

CONTRAILS

ISSUE NO. 177

FEBRUARY 2011



© Joel Vignere

"I took the picture with a small point-and-shoot held in one hand as I had my bear spray in the other. If I interpret his look correctly, he is thinking, 'You humans are really stupid.'"

– Joel Vignere (See page 15)

RETIRED NORTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

RNPA CONTRAILS



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Each Member!

The RNPA newsletter *Contrails* is published quarterly in February, May, August and November by the Retired Northwest Airlines Pilots' Association, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to maintain the friendships and associations of the members, to promote their general welfare, and assist those active pilots who are approaching retirement with the problems relating thereto. Membership is \$35 annually for Regular Members (NWA pilots, active or retired) and \$25 for Affiliate Members.

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FEBRUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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22 PHX Picnic

MARCH

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16 SW Florida Spring Luncheon

APRIL

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JUNE

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9 MSP Summer Cruise (Old boat)

JULY

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AUGUST

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18 Seattle Summer Picnic

SEPTEMBER

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25, 26, 27 Omaha Reunion

OCTOBER

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FUTURE REUNIONS

ATLANTA:

SEPT. 28-30, 2012

TUSCON:

SEPT. ??-??, 2013

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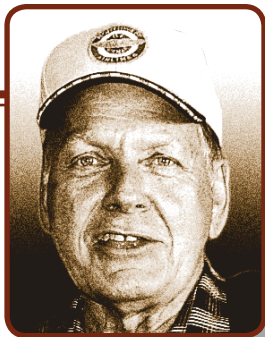
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Contents February 2011



President's Report: Gary PISEL

Greetings,

Here we are in 2011, WOW does time fly by. It has been 15+ years since I retired and much more for some of you. Do you miss flying?? Or just the layovers? These would be great subjects for you to write Gary Ferguson to put in CONTRAILS.

Again it is time to pause and reflect on those fellow pilots that have flown West in the past months. Unfortunately we do not have the same system of notification we had at NWA. The news of passing fellow pilots and employees is largely word of mouth. Please contact a Board member or Philip Hallin if you know of someone who has Flown West. AND please remember to refresh your memory on what information is in the SURVIVORS CHECKLIST. Working with Delta on survivors benefits is frustrating at best. Please contact me if you have any questions.

RNPA has several functions coming up. My advice is to plan ahead and register early! The airplanes are full and the hotels fill up fast, especially for discounted rooms. Why wait until the week before to act, DO IT NOW!

OMAHA: There have been some problems with DoubleTree central reservations saying our rooms are all booked. This is of course false information. The problem seems to be if you are asking to book beginning on the 23rd or 24th of September. As of now, the hotel is fully booked on Friday and Saturday (23rd & 24th) because of the rodeo. The hotel is setting up a Personal Group Web Page we can use to make reservations. It should be up and running by the time you read this and I'll pass the word. In the interim you may call the Room Coordinator, Elana Wade at 402-636-4913 to make your reservation. If you plan to attend the rodeo, there are a multitude of hotels near the airport as well as in the downtown area only a few blocks from our hotel. The airport is only three miles from the hotel. The convention coordinator has suggested calling Elana Wade or Reservations later to check on cancellations. (This from Chuck Carlson.)

As we enter this New Year I would like once again to thank you for your confidence in the RNPA Board of Directors. The members serve to serve you. Please feel free to contact any Director with any concern you might have.

HAPPY NEW YEAR! From Barbara and myself.



Treasurer's Report: Dino OLIVA

IMPORTANT: TWO ITEMS

ONE: I have received several inquiries regarding problems with the forwarding of our newsletters by the postal service. About 15 years ago we went from second class postage to first class so that those that have two residences (snow birds or summer cabin people) would have their RNPA publications forwarded like all other first class mail. I discussed this with my post office manager and the answer was that "all first class mail must be forwarded" (including our newsletter). If you are having a problem with this, discuss it with your local post office and your post person. I found that a Christmas gift to my local postman greases the skids nicely for any requested services.

TWO: After 5 days of receiving dues payments about 50% have paid their dues. I appreciate those of you that are prompt and considerate in remitting your payments. It takes a considerable amount of time to post your payments into the computer. It would be nice if it could be completed in two weeks, not three months. Do yourself and also me a favor by submitting your payments promptly, thus saving me the extra time, RNPA the cost, and you the expense of the \$5 late fee for procrastination.



“NO RULES” – THE FEATURE ARTICLE

It all began simply enough. One Richard “Rick” Seireeni contacted some of us trying to learn more about the father he never knew. He knew he had worked for Northwest in the '40s and '50s and he had only one small wallet-sized “head shot” to know what his father looked like.

Many of you will, and several did, remember Al Johnson, but Rick didn't. His search yielded far more than he could have imagined, including learning of siblings he was unaware of. I won't say more here, but you will find his story fascinating.

I have no doubt that some of you will be able to add to the story of Al Johnson. If you would, I will be happy to forward anything you have to offer to Rick.

IT'LL BE SPRING SOON

In most places. But down there in the land of only two seasons—Summer and Hurricane—they're planning on seeing you at the SW Florida Spring Luncheon. (Even though they don't really have a Spring.)

It's just a few weeks away now, and Doni Jo and Dick say that the reservations are coming in mighty slowly. So don't wait until the last minute. It causes Dick to become irritable and cranky. I'm hoping to get down there myself and I'd like him to be his usual easy-going, lovable self. (Info and reservation form on page 33.)

A NEW MEMBER SENDS A STORY

At the urging of several RNPA members, Kathy McCullough recently joined our ranks and promptly sent a story about an aviation specialty few of us know anything about.

She says that she has been writing on layovers for a long time. That kind of comment is music to this editor's ears.

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO

If you're paying the least bit of attention you may have noticed that I have, not really intentionally, begun a new trend in cover photos.

I was going to put another airplane picture on the cover, but c'mon, haven't we all seen enough airplanes in our time? I had thought of putting a photo of that wonderful Boeing 40C that Pemberton & Sons restored in Spokane. But most of you have probably seen it before and, lovely as it is, it's another airplane already.

I was still struggling with what to use when, about a couple weeks before sending this off to the printer's, Joel Vignere sent me the letter on page 15 intending the photo to go with the letter. That made it a no-brainer for me.

There are pro wildlife photographers who will work their entire careers and never get a shot like that—at least not without a high-powered zoom lens. I realize that Joel did not plan this shot, but everything about it: the composition, the light and the color make for a stunning photo.

So using good, interesting photos for our covers may just become the norm for a while. As I said about the cowboy herding the buffalo last issue, good photos tell a little story. And really, how many of you have seen a grizzly coming your way and only yards from you? That's a big story to me.

Got any great shots you'd like me to consider?

WHAT CHABEENUPTO?



DICK DUXBURY

Hi Gary/RNPA,

Well, you have done it again! The November “Contrails” with the buffalo cowboy on the cover is indeed a classic picture. Both Sue and I agree that you are an exceptional photographer and editor.

So “Thanks” from all our RNPA members for this publication.

Yes, Rapid City was a lot of fun with a variety of things to do. It was with some reluctance that I decided to not run for re-election for the RNPA Board. It’s been 10 years, two conventions, and I was excited to find another of my NWA classmates, K.C. Kohlbrand, was moved to the RNPA leadership.

OK, it looks like I’ll do a lot of planning, contracts, etc. for the Tucson convention/reunion in 2013. Hey, it’s our home country.

I’m angry (well, in a friendly way) with my old NWA pilot friend Bob Root. He seemed to be way too much “on target” with his funny article about “Ask your Doctor.”

We are back in Tucson for the winter—still have our condo in Bloomington and will return for the MSP RNPA Christmas party. Should also make the 2011 PHX picnic—last year it was sunny but not as warm as we expected. Damn, the Florida group always has warm temps for their spring event.

Glad to notice Steve Luckey (retired NWA pilot and RNPA member) got an ALPA award. I spent a bit of time with him during the August ALPA Air Safety Forum in DCA last August. We both testified before the Gore Air Safety Commission—gosh many years ago for sure.

I have mixed feelings about now getting my retired check from Delta.

Yep, I know it’s the same old NWA pilot retired fund. Still, I’m just feeling passed by. Glad I can wear a NWA logo hat for golf in Tucson. I’m afraid that it will be like looking at an old timer wearing an EAL or PanAm hat—or perhaps even Braniff.

Sigh, and my golf game is sooo bad, I should put on a DAL cap. Hmm, I’ve still got an old North Central ball cap; have no idea how that was in my trunk. Should sell it on E-bay?

Regards, (and what a great RNPA magazine!)

Dick Duxbury (Dux),
Tucson

RON MURDOCK

Hi Gary:

Add me to your fan list. Under your tutelage, Contrails has evolved from another somewhat interesting mailing into a fought-over-who-gets-to-read-it-first magazine. Kudos to the persistence of all involved in RNPA .

My wife, Bonnie, a former flight att* (*whoops, major deadly faux pas) stewardess, looks forward to each issue as much as me. We both are saddened, however, to learn of too many westward bound friends and associates.

We’re still happily hanging out on Whidbey Island, WA, the U.S.A.’s second largest and longest Island in the contiguous U.S. Two nearby daughters, one a 19 year NWA cum Delta F/A, the other, family with two GKids, and our third lab keep us busy. Summer golf and chores with periodic visits to various southland winter escapes and/or to visit with the third daugh-

ter’s CA family round out the year.

I decided it’s time to purge a stash of a few old ALPA magazines. Enclosed is a clip of a piece I submitted to ALPA twenty-five years (25!) years ago, for which I was amazed to receive a check. I thought it might be worthy of resurrection. Some things never change.

Regards,

Ron Murdock

I think all readers will agree that it’s very much “worthy of resurrection.” See page 53. – Ed.

STC: Senior Texting Code
(Seniors’ texting and tweeting Codes)

- ATD: At The Doctor’s
 - BFF: Best Friend Farted
 - BTW: Bring The Wheelchair
 - BYOT: Bring Your Own Teeth
 - CBM: Covered By Medicare
 - CUATSC: See You At The Senior Center
 - DWI: Driving While Incontinent
 - FWBB: Friend With Beta Blockers
 - FWIW: Forgot Where I Was
 - FYI: Found Your Insulin
 - GGPBL: Gotta Go, Pacemaker Battery Low!
 - GHA: Got Heartburn Again
 - HGBM: Had Good Bowel Movement
 - IMHO: Is My Hearing-Aid On?
 - LMDO: Laughing My Dentures Out
 - LOL: Living On Lipitor
 - LWO: Lawrence Welk’s On
 - OMMR: On My Massage Recliner
 - OMSG: Oh My! Sorry, Gas.
 - ROFL... CGU: Rolling On The Floor Laughing... and Can’t Get Up
 - SGGP: Sorry, Gotta Go Poop
 - TTYL: Talk To You Louder
 - WAITT: Who Am I Talking To?
 - WTFA: Wet The Furniture Again
 - WTP: Where’s The Prunes?
 - WWNO: Walker Wheels Need Oil
 - GLKI: Gotta go, Laxative Kicking In
- FBVB: Forwarded by Vic Britt*

RON BOCKHOLD

Hi Gary,

Here's a little info for contrails. To all the happy retired pilots from NWA, I have finally joined your ranks.

Most of the whale captains might remember me as their copilot or as a new engineer. I spent 25 years on the classic whale and I still can't believe I was that lucky and now that that life is over. Upward and onward!

I am now a roving ambassador for Pacific Missionary Aviation, an organization operating in the far away Micronesian islands. They operate aircraft, boats, radio stations, churches and television in Micronesia and the Philippines. I just returned from a three week voyage aboard their floating clinic ship the Sea Haven. We distributed schoolbooks and medical supplies and my wife Beata provided medical education on the islands. She is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine in Florida.

This trip I visited Guam, Truk and Pohnpei. Next time I hope to visit Yap, Palau and Kosrae.

I want to thank all the whale captains I flew with over the years, who taught me everything they knew, both good and bad, in the air and on the layovers. 25 years of fun, fun, fun.

If anyone is interested in supporting PMA in any way, check out their website at pmacific.org. If you donate or contact them, tell them Cap'n Ron Bockhold sent you.

Ron Bockhold



Me recovering engine cowling of B-24 Liberator shot down in WWII



Cockpit of the B-24 underwater



Island children bringing gifts of food out to us for their appreciation



The mother ship M/V Sea Haven



Beata and her new friends on the island

Gary

It's beyond me why anyone would be interested in "what I've been up to" however I enjoy reading other letters to see what the troops have to say and to make sure I'm not falling behind.

When I retired in 1996 on a medical (cancer), the all knowing doctors in Oklahoma City pulled my medical even though I had beat the odds and survived; I was building a commercial project in Tampa and working every day and felt great. I passed the physical (you know, form two-syllable words and a heart beat) but the FAA said no. After three years with help from ALPA Aero Medical in Denver I got my third class, renewable every two years.

I'm still flying; I have a Cessna T310R and I love it. If you have not experienced General Aviation lately you will be surprised at the electronics available. A GPS moving map called an MFD that shows the airways just like the low level charts and your position within 100 feet. You can call up the approach plate and follow the "Yellow Brick Road," also available is a "virtual" runway with a flight director all appearing on the TV. Cool, eh?

One interesting comment I hear from our retired guys is, "I haven't flown an airplane since I retired; and I have no interest." I looked at my first log book the other day and last April I had been flying fifty years—April 1960. The entry stated "Basic introduction, traffic pattern, Touch and Go" in a Cessna 150 with six transmitting frequencies and a "coffee grinder" to receive. How many remember the "Coffee Grinder?"

Of course all you military guys don't have a clue.

My hangar mate, who is a gen-

eral aviation check airman, called me stranded in Myrtle Beach with a student and asked me to fly his Cessna 210 from Vero Beach to Lakeland Florida. He had scheduled maintenance in Lakeland and was unable to deliver the plane. "Sure, I'll be happy to." I had not flown his 210 but once, months before, however I was on his insurance. Since the last time I flew the airplane he had an electrical fire and replaced all the wiring. I should keep those minor facts in mind when volunteering to take someone's airplane.

After doing the walk around check I settled in the left seat, turned on the battery that showed a little over 23 volts—good enough. With the engine started, I turned on the radio master switch and contacted ground control;

"Hold short at Charlie One for an intersection departure."

After the run-up and checklist, I noticed the number one radio was breaking up with static. That is OK, I'll use number two. That should have given me my first hint. While waiting for takeoff clearance I noticed the electronics blinked several times. Just as I was getting suspicious, I received "Cleared for immediate take off," and I accepted. Dumb, eh?

During the takeoff roll all the instruments appeared normal. Rotate, gear up and that did it! I had lost all electrical power—once the gear was up of course. There wasn't one electron left on the airplane; but the gear was up! So now I can't say good bye to the tower and no hand held radio, but I have a full tank of gas. I could return and land with no radio that is if I can get the gear down, find the emergency check list and remember the tower light signals, blinking green—steady green? I turn northwest to stay clear of airports in the area and level off at 1,500 feet. Sebastian airport just

north of Vero Beach does not have a tower but does have flight school traffic and student pilots. It also has a sometimes mechanic. I decide with no radio a no tower airport is a logical choice, although they have no emergency equipment, I'm not flying a "heavy."

I circled the airport with the emergency checklist out. On downwind I pump the gear down "fourteen pumps check gear lights, three green"—I get a flicker, red then green. Oh great, I have my choice, I choose green. I start the approach four miles out over the ocean. Flying my 310, a low wing airplane, I have installed a small convex mirror on the engine cowling to check the gear down in an emergency. Looking for a mirror in the 210 to check the main gear and can't find one—(I'm a little slow)—when I realize I'm in a high wing so just look out the window and do a visual, dummy. I could reach out and touch the gear. The wind is westerly and no traffic in sight. No flaps and my hands are sweaty, mainly because it's not my airplane and maybe I did something to cause the problem.

I check the emergency check list again (where is my copilot when I need him?) and started the long approach searching for other traffic. Runway in sight, gear down and maybe three green, on glide path, on speed and no traffic in sight; I touch down—the main gear is solid on roll out. As I ease the nose down I get another "red gear unsafe" flicker then everything is holding as I taxi to the maintenance facility. It's just another day in the life of a "Fan Jet Pilot."

Maybe this is the reason why I hear, "I haven't flown an airplane since I retired; and I have no interest."

In the last fourteen months I've had three melanomas removed; my left shoulder scoped and repaired,

a right knee tendon and meniscus repaired, a small bowel obstruction operation (7 days hospital), my right shoulder rotator cuff repaired and finally my left knee (the only joint left) meniscus and tendon repaired. Last January a CT/PET scan revealed a suspicious “nodule” in my lower right lung that keeps moving locations. I’ve been to doctors in Pittsburgh, Tampa and the Mayo Clinic. Be careful guys even so called “expert in their field” doctors will kill you. Always get second or third opinions from different clinics. Had I listened to three different doctors over the years, I would not be writing this letter. The spot on my lung is still under review. I’ve never smoked.

On September 1st, I departed Vero Beach Florida on my motorcycle going to the Rapid City RNPA convention. I joined Dick Dodge and Dayle Yates in northern Virginia where we stopped for a visit with Donna Corbett. She and her husband purchased a beautiful large estate near the Front Royal/ Leesburg area. We continued north through New York into Canada.

The weather was marginal to bad through Canada and back to the States. We entered Michigan at Sault Ste. Marie and continued to Minneapolis in cold and occasional rain. Dayle and I stayed with Chuck Hinz and Ed Johnson while Dick stayed at his daughter’s home. After two days in Minneapolis with good weather I decided to ride south along the Mississippi and meet Dayle and Dick later. Stopping in La Crosse under cloudy skies and cool temperatures my plan was to get an early start west bound and join up somewhere in South Dakota. During the night the rain started with rain forecast to continue along with lower temperatures. Tornadoes were forecast in South Dakota with heavy rain in southern Minnesota.

Being somewhat weak from the past surgeries and not looking forward to more cold and rain I called Dayle to say, “I’m done, I’m going where it’s warm and sunny.” Heading south through Tennessee going to my mountain home, I got hot and rode two days in a tee shirt. And that’s why you did not see my handsome ass at the reunion. I regret missing the event but if I’m still on the “topside” next year I’ll be there, however, I would like a warmer location with better weather.

I still question why “what I’ve been up to” is of any interest.

Oh yeah, my golf handicap is still 12 and I’m still known as the definitive sandbagger. Bring money and come play with me at the Cliff’s.

JC Hanks

Added just prior to going to press. -Ed.

PS: I just got out of the hospital again with the same small bowel obstruction. Seven days eating ice and again losing fifteen pounds. This time the surgeon did a resection on the problem bowel and all is well. This problem was caused from a metastatic melanoma in my small bowels removed in 1997.

Now the good news is; a recent CAT scan shows my lungs clear of any suspicious areas. No spots or nodules and no problems. Dodged another bullet!

PATTI LYNCH

Dear Gary,

Thank you for the wonderful article about our parents in the November 2010 RNPA Contrails.

It means so much to our family to see that bit of history in the Contrails magazine. I know Ron and Pat’s grandchildren and great grandchildren will enjoy reading about the “old days.”

Again, thank you from our entire family.

Patti (Stelzig) Lynch

PHX PICNIC



**TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 22ND
Falcon Field, Mesa**

Coffee at 10:00

Eat at 12:00

Bring:

- **Meat to cook,**
- **Dish to pass,**
- **Fellow pilot or
Flight Attendant**

PAUL SODERLIND MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Just a reminder that the Paul Soderlind Memorial Scholarships are available to all former NW employees and their relatives. Applications are now being accepted and must be received by February 18, 2011 at any office of Wings Financial Credit Union.

For complete information go to www.wingsfinancial.com and click on "Resources", then click on "Scholarship Programs" and "2011 Paul Soderlind Scholarship Program." All of the information and an application is available at this location. There are two \$2,500 scholarships available.

Don't miss this opportunity to enter the competition for the scholarship awards. The sooner the entry is made, the better. That way it won't be put off until the last minute or forgotten completely. We look forward to receiving the applications.

Good luck!



DAVE SCHNEEBECK

Hello There,

2010 was another busy year for Dave & Andrea Schneebeck. We began the year with Dave having rotator cuff surgery on his left shoulder. It went so well he repeated it on his right shoulder the end of August. It, too, is healing well with motion returning and the pain gone. During rehab of the left shoulder we drove to Phoenix for a little recuperation and warmer, dryer weather. It was a good move and we enjoyed attending the RNPA picnic with the Arizona group and the visiting snow birds. During mid May to mid June we went back to Papua New Guinea for scuba diving and touring the countryside noting the changes that have occurred in 12 years. The discovery of extremely large deposits of natural gas is making a huge impact on the country. October found us on the Tundra in Canada near the town of Churchill on Hudson Bay watching Polar Bears. These creatures are magnificent and more so when you are up close to see them. Our usual trip to Cabo San Lucas was in November and, again, we got away from the snow, wind, and cold in Seattle. 2011 looks as if it is going to be as busy touring the world and enjoying new adventures. We wish everyone good health during the year.

Dave Schneebeck

DAVE WILLIAMS

Dino,

Thanks for all your hard work keeping the NWA pilot association together. We closed up the NAS Willow Grove Navy Flying Club and sent our last two flying T34s to the club in Memphis. Our club members had spent a lot of money having the wing spars rebuilt and updating the instrumentation. Both were nice flying birds. For retired military active duty or reserves in the Memphis area it is a good opportunity to have some fun flying the Mentors. The engines have been well maintained and are in great shape. I used them for some good golf trips and will miss having Navy airplanes to fly once more.

Dave Williams



AL TEASLEY

Hi Gary -

You keep asking for what have you been up to. Jean and I attended Rapid City RNPA and enjoyed ourselves. To meet and greet old friends is stimulating for everyone. The planners for RNPA always deserve kudos for their work. I think Jean and I drove the furthest to get there - it's two thousand miles back to the Tampa Bay area.

Upon leaving Rapid City we drove east and then south through Rosebud Indian Reservation then through the Sand Hills of Nebraska. Charles Kuralt of CBS called it "One of the prettiest drives in the USA". Very unique scenery—home of the Sand Hill Cranes (which winter in Florida).

I always thought that I flew in unusual times with NWA. When I started in 1958 we had DC-3s with service to Kalispel, Montana. I made it into there one time. Does any one know that we had an agent there who commuted on a horse to work?

When I started our layovers in Billings was the Babcock Apartments. Pilots kept clothes there and Roy Almquist once met another pilot wearing Roy's clothes. Being the gentleman that he was he didn't mention it to the other pilot.

I've flown with a lot of Captains - including Deke Delong, who was #1 at the time at NWA. I have many stories about Deke - here's one:

He snored very loudly when sleeping on his side. We shared rooms at that time. But his hearing

was better than mine. On takeoff at MSP in a DC-4 he said, "The #2 engine is running rough". I heard nothing. Shortly after takeoff #2 backfired and we had to return to MSP. We had a 30 minute delay but still made it to BIL on time.

From 1958 to 1989 there were many changes in airplanes. I ended up as Captain on 747's with a good secure pension and lots of good memories.

Jean and I live year around in Florida. Jean has had some maintenance problems. Her pacemaker/defibrillator seems to be a cure-all for heart problems. We still visit Minnesota a couple of times a year and enjoy the boat ride.

Regards,
Al Teasley



• GRANDCHILDREN •

• My young grandson called the other day to wish me Happy Birthday. He asked me how old I was, and I told him, 62. My grandson was quiet for a moment, and then he asked, "Did you start at 1?"

• I didn't know if my granddaughter had learned her colors yet, so I decided to test her. I would point out something and ask what color it was. She would tell me and was always correct. It was fun for me, so I continued. At last, she headed for the door, saying, "Grandma, I think you should try to figure out some of these yourself!"

• When my grandson Billy and I entered our vacation cabin, we kept the lights off until we were inside to keep from attracting pesky insects. Still, a few fire-

flies followed us in. Noticing them before I did, Billy whispered, "It's no use Grandpa. Now the mosquitoes are coming after us with flashlights."

• After putting her grandchildren to bed, a grandmother changed into old slacks and a droopy blouse and proceeded to wash her hair. As she heard the children getting more and more rambunctious, her patience grew thin. Finally, she threw a towel around her head and stormed into their room, putting them back to bed with stern warnings. As she left the room, she heard the three-year-old say with a trembling voice, "Who was THAT?"

• When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure." "Look in your underwear, Grandpa," he advised, "mine says I'm 4 to 6."

• A grandfather was delivering his grandchildren to their home one day when a fire truck zoomed past. Sitting in the front seat of the fire truck was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the dog's duties. "They use him to keep crowds back," said one child. "No," said another. "He's just for good luck." A third child brought the argument to a close. "They use the dogs," she said firmly, "to find the fire hydrants."

• A 6-year-old was asked where his grandma lived. "Oh," he said, "she lives at the airport, and when we want her, we just go get her. Then, when we're done having her visit, we take her back to the airport."

— Thanks to Bill Rataczak

STEVE BOWEN

As I embark on my 7th year of retirement, I've been thinking about how different people spend those golden days once they've hung up those Airmail wings. There are those who spend most of their time doing for others...volunteering, teaching, helping the less fortunate, and basically engaging in selfless activities of giving and charity. And there are those who prefer to spend their days doing those things they've always dreamed of doing for themselves "when they're retired", such as traveling, not traveling, spending time with family, engaging in hobbies of various sorts, playing golf, or just staying home and doing projects around the house,

While I do admire those in the first group above, I tend to fall in the second group most of the time. Ellen and I are great travel partners, and we both love to travel so we've been doing a lot of that lately. In 2010 we've spent time in Maui, Sedona, the Oregon coast, Alaska (cruise), Peru (Machu Picchu), Maui again, Sedona again, and Paris. In the coming months we'll be in Maui again, Italy, Barcelona (cruise to Morocco, etc.), Venice, cruise to Athens, and Istanbul for a tour of Turkey. We try to make use of our passes as much as possible but, as most of you know, it's not always possible.

While it may sound like we're always on the road, we actually spend a lot of time at home in MN. In fact, while I do love the travel to new and exciting places, I find myself getting homesick after a while away from home base. After a few weeks of airport hassles and hotel beds, home and family and my own bed start to sound pretty good. Then, on the other hand, after two or three weeks at home just doing at home type things and running the grandkids around, the wanderlust kicks in again and we're off on a new adventure. You'd think that nearly 40 years of airline flying (mostly



international) would be enough travel for a lifetime. For some maybe, but not for us I guess.

So we're lucky, people always tell us, that we have the time and opportunity to live this life we live with both home and family plus travel and adventure as well. I guess we are, and lucky also to be in continued good health that allows us to live this sort of lifestyle. We still have a lot of items left on our bucket list so we need to keep up the pace for many years to come. We'll do our best.

Thank you, Gary, for all you do, and thanks to the rest of you who work so hard to keep RNPA alive and well! Keep up the good work.

Steve Bowen

P.S. I also was struck, Gary, by the cover photo on the August issue, noticing only the one aircraft with more than two engines. That's all you see these days for the most part. Just look at the current Delta fleet! And as I reflected on this reality, I realized that in my nearly 40 years of flying for NWA, I never flew an aircraft with less than three engines (727, 707, DC-10, 747-200, and 747-400). And I, for one, liked it that way!

Steve Bowen

PAUL BEST

Hello Gary,

First, let me say how much I appreciate all the work that you and the rest of the RNPA staffers do for the rest of us. I am just like a lot of the other retired pilots in that I read the Contrails cover to cover, usually within the first 3 or 4 hours after I pull it out of the mail box. Then I pass it along to my brother to read, just to make sure that it is spread around. My notice to renew my RNPA dues came just today and I have already made

out a check and it will be in tomorrow's mail. I do this to show my appreciation to Dino who has taken on what has to be the most under appreciated job in the world. Thanks Dino! It's hard for me to imagine that I have been retired for over 10 years now. Where did that time go?

I guess I have hung up my flying boots after my retractable gear RV-4 let me down last March. I had been flying the RV-4 for over 11 years. On the day of the



incident I had flown into Skagit Regional airport where Bill Day picked me up to go to La Conner, Washington to attend a monthly retired pilot luncheon. Departing Skagit Regional, I flew back to Arlington Airport (my home base) and made a normal landing. My turn off of the runway was still a couple of hundred yards ahead so I was just coasting down the runway. As I applied the brakes to slow, the plane darted to the left and I applied right brake to keep it straight. That's when I noticed the left wing was sinking towards the ground, so I got on the right brake harder to prevent a ground loop. I could see that there was no way to keep the plane on the runway, so I tried to turn off some switches, I left the runway and the nose came down and the prop contacted the ground. After I came to a complete stop I got everything turned off and opened the canopy and jumped out. I could see fuel leaking from the left main tank, so I moved away from the plane. The police and fire units and some friends who had watched the entire drama, were on the scene within 5 minutes and threw bags of absorbent under the leaking fuel tank. To make the long story shorter, both the drag link bolts on my landing gear had failed causing the gear to be in an unlocked condition as I touched down, even though I showed three green on the landing gear indication panel. The ironic part of the story was that my mechanic friend and I had just overhauled the entire landing gear the previous November. The drag link bolts were so strong looking that we decided that they did not need addressing. I figured the rule that applied here was O'Toole's corollary to Murphy's Law, i.e. O'Toole says that Murphy was

an optimist. Anyway, I decided that I didn't want to rebuild and sold the airplane to a good home in Idaho where it is being rebuilt.

Phase two of the story is, I decided I needed something that went fast and made loud engine noises. I decided I would build a replica Cobra kit. I spent about two months looking at all the things that would be required to build a Cobra and was just about ready to order a kit, when my brother Ned called me and said that he had found a nice looking car on e-bay. I checked it out and it was very nice looking. I called the guy and asked all the appropriate questions, then I flew to Salt Lake City the next day, drove the car and bought it on the spot. The funny part is that the bad economy is forcing people to sell their toys and I bought the car for several thousand dollars less than it would have cost me to build one. I can only describe driving the Cobra as a mix of motorcycle, car, and airplane combined. It is really a blast to drive. I got my first Cobra bite about one week into my ownership. The Cobra has external pipes on both sides of the car that get very hot while driving. Of course, I got out of the car and just stood there with my left leg touching the pipe. I figure that I really didn't feel the pain because my synapses were kicking in. Anyway I survived the burn and I am certain that I will never do it again. Of course, I still miss flying but at my advanced age maybe doing 90 mph instead of 230 might be the right thing as I approach geezerhood. I have added some pictures that I hope you are able to attach to this letter in the Contrails magazine. Also I would like to take this opportunity to say "hi" to all my colleagues that I used to fly with.

Blue side up guys!
Paul Best



JOEL VIGNERE

How I Spent My Summer (and part of the fall)

As some of you who know me, are already aware, I spent many of my long layovers in various parts of the country, hiking backcountry trails wherever I could find them. Since my retirement 12 years ago, this activity has increased many fold. Shortly after leaving Northwest and moving to northwest Montana, I joined a local hiking group. Our twice weekly activities covered an area within approximately 150 miles of Kalispell, but mostly centering on Glacier National Park.

Over time, our interests graduated from mostly trail hiking to more rigorous climbing activities. At this time I am unabashedly proud to report a total of over 100 summits in the area, mostly in Glacier (83 at last count), including all six of Glacier's 10,000 feet plus.

I know, that's not all that high to some of you, but considering that I summited all of those six after my 65th birthday, it's still somewhat of an accomplishment. Somewhere along the way, a few of us got involved in submitting trail condition reports to the Glacier backcountry office. I won't go into details as to how this occurred but mention it only to preface what happened next.

For a number of years, our national parks have not received the funds they require to maintain those parks to the standards we, the American people, deserve. This includes but is not limited to hiring all the needed seasonal rangers to patrol the backcountry trails in the park. (End of soap box activity.)

Late last spring I received a phone call from a Glacier ranger asking if I would be willing to participate in a volunteer backcountry ranger program. Somewhat skeptical, I stated I would be willing to

take a look. "Great" he said, "training starts tomorrow at 8 am".

Long story, short, I have just spent the most rewarding summer and fall of my entire life. This summer was my 40th year of hiking in Glacier. At long last, I feel I was able, in some small measure, to give something back to the park for all the wonderful moments it has given me. Assigned tasks included trail patrols all over the park. We (there are 9 of us) also check backcountry campgrounds, camping permits and clean the outhouses while there. Admittedly not the most rewarding job but somebody has to do it. All of us had some amazing experiences during our patrols. One volunteer was even responsible for the apprehension of a wanted felon hiding out near Kintla Lake.

Things have slowed down considerably now that winter is here. Some ski patrols have been requested but only a few. It is difficult to recall when I have ever looked forward with such anticipation to the coming summer season.

That photo on the cover was my most amazing experience, and yes, he was that close.

Joel Vignere

PETE DODGE

Hi Dino and Fergie:

Life and retirement is going just great. My health as well as Stephanie's is holding up well. Can't believe I'm passing 70. Many, many of my friends would have bet against me getting this far. On that note it really saddens me to get these emails from RNPA informing us of another of us flying west. I am afraid that will be a recurring event as we all start to turn into the wind. My sympathies go out to all RNPA families who have lost a loved one.

In the meantime we continue to spend our time travelling, golfing and spending as much of that precious time with our children and now five grandchildren.

Thanks to all of you that keep the past and memories alive with your efforts on our behalf. The organization and the Magazine are terrific.

Regards,
Pete Dodge

SHIRLEY OTT

Sending off my 2011 dues today. Thanking all of those RNPA board members for all the work that they do. Best wishes for the New Year.

It has been three years since Mel's taking that last flight West and I have read of too many others since then, taking that same flight. My sincere condolences to those families.

Shirley Ott

RHEA DOW

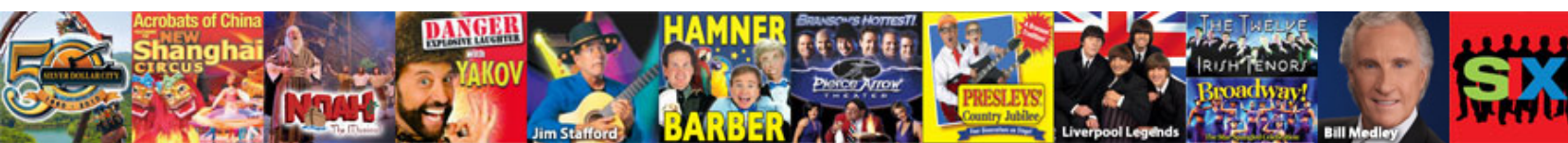
I'm sending my dues from the winter wonderland of Spokane, WA. In November we broke the record for the snowiest month since they started keeping records in 1890. It truly looks like a movie set or a giant postcard. I love the snow but also treasure our gorgeous summers at my Golden Pond in northern Idaho.

Next November I'm looking forward to a 24 day cruise to the Amazon on Holland America. Life is good, and I appreciate each precious year. My best to all.

Rhea Dow

EVERYONE ELSE

Whatchabeenupto?



NEW **MINI REUNION**
Branson, MO
May 11,12,13 & 14



HOTEL: Branson Grand Plaza, 245 N Wildwood Dr, Branson, MO 65616 Phone 417.336.6646
 Rates: Standard room \$75, Mini suite \$95, King feature \$115, and, although none are blocked out for us, family and honeymoon suites are available for \$135. All plus 11.6% room tax. The group rate is extended three days prior and three days after our event, based on availability. **Reservations:** Call 1-800- 850-6646 and mention group code RNPA. **Complimentary hot breakfast buffet from 7am to 10am is included.** We will also have a meeting/hospitality room available to us. It will be cleaned and stocked with ice each day, but will not include any beverages,snacks, etc.

Reserve early. There are 75 rooms blocked but we MAY be able to add more.

TRAVEL: Branson airport is currently served by four airlines; Air Tran, Sun Country, Express Jet, and Frontier. Springfield Airport is 43 miles away and is served by Allegiant, American, **Delta**, and United.

ITINERARY:

WEDNESDAY: Hotel check in; 12:00 p.m. - Hospitality Room open and stays open through Saturday night;
 5:30 p.m. - "Welcome Aboard" Reception in Hospitality Room.
THURSDAY: Daytime free to enjoy the sights and sounds of Branson; 5:30 p.m. - Dinner at PLAZA VIEW RESTAURANT
 7:30 pm. - THE SHOJI TABUCHI EVENING PERFORMANCE.
FRIDAY: Morning free; Lunch on your own; 6:00 p.m. - SIX REAL BROTHERS dinner/show at Hughes Celebrity Theatre.
SATURDAY: Morning and afternoon free; 6:00 p.m. - THE CLAY COOPER dinner and show at Clay Cooper Theatre.

Daytime free time could include more shows, boat tours, golfing, shopping, old town, etc. "Gatherings Plus" will be sending a packet out to all registrants containing info on our package as well as other activities that are available in Branson. **Gatherings Plus web site:** <http://www.reunionproregistration.com/retiredpilots.htm>

ACTIVITY PACKAGE: \$240 per person includes: All of the above, all taxes and most gratuities, transportation to group activities and a reunion website.

RNPA MINI REUNION MAY11-14, 2011 · DEADLINE APRIL 1ST, 2011

NAME _____
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Checks payable to and mail to:
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NOT WHAT WE USED TO BE

Like many of you who read this, I was once an airline CAPTAIN. Before that, I was at one time a PATROL PLANE COMMANDER. I suspect most readers have some idea of the duties of an airline CAPTAIN. Some, however, may not be familiar with the term PATROL PLANE COMMANDER, or PPC (in Navy jargon.) The next paragraph is a description of the position of PPC.

The PPC is the pilot in command of a Navy patrol aircraft. Navy patrol aircraft are generally charged with anti-submarine warfare tactics meant to seek, locate and, if necessary, destroy an enemy submarine. A secondary duty of Navy patrol aircraft is to look at and photograph surface ships of interest. The Navy term for this exercise is, or perhaps was, “rigging a ship.” As a PPC, I was told that the information we gathered when rigging a ship was forwarded to “Washington” where it was analyzed by experts in an effort to determine why certain countries were importing certain cargo. Other experts could determine from this information the direction in which we should aim our missiles, or something. I honestly suspect that, during my “time in naval service,” there was not one cargo ship which went from a major port to another that the U.S. Navy did not “rig.”

My crew when I was PPC consisted of between 11 and 13 other men in naval service. Most of these guys called me “Sir” to my face and probably something else behind my back. The point here is that I told them what to do and when to do it, rather than vice versa. Later, as an airline captain, the crewmembers with whom I flew had somehow forgotten the word “Sir” or, more likely, never heard the term. Most of these people were so well trained and self-motivated that there was no need to tell them what and when to do anything. They did, however, avoid telling me those things.

What you have just read is a very long way for the author to get to the point of the rest of this. You see, alas, I am no longer a CAPTAIN or a PPC.

ROAD TRIP

Arizona suits me as a place to live in winter. In Arizona, there is a town called Prescott, pronounced “Preskit,” by those who live in Arizona. Prescott, during Yule season, is a destination venue for people who might like to take in some spectacular Christmas lights. Four of us climbed into the Subaru to make the two hour drive.

Many years ago I was appraised of the idea that when two couples travel in an automobile, there are three possible seating arrangements. If one sits with one’s spouse, one is traveling “middle class.” Two guys in front and two gals in back is “low class.” That leaves “high class,” which is opposite spouses seated together. We were traveling low that day, with Old Bob in command behind the wheel.

The first clue that I was no longer CAPTAIN came from the back seat.

“You’d better get in the left lane. You have to turn at the light up ahead.”

Said light was only three miles ahead.

Shortly, the co-pilot contributed: “Turn left here on Grand Avenue to get on Highway 60.”

We were still in our neighborhood. You know, where I drive often!

“Put your seat belt on,” from the back. Guess who?

After an hour of being reminded that I was no longer a PPC, I determined to take a stand.

The
Root
Cellar



“Look people, I have driven a car before.” (A bit louder.) “I know what I am doing.” (A bit louder.) “I have never been someplace I could not get to!” (Poor sentence but something to think about.) And finally, “When I want your help I will ask for it!”

That last part actually worked for the remainder of the trip to Prescott, however, after dinner and Christmas lights, I gave up during the trip home. I did, however, have certain nostalgic thoughts regarding CAPTAIN’S and PPC’S.



GOT GAS?

There I was at the gas pump, not far from our Arizona home. We had only recently arrived from our Minnesota locale, a trip we make in a small motor home in order to accommodate certain pets traveling with us. In case you have not traveled in a motor home, I can report for your education that there are a few times when you need to spend your entire pension at the gas pump, but the equipment doesn't want to allow you to do so.

In order to keep fuel prices lower, credit card users will notice that this pump automatically stops at \$75.00. Feel free to initiate another transaction.

This sign, or something like it, can be found on many a pump as one travels the Interstate system. It is irritating, especially since the RV requires something like \$6 million to fill and one is unable to determine how this keeps fuel prices lower. The point here is that I am very qualified with a credit card at a gas pump. I

could pass not only the oral, but also the check ride.

Apparently until that day at the pump not far from our home.

On the other side of the pump island was a Cadillac. Two women were in the process of fueling. One was about my age, the other had to be—I swear—her mother!

I looked at my card, aimed it in the correct direction and inserted it into the pump.

“Remove card rapidly,” said the pump. I did as instructed.

“Enter your Zip Code,” said the pump. I entered my Arizona Zip code, the last three digits of which are 374.

“Incorrect—try again,” said the pump.

“Gentle expletive,” said I. Obviously, the credit card company did not yet have my change of address from Minnesota. I determined to enter my Minnesota Zip.

Suddenly, Mom was there. “Here, let me help,” she said. Then she actually yanked my credit card from my grip!

You may not be surprised to know that old women did not grab my credit card from my hand when I was CAPTAIN! I stood in shock while she inserted my card into the pump's slot.

“Now, what Zip Code did you use?”

“I used 85374, but that was wrong I should have used 55. . .”

“Of course it's wrong. It's 375, not 374.”

“Ma'am, I suspect you live across the highway. Here, it is 374, but I need to put my Minnesota , , ,

She entered 375.

“See attendant,” said the pump.

“Is there any chance I could have my card back?” I asked.

She handed it back, then noticed a certain FLY NAVY sign on the Subaru.

“So, you were in the Navy?” she asked.

“Yes, I was.” (as a matter of fact I was a PPC and later a CAPTAIN and women didn't grab my credit card out of my hand. . .)

“I was an Army nurse in World War II.” Mom said.

I did the math. WOW!

No longer angry, I gave her a big hug.

“Thank you for your service,” said I.

Then I drove somewhere else to buy gas. ✈

A STABILIZED approach



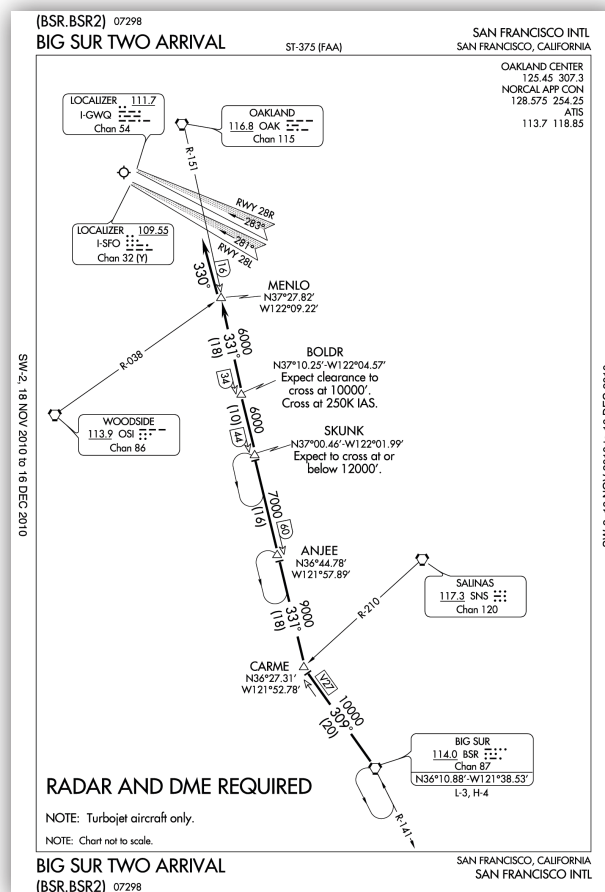
Contributing Columnist James Baldwin

Drop the Rock

The Big Sur STAR to SFO is listed as a “10-2” page in the Jepps. In the old days Northwest didn’t use it much as it was primarily the arrival from LAX and SAN, but once in awhile an irregular operation might allow us to take a look at what the regular north-south airline guys used. The Big Sur arrival—yes, Martha, THAT Big Sur with redwood versions of trees and hot tubs—is actually pretty simple. Cross the BIG SUR VOR in the initial descent towards CARME—lovely Carmel is right below—and just up the road you’d better plan to cross BOLDR at 10 and 250, because that’s what you’re gonna get. Vectors to final or the visual will soon follow but at that point the airport is only 32 miles ahead.

The first time I actually saw it in use was early 1980 when, as a new Cochise Airlines commuter pilot based in Yuma, I was allowed to ride the jumpseat of one of, if not the original low cost frequent flying airline—Pacific Southwest Airlines or, as they were commonly known, just “PSA.” These were the original hotpants clad, liberally advanced denizens of the skies who thrilled the regular business types with airborne antics not seen on the “proper” mainline carriers. That’s probably good because I’m not sure, although the imaginary picture is intriguing, the Midwestern general public was ready to see our girls in hotpants at below zero temps. Herb Kelleher must have ridden them at some point in his early airline career or at least heard of their shenanigans because the same sort of passenger centric culture became and still is the hallmark of his own creation.

I remember, vividly, one flight I jumpseated one afternoon—it was PSA from LAX to SFO. The PSA guys were usually ex-military, probably fighter types who pushed it as a matter of course and were almost always “good sticks.” You could just tell. In those days the airplane was a -100 or -200 version of the Boeing 727 and for 39 bucks you could go from SFO to LAX or ONT or SAN and vice versa. I paid pretty close attention to how these guys did things and the guy back at the panel would usually answer the myriad questions I might have regarding how these big jets were flown. He was probably as anxious as I was to get an opportunity to get up front and try it. But for now we just watched. In those



days we had just emerged from our first fuel crisis and it was still easy to find the remains of fermented dinosaurs so fuel wasn’t as big an issue as speed and on-time performance. And these guys were good at both! Descents were often barber pole, but for this arrival there was that pesky 250 knot restriction at BOLDR. On this particular afternoon the captain was flying and he looked over at the FO and suggested that ATC, if asked, might “drop the rock.” Of course my ears perked up when I heard this new term but, being a new turbo-prop copilot, this was one question I would leave till later. ATC willingly approved the request and we crossed the BOLDR intersection quite a ways north of 300 knots. At least now I knew what this new terminology meant and I didn’t even have to ask. As traffic permitted, a further descent was issued and of course we had to slow down, at least a little. Now we all know it takes a few miles to do that and jets don’t usually like to “go down and slow down.”

No matter to the fighter pilot up front, he was flying this one by hand and with the boards extended and propitious use of flaps and gear we fell off the 10k aeronautical balustrade right on a profile which took us to final. It was one of those textbook perfect approaches right at limit speeds with a great touchdown. This guy obviously knew his airplane, the arrival and what ATC was likely to do. He was good, but hey, he was pretty standard PSA. I'm pretty sure he commuted to work in a Ferrari, or maybe his blond haired girlfriend just drove him up to the terminal in her 911, unfolded her long legs from the convertible and stood on the curb, her diaphanous knee length cover-up revealing enough to make the elderly gentleman, who was checking his baggage, blush as she wrapped her arms around him and bid him goodbye in a manner others only dreamed of. Either way, I could mentally picture the probable surfboard sticking out the rear of the car. This guy was obviously "PSA cool."

Wow, I could barely wait to tell my commuter buddies about this—no not the blond, the arrival. For the next few months all we could do was see how fast a MetroLiner II could be flown on the approach and how close to the various airports we could get before we slowed down and actually extended the gear. Stabilized approaches? Yeah, right. The goal was to find a likely culprit: the Southwest guys were out of the question, we needed to find a United 737. We did and several were passed on the parallel finals to LAX. This went on for several weeks before either UAL or ATC—none of us actually knew who complained—finally made sure we were admonished not to pass the aircraft on the parallel approach path. But it was sure fun while it lasted and of course those were the good old days without digital data tattle-tale recording devices. Nowadays? Yeah right. Don't even think about it.

Airline careers being what they are, it didn't take long before I was the guy in the right seat of that NWA 727. I will admit that once or twice during IOE my mind flirted with the possibility of showing others the flying style of my consanguineous brothers at PSA! Never mind reality—I had only been in the FO seat for three months and was lucky just to be able to fly the standard profiles we all learned in training. It all seemed so reasonable to the high school aged brain trapped inside the older body I now seemed to be occupying.

Keith S. was the captain on the trip that was assigned to me as a reserve FO based in MSP. We had left late in the day for a layover in San Diego and would return two days later. Well, that was the plan until Keith called my room late into the SAN layover and told me we had been rescheduled. "We are going to ferry the airplane to SFO, pick up the passengers and fly it to MSP."

"OK Keith," I said, instantly realizing this opportunity, although evanescent was serendipitous. This had the possibility of working out well if the standard protocol of leg switching was to be followed. After all, he flew the first leg to SAN so there was a chance it might be my turn next. We got all the paperwork done, completed the checklists and were soon taxiing to the runway. Keith looked over at me, with a particularly earnest look, allowed it was my leg and turned the airplane over to me as he made the final turn into position for takeoff. Now Keith was from Minnesota and, not knowing him too well, I wasn't sure of a few things: did he really appreciate how cool the PSA guys were? Did he even know about them? Did he ever hotrod the jet a little? Since no one was onboard would he mind if I did? Hmm, these things were all critical if I was going to be able to attempt to mimic what I had seen just a few years before. Of course it was never in my mind to violate any portion of SOPA, so how could he really object? Really, how could he?

We reached cruise altitude pretty quickly in our lightweight, now fighter plane version of the three-holer and I began my quest by telling the ex-military fighter pilot SO in back how PSA was the only airline I knew of that generously gave not only commuter pilots but also the non-reciprocating NWA guys a jumpseat. They didn't even give us a hard time about it—they were cool! The second officer agreed as we both lamented the then very strict NWA policy. Keith was silent during this discourse but I could see the gears of logic grinding away: Why on earth would a Minneapolis based captain need a jumpseat on some other airline? That's all it took for me to segue into the story about "dropping the rock." Now Keith was listening intently, nodding in my direction past a furrowed brow. The second officer liked the story; with Keith I had my doubts. More silence ensued as the Big Sur VOR grew closer. It was now or never: "Hey Keith, let's ask ATC if we can drop the rock. Don't you think it would be a cool thing for us NWA guys to be like those PSA guys from California?" Without hesitation, "That is unprofessional," he upbraided, emphasizing the un. "Yeah but they give it to PSA so wouldn't it be professional to show them we can do the same," I supplicated? Keith was silent, stone faced and staring straight ahead, as if the answer was inscribed on the billowy cumulus somewhere in front of us. It was about then that ATC cleared us to a lower intermediate altitude and switched us to another frequency. Keith checked in and that was all he said. The cockpit was silent and I knew I had expended about all of the bullets in my gun of convincing conversation. I decided I had better keep quiet and fly the airplane.

“Northwest 324D, you are cleared for the Big Sur Arrival, descend to cross BOLDR at one zero thousand.” Keith picked up the microphone and read back the clearance and added “OK if we drop the rock?” “Yeah Northwest, you can delete the speed restriction.” This happened so quickly I was more than startled, but before I could congratulate Keith he pounded his leg with the microphone and seriously exclaimed in a loud voice, “Why did I do that!” “Too late dude,” I thought. The SO and I were laughing, eyes wide in disbelief, looking first at each other and then in unison over to the captain. Keith was now just barely glaring, but his silent imprimatur was all I needed. I pushed the knobs forward and we all knew we were going to cross BOLDR as fast as I could possibly manage. Three hundred knots, plus, seemed to be a very reasonable goal. After all, it was clear and a million; this would be easy. Keith actually seemed to be OK with the—just barely shy of barber pole—initial descent. The air was smooth and we were smokin’. “Golly,” I thought, “BSR sure got here in a hurry.” No matter, just like the PSA guy, the boards slowed us pretty quickly and the descent continued. BOLDR was next and the laws of physics equated to us being too high, too fast and too close. This wasn’t quite as easy as I remember it being with the PSA guy. I have to admit Keith was pretty cool—no squirming, no verbal admonitions, no reaching for the gear—hey, maybe he was getting into it! Lucky for me we got the visual and I was able to define my own path to the threshold. We needed it, or at least I did. This would be more than embarrassing if I missed it and the idea of red-faced double secret probation traversed my feeble mind. Well, long story short, we made 28R after the visual and with a little extra float the ending wasn’t too bad. Keith seemed to be OK with it and the girls in back didn’t even know I had been chewing holes in my seat cushion for the last 15 miles. I can’t really remember how the rest of the trip went but—no joke—despite his “aw shucks” demeanor my NWA buddies always gave Keith the thumbs up whenever they saw him. He was known by a few of us as potentially “PSA cool.”

Of course as a former resident of the San Francisco Bay Area I had occasion to jumpseat ride the LAX-SFO leg whenever I was lucky enough to get a trip that ended down there. Even though PSA had long ago been absorbed by US Airways it was easy to show up at UAL for their hourly departure and on this particular afternoon the crew looked like they might have just graduated from high school. Sure enough, the young captain was a recent upgrade and his copilot not much older. They were young and cocky and thought they knew this domestic game pretty well. The departure out of LAX in

the 737-400 was per the SID and executed well. The auto pilot took over the task of guiding the aircraft and for one reason or another I related, didactically, “the story.” I related it as you have read here, not only the PSA version but also a self deprecating confession of my personal approach and I guess for a new young UAL jet captain it represented a challenge to his masculinity as well as his mastery of the big airplane he was now in charge of. After all, if these other guys could do it then by golly he would show it to this senior looking international captain flying in his jump seat.

Of course they made the appropriate request and Bay Approach granted the deviation. As the arrival began, our altitude over BSR VOR was high, and the carnage was already in process. I kept quiet, but knew the 737 glider we were in did not have the same drag profile as our old 727s. BOLDR was barely managed at the proper altitude but with speed that made me squirm more than just a bit. I thought back to the PSA guy being fast, but this guy, for sure unintentionally, was going to redefine the concept. As we came up to MENLO, with just 14 miles to the touchdown zone, we were only busting the speed limit by 30 knots as he struggled to get the profile under control. But, we were way high. It was one of those “wonder which glideslope we’re on” approaches we were lectured about in basic IFR training and off in the distance the approach lights seemed to be disappearing under our nose. By now everyone was aware that things weren’t working out quite the way I had described in my earlier story. After looking and searching the cockpit for any other solution, it was time to face reality, and the go-around was performed well. The subsequent approach was pretty subdued and the cockpit silent. It didn’t help that the last eighteen inches of the arrival ended with a resolute crunch. I could feel the temperature as it approached zero in the cockpit. Of course I felt culpable and apologized to the back of two heads as I hurriedly left the cockpit. Part of being “PSA cool” in my mind was knowing what your airplane would do.

Chesley Sullenberger wasn’t the FO the day I first watched Bay Approach allow the PSA 727 to “drop the rock,” but I am willing to bet he may have flown the Big Sur arrival just like the one I saw. One thing for sure is that he was former PSA and I doubt there’s anyone who would argue that he didn’t learn a thing or two from the guys who did. The landing he did do in the Hudson River might not have been done with any concern for an on-time arrival but it did end with a perfect touchdown and a story we will hear about for a long time. There’s no question US Airways Captain Chesley Sullenberger was and remains to this day, “PSA cool.” ✈

The Attended Skies

CRESCO'S ELLEN CHURCH BLAZED AN AERIAL TRAIL.

[story by ERIC NIDEROST]

Ellen Church walked into the offices of Boeing Air Transport (BAT) on February 12, 1930, with confidence and passion. The nation's commercial aviation industry was taking off, and she wanted to be on board.

Church's timing was impeccable. Some say she was merely window shopping along a downtown San Francisco street when she came across the BAT storefront. In any event it was Lincoln's Birthday, and BAT Manager Steven Stimpson was alone in an empty office. He might have disregarded Church on a bustling workday, but on this day she had his undivided attention.

Ellen Church was born on September 22, 1904, in Cresco, Iowa. She got her first exposure to flying when an Army Air Service training field was set up in a pasture next to her family's farm. Young Ellen, only 12 years old, was fascinated by these primitive wire and canvas contraptions that somehow managed to get off the ground. She sat and watched takeoffs and landings for hours.

Church's ambition to be a pilot was sidelined by pursuit of a nursing degree. She relocated to San Francisco in 1926 and began a career as a registered nurse. But long-dormant desires resurfaced, and soon Church was up in the air, taking flying lessons. She walked into BAT's office on that fateful day as a licensed pilot.

Unfortunately, women at that time were not welcome in commercial aviation. Amelia Earhart was celebrated as an "aviatrix," but, as far as the airlines were concerned, the cockpit was a male preserve. Frustrated, Church tried another approach: Why not put registered nurses on the flights? Early aircraft had much lower operational ceilings and usually flew through bad weather, not over it. Violent airsickness was common.

Listening to Church describe a scenario in which medical professionals were available to care for sick passengers, in which skilled caretakers calmed fears of flying, Stimpson envisioned a radical marketing campaign, its subliminal message clear: If a "mere woman" could fly unafraid, so could a businessman. Church envisioned a new profession. Within the hour the pair had created the industry's newest occupation: the "air hostess" or stewardess, today's flight attendant.

56 lowan.com



The Original Eight transformed passenger air travel. (Church stands top left.)

Church was hired as Chief Stewardess on a three-month trial basis. Seven other women — all registered nurses — were added and began their work in the spring of 1930.

The experiment was a success. Church helped design the first uniform — a double-breasted suit jacket with matching skirt and cape — and also had a hand in the stewardess rules and regulations. In the early days, stewardesses loaded baggage, hauled buckets of gasoline to the airplane's 30 engines, dusted the cabin, and even carried screwdrivers in case a seat's bolts needed tightening.

Church's flight attendant career was cut short in 1931 by injuries sustained in an auto accident, and she returned to nursing. Her career path was again interrupted during World War II, however, and she took to the skies once more as a flight nurse with the Army Nurse Corps. In 1944 Captain Ellen Church trained evacuation nurses for the D-day Normandy invasion. She received the Air Medal for her "meritorious achievement in aerial flight" during the war.

Church died prematurely in 1965 at age 60, the result of a horse riding accident, but her contributions are remembered. Earlier this year United Airlines (the company Boeing Air Transport eventually became) celebrated the 80th anniversary of the flight attendant with Flight UA 102 from San Francisco to Chicago — the same route Church followed in 1930. This special United Boeing 767-300 featured flight attendants dressed in retro uniforms that spanned the entire 80 years of service. In a nod to the aerial pioneers, one of the airline's modern 747s bears the name *The Original Eight*. And Cresco celebrates its native daughter with every plane that takes off and lands at Ellen Church Field Airport. ✎

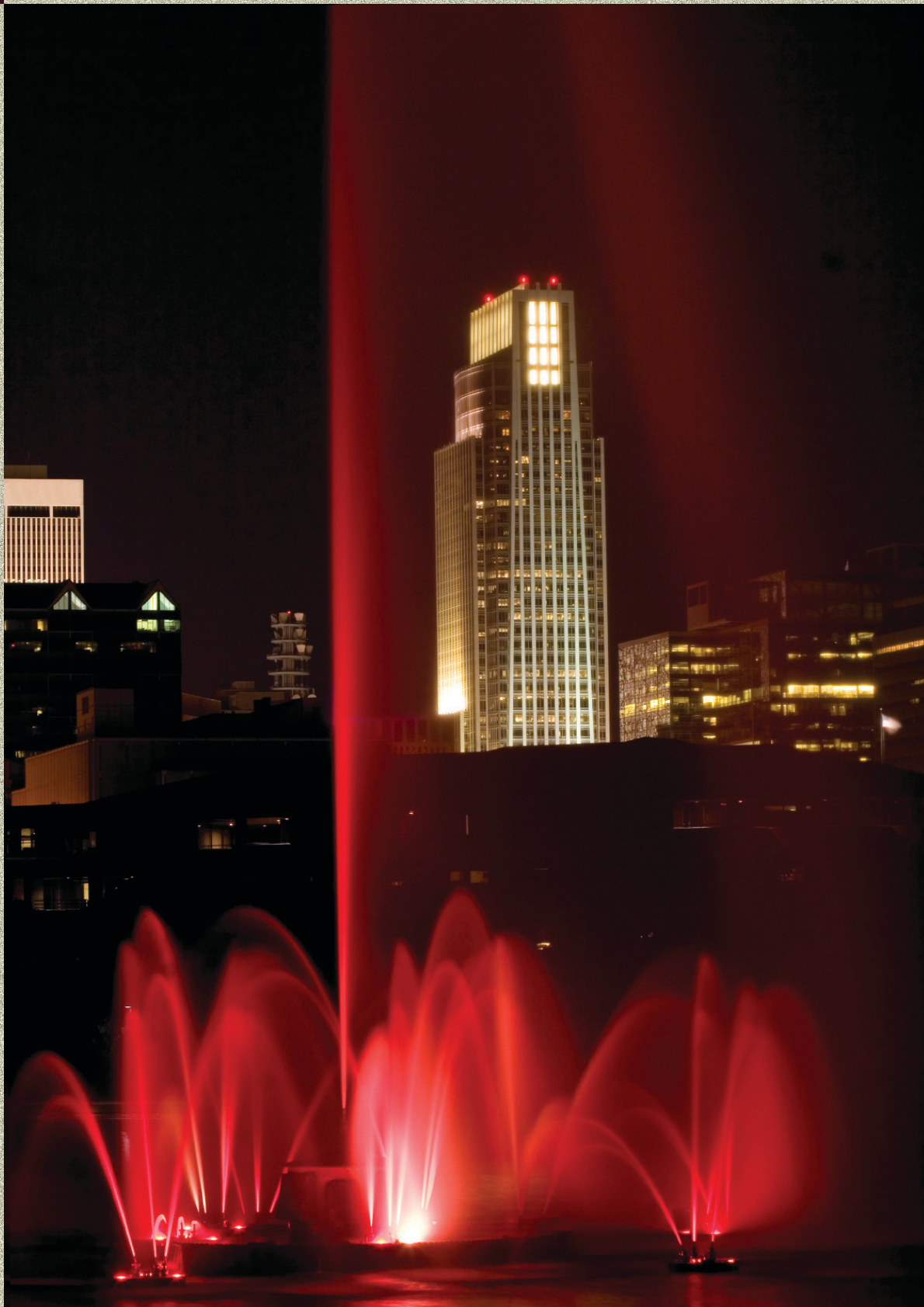
Eric Niderost teaches U.S. history in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Contributed by Richard Schlader

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Register before June 1st and you are entered to win free hotel room.

ABOUT THE REUNION

The 2011 RNPA Reunion is being organized by “Wreunion Wrangler” Chuck Carlson and promises to be perhaps the equal of Rapid City or even better, which is saying a lot.

The basics of the reunion follow the time-proven format of: reception with heavy hors d’oeuvres the evening of the first day; a second day tour, in this case we’ll be touring Offutt AFB and the Strategic Air & Space Museum; and wrapped up of course with the banquet the evening of the 27th.

Chuck assures us that there is plenty to do in the free time remaining. But the real purpose of each of our reunions is to take advantage of this free time to re-connect with old friends and maybe make new ones. Breakfast usually is when we have a chance to meet someone that we have known of, but really never got to know.

As a potential bonus the River City Roundup will be held just two blocks from the hotel at the Qwest Center just prior to the reunion. This is the world’s second largest rodeo. Details should have been available at rivercityrodeo.com after the first of the year.

The most common coment heard from first-time attendees is, “Gee, I had no idea these things were so much fun. We’ll be back again.”

We hope you’ll join us in Omaha.



LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____ MI _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ DRIVERS LICENSE _____ STATE _____ BANQUET MEAL: Steak Chicken

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____ MI _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ DRIVERS LICENSE _____ STATE _____ BANQUET MEAL: Steak Chicken

The above information is required to gain entry into Offutt AFB and must be done before you arrive. Only Terry and the Air Force will see it.

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Mail this with a check (\$160 per person) payable to “RNPA” to:
Terry Confer, 9670 E Little Further Way, Gold Canyon AZ 85118



Chronicled by Rick Seireeni with a little help from his new RNPA friends.

Tokyo, early October 2010:

It was a remarkably warm night given this late autumn, but not unexpected. Japan had just had one of its hottest summers on record, and an unseasonably warm fall was in the forecast. The Japanese have been preoccupied with China—feuding over remote islands and other rare earths. Maybe the hot weather is making everyone irritable. Most of them are at home tonight watching the endless repeats of nationalist rallies. I have just broken into the vacant lot up in Daikanyama next to the Hillside Terrace development. Well, it wasn't that dramatic. I just went around the side of a construction fence and found an unlocked gate behind a parked bicycle. This part of town is now considered the Beverly Hills of Tokyo and clears out early even without the news, so I just walked in.

Dark, overgrown, with bits of rubble here and there, this was the site of one of two Northwest crew compounds. Families were raised in these little pieces of America on the old Asakura Meiji-era estate. They are both gone now, but not the memories. I came here well after midnight because I needed help—help from a father I never knew.

I've been coming to Japan for decades. My Tokyo partner and I share a brand consulting business. The

two of us have been providing brand development and business consulting to many Japanese companies—Mitsubishi Bank, Kirin, and Uniqlo, which is the Gap of Japan—but this was the first time we were asked to work on an airline. ANA and their investment partners are planning to launch a new low cost airline later this year—something like Southwest or JetBlue, but for Asia. At this point in our pitch, I was feeling uneasy. We were up against seven other much larger firms, and today's presentation had been met with stony silence.

I'm not a religious man, but I thought it wouldn't hurt if I asked my long dead father for a little help. After all, he hadn't been around much. He owed me something, didn't he? So tonight, I thought I'd ask the spirit world for a little help to win this contract. We needed it.

I heard he liked Four Roses. With a little cheap scotch sprinkled on the ground, I reached out to my biological father, Al Johnson, one of the original Northwest pilots stationed in Tokyo who I guessed had lived here on this site. He was, as I would soon discover, a character right out of pulp fiction.

The next day we got our news. We made the cut. It was now down to us and one other company. I was flabbergasted and more—this was the first time in 61 years that I actually felt a connection to Al. He was present in my life.

Everyone Knew Your Dad - Except His Kids

This unlikely event is what set me on a quest to find out more about him. But where to start? That evening in my boutique hotel room across from Tokyu Hands I started tapping around Google and Ancestry.com—nothing but thousands of Albert Johnsons with the wrong details or no information at all. After a little break in the lobby where I noticed hoards of Chinese—the only people with money to travel these days—I found an Albert Johnson buried in Hibbing in 1958 that turned out to be the wrong guy. Then I tried “Northwest + History.” I found the Northwest Airline History Centre and a couple of contact names. An amazing Internet hunt ensued:

October 8th

Pete

My father was a pilot for Northwest and died in the late 50s. I didn't know him very well as my mother and father were divorced when I was very young, and he was married to another woman at the time of his death. I believe he was from Hibbing. My mother was a flight attendant for Northwest. He and my mother were among the very first crews flying into Tokyo after the war. They were both stationed there for a time. I'm trying to track down any information or possible pictures of him now that I have a family of my own.

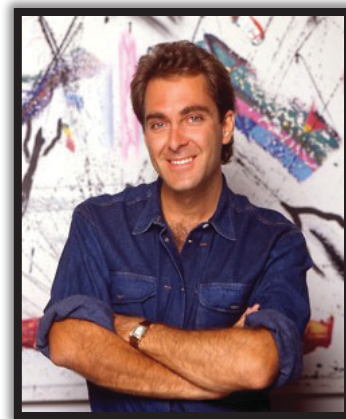
Father's name: Al Johnson, captain, AKA A.T. or Albert Thomas Johnson

Mother's name: Therese (Terry) McArthur

Almost immediately, Pete Patzke wrote back:

Rick—I slightly knew an Albert T. Johnson who flew for Northwest for about 20 years, from the mid 1940's into the 60's. He died in 1964. I was a manager in flight operations for most of those years. I'll dig into what records we may have at the History Centre and will also forward your request to RNPA, which is an Association of retired NWA pilots. I'm sure someone in that group would have more info.

And did they. Dino Oliva, Gary Ferguson, Vic Britt, Neal Henderson and eventually Anne Kerr and other NWA flight crew jumped in with both feet to help. Pete suggested I contact Shigeaki Morita who was Flight Dispatcher for Northwest in Tokyo beginning in the early fifties. Morita-san was the much appreciated go-to guy before retiring. As I was still in Tokyo, I asked one of our Japanese-speaking staff members to contact Northwest (now Delta) operations, which led to a home



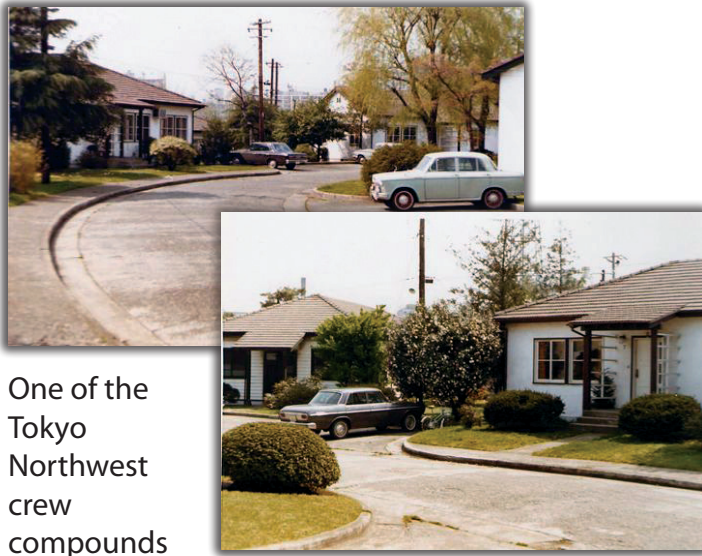
Al Johnson in his early 30s and myself at about the same age (but thirty years ago).

phone number. My colleague spoke to his wife and then Morita was on the phone, “Sure, I knew your dad. Who didn't? Your dad was a legend. What do you want to know?”

“A legend? Really? What did he do?”

Morita said there were many stories and thought for a second. He remembered that they were waiting for Al's flight to return from Seoul sometime in the early 50s when his plane went off the radar around Mount Fuji. Morita was still relatively new at his job and there was a war going on over in Korea. He dutifully called the Japanese Defense Forces to start looking for a downed airliner. About an hour later Al showed up having taken his passengers on an unscheduled sight-seeing trip around the Japanese alps.

“That was your dad. No rules.” Morita added, “In those days, the Americans were calling the shots. They could do anything they wanted.” Morita-san gave me the first third-person confirmation of similar stories my mother had told me; about smuggling gold out of Shanghai, about stealing a P-61 at Boeing Field for a joy ride, about ferrying supplies into Korea during that war under fire... bits and pieces. I don't know why I didn't start looking into Al's life earlier. Maybe it was because I was adopted by my stepfather. He is the only father I have known and a good one—a solid, honest man who has always treated me as his son. Al, on the other hand, was never in the picture. And just when it seemed like my mother was ready to start talking about her colorful life, she developed Alzheimer's and died a few years ago. I was left with one picture of Al, a single gold cufflink with the initials ATJ, a couple letters on NWA stationery, and his watch. That's it. I even had his date of death wrong. He died in 1964, not in the late 50s, but I do remember that day.



One of the Tokyo Northwest crew compounds

And I had come home from school in Bellevue and my mom told me that my dad had died.

“Bob? Bob died?”

“No, your real dad, the pilot. He died.”

Confused, she told me to put on my dress coat and clip-on tie. She was going to take me to SeaTac to view the body, but then thought better of it. She left me with neighbors. My mother later told me that his death was a complete shock to everyone. I have come to find out that he died at a female friend’s apartment in Seattle of a barbiturate overdose—like Marilyn Monroe. There was a little party going on, and Al complained of being sleepy. He asked to lie down in the bedroom. They found him after midnight. The body was shipped to Hibbing, Minnesota, where he was born and where his first wife and children still lived. I spoke to the mortuary’s current owner who looked up the old records. There was a family plot and the names of next of kin. There it was. Now I had two half brothers and one half sister, and maybe some aunts and uncles and cousins.

The Makings of a Good Book... or Movie?

Al seemed to be one of those characters that make a big impression on everyone they meet. Neal Henderson, a retired NWA pilot wrote, “I never met your father—although I would like to have met him. I heard more colorful stories about him from the early captains I flew with as I started my tour (34 years) with Northwest Airlines than any other pilot. His exploits would make a good book or movie. He was described to me as a high-energy person who lived life to the fullest. He boxed and liked to fight, challenging all comers, but

would (and did on occasion) give other pilots the shirt on his back, and if they wouldn’t take it he would beat them up, or attempt to.”

Yes, I’ve since confirmed that he was a Golden Gloves boxer in his younger days and was also a track star at Hibbing High School, where he dated and later married his first wife, Bernadine. Berdie for short. His father—my newly discovered grandfather—James worked for the mines. Al had three sisters and three brothers.

Death seemed to haunt this family. Al’s mother died of tuberculosis when he was a young man. His youngest sister drowned when she was sixteen trying to save an older sister, who later died under mysterious circumstances in a Duluth asylum. I heard that Grandpa James cried and cried over the loss of young Lois, and again later when Al’s body was shipped home. Two of Al’s children committed suicide, also apparently drug related. Neal wrote, “I heard that [Al] died from suicide after a couple of attempts while still employed by Northwest Airlines.”

He drank a lot, but so did others. One person said that he had pain from a car accident. Maybe so, but his airline was transitioning to jets, and I found no mention of a jet rating in his FAA records. Was the now buttoned-up world of aviation leaving him behind? I reread one of the letters he wrote my mother in the early fifties. Writing from Spokane on a milk run, he seemed despondent over his career after the intoxicating thrill of those post-war years in the Orient, and that was fifteen years before he died. The handwriting had that look of alcohol in it.

Addicted To Love

Al was pretty lonely in the end according to Betty Stewart, a retired F/A who was probably his last serious girlfriend and who has been a joy to talk with. They had broken up just a few months before his death. He was married at the time to his fourth wife, a woman named Esther (Jill) Johnson from Australia. She may have been independently wealthy. She may have been older than him. They shared a home in Honolulu. Jill died in 2006 we think. An Esther Johnson was listed in Al’s mortuary records as his wife but did not attend his funeral. Too many broken promises? Al certainly made an impression on the women in his life. He may have been the love of their lives, but not a man you could really live with.

My mother, who was quite a looker in her youth,



Al and Terry on their wedding. Witnesses to the marriage are G.B. Dunn and wife. G.B. is captioned as a pilot.

jumped on a plane to Tokyo two days after I was born in July of 1949. She and Al had married in 1947, but their relationship was already on the rocks. She was flying back to Tokyo to reconcile. When she got to the apartment they shared near Hibiya Park, there was another woman in there making dinner. Terry chased her out with Al's Army-issued 45 and then waited. There was a huge fight. She said she was a fly's breath from shooting him dead. She ran out of the apartment and onto the roof where she spent the night. Al went to the local police Koban to get help looking for her. I think it was during that long night that she decided to move on. She never fell for his entreaties after that. By 1950, Al was married again to another flight attendant with another child on the way. That beautiful boy would be the second of his children to take his own life.

Al's skirt chasing never stopped. Neal Henderson relayed a story he heard, "Late into a party in Seattle he was making love to a gal under a bush in the backyard of the party house. His girlfriend at the time saw him and in a fit of anger stabbed him fourteen times in the back with a steak knife. He never missed a stroke and was later taken to the hospital and survived."

My wife thinks he was addicted to love—the rush of being in love again, and again, and again.

Generous, Charming, Always Broke

It wasn't just the women who were impressed by him—all of which seemed to have been stewardesses, the title used at the time. His fellow pilots have also been an endless source of stories delivered to me thanks to the RNPA email that Vic and the boys sent around to your membership. Some of these stories verge on the truly mythical, like the time Al piloted a plane out of Shemya in the Aleutians in the midst of horrific crosswinds. The passengers and crew had been holed up in the infamous Northwest Hotel, a poorly insulated shack on this god-forsaken island. They were freezing to death, and Al had decided they had had enough. He wanted to get to Tokyo. He directed his flight engineer to apply differential

throttle to the engines to keep the plane from flipping over. The engineer recalled focusing on nothing but a captain's shirtsleeve with a gold ATJ cufflink vibrating, hand straining on the yoke. Then the ground crew cut the cables holding the plane down and off they went like a lurching crab down the runway. A VIP passenger in the back literally shit in his pants. The guy had nothing to wear when they landed at Haneda, so Al gave him his pants. There was Al standing at the entrance to the flight deck in his jacket and underwear smiling as the dumbstruck passengers disembarked.

Some pilots have told me that they were afraid to fly with him because they never knew what he was going to do next.

Anne Kerr, who authors a great blog about her days as an NWA flight attendant (www.ladyskywriter.com), has connected me with other F/As who flew with Al. One of those is Julie Elliot who recalled that when she was a rookie in the early 60s, her passengers were waiting to board a Seattle flight being flown by the very impressive looking, Captain A.T. Johnson. He kept them waiting on the tarmac—chatting them up about his flying exploits in the 40s—until he had finished smoking his cigar. Many people have suggested that any other pilot would have been fired, but Al was being protected.



Terry (L) in flight in the galley. Probably 1946/7.

One story concerned an NWA executive's son who had been involved in a car accident in Japan in the 40s. A Japanese girl riding with the young man, who may have been driving drunk, was killed. He survived. This would have gone badly for the boy, but Al knew people. He got the boy shipped home.

Al's generosity was well known. Pilots who got married were given exquisite gifts of oriental antiques. Anne Kerr told me that fellow F/A Phyllis Curry said she and her pilot husband Chuck were very good friends with Al. "They saw him a lot. She said Al was crazy about (my mom) Terry. When Phyllis and Chuck got married, Al gave them a wedding present. It was a rare Japanese "Blood Vase" inscribed "Fly Boy." He apparently ran an antique business out of his apartment at the NWA compound in Daikanyama. I also recall getting anonymous gifts as a child: a carved black ivory water buffalo; a red fat-bellied Buddha statue; and, a miniature samurai sword that I managed to accidentally stab myself in the stomach with. There's that 'aura of suicide' again.

One of his stewardess friends recalled that Al had hailed down the crew car leaving the compound for Haneda. He had missed his ride earlier that morning. He piled in with the rest and asked if they wouldn't mind taking a brief detour. Al directed the driver to a very sketchy part of town. The car pulled over and Al hurried through a small doorway only to emerge minutes later with his jacket defensively wrapped around his fist. He was fending off several very angry Japanese

thugs wielding knives. Back in the car, no one said a thing. This was just business as usual for A.T. Johnson.

Former F/A Kelly Cohn told me that Al had a gun shot wound in his chest. I have a letter to my Mother from him while recuperating in a Tokyo hospital in 1948 from who knows what.

Retired F/A Julie Elliot relayed the following from her friend Betty Stewart, the same Betty Stewart that dated Al toward the end, "Betty told me a funny story about Al showing some people on Shemya a gun. Al put three holes in the ceiling. People were sort of alarmed because now the rain would come into the house. Al thought he could fix that by putting three holes in the floor so it would drain out. I don't think Betty could have made this up."

Kelly told me they had a layover in Seattle and were hungry. They went down to the local grocery store. Out of sight, Al stuffed a big carrot down his pants. He walked up to her and put her hand on his crotch. "What do you think of that?"

"I've known better," she said dryly. She knew his tricks.

Another pilot, Norman Hilson, who was stationed with Al in Tokyo in the forties, told fellow pilot Arthur Daniel the following story, "We were walking down the street in Tokyo and a G.I. came along with \$5 in his hand. He said "Five dollars to the man who can whip me." Al punched the guy, grabbed the five, and didn't even miss a step." And that was the other thing—Al was constantly broke. He'd come into money, sometimes lots of money, and then it would be gone.

Leaving Children Behind Like Some People Leave Their Keys At The Restaurant

Al had three children before marrying my mother. He was married two more times, four in all, and had at least one more son after me. By the middle of last November, I already understood that this boy and one of the boys from the first marriage had died—but two known siblings remained. I hired an ancestry expert, a kind of private detective, to track them down. Just before Christmas, I got an email from Susan Morrow, "I may have found Sheila, Albert's daughter." She turned

out to be a defense attorney living in Pennsylvania, and I was able to locate her through a poetry group that she was a member of. I called the group's editor, "Do you by any chance know a Sheila, the attorney?"

"Who wants to know?"

"Well I think I may be her brother. Did she grow up in Hibbing and have a dad who flew for Northwest?" Bingo. Sheila turned out to be this lady's neighbor. A few minutes later I was talking to a sister I never knew I had. She's the sharp one of the family. We've been exchanging information ever since. I've learned of a brother living in Wisconsin and all about the Johnson family, living and dead.

Sadly, I've read letters posted by Al to Sheila when she was very young making wild promises. In one, he promises to fly her to Hawaii. Of course, it never happens. In another, he explains that he is finally posted in a warm climate—Manila—and will be back very soon—in about 18 months. I wonder if he realized that a week is an eternity for a child. In one of his letters to my mom, he's not sure about the spelling of my name, "It's Ricky, isn't it?" If he was alive today, I'd soundly kick his butt and then give him a hug, "What were you thinking?"

And then I remembered. He had intercepted me coming home from school when I was—I dunno—7 or 8. He asked me if I wanted to drive his Corvette. I think he was living in the Shorewood Apartments on Mercer Island. I remember sitting on his lap pretending to steer the car. He had his uniform on. I was impressed. My mother was not amused.

Funny how just one incident can affect a young mind. I picked up my private when I was 17. If I had had you guys as mentors, I'd be writing this from the inside and not the outside. I drifted away from aviation and toward a career in design. But anyone interested can take my son under his/her wings. He's shown a definite interest at 10 years old. They will still need pilots to drive those super wide-body planes being developed by MIT.

Where Is The Northwest Gold?

In all my imagination, I never expected my pilgrimage to the NWA compound to turn into this—a four-fold increase in the size of my family—and it hardly stops here.

My sister Sheila, other pilots and F/As, girlfriends and wives have all hinted at smuggling and gun running. Some of the older pilots have said this is a myth that has been floating around NWA for decades, but

others believe the stories are based in fact. I can tell you this, my mother told me flat out that she and Al were involved in gold smuggling out of Shanghai prior to 1949. Some of the details were echoed by one of Al's ex-wives. Sheila told me that Al was involved in gun running to South America. All of this makes sense when you think about it. In China before the fall of Shanghai, the country's wealth and cultural patronage was being emptied out via the Yangtze River. As the wealthy were escaping Mao's conquest and the Nationalist blockade, many turned to airline and shipping personnel to get themselves and their loot out of China. My partner, who is ethnic Chinese but grew up in Japan, has told me that this is how his father got their family money out of China—in this case via BOAC. One story told by Neal Henderson with many variations has it that pilots complained that they could not trim one of the NWA planes. On inspection in Seattle, gold was found in the wingtip.

The story my mother told me and that has been retold by others has it that a fixer named Jimmy Ling was connecting wealthy Chinese refugees with NWA personnel. My mother told me that Jimmy would bring gold over to the Peace Hotel where NWA staff laid over. My mother would go through customs carrying two or three gold bars. Foreign airline crews were not checked by Chiang Kai-Shek's troops. Vic Britt described a story told to him by Ken Bennett and Terry Marsh, "Ken and Terry said that when the Reds were closing in on Shanghai (in May of 1949) they woke the crew in the middle of the night. They packed up an airplane with all the NWA people and the Northwest "Gold" and flew to Tokyo with no flight plan at 200 feet so no one could pick them up. He said your dad got away with a lot of things after that, which would have gotten anyone else fired—and it was probably because of what he did that last night in Shanghai. It was the last "round eye" flight out of China for a long time."

So, did Al Johnson fly the last plane out of Shanghai? Jimmy Ling, who owned a textile company and was associated with Chinese gangsters, like the infamous Big Ears Du, was subsequently stabbed to death. If gold had been diverted, then Jimmy might have taken the fall.

An even more provocative story has it that three planes flew millions of dollars in gold out of Shanghai only to be diverted via Tokyo, Shemya and Anchorage to a destination in Utah where the gold was delivered to who knows who. I don't have permission to tell you the source of this story, but it was someone very close to Al. Her fear? Some of the other flight crew died under mysterious circumstances shortly after.



Rosie Stein (L), Jerry Rudquist pinning wings on Therese MacArthur at the Nicollet Hotel, Minneapolis (probably 1945).

The gun running story also makes sense. America was supporting many rightwing regimes in Central and South America. Anyone with connections to Washington and the CIA could have called on pilots, like Al Johnson, to do a little side work, which may explain why Al occasionally came into large amounts of money. This is where fact and fiction make a fabulous cocktail. I was hoping to interview Donald Nyrop, the former president of Northwest and director of the CAB, about these stories. The RNPA guys were trying to set this up, but sadly he died last month. I really should have started this research earlier.

A Pilot's Pilot

The other day, a long awaited batch of FAA documents arrived in a plain manila envelope. I had to jump through hoops to get them. They contained a record of Al Johnson's certifications—most of them fuzzy Xerox copies. He started flying in 1941 at a local Hibbing airport. According to a Hibbing native and fellow pilot, he probably took advantage of the government's free pilot training program at the time. One of my new nephews told me he got in trouble flying upside down over the giant Hibbing mine pit. Between 1941 and 1942, he obtained his multi-engine, instrument, commercial and transport licenses. He failed one test, retook it

three months later and passed. I assume he went to work for Northwest in the northern region under a war contract with the ATC. I think this is where he met my mother, who told me she also flew into Canada and Alaska along the treacherous Alcan Highway route. I believe he received his command certificate for DC3s in Manila in '49. By 1958, he had about 15,000 PIC hours—on the record. Off the record, who knows?

Al was certainly a character, pro and con. Fellow pilots may have had to sober him up after a bender, but he was a hell of a pilot. Peter Jenkins recalled a comment from his father Reg Jenkins, who was among other things Vice President, Orient Region and an early Director of Operations for Tokyo and Shanghai. "He would always say

that your dad was one of the best natural pilots he'd ever known." Peter, who grew up in Tokyo and knew Al, was kind enough to let me retell his story, which I've edited for brevity:

"On the night of the flight in question there was a large, bad typhoon passing over Tokyo and outward on the route they would have to pass through. The visibility on the ramp and across the field looked pretty grim, with high winds and gusts driving heavy rains sideways in sheets. My Dad was concerned that the flying conditions were getting pretty marginal.

After reviewing the flight plan and the weather reports with the meteorologist on duty, Al's decision was to go. (Northwest was the only airline that had it's own meteorology department, and prided itself that their own weather data and analysis was consistently better than the official weather reports issued by the US Air Force in those days)

At the time an airport expansion program was under way. Apparently the airport authorities assumed that the construction activity had been suspended due to the awful weather and for that very same reason the folks in the tower could not see beyond the active runway that the work that night had, in fact, continued.

When all the passengers had boarded and the loading of mail, baggage and freight was routinely completed,

Al taxied the Douglas DC-4 out to the threshold to cycle his controls and run up his engines. He remained completely unaware of the ongoing construction activity.

Everything looked good from the cockpit, and Al was cleared for takeoff. The DC-4 rolled down the runway through the driving rain and gathered speed. About this time a dump truck had just finished loading, and it's driver and his assistants decided to take a shortcut from the construction site to a landfill area... directly across the middle of the active runway. The construction crew figured that flights were shut down for the duration of the typhoon, and they could get more work done as they had the field all to themselves."

(Isn't this what causes accidents, mutual assumptions?)

"By the time Al had spotted the truck through the gloom and rain, it was too late. He was somewhere between V-1 (the speed at which he could abort the take-off and safely stop [within the remaining runway]) and V-2 (the speed at which the plane was rated to climb). There was a split second to react, and even the right and timely reaction was likely to be fatal under the best of circumstances... yet Al got her rotated and somehow very gently climbing ever so slightly... on a knife edge between a flat-out stall if he rushed it... and smashing into the dump truck if he couldn't get the old gal to climb.

The first my Dad knew of all this was when Al in a calm voice over the radio explained what had happened and requested clearance to land again immediately. With all the routine thumps, groans and whines of the take-off—wheels struts extending to full bump and coming up into the wells, flaps retracting, and engines roaring—the rest of the flight crew had figured they were home free—and miraculously so. Even the dump truck driver later told the authorities that he was completely unaware that there was a plane behind him until he was overwhelmed by the glare of its landing lights and the roar of engines as it passed, in his words, "very low."

But Al felt something about the controls didn't feel quite right as he climbed out from the field and thus decided to return to Haneda to have maintenance give it a thorough going over. This was despite the fact that landing under those deteriorating weather conditions would be no easy matter even if the plane were not damaged.

My Dad said Al made the landing look incredibly smooth and gentle despite the awful conditions... and a good thing he did. On inspection the mechanics noticed a long indented scrape on the belly of the fuselage just between the wings. There were no gaping holes or fluid leaks, so they didn't think the damage looked that bad to them, but due to Al's insistence, they began pulling skin panels to see what lurked beneath. What they then dis-

covered was a crack in the main box section of the wing spar. If Al had continued flying, they said, the wings would have sooner or later (and probably sooner, given the turbulence of the storm) simply broken off in flight or on touchdown."

Peter commented, "That was the Al Johnson I remember most. He was a pilot's pilot when he was at the controls in the cockpit."



Terry,
New Years
Eve Ball,
Minneapolis,
1942

A Few Words About Mommy

And just so you don't think Al deserves all the glory, my mother had quite a history of her own. Terry McArthur was raised in France, born to a Scottish-American father from Olympia, Washington and a French mother. James McArthur had remained in France after his service as an army officer in WWI and became the director of the International Harvester factory in Wasquehal, near the Belgium border. Terry and her sisters were raised in a Brussels convent, the custom of the time. My grandfather loved adventure and once took the family on a car trip to Egypt. Yes, by car.

When the Germans invaded in 1939, my mother's family boarded one of the last ships out of the continent, the SS Washington—loaded mostly with Jewish refugees. There were big American flags painted on the

side to ward off German U-boats. America had not yet entered the war, but the passengers slept in their life-jackets nonetheless. Her family relocated to Louisville Kentucky, home to International Harvester. That is where she graduated from high school. As the war in Europe was coming to a close, the family was planning to return to their little town in dreary northeastern France. Not Terry. She had seen America and wanted to stay. She moved to Minnesota where she trained to become an airline stewardess. Anne Kerr has miraculously found a picture of my mother receiving her NWA wings in a hotel ceremony. She was known to fellow F/As as the cute one with the French accent. Terry's flying career was cut short by her pregnancy, and she eventually wound up in Los Angeles working for Northwest as a ticket agent. She put me in a boarding school. From there we moved to Seattle where she met my Dad who gave me a secure upbringing.

A few years ago, as Mom's memory was fading, she would cup my face in her hands and tell me that I looked just like Al. "The stories, the stories," she would tell me, but it's come to you to fill in those details.

A Big Thank You

In these days of the Internet, finding a biological parent is not such big news. What is news, for me at least, is discovering the intense camaraderie among the flight crews of Northwest Airlines. We're losing the older guys and gals, who were contemporaries of my



Courtesy of Betty Stewart

father, but the younger ones are running with the ball—archiving memories and sharing stories.

One of those is Gary Ferguson, who wrote, "Although Al wasn't a military pilot, he was undoubtedly influenced by those post-war pilots he knew. One has to remember that piloting in the post-war era was accomplished in large part by the survivors who had watched some 37,000 fellow pilots die in training accidents and countless others in accidents and combat. Flying was a risky business then and the young ones who were doing it in Al's timeframe considered themselves survivors and 'bulletproof.' Some of those young military pilots had learned that survival and efficiency sometimes meant that some rules were there to be broken." Al Johnson certainly took his chances and broke his share of the rules.

In one of his few remaining letters to my mother shortly after their divorce, Al Johnson wrote,

March 12th, 1950, postmarked from Portland, Oregon on Northwest Airlines—Route of the Stratocruisers airmail stationery.

"My Dear Terry,

Enclosed is a check for \$50 to help things along in L.A.

I left Mpls last night an hour before Don Jones was killed in that crash—sure was a bad deal, but definitely not a wing falling off. Guess Don just got too low. I fly every day from now on practically—being a junior captain has its drawbacks.

Hope you & Ricky are in the pink. No sickness. I wish you the best of luck too.

LS ever, Al"

For his surviving children, Sheila, Jim and myself, Al Johnson will always be our tragically romantic father. We miss you. ✈

A huge thanks to Jim Anderson, Warren Avenson, Bob Bartholomay, Ken Bennett, Vic Britt, Kelly Cohn, Phyllis (and Chuck) Curry, Arthur Daniel, Dick Dodge, Julie Elliot, Gary Ferguson, Jac Flemming, Marie Force, Phil Hallin, Neal Henderson, Peter Jenkins, Dennis P. Johnson, Anne Kerr (author of Fujiyama Trays & Oshibori Towels), Joe Kimm, Dick Smith, Terry and Spence Marsh, Joyce Rudquist Norvold (and Jerry Rudquist), Dino Oliva, Pete Patzke, Joe Pehoushek, Bonnie Russell, Betty Stewart... and, of course, to my newfound sister and brother and the Johnson family.

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The author may be contacted at rseireeni@brandarchitect.com if you have more to add to the story. – Ed.

SW Florida Spring Luncheon Colony Golf & Country Club Bonita Springs

**March 16th, 2011
11:00 to 3:00**

MENU

Traditional Caesar Salad
with rolls and butter

CHOICES

Salmon with Tarragon Bernaise Sauce,
roasted potatoes and julienne vegetables

OR

Medallions of Pork with Madeira Sauce,
roasted potatoes and julienne vegetables

DESSERT

Chocolate Madness Cake

Coffee, Tea and Soft Drinks
complimentary

\$30 per person

Reservation

NAME _____

Salmon ___ Pork ___

SPOUSE/GUEST _____

Salmon ___ Pork ___

Send check for \$30 x ___ = ___

payable to: **Doni Jo Schlader**

3520 Cassia Ct.

Bonita Springs FL 34134

DIRECTIONS:

Take **I-75** to **EXIT 123**, go **West** on Corkscrew Road **to Hwy 41** (Tamiami Trail),
then **South 2.6 miles** to Pelican Landing/Colony entrance.

Directions to the **Colony Club** will be given by gatehouse.

Valet Parking available.



2010

Minneapolis Christmas Party



Standing: Elaine Mielke, Dee Dolny, Jack Cornforth,
Norm Midthun, Sue & Dick Duxbury, Seated: Lois Abbott,
Betty Cornforth, Midge Glenna



Lorraine & Neil Potts, Jean Midthun



Scott Johnson, Jo & Herb Johnson,
Carol & Pete Hegseth,
Beverly & Patrick Watson



Lowell Stafford, Keith Maxwell,
Gail & Fred Joseph, Wally Weber



Photos: Phil Hallin



Tom Schellinger, Hal Hockett, Joel Long, Jim Driver



Ken
Kreutzmann



Ellen Stephens, Ann Brown, Norma Driver, Marilyn Olson,
Kathy Zielie, Susan Marsh



Cal Dahl, Ken Kreutzmann, Carl Simmons



Marlyn Olson, Ellen & Ned Stephens, Connie Thompson,
Neil Potts, Dianne Andres, Marilyn & Carl (sitting) Simmons



Polly Viertel, Bill & Pam Buckingham, Nancy Bestul, Charlie Horihan, Janet & Greg Gillies



Standing: Pete Johnson, Steve Carr, Tim Olson,
Seated: Hal Hockett, Ken Kreutzmann



Pete Johnson, Pete Brown, Gary Thompson, Julie McNamee, Terry Marsh, Ed Johnson, Dick Glover



Connie Thompson, Phil Hallin





Milt Eitreim, Gary Thompson, John & Dianne Andres, Joan Thompson, Mary Lou Eitreim, Sherry Wenborg, Jean Midthun



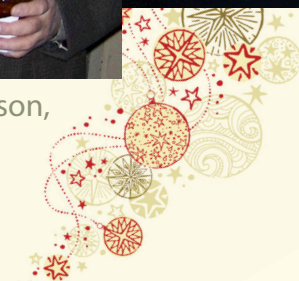
Janet Gillies, Kathy Hogan, Jeanne Wiedner, Denny & Margo Bertness, Don (seated) & Jane Chadwick



Jim McLaughlin, Mindy Schenck, Barbara Erlandson, Betty Long, Dianne McLaughlin, Gary Long



Gay Glover, Eileen Hallin, Nancy Aulick





Julie McNamee, Steve Lillyblad



Barb Stellner, Jody Bartlett, Don Aulick,
Connie Thompson



Rose & Roger Grotbo, Sara Modders,
Dick Duxbury, Cathy Horihan



Corrine Lunde, Betty C,
Nancy Haram



Bob Vega, Jack Cornforth



Don & Jeanne Wiedner, Bill & Pam Buckingham, Ray & Kittie Alexander



ornforth,



Steve Lillyblad, Lee Bradshaw



Connie & Bill Cameron, Elaine Mielke

INFRARED



By Kathy McCullough

Nighttime: National Interagency Fire Center, Boise, Idaho. Bat Year: 1980.

Six of us are in a trailer at the Boise International Airport. Our feet are propped up on the desks and we are all dressed alike in green uniforms. We could be leprechauns, but we are infrared pilots for the United States Forest Service.

Tired and bored, we are waiting for the red phone to ring. There are other black phones, but the red phone, the Bat Phone, is the important one. California is on fire and they still haven't called. By the time they call, the fires will be too far out of control. Like Bruce Wayne (Batman) and his faithful ward, Dick Grayson (Robin) wait in their mansion, we sit in our office, waiting.

In September, before the fire season began, we tested our equipment. Our infrared equipment can

pick up a 6" by 6" fire from 10,000 feet, once everything is calibrated. Our flight is the stuff of legends. Smudge pots were placed in the California National Forest. Our infrared tech, Jerry, easily spotted and mapped the pots the ground crews placed for us as we flew a grid over the area. We also found another series of "hot spots." Using Jerry's imagery, rangers and local sheriffs followed the path of the unknown fires and arrested a murderer who had escaped from jail and thought he was safe hiding in the forest.

We know how good our equipment is and we know they will call us to California. Sometimes we wait weeks for the Bat Phone to ring. When there are no fires to fight, we kill time reading or studying. I've gotten checked out on all three airplanes and practiced my instrument skills. Sometimes we go on Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation flights. We take turns flying the fire missions, and this time Eldon and I are at the top of the list. Suddenly the silence is broken by a ringing telephone. The Bat Phone?

No, just one of the ordinary black ones ringing. Don answers it; the rest of us pretend to read to be busy. We are really listening to Don's phone call. Don has the most interesting conversations with friends all over the world. We think he must be ex-CIA because he is always talking to one of his Trans America buddies. They like to reminisce about the old days of excitement and glory, and we like to listen in.

One of our favorite "Don" stories dates back to his Trans America days. He was a copilot and it was also his job to drop supplies out of the back of a cargo plane. The captain flew the plane as Don went back and started tossing out packages to the ground crew. It was a bumpy day, and the plane lurched suddenly. Don lost his footing and fell out of the plane. Horrified, a crowd gathered and watched from the ground below. Don's feet were tangled in the cargo netting. He was dangling, upside down, two hundred feet above the ground. His wallet, pens, keys and other personal belongings fell. Even his shoes came off as he managed to pull himself back into the plane. Cut and bleeding, shaken and scared, Don stumbled back to the cockpit and collapsed into his seat.

Gruffly, the old captain asked, "What the hell happened to you?"

Don answered, "I fell out of the plane."

Without any trace of surprise, his crusty captain replied, "You better be more careful next time."

When they landed, everyone had already heard about the incident. Don was a hero. He eventually got his shoes and other belongings back. But tonight's conversation is uninteresting. Don rambles on. We go back to our books, yawning.

Only two turboprops are equipped for infrared: a Fairchild Swearingen Merlin and a Beech King Air 90. We have a Queen Air for backup, and for ferrying personnel. All the airplanes are painted orange and white. Last month the Merlin was in Kentucky and I was flying the KingAir with Chuck over two fires in Montana.

Chuck was a real pain to fly with at first. He was sure that women couldn't fly, and he was really ticked that I had been hired. He was sneering and making fun of me one day as I did the flight planning. Chuck couldn't believe I was so stupid that I didn't know the latitude markings on sectionals equaled a nautical mile.

I asked him when he had learned they equaled a nautical mile. He told me he had known it for

twenty-five years at least. I did the math and said, "So, you were twenty-five? I'll be twenty-five in two months." He looked a little taken aback. Slowly relations between us improved. We weren't exactly friends, but at least a mutual respect, or maybe a truce, resulted.

At last, miracle of miracles, the Bat Phone rings. We jump as if we are shot. It is after midnight and we were trying to stay awake. No one can decide who should answer it. Chuck finally leaps across the desk and catches it on the third ring. He nods, answers affirmatively, hangs up the phone, turns and says, "California. They want the Merlin."

Eldon calls Flight Service and begins planning the trip to Ontario, California. I hurry to the parking lot and retrieve my packed suitcase from the car. I can hardly wait to get flight time in the Merlin—a hot, fast turboprop. After all, I need multiengine time to be hired by a major airline. I have over 1500 hours, but not enough multiengine jet or turboprop time to be hired by the majors.

I do my preflight by flashlight on the Forest Service ramp. There are rumors that the government might turn over the infrared section of the Forest Service to an independent contract group in Canada. I hope not. This is one section of the government that is worth its weight in gold. Just thinking about the lives saved since infrared has been used to fight fires makes me proud to be a part of this division.



Here I am as Kathy West, newly hired in 1981 by NWA.



There's something special about that circle on this IR image, but I can't for the life of me remember what's so special.

No longer are smoke jumpers dropped into the heart of a fire by accident. Infrared imagery makes it possible to pinpoint hotspots and map the movement of the fire. Before, it was always a safety nightmare with the smoke masking the true heart and direction the fire was going. Jumpers are now dropped into the safest, most advantageous areas of the forest where they can do the most good. Of course, wind changes still make firefighting a dangerous business, but every edge you can gain over a fire is worthwhile.

My captain tonight, Eldon Askelson, likes to talk about his smoke jumper days. He has over 450 jumps under his belt and his eyes light up when he talks about his experiences. Listening to him moan and groan each morning when he comes to work, you know why he changed careers. He says walking out of the forest after fighting the fires, carrying all the gear, did the most damage to his body. His back has had it and he is stiff and sore. All I know is, I would never jump out of a perfectly good airplane.

Finishing my preflight, a figure materializes out of the dark in a huge, green, oversized coat. Jerry, our infrared technician, gives me a big bear hug.

"Katy-me-love. You and Askelson have this mission?"

I nod. Jerry is a kick. Without him, who would keep us awake? Jerry's humor and songs keep us going long after our bodies say we should be sleeping. Infrared missions are routinely flown at night when the ground temperatures are even. During the day the sun warms all sorts of objects, making it difficult for the interpreters to read the imagery. When the sun is up, rocks show as hot spots, as do roads and any dark, absorbent surfaces. It's hard to tell which spots are fire and which are not. So, we have

to stay on our toes, no matter how tired we are, and fly night missions.

Everything I know about imagery comes from Jerry. Jerry is a pro at his job, and boasts that even Kodak can't believe how he "pushes" their film and develops great pictures in under a minute. He says the secret is keeping the film cold and he stores it on dry ice. Jerry loads his gear into the nose compartment, along with an ice chest

full of dry ice, film and beer. There aren't any bars open at five in the morning when our workday is complete, so we bring our liquid refreshment with us. "Everyone needs a cold beer before bed," Jerry claims.

Lately, I've been hanging out with Jerry and Eldon on Friday nights. We pick up a couple six packs of beer and head for the Boise junkyard. Yes, the junkyard. The guys are into old cars, and the junkyard is the place they find their parts. Usually we gather inside drinking beer, laughing and telling bad jokes until someone decides to amble about the yard. Then we all troop around, and I listen to slurping and burping along with discussions about engines and wheels.

Last week everyone was crushing beer cans by balancing on one foot, then gently tapping their index fingers on both sides of the can simultaneously. When I tried, I wasn't quick enough to avoid the entire weight of my body crushing my fingers into the can. Ow. The laughter that ensued was hearty, but not mean spirited. I tried again. Success: a flat can, no fingers crushed.

We board the plane. Jerry busies himself in the back. Eldon arrives and we finish our interior preflights and checklists. After engine start, I call the tower for clearance to taxi. Within minutes we lift off and turn south. Jerry's booming voice comes through the intercom with his rendition of Yellow Rose of Texas, as we climb higher into the night sky.

The Merlin has Omega navigation as well as an older Doppler radar system. We need accurate latitude and longitude positions to fly our grids over the fires. Ideally, the lines are parallel, followed by

perpendicular cross sections. We have to fly plus or minus five degrees on heading for grid accuracy, and can only be plus or minus 50 feet in altitude. It is crucial to be this exact. Otherwise, the grid lines weave, cross and blur making it impossible for the ground personnel to read and plot the fires.

The King Air is solid and stable as a rock, and I love the airplane. Unfortunately, it only has Doppler, so we are constantly flying back to a VOR station to reset our drifting navigation system. We also have to be plus or minus ten on our airspeed, so we can't let the nose pitch up or down at all. The Merlin is harder to obtain good imagery with because it is more pitch sensitive and not as steady, but we love the Omega guidance system. Its state-of-the-art for the early eighties, even though there aren't many satellites yet. The Merlin's autopilot is not accurate enough to fly the tight parameters we need, so we take turns hand-flying. All night. Back and forth, hour after hour. I feel like a bat, following my radar.

When a grid is completed, if there is an airport nearby, we land and hand off the imagery. Usually this isn't the case and we are given coordinates so that we can "drop" the imagery to the waiting ground crew. We fly over a designated ground site, usually at two hundred feet, and eject the imagery out of a hole in the bottom of the aircraft over a white "X" painted on the ground. The film is rolled up in a canister like the ones used at drive-through bank windows. The faster we can get the imagery to the ground, the more useful it will be. The imagery has to be "fresh" and the information needs to be used within hours, before anything changes. After "depositing" the imagery, we immediately fly on to the next fire.

The high point of the night, for me, is hitting the target. We take turns, betting beers on who can come closest to the big "X" on imagery drops. The other "highpoint" is watching Eldon and Jerry chew tobacco and spit into a cup on the center console. Then they dare each other to drink it. Ycch.

This has been an exceptionally bad fire season. There is no way to cover all the fires before dawn. We do our best and fly the major ones. Exhausted, we land at six in the morning. Our car is from Rent a Wreck." We cruise to our hotel, a dump on the east side of town. The guys are chewing and spitting, making brown lines down the sides of our old, white Pontiac. I'm in the middle laughing, trying not

to get grossed out. We break out the beer and Jerry is right: a beer does make it easier to fall asleep with the sun coming up.

We cruise to our hotel on the east side of town. The guys prefer dumps because our per diem is so low. The plastic sheets crackle every time I turn over and the traffic outside keeps waking me up. Anything over our piddly per diem comes out of our paychecks, but who ever heard of plastic sheets? I think this motel usually rents out rooms by the hour. The housekeepers are cleaning, banging and vacuuming. Talking loudly. Dammit. I have to sleep to be sharp tonight.

Thanksgiving afternoon at the airport: No rest for the weary. The firefighters traipse through the hangar, exhausted. It smells like human sweat and smoke. Huge cardboard boxes of food are set up everywhere. There are all kinds of juices and snacks. The pressed turkey sandwiches have little packets of cranberry sauce paired with them. Tiny pumpkin pies are wrapped up like Twinkies. I didn't know they made pumpkin pies that small.

Walking through, we pick up food and stuff it in our pockets. We'll eat it later, during the night. Not because we are hungry but because we get bored. Flying a grid is so routine. Jerry is stuffing food into his green coat with the big pockets: Hostess





Now it's Kathy McCullough

Twinkies and Ding Dongs, apple and cherry pies, six boxed drinks, five sandwiches and ten pumpkin pies. Some of the workers give us dirty looks because we are obviously not smoke jumpers or fire fighters. They have no idea how hard we work, too. People are staring at Jerry, shocked by his hoarding. I ask if he'll share.

"Not a chance, Katy-me-love. You need a coat like this." Of course I have my own stash, just not as large as his. True to his word, Jerry eats all of his. Thanksgiving comes and goes. At least we had our feast, a regular junk food delight. This has to be the strangest, albeit bountiful, Thanksgiving I have ever had.

There are just too many fires for one airplane to handle. Lockwood, Sycamore, Indian, Summit, Lakeland, Thunder, Panorama, Stable—soon the names are all familiar and the fires blend in my mind. We fly overtime to cover them; legally, we can't log all the hours we are flying. Homes and thousands of acres of forest are burning up underneath us, and we call for backup. They bring in the King Air and another crew.

Two weeks later, we are still flying over California. There are now eleven major fires. Its hard to know where all the other traffic is, even with a helicopter at 12,000 feet for air traffic control. Its really smokey. We fly as low as we possibly can without distorting the images. Visibility is nonexistent and we hope the terrain is well below us. Bombers, lead

planes, jump planes, and all sorts of other reconnaissance share the sky. Curious private pilots are coming too close and getting in the way. Flying out of the smoke, we almost hit a Baron lead-plane. We miss him by fifty feet. Scary. Someone wasn't where they were supposed to be and it wasn't us.

Now there are four crews flying two airplanes. It's daylight, but the fires are so bad that we are flying the infrared in all but the hottest time of the day. Sometimes the heat from the fires pops us up too high, and we have to fly the line all over. With all the smoke, the sun is obscured and the sky is so hazy that it feels like nighttime.

As we finally get a handle on the fires, the season winds down. This has been one of the worst fire years on record. We take the Merlin to Oregon for much-needed maintenance. Then we go back to Idaho, where we hone our instrument skills in the King Air. I update my resumés on file with every major airline. We fly Forest Service personnel around in the Queen Air, a real dog of an airplane. The Queen Air flings the ice on the propellers into the fuselage, and the crashing sounds are loud and unsettling. I long for the Merlin or the King Air, but it is good to be flying. Next week I'll be laid off for the winter.

Over the Christmas break, I get a call from Northwest Airlines. They want to interview me. All the turboprop time on my resumé looks good and they send me to Mayo Clinic and run me through a battery of medical and psychological tests. Then they put me in a simulator to see if I can really fly. Finally I get the call. I'm hired! My class date is February 23, 1981, and I will start as a flight engineer on the Boeing 727.

I'll miss the camaraderie and friendships I've made in Boise. I am glad I won't be flying nights my entire career. I'm tired of the shift work and lack of sleep. Little do I know that much of my flying at Northwest Airlines will also be on the proverbial "back side of the clock." ✪



The image in the title block is not really an IR image, of course, it's the equivalent of a color negative. Call it artistic license. The barn and wind turbines in this beautiful photo are on Kathy and her husband's property in eastern Oregon. He is a wheat farmer.

Kathy is medically retired and was encouraged to join RNPA recently by Mike Smith, Dick Moore, Doug Jones and others. She says she always wrote on her layovers. Just the kind of member Contrails readers should be happy to have. Welcome, Kathy.

— Editor

The David Behncke Lifetime Achievement Award



This is the highest honor that the Association may bestow on a member and shall be granted only by the unanimous approval of the Executive Council. Captain Luckey will be the third recipient of the Behncke Award as it has been presented to only two individuals in the history of the Association that was founded in 1931.

The MEC believes that Capt. Luckey is highly deserving of this award. He is best known for his many achievements in the realm of aviation security, but he has made significant contributions to trade unionism through his efforts to enhance the effectiveness and safety of pilot labor actions for his own MEC and many others within the Association. Capt. Luckey was instrumental in the development and implementation of highly effective strike procedures which helped both management and pilots work through a difficult process without lingering consequences on either side.

Capt. Luckey exemplifies the ideal ALPA representative: highly knowledgeable; well-respected by his peers, government, and industry; articulate and persuasive; diplomatic; industrious and very effective; and above all, strongly committed to ALPA and the success of the union. He literally put ALPA “on the map” as regards aviation security, and his accomplishments—which will have a lasting impact on security in North America—have brought great acclaim to, and enhanced the reputation of, the Association. He has generously donated many thousands of hours of his time to ALPA as chairman of his own MEC’s security committee and later as a member and chairman of the National Security Committee. While flying the line, Steve took great pride in how little flight pay loss he annually charged the Association while conducting his extensive volunteer work, despite the fact that he flew internationally as a 747 captain.

After his retirement from flying at age 60, Steve did not retire from ALPA work, but continued to serve the Association superbly in the dark days and months after 9/11 for nothing



It is difficult to write an endorsement for this award nomination, for the simple reason that it is a truly daunting task to do justice to all of his tremendous accomplishments. However, it is my belief that this legendary ALPA volunteer is richly deserving of this award by any standard that can be applied. Captain Stephen Luckey enjoyed a successful and rewarding 33-year commercial flying career, retiring as a B-747-400 Captain. He is an award-winning international aviation security specialist currently serving as the Special Security Advisor to the President of the Air Line Pilots Association. He served his fellow pilots as the chairman of ALPA's National Security Committee for eleven years.

Prior to beginning his airline career, Captain Luckey served in the military as a carrier-qualified U.S. Marine Corps attack pilot, primarily flying the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk. He flew numerous combat missions in Southeast Asia. Prior to departing the United States for Vietnam, Captain Luckey received extensive military special operations training and saw combat duty on the ground as a special operations commander and counter-insurgency specialist, serving with units of the U.S. Special Forces, Korean Marines, Army of Vietnam and the elite USAF Air Commandos. He originated the highly successful Kit Carson Scout program which used repatriated Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers for specialized counterinsurgency warfare missions. This accomplishment earned him the Bronze Star medal with Combat V. Captain Luckey is a graduate of the Psychological Warfare School-MACV, and was a qualified nuclear weapons delivery specialist, loader and courier.

In addition to his military and airline training, Captain Luckey has been active in numerous anti-terrorist training schools and has trained with the FBI and other Federal agencies in aircraft-related special weapons and tactics (SWAT) procedures including tactical explosive entry. In 1997, in response to the growing threat of disruptive passengers, he led ALPA's Disruptive Passenger Conference, which focused public and government attention on this mounting problem and resulted in hundreds of media interviews for months after the event.

He originated ALPA's International Aviation Security Academy, which drew some of the most highly qualified and respected aviation security experts in the world to teach advanced security methodologies not only to ALPA security volunteers but other security professionals from all over the world. He regularly works with government and local law enforcement groups on the development of tactical procedures designed to improve

but the cost of his minimal expenses. Steve continues to maintain a strong network of contacts within federal agencies and the industry and uses them to advance ALPA's security agenda. His accomplishments on behalf of the union are too numerous to list, but an overview of them is provided below.

The ALA MEC believes that there is no ALPA member who is more deserving of this award. Captain Luckey's decades of service to this union, his accomplishments, and his zeal for ALPA are all extraordinary and should be recognized by awarding him the David Behncke Lifetime Achievement Award.

Following is an overview of Capt. Luckey's many accomplishments which are offered in support of this nomination.

Comments of Captain Craig Hall

Following is the endorsement of this nomination by Captain Craig Hall, Director-Canada, National Security Committee. Captain Hall has worked with Captain Luckey for many years and has first-hand knowledge of his many accomplishments in the aviation security arena.

coordination between airlines and tactical LEO units in the event of terrorist incidents, hijackings, hostage situations, and other crimes aboard aircraft. Captain Luckey is a former deputy sheriff and firearms instructor.

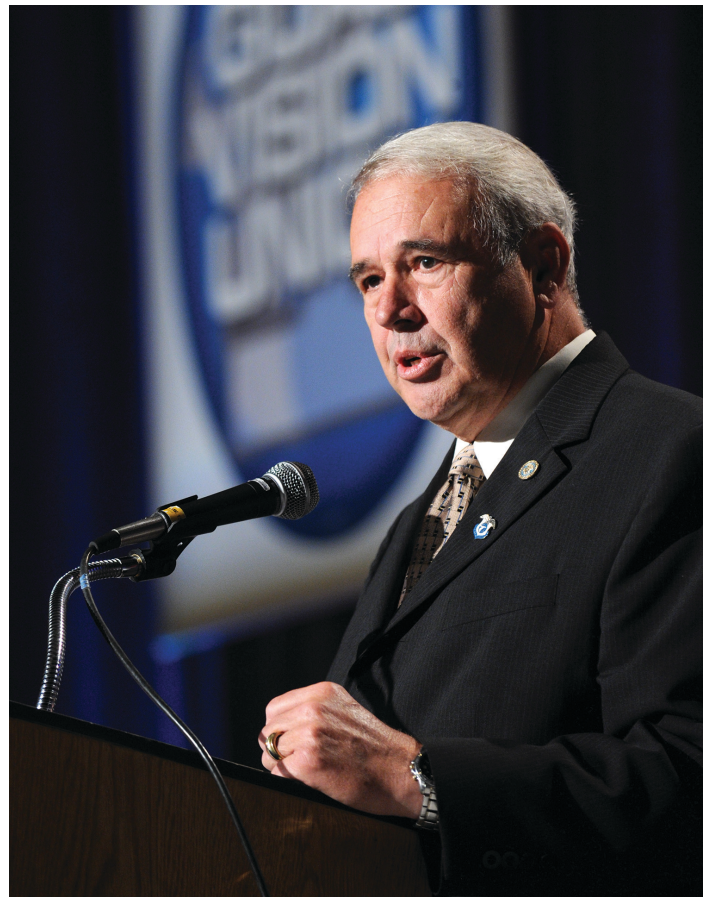
Captain Luckey served as a member of the Baseline Working Group of the Vice Presidential Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, aka the Gore Commission, and has chaired working groups of the Scientific Advisory Panel of the congressionally mandated TSA Research, Engineering, and Development Advisory Committee, and the Transportation Security Administration's Aviation Security Advisory Committee. He also served as the U.S. Representative and former Vice Chairman of the International Federation of Air Line Pilots Associations' Security Committee.

As an internationally recognized authority on aviation crime, Captain Luckey makes frequent presentations to professional law enforcement organizations throughout the world. He has addressed both the House and Senate congressional committees on various aviation security issues, the United States Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee, the International Congress of Aviation Organizations, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and many other federal law enforcement agencies.

He has made numerous television and radio appearances including Good Morning America, ABC's 20-20, Fox News Live, Inside Edition, 60 Minutes, NBC's Today Show, America's Most Wanted, and the Law Enforcement Television Network Series. His security articles have been published in several books and periodicals, and his commentaries continue to appear in hundreds of major news media publications worldwide.

The prestigious FAA Associate Administrator's Award for Civil Aviation Security was presented to Captain Luckey in March 2000, for his outstanding security contributions and enthusiastic support of the FAA's Aviation Security Program.

No description of Captain Luckey's accomplishments would be complete without highlighting his leadership role in the implementation of a lethal force capability in the cockpit through the creation of the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) program. The initially controversial, but now widely applauded, FFDO program was recently recognized by the TSA as one of the most effective deterrents against terrorist hijacking of commercial aircraft. It is very unlikely that this program would have been created without Captain Luckey's leadership and foresight.



Captain Luckey delivering his acceptance speech

The catastrophic terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 placed Captain Luckey's expertise in great demand and he worked tirelessly to assist the Association in the aftermath of one of the nation's darkest hours. He continues those efforts even today by helping the United States more effectively meet the ongoing challenges of global terrorism.

Captain Luckey has briefed the Boeing Company on incorporating safety and security features in future aircraft design, most recently as pertains to the new Boeing 787 aircraft. He is the sole airline industry representative on the Risk Management Analysis Program (RMAP), which Boeing leads for the TSA.

To call Captain Stephen Luckey an ALPA legend is a vast understatement. To use an old axiom, those of us who perform security work for the Association today can see as far as we do because we stand on the shoulders of giants. Captain Luckey stands front and centre among those giants. It is my pleasure to endorse this nomination, therefore, in recognition of four decades of service by Captain Luckey to the Association, trade unionism, and aviation security. ✪

Barbara Peterson



*Joanne Aitken,
Gayla Bredahl,
Darlene Jevne*

*Once again Doug and
Barbara Peterson hosted
the annual Christmas
Party at Emerald Downs
for the West-enders.*

A photograph of a table covered with a green and red plaid tablecloth, laden with various Christmas gifts. There are wrapped boxes, a red Santa hat, a small figurine, and other festive items. The background is decorated with colorful streamers and confetti.

Seattle Christmas Party

Sandy & Curt Bryan



*John Upthegrove,
Gus Diem,
Lowell Schroeder*



*Stanley Tombs,
Harriet Tombs*



Pat & Jim Harrington



Joan Grimm, Eileen Waller, Judy Grimm



Barbara Peterson, Curt Bryan



Rae Leffel, Montie Leffel

Keith Deaver, Jim Palmer

Skip & Kathy Eglet





Roger Sorenson, Darlene Jevne



Dave Hall, Galya Bredahl, Ted Swan



Joan & Howie Parks



Bev & Jim Palmer



*Fran DeVoll,
Sandy Schmidt,
Kelly Cohn*



Bud & Carolyn Cheney



Willis Sorum, Eileen Waller



Bill & Mary Ann Noland



Pat & John Hansen



Sterling & Nadine Bentsen



Jan & Walt Mills

This article first appeared in the July 1985 issue of *Air Line Pilot*, and is reprinted here with permission. As noted in the "Letters" section, Ron came across this while purging his stash of old *Air Line Pilot* magazines. Not only is it one of the most well-written articles of its kind, it is surprisingly apropos all these twenty five years later. As he says, "Some things never change." – Ed.

Regrets Without Apology

By Ron Murdock

Naval aviators say that after experiencing a night catapult launch and landing, all that remains in life is anticlimax. Tales of air combat and adventures of astronauts have added an even wider dimension to aviation lore. Few pilots are exposed to such "highs:" but sooner or later, we all find our own darkened and pitching deck. It may be sooner, in the silence of a windmilling propeller or rotor over inhospitable terrain. It may be later, in the turbulent effort of skidding hundreds of tons around the rooftops of Kowloon in a steeplechase with a typhoon and fuel gauges. And sooner or later, we all reflect upon the events that have brought us to the place where our bloodstreams are regularly drenched with adrenalin, and to a time when our careers are being discarded like tired lovers abandoned in the haste for new lust.

My recollection is that it all began in the middle high school years, when everyone demanded that we deal with the bothersome decision of choosing an occupation. I'd wager that your recollections would be much the same.

What were we to do with the rest of our lives? Camping the wilds of northern Ohio in search of Chingachook or canoeing the upper Cuyahoga River hunting for slow ducks can be great fun, but neither qualify as useful vocations, or so said the counselors. What they did say was: "My goodness, look at your class standings. You must become something special. Most of your group is preparing to be engineers or other professionals, and remember, engineers are well paid for their efforts." That last argument did contain a certain amount of appeal to uncertain teenagers spawned in the Great Depression. Consequently, off to engineering school we went in search of something special.

After several tiresome years in the company of ever so many special dullards, we were almost cured of the desire to become special. Not being the sort of people who give up easily, though, we looked for other ways to fulfill our counselors' expectations.

The war years (pick a war) and the attention focused upon aviation led us all to believe that here, perhaps, was the place for us. Could the world of aviation be the answer? "Be a member of the best and the brightest; join up with the first team; be one of the chosen few; only the select can qualify to fly..." challenged the posters of the Army, Navy, Marine, or Air Force recruiters. Isn't that what we were supposed to be? Aided by memories of the counselors' words, the posters won what would prove to be the battle for commitment of young minds frightened by the alternative: an enlistment into a life of unfulfilled mediocrity.

The succeeding years were filled with the satisfaction of knowing that an entire effort actually did depend upon "special" contributions. The simplicities of college life ended abruptly with the discovery that so many would fail to live through the apprenticeship of our new profession. One quiet and knowledgeable roommate failed to solve a carrier approach problem one beautiful, but too-gusty day. Another mathematically talented friend grievously erred in a three-dimensional vector analysis during a gunnery rendezvous. Both rest forever in the Gulf of Mexico. Similar tragedies cheated others of the final golden or silver glow of "the wings" and the opportunities that came with the requirement to "fulfill the obligation." In later and earlier days, many repaid that obligation inside a ball of flame over foreign skies, some repaid with years of incarceration, and some repaid by just evaporating into the nothingness of the missing. Fated to avoid those trials, most completed their flirtation with aviation and returned to more mundane lives.

The airlines provided the final compromising step of the seduction. Each airline insisted that it, too, wanted only the best. Each captured its share with promises sufficient to overcome the expected rigor of a life filled with layoffs, labor strife, and divorce. Our trancies from our holidays and our family members' birthdays and graduations were to be excused by the traditionally American

method of compensation. The contributions of airline life to stress ailments other than chronic jet lag were to be minimized by donations to fringes. The alarming statistics of early deaths and untimely retirements caused by working conditions or the next six-month gamble were discounted by promises of rainbows in retirement. Each of us in our own way, we allowed ourselves to be seduced and wedded to the airlines of our choice or their circumstance.

And now, suddenly, the affair is over. Now that our laugh lines have walked with crow's feet into the deeper wrinkles of time, we are being betrayed. The agreements to which we have attached our lives have fallen into a crack that has appeared in the surface of economic experiment. A half-century of accomplishment has been sucked into bankruptcy loopholes chaptered for the use of the unscrupulous, while courts and legislators contribute to our betrayal by watching in amusement—eager, perhaps, to welcome us to the level of mediocrity we long ago chose to avoid.

The traveling public is innocently unaware that many airlines no longer search for pilots with the “right stuff” described by Tom Wolfe. Eventually, the tragic revelation will come to many of that uninformed public that airline flying is not the joyful play of media disinformation. Many of the “new entrants” are little more than ambulance-chasers that are proving to be more intently skimming capital gains than providing traditional airline services. Employees are lured into employment with the offer of hypothetical stock profits in lieu of adequate compensation. Actual pilot salaries range from the low of an efficient cocktail waitress to the high of an average building subcontractor. Pilots who voluntarily enter into such a system of servitude and rewards can be classi-

fied as having only “just enough stuff.” In one celebrated instance, *any-stuff-at-all* will do.

The skeptics have never chosen to comprehend that the relatively low flight hours firmly entrenched in their minds have little bearing on our actual work. They elect to continue to ignore that airline pilots devote twice as much time to their tasks as the average working professional does. These skeptics seem to include aviation pioneer and author, Ernest K. Gann. In his extensive compilation of aviation histories, Mr. Gann seldom, if ever, fails to fire a shot in the direction of today's airline pilots. In his latest novel, *Gentlemen of Adventure*, Mr. Gann refers to the “prima-donna pilots.” Yet, many sources reveal that pilots of the 1930s received salaries that were most generous during a time when any employment was a minor miracle. One needs not be a financial historian to compute that the salaries received by airline pilots of the 1930s were in many ways superior to the highly publicized benefits received by today's pilots.

And so, Mr. Gann, I apologize for failing to apologize for what has been—up to now—a lifetime of fulfilled expectations. The rain and the snow of the not-so-long-ago nights may no longer fog the goggles, bringing tears to eyes that searched for a familiar light or landmark. But search we do, with the tears and aches of 12-hour flights terminated by approaches to minimums; with the tears and frequent fears of 14-hour days filled with a dozen takeoffs and landings through mountains of winter and, yes, often with few flight hours to log for the transport of hundreds.

No apologies, but much regret. If an era is truly about to end, an era when aviation rewarded those who sought out the exceptional endeavors of life, then only regret can remain for what the future portends. ✪

The Rest of the Story:

NWA Captain Frank (“Sam”) Houston, an acquaintance of aviation author Ernest Gann, informed me that “Ernie was PO-ed at you” about my article.

Gann was of course the talented author of many magnificent aviation tomes. During WWII, American Airline co-pilot Gann was enlisted or co-opted into the Army Air Transport Command, as were many airline pilots. The product of his war-time experiences was perhaps his finest aviation novel: “Fate Is The Hunter.” At war's end he elected not to return to a co-pilot's seat with American and signed on with Matson, the start-up airline operating between California and Hawaii. Both the novel and the film, “The High and The Mighty,” were inspirations from his Matson years. When NWA and United joined the route, Matson Airlines turned belly-up. Rumors suggested that perhaps the route award might have been influenced by Boeing's desire to sell the B377 Stratocruiser.

Twenty-five years ago, I believed Ernest Gann's allusion to “the prima-donna airline pilots” was a bit nasty. In retrospect, after witnessing the past quarter century of major airline bankruptcies, forced mergers, or complete evaporations, it's much easier to understand his pain. – R. M.



The Responsible Thing To Do

President Gary Pisel tells me that in the last four years we have had five RNPA members die without a will, a trust or even final end of life instructions for his/her survivors.

In one of those cases the surviving spouse did not even know the deceased's employee number. This places an enormous burden on the survivor that a little forethought can easily prevent.

! Did you know that Delta offers a Will Preparation Service at no cost?

! Did you know that every pilot has a life insurance policy worth a minimum of \$10,000? Are your beneficiaries up to date?

The most important element of any of the following is that your survivor know your new Delta ID number.

For those of you who may not be electronically connected there is only one phone number your survivors need to know:

1-800-MY-DELTA

For those of you who can connect online:

<https://connect.delta.com/>

- Near the top of that page hover your cursor over "Employee Info" and select "Retiree Connection" From the drop-down menu.
- On the left hand panel under "Survivors" click on "What to do when a Retiree dies Checklist."

Of utmost importance in this electronic age is making sure that someone, or several, in your family have instructions on where to find all those pesky passwords without which some information and records may go to the grave with you. Mine are included in my final instructions.

Please make sure that your family is aware of the information available in the back two pages of each annual RNPA Directory.

- Editor



*Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
Through the great spaces in the sky,
Be with them always in the air,
In dark'ning storms or sunlight fair.
O, Hear us when we lift our prayer,
For those in peril in the air."*

Verse from The Navy Hymn
"Eternal Father, Strong to Save"

"Al" Kurtzahn 1928 ~ 2010



Alvin R.C. "Al" Kurtzahn, age 81, a retired Northwest Airlines First Officer "Flew West" for a final check at the Zumbrota Health Center in Zumbrota, Minnesota on June 11, 2010. Alvin was born in Minneapolis on September 20, 1928 to Herman and Hilda (Wischnefski) Kurtzahn, and was baptized and confirmed at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. Alvin was a member of Christ Lutheran Church in Zumbrota, the Marine Corps League and the American Legion. He proudly served his Country with the United States Marines from 1946-1949, after which he attended aircraft mechanic school at World Chamberlain Field.

Alvin joined Northwest Airlines as an aircraft mechanic in 1950, and he and Phyllis Beug were married on June 27, 1954 at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. They were married for 56 years. He earned his Flight Engineer and Pilot's license and became a Northwest Flight Engineer in 1958. Alvin also owned the Coast to Coast Hardware Store in Faribault, Minnesota from 1965-1970. He sold the store in 1970 to move to Seattle to fly the B-747. After many aircraft types, and moves between Minneapolis and Seattle, he retired off the B-747 in 1988 as a First Officer. After retiring, Alvin continued as a B-747 second officer and was a second officer instructor with Northwest and NATCO until mid 1994.

Alvin was a true gentleman, a professional, a good husband and father with a great sense of humor, and he was always looking for things to laugh about. He

was always there for his family, even when he was on the other side of the world. No one was ever a stranger to Alvin, and he would always take care of others, even those just met, before he would take care of himself. If any one of his children needed something or his support, he would be there, or on the phone to give his loving fatherly advice. From flying across the country to help load or unload a moving truck, to a personal visit to see a grandchild or child having trouble in college, to medical emergencies, he could be counted on to be there on a moment's notice. On one of his first trips to Seoul, Korea, he visited an orphanage, and within a year, Alvin and Phyllis were volunteering at the Seattle airport to assist with adoptive Korean children passing through Seattle. That same year, they adopted their youngest daughter.

In the mid 1980s a son serving with the Marines in Okinawa, Japan was called to his Squadron's Flight Operations area for a phone call. The MCAS Futema Control Tower had received a radio call from a Northwest B-747 flight asking that they call VMGR-152 and say "Hi" to 1st Lt. Kurtzahn. Even when his kids were deployed overseas, Dad was still there! Alvin never met a stranger, and he was always ready to help anyone in need. His family spent a lot of time waiting in the car at gas stations, stores, and rest stops, and Alvin would always be the last one back to the car. When asked what took so long... he would say he was talking to someone, and he would know the strangers



life story. Once as a crew member on a trip departing Tokyo, he noticed a young lady with a child who didn't have enough money for a ticket to the United States. He overheard her situation and stepped forward and paid the balance of her ticket. He did it from his heart and didn't expect re-payment. A good man, always there for others.

Alvin was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and spent his last few years in a nursing home. In 2009 Alvin's two daughters accompanied he and Phyllis to the Retired Northwest Pilot Association's annual riverboat cruise in Stillwater, Minnesota. Even though he had a hard time carrying on a conversation, Alvin thoroughly enjoyed the time spent with his fellow pilots. The family sends many thanks to all those that took time to say Hello and to greet Alvin and his family. It made his day, and it was a good memory for him and the family. In the end, it was hard even for him to talk. Being the lifelong Marine and the father and husband that he was, if he said anything, he would say, "Semper Fi" and "I love you." He is survived by his wife Phyllis; one brother, three sisters, five children, and twelve grandchildren. He will be missed.



USMC Sgt, El Toro, 1948

Lorraine DeVoll: age 84, passed away quietly Sunday evening, September 26, 2010, at the local hospital. Her husband Francis and son Michael had spent the day with her. Lorraine was born and raised in Fort Myers, Florida. During WWII she worked at the Buckingham Army Air Base in Fort Myers where she met and married Fran Devoll. They began their life of travel and adventure with a seven day Greyhound bus honeymoon to California to meet his folks, and then on to Minnesota. When Michael was old enough to care for himself after school, Lorraine took a job with King County Library as the librarian at Skyway, followed by several years at their headquarters in Seattle.

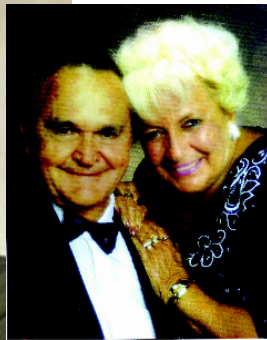
Lorraine served as Den Mother when Michael started Scouting, and when he started high school she and Fran arranged a private student exchange with Shinko High School in Kobe, Japan. They hosted a young lady, Kiyoko Tanaka, in their home, and the exchange went so well they founded and operated "The Rainier Beach Cultural Exchange" for ten years before turning it over to Rotary. The family traveled extensively in all fifty States, Europe, Africa, Australia, and the Orient where the family literally bummed about for a month with no airline or hotel reservations as they visited Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thai-



Lorraine DeVoll
1926 ~ 2010

land, Viet Nam, Cambodia and the Philippines.

Lorraine and Fran wanted to do something special for their 60th wedding anniversary, and that turned out to be a photo safari in East Africa. It was a wonderful trip and the photo was taken outside Nairobi, Kenya. She is survived by her husband of 64 years: Francis, son Michael, sister Mary Ann Kulo of Fort Myers, Florida, extended family and friends.



Chuck and
Rose Marie

“Chuck” Nichols 1925 ~ 2010

Charles William “Chuck” Nichols, age 85, a retired Northwest Airlines Captain, “flew west” for a final check on Wednesday July 28th, 2010. Chuck was born in 1925, the third son of Harold Hobart Nichols, and Gladys May Tilson Nichols on a 160 acre farm in Cresco, Iowa. The boys helped on the farm, fished, hunted and took flying lessons in a Piper Cub and Aeronca Champ. Chuck’s brothers attended the University of Michigan until WWII started and then Harold joined the Air Force and Don joined United Airlines as a pilot, and flew the troops overseas. Chuck was young and stayed on the farm to help his parents. An excellent student he built model airplanes and took flying lessons whenever he could. When he was old enough he joined the army and was sent to Japan with the occupation forces. Upon being discharged in 1947 he entered the University of Michigan to study aeronautical engineering.

In 1948 he met a freshman working behind a soda bar who became the love of his life, Rose Marie Gaiss. In 1951 he went to Chicago to live with brother Don who flew for United, because that was what he wanted to do also. He worked at an electronic factory at night so he could fly during the day, and in May of 1952 he and Rose Marie were married. It was a very good spring for both, as Chuck was hired as a pilot for Northwest Airlines on June 6th, 1952.

After settling in Richfield, Minnesota, the fam-

ily grew by the addition of three boys and four girls. Chuck devoted many hours to the family camping, canoeing, fishing, hunting, traveling the lower 48 states and heading for Florida or Hawaii each winter for a sun break. In 1966 the family moved to Edina where Chuck became a member of the Breamar Golf Club, a leader in the Boy Scouts, Indian Guides, and a Eucharistic minister and usher in his church. He attended Bible Study Fellowship five years with his three sons and he knew what was most important in life; Faith, Family and Flying, in that order. A Christmas pageant Chuck designed is reenacted each year for the grandchildren and great grandchildren, as it was each year for their parents.

Chuck retired in 1984 and during his 32 year Northwest career flew the DC-3, DC-4, DC-6, DC-7, Constellation, Electra, Boeing’s StratoCruiser, 707 and 727, and the DC-10 which was his favorite. His career influenced two of his sons who are pilots for United and Continental Airlines, and two of his daughters who worked in travel agencies. After retirement, Chuck indulged in his love to travel and he and Rose Marie visited 36 countries and took 65 cruises, his favorites being the Nile in Egypt, the Volga River in Russia and cruising in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. He always thanked the Lord for blessing him with his job at Northwest, and for Donald Nyrop, who kept the airline in the black and gave it a strong foundation.

For Chuck and Rose Marie’s 50th wedding anniversary in 2002, Archbishop Harry Flynn celebrated Mass with 350 of their friends attending. Chuck and Rose Marie began spending winters at their condo on a golf course in Florida in 1999. Chuck never tired of playing golf and passed his love for the game on to his sons and grandsons. After his diagnosis of liver cancer, he and Rose Marie made a pact to do something fun each day, and celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary in 2010. Chuck continued to play golf on a weekly basis with his two sons, playing his final game on July 16th, twelve days before he passed away. Chuck lived life to its fullest, all the way to the end! He had a good life, always had a beautiful smile on his face, and he never complained nor had a bad word to say about another.

At the memorial service celebrating Chuck’s life, his youngest daughter Cherie Fesenmaier, welcomed those who had come to help celebrate her father. She



reflected on his life, his patience and gentle demeanor, his willingness to listen and support his family, and his generosity and his love of life. The generosity of her parents, especially at Christmas, will always be a lasting memory for the whole family. Christmas Eve was celebrated with just the immediate family, but on Christmas day, families with no extended family to celebrate the holiday were invited to the Nichols home.

All of the Nichols kids appreciated that their dad was a wonderful listener. He would listen patiently,

perhaps give out some words of advice, and his gentle demeanor made it easy for them to speak openly. He was always patient, always encouraging, always set good examples, and he possessed a quiet but sure faith. The most important things he demonstrated in his daily life were patience, a quiet but sure faith, and actions that were great examples of that faith. My dad lived his life beautifully; my prayer is that we too may be enriched because of his faith.

“Thank you dad, for all the things you taught us.”



**Alice
McCabe**
~ 2010

Alice and
son Sean

Alice McCabe: age unknown, and a twice retired Northwest Airlines flight attendant “flew west” for a final check at 10:05 AM October 29, 2010, peacefully wrapped in the arms of her son Sean and daughter-in-law Dana. Alice had a birthday on October 9th, and her good friend Kay Brennan said that; “Only God knows how old she is as she has been lying about her age for so long, she has probably forgotten.”

Mary Pat Laffey Inman recalled that Alice, beautiful and batting her baby blue eyes, was the first Seattle “stewardess” she met in the crew lounge after transferring from Minneapolis in 1958. Mary Pat moved into a house near the airport with Alice and five other stewardesses, each paying \$25 a month for rent. In 1959 Alice, Mary Pat and four others traveled to Europe with their “bible,” Eric Fromm’s *EUROPE ON FIVE DOLLARS A DAY*. Alice made sure none spent more than \$5 a day, and their first stop was a

visit with Mary Pat’s family in Ireland. Traveling with five females meant it usually took until noon to decide where to have breakfast, and Alice and two others decided they were not going to museums to look at paintings of “ROYAL IDIOTS,” instead preferring to stop at every US Officers Club on the continent.

Alice turned 32 in 1965 and was forced to retire by Northwest. Mary Pat recalled, “She lied about her age for so long, we were surprised she actually turned 32. Our union was ALSSA-TWU and after Alice’s forced retirement, we were the first group of women to appear before the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in Washington DC in 1965. The EEOC agreed with our complaints regarding being fired at age 32, forced out if married, and refusing to allow women to become pursers, but they did not have enforcement powers so Northwest was not required to rehire them. In 1966 Alice and Alta Mae Smith joined the Tom Dooley Foundation serving in Laos for three months. After three months in Laos, they traveled to Australia where Alice met and married, ultimately giving birth to Sean. Alice went to work in NWA reservations, and in 1967 ALSSA-TWU negotiated a contract with NWA allowing stewardesses to return to work who were fired for being married or turning 32; if they were retired, discharged or fired after July 6, 1965. Alice divorced and returned to flying.

Alice never turned down an invitation and never met a stranger, she was everyone’s friend. She loved to laugh, and joined many groups: The Red Hat Society, Antique dealers, Sunday morning breakfast club, Bible Study, RNPA etc. She is survived by Sean (a Southwest Airlines Captain) and daughter in law Dana. She was devoted to her three beautiful granddaughters, Nicole, Jenna and Maddie.



John Grimm 1923 ~ 2010

John Grimm, age 87, a retired Northwest Airlines First Officer “Flew West” for a final check suddenly at the Valley Medical Center in Renton, Washington on Sunday November 28, 2010. He was born September 4, 1923 in Lebam, Washington to John and Edna Grimm, and graduated from Cleveland High School in Seattle in May 1941. John was hired by Northwest Airlines in 1941 and started out in the “shops” and on the ramp servicing airplanes in Seattle.

Later Northwest sent John to the Northwest Territories to service and load DC-3s hauling supplies to build the Alaskan Highway. He returned to Seattle when his draft deferment ended, but discovered he had missed the draft. John joined the Navy and they did not recognize his experience working on and around airplanes, so they made him a cook. He got orders to a destroyer where he would have a ringside seat at the largest aircraft carrier battle in history, “The Battle of the Philippine Sea.”

John’s ship left for the South Pacific and arrived near Saipan in June 1944 to join Task Force 58 Commanded by Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher. TF 58 had 15 carriers, and over 100 other ships and subs, and they found the Japanese fleet near the Mariana Islands. The first day of the battle the Navy’s F6F “Hellcats” shot down so many Japanese aircraft that a Naval Aviator aboard the Lexington said, “Hell, this is like an old-time turkey shoot,” hence hereafter the “Great Mariana’s Turkey Shoot.” On the second day of the battle US attack aircraft were launched too late to return to their ships before dark. Mitscher turned the fleet’s lights on so that pilots could find the carriers, but 80 US aircraft were lost, the majority landing in the sea out of gas. Most of the crewmembers who ditched were picked up and saved by TF 58 Submarines and Destroyers.

After the war the Navy honorably discharged John and he returned to Northwest. He became a licensed mechanic and later checked out as a flight engineer. After getting his pilot licenses, he was hired as a pilot April 20, 1964 and became a second officer and later a first officer on the Boeing 707. He was among the first Northwest pilots to check out as first officer on the Boeing 747, which he flew until his retirement in 1983.

John was preceded in death by his wife June Grimm, and survived by his loyal and loving companion of 27 years Eileen Waller; his sister Katharine Garrett; children, Joan Sehmel, Judy Riley, and Jon Grimm; 5 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

From the Guest Book

Bill Sorum: The Tennessee Ernie Ford song “Big Bad John” is more of an ode to the real nice John Grimm that I knew. We knew each other for years, but became good friends in retirement. He went to work for Northwest Airways at 17 as a groomer, and spent time in the frozen tundra of the Northern Region. John escaped the cold and dodged the Army draft by joining the Navy in 1943, and was assigned as a cook on a destroyer in the South Pacific. We don’t know if there were casualties as a result of his culinary duties. After the war he became a licensed mechanic at Northwest, then a flight engineer, and later a second officer and first officer on the 707. John finished his career as first officer on the Boeing 747



and retired in 1983. Always Seattle based except for a brief interlude in Minneapolis in the 1960's, John made friends wherever he went. I never heard a cross word addressed to John. Sorely missed by many, especially Eileen, his sparring partner of the past twenty some years. His flight west went painlessly. He had a blood vessel rupture in his brain and the end came quickly.

John W. "Red" Kennedy: John and I started at Northwest in 1941 and met in Edmonton, Alberta in 1942, when we went to the Northern Region as apprentice mechanics. John stayed in Edmonton and I went to Watson Lake, Yukon Territories, and we invented "P"-mail to communicate. We wrote messages on the back sides of the props, which were painted flat black, with lead pencils. We pulled the props through to do an inspection, and we had time to work on "P"-mail. A message for Edmonton that applied to Ft. Nelson, Ft. St. John, or Watson, would find us making a heading in bigger letters to the station for the message. Small "gripes" we didn't want in the Log Book were put on "P"-mail, such as a "Voltage Regulator acting up in cold." Once a special "P"-mail from Earl Lunde said that John's tonsils had been removed and he was in the hospital in Edmonton. He was a "bleeder" and needed blood. My boss told me to get down there and I caught the next flight. My blood tested OK and I gave blood to John while I was in a bed next to him, and we talked about airplanes, not women! Our draft deferments in the US Army's "Air Transport Command" expired and Carl Luethi wrote a recommendation to the Navy to get us out of the clutches of the Army.

Many of us sent to the Northern Region as apprentices or mechanics checked out as flight engineers, and later as pilots, including: John Grimm, Tom Boos, Steve Hanto, Dick Hazelman, Earl Lunde, Walter Greer, Bob Kruger, Bob Shotwell, myself and others. We checked out on the 727 together and John went back to Seattle, but he kept up with the Northern Region Reunions (usually on St. Patrick's day) and made sure I knew the time and place. After we both got on the 747 we would meet in Hawaii and have lunch together. We started calling John "Grumpy Grimm" but he was never grumpy to me. He was always looking out for his friends. I will miss the calls from Seattle and the long talks about Northwest, and all the people we have known. We will all miss you, John.



Eileen and John

David W Hall: A fellow pilot at NWA since 1959, a gentleman and a great guy to work with.

Emmett Holen: My best friend for 65 years, Best Man at my wedding in 1950. We raised our families together, and worked at Northwest our whole working life.

Mitchell Holen: A great guy, all of my life one of my Dad's best friends. Fun to be around when I was a boy, we had great conversations later in my adult life. I will sorely miss you John Grimm.

Frank Garrett: So sorry to hear of Uncle John's passing. Our family has many fond memories of him and stories told with his dry wit. He will be deeply missed by me and many others.

LeeRae Blaylock: John was a big part of our neighborhood while we were growing up. Many good memories of the Grimm's house in the 60's, a fun man to be around as a little kid.

Patty Garrett: I'll always remember Uncle John, I've many memories of him and know he's in heaven.



Mary Waldenstrom ~ 2010

Mary Waldenstrom was born in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina and raised on the beach in Florida, yet somehow she managed to marry a mid-western, Scandinavian pilot with dreams of flying for Northwest Airlines. The couple met in Chicago while one was a pretty nurse in training and the other was an English-as-a-second-language pilot in training. Both got jobs in Minnesota and settled there to build a family. Mary was working as a Registered Nurse in several Hospitals and caring for two young daughters when she made the decision to leave her paying job and focus her energies exclusively on family. This was a sacrificial commitment in the face of the strikes and layoffs that occur in the aviation industry. She always managed an encouraging word for her husband Hans, despite the often uncertain prospects in his chosen profession.

Two children, Susan and Karla were born to the Waldenstrom's in the late '60s, and the home Mary crafted became a friendly and welcoming one with a revolving door that brought in friends, young and old, for a bite of food or her epic hospitality. Mary's kitchen was always open and this outreach found rewards in unexpected ways. Mary's chicken and wild rice soup and apple pies were frequently enjoyed at church staff luncheons. Whether it was mixed groups of friends and family—old and new, college buddies of the girls home for the weekend, impromptu Sunday afternoon lunch with a group of friends, or a gracious home cooked Thanksgiving feast: Mary always found

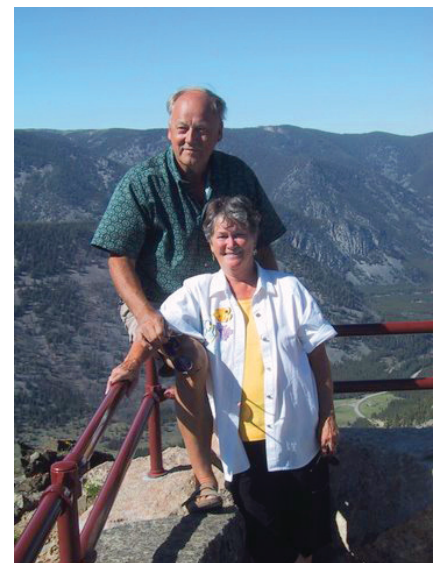
a way to accommodate and include them all.

After the girls grew up Mary developed an interest in painting ceramics. Through this creative hobby she produced beautiful and functional artwork like vases, plates and other pieces which she used around the home or gave away as gifts. For Mary, the best part of this activity was the fun she had with a whole new group of Florida friends who were eager to share and learn ceramics as a creative expression.

But family was always Mary's priority. When the grandchildren arrived, being together, (even if it meant non-revving for days!) became the most precious time spent. Our RV became a home away from home, and a practical way to see the country coast to coast, and to spend quality time with the kids and grandkids—always an adventure.

All she met; grandchildren, neighbors, casual acquaintances and lifelong friends, all of them enjoyed Mary's graceful approach to life and her practical application of letting Jesus love people through her. Status and past failures or achievements were never an obstacle to friendship with Mary. No matter who you were, she'd simply fix you some soup, give you a hug, or let you nap on the couch. Even in her last days, Mary was quick with a word of encouragement and the strength of her quiet, yet dedicated prayer life. Mary was nothing if not a dedicated follower of Jesus.

Mary passed on to eternal life in serenity and peace. Even after several years of dealing with the challenges of cancer, I can honestly say that even that trauma could not alter her steady course or upset her "blue-side-up horizon."



Peace to all,
Hans (Ret. NWA 1968-2000)



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SPOUSE'S NAME

PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS

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EMAIL*
Leave this blank if you do not wish to receive RNPA email news. (See note)

SECOND OR SEASONAL ADDRESS (for RNPA annual directory only)

STREET

CITY

STATE **ZIP+4** **PHONE**

DATE OF BIRTH (Optional for affiliate member)

DATE OF FIRST EMPLOYMENT WITH NWA DELTA AS:

AN EMPLOYEE **A PILOT**

DATE OF RETIREMENT FROM NWA DELTA AS:

AN EMPLOYEE **A PILOT**

IF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BY DELTA INDICATE:

BASE **POSITION**

IF RETIRED, WAS IT "NORMAL" (Age 60/65 for pilots)? **YES** ___ **NO** ___

IF NOT, INDICATE TYPE OF RETIREMENT: **MEDICAL** ___ **EARLY** ___ **RESIGNED** ___

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF HOURS LOGGED

AIRLINE AIRCRAFT TYPES FLOWN AS PILOT

REMARKS: Affiliates please include information as to profession, employer, department, positions held, and other relevant info:

CHANGE: This is a change of address or status only

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