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Up in the Air: The Story of The Abingdon Co.

THE ABINGDON CO

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Abingdon Welch, pilot and founder of The Abingdon Co.

Credits: The Abingdon Co.

At the age of 14, Chelsea "[Abingdon](#)" Welch decided that she would be an airplane pilot some day. She held on to her dream for seven years, finishing high school, earning a

bachelor's degree and serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Africa. Once she returned from Africa, she knew the time had come to finally start flying. Within 34 days, she had earned her private pilot license. She was 22 years old.

Now 28, Abingdon is the founder and CEO of The Abingdon Co., a line of high-quality aviation watches designed specifically for women and she is the driving force behind The Abingdon Crew, a group of adventurous women pilots sponsored by The Abingdon Co. that includes acrobatic pilots Melissa Pemberton and Jacquie Warda, as well as Discovery Channel's "[Flying Wild Alaska](#)" star Ariel Tweto.

When I reach Abingdon on her cell phone, she has just landed her plane at the Santa Monica airport and is still sitting in the pilot seat. We talk about her background—she was born in England but was raised in Los Angeles—and her passion for aviation. “I try to fly every day”, she says. She also tells me about the watches she designs: “When I first started flying, my flight instructors—all of them men—had these really cool aviation watches, but I couldn't find models for women. All the women I knew who were in the industry wanted them, but seeing that they couldn't find them, they had stopped looking. So I decided to make them.” The Abingdon Co., based in Redmond, Oregon, was born.

The Abingdon Co. watches are aviation and travelling watches. They feature multiple times zones (the Elise model has three times zones), conversion capabilities (foreign exchange, imperial to metric units), and technical features such as a chronograph timer on some models. The watches are top quality, yet affordable. They are made of surgical grade stainless steel or ionized 18k gold plating, and feature a genuine mother-of-pearl dial and sapphire crystal glass. In July, The Abingdon Co. will introduce a line of fine jewelry, in white or rose gold. Abingdon is ecstatic about the line: “This is absolutely my favourite jewelry line in the world and I am so excited to be introducing it!”

Abingdon's energy and enthusiasm peak when she talks about The Abingdon Crew. She founded The Abingdon Co. to provide women with beautiful aviation watches, but her end goal is “to promote women in aviation, women who are travelling, thinking outside the box.” Abingdon's great friend Jacquie Warda is sponsored by The Abingdon Co. Jacquie and Abingdon met in San Diego in 2008 and instantly hit it off. When Jacquie's plane had an engine failure and crashed, she started looking for a new plane and new sponsors, and the two women thought it was the perfect opportunity to start working together. Jacquie's fiery

new red plane is adorned with the “Jackie” watch—fittingly, the “Jackie” in Sunset Pink is Jacquie’s favorite model—and The Abingdon Co. logo.

Abingdon is also proud to count Melissa Pemberton and Ariel Tweto, star of the show “Flying Wild Alaska”, as Abingdon girls. Abingdon describes Melissa as “one of the most famous acrobatic pilots in the world”. Melissa was the only woman set to compete in the Red Bull Air Race World Championship series, before the organizers cancelled all events scheduled for 2011 and 2012 worldwide.

Nowadays, the original Abingdon girl is looking forward to continuing flying and expanding The Abingdon Co. Though she has accomplished so much at just 28, we can bet that the self-proclaimed busy bee—“I rarely stop to breathe!”—will achieve a lot more and inspire many young girls to reach for the sky.

<http://www.theabingdonco.com/>