



Corbin Glowacki, owner of MyPilotStore, poses in his warehouse.
(Photo by Kimberly Carrillo)

Flight Club

Businesses catering to the Airpark's aviation industry are still flying high

By Jimmy Magahern

Frank Abagnale would have had a field day at the MyPilotStore warehouse.

The famous impostor, whose con of posing as a Pan Am pilot to fly free on more than a million miles worth of flights was immortalized in the 2002 film *Catch Me If You Can*, would have been able to get his whole wardrobe – uniform, pilot's cap, even lapel wings and epaulets – in one visit to the Scottsdale Airpark mail order business.

"We do a lot of uniforms for airlines and corporate regional carriers – the shirts, hats,

epaulets, ties," says owner Corbin Glowacki, strolling past a long rack of jackets occupying one of several adjoining storage rooms in the 19,000-square-foot building on North 76th Street just off of the Greenway-Hayden Loop. "Not all of the airlines provide uniforms for their pilots. Some of them just give the pilots or flight attendants a stipend, and they go and buy their own uniforms and get reimbursed. Same with headsets: Some airlines will provide the headsets to pilots, and some will just give them a reimbursement."

Unlike Abagnale, however, you don't have to forge a Federal Aviation Administration pilot's license to dress like an air boss: "There isn't anything that we sell that requires a special license or credentials to be able to buy."

The inventory is a treasure trove of products for anyone who flies the friendly skies for a living or hobby: everything from professional flight bags and aircraft manuals to aviation charts and FAA airman exam guides ("The reports of paper's death are greatly exaggerated," Glowacki quips). But it's not just airline employees who buy from MyPilotStore, which has grown out of four previous buildings around the Airpark over its 20-year history.

"A majority of our customers are pilots, but a lot of them are just aviation enthusiasts,



The 19,000-square-foot MyPilotStore building is located on North 76th Street just off of the Greenway-Hayden Loop.
(Photo by Kimberly Carrillo)



Jeff Burrows owns JBS Executive Detailing, which cleans and details planes at airports around the Valley.

(Photo courtesy Jeff Burrows)

and we'll sell a lot of these bomber jackets to them," Glowacki says, flipping through a few choice leather flight jackets hanging on the rack. Indeed, even non-flyers who've only fantasized about diving through the sky in an F-14 Tomcat can buy an exact replica of the iconic bomber jacket Tom Cruise wore in *Top Gun* – just in time for the planned 2019 sequel. MyPilotStore.com carries the G-1 flight jacket made by New York-based Cockpit USA, specially tailored to early-'60s specifications and decorated with the exact same 17 embroidered patches and USN anchor pin featured on Cruise's original, all for \$710.

"You can see we're pretty stocked up," says Glowacki, a sometime pilot and unabashed aviation enthusiast himself. "I'm hoping we'll have a good Christmas season!"

Apart from apparel, the warehouse also stocks oddities like WWII fighter plane holiday ornaments, "Mutt Muffs" protective headphones for dogs (the workplace is very dog-friendly) and even a 10-pack of barf bags.

"We also sell a lot of those to people that are going on cruises or bus trips," Glowacki says, with a knowing smile. "Many uses for those."

MyPilotStore is just one of a multitude of businesses scattered around the Airpark that are specifically tied to the aviation industry or serve the pilot community, from companies that offer pilot training, private jet chartering and aircraft rental to in-flight catering and hangar and shade leasing. (A handy listing can be found on the City of Scottsdale's "Airport/Airpark Businesses" page at scottsdaleaz.gov/airport/airport-businesses.)

In recent years, Scottsdale's economic development team has sought to expand the business makeup of the Airpark by attracting companies in cybersecurity, health care, financial and other non-aviation fields. But even executives in those industries enjoy their private jets, and the area around the airport has retained its strong, flight-friendly community.

"Pilots and aviation people are the best," says Jeff Burrows, 28-year-old founder of JBS Executive Detailing, an aircraft washing and detailing service that has evolved from a humble car washing business he started with his brothers at age 9 in Southern California to a busy Scottsdale-based business offering mobile jet-cleaning service to the airports in Scottsdale and Deer Valley.

"It really is a community," he says. "Every pilot knows each other; it's just one big family. And pilots are the most down-to-earth people I've ever met – even the multi-millionaire private jet owners."

Burrows says he still does some auto detailing work, but most of the company's focus lately has been on aircraft, "just because it's so specialized and there's a high demand for it here."

To begin with, a bad washing job on an aircraft can damage its structural integrity, wiring and other components in ways that can sometimes result in disaster. Burrows points to TWA Flight 800, the Boeing 747 that exploded over

the Atlantic Ocean on a flight from New York City to Rome in 1996. Investigators found traces of water-borne cleaning fluids on the wiring, which dampened the wires and may have contributed to some short-circuiting that ultimately led to the explosion.

"The first thing that goes into any aircraft detailing is a very thorough examination," he says. "So we have a digital platform that allows us to go over every square inch of the aircraft, and we discuss everything that we see with either the pilot or the owner. That ensures that everything from some flaking paint on the wing to a damaged de-icing boot are all addressed."

Todd Puckett, another aircraft detailer who



JBS Executive Detailing is a family-owned and -oriented airplane cleaning business.

(Photo courtesy Jeff Burrows)

"AmericanAngel" by John Stahr
adorns this plane.
(Photos courtesy John Stahr)



John Stahr's painting
"Winged Goddess" is one of
many he's done on planes.
(Photos courtesy John Stahr)

runs Aero Panache, a Phoenix-based aircraft cleaning and detailing service with an office in the Signature Flight Support building overlooking the Scottsdale Airport runway, agrees that aircraft detailing is an exacting science best left to professionals.

"It's a different animal than auto detailing," says Puckett, who also started with cars before progressing to aircraft. "There's a lot of instruments that protrude from the surface of the aircraft and they're all delicate. Sometimes we'll go to facilities where the janitors will also clean the airplanes, and they can use the wrong cleaning products and wreck pieces that cost tens of thousands of dollars. It's kind of a bummer when we see that."

Puckett says he rarely does cars now, and

he's pretty honest about why. "I just wanted to make more money than I could doing cars," he says. "I started this business with my brother in 1999 in New York, but we grew up in the Hamptons, so we had clients that used to fly us on private jets to go to Florida to clean their yachts, which was crazy. But that's how we got the idea to also clean their jets. So my brother started a detailing company at

Dulles International Airport to cover the East Coast and I started this one in Arizona."

Besides the Scottsdale Airport, Puckett also provides mobile service to Phoenix Sky Harbor, Deer Valley, Goodyear, Falcon Field, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway and Carefree Airport.

He says there are challenges dealing with the private jet set, but plenty of rewards as well. "We do a lot of the charter airplanes, which are not typically kept up so well. So it's kind of neat if somebody's chartering an aircraft for \$20,000 to \$100,000, we can make it even nicer for them."

Speaking of making planes nicer, John Stahr has painted some of the best-looking planes spied on the Scottsdale Airport's

runway, although he doesn't live anywhere close to the Airpark.

Stahr runs Artistic Aviation in Eugene, Oregon, a one-man custom painting service whose airbrush work – often intricate and imaginative renderings of fanciful creatures, Vargus-style pin-ups and bold flashes of nature (white-capped waves, bright sunbeams) – has adorned the private jets of billionaires like Richard Branson and dazzled aviation enthusiasts at the annual EAA AirVenture Oshkosh.

But he's also done a number of projects for Scottsdale-based pilots, including a couple with strong Arizona themes, and he occasionally paints at the Tucson bombardier facility (although much of his work involves painting parts of airplanes shipped to him before they're completely assembled).

"I did one for a guy who wanted to celebrate the Arizona contingent of each of the six branches of the armed services," Stahr says. "So I did a wrap-around montage on his airplane that includes a Pat Tillman portrait for the Army, on the Navy side we put the U.S.S. Arizona, and for the Air Force there's an Arizona National Guard F-16. So he's tried to reflect his Arizona heritage in the artwork."

Stahr typically meets with the plane owner first to hash out ideas, then keeps the owner updated digitally. "I'm doing one now for a guy in Scottsdale who's building his own Van's RV-8, which is the same kind of plane I own and fly," he says. "And he was a career F-14 Navy Tomcat pilot, so he's like a walking, talking Maverick from *Top Gun*. So for his airplane, we're recreating as much of the look of the F-14 from his squadron as we can. Kind of a tongue-in-cheek celebration of his glory days flying for 20 years in the Navy."

Stahr's added touches like stripes on the tail mimicking the tail hook of the F-14, and a cheek turret on the nose that fools the eye into thinking the plane is packing a machine gun. "It kind of tells a story about the owner."

Even though some of the aviation-oriented businesses around the Airpark could be operating out of locations with cheaper rent, many choose to be by the action they serve.

"I've always been in the Airpark for a variety of reasons," says Glowacki of MyPilotStore's building number 5. "It's near the airport, making it easy to go fly. We've had a number of flight instructors that have worked for us over the years and it's easy for them to split their time between instructing or flying and being at our office. It's also easily accessible from the freeways with lots of shopping and food options nearby for employees."

Most importantly, perhaps, is working within the flight community. "Overall, the pilot community is great. They're smart guys and gals," Glowacki says. "And they're very loyal, if you treat them right." ■