

# Oh my gosh what an Osh!

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PHOTO: EAA/CRAIG VANDER KOLK

The B2Osh group poses for their annual picture at AirVenture 2007.

## **"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY."**

**Did I really hear that? My first year as leader of Bonanzas to Oshkosh and I'm hearing a distress call in our flight! What could be worse?**

The stricken Bonanza's pilot, Kelly McBride, transmitted that he had partial power and thought he could make it back to Rockford, Illinois, where 102 Bonanzas, seven Barons and one Travel Air had just taken off in the second-largest B2Osh ever. The slight relief was overcome by a feeling of impotence as I wished him well and promised to save him a parking spot at OSH.

A minute or so later, the headset was filled with a worse message. On RFD Tower frequency we heard, "There is an airplane down." It wasn't clear who said it or where. The next several

minutes were spent listening in as RFD Tower and a search-and-rescue helicopter worked to locate the downed aircraft.

From the two worst radio calls to the best: "Rockford Tower, I have the airplane. The pilot appears OK. He's standing outside the plane waving that he's OK." Or words very similar since the "He's OK" part overpowered my recollection of the complete call.

I relayed the good news to everyone on our air-to-air frequency, and what followed was the coolest thing: At least 30 double clicks of transmit buttons—acknowledging the wonderful news, but without gumming up the frequency.

The bottom line was that Kelly decided to put his Bonanza down in a field, under his control, rather than risk having the airplane put him down into someone's home. He managed the off-air-

port landing in a cornfield with such skill that he had no more than a tiny red mark on his chest from his shoulder harness. He rented a car and drove to Oshkosh the next morning and spent his AirVenture week camping with his training partner and retelling his story countless times.

Aside from the Mayday and its successful outcome, the flight itself was uneventful—exactly as it should be. It took 10:31 for the flight to get 110 aircraft airborne and just over 14 minutes to get 108 on the ground—all but Kelly and the photo/chase plane which landed elsewhere.

I led "Element 1" in my J35, with good friends and formation-flying buddies Jim Posner and Mark Merrill on my wings. Element 2 featured the oldest flying Bonanza and the newest: "Old Bob" Siegfried in S/N D-18, which belongs to



Bonanzas, Bonanzas and more Bonanzas lined up on the ramp at Rockford, Illinois, on their way to AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

the Beechcraft Heritage Museum, and Hawker Beechcraft CEO Jim Schuster rode in the newest G36 off the line.

B2Osh XVIII had some big challenges: Our sled dog, our draft horse, our heavy hauler Scott Thomas died in mid-April, leaving a personal void and taking from us all his party-planning skills and tireless work. It was gratifying that many B2Osh regulars stepped up and helped in the wake of Scott's death.

The word "party" gets used a lot when describing B2Osh. Upon landing, long-time supporter Kevin O'Halloran put on his annual welcoming Margarita Party, plus he added an Ice Cream Social for the kids later the same day. (The kid ratio was at an all-time high – nearly 40 youngsters out of 300 people total.)

An addition to our traditional festivities was a party by Hawker Beechcraft to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the

company and the 60th of the Bonanza. Held at the B2Osh parking location, it featured brats, beer and the excellent music of the Sons of Beech – a band comprised of Beechcraft employees.

Our trademark B2Osh party was held later in the week to accommodate the HBC celebration, but was even more fun than usual. Besides great 'eats', we had more door prizes than ever from literally dozens of sponsors and donors –



B2Osh Element 2 with D-18 leading. Photo by Beech CFO Jim Sanders flying right wing.—note that the left wing of the new G36 he is flying is visible.



Bob and Jessie Siegfried at the briefing in Rockford.







55 items worth over \$33,000! Needless to say a lot of happy B2Osh campers flew away with more than they had on arrival!

Not bad for an “event” that started in 1989 when Wayne Collins and a few friends decided to experience OSH together. He and his successor Elliott Schiffman brought B2Osh to an excellent position, and I’m delighted to have inherited a strong support structure.



(Left) For the first time BPPP joined the ABS Tent Topics schedule. Here Bill Hale reviews autopilot operation.

Dennis King’s popular demonstration of shimmy damper repair was one of 18 ABS Tent Topics presentations at AirVenture. These presentations at the ABS tent have grown in popularity over the last couple years. ABS Aviator points are even available for some of these Tent Topics.



Bruce Wold and son Jeff displayed N6240V at the ABS tent at Air Venture.



Jan Strickland, Ginny Roadfeldt, Cappi Carter and Sylvia Vickrey—all wives of former ABS board members, enjoying the Beechcraft Anniversary cake at the Hawker Beechcraft exhibit.



Beechcraft erected a large tent and stage for their excellent party and left it up for B2Osh to use for our Wednesday’s party. On Sunday, as the HBC event wound down, B2Osh pilot Kari Seppanen asked if the tent might be available Tuesday. “What for?” I asked.

“Well, uh, for a little ceremony.”

So, the B2Osh community served as witnesses as two of their own – Kari Seppanen and Vera Martinovich – exchanged vows surrounded by hundreds of Bonanzas and Barons parked in the AirVenture’s “North 40.” (Kari took the cover photo for the August 2007 *ABS Magazine* and Vera flew the photo plane.)

The Sopranos, AKA the Rob & Rob Show, met Monday with the caterer of the Wednesday party to go over last minute details. Before the meeting ended, the caterer had arranged for flowers and a wedding cake to be served under the tent on Tuesday. (The Sopranos must have made ‘em



an offer they couldn’t refuse.)

Kari has an aerobatic Bonanza and Vera has a Cessna 150 Aerobat, so they were teased that they should get married upside down. Vera rejected that suggestion. Their ceremony was held in beautiful sunny weather with a cool breeze, the sun lowering in the western sky and smoke signatures on the south-eastern horizon, courtesy of the still-in-progress afternoon AirVenture airshow. The Goodyear blimp flew by at about 100’ and revved its engines just as Vera was about to say, “I do.”

Of course, there were interruptions by P-51s and other awesome OSH noisemakers once the airshow was over and the field was opened for departures and other normal airport operations. Not the traditional bells, but a celebratory cacophony more appropriate to the occasion.

—Larry Gaines