

# e-CONTRAILS

ISSUE 208

MARCH 2019



*New Orleans* FRENCH QUARTER

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RETIRED NORTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION



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From here on out the most critical thing is *NOT* to

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you must keep your mailing address(es) up to date. The ONLY place that can be done is to send it to:

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*"Heard about the RNPA FORUM?"*

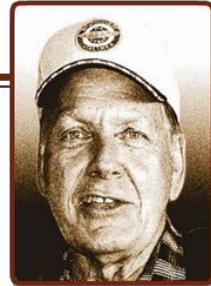
***PSSST...!***



Click the "NEWS" drop down menu, then click "RNPA Forum":

Posted comments will go out to over 840 RNPA members the same day.

## President Reports



### *Gary Pisel*

Gentlemen,

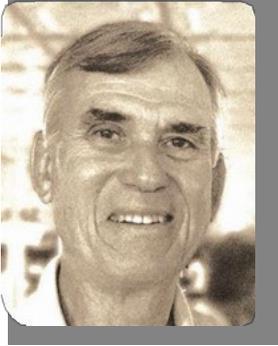
Last notice to sign up the the Reunion in New Orleans. This is a great deal, Ron has worked hard on setting it up.

Also KC is working on the Reunion for 2020 in Louisville. Read his articles and sign up early.

ign up for the Summer Cruise is also available.

At the General Meeting in New Orleans we will be holding elections. Watch your email for information.

Gary Pisel



Treasurer's Report: *Howie* **LELAND**

Gentlemen and Ladies.....

Our reserve funds remain high enough that we will not have to charge dues in 2019. Our expenses are much lower since we switched to "E-CONTRAILS" from the printed "CONTRAILS".

We are always looking for new members. Applications are available at "RNPA.ORG" under the News heading. When completed, send the application along with a check payable to RNPA to: RNPA Howie Leland 14541 Eagle Ridge Dr. Ft. Myers, FL 33912 New member dues are \$25 for regular members or \$20 for affiliate members.

If you have a change of address or phone number, please notify me at the above address, or call my phone, 239-768-3789 or by email at: [howieleland@gmail.com](mailto:howieleland@gmail.com) We want to stay in touch with everyone.

I'm looking forward to seeing as many as possible at the RNPA Reunion in New Orleans on May 7, 8 and 9, 2019.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to RNPA.

A graphic for the 'Editor's Notes' section. It features a stylized green letter 'E' on the left, followed by the text 'ditor's Notes: Jay Sakas' in a black serif font. To the left of the 'E' is a small graphic of a pilot's wing and a portion of a blue and white striped uniform sleeve.  
ditor's Notes: *Jay Sakas*

SUGGESTIONS WELCOME



**eContraails** is progressing, in so far as we are seeing more members signing in. Currently, we have had over 5900 hits since inception. Which is not bad, but we can do better. In order to maintain interest in the magazine, I would like to get more stories from the members. Any suggestions to improve the RNPA site would always be appreciated. Someone suggested that one should to be able to down load the pdf file, instead of trying to read the book.....the link is now on the cover page.

Click the link, and you will download the pdf file. Enjoy.....

In this issue, we showcase diverse stories from Gar Bensen, Dick Dodge, Dave Leighton and Karlene Pettit. All “wannna be” authors are welcome to submit their stories and articles.

The cover for this issue is New Orleans, since our annual gathering is in “The Big Easy”. Always room for more participants. Go over to “Events” and click “New Orleans” and all the info regarding the event is there, and how to sign up. Again, my thanks to Bill Day and Dick Dodge in helping with the publishing of eContraails.

[econtraailseditor.com](http://econtraailseditor.com)



# HISTORY OF NEW ORLEANS

**From then to now, New Orleans is a city of rich culture and fascinating traditions**

In New Orleans, to paraphrase onetime French Quarter resident and writer William Faulkner, the past isn't dead. It's not even past. No other city in America keeps its history as vital or as accessible as New Orleans. Entire neighborhoods, whole buildings, cemetery crypts, manhole covers, cobblestone streets and ancient oaks serve as touchstones to vanished eras. Look for it. In New Orleans, history can strut as loudly as a Carnival walking krewe or creep as softly as a green lizard on a courtyard wall. Thrilling. Colorful. Tragic. Inspiring. Discover a little about the sweep of the city's history.

# COLONIAL NEW ORLEANS

Volleyed between the French and the Spanish, both heritages linger. Claimed for the French crown by explorer Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle in 1682, the city La Nouvelle-Orleans was founded in 1718 by Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville. New Orleans developed around the Vieux Carré (Old Square in English), a central square from which the French Quarter evolved.

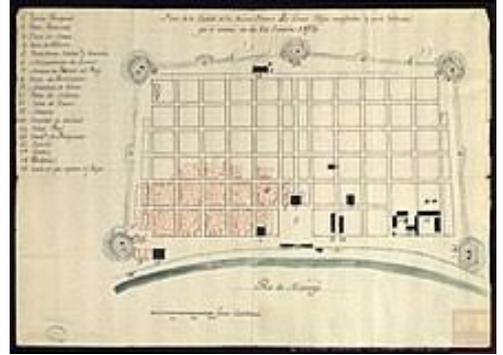
The crescent of high ground above the mouth of the Mississippi became the capital of the French Colony in 1723 and a vital hub of trading and commerce.



Spain took control of New Orleans in 1763 after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, a 37-year rule that left a lasting mark on the city's street names and architecture.

For almost four decades New Orleans was a Spanish outpost and important trading (and cultural) partner to Cuba, Haiti and Mexico before reverting back to French rule. This period also reflected Spain's more liberal views on race that fostered a class of free people of color.

It was during the Spanish rule that the Great Fires of New Orleans did their damage. In 1788 on Good Friday, fire destroyed most of the French architecture in the city. After six years of rebuilding, another fire destroyed about a third of the city.



Because of all the damage, the Spanish legacy is grande. St. Charles Avenue, Baroque-looking government buildings including the Cabildo and the Presbytere and streetscapes marked by arches and Arabesque ironwork -- these and more came from Spain. In 1800, the Spanish ceded Louisiana back to France only to have Napoleon sell the city and what was the Louisiana territory to the United States three years later as part of the \$15 million Louisiana Purchase, April 30, 1803.

Although the French sold Louisiana, residents in New Orleans chose not to be abandoned. If anything they held tighter to their Francophile ways, from language and customs to cuisine and devotion to opera and complex social strata. The Creoles, the American-born offspring of European settlers, many with French blood, created a sophisticated and cosmopolitan society in colonial New Orleans. From the streets of the French Quarter to Creole cottages, the Ursuline Convent and Charity Hospital, vestiges of the French remain to this day.

## **BESET BY PIRATES AND PRIVATEERS**

The flow of goods between the Caribbean and the port of New Orleans quickly bred piracy, with Jean Lafitte and his brother Pierre among the most infamous. Lafitte, for whom the popular

(and some say haunted) Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop bar at 941 Bourbon St. is named, was a fixer and a rogue who played an instrumental role in supplying arms and gunpowder to

**AMERICAN PIRATES**

- Jean Lafitte
  - Originally based out of New Orleans
  - Used his brother's shop to sell his stolen cargo
    - Had one major rule-Do Not Attack American Ships
  - Helped defend New Orleans in the War of 1812
  - Moved base to Galveston, involved in the slave trade
  - Killed in Colombia in 1835
    - Pirate for about 20 years



General Andrew Jackson during the Battle of New Orleans. Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop, which claims to be the oldest structure housing a bar in the United States, was the pirate's base, and

sightings of the privateer have been reported in the dark corners of the first floor, the women's rest room and near the fireplace, where he is said to have kept his gold.

## THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS



Andrew Jackson was catapulted to fame in the War of 1812 during the Battle of New Orleans, deftly turning away more than 7,500 British soldiers and forcing them to

abandon the area, the final end to the war. The treaty to end the war had been signed but word did not arrive in New

Orleans till after the battle – a nice note for the history books. Still, the treaty had not been ratified and the decisive victory sealed the fate of the British attempt to regain the land.

## MARDI GRAS

The first Mardi Gras in the United States was celebrated in March 1699 when Iberville and Bienville landed at the mouth of the Mississippi River on Mardi Gras and dubbed the spot Point du Mardi Gras and celebrated with their men. After that, history gets murky. Carnival was celebrated in France and there are accounts of some various



festivities in New Orleans from the time the French settled here. By most accounts the holiday was entrenched by the 1730s with parties and street fairs.

When Spain took over, historians say the celebrations waned until the French came back. Under U.S. rule, observance flourished. The first parades began in the mid 1800s – in 1857, a secret society of New Orleans businessmen called the Mistick Krewe of Comus organized a torch-lit Carnival procession with marching bands and rolling floats, setting the stage for the public celebrations that occur today.

# ANTEBELLUM NEW ORLEANS

As Americans prospered, the French and Creoles of New Orleans still socially rejected the Nuevo riche American plantation owners. So, the Americans simply stayed across the neutral ground of Canal Street and carved out their own neighborhoods, from what is now the Central Business District, the Warehouse District and all the way up through the Garden District and Uptown.



In the mid-1800s, the highest concentration of millionaires in America could be found between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, fortunes fueled by to slave economy and massive sugar plantations along the Mississippi River.

In the 1850s alone, Louisiana sugar plantations produced an estimated 450 million pounds of sugar per year, worth more than \$20 million annually.



Yet these elegant mansions hid the misery of the enslaved and could not shelter fortunes from the coming storm that divided the nation. War destroyed the world of antebellum New Orleans, but much remains to uncover today. Taste its food at Antoine's, the French Quarter restaurant first opened in 1840. Trace its outlines in the stately houses gracing St. Charles Avenue.

# THE CIVIL WAR



Union troops occupied New Orleans a year into the Civil War – the city didn't fight the Union invasion, thus sparing itself from destruction. But New Orleans would never regain its

particular Antebellum halcyon days. After the war, a legacy of poverty, racial tension and a government in chaos would become the new normal. The city's plantation owners would find it impossible to match their antebellum success. Although the railroad diverted some traffic from the Mississippi, the city's powerful port preserved its essential status on America's transportation map, which it does to this day.

Discover the period by touring the Old U.S. Mint, the oldest existing U.S. mint and the Civil War's only Confederate one. Drop by Louisiana's Civil War Museum located in the Warehouse District, visit the Lower Garden District and the statue of Margaret Gaffney Haughery, a beloved Irish immigrant whose bakery supplied hungry families with bread during the war and who founded a series of orphanages.

# VICTORIAN NEW ORLEANS AND THE DAWN OF JAZZ

You can still hear it and smell it. The rustle of bustled skirts across heart-of-pine floors, a Ragtime tune tinkling from an open Bywater window, a whiff of cheroot smoke, iced oysters and lager beer from a Magazine Street saloon. Uncover Victorian New Orleans. The era that blossomed following the Civil War's conclusion in 1865 is as intricate and as detailed as the "gingerbread" adornments on the fine homes found in Uptown and on the smaller cottages in Mid-City. Audubon Park (1886), the New Orleans Museum of Art (1911) and many of the city's 21st Century B&Bs were built in this period that evolved into the Jazz Age. In the late 19th century, jazz emerged, a revolutionary way to combine ragtime, blues, spirituals and the American songbook into something brand new and soul stirring.



Music is a birthright in New Orleans and it's always been that way. Even before the Jazz Age, throughout the 19th century, a conflagration of diverse ethnic and racial groups —

French, Spanish, African, Italian, German, and Irish — found common ground in their love of listening to and making music. In the late 19th century, jazz emerged, a revolutionary way to combine ragtime, blues, spirituals and the American songbook into something brand new. While the 1920s is

considered the Jazz Age in America, the time when the new improvised music became more mainstream, in New Orleans that age dawned in the late 1800s.

The 1920s roared along the Mississippi, however, and the city roared back, ignoring Prohibition and welcoming travelers. It was a time of cultural excitement. Artists, authors and the adventurous discovered the French Quarter where writer Sherwood Anderson entertained bohemians in his Upper Pontalba apartment and dramatists opened Le Petit Theater on St. Peter Street. America may have learned to dance the Charleston in the 1920s, but it was New Orleans that provided the decade with its soundtrack.

## WORLD WAR II

In the epic struggle of World War II, New Orleans played a special role. Local industrialist and shipbuilder Andrew Higgins invented a boat designed to float in the shallow water of Louisiana's swamps and marshes. He realized this boat would be perfect for getting soldiers, vehicles and equipment off big ships to shore in Europe during the war.



Built in local shipyards, "Higgins Boats" were used throughout the war, most notably on the Normandy beaches during the D-day invasion. They were so successful storming Normandy that General Dwight D. Eisenhower would describe Higgins as

“the man who won the war for us.” The story of New Orleans’ historic contribution is featured in the acclaimed National WWII Museum.

A continuum of change marks New Orleans’ post-WWII experience. For most of its existence, the city could not grow beyond its natural boundaries but by the 1950s new technology drained and dammed the land -- drawing thousands to the suburbs.

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement brought new dignity and opportunities to many New Orleanians. But, as in many U.S. cities after World War II, suburbanization and white flight added to conflicts over school integration, leaving some African-American neighborhoods impoverished and underserved.

In the 1970s and 1980s energy booms and busts became precarious balancing acts as the city struggled with a declining population and increasing needs.

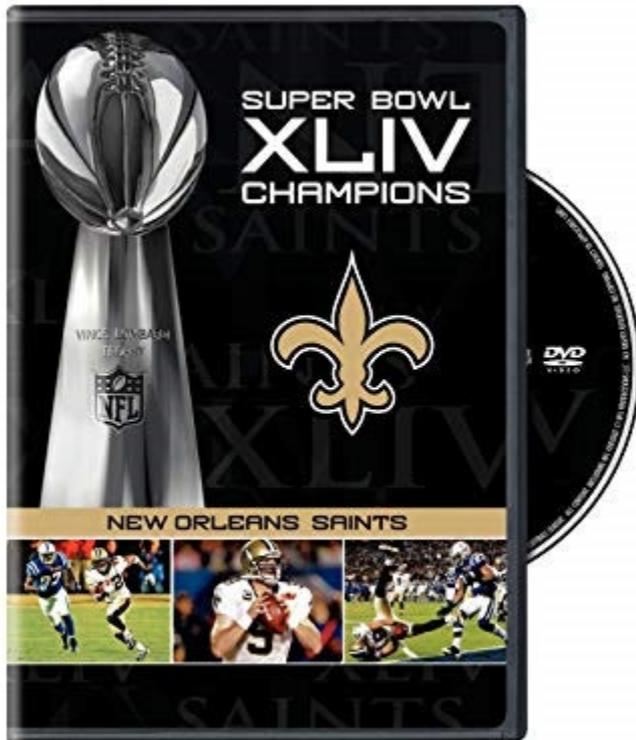
## HURRICANE KATRINA

On August 29, 2005, category 5 Hurricane Katrina swung past New Orleans, driving a storm surge that breached four levees, flooding 80 percent of the city. Hundreds were killed and



thousands were trapped for days in harsh conditions before state and federal rescuers came to their aid. Many of the evacuees never returned home and some neighborhoods, especially the lower Ninth Ward, are still recovering.

A highlight for many in the difficult few years after Katrina came on Feb. 7, 2010 when the city's beloved New Orleans Saints won the team's first ever Super Bowl game against the



champion Indianapolis Colts. The cheers were heard around the United States. Many displaced natives made a point of being not in Miami where the game was played, but in New Orleans to celebrate with the rest of the city.

New Orleans remains a city of rich culture, proud people and entrenched neighborhoods that have survived and thrived

against odds. New Orleanians have always held tight to their unique culture, pride of place, music, cuisine and festivals and tourists from around the world can't stay away. We're glad you're here as we look ahead to our 300th year in 2018.



## Delta flight diverted to remote Alaskan island due to ‘potential engine issue’

Dec 24, 2018

By KIRO7.com

Cox Media Group National Content Desk

SHEMYA, ALASKA —

A wide-body Delta 767-300ER on its way from Beijing to Seattle diverted to a remote island 1,455 miles west of Anchorage, Alaska, Monday.

[Alaska Public Media reported](#) the plane had to land in Shemya, Alaska, which is on the western tip of the Aleutian Islands chain, just east of the international date line, due to potential engine issues.

Flight 128 had 194 passengers onboard.

The airline released a statement to KIRO-TV:

“Delta flight 128 operating from Beijing to Seattle diverted to Shemya, Alaska due to a potential engine issue. Delta apologizes to customers for the delay and has sent another aircraft to continue the flight to Seattle. The safety of our customers and crew is always Delta’s top priority.”

Delta Air Lines sent another plane to pick up the passengers in Shemya and take them to Seattle. They are expected to [arrive in Seattle at 9:15 p.m.](#)

According to [the Anchorage Daily News](#), the runway at Shemya is just over 10,000 feet long at Eareckson Air Station, which is an Air Force refueling hub. The strip is also a diversion airport for civilian aircraft that encounter emergencies while flying over the Pacific Ocean.

*Shemya has a long time history with Northwest airlines. From a refueling base in the 40's and 50's, currently an emergency airfield.*

*The following story tells of Shemya in the early days and the involvement of Northwest Airlines. Enjoy.....*

## **Shemya & Northwest Airlines**

**(rick cochran)**



**My name is Rick Cochran, and I was aboard Shemya in 1950 and '51, employed by Northwest Airlines as a radio operator in support of military airlift activities during the Korean conflict. This story presents my view of Shemya as seen by a Northwest employee during that period. Bear in mind, I am now 78, and memories tend to fade. I will be looking for comments, corrections, and facts to clean up what I am about to write. Please feel free to take exception, clarify, and generally bring these accounts into the correct perspective.**

**I was on Shemya from July 21, 1950 to April 3, 1951, on temporary duty from my permanent position as ground radio operator in Cleveland, Ohio. I had been in New York, looking for employment with the airline industry. I was about to nail down a flight radio operator assignment with TransOcean Airlines with their Middle East subsidiary but they cancelled the operation and I returned to my home in Cleveland and took the job with Northwest on September 11, 1949.**

**Since I had a Radio Telephone and Telegraph license and a Flight Radio Officers certificate, they ask me in July of 1950 to go to Shemya as a temporary assignment to**

support their need for additional personnel during the military airlift. I accepted and soon found myself on a flight to Anchorage, and then to Shemya.

I don't know if you remember Anchorage in those days. As I recall there was only one hotel, the Westward. The Anchorage Hilton now sets on that site. I had a cot on the second floor dormitory, and a clip board hung on the foot with my flight time to Shemya. They woke you up when it was time to get a car to the airport.



Figure 1 NWA Operations



Figure 3 Radio Room



Figure 2 NWA aircraft

Since Northwest had the experience, personnel, and facilities in place, to fly the Great Circle Route to the Orient and were the housekeepers on Shemya at the time. Other airlines provided DC-4 and DC-6 aircraft, and NWA provided flight crews and flew the airlift of munitions, troops, and other wartime supplies from Anchorage to Shemya and then to Tokyo or Seoul.

It was not uncommon to see United, Delta, Chicago & Southern, TWA, and other aircraft on the Shemya flight line. Arrival and departure was handled through the Shemya Tower and GCA, operated by Army Air Force personnel. Once clear of the tower, aircraft communications were by Morse Code (CW) to fixed stations in Anchorage, Shemya and Tokyo or Seoul. That was my job on Shemya. The radio positions were in the flight operations building on the flight line. NWA was continuing their regular passenger flights to the Orient during the airlift activities. I worked twelve hours per day, seven days per week for the duration of the time I was there. All company business was transmitted via CW from the company station in Anchorage, cargo lists, flight manifests, personnel assignments, etc. In

the same building was an Army radio teletype facility, which we supported and backed up when propagation was bad due to the northern lights.

Earthquakes were frequent and mostly ignored. All flights were required to transmit a position report each hour during the flights west and east out of Shemya, but due to poor radio propagation, there were many times when we did not hear from an aircraft for hours at a time. A "Pacific Alert" was called if they missed two reports, but to my knowledge, we did not lose any flights while I was there.

Landings at Shemya were Ground Controlled Approach due to the continuing miserable weather. Constant fog and wind. When the good weather did show up, everyone got outside to get some sun, if there was any, and all landings continued to be GCA for practice. Adak was the alternate, but most of the time their weather was as bad or worse than ours, and the only choice was to risk a landing at Shemya. The GCA and tower operators were excellent at their craft. Landing gear maintenance was high due to hard landings because of zero visibility to touchdown.



*Figure 4 Northwest Compound*

I don't know when NWA was designated housekeeper on Shemya AFB. Probably sometime when they pioneered the route to Tokyo. There were always about forty folks on Shemya and five families. You could get on a housing list when you arrived if you wished. There were radio operators, maintenance, cooks, weather and administrative personnel.

The Army had a compound also, and I am not sure if NWA provided mess and housing support for them or not. One of the first things we did upon arrival was to go to the old main hanger and pick out a flight jacket and boots. There were tons of "stuff" just lying around in the buildings. Photo paper, electrical supplies, hobby shops full of tools and material. It looked as if someone blew a whistle and everyone just left. It seemed weird. Jeeps and three-quarter ton vehicles just pushed over the side. NWA pulled a couple out of the junk and got them operating for company vehicles. There was a munitions junk pile on the beach over the high side of the island. Rounds of ammo, flares, bombs, mortar rounds, etc. We didn't mess around there much.



*Figure 5 NWA Hotel*

Passengers continued to come through and during bad weather they became grounded for a couple of days. They were put up in the "Hotel" for the duration. Some mighty large poker games have been known to occur from time to time. Those of us who were ham radio operators had a surplus Army BC-610 modified to operate on ten meters into a full rhombic antenna supported on sixty foot poles. Since most of

the personnel were from Minneapolis, it was aimed in that direction, and the island personnel could conduct phone patches to their families with almost telephone clarity, the path was so good. The amateur call was KL7NU. It was used almost every day.



Figure 6 Antenna Farm

Sometime after I left, the Boeing Stratocruiser began to over-fly Shemya and NWA's importance declined, except as a alternate landing field. The technology in communications had progress to the point the flight radio operators and their CW operations were history and all communications were handled by the aircraft's second officer via voice over the entire route.



Figure 7 Rick Cochran in front of OPS

I returned to Cleveland in April of '51. Stayed with NWA a few more months and then headed to California. I worked for various electronic firms for a couple of years and then accepted a position with GE in their communications operations and spend 32 years with them. Retired now and living in the foothills east of Sacramento. During my last four years with GE/Ericsson I was working in Alaska and tried several times to get a ride to Shemya, but even though I had a top secret clearance and worked on most all the military facilities in Alaska, I could not make it happen. Shemya had become too "secret". I have been delighted to have been contacted by several ex-Shemyaites after I posted a comment on this website. I hope someone can lend some additional information to support or clarify my thoughts. [Rick Cochran](#) Amateur: W6GGO

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More Pictures from Shemya.....



*Figure 8 GIs Waiting to go home*



*Figure 9 Oiling the aircraft*



*Figure 10 "MSP Crew Bus"*



*Figure 11 Ramp Operations*



*Figure 12 General's B-17*



*Figure 13 Alaska Airlines on the line*



*Figure 14 Follow me truck*



*Figure15 Delta Airlines departing*



*Figure16 North Beach*

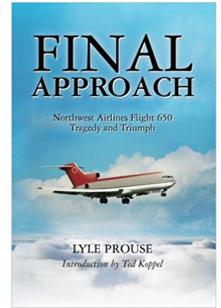


*Figure 17 North Beach ammo dump*

**(Don't miss reading: [The Shemya Informer, 1959](#))[Northwest Airlines - A Brief History](#)[Shemya: 4000 Miles From Home](#)**

**Disclaimer: The following articles are excerpted from:**

{Permission was requested by the editor and received from Lyle Prouse. Only stipulation; the excerpts be as written, and no editing allowed. Lyle did not initiate this article, your editor did and made the selection of the excerpts.}



## The Dream of Flying Again

I was stripped of everything and the FAA demanded two years of "demonstrated sobriety" before I could approach them about getting my medical certificate back. Since booze and drugs were plentiful in prison, I was concerned the FAA would force me to begin from my release date. My regular FAA doctor made numerous attempts to contact the prison to establish random drug tests for me but gave up after the prison refused to respond. A doctor I was in treatment with offered to come out and do the random drug screens. It was a surreptitious and risky maneuver because I would go to the hole if caught. We slipped into two stalls in the men's room and Bob would pass the specimen container to me. I would provide the sample and pass it back under the stall. Bob even paid the monthly cost, about \$35, another appreciated kindness since I was only making \$19.20 per month.

I didn't know if the FAA would accept what we were doing, but it was the best I could do. It turned out not to be a problem.

Two weeks into prison, Barbara came to visit and gave me some startling news. Nine of my fellow pilots had begun making our monthly house payments. Two were people I knew by name only. I was repeatedly struck in the heart by things people did for us, and this was another of those moments. Once I was out of prison, I made four strong attempts to get them to stop but Ed Landers told

me each time, "We meet every six months and when we get ready to stop, we'll let you know." They never stopped during our time of struggle.

These acts of kindness stood in sharp contrast to what I daily witnessed in prison. One day I walked into the prison office area and behind a plate glass window I saw three guards handcuffing a large African-American inmate, tears streaming down his cheeks. The inmate was young, perhaps twenty-three, over six feet, and three hundred pounds or more. The guards told the inmate his father died, and they were taking him to the hole to prevent him from trying to get to the funeral.

We had three inmate counts each day. The first was at 4:00 P.M. and was a standing silent count in the individual cubicles. The next was at 9:00 P.M. and everyone froze where they were as the guards came through and counted. The third took place at night as we slept. The housing areas were laid out in a large U shape, with cubicles going completely around the U. One guard would walk in one side of the U and make his count going all the way around. Then the second guard came in the other side and did likewise. They both disappeared outside to compare numbers and no inmate could move until they announced the count was clear. Rarely did they get it right the first time. The record occurred one night as they made nine different count attempts before both of their numbers matched. My prison journal notes several nights I was late for my college class because the guards began their counts at 4:00 P.M. and were still trying to get them right when my class started.

I met Howard Shapiro a day or so after entering prison. He knew I was the alcoholic pilot who had just come in and he introduced himself. I wasn't particularly interested in talking with him, but I was polite. Then he told me he was a compulsive gambler and belonged to a recovery group. He was in prison as a direct result of his gambling, having embezzled funds to engage in his addiction. Once I knew that, I became more interested in speaking with him.

Howard was five feet ten and weighed two hundred and seventy-four pounds. He had sad, baggy eyes and a strong Boston accent; we had absolutely nothing in common. He was a well-educated CPA from a wealthy family in Boston. He lived a life of privilege in his Jewish community but became the disgrace of his family. He received no mail and had no visitors. If I was challenged to pick one inmate among the five hundred who would end up as

close to me as a brother, Howard would have been in the last ten inmates remaining. He was a charter member of the recovery group I started and was there every week. We talked about recovery constantly. I began to learn more about compulsive gambling. We logged countless laps around the walking track in the evenings and during the weekends. It was not uncommon for us to walk thirty miles on a weekend as we talked. When I left prison, he told me he had recorded our walks and we'd logged one thousand miles together. We could have walked from Atlanta to one hundred miles shy of Amarillo, Texas.

Howard was my only close friend among the inmates, and we looked forward to spending time together once we were both free of prison. I listened to Howard talk about his gambling and it occurred to me how similar it was, in many ways, to my alcoholism. As he related situations, he would say, "and then I'd place a bet." If I simply substituted the words, "and then I'd take a drink," the two addictions became interchangeable. There were differences, however. Howard pointed out that he could go to the horse track, place a bet, then attend a recovery meeting and no one would know. He said, "You can't drink a beer and go to a meeting because they'll smell it and know you drank."

He adored Barbara because she would send him a card once a week. And she sent him a daily meditation book that he cherished. Since he received no mail and no visits, these things were special for him. It was against the rules for her to correspond with another inmate, so she put a Happy Face at the bottom as her signature. Howard could hardly wait to show me each card.

With one exception, Howard was the only inmate with an advanced degree. Dewberry grudgingly allowed him to work in the education department, but before it was over, he would have some harrowing experiences with her. Howard loved helping the other inmates and was a dedicated teacher, spending many off duty hours working with them.

Everyone in the education department was black except Howard. Dewberry brought another African American inmate in, Ron Westmoreland, whom she liked. Ron hadn't even completed high school and Howard watched as he struggled to understand basic fractions, unable to find the common denominator. He was inept as a teacher, but Dewberry gave him fives on his work report while giving Howard threes. This kind of treatment was pure,

blatant racial discrimination but it was simply the norm at the Atlanta Federal Prison.

Mysteriously, Dewberry appeared to wield heavy influence in the camp and prison area. I concluded she must have something on the higher-ups because she got away with extraordinary things. It was widely rumored that she was a heavy cocaine user. Paranoia is a strong by product of heavy cocaine use and hers rivaled Captain Queeg's; the only thing missing were the ball bearings.

Few people attempted to help inmates, but Ms. Levi was one who did. She was an enthusiastic worker who somehow managed to get into the education department after Howard's arrival. She was well thought of by the inmates, but Dewberry disliked her intensely. A federal mandate required that every inmate should leave with a minimum eighth-grade education and Dewberry was unable to meet even that minimal requirement.

A short while later, Ms. Levi and Dewberry had an explosive blow up. Dewberry could be heard yelling in the compound as she screamed at Ms. Levi "You've invaded a black department!" A week later, Ms. Levi was gone, and so was any chance she brought to the inmates for educational help.

Prior to prison, I enrolled in a financial planning correspondence course. A requirement for the course was a small, hand-held Hewlett-Packard financial calculator. Dewberry took an instant dislike to me and refused to allow it in, saying it could be made into a bomb. I wrote to Ms. Ginger Current, the registrar for the college, and informed her of the situation. I minced no words as I described the situation in the prison. I strongly emphasized that all correspondence between us must remain confidential, or I would be in a position of serious jeopardy if she disclosed anything. Ginger Current wrote Dewberry a letter saying the calculator was vital to completion of the course and that it should be obvious to anyone. Dewberry called me in and angrily demanded a copy of my letter to the college. I had no access to a copier, and I informed her no copy was available. She demanded I write the college and have them send her a copy. I informed her that the prison was able to read all my incoming or outgoing mail but there was no provision whereby I had to retrieve letters so they could read them. Dewberry said she would write the college and get a copy. I told Barbara to call Ginger Current to make sure that didn't happen or I would end up in the hole.

Ginger Current informed Dewberry the prison would have to subpoena any correspondence they wanted and then called Barbara to inform her. Dewberry called me in and said she received a copy of my letter from the college, which I knew to be a lie. It was clear Dewberry was going to do everything in her power to thwart the calculator coming in and prevent me from taking the course. An inmate seldom challenges the prison system since it is nearly always a losing proposition. I went to Mike Michaels, an inmate who had been locked up a long time and sought his advice. Mike was a bright guy and knew more about the intricacies of prison life than I did.

He informed me I could file a Form BP-9 against Dewberry but cautioned that I should be prepared to go to war if I did because she would come after me with everything she had. He told me I would need to steamroll her because I would get buried if I lost my resolve. He emphasized I should not make this decision lightly. I told Mike I just wanted to do my time and be left alone. Mike said it didn't work that way. Either the prison staff would pick me to pieces if I chose to be passive or I would have to stand and fight.

Many things happen to inmates in prison. If an inmate causes trouble, guards can (and do) plant drugs or other contraband in his locker and send him to the hole. "Diesel therapy" is a means whereby inmates can disappear for weeks and months, then surface at some prison thousands of miles away. In the meantime, the stress can be immeasurable to family members until the inmate surfaces. There were some specially configured prison busses for this procedure.

Without warning, an inmate is handcuffed, led away, and put on one of the busses. The busses are driven ten to twelve hours a day for several weeks. At the end of each day the bus arrives at an en route prison where the inmates are locked up for the night. Early the next morning the routine begins again. One or two daily restroom stops are made, and the rest of the day is spent handcuffed to special bars in front of each seat. If it's winter, the heat is kept off while the driver and guards wear their jackets and the inmates freeze. No personal effects are allowed so clean clothes and toiletries are a problem. No mail comes or goes for the duration of the trip; then it takes months for mail to catch up. After a week or two on the road, most inmates have had enough and are pacified. I filed the BP-9 against Dewberry and the struggle began. As expected, it was refused at the local level and sent back to me. I followed Mike's guidance and filed a BP-10.

Dewberry submitted a written rebuttal, lying through her teeth. Having been a Marine Corps legal officer, I kept documented notes with dates, times, and quotes. I noted every single detail, every letter written, and every letter received, along with dates for those also. I buried her with facts. The BP-10 came back denied again, this time from a higher echelon in the prison system, but Dewberry was becoming worried. I filed a BP-11, this time going well beyond the Atlanta regime, outside her area of influence; I threatened legal action in addition to the request for the calculator. I won. Wilson called me in and said "things had been worked out."

I went to Mike Michaels because I wanted to pursue the BP-11 and make Dewberry eat crow. Mike gave me some sage advice. He said, "Remember what you wanted when you started this. You've got it. You won. I suggest you take your winnings and leave the table." He was right. But even though I won the battle I lost the war, because the struggle ate up so much time, I was unable to take the course. I knew I made a mortal enemy in Dewberry and had to watch my back. There were many ways for them to get to me if they wished, and I could do nothing about it. I never had problems with the inmates, but the guards and staff were impossible. Nearly everything that occurs in prison is a result of intimidation. Nearly always, the prison system does the intimidating, but once in a while an inmate win. I was hoping that Dewberry would back off now that she knew I would fight.

My release time came and Howard still had a year to go. As we walked our final laps around the prison track the night before my departure, he broke down and wept. We had shared so much together. Howard had dropped seventy pounds and was down to a svelte two hundred and four pounds when I left.

He was finally released and went back to Boston where he began the downhill slide back into his addiction. I saw the signs developing and cautioned him repeatedly. He was soon gambling again. He severed contact with me, and I didn't hear from him for nearly fifteen years.

Prison was a nonstop world of Catch-22 insanity. Cretins ran the prison. I thought that confinement and separation from the free world would be my punishment. Living in that insanity day after day, powerless to do anything but accept it, that was the punishment. It was also, in some ways, like being the only

person alive in a cemetery. It is a system so bad that those who have never experienced it cannot believe it and, thus, in the most ironic way, the system protects itself.

Prison is a different thing to different people. I saw inmates come back to prison like it was a homecoming, almost happy to be back. They were back in familiar haunts with three hots, a cot, and a weight pile (outside workout area where the weights were kept). It was not that for me; down deep my Comanche roots longed to be free, to feel the breeze of freedom on my face, smell the rain in free air, to be able to hug and kiss Barbara, and be rid of the sickness of prison.

I had countless more experiences in prison. Learning to cope with them and the insanity of the prison system challenged me. I found myself grateful for all I learned in treatment. Recovery concepts became my means of retaining my sanity. Many inmates approached me over time and asked how I did it, how I could appear to remain unaffected. I did it one day at a time, shorter when necessary.

I left federal prison on August 8, 1991, after serving eight months and three days. Even as I left, the guards played their games. I gathered my few belongings in a cardboard box and headed for R & D. I passed Wilson and he said, "I'll keep a job open fo' yew, Prouse." I responded, "Just make sure it's not one you need to fill right away," and walked past. Knowing he had a life sentence there and would probably die in that madhouse gave me great satisfaction.

Inside R & D, Ms. Ndebe had my papers on a desk where I could see them. Instead of processing me out, she busied herself with sorting mail. She kept glancing my way to see how I was reacting. I knew it was the same stuff I had dealt with for eight months. She was the one who made me come back every night for a week as she teased and taunted me about bringing a recovery book in. I refused to let them get to me the entire time I was there, and I wasn't going to surrender now. I laid my head back against the wall and dozed off. Ndebe awoke me, shaking my arm and telling me I needed to sign my release papers.

I received \$125.60 from the prison. I had \$100.60 in my commissary account and the prison gave me \$25 to assist me in the free world.

I was slated for six more months in the federal prison halfway house at Tenth and West Peachtree Street in Atlanta. Eight months and three days may

not sound like much to some, but it was an eternity to me. As a convict, locked up and confined, the rain smelled and felt different. So, did the breeze. I missed the smell of the earth and the leaves in the fall. I looked at the moon and wondered what it would look like from the outside.

Years later, after I spoke somewhere, a man said to me, "Fourteen months in the prison system? Man, that's nothin'! I spent eighteen years there!" I looked at him, smiled, and said, "Hey, good for you. You win!" It was a long time for me.

I walked out of prison and Barbara was waiting in the parking lot. She waved and smiled as I approached. "I love you!" she yelled and ran to me. I laughed, hugged and kissed her, free of any guard stopping me. We survived this part of the ordeal but much more lay ahead. She was truly the wind beneath my wings, and I felt we could survive anything together. In her own way, she went through as much as I did. Even though we stood there in the shadow of the prison, we were both free for the moment.

She told me six pilots came in from various places and were waiting just outside the prison area in a church parking lot. Glenn Eggert and Bill Rataczak flew in from Minnesota the night before. Colie Smith and Dayle Yates came down from Gainesville, Georgia, and Mike Phillips drove down from Cumming, Georgia. Vic Manussier made the trip from Alabama. I shook hands and hugged each one of them. Normally, the standard time allowed for the trip to the halfway house was two hours, but Ndebe ate up most of my time as she played her games. I was released at 9:24 A.M. and was down to a thirty-six minute deadline for reporting to the halfway house in downtown Atlanta. I had to cut the reunion short and head for the Dismas House.

Regardless of what I saw and experienced in prison I accept responsibility for allowing myself to be put there. My job, for the rest of my life, will be to continue to move past any anger and resentment and prevent it from intruding on my peace and serenity. Hatred destroys the hater, and resentments are like taking poison and then waiting for the other person to die. I'm still working on those things.

Prison put me in situations that I probably would never experience elsewhere. I lived in circumstances I never imagined with people I could never

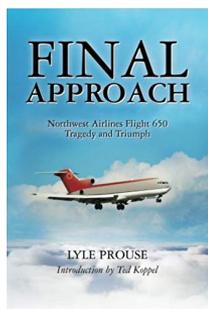
have pictured. Prison tested my character, my will, and my spiritual cornerstone. As I walked away, I was at ease with what I learned and felt I had acquitted myself well. I knew I did not possess the power to do it all alone. I thanked God for the strength, the grace, and the dignity He granted me in a dark and horrible setting.

Prouse, Lyle. Final Approach - Northwest Airlines Flight 650, Tragedy and Triumph (Kindle Locations 2758-2893). Lyle Prouse. Kindle Edition.

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The final two chapters will be included in The July addition of eContrails.

If you can not wait for the ending, you can find the book in the Kindle library and it is free to read.....J--



**Disclaimer: The following articles are excerpted from:** {Permission was requested by the editor and received from Lyle Prouse. Only stipulation; the excerpts be as written, and no editing allowed. Lyle did not initiate this article, your editor did and made the selection of the excerpts.)

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## Return to Flying - The Impossible Dream

It was 1993 and I was still working at Anchor Hospital. Rick Anderton was a former Marine pilot and former Eastern Airlines Captain now flying MD-80's for Private Jet Expeditions. He called to say they were interested in hiring me. That news surprised me, and I called PJE and got an appointment to interview with Greer Parramore, the vice president. I met with Greer on March 12, 1993. Greer was a likeable guy and I had an immediate rapport with him. He was empathetic to my situation and told me he tried to get word to me in prison that I had a flying job waiting when I got out.

I could only imagine what a cushion this possibility would have been had I known. But, as one of the staff members at Anchor said, not knowing meant I had to work the recovery program even harder.

After I spoke with Greer, virtually everyone in management came in to talk with me, from the president on down. All were friendly and enthusiastic about me coming to work for them. A short while later, I began work with Private Jet and my pay skyrocketed by forty-two percent to \$20,000 a year.

Private Jet wanted me to fly their MD-80s, but for the time being they wanted me working in flight dispatch. That meant I had to take the FAA Dispatch exam, which was essentially the same as the Airline Transport Pilot test. I took

it again on April 5th, one day before starting work for PJE. I scored a 98. By this time, I was getting pretty good at FAA exams.

Passing the FAA written exams was only the mid-point of obtaining actual flight certificates. A specified flight program had to be performed and passed for each of the certificates. I looked in several flying magazines to get an idea of the cost and it appeared to be anywhere from \$10,000 to \$20,000. That closed the door. We were just barely getting by as it was. Barbara said, "I don't know if you'll ever fly again commercially, but I think it's important you regain the licenses. We still have our furniture; why don't we sell it so you can try." I could only look at her. She was offering to empty the house of all we had left so I might get my licenses back. What had I ever done to deserve her?

Then, one more miracle came my way. Within a day of Barbara's suggestion, I received both a letter and phone call from Captain Terry Marsh, a close Northwest friend and a man I admired immensely. He had a flight school located in Buffalo, Minnesota, about forty miles northwest of the Twin Cities.

Terry wanted Barbara and me to come to Minnesota. We were to live with him while I went through his flight school, free of charge, and I would regain my licenses. I had already experienced a number of miracles, but this one was huge - out of nowhere the impossible suddenly became possible. Barbara had to stay and earn a living. She was making \$6.50 an hour and would be our only breadwinner while I was gone. My PO, Jack Briscoe, willingly gave me permission to go. I was still under thirteen conditions of probation, so I had to coordinate between the Georgia and Minnesota Departments of Correction upon arrival.

Greer Parramore gave me a leave of absence from Private Jet, and I departed for Minnesota on Sunday, May 23, 1993. I moved in with Terry and his wife



me and there was a lot to learn.

Susan and began flying on Tuesday, May 25th. I never flew small planes before so this would be an all new experience. In the Marine Corps, some forty-two years earlier, I began with a Beech T-34, which was classified in general aviation as a "high performance" airplane. The world of small civilian airplanes was foreign to

In the ensuing days I would sometimes fly as many as three times a day. Terry and his son, Matt, shared the instructional chores. Both were superb pilots and instructors. I always considered Terry one of the finest pilots I ever flew with. We flew together when I was a second officer and a copilot. I also flew with Kirk Leabo, a young man trying to build time for employment with the majors. As he and I walked over the tarmac for our first flight, Kirk, who looked at my resume and saw my total flight time of 15,000 hours, said, "I'm really looking forward to this. I'm going to learn a lot!" I stopped, turned to him and said, "Kirk, let's get one thing straight. You're the instructor and I'm the student. I know nothing about these planes, and I expect you to teach me!" And he did. He was a fine, knowledgeable, and patient instructor.

Then the two Marsh's enlisted the help of Bill Mavencamp, who was the locally designated FAA examiner and known to be tough on check rides. They ambushed him by not telling him who I was at first. I met Bill, spent time with him, and enjoyed his company. Bill had strong sentiments about the Northwest pilots who had flown drunk and never would have agreed to be the check airman. But as Bill told me later, "By the time I found out who you were, it was too late. I already liked you." He was a rigorously thorough examiner, but fair in every sense. I enjoyed all my flights with him. The FAA had found out where I was going, and they contacted him. Bill said he was told, "Don't make it easy for this guy." When I heard that I smiled and said, "I've heard that since my first day in prison."



On June 28th, Bill Mavencamp worked me over in a twin-engine Piper Seneca. I had a good day flying as I passed my multi-engine Private license exam. Upon landing, he looked at Terry's single engine Cessna Cardinal and said, "You've been flying that plane. I know, because I've heard you on the radio. If you want to go for it, I'll give you two check rides for the price of one." I said, "I don't know, Bill. I haven't been doing any of the practice stuff in it since we switched to the twin engine airplane." Bill said, "It's up to you." I walked inside where Terry was and asked what he thought. Terry grinned and



threw me the keys to the Cardinal. Bill and I took off again and I performed well, receiving a single engine Private license. It was only 11:15 A.M. I earned two licenses on the same day, before noon; I'm not sure anyone has ever done that before.

On July 2nd, I experienced a serious down moment. I was taking my instrument check ride with Bill and was on a difficult approach. Bill failed several instruments and I was extremely busy when he also failed an engine. Inexplicably, I nearly feathered the wrong engine, which would have meant both engines were lost. The moment I touched the wrong engine I knew it, but it was too late. I instantly failed the check ride. Bill felt bad but I told him not to, that fair was fair and I screwed up. As a pilot who always took extreme pride in my ability, it was a crippling and humbling blow. Kirk Leabo was riding in the back seat and he was speechless. I dreaded returning to the airport and telling Terry. But Terry was simply Terry - kind, supporting, and empathetic.

I was to have dinner that night with a recovering friend, but I wanted to cancel and be alone. I knew that was the wrong thing to do, so I went. As we ate, I told Tres about the day's events. Calling up all I learned, I said it was probably something I needed to experience in the area of humility and would take it as such. I felt like a boxer who had been pummeled and beaten, but it was time to get off the floor and go at it again.

The next day I smiled and said it was time to get back to work. I have always learned more from my defeats than my victories, so I tried to convert this experience into another positive event. The airplane we were using had to go in for its 100-hour check, so Terry managed to find another twin-engine airplane, a Beech Duchess. I needed to complete the check ride within the next few days, but I had never seen a Beech Duchess before. Except for having two engines it was completely different from the Seneca.

I went to Maple Lake airport where the plane was located and flew two and a half hours with a new instructor, Andy Moses. He signed me off, shrugged, and said, "You won't have any trouble on the check ride." We did all the routine maneuvers, but I only had one landing and absolutely no engine cuts, failures, or single-engine landings. Andy was convinced I would have no trouble and while I appreciated his confidence, I wasn't so sure. I asked if he

could possibly come out the following morning, which was July 4th, and fly with me if we did it early. He agreed to do that.

The next morning was stormy, with thunderstorms and heavy rain, and it was impossible to get the flight in. If nothing else, I was going to sit in the cockpit for several hours and become intimately familiar with the switches and instruments, most of which were completely different from the Piper Seminole. I was in the cockpit when Andy suddenly came out and said the radar showed a small hole around the airport and he thought we might get in a little flying. We started the engines and launched. I asked for engine failures and engine out landings and got more than I bargained for. We did four of them, all with a gusting 25-knot crosswind. Most two-engine landings are difficult with that much crosswind. I had my hands full; however, it was a great confidence builder. I was positive Bill Mavencamp would never require anything like what I just accomplished.

Although I only had two flights and about three and a half hours in the Duchess, I performed well on the next instrument check ride a few days later. I even laughed when Bill failed an engine and I said, "I'll take an extra second to make sure I get the right one this time!" Bill laughed and I breezed through the check ride.

To celebrate, Peter Wold surprised me with a party at his home. Many of my friends from Northwest were there as well as others. A few minutes into the party, Peter asked me to go to his garage and get something, and I walked out to find Barbara. Peter wanted to surprise me and had flown her up at his expense. He thought it would be a fitting way to end this part of the journey. Once again, I was surprised and touched beyond words.

I completed all the check rides. It seemed strange that I could take a breath and relax from the books and the studies. I asked Terry if I might take his Cardinal on one last flight, early the next morning, and just fly to have fun. Of course, he said yes.

On Tuesday, July 6, 1993, I launched from the Buffalo airport just as the sun was coming up. It was a beautiful Minnesota summer day, barely awakening, yet so full of promise and beauty. I flew nearly a hundred miles west, to Montevideo, and watched the rural Minnesota landscape slowly come alive. I

dropped down low over the farmland, wanting to be close to the earth as farmers came out to feed cattle and do their chores. I was very low, and I could see them clearly. Several times farmers would look up and I rocked my wings in a "good morning" gesture. They waved back and I flew on. I turned north, toward Alexandria, then back to the east as I headed for Little Falls. The myriad of Minnesota lakes shimmered in the early morning light and I delighted in being alive. I was flying just for fun, with no tasks to perform. I felt like the young cadet who soloed so many years earlier. I flew for two hours and thirty-seven minutes before landing and taxiing in at Buffalo. My entire spirit was refreshed, and I gave Terry his keys for the last time.

Terry and Susan Marsh had a cookout at the airport that night and I was to leave the next day. Again, I saw many friends from Northwest, all of whom came to wish me well and support me. Over the weeks, a number of Northwest pilots stopped by the Buffalo airport and gave Terry money to help with my training. No one asked them, they just did it.

For forty-four days Terry and Susan opened both their home and their hearts to me. I was in the debt of so many and struggling to adjust to so much goodness after everything we went through.

I attacked this entire endeavor with relentless study and hard work. It was worth it. I was beginning a new life and I embraced it with joy and gratitude. I was coming out of the darkness from all the shame and moving into the brightness of a new existence.

I went home on July 7, 1993. It was a long struggle and there was more to come. But I regained four licenses, two private licenses, a commercial, and an instrument rating. The only thing left was my Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) license, and the requirements for that would be met later on.

Prouse, Lyle. Final Approach - Northwest Airlines Flight 650, Tragedy and Triumph . Lyle Prouse. Kindle Edition.

One of our new authors is Dave Leighton whose book "The Best Seat in the House" is an anecdotal look at his career; in the military and airline. Here are some "snippets" from the book.

## **THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE**



Okay! Flying International most definitely had big upsides. Upsides which vastly surpassed the downsides. But there were little pricklers in the rosebush.

Example: Many International trips were scheduled for eleven or twelve days. But they only included seven or eight "nights" [layovers]. Example schedule: Minneapolis to Narita to JFK to Narita to JFK to Narita to Minneapolis.

[Eleven days, eight "Nights."]

This played a bunch of games with your circadian rhythms—or *whatever they call those things*. As a matter of fact, you got tired.

Hey part of the profession, why they pay you big bucks, et al . . . But you still must come home. Home sounds damn good after a week or so of watching Sumo wrestling in Narita at four AM—or listening all night to car alarms, sirens and seriously weird convention parties in New York City. [*Yup! It is what it is . . .*]

You come home at best a little numb—at worst feeling like Evel Knevel's dead Apache loincloth. No matter! There becomes a sequence for reentering home and family:

### **Day 1:**

-Walk in, hug wife [*who isn't sure about hugging back as she's not sure who this man in the house is . . .*].

-Walk into den/dressing/bedroom, drop suitcase, stare around stupidly [*Where am I?*].

-Vaguely pick at one or two of many pieces of mail on desk—give up quickly as task too complex.

-Open suitcase, stare at dirty underwear – again give up quickly, unpacking also too complex.

-Take off uniform shirt, remove epaulets, throw at wall [*to see if it sticks*].

-Stumble into shower – stumble out. [*Congratulate yourself for not injuring . . . self.*]

-Growl at kids.

-If kids happily not available, valiantly attempt to reacquaint yourself with wife [*in the biblical sense*]. [*This is often “minimally invasive” as generally enthusiastic bride still not sure who strange man is.*]

-NO POWER TOOLS ALLOWED! [*Note: Wine opener is exempt from power tool proscriptions.*]

## **Day 2:**

-Sleep in [*till four AM*].

-Sort mail – but still too much work to open.

-Stare blankly at wife’s “To Do List” [*place under mail or under desk calendar*].

-Walk around yard, take nap, discuss crises with beloved. [*Okay, “To Do List”-easy parts only*]

-NO POWER TOOLS ALLOWED! [*See Wine opener - above*]

Speak normally with strange young people inhabiting lower level of house.

**Every Wednesday? You mean I have to fly every Wednesday . . . ?**

– *Airline pilot’s lament*

*“The happiest days of my life, Dad, are when you leave . . . and when you come home.”*

## **Day 3:**

-Sleep in [*till six AM*].

-Actually open mail, read “To Do list” [*Make mental promises to attack list with dispatch.*]

-Actually use “small only” power tools – screwdriver, toaster, can opener.

-Take bride to dinner [*Discuss “to Do list” items necessarily postponed.*]

## **Day 4:**

-Okay to “use” power mower [Wrong!] Okay to “start” mower for unenthusiastic children.

*[Authors Note: I was/am indeed fortunate to have a bride who worked in the airline business and who mostly appreciated the many mixed nuances both of “life on the road” and of “re-entry.” She was well aware the desire of pilots to promptly “go home”, was highly a function of what he came home to.*

*The house was always clean, a fine dinner on the stove, a drink handy and the crises saved for the following several days. The children—albeit with lives and issues of their own—were well reminded, “Clean up your room, clean up your act and cut the BS”—“Dad is coming home.”*

*After 49 years, I love her more every day.]*

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## **747 Freighter Go Late Night SEA /ANC**

Quite unusual, we were hauling about sixty cows [Or some such number. Can't remember the gross cattle load for the 747—if there was one] from the good old hinterland of the US to The People's Republic via ANC. This was part of a new trade deal involving the US, China and the freighter folks at NWA—a deal involving numerous issues. First, we required a veterinarian as a supernumerary as cows collectively aren't as sturdy as they appear. Next, a prodigious amount of paperwork was generated running Ere We Wander all the way to the State Department. Finally, aircraft modifications were needed for securing the beef and protecting said aircraft from manure, piss, and the amazing amount of heat and moisture generated. As noted: Cows don't travel well and anything over about 36 hours in these pens on the plane they would start dropping.

*On cue, in the middle of a pre start checklist, we got the “hold” order.*

*The Chinese, as they are wont to do, were trying to extort (no other name for it)*

and we were being held in SEA by Chinese customs and the Chinese buyers, who wanted to “re write” the deal. (*Cow clock ticking naturally.*) I guess the Chinese figured it was worth trying . . . .

After some back and forth well above our pay grade, some “really smart dude” at the state department, [*I mean seriously, a smart dude from the State Department, amazing in itself*], told the Chinese in a not very delicate fashion the deal was off and it would be a cold day in “Hong Kong” before they would ever touch American breeding stock.

*We received the word to go in about 15 minutes.*

So, we taxied out accompanied by some seriously unhappy “lowing” from our passengers. (*Does this sound biblical?*) Naturally, the entire airplane smelled like a barn. “At least we joked, the cows wouldn’t complain about being late or if their meal was cold . . . .”

We weren’t as optimistic about turbulence.

Cleared for takeoff, we laid the whip to it and trucked on down the runway. At this point, our bovine passengers got “genuinely” unhappy. If cows could actually stampede while strapped in the seriously confining travel stall they would have—and they sounded like it from the cockpit.

*Right at “rotation” those lucky sixty cows simultaneously shit, pissed and bellowed.* It sounded something out of an old John Wayne cowboy movie. The noise was deafening, both the bellowing and the kicking of the containers. The ammonia smell was absolutely overwhelming.

The air conditioning struggling vainly, was utterly overpowered. Indeed, our eyes watered, the smell was so bad, all three of us put on our oxygen mask.

Ah! The glamor . . . .

We all knew that flying the Whale was often akin to flying a small apartment building. We never envisioned it as also like flying a large smelly barn . . . ! It was a non—gratifying flying experience.

I’m sure it was for the cows too.

*And so was the landing . . . .*

*[Commuting to ANC for an early next day Freighter Go]: 1990s*

Upon late arrival find highly skilled and professional 747 Captain forgot his airline pants.

What to do? (Looking at an eight-day pattern.)

*Okay! Call Mother.*

Panicked call to wife: Who, shaking head at addled husband, finds and delivers said pants to Virginia in *[the patron saint of]* crew schedules in MSP. Virginia, *[well acquainted with foolish, absent minded and sometimes indiscreet crew members]* in turn, hunts down and delivers pants to and requests MSP to NRT pilots again in turn, deliver said pants to crew hotel in Tokyo.

Next morning, highly skilled and professional pilot, *assisted by snide remarking junior crew members*, flies large freighter to Tokyo with somewhat ragged and wrinkled khaki pants under uniform shirt and jacket. Upon arrival, receives many strange looks while trucking through major international airport.

Proceeding down the customs aisle said pilot receives confused appraisal from very strait-laced Japanese customs official.

Captain smiling, *feigning a total lack of embarrassment*, states boldly in front of crowd: "This is new Northwest Uniform . . . !"

Unabashed, quickly recovering official offers slight bow, a big smile and replies "Ahhh! New Northwest Uniform . . .

*Velly snappy! Velly snappy!"*

*(Ya just gotta love those Japanese.)*

Thirty minutes later said highly skilled and professional captain slinks into hotel lobby, trying to remain unobtrusive. Lots of luck! Instead, he receives a cheerful ovation from numerous crew members—as desk receptionist with huge grin holds up missing pants for all the world to see.

*Some things, you learn to live with . . .*

The following article is an explanation of the dissertation that Karlene Pettit submitted for her PHD. Because of recent events, it might have bearing on those events..... editor

## *Normalization of Deviance*

What happened to the good ole days when pilots flew airplanes? There was a time when pilot flew with technique, the seat of their pants kind of flying. They flew with skill. They often knew a better way to fly versus those procedures written by a non-pilot. Those non-standard techniques subsequently became the norm. That practice was termed normalization of deviance. Then standard operating procedures (SOPS) became enforced. We all learned that it was safer knowing what the other pilot was doing, and we all did the same thing. But at least they flew.

Today pilots no longer fly their aircraft, they manage the plane with a push of a button. Yet despite safety of the automated aircraft and conformity of pilots with SOPs, thousands of incidents occur annually. When something happens, pilots are historically to blame. Pilot Error is the always the cause of everything that goes wrong in an airplane.

However, a pilot decided to do a little research in order to prove that accidents and incidents are more than pilot error. This research manifested into a PhD in the process. Pilot simply don't make errors because they want to, there has to be more involved. As it turns out, pilot error is a result of a Negative Safety Culture. The current deviant behavior may just be airline

management procedures. The results of this research was turned into a book—*Normalization of Deviance*.

Simply put, this term best explains why an organization's culture and associated behavioral norms can violate FAA requirements and encourage pilots to perform in a manner contrary to written policy. It explains why operators can know that pilots have insufficient knowledge, lack understanding, and are losing manual flight skills, yet training methodologies continue to be deficient in skill development. This term explains why operators fail to improve training processes in order to increase the level of understanding.

Furthermore, normalization of deviance also identifies why senior individuals within an organization can retaliate when employees follow the FAA mandate of *see something say something*. While it's hard to imagine anyone retaliating against someone offering suggestions for safety, researchers have identified that employees do not recognize their behavior as deviant because the behavior has become a normal occurrence within the organization. Retaliation is occurring within the airline industry with regard to reporting safety and will be the subject of a future book—*Weaponization of Mental Health*.

This study began with the question as to why pilots were not manually flying their aircraft. Regulatory officials identified this to be a problem, not only with manual flight and skill loss, but lack of understanding of their equipment and associated displays. This was identified as a problem and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recommended all airlines to encourage manual flight. That did not solve the problem.

Most of the results were expected, in that the significant predictors of manual flight were pilot understanding, pilot training, aviation passion, and safety culture. Whereas some might think that if a pilot did not understand the aircraft and associated computer systems, they would be more inclined to manually fly. The researcher believed this not the case.

Manual flight does not remove the necessity to understand the systems and utilize the information presented on the aircraft displays. Therefore, pushing buttons and allowing the aircraft to do its thing would be more comfortable for the pilot who lacks understanding. As it turned out, understanding of the aircraft operating systems had the greatest influence over a pilot's decision to manually fly. Pilot training had the greatest influence over pilot understanding, and safety culture presented the greatest influence over pilot training. It was not unexpected that safety culture had the greatest influence over pilot training, but the surprising result was safety culture's influence on pilot training associated with manual flight—safety culture removed the positive influence training could have on the pilots' decision for manual flight. Results identified:

*The more training a pilot receives the less likely they are to manually fly the aircraft.*

*Normalization of Deviance, by Karlene Petitt PhD is available for your reading enjoyment. This research may be scarier than her aviation thrillers—Flight For Control, Flight For Safety, Flight For Survival and Flight For Sanity. Ironically the themes of each novel are identified as problems within the doctoral research. Truth is stranger than fiction.*

SPORT

DECEMBER 2018

# Aerobatics

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the INTERNATIONAL AEROBATIC CLUB

▶ GRASSROOTS

▶ BREAKING THROUGH, PART 3



2018 *Hall of Fame*

# Thomas H. Adams Jr. IAC 1999

## INTERNATIONAL AEROBATICS HALL OF FAME 2018 INDUCTEE

BY LORRIE PENNER, IAC 431036

**WITH A FATHER WHO** was a barnstormer through the 1920s and later a pilot in P-47s in World War II and F-86 jet fighters in the Korean War, it seemed that Tom Adams' path into aviation was set. Still in third grade, Tom remembers his dad, Harry Adams, strapping him into a parachute to ride along in his J-3 Cub on Sundays at Georgia Aeronautics where his dad was teaching World War II vets to fly. Even before that, from either memory or stories, he recalls his dad sticking some cushions into an apple box, loading the 3-year-old Tom into the box, and setting it on his right side as he prepared to fly to a weekend air show. They would then wing their way in a Stinson Tri-Motor to the air show. At that time, Harry was chief pilot for Straughn Aircraft Company.





Tom Adams

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The images and memories from early years kept Tom inspired, and his father gave him flight instruction when he was old enough. Tom earned his private pilot certificate in Seattle at Boeing Field in 1955. He went on to get his commercial and CFI ratings in 1956. To help pay for college, Tom did some crop-dusting in the 450 Stearman, also called the Super Stearman. Tom's crop-dusting experiences took place in three seasons: one in Mississippi and two in Wilcox, Arizona.

Steve Johnson, who met Tom in 1998, said he and Tom attended a contest one year at the Joplin Regional Airport, near where Tom was born, and Tom showed him pictures of Harry that were on display at the airport. Tom was quite proud of his dad's early days as a barn-stormer, military, and agricultural pilot.

After attending college at the Central Washington College of Education, now Central Washington University, Tom went on to join the

Marine Aviation Cadet program in Pensacola in 1959. After his hitch at Cherry Point, North Carolina, flying A4D carrier-based attack jets flying attack jets, he spent a summer flying PB4Y-2 bombers spraying in the Idaho mountains for a spruce budworm infestation. He then started his 32-year career with Northwest Airlines (NWA).

While he worked for NWA, he built his first Pitts SIC and began competing in IAC regional aerobatic contests. Tom is the 17th person in International Aerobatic Club history to earn the ALL-TEN achievement award for proficiency in aerobatic flight through IAC's Achievement Awards program. The program provides the

mechanism through which competition and noncompetition pilots can work to reach the desired level of proficiency in Primary through Unlimited categories.

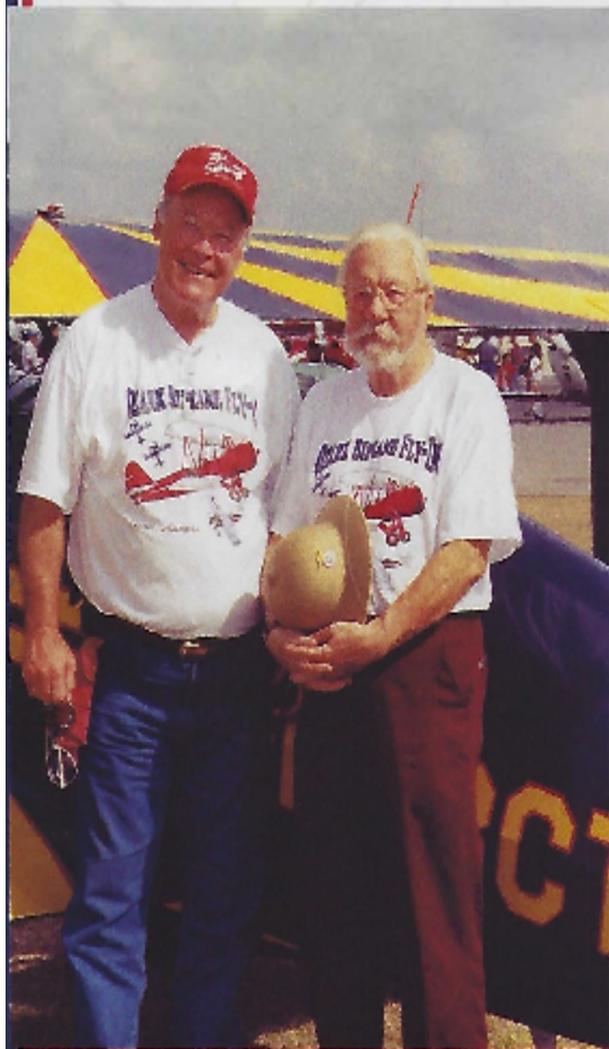
In one of the Pitts airplanes Tom built, he used an O-360 helicopter engine and received some advice from Curtis Pitts regarding the fuselage design. Tom had the original Pitts plans that he was working from, but decided to cut along the longerons and extend the fuselage for a roomier cockpit as Curtis had suggested. Later on he built and added symmetrical wings with four ailerons. The thing he enjoyed most in the building process was the woodwork on the wings. Little known is his development of the first three-bladed constant-speed propeller for a single-seat Pitts.

When he finally got the chance to fly it, he did enjoy the Pitts, because he hadn't flown a tailwheel airplane since his experience with the Stearman doing crop-dusting. His initial training and practice doing aerobatics was challenging. When he first started flying the Sportsman sequences, he would fly a sequence or two, land, and throw up. He didn't get discouraged - he kept at it. After

**"YOU CAN COUNT ON ONE HAND ANY BAD ACTORS -- LOTS OF • TYPE PERSONALITIES, THEY ALL WANTED TO IMPROVE THEIR FLYING AND WIN."**

-Thomas H. Adams Jr.

## Thomas H. Adams Jr.



three days of repeating the same ritual, he overcame his airsickness.

During the early 1970s Tom joined IAC. He was attracted to a makeup of people in which "you can count on one hand any bad actors." IAC members are devoted and interested in aviation and aerobatics. "Lots of N type personalities, they all wanted to improve their flying and win," Tom said with a twinkle in his eye. He has always been impressed at how IACers step up and, even though it is an individual sport, how the group feels like family and rallies around each other to support and encourage. In the early years, he would fly aerobatic competition with good buddies Jim Rossi, Bob Davis, Don Taylor, and Larry

Owen. Later on, his circle of flying friends would include Clint McHenry, Kermit Weeks, and Hubie Tolson.

When he first joined the IAC and wasn't flying in contests or flying for work, Tom flew for an aircraft museum in Minneapolis. That volunteer job allowed him to experience flying antiques, classics, and warbirds. One plane in particular he recalls flying was a Morane-Saulnier MS.230, which stood in for a Fokker EV parasol monoplane for the movie *The Blue Max*. Over his career, he has flown more than 100 types of airplanes, including a North American O-47, which now resides in the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio. He retired from NWA as a captain on the B747-400.

In 1995 Tom was a member of the first U.S. Advanced Aerobatic team to compete in the inaugural Advanced World Aerobatic Championships, which was held in Cape Town, South Africa. Tom shipped a Pitts S-1T, tail number N95JC, which was flown by him, Don Rhynalds, and Larry Owen. Other planes the U.S. team was competing against included the Zlin 50 flown by the newly crowned Advanced world champion, Martin Stahalik of the Czech Republic, and the Yak-55 of second- and third-place finishers Svetlana Kapanina and Victor Chmal from Russia. John Morrissey was the top U.S. finisher in ninth place flying a Pitts S-2B.

Tom remained an Advanced category competitor through 2011 when he switched over to Intermediate, won the category, and retired his competition flying at the Phil Schacht Aerobatic Kickoff in 2012. He flew a Pitts for most of his competition years and flew a Staudacher S300D for last few years. Tom's name appears as the Advanced category Nationals champion banner three times.

In addition to aerobatic competition, Tom has also served as chief judge and/or grading judge at 250-plus contests since 1971. For 2017 and 2018 combined, he judged more than 234 individual flights. Tom was the 2010 recipient of the Robert L. Heuer Judges Award, recognizing his outstanding achievements made in competition aerobatics by a judge. In 2015, he was awarded the Kathy Jaffe Volunteer Award in recognition for his coaching, mentoring, judging, new ideas for improving the sport, encouraging others, and his time in the contest starter



position for many years at the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships.

As an aerobatic competitor and judge, Tom has been able to share his expertise with many fellow aerobatic pilots and has done coaching at contests, chapter practices, and at his private strip for more than 25 years. Goody Thomas has known Tom for more than 21 years and said Tom is always willing to help and share information, whether you want to hear it or not. He remembers a time when Tom invited him, Hubie Tolson, the late Chandy Clanton, and Mike Goulian to his house in Tennessee for a training camp. Russian aerobatic champion Sergei Boriak trained with all of them for several days. Tom's place was like an aviation mecca - the most beautiful home and grass strip. Tom's wife, Lori, cooked amazing meals for them and welcomed everyone into their home. Goody said he remembers so many laughs, good times, and Tom with his quick wit and always that smile with a laugh.

A valued coach, Tom traveled at his own expense as a coach for his good friend Steve Johnson and the U.S. Advanced Aerobatic Team to Radom, Poland, in 2006. Tom's and Steve's families traveled around Europe on vacation while Steve practiced. Tom's coaching style worked well for Steve, and Tom was able to help several other Americans during that contest. Steve liked Tom's direction of telling him what was wrong at the moment it happened while he was flying in the box. Tom also used an audio recording for playback later. After coaching from Tom and moving up from Intermediate to Advanced, when he won his first Advanced trophy Tom told him it was because he had a great coach. Steve confirmed - Tom was right!

At the conclusion of WAAC 2006, Americans Rob Holland, Jeff Boerboon, and Hector Ramirez were the top scorers, enabling the United States to bring home the silver team medal.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF TOM ADAMS

When it comes to coaching, Tom is thrilled and proud to tell anyone who'll listen about his son Kelly, who earned a spot on the 2010 and 2012 U.S. Advanced Aerobatic Teams. Kelly is a natural born pilot with many innate skills. Tom was happy that one of his sons wanted to follow in his footsteps. Tom said his son's desire for aviation continues to inspire him. From about 8 years old, Kelly set his sights on being a professional pilot. According to Steve Johnson, while Kelly is an excellent aerobatic pilot, he didn't like to practice very much, and this would frustrate Tom, but then Kelly would go out and fly great in competition and Tom would be surprised, but grateful, that his coaching had somehow stuck.

Tom has served on the IAC board of directors for more than 28 years and was awarded director emeritus status in September 2018 at the Nationals opening ceremony in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He continues to play an active role in aerobatics

## TROPHIES AND MEDALS FROM 1975 THROUGH 2011

### TROPHIES:

U.S. Nationals: first place, five times; second place, once; third place, three times

IAC Championships: first place, three times; second place, three times; third place, once

Regional Contests: first place, 28 times; second place, 18 times; third place, 17 times

### MEDALS:

(Individual category/flight medals)

U.S. Nationals (Canyon, Texas) and IAC Championships (Fond du Lac): 1 Gold, 19 Silver, 10 Bronze

Contest of the Americas: 1 Silver medal

### THE ADAMS FAMILY DURING THE INDUCTION CEREMONIES AT THE EAA AVIATION MUSEUM.

Back row: Kelly Adams (youngest son), Denise Adams (Kurt's wife), Kurt Adams (oldest son), Darren Adams (grandson), Kim Adams (Kelly's wife), Paige Adams (granddaughter)  
Front row: Taylor Adams (granddaughter), Lori Adams (Tom's wife), Tom Adams, Meghan Adams (Darren's wife), Thomas Adams (great-grandson), Ava Adams (great-granddaughter)



## Thomas H. Adams Jr.

Tom Adams (center) receives his award from EAA president Jack Pelton (left) and IC president Robert Armstrong.



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r 111 EPM; elh/



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as a national judge and coach. During the 2018 Nationals, he served as a judge for the Unlimited category and as coach for David Prather. David flies a Staudacher S600 in the Intermediate category and finished in the top 10.

Reflecting on past teams and pilots he has coached, Tom said he's seen a change in the way the Advanced team looks at coaching. "They are more focused on increasing the amount and

quality of coaching to improve their overall performance," he said. "There have been improvements in the quality of the airplanes as well. The Pitts pilots have to work so much harder at this level than they did in the past. In the last 20 years planes like the Staudacher, Panzer, and now the SC model of Extra aircraft have really raised the bar."

"Tom is synonymous with aviation and aerobatics," Goody said, which anyone who has been fortunate to meet him will know. "He is dedicated and passionate," Steve added.

Tom has followed the path set out by his father, and I believe Harry would have been proud of the good and constant man that Tom became - a man who has been a great contributor to the sport of aerobatics. IAH



## ANOTHER SIDE TO “HIGH FLIGHT”

By

Richard C. Dodge

This article is written not out of a desire to satisfy my ego, but because several you have asked “How in the world does a good old fun-loving retired airline pilot like you get so heavily involved in Christian mission work in Russia?”

Good question. It’s taken me some time to figure out the answer. Let me offer some history.

I retired after moving from HNL to the mountains of Western North Carolina in 1994. We bought a nice home in a gated golfing community. For years, I played golf, rode motorcycles, volunteered at First Baptist Church of Hendersonville, and in general just goofed off. It was here that I met a fellow Christian named Terry Silvers who started hounding me to go to Russia with him to do missionary work. Going to Russia was the last thing that I wanted to do so, I would just hand him some money and he would go away (for a little while). Then one day late in 2003 Terry came to me and said, “I don’t want your money! You ARE going to Russia on an exploratory trip to scope out a building project that we are considering for next summer.” I finally acquiesced, made the trip, and the rest is history.



My first trip took me to Luga, a city of approximately fifty thousand people. It’s located 100 miles south of St. Petersburg. We landed at the St. Petersburg Airport at 1400 on January 29<sup>th</sup>, where the temperature was minus sixteen degrees and the wind chill was Arctic. In 2003, Russia was still suffering from the effects of the crumbled Soviet Union, and heat in buildings was almost nonexistent. Even though I had lived in Alaska, a cumulative year in Greenland, and then Minneapolis for years, I had never known such intense cold. When we went through Immigration and Customs, all the workers had on heavy winter coats and fur hats, and steam was coming out of their mouths.

The drive to Luga was in an old van with the windows so iced up we could not see out of the side and rear windows. For three days we never took off any of our heavy winter clothes (including extreme thermal underwear), even to sleep.

Now that’s the cold part of the story. The warm part was the wonderful Russian Christians we met. To my surprise, I fell in love with these great people and have been compelled to return again and again to Russia. What was there to love about these people? It was simply their kindheartedness in sharing all they had with us, even though they had very little compared to us. They are absolutely and joyfully devoted to Jesus and His Church.

I'm happy to say that God, working through us, has accomplished much in all our trips. In the Leningrad Oblast, we rehabbed the church building in Luga three times (added running water, two indoor bathrooms, a library and a kitchen), bought and rehabbed an old cottage in the Village of Toroskovichie so that some older women could have a church there, paid for and built a church from ground up in Leskolovo, helped put on many Vacation Bible Schools for children, helped with a drug and alcohol rehab center, and financially helped an orphanage.

In the Ural Mountain area (a three-hour jet to the east) we helped to plant a church in Kartaly, financially assist a church in Magnitogorsk to acquire a building for meetings, spread the gospel while fitting eye for Muslims in villages near the Kazakhstan and eagerly participated in two Christian Teen Camps (feeling my age here!).



flight

glasses  
border,  
Sports

Our present plans include building a new church in Luga (we bought the land and have paid for the foundation), continuing to support the Magnitogorsk and Kartaly Churches, planning and conducting a larger and better Ural Christian Teen Sports Camp this summer, and conducting a children's Bible Camp in Luga for about fifty children.

I would like to thank my fellow pilots from NWA who have supported our mission work through our 501 (C) 3 organization, The Russian Relief Foundation. I would also like to thank all my fellow pilots who have done extensive Christian mission work, such as Ron Heitritter, Roger Moberg, Ken Kelm, Dayle Yates (Dayle has been with me twice and was a tremendous help in building the church in Leskolovo), and many more of whom I am not even aware. I look forward to hearing about their mission activities in future editions of E-Contraails.

If being a part of this mighty work might interest you, please contact me at [dick@rcdodge.us](mailto:dick@rcdodge.us). We would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about coming with us, praying for us, and/or helping financially. Also, I put out an occasional article about our activities in a news email called "Ivan's Log." (Ivan is my 'adopted' Russian grandson. He's a tremendous young pastor with a heart as big as the world.) If you'd like to be included in this list, please let me know.

Blue side up.../...Blessings...Dick

PS Below are links to pictures taken of some of the above-mentioned activities:

Pictorial Review of our RRF Activities: [HTTPS://youtu.be/gRdLOlgJiVM](https://youtu.be/gRdLOlgJiVM)

# Stories from the Cockpit

Contributor... Gar Bensen

## Zero/Zero



It happened sometime in 1965, in Germany. I was a copilot, so I knew, everything there was to know about flying, and I was frustrated by pilots like my aircraft commander. He was one of those by-the-numbers types, no class, no imagination, no “feel” for flying.

You have to be able to feel an airplane. So what if your altitude is a little off, or if the glideslope indicator is off a hair? If it feels okay then it is okay. That’s what I believed. Every time he let me make an approach, even in VFR conditions, he demanded perfection. Not the

slightest deviation was permitted. "If you can't do it when there is no pressure, you surely can't do it when the pucker factor increases," he would say. When he shot an approach, it was as if all the instruments were frozen – perfection, but no class.

Then came that routine flight from the Azores to Germany. The weather was okay; we had 45,000 pounds of fuel and enough cargo to bring the weight of our C-124 Globemaster up to 180,000 pounds, 5,000 pounds below the max allowable. It would be an easy, routine flight all the way. Halfway to the European mainland, the weather started getting bad. I kept getting updates by high frequency radio. Our destination, a fighter base, went zero/zero. Our two alternates followed shortly thereafter. All of France was down. We held for two hours, and the weather got worse. Somewhere I heard a fighter pilot declare an emergency because of minimum fuel. He shot two approaches and saw nothing. On the third try, he flamed out and had to eject.

The briefing continued, "I'll lock on the gauges. You get ready to take over and complete the landing if you see the runway – that way there will be less room for trouble with me trying to transition from instruments to visual with only a second or two before touchdown." Hey, he's even going to take advantage of his copilot, I thought. He's not so stupid, after all.

"Until we get the runway, you call off every 100 feet above touchdown; until we get down to 100 feet, use the pressure altimeter. Then switch to the radar altimeter for the last 100 feet, and call off every 25 feet. Keep me honest on the airspeed, also. Engineer, when we touch down, I'll cut the mixtures with the master control lever, and you cut all of the mags. Are there any questions? Let's go!" All of a sudden, this unfeeling, by the numbers robot was making a lot of sense. Maybe he really was a pilot and maybe I had something more to learn about flying.

We made a short procedure turn to save gas. Radar helped us to get to

the outer marker. Half a mile away, we performed the Before Landing Checklist; gear down, flaps 20 degrees. The course deviation indicator was locked in the middle, with the glideslope indicator beginning its trip down from the top of the case. When the GSI centered, the pilot called for a small power reduction, lowered the nose slightly, and all of the instruments, except the altimeter, froze. My Lord, that man had a feel for that airplane! He thought something, and the airplane, all 135,000 pounds of it, did what he thought.

“Five hundred feet,” I called out, “400 feet.....300 feet.....200 feet, MATS minimums.....100 feet, Air Force minimums; I’m switching to the radar altimeter.....75 feet nothing insight.....50 feet, still nothing....25 feet, airspeed 100 knots,” The nose of the aircraft rotated just a couple of degrees, and the airspeed started down. The pilot then casually said, “Hang on, we’re landing.”

“Airspeed 90 knots....10 feet, here we go!”

The pilot reached up and cut the mixtures with the master control lever, without taking his eyes off the instruments. He told the engineer to cut all the mags to reduce the chance of fire.

*CONTACT!* I could barely feel it. As smooth a landing as I have ever known, and I couldn’t even tell if we were on the runway, because we could only see the occasional blur of a light streaking by

“Copilot, verify hydraulic boost is on, I’ll need it for brakes and steering.” I complied. “Hydraulic boost pump is on, pressure is up.” The brakes came on slowly

----- we didn’t want to skid this big beast now. I looked over at the pilot. He was still on the instruments, steering to keep the course deviation indicator in the center, and that is exactly where it stayed.

“Airspeed, 50 knots.” We might make it yet. “Airspeed, 25 knots.” We’ll make it if we don’t run off a cliff. Then I heard a strange sound. I could hear the whir of the gyros, the buzz of the inverters, and a low frequency thumping. Nothing else. The thumping was my pulse, and I couldn’t hear anyone breathing. We had made it! We were standing still!

The aircraft commander was still all pilot. “After-landing checklist, get all those motors, radar and un-necessary radios off while we still have batteries. Copilot, tell them that we have arrived, to send a follow me truck out to the runway because we can’t even see the edges.”

I left the VHF on and thanked GCA for the approach. The guys in the tower didn’t believe we were there. They had walked outside and couldn’t hear or see anything. We assured them that we were there, somewhere on the localizer centerline, with about half a mile showing on the DME.

We waited about 20 minutes for the truck. Not being in our customary hurry, just getting our breath back and letting our pulses diminish to a reasonable rate. Then I felt it. The cockpit shuddered as if the nose gear had run over a bump. I told the loadmaster to go out the crew entrance to see what happened. He dropped the door (which is immediately in front of the nose gear) , and it hit something with a loud , metallic bang. He came on the interphone and said “Sir, you’ll never believe this. The follow-me truck couldn’t see us and ran smack into our nose tire with his bumper, but he bounced off, and nothing is hurt.”

The pilot then told the tower that we were parking the bird right where it was and that we would come in via the truck. It took a few minutes to get our clothing and to button up the airplane. I climbed out and saw the nose tires straddling the runway centerline. A few feet away was the truck with its embarrassed driver.

Total damage---one dent in the hood of the follow me truck where the hatch had opened onto it.

Then I remembered the story from *Fate Is the Hunter*. When Gann was an airline copilot making a simple night range approach, his captain kept lighting matches in front of his eyes. It scarred and infuriated Gann. When they landed, the captain said that Gann was ready to upgrade to captain. If he could handle a night-range approach with all of that harassment, then he could handle anything.

At last I understood what true professionalism is. Being a pilot isn't all seat-of-the-pants flying and glory. It's self-discipline, practice, study, analysis and preparation. It's precision. If you can't keep the gauges where you want them with everything free and easy, how can you keep them there when everything goes wrong?

by Charles Svoboda



# The Age of the 727

Those were the good ole days. Pilots back then were men that didn't want to be women or girly men. Pilots all knew who Jimmy Doolittle was. Pilots drank coffee, whiskey, smoked cigars and didn't wear digital watches.

They carried their own suitcases and brain bags, like the real men they were. Pilots didn't bend over into the crash position multiple times each day in front of the passengers at security so that some Gov't agent could probe for tweezers or fingernail clippers or too much toothpaste.

Pilots did not go through the terminal impersonating a caddy pulling a bunch of golf clubs, computers, guitars, and feed bags full of tofu and granola on a sissy-trailer with no hat and granny glasses hanging on a pink string around their pencil neck while talking to their personal trainer on the cell phone!!!

Being an airline Captain was as good as being the King in a Mel Brooks movie. All the Stewardesses (aka. Flight Attendants) were young, attractive, single women that were proud to be combatants in the sexual revolution. They didn't have to turn sideways, grease up and suck it in to get through the cockpit door. They would blush, and say thank you, when told that they looked good, instead of filing a sexual harassment claim.

Junior Stewardesses shared a room and talked about men.... with no thoughts of substitution. Passengers wore nice clothes and were polite; they could speak AND understand English. They didn't speak gibberish or listen to loud gangsta rap on their iPods. They bathed and didn't smell like a rotting pile of garbage in a jogging suit and flip-flops.

Children didn't travel alone, commuting between trailer parks.

There were no Biggest Losers asking for a seatbelt extension or a Scotch and grapefruit juice cocktail with a twist.

If the Captain wanted to throw some offensive, ranting jerk off the airplane, it was done without any worries of a lawsuit or getting fired.

Axial flow engines crackled with the sound of freedom and left an impressive black smoke trail like a locomotive burning soft coal. Jet fuel was cheap and once the throttles were pushed up they were left there. After all, it was the jet age and the idea was to go fast (run like a lizard on a hardwood floor).

"Economy cruise" was something in the performance book, but no one knew why or where it was. When the clacker went off, no one got all tight and scared because Boeing built it out of iron. Nothing was going to fall off and that sound had the same effect on real pilots then, as Viagra does now for these new age guys.

There was very little plastic and no composites on the airplanes (or the Stewardesses' pectoral regions). Airplanes and women had eye-pleasing symmetrical curves, not a bunch of ugly vortex generators, ventral fins, winglets, flow diverters, tattoos, rings in their nose, tongues and eyebrows.

Airlines were run by men like C.R. Smith, Juan

Trippe, "Eddie Rickenbacker" and Bob Six, who built their companies virtually from scratch, knew most of their employees by name, and were lifetime airline employees themselves.. ..not pseudo financiers and bean counters who flit from one occupation to another for a few bucks, a better parachute or a fancier title, while fervently believing that they are a class of beings unto themselves.

And so it was back then....and never will be again!

*Damn!*

*Flying is the second greatest thrill  
known to man.*

*What is first, you ask? Landing, of  
course.*

