



VINTAGE AIRPLANE™

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A Sedan with One Door



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The post war civilian boom had already gone bust when the word came down to the engineering staff at Aeronca in Middletown, Ohio. Seeking to broaden their marketing base in a quickly shrinking market, management was looking for something to help them ride out the economic storm that post-war civilian aviation had become. The mandate given to the staff sounded something like this. . .

"Design a four-place that we can put into production quickly, with lots of room inside and with good performance. Oh, and one more thing. You can only use the raw materials we already have on hand for the bulk of the airplane. I don't want you to go out and buy anything like tubing, sheet metal and the like."

This wouldn't be the first four-place that the crew at Aeronca had designed, but the Model 14 Chum, a low wing design drawn up at the end of the war had not reached the production stage. With notes on the contents of the raw materials bin, the engineers sat down at their drafting boards. George Owl did

the basic layout and design, Vince Berinati the stress and aerodynamics, and Harry Zeisloft engineered the powerplant installation. They designed a four-place fuselage made out of steel tube, steel tube tail surfaces, and all metal wings braced with a single aluminum strut. All of the materials possible came from the stock on hand, right down to the glovebox covers from the Chief. When each Sedan, as the new craft was called, was rolled out into the Ohio sunshine only a few of the parts had to be bought from outside sources before the plane could be delivered. Most notable among these were the engine, a Continental C-145, and the Consolidair wheel pants. Even the instrument package was gleaned as much as possible from shelf stock. What the engineers didn't know was that their creation would someday become one the favorite mounts for bush pilots and sportsmen alike. Its roomy cabin and load carrying capability have made it handy for hauling hunters, fishermen or families for almost 45 years.

The other airplane with a forward swept fin has captured the fancy of

many pilots in the past, and Dick Folsom of Nokomis, Florida is no exception. Bitten early by the Aeronca bug, Dick learned to fly in a Champ on floats on Moosehead Lake in Maine, and would then transfer to skis when winter arrived and the water became "stiff". In 1952 he enlisted in the service as an infantryman. He then reenlisted as a Warrant Officer, assigned to helicopters. Dick wasn't too fond of the choppers, though, and along with two others from his class he was allowed to transition to Liaison aircraft. He spent the remainder of his military career as a senior instructor, flying L-20s and L-19s.

While he was in the service, Dick earned a degree in geology. After the service, he returned to the Moosehead Lake area, and went to work as practicing geologist. On the weekends he would fly as a bush pilot in the Maine wilderness. He moved a couple of times within the northeast. He sold his marine construction business and "retired" to Florida, where he now has his second marine construction business. Over the years he was actively flying, Dick had owned three Champs, a Chief and a Super Cub.

Dick has always been interested in older airplanes, and after having been away from flying for a number of years, he decided he needed a diversion. He had already owned each of the post-war Aeroncas, so he went looking for an Aeronca Sedan, the last airplane type produced by the Middletown, Ohio manufacturer. His search lasted two years, until he talked to a man in Topeka, Kansas. After talking with the gentleman a couple of times on the phone, Dick bought the Sedan sight unseen in July, 1980.

November of that year saw Dick picking up his prize and winging his way back east. All those hours spent navigating by pilotage over the Maine wilderness helped him bring the Sedan



In keeping with the "keep it simple" school of thought, the fuel gauges for the wing-mounted tanks are graduated tubes.



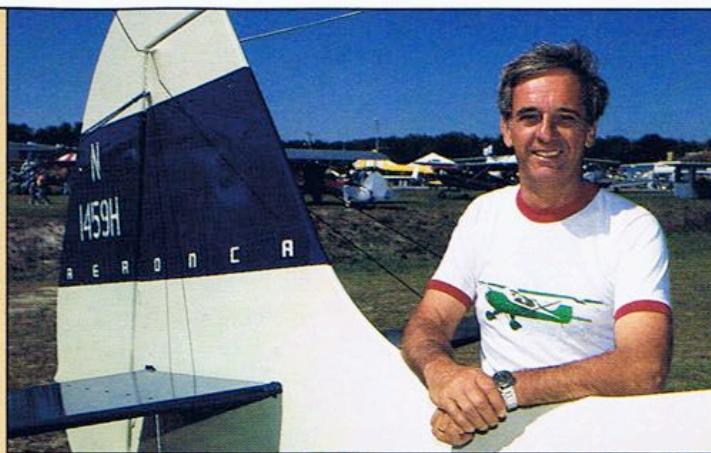
Carefully restored to almost original configuration, the cockpit of the Sedan shows off its spacious cabin width, and the great visibility out the large windshield. The only major difference between 1950's and now? The 6" radio stack on the left side of the panel.

Advertised in Aeronca sales brochures as "a full size four place airplane engineered for everyday people", the Sedan has a large comfortable cabin, with access thru a large door on the right side. Dick's Sedan features an original color scheme, and, for added safety, he has added shoulder harnesses.

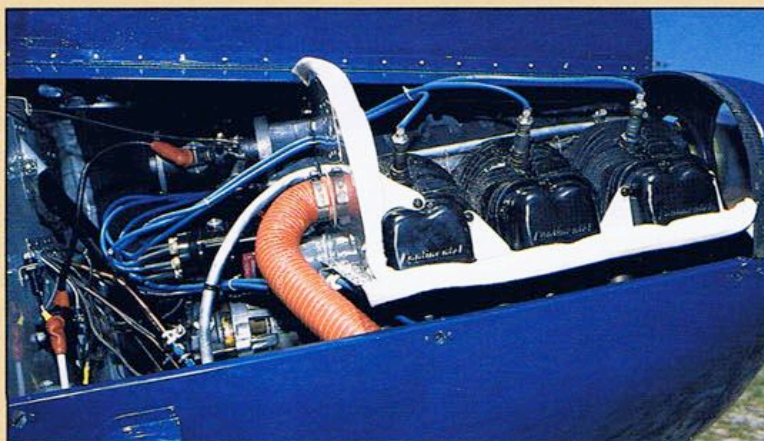


home through low weather in the St. Louis area, with no radios and a compass that was balky. Thanksgiving dinner that year consisted of a candy bar somewhere over New York State, with his final stop that night at his home in New Hampshire.

With the fabric so bad that he knew it would never pass another annual, Dick disassembled the four-placer and stored it in his shop. For the next three years he couldn't get near his project, so he began to look for someone to restore the project. After a few fits and starts, the Sedan was passed along to Joe Hindall and his crew in Englewood, Florida. They started on the project in October, 1989, and completed it in April, just prior to Sun'n Fun '90. The Sedan's maiden flight was to the fly-in! A last minute oil leak was fixed at the beginning of the week, and then it was off to Lakeland for the Aeronca Sedan and its proud new owner.



A happy Dick Folsom with his latest Aeronca. The forward lean of the rudder hinge line has always been a distinctive trademark of the Sedan.



As clean as the rest of the restoration, the installation of the C-145 Continental speaks of the work done by Joe Hindall and his crew.

The airplane is finished with the Stits process, in the original factory color scheme. During the time spent before and during the actual restoration, many details about the plane were researched, including the replacement of the "hogshair" floor mat. Phone call after phone call were made in an effort to find the original manufacturer. They finally found out that the original maker had passed away, but one of his relatives also had a textile business, and that they both used to supply Aeronca. They were then able to come very close to matching the original. The interior still has that warm, spacious feeling that the Sedan was famous for when it was being touted as the "family four-seater". The results speak for itself.

Many of the lessons learned while producing the Champ and the Chief

were put into practice when the engineers sat down to the drawing board. The Champ had always enjoyed great visibility from inside the cabin, and the Sedan featured the same general layout, with the added bonus of a windshield that went clear back to the front spar carry-thru. Many planes, including the J-3 Cub, have similar arrangements, but the Sedan's spar is set so far back, it almost gives the appearance of a skylight above your head!

Dick gives Joe Hindall all of the credit for getting his Sedan as close to original as he could. Joe did all the research on the project and put a lot of time in ferreting out the details. Dick also wanted a safe airplane, and to that end you will see the shoulder harnesses he has added. He also installed modern electronics, including a loran, transponder with encoder and a nav/com.

Dick's Sedan garnered an "Outstanding Aircraft" award at Sun 'n Fun '90, and it's easy to see why - the nice restoration by Joe Hindall and his crew along with the pleasing lines of the Sedan combined to make it easy on the judge's eye. The folks at Middletown would be proud! ●

