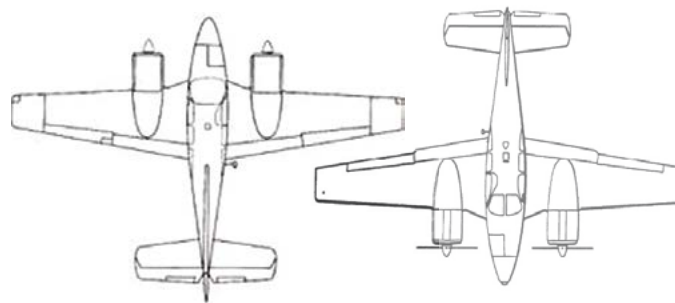


BARON AND TRAVEL AIR

Baron and Travel Air focuses on the unique systems, piloting techniques, maintenance and ownership considerations for the Beechcraft® twins. We encourage ABS members to submit your articles about flying, owning and maintaining Beechcraft® Barons and Travel Airs to info@bonanza.org.



Bill (left), Kevin, and the Travel Air

Chasing the MEI

By Kevin Crozier

As a Bonanza owner and flight instructor, I know there's always another step to climb. For me, that next step was earning my Multiengine Instructor (MEI) rating to complement my CFI and CFII. I wanted to train in a twin that felt familiar, ideally with systems similar to my Bonanza. That led me to Skyview Aviation in Murray, Kentucky, which operates a beautifully maintained Beechcraft® D95A Travel Air, upgraded with dual G5s and Avidyne IFD 440. With its heritage and systems closely resembling the Bonanza, I knew I'd be at home in the cockpit.

But I wasn't the only one heading to Skyview that week. Fellow American Bonanza Society member and good friend Bill Hyden was also working on a goal of his own: completing his Commercial Multiengine Land (MEL) rating. However, he needed to first knock out his Commercial Single-Engine Land (SEL) certificate. We decided to team up, support each other, and turn it into a productive long weekend of focused flight training. After helping Bill prep for his single-engine checkride, we scheduled our multiengine course at Skyview for April 11, 2025.

Do your homework

One thing that really stood out to me about Skyview is how seriously they take preparation. This isn't a show-up-and-wing-it kind of place. Clint Mathis and Greg Carlton, the co-owners and two of our instructors, made it very clear that students are expected to spend significant time prior to the course preparing. In advance of our trip, Skyview provided access to Sporty's multiengine video training course, which was incredibly helpful for brushing up on theory and procedures.

They also pointed us toward supplemental materials, including some excellent YouTube videos. One—Martin Pauly and Doug Rozendaal’s “The Drill”—was particularly valuable and should be required training for any multiengine pilot-to-be (and is a great refresher for current multiengine pilots).

The week before we were scheduled to arrive, the Skyview team hosted a live multi-hour Zoom ground school session, which helped bring everything together and allowed for questions and answers. That session turned out to be a great primer and gave us confidence that we would be able to complete our multiengine ratings in just three days.

Thursday: Arrival in Murray

We landed at Murray’s Kyle-Oakley Field (KCEY) after a roughly 600 nautical mile, four-hour flight in Bill’s rock-solid V35B Bonanza. If you’ve never flown into KCEY, it’s a hidden gem. Quiet, with a long, well-maintained runway and excellent FBO facilities (including the always “fun” to drive Chrysler minivan crew car), it offers an ideal training environment. There’s no need to fly off to a distant practice area on training flights—you can get right to work just a few miles from the airport.

Knowing that Bill was scheduled to take his Commercial SEL checkride first thing Friday morning, we got started immediately. I accompanied Bill on his first intro flight in the Travel Air, which also gave me a chance to get familiar with the aircraft. Unfortunately,

some thunderstorms rolled in and grounded us for the rest of the day. No matter—we’d make up for lost time soon enough.

Friday: Training begins

I was first up Friday morning, getting airborne early before Bill’s single-engine checkride window. My training focused on all the core multiengine maneuvers: steep turns (which proved more challenging than I remembered), V_{MC} demos, stalls, drag demos, and slow flight. I had to really work on my landings—aligning that pointy nose properly takes a bit of practice. The key (just like for any landing) is to get your eyes up and look at the far end of the runway in the flare.

With weather still a factor, Bill’s single-engine checkride got bumped to Saturday. Both Bill and I took advantage of the time by flying two more sessions that afternoon. One was with Greg Carlton, the other with Lucas Kjell—both incredibly capable and patient instructors. I walked away from each flight with better insight, improved skills, and more confidence that I could actually complete this rating in just three days with less than 10 hours of flight time.

Saturday: Pushing hard and making progress

Saturday was a busy day for both of us. Bill launched early for his rescheduled Commercial SEL checkride while I went back up with Lucas for two more training flights. On the second flight we flew over to Kentucky Dam State Park Airport (M34) for a nice change

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of scenery. My last flight of the day was a mock checkride with Clint Mathis. That mock ride was crucial to boosting my confidence and finding my weak spots. It highlighted a few areas I needed to polish, but I could tell the fatigue was setting in by that point, and I was done for the day. MEI training is demanding, with the checkride requiring teaching nearly all of the maneuvers required for a standard multiengine add-on, plus performing the drag performance demo.

By mid-afternoon Bill returned from his checkride grinning ear to ear as a newly minted Commercial SEL pilot. But he didn't slow down. He immediately flew three more flights in the Travel Air, preparing for his MEL ride the next day. While Bill was flying, Clint and I spent time going over endorsements, regulatory requirements, and sharpening my ground knowledge for the MEI oral. It was a full day, and an incredibly productive one.

Sunday: Mission accomplished


I was back in the cockpit at dawn for one final warm-up flight with Greg to address a few weak spots noted on my mock checkride. Then came the moment of truth—my MEI checkride. It began promptly at 7 a.m. with an oral that closely mirrored everything we had reviewed in training. No surprises. At 8:15 a.m., the DPE and I launched into gusty winds for a 1.1-hour checkride. When we landed, I was officially an MEI with 9.6 hours logged in the Travel Air.

Bill's MEL checkride began at 10 a.m. with an even gustier crosswind. He wrapped up around 12:30 p.m., passing with flying colors. Two checkrides, two ratings for Bill, all in one whirlwind weekend.

After a quick debrief, we loaded up the Bonanza and launched into a stiff 30-40 knot headwind for the flight home. Despite the headwinds, we couldn't have been happier.

Final thoughts

Skyview Aviation exceeded every expectation. Its instructors—Clint, Greg, and Lucas—delivered focused, high-quality instruction in a solid airplane and a well-structured curriculum. The D95A Travel Air is a great platform for Bonanza pilots looking to expand their horizons, and the overall experience was efficient, professional, and rewarding.

If you're an ABS member looking to knock out a multiengine rating or even pursue your MEI like I did, Skyview should be on your short list. With the right preparation you can show up, work hard, and leave with new ratings—and a deeper level of skill and confidence in your flying. 

Kevin Crozier is the caretaker of a turbonormalized 1981 A36. He's an ABS Recognized Instructor (CFI / CFII / MEI), and an FAA-designated software Designated Engineering Representative. Kevin is the owner of KTronics Aero Services, located near Austin, Texas.

