



National



Association
Magazine

July/August 1989
Volume 2, No. 4

AERONCA OF

by Gareth Gilson

Aeronca Sedan, NC1054H was originally purchased by F.C. Wallace; my grandfather, from Fred Montague who was the owner of Dickerhoof Flying Service of Chanute, Kansas, July 18, 1949. My father, Geoff Gilson, operated the Eureka (Kansas) Municipal Airport at that time and was giving my grandfather instruction toward his pilot's license. Apparently, Dad took delivery of the plane as his name is on the invoice. However, my grandad's name is on the bill of sale.

As nearly as I can tell from the log books the plane had its engine changed at 7.8 hrs. when a magneto gear failed.

It was flown from Middletown, Ohio directly to Chanute where Mr. Montague used it for a demonstrator for almost a year when we bought it with about 34 hrs. T.T. for \$3,064.23 plus tax. Grandad had two options added at that time, a fresh air ventilator kit and wheel pants.

My first recollections of the plane was a trip that I rode along with dad when we took my grandmother from Eureka, Kansas to Fort Worth, Texas to visit my mom's sister and her

family. There was a fancy new General Electric radio range receiver to help us find our way and I will always have "dit...da...dit...da"

burned in my brain to my grave. This was before recording tachometers and all flights had to be recorded in the airframe and engine logs so I was able to locate the dates of this trip beginning on September 10, 1949, about two months before my fourth birthday.

Grandad went on to complete his training and took his check ride in the Sedan. However, he was always a very conservative pilot not flying if the wind was over 5 mph despite the pleas from all us grandkids to take us for a ride. On the occasions that he did, it was great fun and he always had a couple of those white, round ice cream car-

Good view of Gareth's Sedan showing the unpainted wings, which is the way the early ones came from the factory.



THE MONTH

From the Augusta, KS Convention



for a long time, he would go out and knock off the dust, run the engine and, as he called it, pet the plane. Eventually he put the main wheels on blocks and quit "petting", but he would not sell it for some reason and I am thankful for that. He passed away in 1976 and the next year grandmother told me that I could get the airplane flying if I wanted.

I was prepared for the worst. I fully expected the engine to be riddled with rust. There was stain from the trailing edge of the right wing all down the fuselage that hinted of a rotten fuel bladder. The mice had used it for a condo and the belly was full of nests and dead mice. I expected the fabric to be rotten, and the mud dobbers had fun in the wings. Grandad always insisted that all we would have to do was to put gas and oil in the plane and it would be ready to go, but I really had my doubts. With the help from a good friend with an IA, I removed the engine and took it to his shop. There we removed #5 cylinder to check for rust. To our pleasant surprise we found very little rust in the engine and he told me that if I didn't mind it using a little oil to put it back together and run it which is what I did.

tons with lids for my cousin, Robbie, who had tendency toward air sickness. For some reason he was afraid to use a radio even though the old G.E. had voice capability. He wouldn't dream of going into an airport with a control tower. I now understand that the Aeronca Sedan was the ideal plane for him with its honest flight characteristics, and its ample room and load lifting ability because he weighed over 300 lbs.

The last time he flew the plane was in 1966 when he had a mechanic in Iola, Kansas recover the fuselage and control surfaces. After getting it out of the shop he put it in its hangar where it stayed for eleven years. I'm sure I can attribute the low time to the Kansas weather

because it's a rare day when the wind blows less than 5 mph.

At the time he put it away in '66, the plane had only 336 hrs. and



Gareth's Sedan parked with the big boys.

Aeronca of the Month (cont.)

I spent nearly a full day vacuuming the results of eleven years of rodentery from the belly of the plane and most of the mud dobbers nests weren't hard to get to. I put some fuel in the bladder tanks and found that the fellow who recovered the plane failed to tighten a clamp on the fuel line from the right hand tank. I was again pleasantly surprised when the fabric all punched within acceptable limits, including the belly, and every thing else checked out OK. With a new battery installed and air in the tires we were flying again. Grandad was right!

Sometime around 1956 the National Flying Farmers Association, of which my grandfather was a member, initiated a campaign to have all their members change the last letter of their N number to "F" for Flying Farmers. That is how N1054H became N1054F.

I was able to enjoy the plane for almost a year until the old -12 Bendex mags started giving trouble and it was obvious that the strain on my budget would be more than I could stand so back to the hangar it went until I was finally a stranger.

A young family and the hard work of building a career as a pilot kept me from doing anything to the plane until 1985. The thought of the plane deteriorating over in the hangar was agonizing but it seemed that whenever I had money I didn't have the time and vice-versa.

Finally that summer a friend with a J-3 Cub let me use his plane for the fuel and I decided that I could let it rot no longer. I had to fix it up to fly or sell depending on the financial strain.

This time the plane wasn't so easy to re-license. The ailerons and elevators failed to punch. A fuel cell leaked and, of course, I would have to replace both mags and harness. The wood prop was beginning to deteriorate and I had to do something about the smell of the mice in the cabin. I worked through the spring and summer of '86 with the help of my faithful IA friend. I am an air ambulance helicopter pilot and

thanks to the tolerance of my employer, I was able to do most of the work while on standby. I recovered the control surfaces in Stits and had the prop repaired and refinished. I put in new upholstery except for the headliner and that took care of the mouse smell. We reinspected the inside of the engine, replacing most of the gaskets and seals that we could get to, as well as replacing the entire ignition system. I installed a VHF Nav-com in place of the "Faithful G.E." and that lightened the airplane by about 10 lbs.

I was able to enjoy the Sedan for about two years before mag problems struck again. This time a shaft broke in one of the mags between the rotor and the points cam allowing the drive gear to partially unmesh and the cam gear ground it to small, bearing eating pieces. Over a year went by before I was able to find the time to overhaul the engine. I have just recently completed the major and have a fresh annual to enjoy this summer. Next winter I intend to recover the fuselage replacing the headliner and windshield and corrosion proof the wings so that by next summer, I will have gone completely through the airplane. I intend to keep the same colors, Santa Fe Red and Dianna Cream, and will go back to an NC number. However, to honor a certain Flying Farmer, I might keep the F instead of the H. I hope my son develops an interest in fun flying as

I have and becomes the fourth generation to enjoy a most endearing family Sedan.

Gareth Gilson was born in Columbia, MO, and raised in Eureka, KS. Gareth flew with his father and other relatives while growing up but didn't start logging dual until 1967.

In 1965 he joined the Kansas National Guard, was activated in 1968 and sent to Ft. Carson, CO. In April 1969, he was accepted into the Army Rotary Wing Flight School, graduated a year later as a Warrant Officer and went immediately to Viet Nam where he was awarded the Air Medal, Bronze Star and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Upon discharge from active duty, Gareth rejoined the National Guard, flying numerous lift missions, as well as many air show displays and demos with the Crane retiring in 1986.

He was employed by Great Lakes Aircraft in Wichita from 1972 to 1979. Since 1979 to present, he has been with Midwest Corporate Aviation as a Helicopter EMS pilot, as well as a fixed wing charter pilot.

Besides the A-Star Helicopter, he flies all other aircraft operated by Midwest Corporate Aviation including Barons, King Air 90s, 200s, has an ATP and type rating in the Citation 500 series. Gareth enjoys flying a variety of different aircraft and has no preference of one over another.

Gareth lives in Andover, KS, with his wife Dixie, an elementary school teacher and their three children, Amanda 15, Geoffrey 12 and Jennifer 9.



PHOTO BY RON YOUNG

The only Aeronca K we have ever had at our Middletown Convention is this one, NC19349, a 1937, restored about five years ago by its owner Leo J. Carroll of 1315 W. Seminary Ave., Bloomington, IL 61701.