

MID-CONTINENT AIRCRAFT CORPORATION

Planegram

Epic Journey - Part Two

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By Christina Williams
DA Asst. Editor

It all began with a book, one that when Chris Nesin was first presented with it he stated, "I don't read books." Five days later, he had finished it. "For me, that was a record. I couldn't put it down. I found the story of the whole family dichotomy to be intriguing. Plus, all the places out west that Rinker so vividly described in his book, I now wanted to see," said Nesin.

The book was "Flight of Passage," written by Rinker Buck. It is part adventure and part memoir. It is the story of how two brothers resolved their differences and proved themselves to their father through a flight across America.

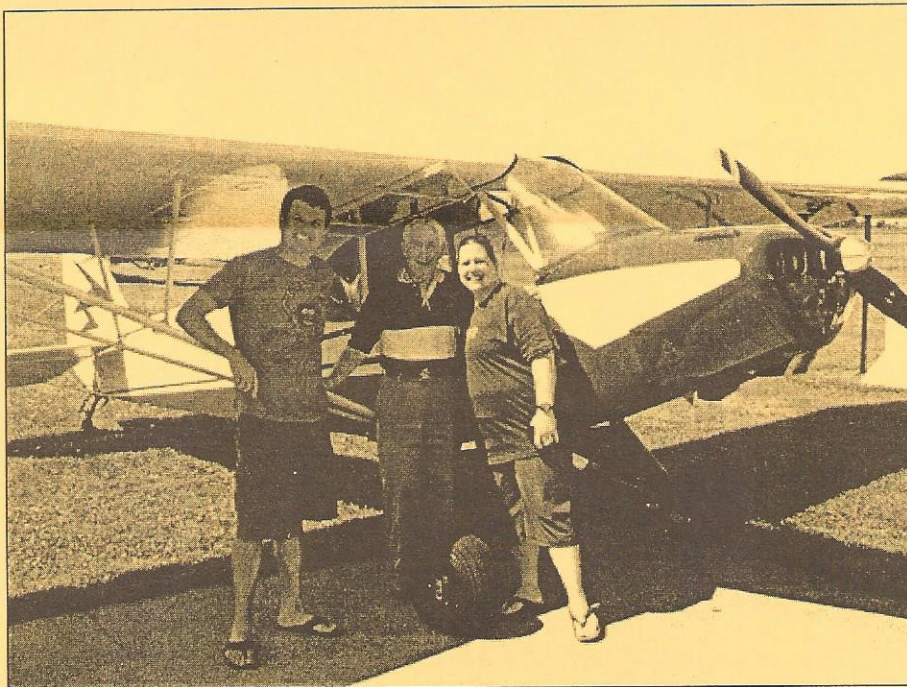
In 1966, Rinker and his brother, Kernahan, then 15 and

17, bought a dilapidated Piper Cub airplane for \$300. They rebuilt the plane in their barn and then took off for California, making headlines across the country as the youngest aviators to ever fly across the United

original Piper PA-11 that had been used in their journey some 48 years prior. making his first flight in the restored plane on June 13, 2014. "Yes, Friday the 13th," his wife laughs, "as if I wasn't nervous enough, but ev-

everything went great!" Today, he and his wife, April, are making that same journey from East coast to West.

They began in Lock Haven, Penn., before they flew to Candlelight Farms Airport in New Milford, Conn., where they met and flew with both of the Bucks brothers, who were quite impressed with the rebuild and



(left to right) Chris Nesin, Dick Reade, April Nesin

States from coast to coast. The book recreates their true voyage, from cheap hotels and dusty landing strips to their perilous crossing of the Rockies and the deserts in their fragile little plane without a radio.

After reading the book, he was inspired. He purchased and restored the Buck brothers'

how it flew.

Along the way, the Nesins are doing more than recreating a historic journey, but they are also helping to raise awareness for the Austin Hatcher Foundation for Pediatric Cancer. This organization works to help re-

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store the spirit of children and families who are battling the terrible effects of pediatric cancer. April works at the foundation as a clinical psychologist.

The two will be using different beginning and ending airports as they trace the route as closely as they can, but instead of doing it in the original five days, they are instead doing it in eight, with their final landing in California on July 2. The two plan to fly three to four hours per day, covering about 250 miles. "The Buck brothers actually did it in four — they spent an extra day in El Paso. They flew eight hours a day, but they were also 15 and 17," Nesin laughs.

While most everything on the plane is the same as it was for the brothers, including the lack of air conditioning, one thing that has changed is in the safety department, in which they use radios.

The two recently made a stop to gas up at Mid Continent Aircraft in Hayti, where they were greeted by Richard Reade and his staff. The Nesins were also joined by two good friends, David Koehn, who is a flight instructor with DestinationsEFC in Tulsa, Okla., and Dalton Nonweiler. Koehn and Nonweiler are co-owners of a J3 Cub and wanted to meet with the Nesins in Lee Bottom, Ind., to fly alongside them as far as Tulsa. "We just wanted to do what we could to support them on their trip," said Nonweiler.

For Nesin, his love of Cubs began in early 2000 when his good friend, Jeff Russell, purchased a Piper J-3 Cub. At first,

he argued with his friend, saying that there were faster and more versatile planes that could get him further, but his friend said that he had always wanted a Cub and was finally getting one. On Nesin's first ride, he was hooked. "I still remember the reflection of the clouds in the perfectly still waters of Damariscotta Lake. The beauty of the land held so much more at 500 feet above the ground." Later that year, Nesin got his first job as a professional pilot, flying regional airline flights out of Bar Harbor, Maine. But he always remembered the advice passed along from a friend and fellow pilot to never stop flying the small planes.

Even today, as he works as a corporate pilot, he takes the time to stay taildragger current on his days off. "Many guys think I'm nuts when they find out I have to hand prop the plane or don't have a transponder — they think I am suicidal. They have a Harley, I have a Cub, they ain't that much different," he laughs. And when there is no one to go with him, he takes his dog, Lenny Bruce, with him. In the past 10 years, the pup has put in about 450 hours in the Piper Cub. "Since he was 5 months old, he has crawled into the front seat of the J-3 and enjoyed every bit of it," says Nesin.

If you would like to find out more about their amazing journey or if you would like to help contribute to their wonderful cause, visit their website and read their blogs at www.flightofpassage.com.

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