The Mooney Flyer

The Official Online Magazine for the Mooney Community
www.TheMooneyFlyer.com

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Departments

Features

The views expressed in each author's article are their own.
The Mooney Flyer's goal is to educate, inform, and entertain Mooniacs.

Aging Mooney Pilots

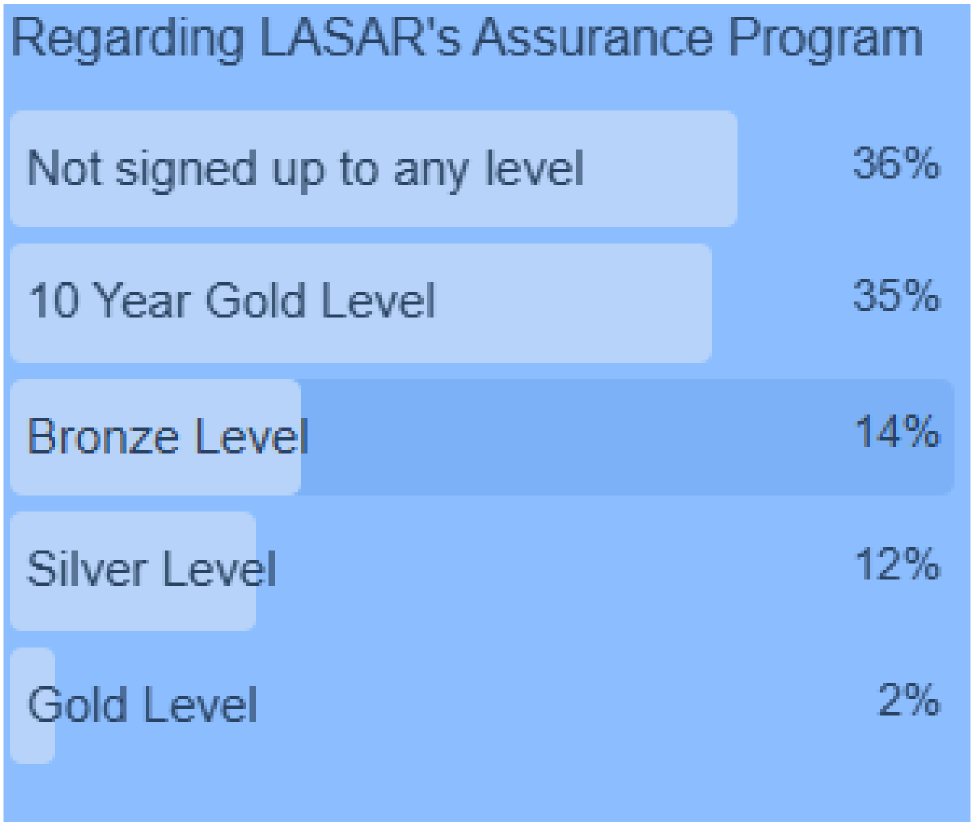
Aging Mooney pilots sit at a unique crossroads where experience, passion, and physiology all meet in a fast, efficient traveling machine. Many of these aviators have decades of judgment built on countless hours in type, yet they must constantly balance that wisdom against the subtle changes that come with age. Their story is not just about growing older—it is about adapting smartly so they can keep flying safely and joyfully.

The strengths of older Mooney pilots are obvious to anyone who has flown with them. Years of cross-country trips in a slippery airframe teach respect for weather, fuel planning, and personal minimums. They tend to be conservative in decision-making, careful with maintenance, and disciplined about checklists and procedures. Where a younger pilot might press into marginal conditions, the veteran Mooney driver is more likely to delay, divert, or simply push the airplane back into the hangar for another day.

Aging is unavoidable, even for the sharpest instrument-rated owner. Over time, vision, hearing, reaction time, flexibility, and stamina all change slowly. Long IFR legs that were once routine can become more tiring. Night flying may feel less comfortable, and managing busy radios and complex avionics can seem to demand more mental effort. Ignoring those changes is risky, but acknowledging them early allows pilots to adjust how and when they fly, instead of giving up flying entirely.

The most successful aging Mooney pilots do not see these adjustments as defeat but as evolution. They refine their personal minimums, limit nighttime and hard-IFR flights, add automation wisely, and schedule shorter legs with more breaks. They stay current with recurrent training, ask instructors and trusted co-pilots for honest feedback, and remain brutally honest with themselves about whether each planned flight is truly within their capabilities on that particular day. In many cases, a simple change, such as flying only in daylight VMC, bringing along another qualified pilot, or choosing lower-workload routes, extends their safe flying years by a decade or more.

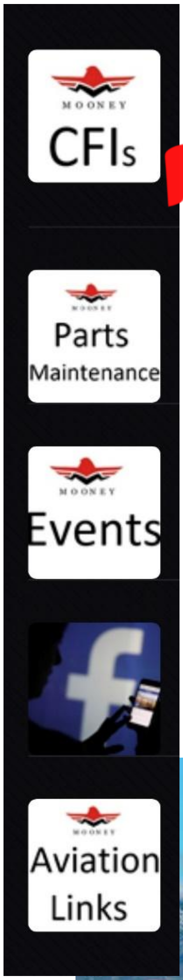
Aging is part of this mortal experience. Be honest with yourself about your physical capabilities and enjoy your love of Mooneys and aviation safety.



Next month's poll: "What is the Single Most Important Thing for the Mooniac Community"

CLICK HERE to vote

CLICK HERE to view the most comprehensive list of Mooney Instructors in the USA



You can also go to https://themooneyflyer.com/ and click on CFIS – (located in the top menu).

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CFIs can list their name and contact information on our website. To modify your current CFI listing, send an email to TheMooneyFlyer@gmail.com

Be sure to include your home base and state.

LTE

Letters to the EDITOR

TheMooneyFlyer@gmail.com

I always enjoy reading your magazine. A well-written, thoughtful, free online publication is increasingly rare in today's world of paywalls. My thanks to everyone involved in producing it.

After reviewing the poll results "On a Go-Around" from in the December 2025 issue regarding the first or highest-priority action pilots take during a balked landing, I was surprised by the apparent lack of consensus. While the precise sequencing of actions is generally forgiving when the aircraft is well above the ground, a balked landing initiated near the runway occurs in a high-drag, low-energy configuration. In that regime, the immediate application of power is essential to arrest the descent and prevent unintended contact with the ground.

The Pilot's Operating Handbook for my 1983 Mooney M20J states:

GO-AROUND (BALKED LANDING)

1. Power — FULL THROTTLE AND 2700 RPM
2. Airspeed — 65 KIAS
3. Flaps — After climb is established, retract to 0° while accelerating to 73 KIAS
4. Gear — Retract after climb is established
5. Cowl flaps — Full open

Every POH for other aircraft I have flown presents this same fundamental ordering, with only minor variation in how flap retraction is handled (full retraction versus retraction to a takeoff setting).

It may be that the poll question should have been more tightly worded. However, the fact that "add power first" did not emerge as the dominant response suggests that a review of the balked landing procedure in the POH would be beneficial for many pilots. The dispersion of responses points to a broader training issue rather than a matter of aircraft type or technique preference.

If I am 20 feet above the runway at night and see deer on the runway ahead, the first action I will take is to add power. Any other action taken first would be contrary to both the POH and all of my training.

Respectfully, **Fred O**

Thanks for another great article, guys. I especially enjoyed Richard Brown's pop up IFR piece.

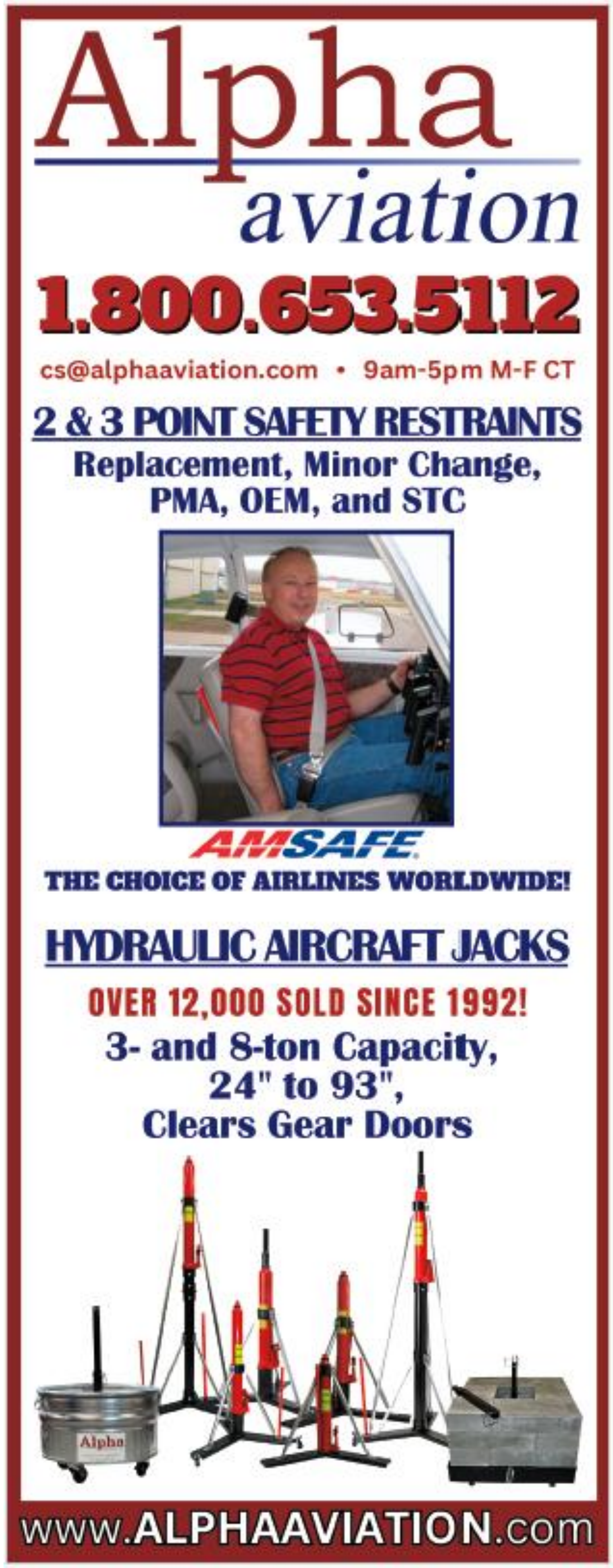
I live in Alberta, Canada- any Mooney CFIs that you would be able to recommend I reach out to? There are not many near me that I can find.

James H

Jim, That is a great article! [She Flew Around the World]. I just told Kathy, "I can't believe there isn't a movie about her."

Do you also know of Beryl Markham? She was the first woman to fly east to west across the Atlantic. Her book West with the Night is an incredible read. I wrote up a review of it a couple years back. The audio book is great too, very well read by the lady who is doing the reading.

Richard B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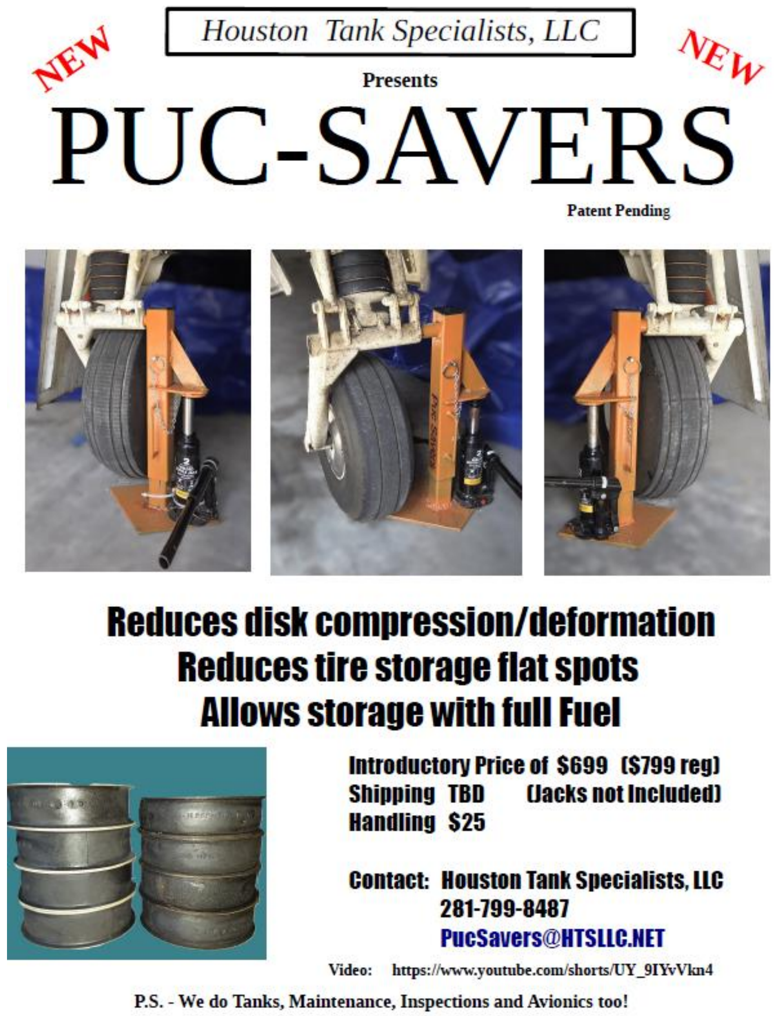

PucSavers – Why does EVERY Mooney NEED Them!

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1. Lifts the weight of the plane off of the shock disks and tires.

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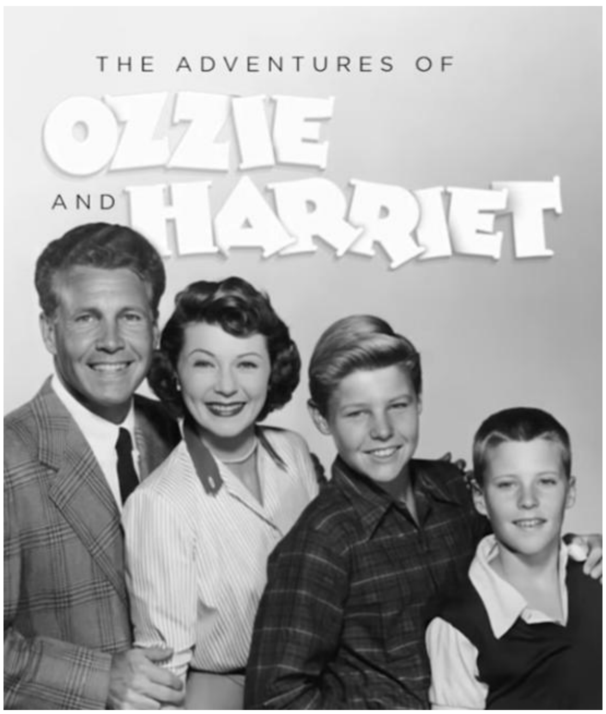
Ricky's Last Flight

Eric 'Rick' (aka 'Ricky') Hilliard Nelson was first introduced to the American public on his parent's radio show in 1949. The radio show became a television series, "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," running from October 1952 to April 1966. The show included Ricky, Ricky's father, big-band leader Ozzie Nelson, Ricky's mother / singer Harriet Hilliard Nelson, and Ricky's older brother David. Considered by some to be 'America's Family,' the show represented a simple, honest idealization of 1960s American life, and provided the Ricky the springboard that would later launch him into becoming a part of the vanguard of 'country rock' artists. In April 1957, Ricky's singing debut on his parent's show featured the Fats Domino hit "I'm Walking". Thus, Ricky became first music video star, and within a week, *I'm Walking* sold a million copies.



He was known for being likable & easy-going, although shy at times. In 1963, he married 17-year-old Kristin Harmon, daughter of football great Tom Harmon, and the sister of Mark and Kelly Harmon.

Some of Rick's hits included: "A Teenager's Romance," "Be-Bop Baby," "Stood Up," "Waitin' In School," "Believe What You Say," "My Bucket's Got a Hole In It," "Poor Little Fool," "Lonesome Town," "Never Be Anyone Else But You," "It's Late," "Travelin' Man," "Hello, Mary Lou," "Teen Age Idol," "It's Up To You" and "Garden Party."

However, in the mid-1960s, Nelson's music was eclipsed by the British pop invasion, and in 1966, "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" was canceled. While he continued to record and sing, he could not regain the success he once had, as audiences were drawn toward newer, faster musical genres. In 1977, Rick and Kristin had a bitter divorce and Kristin won custody of their three children, twins Matthew and Gunnar, and daughter, Tracy.

In 1981 Rick released his first record in three years, "Playing to Win." This resulted in a revival for Rick. He also met a fan named Helen Blair, who became a constant companion, eventually becoming his fiancée.

Rick dreaded flying but refused to travel by bus. In May 1985, he decided he needed a private plane and paid $118,000 for a 14-seat 1944 Douglas DC-3 which had been a World War II C-47 (converted to a DC-3). N711Y had once belonged to the DuPont family and later to Jerry Lee Lewis.

It seems that Rick didn't have a proper PRE-BUY, because after he took ownership of the plane, he learned that it had many mechanical problems.

Because it was privately owned, N711Y was maintained under the less stringent Part 91, rather than the more stringent Part 135 (charters).

Problems with 11 Yankee

On June 4, 1985, a month after Rick purchased 11 Yankee, an engine failed in flight and the pilot, 33-year-old Brad Rank, and 40-year-old co-pilot Thomas Ferguson, were forced to make an unscheduled landing in Lancaster, California. After 11 Yankee was safely on the ground, Rick Nelson and his band pushed the DC-3 off the runway.

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators believed that there were serious questions that needed to be answered. According to the investigation, "S*worn testimony and conversations with a fixed base operator (FBO) related an occurrence of the pilot having run the right engine with the oil shutoff pulled at the firewall during a maintenance check. Without ascertaining the damage this caused the engine, Rank subsequently boarded the passengers and departed. The flight experienced an engine seizure and required an emergency landing."*

Over three months later, on September 20, 1985, Nelson flew aboard N711Y to Memphis to appear in a recording session with Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, and Carl Perkins.

After the recording sessions, Nelson invited several singers to travel aboard the DC-3 for an Indiana rehearsal for a Farm Aid concert in Champaign, Illinois. Johnny Cash and guitarist Marty Stuart accepted the invitation. They arrived at the airport and witnessed N711Y rumble down the runway. Both engines reportedly backfired and died. This was caused by a malfunctioning magneto. So, the Nelson entourage left the airplane in Memphis for repairs and booked commercial flights to California.

Safety Fears

Band members shared fears with their families about 11 Yankee's airworthiness. Lead guitarist Bobby Neal's wife Phyllis urged him not to board the airplane. Bassist Patrick Woodward told his wife Jodie about the two emergency landings and said he was going to die in that airplane and he said it seriously.

Lori Russell, wife of sound technician Clark said, "I hated the plane because every time he went on it, I thought it would be the last time. The band hated the plane."

Laurie Barzie, sister-in-law of pianist Andy Chapin indicated that Andy didn't want to fly on that airplane and that all the guys in the band felt the same.

However, Nelson's personal co-pilot, Ken Ferguson stated there "were no areas of major safety concerns" with the plane.

The Fateful Tour

On December 26, 1985, Nelson and the band left for a three-stop tour of the southern U.S.

Following shows in Orlando, Florida, and Guntersville, Alabama, on December 31st, Nelson and other band members took off from Guntersville for a New Year's Eve celebration in Dallas.

Three hours and eight minutes into the IFR filed flight, while at an altitude of 6,000 feet, the pilot, Brad Rank, contacted Fort Worth Center, stating, *"I think I'd like to turnaround, head for Texarkana here. I've got a little problem."*

The controller provided the crew with radar vectors to several airports. However, a short time later, Rank advised the controller that he would be unable to make those airports. At 5:11pm, Rank radioed that smoke was in the cabin.

At approximately 5:14 p.m. CST the plane crashed in a cow pasture less than 2 miles (3.2 km) from a landing strip in De Kalb, Texas.

Fatalities

Seven of the nine occupants were killed:

- Rick Nelson, 45
- Helen Blair (Nelson's fiancée), 28
- Sound technician Donald "Clark" Russell, 35


Rick Nelson and the Stone Canyon Band

- **The Stone Canyon Band** (Nelson's backing group):
- Andy Chapin, 33, pianist
- Ricky Intveld, 22, drummer
- Bobby Neal, 38, guitarist
- Patrick Woodward, 35, bassist

Survivors:

- Pilot In Command (PIC): Brad Rank, 34
- Co-pilot Kenneth Ferguson, 40

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) chairman Jim Burnett said that although the plane was filled with smoke, it landed and came to a stop before it was swallowed by flames. The NTSB conducted a year-long investigation and finally concluded that, while a definite cause was still unknown, the crash was *probably* the result of a fire that was caused by the plane's gasoline-powered cabin heater "acting up."
N711Y had two gasoline powered heaters, one for the passengers and one for the pilots. With the heater were two fire extinguishers. This cabin heater had ongoing issues, but according to co-pilot Kenneth Ferguson, the heater had been serviced in October.

Differing Stories

When questioned by the NTSB, there were different accounts. According to **Co-Pilot Kenneth Ferguson**, the cabin heater was acting up after the plane took off. Ferguson said that Brad Rank repeatedly went to the back of the plane to try to fix the heater, and that Rank told Ferguson several times to turn the heater back on.
Ferguson said, "One of the times, I refused to turn it on, and I was getting more nervous. I didn't think we should be messing with that heater en route."

Brad Rank said that he was checking on the passengers when he noticed smoke in the middle of the cabin where Nelson and Blair were sitting. Rank stated that he went to the rear of the plane to check the heater, saw no smoke, and found that the heater was cool to the touch. He said that after activating an automatic fire extinguisher and opening the cabin's fresh-air inlets, he returned to the cockpit, where Ferguson was already asking air traffic controllers for directions to the nearest airfield.

Ferguson said one of the passengers came forward and reported smoke in the cabin, so he turned off the switch and initiated a 180-degree turn for Texarkana. Rank then returned to the cockpit to begin the emergency descent. The DC-3 was trailing flames and black smoke from its right engine into the evening sky.

The Fort Worth Regional Air Traffic Center controller stated that he heard the pilot choking on smoke. The pilot said smoke was filling up his cockpit and that he was having difficulty, then he asked how many miles it was to Texarkana.

The controller felt that the pilots were having difficulty seeing and just trying to land the plane anywhere they could. He was correct. The smoke was so bad, Brad Rank had to stick his head out of the window to see.

Rank and Ferguson attempted to land N711Y on Market Road, just south of DeKalb. The DC-3's leading edge of the vertical stabilizer below the anti-collision light severed utility wires on the east side of the highway. Immediately before the initial touchdown, a utility pole inside the field's east perimeter fence was severed by the wings.

Though damaged, the wing leading edges did not separate until the aircraft struck a small island of trees at the field's west perimeter fence line. A truck driver on the highway saw the DC-3 touch down only to become airborne again. During the final contact with the earth, they encountered trees, shearing off both outboard sections of the wings. After the plane crashed, the pilots allowed the left engine to continue idling. Ferguson and Rank, suffering extensive burns, climbed out through the cockpit windows. They shouted in the direction of the passenger cabin, but there was no response. Ferguson and Rank backed away from the plane, fearing an explosion.

Ferguson stated that Rank told him, "Don't tell anyone about the heater, don't tell anyone about the heater."

After the fire, the access panel to the heater compartment was found unlatched.

NTSB Report – Suspected Cause

While it could not be established that the fire originated in the cabin heater, there is no doubt that the fire did originate in the area of the heater. If the copilot's statement about the repeated attempts to relight the cabin heater are accurate, then the captain's repeated attempts to trouble – shoot and relight the heater apparently resulted in a fire in the area of the heater.

What did the Pilots do wrong?

The NTSB criticized Rank for:

- Not following the in-flight fire checklist
- Opening the fresh air vents instead of leaving them closed
- Not instructing the passengers to use supplemental oxygen
- Not attempting to fight the fire with the handheld fire extinguisher that was in the cockpit

The board said that while these steps might not have prevented the crash, these steps "would have enhanced the potential for survival of the passengers."

Firefighter Lewis Glover, one of the first on the scene, stated, "All the bodies are there at the front of the plane. Apparently, they were trying to escape the fire."

The NTSB felt the pilots should have assisted the passengers.

What Else Could Go Wrong?

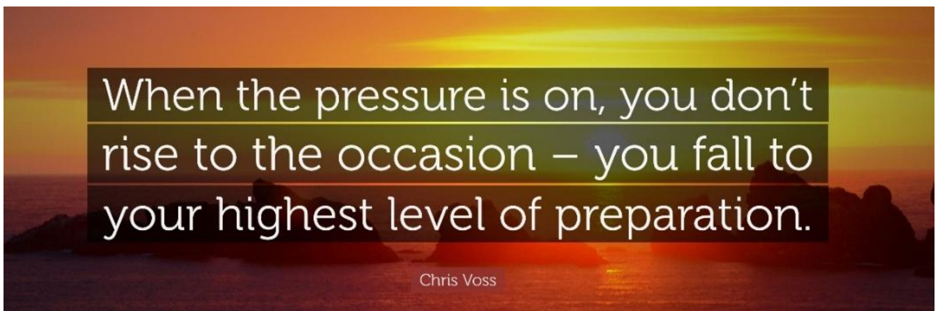

Singer Ricky Nelson killed in fiery airplane crash

Television viewers watched crewcut boy grow into teenage idol

Ricky Nelson's remains were lost in transit from Texas to California, delaying the funeral for several days.

Finally, on January 6th, 1986, 250 mourners entered the Church of the Hills for funeral services while hundreds of fans gathered outside.
A few days after Rick Nelson's funeral, rumors and newspaper reports erroneously suggested that cocaine freebasing was among several possible causes of the plane crash. Following the investigation, the NTSB refuted those theories.

What Can Mooney Pilots Learn from This?



Study your Emergency Checklists regularly. Through regular study, you can train yourself and be prepared for emergencies.

Always refer to and follow the In-Flight Emergency Checklist.

In the event of an accident, help your passengers. Be the Hero, worthy of the Medal of Honor.

If you are experiencing problems with a system in your Mooney, don't be a doofus and think that it will go away or that it won't be a problem on future flights. Get it fixed!

Always maintain a perfect Mooney and fly with confidence on your next flight.

So, You Want to Fly LOP

Among Mooniacs, running Lean of Peak (LOP) is a somewhat controversial issue. Those who choose to fly LOP swear by it, saying that they save fuel, and their engines run cooler and cleaner. Naysayers say that it is not good for your engine and causes you to run at lower airspeeds.

I purchased my Mooney to fly FAST, so I'm not too eager to run my engine so I can fly slower… sigh. Also, I have run ROP all the time, staying out of the RED BOX, and my IO550 is in tip top shape with high compressions, great looking valves, and exceptional borescope reports.

So who knows?

Can You Run LOP?

Most of the time, running LOP means you have a fuel-injected engine, but some claim they run LOP with carburetor engines.

The only correct answer to "Can you run LOP?" is obtained after you run the GAMI Lean Test. The purpose of the GAMI Lean Test is to quantify the fuel/air ratio balance in the engine, either before or after installing the ***GAMIjector***® fuel injectors. Knowing this balance, and the value we call the **GAMI Spread** is important because it will tell you how much you can benefit from ***GAMIjectors***®, if your engine is not already equipped with them. If you are already equipped with ***GAMIjectors***®, it will tell you if you need to adjust your engine balance.

I conducted the GAMI Lean Test on my IO550 and sent the results to GAMI. They wrote back to me that I am able to run LOP with my existing Continental injectors and did not have to purchase their GAMI injectors.

The GAMI Spread is calculated by determining at what total engine fuel flow each cylinder reaches peak exhaust gas temperature (EGT) and subtracting the lowest flow from the highest flow. Most engines are considered to have good fuel/air ratio balance if the **GAMI Spread** is less than 0.5 gph.

You can run the test in three different ways.

Download Method
If your engine monitor has integral fuel flow and downloading capabilities, this is probably the easiest method. In flight at around 65% power at your typical cruise RPM, you should lean very slowly from some point rich of peak EGT to some point where all EGTs are lean of peak. You will know that you are lean of peak EGT on all cylinders once the exhaust temperature of each cylinder continues to drop as you reduce the fuel flow. Once the flight is complete, you should download the monitor and email the file in its native format to **flightdata@gami.com**.
See - **Tips on sending JPI data to GAMI**

Shorthand Method
Most engine monitors will allow you to view all of your EGTs at the same time, in a graphical format as individual columns. As you slowly adjust the mixture from rich to lean, those columns

will rise, as each individual EGT nears its own peak. The columns will then fall as each cylinder reaches peak EGT and becomes lean of peak. Some monitors make determining peak EGT easier by inverting the EGT columns, making them flash, or changing the color of the bar when that particular cylinder peaks. Once you identify that a cylinder or number of cylinders has reached peak EGT, you can write down which cylinder or cylinders has peaked and at what total engine fuel flow. Continue in this fashion until you have recorded the total engine fuel flow for the peak EGT of each cylinder, in the order which they reach peak. You can email these numbers to **flightdata@gami.com** or fax them to **580-436-6622**.

Longhand Method

This method is more complete, but it is more time consuming than the shorthand method. You will record each EGT (and each CHT optionally) at small increments of fuel flow adjustment from around 2 gph rich of the first peak EGT, to some point lean of the last peak EGT. You want these lines of data to be in the smallest practical fuel flow increments - 0.2 to 0.3 gph works well. You will also want to use the smallest EGT resolution possible. For many monitors, this means 1°F, though 5°F or 10°F is the smallest for some monitors. 1°C resolution works fine, also. It may be necessary to use the monitor's "lean find" or "lean assist" function to find the 2 gph rich of peak starting point. The reason for starting 2 gph rich of peak is to prevent you from either taking much more data than necessary, or starting the data collection too late to capture enough information. **DO NOT lean each cylinder one at a time. Start at a fuel flow where ALL EGTs are ROP, and lean in small increments until ALL EGTs are LOP, recording the EGT of ALL cylinders at each increment.** In twin engine aircraft, do each engine separately.

If you are able to run LOP, here's how to do it

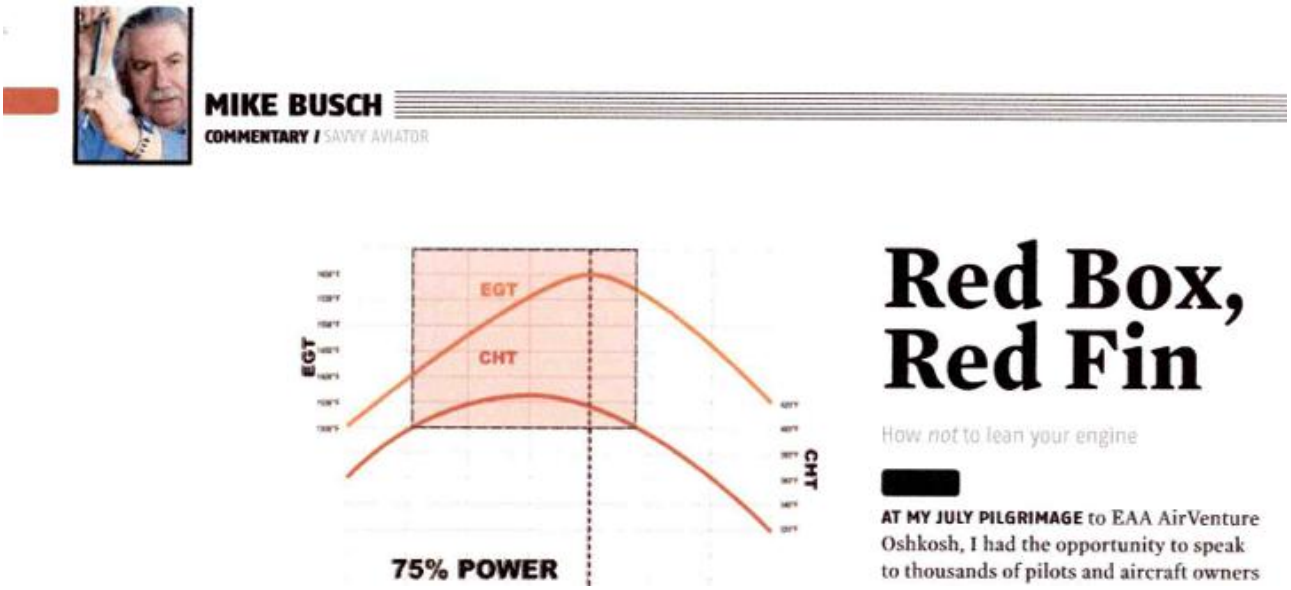
BIG MIXTURE PULL

The so-called "Big Mixture Pull" is a means of setting the mixture control to "park" your engine in a safe place. This will place your engine well lean of peak by moving rapidly "through the mountain" of peak temperatures and pressures, to a safe place on the lean side. To perform the Big Mixture Pull, pull back on the mixture control smoothly and fairly rapidly until you feel the airplane decelerate. Stop! You're there. The pull should take about 5 seconds or so. Do NOT enrichen a little when you feel the deceleration. At altitudes below 10,000 this usually results in a fuel flow of about 13-14 GPH. Less if you're higher. Any time you want to park your engine in a known safe place, such as before finding peak EGT or for level-offs during climb or decent, just perform a Big Mixture Pull.

SETTING MIXTURE USING THE RED BOX TABLE

The "Red Box" table depicts the "edges" of the red box, based on the amount of power you are producing. The "Red Box" defines a region where higher internal cylinder pressures, and the resulting higher cylinder head temperatures, may result in decreased engine life. The limits of the red box are defined in terms of degrees rich or lean of peak EGT, and the "width" of the red box changes depending on how much power you are producing (NOT altitude). To set your mixture so as to respect the red box limits, you first need to know, at any point, how much power you are producing. You can then look at the table, find the row for that percentage of power, and make sure you are at or outside of the limits shown for that amount of power. For example, if I'm developing 70% power, I can look at the table and see that for that power setting I need to be 125 degrees rich of peak or richer, or I can be 25 degrees lean of peak or leaner. It shows me that at 70% power the area between 125 ROP and 25 LOP is to be avoided – that's the red box at 70% power. So the red box is "wider" at high power settings, and smaller or nonexistent at lower power settings. As a matter of fact, a look at the red box table will show you that at 60% power or less, there is no red box, so you can put the mixture control anywhere! (More on that momentarily.)

CLICK HERE for Mike Busch's definitive article on The Red Box



MIKE BUSCH
COMMENTARY / SAVVY AVIATOR

Red Box, Red Fin

How *not* to lean your engine

AT MY JULY PILGRIMAGE to EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, I had the opportunity to speak to thousands of pilots and aircraft owners

Plan Now to Become a Safer Pilot in 2026

Learn more about attending a Mooney Pilot Proficiency Program (PPP) at MooneySafety.com

Apr 24 – 26, Tucson, AZ
Sep 11 – 13, Manchester, NH
Oct TBD, Kerrville, TX (with MooneyMax)

You can also email WT Camp, wtcamp@hotmail.com or call Lela Hughes, 210-289-6939.

Her at 830-315-8008

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

(Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on a Buy Tickets button)

Mooney Safety Foundation has a newly designed web site. If you are interested in attending a PPP event, sign up as a FREE member.

More Than One Way out of Dodge

They say that hindsight is 20/20. It doesn't matter how bad your vision is looking forward; it's perfect looking back. The kids have all moved away and only return to visit, which is a great thing. The problem is that all the grandkids are also far away and on holidays like Christmas, my wife wants to be grandma. It's a good thing we have a Mooney.

This was the plan. We would fly our youngest home commercial from St. George, UT, on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day would be spent at home, and then on the 26th, we would fly the Mooney up to Provo to have a family Christmas party.

The forecast showed that the 25th would be marginal for flying, but the 26th should be great. Forecasts are often wrong, and that was the case this time too. We woke up Christmas morning, and it was a beautiful day for flying. The forecast for the 26th looked 'possible' but not wonderful.

My wife asked, "Do you want to just pack up and go today?"

"Not really," I replied.

"How does it look tomorrow?"

"I think it will work," I said.

I really meant it. I didn't just say it because I didn't feel like changing plans and flying our aircraft, and the forecast really did look flyable.

The next morning, the 26th, I got up and looked at the weather. It wasn't exactly what had been forecast the day before, but I still thought I saw a way to make it work. Rain was moving in from the southwest, and the clouds were getting hung up along the foothills between Orange and Riverside counties. Everything in Orange County was IFR, and almost everything in Riverside County was VFR. If I could just get past the foothills, everything would work.

I filed a VFR flight plan and picked up a briefing. In the winter, IFR just doesn't work from here to Utah because you are up at 10,000' on the departure to clear the big rocks, and that puts you into the freezing levels. I looked at the radar picture and the TAFs. I determined where the window was, with a break in the rain that would let me depart Fullerton and get to the VFR skies past the foothills. From there, we would scoot through the Banning Pass under the cloud deck that was sitting around 4-5,000' and into the clear skies of Palm Springs before turning north.

Once at the hangar, we loaded up the plane, and then all three of us kicked back on the couch, watching the rain fall outside the hangar. I had the Windy app open on my phone and was watching the radar picture and all those little green dots representing VFR airports just on the other side of the foothills. After about 20 minutes or so, I saw what I thought was our chance. A large break in the rain was heading our way. I watched as Long Beach, 9 miles away, and Los Alamitos, 6 miles away, both went VFR. However, the rain stopped at Fullerton, and it stayed IFR. There was just too much mist in the air.

“If we don’t go, it’s okay,” my wife said with her head lying on my shoulder.

When we first started flying, the understanding was that there are no flights that must happen. Flying is always optional, and any number of factors can cause a flight to be canceled. My wife has always been completely supportive and never put any pressure on me to fly, even if the reason is 'I just don’t feel like it today.'

Just then, I had a thought. I don’t need to fly IFR from Fullerton to Provo, I just need to be IFR to get out of Orange County. I pulled up the TEC routes to see my options. If you’re not familiar with

TEC routes, they are pre-published, typically low-altitude routes for short flights that remain inside the TRACON airspace. The CSTP16 route from KFUL to F70 (French Valley) only goes up to 5,000’, which keeps me well below the forecast freezing level at 7,000’. We could fly to F70, cancel IFR, and continue on our way to Provo.

I filed the flight plan on my phone, got my weather briefing, and with a light rain/mist falling, pulled the plane out of the hangar. The current weather indicated winds variable at 4, 4 miles visibility with light rain and mist, 600’ broken, 2,100’ overcast. We taxied out, finished the runup, picked up the IFR clearance, and were shortly on our way. Approaching 600 feet, I was on the instruments as we started going in and out of clouds. Before we got to 2,000’, we were in solid IMC.

The clearance was the standard departure, which starts with a left turn to a 120 heading and radar vectors to the Seal Beach VOR. The only part of the clearance I flew was turning to a heading of 120, which isn’t all that unusual in this airspace. After that, it was all vectors until we intercepted the final approach course. We spent about 30 minutes in the clouds, breaking out just before intercepting the final approach course at the IAF (initial approach fix).

Once on the final approach, I canceled IFR, and we were told to squawk 1200 and change to the advisory frequency. I could have broken off the approach at that point but decided to continue just to get some practice button-pushing while VFR and letting the autopilot fly us down the approach. The GFC500 must be disengaged below 200’ AGL on approach, so just before reaching the decision altitude of 1,600’ MSL (250’ AGL), I kicked it off and started cleaning up the plane to go missed. As we flew down the runway, we were treated to the view of an F-4 parked on the ramp.

I still needed to call one more audible. Visibility was great, and I could see Banning Pass, about 25 miles to the northeast, had heavy rain falling in it. Directly to the east, the skies above the Santa Rosa Mountains were clear. We turned east, began our climb to 9,500', and once past the peaks, turned north to fly the gap between the Bristol and Turtle MOAs.

We had great tailwinds the rest of the flight, with groundspeeds staying above 190 mph almost the entire way. Leveling off and pulling power back as we came across Utah Lake toward the Provo Airport, we were still showing 170 mph ground speed, setting the stage for a spicy little landing.

We turned final with a direct 35 mph crosswind, and I was looking at the runway out of the left side of the windscreen as we crabbed down final.

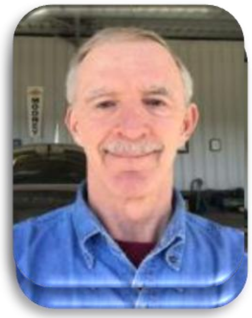
On short final, I kicked in full rudder to align with the runway and dropped the right wing to keep from drifting to the left. We were landing on 13, and the winds on the ground were 9 knots from 220. There is a large berm on the west side of the airport separating the airport from Utah Lake, and that wind was coming up over the berm and rolling across the runway. I had been working the controls all the way down, and just before touching down, we caught that burble. I made a quick adjustment as my wife instinctively grabbed the door's pull handle.

Right main touched down, followed by the left main and then the nose – three little chirps in succession.

We had a great time that evening with family. The grandkids loved opening gifts, and my wife loved being grandma. We built candy sleighs and raced them down the staircase on Hot Wheels tracks and just enjoyed being together. Two days later, on Sunday, we flew home with more beautiful tailwinds. Who would have guessed — tailwinds both ways? We'll call it Christmas. miracle.

INTO THE SKY

As always, thank you for taking the time to read. If there are things you would like me to write about (or not write about), or if you just want to say hello, drop me an email at richard@intothesky.com. If you're ever in Southern California and want to meet up let me know.



It's the Little Things

By Jerry Proctor

I guess I could continue the series of The Little Things, but maybe three articles are enough. So, let's explore several little things that can have a big impact.

First on my list is the fuel gauge, or more specifically believing the fuel gauge. Fuel gauges come in all sorts of shapes and sizes with diverse ways of measuring the fuel. You would do well to consider your fuel gauge wrong, or at least not perfect. I read a site that has aviation daily accident reports around the world and that nasty condition of running out of fuel occurs far too often. I can't say it is always the fuel gauge that causes the engine sputter, which makes your heart flutter. Too often, it's just a pilot trying to press his or her luck. That said, we should mind our fuel gauges closely. To reword an old phrase, "Don't fully trust, but do verify."

Indeed, verification is a critical element. I used to fill my Mooneys up to the brim, fly a few flights, then fill it to the exact same level. I would balance my fuel gauge stated fuel usage with what it really was. The fuel gauge in my first plane, a 231, was ok but not great. My last plane, the Acclaim, was pretty good. However, I always had a healthy skepticism on how much fuel it said I had left. Maybe it is time to wing over and top off earlier than you planned. Admit it, it is very stressful to hope you have enough gas. It is much better to know you have plenty.

Next, a pet peeve of mine is a clean windscreen. During MAPA training flights, I have flown in some planes, where the bugs were splattered all over the windscreen. Several times I paused the preflight to clean the windscreen before we flew. One case was unbelievable; bugs everywhere

but with enough elbow effort we flew. A dirty windscreen does impact your ability to see and avoid. When looking for that speck that ATC said was a plane at your two o'clock, is it that fly splotch or the traffic? Inquiring minds want to know. A clean windscreen screams "I love my plane and I take good care of it."

Finally, we all acknowledge the importance of brakes and power. They have a vital role in every taxi. However, extended use of brakes with higher than needed power creates a countering situation. I can feel during taxi as a pilot applies a higher than needed RPM – say 1,200 or more RPM. I can feel my head bobble forward as numerous times, brakes are applied. It is often a sign of anxiety, and in most situations, the pilot is not aware of this condition. So, I tell them to temporarily put their feet flat on the floor and reduce power. Now we are smoothly moving forward. Obviously, I do this in a safe area. This tends to be a habit a pilot has had for years. It really isn't all that harmful, but it is a technique that one should discard. Get the plane moving, reduce some power to sustain the speed you want and don't tap the brakes until you need to. Your brakes will appreciate it.

So ends a series of three, and I hope you enjoy my articles.

Fly Safer,

Jerry Proctor

Taking Stock

By Don Peterson

For both of you that have occasionally glanced at my rants, you'll know that "Rambo" is now with a new owner. I already consider him a friend and hope to drop in from time to time to help his Mooney skills. He's just now finishing up his PPL, and I can think of no better first plane than an early E (or maybe C) with a Johnson Bar. I like the English tradition that dictates that an aircraft is always referred to by its previous owner. Thus, my Mooney is likely to respond to "Don's plane" as long as I am around, and beyond.

Not many aircraft owners have owned the same plane for 46 or more years. Some, yes, but it's a small percentage. I was suffering with a cup of clearish tea this morning, in preparation for a colonoscopy tomorrow, and reflecting on the variety of detours, failures, and errors presented by, or inflicted upon Rambo during our nearly-50 years. Best to have something take the mind off tomorrow's delights.

Not long after I bought him in 1979 my mechanic told me I needed a fresh engine. I later realized he was likely 800 hours ahead of the actual TBO, but I was young and inclined to say "yessir" to my elders. Piedmont, a well-known and regarded engine shop, screwed up the line bore of the case, leading to a year or more of leaks and failed solutions. Among other fun things, I had to reach out of the vent window with a rag to wipe off the windscreen while looking for various islands during my first trip through the Caribbean. It can be hard to tell the differences in ignorance, stupidity, and youthful bravado.

Eventually, Piedmont surrendered and told me to take the plane to Lycoming. The day after I dropped it off, they called to tell me that upon their initial start, the throttle cable broke, dropping the engine to idle. Look down upon that part of Pennsylvania the next time you're flying over. Yikes. Then, they called to tell me the factory had gone out on strike, so management personnel would be doing the work for me.

I was too young and inexperienced to realize this was not good news.

They cured the mis-bored engine case and returned the plane to my IA's airport. After 15 hours, the entire side of the plane was covered in oil. There was also a patch on my left flap from a toolbox dropped at the factory and a fresh vacuum pump due to FOD in the previous pump. Labor action? I grew up in Texas, and we didn't have labor unions. My mechanic explored the big oil leak and discovered that the #1 cylinder had the two rocker-arms reversed, causing both pushrods to wear on the cylinder, filling the engine with metal shavings.

Lycoming ferried it back to their factory again, where three cylinders were declared out of spec, and both mags required replacement. At this time, in over two years, I had about 200 total hours on the engine. Piedmont responded to my claim by stating the engine was out of warranty. The original leak was discovered within weeks of the initial installation, and there were several visits to them to fix it. They were the ones that sent me to Lycoming to find the source of their leak.

I filed a lawsuit. We settled for $3,000. The original engine cost me $6,500 exchange, and the fees to Lycoming added about $5,000. I think I could have bought a new engine for the total.

At this point I had about 300 total flight hours, including instruction, and despite being an athletic 30-year-old, my blood pressure was up in the red zone. The flight medic denied my certificate while they did various invasive examinations. These seem to be recurring visits in my life, both literally and figuratively. I nearly gave up flying, but while Rambo was away in Pennsylvania, I earned my glider license. A good anti-stress exercise.

Obviously, I did not give up aviating, but this experience went a long way toward preparing me for my future in aviation. Pain, postponements, and probes.

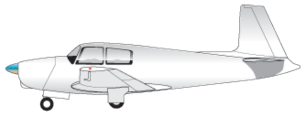
Next month: Bonnie-damage and self-defense. Would you let your wife fly your Mooney?

Mooney Tailplane Icing

by Richard Simile, Thunderbird Aircraft Sales

There is an old saying in the Mooney Community regarding "Tailplane Icing." It is, "If you don't like what the wing looks like with ice on it, don't look at the tail!!" The reason for this saying is that the Mooney tail actually picks up more ice than the wing because it is thinner. That's right, I will say it again, the Mooney tail picks up *MORE ICE* because it is thinner!! Any normal line of thinking would conclude that the opposite should be true, but aviation physics has a funny way of presenting itself and is often the opposite of reality. One would reasonably think that because the wing has a thicker cord, that it would pick up more ice on the leading edge, right? However, because of the cord lower top pressure, much of the ice is taken over the top of the Mooney wing vs impacting the frontal portion. The opposite is true with the Mooney tailplane because of its thinner leading edge, hence the old saying, "Don't look at the tail if you don't like the ice on the wing."

I have included three YouTube videos below that are very educational. All are worth watching. For the highest level of risk mitigation If you do encounter icing, try to get yourself out of it immediately, regardless of TKS equipment or not. Fly Safe. **Videos:** https://youtu.be/_ifKduc1hE8?si=5aMZouJr-EvwpUTp , https://youtu.be/3zBbQ0QBtUU?si=2Gg9YZvH2Wwtl-B4 and https://youtu.be/gOUkAq8oWy0?si=bqySD2g5xiHR7t2M



Mooney Maintenance

CLICK HERE for the FAA's Airworthiness Directives (ADs) for all Mooneys.

CLICK HERE to download Mooney's 100 Hour Inspection Guide

CLICK HERE to find Parts and Maintenance Support

Ask the Top Gun

Tom Rouch

Founder of Top Gun Aviation, Stockton, California

Send your questions for Tom to TheMooneyFlyer@gmail.com

QUESTION

My IO 360 runs rough as I add the last bit of throttle. What could be causing this?

Tom's Answer

I will assume you have the mixture at full rich. As you move the throttle in, you adjust air into the servo, which, through an internal diaphragm control in the servo, adjusts the mixture. You might try to dial out the mixture control and if the engine smooths out, you will know that the problem is air to fuel ratio. It could be a matter of rigging the throttle for full travel. The mixture adjustment can be checked with a simple idle/mixture check. You should have about a 50 RPM rise with an IO 360 at 1000 RPM. The only other adjustment is for idle speed. Another check we do is to remove the intake filter so we can see into the front of the servo. There are four impact tubes that point out into the front of the servo. With the electric fuel pump on, mixture in, we can pressurize the servo and if fuel comes out of the impact tubes, we then know the diaphragm in the servo is ruptured and the servo needs overhaul. Your problem is probably control rigging.


WOW! WHAT A BIRD!
THE MOONEY MUSTANG
250 MPH AND PRESSURIZED:
This one flies above the crowd at 24,000 feet and leaves the crowd behind with speeds to 250 mph. Only the Mustang offers the single engine pilot the comfort and convenience of a pressurized cabin at a price the individual owner can afford. The Mustang costs no more than some of the super charged models on the market today that offers less performance and are not pressurized.
In the Mustang you can enjoy the advantages of high altitude flight without wearing a cumbersome oxygen mask.
The Mustang is powered by Lycoming and Turbo-super-charged by AiResearch to give you 310 horsepower right on up through 20,000 feet. The Mustang is a pilot's airplane inviting you to step up to an exciting new place in the sky where you fly higher, faster, farther — and fly in pressurized comfort.
This one offers a giant step forward in air travel. Before you buy any airplane — see the Mustang!
FLY
MOONEY

First step taken to replace FAA's radar system

By General Aviation News Staff · January 7, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Transportation and the FAA have awarded contracts to begin the replacement of the nation's "aging" ground-based radar system, according to agency officials.

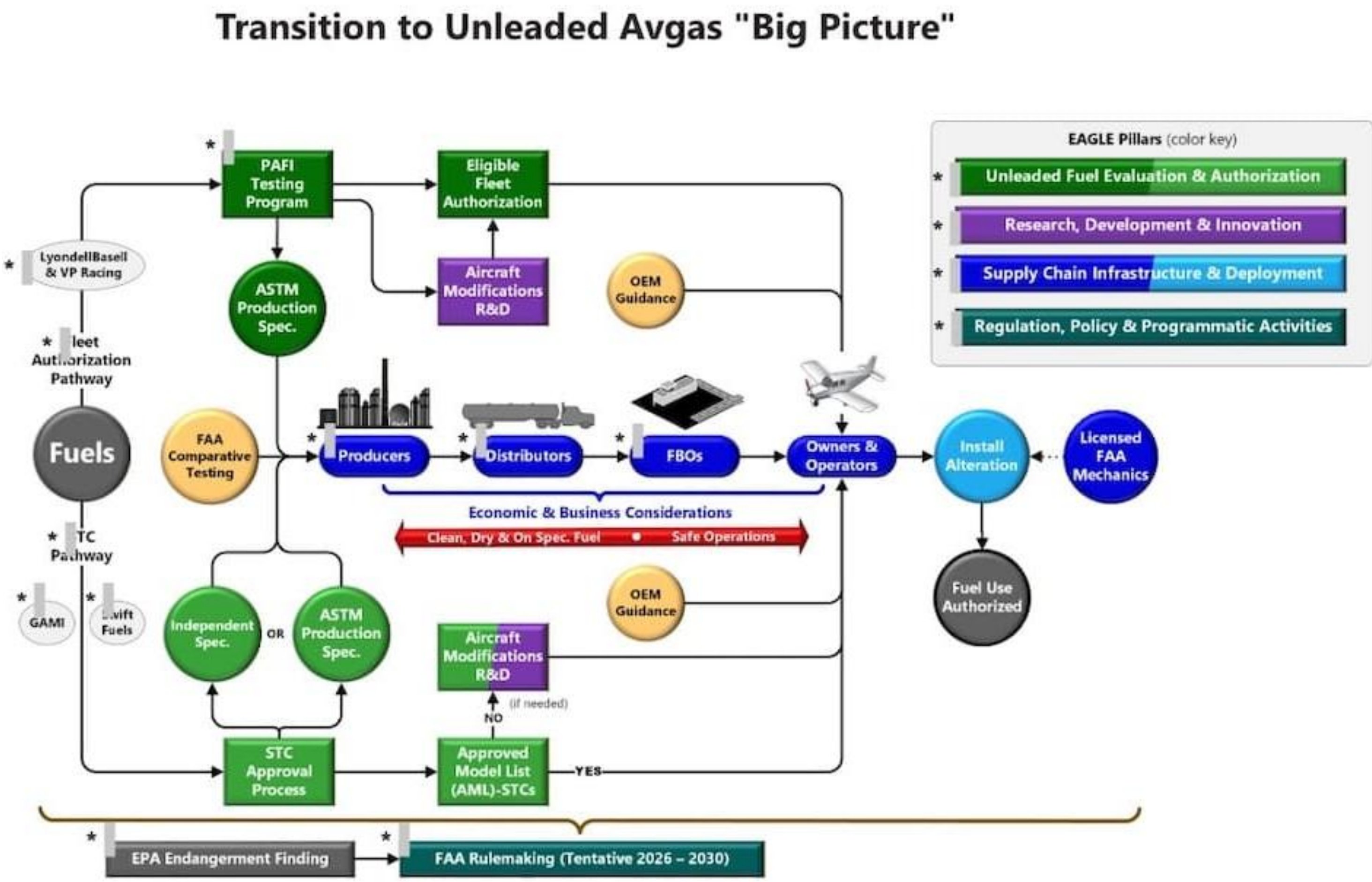
"Our radar network is outdated and long overdue for replacement. Many of the units have exceeded their intended service life, making them increasingly expensive to maintain and difficult to support," said FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford. "We are buying radar systems that will bring production back to the U.S. and provide a vital surveillance backbone to the National Airspace System."

Under the new contracts, awarded to RTX and Indra, 612 radars will be replaced by June 2028. Replacements are scheduled to begin the first quarter of 2026 and will proceed on a rolling basis, prioritizing high-traffic areas, FAA officials explained.

In addition to modernizing the FAA's network of surveillance radars, the agency will consolidate the 14 different configurations in the NAS today, simplifying maintenance and logistics, FAA officials added.

For more information: FAA.gov

By General Aviation News Staff · January 9, 2026



The EAGLE initiative — Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions — has updated its "Big Picture" flow chart, adding interactive links and pop-up narratives.

The chart shows how the transition to unleaded avgas moves from fuel development through testing, authorization/approval pathways, production, distribution, and ultimately aircraft-level authorized use.

Links and pop-up narratives include:

- EAGLE pillar objectives
- EPA Endangerment Finding and EPA/FAA Rulemaking process
- Fuel developer websites
- Piston Aviation Fuels Initiative (PAFI) metrics
- Statistics about airports, piston fleet, logistics, etc.

For more information: FlyEAGLE.org

FAA's Unleaded Avgas Transition Plan

AVweb, Jan 12, 2026

Agency outlines a phased approach to replacing leaded aviation gasoline nationwide in a newly published draft, which is open for public comment. The plan was developed in response to Section 827 of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act, which directs the agency to facilitate a safe, timely and orderly transition to unleaded alternatives while maintaining operational efficiency.

The 77-page draft document establishes a national goal of phasing out 100-octane low-lead aviation gasoline by 2030 in the contiguous United States, with Alaska following by 2032.

The transition framework to unleaded avgas is built around four phases, beginning with fuel authorizations and comparative testing, followed by a period of market experience, a national transition and a final phase specific to Alaska. The plan builds on work conducted under the Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions (EAGLE) initiative, a government-industry collaboration launched in 2022.

The FAA said the framework is intended to support approval of unleaded fuel options for all piston-engine aircraft, ensure continued availability of aviation gasoline and promote widespread access to unleaded avgas at airports.

The agency is requesting comments from stakeholders on the draft plan through March 13, 2026. Public input will help inform refinements to the plan as it continues to work with industry and federal partners toward meeting the congressionally mandated unleaded avgas transition timelines.

Layoffs Hit Jeppesen ForeFlight

AVweb Jan 15, 2026

Jeppesen ForeFlight conducted large-scale layoffs this week, according to multiple employees and online posts from current and former staff. The company has not yet released details on the scope of the reductions, which employees said affected multiple departments.

The layoffs follow Jeppesen ForeFlight's transition to independent operations after Boeing completed the $10.55 billion sale of its digital aviation assets to private equity firm Thoma Bravo on Oct. 31.

A Jeppesen spokesperson said, “Jeppesen ForeFlight is making changes to streamline its operating model and support continued investment in product innovation and customer experience. While we are not sharing specific numbers, the current percentages being referenced are misleading. We are supporting all affected employees with severance, benefits and resources to help them through this transition. Safety, reliability, and our customer commitments remain unchanged and remain our top priority.”

FAA Action Grounds Hundreds of N-Registered Aircraft

AVweb, Jan 15, 2026

The Federal Aviation Administration has invalidated the registrations of more than 700 U.S.-registered aircraft after determining that a company that arranges foreign registrations under a trust agreement did not meet U.S. citizenship requirements when it submitted aircraft registration applications.

In a notice issued Jan. 13, the FAA said all Certificates of Aircraft Registration associated with Southern Aircraft Consultancy Inc. (SACI) are invalid and must be surrendered within 21 days, a move that results in the immediate grounding of affected aircraft worldwide.

The FAA said Southern Aircraft Consultancy registered aircraft for both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals using trust agreements, which require the trustee to either be a U.S. citizen or a resident alien.

“The FAA found that SACI violated FAA regulations regarding U.S. citizenship requirements,” the agency said in its statement.

Aircraft owners now must re-register either through another country’s registry or by submitting a new application to the FAA to regain legal operating authority.

New Prop STC’d for Mooneys

By General Aviation News Staff **· January 24, 2026**

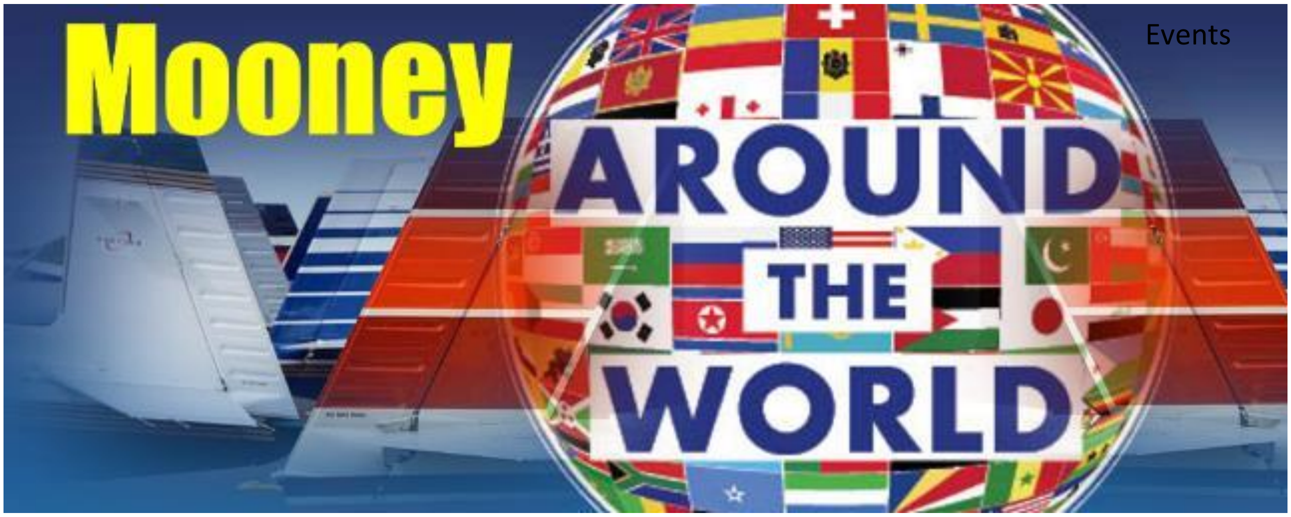
MT-Propeller has received an EASA STC for the installation of its 3-blade natural composite propeller on the Mooney M20. An FAA STC is in progress.

The STC covers the following models: M20A, M20B, M20C, and M20D, powered by Lycoming Engines O-360-A1A and O-360-A1D (M20); O-360-A1A and O-360-A1D (M20B); O-360-A1A and O-360-A1D (M20C); and O-360A1D and O-360-A2D (M20D).

According to MT-Propeller Vice President Martin Albrecht, the installation features:

- Up to 7 kg (15.4 pounds) lighter
- Vibration damping characteristics for almost vibration free propeller operations
- Stainless steel leading edges
- Unlimited blade life
- FOD repairable blades.

For more information: MT-Propeller.com



Events

	Contact Mike Weir at (239) 572-3418, before coming to the restaurant, so they can have an accurate count. Events begin at 11:30
	Apr 24 – 26, Tucson, AZ Sep 11 – 13, Manchester, NH Oct TBD, Kerrville, TX (with MooneyMax) CLICK HERE to Register
	Learn More at https://www.mooney.org.au/
	Learn more at https://www.empoa.eu/index.php/en/
Other	

Parts for Sale

1959 Mooney 20A - Seeking Mooney Purist * $17,000

Hangar stored for years, now ready for overhaul(s) and refurbish. * Airframe and engine 1439.1 TT. McAuley prop. O360 engine. Wood-wing.

* Would consider selling only the engine and prop. However, sentimentally prefer to find a Mooney Lover seeking a great project. * Telephone: 419 591 6477 for further information.

This Cowling was removed from a M20E and replaced with a M20J (201) cowling. The cowling is located at Fullerton Airport (KFUL) and is in excellent condition. Offers accepted.

Contact: Bernard Lee – leebern@msn.com (562-865-2547)

P/N 310309-501
P/N 310309-502

These fairings are new and priced @ $280.00 each or $525.00 for both. Priced elsewhere @ $362.69 each.

Contact: Bernard Lee – leebern@msn.com (562-865-2547)

Bushing P/N 914007-003 - 2- Bushings in the original package @ $35.00 each. Priced elsewhere @ $45.00 each.

Bushing P/N 914007-005
1-Bushing in the original package @ $59.00
1-Bushing loose @ $50.00
Priced elsewhere @ $69.00 each

Contact: Bernard Lee – leebern@msn.com (562-865-2547)

Access Covers P/N 3000-901 (2-available) - 1-without nuts attached.
Make offer. Contact: Bernard Lee – leebern@msn.com (562-865-2547)

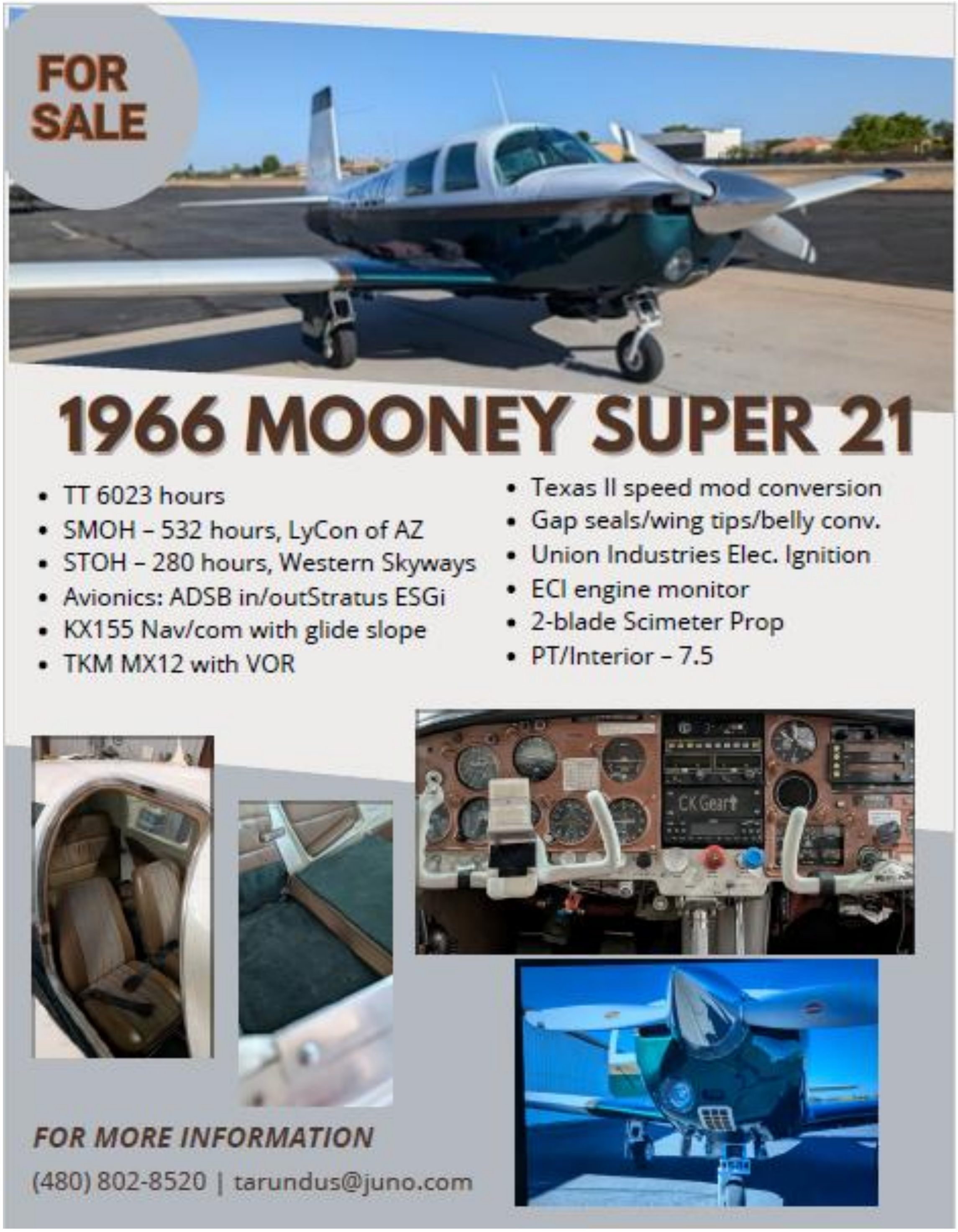
For Sale: Part #75730 LYCOMING TUBE ASSEMBLY PROP GOV LINE: $450.00

This Part #75730 when installed on Lycoming IO360-A3B6 provides clearance between the prop governor oil line and the Mooney M20J engine mount. This part is factory new and includes FAA Form 8130. The current online price for this part from Aircraft Spruce is $767.00. Contact Robert Elliott at rce.elliott@gmail.com or 512-947-4037 (prefer text messages vs. voice calls)


FOR SALE

NEW Slick mag for Shower of Sparks. $1,200
Rebuilt original starter for IO360A1A. About 30 hours since purchase from Spruce. $300

Email Autotech@Flash.net


FOR SALE
1966 MOONEY SUPER 21
• TT 6023 hours
• SMOH – 532 hours, LyCon of AZ
• STOH – 280 hours, Western Skyways
• Avionics: ADSB in/outStratus ESGi
• KX155 Nav/com with glide slope
• TKM MX12 with VOR
• Texas II speed mod conversion
• Gap seals/wing tips/belly conv.
• Union Industries Elec. Ignition
• ECI engine monitor
• 2-blade Scimeter Prop
• PT/Interior – 7.5
FOR MORE INFORMATION
(480) 802-8520 | tarundus@juno.com

FOR SALE - $115,000

Mooney M20E 1964 SN 347

One owner since 1979
Factory Rebuilt IO360A1A
”Zero time”, *NOT* overhauled
300 hrs on 2,200 hr TBO
Roller-tappet engine
6,850 Total hours AF
Surefly
Scimitar prop new 2007, no ADs
90-Gallon Fuel Tanks
PC wing leveler
New cabin cover

Use QR code to access photos, more details, and contact

GTN650 GI275 GTX345 GMA340
MK12D w/GS, EDM730
WX500 Remote Stormscope
JPI Fuel Totalizer
Spare MK12D, VOR only
Plus tools, 4-person raft, manuals and much more

Contact Don Peterson at autotech@flash.net

1997 MOONEY BRAVO FOR SALE
$298,000

This 1997 Mooney Bravo offers a rare combination of performance, reliability, and modern avionics. With a low total time and an upgraded avionics suite, it's ready to meet the needs of both experienced pilots and first-time owners. Equipped with FIKI certification and precise speed brakes, this aircraft is ideal for cross-country and all-weather flying.

Contact Information:

- **Email: aeroncadoc@comcast.net**
- **Phone: 425 780 9483**

Key Features

Engine and Airframe Time:

- **Total Time:** 1860 Hours
- **Engine Hours:** 1100 Hours (Since New)

Avionics:

- **Garmin GTN 750:** Primary Navigation/Communication System
- **Garmin 430:** Secondary Communication System (Comm2)
- **Garmin 500 GFC Autopilot:** Advanced Flight Control
- **Dual Garmin G5s:** Attitude Indicator (AI) and Horizontal Situation Indicator (HSI)
- **Garmin GTX 345:** ADS-B In/Out with Bluetooth Connectivity
- **JPI 730:** Advanced Engine Monitoring System

Additional Equipment:

- **FIKI Certified:** (Flight Into Known Icing)
- **Precise Flight Speed Brakes:** For Enhanced Control
- **LED Lights:** Modern, Efficient Lighting
- **Shadin Fuel Flow Monitor:** Secondary Fuel Monitoring
- **Built-In Oxygen System:** For High-Altitude Flights

Recent Updates:

- **New Paint:** Completed in 2023—Immaculate Condition
- **New Front Seats** – Interior is in great condition

Aircraft Location:

- Based at **KPAE (Paine Field)**


Rusty Pilot or
Old Pro
INSTRUMENT
PROFICIENCY
CHECK
Study Guide
J D Price, CFII, MEI, ATP
FLIGHT
REVIEW
Study Guide
J D Price, CFII, MEI, ATP
Prepare
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FREE
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