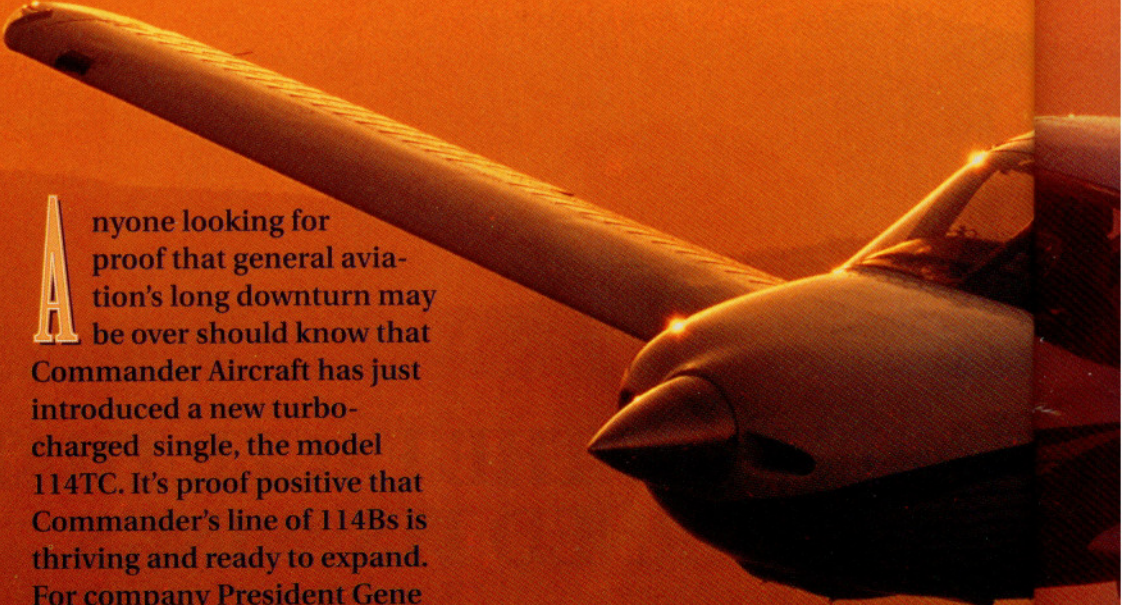


FIRST LOOK: Commander 114TC

The big news out of Bethany

BY THOMAS A. HORNE



Anyone looking for proof that general aviation's long downturn may be over should know that Commander Aircraft has just introduced a new turbocharged single, the model 114TC. It's proof positive that Commander's line of 114Bs is thriving and ready to expand. For company President Gene Criss, Commander's sales activity is chiefly explained by perceptions of the airplane's high quality—that, and the airplane's utility as a cost-effective means of traveling between locations that aren't connected by airline service. Don't get the idea that the

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FIZER

114TC is just a warmed-over version of the old Commander 112TC built by Rockwell back in the 1970s. The new 114TC was certified under an amendment to the original's type certificate. While the airframe may bear a resemblance to the earlier model, there's much that's new.

The biggest change is the engine. The 114TC has a 270-horsepower, turbo-charged Lycoming TIO-540-AG1A with an automatic wastegate. This is 60 more horsepower than the 112TC's Lycoming TO-360 could put out. The list of other improvements is a long one. These include a boost in fuel capacity to 88 gallons and a dedicated 135 ampere/hour alternator for the TC's optional (\$15,750) air conditioning system. Dual vacuum pumps, an intercom, and a digital clearance recorder are among the standard equipment.

AOPA Pilot was on hand for the 114TC's introduction on August 5, an event that coincided with Commander's first international fly-in. This all took place at Commander's ancestral home at Bethany, Oklahoma's Wiley Post Airport.

At the appropriate moment in Criss' speech, three spanking-new 114TCs rounded the bend in a taxiway leading to Commander's huge service hangar and taxied to a formation stop in front of the assembled guests. People stopped feasting on their barbecue lunches, and the gawking began.

The airplane we flew was one of the three—N495TC, an airplane destined to leave the next day with its proud new owner, Tim Barry. Barry runs Barry Aviation, an FBO

and Commander authorized sales and service center at the Kings Land O' Lakes Airport in Wisconsin.

Though Oklahoma was gripped in a sauna-like triple-digit heat wave, Barry's TC was impressively cool inside. Cabin temperatures

draw down quickly after the air conditioning is brought on line. Keeping engine rpm up around 1,500 rpm helps ensure that things in the cabin remain cool.

With two aboard and full fuel, the TC's initial climb rate was an impressive 1,300 fpm, given the density altitude. A cruise climb of 105 KIAS was established, and by 8,000 feet the climb rate sagged a bit, dropping to 900 fpm. Cylinder head temperatures ran high, with the needle just touching the bottom of the indicator's red arc. And that was with the electrically actuated

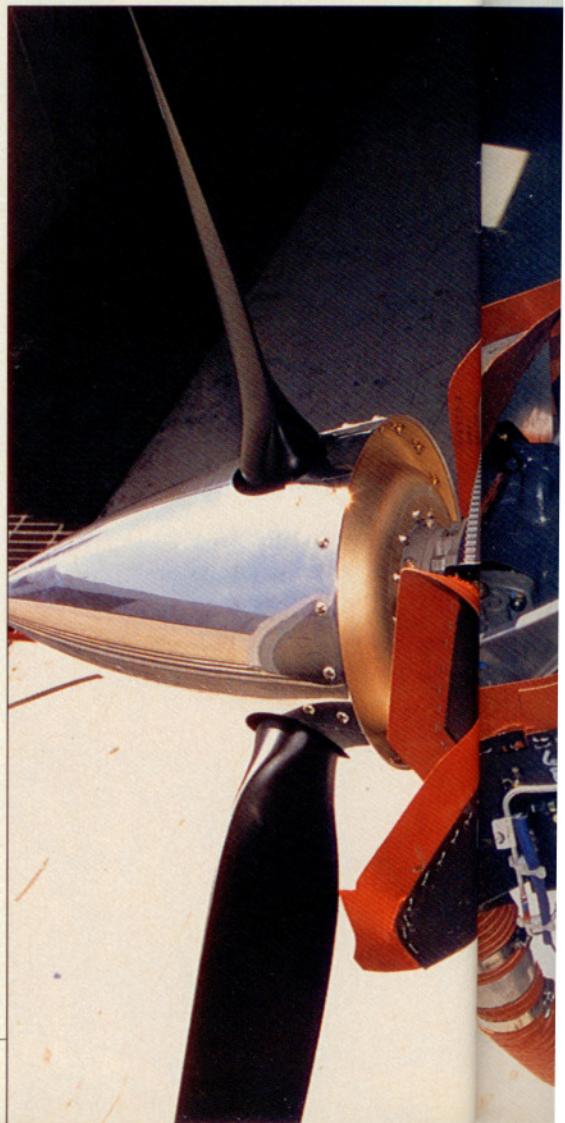
cowl flaps at the full-open position. (There are only two positions for the TC's cowl flaps: fully closed or fully open.)

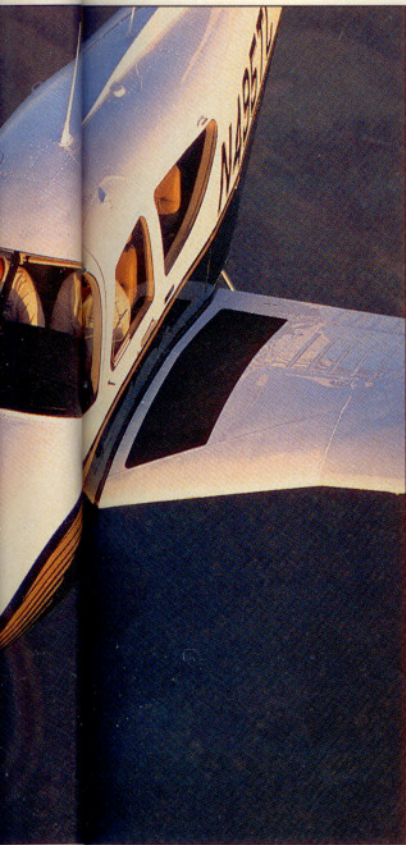
We leveled at 14,500 feet, and at a high cruise setting—28 inches of manifold pressure and 2,400 rpm—our true airspeed worked out to be 175 knots. Again, very good under the circumstances. Outside air temperature was 10 degrees Celsius, or about ISA +23 degrees; fuel burn was 17 gph. Commander claims a maximum true cruise airspeed of 183 KTAS, at the TC's maximum authorized altitude of 25,000 feet.

By this time the air conditioning had long been shut off. Should the main alternator fail, we could use the air conditioner's more powerful alternator to run the ship's electrical system. It doesn't work the other way around, however. Besides, it's

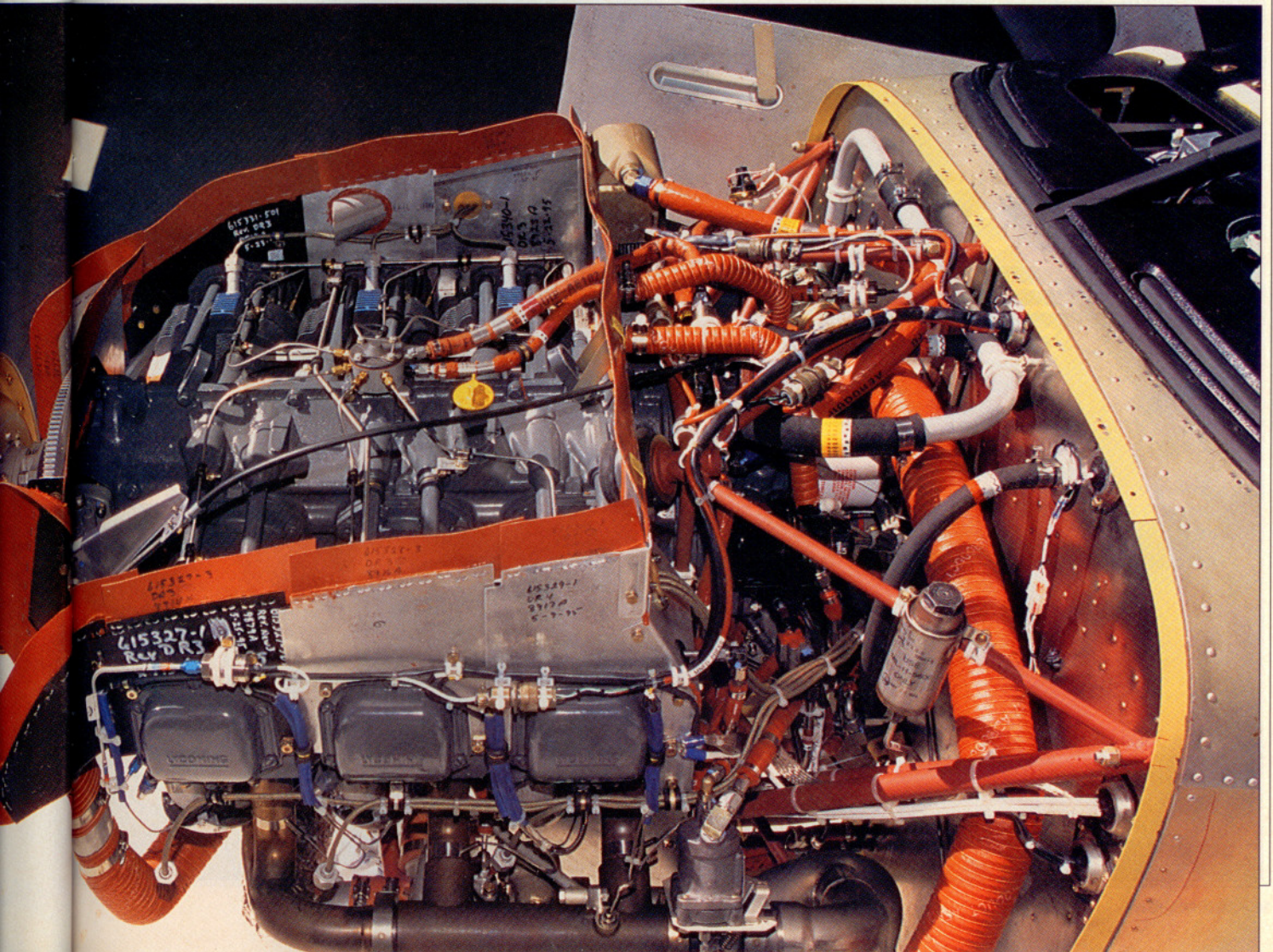


The 98-pound air conditioning system runs off its own 135-amp alternator and uses a large fuselage-mounted intake door.

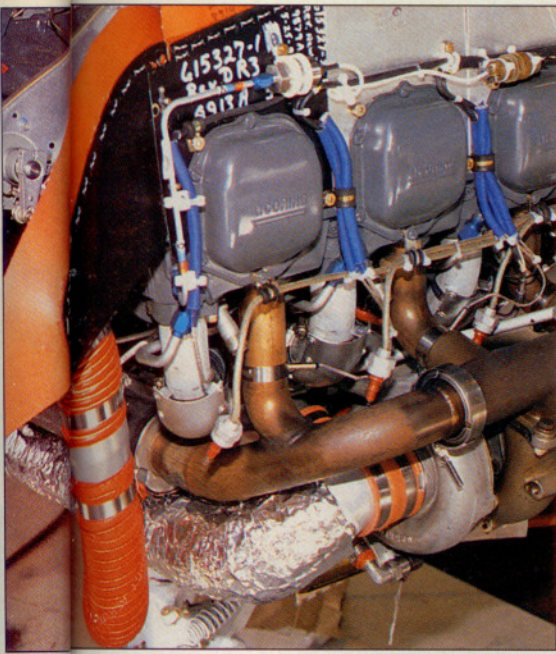




A large, well-equipped panel including GPS, autopilot, optional oxygen, and lightning detection equipment rounds out a cavernous and comfortable interior (above). Below, the turbocharged Lycoming TIO-540 puts out 270 hp at a quiet 2,575 rpm. Engine temperature control is aided by a pair of electrically actuated cowl flaps.







An automatic wastegate controls the TC's boost (above). For 1995, Commanders get a faired-in beacon light atop the tail (below).



hard to imagine a pilot with a failed a/c risking his entire electrical system in an effort to beat the heat.

An oxygen system is a \$2,850 option; N495TC had this and just about every other option you could order. A King KLN-90 GPS, Insight Strike Finder, GEM engine analyzer, King KR-87 ADF (yes, it's optional), altitude preselect, and Bose headsets—they were all there. So, too, was an S-TEC System 55 autopilot, a \$28,000 unit that has recently been certified on the 114TC. All told, Barry's TC priced out at \$447,575. Base price of the TC is \$348,500.

Fact is, Barry's price isn't unusual. Most Commanders leave the factory with similar equipment lists. Virtually all have leather seats, an option that runs a paltry \$1,500.

This gets to the profile of Commander operators. They value the airplane's stout construction and comfortable, spacious cabin above all. Nearly all can swing a \$100,000 option list.

It's clear that Commander has cut out a healthy niche for itself. Since 1992, when the then-new company took the 114B into production, more than 100 of those airplanes have been sold (see "A Corporate Single," April *Pilot*). The

future looks promising for the 114TC, as well. Four were sold sight-unseen, and Commander expects that soon half of its four-per-month production schedule will be taken up with building TCs.

The 114TC is a natural extension



■

**More than 100
Commander 114Bs
have sold since 1992,
while six TCs have been
sold since August.**

of Commander's product line. But it's not the only new development on the company's horizon. An advanced trainer model of the 114B, called the 114AT, is due for its first deliveries.

We'll keep you posted on the TC and AT in future issues, a job we'll thoroughly enjoy. □

<p>Commander 114TC Base price: \$348,500</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Specifications</p> <p>Powerplant Lycoming TIO-540-AG1A, 270 hp @ 2,575 rpm Recommended TBO 2,000 hr Propeller McCauley, three-blade, 77-in diameter Length 24 ft 11 in Height 8 ft 5 in Wingspan 32 ft 9 in Wing area 152 sq ft Wing loading 21.7 lb/sq ft Power loading 12.2 lb/hp Seats 4 Cabin length 75 in Cabin width 47 in Cabin height 49 in Empty weight 2,245 lb Max gross weight 3,305 lb Useful load 1,060 lb Payload w/full fuel 532 lb Fuel capacity, std 90 gal (88 gal usable) 540 lb (528 lb usable)</p>	<p>Max landing weight 3,140 lb Baggage capacity 200 lb, 22 cu ft</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Performance</p> <p>Takeoff distance, ground roll 1,350 ft Takeoff distance over 50-ft obstacle 2,070 ft Rate of climb, sea level 1,050 fpm Cruise speed/endurance w/45-min rsv, std fuel (fuel consumption) @ 75% power, best economy 183 kt/3.4 hr 25,000 ft (94 pph/15.7 gph) Max operating altitude 25,000 ft Landing distance over 50-ft obstacle 1,200 ft Landing distance, ground roll 720 ft</p> <p><i>For more information, contact Commander Aircraft Company, Wiley Post Airport, 7200 N.W. Sixty-third Street, Bethany, Oklahoma 73008; telephone 405/495-8080, fax 405/495-8383.</i></p> <p><i>All specifications are based on manufacturer's calculations. All performance figures are based on standard day, standard atmosphere, sea level, gross weight conditions unless otherwise noted.</i></p>
--	---