

Win a Waco!

A radial engine, an open cockpit, and more fun than you can imagine

BY ALTON K. MARSH



If you're unfamiliar with antique aircraft, you're asking, "AOPA is giving away a *whatco*?" It's a Waco, and the name rhymes with *taco*. AOPA's two-year celebration of the 100th anniversary of powered flight

begins this month with the restoration of your Centennial of Flight Sweepstakes airplane—a pilot-friendly 1940 Waco UPF-7 biplane.

Yes, that means one of you will win it. The GPS-equipped World War II trainer will combine old and new technology, making it the perfect link between aviation's past and present.

Beginning next month, look for bimonthly



reports tracking the complex steps needed to painstakingly restore the aircraft in 2002, followed by the Waco's flight activities in 2003. There also will be coverage in *AOPA ePilot*, our weekly e-mail newsletter, and on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org).

The work has already begun at Rare Aircraft, a company devoted to the restoration of antique Wacos and headquartered in Owatonna, Minnesota.

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Workshops are in nearby Faribault, but the company is in the process of moving to its newly acquired FBO at Owatonna Degner Regional Airport.

You are automatically entered to win when you join AOPA or renew your present membership. To improve your chances, you can also sponsor other new members during the two-year period to receive additional entries. Instructors participating in *AOPA Flight Training* magazine's flight instructor program receive an additional entry for each student-pilot name and address submitted. Any current

See our sweepstakes announcement in this issue for details (p. 19). Until our AOPA Waco is complete, other Wacos will be used to provide familiarization flights to the winners.

AOPA acquires the sixty-third UPF-7

AOPA President Phil Boyer decided in 2000 that he wanted something of a historical nature for the Centennial of Flight aircraft, and he contacted Roy Redman, owner of Rare Aircraft. Restoration can take a year or more, but AOPA needed one in nine months. Could he help?

By fortunate happenstance, Redman could. He happened to have N29352 in his shop, a half-completed Waco UPF-7 that the owner had placed on hold. New

The purpose of the CPTP was to ensure a supply of trained pilots if military needs arose. The aircraft were operated by civilian flight schools with government help. Nearly 600 of the trainers were built, and they included such student-friendly features as wide-stance landing gear that helps to discourage ground loops. Also, the dihedral (a slight V-shape in the wings that improves stability) was removed from the top wing so that it could be raised where it passes over the cockpit, making it easier to get in and out. AOPA's Waco first entered training duties at Flying Service located on Floyd Bennett Memorial Airport in Glen Falls, New York.

The UPF-7—referred to humorously by one Rare Aircraft craftsman as *Oopff 7*, an effort to pronounce UPF—went on to train civilian pilots for future military needs throughout World War II until it passed into private ownership. (The letters UPF stand for the type of engine, wings, and fuselage used. The 7 series began in June 1937. Technically, once the AOPA Waco is fitted with a Jacobs engine, it will be a ZPF-7.) It remained in the Northeast, passing among owners in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania until 1998 when an incident sent it AOPA's way.

The Waco was cruising sedately—that's the only way it knows how to cruise—over Pennsylvania at its usual 99.9-knot cross-country speed. A sudden and violent prop imbalance caused a serious vibration. The pilot landed safely in the only forest clearing available for miles around.

Examination revealed some minor damage that required the aircraft to be trucked from the site. It was eventually sold to David A. Schroeder, an airline pilot who bought it as a restoration project and took it to Rare Aircraft. Schroeder's additional interest in a cabin Waco slowed progress on the UPF-7.

It was just the sort of fast restoration project AOPA needed. There was a problem, however: Schroeder wanted to keep it. Redman proposed a compromise. He found a flying Waco UPF-7 for Schroeder so that Schroeder could sell his restoration project to AOPA. The swap was completed last November. Interestingly, Schroeder and Redman flew together at Northwest Airlines where Schroeder is still a pilot. Redman retired as a Boeing 747 captain.

Schroeder is delighted with the turn of events. While the AOPA aircraft has logbooks dating back only to the 1950s,



A sea of Wacos await restoration work at the Rare Aircraft shop in Owatonna, Minnesota.

member who is on AOPA's Auto Pilot Renewal program receives an additional entry. You may also mail in your entries.

The grand prize winner himself or a family member must be a certificated pilot as of December 31, 2003.

The winner will be chosen in January 2004, but you may not have to wait until then to experience a Waco up close. In a drawing held monthly over the next two years, two dozen of you will win a chance to fly a Waco for yourself. Find out what pilot training—and flying—was like during aviation's Golden Era.

wooden wings had been built by Redman's son, Mike, in 1999 and were sitting in storage. The steel tubes that form the fuselage had been reconditioned.

The aircraft had an interesting 61-year journey before reaching Redman's shop. (By the time it is awarded, our UPF-7—the sixty-third aircraft to come down the assembly line—will be 63 years old.) This particular UPF-7 had spent most of its life flying rather than sitting in a barn as happens to many antique aircraft. It was manufactured by the Waco Aircraft Company in Troy, Ohio, on September 12, 1940, and went into service almost immediately in the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP).

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entries indicate it was flown by people who loved it for its own sake, Schroeder said. Flights were listed as aerobatic flights or rides for friends—all fun flights serving little or no practical purpose. He is delighted that the project Waco has joined an organization of aviation enthusiasts.

Let the restoration begin

As you read this, work has just begun. The restored steel-tube fuselage sits on

wooden supports, waiting for attention. The wings, completed but as yet not covered, sit in a storage room at the Faribault Municipal Airport where they were protected from mice by a resident cat for much of the past two years. The airplane is still in pieces: The engine arrives February 15. It is a national and even international effort. The engine will arrive from Oklahoma, most of the fittings are coming from Illinois, the flying wires and landing wires will be made in Scotland, and the wood is from Alaska.

The F series, according to the book *Waco Aircraft Company: The Famous F*

Series, incorporated many new features, including a 50-percent stagger of the upper and lower wings to give the pilot improved visibility. A modified Heinkel truss used for the wings reduced the number of exposed wires, giving the aircraft a clean-cut appearance.

The motto of the Waco Company was "Ask any pilot." Despite brief experience in any Waco—I flew Schroeder's newly purchased UPF-7—the motto seems to ring true. The aircraft was docile in stalls, responsive, and well-mannered at slow airspeeds. I would certainly brag on it, if you asked. Waco, by the way, doesn't refer to the city in Texas. The letters stand for Weaver Aircraft Company. Clayton Brukner, Elwood Junkin, Charley Meyers, and George Weaver founded the company. According to the Web site for the Waco Aircraft Museum in Troy, Ohio, (www.wacoairmuseum.org) the aircraft company was set aside to help Weaver's brother market his new invention, the Eskimo Pie ice cream treat. However, that business was sold and the men returned to Ohio to build aircraft. Waco operated from 1920 to 1946.

Since the UPF-7 was intended as a military trainer, it could also perform aerobatics, albeit in slow motion. In the interest of thorough research, I intend to make sure that your AOPA sweepstakes aircraft can do all that is advertised. The UPF-7 was a little slow with the standard Continental 220-hp engine, so AOPA will soup it up with a Jacobs 275-hp engine. The Jacobs iteration was originally intended

to make the aircraft a deluxe model for the "sportsman pilot."

That means this aircraft is intentionally designed for fun. Since I will get to fly it, I can hardly wait for it to be completed, although I resisted

the urge to sit in the seat, now resting on the shop floor, and shout, "Vroom!" Or, in this case, "Puckata-puckata-puckata."

Restoration should be completed by fall, in time for the aircraft's first public appearance at AOPA Expo in Palm Springs, California, October 24 to 26. **AOPA**

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