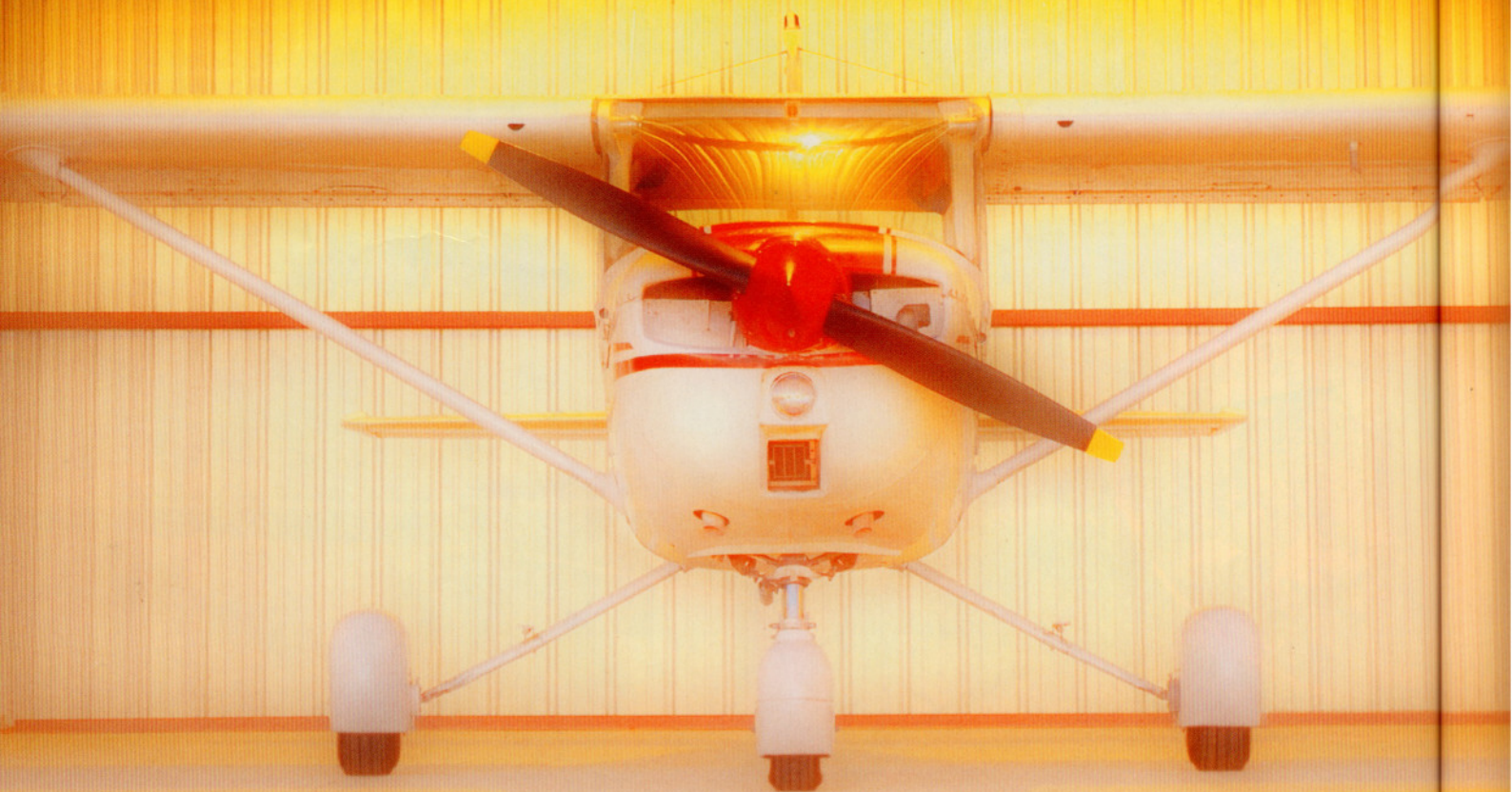
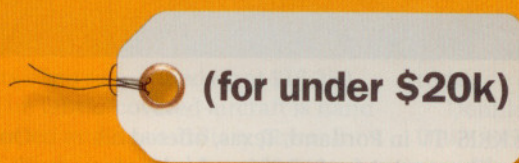


# *Dream Big*







## Proof that an affordable airplane does exist

**BY ALTON K. MARSH**

Did you ever wish there was an airplane for exactly the same price as a car—maybe less? A check of bulletin boards, the *Trade-A-Plane* website, and *Barnstormers.com* shows that a \$20,000 buy is possible. And calls to owners of 10 such aircraft reveal that you may even find airplanes for less in this economy.

It's a buyer's market. Some of the aircraft listed on the next pages went through several price reductions before finding a buyer. There are several reasons for that. It was winter when this article was written and buyers just don't like shopping in the cold. Also, they don't want to pay airfare to check out an airplane they might not buy. Most of the aircraft in this price category are fabric-covered, meaning owners know they should rent a hangar—which adds an additional expense.

Half of the ones found for less than \$20,000 are tailwheel aircraft. If you want to find a bargain, you might first invest in a tailwheel endorsement to broaden your options.

Here are 10 aircraft that either were selling for \$20,000 or less, or were flying in pristine condition by owners who vowed never to sell. Still, they offer proof that the \$20,000 airplane exists.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE FIZER





### Ercoupe

Dan King of KRIS-TV in Portland, Texas, offered his 1961 Ercoupe/Forney A-1 for \$17,900 and sold it for \$16,000. It has a modified gull-wing canopy that, while it can't be opened in flight, reduces drag. The aircraft delivers 95 knots while burning seven gallons per hour in its 100-horsepower Continental O-200 engine.

Only 25 of the Ercoupe/Forney A-1 aircraft were built, so your chances of finding one are slim.

"It's excellent for anyone learning to fly," King said. It has been modified to include rudder pedals, since the original Ercoupes don't have them. Learn more about the Ercoupe in the article, "Easy Flyer" (March 2012 *AOPA Pilot*).



### Piper Tomahawk

A 1980 Piper Tomahawk, listed for \$19,500, had all the modifications required by airworthiness directives to strengthen key parts of the airframe and add stall strips to the leading edge of the wing. Buster Colvin of Big Cabin, Oklahoma, said he gets 95 knots true airspeed with the Lycoming O-235 engine. It has 6,100 hours on the airframe, a bit high, but only 42 hours on the engine since overhaul.

It sold for \$17,000 to a buyer in Argentina after a long hunt for a new home in the United States.

"I like them [Tomahawks] because they are roomy. You sit like you do at the kitchen table, with feet on the floor, instead of stretched out in front of you like the Cessna," Colvin, a former Tomahawk dealer, said.



### Piper Colt

A 1961 Piper Colt found in South Carolina for \$19,500 has an economical 108-horsepower Lycoming O-235 engine. It hasn't sold in a year and the owner is ready to listen to offers.

It has two seats instead of the similar Tri-Pacer's four, but that means there is a large baggage area. Expect a cruise speed of 100 mph true airspeed, burning six gallons per hour.

Don Ratliff of American King Air Services in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, said he had to price the Colt at \$19,500 only because the annual inspection cost \$5,000. The aircraft has 2,655 total hours, but only 481 hours since a major engine overhaul. It comes with a radio, transponder, and intercom.



### Luscombe 8A

The 1946 Luscombe 8A qualifies as a Light Sport aircraft, meaning it can be flown using a valid driver's license in lieu of an FAA medical certificate. The asking price last year was \$19,500 (down from \$21,500). Now, it's down to \$16,000. The reason? Honest salesmanship.

Doug Colley of Seattle is selling it for the widow of the former owner, but he admits he tells potential buyers about every little nick and scrape. Actually, it has \$27,000 of repairs in it.

A battery is used to power lights and instruments, but there is no generator or alternator to recharge it—the battery must be recharged on the ground. "There are a lot of good ones out there but you need to watch for corrosion," Colley said.





#### Cessna 140

Why get a Cessna 140 instead of a Cessna 120? You get an electrical system, for one thing; you also get flaps and back windows. A two-seat 1946 Cessna 140 was for sale last year by owner Bob Lemmon of Fort Worth, Texas, for \$19,500 (down from \$21,500). The final selling price was \$18,000.

Lemmon's 85-horsepower Continental C-85, the same engine as on the Cessna 120, gives him about 95 mph true airspeed. "It's more of a toy for hopping around to eat lunch somewhere," Lemmon said.

His 140 has a polished metal body but a fabric wing. Learn more about the Cessna 120/140 in "Drag Your Tail Cheaply" (October 2011 *AOPA Pilot*) or find it on AOPA Online.



#### Aeronca 11BC Super Chief

The 1946 Aeronca 11BC Super Chief two-seater also qualifies as a Light Sport aircraft. Verlyn Wolfe of Wolfe Aviation in Stockton, California, said the price started in the mid-20s and after two years of no sale, ended up at \$16,250.

The fabric-covered aircraft is hand-propped and has auxiliary power for a GPS. There is an air-driven alternator.

Here's an idea of what you can expect for the price. There were 3,435 hours on the Super Chief Wolfe sold, and 994 hours on the engine, which has an 1,800-hour time between engine overhauls. Wolfe gave the interior a rating of six out of 10. It uses a 75-horsepower Continental A-75. "You are happy to do 70 knots, and are burning four gallons per hour," Wolfe said.



#### Taylorcraft

This 1946 Taylorcraft qualifies as a Light Sport aircraft, as well, although the one found for this article is not for sale. It is valued at \$20,000, and at least gives you an idea of the Taylorcraft flying today.

Dennis Wolter of Air Mod in Batavia, Ohio, who has refurbished the interiors of five AOPA sweepstakes airplanes, can't part with his 65-horsepower BC-12D Taylorcraft. "Be careful, it's easy to lose your heart to a cutie like this," Wolter said. Wolter gets 95 mph to 100 mph true airspeed, burning only four gallons of fuel per hour.

"It's an amazing little airplane," Wolter said. "It will truly get 20 miles to the gallon. It's about as green as you can get."

#### Cessna 120

A two-seat 1946 Cessna 120 was sold last year by owner Loren Hirman of Lester Prairie, Minnesota, for \$19,500. It had flown 905 hours since the 85-horsepower Continental C-85 engine was overhauled. There were 3,597 hours on the airframe.

Hirman burned only 4.5 gallons per hour, but got between 110 and 115 mph true airspeed. "It's hands-off stable in smooth air," he said. He had owned the aircraft since the 1970s, and used it for giving his kids rides, he said. His longest trip was about 200 miles.







### Cessna 150

There are many Cessna 150s, offered by a variety of sellers, from which to choose on the *Trade-A-Plane* website—even an IFR 1966 Cessna 150 for \$20,000.

To give you an idea of what is available, a 1972 Cessna 150 in Columbus, Ohio, was listed in *Trade-A-Plane* for \$16,900. The owner said the interior and exterior are a seven on a scale of 10, which he considers to be “stan-

dard.” It is powered by a 100-horsepower Continental O-200 engine, and has dual radios and an intercom. The total time on the aircraft, as you might expect of this former trainer, is high at 11,728 hours. For more on the Cessna 150 and 152 (a Cessna 152 costs between \$20,000 and \$30,000), see “The Last Affordable Airplane” (August 2001 *AOPA Pilot*).

## Be an owner

*Aircraft ownership doesn't need to be out of reach*

Most aircraft are underutilized—sharing the cost of aircraft ownership makes financial sense. In fact, sharing with just one person reduces the total cost of ownership by 50 percent—and more sharing means even more savings. Find a partner in ownership with the AOPA Aircraft Partnership Program (<http://ap.aopa.org>) and be a renter no more.



### Piper Tri-Pacer

Corey Marvin, 77, of Wadsworth, Ohio, first listed his 100-mph 1953 Piper Tri-Pacer for \$14,900 but it has since been reduced to \$13,950.

"If it's hot and humid, this four-seater is a two-person airplane," says his wife, Karen. The 135-horsepower Lycoming O-290 engine burns seven gallons per hour and still has a few hundred hours left before it needs an overhaul.

It has been advertised on Barnstormers.com for a year, and friends have placed flyers all over the country.

**AOPA**

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## Words of warning

*Things to watch for when buying on the cheap*

Air Mod's Dennis Wolter, located in Batavia, Ohio, warns buyers of older aircraft to have a qualified mechanic do a thorough prepurchase inspection. Of special concern is the condition of fabric, if any; tubing; wooden spars; and especially corrosion in all-metal aircraft such as an Ercoupe. If possible, find a mechanic who has model-specific experience.