

Hangar Talk

By Scott "Sky" Smith

Q. Maybe instead of promoting old Cessna 152's, I have a better idea. Buy one of the new, completely factory assembled airplanes in the new FAA Sport Light category. Many of these planes sell for under \$50,000 and cost only a small percentage of the hourly costs to fly, as do the current GA planes. They are brand new, come equipped with ballistic parachutes like Cirrus, and some have folding wings so you can store them off airport in a trailer. Many use the certified 100 horsepower 4-stroke Rotax 912S, which runs on Super-Unleaded and 100LL, so the price you pay for fuel is up to you. Why buy old when you can buy new?

A. I think you bring up some very good points. The new Sport Category aircraft do have their advantages. A person can buy a factory new, ready to fly aircraft for a reasonable cost. That same owner can take a training class and do the maintenance on the aircraft. All this results in flying at a reduced cost.

In a way, owners can do that right now. A person can build their own aircraft (which is where most of the Sport Category designs are coming from) or buy a completed experimental aircraft. They can also buy the old Cessna's as you mentioned and perform a tremendous amount of owner maintenance to

help keep the costs down. There are many options to get into "Affordable Flying".

Saving money by cutting a few sodas or meals at McDonalds is not what this is really about. In reality, committing to save money that way, very rarely happens. Owners make promises, but like a New Years Resolution, most only last a month or so. Yes, not spending money for those takeout meals or all the other "spendy" habits a person has will add to the bottom line of the bank account, but that is not all.



I am a fan of affordable flying. I think "Affordable Flying" is relative to your personal situation and in many cases that results in someone buying a Cessna 150. It also means I could be renting an aircraft this year and buying Cessna 150 next year. Many people cannot afford a \$50,000 purchase price for a new sport category plane. Many people I talk to cannot afford a \$20,000 old, ratty Cessna 150. Moreover, other people buy brand new \$300,000 or more aircraft.

Each is in its own "affordable" category. Nevertheless, the purchase price isn't really the biggest hurdle. I think you touched on this slightly. The hourly operating cost is what stops many people from buying. You can always get a partner if you do not have enough for the purchase price, but if you cant afford the hourly operating cost, you cannot fly.

*Send your questions or comments to
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Hangar Talk Q & A continued

Operating cost is often misunderstood. It costs a certain amount of money to operate an aircraft. Each "category" has some basic figure. A two place, fixed gear, all metal aircraft will cost a certain amount to fly per hour. There will be engine set aside (for overhauls), fuel used, annual maintenance and unexpected maintenance. There is also insurance and storage. Even the Sport Category aircraft will have a cost per hour to operate. A new aircraft with a Rotax 912 still burns about 4 gallons per hour (the Cessna 150 burns about five). Like the Rotax, the Cessna can burn auto fuel if needed. But they still need oil changes, spark plugs and annual inspections. I would guess the insurance for the Sport Category (initially) would probably cost more than the insurance on a Cessna 150.

Okay, do not get me wrong. I believe and support the sport category. I think it will be a great way to get low cost, new aircraft and a lot more people into aviation. However, I also believe there are a lot affordable flying opportunities on the market right now.

Think it all comes down to the commitment. Flying takes a commitment, a passion. It might entail giving up the cigarettes, McFries and many of those other costly activities.... or it might not. To fly it takes a person that wants to make an effort to fly. Making the commitment to go flying that is what makes aviation affordable.

Q. Hi, I am a student pilot looking at a Piper Arrow. I have located a 1974 PA-28-200R Arrow with 5,500 hours total time and 500 hours since a major overhaul. It sounds like a good deal for the price. However, before I worry about buying the aircraft, I need know how many hours I will need in this model to qualify for insurance coverage. In addition, are there any restrictions for a retractable gear aircraft based on turf fields?

A. Typically the underwriters would like to see about 150 hour total time and 25 in retractable gear aircraft before they will offer a quote in the Arrow. A few will consider less total time if you have higher retractable time. The Arrow is one of the few retractable gear trainers, so it is better for transitioning.

The turf restriction varies with companies.



Most underwriters do not want to insure a retractable gear aircraft that based on a turf field. However, most polices do not usually restrict landing on turf runways.

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