

AOPA
The Debonair
Sweepstakes

AirMod cleanup

From grime to shine

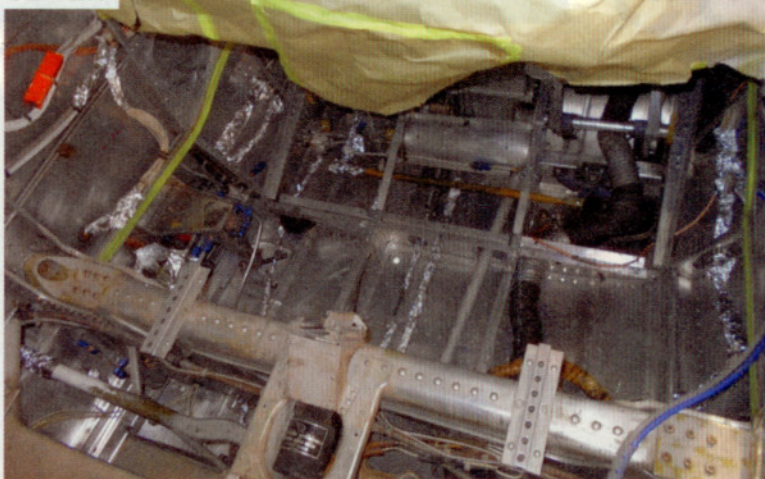
BY THOMAS A. HORNE

AT THIS WRITING, INTERIOR SHOP AIR MOD is smack dab in the middle of its renovation of the sweepstakes Debonair. The old interior is long gone, new seats have been fabricated (thanks very much to longtime sweeps contributor Garrett Leather, of Buffalo, New York), new side panels have been built, new floorboards created, and perhaps the biggest of the work package—locating and treating corrosion—draws to an end. Referring to corrosion treatment, Air Mod's Dennis Wolter says that, "Of all the work we do here in restoring old airplanes, corrosion control is by far the most important." Listen to him long enough and you hear a recital of horror stories: spars rotted through by mouse urine, wing skins corroded beyond repair by trapped moisture, salt air causing entire airframes to rot through. You get the idea.

Luckily, the Debonair hasn't shown any untreatable corrosion. What has been detected has been very light—a true shock when you consider that this airplane is 50 years old. But there has been a lot of dirt. That's bad, Wolter says, because dirt can hold corrosion-causing moisture. So a big part of the Debonair's time at Air Mod has been spent cleaning up the dirt—a total of four pounds was found in the airplane's belly—then treating the now-shiny aluminum with zinc chromate to inhibit any future corrosion. By the way, the dirt removal alone took 80 man-hours of painstaking labor.

Air Mod is performing other work. The Debonair has an overhead pushrod control that opens a fresh-air scoop on the airplane's dorsal skin. The scoop's air box had developed cracks that leaked air and also made operation of the pushrod difficult; now it's fixed. A tail-mounted beacon/strobe assembly from Knots2U has been installed. And an Airwolf Filter Corporation remote-mounted spin-on oil filter has been installed. So yes, the aircraft is getting a new interior, but that's not all that Air Mod is doing for the Debonair.

AFTER



BEFORE

DAYS OF SCRUBBING the interior skins with rubber gloves, Scotch-Brite pads, and lacquer thinner pay off big time when the skins come clean (above). Eventually all of the interior skins, including the belly (left) turned out flawless, and with no corrosion. For a 50-year-old airplane, that's remarkable.

Those who have been following the Debonair's oil-analysis saga—and there have been a lot of you—no doubt welcome the addition of the Airwolf filter. The original engine comes with a mere oil screen, so having a proper oil filter will help us do two things: Check the filter element for contaminants at oil changes; and hopefully aid in reducing the amount of metal particulates that have been showing up in the recent oil analyses. To see a more thorough discussion of the oil-analysis issue, as well as feedback from members, check the Sweepstakes Logbook blog (http://blog.aopa.org/sweepstakes_logbook/).

Believe it or not, folks, we're nearing the end of the Debonair's restoration. Yes, we'll be keeping a close eye on any engine issues, but once the final paint scheme has been applied the job will be done! Then it will be time to show off the Debonair in its full glory. As always, stay tuned, and watch the blog for the latest developments.

Three ways to win one of 76 prizes in AOPA's Debonair Sweepstakes

Join or renew AOPA and you will be entered to win AOPA's Debonair Sweepstakes. AOPA is giving away a completely restored 1963 Beechcraft Debonair B33 with an all-new ergonomic interior, the latest avionics, and up-to-date airframe as the grand prize. Plus, you could also win one of 75 other great aviation prizes. Visit the website (www.aopa.org/Membership/Sweeps.aspx) for ways to enter.

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FOLLOW Tom Horne's sweepstakes blog (http://blog.aopa.org/sweepstakes_logbook/) for updates on the renovation and related news.