

# Bill Elliott



“I’ve flown them all and to me, of the systems that are out there, I think the Avidyne Alliant is very capable and is the easiest to use.”

**Airframe**  
Cessna Conquest II

**Pilot Name**  
Bill Elliott

**Avidyne Solution**  
Alliant Flight Deck

**Dealer**  
West Star Aviation

Champion NASCAR race car driver Bill Elliott calls himself a “jack of all trades, master of none,” though I’m sure his millions of fans would beg to differ. Indeed, Elliott has won the Daytona 500 twice, holds the track records at both Talladega and Daytona, was awarded NASCAR’s Most Popular Driver Award a record 16 times, and in 2007 was inducted into the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America.

But Bill Elliott also has a driving passion for flight. His love affair with flying began in 1976 when he drove down to a local airport in his home state of Georgia, took a ride around the patch, was immediately hooked, and signed up for flying lessons. As Elliott the driver progressed from short-track racing to NASCAR, Elliott the pilot started to use an airplane on short flights in support of his business. In 1983, he bought his first airplane, a Cessna Cardinal RG, which he flew for about a year until he got his instrument rating. Elliott then flew couple Cessna 210s, which he and his business outgrew after a couple years. He then upgraded to a Piper Cheyenne II and went on to fly a series of Citations. He has also owned and flown for business and pleasure a couple Extras, an Aviat Husky, a Bell 206, a Robinson R44, an Epic LT, and couple Lancair IV Turboprops. His main aircraft now are two Cessna Conquest IIs.

“A Conquest II is an all-around good airplane... it is a very good high altitude airplane. Granted, it isn’t a jet, but for what it’ll do, and for where gas prices are today... I have my own fuel farm, and cheaper fuel here on my property, and I do a

lot of 500 to 600 nautical mile trips and never buy fuel on the road, which at the end of the day, it saves you a few bucks. So the Conquest II turned out to be the perfect airplane for what I do.”

**Elliott decides on Avidyne’s Alliant system for his low-total-time Conquest II.**

“I don’t race full time anymore. I stopped racing full time at the end of 2003 and that’s why I got rid of the CJ2 and got the Conquest. I was also flying an Epic, but I sold that and rolled that money into another Conquest II that I’m fixing up the way I want. It’s serial number 300. It’s a low total time airplane, and that’s what I’m putting the Avidyne system in.”

“What everybody wants in a glass cockpit is a big screen. Looking at what’s available, what I’ve flown, and what I like and dislike, big screens are the direction we really wanted to go in. So Jim Pommier at West Star and the guys at Avidyne teamed up to get the Alliant system STC’d. West Star now installs the Avidyne system with RVSM certification, which is what I was looking for.”

**After experience with various glass systems, Elliott goes with Avidyne, it’s “the right product.”**

“For me, the Avidyne is the only solution. They’ve aligned themselves with West Star, and West Star is a one-stop shop, where I can drop off my plane, redo the instrument panel, do everything that needs to be done if your plane’s not yet

## Bill Elliott

*Continued*

RVSM, and have it all work. It's all about trying to find the right product at the right time, and I think Avidyne's done a good job of bringing it all together at the right time."

"I look at it like this. It's a large investment, no doubt, but when I get done with this whole project, I'm going to have a brand new airplane. If I do paint and interior on the airplane and do the avionics and upgrade to a 2008 avionics package, I might as well say I've got a 2008, 2009, brand new airplane. You might as well put 2009 on the ID plate because that's what it's going to be... and I'll have a state of the art panel with the Avidyne Alliant. And I felt like, for down the road, resale or whatever I do in aviation in the next ten or 15 years, I can have my Conquest in a class with any of the new airplanes rolling off the assembly lines today."

**Avidyne is a solid company with a proven track record, which figured very much into Elliott's purchase decision.**

"You see a lot of companies come along with their new products, but are they going to be there two, three or four years down the road, and that's another reason I felt like Avidyne was the right way to go."

**Elliott has flown numerous EFIS systems, from a Chelton in his Epic LT to the Collins Pro Line 21 in his Citation. When he was looking for a system for his Conquest II, he contacted Jim Pommier of West Star.**

"I asked what my options were and he emailed me a photo of a panel they just completed with the Avidyne Alliant system and I said, Now that looks like a really nice system."

Reflecting on the different EFIS systems he's flown over the years, to Elliott, the Avidyne Alliant system is lowest workload and easiest system to use.

I've got a good bit of time behind the Chelton, and in a high-workload environment it's still a pretty hard system, where the Avidyne's more simple... I've flown them all, and to me, of the systems that are out there, I think the Avidyne Alliant is very capable and is the easiest to use."

**Why West Star?**

"I've known the guys at West Star since probably the early nineties. My association with them goes back to the early Conquest I had, and I don't know of any group of people that knows Conquests as well as West Star. They know Conquests better than anybody in the world. And they bend over backwards. I mean, if you call them night or day, it doesn't matter. They're always there to answer your questions.

**Bill Elliott demands simplicity in his race cars and on the racetrack, and he prefers simplicity in the systems in his aircraft.**

"The Avidyne system is pretty self-explanatory. It's not rocket science to get through it; it's pretty simple. And in my Conquest, we've redesigned the panel and worked out putting in two PFDs and the big EX5000 MFD; I think that's going to be the home run of the whole deal."

"It's fairly easy to get to everything you want to get to with the Avidyne system. I like the clarity of the screens of the Avidyne. You've got real good graphics even compared to the Garmins. I feel they're ahead of Garmin in that category. And I like that with the Avidyne, compared to Garmin, I can pick what components I want in the system, but as far as simplicity to use, it doesn't take any time because it's more standard in operation. If it gets late and you get tired and if you're in an environment that you don't know very well... that's where I look at the different systems, like the Garmin, where you have everything in your system, your radios, everything, which I think makes it harder to use. You kind of have to go through a process to get to everything. I think the Avidyne's better, more simple since it doesn't take any time to learn the functions. It's a simple-to-learn, easy-to-use system."

"My CJ2 had the Collins Pro Line 21 system. The straight CJ I had had steam gauges. I've flown a variety of different systems through the years. All these systems are nice, but when it comes to workload, you can't always keep up. I think sometimes we make things too complicated. There are not a lot of people outside of professional pilots that are going to be able to keep up with these systems. And that's why I say simplicity is a key thing."



## Bill Elliott

*Continued*

### **Bill Elliott likes to also keep it simple when it comes to racing.**

"We've found in racing, the simpler you keep it, the easier it is. What you tell a race car to do with an input is no different than what you tell an airplane with the control stick. It's why you see a lot of race car drivers also fly. There are many of the same challenges. In racing, there's such a fine line between your being the driver and a passenger, being in control and out of control, where in aviation, well, you're in control a little bit more but it's still very similar."

### **The large-screen EX5000 MFD, safer, with more information.**

You know, I've got MFDs in other airplanes. The problem is those smaller screens. With a bigger screen, it makes flying a lot simpler, you get a lot more information, and it gives you a little bit of added safety, so that's why I really like, and got really excited, that I was able to get the EX5000 MFD in the panel. The EX500's a good unit, but being able to get that EX5000 in there sealed the deal for me."

### **The quality of the displays and their function impresses Elliott.**

"I was very impressed with the displays. They were very crisp, very clean and very easy to get to the different functions. It had no surprises. The pages are real easy. What's key is being able to have a reliable and simple system that works in the real world; this will get you in less trouble than the other stuff. Because unless you fly every single day... I mean, I fly a lot, I flew my Conquest about 250 hours last year, and that doesn't count my other aircraft, and I still think that keeping the systems simple is one of the most important things in aviation, and the Avidyne system is... pretty simple."

Looking forward, Elliott plans to install Avidyne's new FMS when it becomes available.

"I think Avidyne's FMS is going to be a very interesting unit and I think it's going to be good to work with. Avidyne's going to make a big hit with their new FMS system. And that's what we hope to do with our Conquest, I'm aligning it so when their FMS is available, that I can pull out the Garmins that are there now and put in the Avidyne FMS."



55 Old Bedford Road  
Lincoln, MA 01773

Ph 781.402.7400 800 AVIDYNE  
Fax 781.402.7597

[www.avidyne.com](http://www.avidyne.com)

©2008 Avidyne Corporation. All rights reserved.