



FIFTY YEARS of

G. FERGUSON '08

RMPA



CONTRAILS: Fifty Years of RNPA

When a few retired pilots of Northwest Airlines formed the *Retired Northwest Airlines Pilots' Association* in 1970 their priority was to produce a newsletter to keep in touch with each other. Called Bulletins for the first year, they were produced quarterly by all-volunteer labor and supported by minimal dues. For several more years it was known as just the RNPA Newsletter, with the same support.

In 2003, then editor Dick Schlader renamed it Contrails and it remained so until the final regular issue in November, 2017. I began assisting Dick the year before that hoping that I might make it a little more appealing and informative. I was learning as I went, and quite frustrated that I couldn't make black and white photos print better. (They need full "process" colors to do that, which means more expense.)

Although I had produced some small pamphlets in college using the cut and paste method, my ambition outpaced my ability when it came to computer graphics. But I was enjoying the challenge and having fun. And my education continued.

I think of this book as a reflection of all those issues of Contrails and one to harbor some of those memories; especially those in full color. Full color was probably a matter of pure luck — luck in meeting just the right person who could, and did, make color printing happen.

I first met Jack Sweeney in early 2006 while he was working at a different printing house. His eagerness to help me begin to understand the complexities of offset printing, really for the first time, along with his good humor and patience was an immense help that I had not experienced with other printing companys.



TYPECRAFT

Not long after, he was hired away to the prestigious Typecraft, Inc. in Pasadena. With his typical coaching, in August 2009 the first full color Contrails was published without having to raise dues. All thanks to my friend Jack.

So here's to you Jack, and your colleagues, from all of us.

Gary Ferguson

Contrails from 2007 to 2017: issuu.com/contrails

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OPINION:

Why has RNPA survived for 50 years—now 13 years after our airline's demise?

1. The bond among pilots created by the turmoil of labor relations and the consequent divisions that were created among other employee groups during the '70s and '80s.
2. Paradoxically perhaps, by the support of flight attendant membership, especially in these last decades. That's not just my assessment, but that of the entire Board as well.

The company's zeal to extract every dollar at the expense of employee welfare, during the '70s especially, was revealed in the bitterness of one flight attendant's response to my, "Good morning, I'm Gary," on my walk-through as I preflighted the 707 cabin. Without looking up she said, "Who cares?" She was not alone; ticket agents, baggage handlers, managers, the pass bureau and the red-pencil-pay-clerk, etc., were frequently just as bitter. Only a regulated airline could have survived under those conditions.

Happily, conditions improved some after deregulation when we actually had to compete. But too many in management accepted "the new" kicking and screaming. Flight Operations improved certainly, but there remained a percentage of marginally competent executives, directors and managers until my retirement in 1999.

That's the not so good part of our 50 years. But there were ever so many good things about our tenure that made it great—especially the people we got to work with! I have long maintained that there is no other occupation where "99 and 44 one hundredths percent" of the people we worked with were simply great. (Only old people will recognize that quote!)



The bond I mentioned is evidenced in our desire to gather together and communicate in our advanced years to recall and celebrate what is certainly the most coherent organization of any group of retired airline pilots in the country.

As we continue to bring RNPA to a close may the remembrances in this final issue bring smiles, nodding heads and comfort that we were who we were.



Credit for this project belongs with Jay—it was his idea and the reason why he is Co-Editor. Contrary to what he says on the next page I did not give birth to Contrails. The name was Dick Schlader's contribution, but the RNPA Newsletter predated all of that by almost thirty years.

Greetings to all the readers of Contrails and eContrails,

Contrails was born from the mind of Gary Ferguson. The intent was to keep the Northwest pilots and families informed and entertained. When Gary announced his retirement from Contrails, Bill Day, Dick Dodge and myself went looking for a way to do Contrails electronically on the web.

From that search was born a reincarnated Contrails as eContrails on the rnpa.org website. We enhanced the website to include sections that could be updated continuously on all platforms. Events, Obits, In Memoriam with additional information as is deemed necessary.

From the first issue, March 2017 to the last issue, February 2021, we have tried to emulate Gary's legacy. I hope we did just that and a little more. I have enjoyed the privilege of being the "editor in training." My hope is that we keep the rnpa.org website going for a while to constantly bring updated information to the members.

I wish to thank all of you for letting me play editor and fulfilling my dream of being a writer. My thanks to Bill Day, Dick Dodge and all the contributors of stories for making eContrails a success.

The Final Edition Contrails "50 years of RNPA" represents the best of Contrails. It has been a pleasure working with Gary. I thank him for turning an editor in training into an editor. Thanks Gary.

As to what the future holds for me, I will let the Fates decide.

*There really are two lives we live.
The first life and the second life
when we realize we have only one life...
— Author unknown*



This was my last time in uniform. A Heroes party at the Boys & Girls Club auction. I went as "Sully," the Hero on the Hudson. It still fits!

I FLEW by Brad Baker

When the last checklist's run and the bag drag is done,
I will reminisce of the days I once knew,
I won't remember the oh-three-hundred alerts,
But only that I flew!

I will not remember the crew rest in tents,
Nor recall how cold Arctic winds blew,
And I'll try not to remember the times I got sick,
But only that I flew!

I will never forget when nature became angry,
To challenged my intrepid crew,
I'll always remember the fear I felt,
And the pride in knowing I flew!

I'll remember the sights my mortal eyes saw,
All colored in multiple hues,
Those beautiful lights on cold winter nights,
Seen only by those who flew.

God was extremely good to me,
He let me touch his face,
He saw my crew through war and peace,
And blessed us with His grace.

So when I stand at Saint Peter's Gate,
And tell him that I'm new,
I know he'll smile and welcome me,
Because he knows I FLEW!

Suggested by
Jane Chadwick



PRESIDENTS FINAL REPORT: THE LAST RNPA CONTRAILS

My fellow members of the Retired Northwest Airlines Pilots' Association,

This is indeed a difficult and emotional letter to write. We have reached the point in time where RNPA is no longer a viable organization. We still have several members on the roster, however they are all aging and reaching the time of their lives where travel is not looked forward to and time with family is more important. In actuality we, as an organization, have lasted far longer than first anticipated. When the merger, or buy out, occurred on April 15, 2008 we were hoping for another 6 or 7 years of active events. It has now been nearly 13 years.

The history of RNPA goes far back to the pioneer pilots of Northwest. Flying through the mountains, flying over the ocean and establishing the name of NORTHWEST as a prominent air carrier. On October 2, 1970 a group of pilots, mostly retired, met at the Washington Athletic Club. Hal Barnes, Tom Hillis, Dudley Cox, C.W. (Nippy) Opsahl, Bill Richmond, B.S. Cooper and Mel Kuehn met at 10:00 am. The meeting was to establish an organization that would serve the retired pilots of Northwest Airlines. It was the consensus of the group to call the association: Retired Northwest Pilots Association or RENPA. This was later shortened to RNPA. Bylaws were formed by analyzing those of PAA, UAL and the AAL groups.

The first publications were called BULLETINS, which lasted about one year. In December of 1971 the name of the publication was changed to NEWSLETTER. The early editions were mostly monthly or as needed with important information. In 2003 the name was changed to CONTRAILS.

We have come a long way with our publications. CONTRAILS magazine was a jewel among the airline industry, primarily under the editorship of Gary Ferguson the members anxiously awaited each issue. I joined RNPA in 1994 before I retired and attended my first convention in Tucson.

I have been a member for 26 years or over half of our existence. At that time there were only two bases: Minneapolis and Seattle. Lots of inter-base rivalries took place. I was impressed with the fellowship of all the pilots from "both ends" at our convention.

I retired the following year, 1995. In 1996 Barbara and I attended our largest convention ever. Over 315 pilots, wives and flight attendants attended the convention in Billings, MT. Even our company President, Donald



Nyrop attended for the festivities. Functions were held at Doug Parrott's ranch. Steak Fry, buggy rides and old airplanes were on the agenda.

In 2000 our convention was held in Minneapolis, home of NWA. The honor of being elected President of the organization was bestowed on me there. Following the lead of Tom Finnely and others, I was surprised and taken aback by the honor. Since that date I have been re-elected several times. I am now serving my 20th year as President.

Some of the conventions over the years leave very fond memories. Early in 2001 we chose Vancouver, BC as a destination for October. Little did we know what was



to happen. As you recall on 9/11 all hell broke loose. We considered canceling our plans, however the membership wanted to meet. The city of Vancouver, the hotel and the country of Canada were most helpful. As a result we had very good attendance.



Another convention comes to mind. In 2002 Nashville was our host city. A day tour of Jack Daniels distillery complete with a Southern BBQ was the activity of the day. Joe Kimm was noticed dancing with a waitress. Lots of Jack was poured and lots of catfish, ribs and chicken were consumed. But the day wasn't over. Once back to Nashville our attendance at the Grand Old Opry was noted from the center stage.

San Antonio hosted our 2003 function. Who can forget our members on the stage that night. The rope act with Sheri Ball and the quick draw between Bill Rataczak and Rowdy Yates stole the show.



A visit to Colorado Springs and the Air Force Academy occurred in 2004. A tour of the area and a ride to the top of Pikes Peak was our daytime schedule. At the banquet the falcons of the Academy flew over the diners.

Keeping with the Air Force theme we visited Dayton, Ohio and the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson in 2005. The museum held a special vintage aircraft dog fight for our early morning viewing. Our banquet was held "Under The Wings" at the museum.



The year 2006 took us to the Rose City of Portland, Oregon. For tour day we bused to Timberline Lodge at Mt. Hood for lunch. As we were leaving a light snow began adding to the atmosphere. A short drive down to the Columbia River, a salmon lunch and a paddle-wheeler afternoon before returning to town. We also visited Mt. St. Helens from the new viewpoint.

The Biggest Little City, Reno, Nevada was our host city for the convention in 2007. Our event was sandwiched in between the Balloon Festival and the Reno Air Races. Plenty of free time was available for the slots and tables.



The 2009 reunion took us to the balloon capital of the country, if not the world—Albuquerque, New Mexico. We had a great time exploring the city and soaking in the native american culture.

both in museums and by touring pueblos.

Gateway to the Black Hills, Rapid City, South Dakota became our host for 2010. Weather was ideal and the

scenery was fantastic. Tours at Mt. Rushmore, along with a classic train ride and local shopping were on the agenda.

It was at the Rapid City banquet a new feature was added to our annual affair. I wanted to be able to say "Thanks" to our host cities in some form. The idea of attendees bringing Teddy Bears and stuffed animals emerged.



These would be given to the local Fire and EMT Departments. They would use the stuffed animals to help kids in distress on their calls. As of our reunion in New Orleans in 2019 we have distributed over 3000 critters.

Our new airline home, Atlanta, was on the schedule for 2012. We had tours of CNN, Atlanta Aquarium, Delta Air Museum and the Atlanta underground. Night activities at the hotel featured Milo Phillips, Clint Veebrock and others giving concerts in a jam session.

Who can turn down a trip through the beautiful countryside of Kentucky. Lexington played host in 2013. Here we spent the day at Keeneland Track. The ladies competed in a hat contest judged by the waitresses. Several of the members beat the odds and won money.

Time to head West: Long Beach hosted us in 2015. We stayed at the Hilton Long Beach which was walking distance to the Catalina Ferry Terminal. A day in Avalon complete with trolley tour, walking tour and casino tour kept everyone busy.

It's a repeat! The consensus was that everyone enjoyed Albuquerque so much they wanted to go back. This time we took the Rail Runner Express for a scenic trip to beautiful Santa Fe for the day and back.

We headed to the Midwest and Dearborn, Michigan for our 2017 function. Our tour day was spent at the Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village and the La Rouge Ford plant. Next to the Smithsonian this is perhaps the best museum in the United States. At the La Rouge plant they manufacture nearly 1300 Ford F-150 pickups every 12 hours.



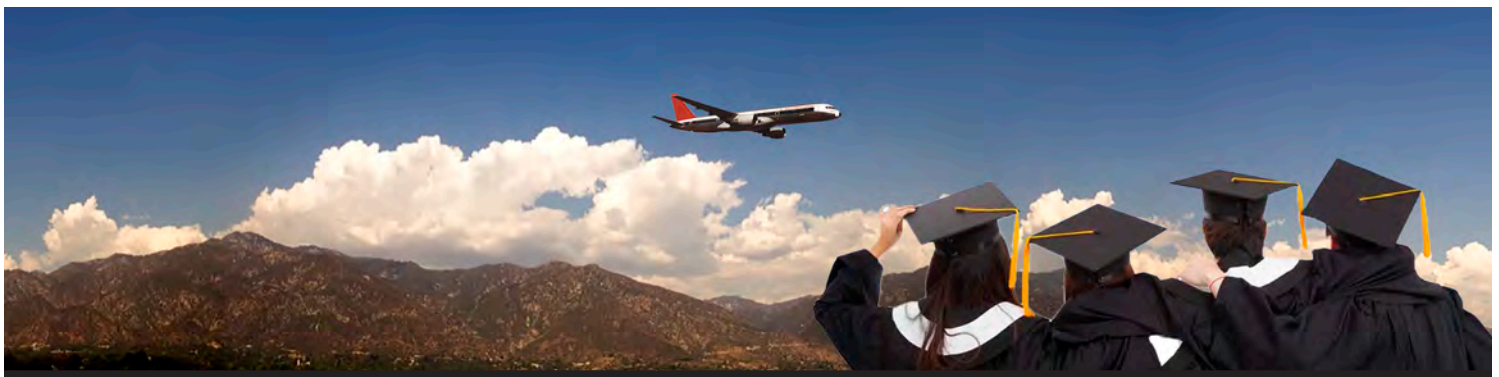
Our last real Reunion was held in New Orleans in 2019. Staying right on Bourbon Street there was never a dull moment, day or night. Highlights of the reunion were the visits to the WWII museum and the Mardi Gras Museum. And of course great music offered all day long. ✨

Twenty five successful Reunions!
Here's the complete list.

1994	Tucson	I joined RNPA in 1994 before I retired and attended my first Convention in Tucson.
1995	Washington DC	We had tickets but couldn't get on a plane. Dino and Karen Oliva have attended every reunion from here on out. He was coaching in '94.
1996	Billings	Steak fry, buggy rides and vintage airplanes at Doug Parrott's ranch in Roundup MT. Everyone who was there agrees that this was their favorite.
1997	San Francisco	We stayed at the Marines' Memorial Club Hotel near Union Square. Great hotel. Few cities in America can top San Francisco for things to see and do.
1998	Orlando	Special room at the Sheraton World Resort, along with amenities. Visits to Cape Canaveral and Cypress Gardens.
1999	San Diego	Headquartered at Bahia Resort on Mission Bay. Trip to Miramar MCAS, bus to train back to San Juan Capistrano and a sunset cruise on Mission Bay.
2000	Minneapolis	Home base of Northwest. Large informal picnic with great food. Tour and party with music and food in the St Paul Caves
2001	Vancouver BC	When all hell broke loose after Sept 11 (9/11) Vancouver, the hotel and Canada were most helpful. As a result we had very good attendance.
2002	Nashville	A day tour of Jack Daniels distillery complete with a Southern BBQ was the activity of the day. Joe Kimm was noticed dancing with a waitress.
2003	San Antonio	Country theater at it's finest: The rope act with Sheri Ball and the quick draw between Bill Rataczak and Rowdy Yates stole the show.
2004	Colorado Springs	Air Force Academy. Top of Pike's Peak. At the banquet the Falcons of the Academy flew over the diners.
2005	Dayton	Keeping with the Air Force theme we visited Dayton and the USAF Museum. Our banquet was held "Under The Wings."
2006	Portland	Timberline Lodge at Mt. Hood. Then to the Columbia River, a salmon lunch and a paddle-wheeler afternoon. Mt. St. Helens visitor center.
2007	Reno	Our event was sandwiched in between the Balloon Festival and the Reno Air Races. Plenty of free time was available for the slots and tables.
2008	Hartford	We walked through the USS Nautilus. Toured the US Coast Guard Academy. Got to spend considerable time visiting with old friends and new.
2009	Albuquerque	Balloon capital of the country, if not the world. Soaked in the Native American culture, both in museums and by touring pueblos.
2010	Rapid City	Tours of Mt. Rushmore, along with a classic train ride. First instance of donating teddy bears for host fire departments. Buffalo roundup a day after.
2011	Omaha	The parks, Old Market, Rodeo and several other venues kept everyone busy. Surely some of the most fantastic city-wide sculptures ever.
2012	Atlanta	We had tours of CNN, Atlanta Aquarium, Delta Air Museum and the Atlanta underground. Milo Phillips, Clint Veebrock and others performed nightly.
2013	Lexington	We spent the day at Keeneland Track. The ladies had a hat contest judged by the waitresses. Several of the members beat the odds and won money.
2014	Sacramento	Empire gold mine and near by Nevada City. California State Railroad Museum, Crocker Art Museum and many other great museums.
2015	Long Beach	It was all about the ferry to Avalon on Catalina Island. Trolley tour, walking tour and casino tour kept everyone busy. Zip line, too!
2016	Albuquerque	This time we took the New Mexico Rail Runner Express to Santa Fe for the day. Open air bus tours, walking tours, art galleries and more.
2017	Dearborn	Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village and the Ford River Rouge Complex to watch F1500s being built.
2019	New Orleans	Bourbon Street, WWII Museum and Mardi Gras Museum. Great food, great music and a lot of each. A fitting cap to all these wonderful reunions.

*We didn't get to all the states
but we visited nineteen plus D.C.*





Paul Soderlind Memorial Scholarship Fund

RNPA Leaves a Legacy

While on a China cruise on the Yangtze river in 2001 the members of the Board of Directors met and established the *Paul Soderlind Scholarship Fund* and an independent Scholarship Board to supervise the activity. The Scholarship Board consists of Gary Pisel, Tom Schellinger and George Lachinski.

Wings Financial helped greatly in setting up this endeavor. The initial scholarship was to be \$1,000. The recipient was to be a dependent of a NWA Employee, or employees themselves. Later qualifications were modified once the NWA/Delta merger was accomplished.

We held several live and silent auctions at annual reunions. We also sold items, including over 1000 coffee cups, 2000 license plate frames and over \$3,600 worth of photos of NWA logos "Flown West." Many members have contributed to our fund and a few have made large donations.

At the Nashville convention we gave our first scholarship to Afton Snook in the amount of \$1,000. We had good fortune and our treasury grew. In 2003 we increased the amount to \$2,000, then on up to \$2,500, \$3,000, \$4,500 and finally \$6,500. We also increased the number of scholarships awarded.

The Scholarship Board decided that 2021 would be the last year the scholarship would be offered. Several technical reasons precipitated this decision. We increased the amount to \$7,500 and the number of winners to ten.

In total 71 scholarships (will) have been awarded totaling \$336,500. We feel it was quite an accomplishment and an honor to Paul Soderlind.



**NWA Airlines
History
Center**

In addition to the scholarship we have also donated over \$20,000 to the NWA History Center. We also donated several items; including the electrified Lockheed Electra, a stainless steel DC-7 and a mock-up of the B-377 Stratocruiser. The bust of Paul Soderlind that originally resided in the NATCO building now resides at the History Center as well. Several manuals and videos and a complete set of printed *CONTRAILS* were donated.

Another important achievement was the establishment and publication of the Survivors Checklist. This information helps the survivors when a spouse or family member passes. Several other organizations have asked to use its contents.

All in all RNPA has had a very good 50 years. It would have been exciting to have another 50, but that was not in the cards. I feel extremely proud that you have chosen me to be your President for the past 20 years.

It All Began Here

2002 Afton Snook

Hi RNPA!

I am in awe that you have had seventy scholarship recipients! What an amazing contribution to the aviation community your collective group has given!

As the first recipient of the RNPA Scholarship, the monetary assistance was incredibly helpful. I want you to know looking back at receiving your scholarship, it was the support that backed the RNPA scholarship that really propelled me as a young aviator forward into the airline industry.

I have had an incredible career that led me through the regionals and now in my eighth year as a A320 FO for United Airlines. I have been fortunate to aspire fellow young pilots throughout my career and am now part of the interview team at United all while continuing to fly the line and have three young children.

This industry has had its up and downs, but I am still so grateful to love what I do and please know RNPA has been a part of my success. Thank you.

Afton Snook Benassi



The audience at the Nashville Convention was so impressed with Afton's acceptance speech that many felt that the \$1,000 scholarship was insufficient. Board Member Phil Hallin "coerced" attendees to contribute more. The result was an additional \$3,000 added to her scholarship.

2003

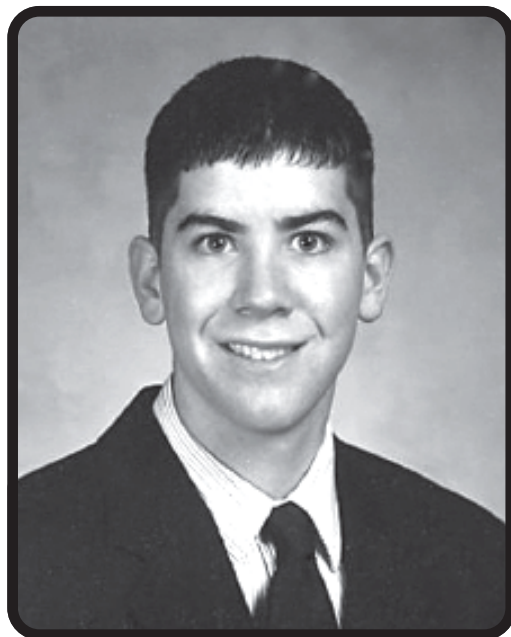
Tiffany Smith



▲ Tiffany's parents David and Cheryl Smith accepting her scholarship from me at the San Antonio Reunion.

◀ Tiffany and Tom Schellinger

2004 Cash McLoughlin





CAPT. PAUL A. SODERLIND
DIRECTOR OF FLIGHT OPERATIONS
TECHNICAL
1954 - 1972

2005

CONTRAILS
156

Cassandra M. Corey

Her father Rick was a MSP based mechanic.



David Shemella

2006

CONTRAILS
160



Charlie and Mary Curry accepting Julia's scholarship from President Gary Pisel

Julia C. Curry



2008 CONTRAILS 168

Tyler Towner

The student selected for the Paul Soderlind Memorial Scholarship Fund scholarship in the amount of \$2000 is Tyler Towner, a sophomore studying civil engineering at Boise State University. Tyler's father is a former NW Customer Service Representative in Cargo, based in SEA.

Alicia M. Seubert

Alicia is a freshman at the University of Central Florida Burnette Honors College and plans to attend medical school after graduation, focusing on cardiology. Alicia's mother is a DTW based Flight Attendant.

2009

**Rose O. Curry
Ruth W. Goins**

**Joseph R. Groom
Andrew J. Kubal**

2010 CONTRAILS 176

Meredith Willems

This year's winner is Ms. Meredith Allen Willems. She has currently been accepted into the Masters Program at Metro State University, part of the University of Minnesota system. She is a 1989 graduate of Purdue University. Since 1989 she was employed by NWA as a Senior Meteorologist. With the DL merger, she left the company in 2009 and planned to pursue a Masters Degree in Technical Communications.

Ms. Willems former manager, Tom Fahey, Manager of Meteorology, states, "Over the last 19 years, I have had the pleasure of supporting Meredith's professional growth and observing her personal evolution from an intelligent young woman fresh out of Purdue University to a mature and confident individual, highly respected by her peers and all levels of management within NWA Airlines. During Meredith's 20 years at NWA Airlines, she has worked directly with the NWA Airlines copyrighted Turbulence Plot (TP) system".



Alexander Riel

"I am honored to have received this scholarship award not just for the financial assistance but mostly for how this award made my grandfather, Ronald Riel, proud of me.

My grandfather retired from the Detroit base as a 747-400 captain, having served as a pilot with NWA Airlines for 35 years. My grandpa knew Mr. Soderlind and had nothing but great things to say about all of the innovations he brought to aviation."



John Levenhagen

"What a great opportunity it was for me to apply for this scholarship where I got to learn about this remarkable man who contributed so much to NWA Airlines, as well as aviation as a whole!

Once again, thanks for everything."



Isabelle Ehdlund

Isabelle is the granddaughter of NWA retired pilot Kenneth Yehlik.

"I owe my interest in aviation and aerospace to a line of pilots and engineers in my family, including my grandpa Ken who is a happily retired NWA pilot in Alaska with my grandma."



Adelaide Weaver

"Thank you for selecting me as one of the recipients of the Paul Soderlind Memorial Scholarship. It is such an honor and a blessing.

I have a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Bethel University and am using this scholarship to pursue an Addiction Studies certificate from the University of Minnesota."



Elizabeth (Pisel) Davis



"... my choice to return to school to obtain my Masters in Education Leadership meets two professional goals.

First, it will provide me with additional perspective and first-hand knowledge (through participation in the full year internship) of the daily work of a principal. This experience

will inform my work and make it possible for me to be a public servant that offers high quality technical assistance.

Second, this degree will provide me a door, when I choose to take it, to return from the balcony (state work) to the dance floor (being a principal at a school)."

Natalie Riel

"Thank you for assisting not only my future education, but also the futures of many young people my age. Your investments truly do make a difference.

Aviation has always been a big part of my life, so receiving this scholarship is especially meaningful to me.

Thanks again for awarding me this generous scholarship."





Mathew D. Merrick

“My grandfather, Dean Sunde, was a retired NWA captain.”



Ethan I. Glidden

“My father was hired in Minneapolis as an Equipment Service Employee in 1988.”



Madeleine J. Drees

“My mother, Renee Drees, has recently completed her 25th year of flying.”



Hanna L. LaValle

“My mom worked in the check hangars, Reservations, the Pass Bureau, and Purchasing departments. My dad worked as a mechanic in the hangars and shops.”



Kanyon Edval

Kanyon’s father is a NWA/Delta pilot.

2015 CONTRAILS 195

Alexis McHale

Alexis’ grandfather was a NWA Mechanic and Crew Chief.



Kristen Mertens

Kristen’s grandfather was a NWA Mechanic and Director of Repair Planning



Kyle Schwartz

Kyle’s mother is a NWA/Delta Sr. Business Analyst, Information Technology



**Mikeila
McQueston**

**Evan
Hesselbacher**

Both of my parents, former NWA employees, introduced me to the wonders of aeronautics.



**GALLATIN
COLLEGE**



**Caleb
Nilsson**

"My grandfather, Larry Daudt flew 747s for NWA until his retirement in 2001."

**Sofia
Robinson**



**Emily
Davich**

Emily's grandfather was a pilot for 36 years primarily based out of SEA. He flew DC-10s, and finished his career as a captain on the Boeing 747. Her grandmother was a stewardess in the later 1950s, back when the Stratocruisers were around.



**Katherine
"Katie" Ernste**

Katie plans to pursue a career in the medical field, in large part due to inspiration from her grandfather Darrell Cloud, who was a captain for NWA. When Katie was 4 years old, he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a rare form of cancer possibly linked to Agent Orange, which Darrell was exposed to from his time serving in Vietnam.



Paige Frank

Her grandfather, is NWA pilot,
Eugene Frank



Susan Schmaltz

Her father is Michael
Schmaltz, NWA Personnel.



Nancy J. Stoudt

Former NWA Flight
Operations Employee



Bethany Seavers

Her grandfather is Vic Seavers,
NWA Flight Operations.

Noah Sattler

His mother is Karen Sattler,
Senior Programmer.



Kathryn S. Merrick

Her grandfather was
NWA pilot Dean Sunde.



Brittany Thelemann

Her mother was NWAFCU
Teller, when the credit union
used NWA employees as staff.





Emily Dehn



Calib Nilsson

I am using the financial breathing room given by last year's Soderlind Scholarship to get my Private Pilot's Certificate. I am learning in a J3 Cub, just like my grandfather Larry Daudt did in 1959,



**Katherine
"Katie" Ernste**

Her father was a captain for NWA. See previous page.



Logan Westgard



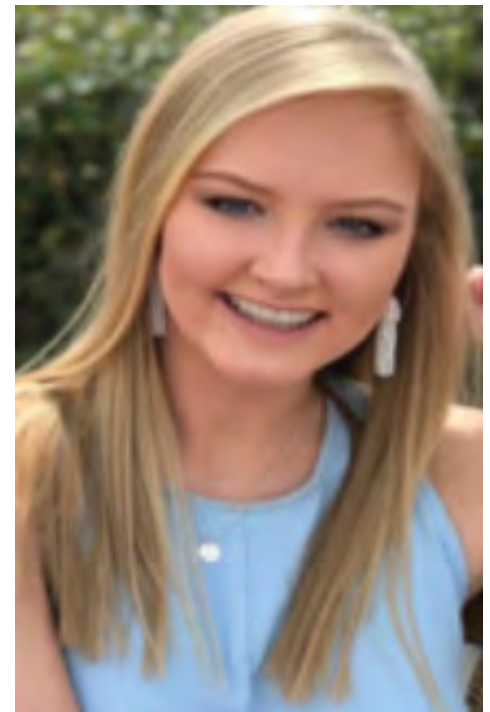
Joe Swenson

I would like to thank Roger Moberg, a retired NWA captain, a former Navy officer, and my grandfather who has been a great role model for me throughout my life.



Ashley Rezachek

My plan for the scholarship award is to help pay my tuition costs, textbooks, and other class material as I work my way towards completing my education.



Kirby Olive

My grandfather, David Olive, was a pilot at NWA Airlines for 33 years and my father is a retired USAF pilot who has been flying for Delta Airlines since 2001.



Tyler Hornyak

2019



Megan Sandberg



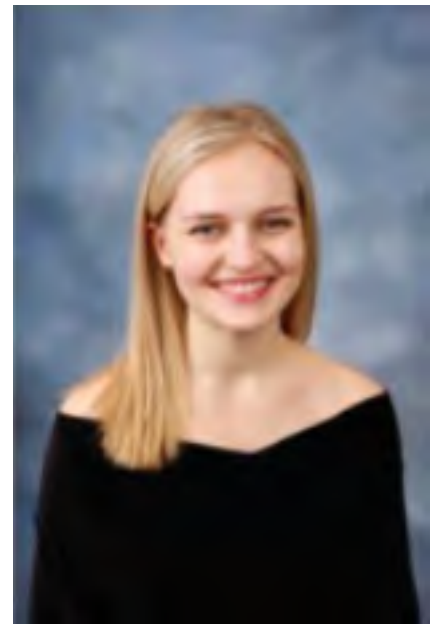
Madelyn Sime



Ana Villars



Amy Wong



Elysia Utech



Anna Swenson

My mom, who spent 14 years with NWA Airlines in the revenue management areas, said that Mr. Soderland embodied the collaborative and innovative spirit of NWA Airlines which is why I am truly honored to receive this scholarship.

— Amy Wong



John Enga

“My grandfather, Wallace Enga, was a pilot for NWA from 1966 to 2003.”



Robert Turner

“I had the honor of growing up in a family of pilots, starting off with both of my grandfathers, Pat Watson and Bob Turner.”



Sarah Ellingson

“Both of my parents, Kristen Ellingson (Larsen) and Michael Ellingson, worked at NW along with five extended family members for a combined 130 years of service.”



Logan Westgard

“I would like to thank my Dad, Rich Westgard, a Delta Airlines pilot, for all the support he has given us as I work toward graduation.”

Amy Wong

“I would like to thank everyone at Wings Financial and the Paul Soderlind Foundation for awarding me this scholarship and allowing me to pursue my passion for research and keeping my dream of attending medical school alive.”



Molly Westerberg

“My grandfather, Don Chadwick, worked for NWA for over 30 years and flew many different types of aircraft, completing his career as a 747 captain.”

Skyler Doebber

“My mother, Mary Doebber is a former flight attendant at NWA and is currently flying for Delta. She always encourages me to try new things and to do my best.”



PSMSF Scholarship Recipients and Amounts

YEAR	RECIPIENTS	NO.
2002	Afton (Snook) Benassi	1
2003	Tiffany Smith	1
2004	Cash McLoughlin	1
2005	Cassandra Corey	1
2006	David Shemella	1
2007	Jullia Curry	1
2008	Tyler Towner, Alicia Seubert	2
2009	Rose Curry, Ruth Goins, Joseph Groom, Andrew Kubal	4
2010	Meredith Willems	1
2011	Isabelle Edhlund, Alexander Reil	2
2012	John Levenhagen, Adelaide Weaver	2
2013	Elizabeth (Pisel) Davis, Natalie Reil	2
2014	Hannah Lavalley, Madeleine Drees, Ethan Glidden, Mathew Merrick	4
2015	Kristen Mertens, Kanyon Edvall, Kyle Schwartz, Alexis McHale	4
2016	Paige Frank, Susan Schmaltz, Noah Sattler, Brittany Theleman, Kathryn Merrick, Nancy Stoudt, Bethany Seavers	7
2017	Caleb Nilsson, Katherine Ernste, Evan Hesselbacher, Emily Davich, Sofia Robinson, Makeila McQueston	6
2018	Ashley Rezachek, Katherine Ernste, Logan Westgard, Emily Dehn, Joe Swenson, Kirby Olive, Caleb Nilsson	7
2019	Megan Sandberg, Anna Swenson, Amy Wong, Tyler Hornyak, Madelyn Sime, Ana Villars, Elysia Utech	7
2020	Wong, Jens Enga, Logan Westgard, Robert Turner, Sarah Ellingson, Skyler Doebber, Molly Westerberg	7
2021	Unknown at time of publication	10
TOTAL		71

YEAR	NO. & AMT	AMOUNT
2002	1 @ 1,000	\$1,000
2003	1 @ 2,000	\$2,000
2004	1 @ 2,000	\$2,000
2005	1 @ 2,000	\$2,000
2006	1 @ 2,000	\$2,000
2007	1 @ 2,000	\$2,000
2008	2 @ 2,000	\$4,000
2009	1 @ 1,000 1 @ 1,500 2 @ 2,000	\$1,000 \$1,500 \$4,000
2010	1 @ 2,500	\$2,500
2011	2 @ 2,500	\$5,000
2012	2 @ 2,500	\$5,000
2013	2 @ 5,000	\$10,000
2014	4 @ 5,000	\$20,000
2015	4 @ 5,000	\$20,000
2016	7 @ 5,000	\$35,000
2017	6 @ 5,000	\$30,000
2018	7 @ 5,000	\$35,000
2019	7 @ 5,000	\$35,000
2020	7 @ 6,500	\$45,500
*2021	10 @ 7,500	\$75,000
TOTAL		\$339,500

* 2021 winners will be announced later this Spring.

Thanks to all who have supported this great program.



2005

Cassandra M. Corey

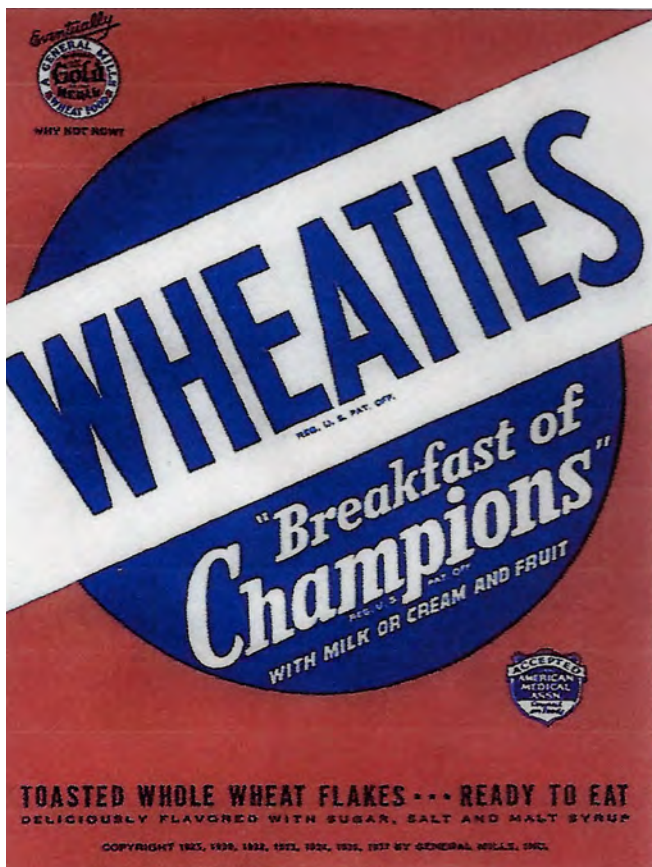
Tom Schellinger congratulating Cassandra on her award on the mezzanine level of NATCO.

Note the bust of Paul between them. When the building was apparently stripped of everything that someone considered useful the bust remained.

Having learned of that, a couple determined RNPA Board Members “rescued” the bust, which now resides in the most appropriate place: the NWA History Center.

“I am in awe that you have had seventy one scholarship recipients! What an amazing contribution to the aviation community your collective group has given!”

— Afton Snook



Not one, but two heroic feats in the air won Mal Freeburg the first Air Mail Flyer's Medal of Honor ever presented!

Mal's first chance for heroism came one night in July, 1930. Winging over railroad tracks, Mal passed a swift Chicago-bound passenger train. A few miles farther the tracks crossed a gully—and the wooden bridge supporting them was blazing furiously!

Whipping his plane around, Mal roared back toward the speeding train and dived to drop a flare in its path. Then as the train approached, he circled till it stopped and he knew the passengers were safe.

In April, 1932, while Freeburg was flying an old-style tri-motored plane on the St. Paul-Chicago run a mishap occurred which would be impossible in the new type airliners. The left motor worked loose and dropped, to smash the landing gear and hang precariously in the struts! Below lay a farming community. Knowing the heavy motor might cause damage or even death if it fell, Mal gently eased the plane toward the the Mississippi river and rocked the wings violently till the moter tore free and plummeted to an uninhabited island.

A few minutes later, despite the shattered wheel, Mal put his crippled tri-motor down for a tricky but perfect one wheel landing.

For these two valorous deeds, Mal Freeburg won the first Air Mail Flyer's Medal of Honor.

No. 1 In all aviation history, *only eight* living men have been awarded the Air Mail flyer's Medal of Honor! The thrilling stories of how each of these men won this signal honor are AVAILABLE NOW ON WHEATIES PACKAGES. Get all eight from your grocer.

Even though this says otherwise, we think Mal is the only pilot to ever make the Wheaties box.
- Gary Pisel

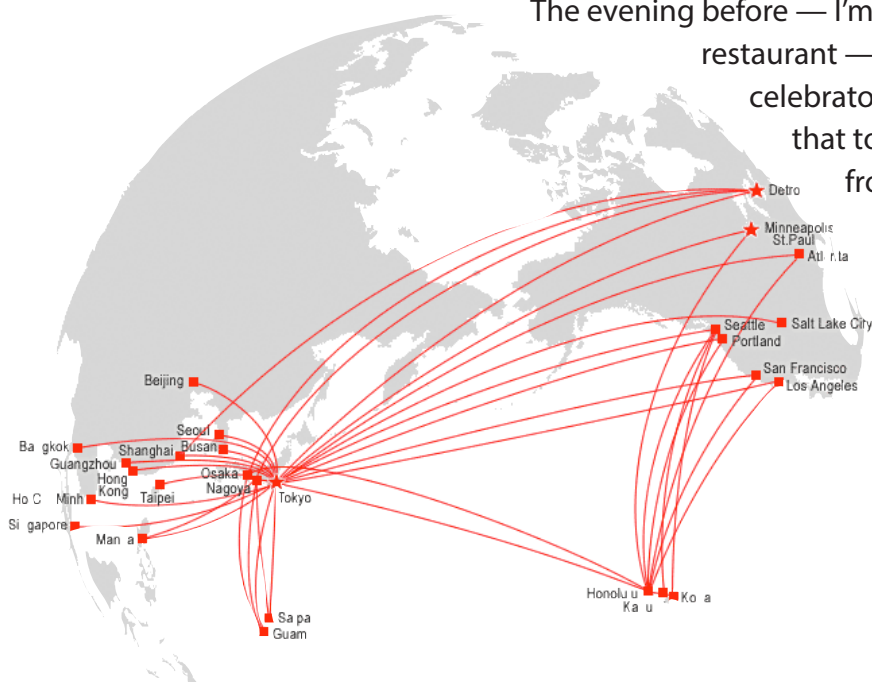


Maybe It's Science Fiction

I woke up this morning and somehow, it was 2021. When I said it out loud it sounded like something from a movie or a book with aliens and spaceships and stuff. Well, I guess the thought wasn't really that far fetched with spaceships, owned by people who behave pretty much like aliens, returning all by themselves to barges parked somewhere out in the ocean. Sorry Elon, seems like science fiction to me.

Then, suddenly, my mind flashed back — yes, so far it's apparently still able to do that — to nearly the same time 21 years ago. Why it decided to do that I have no idea. But, here we were, the other two crew members and I, back-taxiing our Northwest Airlines Boeing 747-200 down PGUM's Runway 24L for some reason, headed for 6L. Maybe taxiway Kilo was closed, or something else I can't remember forced us to do that, but the slow taxi pace was allowing us an obvious conversation: The New Millennium! We were now operating an airplane in the 21st Century!

The evening before — I'm going to say it was while visiting the restaurant — we became participants in a celebratory reception. It hadn't occurred to me that tomorrow's early morning departure from Guam to Tokyo's Narita International would be the first NWA fleet-wide flight testing the new millennium. I guess either the hotel or our own OPs people figured it out because there were hats and balloons and streamers. I think we even made the newspaper. Ah yes, the magic of the International Date Line!



I'm not sure how sterile the cockpit was as we tried to deflect the somewhat obvious apprehension, with a laugh, asking ourselves with some undoubtedly hidden trepidation, what could possibly go wrong? Seriously, three young to middle aged and experienced international pilots were wondering — nah, there wasn't any bravado, macho or denial going on in the cockpit. We are pilots. We are trained to handle abnormalities and emergencies and, not only that, the FE told me he had just pressed 220 that morning! I do believe, individually, we were all really wondering how this departure might go. I know I was.

Though hard to connect back to the emotion and thinking of that day, I do remember the press had been enthusiastically predicting various disasters as the clock ticked past midnight. After all, it had been in the newspaper and on TV so it must be true, right? We were, in one form or another, going to be test subjects of the digital world's failure to include dates in their programming that exceeded the end of 1999.

I guess the rocker Prince, now the late rocker, wasn't the only one who feared it might end poorly. His song "1999," written seventeen years earlier, had an ominous chorus that pretty much expressed his feelings:

*“ Say say two thousand zero zero
party over, oops, out of time
So tonight I'm gonna party
like it's nineteen ninety-nine. ”*



A great song for sure, but I can't recall if those lyrics were buzzing through my head; at that point I'd only flown the left seat of the Classic for a couple of years and must have unintentionally looked fairly quizzical after realizing the potential of being "oh yeah that Northwest guy departing Guam who didn't figure it out." Famous is one thing, infamous quite another.

I immediately blamed myself. Maybe I wasn't listening to the instructor in international ground school that day or maybe I hadn't used the layover to study SOPA, but I couldn't recall this particular event being covered on any checklist. At that point I must have surrendered. We were going to be true pioneers in the South Pacific. Hmmm, Vasco da Gama, Captain Cook; the laughing continued. Continued. Continued.

Of course, as inexperienced inhabitants of an ever increasing technologically digital world, it probably didn't register, as it might now, just how analog our poor old -200 really was. I can't even remember if at that point we were still using the old Delco Carousels to approximate our position, as the "good old days" really did require us to be pilots of a different kind. Flash to the present and trying to describe that unit and its operation to a newly winged graduate from Embry Riddle is like the real old timers telling us about low frequency "Radio Range" devices and "A's and N's." Probably pretty much the same far away look of absolutely having no idea of what "that old guy was talking about." EFBs? No overflowing plastic bag hanging on the pedestal with discarded Jepp revisions? What on earth is this world coming too?

Maybe it's just me, maybe it's some, maybe it's all of us, but at this point in life, it seems like the momentary reflection on past events such as these, both good and bad, have become a more time consuming portion of my conscious thought.

Finally lining up on 6L and being cleared for the first takeoff from PGUM in the new millennium, I distinctly remember asking, just like I figured John Wayne or Burt Lancaster would do in the movies: "Any reason we shouldn't do this guys?" We all looked at each other, shrugged and the four levers went forward with the needed adjustment from the engineer. All looked good through 80 knots and, beyond anything our collective imaginations might have conjured, the airplane actually lifted off and felt like, well, like what a Boeing 747-200 with five hours of fuel always felt like. As we rocketed off on our way to Japan I have no idea of whatever the possible communication relay made from Guam Ops to headquarters might have been but the Y2K relief in the cockpit was kind of subdued, if that. No big deal. Flash, again, at that point my brain apparently decided I had been reminded of that story sufficiently and returned to its normal groggy morning state. I got up, took a shower and had breakfast. I guess recall of the next New Millennium story would have to wait for another absolutely unpredictable moment in time. And we all know what some of those were.

Maybe it's just me, maybe it's some, maybe it's all of us, but at this point in life, it seems like the momentary reflection on past events such as these, both good and bad, have become a more time consuming portion of my conscious thought. Yes, it's a well practiced and enjoyable event to recount the good stories, both to our closest companions and anyone else who hasn't heard "the story" more than a few times. Sorry repeat story tellers, no denial here: you know who you are.

As for the unconscious portion, please don't ask me to posit why our brains regurgitate events from the past at times totally unexpected. Maybe it was the last show on TV the night before. Maybe it's because we won't have time in those final moments for the reported "my life flashed before my eyes" and this is Mother Nature's way of being able to more slowly square accounts with us? Maybe She's feeding it to us slowly, She reminds our mistakes while cautioning; She allows a review of the good ones, perhaps, as confirmation of the good deed. She knows what some of us may not be willing to easily cede: we aren't as capable. We don't press 220 anymore. An offset backcourse non-precision is no longer no big deal. Do they even have those anymore? I won't mention the golf course. That three wheeled bike looks nice. Pretty practical too!

Despite the typical airline pilot "I take no prisoners, I solve all problems" mode, maybe some of us are more agreeably turning in the direction of life's localizer needle. We're going

along more. Maybe it's because the body is naturally older now and we can smile with the new challenge. Sure, two dots may still be OK in some cases, but I suspect in mixed company — that's where the stories recalled have to at least resemble reality — most of us start to adjust our heading when the needle even begins to leave the center mark. Age apparently breeds wisdom. Or maybe it's just experience.

Anyway, I need to finish up here because my appointment at the doctor's office is only a couple of hours away. I don't want to be late but it takes a little longer to get ready and actually get there. Forget the rollerblades. That ended with the new hips. I can't ride the beloved 2005 Suzuki GSX 1300R Hayabusa, the fastest motorcycle in the world at the time of its creation, as it has been sold per instructions from you know who. The newest version was just announced though and...oh well. The once brand new C6 Z06 Corvette that was never driven slower than, never mind, is also no longer available. Have you seen the new C8 version? Maybe...

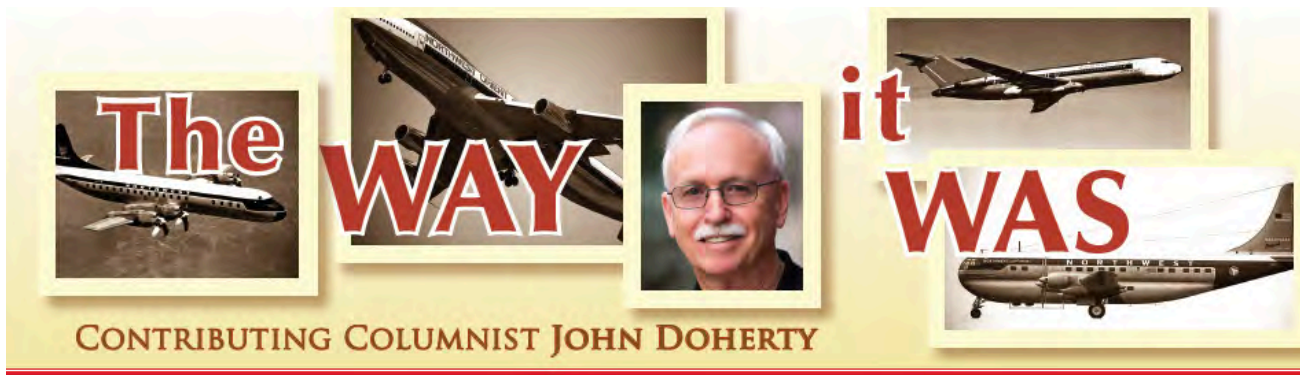
It's better to allow a few more minutes to get to these weekly, OK more like semi-weekly visits. And if I were seen grabbing the rollbar in order to wriggle into the seat with the crash helmet on and attach the 5-point belts of the latest ride, the picture would be worth ... well, only if you could stop laughing at what it takes a 71 year old man to do something like that.

We've lived our many stories, only have the memories left of too many of some of our friends and their stories, and humorously, as no longer the PIC of all things in this universe, are probably more obedient to the simple laws of physics that the effect of age is presenting to us. As I have always, I like to think presciently, suggested, there are two ways we can face this challenge: accept and live it gracefully, or, fight it all the way down.

Luckily for us, we have an advantage. We are the pilots from Northwest Airlines. We may not have been the biggest. We may not have been the most well known.

But we were taught by those who were masters of the flying universe: those who were in "the seat" before us and showed us how. We showed it to the world with our solid red tails, and that is history that will never change with age. ✈





The Days Were Long, but the Years Were Short

I just did the math, and in my career I spent around 6,000 days on the road—20 years of those days included dreary nights grinding across the Pacific Ocean, hour after bleary hour. One captain who I don't remember but remember his aphorism, would say when the purser asked "how much longer," would study the instrument panel for a bit then intone, "Only about 2 more hours and we'll be halfway there."

Not much better, the red-eye-turns in the domestic patterns, or those days where I flew through the same front half a dozen times. Or out in the prairie somewhere flying down a canyon of storms looking for the runway lights.

Yet it all ended so fast. The days were long, but the years were short.

The American philosopher Yogi Berra once said, “Nostalgia is not what it used to be.” Contrarily, in my experience nostalgia has gotten better as the years have passed, and those long days have evolved into happy memories of good times, good people, and missions mostly accomplished without having to go see the chief pilot.

People memories:

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I walked by **Faye Deshazo**’s office in Seattle one day – Faye saw me and hollered that she had a trip if I wanted it. Faye being the capable and congenial person she was, easygoing, professional, personable, capable, master of her craft of managing pilot scheduling. (Faye once told me pilots’ ideal is to fly one 35 hour trip per month – they can do their shopping, and it gets them away from their wives.) My bias was always to say “yes” to whatever she asked. So this case was no exception. Besides, I was always looking to improve my month, and the trip she dangled in front of me seemed like it fit the bill. Faye told me when I’d leave and return and how many hours the trip was worth and little less. I got to drop all other flying. Sounded good.

Turned out the trip crossed the Pacific Ocean six times plus a NRT GUM redeye turn, all in nine days. It was the most utterly gruesome Pacific flying I did in 20 years of it. Endless hours grinding across the ocean, staring out the window, exhausted, with a captain who prohibited NASA naps. The worst of a crop of long days of flying in those short years.

When I got back to Seattle, I stuck my head in Faye’s door and noted that next time she asked me if I wanted a trip I would look more closely. Which amused Faye considerably.

This kind of informal scheduling illustrated how cleverly we could manage our flying in those days. We routinely sat in for another pilot’s last leg if it suited our commuting purposes. No bother about getting crew schedules involved. No uniform, no worries. Or living in Seattle and being based in Minneapolis and just casually mentioning to Seattle crew skeds that we were hanging around with nothing to do if they should need a Seattle located body on short notice. Anything to save a commute. Slowly, over time, computers and the FARs got the upper hand, so now all those shenanigans are relegated to the nostalgia bin. And scheduling algorithms squeeze every ounce of “legality” out of a pilot’s body, mind, and spirit.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Flying right seat in the 727, **Dale Evans** in the left, we had shut down an engine for some reason on a leg I’d been flying. Descending into Spokane, it occurred to me that Dale might want to fly the airplane given the engine out approach. So I suggested to him that if he wanted to fly it, it was fine with me. Dale’s response: “You are going to have to come up with something with a lot more glory than this if I’m going to take the plane.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

While **Jack Hamlin** was in the MSP chief pilot’s office, I was working on the third floor at NATCO. Jack and I socialized regularly, had been friends since the 707 days, and we plotted to make things work despite executive management’s apparent commitment to keep us from

doing that. Jack mentioned one day that he had been in his office for several months and still didn't have a printer despite repeated requests for same. I knew that there was an unused printer on the third floor and suggested to Jack that we just get that from NATCO and take it to his office at the terminal. Jack approved the idea. Of course each printer was identified by a unique character set on a decal, somebody somewhere "owned" and was responsible for each printer. NATCO had a manager whose job it was to manage those kinds of things.

This was no small printer, it was a floor model, weighed 40 or 50 pounds. On the appointed day Jack and I got a cart, loaded up the printer and headed out. Down the elevator and across the lobby to the back door we proceeded like a couple kids filching candy bars. Just then, to my consternation, here comes the manager who "owned" the printer. We proceeded as if we knew what we were doing, he stepped out of the way and held the door open for us as we and his printer departed the scene.

So far as I know that printer is in the chief pilot's office in Minneapolis to this day.

★★★★★

Wrenching on the DC-10: the airplane had a habit of engines over-tempering as they were brought out of reverse, often around runway turn off. Just that situation landing in Anchorage. The EGT on number 2 started rising rapidly, clearly not good. In my panic, I hollered "Watch it, watch it!" Hard to imagine a less useful call out, but there it was. Realizing there was no time to be lost I reached up and shut down number 2 on my own.

The captain, instantly seeing what the issue was opened a start valve and motored the engine to cool it.

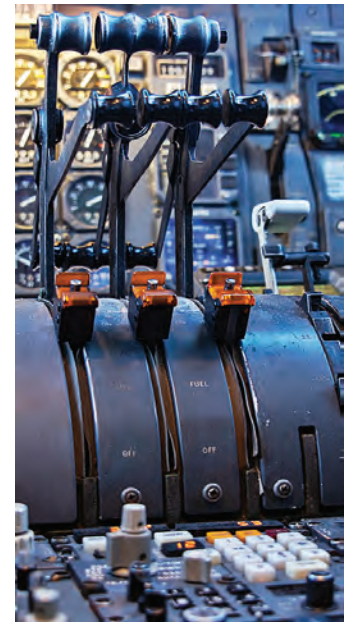
Coincidentally we had an ATC guy riding in the jumpseat. As we taxied to the gate the captain told him, "John just saved the company a couple million dollars." The ATC guy, impressed, asked, "Will John get some special recognition for that?" the captain's apt reply was, "His special recognition is that if he'd missed it, he would have gotten fired."

Both then and now (forty years later) I appreciate that the captain let my nonhelpful callout go without comment. And further he was willing to give me credit for saving the engine. That captain was **Fred Pack**.

★★★★★

Early 70s on probation, 707, I got a trip with a four day layover in Okinawa – which was good except I didn't have much in the way of money, partly because of miserable probationary pay, and partly due to my own money mismanagement. I left with \$25 in my pocket which would have been enough to eat on if I were careful.

On arrival at the hotel, the captain told me to meet him and the copilot downstairs in 20 minutes, "Let's see what this town has to offer." My, "I think I'm gonna pass," was met with derision and "Bullshit — be here in 20 minutes." So I was there.



At the first place the captain pulled out the dice to roll for drinks. My further demurrals were met with the same scorn, so I rolled – and lost. And the next one, and the next one after that, much to the delight of the captain and the copilot. That was it for me. I was broke and not knowing how I was going to eat for the rest of the trip. Apparently the captain came to understand my predicament, because he told me not to worry about it and picked up the tab for my drinks and food for the remainder of the four days. Four days where we well and truly discovered everything that town had to offer. The captain's name was **Dave Monroe**.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Flying with **Bob Kehs** with his torn overcoat pocket, no hat, and a uniform that was stranger to the cleaners. And with a world of understanding of our pilot group.



He told me one day, “There are three groups at Northwest, the old guys, the new guys, and the outsiders.” I opined that having only been on the list for a couple of years I must be a new guy. “No,” he said, “I’m a new guy, you are an outsider.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Coming back to MSP mid-winter, second leg of a red-eye turn, my leg. MSP tight with freezing fog (was there any other kind in MSP?), some misses. Our flight attendants were moms with kids at home, their practice, fly a red-eye turn, get home in time to get the kids off to school, sleep until they came back home, then be up to care for them. Repeat 10 or 12 times a month.

So these moms were worried that we wouldn’t get in and if we didn’t, then who was going to take care of the kids? The captain reassured them, “Don’t worry, John’ll get us in.” Would that I had been as confident as he.

Clear and starry night above, somewhere a city and a runway in the glow below. Past the marker, and Bob Polhamus’s dictum, “Just line up the needles and drive ‘er down to the hubs” in my mind.

Into the glow, nothing but me and the needles. Did that rabbit make things better or worse? Minimums and time to go-around, but from the left seat a soothing “Keep her coming — keep her coming — keep her coming.” Still just me and the needles. Touchdown on the snow covered runway, reverse thrust, and a matter of fact, “I’ve got it,” and we are turning off the runway. Moms gathering up their stuff preparing to head home and get the kids off to school. Thanks for trusting me **Wes Vermillion**.

★★★★★

Oh how mistaken first impressions can be. It took me three months to figure out that he wasn't dumb, he just had a uniquely wry sense of humor, and while I thought he was dumb, he was pulling my leg. So that made me the dumb one.

That, and that he wasn't all that deeply engaged with flying airplanes. Periodically he'd cross a VOR and just continue flying the same course he'd flown into the VOR instead of doing the few degrees of course change that passage usually involved. I'd watch for 10 or 15 miles past the VOR thinking he might notice himself, and finally say something like, "Um, we are supposed to be flying out the 105." He'd look at me with amazement and retort, "Didn't you think I knew that?"

One day he totally pranged it in. Instrument panel shaking, lurching back into the air, speedbrake jerked out while still in the air and the second prang harder than the first. Ripped it into reverse, stomped the brakes throwing us into our shoulder harnesses. As we exited the runway, he turned to me and said, "They'll never know we're on."

One of his things was that he didn't like Tower telling him when to turn off the runway, as in "Northwest empty ump, turn off at Bravo and contact ground when clear." Regardless of the viability of the instruction, he'd tell the copilot, "Tell them unable." Then he'd taxi leisurely to a turn off of his choosing.

Somewhere along the line I figured out that he wasn't dumb, he was smart, the owner of a unique sense of humor, and the carrier of a lightly held determination to live life on his terms. Previously in my efforts at fostering crew debrief events, I'd left him off the invitation list. As experience modified my understanding of him, I invited him one evening to join in the crew debrief. "Hmm," he pondered, "Do you think there will be any Ovaltine?" Classic **Louie Knutsen**.

★★★★★

When I was a new hire going through my initial training, some of my buddies thought it was hilarious to call up newbies and pretend to be training. The idea might be that I would show up for an event that wasn't actually scheduled.

One day I got a call assigning me to the S-2 the following day. "Yeah right, I responded," not expecting to do an event the next day and assuming it was one of my prankster buddies. A few minutes later I got to thinking it was conceivable that it had been training scheduling, so out of caution I decided to give them a call.

"Training, **Douglas**."

"Hey, John Doherty here. Just wondering if you had anything for me for tomorrow?" Long pause. "Doherty?—Doherty? Jesus Christ, how many Dohertys do we have?"

★★★★★

Another multi day Okinawa layover and those good old 707 MAC flying days.

The captain I was flying with had been stationed in Okinawa while he was on active duty some years before, and he announced that we were all going to spend the night at the Okuma Officers Rest Center.

This facility, which he had a very high opinion of based on his previous experience, was in the far North of the island. So many hours and several skosh cabs later, we found the place and sat down to enjoy a late afternoon beverage. And indeed it was a most pleasant spot. Out in the country, completely serene.

After a couple of brews and as the sun was setting, the captain asked the bartender about sleeping and dinner arrangements.

“So sorry,” came the reply. “Our sleeping quarters and mess hall aren’t open anymore.”

So there we were, and for some reason unable to call a skosh cab, my recollection being that typically we would just flag those guys down. Was there even a central dispatcher? And we were several miles from the nearest habitation with dark settling in.

Doing the only thing we could at this point, we started the five mile hike to the nearest town, having no clue what we would find there. By the time we arrived, the little town was well and truly shut down. There was one “inn” in the town, but it appeared to be closed for the night.

Semi desperate, the captain pounded on the door until someone showed up, and as it turned out was delighted to see us—I imagine because business was slow. The inn was an iconic Japanese one, and the owner and his wife set to work putting out food and drink, the wife giving us traditional scrub downs, and then into the hot pool to relax and celebrate the day.

What had seemed like a disaster had miraculously turned into one of the most enjoyable layovers in my career. Thank you, Captain **Neal Henderson**.

★★★★★

Commuting into the cities the night before a trip presented opportunities for socializing with fellow pilots, also at loose ends the night before a trip. One such night ended up being rather later than intended, and I neglected to set an alarm. Sometime around my check in time my phone rang. In my grogginess I knocked the phone off the hook and continued to snooze.

Next thing I know someone was pounding on my door. Now awake and realizing I was close to being a no show for my trip, I called check in.

A cheerful voice I knew so well answered, “Check in, Virginia.”

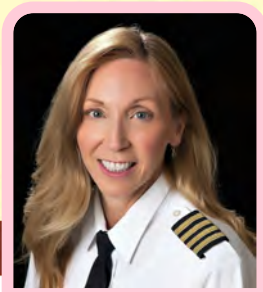
“John Doherty here for Northwest umpty ump.”

“Oh good, I found you, on time at 8:00 o’clock. Have a good one.”

After I’d failed to make my check in call, Virginia had tracked me down by calling hotels she knew to be commuter hotels and she’d found me. Then after I hadn’t responded to her phone call, she’d contacted the front desk to send someone down to beat on my door. She’d saved me from a no show. Thanks **Virginia**.

★★★★★

Well the years were certainly short—and they are getting shorter. Were the days really long? I guess so, but nostalgia is softening those long day memories, and what remains is gratitude for all those I met along the way. ✈



A Chick in the Cockpit

Contributing Columnist Erika Armstrong



OLD BOLD PILOTS

“There are old pilots, and there are bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots” is a pile of rubbish. If you have made it to retirement age and have spent your life earning an income as a pilot, you are an old, bold pilot. The adage and sentiment behind the phrase are admirable, and NTSB reports are confirmation of how pilots boldly overestimate their ability, but spending an entire lifetime in aviation is nothing but bold.

The pandemic has altered our lives in so many ways, but it has been especially challenging to the aviation industry. The headlines shout the damage. Tens of thousands of pilots on furlough, airplanes parked, and pundits saying aviation will never be the same. But old bold pilots will just shrug their shoulders because they know this is temporary in the big scheme of an aviation career and just one challenge among many where the meek will get filtered out and the bold will move forward. They remember the fear and desperation after 9/11 when they were told that aviation would never be the same. That the images of airplanes being used as weapons was seared into our collective psyche so deeply that no one would want to fly again. The industry would not, could not overcome. It always overcomes because of the bold pilots who are willing to lean into the headwinds.

“They will think that’s awesome, love what they do, talk about it constantly, and keep that mischievous grin on their face that hasn’t come off since the day they soloed.”



Old bold pilots have made it through the filters of airline labor strikes, mergers, firings, acquisitions, furloughs, 9/11 and just the sheer incline of reaching the captains' seat of a commercial airliner. It is too steep for many. Flying is, and will always be, expensive and demanding because it is. It can be a hobby or profession, but whether you pay for it, or it pays you, it is an industry that demands respect and self-discipline from its participants. It takes a bold mindset to go a step farther and believe you can make a career out of it.

The current generation of pilots coming into new hire classes grew up in the aftermath of 9/11. Their view of aviation has been through security lines, TSA, barbed wire fences, ultra-low-cost carriers, pilots on food stamps and a fatigued pilot group who stopped recommending their profession to others. They grew up in an era when there are now a quarter of a million less active pilots in the U.S. than the previous generations (student through ATP. 1980 versus 2016).

In the "olden days," when security wasn't a concern, airports were a place to hang out. People would sit at the end of the runway and feel the wake turbulence. Pilots would open hangar doors at the local airport, pull out lawn chairs and tell tall tales about aviation. After 9/11, rules and fear kept those doors closed and the next generation locked out of the stories, the dreams and the aviation desire.

It has been difficult for them to see the glory of aviation, but despite all that, the spirit of aviation is alive and well. It's still there, just look into their eyes. You can see the passion and the deep knowing that they want to be "up there", looking down. Each generation wrings their hands, concerned that the next generation isn't good enough. We tag each chunk of births with a nametag like Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and the current iGen/Generation Z. Of course, our own generational nametag comes with only the best traits, but the reality is that each nametag represents the teachings of the previous. We teach the up and coming so each generation is ultimately responsible for the next. If you blame the next generation, you are really blaming your own.



“Their view of aviation has been through security lines, TSA, barbed wire fences, ultra-low-cost carriers, pilots on food stamps and a fatigued pilot group who stopped recommending their profession to others.”

To round out my aviation career, I've been giving back to aviation by teaching the next generation of pilots at a university. Fresh out of high school, I have some of the most intelligent, funny, tech-savvy future pilots sitting in my class. I already know some of them won't stop until they are captain of a commercial airliner. Maybe going past Mach and above FL600. And, just like all the other aviation generations, I have other students who like the idea of being a pilot but will never make it to the cockpit.

For those who will succeed, they have learned the most basic skills; they must haul their butt out of bed when the alarm goes off (no matter how early it is), that they must put in the time and the work, and that self-discipline creates more rewards than sacrifice. Their bonus is that since these NextGen pilots grew up in front of computer screens, FMS systems, glass cockpits and HUDs, evolving technology will be second nature. They'll fly circles around us round-dial loving pilots. They understand and embrace new technology and accept that change is constant. They will boldly go where we have not.

NextGen is the tag that the FAA placed on their program to improve the National Airspace Systems. NextGen Pilots is the tag I'm placing on this new generation of pilots who will stand on the shoulders of previous aviation giants and move aviation that much further towards safety, efficiency and glory.

Don't worry, they're still learning basic airmanship skills (I had to wipe the dust off my E6B), but they won't have to spend hours learning NDB approaches when instead, they can learn how to fly around the world on direct routes and have guidance right down to the centerline of the runway in zero visibility flight conditions. They will think that's awesome, love what they do, talk about it constantly, and keep that mischievous grin on their face that hasn't come off since the day they soloed. Just like in all the other previous aviation generations.

Nostalgia hurts the older we get, but it is comforting to see the new bold pilots out there entering the world of aviation. I know that in their future, they will safely fly millions of lives around the world, be proud of their profession, and pass that passion on to the next generation.

Thankfully, some things never change. ✈

Erika Armstrong is the daughter of Captain Charles “Chuck” Hagen (NWA 1950-1990) who she considers her favorite old bold pilot. Chuck lives in Park Rapids, MN and still has a lifetime of stories and memories to keep him busy. Erika has spent 30 years in aviation so is now earning some stories of her own. If you need to reach either Erika or Chuck, just email erika@achickinthecockpit.com



Erika presenting at a NASA workshop about the future of air mobility.



1939-2014

The Root Cellar



Contributing Columnist **Bob Root**

Although we lost our friend Bob far too early, I couldn't imagine not including a remembrance of his humor here.

As the first "contributing columnist" in what I came to call my wonderful "stable" of contributors, he had contributed some 35 columns over 9 years.

From his published RNPA obituary by Bill Day: *"His regular The Root Cellar column in our own Contrails magazine bore witness to his wit, insight, and often self-deprecating humor. His writings were usually self-effacing, delightfully describing his dealings with life's episodes that we all encounter, but cannot put so well in words."*

— Contrails Editor Ferguson

Hanging Up

Three p.m.

Bored. Retired. Hearing loss.

Phone ringing.

"Hello." Too loud. (see above)

Male voice (somewhat garbled, see above): "Mister Root, I am Sam at Capitol Two. How are you today?"

"I am just fine, but it's none of your business and I don't hear well."

"Oh yes it is my business, Mr. Root, because I have a great offer for you. I can save you one hundred dollars a month on your mortgage."

"What's a mortgage?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Root? Do you not know what a mortgage is?"

"What's a mortgage?"

"Sir, that's the loan you get on your house."

"I have tiles on my house, designed for the sun in the desert."

"No, no—I'm talking about money here. The money you use to buy your house. You get a loan on your house to buy your house and you pay it back in like 15 or 30 years. It's called a mortgage."

"You say there's money on my house. I'll have to get someone up there to look, but I think all that's up there are tiles and solar panels and pigeon droppings. I'm not supposed to climb on a roof. Hold on while I find my wife."

“No, no—there’s no money on your roof. You get the loan at a bank or other financial institution.”

“You saying I need to make restitution?”

“No, no, Mr. Root, I said institution not restitution.”

“So there’s no money on my house.”

“No, no, Mr. Root, I did not say there is money on your house. I said you get money from a bank for a loan to buy your house and that is called a mortgage which you pay back slowly over years. Maybe I should be talking to your wife.”

“You say you want my wife. Hold on a minute... Honey, there’s some guy on the phone says he has money on the roof of the bank for us. He wants to talk to you.”

“Hey, pal, I guess she’s not listening. Did you say you’re name is Sam? I have a granddaughter named Sam, but I don’t think she works for somebody called Capitol Two. I think she goes to college where they made that movie up there in North Dakota. She rents a place to live so she probably doesn’t need money on her roof either. Listen, I’ve been wondering about something you said. You said I get a loan on my house to buy my house. How can it be my house if Capitol One or Two bought it for me?”

“Well, Mr. Root, that’s the way things are referred to in the housing market. That’s why it’s called a mortgage. That way people can feel like they own their home even if it is owned by us.”

“You mean somebody sells houses in a store? Where is this housing market? My wife sends me to the market all the time for groceries, but I don’t think I know where the housing market is.”

“No, no, no. Houses are not sold in a store. ‘Housing market’ is just a phrase people talk about when they converse about real estazing, not houses. I have a daughter and a granddaughter who run a lot. They wear shoes that say Converse.”

“Mr. Root, I called you up to save you money, not to talk about roofs or shoes. So let’s start over. My name is Sam from Capitol Two. If you will just listen to me I can save you \$100 per month.”

“Say, you’re not that snoopy guy on TV that wants to know what I carry in my wallet are you?”

“No, Mr. Root. That guy is Capitol One. I am Capitol Two.”

“How can there be two capitol? I always thought there could be only one capitol per place.”

“You are right, Mr. Root. There is only one capitol per country and state and province, but we are not one of those, we are a financial institution.”

“You say you make pollution?”

“Gees! I said institution, not pollution.”

“Well you don’t have to get upset. I told you I don’t hear real well. What’s a province?”

“A province is a state in Canada.”

“You say you are in Canada?”

“No, I did not say that. Let’s forget about that, OK?”

“O. K., I’ll forget about that, but I really want to know how your financial constipation earns any money by saving me money?”

“Well, we charge interest, you see. So over the time of the mortgage you actually pay us more than we loaned you and we earn money.”

“Hey Sam, I used to know a guy who said ‘actually’ all the time. He was a great guy. Somebody

taught him to say ‘actually’ when he began to stutter and it would stop the stutter but most people didn’t know that was why he said ‘actually’ all the time.”

"Mr. Root, don't you want to save some money?"

"I don't know. My wife pays the bills and such."

“Now, that sounds like a great idea.”

“Well yeah, it was. You see, saying ‘actually’ allowed him to stand up in front of a class of aviators and teach them stuff about airplanes.”

"No, no. I meant the part about your wife."

“Oh. Well, I’m sure not going to live another 30 years. So you won’t get money from me for 30 years.”

“Your estate will pay the rest of the mortgage after you are gone.”

“You gotta be kidding! We don’t have an estate. We moved to this small house to have less property to take care of.”

Click. Dial tone.

“Alright! Hey Honey, I’m not bored any more. That sucker called me and I got him to hang up on me. I won the game!

Honey: "I always said you pilots are crazy." ✈️



The Last Queen



by Jay Sakas

The ramp is wet from the midnight rain. I sit here awaiting my fate. Soon I will fly away to my final resting spot. Somewhere in the American desert and far from my place of birth.

I am a Boeing 747-400, the Queen of the Sky.

We were many that flew all over the world. Mainstays of the golden age of aviation. Now I am the last, the last of the Queens.

The ground crew is fueling me. It will not be long before I will lift my wings and fly west to the resting place of us old Queens...a desert boneyard.

I should not be deserving of that end. You would think I would be a museum piece, proudly showing the lineage of the Boeing 747. That privilege goes to ship 6301, sitting in all its glory at the Delta Air Museum.

Unfortunately, I was the last to be delivered to the launch customer, Northwest Airlines. It too suffered its demise by Delta's acquisition. We both now are relics.



My ancestry is royal. I came from a long line of historic Boeing airplanes. From the B80, B247, B314, B307—aircraft who brought in the modern age of air travel.

Then came the B707, the granddaddy of the Boeing jet fleet, ushering in the modern jet age.

Finally came the matriarch, the 747. The idea for the 747 was born from a military competition. To build super military freighters capable of long range and extraordinary lift capabilities. Though Boeing did not win the competition, from it evolved the 747. On February 9, 1969 the first 747-100 took flight. The first delivery went to Pan AM.

From the matriarch grew the offspring. The 747-200 flew into the air in 1970. That spawned cousins; 747-SP, 747-200F and finally my big sister, the 747-300. She was the newest of the new and first flew in 1980.



The Queen of the Sky, a 747-400 was launched in February 1989. Northwest Airlines was the launch customer with delivery of 10 aircraft. I was the last to arrive as N676NW in April of 2002. While N674US got to do the farewell tour. I leave as I came, unnoticed.

The pilots are boarding and the APU is running. A crack of daylight is breaking over the hanger. It will be a good day to fly.

The tug is hooked up. I am tugged from the ramp onto the taxiway. As we turn onto the taxiway, hundreds of mechanics, ground crew, pilots, flight attendants and so many others, are lining the sides of the taxiway, Cheering. At the end of the line, two fire trucks are shooting the water salute.

As I taxi under the arch, if there was a way to show a tear, I would.

We clear the arch and start the engines.

As we taxi onto the runway, we get additional farewells over the radio.

We pause for a moment, and as we advance the power, the cheers are heard above the roar. Soaring into the sky, I leave behind, memories.

As I fly West, though I wear the colors of Delta, forever I will be, the red-tailed Queen of the Skies with a Northwest heart. ✈





“Thanks for bringing the troops home! N Schwarzkopf, Gen USA”

747 DESERT STORM EGYPT:1990

by Gary Pisel

This is the story of how we were intercepted and fired on during a flight from Frankfurt to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, Sept 1990.

We all remember the 1990's and the Gulf War. Northwest stepped up to the plate and provided many flight hours getting our troops to and from the area. This is but one of several accounts that took place during that period of time.

I was assigned to the base at JFK, on reserve. Being a junior captain I really had no choice. However, with the additional flying that occurred while based there, it certainly helped my retirement numbers.

On Friday, September 21 I flew Flt 5678 from Kennedy (JFK) to Frankfurt, (FRA). Actually it was to the military side of Frankfurt called Rhine Main AFB. There we were put up at the Holiday Inn, just outside the main gate at the Air Force Base. Great hotel complete with clothes optional swimming pool, Jacuzzi and sauna. Crew members were able to relax with a good German beer and a meal.

The next day I was scheduled to fly to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. It was an augmented crew as we were scheduled for a ramp turn around, roughly 7 hours each way. The senior captain was from Minneapolis and had been assigned to training for several years. Upon arrival at the aircraft you could hear the captain chewing out our ground agents. He was most upset that men and women at the hotel were not clad properly in swim suits.

Soon it was time for our troops to board the aircraft. Again the captain blew. This time he was complaining that all the troops had rifles, bayonets and pistols on their body. It was

explained to him this was a Military Charter (MAC), and the normal rules of no weapons did not apply. I finally was able to reason with him telling that our passengers were members of the 101st Airborne. I told him that if we could not trust them, who could we trust.

The flight departed, flew to Dhahran landing early morning. Of course the captain flew the leg, fretting the entire route about the communications, the approach control, the tower and the runway. To be honest it was an easy leg with everyone giving us full support. He was more than glad to retreat to the cabin for the leg home.

This was my first experience with this captain, however I had heard several horror stories. He said not a word upon arrival at Rhine Main. He headed to the hotel and said he was going home.

The next day I was scheduled to do the same flight with another crew. This time there was no complaining about the hotel or the passengers. All was going very smoothly. Our route of flight took us over Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, across the Mediterranean Sea and then to Egypt.

“Where am I going?” “Can’t tell you, you are to come with us.”

It was dark, about 2230 local when we crossed the Northern border of Egypt, cruising at 33,000 on a clear night, all the stars shining. Just after crossing the shoreline the aircraft behaved abnormally. You could feel the tail rise, the fuselage began to shake, engine instruments were almost unreadable. It was as though all four engines were in compressor stall at the same time. All five of us in the cockpit were in full dress for something very serious. Then just as quickly it smoothed out and all was normal.

Shortly a lieutenant from the Army came running up the stairs shouting, “Did you see that?” We said we saw nothing. He was sitting about halfway back on the starboard side. He said he saw an airplane, single engine, come out from under our aircraft. It held back away. Then suddenly a blast, looked like a rocket exploded about 100 yards behind us on starboard side. Then he said that three other aircraft came from under our airplane, joined the first one and all four broke off and flew to the West.

At this point we tried to raise “Stargazer” the emergency frequency for situations. We also tried talking to ground and air traffic controls. All of this to no avail.

I went downstairs and personally interviewed each window seat soldier. They all had the same story of what happened. Seems four single engine aircraft pulled up and flew formation on our port side. Then one broke right, went to the starboard side. Then he fired a rocket of some sort. Luckily for us and all aboard it did not have the range or accuracy to make contact with our airframe. Then the other three aircraft broke to the right under ours, joined with the single aircraft and they all flew to the West. (We suspect they were heading towards Libya.)

Upon arrival at Dhahran I debriefed the intelligence officer along with other personnel. Our departure for the return flight was basically on time and the flight back to Rhine Main was uneventful.

When we were on the ground in Germany I again debriefed the command post and intelligence. Myself and the other crew members were scheduled to deadhead back to Minneapolis as soon as the aircraft was ready. So I went to the hotel, got all my gear and prepared for a deadhead home. Needless to say this was becoming a very long day.

Minneapolis was a welcome sight. Again, major debriefings took place with the company personnel.

It was too late to continue on to Seattle so a night in Minneapolis was in order. Sleep came fast and short as an early morning DC-10 was on the agenda to Seattle.

Flight was full as usual and I was in a steerage seat. During taxi in at Seattle they paged my name. I opted not to answer the page. As I was exiting the aircraft the flight attendant pointed me out to three men standing on the jetway.

“There he is.”

“Captain Pisel you will need to come with us.”

“Sorry,” I said, “I need to get my luggage and check in at crew schedules.”

“They will bring your luggage and meet up with us.”

“Where am I going?”

“Can’t tell you, you are to come with us.”

So down the jetway stairs we went to a waiting limo, the three FBI men and me. We drove towards Renton, finally they told me we were going to the FAA Directors Office.

“Why, I ask?”

“We don’t know, only following directions.”

At the FAA Building we went to the third floor and the West end of the building. I was introduced to the Director and he said to remain silent until I would be told to speak. So I did. He opened a large double bi-fold door with lots of electronics on the shelves. He then proceeded to dial a phone and told me that when he leaves and the person answers I could speak.

Shortly there was a voice on the other end, identified as a general, and a Secretary of Defense member. I was asked several questions to authenticate who I was. Then we got into the event that took place over Egypt. They were friendly and inquisitive. They wanted to know who I had told and what I had said. They said they did not know at this time who or what the aircraft were or who they belonged to.

All this took nearly a hour. As promised by the three agents, my luggage and my car were at the FAA headquarters when I finished. The best advice they gave me was, “Do not talk to anyone, for the next seven days.” I told them I would not, not even crew schedules.

The next day we were having my birthday dinner downtown Seattle with my son and his wife. He was an officer in the USCG on a ship in Seattle. Dining out was eerie because Desert Storm had begun in earnest and many of the streets were deserted.

During dinner my son made the statement that the Coast Guard ship had received a telex about an American troop carrier being fired on by unknown aircraft. I had to confess to him that it was me. It was a huge surprise to him and to me that the information was out already.

In retrospect, I have tried many times via generals and congressmen to obtain more information, all to no avail. ✈





Baby It's Cold Outside!

Riding in an ^{UNPLANNED} Open Cockpit F-89 at 30,000 Feet

by Skip Foster

I enlisted in the Wisconsin Air Guard at Madison in August of 1962 in hopes of getting a pilot training slot with the Guard in the Aviation Cadet program. I took the AFOQ test and passed the physical, however the recruiter said that I would have to wait about a year because the current slots were filled, but if I wanted to get into the NAVCAD program, he could get me in within a few months.

Based on my bank account balance, I decided sooner was better, and I would be in the cockpit of an F-89 right behind the pilot, and being 19 years old, I knew everything!

So in early November 1962 I was en-route to James Conally Air Base in Waco, Texas. I got my first commercial flight on a Braniff 707 from Chicago to Dallas, then on a Trans Texas flight to Waco and signed in at James Conally about 3 pm. I was given the job of handing out bedding supplies to the other new arrivals until midnight!

Well a year and a day later, I got my commission as a 2nd Lt. and my Navigator Wings. I drove back to Madison and reported in to the 176th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS) and

waited for my next assignment to Radar Intercept Officers (RIO) school in Portland, Oregon. I got a class assignment in early January of 1963.

The RIO school was run mostly by Regular Air Force Officers, Pilots and RIO's, and the airplanes and maintenance were supplied by the 123rd FIS from the Oregon ANG. One of the 123rd's pilots, Captain Hal McKenna, was also assigned to the school. There were 8 students in the class, all ANG navigators from various Guard units: Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin.

We had ground school, simulator, and flight training during our 4 months at Portland. The F-89 was a cold-war interceptor, and in 1963 was mostly based with ANG units along the northern tier of the U.S. It was big, slow, and heavy: 54 feet long with a 60 foot wing span, 2 J35 Allison engines, 16,000 total lbs of thrust in afterburner, and a max weight of 47,500 lbs. Thrust to weight was 0.35. However the F-89J model carried 2 AIR-2A Genie rockets with nuclear warheads, 1.2KT(kilo tons) each, and some later modifications added 4 AIM-4C Falcon missiles on hard-points under wing.

We did most of our intercept work over the Pacific Ocean, and most of it was at mid-altitudes, usually 25,000-35,000 feet. On March 12, 1963 I was flying a mission with Hal McKenna piloting. I was positioning us against a target (T-33) for multiple 135 degree front attacks. After we finished up the required syllabus attacks, we headed back to Portland for landing. Soon the fun would begin!

We were cruising at 30,000 feet and around 400 knots and in the vicinity of Bend, Oregon near the 3 Sisters mountains when the canopy disintegrated! I was pulled up violently in my ejection seat, and then slammed forward once the 8,000 foot cabin pressure equalized at 30,000! I switched to 100% oxygen and tried to call Hal on the intercom but the noise and wind blast made it impossible.

The school had a procedure in case of lost communications between the pilot and RIO: there was a button that I pushed to light up a red light in Hal's cockpit, and if he pushed his button and I got a red light, he was still in the airplane (note: there were no flight controls in the back seat). Well I didn't get a red light in reply, so I pushed the button again—Nada! In this case with no red light, I was supposed to eject, but we were over the mountains and there was lots of snow on the ground. The airplane was still in controlled flight, so I tried to peek around my blast shield to see a helmet—there was no helmet visible, so now what? Finally I felt and saw the speed brakes extend, so I knew he was still there. We made a very rapid descent to about 10,000 feet and Hal got the airplane slowed down, and we could finally converse on the intercom and radio.

We landed uneventfully at Portland, and when I asked Hal why he didn't respond to the red light, he said he couldn't remember the procedure with all the confusion. He did buy me a few beers at the Officer's Club after I got back from seeing the flight surgeon—there was still an active duty squadron of F-102's at Portland in 1963. I had a bad ear block, and the flight surgeon squirted some sort of purple stuff up my nose which ruined the taste of the beer! The reason I couldn't see Hal's helmet was that his seat had "bottomed out" when the canopy departed.

The class graduated in April of 1964 and I went back to Madison. I resumed my college studies at the University of Wisconsin, and flew part time with the 176th FIS.

I always regretted that I didn't wait the extra year to go to pilot training, however that was about to change in June of 1965, but that's another story. ✈ 



William Tell 1972 & Deuces Wild 1970-1974



by Skip Foster

After finishing Radar Intercept Officer (RIO) training at Portland, OR in the Spring of 1964, I rejoined the 176th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS) in Madison, WI. I flew as an RIO in the F-89J aircraft, and pulled alert duty for about 15 days a month as well as being a full-time student at the University of Wisconsin.

I was still hoping for a pilot training slot, but it looked like that was at least 2 years away. But in the Spring of 1965, the Air Force Academy had a cheating scandal which opened up around 100 pilot training slots in June of 1965 that were going to be unfilled. My Group Commander, Col. Dawson, said anyone interested in a pilot class should apply, and I did along with 6 other RIO's in the squadron. We were scheduled to lose our F-89's in 1965-1966 and our replacement aircraft would be the F-102 which was a single seat fighter.

I got selected to train at Vance Air Force Base (AFB) in Enid, OK in June of 1965. There were 8 Reserve Officers in the class, 6 from the Air National guard (ANG) and 2 from the Air Force Reserve. This was unusual, since most classes had only 1 or 2 ANG or Reserve students. I was in class 66-H which was the last class at Vance to fly the T-37 and T-38. The next class 67-A, flew the T-41 (Cessna-172), then the T-37 and T-38.

We had a great class. We started with 41 students, 9 washed out for various reasons, and we had 1 wash-back from 66-G, so we graduated 33 in June of 1966. We flew 125 hours in the T-37 and 125 in the T-38: formation, instruments, aerobatics, stalls and spins, except no spins in the T-38. The class produced two general Officers: Maj. Gen. Fred Womack, Tennessee ANG, and Gen. Richard Myers who wound up as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to finish off his distinguished career.

I got a class assignment for F-102 training in September of 1966 at Perrin AFB in Sherman, TX. The instructors at Perrin felt that those of us who flew the T-38 didn't have a very good instrument background, and so we had to fly about 30 hours under the hood in the T-33. I got pretty proficient, and one of the instructors would let me do a touch and go (still under the hood) after flying an ILS down to the runway. I finished the F-102 school in February of 1967 and headed back to Madison. It was sunny and in the 70's when I headed back, but by the time I got to Tulsa it was snowing and Chicago was in blizzard conditions. It was a long trip back!

When I got back to Madison, I got a local checkout in the TF-102 (2-seater, side-by-side) and then was cleared to fly in all phases of flight. We did a lot of formation work: takeoffs and landings, and most of our intercept work was in 2-ship or 4-ship formation. We also had alert duty 24/7, initially with 2 armed F-102's on 15 minute alert status.



Maj. Neil Udell is marching the troops. L-R: Lt. Col. Phil Brickson (TWA), Lt. Col. Jerry Sedik (AA), Maj. Al LaQuey (AA), Capt. Skip Foster (NWA). Udell was the flight lead for Deuces Wild, Brickson was the Team Captain for Wm. Tell, and LaQuey and Foster were Wm. Tell flyers.



Deuces Wild Team over Wisconsin: (07) Lead, Neil Udell, (05) Dale Ebben, #2, (06) Dick VanRoo #3, (08) Skip Foster #4.

I finally finished my degree at UW Madison in January of 1969. Most of the guys in the Squadron were airline pilots, so I was motivated to interview with TWA, American Airlines, and Northwest. TWA didn't like my total flight time of 800 hours—they wanted 2500 minimum. American said they would hire me in their next class, but they kept delaying it (the next class wasn't until 1971). Northwest was hiring, and so I got a class date of 3 March 1969. The class was mostly military trained with a few civilian pilots. It was a colorful group: Claus Dassel, Lynn Hoyem, Fred Sparks, Guy Hunt, Brad White, and Gary Hutteball to name a few.

About half of the class moved out to Seattle as 707 second officers in the summer of 1969, and the rest of us stayed in Minneapolis as 727 second officers. We were due to come off probation in July of 1970 and get a few more bucks than the \$550 per month we were receiving, but the BRAC strike in 1970 put most of us on furlough status.

I started to do more flying and alert duty with the Squadron in Madison. We had increased our alert presence to 4 alert birds due to the drain of active duty pilots for the Vietnam War. The squadron commander picked myself and Dick Van Roo as scheduling officers for figuring out the monthly alert document.

We also got a new full-time Instructor, Maj. Neil Udell, who transferred from the Spokane, WA F-102 Squadron. He replaced one of our guys who got hired by TWA. Neil was very interested in formation flying, and he wanted to use a 4-ship formation team as a recruiting tool. For some reason, he liked to fly with the 3 furloughed NWA pilots, Capt.'s Dale Ebben #2, Dick Van Roo #3, Skip Foster #4 and so the initial team was formed. We did a few 4th of July flyovers and got good reviews. We also did a show for

our troops at summer camp in Volk Field near Tomah, WI. We had added a 5th team member at Volk, Lt. Col. Dave Hoff as a solo pilot.

In September of 1970, I led a flight of three: Dale Ebben , Dick Van Roo and myself. We had gotten an invitation to try and get within a 5 mile radius of Chatham, Canadian Air Force Base (CAFB) in New Brunswick. Anyone getting inside 5 miles would get to eat and drink for free all weekend! We landed at Bangor Maine and got refueled, then filed an IFR clearance to Chatham. Once we got airborne, I canceled our clearance and proceeded North of our filed flight plan towards Chatham. We descended to about 500 feet and pushed it up until we were at tank speed (550 knots). I may have given Chatham tower a few misleading position reports, but we were able to hit the field right over the beer tent at about 100 feet and 550 knots. An F-101 had seen us about 10 miles North of the field, and he lit both of his afterburners, but didn't catch us!



Picture taken from Skip Foster's aircraft #4 starting a 4 ship diamond pass over Chatham CAFB, New Brunswick.

The Canadians thought we were quite colorful, and we mentioned that we had a formation team from the 176th in Madison. The Canadians invited us back up for their Battle of Britain Day celebration in September of 1971. One of our enlisted guys, Tom Brown, had been a "fitter" (crew chief) in England during the real Battle of Britain and the Canadians were very impressed. We put on our show and then formed up with Chatham's F-101 team and made a final fly-by of the field. None of us, including Tom Brown, had to buy a meal or a drink that weekend!

The USAF had held a William Tell weapons meet every 2 years, but with the Vietnam War ongoing, the 1968 and 1970 meets were canceled. The USAF decided to hold a meet in 1972 at Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, FL. There would be a F-106, F-101, and F-102 category. There was one USAF F-102 Squadron left in Keflavik Iceland, and they were automatically one of the three F-102 units. The USAF sent an evaluation team to a number of Guard F-102 units to determine the other 2 competitors. They decided on Burlington, VT and Madison, WI.

Our Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Ron Skinvik, decided to send a team of part time Guardsmen. He chose 4 primary pilots: Lt. Col. Phil Brickson (TWA) would be the

team leader, Maj. Al Laquey (AA) would be #2, Dale Ebben (NWA) #3, and Skip Foster (NWA) #4. Maj. Dick Manthey, a full-time pilot, would be the spare. The Maintenance troops would be mostly full-time guardsmen. Dick Van Roo (NWA) would act as the public relations liaison. Keflavik by default, and Burlington chose to go with full time pilots and maintenance troops.



L-R: Maj. Al LaQuey((AA), Capt. Skip Foster(NWA), Capt. Dale Ebben(NWA), Maj. Dick Manthey(spare pilot).

Our first mission was a front-stern attack on a Fire-bee drone, and I was paired with Phil Brickson. He managed to score a direct hit on the drone, and since I had no target, I was scheduled for a re-fly of the same mission. Dale Ebben was paired with Al LaQuey, but shortly after takeoff, his radio failed, so he just got awarded points for takeoff. The next day was a stern attack on the drone with an Infra-Red missile. I was paired with Al LaQuey, and he scored a direct hit on the drone, and so he and I got max points for the mission. Phil and Dale also did well and got a high score for their mission.

An operational note: whoever designed the altimeter on the F-102 designed it so it was only accurate when supersonic! To work around it, we had to fly lower by roughly the amount of our airspeed: so at 400 knots we flew 400 feet lower than our altimeter indicated, or 100 feet for a 500 foot intercept! It also got tricky on approach. The F-102 had no flaps, so the slowest we flew final was 170 knots, which made it sporty for a 200 foot approach.

Our next mission was against random targets: B-57's, T-33's, F-101's, and F-106's. We had no live missiles on this one, and everyone scored well. Dale Ebben had to make a rapid descent to acquire his target since his controller wasn't too sharp. Our 4th mission was against Electronic Counter Measure (ECM) targets at night. I got the B-57 on a front-stern re-attack. I wasn't able to lock on during the front attack, so I did a stern re-attack, but wasn't able to break through his ECM. I didn't get a lot of points for the team, but the other 2 teams also had problems with the B-57, and our other 3 guys did well on their missions,



Maj. Neil Udell (lead), Capt. Dale Ebben (#2), Capt. Skip Foster (#4), Lt. Col. Dave Hoff (solo), Lt. Col. John Montzingo (narrator). Capt. Dick VanRoo (#3) is not pictured. All Deuces Wild pilots were part-time Guardsmen except Maj. Udell and Maj. Manthey who were full-time Air Technicians with the Wisconsin Air Guard at Madison.

When all the scoring was tallied on Friday, Keflavik was #1, Madison #2, and Burlington #3. I still had the re-fly mission scheduled for Monday morning against the Fire-bee drone in a front-stern attack with live missiles, and I was the only one scheduled for Monday in the F-102 category.

My airplane had begun to have some starting issues over the past 2 missions. We didn't have a spare aircraft, and I had to fly my original airplane for the Monday mission. Our engine guy, Donny Hill, had shown that he could remove and replace the starter in less than 1 hour, and so Lt. Col. Brickson decided that I should start the airplane 1 hour prior to my takeoff time. Of course when I started, the starter fired right off! I sat in the chocks with a headset on and getting fed cups of water. As I taxied out, I had to pass by the Keflavik team, and their team Captain, Lt. Col. Tom Sawyer, called his entire team to attention and saluted me as I taxied past—very classy, and I returned their salute.

I made my takeoff time, fired both missiles at the drone and got area 1 hits on both missiles (classified as kill shots). We won the F-102 category at William Tell 72. The USAF designated Deuces Wild as an official demonstration team along with the Thunderbirds and Blue Angels. However in 1974, they decided that the Thunderbirds would be the only USAF demonstration team, and the Deuces Wild were no more. Our last official show was at William Tell 1974. The entire William Tell team was inducted into the Wisconsin Air Guard Hall of Fame in 1997. ✈

Author's Note: If you Google "F-102 Deuces Wild" it should bring up a video we made a few years ago showing both Deuces Wild and some William Tell 1972 shots.
— Enjoy





Short Notes

I was only 6 months with NWA And 3 total flights and last in seniority and a bid came out for the Eastern Interchange which I got. I was a copilot for very senior big Bill Dean. Because he broke his leg I lucked out and got Woody Herman as my Captain. He showed me how much fun airline flying was and gave me my first left seat time, which I never forgot. Like Woody, I gave left seat to many first officers I could the rest of my carrier. Being able to fly co-pilot for Woody many times was the best times of my co-pilot times. He told me about the time on the DC-3 and the bathroom. Woody was the type of pilot that was one of a kind that will always be remembered as numbered 1 in my book. Sincerely and blue side up. — Dave Wooden

I was hired by NWA at age 32 (class 4/6/69). And, I've always looked older than my years.

On a trip while still on probation, with Capt. Dick Wing. I'd just completed my walk around preflight, and as I recall was probably not showing my S/O shoulder boards because I was wearing a rain coat. As I stepped from the jet way into the aircraft I was nearly knocked over by a large man in a desperate move to exit. I stepped back and asked if I could help him in some way.

While his face suddenly showed a relaxed feeling of relief, he smiled and said, "I am so glad to see you! I thought that kid was the captain."

Don't think I ever told Captain Wing. I just closed the cockpit door behind me. — Cliff Leary



On October 22, 1983 I was the lead on flight 78 from SEA to DCA on the DC10. The stewardess from the back end of the airplane came up and told me that a passenger in the aft cabin would not put out his pipe. I went back and repeated the request to put out his pipe. He again refused in a belligerent manner. I told him he was making a big mistake and if he did not put it out I would have someone put it out for him. I then went up to the cockpit and told the captain that I thought he should land and put him off the airplane, he then sent the SO back to talk with him, and that did nothing.

So off I go back up to the cockpit to talk with the captain and said, "If you had enough guts to fly during the pilots' strike you should have enough guts to land this airplane in Fargo." We landed at Fargo's Hector Airport and it was a big deal for Fargo as they had never seen such a big airplane. We made the news and a lot of newspapers. Mr. Meserve had to take the bus to MSP as no other airline would board him.

— Darlene Jevne, SEA Based



Tony and Deneen Polgar

I asked for "photos, photos, photos." The total response was this photo, several from Wayne Anderson and one from Mike Ristow.

The Most Significant Culture Change in Commercial Aviation in These 50 Years

Kathy McCullough tells it like it was.

Co-Editor Ferguson's note:

Most members are well aware of Kathy's many articles that have appeared in Contrails over several years. This one is the result of my specific request.

The first female pilot at Northwest was hired nine years after RNPA was formed, in 1979. That was sixteen years after the first female pilot was hired at a major U. S. airline in 1963. When Kathy offered to contribute to this last print "book" I asked her to consider the subject of females in what was then mostly an all male world.

In my request to her I said, *"There may be something I missed about it's arrival at Northwest, but I thought it was pretty incident-free and never heard much of anything to the contrary."* But as I suspected, that clearly wasn't true. At least in her case. We can extrapolate to safely assume her treatment wasn't unique.

**"Prejudice is a product of ignorance that hides behind barriers of tradition."
— Jasper Fforde**

When I was hired by Northwest Airlines in 1981, gender was the last qualification I wanted on my resume. Unfortunately, being viewed as a woman instead of a pilot was something that I worked my entire career to overcome.

I was somewhat prepared for the uphill battle. I had applied to the United States Forest Service while I was instructing out of Troutdale, Oregon. When I was hired, some of my fellow instructors were jealous and claimed I was a must-hire. I asked, "How many of you filled out the eleven-page application the Forest Service required?" I knew none of them had.

California was burning up in 1980, and after only one season with the USFS Infrared Team, I had the 500 hours of turboprop time NWA was looking for. When upper management in the Forest Service learned I was applying to airlines, they sent a lady from Washington D. C. to Boise, Idaho to talk me into staying. Instead, she convinced me to do just the opposite.



"We can offer you the Denver captain position on the Merlin," she said.

This was the job that the captain I had been flying with had been promised. "Do you have any idea how hard it would be for me to be respected and accepted if I leapfrogged over other pilots who had been there for years?" I asked. She claimed that would be no problem, she would see to that. I told her thanks, but no thanks.

I was hired as the fourth female pilot at NWA on 2/23/1981. Lisa Daly, the fifth female, was also in my class. We introduced ourselves, stating our flight time and experience. Half the class had fewer hours and experience than I did, putting me in the middle of the pack. I breathed a sigh of relief.

My 727 second officer checkride was five and a half hours long. Well, not all of it was checking. The first two hours, the instructor hadn't been able to get the simulator to work, and by the second half of the period, the support crew was flying through buildings and goofing around. The instructor released the pilots, and we went back in the simulator because he was not satisfied that I was safe enough to fly his family. He had not seen a climb flow. I laughed and said there had not been a climb.

Once I was flying the line, the 727 pilots treated me better than an equal. Those were the days they let second officers they liked fly every third leg. Usually, they would buy me dinner, too.

There was always that occasional captain who crossed a line—or two. I caught one captain unplugging cannon plugs when I returned from my walkaround. He said he would have told me if I didn't notice the cabin wasn't pressurizing! However, most of the pilots I had trouble with had reputations, so they weren't just messing with me—none of my classmates liked them either.

A few years later, upgrading to second officer on the DC10, there was no drama at all. Sure, some of the captains watched me like a hawk until they were sure I could do the job. I still got the "I've never flown with a woman before" comment, but that was okay with me. I didn't mind being a pioneer, as long as it made it easier for those coming up behind me. The training department soon had me giving initial operating experience on the line.

Then I upgraded to 727 copilot. The checkout was easy, but the line flying was not. I could fly, but it didn't matter to guys who thought women shouldn't be pilots. One captain grabbed the yoke and yanked it back to slow down because I was going ten knots too fast going into Detroit. "When ATC says 250 at Motor, they want f#!ing 250. I hadn't heard the clearance, but that's not an excuse. Luckily no one was hurt.



Newly hired as Kathy West

For years as a 727 copilot, I would have one great month and then one really shitty month. I used to love taking and passing tests, but I have to admit, some of my checkrides were setups. I started getting checkitis. One captain was so angry at the instructor's unfair treatment of me that he yelled, "Give her a f#!ing chance. I couldn't do that approach."

“ Checking out as 747 captain was the final hurdle in my career. Training was the easy part, but getting checked out to fly the line was a nightmare. ”

I think it was easy for the guys to pretend I was a secretary sitting at the table behind them, fetching them their coffee. I was harder to ignore when I was sitting next to them. When I checked out as a copilot on the 747, there was a group of pilots did not believe women belonged on the whale. They ruled the training department. I had observed copilot checkouts for years as a 747 second officer, so I knew what "safety time" looked like. Mine was an inquisition. The instructor nitpicked everything I did, but went silent on approach and landing. I wasn't worried because I thought the nitpicking meant he couldn't find anything to bust me on. I was wrong. On our last leg into Los Angeles, the check airman moved the rudder trim way out of the center position. I thought I was going to catch a wing tip. He wouldn't sign me off after "that landing."

The head of the training department called me at home to tell me that I was "weak." I had "one more chance" since it was up or out. Yes, I told him about the rudder trim.

I was assigned to an instructor who had "flunked more than thirty guys off the 747." (His words, not mine.) I was sweating bullets. We had intersection holding into Narita, and then I landed a little crooked, as usual. "That's normal at first. This baby will land in a crab. Just don't walk the rudders. You'll get the picture," he said. We flew to Hong Kong's Kai Tak, then back to Narita, where I did "get the picture." He signed me off!

Usually, I could laugh things off and not let them get to me. After all, what had I expected going into a man's world? The 747 copilot checkout left me reeling for quite a while.

One captain had me disconnect the autopilot at FL350 and hand fly for ten minutes. At last, he felt comfortable enough to go to the bathroom. The second officer and I cracked up after he left. Could he have held it in all the way to Narita?

There is harassment, and then there is sexual harassment.

I was in uniform, turning in my key at the Narita front desk, when someone grabbed me between my legs from behind. I turned around and punched him in the stomach. It was like hitting the Pillsbury Dough Boy. The man, a pilot I knew slightly, laughed. The room went silent, but no one said a word to defend me or congratulate me on a well-placed right hook. I can joke now, but then it was a different story. Dejected, I walked across the room and sat down by the captain I was flying with.



"Do you know that man intimately?" the captain asked.

"No. My own husband wouldn't do that to me."

"Call Professional Standards," he said. "Or I will talk to the chief pilot and get him fired."

The captain who was standing up for me characterized most of the men I flew with at NWA—professionals who taught me a lot while we flew around the world. The pilot who grabbed me was an inappropriate asshole. Regardless, I did not want him fired; I just wanted him educated on how to behave.

I called Pro Stan. The man who answered the phone said he had seen this guy in action and that he was even worse with the flight attendants. He said I was doing him a favor because my captain was correct: the offender should be fired.

I never heard another word about the incident. However, I did notice I had the bunkroom to myself more often. I didn't know why until years later, when I learned that there was a rumor going around that I turned pilots in for sexual harassment. Guess who started it? I should have let the captain talk to the chief pilot.

Checking out as 747 captain was the final hurdle in my career. Again, the training was the easy part, but getting checked out to fly the line was a nightmare. After the first horrible leg, the Fleet Director called me and asked how I thought it was going. I told him that I was pretty sure I could fly with this particular check airman for the next twenty years, and he would never sign me off. He agreed and took him off my schedule.

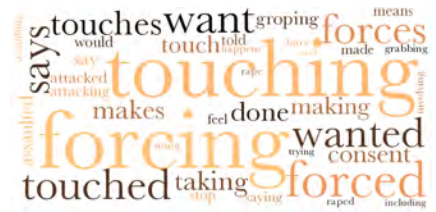
The next morning I was in the boarding area with the check airman, deadheading back to Minneapolis. The check airman started telling me how bad all the women pilots were and that he had "gotten rid of" another one by belittling her until she didn't know her own name. It turns out his wife was sick, dying actually, and he was just mad at the world. (I contacted the other lady pilot, told her my experience, and begged her to come back. She said no, she was done.)

The next instructor was just as bad. His best friend told me he could pick fly shit out of pepper! After grueling, hours-long orals throughout the flight and verbal abuse en route, I was sure he wouldn't sign me off. I was shocked when he did. No, it wasn't always easy being a female pilot at NWA, or I'm sure anywhere else.

You can't force people to play nice. Continual harassment impacts confidence, and we all know confidence in an airplane is half the battle. This behavior has destroyed many women's careers. I hope that persevering made it better for those behind me. As of 2019, there were over 10,000 commercial women pilots worldwide, and 5000 of them in the United States.

Today, the world has turned upside down, and people are being hired in many career fields without the experience needed to do their job. If a woman doesn't have the strength to pass the test because she can't carry the hose, she doesn't deserve the job. If she can, she does. The one U.S. industry that has never been required to lower its standards for job performance is aviation. Because pilots have to perform, male or female.

Flying an airplane is a team effort. ✈





Some remember that Emily Howell Warner was hired by Frontier Airlines in 1973 and may assume that she was the first. But that was 39 years after the actual first.



Helen Richey 1929

The San Diego Air & Space Museum Library & Archives houses the personal papers of the first female commercial pilot, Helen Richey, born on November 12, 1909 in McKeesport, PA.

Richey began her flying career as a teenager out of high school. In 1929 she became the first licensed female pilot in Allegheny County. In August 1932, Richey and Frances Marsalis set a new women's endurance record when the pair stayed aloft for almost ten days. They did so by using another airplane to refuel. In May 1934, Richey won the main race at the first National Air Meet for Women in Dayton, OH.

Richey was the first female pilot to be hired to fly by a commercial scheduled passenger carrier on December 13, 1934 with Central Airlines. Although she won the job after competing with eight men, the Airline Pilots Association and the Department of Commerce, in a case of gross sex discrimination, forced her out. She resigned in November 1935. Women were not to become airline pilots again until 1973.



In 1936, Richey, with Amelia Earhart, came in fifth place in the Bendix Trophy Race from New York City to Los Angeles, and, by doing so bested several male pilots. She was an air-marking pilot for the Bureau of Air Transport and set two world records for light planes. Later, she became the first woman to be licensed as a flight instructor by the CAA. Richey was a member of both the WASP and the Ninety Nines. She died at age 37 on January 7, 1947.

— The San Diego Air & Space Museum Library & Archives

Even Museums don't always get it right! This photo was captioned "Helen Richey as a WASP." Those of course, are not WASP wings. The U. S. Postmaster General was so impressed with the wings that Colonel Brittin had designed (or commissioned) that he was granted permission to use them for all air mail pilots.

A RECENT RETIREE CHECKS IN

From Jonathan Taylor

Hey Gary,

I'm Jonathan Taylor, 1987-2020. Retired off the A-330. My final flight was Jan 3, 2020, Flight 94 NGO-DTW. I was fortunate to fly my last trip with my fiancé, Suzanne Tschida. Little would we know in January 2020 that she would have almost as much time off at home as I have! She has flown maybe a dozen trips as the COVID has cancelled the majority of International travel, and momma Delta is slow to realize that the 330 can fly domestically.

Now only if we had a dozen freighters... oh well.

Semper Fly,

Jonathan Taylor



After Jonathan teased us with the electronic flight bag photo I asked him if he would amplify the EFB for those of us who could only dream of such things prior to this century.

— Co-Editor Ferguson

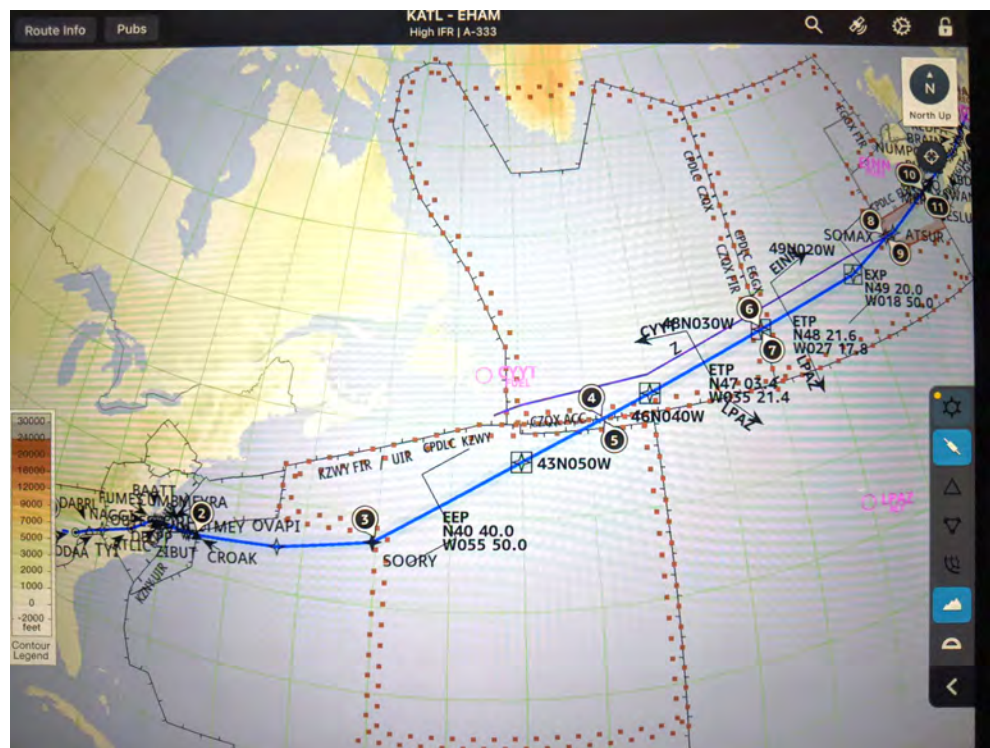
The EFB started out life at Delta as a Microsoft surface, but had many issues with dependability. I had one issue where the device froze during an instrument approach. Nice. A few years ago Delta upgraded to the Apple iPad. Big improvement.

Think of everything you would lug around in your flight bag, and it's all in the EFB, well except for a flashlight. From manuals (MEL, FOM, VOL 1 and 2, OPS and Airway manuals, flight and pilot bulletins etc) which update at a click and approach plates that you never need to rip out of your Jepps binder... update a click away.

The flight plan is also downloaded to your EFB and you can fill in time and fuel over waypoints. (Though Delta still requires us to print the flight plan... DELTA; Destroy Every Living Tree Around."

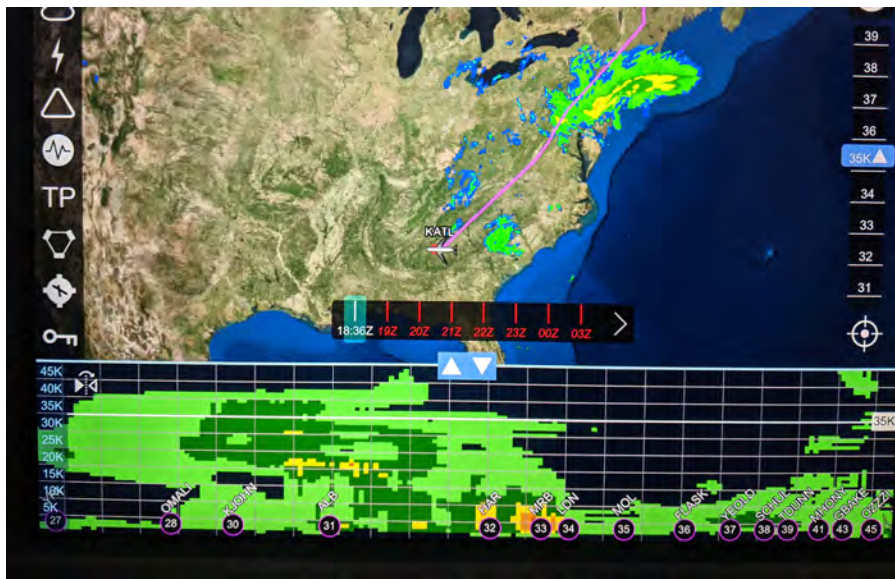
As far as the EFB displays go, while on the ground you would have the taxi diagram up. While taxing it is a moving map. Accuracy can be increased by pairing your EFB to a "Bad Elf" which amplifies the GPS signal. Prior to taking the runway you would display the SID. Once enroute the Jet would show it's position as a magenta triangle. TPs are also automatically uploaded.

Upon arrival you would display on the EFB similar to using paper Jepps. The biggest SA builder especially in reduced visibility is the moving taxi map. By employing the Bad Elf your position is accurate to a few feet. Very helpful at airports with poor signage (think CDG).



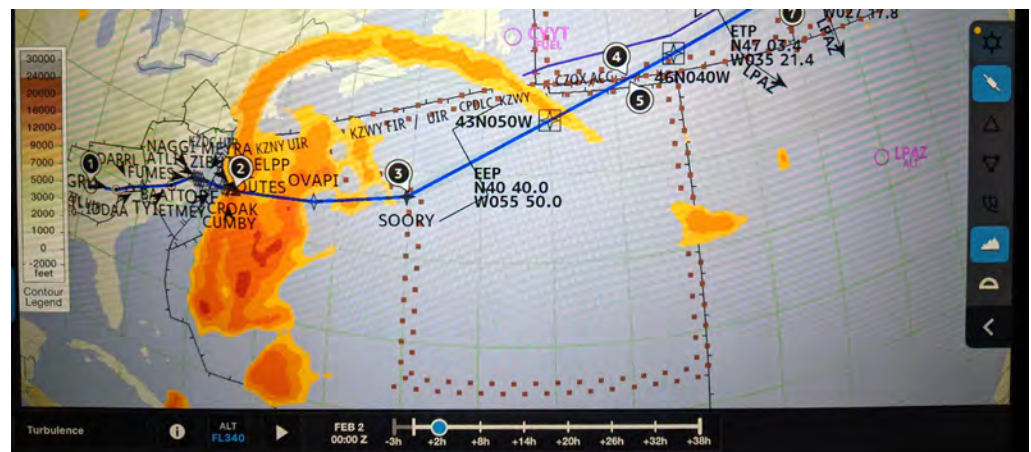
Overview of Plotting Chart. As you can see, all the chart prep that some poor F/O had to prepare is now done automatically. A review of the pic shows the Etops Entry Point (EEP) Equal Time Points (ETP) and ETOPS alternates in magenta. The Etops Exit Point (EXP) is also depicted. Plotting charts are no longer required, but still make excellent sun shades.

Overview of route with radar overlay. Selecting the WX icon (lower left corner) allows you to display a number of wx info; clouds, lightning radar return, turbulence intensity etc.



Route turbulence. You can make an educated guess on the ride conditions along your route. Selecting your desired altitude (current or planned) on the altitude bar (right hand of screen) shows your ride conditions. If this was an actual flight your jet would be depicted on the vertical route (bottom half of pic) in real time. Great SA builder.

Route with turbulence overlay.



From Darlene Jevny

WESTERN UNION

TO: W. A. PATTERSON, ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT
BOEING AIR TRANSPORT,
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.
FEBRUARY 24, 1930

AS A SUGGESTION -- I WAS JUST WONDERING IF YOU HAD EVER GIVEN ANY SERIOUS THOUGHT TO THE SUBJECT OF YOUNG WOMEN AS COURIERS. IT STRIKES ME THAT THERE WOULD BE A GREAT PSYCHOLOGICAL PUNCH TO HAVING YOUNG WOMEN STEWARDESSES OR COURIERS, OR WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL THEM, AND I AM CERTAIN THAT THERE ARE SOME MIGHTY GOOD ONES AVAILABLE. I HAVE IN MIND A COUPLE OF GRADUATE NURSES WHO WOULD MAKE EXCEPTIONAL STEWARDESSES. OF COURSE IT WOULD BE DISTINCTLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE WOULD BE NO REFERENCE MADE TO THEIR HOSPITAL TRAINING OR NURSING EXPERIENCE, BUT IT WOULD BE A MIGHTY FINE THING TO HAVE THIS AVAILABLE, SUB ROSA, IF NECESSARY FOR AIR SICKNESS.

IMAGINE THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAVING YOUNG WOMEN AS REGULAR MEMBERS OF THE CREW: IMAGINE THE NATIONAL PUBLICITY WE COULD GET FROM IT, AND THE TREMENDOUS EFFECT IT WOULD HAVE ON THE TRAVELING PUBLIC. ALSO IMAGINE THE VALUE THAT THEY WOULD BE TO US IN THE NEATER AND NICER METHOD OF SERVING FOOD AND LOOKING OUT FOR THE PASSENGERS' WELFARE.

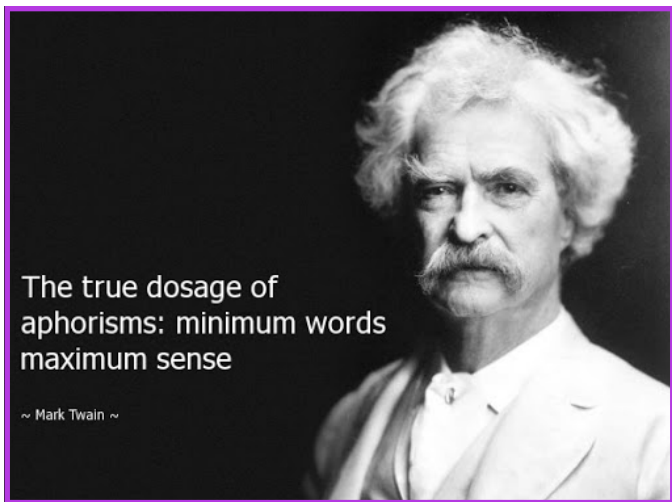
I AM NOT SUGGESTING AT ALL THE FLAPPER TYPE OF GIRL. YOU KNOW NURSES AS WELL AS I DO, AND YOU KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT GIVEN TO FLIGHTINESS. THE AVERAGE GRADUATE NURSE IS A GIRL WITH SOME HORSE SENSE AND IS VERY PRACTICAL AND HAS SEEN ENOUGH OF MEN TO NOT BE INCLINED TO CHASE THEM AROUND THE BLOCK AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. FURTHER, AS A GENERAL RULE NURSES ARE NOT OF THE "PRETTY" TYPE WHICH LENDS TO THEIR USEFULNESS IN THIS CASE.

THE YOUNG WOMEN WHOM WE WOULD SELECT WOULD NATURALLY BE INTELLIGENT AND COULD HANDLE WHAT TRAFFIC WORK ABOARD WAS NECESSARY, SUCH AS THE KEEPING OF RECORDS, FILLING OUT REPORTS, ISSUING TICKETS, ETC. ETC. THEY WOULD PROBABLY DO THIS AS WELL OR BETTER THAN THE AVERAGE YOUNG FELLOW. FURTHER, WHILE WE ADMIT TO OURSELVES THAT WE ARE GOING TO TRAIN COURIERS FOR ULTIMATE JOBS ASHORE IN VARIOUS TRAFFIC CAPACITIES, WE KNOW BETWEEN OURSELVES THAT THERE IS ANYTHING BUT A DEARTH OF OPPORTUNITIES IN SIGHT.

AS TO THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED YOUNG WOMEN COURIERS, THEIR FIRST PARAMOUNT QUALIFICATION WOULD BE THAT OF A GRADUATE NURSE (ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD NEVER BE BROUGHT INTO THE FOREGROUND IN ADVERTISING OR ANYTHING AS IT SORT OF SOUNDS AS THOUGHT THEY ARE NECESSARY); AND, SECONDLY, YOUNG WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN AROUND AND ARE FAMILIAR WITH GENERAL TRAVEL, - RAIL, STEAMER AND AIR. SUCH YOUNG WOMEN ARE AVAILABLE HERE.

THIS IS JUST A PASSING THOUGHT.

S. A. STIMPSON
DIVISION TRAFFIC



An Aphorism is a statement of truth or opinion expressed in a concise, pithy and witty manner.

I read that 4,153,237 people got married last year. Not to cause any trouble, but shouldn't that be an even number?

I find it ironic that the colors red, white, and blue stand for freedom until they are flashing behind you.

When wearing a bikini, women reveal 90% of their body. Men are so polite they only look at the covered parts.

Relationships are a lot like algebra. Have you ever looked at your X and wondered Y?

America is a country which produces citizens who will cross the ocean to fight for democracy but won't cross the street to vote.

You know that tingly little feeling you get when you love someone? That's your common sense leaving your body.

My therapist says I have a preoccupation with vengeance. We'll see about that.

Money talks... but all mine ever says is good-bye.

You're not fat, you're just easier to see.

If you think nobody cares whether you're alive, try missing a couple of payments.

I always wondered what the job application is like at Hooters. Do they just give you a bra and say, "Here, fill this out?"

I can't understand why women are OK that J C Penny has an older women's clothing line named, "Sag Harbor."

Denny's has a slogan, "If it's your birthday, the meal is on us." If you're in Denny's and it's your birthday, your life sucks!

The location of your mailbox shows you how far away from your house you can go in a robe before you start looking like a mental patient.

I think it's pretty cool how Chinese people made a language entirely out of tattoos.

Money can't buy happiness, but it keeps the kids in touch!

The reason Mayberry was so peaceful and quiet was because nobody was married. Andy, Aunt Bea, Barney, Floyd, Howard, Goober, Gomer, Sam, Ernest T. Bass, Helen, Thelma Lou, Clara and, of course, Opie were all single. The only married person was Otis, and he stayed drunk.

Contributed, I think, by Bill Rataczak



LOGBOOK NOTES AND MORE

Vic Britt

Oct. 4, 1965

Four days riding backwards in a USAF C-135 took me from MCAS El Toro to Travis AFB, Wake Island, the Philippines, and Da Nang. A Marine C-130 from VMGR-1 finished the 50-mile trip south to the Aluminum runway at MCEF Chu Lai. Arrived 1500 hours in heat of the day. A "Redneck" hot and humid was not new to me, but Vietnam hot and humid was wicked. BOQ shared with five Marines is a tent with sand floor and occasional pieces of plywood. Threw my seabag on a cot, traded khakis worn three days for a clean flight suit and made beeline for a tent on the beach, Chu Lai's "O' Club".

Carrying weapons to O' Club not encouraged. Took my "cover" off before entering tent. Only person in tent behind bar in flight suit, loudly greeting, ***"What'll it be Marine? Salty Dog, Salty Dog, or a Salty Dog? We're a little short on choice of booze, but you can have Vodka with grapefruit juice or Vodka without grapefruit juice, and without ice or without ice."***

My introduction to Marine 1st Lt. **Robert M. Polhamus.**

MAG-12 had four squadrons at Chu Lai: VMA 211, 214, 224, and 311. Dec 15th 65 All Squadrons were divided into quarters and troops mixed so replacements could be inserted in different squadrons as they arrived in-country. I left VMA 224 for 211, and Polhamus left VMA 311 for 211. Our cots next to each other were five feet apart. The 211 C.O. "Whiskey John" only flew daytime. Rocks had to be thrown at him to get him airborne.

Bob's scheduling contact in flight ops meant we flew together often. He was a good stick and lead. Bob had a photographic memory and could quote FAR's or Skyhawk "NATOPS" verbatim, and never forgot a joke! Bob always knew the rules; He just ignored those with which he disagreed. Time passed slowly in Nam, but in Polhamus' vicinity conversation never stopped and time flew. "Rapid Robert" introduced me to Northwest Orient Airlines. For the next fifty years Bob Polhamus was a loyal friend.

Semper Fi and R.I.P. Bobby.

Oct. 2, 1967	Seniority #1301 of 1305 Ground School. Wednesday October 4th in middle of a class from the hall came: "Attention On Deck!". Sailors and Marines leaped up, staring straight ahead. USAF and US Army slowly stand, look around wondering "What the Hell is Going On"? Polhamus and "Black Bart" Bartholomay passing through MSP time to kill. First time I'd seen Bob since April 66 at Chu Lai. "Andy" Anderson and Ralph Douglass ran flight training scheduling. Ralph was friendly, easy to know, flexible if you needed to change a training event. Pat Honsval left Northwest Airlines Credit Union and joined flight training before the move to new Flight Standards Building (FSB). A welcome addition to flight training. NWA still had rotary telephones when Ralph retired in 1983, too cheap to get push buttons. Ralph called hundreds a day and hated my number, 920-9001 (took forever to dial). Bill Kish, "Fast Eddie" Fasula and I opened an account at NWA Credit Union for Ralph's retirement. "We Three" asked pilots to help send Ralph off right. Ralph's retirement party at Decathlon Club over two hundred attended. Food and drinks first class. Enough left to hand Ralph a check for about \$15,000, about \$40,000 2021 dollars. And a 747 Charcoal signed so many times the 747 was not visible. Ralph "Flew West" in 1993; wrote his own obit but they left out last line. "Get me to the church on time." Ralph's sense of humor. I loved it.
Jan. 17, 1968	NWA had NO simulators until late '69. Flight training/checks were in 707 and 727 aircraft, often freighters. 727-707 ground school instructors were Captains and former Flight Engineers moved over to line pilot positions. Our 727 ground school instructors were Captains Norm Mldthun, Jerry Frederickson, former F/E's including Bob Mielke check airman for my 727 check ride.
Feb. , 1968	Flying the Line, safety time Jan '68 and Feb 727 S/O Florida trips with T.K. Roe on "The List" ("The List" suggested captains to avoid). Got along OK with T.K. Flew MSP-MIA leg Feb 21st T/O to LND. F/O not happy.
Mar., 1968	Ray Niver/Bob Lynn. Pax to EWR. Early up 3-leg cargo flight home. Ray says: "I'll buy if you'll fly." Flew F/O T/O to LND EWR-MKE cargo legs.
Apr., 1968	Bill McNulty/Bill Douglas. Two great guys. Got every third leg.
May to July, 1968	Captains Dave Monroe, Art Poelhs, Bob McClure, Lowell Kegley, Jim Mancini, Tom Kelley, Jim Smith. Good guys, I am in a good place
July 23, 1968	Ground School 707, Instructor Bill Hochbrunn. Handed 707 ground school card, signed W.F. Hochbrunn Director-Flight Training.
Sep. 27, 1968	707 S/O training MIA. Check ride Don (In Other Words-Actually) Abbott. Worked 15 years for Don Abbott and Bob Mielke 707-727-747- DC10. Good friends, excellent Instructors, gave fair thorough check rides.

Oct. 1, 1968	Back to line 727 S/O, Called up for 707 S/O trips through December 68. Mix of 727 and 707 S/O trips.
Jan., 1969	707 S/O trips with Art Peterson/Gary Lindstam and John Scholl .
Feb., 1969	707 S/O reserve: Chet Holtan, Frank Fox, Carl Schultz, George Montgomery, Skeeter Johnson, Ollie Yates – Good Guys. On 707s pitot heat is turned on just before T/O. Last leg with Carl Schultz SEA-MSP I forgot to turn it on. Caught on descent check, asked Carl “What town is that.” Got the heat on without getting caught. CAVU all the way. Skeeter Johnson MSP-ORD turnaround 707/720 Ship 736. Did not stop fueling until 10,000 lbs over max landing weight MSP. Skeeter said, “We are not going to defuel, be here until midnight. Don’t worry about it.” At 10,000’ Skeeter told ATC we were stopping there. Called for gear down. On time in MSP below max landing without dumping, but a bit noisy.
Mar., 1969	707 S/O trips with Lester P. “Les” Lowinske and Al Bensen . Middle of month had a MSP-SEA turn with Earl Hohag and Dale Yates . Short but fun trip with two good guys. Think it was before Dale became “Rowdy”. Last trip with “Les” he asks, “Ever thought about working in flight training?” I said, “No, but I’m interested.” Two days later Don Abbott asked if I’d like to work in flight training. I said yes. Don said: “Be in my office at 8:00 tomorrow.”
Apr., 1969	First month in flight training requalified as 727 S/O and followed Bill Heinig and Bob Mielke around “learning the ropes.” Observing 727 and 707 S/O’s finishing safety time before turning them loose, and an occasional simulator period. Worked with: Dan Lee, Roberts, Manthei, Jansen, Blum, Kelly, Doherty, Ted Miller, Lipman, Rose, Marquis, Daberkow .
May, 1969	L.R. “Jake” Jacobson lectures “need to know” parts of the Flight Engineer exam. NWA often hires two classes a month and Jake wants someone to share his good fortune. I agree to take some of the classes. In the next 8 months there are 14 new classes with 330 new pilots. Jake and I alternate.
June, July, August, 1969	707 simulator and aircraft S/O training periods with: Bartlett, Schultz, Bertness, Tharp, Andy Hill, Sanderson, Roane, Lackey, Crippen, Baertsch, Wood, Cumme, Hyatt, Amelse, Reed, Landers, Taliaferro, Cummings, Dahl, Young, Gerlicher, Ainslee, Christian, Bryant, Hyde, Pomeroy, Darrell Smith
Sep. 3, 1969	S/O Check Airman Qual 720/320 with FAA Chick Hart . Worked six trips as 707 S/O instructor until called up for 727 F/O training.
Sep. 12, 1969	727 F/O training Salina. 70 legs and 95 hours flown while second officering help. Instructors Billy D. Brown, Larry Sutherland, Loyd Cizek .



Sep. 18, 1969	F/O check ride with Don McKay .
Sep. 22 to Oct. 13, 1969	NWA leased two 727-100's to Union of Burma Airways and trained their pilots. I teach FAA Flight Engineer exam, and many mind-blowing sessions on 727 systems. Senior pilot Captain Latt is General Manager-Flight Operations. Very political and least capable of the lot. Capt. Thaw Na "Ronald Lao" Manager of Operations is sharp and a good stick, catches on fast. Well prepared for his oral.
Oct. 25, 1969	Captain Eric Linden probably holds world record for most take offs and landings with an engine out on commercial aircraft. Eric would not be rushed, by anyone, period. He was meticulous, ensured every "I" dotted, and every "T" crossed. Eric was an excellent pilot. I flew a few ferry flights with the 8X10 glossy. His focus was getting the airplane back to MSP ASAP, for perhaps a pat on the back or a nod from his boss.
Nov. - Dec, 1969	707 training flights with S/Os Taylor, Berner, Hansen, Bond, Sovereign, Foster, Hudson, Wenger, Peterson, Good, Harker . Taught FAA Flight Engineer ground schools in November and December.
Late 1969 or Early 1970	NWA and ALPA signed a new contract. ALPA explained the new contract. ALPA got things we wanted. NWA got tit for tat, plus some. ALPA changed wages/pay scale for 747 S/Os. All other aircraft S/O pay scale was a percentage of captain rates and length of service. NWA wanted pay scale for 747 S/Os to be same as 707/720 copilots. NWA got two good deals from the arrangement. 747 S/Os would cost the airline about 20% less than if they got the same percentage of captain's pay S/Os received on 727s/707s. Also, fewer pilots checked out as 707 F/Os would bid down to 747 S/O if there was no monetary gain, less training cost. Negotiating committee explained reasoning for accepting NWA's offer. "We looked at their proposal and the rate at which the airline is growing. You guys are moving up the ladder so fast we did not think that it would take anything away from you."
Jan. 4, 1970	727 F/O schedule with Dick Brundidge and Howie Fowler . Fly four 2-day trips before pulled off schedule for 707 F/O training.

Jan. 26, 1970	707 F/O training SLN: Ed Zimdars, Jack Stewart, Skeeter Johnson, Art Peterson.
Feb. 3, 1970	707 F/O Ck FAA Chick Hart.
1963 - 1970	Pilot hiring: In 1963/64 NWA's F/Es became pilots or S/Os. In 1964/65 some months had two pilot classes, and classes were not large. Classes late 1968 to January 1970 are larger, and often two weeks apart. In 1970 NWA will not add 727s/707s at previous rates. 747s get the attention and money.
Oct. 1967 to Jan. 1970	Pilots hired 686=43 pilots/month. Two new airplanes must be added each month to efficiently use 43 pilots. NWA created an efficient pilot hiring machine running on autopilot, and no one is Flying The Aircraft!
Nov. 15, 1969 to Jan. 31, 1970	Seventy (70) pilots not needed are hired. The BRAC strike will start in June but is not a factor in the pilot layoffs of March/April 1970.
Feb.-Apr., 1970	First layoffs of 70 recently hired pilots. 747 ground school for instructors and line pilots. Two weeks of class then split into groups work on pre-flight, procedures, checklists. First 747s arrive in April and training starts in Salina. Boeing pilot instructors Tom Edmons flew F8U's Pax River, Paul Maier and Paul Bennet each got Migs in Korea. Laid back excellent pilots/instructors.
May. 9, 1970	Bill Kish and I in Salina for 747 S/O training with Boeing's Bill Egglestone and Wes Johnston. Most NWA pilots do well; a couple are challenged. Elwood McCary and Dick Smith could have passed 747 type rating first time they touched the controls. Asked about 747 stall characteristics, Paul Bennet pulled power to idle; trimmed for level flight until stall. Paul held controls back in stall and 747 continued straight ahead, no wing drop. Air popping off wings during stall was loud.
May 15, 1970	Our Check ride with Don Abbott is his check ride for a 747 S/O Check Airman Ticket from Boeing's Curt Dahlstrom, a former NWA F/E Don has known for 20 years. 747 S/O instructors except Kish and I leave Salina to teach ground school, proving flights etc. Kish and I relax by pool. Mielke spots us asks: "Are you getting check rides today"? We said yes, Mielke says, "You should be hitting the books?" Our response, "We broke the code. All qualified 747 S/Os leave Salina today. If we don't pass our checks, ship 601 is a Gemco Board." Bob shook his head and walked away.
Jun., 1970	Dale Hinkle checked out as 727 captain and completed his safety time just before the BRAC strike in June 1970. He will be able to wear 4 stripes in the future whether in the left seat or not. Eight months from now Dale will be checking out as a 747 S/O.
Jul. 8, 1970	747 S-1 simulator Joe Heye and Wray Featherstone. Layoff notice to 1,000 pilots. Ralph Douglass calls. I have a 747 S-3 panel watch July 9th. Hung up, dialed ALPA. F/O Rep Bill Rataczak answered. I said, "I got a layoff notice and Ralph Douglass says I have 747 S-3 tomorrow. What's up?" Bill says ALPA and NWA agreed junior pilots who otherwise laid off can work if laid off pilots who would be working are paid also. NWA sets up to fly 707s and 747s only. Not popular, two thirds of pilot group get nothing.

Nov. 9, 1970	NWA is bumping up 707 flying and recalled captains hired in 58/59 to fly as S/Os. I teach a two day 707 Re-qual Ground School which included: John McAlpin, Dan Linehan, Dick Haglund, Neal Henderson, Dick Suhr, Dick Thompson, Buzz Gilbertson, Arnie Calvert, Roger Bruggermeyer, Don Nelson, Wally Walbaum, Tom Kelley, Harry Franklin. Trip with Roger Bruggermeyer to sign him off as 707 S/O. F/O former Captain Ray Severson keeps turning around to see how Roger is doing. Roger says, "I know what I'm doing, but you don't know what you're doing. You want to be S/O? I'll trade seats." Severson did not turn around again.
Dec., 7, 1970	BRAC strike over! 707 Requal Ground School for "old" S/O instructors: Gary Prehall, Howie Glenna, Roger Wright, Al Haugen, Ken Carlson, Dale Hinkle, Phil Miller, Ron Vandervort, Lynn Adams, Darrell Reber.
1970-1993	1964-1970 "Good Years," 1971-79 "Pain Years". ALPA strikes 1972 and 1978. Standing joke: Nyrop can't run airline bigger than 1200 pilots! 747s and DC-10s replace 707s. 80s Working for Al Taylor writing 747 CRBs, ART lectures, with Jake Jacobson, Ken Warras, Ken Kreutzmann, Ray Alexander, Tom White. Al Taylor's an outstanding leader, as fine a person as I've known.
1991	Tom Shellinger has Line Check Airman and he and Chief Pilots give input on "Fleet Captains." Tom asked if Bob Cavill's considered for 747 Fleet Captain. I said: "I've worked for Bob Cavill. Would Bob work for me?" Shellinger said: "Why don't you ask?" I asked Bob said yes. Dennis Boston warranted the job for outstanding work over several years. Bob Cavill would keep senior Whale Captains "At Bay." 747: Bob Cavill-Tim Olson-Terry Marsh DC-10: Gene Sommerfeld - Roger Break 757: Ray Alexander - Larry Hacker 727: Ken Redetzke - Curt Breeding A320: Noel Duncan - Jeff Carlson DC-9 & MD-80: Mike Greve - Rick Orr - Mark Shanahan. Bob said working with Tim and Terry was his most enjoyed time at NWA. Paul Soderlind and Bob Cavill were the best Flights Ops leaders we had. Special Shoutouts: Bob Boston, Gene Frank, Hugh Ronalds, Dan Handlin, Paul Dealy, Dick Edwards, Pam Schoenecker and Gardner.



Don Nyrop “greet” pilot **Doug Baker** on picket duty MSP terminal 1978

NOTE:

Dick O’Neal has said: “I can do S/O’s job with chewing gum on a stick.” Failed S/O check. Wrong chewing gum, or stick. Sued NWA, Lost! Saw him at Richfield K Mart years later. His eyes glared coldly. Returned my best sentiments!

Ladies Hat Day Lexington 2013



Judy Schellinger



Karen Oliva



Sheri Ball



Kathy Foster



Laurie McCauley



Prim Hamilton



Barbara Pisel



Nadine Bentsen



Katie Pethia



Eileen Hallin



Gayla Bredahl

THE PILOT... AND THE PILOT'S WIFE

Submitted by Jane Chadwick



The pilot...

I'm not sure I can truly relate what the Northwest "family" meant to Don but I'm going to try to share some thoughts of what I believe Don's career, as well as the people he worked with, meant to him.

Don started with Northwest in July 1966 and his class was chosen to become co-pilots on the Electra, rather than second officers on the 727. The captains who mentored him in the early days of his career remained as special friends to him; I'll refrain from naming names for fear of omitting someone. He always enjoyed reminiscing some of those memorable flights with those gentlemen, especially at RNPA gatherings.

Don enjoyed all aspects of the job, even those late-night cargo flights to JFK. He was always eager to learn about the local culture and sights and to share these explorations with other crew members. The long-hauls to Asia opened up new areas to explore, as Don found so much to search out in each city. Lay-overs gave him opportunities such as taking a tour (via horse or camel) to see The Sphinx, tube down the Snake River, climb Diamond Head, enjoy remarkable meals, or visit museums around the world, always with other crew members.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the times Don was able to catch up with friends or family in TPA, SFO, LGA, or FRA. His airline career also extended travel benefits for our entire family which gave us the opportunity to explore various continents. What a wonderful experience for all of us!

Don was especially proud of his time flying CRAF and MATS flights. He enjoyed chatting with the National Guard members he was bringing home from various deployments; it was also special to him that on some flights he was re-uniting military families.

After having to take early retirement due to heart issues, Don happily joined RNPA which afforded him the opportunity to renew old friendships and recall "back in the day..." He sat on the RNPA Board of Directors and was later invited to serve on the Paul Soderlind Scholarship committee, where he and a small group of other retired pilots made the yearly selection of scholarship recipients. Several years after Don's passing, our granddaughter was awarded one of the scholarships—and I was able to experience first-hand exactly how meaningful this scholarship was to a student.

And now the pilot's wife

Don's career certainly opened up the world to me. Oh, there were the day-to-day activities of running the household while he was on a trip and dealing with whatever needed taking care of which could be anything from breakdowns in the house to a tree through the roof of the garage. But one of the real benefits of being a pilot's wife was meeting people from all over the country; these people became our life-long friends. The NWA Bridge Club I joined has been together since 1966, and continues to be a very close-knit group to this very day.

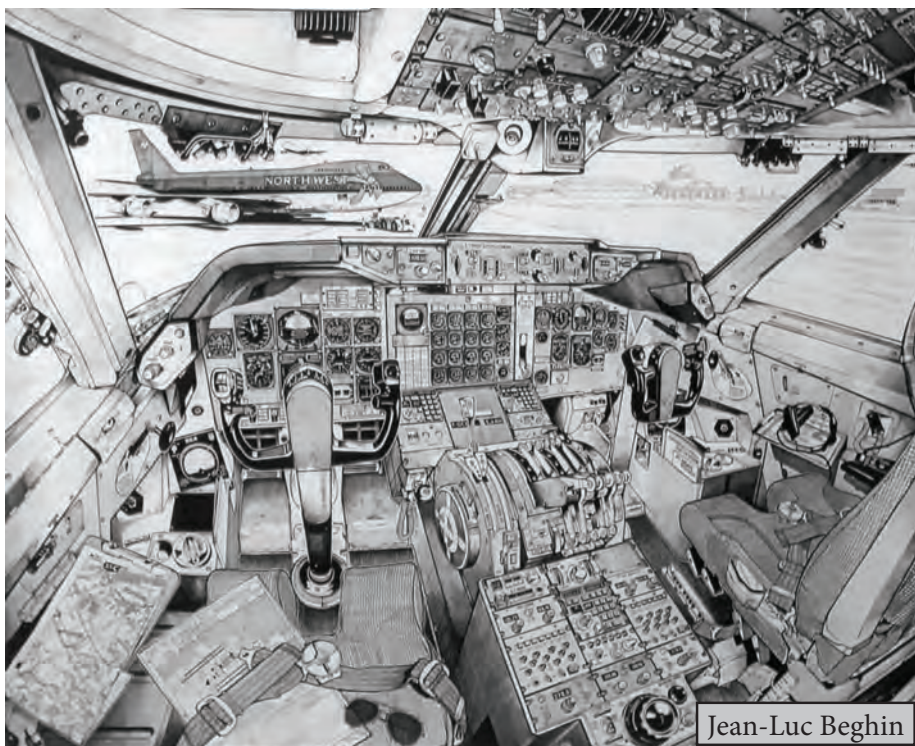
An important activity that I participated in was the Northwest Airlines Pilots Wives Club. In addition to being a social organization, the American Heart Association became the benefactor of our fund-raising efforts. We held a large luncheon each Spring with a theme based on a city Northwest served. We had national celebrities as the entertainers as well as public figures serving as Master of Ceremony. We raised tens of thousands of dollars via the ads we sold for the program book, sought out contributions, and sold raffle tickets for some special prizes, including round-trip tickets donated by Northwest. We also published two cookbooks, one of which featured photography by pilot Bill Atkins.

Several of our members served on various committees within the Minnesota Heart Association; we also did a good deal of education regarding good heart health. A large group of our membership was trained to take blood pressures and we participated in large-group screenings at various events, which would include an appearance by the Heartmobile, an educational vehicle which we sponsored. For several years we sponsored a scholarship for a college student doing heart research.

Don and I, along with our children, used the employee benefit of passes to the best of our ability. We were able to take some wonderful trips to Europe and Asia as well as to travel back East to keep in close touch with our New England family. This afforded our children the opportunity to be well-connected with their grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. And let's admit it, those were the days when we were often able to fly First Class; I'm glad we had that experience!w

Since Don's passing, our youngest daughter has been able to accompany me to a couple of RNPA conventions. She quickly experienced the camaraderie of the Northwest family as everyone welcomed her and shared a story or two about her Dad. ✈





My Home Away From Home for More Than 20 Years

Four Stories from **John Robertson**

1 Crossing Thoughts and Home Away

The 747 pilot's rest area was located in first-class. After climbing the winding staircase, a crew key gained access to an enclosed area that featured a bunkbed and lounge chair. On my first Pacific crossing, I drew the short straw: the senior engineer opted to work the first half of the flight, which meant for the next five to six hours, this wide-eyed newbie was assigned his obligatory rest period.

Clad in sweats and wrapped into a lightweight sleeping bag, my position on the upper bunk provided a clearance of just a few inches between my nose and the ceiling. From there only bundles of wire, cables, insulation, and the ship's outer layer made up the boundary that protected me from temperatures as low as negative 70 degrees Fahrenheit—or 56 below Celsius. The sound of an untold number of air molecules being pushed aside by the onrush of this 800,000-pound beast was incessant.

With hours to go before I'd face the engineer panel, my thoughts drifted to the path that led me to this bunkbed. Only by looking back could I appreciate any potential alternate destinations.

In the mid-1970s, Dad was part of a TWA crew assigned to fly the press corps during President Ford's trip to Asia. At the time, I was within six months of graduating college, and had been accepted to Cal State Fullerton's master's program in journalism. Out of the blue, Dad phoned and asked, "Any chance you could get time off from school and join me and the likes of John Chancellor, Tom Brokaw, and Harry Reasoner?"

Without fail, all of my professors insisted that missing a few classes was a small price for this opportunity. "Just go," they said.

I was giddy with anticipation while Dad worked the phones on behalf of this "cub reporter." The Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation were still recent news items, and I couldn't

believe there was a chance I'd get to watch and learn from the TV anchors who had covered these historic events. But the request hit a dead end when the hurdles of credentials, visas, and clearances became unsurmountable. Had it gone the other way, would I have been influenced to follow in the reporter's footsteps?

Later, Dad relived his experience flying to Vladivostok's airport along Russia's Siberian coast. He'd maneuvered the 707 on a circling approach, burdened with a language barrier, dicey weather, and metric conversion nuances. Perhaps that eye-opener would have pushed me to the service recruiters' doors sooner.

Still in the bunk bed, I tossed and turned while trying to will myself to sleep. Over the next 20 years, I'd learn to accept sleep deprivation as part of the international pilot's plight. One of General Powell's rules of leadership, "Careful what you wish for. You may get it," came to mind. I'd broken an earlier promise to avoid the engineer's seat at all cost, but introducing me to the 747 and NWA's international network more than made up for the windowless seat.

Back at NAS Corpus Christi, it was common to find flight instructors discussing their dream airline job. When I'd open NWA's system timetable, I'd go directly to their route map, where it showed blue lines crossing the Atlantic and Pacific. "Imagine," I'd say to a fellow instructor, "you could fly to Hong Kong one month, and London the next." Just a handful of years later, I was in a bunkbed flying west on one of those blue lines.

I checked my watch. Now less than two hours remained before shift change, and I knew sleep would have to wait. In the meantime, I replayed my first flight on a 747. It was the spring of 1970. I was a senior in high school when dad arranged a seat on Pan Am good for passage to Honolulu. I wore the proper pass rider outfit: dress slacks and stiff, collared shirt with tie; but I didn't stand out as most of the 400 passengers were dressed in similar fashion.

My middle seat in the last row was separated by over 200 feet from the familiar first-class section I'd enjoyed with TWA. But no matter; I was happy to be seated anywhere. At the time, my wonderment came from the plane's size, and years would pass before I'd recognize how this jumbo jet would globalize the tourism industry.

During the takeoff roll I could feel the ship's main wheels tumble over concrete. Nearing the runway's end, the front half of the plane tilted skyward, then seconds later those of us in the rear followed suit and became airborne. The passengers rewarded the crew and the miracle of flight with a rousing round of applause—only to be repeated nine hours later when the ship's 18 wheels made contact on Oahu.

In my NWA uniform's shirt pocket was the printout of a six-day schedule, highlighted with a 40-hour Hong Kong layover. This was 1988, and nine years later, the British Crown Colony would be returned to China. At the crew hotel I planned to pester the concierge, a practice I'd follow throughout NWA's Asian and European theatres. With the city map spread open across his desk, I'd highlight his recommended attractions, restaurants, and pubs.

Now two days later, outside the hotel, I soon learned why Hong Kong is ranked as one of the world's most densely populated cities. Squeezed between sharp rising terrain and a busy seaport were office skyscrapers, apartments, and condos that housed the city's millions. Map in hand, I fought for my share of the sidewalk, one step at a time. Even in the parks, (where I spotted my first "No hacking" sign) clogged pathways made for a slow progression. Subways and the Star Ferry that took passengers from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon were a cramped means of transiting from one mass of humanity to the next. Then one day I got lucky...

While on a search for the Noon Day Gun (the tradition of the noon cannon firing dates back to the 1860s) along the Causeway Bay, I saw a sign for the Hong Kong Yacht Club. Taking a cue I'd learned from dad, I walked past the manned guard gate as if I owned the place. (Dad wasn't shy about attempting entry where he didn't belong. I was a flight student in Pensacola when the movie *Jaws* was being filmed nearby. In a back lot near the beach, the mechanical shark was

under wraps in a fenced, off-limits area. Dad approached the guard, flashed his TWA business card, and said, “I just flew in to see how the star of the show is holding up.” And with that, we were granted access to the device that kept thousands out of the water.)

The Yacht Club’s guard returned my false nod of recognition and I continued toward what I hoped to be an unlocked door. I turned the handle, and once inside heard voices from the far end of the hallway. It led to a bar, where two fellas were bellied up to the counter.

“Is it possible to get a drink?” I asked.

The bartender replied. “Are you a member?”

I figured my streak of luck had run its course. Before I could answer, one of the gents said, “I say, old chap, this one’s on me.”

Over a few Guinness pints, I learned there were no cash transactions in the club, only chits signed with the member’s club number. My new drinking buds were a delight to listen to as they imparted one seafaring story after another. I knew this was a one-time good deal and would have to improvise on future visits. And so, I did...

At a convenience store I tossed a couple of beers into the hotel’s laundry bag, filled with ice. Then once past the now familiar guard, I’d veer toward the veranda, where big leather chairs faced Victoria Harbor, one of the world’s busiest ports. And other than the occasional staff walking by, this priceless refuge was all mine to enjoy. In his book, *Horizon*, Barry Lopez describes a similar, Eden-like setting by stating, “I seemed to want for nothing.”

The Yacht Club oasis, and other nooks I discovered throughout NWA’s international system, taught me that home doesn’t have to be one’s permanent address. It could be a visual cue, a distant sound, or nearby fragrance that would draw me to see what was around the next corner. And if it brought solace, I’d return again and again, until the time came for NWA’s red tail to carry me home.

Crossing Oceans

*I spend my nights crossing oceans
Looking down on moonlit waves
Disguising a giant undertow
That pulls me towards alternate
destinations*

*The plane and compass turn together
Making tracts across the sky
I hold on to find my way back to you*

*Under a sickle moon
A shooting star streaks then fades
Sprinkling wishes like the candle’s
last flicker*

*Slipping through broken clouds
I land amidst a sea of strangers
All in a hurry to get somewhere slow*

2

Iwo Jima

NWA offered daily service to the Mariana Archipelago. These flights originated in Tokyo, and after 3 hours would first touchdown in Saipan and 30 minutes later, Guam—or as we called the islands, “a poor man’s Hawaii.” The beaches, shopping, restaurants, and golf courses fell short of what you’d find on Oahu. But the shorter distance and lower prices filled the 747 with Japanese tourists, eager to unwind in the sun.

Shortly after takeoff from Tokyo’s Narita airport, you’d cross Honshu’s eastern shoreline and the next land mass would be Saipan...most of the time.

On one trip, our meteorology department had alerted us to a band of thunderstorms along our route. Maybe 90 minutes into the flight, this band was hard to ignore. Towering cumulonimbus stretched so far east and west that circumvention was not an option. Judging the clouds’ tops was a science none of us had mastered: we tried sticking a strip of tape on the

forward window, placed a forefinger across our nose and used it as a level, and tilted the radar full down to full up. Only one thing was certain—the closer we got, the more evident it became that the 747’s maximum altitude of 45,000 feet wasn’t enough to clear the tops.

Tokyo radio offered nothing for advice, nor were there any nearby aircraft with recent flight condition reports. We were truly left to our own devices. The flight attendants were told to stop their service, secure the galleys, and to report back once everyone was buckled in. We took up a course westbound where the radar showed contours with a lighter shade of dark. Our first turn toward the wall was greeted with a bolt of lightning, as if Mother Nature warned, “Better try somewhere else.” This probing for safe passage continued for the next 50 to 100 miles. My view of this monster squall line was, at times, mesmerizing. Its speed over the water was impressive, and heading adjustments to the north were required to keep us out of harm’s way. If only I’d been at the controls of my own personal 747 with a boatload of fuel and no passengers, enjoying this display of incredible violence and energy could have lasted for hours. But reality kept knocking: either we’d find a hole and press on to Saipan, or make the turn back to Tokyo.

My scan went from radar to total fuel gage. The former showed a threatening wall of severe turbulence, while the latter a dwindling amount. The engineer had just computed our “bingo fuel,” or the amount required for a safe return to Tokyo, when the co-pilot pointed to the radar and said, “Look here. How about a heading of 150? If the gap holds, I think we’ll be okay.” The gap was at best a mile wide, and curved around clouds so high our stretched necks pressed against the side windows wouldn’t allow us to see their tops. After another reminder to the lead flight attendant and a PA to the passengers, I started a turn toward the wall.

Now beyond the squall’s leading edge, we were close enough to witness the effect of warm air pushing the clouds’ borders outward and upward. This beast was still growing. But the gap held, and by tweaking the heading bug we were enjoying a relatively smooth ride. We were the airborne equivalent of a cruise liner making its way through a narrow, winding Norwegian fjord. Occasionally, a glimpse of the Pacific’s waters came into view, being pounded by what

looked like torrential rains. And then I spotted land. With a focus on the weather and fuel, my attention to navigation had waned and we now found ourselves over Iwo Jima, a prohibited area meant for military use only. A landing strip was visible in the northern half of the island, and at the southern tip there appeared a sizeable hill. (Only later, after running into a history buff in the crew hotel’s bar, did I learn the hill was Mount Suribachi, where the famous photo shows the Marines raising the American flag.)

After few more turns, we exited the squall and were greeted with crystal clear skies as far as our eyes allowed. We couldn’t remember if Tokyo radio had ever gotten back to us with a clearance to deviate west for weather. “Oh well, that’s the least of our worries,” I said. “We’ll probably hear about entering Iwo Jima’s prohibited airspace later.” But fortunately, we never did.



In the song, “Scattered (Let’s think about livin’), Neil Young writes:

*like a comet
painted on the sky
like an old soul
over darkness you’ll fly*

Going back 50 years, I’ve noticed how his songs sometimes jive with the news of the world: Vietnam, HIV, 9/11, and so on. While I can’t say for certain his comet in the sky coincided with the appearance of Hale Bopp in the spring of 1997, the timing was uncanny.

My timing was spot-on one night as we prepared to fly from Tokyo’s Narita Airport to Singapore.

The leg to Singapore normally showed up on your schedule the day following your initial Pacific crossing. Here’s what I mean: after leaving the U.S. on Monday and flying 10 to 12 hours, you’d arrive in Japan (after crossing the International Dateline) on Tuesday afternoon. Then, Wednesday evening, you’re looking at a 6-hour flight to arrive in Singapore around 1:00 a.m. on Thursday. Talk about a circadian rhythm sleep disorder. My time in bed prior to the Singapore departure was spent tossing and turning. Rarely did I sleep. My body was totally out of sorts, and on the wrong side of the clock. Just thinking about the dreaded, seemingly slow-motion flight to Singapore created enough apprehension to keep a healthy nap out of reach.

With all pre-departure checklists complete and pushback/start clearance received, we three crewmen—in between sips of coffee—twisted dials, punched in numbers, clicked radios, and jotted abbreviated notations while making our way to the runway. Our departure took us overhead downtown Tokyo, the world’s largest metropolitan area. A strong cold front had recently passed by and left an abundance of pristine air in its wake. The display of lights was dazzling. It was like the Las Vegas Strip, a thousand times over. As far as I could see, the sparkle and glitter of a densely packed populous was evident. The sight was mesmerizing, like staring into a campfire.

Near Yokohama we left the lights behind and headed south toward the Philippine Sea. With no moon visible, the transition to darkness was drastic, as if someone had flipped a switch.

We were at cruising altitude, close to seven miles high, enjoying a smooth ride when I first noticed the comet, Hale-Bopp. “A screaming comes across the sky” is the first line in Thomas Pynchon’s book, *Gravity’s Rainbow*. I couldn’t have said it better.

With the comet at 120,000,000 miles above the Earth and moving at a speed of 44,000 meters per second, there’s no chance this formation flight would last long. But surprisingly, this visitor from outer space was visible for nearly half the flight. You could say our time spent with Hale-Bopp far exceeded that of those suicidal Heaven’s Gates folks who thought Hale-Bopp was their ticket to another world. We were treated to the comet shooting a greenish-blue exhaust. At times, the tail lengthened, as if it were increasing thrust. Somewhere over the South China Sea—abeam Ho Chi Minh—the comet started to pull ahead, and we eventually lost sight of our wingman.

Another long night in the saddle occurred when flying from Mumbai to Amsterdam. With takeoff scheduled for 1:00 a.m., it presented another circadian challenge. The bus ride from The Oberoi Hotel (the same hotel attacked by Pakistani terrorists in 2008 that resulted in the deaths of 174 people) provided a glimpse of the city’s squalor and a whiff of its stench. Once stopped at the airport, dozens of begging children would surround us and make forward progress nearly impossible. The terminal provided a modicum of sanity, but only relatively speaking. Layers

of bureaucracy and stacks of forms to sign encumbered our path. With a history that included decades of British rule and a caste system in play, we'd line up and wait at non-essential checkpoints manned by personnel attempting to justify their existence.

At the end of this maze was a cramped and stuffy office set aside for our flight planning. Amongst the data was a notice regarding a terrorist attempt to shoot down an Israeli charter flight. Two missiles were fired as the 757 departed Mombasa, Kenya. The pilot reading the NO-TAM (notice to airmen) said, "Great. What are we supposed to do with this info, not use Mombasa as an alternate?"

After we discussed briefly how we had no training, nor defense against a missile launch, we continued sorting our flight's paperwork. Mumbai's airport is poorly lit and poorly laid out. To use the entirety of the runway's length required a back taxi to the runway's end, followed by a 180° turn. Only with an assist from the 747's BGS (Body Gear Steering) would such a tight turn be possible. Once the nose gear (controlled by either pilot's tiller) reached a certain point, the BGS would come to life and follow the nose gear's lead. Even so, there was less than a 10-foot leeway between the outboard tires and grass.

Once lined up and cleared for takeoff, the flying pilot pushed the throttles forward, and nearly 800,000 pounds started to inch forward. Near the concrete's end, the non-flying pilot called "rotate," and the 747's liftoff sent a thunderous roar over rows and rows of shacks just feet beyond the airport's boundary. With the flaps fully retracted and climb power set, we were in a turn to the west headed toward the Indian Ocean. The body of water merged with a pitch-black night. There were no lights, no moon, and no horizon...nothing but black.

Suddenly, a bright light flashed directly in front of us, streaking from right to left.

Instinctively, the three of us ducked, and then peeped above the dashboard. I uttered, "What the hell was that?"

Soon, there was another flash, only not as intimate or seemingly as threatening as the first. It took a few seconds, then one of us declared, "This is an amazing meteor shower."

We didn't know it at the time, but on that November night we were given front row seats to Leonid's Comet. For most of our flight, we dimmed our lights and enjoyed the fireworks display as the Earth moved through Leonid's parade of particles. It wasn't until we were about to start our descent when the rising sun at our backside concluded the show.

4

Sandstorm

In the summer of 1990, Iraq's Saddam Hussein sent his troops across a line in the sand. His invasion of Kuwait was the beginning of the Persian Gulf Wars. First came the troop and supply build-up beginning with Operation Desert Shield, followed by Desert Storm's full-blown counter-attack. Then in 2003, with a veiled threat of weapons of mass destruction, the Coalition Forces brought Iraq to its knees.

The justification for invading Kuwait's oil fields were, in his mind, the improperly drawn straight edge lines put down years earlier in the Rumaila Fields by oil-hungry colonists. I flew over these lines to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in 1990-91, and Kuwait City in 2003.

Occasionally, a military charter would show up on NWA's schedule. Sometimes they were planned far enough in advance to appear in our monthly bid packages, while others popped up with little notice. Regardless, I was on the lookout for these flights. Aside from supporting our troops, there was an attraction to operating in a non-sched environment. Some of the airbases

were new to me. Once on the ground, the issues of transportation, fueling, flight planning, and lodging differed considerably from the routine we were accustomed to in our normal ops.

The mother of all non-scheds took place when a portion of NWA's fleet was put into play in support of Desert Shield. Years before the Gulf Wars, I'd thrown my name into the hat of volunteers willing to participate in the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF). This program gave the military access to commercial airliners and crews, thus providing a quick fix that added lift for personnel and freight. I was in the first cadre of pilots who flew 747s (both passenger and freight models) from US military bases to Frankfurt, Germany, and then onward to Dhahran. Frankfurt's airport was shared by civilian operators to the north and the U.S. Air Base Rhein-Main to the south. It was supported by both NWA personnel and the military and seemed to be a logical fit, except for one obstacle: lodging. The world's largest book fair was in town, and the few vacant rooms were scattered far and wide. Sometimes the cockpit crew would stay together, but more often, three taxicabs would disperse in three different directions.

Scheduling was a crapshoot. At the end of a long day—14 hours of flight time and another hour or two on the ground in Dhahran—we'd return to Frankfurt, clueless about the next day's lineup. One captain had an extra incentive to fly as often as possible: his daughter was on active duty, assigned to the Dhahran Air Base. Others took advantage of the communication breakdowns, and once lodged in a remote town, would stay incommunicado.

During this time, I can remember SCUD missiles often making the headlines on CNN. One of their reporters, Charles Jaco, seemed to carry a bull's eye on his helmet, as he often gave firsthand accounts of another inbound SCUD. At Dhahran's Air Base, I'd look around and consider potential escape routes. I never experienced a warning siren, but one Pan Am crew heard the alert while their military passengers deplaned. They did a quick turnaround and launched the 747 for Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, only to be greeted by another alert. Now low on fuel, their only option was to button up the aircraft and cross their fingers. Fortunately, most of the SCUD were inaccurate. However, 28 reservists were killed when a SCUD landed in their Dhahran barracks.

As Desert Storm approached, the lodging problem eased (the book fair had left town) as did the coordination between NWA and military schedulers. No longer would pilots huddle in the hotel bar to discuss who was flying what, when, and where the following day.

In 2003, the Iraq War would lead to Hussein's escape, capture, and eventual hanging. From Amsterdam, we flew to Kuwait City, where ten years earlier an Iraqi assassination attempt on President H.W. Bush took place. In less than a month, the main thrust of the invasion had fulfilled its mission. The Iraqi Army suffered huge losses, and the government collapsed. But NWA's CRAF flying would continue, as it was time to bring most of the troops home.

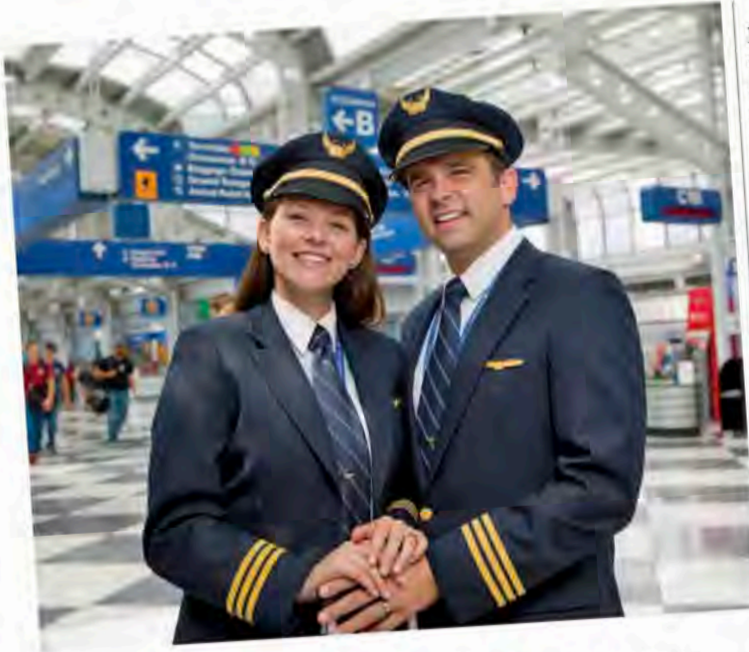
Against regulations, we enjoyed opening the cockpit door and announcing over the PA, "The cockpit is available for tours."

A long line of clean-cut youngsters, average age maybe mid-20s, would ensue. I'd vacate my seat and, while leaning over shoulders, briefly discuss controls and instruments. It amazed me how many soldiers came from the ranks of the Reserves and National Guard. These "weekend warriors" enlisted as part-timers, with little or no expectation of seeing combat. However, the needs of the service prevailed. With a yellow ribbon painted on the 747's nose and an interior decorated with posters, balloons, and ribbons, the homeward-bound flights were boisterous and festive. One inbound leg turned sour, though, when a rumor spread about a quick return to another in-country deployment. That's when I overheard at least one reservist say, "Good luck trying to find me." ✪

From UNITED AIRLINES inflight magazine hemispheres

Afton (Snook) Benassi was the first recipient of the PSMSF scholarship in 2002.

VOICES



Safety First, Fun Next

Afton Benassi and her husband, Dave, bring extra bliss to the friendly skies

BY RYAN HOOD

When a customer on board a recent flight told the flight attendants she'd left her iPad at the security checkpoint, she was nearly resigned to losing the tablet for good. Customers and crew were already on board and the door was moments from closing. What happened next left everyone in awe.

"First Officer [Afton Benassi] came out," another customer on board the aircraft wrote in a letter to United. "She said TSA had the iPad but someone would need to go get it. The attendants replied they couldn't make it—the door was closed already and the gate was near the end of the concourse. Afton looked at the flight attendants inquisitively and said, 'Oh no! I didn't mean you. I'll get it. Please open the door.'"

Nine minutes later, her sprint to and from the checkpoint completed, Benassi was back with the customer's lost iPad in hand. "At least I don't

have to do the treadmill at the hotel tonight!" she exclaimed.

"We weren't a single minute late," said the customer who wrote about the experience, "but the whole flight took on a different vibe. Everyone in first class smiled. The flight attendants did, too. I'm sure the passenger smiled every time she looked at her iPad. It was the single coolest thing I've ever seen any airline employee do."

It was just another day on the job for Benassi, an affable A-320 first officer whose laughter and positive energy fill every room she enters.

"It's so easy to be nice to people," Benassi says. "What an opportunity we have, to come to work, enjoy our job, enjoy who we're working with and work with so many others who are excited to be here. I'd much rather be laughing and having a good time. It makes the job so much more fun. Safety first, fun next."

Benassi grew up a self-described "airline brat"—her mother spent 32 years in the industry as a sales rep. Benassi majored in business in college, but aviation was in her blood, so she looked to the skies. She attended flight school in Florida, where she met her husband, Dave, and she joined United in 2013. As she left her interview, the secretary notified her that Dave had just been contacted for an interview. He started at United two months after her, and both have worked here ever since.

Dave flies the Boeing 737, so they haven't worked the same flight at United, but they look to fly similar schedules so they can spend their free time together. Neither will forget the time, while flying for United Express carrier ExpressJet, they worked the same flight.

"I warned him: If we ever flew together, the only thing I would ask as a first officer that I would never ask another captain is for him to do the pre-flight safety walk-around, since that's the nice, chivalrous, husbandly thing to do," Afton says.

"I said I'd do it if it's not raining," Dave quips.

Sure enough, it was raining for the next flight they worked together. For a few minutes before departure, Dave was nowhere to be found—because he was doing the walk-around.

That was just one of the many memorable days the Benassis have already experienced in their up-and-coming careers.

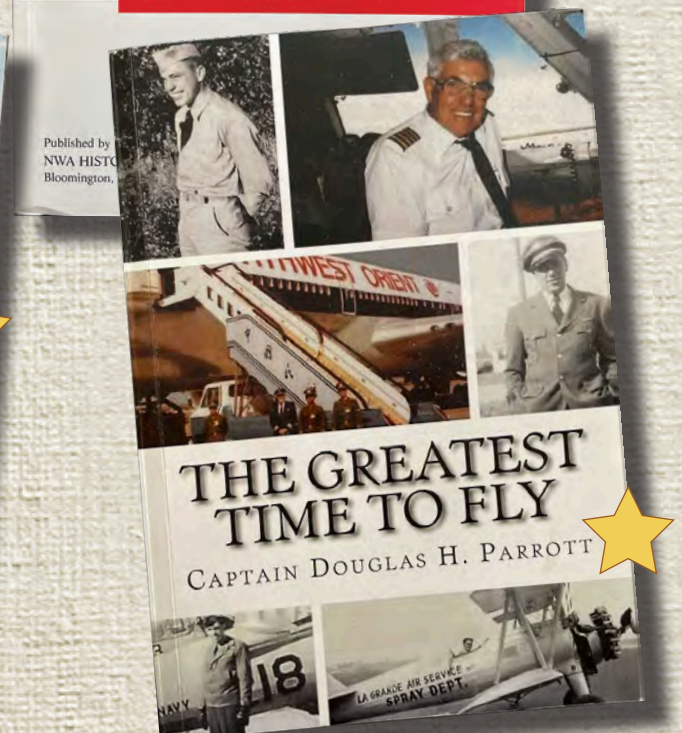
"When we fly, we're taking someone home to see their loved ones, taking them on a business trip, to a funeral, off to college, maybe to the vacation they've been saving for," Afton says. "That's what we do as pilots, and that's what's so cool about our jobs."

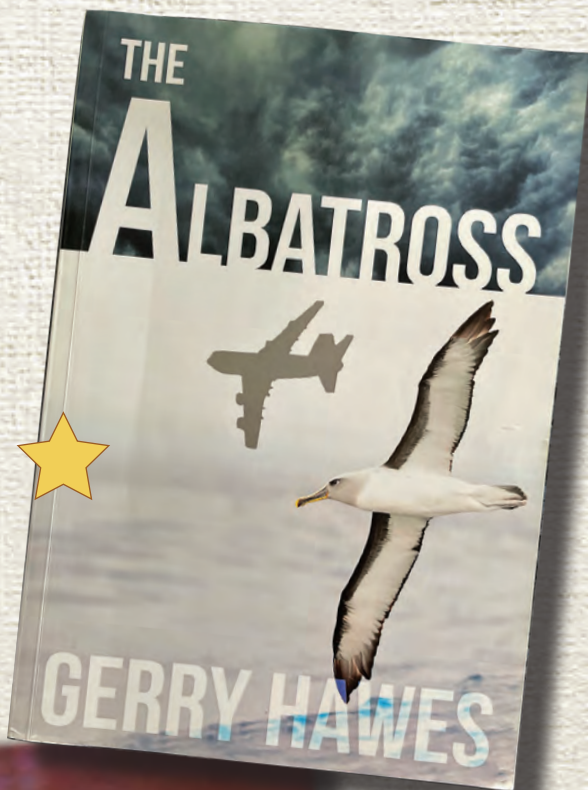
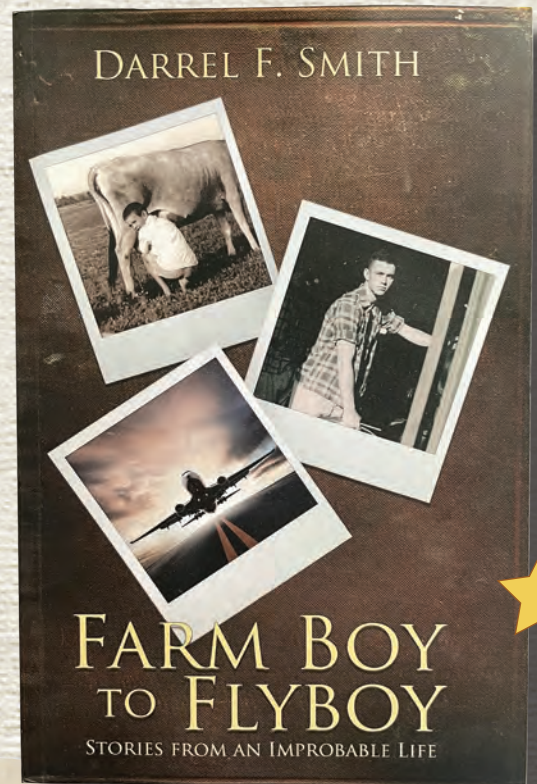
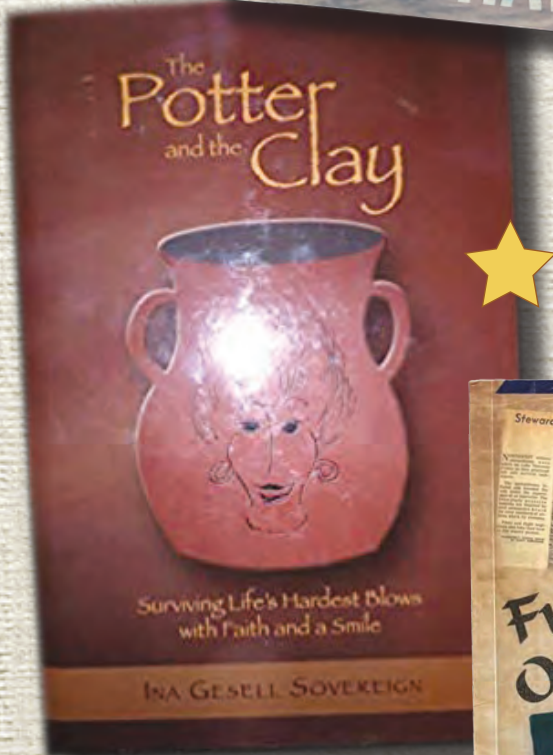
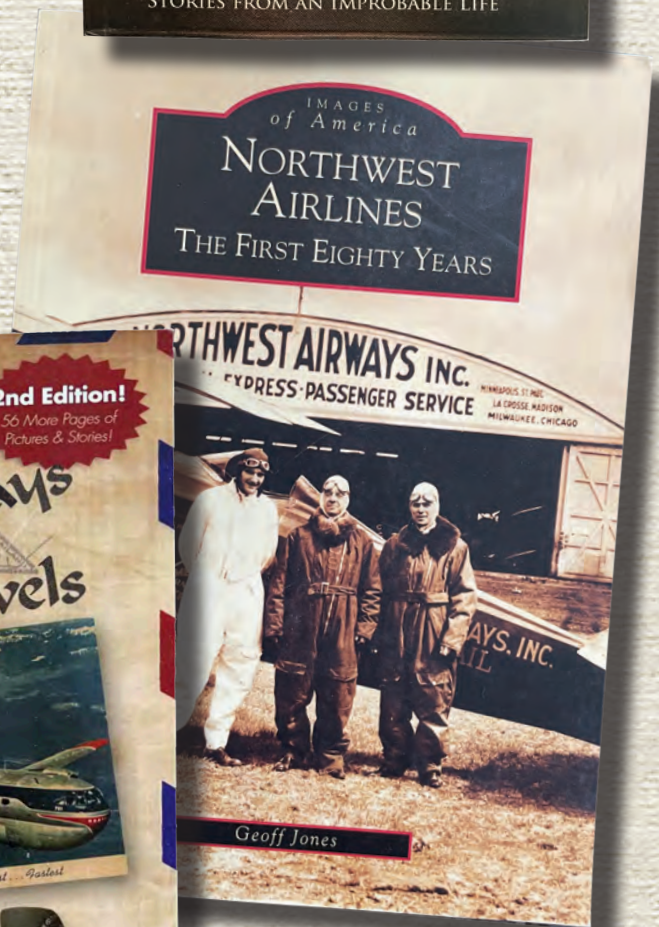
"United is a goal. Everyone's excited to be here and excited about the future of United Airlines. I know we are, and we definitely have a vested interest in this company."

The Benassis bought their first home this year and are expecting their first baby in early December.

"With both of us getting to work here," Afton says, "we feel like we won the lottery."

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Two Short Stories From Bob Gould

Coral Run

Back in 1962, when I was a Junior in college, I came to Hawaii for the summer. It was my second summer in Hawaii and my 4th trip altogether. The intent was primarily to go to Summer School at the UH to take some courses I did not have room for at Stanford, and to help pay the costs I got a job selling cheap (but costly, if you get the drift) 'portable' stereos. I had one demonstration at a house on Kaneohe Bay Drive that had a lawn going down to the Bay, and I decided then and there that I wanted a house on Kaneohe Bay with a lawn going down to the water. Five years later I had one, thanks to Northwest. Whenever a bid came up for the Honolulu base, I put my name in, but I was always way too junior until a fluke in 1967, when I was awarded a bid because no one else senior happened to bid on it that time. This was about 2 months after I had made my initial 707 checkout as F/O, and the flying in HNL was DC-7.

We had some great Navigators and Flight Engineers, and some great Captains in the HNL base. Only 9 crews. As the most junior F/O, my schedule was usually a Saturday flight to Kwajalein with a return by dinner Sunday night, and one monthly turn around to Midway plus one to Johnston Island.

One time I was flying with Art Brown to Midway, and we were told to turn around and return to HNL because Midway was closed due to strong north winds and rain. We had started back and flown for an hour or so when they told us that MDY was again OK, and that we should turn around again and continue our trip. Art pointed out that if we could not land because the weather turned again, we would have to land at French Frigate Shoals, which was a coral runway with essentially nothing else on the island, because we would not have enough fuel to get back to HNL. We were told to land on the north runway, which is no longer even listed as a runway and is less than 6,000 feet long. On short final we were momentarily IFR at about 100ft as we flew through the surf spray, and Art turned off the runway directly onto the ramp, which was about 1500 ft from the end of the runway.

On another flight with Art we had no autopilot, so we decided to hand fly it to Kwaj and back (over 8 hours each way), but we just traded off every couple of hours, and it was fine. We flew the last DC-7 flight out of there back to HNL, and he stayed at about 500 feet for the first 100 miles or so to allow everyone to have a good look at all the atolls along the way. ATC

kept asking us if we were level at 12,000 ft, which didn't occur til we were almost 200 miles out. We once took a turn around the Eniwetok atoll's entire perimeter and were able to see the huge hole in the reef caused by the H bomb test there in 1952.



Gerry Spiess

On July 5, 1981, I was flying copilot for George Stevenson. We were informed that a TV crew from KSTP would be on board and had been given permission to do some video in the cockpit when we got close to Hawaii. They were doing a story on Gerry Spiess, who was sailing from Los Angeles to Honolulu and then on to Australia in a 10 foot sailboat that he had built and previously sailed across the Atlantic. He had a VHF aircraft band transceiver with him, and the plan was to try and contact him on the radio near the Big Island while the TV crew recorded. As we neared his estimated position I called him on the radio, and he came right back, exactly where he was supposed to be. George made a little jink in our track, and Gerry said he saw it, so we all knew his navigation was perfect. He was very emotional, as this was the first contact he had had with anyone for weeks.

We went to SFO on the 7th, and back to HNL on the 8th of July. Gerry figured he would be north of Molokai at that time, and we again talked to him on the radio. HNL gate called us shortly after that and asked if we would mind doing a maintenance hop so they could test the hydraulics on an airplane they had been working on. With a big wink and nod we said, "Of course; throw us in that briar patch!"



Thirty seven years later

After we landed, we swapped airplanes and got on the 'sick' one, and I asked clearance delivery for clearance out of the TCA at 1,500 feet, and away we went with a significantly larger group on board than a couple of mechanics. Of course we headed directly to Gerry's position north of Molokai, and George dropped us down to 500 feet or so and flew circles around Gerry while the mechanics 'tested the hydraulics.' We heard Royal Hawaiian Airlines call ATC and ask what that 747 was doing out there.

Not much later, one of our mechanics and I hopped in our 172 and we again flew out and took some movies of Gerry in his boat and the TV crew bouncing around on a commercial tour boat shooting videos of him.

After that we flew to NRT and back, and then to LAX. Another commuter pilot took my leg back to MSP for me, and I stayed for the welcoming party for Gerry when he arrived at the Ala Wai Yacht Harbor. A few days later, after Gerry and I had gotten our 8mm movies developed, he and his family and the TV crew came out and watched the films at our house. Later on, he continued his journey successfully to Australia. It was quite an adventure, and one that I would not want to undertake, but he knew what he was doing, was well prepared and supported, and had built a fine boat. ✈

Memories from my
NWA photo album
- Wayne Anderson



Landing Kai Tak



Landing Tampa



Bill Kish
Me
Bob Cavill
Dennis Lange

Mesquite Golf
NWA Pilot
Tournament





Classroom, 757 instructors



original Link Trainer



757 engine



Walk around check 757



757 simulator

Don Keating
& Stan Fukai



Captain Check Ride



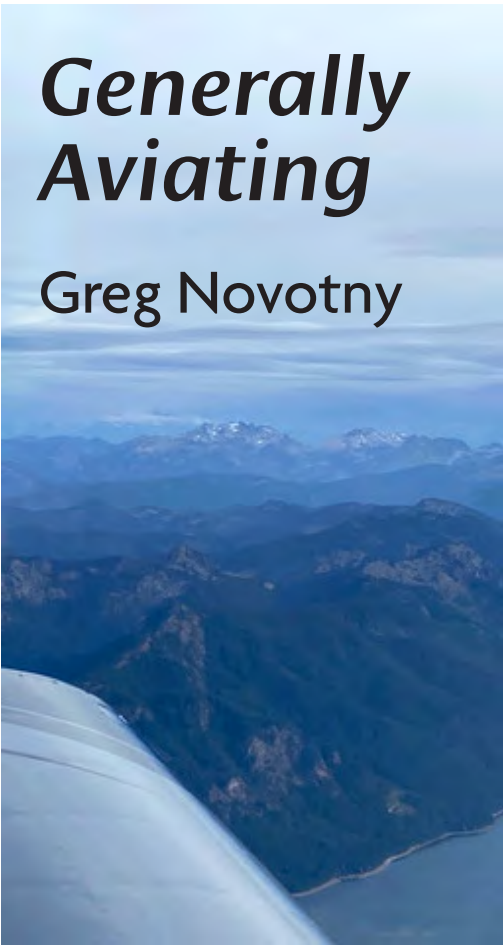
Bill Kish
flight planning



1988 Reunion
NWA pilot
training class
9/9/1968

Generally Aviating

Greg Novotny



Being a 1984 hire, I was the guy in the back seat, flying sideways for most of you Senior Captains. I was a 30 year old new hire, after 6-1/2 years of active duty in the USCG, I often felt great joy hearing your life experiences, while listening to you “Senior guys.” I believe I learned to eventually become a good captain from watching and learning from many of you. To a man, you are an exceptional group. Thank you for being a huge part of my career.

My NWA time was spent between MSP, SEA and HNL, then SEA again. (I never experienced the legendary joy of the DTW base.) I was based in HNL flying various seats on the DC-10 and B747-200 from March of 1991 until the base closed in 2004. I flew the last Whale out of the HNL base that year, HNL-KIX.

By any metric, I had a great career. I had 15 years as a Captain, on the DC-10, B747-200 and the A330. After the merger, DAL offered a “Buy Out” that I simply could not refuse. I was tired of being tired, and getting more junior every month, as the tsunami of DAL South pilots flooded the SEA base. The time was October 2012, time to exit “stage right.”

I knew I would miss flying, so I immediately got checked out in a Cessna 172. I quickly re-learned these are extremely old, plodding and boring aircraft with coffee grinder

avionics. Before long I began a search for a good used Vans RV-7 to buy and fly. Krista, my partner, lobbied for a model with side by side seating. After several frustrating attempts to buy, I gave up and started thinking about instead building the newly introduced model, the Van’s RV-14a. These “RVs” have been built or owned by dozens of RNPA members over the decades. I remember flying with Marty Foy, when he was building his RV-4, back in the mid 1980s.

I have always enjoyed “building” since my teenage years. I love working with my hands and seeing things go together. However, building an all aluminum high performance aerobatic aircraft with a full glass cockpit, seemed like a daunting challenge. Then again, I thought, what a great way to transition from the NWA/DAL flying career! A big new challenge. So I chose to build a new “Experimental” category aircraft, of which there was, at the time, only one prototype of this model flying.



Riveting the wing skins

Fast forward 3 calendar years, after spending 4200 hours of shop time, untold number of hours researching problems/options, and burning piles of retirement cash, N14ZP flew for the first time July 19, 2017. Mine was in the first 20 flying RV-14s, and now there are over 350 flying worldwide. There is nothing like strapping your butt into a flying machine that you built and doing its “Maiden Flight.” Highly stressful, exhilarating and extremely gratifying. There are others in our ranks that have done this, and I am certain they all had the same apprehension and resultant satisfaction.



Over Crater Lake at 12,500 feet

Fast forward another 3 calendar years to the present, and I now have 325 nearly trouble free flight hours on the aircraft and have flown to a dozen states. My aircraft was chosen by Van's to be part of the main stage exhibit during Oshkosh EAA 2018, as part of their “10,000 RVs flying Celebration”.

The Van's RV-14a cruises at 170 KTAS or 196 mph. And if you slow down to 160 KTAS, or 185mph, you routinely burn 22 miles per gallon of avgas. Much better than the typical SUV!

Last summer, most folks were hunkered down with the threat of Covid. We coped by flying almost 30 “day trips” to various obscure airports around WA, OR and CA (such as Lake Chelan, Orcas Island, Newport, Crescent City). Our folding bicycles easily fit in our baggage compartment. With the “Rails to Trails” program there are abandoned railroad lines everywhere across the Pacific NWA, and they are ideal routes to bike or hike. Typically, by 0900 we would be airborne and normally flew to a destination within 2 hours from our home base at Tacoma Narrows. We would then bike 15-20 miles, and stop along the way to eat our packed lunches. Returning to the airport, by mid afternoon we flew



Dynon and Avidyne avionics



Brompton folding bikes on the tarmac at Lopez island

home in time for “Beer-30.” No one shutdown our access to the multitude of uncontrolled airports and the beautiful airspace in the Pacific NWA. It was great therapy during a harsh time.

At age 67, I am inspired by the “Flying Octogenarians” I meet at Oshkosh. Day VFR only, no CAT3B approaches for these guys, but they are still doing the stick and rudder stuff. Then there is Clint Eastwood. When asked how he keeps up his rigorous schedule at age 90, he recently responded, “I Don’t Let the Old Man IN”. What a great philosophy on aging.

Flying these days in general aviation really focuses ones mind, You become the dispatcher, flight planner, chief mechanic, sole crew member. It really makes one appreciate all the ancillary people that supported us at NWA/DAL. But it also forces you to stay proficient, perform an honest self evaluation and do lots of recurrent training. In short, it has been a total joy and a passion to keep aviating as a retirement hobby.

I’ve learned, it’s not about the airplane, it’s the people you meet while building and enjoying it. Aviation tends to attract a special breed.

If any of you happen to be near Tacoma Narrows Airport (TIW), Gig Harbor, WA, please contact me, or just swing by Hangar H3 and look me up. My standing offer is to provide Puget Sound aerial tours for RNPA members! ✈



Krista preflighting at Centrailia



Tacoma Narrows looking south

We Loved Your Stories, Darlene

The original version of this was published in the November, 2008 issue of Contrails. It is updated here with the assurance from the subject that both of these stories are completely factual. The text of each "scene" is unchanged. — Co-Editor Ferguson

As preposterous as it may seem, I am about to relate two stories concerning someone I had never met, nor ever worked with until many years later. Do not assume, however, that she is fictional. She is the protagonist in many great NWA stories.

Most of you will have no trouble filling in her last name. Some would call her "famous."

SCENE ONE

A DC-10 taxiing slowly in a long line of aircraft uphill northbound at SEATAC. Bud Rice is the captain. Darlene is the lead flight attendant. The S/O is fully occupied with some sort of abnormal problem in the cockpit. His problem-solving is interrupted by an interphone call.

"This is Darlene at door 3 left. This damn door isn't working right and I need you to come look at it."

"Well, I've got another problem going up here. I'll be down just as soon as I can."

"The hell you will. You get your ass down here now. This thing is scaring me."

"OK, OK, just leave it alone for now and I'll be down."

After a short interval, the phone rings again. This time Bud chooses to answer, since the S/O is busy. A new, excited, female voice yells, "Hey, that door at 3 left just blew open."

At this point you might expect Captain Rice to take this information seriously. Instead, he says something like, "Yeah, yeah, OK, we'll take care of it," and hangs up. The only explanation for his attitude is that he assumes that he's being sucked into some kind of practical joke. Not so hard to understand, since it is my distinct recollection that he had instigated his share of practical jokes in his time. In addition, whatever the problem in the cockpit was, it was serious enough that it was beginning to look like they may have to return to the gate. They were apparently trying desperately to resolve it before they were number one for takeoff.

After another short interval, the phone rings again.

"This is Bud."

Yet another new female voice says excitedly, "Captain, captain, that chute has deployed and Darlene is out on the wing."

"OK, I've heard all this from the others. Knock off the crap girls, we're busy up here." And he hangs up.

Shortly thereafter, on ground control frequency comes this transmission: "Hey Northwest 123, this is Western behind you. Do you know that you're dragging a chute off the left wing and there's a girl out there on the wing?"

SCENE TWO

The front yard of the recently completed home of our same Darlene. I am told that she built it herself—no, I mean she actually built it, or at least most of it, herself with experience gained from her father who was a contractor. She is discussing with a power company representative the possibility of moving a power pole, which is now in the center of the lot, over to the lot corner.

"How much trouble would it be to move that thing over there to the corner of the lot on the lot line?" she asks.

"Oh sure, we can do that Ma'am, but we'll have to charge you \$400." Thinking that too expensive (sometime in the '70s, I think), she decides to let it go. Not too many days later the landscaper is working the front yard with a bulldozer. By batting her eyelashes (that's exactly how it was related to me) she coerces the operator into teaching her how to operate the dozer.

When the lesson is complete the operator jumps down, Darlene wheels it smartly around, and runs smack into said power pole. When the power company shows up to replace the pole she asks, "Since you have to replace it, would there be any possibility of moving it over to the property line corner?"

"Sure lady, we can do that."

And there was no charge! ✈



THE MUSEUM OF FLIGHT ANNOUNCES LARGEST BEQUEST

Donation will establish new educational endowment

SEATTLE, Sept. 26, 2017--The Museum of Flight has received the largest bequest in its 52-year history, a donation of more than \$17 million from the estate of Betty Houston, widow of Frank "Sam" Houston. The gift will establish the Frank "Sam" and Betty Houston Education Endowment to provide educational opportunities to young people exploring aerospace and STEM (science, technology, education and mathematics) careers. The bequest will also support the ongoing maintenance and exhibition of the Museum's vintage Boeing B-17 aircraft.

Sam and Betty Houston each had a legacy of aviation. Sam, a former Museum trustee who passed away in 2002, flew B-17 bombers in World War II and was an airline pilot after the war; Betty worked for the former Northwest Airlines. Sam's war service included seven missions over Berlin. He also volunteered for the Aphrodite program, a top-secret effort based in England to fly remotely-controlled planes laden with explosives into targets near the European coast. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service.

After returning from the war, Sam met his bride-to-be in Spokane, Wash. They moved to Seattle where Betty held jobs at the Bon Marché and Northwest Airlines. She was one of only eight reservationists booking tickets for the airline's passengers. Sam became a pilot for Northwest Airlines and flew mostly 747s for more than 30 years.

Betty took flying lessons when she was young but could not afford to get her license or attend college. Feeling her career was limited as a woman, Betty shared her wishes with the Museum that her bequest be used to increase opportunities for young women that were not available to her as a youth. The Museum is honoring her wishes through the Houston Endowment to provide scholarships and greater access to Museum programs.

"Betty recognized the importance of The Museum of Flight's educational mission and our commitment to opening doors for all. We are so honored that the Houston's passion for aviation and commitment to young people will live on for generations to come at The Museum of Flight," says Trip Switzer, Vice President of Development. "It is an investment that will help us fulfill the Museum's vision to be the foremost educational air and space museum in the world. And while the size of the gift is impressive, it is the impact on youth into the future that will prove to be the indelible mark on our community."

The Houston bequest marks the conclusion of the Museum's four-year Inspiration Begins Here! campaign, during which more than \$100 million was donated for educational programming, collections preservation and restoration, exhibits, facilities, operations and endowment. ✈



Taming The Dragon *or*

1960s Bush Flying in Africa

by Giff Jones

It was 1935, just after the US Air Mail scandal, that Northwest Airways re-branded itself as Northwest Airlines, Inc. Under its new moniker, Northwest continued delivering mail along with passengers to help pay the way, flying enclosed cabin planes built by Lockheed, Stinson, Waco, and Hamilton. Simultaneously, in England, De Havilland Aircraft began building the first of its 728 Dragon Rapide DH-89 biplanes designed also to compete in non-subsidized airmail and passenger service throughout Great Britain and Europe. The Dragon was powered by two 200 HP Gypsy Queen inverted six cylinder engines that were smooth and dependable.

Taking a “ride on the Dragon” with its roomy cabin and 8 to 10 leather seats became popularized up to the outbreak of WWII when the military pressed Rapides into wartime service, re-naming them the “Dominie.” The Dragon’s reputation as an efficient and comfortable small airliner continued after the war, contributing to its spread eastward into India, across to South America, and down into Africa.

As independence swept the African continent in the early 60's and Belgium had released its colonial grip on the Congo, three European pilot investors started up a small air service there amidst the dregs of old Leopoldville, neo Kinshasa. The Dragon's popularity had attracted their attention as a plausible addition to their burgeoning new business in the Congo. In short order, the flyers had purchased three De Havilland Dragon Rapide DH-89s and had flown them to their new base at N'dolo field in Kinshasa to fit the niche between the jungled interior and Air Congo or Belgium's SABENA, often referred to as, "Such a Bloody Experience, Never Again".



Meanwhile half a world away, at roughly the same time, Australia was promoting immigration of qualified professionals to help boost their economy. I applied. All of these events together were to soon bring about a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a fortunate young entrepreneur and I won the prize. I had earned my ATP (Airline Transport Rating) under the GI Bill, so with fresh immigration papers in hand, I made plans to move my flying school/charter/dusting business to Australia. I set a course the long-way around via Europe to visit relatives in France and some longed-for vacation time.

While spending a few months with my aunt and uncle in Paris, I landed a stint delivering airplanes out of Geneva, Switzerland. My first gig was flying a new Piper Aztec to the Ex-Belgian Congo where the reception committee was comprised of two of those same three pilot investors, and who I had just recently met enroute in Dakar, Senegal. Our post-delivery celebration produced new friendships, old flying adventures, and one new twist that was to put a two year hold on my Australia plans.

With business on the upswing, they asked me to stay and fly for them out of N'dolo field with benefits and a generous salary secured in a Swiss bank account. Too sweet to ignore, I set plans aside and hired on as a line captain flying goods, cargo, and personnel in and out of



mostly improvised jungle clearings along a wide swath of equatorial West Africa. Their new airline, COGEAIR, was already serving numerous bush enterprises from agriculture to mining to manufacturing to missionaries busy converting jungle villagers. Additional contracts had been established with the new government headed by President Joseph-Desiré Mobutu (later, Mobutu Sese Seko) who I would soon meet and spend time with in the air.

After only a short six months I found myself sitting in the Chief Pilot's office. But it now had my name on the door. The promotion entitled me to a private home with domestic help, a company car, and extra flying duties during any spare time I might have. As Cogear's new Chief Pilot, my prime assignment beyond line flying and pilot management, was to fly Mobutu himself on his sporadic visits to jungle outposts in the bush and to his home village in Lisala.

But back to taming that Dragon: Our fleet numbered about 20 light aircraft, from a Piper Super Cub we towed banners with, to a 4 engine De Havilland Heron for junkets to the Coast, a popular tourist spot where the wild Fleuve Congo surged out into the East Atlantic. Numerous executive twins filled in between from the President's Piper Aztec that we managed, to a few Beech C-45's and those three 1935/'36 De Havilland DH-89 Dragon Rapides. Our missions varied from towing banners over downtown to all-day-long cargo/passenger flights into some of the adjoining East African nations with numerous enroute stops in tiny postage stamp clearings in the jungle. Nav aids were sparse to non-existent except two VORs and a few isolated NDBs left over from the Belgians' exodus. All navigation was essentially FTR (Fly the Rivers) pilotage and dead reckoning.

But the missions that still raise “having fun” hairs on my neck were those while strapped in to the single cockpit of one of those three Dragons. One was used to hop passengers back and forth across the river to Brazzaville—a 5 minute flight. Another was for standby and spares; the third was equipped with an aerial fogging system. One of our government contracts was for mosquito abatement. We sprayed DDT (pure—uncut) all over downtown Kinshasa whenever it wasn’t too windy. This was usually within a few hours of sunrise/sunset. Sadly, it was also before I had read Rachel Carson’s “Silent Spring.” The bare cabin was loaded with 55 gallon drums of DDT with a pump and copper tubing threaded outside and down to each engine where it was injected directly into the exhaust. I had a switch in the cockpit to start the pump when I got on target. The result was two billowing clouds of DDT which I laid down behind me as low as I could fly until the entire load was dispersed.

I fogged all the main downtown boulevards and parkways I could find, just above street level, from Embassy Row where I lived, all the way into and around the downtown commercial districts. There were several wide boulevards where I was able to get down below the building tops and/or under high power lines ... more “fun hairs.” I sometimes had to make high-G steep turns when a parkway ended or changed direction. I just barely missed clipping a 3 or 4 story building one time in a tight turn when the old girl was standing right on her wingtips.

Checking out in the Dragon was an adventure all by itself. I don’t recall ever seeing a DH89 ops manual. The outgoing Chief Pilot talked me through startup, taxi, then fast taxi techniques all the while standing and bracing himself in the single cockpit doorway. It was all by guessing and feeling. Having owned two tailwheel airplanes, I apparently imbued him with enough confidence that after about 20 minutes of not ground looping, we made a few



takeoffs and landings followed by some air work. Special tips involved compensating for left-hand English engine rotation and a full swiveling, not-lockable tailwheel. Depending on cross winds, one trick was to hold left rudder while opening the right throttle, then powering up the left engine as airspeed and directional stability increased. After about an hour of taming the Dragon, my check out was complete.

All of flying the African bush was venturesome, frequently exciting, but forays with and for the President often topped the list. They were almost as memorable as Dragon taming. Mobutu was educated and not quite yet a complete despot. He spoke as much English as I did French, so on longer flights we'd enjoy brief, broken conversations. He even enjoyed taking the wheel now and then at altitude. There was much, much more ... like hauling stacks of gold ingots and gunny sacks of rough diamonds, all mining production from deep in the bush; no armed guards, no Brinks truck.

I was dispatched once in Mobutu's Aztec on a life-threatening mercy flight from sub-Sahara Chad where I had flown him to govern the first economic summit of Pan West African nations. Jean Bedel Bokassa, President of the Central African Republic, had collapsed with a sudden affliction and I had to fly him the entire distance at full power, to the nearest hospital in Bangui. The threatened life was my own from fear I wouldn't get the tyrant on the tarmac before he might croak. But I did, and Bokassa ruled on long enough to crown himself "Emperor Bokassa" with an impressive list of guests flown from Bangui to a lavish leopard carpet and ostrich-feathered million dollar celebration in Paris.

For the rest of my brief career of bush flying in Africa, the hours I enjoyed the most and those that went by the quickest, were those up in the nose cockpit of that DH89. All of the African events, like chronicles from America's wild west, were fortuitous circumstances made possible, even necessary, by the increasing prosperity of one of the world's last frontiers. I just happened to stumble into that one in a million opportunity as an eager young aviator out looking for new adventures.

I never did, however, emigrate to Australia nor did I ever again tame another Dragon. ✈



Captain Gifford T Jones
Northwest Airlines, Ret.





Some Sobering Statistics

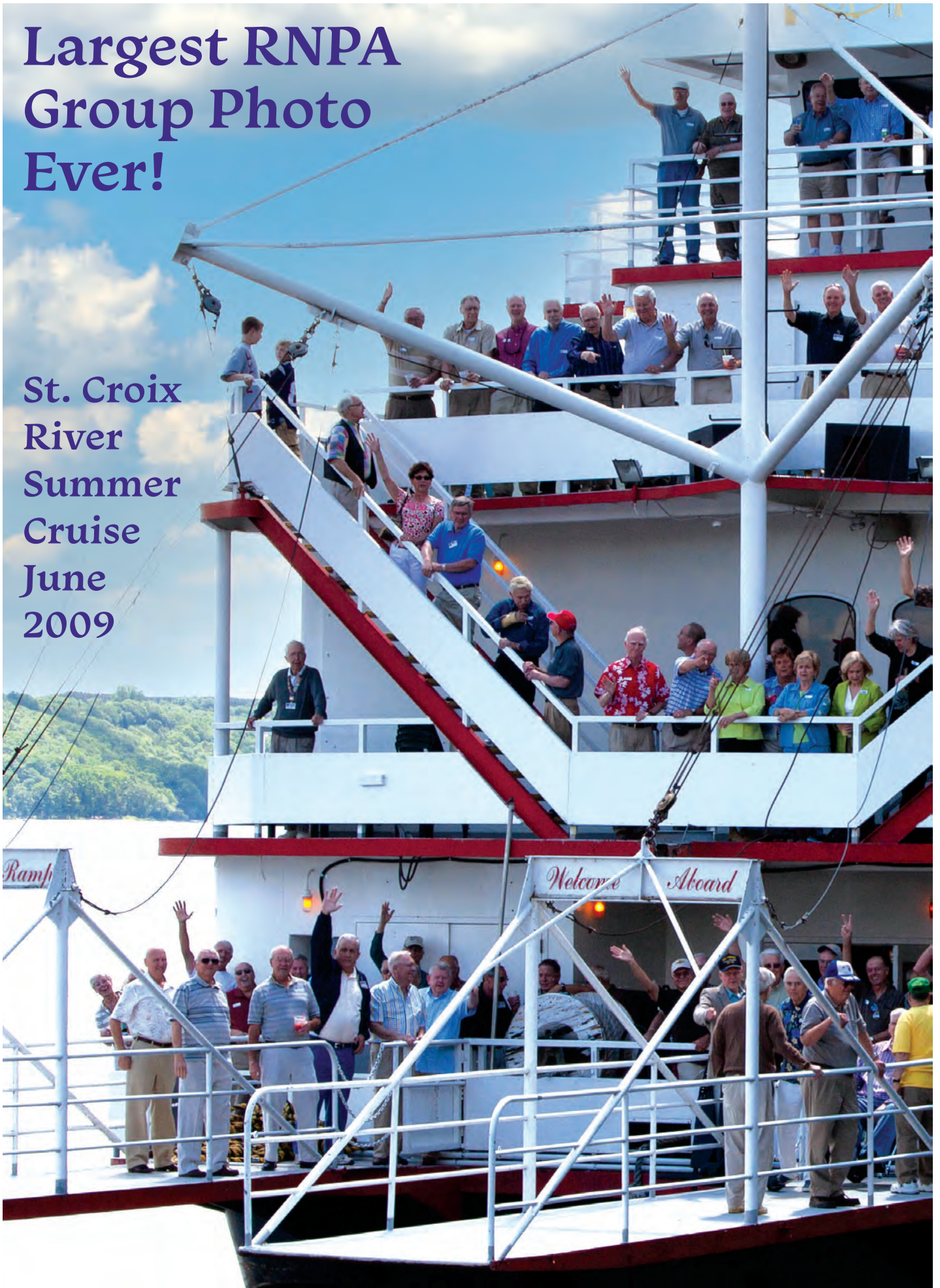
There are 58,267 names listed on that polished black wall, including those added in 2010.

- The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized. It is hard to believe it is 36 years since the last casualties.
- The first known casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, of North Weymouth, Mass. Listed by the U.S. Department of Defense as having been killed on June 8, 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with that of his son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, who was killed on Sept. 7, 1965.
- There are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall.
- 39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger.
- 8,283 were just 19 years old.
- The largest age group, 33,103 were 18 years old.
- 12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old.
- 5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old.
- One soldier, PFC Dan Bullock was 15 years old.
- 997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam
- 1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam
- 31 sets of brothers are on the Wall.
- Thirty one sets of parents lost two of their sons.
- 54 soldiers on the wall attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia.
- 8 Women are on the Wall. Nursing the wounded.
- 244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War; 153 of them are on the Wall.
- Beallsville, Ohio with a population of 475 lost 6 of her sons.
- West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita in the nation. There are 711 West Virginians on the Wall.
- The Marines of Morenci - They led some of the scrappiest high school football and basketball teams that the little Arizona copper town of Morenci (pop. 5,058) had ever known and cheered. They enjoyed roaring beer busts. In quieter moments, they rode horses along the Coronado Trail, stalked deer in the Apache National Forest. And in the patriotic camaraderie typical of Morenci's mining families, the nine graduates of Morenci High enlisted as a group in the Marine Corps. Their service began on Independence Day, 1966. Only 3 returned home.
- The Buddies of Midvale; LeRoy Tafoya, Jimmy Martinez, Tom Gonzales were all boyhood friends and lived on three consecutive streets in Midvale, Utah on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh avenues. They lived only a few yards apart. They played ball at the adjacent sandlot ball field. And they all went to Vietnam. In a span of 16 dark days in late 1967, all three would be killed. LeRoy was killed on Wednesday, Nov. 22, the fourth anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Jimmy died less than 24 hours later on Thanksgiving Day. Tom was shot dead assaulting the enemy on Dec. 7, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.
- The most casualty deaths for a single day was on January 31, 1968 ~ 245 deaths.
- The most casualty deaths for a single month was May 1968 - 2,415 casualties were incurred.

On November 11, 1984, all three units (the wall, the statue, and the flag) were combined. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc. (VVMF) officially transferred control of the Memorial to the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior and it became a national monument.

Largest RNPA Group Photo Ever!

St. Croix
River
Summer
Cruise
June
2009







YOUNG ~~THE OLD~~ MAN AND THE SEA

I was young then.

A story about the sea but definitely not a “Sea Story”

by Len “Jake” Jacobson

This saga began for me one Wednesday morning at 0600 getting on a helicopter at NAS Ream Field south of San Diego on the Mexican border. At the time I had the misfortune of being the Air Group LSO (Landing Signal Officer) of an Air Group that hadn't been at sea for a few months and the pilots were running out of carrier landing qualifications. If the term Carrier Air Group isn't familiar to you ask one of your Navy (not Marine) buddies what it is, it'll save me some typing.

In any case, the respective squadron LSOs and I climbed on the two helicopters and were ferried out to the carrier, which was already at sea.

(Due to the sensitive nature of this entire incident, even at this late date, I will not be using any names—people wearing many stars got involved.)

Our job that day and night was to get each fixed wing pilot a few day and night refresher carrier landings so they would all be current again. The planes showed up about 0800 and for the next 16 hours we just stood in the stack gas and watched aircraft land.

That isn't part of the saga so I'll fast forward to about midnight when all the aircraft were sent back to the

beach. By this time after steaming into the Southern California western wind for 16 hours we were near the Channel Islands off Santa Barbara.

The two plane guard helos landed and were refueled. When the fixed wing aircraft reported feet dry ashore, the other LSOs and I climbed aboard both helos for our ride back to the beach. Even before this day I had the reputation of not particularly caring for helicopters so I tightened my seat belt and chin strap extra tight. I was in the second helo and noticed the first one turned left after liftoff. When our wheels were only two feet off the deck the ship started a hard turn out of the wind and we turned right. It then occurred to me that in a helo your one-man life raft is kind of like a kidney belt and must be strapped on after you sit down. I was still in the process of trying to get it on when, in a right turn at 80–100 knots, we flew into the water.

As most of you know, a helicopter has the structural integrity of a poorly made pole barn. I became conscious (woke up) under water, out of the seat, out of the aircraft and without my helmet. Those of you that had the good fortune to attend any Navy water survival training years ago I'm sure will remember an old guy standing on the edge of the pool saying, “If you ever find yourself under water and don't know which way to

swim for the surface,” and you’re thinking, “Yeah sure, BS.” The next words out of his mouth were, “Just inflate your life jacket and the problem is solved.” Believe it or not I remembered those words from back in 1956 and it worked exactly as he said it would.

After a minute and a half (it seemed that long) I surfaced into what looked like a junk yard—stuff floating everywhere. I spent the first few moments taking inventory, trying my arms and legs. Everything moved with no pain and my head felt OK. I had to have been the luckiest guy in the world—just flew into the water at 100 knots in an orange crate and survived.

My guess is that my seatbelt held for a fraction of a second while the front of the machine disintegrated and I was catapulted through the loose crap in the water and out of the aircraft. I swam to a nearby seat cushion for extra buoyancy and looked over my shoulder at the carrier which was right there.

Thinking that I’d be out of there in a few minutes, I lit off one of my flares and started calling for other people—with no response. I saw no indication that the ship was turning or that the other helo was in the area. We wore a .38 pistol with tracer ammunition for survival purposes. I aimed it at the ship and emptied it, reloaded and did the same again. It was a worthless piece of baggage.

Now for the first time it came to me what could be happening. For about half an hour I continued to call for other people and watched the ship steam over the horizon—which didn’t take long when my eyes were only three inches above the surface of the ocean.

It slowly dawned on me that nobody else was as lucky as me and I was out there alone in the middle of the Pacific Ocean in a life jacket. For the first time I thought about sharks and blood from the bodies but realized that all I smelled was JP-5. I thought that should keep them away and forgot about it. Something had to be going on, how could the ship lose radio and radar contact with an aircraft two or three minutes after launch and do nothing about it?

(I’m sure you’re now thinking something along those lines as you read this. More later.)

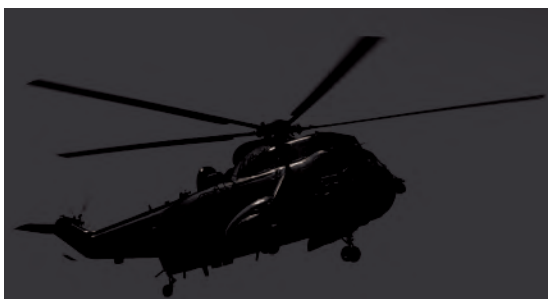
To give you a rough idea of the time frame of the event, if you’re a sports nut or football fan you may remember the game for the national championship between Michigan State and Notre Dame that ended in a 10-10 tie and created a big stink. It was being played that weekend. I must have been a fan back then because as I floated around I was upset. No, I was really pissed, because I was going to die and not get to see the game. As it turned out I still didn’t get to see it—had to testify before the Accident Board.

I found out later the water temperature was 62 degrees. It didn’t take long for my body to start feeling the effects of this fact. The seat cushion I’d picked up earlier probably saved my life in that it kept me a little higher out of the water. I didn’t think my Mae West was fully inflated I readily knew there was a third inflation chamber in it that could be manually inflated. Do you think I would touch the inflation tube to get a little more air into it? NOT ON YOUR LIFE! I was positive that touching that tube would let air out of the jacket. Sure, my head was just fine. Real clear thinking, Jake!

I’m sure there are a multitude of things I’ve forgotten since this occurred but there are three things I experienced that I will never forget.

First, when you’re getting cold from being in cold water you start to shiver just like waiting for a street car in the winter on Lake Street. However, it’s not like dry shivering on a cold Minnesota day. In the water my bodily motion continued to increase to the point where my limbs were wildly flailing. This continued until all eight of the major limb muscles cramped simultaneously. We all know what a leg cramp feels like, try eight of them at the same time. In my case I screamed until the cramping subsided, how long I have no idea, just until it quit. When that happens you feel comfortable. Shortly thereafter it started all over again. Why it ever stopped I have no idea, I’m just thankful it did.

Second, I had the experience of observing the wonderful combination of our body and brain working together. One of the things I never really understood in the water was how I could get so sleepy being in constant motion in the ocean and working my tail end off trying not to swallow half of it. (The Docs told me later it’s the



“The helo shined a spotlight on us momentarily but flew off into the night.”

cold temperature.) In any case I got sleepily depressed to the point where I told myself, “Stay awake until you count to ten, when you get there go ahead and fall asleep.” I tried it, from one to eight was straight down hill, a real bummer. At nine I started uphill, at ten I was soaring, convinced I could stay awake until the next afternoon. I actually had those exact thoughts.

Shortly the sleepy depression started again and I counted again, same result. I don’t know how fast I counted or how many times I did it—could have been a hundred or more. The one thing I do know is there is no way my brain was going to let the number get beyond ten. Your body/brain package is a wonderful thing.

We all think we know what dark is. I’ll tell you what dark is. After about three to four hours I turned my head to the left for some reason and when I turned back there was something one inch in front of my nose. It was what I soon learned was the copilot in a one-man life raft. My luck was holding. If that raft had hit me in the nose coming out of nowhere that would have done it. That’s dark—visibility was less than one inch.

Another comment about my luck. If that raft had been a few feet either side of me as it passed, nether one of us would have seen the other person. Later we both agreed that our meeting saved our lives, alone we wouldn’t have made it through the night.

I’ve decided to call him Mike—not his real name of course. Having Mike run into me was like winning the lottery for both of us. The psychological effect was tremendous. Not only did we have someone to talk to but we could pool our knowledge while making huge decisions like when to turn on our life jacket survival

lights. That being probably the only decision we’d have to consider. We had both turned them off independently when all signs of rescue went over the horizon, not knowing diddly-squat about the length of battery life. (The Accident Board chewed our rear ends about our one critical decision—we shouldn’t have done that.) It turned out that Mike wasn’t as lucky as I was going through the chunks of disintegrating aircraft, he was pretty dinged up—several broken ribs and numerous cuts. That was our guess at the time. Turned out he spent three months in the hospital.

We spent a lot of time trying to work out the best way to stay together and give me the warmest possible position. We worked out a system where I would lay my feet on the edge of the raft, he held them up partially out of the water and I held on to his ankles in the raft, balancing it by using the seat cushion on the outboard side of my body. I used this position for about ten minutes whenever my legs became unbearably cold. It helped tremendously and diminished some of the body shivering. The rest of the time I balanced between the raft and seat cushion with my feet hanging down in the water.

When first meeting we talked quite a bit but as time wore on it was work to talk so conversation backed off to just enough to keep each other awake. When the first ships appeared on the horizon it became time to make our only decision—we turned on our survival lights. The ships appeared to be miles apart, one coming down each side of us, we broke out our last two flares. When they seemed to be close enough Mike lit his but it didn’t work. I tried mine with success but the ships did not alter course. Shortly thereafter a helo came out of the gloom and for the first time we saw how bad the weather was. We had not realized that it was foggy. The helo shined a spotlight on us momen-

tarily but flew off into the night. His disappearance was indeed the low spot of my day. What the hell was going on?

Our conversation centered around the point of whether we'd been sighted or not. The light was a positive sign and we thought one of the ships had turned toward us.

I broke out our last piece of survival equipment, my whistle, and gave it to Mike—his hands were free. Considering the last few hours he wasn't taking any chances and blew that damn thing until the destroyer was close enough to spit on.

My third and last permanent recollection of this event occurred at this time. The DD put a small boat into the water which then came alongside. They tried to pull me into the boat but my inflated Mae West didn't allow for that. I said, "Let me float on my side and you can roll me in." Which I did with no problem, being completely mobile. I was laying on the bench seat and they tried to reach over me to pull Mike in and they couldn't. I said, "Let me go to the other side," and tried to move. I couldn't move a finger or turn my head let alone get up. I was safe, my brain had shut my body down, it said YOU ARE NOT MOVING ANY MORE TONIGHT.

They could have picked me up by my hair and toes and carried me away. I had been in the water almost six hours to the minute.

THE REST OF THE STORY

When I got back to the Air Group I of course started asking some obvious questions. I was told my pay grade wasn't near high enough (I was a LCDR) to be asking those kind of questions. In my mind it was a typical case of the Navy taking care of its own. This ship was going to shortly deploy back to the war with this Air Group aboard and almost all of the personnel present that were involved in the incident. Any upheaval at this time would seriously affect staffing levels for the deployment, not to mention any animosity between the Air Group and ship's company.

The accident report was sent up the chain of command and status quo prevailed. It was history.

Mike and I left the Navy and continued with our lives. Then in the '90s and 2000s the Air Group started having periodic reunions. We all know all you do at reunions is tell sea stories.

Mike and I became reunited and did we have ammunition for sea stories. Mike spent years working for the Attorney General of a certain state and was versed in a new law called The Freedom of Information Act. He said he could get the accident report which was buried in the bowels of the Navy Department, and he did.

It may have been the Freedom of Information Act but that didn't mean a posse of lawyers didn't have first crack at censoring the guts out of it. The document that Mike and I received had all the fire and brimstone removed.

We did find out several items of interest. The ship did see our flares, they thought they were missiles fired from Vandenberg AFB. When the first helo arrived at Ream Field after a one hour flight, but no second helo, the tower, after verifying that no helo had landed at any Southern California airport after our aircraft's ETA, initiated SAR procedures roughly thirty minutes later.

The carrier became aware of the situation then and began steaming back to our helo's take-off position, which became the center of the search area. Many helos from Ream field along with two destroyers were also headed there. The helo that lit us up and then departed into the night had an electrical fire onboard and had to return to the carrier.

The inaction of departure control was not addressed in the report we received. Any action taken by people with many stars was greatly reduced by my previous guess—the upcoming deployment to WESTPAC. However, through personal knowledge I do know that several fairly senior officers' Naval careers came to a screeching halt because of this incident.

They'll let us go to war but they don't forget.

Other than that it's just another sea story. ★

“Der Nipper” One of the Greats, Clarence W. Opsahl

The beginning of the Retired Northwest Airlines Pilots’ Association. I believe the idea was first planted by Sam Houston. Hal Barnes sent me a note and stated to get my a__ to the Washington Towers in Seattle for the first formal meeting. I followed his orders. Hal was elected President and Nippy Opsahl was elected as Secretary-Treasurer, and we were on our way. Many others contributed materially also, but the toughest job of all, in my opinion, was to get our fledgling newsletter off and running—and to formulate policy that would prove interesting to members and others. Nip did this, and I must mention that he had expert help in getting the newsletter in the mails and in a timely manner. Hal Barnes started to call Nip “Mr. RNPA,” and I asked Hal why. Graciously, Hal answered, “Because Nip does practically all the work.” And so it was for many years. An extremely important job accomplished in a most masterful way. Later on, Herm and Larry Muto came along, and they deserve an ocean of kudos. What would we have done without their gifted manner in getting our quality newsletter to all of us. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Barnstorming Days in the depression of the ‘20s and ‘30s

Another close friend of mine and Nipper was the great Walter Bullock, a real character. In discussing Nip one time, Walt told me [the] following story: Walt was in Lorraine, Ohio with his very helpful mate Lillian and their infant daughter Madeline. Walt was flying an old airplane and selling rides to local paying passengers (\$5.00). It was the end of the day, Lillian had taken their car and was proceeding with baby daughter to the next town (near Cleveland), where the aerial circus would next perform. Walt had filled all tanks—gas and water, etc., for the flight to join Lillian and the group. A very heavy-set individual drove up, jumped out of his car, came over to Walt, and told him he wanted a ride. Walt explained he was about to leave, but the fellow was quite insistent, and offered to pay Walt thirty five dollars for a 10 minute hop. That was real money in those days, and against his better judgment he agreed to do it. Along the way, Walt got into what I believe was a flat spin, due to the extra weight, and the plane crashed. Walt and passenger emerged OK, but Walt had a big problem—crashed plane, little money and Lillian enroute to the next town with no way to get in touch. It was a very sad day for Walt when who came back to see what was delaying him but Nippy and Al Opsahl on their respective motorcycles. One look at Walt and his airplane and they could tell he was in need of a friend. It was the low point of Walt’s aviation career. Nip and Al went into a huddle and quickly came to a conclusion. Over they went to Walt and stated, “We both have some money, and we’d like to lend it to you to rebuild your airplane. No interest. Pay us back when you get it.” Walt was stunned by such a generous offer. He thought for a minute or two, then turned to Nip and Al and told them he deeply appreciated what they had offered, but he just couldn’t accept it. As Walt told me, “I just couldn’t take what in those days was probably their entire nest egg.” Walt emphasized how extraordinary these two were. I agreed, and stated, “It also shows what kind of a guy you (Walt) are, when in your real hour of need, not to accept it.”

Just a little of my flying experiences with Nip [during] World War II

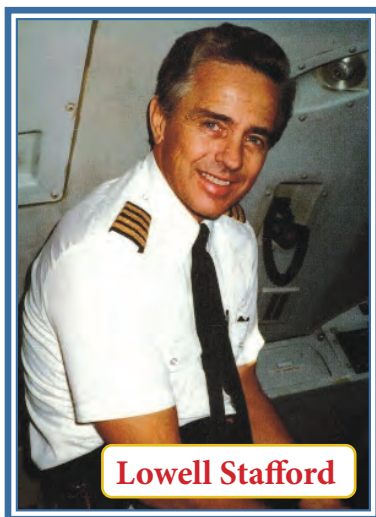
Honeywell hired NW pilots for their experimental flight in regard to their autopilot that was used with the Norton bomb sight in all four engined bombers: The formation stick (a fly-by-wire from over 47 years ago, etc., etc. Nip landed a B24 at Sioux Falls Air Force Base flying by wire only. I stood by on the normal controls just in case, but Nip made a number of perfect landings and never touched the normal controls at all. The Air Force was very happy about this. I could go on and on, but, to brief it up, we flew Douglas Dauntless dive bombers, B17 Flying Fortresses, B24s, AT11s and B29 bombers, plus others, all over the country. Nip is not only a gentleman of the first order, always so considerate of everyone, but in addition, I classify him as a pilot in the category of some of the others. He is “one of the greats,” no question about it.

Sincerely,
Keith D. McCarthy

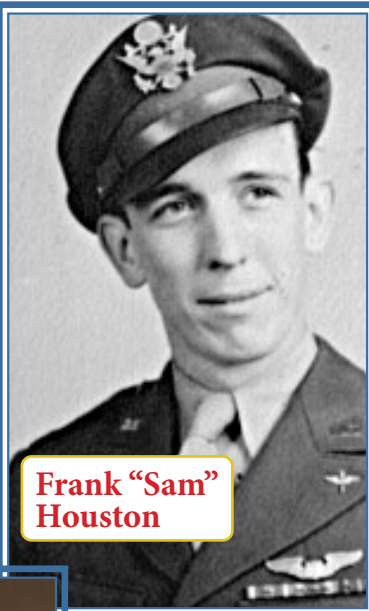
P.S. - Nip will get after me, as he dislikes being the center of attention etc., but Nip be damned, I’m telling it anyway. Nip is just one beautiful human being. I could go on and on, but if I did I think Nip would get after me with a UZI. As I used to say to him, “Clarence, do you have the clearance, Clarence, and are we cleared?” Hasta la vista, amigos.

RNPA

HONORED MEMBERS



Lowell Stafford



Frank "Sam" Houston



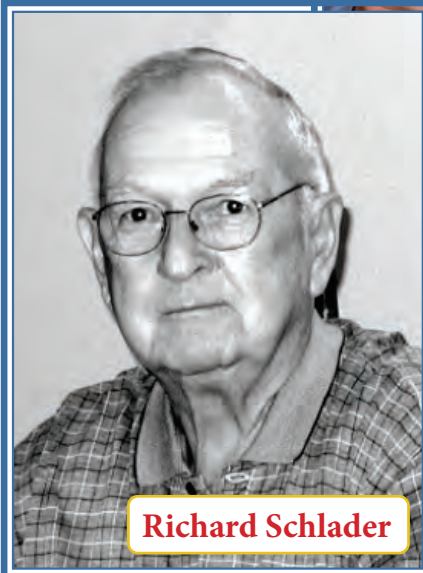
**Clarence
"Nippy" Opsahl**



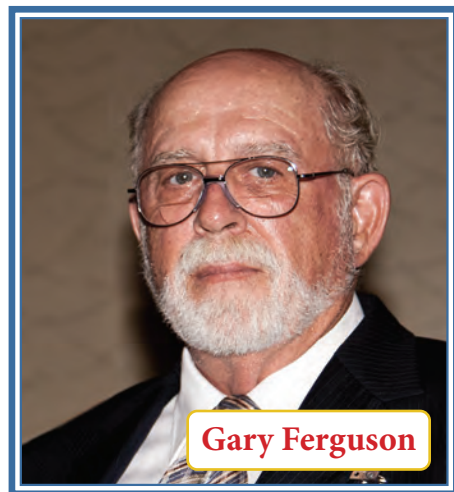
Dino Oliva



Gary Pisel



Richard Schlader



Gary Ferguson



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From the RNPA Constitution

Honored Member:

An Honorary lifetime membership may be conferred on a member for especially outstanding service to RNPA by a majority vote of The Executive Board. Honorary members pay no dues, and are entitled to attend all meetings and social events.

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