

COMMANDER

200



The Speedy Gonzales of the business fleet and how it stacks up as an all-around you-fly-it corporate airplane.

□ Just over half a year since the Aero Commander 200 made its official debut at Albany, Georgia, production has reached eight per month, and a dealer force of 22 has been established as part of the new Aero Commander single-engine sales campaign.

Greyhound speed, goldfish-bowl visibility and fighter-quick handling are the forte of this aerodynamically efficient four-seater.

With a passel of speed records in its trophy cabinet, the 3,000-pound gross weight 200 (formerly the Meyers) will deliver a cruise of 183 knots (210 mph) and climb at an honest 1,300-1,400 fpm at 104 knots (120 mph) with a full load.

Ailerons are the quickest and lightest in the industry. (From lock to lock the control wheel turns only 45 degrees in either direction.)

But in spite of the hot flying characteristics, the 200 lands easily and can be brought in on an extremely steep angle of approach with full flaps. Also stalls are straightforward and at comfortably slow airspeeds (52 knots or 60 mph power off clean, and 41 knots or 48 mph with flaps and gear down). There is a steep left wing drop with everything down.

Along with the high cruise speed comes an unusually high permissible gear lowering speed: 147 knots (170 mph) or even 182 knots (210 mph) in a pinch.

From the pilot's seat, visibility is unsurpassable, as those big bubble windows curve all around the cabin. Control layout has two rather awkward features in present configura-

tion: the pitch trim knob is a highly unorthodox vernier knob that looks and acts like (and can be mistaken for) the prop control; and the lower edge of the panel with protruding gear handle is uncomfortably close to the pilot's knees.

In the back seats, however, there's lots of leg room. The four-man bucket seating is quite comfortable, although the design of the cabin prohibits reclining seat backs.

The 200 takes on a big fuel load (80 gallons with optional tankage), but is handicapped in range when heavily loaded because of useful load limitations. Hence, with four men aboard, and a full panel of navcom equipment, there is only enough useful load remaining to carry about 25-30 gallons of fuel. And of course in this loading situation, no baggage may be carried in the 200-pound capacity compartment behind the rear seat.

Compensating for these characteristics, though, is a massive tubular cabin and center wing section that packs unusual strength. Also, the interior upholstery is a leather-quilted extravaganza complete with chrome-plated seat frames. The ride is very quiet and smooth, in spite of the fact that a big, husky 285-hp Continental engine is doing the hauling up front.

Both gear and flaps on this aircraft are hydraulic, and when the gear comes up, a step that protrudes from the wing fairing automatically retracts to further clean up an already superbly clean airplane. □