

# X-RAY BRAVO ALPHA

## *The First Flight*

**S**he was on her way.

Myriad cameras were focusing on the growing dart as gradually the noise levels started to match those of the smoke and before we could take it all in, through viewfinders, the wheels were off the ground and VH-XBA was once again a flying machine.

All the effort of so many people had come to fruition. The joy overflowed and I will remember forever the sight and sound once again of the aeroplane I had cycled to Mascot to see arrive in 1959. The aeroplane on which I gained my experience as an apprentice. So much of all the Team's origins lay in this one 707.

Almost out of sight now, the smoke trail faded, we watched as the speck turned to the north and disappeared.

Back to the hardstand, empty of our 707 for the first time in 6 years, elated, relieved, excited, we headed for the Southend Terminal Coffee Shop for lunch and for the first time, didn't need to hurry back.

The test flight time was going to be around 3 hours and we took the opportunity to put back so many of the stands we had been using over the last few weeks, and tidied up the bay.

The time passed very quickly and a phone call from ATC told us that XBA was 30 miles out.

Once again, a rush for the grass saw us searching the sky for our baby.

The lights on this aero are a giveaway and when the full set of fixed and retractable landing lights are on, there's no mistaking the airframe behind them.

We knew a missed approach was planned and the execution of this was the highlight of the day.

The noise, the sight, the grace as she went around and into the red sky at the end of a perfect day was poetic.

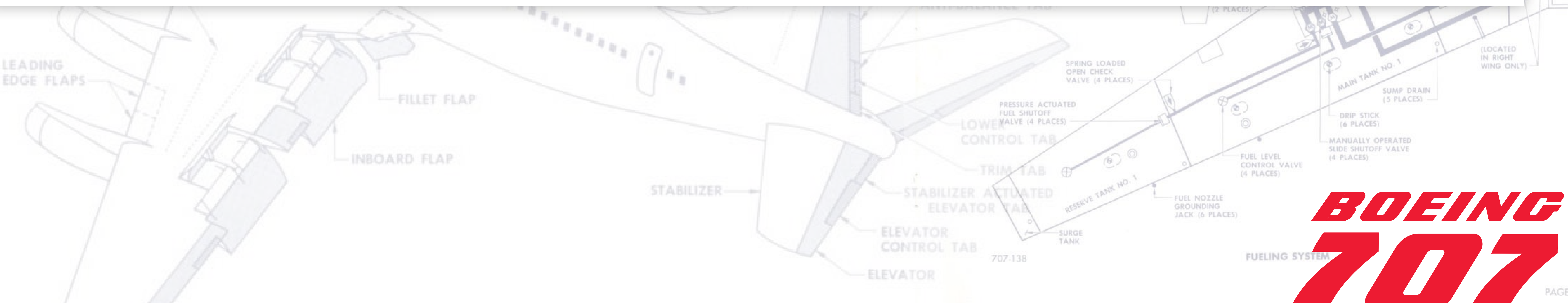
One more right circuit and the touchdown was feather light, all reversers doing their job.

XBA was back at Southend."

*We have had a life changing experience today, and achieved the unachievable.*



Keith Burton



**BOEING**  
**707**