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Beech 55 Baron

This follow-on to the Travel Air combines a Bonanza fuselage with two engines. The result is a timeless classic.

By **estaff** - **Published:** February 28, 2001 **Updated:** October 29, 2019

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To many pilots, the Bonanza is the paradigm of the business single. The Baron represents the same image when it comes to the light twin. These aircraft have a reputation for high quality, good handling, excellent performance, and high cost of ownership. Theyre not for everybody, but they engender great loyalty amongst their owners.

But, like any other airplane, the 55 Baron embodies some important compromises. For instance, what many find to be pleasant handling characteristics can prove to be a handful in bad weather. Also, many Barons have the infamous Beech backwards gear- and flap-switch arrangement (not to mention the non-standard throttle quadrant), which has long been the bane of transitioning pilots. Despite its reputation as easy to fly, the airplane does require good initial and recurrent training.

History

Like the Bonanza, the Baron comes in two sizes, long- (58) and short-cabin (55). There are several sub-types: The 58 could be had for a time with turbocharged engines and, if desired, pressurization. The 55 was available with two sizes of engine. Today, only the straight 58 Baron is still in production.

The Model 55 was Beech Aircrafts first Baron. The airplane was introduced in 1961 as a replacement for the 95 Travel Air, in a move to keep up with Cessnas 310 and Pipers Aztec. Like the Model 95 Travel Air, the 55 comprised a Bonanzas fuselage fitted with a conventional tail. But, instead of the Travel Airs rather anemic 180-HP Lycomings, the original Baron packed 260-HP Continental IO-470L engines.

After building 190 Barons that first year, Beech came out with the A55, which has a 10-inch longer fuselage and could be ordered with a second fold-down rear seat, bringing potential seating capacity to six (more on that later). A total of 309 A55s were built in 1962 and 63. The airplanes nose then was extended seven inches to provide more room for baggage and avionics equipment, and gross weight was bumped from 4,880 to 5,000 pounds. The airplane was redesignated B55. This variant stayed in production the longest (until 1983, when all 55s were dropped from the line, along with the 58TC and V-tail Bonanza), and exists in the greatest numbers.

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Beech built 1,954 of the long-nose B55s from 1964 through 1982 (not including about 70 T-42A versions for the U.S. Army). Among a number of minor refinements during this time was an increase in gross weight to 5,100 pounds, starting with S/N TC-955 in mid-1965. (Earlier B55s were eligible for the higher gross through a Beech STC kit.)

The big-engine version arrived two years after the B55. The C55 Baron appeared in 1966 with a 12-inch longer fuselage and 285-HP Continental IO-520C engines. The little Baron with the big engines also was certified with a gross weight of 5,300 pounds. The airplane was redesignated the D55 in 1968 and the E55 in 1970. It, too, was dropped from production in 1983, after 1,201 were built (451 Cs, 316 Ds and 434 Es).

Big-engine 55 Barons are easily identified by the air scoops atop the cowlings. The difference in length is less obvious, but it shows up when it comes time to load the airplane: The nose baggage compartment is larger, as is the cabin. Other differences included the level of standard equipment, and the availability of a 166-gallon fuel system on the big-engine version.

Non-standard systems

When youre designing an airplane, you have to put the controls somewhere, and for better or worse Beech chose long ago to put the flap switch on the left, and the gear on the right. Theres nothing at all wrong with that arrangement, but as it happened everybody else decided to do it the other way around.

The result was (and is) predictable: A new Baron pilot reaches for the flap switch on rollout, and retracts the gear instead. The record shows a long string of gear goofs over the years.

The picture is further confused by the fact that, in response to customer pressure and its long history of gear-retraction accidents, in later years Beech changed the controls around so they matched the rest of the industry. (This only showed up in later versions of the 58 Baron: the 55 was out of production by the time the change was made.) The backwards switches arent really a bad design, its just that a pilot has to remain aware of them. Many Baron pilots make a particular point of touching nothing until theyre clear of the runway and stopped, so that they can devote their full attention to the controls.

Beechs throttle quadrant, too, is different. Instead of the more usual throttle-prop-mixture, Beech put the throttles in the middle.

While there have been some fuel mismanagement accidents, the Barons system is simpler than some others. Early models can draw fuel into their engines either from the main tanks (37 usable gallons, each side) or the auxiliaries (31 gal/side). The fuel system was simplified in 1974 with interconnected tanks and three-position (on, off, crossfeed) selectors. Also that year, extra aux tanks became available for the E55 model, boosting max fuel capacity to 166 gallons.

Accommodations

The cabin is spacious, plush and comfortable. The tapered fuselage, however, tends to put a cramp on any normal-sized adults banished to the rear seats, though it does provide a couple of big windows to ease their exile. Since the rear seats can be gained only by clambering over the middle seats or through the baggage hatch, theyre of little use. Many pilots just get rid of them, preferring to use the space for baggage.

The front seat of a 55 Baron has to qualify as one of the worlds greatest places to be, with comfort enhanced by a retractable center armrest, adjustable rudder pedals, lots of headroom and good visibility. Minor spoilers are a lack of room to stow charts and a massive control bar that hides various switches and breakers.

Useful loads in the accompanying specifications are maximums. A typically equipped 260-HP Baron can carry about 1,800 pounds of people, bags and fuel; a 285-HP model, about 1,950 pounds. There is no zero-fuel-weight restriction, but care is needed to avoid busting the aft CG when the rear seats or aft baggage compartment is used. Balancing the load is facilitated by a nose compartment that can hold up to 300 pounds (270 in early models with gross weights below 5,100 pounds). With the fifth and sixth seats removed, 400 pounds can be loaded in the rear cabin; and many Barons have an extended aft baggage compartment approved to hold up to 120 pounds.

Performance

True airspeed of a small-engined Baron cruising at 75 percent power is about 190 knots on 27 gallons of fuel per hour. Thats faster than the naturally

aspirated Aztec and Cessna 310, but a good bit off the Aerostars pace. The big-engined Baron is about five knots faster and five GPH thirstier than its stablemate.

Takeoff and landing performance is average. A B55, for instance, can take off or land over a 50-foot obstacle within 2,160 feet. The E55 needs only about 2,050 feet to clear the obstacle on takeoff but a bit more than 2,200 feet to get back over it on landing. Short-field technique can cut these figures roughly in half, but it is rather hairy (involving lift-off below Vmc, for example). Two-engine climb rates of 1,630 to 1,700 FPM for the small-engined Barons and 1,670 to 1,680 FPM for the more powerful models outpace the Aztec by a wide margin but lag behind the Aerostar and 310. The B55s single-engine ROC is a paltry 318 FPM-again, better only than the Aztec. At 388 FPM, the E55s single-engine performance is about par with the 310 and Aerostar.

Handling

The 55 Baron is proof that a light twin doesnt have to handle like a truck. Responsive and well-harmonized, the airplanes controls are one of its biggest selling points. As one owner put it, Once youve flown an E55, everything else feels like a tin can. As mentioned earlier, however, hand-flying may be delightful in nice weather, but when it gets bumpy, an autopilot comes in handy.

There are trim controls for elevator, rudder and ailerons. Early models have relatively low gear- and flap-extension speeds (143 and 113 knots, respectively). Gear speed was raised to 152 knots, beginning with airplanes built in 1969. The B55 came with approval to lower flaps 15 degrees at 153 knots, and full-flap speed was raised to 122 knots, beginning with TC-955 in 1965.

ADs

The IO-470L generally is considered a bulletproof engine, though a few owners, as well as several Service Difficulty Reports, mentioned occasional cylinder problems. The IO-520s reputation is not so good; operators have been beset by cracking crankcases. Continentals switch to so-called heavy cases in the late 70s helped somewhat, but case cracks (and broken camshafts) have appeared rather frequently in the SDRs. The engines are the target of a recent AD, applicable to the E55 (97-26-17) calls for ultrasonic inspection of the crankshaft, with possible replacement.

Among the notable Airworthiness Directives are: 87-18-06 Rev. 1, requiring replacement of recline-actuator handles on copilot and center passenger seats to prevent inadvertent unlocking; 84-26-02, replacement of paper air filters; and 84-09-01, requiring various inspections and modifications to ensure that the emergency window will open. Prospective buyers should also ensure that 91-15-20 (repair or reinforce cracked engine mounts) has been complied with.There are three recent ADs on the props: 97-18-2 (repetitive inspection, A55 and B55 Hartzell props); 95-24-5, (repetitive inspection, E55 McCauley props); and 91-15-4, on the A55.

AD 89-5-2 deals with cracking elevator components, with possible replacement of the elevator.

Owners of Beech 55, 56TC, 58 and 95 Barons are looking (or should be looking) for cracks in the wing forward spar carry-through. The cracking, according to Airworthiness Directive 90-8-14, could lead to loss of the airplane. Beech first apprised owners through a mandatory service bulletin. The bulletin-No. 2269-was originally issued in August of 1989. In March 1990, Beech revised the bulletin, saying Recent engineering investigation has shown that increased allowable crack lengths as described in this service bulletin will not compromise the integrity of the forward spar carry-thru [sic] structure.

The AD specifies that the carry-through must be inspected at 1,500 hours total airframe time, and repeated every 500 hours if no cracks are found. To get at the carry-through, the mechanic must remove the front seats and the carry-through cover (floor). From there, its a standard crack inspection. The carry-through and webs are cleaned, then checked using visible dye-penetrant. If no cracks are visible, he can button it up and come back in 500 hours. But if cracks are visible, its time to get out the rulers. The cracks must be measured, and depending on where they are and how long they are and how many there are, repaired. For example, cracks in the bend radius of the spar carry-through can be up to 2.25 inches long. If theyre that long or less, they can be stop drilled. However, only one such crack per side is permitted, and its discovery means the inspection must be repeated in 200 hours to see if it has gotten any bigger.

If the crack is between 2.25 and four inches long, it can still be stop-drilled, but it must be repaired within 100 hours using a Beech-supplied kit. Any longer

than that (or more than one crack in a single radius), and the Beech kit must be used prior to further flight.

The other area of concern is the spar web face, in the area of the huck fasteners. Here, cracks are limited to one inch length. Only one crack is allowed per side, and Beech specifies that it cant be stop drilled. Instead, the mechanic must look at it again in 200 hours to see if its grown. If it has grown, or if it was more than an inch long to begin with, another Beech kit is needed for the proper repair. The repair must be made within the next 25 hours, or immediately if it is between two fasteners and extends more than a half inch beyond the fasteners.

Beech figures one man should be able to complete the inspection in four hours, provided the airplane is already apart for an annual or similar inspection. Like EPA mileage estimates, your labor charge may vary. If cracks are found, theres the added cost of stop drilling. And then theres the price of the kits if the cracks need repairs. The kits cost several hundred dollars each. Installation time depends on the shops sheet metal proficiency. The average shop should be able to install one kit in about 55 to 60 hours.

So, one point to consider when shopping for a used Baron is whether or not theres a problem lurking in the spar carry-through. It might be worthwhile to have the mechanic performing the pre-buy do the inspection to settle the matter.

Modifications

Many mods are available for the Baron, including the usual engine upgrades (from Beryl DShannon and Colemill), gap seals (from Smith Speed) and so on. However, one mod in particular deserves mention, since it gives such a dramatic improvement in performance: vortex generators.

VGs are available from a couple of different manufacturers. We tested V/G Systems product for a 1987 issue of The Aviation Consumer. Bottom line: They work as advertised. The kit is available from Beryl DShannon.

VGs are also available from Micro AeroDynamics, Inc. of Anacortes, Washington.

Club

Baron owners dont have an association of their own, but the Wichita-based American Bonanza Society supports the Baron along with the Bonanza. The ABS publishes an informative newsletter and conducts service and proficiency clinics at about a dozen locations each year. American Bonanza Society, Mid-Continent Airport P.O. Box 12888, Wichita, KS 67277. (316) 945-6913 or www.bonanza.org.

Owner comments

Ive owned a 1973 B55 Baron for the past three and a half years. I prefer the B55 because of the belt-driven alternators and reliability of the IO-470 engines. I do not need either the speed or load-carrying capability of the big-engine 55 or the 58.

Computing direct hourly operating costs is difficult, but Ive found that doubling the cost of fuel per hour (a little over 27 GPH) approaches a reasonable estimate for hourly operating cost. My maintenance costs are reduced by my being an A&P mechanic and shopping around for parts. Parts availability has never been a problem through Beechcraft.

Among the many additions Ive made are V/G Systems vortex generators, which allow the airplane to fly at a lower speed and lower the minimum control speed. They permit me to touch down at a lower speed, reducing both ground roll and brake wear.

After purchase, I removed the interior of the Baron and replaced it with an Airtex interior. At this time I also removed the third row seats and hardware. I did this for four reasons. First, I do not need six seats. Second, the seats make the area difficult to load and unload. Third, I now have plenty of cargo space. Fourth, liability insurance is less based on four seats rather than six seats. I did upholster the third-row seats in case I ever need them again. I was very pleased with the materials and support from Don Stretch of Airtex and recommend the company highly.

I do have one ongoing problem with the tail strobe. In 1977, a Hoskins Nova Star 3 light strobe system was installed. I replaced the tail strobe/position light with a Whelen assembly. The tail power supply was repaired by Hoskins in late 1992, but it failed again in May 93, then again in October 93. My wing strobes

continue to work perfectly, but for some reason the tail strobe power supply has failed again. If any readers have a solution, Id be interested in the information.

I am a member of the American Bonanza Society and find the information they provide very helpful. Speaking of information, purchasing the shop manual and parts catalog for the airplane has also proved useful.

Larry Kampa
Memphis, Tenn.

I have owned a 1977 BE 55/R for 15 years and during that time have accumulated 2,500+ hours. The aircraft was 500 hours from new when it was purchased. It is well-equipped; shortly after I acquired the aircraft I added Hartzell three-bladed props and BFG de-ice boots. I removed the fifth and sixth seats as they are not realistic.

I have owned several aircraft but this is my first and only twin. It has been a reliable and delightful aircraft to own and fly. I never tire of its aesthetics and quality. Dispatch reliability is extremely high.

It is usually flown with one or two persons. I usually fly between 10 and 12k MSL and 184 KTAS at 2300 RPM/24 GPH is almost always the case. Practical useful IFR ceiling is 14,000 although occasionally I have taken it to 16. However, the climb rate is so anemic at these altitudes that any ice at all is prohibitive. The de-icing boots have added significant flexibility and security particularly in the West. The three-bladed props have added smoothness and ground clearance but performance is the same. The B55 is an excellent and competent IFR ship. I usually hand fly and it is crisp, responsive and stable. The high gear and flap speeds are often handy in a high MEA/traffic environment. Even after my long-term ownership, the aircraft seems sensitive in pitch at flare. Minimal aft trim works best at landing and is closer to a go-around configuration.

Airframe maintenance is essentially comparable to a Bonanza, with which it shares many parts, with an extra engine and propeller at TBO/annual. I

generally run 50 rich of peak with just the usual Continental cylinder problems, i.e., during the first run of the engines (1500 – hour TBO) about half of the cylinders were replaced. The aircraft has good range and speed and can be flown coast to coast in one day.

From time to time I have thought about the pressurization and turbocharging of a Duke or 58P. The added significant cost of maintenance and systems complexity with little additional real world performance has chilled that ardor. With new paint, interior, and fresh majors, I anticipate many more years of a good relationship.

Robert Wagstaff
Anchorage, Alaska

I purchased my first Baron, a B-55, in 1980 with 400 hours. At the time I also owned an Aztec C. I traded the B-55 for a 58P in 1992.

The B-55 was about 15 knots faster but it would carry about 700 lbs as compared to the Aztecs 1000 lbs. In my opinion, the B-55 rode and handled better but the cabin was more cramped. I flew both coast to coast from our home in Oklahoma; the fuel used was about the same, but the B-55 was nicer to fly.

The plane was traded with 2975 hrs. on it. The first 500 hours required only annuals with minor repairs. After that there were continual increases in the hourly costs. Annuals ran about $6,000 with about $4,000 spent between annuals after the plane had 2500 hours on it. Continental cylinders tend to fail at 900 hours and I replaced them one at a time. A better choice would have been to do a top at 900 and try to go over TBO.

The plane was equipped with alcohol (props and windshield) and boots on the wings and tail feathers and heated pitot, fuel vents , and stall warning. The system worked fine, but if there was ice on the wings the landing speed would be increased by about 20 knots. I did have some problems with the alcohol system on the props: the small holes that control the quantity of alcohol flowing

to the propeller would get clogged. Before any flight into icing conditions I would check the flow of alcohol to the prop slingers by turning on the system and rotating the props. If alcohol was flowing it would drain out the low prop or I could feel it with my fingers. It is in my opinion very important to verify how long the alcohol will last when used continuously. The book said 3 hrs. but I felt there was only enough for 2 hrs. Using the windshield deice would reduce the time to 20 min. Also the alcohol would be difficult to see through because the windshield looked opaque.

Pressure pumps for the boots and instruments would fail at about 800 hrs. Other minor problems were fuel level gauges that were not accurate except near empty. I replaced the control boards; that helped some but the Shadin fuel flow kept accurate track of fuel. The fuel controls would get very stiff in cold climates so I always pushed them to full rich after shutting the engines down. One cable broke as I was doing my run up. I replaced that it, then the other side became very stiff. So I replaced that cable and both throttle cables.

In general if something happened on one side I serviced both engines. For some reason the alternators do not quite line up with the motor pulleys and the belt life is short. I always carried a spare belt. Also the magneto distributor cap would carbon up and arc at about 800 hrs. so I paid special attention to them. When they cross fire it is definitely felt in the cockpit. Aluminum shielding and brackets tended to develop cracks after the plane had 2000 hrs. Two gas tank bladders were replaced and I tried to keep my tanks full at all times when parked.

My usual cruising altitude was between 8 and 12 thousand with a fuel burn of 23 gal/hr. Many flights were at 15,000 with oxygen and when crossing the mountains sometimes as high as 17,000, but the climb power was poor at that altitude.

My choice of the 58P was based on the service that I had with the B-55. The 58P has met all my expectations. While I was looking I met some one who said that costs would be 2.5 times fuel and I have found that to be correct. The major cost difference between the B-55 and the 58P is fuel and engines.

Gerald Harris

Pryor, Okla.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you how great an airplane the B-55 is. I owned a 74 from 1988 to late 1992, briefly switched to a 340A and went back to an 81 B-55, which I still own, in late 93. Since I use the plane for business, my records are fairly detailed and accurate. Previously, I had owned two A-36s, so I am a Beechcraft fan with some background.

I enjoy the airplane because I consider it the fastest factory built non-turbo recip available. Another 40 knots would cost a whole lot more money. Both of our B-55s trued out at 188 knots at 7,500′ at 23 squared (63%) burning 26 GPH. The fuel burn may be one or two gallons higher on short hops. The airplane will stay in the air about five hours on 130 gallons usable fuel; however, I plan on flying legs not longer than four hours to allow for reserves and personal comfort.

Flying about 120 hours per year, B-55s cost $150/hour dry or $200/hour wet. This includes engine and prop reserves, insurance, tie/down, annual, maintenance and property taxes. The above numbers do not include interest or depreciation; in fact, the airplanes appreciate significantly. The difference between a tiedown and a hangar would have to be added to the hourly costs.

Annuals have averaged $2,725 over the years, ranging from $1,543 to $4,261. The highest included a rebuilt cylinder because the old one developed a crack from the upper spark plug hole at 900 hours on a chrome cylinder; however, this was the only engine problem. Annual expenses do not include one heater and two fuel cells that were counted in maintenance above. Over the years weve replaced two alternators and three vacuum/pressure pumps. Ive replaced two Grimes rotating beacons with new strobes at half the cost of repair.

Parts seem to be readily available from Beech, and as one might expect they are expensive. The good news is that they seem to Be needed rarely. The American Bonanza Society, which is a great support group, has a technical advisor, Norm Colvin, who is very helpful providing names of alternative sources for parts and repairs.

On the 74 I added a KLN-88 and three-bladed McCauley props. The latter change was worthwhile because a freight-dog took my old two-bladed props at half the cost of the new ones. Aside from cosmetics, the three-blades didnt have a noticeable effect on cruise, climb or noise. Our 81 has three-bladed Hartzells and prop synch.

Both planes had King radio stacks (analog and digital, respectively) which are bullet-proof with minimal maintenance. The Century III and KFC 200s are both solid and reliable. Both planes have Stormscopes which I would not fly without, and I personally find more useful than radar.

Our planes had five and six seats respectively, but four adults, full fuel and 100 lbs. of baggage put you at gross. Most of my flights are alone or occasionally with one or two passengers, but you could put someone under 100 pounds in the fifth seat. There is a potential aft CG problem that could arise under certain conditions, but its easy to avoid as long as you are aware of it.

The B-55 is rock-solid in IFR conditions and doesnt have any bad habits. Its an honest airplane that is fun and easy to fly if you do it by the numbers. I recommend the American Bonanza Societys Baron Proficiency Programs and Simcom, both of which I have attended multiple times for recurrency training.

Both planes had prop de-ice (one alky and one electric) and one had alky windshield. Neither plane had boots which I didnt want; they slow the plane down and cost a lot to maintain. I havent needed them, either (yet).

Over the years I may have saved some money because I enjoy performing light maintenance and detail work, and I tend to remove and replace instruments and radios myself before getting them repaired. I hope to continue enjoying my present B-55 for many more years.

J. Yancey Brame
Bristol, Conn.

For the past 8 years I have operated two model 55 Barons and a Travel Air in

between, accumulating over 800 hours. My current airplane is a 1962 A55 with a Colemill President 600 conversion (300 HP I0-520E engines).

Compared to its primary competition, the Cessna 310, I prefer the Barons handling characteristics, relatively trouble-free landing gear design, and freedom from exhaust related airframe corrosion problems. I have never found the Barons engine control or gear and flap switch layout to be a problem. Inadvertent gear retractions on the landing roll are caused by unnecessary haste -dont touch any switches until youre clear of the active and stopped if you are used to the conventional switch arrangement.

I have no regrets buying my 1962 A55 compared to a later year. Its not that the hundreds of improvements made over the years are insignificant; they just dont redefine the airplane. Plus so many can be (or already have been) retrofitted to earlier models. Compared to the 1974 B model I used to operate, the few features I do miss are the higher gear/flap extension speeds, the maintenance-free manually actuated cowl flaps, and the additional shoulder room afforded the front seat occupants (seat tracks were moved inboard 3/4 inch). Larry A. Balls From Travel Air to Baron, How Beech Created a Classic is a great resource for buyers and owners because it details the year by year changes and improvements.

The Colemill President 600 conversion gives the 260 HP Baron the performance of a C, D, or E model without some of the potential problems of the factory model because the original engine mounts and belt-driven alternators are retained. 285 HP Barons have an AD on the engine mounts for repetitive inspection for cracks and it is generally accepted that I0-520s with case-mounted alternators have a greater tendency to develop case cracks than those which are bracket-mounted. Plus you dont have the worry of alternator self-destruction introducing contamination into the engine. The Colemill conversion of a 260 HP Baron is a better way to go if you can live without the larger nose baggage compartment and extra payload of the C, D, or E. I used to true 187 KTS in the stock B55 using 27 GPH. My Colemill gives me 196 KTS at the same 2400 RPM/full throttle/best power mixture burning 30 GPH. A friend who has the newer President II conversion (300 HP I0-550s) trues just over 200 KTS. The only other worthwhile mod I know of is the VG system.

My experience has been that Barons are not maintenance hogs and are very reliable. The biggest maintenance myth has got to be regarding the fuel cells. Always keep them full and they can last 20-30 years or more. My 1961 Travel Air had all original unrepaired fuel cells until the left main started to leak after 33 years in service. My experience on the two Barons has been comparable. One of the Barons many strong points is freedom from a stack of repetitive ADs. The spar web carry through inspection is relatively inexpensive and occurs at 500 hour intervals if your spar web is crack-free, which is the case for the vast majority of the fleet. Any pre-buy should, however, include this inspection because installing the Beech kit can run as high as $7000 if cracks are found that are too long to be stop-drilled. Annual inspections on a well maintained Baron will cost $2500 – $3000. You never know about surprises but I figure on keeping $5000 under the mattress each year for whatever might pop up. Of course, if you crack a case its a whole other story. $150 per flight hour covers all but overhaul reserves and hangar expense.

The only thing I really dont like is the cabin noise level, particularly if the fresh air vents are open. Wish it was as quiet as my old Travel Air. Unless I won the lotto, I wouldnt own anything else.

Sven E. Larson
Northridge, Calif.

Ive owned my current 1982 BE-55 since August of 1991 and have flown it approximately 575 hours since. The total time on the airframe is 1495 hours.

The direct maintenance cost for this time frame has run $68.34 per hour. This includes all maintenance expenses and annuals, including a few expensive items such as the two tanks in the right wing, a major repair of a heater crack, some autopilot repair, some gear work, and the other usual items. The annuals have each run about $2,600. Fuel runs about $52.50 per hour. Hangar insurance for the time frame has run $43.80. Allowance for engines and props I figure at $26.50. This totals $189.14 per hour. The actual cost through 1995 should run somewhat less due to the timing of the last annual and insurance payment… probably in the neighborhood of $180.00.

Ive owned several Barons and A-36s and enjoy both aircraft. The Barons offer much more flexibility in loading and range than the A-36. I can load four 200 lb. people, golf clubs, and luggage, and still fly four hours at 190 knots with reserves. A late model A36 with air conditioning would hold only 30 gallons or so with the same load. I miss those big doors though….

The engines were in need of at least a top overhaul at 1210 hours. Since I was the second owner and didnt know much about their history, I decided to get either remans or a custom rebuild. We pulled the engines and sent them to Terry Capeharts shop, Ultimate Engines. To say that was the right decision would be a big understatement. Those of you who fly B-55s will know what Im talking about when I say that in the 300 hours of flying these engines Ive not had one crack in an air box. I believe that they definitely develop more horsepower as Terry claims, and his workmanship is superb.

For the first 290 hours on these engines my true airspeed was about six knots better than book and I was a little disappointed. At the last annual in March we replaced the Brackett foam filters with paper and I get one more inch of MP at altitude. The true airspeed increased another 4 to 5 knots. These engines breathe better with the original equipment.

There are several items that have been added over the last 4 years that I can recommend. The S-TEC yaw damper makes riding in the plane a much nicer experience. ADC oil filters were added at overhaul. They are relatively inexpensive, fit well, work extremely well, and are a quality product. A GEM-1200 was added at overhaul. It has saved me some possible cylinder grief twice by alerting me that I had a partially plugged injector. The standard EGT still in the plane did not register any problem.

Ive also been pleased with the VG Systems VGs. The stall speed is as advertised and the few stalls Ive done with them have been more of a mush like the later Cherokees. They may hurt the cruise a couple of knots, though. The Argus 5000 really is too much of a luxury, but I might give up anything else in the panel to keep it. It fits in the spot that the ADF indicator occupied and gives me a slaved heading card in return.

My only gripe is the lack of air conditioning, but the plane climbs to altitude so

quickly that the warm period doesnt last too long. I added tinted plexiglass inserts from G&D Aero that really cut the heat and glare, especially in the passenger area.

Last but not least Id recommend that anyone flying a Baron (or Bonanza) attend the BPPP proficiency training sponsored by the American Bonanza Society. Its a lot of fun, and the instructors have enough Baron experience to challenge you safely. Ive also been to Simcom and can recommend them as well.

Name withheld by request

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