

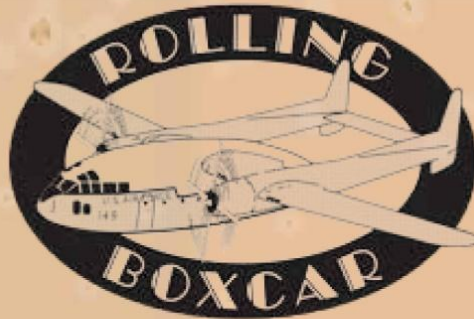
BOXCAR BULLETIN

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☆☆ Rolling Boxcar Updates ☆☆

"Stewardship Part 2" (continued from July, August, September 2024 issue)

Back in June of 2019, in Battle Mountain NV, we soon verified that it was not a complete aircraft. Neither Rolling Boxcar President John Will nor I expected it to be. While it's very true that we didn't need, or even want, a complete C-119, it would have been nice to have enough bits to make the fuselage pod at least appear to be all there. But there were three big holes which would have to be filled before she was ready to face the world. Specifically, that would be the two ditching hatches in the fuselage behind the wings, above the troop compartment, and the overhead hatch above the cockpit behind the pilots. These are relatively straightforward assemblies, or no great complication, but still to make them from scratch would be tedious and time consuming. When we finally got to the end of the Nevada site activity and the rig was ready to hit the road for the major conversion activity in McArthur California, on the morning of our departure good friend and steady helper Matt Hei (from the air tanker base at the airport there) discovered that someone had tossed three boxcar hatches over



Rolling History to the Vets Who Helped Make It

the fence sometime during the previous night! Wow, what a terrific break for the project! The ditching hatches were quickly installed but the cockpit hatch had a severely damaged corner and would no longer fit in the opening. A great break for the project, but fixing that would have to wait.

Once our very impressive rig had made a completely uneventful trip to the build site, we began the clean-up activities. Just a couple of days before I had to leave for home in Alaska, I tackled the issue of that hatch. Knowing that this was an aircraft no longer and considerations of airworthiness need not

apply, I cast about for suitable repair material to rebuild that bad corner. All I could find was light gauge steel and somewhat heavier aluminum. Since the original hatch was mostly aluminum, that would be the obvious choice. But the only aluminum we had was heat treated to T4 temper, which does not form into the required shapes without cracking. We considered cutting out the parts and annealing them, but that was something we could do if we had to. Desperation found a way! I was wandering around, wishing for some dead soft aluminum, of any alloy, when I noticed the bus. Yeah, the AmTrans school bus, still wearing its Oregon license plates. And license plates are TO aluminum. Whack 'em up with my tinsnips to shape, a little bit of compound curving as required, drill for pop rivets, and dimple the holes. Pop away, add a bit of Bondo (I said this wasn't going to be airworthy!) sand and paint. It ended up looking pretty darn good. When you see the Rolling Boxcar and you get up to the cockpit, take a look at that hatch. See if you can tell which corner got the makeover. And that, gentle readers, is just one more example of how we get the job done without expending much of our precious resources.

Red Fuel Gauge

So, I was never a big fan of Red Bull but now I am. I was working in the shop one day and was digging around for something I could use to make the center 24 gauges out of. I ran across an old Red Bull can I had emptied for a pick-me-up several months prior and being I have a messy shop; this empty can

was still lurking around. It had the right diameter as the 2" gauges in the center of the forward main instrument cluster. So, after rolling it around, looking at it from several angles and mumbling "Hmmmmm" for several minutes, I realized the top could be cut and trimmed and then buffed into the



shiny raised profile ring you see here on the fake gauge on the left. Sure... it should be flat black and lower profile, like the one on the right, but what fun is that. So, with a nice shiny ring and new glass, some hi-definition printing, a nail and white plastic, your fuel gauge can be full all the time too.



"Boxcar Engine Runs!"

Inactivity is seldom helpful, except maybe for brief periods to pause and reflect. Well, for people, at any rate. For mechanical devices that have many moving parts, long term inactivity is almost always begging for trouble. Rolling Boxcar member and technical wizard John Reffett of Eagle River owns two C-119s that live at the Palmer airport. In keeping with his somewhat informal "schedule" of running up the engines about once a year, so late September rolls around, and a bunch of us gather at the airport to make it happen. The bunch included John R, of course, ace airplane driver Roger B, me, and a group of wingnuts from Great Britain and a lot of other places.

Except it didn't happen. At first..... To resurrect an aircraft engine that hasn't been run for quite a while (and, yes, a year qualifies), if you care about your powerplants they want to be

pre-oiled. This involves connecting a pump with a supply of oil, a long hose, and a connection on the engine. remove a cap on the nose case, and start pumping. Eventually, oil will start to flow from the witness port, and you can be assured that ALL the internal oil passages are filled. After successfully pre-oiling both engines, it's time for the burp run. The boxcar's engines are 18-cylinder radials. The cylinders are arranged radially around the crankcase. That means some of them will be vertically upward, some vertically downward, and others horizontal and in between. It's those downward facing cylinders that need extra attention. Oil will sometimes leak past the piston rings and collect, and if you try to run the engine like that, it can result in a cylinder being blown clean off of the case. Very not good.

So, pull the bottom cowl segments and remove a spark plug from each cylinder that is oriented below horizontal. Now start the engine and run it at a low speed for a few minutes. This will clear the misplaced oil.

You may think this would be messy. You would be correct - it is. Unfortunately, this time we could not get the engines to start. With plugs out of a third of the cylinders, there wasn't quite enough compression at the low cranking speed to get it to fire off. And then there was the old fuel. AvGas is much more stable than automotive gasoline, but it does have its limits. And the stuff in those wings was well past its use by date. So, we hung it up for that Saturday. Bought some fresh fuel and came back the next Tuesday.

And it worked perfectly. There are few sounds (at least to these old ears) prettier than a big radial rumbling away. You really should have been there!



**We need your help!
You can help
Rolling Boxcar
get on the road.**

You can help by;
planning and working a fund raising event, ship merchandise,
work with our on line presence, publish the newsletter,
and many other things I can't even think of.

If you would like to become a part of
Rolling Boxcar
email us at dean@rollingboxcar.com.

