

**AOPASWEEPSTAKES**

# Home stretch

*Notes to the lucky winner*

BY THOMAS A. HORNE

It seems difficult to believe, but the year of AOPA's Win-A-Twin Sweepstakes is drawing to an end. Just one short year ago I was flying a newly purchased, rather well-worn 1965 Piper Twin Comanche across the United States, taking it to the first of many stops in its restoration. Now that restoration is virtually complete. The airplane—once a beater facing the boneyard—is now a born-again beauty.

The Win-A-Twin's winner will be chosen during a drawing in January 2005. The winner will be notified shortly thereafter.



While the new winner will no doubt be thrilled with the Win-A-Twin, my reaction will probably be a bit subdued. The Win-A-Twin project has claimed the bulk of my attention in the past 12 months, and turning it over won't be easy. I've flown it across the United States twice, halfway across and back two times, up and down the East Coast three times, and in all logged some 100 hours in N204WT. It's a great airplane—now, that is. And I've got a lot to be thankful for. I've learned a whole lot about Twin Comanches in particular, and the ins and outs of



**November 2003:**  
A well-worn N7625Y sits on the LoPresti Speed Merchants ramp. Work on the Win-A-Twin was soon to begin, starting with new engines, props, and tip tanks.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FIZER



**Before**

Square yokes, a panel “rejuvenation” from the 1970s, and a tattered interior marked the original airplane. The nav radios worked only at very short ranges from VOR stations. Airframe and engine vibrations were another problem. After an hour in cruise, they settled down. Most of the time.

**Hands down, it’s the most complex of the sweepstakes airplanes AOPA has given away.**

gram. First of all, it’s a light twin. AOPA has never had a twin in its 12-year roster of sweepstakes airplanes. It also means that ongoing training and maintaining currency will be big, big responsibilities for the Win-A-Twin’s winner. Much more so than if the airplane were, say, a Comanche single. AOPA will help kick off the training program by providing the winner with multi-

multiengine procedural skills (for the winner who has a multiengine rating, but needs to get current).

Training in N204WT is the next step. For this, the International Comanche Society’s Comanche Flyer Foundation will provide type-specific training from Larry Larkin, one of the most experienced Twin Comanche instructors in the world.

airplane maintenance and up-keep in general.

The more I reflect on the upcoming giveaway the more I think about the uniqueness of the Win-A-Twin pro-

engine training from American Flyers. This will prepare a winner for the multiengine checkride (if he or she doesn’t have a multiengine rating), or brush up

The Win-A-Twin’s avionics present another learning curve. Without any prior familiarity, the Win-A-Twin’s black boxes can be baffling. In high-



What hasn't been changed in the Win-A-Twin? Very little indeed. A state-of-the-art panel, custom leather interior, and in-flight entertainment system now rule.

workload instrument flying situations, not knowing the airplane's Garmin AT GNS 480 GPS/nav/com, Garmin AT MX20 multifunction display, or Meggitt/S-Tec System Fifty Five X autopilot could be downright dangerous. That's why Avionics Training Unlimited will be there to help the winner make the most of the Win-A-Twin's panel.

After this, however, it will be up to N204WT's new owner to keep flying

skills safe and sharp, and to fly the airplane with the respect it demands.

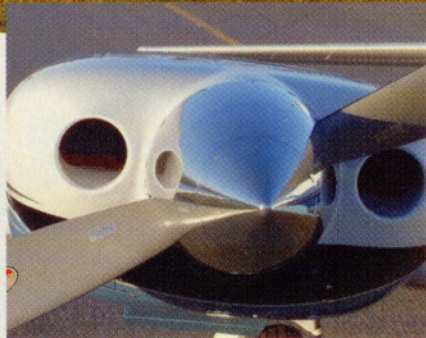
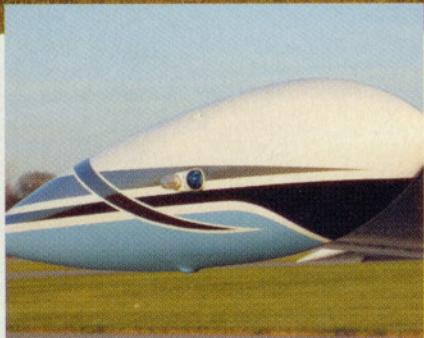
Then there are the Twin Comanche's many systems. Hands down, it's the most complex of the sweepstakes air-

The ratty old interior featured worn-out seat springs, stained carpeting and sidewalls, and a headliner that sagged so much it would touch your head while flying. An Airtex interior changed all that.





LoPresti speed mods, J.L. Osborne tip tanks, and a fancy paint job from Scheme Designers, KD Aviation, and DuPont made an already-sleek airplane look even slipperier.



## This is one of the best cross-country machines ever built.

planes AOPA has given away. And on top of that, it's one of the oldest. This combination of age and complexity translates into higher awareness of maintenance issues, and rigorous adherence to inspection intervals and recurrent airworthiness directives.

Remember, the Win-A-Twin may have started out as what I have called a *beater*, but it was only through the application of an aggressive maintenance and repair philosophy that the airplane was transformed into a near-concours-quality classic. This same philosophy will be needed to retain the airplane's high standard.

Skimping on maintenance is a false economy: That's how N204WT's previous owners let the airplane slide into neglect. What these owners apparently didn't understand was that for air-



A gear-up landing in 1986 totalled a propeller and its engine, but replacement engines, props, and prop spinners from Superior Air Parts and Hartzell Propeller, respectively, reversed that bad patch of history. New windshields from LP Aero Plastics gave the airplane frameless storm windows.

planes such as the Twin Comanche—and all airplanes, for that matter—maintenance is a continuous process. That goes double for the engines. One great realization of mine during this restoration process was an irony of light-twin flying: With two engines, you worry twice as much about engine health. That's because an engine failure or stoppage can be so dangerous in critical phases of flight.

But enough of this sobering talk! For the winner, there will be much more to like than fret about—take it from me. Let me recount the most impressive of the Win-A-Twin's attributes.

This is one of the best cross-country machines ever built. Name another single-engine or light twin airplane that can fly for five and a half hours and still land with nearly two hours of fuel reserves. Or any light twin that has the fuel burn of a big single. Or any airplane that can consistently cruise at 175 knots true airspeed on a fuel burn as low as 14 gph, single or twin? Then throw in the \$5,000 fuel credit that Carolina Air Center of

## Contributors

*AOPA would like to thank the following companies that donated or discounted their products and services to restore AOPA's Win-A-Twin Sweepstakes Piper Twin Comanche or are otherwise assisting with the project.*

### Seat belts/shoulder harnesses

Aircraft Belts Inc., 2000 Anders Lane, Kemah, Texas 77565; 800/847-5651, 281/538-1284; fax 281/538-2225; www.aircraftbelts.com

### GAMA-format pilot's operating handbook

Aircraft Publications, Post Office Box 201183, Austin, Texas 78750-1183; 512/250-9350; e-mail airpubs@onr.com

### Aircraft instrument overhauls/refinishing

Air Parts of Lock Haven, Hangar 3, Piper Airport, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania 17745; 800/443-3117; www.airpartsoflockhaven.com

### Interior design and upholstery

Airtex Products Inc., 259 Lower Morrisville Road, Fallsington, Pennsylvania 19054-1494; www.airtexinteriors.com

### Multiengine initial/recurrent instruction

American Flyers, 3N040 Powis Road, West Chicago, Illinois 60185; 800/323-0808; www.americanflyers.net

### Propeller balancing

Aviation Resources, 101 Airport Avenue, Hangar #7, Cumberland, Wisconsin 54829; 715/822-5787, 715/822-3413; www.aviationvibes.com

### Avionics training

Avionics Training Unlimited Inc., 3864 Township Line Road, Collegeville, Pennsylvania 19426; 610/405-5243; fax 610/454-9985; e-mail cadmusja@hotmail.com; www.avtrainingunlimited.com

### Bose X aviation headsets

Bose Corporation, The Mountain, 145 Pennsylvania Avenue, Framingham, Massachusetts 01701; 800/999-2673; www.bose.com

### Aircraft cover/cowl plugs

Bruce's Custom Covers, 989 East California Avenue, Sunnyvale, California 94085; 408/738-3959, 800/777-6405; fax 408/738-2729; e-mail bruce@aircraftcovers.com; www.aircraftcovers.com

### \$5,000 avgas credit

Carolina Air Center of Hilton Head, Hilton Head Island Airport, Hilton Head, South Carolina 29926; 843/689-3200; fax 843/681-3960; MBNA America Bank, NA Wilmington, Delaware 19850

### K&N air filters

Challenger Aviation Products Inc., 3530 Lightner Drive, Vandalia, Ohio 45377; 937/667-0510; fax 937/667-3410; www.challengeraviation.com

### Stainless-steel fasteners

D&D Aircraft Supply, 4 Stickney Terrace, Post Office Box 1200, Hampton, New Hampshire 03842; 800/468-8000, 603/926-8881; fax 603/926-7855; www.ddaircraft.com

### Fuel cells

Eagle Fuel Cell-ETC Inc., 853 Adams Road, Eagle River, Wisconsin 54521; 715/479-6149; www.eaglefuelcells.com

### Integrally lighted instrument subpanels

EDN Aviation Inc., 6720 Valjean Avenue, Van Nuys, California 91406; 818/988-8826; fax 818/904-6799; www.ednaviation.com

### Engine accessory/landing gear maintenance

Fessler Aviation, 13342 80th Terrace, Live Oak, Florida 32060; 386/330-0291; e-mail jim@piper.aero; www.fessleraviation.com

### Avionics

Garmin International Inc., 1200 East 151st Street, Olathe, Kansas 66062; 913/397-8200; www.garmin.com

### Fiberglass rudder cap assembly

Globe Fiberglass Ltd. Inc., 3470 Aircraft Drive, Lakeland, Florida 33811; 800/899-2707; www.globefiberglass.com

### Propellers and propeller spinners

Hartzell Propeller Inc., One Propeller Place, Piqua, Ohio 45356; 937/778-4200; www.hartzellprop.com

### Electronic horizontal situation indicator (EHSI) and compass slaving

Honeywell Bendix/King, One Technology Center, 23500 West 105th Street, M/D #19, Olathe, Kansas 66061-1950; 877/712-2386, 913/712-2613; fax 913/712-5697; www.bendixking.com

### Wingtip fuel tanks

J.L. Osborne Inc., 18173 Osborne Road, Victorville, California 92394; 800/963-8477; www.jlosborne.com

### Engine analyzers

J.P. Instruments, 3185-B Airway Avenue, Costa Mesa, California 92646; 800/345-4574; www.jp instruments.com

### Custom painting and finishing

KD Aviation, Trenton-Robbinsville Airport, Sharon Road, Robbinsville, New Jersey 08691; 609/259-4200; and Stewart International Airport, Newburgh, New York 12550; 845/567-1617; www.kdaviation.com

### Magnetos; fuel-injection components; starters

Kelly Aerospace, 1400 East South Boulevard, Montgomery, Alabama 36116; 334/286-8551; www.kellyaerospace.com

### Exhaust augmenters, rudder and aileron seals

Knots 2U Ltd., 703 Airport Road, Burlington, Wisconsin 53105; 262/763-5100; www.knots2u.com

### Reconditioning/repair of engine mounts

Kosola and Associates Inc., 5601 Newton Road, Albany, Georgia 31707; 800/456-7652; www.kosola.com

### Speed modifications, airframe repairs, engine removal/installation

LoPresti Speed Merchants, 2620 Airport North Drive, Vero Beach, Florida 32960; 800/859-4757; www.speedmods.com

### Windshields

LP Aero Plastics Inc., 1086 Boquet Road, Jeanette, Pennsylvania 15644; www.lpaero.com

### Autopilot/flight director, electric pitch trim

Meggitt Avionics/S-Tec, One S-Tec Way, Municipal Airport, Mineral Wells, Texas 76067; 800/872-7832; www.s-tec.com

### Instrument overhauls, standby attitude indicator

Mid-Continent Instrument Company, 9400 East 34th Street North, Wichita, Kansas 67226; 316/630-0101; www.mcico.com

### Modern control yokes

The New Piper Aircraft Inc., 2926 Piper Drive, Vero Beach, Florida 32960; 772/567-4361; fax 772/978-6584; www.newpiper.com

### Stemless digital OAT

Questair Inc., 312 Boston Post Road, Orange, Connecticut 06477; 203/795-0611

### Engine overhauls

Penn Yan Aero, 2499 Bath Road, Penn Yan, New York 14527; 800/727-7230; www.pennyanero.com

### Leading-edge abrasion boots

PM Research, 4110 Niles Hill Road, Wellsville, New York 14895; 800/724-3798; www.papa-mike.com

### Oil hoses

Precision Hose Technology, 2702-D North Sheridan Road, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74115; 800/331-5946; www.aircraftthose.com

### Audio panel and entertainment system

PS Engineering Inc., 9800 Martel Road, Lenoir City, Tennessee 37772; 800/427-2376; fax 865/988-6619; www.ps-engineering.com

### Radio-stack mounting rails

Radiorax Aviation Systems, 228 West Bonita Avenue, Claremont, California 91711; 909/981-0422; www.radiorax.com

### Vacuum pumps

Rapco Inc., 445 Cardinal Lane, Hartland, Wisconsin 53029; 800/527-2726; www.rapco-rfs.com

### Paint scheme design

Scheme Designers, 210 Brookside Avenue, Cresskill, New Jersey 07626; 201/569-7785; www.schemedesigners.com

### Instrument panel design, avionics installation and modifications

Sebastian Communications Inc., 473 Manor Drive, Merritt Island, Florida 32952-3796; 321/453-6894; www.sebcomm.com

### Engine components for overhauls, ignition harnesses, oil pumps

Superior Air Parts, Suite 100, 621 South Royal Lane, Coppell, Texas 75019-3805; 972/829-4600; www.superior-air-parts.com

### Paint

The DuPont Company, 854 Pheasant Run, Westchester, Pennsylvania 19382; 610/793-2626; www.performancecoatings.dupont.com

### Propeller governor overhauls

Tiffin Aire Inc., 1778 West State Route 224, Tiffin, Ohio 44883; 800/553-7767; www.tiffinaire.com

### Airframe replacement parts, placards, interior hardware

Webco Aircraft Company, 1134 North Oliver Road, Newton, Kansas 67114; 316/283-7929; www.webcoaircraft.com

### Re-skinning of control surfaces, cabin door refurbishment

Williams Airmotive Inc., 9838 North 1100 East, Kendallville, Indiana 46755; 260/347-0807; www.williamsairmotive.com

### Datalink weather hardware, software, subscription service

WSI Corporation, 400 Minuteman Road, Andover, Massachusetts 01810; 978/983-6300; www.wsi.com

**i** Links to additional information about the AOPA Win-A-Twin Sweepstakes may be found on AOPA Online ([www.aopa.org/pilot/twin](http://www.aopa.org/pilot/twin)).

**Although it's 40 years old, it's kept its looks and has an appearance that's still contemporary. In short, it has aged well.**

procedures—plus holding patterns!—on its own, right down to all the course changes. All you have to do is monitor the goings-on.

Hilton Head, South Carolina, and MBNA America Bank are adding to the sweepstakes package. Now you have an airplane that can cruise fast and far for very little cost indeed.

The Win-A-Twin also has one of the best avionics packages ever put

together. The GNS 480's flight management functions let you program flight plans, sure, but they also store arrival and departure procedures as well as instrument approaches and their missed approaches. Turn on the System Fifty Five X autopilot and it will fly all those

The autopilot also can be used to effect altitude changes. Just push the VS (vertical speed) button, then dial in a climb or descent rate using the knob on the right.

The WSI InFlight datalink weather will spoil you rotten. A composite of Nexrad images lets you see storm cells and their precipitation contours, cloud top heights, and direction of movement. Text weather—METARs, TAFs, sigmets, airmets, and more—is also available, as are graphical METARs. All of this plays on the MX20's large screen, along with low-altitude en route charts and a VFR display that can be configured to show VORs and a terrain awareness depiction.

Now throw in the traffic-information-service (TIS) capability provided by the Garmin GTX 330 transponder. This shows nearby traffic on a thumbnail view in the MX20, unless that traffic comes within a 5-nautical-mile radius and preset vertical parameters. Then the MX20's display automatically switches to a full-screen view of potential traffic conflicts.

Finally, the Twin Comanche is one of the best-looking airplanes in all of general aviation. Although it's 40 years old, it's kept its looks and has an appearance that's still contemporary. In short, it has aged well.

Although we're in the home stretch for the sweepstakes drawing, I'll be providing more updates on the Win-A-Twin via AOPA's Web site, right up to the time N204WT is delivered to the winner. Just click on the status report button over on the right side of AOPA's home page ([www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org)).

Oh, and come February keep an eye on your airport. If you see a pilot in a blue-and-white Twin Comanche with multicolored stripes—it won't be hard to miss—that'll be me, and the winner just might be you. AOPA

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