



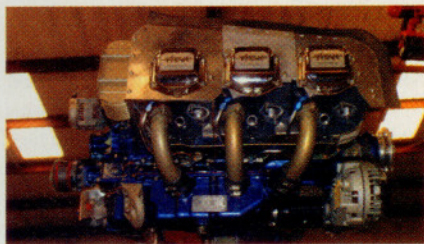
Progress report

At this writing (mid-February 2006), AOPA's Win A Six in '06 Sweepstakes airplane—a 1967 Piper Cherokee Six 260—is passing a milestone. Ultimate Engines—the project's engine overhauler—has finished its work.

The original, 260-horsepower Lycoming O-540 engine has had its original parts sent out for inspection, reconditioning, or replacement, and now they've been reassembled. Ultimate took extra steps to improve the engine's smoothness and minimize wear: balancing the crankshaft and connecting rods; polishing the cylinder heads' intake and exhaust ports; and matching the airflow volumes passing through

Hanging six on the Six

BY THOMAS A. HORNE



each of the brand-new Engine Components Inc. Titan cylinders. And Ultimate's painting and detailing of the en-

gine and engine compartment make this installation look great.

Very soon, the engine and its many components will be installed—"hung," in maintenance slang—on its mounts, and the brand-new, three-blade Hartzell propeller will top off the powerplant work. The "AOPA Sweepstakes" logo and blue and gold striping adorn the propeller—a paint job provided by American Propeller Service—as does a sleek new Hartzell polished aluminum spinner.

Next step: LoPresti Speed Merchants at the Vero Beach Municipal Airport in Florida. There, LoPresti's sleek "Wow Cowl" will be fitted to the airplane, along with a single-piece

Project Timeline

Purchase



Engine

Airframe

Paint

Avionics

Interior

Travel

Delivery



Technicians install Ultimate's overhauled engine. Note the newly painted firewall, and the blue crankcase and oil pan. The engine color will match an accent stripe on the final paint job, which will be provided by Dial Eastern States Aircraft Painting, Inc. of Cadiz, Ohio.

windshield from LP Aero Plastics, plus all the LoPresti modifications available for the Cherokee Six: aerodynamically correct wheel pants ("Speed Spats"); flap-gap- and track seals ("Speed Splitters"); and a powerful Xenon, high-intensity discharge landing light (dubbed a "Boom Beam").

Check the next issue of *AOPA Pilot* for another progress report. And be sure to stop by AOPA's sweepstakes Web site (www.aopa.org/sweeps) for the very latest information on the Six's restoration. There's a photo gallery to

He can't believe it!

"I was completely blindsided," says winner

BY STEVEN W. ELLS



Robert Melnick's emotions ranged from surprise to disbelief to overwhelmed within one hour just before noon on February 5—and this all took place four hours before the

kickoff to Super Bowl XL.

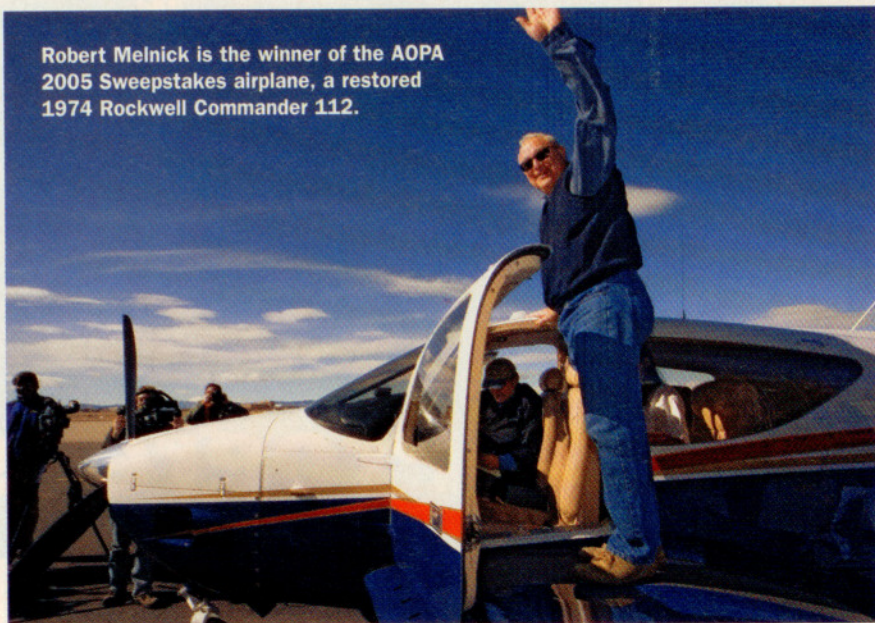
At 11:10 a.m. Mountain Standard Time, AOPA President Phil Boyer, standing in front of the big glass windows at the Denver JetCenter, asked Melnick to turn around and look outside at his new airplane. It took Melnick just a moment to realize that Boyer had told him that he was the winner of the 2005 AOPA Commander Countdown Sweepstakes and was the new owner of N112WN, a beautifully restored and equipped 1974 Rockwell Commander 112.

Melnick, a 50-year-old sales manager for a Denver Porsche/Audi dealership, and his 15-year-old daughter Alexandra had driven to the Denver JetCenter at Centennial Airport on Sunday morning, believing they would be part of an AOPA video production. After a short interview with Alexandra, who has been bitten by the flying bug and dreams of getting her pilot certificate, Melnick was seated for only a few seconds before Boyer broke the ruse. His emotional state shot sky high. "It's unreal. I had no idea. I'm definitely overwhelmed," said an elated Melnick after Boyer handed him a symbolic key to his new airplane.

"I was completely blindsided," said Melnick. "I've never won anything before, but I've been following the stories about this airplane, yes, I have," he said.

Within a few minutes Melnick became an instant local celebrity as reporters from Denver newspapers and television stations

Robert Melnick is the winner of the AOPA 2005 Sweepstakes airplane, a restored 1974 Rockwell Commander 112.



sought interviews. After a few minutes in the limelight, Melnick, who was clearly overwhelmed, asked for a few minutes alone. After phoning his wife—who, Melnick said, isn't as into aviation as he and Alexandra are—he was heard to say that she didn't believe him. It was that kind of day for Melnick.

"There's one person I've got to call—my flight instructor," said Melnick. During a high school math class Melnick found out that his teacher, Glen Endsley, was a pilot. Soon after graduation, they took their first flight together as Melnick gained his private pilot certificate. Thirty years later, Melnick called his flight instructor and mentor with the good news.

"Glen, you're not going to believe this. The airplane AOPA is giving away—the Commander—I just won it, so we can go again!" laughed Melnick. Melnick, who lost a leg to bone cancer as a teenager but went on to learn to fly, has since chalked up nearly 350

hours of flight time, and he recently sold his interest in a 1977 Cessna T210. "I flew that 210 nearly 100 hours and was sad when I had to let it go," he said. Melnick was on his way to getting his instrument rating.

Since I oversaw the Commander project, I asked Melnick and Alexandra if they felt comfortable with a short flight around the patch at Centennial Airport, even though the winds on that bright and blustery day were blowing 15 knots with gusts to 23 knots. "Yes," they said in harmony. So a little after 1 p.m., N112WN lifted off Runway 35R carrying its new owner and his bright-eyed daughter on their first flight together in the family's new airplane.

Early the next morning Melnick and I met again in N112WN's temporary new home—heated hangar space that had been generously donated by Denver JetCenter—for some hangar flying to explain the Commander's avionics and

help you visualize all the work packages in depth, plus some exciting video clips that put you right at the job sites. And, of course, look for the airplane next to The Big Yellow Tent at the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In April 4 through 10 in Lakeland, Florida. **AOPA**

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Links to additional information about the sweepstakes aircraft may be found on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org/pilot/links.shtml).

turbonormalizer controls. Melnick was again shaking his head in disbelief as I pointed out the airplane's advanced features such as the highway-in-the-sky technology and the synthetic vision displayed on the dual screens of the Chelton Flight Systems electronic flight information system, the NOWrad weather in textual and graphical format from WSI InFlight that the pilot can call up and display on a Garmin AT MX20 multifunction display, and the Avidyne TAS600 traffic advisory system.

At 8:50 a.m. on Monday, February 6, we again took off into the cold, clear, calm—the front had moved east overnight—Colorado air for Melnick's second, and my last, flight in the 2005 AOPA sweepstakes



Robert Melnick reacts with disbelief as AOPA President Phil Boyer congratulates the winner and his daughter, Alexandra.

Commander. So ends my involvement with one of the best-looking airplanes ever featured in a sweepstakes—but it's not the end of the sweepstakes.

The 2006 sweepstakes airplane, a heavy-hauling, stable-flying Piper Cherokee Six, has had its rebuilt engine by Ultimate Engines, of Mena, Arkansas, installed. AOPA and generous contributors will be working throughout 2006 to create an airplane that any AOPA member would be proud to own. **AOPA**

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