

## **SIKORSKY'S S-38 'OSA'S ARK**

**The very last flying example in the world. Fynytt flew along !**

### **'THE EXPLORER'S AIR YACHT: S-38 OSA'S ARK**

It would be inappropriate to call this aircraft as a fairground attraction, though owner Thom Schrade spends a whole lot of time and money to show his plane worldwide to the enthusiastic and interested visitors to airshows. It is still the only flying legendary S-38 in the world.

### **HISTORY AND CHARITY WORK**

Why the plane is painted in aebera outfit ? Thom starts an enthusiastic story about the couple Martin and Osa Johnson, in the years '34-'35 they made a 'wild-life tour' about Africa, Borneo and the 'South-Sea's' area. The amphibious S-38B (the first of this type of Sikorsky) flew this way over 100,000 miles across inhospitable and distant places. Therefrom the "Zebra outfit 'on' OSA's ARK. Nairobi as the main base. This enabled them to do their exploratory work for writing books and making films. The S-38 proved to be a very reliable aircraft underlined by the recent 'World Tour 2010', which brought the couple hundreds of miles across inhospitable area, over fjords, glaciers in Iceland and Greenland and areas with polar bears. Hours and hours flying without the possibility of radio-contact. The plane however is capable of flying on one engine and even land on one in case of emergency.

Thom, the lovely navigator Sally and her dog Remington again decided to make the trip from Minneapolis USA to Europe. Both are closely involved in the organization "Wings of Help (Frankfurt) and combine flying with 'fund-raising for children in need. These children can be flown this way to often hospitals on very far distance for their necessary medical treatment. For 'World Tour part one' in 2010, Thom set his plane available for Wings of help, and was being supported by co-pilot and friend Bruno Gantenbrink (sponsor fuel) and the German astronaut Ulf Merbold (support device). There was help from people like Tom Enders (President of Air-Bus) and Frank Franke (President of "Wings of Help") , persons that helped partly realize this 'World Tour'.

### **OWNER AND HOBBYIST**

Buzz Kaplan, owner of the company 'Born Again Restorations' and Thom were captivated by the idea of the S-38 restoration in a fully operational way. Thom was a financial partner / owner of this historically significant plane. It was indeed the first commercially successful airliner in companies like Pan Am who flew the North-South route. The blueprints were arranged by Sikorsky, because of the 'OSA's Ark' only the main wing and tail trees were original, the rest had to be made from drawing. besides skiing and fishing flying ofcourse ie the main part in my life explains Thom. "I now needed seven days to Minneapolis from USA to Europe via Canada, Greenland, Iceland and the first thing we saw in Europe was Ireland.

## WORLD-TOUR PART-II

The organization of 'World Tour part II (winter 2012) is already in full swing as it comes to the organisation. We think to go back on Russia, Mongolia and across Siberia to Alaska, depending on sponsors, permissions, available fuel on the road, and also we look at Plan B as Middle East, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, China and Russia. "The plane lives in oil, annually it receives a major overhaul, but I consider to invite my regular 'mechanic' to fly in from the USA to inspect the S-38 before 'Part II' begins. Safety first!

## INSIDE & OUTSIDE

Small chairs, a bench, beautiful white lacquered wooden frame and floor, white curtains, mini-bar, a table with foldable tabletop it all looks fabulous, like living in a fairy-tail. Thom however explains: "It is a large, ungainly clumsy aircraft, keep out as much as possible from the turbulence otherwise it will be a fight to maintain control. Pulled by the reliable Pratt & Whitney R-1340's however under normal conditions it is easy to fly, the monotonous humming of the engines doesn't bore you at all.

Thom seems to be one with his plane from the moment the aircraft leaves the runway to the moment you hear the 'tjoep' sound as the wheels accelerate at the landing when the rubber hits the tarmac and the plane is parked.

## FUTURE OF THE ARK

Thom pulls his shoulders on the future of the ark after 'World Tour II. "It's nearly ten years that I owned the plane, actually the things that I wanted to do with it I nearly reached. I may look for a buyer who might want to continue the saga and fly back to South Africa, South America or Australia. Or perhaps a sponsor who might want to share another trip with me.

## REFLECTIONS

Would you like to restore another plane to see the history repeat itself ? Thom pulls his cap a little deeper into the eyes and replies: Look, in the four years prior to the maiden-flight is about 40,000 man-hours that were needed ... We now do have GPS, electronic engines and fuel monitoring, safety first. But again such a project ... (his face speaks volumes). Thom concludes with mentioning about his friend and partner Buzz Kaplan, he crashed in a restored "Jenny" from 1917 and payed with his life. "Our mutual goal was to fly the S-38 and explore the world. I really think of him daily as I do the things that we might have shared together. I am a very lucky man, but I would have liked to share this all with Buzz.



For specifications scroll down please

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## SIKORSKY S-38-B SPECIFICATIONS

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| Span (upper)     | 71 ft 8 in |
| Span (lower)     | 36 ft 0 in |
| Length (overall) | 40 ft 3 in |

|              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| Gross Weight | 10,480 lb |
| Empty Weight | 6,550 lb  |
| Load         | 3,930 lb  |

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| High Speed    | 125 mph |
| Cruise Speed  | 110 mph |
| Landing Speed | 55 mph  |

|       |        |
|-------|--------|
| Range | 750 sm |
|-------|--------|

|                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Powerplant S-38-B         | 2 P&W Wasp (410 hp)   |
| Powerplant S-38-B Special | 2 P&W Wasp C (450 hp) |
| Powerplant S-38-BS        | 2 P&W Wasp (450 hp)   |
| Powerplant S-38-BT        | 2 P&W Wasp T (525 hp) |

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|----------------------|------|
| Year of Introduction | 1928 |
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