

1947 ad.

It was a fairly short hop from Antiquers Aerodrome in Delray Beach to Sun 'n Fun for Richard Preiser and his Stinson, but it was a decades-in-the-making journey for them to arrive there together. Richard was just a teenager when he started learning to fly in 1969. He soloed at Pompano Beach, but wasn't making much money at the time and couldn't afford to continue lessons. So when he went into the Air Force, he flew with its aero club and earned his private certificate just three days before leaving for a tour of duty in Vietnam as a weapons mechanic, loading bombs in airplanes.

After returning to the States, he bought two Corvettes, married, and

started a family. Being do-it-yourselfers at heart, he and his wife, Peggy, decided to go into their own printing business. The sale of the Corvettes funded that venture, and just as soon as the business was profitable, Peggy suggested he buy back one of the Corvettes. Instead, he decided to pick up flying again and bought a Piper Arrow—and later, a Cessna 150 for his son.

Years later he was bitten by the vintage bug, after he struck up a friendship with fellow Floridian Kevin Proodian, who had been flying radio-controlled airplanes with Richard's son, Brian. When Kevin bought a Stinson 108-3, he frequently flew it over to Antiquers Aerodrome to visit the Preisers. Be-

ing around that Stinson was all it took—Richard was hooked. “I told my son that I was going to trade the Cessna 150 for a Stinson,” he said, chuckling. “Brian is now a captain on Colgan, flying for Continental.”

Kevin, an airline pilot who is also a certificated flight instructor and an airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanic, loves flying classic tailwheel airplanes. He good-naturedly steered Richard away from buying an early-model Stinson 108 that hadn't flown in 20-



One Outstanding Stinson Flying Station Wagon...

... Soon to be joined by its sister ship by Sparky Barnes Sargent

SPARKY BARNES SARGENT



1948 ad.

after a brief conversation, he sent Gene a deposit for the Stinson, sight unseen—and then asked Peggy for permission to buy it.

Flying Station Wagon

All told, more than 5,000 of the Stinson 108 series were manufactured. According to FAA Aircraft Specification No. A-767, the Model 108-3 was similar to the 108-2, with the exception of “larger fuel tanks, structural changes for increased gross weight, revised vertical tail surfaces, and a controllable rudder trim tab, [which replaced the] rudder bungee.”

In 1947, a utility version of the Model 108 Voyager was introduced, and its attributes were marketed in

this manner: “New! America’s first personal ‘cargo’ plane! See the new Stinson Flying Station Wagon. Reinforced 24-cu.-ft. cargo compartment in 2-tone plywood paneling equipped with tie-down straps. A side-loading baggage compartment offers an additional 11 cu. ft. of carrying space. Carries pilot and 600 cargo pounds, or pilot, one passenger, and 500 cargo pounds. Two rear seats can be replaced in 5 minutes’ time. Ideal ‘utility’ plane for ranchers, farmers, sportsmen, and flying businessmen.”

Powered by a 165-hp Franklin 6A4-165-B3, the Flying Station Wagon measures 25 feet 2 inches from nose to tail, has a wingspan of 33 feet 11 inches, and reaches

odd years, telling him, “If it hasn’t run in that long, you’re going to spend something like four times the purchase price to get it in flying condition. If you want a pristine airplane, let’s look around for one. Just a couple of weeks later, NC6364M showed up on Barnstormers [website]. It was an Oshkosh 2006 Classic Reserve Grand Champion, and I told him it would be a good airplane.” Richard called owner and restorer Gene “Pete” Engelskirger of Hinckley, Ohio, in early 2007, and

a height of 7 feet 6 inches in level attitude. It weighs 1,320 pounds empty and has a useful load of 1,080 pounds. Its maximum structural cruising speed is 126 mph, with a cruise speed around 108 mph—just right to enjoy some fresh air from its sliding windows. With a 50-gallon fuel capacity (a 25-gallon tank in each wing) and a 10-gph fuel burn, it offers a range of around 540 miles.

If you look carefully at the Stinson's wings, you'll notice slots in the leading edges, which increase the airflow over the ailerons at high angles of attack, thereby providing greater stability and control. And the slightly offset vertical stabilizer (for the 1948 model) helps counteract the torque of the 165-hp Franklin engine. Slotted wing flaps enhance takeoff performance, and landings were cushioned by the cantilever gear's oleo-spring shock absorbers. The Model 108-3 Flying Station Wagon sold for \$6,484 in 1948, according to aviation historian Joseph Juptner (*U.S. Civil Aircraft, Vol. 8*).

Touted as being roomy and soundproofed, with quick takeoffs and slow landings, Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation further enticed its targeted share of the market by advertising that "beginners can solo this spin-resistant Stinson in only about eight hours' flying time!" and thereby offered a "special flight plan for business and professional men ... your Stinson dealer will teach you to fly, free—up to and including solo." It was a winning campaign, apparently, since another company ad proclaimed that "... Stinson has become America's biggest-selling 4-place personal plane—especially with 'over-40' owners who fly for business and pleasure."

NC6364M

Manufactured by Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation—Stinson Division in Wayne, Michigan, in April 1948, it took nearly two years for this particular Flying Station Wagon to arrive in the hands



SPARKY BARNES SARGENT

Kevin Proodian (kneeling) and Richard Preiser—these longtime friends are both aficionados of Stinson 108-3s.

of its first owner. Later, while Richard was focused on his family and printing business, NC6364M was doing touch-and-goes between various owners from Nebraska to Florida, and then on to Ohio, where it languished for a number of years.

Gene Engelskirger, who restored the airplane, wrote this about NC6364M: "[It had] been around the Cleveland area since 1972 and was tied down next to my first restoration at Columbia Station airport 34 years ago. Bernie Ockuly bought the basket in 1987 and started the long process of bringing her back to life. Bernie got the RV bug, and I picked up the project in 1995. It was going to be a quick one-to-two-year deal that was finally finished 11 years later."

He also enumerated a few potentially controversial and interesting details derived from his restoration research:

- "There are two holes on the underside of the right gear leg. The

"About a month after I bought 64M, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be neat to have two airplanes with consecutive serial numbers.'..."

—Richard Preiser

battery drain hose originally went through the empty hole, and a service bulletin put it where it is now. This was to eliminate acid on the gear leg paint.

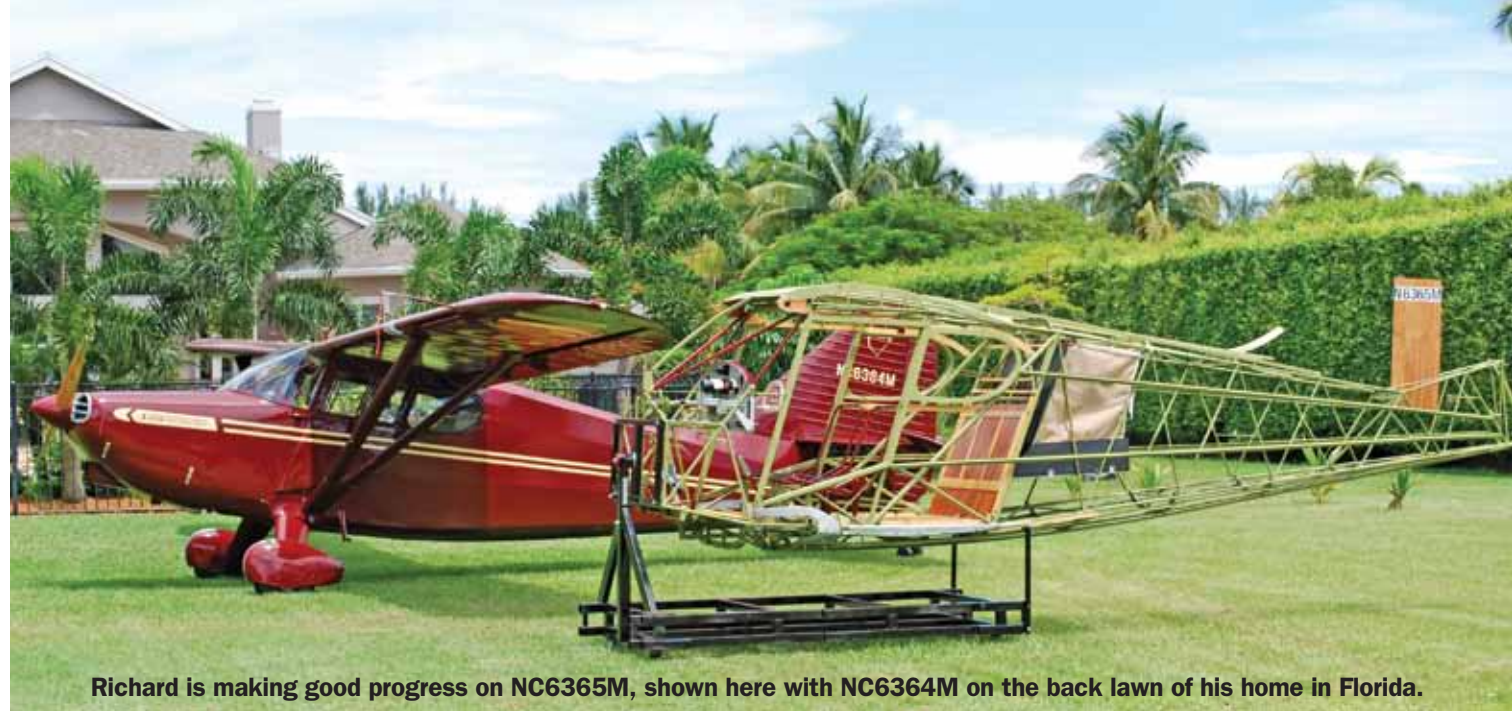
- "Franklins had red lettering on the rocker covers. [But] not in the later production years, according to [the late Charlie Hart], a former employee of Franklin Aircooled Motors.

- "A lot of Stinsons have cowling props on both sides. [But] per the Stinson parts book, they only had one on the right side for oil stick and cap access.

- "The aircraft was delivered with a Scott 3-24 BS tail wheel, item 202 (a), which was a 6-inch hard rubber unit. It was replaced with a Scott 3200, item 202 (c), in July of 1950.

- "The aircraft was delivered with a Sensenich wood propeller. In July of 1950, a metal McCauley was installed."

Karl Engelskirger helped his father with the restoration, and he shared some information about



Richard is making good progress on NC6365M, shown here with NC6364M on the back lawn of his home in Florida.

COURTESY RICHARD PREISER



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Left: Stinson 4—The interior and panel of NC6364M.

Below left and above: Close-up views of panel.

gentleman in California who was parting out several Stinsons had one that still had the latches on the position lights. Then the only thing we were missing was the ceramic insulator that goes on the tail, and I found one from another Stinson, so we were able to piece the whole thing together.”

what is perhaps the Stinson’s most unusual original feature—the low-frequency antenna for shortwave radio. It stretches from the top of the fuselage to each wingtip and the tail, and surprisingly, its presence isn’t discernable in flight. “The radio antenna installation was a joy,” recalled Karl as he smiled. “That airplane was untouched from the time it left the factory; it had the original panel, radios, and interior. The only thing missing was the antenna, and a

To keep the panel looking as original as possible, Gene and Karl mounted a small sliding tray behind the old Hallicrafters shortwave radio. This radio can be removed, thereby allowing easy access to the new radio, which is mounted on the tray. To make the airplane practical for cross-country flying in present-day airspace, updated avionics





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The aileron hinge fairings are made of cast aluminum.

Baggage capacity in this compartment is 100 pounds.

and other items include an Ameri-King AK-350 encoder, a Bendix/King KT 76A transponder, and a Whelen A650 navigation/strobe light system (in place of the original Grimes navigation lights). A four-place Flightcom 403mc intercom was installed, along with an Ameri-King AK-450 emergency locator transmitter, and a Bendix/King KLX 135A GPS/comm.

According to Karl, the Stinson had been tied down outside for many years and corrosion had begun in the wing spars. "That was difficult to deal with," he said, "because the stamped ribs and alu-

minum spars are riveted together, making it hard to replace the spars. But we finally got that cleaned up. The fuselage and wings were covered with the Poly-Fiber system, and the entire airplane was painted with Aerothane."

Current Caretaker

Thirty-eight years after Richard first started taking flying lessons, and 59 years after NC6364M was manufactured, the time had finally arrived for the two to become acquainted and begin their journey together. Richard and Kevin traveled via airline to Ohio to pick up

the Stinson and fly it together to Florida. It was a memorable occasion—especially since their return cross-country was encumbered first by low ceilings and then, as they flew farther south, by very thick smoke from intense forest fires in southern Georgia.

But they made it successfully, and back in Florida, Kevin gladly stepped into his flight instructor role to help Richard learn how to fly the tailwheel airplane, as well as the nuances of coaxing the very best performance out of the Flying Station Wagon. Recalling those lessons with a chuckle, Richard said, "It took a while to

make the transition from tricycle to tailwheel, and Kevin actually made a point to go flying on windy days, because Antiquers has trees on one side and a tower on another side, so you really have to know how to handle the airplane."

"The aircraft is very forgiving," said Kevin, adding, "I tell people it is like a four-place Piper Cub—the same wing planform, a Hershey bar with round wingtips. The takeoff and landing speed is 80 mph, and it stalls at 61.4 mph, with flaps down. It's a very honest airplane, and very affordable."

Richard's delight in flying his Wagon is obvious, as well as his dedication to keeping the airplane in top-notch condition. Since he's owned it, it has been awarded the 2008 Best Restored Classic (101-165 hp) and 2009 Outstanding Classic Aircraft (9/1/45—12/31/55) at Sun 'n Fun.

All in the Details

There are numerous fine details that make NC6364M's restoration an award winner—and since a casual observer may not even be aware of some of these items, Kevin shared his knowledge about them. "Everything is original to this airplane, minus the Cleveland wheels and brakes," he explained. "They came from the factory with Goodrich brakes. This airplane has the original-type split windshield, paint scheme, and polished aluminum trim. The headliner is complete with the original dome light and elevator/rudder trim controls. The 108-3 was available in two colors—the Stinson Maroon or Blue only, with Diana Cream trim. The fabric and upholstery were beautifully done [by Paul Workman of Ohio] and are correct for this model, and so are the mahogany veneer panels."

If you stand underneath the wing and gaze up at the ailerons, you'll notice some rather large, streamlined covers for the aileron hinges. They are cast aluminum fairings, composed of two halves which are joined by two screws—and it's not often you'll see these anymore. The inspection plate covers are also original, according to Kevin, who ex-

plained that they are different from most because they have two fastener strips on the back side and four small, raised vents on the front.

Richard humbly confesses that, after he bought NC6364M and began thoroughly observing all of its details, "I told Gene that I didn't pay him enough for all the detailed work that was done on it—he is a super nice guy, and he got a chuckle out of that. I paid his price, but I owe him money—you know what I mean? To see the work he did, I know he didn't make a dollar an hour."

Stinson Sister Ships

Throughout their lives, the Preisers have worked hard for what they have, and they derive a deep satisfaction from achieving their hands-on goals—whether it's running a successful business, remodeling their home, or their latest endeavor—restoring an airplane. "My wife and I took a six-room house and made it into a gorgeous mansion," explained Richard, smiling. "My wife and I painted it inside and out, we did all the wood-working together, and we bought 186 tons of bricks and made our own driveway. That took about six months of laying the sand and shell rock foundation, and then the brick with our own hands. "

So it's just natural that Richard feels a bit uncomfortable accepting compliments for NC6364M. Now he's determined to restore its sister ship with his own hands, and to that end, he's keeping his handsome Stinson hangared—and only flying it on nice days—so he'll have a pristine example to go by for his own restoration.

Top: It's nice and clean under the cow! This 165-hp Franklin runs strong, but parts are hard to come by.

Middle: Close-up view of the controllable rudder trim tab.

Bottom: Close-up view of the antenna attachment tab on the wingtip.



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Close-up view of the inspection plates.

“About a month after I bought 64M, I thought, ‘Wouldn’t it be neat to have two airplanes with consecutive serial numbers.’ So I researched NC6363M, and found that it crashed. An 80-year-old man called me from Ohio and confirmed that information—he was there when it went into the trees. So then I looked for NC6365M, and I found it in San Marcos, Texas. I e-mailed the owner and found out everything was for sale. The project was in bad shape and wasn’t complete—so I had to sleep on it and think about whether

I really wanted to buy it and restore it. It was missing a lot of parts, and some were damaged and mismatched. But I decided to go ahead with it,” declared Richard with an optimistic tone of determination, “and I bought a third Stinson from California, just for parts. I’ve never restored an airplane, and I want to do everything on it I can, and I have an A&P who is guiding me through the project.”

Richard is making steady progress on his project. To date, he has had all of the instruments for

NC6365M overhauled by Keystone, he’s completed the interior woodwork, and he’s started working on the wiring system and the fuselage. He hopes to finish this Stinson in three or four years, if all goes smoothly. And when he does, it’s likely that the two virtually identical Stinson sister ships will compose quite an eye-catching display on the flightline in their deep, rich maroon paint scheme. And Richard will no doubt finally feel comfortable accepting compliments for his own restoration. 