



KEEPING THE PROPS TURNING

WE ARE FACING A CRITICAL POINT IN THE SUPPLY OF WARBIRD ENGINES — BUT THERE IS AN ANSWER ON THE HORIZON!

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For as long as I can remember, I have been interested in aircraft and aircraft engines — especially those related to the Second World War. As readers of *Air Classics* will realize, America was able to respond to the global threat posed by the Axis powers by building an unprecedented number of warplanes along with the engines to power them.

This veritable flood of aircraft and engines was also underlined by the fact the factories were not only concerned with quantity but also quality. That many of these planes and the engines that power them are still flying is amazing but it is also due to the fact that American factories built huge amounts of spare parts for the

engines and aircraft. Need a right-wing panel for a damaged B-17? No problem, just pull it out of the spares store. Cylinders damaged on an F4U Corsair? Again, no problem. Just pull them out of spares.

Times have changed and we need to change with them.

I am going to share a sad fact with *Air Classics* readers: For the first time since the early 1970s, we are about to run out of overhauled engines. This current shortage shows signs of getting worse.

I am writing this on 3 October and I can look out on my shop floor and see that we have two R-985s, one R-1830, one R-1340 geared-nose, and one R-2800CB3 in stock. We have

20 cores out for overhaul and seven engines that customers have paid for and are awaiting completion.

Nine years ago, we had 39 overhauled engines on the shop floor. Over the past few years, we would usually average 20 engines.

I got in the Pratt & Whitney business during high school. At that time, there were nine engine overhaul shops in Los Angeles County, about 20 in California, and probably 100 in the United States.

Over the last few years, we have seen the following shops close: Aero Engines, Airborne Overhaul, Aircraft Cylinder & Turbine, Global Radials, Abbott, Dallas Aero, Precision Engines, Sea Air, Airmotive Inc.,

Precision assembly on a radial during WWII.

Rudy Blakey, Garside, Aircraft Engine Service, Kenmore, and others.

This is a devastating list of closures. These names are well-known to the Warbird and vintage aviation communities.

Today, there are fewer than ten shops in the USA doing this type of work.

Now, I know of several *Air Classics* readers that are restoring WWII aircraft. Sadly, I have to tell them that they need to prepare to wait in line for eight to 14 months for an engine. And that is if they order today! Wait and it will just get worse.

Crop dusters have to convert from R-1340 engines to turbines because they cannot wait eight to twelve months for an engine overhaul and no one today has the outright engines in stock.

Covington will not sell outright engines. Aero Recip has stopped overhauling R-1340s and R-1830s. The Tulsa and Younkin shops are backed up a year.

HELP IS ON THE WAY!

Sun Air Parts (SAP) — along with Chester Roberts Supply (CRS) and Everts Air Cargo (EAC) — has donated tooling, machines, a brand-new test stand that Kenmore sold us for way less than what it is worth, along with financial help to Roger Edwards of Yuba City, California.

Roger owns land and a large hangar and has started the process with the FAA and State of California to open a new overhaul shop — **California Aero Engines.**

We all live by the saying “Keep Them Flying.” If we do not have engines, then there will be less and less of the flying that we all love and support.

Roger will be overhauling Pratt & Whitney R-985, R-1340, R-1830, and

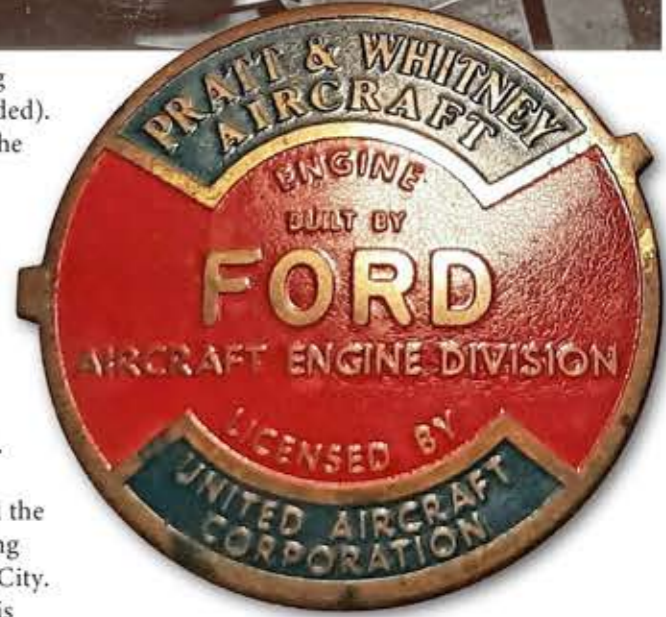


R-2800 radials (along with R-2000s, as needed). If all goes well with the P&W engines, then the company will expand into Curtiss-Wright engines.

Russell and Chet Roberts of CRS recently purchased Aircraft Cylinder Sales of Waco, Texas. CRS is now in the process of moving all the necessary shop tooling and fixtures to Yuba City.

As this magazine is being printed, we will move the test stand from Washington to Yuba City. This is a new state-of-the-art test stand built by Precision Engines prior to their closing shop.

The reason for this article is pretty simple — we are looking for an investor. Sun Air, Chester Roberts, and Everts have no interest in ownership. However, we do want another shop to support, overhaul our engines, and grow. The three of us can supply more engine cores than anyone



Demand for engines like the R-2800 was so great, the other companies like Ford built the radials under license.

could overhaul in one year!

I know that there are *Air Classics* readers who realize the importance of a shop like California Aero Engines. I would like interested parties to contact me directly at 661-257-7708. There is plenty of work out there and with SAP, CRS, and EAC supplying engine parts and engine cores, then California Aero Engines will be a winner and the Warbirds will keep on flying for many years to come. **AC**

TOP: During WWII, not only did America build record numbers of aircraft and engines, tens of thousands of young men and women were trained to overhaul and maintain these engines as seen in this view of students learning the ins and outs of the R-2800. After the war, some of these individuals started engines shops or went to work in such shops. Sadly, with the passage of time, much of this “tribal knowledge” has been lost.