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MOONEY M20s: BORN TO RUN

Speed and efficiency—yours for the price of a new Corvette

BY MARK M. LACAGNINA

They call themselves Mooney maniacs. They are crazy, all right—crazy about an alluring but rather odd-looking airplane that just does not fit any of the traditional aircraft design molds.

Take the tail, for instance. Somebody must have put it on backwards. It is swept the wrong way. And look, the whole darn empennage moves when you turn the trim wheel. What does this airplane think it is? A Lockheed JetStar, for Pete's sake?

The cabin is a real piece of work. All the comforts of a Volkswagen. And if you watch closely, you will see the boarding step disappear. Now, that is weird.

The airplane is different—in performance as well as in appearance. A Mooney flies faster than any other airplane with the same horsepower rating. Cruising at 140 knots while burning only nine gallons of liquid gold per hour is bound to glaze the eye of any pilot.

Mooney mania: It is an infectious and pleasurable affliction. I caught a dose of it during a recent Mooney Aircraft Pilots Association fly-in at Danbury, Connecticut. It was not the usual eat-beans-and-swap-hangar-stories type of fly-in. The members came armed with questions on operational and maintenance problems. Edwin G. Penney, Mooney Aircraft's director of customer services, was there to provide the answers. Roy Lopresti, Mooney's resident design wizard, also was there. He offered an engrossing account of the airplane's history, complete with a progress report on the company's new airplane, the M30. (We will have more on that aircraft in a future issue.)

I came away from the fly-in with a lot of enthusiasm and promptly laid siege to editor Ed Tripp for an



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Trouble-free systems in an airframe that offers little to drag.

assignment on used Mooneys. "Okay, but do me one favor," Tripp said. "Choose a model that can be purchased for less than \$20,000.

"And Lacagnina, I don't want to hear you tease me anymore about *my* silver Mooneys."

I was surprised to discover that there are a lot of used Mooneys that can be purchased for under \$20,000. In fact, most of the M20 models built between 1955 and 1969 fall into that price category on the used-aircraft marketplace. They are the airplanes that I will discuss in this report.

M20 is a model designation. It denotes the twentieth aircraft designed by Al Mooney and, with a variety of lettered suffixes, comprises aircraft ranging from the original wood-wing Mark 20 to today's 201 and Turbo 231. This causes some confusion, because there are some Mooney "M" models that Al Mooney played no part in designing. Among them are the M10, the Mooney Cadet version of the Forney Ercoupe/Alon Aircoupe; and the M22, Mooney's ill-fated pressurized single. Now there is the M30; but this airplane, of course, is strictly Lopresti's baby.

Al Mooney designed his first airplane, the OX-5-powered Alexander Eaglerock biplane, at the age of 19. In 1929, at the age of 23, he and his brother Art formed the Mooney Aircraft Company. They built the M5, a low-wing monoplane with a Kinner engine.

The original Mooney company went out of business during the Great Depression. But Al Mooney's design talents were much in demand. He designed for Bellanca, Monocoupe and Culver before again forming his own company in 1946, Mooney Aircraft Incorporated, with the support of Charles Yankey.

The company produced the M18 Mite, a single-seater equipped with retractable gear; and the M19, a machine-gun-equipped, military version of the Mite that earned the nickname, The Cub Killer.

Al Mooney began work on the M20 in 1952—the same year that the company was relocated from Wichita, Kansas, to Kerrville, Texas, to take advantage of a more stable and more loyal work force. According to accounts, Wichita workers often had abandoned Mooney for greener pastures at Cessna and Beech.

When Charles Yankey died in 1953, the company was acquired by Hal Rachal, Norman Hoffman and Edward Hunnicut. Al Mooney left the company to join Lockheed shortly after the M20 was certificated in 1955. At Lockheed, Mooney designed three more airplanes: a high-wing utility aircraft and two vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) research aircraft, dubbed the Hummingbirds.

The prototype M20 was powered by a 145-hp Continental engine. The aircraft later went into production with a 150-hp Lycoming O-320 engine. The



M20A made its debut in 1958 with a 180-hp Lycoming O-360 engine.

The wing spar and tail structures on the early Mooneys were made of bonded and laminated aircraft spruce. The use of wood had its advantages. The wooden components weighed less than metal and were at least as strong. But that was more than 20 years ago. Many of the airplanes have suffered in climates that are either too moist or too dry for the wooden structures to retain their integrity. Airworthiness directives require owners to have the wing spars and the vertical fin inspected every six months to check for wood and glue deterioration. The inspection costs more than \$500 and must be repeated until the wooden components are replaced with metal.

Therefore, it is a good idea to avoid buying a wooden Mooney. There are very few mechanics who know how to work with the material. Besides, you probably would not be able to afford the insurance on a wood-wing Mooney—if, indeed, you could even get it.

Building the wooden components for the M20 and M20A also was very labor-intensive and expensive. The company decided to switch to an all-metal airplane in 1960 and hired Ralph Harmon to do the design work. Harmon had played a major role in the design of the Beech Bonanza and had headed the company's Twin Bonanza and T34 aircraft programs. He also had been a designer for Cessna and McDonnell.

Harmon's all-metal Mooney, the M20B, has a gross weight of 2,450 pounds—the same as earlier models. But the metal components raised the M20's empty weight by 110 pounds, to 1,527 pounds.

Mooney built 220 M20Bs before introducing the M20C in 1962. Named the Mark 21, it has a gross weight of 2,575 pounds. The company built more

than 1,600 Mark 21s before changing the name of the M20C to Ranger in 1968. Unlike the Mark 21, the Ranger has fixed cowl flaps, a nonretractable step, no dorsal fin and a gross weight of 2,740 pounds.

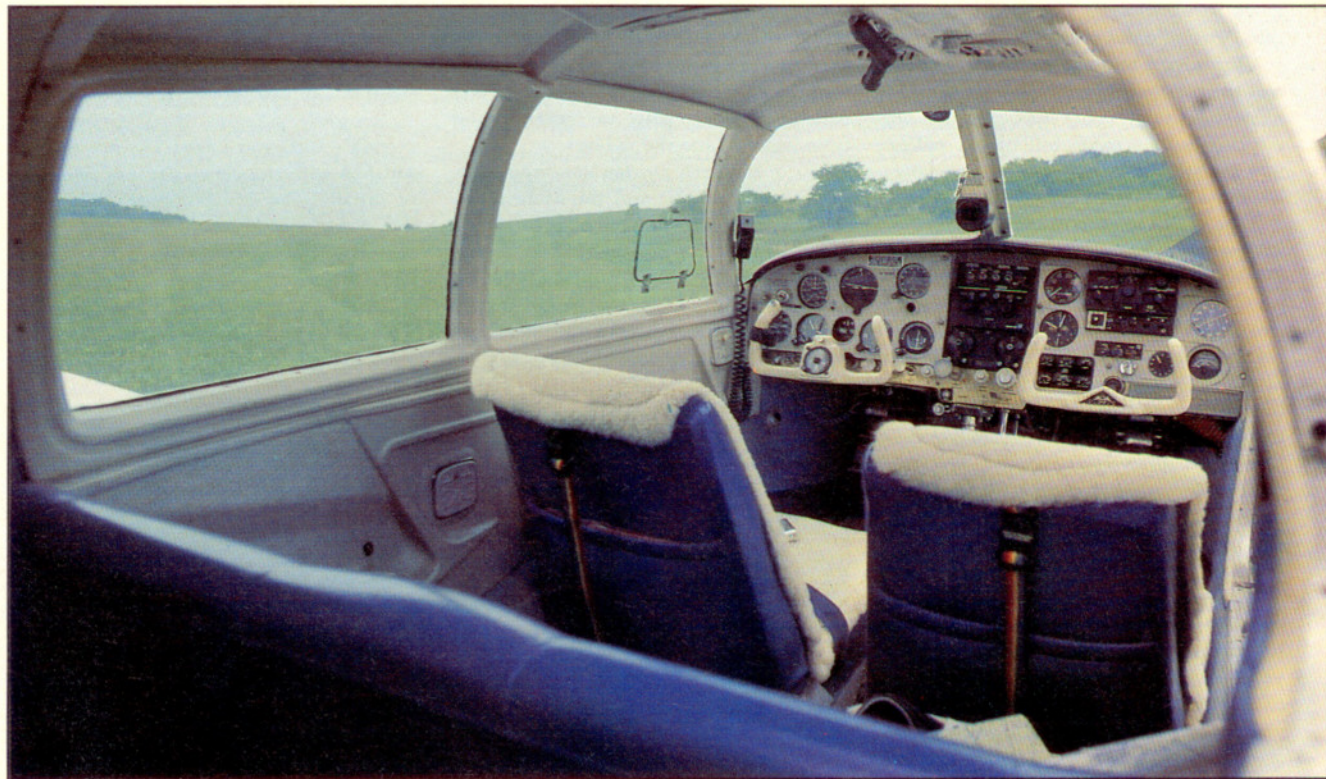
A few words about the boarding step: M20 models built before 1964 have cranks mounted on the left side of the cockpit to raise and lower the step. Airplanes built between 1964 and 1968 have steps that retract automatically when the engine is started. The retraction mechanism is activated by pneumatic pressure supplied by the vacuum pump. This feature was discontinued in 1968 to save weight and to cut costs.

The M20G Statesman also was introduced in 1968. It is similar to the Ranger, but has a fuselage that is 10 inches longer. The extension offers more legroom for rear-seat passengers but takes its toll in drag. The Statesman is slower than the Ranger and the Mark 21.

The Ranger and the Statesman are the best buys among the 180-hp Mooneys built before 1969. Their engines have larger valves and higher recommended times between overhauls (TBOs) than those in the earlier models. The TBO on the M20C Mark 21's engine, however, can be raised from 1,200 to 2,000 hours if the valves and camshaft are replaced. When you shop, check the engine logs carefully. An M20C with this modification would be an excellent buy.

In response to dealer requests for a training airplane, Mooney introduced the M20D Master, which has fixed gear and a fixed-pitch propeller. The airplane did not sell well, and Mooney built only 160 of them in 1963 and 1964. Most Masters have been converted, at a cost of about \$2,000 each, to retractable gear and constant-speed props.

Mooney introduced the fuel-injected, 200-hp M20E Super 21 in 1964. Three years later, the air-



plane's fuselage was extended 10 inches, and the Super 21 was redesignated the M20F Executive 21.

Because of the Mooney's tight cowling, the fuel-injection system is prone to heat-soaking and vapor lock during ground operations. The owner's manual advises pilots to get the Super 21 and Executive 21 into the air as quickly as possible. Activation of the fuel boost pump sometimes can force vapor bubbles out of the Bendix fuel-injection system. When this fails, the only alternative is to cover the system with rags dampened in cold water to cool it off.

The 200-hp Mooneys have a feature called Power Boost. Application of full throttle activates a system that allows induction air to by-pass the engine air filter. The engine then runs on unfiltered ram air and provides a few extra inches of manifold pressure. This feature should be used only at altitude and in dry air, because moisture can freeze in the by-pass passages. Contaminants in the air at low altitudes also can damage the engine. The airplanes have lights on their panels that glow if the gear is lowered while the system is still in operation.

If you are considering buying a 1960s-vintage Mooney, take a look at the 180-hp models, first. Pilots who have owned both 180- and 200-hp models say the few extra knots provided by the fuel-injected engines are not worth the associated higher maintenance and fuel costs.

Mooneys are well-known for their exceptional speed and fuel efficiency. The keys to the airplane's success are its tight cabin and thin, laminar-flow wings. These structures offer less frontal area and, hence, create less flat-plate drag than airplanes with bigger cabins and thicker wings.

What is not so well-known is that the Mooney is a very tough airplane. From the tailcone forward, the fuselage comprises a welded-steel truss covered with prestretched and flush-riveted aluminum skin. The massive, aluminum alloy wing spar is constructed in one piece and runs through the cabin beneath the rear seats. The wing is attached to the fuselage by 34 bolts.

The landing gear is made of heat-treated chromemoly tubing and uses neoprene disks as shock absorbers. The gear is incredibly strong, and it also is very stiff. Taxi maneuvers require vigilance, because the airplane tends to rock back and forth when the gear hits a bump. There is precious little clearance between the low-slung Mooney's propeller and the ground.

Two owners told me about incidents in which their propeller hubs shattered. The failures apparently were initiated by damage caused by previous prop strikes that were not reported by former owners. A thorough examination of the engine log books and the propeller itself for evidence of a prop strike is very important.

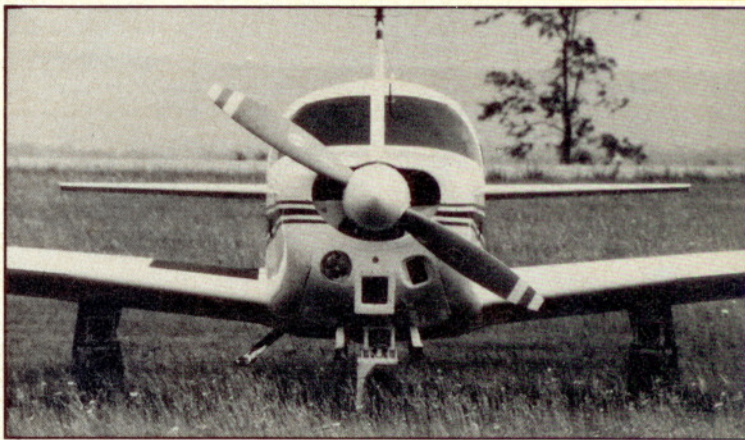
One of the Mooneys I flew for this report is a 1965 M20C, owned by Michael A. Meyer, AOPA 489896, of Reisterstown, Maryland. I had spotted a picture of the handsome airplane, N7854V, on a bulletin board. Meyer, who currently is looking for a partner in his Mooney, agreed to give me some right-seat time.

My first flight in his airplane reminded me of an early promotional photograph that shows a Mooney parked next to an Austin Healey 3000 sports car. The

analogy is a good one. As with a sports car, you do not occupy a Mooney; you wear it. The cockpit is tight but not uncomfortable. If you like sports cars, you will love a Mooney. I have flown in the airplanes with beefy, six-footers. It was close, but there were none of the elbow wars that usually break out in the cockpits of Cessna 150s and Piper Cherokees.

The Mooney's controls also are sports car-like: tight and responsive. The control system comprises torque tubes and permanently lubricated and self-adjusting bearings, rather than cables and pulleys. Because of the differential travel of the ailerons, very little rudder is needed to make a coordinated turn.

Stalls are abrupt. The laminar-flow wing gives little warning of an impending stall. And when it quits flying, the airplane tends to fall off on a wing very quick-



MOONEY M20s

A tight cowl makes mechanics growl.

ly. I have heard that a Mooney will wind up rapidly in a spin. But Mooney prohibits intentional spins.

One of the major disadvantages of old Mooneys is their owner's manuals. The booklets do little more than congratulate the owner for his wisdom in buying the airplane. The pilot really has to dig to find any useful information in them; and the performance figures for early Mooneys are exaggerated grossly.

During the flight at 7,500 feet from Westminster, Maryland, to Petersburg, West Virginia—well below the M20C's gross weight—our true airspeed was about 138 knots at 68 percent power. The manual said we should have tried at 158 knots.

The Mooney is not a hands-off airplane. Any ripple in the air tends to send it off the straight and level. To reduce pilot fatigue, Mooney introduced Positive Control in 1965. Basically, the system is a wing leveler that supplies pneumatic inputs to servo units linked to the rudder and aileron controls. Pneumatic pressure is supplied by the vacuum pump, and the system is in operation whenever the engine is running.

I certainly would welcome the system during long trips or flights in rough air. But, like many other pilots, I do not like the fact that the wing leveler is *always* on. It takes a little muscle to overpower the system to

MOONEY M20s

Like sports cars? You'll love an M20.

make a turn. And it feels as though there is a gnome hidden in the airplane who continually attempts to thwart your efforts to make minor heading changes.

A button on the pilot's yoke can be pushed to deactivate the wing leveler. Meyer uses the Velcro fasteners on his push-to-talk switch to keep the button depressed. Others say that rubber bands and tape also work.

On our return from Petersburg, I was a bit surprised when Meyer advised that I start our descent from 9,500 feet some 30 miles from our destination. The reason became readily apparent: The Mooney does not like to slow down. The yellow arc on the airspeed indicator begins at 132 knots, and the gear-extension speed is 114 knots. Descents require planning.

The landing gear is linked mechanically to a two-foot-long bar in the center of the cockpit. A locking mechanism built into the grip slides into metal holders located below the power controls and between the seats. I found that by using smooth pressure, the gear can be operated very easily. I have seen some pilots

continued p. 68, specifications overleaf

TEAM EFFORT

Yes, I hear you talking: You would like to own a Mooney, but it just is not in the cards right now—with the mortgage on the house and the note on the new car, the family budget is stretched tighter than the D-string on a guitar.

Well, join the club. A flying club, that is. Group ownership of a used Mooney could be a good way to go, especially if you are putting more than 100 hours on rental aircraft each year. (See "Sharing the Costs," *AOPA Pilot*, October, p. 55.) For a modest initial investment, you will not own the entire airplane, but you probably still will find it very satisfying to point to a Mooney and say, "That's our airplane."

There are a number of successful Mooney clubs in operation. One is Chique's Aero Corporation, based at Pennsylvania's Lancaster Airport. According to Donald Heagy, AOPA 425597, treasurer of the club, Chique's (pronounced Chickee's) started out with a couple of taildraggers in 1947. The club was incorporated when it bought its first Mooney, a wood-wing Mark 20A, in 1956. The members traded the airplane in for a new Statesman in 1968.

Heagy said the members are very pleased with the Statesman, especially with the extra legroom and the fixed cowl flaps. The club has logged nearly 4,000 hours in the Mooney. They recently had a new engine and nose gear installed in the airplane. "It's a dependable airplane," said member Daryl Myer, AOPA 415456. "The biggest problem we have had with the Mooney is quite a few generator failures."

Membership in Chique's Aero costs \$2,500 for initiation, \$30 for monthly dues and \$29 per hour for use of the airplane, fuel included. The club's eight members, who use the Mooney primarily for recreation and personal transportation, are required to fly the airplane at least two hours a month. This ensures that the members stay reasonably current in the airplane and that the club's cash flow stays in the black. Scheduling is on a first-come, first-served basis, with extended trips re-

quiring approval by all of the members.

Another Mooney club, Badlands Flyers Incorporated, is rather unusual. The club is based in Watford City, North Dakota, a farming and oil-drilling community with a population of about 2,000. Except for a part-time charter service, there is no commercial air service available at Watford City. There are no aircraft available for rental at the city's airport, either.

"We feel that we have given years of reasonable flying costs to a number of people in this community who would not have flown otherwise," said club founder and president Paul Wagner, AOPA 613815.

Badlands Flyers started nine years ago with a 1946 Funk, which later was replaced with a 1963 Mark 21. When membership grew, the club decided to buy a second airplane. "We tried a Cherokee 140 and a Cessna 182," Wagner recalls. "But they were more expensive to operate than the Mooney because of maintenance problems. The Cherokee and the Cessna also burned more gas than the Mooney."

A few years ago, the members voted to buy another Mooney, a 1967 Executive. The 12 members of Badlands Flyers put about 300 hours a year on each of the air-

planes. Wagner said the Mooneys are flown primarily for business purposes.

It costs \$4,000 to join the Badlands club and \$28 per hour to fly either of the Mooneys. Monthly dues are \$41 and include one hour of flight time.

With a little luck, you may be able to locate a club in your area that offers a piece of Mooney ownership for the price of a good used car.

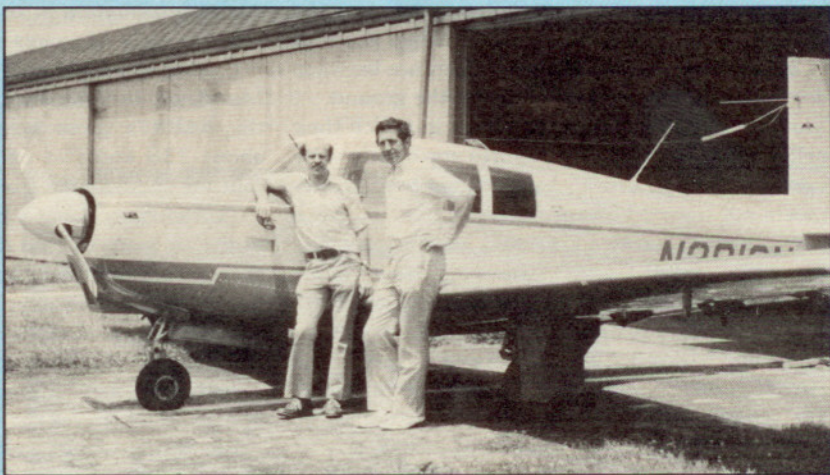
If not, why not form your own club? An AOPA booklet, "The Flying Club," can get you started. It is available free from the Service and Reference Department.

Members of Chique's and Badlands stress that one of the most important factors in running a successful flying club is a comprehensive set of bylaws. "Get it all down in print," said one member, "so that there are no questions or hassles later on."

"Choosing your partners wisely is also very important," another member said. "The club experience can be very rewarding and enjoyable when there is harmony among the members. But one black sheep can spoil the whole thing."

So, find some flying buddies who can make a modest investment and are willing to devote some effort to making a flying club work. Draft a good set of bylaws.

Then, go fly your Mooney. □



Daryl Myer and Donald Heagy of Chique's Aero. The club has logged 4,000 hours in its Statesman.

USED MOONEYS (1955 through 1968)

	M20 Mark 20 1955-1957	M20A Mark 20A 1958-1960	M20C Mark 21 1961-1967	M20D Master 1963-1964	M20E Super 21 1964-1967	M20F Executive 21 1967-1968	M20G Statesman 1968
Price new	\$12,500 to \$13,750	\$14,750 to \$15,540	\$15,995 to \$18,250	\$13,995	\$18,450 to \$19,995	\$21,995 to \$22,995	\$18,790
Current market value	\$6,000 to \$12,000	\$8,000 to \$15,000	\$10,000 to \$22,000	\$9,000 to \$15,000	\$14,000 to \$25,000	\$17,000 to \$29,000	\$16,000 to \$28,000
Specifications							
Engine	Lycoming O-320 150 hp @ 2,700 rpm	Lycoming O-360A1A 180 hp @ 2,700 rpm	Lycoming O-360A1A 180 hp @ 2,700 rpm	Lycoming O-360A1D 180 hp @ 2,700 rpm	Lycoming IO-360A1A 200 hp @ 2,700 rpm	Lycoming IO-360A1A 200 hp @ 2,700 rpm	Lycoming O-360A1D 180 hp @ 2,700 rpm
Recommended TBO	1,200 hr	1,200 hr	1,200 hr	1,200 hr	1,200 hr	1,200 hr	2,000 hr
Propeller	McCauley constant speed 2 blade, 74 in	McCauley constant speed 2 blade, 74 in	Hartzell constant speed 2 blade, 74 in	McCauley fixed pitch 2 blade, 74 in	Hartzell constant speed 2 blade, 74 in	Hartzell constant speed 2 blade, 74 in	Hartzell constant speed 2 blade, 74 in
Wingspan	35 ft	35 ft	35 ft	35 ft	35 ft	35 ft	35 ft
Length	23 ft 2 in	23 ft 2 in	23 ft 2 in	23 ft 2 in	23 ft 2 in	24 ft	24 ft
Height	8 ft 4 in	8 ft 4 in	8 ft 4 in	8 ft 4 in	8 ft 4 in	8 ft 4 in	8 ft 4 in
Wing area	167 sq ft	167 sq ft	167 sq ft	167 sq ft	167 sq ft	167 sq ft	167 sq ft
Wing loading	14.7 lb/sq ft	14.7 lb/sq ft	15.4 lb/sq ft	15.4 lb/sq ft	15.4 lb/sq ft	16.4 lb/sq ft	15.4 lb/sq ft
Power loading	16.3 lb/hp	13.6 lb/hp	14.3 lb/hp	14.3 lb/hp	12.9 lb/hp	13.7 lb/hp	14.3 lb/hp
Seats	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Cabin length	8 ft 8 in	8 ft 8 in	8 ft 8 in	8 ft 8 in	8 ft 8 in	9 ft 6 in	9 ft 6 in
Cabin width	3 ft 4.5 in	3 ft 4.5 in	3 ft 4.5 in	3 ft 4.5 in	3 ft 4.5 in	3 ft 4.5 in	3 ft 4.5 in
Cabin height	3 ft 8.5 in	3 ft 8.5 in	3 ft 8.5 in	3 ft 8.5 in	3 ft 8.5 in	3 ft 8.5 in	3 ft 8.5 in
Empty weight	1,415 lb	1,480 lb	1,525 lb	1,475 lb	1,560 lb	1,640 lb	1,585 lb
Useful load	1,035 lb	970 lb	1,050 lb	1,100 lb	1,015 lb	1,100 lb	990 lb
Payload w/full fuel	825 lb	760 lb	738 lb	788 lb	703 lb	716 lb	678 lb
Gross weight	2,450 lb	2,450 lb	2,575 lb	2,575 lb	2,575 lb	2,740 lb	2,575 lb
Fuel capacity (usable)	210 lb/35 gal	210 lb/35 gal	312 lb/52 gal	312 lb/52 gal	312 lb/52 gal	384 lb/64 gal	312 lb/52 gal
Oil capacity	8 qt	8 qt	8 qt	8 qt	8 qt	8 qt	8 qt
Baggage capacity	120 lb	120 lb	120 lb	120 lb	120 lb	120 lb	120 lb
Performance							
Takeoff distance (ground roll)	725 ft	600 ft	890 ft	620 ft	575 ft	595 ft	815 ft
Takeoff over 50 ft	N/O	N/O	1,250 ft	1,800 ft	1,120 ft	1,385 ft	1,250 ft
Rate of climb (sea level)	900 fpm	1,150 fpm	1,010 fpm	740 fpm	1,000 fpm	1,055 fpm	875 fpm
Max level speed	149 kt	162 kt	160 kt	128 kt	172 kt	160 kt	154 kt
Cruise speed/Range (Fuel consumption)							
@ 75% power							
5,000 ft	143 kt/520 nm (55.2 pph/ 9.2 gph)	156 kt/550 nm (60.0 pph/ 10.0 gph)	148 kt/690 nm (66.6 pph/ 11.1 gph)	124 kt/570 nm (69.0 pph/ 11.5 gph)	153 kt/710 nm (67.2 pph/ 11.2 gph)	151 kt/860 nm (67.2 pph/ 11.2 gph)	142 kt/665 nm (66.6 pph/ 11.1 gph)
10,000 ft	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	162 kt/760 nm (66.6 pph/ 11.1 gph)	160 kt/925 nm (66.6 pph/ 11.1 gph)	N/A N/A
@ 55% power							
5,000 ft	N/O N/O	N/O N/O	128 kt/740 nm (54.0 pph/ 9.0 gph)	98 kt/530 nm (57.6 pph/ 9.6 gph)	143 kt/810 nm (50.4 pph/ 8.4 gph)	137 kt/1,000 nm (50.4 pph/ 8.4 gph)	122 kt/704 nm (54.0 pph/ 9.0 gph)
10,000 ft	131 kt/535 nm (46.2 pph/ 7.7 gph)	143 kt/660 nm (42.0 pph/ 7.0 gph)	127 kt/830 nm (48.0 pph/ 8.0 gph)	104 kt/628 nm (51.6 pph/ 8.6 gph)	143 kt/840 nm (49.8 pph/ 8.3 gph)	138 kt/1,060 nm (49.8 pph/ 8.3 gph)	120 kt/780 nm (48.0 pph/ 8.0 gph)
Service ceiling	17,200 ft	17,200 ft	17,200 ft	13,600 ft	19,500 ft	17,900 ft	17,000 ft
Landing distance (full flaps)	575 ft	550 ft	550 ft	550 ft	595 ft	640 ft	595 ft
Limiting and Recommended Airspeeds							
Vx (Best angle of climb)	53 KIAS	N/O	83 KIAS	N/O	80 KIAS	75 KIAS	80 KIAS
Vy (Best rate of climb)	82 KIAS	N/O	100 KIAS	82 KIAS	100 KIAS	100 KIAS	100 KIAS
Va (Design maneuvering)	113 KIAS	113 KIAS	115 KIAS	115 KIAS	115 KIAS	117 KIAS	115 KIAS
Vfe (Max flap extended)	87 KIAS	87 KIAS	87 KIAS	87 KIAS	87 KIAS	92 KIAS	87 KIAS
Vle (Max gear extended)	104 KIAS	104 KIAS	114 KIAS	N/A	114 KIAS	114 KIAS	114 KIAS
Vno (Normal operating)	130 KIAS	130 KIAS	130 KIAS	128 KIAS	132 KIAS	152 KIAS	132 KIAS
Vne (Never exceed)	159 KIAS	159 KIAS	164 KIAS	164 KIAS	164 KIAS	173 KIAS	164 KIAS
Vr (Rotation)	N/O	60 KIAS	60 KIAS	60 KIAS	60 KIAS	60 KIAS	60 KIAS
Vsi (Stall clean)	54 KIAS	54 KIAS	58 KIAS	58 KIAS	58 KIAS	58 KIAS	58 KIAS
Vso (Stall in landing configuration)	49 KIAS	49 KIAS	49 KIAS	49 KIAS	49 KIAS	49 KIAS	49 KIAS

All specifications are based on manufacturer's calculations. N/O: not obtainable; N/A: not applicable



MOONEY M20s

Mooney mania, a rare form of sanity.

employ the Kamikaze approach—slamming the gear up or down with a heavy thud. It is quite a show, but it is entirely unnecessary.

The manual-gear system requires little maintenance. For those pilots who do not like to exercise their arms, electric gear became an option in 1965.

Meyer's airplane has a small handle located on the center pedestal that is used to pump the hydraulic flaps down. I prefer the flap-actuating system that was

used in the Mooneys built before 1962, which has detents for both takeoff and landing flap positions.

Landing a Mooney requires precision. It must be flown by the numbers. Speed builds up rapidly when the nose is lowered, and the slippery airplane rewards a hot approach with a long float down the runway in ground effect.

Although he has had some problems with his airplane, Meyer said he would not consider trading it for any other single—except, perhaps, the M30.

Meyer has suffered three engine stoppages while flying in heavy rain. "Each time, it took an eternity plus 20 seconds to get the engine restarted," he recalls. Meyer believes the air filter was the culprit. He has replaced the paper element with a foam-pad filter.

Meyer, like many other owners of used Mooneys, also has had a problem with fuel seepage. The high concentration of aromatics in the new low-lead fuels tends to break down the lead-cure fuel-tank sealants that were used in Mooneys built before 1979. Meyer recently resealed his tanks with the dichromate and magnesium sealant that is used in the newer Mooneys.

Speed and efficiency are the hallmarks of the M20. But many owners said that money saved on fuel has to be plowed back into the airplane to pay for maintenance. The compactness of the Mooney makes maintenance work time-consuming and expensive.

Nevertheless, a used Mooney is one of the best buys on the market. As fuel prices continue to climb, Mooney mania is just what the doctor ordered. □