Beat: Entertainment

Warbirds Over Debert Part 5

Third Strike Wingwalking, Carol Pilon

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USPA NEWS - Carol Pilon resides in Masham, Quebec and has been a professional wingwalker since 2000. She is the owner of Third Strike Wingwalking and is noted for being the only Canadian woman to wingwalk on a jet propelled aircraft. Over her more than 2 decade career, Pilon has performed solo walks, dual walks and formation walks, has performed on several types of aircraft, and worked with a number of different pilots. She is the only female wingwalker to own and operate a team in North America.

Carol Pilon and the Third Strike Wingwalking Team have travelled throughout Canada, the United States, and Mexico thrilling fans with heart pounding and jaw dropping performances. I had the chance to chat with Carol, just prior to their first performance at the 2023 Air Show Atlantic Warbirds Over Debert.

I commenced the interview, by asking Carol Pilon to introduce the 2023 team.
She described the team as being "International" and that the current Third Strike Wingwalking team was formed this year. The team consists of the Pilot Stefan Trischuk from Calgary, and two additional wingwalkers, Kelly Garvin from Louisiana and Joseph Bender from Virginia.

I then asked if she would tell me a bit about her aircraft. With great amount of pride in her voice Carol said, "Sure, my aircraft is a 1940 Boeing Stearman, her name is Royal Rhapsody, and she is based in Oklahoma.
She first saw service as a trainer in the military. From there, she was put into a crop dusting service. Then, she was put back into her original status and did some movie work for awhile. After that she started doing air shows and has been ever since."

Next I asked, Does Royal Rhapsody fly venues to the where the team performs? Carol explained, that the plane does not fly to the air shows. "I actually take it apart and put in in a very larger trailer and haul it down the road with a Ford F450 pickup truck."

When I asked how many shows the Third Strike Wingwalking team do each season she said, " We probably average between 8 to 10 a year. In the past we have done upwards to 32 and was on the road for 8 months out of the year, but no more of that nonsense! I am too old for that now."

As I concluded the interview, I asked Carol, What motivates the team to provide what a lot of people would describe as insane performances? She replied, " I do not think it is insane in the slightest. I think of it as a total pursuit for perfection. Each time I personally go up wingwalking, I am looking for that harmony between aircraft, between environment, between pilots and between wingwalkers. Once you get into that harmony, I simply call it the state of grace. Make no mistake, there is a little bit of insanity attached to it. It is a challenge for us and we are absolutely questing for excellence in everything that we do."

Over the years, Carol Pilon and Third Strike Wingwalking have become a fixture within the North American air show scene. The skilled, breathtaking and daring performances has made them a fan favorite which draw thousands of spectators to witness their aerobatic displays.
After chatting with Carol and watching the Third Strike Wingwalking performance it was clear that the team has a passion for achieving the high standards required to master their craft and have done so by embracing utmost team work and professionalism.

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