

# R.A.R.E. REPORT

RESALE AIRCRAFT RESEARCH EVALUATION

## The Aeronca Sedan

An elephant turned ballerina, the last Aeronca was STOL before the term was invented

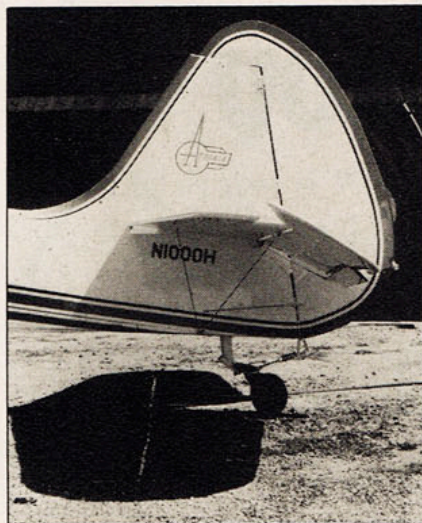
By Bob O'Hara

On an especially warm day in spring, some new buds suddenly appeared on the young sycamore tree beside the EAA hangar at Placerville Airport in California. Just a few paces away, over at the Ragtime Aero shop, the crew was tightening the last screw on a flawless restoration — an immaculate Aeronca Sedan.

The sycamore tree and the Aeronca Sedan had something very special in common. Both were memorials to an aviator who had been a charter member of Chapter 512 EAA in old Hangtown. Mike Womak was killed in the crash of his French Stampe biplane shortly before his treasured restoration was completed. The members of Chapter 512 planted the sycamore in Mike's honor, and Mike's brother, Bob, took on the task of making Mike's dream come true — getting old number one back in the air.

Aeronca Sedan number one is now flying, and N1000H has caused plenty of nostalgia buffs at the fly-ins to flock around for a closer look. Its fantastic green-and-white paint job over a cosmetically clean airframe is a far cry from the basket case that Mike trucked home several years ago. Its twisted steel tubes and splintered wood had been a rebuilders' challenge that Mike couldn't resist. This was to be his second sedan, and because it was the first one ever built it would be well worth the investment in time and money.

For those who haven't had the pleasure of flying this machine, take my word for it, it's a sheer delight. Not fast of course, but there is nothing more comfortable, roomy or friendly. It gets on and off very fast and would qualify to be called a STOL airplane in every sense. But a lot of old machines were STOL before "they" built STOL air-



*The ample fin and rudder give the Sedan its arrow-like flight characteristics. Note how simply the steerable tailwheel is controlled off the rudder.*

planes. Madison Avenue has crept into every niche of aviation and given us names for stuff we have always taken for granted.

The Sedan, or Model 15AC, was the last aircraft type to be produced by the Aeronca Manufacturing Co. before it quit lightplane construction to go into other forms of aircraft work and to design programs that included subcontract work for other airframe builders. The Sedan first appeared in 1947 and was placed in production the next year. Because of its relatively simple construction of welded tubular steel and straight planform wing, the Sedan was produced in quantity. Records show that over 400 Sedans were delivered and perhaps 150 of these are still active in the United States, Canada and several foreign countries.

Most Sedans are powered with the very smooth-running six-cylinder, Continental C145, 145-hp engine. A small number were delivered with the 6A40165-B3 Franklin powerplant. An interesting feature of Sedan is its mixed construction. The fuselage and tail group are fabric covered, but the wing is a single-spar, metal-covered affair with rubber tank bladders.

As you might expect, the Sedan is superb on floats or skis, and it's not surprising that many Sedans are making their way as bush planes in Alaska and Canada. The large cabin door and ample interior allow for some 100 cu.ft. of cargo space (with the pilot alone).

N1000H has been restored almost to its original condition; the instrument board has been kept free of later-day gadgetry to preserve the stock appearance. The original engine has been freshly overhauled and sports a metal propeller in place of the factory-supplied wooden one. The airframe was repaired, then sandblasted and primed. All formers had to be remanufactured and new stringers fastened into position before the Dacron was stretched over. The Dacron and new Scott tailwheel assembly were concessions to serviceability.

The overall quality of Ragtime Aero's restoration work has won Bob Womak "Best Aeronca" trophies at several West Coast fly-ins, but most importantly it represents a goal achieved and proves once again that battered, old airplanes can be made new again with patience, time, and of course, money.

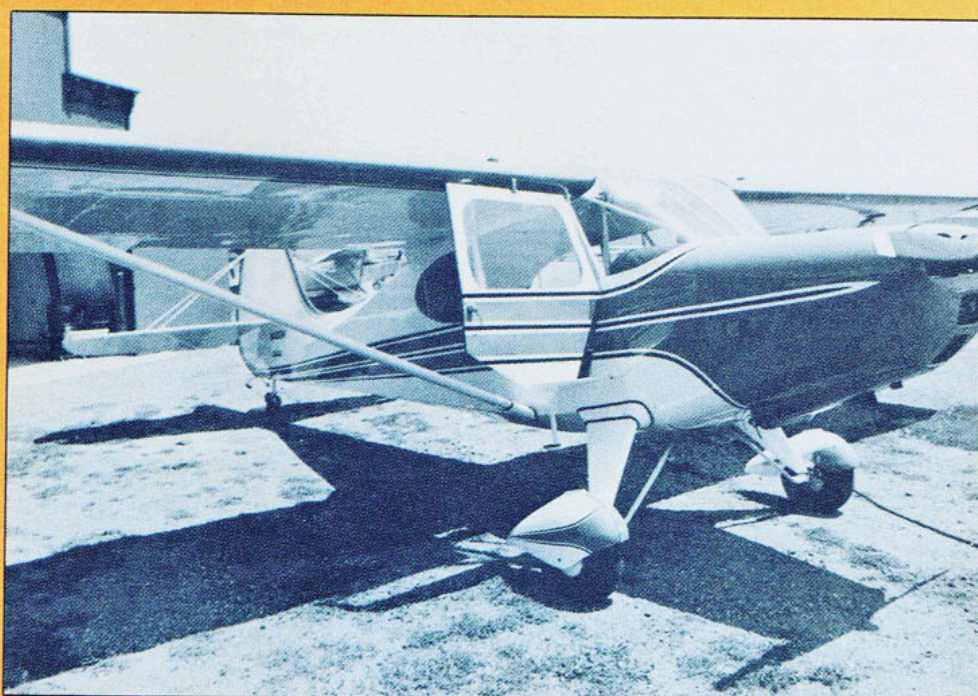
Just looking at the Sedan is a pleasure; flying it doubles your pleasure. As I mentioned earlier, the Sedan is a large, slow



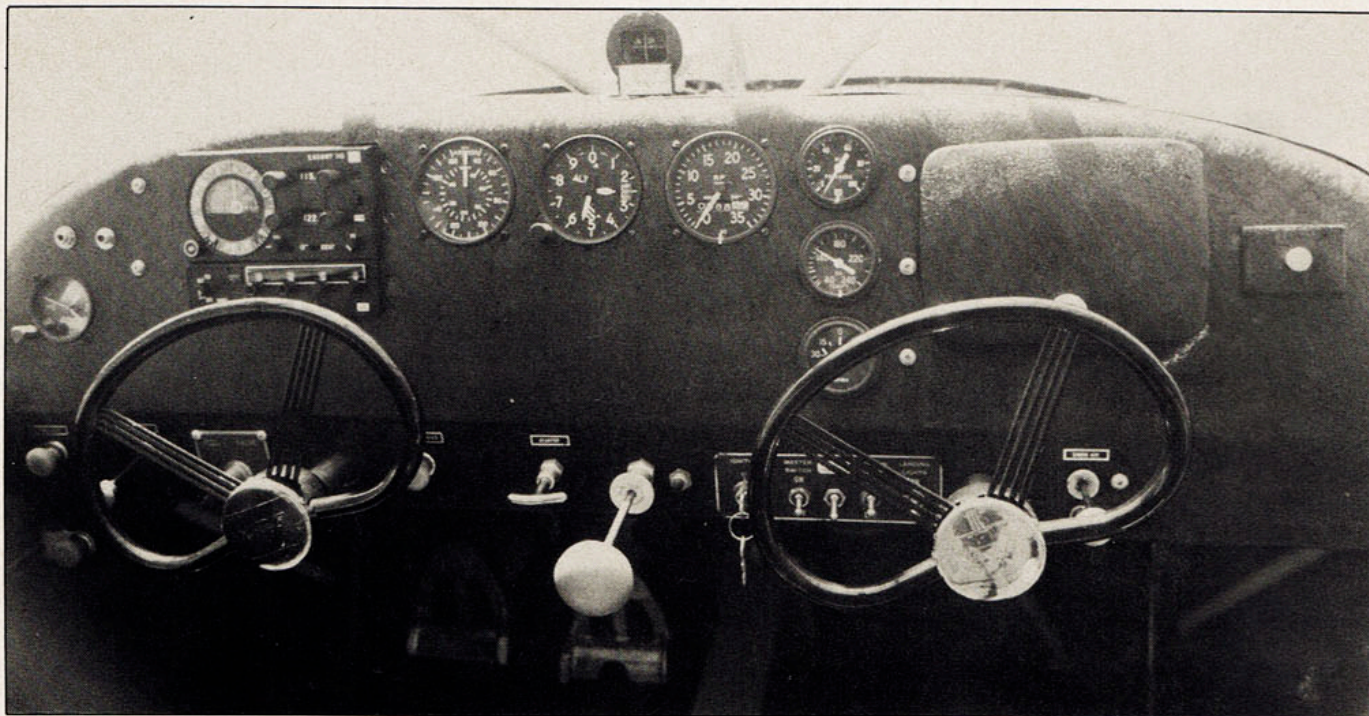


*The Sedan has outstanding visibility for the crew forward and out the top of the windscreen.*

*The airknocker Sedan is an airplane with more than pleasing lines. The stock-issue wheel fairings dress it up very well for city-type flying.*







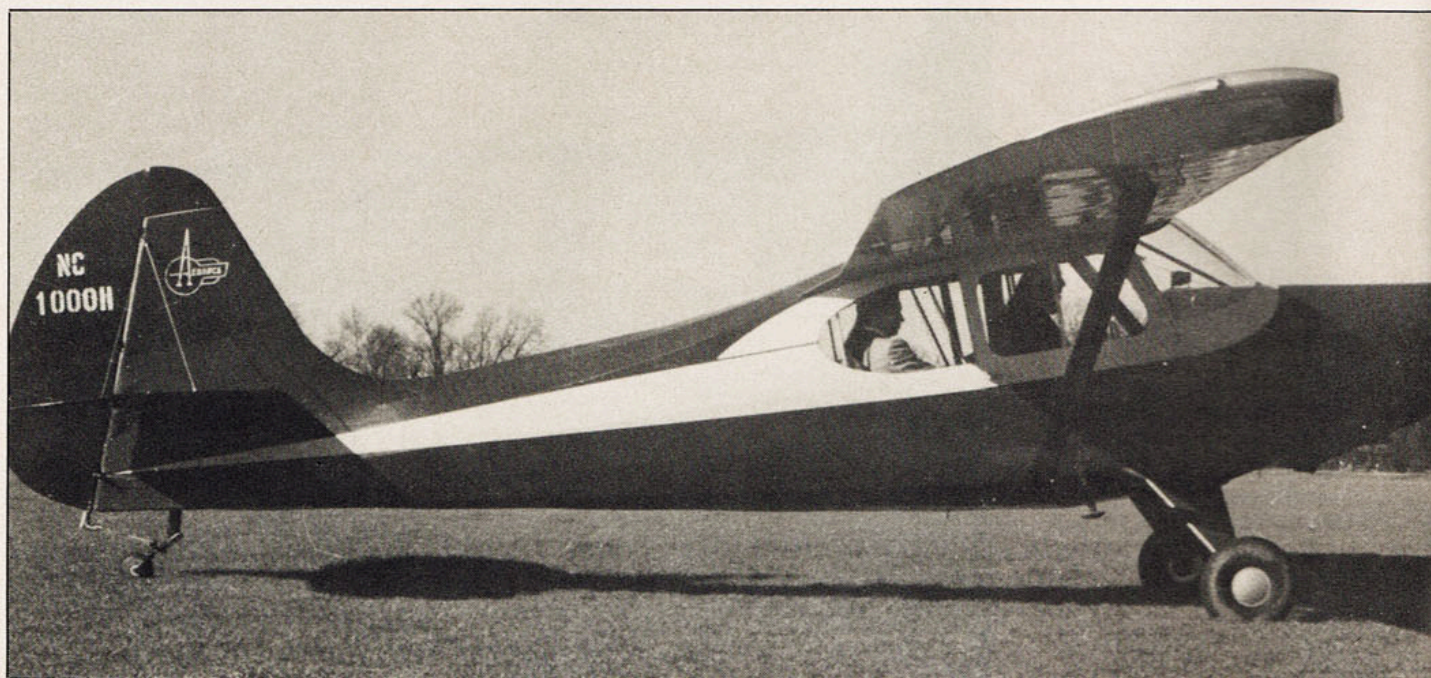
*The simplistic instrument board of the Sedan is preserved, with the minimum of avionics and gadgets.*

### **AERONCA MODEL 15AC**

Wingspan: 37ft 6 in  
 Height: 7 ft  
 Length: 25 ft 3 in  
 Power: 145 hp Continental  
 Cruise Speed: At 75 % power, fully grossed  
 at sea level: 105 mph  
 Top Speed: Same conditions, 120 mph  
 Stall Speed: Power off, 53 mph  
 Rate of Climb: Fully loaded, 650 fpm  
 All Up Weight: 2050 lbs

Baggage: 120 lbs  
 Useful Load: 900 lbs  
 Wing Area: 200 sq.ft.  
 Wing Loading: 10.02 lbs  
 Power Loading: 14.01 lbs  
 Fuel Capacity: 36 U.S. Gallons  
 Range at 105 mph: 430 sm  
 Empty Weight: 1150 lbs  
 Elec. System: 12 volts DC  
 Landing Lights: 400,000 cp

*A strong family resemblance can be seen between the Sedan and today's Bellanca Citabria, which is a robust airknocker to anyone over 35.*







The giant door allows easy access to the wheelhouse, the seaplane version had two of 'em.

airplane. It reminds you of an elephant turned ballerina — light on its feet, so to speak. The enormous fin and rudder stabilize the Sedan to the point of piety. It's a big, humble, Saint Bernard of an airplane. There isn't a mean streak in its soul. The ailerons are responsive, albeit a tad slow. The Sedan is a nice flyer — I'd call it one of the best four-placers in the class.

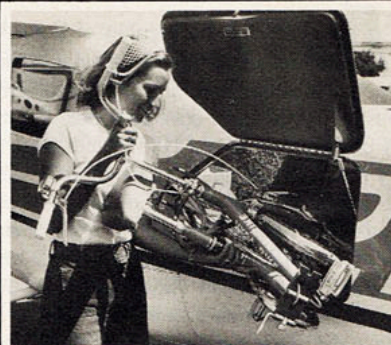
And it really is a four. It will take four normally equipped gamblers in and out of South Lake Tahoe without any problem. The casinos guarantee that you will leave lighter than when you went in, anyway. It seems that most four-place machines are fairly good two-placers in the high country. Not so with this amiable stork of an airplane. It takes a tad longer to get off at high elevations, just like any other airplane, but those large wings do plenty of work for you on the way over the peaks. At 2500 feet elevation with an all-up weight of 2050 pounds, the Sedan is off in about 500 feet with an outside temperature of about 75 degrees F. The Sedan lands very short, too, but that's up to the pilot and how slowly he can get over the fence. With a normal angle of

dangle, the ASI will read about 55-60 mph at touchdown.

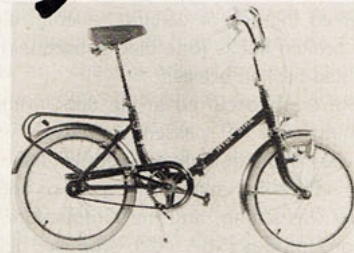
The door is so arranged that you enter the pilot's and copilot's seats ahead of the strut, and the passengers can emplane just as easily. The seaplane model, the S15AC, has a door on both sides of the cabin — a nice feature.

Rumors tell of Sedans with larger and larger engines being bushed in the boondocks. It would not be hard to see a 180 Lycoming four-banger hanging up front. But the old 145 is incredibly smooth and can be flown out of petty cash.

Old 1947 ads show guys in double breasted suits and overly-frocked ladies lounging around N1000H. They seem pleased with their new machine, fresh out of the prototype department at Aeronca. These people, posed so woodenly, don't look half as pleased as Bob looks when he's flying the very same machine today, or as pleased as you will be if you ever get a chance to fly it. In retrospect, wouldn't it be neat if Wag-Aero had offered this airplane as a kit? A real four-place bush plane for the homebuilder — hmmmmmm, just savor the thought. •



## Hyda Bike



Save yourself a hike! RIDE A BIKE! It saves time and money, not to mention your aching feet. In fact, we think the Hyda Bike is the ideal answer to every pilot's needs wherever he goes.

**Weights 40 lbs. and measures 29"x 29"x10" when folded**

The Hyda Bike folds neatly in half and can be stashed behind the pilot's seat. And when you land you're ready to go in seconds because the Hyda Bike is so easy to assemble without the use of any tools. Other features include:

- **Handle bars and deluxe padded spring seat adjusts to any size**
- **Quick action front and rear caliper brakes**
- **Chrome finish fenders and chain guards**
- **20" white wall balloon tires**
- **Tail light and rear reflectors with a generator powered headlight**

Choose between the one-speed, available in high gloss paint finish of either red, blue or green for \$159 or the 3-speed shift derailer type which is available in red for \$16.95.

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**Guarantee**

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☐ **Three-speed for \$169.95**

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