

Bevo.....and the Clipped-Wing Cub

by Ivan D. Livi

In August, 1944 I left my job as a mechanic at Bettis Airport, previously known as the Homestead-McKeesport Airport, to go to work for Bevo Howard's Hawthorne Flying Service in Orangeburg, SC. My job with Hawthorne Flying Service came about as the result of answering a Trade-A-Plane ad soliciting mechanics for work at the Primary Flight School being conducted by Hawthorne Flying Service for the Army Air Corp. The primary training was being done using the Stearman PT-17 and PT-13 airplanes. Because of my experience gained at Bettis Airport doing maintenance and major overhaul of light aircraft I was asked to help maintain Bevo's clipped-wing J3 Cub.

Beverly "Bevo" Howard was a South Carolinian who learned to fly at an early age and became a pilot at age 16. The first plane that he owned was a 1927 Waco 10 powered by an OX5 engine. Bevo acquired ownership of Hawthorne Flying Service after working there as a mechanic's helper and part time pilot. By 1936 Bevo had become a pilot for Eastern Airlines which made him the youngest airline pilot in the nation. During the ensuing years Bevo became known as one of the finest light aircraft stunt pilots in the world.

Bevo's clipped-wing cub had the wings shortened about three and one-half feet. The rear wing strut, which was normally smaller than the front one, was replaced with a front strut for added strength. The engine was a 75 HP Continental engine equipped with fuel injection for inverted flying. The wet sump oil system was modified in a unique way. The standard metal pickup pipe in the sump was replaced with a rubber hose that extended to the bottom of the sump. The end of the hose had attached to it a square block of metal with a hole drilled in its center for the end of the hose to stick through. When the airplane was in an inverted position the metal block caused the hose to double over putting the end of the hose into the oil supply. A solid micarta plate approximately a quarter inch thick with some holes drilled through it was placed between the sump and the engine. This permitted oil from the engine to drain into the sump during normal operation but prevented the main oil supply from gushing into the engine while the airplane was in the inverted position.

When Bevo came to the airport to do a bit of practicing it was always a thrill watching him lift off the ground, point the nose of the airplane at the far corner of the runway to gain momentum, and then, do a slow roll on takeoff.

With the closing of World War II in 1945, I left Hawthorne Flying Service to go to work in the crop dusting industry north of the city of Chicago, IL. While there I attended an air show just north of the present location of O'Hare International Airport. To my surprise.... Bevo was there doing his precision routine in a V-tailed Beech Bonanza.

In 1971 Bevo was killed in an accident while flying a Buecker Jungmeister at a show in Greenville, NC. I am proud to have known and worked for Bevo Howard.

Ivan D. Livi, Pres OX5 Cliff Ball Wing 2011

For more information about Bevo Howard visit Beverly Howard Jr's web site at Bev@BevHoward.com.