

From the Flight Deck

by Kevin R. Dingman



Duke Meisters

The 2018 Beechcraft Duke Fly-In



[**Meister** – *compound noun* – akin to maestro – A person regarded as skilled or prominent in a specified area of activity; one who has extensive knowledge or ability.]

Aircraft type clubs are organizations that provide information and support to a single aircraft type from the same manufacturer. Most aircraft type clubs are independent of the manufacturer and organized as not-for-profit associations operated by volunteers. Such is the

case with The Duke Flyers Association (DFA) which has nearly 300 members including pilots from Switzerland, Australia, Austria, Germany, New Zealand, Belgium, South Africa, and Canada. The annual fly-in presents an opportunity to socialize with birds of a feather, renew friendships, and relate stories through heartfelt (sometimes harrowing) tales of all things aeronautical. Attendees also discuss piloting, maintenance, operational techniques, meet face-to-face with vendors, and accomplish recurrent training.

Pilot Steel, Inc.

As much a treasured social event as a technical one, this year's annual Duke Flyers Association (DFA) meeting was held in Owensboro, Kentucky (KOWB). The event was organized and hosted by Ray and Susan Assmar,

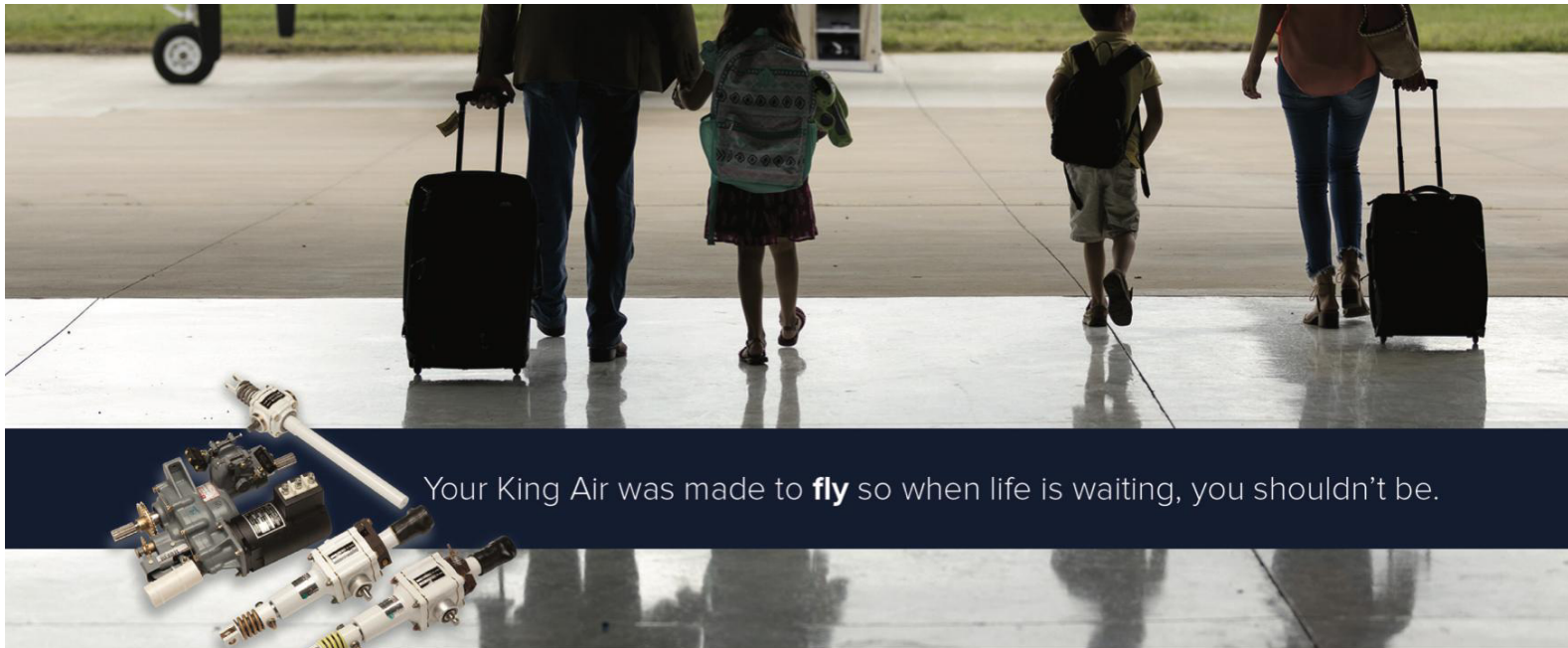
owners of both a beautiful Duke and Pilot Steel, Inc., a metal fabrication company. Throughout the gathering, DFA President, retired Delta Captain and Duke guru Bob Hoffman shared pearls of wisdom gained from his 48,000-plus hours of airline and GA flying. Mid America Jet provided host FBO services for attendees which included both piston and turbine Dukes.

A Tough Crowd

The conference itinerary began with cocktails at a meet-and-greet with an evening of storytelling held at the event hotel. The official beginning of the gathering commenced the next day with an early morning, seven-hour, all-encompassing Master IFR refresher course presented by Gary Reeves. Considering that DFA members regularly fly their Dukes in the IFR system, in actual IMC and often to an IMC approach, it was a tough crowd of meisters to impress. However, we can all use instruction and reminders about the sometimes overlooked and essential details of instrument flying using today's modern avionics, and Gary presented valuable information with something for everyone. Course subject matter covered everything from the still mandatory recording of VOR checks, seldom accessed knowledge about required aircraft instruments, lighting and inspections to LP+V and LPV minimums, DH vs. MDA, holding, SID's and STAR's, as well as IF vs IAF with a discussion about the requirement to fly (or not to fly) the procedure turn. His material prompted class participation with a spirited conversation about approach procedures and techniques as well as communicating with ATC while defending our position and responsibilities

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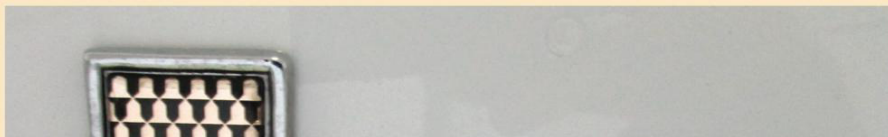




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Put Up Your Dukes

The Duke - Model 60, A60 and B60 -
Very Shapely



as PIC. The refresher course was followed by an evening tour of the OZ Tyler Distillery (Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey) and dinner featuring a live bluegrass band. Ye-ha! Bourbon, barbeque, and banjos – a delicious diversion after the day-long instrument review.

Brace for Impact

The next day kicked off with an in-depth, six-hour review of the Duke POH as well as operational procedures, policies, and techniques. This Duke specific training was followed by Q&A including the sharing of relevant events, accidents, incidents and mistakes in both GA and the Duke fleet. The final evening's formal dinner at the Bluegrass Hall of Fame featured speaker Doreen Welsh who was a flight attendant on US Airways flight 1549 (Miracle on the Hudson). Doreen told the story ("90 Seconds to Impact") from her perspective stationed at the aft jumpseat – the most heavily damaged section of the Airbus. After discovering that they had ditched in the Hudson and not crashed on land, and after making her way to the forward section of the aircraft, she recounts, "Everything was calm up front. The other two flight attendants were dry and perfectly groomed. It was as if there had been two entirely different accidents." Doreen provided lessons in survival and emergency procedures

Why a Duke?

Long recognized for exceptional workmanship and solid flying characteristics, Beechcraft built a line of twins employing royal titles: the King Air, Queen Air, Baron, Duchess, and Duke. The development of the Beechcraft 60 Duke began in early 1965 and was designed to fill the gap between the Baron and the Queen Air. On December 29, 1966, the prototype Model 60 made its first flight. Available to the public in 1968, the six-place pressurized, radar-equipped Model 60 Duke was instantly popular as an improvement over the Baron and is widely regarded as one of the most strikingly attractive airplanes ever built. The Beechcraft A60 came onto the market in 1970 with an improved pressurized cabin utilizing advanced bonded honeycomb construction, lighter and more efficient turbochargers, and improved elevators. The last variant, the B60, was introduced in 1974. The interior arrangement was renewed, and the engine efficiency increased with improved turbochargers.

There are those who claim that the Duke was designed to be 30 knots slower than it could have been because otherwise, it would have been faster than the King Air. The Duke's cruise speed is only marginally less than that of a King Air 90 and about the same as a Cessna 421. Beechcraft may not have wanted to take sales away from their highly successful (and

The Grand Duke - Dukes with VG's, winglets and strakes - *Even More Shapely*

The Royal Turbine Duke - Grand Duke with PT6 turbines - *Shapely and FAST*

According to the FAA's aircraft registration website as of last February, there were 295 Beechcraft model 60 aircraft in the U.S. registry. By model, the count was 39 dash 60's, 52 model A60's, and 205 B60's. A recent Duke Flyers survey indicated that there are about 45 more in the U.S. than the FAA database indicates and also about 60 Dukes that exist outside of the U.S. This means around 400 of the 594 manufactured remain airworthy and productive. Considering that the first Duke was manufactured 48 years ago and the last was 36 years ago, the fleet remains viable and active.

Initially certified up to 30,000 feet, piston Dukes typically operate in the low 20's burning about 45 to 50 gph at 220+ TAS. Some Dukes have converted to turbines with PT6-35's flat rated to 550 SHP. You provide Rocket Engineering of Spokane, Washington, with a B60 piston Duke and a check for about \$900,000, and a few months later (sporting a 4,000 fpm climb, 285 KTAS cruise and 66 gph fuel burn) you have a Royal Turbine Duke that will water the eyes of men, women, children and supermodels. Twenty-one Dukes have been converted so far.

The piston Duke's once troublesome maintenance and operational issues are now relegated to very persistent folklore. Over the years, some early model Dukes have been converted to Lycoming TIO541-E1C4's with alternators and lead-acid batteries. Many have intercoolers, carbide tipped lifters, vortex generators, winglets, and aft body strakes. The entire fleet, save two Dukes, are certified known ice.

applicable to any audience regardless of occupation or background. Her perspective on the cockpit crew's interaction with the FAs was invaluable to me as an airline captain, and I believe that hearing her lifesaving and life-changing recount of the event should be a mandatory training event for all flight crew members whether Part 91, 135, or 121.

profitable) King Air lineups, but I think that the Duke's engine-propeller combination that caused the 30-knot degradation was an unfortunate engineering necessity. Moreover, it's this that relegated the Duke to a small, niche-aircraft in Beechcraft's history and exposed it to issues long ago resolved but still the subject of inaccurate folklore.

A thicker engine case, carbide tipped lifters, engine pre-oilers, vortex generators, lightweight starters, alternators and the DFA's brain trust of professional pilots, chemists, metallurgists, engineers, attorneys, doctors, and airline pilots have doggedly smoothed the Dukes rough edges, honing it into a voluptuous machine with razor-sharp value.

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November 2018

For Sale: 2018 Duke, \$2.07 Million

For a two- or three-hour flight in all weather, while hauling four people and luggage at 20,000 feet and 210 kts (65 percent), the Duke is a great value. If you calculate a 4 percent annual price increase (cost of labor, material, and inflation) the 2018 Duke, if it existed, would sell for about \$2.07 million. Something to think about when they currently sell for \$90-400,000. Without reservations or crowds to negotiate, without fellow passengers' knees in our backs or elbows touching ours and without the oversight of TSA, GA is a freedom-enhancing and time-saving privilege that successful entrepreneurs have used for decades. I thoroughly enjoy the privileges provided by my 69' Model 60 Duke. An original print ad from Beechcraft pictured a Duke taxiing behind a follow-me at the FBO. The headline read, "This is the only time your pressurized Duke will play follow-the-leader." I've had approach control direct other twins to make a 360 to make room for a "fast-moving Duke." And every flight I hear, "nice Duke" from someone on the ramp or radio when they see the shapely airplane on the field. The folks at Beech got it right

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because the Duke gets the job done in all-weather and looks great while doing it – despite folklore to the contrary. Just ask any Duke meister.

Author's Note:

Thank you, Ray, Susan, Bob, Ab, Doreen and the volunteers for an exceptional gathering. For those DFA members not in attendance, please make a spot in your schedule for next year and join us! Prospective members and those looking for more information may visit Dukeflyers.org

Kevin Dingman has been flying for more than 40 years. He's an ATP typed in the B737 and DC9 with 23,000 hours in his logbook. A retired Air Force major, he flew the F-16 and later performed as an USAF Civil Air Patrol Liaison Officer. He flies volunteer missions for the Christian organization Wings of Mercy, is employed by a major airline, and owns and operates a Beechcraft Duke. Contact Kevin at dinger10d@gmail.com.



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