

Flying the Trojan

PART 1 OF 3

I have been fortunate enough to accumulate over 500 hours of T-28 time since my first flight in 1977. It had been a couple of months since I had the opportunity to enjoy a flight in one, I thought that needed to change.

Recently I was able to sit down and review the NATOPS (Navy Flight Manual), the checklist and just think about the operation of one of North American's finest trainers. After a complete preflight inspection, I just sat in the cockpit and reviewed the location of the various controls and thought about the purpose of each and the procedures involved. It was a familiar setting that brought back memories of some great T-28 flights- Oshkosh, flying several T-28s right out of the Davis Monthan boneyard, test flying aircraft recovered from Honduras, training, and delivery flights to new buyers as well as some great cross-country flights to enjoy airshows.

Once the wave of nostalgia was past it was time to get down to business. Following the checklist, I started the 1425 HP Curtiss Wright radial. What a great and historic sound! It settled down to a nice idle and I scanned to see everything was warming up nicely.

Time to tune in to ATIS and find out the local airport information.

"Rockford Ground Control North American 509WT has the information and ready to taxi from Courtesy Aircraft for a non-radar westbound departure."

"509 WT cleared to taxi to runway 19 via Lima."

With that I headed toward the runway, performed my runup per the checklist and called the tower for take-off. Once cleared I taxied into position and did my normal left to right cockpit scan for a final look before opening the throttle and heading skyward.

As I climbed to altitude, I could not help but be impressed by the rapid rate of climb and how light on the controls the aircraft was. With lots of reserve power, the T-28 is a great performer and at low altitudes it can outperform a Mustang (for a considerably smaller investment).

I quickly reached my cruise altitude and reduced the power to my normal cross country cruise setting. 30" MP and 2000 RPM will give an IAS of 190-200 Knots with a fuel flow in the 50-55 GPH range. Other settings will give different results, but I tend to use the same setting as a way to judge the performance of the many different T-28s that I fly. Depending on altitude the TAS will be in the 210-225 knot range. Once trimmed up, I surveyed the roomy and comfortable cockpit, everything was in the green. After a couple of clearing turns, I reduced the power for some slow flight and a stall series. It was great to explore the operational envelope of the aircraft. Everything is very straightforward; the visibility is outstanding, and I felt it was truly an honor to experience the aircraft that trained so many of our military aviators.

Time to tune in ATIS and head back to the field for some landing practice. "Rockford Tower- North American 509WT is 10 miles west with the information requesting the option". As neared the field, I reviewed the landing checklist and set up my approach. The first landing was full stop and taxi back. I then did a few more- short field, overhead and go around. The aircraft handles nicely in the pattern. With outstanding visibility and power pattern work is a joy. Since there was no aircraft carrier in sight, there was no need to work on my 82 knot power on approach.

I taxied back to the hangar and pulled the mixture to cutoff. As I looked through the windscreen, I could not help but think of the thousands of hours and hundreds of pilots that sat in this very spot. What an honor to have this experience and be able to share it with others.

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OF THE "FLYING THE
TROJAN" SERIES



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