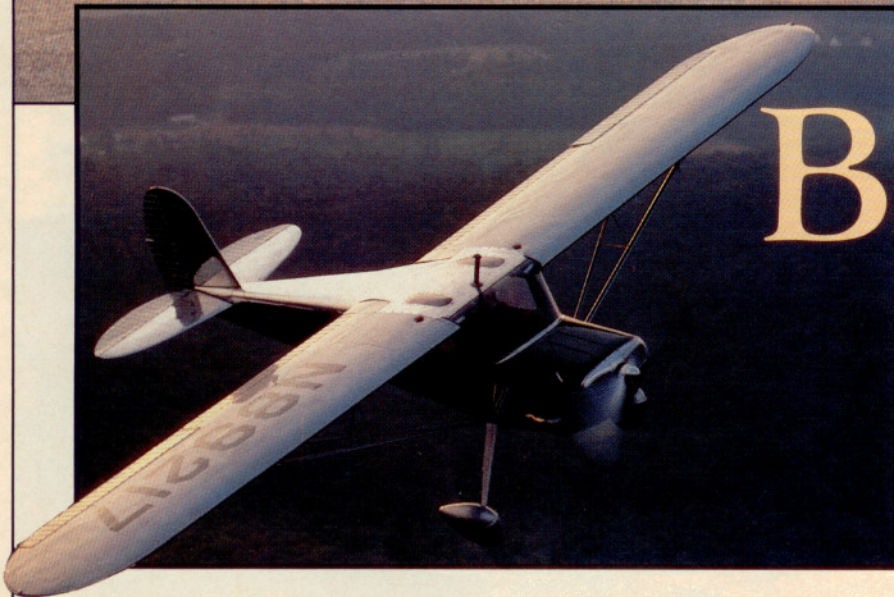


CESSNA 140



Flying this classic airplane is only half the fun.

BY MARK TWOMBLY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ART DAVIS

Bernard A. (Bernie) Funk spends gentle, clear evenings in his Cessna 140 ranging about the countryside at sightseeing altitudes. Usually, he is content to maintain runway heading after leaving the pattern, as long as the landscape below holds his interest. If Runway 19 is active at his home field, Frederick Municipal in Frederick, Maryland, eventually he'll wind up over Sugarloaf Mountain—a nice setting to brush up on stick and rudder coordination. If 01 is in use, he is just about lined up for the Hanover (Pennsylvania) Airport, 35 miles to the north, and a few practice landings on its turf strip. When he flies, Funk has no schedules to meet, no foul weather to confront. It is pleasure, pure and simple.

Funk flies his airplane about 70 hours a year, or 80 minutes a week. That isn't much, but each time does not measure the satisfaction he gets from aviation. The 140 is only a part of an airport community at Frederick in which Funk is a leading citizen.



Friday nights, he can be found at the Final Approach, the airport cafe. He and about two dozen other regulars sit and wait patiently for someone to enter the restaurant's dining room. The first person who does is startled when the group suddenly breaks into a musical greeting that sounds vaguely like the *Mickey Mouse Club* theme song:

Hey there! Hi there! Ho there!
You're as welcome as can be,
S...T...R...
A...N...S...
K-Y!

It's that way every Friday night at the Final Approach. Friday night is Stransky Night, and anyone who wanders in, Stransky Club member or not, is welcomed with a serenade and an invitation to hoist a few and swap flying tales. Membership in the club, named after one of the original Friday night hangar pilots, is open to anyone who doesn't turn and run.

Lead vocals for the weekly Stransky songfest are provided by Funk. His

deep voice, ability to sing on key and unabashed willingness to musically accost strange diners make him the natural choice to lead the revelers. More important, Funk is a leader among the self-confessed airport bums who are the Stransky Club's rank and file.

Funk, who is not married, spends almost every afternoon and most weekends at the airport. Base of operations is his strategically located T-hangar, which faces the flight line and both runways and is just a short walk from the Final Approach. Around the airport, Funk's hangar is known as the clubhouse, as much for its ambiance as the activity. The walls are papered with aviation posters slowly taking the texture of parchment and fading photographs of friends and airplanes. Furnishings include a school bus bench seat, a well-stocked refrigerator that is operated on the honor system, concert hall stereo speakers, two full-size rolling tool boxes, work bench and parts closet, a handful of lawn chairs and a

collection of airport transportation conveyances, including golf cart, go-kart and motorcycle.

The centerpiece of the clubhouse is N89217, his gleaming, polished-aluminum Cessna 140 with silver-painted wings. Even in the dim light of the hangar, objects are clearly reflected in the mirror-like skin of the fuselage. It's apparent Funk spends a lot of time with a polishing rag in his hand.

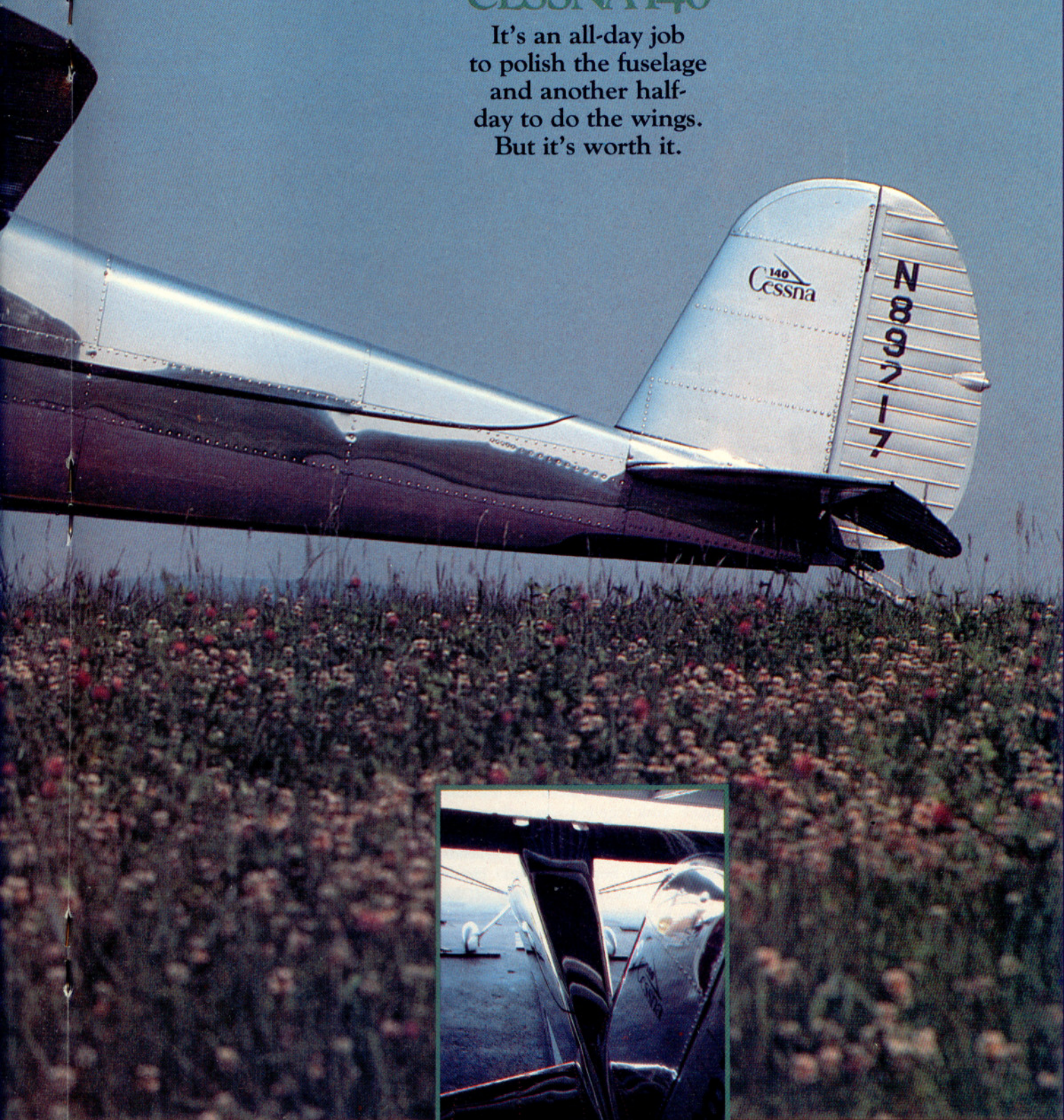
"I polish it every six weeks. If I let it go longer than that, I would have to use rubbing compound. It's an all-day job to do the fuselage and another half-day to do the wings. But it's worth it," explains Funk.

The clubhouse doors are almost always open, with the upturned, polished snout of the 140 peeking out. It's guaranteed that on weekends and warm evenings Funk and a half-dozen friends will be parked out front in lawn chairs, logging a few more hours of hangar flying. Between tales, runway arrivals and departures are critiqued.



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But it's worth it.



Colorless tricycle-gear aircraft rate silent jeers, while taildraggers and biplanes are treated with elder-statesmen-like respect. One afternoon, the rumbling takeoff of a visiting Beech 18, followed by a DC-3, very nearly prompted a standing ovation.

Every so often, someone will slowly rise, stretch and amble off to his own hangar. The doors are pushed back and out rolls an immaculate L-2 Aeronca trainer, a rare Lenape radial-engined Piper Cub or a Waco QLF-2 biplane. The double bank of T-hangars hides an astounding array of classic and antique aircraft, some of which make only rare appearances. It takes a good-weather weekend to lure the vintage hardware from their cubbies.

Funk and his friends are Sunday pilots. When they fly, it is for sport, and usually on good VFR days only. But they have the best of explanations for spending so much time at the airport for so little time in the air: They are having fun. T-hangar socializing and Stransky Night gatherings are as much a part of their flying as three-point landings. The same is true at yacht basins and vintage car clubs. People with a fondness for classic vehicles spend a lot of time around their toys. Often, just being around them is enough.

Restoring and maintaining a classic airplane adds to the pleasure. When Funk is not polishing his 140, he is talking about it, just hanging around it and, sometimes, flying it. "It's a good airplane for my kind of flying," he says—"just poking around."

This is Funk's ninth airplane, and his third Cessna 140. Two of the nine were Cessna 120s, the blood brother of the 140. Funk also has owned a Globe Swift, Piper Super Cub and Luscombe Silvaire, and he was part-owner of a Fairchild PT-23.

He bought this 140, a 1946 model, in 1983 from its second owner. The airplane sat in a hangar for 18 years without flying, but it was kept in license and received regular maintenance and engine run-ups. Funk bought the 140 with 900 hours on the airframe and 100 hours on the overhauled 85-hp Continental C-85-12.

To protect the fuselage while the airplane was in storage, the previous owner had drenched the bare aluminum in floor wax. Over the years, the wax had hardened to the consistency of concrete and had begun to corrode the aluminum. Funk ferried the air-

plane to Frederick, bought some rubbing compound and rolled up his sleeves. Six months and six gallons of compound later, he had removed enough of the floor wax to switch to an electric buffer. Finally, he was able to hand-polish the bare metal.

The second owner had recovered the original fabric wings with aluminum, a common modification on early Cessna 120s and 140s. (Cessna introduced the metal-wing Cessna 140A in 1949.) Funk painted the metal wings silver, along with the wing struts, control surfaces and wheel pants. A dark green trim stripe was applied, and a new



Bernie Funk, lead vocalist and 140 owner



green Airtex interior installed. The seat-belt webbing was replaced with new material—green, of course.

The ancient radio range receiver with its heavy power supply was removed and a single nav/com installed in its place. All other instruments are original. The metal panel was repainted to match the interior.

New Cleveland wheels and brakes were installed, along with new tires. Most of the nuts-and-bolts hardware in the airframe was replaced, but the only engine work required was replacement of a leaking front crankcase seal.

Funk spends many of his weekends attending or hosting fly-ins. He is Maryland state representative of the International Cessna 120/140 Association and fly-in director of the Potomac Antique Aero Squadron. He directs at least two fly-ins each year, and he takes his 140 to a number of others.

Cessna 120/140 gatherings are part swap meet, part tech sessions and part show circuit. Cessna club members spend hours comparing notes on maintenance squawks and newfound

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sources for inexpensive 120/140 parts.

Funk is a key player at these sessions. One reason is his inclination to become involved. "I'm a joiner," he admits. Besides leading Stransky Night and representing 300 120/140 members in Maryland, he is president of the airport association at Frederick. Funk's stature also derives from the stunning appearance of his 140. Few other airplanes of that vintage can rival its better-than-new condition.

The Cessna 140 is, in Funk's opinion, one of aviation's best-kept secrets. It cruises at a respectable 105 mph (91 knots) on 85 hp, using only about 4.5 gallons of fuel per hour. Funk claims it requires minimal maintenance, if you don't count the polishing.

Cessna manufactured more than 7,000 120/140s between 1946 and the end of the production run in 1951, although a few more are said to have trickled out of Wichita after that. Plenty are still flying. The average retail price for a good Cessna 120 is \$6,500, according to the summer 1985 edition of the *Aircraft Bluebook Price*

Digest, while a sharp, late-model 140 can be worth \$8,500, about 60 percent more than it sold for 36 years ago. Avionics equipment (beyond a basic nav/com) and a first-class restoration can bump up the price considerably.

The 120 was introduced concurrently with the 140 as the economy model. The major difference is the absence of flaps on the 120. The steerable tailwheel, electrical system, side fuselage window and mixture control were standard on the 140 but had to be ordered as options on the 120.

Early 140s were delivered with Stromberg carburetors that featured a mixture control designed only for leaning; there was no idle cut-off. To shut down the engine, the throttle is retarded and the mag switches flipped to the Off position. Many owners believe the mixture control is only marginally effective for leaning at altitudes below about 5,000 feet. Consequently, they have wired the mixture control in the full rich position. Later 140As had Marvel-Schebler carburetors with idle cut-off mixture controls.

In 1948, the 140 was offered with a 90-hp Continental C-90-12F engine and optional controllable pitch propeller. The next year, the 140A appeared with a metal-covered wing and single wing strut. The 140A's wing is six inches longer than the 140's fabric-covered wing and also has a tapered planform outboard of the flaps. It was the first Cessna model to incorporate the now-familiar tapered wing. The 140A wing is, in fact, virtually identical to the Cessna 150 wing. The 140A windshield also is interchangeable with the 150 windshield.

The Cessna 140 is neither very difficult nor extremely easy to fly. Like other tailwheel airplanes, it is at its most cantankerous taxiing out to the runway and on landing. The nose sits relatively high, and the seat and rudder pedal positions are fixed; there are no adjustments. A pilot of average height can reach the pedals comfortably but still must strain to peer over the top of the cowl. S-turn taxiing is required to make sure the road ahead is clear.

The Cleveland brakes on Funk's 140



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are very effective and very sensitive. A tap on a toe brake and a quick blip of the throttle ably assist the steerable tailwheel in executing a tight turn on the ramp.

Richard W. Kanode, a flight instructor, owner of two classic airplanes and Funk clubhouse regular, accompanied me when I flew Funk's 140. Kanode had some helpful advice. One of the final takeoff and landing checks is to make sure your toes are resting on the bottom of the rudder pedals. Kanode explained that any application of those brakes on roll-out could result in an embarrassing talk with Funk after the airplane is trailered off the field.

The rudder becomes effective once power is applied to start the takeoff roll, and a light tap dance on the pedals (toes on the bottom, remember) keeps the airplane tracking the runway centerline. Neutralizing the elevator allows the tail to rise slightly, and soon the airplane is ready to fly. Climbing out at about 70 mph (61 knots) with two aboard and the tanks three-quarters full, the 140 achieved a respectable 600 fpm ascent. The operating handbook promises 640 fpm at 81 mph (70 knots), the best rate-of-climb speed. At that speed, over-the-nose visibility is much improved.

It doesn't take long to get to cruise altitude. You don't need to go very high for the typical 140 mission: giving your passenger an exhilarating new view of his house and property from a proper altitude, or chasing a meandering river down off the hills. It might make sense on a long cross country to go high and take advantage of favorable winds, especially since the 140's 25-gallon fuel capacity (21 useable) affords an endurance of about four hours. But sitting for hours on end at

rarefied heights while congratulating yourself for bulls-eyeing the VOR stations just doesn't seem to be what the 140 is all about.

Part of the pleasure of owning a

tailwheel airplane is the added degree of difficulty in landing it. You have to fly a little harder than in a tricycle-gear airplane. Some tailwheel aircraft have reputations for trampling pilots' egos like spring grass in the touchdown zone. Fortunately, the 140 seems more sympathetic to persons of limited tailwheel experience.

The small size helps. It is less intimidating, physically, and doesn't have that heavy feel as if it will drop onto the runway like a basketball.

The 140 can be trimmed to fly a very stable 65- to 70-mph (56- to 61-knot) approach. The full, 40-degree dose of flaps succeeds in cranking down the nose somewhat, but with their modest chord, they are ineffective in generating much additional drag. The ailerons have a heavier feel than the size of the airplane suggests, but they are effective right down to the stall. The large rudder also contributes to the 140's maneuverability on short, slow final. Best of all for novice tailwheel pilots, the 140's spring-steel gear doesn't seem too eager to carom the airplane back in the air after a less-than-precise touchdown. The same claim can't be made for larger, springier tailwheel aircraft.

Funk, of course, is adept at finessing the 140 onto the runway with barely a shudder. He has practiced it often enough. Touch and goes are a staple among owners of classic airplanes. The endless landings hone skills, and the occasional botched attempt provides grist for the next Stransky Night. Every bounce will be recalled that Friday evening over a cool pitcher. Funk will pause in his tale only when the door to the Final Approach opens, and a stranger walks in.

Hey there! Hi there! Ho there!

You're as welcome as can be. . . □

1946 Cessna 140	
Base price \$3,345	
Current Market Value \$6,750-\$8,000	
Specifications	
Powerplant	Continental C-85-12, 85 hp @ 2,575 rpm
Recommended TBO	1,800 hr
Propeller	Sensenich 74FK-49
Length	20 ft 11.875 in
Height	6 ft 3.75 in
Wingspan	32 ft 10 in
Wing area	159.3 sq ft
Wing loading	9.1 lb/sq ft
Power loading	17.06 lb/hp
Seats	2
Empty weight	785 lb
Gross weight	1,450 lb
Useful load	665 lb
Payload w/full fuel	539 lb
Fuel capacity, std	150 lb (126 lb usable) 25 gal (21 gal usable)
Oil capacity	4.5 qt
Baggage capacity	80 lb
Performance	
Takeoff distance, ground roll	663 ft
Rate of climb, sea level	640 fpm
Max level speed, sea level	104 kt/120 mph
Cruise speed/range—no reserve, std fuel (fuel consumption)	
@ 2,400 rpm	91 kt (105 mph)/439 nm (28.8 pph/4.8 gph)
@ 2,200 rpm	80 kt (92 mph)/452 nm (25.2 pph/4.2 gph)
Service ceiling	15,500 ft
Landing distance, ground roll	302 ft (flaps up)
Limiting and Recommended Airspeeds	
V _y (Best rate of climb)	70 kt/81 mph
V _f e (Max flap extended)	71 kt/82 mph
V _n o (Max structural cruising)	100 kt/115 mph
V _n e (Never exceed)	122 kt/140 mph
V _s 1 (Stall clean)	43 kt/49 mph
V _s o (Stall in landing configuration)	39 kt/45 mph
<i>All specifications are based on manufacturer's calculations. All performance figures are based on standard day, standard atmosphere, at sea level and gross weight, unless otherwise noted.</i>	