

# CONTRAILS

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RETIRED NORTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION



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## RNPA CONTRAILS



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*Each Member!*

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**doozy** | 'doozē | (also **real doozie**)  
noun (pl. **doozies**) informal, chiefly N. Amer.  
something outstanding or unique of its kind:  
*it's gonna be a real doozie of a reunion.*



**ABQ 2016**

## TIS THE SEASON SOON!



*Sign up for the Minneapolis  
Christmas Party on page 52.  
NEW TIME! Dec. 10th.*

*Seattle's having their Christmas  
Party on Dec. 10th, too! Page 22*

## PHX PICNIC



**TUESDAY MARCH 1ST**

**FALCON FIELD, MESA**

**Coffee at 10:00**

**Eat at 12:00**

Bring:

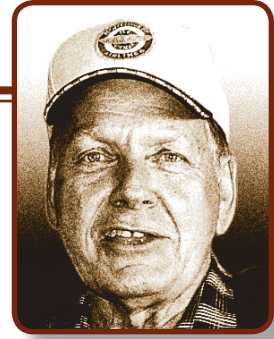
- Meat to cook,
- Dish to pass (no dessert),
- Fellow pilot or flight attendant

*Send email changes to [rnpanews@bhi.com](mailto:rnpanews@bhi.com)*

*HINT: Hang onto the 2014 Membership Directory!*



## President's Report: Gary PISEL



Well it happened again! Everyone says the Reunion in Long Beach was the BEST EVER. There were 134 attendees including 28 First Timers, all having a great time in both Long Beach and on Catalina Island. The trek to the Express was interesting to watch as all but a few hiked down Golden Shore Ave. Tickets were dispersed and the line up for the Express started. A quick hour-plus ride across an extremely smooth ocean was in order. The entrance to Avalon Harbor was scenic and the tour busses waiting. Many took advantage of the discounts for doing the many venues offered. Perhaps the Zip Line was the most popular.

The Presidents Reception offered a variety of good food. The Banquet had two highlights, first was the auction of the 14K gold wings and challenge coin which went for \$4700, and the second was the performance of the Darden Sisters, ages 14, 16, 17 & 19. This was a complete surprise to all with lyrics and music our age understands. Even a request of "On The Road Again" for the President.

Albuquerque is next, Sept 12,13,14. We will have a tour day to Santa Fe via the Rail Runner. The Loretto Trolley will provide a city tour upon arrival. Sign up early as there are only 60 rooms available.

All else with RNPA is going well. Six scholarships will be offered this year with new requirements on the application. Be sure to have those interested apply.

Thanks to all that helped to make this Reunion great. Also thanks to all the RNPA members for keeping the organization viable.



## Treasurer's Report: Dino OLIVA

We are rapidly approaching the end of another year, and with that comes dues time. Dues notices will be sent out the end of December.

**DO NOT SEND IN ANY DUES UNTIL YOU RECEIVE YOUR DUES STATEMENT!!!!**

Each year some members send in incorrect payments—usually overpayments. Please send in only the amount shown on your statement as dues owed. If you do not receive a statement it is because you have overpaid.

Email a letter to our editor at [contrailseditor@mac.com](mailto:contrailseditor@mac.com) with what you've been up to this past year. Your fellow RNPA members would like to hear about you.

Have a nice holiday season.



## ABOUT THE COVER

That happened in ATL on August 18, 2015 to a Delta 737 bound for Las Vegas. Apparently they continued with the flight. I suppose it's possible they didn't even know they'd been struck.

Now that almost any smartphone can take pretty good video we were bound to get something like that frame of a video. It was posted to YouTube by one Jack Perkins. What seems so special about this shot, it seems to me, is actually documenting the charge going to ground at the wheel.



Things don't always work out so well, though.



This strike happened to an All Nippon Airways aircraft near Osaka, Japan airport sometime prior to July of 2007.

It's probably a safe bet that each one of us have a lightning or static discharge story or two to tell.

"It was cloudy, St. Elmo's Fire on the windscreen, static on the radios and we were..." well, you know.

## CORRECTIONS TO THE AUGUST ISSUE

1. Score 10 points if you noticed this in the "August Notes:"

Yes, ABQ is still in New Mexico.



2. On page 22 this gent was identified as "First Lastname," when it's actually our friend Ron Kenmir. My apologies, Ron. So far the Board hasn't docked my pay.

## A CHANCE TO EXPRESS YOURSELF

Our own Chick in the Cockpit, Erika Armstrong, is conducting research for an aviation medicine article she's doing on long-term pilot health and how that may or may not correlate to the health of the general population.

She has written a lead article on the blog "Disciples of Flight." In that article Erika is asking that we respond to a survey. Yes, I know that very few like surveys, but this one is short and sweet—just ten questions. All confidential and anonymous of course.

She didn't tell me specifically, but I'm guessing that our answers would be helpful since most of our schedules now are trips to the doctor's office instead of to the airport.

Here's how I think is the easiest way to get to the article and the survey:

- Do an online search for **Disciples of Flight**. (It's the first hit on Safari and Firefox.)
- In the row of photos and articles at the top of the home page look for **Aviation Medicine: Surprising Long Term Health Risks to Pilots**.
- Near the end of that interesting article a simple click on **Pilot Survey** will take you to it.

Or, if you want to go directly to the survey or simply like to type, go to the survey here:

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/pilotshealth](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/pilotshealth)

Erika is paying for this survey by the month and expects it to be available for only a couple months.

I've done mine. You?

## PHOTOS GALORE

This issue contains fully 30 pages of photos—nearly half the magazine. Many of the comments I hear typically say how much you enjoy the photos.

It's a minor concern of mine that many of those photos are of generally the same people year after year that attend most of the functions. The effect, then, is that roughly 85% of the membership gets to see how rapidly the other 15% is ageing.

Not a problem for me, but if you would like to see something else in place of some of the photos I'd welcome some suggestions.

Whatchabeenupto?

# We've Got M@il



Why  
women  
live  
longer  
than  
men!



Gary,

Thank you so much for including my little story in the August edition of “Con-trails”. As stated before, I do not consider myself a “writer.” It does give me a big thrill to see one of my efforts in print! I only hope that a few of our fellow pilots enjoyed it.

Your editing and presentation were exceptional! The layout, added pictures and wording changes were well done. As usual you did a great job. “Con-trails” is a class publication—you should be proud!

Thanks again,  
Darrel (Captain Smith)

VIC  
BRITT

OR

Just read all but two [August] entries—saving them for later. Too many military stories. Just kidding, maybe your best effort ever.

It’s only about 2pm and I am enjoying a cigar with a couple shots of Bardstown, Kentucky’s best to sip and dip my cigar in.

I don’t know how much longer you can keep doing “Con-trails” but your and the RNPA leaders’ efforts are much appreciated by all.

The strikes helped meld our pilots into the most cohesive group in the industry, and though we scattered to the winds, RNPA keeps us close.

Semper Fi,  
MARCAD Britt

JOEL  
TASTAD

MN

Greetings,,

Just a note to tell you that the kind of language now approved for use in the Contrails is both disgusting and offensive to me..

Not talking about the article with the warning..

Haven’t read that yet..

Best Regards,  
Joel Tastad

### How to Become a Four Star General in the U.S. Air Force

Yakota Air Force Base  
Yakota, Japan  
August 1970

Subj: Orders from Air Force HQ Washington, D.C.

All Civilian Crewmembers on Military Charter flights  
will be issued Military I.D. Cards.

Northwest Airlines crew of 2BC will report to Yakota Air Force  
administration building to get Military I.D. cards.

The captain of flight 2BC was at the end of the line answering the questions of the clerk typist who was busy clickety-clacking away until the last question which was, “What rank do I put down Sir?”

“General,” answers the captain. Clickety-clack and, “Please proceed to the next desk for your photo,” says the clerk.

“Thank you,” says the captain. One flash later and the clerk says, “Please have a seat, captain. The card will be ready in five minutes.”

Five minutes later the captain checks the I.D. card and there bold as life was the rank: General.

“Wow,” says the captain, “Do I get to pin the four stars on my uniform now?”

CLINT  
VIEBROCK

CO

Gary,

The article about the 1929 Ford Tri-Motor crash was of special interest to me as it has an interesting sequel.

Joe Kimm, my former father-in-law, was struck by aviation. He was a member of a modeling club that was mentored by pioneer Northwest Airways pilot Walter Bullock. Joe eventually worked for Bullock in the latter’s kit model business. From time to time Joe would beg Walter to help him get on the fledgling airline. A few weeks before Joe’s 18th birthday he got a call from Walter: A Ford had crashed, the pilot was killed, and the steward, Bob Johnston was scheduled to fly the next day, but was injured and in the hospital. Did Joe want to take his place? Johnston’s uniform had some blood stains, but dark shoe polish took care of that. Joe took the flight, and thus started a career that included flying in the Brass Hat Squadron in WW II, NWA system chief pilot in the late ‘40s, and ended as #1 in seniority, retiring in 1971 as B 707 Captain.

Another sidelight is in my wife’s and my online magazine, *Telluride Inside... and Out* and can be found here: [www.tellurideinside.com/2013/11/hood-river-aviation-museum.html](http://www.tellurideinside.com/2013/11/hood-river-aviation-museum.html)

Clint Viebrock

THE REST OF THE STORY

Regarding the articles written by Erica Armstrong, they were of great interest to me, not only because of the content itself, but because Erica and her Mom, her sister, our three children and I spent lots of hours together from the time they were babies until they were all somewhere between the ages of 12 and 2.

We lived in the same city during that time so the many days our husbands were flying to distant places, we had much time to get the kids together for play and excursions.

Her mom was a stay-at-home mom so I'm sure she had a great deal of influence in Erica's choice of employment and, consequently, her interesting flying experiences.

You see, Erika had a mother who just happened to fly for NWA as a stewardess/flight attendant for 28 years. I'm sure MANY of you reading this Contrails have flown with or know Geri Carrigan Hagen, who is Erica's MOM.

She was, as were many of us, part of the unfortunate group of ladies who had to sign a contract that our employment would be terminated should we have the audacity to get married or turn 32 years old. Geri flew for 10 years before she married, but timing being in her

favor, she was able to come back to grace the aisles for another 18 years.

During her NWA days, she was based in Detroit, Minneapolis, Seattle, Hawaii and now lives in Arizona having retired in 2007.

Now, you know THE REST OF THE STORY. Thanks for allowing me to bring you up to date.

Way to go, Erika!!!  
MaryAnn Allmann

I would like to express a big THANK YOU to many people who helped bring the Long Beach convention full circle. —To the Board of Directors and wives, plus Rowdy, who helped put 'goodie bags' together and work a shift to sign attendees in. —The 5 gentlemen who "volunteered" to hold neon green RNPA signs to safely direct people to walk to the Catalina Express boat on tour day! Howie Leland, Sterling Bentsen, Myron Bredahl, Terry Confer, Walt Mills. —To Gary Ferguson for putting together several awesome flyers and getting them printed. And for carrying his camera around making memories for all of us as well as taking group pictures at the Banquet night. —And to any others I missed who volunteered and offered help.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU...  
you all helped to make it a fun time!!

Barbara Pisel

Hello Gary:

Last spring I submitted the attached story to AOPA PILOT magazine for consideration in their NEVER AGAIN column. Alas, they felt it "not exactly what they had in mind" or some such brush off. I forgot about it until recently and thought it might be suitable for CONTRAILS as there are fewer children reading that finer publication!

Meantime all is well in beautiful downtown Lonsdale, Minn. I'm still shooting a lot of NRA rifle competition in the summer and eating a lot of \$100.00 "free" pancakes. I fly the Super D 35-40 hours a year and Bob Matta's old Cessna 140A maybe 10 hours. Daughter Lisa now owns it and is flying F/O on the little Poodle Jet in MSP. Linda is also doing well and keeps busy with her flowers and yard. She won't let me mow it. Says I drive to slow, too fast, wrong direction, cut too short, too tall or some other error every time I mow. She has had her own personal Dixon for 20+ years!

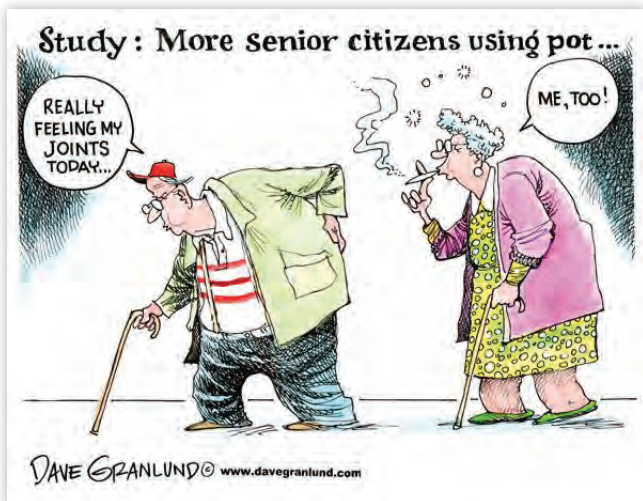
I am asked regularly why we don't go to Arizona for a few months in the winter. Well DUH.....why would I go to Arizona when all my snow removal equipment is in Minnesota. And I have heat and satellite TV in the hangar.

I always read the CONTRAILS cover to cover and look forward to every issue. Congratulations to the entire staff!

Bob Peasley

December 20, 1981.

I was flying 727s and happened to be passing through our company's home base at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International airport (KMSP). We arrived late morning and had about a 90-minute layover with a bag drag to a different gate and airplane.





On the way to the new gate I realized this was the last Minnesota Vikings game ever to be played at Metropolitan Stadium in Bloomington. The stadium was located just southwest of the Twin Cities airport. The Kansas City Chiefs were the opponents. And it just so happened the 727 ADF would pick up standard AM broadcast signals. So upon arrival at the new plane, I brewed a fresh pot of coffee just in time for kickoff and listened to the game until time for checklist, engine start and pushback.

It was a bright sunny day with the wind from the south and runway 22 was the active. During a brief hold in the run-up pad I flipped the ADF monitor switch back on to catch a quick update on the game. In 1981 there was no sterile cockpit rule and the term “distracted driving” was well into the future. I had heard rumors of crews actually listening to sports and news on the ADF during taxi and even during cruise flight, but these were just rumors.

After the short delay in the run-up pad, the tower cleared us into position and hold. This was before the days of the politically correct clearance to “line up and wait.” After stopping on the runway it seemed like it would be prudent to turn the ADF monitor off and concentrate on the take off, so I did. The tower issued our take-off clearance as follows: “Cleared for takeoff, turn left to 200 degrees.” The first officer set the heading bug and confirmed out initial climb to 7000 feet. Off we went.

At about 4 to 500 feet after take-off I thought to myself, “Hey, this 200 heading might take us right over Met Stadium.” My next thought? “I wonder if we can hear ourselves on WCCO radio? That would be pretty cool!” So I flipped on the ADF monitor and turned down the volume enough so I could hear ATC if they were to call and interfere with the

game. It worked like a charm. We sounded like Apollo 11 heading for the moon, even with the volume way down. A few minutes later we were out of range to hear the game, so I shut the monitor off.

We returned to KMSP on Tuesday after a fun-filled four-day trip. Even though it was still a few days before Christmas, it seemed like a good idea to check my company mail box to see if, by chance, the Christmas bonus checks were out. They weren’t. But there was a hand-written note from the chief pilot saying something like, Peasley, stop by my office ASAP. I was on a streak with several above-average landings and perhaps I was going to receive personal congratulations from the chief pilot. Alas, wrong again.

The chief’s secretary immediately ushered me into his office, and I realized this was not a congratulatory meeting when he said, “Be seated. I’ll be with you in a minute.” He finally asked if I was the captain on flight so-and-so December 20. I assured him I was. He then went on to point out to me the company president and the VP of flight operations had been in attendance at the Vikings game. I replied that I had no idea they were football fans. The chief went on to explain how he and the company executives thought my flight over the stadium was unprofessional, stupid, bad company PR, tacky and a few other adjectives I don’t recall. The VP of flight operations had contacted the chief pilot with instructions to offer me some remedial training on stadium avoidance or some such. During the interview with the chief, he seemed to be doing his best to avoid smiling and asked what the heck I was thinking when I pulled this stunt.

I pointed out to him that I was just following directions from the United States Government when I turned left to 200 degrees. He asked

if I was aware that this heading might take us over the stadium. I told him I thought it might. He then asked if I was aware of the company policy of avoiding the stadium during events. Being a student of the company’s flight operations manual I was, of course, aware of this policy. He then wanted to know why I had violated company policy, and I asked him if he thought the control tower was also aware of the policy. He said he thought they were. So I asked why the controller was not here beside me also being chewed out. The chief couldn’t answer that, so he switched to asking why I didn’t request a heading change to comply with company policy and avoid the problem. I pointed out that when I realized the potential problem, the controller was working another flight and by the time I could make a request it was too late.

He then suggested that maybe I should have just cheated 20 degrees on my assigned heading. I replied that I wouldn’t feel comfortable cheating the FAA 20 degrees. And did he think I would cheat the IRS 20 percent? We were, after all, dealing with the United States Government. The chief muttered a couple comments and told me to get out. I think he also wished me a Merry Christmas, but I could be wrong on that.

As I got up to leave I said to the chief, “You do know there is some good news associated with all this don’t you?” He said, “Yeah, what’s that?” I reminded him this was the last game ever at the Met and NEVER AGAIN would he have to chew somebody’s butt for this offense. The lesson of this story is that 14 CFR Part 91.113 (b) “see and avoid” applies to sports stadiums as well as airplanes!

The Vikings lost to Kansas City 10-6 and this was not my last trip to the Chief Pilot’s office over the next 23 years!



Gary,

I can shed some light on when the 747 photo over Mt. St. Helen's was taken. The story starts back in MSP when NWA got involved with the Smithsonian on an IMAX photo shoot. The movie, as I remember, was to be about migration, how birds, animals and people migrate.

Brian Moon (VP of Advertising) agreed to furnish a 747 for the air to air photos so that NWA would get some exposure in the movie. The air to air shots were going to be taken in the Seattle area.

I got involved when Don Nelson asked me to fly with him to SEA and do the photo flight with him. We were going to take Flight 51 on March 31, 1985 to SEA and fly the photo flight the next day. When we got to the DC-10 for Flight 51 Don asked the captain if he could fly the trip to keep current. I sat in first class with very few passengers up there. I was reading a book and enjoying some free time.

I did look up as we lifted off and remember thinking we must be light because I could see the old gate 9 as we

lifted off runway 29. Things were quiet until after we leveled off when Gar Benson, the second officer, came back and kneeled down beside me. He said he almost needed clean underwear (not quite his words) after takeoff. He said during the takeoff roll he looked up and there was a DC-10 crossing the runway ahead of us. He thought there wasn't a chance we could avoid a collision.

As many of you remember, Flight 51 was able to rotate in time to avoid Flight 65 which was crossing the runway. That made it possible for me to be here now telling this story. When we landed in SEA there was a message for Don Nelson to return to MSP for the incident investigation.

The next morning we recruited Bob Scott to replace Don and proceeded with a meeting for everyone involved in the photo flight. Clay Lacy was going to fly his Learjet and take the air to air photos. His Learjet was modified with two periscopes, one on the bottom of the jet with the other on top. 35 mm movie cameras were attached to each periscope. In addition, video cameras were attached

to each of the 35 mm cameras as view finders. Clay had a small monitor above the glare shield from which he could see what the movie cameras were viewing. Using this he could fly formation from any position around our 747, including in front of it.

For this shoot one of the 35 mm cameras was replaced with the 70mm IMAX camera. This caused some problems. The camera with the film magazine attached was too large to rotate in the cabin like the 35mm could. They also only had one magazine and it only contained about two minutes of film. It would take several minutes to reload. This meant valuable airplane time was wasted during each reload.

I remember a scene where we were simulating a descent over the sunny warm Hawaiian waters. We did this scene with a descent over the sunny cold waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. There were several problems with the camera and we were unable to finish the shoot in one day.

Brian Moon had given us a time limit on how much air time we could use for this shoot because the cost was coming out of his budget. He also insisted that we were not to fly the 747 if it was too dark to see the logo on the aircraft.

The second day, time was becoming a factor as we had a budget to adhere to. We wandered down toward Portland while Clay was under us getting shots of flap and gear extension/retraction. After that we headed for SEA with a chance of making our agreed return time on the airplane.

Enroute, Clay called and said the photographers had noticed Mt. St. Helens and wanted to know if they could get a shot of the 747 over Mt. St. Helens.

This was not part of the plan.

We made a turn south and crossed over the mountain at something less than 1000 feet on the radar altimeter. After crossing the mountain we made a sharp turn north for SEA and hoped we still had a chance of not exceeding the time allocated to us.

Approaching SEA, Clay called and said the photographers thought Mount Rainier was beautiful and could we do a close in fly-by on the east side of Mt. Rainier at 14,000 ft. I gave a standby and checked the INS winds. I remembered the Thermo King 707 charter that flew downwind of Mount Fuji that caused the loss of the aircraft. The winds were about 35 knots so I agreed to do it. We did not get any turbulence and they got a good shot. We hurried to SEATAC and of course we exceeded the time we were allowed. Fortunately, Mr. Moon understood.

I didn't see the movie when it was at the IMAX theater at the Smithsonian. I talked to some people that did see it and they told me it was not about migration. I understood that NWA was supposed to get a copy of it in 35 mm film or video form. If NWA did get a copy it is likely in the Delta Museum.

The photo was produced from one frame of the 70mm IMAX movie film. I had a friend buy two 16x20 copies from the Smithsonian. Since the picture was too large to copy on my scanner I used a digital camera.

Gene Frank



“Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me. I want people to know why I look this way. I’ve traveled a long way, and some of the roads weren’t paved.”

“There are three kinds of men. The ones that learn by readin’. The few who learn by observation. The rest of them have to pee on the electric fence for themselves.”

“Everything is changing. People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke.”

~ Will Rogers



# A STABILIZED approach



Contributing Columnist **James Baldwin**

## *Like Father Like Son: Part 2*

"It was an early morning launch. I was ready. The damp darkness of the August English fog hung low. My boots sunk into the soggy surround as I approached the hardstand where SCAT II, my Lockheed P38 Lightning, was parked. The rain had stopped and Glen Wold was standing there, waiting. His solemn look had just a hint of approval, probably remembering how he had appeared at the door of the Officer's Club the night before to insist I accompany him to the flight line. I had looked at the beer in my right hand and reluctantly abandoned it as I hustled behind him to the waiting jeep. More than a crew chief, he understood me. I wanted to learn about the insides of the machine I was using to kill Krauts. I had already downed two and was yearning in the worst way to get back out over the continent and find more.

"Since D-Day we pretty much had control of the skies and he had listened to my frustration framed in expletives. I wanted to be turned loose; I wanted to find more Messerschmitts and Focke Wolfs to send to their fiery deaths. Glen was proud of the small but innovative changes he was making to his aircraft and I participated, with genuine interest. It was a well accepted standard that the crew chiefs were the ones who owned the airplanes; they just let the pilots fly them once in awhile. Part of our relationship was his patient acceptance of allowing me to take part in maintaining it. It worked out well for us both.

"The forecast for the mission the next morning was for clear skies on top of the low overcast. I was strapped into Scat II and ready. Glen motioned number two was clear and I cranked it. It caught quickly and he motioned to start the other Allison. The engines fell into the rhythm I would be listening to for the next five hours. The props, mixture and throttles were never synced and it was a message from them to me about the care and adjustment they required for the abuse combat would deliver. I always listened.

"As a new flight leader I was proud to be leading Blue flight. I had briefed the guys that after the formation

organized over the Channel, I would sneak us out wide to the North approaching the coast. I wanted us to have first crack at finding Jerry.

"After takeoff and the usual three orbits, my flight joined up with Hollister on my left wing. We set the power for the climb to 28,000 feet on the left side of the group. After we got to the continent, I turned us ten left just like I had briefed and Hollister dropped low and inside me. The radio was silent as I checked the horizon for as far as I could see. We were all business now as I looked over to see Hollister. His head was like the Hula Girls' on the dashboard of my stateside car, bobbing and turning side to side just like it should. He was doing his job.

"Suddenly, the specks on the windscreen turned into smudges. They were moving and getting bigger. Finally, the enemy! Intentionally, I delayed calling them out to give us the first shot but one of my flight members called "Bogeys eleven o'clock, level." I immediately pushed all the levers to full power, climbing with Hollister tucked in tight. It looked to me like the entire German Luftwaffe was before us in V formations of at least a dozen airplanes each. This was going to be exactly what I had been waiting for as I noticed two stragglers aft of the main force. As they came into range I checked to see Hollister's position as I dropped my wing mounted auxiliary tanks and pulled my nose into position on the trailing Messerschmitt. The gunsight filled with the green mottled outline of the poor bastard about to die from the four .50 caliber machine guns and the 20 millimeter canon mounted in the nose of my 38. Bright flashes punctuated the enemy as he rolled inverted and vertical, seconds from death. I pushed on the left rudder pedal to bring the lead fighter into view but, wait, the left engine faltered. The airplane yawed and then the right engine failed as well! S#@! In an instant, I realized I had forgotten to switch to internal tanks in the confusion and excitement of finding the enemy. Hard right rudder and diving away I was able to restart the engines."

~ Robin Olds

The Boeing B-17 rolled to a stop. Robin Olds and his brother Stevan had been summoned from their classes at West Point. Their father, Major General Robert Olds, had been recovering from pneumonia and heart disease for several weeks in a Tucson hospital and asked to see them. When they arrived it was evident he would not survive the subsequent heart attack he had suffered and they stood by as he died. Robin Olds was devastated by the passing of not only his father, but also of the most influential person in his military oriented flying life; the person who had, from an early age guided him to where he was right now a.

Robin Olds graduated soon after from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point with a history that would turn out to be a harbinger of what the military hierarchy might expect from him. He was from the beginning, and in the model of his father, the antithesis of the military old guard promotional standard. It was during his time at West Point that he first began to develop a disrespect and ambivalence, in particular to the academy's "Honor Code." Distorted by academy officers in petty applications, it left an indelible impression that followed Olds throughout his career.

The academy class of 1943, due to the demands of war, was condensed and shortened to graduate early. After walking rotations right up until the hour of his graduation ceremony due to an off campus consumption of alcohol, his enthusiasm towards the military hierarchy dimmed further. The Army graduates were given the choice of regular Army or Army Air Corps, which, to the surprise of the school run by regular Army, was nearly evenly split. After the coordinated training regimen the graduates were channeled directly to their assignments. In Olds case, he travelled straight to Williams Field near Phoenix to train in the P38 Lightning. Once checked out in the airplane they were assigned, he and his West Point pilot classmates were trained in Texas and then Muroc Field, Lomita, Salinas and Glendale, California. Olds and his roommates were anxious and knew they were ready for war assignments. Military bureaucracy stood in the way of a war assignment for Olds and other West Pointers and led again to frustration with the hierarchy. More flying was the chosen distraction but the war was on and he genuinely felt like he was missing it. As the angst increased Olds and a roommate surreptitiously journeyed to a distant location and talked an innocent sergeant into issuing orders for them and their classmates. They would join up and depart with the newly formed 479th Fighter Group. Robin knew they were ready, or at least knew he was ready. There's no way he could have had any idea of how few of his classmates would never be there to see the end of the conflict. No matter, they were finally off to war!

Robin Olds was 22 years old with 650 hours total time when he arrived at RAF Wattisham, Suffolk England, in early May, 1944. Beyond eager, and willing to verbalize his ability to run the air war effort by himself, Olds continued to develop his disdain for the military hierarchy. The newly promoted lieutenants arrived just in time to gain flight time and orient themselves to living on a base in southeastern England. Even after only a few missions, Olds was admonished that the briefed war-time protocol would be followed or he would be court martialed and returned to the U.S. His peers joined in disbelief at this warning but respected his flying talent and willingness to attack the enemy with fearless enthusiasm. He was building a reputation and name without trying; he was a true warrior.

Just weeks after their arrival, the big event, "D-Day," occurred without any previous notice or warning to the new pilots. After assignments that day that accounted to nothing more than protecting the landing force from a non-existent air attack, it was frustrating from his vantage point for Olds to witness uniformed German soldiers firing down on troops below. Nothing Olds was experiencing was in any way ameliorating his perception of the inefficiency of air war management.

Olds' 434th squadron and the other two squadrons of the 479th FG had suffered continual and higher than acceptable losses since their arrival in England. By August of 1944 over half of the original squadron was gone. Three of the four flight commanders had been lost. Both of his roommates were shot down over Holland. As the least experienced group in the Eighth Air Force they had lost 30 aircraft and pilots in the last two and a half months. The fighter group needed experienced leadership and the man Jimmy Doolittle had once called "his greatest flight commander," was sent to Wattisham.

The new boss was war ace Colonel "Hub" Zemke. As Commanding Officer of the 56th Group known as "The Wolfpack," Zemke had developed tactics for bomber escort. He turned the, thought to be, unwieldy P47 Thunderbolt fighter bomber into a great platform for protection of the bomber groups by applying the "Zemke Fan" technique to complete squadrons for better coverage. Zemke, famous to fighter pilots in the theater, used his fame to gain the trust of his pilots and his experience to mold the 479th into a formidable group. Zemke's effect on the group yielded positive results and had finally gotten the 479th Fighter Group to where it belonged: out front on the leading edge of the fight. The pilots were elated to finally get the kind of missions they really wanted and no one was happier than Robin Olds. Bomber escort, patrol, ground based attack missions and a return home and back to a second tour consumed the next 8 months.

The rumors regarding a conversion to the P51 Mustang for the FG had begun in July of 1944. The introduction was finally announced Sept 7th and the boys of the 479th were pleasantly shocked by the precision delivery of their new mounts by female ferry pilots. There isn't enough space in this article for those stories! Their training existed of a quick cockpit checkout by the maintenance techs who would later maintain the airplane. That was really the only training. Getting an entire fighter group who were flying P-38s with nosewheel landing gear converted and checked out in a taildragger like a -51 was a scary process. There were losses. As good as the -38 was and as much as they had loved their personal airplanes, it was generally agreed the Mustang was a big step up. The group made good use of the new airplane, and better missions from their new leader, Zemke, meant more kills and better "O" club parties afterwards. Olds personal record as the war ended was 12 kills airborne and another 11 and a half on the ground. He was a double ace.

On May 8th, Nazi Germany finally collapsed and the war was officially declared over in Europe. Though the V-E Day celebration was welcome, the war had ended too quickly for Olds and other members of the 479th. They admittedly didn't know what to do except turn their attention to the Pacific and began studying and flying large formations all over Germany. Weeks passed with instructions to prepare for life in the Pacific. That all ended with the announcement of the world's entry into the atomic age at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The war was over in the Pacific as well.

The post war military was a confusing time and place for soldiers. Olds was no different and before he could organize the next step in his military career he was summoned to West Point once again. Red Blaik, his old football coach had learned of his availability and wanted him as an assistant coach. Unbelievably aston-



ished, he dutifully reported and spent until the end of the 1945 season doing his best at a job totally wrong for an experienced warrior. When he learned the assignment was for four years, Olds recalled the process he and his classmate friend had used earlier to gain a combat assignment. Cocktail party coincidence provided a contact who managed a transfer to one of the first jet flight groups in the Air Force. And it was in California!

Olds, like the majority of the pilots of the 412th group was surplus. It was 1946 and the ratio of available airplanes to fly versus the number of pilots ready to fly them was fractional. The only way to answer the question of why he was there was natural for Olds as he endured the necessary mind numbing desk duty to allow him to fly as much as possible. His flying skills, warrior attitude and desire were immediately noticed and within weeks was asked to accompany the commander of another squadron in a combat test flight against the Navy. The match went well, but it was prior war time acquaintances and drinking with buddies, a pastime which Olds had a penchant for, which provided the path to flying jet fighters and learning about the new technology of turbine powerplants.

Based at March Field, Riverside, California were the new Lockheed P80s that the Air Force was learning to use in their transition from propeller powered aircraft. The competition for flying time was intense and Olds, again based on his flying skills, was recruited by the same commander, the famed war ace and aerial renegade, John "Pappy" Herbst, to join his two plane aerial demonstration team. Flying right at the edge of the airplane's, and pilot's capability, they performed shows in southern California and across the country. Life was fulfilling for Olds as he got to do the flying he enjoyed most. Later, he was quoted as having said: "There are pilots and there are pilots; with the good ones, it is inborn. You can't teach it. If you are a fighter pilot, you have to be willing to take risks." Olds enjoyed the new risk and as Pappy's wingman enjoyed the shows they performed. Nearby, 80 miles east through Banning Pass, was Palm Springs, California. In the mid years of the last century it was the playground for the Hollywood stars. Many had vacation get-away bungalows and homes and many just came to play. Coerced by friends to make an evening excursion from the March O Club to the desert town, Olds and his drinking buddies headed east for dates pre-arranged. With a father whose last wife was the actress/socialite Nina Auchincloss Gore, Robin Olds was accustomed to the beautiful Hollywood types and lifestyle. As he was introduced to the women, he quickly noted the most beautiful and charming of them was cover girl and actress Ella Raines. Robin did not check his six that evening and she was able to immediately do what no

German could, sending Robin Olds immediately down in flames. He was more than smitten and courted her torridly. Equally impressed, she introduced Olds to many of the then current Hollywood stars at parties and locations where she was filming. He impressed her as one of the stars of the aerial demonstrations she attended.

The show for the San Diego County Fair, at the Del Mar racetrack would be the team's last. Pappy Herbst, perhaps a little "under the weather" from his "stag party" and marriage the day before was not as smooth as Olds knew he usually was. It was the last "split S" maneuver that ended in his demise as he stalled and crashed into a river bank near the track. Pappy's new bride of one day witnessed the crash but didn't know which of them it was. It was hours later that a devastated Robin Olds reluctantly raised his canopy on arrival at March Field and pulled off his helmet for her to see she was now a widow.

Ella and Robin, despite recognizing their disparate lifestyles, married early the next year in Beverly Hills. Their honeymoon was at the then very private and exclusive Sugar Bowl Ski Resort near Lake Tahoe. Ella had made it clear she would never live on base housing and, during his assignments in subsequent years, lived for periods of time with his wife and two daughters absent.

**P**eacetime positions Olds was assigned were varied and interesting to any pilot except the true warrior that he was. Olds was the first foreigner to command an RAF unit in peacetime when he was at RAF Tangmere in southern England for most of 1949 flying the Glostar Meteor. Enduring a period of what he considered to be undesirable staff positions, Olds was promoted to Colonel in 1953 and was finally able to return to flying in 1955 with duty in Germany and Libya with the F86 Sabre. His repeated requests for a combat assignment to Korea had been turned down. He was never sure why he was not allowed to join the fight.

At the Pentagon from 1958 to 1962, Olds was unable to remain silent regarding his opinion that America was losing its ability to wage a conventional war and that pilot stick and rudder skills were diminished. (Gee, does that sound like today's airline pilots?) Adding to that unwelcome report was another he issued predicting America's future shortage of conventional munitions for Vietnam, which turned out to be spot on. Either or both, the reports were unwelcome and little attention was paid to them, alienating him further from those responsible for promotion. Olds didn't want to be promoted, he wanted to go to Vietnam and do the only thing he was good at: being a fighter pilot. A final year in Washington spent at the National War College led to Olds being assigned to wing commander of the 81st TFW at Bentwaters, England. Back across the Atlantic was fine and the McDonnell F101 VooDoo was at least a new airplane and a new flying job! Training pilots for delivery of nuclear weapons was the job description but it wasn't what he knew a fighter pilot should be doing. Intentionally staging an unauthorized all F101 VooDoo airshow demonstration had the desired effect of having him removed from command and sent back to be assistant deputy of



operations on the east coast.

Colonel Robin Olds wanted to go to Vietnam and received his orders to command the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing based at Udon Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. Drawing on pilots from past friendships enabled Olds to assemble what has been called the "strongest and most effective tactical command triumvirate of the Vietnam War." Operation "Bolo" was the well known combat tactic he designed which gained him and his wing favorable success against the MiG 21s of the North Vietnamese. It was during this time that Olds nurtured what made him instantly recognizable. His non-regulation mustache was the "middle finger" he had for the air war management.

Four more MiG kills turned Olds into a triple ace. Multiple other opportunities were passed to wingmen in order for him to avoid being recalled as a "publicity asset" after five kills.

Olds last official mission was on September 23, 1967. He fought in two wars over 20 years apart. 259 missions were flown and 16 enemy airplanes shot down.

Iconoclastic, an outspoken maverick to military management that didn't make sense and a personality in the image of the father who raised him, Robin Olds was a hero warrior in the truest sense. He fought just the way he led and asked for nothing but to defend the country he loved. ✈



# *A Chick in the Cockpit*



Contributing Columnist Erika Armstrong



I can spot them. It's not as easy as planespotting because each make and model are only slightly different from a distance, but on closer inspection, pilots behave, dress and present certain personality traits which helps me spot them in a crowd. I enjoy freaking my friends out because I can see someone and suddenly my pilot radar activates. I quietly gather clues and enough information to conclude that my radar was correct: that's a pilot. My friends are in awe when I'm usually correct and then I'll verify by asking the target, "So, what do you fly?" They'll raise an eyebrow and ask how I knew they were a pilot, but I don't like to reveal my secrets. Often times, the clues are so overwhelming, I can ask, "Who do you fly for?"

**The private pilot:** They're the easiest to spot. No matter the age, they have the most enthusiasm about aviation. Their love is pure and their motivation to be around aviation is endless. They read aviation publications and light up when someone asks about their flying. Since they passed the student pilot phase, many have already been weeded out from the crowd. Many people say they want to be a pilot, but most don't obtain the actual license. Private pilots have officially entered the pilot herd and from here forward, they start maneuvering to other pilot cor-

als. Many pilots will stay here, loving everything about being in the air, and wouldn't want to ruin it by being told where and when to fly. For others, they won't be able to imagine not living without departing the earth on a regular basis, and getting paid for it. Either way, these pilots buy a pair of Ray-Bans and are constant optimists.

**The instrument pilot:** These flyers are slightly more confident than the private pilot because this is one of the hardest licenses to earn. Pilots at this level are still learning how to fly and then they add another level of skill and safety by being able to purposely fly in the clouds. This level of pilot can sometimes be bogged down by overconfidence, but usually one or two scares in the clouds with icing or low visibility approaches puts a healthy fear into their mindset. These pilots go from loving aviation to loving and respecting aviation. Those who don't give it the respect it deserves are often discussed in the newspapers and NTSB reports. These pilots have coffee tables overflowing with aviation magazines, but are still detail oriented and self-disciplined.

**The commercial pilot:** No turning back from here. These pilots have made a commitment, but they're at the point



in their training where they might need to be committed. With the magic number of minimum hours raised to 1,500 for even the commuter airlines, I recognize the signs of a pilot with about 500 hours. Their savings accounts are empty and they're questioning their career path while pondering how long a bank robbery conviction would stay on their record. It's just a rating in the sequence so they can take the next step, but it's nice to say you're a commercial pilot. These pilots have to keep reminding their parents that a commercial pilot is not an airline pilot. The first set of bags will appear under their eyes and temptations from the outside world will push hard on pilots during this phase. By this point, these pilots do not have enough hours to get hired anywhere, but too many hours to let go. These pilots are holding on to the dream by a thread, but that thread is unbreakable. They'll try ag/spray piloting, banner-towing, traffic reporting and nonprofit volunteering. Somewhere along their timeline, they'll have to fit in that pesky bachelor's degree too. At some point, between private and commercial, they'll own a manual transmission car.

**The multi-engine pilot.** Walks with a straighter back by having stronger calf and thigh muscles. These pilots have learned that multi-engine does not necessarily mean safer. Stomping on the rudder pedal on the dead engine, repeatedly, will increase leg as well as brain muscle strength. Grabbing a fistful of throttles is thrilling while going higher and faster which pulls the ego a bit higher too. Having a lighter wallet will allow you to climb that much higher. A new addiction to wanting jets behind you begins. These pilots have a leather jacket somewhere in their closet.

**The certified flight instructor:** The new instructor is enthusiastic and has not yet had their first bowel movement in their pants when a student unintentionally tries to repeatedly kill them. Experienced flight instructors are the sharpest pilots in the industry. They are able to mind meld and determine which idiotic move their student will perform next. The best pilots I've met are professional flight instructors. They have chosen this path out of the reward of teaching and they know everything there is to know about their chosen field. They'll admit they didn't do it for the money. Their closet is full of khaki pants with grease stains.

**The second-in-command:** This is what all those other steps were about. This seat is the desire and the most important yoke to get behind while in the pilot pipeline. Once you're here for the first time making money, you've made it. This is where you start your pilot worthiness. Hours and operational experience in the Part 135 world

will open doors for you. When the phone rings at 0200 and it's -22F and you're asked to fly an air ambulance flight, you'll be there in ten minutes with a smile on. And, you'll do it again and again...for years. You'll wake up in a shack in North Dakota and see your captain sleeping in the Lazy Boy next to you and you'll have a moment where you wonder where you are, wondering why you're doing this, but you'll keep doing it. These pilots chant "1500 hours" in their mind, repeatedly. They are happy zombies.

**The Airline Transport Pilot:** Yes, it's capitalized, unlike the others. These pilots are all the other pilots wrapped into one. They are either flying charter, corporate or are at the airlines and ironically, the bigger the airplane, the less they talk about aviation unprovoked. If they are sitting captain of a heavy, they have spent tens of thousands of hours, either in the air or on the ground, embraced by aviation. When they leave the cockpit, they often need to detach from years of aviation overload. They need their quiet time. But yes, they will still light up and can, and will, tell you endless stories about this extraordinary industry. They are highly intelligent, but don't spend too much time being intellectual. The work-style demanded by the cockpit environment is unlike any other so one of the side effects of aviation is learning how to deal with people on every level and in every situation. Not too many people have to sit next to their co-workers, for hours at a time, and deal with life and death decisions on a routine basis. One fatal mistake means hundreds die. Crew resource management is not just a phrase, it's a mindset. They learn to be assertive without being aggressive, unless it comes to safety—then you'll learn the true meaning of stubborn. These pilots have the fancy watch, the gadgets and will splurge on one unusual hobby or item—usually involving four wheels or a boat. ATP pilots have a permanent, mischievous grin on their faces.

Aviation is not just about the pilots. Enthusiasts don't even need to put a hand on the yoke to be an important cog in this machine. There are tens of thousands of people who work in and around the industry who are passionate about how aviation has changed the world and they will never lay their hands on the throttles. They are just as important because they educate, fund and create the romance for an industry that is defined by its ups and downs. Mergers, takeovers and furloughs often sour the lives and attitudes of those involved, so we need others to be detached and remind us all that aviation represents the genius of human creativity. We need to crane our necks to peer up to the heavens and see the result of human collaboration screaming above the clouds. Magnificence. If you understand this, then always remember that you helped put that machine up there... ✈

# *SW Florida Spring Luncheon*

## *March 8th, 2016 • 11am*



Marina Jack Restaurant  
2 Marina Plaza  
Sarasota, Florida

**\$27 / person**  
**Seating limited to 160**

Meal choices: 1. Grouper Oscar | 2. London Broil | 3. Island Chicken

CHOICE

Name

Name

We are FIRST-TIMERS!

Checks payable to "Dino Oliva" and mailed to him at:

3701 Bayou Louise Ln  
Sarasota FL 34242

REGISTRATION DEADLINE  
**March 4th**

INFO  
941.349.4960 or 941.356.1963

# 2015 Reunion



## Long Beach & Santa Catalina



Photos by the Editor except as noted





## President's Reception

1. Ina & Al Sovereign, Dino Oliva
2. Dino & Karen Oliva, Neal & Carolyn Henderson
3. Bonnie Daniel, Jan Mills, Curt & Sandy Bryan, Walt Mills
4. Denny Olden, Shirley & Doug Parrott
5. Barb Pisel, Prim Hamilton, Montie Leffle, Kay Kurtz, Denny Olden
6. Vic Britt, Bob & Julie Henderosn





### THE FIRST TIMERS

Front Row: Deneen Polgar, Kay Kurtz, Kathy Bensen, Julie Henderson, Nancie Russ, Betty & Wayne Spohn, Sandy Bryan

Back Row: Tony Polgar, Cindy Erickson, Michael Hay, Gar Bensen, Bob Henderson, Gary Russ, Ben Green, Curt Bryan

Not shown: Judy Huff, April Hay



Nadine Bentsen, Andrea Schneebeck, Ivars Skuja, Mary Ann Wotherspoon, Bev Skuja, Barb Pisel, Sterling Bentsen

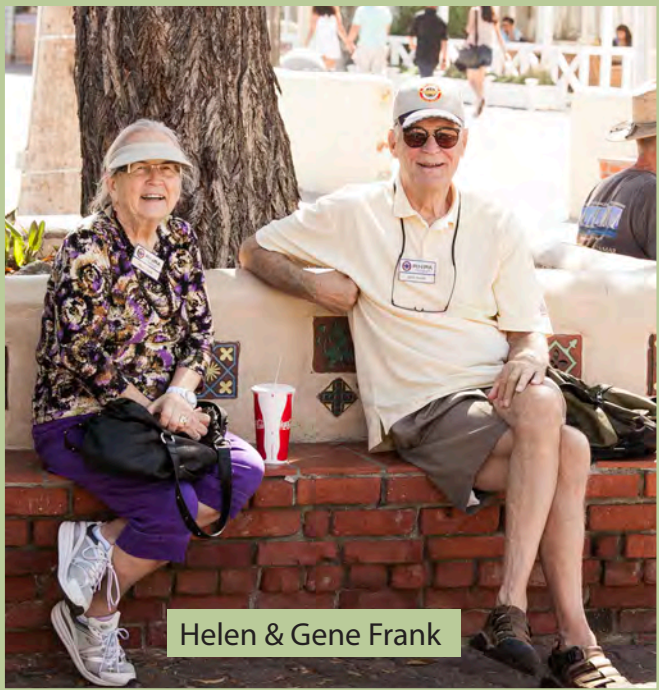


Gene Frank, Rowdy Yates, Gar Bensen, George Lachinski



Myron & Gayla Bredahl, Ben Green, Sheri Ball, Dona Schessler, Bonnie Gehrmann





Helen & Gene Frank



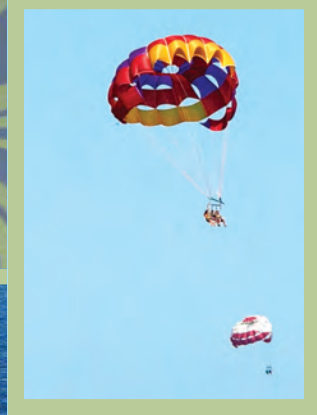
Mary Linda & Tom White overlooking one zipline station.



photographer unknown







# Avalon



Mural detail in the famous Avalon Casino

# Day Two



Very few cars allowed, but many golf carts



Roberta & Haven Hill  
Gail Olson & Bruce Armstrong



Pat Riemen & Dave McLeod  
Nancy & John Bates



JoAnne Aitken & Chuck Carlson  
Mary Ann & Bill Noland



Rowdy Yates, Denny Olden, Vic Britt

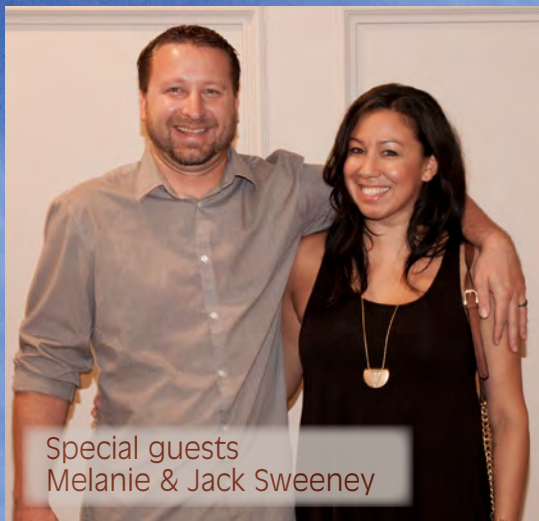


Master of Ceremonies

# Banquet Day Three



Barbara won the bidding for solid gold wings for Gary's birthday present



Special guests  
Melanie & Jack Sweeney



Great entertainment from the Darden Sisters, ages 19 to 14  
They reminded us all of the Andrews Sisters plus music from that time.



Gayla & Myron Bredahl

Barbara & Gary Pisel



Kathy & Gar Bensen

Rita & Wayne Ward



Helen & Gene Frank

Bobbi & George Lachinski



Bev & Ivars Skuja

Mary Ann & Gordon Wotherspoon



April & Michael Hay

Judy & Tom Schellinger



Cindy Erickson, Kathleen Palmen

Carolyn & Jim Pancharian



Ina & Al Sovereign

Marilyn & Howie Leland



Shirley & Doug Parrott

Karen & Dino Oliva



Jan & Walt Mills

Nadine & Sterling Bentsen



Betty & Wayne Spohn

Mindy & Pete Schenck



Andrea & Dave Schneebeck

Nancie & Gary Russ



Barbara & Doug Peterson

Sandy & Curt Bryan



Shirley & Hal Newton

Deneen & Tony Polgar



George Bucks, Hal Hockett

Lynn & Terry Confer



Camille & Jack Herbst

Bonnie & Art Daniel



Prim Hamilton

Montie Leffle

Sheri Ball



Edith & Don Schrope

Carol & Ron Vandervort



NanSea & Charlie Welsh

Denny Olden, Danny Camp



Judy & Bob Royer

Joan & Bill Fields



Claire & John Lackey

Donna Pauly-Chetlain & Art Chetlain



Dona Schessler

Kathy & Skip Eglet



Alayne & Jack Hudspeth

Ron Hudspeth



Julie & Bob Henderson

Sue & Bob Horning



Sue & Tom Ebner

Joan & Gary Baldwin





Judy & Chane Howard  
Sandy Ensman & Chester White



Jane & Dave Sanderson

Eileen & Phil Hallin



Kay Kurtz, Judy Huff

Mary Linda & Tom White



Carolyn & Neal Henderson

Katie & Dave Pethia

# Smithsonian?



# Really?

By Darrel Smith



1999

Glenda, my first and last wife, answered her phone. Mayan, our granddaughter, who was on a short visit to Washington DC, was on the line. Obviously excited, she was talking so fast it was difficult to understand what she was saying.

She was calling from the entrance to the cockpit area of a Northwest Airlines Boeing 747 that was part of a recently opened display of "America by Air" at the Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution. "I found it! I found it! I am standing beside Gram Pa's uniform." The "dummy" in the display was outfitted with this "dummy's" uniform.

In the Airline industry most eastbound "long haul" flights depart in the late afternoon or early evening. This departure time, after passing through several time zones and hours of flying through the night, allows for an early morning arrival. Drowsy passengers, followed by an almost equally exhausted flight crew, stumble into the airport terminal.

Tommy Tucker, my trusted copilot, the second officer and I had just completed a normal layover in the company hotel near the Narita Airport in Japan. We had been delivered to the airport where we went about our normal preflight duties. Upon arriving at the aircraft we found the cabin crew busy preparing the aircraft for the

overnight flight. This huge Boeing 747 sat quietly while many workers hurriedly prepared it for yet another Pacific crossing.

Takeoffs, departures, approaches and landings were the fun parts of airline flying. The time between could become hours and hours of checking, logging and monotony.

Thank goodness the average captain's memory was relatively (maybe very) short. He could therefore be entertained by the jokes and stories of his fellow pilots even though he had heard them all only a week or so ago. Their offerings always seemed fresh, humorous and interesting.

The start, taxi and takeoff had been normal. This old heavily loaded jet was very slow to climb to altitude. We nursed it to the initial cruising altitude. The last few thousand feet showing only a 100 to 200 feet per minute climb rate. We were now well out over the Pacific and everything settled into a comfortable (let's somehow get through the night) mode.

The last four and a half years I had served as the Chief Pilot for the 400 or so pilots based in Honolulu, Hawaii. This relatively small group formed what seemed to be a close bond. We frequently addressed each other by first names. Everyone knew that I was approaching my mandatory retirement age of 60 years.

Our old but trusty jet preformed perfectly as we rode the jet stream toward the Islands. There had been a period of silence. Tommy finally turned slowly toward me and asked, "What are you going to do with your uniform after you retire?"

Aroused from a period of extreme alertness, I replied that it would never be used again. He asked, "Would you like to donate it to the Smithsonian?"

Tommy, from his college days, I think, was very good friends with the curator of the new display being developed for the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. Northwest Airlines had donated the very first Boeing 747 aircraft which, during its last years, had been flown regularly between Honolulu and Tokyo, to the Museum. It and its sister ships were dubbed "the beach product" and therefore rigged with many rather small seats to accommodate the Japanese body style. I had served as captain on several Pacific crossings on this very aircraft.

I told Tom that I would be happy to donate this old uniform to the cause. I had no clue as to how this was to be accomplished. He gave me a name and address which I somehow put in a place where I could later find it.

Upon retirement I gathered my entire uniform; hat, jacket, trousers, shirt, tie, belt, shoes, socks (no underwear) and sent the lot to the address that Tom had given me. I soon forgot the entire event. A few months later I

received a form letter that, if signed, would relinquish any claim to the items that I had mailed. This document was quickly signed and returned.

Long story made short, my uniform was used in this new Smithsonian (America by Air) display. Our granddaughter had found it and was excited. I would like all my fellow pilots of Northwest Airlines to understand that I feel that there are numerous pilots who more richly deserve to have their uniforms in this display.

I do find it interesting that I wore that uniform to fly that aircraft across the Pacific a number of times. There are many, many pilots who have flown the Pacific and that aircraft much more than me. I feel that every pilot who flew this magnificent aircraft should be proud to have been part of the history of the Boeing 747.

Tommy, thank you for requesting that I donate my uniform, there is some pride knowing that I was an operational pilot on this aircraft and for the historic Northwest Airlines. As I write this little story, 15 years after retiring, I wonder if that old uniform is still on display.

Note: I have never viewed the display at the Smithsonian. Please know that I still love Northwest Airlines and consider it one of the best that ever existed. Every Northwest pilot should be proud that we were part of one of the world's best! It was a sad day when it disappeared! ✈

---

MARYANN  
ALLMAN

WA

Regarding the articles written by Erica Armstrong, they were of great interest to me, not only because of the content itself, but because Erica and her Mom, her sister, our three children and I spent lots of hours together from the time they were babies until they were all somewhere between the ages of 12 and 2. We lived in the same city during that time so the many days our husbands were flying to distant places, we had much time to get the kids together for play and excursions. Her mom was a stay-at-home mom so I'm sure she had a great deal of influence in Erica's choice of employment and, consequently, her interesting flying experiences.

You see, Erika had a mother who just happened to fly for NWA as a stewardess/flight attendant for 28 years. I'm sure MANY of you reading this Contrails have flown with or know Geri Carrigan Hagen, who is Erica's MOM. She was, as were many of us, part of the unfortunate group of ladies who had to sign a contract that our employment would be terminated should we have the audacity to get married or turn 32 years old. Geri flew for 10 years before she married, but timing being in her favor, she was able to come back to grace the aisles for

another 18 years. During her NWA days, she was based in Detroit, Minneapolis, Seattle, Hawaii and now lives in Arizona having retired in 2007.

Now, you know THE REST OF THE STORY. Thanks for allowing me to bring you up to date.

Way to go, Erika!!!

MaryAnn Allmann



# MSP CHRISTMAS PARTY

Same place... different time!

Thursday, December 10th  
Social hour: **11:00AM**  
Luncheon: **12:30PM**



Chart House  
11287 Klamath Trail  
Lakeville MN (952) 435-7156

Entrées: Champaign Chicken  
Walleye  
Prime Rib



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Checks payable to "RNPA Christmas Party"

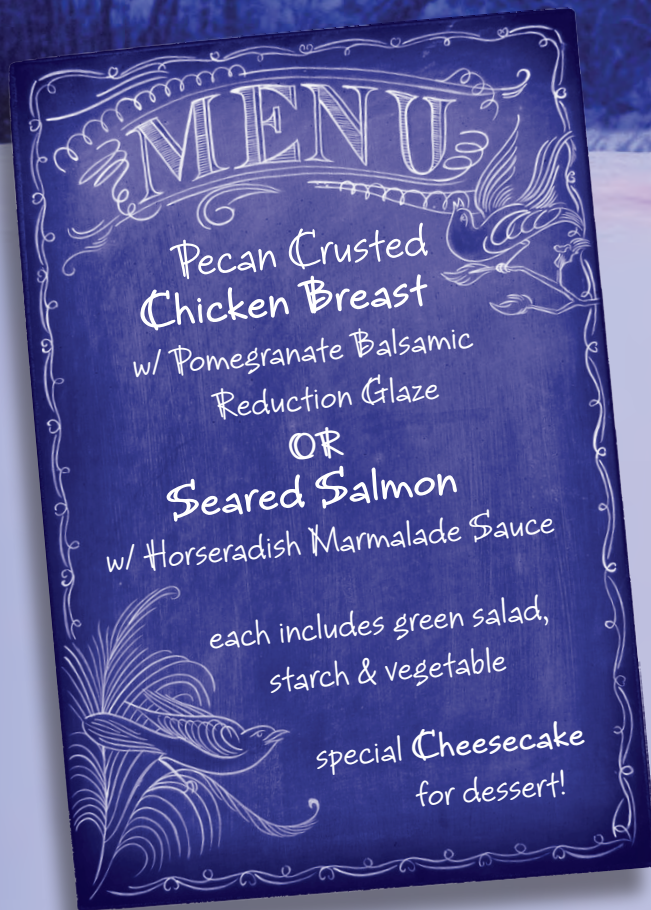
RSVP by: Tuesday, December 1st

Chicken ↑  
Walleye ↑  
Prime Rib ↑

Mail to:  
Steve Lillyblad  
8493 133rd St.  
Apple Valley MN 55124

# SEATTLE 2015 CHRISTMAS PARTY

DEC. 10TH  
10:30 - 3:00



***Emerald Downs Racetrack***  
2300 Emerald Downs Drive  
Auburn, Washington

***\$35 per person***



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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \$35 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

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**Registration DEADLINE: December 3rd**

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Salmon

Mail to:

**Kathee Nelick**

**6101 Nahane West N E**

**Tacoma WA 98422**

253.927.9136

knelick60@comcast.net

# Seattle Picnic '15



Photos by the Editor

Hosts NanSea and Charlie Welsh ➡ brought us another well organized picnic with great barbeque, old friends and near perfect weather.

No one wanted to ask the Master of Ceremonies what he had been doing over behind the shrubbery.



Sharon & Dave Turner (FIRST TIMERS), Fred Pack, Marty Foy, Gordon Wotherspoon





Hosts NanSea & Charlie Welsh, Irene Kochendorfer, Nadine & Sterling Bentsen



Francine Elliott & Larry Patrick, Kathee & Rex Nelick, Donna Pauly Chetlain & Art Chetlain





Lowell & Dorothy Schroeder, Gerri & B. J. Molé,  
Myrna & Lenny Lipman



Kathy Eglet, Bud & Carolyn Cheney, Sally Reber, Ray Schier,  
Skip Eglet



Jim & Pat Harrington, Mary Ann & Gordon Wotherspoon,  
Andrea & Dave Schneebeck



Joann & Denny Swanson, Joen & Howie Parks,  
Linda & Dave Rolczynski



Jack & Mary Ann Allman, Darlene Jevne, Eugenia Nakamoto, Corky Black



Chuck & Marilyn Nelson, Alayne & Jack Hudspeth, Bev & Ivars Skuja



Cindy & Dick Moller, Gary & Nancie Russ, Larry & Mavis Stears



Holly & Dave Nelson, Abby Lanman



Jim & Bev Palmer, Jerry & Irina Harrott, Greg Novotny



John & Karen Pennington, Dave & Veda Hall, Betty & Bill Huff



Linda & Tom Peterson (sorry Linda), Patricia & Jack Kemp, Andrea & Dave Schneebeck



Wayne & Kathleen Stark, Janice Hendrick, Eve & Mel Sugget, Judy Evenson



Sandie Snead, Chuck Carlson & JoAnne Aitkin, Sandy Schmidt



Myron & Gayla Bredahl, John & Nancy Bates,  
Dave McLeod & Pat Rieman



Roxanne Davis, Lydia Dawson, Montie Leffle, June Palon, Patty Dills



Wilbur & Becky Harris, Barbara & Doug Peterson  
front: Towa & Hika





Curt & Sandy Bryan, Cynthia Bryan, Eileen Halverson



Eileen Halverson, Mike Orecchio, Judy Evenson

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timers?

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*ADVICE*



This building was the first hotel built by Conrad Hilton. It has been extensively remodeled, updated, made "green" and is on the National Historic Register. Conde Nast Traveler recently named Hotel Andaluz among the top 10 hotels in the southwest.

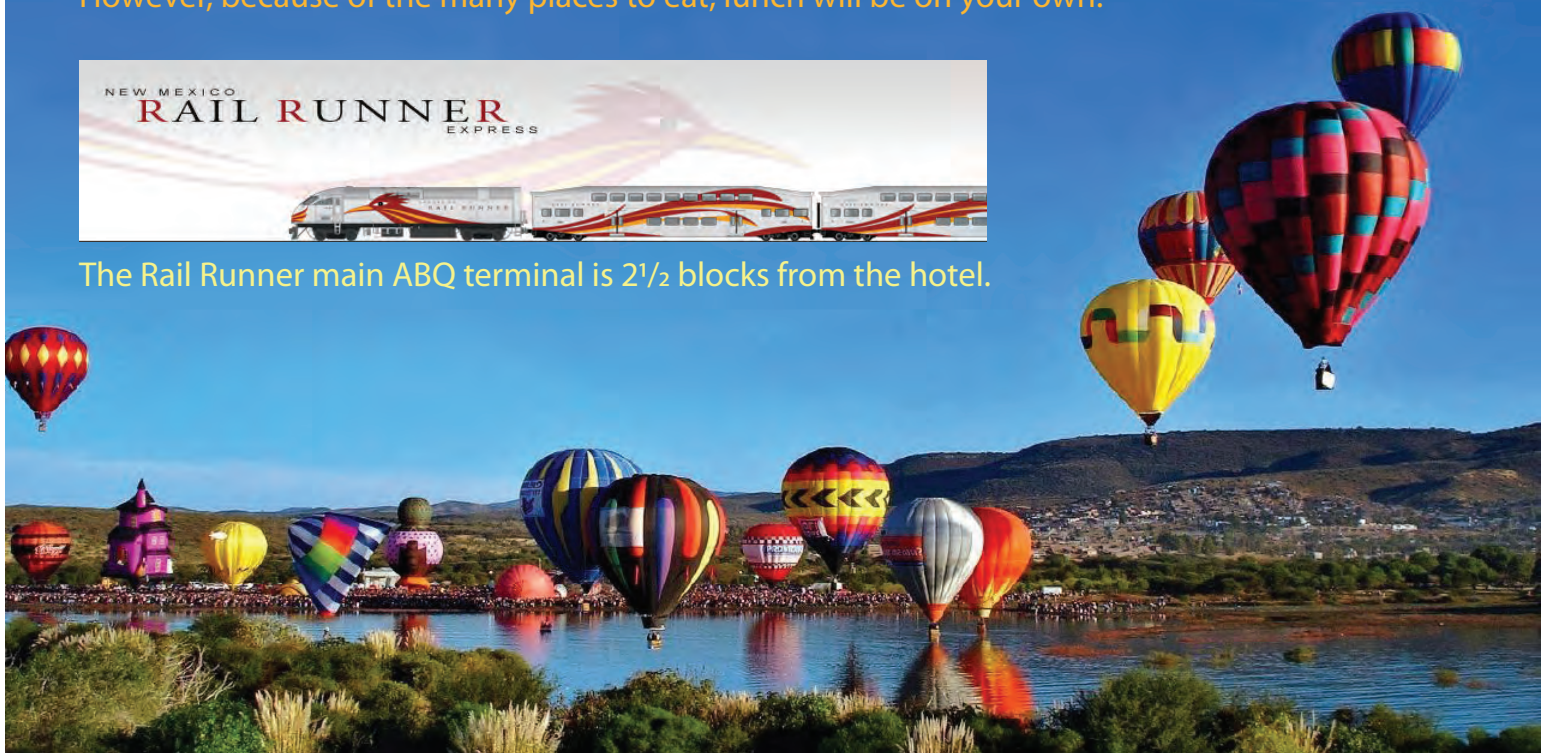
on site dining  
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NO BUSES! On Tour Day we will take the NM Rail Runner from ABQ to Santa Fe. When we arrive we'll tour the Loretto Chapel and take the Trolley Tour of the area then return on the Rail Runner, all costs included. However, because of the many places to eat, lunch will be on your own.



The Rail Runner main ABQ terminal is 2 1/2 blocks from the hotel.





*Dave & Andrea Schneebeck*



*Jan & Walt Mills*

Photos: Roseanne Jones



*Doug & Roseanne Jones*



*Claus Dassel, Sig Hermann*

*Connie Bowen, Margie Plimpton*



*George & Pat Groth*



*Marian Knutzen, Sterling Bentsen*



*Wally Plimpton, Turid Dassel*



*Sig Hermann, Claus Dassel*



*Jerry Black, Rich Conrad*



*Howard & Nancy Schwend*



*Pat Riemann & Dave McLeod*



*Skip Eglet, Bill Knutzen, Marty Foy*



*Linda & Dean Johnson*



O. D. and Stew

## ORVILLE “STEW” SCHROEDER 1942 ~ 2015

**Orville Steward Schroeder**, age 72, a retired Northwest Airlines captain passed away June 29, 2015 at Sandpoint, Idaho. The cause of death was pneumonia exacerbated by Alzheimer’s dementia.

Stew’s famous teenage words were: “I’ll never be a pilot like my Dad.” Born into an aviation world, Stew evolved into a true aviator himself. He entered that world on October 16, 1942, born to Orville Dietrich and Ann Steward Schroeder. His father, O.D. Schroeder, a senior NWA Seattle based captain, retired in 1970.

Stew’s family moved to Auburn (Star Lake), Washington and in time he graduated with the Federal Way High School class of 1960. While attending college, Stew also accumulated flight time and acquired FAA pilot ratings. As a student he was creative about having fun and deservedly earned a reputation as a mischief maker in the process.

He married Sue Joneli in 1965 prior to NWA employment. On December 06, 1965 the second Schroeder pilot’s name was entered on the NWA pilot seniority list, Stew having just turned 23 years old. His class may have been the youngest pilot class ever hired by NWA. Upon completing initial training Stew was based in MSP as a Boeing 727 second officer. He and his buddy Bob Blad were soon upgraded to second officer instructors on both the 727 and 707 series. A move up to the right seat as 727 first officers soon followed.

Stew acquired a reputation among his classmates as a skilled poker player. Poker games were popular with his classmates until marriage and family obligations cut short their playing time.

The late 1960s and 1970s was a time of meteoric pilot upgrades followed by back-sliding reversals. In 1970, just prior to the infamous BRAC strike, classmates Stew Schroeder, Bob Blad and Ted Swan submitted bids to be copilots on the yet to arrive Boeing 747. That summer while many of their colleagues were laid off and filling construction trade jobs, Stew and his pals were checking out on the ‘Whale.’ When the strike ended in early winter Stew was a qualified 747 First Officer. Being the junior 747 copilot on reserve, he and his buddy Marv Peterson spent Christmas Eve 1970 together in MSP locked to the telephone. Pilot lore suggests that Stew was the youngest pilot to check out in any NWA 747 cockpit seat.

During the 1972 ALPA Pilot Strike, Stew and classmate Marv Peterson opted for a day of water skiing on Lake Whatcom at Bellingham, WA. Stew was steering the boat when Marv struck an obstruction in the water and nearly lost his hand. It remains to be determined whether it was ever healthy to let those two get together.

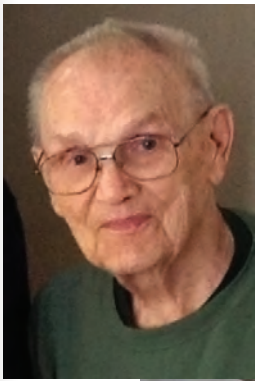
In 1974, just as family arrivals began, Stew completed his initial captain upgrade to the 727. NWA invited Stew to return to flight training as a 727 captain instructor. This was an era of career stability.

Stew maintained long enduring friendships with his airline pals; he was the best man at Doug Harrison’s wedding and the two were almost bonded at the hip. Stew also shared his passions for the outdoors, fishing, water sports, and skiing with his children. He especially liked to go north to Vancouver Island and fish for salmon with his son Scott and Doug Harrison.

His last airline career event was an upgrade to captain on the 747/400. Flying the Queen of the Fleet required being based in New York and when that base closed, Detroit. During these years Stew also served as a check airman. In 2002 Stew arrived at age sixty and mandatory retirement. Remarkably he retired just two months short of a thirty-seven year career. In retirement Stew enjoyed the RNPA gatherings and visits with airline colleagues.

At the time of his passing Stew lived in Sandpoint, Idaho, chosen because of his love for the outdoors. He is survived by his daughter Stephanie Martin of Ann Arbor, MI and son Scott of Sandpoint, Idaho; two grandchildren; his brother Steve Schroeder of Auburn, WA; and sisters, Sandy Ripley of Shoreline, WA and Sue Edwards of High Point, N.C.

(– Bill Day)



### JOHN “BOB” BEAN 1918 ~ 2015

**Captain John Robert Bean**, age 97, of Rochester, Minnesota died July 28, 2015. He donated his body to Mayo Clinic for the purpose of medical education and research. His wish was to contribute directly to new understanding and discoveries that would help future patients.

Bob was born in southern Illinois on Feb. 13, 1918, to James Allan and Rose (Castle) Bean. In the early 1920s the family moved north to Minnesota and Bob grew up in Winona. In Winona he attended school and learned to fly. At the age of 15 Bob began flight instruction with the famed aviator Max Conrad. Family lore reports that Bob soloed with only two and a half hours of flight instruction.

In time Bob would work for the legendary Max at the Max Conrad Flying School as an instructor and charter pilot. It was early in this era—November 1940, while still a student pilot, that Bob was called upon for emergency service during the great Armistice Day Blizzard; for which he and his instructor were nominated for the Carnegie Medal for heroism.

The Armistice Day blizzard was legendary in Minnesota meteorology historic lore. The morning of 11 November 1940 brought with it unseasonably high temperatures. By early afternoon temperatures had warmed in lower to middle 60s degrees Fahrenheit. As the day wore on conditions quickly deteriorated. Temperatures dropped sharply, winds picked up, and rain, followed by sleet, and then snow began to fall. An intense low pressure system had tracked from the southern plains northeastward into western Wisconsin, pulling Gulf of Mexico moisture up from the south and pulling down a cold arctic air mass from the north. The result was a raging blizzard that would last into the next day. Snowfalls of up to 27 inches, winds of 50 to 80 mph, 20-foot snow drifts.

Along the Mississippi River several hundred duck hunters took time off from work and school to take advantage of the ideal hunting conditions. Weather forecasters had not predicted the severity of the oncoming storm, and as a result many of the hunters were not dressed for cold weather. When the storm began many hunters took shelter on small islands in the Mississippi River, and the 50 mph winds and 5-foot waves overcame their encampments. Some became stranded on the islands and then froze to death in the single-digit temperatures that moved in overnight. Others tried to make it to shore and drowned. Duck hunters constituted about half of the 49 deaths in Minnesota. Those who survived told of how ducks came south with the storm by the thousands, and everybody could have shot their daily limit had they not been focused on survival. Casualties were lessened by the efforts of Max Conrad, a pioneering light plane pilot and one of his students, John R. Bean, both based in Winona, Minnesota, 25 miles upriver from La Crosse. They flew up and down the river in the wake of the storm, locating survivors and dropping supplies to them.

After high school, without any college preparation, Bob taught aeronautics at the University of Colorado. He was hired by Northwest Airlines on April 08, 1942 and soon found himself flying Army Air Corps Northern Region contract flights. This flying included extensive military contract supply flights over the tundra of Canada and Alaska, including the Aleutian Chain. During the war years Bob flew the Army C-46, C-47, C-48-B, C-53, C-73, Lockheed 10-A, and the North American B-25.

In 1943, while on leave from his Army contract duties, Bob married Jeanne Oskamp in Winona, Minnesota. Together Bob and Jeanne raised five children, Robert, Thomas, Michael, Susan, and Richard.



Bob served as a line pilot, ground school instructor in aerodynamics and a check airman. During the thirty-six year career at NWA Bob flew the DC-3, DC-4, DC-6, DC-7; the Boeing 247, Boeing 377, Boeing 707 series and the Boeing 747; the Martin 202, 404 and the Lockheed Electra. At age sixty in 1978 Bob retired from Northwest Airlines. However, he wasn't finished with airplanes and continued his aviation interest in Alaska logging bush flying time in the Cessna 180, 185, 205 and the Maule M-4. Incidentally, Bob was retired for 37 and a half years, longer than his working career, he certainly defied the prognostics of NWA financial statisticians. There is no doubt he made the most of every one of those working and retirement years!

Bob was preceded in death by his wife of nearly 69 years, Jeanne; his son, Thomas; and brothers, James V. Bean and William P. Bean (also a NWA pilot) He is survived by his four remaining children; Robert, Michael, Susan, and Richard; plus eight grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. His family was everything to Bob and he was an outstanding example for them. (- Bill Day)

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## LOOKING BACK



### ARMISTICE DAY 75 NOVEMBERS AGO

"We were playing cards, and all at once, we heard a bang like a thunderbolt that was close by, and the ground just trembled."

Wendelin Beckers, 20 at the time, was on duty at the Mobil station in Watkins. He half-stumbled, half-crawled through the storm to see what had happened.

"I felt my way. I knew the area so good and followed the side tracks up to the depot. And when I got there, I saw the awful truth. My God! Two of those iron horses like they had years ago, those steam engines, were smashed right head on together," says Beckers.

A passenger train loaded with duck hunters and a freight train collided in front of the Watkins depot. Unable to see in the white-out, the passenger train's crew missed a track-side signal. An engineer and fireman were killed. Watkins residents formed a human chain to lead the passengers to safety, while an eerie cry mingled with the storm's roar.

"One of the whistles in one of the engines got jammed and it let out the most mournful tone," says Beckers. "All day and part into the night before the steam was all out of the boiler. A low mournful sound like it was crying over the accident that happened, that's the way it sounded."

*(Excerpted from The Winds of Hell by Mark Steil, MPR News)*

On Tuesday, November 12, the "winds of hell" brought a deadly reckoning. The Armistice Day storm cut a 1,000-mile-wide path through the middle of the country. On Lake Michigan three freighters and two smaller boats sank, 66 sailors died. In Minnesota, 27 inches of snow fell at Collegeville, the Twin Cities recorded 16 inches. Twenty-foot snow drifts forced rescuers to use long probes to find missing cars. Passenger trains were snowbound. And along the Mississippi River, the first bodies of duck hunters were brought in. "The city of Winona turned their city garage into a makeshift morgue and were bringing in those that were frozen and they thawed them out there for identification," says Norman Roloff. When stories of how people died began circulating, he realized just how lucky he had been. One man that they found was frozen upright in the water. For some reason he had held on to a branch and the rescuers just cut the branch on either side of his hand and he was brought in with that branch still in his hand.

*(Excerpted from The Winds of Hell by Mark Steil, MPR News)*



"Needed an 8-foot probe to find pickup", photo by Richard Bren Sr., 1940, from "All Hell Broke Loose", by William H. Hull



**ROYAL W. CHERRY, JR.**  
**1941 ~ 2015**

**Captain Royal W. Cherry Jr.**, 74, of San Clemente, California, born March 31, 1941 in San Diego to the late Royal Wallace Cherry and Gladys Alma Cherry, “Flew West” July 7, 2015 in Mission Viejo.

Royal graduated from Grossmont High School in La Mesa, California in 1958, and entered the Naval Aviation Cadet (NavCad) program in fall 1961. He was commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Navy and designated a Naval Aviator in winter 1963. He volunteered for duty in South East Asia and was assigned to Fighter Squadron (VF) 154, the “Black Knights” flying F8U “Crusaders,” and later transitioned to the F4H “Phantom.” The squadron insignia, a silver Crusader knight on a black field with two F8U divisions crossing in the background, was designed by squadron pilot, John “Crash” Miottel and drawn by cartoonist Milton Caniff, creator of the “Terry and the Pirates” and “Steve Canyon.” During Royal’s 1965 cruise in the Tonkin Gulf on the USS Coral Sea, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, 11 Air Medals and two Commendation Medals.

Released from active duty in 1967, Royal continued in the Navy Reserve and was hired as a pilot by Northwest Orient Airlines in June 1967. He flew Boeing 727,

707, 757, 747 and Douglas DC-10 commercial jets, and retired as a Boeing 747 Captain after over 30 years with the airline.

Royal was a member of Dana Point Yacht Club, and he enjoyed sailing off the coast of Southern California with his family.

*Carl Plucker:* “No one besides my father had as much impact on my life as Uncle Royal. That says a lot about a man I saw infrequently. His service to country guided me as I became a sailor too. Recently my son and I spent time with him, and he made a huge impact on my son also. Fair Winds and Following Seas Uncle Royal, we will visit again someday!” *Bill Horne:* “One of the funniest guys ever. Loved being on a layover with Royal; his humor will be dearly missed. This world needs more Royals. First time I heard his name I laughed, after I met him his name became secondary. Heaven is getting a great guy.” *Gary Lee Parks:* “A fine gentleman and a great guy to be around, and my inspiration when I decided between Air Force pilot or Naval Aviator. I chose the BEST! Though Royal was an Upperclassman, I knew him in high school. We flew combat in Vietnam at the same time off different carriers, and flew F8U Crusader’s ‘Last of the gunfighters’ in the NAS Dallas Navy Reserve squadron. On ‘cross country navigation training flights’ from Dallas to NAS Miramar, San Diego we overnigh-  
ted at home with our respective wives. Always a smile, a good husband and a lifelong friend. I will miss you for now.” *Harry Bedrossian:* “Royal was one of a kind. A gentleman and excellent pilot. Royal will be missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.” *Bill Kish:* Royal was a really good, fun guy to be around. Royal, Paul Reyes and I were members of the “Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club” with AirWing (VAW) 15 during the 1965 cruise on the Coral Sea. After the Navy we ended up with NWA in 1967, and flew in the NAS MSP Reserves until the A4’s moved to Selfridge AFB near Detroit in 1970. Royal was as good a pilot as he was a fun companion.” *Al Schlegel:* “A mutual friend and I visited Royal shortly after his motorcycle accident. The accident did not affect his sense of humor nor his viewpoint of things. In fact, he gave some sailing stuff to my friend who was about to depart on a round the world, single handed sailing adventure.” *Chane Howard:* “I first met Royal at NAS Atsugi’s O’Club, during the Vietnam War. His Squadron was having a party. He walked up and said, ‘Can I pour you a glass of Champagne?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ Royal put a glass in my hand and said, ‘I’ve got to get my line up right.’ He poured the champagne from my shoulder down my arm and into the glass. I said, ‘Thanks, my name is Chane.’ And he said, ‘My name is Royal Cherry Jr.’ and I said ‘Really?’ Next time I saw Royal was at NWA when we became classmates in class 12, June 67. Last time

I saw Royal was a week before he died, and he was still that 'Wild and Crazy Guy' who poured that glass of champagne in Atsugi, Japan 49 years ago." *Lyle Prouse*: "Royal Cherry, a new NavCad in Class 38-61, entered Pre-Flight training at NAS Pensacola, Florida, my cadet officer week. I was a MarCad and Regimental Sub-Commander of Indoctrination Battalion ("Boot Camp"), and the first week at Pensacola is hell week. I called Cadet Cherry out of formation and stood him at attention in his white Navy issue skivvies and white T shirt, while I held forth about his name. I asked pointed questions he could only answer with, 'Yes Sir' or 'No Sir.' Next time I saw Royal, eight years later, I'd left the Marine Corps and Royal was well ahead of me on the seniority list at Northwest. Royal was an outstanding gent, supremely capable in the cockpit, quick-witted and funny, a good friend, and I liked him a lot. After his motorcycle accident, I knew he was paralyzed from the chest down. I had no idea how our conversation would go, or how either of us would handle it before I called. I dreaded the call but felt obligation born of our friendship. Royal was amazingly upbeat and positive. I asked how he could have such a positive, cheerful attitude in his physical condition. Royal said, 'When I came to I was on my back in the hospital. I couldn't talk



or move anything. I looked at the small holes in the ceiling tiles wondering if the rest of my life would consist of one eye blink for Yes and two eye blinks for No. As I improved, I was able to talk and move my head, neck and arms. I realized how fortunate I was.' I admired Royal for his unique ability to focus on what he had left versus what he had lost. I experienced something similar, but never under the extremely grim, tragic, and physical circumstances he had, and never with the idea that my situation would hold me in permanent captivity as I knew his would. I talked about his attitude, which he seemed to casually maintain, and I hung up the phone grateful for the lesson in what an indomitable spirit really looked like. Over the years I sent a few cards, but Royal was in my thoughts and prayers far more often than the number of cards I sent suggest, and I am very sad to hear that he's crossed over into the spirit world, as we say in our native culture."

Royal is survived by his wife Judith Lynn Cherry; children Kristen Cherry Levy and Royal Wallace Cherry III (Trey); grandchildren Mason Wakefield Levy, Alexandra Ellie Levy, Nathan Royal Cherry, and Hannah Lynn Cherry; and sisters Fern Plucker and Beth King.

(- Vic Britt)



## RICHARD "DICK" SUHR 1933 ~ 2015



**Captain Richard "Dick" Suhr**, age 82, passed away on July 22, 2015 after a long and complex struggle with prostate cancer. Dick was born in Sheridan, Wyoming, the only child of Victor and Nena Suhr, and was raised in Buffalo, Wyoming.

From his early childhood Dick was an outdoor kid. He was adept at catching trout in the local creeks and often provided the main course at the dinner table. Very young in life Dick became a skilled hunter and was soon leading pack horses into the mountains on deer hunts. It was not uncommon for nine year old Dick to head out into the wilderness for a few days with only his dog and horse. Somehow he also wedged some time in for education, graduating from Johnson County High School in 1952. Post high school, Dick enrolled in the University of Wyoming at Laramie where he also played varsity baseball.

There is no shortage of baseball players in the ranks of NWA pilots and Dick was one of the best. You could find our man on the pitcher's mound at University of Wyoming games. He also played in the American

Legion leagues, rising to championship levels. His college was interrupted when Dick signed on with the Pittsburgh Baseball organization, playing the 1954 season with their Pioneer League team the Billings Mustangs. During the 1950s, military obligation for young men was an ever present reality, therefore Dick opted to do his service by enlisting in the Naval Aviation Cadet (NavCad) Program.

Dick began his NavCad training and lifetime aviation career at NAS Pensacola. The primary and advanced flight training were flown in the SNJ and T-28, thereafter he had his multi-engine training in the Beechcraft SNB and Grumman S2F. Dick was winged and commissioned in 1956, then sent to his first operational squadron at Barbers Point, Hawaii. Arriving NAS Barbers Point, Dick was assigned to VW-12 where he flew the P2V and WV-2 (the radar picket ship Lockheed Constellation). This squadron was one of several that flew the radar barrier stretching between Hawaii and the Aleutians in Alaska. After Barbers Point, Dick spent a short time stationed at Iwakuni, Japan flying the VF-1 (SA-16) before separating from active duty in October, 1958.

Returning to the states, Dick was hired by NWA on March 03, 1959. After initial training he was based at MSP flying the line as a copilot in the DC-6 & DC-7. In 1963 he married Cynthia Nimmer and together they raised two daughters Nicole and Jolie. When his seniority permitted, Dick qualified as captain on the DC-6, DC-7, L-188, and

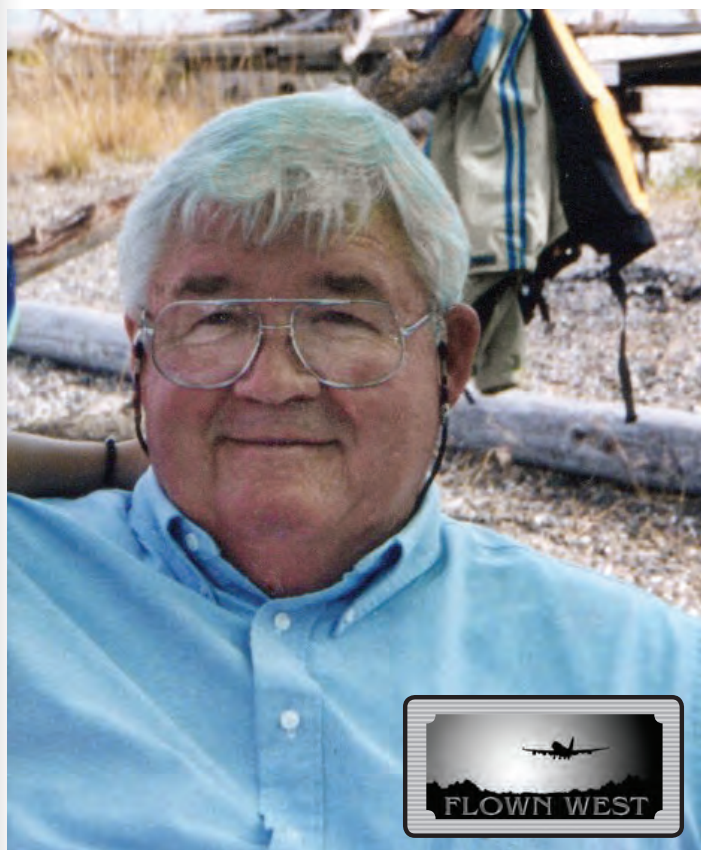
the Boeing 727. [Author's note:] One of my first copilot trips was with Dick on the 727. At the end of my first day, Dick grinned at me and said, "I didn't realize I also had to do instructor duty." In 1971 Dick bid into the Seattle base where he completed the rest of his 35 year career flying the Boeing 720/320, the DC-10, and eventually the 747/200.

Dick and Cynthia parted ways in 1980. Dick thereafter concentrated on flying the line and pursuing his passion for boating. As a member of the Meydenbauer Bay Yacht Club he was introduced to Linda Gaylord. Dick and Linda married in 1983 and together they pursued their mutual passion for boating in the San Juan islands, Canadian waters, and coastal Southeast Alaska. Ever present with the two were their stalwart sea-faring cats.

Mandatory age sixty retirement ended Dick's NWA career in April 1993. Dick and Linda filled any void by boating, playing golf and traveling extensively locally and abroad. In time, Dick and Linda matriculated into a 'snowbird' lifestyle, spending summers in Semiahmoo (Blaine), Washington and the winter months in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Dick was close to his family and had a special bond with his grandchildren. He is survived by his wife of 32 years, Linda Suhr, daughter Nicole and her daughter Simone; daughter Jolie and her daughter Lucie.

(- Bill Day)



## MARVIN BANKS RITCHIE, JR. 1936 ~ 2015

**Captain Marvin Banks Ritchie, Jr.**, age 78, passed away in Bremerton, WA on May 17, 2015. He died after a short illness complicated by the effects of Agent Orange to which he was exposed while serving in Vietnam.

Marv (Banks to his family) was born Nov. 5, 1936 in East Bend, North Carolina. He knew flying was his dream job when he listened to his Uncle David, dressed in his uniform, describe his WWII flying experiences. Marv grew up in the Piedmont Triad region and attended Greensboro Senior High School where he was a good student and an All-American High School football player. He entered Duke University in the fall of 1955 on a football and academic scholarship. Gary Wilson, future Chairman of the Board of Northwest Airlines, was also on the Duke U. football team that year.

Marv performed well in football, academics, and Air Force ROTC. To his surprise, an administrative glitch during his senior year changed everything. With only one four-credit class needed to graduate, Marv learned he had to wait until the second semester of the next

year to enroll in that class. Despite having completed four years of ROTC, Marv decided to enlist in the USAF Aviation Cadet Pilot Training to avoid being drafted into the Army while waiting for the course. He knew that others had been drafted under similar circumstances

Ralph Christ and Marv Ritchie, two future NWA pilots, were classmates in Pilot Training Class 61-F. Their primary training in the T-34 and T-37 was at Marianna AFB, where the two lived in adjoining rooms. Ralph writes: "Every morning Marv would stop by my room, before every morning formation, and he usually left a cigarette ash on our floor for the inspector to find. We were sent to Reese AFB in Lubbock, Texas for T-33 training. We became roommates at Reese, where the ash problem persisted. He always amazed me in the academic side of training. While the instructor was lecturing, Marv would read the chapter in the manual. He never opened the book again and aced every test. He did, however, explain the materials to others as they studied."

Completing advanced training in the T-33, Marv received his wings and commission on March 17, 1961 at Reese AFB, Lubbock, Texas. Marv was on a multi-engine track and subsequently assigned to the 62nd Troop Carrier Wing, at McChord AFB. The 62nd TCW was a MATS C-124 special operations wing and participated in many one of a kind flights worldwide. In 1963 Marv had a break from the C-124 when he was deployed to Vietnam for a short tour flying the C-123 in support of the Army Special Forces operations. His 150 sorties in the C-123 were often under hazardous combat conditions. During his USAF service Marv flew the T-34, T-37, T33, C47, C117, C123 and C124.

After returning to the mainland in 1964, 1/Lt. Ritchie met Susan Claggett at an event for tall people. They hit it off and were married on Oct. 24, 1964. Their fifty years of marriage testify to the wisdom of bonding tall folks.

Marv left the active Air Force to seek airline employment and was hired by NWA on May 23, 1966. After his initial new hire training Marv was assigned to Seattle as a second officer on the Boeing 720/320. The Air Force recalled him two years later to serve an additional year of active duty during the Pueblo Crisis.

Resuming his airline career, Marv served NWA for a total of 30 years flying the Boeing 727, 707/320 series, DC-10, Boeing 747/200, and finally 747/400. He stored his flight bag for the last time on November 05, 1996 at age 60 years.

On September 19, 1991 Marv was one of two captains on a crew facing an extraordinary inflight emergency. NWA 18, a 747/400 from Tokyo NRT to JFK, encountered a bizarre mix of failures. Passing through



Marv accepted the Daedalian Award on behalf of the entire flight crew on June 13, 2002.

FL240 on climb out, the crew started receiving warnings and caution messages implying multiple engine malfunctions, hydraulic failures, and pressurization control problems. (See Contrails article *A Storm of Failures in the Teeth of a Typhoon*, November 2009.) The cockpit crew opted to return to NRT in the face of an approaching typhoon, landing successfully despite an engine fire, flap failures and pressurization problems. Upon landing, the aircraft was evacuated into typhoon conditions that kicked up the fire suppression foam to the point of blindness for passengers and crew. After evacuating the passengers, the entire crew did an extraordinary job of caring for their passengers.

For their performance in this emergency, the flight crew was awarded the 1992 ALPA Superior Airmanship Award and the USAF Order of the Daedalians award for Outstanding Civilian Airmanship.

After retirement, Marv enjoyed travel, cooking delicious meals, and sports. He remained a faithful servant and good friend to many, by putting his cooking skills to work in a Catholic Church food kitchen serving the elderly. Marv will also be remembered for his flying stories, his snappy comebacks, and clear-headed thinking.

Marv is survived by his wife Susan Claggett, his son Samuel Todd Ritchie and his daughter Sarah Brooke Ritche now serving in Geneva, Switzerland with the U.S. State Department.

(- Bill Day)



## VERNON FRANCIS DEHMER 1927 ~ 2015

**Captain Vernon Dehmer**, age 87, passed away May 19, 2015. Vern was born a farm boy in St. Michael, Minnesota. Bright and capable, deeply etched by the depression years, he rose to serve our military during World War II and worked his way into the cockpit from the maintenance ranks at NWA.

Vern grew up on a farm near St. Michael and attended school in Buffalo, Minnesota. He performed well as a student with a special affinity for history and mathematics. In high school Vern was recognized as a skilled athlete, playing both football and baseball.

Due to his young age, Vern's entry into the military came late in World War II. He enlisted in the Army and earned paratrooper wings. He became a rifle squad leader in H Company, 511th PIR, 11th Airborne Division. After the Japanese surrender, Vern served in Japan with the Army of Occupation in Iwate and Aomori Prefectures in Northern Honshu. There the Paratroopers were served the best and only ice cream in Japan.

Vern was always proud of those paratrooper wings. His sons believe the following Army definition fits their father to a tee: "A 511th paratrooper is like a good watch. He has an open face, busy hands, is made of pure gold, is well-regulated and well-disciplined and full of good works."

After release from Army service Vern enrolled in technical school to study aircraft mechanics. During these post-war years three of the Dehmer boys jointly purchased an airplane which they flew off the family farm; Vern was soon hooked by the flying bug. In 1949 Vern married Mary Agnes 'Aggie' and together they began a family.



Northwest Airlines hired Vern as a mechanic trainee on August 31, 1950. In time he acquired FAA A&P and A&I mechanics ratings and was designated a Master mechanic. Vern always sought duty as a flight mechanic and in 1956 NWA selected him to be trained as a flight engineer. As a flight engineer Vern flew the standard four engine propeller transports of the era, the Boeing 377, DC6 and DC7 with the Lockheed Electra being his favorite. In 1964 he accepted NWA's offer to provide flight engineers training to upgrade to copilot, his initial checkout being on the Boeing 707/720-320.

Throughout his life Vern never hesitated to make broad leaps and embrace new challenges. In conformity to this tradition, he opted to upgrade to Boeing 727 captain in 1970. Vern had a long tenure on the 727, and when seniority permitted, he upgraded to the Boeing 747. He was flying 'the Whale' when he retired on May 26, 1987. The last month he flew for NWA, Vern carried 3,985 passengers and flew 29,000 miles. The date of Vern's last flight was the very same day of the year that he laid to rest his wife, Aggie. Vern loved his career and said he was blessed with never having to work a day in his life.

Vern lived a full and diverse life. He also believed very strongly in his civic duties and served two terms on the Osseo City Council as well as being a long-time member of the Brooklyn Park Rotary Club and Osseo American Legion.

The family reports that Vern never lost his fine touch with a wrench and saw with which he built additions to their Osseo home and restored a 1958 Willy's Jeep Pickup with his boys. Friends and family affirm that Vern was an adventurous man who golfed and rode motorcycles well into his late seventies. His adventurous spirit inspired his sons to follow suit. In addition, Vern was also a supportive father and grandfather. He could always be seen and heard at the grandchildren's soccer and hockey games and other school activities.

Vern was preceded in death by his wife Mary Agnes; his son Robert; and his granddaughter, Robyn. He is survived by his children, Jerold, Richard, and Dale. He had eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. This extraordinary man lived a life of service and kind consideration for others.

(- Bill Day)



# Membership Application and Change of Address Form

NAME
SPOUSE'S NAME

**CHANGE:** This is a change of address or status only

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)		

**MEMBERSHIP TYPE**

**REGULAR (NR) \$45**  
Pilots: Retired NWA, post-merger retired Delta, or Active Delta

**AFFILIATE (AF) \$35**  
Spouse or widow of RNPA member, pre-merger Delta retired pilots, other NWA or Delta employees, a friend, or a pilot from another airline

SECOND OR SEASONAL ADDRESS (for RNPA annual directory only)		
STREET		
CITY		
STATE	ZIP+4	PHONE

**PAYMENT**

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:  
"RNPA"  
AND MAIL TO:  
Retired NWA Pilots' Assn.  
Dino Oliva  
3701 Bayou Louise Lane  
Sarasota FL 34242-1105

DATE OF BIRTH (Optional for affiliate member)
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DATE OF FIRST EMPLOYMENT WITH <input type="checkbox"/> NWA <input type="checkbox"/> DELTA AS:	
AN EMPLOYEE	A PILOT

DATE OF RETIREMENT FROM <input type="checkbox"/> NWA <input type="checkbox"/> 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
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IF NOT, INDICATE TYPE OF RETIREMENT: MEDICAL	EARLY	RESIGNED
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APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF HOURS LOGGED
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AIRLINE AIRCRAFT TYPES FLOWN AS PILOT
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**NOTES**

**U. S. POSTAL SERVICE:** We are unable to change mailing addresses seasonally. Instead, Contrails and all other mail is sent First Class to your permanent mailing address, which provides for forwarding, unlike our previous mailing system. If desired, please arrange forwarding through the U. S. Postal Service.

**\*EMAIL NOTE:** To protect email addresses they have been removed from the RNPA website ([www.rnpa.org](http://www.rnpa.org)). To request a member's email address or to **change your own** please contact Phil Hallin at:  
**RNPAnews@bhi.com**

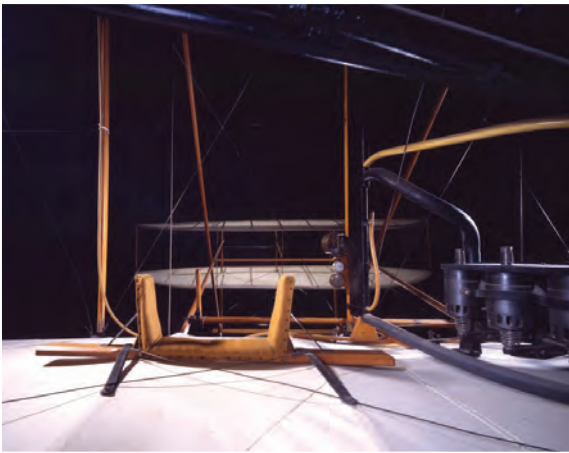
<b>REMARKS:</b> Affiliates please include information as to profession, employer, department, positions held, and other relevant info:
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RNPA TREASURER:  
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SARASOTA FL 34242



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