

## .... **CESSNA SKYLANE**

By **JESS KRIESER** . . . IF YOU LIKE A REALISTIC, SEMI-SCALE 1/2A SINGLE CHANNEL RADIO CONTROL PLANE THAT IS NEARLY INDESTRUCTIBLE AND OF MORE IMPORTANCE, AN EXCELLENT FLIER THAT STUNTS VERY WELL, OUR SKYLANE IS FOR YOU.

■ The Cessna Skylane bore the distinction during 1963 of being the second-best selling private airplane in the world, according to sales figures compiled by one of the leading aviation journals. The Skylane was second only to a lower-priced member of its own family, the Cessna

150. While not the latest in the long line of aircraft bearing the name Cessna, the Skylane is a fairly recent addition to the large family of distinctive monoplanes that had its beginning nearly forty years ago, when Clyde Cessna disagreed with his early business partners over aircraft design, and went his own way.

Back in 1924, Clyde Cessna joined forces with Walter Beech and Lloyd Stearman to design and build airplanes. They formed an organization which they named the Travel Air Mfg. Company, and their first design was a biplane which has become one of the world's great biplane classics—the Travel Air 2000. The three partners were fabulously successful in their venture, and soon their biplanes were popular from coast to coast. However, in 1925, Clyde Cessna wanted to design and build a monoplane, and Beech and Stearman disagreed. They wanted to stick to biplanes. This didn't bother Cessna, however, since he merely turned to designing and building his monoplanes in his spare time, as a side-line. His second design was quite successful, and became the first commercial monoplane to fly from California to the Hawaiian Islands. This launched Cessna, and in 1927 he left Travel Air to form his own company, Cessna Aircraft.

From the very beginning, Cessna's designs were unique, and incorporated design concepts which were quite advanced for their day. His airplanes were characterized by clean lines, and an absence of bracing struts and wires. Cessna was one of the early believers in the use of cantilever design and construction to clean up the design and reduce drag. The entire empennage assembly was cantilever, as was the wing. The earlier designs had multi-strut landing gears, but these soon gave way, too, to the cantilever principle, and by the early 30's, Cessnas began to sport a single strut landing gear that not only cleaned up the looks, but improved performance as well. Unlike Fokker, who relied on plywood skin covering on his wings for their cantilever strength, Cessna used fabric covering, but braced the wings internally by an ingenious method utilizing steel strapping such as that used so extensively today in materials handling and packaging.

While the present day Cessnas bear little visual resemblance to their early ancestors, they still follow the same basic design concepts of clean, good-looking design, coupled with excellent performance. These two principles were also followed in the creation and design of the single channel R/C Skylane presented here.

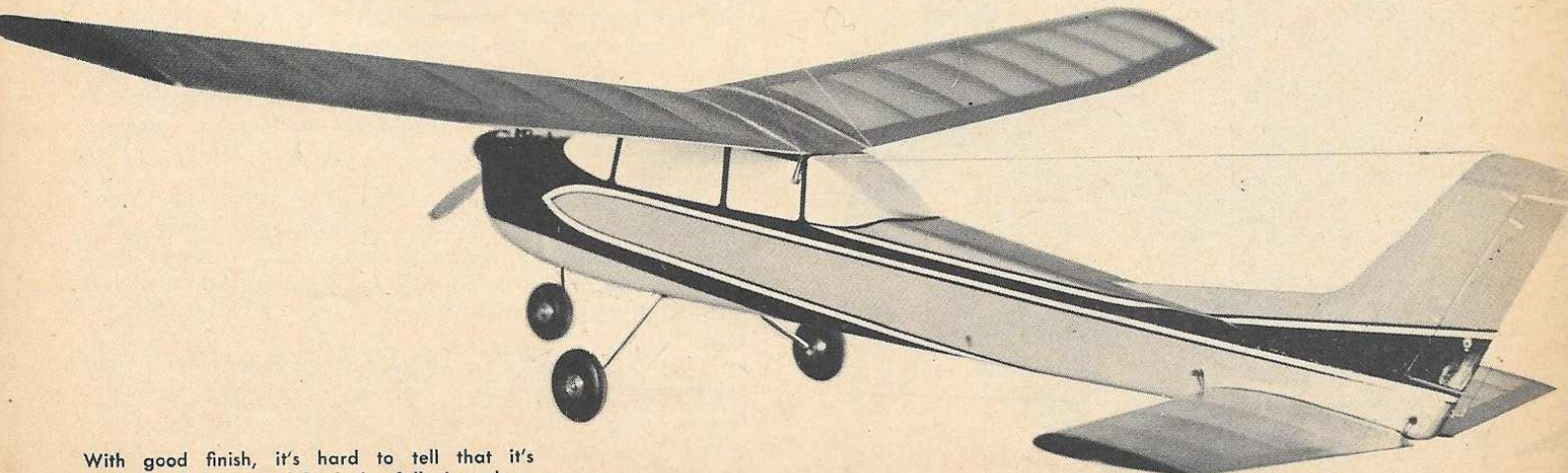


Author's son Curtis, a 12-year-old modeler, holds his Pop's bird with real pride. Curtis is just about to break the ice in RC with a Jr. Falcon.

When I first conceived the idea for this ship, I wanted a 1/2-A sized single channel ship that would be capable of the stunt pattern flown by the larger, competition type rudder-only ships. I wanted a ship that would stunt well, but be tamer to fly than the competition designs, and one that I could pack in the trunk of my car to take along on weekend trips, and fly out of relatively small fields. I also wanted the ship to sport a pleasing appearance, and look like a real airplane. And since I was a long way from being an expert rudder-only pilot, I had to have a stable, forgiving airplane that could absorb pilot errors. And for those occasions when I goofed too badly, the ship had to be tough so that I wouldn't be spending half of the good flying weather repairing the ship.

I worked out the arrangement of forces that I thought would provide what I was after, and then developed the esthetics of the ship so that it would look like the Cessna Skylane. For that reason, I regard this as a semi-scale airplane. I also tried to keep construction as simple as possible, so that the ship could be built quickly. (Another reason for the simple construction was that my son, who was eleven at the time, took a liking to the ship and wanted to build one. So I had to keep the construction simple to keep him from becoming discouraged at wanting to build models.)

The ship has been a real pleasure to fly. I have had more fun and flying enjoyment out of this ship than any other radio control model that I have ever built. It is very acrobatic, and with a Cox RR-1 up (Continued on page 52)



With good finish, it's hard to tell that it's not a true scale model of the full size plans.

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**WHEN IT'S MADE BY STERLING,**

### Cessna Skylane

*(Continued from page 21)*

front for power, will do three loops on a 2-turn spiral dive. About the only thing it hasn't done yet are tail-slides and touch-and-go's. If fitted with a throttle, it would probably do these, too. Last summer, while testing the original Skylarks with Carl Goldberg, before the ship was kitted, I took the Skylane out one day and let him fly it. I had a hard job getting the transmitter back from him before the day was over. Carl thought it one of the most enjoyable ships he had ever flown.

As far as ruggedness is concerned, in a matter of two weeks I spiral dove the ship under full power straight into the ground five times! Twice it was due to goofs on my part, and three other times it was due to being shot down by interference. (I have since switched to superhet for single-channel flying.) Our flying site is a Merion Blue Grass sod farm, where the soil is much like hard-pan clay. This is not the gentlest of tarmacs for straight-down power-on landings. But in every instance, the ship had no more damage than a few dents on the nose blocks, and was back in the air within ten to fifteen minutes.

On another occasion, while flying the ship at a free flight contest at Bong Air Force Base, in Southern Wisconsin, I dove it into a fire hydrant! I had just finished competing in three classes, with the same

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pattern of flying in each—three maxes, followed by a poor fly-off flight, hitting down-drafts. I put my three free-flight ships in the trunk of my car in disgust, and decided to have some fun flying R/C while waiting for the contest to end. I put in several very excellent flights, when all of a sudden disaster struck. Another modeler who brought along a radio ship to fly (multi-equipped), was standing quite near me while I was flying, and he decided to check his ship—after being informed that I was flying on super-regen. He shot me down, and the ship wound in on a wild spiral dive. Bong is covered with tall grass nearly waist high, so I thought it would be like diving into a soft blanket. But much to my horror I heard a crunching, metallic sound as the ship struck. The wing flew in one direction, the tail in another, and the receiver and batteries went still another.

I ran over to where the ship struck, and found that in this nine-square mile area, I had collided squarely with an old rusty fire-hydrant concealed in the grass. Careful inspection revealed only a nick in the nose, a broken propeller, two tears in the wing covering, and a tire missing from the nose wheel. I found everything but the tire, put the ship back together, and patched the tears in the silk with a bead of glue. I waited about thirty minutes for the glue to set up, and then put in four more good flights before starting out for home. The ship flew in its usual good fashion, but looked a little odd with nothing but a wheel hub for the nose gear.

The ship as presented here is a well-tested design. As nearly as I can determine, it has over 10 solid hours of flying time on it, which is a lot for a 1/2-A sized airplane. The original was equipped with a Citizen-Ship SE-2 escapement, LT-3 receiver, and was flown with the TTX Transmitter. The TTX is license-free, since input

to the final stage is under 100 milliwatts. While this is not a very powerful transmitter in terms of radiated power output, I found its reliability to be excellent, and never once did I encounter any trouble at all with the radio equipment. In fact, I never even re-tuned the receiver after the straight-down impacts. I always had reliable, positive control of the airplane at all times as far as the eye could see. Ground range checks were equal to anything else I had used up to that time.

The original ship has been retired from active service, and the second one, which is shown in the photos, is ready to fly. I have fitted this one with the new Controlaire single channel superhet receiver, with a matching Mule Transmitter with 100% modulation. This new receiver is a relay type, weighing 2 1/4 ounces, and measuring 1 x 1 1/2 x 2, which makes it an ideal size for small single channel use. As soon as the weather turns better, this one will take to the air.

**WING:** I always build wings first. Somewhere I heard that this is a good idea as you can set it aside to cure, and stabilize any stresses present while working on the rest of the ship. This is supposed to help produce a warp-free wing before covering. I don't know if this theory can be proved or not, but I like to think it helps as I have never had any serious wing-warping problems.

Select medium soft stock for leading and trailing edges. You can use pre-shaped trailing edge stock if you wish, and save a lot of work in carving. Notch trailing edge for the ribs and pin it to building board. Then shape a piece of 1/2 soft sheet to the wedge shape shown to help form the tapered trailing edge, and glue it to the trailing edge. Next, pin leading edge in place, and cement the 1/8" x 1/4" back-up strip to it as shown. Now fit and glue all full length

ribs in place. When you get to the last three ribs, cut the necessary length from trailing edge of the ribs to fit them in place. Finally, add the spruce spar, and the tip gussets. Build the wing in two panels, to be joined later.

When dry, remove from building board, block up the tips to form necessary dihedral angle, and join at the center. Add plywood dihedral braces as shown, and spruce spar joiner. When dry, remove, and pin one panel flat to building board. Block up the other tip so it remains flat. Cut leading edge sheeting to size and glue in place on the pinned down panel. Cut and glue all cap strips in place at the same time. When dry, remove from the board, and pin the other side down flat, sheet it, add the cap strips, and the center section sheeting. By following this procedure, you can help assure a warp-free wing.

When entire structure is dry, carve and sand the half sheet angle blocks at the tips to conform to upper curve of ribs and trailing edge. Now trim trailing edge off as shown to provide correct taper to each tip panel. Turn wing upside down and carve bottom of trailing edge to shape at the tips, sweeping it upward gradually toward the tips. Check it with a straight edge as you do so, to be sure it is straight. Then cut some off the bottom of each of tip ribs so that they are flat-bottomed from leading edge to the very tip of trailing edge. When you are finished, you will have a build-in wash-out in each wing tip. Adding the soft balsa top blocks, and carving them and sanding to final shape completes the wing. **STABILIZER:** This part is very simple, and needs little explanation. The tabs on bottom of the ribs at the front enable you to build the stab with trailing edge pinned flat to building board. They also help line up leading edge and hold it in position while glue dries. Allow glue to set

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thoroughly on leading and trailing edge rib joints before sliding spar in place. Add sheet tips, top and bottom sheet at center section, and sand assembly to final shape. **FUSELAGE:** Select two 6-inch wide pieces of medium soft 1/16 sheet stock for the sides, matching them if possible. Cut sides to shape, then cut 1/16" sheet doublers, 1/4" sheet triplers, 1/4" sheet nose pieces, and 1/16" stabilizer doublers. Cement all of these pieces in place as shown. Use of contact bond cement for this operation will speed things up quite a bit. Add 3/32" plywood landing gear retaining pieces, cementing them in place with white glue. Add soft 1/4" square longerons, and the 1/16" x 3/16" uprights and diagonals. While these assemblies are drying, cut all formers to shape. Make "B" and "C" from 1/8" medium hard sheet, and "D" from 1/16" sheet. "A" is made from 1/8" plywood. Drill "A" for J-bolt, and for threading nose gear strut in place. Bend nose strut from 3/32" wire from a 1/4" diameter mandrel to form coil. Bolt it to "A" with a J-bolt, and cut off protruding end of bolt. Then bind top of strut to former by sewing through the holes with either strong thread or fine wire.

Pin one of the completed fuselage sides firmly to building board. Cement formers "B" and "C" in position. Line up "C" so that it is flush with the end of the 1/16" doubler, and line up "B" so it butts solidly against the 1/4" tripler. Check both with a small triangle to insure that they are square with the sides. Next, glue the other side assembly in place, lining up everything as you go to be sure it is square and true. A little care at this point will assure you of a well-aligned fuselage. Let assembly dry thoroughly before removing it from building board. When dry, glue firewall in place, butting it against the ends of 1/4" sheet nose pieces, and reinforcing it with lengths of trailing edge stock. Be sure this assembly is solidly cemented in place, as it takes a lot of shock from the nose gear.

Add uprights to the inside of fuselage where you will install plywood slides for mounting receiver and escapement, and add 1/8" x 1/2" stiffeners at the wing opening. Cut three pieces of 3/32" plywood for the landing gear mount, and glue them in position on the bottom of fuselage, slotting the sides to receive them. Drill a 7/64" clearance hole at each end to line up with the slot on the insides of fuselage formed by the 3/32" plywood strips. Add a 1/8" sheet bulkhead between the sides to form front of battery compartment, to build the compartment in position. Add 3/32" bottom sheeting from former "A" to former "C", slotting sheeting to provide for travel of nose gear strut. A piece of 1/16" plywood laminated to the forward part of bottom sheeting before installation helps strengthen this area against impacts from nose wheel when it gets bent rearward under sharp impacts. This is not essential, but does help safeguard against denting or cracking of this bottom sheet later on.

At this point, before the top cowl block is added, coat the landing gear area in the fuselage, on the sides and bottom sheeting, with fibreglass resin to fuelproof it. If you prefer, a few good coats of Aero Gloss dope will also serve the purpose. Be sure it is fuelproofed on the inside to safeguard against fuel seepage through the landing gear clearance slot. Also, drill for engine mounting and install blind nuts on the back of former "A".

Cut the tail post to shape and cement it in position, drawing sides together at the rear as you do so. Install former "D" at the same time. Add the cross pieces to top and bottom, and you are ready to sheet rear of fuselage. Install your torque rod at this time, before adding sheeting. Top and

bottom sheeting is 1/16" stock, grain cross-wise. When dry, cut a soft balsa block to the shape of rear cabin section, and glue it in place to form back section of the cabin.

Cut nose block, cowl, and windshield blocks from medium hard balsa and cement in place. Use fairly firm hard balsa, and don't worry about weight, as a little extra weight here will help assure the proper CG position. When entire assembly is dry, carve cowl and windshield blocks to shape, and carve rear cabin block to proper shape. Sand the 3/32" bottom sheeting to taper into the 1/16" bottom sheeting, and sand all fuselage corners to a 1/4" radius. Finish sanding the entire fuselage with very fine paper.

**FIN AND RUDDER:** Cut fin and rudder parts from very light 3/32" quarter-grained sheet. Use of quarter-grained sheet here assures a warp-free assembly after it is silked and doped. Top of the fin is made from very hard 3/32" sheet, as it helps guard against damage should ship nose over when landing on rough fields. Hinge rudder to fin with small pieces of nylon or linen. Cut two pieces of soft 1/4" square to the shape shown for fin fillets, and carve to a triangular cross-section. Cement them to the sides of fin before installing fin. When dry, cement the fin to the top of the fuselage, but when doing so, be sure it is lined up dead straight ahead. Proper alignment here is important! Apply several coats of glue to the fin-fuselage joint, to strengthen it and to form a slight fillet.

**COVERING AND FINISHING:** The only advice to be given at this point is that if your plane is on heavy side, avoid colored dope. If it is lightly built, you can afford the extra weight of colored dope. The original plan was 24 1/2 ounces ready-to-fly, and was an excellent performer. My second weighed 20 ounces, and should be even better. I choose to use colored silk on small ships to keep weight down, and use colored dope only to achieve desired trim effects.

Original ship was solid orange, with black trim and white striping. I used a heavy duty grade of silk as the orange is a deeper color in the heavy grades. If you wish additional strength around the nose, apply several coats of resin and a layer of light weight fibreglass cloth. This is very helpful, but not essential. The original didn't have it, but the second one does, to help prevent nicks and dents in the nose over a period of many flights. At this point I sand the entire ship lightly with 8/0 paper, and give entire structure two coats of clear dope with talcum powder added. I sand it until the talcum is nearly gone and the grain is then fairly well filled. This is followed by two coats of clear, sanding lightly after each coat. The entire ship is then silked, and given eight to ten coats of thinned out clear Aero Gloss dope. Trim is then applied, using Aero Gloss colored dope. When the trim is completed, and has dried for at least two days, I apply two more coats of thinned out Aero Gloss over the entire ship. This helps bring up the lustre, and helps level off the edges of the colored dope where it was masked off. Installation of equipment and engine completes the ship, except for the landing gear.

Main landing gear is bent to shape shown from 3/32" wire and installed in place. Each shank slips through one of the holes in bottom plywood plate, and vertical part of it is retained by the plywood strips on the inside of fuselage. A pair of small metal plates attached across the bottom of the struts with self-tapping screws holds them in position. This gives you a two-piece landing gear with torsion-bar spring-  
(Continued on page 58)

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### Cessna Skylane

(Continued from page 54)

ing, which I have found to be very effective. This type of landing gear was originally developed for a large, 6-foot "Sr. Falcon," and before the original was completed, I applied this gear to a modified Falcon 56, which was equipped for 10-channel operation. We found it to be quite effective, and after going through a flying season last year with it on my Falcon 56, it has been incorporated by Carl Goldberg into the Falcon 56 kit. Personally, I like this well enough that I am using this type of main gear springing on all of my ships.

When you install your equipment in the ship, pack the batteries in foam rubber and stuff them into the battery compartment. Use a 6-3 prop, and install engine with about 2 degrees of right thrust. A washer behind the radial mounting lugs on the one side of the engine will be just about right. Install a 1 1/4 diameter Merco spinner, and check to see where the CG is. If necessary, add ballast to the nose. It is very doubtful that the ship will be nose-heavy and require ballast in the tail. If ballast is needed in the nose, a simple way to solve the problem is to cut discs from 1/16 sheet lead to install behind the RR-1. A disc of the proper size is just about an ounce in weight. To regulate the proper amount of weight, you can drill holes in the lead discs. I had to use these on the first ship, but by using harder balsa in the nose, and using four pen cells instead of two, the CG fell right on the button on the second ship without any ballasting.

Check for proper alignment of wing and stabilizer, and mark these alignments with a ball point pen. Always check these alignments before each flight. Decalage should be two degrees, as shown on the plans. I prefer not to fly with less than this, as

windy or gusty weather often requires reductions in decalage, and if decalage gets too close to zero, pullouts aren't as good in windy weather. If your ship checks out properly, but still has a tendency toward stalling in the glide in normal, calm weather, move the CG forward. Under power, ship should climb steadily, but not hang on its prop. If any hanging tendencies are encountered, take them out by adding more downthrust.

When you are certain all is ready, try a number of test glides in tall grass, to make sure everything seems pretty safe. Be sure escapement is wound, and let engine run until only 30 to 45 seconds of power are left. Hand launch it with a short run and a gentle heave, and it should climb right out of your hand. I like to adjust my ships so that they turn very gently to the left under power, and require only an occasional blip of right rudder to keep them going in a straight line. When adjusted this way, the Skylane climbs out of my hand, makes a wide climbing turn to the left and by the time it has completed one circle it is nearly overhead, with about 200 feet altitude. Usually it does this without sending a single rudder command. By this time you have enough altitude to start flying whatever pattern you wish. When power cuts, the ship should glide nearly straight, with only a slight tendency to turn left. I set them up this way so that if anything fails, and control is lost, the ship will tend to circle instead of heading straight out across country.

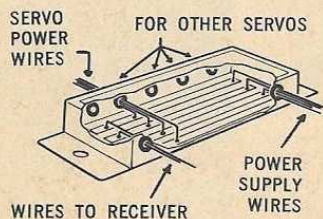
After a few flights you will have the feel of the ship and stunts will be a real ball. As a starter, try a wingover. But when you do, spiral the ship down for only one turn. If you give it more than one turn, you're going to have to be mighty fast on the rudder to complete the maneuver or you'll be through a loop or two before you

know it. The first time I tried this, I gave it two full spiral turns under power with full left rudder, then kicked it into right rudder, and up it zoomed into a loop. Before I recovered from my surprise at its quick response, I was through the second loop and into the third. I finally rolled it out at the top of the third loop, and decided that one spiral would be plenty from then on for either wingovers or Immelmans.

One of the greatest pleasures I get from this ship are the approaches and landings. When power cuts, I can bring the ship in on the downwind leg of its approach, parallel to its intended landing path, then turn it around into the wind in a very low level flat turn by gently blipping the rudder as it turns. If a little too much rudder is applied, a quick, but gentle blip in the opposite direction produces nearly instant correction. With the built-in washout in the wing tips, it executes flat turns beautifully without ever showing any tendency to stall out. With the realistic lines of the Skylane, and the sporty Skylane paint job on it, it's a beautiful sight as it glides past you to flare out into a gentle touch-down on your landing field. I hope you get as much fun out of building and flying this ship as I have had in its development.

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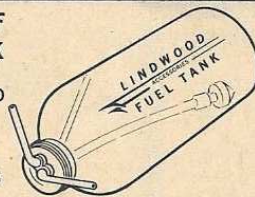


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