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Grumman Tiger

The Grumman Tiger attracts intensely loyal owners. And despite an emerging sportplane market, nothing quite matches it.

Whether due to good design, unique market attributes or just plain luck, some airplanes seem destined to survive the worst, only to reemerge in yet another iteration.

Such is definitely the case with the Grumman AA-5 Tiger, a model that had more ups and downs than a yo-yo but one that seems to endure, thanks in large part to a loyal owner following.



Even as Tigers remain popular on the used market, Tiger LLC, a new start-up company in Martinsburg, West Virginia and financed by the government of Taiwan, stands poised to resurrect the model yet again, promising to produce the first new Tiger by the fall of 2000.

And this won't be a revised or improved Tiger, but substantially the same airplane as that built by American General nearly a decade ago.

Are these guys nuts? Maybe. But the Tiger's impressive persistence and loyal cadre of owners isn't just a fluke. The airplane delivers a well-balanced combination of speed, good handling and range without giving up much to the spam cans coming out of Independence or Vero Beach. And despite the emergence of new sportplanes such as Micco SP20 and re-heated Globe Swifts, the Tiger remains the only model with a fighter-like sliding canopy that can be opened in flight.

Origins of the Line

Like most large-volume successful single-engine airplanes, the Tiger's origins date to GA's salad days in the late 1960s. Its predecessor was the Jim Bede-designed two-place AA-1, which stirred up the quiet backwaters of U.S. flightschools in 1969.

Built by American Aviation and launched into a universe of staid Pipers and Cessnas, no one had ever seen anything quite like the AA-1 Yankee. Sleek, with stubby wings and a canopy, it was a Walter Mitty fantasy come true.

But there was a problem. It was a tad too hot for students and low-time pilots, who tended to smash the airplane with regularity due to its tendency to get behind the power curve and stall with an abrupt break and wing drop if not flown on speed. Still, American could see by the response to the AA-1 that it had something. In 1972, American Aviation followed the Yankee with a 150-HP, four-place version of the AA-1. While the AA-5 Traveler shared the family genes of the AA-1, it was an all-new airplane that was larger, faster and with new systems.

The construction method and materials—tubular wing spars, aluminum-honeycomb sandwich fuselage panels and bonded wing skins—were retained, making the airplane simple if not quick to build.

The Yankee has a small horizontal stabilizer and elevator and sharp-eyed aviators noted that all three tail surfaces were exactly the same, for economy and simplicity. Nice idea but one of the Yankee's problems was poor elevator authority. The AA-5 got a dorsal and ventral fin and larger elevator to address this shortcoming.

A few years after the AA-5s arrived, Grumman bought out American and famed drag reduction expert Roy LoPresti went to work on improving the airplane, resulting in the AA-5B Tiger, which appeared in 1975.

The changes were more than skin deep. The airplane got a new nosebowl and cowl, bigger fuel tanks and improved elevator design. For performance and payload, engine horsepower was increased to 180 HP, a Lycoming O-320-E2G. The following year, the Tiger's airframe mods were applied to the Traveler to yield the AA-5A Cheetah. Think of the Cheetah as just like a Tiger but with 150 HP instead of 180 HP.

With its larger engine, the Tiger is obviously the better seller and despite the higher price on the used market, probably a better value. Comparing the two, a 1978 Tiger retails in the fall of 2000 for \$54,000 while a Cheetah of the same model year can be had for \$39,000. For comparison, a 1978 Piper Archer brings \$61,500.

What does \$15,000 additional for a Tiger over a Cheetah buy? About 10 to 12 knots more in cruise speed, a brisker climb rate and more payload. For serious cross country trips, we think the Tiger is the better choice. Despite good market response, Grumman didn't make the Tiger/Cheetah models for long. Original production for the AA-5B was 1323 units, versus 900 AA-5As.

A total of 834 AA-5 Travelers were produced, as well. In 1979, Gulfstream bought the line and Alan Paulson had bizjets on his mind, not piston singles. Both were discontinued just before the big GA slide the following year.

The model languished for a decade until a start-up called American General bought the designs, building the first revised AG-5B Tigers in 1990, in the midst of what was still an anemic market. Although American General improved the Tiger, the company folded in 1994, mostly due to lack of investment capital, since it appeared that a modest market existed. American General built some 150 AG-5Bs before going out of business.

Full circle, Tiger LLC acquired American General's tooling, trucked it to Martinsburg and will use it to build new Tigers.

As light aircraft go, the line underwent fewer changes than most, thanks to a well thought out design from the outset. The soundproofing was improved, as were techniques used for bonding the wings, which suffered delamination problems early on. A thicker windshield was used, also for noise reduction. In 1978, the seats were improved, and U-strips were added to the trailing edges of the control surfaces to prevent delamination of the bonds.

Performance

The Cheetah and Tiger are renowned for decent speed on little horsepower. Of course, part of the credit belongs to Piper and Cessna, whose four-place airplanes would never be mistaken for air racers. The Tiger boasts a book cruise speed of 139 knots. Some owners insist this is accurate, others say it's rarely achievable. Grumman experts say claimed cruise speeds are accurate if the airplane is properly rigged. Whatever the case, we've watched a Piper Archer fade into the Tiger's slipstream and good one doesn't give up much to an early model Mooney. Not bad for 180 HP and 9 to 10 GPH.

The Tiger speeds along due mainly to its slick surfaces—bonded not riveted—not its slick shape. In fact, the airframe is slab-sided and rather boxy. The bottom of the fuselage is as flat as a Kansas wheat field. This shape, however, made the airplane easier to build than a Mooney. The Cheetah puts along at 120 knots or so, sipping a little less fuel. That's fast enough to sail by a Cessna 172 but perhaps not a Warrior with the 160 HP engine and wheel pants.

Neither the Tiger nor the Cheetah are great climbers, however. At sea-level, on a standard day and mid weights, the Tiger will hop right up there on initial climb, easily showing 850 FPM or a bit better.

On a hot day in the hills, however, better have a long runway if your technique isn't up to snuff. You'll need it. With 30 HP less, the Cheetah is even more anemic in high density altitude conditions.

Cheetah owners report marginal climb rates in the 250 to 350 FPM ranges, a lack of performance that has put a few airplanes into the trees. Advice: Keep the airplane as light as

practical. Also, use flaps for takeoff, which the POH doesn't recommend. Owners say it helps.

Payload and Range

Gross weight of the Tiger is 2400 pounds and with typical IFR equipment, the model will weigh in at about 1450 to 1500 pounds, leaving a useful load of 900 pounds.

That's enough for full fuel (51 gallons) and three adults, plus a little baggage. Not quite what an Archer will do but about the same as a Mooney 201.

The Cheetah has an empty weight a bit less and a gross of 2200 pounds, with a useful load in the 750-pound range. With full fuel—only 38 gallons in this model—you've got room for three light passengers. Some Cheetahs have optional 51-gallon tanks, but these can be filled only if the cabin is limited to two people.

The marginal useful load is all the more unfortunate because of the Cheetah's rapid loss of climb performance when overloaded. Cheetah owners universally say don't mess with the weight limits. Stay at or below gross.

The Cheetah's tiny baggage door

discourages overloading. Called a "mail slot" by one owner, you'll have to muscle overlarge baggage up and over the backseat. Not easy to do. CG is not a super sensitive issue in either the Tiger or the Cheetah.



Unique among light aircraft of the era, the Tiger's rear seats fold forward, opening up the cabin for cargo space.

Handling

Any pilot who has flown a Tiger or Cheetah will be impressed with its sports car feel, with light, nicely balanced control forces. "The Tiger's handling is to a Cessna 172 as the Mazda Miata is to the Ford F-150 pickup truck," writes one happy owner.

But it's not perfect. With light controls comes a degree of sensitivity for IFR flying which one owner summed up this way: "It's easy to wobble your way down the glideslope." Owners seem to agree that the airplane is adequate for IFR but not exceptional. An autopilot is a valuable helper.

With its castoring nosewheel, the airplanes are easy to handle on the ground and will turn in half the radius of your typical Cessna, at the expense of going through brake pads. Good technique can reduce brake wear dramatically.

Experienced Tiger pilots, for example, often start their takeoffs cocked well to the right. By the time the nose swings straight due to P-factor, the rudder is biting and there's no need to ride the brakes on takeoff at all.

Pushing the airplane backwards without the towbar can damage the nosewheel. It castors, but not all the way around. This also means that chocking the nosewheel doesn't work; it can swivel sideways and pop free of the chocks. Chock the mains instead.

On takeoff, the airplane practically levitates before settling into its initial climb and tends to float somewhat on landings, making nailing the approach speed a must. Landing overshoots are the number one cause of AA-5 accidents. (Other models, admittedly, have the same trouble.)

Cool Canopy

From day one, the Tiger/Cheetah's sliding canopy was an eye catcher. During the summer, it can be left open for taxiing, improving comfort and visibility. You can also fly with it open at slow speeds.

But it has significant downsides, too. For one, getting into and out of the cockpit requires a degree of flexibility and if it's raining, the seats and panel will get wet, which is hard on avionics and switches.

If the airplane overturns in a crash, the canopy may jam, preventing escape in case of a fire. This doesn't happen often, but it has happened. One solution is to carry a small escape tool, such as the Life Hammer. (www.store.yahoo.com/midnightpassinc/lifehammer.html)

Owners who have upgraded their Tigers tell us there's plenty of room for avionics. However, many Tigers were equipped with Narco radios that are getting ancient. Don't be surprised to find one with an avionics museum in place of modern gear.

The Tiger/Cheetah interior is comfortable but not exactly spacious. The seats are typical GA minimal circa-1970s, with no height or seatback adjustment.

One unique feature is the rear seats, which fold down to provide a six-foot long cargo compartment that will hold a couple of bikes, skis or even short folks for a night of airplane camping.

The airplane has simple, largely quirk-free systems. The panel is well laid out, with plunger-type engine controls and a well-designed fuel selector, a la Mooney, with a prominent lever pointing to the selected tank. (There's no both position.) The control wheel is smallish and well positioned for a good view of the instruments.

The flap system is electric, with a console-mounted switch/indicator, requiring a head-down look to set the flaps. Savvy Grumman pilots merely count to five for half flaps. If you hold the switch down to extend the flaps and let it go, it tends to flip back over center and retract them again.

Safety

Historically, AA-5s haven't proved as accident free as competing aircraft, namely the stodgy Skyhawk, Warrior and Archer. Why? Three reasons seem apparent.

Grummans really are different. They're a degree slicker and faster than the typical Cessna or Piper and getting familiar with one takes some training. Second, weak climb performance. These airplanes are involved in proportionately more takeoff accidents than other models, especially the Traveler and Cheetah.

Third, landings may be easy but two traps are too high a speed on final, which leads to floating and overruns and that springy nosegear. Touchdown nose first with speed to burn and you're almost certain to porpoise. That's recoverable if you know how, but many pilots don't.

Maintenance

From the outset, the Grumman line was designed to be easy to build and maintain. Owners say it generally delivers. There's no constant speed prop or retractable gear to fuss with and fuel, wiring, brakes and other systems are dirt simple.

Things to look out for:

Cylinder problems: Although the O-360 and O-320 Lycs are two of the best engines going, the installation in the AA-5s is not the best. Cooling airflow margins are narrow which tends to shorten cylinder and piston life. Ratty baffling aggravates this so check it often and on pre-buy, of course. A compression check and borescope is a must. A four-probe engine analyzer is a good idea, preferably one with digital CHTs. This will alarm high temps before they do damage.

Bonding: In early models, there were bond problems in the wing caused by use of an improper sealant, American Cyanamid FM-123, known as "purple passion" among production employees. FM-123 was used in all Grumman-American aircraft built between April 1974 and December, 1975—including Tigers up through about serial number 125.

At least one severe delamination occurred in flight in a 1975 Tiger, but no accident resulted. At least two Tigers, serial numbers 15 and 19, were virtually rebuilt from scratch because of bonding problems.

According to a former Grumman American employee, 30 or 40 honeycomb fuselage test panels somehow found their way into production aircraft, possibly affecting Tigers with serial numbers below about 30.

A 1976 AD required rivets along bondlines, and the problem has since become a non-issue. Still,

any buyer of a 1975 or early 1976 Tiger should check the logs carefully for any history of delamination.

The Cheetah came along a year later so it wasn't affected much. (You can check for the defective glue by pulling off the wingtip and inspecting the bonded seam at the spar-to-rib or rib-to-skin joint. If there's a purple line, you may have a problem.)

Nosewheel shimmy: Nothing unusual here. Other models with castoring nosewheels have had shimmy problems. It's caused by a variety of factors: Improper tension in the spring washers—they may be worn out or the shop may have adjusted them too loosely by improperly interpreting the 18 to 22-pound side-pull requirement as a torque requirement; loose axle nuts, a bald tire or improper inflation, or loose torque tube strut.

The nosegear demands maintenance and must be lubricated and adjusted strictly by the book. (Not many shops even have the book.) In particular, the strut inside the torque tube should be free of corrosion and well lubricated.

The 1977 and later models have a shock absorber in the nosewheel, which helps some. But they make removal of the nose gear more difficult. If you have persistent shimmy problems, a shop familiar with Grumman American aircraft will have seen it and can probably fix it.

Cracking prop spinner: Pre-1979 Tigers (s/n 1047 and below) had problems with cracking spinners, possibly related to propeller vibration.

Virtually all Tigers in the field have been retrofitted with improved spinners, but check just to make sure. One experienced Grumman mechanic told us that even the new spinners have problems.

Magnetics: The Slick mags in the AA-5s seem problematical and don't appear to last. We still hear reports of failures in 500 hours or less.

Leaky fuel tanks: Several owners reported leaks. The most recent AD on the AA-5 addresses the fuel tank sealant.

Brake wear: Clever AA-5 pilots manage to minimize brake use but since it's the only way to steer, the brakes will wear. If the brakes crap out, the airplane can't be taxied. Inspect the brakes often and replace the pads preventively.

Fragile rudder return springs: Several owners reported repeated breaking of the rudder springs. One owner told us he always carries a spare, however, the part is cheap and must be replaced every 1000 hours.

Airworthiness Directives

Being a simple airplane, the Cheetah and Tiger are relatively AD free. But there are two major repetitive ADs: A 200-hour inspection of the McCauley prop hub for cracks and a 100-hour inspection of the ailerons.

In addition to the usual shotgun ADs that apply to many aircraft—Lycoming oil pumps, Airborne vacuum pumps, oil coolers, ELTs, air filters, altimeters, Bendix and Slick mags, etc.—the Tiger and/or Cheetah have had one-time ADs on the rudder bar, cowl hinge, mixture control, bonded skin, alternate static source, carb air box and carb heat valve.

AD 89-18-08 covered the fuel tank sealant coming loose and required an inspection and reseal if necessary. More recently, 95-19-15 requires replacement of wing shoulder attach bolts that are fretted, scored or otherwise worn.

Parts, Support, Mods

For an airplane out of production for so long and not exactly of huge population, the Grumman's are exceedingly well supported. There are two good sources of parts, Fletchair, (900 Randolph St., Houston, Texas, 713-641-2023, www.fletchair.com)and Air Mods NW at 425-334-3030. Both of these shops have long specialized in supporting Grummans and when AGAC folded, Fletchair wound up with the parts inventories and manufacturing rights. Air Mods NW is well known as a source for getting any parts and pieces—plus service work—for anything related to Grummans.

We'd recommend three modifications for the Tiger. First, a Sensenich propeller in place of the AD-plagued McCauley. In addition to eliminating the AD inspection, the new prop also does away with an annoying RPM restriction between 1850 and 2250 RPM in descending flight.

This yellow arc, due to vibration problems unique to the McCauley engine/prop combination, straddles the usual ILS approach speed. In addition, the Sensenich is claimed to increase speed a little. It's available in four pitches from Air Mods NW.

Air Mods NW also has an upper aft baggage compartment hatshelf for the AA-1 series, a 150 HP conversion for the same airplane, plus aux fuel tank products. Fletchair has a split nose cowl STC, which eliminates the need to remove the spinner and prop to get at the starter, alternator and front engine baffles, a mod that will likely pay for itself due to easier and quicker maintenance.

This mod applies to the 1975 Traveler up through the 1979 Tiger. The AGAC Tiger was built with a split nosebowl. Air Mods NW can install split nose and lower cowlings, the former under a distribution agreement with ADC.

LoPresti Speed Merchants recently completed a new vertically split carbon fiber cowling with NACA ducts which supposedly adds 5 MPH to the Tiger's cruise speed. Contact www.flyfast-lopresti.com or 800-859-4757.

Aviation Development Corporation also offers mods, including split nose- bowl, landing lights, flashing rudder beacon and oil filters. ADC can be reached at 206-546-3011.

Owner Group

The American Yankee association, the owners group for the Grumman/AGAC airplanes, is one of the best owner groups around. It publishes one of the best owner group magazines we've seen.

The AYA also has a group insurance plan that may save you money and can put you in touch with approved pilots for a proper AA-5 checkout. The association also publishes a tip sheet for the AA-5, covering operations and maintenance, which includes a summary of all ADs and service bulletins applicable to the aircraft. Contact 530-676-4292, or on the Web at www.aya.org.

Owner Comments

I owned a 1976 Cheetah for five years and in that time accumulated 1100 hours as its sole pilot. I sold it last summer after I bought a turbonormalized and TKS-equipped V-35 Bonanza.

The Cheetah was a lot of fun to fly. Its controls are light and response to pilot input is immediate. In comparison, the "responsive" V-35 seems three times heavier on the controls. You'll bounce around in turbulence a bit but the Grumman never feels like it's trying to get away from you.

Performance on 150 HP was about 119 to 123 knots at 8000 feet and 2700 RPM. Fuel consumption in this configuration was about 8.75 GPH dropping to just under 8 GPH at 12,000 feet.

Rate of climb at a 1000-foot elevation and at gross weight ranged from 600 FPM at 95 degrees OAT to 1000 FPM in the winter when it's 10 below F.

The maximum gross weight should be observed. The climb performance drops exponentially if weight is added beyond the gross limit. Ice is another no-no.

If you get more than a quarter inch of rime, the otherwise superb controllability begins to wander into random movements that require larger and larger corrections.



On a summer's day, the Tiger's canopy can be partially opened in flight at speeds up to 130 MPH. This airplane belongs to Dan and Renee Kelly of New Braunfels, Texas.

If you've picked up any ice, final should be with no flaps and 100 MPH (85 knots) indicated. Reduce power over the fence and then let it float down the runway. In the cold climate where I live, pre-heating on the ramp was simple. I placed a small ceramic space heater (5000 BTU) in front of the battery, facing forward into the cylinders, sealing the cowl opening with a towel. After 60 minutes, the engine will be warm, even if minus 10 F outside.

A second heater placed on the floor in front of the pilot's seat facing forward warms up the entire cabin along with the avionics.

Once in the air, the cabin heat will keep the front seat occupants comfortable down to minus 25 degrees at night if 75 percent power is maintained.

If you don't preheat the cabin it will take a couple hours in flight for everything to warm up. Also the trim adjustment becomes stiff and "slips" under very cold conditions but will work again after a couple hours in the air. The trick is to set it back to a cruise setting upon landing if your next flight is in extreme cold.

The AA-5 is a simple airframe and requires little maintenance other than its minor 100-hour inspections. The single largest expense for me involved an engine overhaul. We found that after 1700 hours SMOH, a piston pin plug had started rocking back and forth inside one of the pistons.

Shavings from the plug had partially blocked the oil pump's screen which caused a drop in indicated oil pressure. \$12,000 later, I was back in the air with a complete overhaul.

The avionics proved to be the second largest expense. If you plan on flying IFR, it's probably best to look for an airplane with updated equipment. I couldn't get the Narco Nav12's repaired so I had them replaced.

The hourly operating cost was under \$18 per hour for gas (at \$2 per gallon) and about a buck an hour for oil and filter changes. Throw in another \$6 per hour for the engine reserve.

Expenses unrelated to hours flown include \$800 per year for the annual, \$900 for \$1 million liability and hull insurance and about \$1800 per year for the hangar. In my case, I probably averaged \$1500 per year in avionics expenses but I started with avionics that needed work. When I sold the airplane, I netted \$9500 more than I originally paid for it. With all the above factored in, I had hangared a solid IFR airplane for about \$45 per hour over five years and 1100 flight hours.



Small baggage doors makes loading big bags a chore.

I'd highly recommend the Grumman to a perspective purchaser. As my first airplane, and with only 56 hours under my belt in a Cessna 172, I found it fast, reliable, inexpensive to own and operate and always fun to fly.

Mike Hongisto
White Lake, Michigan

I have owned half interest in a 1975 Grumman Tiger since 1987. I find it to be uncomplicated and a most enjoyable airplane to fly. Several times in the past few years I have rented 172s and Warriors while on vacation. It's like driving a truck compared to a sports car. The Tiger is so much more responsive.

A few points: I flight plan TAS at 130 knots at 75 percent power and that is what I get, even though it's supposed to get 138 knots. Age takes its toll. Fuel burn is right at 10 gallons per hour.

Annuals have averaged about \$1000 during the 13 years of ownership. This does not include an engine overhaul at 1950 hours. That was \$9000. The airplane has tripled in value during those years so it doesn't owe me much.

You hear complaints about the castoring nosewheel, but frankly, I prefer that over nosewheel steering. It makes the airplane unbelievably maneuverable on the ground and becomes second nature after a while.

The airplane has suffered no debonding of the skin as some earlier models did. Mine is serial number 97. The yellow arc between 2200 and 1900 RPM is a pain when executing instrument approaches.

The canopy leaks like a sieve when on the ground so it needs to be covered at all times. It's also a pain in the rain. Sure makes it nice taxiing on a hot day though!

Tom Clark
Atlanta, Georgia

I own a 1977 Grumman AA-5B Tiger and I'll tell you right off the bat that I am not objective on the subject. I find the Grumman line of light aircraft to be one of the best values out there. I've flown about 850 hours in my Tiger over the last five years.

The Tiger's handling is to a Cessna 172 as the Mazda Miata is to the Ford F-150 pickup truck. It carries a full load of four adults and plenty of fuel. My Tiger's useful load is 950 pounds (1450 pounds empty). I can load myself and my wife, my brother and his wife, weekend bags, and still be able to have fuel to the tabs, at 38 gallons.

The instrument panel of all Grummans (including the AA1-series two-seaters) uses the standard T-arrangement and is large enough to accept just about any instruments and avionics that you care to stuff in. Despite that, the panel's position is lower compared to other GA aircraft, giving the pilot a magnificent view through the large windshield and side windows.

I've done a number of STC-approved modifications to my Tiger, including the new LoPresti GTO Tiger cowl. The book says that I should fly 139 KTAS at 8000 feet at redline (2700 RPM) using 10.8 GPH. I can match (and beat) those numbers easily. I consistently flight-plan for 135 KTAS and I'm never disappointed.

Despite the fact that Grummans have been out of production for over 20 years, parts and support are plentiful. I have effectively done a complete restoration of my Tiger and I've never wanted for parts.

Fletchair has been fantastic in supporting our aircraft. Owner-to-owner support is provided by the marque club, the American Yankee Association and by the Internet-based support group, the Grumman Gang (www.grumman.net). Like other aircraft, Grummans have their minor issues. But because of the simplicity of the airframe, the AD list is thankfully small.

All one-time ADs on standard aircraft parts (mags, air filter, seat belts, oil cooler, carb, your various Lycoming ADs) should have been complied with by now.

Finally, the cost of ownership and operation of my Tiger is exceptional. For a basic annual, the cost is \$750 if I just drop off the key. Assuming a well maintained airplane, plan on 11 GPH fuel costs and insurance costs of about \$1300 annually.

There are no downsides to the Grummans: Sporty handling, great looks, good economy, bargain speed and good load-carrying capabilities. If you need to carry big game out of the Alaska tundra, you're out of luck. But, if you want a fast, attractive light airplane, you'll be hard-pressed to beat the value of a Grumman.

Greg Amy
Milford, Connecticut

We bought our 1979 Tiger (Herbie) in 1996. It was low time and all original. I added a Sensenich prop, the split nosebowl mod and a four-place intercom and have flown the airplane just short of 1000 hours in the last four years.

Maintenance has been straightforward. The normal things have failed. Muffler, starter, attitude

indicator, minor radio repairs. When the starter quit, I went with a lightweight unit that later burnt up when it didn't disengage. Sky-Tec rebuilt it for cost and recommended a new starter solenoid to prevent a repeat.

The left wing tank sprung a leak and Fletchair fixed it with just a couple of days of down time. (They do an excellent job of Grumman specific repairs and parts. Air Mods NW is also excellent).

A recent service bulletin by Fletchair warning of inappropriate fastening of defroster hose tubing to fuel and oil lines behind the instrument panel arrived just in time for my oil pressure line to spring a leak from just that cause, followed shortly thereafter by a brake line succumbing to the same problem. Switching to Champion REM37BY spark plugs greatly reduced lead deposits. I don't consider the foregoing to be unusual for a 20-year-old machine.

An honest 139-knot cruise speed is always available at 75 percent (10 gallons per hour) at 6000 to 8000 feet. Useful load is 952 pounds in our airplane, leaving 600 pounds for people and stuff with full fuel.

It's a good short field performer with just a bit of flaps but suffers the same density altitude woes as its competition. Climb performance is okay but service ceiling is a bit short, although we have flown it through the Rockies with no problems.

Landing performance and handling is outstanding. With practice, you can put this airplane right where you want it. Full flaps allow steep approaches and short landing rolls.

Airspeed control is critical but very precise touchdowns can be achieved consistently with a stable approach technique. Crosswind capability is super. Insurance through the American Yankee Association is reasonable.

All in all, it's a remarkable airplane that gives retractable performance without the complexity or expense of folding wheels, handles like a fighter and is a grand touring and sightseeing platform. Herbie is truly a member of the family.

Dan and Renee Kelly
New Braunfels, Texas

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