



**Commemorative Air Force  
Jayhawk Wing**

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## **Saga Of The Silverhawk**

The tension in the meeting room was with an air of expectation. Small groups of people talked quietly, and even laughter broke the calm at times. Duncan Henderson, Squadron Leader, stood looking through his notes pertaining to the business of the meeting. Suddenly someone said loud enough for all to hear, "What are they doing?" The atmosphere changed to that of a Hospital Father's Waiting Room. I got up and stated that I would go and find out what was happening. Searching through the maze of hall ways and offices, I found a group of three standing closely together about the pay phone in the break room. Mike Jones stared intently at the wall, Joe Cowan observed Earl Long's feet with great interest, while Earl peered over his spectacles, and scratched his salt and pepper beard while listening to the telephone. Returning to the meeting room, I reported that they were working on it.

Earl and Joe explained the details of what had been learned on the phone, fielding several questions. The air was lighter and decisive now, and problem after problem was raised and solved. The vote provided a mandate; buy the Beechcraft C-45, if it looks as good as we had been led to believe.

Large fluffy clouds filled the sky as the Piper Archer took to the air, with Joe and Earl as they departed Wichita to do the Jay hawk Squadron's bidding.

Setting down on the dusty high plain in the Land of Enchantment, they began negotiation. The owner of the Beech C-45 was a seasoned bird trader. He knew the military version of the Model 1& Beechcraft was a good buy at the asking price. Earl and Joe walked around the airplane noting it's good points, but talking about the C-45's deficiencies. They began to try to barter down the \$19,500 price tag. Offering \$17,000, but they were not able to agree they turned away from the gleaming silver bird, saddened by the lack of the acquisition. In the air on the return journey, they consoled one another that they would fight the good flight another day and win. ..

Bad weather looming in the distance beyond Clovis, New Mexico halted the return for an overnight on the ground.

Somewhere in Texas, three unsavory characters sped toward a rendezvous with the silver steed that should belong to the pure of heart, the Confederate Air Force.

Back in Clovis, the day dawned clear. Joe and Earl sharpened their acumen on the worth of the beautiful C-45 Beech. Many phone calls to knowledgeable individuals in the fields revealed that the asking price was a bargain. With new resolve, they discussed returning to purchase the Beechcraft at the original price.

Meanwhile, the black hats of the story were stepping out of their car, intending to offer cash money, in large bills, for the unsuspecting Silverhawk. Walking toward the office, the well-dressed trio laughed about how many more kilos of snow they would be able to haul. One carried a briefcase; the large man had an unsightly bulge under his left armpit. The owner was put off by their slick but unkempt appearance. He didn't like their attitude about the airplane. With questions like, "How short a strip can it take off from, loaded?", and "How fast will it fly on the deck?", he turned down his asking price. They showed him a roll of cash and offered more money, and he asked them to leave.

Later a mechanic came in for coffee and asked, "Who were those guys?" "I don't know, drug runners, I guess!" Just then the phone rang; it was Joe wanting to know if the owner might have reconsidered the Wichita Jay hawk Squadron's offer for the C-45. The answer was, "Yes".

Later at the bank the owner had to write a check for \$500 to clear the title to the airplane, after the \$17,000 had been signed over.

A lengthy preflight followed the bank visit. Numerous attempts to air up one of the landing gear struts appeared to fail. Finally after walking the props through for along time, one engine sputtered and coughed to life. Then the other blew a cloud of smoke and started. Run-ups discovered a weak port engine, that could only get up to 1500 r.p.m., while the starboard motor came up to full power, but was running rough.

Take-off roll was long and took a lot of opposite rudder to balance the poor performance of the left engine. Airborne, the right engine smoothed out, and Earl throttled back so as not to out distance Joe in the Piper .

Joe was orbiting, keeping a visual check of the airplane for signs of trouble. It almost looked like a blackbird heckling a crow. Finally it was decided to try putting up the landing gear on the Beechcraft, even though they had had trouble with airing up the strut. It was a sight with the Beech lugging along and the Piper running almost full tilt.

Just about the time they had penetrated Amarillo's air space, Earl reported the starboard engine was going sour! Moment's later Earl exclaimed that the motor was hot and had no oil pressure! He asked Joe to get them clearance for a straight-in approach to Amarillo, because, he said, "I'm going to be a little busy." Earl remarked afterward that, "I was afraid to shut that right engine down, because I didn't think the left engine would pull hard enough to make the runway!" But it did so after the right engine completely stopped on the downwind leg for landing.

We take our hats off to Joe Cowan for having enough presence of mind to **NOT** declare an emergency, and cause us a lot of unnecessary headaches with the F.A.A.; also to Earl Long for his raw flying skill and his coolness under pressure to make the decision to save the airplane at the sacrifice of the motor. This was Earl's second engine out landing in a twin Beech in the past nine months.

Someone up there must be helping. For a newly formed club to plunge into a \$20,000 project after having known each other 60 days or less, to accidentally buy an airplane out from under the clutches of drug dealers, to pick at random a former owner that would not allow aircraft to be lost in the jungles of Colombia, to lose an engine only minutes from an airport. Well what's the odds on all those events? We believe we are doing something right.

**“Lest We Forget...”**

