



PILOT FLIGHT CHECK:

THE CESSNA 150

Don't think of it as a trainer; think of it as the

by WILLIAM GARVEY / AOPA 480899

■ ■ Cessna Aircraft Co. this month will formally present its newest model 150 to the public, an act as unnecessary as being reintroduced to your wife because she's had her hair done. It's not that the airplane or the woman haven't changed—to a degree they both have—but when you get down to basics they're still both the same, both as familiar and as loved as last year and the year before that.

A few of the changes for 1975 include a cruise speed boost of 5 mph, a larger tail, some minor cabin

alterations, and a well-equipped newcomer to the 150 line called the Commuter II. The 150 line now includes the Standard, the Commuter, the Commuter II, and the Aerobat.

The Cessna 150 has been around for 16 years and in that time has become as much an aviation institution as the lumbering DC-3, the Piper Cub or, to a certain degree, the *Spirit of St. Louis*. It was Lindbergh's Ryan that awakened the world to aviation. The Cessna 150 gave aviation to the world by becoming one of the most popular training aircraft in history. True, there are other fine training birds, planes hotly defended by their students against any suspected slight,

but the 150 is the giant of its class.

The men at Cessna say estimating the number of people who have won their wings in a 150 is well nigh impossible and seem satisfied to say that 45% of each year's new crop of pilots train in a 150.

Of the approximately 20,000 150s built to date (a civil aircraft production figure surpassed only, and barely, by the Cessna 172) most are used for training purposes. Cessna men say only about 15% of the models sold are used privately, but that statistic may change this year.

Now that gasoline is a precious commodity and patriots are limiting themselves to 55 miles of freeway per hour, the old 150 becomes a revolu-



Cessna Aircraft Co. photo.

FOR 1975

intercity express

tionary and respectable alternative to King Car. It's a machine that can halve travel time while sipping avgas at six gallons per hour. That works out to 20 air miles per gallon.

Cessna took a look at those numbers and decided to package the 150 a little differently this year. Instead of touting its proven qualities as a trainer, Cessna will advertise the 150 of 1975 as the answer to every working traveler's woes.

"In the eyes of a guy who's used to driving a territory, he now sees that where he used to be driving at 80, which looked good to him, he's now at 55," explained one Cessna man. "So now he's more conscious of the difference a plane can make."

And the plane that Cessna advertising will show making that difference is a 150.

According to the 150 price sheet, the road-weary can retire from the highway life for \$10,700. That's what a new 150 costs. Its wings and belly would be bare aluminum, it would have single controls, a standard (not adjustable) altimeter, pantless wheels, no flight instruments to speak of, and, naturally, no radios. But it would be a 150, a Standard 150, a model as rare as a Wichita Eskimo. In fact, one Cessna man said, "No one around here can remember the last time they saw a Standard 150." For obvious reasons: it's a most impractical airplane.

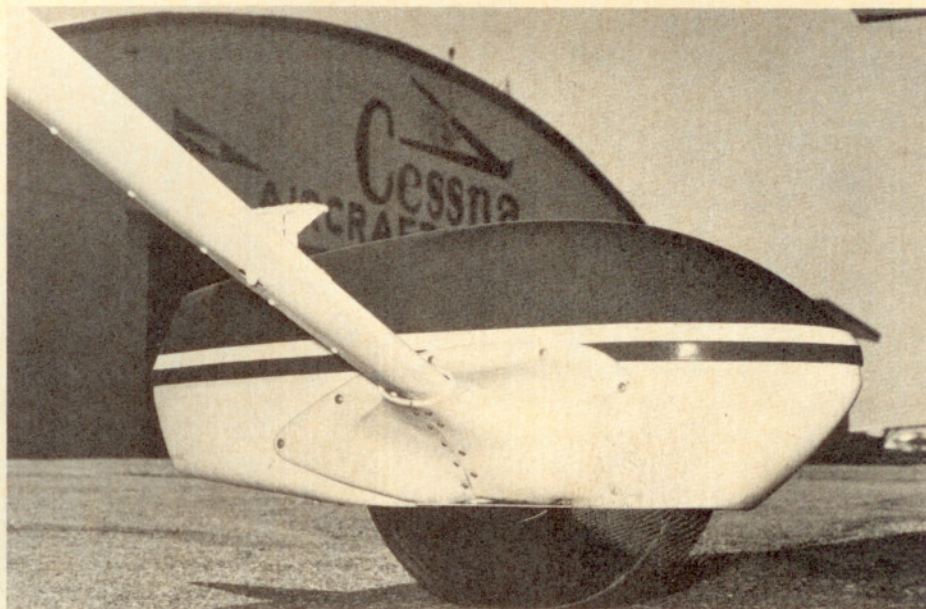
Almost every 150 sold is a Commuter, a fairly well-equipped VFR airplane complete with gyros, turn indicator, landing light, 300 nav/com, and paint. This plane will sell for \$13,325 in 1975. But better still is the Commuter II, a new model 150 introduced for the coming year.

Cessna began the "II" designation with the Centurion several years ago. It means the aircraft is factory equipped with a true airspeed indicator, ground-service plug, ELT, dual nav/coms, and a transponder—all popular items, the latter two of which are increasing in importance as airspace becomes more and more restrictive. The 150 Commuter II will sell for \$16,925, which is a sav-

CESSNA 150 continued

ing of \$635 were you to order the exact same equipment as options on a regular Commuter.

The 150 I flew in Wichita was a Commuter II. It, like all such models, had dual 300-series nav/coms. Unit number 1 had 360-channel com, 160-channel nav, and a remote VOR indicator, while unit number 2 had 720-channel com and 200-channel nav with a remote VOR/LOC indicator. The transponder was a 300-series (low altitude) model. The radios were made by Cessna's Aircraft Radio and Control Division in Boonton, N.J. The ELT was a Leigh Sharc-7.



By extending the wheelpant to cover the brake and adding a different prop, Cessna's engineers have increased the 150's cruise speed by 5 mph. Photos by the author except as noted.

The true airspeed indicator, standard on the Commuter II, is a movable plastic ring around the airspeed indicator. It's a handy gizmo but hardly seems worth the \$40 Cessna charges for it as an option.

Both the Commuter and the Com-

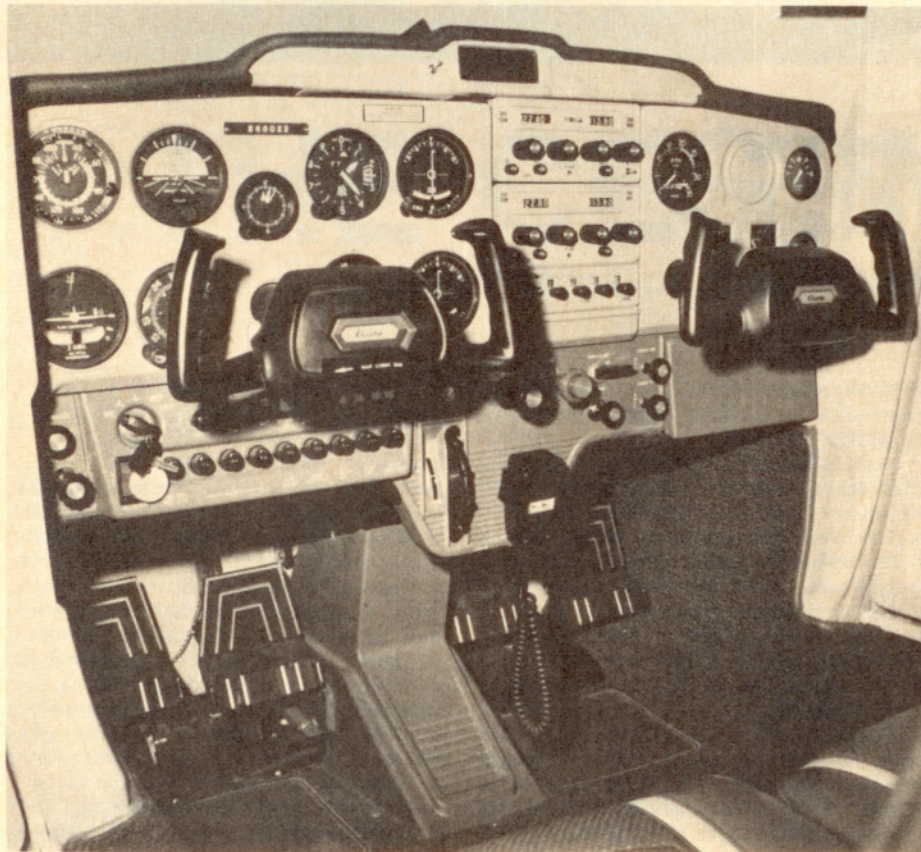
muter II come equipped with wheel fairings, a \$415 option on the Standard. The fiber-glass pants were redesigned for 1975 and now cover both the wheels and the brake assembly. This change, combined with a new McCauley prop, has boosted the 150's cruise speed to 122 mph, up 5 mph over this year's version.

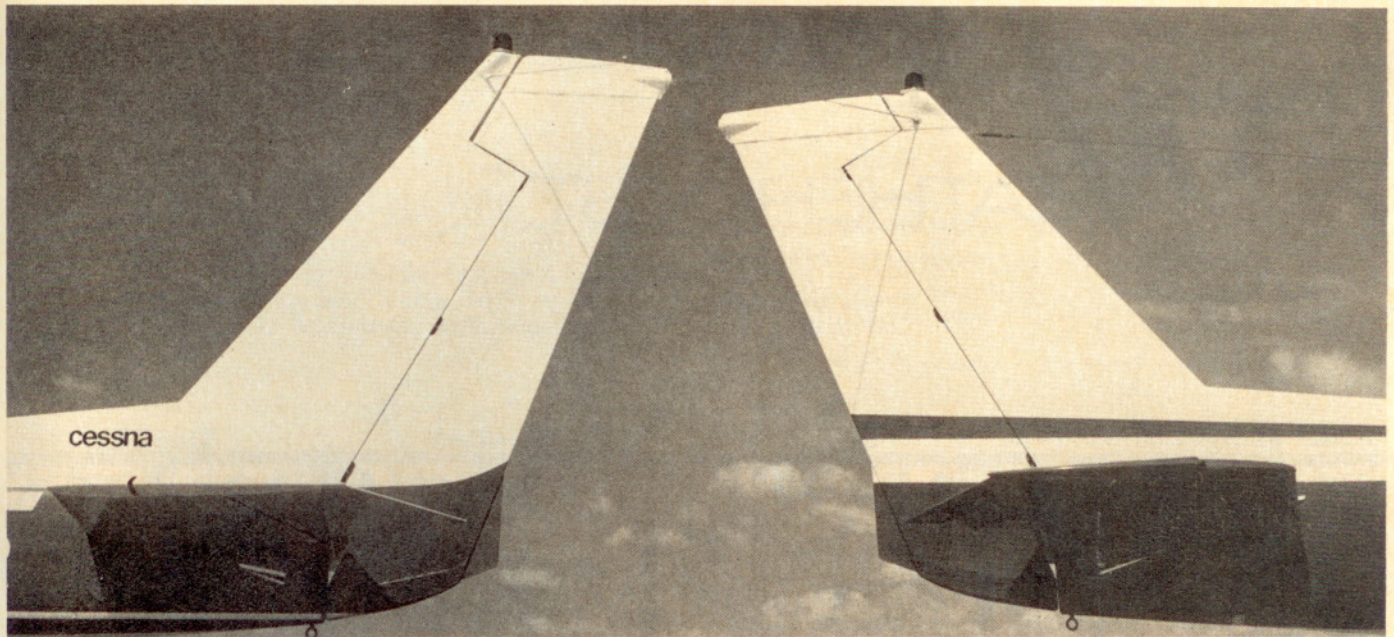
Also new in the 1975 model is a redesigned fin, now six inches higher. This modification was prompted by 150 Aerobat owners who complained that the looper was too sluggish recovering from snap rolls and spins. During our flight check, recovery from spins right and left was immediate.

Preflight on N66022 was a return to flying-school days. If you've ever preflighted a 150, you've preflighted the new ones. No difference. Quick drains and gas sampler cup, once a \$7.50 option, are standard equipment on the new 150s. The panel has larger lettering, and there's a printed checklist on the passenger's window post. Cessna has also included a printed, ring-bound checklist as standard equipment so you don't have to page through the owner's manual to start 'er up anymore.

The control wheels are padded for '75, and when you reach for the mixture control you'll discover another change. Instead of just giving the old red plastic knob a shove, you've got to push a button on the center of the knob before it will slide. The idea behind the push-button was to make it harder to mistakenly cut the gas instead of carb heat or power. The intent was a good one, but the solution was not quite its equal. I just shoved the mixture in as always, not realizing I was supposed to depress the button

Front office, 150. Not much change here for 1975. The controls are padded and the mixture knob has a pushbutton release.





Complaints that the Aerobat was slow in recovering from snap rolls and spins promoted the addition of six inches to the new 150's tail, shown here on the left with the 1974 version on the right.

first. Check pilot Chuck Hinson suggested it was probably harder to do it that way, and I guess it was. Honestly though, I didn't notice much difference.

N66022 was also equipped with inertia-reel shoulder/seatbelts, a \$140 option new to the 150. The plane's weight-and-balance sheet showed a listed empty weight of 1,113.5 pounds. That left 486.5 pounds for people, fuel and oil. Standard tanks on a 150 hold a total 22.5 usable gallons. The aircraft also holds six quarts of oil. Thus, gas and oil combined weigh 168 pounds, leaving 340.5 pounds for people and gear. Needless to say, we were near gross at takeoff.

Those who got their feet wet in 150s should try flying one fresh from the factory. N66022 showed 22 hours on its tach when I started it up.

The book says you'll get a Commuter up in 735 feet and we did, climbing out at 500 fpm through 3,500 feet, with the temperature reading 55°F and no wind to speak of. When we were straight and level at 3,700 feet, Chuck pushed the throttle to 2,750 rpm (redline) and the airspeed hit 130 mph true. This was a 150, mind you. On our return flight we got 120 mph true, at 2,700 rpm, at 2,000 feet msl.

When I reduced power to 2,600 rpm and held back on the yoke, the stall horn started sounding at 50 mph indicated, and the wing dropped left at 45. In slow flight at 2,000 feet, with 40 degrees of flap, the airspeed indicator slipped below the 40-mph mark, but the plane still responded well.

For landings the manual says there's a 445-foot ground roll on a wide-open field and 1,075 feet when

you're coming in over a 50-foot obstacle. I can't challenge those figures; they might even be modest.

Hinson mentioned that the noise level in the cabin had been reduced because of the new prop shape. Without an audio gauge it would be difficult to say how much noise was dampened, but it will be a long time before the 150 replaces a library for quiet.

At the conclusion of the standard maneuvers, I asked Hinson if there was anything special he wanted to show me. His reply: "Let's go down to the turnpike and pass some cars." That man is a Cessna saint.

Having shown a few Buicks, Fords, and Chevies our tailfeathers from 2,000 feet up, we returned to the Cessna field and more marketing chatter.

Even though Cessna is pushing the 150 this coming year, 1975 will not be the "Year of the Commuter" as 1974 was the "Year of the Hawk," when dealers were told they would sell 2,500 Skyhawks. The fact is, the company's not at all sure just what the 150 advertising promotion will render. Some 1,600 model 150s were sold in 1973, and that figure is not expected to change much in 1974. One Cessna man said the firm's planning on a similar run in 1975.

Then what about all the advertising for the 150? Said he, "We're not sure what we're going to discover. We might discover that a businessman finds the concept an interesting thing and that it gets him interested in a Skyhawk . . . If we can get him interested and he decides to buy a Centurion, we wouldn't mind at all."

Of course not. And odds are he'll graduate from a 150. □

CESSNA 150 COMMUTER II

Specifications

Engine	Continental O-200-A, 100 hp
Propeller	McCaughey 69-inch, fixed pitch
Empty weight	1,085 lb (approximate)
Useful load	515 lb (approximate)
Gross weight	1,600 lb
Baggage	120 lb
Wingspan	33 ft 4 in
Wing area	159.5 sq ft
Length	23 ft 11 in
Height	8 ft 6 in
Fuel capacity:	
Standard tanks	26 gal
Long-range tanks	38 gal
Oil capacity	6 qt
Wing loading	10 lb/sq ft
Power loading	16 lb/hp
Basic price	\$16,925

Performance

Top speed	125 mph
Cruise, 75% power	122 mph
Range, 75% power, no reserve	500 mi
Service ceiling	14,000 ft
Rate of climb	670 fpm
Takeoff distance (over 50-ft obstacle)	1,385 ft
Landing distance (over 50-ft obstacle)	1,075 ft
Stall	
Flaps down	48 mph
Flaps up	55 mph