

The Story of the Restoration of the Ryan ST

In the spring of 1997, Doug Smith found the one airplane that Ted Teach had always loved and dreamed of owning. That was a Ryan. This Ryan ST (Sport Trainer) serial number 117 is one of only five ST's that were built and the only one that remains in existence. It was located in Santa Paula, CA and had been signed off as "airworthy" for four years but had never flown after its latest rebuild. Ted purchased the airplane and was tempted to fly her home, but after consulting with Al and Brad Ball, he decided to disassemble the ST and leave the Menasco engine with them for overhaul. The airplane was trucked back to New Carlisle, OH for a complete restoration. The ST however, sat in the back of the hangar for nine years while other projects were finished. Finally, after returning from Oshkosh in 2006, Ted told Doug it was time to get started on the ST.

The fuselage was in fair shape, but almost every piece of sheet metal that could be removed was "not to Ted's expectations". This meant all of the fairings, some of the wheel pants and all of the cowling except the nose bowl was to be made new. Doug, who is Ted's personal aircraft mechanic, headed up the restoration project and work began in earnest. Given the complexity of many of the sheet metal parts we enlisted the help from a few experts in this field. Mark Kennison and Steve James of D&D Classics in Covington, OH did some major work on the fuselage as well as making the wing root fairings. Brian Stansberry of Moulton, IA was invaluable when it came to working on the cowling and landing gear fairings. However, it became obvious that we needed to have sheet metal forming capabilities

in house as well. With some newly acquired tools, Doug took what we had been learning from the experts and started forming metal. Shown in one of the pictures is a collection of all of the molds that Doug made in order to form various parts to restore the ST.

As the paint was stripped out of the fuselage, we found 4 different colors before we got to bare metal. Doug then repainted the entire inside of the fuselage with epoxy primer and then silver in the cockpit areas. Doug replaced all of the fabric on the wings, tail feathers and control surfaces and finished them with Air Tech polyurethane.

When the time came to bring the shine back to the Ryan, Doug knew it was going to be a monumental task, so we enlisted the help of Bob Jacoby. Bob was retired from the appliance business and a recent widower, but also loved airplanes and especially the Ryan ST. So one day at church, Doug asked Bob if he would be willing to help us out. At the young age of 87 (now 89) Bob jumped at the chance and has been working almost full time for the past two and a half years. He prepared the aluminum for polish and helping out wherever needed to finish the ST. Bob is a WWII veteran and crewed on B-17's and OA-10's out of Guam doing Air/Sea rescue and was a crew chief on the P-47.

We owe so much to so many that have helped us bring our ST back to its amazing glory. One is the late Ev Cassagneres who was a Ryan/Lindbergh historian. Ev was one of the many former owners of our ST and he provided us with a set of drawings as well as a set of original photos from the Ryan factory. Ev also

gave us many of his personal photos and journals from the time he had owned the airplane.

We have also had the honor of getting to know and becoming great friends with Fred and Nancy Barber. Fred knows more about Ryan ST's than Claude Ryan probably did. He supplied a copy of service bulletins for the airplane as well as the Menasco engine, but more importantly was always available for a phone call to ask questions when we got stuck. His support and encouragement meant so much to us when the project at times seemed insurmountable.

For the first time in 37 years, after a 10 year complete restoration, on June 25th 2016, Ryan ST NC 14985 was returned to her rightful place in the air. She glistened in the morning sun and performed in flight just as beautifully as she is sitting on the ground.