

What's happening at PIONEER AVSPECS

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Hi Everyone

We had intended putting something out before this but everyone here has been head down, backside up getting ready for Wanaka.

Well, Wanaka has been and gone and it was the good news bad news scenario.

Bad news was of course the fact that the La-9 didn't make it. It was all dressed up but had no way to go. The airframe was essentially finished and ready, but we had no engine or prop.

Mark Petru and the team in the Czech Republic put in an enormous effort to get the engine and prop ready. One of the prop blades was found to be cracked and Mark scoured the old Eastern Bloc looking for a replacement. He finally found one in Kiev in Ukraine and getting hold of it entailed a 3-day each way car journey (in the snow). The outcome was that Avia was able to build us a fresh prop which was ready to go.



All dressed up - just need the noise department

The engine job didn't go quite as smoothly. Both of the principal engineers on the engine job caught the rather virulent flu virus that plagued Europe last year and that resulted in them being off work for nearly three weeks. Then the original engine test stand was found to be unusable and another facility was found at a military installation, but not much time was available on it. When they did get the engine mounted on the stand it ran with Ts & Ps, exhaust gas temp etc great - only problem was it would not run properly at low power settings and had a propensity to accelerate the RPM uncontrollably at high settings! This problem was traced to the "equaliser" in the injection unit.



The engine running on the test stand

Unfortunately we couldn't source a replacement in time, the test bed was otherwise booked and in a nutshell it wasn't ready to go. This was a major disappointment, not only for our team, but also for Mark Petru and the people in Prague who had worked enormous hours to try and get it done in time.

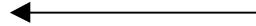
I guess we have to be philosophical about it and look forward to the next potential time we can present this rare bird to the world.

We are still intent on having it flying as soon as possible and Mark is working towards getting the engine to us as quickly as possible.

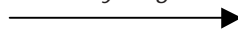
The GOOD NEWS of course was the completion and debut of Tony Banta's P-40E. Once again, another enormous effort by the guys in the shop. For the three weeks preceding Easter it was 7-day weeks with the light on till late at night.



Seven days to go and still cowl, etc to be finished



Ready to go



The Team at Wanaka with Tony, Simon and our crew



But we made it. Tony and Simon with their ladies and accompanied by Chad and Jason arrived from the USA on Saturday, driving onto Wanaka Airfield just as the two P-40s started a paired aeros display.

The plane is beautiful (even if we say so ourselves) and is now back in Auckland with 15 hours flight time on it, no squawks and after some minor additions such as armament and oxygen system it will be shipped back to Tony in the USA.



John Lamont taxis back into our shop after returning from Wanaka

So where to now for our shop? All hands are on deck and work will be focussed on Jerry Yagen's P-40E. Jerry graciously allowed us to defer some time from his project so we could focus on getting Tony's aircraft to Wanaka. Things will now accelerate markedly and we'll keep you abreast of developments in the months to come. We are still aiming for a December fly date for this aircraft.

Additionally, we now have a complete set of mainplanes including wingtips, control surfaces, ammo doors, fuel tanks, etc for Judy Pay's P-40F and work has already commenced on this with the RH leading edge now in our jig.

Warren's team at Avspecs are also about to restart on the MKIV Spitfire and updates will be forthcoming here also.

In case there's some confusion (and from some comments we've received it looks like there is), perhaps a bit of an explanation is in order as to how we operate and who actually is Pioneer Avspecs.

Pioneer Avspecs Ltd is a joint venture company comprising of Pioneer Aero Restorations Ltd (Garth's company) and Avspecs Ltd (Warren's company). The latter two companies are separate entities who operate independently with their own projects (Pioneer with the La-9 and Avspecs with the Spitfire XIV) as well as combining on certain projects - more specifically to date Dick Thurman's P-40K, Tony's P-40E and the P-40 work currently in the shop for Jerry Yagen and Judy Pay. We share a jointly owned hangar at Ardmore Airport and the two teams combine and work together very comfortably.

Warren's background is primarily as an Aircraft Engineer, whereas Garth's is Business Management.

Hope that wasn't too confusing and clarifies how we work.

And just to close out this newsletter, how does this look?



The start of a squadron!

Warren & Garth