

# Northwest Backcountry Aircraft



Where runways end, service, experience, and adventure begin.  
by Tim Kern

// We aren't sitting in fancy offices selling planes; we are pilots/aircraft enthusiasts that have turned our passion into a real business."



So says Kasey "Bonecrusher" Lindsay, co-owner of Northwest Backcountry Aircraft LLC in Caldwell, Idaho. He and partner Bob "Hurricane" Hannah were former competitors in the light plane business; they figured they liked the same things, the same kinds of airplanes, and together they

could sell more airplanes and have more fun. So they joined forces.

Lindsay and Hannah both retired from their day jobs in the 1990s. Lindsay, a Chiropractor, started flying as an Explorer Scout (an organization for older Boy Scouts) at age 15. He was an aeronautics teaching assistant in his high school. "Those were the days," he said. "My high school had metal shop, wood shop, auto shop, and -- believe it or not -- a full-blown Aeronautics class, unheard of in today's era of cost cutting in education. The goal/final was the FAA Private Pilot written, a full-credit science course! The top three grades got a ride in the teacher's Bonanza."

Bob was a professional motocross and Supercross racer, a 7-time AMA champion. He still needed adrenaline rushes after his two-wheel retirement, and got into car, boat, and air racing. Way into air racing. "Hurricane" Hannah flew highly modified P-51 *Voodoo* to top qualifier spot one year in the Unlimited Class at Reno. After 5 years, he abruptly

left air racing in 1999 because "It wasn't fun any more. I like the flying, not the politics."

**Bob has been selling airplanes for 22 years; Kasey for 16.** They're more formal now, but still have that wide-open attitude that fits so well with their customers. Bob explained, "We have sold everything from Cobra gunships and multiple warbirds to all types of general aviation aircraft. I would say we started as all around dealers but evolved into a higher percentage of bush type planes after forming our partnership and opening Northwest Backcountry Aircraft in 2002. We should have started a book to remember all of the interesting and diverse people that have purchased planes from us. From sweet tiny Southern ladies buying their first taildragger, to gruff seasoned aviators, policemen, firefighters, veterans, heads of University Aeronautics departments, dozens of crop dusters, oil companies in Kazakhstan, to one of the wealthiest men in the world (who bought a Denali)."

Most of Northwest Backcountry Aircraft's customers are from the U.S., but "We have a whole bunch of Canadians, with other customers scattered all over the world. We just sent a new Super Decathlon to Brazil. In January we delivered nearly identical Super D's to a doctor in New York and a land/lumberman in San Francisco. These were super cool guys to get to know and we talk weekly. We take the most pride in the personal relationships that often follow the sale. We both have grass airstrips at our homes, so it isn't hard to make aviation friends!"

Customers range in knowledge and sophistication, but "We work through the choices. Many clients have purchased or sold five or six different airplanes through our



company. We work through all the issues to help, from financing, insurance, delivery and training to boxing it up and sending it overseas.”

Some clients are totally ready when they call. Kasey said, “A customer might call and say he wants a red Scout, black stripes, and specify exactly the accessories, tires and radios.” But not always. “Believe it or not, sometimes it gets narrowed down from ‘I’m not sure if I want a Maule or a Learjet!’”

Bob said, “We [he and Kasey] met at a fly-in; we both liked playing around. We still go flying whenever we don’t have customers. A lot of weekends this winter, we’d be gone maybe nine hours, looking for arrowheads, spent ammo – whatever we’d find.” Bob especially knows a lot of great places to explore, and shares some of these great secrets with customers.

**There is seldom a classic check ride.** “We take a customer out to back-country strips. By the time a guy goes home with his new Champ or Maule, he’s flown, really flown his airplane.”

Bob’s experience as a pro racer gave him an eye and ear for testing, and it intensified his inherent perfectionist traits. Kasey, he says, is just as focused. “In fact, as customers, we’re your worst nightmare. We’re very picky,” he laughed, “and we know how we’d like to be treated. So that’s how we treat our customers. We tell ourselves that all our customers are just like us, even if they’re more laid-back.”

“We don’t squabble over the little stuff. We sold a lady a used airplane; on her trip home, the starter went out. She called us. Used airplane -- not our problem, right? We told her to get a new starter, and we’d pay for it. ‘Really?’ she said. She couldn’t believe it. We don’t do that kind of thing all the time because we like to deliver squawk-free airplanes. But... just call us and tell us what’s up. We take care of it.

“We have a lot of customers that work with us regularly. We just do it – we don’t even do contracts with those guys. The customer tells me a list of what they want, we agree on a price and delivery, we make it squawk-free, and we deliver it on time. They like that.”

As airplanes get more complicated and sophisticated, he might expect to find more squawks, but he understands that “Boeing’s are really squawk-free, Gulfstreams, too. My hat is off to them.”

**Kasey and Bob are at the pinnacle of the backcountry aircraft business.** “We like to think we are ‘real dealers’ as

opposed to ‘internet brokers,’ i.e., people that just solicit listings and run an ad, or the just as common ‘retired guy with a rented T-hangar.’ Real dealers have their own inventory, facilities and services. We have 30,000 square feet of hangars in Idaho, plus a complete shop with AI’s and A&Ps that does paint, composite, metal, avionics and engine work.”

Our team is pretty unreal. Jason runs the facilities, parts, media director, world class detailer, pilot and all around airplane nut. Shaun owns Performance Air Inc., the heart of our mechanical needs and a super well respected operation.

Bob added, “We have a full-time instructor; we have a full-time ferry pilot. We also do some flying with guys that we like. You can leave with a new plane and a tailwheel endorsement; if a customer wants a pilot to go home with them, we’ll send one.

**These guys are adamant about service.** Kasey: “‘Full service’ should mean just that, full service. Finance, escrow, airframe/powerplant, storage, avionics.” We are constantly refining and fine-tuning our modifications and designs.” Kasey notes that “Bob had four teams of engineers and mechanics all over the world that would incorporate his feedback into the race bikes; he has carried that ‘super fine tuning’ mentality to our technical/performance side of the business.”

Bargains aren’t always bargains. In this market, cycles are dominated by supply and demand, but reactions are quicker, since the market of consumers and available inventory is relatively small. “The key is knowing your market inside and out, especially any and all models of new aircraft we sell.”

“The classic case of a ‘bargain’ not being one is just like any other fixer upper. You’d better do a very thorough pre-purchase inspection and records search. Know all you can about the type you are buying, or use a dealer with a known excellent reputation.” Like Northwest’s, he’d add.

Bob doesn’t put up with imperfection. “I’ve done a lot of testing; I did testing for a job. We keep squawking them until they’re right. We consider ourselves good at that.”

There are some frustrations, as when he took delivery of a new plane out of Wichita. “We get an airplane and we find three squawks before we get to the fuel farm – that’s an issue. I once purchased a brand-new Cessna P-210 in the 1980s, and it had 41 squawks. Minor, but still there. I expected more from such a big pile of money.”

#### TIME DOESN’T STAND STILL, AND OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS.

We have been and are the largest American Champion dealer since 2002, and currently the only factory authorized independent Maule distributor, handling the territory west of the Mississippi.

Kasey isn’t often asked to brag, but for this feature, we asked. “Many people, customers and friends, have said that we have created the market and put the American Champion Scout on the map. We each own one and have since we started as dealers for ACA. We ‘walk the talk,’ I think. Bob and I started as competitors, ended up as partners. We have the enthusiasm of 19-year-olds. I think our ‘OCD attitude’ to get the planes right, as squawk-free as humanly possible – that’s a good quality. We love what we’re doing. We love matching customers up with the right airplane. We love our airplanes, and we love flying. We laugh and fly and cuss our way through the days... Really.”

One thing that gets under his skin is a persistent – and untrue – perception about one of his favorite planes: that Scouts are heavy and don’t perform. “We invite anybody that has interest in seeing the truth to come flying with us. There is no more mission-capable two seat tandem on the market today. If you want great short field performance, room, speed, fantastic flying qualities, monster strong gear, elegant trim system, heaters that work, range that will make your eyes water, buy a Scout/Denali. We will also be posting more videos of our operations and flying on Facebook and our web site.” Just in case there are a few non-believers.

**Northwest Backcountry was recently selected to represent Diamond Aircraft** as full-service sales representatives, and they are becoming more heavily involved in aerobatic aircraft. They now have the full spectrum of small aircraft, from Diamond’s singles and twins, aerobatic aircraft, and a huge slice of backcountry stars in the middle.

Kasey sums up. “There is more to buying a plane than emailing someone, or posting on the Internet. We have something to offer: experience, expertise... passion.”



More: [www.NorthwesternBackcountryAircraft.com](http://www.NorthwesternBackcountryAircraft.com)



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