

# Ticket to


Not the least ex



# BONANZA F33A Ticket to Adventure

Not the least expensive ride, but one of the best

BY MICHAEL MAYA CHARLES



**F**or many general aviation pilots, the word *Bonanza* means ultimate piston single. For owner David Ovad and fiancée Deb Mathein of Blairstown, New Jersey, Bonanza means ticket to adventure. ■ A little more than three years ago, Ovad was a 275-hour private pilot looking to buy his first single-engine airplane, something with good cross-country performance and speed.

He considered several airplanes, including Mooneys and a few Cessna singles. Finally, though, the utility, performance, reputation, and—well, the handsome lines and aura of the Beech

Bonanza won him over. His search took him to Memphis, where he found a very clean, no-damage F33A model with 2,700 hours total time and a fresh factory-remanufactured Continental engine. ■

When his search for the ultimate adventure machine began, Ovad had no instrument rating, yet he wisely realized how important it was to be as weather-capable as the airplanes he was considering. Instrument training began the month before he showed up in Memphis, check in hand, to pick up his new airplane. Ovad had big plans for his new Bonanza and didn't

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want weather to interfere.

Ovad's Bonanza is a "straight-tailed" F33A. Don't call it a Debonair—that won't endear you to any F33 owner. Yes, the F33 grew from the classic 225-horsepower Debonair, but to call Ovad's F33A a Debonair is like calling the Piper Cheyenne a Navajo, or a Cessna 206 a big 172. When Beech's Debonair made its first flight in September 1959, the idea was to offer a cheaper alternative to the V-tail Bonanza to compete with the Piper Comanche; not surprisingly, the straight-tail Debonair soon acquired the moniker "poor man's Bonanza" because of its Spartan options list.

But Debonair buyers of the early 1960s demanded many of the options that were offered on the more expensive Bonanza until, by the mid-1960s, most Debonairs were ordered with virtually all of the Bonanza goodies, leaving few differences between the two airplanes.

In 1966, the C33A Debonair introduced the 285-hp Continental IO-520 to the straight-tail airframe. With the introduction of the E33 two years later, Beech began calling the no-longer-budget bird what everybody already knew it to be—a Bonanza, although the "poor man's" moniker hung around for several years afterward. The 285-hp Bonanza in 1970 eclipsed the 225-hp model, which was last produced in 1971. (A handful of 260-hp G33 Bonanzas were also produced, in 1971 and 1972.)

Ovad loves the cross-country capability of his airplane. With the aftermarket Osborne tip tanks, his aircraft has 114 gallons of fuel capacity, enough for almost nine hours of flying in reduced-power operations. This fuel gives him lots of flexibility and peace of mind, especially in bad weather. The Bonanza's comfortable cabin has allowed Ovad to fly nine-hour days in the aircraft, and "you don't feel like you've been tortured," when you finish, he says.

In cruise, Ovad finds that his Bonanza delivers 158 to 162 knots true airspeed at 6,000 feet, burning 12.2 gallons per hour; this equates to about 65 percent power. This lower-than-book fuel flow reflects the savings of GAMInjectors which he had installed; Ovad claims that the balanced fuel injectors knock off about a gallon to a gallon and a half per hour of charted fuel flow by safely allowing the engine to run leaner.

Maintenance is a big concern of Ovad's and he is the first to admit that he probably spends more on maintenance than does the average Bonanza owner. "I'm very particular about maintaining the aircraft," he says. Although Bonanzas have a reputation for being expensive to keep, Ovad figures he spends only about \$3,000 a year for his annual inspections. Not too bad for almost 200 hours of flying. "I figure if I'm going to fly the aircraft over the Gulf of Mexico or the Blue Ridge Mountains, then I





**Calling this Bonanza a Debonair will not endear you to any F33A owner.**



need that comfort level." He calculates the total cost of the Bonanza at about \$87 per hour.

Ovad does his own oil changes every 25 hours—twice as often as recommended on an oil filter-equipped engine—and he has the oil analyzed; he then tracks the various metal contaminants in a computer spreadsheet program to keep a running trend. In more than three years and 600 hours of ownership, maintenance has been mostly routine; he has replaced the prop (it was a McCauley that was subject to an airworthiness directive) but has had no other big surprises.

When the airplane was down for the lengthy prop replacement, Ovad confessed that he really suffered without his airplane. But the new three-blade prop was finally installed and balanced, and Ovad flew the airplane home. When he popped out on top of an overcast on that flight, he told himself, "I'd sell my soul to the devil before I'd let this thing go."

Ovad readily admits that he "likes gadgets and toys," and added a J.P. Instruments engine monitor early on to track the health of his engine. He keeps a running record of those vital trends in his computer spreadsheet program also. When he bought the airplane, it had King KX-175s and an older II Morrow Ioran installed. Ovad updated the panel with new AlliedSignal Bendix/King navcoms, DME, a KLN 89B IFR GPS, and a PS Engineering audio panel.

Ovad's adventures in his Bonanza include taking short jaunts to Nantucket or Atlantic City with clients and their wives, often flying along the Hudson River or over Staten Island as a bonus. He's also delivered high-priority electrical products to customers of his electrical supply business to "save the day," although these flights are clearly out-of-the-office-adventures disguised as rescue missions. Longer treks to Nova Scotia, Belize, Colorado, Florida, or New Orleans are flown with his fiancée, well, just because those places are there and need exploring.

Ovad figures that he and Mathein are alone in the airplane about 70 percent of the time. She enjoys these flying adventures and has 20 hours in her logbook, but she is not interested in pursuing her private pilot certificate—at least not now. She understands the constant radio chatter and loves to navigate, especially with the new GPS.

Next summer, Ovad plans to fly the Atlantic in his Bonanza, then spend some time flying around Europe. He has already started planning for that long over-water trip and was surprised to learn how easily his long-range Bonanza will accommodate the legs across the northern "land bridge" route through Ireland and Nova Scotia.

When I flew Ovad's pride and joy for the photos that accompany this article, I hadn't



## The Bonanza has a loyal, almost cult-like following.

flown a Bonanza in a few years. Just as I remembered, the

Bonanza is a fine-flying airplane—Beech seems to pay a lot of attention to handling qualities—although the tip tanks create more roll inertia than does a standard airplane. With tip tanks full, the airplane is a little ponderous in roll.

There are a few things about the Bonanza that I don't particularly like: one is the fuel selector's location on the floor, just below the pilot's left knee, which requires the pilot to nearly put his head between his knees to switch tanks—it's not easy to see or find the right detent. The power controls are located low in the center of the panel, well below eye level, making it easy to grab the wrong lever in times of high work load.

The main cabin door is hard to keep open on the ground. On many older Bonanzas, someone has allowed the wind to catch the door, swinging it open abruptly, twisting the door, and widening the stay-open bar track. Before flight, it is difficult to know if the door is locked just by looking.

There are things that offset these petty gripes, though: the engine cowl opens easily, allowing (and encouraging) a thorough inspection of the engine before flight. It's also a well-built airplane with tough and reliable landing gear. Lighting and panel layout are good. The cockpit is roomy and comfortable; visibility is among the best in the business. There's lots of room for passengers and baggage. The hat shelf in the rear baggage area was removed beginning with the 1971 model, resulting in a 19-inch interior cabin stretch. Later versions had an optional larger baggage door.

The Bonanza has a loyal, almost cult-like following; the faithful are served by an excellent owner organization, the American Bonanza Society (ABS), with 10,000 owners and enthusiasts. ABS produces a monthly magazine that rivals some newsstand offerings and deals very thoroughly with Bonanza maintenance and operational issues. ABS is also an advocate for its members, putting pressure on Beech/Raytheon to reduce parts prices; some are coming

down. One notable example is ABS's efforts to reduce the price of the shoulder harness retrofit kit by half.

For many of these owners and enthusiasts, the Bonanza is still a benchmark, a symbol that one has arrived. For David Ovad and Deb Mathein, however, the Bonanza is not about arriving, but a great way to get there. Their Bonanza sits quietly in the hangar near their home awaiting their next adventure, a window to a nearly limitless number of new discoveries and new places to fly. □

### 1970 Beech F33A Bonanza

Price when new: \$34,150 standard, \$45,215 equipped

Current Vref value: \$140,250

Specifications		Cruise speed/endurance w/45-min rsv @ 75% power	
Powerplant	Teledyne Continental IO-520-BA		172 kts/6.75 hr
	Recommended TBO	1,700 hrs	Max operating altitude
Propeller	McCauley Blackmac 3-blade		17,500 ft
Length	26 ft 8 in		Landing distance, ground roll
Height	8 ft 3 in		780 ft
Wingspan	32 ft 10 in		Landing distance over 50-ft obstacle
Wing area	177.6 sq ft		1,325 ft
Wing loading	19.1 lb/sq ft w/o tip tanks (19.71 lb/sq ft w/tip tanks)		
Power loading	11.9 lb/hp w/o tip tanks (12.28 lb/hp w/tip tanks)		
Seats	4	<b>Limiting and Recommended Airspeeds</b>	
Empty weight, as tested	2,166 lb	V <sub>X</sub> (best angle of climb)	77 KIAS
Max gross weight	3,500 lb	V <sub>Y</sub> (best rate of climb)	96 KIAS
Useful load	1,344 lb	V <sub>A</sub> (design maneuvering)	134 KIAS
Payload w/full fuel	660 lb	V <sub>FE</sub> (max flap extended)	123 KIAS
Fuel capacity (long-range fuel)		V <sub>LE</sub> (max gear extended)	154 KIAS
Mains	80 gal (74 gal usable)	V <sub>NO</sub> (max structural cruising)	167 KIAS
Tip tanks	40 gal (40 gal usable)	V <sub>NE</sub> (never exceed)	196 KIAS
Oil capacity	12 qt	V <sub>S1</sub> (stall, clean)	64 KIAS
Baggage capacity	270 lb	V <sub>SO</sub> (stall, in landing configuration)	54 KIAS
Performance			
Takeoff distance, ground roll	1,000 ft		
Takeoff distance over 50-ft obstacle	1,700 ft		
Max demonstrated crosswind component	17 kt		
Rate of climb, sea level	1,136 fpm		

For more information, contact the American Bonanza Society, Mid-Continent Airport, Post Office Box 12888, Wichita, Kansas 67277; telephone 316/945-6913, facsimile 316/945-1710, or visit the Web site ([www.bonanza.org](http://www.bonanza.org)). The World Beechcraft Society is located at 436 Muirlands Drive, La Jolla, California 92037-6827; telephone 619/565-9735.

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.