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A Journey of Grace and Mercy by Air and Ground

by JOSH RITTENBERRY



While the other guys in junior high were talking about tricked-out trucks, Carlo Sciara was daydreaming of F15s and Pratt & Whitney engines. Like some of the pilots who read this, Carlo's formative years began with a strong interest in aviation, but his access to it was limited, at best. What little interaction he had came as a young man on the family farm among the rolling terrain of Northeast Texas. Carlo would look up to the sky and see Roger's Flying Service, who would come from Southwest Arkansas to spray



Bryan Whittington and Carlo Sciara

in the area.

An effort by Carlo to enlist in the U.S. Air Force didn't materialize, so he was content to farm with his dad after high school. After the Sciara family rented a farm in Mississippi, they relocated to the plot of land north of Natchez. It was there that Carlo had closer contact to flying when Jackie Hopkins of Waterproof, Louisiana would cross the river to spray the family's fields. Seeing Mr. Hopkins, an F4 Vietnam pilot, crisscross the skies convinced young Carlo that he could do the flying while working on the farm. Soon he enrolled in Northeast Louisiana University, the only known school at that time that offered a four year Ag Aviation degree program.

"After graduation, I bought a 450A Ag Cat and began working on my dad's farm near Clayton, Louisiana," Carlo recalled. "Mr. Fred Bernard, my professor and adviser from NLU came to fly my first year and

helped me break in. Fred's watchful eye and mentoring was immeasurable."

After four years, Carlo had established himself a business while also farming. But like the common thread that runs through many operators' stories, hard times followed. Carlo decided to sell the operation and attempt another career. While professionally things were uncertain, personally Carlo was riding high, marrying his wife Kelli and having a son. The young family would eventually find themselves back in Northeast Texas where Carlo took a job coaching football.

"We did well and were quite happy," Carlo remarked. "But I missed flying tremendously."

Two years into coaching, one of Carlo's college buddies, Lyle Malloy, asked if he ever thought about flying again. "Only every day," Carlo quipped. Lyle was flying in Eudora, Arkansas and asked Carlo to come visit. It only took that one visit to convince Carlo to return to the skies. Soon he and his family relocated to Southern Arkansas to start a new chapter.

"Kelli has always been so supportive and followed me all over the country, so we moved again," Carlo explained. "Lyle moved back closer to his home in Cleveland, Mississippi and, after two seasons, I became chief pilot in Eudora at Hensley Flying Service."

In 2005, Carlo expanded his horizons when he partnered with Bryan Whittington, a ground sprayer and Eudora native, who had been spraying since leaving the cattle auction business in 1994. The new partnership, Sciara & Whittington Air & Ground, acquired a two AT502 operation, in addition to Bryan's ground sprayer. With a shoestring budget and limited crew, Carlo and Bryan did a majority of the application work in those early years. With some assistance from Clay Poole and an AT401, the partners reached out to Mid-Continent and purchased a 660 Turbine Thrush. Afterward, business was booming and Bryan had to move into the office full-time because the operation was

too busy to keep him working on the sprayer. A few years later, with two spreaders and two 510 Thrushes, the operation acquired two neighboring flying services, completing the composition of the business as it operates today. A Cessna 182 for making short trips and a Citabria round out the fleet of airplanes. Bryan got his Private License six years ago, and added an Instrument Rating last year.



Ground Crew L-R: Justin Harper, Jesse James, Bryan Whittington, Wesley Hammett, Shaq Brown



Flying Crew L-R: John Patrick, Carlo Sciara, Ted Brown, Bryant Russell

Early in the operation, cotton was king and so was rice. But today Sciara & Whittington primarily treat corn and beans, with some cotton and rice here and there. The season begins in January with burndown, then spreaders put out blended fertilizer for corn, beans, and rice. The season ramps up in July with fungicide, insecticide, and desiccation of beans.

“We have a great friend, Robby Lassiter, who we help during the busy season, as well as other neighbors who get overloaded. We are very humbled when our neighbors feel comfortable calling us for help, knowing they trust us. I know many operators do not have this type of relationship with their neighboring flying services, so again, we are blessed to be amongst some good folks.”

In the fall, the operation kicks into high gear again with spreading work that puts out blends for crops to be treated the following

year. Carlo describes the year as a whole as a steady, long season.

Outside of spraying Carlo and Bryan are both pastors in the same church, “Our commitment to God and each other has formed a brother-type bond. Our desire in our church, home, and business is one and the same: to live and work in a manner which God would be pleased with. We do not work on Sundays, rather we worship together with our brothers and sisters and encourage our workers to do the same.”

As the old saying goes, a business is no

better than the people who run it. And the same is true at Sciara & Whittington. "We have been blessed by the great men and women who work with us here. It is a team effort." The team includes Ted Brown, who has been with the operation the entire length of the partnership. John Patrick, Kevin Gwin—one of the operation's two primary pilots—and Felicia Jones have been with the operation for the better part of a decade and more. Jesse James, Shaq Brown, and Bryant Russell round out the ground crew, who have all been with the operation for more than four years. Even Carlo's oldest son, Carlo IV, has gotten into the act by getting his A&P License and is currently working on his pilot license while his youngest son, Nicholas, is currently enrolled in college with the goal of becoming a crop consultant. Other family who contribute to the business include Bryan's wife Lori, who is the CPA, and his two sons-in-law, Justin Harper, who operates one of the ground rigs in addition to Wesley Hammett, and Clark Strange, who performs maintenance.



Pilots: Kevin Gwin and Carlo Sciara



Office: Felicia Jones

"It would be impossible to list all of the people who have helped this business be successful," Carlo said. "God has blessed us with safety and good customers. Our families have contributed, worked, and supported us the entire way. Our industry support has come from Mid-Continent, Landry Aero, Air Repair, Strange Aviation, Pickett Equipment, Transland, Thrush, Mid South Ag, our local parts warehouse, Sibley Auto, Satterfield, Greenway, Scott Fuel. All I can say is we have been blessed to work with such fine people."

While it is impossible to know what the future will hold for the Ag Aviation industry, Carlo remains hopeful that his operation's lasting success will continue uninhibited. "All Bryan and I can do is thank God for his grace and mercy and for putting so many good people in our business. We humbly thank each and every person who has been with us on this journey."

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**1996 THRUSH S2R-G1
N2237D**

9688.0.0 A/F TT, Hatfield Bottom Load Fuel, A/C, Vortex Generators, New Satlock Bantam, Flow Control, Stainless Steel Spray System, AFS Check Valves, CP Nozzles, Agrinautics Pump, Lane Electric Brake, Aircraft Radios, Fresh Eddie Current, Spar Caps 3220 of 6,200 Hour Life

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**301
N31580**

9679.2 A/F TT, 350 Gallon Hopper, Bantam GPS w/ G4, Light Bar, Intelliflow, Stainless Steel Boom, Nozzles, CP-03, Smoker, Air Conditioner, bottom Load Fuel, New Side Windows

[More info](#)



**1998 AYRES S2R-G10
N2146S**

4909.0 A/F TT, New Fuel Spline, Bantam GPS, Lane Electric Brake, Smoker, Fast Start, A/C, No Heat, Stainless Steel Boom, Nozzle CP-09, Comm Radio, Trac TXP with ADS-B Out, New Wing Spar May 2016, Annual 2-21

[More Info](#)

N4562Y

5,764 A/F TT, 1,463 SMOH, 235 HP, SATLOC GPS Lite Star 4, New Lane Electric Fan & Brake, Spray Booms, Pawnee Spreader, Excellent Paint & Interior, No Damage History.

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**2019 THRUSH, S2R-T34
N1009F**

750 SHP Pratt & Whitney PT6A-34AG Turboprop Engine, Constant-Speed Hartzell Propeller, MVP-50T Glass Panel, Garmin G5 Attitude Indicator, 510-Fallon Fiberglass Hopper, 250-Amp Starter/Generator, Spray System w/ 41-inch Stainless Steel Gatebox For Dry Applications (seeding and fertilizer) and Emergency Liquid Dump Capabilities, Sherwin-Williams JETGLO Paint, Two-Inch Stainless Steel Spray System, Flve-Blade Weath-Aero Cockpit Adjustable Fan, Three-Inch Side Loader, Streamlined Aluminum Booms, Wingtip Navigation and Strobe Lights, 228-Gallon Fuel System, Windshield Wiper and Washer, OAT Gauge, AmSafe Aviation Inflatable Restraint System, 29-Inch-High Flotation Tires and Wheels with Dual-Caliper Cleveland Brakes, and Zee Air Conditioner and Cabin Heat.

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**1988 AIR TRACTOR AT-301
N69WN**

8,900 A/F TT, 600 HP, 530.0 SPOH, 320 Gallong Hopper, Ag Pilot X GPS, Flow Control, Smoker, Stainless Steel Boom, Air Conditioner, VGs, Lane Electric Brake, Botton Load Fuel, 25-Inch Gate, 2 Each Spreaders

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**2013 THRUSH S2R-T34
N3043V**

3,398 A/F TT, Engine 3,398 SNEW, Concord Batter, CP Nozzles, AM-SAFE Seat Belts, GPS, Bird Lights, Stainless Steel Spray Valve

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**2012 THRUSH S2R-T34
N986MM**

Very Clean and Well-Maintained! Cascade, MVT-50 Glass Panel, Load Hawg, Bantam GPS, Intelliflow, Leading Edge Lights, Vortex Generators, Smoker, Bottom Load Fuel

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**1998 Air Tractor AT-802A
N5094H**

12,152.6 A/F TT, 1230 HP, 2000 SPOH, Reabe Digital Hopper, Quantity & Spray Boom Pressure, E-TEC Inc Fast Start System, Comm Radio, Hemisphere G4 GPS, RT Side Boom Shut Off, Smoker, Hydraulic Gate, Air Conditioner, Wipaire Vortex Generators, Wingman Wing Due at 15,823.2, Gear Due at 12,798.2, Eyebolt Stabilizer Due at 14,798.2, 4479.7 Hobbs

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**2010 Dream Tundra,
N523MM**

90.0 A/F TT, Aerosport IO375 210 HP, PMA-8000B Switching Panel with 4 Place Intercom and Three Light Markers, Garmin SL-40 Com, Garmin 430 GPS, Garmin GTX-330 Transponder, Garmin 496 GPS (Panel Mounted), Digiflight II Autopilot w/ Altitude Hold, PFD/MFD

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**1997 Ayres, S2R-G10
N773CC**

6500.0 A/F TT, 400.0 SPOH, Cool Start System, Hatfield Single Point Fueling, ATS-VGs, Ag-Tips-Marburger, Kawak Hydraulic System, Satloc, G4, Load Hawg

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