

# Spirit

Steve Logue has owned, flown and restored a lot of airplanes over the years. He loves everything about flying, and made some impulsive decisions based on that love — like the time he quit his construction business at the age of 37 to join the Air Force (actually the Kansas Air National Guard) just because he wanted to get a ride in an F-16 (he eventually did, and penned 40 minutes time in his logbook to prove it). But he's retired now, has settled down, and while he still loves to fly and restore airplanes, his heart belongs to just one: N45888, a 1963 PA-24-250.

Logue lives near Wichita, Kansas, where it is practically one's civic duty to be involved in aviation. The city is the birthplace of Stearman, Mooney, Cessna and Beechcraft; and is home to Boeing, Bombardier and McConnell Air Force Base. In many respects, it is a one-industry town. Logue moved there in 1976, after a stint in the Army to work for Cessna. He worked for the plane-maker for a year, got his pilot's license through the company's flying club and met his future wife. After a year with Cessna, he quit and went into construction where he helped build everything from hospitals to private homes.

Flying out of Cook Field (K50) near Wichita, Logue owned a Cherokee 180 that he kept in a shared hangar on the field. One of the other tenants was an old man, Charley, who owned a single-engine Comanche 250. Logue had never flown or been in a Comanche before this, and was naturally curious. So when Charley showed up and asked if anyone wanted to go flying with him, Logue agreed. Besides, "He was in his eighties then and had a difficult time getting around," recalls Logue. "So I'd go up with him just to make sure he was in good shape to fly."

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The plane was another question. “His maintenance on the airplane was way less than perfect,” says Logue. The old guy was cheap, and the aircraft seemed to be held together with baling wire and duct tape. “I really had to do some conscious evaluation before I’d get in with him.” Still, the two went flying several times and became, in a way, friends.

In 2001, the owner of the airport negotiated a deal to sell the property to a developer and sent out notices to the aircraft owners stating they needed to relocate their planes. Logue and a business partner, who also owned and based an aircraft on the field, contacted the owner about selling to them. “But he said the deal was done and there was nothing he could do.” Three weeks later he called to say the deal fell through, so in 2002 Logue and partner Greg Thomas became airport owners. In the

years since then they have rebuilt the runway, taxiways and ramp; added full lighting; torn down dilapidated hangars and replaced them with clean, modern structures; and basically turned the airport into a gem in the heartland.

Part of the improvement process was reviewing and revising the rent structure in order to make the enterprise more fair and sustainable. When Charley got notice that his hangar rental would increase from \$15 per month to \$95, Logue recalls, “he called us crooks” and said he was moving his Comanche to his home, where he would store it in a spare garage. He then asked if Logue would help him fly it there, reassuring Logue that there was a long runway right next to his house. Logue agreed, but as he approached the “runway” he noticed that a large power line ran across the center of it, requiring anyone landing to fly under

it. Logue refused to land and returned to Cook Field. Charley found someone less cautious to deliver his Comanche home. It sat in his garage for most of the next 10 years. The next time Logue heard about it was after Charley died. His widow contacted him about buying the plane. Logue had a business repairing and restoring aircraft, and had refurbished a couple of Comanches. He knew this plane was in rough shape — the widow was selling it for salvage. She sent a letter to the FAA to have it decertified and its airworthiness certificate withdrawn. Logue knew this plane would be a challenge, but having known Charley and also flown the plane, he had an attachment to it. He paid the widow, loaded the plane onto a trailer, and transported it to Cook Field.

Like joining the Air Force at age 37, restoring this plane might not seem like the best idea. “I had some history in

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