

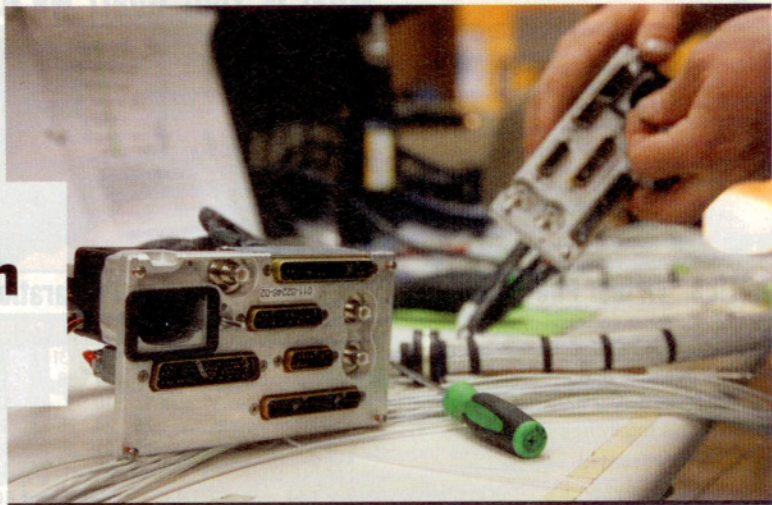
AOPA
The Debonair
 Sweepstakes

PROGRESS REPORT

Avionics home stretch

Strapping on the electrons

BY THOMAS A. HORNE



BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS, the AOPA sweepstakes Debonair should be making its way to the Sun 'n Fun International Fly-In and Expo at Lakeland Linder Regional Airport. That event will run from April 9 through April 14, and it will be the first time the public will get a close-up look at this remarkable airplane.

As this issue goes to press, Santa Fe Aero Services is busy installing the many new components in the Debonair's panel. Topping that list is Aspen Avionics' three-screen Evolution 2500 display system; Garmin's GTN 750 and GTN 650 GPS/navcoms; Electronics International's MVP-50P engine and systems analyzer; Alpha Avionics' angle-of-attack indicator; R.C. Allen's standby attitude indicator; CO Guardian's combination carbon monoxide detector/clock/cabin altitude alerter; PS Engineering's PMA 8000BT audio panel; and an iPad capable of receiving ADS-B-In data from Garmin's GDL 39 GPS and datalink antenna. Other sources of ADS-B information—both traffic and weather—will come from Garmin's GDL 88 dual-channel datalink receiver.

Of course, that's not all that's aboard. National AirParts Inc. provided a new, 70-amp alternator conversion. Wentworth Aircraft supplied a new alternator bracket to replace the earlier bracket, which failed. All those new avionics will require more than the 55 ampere-hours that the previous unit put out, so the National AirParts upgrade was a necessity. Electrical power increases are not new to the Debonair line. Early models came with 35-amp Bendix generators, which weren't sufficient from the start, according to National AirParts' Al Petrone. So, many owners opted to move up to 55-amp Alcor alternators, one of which was in the Debonair when it was purchased. During one flight, that alternator's bracket failed in two places, causing the alternator belt to slip. This made power output sink to the point where the landing-gear motor (the gear system is all-electric) didn't have enough oomph to retract the gear on one occasion! So it's good riddance to that wimpy bracket.

A LOT OF the panel work involves painstaking attention to detail in making new wiring bundles and connectors. All of the 50-year-old wiring has been replaced with brand-new leads.

In addition to these updates in *AOPA Pilot*, there is blog coverage of the Debonair sweepstakes project in the "Sweepstakes Logbook" section of AOPA's website, and I'd encourage you to check the site frequently for more news. Just go online (www.aopa.org), scroll down the left side of the homepage until you get to the "Blogs" section, and click away. We've posted slide-shows of the work being done on the airplane under the "Sweeps Home" button on the logbook page, and videos will be posted there as well. AOPA's weekly webcast—AOPA Live This Week—also features stories on the Debonair's progress. Before long, you'll be seeing videos of yours truly flying the newly embellished panel, with in-flight demonstrations of all its capabilities. I can't wait.



THE NEW PANEL will be dominated by Aspen Avionics' three-screen, Evolution 2500 display system.

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