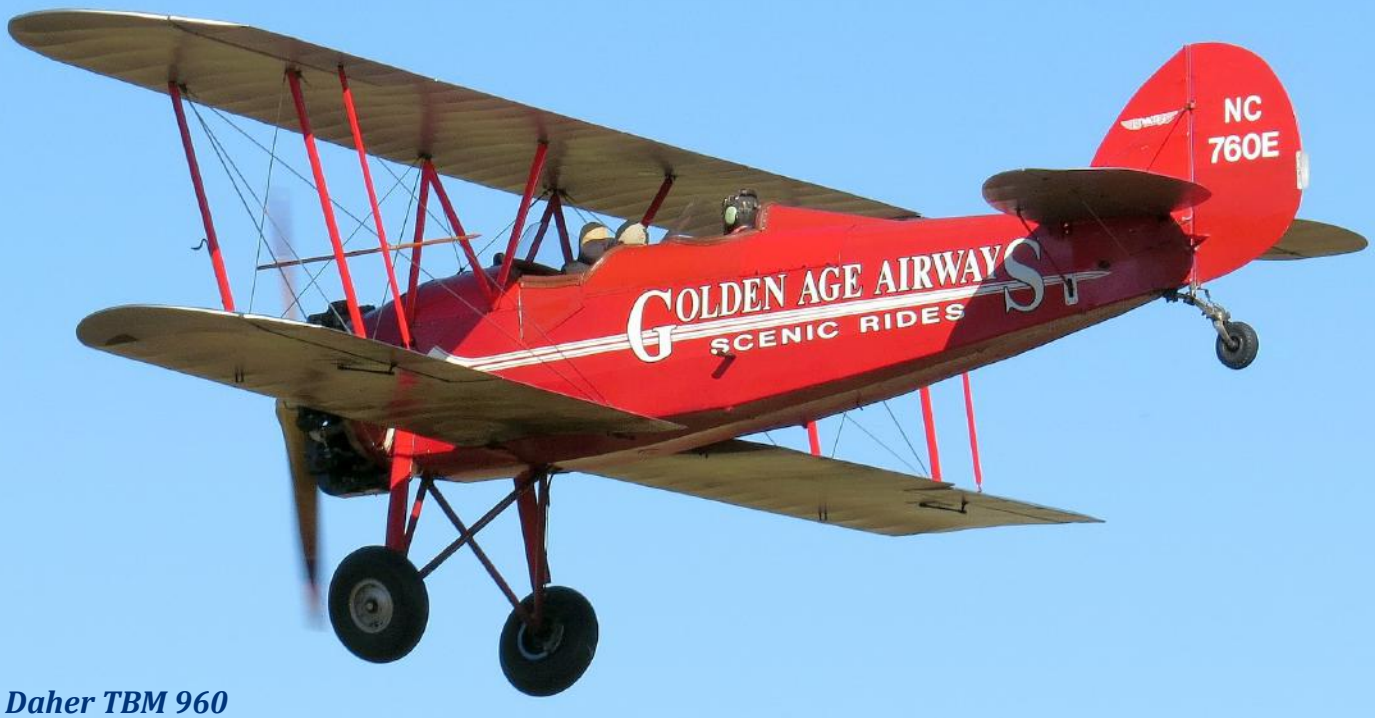
January/February 2026

Corey J Beitler's

"Distelfink Airlines"

An Online Aviation Newsletter

Golden Age Air Museum Great Pumpkin Fly-In



Daher TBM 960

Wallace Berrie & Co. Early American Aviation Framed Prints

Corgi 1/72 Scale North American P-51D Mustang "Bunnie"

Curtiss SB2C-5 Helldiver

Fairchild Swearingen Metroliner SA227-AT

"Air Force Two" Visits Lehigh Valley International Airport

The Golden Age Air Museum's 1929 Waco GXE biplane comes in for a landing at the museum's 2025 Great Pumpkin Fly-In. The museum sells scenic biplane rides in this aircraft. These rides are available throughout the museum's operating season during regular museum hours, special events, and by appointment.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Great Pumpkin Fly-In, SB2C-5, Wallace Berrie & Co. Prints, "Air Force Two" Visit

Greetings Everyone:

Welcome to the first edition of "Distelfink Airlines" for 2026! It is a pleasure to be back with you and publish the newsletter for everyone this year. The 2026 airshow and aviation event season is shaping up to be full of excellent events, and I hope to cover several of them in the newsletter this year. Once again in 2026, "Distelfink Airlines" will cover airshows and aviation events, museum aircraft, aircraft models, aviation memorabilia, and much more. Thank you for your support of "Distelfink Airlines" and my aviation photojournalism efforts.

The featured content for the first edition of the "Distelfink Airlines" in 2026 highlights the Great Pumpkin Fly-In held in late October last year at the Golden Age Air Museum. The fly-in is an excellent event and, if the weather cooperates, always features a wide variety of fly-in aircraft, including warbirds, general aviation aircraft, and homebuilts. For this feature, the content focuses on aircraft that were arriving at the fly-in on Saturday morning. This was the time during the weekend when the weather conditions provided the best opportunity for pictures. The feature includes photos of a variety of aircraft types. There may be some additional photos from this fly-in featured in a future edition of "Distelfink Airlines". Additional information about the Golden Age Air Museum and its event schedule can be found at: goldenageair.org.

For 2026, the "Aircraft of the National Air and Space Museum" section has changed names and is now the "Museum Aircraft Spotlight". This change was made so aircraft from other museums can be featured in this section in addition to those in the National Air and Space Museum's collection. For the first edition of "Distelfink Airlines" for 2026, this section of the newsletter features the Curtiss SB2C-5 Helldiver in the National Air and Space Museum's collection. The Helldiver was the last dive bomber ordered by the U.S. Navy and also the last significant military aircraft built by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation.

The "Aviation Memorabilia" section features a set of three prints produced by the Wallace Berrie & Co., illustrating early American aviation aircraft and aviators. These interesting prints are framed in shadow-box frames with printed glass, creating a three-dimensional effect when they are viewed. These prints were a recent score at an antique shop for $15 for the set. They will be enjoyed in my aviation memorabilia collection for several years to come.

Finally, "One Last Thing" features some photographs of a Boeing C-32A operating as "Air Force Two" landing at the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania, back in December. The C-32A's appearance at the airport was due to a visit by the Vice President of the United States, JD Vance, to the Lehigh Valley region to speak about the nation's economic outlook at a local shipping supplies warehouse. The clear skies, early morning light, and snow on the ground providing sunlight reflections, created an incredible photo opportunity of this aircraft for anyone willing to brave the cold temperatures.

Thank you again for supporting my aviation photojournalism efforts and "Distelfink Airlines" this year. Please feel free to share the newsletter with whoever you wish and invite them to join the newsletter's official social media pages listed below.

Regards,

-Corey

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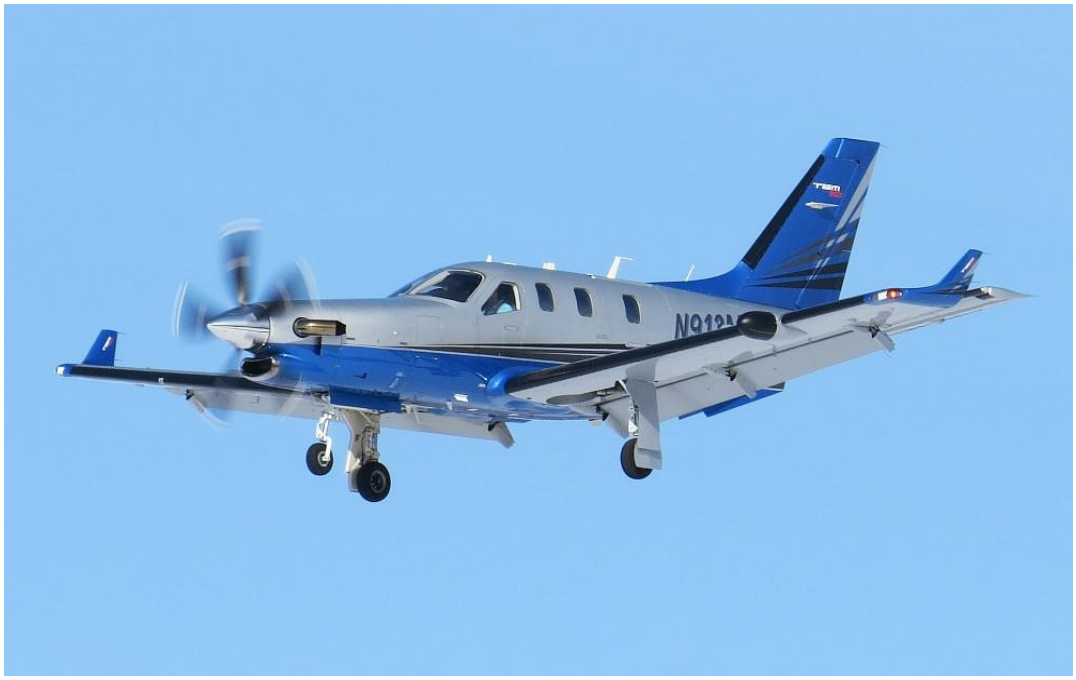
On December 16, 2025, a U.S. Air Force Boeing C-32A operating as "Air Force Two" brought Vice President of the United States JD Vance to the Lehigh Valley for a visit to the region.

Daher TBM 960



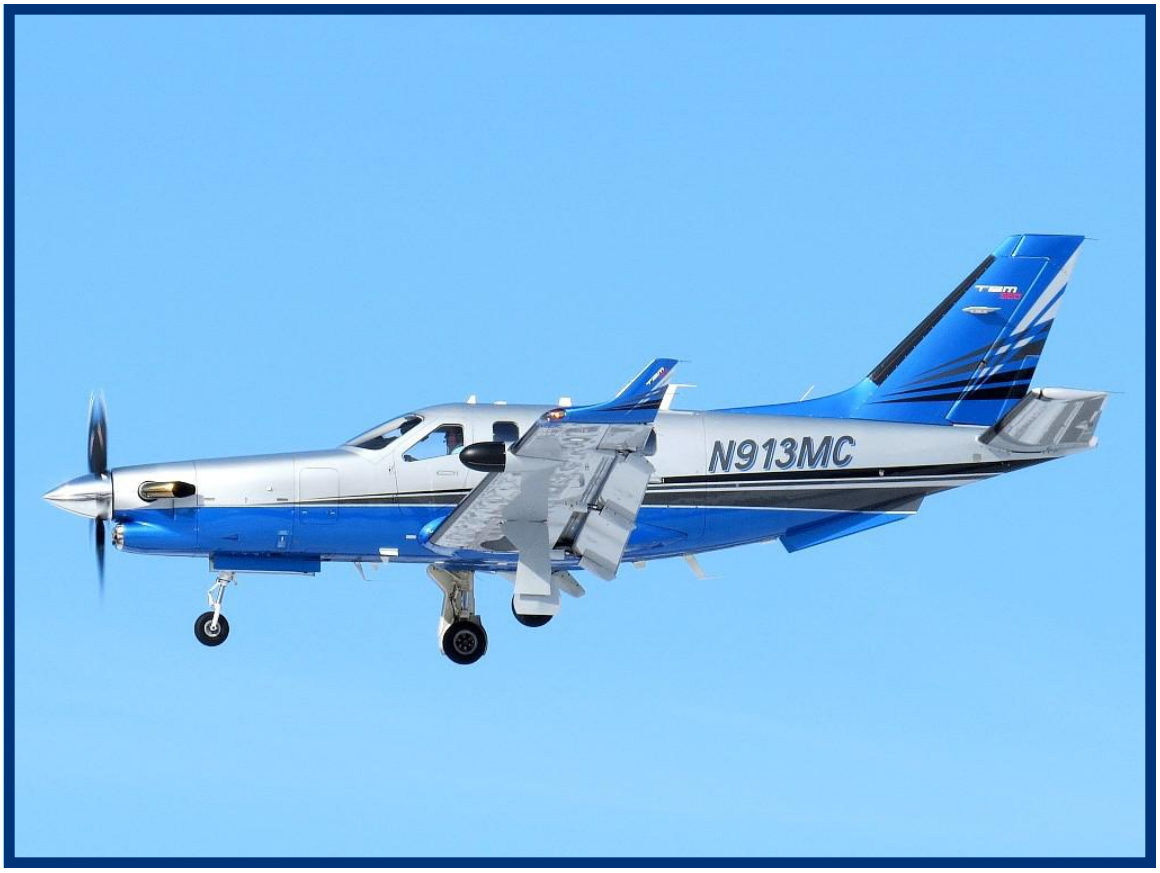
A Daher TBM 960 on approach to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The TBM 960 is an improved variant of the TBM family of high-performance, single-engine business and utility aircraft introduced in 1990 by SOCATA. The TBM 960 features several design updates for improved performance, including a more powerful Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6E turboprop engine, a Hartzell five-blade propeller, a full-authority digital engine and propeller control system, an autoland function, and automatic deicing.

The Daher TBM 960 is an improved variant of the TBM family of four to six-seat, high-performance, single-engine turboprop business and utility aircraft produced by the French industrial conglomerate Daher. The aircraft was originally developed as a collaborative effort between the American Mooney Airplane Company and the French light aircraft manufacturer SOCATA.

In the early 1980s, the Mooney Airplane Company designed a prototype of a six-seat, pressurized, light aircraft powered by a 360-horsepower piston engine designated the Mooney 301. In 1985, Mooney was acquired by French owners, and collaboration between Mooney and French light aircraft manufacturer SOCATA led to the production of a turboprop derivative of the 301, the TBM 700. The new aircraft was considerably heavier than the 301, but had twice the available power. The envisioned TBM 700 was the first high-performance, single-engine passenger/cargo aircraft to enter production. The TBM 700 performed its first flight in July 1988, with the first production aircraft entering service in 1990. The TBM 700 was an instant success, with the initial production batch selling out almost immediately. Pilots and operators also spoke positively about the TBM 700's range, speed, and generous power margins. Initially, TBM 700 operators faced considerable difficulty in sourcing spare parts and support services for their aircraft. SOCATA improved this during the 1990s by opening sales and support facilities worldwide, and sales of the aircraft climbed dramatically later in the decade.

Following the initial success of the TBM 700, SOCATA refined the aircraft and developed improved variants, including the TBM 850 and the current production TBM 900 series, introduced in 2014. Improvements included more powerful Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A or PT6E turboprop engines, new propellers, increased fuel capacity, an additional baggage compartment, a redesigned interior, new avionics suites, updated safety systems, and aerodynamic refinements. As of mid-2025, over 1,200 TBMs of all variants have been built.

The aircraft pictured here is a 2022 TBM 960. It was spotted and photographed on approach to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania, after a flight from Stella Maris Airport in the Bahamas.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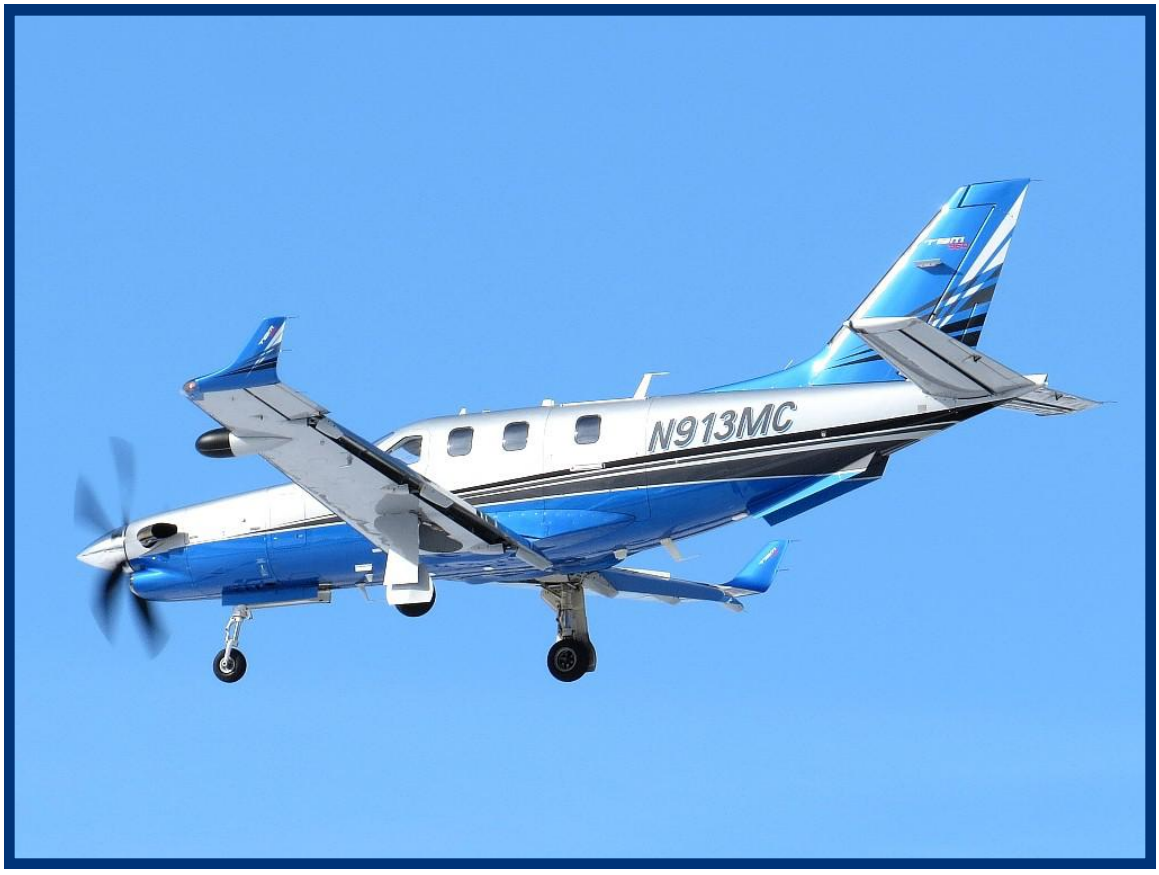
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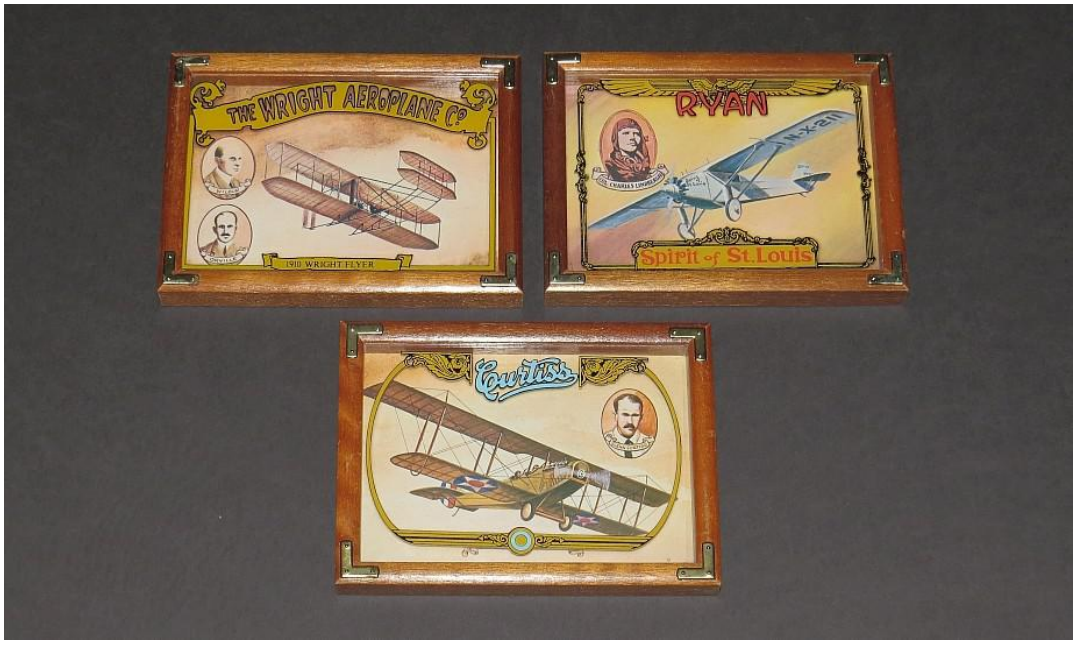
Wallace Berrie & Co. Early American Aviation Framed Prints

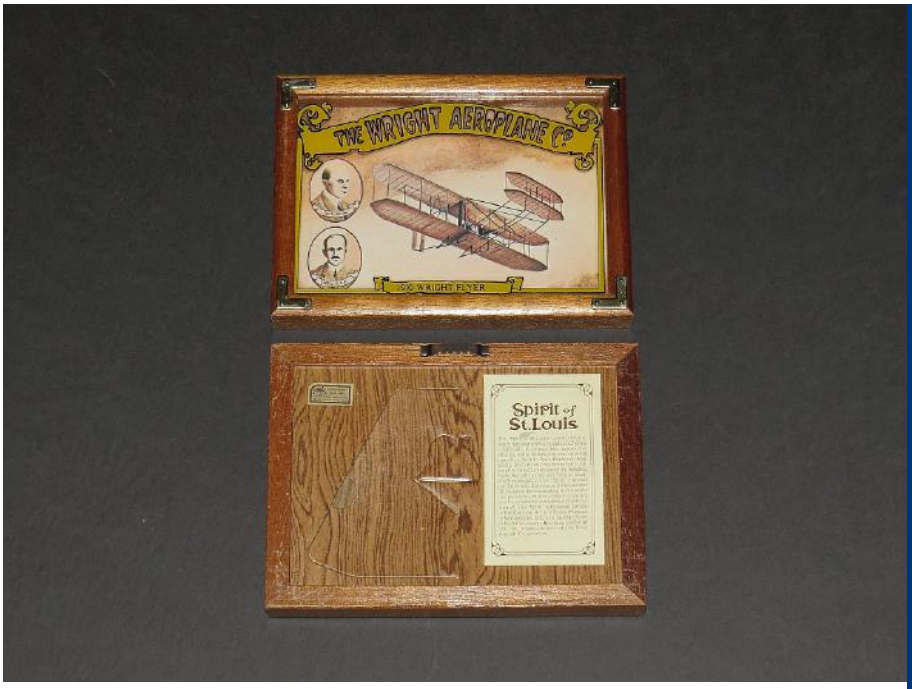


In 1980, Wallace Berrie & Co. sold this set of three small framed prints featuring famous aviators and aircraft from early American aviation. The prints are presented in shadow-box frames and feature excellent illustrations of the 1910 Wright Flyer, the Ryan "Spirit of St. Louis, and the Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny" trainer with smaller insert artwork of aviators Orville and Wilbur Wright, Charles Lindbergh, and Glenn Curtiss.

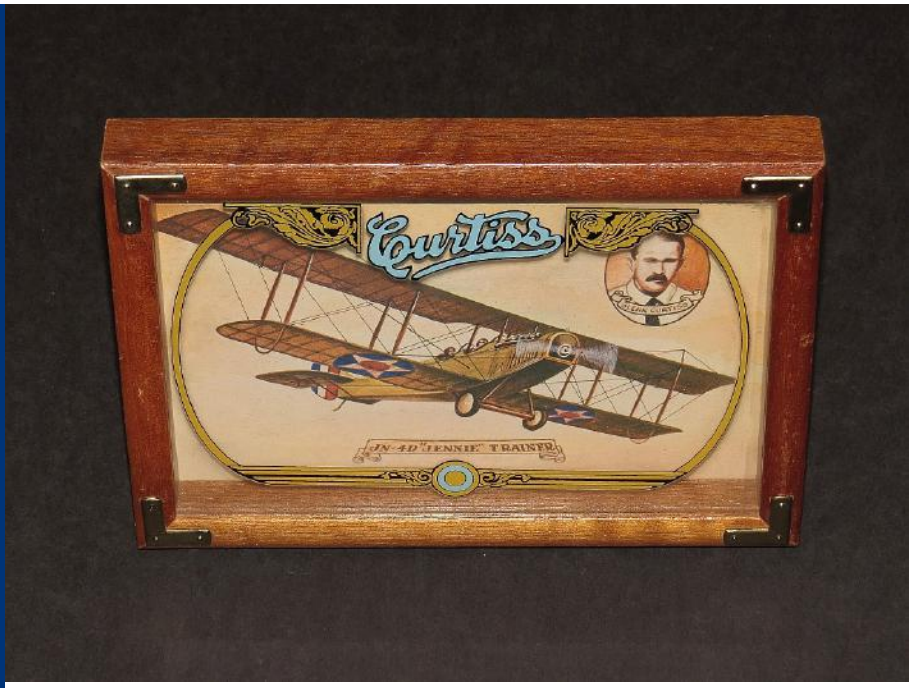
Wallace Berrie & Co. was founded in Van Nuys, California, in 1966 by Wallace Berrie. The company specialized in selling collectibles, stuffed animals, and toy figurines. In 1979, the company obtained the worldwide rights to *The Smurfs* and began selling small toy figurines of the characters. *The Smurfs* figurines became an instant hit and were one of the best-selling toys of the early 1980s. In 1982, the company purchased the Applause division from Knickerbocker Toys, which gave the company licenses to the Disney, *Sesame Street*, and *Raggedy Ann and Andy* brands. The company changed its name to Applause Inc. after being purchased by Jerrald A. Plebiew. In the 1990s, Applause Inc. was a world leader in products based on entertainment license brands featuring in-store merchandising displays. In 1995, Applause merged with Dakin Inc., a manufacturer of stuffed animals. This merger brought Applause additional brand licensing, including *Garfield* and the *Peanuts* characters. During the late 1990s, Applause produced several series of kids' meal toys for fast food franchises such as McDonald's and Taco Bell. Applause filed for bankruptcy in 2004, with its name acquired in a bankruptcy auction by Russ Berrie.

In its early years, Wallace Berrie & Co. produced collectible items marketed toward adults in addition to children's toys. These collectible items included wall art, glassware, signs, plaques, and other novelty items. In 1980, the company produced and sold a set of three framed 5" by 7" prints highlighting airplanes and aviators from early American aviation. The series of prints included excellent artwork portraying Orville and Wilbur Wright and the 1910 Wright Flyer, Glenn Curtiss and the JN-4D "Jenny" trainer, and Charles Lindbergh and the Ryan "Spirit of St. Louis". Each print was enclosed in an old-fashioned, shadow-box, wooden frame, with the back of the frame featuring a descriptive historical panel about the airplane in the artwork. The back of the frame also included a metal hanger and an opening easel stand, allowing the print to be displayed on either a wall or on a shelf, table, or desk. An unusual feature of the set of prints was that the frames featured glass with the name of the airplane and its manufacturer printed on it, rather than that information printed on the artwork itself.

These Wallace Berrie & Co. framed prints are intriguing aviation memorabilia items. The prints honor some of America's famous early aviators and the aircraft they designed and flew. Although they are difficult to find as a complete set, these framed prints often appear individually in online auctions. They are an excellent entry-level item for collectors to display on a wall or shelf in an aviation memorabilia collection.

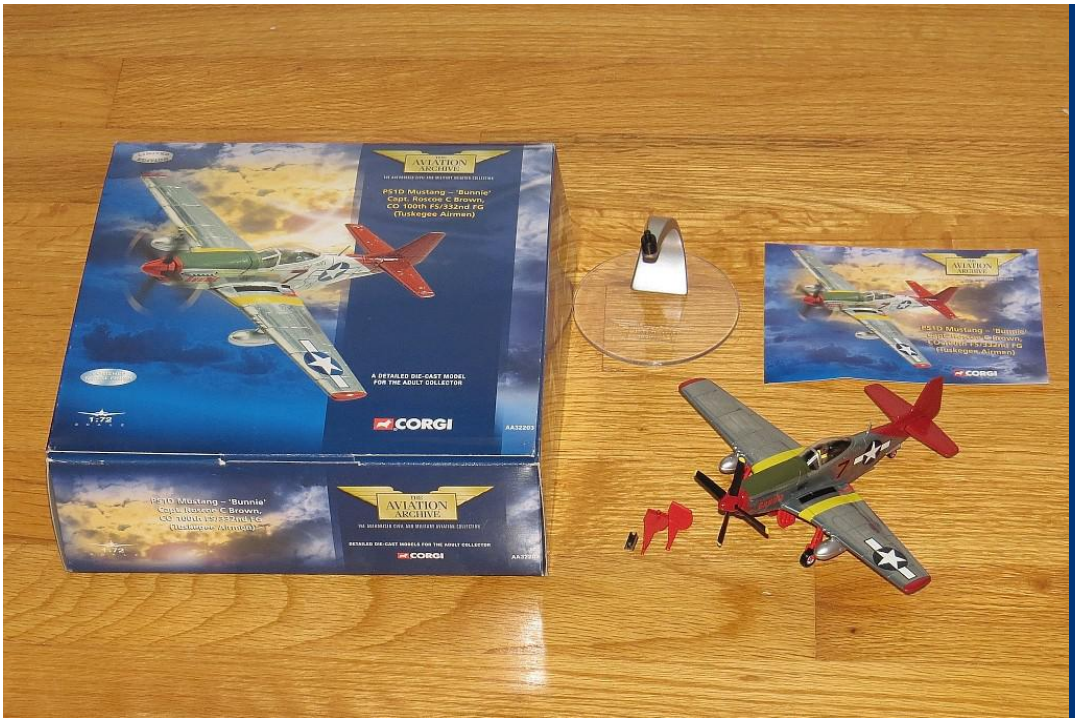


Each frame is sealed front and back, so the print can not be removed. The glass of the frame features printing and a design that forms a border for the print inside. The back of each frame includes a description of the airplane and the aviator or aviators featured in the print, as well as a hanger and easel, so it can be displayed.



The Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny" trainer illustration is interesting as the name of the aircraft is printed on the print itself, not on the glass. The artwork also has a printing error, as the wrong spelling of "Jennie" is used. The design of the printing on the glass hides the error when the print is viewed directly from the front.

Corgi 1/72 Scale North American P-51D Mustang "Bunnie"



In 2001, Corgi produced this 1/72 scale model of a North American P-51D Mustang in the colors of "Bunnie", the aircraft flown by Capt. Roscoe C. Brown, when he was Commanding Officer of the 100th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group. Brown was one of the most famous members of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's first African-American fighter pilots and airmen who fought in World War II. The model comes with optional position landing gear pieces, a display stand, and a collector's card that details the history of the Tuskegee Airmen.

The North American Aviation P-51 Mustang is an American single-engine, single-seat fighter aircraft that was designed during World War II. With its long range and excellent performance, the P-51 Mustang became one of the war's most iconic fighter aircraft. In addition to its service during World War II, the Mustang, designated the F-51, also saw service during the Korean War as a fighter-bomber. Mustangs sold as surplus after World War II were used in postwar races, where they competed against Lockheed P-38 Lightnings, Bell P-39 Airacobras, Bell P-63 Kingcobras, and Goodyear FG-1 Corsairs. Today, the P-51 Mustang remains one of World War II's most well-known fighter aircraft. Restored examples are often seen flying at airshows and aviation events, and dozens of others are preserved on display at aviation museums worldwide.

The Mustang was designed in 1940 by a team headed by Edgar Schmued at North American Aviation. The firm was first approached by the British Purchasing Commission to license-build Curtiss P-40 fighter aircraft for the Royal Air Force. Rather than build a design from another company, North American Aviation executives proposed designing and building a more modern fighter aircraft. The prototype of the P-51 Mustang was completed in September 1940, just 102 days after the British Purchasing Commission awarded a contract for the Mustang to North American Aviation. The prototype flew for the first time on October 26, 1940.

The Mustang was initially designed to use the Allison V-1710 12-cylinder, water-cooled, inline engine without a turbosupercharger. The lack of a turbosupercharger severely limited the Mustang's performance at high altitudes. As a result, the initial production examples of the Mustang were used for low-level fighter-bomber and fighter sweep missions over the European continent. In 1942, a Royal Air Force research and development project replaced the Allison engine with a Rolls-Royce Merlin 65 12-cylinder, two-stage, intercooled, supercharged engine. The similar dimensions of the two engines meant that very few design changes needed to be made to the Mustang's airframe to allow the installation of the Rolls-Royce engine.

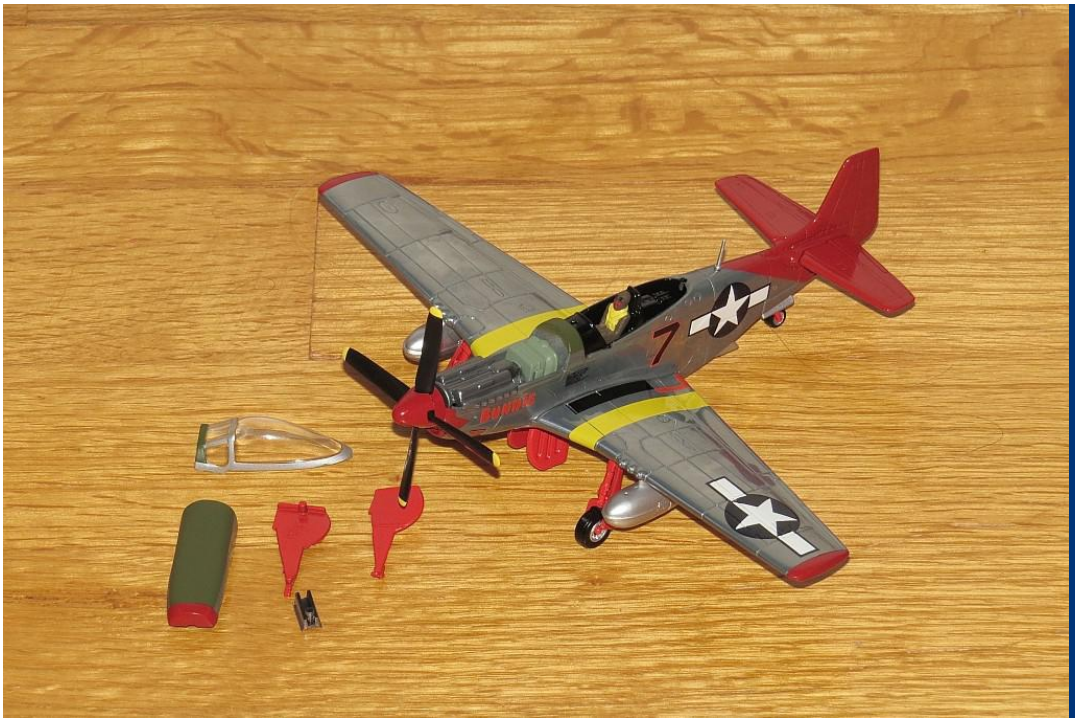
Test flights of the Mustang fitted with the new Rolls-Royce engine revealed that it dramatically improved the fighter's performance above 15,000 feet (4,572 m) without sacrificing range. After further testing in the United States, North American Aviation began installing the engine on P-51s on the production line, resulting in the P-51B and C variants. The P-51B and C variants were the first Mustangs and Allied fighter aircraft competitive with Luftwaffe fighters at high altitudes.

The definitive variant of the Mustang was the P-51D, which featured a bubble canopy and a cut-down rear fuselage for improved pilot visibility. The P-51D was powered by a Packard V-1650-7 12-cylinder, water-cooled, inline engine, a license-built version of the Rolls-Royce Merlin 66. The P-51D was armed with six .50-inch (12.7 mm) machine guns in its wings and could also carry rockets, bombs, or external fuel tanks on underwing pylons. The P-51D had a top speed of 440 miles per hour (710 km/h) and a range of 1,650 miles (2,660 km) when fitted with external fuel tanks.

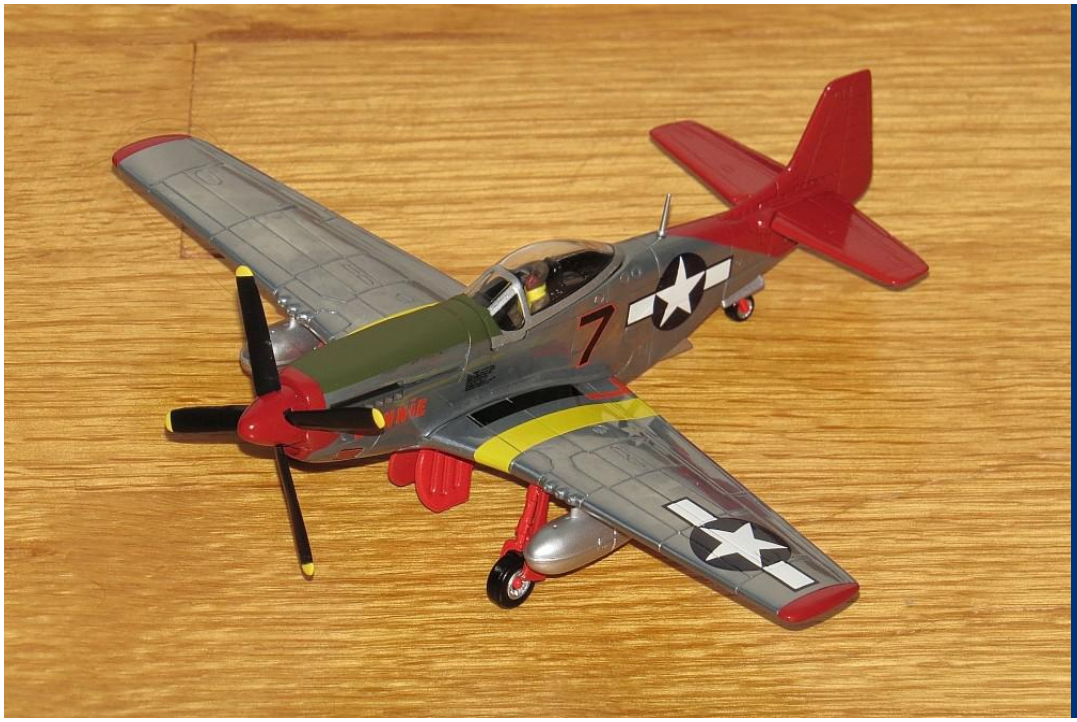
From late 1943 into 1945, P-51Bs and Cs (supplemented by P-51Ds from mid-1944) were used by the U.S. Army Air Force's Eighth Air Force to escort bombing raids by B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator heavy bombers deep into the heart of Germany. Nicknamed "Little Friends" by the bomber crews, the P-51s finally provided the Eighth Air Force with a fighter aircraft that had the range to escort the bombers to Germany and back, providing the bomber formations with much-needed fighter cover from Luftwaffe fighters.

The Royal Air Force's Second Tactical Air Force and the U.S. Army Air Force's Ninth Air Force used the P-51D as a fighter-bomber, helping ensure Allied air superiority over Europe from 1944. These P-51Ds attacked ground targets of opportunity, destroying enemy railroads, vehicles, and supply dumps. The P-51 was also used by Allied air forces in the North Africa, Mediterranean, Italian, and Pacific theaters during the war. Over 15,000 P-51s of all variants were built during World War II, and P-51 pilots claimed 4,950 enemy aircraft destroyed.

The P-51, designated the F-51 in the newly formed U.S. Air Force, also served in the Korean War during the early 1950s. Initially used as a fighter, the F-51 was relegated to a specialized fighter-bomber role when jet fighters, such as the North American F-86 Sabre, were introduced. The F-51 acquitted itself well in the fighter-bomber role during the conflict, although several were lost to ground fire.



Corgi's 1/72 scale North American P-51D Mustang model has some innovative features for a die-cast model airplane manufactured in the early 2000s. The model has a removable cockpit canopy and engine cover. Removing the engine cover reveals a detailed engine. The model also features optional position landing gear, allowing the P-51D Mustang to be displayed with its landing gear extended or retracted as if it were in flight.



Corgi's 1/72 scale North American P-51D Mustang has several positive attributes, including a historically accurate paint scheme, optional position landing gear, and a removable engine cover. Unfortunately, the model is one of Corgi's earlier die-cast offerings and lacks some of the finer details, such as propeller stenciling, that are found on the manufacturer's more recent model releases.

Although the F-51 was retired by the U.S. Air Force in 1957, the Mustang remained in service with the air forces of many other nations worldwide throughout the 1960s. The last Mustangs retired from military service were those operated by the Dominican Air Force, which withdrew its P-51s in 1984. Today, restored and airworthy P-51 Mustangs remain popular with aviation enthusiasts, and these aircraft make regular appearances at airshows worldwide. Highly-modified P-51 Mustangs are also raced competitively in the Unlimited class at the National Championship Air Races each year.

This 1/72-scale die-cast and plastic model of a North American P-51D Mustang was released in 2001 as part of the Aviation Archive collection of die-cast model airplanes produced by Corgi. The Aviation Archive range presents die-cast, ready-made models of military and civilian aircraft. Corgi's Aviation Archive models are prized by die-cast model collectors and aviation enthusiasts, as the models often represent historically significant aircraft in aviation history. This edition of Corgi's die-cast 1/72-scale North American P-51D Mustang represents "Bunnie", the aircraft flown by Capt. Roscoe C. Brown, the Commanding Officer of the 100th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group. Brown was a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's first African-American military pilots and airmen who fought in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II.

Corgi did an excellent job replicating Brown's P-51D Mustang, "Bunnie". The model is made primarily of die-cast construction, with plastic detail parts, including the external fuel tanks and cockpit canopy. The model is decorated with an authentic paint scheme, accurate markings, and includes a display stand and collector's card. The colorful box also details the history of "Bunnie" and the career of Capt. Roscoe C. Brown.

The model has several excellent features. One of the positive attributes of this model is the design of the landing gear. The model comes with landing gear pieces to display it with its gear extended or as if the aircraft were "in flight". When in place, the extended landing gear pieces support the model's weight when it is displayed on a desk or bookshelf. For those who wish to do so, the model can be displayed using the provided display stand. This stand is easy to assemble and supports the model's weight. A nice added touch on this model by Corgi is the inclusion of a nicely painted African-American pilot figure in the cockpit of the P-51 Mustang.

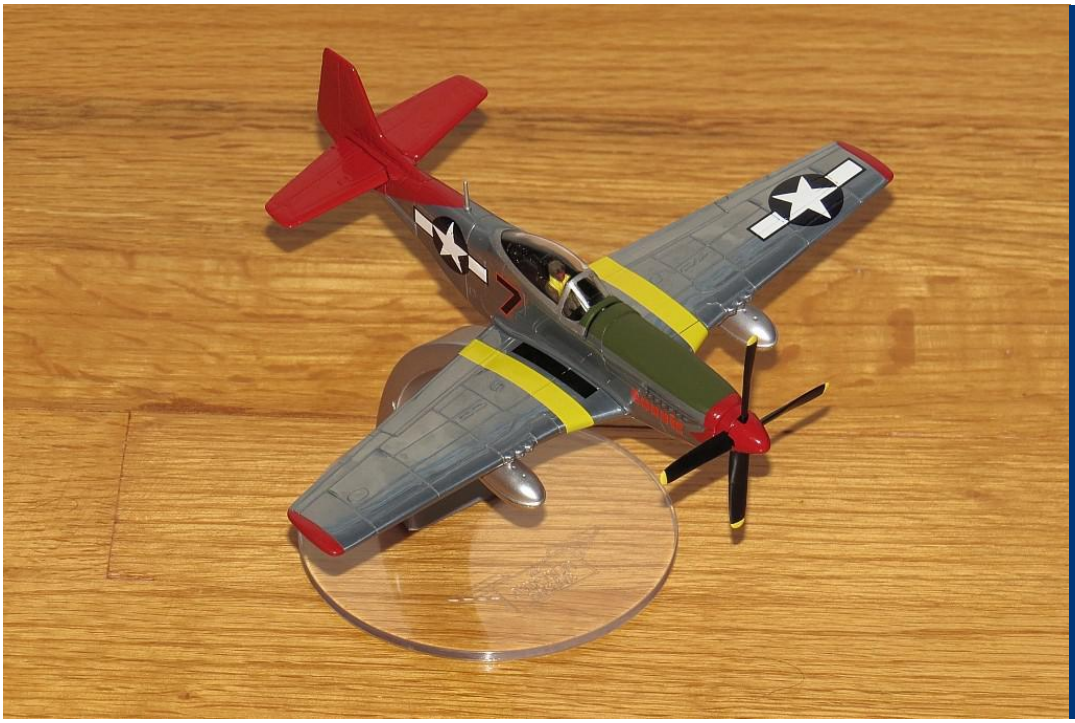
Another positive element of the Corgi's P-51D Mustang "Bunnie" is the top engine cover, which is removable by simply lifting it off the nose of the model. Removing the cover reveals a detailed engine in the nose of the P-51 Mustang. The removable engine cover offers collectors additional display options for this model in either a die-cast model airplane collection or a diorama, and is a feature not usually included on die-cast model airplanes in this scale.

One element of this model that could have been improved is the overall paint finish. In the early 2000s, Corgi used a shiny natural metal finish on some of their models in an attempt to replicate aircraft that were flown in a natural metal finish at the end of World War II. Unfortunately, the paint used for this finish is susceptible to fingerprint and imperfection marks. As a result, handling the model will leave fingerprints that need to be wiped off. On later aircraft produced by Corgi in the Aviation Archive lineup, the company switched its natural metal paint to a less shiny finish that hides fingerprints and imperfections better.

Another issue with Corgi's 1/72 P-51D Mustang model is that the main landing gear pieces are very difficult to install on the undersides of the wings. These pieces have a small peg that inserts into an equally small hole. The result is a piece that is unstable and does not stay in place. It can take several attempts to get these parts inserted correctly. Another unfortunate aspect of the landing gear is that the pieces were painted entirely red, with no paint detail added to areas such as the struts themselves, which should be a natural metal color.

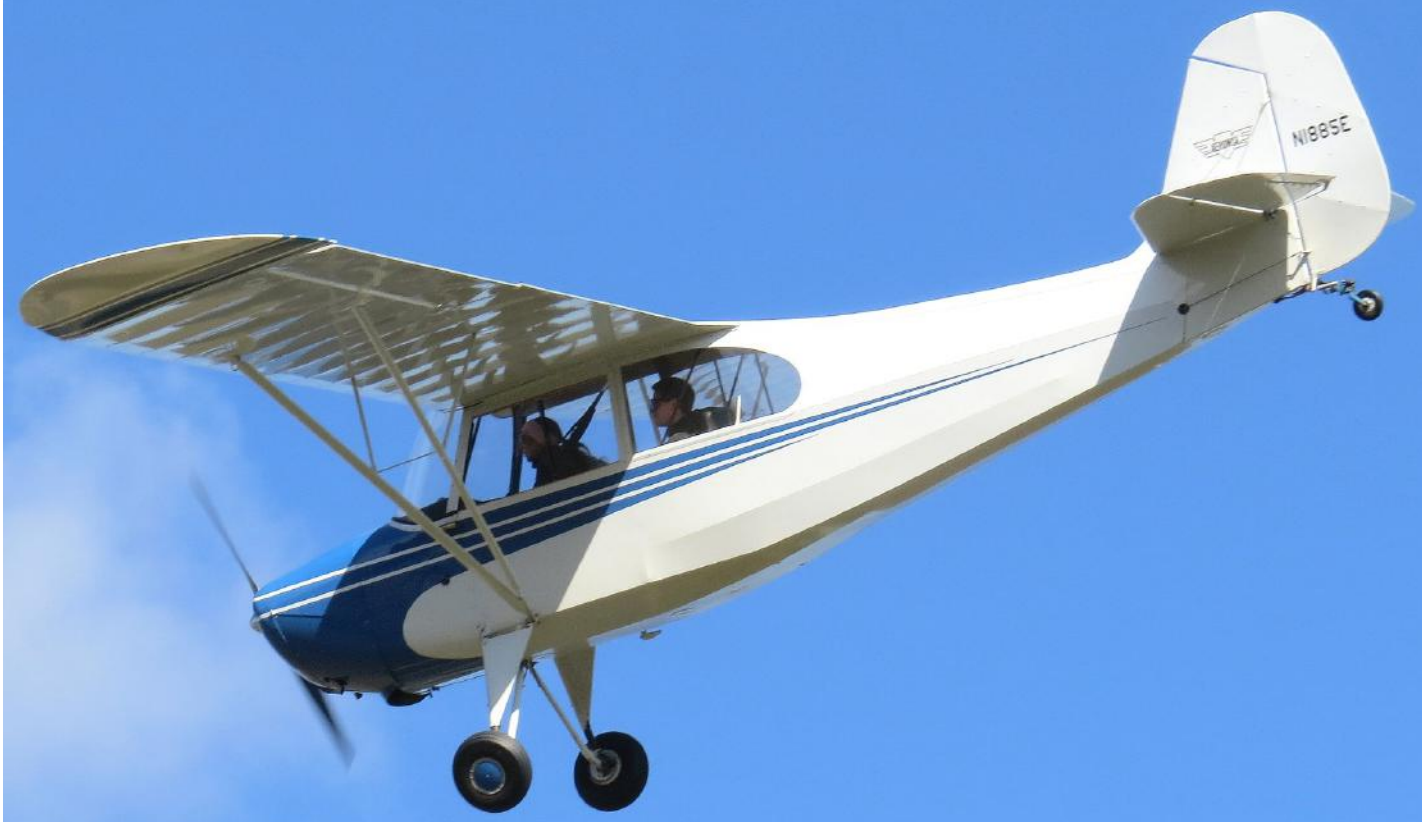
Finally, the fit of the removable engine cover and canopy is problematic. These parts do not have any tabs to lock them into place on the model. Simply turning the model over to install the landing gear pieces or insert the display stand will cause both the canopy and the engine cover to fall off the model. It is best to leave these two pieces off the model when switching the landing gear pieces or installing the display stand, so they do not fall off and possibly break.

Corgi's 1/72-scale North American P-51D Mustang "Bunnie" is a wonderful tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen and one of their most famous pilots. The model honors a significant part of American World War II and aviation history. The model's excellent details and historical paint scheme make it an excellent addition to any model airplane collection or to the desk or bookshelf of anyone interested in American or aviation history.



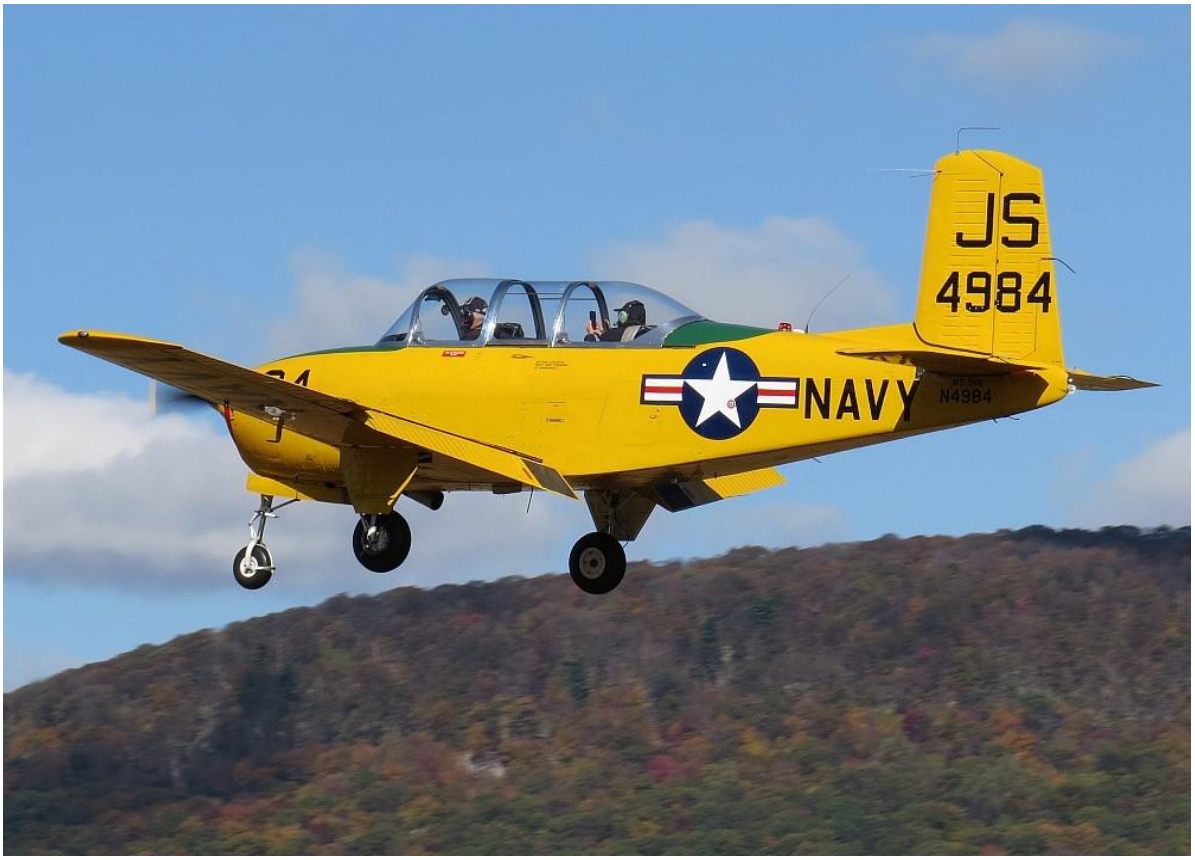
Although an excellent model by early 2000's standards, Corgi's 1/72 scale die-cast North American P-51D Mustang model shows its age as a tooling. The canopy and removable engine cover have significant seam lines, and the early attempt at a natural metal paint finish by Corgi on this model is susceptible to fingerprints when this model is handled. Despite its shortcomings, the model is a nice replica of Capt. Brown's P-51D "Bunnie" and is an excellent desk or bookshelf piece for anyone interested in World War II aviation.

Golden Age Air Museum Great Pumpkin Fly-In



The annual event at the museum featured dozens of fly-in aircraft, including vintage, general aviation, and homebuilt types, a small car show, biplane rides, a Halloween candy drop for children, and the opportunity to bomb a junked car placed next to the runway by dropping a pumpkin from an aircraft.

Caroline Dougherty flies the Golden Age Air Museum's Aeronca 7AC to take a museum visitor on a pumpkin bombing flight during the museum's 2025 Great Pumpkin Fly-In. During the fly-in, museum visitors who purchased pumpkins were taken up on a brief flight in one of several aircraft to attempt to drop their pumpkin on a designated target next to the runway.



One of the highlights of the arriving aircraft on Saturday at the Golden Age Air Museum's Great Pumpkin Fly-In was this beautifully restored Beech T-34B Mentor. The T-34 Mentor was used as a primary training aircraft by both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s. An upgraded version with a turboprop engine, the T-34C, was operated by the U.S. Navy from the 1970s until 2012.

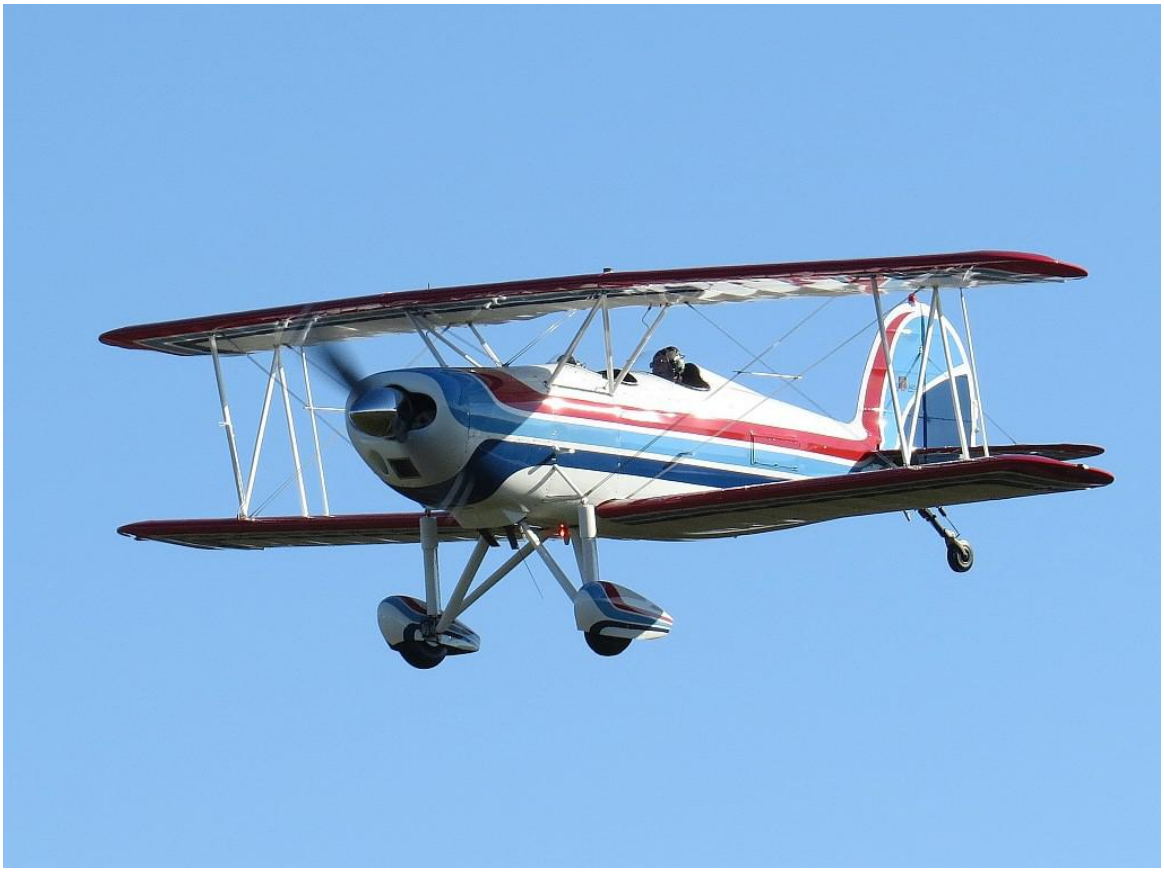
A trip to the Golden Age Air Museum, located near the town of Bethel in scenic Berks County, Pennsylvania, takes museum visitors back to the early days of aviation. Located at the Grimes Airfield, the Golden Age Air Museum was established by the Dougherty family in 1997. The museum is dedicated to collecting, restoring, and displaying aircraft, aero engines, and artifacts from the "Golden Age of Aviation". This period in aviation history was a time of great advances in aircraft design, with airplanes evolving from wood and fabric-covered biplanes to all-metal monoplanes. These airplanes and the pilots who flew them, such as Charles Lindbergh, Jimmy Doolittle, and Amelia Earhart, captured the public's imagination, with stories of their record-breaking flights making the front pages of newspapers throughout the country.

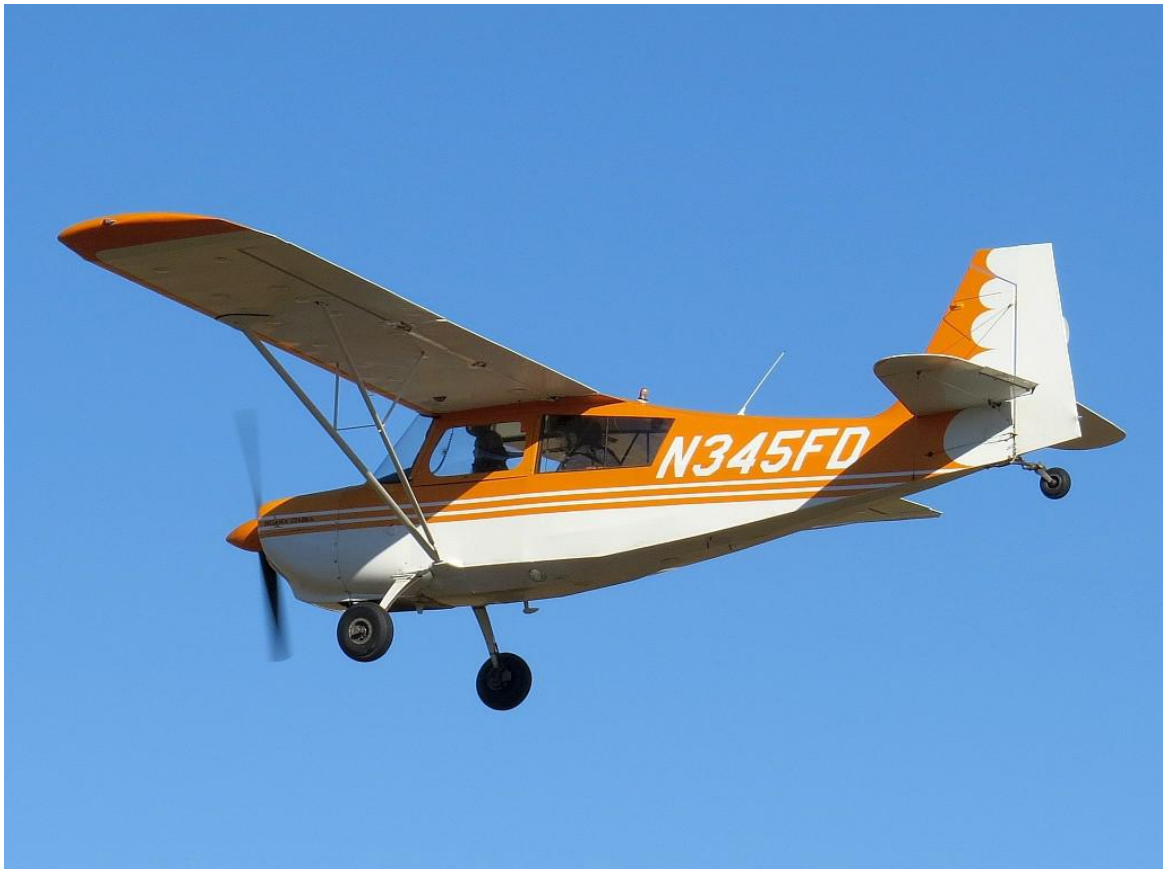
The Golden Age Air Museum has a collection of over 30 aircraft, several vintage automobiles, and hundreds of smaller pieces of aviation memorabilia. One of the highlights of the museum collection is a rare airworthy original 1918 Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny", an airplane that was a favorite of the barnstormer pilots. The museum has also built three World War I reproduction aircraft for its collection: a 1916 Sopwith Pup fighter, a 1918 Fokker Dr.I Triplane fighter, and a 1918 SPAD S.XIII, a French-built fighter used by American pilots during the war. Aircraft in the museum's collection from the "Golden Age of Aviation" include a 1931 Taylor E-2 Cub, a 1932 Pietenpol Air Camper, and a 1936 Aeronca C-3 Master.

The Golden Age Air Museum held its final public event of the 2025 season, the Great Pumpkin Fly-In, on October 25 and 26. Excellent weather provided for a large turnout of fly-in aircraft and classic cars. Activities for museum visitors during the fly-in included self-guided museum tours, a pumpkin bombing contest, and a Halloween candy drop for children.

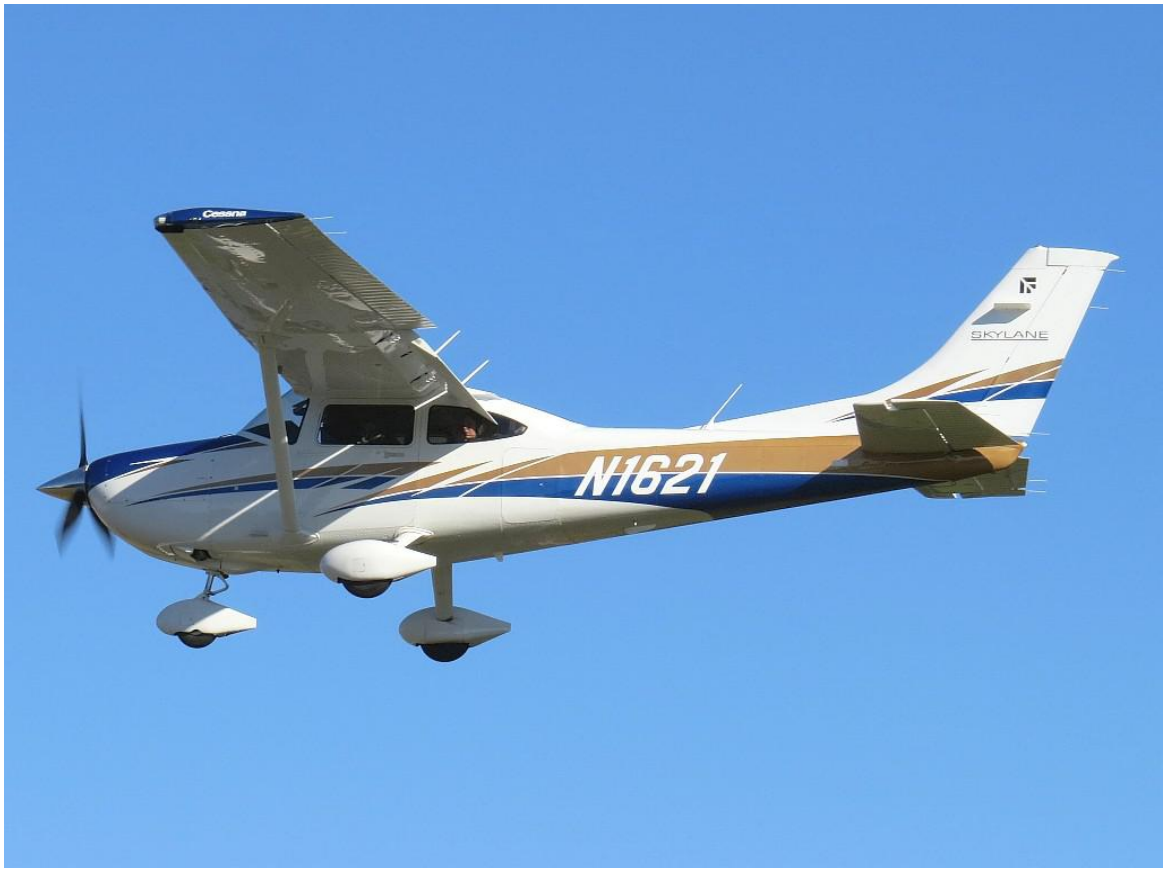
This feature highlights some of the fly-in aircraft arriving at the Great Pumpkin Fly-In on Saturday morning, October 25. More information about the Golden Age Air Museum is available at the museum's website, www.goldenageair.org.

The weather was perfect for the 2025 Great Pumpkin Fly-In on Saturday morning, with clear skies and light winds. This is a 1980 Great Lakes 2T-1A-2 Sports Trainer arriving at the museum for the fly-in. The original Sports Trainer was built during the 1930s by the Great Lakes Aircraft Company. The company went bankrupt during the Great Depression, but plans for the company's Sports Trainer survived and have been used by several manufacturers to build improved variants of the aircraft.



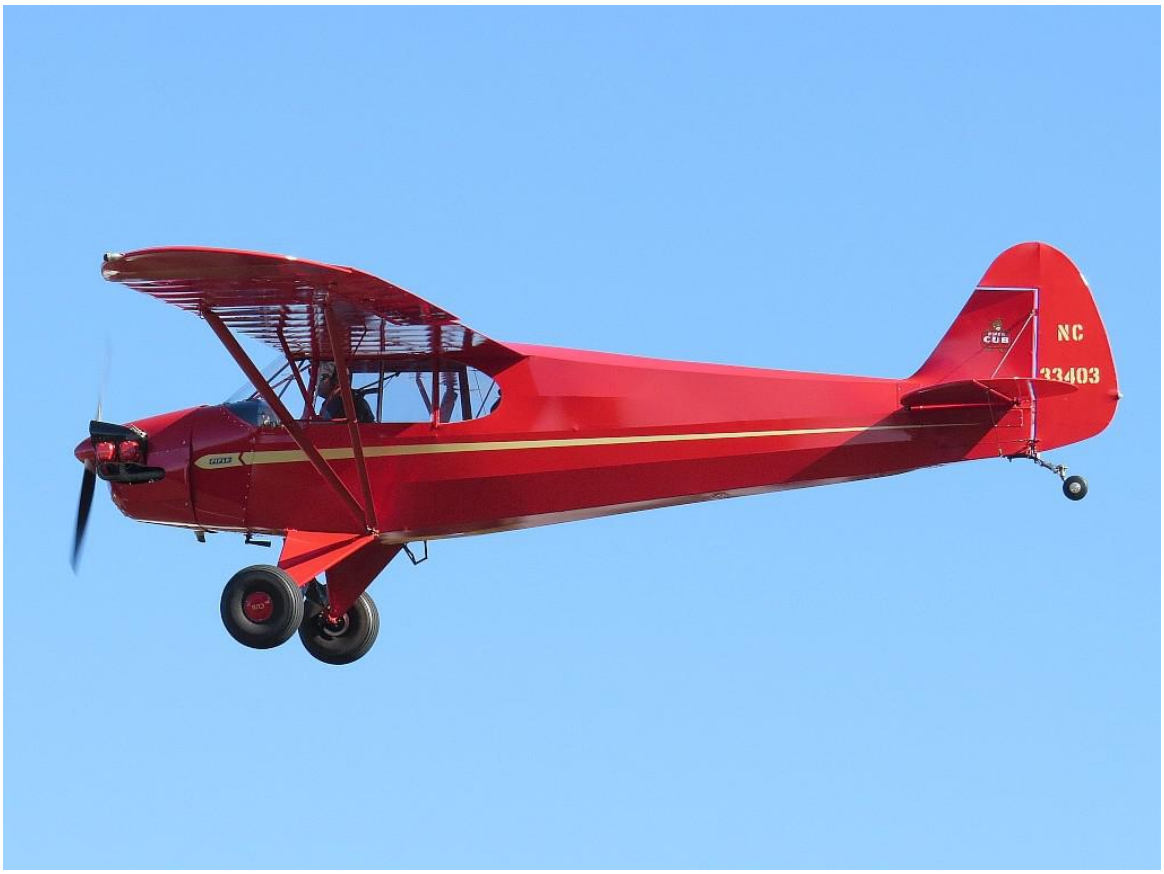


Over the years, the Golden Age Air Museum's Great Pumpkin Fly-In pumpkin bombing flights have increased in popularity with visitors at the event. The museum now uses several aircraft for pumpkin bombing flights, so all visitors who wish to drop a pumpkin are able to do so. This is Golden Age Air Museum volunteer pilot Neil Baughman flying a 1975 Bellanca-built 7GCBC Citabria on one of the Saturday morning pumpkin bombing flights. Bellanca produced variants of the Citabria from 1970 to 1980.

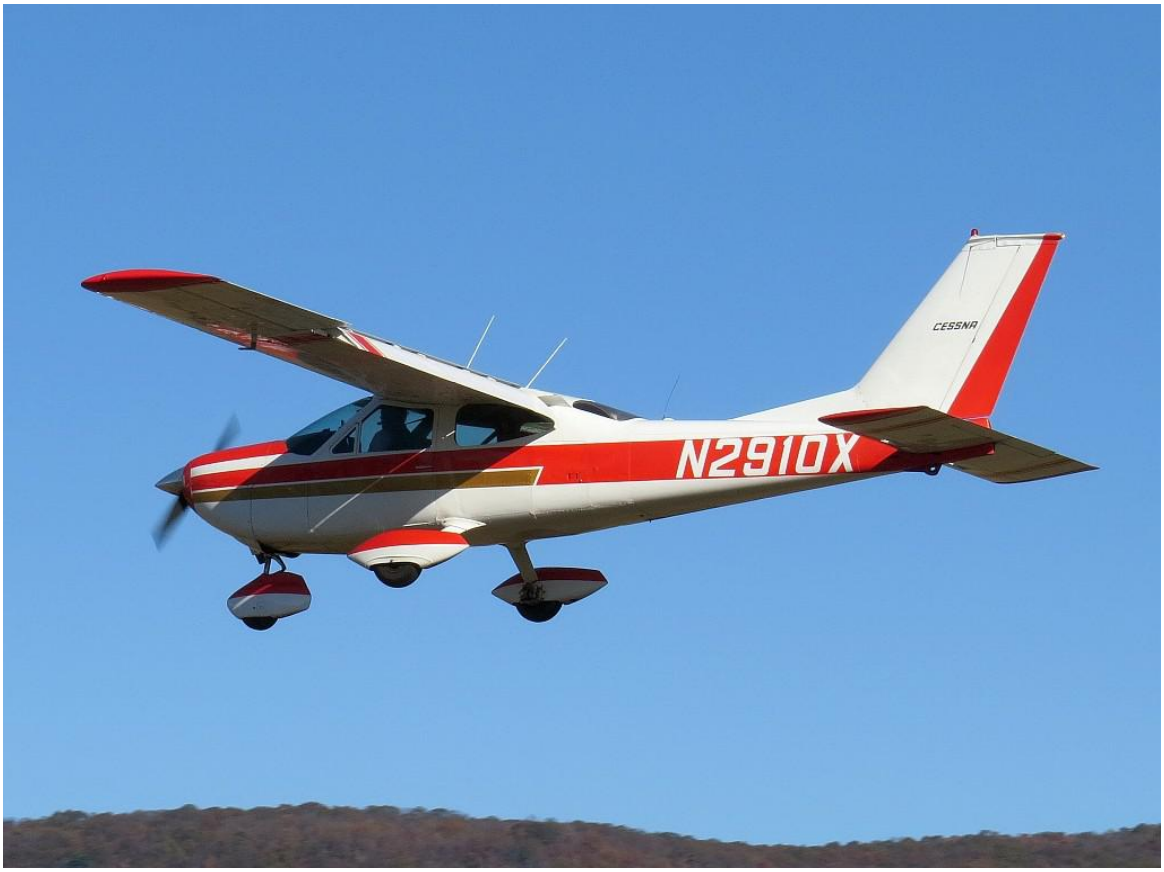


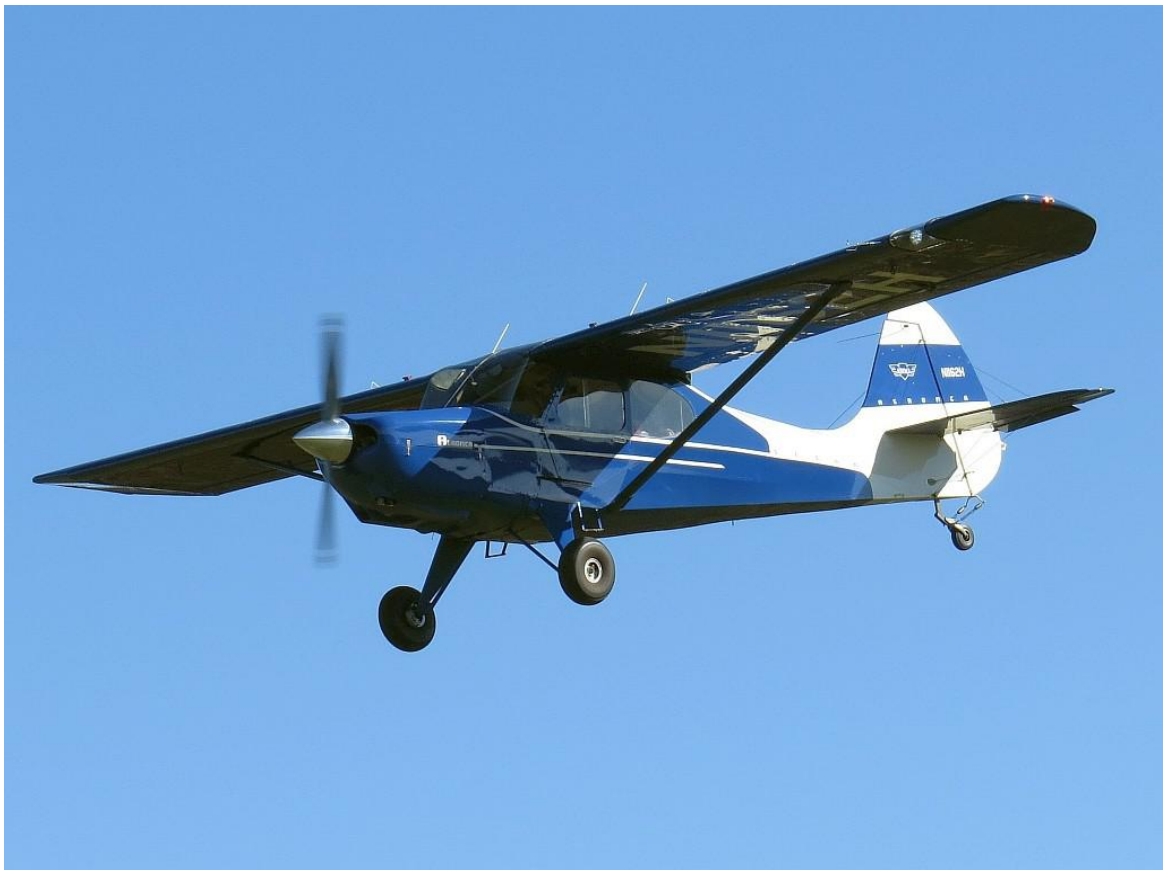
The Golden Age Air Museum Great Pumpkin Fly-In is open to all aircraft types, and the field fills with vintage, general aviation, and homebuilt aircraft if the weather conditions are favorable. This aircraft is a brand-new Cessna/ Textron 182T Skylane. The Cessna 182 Skylane was first introduced in 1956 and has been produced in several variants since then. Over 23,000 182s have been built, and the aircraft is the second-most popular Cessna model still in production after the venerable 172.

The Piper J-5 Cub Cruiser was a larger, more powerful version of the iconic J-3 Cub. It differed from the J-3 Cub by having a wider fuselage with the pilot seated in the front seat and up to two passengers accommodated in the wider rear seat, although this seat was a tight fit for two adults. The Cub Cruiser was built for civilian and military use, with a U.S. Navy version, the HE-1, built as an air ambulance and having a hinged top fuselage for stretcher access. Over 1,500 J-5s were built from 1940 to 1946.

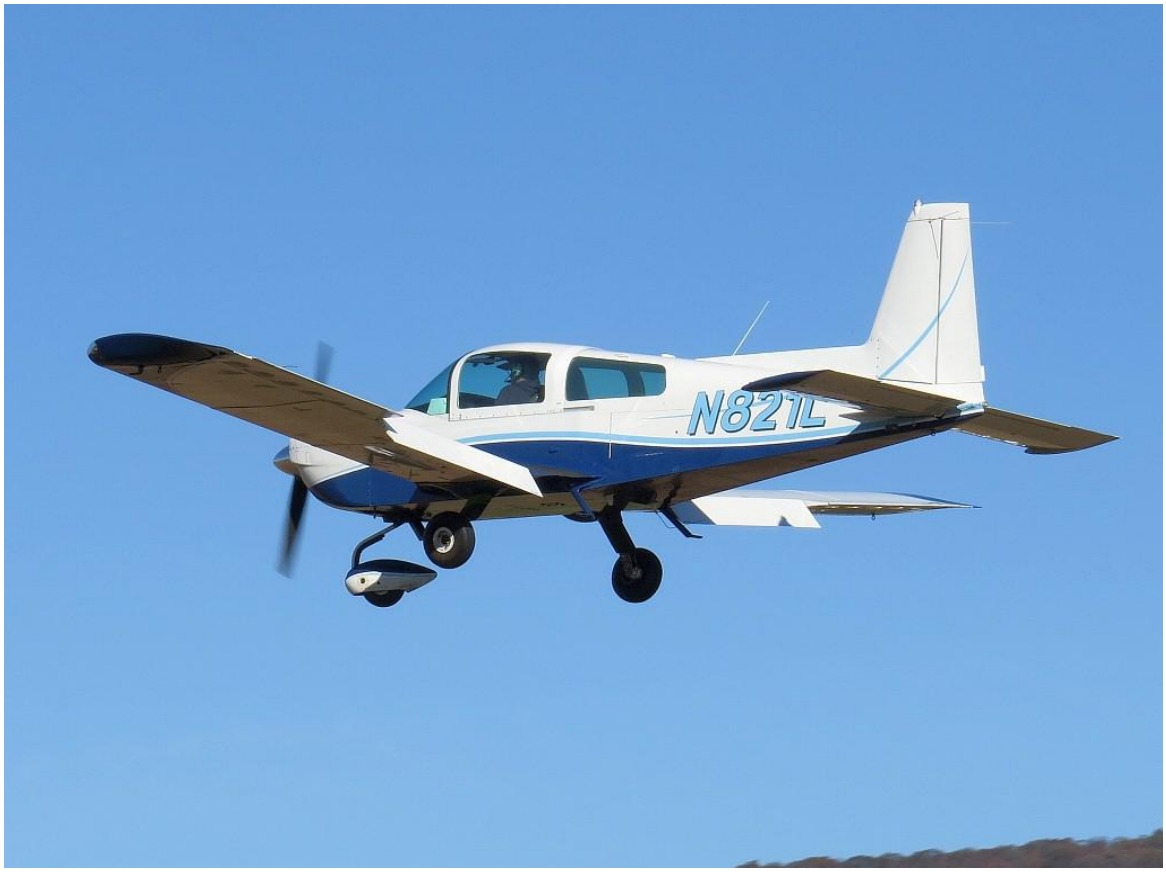


The Cessna 177 Cardinal is a general aviation aircraft produced by Cessna from 1968 to 1978. The 177 Cardinal was designed as a replacement for the 172 Skyhawk. The 177 Cardinal introduced a cantilever wing and steeply raked windshield to improve pilot visibility, especially during turns. Despite the intention to replace the 172 with the 177, the Marketing Division at Cessna resisted, and the 172 remained in production. Cessna built 4,295 177s during its ten-year production run.



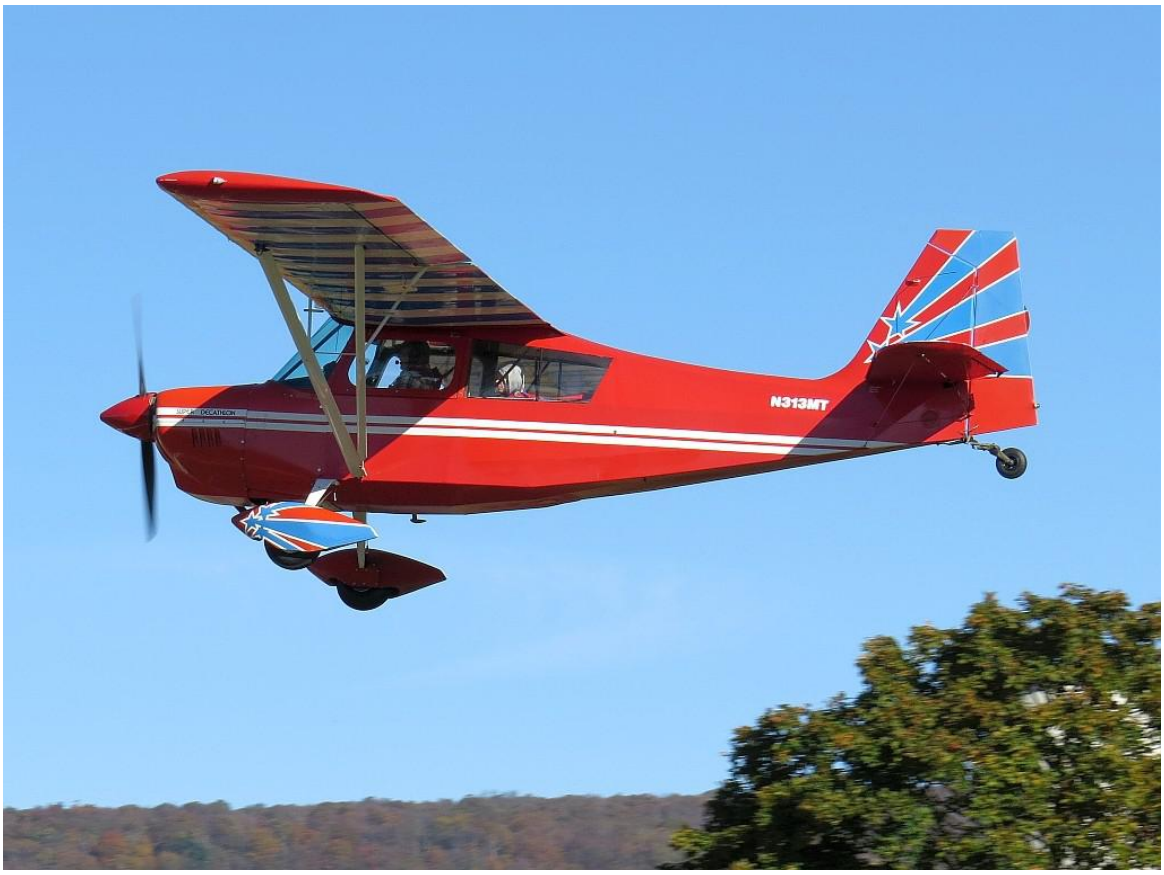


The Aeronca 15AC Sedan is a four-seat light aircraft introduced by Aeronca in 1948. The Sedan added a four-seat aircraft to Aeronca's product lineup, which included the two-seat Champ and Chief. The Aeronca 15AC Sedan was produced from 1948 until 1951, when Aeronca ceased production of all aircraft. Intended for personal use, many 15AC Sedans were used in utility roles, such as commercial bush flying, due to their good performance, large interiors, and docile handling qualities.

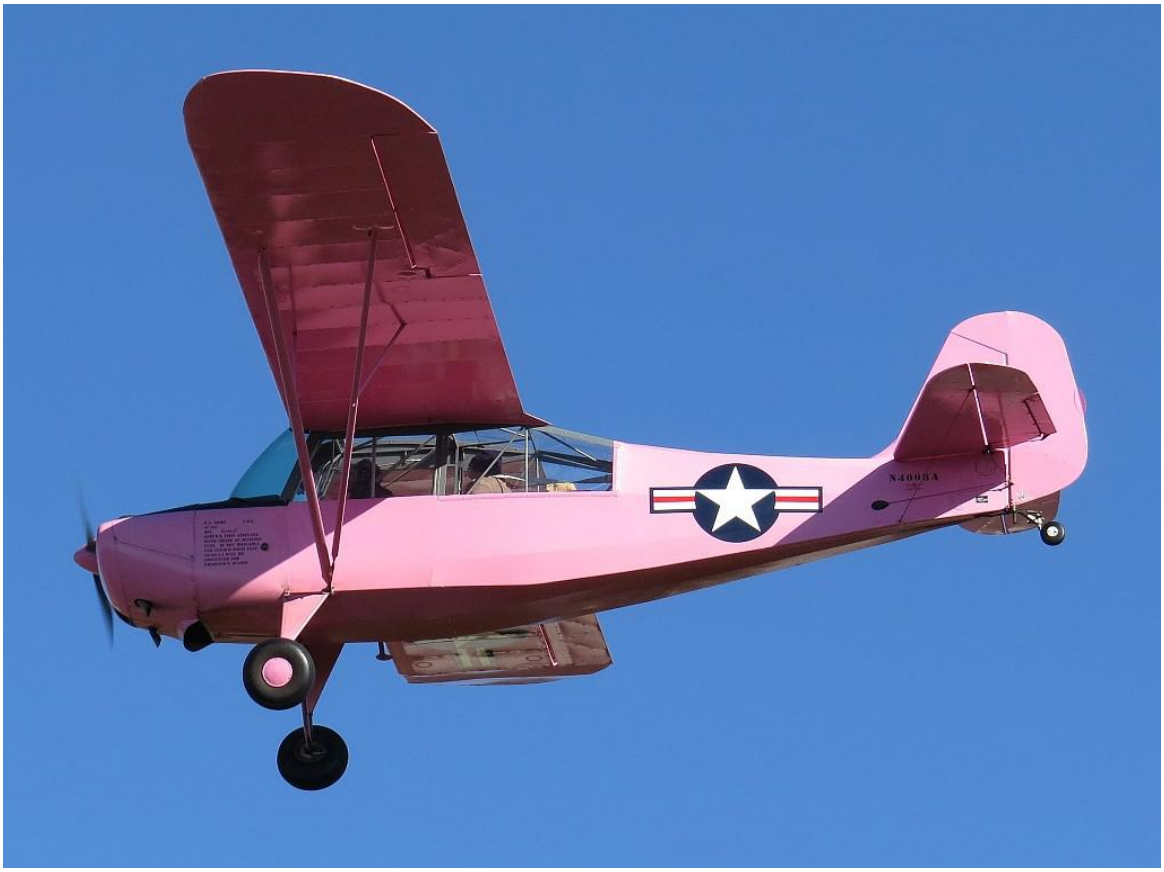


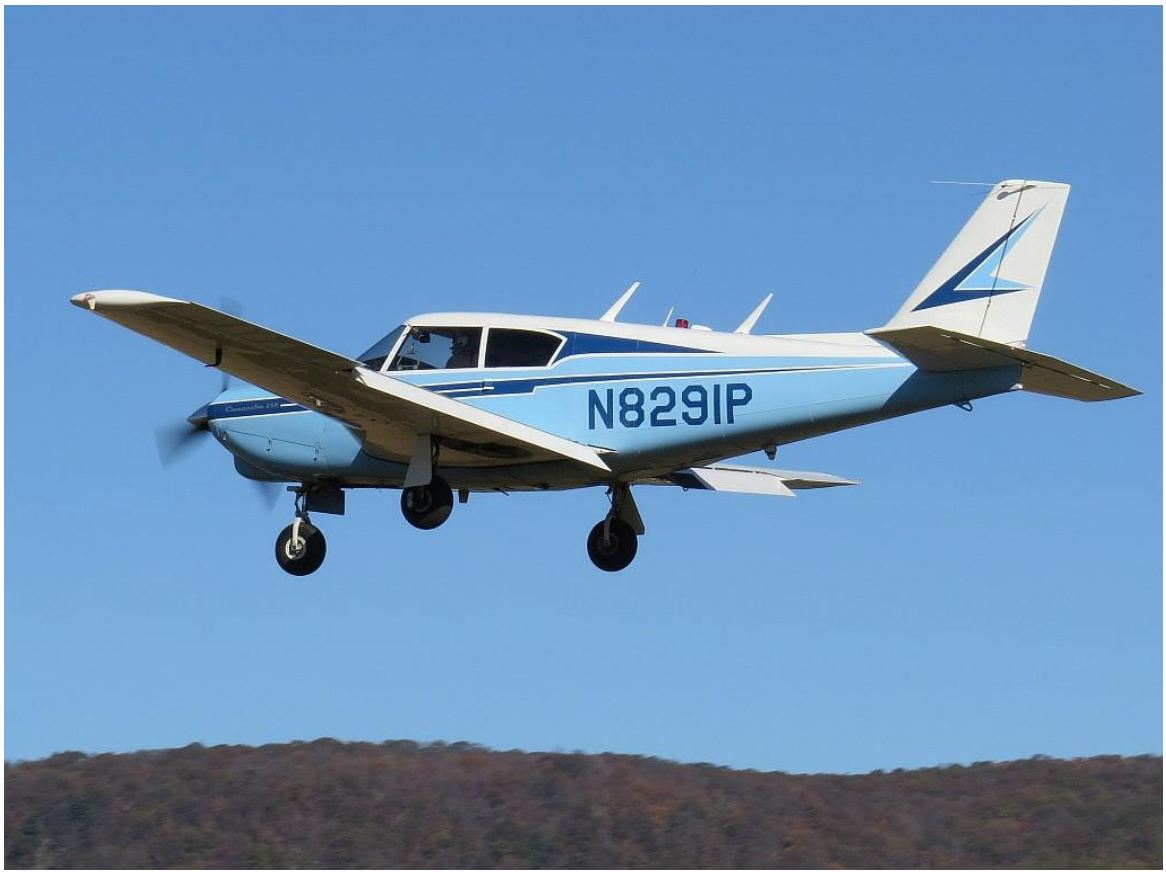
The Grumman AA-5 is a series of all-metal, four-seat, light aircraft used for touring and training. The AA-5 was designed by American Aviation as a follow-on to their two-seat AA-1 Yankee to add a four-seat aircraft to their product line. Production of the AA-5 had just begun when American Aviation was bought by Grumman, becoming Grumman American. Over 3,200 AA-5s would be built by five different manufacturers from 1971 to 2006. This is an AA-5B, the last variant of the AA-5 built by Grumman American.

The Super Decathlon is a light airplane designed for personal use and flight training built initially by Bellanca Aircraft Corporation, and now by American Champion Aircraft. It is an improved variant of the Decathlon light aircraft designed by Champion Aircraft Corporation. The airframe is capable of sustaining aerobatic stresses between +6g and -5g, making it suitable for aerobatic flight training. Over 6,000 Decathlons and Super Decathlons have been built since production began in 1970.

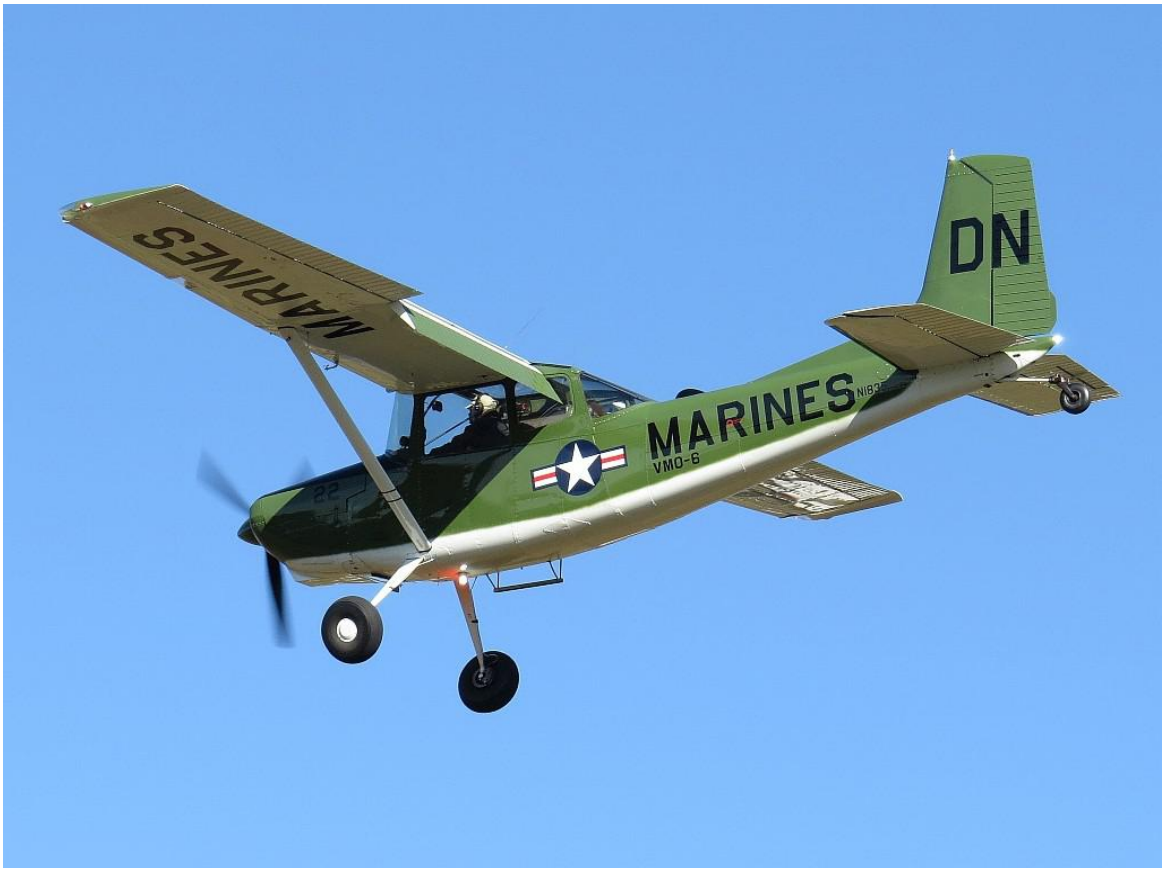


In addition to its use as a civilian light aircraft, the Aeronca Model 7 Champion was also used by the U.S. Army as a liaison aircraft. Over 500 Aeronca 7BCM Champions were built as L-16As and served with the U.S. Army and U.S. Air National Guard during the Korean War. About 100 were built as L-16Bs and served as trainers. After 1955, large numbers of these aircraft were transferred to the Civil Air Patrol. This L-16 is a regular visitor to fly-ins and other events at the Golden Age Air Museum.



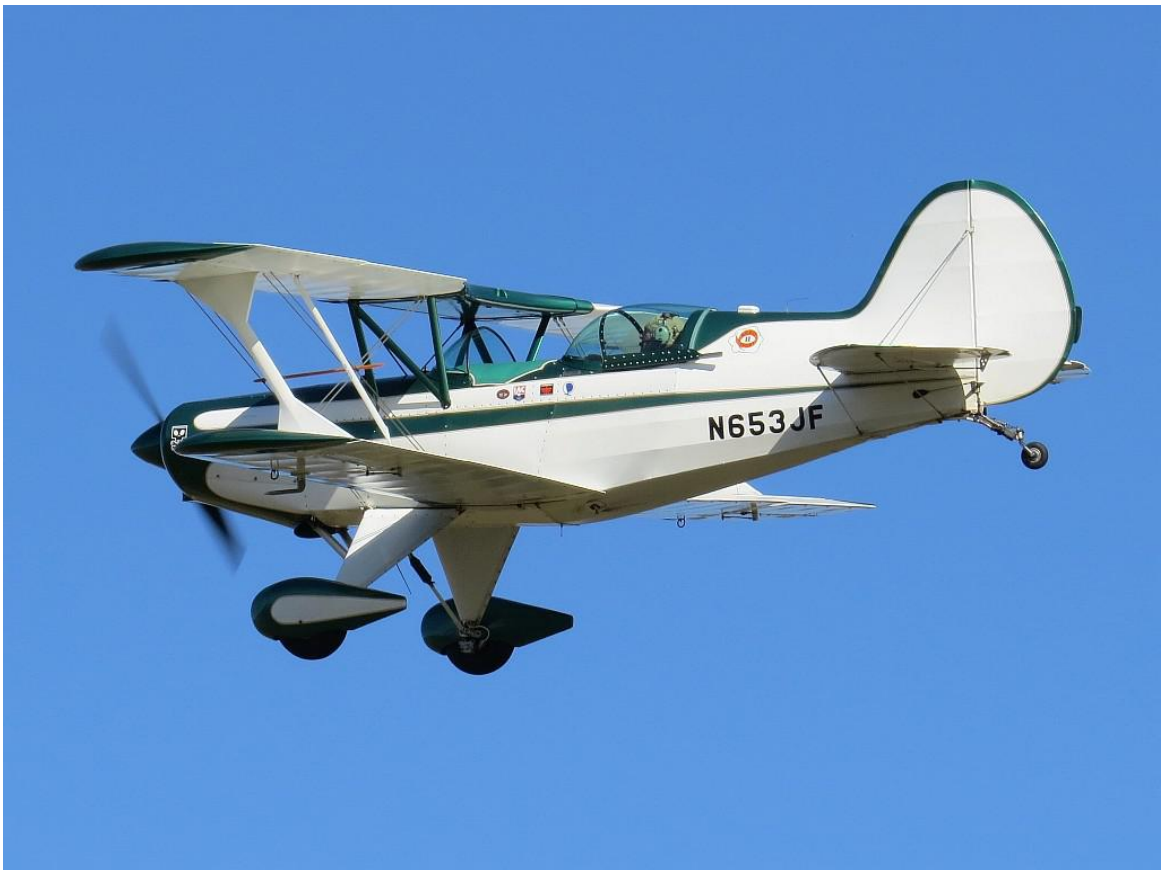


The PA-24 Comanche was introduced by Piper Aircraft in 1958 as a single-engine civil utility aircraft that seats four or six people. The Comanche was built in several variants from 1957 to 1972. During these years, the PA-24 Comanche, along with the PA-30 and PA-39 Twin Comanche, made up the core of Piper's aircraft lineup. In 1972, the Lock Haven flood destroyed the PA-24's production line. This aircraft is a Piper Comanche 250, which was the most produced variant of the PA-24, with 2,537 examples built.

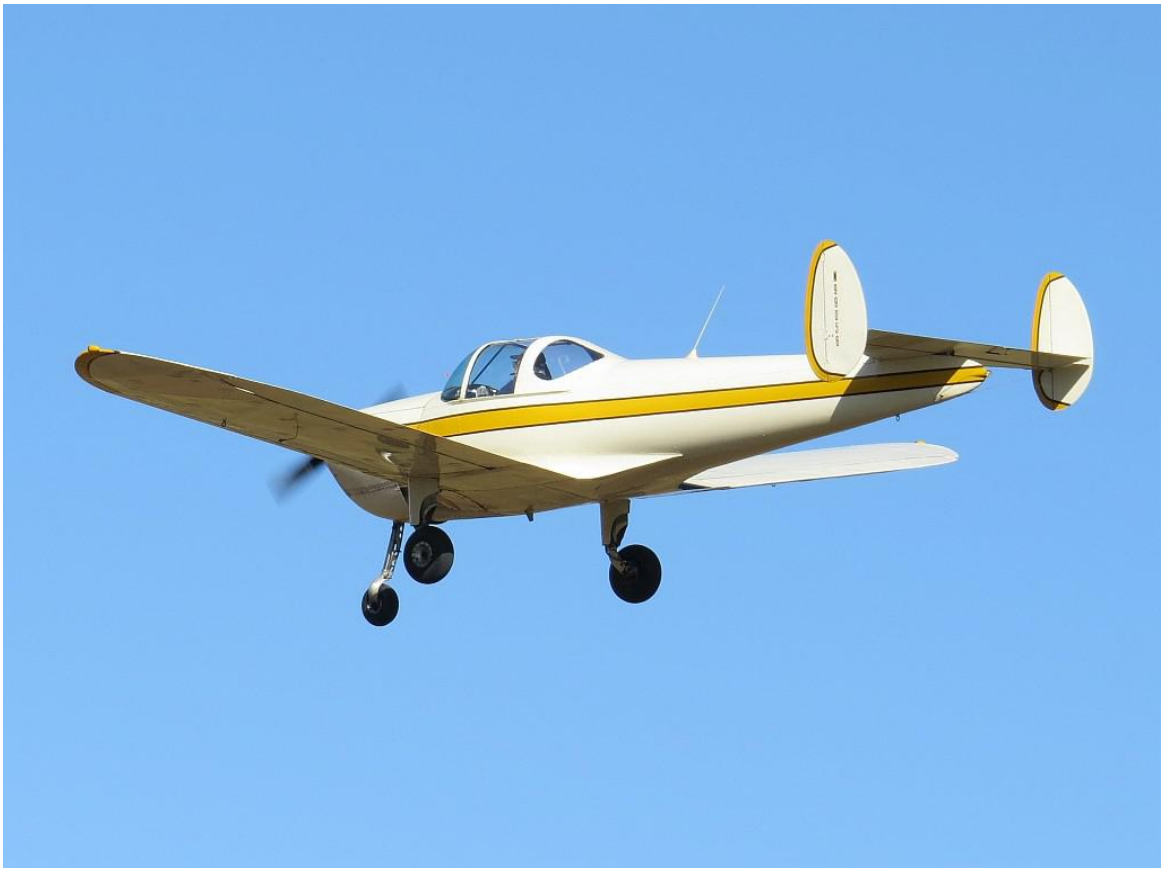


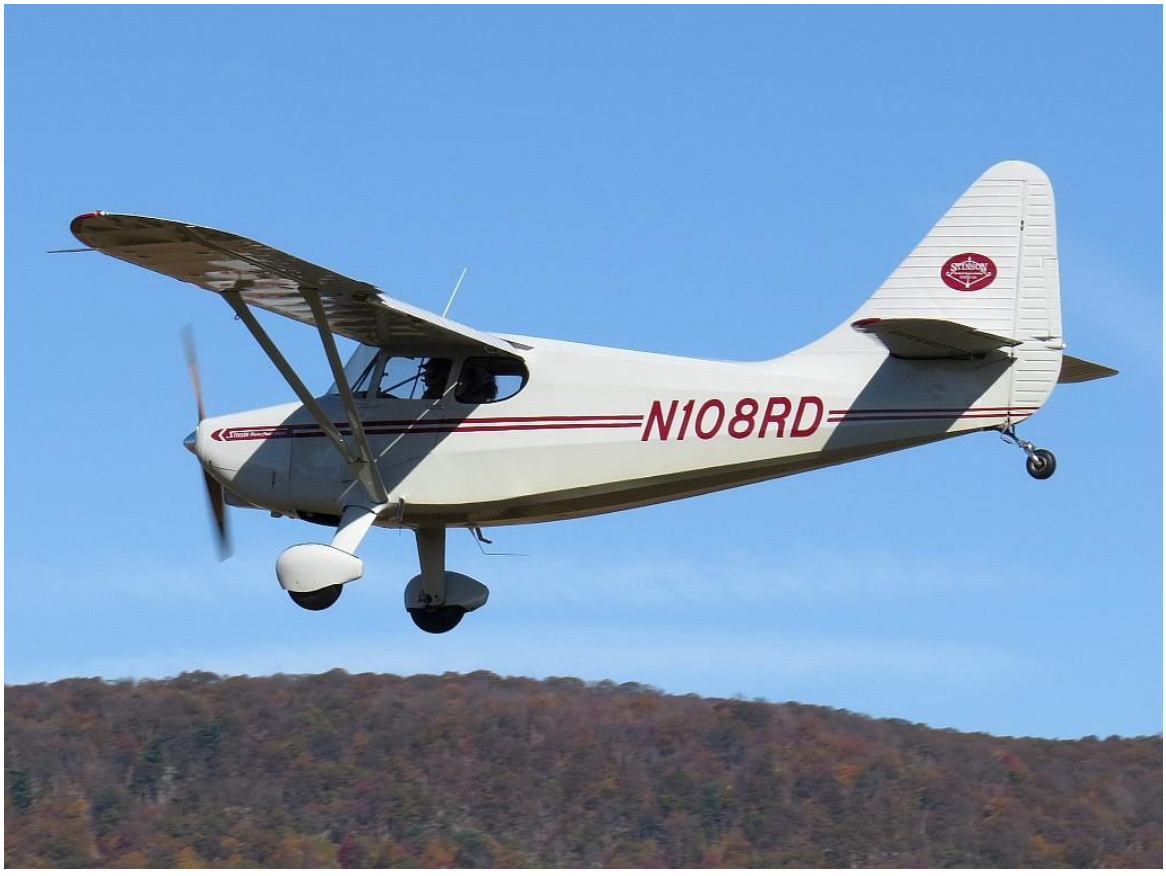
This restored Cessna L-19/O-1A Bird Dog is a regular visitor to fly-ins and other events at the Golden Age Air Museum. The L-19/O-1 Bird Dog was a liaison and observation aircraft built for the U.S. military and introduced into service in 1950. Bird Dogs were used during the Korean and Vietnam Wars for several liaison roles, including reconnaissance, artillery spotting and adjustment, medevac, radio relay, and forward air control of tactical aircraft. Over 3,300 L-19/O-1As were built.

This sharp-looking and colorful biplane coming in for a landing at the Great Pumpkin Fly-In is an Acro Sport II. The Acro Sport II is a biplane designed by aviation enthusiast Paul Poberezny in the 1970s as a kit plane for amateur construction. The Acro Sport II is typically built with open cockpits and spatted landing gear, and powered by engines ranging from 108 to 200 horsepower. To date, over 80 examples of the Acro Sport II have been built by and are flying in the United States.

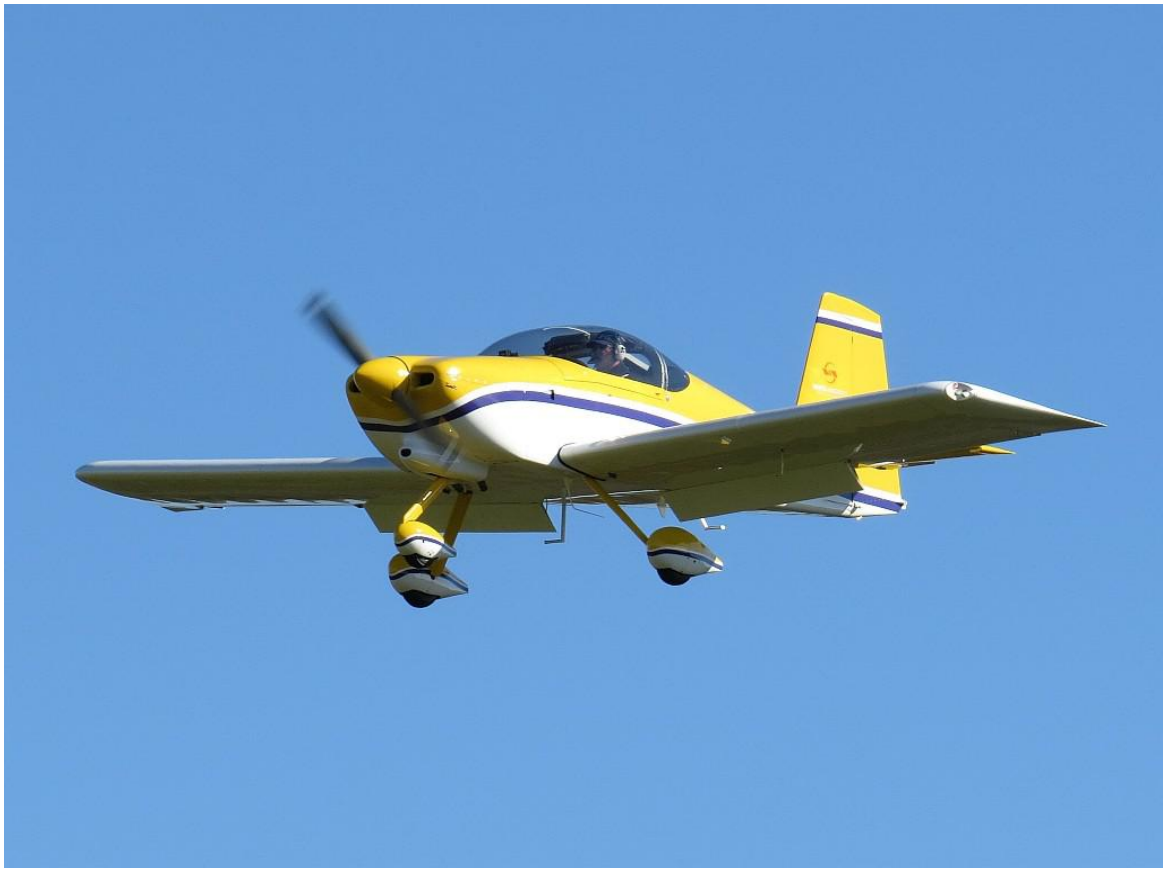


A great classic airplane arriving at the Great Pumpkin Fly-In on Saturday morning was this ERCO Ercoupe 415C. The Ercoupe 415-C was designed as a reliable, simple, and safe aircraft to fly that was reasonably priced and would not stall or spin. Other revolutionary aspects of the design included its large bubble-style canopy, twin-tail configuration, and tricycle landing gear. The Ercoupe 415-C remains a popular aircraft, with many still flying and having a faithful following among its owners.



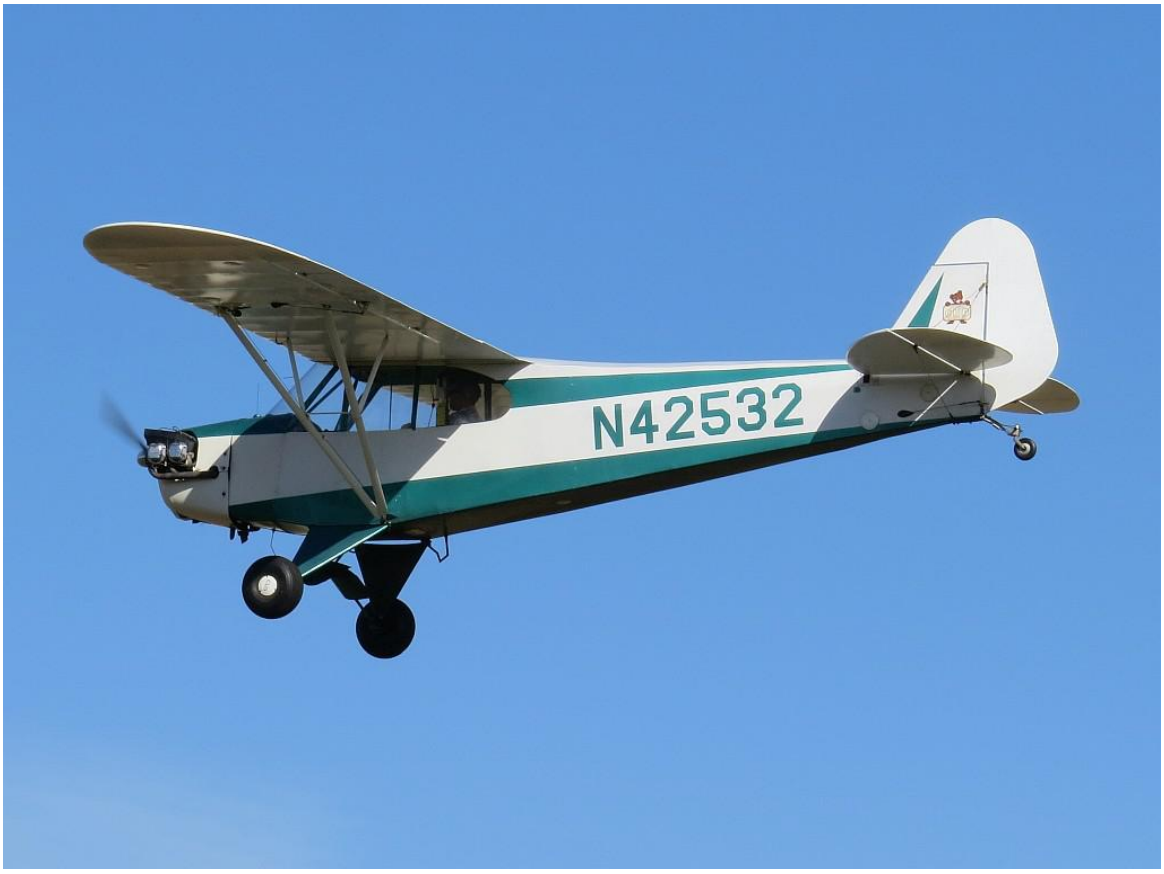


The Stinson 108 Voyager (or Station Wagon) was a popular single-engine, four-seat, light aircraft produced by the Stinson division of Consolidated-Vultee from immediately after World War II to 1950. Initially built with a six-cylinder Franklin engine, supplemental type certificates (STCs) have allowed operators to install several newer and more reliable engines in these aircraft. Over 5,000 Stinson 108s were built before the company was acquired by Piper Aircraft in 1948.

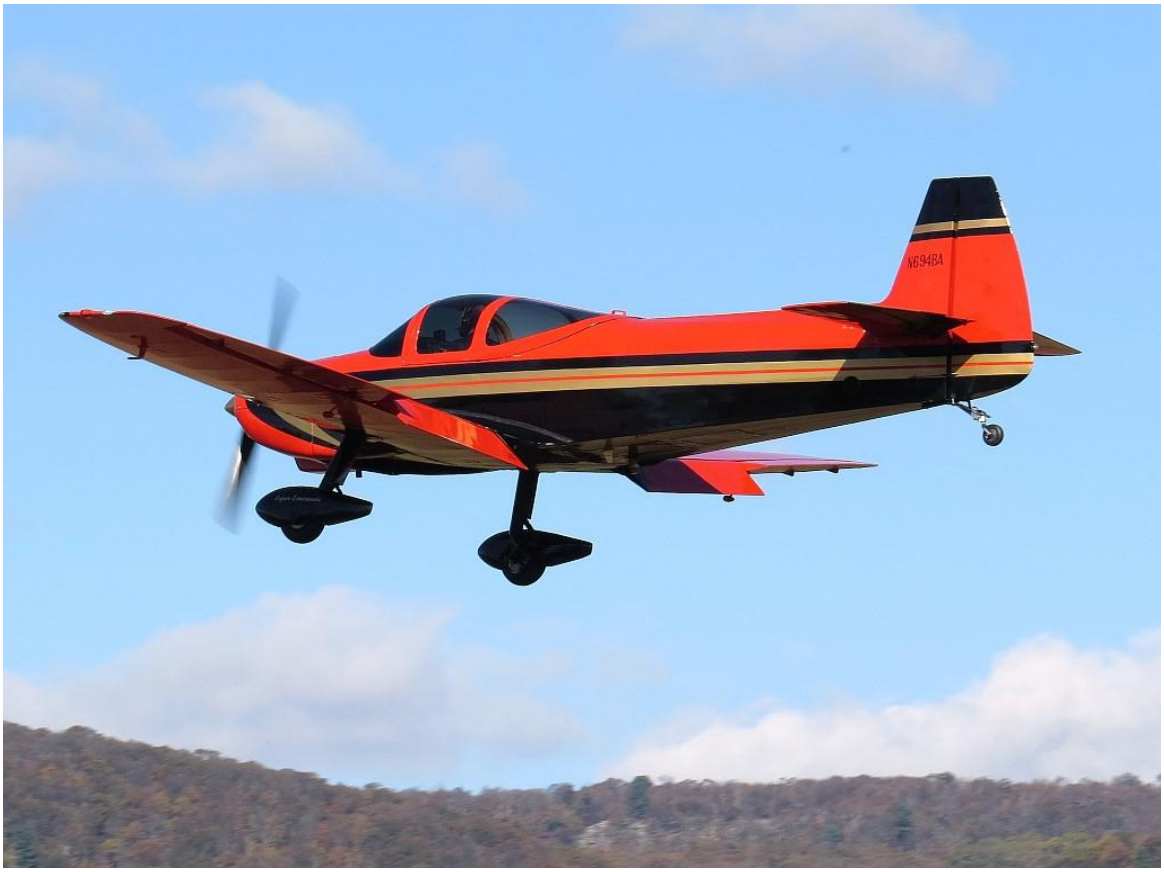


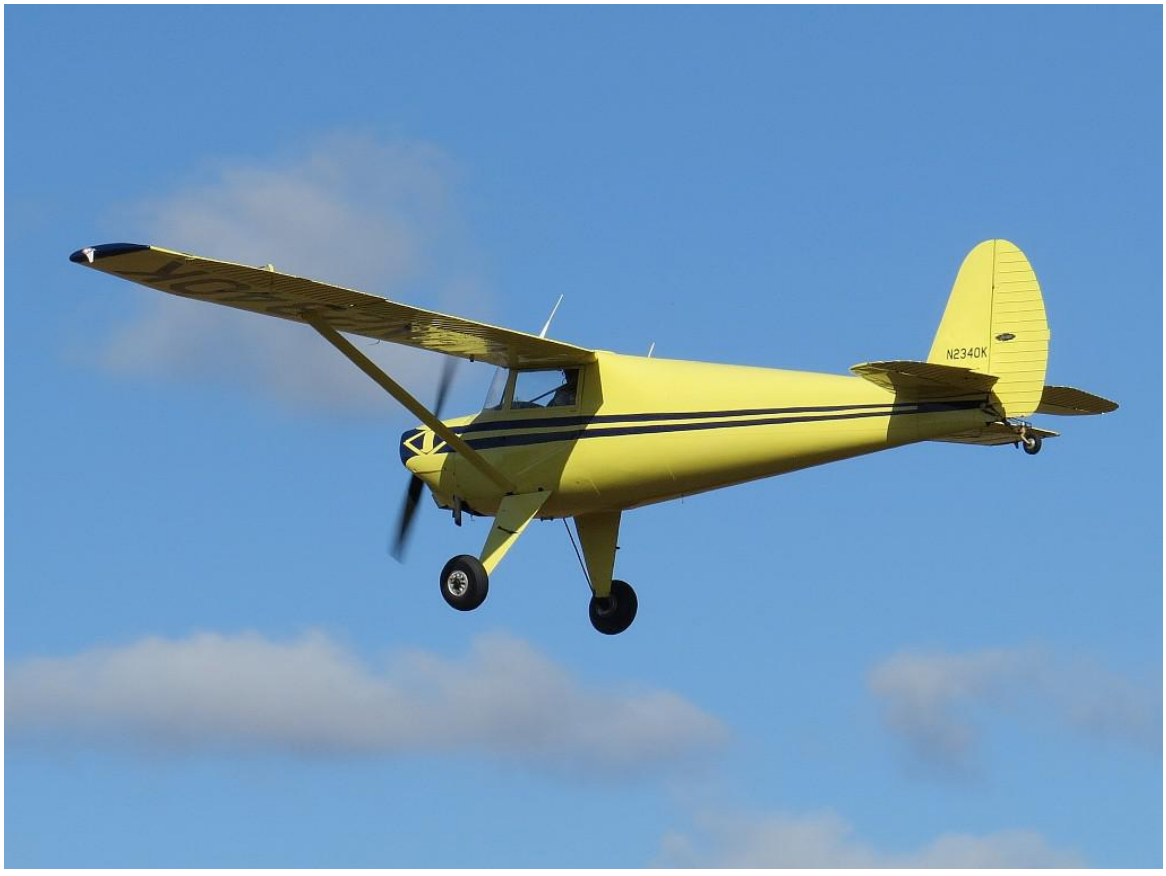
Dozens of aircraft attended the Golden Age Air Museum's Great Pumpkin Fly-In on Saturday, with many arriving in the morning hours to take advantage of the clear skies and light winds. In addition to an excellent assortment of general aviation and vintage aircraft that attended the event, a large number of homebuilt aircraft also visited the fly-in. This Van's Aircraft RV-7A homebuilt is a regular attendee of fly-in events at the Golden Age Air Museum and is setting up to land at the airfield.

The Piper J-3 Cub is one of the most famous light aircraft ever built. The Cub is a simple and lightweight design, which gives it excellent short-field performance and low-speed handling properties. The Cub was simple, affordable, and reliable to operate, making it ideal for flight training. The Cub, designated the L-4 Grasshopper, also served during World War II in large numbers as a liaison aircraft. This Cub wears a white-and-green two-tone paint scheme instead of the iconic factory yellow and black.

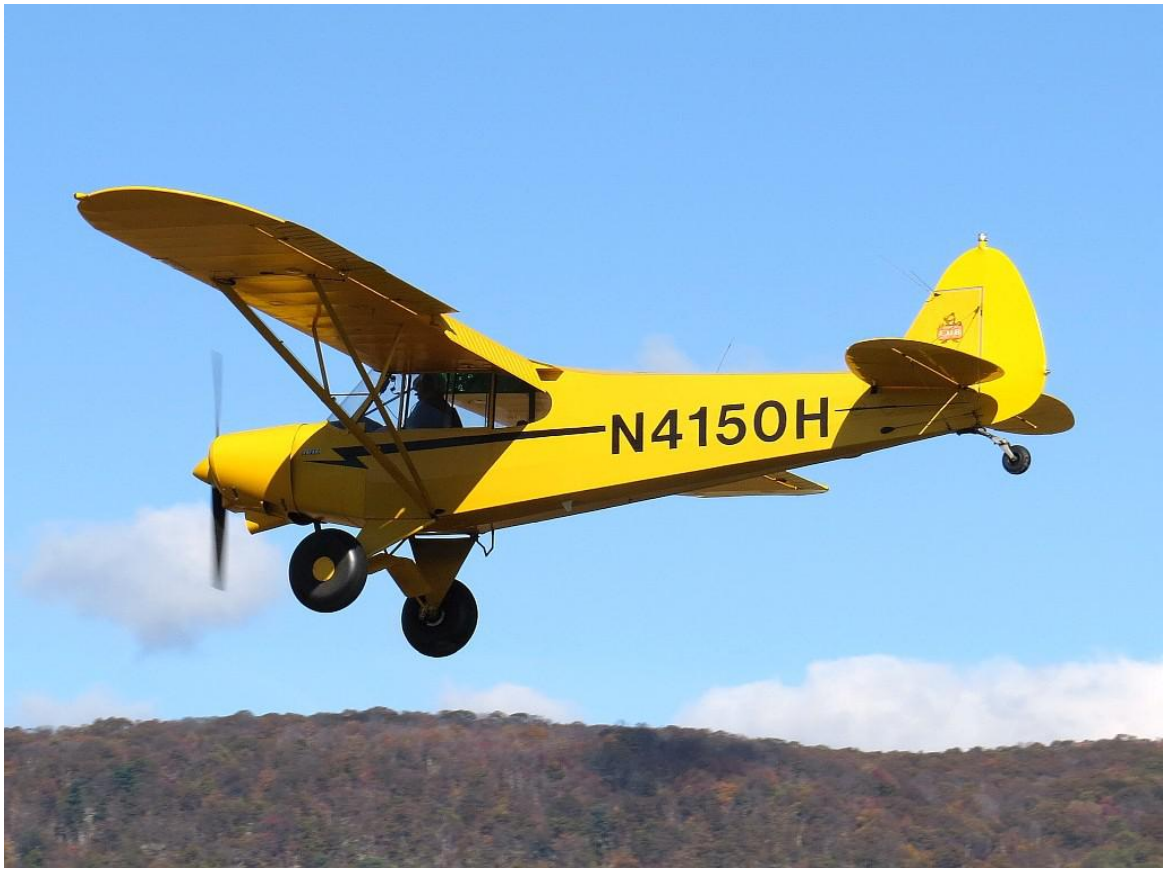


One of the unusual aircraft attending the Golden Age Air Museum's Great Pumpkin Fly-In on Saturday was this colorful Piel CP-301A Emeraude. The Piel Emeraude was a two-place aircraft designed in France in the 1950s and has been widely built by both factories and aircraft homebuilders worldwide. The Emeraude has been built in several variants since its introduction, with the newer variants featuring improved aerodynamics, more powerful engines, and being certified for aerobatics.



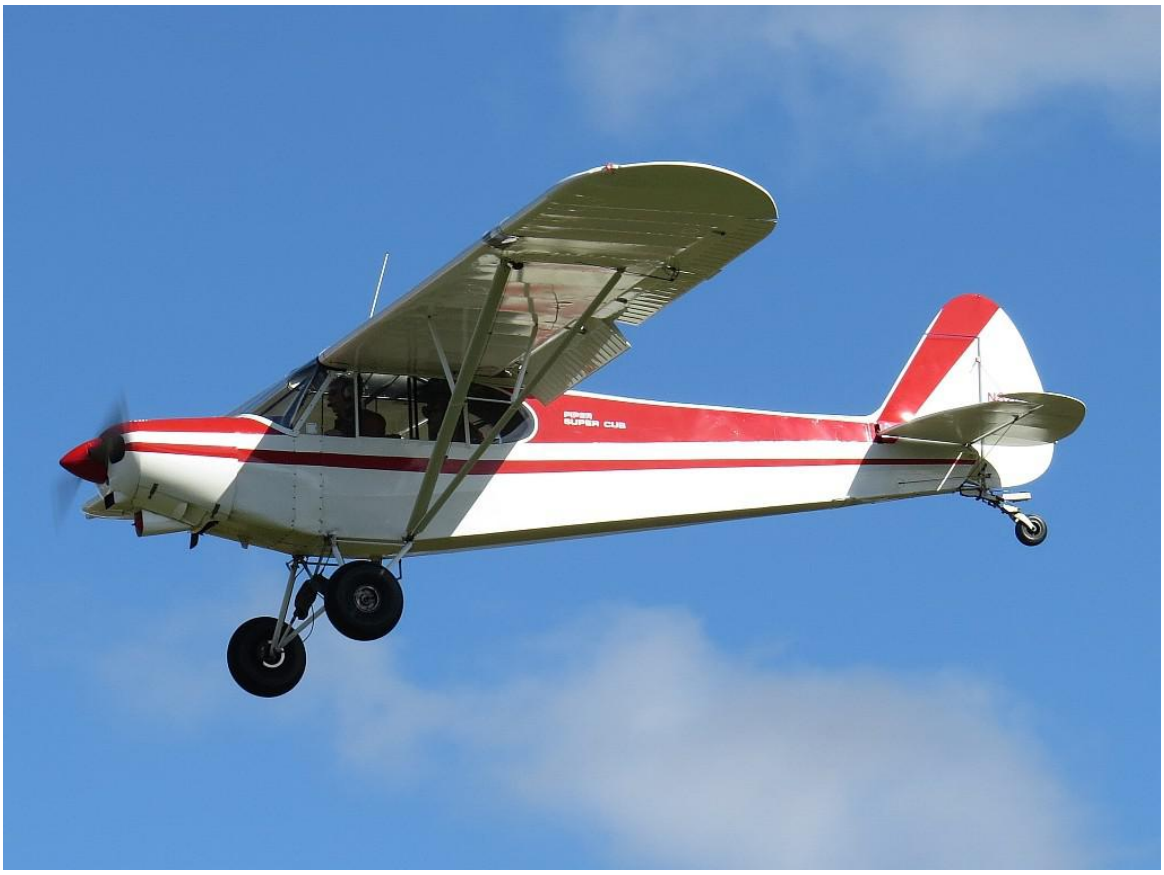


Another aircraft used for the pumpkin bombing contest at the 2025 Golden Age Air Museum Great Pumpkin Fly-In was this bright yellow Luscombe 8A owned by Scott Mistysyn. The 8A was a variant of the Luscombe 8 series of high-wing, side-by-side seating monoplanes built by Luscombe Aircraft in the 1930s and 1940s. The company built over 5,800 variants of the Luscombe 8 between 1937 and 1949, after which the company shut down. In this photo, Mistysyn is setting up for a landing on the runway.

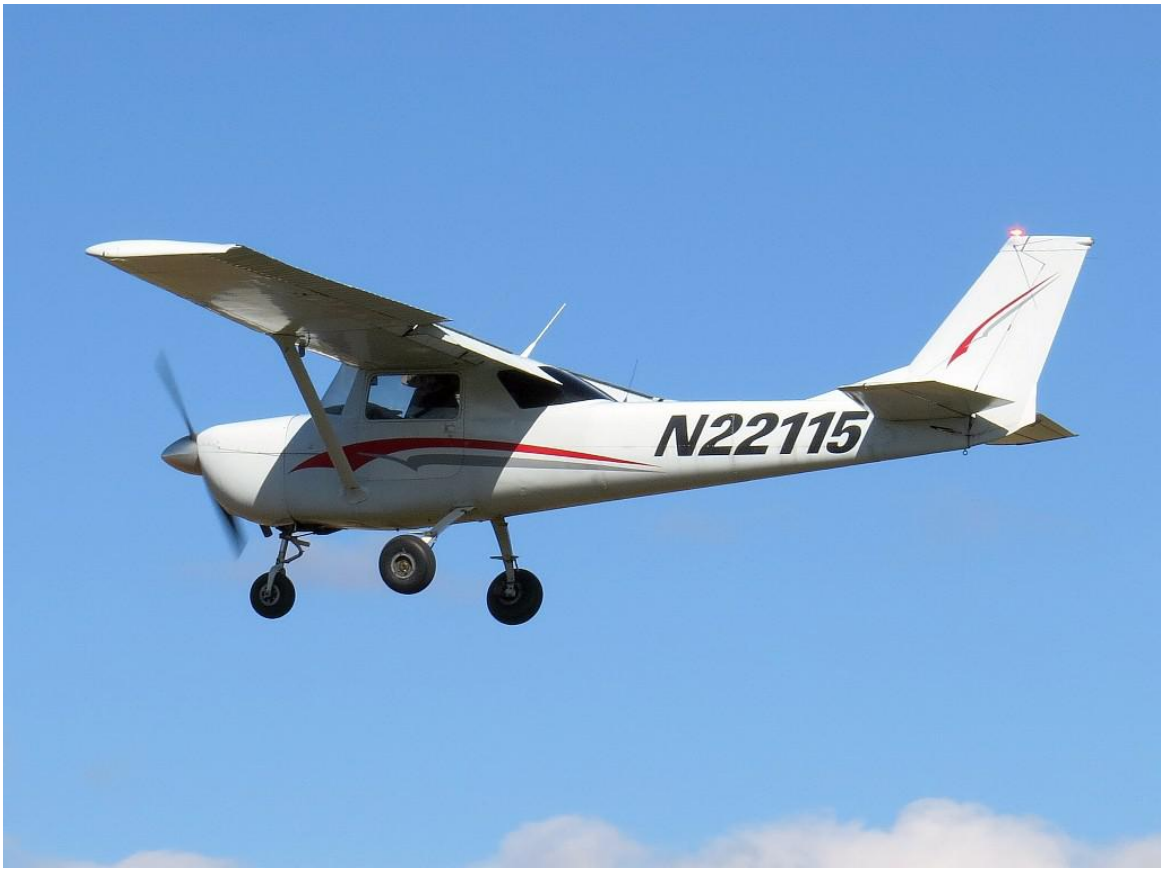


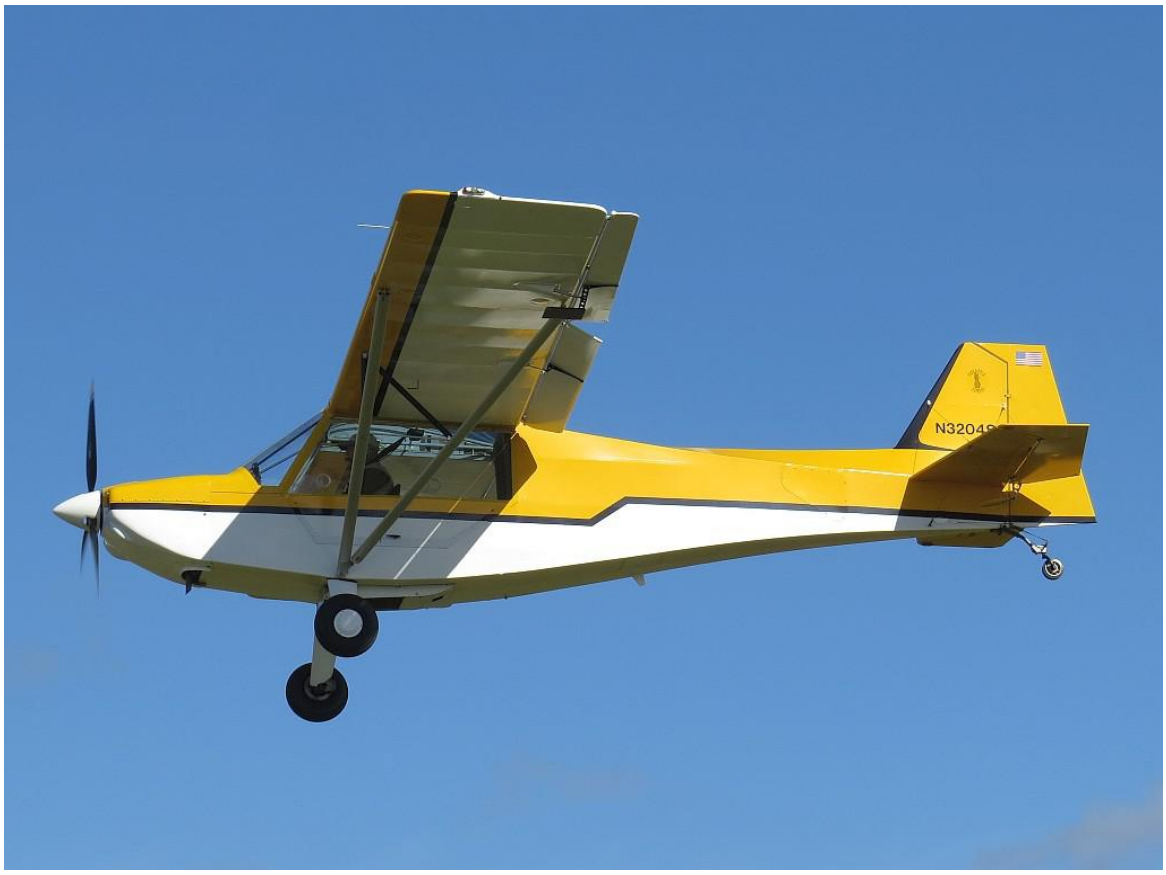
There were several Piper PA-18 Super Cubs that visited the Golden Age Air Museum's Great Pumpkin Fly-In in 2025. Introduced in 1949, the Piper PA-18 Super Cub was extremely popular as a light utility aircraft. Over 10,000 examples of the Piper PA-18 Super Cub were built during 40 years of production. The Super Cub was built in two separate production runs, from 1949 to 1983, and then again from 1988 to 1994. Super Cubs are commonly used for bush flying, and glider and banner towing.

The Piper PA-18 Super Cub traces its lineage to the J-3 Cub and the Taylor E-2 Cub of the 1930s. While the design is similar, the addition of an electrical system, flaps, and a more powerful engine provided a much different flying experience. The powerful engine and high-lift wing made the Super Cub ideal for conversion to a floatplane or skiplane. The PA-18 has a dedicated following in the bush-flying community, and several modifications to improve its performance have been developed.

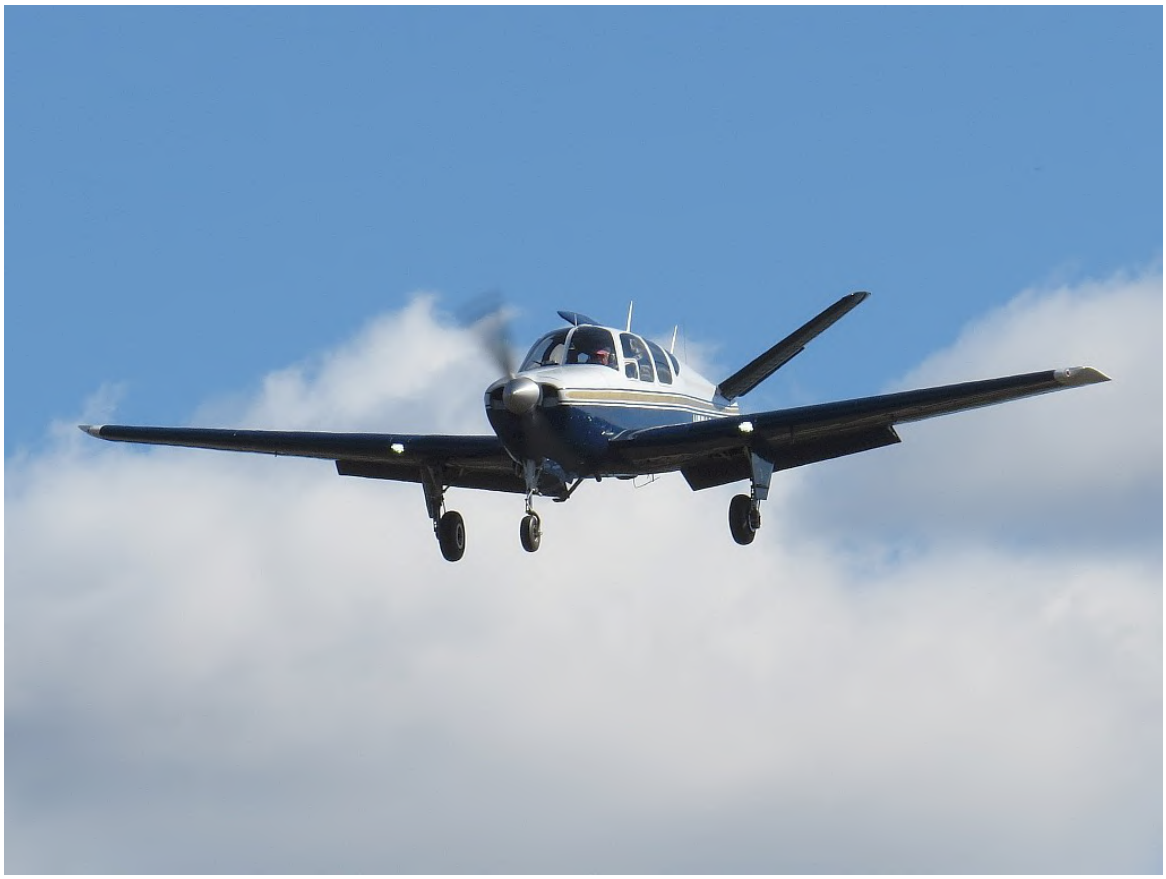


Introduced in 1958 as a two-seat light aircraft, the Cessna 150 was offered in several models and trim levels, including Standard, Trainer, and the deluxe Commuter model. The Cessna 150 is the fifth most-produced aircraft in aviation history, with 23,839 built between 1958 and 1977. The 150 was succeeded in production by the Cessna 152, which featured a more powerful engine and minor design changes. Cessna 150s are still used worldwide by flight schools as a training aircraft.



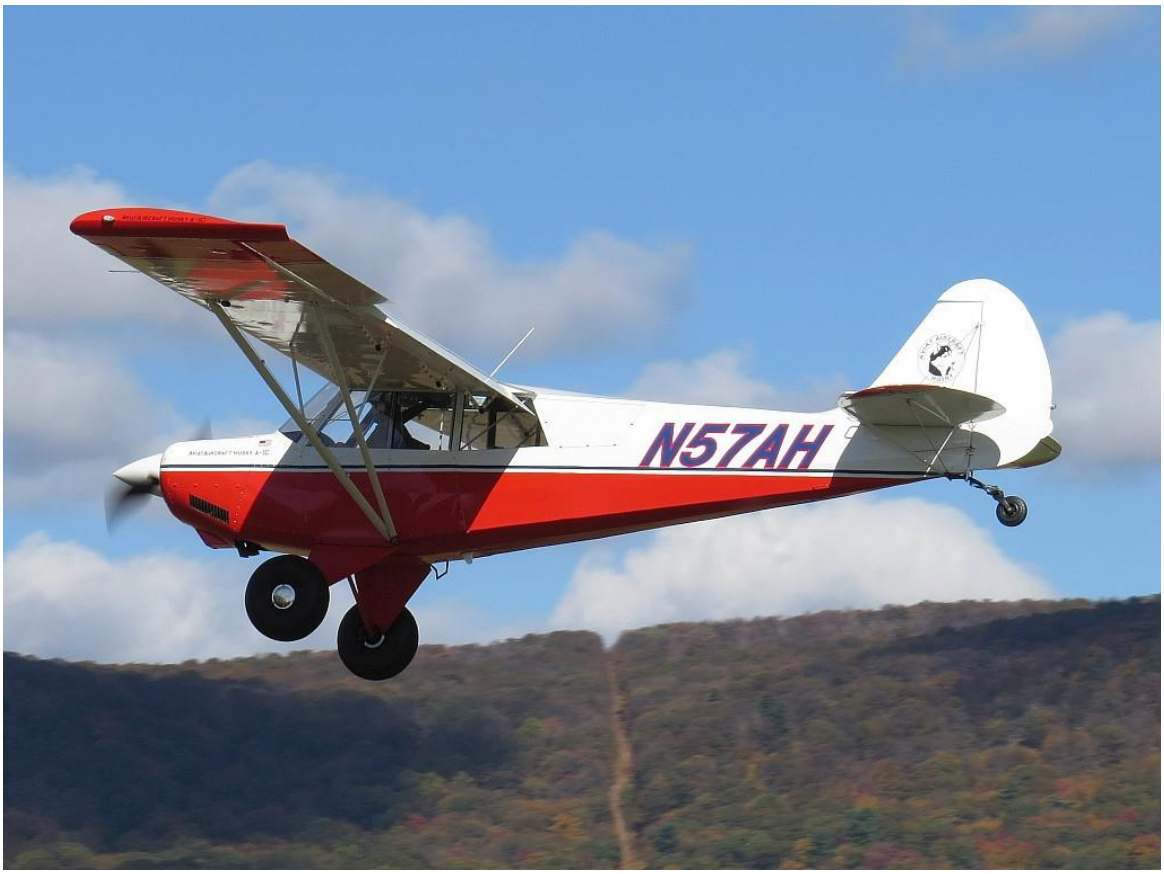


The Rans S-7 Courier is a high-wing, single-engine, two-seat kit aircraft designed by Randy Schlitter and manufactured by Rans Inc. The Courier is available as a kit aircraft for amateur construction and as a completed light-sport aircraft. The S-7 is available with only conventional landing gear, but can be fitted with skis or floats, making it popular with bush pilots as a utility aircraft. Reviews of the S-7 Courier praise its affordability, performance, and wide cabin. Over 600 S-7 Couriers have been built.

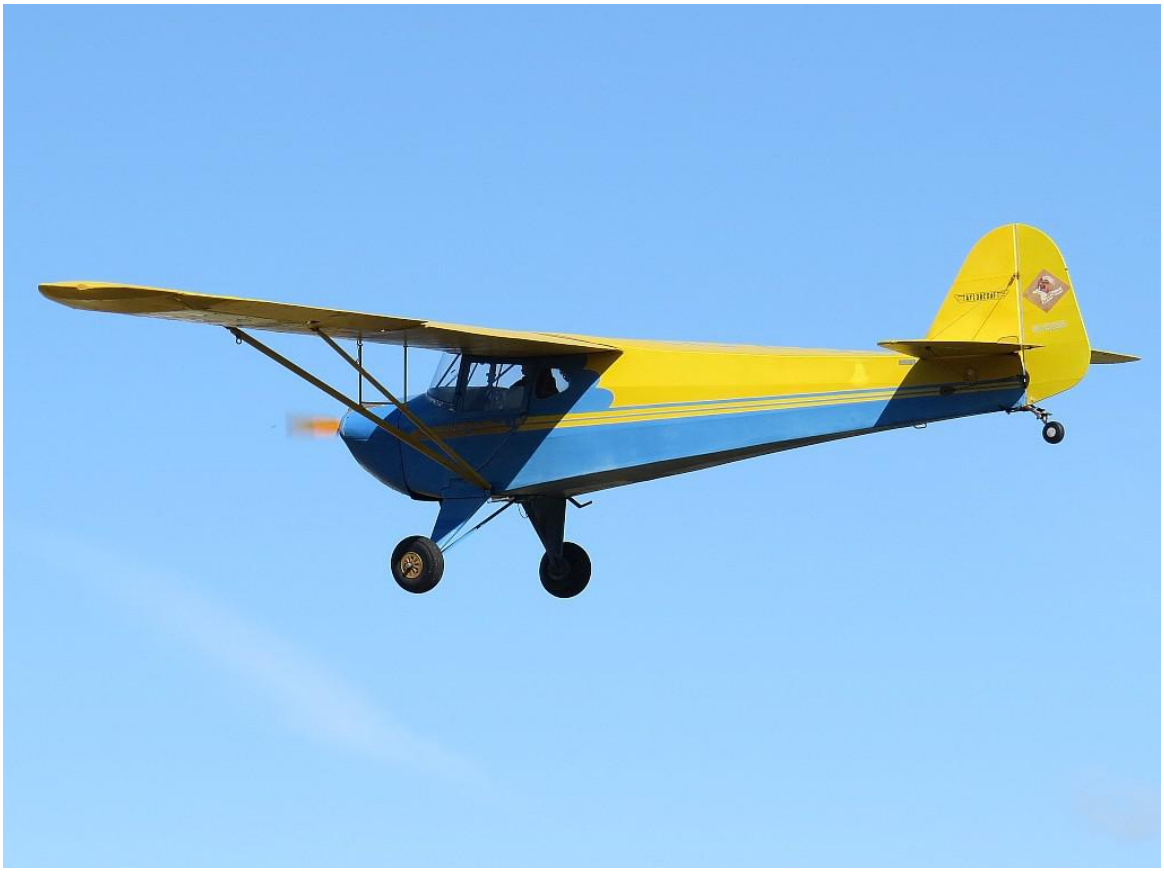


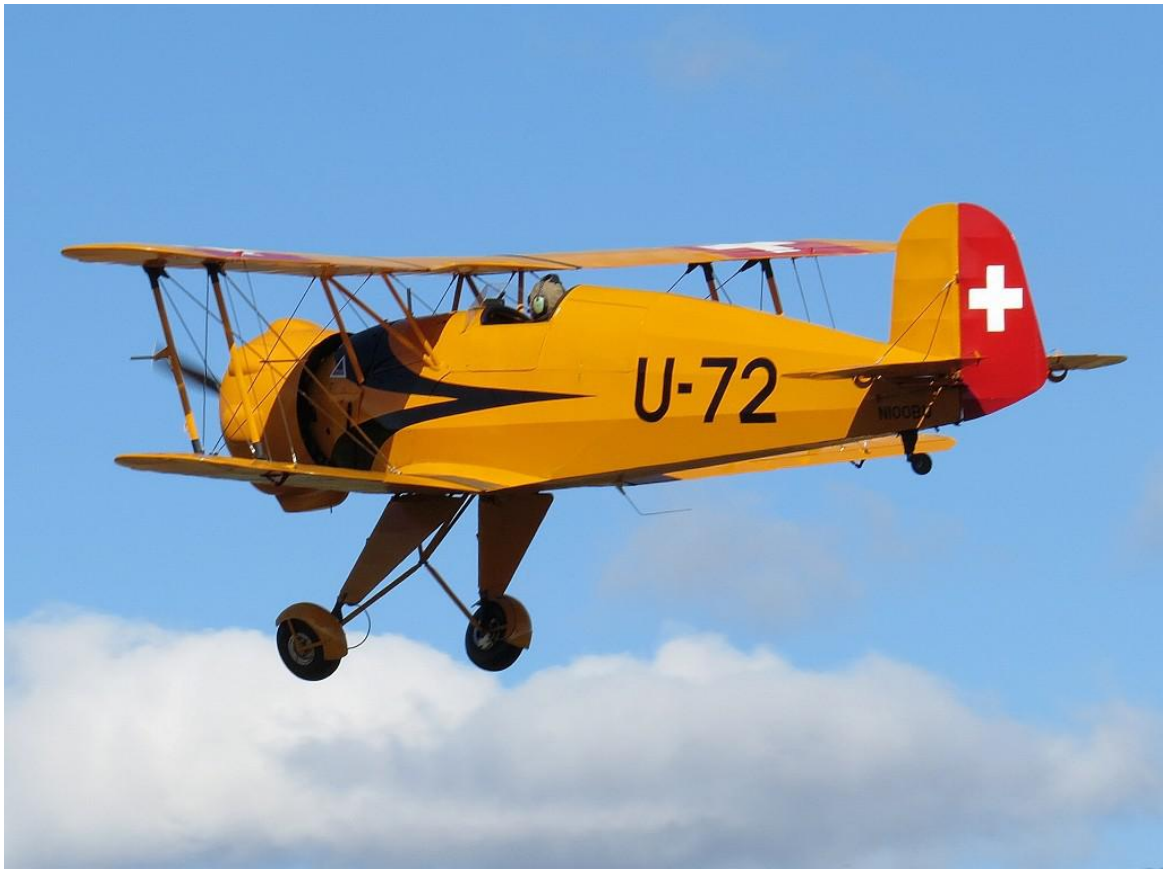
John A. Majane III is a regular visitor to fly-ins at the Golden Age Air Museum in his 1955 Beechcraft F35 Bonanza. When the Bonanza appeared in 1947, it represented a fundamental change in general aviation aircraft engineering and design. The all-aluminum design had a six-cylinder engine, retractable tricycle landing gear, and a V-tail equipped with combination elevator-rudders called "ruddervators". The Model 35 Bonanza with the V-tail configuration was built from 1947 to 1982.

The Aviat Husky is a two-seat, high-wing, utility aircraft built by Aviat Aircraft in Afton, Wyoming. Design work on the Husky by Christen Industries began in 1985. The aircraft, designed using CAD software, was the only all-new light aircraft that was designed and entered series production in the United States in the mid-to-late 1980s. The Husky is built in six versions and has been used for a variety of roles, including border patrol, observation duties, pipeline inspection, and glider towing.

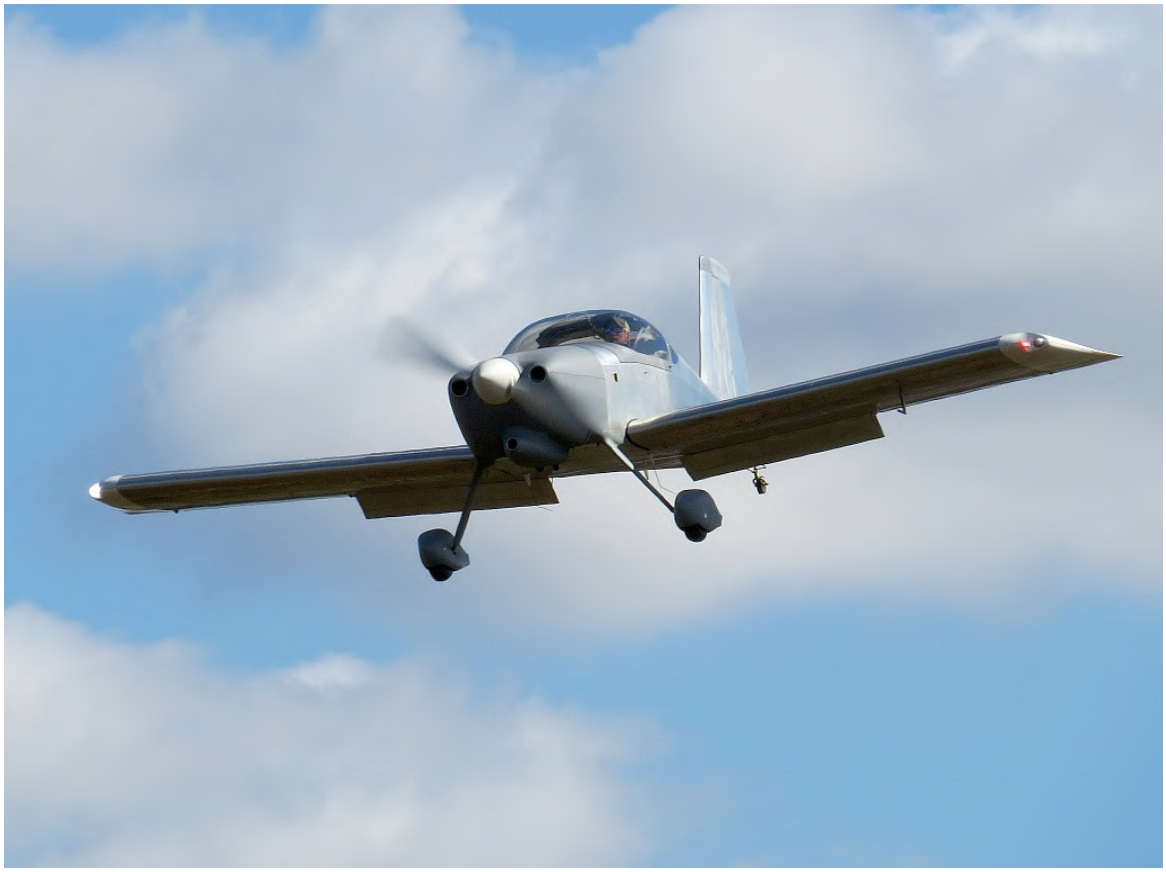


Another one of the aircraft flying pumpkin bombing flights for museum visitors was this 1946 Taylorcraft BC-12D. The Taylorcraft Model B is an American light, single-engine, high-wing, general aviation aircraft. The Model B was constructed in several variants during the 1930s and 1940s. The airplane was available for delivery from the factory as a land plane and a floatplane. The Taylorcraft Model B was sold primarily to private pilots in the United States, Canada, and several overseas countries.



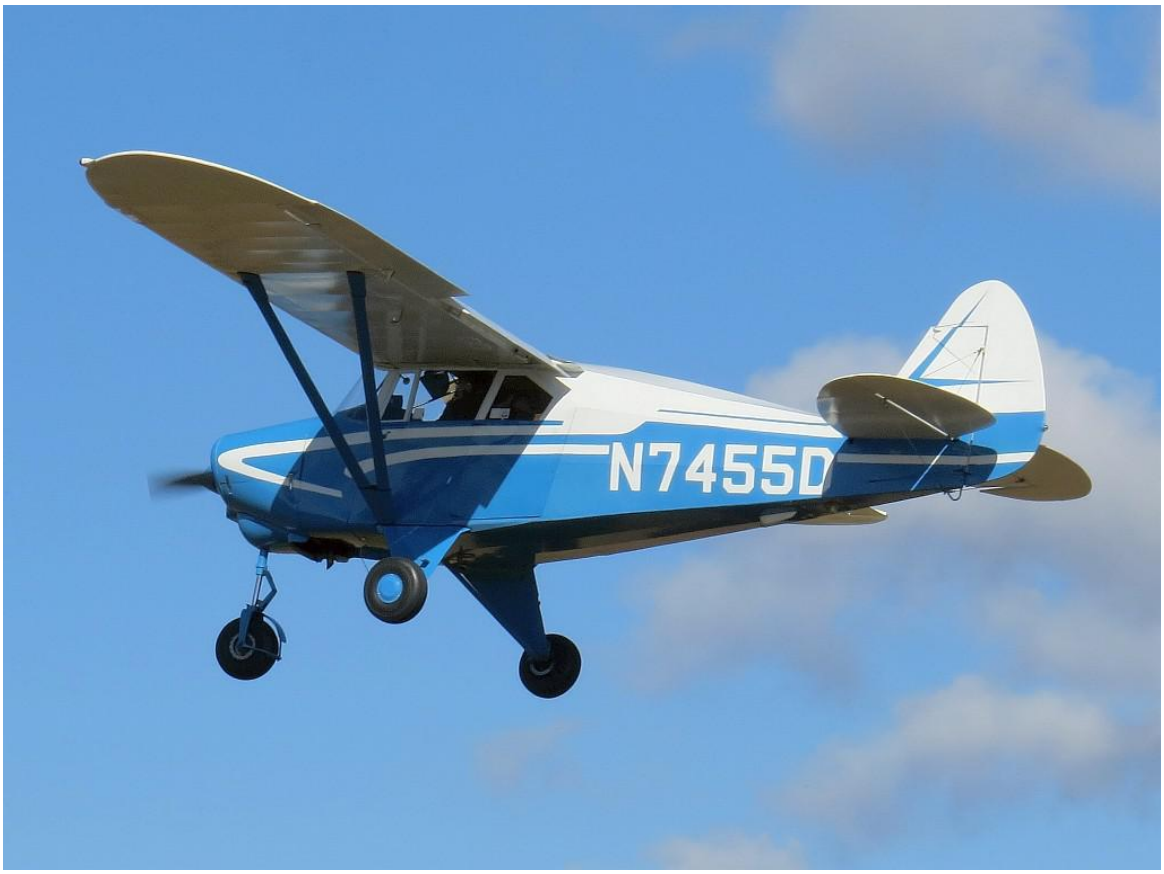


The Bücker Bü 133 Jungmeister was designed and built as an advanced trainer in Germany during the 1930s. The Bü 133 was a very successful design, and the type won numerous international aerobatic competitions in the 1930s. The Bü 133 remained competitive in international aerobatic competitions until the 1960s. This restored Bü 133 Jungmeister is powered by a modern Lycoming engine and features a dummy radial engine front, making it appear more authentic to the original design.

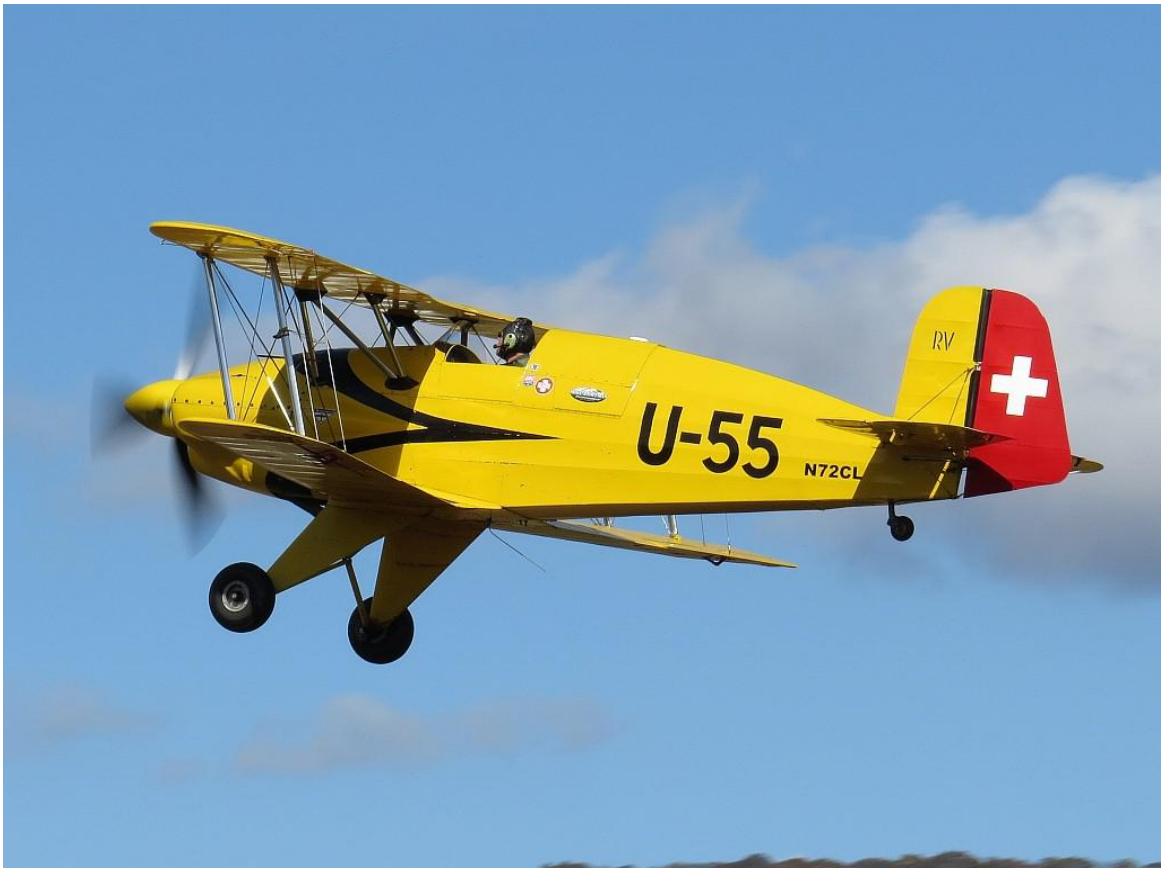


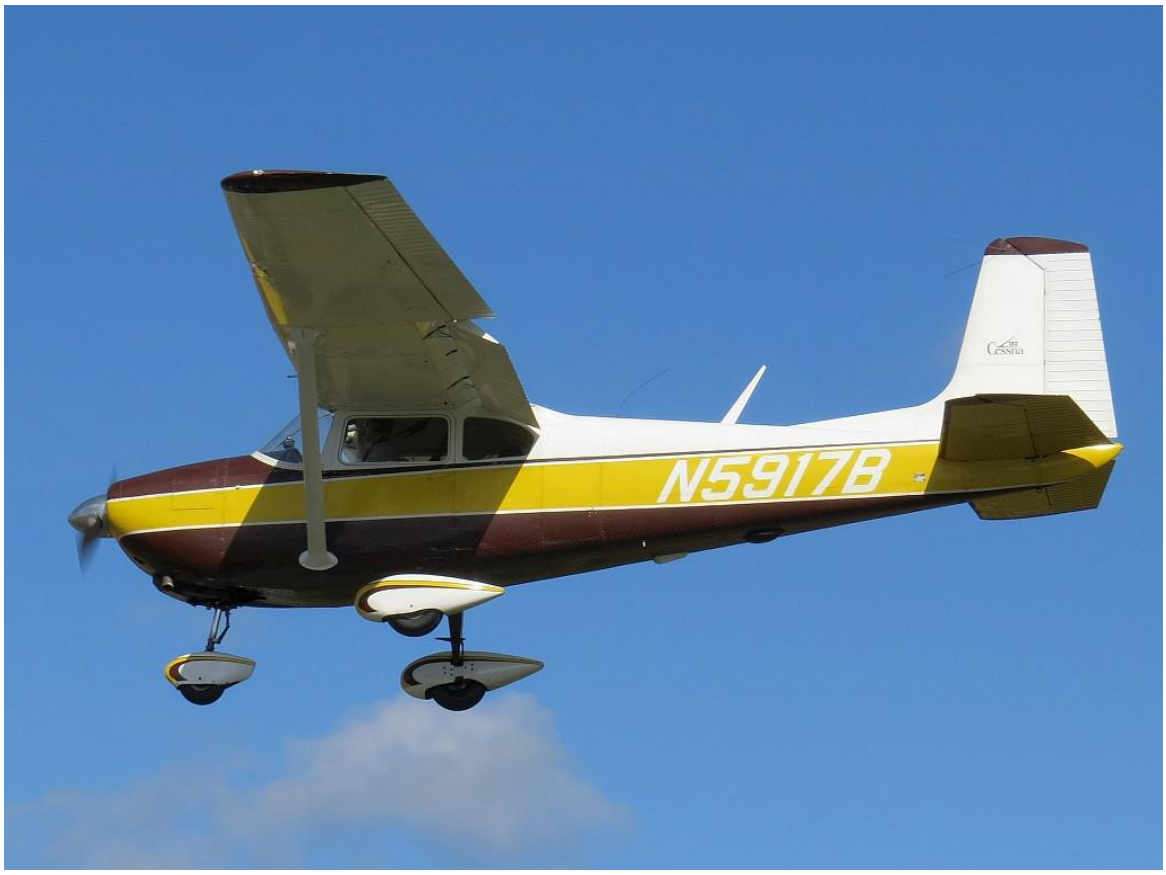
The Great Pumpkin Fly-In draws a significant number of homebuilt aircraft to the event. This aircraft is a Van's Aircraft RV-7. The RV-7 is a two-seat, single-engine, low-wing monoplane sold in kit form. There are two variants, the conventional landing gear RV-7 and the RV-7A, which features tricycle landing gear. The RV-7 and RV-7A were introduced in kit form in 2001. Since the aircraft's introduction, over 1,900 RV-7s and RV-7As have been constructed and flown by amateur homebuilders.

The Piper PA-22 Tri-Pacer is a development of the PA-20 Pacer with tricycle landing gear. The Tri-Pacer followed the similar construction techniques of Piper's famous Cub and Super Cub, with a steel tube fuselage and aluminum wing covered in fabric. The Tri-Pacer and Pacer were the first post-World War II designs from Piper to feature flaps and a control yoke instead of a center stick. The Pacer and Tri-Pacer are prized for their ruggedness and spacious cabins. This Tri-Pacer is a PA-22-150 Caribbean model.

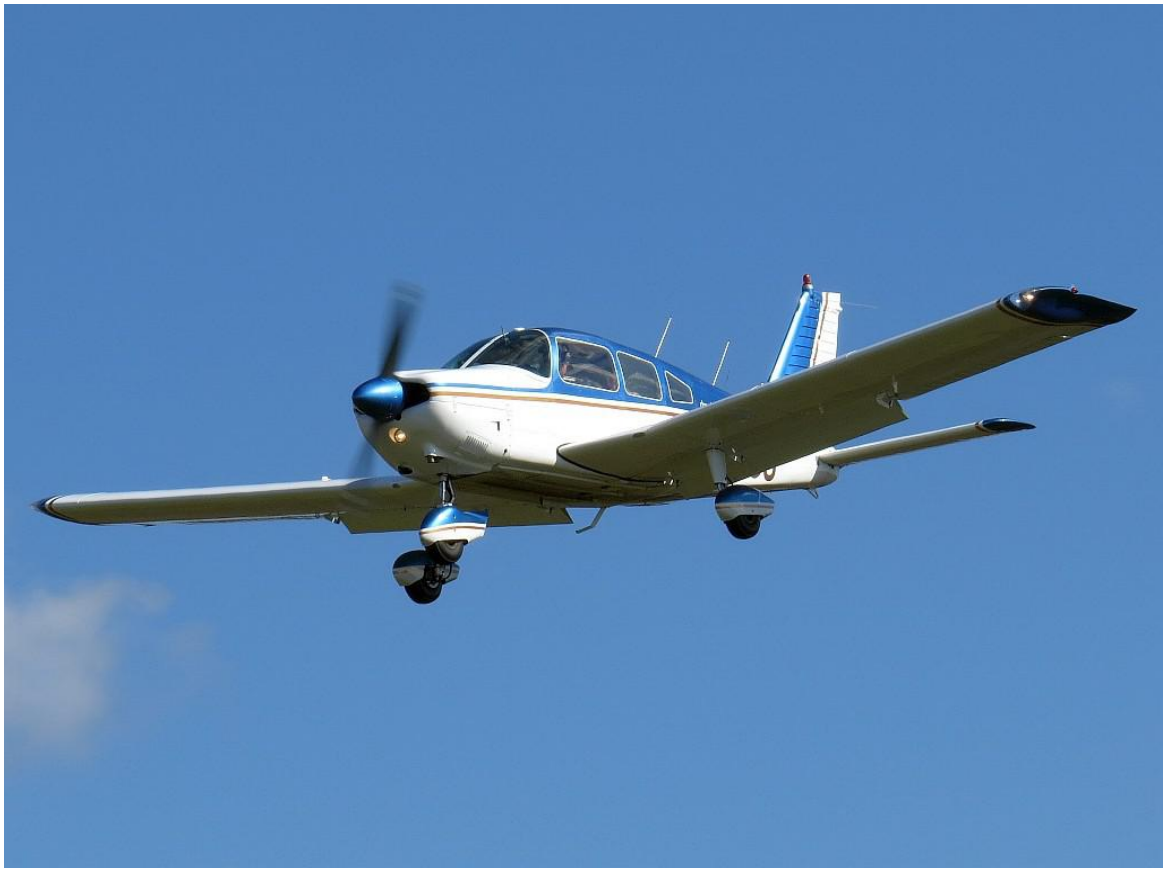


In addition to the German Luftwaffe, the Spanish and Swiss Air Forces were the primary military users of the Bücker Bü 133 Jungmeister. These air arms used the Jungmeiser as an advanced trainer. Following their retirement, many ex-Swiss Air Force Jungmeisters were sold as surplus on the civil market. This highly modified Jungmeister, owned by Jerry Wells, is fitted with a modern Lycoming engine to improve its performance. Wells flies the airplane in aerobatic performances at local airshows.



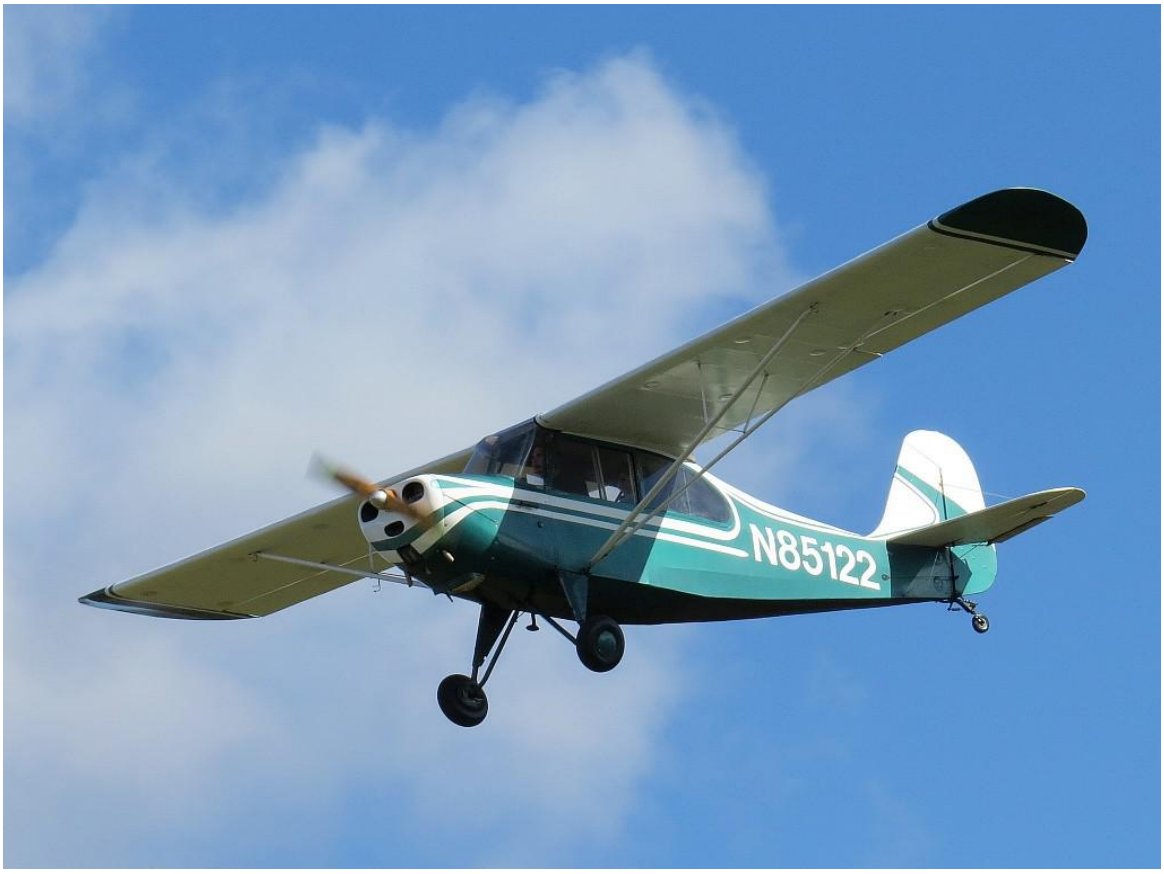


The Cessna 182 was introduced in 1956 as a tricycle landing gear variant of the 180. The 182A, an improved model with redesigned landing gear and manual flaps, was introduced the following year. In 1958, the Skylane, a deluxe version with full exterior paint, landing gear fairings, and redesigned engine exhaust, was offered. Over 23,000 Cessna 182s have been built, and the aircraft remains the second most popular Cessna model remaining in production. This is a beautiful 1956 Cessna 182A Skylane.

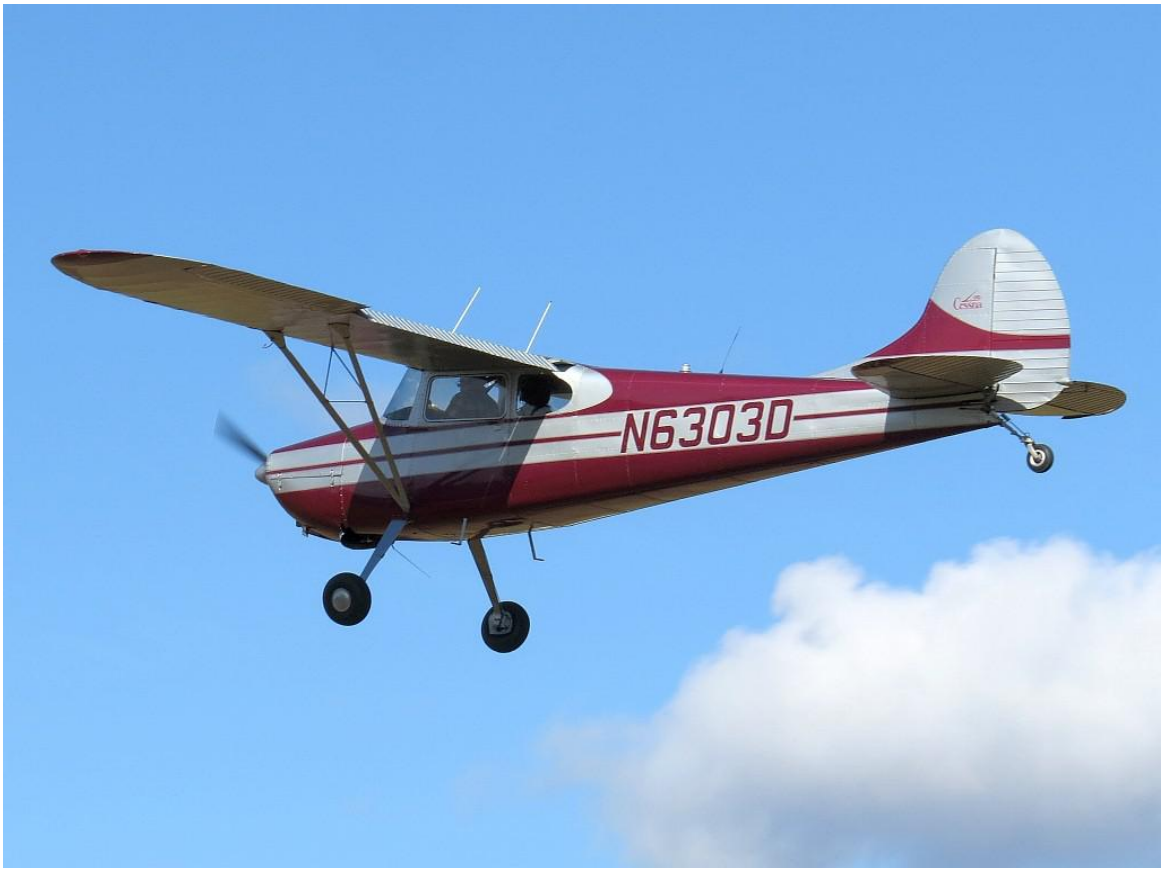


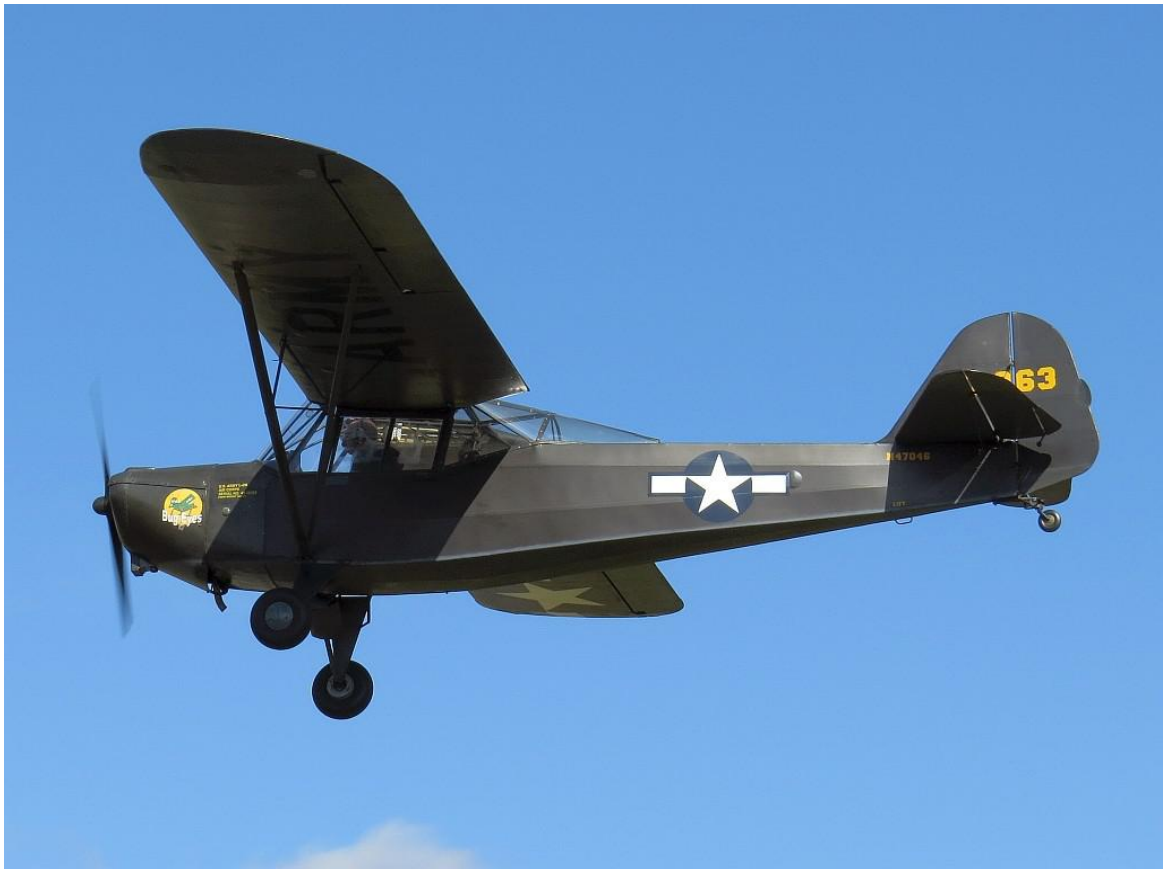
Another general aviation aircraft with a long production run is the Piper PA-28 Cherokee. The PA-28 Cherokee is a family of two or four -seat light aircraft built by Piper Aircraft since 1961. Built in several variants and trim levels, such as the Archer series, over 32,000 PA-28s have been produced by Piper Aircraft. Variations in the PA-28 Cherokee family include models with more powerful engines, constant-speed propellers, and retractable landing gear. This PA-28 is a 1974 Piper Cherokee Archer.

Mark Houck was back at the Golden Age Air Museum's Great Pumpkin Fly-In on Sunday, this time with this green and white 1946 Aeronca 7AC. Commonly known as the "Champ", the Aeronca Model 7 Champion was designed to compete with the Piper J-3 Cub and entered production in the United States in 1945. The "Champ" was marketed for flight training and personal use. During its long production run, over 10,000 "Champs" were produced, 7,000 of those by Aeronca.

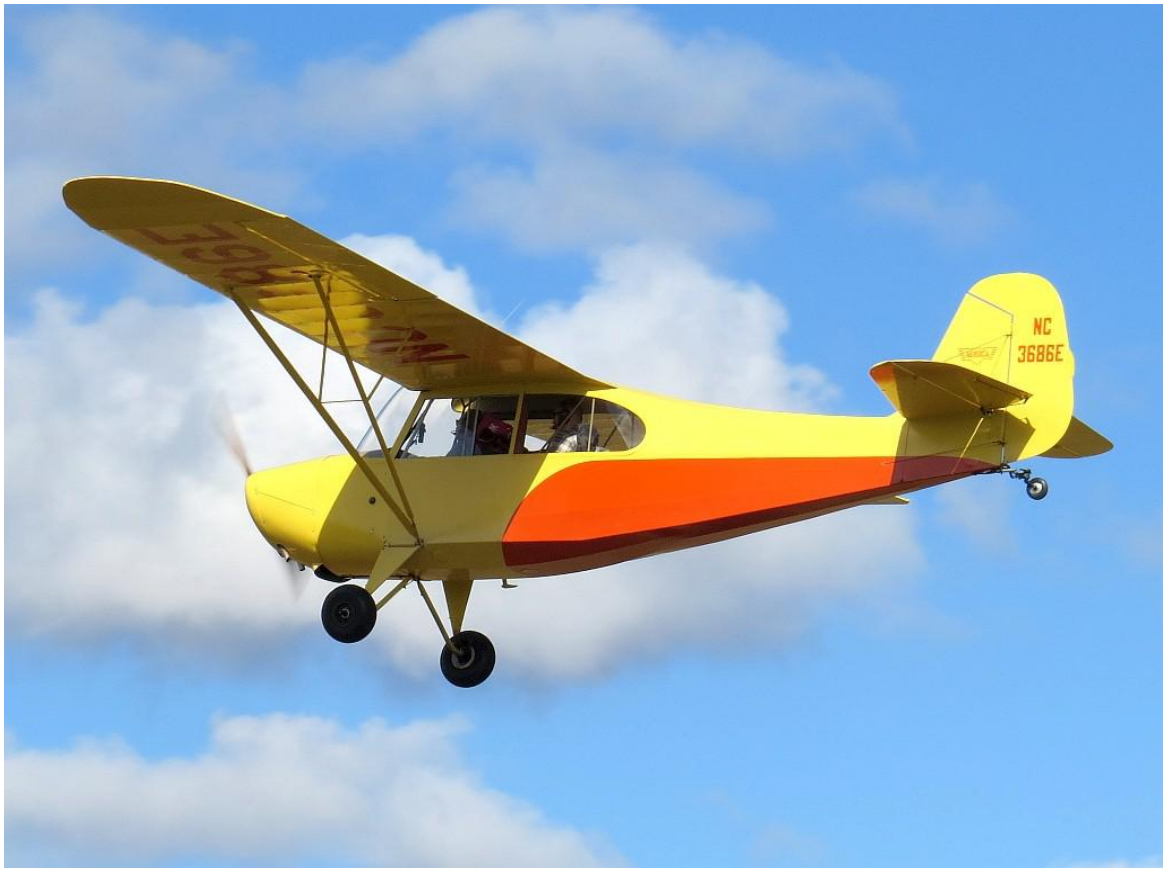


There were several colorful aircraft in attendance at the 2025 Golden Age Air Museum's Great Pumpkin Fly-In, including this beautiful 1948 Cessna 170. The Cessna 170 is a single-engine, four-seat, general aviation aircraft that was built by Cessna from 1948 to 1956. The 170 was the predecessor to the Cessna 172, the most produced aircraft in aviation history. The 170 was also developed into the L-10/O-1 Bird Dog, a liaison and observation aircraft used by the U.S. military in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.



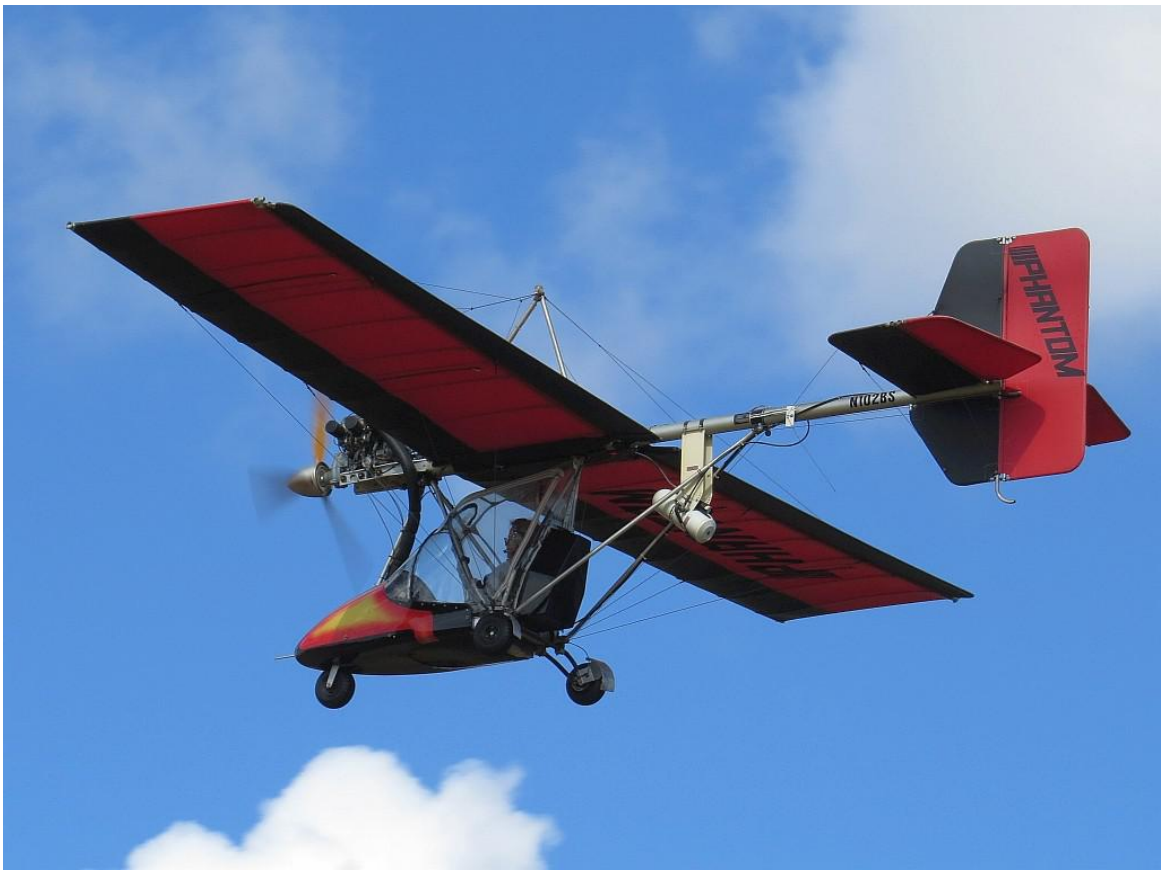


The Taylorcraft L-2 Grasshopper was an American observation and liaison aircraft built for the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II. Liaison aircraft such as the L-2 were used for artillery spotting, light transport, and short-range reconnaissance missions. The Taylorcraft L-2 was primarily used stateside during World War II for training purposes. After the war, many Taylorcraft L-2s were sold as surplus and converted for civilian use, designated as the DCO-65. This restored L-2M belongs to Eric Ridilla.

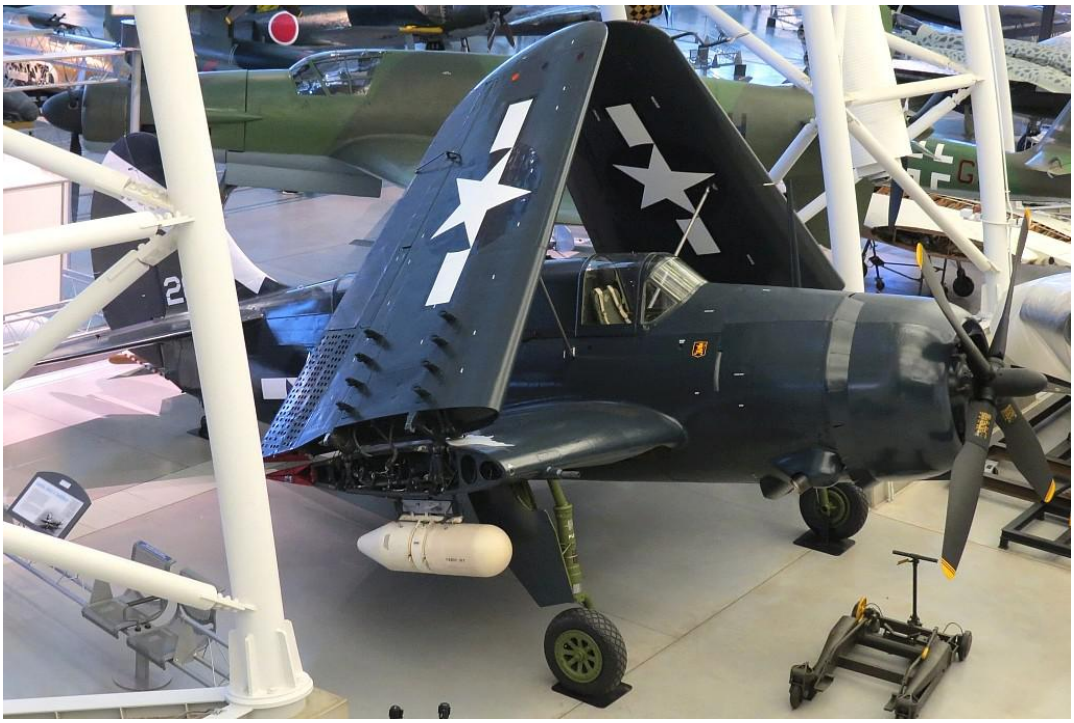


The Golden Age Air Museum Great Pumpkin Fly-In always features a large number of Aeronca Champs in attendance. This Champ is owned by Betsey Carlisle, a regular attendee of fly-ins and other events at the museum. Carlisle's Champ can also be seen annually at the New Garden Airshow and several other local aviation events and fly-ins. The colorful yellow and orange paint scheme, the original factory color scheme chosen by Aeronca, stands out well against the partly cloudy sky.

This ultralight aircraft is manufactured by Phantom Aeronautics and is available to builders in kit form. Phantom Aeronautics introduced this ultralight as the X1 in 1982. Since its introduction, updated single-seat and two-seat models of this aircraft have been offered by Phantom Aeronautics. The updated versions feature more powerful engines, structural improvements, and enclosed cockpits with removable doors. Engines used to power the aircraft typically range from 40 to 80 horsepower.



Curtiss SB2C-5 Helldiver



A Curtiss SB2C-5 Helldiver on floor display at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center located in Chantilly, Virginia. The SB2C Helldiver was the last purpose-built dive bomber ordered by the U.S. Navy and the last significant aircraft built by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation.

The Curtiss SB2C Helldiver was a dive bomber developed by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation during World War II. A key component of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps war doctrine from the Interwar period until the end of World War II was dive bombing, which involved using an aircraft to deliver a bomb on a target at a steep angle to increase accuracy. U.S. Navy dive bombing squadrons flew SB2C Helldivers against Imperial Japan beginning in 1943 until the end of the war. Changes in aircraft carrier tactics, technology, and weapons made dive bombing obsolete as the war progressed. The SB2C Helldiver was the last scout and dive bomber operated by the U.S. Navy, and also the last significant combat aircraft developed by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation.

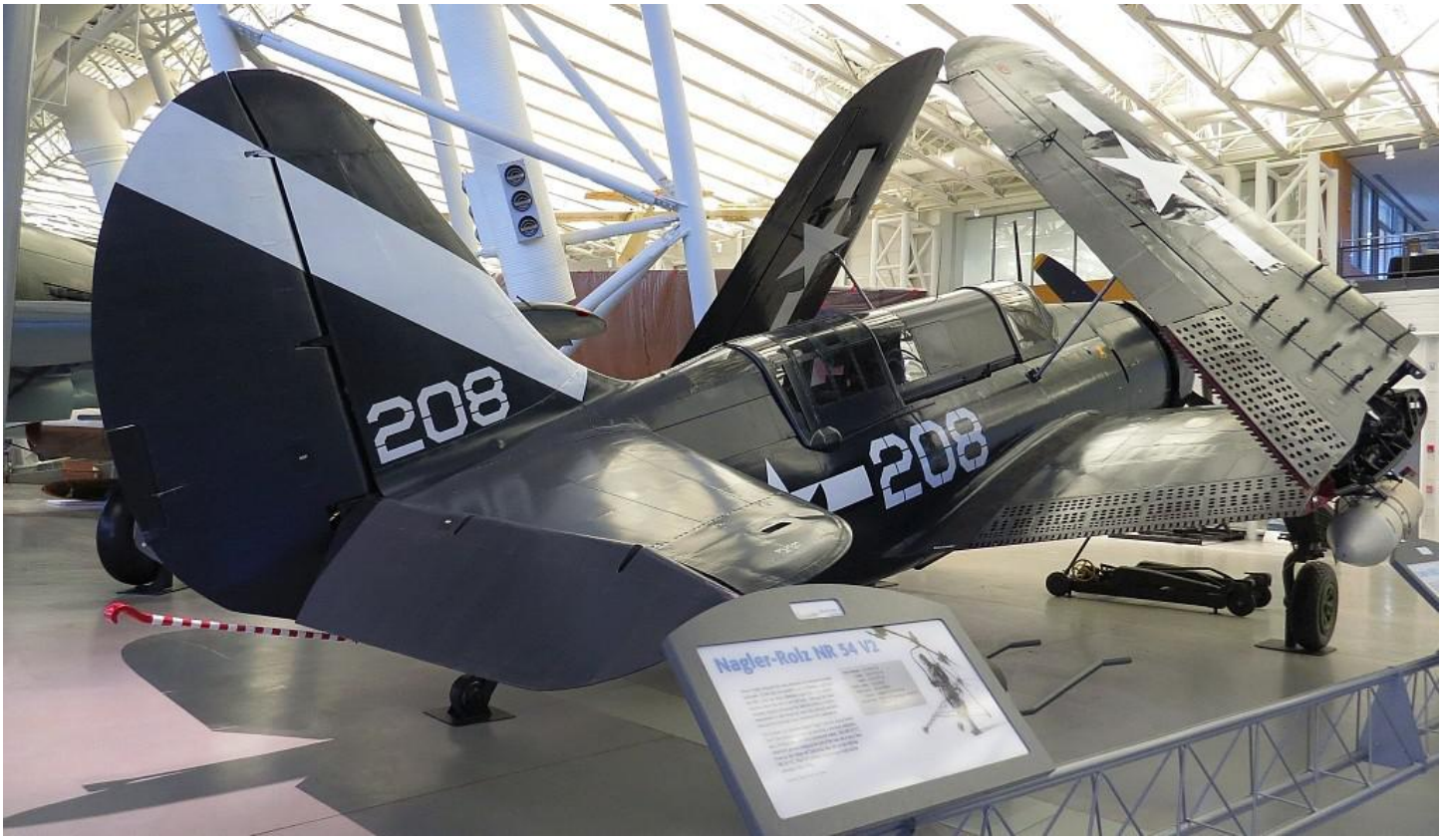
The SB2C was the third carrier-based dive bomber called "Helldiver" produced by Curtiss. "Hell Diver" was a heroic and death-defying nickname given to both pilots and their aircraft by the imaginative American public during the 1920s. The first "Helldiver" was the Curtiss F8C-4 and F8C-5 biplanes, which served with both active and reserve squadrons during the early 1930s. Curtiss reused the nickname for the SBC dive bomber series, which entered service with scouting squadrons aboard the carriers *Enterprise*, *Saratoga*, and *Yorktown* in late 1937. Designed by Curtiss-Wright chief engineer Raymond C. Blaylock, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps SBC-3s and SBC-4s were some of the last American combat biplanes to enter operational service. These aircraft helped the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps refine the capabilities of dive bombing aircraft and develop tactics for pilots.

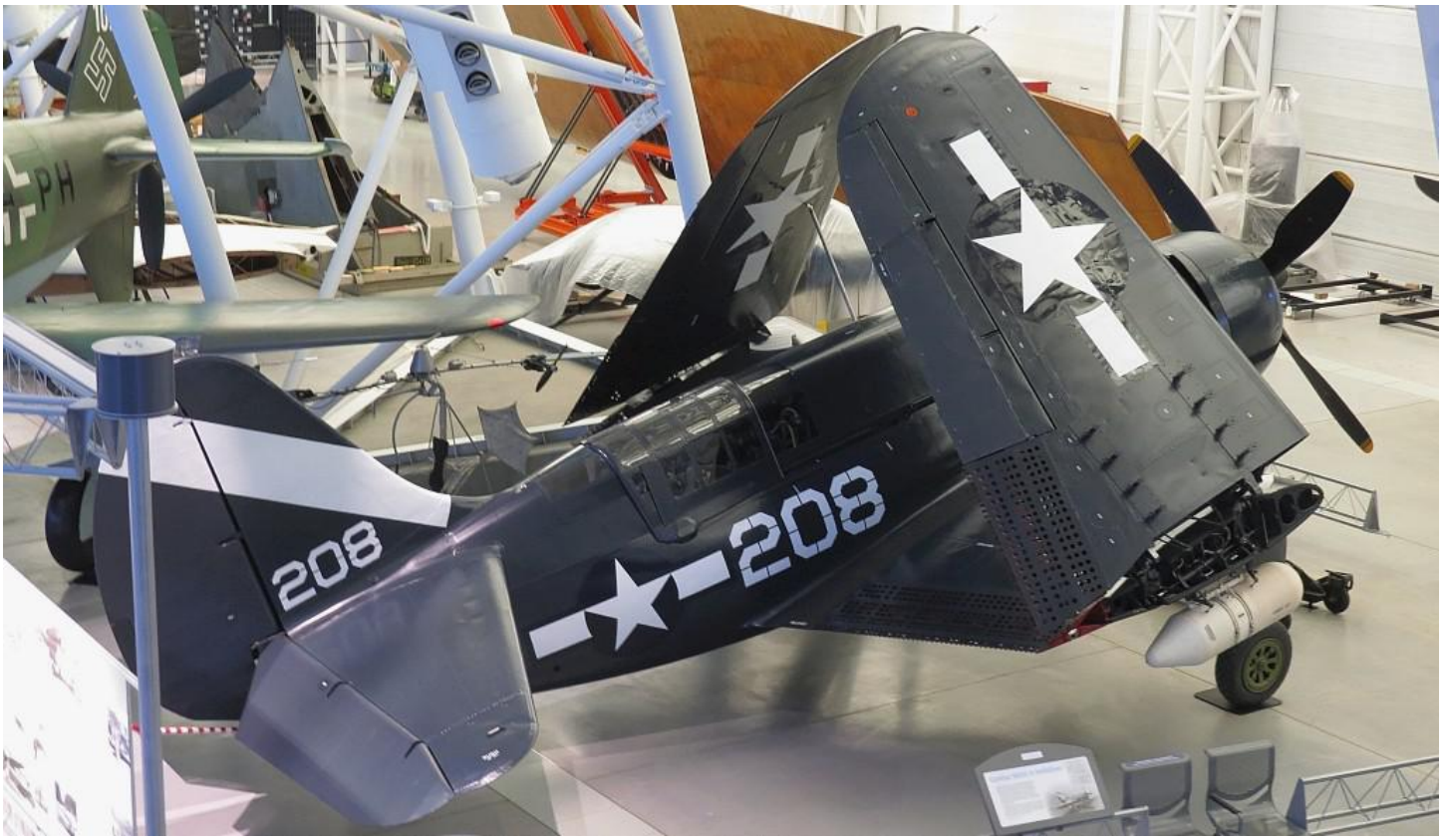
In 1939, the U.S. Navy placed an order with Curtiss for a new scout and dive bomber designated the SB2C to replace the Douglas SBD Dauntless and SB2U Vindicator. Blaylock and his team designed a two-seat, single-engine monoplane with an internal bomb bay capable of carrying 1,000 pounds (454 kg) of bombs and folding wings to facilitate storage aboard an aircraft carrier. Due to extensive requirements from the U.S. Navy, the SB2C was developed as a multirole aircraft rather than exclusively as a dive bomber. The prototype XSB2C-1 flew for the first time in December 1940.

Even before the prototype flew for the first time, problems with the SB2C's design were apparent. Wind tunnel testing revealed the SB2C would suffer from instability and poor directional control. The instability was due to the SB2C's short fuselage, a requirement from the U.S. Navy, so that two Helldivers could fit on an Essex-class aircraft carrier elevator. After the prototype XSB2C -1 crashed during landing on a test flight, Curtiss rebuilt it with a larger tail and longer fuselage. An autopilot was also added to help counter the instability issues.

The revised prototype and early production examples of the Helldiver suffered from several design and developmental problems related to propellers, engines, and structural weaknesses. During flight testing and initial fleet delivery in 1942, numerous accidents occurred. The SB2C's carrier trials in early 1943 were a near disaster. Landing gear failures and the SB2C's tendency to bounce on landing resulted in many aircraft ending up in flight deck barricades. The U.S. Navy demanded over 880 changes and corrections be made to the SB2C before it would be accepted for operational service. Changes to the Helldiver included increased fuel capacity, self-sealing fuel tanks, and forward armament changed to two 20-millimeter (0.767 in) cannons in the wings. Unfortunately, the equipment changes demanded by the U.S. Navy made the Helldiver nearly 40% heavier during its development, further exacerbating the poor flight handling characteristics of the dive bomber.

The Helldiver's combat debut was in November 1943 when Bombing Squadron (VB) 17, assigned to the *U.S.S. Bunker Hill,* attacked the Japanese fortress at Rabaul. Initial opinions of the Helldiver in operational service were poor. The aircraft quickly gained the name the "Beast", or more offensively, "S.O.B. 2nd Class", a profane play on its official designation, due to its tricky handling characteristics and large size. Maintenance crews also disliked the SB2C Helldiver; it had a complicated electrical system and an unreliable hydraulic system. The aircraft's propeller was also the source of numerous maintenance issues. Despite the problems, the SB2C Helldiver was faster and carried more ordnance than the SBD Dauntless it replaced.





The introduction of the SB2C-3 variant of the Helldiver in 1944 solved most of the aircraft's problems. This variant featured a new 1,900-horsepower Wright Cyclone R-2600-20 Twin Cyclone radial engine and four-bladed propeller, which remedied the Helldiver's chronic issue of being underpowered and significantly improved its slow-speed handling characteristics. The SB2C-3 was also the first variant of the Helldiver that could be equipped with radar. This variant was followed by the improved SB2C-4, which featured underwing racks to carry rockets or additional bombs. The SB2C-5 was the final production variant. This variant featured increased fuel capacity, a frameless canopy for the pilot, the deletion of the propeller spinner, and a tailhook mounted permanently in the extended position. Introduced in 1945, the SB2C-5 entered service too late to see widespread service in World War II.

SB2C-3 and SB2C-4 variants of the Helldiver served with U.S. Navy squadrons as American forces went on the offensive in the Pacific. Helldivers participated in the Marianas campaign, the battles of Leyte Gulf and Okinawa, and in raids against the Japanese home islands. Due to continuous efforts to improve the aircraft and intensive training for the crews that flew it, the Helldiver became an integral part of carrier air groups in the final years of World War II. Approximately 30 different squadrons operated Helldivers from 13 different aircraft carriers during World War II.

With the end of World War II, production contracts for thousands of Helldivers were canceled. When production ended in 1945, 7,140 Helldivers had been built. Most were built at the Curtiss plant in Columbus, Ohio. In addition to U.S. Navy variants of the Helldiver, Curtiss built 900 Helldivers as A-25 Shrikes for the U.S. Army Air Forces. The A-25s featured non-folding wings and other equipment changes. By the time the A-25s were ready in 1943, the U.S. Army Air Forces had abandoned the tactic of dive bombing, so most of the A-25s built were given to the U.S. Marine Corps, which used them in non-combat roles. Additional Helldivers were also license-built in Canada by Canadian Car & Foundry and Fairchild Aircraft Ltd. as SBWs and SBFs, respectively.

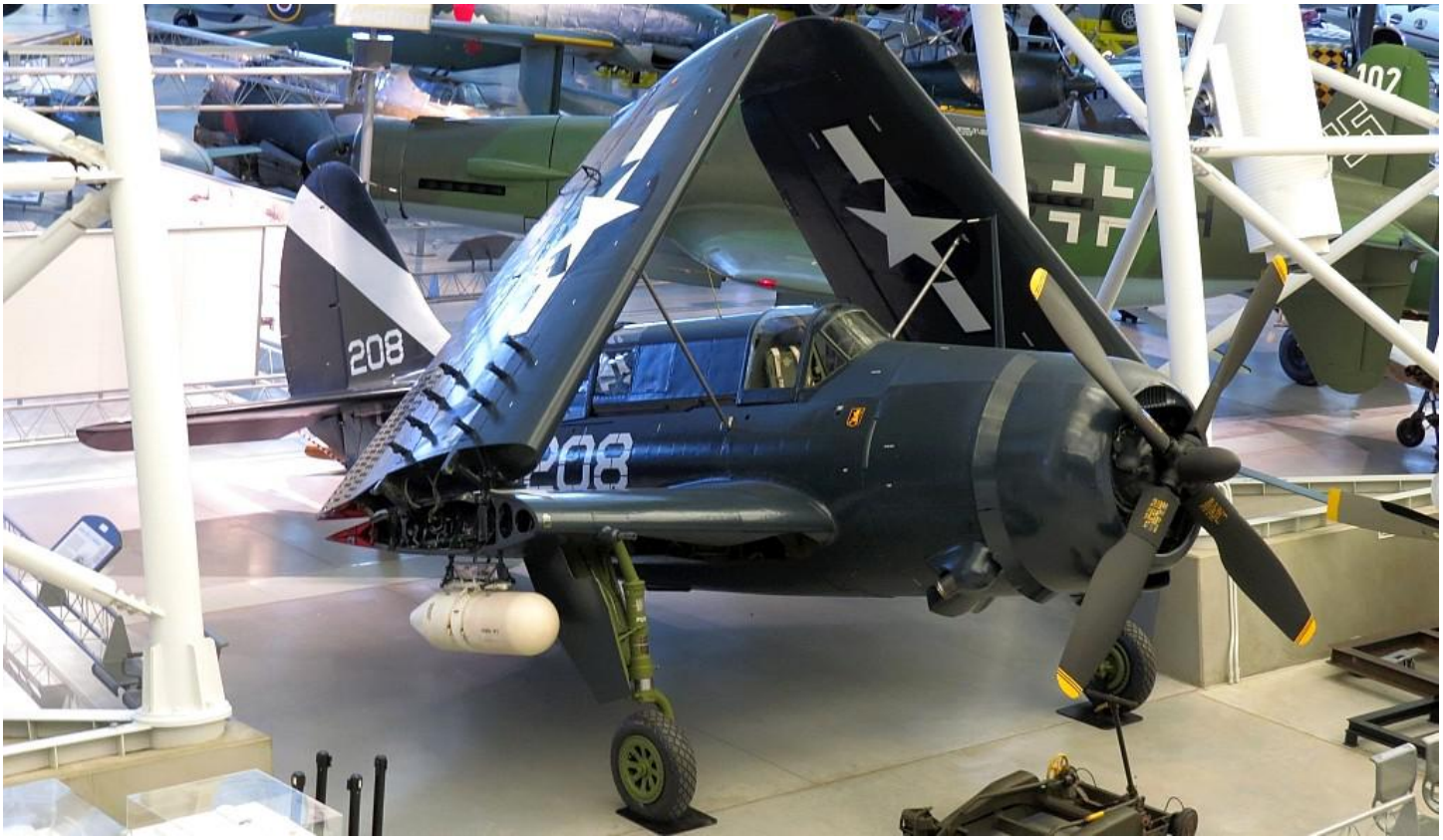
The U.S. Navy and Naval Reserve operated Helldivers until 1949. Postwar, surplus Helldivers were provided in small numbers to the navies of France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Thailand. Most of these nations used their Helldivers until the mid-1950s. Thailand was the last nation to operate the Helldiver, retiring the type in 1963 due to a lack of spare parts.

The U.S. Navy accepted the National Air and Space Museum's Curtiss SB2C-5 Helldiver on May 19, 1945, at the Curtiss factory in Columbus, Ohio. The airplane went to Naval Air Station (NAS) Port Columbus, located at the same airfield, three days later. After spending time in San Diego, it was sent to Guam for assignment to a Carrier Air Service Unit, arriving there in July. The war ended before the Helldiver flew any combat missions. However, in the three months that followed, September to December 1945, the Helldiver was assigned to Bombing Squadron (VB) 92 aboard *U.S.S. Lexington,* operating in the western Pacific, near occupied Japan.

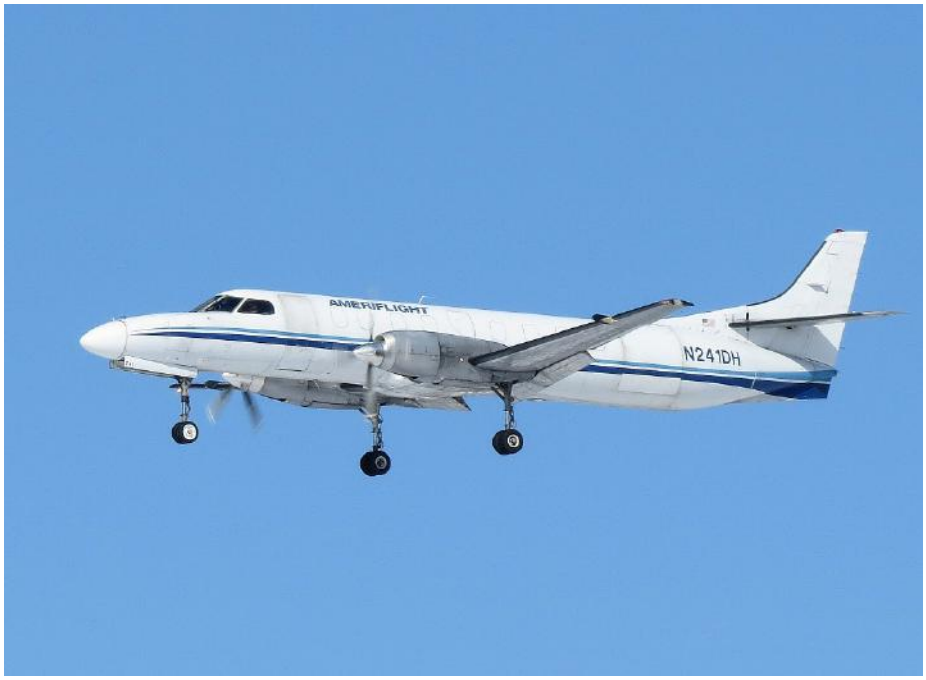
After returning home in January 1946, the Helldiver passed through several different stateside units, including Bombing Squadron (VB) 11 at Santa Rosa, California, Attack Squadron (VA) 3A at San Diego, and Aviation Training Unit (VA-ATU) #4 at NAS Jacksonville, until it was dropped from U.S. Navy inventory on May 31, 1948, and set aside for the Smithsonian Institution. The Helldiver was flown to Norfolk, Virginia, on March 2, 1949, given preservative treatment, and placed in a metal storage container. At the time of its retirement, the Helldiver had accumulated 630 flying hours on its airframe.

The Helldiver officially entered the National Air and Space Museum collection in September 1960. After being stored outside for several years, the aircraft was loaned to the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Florida, in 1975. Museum curators restored the Helldiver and placed it on indoor display in 1982.

In 2003, the Helldiver was returned to the Smithsonian Institution and placed at the Paul E. Garber Facility. In 2010, the aircraft was sent to the Mary Baker Engen Restoration Hangar at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center. The Helldiver is currently on public display in this building.



Fairchild Swearingen Metroliner SA227-AT (1972)



The Fairchild Swearingen Metroliner is a pressurized, twin-turboprop aircraft produced for commuter airline and corporate use. The Metroliner was first marketed as the Swearingen Metro and later as the Fairchild Aerospace Metro. The Metroliner was manufactured in two main variants: the SA226 introduced in 1972, and the improved SA227, introduced in 1980. The SA227 was also produced in a corporate version, known as the Merlin IVC, and a freighter version, known as the Expediter. Small numbers of specialized transport and reconnaissance versions of the Metroliner were also purchased by military operators. Fairchild built over 600 Metroliners from 1968 to 2001. More than 200 Metroliners remain in service worldwide as corporate aircraft, regional and commuter airliners, and small freighter aircraft.

Fairchild Swearingen Metroliner SA227-AT

Crew: 2

Cargo Capacity: 4,000-5,000 lb (1,814-2,268 kg) of cargo on 120 cm x 100 cm EUR pallets (x7) on the main deck

Length: 59 ft 4 in (18.08 m)

Height: 16 ft 8 in (5.08 m)

Wingspan: 57 ft 0 in (17.37 m)

Wing Area: 310 sq ft (29 m^2)

Powerplant: Garrett AiResearch/Honeywell TPE-331 turboprop engines (x2)

Range: 594 nmi (1,100 km)

Cruise Speed: 320 mph (515 km/h)

Maximum Speed: 358 mph (576 km/h)

Empty/Gross Weights: 8,737 lb/14,500-16,000 lb (3,963 kg/6,577-7,527 kg)

Service Ceiling: 25,000 ft (7,600 m)

Time-Sensitive Cargo Delivery

Cockpit

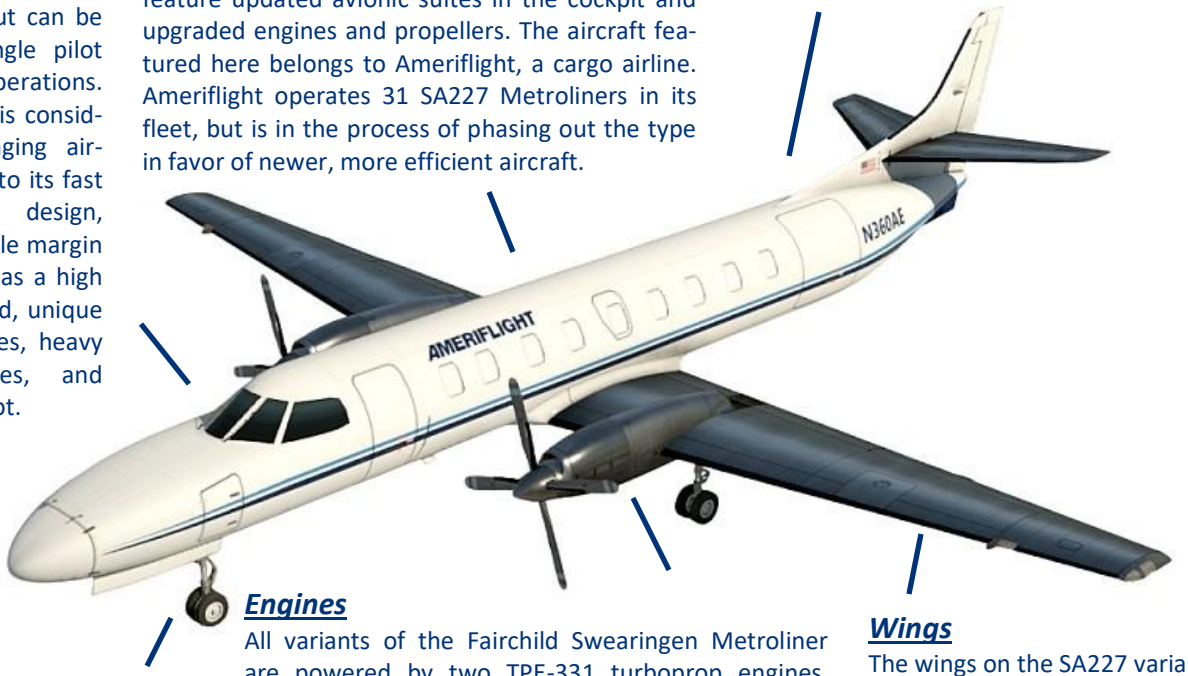
The Metroliner's design was based on a smaller, turboprop-powered corporate aircraft designed by Swearingen Aircraft called the Merlin. The Metroliner evolved into a much larger aircraft, only retaining the cockpit windows of the Merlin in its design. The Metroliner's cockpit is designed for a crew of two, but can be flown by a single pilot during cargo operations. The Metroliner is considered a challenging aircraft to fly due to its fast and powerful design, which leaves little margin for error as it has a high cockpit workload, unique engine-out issues, heavy control surfaces, and lacks an autopilot.

Converted Freighter

Many Metroliners that remain in service today are flying as converted freighters. The Metroliner is especially useful as a small, fast freighter, delivering time-sensitive cargo and parcels such as express mail, aviation and automobile parts, laboratory materials, medical and pharmaceutical supplies, and perishable food items to small airports. Metroliners converted to freighters have their interiors removed and replaced with a reinforced floor, their cabin windows plugged, and a large cargo door installed in the rear fuselage. Metroliners converted for freighter use also sometimes feature updated avionic suites in the cockpit and upgraded engines and propellers. The aircraft featured here belongs to Ameriflight, a cargo airline. Ameriflight operates 31 SA227 Metroliners in its fleet, but is in the process of phasing out the type in favor of newer, more efficient aircraft.

Cabin

The Metroliner's cabin was designed to accommodate 19 passengers, the maximum number allowed by airline regulations without a flight attendant required as a crew member. Corporate versions of the Metroliner usually accommodated 10 to 12 passengers. Initially, small round windows were used for the cabin, but were changed to a larger, square-oval design on later variants of the Metroliner. An enclosed lavatory could be fitted in the rear of the passenger cabin at the expense of reduced seating and baggage capacity.



Landing Gear

The landing gear on the Fairchild Swearingen Metroliner, with its long legs and small tires, can make the aircraft difficult to land in certain situations, such as crosswinds. It also makes the aircraft sensitive during ground handling. On the SA-226 variants of the Metroliner, the main landing gear doors stayed open when the landing gear extended. On the SA-227 variants, the design of the doors changed so that they closed once the landing gear extended, reducing aerodynamic drag.

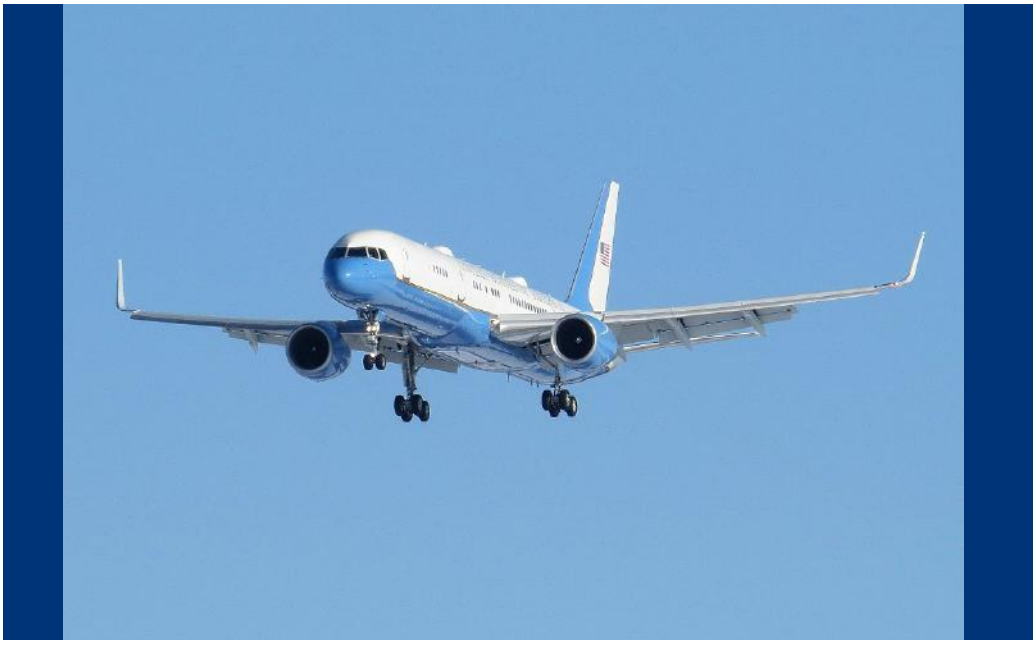
Engines

All variants of the Fairchild Swearingen Metroliner are powered by two TPE-331 turboprop engines. These engines were designed and manufactured initially by Garrett/AiResearch, and later by Honeywell. As more powerful and improved variants of this engine were developed, they were incorporated into later variants of the Metroliner to improve the aircraft's performance and reliability. These engines drove three-bladed propellers on the SA226 variants of the Metroliner and four-bladed propellers on the SA227 variants of the aircraft. The design of the engine nacelles on the aircraft changed from the SA226 to the SA227 variants. On the SA226 variants, the nacelles were larger and had intakes on the top and bottom. The SA227 variant of the Metroliner featured more streamlined nacelles, with only a top intake. The nacelles on the SA227 also had "quick-access" cowlings to facilitate easier maintenance.

Wings

The wings on the SA227 variants of the Metroliner were 10 feet longer (3 m) than those on the SA226. The wings also have a small fence on the leading edge, which is not present on the SA226 variant. During early production of the Metroliner, Fairchild was responsible for building the wings and engine nacelles for the aircraft. After Swearingen Aircraft encountered financial difficulties during the testing of the Metroliner prototypes in the early 1970s, Fairchild purchased a 90% stake in the company, which allowed the aircraft to be put into full production.

"Air Force Two" Visits Lehigh Valley International Airport

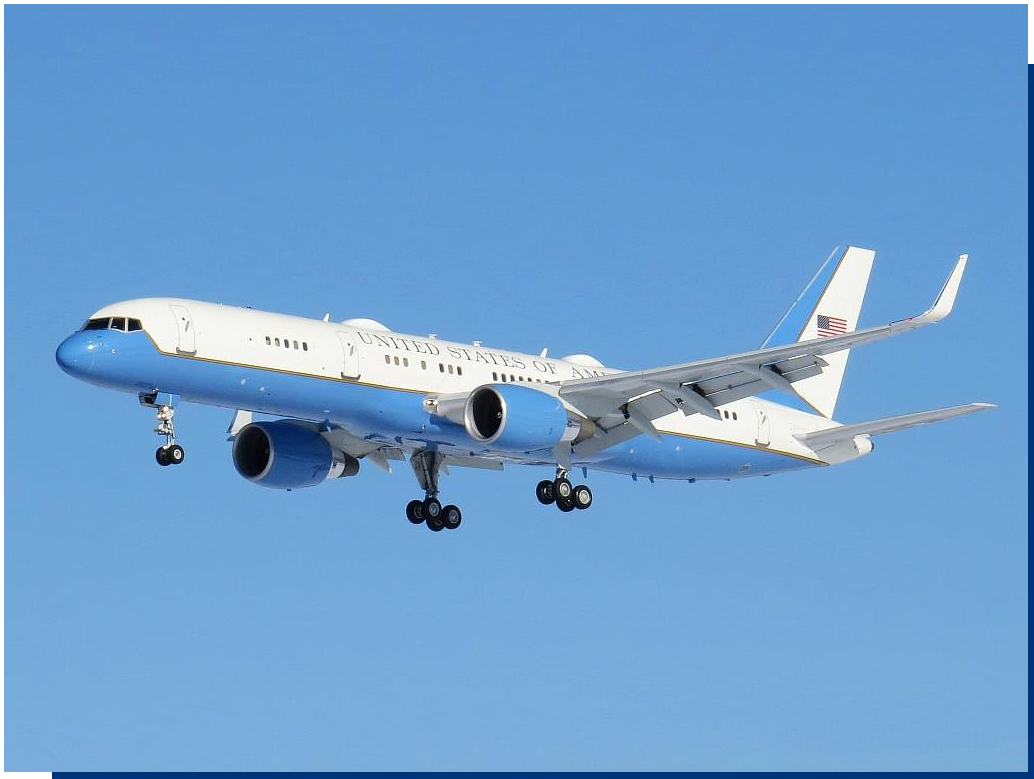


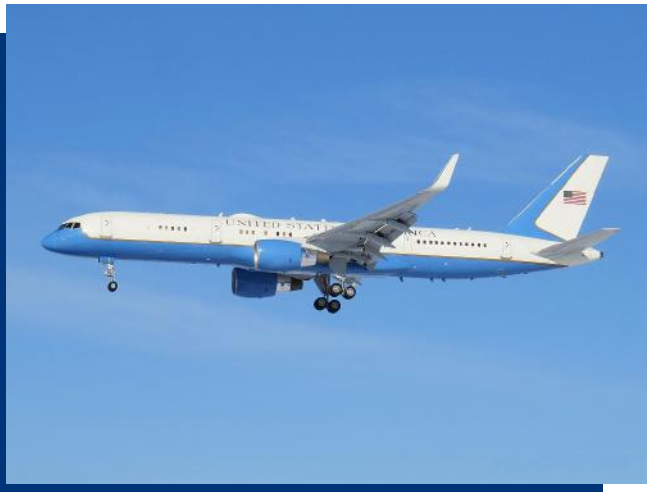
A U.S. Air Force Boeing C-32A operating as "Air Force Two" prepares to land at the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on December 16, 2025. The C-32A was visiting the airport to bring Vice President JD Vance and his wife, Usha, to the Lehigh Valley for a visit to the region.

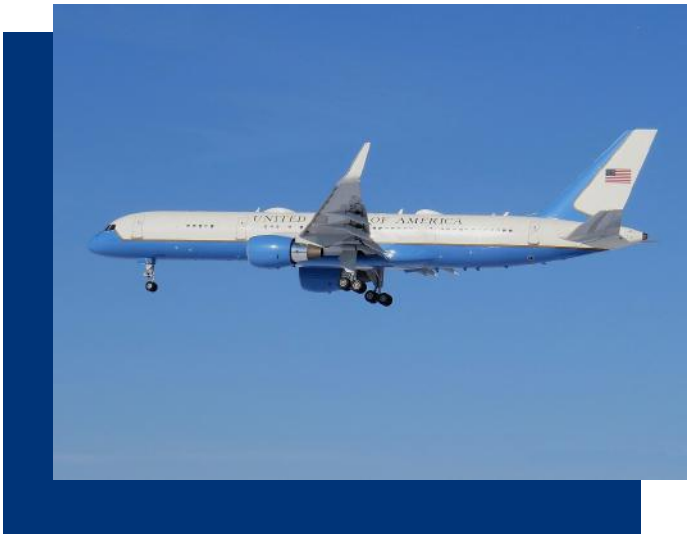
On December 16, 2025, the Lehigh Valley International Airport welcomed a special visiting aircraft to its runways. A U.S. Air Force Boeing C-32A operating as "Air Force Two" brought Vice President of the United States JD Vance to the Lehigh Valley for a visit to the region. The Vice President visited a Uline shipping supplies warehouse in the town of Alburtis, where he gave remarks about the nation's economic outlook to a gathered audience of special guests. Following the remarks at Uline, the Vice President and his wife, Usha, also made a surprise visit to the Allentown Rescue Mission, where they served hot meals to those in need.

The Boeing C-32A is a military VIP passenger transport variant of the Boeing 757 narrow-body commercial airliner. The C-32A serves with the U.S. Air Force in the Special Air Mission role, providing transportation to the Vice President, First Lady, or Secretary of State of the United States to meetings and other diplomatic functions worldwide. When used to transport the Vice President, the aircraft operates under the callsign "Air Force Two". On rare occasions, a C-32A is used by the President of the United States as "Air Force One" on travel to domestic destinations when flight operations with the larger VC-25A (military transport version of the Boeing 747-200) are not possible due to runway length or ramp space at the destination airport.

The first of four C-32A aircraft acquired by the U.S. Air Force was delivered to the 89th Airlift Wing at Andrews Air Force Base in 1998. The C-32A is powered by a pair of Pratt & Whitney PW 2000 (military designation F117) turbofan engines and has winglets installed for improved fuel efficiency and range. For enhanced security, aircraft serial numbers are changed frequently or removed entirely to disguise individual aircraft and fleet movements worldwide. The C-32A has a specially designed interior including a communications center, a fully furnished stateroom, conference rooms, and a general passenger section with seating for 45. In addition to the interior, the C-32A is equipped with advanced avionics, weather, and navigation systems, including a Global Positioning System, Wind Shear Warning System, and Air Traffic Collision Avoidance System. The C-32A is equipped with defensive countermeasures, such as flares and chaff, to protect the aircraft against air-to-air and air-to-ground threats. In the last several years, each of the C-32As has received upgrades to its interior, including improved lighting, new carpeting, and leather seats and tables. The U.S. Air Force expects to keep the C-32A fleet in service until at least 2040.



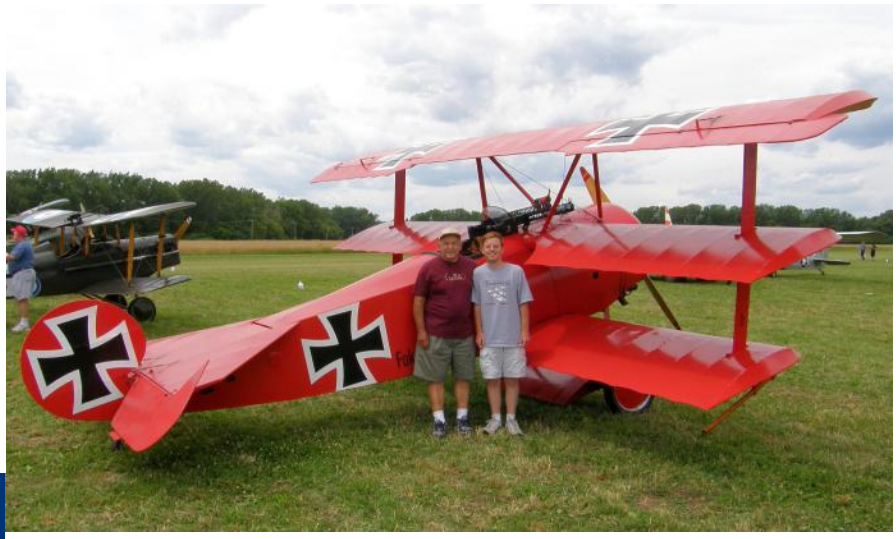




Distelfink Airlines

Est. 2013

ABOUT DISTELFINK AIRLINES



My late grandfather, John Brey, and I at the 2007 Geneseo Airshow. This was one of the few times that we had our photo taken together at an airshow.

The story of "Distelfink Airlines" begins in the early 1990s when my late grandfather, John Brey, began building and flying remote control model aircraft in his retirement. He enjoyed the hobby and quickly amassed a large fleet of model airplanes, which filled his garage and woodworking shop. He gave a name to his fleet of aircraft, "Distelfink Airlines". For the symbol of his fleet, he chose the Pennsylvania Dutch/German hex sign featuring the "Distelfink", a colorful bird that is a symbol of good luck and happiness. This hex sign and symbol is very common on Pennsylvania Dutch/German barns in Eastern Pennsylvania and is an important part of our local culture. He had custom "Distelfink" decals made for all his airplanes and had T-shirts made with "Distelfink Airlines" printed on them. It wasn't long before curious people began asking about "Distelfink Airlines" and what it was. My grandfather told anyone who asked that "Distelfink Airlines" was a new startup airline that was going to be offering service between the Lehigh Valley International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport with more routes to come soon.

In addition to flying his model airplanes, my grandfather enjoyed attending airshows and we traveled to airshows together for almost 20 years. He also enjoyed local aviation history and was particularly fascinated by the history of the Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf, a torpedo bomber that was built locally in Allentown, Pennsylvania during World War II. He also remembered when famous aviator Amelia Earhart visited the Lehigh Valley in the early 1930s to raise funds for her failed attempt to become the first woman to fly around the world.

Established in 2013 in memory of my grandfather, "Distelfink Airlines" is an online aviation newsletter that carries on a tradition of sharing a love for aviation that my grandfather shared with me. This newsletter features photographs and writings on a variety of aviation topics. The logo that was chosen for "Distelfink Airlines" is the hex sign that my grandfather chose for his fleet of remote control model aircraft many years ago. This proud symbol of local Pennsylvania Dutch/German culture is joined by a pair of Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf torpedo bombers, the aircraft that was built locally in Allentown during World War II and is such an important part of our local aviation history. Thank you for reading "Distelfink Airlines" and sharing in the passion for aviation that my grandfather shared with me.