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THE NEW TOM SWIFT INVENTION SERIES

Tom Swift And His Quieturbine Skyliner

By Victor Appleton II

Air pollution, noise pollution, crippling operating costs and an increase in dissatisfaction with air travel is forcing the world's air carriers into financial ruin.

Tom is asked to help keep many of them operational and to help prevent hundreds of thousands of jobs from being lost. But a greater threat than that is the crippling effects a non-functioning airline industry will have on the United States. And, he has competition.

Another aircraft designer has their sights set on getting the lucrative contracts to provide the next generation of more efficient and quieter aircraft. And they will stop at nothing—theft and even violence are on their list of activities.

When those he loves are kidnapped by unknown thugs, Tom must struggle to balance his emotions for those he must save along with his duty to keep Swift Enterprises in the running.

Can Tom succeed? Or, is there just too much involved? Is this the task that Tom can't overcome?

This book is dedicated to my loving and ever-patient wife. She who early on in our marriage discovered that one of anything constitutes a curiosity and two are the start of a collection. Many have been the hour where she has sat across the room from me as I all but ignored her while chronicling our young hero and his adventures. Thanks, P. ILY!

Tom Swift and His Quieturbine Skyliner

FOREWORD

Tom Swift has always stood for something important to me: integrity! If he gives his word on something, you can bet that he won't back down until the job is completed.

Whether the task is given to him, or comes from his own mind, Tom takes on any and everything with an energy that must be seen to be believed.

But, Tom is also human. Being just like the rest of us makes him vulnerable to all of the human frailties out there. Jealousy, hate, fear, pride and love amongst them.

If you add that to the enormous strain he subjects himself to, is it any wonder why he may appear to give up at times? Wouldn't any of us do the same?

In relating Tom's adventures over the years I have always felt that deep inside of the scientist and inventor is just a teenage boy yearning to break free.

Perhaps some day he will.

Perhaps Tom will give up his responsibilities and just have fun.

Perhaps some day pigs will fly!

Victor Appleton II

CHAPTER 1 / A REVOLUTION

“WOW!” exclaimed Bud Barclay, the dark haired, athletic best friend of Tom Swift. “This will revolutionize air racing, Tom!”

Tom Swift, blond teenage inventor and renowned scientist, smiled as he watched his friend detach himself from the 5-point harness that secured him to the sleek midget jet aircraft he had been test flying around the perimeter of Swift Enterprises.

Bud patted the long, thin aircraft affectionately.

“How do you like the way she handles?” Tom inquired.

“She's great on the flat and pretty good going up and down,” he said thinking back to the racecourse of inflated obstacles he had just been piloting over, under and around. “I felt like she wanted to slide a bit out of control on the sharp corners, though,” he said.

“Yeah. I had that same impression,” Tom replied. “I'll get everything under control before that new air racing league needs to have the first test models. With your help, that is.”

Bud slapped his pal on the shoulder. “Count this fly boy in, skipper!”

Just five weeks earlier Tom had been approached by a well-known financier from Las Vegas who had dreams of creating an aircraft version of motocross. As he described it, each course would accommodate six aircraft at a time that would maneuver around a two-mile-long oval sky track. Like the motorcycle version, the pilots would ride on top of, rather than inside of, their aircraft.

Unlike traditional air races that frequently saw pilots losing control at speeds greater than 300 MPH, too often losing their lives in fiery accidents, the 'sky cross' planes would fly at a speed under 100 MPH.

Like their two-wheel counterparts, the sky racers would bob and

weave around a course filled with inflatable obstacles and show that maneuvering skill was more important than outright speed or power.

As the man had spoken, Tom immediately envisioned a combination of the military's Cruise Missile, and a low-slung racing bike. "But you understand that it must look thrilling and still be as safe as possible!"

In the end, Tom built the first jet-powered prototype to be more like the aforementioned Cruise Missile, 15-feet long with a 12-foot wingspan, a motorcycle-style racing saddle and low windscreen. The rider's body reclined face down into an indented area on top of the 15-inch wide by 27-inch tall fuselage. The legs rested in troughs along the sides with the feet up against a set of traditional airplane foot pedals providing steering control.

The pilot's hands would reach inside of the fuselage with one controlling flight characteristics via a joystick and the other operating the throttle and raising and lowering the landing gear via a hand crank.

For safety, pilots—or riders, as Tom referred to them—would wear a harness similar to a parachutist that would be anchored and automatically tightened to a central point in the saddle, and the aircraft would have a built-in parachute recovery system that could be engaged by the pilot or automatically by motion sensors that would activate if the plane began to fly out of control or lost power.

He believed he had everything handled including the 7-inch full-color display to provide the pilot with all typical instrument readouts: speed, artificial horizon, fuel state, oil pressure and exhaust temperature.

The only problem was that what worked fine on paper and in simulation typically had issues when exposed to the real world. Such it was with the steering control of the SwiftRacer-1 as Tom

had named it.

He was sure that an auxiliary computer and sensor array could measure and fine-tune the flight characteristics and keep the little racer under control but had run into a problem with the racing league organizer.

"Oh, gosh no, Tom. The whole thing about this league is that it is pilot controlled. All the way. That's why we couldn't even allow you to make these fly-by-wire," he has insisted, referring to the way newer aircraft were controlled by sending electrical impulses to servo motors that did all of the steering and control surface operation rather than the old-fashioned cable and pulley system that had been in use since the Wright Brothers first flight.

Tom had agreed to keep the aircraft as simple and traditional as possible but had, in the end, insisted that it would be mandatory to put some sort of 'power steering' equipment into the aircraft so that the joystick would be able to be operated under the G-force stresses the pilots would experience.

He was certain that an increase in the length of the wings or even wing tipettes—like those used on airliners—would help but wasn't sure that either would be the complete solution.

The next day he asked Art Wiltessa to run up a new set of wings incorporating only 24 degrees of sweep instead of the 27 degrees of the original wings and featuring an additional 11 inches of length each. He included small tipettes in his design, but he asked that these be detachable for testing purposes. "The designs are in the computer system."

His chief model maker, the man responsible for hand-building most of the models and prototypes of Tom's smaller inventions, agreed to have them finished in four days, the following Monday. "I could do them sooner if it weren't for the weekend and a top priority project your dad has us doing today."

“I don't want you to take any time away from dad's work. That Defense Department project is vital to the new surveillance satellite system dad designed. If you need an extra day, or even two, take it!”

But, good to his word, Art Wiltessa had the new wings and tiplettes delivered to the Barn—an open-ended construction building—where Tom had been working on the midget racing plane four days later.

Tom already had the old wings detached and they were leaning against a workbench. With Art's assistance he positioned the new wings on padded benches below the hanging fuselage of the airplane.

They lowered the airframe and soon had the wings attached using high-strength aircraft-grade steel bolts.

Standing back to admire their work, Art remarked, “She looks like a little flying demon. Besides SR-1, has she got any name?”

Tom thought over what Art has just said. “You know, Art? That 'demon' remark gives me an idea. How about calling these 'Imps'?”

“Like the mythical beings? I like it. What do you think the buyer's reaction will be?”

“We'll deliver them as SR-1s and call them Imps in house.”

After checking all of the systems, Tom dragged the jet out of the Barn using a towrope. He returned the rope to the workbench and then slipped into a flight suit and harness.

Sitting astride the saddle, he attached the safety umbilical from the aircraft to his harness and then activated the mechanism. As it retracted into the fuselage he laid face down. It clicked into place and locked.

Tom lowered the visor of his helmet and placed his hands into the holes on either side of the fuselage. He soon had the display

turned on and the starter motor activated. The built-in Swift solar battery turned the starter motor which began spinning the small jet turbine engine. In less than 15 seconds it was up to the proper speed where Tom could start the fuel and spark process.

Seconds later the little engine was revving up on its own. Tom glanced at the readout screen and was satisfied that everything appeared to be normal.

Waving at Art, who had waited around to watch Tom take off, he thumbed the throttle up a little and the small craft began to taxi forward.

Because the small aircraft didn't have the electrical power or the space to include a built-in radio and antenna, Tom's helmet featured a radio. He flexed his jaw against the chinstrap and activated the radio circuit.

He contacted the tower and told them of his intent to fly around the Enterprises perimeter several times and then to do a high-speed run straight out to Lake Carlopa. His flight plan was designed to circle the lake and then return to Enterprises.

“Have a fun time, skipper,” came the controller's cheerful voice.

“Wilco, Mike,” Tom replied and then flexed his jaw, placing the radio in stand-by.

The little aircraft taxied out to the main east-west runway situated to the north of the main buildings area. Tom checked the joystick and pedals one more time and then thumbed up the throttle all the way. The little jet streaked down the runway and was airborne after using only about 1,100 feet of the runway.

Pulling slightly back on the joystick he put the aircraft into a shallow climb. He hand-cranked the landing gear up and was soon steering to the right following the basic route of the outer complex wall. He reduced the throttle and cruised along at 80 MPH.

“How are things working, Tom,” the controller radioed.

Tom replied, "It's looking good. Please relay to Art Wiltesa that the new wings and tiplettes seem to be doing fine. Out."

He circled the vast Enterprises complex three times trying out the up-down and left-right controls in the straightaway. Satisfied, he finally turned the jet toward the lake that formed a beautiful azure blue patch about twelve miles away.

Might as well see what she can do opened up, he thought moving the throttle to full. The jet shot ahead from the 80 MPH he had been traveling to its top speed of just under 110 MPH. Tom found that he needed to keep his head tight against the chin rest or it was buffeted too much by the wind.

He neared Lake Carlopa. Seeing more than a dozen yachts lazily sailing around the island that sat in the middle of the lake, he decided to go down and fly close enough to see if he recognized anyone.

The only craft he recognized proved to be that of the parents of an old school rival, Thurston Jones. His father had made millions speculating in the oil markets. Some whispered rumors said that he may have been involved in illegal manipulation of prices, and that he had profited when oil prices had suddenly shot up for no well-explained reason.

Shrugging, Tom decided that he had seen enough. A glance at the readout showed that he still had more than half a tank of fuel, so he pulled up and was soon turning back toward Enterprises. Partway through the turn the little airplane shuddered and then lurched to the right.

Tom turned his head in time to see the right side wing tiplette tear away and go spinning down toward the lake. Once it broke free the plane seemed to regain control.

Tom radioed in that he had lost the tiplette but he thought that he would be in no trouble. As he approached Enterprises he began

his final left turn to line up with the runway.

Without warning, the little jet flipped upside down and began plunging toward the ground!