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How Harry Ogg Pioneered The First 'Private Air Office' In 1929

Harry Ogg used a plane to demonstrate his washing machines all over the USA.

BY MARK FINLAY PUBLISHED 2 DAYS AGO



Before discussing Harry Ogg, we should first explain what a private air office is. It is a private plane designed to allow business persons to run their company even when flying at 36,000 feet. A great example of this would be Air Force One. While technically not a business jet, the aircraft is fitted to allow the President of the United States to oversee what is happening while away from the White House.

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Harry L. Ogg was born in Newton, Iowa, on September 2, 1884. When Ogg graduated from high school in 1904, he enrolled in the University of Iowa, where he studied electrical engineering. Since the 1700s, people had been working on machines that could be used to wash clothes. Early machines were powered by hand until the 19th century when steam engines could rotate the drum. In the early 1900s, electric-powered washing machines began to appear, and seeing the potential, Harry Ogg set up the Automated Washer Company.

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Ogg decided to use a plane to help demonstrate his washing machines

While Ogg built an appliance that every homemaker wished to own, the trouble was getting people to see and understand how they worked. As mail planes and then later passenger flights became popular after the Post Office Act of 1925, Ogg came up with the idea of having his own aircraft.

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In the summer of 1929, Ogg got together with the Travel Air Company to fit out a plane that he could use to demonstrate his washing machines. The aircraft selected for the job was a six-passenger high-wing monoplane called the "Travel Air 6000." The plane was later known as the Curtiss-Wright 6B when Travel Air was purchased by Curtiss-Wright.

Ogg removed the seats and turned the plane into an office

The first thing Ogg did was to remove the seats and install a folding desk, add a typewriter, an Ediphone dictator, and an intercom so that he could communicate with the pilot. The aircraft was fully carpeted, had a lavatory with running water, and even had curtains on the windows.


 An advertisement for an ediphone.

Photo: [Bunky's Pickle via Flickr](#).

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More importantly for Ogg, the plane could carry four washing machines that he could use to demonstrate how they worked at each location he flew to. The aircraft was electrically wired so that the washing machines could be unloaded and powered by the plane.

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The plane would fly low over its destination to attract people

The aircraft called "Smilin Thru" would fly low over its destination and use a siren to get the townsfolk's attention. Curious about what it was all about, people would flock to the airfield. Once enough people were gathered, Ogg would demonstrate his washing machines and deliver his sales pitch.


 Someone using a washing machine to clean their clothes.

Photo: Maytag.

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During the two years of having the first office in the Sky, Ogg clocked in more than 900 hours, demonstrating his washing machines in 43 states. Unlike many businesses that went bust during The Great Depression (1929-1939), sales of washing machines declined, but their manufacturers survived and actually made a profit. Ogg eventually sold his company to Maytag, which is one of the most successful washing machine companies in the United States today.



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