



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE CITY OF YUMA

Perfect landing

Airplane that flew 47 days honored in Yuma

BY ALTON K. MARSH

BEHIND THE SCENES

Car-to-airplane refuelings weren't always smooth. A spotlight was knocked off the side of the Buick twice, and the airplane's hubcap had several dents.

Thousands of people came to see evening refueling runs. They were sure somebody was going to get killed, according to the book, *The Longest Flight*.

How about a nice 1,124-hour flight that goes anywhere you want, as long as you stay within fuel range of Yuma, Arizona? That's what Bob Woodhouse and Woody Jongeward did in a 47-day flight in an Aeronca 15AC Sedan ending October 10, 1949. It demonstrated that Yuma has good flying weather year-round, and two years later helped to convince the military to reopen what is now Marine Corps Air Station Yuma.

The Aeronca was found in Minnesota in the late 1990s; brought back to Yuma, where it was restored; and is installed in the Yuma city hall—along with a mural depicting the transfer of gas cans from a Buick to the airplane. The permanent display is to be dedicated October 10, 2012.

Pumps in the airplane allowed the men to transfer fuel from milk cans—once they were handed up from a car—to the fuel tanks, and to pump new oil to the engine every 100 hours. A failed magneto finally ended the flight. Their record inspired the Hacienda Hotel of Las Vegas to attempt to break it. The Yuma record was broken in 1959 by a Cessna 172 that had taken off from Las Vegas in December 1958 and landed there in February. It was flown by Robert Timm and John Cook (see "Endurance Test, Circa 1958," March 2008 *AOPA Pilot*).

