



KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

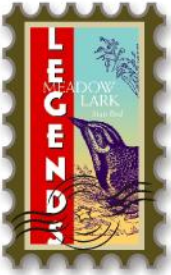
David Blanton – The Autopilot

In addition to the major aviation feats accomplished in Kansas and by legendary Kansans, one of the lesser-known facts about Kansas history involves the autopilot. Although the autopilot was initially created in the early 1910s by the Sperry Corporation, the invention has come along way from its early days. Today the autopilot is built using a custom operating system and is tailored to each specific type of aircraft.



Kansas' contribution to the autopilot involves David D. Blanton, Sr., a man who began a love of flying as a boy. His father purchased a small airplane during Blanton's childhood, and in 1936 at age 5, he was a regular passenger. By age 11, Blanton began building free model airplanes and used his own knowledge and imagination to create unique versions of the planes. His aviation career officially began in 1942 in the U.S. Navy Air Force. Though too young for Officer Pilot, he flew co-pilot as an enlisted Seaman for four years during World War II.

After returning home from his military duties, Blanton sought out to be an aeronautical engineer and founded Javelin Aircraft Company in Wichita, Kan., in 1953. He served as president and chief engineer of the company throughout its 40 years in operation. Javelin Aircraft became the world's leading manufacturer of special aircraft fuel systems, due greatly in part to Blanton's creativity and innovation. He was a Wing Governor of the Kansas OX-5 Club of America, a group of aviators who helped mold the development of early aviation.



In September of 1993, Blanton was inducted into the OX-5 Aviation Pioneers Hall of Fame. He received the honor for his decades as a pilot, flight examiner for airplanes and sailplanes, his work manufacturing auxiliary fuel tanks, and automobile engine conversions for homebuilt aircraft. In addition to these great feats, in 1954, Blanton pioneered the autopilot for small planes as we know it to be used today. At the time of Blanton's death, Wichita's Javelin Aircraft Company had produced 18 aircraft and more than 300 aircraft kits.

