

WHEN THE STAGGERWING



Beech UC-43 43-10828 of the USAAF. Aircraft is painted in standard USAAF Olive Drab/Neutral Gray



During the decade that comprised the 1930s, aviation was changing on an almost weekly basis. During 1932, at the height of the Great Depression that swept the world, Walter Beech and Ted Wells came up with the idea of developing a fast single-engine aircraft aimed at businessmen and wealthy individuals that did not feel the effects of a collapsed economy. To create such a plane during a dire time in history was a bold move.

Beech gave the new design the designation of Model 17 and right from the start it was an unconventional aircraft. The most noticeable feature of the Model 17 was that it employed “negative stagger” wings. This meant that top wing was staggered behind the lower wing. Testing in early wind tunnels showed that this configuration would reduce interference drag between the two wings and Beech and Wells were attempting to gain as much performance as possible through aerodynamic refinement. However, it was eventually shown that the reduction factor was quite minimal. The configuration would give the aircraft a name that exists today — Staggerwing, even though the name was never officially used by Beech.

The Model 17 employed just about every type of aviation construction — welded steel tubing, aluminum sheet panels, wooden ribs and spars, and the majority of the aircraft was covered in Irish linen. With all these disciplines employed to build the aircraft, the time to construct each machine was considerable and called

Matt Walker and Garren Swager airborne in the GB-2 near Chino Airport during September while flying formation on Matt Nightingale's Texan camera plane.

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WE FLY WITH AN IMMACULATE BEECH GB-2 THAT SERVED WITH THE ROYAL NAVY DURING WORLD WAR TWO - BY MICHAEL O'LEARY