November 2009

Seabee Club Newsletter

John Galloway and Glen Alton's Seabee #593 being brought back to flying glory!

Hello Everyone,

It warms my heart to see wonderful restorations still being completed. A few months ago I'd shown you the two in Bremerton. John and Glen's airplane above looks magnificent, I can't wait to see the pictures of the completion. It saddens me some to see the prices so low on some of the airplanes for sale, but what an opportunity to buy up some airframes. By the way, Sam Richardson just dropped the price again on his beautiful Bee. Anyone want a water view building lot in Port Orchard, WA?

Many of you have been following the project of Pete Norman in Carson City. He is flying his Bee and it is impressing people every where he goes, I wish I could have made the Clear Lake event to see it again. Check out his web page for some great pictures. http://flyawayplaces.com/

Richard Lawrence is a new addition to our family. He contacted me from BC and mentioned that he needs a Right Wing for his restoration project. See his contact information in the Classifieds if you know anything about finding a right wing.

For those of you working on your airplanes, or anything mechanical for that matter, please see the Safety Section below for this months recipe for disaster. I had no idea how dangerous Liquid Wrench could be!

It's also exciting to be in contact with some of our Seabee pioneers that are willing to share their stories with us, another reason to make Clear Lake if you've never made the event. I'd mentioned a few months ago that Don Kyte is interested in recreating his great Alaskan adventure next year or maybe in 2011. I'd forgotten that he sent me the story of 8 Seabees flying to Alaska and Back to Seattle. I just finished reading it, what a great trip that must have been. I've included the attachment "Alaska Seabee Safari" as a .pdf file so you can print it and take it to your favorite reading place. I think I was born just a few years too late, I wish we could do that kind of thing again. Is it my imagination, or are those kind of adventures just not happening anymore? It seems everyone is just too busy or too broke.

For your reading pleasure, I've also included another great story. The other attachment was written by one of my favorite authors, Richard Bach. Richard wrote this years ago and it's been copied from an old Airprogress magazine. The attached email files are actually scanned pictures of magazine pages. It's a big file, but should be easy to read. Interesting to note, at one point Richard quotes Don. Enjoy.

All of you are aware of the engine choices for your Seabee I'm sure. The most popular STC being the 3 versions of the GO-480 and the GO-435. A few aircraft have the IO-540 of which very few were done. Even less prevalent are those with the IO-470P. John Bamby was at Clear Lake and writes about the conversion. He is looking for a partner for his "470P" project. I don't agree with his performance figures, my editor notes will be in black at the bottom, but he writes.....

"Now that Mike Couch has completed the STC on his IO470P seabee and flown it to the Clear lake fly in I am looking for a partner to complete my STC for the same engine. I have a complete IO470 P. I have all the pieces except wing floats and have rebuilt all the control surfaces landing gear and bottoms....

I started on this project in "87 then took a break when I Lost my job in 89. then a further hiatus while raised four kids All this time Mike Couch of American Aircraft Sales in Hayward was doing a similar IO470P conversion on a seabee This year He finally got his STC done, flew off the local hours and then flew it up to the Clear Lake Fly In.

My Bee is all stripped but the wings, The bottoms and tail cone were drilled off, The gear was completely rebuilt, the entire insidehull has been etched alidined and finch primed and the aft bottom and tail cone put back together. in addition all the tail components have been unrivited stripped, etched alidined finch primed rervited and stored in he dark and are ready for reasembly and paint. The IO470P engine has 1000 hours but the log books are not up to date and it has be sitting in storage for twenty years so it will need a teardown and inspection . the prop is a hartzel ax 3. I have hub and blades but there is an ad on the blade clamps and I do not know if mine will pass or need to be replaced.

I would like to do this partnership one of two ways. The A method would be for someone to put 50 grand in the bank and we would do a 50 50 split and use the fifty grand to finish the bird overhhaul the engine and prop and buy sime new avionics. the B method is for someone to give me personally twenty five grand and he again gets half . as is and we do a budget job splitting the cost from here on in and get a basic flying bird and keep flying for the last 800 hours on the engine till TBO. Then decide what to do. I have a complete shop and own or have accesss to all the tools needed to finish the job. I am just out of cash.

The bottom line is that the250 hp IO470 P seebee outperforms the305 hp GIO 480 Mc Hugh conversion 120 MPH on 13 GPH vs 116 MPH on 18 GPH I got the figures at the Clear lake fly in from Mike and from Gene Balon of michigan who has flown one for years on an uncompleted STC and is a darn site cheaper to overhaul, not to mention much less expensive to do. If anyone is interested contact me at 510-352-4084. John Bambey

{GO-480's are 270, 295 or 340HP. The big one being supercharged. 12-15GPH for the fuel burn on the normally aspirated, and 18 for the biggie. Speed, well, that debate will rage on among owners until there is a good side by side fly-off. The conversions are usually 5-10 mph faster than the Franklin airplanes. The Bee is a barn door and 105-110, maybe 115 would be the max for cruise but it will take lots of power to go just a bit faster. In 10 years of operation, our 295HP Bee is usually flown close to gross weight and we average 105MPH @ 12GPH on a long cruise of about 3hours. We flight plan for 15GPH on local flights at low altitude. From what everyone has told me, pitot location and type can make difference in readings. BH}

Worthy Cause

Most of you are aware of AOPA's Airport Support Network. They've published a list of Airports without representatives. If any on this list are airports you operate out of I'd encourage you to contact them and try and organize some support.
http://www.aopa.org/asn/target_arpts.html?WT.mc_id=091016epilot&WT.mc_sect=ast#wa

Safety A recipe for disaster...

If you're like me, I can't afford to just have all the work done on my airplane, so I do whatever I can to help keep the cost down. I don't mind getting dirty and actually enjoy learning about what keeps the old girl flying. I know some products have no place around an airplane and never gave much thought to things like WD-40 or Liquid Wrench. I received the following study about the effectiveness of some well known products and forwarded it out to some others I know. Here is the story, and most importantly, the response I got back from my IA that follows the study. BEE careful what you use!

Machinist's Workshop Magazine tested penetrants for break out torque on rusted nuts. Significant results! They arranged a subjective test of all the popular penetrants with the control being the torque required to remove the nut from a "scientifically rusted" environment.

Penetrating oil ..... Average load
None ..... 516 pounds
WD-40 ..... 238 pounds
PB Blaster ..... 214 pounds
Liquid Wrench ..... 127 pounds
Kano Kroil ..... 106 pounds
ATF-Acetone mix....53 pounds

The ATF-Acetone mix was a "home brew" mix of 50 - 50 automatic transmission fluid and acetone. Note the "home brew" was better than any commercial product in this one particular test. Our local machinist group mixed up a batch and we all now use it with equally good results. Note also that "Liquid Wrench" is about as good as "Kroil" for about 20% of the price. Don't use Liquid Wrench! Here's what my IA had to say.... "Interesting but I did not see the best we have found tested National Chemsearch "Yield" I haven't seen any commercial product beat it yet. One thing many do not know is NEVER, NEVER use anything with graphite [liquid wrench is one] in it on anything subject to high temp. and high stress like stainless steel exhaust. It causes embrittlement and failure.
I know of a King Air that a recent hot section inspection was done and the mechanic reassembled the front case ("C" Flange) hardware and bolts with anti-seize compound that had graphite in it. In flight the whole front of the engine including prop left the aircraft.
All the bolts failed!"

Seaplane Safety Blog (new) -this is a new volunteer effort being done by Jason Baker.

He's the guy that moderates the new SPA Forum. He writes...
"3 months ago I started a Seaplane Safety Blog www.jasonjamesbaker.wordpress.com that was well received and has gained 1000+ readers within a short time frame. I am currently working with several DPE's and FAA Inspectors to grow and expand my blog, so it can serve current and future Seaplane Pilots."
If you get a chance, take a look, he's doing a nice job.

Classifieds Listings will be for 6 months unless I hear from you. After that, they will be gone... renew or update your ad as long as you like! Cleaning out your hanger, sell it here! Need some parts, let us know!

Right Wing Needed!
AS MENTIONED I NEED A RIGHT WING....., FOR NOW?RICHARD LAWRENCE
250-675-3008 or email richard@airspeedwireless.ca

Seabee Art!

Ginny Ivanicki is an artist and Seabee lover. Ginny does some incredible oil paintings of the 40's and 50's that include other seaplanes and warbirds too. You can see her works at www.elliottlouis.com/dynamic/artists/Virginia_Ivanicki_Strell.asp. Contact her at ivanicki@telus.net or 604-709-0190 9/09

The Remarkable Tahoe Special Experimental Amphibian is for Sale!

Grand Champion Oshkosh, Grand Champion Sun & Fun, numerous first place awards at airshows throughout the USA. The best single engine four seat seaplane in the world. Powered by 405 HP LS-6 Corvette V8. Corvette air conditioning and heat. Four bladed custom reversible MT propeller, custom upholstery and paint by Paul Shepherd. 446 hours aircraft and engine. 9.8 gallons per hour on auto gas, 120 gallon fuel capacity. Will consider trade/trade in for Husky, Super Cub, Bearhawk, American Champ High Country or Maule. $185,000. Aircraft is at Carson City NV. Will deliver for expenses. Contact Steve Lantz at stevelantz@aol.com or call at 775 720 4157 10/09

Turbocharged SeaRey

Options include; Hydraulic gear, Heel brakes, Electric trim, Whelen strobes, King com radio, King transponder, 121.5 mHz ELT, Nav lights. Rotax 914.turbocharged engine 115 hp. Full electrical system. Dual electric fuel boost pumps. 137 total hours. Built by an A and P mechanic. Always hangared. $45,000. (A new Rotax 914 sells for $31,000 by itself.) Contact Tom Watkins 253-549-4549 Cell 602-284-0770. 8/09

PRICE REDUCED AGAIN- SEABEE with Ground-Up Restoration **FOR SALE**

$65,000 1947 Republic Seabee N6755K, S/N 1043, , T.T. 650, Engine & Prop 17 SMOH, Spare A/W B9F, Alternator, Airwolf oil Filter, new glass paint and interior 07, wide spray rails, wing ext's., overhead quadrant, Cleveland brakes., new fuel cell, inboard strakes, steerable T/W all logs for two other photos, visit Barnstormers website http://www.barnstormers.com/ad_detail.php?ID=171092 Contact Sam czechride@canby.com - located Wilsonville, OR phone: 503 678-5114 07/09

FOR SALE

1947 SEABEE, RC3 SN395, TTAF 1463, Franklin B9F, TT 629, 12 STOH, Reversing 3 blade Prop, TT Prop 197, 12 SPOH, Bendix/King KX 125 Nav/Com, Cleveland Brakes, New Engine Control Cables 2004, Fuel Cell replaced 1996, Artex ELT, Wing Extensions, Large Spray Rails, Never operated in Salt Water. Location Muskoka, Ontario, CYQA. Asking $55,000, Contact: Lorne McLean 905-989-2798, 416-434-0091 cell, or lornemclean@rogers.com 3/09

Harzite Blades 4 sale!

(I would have jumped on this tailwheel had I not already found one, I believe the Bendix is superior to some of the others out there. Go ahead, ask me why? These blades are absolutely beautiful, they belong in a museum!)

2 Brand New Hartzite propeller blades Design # L8427... These blades were manufactured by Hartzell for the Seabee and Navion, in conjunction with Franklin engine, at the time they were called the first composite blades and I will sell both for $1900.00.

Contact Kim dos Santos at jaspat4kim@gmail.com, (203) 915-2000 Cell, (203) 877-7750 is Home, or (203) 877-7750 Fax

WOW, Another Northwest SuperBee! GO 480 Simuflight Conversion, fuel injected.

Recent engine overhaul. New 3 bladed Hartzel propeller with Beta Ring pitch control, fully reversible. Droop tip extended wings. Collins microline VHF, transponder, ADF. VIR and Morrow Apollo Loran C. Digital fuel management system Miniflo L. Steerable tail wheel. To inspect airplane, call (253)752-4987 to arrange an appointment. Ben Blackett wbnsurgconsult@comcast.net 02/09

LS-6 powered 350 HP Corvette "BEE" for sale, NOW U.S. registered!

Don't miss this rare "BEE",it is a great aircraft. No oil required between oil/filter chgs. BURNS LESS THAN 10 USG PER HOUR ON PREMIUM AUTO FUEL.
-MGTW 3350 lbs.,Usable load 1200 lbs., rate of climb, over 600 F.P.M. at Max Gross @ SL.
-Hartzell wide cord composite fully reverse-able prop w/spare COMPOSITE & Metal blades.
-Wide spray rails w/propellor" No-Spray shield " at hull step, works great.
-Spectacular T/O performance, even off calm water, at full gross weight, 19 sec's
-All new windows, all new stainless control cables, bow door w/auto hold open feature.
-Aircraft totally re-wired,standby alternator, split-able dual battery system.

-Cabin heater & defog system, free fall undercarriage with positive downlock feature.
-Black stainless disc brakes,good tires and positive tail wheel lock,new 75 gal.fuel bladder.
-Capacitance type fuel tank gauge system, Removable 15 gal long range aux fuel tank.
-New paint & new upholstery & carpet 1 year ago. Short wings, splate tips, flasher beacon.
-All new Inst. panel with COM,transponder, stdby nav/com, Garmin GPS, vertical compass,
-Vac.gyro horizon,some spares, and many more extras too numerous to mention.Meets all specs for import into U.S.A.
Contact Ken at winterhawk23@hotmail.com or Phone 604-943-3380 (home) 604-813-7794 (cell)
Asking price $115.000.00 US 01/09

Roger Duke's Super Seabee (New Price) and Home are 4 sale.....

Serial #56, Simuflight GO480-B1A6, 270 HP, logs since new in 9/16/46. Hangared, TTAF 2188, Engine only 600 since overhaul. Reversible Prop 322 since overhaul, 5 yr. AD last year (same as overhaul), Landing light each wing tip. Overhead engine controls, Large spray rails, Locking tail wheel, Cleveland brakes, Whelen strobe system, Daubenspeck droop wing tips, KT 76A transponder, KR 86 ADF, KY97A Comm., Narco 122 Nav., Northstar M2V Loran/GPS, $95,000. Contact Roger Duke 360-321-1537. email rduke@whidbey.com 02/09

Airpark Home on Whidbey

Roger is also selling his home. If the following link doesn't work, go to Windermere's website and type in the following MLS # 27025608. WOW
http://www.windermere.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Listing.ListingDetail&ListingID=17411843

G 21A Grumman Goose

Serial Number B 32 is one of the best fresh-water Gooses in existence. It is a straight, corrosion free, always-hangared and well maintained aircraft perfect for long-range exploration. It has only 4,000 hours since it was rebuilt in 1982 for the late Bob Richardson of Seattle.
Total airframe time: 8,638 hours.
Clean, smooth-running P&W R985s with 890 hours and good compression.
Heavy Hartzell props and Twin Beech cowls.
Retractable water rudder and McKinnon retractable floats
Electric up and crank down landing gear.
Mallard Goodyear wheels and brakes (Great!)
Electric fuel pump and long-range fuel tanks
Bubble windows in cockpit, picture windows in cabin.
One-piece front bow hatch.
Full King IFR package including HSI, RMI, and Radio Altimeter
New interior with six quick-release original Goose seats on tracks.
Original paint since 1982 rebuild. Still has good gloss.
Complete logs, beginning with original 1943 delivery logs.
For more details and pictures, please see http://www.tanglefoot.org/gooseforsale.html
Price: $650,000 with new annual.
Editor's note: This owner KNOWS Grummans. If he says it's one of the finest, you can count on it. 1/09

Other Interesting Web Sites

http://www.tanignak.com/More Amphibian Adventures.htm which has some wonderful Widgeon, Goose and other amphib stories,
More history from our friend Andy Shane if you are interested in the Pan Am flying boats. Check out....
http://www.flyingclippers.com/main.html or
http://www.rbogash.com/B314.html Carl Hankwitz has republished the 1949/1950 movie featuring his family's Seabee. You can view it online at
http://web.mac.com/chankwitz/BlueHorizons/Movie.html if you'd like to contact him, he can be reached at chankwitz@mac.com
www.alaska.faa.gov/flyak/
http://shaunlunt.typepad.com/shootings/
www.dunk-you.com emergency egress training.
www.sfahistory.org Society for Aviation History

www.clearlakesplashin.com

homepage.mac.com/gotta1der/PhotoAlbum28.html personal Clearlake photos

www.dhvied.com/clearlakesplashin personal Clearlake photos

www.aerocheck.com
www.hu-16.com
www.SeaPlaneOps.com
www.flightcontractservices.com
www.rcairplane.net Easy to build Seabee with a 72" wing span, other great models too. Contact Bill Price bprice@puc.edu

Canadian Information

www.alaska.faa.gov/flyak/
http://www.bcfloatplaneassociation.com/
http://www.floatplanepilots.com/
http://www.floatplaneflyin.com/index.html
www.alertbay.com/eagleair/ Looks like a great place to go, let's plan a trip!
www.canadianseaplane.com/index.htm

Seabee Products And Information

Bubble Windows Aircraft Windshields in Los Angeles is run by a lady named Judy. They do a great job according to Steve Lantz. The bubble molds are there and all she needs is your old windows as pattern for size. Call 562-430 8108

Wing Walks, those things you put on the wings when you want to get up and clean up the oil mess...
Jim Dixon's dad is a retired carpenter and will make these for $100 each. He does a great job from the original plans, they just aren't quite as wide. Which is nice, they are a lot easier to handle. I have two one for each side. He also puts felt on the bottom edges so they don't scratch the wing and carpet on top. Contact Jim jdickson@intd.com 360-701-1119 or 253 851-6315.

Walk Around Inspection
http://www.aircraftwalkaround.com/seabee/seabee.htm is an interesting series of pictures of a walk around. Note the high polish job and a very interesting water rudder.

Leading Edge Wing Tanks (I want some of these...)
Second generation Seabee Guru, Henry Ruzakowski, has developed tanks that will hold at least 15 useable gallons per side. They are made of carbon fiber and Kevlar and will gravity feed to the main tank with the operation of one lever. They will be done on a field approval, so you'll have to take your airplane to him in Florida. So, let's plan a trip to Sun and Fun!!! Call or email Henry for more information. 561-436-0821 amphibs1@aol.com

The Seabee CD and the new Newsletter CD! The Seabee CD contains all the Bulletins, Flight Manual, Parts Manuals, etc.. He states ..."Everyone I have sold this CD to has found it most useful. I have re-typed all of the Service Bulletins and reformatted the parts manuals for easier reading. The Newsletter CD contains most of the old Seabee news letters by George Mojonnier, and Richard Sanders. No special software is required. All files are in Adobe Acrobat format and I include a reader with the CD. Once the Acrobat Reader is installed, just put the CD in the computer and it starts automatically! Contact Steve at smestler@pbtcomm.net I have them both, they're a great reference!

The Seabee Experts

Simuflight's Back They have been back in business since the first of the year for parts, maintenance and restoration work. Ken Thompson runs the 6000 sq ft facility in Fallon NV and their engineering and operations are run by Scott Henderson out of Anchorage Alaska. They also offer a traveling A&P/IA Seabee expert supported by their shop that can handle anything that is wrong with a Seabee. Simuflight's Fallon facility is a complete Seabee maintenance station. Please contact Scott Henderson (scott@simuflight.net) 907-339-8085 x6101. You can also visit their website at http://www.simuflight.net for more information. In addition to Simuflight's many STC'd and non STC'd kits they are also working with the FAA to begin producing replacement parts for the Seabee.

New From Simuflight

We have not officially announced it but McHugh Aviation completed an STC for an electric trim replacement for the Republic Seabee (RC-3) this last year. Due to the extensive FAA rules on PMA it is still not ready for shipping but we are taking pre-orders at this time and I am hopeful shipping will occur sometime this fall.

This STC was the final project my father (Joe McHugh) was working on for the Seabee and took an additional three years after I took things over to complete but is a nice kit. The FAA put us through the ringer on this one (primary flight system) but in the end they were very happy with the results. This system completely replaces the original trim system and replaces it with three servo motors (two for the elevator, one for the rudder), the entire installation weights less than a pound. This system also adds a rudder trim. The installation removes ALL the original hardware. Actuation of the trim is via a typical hat switch on the yoke and/or alternate panel switches.

The system was extensively flight tested (both our internal DER and the FAA flight test staff) with special attention to management of flight controls and the system in trim runaway situations. The result is a clean and simple system that addresses one of the high maintenance systems on the aircraft and of course adds that long desired rudder trim.

For more information please check our website at: http://www.simuflight.net/content/view/30/29/ or e-mail me at scott@simuflight.net.

Scott Henderson, McHugh Aviation Inc. http://www.simuflight.net/http://www.simuflight.net

IRSOC (International Republic Seabee Owners Club) Now at www.republicseabee.com It's still the best source of information and experts on the old beast that you will find. If you haven't checked out the IRSOC and Joined? Go ahead, it's free, with free classifieds for members. The 337 database and clearing house for 337 forms and field approvals is also a free service to IRSOC members. For the time being all forms would have to be faxed to Jim: May to November (315) 531-9168; November to May (386) 767-0706.

"Frankenstein Guru" Rich Brumm in Long Island, N.Y. is also one of the experts. If you ever heard of a problem with the Franklin, he has the fix for it! He's also done some interesting things to fix other plagues that continue to give Bee owners headaches. Tired of changing wheel bearings? Ask him about the "Double Lip Seal!" **brummrichkaren@aol.com** Phone: 631-779-3178 Office: 516-885-5879

Seabee Discussion Group This is a great Discussion group that gets lots of activity. If you post a question, you'll be sure to get a quick response with good experience behind it. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Seabee If you don't want to join the group right away, you can log in as "seabee guest" with a password of "Seabee". Enjoy, it's a great site with lots of great pictures and links.

www.seabee.info/seabee.htm The author of the discussion group has created this fabulous website that is fast becoming the place to go for knowledge and history on the old Beast. Steinar has done a great job and you can spend hours looking at all his information.
Speaking of engines.... Randy Komko is putting together a new website... Check it out for current pricing on Lycoming engines..Props..parts..ect
he'll be updating it with 2007 prices soon.. http://www.seabee-transition.com/

Bee Sea n'ya,
Bruce Hinds, President
Washington Seaplane Pilots Association
Seabee Club Newsletter
360-769-2311 home
360-710-5793 cell
www.wa-spa.org

To: Bruce Hinds <brucehinds@earthlink.net>
Subject: SeaBee article

Hello Bruce!
I have an aviation historian friend who loaned me some old magazines recently... I thought that you might enjoy reading one of the articles that I found in the May - 1972 /Air Progress/ magazine.
Happy landings,
Dave Johnston

PS: I am enjoying R/C airplanes...I only have one float-plane so far but am looking forward to possibly a 74" wingspan Grumman Goose.

adventures aboard a flying floating summerhouse

You wouldn't expect Richard Bach to buy an ordinary airplane— but a 1947 Republic Seabee amphibian?

By Richard Bach

He was selling his airplane to me because he needed the money, but still there were three years of his life in the thing and he liked it and he wanted to hope that I might like it too, as if the plane were alive and he wished it happy in the world. So it was that after he saw that I could fly it safely, and after I had handed him a check, and after waiting for as long as he could stand it, Brent Brown turned to me and said, "Well, what do you think? How do you like her?"

I couldn't answer. I didn't know what to tell him. Had the plane been a Pitts or a Champ or a fiber-glass motorglider, I could have said, "Great! Wow! What a lovely airplane!" But the plane was a 1947 Republic Seabee, and the beauty in a Seabee is like the beauty way down in a woman's eye who is not a covergirl moviestar—before you see her beautiful, you must begin to know who she is.

"I can't tell, Brent. The airplane flies all right, but I'm still way behind it—it's still pretty big and strange."

Even when the weather cleared and I flew away at last from the snows of Logan, Utah, I couldn't honestly tell Brent Brown that I would ever love his airplane.

Now, nearly a hundred flying hours later, having flown the Seabee across winter America, down the coast to Florida and the Bahamas and back into spring, I can begin to answer his question. We've flown together 13,000 feet over mountains sharp as broken steel, where her engine failure could have meant some cool discomfort; we've survived some rough-water ocean takeoffs where my slow beginner's ways in seaplanes could have sent us in large pieces to the bottom. Through these hours I've come to find that the Seabee is generally worthy of trust; perhaps she's found the same is true of me. And perhaps, back in Logan, Utah, Brent Brown could call this the beginning of any real love.

Trust comes not without difficulties overcome. The Bee, for instance, is the largest airplane I've ever owned. With extended wings and droop tips, its span is nearly fifty feet. The vertical stabilizer is so high that I can't even wash the tail of the plane without a ladder to climb. Its all-up weight is just over a ton and a half—I can't push it alone even across the taxiway, and two men together can't lift the tailwheel.

Take this huge machine to Rock Springs, Wyoming, let's say, take it there and land in a 50-degree crosswind 20 gusting 30 (thanking God that the rumors about crosswind landings in Seabees aren't true), struggle it to the parking ramp (cursing the devil that the rumors about crosswind taxiings are), freeze it overnight so the oil is tar and the brakes are stone. Then try to get it flying, come dawn, by yourself. It's like coaxing a frozen mammoth to fly. A Cub or a Champ, you don't need help to get it going, but a Seabee sometimes you do.

After hurling my body like a fevered desperate snowflake against the smooth aluminum mountain of the Bee, hurling it twice and again, I was trembling on collapse and hadn't moved it a fraction of an inch. Then out of the wind came Frank Garnick, airport manager, wondering if he could help. We hitched his snowplow to the mammoth, towed it in compound low till the wheels shattered ice and turned, set a preheater in her engine compartment and a charger on her battery. Half an hour and the mammoth was a fawn, engine purring as though Rock Springs was Miami. You can't always do everything alone; a hard lesson eased by a fellow who didn't mind helping.

With a big airplane one also learns about systems, and how they work. Take the landing gear and the flaps. They all move up and down under the calm physics of the hydraulic system, which is so reliable that it requires no mechanical backup or emergency mode. So that if you squeeze the landing gear down with 20 strokes or so of the hydraulic handpump on a night landing to Runway 22 at Fort Wayne, Indiana, and touch down with the gear not quite locked, you hear this loud sound—*VAM!*—and then a moment later comes a screeching crunching roaring sound wild as freightcars slid sideways on rock.

After you shut the engine down in utter disgust, it gets quiet in the cabin, there in the middle of Runway 22, and into that quiet comes a voice, from the tower.

"Do you have a problem, Seabee six eight Kilo?"

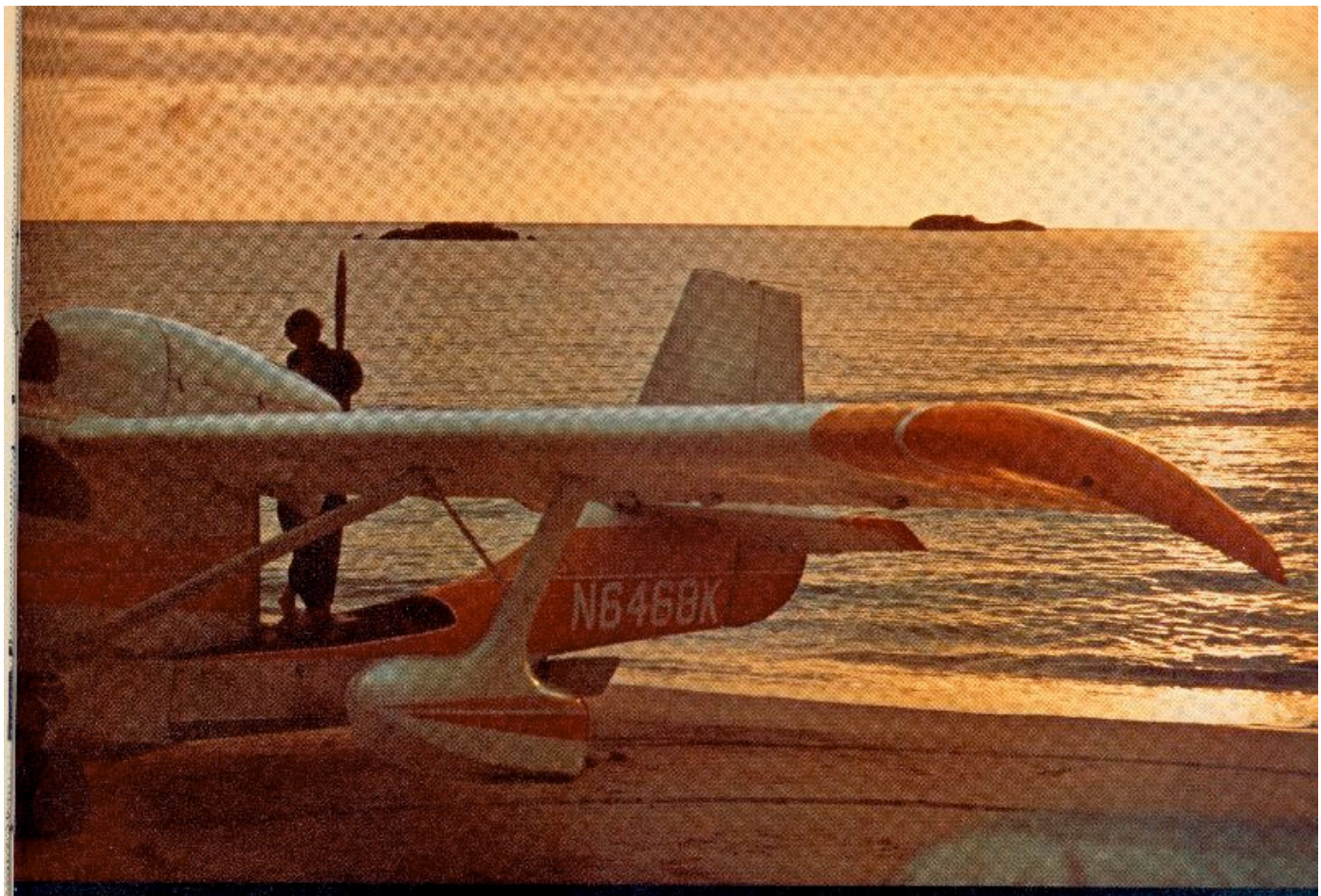
"Yeah. I have a problem. The gear collapsed out here."

"Roger, six eight Kilo," comes the voice, pleasant as America itself, "Contact Ground Control on one two one point nine."

You listen to that, and you start to laugh.

Sure enough, just as the factory said, a wheels-up landing on concrete only shaves a sixteenth of an inch from the keel

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD BACH/CREATURE ENTERPRISES



With a Seabee, slip onto a deserted beach at nightfall, use the whole ocean for a tiedown spot. . .

Bach found his Seabee nestled in a hangar in cold, snowy Logan, Utah.

of your new Seabee. Fort Wayne Air Service was there to extend the lesson on help with big airplanes. A clevis had broken in the gear system and a mechanic there hunted me a new one.

"What do I owe you for this?"

"Nothin'."

"Free? You're an airplane mechanic and you're giving me a stranger this clevis free?"

He smiled, thinking of a price. "You're parked at our competitor's place. Next time park here."

Then Maury Miller drove me for nothing all the way back across Baer Field, where John Knight at Consolidated Airways helped me run a gear retraction test, also free of charge. It was either something about the Seabee, or about these people, or about that particular sunrise, but Fort Wayne couldn't do enough to help me out.

"Don't think of a Seabee as an airplane that can land on water," Don Kyte had told me years before. "Think of it as a boat that can fly." A boat that can fly, you don't care if it's not as fast as, say, a cross-country minié ball. The Bee trues out at around 90 mph at low cruise, 115 at high; this and patience will get you anywhere. At low cruise, the 75-gallon tank holds nearly eight hours' flying, at high cruise it's just over five.

Flying his boat over Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, the captain has time to look down and notice tens and scores of little towns right on the edge of bluequiet lakes and wide rivers, and in time he thinks of a way to make a Seabee pay for itself.

"A boat that can fly, folks, just three dollars buys you 10 full minutes aloft! It's perfectly safe, your government-licensed pilot, Captain Bach, the Air Ace, thousands of flights without a mishap, former Clipper pilot on the Hong Kong-Honolulu run, himself at the controls!"

Towns, lakes breathed away below. Sure enough. It could be done.

After 20 hours in the Bee, I began to feel gingerly at home. Every day the airplane seemed a little smaller, a bit more maneuverable, more a controllable creature than a houseboat in the sky, although the latter is the literal truth. The cabin inside is something over nine feet long, and that before opening the door into the hollow tower under the engine, that adds another three or four feet. The seats recline to make a full double bed. The Seabee Hilton, in fact, is the first flying hotel in which I've been able to stretch out full length and sleep soundly all night—a point not to miss in a machine built to spend its nights anchored in wilderness lakes.

The Seabee is fitted with three enormous doors, one right, one left, and then one bow door, four feet forward of the copilot's seat. According to the owner's manual, this door is for "docking and fishing"; it is also an excellent ventilation door for noons in Bahama waters, when otherwise the cabin overheats in direct sun.

If he's landed by a coast of rocks, or just doesn't feel like

leaving his ship, the captain can exit the cabin by any door and stretch out in the sun on the warm aluminum along the wingspar; writing or thinking or listening to the waves lap down the length of the hull.

With an alcohol stove, he can prepare hot meals on the cabin-top or within, on a galley set on the right half of the flight deck.

I had heard many a discouraging word about the Seabee's Franklin engine, which is odd in that it has a special long propellershaft and in that it is mounted backwards in the airplane, so that the prop is a pusher. In spite of the words, I've had only one brief engine problem. I noticed in cruise that the engine said "mmmmmmmmmmm" on the magneto-fired spark plugs when it said "mmm-m-mmmm-mm-mmm-m" on the distributor-fired ones. I reached back into the workshop as I flew along, took out the engine trouble-shooting guide, and deduced that the cause had to be distributor points gone a bit tacky. Sure enough. Next landing I removed the points, replaced them with a new set (which also fits a '57 Plymouth), and the engine said "mmmmmmm" thereafter, on all sets of plugs.

According to the overhaul manual, the Franklin is good only for 600 hours between overhauls. At 250 since overhaul, mine burns two-thirds of a quart of oil per hour at normal cruise. This pleases me because there are Franklins in Seabees that throw that much oil on the vertical stabilizer and are still considered normal.

It's said that Seabees without wing-extensions are occasionally reluctant to fly. The manual admits that the stock Bee, brand new, can take up to 13,500 feet to make a high-altitude water takeoff. Not having flown the airplane without long wings, I can't comment, save to say that 68K was flown from Bear Lake, Utah, 6,000 feet above sea level, all summer long, with full passenger loads. The long wings and the tips make a difference.

One special pleasure for Seabee owners resides in a small lever overhead the pilot: the reverse pitch control for the propeller. It was installed because the Bee, unlike pontoon planes, normally approaches a dock head-on, and so has to leave by backing away tail-first. In the hands of a practiced pilot, reverse pitch makes the plane as maneuverable as a large, heavy alligator.

Ex-owner Brown reluctantly takes a last look at his airplane.

One can use reverse on land, too. The captain taxies into a tight space at the fuel pump, fills up, and then with everybody looking and wondering what happens next, he can yawn, back slowly out of his parking place, and be on his way.

This is hard to top, yet the plane has other and even better features. Last month I flew some 2,500 miles in the Seabee, most of it over the Intracoastal Waterway. It was the most confident secure flying I've done anywhere. Should the engine have failed, I had only to glide straight ahead, or to

Bach was still learning to cope with the big Seabee when he reached icy Wyoming. "Try coaxing a frozen mammoth to fly," he says.

turn slightly to land on the water. Horizon-wide swamps we flew over, that hadn't enough firm ground for a Cub to land, yet they were all one vast international airport for the Bee: cleared to land whenever we wished, on any runway, upwind, downwind, crosswind, no traffic reported. The airplane is not equipped for instrument flying, but under these conditions it is the best instrument airplane possible.

Following the lee shore of Cape Hatteras, the clouds lowered to 200 feet and visibility to a bit over a mile—weather one would never consider in a landplane unless he happened to be flying directly above a hundred-mile runway. In the Seabee, I was. I dropped down to 50 feet over the water, kept my thumb on the map, and pressed ahead like next year's Chris-Craft. When the visibility worsened, I dropped half flaps and slowed. When it worsened still, I decided to land, a matter of easing the throttle back and raising the nose slightly. But just before touchdown, ripples

Back in its native habitat, the Seabee docks at Lambros seaplane base in New Jersey, after sneaking in under the New York TCA.

flashing below, I saw a line of light that meant higher ceilings ahead. So we air-taxied along the water for another mile and sure enough, things got better. As I am chicken in weather, this single feature is my favorite of the Seabee's qualities.

The one dangerous aspect of the airplane, and of most amphibious aircraft, is the other face of its ability to land anywhere. I have talked to three pilots who landed Seabees on the water with the wheels down. Two of them had to swim out of the airplane as it sank upside down, the third merely had to rebuild the nose section of the plane where it was smashed violently by the sea. For this reason I taught myself to say aloud in every traffic pattern, "This is a land landing, therefore the wheels are *down*," and, "This is a water landing, therefore the wheels are *up*, checked *up*, left main *up*, right main *up*, tailwheel *up*. Because this is a *water* landing." I like to say the water-landing check twice before touchdown. It's being a little overcautious, but there is something about the picture of 3,200 pounds on top of me, squashing me against the sea-bottom, that I don't mind being overcautious. Then, too, aside from being the biggest, the Bee is the most expensive plane I've owned. I do not wish to look down from some rowboat, grappling with a hook for $9,000 of my fortune. If it were a normal-priced Seabee, $5,000 to $7,500, maybe I wouldn't mind.

By the time I had logged 50 hours in the airplane, I had learned how to land it. Thirty hours were spent to believe that I could actually be so high in the air at the moment the wheels first touched; the other 20 were required to discover that just because the wheels had touched didn't mean I wasn't flying the airplane as much as ever. The reason for both learnings was the same—the Seabee has such long oleo shock absorbers that the wheels drop below the place one thinks they ought to be; they roll along the ground a few seconds after the plane is actually flying and for a few seconds before it has actually landed.

The warning is that the Seabee is a high-maintenance machine. I haven't noticed this because I enjoy working on airplanes and don't count the difference between necessary maintenance and work not really required. But here is part of a shopping list made shortly after buying the plane:

Anchor and chain	Scissor jack
Raft	Hydraulic fluid
Grease gun, grease	Brake hose
Silicon cement	Bilge pump
Silicon spray	Bicycle
Weatherstripping	Cork
ADF	

There's a story for every item there, even for the cork, which is pressed into the end of the engine compartment oil scupper, to keep black oil from spraying out on the white hull.

The propeller needs to be greased every 20 hours or so, as do wheel bearings and landing gear fittings. All this can be fun, climbing around and servicing an Alumigrip mountain.

Other elements of Bee-flying one learns only by experience. It's a delight, for instance, to taxi up from the water to a lovely virgin beach, but one had best be sure he gets above the high-water line and points the airplane back downhill before he allows it to stop rolling. If not, the captain has an hour's shovelling and messing around with jacks and old boards before his Seabee is unearthed and back in the water.

If the wingtip floats aren't sealed around the tops with silicon rubber, water pours in during crosswind water-taxiing, when the downwind float is sometimes completely underwater. Mark the trim indicator overhead for takeoff with different loads; the Bee is very much a trim airplane. Once when the trim froze at high altitude, just a little bit nose-up, I had to ease back the power till the plane flew level by itself—I didn't have the strength to manually override that trim for more than a few minutes at a time.

Somebody said that anything worthwhile is always a little bit scary. I was a little bit scared and a little bit cautious about the Bee—how do you know what happens to a summerhouse in flight until you go up and fly one? But in time the captain learns to know its strengths and its quirks, begins to discover its secrets.

One secret of the Seabee I found by chance, that I have found on no other airplane. If one happens to be cruising at 9,500 feet, at 2200 rpm with 22 inches of manifold pressure, indicating 97 mph with an outside air temperature of −5 degrees F, and if one is alone in the left seat and if one happens to sing *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* or another song in that frequency range, one's single voice becomes *four*—one becomes a kind of airborne Willie the Whale. The strange acoustics have something to do with the thin air, no doubt, and the resonance of the engine at that rpm, but the result is of more than passing interest for those captains who choose to sing only when there's no one else to hear. What other aircraft in the world offers all these features and a full quartet as well, enroute to your lake-wilderness hideaway?

I give you, dear, reader, the Seabee. □