News

Take a Sentimental Journey to Cub Haven

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Most of us begin our days by waking up to the annoying, electronic beeping of an insistent alarm clock. But just imagine waking up to the sound of a five-cylinder radial Kinner engine clattering to life, as you yawn and stretch, all snug and toasty in your sleeping bag in the cool and moist Pennsylvania morning.

Suddenly you realize just what that noise is, and you can't help but smile as you zip open the tent flap and peer beyond the rows of colorful Piper rag wings, catching a glimpse of the antique orange Fleet biplane accelerating down the grass runway, with the pilot's long white scarf fluttering along the fuselage behind him.

And if you think you've passed on to the big hangar in the sky, you just might be right, because the Sentimental Journey to Cub Haven fly-in is indeed a bit of heaven for pilots and those devoted to older airplanes and aviation history. The Old Piper Aircraft manufacturing plant still stands by the grassy tie-down areas, and the Piper Aviation Museum is housed in one of the buildings.

But history isn't just tucked away inside the museum; it comes to life in vivid colors at Cub Haven. Chances are good that you'll not only see an excellent array of Pipers — from the 1930s Bradford J-2 Cubs with their Continental flathead engines, J-3 Cubs, and Vagabonds; to the Super Cubs, Pacers, and TriPacers — but a tantalizing variety of other vintage aircraft as well. This year, there were Fleet biplanes, a 1929 Great Lakes Menasco Special, Aeronaona Chiefs, Staggerwings, Taylorcrafts, Globe Swifts, a 1934 Stinson Reliant, and a 1946 Funk, among others. And the noble Stearmans sat wingtip-to-wingtip on the grass, towering over their smaller winged friends like gentle yet protective big brothers.

Sentimental Journey is a fly-in for those who love to fly and hop rides, and you'll see dozens of airplanes flying each day from sunup to sunset — for the sheer joy of it.

One of the highlights this year was the opportunity to fly in the roomy, four-passenger open cockpit of a 1929 New Standard biplane, flown in from Old Rhinebeck's Aerodrome in New York. Captain Mike took us up for a sunset flight, and as the wind whipped our hair into strings, we imagined ourselves to be barnstormers, and gazed earthward to see the summer sunlight sparkling on the Susquehanna River, and the rolling, lush terrain that surrounds the old homeplace of Piper Aircraft.

Talking with the friendly volunteers and enjoying the fresh air, forums, fly market, and vendors’ area will whet your appetite for the easy-on-the-wallet meals, available from several concession stands that continue to serve well into the night, long after the famous corn roasting session is over. And you won't be eating your meals in silence at the community pavilion. There is always someone to swap stories, and live bands play great music every evening from swing to polkas to rock ‘n roll.

It seems there are always pleasant surprises in store at Cub Haven. You never know just who you'll meet at this down home, grassroots-style fly in. The awards banquet is normally held on Saturday evenings during the event, and last year I had the privilege of meeting and talking with William T. Piper Jr. afterwards. And if you need to take the "donations-only" shuttle service into town, you might meet some of the men and women who have vivid memories of welding airframes and doping fabric-covered wings on the Piper production lines.

The Grand Champion Award for this year's 17th annual Sentimental Journey went to NC4643H, a 1948 Piper PA-17 Vagabond, immaculately restored by a trio of men, Jack Tiffany, Herman Leffew, and Don Siefer, from Leading Edge Aircraft in Spring Valley, Ohio.
NEXT YEAR

Sentimental Journey will feature the PA-18 Super Cub next year. It will be held from June 18-21, 2003, at the William T. Piper Memorial Airport in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania (LHV, N41-08.171, W77-25.232).

For information, call 570-893-4200 or VSK.Cape.com/~cruiser/lhv.htm.

For information on the Piper Aviation Museum, go to Piper Museum.com.