

# Wright 'B' Flyer getting ready for road trip

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Wright "B" Flyer Inc. volunteers are preparing two of the nonprofit organization's Wright "B" Flyer lookalikes for an unprecedented road trip to San Antonio.

The one-of-a-kind airplanes – each one independently designed and

built to resemble the Wright Company's first mass-produced airplane – are to take part in a ceremony on March 2 at Fort Sam Houston to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first military solo flight.

On that date in 1910, then-Lt. Benjamin Foulois made the first flight of Army Signal

Corps No. 1 from the parade field at Fort Sam Houston.

A San Antonio-based chapter of the Order of the Daedalians, Stinson Flight No. 2, has commissioned Wright "B" Flyer Inc., located in Miami Township, Ohio, to participate in the celebration with preflight operations on MacArthur Parade Field and a flyover.

Wright "B" Flyer's airplanes can't take off safely in the space available on the parade ground, so the organization will deploy two airplanes for the event – a first for the all-volunteer group.

It will use its non-flying "Yellow Bird" to reenact ground operations, and its "Brown Bird" – a familiar sight at the Vectren Dayton Air Show – will perform the flyover.

Foulois was sent to



Photo by Timothy R. Gaffney

Wright 'B' Flyer Inc. volunteers have loaded the "Brown Bird" into its custom transport trailer in preparation for taking it and the "Yellow Bird" to San Antonio for ground and airborne exhibitions at Fort Sam Houston. The Yellow Bird's upper wing is visible in the foreground. The San Antonio chapter of the Daedalians has commissioned WBF to take part in a celebration of the 100th anniversary of Benjamin Foulois' first flight at Fort Sam Houston on March 2, 1910. In this picture, the Brown Bird can be seen sitting in the trailer with the trailer's right side panels off.

Fort Sam Houston with the airplane, a lot of spare parts, and orders to "teach yourself to fly."

Incredibly, he did, in large part by correspondence with the Wright brothers. He survived to retire as a major general.

"Old Number One," America's first military airplane, was an earlier machine than the Model B the Wright brothers began building in their

Dayton factory in 1910.

A distinguishing feature was its front-mounted elevator.

But Foulois made so many modifications in consultation with the Wrights, including a tail-mounted elevator, that by the end of 1910 it resembled a Model B.

The story of Foulois' experiences with the first military airplane is available online in an Air

Force report that includes the logbook of Signal Corps No. 1 that can be downloaded at [http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/Publications/fulltext/Logbook\\_Of\\_Signal\\_Corps\\_No\\_1.pdf](http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/Publications/fulltext/Logbook_Of_Signal_Corps_No_1.pdf).



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Wright "B" Flyer volunteer Joe Tyler is framed by the Brown Bird's struts and wires inside its custom trailer as he secures a side panel with pins. The Brown Bird and Yellow Bird are to be trucked to San Antonio for the Centennial of Military Flight celebrations at Fort Sam Houston.