



*Plenty of room for the golf bags with one seat removed.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCOTT THOMASON



Jack was a King Air driver for Paul Mueller Company and had been to GMU that same day to visit my company. He asked if I knew Hank Brown (the local FBO owner and a former Comanche pilot). “Yes I did” was followed by a long conversation about airplanes.

Jack was an ICS member and the proud owner of his second Comanche. He expounded on the history and virtues of the Comanche and Lycoming engines. He explained what a great traveling aircraft it was and suggested I join ICS for a year to get acquainted with the model while having access to the various forums and experts. I joined ICS that week.

I test flew a Cherokee Six and two Comanches for sale locally. One had too much vibration, one shuttered on go-arounds, and one conked out on the run up (we had to be towed back to the hangar). Then I spotted N8332P, a 1964 Model 250 with fuel injection. The plane was 800 miles away based in South Florida but it seemed to have most of the features I was looking for including a Garmin GNS 530 with weather services and flip-up seats in the rear. It had been serviced for years by Aircraft Engineering in Bartow, FL and looked

good on paper. I bought a one-way ticket to Fort Lauderdale and ended up flying home in my own airplane.

The previous owner, Henry Ohlef, was also an ICS member. He used the plane to travel between Maryland and Florida. As a retired electrical engineer I think he really enjoyed redesigning the instrument panel. The Electronics International components are all coordinated and the plane has a Black Box MUX 8A Data recorder. Henry also gets credit for the wonderful paint scheme based on the original Comanche advertisements from 1958.

Prior to and after the purchase I got a lot of support from a local ICS member Maurice (Mo) Mayo. He owned a beautiful Comanche 180. Mo had made several improvements to his bird including the stainless steel dual exhaust conversion.

My first cross country was a trip to Lakeland, FL to visit relatives. On the way I had a planned stop at Macon, GA to visit Lowe Aviation and get a quote on an autopilot. Twenty miles out on a CAVU day, I saw a few wisps of smoke coming out of the dash. Thinking I had an electrical problem I shutdown

all the unnecessary components and saw no more smoke. I informed ATC, landed and taxied to the shop.

Upon inspection there was nothing wrong with the instrument panel so we looked at the engine compartment. On the right side, the original single exhaust muffler had slightly separated at the collar. I asked the Maintenance Manager (the late Nick Porcel) if the plane could be ferried back to GMU and he replied “Mister, I’m not sure I would even start this engine much less ferry it an hour from here.”

Two months later I picked up my plane with a new dual exhaust, an S-TEC 30 autopilot with altitude hold and GPS steer, a new 406 MHz ELT, and a WASS upgrade to the GNS 530. In the first four months of ownership I had blown my contingency for the first four years.

One hiccup with the upgrade was the onboard weather receiver. When I upgraded the GNS 530 to WASS service the GDL 49 became obsolete. I could have installed a GDL 69 at the time but that only gives you weather while you are in the plane. I opted for a Garmin 696 with the XM weather option. I can