

1977 Twins: Cessna, Beech & Commanders

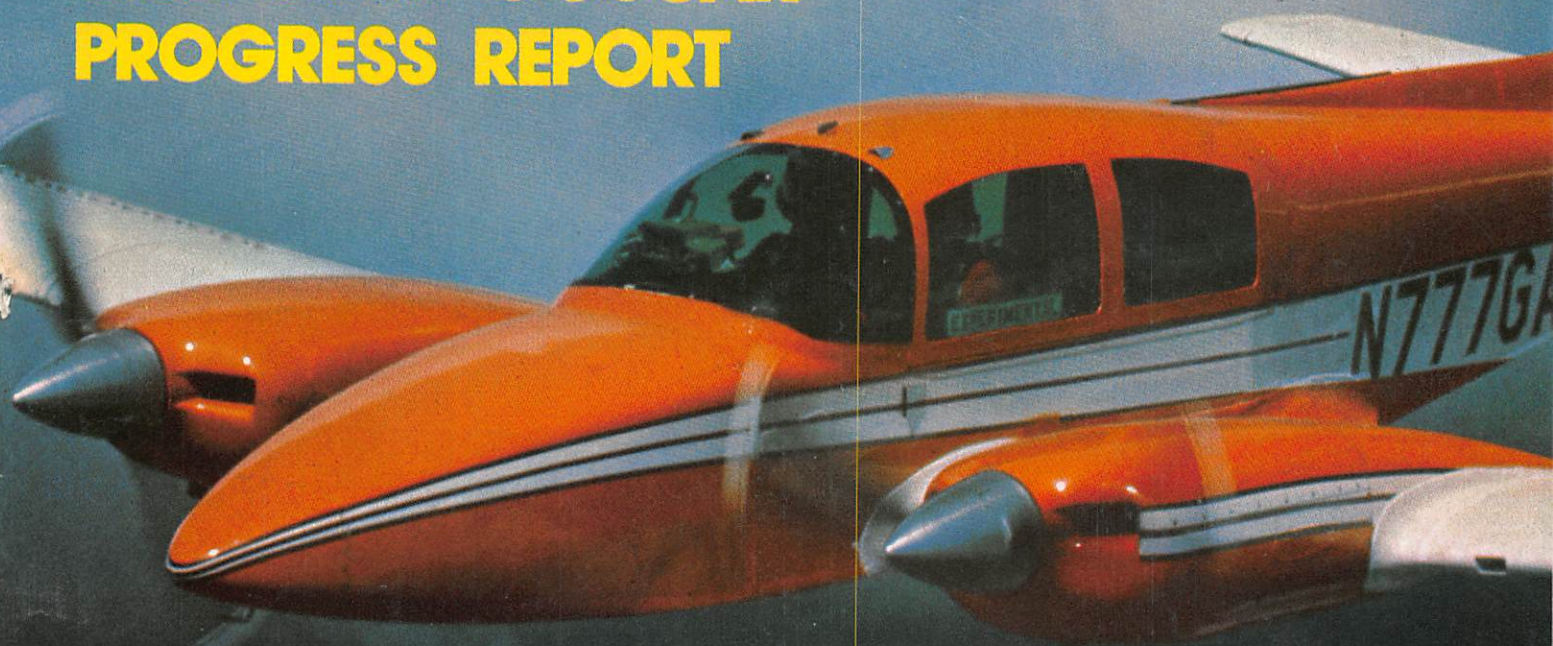
Plane & Pilot

FEBRUARY 1977 \$1.25

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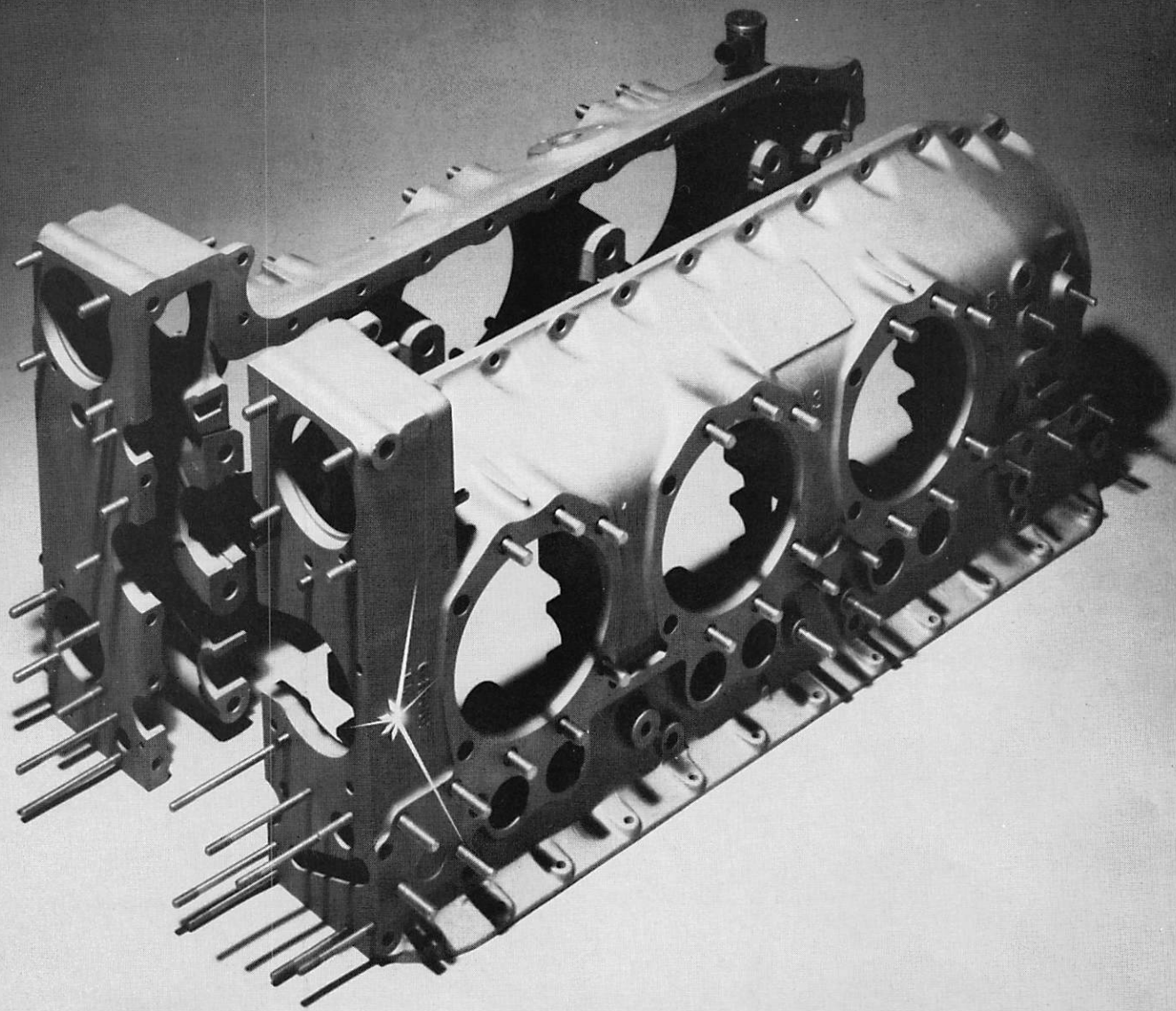


GRUMMAN COUGAR PROGRESS REPORT



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to no longer extend VA benefits to flight students. The schools did manage to retain the flight training benefit this time around, but this source will eventually dry up, as will all related VA programs.

Faced with this outlook for the future, the aviation industry sees that it's now their turn to take the ball and run with it. In order to stimulate the flow of new students and new money, they have to start at the bottom by encouraging people to seek their Private licenses. To this end, the five GAMA member companies have joined hands and put together "the biggest airplane sweepstakes in the world." In the words of GAMA's public affairs department, TakeOff is a "three-year industry-wide program intended as an open invitation to citizens of the U.S. and Canada to learn to fly and

discover the economic and personal benefits and services of General Aviation aircraft." As a matter of fact, Frank Hedric, chairman of the board of GAMA and president of Beech Aircraft, has called TakeOff "the biggest single effort ever undertaken by the combined forces of the General Aviation industry."

While GAMA is counting on the sweepstakes to act as the bait to entice the non-flying public to take the hook, they will still rely on a grass-roots advertising and promotion program to be the tackle that ultimately lands the catch.

After the first of the year when the sweepstakes clock starts clicking, learn-to-fly advertisements will seek new pilot prospects through non-aviation oriented media. People will be moved to "learn to fly for fun and adventure, for an exciting career, or to enhance the productivity of their businesses, large or small. To find out more, call the toll-free telephone number." In the U.S., the number is (800) 447-700 for all states except Illinois, where the number is (800) 322-4400. In Canada, the telephone number is (800) 261-6362, except in Toronto where it is (800) 445-2231.

A caller who indicates that he wishes to learn more about flight training will be put in touch with any three flight schools in his area, or any three factory affiliated schools in his area. The flight schools will be picked from a central computer containing those schools who have joined the TakeOff program. At the same time the caller receives the names of local flight schools, those schools will also be notified that there is an eager future-pilot in their area.

The hope is that this will put would-be students in the hands of flight centers that are thoroughly intent on encouraging new pilots, thereby insuring that fewer student starts will slip through the industry's fingers to become those ugly six-out-of-ten statistics.

To be included in the 800-number computer, a flight school must purchase a TakeOff promotion kit which will identify it as a fired-up, ready-to-teach operation. The kit includes posters, banners, brochures, decals, radio spots, and newspaper advertisements — everything needed to be a bonafide TakeOff dealer — at a cost of just \$30. This enables dealers to get involved with very little up front cost.

As an added incentive to flight schools and instructors, those whose students complete their Private Pilot requirements and win the drawings, will receive a \$3,000 ATC flight simulator and a \$3,000 paid vacation, respectively. However, the real reward is increased flight training operations, rentals, new plane sales, etc. GAMA provides the contest, but the rest is up to the dealers.

How optimistic are the participating aircraft companies? "Very," says Jerry Boyer, director of Public Affairs at GAMA. It won't happen tomorrow, but in the

near future, GAMA expects to increase student starts from 135,000 to 200,000 per year. Completions are projected to jump from four out of ten to five out of ten, according to Boyer. Thus, over the next three years, GAMA hopes to stimulate 600,000 student starts in place of the 300,000 starts that could otherwise be expected. That's a 50 percent increase — a bright outlook any way you see it.

To what extent are the GAMA members jumping on the band wagon?

Skinner indicates that his company considers the TakeOff program to be "essential to the growth of the industry." Piper, for one, will be directing much of their advertising thrust toward the non-flying public by means of non-aviation media.

Because the bulk of their product line is tied up in the flight training/Private Pilot segment of the business, Laurel Smith, Grumman American's Marketing Communications director, said that his company will be taking a special interest in the TakeOff program. All Grumman American dealers who have flight schools will be entered in the central computer. In addition, dealers will be including a more complete first-flight offer as part of the program. In the past, there has been some reluctance on the part of many dealers to embrace a \$5 coupon as a viable means for drumming up business, said Smith. However, he believes that if the first-flight offer were less of a novelty or barnstormer's ride, and more of an introduction to what flight instruction is all about, it could be a more successful means for increasing flight training business. Grumman American's first-flight will be a genuine first lesson that can be entered in a log book.

Cessna plans to turn out 400 of their 150 trainers with "TakeOff" paint schemes to act as airborne billboards to emphasize the program. Phil Michel, manager of Advertising and Sales Promotion, points out that the 150 is the most widely used trainer, so his company has a more than ordinary interest in supporting TakeOff. Like Grumman American, Cessna will also encourage their Pilot Centers to offer a \$10 discovery flight, which is logable, to everyone who calls the toll-free number and visits a Cessna flight school.

Beech has asked all their Aero Centers to participate in the TakeOff program and is splitting the cost of the dealer's kit. The introduction of their Model 77 trainer projected for early 1978 will no doubt play a large part in their promotion.

Exactly how effective TakeOff will be for stimulating pilot growth in this country may not be known until the program is completed three years from now and the figures can be tallied. However, by July 1977 when the first sweepstakes winner is chosen, GAMA should have a good idea how much attention it's generating. If past GAMA contests are any indication of what to expect, there's good reason to count on a large measure of success. ●

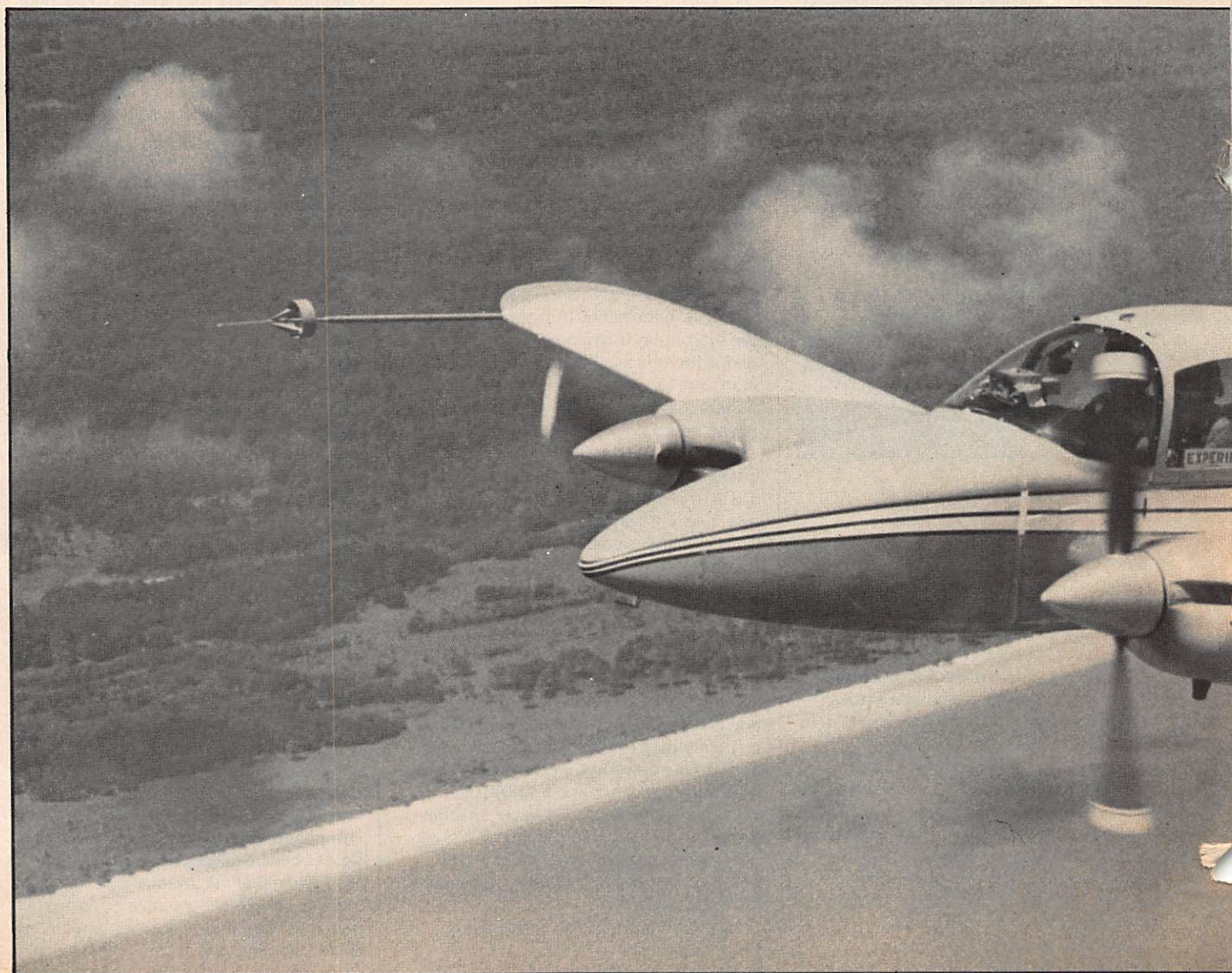
GRUMMAN AMERICAN COUGAR UPDATE

By Bill Cox

DESPITE WHAT SOME manufacturers like to believe, the light twin market isn't really very competitive. While it's true there are four or five airplanes to choose from, only two qualify as "light" twins in the classical sense. One of those is the centerline-thrust Cessna 337 Skymaster, an offbeat design that, while certainly a step forward in multi-engine safety, hasn't really caught on with the flying public. The other true light twin and the best-selling General Aviation multi in the world is the Piper Seneca II.

Just as the Cessna 150 dominates the primary trainer field, so the Seneca accounts for the largest share of twin training, and there really aren't any serious pretenders to the throne.

Grumman American is well aware of the Seneca's dominance in its market and of the relative lack of competition in the field. That reality, in fact, inspired the Cougar program two years ago, a development process that's scheduled to bear fruit about the time you read this. If no unexpected problems arise the Cougar roll-



out celebration probably will come in late January.

Though Grumman American is being cautious about advance publicity, a few general specifications and performance parameters are known — or at least strongly suggested. The prototype pictured here uses a pair of O-320 Lycomings pumping out 160 horsepower each, and is configured for four seats. (The Cougar's cabin is easily large enough to house six and unquestionably will after the company has had time to gauge the airplane's acceptance. Such an increase in gross weight and useful load will demand adaptation of larger engines, very likely blown, 200-hp Continental or Lycoming IO-360s, so the six-place Cougar isn't likely to happen in the near future.) With only 320 horses to feed, fuel consumption should be in the neighborhood of 17-18 gallons an hour, a strange neighborhood for all other current production twins.

Gross weight will be about 3700 pounds, and useful load should come in at 1400 or so, allowing the Cougar to carry 90-100

gallons of fuel plus full seats and some baggage.

Look for cruise speeds right at 200 mph and a climb rate of 1200-1300 fpm with both fans turning. Single-engine climb performance shouldn't be much different than the Twin Comanche's: 250 fpm to a single-engine ceiling near 7,000 feet. Though the Cougar won't have counter-rotating props, asymmetric thrust problems should be minimized by aerodynamic tricks that lower minimum control speed below power-on stall. Grumman American has designed the Cougar to be gentle and forgiving in all respects, a deliberate effort to attract pilots stepping up from mid and high-performance retractables.

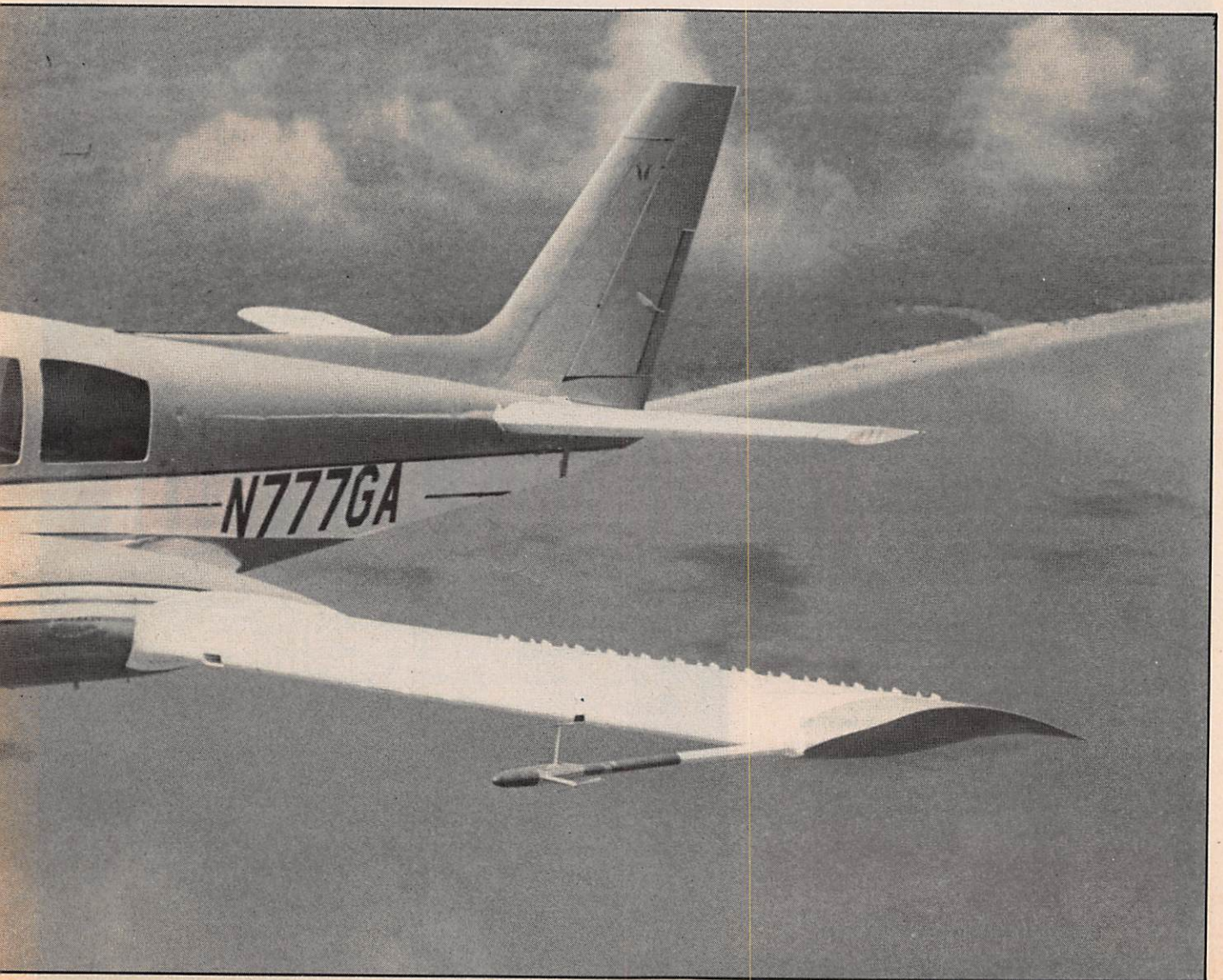
The finished production airplane will feature a fully-bonded fuselage compared to the prototype's riveted body, a cabin door on the left side as opposed to the present Tiger-style sliding hatch and baggage doors in the nose cone and left rear fuselage.

If the four seat, normally-aspirated

Cougar is to make it against the six-passenger, turbo-powered Seneca II, it will certainly have to sell for far less than Piper's base tab of \$84,730. In fact, GA hopes the Cougar will compete not only with Piper's popular twin but also with super-singles like the Bonanza, 210, Rockwell 114 and Lance. Fuel consumption should be only marginally higher than the big singles, and performance should be as good or better in every respect.

The question is, can the Cougar be marketed for a single-engine price? The four airplanes mentioned above sell for \$80,000-\$90,000 with full IFR and utility options, so G A will have to sell the Cougar at or only slightly above that range to be competitive.

If they succeed, and our guess is they will, the Cougar well may become as firmly entrenched in the "light" twin field as was the Twin Comanche — economical, relatively inexpensive and a logical extension of the trend toward leaner, more efficient airplanes. ●



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