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Beechcraft King Air 350ER
Courtesy of Wellman Aviation Services

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OPERATOR SPOTLIGHT UPDATE



Matt Burkhart, Jeff French and Nick Mahon (left to right) worked with Avcon to bring FL-862 online. The 2013 King Air B300 replaces UW's 1977 King Air 200T (inset), which retired after 45 years and nearly 9,000 research hours.



REPLACING A LEGEND

University of Wyoming receives $14.8 million grant to operate new King Air research aircraft

by MeLinda Schnyder | Photos courtesy of University of Wyoming

Editor's note: King Air *magazine featured the University of Wyoming's King Air fleet in a January 2018 article titled "For Science's Sake."*

The University of Wyoming announced recently that it received a $14.8 million U.S. National Science Foundation grant that will provide operation and maintenance funding for the new NSF/King Air atmospheric research aircraft that flew its first study mission this past summer.

The five-year grant began Sept. 1 and runs through Aug. 31, 2031, for UW, which is the only academic institution in the United States that provides a research aircraft facility to the atmospheric science community.

Airborne research started at the university in the 1960s and has used three different Beechcraft platforms. First, a twin-engine Beechcraft C-45 supported research funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on the effects of cloud seeding. A doctorate-granting Department of Atmospheric Science was established in 1971, the same year a Beech Queen Air replaced the C-45. The scope of department research broadened in the 1970s, with the aircraft, faculty and staff supporting the NSF's National



The design of the University of Wyoming's NSF/King Air atmospheric research King Air B300 aircraft allows for switching out instruments to meet the needs of each research project.

Hail Research Experiment and the World Meteorological Organization's weather modification verification projects in Spain.

UW's Department of Atmospheric Science has been operating a King Air atmospheric research aircraft since 1977, when it was purchased for $1 million. Over the ensuing years, additional millions have been awarded by NSF and other federal agencies for instrumentation and airframe modification, such as for radar and lidar.

When UW's 1977 King Air 200T retired in August 2022, it had flown roughly 9,000 research hours and logged thousands of flights over 45 years. It was replaced by a 2013 King Air B300, serial number FL-862.

60-plus modifications

UW purchased FL-862 in 2020 and it spent four years at Avcon Industries Inc. in Newton, Kansas, for design, installation and certification on 60-plus modifications. Jeff French, a professor and head of UW's Department of Atmospheric Science, told King Air magazine the combination purchase and modification was an approximately $20 million project funded jointly by the NSF and UW.

Avcon outfitted the B300 with a complex integration of structural and electrical modifications that allow flexibility in mounting instruments relevant to specific research campaigns.

Senior Scientist Matt Burkhart, Aeronautical Engineer Nick Mahon and French were responsible for working with Avcon to bring the aircraft online. The B300, which carries the same tail number – N2UW – as its predecessor, was delivered to the campus in Laramie in September 2024 with an open house and ribbon-cutting event.

In a spring 2025 news release, UW announced that Avcon had received Federal Aviation Administration supplemental type certification approval for the installation of the Avcon King Air Nose Extension with sensor mounting provisions; wing tip or outboard hard points – also referred to as provisions for external stores, with significant sensor shapes; dual downward and dual upward camera ports; lower fuselage hardpoints

with pylons for large external sensors; side-fuselage hardpoints for sensors; and upper fuselage hardpoints for sensors on the King Air.

In fall 2025, UW started installing and test flying instruments that are part of the King Air Research Facility. French said those flights based out of the Laramie Regional Airport (KLAR) gave the team an opportunity to test fly new instruments that were acquired and/or developed as part of the same grant that funded the new aircraft development.

The university launched its first project with the new platform during summer 2026.

Grant funds unique partnership

"This grant is absolutely critical for using the King Air to conduct research over the next five years. The grant funds the basic infrastructure that is needed for operation and maintenance of the aircraft, including all the scientific instruments that are part of the NSF/UW King Air Facility," French said in a news release. "A lot of this comes down to people whose skill sets are highly specialized. This includes scientists, engineers, technicians, aircraft mechanics and pilots. We have 18 persons who are funded either full-time or half-time through this grant, and their skills and knowledge are what allow us to maintain a state-of-the-art research facility and support the atmospheric science research community."

NSF Program Director Nicholas Anderson added: "NSF is excited to continue this unique partnership between the federal government and the state of Wyoming. The new NSF/King Air aircraft was purchased by the state; converted to a highly capable research platform through NSF funding from the Mid-scale Research Infrastructure-1 program; and will continue to be operated by the University of Wyoming through this new grant."

Since 1988, the King Air platform has been part of the NSF Lower Atmospheric Observing Facilities Program, which provides base funding to UW to deploy the aircraft and its instruments in support of NSF-funded research. Under the cooperative agreement, the NSF provides





The University of Wyoming Department of Atmospheric Science debuted its King Air B300 this summer in Utah, where this team helped conduct the aircraft's inaugural research mission.

nearly $3 million in base funding annually to UW to maintain the aircraft. The funding also helps pay for the staff of 18 individuals French mentioned, comprising three professional pilots, two aircraft mechanics and 13 research scientists, engineers and technicians. In exchange, UW provides the plane and instrumentation to NSF-funded investigators.

Prominence in the field

French said the latest grant illustrates the University of Wyoming's prominence in the field.

"We are the only university in the country that houses a research aircraft that is funded as a national facility through NSF," he said. "NSF's two other aircraft are operated by NCAR (National Center for Atmospheric Research). Other research aircraft that are in the U.S. are operated by large agencies, such as NASA and the Department of Energy. The University of Wyoming is internationally recognized as an expert institution for airborne atmospheric measurements. We collaborate closely with many of the other aircraft operators, both in the U.S. and outside of the U.S."

French also emphasized that operating the aircraft at a university allows for students to be involved. All the research projects where the aircraft is used have some type of student involvement, usually graduate students he said, and provides students the opportunity to work side-by-side with UW scientists and engineers.

"This often includes flying on research flights, operating instruments in real time and working with the data following the flights," French said. "UW is really the only university in the country that can provide this type of

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FL-862 spent four years at Avcon for design, installation and certification on 60-plus modifications.

experience for students, which is why we have a such a strong reputation nationally and internationally for educating scientists within the specialty field."

FL-862's maiden research flights

FL-862's maiden research mission – a collaboration involving Colorado State University, the University of Utah and the University of Montana alongside NASA and the Utah Division of Air Quality – measured summer ozone levels in the Salt Lake Valley. At lower elevations, ozone is harmful pollution that can trigger asthma, reduce lung breathing capacity and is harmful to plants.

Outfitted with equipment to measure components of ozone, including volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, the B300 conducted flights twice a day from mid-July through August.

"The focus of the study is to understand the formation of ozone in the Salt Lake Valley during the summer, which is a huge air quality issue. The project was approved by NSF even before the completion of the aircraft, and we've known for a couple of years this would be our first project," French explained. "We've worked with many of the same scientists on previous projects with our old aircraft ... Instrumenting and operating an aircraft for its first project has brought a number of challenges, but it has been helpful to work with a group of scientists we are familiar with and have worked with in the past."

Next projects scheduled for 2027

Historically, about 50 percent of the research conducted with UW's King Air is related to cloud physics. Another 30 percent focuses on aerosols and air quality, French said. The remaining 20 percent of the aircraft's research hours are spent on the exchange of energy



between the surface of the Earth and its lower atmosphere.

The next project, slated for early 2027, will be based in Laramie and will focus on the measurements of clouds over and downwind of the mountains.

"This is a really good area to study clouds during the late winter/early spring because they tend to be very predictable on when and where they form," he said.

The project has two principal objectives. The first is to test and verify the standard cloud physics instrumentation package on the new aircraft. Most of these instruments fly on the outside of the fuselage, mounted under the wings or on the fuselage itself.

"So, proper operation of the instruments can be tricky," French said. "Imagine flying through an icing cloud at 200 mph and trying to measure cloud droplets and snowflakes."

The second objective is to develop and test new algorithms for retrieving cloud characteristics from the aircraft's radar and lidar instruments that will be mounted on the aircraft.

"These techniques that are being developed can help 'extend' the measurements we make to regions away – above and below the aircraft – to study the entire depth of a cloud, while still being grounded in 'truth' based on the detailed measurements we make right at the aircraft," French said.

Several future projects are under consideration. French explained that the NSF, based on merit reviews, in conjunction with UW, will make decisions on funding for projects typically six to eight months in advance, sometimes longer if the project is especially complex. KA

UW is the only academic institution in the United States that provides a research aircraft facility to the atmospheric science community.





Knowing Your DOPE

Why precision King Air flying requires more than just a POH

by Joe Casey

If you know me, you know that I've become intrigued with rifles in the last few years. Adam and Brenda Weatherby are third-generation owners of Weatherby Firearms, and Adam is also a pilot. I helped him upgrade his airplane, and he helped me upgrade to a new .300 Weatherby Mag, and I entered the fascinating world of long-distance rifle shooting. I now have many Weatherby rifles in various calibers and shoot frequently at local long-distance competitions, mostly to prepare for elk hunting in Idaho. It's been a blast, pun intended.

One of the things you'll learn about in long-range rifle shooting is DOPE, which stands for Data On Previous Engagements (DOPE). To shoot accurately, you'll need to know how the rifle and ammo performed in the past. You



PHOTO CREDIT: CLINT GOFF

DOPE: .300 WBY

Yards	MILS
100	-1.0
200	0.0
300	1.8
400	3.9
500	6.3
600	8.9
700	11.5
800	14.5
900	17.7
1000	21.2

King Air 350

Engine(s)	Gear	Flaps	IAS	TQ Required
Dual	Up	Up	150	35
Dual	Down	Approach	110	19
Dual	Down	Down	110	23
Single	Down	Approach	125	50
Single	Down	Down	110	38

Example of a DOPE (Data On Previous Engagements) card for a .300 Weatherby Mag. The best pilots know their numbers by studying data from previous flights.

can put all the ballistic data into a ballistics calculator and get an approximate answer, but the best data is actual data from previous shots fired with a specific rifle. Not every rifle is the same and not every King Air is the same. Most King Air pilots operate a specific airframe, not a fleet of identical airplanes. Those specific airplanes have nuanced differences that affect performance.

With your specific rifle, you'll enter the variables into the ballistics calculator application on your handheld phone. The data includes cartridge type, projectile weight, muzzle velocity, distance to target, projectile ballistic coefficient, humidity, temperature, altitude, barrel length, barrel twist, scope height above barrel and a whole bunch of other information. All this information will tell you how high above the target to aim, or to set your scope. Bullets drop and slow with distance, which affects the impact point. But the data that will be presented to you will be generic, and you will be shooting a specific rifle, a rifle with nuances.

Want to hit your rifle target at 100 yards? Easy! There's little to affect such a short shot. Want to hit the rifle target at 800 yards? You must know your numbers and have precise skills. Want to land your King Air on an 11,000-foot-long, 150-foot-wide runway in VFR conditions? Easy! Want to land your King Air on a 3,500-foot-long runway that is 75 feet wide in IFR



Mackinac Island, Michigan (KMCD)
PHOTO CREDIT: MACKINAC ISLAND TOURISM BUREAU



conditions? You must know your numbers and have precise skills.

Land at Mackinac?

We're planning a flight in our King Air 350 and our King Air B100 to Mackinac Island, Michigan (KMCD), next summer. We'd love to land on the island and have a series of horse-drawn carriages move the 18 people on the two King Airs from the airport to the hotel. But can both airplanes land and take off safely on the 3,500-foot strip? Is there enough margin, or should we land on the mainland at Pellston Regional (KPLN) and accept the more difficult logistics (a long car ride and a ferry ride), with multiple movements and a lot of luggage?

One advantage of a King Air compared to a jet is that we can use smaller, more accessible runways. Would you land at KMCD or KPLN if you were bringing nine people to that wonderful island experience in your King Air? Are you comfortable with the landing and the takeoff performance at KMCD? I think it is doable, but in both airplanes we will have to fly exact numbers and really know the performance of the airplane.

Same with a rifle. Everything will have to be set perfectly to hit a rifle target at long distances. Everything matters at long distances. And the best way to prove what your rifle will actually do is to shoot the rifle. A good shooter will record every piece of data on every shot. They will then create a DOPE card that tells the shooter what to expect at a given distance in a certain situation. What happened in the past is a great predictor of what will happen in the future.

It takes a lot of work, time and money to get the chance to harvest a mature bull elk. When that day comes, I won't want to guess where that bullet will go. I don't want to miss. I'll tape the DOPE on the side of my gun so I can range the target, set the scope elevation, read the wind and steady my aim for that one important shot. Accurate DOPE is everything to a rifle shooter – it tells the shooter what to expect on subsequent shots.

Ballistics calculator = POH data

DOPE is important for a King Air pilot too. A pilot needs to know what to expect when flying in certain phases of flight. The POH presents much of this data. Takeoff distance, rate of climb, fuel burn, weight and balance considerations and environmental considerations – just

like shooting a rifle accurately – are critical to knowing how the airplane will perform. But you can't practically input data into your ballistics calculator when the elk steps out and you can't pull out your POH when you're outside the outer marker on an ILS. Having a quick reference for the data is critical when shooting and when flying an approach in your King Air. Having the DOPE readily accessible (or memorized) is important.

A good example is the torque required to hold the glide slope on a precision approach. If the approach angle is 3 degrees, the flaps are set to approach, and the gear is down and locked, do you know what torque to select? What changes would you make if the temperature was particularly high or particularly cold? What if you were substantially heavy or substantially light on that approach? Most importantly, just like in rifle shooting, how does the wind affect the torque required on an approach?

Dang, that wind!

The hardest part of shooting a rifle accurately is reading wind. Wind affects a bullet's trajectory and a good rifle shooter will have all the DOPE figured out, then read the wind to make the best shot. With a strong wind from the right, the shooter will need to adjust to the right. Want to shoot a target 1,000 yards across a valley? There may be multiple wind regions across that distance. The key to success is knowing your DOPE, reading the wind, building a strongly supported shooting position, and engaging the target.

Same with a King Air. You must know the wind! Many of the latest cockpit displays can display actual wind conditions in flight. It is amazing to see how much the wind can change when on an approach. I've seen the wind direction change by more than 150 degrees, effectively changing the power required to hold an airspeed on approach. And, when approaching the



runway, I always look for wind direction and velocity. A windsock is best, but a professional pilot can look at the color change of leaves on trees, ripples on water surfaces and even the movement of grass to determine wind. In my opinion, reading wind is the greatest single safety factor when operating near the ground while flying.

On a precision instrument approach, the autopilot will be in GS Mode (glidescope) and therefore the power levers will control airspeed on the approach. What airspeed are you planning to fly? To hold your planned airspeed, what power setting do you think you'll need with full flaps? You learn all of this by knowing your DOPE, or, in an airplane, data from previous flights. You should build a body of information you can use as a reference. In the aviation world, we say know your numbers. The best pilots will know their airplane so well that they can set power settings and adjust pitch attitudes for precise flying. A true pro will know their DOPE.

Single-engine DOPE?

Whether flying an instrument approach, rotating for takeoff or setting the power in cruise, a good pilot will know the numbers. But a great King Air pilot will also know the numbers for when things go wrong. Do you know your power settings for a single-engine approach? Do you know what pitch attitude to use if an engine fails at 300 feet AGL on a go-around? What if those same emergency situations occurred on a cold night in January when you are shooting an approach into a mountain airport with an elevation above 7,000 feet MSL?

When that trophy elk steps out of the thicket at 500 yards after you've hiked 18 miles into the snowy wilderness, when the wind is blowing into your face at 10 knots and time is not your friend, you'll want to have the critical numbers on the stock of your rifle so that you can place that bullet in the kill zone.

When you have that dreaded engine failure, it'll more than likely happen when you least expect it, when you are in a less-than-ideal situation. And you'll want to know your numbers. When the flap circuit breaker pops and you cannot move the flaps any longer, you'd better be able to produce a new torque setting that will give you the best chance of success on that approach to minimums when the visibility is low.

A blur in the cockpit

Interestingly, the best pilots I train seem like they are doing little in the cockpit. If I were to record them in time lapse while flying, there'd be little movement in the video. They move efficiently in the cockpit, putting their hands on the right control at the right time and in the right way.

The worst pilot I train would be a blur in the cockpit during a similar time-lapse video session. The flight controls would be overcontrolled; the pilot moving the power levers would look like a lumberjack sawing lumber, and the hands would incessantly move knobs, switches and levers. Bottom line? The worst pilots don't know their numbers and have to hunt for the data on the fly. They set the torque many times over on an instrument approach, waver down a glide slope and wander on the localizer. Every movement of one flight control requires a compensatory movement of another control in the cockpit.

The key? Know your DOPE. If you've not made a cheat sheet for reference on approaches, I'm going to challenge you to make one. Have some data on previous approaches and really get to know your King Air. And then, write down your DOPE on single-engine scenarios.

Whether you are a rifleman or a pilot, knowing your DOPE is the key to hitting the target or landing with precision on the runway. It's the difference between harvesting that trophy bull elk or having an empty freezer. It's the difference between living or dying when the chips are down on your next emergency. DOPE is important. KA

Joe Casey is the owner of Casey Aviation, Inc., based at Angelina County Airport (KLFK) in eastern Texas. The company manages four King Air aircraft and provides flight training in many aircraft models. He has 19,300 hours of total flight time, over 4,500 of which are in King Air airframes. He is a certified ATP-ME/SE commercial pilot with ASES, Rotorcraft-Helicopter/Instrument and Glider ratings. Casey is also a designated pilot examiner (DPE) with authorizations from Sport Pilot through ATP, CFI-Initial, and the BE-300 type rating issuing authority up to the ATP level; he also holds CFI, CFII, MEI, CFI-H, CFI-IH and CFI-G certificates. He has flown 83 North Atlantic crossings in King Air aircraft.

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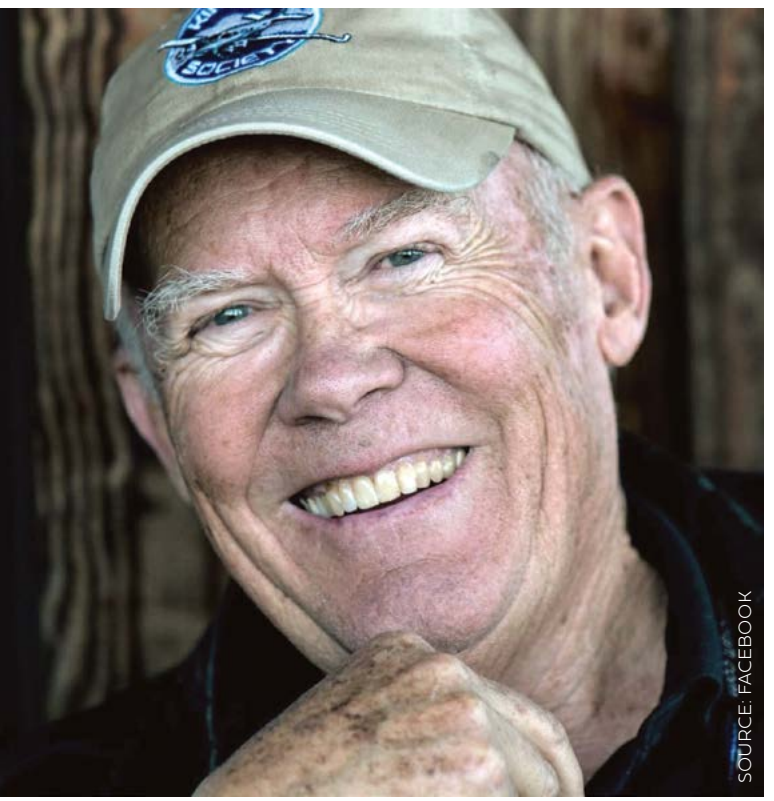
King Air Instructor, Mentor & Friend Tom Clements Shaped Generations

A legend. A national treasure. One of a kind. A giant in the King Air community.

These are just a few of the descriptions of Tom Clements that were shared online as news spread about his death Oct. 19 at age 81.

Tom flew and instructed in King Airs for more than 50 years, starting as a ground and flight instructor at Beech Aircraft Corporation in 1972, continuing through his own on-site training company Flight Review and then mentoring the instructors at King Air Academy in Phoenix, Arizona, starting in 2013.

He had graduated in 1967 from Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon) with a degree in mechanical engineering and a minor in English. He once wrote, "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."



SOURCE: FACEBOOK

He wrote articles for publication as early as the 1990s and became a regular columnist in *King Air* magazine in 2011. His articles were the basis for "The King Air Book" that he self-published in 2009 and 2019's "The King Air Book, Volume II."

Tom finished his flying career in 2023 with 24,000 hours, including 16,000 in King Airs.

In 2024, he wrote in his final "Ask the Expert" column that he was ready to end his King Air training endeavors, citing medical challenges and the evolution of the product line.

"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," he wrote.

You can find that December 2024 column titled "Time to Say Goodbye" along with others in the "Ask the Expert" archives at *kingairmagazine.com*.

"Tom's passion for flying was only matched by his love for sharing his knowledge, helping others and living life to the fullest," Tom's stepson Mike Marley wrote on Facebook. "He leaves behind an incredible legacy, and seeing the love and respect pouring in from those who knew him means more to our family than words can express."

Let's gather more remembrances to share; send your memories of Tom to *melinda@kingairmagazine.com*. KA


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For a recent mission supporting the Valiant Shield exercise in Guam, the former Air Force MC-12W, serial number FL-654, provided area chase for a high-altitude, high-speed drone.

Surplus to Flagship

Two entrepreneurs leverage an ISR workhorse into a multimission enterprise

by Grant Boyd | Photos courtesy of Wellman Aviation Services

Beechcraft King Airs are considered among the most reliable and multifaceted airframes ever built. One of the most comprehensive tests of their durability was the Javaman program. This covert 16-year U.S. military initiative deployed modified King Air variants across the Middle East and other global hotspots.

From 2008 to 2025, MC-12s and other versions operated for hundreds of hours a month in an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capacity. It was not uncommon for the heavily modified King Air aircraft to accumulate tens of thousands of hours in the skies during this mission, which required an array of secretive, high-tech equipment.

One airframe in the program was serial number FL-654. Military veteran and entrepreneur Greg Wellman acquired the King Air 350ER, now tail number N90654, from government surplus in July 2025, setting a new course for the ISR platform and one of his business ventures.

Two military transitions

"Our King Air 350ER is a former United States Air Force MC-12W that was part of the Javaman program, where I believe it flew over Northern Africa," Greg said. "It is a 2009 model and has almost 25,000 hours on it now, which is actually one of the low-time aircraft from the fleet."

Wellman recently transitioned from the United States Army after 15 years of service, first as an Apache pilot and later flying a wide variety of aircraft, predominantly in an experimental flight-test role.

This role aligned with Greg's undergraduate degree in aeronautical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his master's degree in aeronautical engineering from Georgia Tech. After transitioning to the civilian world, he earned his MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

"I then spent a year in investment banking in aerospace and defense. But that role was not close enough to the aircraft to scratch the itch," Greg said. "I didn't even make it a year before I called it quits. That job had taken me to Los Angeles, and I had been working on a thesis for a long time about general aviation maintenance and a need for improvement in that space."

Wanting to create a more transparent and seamless experience for aircraft owners, Greg and his roommate at MIT, Tom Schaefer, started Fourth Front Aviation in 2025. The company started with a shop at Santa Monica Airport (KSMO) and recently added another at Colorado Springs Airport (KCOS).



Greg Wellman (left) and Chief Pilot Brian McCormick at the beginning of their KOXR-PHNL leg with a full bladder of fuel in the cabin.

"We are focused on transparency for the customer, using an in-house app to keep customers up to date with progress on their aircraft. It's kind of like the Domino's Pizza tracker," Greg said. "We also put emphasis on staying under our quotes. If we are going to exceed a quote, we stop for permission from the owner to continue, explaining the change."

Owning the first maintenance facility led to a new line of business that traces back to Greg's military roots. In mid-2025, the business partners had an opportunity to acquire a versatile aircraft that would give them the flexibility to support the aerospace and defense industry in a different way.

A workhorse's new mission

"We initially had some plans to move parts and aircraft owners for flying traffic in support of our aviation maintenance business," Greg said. "But once we acquired the King Air 350ER, people started asking what we were going to do with it and my flight test connections pulled me back into that world. It spun up from there."

Wellman Aviation Services, established last year, is an airborne test, data collection and special mission support organization based at KSMO. The King Air 350ER largely supports the company's efforts, and it also operates two optionally piloted testbeds that resemble delta-wing unmanned aircraft systems.

They provide flight testing as a service for clients including defense and government agencies, as well as companies looking to evaluate next-generation airborne systems, hardware, software and autonomous technologies. Customers dictate the requirements for testing various systems and equipment, and Wellman Aviation Services provides the necessary engineering, maintenance and flight crew to ensure mission success.

"The vision was to have a flying testbed that's useful for customers who are testing sensors, radars, antennas, weapon systems and more but don't have an aircraft



The display shows the King Air 350ER crossing the international date line while enroute to PWAK to support the Valiant Shield exercise.

to accomplish those tests easily," Greg explained. "We provide the aircraft, modify it as needed, get FAA approvals, get the airspace and do everything to get the customer the data that they need without having to deal with all the other stuff."

In addition to consulting on program strategy, testing approach and instrumentation decisions, Wellman Aviation Services' capabilities include testbed flight operations, aircraft modification, test planning and FAA interface, data and connectivity, and special mission support.

The King Air has proven to be valuable regardless of the role it plays, including on a recent long-range mission for a flight test campaign on the other side of the globe.

Crossing the Pacific

The ER in the King Air 350ER model designation stands for extended range. The aircraft's additional fuel capacity means the PT6A-60A engines have an impressive loiter time of up to 12 hours. It also means this King Air can go as far as 2,650 nautical miles in standard conditions with no wind and one crew member.

Prior to this scheduled mission in the western Pacific Ocean's Mariana Islands, the Wellman Aviation Services team installed an internal tank that held 2,000 pounds of Jet A. The aircraft's previously installed optional military equipment reduced its advertised range, so the additional fuel helped with the roughly 2,218-nautical-mile trip to Daniel K. Inouye International Airport (PHNL).

"We technically could have made it to Hawaii with just the ER tanks but added the internal tanks as well, and we wound up landing in Honolulu with 900 pounds because of the headwinds," Greg said, noting that the next stop was Wake Island Airfield (PWAK) nearly 2,000 nautical miles away.

En route from PWAK westbound to Guam's Antonio B. Won Pat International Airport (PGUM), the two-pilot crew saw the performance numbers below. The aircraft also has an array of antennas and pods that increase parasitic drag, including the range reduction caused by added equipment weight. The pilots stayed at FL280 on this trip because they didn't file for an RSVM over-water permit in time for the flight.

GW	FL	Temp	Q (%)	FF (x2)	IAS	TAS
13,500	280	ISA +10	62	295	169	267
14,500	280	ISA +12	62.1	295	167	269
15,500	280	ISA +11	62.2	295	166	262
16,200	280	ISA +13	62.2	300	164	260
16,300*	280	ISA +17	57	280	154	247

**The top four rows were data en route to PWAK and the last row was data en route to PGUM.*

An important mission

FL-654 was in Guam to participate in Valiant Shield, which is a multinational joint exercise led by the United States Air Force and Navy. The aircraft stayed for two weeks to provide chase for a drone that was participating in the exercise.



With 7,200 pounds of fuel onboard FL-654 – all tanks plus capacity held within an installed fuel bladder in the cabin – the door clearance to the ground below was mere inches.

"Owning the first maintenance facility led to a new line of business that traces back to Greg Wellman's and Tom Schaefer's military roots. In mid-2025, the business partners had an opportunity to acquire a versatile aircraft that would give them the flexibility to support the aerospace and defense industry in a different way."

"Photo chase is a mission that has been around forever, but drone escort is an evolving mission," Greg explained. "Now that they've got drones that are in the jet space for altitudes and airspeeds, that's what we were chasing. It outpaced and outclimbed us all day; they just needed us there to make sure the airspace was clear."

Greg said his key takeaway was: "To think that we had a customer willing to have us fly 25 hours each way to come do this is a testament to how much more effective the King Air was than the other assets that they had available to them."

Serving as a support vehicle for aerial missions is just one possible use profile for their 350ER. The Wellman Aviation Services team has been fielding an array of novel inquiries since its founding.

"We have received a lot of interesting requests and are just getting into execution with some of them," Greg said. "The most interesting ask so far was to install an 18-foot-long, 2,000-pound rocket-assisted drone that the customer wanted us to launch off the center line of the aircraft. We made it pretty far in the planning process, but it ended up being cost prohibitive and we would only have 3 inches of ground clearance with the struts filled to the max even with high float gear."

The most common use cases involve chase support, including cameras for aerial photography.

Another recent mission highlighted the aircraft's ability to support unique requests. In October, Wellman Aviation Services provided airborne photo support for NASA's SpaceX

Crew-12 return to NASA's Los Angeles recovery site, not far from Wellman's headquarters.

The King Air was the top aircraft in a stack of three and the first to see the SpaceX Crew Dragon Freedom as it broke over the horizon. The Wellman crew arrived at its assigned photo point within two seconds of time on target and provided a live video feed for NASA TV's coverage of the spacecraft's landing.

This was the company's first execution on a contract to record space objects returning to Earth. Greg said N90654 is an excellent fit for this task because its nose-mounted MX-20 sensor can detect objects 40 degrees above the horizon without any structural limitations. Additionally, its operating costs are 30 times less than those of the NASA platform it replaced.

Modifying a heavily modified plane

"Coming out of the Air Force, the aircraft had all kinds of modifications. It has a ton of antennas, an extended nose STC, a belly pod, high-flotation gear, and a dorsal pod that we added a satcom terminal to," Greg said.

"I was able to work with our DAR (designated airworthiness representative) and get the aircraft up on a standard airworthiness certificate even with leaving all that stuff on, which is awesome. As test programs come up, if required, we put it on an experimental or restricted 'shirt pocket' certificate. This means that while the test efforts are ongoing, it's in that category and as soon as we're complete, we de-mod and it goes back to the standard airworthiness cert."

Greg is an A&P mechanic with inspection authorization and owning a maintenance facility gives a competitive advantage in completing routine maintenance, modifications and de-modifications in a timely manner. Recent work on FL-654 has included replacing the pilot-side windshield and adding two cameras.

"These cameras zoom in really far and are useful for a variety of cases, including a customer that was launching



Greg Wellman, co-founder of Wellman Aviation Services and Fourth Front Aviation, fills the extended range tanks of the PT6A-60A engines on N90654 before the flight to PHNL.



N90654 retains many of the modifications from its days as an MC-12W, including an extended nose, belly pod, dorsal pod, antennas and high-flotation landing gear.

equipment into the ocean and wanted real-time performance data on their system," he said.

Greg added: "The 20-inch diameter camera, a WESCAM MX-20, is in the extended nose and the 15-inch diameter one, an MX-15, is on the belly. This is how the aircraft was equipped in the Air Force, so we are restoring it to the equipment it had previously. Having this equipment draws in a lot of interest from customers."

While the King Air 350ER requires only one pilot, the company usually includes two crew in proposals. They are also adding two crew stations in the spartan interior cabin area, where they'll be able to operate cameras and onboard sensors. The team will keep evaluating new equipment based on customer requests.

Thousands of additional hours

The Wellman Aviation Services story has plenty of runway ahead of it, but ironically, it's headquartered at an airport set to close permanently at the end of 2028.

Fourth Front Aviation is one of two on-airport maintenance facilities, although the other provider is only focused on Cirrus airframes – leaving more than 100 aircraft based there with no service provider until Fourth Front started up. With the number of aircraft and other businesses at KSMO, Greg is skeptical it will be turned into a park as the plan currently proposes.

Regardless, the airport serves the two companies well for however long they will be able to call it home. While the weather in Santa Monica is never too hot, the runway is only 3,500 feet long and they typically do not take off with more than 2,000 pounds of fuel in FL-654.

Wellman Aviation Services is expanding its fleet to cover additional altitude and airspeed blocks. Along with an aircraft that can go higher than a King Air, they are considering something that can go much slower. One platform they are exploring is the Winch Aerostat Small Platform, or WASP, a lighter-than-air solution that can carry an array of payloads at altitudes up to 1,500 AGL.

The 350ER will remain Wellman's flagship aircraft even as the company's mission continues to evolve and it likely has many thousands of hours left to fill in its logbook.

"Depending on the workload, we may add another King Air to the fleet," Greg said. "The King Air is a great platform for our mission because it is extremely reliable and robust." KA

Grant Boyd holds a doctorate of education and is a private pilot and business aviation professional with a passion for writing. His background includes aviation marketing, communications, customer service and sales roles.

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Garmin Delivers 1,000th King Air Retrofitted With G1000 Avionics

On Oct. 6, Garmin celebrated the delivery of its 1,000th G1000 integrated flight deck retrofit for Beechcraft King Air aircraft. The milestone occurred on a U.S. Army C-12 Huron, which was upgraded by Stevens Aerospace and Defense with G1000 NXi and Garmin Autothrottle.

"Reaching 1,000 King Air retrofits is a testament to the enduring value of this program and the trust customers place in Garmin and our authorized dealer network," Carl Wolf, Garmin vice president of aviation sales, marketing, programs & support said in a news release. "From the original G1000 installation to today's G1000 NXi platform with advanced capabilities such as Garmin Autothrottle and Autoland, we have continued to expand the program to serve King Air operators and missions around the world."

Garmin said the delivery underscores the long-standing success of its King Air retrofit program and its ability to provide commercial off-the-shelf avionics solutions for defense missions. The U.S. Army has upgraded more than 40 C-12 Huron aircraft with G1000 NXi.

"To maintain mission readiness of the U.S. Army's C-12 fleet through 2050, the Army initiated a comprehensive avionics modernization effort," said Jim Williams, senior vice president at Stevens Aerospace. "The Garmin G1000 NXi was selected as the fleet's next-generation avionics solution, and Stevens Aerospace and Defense Systems was awarded the contract to perform the upgrades."

Lt. Col. James B. Hickey, project manager, fixed wing, said the achievement shows government and industry can rapidly deliver modernized capability that positions Army Aviation for the future fight.

"By replacing aging analog systems with reliable, data-enabled G1000 technology, we are mitigating obsolescence, reducing lifecycle maintenance burdens and improving operational readiness," Hickey said. "This modernization gives fixed wing Army Aviators enhanced situational awareness and decision advantage while reducing cognitive workload, enabling them to execute complex missions more effectively in demanding and contested operational environments."



Garmin celebrated its 1,000th G1000 retrofit for King Air aircraft with an Oct. 6 ceremony at Stevens Aerospace and Defense, where the upgrade on a U.S. Army C-12 Huron was completed.

Garmin received the first supplemental type certificate for a King Air G1000 retrofit in November 2007 and evolved with the January 2017 certification of G1000 NXi. Since then, the program has expanded across multiple King Air variants, including the C90A/B, 200, B200, 300 and 350 series and C-12 variants.

King Air G1000 and G1000 NXi upgrades have been completed globally, supported by foreign certification validations that make the modernized flight deck available to operators for various missions. More recently, Garmin has introduced additional capabilities for eligible King Air aircraft, including Autothrottle and Autoland. Garmin Autothrottle automatically manages engine power from takeoff through landing to reduce crew workload. On properly equipped King Air aircraft, Garmin Autoland takes control if the crew can't perform their duties. It selects an airport, communicates with air traffic control, navigates to the airport, lands the aircraft and shuts down the engines, all without human intervention.

With the G1000 NXi retrofit solution, King Air owners can access features including synthetic vision technology that includes a 3D exocentric view of the SafeTaxi airport environment, emergency descent mode as a standard feature and Garmin's Electronic Stability and Protection technology. Later this year, Garmin expects to certify Autothrottle and Autoland for King Air aircraft with increased gross weight STCs up to 16,500 pounds.
Source: garmin.com



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FlyRight's King Air C90A Full Flight Simulator Relocates to Brazil

FlyRight Inc., an FAA-approved Part 142 flight training center in North Carolina, and EPA Training Center, Latin America's largest regional aviation training center, have entered into a strategic agreement. This international collaboration involves relocating FlyRight's King Air C90A Level-C full flight simulator from Concord-Padgett Regional Airport (KJQF) to EPA's advanced aviation training hub in São José dos Pinhais, Brazil.

The relocation of the full flight simulator is scheduled to begin in November 2026. Following transit, installation and rigorous testing, the device is projected to secure Brazilian National Civil Aviation Agency (ANAC) certification for pilot training by early 2027. The companies said this deployment will meet regional demand for advanced turboprop simulation, allowing South American aviators to complete localized, motion-based initial and recurrent training without traveling abroad.



PHOTO CREDIT: FLYRIGHT

"We are incredibly proud to partner with EPA Training Center to maximize the global reach of our simulation assets," said Andy Bauer, FlyRight's vice president of sales and marketing. "This strategic shift allows FlyRight to optimize our Concord training capabilities while supporting the rapidly growing corporate and regional aviation sectors in Brazil with a premier, Level-C simulation training tool."

EPA Training Center will host the King Air C90A alongside its existing state-of-the-art pilot and crew training fleet.

"With the King Air simulator, pilots and operators will have access to highly accurate equipment and instruction in Portuguese, right here in Brazil, without having to travel abroad. This means more safety, lower costs and less time away from operations," said Flávio Farias, CEO of EPA.

The King Air C90A Level-C simulator features realistic flight dynamics and fully immersive visual systems capable of replicating complex operational scenarios. It offers full-motion capability designed to satisfy strict regulatory standards, ensuring seamless alignment with ANAC Brazil requirements during the upcoming certification window. *Source: flyrightinc.com*

Skandia King Air Soundproofing Kit Receives ANAC Approval

Aircraft interiors specialist Skandia, Inc., has received final approval from Brazil's ANAC for its King Air 200/300 soundproofing acoustic kit.

Skandia engineered and tested the kit, which received FAA approval in 2017 and holds EASA and Transport Canada Civil Aviation approvals. The latest certification makes the solution available to most King Air 200 and 300 aircraft in Brazil, expanding access to a quieter, more comfortable cabin experience.

The kit uses advanced Skandia-designed materials to reduce cabin noise and unpleasant sound frequencies throughout all phases of flight. Its straightforward installation and à la carte format allow operators to tailor the system to their aircraft and performance goals.

Skandia's engineered approach treats both airborne and structure-borne sound through a coordinated



Skandia received final approval from Brazil's ANAC for its King Air 200/300 soundproofing acoustic kit that can be customized for each aircraft.

PHOTO CREDIT: GERARDO VILLA

system of damping, absorption and barrier materials. The company can also perform an in-flight acoustical analysis to establish an aircraft's unique sound signature at cruise speed and altitude, then recommend a customized solution designed to maximize noise reduction while minimizing weight. *Source: skandiainc.com*

Mint Turbines Receives PT6 Engine Overhaul Authorizations

Pratt & Whitney Canada has named Mint Turbines a designated overhaul facility for its PT6A and PT6T engine lines. This expands the portfolio of original equipment manufacturer authorizations for the turbine engine maintenance, repair and overhaul provider based in Stroud, Oklahoma.

For operators, the designation means access to OEM-authorized overhaul services backed by Mint Turbines' fast decision-making, 24/7 customer support and field service that brings expertise directly to customers when and where they need it most.

"This authorization represents years of investment in our people, our systems and our unwavering commitment to doing things the right way," said Rob Ruck, president and chief operating officer of M International, the parent company of Mint Turbines. "We are truly honored to become a part of the prestigious designated overhaul facility network. Becoming a

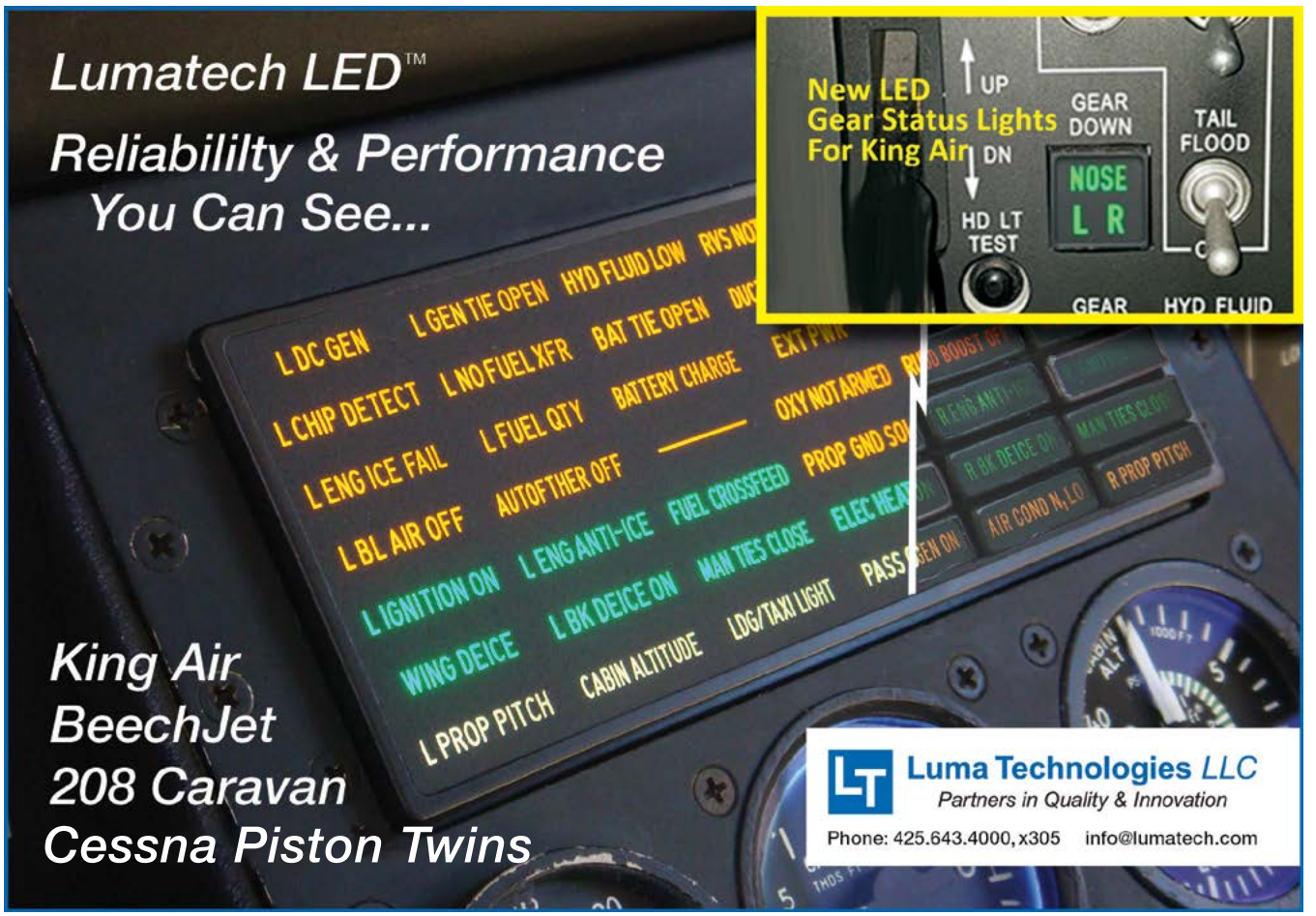


Pratt & Whitney Canada DOF reflects the trust we've earned from our customers and Pratt & Whitney Canada through decades of supporting operators and demonstrates the standard our team brings to every engine that comes through our facility."

The Pratt & Whitney Canada designation joins Mint Turbines' growing portfolio of OEM authorizations, including General Electric, Ozark Aeroworks and Rolls-Royce through sister company Airborne Engines in Canada. Together, these relationships reflect the company's long-standing investment in technical expertise while providing operators with broader access to certified support across government, commercial and specialty aviation. These authorizations distinguish Mint Turbines among independent MRO providers.

For customers already supported by Mint Turbines, this certification offers access to a range of OEM-sponsored programs and resources, further enhancing the support and services available to them. All services Mint Turbines performs are backed by the same level of oversight, documentation and precision demanded by major airlines and federal agencies, giving customers confidence in OEM-backed work.

For more than 45 years, Mint Turbines has built its reputation by delivering responsive service, technical expertise and lasting customer relationships. This authorization represents another big step in the company's continued commitment to expanding authorized capabilities while maintaining the personalized service that has defined Mint Turbines since its founding. *Source: mintturbines.com* KA









Check Out the Complete Guide to Garmin G1000 NXI In the King Air (2026 Edition)

Step into a smarter, more capable cockpit. The Garmin G1000 NXi delivers faster performance, sharper visuals, and enhanced situational awareness to the King Air, making every phase of flight more intuitive. From advanced safety features to streamlined workflows, this upgrade redefines expectations. Scan the QR code to explore the complete guide and see how the G1000 NXi can elevate your aircraft.

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- ***Feb. 25-27:*** Women in Aviation International Conference, Savannah, Georgia
- ***March 23-26:*** Aircraft Electronics Association International Convention & Trade Show, Savannah, Georgia
- ***April 6-11:*** SUN 'n FUN Aerospace Expo, Lakeland, Florida
- ***April 14-17:*** AERO Friedrichshafen, Friedrichshafen, Germany
- ***April 22-25:*** Beech Bash in the Bluegrass, Mount Sterling, Kentucky (KIOB) – NEW LOCATION!
- ***July 26-Aug. 1:*** EAA AirVenture, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
- ***Aug. 3-5:*** Latin American Business Aviation Conference & Exhibition (LABACE), São Paulo, Brazil
- ***Oct. 13-18:*** Beech Party, Beechcraft Heritage Museum, Tullahoma, Tennessee (KTHA)
- ***Oct. 19-21:*** National Business Aviation Association Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (NBAA-BACE), Las Vegas, Nevada

Let us know of additional events at *melinda@kingairmagazine.com*

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