

## Organization's most original 170 locally owned

Of the 66 Cessna 170s at the International Cessna 170 Association's annual meeting, Sandy resident Dennis Torgerson's was judged the most original.

Torgerson, an insurance adjuster specializing in motorcycles who lives across the street from Rich's Airport on Oral Hull Road, was also appointed Oregon's representative at the association's meeting.

He's been in the organization about five years, and joined a year before he even bought a Cessna 170. He learned to fly in a Cessna 140 tail-dragger, and so his progression to the 170 tail-dragger, a four-seat family plane, was natural.

A tail-dragger, naturally enough, is a plane with a landing wheel on the tail end of the plane, which is called a third wheel. Although Cessna is still making tail-draggers, a 180 and a 185, most of the planes they make have what is called a tricycle landing gear.

Although Torgerson admits that landing a tail-dragger can be tricky in a gusty cross wind, he said the plane has other features that make up for that deficiency.

It's got a very wide landing gear, he said, and ailerons with "a lot of force."

"It's a very safe airplane," Torgerson said.

"They've never had one come apart in the air structurally. There are very few ADs, that would be airworthiness directives, against these airplanes after manufacture. The ADs that have come out against the 170s are only minor in nature.

"The aircraft is one of the very few ever built that just required no further changes after manufacture."

Torgerson said that the members of the international association really liked Rich's Airport.

"The general consensus was that they'd never seen an airport just like this one before.

"If you look around, it's all grass, and you've got

these metal buildings. It's circa 1935. You just don't see airports like this anymore," he said.

Following the landing contest and lunch at Rich's, the association had a flowerbomb-dropping contest, which Torgerson won. After a flight to Mount St. Helens they had a banquet at The Thunderbird, which was "a big success."

"These people, they really love this organization. It's amazing to me that they'll travel as far as they do just to go to an annual convention," Torgerson added.

It might amaze some people the trouble Torgerson has gone through to keep his plane "original."

"There isn't a paint-line on that plane off more than a thirty-second of an inch from the original paint scheme," he said. "When I got the aircraft it was in the original paint scheme and I made sure it went back exactly to what it was."

Torgerson has good reason to take care of the plane. It's "probably in the last 100 serial numbers ever built."

"It's now an antique. The FAA goes back to the date of type certification and this particular aircraft was type-certificated Sept. 15, 1950. So, even though it's a '56 model, it's considered to be over 30 years old, so it's an antique."

Torgerson said that 170s are a good buy. His plane, he said, sold for \$8,500 new, and is now worth about \$21,000. The cost of a new Cessna 172, he said, would be in the \$35,000-40,000 range.

"Keep in mind that 172s are all going down in value and 170s are all going up in value," he added.

Like John Benham, president of the organization, Torgerson considers the 170 a classic.

And, he says it's economical. "This aircraft will haul four people and baggage at about 18 miles per gallon at best, at about 16 miles per gallon at worst."

"With today's fuel costs, and the cost of new aircraft, this airplane is very attractive."

Torgerson raced motorcycles for Husqvarna between 1968 and 1971, and raced for about five years before joining Husqvarna. Although his wife used to go to cross country "desert" races with him, he said that he'd flown for about three years before she'd fly with him.

He's now logged over 1,000 hours without incident.

A resident in the community for about six years, he said that he plans to be adjusting airplane wrecks as well as motorcycle mishaps.

His wife, Deme, works at Williams Thriftway, as does his son, Chris, 17. His other son, Dennis, 19, has just taken a job in California.

Others in the area that belong to the 170 Association include Len Kauffman of Oswego and Ted Dusner of Troutdale.

Stories and photos

by Scott Newton



Dennis Torgerson

## International Cessna club makes stop in Sandy

John Benham calls the Cessna 170 the working man's airplane.

A self-described "common laborer at Kelly Field" in

San Antonio, Benham is president of the International Cessna 170 Association. He also founded the club, but wouldn't accept an office in the organization until two

years ago.

He's always felt "the 170 was a classic airplane, a family airplane." Knowing that there must be others

who felt the same way, he and his wife wrote some articles, requesting other Cessna 170 enthusiasts write them.

*The Cessna 170 is  
"a classic airplane,  
a family airplane."*

He heard from 135 people, which prompted him to make up "a little booklet," which he sent out to the people he'd heard from. He requested \$1, and received \$133 all together, which more than covered the cost of the booklet.

He then contacted Cessna, of Wichita, Kansas, and received permission to use their facilities for a meeting. That was in 1969, and at that meeting the association was formed.

More than 2,000 membership cards have been issued, although the club has about 1,100 active members.

Benham was at Rich's Airport in Sandy Friday, where the club had a landing contest and lunch.

The international association was holding its annual meeting in Portland last week. There were 160 persons and 66 aircraft registered. At Sandy, 45 aircraft and about 135 people participated in the activities.

Besides the activities at Rich's Airport, the group also dropped flowerbombs at McKinnon's Airport at Roslyn Lake and viewed Mount St. Helens from the air.

Persons from all over the United States, and Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Mexico, belong to the International Cessna 170 Association. They've held their yearly meetings in places like Seattle, Davenport, New York, Milwaukee, Dallas, Colorado Springs and Edmonton, Alberta.

Cessna produced the 170 from 1948 through 1956. It's a four-seat plane that weighs in at 1,300 pounds (empty), and can carry payload of about 1,000 pounds, or four 170-pound passengers, 100 pounds of luggage and 240 pounds of fuel.

Talking about the many nicely-painted airplanes prompted Benham to say, "You couldn't imagine what the airplanes looked like in 1969 compared to the airplanes here today."

When asked if the air traffic controllers strike had been a topic of discussion, he said, "No. It would surprise you, no more interest than we have in the air controllers strike."

He said that small aircraft pilots usually don't talk to air traffic controllers unless they climb above 10,000 feet. There is, however, an air traffic controller in the association.

"I don't think we should get into that because he's kind of bitter," Benham said.



Lunch at Rich's Airport