



# What Did You Do with Your Bonanza Today?

By Gene Cross

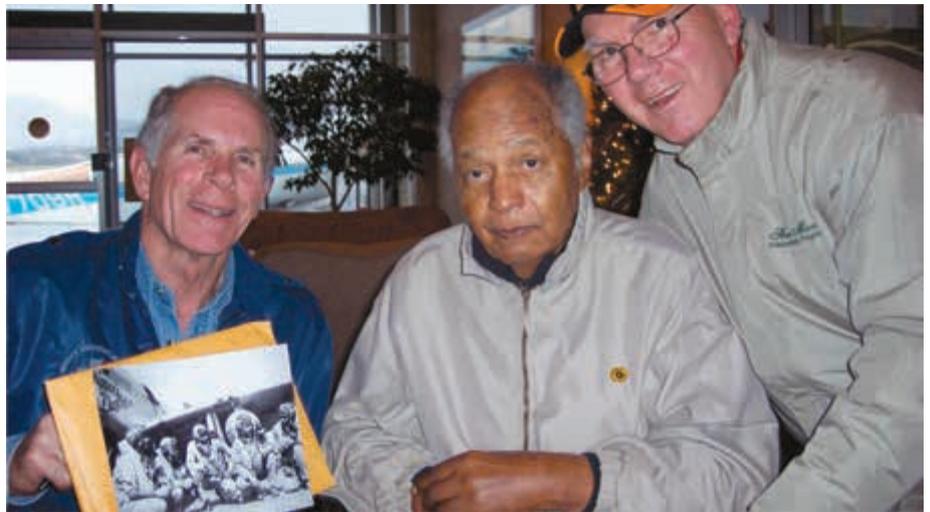
**F**or many of us who fly a Beechcraft, that would seem like a simple question, with typical answers:

- We went to visit family.
- I went on a business trip.
- We went on a family vacation.
- I did a refresher with an instructor.
- I did some practice approaches for proficiency.

You get the message... our airplanes are tools that we use as time machines for business or family needs. This is especially important to places not well-served by commercial aviation.

For the pilots of Compassion Airlift LLC ([www.compassionairlift.org](http://www.compassionairlift.org)) the answer is distinctly different, something along the lines of:

- I flew a delightful six-year-old from Virginia to the burn center at Shriners Hospital in Boston for treatment of a rare chemical imbalance causing internal “burns” throughout her body.
- I flew a cancer patient from a rural airport to a specialized treatment center.
- I flew an Alzheimer’s patient to a care facility closer to her family.
- I flew a legendary Tuskegee Airman to a care facility near Roanoke.



**We flew Tuskegee Airman Lt. Dempsey Morgan (center) to a veterans’ care center in Roanoke, Virginia. Pilot Chuck Van Nostrand (left) shows off a vintage photo of the legendary airman. John Hoffmann (right) was copilot.**



**The patient arrived in an ambulance and is ready to move to the Bonanza stretcher.**



**Patient and father ready to get under way.**

- I flew a four-year-old girl in a cast from her hip to her ankle from Virginia Beach, where she was injured, to her home in Connecticut.

Many of us use our aircraft for Angel Flights from time to time. However, in 1992, we installed an STC-approved stretcher from LifePort ([www.lifeport.com](http://www.lifeport.com)). The STC number is SA4745NM. It was installed with LifePort drawing # 360-58 and LifePort PLUS Systems Supplement #14. This stretcher makes our A36 Bonanza, N7709R, unique. It allows passengers who for reasons of comfort or physical necessity need to recline during travel.

The aircraft is dedicated to fulfilling the mission of the organization:

## Compassion Flight Supporters

APP Jet Center (KHEF)

Bonanza Angel LLC  
Pilots/Owners

Bull Run Rotary Club

Computer Training Systems

Cycle Aviation

Dulles Aviation

Jeppesen

Rockville Elks Club

Sirius Aviation

The mission of Compassion Airlift is to provide free air transportation to and from distant medical facilities for patients who have both a financial need and a need for air travel for specialized medical evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, or rehabilitation not available near their home. Transportation is available to those eligible patients who do not require medical monitoring enroute, who are unable to travel via public transportation, and especially to those who require a stretcher enroute.

Compassion Airlift has its origins in Mercy Medical Airlift. N7709R was purchased in 1977 by a group of pilots for use as a vehicle for long-range charitable transportation. That mission eventually evolved to be dedicated solely to charitable medical transportation. With a recent change in focus by

Mercy Medical, Compassion Airlift launched as an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization relying solely on contributions to maintain its mission objectives.

Throughout its life, N7709R has been continually upgraded. A JPI engine management system is the most recent addition. All flights are flown IFR and the panel reflects that need. Since 1994, N7709R has flown 1.5 million miles to 289 unique destinations in 39 states. Typical mission costs range between \$500 and \$3,300, with the average being around \$1,100. There is never a charge for the patient or his/her family.

Compassion Airlift pilots all hold advanced ratings, and regular training is a part of normal operations. The pilots are mostly retired from aviation or other

careers. They might be characterized as having more compassion than money. Since the separation from Mercy Medical support, the organization is struggling to continue its mission. Sponsorships and donor financial support will be important if this organization is to survive beyond 2019.

If you'd like to help us continue our mission, or if you'd like to talk to us about how you might use your Beechcraft to make a real difference in a unique way, contact:

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**Sgt. Josh Bouchard is welcomed home after treatment.**



**Patient is secured comfortably in aircraft.**



### Mission Cities

Map generated by Compassion Airlift using the Great Circle Mapper copyright © Karl L. Swartz.