Volume 8, No. 3 September 2010





Reflections

Dedicated to preserving the history of a great airline.

The Thursday Gang

by Bob Johnson

They came from different places. Their careers in aviation separated them even more. Yet they eventually came together in Northwest Airlines' MSP engine shop. For many years they worked (and often played) together. They are still together now as valuable Northwest Airlines History Centre volunteers. Every Thursday from 11 to 2 you will find them welcoming guests and, when asked, imparting their enormous knowledge about airplanes to avid listeners. Who are these five remarkable men?



L-R: Joe Olson, Ray Carlson, Arlye Weisheim, Dave Trautman, Jim Haines

Arlye Weisheim is a Palmetto Fla. native. "I was always an airplane nut," he says. So in 1969, with his Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) license in hand, he headed for Alaska. "I knew there were a lot of airplanes up there."

Before joining Northwest in 1974 Arlye worked for bush operators for awhile. He recalls his 13 Alaska years (in two stints) with fondness. "We were one big happy family. Everybody helped everybody. If you had a problem you could call a guy at home and he'd be with you in 10 minutes." Arlye also worked in Honolulu, San Francisco and at La Guardia before landing permanently at MSP.

Arlye has a well-deserved reputation as a guy who can build, fix or modify just about anything that needs welding, soldering, painting, taping or action with a hammer, chisel, screwdriver, wrench or more exotic weapons. For instance he's refurbished his 1922 Model T Ford, which soon will be in a movie about St. Paul's 1920s gangster days. "I tool around in it quite a bit, he says. "In the winter I outfit it with skis."

"I credit 'Big John' (NWA History Centre's board member John Peterson) for signing me up as a History Centre volunteer." He also wants it known he has just renewed his A&P license. "You never know," he says. "Just in case." Arlye left Northwest in 2005.

Dave Trautman is from Pittsburgh. He worked for a Washington, Penn. glass factory early on. "The hot end," Dave says. "It wasn't much fun." Then the United States Army, with a year of combat in Vietnam as an E-4 specialist and crew chief. He served in the First Cavalry Division in the country's war-ravaged central highlands. "That wasn't much fun, either," says Dave in a masterpiece of understatement. "September to September, 1965-66. Don't think I need to tell you how glad I was to leave."

Dave earned his A&P license from the Pittsburgh School of Aeronautics. He joined Northwest's MSP engine shop in 1969 as a mechanic and inspector. His treasured memories include "the people I worked with" and extra curricular activities which included the Northwest hockey and softball teams. He now has time to enjoy hunting and fishing and gearing about in his new Honda VTX-1800.

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President's Message

by Bruce Kitt

It is truly amazing to watch a 75-ton airplane gracefully soaring above us, cutting multiple contrails across a blue sky. You can be any one of the people who work in the air transport industry watching that sight...and just imagine how many other employees eyes are also watching the same sight. All part of the team, part of the effort, that gets an airliner into the sky.

Now imagine any one of the people who volunteer at the NWA History Centre - or support it by donations and contributions - working to build the museum into a recognized source of Northwest Airlines history. No contrails here, but phone



calls and e-mails instead, asking for information about Northwest for their specific projects or answers to specific questions. Over the past two years the NWA History Centre has begun to field an increasing number of requests for information, to the extent that one article and one book have been published with credit given to the NWA History Centre for the help and information provided. Unfortunately, we were not able to answer the Discovery Channel's recent request for new information regarding D.B. Cooper, but we tried.

The museum display floor is the front door our friends and alumni enter to visit. Our website is the front door those outside the Bloomington area enter to visit us. There is no virtual tour of the museum (yet), but there is the phone and e-mail link that allows them to ask for our assistance, which is how they can experience the NWA History Centre. Through the dedication, work and financial support of volunteers and supporters, the NWA History Centre is beginning to grow into the museum we want to see it become. If you haven't already done so, come join us, support us, contribute to the museum. Help the NWA History Centre fly higher.

If you're in the Twin Cities, and you like independent films, the Minnesota Historical Society www.mhs.org is hosting a screening of 10-minute films submitted for "The 1968 Project" on September 25, 2010. NWA/Delta pilot Marc Ye has submitted his entry, "Jumbo: the Disappearance of an American Icon," on the impact of the Boeing B-747 on commercial aviation. Make a day of it. CAVU. *>



Bill Klotz at the NWA History Centre

This Postman Didn't Ring Twice . . .

... he came running when YOU rang!

Bill Klotz worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 34 years, 32 of them at the MSP Post Office, where he developed a relationship with Northwest Airlines and its employees that remains strong to this day.

Bill was a driver for the Railway Express Company for several years. He remembers hauling airmail out to the airport, walking it out to a NWA DC-3, and handing it up to the pilot from under the nose.

He was transferred to the airport in 1951 where he was window and mailbox clerk for over 30 years. He started in the main terminal building when the P.O. was in the basement. His shift started at 5:30 a.m. and "as far as I was concerned, the post office was open immediately," Bill says, even though it wasn't supposed to open until 8:30 a.m. As he got to know people, he told them, "When I'm here, the post office is open. Just knock on the door." Get to know people, he did.

When I'm here, the post office is open. Just knock on the door.

Bill had coffee ready for returning pilots from all airlines. "They were pretty well fatigued. When they couldn't get above the weather, their concentration was severe." One pilot told me, 'All we see is 50 feet of the runway when we go out and 50 feet of the runway when we come down." Bill is rightly proud of the service he provided. "I saw that NWA got their certified and registered mail the same day I got my hands on it. When it came in after the carriers had left, I personally walked it across the street to their mail room." Bill was rebuked for this effort and told to put the mail in the safe until the next day's delivery. "I refused to do it," Bill says. USPS management at the airport thought Bill gave people too much service. "That's an impossibility,!" I told them.

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"Arlye got me interested in the History Centre," Dave says. "Volunteering here is a worthwhile way to spend some time helping to keep Northwest's memory alive. We were a great airline." Dave retired in 2005 after 37 years of Northwest service.

Joe Olson hails from the North Dakota city of Grand Forks. ("I guess you can call it a city," he says.) The aviation bug targeted Joe early. At 15 he was a Grand Forks high school Civil Air Patrol cadet. His first teenage job was as a flagman and mixer-of-chemicals for an agricultural crop duster. Then it was the U.S. Air Force in 1952: a year in training, one year as a mechanic in Morocco, three years with B-36 bombers in New Mexico ("We flew all over the world"), and four years as a reservist. Joe spent a year at the U of M and received his diploma as a tool and die maker from Dunwoody Institute, Minneapolis, in 1961. He joined Northwest's machine shop in 1969, switching to its engine shop in 1983.

He is a life member (since 1983) of the Confederate Air Force (now the Commemorative Air Force) and still toils on the old CAF birds — B-25, P-51, AT-6, BT-13, L-5 PT-22 and the like, based at Fleming Field, South St. Paul. (The CAF, based in Midland, Tex., maintains about 144 planes at various locations around the globe.) Joe is also a life member of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society, both Minnesota and National chapters. He retired from Northwest in 2000. "My life," he says, "has been mostly aviation."

Jim Haines comes from the eastern Nebraska town of Dixon, about 35 miles west of Sioux City, Iowa. He spent 20 years, 1948-1968, in the U.S. Air Force — five years with C-124s and most of the rest with B-25s and the storied C-47s, all with the Military Air Transport Service. His MATS service led him to stations around the world, including San Antonio, Long Beach, Athens, Greece and the memorable Pacific island of Iwo Jima.

Jim earned his A&P license after the Air Force and joined Northwest's engine shop in 1969. "Sure, you bet. I taught Arlye, Dave and Joe all they know," he smiles. "Among other things, I taught them about those critical airplane gear boxes that run all the accessories. It took awhile, but they finally got smart enough to be inspectors."

"One thing," Jim says in all seriousness. "I loved my work and the guys I worked with. I NEVER, ever, didn't want to come to work. I don't know if it is that way anymore." Jim's been a NWA retiree for almost 18 years, since Dec. 31, 1992. "My wife and I have done some traveling, but that's sort of winding down now." Jim's been a History Centre volunteer for several years.

Ray Carlson, you might say, is something of a homebody. He's a genuine St. Paulite, born and raised in the Saintly City. He's lived in the same home on Wilson Avenue, within sight of the 3M complex, for 55 years. His early education took place at a St. Paul landmark, Mechanic Arts High School, which sadly is no more. His first job was at Como Park, tending the kiddie race cars and railroad, changing drained batteries and performing related maintenance tasks. In 1938 a Lincoln, Nebr. aeronautical school provided Ray with his A&P license. Then in 1942 he became a 15th Air Force mechanic. He spent most of the next three years in Foggia, Italy.

Subsequently, Ray spent 14 years with Northwestern Aeronautical Company, in the brick building at St. Paul's Holman Field that was Northwest Airlines' original office and hangar. Sadly, this historically significant structure is also now gone. Ray's efforts were centered on commercial and military engine repair. He moved on to Northwest's engine shop in 1965 and remained there until his retirement in 1992. "Joe Olson got me interested in the History Centre," Ray says. "It gives me a chance to see old friends and make new ones. When you're going on 90, that's important. I'm the oldest one of us in age, but I retired first so actually, I'm at the bottom of the seniority list. Still have a ways to go!" Ray's been batching it since his wife died 10 years ago.

Arlye, Dave, Joe, Jim and Ray are among the legions of talented people who for 84 years helped keep NWA's fleets of airplanes in Prime Time. The five of them represent 149 years of unexcelled dedication and experience.











___ Jim Haines

Ray Carlson



Donations of any size are greatly appreceiated, History Centre Chief Pete Patzke says. They are critical to the Centre's operation.

Pete Patzke - Gold Star Volunteer!



Henry V. (universally known as Pete) Patzke founded the Northwest Airlines History Centre and has served as its President, Board Chairman and Treasurer since its inception in 2002. Winding down a bit now, he's handed off some of his duties to History Centre (H.C.) President Bruce Kitt and others. He remains firmly in the batter's box, however, as the Centre's idea man and creative accountant and shares with Bruce up-front repping with outside groups.

How did the NWA H.C. come about? It was never a part of, or supported by Northwest Airlines, Inc.; Pete created an independent nonprofit entity staffed by unpaid volunteers, including employees, retired employees, and friends of the airline. "We used to talk about it now and then in the cafeteria of our old world headquarters building (1947-1960) on

University Avenue in St. Paul," Pete recalls. "The need to preserve our history, the history of a remarkable, colorful and pioneering airline. But the answer was always the same, no money and no space."

Finally, things changed. In 2000 the NWA Credit Union (CU) built a new 10-story building in Apple Valley, Minn., a few miles south of its former headquarters site at 8101 34th Avenue S., in Bloomington (where it still maintains a major office). That freed up space at that location. Pete had an illustrious career with the NWA CU (now Wings CU) as you will soon see. He and the CU negotiated a very favorable lease and the History Centre was born.

What happened next? "Well, about two days later I got a call from NWA pilot Mike 'Snuffy' Smith," Pete recalls. "I don't know how the word got to him so fast. Snuffy ran a model airplane operation in the Philippines." "Hey Pete," Snuffy said. "I have 26 airplane models, one of every plane Northwest ever flew. The company doesn't have any room for them. You want 'em?" A day later, another call., from NWA pilot George Bond. "Pete, I know where you can get a helluva deal on all the display cabinets you want." So that's how we got started," Pete says. "With Snuffy's 26 airplanes and a huge room full of display cabinets. Things have progressed from there."

Pete's pre-Northwest career was both serpentine and interesting. From White Bear Lake, Minn., the Patzke family moved to St. Paul when Pete was five. Schooling there included St. Mark's Elementary School, St. Agnes High and the College of St. Thomas (now St. Thomas University). He studied for the priesthood two years, until the start of World War II. "I spent three years in the Medical Corps," Pete recalls. "Had my choice, Army or Navy. I chose the Army because I didn't like the idea of being torpedoed. The Army put me on Army Transport and Medical Ships in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean for 19 months. You never know."

Returning to St. Thomas, Pete majored in chemistry and pre-med. The former, because his brother-in-law, Robert Carlin, was a Ph.D. who once headed the Chemistry Department at Carnegie-Mellon University, the latter because of his Army service. In 1947 he skipped a semester and took a 90-day "temporary" job at Northwest Airlines, which lasted in various forms for 31 years. His first assignment was counting origination and destination tickets, a matter of interest to the Civil Aeronautics Board at the time. He extended his "temporary" service for another 90 days, calculating back pay for IAM members who had negotiated a new contract.

Then on to the Revenue Department in various jobs. At one point Pete was in Operations and Engineering Vice President Frank Judd's office explaining his analysis of flight crew delay problems. "How would you like to come to work for me?" Judd asked. Pete did, as manager of Flight Crew Utilization.

This matter, as most matters, interested President Donald W. Nyrop. "You'll know why I can't forget this incident," Pete says. "We were in a scheduling committee meeting discussing the idea of getting a Portland, Ore. flight out an hour and a half earlier. But it would have increased crew layover time and expense, from 10 to 30 hours.

Whose dumb idea is that? I asked. From behind me came President Nyrop's voice: "It was mine."

On another occasion Pete was in President Nyrop's office to discuss various crewing factors for the airline's new DC-8s. "Nothing happened for awhile," Pete relates. "He sat there looking out his window on traffic-clogged University Ave. I waited. Finally he said, 'they sure make those trucks big now-a-days, don't they?' Perhaps his mind was on air freight.

"President Nyrop is often cited as one of the best airline executives ever. I agree. Like I said, he was fair. But, of course, you had to produce." Continued on page 5

Patzke, continued from page 4

Pete's professional activities during and after his Northwest years were richly varied and deserve much more space than we have here. Essentially:

Northwest Airlines Credit Union: Supervisory Committee, 1956-1958. Board Member, 1959-1964. Manager and Treasurer, 1962-1977. Board Member, 1990-1999. Chairman of the Board, 1993-1995 and 1997-1999. His print on the Northwest Airlines Credit Union is indelible.

Banking: Director, Summit Bank of Richfield. Director, Southwest Fidelity Bank of Edina. Second stint with Summit Bank, seven years as Executive Vice President. "I left Northwest for that gig," Pete says. Then the bank's owner, who also owned the Tropicana in Las Vegas, got nailed for misuse of bank funds. The bank was sold and I retired in 1983. Pete also was partowner and director of First National Bank of Minnetonka.

Politics: Three term mayor (1962-1967) of picturesque Mahtomedi, Minn., just across White Bear Lake from Pete's hometown of White Bear.

"It's been a great ride," Pete says. Dolores, Pete's wife of 58 years, worked for Northwest, as did his sister Agnes, before she migrated to California in the late 1950s. The Patzkes are a Northwest family.

A couple of little items Pete modestly overlooked for this interview: among some of his close associates in those halcyon days of yore he was known as "Babe" Patzke -- co-founder of the rollicking Northwest Airlines Booster, Bleacher and Beerbust Club -- and slugging first baseman for the incredibly gifted Northwest Airlines General Office fast-pitch softball team. And you can't get no better than that! >>

Bob Johnson

Ed. note: Bob Johnson also played on the "incredibly gifted" G.O. fast-pitch softball team.



50 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH . . . the Boeing B-377 Stratocruiser - the huge piston-engined commercial airliner that ushered in the age of luxury air transportation - disappeared from the skies over the United States. NWA was the last scheduled operator of the Stratocruiser on domestic routes. *The last NWA B-377 flight landed at Minneapolis/St. Paul airport. on Sept. 15, 1960.* Passengers loved its big, square windows, wide aisle, deep, comfortable seats, high ceiling and, of course, the lower-deck cocktail lounge.

The History Centre has acquired a pair of Stratocruiser seats that need refurbishing. *Reflections* editor (and former Stratocuiser stewardess) Anne Kerr is the initial contributor to a fund for that purpose, and invites any of you who also get misty when you hear the name Stratocruiser to join her in this endeavor. Envision a Stratocruiser Lounge area at the H.C. museum! Please send contributions to the NWA History Centre, 8101 34th Ave S., Bloomington, MN 55425, marked **Stratocruiser Seats.** Know a volunteer upholsterer? Call Anne, 612-865-5377, with questions or ideas for this project.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Put your talent to work for the NWA History Centre!

Hosts/Hostesses needed during museum hours. Call Wayne Snyder 952-698-4478

Story and photograph submissions for the newsletter. Call Anne Kerr 612-865-5377

Help with many H.C. projects Call Bruce Kitt 952-698-4478

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Members: We'd like to hear fromyou! Have ideas of stories you'd like to see in your newsletter? Photos to share? Send to editor@nwahistory.org or call Anne @ 612-865-5377.



Holman Field, St. Paul, MN

Hangar Talk . . . Stories from Reflections Readers

A certain retired NWA flight engineer, who asked to be nameless, called with this story:

He was flying a three-day schedule with NWA Captain **Woody Herman** in late 1960. They flew MSP-IDL, IDL-SEA, SEA-MSP, all non-stops. **Holly,** one of the stewardesses, was runner-up for Miss Montana that year. When the crew settled into their limo in Forest Hills to head to the airport for the IDL-SEA trip, Holly asked if they would fly over her home town of Ellis, Montana. Woody says, "We sure will. I'll call you when we get close and you can come up to the flight deck. Do you know the call letters for the Ellis radio station?" She replied, "KOBR." "How would you like to talk to the folks in Ennis on the radio as we fly over?" Woody asked. "That would be great," she answered. When they entered Montana airspace, they got busy setting things up. They called Holly up to the flight deck and gave her a head set. The *nameless engineer* who contributed this story sat at the navigator's table, hidden from her view, and pretended to be the KOBR announcer. She thanked all the people of Ennis for supporting her in the Miss Montana contest. When it was over, she effusively thanked Woody for making it happen. On the next trip they asked her if any of her friends or family in Ennis had heard her on the radio. No, she said wistfully, nobody heard it. *Ed. note: We'd love to hear Holly's side of this story. Unfortunately, perusal of NWA History Centre cabin attendant seniority lists for the time period show no "Holly" listed. If you are out there Holly, or if anyone knows how to reach Holly, please contact. editor@nwahistory.org.*

Alan Ashton, of the U.K., produces videos on YouTube under the heading *Organ Celebrities*. Researching a piece he did on Twin Cities organist **Leonard Leigh**, Alan discovered that Leonard had played the organ NWA (and Northwest Organ Co.) installed on Stratocruiser 709, To view his story on Leonard Leigh and the B-377 organ go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqWYP-eJW9A

Bill Klotz,, continued from page 2

"Mr. Nyrop (then C.E.O. of Northwest Airlines) used to come to the post office occasionally. Often enough so I got to know him. He remembered me because occasionally I would purposely either shortchange him or give him too much change. One day he said, 'Bill, if you take care of the pennies, the rest will take care of itself.' I considered that a very nice education. I knew him as the best of the best."

Bill got his pilot's license in 1970. "I got personal with maybe 10 or 12 Northwest pilots. They knew that I loved to fly, so they taught me. They used their own airplanes and taught me after work and on days off. They were very severe on me. They only gave me 10 ft. on either side of the altimeter for maneuvers, even though the pilot's exam gave 100 ft. They made me the pilot I was," he says. "They also gave me time in DC-10 and B-747 simulators. Many of them called me 'Dad' and would confide in me. I guess I was someone they could talk to." Bill still hears from many of them.

Donald Nyrop wasn't the only airline chief Bill got to know. North Central/Republic C.E.O. Hal Carr gave Bill a personal tour of their big, new computer systems one day. And N.W.A.'s Mail Room Supervisor Harold Hageman would see that the post office got some Fujiyama Trays once in awhile. Hageman always made sure there was one tray just for Bill. "Management didn't like that," Bill solemnly adds.

Bill and his wife, Mayme, have been married 65 years. Bill has called her "my girl" since the day they married and to this day. He doesn't like the word "wife" because to him, it sounds like a position. "The girl I married is still the girl I married," he says. They have two kids, Marty and Sandy. Son Marty works for NWA, now Delta, in Honolulu; daughter Sandy is married and lives in St. Paul with her husband and three children.

Still vigorous at 89, Bill often drops by the NWA History Centre and enjoys talking with friends, old and new. *\rightarrow Ed. note: I suspect that there are many more Bill Klodt stories out there waiting to be told. Send yours to editor@nwahistory.org or call Anne Kerr at. 612-865-5377 We'll include them in a future issue of Reflections.

Richfield Hosts Mal Freeburg Day, June 12, 2010

Bill Marchessault, Mayor Debbie Goettel, Jim Johns, Fay Kulenkamp and Bruce Kitt.

Richfield Mayor Debbie Goettel read the plaque honoring Mal Bryan Freeburg, 1906-1963, after it was presented to the City of Richfield, Minn. by the Richfield Historical Society and the Freeburg family on Saturday, June 12. The mayor was flanked by Bill Marchessault, current Delta flight attendant wearing a vintage NWA uniform, and Fay Kulenkamp, retired NWA flight attendant. Both serve on the NWA History Centre board. Jim Johns, representing the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame, and Bruce Kitt, president of the NWA History Centre, assisted with the presentation.

Mal was mayor of Richfield in 1942. He was chief pilot for Northwest Airlines from 1928 to 1945, and demonstrated, sometimes colorfully, his flying skills and heroism. For example, in 1930, Mal saved train passengers



Popular guest Donald Nyrop, retired C.E.O of Northwest Airlines and 97 years young, with Fay and Bill.

Mal Freeburg Day continued for the public in the afternoon at Veterans Memorial Park with experimental aircraft displays, radio-controlled airplane demonstrations, historical displays and food.



from a burning railroad bridge near collapse by flying repeated warning dives at the locomotive.

In 1932 he safely landed a passenger plane after the engine broke loose. Twisting the aircraft violently, he shook the engine free and then made a one-wheel landing.



Above: Retired NWA Captain Bert Sisler flew the Boeing 747 in this uniform. Left: Anne Kerr, Bert Sisler and Pat Freeburg at Veterans Memorial Park., Richfield.

Mal's Daughter Remembers . . .

One recent summer afternoon we chatted with Pat Freeburg at her lovely home in Fridley.

Q: We've heard stories about your Dad's public life; his experiences as a pilot, chief pilot, and mayor of Richfield. What family stories come to mind?



Pat Freeburg remembers her dad, Mal Freeburg.

Pat: My mother (Ruth Smith Freeburg) and my dad did a lot of barnstorming together before my brother Jim (retired NWA Captain, now deceased) and I were born. They flew their bi-plane from town to town to take people up for rides. Both of them were young and slim. She would wear a flight suit and leather helmet. People would call her his brother or his son. He'd get mad and say, "That's my wife!" Some of the hotels they stayed in were really awful. Mal could actually *smell* bedbugs. He could walk into a hotel room and say, "This room has bedbugs!" He would go into the bathroom and wet a bar of soap. He turned off the lights and told Mother to pull back the bed covers. He ran to the bed and picked up the bugs on the bar of soap.

When he taught my mother to drive, they drove the car to the airport. He settled her in the driver's seat and told her to follow him on the tarmac. He got in his airplane and took off. She followed!

Q: How about when you and Jim were growing up?

Pat: Dad taught Jim to fly in the Stinson we owned.

They were doing touch and go's. Mal decided the wheel pants were too wind resistant. He took off the pants, not realizing the same bolts held the wheels on. As Jim took off alone, one wheel came off. Jim didn't realize he'd lost it until he looked out the window and saw Dad waving the wheel. (Jim was then only 13.) Jim steeled himself for the landing. When he touched down, the lone wheel came off and the airplane flipped over. Mal thought he had killed his son. Thankfully, Jim wasn't hurt but the airplane was. Our stepmother Violet had to sew all the material for recovering the wing. They had the fabric laid out all over the yard until a raccoon came along and did his business on it. An investigation followed as to why the wheel pants couldn't be taken off without disturbing the wheels.

I don't remember Mal ever punishing us. However if he was displeased about something we had done his expression bore a sort-of black look. One summer day I was lazing in the hammock. Dad came over to me and asked if I would pick up some small tree branches on the lawn. He said he would give me something. I said, "How much?" He gave me that black look. You never saw anybody move so fast.



8101 34th Avenue South Bloomington, MN 55425



Donald Nyrop, retired NWA C.E.O. and Bruce Kitt, N.W.H.C. President. on Mal Freeburg Day, June 12, 2010. See page 7

September 2010

NWA History Centre Reflections

Airline Collectible Get Together Minneapolis, MN

Saturday, October 16, 2010 9 am to 4 pm

Holiday Inn and Suites - Mpls / St. Paul Airport

3 Appletree Square, Bloomington, MN 952-876-8654

Admission \$5 - Children under 12 Free Complimentary Shuttle from MSP Airport



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