

## USED-AIRCRAFT FLIGHT CHECK:

# The Globe Swift GC-1B

To its devotees, who are legion, it's a mighty mite  
with the class of a mini-Spitfire

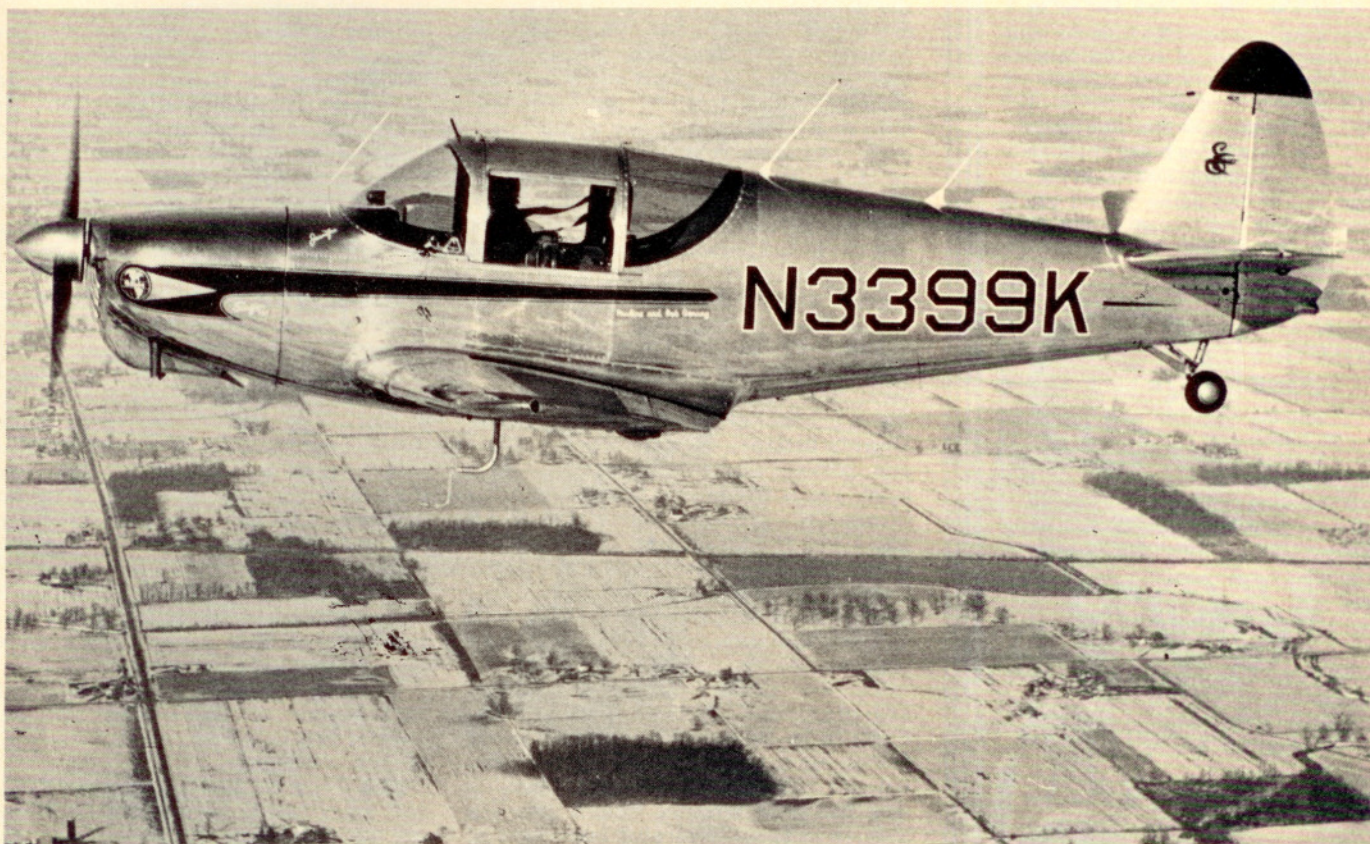


Photo by Robert Lavelle.

by PAULINE GENUNG / AOPA 517733F

■ ■ Impulse buyer? I even surprised myself when I started putting the pressure on my husband to buy N3399K, a 1946 Globe Swift GC-1B, after seeing her only once. We had owned six airplanes during the preceding 10 years, and each had been modern, low-time, and well-equipped. In fact, we had just sold a beautiful, IFR-equipped Cessna Centurion.

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"You decide this time" was all Bob would say, so I went right back to the airport and bought the Swift.

In any group of pilots there's always someone who can supply at least one hairy story to prove that the Swift's sleek, inviting looks can deceive even the hottest pilot. The ink was barely dry on my deposit check when an FAA examiner from the local GADO, who had overheard the purchase being discussed by several of the usual weekend hangar flyers, dropped an accident reporting form in front of me.

"Here, in case you need this sometime," he said kindly. That shook my confidence just a little. However, we've had the benefit of expert instruction and maintenance, and in the two years we've owned our 28-year-old Swift, it has become our favorite.

The Swift is an all-aluminum, side-by-side two-seater with retractable, conventional gear. The aircraft's popularity was a product of the short-lived postwar aircraft bonanza of the forties. During this period, Globe Aircraft Co.—and, later, Texas Engineering and Manufacturing Co.—produced about 400 85-hp and 1,100 125-hp models. The last Swift rolled off the assembly line in 1951. Univair Aircraft Co., Aurora, Colo., continues to supply Swift owners with a complete inventory of parts and manuals.

The first Globe Swift to be displayed at Indianapolis's Weir Cook Airport was flown in by William F. Long, of Central States Aeronautical Corp., a Swift distributor. Twenty-seven years later, it was Bill who wheeled 3399K into his hangar to begin a careful inspection of the plane and to evaluate its condition.

The FAA examiner's subtle word of caution about my purchase was brought home to me as Bill found many things needing attention or updating. We decided on a major overhaul of the Continental C125 engine and a complete restoration of our bird.

We were fortunate in finding someone like Bill, who had knowledge of the Swift, to guide us. He once received the FAA's Mechanic of the Year Award, and he was genuinely concerned about our project, which was to be his last major overhaul and restoration before retirement.

As we watched Bill proceed, we real-

ized how vital the knowledge and experience of the restorer can be, and this should certainly be taken into account when you purchase an older aircraft. The mechanic's knowledge of ADs, design changes, and the reasons for them can save much time and money and decrease the chance of problems later on.

After flight tests and final adjustments had been completed, and after the newly majored engine had been sufficiently broken in, it was my pleasure to receive instruction from Russ Baum, President of Sky Harbor, Indianapolis, who originally sold me the plane. He had fond memories of instructing in Swifts and was anxious to show us what a fine piece of equipment we had when properly flown. And "Swifting" through chandelles, lazy eights and steep turns, and greasing on three-pointers, proved to be a beautiful experience.

Comparatively small in size, the Swift is only 20 feet 10¾ inches long and has a wingspan of 29 feet 4 inches. Slotted wings and spin strips on the leading edge are easily identifiable features, as is the toothy grin of the Swift when viewed head on. Access to the cockpit is gained when the canopy is raised and the side window lowered. While the result cannot be called a graceful entry, it still seems right for this miniature Spitfire.

Max speed of the GC-1B, according to company specs, is 150 mph, while cruise speed is 140. The aircraft lands at 56 mph without flaps and 48 mph with.

Grossing out at 1,710 pounds, with 26.5 gallons of usable fuel and our crew of two on board, we can carry 47 pounds of baggage.

The Swift originally sold for \$3,495, and today can be found at \$4,500 and up, depending on condition and airframe and powerplant modifications.

Through the International Swift Assn. and the Experimental Aircraft Assn., one can keep abreast of the latest developments important to Swift owners. We have not found the aircraft to suffer from more maintenance problems than any other high-performance retractable.

It seems that old airplanes are friendly airplanes. Most people are interested in them, and there are few strangers around when our Swift lands.

Feeling "ho-hum" about your aviating these days? Don't overlook the excitement and challenge of owning a piece of aviation history. Remember what flying's all about! □