From Klaus Savier 10/16/21:

Having staggered timing of the two ignition sources is not bad and can even help. Most radial engines have the front plugs timed 2-3 degrees different from the rear plugs. The original 0-200 manual also called for a 2 degree stagger, the mags were NOT crossed: one fired the bottom plugs and the other the top plugs.

The problem is when one ignition source is timed too early and 25 degrees BTDC is way too early for a 10:1 engine in my opinion. I have argued this case with Kenny at Lycon forever. He recommends 25 degrees for his 10:1 engines. He has the dyno and he can clearly see that the engine makes peak power at 25 degrees so he times them that way.

Here is something I wrote up years ago about timing, it might help understand the details:

Timing:

The correct ignition timing is specific to a given engine, it's accessories and operating conditions (octane rating, inlet temp, compression ratio, air/fuel ratio, cylinder head temp etc.) For this reason it must be defined by the engine manufacturer, not the ignition manufacturer. I can only go from my experience (and provide an educated guess).

Here is how an engine manufacturer defines the proper safe timing for an engine: All operating conditions are adjusted to the worst conditions: lowest octane fuel to be expected, highest CHT allowed etc. Then the timing is swept to find Peak Torque Timing (PTT). The production timing is then set somewhat lower. If PTT is at 25 degrees BTDC, the production timing is typically set 2-3 degrees less than that. This is to have some safety from preignition. It also compensates for what is called Octane Requirement Increase (ORI). Within the first 200 hrs, the engine can use more ignition lead (and make a little more power). After there is complete carbon build-up on the piston, valves and the combustion chamber, the engine becomes more prone to suffer from preignition and the timing should be reduced to avoid problems. (You could also use higher octane fuel to avoid the same problems, that's why it is called ORI.)

The spark characteristics, heat and duration of the spark, also reduce the octane requirement by 2-3 points. (This is what the Plasma CDI is all about.)

Retarding the ignition timing only reduces the heat generated by the subsequent combustion. It is this heat reduction that reduces the octane requirement of the engine slightly.

Obviously if the octane requirement is too high, the engine will "Diesel" without any ignition at all.

If Auto fuel is to be used, retarding the timing may not be enough to keep the engine operating safely.

It might be best to limit the manifold pressure when lower octane fuel is used. You might want to consider a sticker on the instrument panel that limits the maximum MAP to 25" when 94 Octane fuel must be used.

Again, this is a guess. Ideally someone should define such limits through proper testing.

The Cabri helicopter with it's 0-360 Lycoming engine was certified (EASA and FAA) for use with high test 98 octane auto fuel. It's engine is 8,5:1CR with Plasma CDI and blower cooling.

Unfortunately we don't have 98 Octane fuel in this country, we are lucky to get 93 Octane pump fuel.