

## *Just As a Matter of Interest:*

### *The Mitsubishi MU-2 In Review*

*By Thomas H. Chappell*

There has been much discussion regarding the safety of the MU-2. If taken at face value, the history of this maligned aircraft appears to support the talk. If an MU-2 crashes as a result of pilot error, the aircraft gets the blame. If it crashes as the result of weather, the aircraft gets the blame. If it crashes as the result of poor maintenance, (you guessed it) the aircraft gets the blame. As a matter of fact, the MU-2 has become the whipping boy of the general aviation industry. It has become so stylish to criticize the MU-2 that politicians have tried to have the aircraft grounded.

Fortunately, political efforts to ground the MU-2 were unsuccessful and the politicians leading the charge had to settle for increased mandatory training requirements. There is no doubt that training is important to the safety of all aircraft, but particularly critical to the safe operation of high performance aircraft such as the MU-2. If properly trained, an experienced pilot can operate the MU-2 as safely as any other aircraft in the industry.

OK, I said it. It takes pilot experience. You will say, “but what about two of the most recent MU-2 accidents both flown by extremely high time, highly qualified pilots. How can you say that the MU-2 is a good aircraft?” My answer is that any aircraft can crash if you fly them into weather. That was the case with both accidents. Once again, pilot error and we blame the aircraft.

Over the years, I have flown many hours in the MU-2. I had forgotten what a pleasure it can be. Recently I was visiting a client in Manchester, New Hampshire. Because of my crowded meeting schedule, I elected to miss my Delta Airlines flight from Manchester to New York City. I hitched a ride to the City in one of my client’s MU-2s.

What a treat. We flew a short body MU-2 powered by Garrett TPE-331-10 engines. This may not mean anything to some of you so let me just say we had 1,000 HP per side (de-rated to 665 SHP or 727 ESHP). The pilot in command was Mr. Bill White, Director of Corporate Aviation for the Keller Companies, a New England manufacturing firm. Bill enjoys the reputation of being one of the world’s foremost authorities on the MU-2 with over 23,000 flying hours in the make. In fact, Bill is the highest timed MU-2 pilot in the world and was recognized by Global Aerospace (AAU) with their 25 year award in 2005.

I wish every critic of the Mitsubishi could have been with me on my flight. From the confident drone of the powerful Garrett engines to the 2,300 feet per minute rate of climb at 200 knots, every minute of the flight was comfortable and pleasant. Had the many critics of the MU-2 had the opportunity to ride with me in an aircraft flown by a pilot the caliber of Bill White, I believe the attitude in the industry would have turned from suspicion and distain to understanding and confidence.

Bill, thank you for reintroducing me to an old friend. →