

*"Vol. 1 of Lesser Known Record & Racing Aircraft" – Book and CD review
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Warren Eberspacher: "Volume 1 of Lesser Known Record & Racing Aircraft" (Historical Aircraft Digest 00-8) + accompanying image CD. The book is loose-leaf bound, 22 x 28 cm (8½ x 11 inches), 112 pages of which some 70 pages of drawings and other illustrations. The CD contains 115 images, including 59 photos. The price is US \$ 22.00 for the book and US 22.00 for the CD, plus postage. Published 2002 by **Creative & Customized Support**, 993 Hwy 65 #10, Austin, CO 81410, USA (phone: +1 970 8354395)

This is another in **Warren Eberspacher's** series of monographs on not-so-well-known aircraft. It describes six planes – a really diverse collection of successes, failures and disasters:

- The 1923 US Army **Fokker T-2**, the first plane to make a non-stop transcontinental flight across the USA
- The 1929 **Paramount Cabinaire "The Answer"**, which crashed during an endurance record attempt
- The 1930 **Lockheed Sirius "Anahuac"** which made a non-stop flight between New York and Mexico City
- The 1932 **Carr Special**, an unsuccessful racer that turned skywriter
- The 1949 **P-51C #7 "Beguine"**, which crashed fatally during the last Thompson Trophy race
- The 1949 **Christensen Zipper**, a Goodyear Trophy midget racer

All these planes have a short history and five-view drawings, sometimes of different versions and paint schemes. Some are more detailed than others, for example the T-2 drawings, which contain quite a bit of cockpit detail. In addition there are two more short features from the 1949 National Air Races, about a P-38 crash and about the women's T-6 races.

As far as I can judge, given the obscurity of some of the subjects, the drawings seem accurate and the articles well researched. I have some reservations regarding the "Beguine" drawings, though. The fuselage is way too slim in side view, and some of the kinks and details below the fuselage and wing are missing. It almost looks like the drawings are based of a side view of an Allison-engined P-51, on which the wing sits higher in the fuselage than in the Merlin engine versions. The wing clip is not shown to be in the "natural" place at the end of the wing spars, but further outboard. The little winged logo on the tail is not correctly identified as the JD Reed Co. logo. I have still not seen a correct "Beguine" drawing...



*The JD Reed Co. logo - pale green shield, white wings and black details
(Thanks to Bruce Fraites!)*

I also wonder about the dimensions of the colourful "Zipper". The dimensions given, a length of 24' 8", a span of 24' and a chord of 6' 10", would probably make it the biggest midget racer of all times. From drawings by Bob Hirsch and drawings published in the February 1950 "Air Trails" (thanks to Dick Toth!) it seems like all figures are exactly 50% too big.

The separate image CDs of the Historical Aircraft Digests are a great idea, it means that a low-budget operation can still produce a colour publication with lots of images. The photos are a mixture of good and bad ones, some of them being scanned from newspaper articles. I found several that I had not seen before. The drawings really come alive when coloured. However, I was a disappointed in two aspects of the CD – user-friendliness and image resolution. No advantage has been taken of the possibilities to make a "surfable" electronic document or of the storage capacity of the CD medium.

The CD is really nothing more than the scanned pages of a paper publication – even the pure text pages are scanned to jpg format! In itself it contains no way of identifying the images. The files are all in the root directory and are simply called "fig1.jpg", "fig2.jpg" etcetera. You must consult a separate paper list in order to find a particular illustration. It would have been simple

to add an index file with links to the different images, or at least to organise the files in directories and give them more meaningful names.

The 700 Mb capacity of a CD would have made it possible to cram in a lot of big, sharp high-resolution images. Bearing that in mind I was surprised to see that the 115 files only use 7.52 Mb, a little more than one percent of the capacity. The average photo size is only around 75 kB, which is about the quality of most photos found on the web, where many people have to download them over a modem. This means that the photos and drawings on the CD are hardly scaleable at all and can definitely not be blown up to show interesting details. The accompanying instructions contain some reasoning about showing the whole images on the screen at 100% of the image size. I can't follow it – all image programs that I know have a simple one- or two-click tool that adjusts the size of an image to the size of the window,

and they also have ways of adjusting the size and resolution of images when saving them. If printability of the drawings is an issue, I would suggest using pdf format rather than jpg.

Conclusion

This is a very nice mixed collection of obscure and less obscure planes. I really like the focus on something less obvious than GeeBees or modern Unlimiteds. The drawings are perhaps not comparable to the best, like Taichiro Yamashita and a couple of others, but they are perfectly adequate for most modelling purposes. The potential of CD publication is not fulfilled, but I hope the CDs will be improved in future digests, because it is such a great idea. Recommended!

A big thanks to Warren Eberspacher for the review example!