

AOPA 2010
FUN TO FLY
SWEEPSTAKES



GIRL ON THE GO



The Fun to Fly
Remos GX makes
friends everywhere

BY JILL W. TALLMAN



Thanks to our generous contributors:

Scheme Designers Inc., for the design and application of our Fun to Fly artwork (www.schemedesigners.com)

Sennheiser Inc., for the two HMEC 460 headsets (www.sennheiserusa.com)

Tanis Aircraft Products, for the engine preheating system (www.tanisaircraft.com)

PlaneSights, for our pitot tube cover (www.planesights.com)

FlightPrep, for our Chartcase Professional electronic flight bag (www.flightprep.com)

The Claw, for our tiedown kit (www.theclaw.com)

A special thank you to these contributors who helped to make the Fun to Fly Road and Runway Rally a resounding success:

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What a year it's been for our 2010 Fun to Fly Sweepstakes Remos! From the moment her wings were first folded to the day she helped a student pilot earn his wings, this small but mighty airplane has done things none of our preceding sweepstakes aircraft have achieved.

Of course, that's because, unlike our other aircraft, the Remos GX came to us brand-new in November 2009, when we took delivery at AOPA Summit in Tampa, Florida. We didn't have to wait for parts or refurbishments to get our fun machine into the air. She even came home with her beautiful

green-and-blue design already in place, thanks to the hardworking staff of Craig Barnett's Scheme Designers, which donated the work. All that was needed was an N-number change, from 131GX to 210FN.

After a "breaking in" period in which several of our staff pilots became

acquainted with this sprightly Light Sport aircraft and the workings of her 100-horsepower Rotax engine, the airplane was off to Florida for the first of two 700-nm treks to and from the Sunshine State. Our first, to the Light Sport Expo in Sebring in January, showed us what a great little traveling machine



the Remos is. With a 22-gallon tank and a fuel burn of about five gallons per hour, leather seats, and an autopilot, the airplane made a long flying day comfortable as well as economical. It was a trait she would display again and again in the months to come.

Our Road to Runway Rally in April

showcased not only the Remos's capable nature but also its fun quotient. Editors Ian Twombly and Alyssa J. Miller took turns flying the airplane down the coast to Florida (again!), this time to Sun 'n Fun in a "race" against a smart fortwo two-seat car. Of course we all know who really won

the event—the Remos! Twombly's rally partner, *Motorweek* producer Steven Chupnick, fell in love with flying, especially when he and Twombly took off the doors and flew out over the Atlantic Ocean. Miller and her partner, *Wired.com* correspondent Jason Paur, would emulate that wind-in-your-hair feel-

ing for their opening-day arrival at Sun 'n Fun. If you missed our Rally coverage, it's on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org/sweeps/rally), and stay tuned—a *Motorweek* segment is planned for early November.

In between the bigger gigs, we took the Remos to numerous airport-centric events, but we also took a course in Wing Folding 101 so that we could transport the airplane via flatbed truck to a downtown arts festival in Frederick, Maryland. We were the only airplane at that event, needless to say; a lot of folks were scratching their heads at how an airplane had managed to turn up along a creek (think Riverwalk in San Antonio, only smaller). And no matter where we took the Remos, she turned heads. People who had never been so close to an airplane were charmed by her modern interior, especially the sleek panel. Pilots who initially thought she seemed very, well, petite were pleasantly surprised by her 46-inch cockpit and ample headroom.

Travel aside, the Remos GX is one of a number of LSAs designed to bring flight training into the future. So we put the airplane to the test and, in another first for an AOPA sweepstakes airplane, took a student through the entire sport pilot training process—from first flight to checkride. Under the capable tutelage of Senior Editor Dave Hirschman, USMC Sgt. Michael Blair passed his checkride with flying colors (see "Sgt. Michael Blair—Sport Pilot," page 51).

As this wrap-up goes to press, the Remos will be trekking to AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and then will wing its way west to Long Beach, California, for AOPA Aviation Summit 2010 where the little girl will be given away. AOPA members are automatically entered to win. We'll announce the winner at Summit, and it's my sincere hope that, whoever you are, you're in the audience when your name is called. I must admit I'll miss this little girl, but I look forward to handing her over to you. **AOPA**

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Join the fun

Make your plans to visit Long Beach for AOPA Aviation Summit November 11-13, 2010, by visiting the website (www.aopa.org/summit2010).

Everything but the waffles

The panel in the Fun to Fly Remos GX is a stunner, but there are some things it can't do—such as file a flight plan, or carry all of your charts and approach plates in one tidy location, or make you waffles in flight. A generous contributor has fixed that for you (well, all except for the waffles part. Maybe for next year's sweepstakes?).

Stenbock & Everson, Inc., makers of the FlightPrep ChartCase electronic flight bag (EFB), has donated an entire system to the winner of the 2010 sweepstakes air-

Use FlightPrep to plan your flight; file it and get a weather briefing via DUAT. Now take the unit and go fly your plan. The unit comes with a Bluetooth-enabled GPS receiver, so place that on top of the panel glareshield and you have a geo-referenced back-up GPS to the Garmin 496. (Or vice versa.) Want supplemental weather to overlay your route? That's an option with WxWorx XMLink, although it is not currently enabled in this system.

Your instrument-rated friends will want



craft. If you read aviation magazines, you're probably very familiar with the FlightPrep and ChartCase products. If you don't, you should know that the robust flight planner and EFB are among the highest-rated products out there—and for good reason.

A sturdy Intel Atom notebook holds the programs. Its size—just 7 by 9 1/2 inches—makes it a perfect cockpit companion. What's more, the Intel's display folds down face up so that you can easily keep it on your kneeboard. Note that you can use this laptop as you would any other—surf the Web, create Word documents, and the like.

to borrow your system—just make sure they give it back. ChartCase comes loaded with approach plates and low-altitude en-route charts as well as sectional, terminal, and world aeronautical charts for the continental United States.

"It's like having a panel-mounted GPS that is portable, with a flight-planning element," Deputy Editor Ian J. Twombly said of the unit when he took it along on the Road and Runway Rally. I've been using the ChartCase on local flights.

This system, which includes the notebook, receiver, software, chart subscriptions through March 2011, external power cable, back-up battery, and carrying case, is valued at more than \$4,000.

—JWT

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Bill Nelson, designated pilot examiner in Chester County, Pennsylvania, was the first to congratulate new sport pilot Michael Blair (top left). Blair's biggest fan has been his daughter, Bella, (above).

Sgt. Michael Blair— Sport Pilot

Remos GX is a great learning tool **BY DAVE HIRSCHMAN**

Few things focus the mind better than an approaching deadline. Writers know this, and apparently, so do Marines.

When I informed Sgt. Michael “Bulldog” Blair in early June that I had scheduled his FAA sport pilot checkride 10 days hence, he took to the books with vigor. The irrepressible Blair had always been an enthusiastic flier and quickly learned to handle the AOPA 2010 Sweepstakes Fun to Fly Remos GX with confidence and aplomb.

But getting the manically busy, married father of a 4-year-old daughter to sit down and memorize aviation regulations, decode METARs, and recite

cloud-separation requirements wasn't easy. At least, not until his test date had been set—and then you couldn't tear him away from his study materials.

On a steamy summer Saturday, 48 hours before his scheduled checkride, Blair called me at home with a long list of detailed questions about airspace, weather, regulations, and radio procedures. He was spending his weekend hitting the books, and that made me feel good about his prospects for passing his upcoming checkride.

Blair had overcome unimaginable obstacles on his long journey to becoming a flight student. A veteran of some of the fiercest fighting in Iraq, Blair, 35,

was grievously wounded during his second combat tour there in 2006. He has undergone scores of orthopedic surgeries on two severely damaged legs, and he deals with chronic pain every hour of every day.

He was recommended to AOPA by Walt Fricke, founder of the Veterans Air-lift Command, and began flight training in the AOPA 2010 Sweepstakes Fun to Fly Remos GX just in time for the heaviest snowfall the region had experienced in a century. An exceptionally windy spring, the airplane's busy travel schedule, and Blair's military obligations made flight-training time extremely hard to come by.

But Blair persisted, fellow AOPA staff CFIs Alton Marsh and Mark Evans pitched in, and by June, Blair had logged nearly 30 hours of dual and solo flight training—more than meeting the requirements for a sport pilot certificate.

The big day was going to be June 14. We would take the Remos 78 nm northeast to Chester County, Pennsylvania, and Blair would fly with Bill Nelson, a veteran examiner based there at Chester County/G.O. Carlson Airport (MQS).

As I drove to Frederick Municipal Airport early that morning to meet Blair and travel to our destination, the weather report made my heart sink. Fog and low clouds were blanketing Pennsylvania's Amish country, and conditions weren't likely to improve until noon. Once the low ceilings lifted, the wind was forecast to kick up to 15 knots or more, making it a challenging day for a checkride.

Blair and I met at AOPA headquarters, reviewed our options, and used the downtime to go over his new favorite subjects: FAA regulations and airspace. Nelson was sympathetic and understanding about our delay, and he kept his afternoon clear to accommodate our revised schedule.

A few hours later, the weather had improved enough to allow an easy VFR flight to Pennsylvania, and we touched down a few minutes before noon. Nelson took us to his office, made us feel at ease, and ran Blair's application through the FAA's paperless IACRA system.

About 90 minutes after the oral exam began, Blair and Nelson made their way to the Remos for the flight portion of the practical test. The normally cocky Marine said he had been humbled by the gaps in his knowledge that Nelson's commonsense, open-ended questioning revealed. But now that they were finally headed outdoors to the airplane, Blair was back in his element.

"I'm wearing my lucky boots," he said with a wink. "I feel good about my chances."

The wind was kicking up out of the west and gusting to 20 knots, but Blair took off and climbed smoothly, and soon the diminutive airplane was out of sight. When they returned about 90 minutes later, I watched the Remos land like a feather and taxi to the tie-down area. Nelson reached over and

shook Blair's hand. He was a sport pilot, and the look of relief on Blair's face was unmistakable. He grinned broadly and touched the lucky charm from New Zealand he had strapped around his neck.

Blair had hoped and planned for his daughter Bella to be his first passenger, but he was stuck with me in the right seat as we made our way back to Frederick. We flew about 1,200 feet agl over the farms of southeastern Pennsylvania and watched in astonishment as an Amish farmer used a team of five horses to harvest a hay field. We circled a horse-drawn buggy making its way down a narrow country road.

During the hour-long flight, Blair was already thinking about what might lay ahead for him in aviation. A private pilot certificate seemed easily within reach, and I urged him to seek it while the hard-won knowledge he'd gained was fresh in his mind.

The Remos had served him extremely well during his sport pilot training, and it was exciting to see the sleek, thoroughly modern aircraft stand up to rigors of the flight training environment. The Light Sport category and airplanes like this one are going to be critical to growing the pilot population in the future.

I let Blair know that flying a four-seat Cessna or Piper would seem like driving a truck compared to the responsive LSA he was accustomed to. We'd already done several hours of flying under the hood, so he'd need about 10 hours in a standard aircraft, some night flying, and a long cross-country to satisfy the FAA's private pilot requirements. Compared to what Blair's already accomplished, and the difficult challenges he faces in his daily life, future FAA ratings will seem like a snap—even though they'll require much more of that dreaded bookwork.

Blair said flying already has changed the way he looks at the world and opened new possibilities that he hadn't considered.

"I've been thinking about going back to school for an engineering degree," he said. "Aerospace engineering could be the place for me, and that's something that never would have occurred to me before I started flying. This whole process has changed me in ways that I'm just beginning to figure out." **AOPA**

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