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JANUARY

2020

Time Traveling

(Fifty years ago Midwest Flyer writer Jim Hanson traveled from Minnesota to Hayti, Missouri to deliver a Piper Cub and pick up a Stearman from Mid-Continent Aircraft. Before making the ferry flight back to Minnesota, he was checked out in the Stearman by Mid-Continent President Dick Reade, a pilot who made a lasting impression upon him. This is the first of a three-part series about that adventure.)

by JIM HANSON

I've been flying for 58 years. You might well imagine that I've seen a lot of airplanes and have met a lot of people—this writing gig may not pay much, but it certainly gets me into a lot of airplanes and lets me meet a lot of interesting people. I've been fortunate to meet some of the “titans of the industry”: aircraft and avionics manufacturers, military heroes, inventors, hard-working homebuilders, writers, publishers, astronauts.

It has also “taken” me to a lot of places in 30,000 hours—83 countries around the world by general aviation aircraft, every state in the U.S., six continents, ocean crossings, 346 unique types of aircraft. Here's a story about an aircraft—a journey back in time—and the pilot that made such an impression on me.

In January 1970, I was doing corporate flying from Albert Lea, Minnesota for a company that owned a Beech Travel Air. The owner also owned an award-winning Cub. Though he flew and enjoyed the Cub, he was one of those people who enjoyed the challenge of doing a restoration even more than flying the airplane. He wanted a Stearman and negotiated a trade with Mid-Continent Aircraft, located in the town of Hayti, Missouri. The problem was that there was no pilot that was going to fly a Cub (let alone an open-cockpit biplane) to Minnesota in January. He asked if I would do it, and when the Boss “asks”, the answer is almost always, “Yes, Sir!” Besides, what 23-year-old wouldn't want adventure?

It would be a long day just getting the Cub down there (nine hours) and the days were short. I took off almost an hour before sunrise, climbing to meet the dawn. There was a promise of a tailwind at altitude, but nearly an hour after takeoff, I looked back from 7,500 feet and could still see Albert Lea Lake behind me. I went low and made better speed. Eight and one-half hours and two fuel stops later, I landed on the crop-duster airstrip at Hayti using the “IFR Method” (in this case, it was “I follow RIVERS”—the Shell Rock and the Mississippi).

The people from Mid-Continent came out and looked at the Cub, and I inspected the Stearman. The Stearman was no prize—it would be later, but not yet—and I was told that they had known the airplane for a long time, and that it was dependable. The deal was confirmed, and I needed a

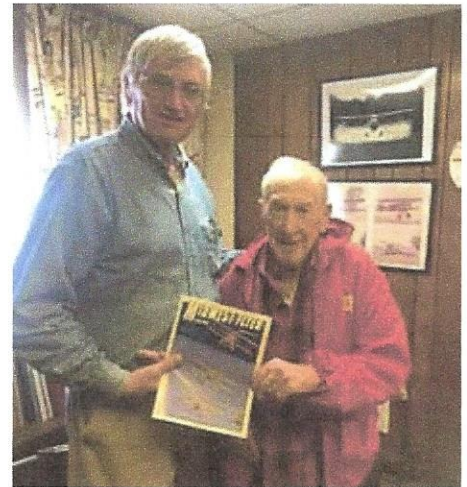
checkout in the Stearman. I had learned to fly in my Cessna 120, and my flight instructor always said, “If you can fly this airplane, you'll never have a problem with a tailwheel airplane,” and that's been true. Though I'd flown Fairchild PT-series WWII trainers, I didn't have much “round engine” (radial) time, with the exception of some BT-13 and 15 time. The owner of Mid-Continent, Dick Reade, gave me the checkout. He showed me how to start it, crawled into the front cockpit instructor's seat, and we made the first takeoff and landing.

“If I want to fly the airplane, I'll pat myself on top of my helmet,” he explained, “and you wiggle the stick to acknowledge.” I made the first takeoff. On the downwind, we exchanged controls, he rolled the airplane, and gave it back to me for the landing. I was taken by surprise, but made the landing anyway—and it was a good one.

“Great!” he said, “Let's do it again!” Same scenario; he took it on the downwind and pulled up into a loop, I made the second landing. Third takeoff. What next? On the downwind, the roll was much faster. “What was THAT?” I asked after landing. He replied “Snap roll. You were born with the airplane!” (Actually, the airplane was 5 years older than I was).

“Take off and have some fun!”

I wanted to make Clarksville, Tennessee (where I had run the military flying club at Ft. Campbell only a few years before) before dark. The problem was my checkpoints weren't coming up. Twenty minutes into the flight, I was lost. It was hard to



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SPECIAL OF THE MONTH



2013 Thrush, S2R-H80, N3025Z

3095.61 A/F TT, Smoker, G4-SATLOC, Flow Control, Lane 111F Fan, Stainless Booms Exchange, MC Bottom Fuel, Left Landing Lite, Hydraulic Gate



2020 THRUSH DUAL COCKPIT N705MC, 0.0 A/F TT READY FOR WORK!



1989 Air Tractor, AT-402, N1012B

12623.4 A/F TT, Left and Right Bottom Load Fuel, Left and Right Loader Valve, Flow Control, Vertex Generator, Heat and A/C, Aluminum Boom, Satloc GPS, Less Spreader



2019 Thrush, S2R-T34, N1009F READY FOR WORK! AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY! 575.0 A/F TT



2018 Thrush, S2R-H80, N318SW

700 A/F TT, GE H80 (800 SHP engine), 510 gallon spray system with 41" stainless steel gatebox, leading edge lights, G4 and flow control, Load Hawg, smoker, plus much more.



1995 Ayres, S2R-G6, N3160M

11,024.0 A/F TT, 750 HP, Spreader-Slim Line, Air Conditioner, Strobes, Weathero, Electric Fast Start System, Satloc M3, Load Hawg, Checks Valves & CP 09, 2" Load Valve, Bantam w/ 9" Screen, Spring Type Tail Wheel, Flow Control, Serviceable Wings Installed at 10,918.3 Hours, Stainless Steel Boom



2013 Thrush, S2R-H80, N3046N

2700.0 Engine TT, 0.0 Siran, 1600 A/F TT 800 HP, Load Hawg, VGs, Bottom Fuel/Dual Load, Intelliflow with Smart Pump, Leading Edge Lights, Stainless Teel Booms, Hopper Rinse, Bantam, Smoker, Spreader w/ Kicker Plate, Radio, CPs, G4 Intelliflow



2017 Thrush, S2R-H80, N6216M

1300.0 A/F TT



1996 AYRES-41, S2R-T34, N2243J

8352.0 A/F TT, 850 HP, Satloc M-3 w/ Intelliflow, Lane Electric Fan Brake, Smoker, Cool Seat, Air Conditioner/Heat, Hopper Rinse Tank, Bottom Load Fuel, Stainless Steel Boom



2010 Thrush, S2R-T34, N5298F

4200.0 A/F TT, sprayer, nav lights, 228 gallon fuel system, Weather-Aero fan, intelliflow, smoker, G4, VGs, bottom fuel, additional equipment, 500 SMOH



2013 Thrush, S2R-T34, N3006J

3000.0 A/F TT, Zee Air Conditioner, Lane Electric Fan Brake, MVP-50T, Leading Edge Lights, AM Safe Inflatable Restraint System for Front & Rear Seats.



1994 Ayres, S2R-T34, N94PR

7835.9 A/F TT, 750 HP, 578.7 Hrs Since Spar Caps, GPS Bantam-Intelliflow, CP-09s, Vortex Generators, Hopper Rinse, Spreader, Harbor, Air Conditioner, Electric Fan Brake, Bottom Load Fuel, Kawak Quadrant, Smoker, New Landing Gear, Wingman, Winglets



1999 AT-402B, N51967

7922.0 A/F TT, PT6A-15AG, 8950 TT engine, Covington light OVH at 6500 engine hours, SATLOC Bantam with G4 screen, flow control, A/C, heat, Garmin G5 attitude indicator, CP 11 nozzles, smoker, very little fertilizer, Transland 10 vane, overhauled FCU and fuel pump at 7322.0 TTAF, wing spars done in June 2019 at factory. One owner, always hangared



1974 Grumman Ag Cat, G-164A, N9688

6042.6 A/F TT, 600 HP, Del Norte GPS, Smoker, Spreader, Transland Gate, Stainless Belly Skin, 80 Fuel Cap, CP 09 Nozzles, Stainless Steel Booms

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MID-CONTINENT AIRCRAFT CORPORATION

is located in Hayti, Missouri, 80 miles north of Memphis, Tennessee. Although Hayti is not the geographical center of our nation, **MID-CONTINENT** is the center for all ag aviation needs.

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check the other side of the chart; I was still fighting to keep my chart from blowing away. I thought, "If I just take up a heading of east, I'll eventually hit 60-mile-long Kentucky Lake, and I'll recognize where I am." I turned about 20 degrees left, and found the compass never moved. I wondered if there was another compass in the front pit, so I carefully stowed the chart, held onto the cockpit tubing, unfastened my belts, and stood up. Nope—no compass in the front pit. In the waning light below the overcast, I put the sun behind me, and eventually did hit Kentucky Lake. I now had a choice. From my present position, it was about the same distance to the nearest airport as it was to my destination at Clarksville. I reasoned that rather than land at an unfamiliar airport for my fourth landing in the airplane in fading light, I would continue to the known airport at Clarksville.

I avoided Ft. Campbell's restricted airspace by keeping away from the area where there were no ground lights—a restricted area. I kept the airplane high on the downwind, and pulled the power. I was shocked to see the shower of sparks come out of the exhaust—I had never seen the carbon come off a radial engine at night before—and thought I had lost the engine. I immediately turned toward the runway only to discover what old-time aviators already knew—biplanes have restricted forward visibility during the daytime and are virtually blind at night. I sideslipped to a landing. It was a good one.

(Watch for Part 2 in the February 2020 newsletter.)

Jim Hanson is the long-running FBO at Albert Lea, Minnesota.



Dylan McCain of Crop Doctor Inc in Lake Village, Arkansas was the winner of the Mid-Continent 70th Anniversary coat rack at the KansasAAA Convention.



Daniel Funk of Kenneth City, Florida won the Mid-Continent helmet at the KansasAAA Convention.