

BEECHCRAFT OF THE MONTH

N8939U

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DREAM MACHINE

1965 S35

When the time came for my wife Jessie and I to purchase an airplane, it probably was inevitable that it would be a Bonanza. My father taught me how to fly in his 1947 Model 35, which I soloed on my 16th birthday. At that time Dad ("Old Bob" to many of you) was a partner in a Beech dealership, so I had the good fortune to fly a series of brand-new Bonanzas—from the S35 through V35B models. That exposure to Beech products spoiled me. Nothing else I had the opportunity to fly could measure up as a fun transportation machine.

Once our two children reached the age where we had to pay for their airline tickets, I convinced Jessie we could save money by flying ourselves on family trips. This actually turned out to be true as a result of an excellent flying club (RFC Dallas) in the Dallas, Texas, area where we lived for 15 years.

We flew the club's B33 Debonair on many wonderful trips, including destina-

tions on both coasts and in Canada. Those experiences reinforced the tremendous value of these planes as a tool for going places, especially when a small amount of flexibility is available to deal intelligently with weather conditions.

When a job change brought me to the Chicago area and we were able to buy a house on the same residential airport as my father and one of my brothers, I figured I had just joined the ultimate flying club.

I provided hangar storage for a Piper Pacer and a Stearman that were a part of the Siegfried fleet, and could fly either of them—in addition to Dad's very nice V35B. The only problem was that "Old Bob" and Mother (aka T.J.) always seemed to be off attending a regional Bonanza society event, visiting family or using their Bonanza in other ways.

Once we decided that we needed another Bonanza in the family, we were faced with the same dilemma as many prospective purchasers: Which model and equipment selection would make the best use of our limited acquisition and maintenance funds?

Due to my memories of the fun I

had flying Dad's lightweight straight 35, we started looking at the G35 and earlier models. A recognition that these fine aircraft were likely to be at least as costly to maintain as a later model, as well as their limited fuel capacity and other considerations, eventually drove us toward the later airplanes.

We settled into looking primarily at H35s through P35s, with a few later models thrown in the mix. We were looking for an exceptionally clean, low-time airframe and decided that we would let the equipment be a secondary consideration. In fact, a minimal IFR package would probably make it easier to keep the maintenance costs under control.

We looked at more than 30 Bonanzas before we found N8939U, a 1965 S35 with original paint and interior and 2200 airframe hours. The airframe condition appeared to be consistent with an airplane that had been hangared enough to preserve a 35-year-old paint job. The maintenance records were complete and painted a picture of a no-damage plane that had been continuously maintained and flown, although annual flying time during the last 20 years was low.

She was equipped with a modest but utilitarian avionics package consisting of two KX-170Bs, a KMA-20 audio panel, a KT-76 transponder, a Narco DME 195—and a Bendix T-12C ADF that was good for listening to AM radio, but not much else.

A Beech (Brittain) B-4 autopilot with marginal functionality rounded out the electronics complement. Tip tanks and a speedscope windshield from BDS had been installed in 1978.

Many Beechcraft of the Month stories describe how an owner has trans-

formed a good airplane into a "dream machine" through a series of extensive upgrades. In our case, at that time, this 35-year-old airplane was pretty close to our "dream machine," but each year we have made a few changes. Our goal has been to keep the empty weight down and to keep the avionics simple and relatively inexpensive to maintain, while still maintaining good IFR capability.

Summary of changes:

2000

- Replace turn coordinator with turn & bank instrument.
- Overhaul Brittain B-4 autopilot.

The classic turn & bank instrument is my preference for partial-panel flying, as it offers a less ambiguous and more readily interpreted display than a turn coordinator. The Brittain overhaul gave us a functional autopilot with altitude hold, nav tracking and a heading bug.

2001

- Install GEM 602 engine monitor.
- Install Shadin Mini-Flow fuel flow system.
- Install GAMjector fuel injection nozzles.

We chose to add some complexity in engine instrumentation to take full advantage of the flexibility in engine operation permitted by the installation of GAMjector nozzles.

2002

- Remove the DME 195 and nonfunctional ADF.
- Install Trimble 2000 Approach Plus IFR approach-approved GPS system.
- Replace all antenna wiring, move primary communications antenna from cabin top to belly, and add wiring for eventual installation of blade-style navigation antenna and intercom jacks in rear seats.

We might have kept the DME if it had been a modern lightweight unit, but it added seven pounds in the tail cone, where no Model 35 needs extra weight. The GPS installation, with a dedicated CDI, was a relatively low-cost way to provide GPS IFR navigation and approach capability. The GPS can legally be substituted for DME and ADF for all IFR applications with the exception of executing ADF approach procedures without a GPS overlay.

We use a portable GPS to provide moving-map capability and back-up navigation. Avionics experts advised us that coax cables and their connectors can deteriorate over time, so we took advantage of the fact that the interior panels were out as an opportune time to renew all of the antenna wiring.



The cover photo was taken from Rand Siegfried's Beech E18S by ABS member Keith Zenobia. The image of N8939U (Bob Siegfried's S35) was taken during a photo mission over the Sierra mountains of California.

PHOTO BY JESSE SIEGFRIED

2003

- Removed NARCO VOR antenna on cabin top and installed blade-style navigation antenna on tail section.

This installation was documented in the November 2003 *ABS Magazine*. It was driven by the desire to use a canopy cover without cutting any antenna holes, as well as by the superior performance and lower drag of the blade antenna.

Future plans

The next upgrade on the horizon is the replacement of the somewhat long-in-the-tooth KMA-20 audio panel with a state-of-the-art audio panel/stereo intercom system. This will also allow us to find another use for the Sigtronics portable intercom that I picked up on eBay a few years ago.

We use 39U primarily for pleasure flying, including trips from our home

base near Chicago to the east and west coasts to visit relatives, as well as weekend getaways. Opportunities to get together with other Beech flyers are always enjoyable, and 39U has been seen at occasional Midwest Bonanza Society and North East Bonanza Group events, three Tullahoma Beech Parties, the Bonanza/Baron Museum Dedication and the 2003 and 2004 Bonanzas-to-Oshkosh flights.

I have to admit that the impetus for putting this article together came from a desire to see the excellent photographic work of ABS member Keith Zenobia on the cover of *ABS Magazine*. Keith shot the cover photo from my brother Rand's Beech E18S photo ship while we were flying over the Sierras during a visit to Rand's family on Pine Mountain Lake Airport (E45), California.



EQUIPMENT LIST - N8939U - S/N D-7924

Two King KX-170B nav-comms
KI-214 indicator and GS receiver
KI-201C indicator
King KMA-20 audio panel
King KT-76 transponder
Trimble 2000 Approach Plus GPS

Mid-Continent MD40-66L GPS CDI
Beech Model B-4 autopilot
Electronics International VA 1-50 volt/ammeter
Insight GEM 602 engine monitor
Shadin Mini-Flow L fuel flow computer
GAMjector fuel injection nozzles



Bob and Jessie Siegfried with N8939U outside their home at Brookridge Air Park (LL22), Downers Grove, Illinois.