

DUSTER HEAVEN

by

Harry S. Gann Jr.

Like the proverbial Texan who wanted to say a few words about his home, I would like to write about Phoenix, Arizona. I didn't appreciate it until I moved away. Now I jump at the opportunity to go back and visit the airports and duster strips that surround Phoenix. That area seems to be a haven for old airplanes that have been converted to dusters and sprayers. Some have been rebuilt or modified so many times that all that remains stock is the nameplate (if Larkins hasn't got it).

One of the more interesting places is Rex Williams' strip. It is located on 91st Street just off of Indian School Road. Rex had a Ford 4-AT-E, N-8407, for awhile. Later he sold it and got a Boeing 247D, N-41899. The late William B. Stout had an engineering office in Phoenix and he and Rex spent many hours reminiscing about the old tri-motors. At various times I have seen and photographed at that strip the following aircraft:

Bird CK duster	N-933V	220 Continental
Meyers OTW sprayer	N-26483	Jacobs R-735-9
New Standard D-25 duster	N-149M	
Stearman 4E duster	N-791H	P&W R-1340-18
Stearman 4CM-1 duster	N-489W	P&W R-1340-AN1
Stearman 4D duster	NR-11724	P&W R-1340-18
Travel Air 4000 duster	N-9048	Wright J-5
Vultee BT-13 sprayer	N-56154	P&W R-1340-AN1

Just North of the Williams' strip on 99th Avenue and Glendale Avenue is Fram Field. Max Shears and Bill Mason have a collection of airplanes that would whet the appetite of any aviation enthusiast. The December 1957 issue of American Airman had an interesting article about the field. I have photographed the following Standards there:

Jones New Standard D-25 duster	N-19155	Wright R-975-11
New Standard D-25 sprayer	N-9194	Lycoming R-690-9
New Standard D-25 duster	N-31K	Wright R-975-11

Among the dismantled airplanes are a Tank Robin, a MacClathie powered Timm Collegiate and a Waco F.

In the same neighborhood on 115th Avenue, between McDowell and Thomas Road, is the Country Boy Duster Strip. Here may be found various Travel Air dusters and sprayers. I have seen and photographed the following Travel Airs:

D4000 duster	N-9826	Wright R-760E-1
4000 sprayer	N-5433	Continental R-670-4
D4D sprayer	N-475N	Wright R-760-8
L4000 duster	N-609H	Lycoming R-680-13

Over on the East side of town near the municipal airport there is a small strip located on 16th street and the river bed. Farm Aero keeps their Travel Airs there. I have seen:

E4000 duster	N-9918	Wright R-975-28
C4000 sprayer	N-8700	Lycoming R-680-13
3000 duster	N-5427	

Jim Strnd of Farm Aero who, unfortunately, was killed a few years ago in a dusting accident was an aviation enthusiast. He had various old engines as well as a Heath and an Aeronca C-2 that he was restoring. The C-2 was completed except for the ailerons while not too much has been done with the Heath.

The municipal airport in Phoenix, SkyHarbor, is located on 24th Street and about Jefferson, is always good for something. The last time that I was there, I saw two FM-2 sprayers and a B-17 sprayer, as well as a T-33 with a photo nose and a commercial license.

Crowl Dusters at Air Haven on Grand Avenue mounted an extra set of PA-12 wings and a 165 hp Warner Scarab engine on a Piper PA-12 duster. Evidently it did not work out too well as he sold it and remained an N3N operator. His latest modification is extending the wings on his N3N's.

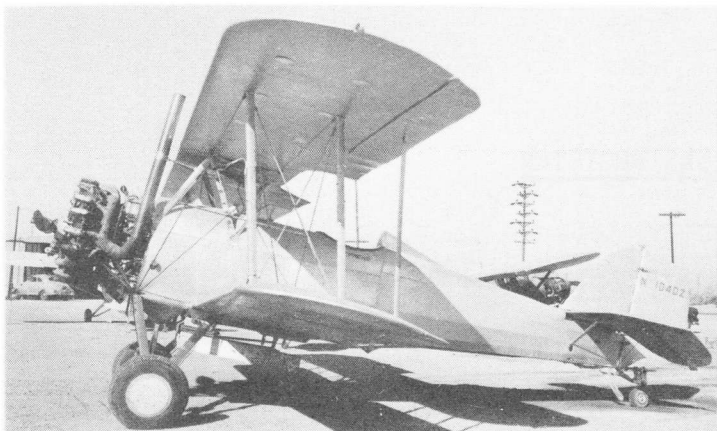
About forty miles southwest of Phoenix, in Buckeye, are still more Travel Airs. Formerly owned by Loudermilk, Moore now operates them. They are:

E4000 Mod duster	N-402N	Lycoming R-680-13
2000 Mod duster	N-3242	Lycoming R-680-13
E4000 Mod sprayer	N-9959	Lycoming R-680-13
4000 Mod sprayer	N-9088	Lycoming R-680-13
4000 Mod duster	N-4321	220 Continental

I understand that he has papers and parts on two others that he intends to build up this winter.

There are other airports around such as Paradise Field on North 19th Avenue, the Tempe Airport and Falcon Field north of Mesa. However, I find that the previously mentioned fields are the most interesting. If you are traveling through, stop off and kill a few hours. You will not regret it.

Ed Note: Members Chalmers Johnson and Leonel Stollar made a photographic trip to this same area in February 1953. It is interesting to note that nearly all of the dusters that were there at that time, five years ago, are still active. A few are not listed, and for the record they are: Travel Air 4000 N-359M, c/n 1271; Travel Air 4000 with 2000 gear, N-8125, c/n 900; Stearman C-3R, N-670K; and Laird LC 1B-300, N-10402, c/n 188. In agreement with Harry Gann, they state "In Phoenix we received an extremely friendly reception from the duster pilots we visited. There seems to be a very high level of technology in their rebuilding of dusters. They disagreed strongly with the use of the PT-17 with Wasp Jr. for dusting which is so common in California. They rank "Bull" Stearman as best, T/A 4000 next best."



1. Laird LC-1B (NR-10402) Feb 1953 C.A. Johnson

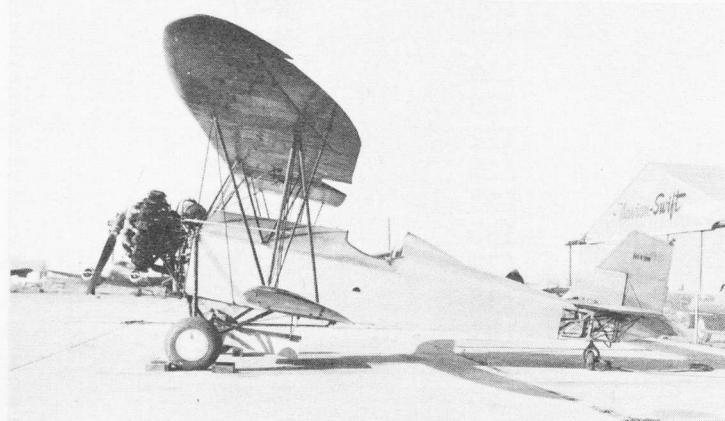


2. Stearman C-3R (NR-670K) '53 L.S. Stollar



3. T/A E-4000 (NR-9959) '53

L.S. Stollar



4. New Standard D-25 (N-149M) '53

Larkins



5. Meyers OTW (N-26483)

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6. Stearman 4CmL (N-489W)

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7. Piper PA-12 Mod (NX-4344M)

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8. General Motors FM-2

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