

King Air

A MAGAZINE FOR THE OWNER/PILOT OF KING AIR AIRCRAFT

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DETAILS

FLIGHT: OCTOBER 27, 1972
OPERATION: 1972 (MILITARY); 1974 (CIVIL)
SERIAL: 3,781 AT END OF 2015
STATUS: 1972-PRESENT
TYPE: CIVIL UTILITY AIRCRAFT

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Tom Clements



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Tom Clements'
farewell column



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Contents

EDITOR

MeLinda Schnyder

EDITORIAL OFFICE

2779 Aero Park Dr.,
Traverse City MI 49686
Phone: 231-946-3712

Email: melinda@kingairmagazine.com

PUBLISHERS

Dave Moore
Village Publications

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Rachel Coon

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Mike Revard

PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

Jason Smith

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Jenna Reid
King Air Magazine
2779 Aero Park Drive
Traverse City, MI 49686
Phone: 816-699-8634
E-mail: jenna.reid@vpdcs.com

ADVERTISING ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR AND REPRINT SALES

Betsy Beaudoin
Phone: 1-800-773-7798
E-mail: betsybeaudoin@villagepress.com

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

Rhonda Kelly, Mgr.
Jessica Meek
Jamie Wilson
P.O. Box 1810
Traverse City, MI 49685
1-800-447-7367

ONLINE ADDRESS

www.kingairmagazine.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Time to Say Goodbye

by Tom Clements

This is my last article for *King Air* magazine. I have been a regular contributor here since 2011 ... 13 years. The magazine has provided a perfect forum for sharing my 50-plus years of King Air flying and instructing experience. I will always be grateful for the leadership and guidance of the magazine's editor, Kim Blonigen. Her oversight and direction have been delightfully presented and she has suggested many small – and some large – improvements to my articles. It is a coincidence that she is also retiring from the magazine, though McLinda Schnyder will be an excellent replacement. You may know that she has already written many interesting and factual articles for the magazine.

How I got started

God has blessed me with a truly amazing and satisfying life. I am sure some of us were birds in a previous life! As a child, I always gazed skyward whenever I heard an airplane passing overhead. Living almost directly on the airway between Indianapolis, Indiana, and Dayton, Ohio, gave me daily opportunities to view the lovely progress of DC-3s as they passed overhead. My great uncle, Claud Stanley, who lived next door, developed a strong flying interest later in his life and bought a Cessna 170A and, later, a 195. My first ride in a small airplane was with Emerson Western, his pilot, in

the 195 on a trip to Uncle Claud's and Aunt Deedie's summer home in Charlevoix, Michigan. My mother's sister and her family resided in North Carolina and we often flew in a Piedmont Airlines DC-3 to visit.

Why I remained so fascinated and interested in flying will forever remain a mystery because, first, I always got airsick on these flights! Once the barf bag had been used, though, all was well with me, and I enjoyed the flying experience. Second, due to a head cold, I once had difficulty clearing my ears during the descents at the intermediate Piedmont stops on our way to North Carolina. Dang! What's that nail

“With my eyesight limitations, I knew that military and airline flying were not available to me. Flying would just be a lifelong hobby, never an income-producer. Boy, was I wrong!”

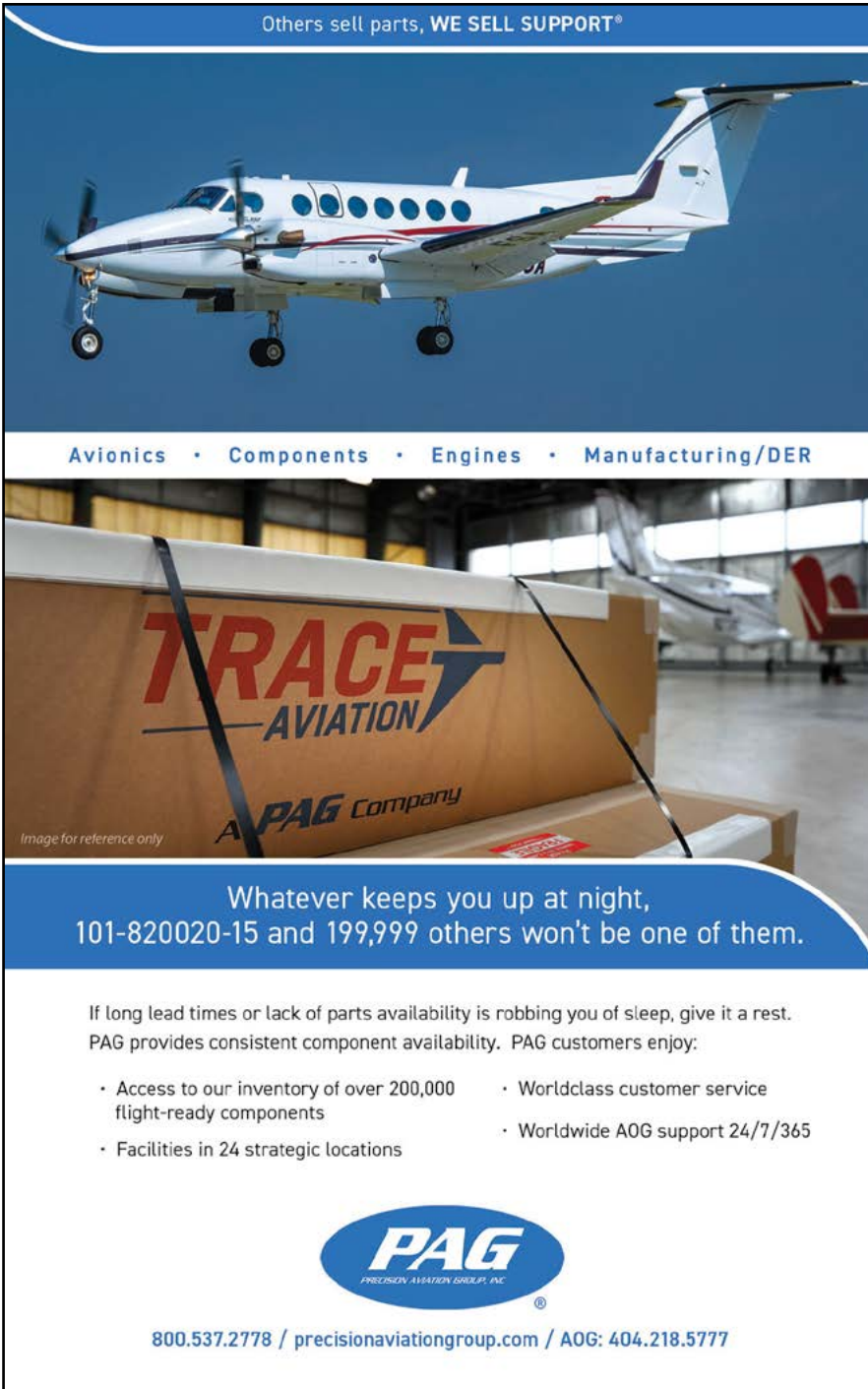
doing being pounded into my ears? This ain't fun!

Another obstacle to any hope of becoming a pilot was that I was quite nearsighted and had a bit of astigmatism. My first and second grade teachers thought I was mentally deficient but the glasses I finally got fitted for in the third grade proved that my problem had been that I couldn't see anything the teacher wrote on the blackboard!

My love for flying has never abated. My parents were generous enough to pay for my private pilot instruction and license between my junior and senior years of high school when I was 17. With my eyesight limitations, I knew that military and airline flying were not available to me. Flying would just be a lifelong hobby, never an income-producer. Boy, was I wrong!

I graduated from Carnegie Institute of Technology – now, Carnegie-Mellon – in 1967 with a degree in mechanical engineering. My minor was in English! Little did I realize then that this unusual combination would provide the basic framework for my King Air work. The engineering knowledge allowed me to understand aircraft systems quite well and the English training allowed me to write and communicate my understanding to others.

Through a local flying club, I had flown just enough in college to meet the currency requirements. Now what? The Vietnam War was going hot and heavy at the time I graduated and, being single, I was prime draft material. To avoid the draft, I enlisted in the Navy! While at Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, I was offered an instructor position in the Navy's Nuclear Power School. I had a choice of being stationed at Bainbridge, Maryland, or Vallejo, California. I picked Vallejo and spent my entire four-year Navy commitment without ever leaving



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Tom was among the inaugural class inducted into the Beechcraft King Air Hall of Fame in 2022.



Tom's headshot for Beechcraft Training Center is on the top row.

California or being on a ship! But this led to two events that God brought into my life that would play a huge part in my King Air career.

First, teaching at the Nuke School – heat transfer and thermodynamics were my teaching specialties – gave me lots and lots of classroom teaching experience. The Nuclear Power Program, then still under the tight grip of Admiral Hyman Rickover, was thorough and instructors were evaluated in the classroom at least once a month. Sloppy performance was not acceptable.

Second, being single and receiving officer's pay, I had a bit of discretionary income that I quickly allotted to pay for more flying. At Navajo Aviation in Concord, California, I got my commercial, instrument and instructor (CFI, CFII, AGI) ratings. I landed a part-time job at nearby Sonoma Skypark. I taught my first and several other newcomers to earn their private pilot certificates. I got tailwheel qualified and even helped an owner get his commercial license in his Luscombe 8A. I also used the FBO's old 150HP Apache to get my multiengine rating. I bought my first airplane, a 1946 Stinson 108-1. (I have owned a total of eight airplanes, the last one being a Cessna 180.)

After college, a well-known Ivy League school accepted me into an MBA program. In the back of my mind, this was my plan after my Navy commitment. But now, four years later, and maybe partly due to the “do your own

thing” culture of the San Francisco Bay Area in the late '60s and early '70s, I decided to pursue flying instead. What a fateful decision that turned out to be!

Teaching at the Beechcraft Training Center

Who would want a 1,500-hour pilot with all the fixed-wing ratings but little worthwhile experience? I sent resumes to all airplane manufacturers, sales organizations and advanced training schools that I could find. Wonder of wonders, one of my replies was from Beech Aircraft Corporation! Whereas I thought my “best fit” with a manufacturer would be as a demonstration pilot, they wanted me to come to Wichita, Kansas, to interview for a ground and flight instructor position.

Since all of Beech's instructors taught ground school and flight training, I am sure my four years of ground school instruction at Nuke School were a huge factor in why I was interviewed with the low flying time I had and helped me get the job.

In January 1972, I began work at Beech. As I have written in other articles, it was a wonderful time to start at Beech. I was there for five years and rose from a pilot instructor to the head of all pilot training to the head of the whole Beechcraft Training Center, which also included maintenance and sales training. What an experience! The aviation market began some fantastic growth years at that time. In the mid-1970s, Beech



Tom finished his flying career with 24,000 hours, including 16,000 in King Airls.

manufactured and sold as many King Airls in a month as Textron Aviation does now in a year!

The King Air model E90 was introduced in 1972, the 200 in 1974 and the C-12 (military version of the 200) in 1976. I had the fantastic fortune of being assigned as the lead instructor for all three King Air models. I got to communicate and work directly with engineers, test pilots and mechanics, and I learned so much.

Two additional comments about the Beechcraft Training Center: First, I am happy and proud that, with my engineering training, I created and improved many of the training materials still in use in multiple ground schools today. Second, at that time the BTC also provided ground and flight training in the Beech model 60, the Duke. I became quite knowledgeable and proficient in that lovely airplane too. (The Beech Baron 58P became a BTC subject just as I was leaving.)

I married in May 1972, my first year in Wichita. Mary was a fine woman, but our union produced no children and lasted only until 1985. In 1989, Pam became my wife and continues so today. We met while I provided recurrent B100 training for her and the other company pilot in Phoenix. Pam retired from corporate flying many years ago and returned to her first love – horses. She is all one could ever desire in a life mate!

Back to California

Mary and I had met at the Naval Officers' Club on Mare Island, where the Nuke School was located, and she strongly desired to return to California. In late



Tom managed and flew this 1988 King Air C90A for 17 years. He was chief pilot for its owner, Gary Banker, shown in the inset photo with Tom on one of five trips the pair took to/from Alaska in Gary's airplane.

1977, I transferred from the BTC to one of the factory-owned distributors, Beechcraft West in Hayward. I tried my hand at airplane sales and quickly found that I was not a good fit. I served as a demo pilot and filled in for many customers' pilots during their vacation periods.

Beechcraft West had sold a King Air 200 to the government of Sabah, Malaysia. It was a highlight to ferry that airplane across the Pacific and to spend four months in Sabah's capital, Kota Kinabalu, on the island of Borneo, training the Malaysian pilots. (Details can be found in "The King Air Book," Volume I.)

I missed training! Upon my return to California, I filled in as the corporate pilot for Beacon Oil Company on their 1977 BE-200, hangared in Visalia. That was enjoyable with great people, but Mary did not want to leave the Bay Area, so I returned to Hayward.

An idea had been planted in my head when Beech stopped providing on-site ground and flight training at the customer's facility. We had gotten so busy with training in Wichita that our ability to accommodate a customer's request for on-site training went by the wayside. I formed Flight Review, Inc. in January 1979 to provide on-site training for King Air and Duke operators. Alan Roberts, another instructor at the BTC who had moved on to join the Beech distributor in Seattle, Washington, encouraged

me to start the business. He was the one who came up with the name, although he was never active in the company. Thanks, Alan!

On to Arizona

God blessed my endeavor again; that part of my career continued for 21 years until 2000. In 1987, I had relocated to make Scottsdale, Arizona, my base of operations, although my life was mostly in hotel rooms. I spent 232 nights on the road one year. From 1990 to 2000, I continued to travel a lot, but I also had an office and classroom at Scottsdale Airport.

I had a minor heart attack in 2000. My medical went and came and went again more than four times. Thank God I could continue instructing recurrent training since my students were already qualified to be PIC. Similarly, in 2016 I helped Gary Banker find and purchase a C90A; I managed that airplane for him for 17 years, until his death in 2023. We always operated with a two-pilot crew, and the insurance company allowed me to occupy either cockpit seat if a qualified PIC was in the other seat. I have no longer flown since Gary's demise, except for delivering the King Air to its new owner in Canada. The last page of my logbook shows 24,000 hours, 16,000 of which are in King Airs.

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Audiobook update

The audio version of “The King Air Book” – narrated by Tom Clements – is now available on audible.com.



Columnist Tom Clements (right) is retiring and leaving the readers of *King Air* in good hands. Zach Cleaver (left) and Pete Marx (center) from King Air Academy, where Tom has mentored instructors for the past decade, will launch a new column in January.

The King Air books

In addition to my many years of writing for this magazine, I also contributed articles to other publications from as early as the 1990s. They were well-received, and people kept asking, “When are you going to put those in a book?” In 2019, at our new summer home in Westcliffe, Colorado, I finally compiled the many articles into a 385-page, 8½-by-11-inch, self-published book, “The King Air Book.” (Catchy title, eh?) It sold well, and I called it my “401(b)” retirement plan, a minor modification to the popular 401(k) programs.

Ten years later, I had amassed enough additional articles to compile them into “The King Air Book, Volume II.” I am happy to report that both books continue to sell quite well. As I write this, we are in the process of making the books available in an audio format.

On the dedication page of Volume I, I wrote, “To my hundreds of students, who taught me as I taught them.” How very appropriate that is! It perhaps contributed to my gaining the positive reputation I have enjoyed as a King Air and Duke instructor.

Older versus newer King Air models

If I were to fly a new King Air 260 or 360 it would probably be the safest flight anyone could undertake. Why? Because I’d never leave the ramp! I am quite sure that I’d still be trying to tune ATIS and then obtain my IFR clearance using the latest Pro Line Fusion avionics long after my proposed ETD!


That is a significant factor in deciding to “hang it up” now and end my King Air training endeavors. I feel quite proud to think that my depth of knowledge about King Airs is second to none, yet I realize that this depth ends with about the B200GT model and the earlier 350s.

I am passing the baton on to Zach Cleaver, Pete Marx and Kevin Carson, the leaders of the King Air Academy in Phoenix where I’ve mentored the instructors since 2014. They have a great depth of King Air knowledge, including the latest and greatest models. The King Air Academy’s motto is “We will teach you to fly any aircraft as long as it is a King Air.” This specialization truly shows in the excellent training they provide. If you haven’t already done so, give them a call at 602-551-8100 and consider doing your next recurrent training session with them.

Look for their new monthly column, “From the Training Center,” in this magazine starting next month.

And so ... so long!

I will turn 80 years old next February. This year has provided some medical challenges that are being treated well but have slowed me down a bit. I have never been reluctant to provide my email address (twcas@msn.com) and phone number (602-625-9132). One of my joys in life remains to help people know and operate their King Air as best they can. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me this coming year if I may help with any questions you may have.

I’ll sign off the way I autographed many a King Air book – Best wishes for safe and happy flying. 

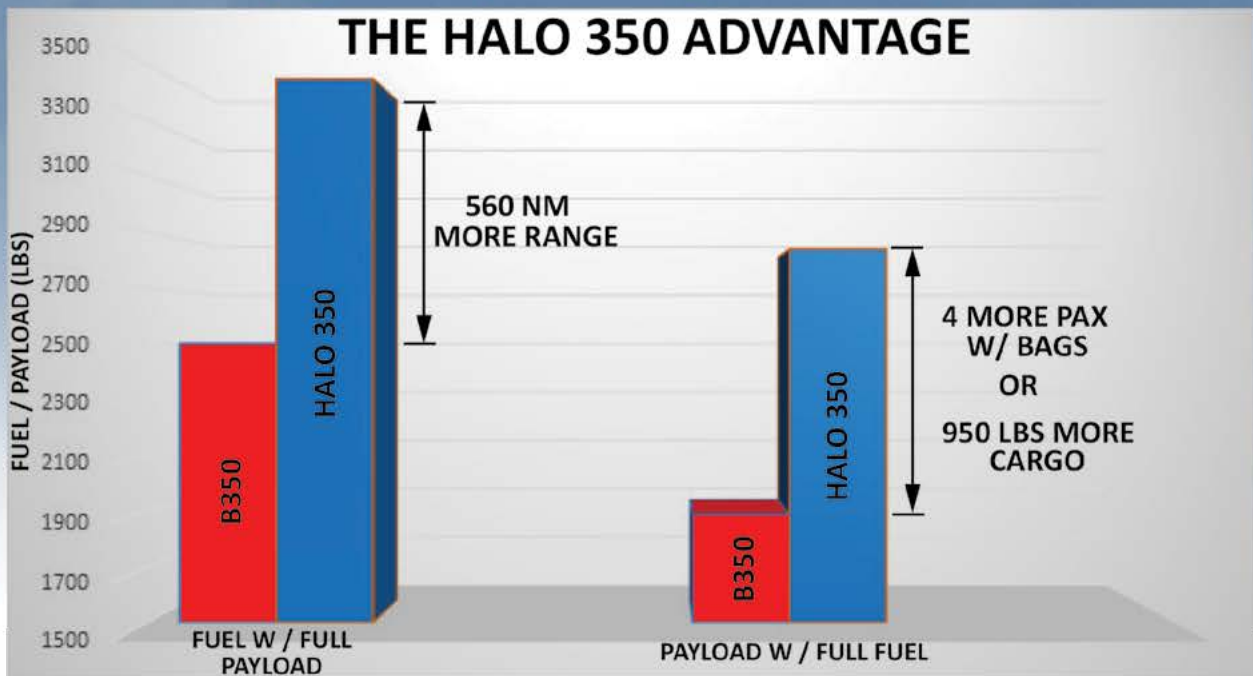
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HALO 350 Information Chart

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Increase Max Takeoff Weight	15,000 to 15,950
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Payload Increase	950

Weight and payload shown in pounds.

HALO 350 STC Kit:

The Halo 350 STC kit includes the STC, installation drawings and instructions, AFM Supplement, instructions for continued airworthiness documents, and the required parts and components (except common hardware items) for converting and operating a King Air 350 series airplane at a maximum takeoff weight of 15,950 pounds.

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Estimated installation labor hours: 20 hours



Host Hotel: Sheraton Downtown Phoenix

FBO: Cutter Aviation at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (KPHX)

Registration: kingairnation.com/gathering-2025

Save the date and start making plans to attend King Air Gathering 2025, the only event of its size dedicated solely to the Beechcraft King Air.

Co-hosts King Air Nation and BLR Aerospace are finalizing an agenda that embraces what past attendees say they want most when connecting, collaborating and sharing a passion for aviation and the King Air.

Among popular King Air Gathering activities are interactive speaker panels and workshops, keynote speeches, live demonstrations and vendor exhibitions. Organizers are facilitating an expanded FBO Day where owners, operators, pilots, trainers, maintenance providers, FBOs and manufacturers can convene.



A limited number of King Air Gathering sponsorships are available until Dec. 31.

Learn about partnerships by contacting kag@kingairnation.com or by visiting kingairnation.com/gathering-2025.

The Sheraton Phoenix Downtown is just minutes from KPHX and Cutter Aviation, the site of this year's FBO Day. Cutter is waiving landing, ramp or other fees with a 40-gallon or more fuel purchase. Check with your current fuel card provider for potential discounts.

The itinerary also offers curated social events, from companion experiences to a dinner and live auction to support the King Air Nation Foundation. Attendees bid on exclusive aviation memorabilia, state-of-the-art accessories and unique experiences, knowing that contributions help build community by supporting scholarships and training programs for aspiring pilots and technicians.

There will be new activities as well, such as exclusive King Air Academy-coordinated reservations in their high altitude chamber.

Registration for the King Air Gathering is scheduled to open in December. Look for details at kingairnation.com/gathering-2025. 

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Pause for Paws

350 used for law enforcement activities helps relocate orphaned black bear cubs



FOLLOW THE CUBS' JOURNEY

Visit bit.ly/350cubs to see Takelma & Sama's journey from Oregon to Kansas via the King Air 350 in a video by Chelsey Schartz, marketing manager at the Sedgwick County Zoo. Follow the cubs' growth on the zoo's Instagram and Facebook pages.

by Melinda Schnyder

Photography by Chelsey Schartz/Sedgwick County Zoo

Two black bear cubs orphaned this summer in the Oregon wilderness quickly found a new home in Kansas with the help of a rescue mission flown by a 2001 Beechcraft King Air 350.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife discovered the male and female cubs when their mother was killed in a shooting incident in July. Deemed too young to survive on their own, the three-month-old siblings spent a few days at Wildlife Safari in Winston, Oregon, before the King Air arrived to take them to their new home at the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas.

One-off missions like this have a profound impact on the lives of the animals involved. These philanthropic flights join the hundreds of hours general aviation pilots fly every year via organizations dedicated to animal rescue flights. These range from rehoming pets for a better chance at adoption to rescuing and relocating wildlife; see the box on page 18 for suggestions on how to get involved.

Here's how an airplane most often used for inmate transport helped these motherless cubs find a new way of life.

A call for help

Wichita's Sedgwick County Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is home to nearly 3,000 animals of more than 400 different species. The

247-acre zoo has been recognized across the globe for its support of field conservation programs and successful breeding of rare and endangered species.

The zoo had humanely euthanized their beloved black bear Mitch in December 2023 due to age-related arthritis and heart disease. Mitch had spent nearly all his 20 years at the Sedgwick County Zoo after being rescued from a private residence in Illinois as a cub. With a vacant enclosure in its North American Prairie section, the zoo was on a waiting list for new black bear residents. They jumped on the chance to raise the Oregon cubs, then quickly started working on the logistics to make it happen.

Sedgwick County Zoo is a not-for-profit zoo that opened in 1971 in northwest Wichita. It is funded through a partnership between the Sedgwick County government and the Sedgwick County Zoological Society, Inc.

Fortunately, a former lieutenant for the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office was working security at the zoo the day the call came in that a pair of cubs halfway across the country needed a new home. He heard the zoo team talking about quickly finding safe transportation for the bears, so he mentioned that Sedgwick County had an airplane at its disposal.

"The ex-lieutenant reached out to me to see what our schedules were because this flight had to be done quickly," pilot Shauna Sherwood said. "Our schedule supported it, so an email was sent to get the sheriff's approval. Within 24 hours from the first email, we had a plan in place. We were in the air within a day of that."



Sama (left) and Takelma are growing quickly in Wichita.

About black bears

The American black bear is a medium-sized bear with fur that can be black, brown, gray or bluish-black. They aren't aggressive unless provoked and are known for their ability to climb to escape threats. They aren't true hibernators but tend to spend winters in caves for protection against the cold. They eat all through the spring, summer and fall to build up fat for the winter. Even while dormant in winter, they are easily awakened upon intrusion or commotion. The American black bear is the most widespread and numerous bear in North America, with a total population of 500,000. *Source: Sedgwick County Zoo*



Sedgwick County's King Air

The Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office has had a fixed-wing airplane for nearly four decades. The county purchased its 2001 King Air 350 in December 2023, replacing a 1975 Twin Commander 690A.

"When we got a new captain, his first question was 'Why are we not flying a plane that was made in Wichita?'" Sherwood said. "So, we started searching and were lucky that the Kansas Highway Patrol was willing to sell their King Air to us for a reasonable amount."

Choosing the King Air was about more than loyalty to a local manufacturer, though; it was finding an airplane that met their needs, was dependable and still in production for parts availability (the 690A hasn't been produced since 1985). Sherwood said it's also saved time and money now that neither airplane maintenance nor pilot training requires traveling out of state as it did with the Commander.

Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office has two pilots and one in training. Dr. Lawrence Lay, who the team calls Doc, has been a reserve deputy/pilot since 2009. He's a 19,500-hour pilot with approximately 1,500 in King Airs, including time as a test pilot for Beech and a check airman for LifeSave Transport, which provides regional air and ground transport for critically ill or injured patients.

Sherwood was a detective when the Sheriff's Office opened applications for one pilot trainee in 2018.



The 350 flown for the rescue mission is operated by the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office.

“I had been with the Sheriff’s Office for 15 or 16 years, and they were having a hard time finding pilots,” she said. “So instead of trying to hire a pilot who already had their certifications, they took a deputy and sent them up to pilot training at Kansas State University in Salina. I was in Salina for about 14 months earning all my certifications.”

She added: “I was in the military and I was on flight crew, but I was in the back. Never in a million years did I ever expect to become a pilot. When the position came open, I thought it was an opportunity of a lifetime so I figured why not put my name in for the spot. It was a long process, but I got selected and I’m very happy. It’s the best job in the department.”

Sherwood started flying the county’s Commander in 2019. Lay had previously flown King Airs, too. Both pilots attended FlightSafety in Wichita in July 2023 to get their King Air type ratings in advance of the county taking ownership of the King Air in December 2023.

Before the pandemic, Sherwood said, the office was flying nearly 500 hours every year. Today, it is about 275 hours per year. Flight hours are steadily increasing and she expects they will return to pre-COVID use within the next couple of years.

“Our King Air is primarily used for inmate transport. When we have inmates arrested in other states on our warrant, we have to go get them and extradite them back so they can go to court,” said Sherwood, who has accumulated nearly 1,400 total hours. “By policy, the plane



Pilot/deputy Lawrence Lay.



Pilot/deputy Shauna Sherwood.



Zookeepers Nancy Smith and Lindsey Davis (above) flew on the 350 to retrieve the cubs and feed them (below) on the flight to Wichita.

can also be used for surveillance or transportation of detectives for on-duty work in other states. For example, we've taken our K-9 unit to pick up new canines."

The bear cub adventure

Sherwood said picking up new canines for the office is the only mission remotely close to transporting bear cubs, something she never dreamed she'd be asked to do.

"This was kind of once-in-a-lifetime," she said. "It was a really cool adventure."

The flight to Oregon included Doc and Sherwood, zookeepers Nancy Smith and Lindsey Davis and two communications team members to document the trip. They flew from Wichita's Colonel James Jabara Airport (KAAO) to Southwest Oregon Regional Airport (KOTH) in North Bend, a city surrounded on three sides by Coos Bay.

"There was an airport just north of Winston, where the cubs were being kept at Wildlife Safari, but because it doesn't have approaches, we went to Southwest Oregon Regional to be on the safe side," Sherwood said.

They split the trip over two days to give the zookeepers time to coordinate with the Wildlife Safari team on feeding schedules and to allow the cubs to start acclimating to their new keepers.

"The zookeepers were so knowledgeable and nice enough to involve us in the process," Sherwood said. "It was cool to talk with them and understand what they go through with these wild animals. They invited us to go with them to Wildlife Safari, a 600-acre outdoor zoo. The staff there drove us through and showed us some behind-the-scenes work."

The crates the zoo brought along to load the cubs into were larger than needed. Fortunately, Wildlife Safari

had smaller carriers that fit in the King Air seats and could be maneuvered to feed the cubs by bottle every two hours and keep them in sight of one another.

"The cubs weren't used to being separated, so the keepers had to face the cubs toward each other," Sherwood said. "There was some crying when they couldn't see each other."

The male slept most of the trip, the female needed a few apple slices to settle down. According to Sherwood, the bears were great passengers considering all they'd been through in the days leading up to the flight.

"Seeing those little baby bears was just awesome," she said, adding that the flight to Oregon took a little over 5.5 hours with a headwind and the return flight was 4.5 hours.



Wichita meets Takelma and Sama

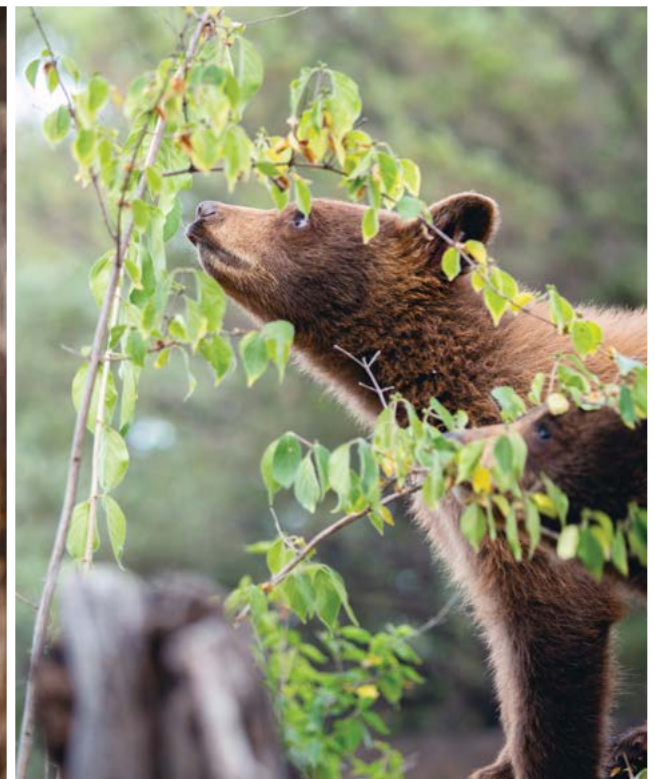
The cubs now have names: Takelma is the male and Sama is the female. Takelma honors the name of the Native American people who lived in the region of Oregon where rescuers found the cubs. Sama translates to “summer” in the native Takelma language and was chosen for the time of year she was rescued.

Scott Newland, president and CEO of Sedgwick County Zoo, announced their arrival in a news release several weeks after their flight to Wichita.

“We are committed to our mission to inspire respect and conservation for wildlife around the world,” Newland said in the release. “These cubs are far too young to fend for themselves, and we are happy to provide them with the expert care they need to thrive.”

Zoo visitors were eager to get to know the cubs as soon as they were announced, though it took some time for them to be on public display regularly. They were receiving care behind the scenes and were too small to be left alone in their outdoor habitat that includes a climbing structure, a tree and a pool. By August, they

The cubs in their habitat at Sedgwick County Zoo.



were making short, supervised visits in the outdoor area and the frequency and length of time steadily increased into the fall.

As of November, the cubs were in their outdoor habitat daily though they also have access to their indoor space 24/7 as temperatures in Kansas drop. Bears in zoos do not need to hibernate since they do not see the reduction in resources that wild bears experience but Sedgwick County Zoo staff said the zoo recognizes hibernation behaviors can be beneficial, allowing bears to calm, heal and grow. Keepers plan less involvement in winter so the cubs can rest undisturbed and they also provide extra food, denning boxes and additional bedding material.

In the first four months after arriving in Wichita, Sama grew from just under 10 pounds to a little over 42 pounds while her brother went from 11 to 52 pounds.

Zookeepers say the siblings are excellent swimmers and love spending time playing and foraging in their habitat. They love rolling around on top of cedar branches to get the cedar scent on their fur. They also love enrichment, including puzzle feeders.


Everyone involved wishes this rescue hadn't been necessary, that the cubs and their mother had been left alone to live wild in the Pacific Northwest. Yet each

Volunteer pilots needed

Whether for one flight a month or one a year, there is likely an organization out there that can use your help.

The King Air is great for animal rescue missions because the pressurized, climate-controlled flight can help make animals more comfortable and the roomy cabin can accommodate multiple crates, supplies and helpers to be with the animals.

We've highlighted several animal rescue organizations over the years in *King Air* – Turtles Fly Too, Pilots N Paws, Pilots to the Rescue, to name a few. In addition to searching out these organizations, we encourage you to check with local groups and to consult with Air Care Alliance (aircarealliance.org), which has an Animal Transport category among its directory of organizations facilitating flights.

organization that played a part was happy to help make the best of a tragic situation. Thanks to a group effort, Takelma and Sama will serve as important ambassadors for their species from their home in Wichita's Sedgwick County Zoo. 



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Spike in Engine Temperature Got Your Attention?

Check the temp stick when an engine temps out before making full power

by Dean Benedict

Years ago, a King Air 200 was in a shop for phase inspections and the owner was waiting for it to be released. It was the first phase inspection since he had purchased the aircraft. Unfortunately, the shop found both engines would not make book power – they temped out before reaching max torque – and, accordingly, the shop would not release the aircraft.

The owner directed the shop to JETCAL the instruments and they did so. The results confirmed the engine gauges were reading correctly, so the JETCAL testing supported the shop's position that the engines were not airworthy. At this time, these engines were about 100 hours from overhaul. The shop was eager to arrange the overhauls

or discuss replacement options. The owner, however, was not convinced.

He called me and we discussed the situation. I gave him a possible scenario that could make the engines appear to temp out when, in fact, they were still good to go. He obtained a ferry permit and brought his 200 to my shop. Sure enough, my hunch was correct: Both engines

had a bad temp stick. I ordered and installed a new temp stick on each engine, and both engines made book power within the allowable temperature range.

The owner was pleased to say the least. A little later he put the engines on the M.O.R.E. (Maintenance On Reliable Engines) program and ran them another 5,000+ hours before selling that King Air and buying a 350.

Engine data plate

Not all PT6s are created equal. As I've said many times over the years, every engine is a tad different from the next. I'm fat. You're skinny. The next guy is somewhere in between. It's the same with engines. Every brand-new PT6 is brought to acceptance level in the test cell where it gets a good bit of customized tweaking.

One of the last things checked before a new engine makes its way



Here is the entire temp stick assembly, from the tip (left, over the engine inlet) to the wires going to the T5 harness on the right. The tip of the temp stick fastens to a disrelated line, which makes good positioning over the engine inlet where there is metal mesh resembling hardware cloth.

into the world is the measurement of the resistance needed to bring the temperature reading into line. That measurement, stated in degrees of temperature drop (they call it "ITT trim"), is stamped on the engine's data plate and the corresponding temp stick is installed.

In the future, if the temp stick fails on that engine, the correct replacement can be ascertained by checking the engine data plate.

Temp stick 101

For the PT6 engines in most King Airs, the temp stick is located over the engine inlet (T1) and hitched up to the T5 harness. It can go by many names (trim stick, T1 probe, T5 stick) but there is only one temp stick and it is sensing the ambient inlet temperature of the engine. It takes that reading, reduces it proportionately and transfers it to the engine gauges.

Other aircraft engines have a similar feature. They call them "pilot pleasers" because somewhere along the line an engine designer thought pilots would be nervous if they knew the real temperature reading inside their engines. My understanding is various methods were developed to make the engine gauges read lower than the actual temperature while still preserving accuracy. In

simplistic terms: Your PT6 temp stick is a resistor and the electrical signal going from the engine to the cockpit goes through this stick, which has been adjusted specifically for that engine. The stick reduces the electrical signal on the way to your temp gauge. In reality it is a pretty sophisticated resistor, considering the change in OAT as you go from ground level to altitude. (FYI – if you're a "sparky" reading this, the stick is wired in parallel, not in series.)

The most important thing for you to know is this: The required resistance of the temp stick for that engine was determined "at birth" and stamped on the data plate. The temp stick takes the engine's real running temperature and recalculates it into what you see on your engine gauges.

Adjustable or fixed

Way back in the day, temp sticks were adjustable. There was only one type of stick. When installing a new stick on an engine, the mechanic consulted the engine data plate and adjusted the new temp stick accordingly. The stick was then sealed and installed.

Although straightforward and handy, these adjustable temp sticks were tempting to a few unscrupulous

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This is a closeup of the temp stick sensor end at the engine inlet; the metal mesh protects the inlet from FOD.

individuals who sought to mask an engine that was running too hot by lowering the resistance of the temp stick to lower the reading on the gauge in the cockpit. This gave the appearance that the engine was making power without temping out, when in fact it was running hotter than a poker.

Temp sticks these days are no longer adjustable. They are pre-set and available in several different “classes.” The technician examines the engine data plate and then consults a chart in the engine maintenance manual. The chart identifies which class of temp stick will work in that particular PT6.

Temp stick failure is not a common problem. The pre-set temp sticks are less prone to failure than the old adjustable versions. That said, it is still something to remember when confronted with a sudden temperature spike in an engine. The first thing that inevitably comes to mind is hot section repairs and lots of dollar signs. So, if it turns out to be a faulty temp stick, you can breathe a sigh of relief.

Troubleshooting and trend monitoring

Successful troubleshooting is impossible without correct information. This is true for any squawk on an airplane, but it is particularly crucial in diagnosing engine problems. Trend monitoring, accurately done, enables your technician to identify the problem quickly. This can save many hours of labor and thousands of dollars in parts. Keeping track of engine temperatures, N1, fuel flow and torque on a regular basis is vital to getting optimum performance from your engines. Trend monitoring is a godsend to your mechanic.

Let’s say that you’ve been trend monitoring for some time. Your N1s are close, fuel flows are pretty close and the torque is equal on both sides, but you see the temperature jump up on one side. If none of the other parameters have changed, then your temp stick is the first place to look.

Without trend monitoring data, I can’t zero in on the temp stick right away. I’d have to start by calibrating the engine gauges and verifying the internal probes in the engine. Next, I’d run the engine with the temp stick in, noting engine temp. Then I’d remove the temp stick, run it again to the exact same torque value and compare the temp readings. I’m looking for a difference in temperature. The stick-in temp should be lower than the stick-out temp.

If there is no temp difference, the stick is not doing its job. That is the sign of an “open” (i.e., faulty) stick, but I would still ohm-out the stick to be certain. To order the correct replacement I would check the engine data plate and compare that information to a chart in the PT6 manual which determines the correct class of stick for that engine.

If, after the stick-in and stick-out runs, I do get a drop in temperature, I still must study the engine data plate and compare it with the chart to verify that (a) the stick is the correct class for that engine and (b) the stick is offering the correct amount of resistance. If the stick checks out OK, then I know this hot-running engine has another problem. A borescope inspection would be the next step.

To swap or not to swap?

A frantic customer called me after seeing a sudden spike in engine temperature on one side while returning from a flight to Mexico. His engines were past TBO and he worried the hot section was going bad.

I quizzed him on the engine’s performance: Was the N1 slower? Did the fuel flow jump up? This pilot was diligent with trend monitoring and could confidently answer no to all my questions on engine parameters. The only change was the temperature on one side; in that circumstance, a bad temp stick is the likely culprit.



When he got his King Air to my shop, I duplicated the discrepancy on the ground run.

First, I calibrated the temp system and it was fine. Next I ohmed-out the temp stick and sure enough, it was open. When I checked the data plate, I happened to check both sides and found they both had the same ohm reading. Rarely do both engines have the same class temp stick, but it gave me the unique opportunity to illustrate the problem to the pilot. I put the bad temp stick on the other engine and the problem went to that side. Then I reinstalled the good stick where it was originally. We ordered a new one for the problem side, and everything was fine once the new temp stick was installed.

Typically, swapping temp sticks from side to side is a bad idea because the temp sticks do not match from engine to engine. Swapping temp sticks can really make a mess of things. I once unraveled an engine temp problem complicated by earlier troubleshooting where they swapped the temp sticks. This created problems with both engines.

I tested both sticks with an ohm meter. One was good and the other was bad (open). The class on the good stick married up with the left engine data plate so that's where we put it. The class on the bad stick was not the correct class for the right engine! That told me they had engine temp problems even before the stick went bad on the right side. The wrong stick throws off the engine temp reading. When the correct class temp stick was installed on the right side, all their engine temp problems finally went away.

On the ground versus in the air

Remember the King Air 200 with two bad sticks? Years later, I found another trim stick squawk on that very same King Air, which I discovered completely by chance. They had a problem with the cabin door. It had developed a leak that wasn't resolving and was bothersome to the passengers. When a short trip cropped

Here's a look at the other end of the temp stick, where it's wired into the T5 harness. The way a PT6 sits on a King Air, this T5 harness is forward of the ambient air inlet and the temp stick extends aft to the engine inlet.

up, I went along to troubleshoot the door in the air. I figured out the door seal problem right away, but I was surprised to see the left engine was running hotter than it should. I'd been maintaining this King Air for over 12 years – I knew it inside and out – and I had never seen this in any ground running.

I asked the pilot about it. He didn't seem too concerned. He chalked it up to age and time past overhaul. By this time, both engines had been on the M.O.R.E. program for several thousand hours. In spite of the pilot's blasé attitude, I couldn't let it go.


To complicate things, this pilot was not into trend monitoring, so there was no history of engine parameters to look at. I asked him to perform a number of tests during his next few flights and report back to me. Although he didn't really do what I asked, I managed to eke enough information out of him to indicate we might be looking at another temp stick problem – but this time it was one that didn't show up on ground running.

The next time that aircraft was in my hangar, I did an ice test on the L/H temp stick to fool it into thinking it was at altitude. The stick opened right up! So, I checked the data plate, ordered the corresponding class of temp stick, installed it on the left engine and suddenly the L/H engine temp was back in line.

It's something for your technician to think about when everything points to a bad temp stick but the ohm meter doesn't agree. Rub an ice cube along the stick for a bit and see what happens.

Moral of the story

If an engine is running hot, why split the engine and jump into hot section sticker shock if it's just a faulty temp stick? And the other moral of this story? Trend monitoring, trend monitoring, trend monitoring. Make that your new mantra. If you are regularly recording your engine parameters and the only change is a spike in temperature, chances are a new temp stick is all you need.

As always, fly safely. 

Dean Benedict is a certified A&P, AI with 50 years of experience in King Air maintenance. He was an inaugural inductee to the King Air Hall of Fame. He owned and ran Honest Air Inc., a Beechcraft maintenance boutique with a strong following of King Airs, for 15 years. Currently, with BeechMedic LLC, Dean and his wife, Lisa, consult with owners, pilots and mechanics on King Air maintenance issues, troubleshooting and pre-buys. Dean performs expert witness work on request. He can be reached at 702-524-4378 or via email at dr.dean@beechmedic.com.

Gift-giving Guide:

Aviation-inspired works of art

by Melinda Schnyder



FRANK MARTIN'S PAINTING "BEECHCRAFT KING AIR NO. 1"

Whether buying for yourself or a fellow aviation enthusiast, consider gifting art inspired by flight. Let this list inspire you to purchase from one of these artists or discover an artist local to where you live.

The Art of Aircraft

Abstract painter Frank Martin creates colorful collages, from paintings showcasing specific models (he has two devoted to King Airls) to works focusing on historical and military aviation or turbine and instrument details. Prints of his original paintings are available on fine art paper or canvas. Three hyper-grain black and white photographs of King Air details are among Steven Greenwald's "The Shades of Aviation" collection.

The artists also offer art consultation and take custom art projects through their South Carolina-based company The Art of Aircraft. Aircraft owners provide photos, keepsakes, quotes, charts, favorite airports for the artists to incorporate into a custom painting.

theartofaircraft.com



Abstract painter Frank Martin signs one of his King Air works of art.



Plane Pieces

Since 2004, RT D'Onofrio has designed hundreds of products ranging from lamps and clocks made with WWII-era radial engine pistons to jewelry crafted using small unairworthy scrap airplane parts. He started with a treasure trove in the warehouse of the Connecticut-based propeller company his father and grandfather ran for six decades and now sources globally.

He melds genuine aircraft relics with modern design through his company Plane Pieces. Blades from the King Air 90, 200 and 300 series are polished up and sold as sculptures with or without custom paintings, along with table lamps made from the propeller cylinders. He also has one-of-a-kind finds like a Curtiss HS-1 Flying Boat propeller (left).

aviationart.com

Wyldebyrd Art

Capturing the emotional connection between art and flight drives Lance Lockhart, a fulltime airline captain based in Mesa, Arizona, with history flying the Beech 1900 and Beech 99. His passion project is Wyldebyrd Art (a mashup of his sons' middle names), which he calls the world's largest genuine part aviation art store.

He turns reclaimed aviation parts and materials into industrial art, wall art, jewelry and functional pieces such as furniture and luggage tags. Retired seats become office chairs, galley carts are converted to side tables for your home or office, and engine blades are cleaned up to become key chains or pendants.

wyldebyrdart.com



MotoArt

This California-based workshop handcrafts one-of-a-kind functional office and home furniture using salvaged structures from decommissioned airplanes. In business since 2001, MotoArt has several desks and tables featuring Beech 18 tail assemblies, vertical wing stabilizers and wing flaps. Glass tops showcase the vintage details, which can be left raw or polished and powder-coated.

MotoArt's artists also create PlaneTags, oval-shaped mementos hand cut from the skin of retired aircraft, stamped, shaped and individually etched. They have a general aviation line, though no King Airs yet. Some enthusiasts collect these, others use them for IDs on luggage, keychains and more.

motoart.com

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The advertisement features a large image of a King Air aircraft in flight against a sunset background. The aircraft is shown from a low angle, highlighting its wings and tail. The text is overlaid on the image in white and black.



Factory Direct Models


The talented team of artisans at Factory Direct Models, pilot owned and operated for more than 35 years, create miniature works of art customized to replicate your airplane. Their handcrafted tabletop models are made using manufacturer blueprints and your photographs so they can match paint scheme, logos, registration number, antennas and all the details that make your airplane unique. There's also an option to personalize your model with an interior that matches seats, seat colors, instrument panel and all other fine interior details. The company is based in Mesa, Arizona, and has a showroom at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

factorydirectmodels.com

Tin Tail Numbers

Pilot Mitch Osowski owns a sheet metal fabrication company and wanted to help a friend remember a beloved airplane by creating a replica of the side of the plane's fuselage. The concept launched Tin Tail Numbers, and now you can send the Minnesota artisans a photo of an airplane for them to create a replica body panel to display.

Material for each curved 16-by-30-inch sign is chosen to best match the plane, and then it is personalized by hand with the paint scheme, tail number and other markings. These are perfect memorials of aircraft significant to you or a loved one.

tintailnumbers.com 



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Roundup of announcements from NBAA

In case you missed it, here is a collection of press releases from the 2024 NBAA Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition held in late October in Las Vegas.

Textron Aviation Service Centers offer Starlink high-speed internet solution for B200/300

Textron Aviation says the King Air B200 and B300 are among the aircraft series on which it can now offer Starlink high-speed internet connectivity following the FAA issuance of AeroMech's supplemental type certificate.

AeroMech's STC uses Starlink's "standalone system" that consists of an antenna, power supply and router, and only requires power input from the aircraft. The technology connects to Starlink's constellation of low earth orbit satellites that provide more reliable

connectivity over land, water and remote areas where traditional in-flight Wi-Fi may not have service.

"In today's interconnected world, our customers expect to use their aircraft as a mobile office," said Brian Rohloff, Textron Aviation's senior vice president, Customer Support. "Offering Starlink for the Beechcraft King Air B200/B300 including popular King Air 250, 260, 350, 350i and 360 models and for the Cessna Citation Excel, XLS, XLS+ and XLS Gen2 positions our customers to experience one of the best possible in-flight connectivity and aviation experiences available today."

Customers can schedule the upgrade for installation at Textron Aviation Service Centers in North America as well as select international service centers.

Blackhawk debuts new aftermarket parts and avionics e-commerce platform

The Blackhawk Group has launched a new, enterprise-wide aftermarket parts and avionics e-commerce



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FAA STC approval is imminent for the integration of Blackhawk's XP67A Engine+ Upgrade with Collins Aerospace Pro Line Fusion avionics system on the King Air 360. (Photo credit: Blackhawk)

platform to streamline operations. Find it at exchange.blackhawkgroup.aero.

The all-in-one solution encompasses used parts and avionics inventory across six U.S. locations: KACT in Waco, Texas; KCOU in Columbia, Missouri; KCMA in Camarillo, California; KFNL in Loveland, Colorado; and two facilities at KBJC in Broomfield, Colorado.

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seeking hard-to-find equipment,” said Beau Hawkins, director of Sales at the Blackhawk Performance Centers at KCOU and KBJC.

Blackhawk XP67A Engine+ upgrade for King Air 360 nears certification


Blackhawk is close to securing FAA STC approval for the integration of its XP67A Engine+ upgrade with Collins Aerospace Pro Line Fusion avionics system. Once certified, it will be available as an aftermarket upgrade option.

“This certification brings significant value to King Air 360 owners and operators, offering a powerful and efficient engine upgrade option,” said Edwin Black, president of Blackhawk Aerospace. “Integrated with the Pro Line Fusion avionics system, the XP67A Engine+ upgrade enhances the capabilities and market value of these aircraft. This certification effort expands eligibility for over 300 recently delivered aircraft to fly with Pratt & Whitney’s PT6A-67A engines and the latest and greatest Pro Line Fusion avionics system from Collins.”

According to Blackhawk’s press release, the PT6A-67A engine delivers 1,050 SHP to altitude, significantly

outperforming the baseline stock engines that are mission optimized but start losing power at lower altitudes. Paired with MT 5-blade composite propeller, the upgrade transforms the King Air 360 into a high-performance, fuel-efficient aircraft, reducing operational costs and increasing longevity.

The Collins Aerospace Pro Line Fusion avionics system provides an advanced user interface with high-resolution touchscreen displays, synthetic vision system and next-generation flight management and communication tools, further enhancing safety and situational awareness. Specifically, the upgrade to Fusion adds new features such as datalink option enabling CPDLC (FANS1/A+ Domestic & ATNB1), Privacy ICAO Address, integration with the Blackhawk XP67A Engine+ upgrade and the ability to add all factory options in the aftermarket.

Get additional details online at blackhawk.aero or from any authorized Blackhawk or Collins approved dealer. 



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corpangelnetwork.org



It's wonderful that organizations like the Corporate Angel Network are able to help connect those most in need of flights to those who are flying.

-Henry Maier, President and CEO, FedEx Ground

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