

Takeoff

THE ALPHA TO ZULU OF
AVIATION PHOTOGRAPHY



FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

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Takeoff

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AVIATION PHOTOGRAPHY

A decorative swoosh line in a dark blue color, starting from the left edge of the page and curving upwards to end under the 'f' of the word 'Takeoff'.

MOOSE PETERSON

Takeoff The Alpha to Zulu of Aviation Photography

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To all those who've taken to the skies
since the 1903 pioneering flight,
all those having lit our imaginations
in those magnificent flying machines,
and especially to all those having fought
for our freedoms in the skies—this book
is dedicated with deep, abiding thanks!



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Sharon flying in a Waco QCF

INTRODUCTION



The Skies Are Not the Limit

For me, I haven't gotten close to that limit that started decades ago. We'd gathered our stuff from the station wagon, the whole family in tow, as we walked toward the entrance. I was perhaps six or seven, holding my dad's hand, while walking in, and boy was I excited to see the planes! It was an overcast day with the sun just starting to make its presence felt on the morning. The roar that seemed to be off in the distance soon went screaming past and I looked up just in time to see fire coming from the back of those "fast planes." My dad looked down at me and said, "Those are the Blue Angels and they are just the start," as we watched them fly off into the warmly lit haze and disappear from view. That was my first air show at Point Mugu, CA, and I was hooked!

My father's start was at age 16 in ROTC for what was then the Army Air Corps and when WWII started, he was right there flying. He wasn't a pilot, though, he flew a Cub that someone had on base. He was a navigator/bombardier in a B-29 in the Pacific during WWII and Korea. Like many, he was a kid going off to war, and like so many, the camaraderie it brought was life changing. He and his crew and squadron mates lived and breathed aircraft! My memories from the rest of that day at the Point Mugu Air Show, other than being scared to death by the surprise and low pass of the Blue Angels, are of sheer fun! For the next decade, while sitting around a campfire in the backcountry of the Sierra, my father told me stories of those days in the B-29 and the aircraft that protected them.

I still have his flight jacket, plane ID books, and training manuals. Inside of them are my drawings I did as a kid, trying to bring those aircraft closer. On Sundays, my family would go to LAX, walk up to the departure gates, and watch the planes and people come and go (an era long gone, sadly). My dad would tell me more stories and solve some of the mysteries of flight for me. I have no doubt that in the sharing of all of his stories, my father's romance with flight and aircraft planted the seeds.

What Draws Us to Aircraft?

There are a thousand reasons why a photographer first begins to pursue one particular genre of photography over another. In my case, it was a chance comment that got me pointing my lens at an aircraft in 2008, and the bug finally bit after 25 years of pointing my lens at critters. Now, you might think it's a guy thing, but such is not the case! I know a lot of great lady aviation photographers who are really, really good and have been at it a whole lot longer than me.

So then, just what is it? Why do we photograph aircraft? I live in the Sierra, which is part of the flight path during the summer for the NAS Fallon and NAWS China Lake F/A-18s. The valley reverberates as the F/A-18s pass overhead. And nearly without exception, as they do, heads turn skyward as folks scan the skies to catch a glimpse of a plane as it roars past. Those who find it in the sky point upward and smiles appear. Airplanes are a part of our lives in some way or another, from the movies we watch, to how we travel from coast to coast, to simply flying overhead. Leaving earth with our imaginations or in reality, flight tugs at our heartstrings in a unique and special way.

Photographers have overactive imaginations! Thank goodness, as that creates all the images we enjoy taking, viewing, and sharing. Photographers are also collectors, not of coins or stamps, but of images that contain the wonders they see that spark their imaginations. And photographers by nature are very curious, often using their cameras to find the answers to questions. I think this is the genesis of why most point their cameras at aircraft, what we affectionately call when birding, "Silver Gashawks."

We've produced a number of KelbyOne.com classes on aviation photography, even a movie (which you can watch for free at kelbyone.com/books/warbirds). We've received a lot of response from folks watching them with the common comment, "I never thought about photographing planes until I watched your classes." Planes are perceived as being out of reach of most photographers when nothing is farther from the truth. And that's because we normally see planes way up in the sky, where the longest lens

on the planet still renders them as micro dots in the viewfinder. For some reason, most air shows don't do a great job of making their presence known, so the idea of getting close to aircraft, for the purposes of photography, just doesn't leap out at us.

Because the response has been so great to the KelbyOne.com classes is partly why I wrote this book, but it gets to the heart of the question, "What draws us to aircraft?" I think understanding the answer is an essential ingredient in making the spectacular images we take. Without that answer, we're merely going through the motions and being satisfied with an image only because it's sharp. There is so much more satisfaction to be gained from our photography!

The answer to the question is simply: "We wonder what it's like to be at the stick, flying like a bird." It's that answer that we need to incorporate into our aviation photography! Setting our viewers' imaginations loose in a spirit of wonderment when looking at our photographs makes flight come to life for us. For most of us, we won't ever be physically behind the stick (most pilots have cameras, so we're not alone in this quest), so we need to bring that to life in our photographs. Our imaginations permit us to, though, from the moment we have that aircraft in the viewfinder, the moment we go click, and the moments afterward when we enjoy that photograph! Whether the plane is on a stick, parked on a ramp, or flying overhead, when we have that great click of it, our imaginations put us in the pilot seat, soaring above the earth and going as fast as our imaginations let loose!

The Romance of Flight

Understanding this answer is so important to our photographic success! We need to incorporate it in every one of our photographs to move them beyond what others standing beside us might be capturing (that sounds bad, but that's the game, right?). When we do that, it leaks out of our photographs and grabs the imagination of the viewer, and that's how we begin to visually tell stories.

Understanding this answer inspires us to push beyond the "Here's a parked plane" to "This plane soars with the clouds,"



AT-6 Texan

even when the plane is parked. And while we're just playing with semantics here, the make or break of a photograph hinges on the same tiny nuance. This is when the brain has to take a right seat to the heart, which then flies the plane!

Many have asked, causing me to wonder and find the answer, "why I have had such success so quickly as an aviation photographer." There are three answers to this question, with number one being romance. While I think aircraft are amazing industrial art with lines, shapes, textures, and sounds that rival

the finest art hanging on a wall, you can't exactly hang a plane on a wall and admire it (though I know of someone doing just this). But we can hang our aviation prints on the wall and they can, and need to, contain all the romance that makes that industrial art a flying aircraft.

This has to be the greatest challenge facing the aviation photographer! How do you bring romance to a piece of cloth, wood, plastic, and metal, especially when some were made for the express purpose of waging war? This is where the answer



Aeronca 7AC, Piper J3C-65 Cub, Piper PA-11 Cub, and Taylorcraft BC-12D





SNJ-5C Texan and P-51D Mustang

to “What draws us to aircraft?” comes into play. We have to move past the technical and that, in itself, is a challenge for many. Making that f-stop do more than just communicate sharpness and shutter speed, more than time and light, more than whites and blacks, pushes us. And that’s a good thing! We need to move to that area of the heart; our aviation image must encompass romance.

The Challenge of Bringing Movement to Stills

And if this weren’t enough to scare off the mere mortal of an aviation photographer, we also have to give flight to our still images! Why do we photograph planes? It’s to put ourselves and our audience behind the controls of a plane and that means it’s moving, flying!

While what I present in this book could be used, in part, for video production, the main focus is stills. A still, that moment in

time forever gone, but recorded in a heartbeat by our camera, is a frozen point in time that means something to us. Whether perceived or in reality, aircraft don’t freeze, but are in constant motion. Yet our images are not moving.

How then do you bring motion to a still image? Cutting to the chase, the answer is shutter speed and background. But, being a photographer, you know that there is no simple, one-word answer for solving our photographic problems. There are buts, ifs, ands, ors, perhaps sprinkled liberally, and that’s because we are all individuals with unique ways of telling a story.

I alluded a moment ago to there being three things I attribute my quick success as an aviation photographer to—number one was romance, next is wildlife, and lastly, is landscape photography. Thirty years of photographing critters instilled in me certain techniques, tools, and thoughts, which I’ll fully share here, permitting quick access to aviation photography success. In my mind, I treat the plane itself as a critter. Landscape photography is how I treat everything else in the frame. If you’ve read any of my work, you know I stress backgrounds and aviation is no exception! When you combine romance, wildlife, and landscape styles into a photo of an aircraft, you are able to achieve success because that piece of metal is no longer just a piece of metal. That brings movement to a still image of a moving subject!

And with that, it’s time to put fuel in your photographic engine and get that prop turning!



My very first air-to-air: AT-6 Texan *Midnight Rendezvous* | Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec



"North 40" plane camping, EAA AirVenture | Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec



SECTION 4



A Gathering of Planes

Shooting at Air Shows and Fly-Ins

"Have you ever been to the biggest and greatest air show in the world?" Beaming with a big smile, my good friend Kevin asked me as my face screwed up into a huge question mark. I had no clue what he was referring to. Kevin then said, "We fly there in the Cessna 206, camp under its wing, and take in the air show that runs for over a week!" I was only starting my second year since deciding to add aviation to our business plan, and it was less than a week since my very first air-to-air mission. It was January 2010, and the event happened in July. My mind was spinning as I made all the calculations of time and capital being invested into this unknown event and what might be the possible outcome. Kevin had been pushing me into aviation photography for years and had never steered me wrong. I smiled and off we went, making plans for the summer show.

The thrill of “rock your wings” is not experienced by everyone going to Osh. (The EAA AirVenture, which is held every year in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and has been for decades, is simply called, “Osh.” A gathering of thousands and thousands of aircraft and tens of thousands of fans in one place is an excitement that simply has to be experienced.) I thought it would be a massive photographic cash cow, but when Kevin explained to me the limits of the useful load (the load able to be carried, in addition to an aircraft’s own weight) of the Cessna 206 that we were flying to Osh in, what spun through my mind was

simply: yikes! The camera, computer, and camping gear—well, for just myself—well exceeded what the three of us combined could pack into the 206. Plane camping is on a level of fun that explodes the imagination. But, combine it with the work of photography, and it is a challenge. Thank goodness for FedEx as that’s how I got my camping gear and other basics to Osh. I just had my camera and computer gear in the plane for that flight in. In July, when I heard over the headset, “Cessna, rock your wings,” I knew we had made it to the greatest air show on the planet!

PT-17 Stearman

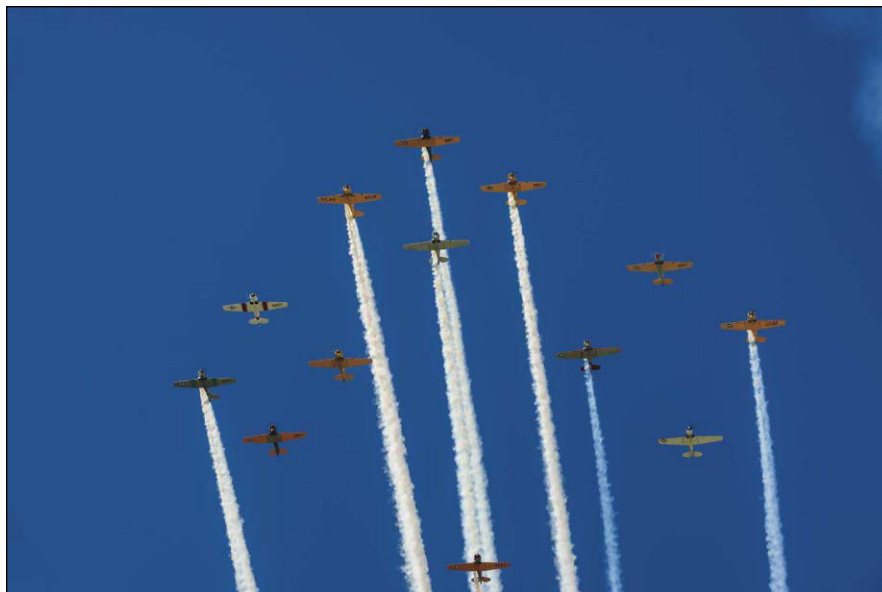


Flying into an air show means your main method of transportation is your feet. With the length of the flight line being well over a mile long, and its depth a minimum of half a mile, walking six or seven miles is easily accomplished by noon each day. That whole time, everything you need to be a photographer has to be with you because you just don't know when the next opportunity will appear—and there are so many, with the next one probably around the next plane. My greatest lessons from this first trip to Osh had to be: it's all about the people and only have the equipment needed, and no more, to get the job done. While, at the same time, getting the photographs in the heat and humidity, while still having fun. I've gone back nearly every year since! Those lessons, and a whole lot more, is what this section is all about, because it's from the air shows and fly-ins we attend that we grow our aviation photography, while continually coming back to them to learn and refine our craft.

Air Shows and Fly-Ins...Huh?

These two aviation celebrations, the air show and the fly-in, are a mystery to some, so I thought an explanation as to what they each are would help. There is a big difference between them when it comes to the event, but not the great opportunities they afford us. They are target-rich venues we aviation photographers should, at the very least, be aware of as they happen around the globe. You can summarize them both as gatherings of aircraft and aviation-minded folks, but after that, they can be widely quite different.

Generally speaking, air shows are where aircraft come and put on displays—both static and in the air. These are organized events where you have paid performers and you most often pay



AT-6 Texans

admittance to attend (there are, though, some free air shows across the country). The big attraction is the aircraft that fly during the event, the show in the air, which all air shows have. You can find a list of the majority of North American and European air shows on the Air Show page on the MILAVIA website (www.milavia.net/airshows/). The site provides dates, locations, and often a link for an air show itself. These are one- or two-day events. The main thing about air shows is, as the name states, there is a show in the air with, typically, a headliner event like the Blue Angels or Thunderbirds. They are open to the public, who is encouraged to attend and enjoy the show.

The fly-in is similar to, yet totally different from, the air show. They are similar because it's a gathering of aircraft, but a fly-in might last just for the morning with a couple of aircraft or, like the AAA Blakesburg fly-in, for a week with hundreds upon hundreds of aircraft from around the country. Some are on a Sunday morning, and they usually feature a pancake breakfast. Most are open to the public, while some are not. What makes fly-ins unique is there is *no* air show, no schedule of performers

QUICK BRIEF

The key to air shows and fly-ins is to make them your own. While I have lots of ideas and suggestions here, you will be the most successful when you make them your own!

or acts. You could call them more of a social affair, but for the aviation photographer, still a very rich target of opportunity. That's because, while there is no air show, there is still lots and lots of flying. And, while you can easily find dates and locations for air shows online, fly-ins, not so much. You can head to <http://fly-ins.com> and get a hint of when and where some are being held, but some you won't learn about until you get deeper into the flying community. By the end of this section, you'll better understand how working both air shows and fly-ins into your shooting schedule is a good thing for your aviation photography.

Self-Preservation!

Yep, self-preservation is the first thing I want to talk about when it comes to working air shows and fly-ins. If you feel good physically and mentally, then shooting at an air show or fly-in is a successful, rewarding photographic snap. Having worked an air show or two, and having seen other photographers, I know that taking care of one's self seems to take a back seat to the camera gear and the photograph. But in the end, those two things suffer because the photographer is suffering, and there's no need for that to happen. There are some really simple things you can do to assure this doesn't happen, but because they are simple, they are easy to overlook, so let's cover them now.

I've been privileged to sit in on air show briefs. There are lots of things they cover, and they can vary, but the one thing every air boss repeats over and over again, from air show to air show is: hydrate! They say, very straight-faced and very seriously, "If you're not visiting a bathroom at *least* once every

two hours, you are not hydrated!" This affects you physiologically in a couple of ways, with the most important being your vision and muscles. The bottom line is it's very important that you drink lots of fluids—lots because air shows by their very nature are hot, dry places that take their toll on the body. Water is essential!

What I've seen nearly all photographers take for granted when working air shows are their feet! You have no idea how the heat from the cement and tarmac is sucked right up through your shoes and transferred to your feet. Then, you have the fact that you're on them for a minimum of six hours shooting, and then the additional time spent walking about. All of this takes a huge toll on your feet and that takes a toll on you providing your camera a stable platform on which to operate. When it comes to shoes, I recommend, like me, you spare no expense. And, a word of advice: don't buy a new pair of shoes the day before you go to an air show. You'll regret that!

Along the same lines as dealing with problems caused by the heat of the sun, like thirst and aching feet, is the direct effect the sun has on us. Sunblock is something you must apply and apply liberally all day long. You're dealing with not just the direct sun, but the reflected sun coming off the cement and tarmac. It's brutal, so you must take care. You can take this protection further by wearing a wide-brimmed hat. While I really hate them, as they affect your peripheral vision and tend to blow off at the most inopportune moment, they are protection from the sun. You can take this even further by wearing long sleeves and Columbia

QUICK BRIEF

As important it is to wear sunblock, it's just as important not to get it on your camera gear! Sunblock's oily nature is a magnet for all the dust at an air show and that combination of oil and dust can be death for our gear!



Bell UH-1 Iroquois

PFG shirts. These block the sun even further, and with all the days in the year you are outside with aircraft, this protection can really add up! Lastly, sunglasses are a must! I use a pair of Julbo's Glacier glasses because they have such intense protection, and at the same time, stay on my head without having to put them over my ears. This makes for very a quick on and off while shooting.

If there's a trick to working air shows when it comes to personal preservation, it's knowing where to park. Most air shows have a website, and they show parking; it's worth heading there and doing some planning. Even if you have to leave your home or hotel an hour earlier to get that great parking spot, it will save you in so many ways during the show. Getting the perfect spot means you can have a cooler filled with cold water easily accessible, a place to sit, and even an opportunity to review your images or clean your sensor if need be. The one thing you will find really beneficial is that at the end of the day, when you're dead

beat, getting back to your vehicle quickly is a lifesaver. Lastly, if parked strategically, it can be used as a locker for your chair or for gear, like your tripod or lights, in case you might need them at some point. Be aware that some air shows permit you to park almost on the show line for a little extra fee. I take advantage of that every time I see it available. It's well worth the price!

One common asset many take with them to an air show is a chair. You have a number of options here if you want to go that route, but there are a couple of things to keep in mind when it comes to chairs: the main one is, it is something you will have to carry around with you, along with your gear, which can be a bit much at times. There are some new chairs on the market that, while more expensive than your basic folding chair, weigh practically nothing and fold up to near nothing. I'm referring to ones like the Kelty Linger, for example, which can hold 300 lbs., while weighing only a few pounds itself, and fold up to nothing.

I want to warn you about the temptation of shooting from your chair, though. While it's much more comfortable, and it's easier on your feet, it's murder on your panning technique. The chair can hold your spot, serve as a shelf for your gear, but when it comes to shooting, you need to be standing!

This is probably the oddest recommendation when it comes to taking care of yourself at an air show or fly-in, but I'm here to tell you that I can't live without hand wipes! You just have no idea how greasy your hands can get at an air show. Whether from applying sunblock, sitting on the ground, or the times you are

with aircraft and need to push them out, your hands get greasy! And, it's Murphy's law that as soon as your hands are greasy, you need to grab your camera. It's for that reason I have Permatex 25050 Fast Orange Hand Cleaner Wipes (25 count) and Nikon Pre-Moistened Lens Cleaning Wipes in my sling bag (discussed in a moment). One is for your hands, and the other for your gear, after your hands handle it. You'd be surprised how perspiration can also foul up gear. These simple things add up to making your day of shooting just that more comfortable and, therefore, your photography more successful.



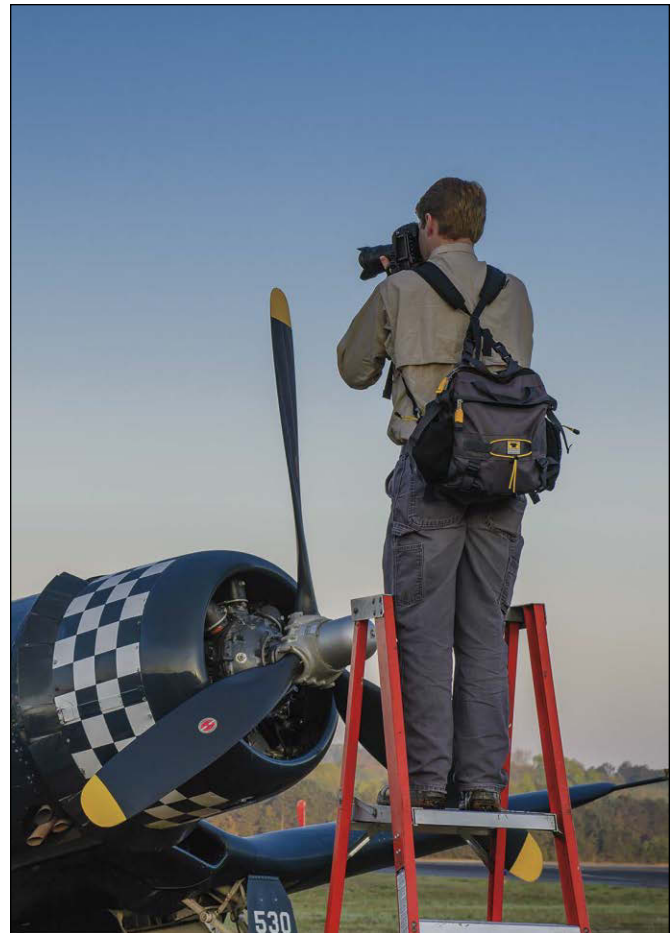
Bell UH-1 Iroquois

Gear for the Air Show/Fly-In

This is why I so love air shows (aviation photography): it requires nearly no camera gear. You can literally shoot with one body and one lens all day and be totally successful! Seriously, a D500 and a 70–200 lens, and you’re rocking it. You can start with that minimal amount of gear and make great photos! With that said, I hardly see any photographer anywhere with just one body and one lens. Where is the fun in that?! With that understood, let’s talk about gear for working the air show/fly-in as there is a maximum you want, and that limit is how much you can physically carry for a full day. Getting right to it, this is what I have with me (a condensed list of what I listed in Section 1):

- » **Nikon D5**
- » **Nikon D500**
- » **AF-S NIKKOR 200–400mm f/4 VR II lens**
- » **AF-S NIKKOR 105mm f/1.4 lens**
- » **AF-S NIKKOR 24–70mm f/2.8 VR lens**
- » **AF-S NIKKOR 14–24mm f/2.8 lens**
- » **Nikon SB-5000 Speedlight**
- » **Nikon 67mm & 82mm Circular Polarizers**
- » **Nikon AN-SBR2 BlackRapid Strap (for the 200–400mm)**
- » **Really Right Stuff Ground Pod (for early morning statics)**
- » **Knee pads (for early morning statics)**
- » **Vulture Equipment Works A4 Camera Strap**
- » **Mountainsmith Day Lumbar Pack**
- » **iPad mini**
- » **Business cards**

This might seem like a lot of gear to carry around all day, but it’s actually very manageable (it doesn’t even get in the way of me eating ice cream!). To understand how that is, I need to explain my “system” for working an air show/fly-in with this gear: The heart of it all is the Mountainsmith sling, or what they are now calling their Lumbar Day Pack (its name has changed a couple of times since I got mine). To this, I add their Strapettes strap harness, and now the sling bag—with all my gear, except the 200–400mm—rides amazingly comfortably on my back. Add their lens Kit Cube to the inside, and you have what I think is



Jake wearing the Mountainsmith sling



P-47D Thunderbolt



the perfect camera bag for air shows/fly-ins. It holds *all* the gear I listed on page 69, with the SB-5000 riding in an outside pocket, and the 200–400 attached to the AN-SBR2 strap, with the D5 riding on it. The rest is easily and

quickly accessible, even when it's on your back. And, there you have it—really simple!

Two tools I also have listed are new to our discussion here: the iPad mini and business cards. I need to step back for a moment to explain these. One of our goals when attending air shows/fly-ins is not just great static or ground-to-air photos, but to get up in the sky with the aircraft themselves in an air-to-air photo mission. I said that you could be a very successful photographer at an air show with just one body and one lens. That is very true. But, if we move our goals forward to that air-to-air photo mission, it will be a challenge to get there with just that one body and one lens if you don't come across as a professional, as well ("professional" is a state of presence and not just how you make your money). You'll find out really fast that plane owners and pilots still work on the very old system of a handshake and business card. Those two things are how business is conducted. And, a vast majority of pilots have iPads. They use them for flying (charts and the like), and we use them to share our photographic successes. To the photographer with higher goals, these tools are just as essential as the body and lens you want in your sling bag!

With that in mind, here's my two-cents worth on these two essential tools: When it comes to your business card, KISS works the best. This means it

QUICK BRIEF

Along with the gear mentioned on page 69, and the hand and lens wipes I mentioned earlier, also in that Mountainsmith is a large 50-gallon heavy-duty plastic bag. It gets used for everything from an emergency rain cover to a ground cloth on wet grass. I never go without one.

prominently has your name, mailing and email addresses, and cell phone number. Many put cute business names big and bold on their card. You're asking a lot of someone to associate your cute business name with your own

name. Stick with your own name; it's branding enough! And, keep the card clean—don't use a photo that you like today because in six months, when you still have 5,000 cards left, that image will be old and dated. And, with the iPad, do the same thing. Keep it clean; have images easily accessible and organized, so you can find what you need in a snap. Think of the iPad mini as a glorified business card you don't give away. Being a professional is a state of mind and presentation, so separate yourself from the crowd by making your presentation just that—professional.

The Air Show's Big Secret

Our success in getting into the skies to photograph an aircraft lies with those images we capture of them while they are on the ground. Statics are so important to our start and continued success in aviation photography! And, light is essential in photography. So when you combine the two necessities, statics and great photography, whenever we can be with statics in great light, we can accomplish our goals. This brings us to the big secret in air shows: the early bird or sunrise pass (fly-ins are different; no admission costs and normally with no set hours of operation).

Many, many air shows offer early entrance passes, often called the early bird or sunrise pass. They typically



Fairchild 71C

go on sale the very moment an air show's general admission tickets go on sale and are often snapped up instantly. Regular air show goers, who simply want the best seat in the house, often buy these passes. They rush in, in the predawn hours, place their chairs on the flight line by show center, and then leave their chairs until later. Jake and I have been to some air shows where all these passes are sold out, yet we find we're all by ourselves photographing the aircraft. The number of tickets sold is always limited, so even if they're all purchased by photographers, you still have the aircraft to yourself, making for magical sunrise moments with statics.

One sunrise pass opportunity I particularly love is at the Planes of Fame Air Show each May in Chino, CA. The access to the large assortment of classic aircraft, vintage, warbirds, and jets is staggering! The pass gets you preferred parking, which

is a big help, so you can easily ditch that tripod you needed for predawn photography after the sun comes up. They provide a free tram that takes you right to the aircraft, and have minimal ropes around them. This permits easy access to the statics and the rest of the air show. Finally, they have the aircraft parked far enough apart, which works really well for static photography. And, one small but important point, they have food vendors that open early and serve hot coffee and breakfast (we must have our priorities).

Some air shows, like EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, have no early bird pass because the ramp is open basically 24/7—you just have to get up early and make the walk to be with the aircraft parked on the grass, but there are no ropes or gates. Jake and I are always surprised that with the tens of thousands of folks in attendance, there are never more than a handful of us crazy

photographers out there to greet the sun with the aircraft (and yes, they have hot coffee and breakfast, too). Why aren't there more photographers out there on the grass with all the aircraft at sunrise? It's a secret, remember?!

There's More to an Air Show Than the Air Show

The obvious reason to go to an air show is the air show itself. The performers and acts that fill the skies with excitement and grace are what we want to fill our viewfinders and photographs

with. I want to encourage you, though, to go further as an aviation photographer, and that requires understanding that there is a whole lot more to the air show than just the show in the air. We most definitely want to photograph the aircraft in the air, but that is just one of the priorities. Most shows begin hours after sunrise, and in those hours, we can accomplish much as photographers. This is an important lesson I, luckily, learned early on. This is when we expand our opportunities by remembering that aircraft are all about the people associated with them.



Steve Hinton of Planes of Fame



Here is where your comfort level might be tested, at least it was and still is for me today. The aircraft are only at air shows because someone owns them, maintains them, and flies them. Without that human involvement, aircraft cease to exist. This very obvious fact was totally lost on me in the beginning, and when the light bulb flicked on, aviation photography took on a whole new life, importance, and success. So, during those hours, when the planes are static and the light isn't exactly at its best, is when we need to work even harder to make the photographs and hone our skills as visual storytellers. How do we go about that? We get to know those people!

QUICK BRIEF

These morning hours
are one time when you want to
make sure you have business cards,
an iPad, and flash with you.
You're working with pilots as
much as the aircraft.

The first suggestion I have has nothing to do with shutter speeds or f-stops. The best way I know to engage with those with the aircraft is by simply asking questions. Talking with the plane owners and pilots (often one and the same) about their aircraft is one of the best ways to get involved and get access. This is an art all by itself, and one I'm still getting better at. You start by understanding where the other party is coming from—an important part of communicating. Pilots are a unique group: they are smart, funny, intelligent, and selective in whom they let into their world. It's hard to understand until you are welcomed into that world and have a hint of where they are coming from. It's a mutual respect you need



Reenactors at EAA AirVenture

to start, foster, and nurture your entire career, and it can begin at the air show during these dead light hours.

How do you begin such a conversation with a total stranger? The way I did it was to head to the aircraft that I had the greatest photographic interest in. This interest wasn't in an aircraft that I wanted to do an air-to-air with necessarily, but simply one that was the visual standout at that air show. (Want to make an interesting photograph, stand in front of something interesting!) With the narrowing down of the aircraft, you watch for when it appears there is someone with that aircraft, which might take some time.

Use that time, if you can, to do some quick research. It might be as simple as reading the info poster with the aircraft, reading a write-up in the show guide (which you should buy for just such reasons), or getting on your smart device and doing a quick web search (searching the aircraft's N-number can work wonders). With this brief research, you should have enough to walk up to the pilot, not interrupting him, and simply ask, "What's it like to fly this gorgeous plane because you make it look like so much fun?"

The question you ask, whether this or another, has to be not only sincere but the start of a bigger conversation. I've



Bob with the #74 Super Corsair

seen all sorts of approaches used and most aren't successful because they end with a simple answer. This means you don't ask a question that is answered, for example, on the poster with the aircraft. You don't ask a question you know the answer to, showing off your knowledge. What is considered successful? A conversation where, in the perfect world, you are invited on the other side of the rope (if there is one) and provided a closer inspection of the aircraft. More importantly, you get closer to the pilot, who is all by themselves a very interesting story. And, in getting to know that story and perhaps telling it, you begin to tell the story of the aircraft.

Now, before you start this whole process, you have to be prepared for success. What preparation, you ask? Photographically, for example, how are your portrait skills? We're doing all of this preparation prior to the air show and during the hard light hours of mid-morning (shooting with a friend and having them stand in as the pilot to get your basic settings set prior to meeting the pilot is smart shooting!). The first tool you need to pull out is the flash. The next tool is the wide-angle lens, so you can photograph the pilot *with* their plane. Do you have those tools and techniques in your camera bag? Do you have your business card readily available to instantly put in their hands? That's just part of the preparation you need to have before you ask that intro question.

Next, and probably even more important, is do you have the tools for the follow-up? In any relationship, and especially with a new one, follow-up is important for that relationship to grow. As a photographer, how can you do that and at the same time grow that relationship? How can you do that while keeping that end goal of a possible air-to-air mission in sight? The first thing is you have business cards! I'm not talking about cards for your normal day job if you're not a full-time photographer (being a full-time photographer is not required), but ones you've made for your aviation work, which, again, can be as simple as your name, phone number, and email address. Like I mentioned earlier, you don't have to spend money on a logo or printing some photo on the card, just the basics for communication. Because after you're done, you hand them that card and tell them you'll be in touch, so you can send them prints. That's right, prints!

Then, once this is all done, you make darn sure that you get at least one good, strong image of that plane the pilot is flying. Be it from the early morning sunrise pass or from the air show, you get that photograph! With that, you now have two photographs to present to the pilot: the portrait and the aircraft. That's two prints, and not just two thumbnails attached to an email. That's two prints! And, after the air show, you follow through with your commitment, that handshake, and you get those two prints (it could be more) in their hands!



Brian and Dale with their T-6



Alan with an FG-1D Corsair



The B-17 *Sentimental Journey* ground crew reenactors



The B-25J *Betty's Dream* Texas Flying Legends Museum crew

It sounds so simple, so obvious, yet it's rarely done. Being the exception is how you move forward in aviation photography. Just keep reminding yourself, "If Moose can do this, then so can I!"

Where to Stand?

Yep, there is even a strategy for where to stand at air shows. But, there isn't just one strategy, there are many, and the one you select will make or break your success. The thing is, how you measure success will dictate your strategy for where you stand. What should your strategy be? What if it's your first time to that air show, or any air show? What if it's your twentieth? There really is a lot to think about, and there is no perfect answer, no wrong answer, just some that are better than others. Here are some thoughts to help you with your strategy:

Show center is a location on the crowd line that all the performers use to determine the center point of their acts. As the name suggests, it is in the middle of the crowd line, usually running parallel to the runway. The planes themselves normally fly 500 feet or further out from the audience over a runway; this is not show center. Even if you've never been to an air show, you can determine where show center is simply by finding the show announcer. They are on some type of raised platform, so they can easily see the air performers, and typically, you'll see a soundboard near them. This is show center and where many photographers

like to stand. This is because, when the performers fly their acts, the majority of their maneuvers focus on show center. When they dive back down, from this position, you will see them in your viewfinder, seemingly flying right down the lens barrel. You can get this from other locales, but at show center, this is almost a guaranteed shot.

To swing the pendulum to the other side, your strategy might be to stand where you have the best light. How do you determine that, especially if you're new to that air show?

The majority of the air show is flown parallel to the crowd line, so you can use your hand—"fly it" back and forth in the same direction as the crowd line and look at the light on your hand. This provides you one possible strategy based on the light. Next, air shows often have the performers fly what's called a "photo pass." Another term for this is a "banana pass." That's because the flight path taken during this pass is the basic shape of a banana. A majority of the time, the direction of this pass is left to right, banking in from the left of the crowd line, following



B-24 Liberator

the crowd line down, and then banking right at the end. This pass puts the aircraft in a bank, so you see it from the top rather than from the side (like you do when they just go up and down the flight line). With the right light, and with you standing in the right place, the photograph looks like it was taken air-to-air. The right place is? Where the light is at its best!

Another strategy for when it comes to finding a place to stand at an air show is either on the crowd line or back in the crowd. I mentioned before how some get sunrise passes just to hold their spot on the crowd line. This is so there is nobody in front of them when they are shooting. There is no doubt that, at times, this can be the only place to stand. When are those times? For me, personally, it's when the combination of light and background make it worth being there. The one photograph you can get from the crowd line that you can't get anywhere else is the launch and recovery of aircraft (takeoff and landing). If you want that shot, you have no option. But, if you have this spot, unless you have a chair or person to hold it, you're stuck there the whole show. On the other hand, if that launch and recovery shot isn't a priority, you can stand in the back and get all the shots of planes flying you desire. And, standing in the back, you have the ability to move around. One drawback is when that father puts their kid on their shoulders right in front of you!

Yet another strategy for when it comes to where to stand is all based on the plane the pilot, who you just met, is flying. Is it a warbird or a performer, a jet or prop, fast or slow flyer, flying at the beginning of the air show or at the end? Any and all of these might impact your strategy for where you stand. Remembering that end goal of having that great photo you

can print and send to that pilot might totally determine your strategy for the air show. Understand that, at times, the answer is really obvious, and at other times, it is not. There will be times when you will not be in the right place at the right time. There will be other times when you can't be in a better place. All of these instances happen to all of us. One thing you can do to maximize your success is to attend *both* days of an air show, changing your strategy each day.

Why would you want to spend two days at an air show? Let me count the ways! Your hand-holding and panning techniques are so much better that second day; you've watched the show, so now know what to expect the second day; the weather is never the same two days in a row; you know what images you missed on Saturday, so you can get them on Sunday; and you know ex-

actly where you want to stand as your strategy changes. The list of reasons why you should go both days just keeps on going. You have a sunrise pass, and you can only really photograph, thoroughly, one static at sunrise simply because time runs out. You can get another the second day. How about on the first day, you got a good photo of that plane the pilot that you met was flying? Perhaps, you go

by and show him that image on your iPad or take him a print the next day? That sound like a good reason to go the second day? Knowing you're coming back a second day can greatly influence your strategy for where you're going to stand the first day.

The last thing I would encourage you to think about in picking that place to stand is your hand-holding and panning skills. Whether intentional or not, you are going to get bumped by the public, who know nothing about photography and are just there to see the planes. They will stand

QUICK BRIEF

Don't clean your sensor on the crowd line! Yeah, dust is horrible—I repeat, horrible—at air shows, and having it on your sensor sucks! With the D5/D500, I run the sensor clean mode and that helps some. But, if you have a bad dust problem, run back to your car, close the doors, and clean. Otherwise, deal with it in post.



Great Lakes Biplane

up in front of you, crowd you on your sides—all the things that can and will throw off your panning. One other thing to consider is that, more often than not, your panning will be a 360° operation and not simply right in front of you. There are tons of photo ops that happen behind the audience, as well as in front. You need to be able to turn in place to catch it all.

One more thing to throw into this strategy is all your gear. What are you doing to do with all of it while you're

shooting the air show? When I'm shooting the air show, the majority of the time I'll shed the sling bag because it makes it easier to pan with less wear on the old body. When one's attention is on the action, it's not going to be on that sling bag on the ground or in a chair. I do one of two things: leave the sling bag with Sharon or wrap its straps around something so it can't just walk away. We have never had any issues at an air show, but where you stand could possibly influence this.

Do You Start with the Big Ones?

Years ago, we filmed a KelbyOne.com class on shooting air shows. It was filmed at the delightful Florida International Air Show in Punta Gorda. I chose to film the class there, in part, because while being a great air show with killer photography, it's a small, community air show. Another such air show is the Cable Air Show in Southern California, the first air show of the year for the last 42 years. The number of aircraft might be less, but they are more diverse, crowds are smaller, and for the new aviation photographer, this is perfect! When just starting out, this is the perfect formula for building your confidence, files, and relationships. The beauty is that there are lots of smaller, community-oriented air shows around the world that you can "cut your teeth" on very easily.

The *Barbie III* is the only example of a B-25H flying today. It's truly a rare warbird. In that KelbyOne.com class on shooting air shows, you can see me go up to the crew of the *Barbie III* and introduce myself. Back then, you've gotta understand, I was scared to death to do that. But, there was a class to film, so I had no option—looking back, this was a good thing for me. And, working a smaller air show, there were fewer people and fewer photographers, providing



B-25H *Barbie III*





me more opportunities to walk up and start a cold conversation with a stranger. You can watch it all unfold right there in the class. I photographed the aircraft, I photographed the pilot and crew, and then we were permitted to go up into *Barbie III* and film inside. Our sincerity opened up the doors quickly to our cameras. But, what you didn't see unfold on camera came the next day, Monday, after the class was over.

The following morning, weather permitting, they would be ferrying the *Barbie III* back to its home airport. When the cameras went off that Sunday, I talked with the pilot about the possibility of doing an air-to-air mission the following day when they ferried the B-25H home. He said that was doable, and even had a photo platform I could use as long as the weather cooperated. We exchanged phone numbers and I crossed my fingers. At 03:00 the next morning, a tremendous crash of thunder almost threw us out of our beds. One of those monster Florida thunderstorms was moving through the area. My first thought was, "There goes the flight!" (I've had many, many air-to-air missions postponed because of weather.)

At 06:30 my phone rang. "There is a window in the weather and we're going to launch in 45 minutes. Can you be at the airport by then?" Thirty minutes later, we were on the wet ramp, shooting statics with the storm still threatening. Minutes later, I was in the air, shooting photographs that would become the centerpiece of an article on the B-25H *Barbie III* and their mission. And, all of that came about because we were at a small air show and walked up and talked to a pilot. I've lost count of how many times the story has unfolded that way and ended with a successful air mission under my belt; the next one is just around the corner. While there is no guarantee in this business, I personally recommend you start at the smaller air shows and continue going to them long after you've established yourself at the

big air shows. Just like in wildlife photography, it only takes one cooperative bird to make your day!

Is There a Photographic Strategy?

By now, you can probably answer that question yourself with confidence. The first answer should be, of course, that it's up to your own goals. Air shows can be photographically very addicting, though, and at times, throw you off your goal. I speak from personal experience. With that past experience, I want to provide you with a couple of strategies that might keep you working toward that end goal of an air-to-air photo mission. It's important to understand that the strategy, like your photography, will grow with time. If you have none in the beginning,

that's normal, so don't sweat it. There is a lot to think about in this whole process, which is why we go to lots of air shows.

Probably one of the most common strategies of photographers at an air show is simple stock photography. You can think of stock pho-

tography like running a grocery store and needing to fill all of its shelves with a vast variety of products to suit every taste. You need the shelves lined with all those products, so you can cover all the changing trends in tastes. As the old saying goes, "You can't sell from an empty cart." When it comes to aviation photography, and the many editorial markets, the more varieties of aircraft you have in your files, the more clients you can help. Just having a huge inventory of aircraft photos in itself is not a business strategy, nor an air show shooting strategy. But, it's a strategy that might just help you move forward. Let me use myself as an example.

At the first air shows I went to, my focus was just on warbirds. Warbirds are generally thought as WWII- and Korea-era aircraft. There's no doubt they are a huge draw at air shows, especially when they are in the air. They are aircraft

QUICK BRIEF

What's the number one thing
to remember when shooting aviation?
Proper hand-holding!

that, to this day, I focus in on, as there are so many different ones, and so many different unique aircraft within a warbird type. The strategy then, was just warbirds, statics and in the air the first year, and it laid a good foundation. It was obvious, though, that there were more aircraft that I was missing and needed in my files than just warbirds if we were to continue on.

This is when I started to delve more into antiques—a period of aircraft from WWI to WWII. Most simply, think of biplanes as antiques, but there are many more than just those. This is how, in part, I got into fly-ins, but more on that in a moment. This actually left a really big hole on my shelves for buyers and that was modern military aircraft. To this day, that's still a big hole in the files and the reason is pretty simple: while I love watching them fly, unless there is killer light, they just don't excite me photographically. At the same time, there are some really amazing photographers out there that just photograph modern military hardware, and know the subject, and have a heck of a lot more contacts than I do. With time being precious, I have few in my files.

Conversely, you might not like antiques or warbirds and just love modern military. If this is the case, then there is your product to line your shelves with for your customers. Air shows are a natural for you, as you often have access to military aircraft you can't just drive up to and see at an



The Horsemen F-86 Sabre performance over Chino



F-22 Raptor

airport. With all the possible variants, you can keep quite busy and become quite successful with this genre of aircraft. In that same KelbyOne.com air show class, you can see me walk up and work with an F-22 pilot. So, the same strategy can work with modern military aircraft as with all the rest. And, with that, you have the basics for stock photography strategies at an air show.

The one strategy I typically focus on at air shows is the editorial market. So we are all on the same page, “editorial” generally means magazines. There are hundreds of magazines published

worldwide on aviation every month. These magazines are photographically driven, and they need our photographs to tell their story. You can be a part of this simply by working with the stock photography strategy I just talked about. But, the editorial strategy means you’re not just producing a photo or two, but rather an entire text and photo package. That is, you’re writing a whole article and illustrating it with your photographs. The editorial strategy all begins with the photographs, because without them, you have nothing to write about.

Don't let the thought of having to write an article (they are only like 1,500–1,800 words) or produce an entire article from two days of shooting at an air show scare you off! Like everything in photography, slow and easy wins the race. But, by starting to think about this and actually working at making it a shooting strategy, you've already taken the biggest leap. Remember that, as photographers, we are already visual storytellers, so all you're doing is taking your photography to its next natural extension.

How does this all work then? It starts by having a subject at the air show that interests you, one whose story you want to tell. It could be the air show itself, a particular pilot, or airplane, or period of history, or any combination thereof. The possibilities are truly endless once you give your mind over to the opportunities. With that, you come up with your own basic shot list you think you need to tell that story. You go to the air show, and work on capturing those and many more images. Then afterwards, you assemble the package and get it into the hands of an editor. You might be saying to yourself, "Moose is making this sound awfully simple." As long as you remember that it is all built with great photography, you're good to go.

If you don't keep in mind that it's all about the photography, the odds of success go downhill fast. So, the editorial strategy might not be one you work on right from the start, but rather one you work toward with more time behind the camera.

One of the most common strategies for shooting at an air show is the personal assignment. This can take on as many aspects as there are people attending an air show. The one strategy that actually turns out to be a common subject in my viewfinder is the family outing. Taking photographs of mom or dad (there are just as many women in aviation photography as

men) taking pictures of their kids is a killer subject! I know a photographer who goes to the air shows looking to get that one new aircraft in their files as a static that they finish in Photoshop to look like a painting. Their personal assignment is to create a portfolio of these "paintings" that they love sharing with folks.

Probably the most common personal assignment is family history—a member of the family who flew either commercially or in the military—and air shows are simply a great way to connect with that past. Their photographic strategy is no more than the truest use of photography: to record memories. And, that's a beautiful thing!

Another strategy, which takes absolutely nothing to explain, is going to air shows for the sheer fun of it! Yeah, air shows are just an amazing amount of fun, and we can't ever get enough of that in our photography or lives. Going with no strategy, no design other than just to have fun, is perfect and works for many, so don't ignore this very obvious one.

Finally, what so many do is go with a strategy that combines all of these. For me, personally, and for my whole family (because, even today, this is a family affair), we combine a number of these strategies. Stock, editorial, family memories, and

fun are combined into every air show we attend. Now, one of these strategies might be of higher priority than the others at a particular air show, but there is always some end game in mind at the start of the weekend. And, that keeps us moving in a forward direction to capture the photographs we need to tell the story. The purpose of a strategy is to avoid making the comment, after looking at all your photos, "I wish I had taken that one." It does happen, but with a little thought and planning, you can minimize it and just come back feeling rewarded for your efforts.

QUICK BRIEF

The personal assignment is a killer strategy, which can take on many aspects. One you should consider is the long term assignment. How long is long term? One of mine is going on its third year and still going strong!

What About Them Fly-Ins?

Like I mentioned at the beginning of this section, for the aviation photographer, fly-ins can be one of the most target-rich opportunities you'll ever come across! For aviators, they are a giant social event that attendees reach by literally flying in with their aircraft. They can be anything from a simple Sunday morning pancake sit-down to a week-long closed-to-the public celebration, and everything in between. The important point here is that there are lots of social pilots who fly some really cool aircraft, who just want to spend time taking in all that aviation brings. For a photographer, the storyteller, you can't ask for anything more.

If these are such great photographic opportunities, why might you have never heard of them before? If you were to think of these as "parties," unless you're invited to the party, you don't usually hear about the good parties until afterward. Fly-ins are, in a sense, a party with many not "advertised" on the web, where many photographers look for events to attend. It's not that they are closed events, they just don't publish worldwide invites. So, this is the start of your challenge of the fly-in: finding them!

One of the best ways I know of finding fly-ins is talking with the pilots you meet and befriend at air shows. Those folks you see flying at air shows are very social folks who love talking planes.



AAA Blakesburg Fly-In

One great place for them to further their passion is fly-ins. So, when talking with them, ask if they will be attending any fly-ins in the near future. You might also ask them if they know of any upcoming fly-ins you might find worth attending. This is how it all starts—connections—and that's what you need at the fly-ins. Keep in mind that relationships are how we gain the access to statics, and then if all works out, to the air-to-air photo mission.

Some fly-ins are, on the other hand, very well known. There is the Beech Party in Tennessee or the AOPA Regional Fly-Ins, which are well-publicized and you can find info about on the web. These annual fly-ins are well attended by some gorgeous aircraft that make great subjects. Fly-ins like these normally have kinda specific aircraft, like the Beech Party normally has just Beechcraft aircraft, vintage, and current general aviation (GA). The AOPA Regional Fly-Ins tend to be more basic GA aircraft, although antiques and warbirds do attend these at times. The Cactus Fly-In will be celebrating its 60th year in 2018. This fly-in attracts every class of aircraft there is in a gorgeous setting in the Arizona desert. It even has a photo contest.

Another fly-in is the Blakesburg Fly-In that has been going on forever. It's held in Iowa at the Antique Airfield/Antique Airplane Association. This particular fly-in is all about antique aircraft, many incredibly rare and one of a kind. It is a weeklong event, and when at its peak, there are hundreds of aircraft present with incredibly friendly pilots and owners.

Riches at the Fly-In

Next, I want to talk about how you might approach a fly-in, centering on the Blakesburg Fly-In. The first thing you need to know about the Blakesburg Fly-In is that it is not open to the public. You can't just arrive and walk in like at the Cactus Fly-In.



Porterfield 65s at Blakesburg

You must be a member of the Antique Airplane Association to enter the fly-in, so becoming a member is a no-brainer (it costs less than some air shows). With that membership, the entire event is open to you to explore and shoot. The photography is an all-day venture, starting before dawn and with many photographers doing star trails at night. This means that being able to access the fly-in at a moment's notice, if need be, is important. If you flew in, you camp with your plane. If not, you might travel there in your (or a rented) RV and stay on their grounds. Or you could stay in town (about 20 minutes away) and drive in and out of the fly-in each day. Any of those strategies work.

You need to go equipped to make the most of this. First are business cards, your calling card at such a social event. Cell coverage is spotty at the fly-in (which is funny as a tower is right there), but your business card needs to have your cell phone number so you can stay in contact with all the friends you make at the fly-in. Along with these, you should bring some basic knowledge about antiques. You don't need to have vast knowledge about them, but enough to know which aircraft



Beech A-212



Porterfield 65



Waco YKC

are of interest to you and to be able to ask questions. Asking questions with your camera, as well as your words, is how you begin to work the fly-in.

Our mornings start before sunrise. But, understand that for a majority of those camping at their planes, theirs do not! There is a slight challenge in this, as we need to almost “sneak” around to make our photographs, while respecting the privacy of those still sleeping. This brings us to our first gear recommendation: the telephoto zoom, such as the 70–200mm or even better, the 80–400mm. This is a great tool. It permits us to shoot, giving that extra distance to keep quiet. At the same time, the longer lens permits us to isolate the aircraft we have in our sights, as the

QUICK BRIEF

Fly-ins tend to have “big” night parties, where drinking is very much a part of it.

While there aren’t any photography possibilities at these parties, meeting folks is very much possible. Something to think about when making your plans.

planes can be parked side by side. Lastly, there is always at least one pilot who loves to fly at the crack of dawn in that gorgeous light and having that lens already on your camera permits the quick photograph. Yeah, it might be a sleepy morning, but it’s aviation and you know my motto: “Just show up!”

While there is a food stand at the fly-in, it serves a limited menu, so breakfast can be a challenge if you’re not staying on-site. They do serve great coffee, and there is a tradition of buying a mug and leaving it at the coffee bar to use during your stay. This means that you should stock your car with water (it can be hot or cold during the event) and perhaps some food. While stocking your vehicle, bring a folding chair! The only seat available is the

grass, and while it's comfortable, if you need to get up fast to photograph a plane just arriving and making a pass, you might not make it, if you're sitting on the grass.

There is one thing I should tell you about the Blakesburg Fly-In: the pilots are strongly encouraged to fly! Making low passes over the landing strip is a long-standing ritual that every pilot seems obliged to do. Whether they are just coming in for the first time or just out for a flight, making passes low and slow is just what they do. For us photographers, this tradition is gold! Just taking your chair, "parking" on the line, and waiting for these opportunities can easily fill your day and your media card with great images!

Keep in mind that the fly-in is basically an air show opportunity without the show and more of the social. Our photographic goals have the same path: working the statics and meeting the pilots, and working toward the air-to-air. With that in mind, you have two paths to getting that air-to-air. The first and best, yet most difficult, is to have an article or cover article appear in an aviation magazine, preferably an antiques aircraft magazine, before the fly-in. I mention this because I had the great fortune of this happening, and it made a huge impact in meeting folks. Next would be to fly in with some unique aircraft, which brings you attention. I had that good fortune, as well, as we came with our friends and their three Porterfields. Lastly, and the most realistic approach, is coming the first day, making some great images, and then that night, processing those images and uploading them to your iPad to show and share the next day.

You might think that gaining that air-to-air is the pinnacle of success of such an event, but actually, it's not. Being able to turn the event into a published article might seem even better, but we're still not there. Getting close

to the pinnacle of a fly-in is all of these things, along with establishing a relationship that extends past the fly-in! The vast majority of these pilots and plane owners have more than one aircraft, and more than likely have a project back home they are working on. ("Project" is the term for an aircraft that is being restored.) Making that connection establishes the long-term relationship and many, many air-to-air photo missions and articles.

Aviation photography, like all photography, is in large part a process—a process of growth, longevity, and passion. One air show or one fly-in, let alone a dozen, is still just a start. There is a story in aviation: A student with 400 hours of flying feels like he has tons of experience. He talks to another pilot, who has 5,000 hours, and speaks of his tons of experience of 400 hours not knowing the other pilot has 5,000 hours. The 5,000-hour pilot then tells him about when he talked to a pilot with 10,000 hours who said, "I have 10,000 hours, and I'm just learning all I don't know about flying." The moral is: in aviation, we must continually work at our craft to get better, but we'll always be learning.



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