

Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Floe (AOPA 146397) check a used plane with Herb White (AOPA 167839) who is in charge of used aircraft sales at Norman Larson Company, Van Nuys, Calif., Airport. All these photos were taken at Norm Larson's (AOPA 54938) hangar. (1) **ENGINE.** The Floes know there should be no sign of oil leakage; the engine should be clean, free of rust and corrosion.

(2) **PROPELLER.** They check condition of propeller sheath for nicks. If it were wood, they would look for cracks or separations in the laminations. (3) **WING.** The leading edges should be free of cuts, hangar "rash" and distortions; wing skin should have no wrinkles or sprung rivets. (4) **AILERON.** A glance will tell if the ailerons fit snugly and are free of cracks and

How To Buy A USED Plane

*When the buyer knows what he wants in a used plane,
careful scouting and conscientious inspection
can make the purchase a pleasure*

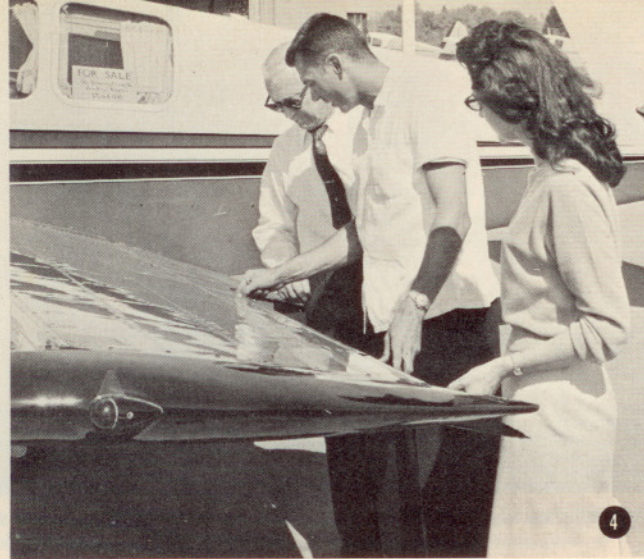
Have you spent the normal number of hours drooling over this year's new aircraft and decided the old pocketbook just hasn't the price? If so, and if you haven't an airplane, the time has come to check the used aircraft market. Somewhere among this country's 98,000 civil aircraft is the one for you at the price you can pay. You'll have company, too, for as one dealer estimated recently, for every \$1 spent for new airplanes last year, \$2 was paid out for used airplanes.

The recommended method is to put yourself in the hands of a reliable dealer, tell him what kind of flying you expect to do, what you have to spend, what performance you expect and what you think you can afford in upkeep and maintenance. Chances are he will get you the right airplane. This is not to say you can't get a satisfactory deal at your local airport from a local pilot who has to sell his plane. If you go over this plane with a certified mechanic, inspect its logs, get the opinion of dis-

interested people who are familiar with its history, you may get a fine piece of machinery. But if you really don't know what you're about, your chances are usually better if you let yourself be guided by a dealer who will stand back of the statements he makes regarding the aircraft he sells you.

Jack Adams (AOPA 138362), president of Jack Adams Aircraft Sales, Inc., at Memphis, Tenn., pointed out to The PILOT that picking a responsible sales agency is important not

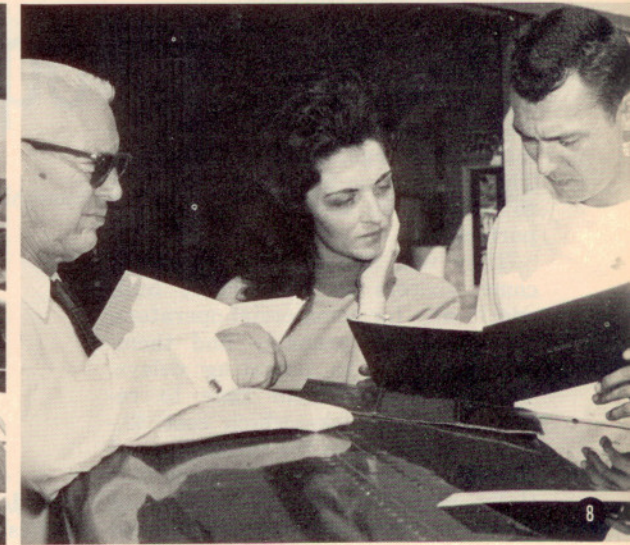
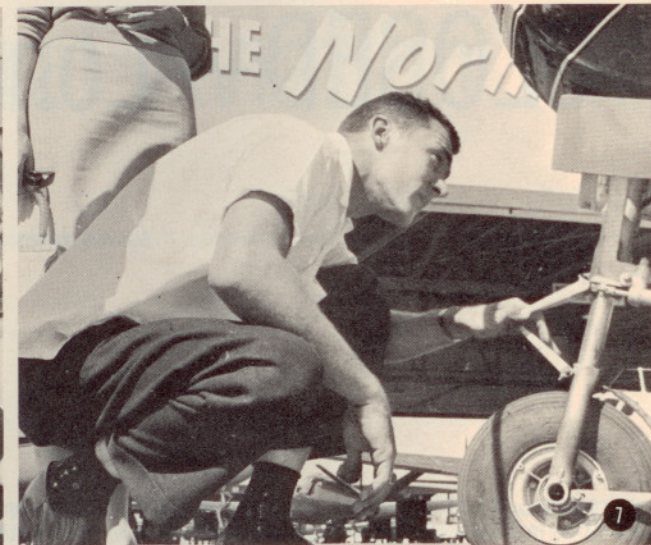
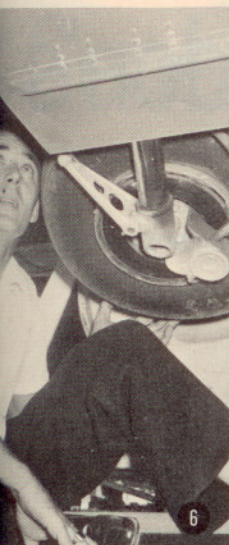




scratches. The fuses look for loose hinges or worn pins. (5) **TRIM TABS.** The trim tabs, like the ailerons, should be checked for snugness. Look here, too, for loose rivets or torn fabric. (6) **LANDING GEAR.** Any airplane with a retractable landing gear should be put on a hoist so that gear retraction can be tested; fairing doors should close completely. (7) **NOSE WHEEL.** There

may be cracks or loose fittings at the nose wheel and the wheel well; check the latch assemblies, drag struts, shock struts and linkage. (8) **LOG BOOK.** Go over the logs carefully to get the plane's maintenance and flight history. Get assurance that entries are proper.

Photos by Don Downie



so much from a standpoint of honesty, but rather "because these people are qualified to recommend the proper airplane for a particular use." Because of their large inventories and access to many types and conditions of aircraft, this makes sense.

Another man who knows about this business is Don J. Vest (AOPA 70774) of Vest Aircraft and Finance Company at Sky Ranch Airport, Denver. Vest encourages the prospective buyer to think through

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CHECK LIST FOR BUYERS

Have a competent mechanic go over the entire airplane for you; here are some of the items you should note:

ENGINE

Total time? _____ Engine ever been overhauled? _____ Top or major? _____
 Total time since overhaul? _____ Engine clean? _____ Free of rust, corrosion? _____
 Evidence of oil leaks? _____ Checking on hose? _____ Clamps cutting? _____ Copper
 lines cutting? _____ Chafing? _____ Sharp bends? _____ Metal particles in the oil
 screen? _____ Does the engine turn up maximum rated r.p.m. on the ground? _____ Have
 you checked the cylinders for compression? _____

PROPELLER

Finish in good condition? _____ Blade sheath in good condition? _____ Any looseness in
 prop? _____ Free travel? _____ Have all propeller bulletins been complied with? _____

WINGS

Cuts in leading edge? _____ Inspection plates present? _____ Loose tape on fabric-covered
 plane? _____ Sprung rivets on metal airplane? _____ Loose bolts on struts? (Rock ship
 vigorously at wing tips) _____

COWLING

Any fasteners missing? _____ Sprung rivets? _____ Cracks? _____ Is cowling good
 fit? _____

CABIN DOORS

Open easily? _____ Latch securely? _____ Loose or twisted hinges? _____

CABIN INTERIOR

Upholstery clean? _____ In good repair? _____ Instruments adjusted properly? _____

FABRIC COVERED AIRPLANES

What is the test strength of the fabric? _____ Is finish cracking? _____ Checking?
 _____ Has airplane ever been recovered? _____ When? _____ Has ship always been
 hangared? _____

GENERAL

Number of hours airplane flown while seller had it? _____ Number of hours since last major
 overhaul? _____ Number of hours since last 100-hour inspection? _____ Have you checked
 carefully for metal corrosion inside wings and tail? _____ Airplane in any accidents? _____
 How many gallons of gas used per hour? _____ How many quarts of oil? _____ If plane
 equipped with instruments and/or radio, have your flight checked them? _____

Buy A Used Plane

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his requirements.

"We find all types of buyers," he says. "Some wish to buy a bargain, then spend time and a little material to make themselves a good airplane. There are other buyers who will take an airplane with a very high-time engine, knowing that the engine is unsafe. These are people who probably have a new engine or a good engine in their garage just waiting to be put in a good airframe."

A dealer like Vest can supply you with "something" to be hauled away on a truck, if that's what you want. The plane will then be described as "unsafe." However, if you want an airplane in top-notch shape, that is just what the reliable dealer will give you.

"Here is an illustration," Vest told The PILOT. "We store a lot of our airplanes in stock for sale on our sales lot. Once in a while we have a hail storm, and after adjustment with the insurance companies, we advertise hail-

A summary of the important considerations in buying a used aircraft is contained in one of AOPA's most popular Special Reports—SR-6, "How To Buy A Used Airplane." It's available to members on request.

damaged airplanes. We have been amazed how much faster this stock will move at reduced prices, even though it is damaged—in some cases it looks almost beyond repair—fabric beaten off, practically nothing but pipe, wheels and an engine. People who are looking for bargains or for something

to which they can apply their own energy and material and so offset cost will pick up these airplanes in trucks and trailers. There are buyers for all kinds."

Asked how the buyer could weigh the relative importance of price with maintenance costs and performance characteristics, Vest said:

"In most cases with current-model used airplanes, four-place or light twins, the price of maintenance, gasoline consumption, and so forth is very nominal. These airplanes being practically new require very little maintenance. Gasoline consumption is amazingly low for the efficiency and speed you get.

"But as an example of how you can weigh these things, take this illustration: Say a man looks at a new *Bonanza*, a \$24,000 airplane. He wants a piece of utility equipment to do the most for the dollar and give good, safe transportation. With this airplane, the man can figure low maintenance, low fuel consumption and a cruising speed of 190 m.p.h. On the other hand he will have to figure on a high insurance cost and heavy amortization cost on the depreciation of his invested capital.

"To get the same job done, this man could look at a 450 h.p. D17S Staggerwing Beech. Here, his acquisition cost of \$3,500 to \$4,000 would represent approximately the same cruising speed, performance, weight and load-carrying capacity. Now though, even if the airplane is licensed and in good condition, he must expect to have high maintenance costs. The airplane is older; more things will show up to repair. Instead of 12 gallons per hour, fuel consumption will be at 22 gallons per hour. On the other hand, he has comparatively low insurance costs and practically no amortization cost. He gets the job done with a heck of a lot smaller investment and he will arrive at his destination within minutes of the time he would take in the new *Bonanza*.

"As a dollar and cents proposition, it is just a matter of addition to arrive at the conclusion that the higher gasoline and maintenance costs represent very little in comparison with the high amortization and depreciation. So he simply makes up his mind whether he wants to ride in a new airplane or an old airplane—if he wants to sail first class, cabin, or more or less work his

passage."

This kind of balancing and weighing of relative merits is the sort of thing a competent sales agency can help a prospective buyer do. Jack Adams also points out that the businessman can put his auditor to work on this kind of calculation with good effect.

You can have confidence in most cases that the resale value of a good used plane that you buy today will continue high. An airplane purchased 10 years ago has frequently more than maintained its original price level. Take the Beech *Bonanza* for instance. A 1947 Model 35 *Bonanza* retailed at \$6,990. It's not unusual to see the same plane today, 11 years later, selling from \$6,000 to 8,000, depending, of course, on its condition. Vest expects this trend to continue.

"I think that you can expect to sell a used aircraft two years from now for pretty close to what you would pay for it today. Not that the airplane would be worth that much—it's just an example of the inflationary trend. Metal airplanes do hold their value better than the old-type fabric structures. They deteriorate very little and, if kept in good repair, an airplane 10 years old is just as reliable and safe as a current model. Deterioration was rapid, though, in old wooden types."

Jack Adams, too, emphasized that many used airplanes are worth more on the market today than they were two years ago and he agrees that age does not affect the safety and economy of operation as long as an aircraft has been properly maintained and kept in an airworthy condition.

"We have handled several airplanes recently, built in the middle 1930's, that are still airworthy and probably will still be flying several years from now," Adams said. "The type of original construction governs this to a great extent. Fabric and wood airplanes are not as popular as metal, but a lot of them, 15 or 20 years old, are still in airworthy condition."

Vest Aircraft, which is probably one of the early merchandisers of used airplanes in the business, started back in 1945. It has witnessed a revolution in the used aircraft market. At that time surplus planes—PT-23's PT-19's, AT-11's, Cessna T-50's, L-2's, 3's, and 4's, all manufactured for the military, were converted and offered to the personal and corporate market as they were about the only types available. They weren't too desirable from the customer's standpoint but, as Vest says, they did introduce aviation to the private market that had not had even that type of aircraft before, particularly in the larger horsepower bracket.

Since then, the trend has been toward more efficient airplanes designed to meet the specific needs of the business and individual market. "This coupled with the income tax trend of corporations has created a tremendous market, which it is logical to assume will increase," Vest noted. "Ten years ago, it was normal to sell the bulk of your airplanes to individuals or small businessmen—the airplane sale prices

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running from \$500 to \$4,000 or \$5,000. We have noticed that gradually the individual has dropped out of the picture unless he has a logical charge-off for tax purposes, simply because he cannot pay the price demanded now for modern-type aircraft. Sales more and more are concentrated among larger companies or healthy small companies in the high income-tax bracket.

Despite this, there are planes for every need, and having presented your problem to the aircraft dealer who can help you, there are a number of other things you must be assured of.

First of these is a clear title to any airplane you buy. You must be sure that there are no liens on the plane and that the title is properly registered in your name. AOPA will have a title search made for members for \$2.50 and you can proceed confidently with your purchase.

Be sure as you go over the logs that the former owner has complied with all airworthiness directives. If not, you may be stuck immediately with a big bill to put the aircraft into shape before it can be flown.

Make certain too that crash and hull insurance is readily available, at regular rates, or if it is not that you understand what you are undertaking. The seller should be able to tell you about this.

Now how can you be assured that you are getting what you paid for? We asked Vest this question:

"The same thing applies here that would to almost any other item of merchandise. How do you know when you buy a mink coat that has a \$5,000 price tag, that you are getting a \$5,000 mink coat. You probably go to a reputable dealer to price the coat and assume you can place confidence in his reputa-

tion. You draw your own conclusions from personal contact as to his integrity. Chances are you could walk out of that store into a cut-rate shop and the gyp dealer would guarantee you exactly the same kind of coat for \$2,000. There would always be doubt in your mind even if the coat was just as good as the other. Same thing applies to airplanes."

Vest says his company has found that the average late-model corporation or business-owned airplane coming into his stock is usually pretty well evaluated in the papers and logbooks. "The average company does not try to cut hours off the time. Its executives ride in these planes and they try to keep the checks up-to-date."

Vest also says that he has found from long experience in buying thousands and thousands of airplanes over the telephone that the average man pretty honestly describes the plane he has for sale, frequently even going into more detail than necessary to point up small deficiencies of the aircraft.

"So," he said, "we deal with everyone in good faith and once in a while we get stuck. However, from our side, we do not try to sell any customer an airplane that we think is a type he cannot use or does not want. Or if we think he does not know what he wants we try to advise him to the best of our ability."

The moral of this all seems simple. Think your aircraft problem through. Get the best advice you can before you spend your dollars. When you are ready to make your purchase AOPA recommends that you get in writing the items shown on the accompanying contract form. It is a facsimile of a sample contract sent on request to AOPA members. END

This is a facsimile of the contract AOPA recommends that you use when you purchase a used airplane

CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF AIRCRAFT

hereinafter called Seller, and _____ hereinafter called Buyer, agree as follows:

The Seller agrees to sell, and Buyer agrees to buy an aircraft identified as follows: _____

The Seller represents that said aircraft is in an airworthy condition, meets all of the requirements of the Civil Air Regulations, and will now pass the annual inspection specified under Part 43 of the Civil Air Regulations.

The Seller further represents that the airplane, the airplane engine, all accessories and appliances have been carefully and thoroughly examined and tested in accordance with the testing and examination procedures used by first class aircraft repair stations, and that no defects or deficiencies have been disclosed except as follows:

(describe exceptions)

Seller agrees to take all the steps necessary to register the aircraft in the name of the Buyer on the aircraft registration records of the FAA, and agrees that the Seller will deliver to the Buyer full title to said aircraft, free and clear of all liens, encumbrances and burdens of every character.

The Seller and Buyer agree that any controversy, or claim, arising out of, or relating to this contract, or the breach thereof, shall be settled by arbitration in accordance with the rules, then obtaining, of the American Arbitration Association and the judgment upon the award rendered may be entered in the highest court of the forum, state or federal, having jurisdiction.

Seller

Date

Buyer