
DUKES

THE PRICE OF ADMISSION

By Fred Mackerodt

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When I got the annual insurance renewal call from my broker, I was in for a surprise. "You're undervalued," he said. "Your Duke is listed at \$100,000 on the policy and the *Blue Book* is \$136,000." I said, "Check that again. My airplane's a '69." (I bought my Duke, S/N 95, in June 1993 for \$63,000.) "I'm reading right from the *Blue Book*," he answered. "The value of your airplane has spiked up considerably since last year."



While general aviation airplanes have been ticking up at an annual rate of 10 percent or so, the Duke has been charging ahead at more than twice that rate. What happened? I called around to check with the experts. Apparently, three factors are at work:

A rising tide raises all ships

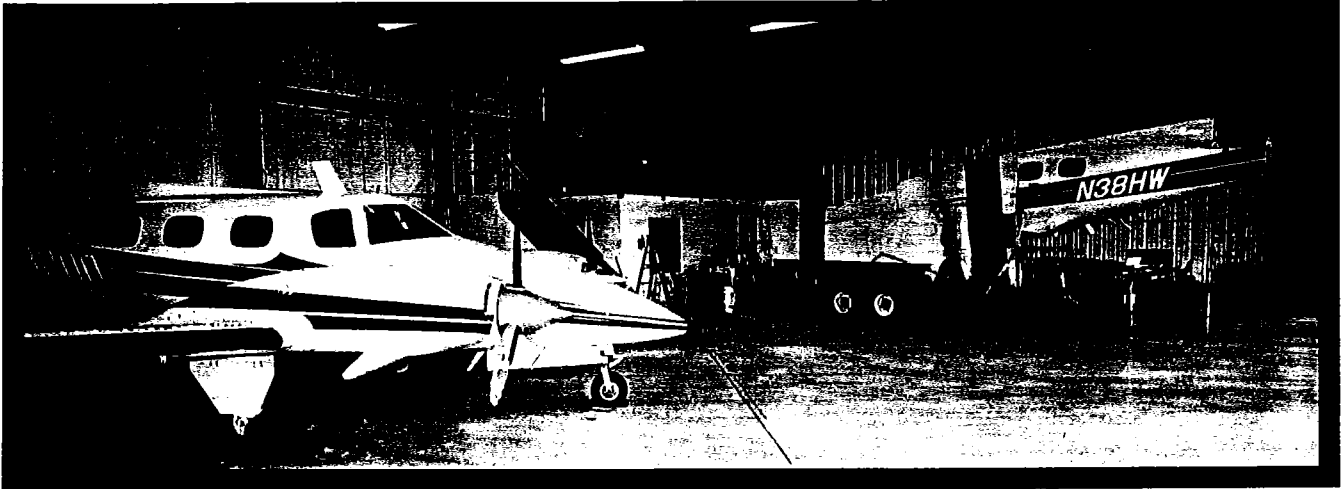
The aforementioned inflation in the value of general aviation airplanes is bringing the Duke along with it. Times are good, people have money and good used air-

planes are getting more and more difficult to find, especially among the cabin-class birds.

Truth prevails

With more people taking a harder look at the Duke, hangar tales about the Lycoming 541 engines' unreliability, and the Duke's general maintenance woes are being dispelled for what they always have been—balderdash.

Owners will tell you that the Duke's maintenance expenses are on par with other cabin-class pressurized

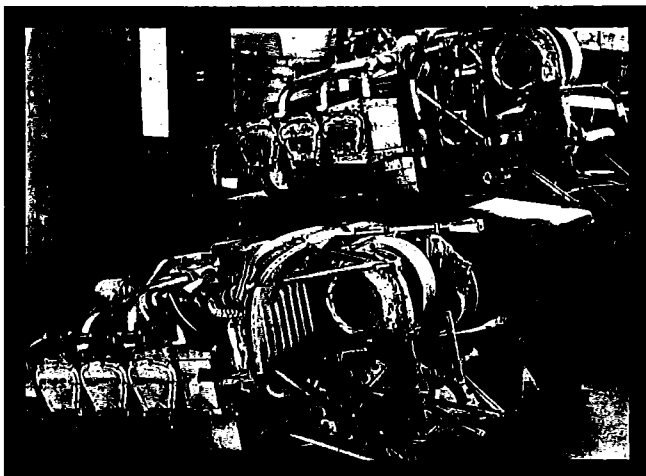


Two Dukes in author's hangar. The one on the trailer is a parts plane. Duke parts are available but some take a while to get.

twins. Dukes are strong airplanes. Remember, the Duke is a Beechcraft product and therefore built like a brick outhouse. Owners will also tell you that Lycoming 541 engines regularly exceed the 1,600-hour TBO, and are probably one of the best designs in the lineup of technologically backward GA reciprocals. I know of an airplane with 2,500-hour engines that shows no signs of giving up the ghost.

Peer pressure

On the subject of powerplants, the 541 Lycomings were designed from the ground up to be turbocharged, high-altitude powerplants. The turbochargers are mounted integrally on top of the engine. Not so with the turbocharged Continentals on the Cessna cabin-class fleet. These airplanes have been experiencing serious safety-of-flight problems with their airframe-mounted turbos, causing Cessna intenders to take a closer look at the Duke. The prices of Dukes are for the first time in history moving toward parity with the admittedly more spacious cabin-class Cessnas.



Author's TIO-541 engines in the shop. They went 300 hours over TBO and were still running beautifully when removed for overhaul. The TIO-541 engine was designed specifically for high-altitude operation, with integrally-mounted turbochargers.

Aside from the cost of acquisition, the increasing value of Dukes is good news for Duke owners and operators. When complex airplanes like the cabin-class Cessnas, Aerostars and Dukes get too cheap, they tend to attract owners without the wherewithal to keep them properly maintained, and the safety reputation of the airplane takes a hit, affecting the insurance costs, for the entire fleet. (There are about 400 Dukes now flying of the 600 originally manufactured.)

With the new owners keeping their Dukes properly maintained, more suppliers will become interested in concentrating on the Duke, and more and better components and services will become available. This will go a long way toward solving one of the problems current Duke owners have been experiencing recently. Some components are only available with long lead times. These range from 90 days for an instrument pressure gauge to 50 weeks for magnesium tail skins. Increased demand will increase supply and decrease lead times.

So what are the Dukes going for?

Ron Knudsen of Willowbrook Air Associates in Englewood, Colorado (303-790-0880), has been selling Dukes for 25 years and markets seven or eight per year. His associate, Dan Marshall, tracks and spreadsheets the asking prices and particulars of Dukes currently on the market.

Of the five 1968-69 straight 60 models being offered, prices ranged from \$110,000 for an airplane with 4,000 hours and mid-time engines to \$128,000 for another Duke with 6,000 hours and low-time motors. You used to see airplanes like these priced in the \$80,000 to \$90,000 range. That's history.

Of the nine 1970-73 A60 airplanes on the market, at the low end, there is a Duke with 3,000 total time and 300-hour engines for \$139,000, to a 1,200-hour airplane with zero-time motors for \$270,000.

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off, the painted surface appears dull and lifeless.

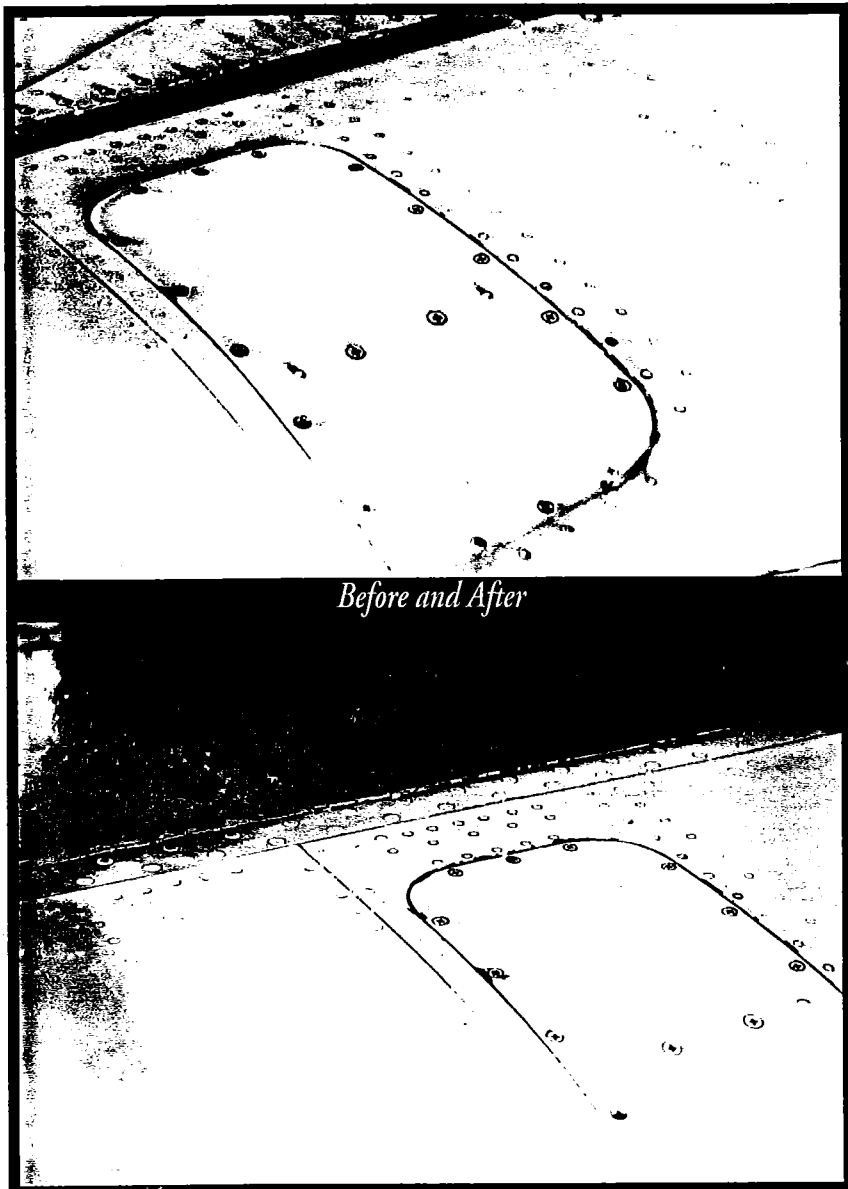
From Pro-Kare's impressive customer list and a number of equally impressive testimonials from satisfied users, it appears that Rick has worked out an answer to the nasty looking soot that collects and clings to some of the world's otherwise most beautiful aircraft.

Here is how Rick Clark reports their successful technique:

"The process we go through to shine the paint is very time-consuming. First we wash the area to be treated and dry it. Then we use a heavy grit compound and high-speed buffer to clean the paint and open its pores. Although this sometimes dulls the paint, the paint is clean and the pores in the paint are open which allows dirt to be released.

"While the paint pores are still open, we use a light grit polishing compound to bring the luster and shine back to the paint. We finish the job off with a clear resin that we have made to close the pores of the paint. This helps seal out the grime of the exhaust trail and protects the paint for a lot longer time than wax does."

All this seems to work well, as shown by the accompanying photographs. *Twin & Turbine* congratulates Rick Clark on his enterprise and his ingenuity.



ProKare, Inc. conducts its operations from Nashville, Tennessee.

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Of the last of the Dukes—the 1974-82 B60 models, there are currently 32 on the market. As you'd expect, there's a wider variation of asking prices for the model. At the low end, there's a 1975 with run-out engines for \$119,000. At the other end, a primo 1982 Duke with zero-time motors is down for \$450,000.

To translate asking prices into actual sale prices, deduct 10 percent and you wouldn't be far from the truth. But if you're intending to pick up one of these airplanes, don't wait



too long. If things keep going the way they've been going, by this time next year, prices will be up another 25 percent.

Fred Mackerodt writes on aviation topics. A Duke owner for four years, he is also a contributing editor for both Popular Mechanics and TBO Advisor. Mackerodt is in the process of setting up a business, Duke Central, servicing

the needs of Duke owners. It will be based at Orange County Airport in Montgomery, New York.