

AOPA PILOT **TURBINE**

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PILOT BRIEFING

BY ALTON K. MARSH

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A son's memorial to his dad

This is the second time this Chance Vought F4U-4 Corsair aircraft has been restored. After serving on two aircraft carriers during the Korean War, the aircraft went to the Honduran Air Force. An airline pilot bought it in 1970 and returned it to the United States. Joe Tobul and his son, Jim, bought it in 1981 and began a long restoration; they had it flying again in 1991.

In November 2002, the aircraft was destroyed in an accident that took the life of the elder Tobul. It sat unrepaired for two to three years as the younger Tobul dealt with the loss, but he decided to fully restore it as a memorial to his father, and as a tribute to Korean War veterans.

"There's lots of emotion in this project," Tobul said.

Restoration was completed in March and the aircraft began a tour of 14 airshows less than two weeks later. Friends went with Tobul, of Bamsberg, South Carolina, to the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In in Lakeland, Florida, at the end of March, helping prepare the aircraft, named *Korean War Hero*, for judging. At the midpoint of the show, Tobul was awarded the grand championship in his category of restored aircraft. And, happily, *Korean War Hero* was safely in a hangar when a tornado hit during the fly-in, destroying or damaging nearly 50 aircraft.

The Corsair flew 200 combat missions in Korea, and served on the *USS Boxer* and the *USS Valley Forge*. Tobul honors the squadrons in which it served by placing one of the unit's insignia on one side of the vertical stabilizer, and the other squadron's insignia on the opposite side. Normally restorations are painted to represent one unit, but Tobul wanted to honor them both. You can read more about the aircraft online (www.koreanwarhero.com).