King Air

A MAGAZINE FOR THE OWNER/PILOT OF KING AIR AIRCRAFT

FEBRUARY 2025 • VOLUME 19, NUMBER 2 • $6.50

Reliable Relay

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King Air
February 2025 Volume 19 / Number 2
A MAGAZINE FOR THE OWNER/PILOT OF KING AIR AIRCRAFT

Contents

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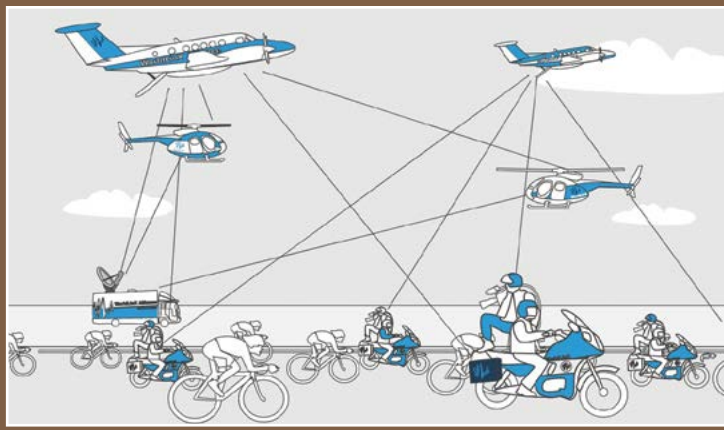
COVER PHOTO
Pilots Steven Luys and Jens Vanhoof with WorldLinX's 1994 King Air B200.
Courtesy of WorldLinX

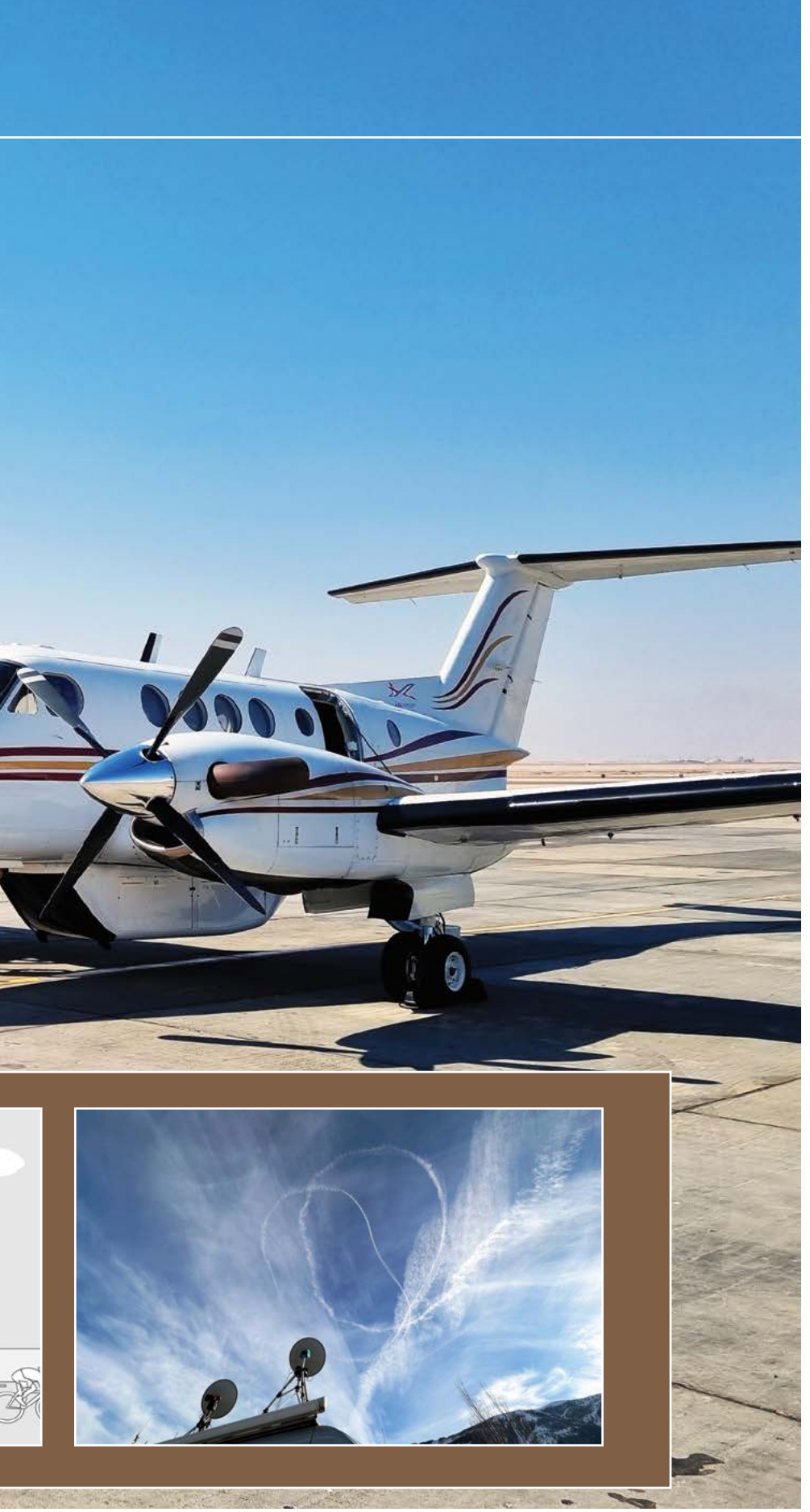
Reliable Relay

Belgian-based B200s provide television-relay services for global sporting events

by MeLinda Schnyder



WorldLinX has two B200 models outfitted with extra antennas and extendable transmission arms (left) that play roles in the television-relay process (middle), which includes the King Airs flying circles over sports competition areas (right).



Jens Vanhoof likely has one of the most unique gigs among Beechcraft King Air pilots. The 38-year-old Belgian alternates between flying in circles for hours at a time and crossing the globe on ferry flights – all in support of bringing major sporting events to worldwide television audiences.

WorldLinX operates two B200 aircraft with television-relay configurations from its base in Antwerp, Belgium. They provide long-range wireless transmissions for television facility companies that have been hired by the television networks with broadcasting rights to the events, mainly sporting events such as auto rallies, cycling, sailing, cross-country skiing and marathons.

"We operate our King Airs exclusively as a relay in live television broadcasting. About 99% of the business is sporting events where you either need to cover a big area or a smaller area that constantly changes, like cycling races that can go on for 80 miles. In these cases, you can't physically pull cables to a broadcast truck and putting antennas next to the stages is logistically impossible. That's not the case for tennis or hockey games or even Formula One races, where no relay is needed," Vanhoof said during an interview from Chile, where he'd landed after ferrying a B200 for six days from Belgium to help broadcast the Rally Chile round of the World Rally Championship.

As a task specialist, Thierry Lecoz (right) works from the cabin of a B200 during events to coordinate the television-relay process, which includes ground-based antenna rigs like this one (left) set up for the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics sailing competitions.

WorldLinX owns OO-ASL, a 1984 Model B200C, and OO-LET, a 1994 B200. They operate on the air operator certificate of ASL Group out of Antwerp International Airport (EBAW). Both aircraft have extra antennas mounted, the most obvious of which are housed in the fuselage belly pods of the aircraft as well as extendable transmission arms.

"We've modified the Superpod 60 from Commuter Air Technology to be suitable for radio transmission," Vanhoof said. "This means that all the metal has been removed, so the pods are no longer suitable for actual cargo loads."

The cabins look quite different, too. A few passenger seats remain though most of the space is filled with tech equipment that turns the King Air into a flying station, broadcasting directly to the ground station. A single operator works the equipment during an event – EASA calls the position a task specialist. Their role is to reconfigure the signals constantly as the event develops. In a cycling race, for example, the task specialist monitors whether all the cyclists are close together or if a few competitors are some distance ahead of the pack. They stay in contact with filming teams on camera motorbikes and in helicopters, and they monitor and

TRIP REPORT

The Life of a Television Relay Pilot

Jens Vanhoof (left) provided an account of one trip in WorldLinX's 1984 King Air B200C (OO-ASL) with fellow pilot Thieu Hendriks (right). The two traveled from Antwerp, Belgium, to Auckland, New Zealand, in 2022 for Rally New Zealand. The four-day auto racing event consisted of 17 special stages over gravel roads running through forests and along the coastline. Competitors covered nearly 174 miles in New Zealand, one of 13 rounds of that year's World Rally Championship.

Day 1 (Tuesday): Thieu and I flew out of Brussels Airport (EBBR) to Lyon, France (LFLL). We took an Uber to Grenoble Alpes–Isère Airport (LFLS), where our King Air, OO-ASL, had just received Phase 3 maintenance at Blue Aero.

> **“About 99% of the business is sporting events where you either need to cover a big area or a smaller area that constantly changes … ”**

adjust radio and video signals to ensure all is optimal for the re-broadcasting to the broadcast truck.

Changing perspectives on the King Air

As the chief technology officer for WorldLinX, Vanhoof is responsible for all King Air operations. He is also a pilot for the company after working his way up from warehouse assistant after graduating from broadcast school in 2007 to operating the equipment in the plane during relay flights.

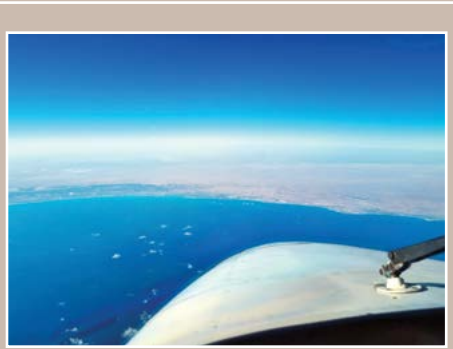
“I come from a television background and not so much from an aviation perspective,” Vanhoof said. “From 2008 until 2015, I spent several thousand hours in the B200 as the operator sitting in the back.”

He started the journey to become a pilot in 2015 after company leadership asked him to learn to fly. WorldLinX was doing more productions outside of Europe, and at the same time EASA’s duty and rest time regulations were becoming more structured.

“Sometimes we would have to fly in other crew members via airliner just to fly two or three flights to

Our task specialist, Jean-Yves Delamaire, arrived and we loaded our luggage and equipment. We thoroughly inspected the aircraft, including hot items and all the lights. Avionics were updated for the Middle East and the Far East. We also tested the satellite phone that we had with us.

We flew OO-ASL to Athens International Airport (LGAV). After a long wait for fuel with Goldair Handling, we were off to the Grand Hyatt hotel in the city center. It was late; we ate quickly and got a few salads for the next day.



Day 2 (Wednesday): After a half-hour waiting for the handler, we were on to Egypt (HEGN), where we had a very fast refuel, and then on to Bahrain (OBBI) and Muscat (OOMS) in Oman. We cleared customs and proceeded to the Novotel hotel.

Day 3 (Thursday): We flew to Ahmedabad, India (VAAH), where we had a team of nearly 10 men refueling OO-ASL on arrival. We then went to the terminal to process passports, photos and fingerprints, explain our reason for traveling and file a form indicating how many valuables we had. Food and drinks were provided during the well-organized procedure, which still took nearly 1.5 hours. They scanned our luggage while we were

Thieu Hendriks (left) and Jens Vanhoof, who also is the company's chief technology officer, are among the fixed team of eight pilots for WorldLinX.

give the other crew members the required rest, especially when they'd flown many hours just getting to the event location," Vanhoof said. "The idea was that if I were already on-site and a pilot, maybe I could do those flights. The assumption was that I might be able to combine the 'operator' and 'pilot' jobs, which I realized would be impossible once I started progressing through flight school. Still, we knew it would benefit the company to have a technical manager who knows about broadcasting and has experience from the flight deck."

He earned his private pilot license in 2016 then his commercial pilot license and type rating in the B200 in 2018. In six years, he's amassed a little more than 2,900 hours, including nearly 2,700 in the B200.

"I recently started the journey to become a type rating instructor on the King Air BE90/99/100/200," he said. "The training ›

TRIP REPORT (CONT.)

at the terminal and required photos of fuel gauges.

We then flew to Kolkata (VECC), where we had to repeat customs forms to "depart faster the next day." They applied many paper stickers on the door of OO-ASL, which were difficult to remove. Our taxi to the Holiday Inn was hectic with a continuous stream of honking cars and mopeds. Thieu spit fire after eating spicy beans and I spit fire from the soup on the hotel's buffet before they made a mild mix for us to enjoy.

Day 4 (Friday): Even with yesterday's customs paperwork it still took about an hour before we could depart. Everyone was friendly and eventually we left for Bangkok, Thailand (VTBD).

On to Singapore (WSSL), which has a nice approach, Thieu went to the hotel while I waited about 45 minutes ›

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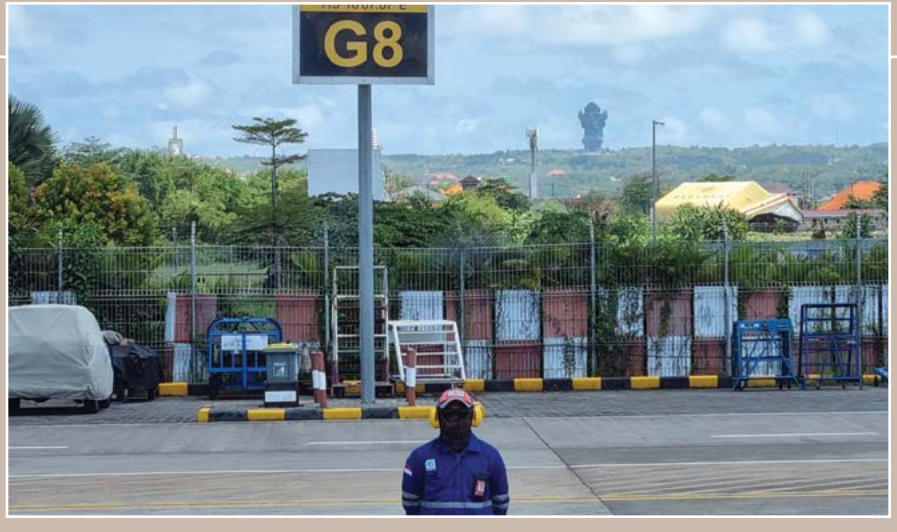
TRIP REPORT (CONT.)



for fuel. We ate at the hotel, Ibis Styles, then went to Bar 12. It's close to the hotel, and we received a ticket for a complimentary glass of wine that we didn't want to waste.

Day 5 (Saturday): It was the first time we experienced a little rain, but it was still very warm (it had been above 30 degrees Celsius for the whole trip). Our flight to Bali (WADD) went smoothly; handling took pictures of our passing gates and we didn't have to do anything else. There is a gigantic Buddha statue in the city, a few kilometers from where we were (it is known as the Garuda Wisnu Kencana statue). We removed all the garbage from the plane and headed to Darwin, Australia (YPDN).

We were tired on arrival at YPDN, and it was already night. The jet lag was starting to play tricks on us. The ILS was down, and work was being done on the runway. We made a few stupid mistakes – especially me with ATC. In one clearance I talked about a visual, an ILS and a localiser approach – but we landed without any problems.

We remembered from our last visit to YPDN that we had to spray insecticide in the cabin before opening the door, and because we didn't have any, we needed to report this to ATC 30 minutes before landing. After landing, they passed us the spray can through the window. We sprayed for 10 seconds and waited a few minutes for them to give us a signal. We filled in a passenger arrival card for customs.

program in Farnborough was recently retired, and we have been working on a solution for recurrent training and initial training for new pilots. With this new rating, I hope to assist in keeping our pilots current. I'm very excited to get yet another new perspective on the King Air."

WorldLinX operates the aircraft multi-pilot and uses a fixed team of eight pilots who are all contract aside from Vanhoof. They fly the B200s about 1,200 hours a year combined.

"OO-ASL was the company's only aircraft between 2008-2012. For the London 2012 Summer Olympics we bought OO-LET as a backup. These days, both planes are used all the time for relay work only," Vanhoof said. "The business is expanding with more and more events requiring both aircraft at the same time, which leaves us without in-house spares in case of technical failures. We might add additional aircraft to the fleet in the future."

"There is quite a bit of experience and expertise that goes into these productions, both on the aeronautical side and the broadcast side."

A unique mission

There are just a few operators in this specific segment of the market, Vanhoof said, adding that WorldLinX collaborates with other companies when more lift is needed. With events scattered across the globe – Argentina, Chile, Italy, Kenya, New Zealand, Spain and the United States, to name a few – a big part of meeting demand is getting the Belgium-based King Airs to event sites.

"There is quite a bit of experience and expertise that goes into these productions, both on the aeronautical side and the broadcast side," Vanhoof said. "Often the convenience of having our own aircraft and

They were not interested in our transit visa, which took a long time to apply for. Pearl Aviation pulled the plane aside and took us to the hotel they had booked for us. We drank a beer, ate and went to sleep.

Day 6 (Sunday): It was the only free day for our 36-hour rest and maximum duty of seven consecutive days. We visited a military museum and had a pint with the pokies (electronic poker machines).

Day 7 (Monday): A concrete mixer pouring a new swimming pool under his window awakens Thieu at 5 a.m. Pearl Aviation picked us up, and because the plane had already been refueled, we could leave immediately for the mining town of Mount Isa (YBMA), where we would make a quick fuel stop. The field was uncontrolled, so we stayed in touch with Brisbane Center down to the ground. Onward to Gold Coast (YBCG), where Platinum Business Aviation Centre was the handler. They forgot to arrange a hotel and everything was full due to school holidays. Eventually, we found a hotel about 20 minutes away. It was a crowded tourist hotel but chic. We ate on the terrace and bought lunch for the next day.

Day 8 (Tuesday): Our final leg took us 1,200 nautical miles to New Zealand (NZAA). We had 60-knot tailwinds and made the crossing in one go. We calculated the point of no return, double-checked the

Pilots Hendriks and Vanhoof pose with the refueling crew during a ferry flight stop at Ahmedabad, India (VAAH).

pilots outweighs the cost of transferring the aircraft to these remote locations for the client."

Vanhoof said he's seen operators use Pilatus PC-12, Piper PA-31 and Britten-Norman BN-2 aircraft for the mission, though most use at least one King Air because of their reliability.

"The King Air is great for this specialized use for a number of reasons," he said. "You absolutely need an aircraft that can fly 99% of the time. We can fly virtually in any weather condition. The payload handles the broadcast equipment, which tends to be heavy. We can fly up to FL280 – we are non-RVSM so we can't go to the service ceiling of FL350. Another thing is the autonomy of the aircraft, where we can usually provide six to seven hours of flight time, depending on the weight of the equipment. We can fly it slow when we need to – so our turn radius is small and we can stay close to the motorbikes/cars/helicopters/ski scooters/sailboats – and fast enough so we can efficiently position the aircraft virtually anywhere in the world." KA

TRIP REPORT (CONT.)

aircraft and the oil and added Prist. At 400 feet, we made a right turn and were over water within a minute. An ICAO requirement was we must have HF radios, but we only had VHF. We told Brisbane Center, exchanged telephone numbers (our satellite phone) and did a test interview, which worked reasonably well. We were told we might have to continue from the middle VFR, but in the end we could stay IFR. We were advised that Jetstar Airways flight 131 followed a parallel route and that we could share position reports through them.

We arrived in New Zealand without any problems, and we taxied to the corporate terminal using Air Center One handlers. We had to disinfect the cabin for five seconds with the surplus of our insecticide and wait a few minutes (no food was allowed on board for this leg). Customs clearance was remote, so we didn't see anyone directly. Our luggage was X-rayed, and we filled in another passenger arrival card before heading to our hotel. It was 18 degrees Celsius and rainy.

Day 9 (Wednesday): Thieu stayed in the hotel while Jean-Yves and I completed the technical installation on OO-ASL once we were on-site. This involved connecting cable, programming frequencies, and testing to ensure everything was ready for broadcasting.

Day 10 (Thursday): We prepared for the start of the rally race with the shakedown, a short, designated test stage when competitors check their car's setup and functionality. We spent the afternoon sightseeing, watching a harness jump at the 328-meter-high Sky Tower in Auckland's city center and walking along the harbor. The rally began that evening, but the King Air wasn't needed because production could be done with local antennas in the short Stage 1 loop.

Over the next four days, we flew nearly 30 hours to ensure the World Rally Championship audience could enjoy live images of all stages during the New Zealand rally. We returned to Belgium on a commercial airliner on Monday because we had almost reached our legal maximum duty period over 28 days. Another two-pilot crew moved the aircraft to Nagoya, Japan – which took just over 30 hours across four days – so that the King Air is ready to go two weeks later for Rally Japan, the final round of 2022's WRC. KA

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A Seemingly Simple Squawk

A trip down the troubleshooting trail

by Dean Benedict

PHOTO CREDIT: ROB TURCHICK/YIPDOG STUDIOS

A customer called to say his R/H generator went offline mid-flight. He happened to have an F90, but this squawk could happen with any King Air. For troubleshooting purposes, I suggested he swap the generator control units to see if the problem went to the other side, and it did. I had an exchange GCU drop-shipped to him and it was installed on the right side, putting the GCU that came off the left side back in its original position.

Everything worked fine on the ground, but going through 12,000 feet on the next flight the right generator dropped offline again. He flew to my shop so I could take a further look. We took the usual troubleshooting steps such as ringing out all the wiring between the GCU and the generator to confirm continuity. We found no obvious smoking gun, but we tweaked a few things, installed another exchange GCU and it ran great on the ground.

Frustration

On the next flight, going through 12,000 feet, the right generator dropped offline yet again. By then I was frustrated. As it turned out, this was only the beginning of a long and difficult journey that came to be known around my shop as "The Great GCU Saga." I will spare you some of the excruciating details and most of the expletives that proliferated throughout this aggravating experience.

My partner in this battle was John, an avionics tech who worked part-time for me. Although sidelined by a bad back, his brain fired on all cylinders. He was a fantastic "sparky" – my term for avionics technicians. I swear those guys are wired differently from the rest of us, pun intended. His approach to troubleshooting meshed with mine, and between the two of us we had unraveled quite a few mysteries. But this GCU issue had us stumped, and we were not happy.

In our fight to resolve this conundrum, we went through at least five GCUs, though I think one was an out-of-box failure. We sent the starter generator out for repair and found the field was out of specs; we were hoping that would do the trick. But in the subsequent flight, after about 20-25 minutes while going through 12,000 feet, the same problem reared its ugly head.

Exasperation

We megger tested all the wires going in and out of the GCU. A megger tester will tell you if there is a short, then it's up to you to find it. Everything checked out OK, indicating no shorts in the wiring. All systems ran great on the ground and the R/H generator was fine on the subsequent flight home. Hooray! On the next flight … you guessed it, the R/H generator went offline.

The exasperation multiplied exponentially, and the expletives followed suit accordingly. The core charge billbacks from the GCU cores were piling up. John and I scrutinized the teardown reports on those cores and found a possible clue to the problem. Two different shops squawked blown transistors at Q6 and Q7. This was like manna from heaven to John because the King Air maintenance manual includes a breakdown of the GCU. We saw that Q6 and Q7 run the line contactor, so we used a power supply on the line contactor to see if it was drawing the correct amperage – it was. We even left it going for four hours to see if it would break down from the buildup of heat – it did not. Just when we thought we were on to something, we hit another dead end. We were crushed.

Despair

At this stage, we had even exchanged the starter generator. I was beyond frantic with the extravagant parts costs mounting up for my customer. I gave no thought to what this was costing me in labor. I had no intention of charging my customer for that. Fortunately, this customer trusted me implicitly and had the patience of Job the entire time. I, however, was in agony over the exchange GCUs, the core billbacks, the generator repair

and replacement and the downtime for this King Air. Add to that the costs incurred by flying this King Air back and forth to my shop. I was borderline despondent.

My wife attempted to placate me with logical discussions such as: "Troubleshooting is like peeling an onion; you can only go layer by layer, and you can't always get to the crux of the matter on the first try." This was of no help at all.

"Troubleshooting is like peeling an onion; you can only go layer by layer, and you can't always get to the crux of the matter on the first try."

John and I discussed this situation ad nauseam, then soldiered on. I rented a GCU breakout box and teed it into the system. We flew the aircraft and confirmed that the GCU was operating normally. Then we wondered if we had a chafed wire problem triggered by pressurization. Going through 12,000 feet measured around 3.0 psi in the cabin.

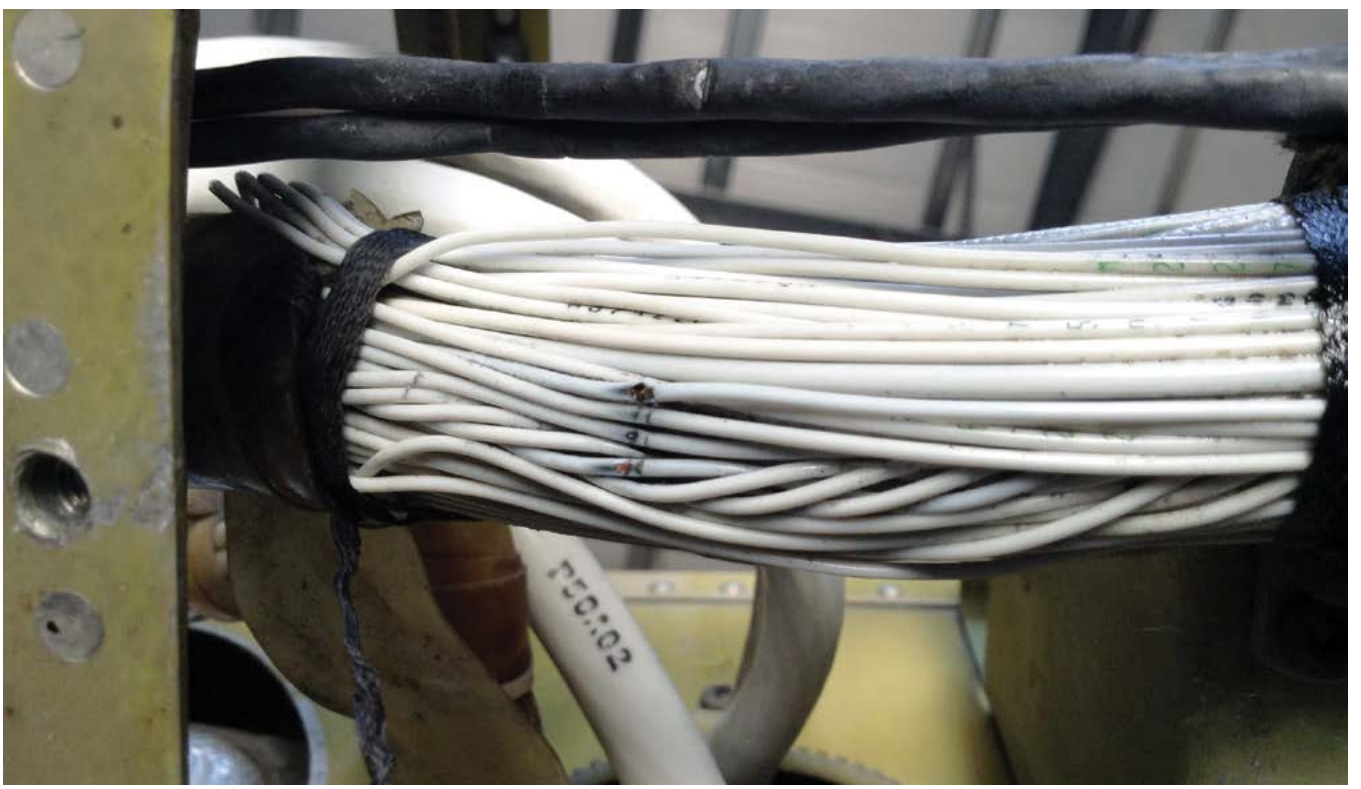
We borescoped the wire bundles, starting at the GCU and worked our way out. We looked for something inside the pressure vessel but found nothing. Totally deflated, we labored on and removed the leading edge yet again. We examined every inch of the wire bundle with magnifying glasses. There was no evidence of arcing on any portion of the airframe. Parts of the wire bundle were encased in spiral wrap, showing no traces of arcing, but we removed it anyway. At long last we found a sign: a small black smudge on four little wires – and one of them went from the line contactor to the GCU. Eureka!

Success at last

We repaired that wire. We replaced the Q6 and Q7 transistors in the GCU for the last time and put everything back together. That R/H generator stayed faithfully online from then on. Hot diggity dog!

The saga was over, and we'd won the war. It's a great feeling when everything finally works. My only lingering problem was understanding how replacing the transistors at Q6 and Q7 translated into $1,000 core billbacks each time I returned a GCU. When John did the job it was $50 in parts and an hour of labor – go figure that one!

This seemingly simple squawk turned into quite the wild goose chase. It's been years since it happened, but



A close-up look at the cause of the perpetual problem – a small black mark on part of a wire bundle.

the memory of it still boggles my mind. It was peculiar for several reasons. First, chafed wires are not the norm in a King Air. Then there was the location on the leading edge – an area where there's not much expansion/contraction – which is a mystery. Also, why did it short out consistently when going through 12,000 feet? And why didn't the megger testing indicate a short in the leading edge wire bundle? That wire bundle was properly tied up, had protective spiral wrap added and appeared pristine in every way. The leading edge was removed several times during this saga, and each time everything looked normal.

Keeping the craft in Beechcraft

King Airs do not typically get chafed wires. What happened with this F90 is rare for any King Air. I know this from experience. After leaving Beechcraft, I ran a corporate flight department for many years. They had King Airs when I started but later acquired Cessna Citations. Suddenly, chafed wires became an everyday problem. Those Citations were the bane of my existence. Oh, how I missed the King Airs!

When I worked for Beechcraft, I made many visits to the factory. In those days, great care was taken when the wire bundles went in, to allow for the expansion and contraction brought on by fluctuations in altitude, temperature and pressure. I remember this vividly.

Working on the Beechcraft product line has been a source of great pride for me my entire career. When owners of non-Beechcraft airplanes asked me to help them out, I used to jokingly say, "Sorry, but my alphabet stops at 'B.'"

I hope your association with the Beechcraft King Air, whether through ownership, flying, fixing or all of the above, has given you the same sense of pride and satisfaction that it has for me. KA

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*.

Five Reasons To Register for King Air Gathering

by MeLinda Schnyder

There's only one King Air Gathering

The annual King Air Gathering is the only event of its kind dedicated to the Beechcraft King Air. Owners, operators, pilots, trainers, maintenance providers, FBOs, manufacturers and other industry folk gather in an intimate setting for learning, networking and socializing opportunities. KAG's focus, size and format make this truly a gathering rather than a typical trade show. Past participants say the excellent return on investment delivers immediate camaraderie plus long-term relationships among the King Air community.

Registration (*kingairnation.com/gathering-2025*) is $999 plus online fees for each participant or companion. This includes meals, cocktail hours, transportation for KAG events and all activities on the agenda unless an extra fee is noted. KAG has negotiated room rates starting at $289/night plus fees and taxes at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown as well as no landing, ramp or other fees at Cutter Aviation PHX with a fuel purchase of at least 40 gallons.

Access to King Air experts

The one-of-a-kind KAG offers unprecedented access to King Air experts. This year's itinerary includes several sessions by two King Air Hall of Famers: BeechMedic LLC owner Dean Benedict, whose "Maintenance Tip" column is found in this magazine every other month, and Tom Clements, author of "The King Air Book" and "The King Air Book II."

Others speaking and presenting: Peter Basile, senior air safety investigator at Textron Aviation; Zach Cleaver, senior instructor at King Air Academy; Millicent

Itinerary

Note: This schedule is subject to change after publication. Visit *kingairnation.com/gathering-2025* for times, additional details and the most up-to-date itinerary.

Tuesday, March 18

Arrivals
Transportation provided from Cutter Aviation PHX to the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown

Wednesday, March 19

Arrivals
Transportation provided from Cutter Aviation PHX to the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown

High Altitude Chamber all-day session *extra fee & limited availability

Evening welcome reception

Thursday, March 20

Breakfast with sponsors

Sponsor exhibits

Opening remarks from King Air Nation

Session: King Air Incidents with Peter Basile

Companions: Ground school & lunch

Session: Anatomy of King Air Phases KAN 145 with Travis Lamance

Break with sponsors

Session: Understanding the PT6A in YOUR King Air with Pratt & Whitney

Lunch with sponsors

Shuttle to FBO for King Air displays and demonstrations, including:

What is a complete preflight with Zach Cleaver & Tom Clements

On-aircraft look at maintenance with Travis Lamance & Dean Benedict

Companions: Jewelry-making party

Cocktail hour

Dinner and King Air Awards

Friday, March 21

Breakfast with sponsors

Sponsor exhibits

Companions: Visit Desert Botanical Gardens

Session: Looking from the “other” side: How FAA/ Tracon/ATC views you with Bruce Reins

Session: Pilot expectations of engine rigging with Paul Sneeden

Break with sponsors

Session: The King Air pressure vessel and how it is architected with Tom Clements

Lunch with sponsors

Looking at the weather vs planning with Zach Cleaver

Companions: Scottsdale Wine Walk Tour

Keynote: Millicent Hill, NTSB

Break with sponsors

Cocktail hour

King Air Hall of Fame Awards, dinner and live auction

Saturday, March 22

Departures
Transportation provided from Sheraton Phoenix Downtown to Cutter Aviation PHX

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Hill, aviation accident investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board in the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage; Travis Lamance, CEO of Haven Aviation Services Group; Bruce Reins, lead instructor at King Air Academy; Paul Sneden, owner and president KingAirDOM & King Air Maintenance Academy; as well as Pratt & Whitney representatives.

Each day also includes time to visit sponsor booths as well as breakfast, lunch and breaks hosted by sponsors. See the box to the left for a list of the sponsors confirmed to attend.

Networking with fellow pilots

From arrival to farewell, there are plenty of social opportunities built in to the KAG itinerary to foster networking. The collaborative approach to the event makes it unlike any other in the industry.

For some, spending time at the airport is a highlight so organizers have expanded FBO day this year. Attendees will be shuttled to Cutter Aviation PHX after lunch and spend the rest of the day there. Take part in on-site presentations, explore aircraft and get to know fellow pilots. The evening includes cocktails, dinner and King Air Awards.

Companions are included, too

What's not to love about spending time in Phoenix in March? Companions are encouraged to attend KAG and can have a great time with the group and during private experiences planned specifically for companions.

These daytime excursions include concierge service and transportation, and they range from jewelry making with a silversmith to an all-inclusive walking wine tour in Old Town Scottsdale and a guided tour of Desert Botanical Gardens. King Air Academy will present companions ground school.

These five-star reviews

"What a blast! I will be at every King Air Gathering from now on. Every year is awesome! Our companions love the excursions. King Air owners and pilots love the info. Very informative and fun!" ~ Chris Roan, King Air 200 owner/pilot

"KAG is the one place I can go to network and mingle with all the players in the King Air crowd. I have always enjoyed the event. I never miss it!" ~ Chip McClure, owner Jet Acquisition & The Vault

"I had a chance to attend KAG24 for the first time with my wife. I always assumed it was a hyped up fly-in, but it's so much more than that. I left the gathering with more information about the King Air industry and made excellent contacts with vendors I still stay in contact with today. I never want to say I missed another gathering event. 5 stars!" ~ Cody Wolford, King Air 350 & E90 pilot

Register by March 7 online at *kingairnation.com/gathering-2025.* KA

Pro Pilot vs. Owner Pilot

by Zach Cleaver

At King Air Academy, we see a wide range of pilots for training: pilots who just passed their multiengine checkride to pilots with thousands of hours in King Airs. Let's look at what separates the owner-pilot from the professional pilot.

Checklist use

The first differentiator to jump out is checklist use. This truly separates professional pilots from the rest. Pro pilots do not waiver from their use of checklists – ever. It is tempting to relax on checklist use especially when you have flown the plane for thousands of hours, or it's the third leg of the day. However, if we become complacent, the checklist protects us from making mistakes. How should we approach checklist use? There are three main ways: read and do, flows and memory items.

Read and do: This one is very straightforward: line by line, read each item and do each item. As you learn the plane and checklist, it gets faster and faster to move through each item.

Flows: Airline pilots are taught flows from the start of their training. Working in a crew environment truly shows this method's advantage. Each pilot performs their flow, and the checklist is then used to verify that those items have been completed. After you gain experience in your aircraft you will develop flows for different phases of flight backed up by a checklist. For example, performing the cockpit preflight setup as a read-and-do checklist takes quite some time, 20 minutes or more when first learning

the plane. It can be shortened to two to three minutes using a flow to check the positions of your switches then pulling out the checklist to verify you have not missed any items. This will ultimately save considerable time during preflight. The key to this method is verifying you didn't miss any items with the checklist.

Memory items: There is not much to say regarding memory items besides memorize them. These items are associated with emergency procedures that need to be completed methodically and accurately when time is of the essence. Every pilot should have the memory items for their plane committed to memory and review them regularly so they don't fade when you need them the most. When a malfunction occurs, fly the plane, do your memory items and when at a safe altitude and airspeed, pull out the emergency checklist. Read through the bold items in the checklist to verify you didn't miss a memory item and then start working the rest of the emergency checklist as a read and do.

One last comment about checklists. Many King Air checklists from the factory have not been updated in years. They also will not reflect any modifications on the plane. Please have the most current factory-approved checklist and the appropriate supplements for your specific aircraft. This will ensure you have the most up-to-date, normal, abnormal and emergency checklists available in the cockpit. Remember, the airplane flight manual supplement checklists supersede the factory checklists.

Briefings

Briefing normal operations should be done every time. Briefing emergency situations before they occur is one of the most important things you can do to create a successful outcome to an abnormal or emergency event, especially close to the ground. This is something very few owner pilots

perform but all professional pilots do. Don't neglect to cover what switches and buttons you might use as well as weather conditions you might encounter.

What briefings are needed?

Taxi brief: Brief the expected taxi route using your airport diagram. Both pilots should have the airport diagram displayed even at airports you are very familiar with. When you receive your taxi clearance, write it down and make sure both pilots fully understand the route noting any hot spots or runway crossings.

Takeoff and departure brief: Once you are at the runway, it's time for the departure brief. Review the entire departure procedure and compare it to your navigation system. Make sure the procedure matches what is programmed. Next is the takeoff brief; it should include, but is not limited to, runway number and length, takeoff distance required, V1 and VR speeds, what you will reject the takeoff for, when you will continue the takeoff, takeoff alternate airports and route to get there if needed.

An example: "This is my takeoff. Prior to 80kts I will reject for any abnormality. Between 80 and V1/R I will reject for engine failure, engine fire or loss of directional control. After V1/R I will treat it as an inflight malfunction. I will return to runway XX or I will divert to XYZ airport, runway XX." The last part – and arguably one of the most important elements – is asking, "Do you have any questions?" Now is the time to speak up if you have any questions!

Arrival and approach brief: Ideally, the arrival brief should be accomplished prior to starting your descent. Now is the time to review the arrival you have been assigned and verify it is programmed correctly. Make sure you talk about routing, altitude restrictions and how you expect to get from the arrival to the approach (vectors, feeder leg, published heading to join the approach, etc.).

Once the arrival has been covered move on to the approach briefing, verify that both pilots are looking at the same approach and that both plates are still valid. Again, make sure the navigation system is programmed correctly. Review the approach plate and make sure you fully understand all aspects of the approach. You can also include the expected runway exit and expected taxi route.

Taxi brief – after landing: The same noted above applies here: write it down, review the airport diagram and follow along while you taxi. If you have any questions or doubts about what ATC asked you to do, ask!

Training

The last topic I want to touch on is training. Insurance companies require annual recurrent training if they are willing to insure the aircraft and its pilots. Professional pilots attend recurrent training at least once every 12 months, often more frequently due to flying multiple aircraft types. Most owner-operators only attend once a year.

The biggest difference we see between the two pilot groups is how well they prepare to come to training. Professionals spend time prior to training reviewing V-speeds, limitations, procedures (especially emergency procedures) and memory items. They have this information committed to memory prior to arriving at training. Many show up with a list of questions they would like answered or questions about why their plane behaved a certain way since the last time they were at training.

It is just as important for owner pilots to prepare prior to initial or recurrent training. Being prepared increases how much can be covered in both the ground school and simulator sessions. While we all know how busy life gets, staying knowledgeable and proficient in your aircraft is extremely important. Consider bringing a list of questions or contact your training provider ahead of time to request certain topics, airports or approaches you would like covered. This will allow you to get the most out of your training.

Use your checklists, do your briefings and go into training with a desire to improve your aviation skills. These simple steps will elevate your performance and increase safety in your aircraft. KA

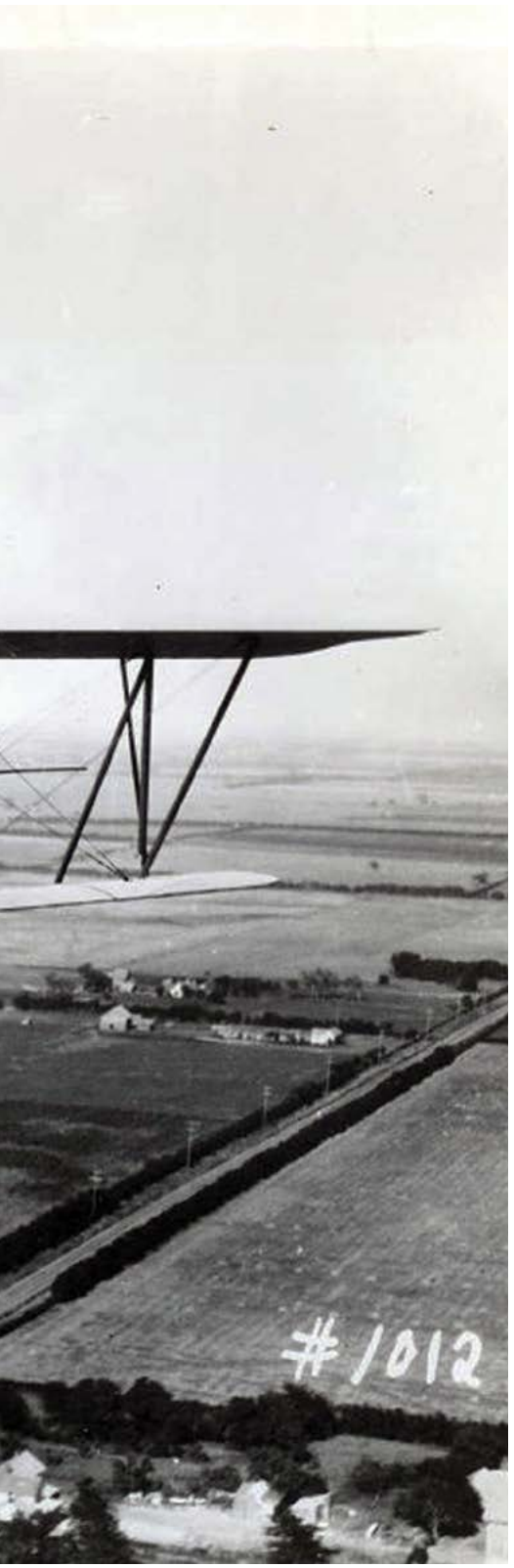
Zach Cleaver, a Gold Seal flight instructor since 2009, started teaching in King Airs in 2010. He has worked for King Air Academy in Phoenix, Arizona, since 2013 and flies all models of King Airs.

Honoring 100 Years Since Travel Air's Founding

The pioneering airframe manufacturer began operations in 1925 and its legacy has greatly outlived its six-year lifespan.

by Edward H. Phillips

Walter Beech was photographed flying a Travel Air Model A near Wichita in summer 1925. Powered by a Curtiss OX-5 engine rated at 90 horsepower, the biplane's front cockpit could accommodate two passengers. (Source: Textron Aviation)



During a cold December in 1924, Walter H. Beech and Lloyd C. Stearman contemplated forming a new airplane company, but they needed help. They met with their friend Clyde V. Cessna, one of America's true aviation pioneers, who agreed to join the two young men in their ambitious endeavor.

All three men were seasoned aviators. Beech learned to fly in the U.S. Army Signal Corps after the end of World War I. Stearman became a pilot in 1920, and Cessna had been flying monoplanes of his own design since 1912 and operated the Cessna Exhibition Company until 1917.

Beech and Stearman were employed by the Swallow Airplane Manufacturing Company in Wichita, Kansas, led by Jacob Melvin Moellendick. In the wake of a strong disagreement between Beech, Stearman and Moellendick that centered on Jake's blunt refusal to upgrade the Swallow's wood airframe to welded steel tubing, Walter and Lloyd bravely decided to strike out on their own and build a better biplane.

In February 1925, the new company known as Travel Air, Inc. received its charter of incorporation from the State of Kansas and began constructing the first Model A biplane in the Kansas Planing Mill Company in Wichita. Originally conceived by Stearman, the airplane was a three-place, open-cockpit design powered by the ubiquitous, war-surplus Curtiss OX-5 engine rated at 90 horsepower. The welded fuselage and empennage structures featured 1020-grade commercial steel tubing, but the wings were of conventional wood construction.

On March 13, the first Travel Air made a successful maiden flight, flown by local aviator Irl Beach, and later that month it was sold to O.E. Scott of St. Louis, Missouri. The company was soon overwhelmed by orders for the Model A, and it became clear that a secretary and office manager was desperately needed to handle paperwork. To fulfill that important position, Clyde Cessna hired 22-year-old Olive Ann Mellor, a native of Waverly, Kansas.

By November, the renamed Travel Air Airplane Manufacturing Company had relocated production across the Arkansas River from Downtown Wichita. Lloyd Stearman replaced the Model A with the Model B, and in January 1926, the Model BW made its debut. It was powered by the new Wright Aeronautical nine-cylinder, J4 static, air-cooled radial engine rated at 200 horsepower.

"Today there is a bit of Travel Air DNA in every Beechcraft King Air."

Travel Air was the launching pad for key personalities who would make their mark on American aviation, including (clockwise from upper left) Clyde Cessna; Lloyd Stearman, shown in 1924 with the New Swallow biplane he'd designed; Olive Ann Mellor, hired in early 1925 as a company secretary and office manager; and Walter Beech, shown with a 1928 Travel Air A6000A. (Source: Edward H. Phillips Collection)]

Travel Air was among the first airframe manufacturers in the U.S. to adopt the static, air-cooled Wright J4 radial engine, creating the Model BW in 1926. By the next year the engine was obsolete, replaced by the highly reliable Wright J5-series engines. (Source: Edward H. Phillips Collection)

"Dubbed the 'Limousine of the Air,' Travel Air's Type 6000 can be considered the predecessor of the Beechcraft King Air series that appeared nearly 40 years later."

The company sold 19 airplanes during its first year of operation, and Miss Mellor reported that the company expected to build 46 biplanes in 1926.

That year Travel Air entered a custom-built Model BW owned by the Pioneer Instrument Company in the second annual Edsel B. Ford Reliability Trophy competition. The biplane was equipped with the latest Pioneer navigation technology, including the new earth inductor compass that provided more precise directional information than the standard magnetic compass. Piloted by Walter Beech with Brice Goldsborough in the rear cockpit, the duo won the event and earned $3,850 in prize money. The company, however, lost its chief engineer in October when Lloyd Stearman was lured to California by businessmen to sell airplanes to Hollywood movie stars, some of whom were avid fans of aviation.[1]

Next to depart was then company president Clyde Cessna, who resigned in January 1927 and later that year formed the Cessna Aircraft Company in Wichita. Cessna designed and built a full-cantilever monoplane he called the Phantom, and it first flew that summer. Walter Beech was temporarily installed as Travel Air's president and his title became official in February. After two years of operation, Travel Air had earned a profit of $25,003 on sales of $185,169.

That winter the company received its first major order for the new Type 5000 cabin monoplane from National Air Transport (NAT), which operated scheduled passenger and mail service from Chicago, Illinois, to Fort Worth, Texas. The monoplane evolved from an earlier, private design by Clyde Cessna that was reworked by Cessna and Stearman into the Type 5000. NAT ordered eight of the transports at a cost of $128,676, and all of the monoplanes were delivered in 120 days.

In February 1927, Travel Air officials received an important telegram from a young airmail pilot named Charles A. Lindbergh from St. Louis:

"New York-Paris flight under consideration. Requires 'Whirlwind' plane capable of 45 hours flight with pilot only. If you can deliver, state price and earliest delivery date."

Walter Beech relished the opportunity but replied to Lindbergh that the company was committed to delivering the NAT monoplanes and had to decline his invitation. However, the Ryan company in California accepted the challenge and built the Spirit of St. Louis that Lindbergh flew nonstop to Paris on May 20-21.

Although Beech had to refuse Lindbergh's request, he chose not to refuse offers from pilots who wanted to win a prize offered that summer by Hawaiian pineapple magnate James Dole. He offered $25,000 for the first nonstop flight made by a commercial aircraft from California to the U.S. Army's Wheeler Field near Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii.[2]

By June 1927, Travel Air had received 17 requests for monoplanes, but only two were accepted. The first came from Arthur C. Goebel, a California-based pilot for National Pictures, Inc., and the second came from Benny H. Griffin and Al Henley. All three men were experienced pilots and plunked down $5,000 deposits for their airplanes. The timeframe was extremely tight – less than three months. Both airplanes were financed by Frank Phillips of the Phillips Petroleum Company based in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Goebel's Type 5000 was named "Woolaroc" after the woods, lakes and rocks of Phillips' ranch. Griffin and Henley's airplane was dubbed "Oklahoma" in honor of the Sooner state.

Walter Beech realized that the company was taking a serious risk building two airplanes for the race. If one or both were lost amidst the vast Pacific Ocean, it would damage Travel Air's hard-won reputation as a manufacturer of prestigious aircraft, but he and the board of directors believed it was worth the rewards that would come if a Travel Air landed first in Hawaii. Goebel's navigator was Lt. William V. Davis, Jr., while Henley would serve that purpose in the Oklahoma. Of the nine entrants in the race, only two arrived in Hawaii – the Woolaroc landed first, followed two hours later by the Breese monoplane dubbed Aloha. Beech's gamble had paid off handsomely.

On Dec. 31, 1927, Miss Mellor reported that Travel Air had received orders for one new airplane for every day of 1928! In addition, as of that date the company had produced 200 airplanes since 1925, including 162 Model B units, 16 Model BW, five Model BH biplanes and 18 Type 5000 monoplanes. To build the anticipated 365 new airplanes in 1928, Travel Air had built two new factories 5 miles east of downtown Wichita and could build two more if future demand warranted the expense. The workforce increased to 250 men and women with another 100 employees to be hired during the year.

As 1927 drew to a close, Beech and chief engineer Horace Weihmiller were mulling over the design of a new Travel Air – a cabin monoplane aimed directly at aviation-minded businessmen and corporations. It had become clear to Beech that the days of open-cockpit flying were in decline as an increasing number of pilots reported that they would buy an airplane featuring an enclosed cabin and cockpit. He based his plans for a sedan model on a series of surveys sent to Travel Air owners and operators in mid-1927. The response was clearly in favor of a cabin monoplane, and in April 1928 the Type 6000 took to the skies over Wichita.

Beech flew the airplane on the Kansas Air Tour in June and hundreds of prospective customers examined the aircraft and many signed up for demonstration flights. Another 700 took demo flights during a September tour through the Midwest and Eastern regions. Responding to complaints that the cabin was too small, Travel Air engineers created a larger airplane designated the Type 6000B, powered by a Wright Whirlwind radial engine rated at 300 horsepower. As for customers who wanted more power, the Type A6000A was available, featuring a 420-horsepower Pratt & Whitney radial engine.

Pilot Arthur Goebel posed with the Travel Air Type 5000 monoplane he flew to win the Dole prize in 1927. The airplane was restored in the 1990s and is on permanent static display at Woolaroc, a wildlife preserve and museum on the historic Phillips ranch near Bartlesville, Oklahoma. (Source: Frank Phillips Museum)

The Travel Air Type R monoplane won the free-for-all event at the 1929 National Air Races. (Source: Textron Aviation)

A major change of a different kind occurred late in 1928 when the financial institution of Hayden, Stone and Company agreed to acquire 50% of Travel Air. The acquisition dissolved the original business and reorganized it under Delaware law as the Travel Air Company. Beech and the board of directors were confident they had made the right decision but realized the company was no longer a possession of Wichita alone.

In August 1929, the company was absorbed into the Curtiss-Wright Corporation, which would eventually include Wright Aeronautical, Curtiss Flying Service and Keystone-Loening airplane manufacturers. In the exchange of stock with Curtiss-Wright, the value of one share of Travel Air outstanding stock that sold for $100 in 1925 was suddenly worth $4,000.

One of the greatest achievements in Travel Air's existence came in the summer of 1929 when the Type R racing monoplane made its first flight. It was designed by engineers Herbert Rawdon and Walter Burnham. During initial test flights the airplane had achieved 185 mph, and after installation of a specially-designed NACA engine cowling, indicated airspeed increased to 225 mph. The Type R was built for one purpose: to beat the U.S. Army and Navy at September's National Air Races. Walter Beech made certain that the Type R remained hidden from newspaper reporters until race day.

Flown by Travel Air distributor Doug Davis, the Type R – referred to as the Mystery Ship – defeated all entrants in the free-for-all race at an average speed of 196.96 mph. Shell Oil Company and The Texas Company ordered custom-built versions of the Type R, and the Italian government took delivery of the fifth and final monoplane in 1931.

While Travel Air airplane sales peaked at $2.1 million by June 1929, orders and sales entered an unrecoverable tailspin in the wake of Wall Street's debacle in October. Many people in the commercial aviation industry lamented that the Lindbergh boom was finally over. Sales of new airplanes slowed to a trickle, and by 1930 Walter Beech could no longer retain 650 employees on the payroll. Layoffs began and continued unabated through that year and into 1931 when parent company Curtiss-Wright closed the Wichita factory. The days of autumn 1932 witnessed the departure of the few remaining workers, and the factory complex known in Wichita as "Travel Air City" ceased to exist.

Epilogue

During its six-year existence, the Travel Air Company earned worldwide respect for its aircraft and manufactured approximately 1,500 airplanes between 1925-1931. It led other airframe companies in the number of approved type certificates issued for new aircraft, helped to pioneer design and construction of small transports for the infant airline industry and quickly adapted installation of the static, air-cooled radial engines into the company's product line.

Travel Air introduced the innovative Type 6000 in 1928. It was designed specifically to meet the businessman's demand for enclosed cabin monoplanes for executive transport and the airborne conduct of day-to-day corporate operations. Dubbed the "Limousine of the Air," Travel Air's Type 6000 can be considered the predecessor of the Beechcraft King Air series that appeared nearly 40 years later.

Throughout the late 1920s and into the early 1930s, many pilots flew Travel Air biplanes in air races nationwide and often emerged victorious, including Louise von Thaden who won the 1929 National Women's Air Derby flying a Travel Air D4000.

When it came to airplanes, Walter Beech craved speed. He enthusiastically supported development of the famous Type R racer of 1929. The monoplane's unexpected victory over military biplanes at the 1929 National Air Races stunned the aviation world

The Travel Air factory complex on East Central Avenue in Wichita shown here when it was completed in 1929.
(Source: Edward H. Phillips Collection)

and accelerated the move away from military biplanes toward development of the monoplane fighter for the U.S. Army and Navy during the early 1930s.

In addition to these and other aeronautical achievements, it is important to realize that Travel Air was the launching pad for key personalities who would make their mark on American aviation. By 1928, Lloyd C. Stearman and Clyde Vernon Cessna were both respected airframe manufacturers. Eventually the Stearman Aircraft Company became a major subsidiary of Boeing, and the Cessna Aircraft Company was an important supplier of airplanes for the giant Curtiss Flying Service.

Perhaps Travel Air's greatest legacy, however, is not only the airplanes it produced but the men and women who made the company a great success. Of these, Walter H. Beech and Olive Ann Beech later braved the depths of the worst economic disaster America had ever experienced to create the Beech Aircraft Company in 1932. Travel Air was their "classroom" that taught them the aviation business, and today there is a bit of Travel Air "DNA" in every Beechcraft King Air. KA

Edward H. Phillips, now retired and living in the South, has researched and written eight books on the unique and rich aviation history that belongs to Wichita, Kansas.

Notes:

1. The Stearman Aircraft Company, based in Venice, California, built only four biplanes before returning to Wichita. By 1941 it had become an important subsidiary of the Boeing Airplane Company, building thousands of primary trainers for the U.S. Army and Navy.
2. The first airplane to cross the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii was the U.S. Army's Fokker C-2 monoplane that departed Oakland on June 28, 1927, and landed at Wheeler Field June 29. The first commercial airplane to make the flight from California to Hawaii was the Travel Air Type 5000 prototype but the flight was made before the official starting date for the Dole prize. On July 14-15, 1927, pilot Ernest Smith and navigator Emory Bronte arrived over the island of Molokai on their way to Oahu. The Travel Air ran out of fuel and Smith crashed the airplane in a wooded area on Molokai. It was dismantled and not rebuilt.

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