A look outside the box of a typical trainer

by Leroy Cook, Steve Whitson and Charles Stites from PRIVATE PILOT June 2003

....Constructed entirely out of aluminum, other than for cowlings and fairings, the CH2000 has room for two in a side-by-side cabin with swing-up doors. Electric flaps are fitted, and conventional dual yoke controls are installed, including brakes and nose gear steering through the rudder pedals. The main gear is a massive slab of aluminum spring, with the nose-wheel cushioned by a bungee cord.

To gain a customers perspective, we spoke with Noland Clifford, director of flight operations for the flight technology department at Salt Lake City Community College (SLCCC) in Utah, which operates a fleet of 10 AMD CH2000 trainers. The airplanes have been outfitted with GARMIN GNS430 GPS/VOR/ILS/com units and Sandel 3308 electronic projection-map HSI's. This turns the CH2000 into a "sweet little instrument trainer," according to Clifford, and SLCCC is very satisfied with the airplanes, from expense and maintainability standpoints. Its 116-hp Lycoming 0-235 engine has proven adequate for the gross weight, recently enhanced to 1692 pounds for normal-category operations.

"We got the first airplane in December of 2001. We also operate Piper Arrows and Beech Duchesses for complex and multi-engine training," Clifford said. The 5.5-gph fuel burn is attractive, and Clifford was pleased with the CH2000's ability to operate with two people at Salt Lake City International's 4227-foot elevation on a hot day. SLCCC shoots for a 50 to 60-hour-per-month utilization rate.

The aircraft’s appeal centered on its aluminum construction and ready availability of parts to fix the airplane. “that main landing gear is really tough.” Clifford says. “the bungee-type nose gear is right up on the firewall, and it has now been reinforced with extra metal to increase strength.”

Offering aviation degrees since about 1990, staring first with maintenance training, SLCCC has a two-year flight technology degree for professional pilots, leading to commercial pilot and CFI certification, and a maintenance technology degree for professional aviation technicians. It also has a unique nondestructive testing program, where students learn the aspects of NDT, either for certification in the procedures or for a maintenance degree. SLCCC’s strength is its location on a Class B international airport, where students can have access to commercial aviation for mechanics and pilots. The are about 200 students in the aviation division at any given time, according to Clifford...