

ATC Incorporated: Three Counterpoints to a Horrible Idea

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VOLUME 6 ISSUE 6 - June 1994

US \$2.95 / CANADA \$3.50

Printed in the USA

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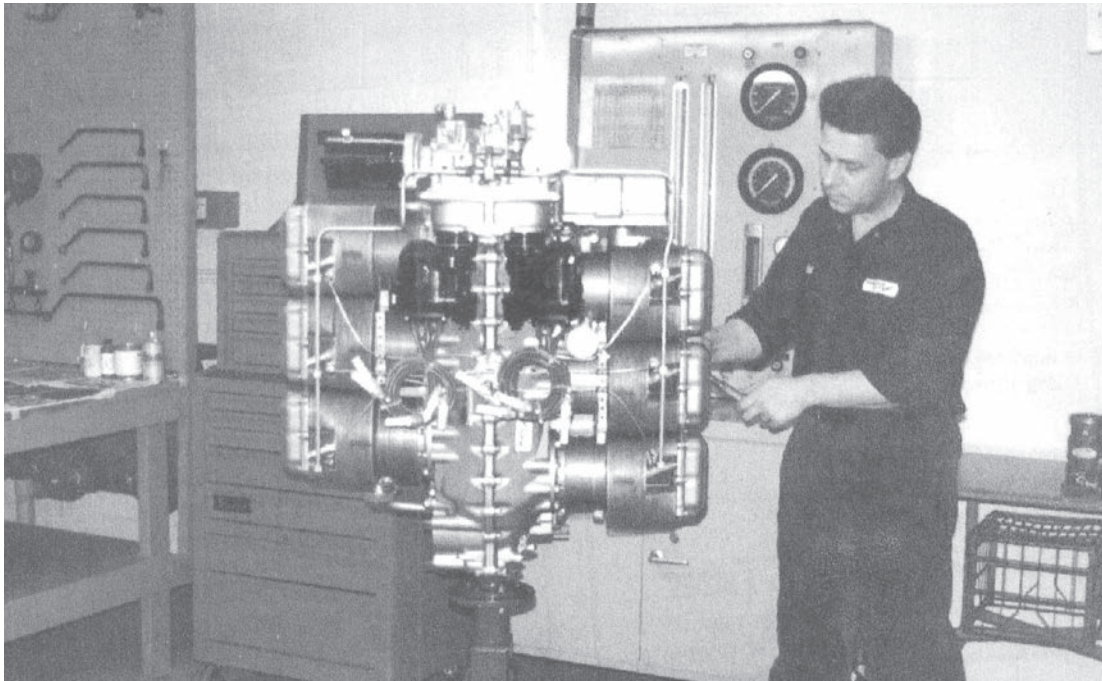
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Blueprint Engines



Ed Rachansk, Jr.

This tiny FAA Repair Station, once located on Midway airport, but now situated in a small off-airport building in Chicago Ridge, Illinois, was founded in the seventies by ex-USAF mechanic Ed Rachanski. (Funny-car aficionados may remember Rachanski as driver of the Lincoln-Mercury team's Marauder Comet back in the sixties.) Today, the senior Rachanski spends most of his time as an independent accident investigator; the shop is run by sons Mike and Eddie, who somehow manage to pump out close to 100 engines a year, year after year.

The Rachanskis have successfully resisted the temptation to grow bigger over the years (although it's clear that they could have grown much bigger), simply because they want to retain control over quality. "When you've got 30 employees, you don't have the kind of quality control we have, Eddie says. "You lose something when you get that big. That's not for us."

What do you get with a Blueprint Overhaul? For one thing, factory parts like Penn Yan, these guys don't much believe in "will-fit" (PMA) parts. You also get something that's very rare in the industry these days: good valve-guide to valve-seat concentricity. (Mike Rachanski has special tooling that enables him to sink a seat-hole dead-center on the guide axis.) The Rachanskis are big believers in proper honing (of everything-valve guide ID's, guide and seat cutouts, you name it) and of using an oven to heat cylinders prior to guide/seat installation. (Penn Yan and others use the blow-torch technique, which is fast but risky in terms of head-warping.) Attention to details like this results in the Rachanskis being able to say, for example, that they "haven't had a guide or seat come loose, ever" on one of their engines. Blueprint engines also tend to break in immediately and give good compression for years.

As small, detail-oriented shops

go, this is definitely one of the best.

On the plus side: These guys are experts at honing and machining. Sticklers for quality throughout (won't reuse camshafts; often ask the customer to buy factory-new cylinders). One of the few shops to engage in "power balancing" (cc'ing the combustion chambers and arranging cylinders for best dynamic balance in the firing order). Willing to take on turbocharged, geared, and helicopter engines, as well as run-of-the-mills. One of the original FAA Repair Stations to use a dynamometer for run-in.

On the minus side: No flow bench (no porting). Limited shop capacity (they barely met our volume cutoff for this article). Coordinate your schedule far enough in advance, however, and you should have no trouble getting a slot on the Blueprint calendar. FMI: Power by Blueprint Engines, 6800 W 73rd St., Bedford Park, IL 60638-6024 or call Ed Rachanski, Jr. at 888-645-1101 or 708-790-0108.