

Number 308

It looks like #308, a beautiful blue and yellow Stearman with a red and white striped rudder will have to undergo some delays in her flying schedule for a while. Please excuse my blurry photos.



Per Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stearman_Aircraft Stearman Aircraft Corporation was an aircraft manufacturer in Wichita, Kansas. Although the company designed a range of other aircraft, it is most known for producing the Model 75, which is commonly known simply as the "Stearman". In 1934, the Stearman plant had created its most successful and enduring product, the Model 75 "Kaydet" that would become the main primary trainer aircraft for the US military during World War II. (I have been told that ex president Bush trained in one of these large open cockpit, fabric covered airplanes. That's right, you are looking at cloth painted yellow.)



It is common to see these beauties painted in their original WW II colors. This stock photo is from Wikipedia. Please notice the design of the front landing gear and wheels. Looks sturdy to me.

Now back to #308. Today I was hanging out at the airport watching the light and dark gray cloud patterns constantly change, teasing me with a bit of blue sky from time to time, the ramp get sunny with distinct shadows then drift back to a bland gray, while I was sipping slowly on a Blue Can, and talking with my new hangar neighbor John Rosenau. He had brought a chair out of his hangar and was sitting six feet in front of me as I sat on the carpeted back end of my RAV4. It was chilly out, but the friendship was warm enough to compensate.

As I was facing the runway, I could see the airplanes landing and departing straight ahead of me. We were talking about Mooneys, Pipers, and all manner of fun things.

The rumble of a radial engine became audible as a blue biplane body went by. John looked at me. I told John "That was a Stearman." A little while later it went by again as the pilot was practicing take-offs and landings.

10 minutes later, Dave Palacios, our A&P, came by and said a Stearman had suffered a broken landing gear while landing and the pilot had managed to save the airplane from severe damage. They jumped in John's vehicle and drove down to the site. After I squared my stuff away, I followed.



By the time I got there multiple vehicles were parked nearby. Some people were watching, some were taking pictures, and some were pitching in to assist. This is normal life at a small airport anywhere in the USA.

Someone had wrapped the plane in a sling made of super heavy duty tubing (like a fire hose), had lifted it up so the broken landing gear was no longer touching, and was pulling it using a front loader - ever so slowly off of the runway area and into a hangar ramp. I could not see the Stearman's landing gear from this angle. What I could see is all of the people who come out of the woodwork to lend a hand when one of us needs assistance. I think all of the people in this picture are over 50, maybe over 60 years old.



I noticed that a blue wing strut had taken so much stress that it had kinked almost halfway up



Slowly rolling up the ramp with help all around. The usual Airport Dog was on duty of course.



A close up of the broken and twisted landing gear that prompted this event.

I am sure # 308 shall fly again. Hopefully soon. My best wishes to her owner and keeper.

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