

FLIGHT LEVELS

The Magazine for Twin Commander Owners

FALL 2006

Volume 11, Number 3



PRSR STD
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EFFINGHAM, IL
PERMIT NO. 294

NEED FOR SPEED

Going Fast Efficiently

Project Enterprise For 690A/B

Doing the Math on Dash 10T

J-W OPERATING COMPANY: An Embedded Desire for **SPEED**

J-W Operating Company is a family-owned energy development and energy services business that for 40 years has depended on aircraft to get to its business. In fact, the company's headquarters offices are attached to the company's hangar at the Addison, Texas, Airport.

Founder Howard Westerman Sr. learned to fly in 1967 and became a passionate aviator who staunchly believed in the practicality of employees flying themselves on company business. For years his engineers and managers flew single-engine piston aircraft, mostly Bellanca Super Vikings, around the Southwest.

Beginning in the 1990s, J-W Operating Company's fast-paced growth in oil and gas exploration, production, pipelines, and compressors meant employees had to travel farther and faster to visit outlying offices, service customers, and seek new business opportunities. An Aerostar, Cessna 340, and Cessna 210 were added to the fleet.

In 1996 Westerman bought an 840 Commander. "It was his gold watch, his retirement gift to himself," says his son, Howard Westerman Jr., with a smile. When the company's patriarch died in 1999, Westerman Jr., who held the title of president, became CEO. A pilot also, he now flies the 840.

The company's rapid growth accelerated, which meant more traveling.

The piston singles and twins were fine for short-range trips to company offices, customers, and job sites in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, but inefficient for more distant business at offices in Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming, Utah, Kansas, North Dakota, Ohio, and West Virginia.

The company bought a King Air F90, but quickly came to the conclusion that it lacked the necessary combination of speed and fuel efficiency that J-W Operating had come to expect from the Vikings, Aerostar, and 840. The solution? More Commanders.

In the space of about a year the King Air was sold, and three more Comman-

ders were purchased. The fleet now stands at four including the 840.

Why Commanders? "The company has an embedded desire for speed," says Chief Pilot Peter Jumper. "The Bellanca Vikings delivered a lot of bang for the buck. So does the Aerostar. And now it's the Commanders."

Each is powered by TPE331-10T engines, and several have Hartzell wide-chord propellers. "They're fast," says Jumper, "and the long TBO on the engines means the hourly reserve is half what it was on the King Air."

Jumper admits to the company's "fond attachment" to fast airplanes, but he says the Commanders are on



J-W Operating Company pilots (left to right) Peter Jumper, Dave Carey, Barry Lane, and Bill Hoeper at the company's Addison hangar/headquarters.



board because they meet the company criteria for efficiency. Pilot Barry Lane cited one flight that underscores their cost-effectiveness.

"We had a workover rig in Louisiana that was stuck, and when it doesn't run it costs the company \$50,000 a day," he explained. "We flew our engineers in the Commander to a remote strip to personally oversee fixing the rig. It cost \$2,000 to fly there and back. The value to the company was that we spent \$2,000 to save \$50,000."

"The Commander is a good airplane for what we do," Jumper agrees. "We go to a lot of small airstrips to get to remote sites, and often make long trips. The Commander is fast and can make those trips nonstop."

"We see the Commander as the most reliable and cost-efficient platform," he adds. "It produces huge value to the company. The Commander has the speed and the fuel efficiency, and we've found it to be very solid for single-pilot operations."

"We value the productive use of our time. We like to see our people home



The four-Commander fleet began with an 840. The company later added two 690As and a 690B. All have TPE331-10T power. Airframe, engine, and instruments/avionics commonality was a company objective.



Headquarters is on the opposite side of the hangar. The Longview and Denver offices also are on or near airports.



One of the Commanders has the full Meggitt panel including dual EFIS, electronic engine display, and autopilot.

at night with their families. With the Twin Commanders we can go out and back in a day instead of two or three using the airlines or slower aircraft.”

Two of the Commanders are based at Addison, one is assigned to a large

company office located on the Longview, Texas, airport, and the fourth is with the Denver office, which is across the street from Centennial Airport.

All are equipped with Meggitt EFIS and 2100 Digital Flight Control Sys-

tem. The common panel configuration allows pilots to easily move among the four aircraft. Pilots say they appreciate the Meggitt’s features including the moving EGT redline on the Engine and Instrument Display System, the

‘A CAREER-BUILDING OPPORTUNITY’

Of six J-W Operating Company pilots qualified in the Commanders, four are professionals. John Dutton is one of the other two; his business card says Operations Manager, not pilot.

Dutton started flying in 1998, six months after joining the company. “J-W thought it would be advantageous to fly myself around on business,” Dutton says. He earned his Private certificate and instrument rating in the company’s 182, and a multiengine rating in the 340. He began flying the Commander in January 2006.

“Transitioning from the 340 into the Commander was pretty easy and straightforward,” he commented. “It’s a turbine, but the approach speeds are not that different. You have to watch and stay ahead of the aircraft in cruise and descents, but it’s nice to be able to pull back the power on the turbines versus the 340’s turbocharged piston engines. The Commander is a typical twin, except that it’s blindingly fast!”

Dutton and one of the Twin Commanders are based at J-W Gathering Company (a J-W Operating Company subsidiary) in Longview in east Texas. He typically travels with his boss as a passenger.

One regular monthly trip begins with a 6 a.m. departure from Longview to pick up five people in Addison. Then it’s on to the company’s Centennial, Colorado, office near Denver. When the working-lunch meeting wraps up in mid-afternoon, he and his passengers head back to Addison for the drop-off, and by 8:30 that evening Dutton is back in Longview.

“It’s a long day,” he says. “I watch my fatigue level, but the Commander is comfortable and fast even though I don’t push it hard. It allows me to do a two-day trip in one day.

“It’s not often I have an overnight stay,” he explains, then offers an illustration. “One morning I left Denver to fly two hours to Rock

Springs, Wyoming, where I drove two hours to a remote field location to spend two hours working at the job site. Then I drove back to the airport, flew to Longview, and that night I was in bed at home. You can really cover some ground.

“I view flying in my job as a privilege, a huge benefit,” says Dutton. “I probably couldn’t do this at another company. It’s part of the total compensation package.”

Howard Westerman Jr. agrees. “We encourage a love of flying,” he says. “It motivates employees. Flying is a career-building opportunity here—and just a tremendous amount of fun.”



John Dutton, Operations Manager and Commander pilot.



information resources and efficient scan on the Primary Flight Display, and the readability of the displays, even from acute angles and when wearing polarized sunglasses.

“From a reliability, redundancy, and pilot-workload standpoint the new

glass cockpit is a tremendous step forward,” Westerman Jr. says. “It has reduced the pilot’s scan to a smaller area, and the increase in technology translates to value in terms of safety, reliability, and a higher percentage of completed flights.

“I see an aircraft as a tool,” he adds. “We are a service-oriented company and have a need to get to far-flung, remote locations. As long as our aircraft operations provide a value to the company, I see no reason why we won’t expand.” □

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