

On a Plane You Can Afford . . .

The Champion Traveler

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Highest-priced of the Champion line, the Tri-Traveler loses only 2 to 3 mph in cruising speed by the addition of a steerable nose wheel. Other handling characteristics are identical to the conventionally geared versions.

IF YOU can postpone buying that "medium-priced" new automobile with all the trimmings, you can afford a Champion. Its price tag ranges from \$4,495 to \$5,875.

And, for the price, you will have a lot of airplane; it is largely forgiving, gets off the ground about as quickly as any comparable craft we have ever flown and cruises at a comfortable 110-plus. Models with conventional gear make even the crudest landing look pretty good. And the Champion line, generally, gives you insulation and upholstery that make many former economy models look like a meatless skeleton.

Basically, the Champion Traveler is the same air machine that was formerly built by Aeronca for many years, found its way into all parts of the world and was widely beloved by thousands

of pilots who took their first instruction in it. The Champion Aircraft Corporation of Osceola, Wisconsin, bought not only the rights to the ship but all of the dies and jigs to make it from Aeronca and has retained the basic airframe throughout.

There have, however, been changes made, some of them dramatic. Up front, the old 65 hp engine has been replaced by the C90-12F Continental, delivering 95 hp for takeoff at 2,475 rpm. Underneath, and this is the secret of those easy landings, the main gear now rides on an oleo (hydraulically shock-absorbed) strut with a long throw. Inside, heavily cushioned seats have been installed, and the interior has been upholstered



Standard equipment on the DeLuxe Traveler, on which most of our flight testing was done, includes a metal propeller with spinner, wheel pants, steerable tail wheel and navigation lights.



All three wheels are supported on oleo (hydraulic) struts, as are the main gear on conventional models. Main gear remains far enough forward on the tricycle model to permit the nose to be raised by the gentlest downward pressure on the stabilizers, perhaps a bit too far forward for the very best stability on the ground.



and insulated, adding greatly to comfort and lowering the noise level materially. The new heater at full blast will practically chase you out of the cockpit in the coldest weather. It has a full electrical system, with navigation lights, and spark suppressors to improve radio reception, plus a parking brake. Some speed increase has been gained simply by a change in center of gravity which contributes to streamlining in a lowered flight attitude. In the tricycle model, which is 100 pounds heavier and about 3 mph slower, the frame has been beefed for the nose wheel.

How She Flies. We first checked out with the Champ, a brand new model with less than eight hours on its recording tachometer, from Palwaukee airport, Wheeling, Ill., under conditions of 36° temperature, 30.02 barometric pressure and with a crosswind of 9 mph at almost 90° to the active runway.

It doesn't really snap your neck in acceleration, but the difference between the 65 horses you are accustomed to in this type of ship and the 95 that are now out front is considerable. We were only about 115 lbs. under the maximum gross weight of 1,450, and with trim well forward (it's a sliding lever in the ceiling), anticipated holding it down a bit for plenty of control in the existing crosswind.

Actually, the Champ took the bit in its teeth and hauled itself off the runway so fast I was busy retarding the throttle to get the tachometer under the red line before I fully realized I had opened the throttle all the way!

Later, in a try for maximum takeoff performance, we lifted the Champ in just a little under 7 seconds. In view of the small assist to be had from an almost right-angle crosswind, this would indicate something in the order of a surprisingly short 220 feet of takeoff run. (Although temperature and pressure were materially more favorable

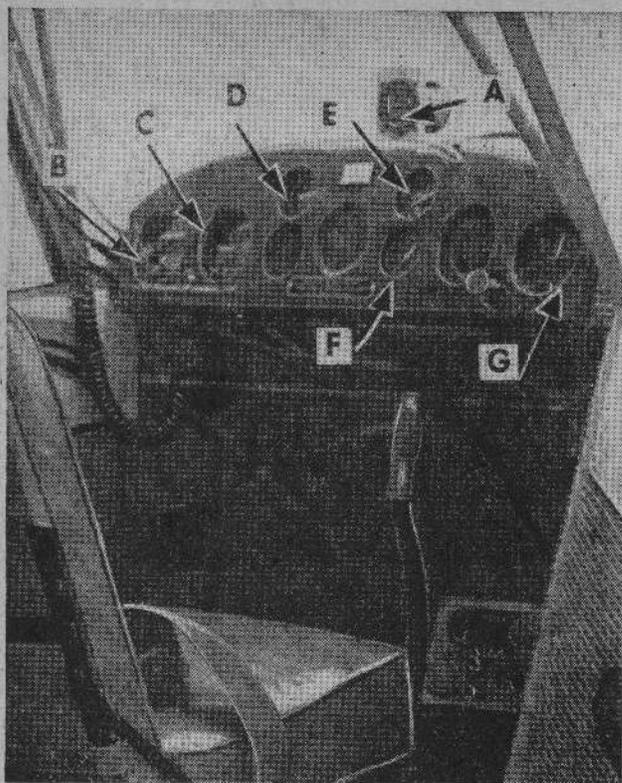
SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Champion Traveler
 Wingspan: 35'2" Length: 21'8" Over-all Height: 8'
 Engine: C90-12F Continental rated at 95 hp @ 2,475 rpm
 Propeller: Fixed metal
 Weights: Empty: 890 lbs Maximum gross: 1,450 lbs
 Useful load: 560 lbs
 Fuel: 26 gals in 2 wing tanks with cross flow, no selector. Useful load above fuel: 404 lbs. (2 average people and 50 lbs of baggage, or one person plus cargo)
 Standard Equipment: Spinner, recording tachometer, wheel pants, steerable tail wheel, heater, parking brake, navigation lights (on Tri-Traveler and DeLuxe models)
 Optional Equipment: Landing light, stall warning, gyro panel, radio gear, spraying and dusting equipment
 Price: Tri-Traveler (tricycle gear) \$5,875
 DeLuxe Traveler \$5,475
 Special Traveler \$4,995
 Traveler \$4,875
 Champion Standard Trainer \$4,495

than U.S. Standard Atmosphere, the manufacturer's statement of 375 feet as maximum gross still looks conservative.)

Altitude Eater. Climbing out in a busy student pattern, you have to remember that this is not the conventional trainer. You overhaul things awfully fast, and you get altitude just as fast. Since our test plane did not have a sensitive altimeter, it was impossible to check the manufacturer's statement of a rate of climb of 990 ft/min., but it, too, would appear to be safely conservative.

It takes just a little practice to trim her out at cruise. At first, you have a tendency to distrust the published cruising speed of 112. It comes up to 100 easily and has a tendency to stay there until you realize that you are still slowly climbing. The large windows, high seating and cowling slope combine to give you the impression that you are nose down when you are actually straight and level. To get full cruise,



Upholstered interior of the DeLuxe Traveler is accessible through a wide door, jettisonable in the specialized versions. Equipment here includes: (A) compass; (B) airspeed; (C) altimeter; (D) ammeter; (E) oil pressure; (F) oil temperature; (G) recording tachometer. Radio equipment (here a Super Homer) is installed between your feet. Throttle is at left of cockpit, trim adjustment in the roof.

some tendency for a wing, once lowered, to stay down, thus exhibiting a bit less inherent stability than we might wish. We like a well-rigged craft to return to straight and level flight automatically. According to the manufacturer, this is a matter requiring a minor adjustment in the wing struts and not a normal characteristic of Champions. With proper control compensation, stall recovery is clean and quick with little loss of altitude.

And landing on that oleo gear is a completely new experience for a plane of this class. Really all you have to do is get it in the general vicinity of the runway and chop the gas. Having heard these boasts, I deliberately approached high once and dropped it in far enough to jar your teeth in the usual plane of the class. It squished down with a slight whoomp and stayed there — no

you push the nose down, let it lose a little altitude until it picks up speed and planes, and there, sure enough, the airspeed indicator sits solidly just above 110.

Tyro-Proof Turns. To keep tyros out of trouble with the large control surfaces at the speeds of which the new Champ is capable, rather strong centering springs have been installed in the rudder pedals. You really have to push this rudder, with an action similar to but stiffer than the 1947 Stinson Voyager, which used a similar approach to accomplish rudder trim. You will slip in your first few turns until you learn to lead hard with your feet; once "with it," a mighty neat job can be done, and the Champ wheels through standard maneuvers impressively with its power excess. Banks over 50° are possible with standard cruise settings.

This power factor again affects stall characteristics. While we were a bit reticent to wring out a brand new ship too far and didn't force the issue, the Champ just doesn't want to stall at all with power on. The manufacturer lists the stall speed at 38. The airspeed indicator starts reading at 40. With power on and steady back pressure, you can get that indicator down to where no reading is possible, still without inducing a stall break; it just sits there and shudders a bit and mushes.

In power-off stalls, the test model had a tendency to drop rather sharply on the right wing, and in other maneuvers we thought we detected

nothing even seriously jarred. A student might easily have thought it was a good landing while his instructor reached for the aspirin!

For the record, the Champion is produced by the Champion Aircraft Corp. of Osceola, Wis., a 2½-year-old firm headed by 36-year-old Robert Brown, ex-Navy multi-engine pilot, as president and chief test pilot, and by ex-Navy aviation machinist Henry Dickhudt as vice president and plant and personnel manager. It is built by 78 production employees at a rate of six a week in a spanking new 22,500-square-foot plant erected for the firm by the village of Osceola (Pop. 700) under a municipal bond issue.

The Champion aircraft is produced in a variety of forms, with a greenhouse top for visibility to suit almost any job. It has a jettisonable door and is produced as a duster and sprayer, with floats or skis, with a cargo hold or with removable seats for alternate taxi-utility use. Sixty-four of the over 600 produced through 1957 have gone to South America for a variety of uses, and while we were there an air force lieutenant was checking one out for a flying club in Puerto Rico while two Canadian visitors were touring the plant before deciding on the conformation they wanted. One Champ recently was flown solo from Osceola the length of the Alcan highway to its new home in Alaska—by a girl.

If 110 mph or so is fast enough for you, here is really a lot of airplane at its price, and it's not easy to get in trouble with it.