THE FIRST BOEING 727 WILL FLY AGAIN—FOR 12 MINUTES

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Once N7001U takes off from Paine Field in Everett, Washington next Tuesday, the crew won't even retract its landing gear. Makes sense. It'll only be airborne for just over 10 minutes.

The first 727 ever built rolled off the line in 1962 and hasn't flown in 25 years. But it's about to make a trip to Boeing Field (King County Airport), where it will become a permanent exhibit at the Museum of Flight in Seattle. United Airlines donated the aircraft to the museum back in 1991, but the 25-year restoration effort has only now just completed. This is an odd and special aircraft because it was the prototype 727, but proceeded to go directly into airline service with United. Up until the 777, this plane was unique among Boeing commercial jets in doing so. Old airliners almost universally go to the scrapyard but this one will enjoy a new, sedate lease on life, joining Boeing's 737 and 747 prototypes at the Museum's new Aviation Pavilion.

Boeing came up with the 727 to meet conflicting airline requirements. While its customers agreed on the need for an airplane smaller than the 707 to serve smaller cities with shorter runways, some wanted a four-engine aircraft for flights to high-altitude airports. Others favored a twin-engine design for efficiency. Still others wanted an airliner for overwater flights, and at the time, twin-engine commercial flights were legally barred from flying overwater routes that took them more than 60 minutes flying time to an airport. So Boeing designed a tri-jet with three engines.

The 727 proved to be a great aircraft for short and medium-haul routes and Boeing eventually built 1,832 of them. Until the ubiquitous 737 came along, this was the most successful commercial

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airplane program ever. Boeing rolled out the 727-100 on November 27, 1962 and it made its first flight from Boeing's Renton, WA factory on February 9,1963. Its first landing happened at Paine Field, its soon-to-be-former home.



Boeing 727 and 787

Museum of Flight

N7001U was delivered to United Airlines in October 1964. It spent over two decades with the airline where it racked up 64,495 flight hours, made 48,060 landings, and flew an estimated three million passengers. United paid $4.4 million for the airplane and it paid them back handsomely, generating revenues of more than $300 million during its career.

A small team of volunteers including former United or Boeing employees led by Bob Bogash, a 30-year Boeing veteran, has labored at the Museum of Flight's restoration facility at Paine Field for two decades, overcoming funding challenges and missing parts (many of which were cannibalized for other 727s in the early 1990s). In a turnabout, the team acquired the parts it needed from two other 727s donated to the museum in 2004 and 2005 by FedEx and Clay Lacy Aviation.

Painted in its original United livery, the 727 will lift off from Paine Field at around 10 am Pacific time on March 1 and head directly for Boeing field flying with an FAA Special Flight Permit. A crew of three including pilot, Tim Powell, will be aboard, using the minimum flight systems, instruments, and fuel to make the hop. Last week, the team made successful high-speed taxi tests, reaching about 100 knots on the runway at Paine Field.

"Now this historic airplane can taste the skies and feel the wind beneath her wings for one last time," says Bogash. "That will make all the hard work more than worth it."

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