

**Right and below**  
Michael Kopp flying  
TBM-3E 'Ida Red'  
on a sortie out of  
Paine Field, Seattle in  
September 2016.



**"I was struck by the number of people gawking at the Avenger versus the few milling about the Wildcat. Hmm... I left that airshow sold on acquiring an Avenger"**





# ALL

**MICHAEL KOPP DESCRIBES  
HOW HE CAME TO OWN AN  
AVENGER AND WHY HE'S**

**BEEN GRINNING EVER SINCE. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN DIBBS**

# Smiles

I became the proud owner of *Ida Red*, a 1945 Grumman TBM-3E Avenger, on December 5, 2015. Back in time, almost 75 years to the day, on December 7, 1941 Grumman test flew the second prototype, XTBF-1 2540 at Bethpage, New York State.

"Why an Avenger?" with a hint of derision, was a question asked by friends, fellow pilots and quite a few volunteers at the Historic Flight Foundation, Everett, Washington State, where *Ida* now resides.

First, I wanted to own a World War Two combat aircraft. Second, it had to be powered by a radial engine. Third, my preference was for a Navy carrier type. For months, I was considering a Grumman Wildcat.

Then, attending an airshow where a Wildcat and Avenger were parked side-by-side, I was struck by the number of people gawking at the Avenger versus the few milling about the Wildcat. Hmm...

I really do enjoy being able to take passengers flying in these historic aircraft. I repeatedly came to verify that the crowds around the Avenger were not a fluke. I left that airshow sold on acquiring an Avenger.

## STOCK MILITARY

Built by the Eastern Aircraft Division of the General Motors Corporation at Trenton, New Jersey, as 85882, my TBM-3E was accepted by the US Navy in late March 1945 and assigned

to the Naval Aviation Radar Training Unit at Sandpoint, Seattle. After the war, she served with several torpedo squadrons and a carrier aircraft service unit before shuttling around various land-based naval air stations. *Ida* was struck off charge in 1956.

Civil registered as N9584Z, she was shuffled between various owners all with a mind to operate her as a fire-bomber or bug sprayer. It appears none of them won a coveted contract as *Eight-Four-Zulu* was never converted, keeping much of her military equipment. Instead she wound up in the back of a Texas hangar waiting for the right group to rescue her.

In stepped the Michigan-based brothers, Dave and Larry Tinker. Along with a dedicated bunch of friends, Dave and Larry made numerous trips to Texas to refurbish and restore the TBM to flying status. Along the way, she picked up the name *Ida Red* and a paint scheme commemorating the use of Avengers as part of escort carrier U-boat 'hunter-killer' groups in the Battle of the Atlantic.

After 20 years of ownership, the Tinker brothers decided I would be a worthy next custodian. ☺

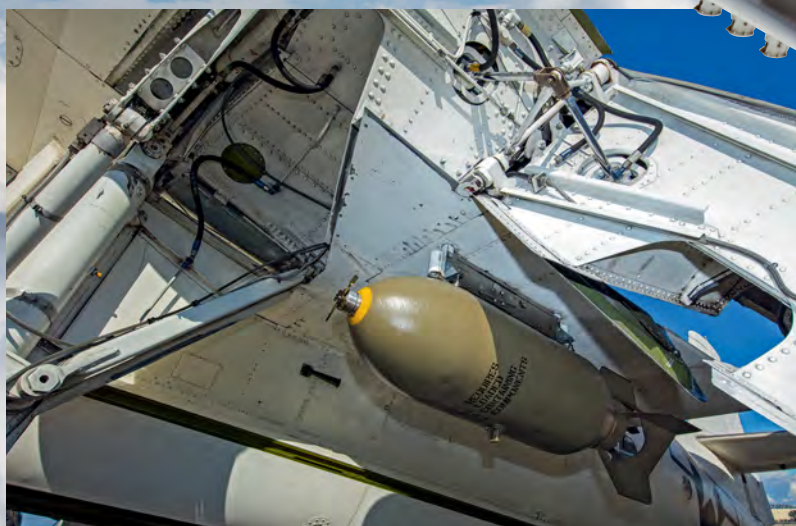
## Below

*The TBM's Wright Cyclone R-2600. ALL  
JOHN M DIBBS - PLANE  
PICTURE COMPANY*





**"The Wright Cyclone R-2600 develops 1,900hp, giving the big girl surprisingly sprightly take-off acceleration. She is rock solid once the pitch, power and trim are set"**





## ROCK SOLID

How does an Avenger fly? During ground school other Avenger pilots had joked that on the first take-off I would think I had left the control lock on! Well, I survived that debut and now, with a whopping 50 hours in the logbook, I can verify that my right arm has got considerably stronger. I frequently need to use both hands and some help from a leg to move that massive wing into a quicker airshow wing bank.

The Wright Cyclone R-2600 develops 1,900hp (1,417kW), giving the big girl surprisingly sprightly take-off acceleration. She is rock solid once the pitch, power and trim are set.

After a year of ownership and my first year of an Avenger airshow season I have a smile that matches *Ida's* size. ●

*The cockpit of Avenger N9584Z. The panel on the right includes armament selection switches, complete with hinged guards.*



### Far left

*The complex wing fold turns the wings through 90° and back to run parallel with the fuselage.*

### Left

*The wing root bomb racks hold replica 500-pounders.*

### Right

*The weapons bay, capable of taking a single torpedo, or up to 2,000lb of bombs.*

