

es or so of the descent and instead of landing I really just let the airplane plop onto the runway. In any of the landings, just a slight bit more back pressure on the wheel right before touchdown would have turned a solid arrival into one of those gentle "chirp-chirp" touchdowns.

Where we look when we land has a lot to do with managing that last six inches of descent. I remember from helicopter training that if you try to look at the ground too close when hovering, height judgment and control can be more difficult. In a helicopter you are sitting in a bubble with unlimited visibility. In many airplanes—my 210 is one—if you can see the runway ahead over the nose right before touchdown, the airplane will land on all three wheels simultaneously. So, looking out the left side is required. The looking part is actually similar to that when flying a J-3 Cub from the back seat, or flying a Cessna 195 which, with its big round engine, doesn't offer much view ahead.

Usually after making a series of thumpy landings, I remember how to do it. If I lean a little to the left, to get a view of the runway at more of a distance, the landings always improve. When flying airplanes with good over the nose visibility I typically can make more uniform good landings than I do in my own airplane. So, where you look relates directly to judging that last six inches of descent.

The "stabilized" approach is often mentioned as something that has to be done if landings are to be good. That is quite true in jets, but in light airplanes we have a lot more flexibility on how to fly final approach. As long as the approach is stabilized when the airplane reaches the threshold, it shouldn't have an effect on the landing that follows. Especially at busy airports, we need to know how to fly a final approach with the airplane decelerating, to reach the proper approach speed only when on short final so that we don't delay faster traffic behind us.

One airspeed item that can have an effect on landings comes on a wild and windy day. In those conditions the airspeed fluctuates and most pilots add to the normal approach speed for the gusts. Some do half the value of the gust—15 gusting to 25, add five knots—and others add the whole gust value. I just try to adjust the pitch attitude and power so that the lowest excursion of the fluctuating airspeed is the value for a normal ap-

proach. The challenge in these conditions comes from the fact that the airspeed may or may not be at or near the normal approach speed when the flare is begun. That depends on the behavior of the gusts. It is a time when we have to think and react quickly.

There is one final bit of landing technique to consider. Some pilots, when flying airplanes with control wheels as opposed to sticks, use both hands on the control wheel when landing. Is this

good technique? Those who do it say they feel more in control of the airplane and that if they need power the throttle isn't far from their right hand. Those who don't like it say that the right hand should be on the throttle just in case. I don't land with both hands on the wheel but in the 53 years my dad flew light airplanes he always landed with both hands on the wheel. And, he always made better landings than I do. Maybe I should give it a try. □






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USED AIRPLANE REPORT





Tiger by the Tail!

This fast cat still earns its stripes

The Tigers started life as Grumman Americans and were later built by American General. The designations are AA5B for the Grummans, which were built from 1975 through 1979, and AG5B for the American General airplanes built from 1990 through 1993. A Taiwanese company, TLM Aerospace, is currently moving into a new plant at the Martinsburg, West Virginia, airport where Tiger production is to resume. The new airplanes will initially be almost exactly as

last built by American General.

The Tiger is a refined version of the American Aviation AA5 Traveler that entered service in 1972. Roy Lopresti, who then headed up engineering for the company, gets credit for the many aerodynamic refinements—along with the increase from 150 to 180 horsepower—that give the Tiger a nearly 20-knot cruise speed edge over the Traveler.

The Tiger is about as “personal” as an airplane can get. While it appears to be—

and relatively small on the outside, the cabin has room for four in reasonable comfort, plus some baggage. As a rule of thumb most of us buy airplanes with two more seats than we expect to use most of the time, and the Tiger fits this bill nicely. It's great for two people touring the country, and is adequate for



four on shorter hops. To make this work even better, the back of the rear seat folds down to give you an expansive area back there when just two are on board.

The full fuel payload on an early IFR-equipped Tiger was 709 pounds, which is pretty good for any four-seat single. However, all airplanes gain weight with time in production, and as pilots opt to add new equipment once the airplane is in service, so later year Tigers don't have as much payload.

The Tiger is a simple airplane, too. The main gear legs are made from composite materials, and the nose gear is a metal tube. There is no nosewheel steering. The nosewheel swivels freely and

you steer during taxi by using differential braking. The prop is fixed-pitch. The instrument panel is adequate for a collection of conventional IFR whistles and bells, and as new avionics like the Garmin GNS 430 appear, panels will have more actual space because a couple of those units will take the place of a lot of individual radios.

The Tiger's small airframe means that it moves along at a good clip in cruise. *Flying* raced one against a 180-horsepower Mooney Ranger back in the '70s and the retractable Mooney couldn't quite keep up in a wide-open low altitude sprint. So, when claims were made for a Tiger cruising speed close to 140 knots,

they were believable, though to get that speed you had to run it wide-open at its optimum altitude. The fuel tanks hold 51 gallons usable and the fuel flow at max cruise is 10.6 gallons per hour, so the airplane is good for just under four hours at maximum cruising speed.

The Tiger is a good instrument platform, but that great visibility ahead does have a drawback when it rains hard. The top of the instrument panel is relatively low and there is a wide swath of windshield for the rain to pound on and make a lot of noise.

Because the Tiger has a sliding canopy, boarding is mainly a matter of stepping from the wing into the cabin,

C H E C K L I S T

- Great visibility
- Good performance
- Economical
- Nice flying qualities
- 180 Lycoming



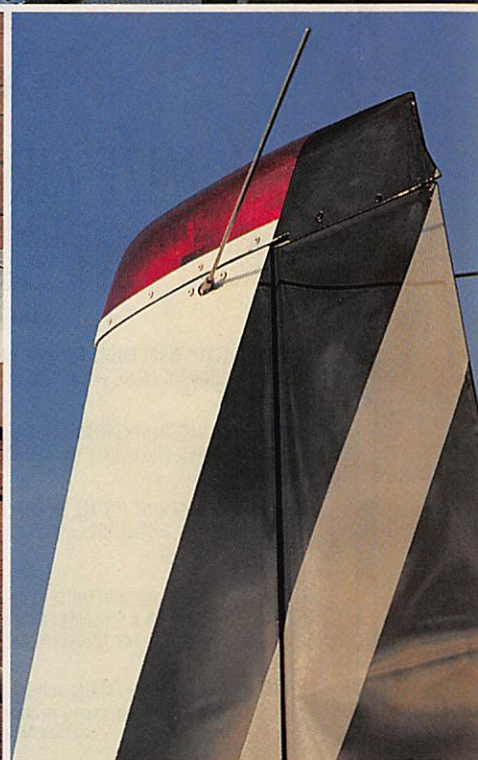
or, vice versa. The only drawback to this apparent ease of entry and exit is when it rains. There's no good way to keep the seats from getting wet as you enter and exit, though judicious use of an umbrella can help.

A Tiger is not as good a short or rough field airplane as a Cessna, but it does okay. The rate of climb is shown in the manufacturer's performance data as 850 feet per minute at maximum takeoff weight in standard conditions. The wing loading is relatively high (for a light airplane) at 17.1 pounds per square foot.

The Tiger is quite nice to fly. The required control pressures are on the light side, and the airplane is very responsive. The ride in turbulence is good. A couple of pilot technique items do appear on the approach and landing. The Tiger flaps extend to 45 degrees, but they are not very effective in increasing drag, so even power-off approaches are not too steep. Full flaps lower the stalling speed by only 3.5 knots. The other technique item to be aware of is during the landing. The Tiger is a nice airplane to land, but if the flare is botched a little, the pleasantly light control forces might lead to a pilot induced pitch oscillation. A small forward movement of the controls causes a sharp nose-down pitch change. The natural instinct is to immediately yank back on the wheel, which raises the nose with equal abruptness. If this then leads to porpoising down the runway there could be damage to the prop, nose gear and front of the airplane. There's plenty of elevator power for a tail low landing, which is the way to go.

According to *Vref*, an aircraft value reference, there are 1,099 Tigers on the registry. Most of these are Grumman American Tigers, AA5Bs, of which 1,323 were built. From serial numbers reported in *Vref*, it appears that American General built 174 AG5Bs. The biggest year for the AA5Bs was 1979, its last in production. More AG5Bs were built in 1991 than in the other years. In a recent issue of *Trade-A-Plane*, there were seven AA5Bs and two AG5Bs for sale. Most have avionics adequate for basic IFR flying, though most of those avionics are original in the airplanes offered for sale.

From a price standpoint, the older Tigers do very well when compared with other 180-hp fixed-gear singles. According to *Aircraft Bluebook-Price Digest*, for 1975 models, the Tiger's average retail today is \$48,000. That com-



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compares with \$50,000 for a Piper Archer, \$44,500 for a Cessna Cardinal and \$31,500 for a Beech Sundowner. The Tiger is the fastest airplane of the lot.

The later model Tigers compare only with the Piper Archer, as the other 180-hp airplanes weren't being produced at that time. A 1990 Tiger at \$68,000 in *Aircraft Bluebook-Price Digest* compares with a 1990 Archer at \$94,000. The figures are \$88,000 and \$111,000 for '93 Tigers and Archers. *Vref* gives the percentage of the new price that the airplanes will fetch in today's used market, and a '75 Tiger sells at 188 percent of its new price, while a '93 goes for 51 percent of its price when new. For comparison, an Archer is at 180 percent and 74 percent for those two years. Tigers, according to *Vref*, sell easily within three or four months.

The suggested retail price new of the last Tiger built by American General was \$166,238. The latest price from the new company, TLM Aerospace, puts the airplane at \$214,500 when it starts rolling off the line in West Virginia.—R.L.C.

1975 Grumman American Tiger

This specifications box is based on one in the February, 1975 issue of Flying where we reported on the Tiger, as well as the other Grumman American singles. The airplane flown for our report had basic IFR avionics. The performance numbers are from the manufacturer and reflect standard conditions. The used price today is an average of the prices shown in Aircraft Bluebook-Price Digest and Vref.

Standard price, new.....	\$24,137
Basic IFR price, new	\$31,479
Used price today	\$47,500
Engine.....Lycoming O-360-A4K, 180 hp	
TBO	2,000 hrs
Propeller	Fixed-pitch, 73 in dia
Length.....	22 ft
Height	8 ft
Wingspan	31.5 ft
Wing area	140 sq ft
Wing loading.....	17.1 lbs/sq ft
Seats.....	4
Empty weight,	
basic IFR equipped	1,385 lbs
Useful load.....	1,015 lbs
Payload, full fuel	709 lbs
Max takeoff weight	2,400 lbs
Power loading	13.3 lbs/hp
Usable fuel capacity	51 gals/306 lbs
Max rate of climb	850 fpm
Service ceiling	14,600 ft
Maximum speed.....	148 kts
Max cruise, 75% power,	
optimum altitude	139 kts
Duration at max cruise,	
no reserve	4.8 hrs
Stall speed, flaps up	56.5 kts
Stall speed, flaps down	53 kts