

# CONTRAILS



ISSUE NO. 181

FEBRUARY 2012



Will their future careers be anything like ours were?

**RETIRED NORTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION**

# RNPA CONTRAILS



## EDITOR / PUBLISHER

**Gary Ferguson**  
1664 Paloma St  
Pasadena CA 91104  
C (323) 351-9231 (primary)  
H (626) 529-5323  
contrailseditor@mac.com

## OBITUARY EDITOR

**Vic Britt**  
vicbritt@tampabay.rr.com

## PROOFING EDITOR

**Romelle Lemley**

## CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS

**Bob Root**  
**James Baldwin**

## HISTORIAN

**James Lindley**

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

**Dick Carl**  
**Phil Hallin**

## REPORTERS

**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 \$40 annually for Regular Members (NWA pilots, active or retired) and \$30 for Affiliate Members.

## ADDRESS CHANGES:

**Dino Oliva**  
3701 Bayou Louise Lane  
Sarasota FL 34242  
doliva59@gmail.com

FEBRUARY						
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14 MSP Summer Cruise

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26-28 Atlanta Reunion

OCTOBER						
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## FUTURE REUNIONS

**ATLANTA:**  
SEPT. 26 - 28, 2012

**LEXINGTON, KY:**  
OCT. 10 - 12, 2013

Union made  
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## President's Report: Gary PISEL



WOW, or is it WHEW?

Here we are at 2012 already, who would have thought it. This will be another banner year for RNPA. We have great functions planned and Rowdy Yates is doing a fantastic job organizing the Atlanta Reunion. Remember to REGISTER, and plan to arrive a day early so you can take advantage of all the activities. Plan to stay a couple days after and see the surrounding attractions. Don't forget to bring your Teddy Bears or stuffed animals for the Banquet. This is our way of saying thanks to the local area. The fire and police departments are truly grateful. See the form in this *Contrails*.

Elections of officers is on the agenda for the general meeting at the Reunion in Atlanta. If you are interested in holding a position please contact me or any Board member.

As we head into this coming year I would like to ask each of you to contact a fellow pilot or employee. Bring them to the function you are going to attend. Ask them to join RNPA or better yet, give them a first year membership. It has been proven in the past that once you attend a reunion, you will want to attend more.

Vic Kleinsteuber is working on the summer cruise with the help of Phil Hallin. This year promises to be the largest yet. We are nearing the capacity of the lower deck and hope to fill the upper one. The information and registration form are in this issue, so register early—make it easy for Vic.

Most of the kinks have been worked out with Delta and their systems. If you have a problem please contact me and I will work to get it resolved.

As we enter this year of 2012 I and the Board Members of RNPA would like to wish each of you a Happy and Prosperous New Year. May the air always be smooth, the winds on your tail and the arrival on time!



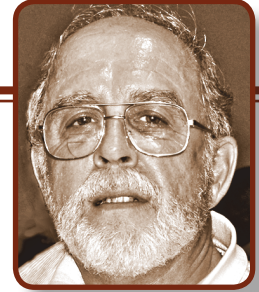
## Treasurer's Report: Dino OLIVA

Well it's January, and my mail carrier is suffering from the weight of all the dues payments he has to deliver to my mail box. Going well so far.

Had an inquiry as to the number of members in RNPA. At the present time we have 1379, of which 24 are either complimentary or Honored members. The remaining 1355 are dues paying members of which 293 are affiliate members (F/A or other ex-NWA employees). The most members we have ever had was 1417. Each year we lose about 35 to 40 members due to deaths, or moving with no forwarding addresses and a few that just drop out. We need to maintain about 1380 to remain financially viable. If you have any friends that are not members encourage them to join. This past month one of our members recruited a retired pilot friend to join that had been retired since 1992. It's never too late to join.

As I log each payment into the data base I have noticed that most payments are made within a couple of days of the calendar date that the previous years payments were made. Vic Britt discussed this pilot trait in one of his general refresher classes. Those that procrastinate usually end up having to pay the \$5 charge to be reinstated.

Do me and yourself a favor and pay your dues before the Feb 29th deadline (one extra day to procrastinate this year). Thanks in advance for your prompt payments.



### ABOUT THE COVER

I certainly don't have an answer to that question, and I doubt if any of us do. But knowing of the struggles that many of your children and grandchildren are going through following in your footsteps, it sure doesn't look promising.

If there really is such a thing as the "Golden Years" in the piloting business the consensus seems to be that we were there.

### SEA STORIES

This issue is a little heavy on military recollections, or what my branch of the service calls "Sea Stories." While not technically a sea story, Neal Henderson sent me a copy of Barry Schiff's account of his flight in a U2. It's been sitting in my "Future stories" folder for some time now and I thought you might enjoy it.

There are two other genuine sea stories that are really hair-raising, to put it mildly.

Then I added one of my own that was prompted by the U2 story, involving seeing the curvature of the earth. I am hopeful that some of you will say, "Hey Fergie, I've got one that'll top that."

I have no doubt that that's true. Whether military, general aviation or commercial aviation, we all have stories that are defining moments in our careers. I encourage you to share them with the membership here.

And then there are you combat veterans whose experiences, seemingly true to the time-honored tradition, you are reluctant to talk about. I don't seem to be very successful in pulling such stories out of those of you whom I have asked—maybe some of your friends can tell me more. Or, just maybe, those friends will encourage you to tell those stories yourselves.

This little magazine is intended to be for, about and **by** us. Of all the stories in this issue, except for the Letters section, mine and Nick Modders' are the only two to meet that criteria. I think we can do better. Please give it some consideration.

### COMING NEXT ISSUE

I'm very pleased to announce that beginning with the May issue *Contrails* will be adding a third Contributing Columnist. John Doherty has agreed to grace our magazine with his gift for story telling. If you remember his two recent contributions you will be pleased.

### BOOK REVIEW

One of you sent me the book, *Aphrodite: Desperate Mission*, by Jack Olsen many, many months ago, with instructions to send it on to the History Centre when I was finished. Unfortunately, as with so many other things I can't seem to keep track of, I have lost the note and can't remember who sent it. Ughh.

I only recently got around to reading it and I'm really glad I did. Once I picked it up I couldn't put it down until I finished it. It's about the mission that eventually cost the life of Joe Kennedy. Our own "Sam" Houston figures prominently in the first part of the book. If you haven't already done so, it's a good read.

It will now be in the next shipment of extra *Contrails* I usually send to the History Centre.

### RECRUITING

You have probably seen and heard us several times suggest that you bring fellow crewmembers to one of our functions, or to at least make them aware of what RNPA is up to. President Pisel mentioned it again on the previous page, as did Dino. We do that for a very important reason: our continued viability as an organization, or; more pointedly, our ability to continue to publish *Contrails* in its current form is dependent on keeping the membership at or near the current level.

There's no question that RNPA will eventually wither away at some point in the future. We are intent on deferring that demise as long as possible. Your help in keeping the membership count stable is the only way we know of to accomplish that.

### OUR EVOLVING LANGUAGE

Typing "in the future" in the paragraph above, I was reminded of how the phrase "going forward" is used so often in its place now and how that grates on me. Am I just being cranky, or does that bug you too?

Even worse, to my aging ears: "No problem" in place of "You're welcome."

And then there's the most overused and misplaced phrase in the English language: "In terms of."

Oh, the changes we have witnessed!

Whatchabeenupto?



**TOM  
WONDERGEM**



Gary,

My wife, Kathy, is fond of saying that my last words on this earth will be something akin to, “Hey y’all, hold my beer and watch this!” Well, I have outdone myself once again. No doubt you will see this true story chronicled in a Life-Time movie in the near future. Here goes.

Last weekend I spied something at Larry’s Pistol and Pawn that tickled my fancy. (Note: Keep in mind that my “fancy” is easily tickled). So I bought something really cool for Kathy. The occasion was our 30th anniversary and I was looking for a little something extra for my sweet girl. What I came across was a 100,000-volt, pocket/purse-sized taser gun with a clip. For those of you who are not familiar with this product, it is a less-than-lethal stun gun with two metal prongs designed to incapacitate an assailant with a shock of high-voltage, low amperage electricity while you flee to safety.

The effects are supposed to be short lived, with no long-term adverse affect on your assailant, but allowing you adequate time to retreat to safety. You simply jab the prongs into your 250 lb. tattooed assailant, push the button, and it will render him a slobbering, goggle-eyed, muscle-twitching, whimpering, pencil-neck geek. If you’ve never seen one of these things in action, then you’re truly missing out—way too cool!

Long story short, I bought the device and brought it home. I loaded two triple-a batteries in the darn thing and pushed the button. Nothing! I was so disappointed.

Upon reading the directions, I found much to my chagrin that this particular model would not create an arc between the prongs. How disappointing! I do love “fire” for effect. I discovered that if I pushed the button, however, and pressed it against a metal surface that I’d get the blue arc of electricity darting back and forth between the prongs that I was so looking forward to. I did so.

Awesome!!! Sparks, a blue arc of electricity, and a loud pop!!!

Yipeeeeeee. I’m easily amused, just for your information, but I have yet to explain to Kathy what that burn spot is on the face of her microwave.

Okay, so I was home alone with this new toy, thinking to myself that it couldn’t be all that bad with only two triple-a batteries, etc., etc. There I sat in my recliner, my cat, Pumpkin, looking on intently (trusting little soul), reading the directions and thinking that I really needed to try this thing out on a flesh and blood target. I must admit I thought about zapping Pumpkin for a fraction of a second and then thought better of it. She is such a sweet kitty, after all.

But, if I was going to give this thing to Kathy to protect herself against a mugger, I did want some assurance that it would work as advertised. Am I wrong? Was I wrong to think that? Seemed reasonable to me at the time...

So, there I sat in a pair of shorts and a tank top with my reading glasses perched delicately on the bridge of my nose, directions in one hand, taser in another. The directions said that a one-second burst would shock and disorient your assailant; a two-second burst was

supposed to cause muscle spasms and a loss of bodily control; a three-second burst would purportedly make your assailant flop on the ground like a fish out of water.

All the while I’m looking at this little device (measuring about 5” long, less than 3/4 inch in circumference, pretty cute really, and loaded with two itsy, bitsy triple-a batteries) thinking to myself, “No friggin’ way!”

What happened next is almost beyond description, but I’ll do my best. Those of you who know me will have got a pretty good idea of what followed. I’m sitting there alone, Pumpkin looking on with her head cocked to one side as if to say, “Don’t do it buddy.”

Reasoning that a one-second burst from such a tiny lil’ ole thing couldn’t hurt all that bad (sound, rational thinking under the circumstances, wouldn’t you agree?), I decided to give myself a one-second burst just for the hell of it. (Note: You know, a bad decision is like hindsight—always twenty-twenty. It is so obvious that it was a bad decision after the fact, even though it seemed so right at the time. Don’t ya hate that?)

I touched the prongs to my naked thigh, pushed the button, and HOLY \*\*\*\*\*! DAaaaauuuuuMN!!!

I’m pretty sure that Jessie Ventura ran in through the front door, picked me up out of that recliner, then body slammed me on the carpet over and over again. I vaguely recall waking up on my side in the fetal position, nipples on fire, testicles nowhere to be found, soaking wet, with my left arm tucked under my body in the oddest posi-

tion. Pumpkin was standing over me making meowing sounds I had never heard before, licking my face, undoubtedly thinking to herself, "Do it again, do it again!"

(Note: If you ever feel compelled to mug yourself with a taser, one note of caution. There is no such thing as a one-second burst when you zap yourself. You're not going to let go of that thing until it is dislodged from your hand by a violent thrashing about on the floor. Then, if you're lucky, you won't dislodge one of the prongs 1/4" deep in your thigh like yours truly.)

SON-OF-A-\*\*\*\*\* that hurt! A minute or so later (I can't be sure, as time was a relative thing at this point), I collected my wits (what

little I had left), sat up and surveyed the landscape. My reading glasses were on the mantel of the fireplace. How did they get there??

My triceps, right thigh and both titties were still twitching. My face felt like it had been shot up with Novocain, as my bottom lip weighed 88 lbs. give or take an ounce or two, I'm pretty sure.

By the way, has anyone seen my testicles? I think they ran away. I'm offering a reward. They're round, rather large, kinda hairy, handsome if I must say so myself. Miss 'em . . . sure would like to get 'em back.

Sincerely,  
Your Pal,  
Tom Wondergem



An old Italian lived alone in New Jersey. He wanted to plant his annual tomato garden, but it was very difficult work, as the ground was hard.

His only son, Vincent, who used to help him, was in prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and described his predicament:

*Dear Vincent,*

*I am feeling pretty sad because it looks like I won't be able to plant my tomato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. I know if you were here my troubles would be over. I know you would be happy to dig the plot for me, like in the old days.*

*Love, Papa*

A few days later he received a letter from his son.

*Dear Papa,*

*Don't dig up that garden. That's where the bodies are buried.*

*Love, Vinnie*

At 4 a.m. the next morning, FBI agents and local police arrived and dug up the entire area without finding any bodies. They apologized to the old man and left.

That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

*Dear Papa,*

*Go ahead and plant the tomatoes now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances.*

*Love you, Vinnie*

## DON BERGMAN



Hi Gary,

A picture of four retired NWA pilots and one retired Alaska pilot on a December pheasant hunt in South Dakota.

Don Bergman



(L-R) Bill Fellingner, Dwaine Ratfield, Don Bergman, Tom Erickson & Richard Couper (Alaska).

**JIM & NANCY  
BESTUL**



Hi Gary,

Twelve years ago our granddaughter, Erica, received a teddy bear at the scene of an accident. Jim and I thought the account you asked for ought to be her memory of what the teddy bear meant in her words.

She was happy to share the experience with everyone.

Hope this inspires our members to continue to bring bears (animals) to our reunions.

Jim and Nancy Bestul

**SUPER  
BEAR**

**Erica Bestul**



It was an overcast September morning, I was five, strapped into my purple car seat ready to go to preschool. My younger sister was in the car seat next to mine. Our new nanny was driving us, waiting to turn into the parking lot when our car violently lurched forward. A woman had rear ended us. I could see flames out the window behind us, and shattered glass blanketed my sister and me. The wail of sirens could be heard approaching our car. I remember our nanny being rolled into the back of an ambulance on a stretcher. Before I knew it my sister and I were scooped up in our car seats, and put in the back of the ambulance along with our nanny.

Everything had happened so fast, one minute I thought I was going to preschool, and the next we were racing down the road towards the nearest hospital. There are a lot of parts of that day that I can't remember, but one memory that stays with me is when one of the paramedics gave me a teddy bear. While we waited in our car seats, for what seemed like forever for the doctor, that cuddly stuffed animal was something I could hold on to. It gave me comfort when I felt I had no control over what was happening.

My teddy bear now lives in a box in my closet, and I still pull it out on days when I'm having a bad day, because it reminds me of the comfort it brought me on that September morning twelve years ago.



Dear Gary [Pisel],

The Delta Employee & Retiree Care Fund wants to thank RNPA for your donation of \$1,315.00 on October 10, 2011.

The donations of financial support we receive allow us to continue to grow the fund and support Delta people in need. Since launching in 2007, the Care Fund has assisted over 2,250 Delta people facing a crisis and applications for assistance are continuing to increase.

Your donation provided during 2011 to support the Delta Employee & Retiree Care Fund is tax deductible based on IRS guidelines. The Care Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and does not provide goods or services in whole or partial consideration for any contributions made to the Fund.

Your continued support of the Care Fund's mission and generous charitable gifts are allowing us to meet the needs of those in the midst of a crisis.

Once again, thank you.

Sincerely,  
Elaine Miller  
President / CEO  
Delta Employee & Retiree  
Care Fund, Inc.

**DON'T FORGET  
TO BRING THOSE  
STUFFED TOYS TO  
ATLANTA!**



**BRENDA  
MCLAUGHLIN**



I always thought the song “When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again” was about my father, our fathers. They are the ones whom we celebrate as “The Greatest Generation.” Born into the “Great Depression” and drawn into World War Two, they and our mothers braved the monumental obstacles of poverty and fear. Fear for their lives and their families and fear for the world about which they were mostly unfamiliar.

World politics was far from the minds of those struggling to live on ration stamps and hope. Innocent, maybe naive, they rallied bravely and went off to defend their country. Those who were unable to serve stayed behind and protected the home front and did what they could to support the war effort. The wives and mothers, left alone to worry and to make do, often on a Private’s salary, made do! Aircraft factories, and steel mills, and listening to the war news on the radio at night. Hardships that my generation can not imagine.

Yes, the lucky ones came home to loving families and the GI Bill. They also came home devastated by wounds and memories that would never go away. What innocent young men could ever have been prepared for what they experienced. War was often hand to hand. They had to look into the eyes of the men they killed. And yet, they came home! They came home and put their shoulders to the task at hand, rebuilding their lives and their country.

My generation—I was born in 1946—has been the “luckiest generation.” We entered the world with a booming economy, and parents made strong by the memories of the past and hopeful for the future.



Look at what our parents had done with far less support. My parents stated goal was, “We want you to have everything we never did.”

The world was our oyster, no matter our beginnings. We could go anywhere, do anything. We could even go to the moon! With our fierce self-confidence we have accomplished miracles. We lived in a time when we had the education, the sophistication, and the leisure time to do good works. To make the world a better place. We ended segregation, worked for human rights, and became engaged in the world community. Personal freedom and individual contributions opened the door for a more classless society in which all could thrive. Certainly, we didn’t do everything right, but we had the courage to try because of our parent’s sacrifices.

I am fortunate to be a part of the “luckiest generation” and am grateful for the way that was paved for us by “The Greatest Generation.”

Thank you to our Veterans and our parents for all we were encouraged to dream and all that we have accomplished.

Brenda McLaughlin

# PHX PICNIC



**TUESDAY  
FEBRUARY 28th**

**Falcon Field, Mesa**

**Coffee at 10:00**

**Eat at 12:00**

**Bring:**

- **Meat to cook**
- **Dish to pass (no dessert)**
- **New fellow pilot or Flight Attendant**

## A RIDE HOME

Dear All,

I would like to share an experience with you about drinking and driving. During the recent Christmas holidays you, like me, may have attended festivities where alcohol may have been served.

As you well know, some of us have been known to have had brushes with the authorities on our way home from the odd social session over the years. During the holidays, I was out for a few drinks with some friends and was overserved with a few too many glasses of wine and some rather nice Bombay Sapphire gin.

Knowing full well I may have been slightly over the limit, I did something I've never done before—I took a bus home. I arrived back safely and without incident, which was a real surprise since I had never driven a bus before and am not sure where I got that one.

*Contributed by Bill Rataczak*

## MONTANA RANCHER



The Montana Department of Employment, Division of Labor Standards claimed a small rancher was not paying proper wages to his help and sent an agent out to investigate him.

GOV'T AGENT: "I need a list of your employees and how much you pay them."

RANCHER: "Well, there's my hired hand who's been with me for 3 years. I pay him \$200 a week plus free room and board. Then there's the mentally challenged guy. He works about 18 hours every day and does about 90% of all the work

around here. He makes about \$10 per week, pays his own room and board, and I buy him a bottle of bourbon every Saturday night so he can cope with life."

GOV'T AGENT: "That's the guy I want to talk to—the mentally challenged one."

RANCHER: "That would be me."  
— *Thx to Vic Britt*

## HERB JOHNSON



Dear Gary:

I don't know if you are interested in old stewardess stories, but I thought I would send this article from our paper.

Herb is 90 years old now and still driving around doing great.

Son Scott still with "Delta" now 28 years. His son Eric is with Mesaba and our daughter, Linda was an agent but taking a buyout.

Always love the RNPA magazine and we miss all the reunions.

Have a great Christmas.

Jo & Herb Johnson

*by Sue Sullivan*

## Cannon Falls Beacon

Sixty one years ago the United Nations intervened in the Korean Peninsula. Now in 2011, the U.N. is once again being asked to intervene—this time in the Middle East.

*The Korean War, begun in the summer of 1950, was a proxy war*

*with both sides sponsored by external sources—the north by Russia, and the south by America. The Korean peninsula was sharply divided along the 38th parallel as a result of negotiations at the end of WWII, creating a North Korea and a South Korea with both sides claiming rights to the other.*

*American General Douglas MacArthur, who was in Japan and in charge of rebuilding that nation after WWII, was given command of U. N. troops (largely American) sent under the U. N. flag to Korea.*

*When a rush order for 500 U.N. flags requested by the General was completed, Northwest Airlines' stewardess, Merry Jo Arends (now Johnson) was selected to participate in the ceremony as courier on the first leg of the flight to Tokyo, from New York to Minneapolis.*

*The flags took flight from Minneapolis to Seattle, from Seattle to Hawaii, and finally from Hawaii to Tokyo. Merry Jo was aboard the new double-deck Boeing Stratocruiser dubbed the "Castle in the Air."*

*She flew for the airline only two years, having met Cannon Falls native Herb Johnson, a pilot, in 1949. They were married in March, 1951, and once married, women were no longer allowed to work as a stewardess.*

*The couple raised their children in Cannon Falls while Herb continued working as an airline pilot. Their son Scott and grandson Eric followed in the family business, both airline captains.*



UN Flag Presentation to Douglas MacArthur, for Use in the Korean Civil War



# NOTHING CAN STOP THE ARMY AIR CORPS

In 1943 during WWII, an American bomber group was stationed at an airfield on the outskirts of London. They were highly trained B-17 pilots and somewhat proud of their role—that of saving England. The pilots had a good deal, and they knew it. So did the pubs, the townspeople, and, of course, the local girls.

One day there was some grim news: An American fighter group was moving into their area at a nearby airfield. The bomber pilots plotted in their club at night for a week, seeking a suitable welcome for the “Fighter Jocks.” Finally, they had it.

At high noon on a rarely beautiful English day, all hands at the fighter group’s airfield peered aloft as a low-flying B-17 made several low passes across their tarmac. Slowly the bomb bay doors opened and a large dark object came hurtling down. A direct hit was scored on the shiny new white concrete apron just in front of Field Operations. The object turned out to be a 300-pound bag of cow manure. When dropped from an altitude of a thousand feet, it had not only made its mark, it had splattered magnificently.

Back at the B-17 base, the bomber boys were ecstatic that evening in their club. The perpetrators had to tell and retell their mission, each time to an appreciative and applauding audience. Finally, someone in the back of the room said: “Wonder what they’ll think up in return?”

It was a good question, and no one could come close to a suggestion of how the “manure caper” could be topped. For three long days and nights, the entire bomber group waited with bated breath. Finally, on the fourth day of the bomber group’s evening muster, a small liaison plane was observed heading directly toward their airfield. Obviously, this must be a retaliatory raid from the Fighter Boys. Many took cover, not knowing what to expect.

After several very slow and deliberate turns, the small plane waggled its wings and a small object with a white streamer attached floated to the tarmac below. Gingerly, with great caution, an airman retrieved the object. Close examination revealed no booby trap, only an old flying boot. Further search revealed a note securely fastened inside the boot. It read:

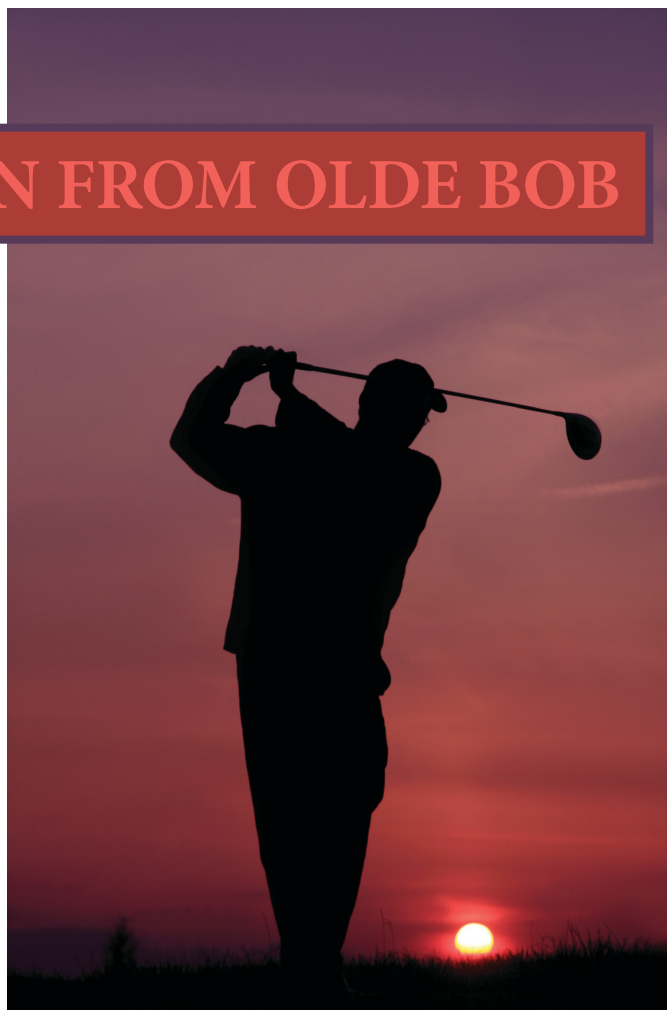
“To the 403rd Bomb Group: It is with our deepest regret that the officers and men of the 33rd Fighter Group must report that your Commanding Officer fell to his death at our airfield three days ago.”

*Editor’s note: I regret that I can’t give credit to whomever sent this fun little story to me. As you might guess, I get a lot of similar things. Until the last couple of years I just filed them away without “tagging” them with the sender’s name. While putting together the article on page 41 I noticed a name that seemed somehow familiar—D. K. Tooker. Sure enough, a search of my computer found that little article from a book titled Stand Well Clear, by D. K. Tooker. Even with only the millions of men and women who have served in the U S Military, it still fits the old adage; “It’s a small world.”*



## Contributing Columnist **Bob Root**

### GOLF LESSON FROM OLDE BOB



*Author's note: Most recipients of this are familiar with my Surprises from Surprise. If you fit this category, you may skip this note. Some of you, however, are receiving this for the first time and I feel an explanation is in order. Verlee and I spend winters in Arizona. Our home here is located in a retirement community (Sun City Grand) which is within the city limits of Surprise, Arizona. Several years ago, in an effort to subtly suggest to family members and friends that we would like to hear from them, I began writing periodic reports based upon events in our lives that we encounter while we are here. I call them Surprises from Surprise, which most likely will not win me a Pulitzer. This is the latest.*

Like all of us, I suffer from several age-related maladies. All one needs to do to be reminded of this is to spend an evening in front of one's wide-screen, high-definition, satellite-fired television set. In that one evening you will be reminded of at least 27 health malfunctions about which you need to "ask your doctor." I now take seven medications per day, none of which I have ever asked to receive. I can only imagine how many I would have if I asked! Verlee has a handful also. Unfortunately, what works for her hot flashes does not work for my CRS (Can't Remember Somethingorother), so we can't share. Pity.

One of my problems brought about by age is CLD. I have never seen an ad on TV asking me to check with my doctor to cure CLD. This is most likely because CLD takes place only when one is on a golf course. Over time, one develops Consistent Loss of Distance, or CLD.

Since there are no ads to lead one in the direction of a cure, one leads himself. In my case, to the best golfer in our senior community—a retired dentist. (Walking proof that

# The Root Cellar



dentists take Wednesdays off to practice golf.) He provided me with a cure for CLD. It came in the form of a Taylor Made R7 driver just like the one I already had, except for a gorgeous blue shaft apparently purchased at Victoria's Secret which just happens to be about a foot and a half longer than a regular shaft.

"I guarantee you will hit it farther with this," he said. "But you will have to learn to wait for it and practice." So, I went out and waited for it and practiced and waited and practiced and found that two of the balls out of the 100 I hit did, in fact, go farther.

The next day I played golf. (No surprise there.) I used my new (previously owned) blue-shafted driver for the entire round and avoided hitting someone's house. Twice, the ball went pretty far. I shall continue to wait for it and hope for improvement.

It should be noted that this time of year provides some unusual problems for Arizona golfers. The courses have been over-seeded with winter grass. Course superintendents will not let golfers drive golf carts on their newly over-seeded grass for a few weeks and impose a CART PATH ONLY rule. A rule such as this requires the golfer to park his cart ON THE PATH, near the vicinity of where he thinks his ball went, select a handful of clubs, walk to the area, search and find the ball, hit it and then walk back to the cart or onward to the green ALL DAY! In yesterday's case, all afternoon. Another problem is that the good citizens of Arizona do not save daylight here, so if you play in the afternoon you are hot, very hot, and it gets dark early and quickly.

And so it came to pass that I, exhausted, out-of-breath and still suffering from CLD, arrived at the 18th hole of the Desert Springs Golf Course in Surprise, Arizona, after the sun had set. The 18th is a 479-yard par five hole easily reachable in three shots unless one suffers from CLD.

There is a term in golf called "course management." When one plays with the CART PATH ONLY rule in effect, good course management requires the golfer to hit his ball near the cart path in order to reduce walking. My course management had been poor all afternoon, and was no better on the 18th hole. I had, by this time, walked the equivalent of a mini-marathon, lost complete interest and hoped only to finish while still upright. My first two shots exhibited all the characteristics of CLD and, although we could not see it, the second one went way left, away from the cart path. Searching from the cart, I spied a ball on the left side of the fairway about 175 yards from the green. I pulled from my bag two clubs, a three-wood and a five-wood and began the trek across the pristine-don't-drive-on grass. Imagine my surprise when one of my playing partners, Fritz, arrived

at the target ball before I and announced: "This one is mine." He then hit it and we searched for mine, finding it some 30 yards closer to the green than I had estimated, farther left and nestled in some deep rough. Apparently, the CART PATH ONLY rule applies to mowers as well as golf carts.

There is another rule of golf not aforementioned here. One cannot borrow a club from another golfer during play. This is a bad no-no.

I looked back toward my supply of clubs in the dusk and noticed that one of my other playing partners had driven off to the green with my bag of weapons. No way could I hit this shot with either of the clubs I carried. To hell with the rules of golf!

"Fritz," I gasped, "May I borrow that iron in your hand?"

"Sure."

Fritz handed me a club. I tried, in the poor light, to read the bottom to see what club it might be. All I could see was the word Cleveland and the number 5.

Dear Reader, a digression. In my lifetime I have attended three golf schools. At each one, the phrase "take dead aim" was part of the curriculum. The goal is to aim at the target and hit the ball into the hole..

In this case, I knew the direction and approximate distance to the green only because I had been here before. The target itself was not visible. With no time for a practice swing due to fading light, I took a swipe at the ball.

"Nice shot, I think," said Fritz.

"Thanks," moaned I. I then staggered the remaining 145 yards to the green, searching for my ball. Our other two partners were already on the green. Only three balls were in sight. Mine was not one of them.

"That's o.k.," I said, "I'll just have to go pull it out of the cup."

And, that is exactly what I did!

#### EPILOG

When I returned home, Verlee said, "How was golf?" Bob said, "I need a new set of irons that are made in Cleveland."

#### MORAL 1

Don't get too cocky. The guy who sold me the long-shafted driver has recorded a two on that very same hole, a very rare Double Eagle.

#### MORAL 2 AND 3

Do not attend golf school and do not obey the rules of golf. ★

# A STABILIZED approach



Contributing Columnist **James Baldwin**

## Ho Ho Ho

December 26. Narita. The morning after Christmas. Things are pretty quiet this early but I chuckle to myself as I walk through the lobby of the Radisson. The Christmas tree is being dismantled with typical Japanese precision. I pause to watch, trying not to stare, as the “tree” pieces are carefully put back into their boxes, each piece exactly in the spot from where it came. It will be ready next year but for this year it’s the day after and, with Christmas over, it’s obviously no longer needed. Geez, at my house I was lucky to have it down by New Year’s. And my girls thought it was pretty funny to turn the Christmas lights on in June. I’m not sure the neighbors shared that joke though.

I guess it’s good to be done with Christmas though because it is the time of year when most of us look back on the past twelve months and can reflect. Contrasting what has happened and changed over the last year with those of the more distant past is usually what we do about now. And with the way and speed events happen these days is it any surprise things might be a little different? Well, they are and they aren’t. Change is the only constant and, save for a few, the subjects are usually the same.

There’s no point in more than mentioning global concerns and changes both domestically and internationally. The hotspots will always be the hotspots and in that regard little has changed. Of course we could talk about things we’ve never heard of before and that’s where the constant of change remains. Who had ever heard of an “Arab Spring?” Or a “soft landing” concern about China? Or how about an article in the the Wall Street Journal where it was reported the Chinese government is actually allowing a discussion of whether the nation needs a revolution or not? Same hotspot, changing issue. Occupy? It used to be a parking spot you occupied. Or a spot on the standby list to HNL. But for Wall Street? Change.

I could go on and on, which I won’t, but it leads me to discussing something that never changes: our beloved airline industry’s volatility. The predicted consolidation of an industry—with barriers to entry that have been shown to be way too low—is a change very understandable by those who follow the green leafy-like motivator of business. Even though, as Robert Crandall, former CEO of American Airlines, recently noted, the industry as a whole has never justified its cost of capital. A pretty serious indictment considering—I’m opining here—almost any passenger, when asked, would never understand that airlines can’t generate a supermarket rate of return on investment on any consistent basis.

Today’s ticket prices occur to the public as increased in cost with load factors that are visually equated to profit. That the airlines have not chosen to or have not been able to install pricing that is directly linked to fuel cost is a lost concept to the travelling public. No surprise there—the number of the larger SUVs with new paper license plates doesn’t seem to be any less where I live. We are all becoming used to the idea that four dollar fuel is probably the new norm but the guys running the airlines these days get it; the industry is actually reducing capacity! That’s a change for sure when compared to the previous strategy of trying to be the last man standing and buying market share no matter the cost.

The recent news of American Airlines filing for bankruptcy, relatively very belatedly, really represents no change in one respect. Starting with Braniff in 1982, we, the US majors, were all there by 2006 and I’m sure now there are some at American who feel it was too bad they were too well capitalized to join the crowd and get it over with. It looked good at the time and served to placate the pilot group to the extent that, despite a pay reduction contributing to a total savings to the corporation of \$1.6 billion, they “knew” their wages would be returned to pre 911 levels. They undoubtedly well reasoned the ubiquitous pension forfeitures of others could be avoided as well.

Sitting in their jumpseat during that era of commutes allowed them to educate me on those “facts.” With a varying degree of smugness in their elucidation, there was a certainty to their expectation, held apparently, pretty much universally. Of course with their own BK filing and the very recent delisting from the NYSE, that now looks highly unlikely and that long held view ends up merely a then current faith based belief. For sure there’s a change in there somewhere.

What didn’t change is that labor wasn’t happy then and I don’t really need to guess what it might be like now. The rugged realization of their company’s situation by the AMR pilot proletariat has morphed from denial to disbelief to glacial enlightenment and finally into the beginning of the sudden and stark experience of the jagged effects of a financial reorganization. The 8,700 current AMR pilots, and the 950 still furloughed, might have had reason to choose to hold the line based on the finally intractable negotiations which began in 2006. But the reality is really based on far more than a further contract concession aimed at saving a reported \$100 million per year; the vendors and lessors will finally have to consider the pricing model set forth previously by all of their competitors.

In that respect the pilots probably played the hand they had been dealt as well as it could have been. Holding the hand management was willing to deal would have obviated the opportunity to renegotiate all of the other labor and equipment leasing contracts and cost of services and goods in place. It was time to fold. What had gone around will finally have to come around to American’s vendors as well. That might be a change to some but hardly a change to others. Those who have “been there, done that” will get to revisit those negotiations and concessions again. With the filing occurring on November 29th, Christmas might be a little different this year; I’ll refrain from commenting about what that change might be like.

Change for us, as new veterans of an historic merger unlike any of those of the past, continues even as we pass the two year anniversary of gaining the “Single Operating Certificate,” granted on January 1, 2010. The veterans of mergers past might have noticed cultural challenges but with the built in regional differences of this one, it is up front and palpable. I haven’t heard any of the stories about the North Central/Southern merger, but they might have had similar issues. Now that I think about it some of those guys are probably still around and

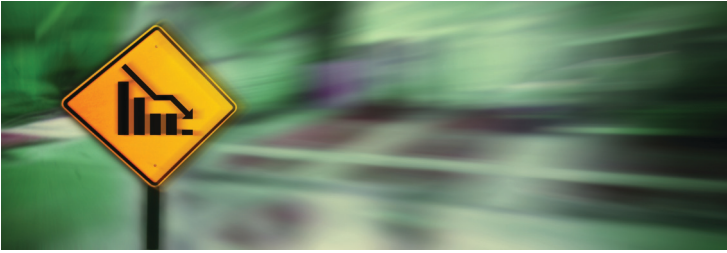


that reminds me I’ll have to ask them about it. But for sure we are still dealing with the different ways of accomplishing the same basic task of geographically moving people around in jet airplanes.

The “RD” pilots (Real Delta) had and still have a distinctly different way of performing this task and certainly maintain an opinion of their “superior” flying operation. The ways, means and practices of the “NERD” pilots (Never Ever Real Delta) from the north are incrementally and very gradually being reexamined after being discarded in whole. In some cases it has served to remind the RD pilot management group that they might be able to adopt some of these methods, of course after modifying them slightly to enable them to re-label them as Delta. Oh well, never mind that we had done it that way for as long as I’ve been here; it’s better and it’s change.

Conversations in the cockpit have changed but really, only a little. When we’re in the cockpit we still talk about girls and when we’re with girls we still talk about airplanes. So that’s the same and I’m glad some things never change. On the other hand, I don’t ever remember any of “the old veterans” discussing the possibility of pension default. That’s changed now because we know who the PBGC (Pension Benefit Guarantee Board) is. We didn’t ever talk about it before because pension reliability was a given! Or so we thought. That’s a change.

Sometimes change is inexorable in that it sits right in front of us and refuses to go away until



**“A trip down the street we call denial always dead-ends at a cul-de-sac named reality.”**

we acknowledge it. It, meaning a changing reality, can wait. It has time. You don't. You are forced to eventually face the facts one way or another. The old axiom (well, it's not that old—I made it up last year for my two teenage daughters): “A trip down the street we call denial always dead-ends at a cul-de-sac named reality,” always applies because, well, reality will wait for you to come to recognize it, not the other way around. No change there. My daughters didn't really appreciate what I thought was clever prose, so no change there.

Southwest Airline president Gary Kelly wrote a recent blog to the internal airline website when he told his readers that AMR, as it exists today, would not survive. He of course was suggesting they would emerge from bankruptcy as a new, lower cost version, not the good old traditional, higher cost, less efficient American they so loved to compete against. Citing the loss of the cost difference and higher productivity level of Southwest to the old “Legacy” carriers, Kelly hastened to point out the increased challenge of competing with the “New United, New Delta and New US Airways.” Noting the presence of new low cost airlines like Frontier and Jet Blue and the really low cost airlines like Allegiant and Spirit was for Southwest like looking back 30 years in the rear view mirror. In a worrisome comparison he cited his airline's labor rates as “far and away, the highest in the industry.” Since SWA is the only major airline since 1989 that has survived without a bankruptcy, guess who might be called a “Legacy” carrier now? That's a change.

Another change, well, really an invisible adjunct, is how SWA has been able to generate those consistent profits. Kelly pointed out that they started with lower costs and lower fares which generated more demand. Serving airports the Legacy carriers dismissed worked until they either ran out of smaller markets to serve or the regional airlines became more capable. Now that growth opportunity is gone as well. Change.

All of the airlines at some point knew of the volatility in energy prices and the need to at least establish a corporate strategy for them. It had to become a major talking point with no real answer after it surpassed labor as the major expenditure on the balance sheet. Insurance against “Black Swan” energy events like wars and political instability in the mid-east turned out to be the best answer and it was known as “hedging.” Sounds simple but in fact there wasn't then and still isn't an exact financial instrument to hedge the price of jet fuel. Heating oil futures and crude oil are the best derivatives they have found to use despite a “basis” risk in non-correlation. And the idea Southwest and others have is really pretty simple: don't pay market rates for fuel, the biggest cost item on the balance sheet. The execution is pretty complex and the risk, or cost, for a variety of reasons is significant, but from 1998 to 2008 SWA had saved \$3.5 billion in fuel costs versus what it would have paid if a comprehensive hedging strategy had not been employed. More interesting yet is the profit from fuel savings is 83% of the company's total profit over the last 9½ years!

Sure, they still need to fill the airplanes up with people and operate the airplanes efficiently and safely but it was one reason they were willing to give up the estimated \$300 million they could have made on bag fees the other airlines were charging. I'm sure the debate at the corporate level measured the revenue lost versus the attractiveness of the concept to consumers that “The Bags Fly Free” and its effect on load factors. Southwest Airlines started by thinking outside the box and inside Texas. Now they're pretty much outside Texas and inside the box of airplane physics, regulation, people issues and profitability just like the old Legacy carriers. Do I need to say that for sure is a change?

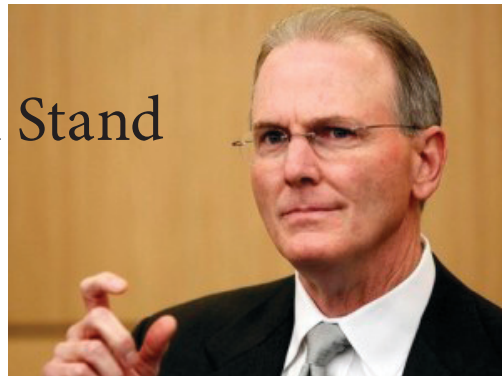
Still on the horizon is the result of the latest merger yet unfinished: United and Continental. Stories abound and even though the cultural difference may not be as distinct, there are expectations, perceptions of entitlement and historical differences (read SCABS) that add to the seemingly simple yet so complicated concept of merging working groups of all types. That will be an interesting story to tell at some point.

I'm sure next year when it's time to sit back and reflect on the past twelve months we'll have more stories and examples of how things in this business we love have changed and how others have remained pretty much like they were. That for sure will never change. ✈



By D. MICHAEL LINDSAY  
Published: November 30, 2011

## A C.E.O.'s Moral Stand



It seems that every week we hear of a C.E.O. who earned millions from a golden parachute after demonstrating poor business judgment or cutting thousands of jobs with no financial downside for executives. These stories feed the fires of the Occupy movement growing all over the world.

But on Tuesday, we heard something different. American Airlines, once the largest airline in the United States, declared bankruptcy. This is not surprising news for the beleaguered airline industry; what is different is what is emerging from the wreckage. Gerard J. Arpey, American's chief executive officer and chairman, resigned and stepped away with no severance package and nearly worthless stock holdings. He split with his employer of 30 years out of a belief that bankruptcy was morally wrong, and that he could not, in good conscience, lead an organization that followed this familiar path.

Things have been tough for the so-called legacy carriers since the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978, as they have been pulled in opposing directions by customer demands for lower fares and labor demands for higher wages. The events of 9/11 further shook up the industry, closely followed by the oil crisis and the recent recession.

Since Congress deregulated the industry, it has been common for airlines to claim bankruptcy and regroup under the temporary shelter provided by Chapter 11. Continental filed in 1983 and 1990, United in 2002, US Airways in 2002 and 2004, and Delta and Northwest in 2005. In each situation, bankruptcy gave the airlines the chance to cancel their debt, get rid of responsibility for employee pensions and renegotiate more favorable contracts with labor unions.

For a long time, Mr. Arpey voiced his opposition to bankruptcy, but the airline struggled because of it. "Our bankrupt colleagues all made net profits, good net profits last year, and we didn't," Mr. Arpey told me a few months ago. "And you can mathematically pinpoint that to termination of pensions, termination of retiree medical benefits, changes of work rules, changes in the labor contracts. That puts a lot of pressure on our company, not to be ignored."

Over the last eight years, I have interviewed hundreds of senior executives for a major academic study on leadership, including six airline C.E.O.'s. Mr. Arpey

stood out among the 550 people I talked with not because he believed that business had a moral dimension, but because of his firm conviction that the C.E.O. must carefully attend to those considerations, even if doing so blunts financial success or negates organizational expediency. For him, it is an obligation that goes with the corner office.

When we discussed the prospect of bankruptcy at American he spoke with an almost defiant tone of the company's commitment to its employees and holders of its stock and debt. "I believe it's important to the character of the company and its ultimate long-term success to do your very best to honor those commitments," he said. "It is not good thinking — either at the corporate level or at the personal level — to believe you can simply walk away from your circumstances."

But after being the only major airline with a net loss last year and with dismal prospects ahead, American joined the rest of its major competitors when the board declared bankruptcy. The board requested that Mr. Arpey stay on, but as he wrote to American's employees, "executing the board's plan will require not only a re-evaluation of every aspect of our business, but also the leadership of a new chairman and C.E.O. who will bring restructuring experience and a different perspective to the process."

Mr. Arpey may be the only airline C.E.O. who regarded bankruptcy not simply as a financial tool, but more important, as a moral failing. In a day and age of outrageous executive compensation and protest movements justifiably angered at the self-serving nature of the 1 percent, it is refreshing to see a C.E.O. leave a position with honor even as he loses a long-fought battle.

Protesters at Occupy Wall Street are mad because, to them, financial considerations are inherently moral. It is a troubling commentary on American business that perhaps the last C.E.O. who agreed with them no longer calls the shots for one of the nation's most venerable companies.

*D. Michael Lindsay, the president of Gordon College, is writing a book about executive leadership.*



# Pinal Airpark: A Saga of Planes, Aviation Expertise and National Security

By Bill Norman

As a candidate for subterfuge and secrecy in the interest of national security, Pinal Airpark, located 28 miles northwest of downtown Tucson, gets high marks.

Many Tucsonans may not even be aware that the 1,600-acre facility exists, although its commanding visual array of big aircraft and airplane hangars is plainly visible only three miles west of I-10, south of Picacho Peak.

Today the facility is an enormous complex dominated by Evergreen Maintenance Center, Inc. (EMC), which bills itself as the world's largest commercial aircraft maintenance, repair and storage facility. An assortment of U.S. government agencies have facilities on the fringes of EMC, many of whom have responsibilities connected with national security.

For years, the park was rumored to be a thinly disguised aircraft operation of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the Vietnam conflict, and for good reason. But the story begins long before that.

In 1942, Del Webb and Sundt construction companies built the facility, then known as Marana Army Air Field, to train U.S. Army Air Force pilots for WWII.

The Air Force went away in 1948 and deeded the site to Pinal County, which leased it to an assortment of companies, several of whom continued in the U.S. military pilot-training business, for the next 12 years.

In 1960, Sonora Flying Service, out of Columbia, Calif., was granted a 15-year lease to the site. Sonora's operations included converting old military aircraft to firefighting tankers (they dropped fire-retardant chemicals on wildfires) for the U.S. Forest Service. At any given time, Sonora had dozens of old military aircraft in plain view of the public eye, taking off, landing and being worked on.

In 1961, a company named Intermountain Aviation filed articles of incorporation in Phoenix. It operated at the airpark for another 14 years.

Intermountain was a CIA "front" company. Given that Sonora already had many old military planes scooting around the airpark for legitimate Forest Service contract operations, the presence of other new arrivals, albeit for Intermountain's paramilitary operation, probably was no reason for raised eyebrows.

Another company, Air America, was the best known of the CIA's covert air operations in Southeast Asia. The Air America Association on its website [www.airamerica.org](http://www.airamerica.org) tracks the history of CIA air operations from 1950 to 1975.

It describes how in the early 1950s the CIA quietly purchased Civil Air Transport (CAT), an airline originally started up in China in 1946.

Through a holding company named the American

Airdale Corporation, the CIA acquired all CAT cargo-carrying assets. Then the agency reorganized Airdale as Pacific Corporation, which in turn became a holding company for an assortment of CIA-front air operations including Air America, Civil Air Transport, Inc., Southern Air Transport and Intermountain Aviation.

### **The Intermountain Years**

From 1961 to 1975, Intermountain Aviation was very busy with CIA aircraft support operations at the airpark.

Robert E. Roberts, former president of Sonora Flying Service, which later morphed into Intermountain, said in an interview with the Portland Oregonian in 1988 that Intermountain's primary activities at the airpark were modifying airplanes and developing new parachutes and jump techniques for covert operations overseas.

On paper, Roberts was listed as president of Intermountain until 1965. But he told the Oregonian that after a brief period he became uncomfortable with some of Intermountain's activities and decided to focus on mining in New Mexico, although the 15-year airpark lease apparently was still in his name.

One of the advantages of Intermountain deciding to locate at the airpark, apart from hangars and an airfield already being in place, included its proximity to the "boneyard" (the Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Center) at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. Thousands of old military aircraft were and are stored there, and served as a ready supply of planes that Intermountain could modify for clandestine use for other CIA air operations in places such as Southeast Asia.

Air America planes ferried U.S. agents, foreign agents and cargo and dropped them by parachute into countries such as Laos, where combat operations against Communist forces were fully, though unofficially, underway even as U.S. troops openly battled Communist forces only a short distance away in South Vietnam. When pilots dropped food and provisions to friendly forces, they referred to their cargo as rice. When they dropped guns or ammo, they called it "hard rice."

Given that Sonora already had many old military planes scooting around the airpark for legitimate Forest Service contract operations, the presence of other new arrivals, albeit for Intermountain's paramilitary operations, probably was no reason for raised eyebrows.

In a book titled *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet*, by Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, the authors contend that Intermountain Aviation was skilled at developing novel aerial-support techniques. One of those was the Fulton Skyhook, a device that permitted a low flying aircraft to snatch a person or cargo package off the

ground and winch it aboard the plane.

The Skyhook was demonstrated for news media at the airpark in 1962 when a B-17 flying low at about 125 mph scooped up a dummy. The demonstration ostensibly was meant to show how admirably the device could rescue a firefighter who'd gotten into a tight spot on otherwise inaccessible terrain.

That same year, though, the CIA used a very similar (if not the same) plane and device to whisk two U.S. agents off an ice floe above the Arctic Circle, where they had been extracting information from an abandoned Soviet research and submarine tracking station.

### **The Forest Service Connection**

Sonora Flying Service, through its contract to convert old military planes into tankers, had established a good relationship with the U.S. Forest Service even before the company came to what is now called Pinal Airpark.

Roberts, with Sonora Flying Service, maintained that one of the people who first approached him about letting his company become involved with the CIA was a veteran CIA agent named Garfield "Gar" Thorsrud.

In the book *Feet to the Fire: CIA Covert Operations in Indonesia: 1957-58*, also authored by Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, Thorsrud is identified as a college student and seasonal Forest Service smokejumper out of the U.S. Forest Service Smokejumper Base at Missoula, Montana, who was recruited by the CIA in 1951. The book describes an assortment of CIA Southeast Asia operations in which Thorsrud played a prominent role.

When Roberts, in 1965, grew fidgety about his ostensible role as president of Intermountain, Thorsrud openly was acknowledged as the company's head man, although Roberts identified him as the true boss from Intermountain's start-up.

### **Smokejumper Expertise**

Forest Service smokejumpers then and now have been acknowledged as the go-to professionals when it comes to parachuting down into terrain of all types, including the most heavily forested, steep and rocky.

Many sources have suggested that the CIA sought out smokejumpers to hire as uniquely qualified drop-in agents for its covert operations worldwide. When not jumping, many served as "kickers"—people who would push cargo out of the plane to supply forces on the ground.

Bill Joslin, an Arizonan now retired from the Forest Service, was a Missoula trained smokejumper for years, beginning in the 1970s. He readily acknowledges that the CIA came shopping for recruits when he worked



Many Boeing 747s from many different owners and countries are in storage at Pinal Airpark as part of Evergreen Maintenance Center's operations. Some of them may change hands several times, depending on the market, without ever lifting off.

there. He also remembers Thorsrud. When asked whether the agency openly spread the word that it was hiring, he laughed. "Well, it wasn't exactly a job fair, but we always got the word when they were in town and doing interviews."

Joslin said he applied for a job with the agency in the mid-1980s, but wasn't selected. He was close to 40 at the time and may have been considered too long in the tooth.

### **The Ascension of Evergreen**

In 1975 (when the Vietnam conflict ended), the CIA decided to unload Intermountain. It found a taker in Evergreen Helicopters, Inc., which bought out Intermountain and assumed its lease of the airpark.

In the mid-1970s, near the time it took over operations at the airpark, Evergreen also acquired a Missoula, Montana, company named Johnson Flying Service, and in doing so, acquired Johnson's airline operating certificate. Johnson was well known as a contractor to the U.S. Forest Service that often flew smokejumpers (including "Gar" Thorsrud and Bill Joslin) to fight wildfires. Obtaining an airline operating certificate was the logical next step for Evergreen to grow beyond its status as a simple helicopter company.

In 1976, Gar Thorsrud and others formed a new company called Sierra Pacific Airlines that still operates today. At first it flew out of Pinal Airpark. Today its planes lift off from Tucson International Airport.

In 1982, Evergreen got a 25-year extension of its lease, from Pinal County.

In 2007, Evergreen got another 25-year extension of its lease, from Pinal County.

### **What's Happening Today**

Evergreen Maintenance Center is part of Evergreen International Aviation, Inc., in McMinnville, Oregon. The parent organization, now a far cry from its early helicopter company days, also has other sub-companies that deal in areas such as global air freight, aircraft and

material sales, and helicopter and small aircraft services. The corporation identifies its clients as public, private and governmental.

The author of this article gained access to Pinal Airpark after being diverted through Evergreen's public relations firm in Scottsdale. Interviews with Evergreen management are carefully controlled by the PR company. Photos, when permitted, must not include the names or logos of airline companies and countries that have some 200 jets stored, row upon row, at the site.

Sometimes, when driving past aircraft with blacked-out names or in proximity to the other government agencies that fly out of the airpark, Evergreen staff or the PR outfit, when asked about them, respond simply, "We can't talk about that."

They aren't so reticent when it comes to some of the more obvious and positive Evergreen air ops such as its group of Supertanker 747s that have been retrofitted as tankers for fighting fires and are available for hire. The company is proud of its three airplane maintenance hangars, including one large enough to engulf a 747. They're very proud of the fact that they have one of the very few FAA Class IV Unlimited Airframe certifications, which means Evergreen can perform heavy maintenance on the largest aircraft.

### **What Does It All Mean?**

Evergreen's reluctance to discuss much of its clientele and operations can easily be attributed to protection of its business interests, a practice that's common to many corporations. The company came on to the airpark scene as an immediate successor to a CIA operation, but it's a demonstrated fact that Uncle Sam had learned its covert agency-owned air support operations in the States were rapidly losing their covertness as the government's activities became more transparent.

The CIA has not gone out of business. It does have many options, including through contracts with private companies and corporations, for carrying out the aviation aspects of its efforts on behalf of national security. ✈

## Pinal Airpark



Big jets, with many different histories, are stacked row upon row in storage at Pinal Airpark today.

The Pinal Airpark story was originally published in *The Desert Leaf*, a monthly publication serving the Catalina Foothills and Tanque Verde valley communities of Tucson, Arizona. It is reprinted here exactly as published.

My old Boston crash pad roomie, Pat Donlan, sent this story to me over a year ago in clipping form. He will no doubt be surprised to see it here, assuming, I'm sure, that I just tossed it. Not so. I just wanted to wait until it appeared online to avoid having to retype the whole thing. If, like myself, you kind of always wondered what was going on there—now we know.

At the same time, Pat sent me these photos of a military cemetery with this caption;

**"NAME THIS MILITARY CEMETERY AND ITS LOCATION AND WIN TWO FREE ADMISSIONS TO THE NEXT REUNION."**

What he failed to tell me in the email was exactly who was going to pay for those two "free" admissions. If you know where this cemetery is you'll have to negotiate the deal with him. – *Ed*.



# Seattle Christmas Party

December 8, 2011



Walt & Jan Mills, Nadine & Sterling Bentsen



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Lnda Peterson, Pat Rieman, Darlene Jevne, Chuck Carlson, Bill Stocker



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Marv Peterson, Pam Beckman, Chuck Carlson



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Joan & Bille Fields



All photos by Doug Peterson

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**11:00am**  
Congregate at dock side just south of downtown Stillwater.

**11:30am**  
Boat sails **PROMPTLY.**

**Thursday  
June  
14th**



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**👉 Reservation DEADLINE is June 8th. 👈**



By Barry Schiff

Photo: John Bordner

It's a safe bet that most pilots are familiar with the author. For those who are not, he has flown more than 310 types of aircraft, has written numerous books and more than 1500 articles for a hundred aviation magazines, received numerous awards for aviation safety and holds five world speed records. In other words, he is an authority when it comes to aviation. He retired from TWA in 1998 after 38 years in the cockpit, which means he is of our vintage. All of this may explain how he managed to wrangle a flight in a U2.

Maj. Dean Neeley is in the forward, lower cockpit of the Lockheed U-2ST, a two-place version of the U-2S, a high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft that the Air Force calls "Dragon Lady." His voice on the intercom breaks the silence. "Do you know that you're the highest person in the world?" He explains that I am in the higher of the two cockpits and that there are no other U-2s airborne right now. "Astronauts don't count," he says, "They're out of this world."

We are above 70,000 feet and still climbing slowly as the aircraft becomes lighter. The throttle has been at its mechanical limit since takeoff, and the single General Electric F118-GE-101 turbofan engine sips fuel so slowly at this altitude that consumption is less than when

idling on the ground. Although true airspeed is that of a typical jetliner, indicated airspeed registers only in double digits.

I cannot detect the curvature of the Earth, although some U-2 pilots claim that they can. The sky at the horizon is hazy white but transitions to midnight blue at our zenith. It seems that if we were much higher, the sky would become black enough to see stars at noon. The Sierra Nevada, the mountainous spine of California, has lost its glory, a mere corrugation on the Earth. Lake Tahoe looks like a fishing hole, and rivers have become rivulets. Far below, "high flying" jetliners etch contrails over Reno, Nevada, but we are so high above these aircraft that they cannot be seen.

I feel mild concern about the bailout light on the instrument panel and pray that Neeley does not have reason to turn it on. At this altitude I also feel a sense of insignificance and isolation; earthly concerns seem trivial. This flight is an epiphany, a life-altering experience.

I cannot detect air noise through the helmet of my pressure suit. I hear only my own breathing, the hum of avionics through my headset and, inexplicably, an occasional, shallow moan from the engine, as if it were gasping for air. Atmospheric pressure is only an inch of mercury, less than 4 percent of sea-level pressure. Air density and engine power are similarly low. The stratospheric wind is predictably light, from the southwest at 5 kt, and the outside air temperature is minus 61 degrees Celsius.

Neeley says that he has never experienced weather that could not be topped in a U-2, and I am reminded of the classic transmission made by John Glenn during Earth orbit in a Mercury space capsule: “Another thousand feet, and we’ll be on top.”

Although not required, we remain in contact with Oakland Center while in the Class E airspace that begins at Flight Level 600. The U-2’s Mode C transponder, however, can indicate no higher than FL600. When other U-2s are in the area, pilots report their altitudes, and ATC keeps them separated by 5,000 feet and 10 miles.

Our high-flying living quarters are pressurized to 29,500 feet, but 100-percent oxygen supplied only to our faces lowers our physiological altitude to about 8,000 feet. A pressurization-system failure would cause our suits to instantly inflate to maintain a pressure altitude of 35,000 feet, and the flow of pure oxygen would provide a physiological altitude of 10,000 feet.

The forward and aft cockpits are configured almost identically. A significant difference is the down-looking periscope/driftmeter in the center of the forward instrument panel. It is used to precisely track over specific ground points during reconnaissance, something that otherwise would be impossible from high altitude. The forward cockpit also is equipped with a small side-view mirror extending into the air stream. It is used to determine if the U-2 is generating a telltale contrail when over hostile territory.

Considering its 103-foot wingspan and resultant roll dampening, the U-2 maneuvers surprisingly well at altitude; the controls are light and nicely harmonized. Control wheels (not sticks) are used, however, perhaps because aileron forces are heavy at low altitude. A yaw string (like those used on sailplanes) above each canopy silently admonishes those who allow the aircraft to slip

or skid when maneuvering. The U-2 is very much a stick-and-rudder airplane, and I discover that slipping can be avoided by leading turn entry and recovery with slight rudder pressure.

When approaching its service ceiling, the U-2’s maximum speed is little more than its minimum. This marginal difference between the onset of stall buffet and Mach buffet is known as coffin corner, an area warranting caution. A stall/spin sequence can cause control loss from which recovery might not be possible when so high, and an excessive Mach number can compromise structural integrity. Thankfully, an autopilot with Mach hold is provided.

The U-2 has a fuel capacity of 2,915 gallons of thermally stable jet fuel distributed among four wing tanks. It is unusual to discuss turbine fuel in gallons instead of pounds, but the 1950s-style fuel gauges in the U-2 indicate in gallons. Most of the other flight instruments seem equally antiquated.



### I train at “The Ranch”

Preparation for my high flight began the day before at Beale Air Force Base (a.k.a. The Ranch), which is north of Sacramento, California, and was where German prisoners of war were interned during World War II. It is home to the 9th Reconnaissance Wing, which is responsible for worldwide U-2 operations, including those aircraft based in Cyprus; Italy; Saudi Arabia; and South Korea.

After passing a physical exam (whew!), I took a short, intensive course in high-altitude physiology and use of the pressure suit. The 27-pound Model S1034 “pilot’s protective assembly” is manufactured by David Clark (the headset people) and is the same as the one used by astronauts during shuttle launch and reentry.

After being measured for my \$150,000 spacesuit, I spent an hour in the egress trainer. It provided no



comfort to learn that pulling up mightily on the handle between my legs would activate the ejection seat at any altitude or airspeed. When the handle is pulled, the control wheels go fully forward, explosives dispose of the canopy, cables attached to spurs on your boots pull your feet aft, and you are rocketed into space. You could then free fall in your inflated pressure suit for 54,000 feet or more. I was told that “the parachute opens automatically at 16,500 feet, or you get a refund.”

I later donned a harness and virtual-reality goggles to practice steering a parachute to landing. After lunch, a crew assisted me into a pressure suit in preparation for my visit to the altitude chamber. There I became reacquainted with the effects of hypoxia and was subjected to a sudden decompression that elevated the chamber to 73,000 feet. The pressure suit inflated as advertised and just as suddenly I became the Michelin man. I was told that it is possible to fly the U-2 while puffed up but that it is difficult.

A beaker of water in the chamber boiled furiously to demonstrate what would happen to my blood if I were exposed without protection to ambient pressure above 63,000 feet.

After a thorough preflight briefing the next morning, Neeley and I put on long johns and UCDs (urinary collection devices), were assisted into our pressure suits, performed a leak check (both kinds), and settled into a pair of reclining lounge chairs for an hour of breathing pure oxygen. This displaces nitrogen in the blood to prevent decompression sickness (the bends) that could occur during ascent.

During this “pre-breathing,” I felt as though I were in a Ziploc bag-style cocoon and anticipated the possibility of claustrophobia. There was none, and I soon became comfortably acclimatized to my confinement.

We were in the aircraft an hour later. Preflight checks completed and engine started, we taxied to

Beale’s 12,000-foot-long runway. The single main landing gear is not steerable, differential braking is unavailable, and the dual tailwheels move only 6 degrees in each direction, so it takes a lot of concrete to maneuver on the ground. Turn radius is 189 feet, and I had to lead with full rudder in anticipation of all turns.

We taxied into position and came to a halt so that personnel could remove the safety pins from the outrigger wheels (called pogos) that prevent one wing tip or the other from scraping the ground. Lt. Col. Greg “Spanky” Barber, another U-2 pilot, circled the aircraft in a mobile command vehicle to give the aircraft a final exterior check.

I knew that the U-2 is overpowered at sea level. It has to be for its engine, normally aspirated like every other turbine engine, to have enough power remaining to climb above 70,000 feet. Also, we weighed only 24,000 pounds (maximum allowable is 41,000 pounds) and were departing into a brisk headwind. Such knowledge did not prepare me for what followed.

The throttle was fully advanced and would remain that way until the beginning of descent. The 17,000 pounds of thrust made it feel as though I had been shot from a cannon. Within two to three seconds and 400 feet of takeoff roll, the wings flexed, the pogos fell away, and we entered a nose-up attitude of almost 45 degrees at a best-angle-of-climb airspeed of 100 kt. Initial climb rate was 9,000 fpm.

We were still over the runway and through 10,000 feet less than 90 seconds from brake release. One need not worry about a flameout after takeoff in a U-2. There either is enough runway to land straight ahead or enough altitude (only 1,000 feet is needed) to circle the airport for a dead-stick approach and landing.

The bicycle landing gear creates little drag and has no limiting airspeed, so there was no rush to tuck away the wheels. (The landing gear is not retracted at all when in the traffic pattern shooting touch and goes.)

We passed through 30,000 feet five minutes after lift-off and climb rate steadily decreased until above 70,000 feet, when further climb occurred only as the result of fuel burn.

### On final approach

Dragon Lady is still drifting toward the upper limits of the atmosphere at 100 to 200 fpm and will continue to do so until it is time to descend. It spends little of its life at a given altitude. Descent begins by retarding the throttle to idle and lowering the landing gear. We raise the spoilers, deploy the speed brakes (one on each side of the aft fuselage), and engage the gust alleviation system. This raises both ailerons 7.5 degrees above their normal

neutral point and deflects the wing flaps 6.5 degrees upward. This helps to unload the wings and protect the airframe during possible turbulence in the lower atmosphere.

Gust protection is needed because the Dragon Lady is like a China doll; she cannot withstand heavy gust and maneuvering loads. Strength would have required a heavier structure, and the U-2's designer, Clarence "Kelly" Johnson, shaved as much weight as possible—which is why there are only two landing gear legs instead of three. Every pound saved resulted in a 10-foot increase in ceiling.

With everything possible hanging and extended, the U-2 shows little desire to go down. It will take 40 minutes to descend to traffic pattern altitude but we needed only half that time climbing to altitude.

During this normal descent, the U-2 covers 37 nm for each 10,000 of altitude lost. When clean and at the best glide speed of 109 kt, it has a glide ratio of 28:1. It is difficult to imagine ever being beyond glide range of a suitable airport except when over large bodies of water or hostile territory. Because there is only one fuel quantity gauge, and it shows only the total remaining, it is difficult to know whether fuel is distributed evenly, which is important when landing a U-2. A low-altitude stall is performed to determine which is the heavier wing, and some fuel is then transferred from it to the other.

We are on final approach with flaps at 35 degrees (maximum is 50 degrees) in a slightly nose-down attitude. The U-2 is flown with a heavy hand when slow, while being careful not to overcontrol. Speed over the threshold is only 1.1 VSO (75 kt), very close to stall. More speed would result in excessive floating.

I peripherally see Barber accelerating the 140-mph, stock Chevrolet Camaro along the runway as he joins in tight formation with our landing aircraft. I hear him on the radio calling out our height (standard practice for all U-2 landings). The U-2 must be close to normal touch-down attitude at a height of one foot before the control wheel is brought firmly aft to stall the wings and plant the tailwheels on the concrete. The feet remain active on the pedals, during which time it is necessary to work diligently to keep the wings level. A roll spoiler on each wing lends a helping hand when its respective aileron is raised more than 13 degrees.

The aircraft comes to rest, a wing tip falls to the ground, and crewmen appear to reattach the pogs for taxiing.

Landing a U-2 is notoriously challenging, especially for those who have never flown taildraggers or sailplanes. It can be like dancing with a lady or wrestling

a dragon, depending on wind and runway conditions. Maximum allowable crosswind is 15 kt.

The U-2 was first flown by Tony Levier in August 1955, at Groom Lake (Area 51), Nevada. The aircraft was then known as Article 341, an attempt by the Central Intelligence Agency to disguise the secret nature of its project. Current U-2s are 40 percent larger and much more powerful than the one in which Francis Gary Powers was downed by a missile over the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960.

The Soviets referred to the U-2 as the "Black Lady of Espionage" because of its spy missions and mystique. The age of its design, however, belies the sophistication of the sensing technology carried within. During U.S. involvement in Kosovo, for example, U-2s gathered and forwarded data via satellite to Intelligence at Beale AFB for instant analysis. The results were sent via satellite to battle commanders, who decided whether attack aircraft should be sent to the target. In one case, U-2 sensors detected enemy aircraft parked on a dirt road and camouflaged by thick, overhanging trees. Only a few minutes elapsed between detection and destruction. No other nation has this capability.

The U-2 long ago outlived predictions of its demise. It also survived its heir apparent, the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird. The fleet of 37 aircraft is budgeted to operate for another 20 years, but this could be affected by the evolution and effectiveness of unmanned aircraft.

After returning to Earth (physically and emotionally), I am escorted to the Heritage Room where 20 U-2 pilots join to share in the spirited celebration of my high flight. Many of them are involved in general aviation and some have their own aircraft.

The walls of this watering hole are replete with fascinating memorabilia about U-2 operations and history. Several plaques proudly list all who have ever soloed Dragon Lady. This group of 670 forms an elite and unusually close-knit cadre of dedicated airmen. ✈



*The author expresses his gratitude to Col. Eric Stoberg, Lt. Col. Greg Barber, Maj. Dean Neeley, and the men and women of the 9th Reconnaissance Wing for so graciously sharing their time and expertise.*

## My Own High Flights



By Gary Ferguson

Captain Schiff mentions in the previous article that he could not detect the curvature of the earth from those altitudes, "...although some U2 pilots claim that they can." It reminded me that I have been to those altitudes, even if ever so briefly. Seeing the curvature of the earth is one of the enduring memories of one of my two most memorable trips to the fringes of the atmosphere.

These flights were just two of several amazing things that my government paid me to do as a young Naval Aviator. In retrospect, it was mostly a matter of luck being in the right place at a time when aviation—and space travel—was making tremendous advances.

I joined my Navy squadron in December, 1963 with shiny new Ensign bars mere months after the F4H "Phantom II" had been introduced to the fleet. My assigned squadron, VF-31, had just transitioned to the F4 from the F3H "Demon." I was the "junior puke" pilot, and would remain so for almost half of my tour because it was a newly re-equipped squadron with no "turnover." Even though my rank would increase, not until my final year or so with the squadron would I gain much seniority.

At the time, the F4 was the hottest fighter the Navy, or anybody else, had. In 1959 a stripped-down prototype had reached a record altitude of 98,557 feet. Later aircraft set many time-to-climb records, and, in August of 1961, set a low altitude speed record that still stands. Perhaps not the most elegant of aircraft—it was nicknamed accordingly—but it was a powerful brute.

At some point in my early Navy career all of the squadron pilots and RIOs (Radar Intercept Officers) were fitted with what I assumed were "leftover" Mercury pressure suits—the same kind that John Glenn wore on his historic flight. It didn't occur to me until later that they may have been rejects! Who was I to question such things? I was just happy to be where I was, doing what I was doing. (That's me in the photo.)

Now that we had our new suits the CO decreed that we should train in them by trying to replicate some of the early F4 records; in particular, the altitude record.

Anyone who flies knows that this type aircraft can never maintain such altitudes—these were all ballistic

climbs. The profile went like this: burn the fuel to a pre-determined level, climb to the tropopause and accelerate level to as fast as the aircraft would go (as I recall, in this case it was right at Mach 2), do a 4G pull to 45 degrees nose-up to 50,000 feet, re-accelerate level to max speed again and do another 4G pull to 45 degrees nose-up and hold that attitude until she started down, being careful not to put any control inputs that weren't necessary, considering the restrictions of a pumped up pressure suit.

As we neared the apogee of our profile the four-stage afterburners quietly snuffed out, one stage at a time, and the engines spooled down producing very little thrust. At the same time the ink black of space was pronounced and the curve of the planet could plainly be seen. The aircraft was more "flying brick" than anything aerodynamic, wallowing ever so gently, due to slight differences in thrust, while thankfully pointing in the correct general direction. We managed to squeak over the top just a touch over 76,000 feet.

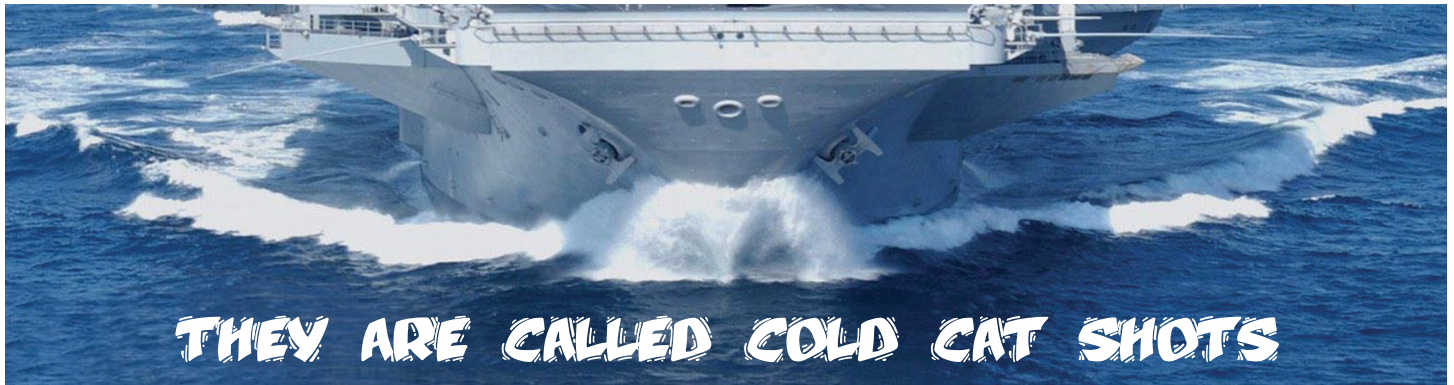
My second foray into the upper reaches of the atmosphere was more challenging and decidedly more exciting. The exercise required my squadron to intercept and destroy a supersonic "enemy" drone coming downrange from somewhere along the Eastern Seaboard toward us defenders aboard the USS Saratoga operating in the area around "Rosy Roads" (Roosevelt Roads NS, Puerto Rico). The training derived from the previously described sortie was put to good use there.

Several aircraft launched for the exercise, but, as usual, I was tail end Charlie—still the junior guy, with little chance of getting in on the action. We were armed with Sparrow missiles which required our onboard radar to lock onto the target, which then reflected a signal for the missile to track for the kill. The closure rate between target and aircraft would be in excess of Mach 3.5, meaning that we had better damn sure have been somewhere out front of the target. The drone was at an advertised 80,000 feet. Ship's radar got us in the general area. It was up to my RIO to acquire the target and keep it locked on.

One by one those ahead of us were unable to make the kill, either because they couldn't get in position, couldn't get a lock-on or their missiles wouldn't arm. We were headed for the target at Mach 2 and 50,000 feet once again and got a radar lock. From that point I followed the radar guidance, requiring familiar G forces in the pull up and when in range fired the Sparrow at 63,000 feet. As it left, some of the missile exhaust trail got ingested into the starboard intake, causing a few violent hammering compressor stalls. But we were both able to watch the exhaust trail all the way to the spectacular "Splash" of the target as we cleared 68,000 feet.

Heady stuff for any Naval Aviator, young or old. ✪





*Jerry “Turkey” Tucker was with the Blue Angels during the last years of the F4s then stayed on for the first two years of the A4. During Viet Nam he flew F8Us. He’s now a senior Captain for Southwest [presumably retired by now]. Here’s his incredible true story of falling off a carrier while inside his aircraft.*

It wasn’t just all fun and great looking chicks!

Another combat day in Viet Nam and Turkey was waiting to be launched. There was a problem with the aircraft in front of him, so they pulled it off the cat and put Turkey in his place. He wound it up, gave the salute and waited for the launch. He felt it start to go, then nothing. His aircraft was moving down the deck. But no acceleration. He pulled the power and was on the brakes. Shut it down—then found himself teetering over the leading edge of the flight deck. He felt the Crusader rocking with each movement of the ship as he talked to the Air Boss. Air Boss told him to stay in the cockpit, that they were trying to hook his aircraft to a tug and that several sailors were trying to hold his tail down to change his tilting aircraft’s center of gravity until it was safely hooked up.

The ship rocked with another swell. And over he went, falling down toward the water below. As it fell, the aircraft rolled on its side. Turkey recalls that he could now see the ship’s bow plowing through the water. He didn’t know which was worse, seeing the water coming up at him, or seeing the carrier slicing through the water toward him. When he’d been teetering over the bow, he’d thought of ejecting. However, he was worried about being run over by the ship. But now he was in the water and he felt sick as the bow of the carrier hit his F8U. He was sure he was a member of the living dead. And was just along for the ride.

He remembers the hit, and the terrible ‘snap’ as the ship’s bow broke his aircraft in two, just behind his cockpit. Turkey now realized that he was still alive and

that he was sealed inside the Crusader’s cockpit module. The water was so clear [that] he could see all of the ship’s bottom as he was bounced and bobbed along. He remembers every bob and hit along the ship’s bottom as chunks of his cockpit’s plexiglas were gouged out by the barnacles on the carrier’s hull.

He was thinking he might come out of this alive, as fear struck him again when he saw the ship’s screws spinning like hell. And he was heading straight for them. The sound of the screws was terrifying. He now visualized being chewed up as he felt a sudden surge of speed bringing him closer and closer to the screws, knowing he was being sucked into the vortex created by them. He continued accelerating and watched in horror as he passed through the screws themselves. Miraculously, he was unharmed.

Disoriented and rolling violently in the screws wake, he suddenly saw the sun and noticed he was bobbing on the ocean’s surface. He said his heart rate was so fast he could feel his heart thumping in his chest. He tried to do something to get out but he couldn’t control his shaking hands. He tried several times to blow the canopy but didn’t have the hand coordination needed. Until his third try.

He blew the canopy and immediately realized he’d made a mistake as the cockpit capsule filled with water. Then sank. Going down fast. About 35 to 40 feet beneath the surface, he extracted himself from the cockpit. When he got to the surface he was greeted by a helicopter and a rescue swimmer who jumped out of the helicopter to save him. During the helicopter ride, Turkey said he couldn’t thank God enough, and praised the Lord all the way back to the ship.

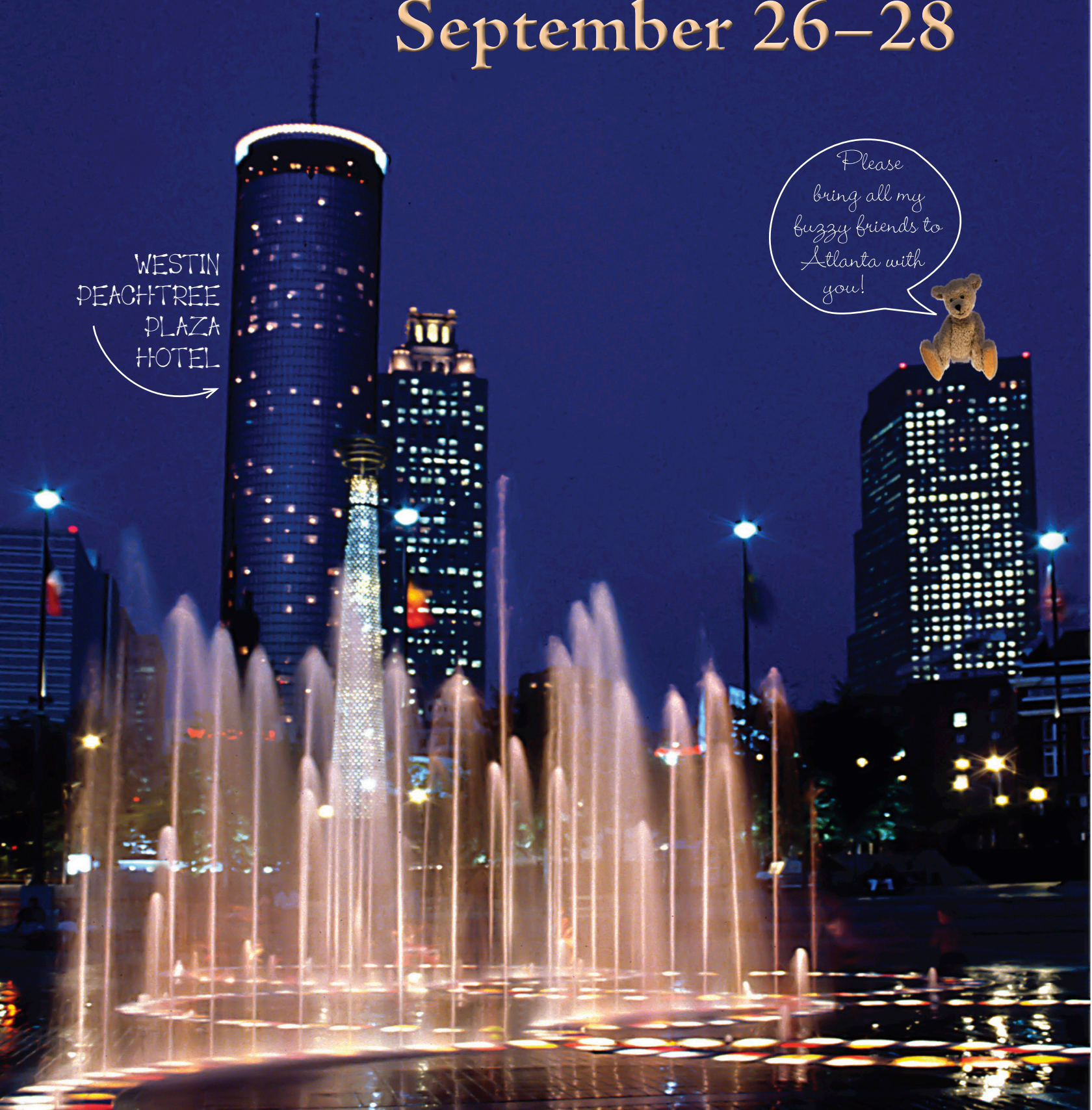
They got him on the ship and to the Doc. Turkey recalls a comical but serious moment when the first thing that came out of his mouth was: “You can bet your sweet ass that next time I won’t blow that f\_\_\_ canopy!” Like one day all of this might happen to him again, right? ✪

# ALL ROADS LEAD TO ATLANTA IN 2012

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Rowdy Yates, an Atlanta commuter for most, if not all, of his career is the “Reunion Wrangler” for this year’s Reunion, and he has planned a dandy.

Most of the activities take place right in the heart of downtown and we’ll be staying at **The Westin Peachtree Plaza** hotel right on Peachtree Street. All of the tours except for the **Delta Air Transport Heritage Museum** are within walking distance, but there will be shuttles for those who may need them.

We will have lunch under the wing of the famous employee-purchased B767 while at the Delta Museum. As always, we’ll have the President’s Reception with heavy hors d’oeuvres the first evening and the Banquet on the final evening.

MARTA, Atlanta’s rapid transit light rail leaves directly from the airport and stops at Peachtree Station a half block from the hotel.

It’s important to note that there are some stringent deadlines and penalties in order to control contract costs, which helps keep the fees reasonable. Pay attention!

The Westin direct web site (below) is now available to book your room. If you book by phone be sure to call the hotel directly to get the group rate, not the universal Westin number: **404.659.1400**

<http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/retirednorthwestpilotsasn>



## The Tours:

- Delta Air Transport Heritage Museum
- Georgia Aquarium
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**HOTEL: \$119/NIGHT**  
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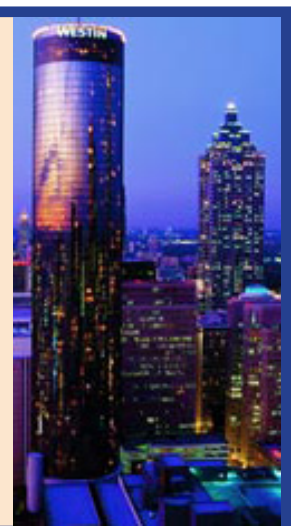
### REGISTRATION

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# Christmas Party



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Tim Olsen, Ed Johnson



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Charlie & Kathryn Horihan



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Bill Marchassault, Doug Wenborg



Joel Long & daughter-in-law



Laurie Fitzer, Jacqueline Pegelow,  
Barbara Vega



Mike & Michele Garrison



Marion & Dean Middlestaedt



# I FELL 15,000 FEET AND LIVED

By Cliff Judkins



“Jud, you’re on fire, get out of there!” Needless to say that startling command got my attention. As you will read in this report, this was just the beginning of my problems! It had all started in the brilliant sunlight 20,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean as I nudged my F-8 Crusader jet into position behind the lumbering, deep-bellied refueling plane. After a moment of jockeying for position, I made the connection and matched my speed to that of the slowpoke tanker. I made the graceful task of plugging into the trailing fuel conduit so they could pump fuel into my tanks.

This in-flight refueling process was necessary, and routine, because the F-8 could not hold enough fuel to fly from California to Hawaii. This routine mission was labeled “Trans-Pac,” meaning Flying Airplanes across the Pacific. This had been going on for years.

Soon, after plugging-in to the tanker, my fuel gauges stirred, showing that all was well. In my cockpit, I was relaxed and confident. As I was looking around, I was struck for an instant by the eeriness of the scene: here I was, attached, like an unwanted child, by an umbilicus to a gargantuan mother who was fleeing across the sky at 200 knots as though from some unnamed danger. Far below us was a broken layer of clouds that filtered the sun glare over the Pacific.

In my earphones, I heard Major Van Campen, our flight leader, chatting with Major D.K. Tooker who was on a Navy destroyer down below. Major Tooker had ejected from his aircraft the day before, in this same area, when his Crusader flamed out mysteriously during the same type of refueling exercise.

At that time no one knew why his aircraft had flamed out. We all supposed it had been some freak accident that sometimes happens with no explanation. One thing we knew for sure, it was not pilot error. This accident had to be some kind of mechanical malfunction, but what? Our squadron had a perfect safety record and was very disturbed because of the loss of an airplane the day before.

“Eleven minutes to mandatory disconnect point,” the tanker commander said. I checked my fuel gages again, everything appeared normal.

My thoughts were, “In a few hours I knew we’d all be having dinner at the Kaneohe Officers Club on Oahu, Hawaii. Then after a short rest, we’d continue our 6,000-mile trek to Atsugi, Japan, via Midway and Wake Island.” Our whole outfit—Marine All Weather Fighter Squadron 323—was being transferred to the Far East for a one-year period of operations.

“Nine minutes to mandatory disconnect.”

My fuel gages indicated that the tanks were almost full. I noticed that my throttle lever was sticking a little. That was unusual, because the friction lock was holding it in place and was loose enough. It grew tighter as I tried to manipulate it gently.

Then—thud! I heard the crack of an explosion.

I could see the rpm gauge unwinding and the tailpipe temperature dropping. The aircraft had lost power—the engine had quit running—this is a flameout!

I punched the mike button, and said, “This is Jud. I’ve got a flameout!”

Unfortunately, my radio was already dead; I was neither sending nor receiving anything via my radio.

I quickly disconnected from the tanker and nosed the aircraft over, into a shallow dive, to pick up some flying speed to help re-start the engine. I needed a few seconds to think.

I yanked the handle that extended the air-driven emergency generator, called the Ram Air Turbine (RAT), into the slipstream, hoping to get ignition for an air start. The igniter’s clicked gamely, and the rpm indicator started to climb slowly, as did the tailpipe temperature. This was a positive indication that a re-start was beginning. For one tantalizing moment I thought everything would be all right. But the rpm indicator hung uncertainly at 30 percent of capacity and refused to go any faster. This is not nearly enough power to maintain flight.

The fire warning light (pilots call it the panic light) blinked on. This is not a good sign. And to make matters worse, jet fuel poured over the canopy like water from a bucket. At the same instant, my radio came back on, powered by the emergency generator, and a great babble of voices burst through my earphones.

“Jud, you’re on fire, get out of there!”

Fuel was pouring out of my aircraft; from the tail-pipe; from the intake duct; from under the wings, and igniting behind me in a great awesome trail of fire.

The suddenness of the disaster overwhelmed me, and I thought: “This can’t be happening to me!”

The voices in my ears kept urging me to fire the ejection seat and abandon my aircraft.

I pressed my mike button and told the flight leader, “I’m getting out!”

I took my hands off the flight controls and reached above my head for the canvas curtain that would start the ejection sequence. I pulled it down hard over my face and waited for the tremendous kick in the pants, which would send me rocketing upward, free of the aircraft.

Nothing happened! The canopy, which was designed to jettison in the first part of the ejection sequence did not move. It was still in place and so was I.

My surprise lasted only a second. Then I reached down between my knees for the alternate ejection-firing handle, and gave it a vigorous pull. Again, nothing happened. This was very surprising. Both the primary and the secondary ejection procedures had failed and I was trapped in the cockpit of the burning aircraft.

The plane was now in a steep 60-degree dive. For the first time, I felt panic softening the edges of my determination. I knew that I had to do something or I was going to die in this sick airplane. There was no way out of it. With great effort, I pulled my thoughts together and tried to imagine some solution.

A voice in my earphones was shouting: “Ditch the plane! Ditch it in the ocean!”

It must have come from the tanker skipper or one of the destroyer commanders down below, because every jet pilot knows you can’t ditch a jet and survive. The plane would hit the water at a very high speed, flip over and sink like a stone and they usually explode on impact.

I grabbed the control stick and leveled the aircraft. Then I yanked the alternate handle again in an attempt to fire the canopy and start the ejection sequence, but still nothing happened. That left me with only one imaginable way out, which was to jettison the canopy manually and try to jump from the aircraft without aid of the ejection seat.

Was such a thing possible? I was not aware of any Crusader pilot who had ever used this World War II tactic to get out of a fast flying jet. I had been told that this procedure, of bailing out of a jet, was almost impossible. Yes, the pilot may get out of the airplane but the massive 20-foot high tail section is almost certain to strike

the pilot’s body and kill him before he falls free of the aircraft. My desperation was growing, and any scheme that offered a shred of success seemed better than riding that aircraft into the sea, which would surely be fatal.

I disconnected the canopy by hand, and with a great whoosh it disappeared from over my head never to be seen again. Before trying to get out of my confined quarters, I trimmed the aircraft to fly in a kind of sidelong skid: nose high and with the tail swung around slightly to the right.

Then I stood up in the seat and put both arms in front of my face. I was sucked out harshly from the airplane. I cringed as I tumbled outside the bird, expecting the tail to cut me in half, but thank goodness, that never happened! In an instant I knew I was out of there and uninjured.

I waited . . . and waited . . . until my body, hurtling through space, with the 225 knots of momentum started to decelerate. I pulled the D-ring on my parachute, which is the manual way to open the chute if the ejection seat does not work automatically. I braced myself for the opening shock. I heard a loud pop above me, but I was still falling very fast. As I looked up I saw that the small pilot chute had deployed. (This small chute is designed to keep the pilot from tumbling until the main chute opens.) But, I also noticed a sight that made me shiver with disbelief and horror! The main, 24 foot parachute was just flapping in the breeze and was tangled in its own shroud lines. It hadn’t opened! I could see the white folds neatly arranged, fluttering feebly in the air.

“This is very serious,” I thought.

Frantically, I shook the risers in an attempt to balloon the chute and help it open. It didn’t work. I pulled the bundle down toward me and wrestled with the shroud lines, trying my best to get the chute to open. The parachute remained closed. All the while I was falling like a rock toward the ocean.

I looked down hurriedly. There was still plenty of altitude remaining. I quickly developed a frustrating and sickening feeling. I wanted everything to halt while I collected my thoughts, but my fall seemed to accelerate. I noticed a ring of turbulence in the ocean. It looked like a big stone had been thrown in the water. It had white froth at its center; I finally realized this is where my plane had crashed in the ocean.

“Would I be next to crash?” were my thoughts!

Again, I shook the parachute risers and shroud lines, but the rushing air was holding my chute tightly in a bundle. I began to realize that I had done all I could reasonably do to open the chute and it was not going to open. I was just along for a brutal ride that may kill or severely injure me.

I descended rapidly through the low clouds. Now there was only clear sky between me and the ocean. This may [have been] my last view of the living. I have no recollection of positioning myself properly or even bracing for the impact. In fact, I don't remember hitting the water at all. At one instant I was falling very fast toward the ocean. The next thing I remember is hearing a shrill, high-pitched whistle that hurt my ears.

Suddenly, I was very cold. In that eerie half-world of consciousness, I thought, "Am I alive?" I finally decided, and not all at once, "Yes, I think I am . . . I am alive!"

The water helped clear my senses. But as I bounced around in the water I began coughing and retching. The Mae West around my waist had inflated. I concluded that the shrill whistling sound that I had heard was the gas leaving the CO2 cylinders as it was filling the life vest.

A sense of urgency gripped me, as though there were some task I ought to be performing. Then it dawned on me what it was. The parachute was tugging at me from under the water. It had finally billowed out (much too late) like some brobdingnagian Portuguese man-of-war. I tried reaching down for my hunting knife located in the knee pocket of my flight suit. I had to cut the shroud lines of the chute before it pulled me under for good.

This is when I first discovered that I was injured severely. The pain was excruciating. Was my back broken? I tried to arch it slightly and felt the pain again. I tried moving my feet, but that too was impossible. They were immobile, and I could feel the bones in them grating against each other.

There was no chance of getting that hunting knife, but I had another, smaller one in the upper torso of my flight suit. With difficulty, I extracted it and began slashing feebly at the spaghetti-like shroud line mess surrounding me.

Once free of the parachute, I began a tentative search for the survival pack. It contained a one-man life raft, some canned water, food, fishing gear, and dye markers. The dye markers colored the water around the pilot to aid the rescue team in finding a down[ed] airman. All of this survival equipment should have been strapped to my hips. It was not there. It had been ripped away from my body upon impact with the water.

"How long would the Mae West sustain me?" I wondered.

I wasn't sure, but I knew I needed help fast. The salt water that I had swallowed felt like an enormous rock in the pit of my gut. But worst of all, here I was, completely alone, 600 miles from shore, lolling in the deep troughs and crests of the Pacific Ocean. And my Crusader aircraft, upon which had been lavished such affectionate

attention, was sinking thousands of feet to the bottom of the ocean.

At that moment, I was struck by the incredible series of coincidences that had just befallen me. I knew that my misfortune had been a one-in-a-million occurrence. In review, I noted that the explosion aloft should not have happened. The ejection mechanism should have worked. The parachute should have opened. None of these incidents should have happened. I had just experienced three major catastrophes in one flight. My squadron had a perfect safety record. "Why was all of this happening?" was my thinking.

In about ten minutes I heard the drone of a propeller-driven plane. The pot-bellied, four-engine tanker came into view, flying very low. They dropped several green dye markers near me, and some smoke flares a short distance from my position. They circled overhead and dropped an inflated life raft about 50 yards from me.

I was so pleased and tried to swim toward the raft. When I took two strokes, I all most blacked out due to the intense pain in my body. The tanker circled again and dropped another raft closer to me, but there was no way for me to get to it, or in it, in my condition.

The water seemed to be getting colder, and a chill gripped me. I looked at my watch, but the so-called unbreakable crystal was shattered and the hands torn away. I tried to relax and surrender to the Pacific Ocean swells. I could almost have enjoyed being buoyed up to the crest of one swell and gently sliding into the trough of the next, but I was in such excruciating pain. I remembered the words W.C. Fields had chosen for his epitaph: "On the whole, I'd rather be in Philadelphia."

In about an hour, a Coast Guard amphibian plane flew over and circled me as though deciding whether or not to land. But the seas were high and I knew he couldn't make it. He came in very low and dropped another raft; this one had a 200 foot lanyard attached to it. The end of the lanyard landed barely ten feet from me. I paddled gently backward using only my arms. I caught hold of it and pulled the raft to me. Even before trying, I knew I couldn't crawl into the raft due to my physical condition. I was able to get a good grip on its side and hold on. This gave me a little security.

The Coast Guard amphibian gained altitude and flew off. I learned later that he headed for a squadron of minesweepers that was returning to the United States from a tour of the Western Pacific. He was unable to tune to their radio frequency for communications. But this ingenious pilot lowered a wire from his aircraft and dragged it across the bow of the minesweeper, the USS Embattle. The minesweeper captain understood the plea, and veered off at top speed in my direction.

I was fully conscious during the two and a half hours it took the ship to reach me. I spotted the mine-sweeper while teetering at the crest of a wave. Soon, its great bow was pushing in toward me and I could see sailors in orange life jackets crowding its lifelines. A bearded man in a black rubber suit jumped into the water and swam to me.

“Are you hurt?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said. “My legs and back.”

I was now very cold and worried about the growing numbness in my legs. Perhaps the imminence of rescue made me light-headed, for I only vaguely remember being hoisted aboard the ship. I was laid out on the ship’s deck as they cut away my flight suit.

“Don’t touch my legs! Don’t touch my legs!” I screamed.

I don’t remember it. Somebody gave me a shot of morphine and this erased part of my extreme pain.

An hour or so later a man was bending over me and asking questions. It was a doctor who had been high-lined over from the USS Los Angeles, a cruiser that had been operating in the area.

He said, “You have a long scar on your abdomen. How did it get there?”

I told him about a serious auto accident I’d had four years earlier in Texas, and that my spleen had been removed at that time.

He grunted, and asked more questions while he continued examining me. Then he said, “You and I are going to take a little trip over to the USS Los Angeles; it’s steaming alongside.”

Somehow they got me into a wire stretcher, and hauled me, dangling and dipping, across the watery interval between the Embattle and the cruiser.

In the Los Angeles’s sickbay, they gave me another shot of morphine, thank God, and started thrusting all sorts of hoses into my body. I could tell from all the activity, and from the intense, hushed voices, that they were very worried about my condition.

My body temperature was down to 94 degrees; my intestines and kidneys were in shock. The doctors never left my side during the night. They took my blood pressure every 15 minutes. I was unable to sleep. Finally, I threw up about a quart or more of seawater. After this my nausea was relieved a bit.

By listening to the medical team who was working on me, I was able to piece together the nature of my injuries. This is what I heard them saying. My left ankle was broken in five places. My right ankle was broken in three places. A tendon in my left foot was cut. My right pelvis was fractured. My number 7 vertebra was fractured. My left lung had partially collapsed. There were

many cuts and bruises all over my face and body, and, my intestines and kidneys had been shaken into complete inactivity.

The next morning Dr. Valentine Rhodes told me that the Los Angeles was steaming at flank speed to a rendezvous with a helicopter 100 miles from Long Beach, California.

At 3:30 that afternoon, I was hoisted into the belly of a Marine helicopter from the USS Los Angeles’s fantail, and we whirred off to a hospital ship, the USS Haven, docked in Long Beach, CA.

Once aboard the Haven, doctors came at me from all sides with more needles, tubes, and X-ray machines. Their reaction to my condition was so much more optimistic than I had expected. I finally broke down and let go a few tears of relief, exhaustion, and thanks to all hands and God.

Within a few months I was all systems go again. My ankles were put back in place with the help of steel pins. The partially collapsed left lung re-inflated and my kidneys and intestines were working again without the need of prodding.

The Marine Corps discovered the cause of my flame-out, and that of Major Tooker the day before, was the failure of an automatic cut-off switch in the refueling system. The aircraft’s main fuel tank was made of heavy reinforced rubber. When the cut-off switch failed, this allowed the tank to overfill and it burst like a balloon. This then caused the fire and flame out. We will never know why the ejection seat failed to work since it is in the bottom of the ocean. The parachute failure is a mystery also. Like they say, “Some days you are the dog and others you are the fire plug.”

Do I feel lucky? That word doesn’t even begin to describe my feelings. To survive a 15,000-foot fall with an unopened chute is a fair enough feat. My mind keeps running back to something Dr. Rhodes told me in the sickbay of the Los Angeles during those grim and desperate hours.

He said that if I had had a spleen, it almost certainly would have ruptured when I hit the water, and I would have bled to death. Of the 25 pilots in our squadron, I am the only one without a spleen. It gives me something to think about. Maybe it does you as well. ✈

*This story is Chapter 7 from the book *Supersonic Cowboys*, which contains 44 other chapters of similar stories edited by Ron Knott. The author of the story and the editor both retired from Delta. It appears that the editor was effectively a co-author, which may explain some of the overly dramatic language and mixed tenses. But a hell of a story nevertheless. I have not read any of the rest of the book. – Editor*

# Museum showcases newly acquired vintage aircraft

August 30, 2011

The Delta Air Transport Heritage Museum in Atlanta has added another historical plane to its collection.

A vintage 1928 Northwest Airways Waco Model 125 biplane — the only one remaining of its kind in the world — was gently hoisted by cranes to its new home high above the museum floor on Tuesday.

The 83-year old plane, painted in an outdated black and gold livery and a vintage Northwest Airways logo prominently displayed on its side, never flew passengers, but was used for promotions, charters and flight instruction, says Tiffany Meng, director of the Delta Air Transport Heritage Museum.

News about the plane's arrival in Hangar 1 at the Atlanta General Offices spread quickly even before an official announcement could be made.

"We had quite a few people — 50 to 100 — walk through yesterday to get a glimpse of it just from word of mouth alone," said Tiffany.

"It's like a new baby is here," said Marie Force, the museum's archive manager. "It's a piece of aviation history."

After rescuing the aircraft from a barn where it sat rusting for many years, Northwest Airlines pilot Capt. Daniel F. Neuman (deceased) restored it to its original glory. The name "C.W. Holman" was painted on the cockpit door in honor of Northwest's first chief pilot, Charles "Speed" Holman, a famous stunt flier.

On Dec. 16, 1985, Neuman and his family donated the biplane to Northwest Airlines in memory of his late wife, who also worked to restore the plane. It was then hung in the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport when the new Lindbergh Terminal opened.

For two and a half decades, the Waco biplane hung from the ceiling of Concourse G until last week. That's when a Delta team, led by Museum Maintenance Manager Joe Maknauskas, Tech Ops mechanics Scott Gerkin and Jeff Hoole, Paul Mara, from MSP-Property and Facilities division, and retired Northwest mechanic Craig Lieberg, dismantled the aircraft section by section to make way for Delta's upcoming concourse renovations.

Dan Neuman, Jr., the donor's son and also a former Northwest pilot, watched as the aircraft came down.

"My dad purchased the Waco biplane on March 18, 1957. The fuselage frame was being used as a windmill tower and due to rust it needed extensive rebuilding," he said. "My parents completed 95% of the restoration in three to four years. My mother worked alongside my dad during the restoration completing all the fabric work and the interior. That's why he dedicated it in her memory."

Now on permanent display at the Museum and surrounded by other birds from a bygone era, the 1928 Waco biplane has become a permanent part of Delta's history.

*You will be able to see it once again in person if you attend the Atlanta Reunion. – Ed.*



# SW Florida Spring Luncheon



LIMITED TO 150 GUESTS  
• REGISTER EARLY •  
REGISTRATION DEADLINE  
FEB. 28TH, 2012

**Marina Jack's Restaurant**  
**Sarasota, Florida**  
**March 6th, 2012**  
**11:00 – 15:00**

I've marked the calendar for March 6th at 1100 hours.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ MENU CHOICE:  1  2  3

SPOUSE/GUEST \_\_\_\_\_  1  2  3

\$25 X \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_ (INCLUDES GRATUITY)

**MENU CHOICES:** ① Herb Crusted Baked Grouper ② London Broil ③ Chicken Marsala  
Entrées include salad, vegetable, potato, dessert and coffee or tea

Checks payable to  
"Dino Oliva"  
and mail to:  
**Dino & Karen Oliva**  
**3701 Bayou Louise Ln**  
**Sarasota FL 34242**

**DIRECTIONS:**  
From I-75 N or S take Exit 210.  
Go West on Fruitville Road  
about 5 miles to US 41.  
Turn Left on US 41 to second  
signal.  
Turn Right into Marina Jack's.  
(Valet parking available - not  
included in price.)

# THE BEST OF TIMES



# THE WORST OF TIMES



By Nick Modders

My employer immediately before being hired by Northwest Airlines was the United States Air Force. Perhaps employer is the wrong word. I served with the United States Air Force. They paid money for my service. They also got to decide where I served and I didn't find that particularly pleasing so I welcomed employment with Northwest so I could do what I wanted to do where I wanted to do it. Northwest also could not cause me to serve in what were called "career broadening opportunities." More commonly known in the Air Force as non-flying positions.

So it was with great happiness that I arrived in the Twin Cities in early March, 1969 to start on a great adventure and a great career. The mood was only chilled by the fact that the snow banks were seven feet tall and driving was a challenge for someone coming from California.

After slightly more than a year NWA was "forcing" probationary second officers to qualify on the Boeing 707. Life was good! Getting off probation and making

some real money was right around the corner. Times were exciting. The arrival of the Boeing 747 was only a month away. I'd gotten through a full winter in Minnesota with no major driving mishaps.

As spring turned to summer in 1970 the snow went away, the flowers bloomed, the trees budded and people were talking about the Clerks. The Clerks being the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, also known as BRAC. Seems BRAC was having trouble negotiating a contract with NWA. I was pretty sure that everything would be OK. My first year and a half at NWA had been nothing but smooth sailing, why shouldn't the good life continue?

It took a couple of weeks after July 8, 1970 to figure out that I was unemployed. Once that unpleasant fact sunk in I also discovered that the native pilots knew where to go to find jobs and there wasn't much left for those of us new to the Twin Cities. I flew as many Air National Guard trips as I could but the unit was full of hungry NWA pilots and so the Guard trips were shared

and there wasn't enough for anyone to make a living.

In early August I discovered that the Metropolitan Transit Commission was hiring drivers. I'd driven truck while in high school and college so driving for a living wasn't completely foreign. I figured it would only be for a little while. Perhaps I'd be back at NWA before I had to do bus in snow.

Training was interesting. I hadn't driven anything big for ten years. The training quickly made me feel at home. I got through training with only one minor scrape of a parked car. So far, so good. I became Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) driver number 2925 assigned to the garage at 400 Snelling Avenue, St. Paul. I was one of over a hundred Northwest pilots that drove for the MTC during the BRAC strike layoff.

The bus company had a nifty driver utilization plan called "split shifts." You showed up at or before 6 AM, drove a morning rush hour shift and then idled until driving an afternoon run which got done around 3:30 PM. The several hours of dead time each day got old in a hurry. But, it was a job and it paid pretty well so no whining.

One sage came up with a mention that this would be a pretty good job if it weren't for the passengers. Being isolated from the passengers in an airplane was quickly found to be a good feature. Unfortunately it was not offered in buses. Got to know some people that I didn't really want to know.

As time marched on into 1971 I got senior enough to hold a "regular run." These would be regular runs starting at about 4:00 PM and getting done at 1:30 AM the next morning. Not my favorite time of the clock, but, it was a job. I was happy to be employed. Having a regular run meant that I got to see the same people every day at the same time. See above about getting to know some people that I didn't really want to know.

## SOME MEMORABLE EVENTS

### THE GUNNER

In late 1971 I could hold a run that started out as the Stillwater Express. Pick up in downtown St. Paul and then limited stops to Stillwater. On arrival in Stillwater I had enough time to eat supper. Supper was often consumed sitting by a steam locomotive that was on display. (That steam engine and I continue to this day to have our lives intertwined.) On the way back to St. Paul from Stillwater it was regular stops. About half way in to St. Paul I'd pick up a fairly large individual who worked at the main post office. Most of the time he was my only passenger for a few miles and we would talk

about various subjects and he eventually figured out that I liked airplanes. He admitted that he had previously been a ball turret gunner in a B-17 in 1944. He had a few stories that he shared.

One day he was not at his regular bus stop. He was a very regular customer so I was a little concerned. Knowing where he lived I pulled up to his house and gave a couple of beeps on the horn. Just as I was ready to continue into St. Paul he came roaring out of the house and set a land speed record getting to the bus. He said that he had laid down for just a quick little nap and the alarm clock did not wake him. He appreciated my caring. I appreciated his service.

### THE NIGHT OF THE BROKEN GLASS

With summer vacation starting I ended up with a new group of customers that I picked up on Fridays near a Roller Rink on Maryland Avenue. This "Group" was a large collection of juveniles who would storm onto the bus like a deluge and hardly put anything in the fare box. Trying to get money out of this crowd was going to be futile so I intelligently kept my mouth shut and headed downtown.

I did notice that many of the riders had their arms out of the windows. They had their arms out of the windows so they could propel the rocks in their hands at oncoming automobiles. I suggested in a loud voice that they close the windows. Had to stop the bus so we could have eye-to-eye contact. Since many were standing in the aisle of the bus and when I stopped, utilizing the full features of the air brake system, several of them slid down the aisle right to the fare box.

After a trip to the back to close windows and derock the passengers we continued. It was pretty quiet back there, which I thought was good. Once we got downtown everybody got off to transfer to another bus line. If I had any thoughts that the pile of rocks that I had collected was a complete collection I quickly found out that I was mistaken. Almost as a military formation the former passengers lined up along side the bus and unleashed a barrage of rocks that broke most of the windows on the right side. After having made that statement they quickly ran off. After getting a replacement bus I finished my shift.

The following Friday I called in sick so I could be fully rested for my Air National Guard drill weekend. While I was resting the substitute driver was beaten up and a passenger had her purse stolen.

The next Friday when I pulled up the the Roller Rink stop there was the usual collection of suspects and every police car in St. Paul. The cops were there to tell me what a bad bunch of actors this crowd was. I stood



in the door way of the bus and counseled the potential riders on good manners on how we were not going to throw rocks and how we were not going to destroy the bus and how we would have a nice ride downtown and they could get home on time. Lots of toothy grins, big smiles and nodding of heads. I also mentioned getting on the bus one at a time and putting their twenty cents in the fare box. Fewer smiles. But they did do all of that and we got along great all through the summer.

#### THE FIRE

One night, on the 1:00 AM departure from downtown St. Paul I was hurtling down Margaret Street on St. Paul's east side at about 45 MPH and caught a glimpse of what appeared to be a well developed fire. Don't know why, but I stopped, told the few passengers that I'd be right back. I ran back to where I thought I saw the fire, and sure enough, there was a garage, fully ablaze. I knocked on the door of the closest home. The responding resident started yelling at me to go away and when she saw the fire she said, "Oh, my God, what shall I do?" I suggested calling the fire department. I knocked on one other home and interrupted their sleep and then ran back to the bus and wasn't even late getting back to the garage.

#### FINALLY... THE RECALL TELEGRAM

In April, 1972 I received my recall telegram to report for work at Northwest. Everytime I got to the end of a bus line I would pull out the telegram and read it again. Just to make sure I wasn't dreaming.

If I'd been smart I would have resigned as soon as I got my recall telegram. When I did serve notice that I would be leaving, the Garage Supervisor, Vern Hunter, asked me to stay through the end of the week since they were short of drivers. Mr. Hunter had been very good to me and it was the fair thing to do to honor his request.

With just a couple of days driving left in my bus career I was holding a regular run on the St. Paul to Minneapolis #16 line. While "laying over" in downtown St. Paul a automobile backed into the bus stop that I was occupying and had the bus pinned in. I got out and suggested to the driver that perhaps he would be so kind to let me out of the bus stop in just a few minutes so I could complete my run. The driver said bad words and displayed an obscene gesture. Now, you may find this hard to believe, but I was way above my usual degree of nice during my initial request and his response was entirely unjustified.

The driver informed me that I could leave the bus stop when he felt like letting me out and that it was going to be a while.

Having gotten back to my usual degree of nice I informed the driver that the General Motors 6-71 diesel engine that could develop 318 horsepower delivered through the Allison two speed automatic transmission could shove his Oldsmobile right to the Mississippi River and not even break a sweat.

The driver said he wanted to see that.

Actually, I chickened out. Rather than push the Oldsmobile straight to the Mississippi I turned the steering wheel as far as it would go (a lot to ask considering the bus was not equipped with power steering). As advertised, the General Motors 6-71 and the Allison transmission converted diesel fuel into noise and torque, the bus lurched ahead, (a byproduct of the accelerator being on the floor) and the left rear quarter panel of the Oldsmobile crumpled like it was tin foil.

The driver was not happy. The bumper on the bus was not even scratched.

After a few anxious days while the St. Paul Police explored charging me with Malicious Destruction of Property I left the employ of the Metropolitan Transit Commission.

At last, I was back to work as an airline pilot.

In six weeks the pilots went on strike. I was off for another year. I did not go back to driving bus.

#### MEMORIES

It has been almost 40 years since I worked as a bus driver. The sound of the 6-71 diesel still is special to me and I occasionally get to experience the special feel as I start one. Some of the same buses I drove as a job are now in the fleet of the Minnesota Transportation Museum and I drive them for museum events.

The steam engine that was at Stillwater is now in the collection of the Minnesota Transportation Museum. During the late 1970's the locomotive was restored by the Museum and I had the chance to run it a couple of times. Right now it is awaiting a rebuilding and if that happens perhaps I'll get to run it again. The only thing lacking from this picture is \$350,000.

It was the worst of times. Nothing is worse than studying for the ATP written on a dimly lit bus at 11:00PM on a chilly February night.

It was the best of times. Both of our daughters were born during strikes.

I didn't think that Northwest Airlines could send me to a "career broadening assignment" but with the strikes we experienced I got to be "broadened" several times. I could have done without the experience but we lived through it and now it is all becoming a dim memory, except for the good parts. ✨



## Doug Wulff 1943 ~ 2011

**Douglas Owen Wulff**, age 68, was born on February 11, 1943, in St. Paul, Minnesota, the first child born to Owen Valley Wulff and Laura Mae (Murnane) Wulff. Doug's education began at Farnsworth Elementary School, where he made friendships with several kids that lasted his entire lifetime. Doug attended St. Paul Academy in 8th grade because he liked the uniforms, but didn't like the bus ride to school, so he transferred to Minnehaha Academy for 9th grade. Doug then decided to go to Johnson High School so he could go to school with his friends, where he graduated in June 1961.

Doug attended the University of Minnesota for three years studying Mortuary Science and planned to follow in his father's, grandfather's and great-grandfather's footsteps. Doug was expected to become the fourth generation to eventually own and operate Wulff Family Mortuary on the east side of St. Paul. However, after taking flying lessons, Doug realized he was destined to be an airline pilot.

Doug began flying for Northwest Orient Airlines in July 1966. Working his way up through the ranks, Doug became a 747 Captain and flew overseas until

his retirement in 1997. Throughout his piloting career, Doug made many lifelong friends whom he cherished. Even though he hadn't flown for years, pilot friends' names remained part of his every day conversations.

Pilots at Northwest who flew with Doug said it was a pleasure to share his cockpit. He was a quality pilot, a man of integrity and compassion and a true professional. Always laid back and a good guy to work with, they felt their life was enriched for having known him. Doug's friends followed his battles with his many medical issues very closely. He had a tough go towards the end and was quite brave through it all, and his calmness and ability to face his illness head on made a lasting impression. The last pilot to visit him before he passed away said Doug was in great spirits and talked mostly about flying which he so dearly loved.

Doug was a loving son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, neighbor, co-worker, and friend. He was one you could count on for advice. He was one you could count on for a helping hand. He was one you could count on that truly cared about you. Doug had a smile for all and was friendly to everyone he met. If he had never met you before and would likely never see you again, he was truly interested in you and listened and talked to you like you mattered. And, if you owned a cat or dog, you were an instant friend.

As tireless animal advocates and animal lovers, Doug and Dianne cared for their own animals and donated to and volunteered for animal shelters and organizations. Doug encouraged his family to log onto computers each morning, and "click" to feed the animals. He always kept a container of dog treats under his car seat and in his cupboard, so he could give a treat to any dog he came across or that visited. Doug's great wish was for every animal to be treated humanely and given a home.

The last years of Doug's life were a challenge. He survived cancer, bone marrow transplants, congestive heart failure and a heart transplant. Throughout it all, Doug was a trooper. He befriended doctors, nurses, and others that needed encouragement through their illnesses. That he could remain so upbeat and survive so much truly seemed a miracle. But, his body was too weak to fight infection, and God called him home to heaven on December 25, 2010. His wife Dianne, daughters Debra Nelson and Deirdre McDonald, and five grandchildren survive Doug.

– *Donnis Bergman*



### **“Bill” Green, 1941 ~ 2011**

**William Edgar “Bill” Green**, age 70, a retired Northwest Airlines pilot, of Bloomington, Indiana and Sebring, Florida, “Flew West” for a final check on October 5, 2011, while surrounded by his family at Bloomington Hospital. Bill was born June 6, 1941, in Indianapolis, Indiana, the son of Edgar and Lilly (Feltner) Green, and was a graduate of Arsenal Technical High School, Class of ‘59. He was a graduate of DePauw University, 1963, and a member of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity. Bill served his country as a pilot on active duty in the U.S. Air Force from 1964 to 1969, based at Webb AFB, Big Spring, Texas, for pilot training, and then assigned to TAC at Pope AFB, Fayetteville, NC for four years. He flew the T-37 and T-38 in training, but his real joy became the Lockheed C-130, his favorite. Missions included dropping troops and supplies over Vietnam while dodging bullets, and relief missions to the Congo and other places around the world. Later, during an NWA layoff, he resumed flying the C-130 again, this time as a Major in the USAF Reserves.

Bill was first hired by Northwest Airlines in 1969 and flew for Northwest until his retirement 28 years later. The early years at Northwest were challenging, with several layoffs, a family and a new house in Apple Valley. During one of the “off” periods, Bill was hired as a Sky Marshal, which turned out to be an interesting job during the hijacking era of the ‘70s. He didn’t encounter a major incident as a Sky Marshal, but had some good cover stories and tales to tell. Those early lay-off years slowed Bill’s progression through the pilot ranks, and his opportunity to bid a captain position on

domestic aircraft did not occur until late in his career. The Boeing 747 became a favorite of his with international trips to Tokyo and other exotic destinations in Asia. By then he was commuting from Minneapolis to Indiana, enjoyed the routes and time off, and he was happy right where he was. Bill had a lot of important family events during that period of time, and chose to stay in the first officer’s position on the 747 for the perks of seniority bidding, instead of being a very junior domestic captain on reserve. Pilots who flew with Bill remembered him as a true gentleman, and a true professional pilot. They looked forward to having Bill in the cockpit because he was one of the really nice people to fly with, and his deep velvet voice could calm the waters on a stormy night, just by talking.

Bill’s family and friends were the joys and priority of his life. They will deeply miss him, his gentle soul, sense of humor, and steadfast friendship. Bill was always there to lend a helping hand to whoever needed it, and his friendly ways touched many lives. He was a very talented handyman, good at fixing things, and a compulsive “time keeper.” He believed that all clocks, watches and timepieces should be accurate, and to the second, if possible. He always synced them all. Bill enjoyed the outdoors, fishing, boating and putzing in general. In Florida, he did some alligator hunting, relishing the unique experience along with some family. He especially enjoyed the opening of deer hunting season each November in New Ross, Indiana. Bill and the family guys, many cousins and older children, gathered annually at the over 100 year old Feltner family “homestead” to hunt, and to renew and celebrate old ties. Bill often brought and cooked “alligator” as his contribution to the feasts.

Bill and his wife, Linda, had just celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary on September 29, 2011, and have shared their life journey together since they became “high-school sweethearts.” Bill is survived by his wife, Linda (Hill) Green; son, Jeffrey Green, and wife Robin; daughters, Julia Fields, and husband Randy, and Jill Courtney, and husband Brian; six grandchildren, Mason and Hudson Green, Heather, Hayley and Harrison Fields, and Henry Courtney. A Memorial Service was held October 20, 2011, in Bloomington, with Military Honors and a Celebration of Life. Blue skies and a fly-over completed the memorable tribute.

– Vic Britt



**Al Kirkpatrick**  
1918 ~ 2011



**Allen Kirkpatrick**, age 92, a retired Northwest Airlines Captain, of Breezy Point, Minnesota, “Flew West” for a final check Sunday, August 14, 2011, at Good Samaritan Society-Bethany. He was born to Clarence and Esther Kirkpatrick on Oct. 16, 1918, in Hector, Minnesota, and graduated from Hector High School. He later received his pilot’s license from Hector Airport. Allen was a captain for Northwest Airlines for 37 years and retired as a Boeing 747 Captain in October 1978. His wife Julie preceded him in death. Allen’s survivors are son Tom Kirkpatrick; daughter Kathy Gaskill; six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.  
– Vic Britt



**Jim O'Reilly**  
1942 ~ 2011

**James R. O'Reilly**, age 69, a retired Northwest Airline Captain “Flew West” for a final check on June 30, 2011. Jim was born on March 1, 1942 in Brainerd, Minnesota to Raymond and Juanita O'Reilly. After graduation from Brainerd High School in 1960, he received his AA degree from Brainerd Junior College. Jim had always talked about flying so he joined the US Navy. After completing his flight school training he was commissioned as Ensign earning his wings in Pensacola, Florida in 1964. On February 15, 1964 Jim married his high school sweetheart, Jacquilyn (Jackie) Hall. Jim flew P2V “Neptunes” with patrol squadron VP-1 in the fleet and flew reconnaissance missions in Viet Nam while he was deployed with VP-1 to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan. Jim was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant prior to his release from active service in 1967.

In August 1967 Jim left the Navy for a pilot position at Northwest Airlines. He started his training and soon was flying second officer on the 727s and working his way up the line to fly the 707s, 757s, DC-10s, and finally serving as Captain on the 747s international flights until his retirement in 1998. On one trip that Jim flew into Osaka, Japan, he got a big surprise when he exited the plane. His daughter Kristie was an exchange student in Japan, and she met him when he got through customs. Kristie’s “Japanese Mother” had brought him a large Japanese doll in a glass box for him to take home. He just about died. It was a beginning of a long trip so had to tote it all over Asia, and go



through customs with it several times.

Jim was an active member of the American Legion, VFW, two Rotary groups of St. Cloud, Minnesota where his family lived for many years. Jim and Jackie had three very active 4-H members, Kristie, Craig and Dawn, and he enjoyed teaching gun safety and wood working classes to all of the 4-H members, including his children. He loved outdoor activities, especially hunting big game, golf, NASCAR, and 4 wheeling. Jim and Jackie were married for forty-seven years, wintering in Surprise, Arizona and spending summers at Mission lake near Merrifield, Minnesota. Jim spent much of his life in active involvement with his family, and often all the families came home on weekends. Their six grandchildren were the apple of his eye. Jim and Jackie traveled extensively on land tours, cruises, and an unforgettable, exciting mule safari in Switzerland. His favorite cruise was to Antarctica.

Jim's remains were interred at Mission Cemetery near their lake home before a planned celebration of his life. Jackie's bother -in-law brought his tractor with auger to the cemetery and drilled the hole for Jim's ashes. His family

was all there, and after the ashes were put in place each family member put a shovel of dirt in the hole. Jim's two year old granddaughter was first, and Jackie was last. The weather was beautiful and Jim would have loved the entire service, as he was an outdoors man. The celebration of Jim's life was held on July 6, 2011 at their Mission Lake home, in the front yard by the lake. Military honors were held with a 21 gun salute. Over 300 friends and relatives attended, that was a real honor and Jim would have been pleased.. Although he was a quiet man, Jim O'Reilly had a marvelous sense of humor that will be missed by his family and many friends.

Jim is survived by wife Jackie, the love of his life; daughter Kristie Cencer (Kevin); son Craig O'Reilly (Jody); daughter Dawn Drayna (Todd); and grandchildren Benjamin, Nicholas, Reilly, Lainey, Kaelyn, and Kennedy.

- *Donnis Bergman*





## John Hansen 1934 ~ 2011

**John Lyle Hansen**, age 77 of Bellevue, Washington and Polson, Montana unexpectedly “Flew West” from his home on Flathead Lake in Montana, on September 17, 2011. John was born March 13, 1934 in Great Falls, Montana where he was active in sports, primarily hunting, fishing, skiing and playing football for Great Falls High School where he graduated in 1953. He joined the Montana Air National Guard after graduation from high school, and after his first year at the University of Montana John was selected to attend US Air Force Flight School for pilot training.

During Air Force flight training John flew the Lockheed T-33, a two-seat version of the USAF’s first operational jet fighter, the F-80 “Shooting Star.” After receiving his USAF pilot wings, John qualified in the North American F-86 “Sabre,” and was assigned to Montana Air National Guard’s 186th Fighter Squadron, based at Gore Field in Great Falls, Montana. The 186th was the first Air National Guard unit to receive the F-86, along with the task of providing aerial combat

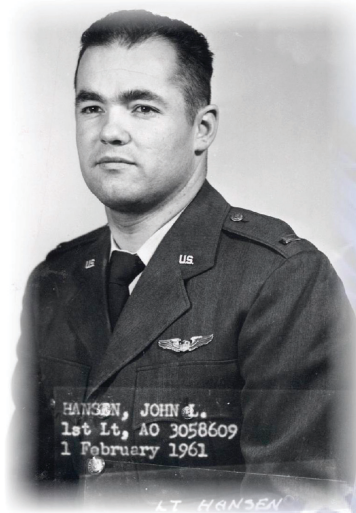
capability for our nation’s air defense system. In 1955 the 186th was the first Air Guard unit to transition into the Northrop F-89C “Scorpion”, which provided an all weather fighter-interceptor capability for America’s air defense. John flew weekends while he finished getting his Bachelor’s Degree in Education, and in 1957 he met and married Patricia Firth from Seattle and started a family.

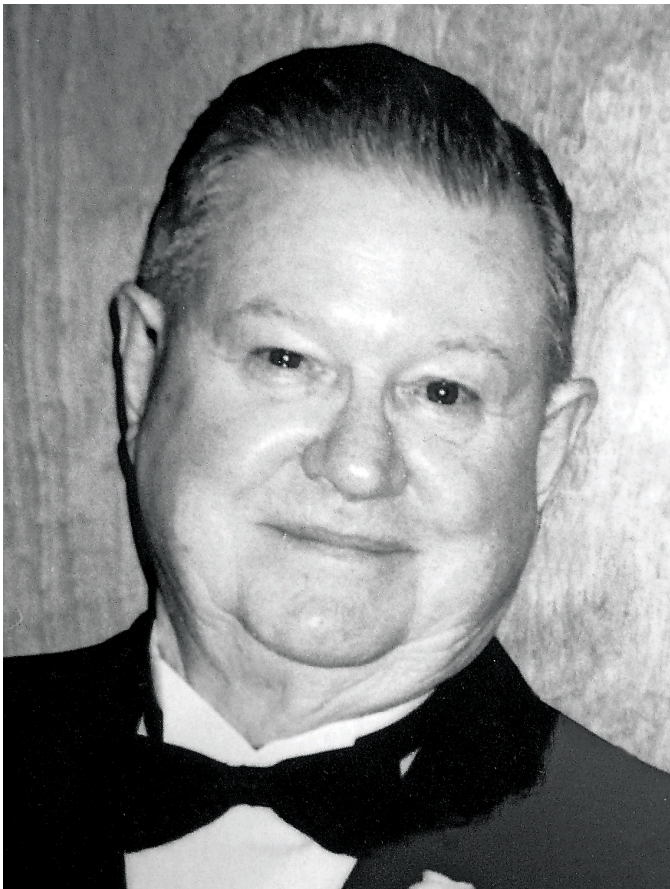
After John’s graduation from the University of Montana in 1959, the family returned to Great Falls where John taught grade school for two years, and two years of junior high. All the while John was flying evenings and weekends with the Montana Air Guard. With two very young boys and two foster children, ‘Dad’ needed to have one job and more time at home. By then, he knew his true loves were family and flying. So John went full time with the Air Guard, flying Alert Missions when relations with the USSR were touchy.

In the summer of 1966, at age 32, John joined Northwest Airlines as a pilot. His first check out at Northwest was as a second officer on the Boeing 707. During his career at Northwest John flew the Boeing 727, Douglas DC10 and finally the Boeing 747. He enjoyed traveling the world and working with great crews. Northwest pilots who worked with John Hansen remember him as a professional pilot who came to work prepared, and as one of the “good guys.” He was pleasant, friendly, courteous, and considerate of his fellow crew members. It was a sad day for John when after 28 years he had to retire due to a painful back condition.

John and Pat’s friends and their children fondly remember times at the Lake, and being treated by them as “family” and as one of their own. One of their children’s friends expressed the thought, “You all should be very proud of the man your husband and Dad is. What a sweet man.” He had a big smile for all. They thought of him as a good friend, a fine and gracious person who will not be forgotten.

John was preceded in death by a son Eric Alan, age 14 months and grandson Tim “TJ” Philio, age 20. Survivors include Pat, his wife of 54 years; two sons David and Paul; and daughter Heidi Philio; six grandchildren and four sisters. – *Vic Britt*





## “Bill” Roberts 1924 ~ 2011

**William P. “Bill” Roberts, Jr.**, age 87, caught his last flight out and “Flew West” at 5:00pm on Sunday, October 23, 2011. Bill was born on October 16, 1924 in Lexington, KY. At age 10, the family moved to Elizabethtown, KY, where Bill graduated from high school. Bill then moved to Illinois to attend Parks Air College (now part of St. Louis University). He was a member of Phi Alpha Chi, the oldest aviation fraternity in the world.

A month shy of graduating, Bill joined the Navy and spent his service time on Guam. When discharged, Bill returned to Parks Air College, graduating with a degree in aeronautical engineering. He was a certified aircraft and

engine mechanic, and held “a fistful” of instructor ratings. He took work in St. Louis with the Army Aeronautical Chart Services as jobs in his field were scarce due to post-war engineers being a dime-a-dozen.

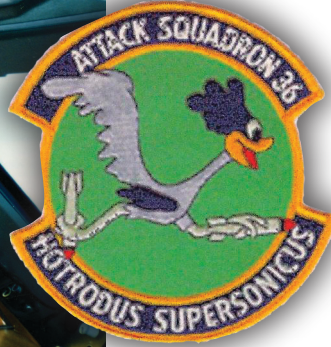
Bill met Ann, his wife, in St. Louis, and shortly thereafter learned of an airline in Minnesota that was hiring mechanics. Bill hired on with NWA and moved to Minneapolis in March 1948. In April, Ann stepped off the train in Minneapolis, married Bill, and off Bill went to his job as a night shift mechanic. Thus began a 63-year marriage to Ann and a 42-year love affair with Northwest Airlines.

Bill’s early years with NWA were spent as mechanic, overhaul inspector and electrical / powerplant instructor. In 1949 he answered NWA’s call for bids as Flight Engineers. In 1964, Bill checked out as Co-pilot, and in 1968 made the transition to captain. In 1984, at the age of 60, Bill retired from the captain’s seat of the 747. Bill continued to fly for the next five years as a 747 Flight Engineer. Bill loved flying, all things mechanical, woodworking, traveling, wintering in Key Largo and most of all his family.

Bill is survived by his wife, Ann; daughters Cindy (Ken), Marcia (Chris); grandchildren Kim (Lehi), Beth (Jeff), Brian, Brett, Scott; great-grandchildren Chloe and Will; two nieces and two grand-nieces. Memorial services were held in Minneapolis at Lake Harriet Christian Church on Friday, November 25, 2011 with interment at Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

– *Donnis Bergman*





## “Dick” Turner 1941 ~ 2010

**Richard S. “Dick” Turner**, age 69, a retired Northwest Airlines Captain, “Flew West” for a final check on December 20, 2010. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on June 15, 1941, spent his early years in Albany, NY, and later moved to Needham, Massachusetts where he graduated from high school. He studied at the University of Massachusetts before joining the US Navy as a Naval Aviation Cadet (NAVCAD) and reporting to the Naval Aviation School of Pre-Flight at Pensacola, Florida. He received his Naval Aviator’s wings and commission as an Ensign in 1962, and got orders for Naval Justice School which took him back near Boston and home, where he met his future wife, Evelyn (Evie). Dick and Evie were married in June 1964.

After Justice School Dick’s orders took him to VA-44 the A4 “Skyhawk” training squadron at Cecil Field, NAS Jacksonville, Florida, and to VA-36 “Roadrunners” (“Hotrodus Supersonic”) a fabled A4C squadron at Cecil Field. Dick served with distinction on three cruises, joining VA-36 on board the USS Saratoga for his first Med cruise in 1965. After Saratoga’s Med cruise, and a short two months at home, the first of two combat cruises took VA-36 to Vietnam aboard the USS Enterprise CVAN 65.

The Enterprise left Norfolk, Virginia on October 26, 1965, sailed around Africa to Subic Bay and conducted combat ops on Dixie Station in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam on December 2, 1965, the first

time a nuclear powered ship had engaged in combat. The strikes were promoted as “Nuclear Power at War” and the Enterprise lost four F-4B “Phantom’s” that day (only one to combat). The “Roadrunners” first ALPHA strike off “Yankee Station” on Dec. 22nd targeted the Haiphong power plant. After completing a second combat cruise Enterprise left the line, returning to Alameda, California June 21,

1966. During combat ops squadron personnel were awarded over 170 Air Medals. Four VA-36 aircraft were lost to enemy fire: Two pilots ejected and were recovered, and two pilots ejected and were captured and made prisoners of war.

In late May 1967, VA-36 embarked on USS America CVA 66 and was on station during the Middle East War between Israel, Egypt and Syria. Units of America’s carrier air wing group were launched to provide air cover for USS Liberty AGTR 5, when it came under attack by Israeli forces. Don Dollar said, “In our squadron and around the ship, Dick was known for his technical expertise in photography and sound systems. It was the height of “Beatlemania” and all looked to Dick for his expertise in replay and sound systems, known as “Gear,” and Dick had the ultimate gear.

So, one day Dick was approaching the Enterprise with a hung 2000 pound bomb, a very tense situation. But it didn’t prevent “Bear” and me from asking “Bull:” If you don’t survive the approach, can we have your Akai tape deck and share your “ultimate” gear?” (Humor at times of stress helped us to get through it.) “Bull’s” comment to us was, “You guys cut that crap out.” Always the ultimate professional, he made it aboard without incident. Dick “Bull” Turner and his flight leader and “roomie” Ted “Bear” Langworthy had their “going away” party together in Athens, Greece in late July 1967.

Discharged from the Navy in 1967, he began his career at Northwest Airlines and progressed from a second officer on the Boeing 707, to the 727, 757, DC10, and 747 and 747-400, on which he was a captain when he retired in 1996.

Throughout his career at Northwest Dick was vitally interested and involved in the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA). He served on several committees and was elected co-pilot representative for NWA ALPA





Council One, where his booming voice and stern demeanor worked to the pilot's advantage in negotiations. Tom Beedem was his highly valued mentor and very close friend, and during his most active involvement in ALPA activities, he came to know, admire, and become good friends with many fellow pilots. During the merger negotiations with Republic Airlines, he filmed and edited a video of flight operations in the USA and Asia, which was used to support those negotiations. Dick's abiding love of photography resulted in his being the unofficial and official photographer at many airline and ALPA gatherings.

Dick and Evie moved from their longtime home in Minneapolis, Minnesota to Punta Gorda, Florida, in 1991, and in 1997 established a seasonal home in East Boothbay, Maine where friends and family loved

to gather. After retirement, Dick pursued his love of photography, boating, travel, woodworking and baking. Homemade cinnamon buns were one of his specialties and they were devoured with great pleasure by children, grandchildren, and friends alike! He served actively in his church and showered love on his family. His laughter and his grin could overflow a room, and his stories were renowned. His dynamic presence, love of life and people, graced the lives of all who knew him.

He is survived by his wife, Evie; sister, Betsy Sigman of Ft. Myers, FL and Boothbay Harbor, Maine; children, Deborah (Dave) Mascorro of San Antonio, TX, Richard Jr. (Lesa) of Seattle, WA, and Douglas (Julie) of Jacksonville, FL; grandchildren, Joshua, Hannah and Matthew Mascorro and Ryan and Allie Turner.

– Vic Britt



## Virginia Carow 1921 ~ 2011

**Virginia Carow**, age 90, a longtime RNPA associate member, passed away October 24, 2011 at her Belmont, California home of 35 years. Virginia was the daughter of a Naval Officer, and her life became intertwined with aviation when she married aviator Arnold Carow before the outbreak of World War Two. Arnold, born in 1918, had worked after school hours at the Long Beach Airport

washing small planes to pay for his pilot training. He finished high school in 1935, and later graduated from the Boeing School of Aeronautics in Alameda with an Airplane and Engine Mechanics License. On December 7, 1941, when the Japanese Navy attacked Pearl Harbor, Virginia and Arnold were living in Southern California.

Arnold had been flying large Boeing airplanes, and the US Government feared the next Japanese targets might be the aircraft works of Southern California. Arnold and other civilian pilots answered a call to volunteer to fly new Army Air Force planes from the

aircraft factories to inland airfields to scatter them away from the coast. In June 1942, the Army Air Force asked some of the civilian pilots to volunteer to deliver aircraft from the factories to military units overseas. After only two weeks of military training, Arnold was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps, and received a promotion to Captain before the war ended.

After the war Arnold became President of the Motion Picture Pilots Association and joined the Screen Actors Guild. He and Virginia attended strike meetings run by Ronald Reagan, President of the Screen Actors Guild, who presided over the longest strike at the time in the Screen Actors Guild. Virginia remembered Howard Hughes picking Arnold up at their house one day and driving him to the desert, where the Government was selling surplus military airplanes cheap.

In 1946 Jimmy Stewart, Leland Hayward and some other movie people got permission from the Civil Aeronautics Board to start a local airline in California. They named the new airline Southwest Airways, (not the present Southwest Airlines), and Arnold Carow flew as Captain from the first day of the airline's operation. He was a Captain with the airline for 32 years until reaching age 60 mandatory retirement, as Southwest Airways through name changes and mergers became Pacific, Air West and Hughes Air West. Arnold flew the DC-3, Martin 404, Fokker F-27, DC-9, Boeing 727, and the Boeing 737 before his retirement in 1978.

Virginia loved sailing and cruising. Arnold and



Virginia got their first boat in 1940 and their last one in 1983, a new 47 ft motor-sailor from Finland. She and Arnold sailed Finlandia for 18 years up and down the west coast and into Mexico, as members of the Coyote Point and St. Francis Yacht Clubs. She loved to travel, and she and Arnold flew all over the world in retirement. Virginia also enjoyed being a member of various women's groups, serving as a Regent of the Los Altos DAR, Foster City Newcomers, Par Avance, Questers (an international organization), and served

four years as treasurer of the Hillsborough Museum Society Auxiliary.

Virginia and Arnold Carow were married for over 61 years before his death on August 10, 2001. Virginia scattered Arnold's ashes outside San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge on September 11, 2001, a day no American will ever forget. Virginia was 90 years old when she died, and is survived by her son Don Carow and daughter Chrysteene.

– Vic Britt

## John Blais 1945 ~ 2011



**John Raymond Blais**, age 66, a retired Northwest Airlines pilot of Longville, Minnesota "Flew West" for a final check on Saturday, December 17, 2011 at Golden Living Center in Walker, Minnesota. John was born October 1, 1945 in Grand Rapids, Minnesota to Anthony and Lucienne (Pouliot) Blais. He grew up and attended school in Remer, Minnesota, graduating from Remer High School in 1963.

John went to St. John's University and took flying lessons after high school. Northwest Airlines hired John as a pilot in 1966 when he was twenty-one years old, and four years later he was drafted into the US Army. John returned to Northwest following his military service, and flew as a pilot for 38 years, having the distinction of logging the most pilot hours in a Boeing 747 in the history of Northwest Airlines. His favorite flight was to Tokyo's Narita airport, but he flew worldwide, and loved to make new friends and find new places to eat, especially in Bangkok, Thailand. John's laugh was infectious, and everyone he met felt warmed by his smile. He proudly volunteered to serve as main pilot on one of the first flights of troops to Iraq. John's fellow crewmembers said that he made long flights seem shorter with interesting conversation and humor, always did a professional job, and was an asset to the flight. Pilots whom John had flown with always looked forward to working with him again. John retired from Northwest Airlines in 2004 and moved "north" to Longville, Minnesota where he continued to fly his

own airplane, and looked forward to making flying trips to his cabin in Canada.

John enjoyed hunting and fishing during his retirement years, and his friends will remember him as talented, humorous, pleasant, and very knowledgeable about hunting and fishing. John's neighbors, Corey and Cassie Chizick, will miss catching Monster Lake Trout with him, his favorite prey. He was a member, and served on the board of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association. John Blais was an independent and intelligent man who always had time to share his lifetime of experiences over coffee with friends.

John's friends admired his courage and strength as he faced the final days of battle with his cancer. He prepared them for his departure in a letter with these sentiments:

*"December 4, 2011, It gives me great pride to have worked for NWA for 38 years, and met and worked with such a great group of people. Thanks for doing such a great job at RNPA. I will treasure the memories forever! To all my wonderful friends, I need to tell you the news of my present situation. I'm out of time. On Friday I moved to a nursing home, and will live my remaining time here. Tomorrow, I will arrange my hospice. My time remaining is quite short now. I'm sorry to deliver this bad news so suddenly, but the changes have been so rapid. I truly treasure the friendships we have had over many years now. You have all been truly wonderful friends, and I shall treasure those memories forever. God bless you all! Thank you to each one of you! Good bye everyone..."*

John is survived by sister's-in-law Kay and Marilyn Blais, nephews Mark, Scott, David, and John Blais; Niece Sue Klaus, and good friends Alan Weaver and Rosalie Letson. John's parents and his brothers Bob and Phillip preceded him.

– Vic Britt



# Membership Application and Change of Address Form

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
SPOUSE'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS  
STREET \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP+4 \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
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

## MEMBERSHIP TYPE

REGULAR (NR) \$40  
Pilots: Retired NWA, post-merger retired Delta, or Active Delta

AFFILIATE (AF) \$30  
Spouse or widow of RNPA member, pre-merger Delta retired pilots, other NWA or Delta employees, a friend, or a pilot from another airline

## PAYMENT

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:  
"RNPA"  
AND MAIL TO:  
Retired NWA Pilots' Assn.  
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Sarasota FL 34242-1105

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