

Getting your Warbird Ready

Spring is rapidly approaching and with better weather, our thoughts naturally turn skyward. All of us involved, in all aspects of Warbird activities want the upcoming season to be a safe one. We all need to be thinking of actions that will make the upcoming flying season a safe one. These are not new ideas or policies but a review of information we can all use to foster a safe flying season.

With the goal of promoting safe flight, the FAA has regulations that must be met before flight. The manufacturers of the aircraft, engine, propeller, and related systems have developed normal and emergency procedures for their equipment with that same goal of promoting flight safety. The airports, airspace, weather information, navigation systems, and communication systems help us promote flight safety. We have flight instructors, pilot mentors, and our own flight experiences that also promote flight safety. So, after all this promoting of flight safety, will we still have accidents or incidents in aircraft? Sadly, the answer is yes, we will have accidents and incidents in aircraft. Mechanical, operational, and/or human failures can never be totally eliminated. We can minimize the threat of these failures thru education, preparedness, and some self-reflection.

To realize and continue our dream of flying these historic Warbird aircraft, they must be properly maintained, and certified airworthy annually, or each 100 hours of flight depending on use. This brief column is not intended to be an all-encompassing description of proper maintenance procedures, only a reminder that continued maintenance of Warbird aircraft, by highly qualified mechanics, (technicians) is imperative. Following the manufactures inspection guide, seeking information from Type clubs, using the FAA's Best Practices for Maintaining Aging General Aviation Aircraft, and communicating with fellow operators are tools that can be used to make sure your Warbird is ready for flight.

Once the aircraft is ready for flight, it is time to look at the environment in which the Warbird will fly. Is the airport familiar? If operating to or from an Airshow, are there any special departure or arrival procedures that are in place during the show? If ground personnel are available to facilitate your arrival/departure, do you know the procedure to utilize them? If you are a ground person, do you know the limitations and operational characteristics of that particular Warbird aircraft? The time for communication between the pilot and ground crew, is prior to getting in the aircraft. Take the time prior to engine start to make sure all involved with the aircraft operation are on the same page. During ground operations, how many times have you taxied up to a guide man in a tail wheel aircraft only to have him disappear underneath the nose? If you are operating into an airport unfamiliar with your aircraft, a quick call to the FBO or Airshow personal describing the limitations of your aircraft may be in order.

The en-route portion of the intended flight has a host of potential hazards as well. Today's airspace has become more complex. More and more TFR(Temporary Flight Restrictions) are being issued for varying reason, Fires, Presidential movements, and

natural disasters are but a few examples of why TFR's are issued. Flying through a TFR may not be a potential accident but may result in the removal of your flight privileges. Weather is a variable that all of us must contend with. Pilots are required to seek out pertinent weather information prior to flight. Make sure that both you and the aircraft are properly equipped and trained to fly in the weather that you will encounter in getting to your destination. The self-induced pressure of getting to an airshow or simply getting home should ever interfere with sound judgment when taking flight. Prior to even a local flight, make sure you seek out all information about the weather, airports, and airspace prior to your intended flight.

Finally it is time to look at the most important piece of safety equipment on the aircraft. The Pilot in Command ultimately it is the final authority when comes to how and when the aircraft will be operated. Certainly the pilot should be well rested and fit for flight. I believe all of us can look back on our flight experiences and think of a time where we may have pushed the aircraft, the weather, or ourselves to the limit. We may even have had friends that pushed that limit too far with grave consequences. Springtime is an excellent time to reflect on all those experiences. As you read the articles included in this issue, think and learn about situations both in flight and on the ground. How would you have handled the situation? How could you have been better prepared? Will you make any changes to your operation this year to make this a safe year for all of us? Seek out and review the safety information provided by, the FAA, EAA, Warbirds of America, type clubs, owner groups, safety seminars, and all other available sources. Let us all make the commitment this year to "KEEP'EM FLYING SAFELY".