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Nothing But Air

by Josh Rittenberry



In an area deep down south where Louisiana and Mississippi share a muggy embrace, Trennis Vaughn often sat on the back of a slow-moving tractor nestled in the 1,400 fertile acres that make up the Cherippa Plantation where he was raised, envious as the aerial applicators darted from field to field above him.

"While I have always had a deep love for farming, I had no interest in being burned to a crisp or eating dust," Vaughn said. "My dad, however, didn't see the need for air conditioned cabs on the tractors or in the house either, for that matter."

It was while baking in the hot Louisiana sun, watching the applicators work that Trennis thought to himself, "That's what I want to do!"

The Frogmore, Louisiana native



eventually traveled north to the College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri where he completed all his flight ratings and earned his A&P certificate. After college, he briefly worked in construction near the Ozarks so his new wife, Sherry, could finish her medical internship. But all the while, Trennis had become restless. Construction was not supposed to be the landing spot after college. So after some long conversations with Sherry,

Trennis asked his wife to find him an ag school.

“Sherry called all the schools in the trade magazines and asked them why her husband should attend their school. Harold Miller was the only one that said he would get me a job, so I went there. In the end, I was the only one from my class to get a job.”

The job came from Ralph Lutes of Lutes Flying Service in Shipshewana, Indiana. Mr. Lutes first put Trennis in a 600 Ag Cat, then transitioned him into a Turbine Ag Cat and then an AT402. Seven years into his stint, Trennis was working at one of Lutes’ satellite locations in Sturgis, Michigan when former mentor Harold Miller landed there one day. Miller was on his way to sell an aerial application business in the thumb of Michigan. With a ripe opportunity and some encouragement from Mr. Miller, Trennis and Sherry soon became owners of the business that would become Vaughn’s Flying Service in 2004.



The operation began with one Weatherly 620B before upgrading to a geared 600 Thrush, and then a 510 Turbine Thrush. In early 2022, Vaughn’s became a two airplane operation when it added a 710 Turbine Thrush purchased from and outfitted by Mid-Continent.

In a largely agricultural area, Vaughn’s Flying Service typically treats corn, wheat, soybeans, and potatoes. When operating in and around southern Michigan, Trennis makes a trip to Pennsylvania to spray gypsy moths every spring.

As with most new operations, the crew that ran the business in the beginning was a skeleton one, with Trennis in the air, a loader guy on the ground along with Sherry, who managed the office. Today the crew has expanded to include the Vaughn’s oldest son Luke, who is now the ground support manager, A&P mechanic, and pilot. Also part of the action is youngest son Mark, who works with the ground crew and aspires to be an ag pilot himself. Darren Evants, a seasoned pilot transplanted from Arkansas, recently joined the flying service and reportedly keeps the crew entertained. Also in group this year is Collin Janowski, who is assisting with the ground crew as a loader. Daughter Lauren is also there to aide Sherry with various scheduling and office duties.

When asked, if the most challenging side of the operation is business or flying, Trennis doesn’t hesitate. “I don’t think the flying part is challenging. I really love that. I’d have to say the business part which my wife does amazingly, and without her help I think I would quit.”

Because operators often rely on the support of those close to them, The Vaughns are fortunate that all three of their children continue to be involved in operations. They are also fortunate to share two grandchildren who are growing up around the business.

“My sons are the future of our business and they are pretty great. I am biased, I know. But really, I think if we do the best we can today we will create a pretty hopeful tomorrow.”



The Vaughn Family enjoys the lifestyle of slow winters and fast-paced summers, when the days are filled with work, travelling, seeing friends, hunting, and ice fishing. Their life well-lived is due, in part, to their commitment to God. “We pray about everything and have seen so many miracles on our behalf. We can’t leave Him out of the story, because knowing God has made all the difference.”

Aside from relying on family and faith to get through the long, hard days of flying, Trennis will never shake the sage words of advice he picked up so many years ago: “Don’t fly through nothing but air.”



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Please join us in welcoming Tanner Cobb as a full-time member of the Mid-Continent Insurance Division staff. Fresh from graduating from The University of Mississippi with a degree in Risk Management and Insurance, Tanner has spent his breaks from school in our offices learning the intricacies of aviation insurance and meeting the pilots and operators we insure. Prior to returning to Ole Miss last fall for his senior year, Tanner succeeded in passing his Missouri Property & Casualty Insurance Exam, adding yet another licensed Insurance Producer in our division to serve you.

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6080.7 A/F TT, 520.4 TSMOH, 450 HP, Garmin SL-40 Com, PS Engineering PM-1200, Oilomatic Preoiler, Airwold Remote Oil Filter Smoker, Speed Ring, 46 Gal Fuel, Redline Brakes, Garmin GDL 82 ADSB-Out

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1981 PIPER PAWNEE BRAVE N2329Y

5127 TT A/F, 1235 SNEW, 120.0 TT on New Cylinders, Prop 372 SNEW, 300 HP, Satlock GPS-M3, Lane Electric Brake, Complete Spray System, New Hooker Harness, Comm Radio, Left and Right Fuel Cells Replaced 2-13-18, Fresh Annual at Sale

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1978 PIPER PAWNEE BRAVE N3787E

45,950 A/F TT, Lycoming TIO-540, 1851.0 TT Engine, 446 Hrs on New Carbine, Cylinders Top OH, Spreader, Boom & Nozzles, 86 Gal Fuel, Satlock GPS, 3656 Hrs Left on Wing Spars

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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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2013 THRUSH S2R-H80 N3046N

3,600 A/F TT, 800 HP, Load Hawg, VGs, Bottom Fuel/Dual Load, Intelliflow with Smart Pump, Leading Edge Lights, Stainless Steel Booms, Hopper Rinse, Bantam, Smoker, Spreader with Kicker Plate, CPs, MVP 50T Glass Panel

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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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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, Wipaie 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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1983 AIR TRACTOR AT-301 N31580

9679.2 A/F TT, 600 HP, 550 Engine TT, 350 Gallon Hopper, Bantam GPS W/ G4, Light Bar, Intelliflow, Stainless Steel Boom, Nozzles CP-03, Smoker, A/C, Bottom Load Fuel, New Side Windows

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1981 CESSNA A185F N61955

7300 A/F TT, 770 SFRM, Continental IO520, 285 HP, Audio Panel w/ 3 Light Markers, Garmin 430 WAAS, Garmin 255 Com, Garmin GTX 345 w/ ADSM In and Out, Glide Slope, Stormscope, S-TEC-50 Auto Pilot with Altitude Hold, Rosen Sun Visors, VG Kit, Horton STOL Kit, Float Kit, Cessna Turbo Vents for Cabin Cooling, Backup Altimeter, Backup Artificial Horizon

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