

## Cal Worthington – From B-17's to Lear Jets: 70 Years of Flying Safely

**Cal Worthington** was born November 27, 1920, in Shidler, Oklahoma. Cal is best known as a legendary car dealer who has sold millions of cars throughout the western United States for six decades. His early TV commercials featuring "my dog Spot", and his catchy theme song urging folks to "Go See Cal" have become cultural icons.

What is less known about Cal is his long-time, passionate love affair with aviation. Cal served in the United States Army in World War II, flying for the Army Air Corps, where he was the aerobatics champion at Goodfellow Field in San Angelo, Texas. As a second lieutenant during the war, he served as a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot with the 390th Bomber Group, flying 29 missions over Germany, and was discharged after the war as a captain. Cal flew in some of the most dangerous campaigns of the European theatre, including leading raids over Berlin. He was awarded the Air Medal five times, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross by Jimmy Doolittle.

When the war ended and Cal began to develop his automobile empire, he never left aviation far behind. He grew his early Los Angeles dealership in the 60's by flying his airplane and doing air traffic reports for a major local radio station. As Cal became more successful, his planes evolved from a Bonanza to a King Air, and ultimately to a Lear 24 and then Lear 35, which he based at his 23,000 acre Big W Ranch near Orland with its private 5,000 foot runway. During the mid-eighties, Cal routinely flew the Lear to 23 auto dealerships spread out from Texas to Alaska. But his normal commute was from the ranch to Sac Executive in his Mooney 201, and air traffic controllers knew to expect that early morning check-in from Mooney "74H" just south of the Sutter Buttes. When he wasn't flying the Lear or Mooney, he was probably in the Aeronca, checking out the ranch crops or finding lost cattle.

General aviation has played a role even in the people with whom Cal works. His ranch manager flies the company 182 to the various ranches that he manages for Cal, while Cal's long-time personal attorney has been a pilot for over 30 years. Today, Cal relies on a great co-pilot in his son, Rod, a retired American Airlines Captain.

Through it all, from B-17's over Berlin, to Lear Jets over Orland, Cal has amassed over 10,000 hours in the air and has returned safely each time without incident or accident. That's just one of the many records of which Mr. Worthington can be justifiably proud.