



CONTRAILS

ISSUE NO. 201

FEBRUARY 2017



WWI ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. That day was designated Armistice Day in 1926, later renamed to Veterans Day.

RETIRED NORTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

CONTENTS

- 10 A STABILIZED APPROACH**
Saying goodbye to an aviation legend
- 13 THE WAY IT WAS**
Non-revving remembered
- 16 A CHICK IN THE COCKPIT**
Teaching the next generation of pilots
- 18 THORUNG LA**
Fifteen days of trekking in Nepal
- 23 FATE IS THE HUNTRESS**
Is ours determined by fate or something else?
- 26 MSP CHRISTMAS PARTY**
Our two largest events are both in Minnie
- 36 RAGS**
Preventing, rather than cleaning up messes
- 40 IDAHO BACK COUNTRY**
Larry Daudt sends a photo essay of 6 days there
- 46 SEA CHRISTMAS PARTY**
Sterling Bentsen sends a photo recap
- 50 HAL'S SEA STORY**
It's his story and he's sticking to it
- 53 IMAGINING THE FUTURE**
How will our grandkids handle exponential change
- 4 OFFICERS' REPORTS**
- 7 WE'VE GOT MAIL**
- 56 FLOWN WEST**

RNPA CONTRAILS



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Each Member!

The RNPA newsletter Contrails is published quarterly in February, May, August and November by the Retired Northwest Airlines Pilots' Association, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to maintain the friendships and associations of the members, to promote their general welfare, and assist those active pilots who are approaching retirement with the problems relating thereto. Membership is \$45 annually for Regular Members (NWA pilots, active or retired) and \$35 for Affiliate Members.

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Membership Application & Change of Address Form

MEMBERSHIP TYPE (CHECK ONE)

\$45/year REGULAR (NR): Pilots; active or retired NWA or Delta.

\$35/year AFFILIATE (AF): Spouse or widow of RNPA member, everyone else.

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DATE OF FIRST EMPLOYMENT WITH NWA DELTA AS:

AN EMPLOYEE

A PILOT

PAYMENT

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: "RNPA" AND MAIL TO:
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Sarasota FL 34242-1105**

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). To request a member's email address or to change your own please contact Phil Hallin at: RNPAnews@bhi.com

DATE OF RETIREMENT FROM NWA DELTA AS:

AN EMPLOYEE

A PILOT



Notices to Airmen



SW Florida Spring Luncheon March 7th • Page 17



MSP Summer Cruise June 15th • Page 39



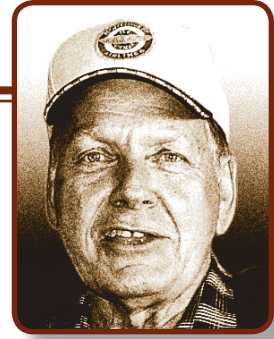
Palm Springs Desert Gathering March 25th • Page 39

DEARBORN REUNION 2017

Page 6



President's Report: Gary PISEL



Greetings to all from sunny Hawaii. Been 25 years since we have been to Honolulu and WHAT A CHANGE. All the old haunts are gone, the Royal Hawaiian has been engulfed in a major shopping complex. The layover hotel is still the Ala Moana, and the shopping center there has gone high end, no—HIGH END!

Reservations are coming in very slow for our Reunion in Dearborn. The venue of the Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village and the Ford Rouge Factory has lots to offer. Tom Ebner has arranged a continuous shuttle bus so you can keep your own schedule. Please sign up at your earliest convenience.

Plans for future Reunions are in the works, however we would like some volunteers to run the reunions. It is

time for some new blood and new ideas to be part of the RNPA experience. Locations we are considering are Great Falls, Duluth, Seattle and New Orleans. Ideas are needed for other future sites.

The spring and summer functions are just around the corner. The Spring Luncheon in Sarasota, the Palm Springs party, Seattle Summer Picnic and the Phoenix Picnic. Not far behind those is the summer cruise on the St. Croix, always a big draw.

As our membership wanes I ask all current members to recruit someone to join. We have many retired pilots that have never attended any of the functions. Once they attend they want to come back again. It is a great way to keep in touch with all your former working partners.



Treasurer's Report: Dino OLIVA

Between issues I quite often think of something that needs to be done, but unfortunately I don't write it down, so when the deadline for my report arrives everything I thought about disappears from my mind. This time I wrote it down when I thought about it, so here it is.

Each quarter when we send out our newsletter 2 or 3 come back with the notation "MOVED NO FORWARDING ADDRESS." I then look at the RNPA directory telephone number. If it is a cell phone number I can contact the individual and update their information. Unfortunately, many of you do not send in your cell numbers so we lose all contact with you.

Please, when you move, remember to let me know about it. Send your new information via snail mail, email, cell phone or any other method you can think of. Help me out so that we do not lose contact with you. Any of you that have canceled your land line and only have a cell number, please send me that number so that I can put it in our data base.

Thanks



INSPIRATION

In addition to our three great contributing columnists, this issue has five stories from five different members and one that I found elsewhere.

I am hopeful that you, too, may find the inspiration to send me one of your stories. As I have said many times, we ain't producing literature here—just our stories.

DO YOU FIND COMMITMENTS HARDER NOW?

Classify this along the lines of the guy who never buys green bananas. Folks our age aren't sure they want to commit to something months in advance. Hence the slow incoming registrations for the Dearborn Reunion.

As a reminder, our reunions are self-supporting. That means nothing comes out of the RNPA general fund. That also means that whoever organizes one must pay considerable up-front money to seal contracts. That's why your early registration fees are important.

Here's something that may ease your mind; a long-standing policy you may not be aware of:

- 1) Any time 30 days prior; full refund
- 2) Between 30 and 7 days prior we will attempt a refund if at all possible.
- 3) Within 7 days prior any excess monies over actual expenses will be equally distributed amongst the no-shows.

DUES NOTICES WERE A LITTLE LATE

The USPS caused us a bit of a mild panic in early January. The notices were mailed on the 23rd of December with the expectation that they would arrive in your mailboxes around the first of January. That was meant to allow you almost a month to beat the January 31st deadline.

When none had received theirs around the 6th of January we sent out the detectives to investigate. The PO claimed that it "May take ten to fifteen business days this time of year." I became alarmed in case the whole lot was simply lost. How could we reprint them and get them mailed in time to have enough cash to print the February issue?

It was a big relief to finally receive mine after a full sixteen days.

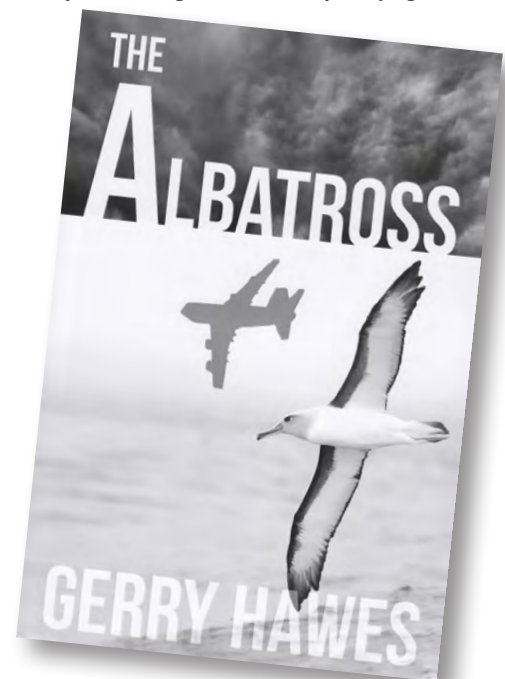
WANT A GOOD READ?

RNPA member Gerry Hawes may be a first time author, but you will have a hard time accepting that after reading his first effort. Pilots *and* flight attendants alike will recognize everything—and you will find yourself right there with this crew. Good story, great writing.

Here's what another admirer had to say:

"Gerry Hawes, recipient of the FAA's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, knows what he's writing about and it shows. *The Albatross* is a compelling story rich with memorable characters, a real tour de force, but its greatest strength is the author's ability to put the reader in the cockpit of a commercial airliner. I was gripped from beginning to end. If you've ever flown a 747 you will recognize the writing as absolutely authoritative. If you are not a pilot this may be the closest you get to flying a big jet. Be sure to fasten your seatbelt!"

—J. Bradford Tillson was a reporter, editor, and publisher of *Dayton Daily News in Ohio* and CEO of *Cox Ohio Publishing*. In 2003 he chaired *Dayton's* celebration of the centennial of the Wright brothers' first flight.



Available personalized with free shipping from the author here: ghawes7693@aol.com or from Amazon.

DEARBORN REUNION 2017



SEPTEMBER
14-15-16

REUNION FEE OF \$195 PER PERSON INCLUDES:

- President's Reception • Henry Ford Museum (much more than just Ford cars!) • Greenfield Village • Ford Rouge River Tour (see the F150 built) • Banquet • Meetings • Ladies' Coffee •

Continuous all day 25 passenger bus service between hotel and museum—from 9:15 until 5:15—about a 10 to 15 minute one way trip.

Banquet Meal Choices:

1. Roulade of Chicken Breast (stuffed with spinach, tomato and artichoke)
2. Hazelnut crusted Grouper



DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

dearborn.doubletree.com

Ph: 313.336.3340/1.800.222.8733

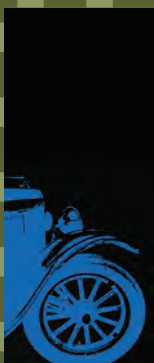
\$124 per night +taxes

Rates good for 3 days before and after

Shuttle available to/from DTW

Parking \$4/night self – \$8/night valet, in'n'out OK

Breakfast included



Name _____

Name _____

email: _____

Checks payable to "RNPA"

Mail To: **Terry Confer**

**9670 E Little Further Way
Gold Canyon AZ 85118**

**DEADLINE:
August 15th**

1. Chicken
2. Grouper



Don't forget →

First timers?

We've Got Mail



Betty Foster Houston was born and grew up in Spokane, WA, where she met her future husband, NWA pilot Frank “Sam” Houston, who preceded her in death in 2002.

She moved to Seattle sometime after the war—late '40s. They were married in 1952 in Bellevue, WA.

Betty worked in Northwest Orient Airlines reservations in Seattle. After her midnight shift she would change her clothes and go to downtown Seattle to work a shift at Frederick and Nelson department store.

Betty and her friend, Doris, cruised to Hawaii in 1939 for a six week vacation at a cost of \$300 each (imagine that nowadays). Then they cruised to Alaska in 1940, and took another cruise to Cuba going through the Panama Canal and back up the west coast to Aca-pulco in 1941.

She had the travel bug early on. Since she and Frank had no children for whom she had a great love, she used that love and her travel bug to bring many Korean babies back to the USA for adoption from 1982 to the late '90s.

Betty had many NWA friends, who will miss her happy demeanor, from her reservation days and travels with Frank.

She left us August 18, 2016.

Mary Ann Allman

LANE
LITRELL

MN

Dino, Gary, Gary, et al --

Thanks for the wonderful job you guys do so that the rest of us can enjoy Contrails and RNPA socials.

I retired at the end of October. I have been practicing at this retirement thing since, and I find that I'm pretty good at it! My interests other than aviation run toward railroading. Now that I've retired, I'm getting more involved with the railroad museums here in St. Paul and in Duluth, so have traded my pilot's cap for an engineer's cap. Running a train is basically energy management, just like flying, but without the vertical component. Kids and grandkids are well, as are Nancy & I, for which we're thankful.

Sunny today here in Minnesota, but just barely above zero. You Floridians... Be thankful !!

Sincere best regards to all.

-- Lane Littrell



Most people can't tell what this image is. Can you?

Answer next page.



Walking by his son's room a father notices, with his parental instincts, that something must be wrong. The room is spotless and even the bed is made. Several alarms go off at once, especially when he sees a letter on the pillow with the word "Dad" written on the envelope. Expecting the worst, he opens the letter and begins reading it with trembling hands.

"Dear Dad,

It is with great regret and sorrow that I am writing you. I had to elope with my new girlfriend because I wanted to avoid a scene with Mom and you. I've been finding real passion with Barbara, and she is so nice. But I knew you would not approve because of her piercings, tattoos, tight motorcycle clothes and the fact she's much older than I am.

But it's not only the passion Dad; she's pregnant.

Barbara assures me that we will be very happy. She owns a trailer in the woods, and has a stack of firewood for the whole winter. We share a dream of having many more children.

Barbara has opened my eyes to the fact that marijuana doesn't really hurt anyone. We'll be growing it for ourselves and trading it with other people in the commune—for all the cocaine and ecstasy we want.

In the meantime, we'll pray that science will find a cure for AIDS so that Barbara can get better. She sure deserves it.

Don't worry, Dad. I'm 16, and I know how to take care of myself. Someday, I'm sure we'll be back to visit, so you can get to know your many grandchildren.

Love,

John

PS: Dad, none of the above is true. I'm over at Billy's house. I just wanted to remind you that there are worse things in life than my report card that's under my pillow. Call when it's safe for me to come home!

JANE
CHADWICK

MN

Hi Gary,

I would like to thank the RNPA family for their outpouring of love, support and concern at the time of Don's passing. I am so amazingly overwhelmed and appreciative of the many cards, letters, phone calls, and memorial donations our family received during this difficult time.

All of these things certainly are a tribute to Don and his career with Northwest Airlines—a career he truly loved!

I look forward to seeing many of you at future RNPA gatherings.

Thank you my friends,
Jane Chadwick

WEB
BATES

WA

The good life continues for my wife, Pat and me in Lake Forest Park, WA, a suburb of Seattle. We do the usual things retired people do: travel, garden, golf, tennis, pay a lot of attention to grand kids.

It's important for me to stay connected to NWA (DELTA).

Thanks for that.
Web Bates



Now when you look back this will be the ONLY thing you can ever see.

Fortunately the Vandervort household continues in good health and still migrates between Silverdale WA and Goodyear AZ 6mo/6mo roughly.

We have a 20 foot motor home that we use for our migration trip each spring and fall, which allows us to take our good natured time enroute, visiting folks and places, using a different route each trip allowing us to see more of the great western US regions. Earlier we had used our airplane but found it did not allow us any wiggle room for stopping along the way because we were always working a weather window.

Am still flying my RV-6 when in WA and had an opportunity

to do the first flight on an RV-10 this summer. A friend built the airplane for his nephew in S. Africa... so after test flying the airplane it has been disassembled and shipped in a container to S. Africa. My friend is now over there assembling it for it's first African flight. It has a full glass cockpit with all the bells and whistles... amazing stuff in General Aviation these days.

Whilst in AZ I volunteer at Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson. I drive the Tram around the campus talking about the outside airplanes... about an hour's drive past approx. 130 aircraft. A great place to see about 300 total aircraft of all different types and across the street about 4000 boneyard aircraft at Davis Monthan AFB.

In WA I volunteer at the Lemay Family Foundation Auto Collection... about 450 cars from Duesenbergs to a 48 Tucker... a worthwhile place to visit

if you have some time in the Seattle area.

Did 8 days floating through the Grand Canyon this last spring with a group of Professors and Grad Students from Tulane U. We had expert guidance identifying rocks, flora and fauna. Flew out by helicopter (Bell Ranger) to a Cessna Caravan back to our starting point at Lee's Ferry.

Playing tennis, painting, carving, old cars, flying etc. fill in the small spaces of my calendar. Hope that continues for awhile!

Had a great time attending the RNPA convention at Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Thanks to all you folks for that... and every thing else you RNPA folks do for us.....!!!!

Ron Vandervort

PHX PICNIC



TUESDAY MARCH 7th · FALCON FIELD, MESA

COFFEE AT 10:00

EAT AT 12:30

BRING:

- MEAT TO COOK
- DISH TO PASS (NO DESSERT)
- YOUR OWN DRINK AND UTENSILS

Contributions to the NWA History Centre will be accepted.



A STABILIZED approach



Contributing Columnist **James Baldwin**



Another Flight West

The four polished aluminum blades of the eleven foot diameter Hamilton Standard rotated awkwardly at first, hesitating unevenly, and then turned more quickly as the 12 cylinders of the Rolls Royce Merlin ignited and coughed their characteristic puffs of white unburned fuel out the stubby individual exhaust stacks. The sixteen hundred fifty cubic inches of reciprocating mayhem settled into a loping idle with a distinctive bass melody more beautiful than any Gershwin or Mozart had ever written. Or Sting for that matter. The man seated in the cockpit had removed the trademark straw hat and pulled his helmet on as he rolled the canopy closed and began taxiing to the active runway.

The yellow North American P51 Mustang was at the Rancho Murieta airfield, just east of Sacramento, and the air show was about to begin. Our position, in the back of my friend's pickup truck, was perfect. This was a tail-gate party rivaled by none. Somehow, in those previous millennium days of the past, we didn't worry about what might happen being so up close and personal with the airshow performers of the day. Reno 2011—11 dead, 69 injured—hadn't happened yet.

We heard the introduction—Mr. R.A. "Bob" Hoover—that was common in the countless air shows he

performed in either his trademark yellow Mustang or in the Twin Commander Shrike, and now we were going to see it once again.

After a brief pause at the end, the Mustang began its roll down the runway, the Merlin at full song as the tail lifted while accelerating past us. He rotated smoothly and pulled the airplane nose up into a truly improbable attitude and without any hesitation the airplane began to roll with the wheels still extended. As it passed through inverted, the main gear could be seen folding into their retracted positions. For all that was happening, it made me wonder how many hands this guy really had? The rest of the display was similarly spectacular with loops, rolls, modified Cuban Eights, hesitation rolls and the famous Tennessee Waltz landings on one wheel and then the other. Hoover taxied to the center of the ramp at the end and stood to applause just as he had done many, many times all over the world.

It might be hard to equate the airplane version we had just seen perform with the model of the Mustang that was really a key ingredient in our winning of the air war in Europe, but Bob Hoover had flown both and many variants since he was twenty years old. The stories and experiences he had fill several books and yet there

was no real way to appreciate them without witnessing the show as a culmination of them all. The display I had seen in the past with the Shrike Commander was equally impressive or maybe even more so after flying the same model airplane and then watching what he did to make it perform. Alas, I realized I was no Bob Hoover, and, it's probably a good thing I didn't try.

Hoover's talent from an early age almost undid his desire to enter the ranks of combat pilots in WW II. His talent was recognized early and he was considered too experienced in the flight test of recently assembled airplanes from America to enter combat. He persevered and was finally allowed to join a combat squadron flying the British Spitfire in Sicily with the 52nd Fighter Group. After 59 missions, a jettison malfunction of the center aux fuel tank resulted in his crippled fighter being shot down over the Mediterranean. The story of his capture and treatment by the enemy is no different than many others but I doubt anyone else escaped by stealing the very model of German airplane, the Focke Wolfe 190, that had shot him down. Flying it to a friendly air field in Holland ended a confinement of 16 months in the Stalag Luft 1 prison camp.

After the war he was assigned to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio where he met Chuck Yeager. The introduction would turn out to be life long friendship. Together, they performed air shows in all types of aircraft which, in that period, were very popular due to the success of the U.S. Army Air Force in Europe. They reportedly entered into simulated dogfights any time they found themselves airborne together and with an ever lasting humorous disagreement, were never able to declare a consistent winner.

The major challenge facing aeronautical development was the then dreaded sound barrier. Although hard by modern standards to understand, the difficulty of exceeding the speed at which sound travels in a given medium, had not been accomplished in an airplane and was the universal goal of leading edge aerodynamicists and designers. In the United States, Larry Bell had designed, and his company had built, the Bell X-1 airplane that was being used to attempt to surpass the high subsonic marks set by the Germans near the end of the war and those later by the English. The Messerschmitt ME163

Komet, the rocket powered Luftwaffe fighter miscreant and the Gloster Meteor had both challenged the magic number without officially trying. England was no different in their pursuit of understanding what the Germans had flirted with years before. After a test dive at Mach 0.9, Sir Geoffrey De Havilland Jr. was lost after severe longitudinal oscillations caused the spar to fracture. His body was found in the mud of Thames Estuary in September of 1946 with his parachute pull ring untouched. The English lost several other pilots testing the barrier and two more were killed in the same airplane type.

The American P47 Thunderbolt fighter, built by Republic, had been close to it unintentionally in combat and over M 0.8 in post war testing, but a lack of control effectiveness due to compressibility made sure it was still an unknown barrier to us as well. All nations were trying to better the speed for understanding and to gain a leg up in military superiority. It was deemed vitally important for America and the facility at Wright Field was the center for that effort.

At Bell Aircraft, Chief Test Pilots Jack Woolams and later Slick Goodlin, accomplished many tests with the X-1. Even though Goodlin had exceeded M 0.8, the government was unhappy with the progress in exceeding the speed of sound. When he demanded \$150,000 to make the attempt, the government decided that was too much and advertised at Wright Field for pilot applications. Of course both Hoover and Yeager applied and after several interviews, Hoover felt he was probably first in line for the position. At that same time, Hoover had been one of the few pilots flying the P80 and a fellow pilot asked him for the favor of flying over his home





town airport in Springfield, Ohio so he could claim he was also a pilot of these new jet aircraft. Hoover agreed to do the flyover but in typical fashion also included two inverted passes. The problem was that a CAA (now the FAA) official witnessed the show and filed a safety report resulting in Hoover being officially assigned as the X-1 backup pilot who would also fly the chase plane. He was incredibly disappointed but was a true team player with Yeager and on October 14, 1947 the speed of sound was finally exceeded at M 1.07. Hoover took the well published photo of the X-1 with diamond shaped shock waves shooting out the tailpipe of the rocket powered plane.

Hoover left the Air Force in 1948 to enter the civilian test pilot profession. At North American Aviation he tested all of their jet models including the F86 Sabre and the first of the Century fighters, the F100 Super Sabre. Harrowing flights, mechanical failures and the frequent deaths of fellow test pilots were common in that era of development of these jets and Hoover managed through several challenging emergencies to survive where others didn't.

He became a leading expert with the F86 and how to use it.

Assigned to travel to Korea as North American's representative during the conflict, he not only briefed the pilots on the latest technical information but also introduced the pilots to the airplane's dive-bombing ca-

pability. Through demonstration he restored the combat pilot's confidence in the airplane with his air show routine. His trademark flying left few doubters of what the capabilities were of the military fighter they had been assigned to fly. Bob Hoover, in an almost emblematic manner, accompanied the 18th Fighter Bomber Wing on a combat mission to destroy ground targets and actually destroyed a supply bridge in further demonstration of the techniques he came to teach. Future astronaut Jim McDivitt was a member of the 4th Fighter Group and ... "watched the damndest airshow I ever saw..." He later stated that after the demonstration, the pilots of that group felt like "...we could lick the whole Chinese Air Force by ourselves."

There are too many stories to recount regarding his air demonstrations in countries all over the world, meetings with dignitaries and astronauts, foreign and American, of pouring ice tea while barrel rolling the Shrike Commander and battling a bureaucratic FAA to regain his flying privileges after improper revocation of his medical certificate, but Hoover's impact on the test program for the F100 Super Sabre stands out. Recognizing very early that the F100A had an insufficient amount of vertical stabilizer put him at odds with the entire community who produced and test flew the airplane. Hoover stood his ground, refusing to accept the test card for further evaluation at high speeds even though his position was at risk. After a verbal exchange with fellow test pilot George Welch where he was called a coward, Hoover refused to give his approval to what he knew was a problem. Welch was killed in a testing accident of the F100A that Hoover felt could have been avoided.

Bob retired from the North American jet test pilot roll in 1968, during the merger of North American and Rockwell, to become involved in helping promote the Aero Commander. His show soon included both the P51 Mustang and the Commander and was seen all over the world.

It is a reality that all good things finally end, and in 1999, Bob flew his last aerobatic performance, due more to insurance requirements than anything else, and on October 25, 2016 he, just as we all will, took his final flight west. I am pretty confident that Bob would honor his own advice and for that final flight remember:

"If you're faced with a forced landing, fly the thing as far into the crash as possible."

After flying for nearly 80 years, surviving the experiences he had and being described by Jimmy Doolittle as "the greatest stick and rudder man who ever lived," I am pretty sure he flew about as far as any man could.

Farewell Mr. R.A. "Bob" Hoover, and thank you. ✈



it

WAS



CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST JOHN DOHERTY



Art of the Non-Rev

plus

Did Rothmeier really fire a passenger?

It sounds like a great deal. Travel all over the world anytime you want for free. Well sorta.

My early experience with non-revving started as a new hire in the 60s. It didn't take long for my delusional belief that I would be able to fly anywhere for free anytime I wanted to crumble. For starters I had to have been on the payroll for some set time (how much time escapes me at the moment, but it was something like six months.) Then once I did qualify for passes, the passes were rationed. Six round trips per year.

To further complicate the "travel anywhere for free" myth, we had to apply for the passes in writing, and then wait. The wait was several days, sometimes more depending on how the one person who wrote pilot passes workload and mood was.

The woman who wrote the passes treated each one as though passes were her personal property. She was affectionately referred to as "pass witch" (or something close to that). A comment to her about how long ago an application had been submitted was guaranteed to extend the wait another few days.

It seems there was a rule handed down from Mister Nyrop that if employees wanted something, they shouldn't get it. Since the cost of providing space available travel was minimal, as a new hire I was mystified why the tight fist. I flew with a captain who was on the negotiating committee at the time, and he told me that Nyrop liked to hold back pass privileges for a bargaining chip.

In the early '70s commuting came upon the scene. It was forced on the pilot group because of the way they were administered. From the time I was recalled in 1971 after the BRAC strike until 1980 I was transferred 19 times. Moving 19 times in nine years was inconceivable, so I, like many others in similar circumstances, started to commute. And thus passes became even more valued.

When our miserly allotment of six passes was used up getting back and forth to work, we were down to using quarter-fares. Given the constant strikes and the equally miserly pay that pilots received in those days, the three required quarter-fares per month were a considerable financial burden.

Commuting pilots did fight back. In those days



passes were not by segment, they were by round-trip, and the round-trip could include multiple stations. Someone discovered that agents didn't really care much where the pass coupon's destination was, they just wanted a pass coupon to put in their envelope. So when pilots requested passes, they would create a zigzag route all over the United States with five, six, or seven airports on the route of flight. Using that technique one could get two or three commutes out of just one pass.

After a year or so, somebody in the GO got wind of the tactic and put an end to it.

Back in those days, the flights were running over half empty, so getting on an airplane was rarely an issue. There wasn't much of a priority system for determining who boarded first, and there were usually first-class seats available, so it was common to ride in first class on a pass, and the first people issued seating were the ones who got the first-class seats.

Many of the agents had a practice of just stacking up the passes at the podium as they were submitted, then when it came time to assign seats they would flip the stack over, and in essence pass out the seats on a first-come first-served basis. So arriving early at the podium increased not only the chances of being boarded, but the chances of getting a first-class seat.

On one of my commutes the agent was using this procedure. I arrived early and was close to the bottom of the stack which was going to put me close to the top when the agent flipped the stack over. Just as the agent was about to assign seating, one of my pilot "buddies" showed up, slipped behind the podium, and blithely inserted his pass at the bottom of the stack. I clearly recall the gloating look on his face as he waited for his first-class seat assignment.

During that time I also recall encountering one of my other buddies waiting to board for a New York flight. Since he was more than senior enough to hold the Seattle base where we both lived, I queried him as to why he was going to New York. He replied sardonically, "I'm taking a graduate course in preference cards."

One of the other significant features of pass riding in those days was the dress code. Males down to the age of eight or so were required to wear a coat and tie. Females had to wear dresses or pantsuits. Invariably, the pass riders were the best dressed in the aircraft, and a part of the non-rev folk wisdom was that we were required to be so dressed to make it easier for the flight attendants to pass us by at mealtime.

I tripped over this policy on one commute. This was back in the days before Nyrop had agreed to a pilot summer uniform of short sleeve shirt and epaulettes. Pilots, once again being a resourceful if not rebellious group, had adopted their own policy of wearing short sleeve shirts in the summertime, and in Asia, far from Minnesota, not wearing a tie either. I was commuting "in uniform," and as was the practice in those days, I had carried my suitcase down to the ramp to have the baggage handlers load it into the cargo bin. As it came time for me to board, the agent gave me a baleful look and asked, "Do you have a tie at all?" Flummoxed, I answered that my tie was in my suitcase which was in the belly of the aircraft. Looking equally baleful, the agent handed my pass back with the succinct instruction, "Next flight." I forget how I rejoined my suitcase, but I do remember that agent.

(This agent's demeanor foreshadowed an airline joke that was yet to come: "What's the difference between a Minneapolis gate agent and a terrorist?" "You can negotiate with terrorists." Of course the joke doesn't work any-

more because terrorists don't negotiate anymore either.)

In those days we were in the dark regarding loads and at the mercy of getting an agent to list us over the phone. Once again pilot entrepreneurship showed up, and we learned the niceties of using PARS to check loads and list ourselves. This was no simple thing because everything was coded and required exact formats to work. Pilots passed around "cheat sheets" for PARS and many became sophisticated with its use.

Our world of pass privileges started to come of age with the Republic merger. It's far easier for a corporation to deny something to employees they've never had than it is to take something away that employees are accustomed to. The Republic employees had enjoyed a civilized pass policy, and no one at Northwest was willing to take it away from them and face the firestorm. There were a number of changes, the most prominent of which was unlimited passes for most employees, and the ability for employees to write their own passes. No more "pass witch." No more quarter fares.

Somewhere along the line, pretty much concurrent with the advent of electronic ticketing, we gained the ability to list ourselves online and to check loads prior to listing. For most of us old Redtails, the transition to the Delta system that followed the merger was a bit rocky, but really, the Delta system is about as civilized as one could hope for. The ability to check loads in detail, the ability to see one's position on the non-rev standby list, and then as seats are assigned, to be able to watch the airport standby list in real time as boarding passes are issued. Delta has even created a very effective mobile app for non-revs. (There are also a couple of very useful informal "Delta Non-rev" groups on FaceBook.)

While the issue used to be few passes and lots of seats, now the issue is lots of passes and few seats. The marketing folks have figured out how to fill up airplanes, and the days of first-class for non-revs, at least on the domestic system, are pretty much gone. It's not unusual to see 20 or 30 full fare passengers requesting upgrade into first-class when there are maybe three or four first-class seats left. The best we can hope for is usually the middle row in last class.

A natural concomitant of full flights are the legendary "non-revs from hell." The ingredients of the non-rev from hell are twofold: 1. Significant disruption of travel with accompanying frustration and exhaustion, and 2. Cost eventually exceeding what it would have cost to buy a ticket in the first place.

A quick example from my own experience: I attended a family gathering in Ireland accompanied by my youngest daughter. Not wanting to miss the event I purchased full fare tickets to Ireland, and decided to come back non-rev to save the bucks when my calendar wasn't

so pressing. I was traveling from Shannon to Newark on a Continental Zed fare. From there on Northwest to MSP. I paid the extra bucks for first-class seats on Continental, but the agent in Shannon had a simple policy: non-revs ride in the back, and that was the end of that. Well at least we were getting home.

The aircraft we boarded had some kind of mechanical and we departed Shannon three hours late, meaning we arrived in Newark too late for the last Northwest flight to Minneapolis. The next best thing was a connection through Detroit. Which we took. In Detroit we stood by for several flights to Minneapolis unsuccessfully. Then a night in a hotel, up in the morning and standing by once again for half a dozen Minneapolis flights unsuccessfully.

By this time there were a bunch of us trying to get to Minneapolis, and a creative agent came over and told us the best thing looked like going down to Washington National and catching a flight from there to Minneapolis. Appreciating the agent's creativity, we all flew down to National. As we were getting off the airplane, a National gate agent intercepted us and said she had no idea why Detroit had sent us down there since there were no seats on the next Minneapolis flight.

Disconsolate, the group, even larger now, sat around watching flight after flight leave for Minneapolis without us. Late in the day another creative agent came to us with a plan. There were seats it seemed to someplace in Iowa, a two and-a-half hour sit there, and a flight up to Minneapolis. With no better option, everyone took the agent's advice. On our sit in Iowa, my daughter and I purchased and donned T-shirts that had IOWA emblazoned across the front, just to mystify and amaze our friends and family who were expecting us to be all about Ireland when we got home.

So did Rothmeier really fire a passenger?

Here's how the story goes: Rothmeier was traveling in first-class on a Northwest flight. He noticed that the boarding pass for his seatmate had an F5 standby designation on it marking the person as a non-revving employee. For some reason that passenger got in a dispute with the flight attendant during the pre-departure phase. Doing a fast burn at the passenger's unacceptable non-rev behavior, Rothmeier invited him out onto the jetway, castigated him soundly, and told him he was fired. Turns out that the boarding pass that Rothmeier had seen was left over from the previous flight, and the person he fired was actually a full fare first-class passenger.

True story? Who knows, and too late to ask Rothmeier. He died in 2014.

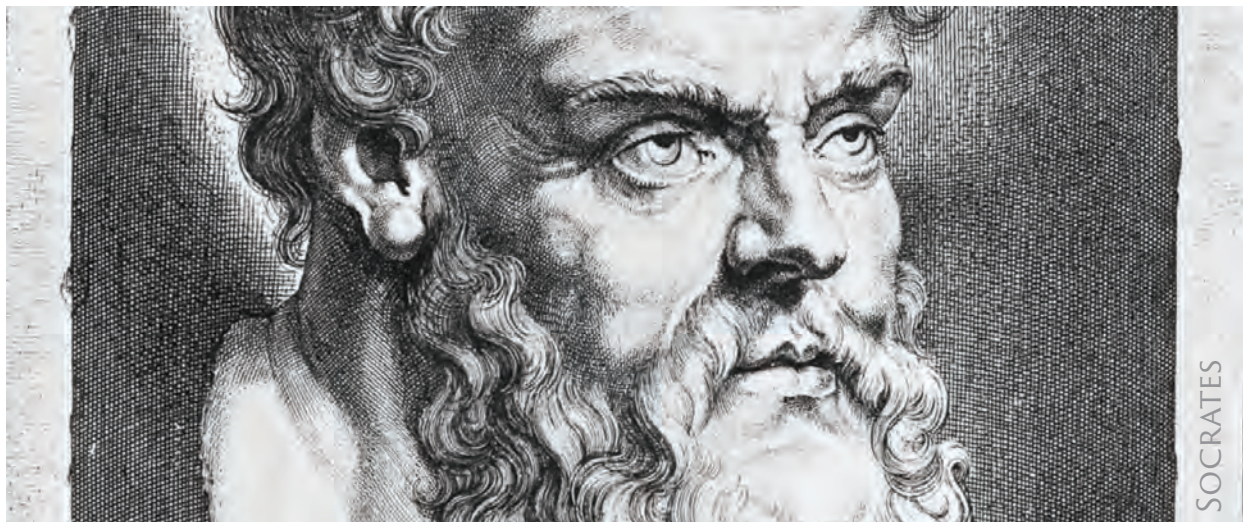
And so the wheel goes around. And the good news is that our last flight is confirmed space. ✈



A Chick in the Cockpit



Contributing Columnist Erika Armstrong



As Socrates stood at the front of his class trying to teach the next generation, I'm sure Plato did something that made his teacher shake his head in frustration. Maybe Plato stayed out too late the night before, partying with Aristotle and other philosophers. I'm sure Plato told Socrates at least a time or two that a lion ate his homework. Every generation thinks that the up and coming are less capable, less intelligent, and less motivated than the present. Just ask my dad, he'll tell you all about it. But, it's really just a matter of perspective.

To round out my life in aviation, I am now teaching Millennials at a university. First and senior year aerospace/aviation science students. You cringed a little, didn't you? Yes, the first day of class as I was walking around the room, talking about what they'd be learning in Aviation Fundamentals, one student in clear sight pulled their backpack to the center of the desk, fluffed it up, laid their head down, and promptly went to sleep. Yes, I wanted to walk up and pour my hot tea on their head, but the reality is that I don't need to provide

punishment. They will just end up punishing themselves. They always do. That student, at the end of the semester, is now failing. There is always this type of student (or two) in class. There always have been and always will be the best and the worst of each class and each generation. It's not because of the era in which they were born, it's the person that they are.

We tag each chunk of births with a nametag like Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and the up and coming iGen. Of course, our own generational nametag comes with only the best traits, but the reality is that each nametag represents the teachings of the previous. We teach the up and coming so each generation is ultimately responsible for the next. If you blame the next generation, you are really blaming your own.

This next generation of pilots are Millennials who grew up in the aftermath of 9/11. Their view of aviation has been through security lines, TSA, barbed wire fences and airplanes used as weapons. They grew up in an era when there are now half a million less licensed pilots in



the U.S. than the previous generation. It's been hard to see the glory of aviation for them, but despite all that, it's still there. And it's growing again. I see the passion, dreams and focus of these future pilots, just like all the other previous generations saw in theirs.

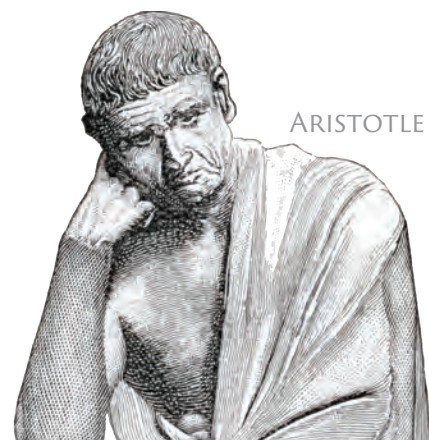
I have some of the most intelligent, tech-savvy future pilots sitting in my class. I already know some of them won't stop until they are captain of a commercial airliner. And I have other students who like the idea of it, but will never make it to the cockpit. Just like all the other

aviation generations. For those who will succeed, someone along the way taught them that they have to haul their ass out of bed when the alarm goes off (no matter how early it is), that they have to put in the time and the work, and that self-discipline creates more rewards than sacrifice. Their bonus is that since these millennials grew up in front of computer screens, FMS systems, glass cockpits and HUDs are second nature. They understand and embrace the technology and demand that it works. It's available, so why not use every piece of it.

NextGen is the tag that the FAA placed on their program to improve the National Airspace Systems. NextGen Pilots is the tag I'm placing on this new generation of pilots who will stand on the shoulders of previous aviation giants and move aviation that much further towards safety, efficiency and glory. Sure, they'll have basic airmanship skills, but they won't have to spend hours

learning NDB approaches when instead, they can learn how to fly around the world direct and have guidance right down to the centerline of the runway in zero visibility flight conditions. They will think that's awesome, love what they do, talk about it constantly, and keep that mischievous grin on their face that hasn't come off since the day they soloed. Just like in all the other previous aviation generations.

Thankfully, some things never change... ✈



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DEADLINE
FEBRUARY 28

Thorung La

Trekking Nepal with Glenda



By Darrell Smith

Glenda is tough! She tends to underestimate her abilities, but usually completes any task ahead of most of her peers.

Prayer flags marking the summit of the Thorung La Pass were visible only a quarter mile away. Glenda looked at the flags and then at me with doubt showing on her face and said, “I don’t think I can make it.” It had been 4 degrees above zero when we started climbing before daylight, 5 hours earlier and 4000 feet below. The trail was not exceptionally steep; we were able to stand and walk the entire way. The going was slow, however, since every step at 17,000 feet above sea level was a major endeavor. The lack of oxygen limited our movement to a slow-motion pace.

This adventure started months before, when in casual conversation Marlene Lomas, a fellow employee at Northwest Airlines’ Honolulu Flight Operations, informed me that she was going trekking in Nepal for the fifth time. After quizzing her for a few details, I knew this was something Glenda and I should do—a once in a lifetime adventure.

My best salesmanship was required to convince Glenda that we needed this trip to make our lives complete. After a little foot dragging she agreed—what a trooper. She purchased a pair of quality hiking boots and began whipping her body into shape by climbing the hills around Honolulu. Recently (17 years later) we hiked a rocky trail in the Arizona desert—she wore those very same (Basque, Skywalk) boots.

I contacted Jim and Pat Harrington, the expedition organizers, to sign-on but was told that all slots had been filled. Unwilling to take “no” for an answer, I sent them a pitiful, whining letter pleading that we be included. I think their distaste at seeing a grown man grovel was too much for them to handle. They agreed to make room for

us. Whoopee! We were on our way to 15 days of trekking in the Nepalese Himalayas.

Anticipating a physically demanding adventure, we hiked and climbed in the local hills, attempting to improve our strength and endurance. Our muscles responded, but there was one big problem. We were training at sea level, but our coming hike would be at altitude, up to nearly 18,000 feet.

Northwest Airlines provided us with a ride to Tokyo and then on to Bangkok, Thailand. On the night flight to Bangkok, a comet with its tail extending a great distance across the sky was easily visible. The next two days were filled with sightseeing, scrumptious food and arranging transportation to Kathmandu, Nepal. So far everything was going as planned.

The Thai Airlines flight was uneventful except for a view of Mt. Everest in the distance. Upon clearing customs and immigration we were greeted by Jim and Pat (the event organizers), Phurba (our lead sherpa), his wife and their youngest child. They presented us with Nepalese flower leis, taught us the meaning of the word “namaste” and loaded us into a small van for a ride to the hotel. This trip was eventful. We experienced a flat tire, a traffic jam caused by sacred cows taking a nap on a bridge and wild drivers. “Namaste” is a greeting, similar to “good day” back home, spoken with “praying hands” and a slight bow.

Our hotel was a simple four-story building furnishing our basic needs but very little luxury. For instance, when the shower was used, the spray pattern covered the entire bathroom—toilet, sink and floor. The bed was much less than comfortable. However, the hotel did have a nice outdoor patio with picnic tables and shade trees where a cool adult beverage could be ordered and consumed.



Every time I think of Kathmandu, dogs come to mind. I called it a “sea of barking dogs,” there seemed to be hundreds and hundreds. The barking would gradually slow and then stop altogether. Then one dumb dog would bark and the “sea of barking dogs” would return. This happened over and over again. It was difficult to sleep!

About four days were required to obtain the proper permits for our trek, during which we explored the city. Kathmandu is a bustling place with many interesting sights. We witnessed a cremation, holy men in cage-like rooms, monkeys roaming wild, snake charmers, shrines, a trekker losing control of his bowels and wool being processed near the river.

All trekkers, sherpas and supplies were loaded onto a school-bus-like vehicle, our transportation to the point where we would start the walking part of our adventure. The trip was hot and windy. The cooking-fuel containers, stored in the center aisle, seemed to be leaking and the fumes were overwhelming. Some of the trekkers experienced headaches and nausea.



The bus experienced a tire problem, causing a delay of approximately one hour in a small village, but this gave us a chance to get some fresh air. We wandered about this little town and noted some unacceptable sanitary conditions by our standards. For instance, a small stream running through town was the water supply for cooking, washing clothes and drinking. A short distance upstream there was ample evidence that animal and even human waste could easily have contaminated this stream.

After eight or ten hours, the uncomfortable ride mercifully came to an end. The bus jolted to a halt in a small village with a name that sounded like “body odor,” the end of the road for wheeled vehicles. Our trek was about to begin.

After spending a fitful night in our tents, which had been set up in a dry rice paddy, we witnessed an interesting event. A large group of men, boys and a few women gathered in our paddy, squatted and faced Phurba, our leader. The negotiating began. All the food, bedding, tables, chairs, tents, fuel and our personal gear would have to be transported on the backs of porters.

This gathering was the accepted way for the available porters and the expedition leaders to interact. An hour or so later, a number of porters had been hired but not quite enough—a few would have to carry double loads. One woman, wearing a ring in her nose, became “the egg lady.” She carried a large square pack containing enough fresh eggs for the entire trip.

Just at daybreak, a quiet, gentle voice could be heard, “Good morning sir, good morning ma’am, bed tea.” A young sherpa with a serving tray, hot tea, sugar and cream would be kneeling just outside our tent. We would drag ourselves from our sleeping bags and enjoy a warm cup. It happened every morning.

Pardon the language, but the next thirty minutes was referred to as a time of “Shoveling Shit” by the trekkers. “shoveling” sleeping bags into their carry bags, “shoveling” clothes and personal gear into duffle bags and “shoveling” ourselves into the outfit of the day. All things “shoveled,” the results were pushed outside through the tent flap. Our personal porter was always quietly waiting with a simple cotton rope, anxious to get his workday under way. Somehow, the porters could wrap their rope around the day’s load and make a loop. The load was carried on their backs with the loop across their heads where a thin pad was placed under the rope for comfort.

Almost immediately after we crawled from our tent, it was taken down and packed for transport to our next overnight camp. While we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast the porters were on their way up the trail.

The entire group, trekkers, sherpas and porters, numbered about 60. This number would vary as new

porters were hired and others returned to their home villages. There was no way to know for sure but we felt our group, on a normal day, stretched over several miles along the trail.

There was no formal beginning of the day's trekking. The porters would depart camp as soon as they could get their loads together. The trekkers would follow at their leisure after a hearty breakfast. The sherpas would clean up after the meal and bring up the rear, usually overtaking and passing us on the trail. Glenda and I always tried to get an early start—we set a slow but steady pace and would arrive at the next camp or lunch site along with the others.

As the noon hour drew near we started looking for “the blue tarp.” Some of the Sherpas would race ahead, spread out a 12ft x 12ft blue plastic tarp and prepare lunch. On an average day we dined on cold cuts, bread and fruit served with some sort of cool-aid like drink. We would kick off our boots, have lunch, lie on the tarp and sometimes take a nap.

The locals seemed to enjoy watching, they would stand quietly just off the edge of the tarp and take note of our every move. There would, at times, be as many as twenty or more. On one occasion, the tarp was placed in a small field that was completely covered with young marijuana plants.

Lunch break would end as the trekkers “saddled up,” a few at a time, and headed up the trail. After a few hours of walking through some of the most beautiful scenery on earth, a sherpa would greet and direct us to our overnight campsite. If the porters had made good time, our tents would be set up and ready. The trekkers would drift into camp and throw their daypacks in front of any unoccupied tent. If the porters were a little late we would find a comfortable place to sit and relax until the tents were available.

There was no TV, radio, telephones, taverns or restaurants at our overnight campsites. Our time was occupied with rearranging our personal gear, trying to clean our dusty bodies and waiting for dinner. Sometimes, a shower could be purchased in these small mountain towns.

Glenda and I once walked a mile in light snow to a private home in pursuit of a shower. We were invited



into the kitchen where we stood around a huge open wood-burning stove that had no vent to the outside.

The shower room was across a courtyard where five men sat outside at a table in the snow. The shower-head was attached to a garden hose that hung limply from the ceiling. Somehow, the low volume of water that drizzled from this fixture had been warmed a bit but it was a struggle to soap up and rinse off. The fee was about 25 cents each, so I guess we could not expect too much. We then walked the same mile back to camp, still in the snow.

Several days in Kathmandu and more on the trail was time enough for almost everyone to have experienced some adverse effect on their gastrointestinal system. Even though the restaurants in Kathmandu and our sherpa staff along the trail attempted to make the food compatible with our bodies, it was hopeless. It seemed that nearly everyone had problems, causing many cases of trekkers frantically diving behind the nearest bush, hoping for a little privacy. A good portion of the time, these attempts simply did not work! I think we had a view of nearly every trekker's bare butt during the trip—much too much information.

Our unsettled GI tracts motivated one of the trekkers to create a new (at least to us) term—HAFE (High Altitude Flatulent Explosion). This term was a very accurate description for one of our frequent symptoms. The condition of our GI tracts was a favorite subject of conversation during meals.

This routine, with some variation, was the way we lived. Day after day we climbed higher and higher, passing through many small towns, each with a series of prayer wheels.



A prayer wheel is a cylinder, sometimes as large as a 55-gallon drum, mounted upright with rollers top and bottom, located under a roof. The idea was to give each a spin and say a prayer as you passed. The entire group of wheels would be left spinning as we proceeded into town.

One of our overnight stops was in the village of Tal. A wedding was taking place, which included music and dancing. The bride, carried on the back of her brother, finally arrived. She was covered, head to toe, with clothing and blankets and was carried all around this small town. The chanting and drinking began and continued through out the night. There were vertical cliffs all around, the echo of the chanting made for a very unusual and mostly sleepless night.

The next morning we observed a party participant departing the village via horseback. He was obviously intoxicated and had a very difficult time mounting and staying on board.

Manang, a slightly larger town, was located at 12,000 feet above sea level. Our leader chose this spot for a rest and laundry day. Two inches of snow had the tents sagging when we awoke. The day was clear and cold but most of the women washed some clothes by hand. During the day we heard and saw several avalanches across the valley but they were of no danger to us.

Our trek, well over a one hundred miles long, was along the very famous, Annapurna Circuit. The Annapurna Mountains are some of the highest and most beautiful in the world. Each day was filled with never-ending extraordinary views that are impossible to describe.

The highest point on the entire route was the Thorung La Pass. The focus of our first 10 days of walking

was on successfully making our way up to and over this formidable obstacle.

Our last night short of the pass, was at a very small village with just a few buildings. We were now at nearly 14,000 feet and it was cold—Glenda and I zipped our sleeping bags together and piled all our clothes on top and we still slept cold! The goal for the next day was getting over the Throng La!

Well, of course, Glenda made it! We just kept putting one foot in front of the other and all at once we were at the Pass, the highest point of the trip, 17,769 feet. She never knew that at her moment of doubt, I felt that I also could not make it. The small group that gathered near the prayer flags was in high spirits, laughing and talking. Not one person was heard to say, “Boy, I would love to do that, again.”

The snow disappeared almost immediately as we started our descent in a desert like landscape. Ample sunshine and clear skies allowed us to look onto the Tibetan plateau in the distance. We made our way to Muktinath, the first small town, about 5000 feet below the pass. I don’t remember seeing even one blade of grass in town but there was a ton of dust. Our camp was in a small walled field, which held more than its share of that dust. Local ladies arrived in camp, spread blankets to display hand crafted jewelry and trinkets with hope of making a sale.

The overall trip was taking much longer than we had expected. The layover days in Bangkok and Kathmandu had added at least a week. I felt it was time for me to get back to work and Glenda had developed a sinus infection from the dust and was having difficulty breathing. Considering these factors, we chose to leave the trek in Jomson, a larger town, which had commercial air passenger service. After being on the trail for 15 days and having successfully negotiated the pass, we considered the adventure complete and a success.

A very large older Russian helicopter delivered us from the mountains, (Jomson) to Pokhara. The luggage was piled on the floor and the passengers sat on benches along the sides, some with no seat belts.

Everest Airlines delivered us back to our starting point in Kathmandu. Immediately after liftoff, the Captain of this small aircraft (maybe 50 passengers) opened a newspaper and read it the entire flight.

We arrived back in Honolulu with no further exciting events. We were exhausted but satisfied with our unique adventure. We would never visit Nepal again but we will never forget our experiences.

This was truly a trip of a lifetime!

Miscellaneous observations:

Donkeys were used to transport cargo to the distant mountain towns. They traveled single file in small

groups, ten or twelve. We were told that when meeting them to always stand on the inside of the trails. They walked along in a seeming trance and could easily knock a person off the mountain, to our death in many cases.

Our digestive tracts took months to get back to normal. Doctor visits did not seem to help.

One day we were already at our overnight campsite when our porter arrived with our personal stuff. Someone suggested that I try to carry his load. With the help of several people I got the load up on my back but I could barely walk with it. Everyone had a great laugh. We have a picture of that porter—standing beside Glenda his head is even with her shoulder. He had carried that load all day.

Female trekkers were expected to wear long skirts (down to their ankles) all the times.

After a few days, Anne, one of our friends, started getting favored treatment from one of the older Sherpas. He went out of his way to make sure she was comfortable. One day, she experienced a sudden “HAFE” attack, which created a rather loud noise. He thought that was the funniest thing he had ever heard. We thought he would never stop laughing.

Care had to be taken if for any reason you stepped off the main trail. It was common for people to move only a short distance off the trails before relieving themselves.

During the days spent trekking, we had no knowledge of current events. Glenda on the flight from Pokhara to Kathmandu remembers that she read in the paper over the Captain’s shoulder that Nick Faldo had come from behind to beat Greg Norman in the Masters golf tournament. I read that a famous person (maybe Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder or Erma Bombeck) had died.

On our trip from Kathmandu to “body odor,” a man sat on the roof of the bus. He gave the bus driver directions and information by slapping the top of the bus with an open hand—go fast, slow down and it is OK to pass, etc.

Along the trail high in the mountains, someone spotted a Lammergeiers’ on its’ nest across the valley. This unusual bird is a large eagle-like vulture that makes its home in the high mountains of Asia.

At some point along the trail, a Sherpa commented that we were 30 to 40 miles from the nearest wheel. Even while on the bus we observed roadwork being accomplished by women with baskets.

One of our young Sherpas somehow made his way to Hawaii and then on to California where he became the valet for a very famous movie actor. While in Honolulu he stayed in our guest bedroom for several nights. He was very impressed with the bathroom—he felt it was too clean to use.

Update:

Surprise Blizzard, Avalanches Kill Hikers in Himalaya Mountains

October is normally the very best time for trekkers to attempt to complete the Annapurna Circuit. The skies are usually clear of clouds and the temperature is moderate. This month in 2014 had begun as advertised. The adventurers were enjoying great weather and their hike was going as planned.

Unfortunately everyone was totally unaware (or chose to ignore the warnings) that for a week or longer a typhoon had been making its way across the Pacific. After coming ashore this storm had delivered a lot of rain and caused some flooding but little damage.

This weather system was dissipating but still contained a ton of moisture. Upon reaching the mountains the air was forced upward. This action with its associated decreasing temperature turned the moisture into snow. The Thorung La pass and the surrounding area received several feet of snow in a very short period of time. There was no warning that this unusual event was about to take place.

The skies went from clear and sunny to grey and angry in a very short time. Everyone was caught off guard. Even the locals had not experienced such an event in their lives. Trekkers from many nations were scattered along the high altitude trail. The storm quickly turned into a full blizzard. The snow and wind made it impossible for many to find shelter. People were separated from their parties and left to their own resources.

Many people (as many as 40) were unable to find shelter and therefore perished. Many found cover and survived after spending a frightful night thinking that they too would not live.

Our trek in 1997 was blessed with very good weather (there was a 2 or 3 inch snow overnight at Manang). The storm of 2014 is a rude reminder that the mountain weather can become desperate at any time. We can consider ourselves lucky. ✈



Fate is the Huntress

By Jay Sakas

This past summer, I attended the Seattle RNPA summer picnic. Not having been there for a couple of years, it was great to reacquaint with old friends. Unfortunately, some friends had “flown west” and it was sad to have missed them. Looking out at the crowd enjoying life, I could not help but ask myself, “What was it that made us all arrive to this point in life?” Was it luck, divine providence, destiny or Fate? I believe it is Fate.

After my retirement, among the many projects I undertook, one was to get back into writing. In a writing class I enrolled in, the instructor had us analyze the autobiographic writing style of Ernest K. Gann. “Fate is the Hunter” and “The High and the Mighty”, are two of his best sellers. I had read and reread them many times as a teenager. In the conclusion of “Fate is the Hunter,” Ernie describes an incident which made him conclude that Fate, his and that of others, governed or controlled his and their lives. It was his last flight. Eventually, Ernie retired to the Pacific Northwest.

Judge for your self what it was that predicted his “Last Flight.”

The following is a synopsis of the event that determined Ernie’s “Last Flight.”

“Gann was piloting a DC-4A, bound from Honolulu to Burbank. Over the course of several hours, the aircraft suffers a series of strange but not ominous vibrations. Grimes, the intelligent and attentive Flight attendant, complains of a bizarre shaking motion in the tail section. Gann and his crew investigate but eventually decide that one of the engines must be running roughly. Gann is anxious to reach land and, contrary to common practice, does not reduce speed in the face of the uncertain vibration. Throughout the remainder of the flight Grimes continues to complain, the crew continues to inspect, and Gann continues to wonder what could be wrong—if anything. He performs a personal physical inspection of the plane, concludes it must not be serious, and flies as normal. He lands the plane in Burbank and deplanes most of his passengers before continuing on to Oakland. He is

scheduled to leave the next day on a sailing vacation and, anxious to be home, causes more fuel than usual to be loaded so that he can sustain maximum speed throughout the short flight. While on the ground he is informed that another crew, also flying a DC-4A, had just been killed in a bizarre crash the day before. He flies to Oakland, lands the plane, stands around anxiously while both mechanics and engineers perform an inconclusive inspection, and then leaves for his sailing vacation.

When he returns from vacation, three weeks later, he is informed that his vibrating plane had been missing a critical bolt; the loss of the same bolt had caused the other crew to lose control and crash. Only an impossibly complicated series of events—flying at a certain speed, loading additional fuel, flying at a certain altitude—had allowed him to retain control. While the senior engineer implies that Gann has exceptional dumb luck, Gann felt it was time not to tempt Fate any further. Gann reflects that men’s Fates vary according to unseen providence.”

Fate is the Hunter by Ernest K. Gann | Summary & Study Guide © 2000-2011 BookRags, Inc.

During this study, the instructor assigned us the task of writing an autobiographical sketch of our lives and if Fate was a factor.

In Greek, Roman, and Nordic mythology, there are three Fates, goddesses: One creates the thread of life, the other maintains the thread and the final Fate cuts the thread of life. Reflecting on my life, my definition of Fate slightly differs from the official Webster Dictionary definition of Fate.

“The Fates are huntresses, seekers of one’s destiny, who surreptitiously infuse into it inexplicable events, ever changing that destiny, one or more challenges at a time; all the while cackling, like the witches in Macbeth, at our folly.”

I am sure we all have stories wherein Fate infused events into our lives and changed our destiny.

The following is my story. (I have slightly adjusted the story to reflect the current readership.)

The Last Flight

By Jay Sakas

It is midnight over the north Pacific. The darkness from outside permeates into the flight deck, softened by the glow from the instrument lights. The rhythmic throb of the four engines lulling one to sleep, as is evident by the buzzing sound coming from the guy in the right seat. I am flying a 747-400 and along with my crew and 321 souls, are racing eastward to meet the sun and then on to our destination. Looking out the windshield, the universe in all its splendor, looks down on me one last time. This is my last flight. In the past and now, I have always considered this time in flight as my cathedral. A place of reflection. The past and the future

It seems only yesterday, that 22 airline pilot wannabes were gathered in the vending area in the bowels of the green windowless Northwest Airlines General Offices. Trying to introduce ourselves and impress each other, while gawking at the new class of flight attendants walking quickly through the area. Of the twenty-two only myself and another junior pilot are left. Many of the twenty have flown their last flight and some never flew that last flight but flew west instead.

I believe that the Fates are in my life. Inserting into it inexplicable events, mischievously at times, to push me in the direction of being here, on the last flight.

I was born in an insignificant country, Lithuania, during the heyday of World War 2. My mother, with me in her arms, and her family were told to flee the country by my father, in order to avoid living under Russian rule. The family joined other refugees and eventually made its way into Germany. My father was captured by the Russians and sent to the gulags in Siberia not to be heard from until just before his death in 1986.

My mother and her family were captured as refugees by the retreating German army. My mother having been a nurse in Lithuania, was conscripted by the German army to work at a hospital in Berlin. By Fates' design, it was located in what eventually became the American sector of Berlin after the war. During the bombing of Berlin by the allies, I was placed in the hospital orphanage which had a bomb shelter. Many a night was spent in that bomb shelter, and I survived. Later on during my teen years, my mother would swear she picked up the wrong child from the orphanage.

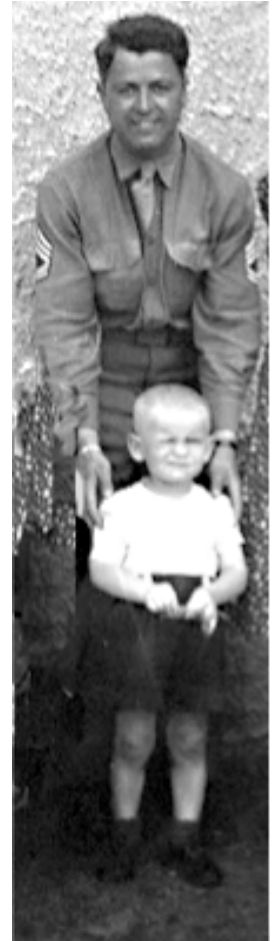
My mother, as fate would have it, was born in the

US during my grandparents twenty year sojourn in the US. Being a natural born US citizen, she was entitled to travel to the US immediately. I was not. It took 3 years for my paperwork to arrive with permission to enter the US. During this waiting time, we lived in many refugee camps throughout Germany. During one of those camps, an American aviator befriended my family and he gave me a small tin airplane. My destiny was set. As a child it went everywhere with me, even to bed. It stayed with me for many years. Finally, we boarded a refugee troop carrier ship, survived a hurricane at sea and finally arrived in America in 1948 at age 5. Looking back, one can see Fates' footprints.

As fate would have it, we boarded the train going from New York City to Chicago, our final destination. Inexplicably, my mother and I got off in Rochester, New York. I suspect she followed other refugees scheduled to get off there. Taken in by an old Lithuanian family, they cared for us, sent me to school, and helped my mother find a job. This is where we stayed.

Growing up in upstate New York, I assimilated well into the culture. Went to school and lived the life of an unadjusted teenager. My room was a hanger for model airplanes. As I grew older, I would ride my bike to the nearest airport and "thumb" for rides. Many of those rides were in "taildraggers," i.e.: Piper Cubs, Champs, (my favorite airplanes to this day). Those rides paid off. They prepared me not only for my first flying lesson but kept me motivated to seek my private license.

Off I went to college for a journalism major, but spent so much time at airports that I was soon asked to leave. I floundered about for a year, going to school part



time while earning enough money to get that private pilot's license. Previously, a couple of years earlier, I had an accident while riding my bicycle. Took the settlement money, bit the bullet and went after my dream and enrolled at Spartan School of Aeronautics. Fate seems to make sure when you earn your good fortune, a little bad fortune must precede it.

After my last check ride and during the interview with the Director of Flying for a job at Spartan as a flight instructor, the phone rang. After he answered it, he handed it to me and said, "This may work better for you." The short of it, I was hired to be a contract flight instructor for the US Air Force's T41 program at Laredo TX. Which by the way kept me out of the draft.

After a year and half of instructing, I ventured forth and became a vagabond. Working in any place that would hire me. In Africa working for a wild animal TV show producer flying animals around. Flight instructing, everywhere and anywhere. Becoming a freight dog, with a little crop dusting thrown in to make life exciting.

Finally, I settled down and went back to school at the University of Dayton. Got three years of college under my belt, while still hanging around the airport instructing and flying any charter I could find. One day I had to fly a freighter aircrew from Dayton to Detroit for Zantop Airlines. Upon arriving, I asked operations if they needed pilots, and the next thing I knew I was hired. Zantop became Universal Airlines within a couple of weeks and as such I was in their first C-46 class at Willow Run airport.

After training and flying a dozen trips, myself and my classmates were called into a meeting. Change of plans by Universal management and we were all furloughed. After the furlough meeting, I drove over to Detroit Metro Airport, to have lunch with a Northwest Airlines ticket agent that I "knew." She handed me the pilot application and said, "Fill it out and stop feeling sorry for yourself." I did as I was told.

I took the application over to the station manager, who called a person in the Personnel Department named Randy Breize. The next thing I knew, I was on an Electra flight that afternoon to Minneapolis for an interview. It was a good thing I had worn a suit and tie for the furlough meeting. (A big, big thank you Randy Brieze, wherever you are.) I was hired for the June 3rd class of 1968.

For the next couple of years the Fates seemed to have backed off. They allowed me to enjoy a somewhat normal life of an airline pilot. There were a couple of engine failures but nothing of imminent danger. Survived the usual strikes, furloughs, upgrades, check rides and numerous base transfers. Life was good, living the dream. However, early in my career, the Fates had one more



The Three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, goddesses of Greek mythology who spun, measured and cut the thread of life.

This carved relief is in the drawing room of Castell Coch (Red Castle) near Cardiff, Wales.

inexplicable event to throw into my life.

I was returning from a home visit and attempting to catch a flight from Chicago to Minneapolis. The flight was full. A Boeing 707 had a mechanical problem and was being ferried with crew to Minneapolis. A bunch of us non-revenue pass riders got on board. As I entered the cabin, waiting to greet me was the most beautiful flight attendant I had ever seen. It turned out, it was her very first flight. Later on during the flight, as she came by me offering coffee, I asked her for a date in a "suave" pilot way. Whereupon she politely walked away. I kept trying during the flight to entice her to go out with me; lunch, sailing on Lake Minnetonka, dinner at Fletcher's. Finally, she agreed to go sailing only after I was vouched for by my seat mate, a flight attendant that knew me "too" well. That and the fact that I had a new black lab puppy seemed to close the deal. I never had a chance. In spite of my roommates' warnings about my character, she felt I had possibilities and married me. Today, 30 years and four kids later, she is still looking for those possibilities. She is back there trusting me and the Fates to get us safely to our destination.

Soon the hint of dawn was starting to break over the glare shield. Time to get out of my reverie and start to work one last time. I can only thank the universe or the Fates for allowing me to have reached this point in my life. I hope the Fates will continue to take care of me and I promise not to tempt them (right!).

With luck, I will set this great bird softly on the tarmac in Detroit and my career will have come full circle. I will accept the congratulations of my peers, my friends and my family. Though I will leave with a heavy heart, I have a happiness so few can ever understand.

What the future holds for me, I do not know. I'll let the Fates decide. ✨



MIDDEAPOLIS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Photography: Ray Alexander



Ray & Rittie Alexander



Stephanie & Dick Wing



Dave & Angie Lurden



Steve Lillyblad, Gary Thompson



Kathy Bell, Jack Cornforth



Sam McGone, Connie Blad



Art Bein, Pete Brown



Doug & Sherry Wenborg



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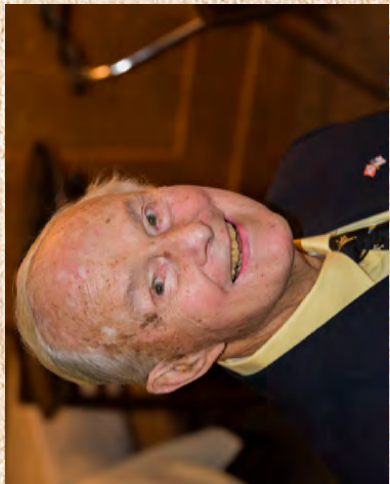
Dale & Diane Ebben



Jim & Norma Driver



Joel Tastad



Norm Middleton



Bob Blad



Terry Marsh



Virgil Sagness



Barbara Fischer



Liz Whetter



Bill Buckingham



Billy Brown



Lois Abbott



Marcia McCallum



Dale Hagfors



Dennis & Margo Bertness, Kathleen Hogan



Kathleen Atkinson, Dick & Barbara Erlandson



Stephen Weber, Wally Weber, Steve Fowle



Mary Jane Dittbener, Larry & Nancy Doran



Dick Glover, Stan & Colleen Heaston



Cornie Thompson, T.J. & Kathy Manion



Hal Hockett, Susan Kosta, Dick Duxbury



Ned & Ellen Stephens, Kathy Julie & Keith Maxwell



Jim & Patty Jo Halverson



Arlo & Susan Johnson



Dick & Cookie Bihler



Lee Bradshaw, Chris Bradshaw



Dave & Jane Sanderson





Unlike the kinds used to clean up messes, these RAGs attempted to prevent messes.

By “Jake” Jacobson

During and after the Korean War it became readily apparent to the Navy that they had to develop a method to train aviators. I don't mean new guys, they were very good at training college graduates to be excellent pilots.

I mean old guys.

To understand the concept you have to be aware of the normal progression of the standard career assignments of a typical aviator who is in the pipeline for future command. If he's not in the pipeline there are thousands of places to send him. If he is, this is what the first dozen years of his career would kind of look like.

Out of the training command he would go to a squadron—could be fighter, attack, transport, anti-submarine, carrier or shore based, blimps (remember this is the late '50s), etc. This would be a 3-4 year tour, if he found the Navy to his liking and stayed in he would be assigned a shore duty billet. Probably flying a desk in

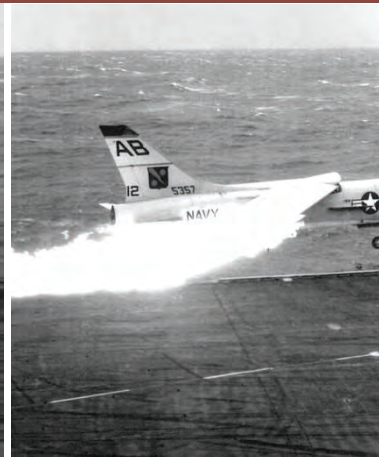
Washington or somewhere else a long way from aviation. After 2-3 years of this it's time to go back to sea, either a second squadron tour or ships company on a carrier.

Remember these are guys in the pipeline for command. A carrier job would be catapult, flight deck, hangar deck, arresting gear, aircraft handling officer or the like. After two years of this he would go to his second squadron and the squadron guy would go to a carrier. After this four years it's back to shore duty and the cycle starts over.

Now you know what I mean by old guys. All these desk jockeys going back to carrier squadrons. Let's say a guy's first squadron was in patrol planes and he gets orders to an A-4 attack squadron out of shore duty. He would be as useful as t--- on a boar, he doesn't even know how to get in an A-4. The old guy must be trained.

Today the shipboard component of aircraft is several

1: F-8 landing gear strut failure upon otherwise normal landing—fuel ignites. **2:** Edge of angle deck and



squadrons of F/A-18s, a couple of electronic A-6s and early warning radar planes. In 1957 a carriers complement of planes included the A-3D, A-6, A-4, A-1D, F-8U, F-4D, F-2H, FJ, F-4H, S2F, WF, F-3H, etc. This was the cold war remember, anything the military wanted they got. The Air Force was the same way, look at the long line of century series fighters F-100 through F-111.

In order to sustain readiness in this varied fleet of aircraft the Navy answered this problem with what they called RAGs (Replacement Air Groups). They developed a new squadron for every one of these planes that was scheduled to remain in the fleet into the '60s and beyond. The purpose of these RAG squadrons was very simple; produce a product upon completion of the training who would be a contributing member of the fleet squadron they were going to, not a t--- on a boar.

Every pilot slated for a particular aircraft, either just out of the training command or scheduled to be the commanding officer must complete the course of training at a RAG. This included not only learning how to fly the aircraft but to master all of the warfighting skills necessary to carry out the mission of the squadron. This included day and night carrier qualification.

After all of this prep work we're finally getting near the telling of the sea story. The start of the RAG operation was perfect for me back in the very late '50s because about that time I was ready for shore duty. I was lucky enough to go to the RAG as an instructor and didn't have to go fly a desk. Because of my squadron job, Landing Signal Officer, they gave me the same duty in the RAG. This was both good and bad news, good cause I liked it and bad because I had to spend about one week a month on a carrier.

Why's that, a week at sea when you're on shore duty? Because we had to get the students both day and night carrier qualified before they went to their fleet squadron.

This became a huge scheduling problem because you just don't send a carrier to sea to get one squadron's pilots some landings. The 6-8 previously mentioned RAG squadrons arrange their schedules so that the bunch of them are ready to go to the ship at the same time.

This of course means that every RAG LSO on the West Coast is on the ship for the week to get the job done on all types of aircraft. Seeing as you're only working for one day and night the rest of the time you're just killing time.

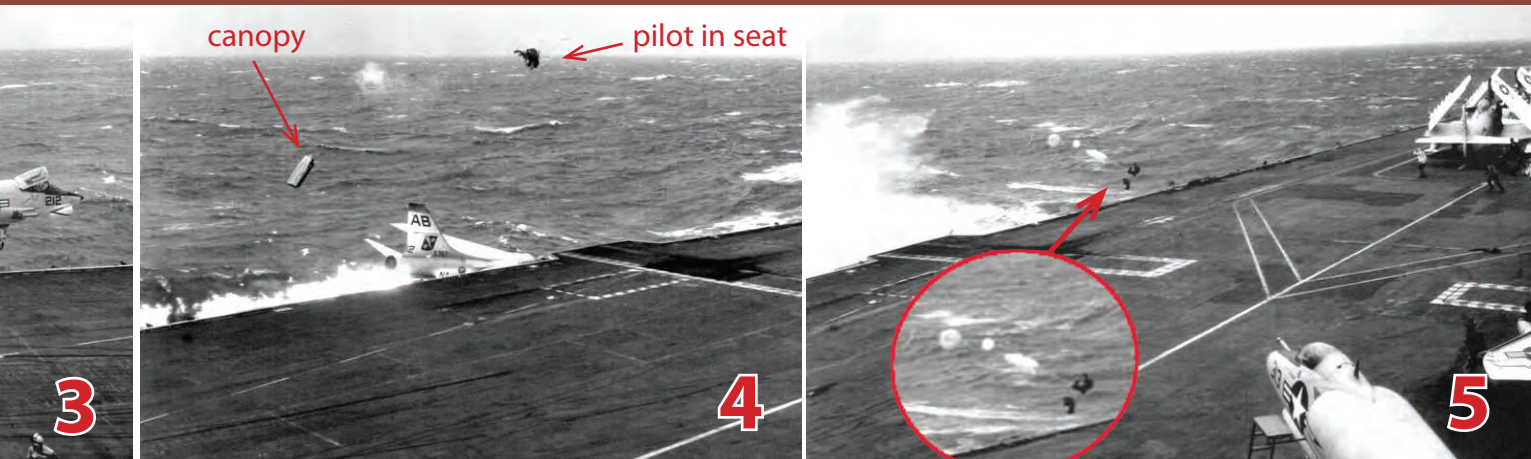
In those days the Navy had one plane that was a little difficult to get aboard for a rookie, especially at night. The F-8 had some peculiarities which created this fact. Now I know some of you flew this plane and may differ with me but that's my story, judge, and I'm sticking to it. (They did add an auto-throttle later, which helped.)

I'm sticking to it for one reason—month after month for year after year there was only one plane that brought a bunch of experienced LSOs to the platform to watch the circus. Why would a bunch of people who have watched thousands and thousands of approaches spend a couple hours observing some other aircraft try to get aboard. To watch the F-8 circus at NIGHT, that's why.

COMNAVAIRPAC had a regulation that dictated a maximum of four people on the LSO platform during flight operations. When the F-8 rookies went at night it was hard to squeeze into a couple feet of space. On the night in question I'm guessing there were 12-15 of us watching.

It didn't take all that long for the rookies to make it worth skipping the movie in the wardroom that night. Skipping the preliminaries, soon a kid dropped his nose in close (a cardinal sin in the F-8), the controlling LSO screamed, WAVE OFF, WAVE OFF. None of us being rookies, we all knew what happens next and we all headed for the net at once, we needed no prompting. The

pilot reaching for ejection ring. **3&4:** Ejection. **5:** Seat separation and drogue chute deployed. Pilot survived.





This Crusader suffered what was technically a “cold” cat shot. This one was different in that the bridle failed and pulled the aircraft into the starboard catwalk and it then fell tail-first into the sea. The pilot, whose helmet is visible, escaped with only a cut elbow.

next second saw a gaggle of about a dozen guys jumping over the side. We ended up on top of each other tumbling down the net.

Under and outboard of the platform over the water was a safety net made of ¼ inch woven cable with a couple of old weather beaten mattresses at the bottom, it was quite steep and dumped you out a ways below the flight deck in a catwalk.

Anyway, the rookie got it into afterburner and somehow missed the ramp. The bunch of us in the net unscrambled and hurried back up to the platform because the next plane was only 45 seconds to a minute away.

Shortly I heard a voice shouting, “Call a doctor.” Shining a flashlight down I saw a guy still laying in the bottom of the net. I jumped down and put the light on his leg to see one of his shin bones was sticking out

through his stocking. We hadn’t escaped the mass exodus of the platform unscathed—too many people jumping on top of each other. The doctor was there in a couple of minutes with a bright white light destroying everyone’s night vision.

Shortly thereafter you guessed it, the same posse is on the platform, a guy with a broken leg in the net and the same kid in the groove on final. Yep, he drops his nose in close and the same thing starts all over except we can’t jump. We all crouch down and he’s not as lucky, striking the ramp at 120-125 knots about 40 feet away. There is no sound like it, it’s one of a kind.

He again got it into afterburner which ignited into a fireball beside us as the damaged plane continued up the deck. To his credit he ejected successfully while the aircraft was still on the flight deck and hit the water a few hundred yards aft of the ship.

Meanwhile the pilotless plane did not dive into the ocean. When

reaching the end of the deck it rotated nose up and climbed vertically, still a huge fireball. I don’t have any idea how high it climbed, could have been 10-15,000 feet. All I know is we all stood and stared for a long time. When it stopped climbing it started coming down, still a fireball.

All of us rubber neckers were wandering around on the flight deck looking up and had the same mental illusion, pitch dark night, huge fireball coming straight down, had to hit the ship, had to, nowhere to run. We talked about it as it descended. A spectacular site, ended up hitting the water about 300 yards off the starboard quarter. I’m not sure which happened first, the helo picking up the pilot or his plane hitting the water.

Those of us that skipped the movie that night and watched the F-8 circus got our money’s worth. ✈

“Naval aviators privileged with flying the F-8 Crusader were given a fairly badass jet, albeit one with an astonishingly high mishap rate. By the end of its production, 1261 F-8s were churned off the line, and all but 155 of them were involved in some mishap or another, varying in severity.”

Search: “The F-8 Crusader Once Scared a Vietnamese MiG Pilot Into Ejecting Before a Dogfight.”

– by Ian D’Costa

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Hey Gary,

You asked for stories. Good stories. Stories of travel and adventure and just what we retirees are doing to stay sane.

Well, I would like to share with you my recent adventure in the Idaho Back Country. You know, that beautiful part of the world that we used to look down on as we flew from Billings or from Minneapolis or Chicago to Portland in the three holer and wonder who actually lived there.

I'm referring to the Frank Church Wilderness Area and the Bitterroot Range—north of Boise and Cascade and east of McCall.

Larry Daudt

By Larry Daudt

 Photos by the author

It all started when my friend, Dave Larson, who owns a hanger near mine here in Boerne, Texas was telling of his trips to the Idaho Back Country in his Maule M7 235.

He really piqued my interest when I learned that Dave had given presentations at Oshkosh about the proper way to stay alive while flying in the back country.

Dave and Barb have a home near me in Boerne and have a small ranch near Hondo Texas, which I look after when they are in Colorado. Dave and Barb also have a home in Durango Colorado, where they hanger the Maule.

One day while having a beer after sweating together on the ranch all day, Dave suggested that I take a week with him in the Idaho Back country.

I said when and where can I meet you?

Now, since my number two daughter lives in Boise, he agreed to pick me up there and then we would head north to Johnson Creek near Yellow Pine.

Yellow Pine is nearly at the end of the road and boasts a population of twenty or so folks and a big dog named Charlie. They have a bar reminiscent of some place we crews frequented in Anchorage, on long layovers of course. There is some sort of grocery store, where they sell beer and snack food but most of all they have a golf course in the forest that no one maintains.

A drive of four and one half hours on mostly gravel roads north out of Boise will get you there.

It took us forty minutes to fly there.

On to the adventure.



Charlie and me



The Maule on the Upper Loon airstrip— about 6000 ft elevation

Day One:

The weather was good. I met Dave at BOI, fueled up, and off we went. Forty minutes later we were circling to land at Johnson Creek. Dave had jam packed the Maule with camping equipment, food, sleeping bags and tents. We went to work setting up camp in the trees behind the row of Cessnas, Supercubs, Maules and a few not such slow-flying airplanes.

We met with Dave's friends who were also camping out. They were active pilots for United—787 and 747-400.

Denis and Jim were excellent camp cooks and the food never tasted better as we dined in true camp style on the banks of Johnson Creek.



Straddling the roadside drainage at Yellow Pine

Day Two:

The sun was just cracking the horizon over the mountains to the east when the first of the breakfast flight departures revved up and flew out. At seven AM in the mountains the air is cold and crisp and it is filled with lift.

I'm out of my bag at the sound of the Cessnas warming up and Dave is stirring in his private quarters.

Brrrrr: Its Thirty six degrees in the morning with frost on the manicured four thousand foot grass runway at Johnson Creek.

We hustle out, splash cold water in our eyes, then prepare to launch for the twenty dollar breakfast of a lifetime somewhere. Im just the passenger!

What a majestic moment as the Maule lifts off in the coolness of the mountain morning, headed for the first adventure, Sulpher Creek. This was, as are most of the dude and hunting ranches we visited, accessible only by airplane or pack horses.

As we circle in the valley to line up on final, I see two elk grazing in the meadow near the end of the runway.

Dave lands on the gravel runway. The Maule decelerates and stops in three hundred feet or so and we find that we are not the first nor the last to go out for breakfast at Sulfer Creek.

The breakfast consisted of eggs, fried potatoes, ham, sausage, toast, all to your liking, coffee, and fruit of your choice, all served on a giant meat platter with no room to spare. All that and atmosphere too. Just a little bit of heaven, for sure.

We then flew out to Thomas Creek for hiking, and Indian Creek just to say we could.



Approaching Lower Loon for breakfast. No go around here.

These two airstrips are on the Middle Fork of the Salmon river. Commercial and pleasure rafting are afloat up and down the river.

The sun was getting high and the breezes were picking up. The air was getting bumpy so it was time to head back to Johnson Creek. Fine wine and steaks on the campfire grill by Dennis were the fare for dinner.



The "Adventurers Breakfast"

Day three:

We flew out early to have another fantastic breakfast at the Flying B ranch.

The air was getting rough so we flew out to Cascade, Idaho for fuel and cell phone connections with the family and then flew back to Johnson Creek.



Most likely helped build the runway

Day four:

Day four was my most enjoyable day, although all were fantastic. Dave decided that we would fly to the Lower Loon ranch on the middle fork for breakfast again and then up stream to Upper Loon above 6000ft.

We landed at the Lower Loon strip after circling and letting down behind the mountain, following the stream around to the left to the strip. No chance to go around here. You are committed to land once the strip is in sight. In fact, most all strips in the Idaho back country are one way in, one way out—no go around option.

Another delicious breakfast prepared by Ron, the ranch hand, the caretaker, the hunting guide and all around good guy.

After relaxing we walked a mile or so to a natural hot spring for a good soaking. Water temperature was about one hundred degrees. Just right!

We returned to the airplane and took off down stream, turned right around the mountain and climbed back to fly upstream again enroute to the Upper Loon strip eight miles away. Again a very difficult approach and landing to a gorgeous setting in the Idaho high country.

Mule deer were grazing on the meadow near the strip.

Another hike and more wonderful scenery—wild animals and birds. We departed downstream and bumped back to Johnson Creek.



Indian Creek forest service strip. Rafters put into the Middle Fork here.



Yellow Pines' finest bar and grill. Good beer, great food, friendly folks.



Dinner on the banks of Johnson Creek and Barney, the curious pack mule.

Day five:

At the camp dinner on day four we decided to fly out to Root Ranch for the prepared breakfast next morning. There were about six aircraft and ours to fly out. Once finished with breakfast and more hiking, we split up.

Dave and I landed in two more interesting strips before heading out to get fuel at McCall, Idaho.

The towns on the strips were Dixie and Warren. Both were nearly abandoned mining towns and may have been considered ghost towns, although there was some progress being made to restore them for tourism I think. These two towns were accessible by gravel roads.

One more great camp supper, prepared by Denis, Jim, Larry, and Dave with the normal consumption of adult beverages spiced with old war stories and cajoling



Up stream to the Flying B ranch on the far right.



about our airline careers and retirement.

What a truly great way to spend a week in harmony with God's great creation. Flying with a very competent pilot was the frosting on the proverbial cake.

Day Six

The weather was threatening in the mountains so we broke camp and flew out to BOI where we parted ways for the moment.

Dave arrived home in Durango four hours later and after one more day with my daughter in Boise, I flew on to San Antonio.

Enjoy life here as it is given to you. One day, and all too soon, it will only be a memory. ✈



Golf in the woods. Dennis gets a TREE in one.



South approach to Johnson Creek



Jay Sakas
Howie & Joen
Parks



Sterling & Nadine
Bentsen

The Hosts
Rex & Kathee
Nelick



Tom & Linda Peterson

Seattle Christmas Party

 Photos: Sterling Bentsen



Bill Stocker
Gus Diem
John Upthegrove



Bill & Betty Huff
John & Karen Pennington



Mel & Evie Suggett
Bev & Ivars Skuja



Dave McLeod & Pat Rieman
June Palon
Montie Leffel

Gary & Nancie
Russ
Larry & Mavis
Stears



Skip & Kathy
Eglet

Chuck Carlson &
Joanne Aitken

Dave & Linda
Rolczynski
Marv Peterson



Bud & Carolyn
Cheney

Charlie & NanSea
Welsh



Dave Hall
Pattie Dills
Lowell & Dorothy
Schroeder



Dave & Katie
Pethia
Wayne & Kathleen
Stark



Heather Olm
B. J. & Gerri
Molé
Ardie Madsen



Doug & Barbara
Peterson
Curt & Sandy
Bryan

CAPTAIN HAL'S SEA STORY



Photo by Ensign Hockett



Air Anti Submarine Squadron 37

(Here's my story and I'm sticking to it.)

By Hal Hockett

It's another election year, I'm sitting here catching up on my Contrails magazines and I realize that among all of its fine qualities, it is a great distraction from Donald and Hillary. Every issue has something to send you on a nostalgia trip into yesteryear of things, places and people that have entered your life.

I read in the November issue that Don Chadwick flew Vice-president Humphrey in the same VH-34 helicopter used by President Eisenhower. I found this very interesting and wished I had known this earlier so I could have discussed it with him.

Then in the August issue I read "THE YOUNG MAN & THE SEA" an honest to goodness real sea story by "Jake" Jacobson and thought "HOLY CRAP," if Jake's story is in Contrails, then that's the place for mine.

My story takes place in 1960. I had just turned 23 years old, a newly designated Naval Aviator and had just been assigned junior Ensign to VS-37 which was preparing to depart on a WestPac cruise aboard the USS Hornet (CVS12). I remember receiving a pre departure briefing from an old salt who already had made one cruise. He told me, Hal you are going to have a ball, we are going to Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. I discovered I was really up for an eight month vacation cruise.

Cruising over to Hawaii everyone noticed four H-34 helicopters parked on the hanger deck but there was no concern or question what they were doing there. When we got to Hawaii the Hornet canceled all flight operations. It threw the Air Group off the ship, sent it to Ford

Island, then took off a secret mission. We were then assigned to liberty with nothing to do but go and pick up women arriving on cruise ships and show them around. They seemed to be very grateful when you took them to a huge party at the Royal Hawaiian celebrating Hawaii's 1st anniversary as a State on the 4th of July. It was tough duty but someone had to do it.

A few weeks later the Hornet returned and the vacation cruise continued toward Japan minus the four H-34 helicopters. We would learn later that President Eisenhower had a trip planned to Japan and wanted his helicopters there when he arrived. The Hornet had steamed halfway to Japan and another aircraft carrier in Japan had steamed halfway to Hawaii, they met, transferred the helicopters, turned around, and went back. It ended up that there were anti-American riots going on in Japan and Eisenhower canceled the trip. I have always wondered how much fuel was wasted running an aircraft carrier across the Pacific and back. These were the same VIP VH-34 helicopters flown by Don Chadwick and I now have confirmation that they were returned. Nice to know.

We then proceeded to Yokuska, Japan and then made it to Hong Kong, but then the vacation cruise went awry. They told us not to go to Singapore. Go to Okinawa and pick up a Marine vertical envelopment squadron. Marines no longer had to storm the beaches in LSTs but could surround the beach defenders by going over the top by helicopter.

The Marines came aboard with their H-34 helicopters and all their gear. We had Marines bivouaced out on the hanger deck and every nook and cranny of the ship.



I have always wondered if we set a new population record for the Hornet, but that would never be recorded.

What the Marines were doing aboard the Hornet was highly classified. No one was supposed to disclose that they were even on board, let alone why or what they were doing there.

The next thing we knew the ship's loudspeaker informed us that we were in the South China Sea steaming 60 miles off the coast of French Indo China. I don't think the ship ever called it Vietnam and I don't think I even knew there was a Vietnam. We continued to steam 60 miles off the coast of French Indo China week after week.

attack and continued to wait. A couple of times we put into port at Cubi Point for R&R, then we would be back steaming off the coast of French Indo China. We did keep playing our submarine games throughout, ignoring the fact that the Marines were on board.

Then came the orders, take the Marines back to Okinawa and return home. We dropped the Marines off on 2 December and steamed great circle route bypassing Hawaii to return almost on schedule. We were all home with our families for Christmas.

About 40 years later I am watching a program on PBS about all the conspiracy theories on the Kennedy

“ As I prepared to write this story another light went off; a CVS conducting antisubmarine operations 60 miles off the coast would go unnoticed and a CVA would tip it off immediately. It makes sense after all. Took exactly 56 years to figure that out. The ASW stuff was nothing but a ploy—it even fooled us. ”

With all the secrecy, somehow I heard that they were mixing napalm aboard ship and that we would be providing close air support for the Marines when they invaded French Indo China using our Grumman S2F Trackers. Fact or fiction, I decided to believe it and wondered how that was going to work. Our mission and training was seek out and destroy enemy submarines. We were slow and had no armor plating, would be sitting ducks. But we were a legitimate war bird. If we could drop a depth charge in the water we could drop a napalm bomb over land. We had in fact been practicing, firing 5inch HAVR rockets at a sled towed behind the Hornet. This must be real and I assumed that everyone knew what I knew, but just weren't talking about it. I just couldn't understand why they had put the Marines on the Hornet, a CVS and not an attack carrier or CVA.

I wondered why there was no order to launch the

assassination. One of which was that Kennedy was planning to pull us out of Vietnam and that Lyndon Johnson didn't want us to. Lyndon Baines Johnson may have had something to do with the assassination. They went on to say that Kennedy never wanted anything to do with Vietnam because he was concerned about Cuba and he refused to address the Vietnam situation in his campaign for president.

Well-Duh, and a light went off in a real dim wit! 1960 was a presidential election year! Eisenhower was President and Nixon was his Vice President running against Kennedy for president. Eisenhower wasn't going to start a war and turn it over to a president that didn't want the war. We hadn't been waiting for some admiral to launch the attack. Nixon was chomping at the bit for a war in Vietnam in 1960 then finally won a presidential election claiming he had a secret plan to get us out of



Vietnam. We all learned that his secret plan was lose and run!

I wasn't much interested in politics back then and probably didn't even know about absentee ballots. I don't even remember an election going on or any talk of it aboard ship. I didn't vote for Kennedy but now wish I had. I now believe that on election day 1960 we were 60 miles off the coast of Vietnam when Kennedy won the election. If Nixon had won we would have launched the Vietnam War the next day and I could very much have been dead instead of home for Christmas. I believe that it may have been President-elect Kennedy that issued the orders to take the Marines back to Okinawa and go home. It is also my story that you need to pay attention to presidential elections. Never have I seen more profound or immediate impact on a person's life. It has changed my outlook on presidential elections just like roast pork prison food changed Darrel Smith's outlook on food for life.

Shortly after coming up with this presidential election theory, while walking the dogs in a local park, I ran into another old geezer. During conversation we started talking about Hillary. She was in the news for something, maybe running for senator. Anyway the conversation lead to an opportunity to tell my story. I told him that I had been scared and would have not even known how to talk to a forward air controller. This guy said, "I'm the guy you would have been talking to." He assured me that although he had been sworn to secrecy he was in fact a marine in Vietnam at that time. He was not allowed to wear dog tags but was a trained sniper and forward air controller. There are all kinds of such stories out there and I understand that somewhere in Hanoi there is a marker of some sort commemorating the start of their "American War" starting in 1954. My logic is that maybe our "Vietnam War" started at the same time!

I have told my story to a few of my squadron mates and each time I get a dumbfounded look of disbelief that we were there to attack Vietnam and not just playing with submarines. This is followed by them adding something in support of the theory. One claimed we also

steamed with a troop ship but I have no memory of that. No one has said anything to discredit the theory. The story just keeps getting better.

As I prepared to write this story another light went off; a CVS conducting antisubmarine operations 60 miles off the coast would go unnoticed and a CVA would tip it off immediately. It makes sense after all. Took exactly 56 years to figure that out. The ASW stuff was nothing but a ploy, it even fooled us.

The USS Hornet Westpac 1960 cruise book devoted a whole two pages (mostly pictures) to the Marines coming aboard. This is the single statement:

"In August HMR-162, commanded by LtCol. M.M. Cook Jr., came aboard for a "short stay." At the time we went to press in mid-November the Marines are still aboard and seemingly not anxious to get home to Okinawa. Flying troop-carrying HUS-1s, the squadron made mail deliveries to destroyers and submarines, personnel transfers, flew plane guard and in one day afforded over 750 ship's crew with a helo hop."

The Marines had actually practiced to see how many troops they could carry in a day! That was how the cruise book treated the most significant event of the cruise.

When I came to work for Northwest in 1967, I applied for membership in the American Legion or VFW and was turned down. They claimed that I did not serve during a foreign war. With 9 years active duty I was a little put out with that.

The Hornet is now a museum in Alameda, California. When I first started going aboard the museum, ready room 3 was exactly like I left it. It still had the VS-37 emblem on the door and I could find my name on the squadron rosters for every cruise VS-37 made on the ship. This was all stripped out and replaced with a display for the California Department of Forestry which now has been replaced with a display of the previous Hornet (CV8) and the Doolittle raid. The museum really touts, with large displays, picking up three astronauts returning from the moon and returning them to their home base.

I do not consider fishing three people out of the water much of a mission for such a fine and decorated warship. I do not believe that the museum staff has any knowledge that it almost started the shooting war in Vietnam in 1960, prevented only by a presidential election.

Well Jake, that photo with your article of you standing on the LSO platform reminds me a whole lot of the guy that gave me my pre-departure briefing. The trip did not exactly turn out to be a vacation cruise. Do you think that the 1960 cruise should qualify us to be a veteran of a foreign war? ✈

Imagining The Future



Is it even possible for us to imagine that our grandchildren will experience a world which will change *exponentially* more than our grandparents' lives had, or even our own?

Editor's comment:

As a ten-year-old, the Dick Tracy two-way wrist radio seemed to me to be nothing but pure fantasy. Not too many years later I was mystified by how that then-new television set could extract a picture—well, almost a picture—through that wire plugged into the wall. Things were changing. Someone presented a program to my high school assembly praising the soon-to-come waterless washing machines that would clean our laundry with microwaves. I don't recall any mention about cooking. Somewhere in that time frame I started hearing about a binary number system. That seemed cumbersome. What use could that be? We also started hearing the word digital more and more. And, of course, the jet engine improvements were coming along that would affect the lives of everyone reading this and shrink the world. Twelve of our citizens would walk on the moon—most people can name only one or two—to be met still today with disbelief by some.

How the following article appeared on my computer last Spring I am not at all sure. This was a Facebook post (I've never had a Facebook account) that I found interesting. It was written by a young German fellow named Udo Gollub who had just returned from a gathering called the Singularity University Summit.

I Googled the university. Talk about change. Did you notice that I just tossed off the verb form of Google as if we've always had it? We now have a knowledge base so extensive that one may learn just about anything with a few keystrokes. Yes, it has its share of erroneous information, but I submit that many of the textbooks that we learned from were proportionally tainted—some quite intentionally.

The folks at Singularity University apparently spend a lot of time thinking about this stuff. What follows is Herr Gollub's take on what transpired there. It may or may not be an accurate prediction. It doesn't matter.

Past experience, coupled with these predictions, would suggest that we are incapable of even imagining what's to come. Let's hope that our grandkids may be able to handle the head-over-heels exponential instability of the future. I think it questionable whether societies will be able to.

Is humankind capable of not destroying ourselves? The odds may not be very good. Scientists tell us that more than 99% of all species that have ever existed are now extinct.

WELCOME TO THE EXPONENTIAL AGE

In 1998, Kodak had 170,000 employees and sold 85% of all photo paper worldwide. Within just a few years, their business model disappeared and they went bankrupt. What happened to Kodak will happen in a lot of industries in the next 10 years—and most people don't see it coming.

Did you think in 1998 that three years later you would never take pictures on film again?

Yet digital cameras were invented in 1975. The first ones only had 10,000 pixels, but followed Moore's law. So as with all exponential technologies, it was a disappointment for a long time, before it became way superior and got mainstream in only a few short years.

It will now happen with Artificial Intelligence, health, autonomous and electric cars, education, 3D printing, agriculture and jobs. Welcome to the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Software will disrupt most traditional industries in the next 5-10 years.

Uber is just a software tool, they don't own any cars, and are now the biggest taxi company in the world.

Airbnb is now the biggest hotel company in the world, although they don't own any properties.

Artificial Intelligence: Computers become exponentially better in understanding the world. This year, a computer beat the best Go player in the world, ten years earlier than expected.

In the US, young lawyers already don't get jobs. Because of IBM Watson, you can get legal advice (so far for more or less basic stuff) within seconds, with 90% accuracy compared with 70% accuracy when done by humans. So if you study law, stop immediately. There will be 90% less lawyers in the future, only specialists will remain.

Watson already helps nurses diagnosing cancer four times more accurately than human nurses.

Facebook now has a pattern recognition software that can recognize faces better than humans.

In 2030, computers will become more intelligent than humans.

Autonomous cars: In 2018 the first self-driving cars will appear for the public. Around 2020, the complete industry will start to be disrupted. You will not want to own a car anymore. You will call a car with your phone, it will show up at your location and drive you to your destination. You will not need to park it, you only pay for the driven distance and can be productive while driving. Our kids will never get a driver's licence and will never own a car. It will change the cities, because we will need 90-95% less cars for that. We can transform former parking space into parks.

1,200,000 people die each year in car accidents worldwide. We now have one accident every 100,000km, with autonomous driving that will drop to one accident in 10 million km. That will save a million lives each year.

Most car companies might become bankrupt. Traditional car companies try the evolutionary approach and just build a better car, while tech companies (Tesla, Apple, Google) will do the revolutionary approach and build a computer on wheels. I spoke to a lot of engineers from Volkswagen and Audi; they are completely terrified of Tesla.

Insurance companies will have massive trouble because without accidents, the insurance will become 100 times cheaper. Their car insurance business model will disappear.

Real estate will change. Because if you can work while you commute, people will move further away to live in a more beautiful neighborhood.

Electric cars will become mainstream [by] 2020. Cities will be less noisy because all cars will run on electricity, which will become incredibly cheap and clean.

Solar production has been on an exponential curve for 30 years, but you can only now see the impact. Last year, more solar energy was installed worldwide than fossil. The price for solar will drop so much that all coal companies will be out of business by 2025.

With cheap electricity comes cheap and abundant water. Desalination now only needs 2kWh per cubic meter. We don't have scarce water in most places, we only have scarce drinking water. Imagine what will be possible if anyone can have as much clean water as he wants, for nearly no cost.

Health: The Tricorder X price will be announced this year. There will be companies who will build a medical device (called the "Tricorder" from Star Trek) that works with your phone, which takes your retina scan, your blood sample and you breathe into it. It then analyses 54 biomarkers that will identify nearly any disease. It will be cheap, so in a few years everyone on this planet will have access to world class medicine, nearly for free.

3D printing: The price of the cheapest 3D printer came down from \$18,000 to \$400 within 10 years. In the same time, it became 100 times faster. All major shoe companies started 3D printing shoes. Spare airplane parts are already 3D printed in remote airports. The space station now has a printer that eliminates the need for the large amount of spare parts they used to have in the past.

At the end of this year, new smartphones will have 3D scanning possibilities. You can then 3D scan your

feet and print your perfect shoe at home. In China, they already 3D printed a complete 6-storey office building. By 2027, 10% of everything that's being produced will be 3D printed.

Business opportunities: If you think of a niche you want to go in, ask yourself: "In the future, do you think we will have that?" and if the answer is yes, how can you make that happen sooner? If it doesn't work with your phone, forget the idea. And any idea designed for success in the 20th century is doomed to failure in the 21st century.

Work: 70-80% of jobs will disappear in the next 20 years. There will be a lot of new jobs, but it is not clear if there will be enough new jobs in such a small time.

Agriculture: There will be a \$100 agricultural robot in the future. Farmers in 3rd world countries can then become managers of their fields instead of working all days in their fields. Aeroponics will need much less water. The first petri dish produced veal is now available and will be cheaper than cow produced veal in 2018. Right now, 30% of all agricultural surfaces are used for cows. Imagine if we don't need that space anymore. There are several startups who will bring insect protein to the market shortly. It contains more protein than meat. It will be labeled as "alternative protein source"

(most people still reject the idea of eating insects).

There is an app called "moodies" which can already tell in which mood you are. By 2020 there will be apps that can tell by your facial expressions if you are lying. Imagine a political debate where it's being displayed when they are telling the truth and when not.

Bitcoin will become mainstream this year and might even become the default reserve currency.

Longevity: Right now, the average life span increases by 3 months per year. Four years ago, the life span used to be 79 years, now it's 80 years. The increase itself is increasing and by 2036, there will be more that one year increase per year. So we all might live for a long, long time, probably way more than 100.

Education: The cheapest smartphones are already at \$10 in Africa and Asia. By 2020, 70% of all humans will own a smartphone. That means everyone has the same access to world class education. Every child can use Khan Academy for everything a child learns at school in First World countries. They have already released their software in Indonesia and will release it in Arabic, Swaheli and Chinese this summer, because they see an enormous potential. They will give the English app for free, so that children in Africa can become fluent in English within half a year. ✈

AMERICA IN OUR GRANDPARENTS' TIME

In 1900:

- The average life expectancy for an American man was 48.3. For a woman was 51.1.
- Only about half of American children between five and 19 years old were enrolled in school. Ending formal education after eighth grade was typical.

In 1910:

- 7.7% of Americans said that they couldn't read or write, a sharp decline from 1870, when 20% said they were illiterate. (True rates of illiteracy may have been higher, since these were self-reported.)
- The average annual per capita income in the US was estimated at \$332, or about \$7,800 in current-day dollars. But that was decades before truly representative income samples were available.
- There were just over 14,000 people incarcerated in the US for first- or second-degree murder.
- Less than half of the US population lived in urban areas. (Today, it's 80%.)

In 1915:

- Cocaine had only been illegal for a year; marijuana was still perfectly legal, available for purchase in pharmacies; and doctors still regularly prescribed heroin to patients.

- The constitutional amendment granting American women the right to vote had not yet passed.
- A dozen eggs cost 34 cents; a gallon of milk cost 18 cents; and a pound of coffee cost 30 cents.
- Many practicing doctors in the US had been educated haphazardly since, according to the National Library of Medicine, "medical schools had become mostly diploma mills."
- The three leading causes of death in the US were heart disease, pneumonia/influenza and tuberculosis.
- Canned beer, modern supermarkets and Barbie dolls had not yet been invented.
- The Eiffel Tower was the tallest structure in the world—a status it had held since its completion in 1889 and that it maintained until 1930.
- The US did not have an official national anthem.

In 1938:

- The US set its first minimum wage: 25 cents an hour.

In 1940:

- When the census collected information on the plumbing in American homes, almost half lacked the trifecta of hot/cold water, a tub or shower, and a flush toilet.



I have come to realize when someone you love dies the continuity of life is a difficult surprise. The birds still sing, the flowers bloom, people are in love and the one thing that skips a beat is the heart of the broken-hearted...

– Mary Rethlake, NWA Flight Attendant



BARRY D. BROXSON 1939 ~ 2016

Captain Barry Broxson, age 77, flew west August 31, 2016 in Auburn, WA. He was born in Seattle February 24, 1939 to Howard and Lois Broxson, longtime residents of Maple Valley. He attended Tahoma High School where he played both football, basketball and wrestling. Barry was a farm kid accustomed to working with his hands.

After high school Barry matriculated into Central Washington University (CWU) where he studied biology, AFROTC, and played collegiate golf. He graduated from CWU in 1961 and was commissioned in the Air Force Reserve. Before entering the Air Force Barry married fellow CWU student Judith Nyseth who was to be his lifetime companion.

The Air Force assigned Barry to Reese AFB, at Lubbock, TX for undergraduate pilot training. Earning his silver wings, he was assigned to the 903rd Air Refueling Squadron in support of the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, the organization that operated the SR-71 aircraft. Barry flew a modified version of the KC-135Q tanker and became skilled at high speed fuel transfer operations. This was crucial element for supporting the global SR-71 reconnaissance operations and required Barry to make frequent deployments. It was during these Air Force years that their children, Jeff and Lisa, were born.

Barry began his Northwest Airlines employment on November 06, 1966. His initial crew position was 727 Second Officer out of Minneapolis. As seniority permitted he upgraded to First Officer and Captain flying out of the MSP, SEA, and DTW bases. Barry pretty much 'flew the fleet' and was type rated in the B-727, DC-10, and B-747/200 and 400. He was known as a competent and steady pilot, much respected by all. It was early in his NWA career when he became bonded at the hip with fellow pilot Darryl Cloud.

The 1970s were an era of labor unrest and layoffs at NWA. Barry joined a small pool of laid off pilots driving ready mix concrete trucks (now Teamsters). Being a farm boy driving a large truck came easy for Barry.

Mandatory retirement ended Barry's airline career in February 1999. Undaunted he stayed physically active doing landscape work, rebuilding old cars with his buddies and brother-in-law, and playing golf with his son-in-law Dave. Barry was skilled at the construction trades, which led him to finish the second level in his home by himself. He was also an enthusiastic member of the Auburn chapter of the Sons of Norway. Outwardly quiet and reserved, Barry retained a delightful dry sense of humor.

After 54 years of marriage, life took a radical turn when Judy passed away on December 6, 2015. Thereafter, appearing to many heart broken, Barry began to lose weight. He was soon diagnosed to with cancer.

Less than a year after Judy, Barry passed way. He is survived by his son Jeff and his wife Renee, of Mill Creek, Washington and his daughter Lisa and her husband David Dal Molin, of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Remembered as a caring and gracious man, Barry is dearly loved by his family and will be greatly missed by many. (– Bill Day)



**ROBERT “BOB” LOWENTHAL
1938 ~ 2016**

Captain Robert Lowenthal, age 78, passed away peacefully of dementia on September 6, 2016. Bob was born in July, 1938 in Miami, Florida to Robert and Emily Lowenthal. He was the eldest of three sons. Bob’s father was an oil refinery steam fitter and foreman working for overseas ventures of Texaco and Standard Oil Company. The family lived abroad for an extended period of time in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bahrain and India. Bob returned to the USA to study aeronautical engineering at Georgia Tech, but by his own admission failed to graduate due to “too much party time.”

After Georgia Tech Bob enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served as a rifleman. In 1961 he married Edwina Harris and they had two sons, Robert Jr. (deceased) and James Lowenthal. Completing his enlistment, Bob decided to pursue his passion for flying while quietly harboring a desire to become a NASA astronaut. Sadly, his marriage to Edwina did not survive his career change.

Bob’s Northwest Airlines employment began August 11, 1966 and like most NWA pilots of that era, he began as a 727 Second Officer at MSP. During a chance encounter, Bob met the lovely flight attendant Kathryn Steidel. They were a great match and Bob and Kathy married in 1969. The first major career leap was to Honolulu where they lived happily

until the base abruptly closed in 1971. Bob had to leave for Seattle without Kathy, who was deemed too late in pregnancy to travel. She gave birth to daughter Wendy in Honolulu. Mother and daughter met up with Bob in Seattle a week later.

Bob earned a math degree at the University of Washington while flying the line so that he could finally apply for the NASA astronaut program. All his application got him was a form letter NASA saying, “Thanks for your application but we are swamped.”

With a second daughter Kristi in tow, the family moved back to the Twin Cities in 1981 when Bob checked out as captain on the 727. In 1987 they pulled up roots yet again and moved to Mystic, Connecticut so that Bob could fly the DC-10 out of nearby Boston. This proved fortuitous when NWA closed the BOS base and moved it to JFK to become a 747/400 base.

In addition to line flying, Bob assisted in the investigation of the 1989 Sioux City UAL DC-10 crash. In 1989, he and daughter Kristi traveled to Alaska to search for the wreckage of NWA flight 4422, the flight that was rumored to have gold aboard. Their search is mentioned in a book named—*Flight of Gold*.

In 1993 NWA pulled the plug again and closed the JFK base moving Bob to Detroit. Anticipating his approaching retirement, Bob and Kathryn tested the waters at Colorado Springs, but eventually settled in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. On July 27, 1998 Bob put away his flight bag for the last time. During his career Bob acquired type ratings in the DC-3, B-727, B-747, DC-10, B-747-4 and logged copilot time on the Lockheed Electra.

Retirement didn’t slow Bob much. In 2003, he traveled to Mongolia with an expedition searching for Genghis Khan’s tomb. He also delved into the real estate business, flew recreationally, joined the Navy League and Rotary Club, and participated in several summer tours as pilot for the Collings Foundation’s restored B-24 and B-17 aircraft. .

Bob’s health started to fail in 2012 after Kathy had a devastating stroke. He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Kathryn S. Lowenthal, his son Jim Lowenthal, daughters Wendy Simeur and Kristi Lowenthal, 7 grandchildren, and brother Dave Lowenthal. (-Bill Day)





CHESTER ALLEN EKLUND 1921 ~ 2016

Captain Chester A. Eklund, age 95, of North Oaks, Minnesota passed away peacefully at home on September 30, 2016. Born June 06, 1921 to Chester and Esther Eklund of St. Paul, MN. Chet's father was a bank teller who was killed in a bank robbery when Chet was only one year old. He was raised by his widowed mother until age eight years old, when his mother married Lawrence Fox—Chet's stepfather who fully filled the father role. Chet was third in birth order of four siblings: John, Dorothy, and half-brother Charles Fox. .

As a high school student Chet excelled in swimming, diving, and gymnastics. His extra-curricular activities were limited by his obligations to a paper route he served from age eight until college age. Graduating from Johnson High School in 1939 he matriculated onto Macalester College. At Macalester he discovered flying through the college flying club and later learned that Northwest Airlines was hiring pilots. Due to the World War II mobilization NWA had become desperate for pilots applicants. Chet would humorously claim that NWA was willing to hire and train him, or anyone else who could pass a physical exam. Chet's official NWA date of hire was August 18, 1942.

For the duration of the war Chet mostly flew Northern Region non-combat military missions in Canada and Alaska (including the Aleutians) as a civilian pilot contracted to the Air Transport Command. It was challenging flying at its best. In 1943, during a break back in Minnesota, he and Marjorie Wall were married.

After the war Chet retained his job as a NWA line pilot. In 1946 Chet and Marjorie, along with Chet's parents, purchased a private 60-acre estate on Whitefish Lake near Brainerd, Minnesota. In 1947 they opened Fox Hunter Lodge, a family resort with ten 'Ultra-Modern' guest cabins. Chet was one of the early NWA commuters, flying to the Twin Cities from the resort in his personal float plane to fly his scheduled NWA flights. In time he would own a 1947 RC-3 Seabee and a Cessna 182 on floats.

During his 43 year career at NWA, Chet was rated in the DC-3, 4, 6, and -7; the Lockheed Constellation, the DC-10; and the Boeing 707, 727, and 747. In the 1960s he was the NWA Chief Pilot at MSP. There is a little known tidbit about our Chief Pilot. During a training flight he made a low pass over the resort for his Mom's benefit. Unknown to him his approach went directly over a turkey farm and caused devastation to the turkey flock. Oh yes, the farmer recorded the tail number.

Chet's daughter Jeanne Elizabeth Quillen was an adopted child born in Florida. Only days old, she was 'flown home' to Minnesota in the cockpit of Chet's regularly scheduled flight. He was able to send a radio message to his wife that "Queen Elizabeth has arrived," his daughter's middle name.

At age 60 Chet opted to 'fly the panel' on the 747 until age 64. Remaining physically fit, Chet continued to ski into his 70s, played tennis until his 80s, and golf into his 90s. He was preceded in death by his wife Marjorie, sister Dorothy, and brother John. He is survived by his brother Chuck Fox, sons Donald, Richard, and daughter Jeanne Elizabeth Quillen.

(- Bill Day)





ROBERT R. JOHNSON
1935 ~ 2016

Captain Robert “RR” Johnson, age 81, flew west on November 13, 2016. Bob was born in Minneapolis, MN on July 1, 1935 to Ruth (Steinbach) and Ralph Johnson. He attended West High School in Minneapolis where he played hockey, participated in class plays and early graduated at the age of 16. This impressive performance was followed with a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Minnesota.

Bob was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in 1956 and winged as a Naval Aviator in 1957. Thereafter he checked out in the North American FJ-4, the Navy version of the Saber Jet and served with VMF-232 ‘Red Devils’ at MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. In 1958 VMF-232 deployed aboard USS Bennington during the Quemoy/Matsu Crisis. It was at Kaneohe that Bob first qualified as a Landing Signal Officer (LSO), the aviator responsible for guiding aircraft aboard the aircraft carrier. Bob was particularly proud of the thousands of landings that he controlled onto aircraft carriers without a single accident of any kind.

Separating from USMC active duty on July 1, 1959, Bob began initial pilot employment with Northwest Airlines on September 1, 1959. This initial tenure with NWA became short lived when he was laid off in October, 1960.

There followed nearly two years of employment with the Military Products Group at Honeywell before he returned to active Marine Corps service in September 1962. During this period of extended active duty, Bob



flew the F-8 with VMF-122 at MCAS Beaufort, SC. He remained on active duty in the Marine Corps until September 1966 when he returned to NWA employment.

Bob flew an extensive number of NWA airplanes. In 1968-69 he also served as Assistant Chief Pilot to Les Lowenski at MSP, but preferred flying the line to holding down the desk. Bob was a long term instructor pilot and FAA Designated Check Airman until his retirement on July 1, 1995.

In R. R. Johnson’s own words: *“In addition to his lifelong commitment to aviation, Bob was deeply involved in his local community through youth sports, the Catholic Church, and the local school district. After retirement, Bob reconnected with an old friend, Georgia Pappas and a loving marriage resulted which fulfilled him for the remaining years of his life. Bob and Georgia made their new home in Sandestin, Florida where their life was with amazing friendships and wonderful social life. In addition, they shared their mutual love of travel by taking multiple trips abroad each year, as well as demonstrated their commitment to volunteer service at Sacred Heart Hospital in Sandestin.”*

Bob’s life was deeply enriched through his very special relationships with his grandchildren. Bob is survived by his loving wife, Georgia, three wonderful children Michael, Elizabeth Baxter, and Kristin Johnson and a step-daughter Stacy Pappas, as well as his nine grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son USAF Captain Daniel R. Johnson.
(– Bill Day)



PAUL A. GEIGER
1939 ~ 2016

Captain Paul A. Geiger, age 77, began his scheduled 'Flight West' from the St. Cloud, Minnesota VA Hospital at 7:15 pm, October 14, 2016. We are sure that St. Peter was waiting with the gates open.

P.A. Geiger 'TWIGGY' attended the University of Missouri where he played football and wrestled in the 175 lb. class. During his junior year 'Pauly' decided to join the USMC as an aviator and fight for our country in Vietnam. While in Vietnam Marine Captain Geiger served with VMFA-542, flying 330 missions in the F-4B Phantom. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and 23 Air Medals.

After serving the USMC in Vietnam, Paul 'Twiggy' Geiger was hired by Northwest Orient Airlines for the pilot class of Nov. 4, 1968 along with 24 others. The 1970s were a great time for NWA pilots, we learned many pilot skills: driving 18 wheel trucks, driving city busses, selling used cars and setting up union picket lines. Captain Geiger

flew the Boeing 727, 707, Douglas DC-10, and Boeing 747-100 and 747-400.

During his NWA career hunting and fishing was very important to Pauly. His favorites spots were the Boundry Waters of Minnesota, Lake of the Woods and the Dry Tortugas (Marathon, FL). These fishing trips were a Marine (USMC) extravaganza attended by many daredevils: Bill Iams, Bob Cummings, Lyle Prouse, Mike Carson, Vic Britt, Bill Isaacson, John Doherty, Greg Booze, George Bond and many others.

Captain Geiger is survived by a large and loving family, his wife Mary Ann 'Bunny' Geiger, daughter Becky, sons David and Paul 'Butch', five grandsons and many nieces and nephews. If a person needed someone to watch their back Pauly was your man, always finding the best in everyone.

WE WILL MISS YOU BROTHER! "SEMPER FI"

(- George Bond & Bill Iams)



**RICHARD
ELLIS
SMITH**
1941 ~ 2016

Captain Dick Smith, age 75, passed away on September 04, 2016. Born Aug. 19, 1941, in Scott City, Kansas to Ellis and Olive Stratton Smith, Dick was the third of four children and the only son.

Dick was never one to stand around and watch, he was always in the center of the action. Even while attending high school this farm boy profitably raised cattle.

He earned a master's degree in economics at Colorado State University. Paying for his education by delivering milk in the Fort Collins area and crop dusting in Iowa during the summer season. Crop dusting is a dangerous occupation, but for Dick it was sport. This was how he launched his pilot career and the flying passion that lasted a lifetime.

In 1966 Dick married Karen Coffman. Two sons were born of this union: Mark Andrew and Bradley Richard.

Dick was hired by Northwest Airlines May 19, 1969 and flew for NWA for 32 years. While he loved country living, he also appreciated seeing the world. In 1970 he was laid off by NWA during the infamous BRAC strike. This layoff proved to be the event that released his entrepreneurial spirit as he sought new ways to support his young family. Having few other formal skills, Dick and a fellow airline pilot began painting houses in the Seattle area. During the Christmas season he hawked Christmas trees.

Out of necessity Dick launched a number of small businesses including the successful coffee and tea chain, Olive's East, in Seattle, Portland, Minneapolis and Denver. He owned and operated a large Seattle bakery specializing in European cakes and pastries. His sons worked alongside their Dad, accruing an appreciation for the value of hard work.

In 1979 NWA recalled Dick to his first love—flying. A few years later

Dick married Karen Johnson. Together they operated two farms in southern Minnesota raising corn, soy beans, hogs and cattle. One farm soon had a runway for launching Dick's Cessna 182.

Dick and Karen eventually layed down roots in Western Montana and purchased the 61 Bar Ranch near Stevensville. They worked hard at building the ranch doing so much clearing that you could find Dick by locating the smoke. The couple restored their original 1911 ranch house into a loving and hospitable home that became the site for the Smith's legendary branding parties—an annual Bitterroot event. Dick and Karen took time to slip away for Puget Sound pleasure trips and fishing excursions on his yacht—'Scotch and Water.'

Dick retired as a 747 captain on Aug. 19, 2001. Thereafter he invested more time in the cattle business—owning and operating the Great Falls and Missoula livestock exchanges. Dick also pursued his passion for fishing all over the Northwest, Alaska and Central America. He and his sons often participated in annual pheasant shoots in North Dakota and Texas when not spending time on his Montana boat—Classy Lady.

Intelligent and physically strong, Dick was quick to put his thoughts into action and he did value action! Dick was also a generous man ready to help people and causes that were important to him. Dick is survived by his wife Karen; sons Mark and Bradley and five grandchildren. He was a loving and supportive husband, father, grandfather, and brother.
(– Bill Day)

WILLIAM “BILL” HALVERSON 1925~ 2016

Captain William W. Halverson, age 90, passed away on August 17, 2016 at Bayfield, Wisconsin. Bill was born in Lyons, Nebraska on December 31, 1925 to Roscoe and Mary (Jacobs) Halverson. He had one younger sister.

Bill's father was a railroad traffic manager, a profession that required the family to move often. Due to a stroke of good fortune, Bill attended high school in Bayfield, Wisconsin. A fascination with aviation came early and while still a high school student Bill was crop dusting in the upper Midwest. He attended the University of North Dakota and after WWII returned to earn a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Bill entered the U.S. Army Air Corps late in WWII, only 19 when he earned his Air Corps pilot wings. Due to his late entry in the war he saw no combat, however it is noteworthy that he did qualify in P-51 fighter aircraft which he flew later with the Minnesota Air Guard.

Bill met Frances Hewitt at the University of North Dakota and on September 5, 1948 they married. During their 67 year marriage the couple had two children. In the mid-1950s Bill and Frances moved to St. Paul to launch Bill's career with Northwest Airlines. His official date of hire was August 01, 1950 and his first crew position was copilot on the DC-3. During his career Bill would fly the DC-3, 4, 6, 7, 10; the Lockheed Electra; the Boeing 707-720/320 series, the 727, and his last NWA airplane—the 747 classic.

During much of his career Bill served in some capacity as an instructor; beginning as an initial ground school (new hire) instructor at the 34th Avenue warehouse at MSP. Bill liked to mix flying the line, serving as aircraft instructor pilot, along with a lengthy assignment to Paul Soderlind's Test and Ferry group. Bill retired as a Boeing 747 (classic) captain on December 30, 1985.

The Halverson's were accomplished sailors and enjoyed the waters of Lake Superior near Bayfield. In fact, Bill once purchased a Dutch sailboat franchise operation. Summer months were spent in Bayfield, Wisconsin sailing, canoeing, camping, playing tennis



and walking the brownstone trail with Frances. Serious hiking was a complex and long term endeavor. After retirement Bill and Francis joined Norm and Jean Midthun in completing the famous Milford Track, described as 'the finest walk in the world.' They trekked for 14 days in the mountains of New Zealand. Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Conner was a participant on that venture.

After retirement Bill and Francis spent winters in Henderson, Nevada catching up with family and friends and enjoying the holidays together. If you attended the EAA Oshkosh Fly-In in the 1980s you might have seen Bill's antique airplanes. His magnificent Staggerwing Beechcraft (pictured above) was a two-time EAA national grand champion. It was a classic beauty.

The Halverson family has a long military tradition: his son Bob is a retired Air Force officer and F-15 pilot; and his grandson Garret is a USMC officer now undergoing USN flight training.

Bill is survived by his beloved wife of 67 years, Frances; his daughter Lizabeth Halverson and his son Bob Halverson; a grandson, Garret Halverson; and nieces and nephews.
(– Bill Day)



JOSEPH M. "JOE" SUTILA 1938 ~ 2016

Captain Joseph Sutila, age 77, departed this life on October 24, 2016 at home in Eden Prairie, MN with his family at his side. Joe succumbed to acute myeloid leukemia. He was born in New Haven, CT to Croatian immigrant parents Joseph and Mary Sutila. Joe was a good student and well-coordinated athlete playing football, basketball and baseball in high school. After high school Joe matriculated to the University of Connecticut where in 1961 he earned a degree in Geology and Geography. Concurrent with college graduation he completed Air Force ROTC and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve.



Soon after college, Joe was called to active duty for USAF pilot training. He earned his silver wings at Reese AFB, TX and was selected for advanced fighter training in the F-102 at Perrin AFB, TX. Thereafter Joe was assigned to Air Defense Command, 325th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Truax Field in Madison, WI. In 1965 as Vietnam heated up, Joe was reassigned to the 405th Fighter Wing at Clark AFB, Philippines. This Wing deployed to Thai air bases where they flew cover and interdiction over North Vietnam. In 1967 Joe, now combat seasoned and highly decorated, left the active Air Force to pursue airline employment

Hired by NWA on November 06, 1967, Joe began his career flying sidesaddle on the 727. During his 32 years at NWA he flew the B-727, B-707 series, and the DC-10. Flying with Joe was always pleasant regardless of the weather, trip pattern, or wake up times. We knew him as a prankster and a great story teller who could tell a masterful joke. Joe's final upgrade was to the DC-10 where he homesteaded for the rest of his career. He dutifully served as an instructor on the DC-10, sharing his special feel for that airplane. Joe hung up his flying spurs on December 05, 1998.

Joe married NWA flight attendant Pat Duncan on August 28, 1982. Those of us who knew Joe personally took note of his dedication to parenting. He was the reliable compass in the lives of his son Craig and daughter Donna, his children from a previous marriage. They both recall countless 'JOE - ISMS' that he repeated over and over. For example, "Craig, if you ain't the lead dog the scenery never changes." His wisdom focused on faith, family, flying, finances, faithfulness and how to just have fun.

A favorite fun adventure for Joe and Pat were ship cruises, they especially liked cruises to Alaska. During retirement Joe remained an active golfer, a Minnesota Twins fan, a member of the Flying Cloud Airport Advisory Council, and what is lessor known—a gardener. He most loved to hunt deer near Plentywood, Montana with his son Craig, and also enjoyed pheasant hunting in Minnesota and South Dakota.

Joe's daughter Donna Nord resides in Prior Lake, Minnesota. His son Craig is a pilot with American Airlines now residing in Texas. In death Joe is survived by his wife Pat, sister Emily Coppola, daughter Donna Nord, and son Craig, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

(- Bill Day)





ARTHUR LYLE THRALL 19231 ~ 2016

Captain Lyle Thrall, age 93, passed away on October 15, 2016 in Gig Harbor, Washington. He was born in Tacoma, Washington to Samuel and Olga Thrall. Lyle (Art) grew up a city kid in both Tacoma and Gig Harbor, graduating from Gig Harbor Union High School with honors.

At the beginning of WWII Lyle went to work at the Bremerton Navy Yard as a machinist to earn money for college. Because he held a war critical job, wartime regulations held him at that job until 1943, when he was released to enlist in the Air Corps Aviation Cadet program. WWII ended just prior to Lyle earning his wings. After release from the Army, Lyle headed east to Parks College at St. Louis University to study Aeronautical Engineering.

Concurrent with his engineering studies, Lyle acquired additional pilot time and ratings at Parks College. With a fresh engineering degree in hand he was hired by Northwest Airlines on September 11, 1950 to work as a control clerk. However his time as a control clerk was short lived for he was soon recalled by the Air Force for Korean War service in Japan.

NWA hired Lyle as a pilot in 1953—just as he was about to accept a pilot training slot with United Airlines. His initial base assignment was to Seattle as copilot on the DC-3. He was laid off and recalled several times during the 1950s and early 1960s. During the layoffs he flew copilot for non-sked West Air, Pacific Northern in Alaska, and Eastern Airlines in Miami. Apart from his five years based in MSP, Lyle was Seattle-based his entire career. He loved those flying years and the people he worked with. He met his future wife, Dot Stone, in Seattle Crew Schedules. She had already been a 'stewardess' for six years when the two discovered they had been in initial training at the same time. Lyle and Dot married on February 14, 1959. During his 33 year career at NWA, Lyle flew almost every airplane in the inventory from the DC-3 to the Classic 747. He closed out his last flight plan and retired on March 19, 1983.

Lyle and Dot raised three daughters; he was immensely fond of each one. Growing up living near Puget Sound, especially in Gig Harbor, Lyle naturally loved the water and boats. The family enjoyed extended summer living on their boat as they traveled inland waters. Starting with a 34 foot boat, they graduated to a comfy 45 footer. In addition, Lyle kept his hand in the flying world with a partnership in a Beechcraft Bonanza. When the big toys became "one too many," he sold his interest in the Bonanza. In 1998 Lyle sold their boat, but life was not over as they acquired a motorhome for a different kind of travel.

In retirement Lyle enjoyed his family, travel, and gardening. He stayed active until he had a stroke in Arizona in 2008. He was able to live at home for 4 years until another stroke induced dementia requiring extended nursing home care. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Dorothy Stone Thrall, daughters Margaret Claar, Polly Thrall, and Barbara Thrall, five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Lyle's ashes will be distributed upon the waters of Puget Sound next June on Father's Day.

(- Bill Day)



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