

FLASHBACK



Paul Lopez's Cox Pitts

It's
a beautiful, sunny day in Lakeland, Florida, and I'm wandering through the aerobatic aircraft spread out around the Aerobatic Center at the 2004 Sun 'n Fun EAA Fly-In. Suddenly, I flashback 30 years in time.

D A V I D K U J A W A



JIM KOEPNICK

I'm in the parking lot of Jacob Shapiro Elementary School in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, with my friend, Dean. "Come on! Get it started," yells Dean. I'm holding a little red, white, and blue control-line biplane in my left hand and trying not to get the fingers on my right hand bit off as I release the black prop from its spring-loaded starter. The right amounts of glow-plug heat and model airplane fuel finally ignite in about 80 decibels of noise. I release the little wailing beast, and Dean's Cox Pitts takes to the air for the first time.



The reason for the flashback? Sitting in the grass in front of me on this fine 2004 Florida spring day is a life-size replica of the Cox Pitts.

Paul Lopez was born and raised in California. Some of Paul's earliest aviation memories are from the Mojave air show. A friend of Paul's father was an executive at Cox, and Paul was

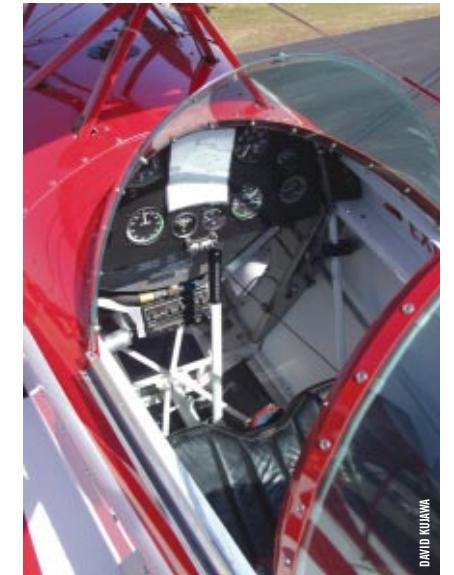
able to meet the legendary Art Scholl and see him fly his Cox-sponsored Chipmunk.

Paul started taking flying lessons when he was 18. He washed airplanes in exchange for flight time in a Cessna 152 at Van Nuys airport. After getting his private he flew for two years on, two years off—money dictated the amount of flying he could do. Finally in 1997 he got to the point where he could start flying full time. He got his tailwheel endorsement in a J-3 Cub in Andover, New Jersey, for the sole purpose of being able to start flying aerobatics. He started aerobatic training in a Decathlon at Sussex. Once he got a taste of aerobatics, Paul wanted to fly the Pitts. He first flew an S-2A and later participated in some northeast region competitions in an S-2A.

A job transfer moved him to Florida, and he soon learned there were no aerobatic airplanes in the Tampa area to rent. Giving up flying was not an option, so the natural decision was to buy an airplane.



JIM KOEPNICK



DAVID KUJAWA



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N614GT

While doing some spin training with Rich Stowell, Paul asked him about buying a Pitts. At Sun 'n Fun in 1999 Rich introduced Paul to Debbie Rihn-Harvey. It so happened that she had two S-1Ts for sale, and they were in his price range. He went out to LaPorte, Texas, and checked them out. In June 1999 he flew back to Florida in his very own Pitts. N614GT was formerly owned by the late Glenn Frick and was blue and yellow with the traditional starburst paint scheme with a checkered bottom.



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After flying the Pitts for a few years the fabric was rattled out. Paul started out just wanting to re-cover the wings. After getting some quotes he realized it made more financial sense to re-cover the entire airplane. After removing the fabric, one thing led to another, and Paul decided to rebuild the entire airplane. Herb Clark of Weirsdale, Florida, did the rebuild. He replaced the trailing edges, fixed the ribs, replaced sheet metal, and did the re-cover. Paul was grounded from May 2003 until February 2004 while Herb did his thing.

With a blank canvas of new fabric Paul needed to figure out what he wanted his "new" Pitts to look like. He had fond memories of playing with the Cox model as a boy, and one day he and friend Randy Ott were surfing eBay looking for an original. The idea hit both of them at once—that was the paint scheme for his real Pitts. Paul researched the color scheme on Art Scholl's S-2A and the original Cox models to get the most accurate reproduction as possible.

N614GT is powered by a 230-hp Monty Barrett-built Lycoming AEIO-360 with 10-to-1 pistons, a four-into-one exhaust, and cold-air induction. A Hartzell constant-speed prop spins up front.

Paul has flown the airplane about 20 hours since the rebuild. He says, "It flies great, a lot better than when I originally bought it. The pilot just needs work." He competed in Sportsman at the Keystone, Florida, contest hosted by the Embry-Riddle Sport Aviation Club, as well as Sebring where he placed third over all, and Hampton, Georgia, where he placed second over all. His future plans are to have fun with the airplane, finishing the year in Sportsman. Next year will come Intermediate and ultimately Advanced. Paul is a member of IAC Chapter 23.

Paul enjoys people's reactions to his airplane. "Everyone loves it. I see them walking by and acting like they have the control lines and are flying the toy!" ✈