



PIPER PA-32





FLY-IN 2021

Piper PA-32 owners converged on Memphis this past April, for what may be the largest gathering of the PA-32 series ever.

By Spencer Hamons





Anyone who has dared to venture into the world of social media in the last couple of years might find this communications medium trite, frustrating, and distrustful, with a handful of other adjectives that shouldn't grace the pages of *Piper Flyer*.

However, April 23-25 of this year saw the positive potential of social media when it brought together a group of like-minded aviators at the first PA-32 (Cherokee Six, Lance, Saratoga, 6XT) fly-in hosted at Olive Branch Airport (KOLV) in Olive Branch, Mississippi, just southeast of Memphis.

The fly-in started as an idea from PA-32 owner Troy Kornacki, a prominent member of the Facebook and MeWe group "Piper PA-32 (Six, Saratoga, & Lance) Owners & Pilots," which has over 6,000 members. Troy's idea quickly

spread across the group and became a grassroots effort by various members to facilitate what is believed to be the largest gathering of PA-32s at any one location in history.

As the event dates approached, all the rookie event planners felt they were getting a little "behind the airplane," as the signup roster exceeded 80, then 90, and eventually 120 registered aircraft and over 300 attendees.

Five core members with knowledge of the local area divided responsibilities amongst themselves as Master Planner, Virtual Operations, Event Ground Operations, Event Static Operations, and Raffle Coordinator. Others assumed secondary and tertiary duties as needed to fill in logistical needs.

Various members began simply mentioning the fly-in to their vendor partners, and these generous vendors began offering raffle giveaways, creating a buzz amongst the attendees. Eventually, these raffle items exceeded \$50,000 and were provided by nearly every major name in

General Aviation. A Maryland-based airplane tinting company was on-site and tinted 19 aircraft over the weekend.

Aircraft owners and their families enjoyed amazing food, fun camaraderie, and a vibe equivalent to any of the best classic car runs, as people fawned over each others airplanes and unique accessorizing.

Just like every car show where someone shows up with a Ferrari, Bugatti, or something else exotic, Piper got in on the action by bringing in a brand-new M600 equipped with the latest Autoland technology.

The staff from Piper didn't just show up to show off, but participated in every aspect of the fly-in, staying throughout the event and even volunteering for a larger role next year.

Lodging for attendees was coordinated in downtown Memphis at the historic Peabody Hotel with group dinners scheduled at Texas de Brazil and the ever-popular local barbecue joint, Charlie Vergo's Rendezvous.





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...the Olive Branch Tower air traffic controllers worked diligently with Memphis Approach to make entry under, around, and through the busy Memphis Class B airspace as easy and efficient as possible, even for the most novice of fliers.





The Olive Branch Airport manager, Gil Bobo, and his crew were instrumental in assuring that every PA-32 owner that wanted a tiedown could be accommodated, and the Olive Branch Tower air traffic controllers worked diligently with Memphis Approach to make entry under, around, and through the busy Memphis Class B airspace as easy and efficient as possible, even for the most novice of fliers.

No event like this ever goes exactly as planned. Over 120 aircraft were signed up to attend the fly-in, but due to poor weather and IFR conditions around Memphis and much of the East Coast, "only" 82 aircraft and approximately 300 people were able to make the trip.

Members who either came in early to beat the weather or arrived IFR flew their beloved six-seaters from as far as Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Minnesota, Florida, and Connecticut,

They joined the dozens of other nearby attendees to show off their unique flying Suburbans and to just enjoy the company of other enthusiasts. Some members who couldn't make the flight drove in, one from as far away as Rochester, New York, while others were able to attend virtually with a Facebook livestream.

Although the uncontrollable weather put a damper on the fly-in for some, those who were able to attend departed Olive Branch with memorable aviation experiences. They had the pleasure of getting to meet those in-person that had previously only been words from the other end of a keyboard somewhere across the internet.

As attendees were preparing to head home, every single pilot and family member polled said unequivocally that they wanted this to become an annual event—and those core members that started the ball rolling all agreed.

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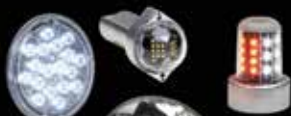


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Special thanks must be given to those PA-32 owners that put so much of their time and effort into this event: Troy Kornacki, James Sandlin, Cannon Loughry, Todd Woods, and Butch "The Man" Mauldin. Thank you all for everything you did to make this a safe, fun, and memorable event!

Spencer Hamons owns a 1981 Piper PA-32R-301T Turbo Saratoga with his wife Coryee. They are based out of the fourth-highest airport in the country; Angel Fire, New Mexico (KAXX), at 8,380 feet msl. Spencer serves in the Taos Squadron of Civil Air Patrol and loves living in the mountains where he and his family can enjoy skiing in the winter, golfing in the summer, Jeeping, and of course, flying all

year long. Send questions or comments to editor@piperflyer.org.

RESOURCES

Olive Branch Airport
obms.us/airport/

Peabody Hotel
peabodymemphis.com

Piper PA-32 (Six, Saratoga, & Lance) Owners & Pilots
facebook.com/groups/1420056191657563/

"Piper PA32 Series"
MeWe Group: mewe.com

Texas de Brazil
texasdebrazil.com/locations/memphis/



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