

Culver Lover

A Hangar Full of Culver Memories

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY LEROY COOK



YOU MAY NOT immediately recognize the name Culver as a pioneer of aviation, but that of Culver Aircraft's chief designer, Albert W. Mooney, probably rings a bell. Before they started their own company, the Mooney brothers worked for various 1930's entrepreneurs, at a time when everyone had a passion for aviation, but no money. And thus one man who did have some money, Knight K. Culver, who was determined to bring an aircraft industry to Columbus, Ohio, in 1937, bought the rights to the low-wing airplane Al Mooney had designed for Mono Aircraft in St. Louis. Culver insisted that Mooney had to come with the deal.

Passion, of course, is what keeps us in flying, an often illogical activity that

confounds spouses, bankers and life insurance salesmen. Mark Trimble, a fixture of aviation around Branson, Missouri, carries the aviation gene and he indulges his passion to a degree some people would consider obsessive. How obsessive? "We've had as many as 24 airplanes in this hangar," says Trimble as we maneuver ship after ship through the doorway of his toybox. Not one to seek publicity, neither does he refuse a fellow airhead's curiosity. Today, we are digging out his Culvers, examples of Al Mooney's early work that would be slipping away if not for the efforts of antiquers like Mr. Trimble.

Mark Trimble goes back a long way with the Culver airplanes. As he said, "I was growing up in southern Kansas City in the spring of 1940 when I

heard that Toth Aircraft down at Municipal Airport had become the Culver dealer and was having a Cadet factory demonstrator flown in by R.S. 'Pop' Johnson. I hopped on the streetcar and rode down to the end of the line at the airport, and there I saw a little maroon and cream airplane dive across the field, pull up to land and roll to a stop."

Trimble proceeded to learn to fly at Branson after the family moved there. He bought a 1946 Culver V in 1950, which he flew back and forth to college in Fayetteville, Arkansas, for the next four years. He said, "It had 265 hours on it when I bought it, and after I put another 800 hours on it, it was just worn out. I flew it all over the country, even flew it over Pike's Peak,