



Reflections

Dedicated to preserving the history of a great airline.

Donald Nyrop led NWA for A Quarter-Century

In recent days Donald W. Nyrop has been called an aviation giant, leader, and legend, by the national business media. He was all of those things. But to those of us who worked under him during his tenure, he was very approachable, and would pitch in to help on a busy flight or quietly cover the hospital expense of an employee's child.

Nyrop died on Tuesday, November 16, 2010 at his home in Edina, Minnesota. He was 98 years old.

Born in Elgin, Nebraska, on April 1, 1912, he graduated from Doane College in Crete, Nebraska in 1934 and subsequently earned his law degree from George Washington University Law School in Washington D.C. After being admitted to the bar in 1938, he joined the newly formed Civil Aeronautics Authority (the precursor to the Federal Aviation Authority), thus beginning his lifelong career in the airline industry. Early on, he focused on route proceedings and airline safety. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army's Air Transport Command, returning to civilian life in 1946 as a Lieutenant Colonel. He continued his aviation career, holding the highest civilian aviation posts in the U.S. government: Civil Aeronautics administrator and Civil Aeronautics Board chairman.



Donald W. Nyrop

Northwest Airlines beckoned in 1954, and Nyrop became the industry's youngest chief executive. Under his leadership, Northwest was transformed from a struggling airline with a poor safety record into one of the country's most consistently profitable airlines and with one of the industry's best safety records.

He led the airline to profitability by keeping an eagle-eye on costs. Called tight-fisted and a hard-bargainer, he became legendary for his frugality. **Brent Baskfield**, a retired Northwest executive who worked with Nyrop in the 1970s, recalls that to save weight (and money) Nyrop had all paint removed from the exterior of company airplanes except the NWA logo and identifying numbers. He also disdained any outward show of success, as was evidenced in the sparse design and furnishings at the corporate headquarters building at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. "It was monastic," Baskfield recalls. Although he had controversial relationships with unions, and the airline was buffeted by several strikes, Nyrop was proud that unionized workers never took a pay cut on his watch.

Fay Kulenkamp, retired flight attendant and volunteer at the NWA History Centre, said that although she missed a year and a half of work over 36 years due to strikes by pilots or mechanics unions, she respected Nyrop. "This man made money the old-fashioned way, unlike what goes on in business today," Kulenkamp said. "He was behind Northwest's excellent pilot training, our wonderful safety record and strong financial performance. He was very frugal, but in a good way. He was very proud of Northwest Airlines and what it had accomplished in Minnesota."

Continued on page 2

President's Message by Bruce Kitt

This year began on a low note January 1, 2010: Northwest Airlines' operating certificate had been cancelled and it was the first day all operations were owned by Delta Air Lines. Northwest Airlines, Inc., ceased to exist. The year ends on another low note with the passing of Donald W. Nyrop, former president and C.E.O. of Northwest Airlines and arguably the most influential leader of the airline since Col. Lewis Brittin, who founded Northwest Airways 84 years ago in 1926. These two events represent a loss of identity for all of us as Northwest joins the list of airlines whose colors have faded from the skies.



These two events also reinforce the purpose of the NWA History Centre - to educate, preserve, and display the tangible reminders of what a vision and dedicated employees were capable of accomplishing when their airline was flying, and afterwards, when the power levers were moved to idle cutoff and the office lights were turned off. The employees of Northwest and its 12 legacy airlines are fortunate because, unlike Eastern, Braniff or TWA, we still have a main base and headquarters - The NWA History Centre, Inc. - where our legacy is available to see and share. We are committed to keeping the power levers at cruise and the lights on, as long as you are onboard with your contributions to support the museum's mission.

Special thanks to the 17 donors who contributed to NWA History Centre, Inc. during Give to the Max Day (www.GiveMN.org) on November 16, 2010. This year saw a doubling of both donors and money to the NWA History Centre over last year. A personal note of thanks has been sent to the donors, and I extend this public note of thanks and appreciation to acknowledge the generosity of one anonymous donor. Thank you to all who have supported your museum in 2010. And special thanks to the dedicated volunteers who put in many hours greeting visitors and helping operate the museum. We are now clear of 2010. The seatbelt sign has been turned off and 2011 leaves you free to walk around the NWA History Centre. CAVU

Donald Nyrop ...Continued from page 1

Joe Leonard, AirTran Airways C.E.O., began his career as a flight test engineer for Boeing. After he left Boeing he had offers from both United and Northwest as a power plant engineer. He took the job with Northwest. "If I had gone to United I would have been just another cog in the wheel, but at Northwest I could make a difference and learn more, Leonard said.

"At United I would have been responsible for one engine part. Northwest was an extremely lean organization. I was responsible for one engine model and half of another, and I monitored engine conditioning for the entire fleet. The airline also believed in promoting young people. When I was 29, I ran the second-largest organization in the company, line maintenance.

"C.E.O. Nyrop was a stickler for detail. He'd quiz you over and over about your operation. It wasn't always fun, but you learned from him. His motto was 'Keep it simple and say no a lot.'"



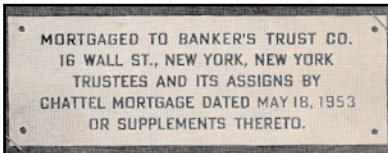
Wayne Snyder, who worked for Northwest for 44 years and serves on the NWA History Centre board, praised Nyrop for providing excellent leadership that saved the airline and completing mergers that strengthened it. "He understood the industry. And I think he had some foresight into where it was going. He was an excellent manager," Snyder said. "He used to say, 'If you take care of the pennies, the dollars will take care of themselves.' He really got the airline solvent."

Donald Nyrop visited the NWA History Centre often over the years. He was a regular donor of artifacts from his career and attended retiree events at the Centre. He was a good story teller and wasn't shy about telling stories on himself. Not too long ago he and **John Peterson**, NWA retiree and NWA History Centre board member, had a good laugh over the time Nyrop personally fired Peterson and then hired him back within the hour. ➔

From the Archives . . .



President Donald Nyrop and Board Chairman Croil Hunter melt down a mortgage plate using tongs and acid.



Loan Repaid!

That's a Big Weight Off Our Minds

Twenty little metal plates, each six inches long and two inches wide, have been pried off 10 Stratocruisers and 10 DC-4s - and, remarkably enough, this simple removal of objects weighing only a few ounces apiece has given the whole airline a bit of buoyancy.

This was a feat of finance, rather than engineering.

Each plate was a symbol, and a legal notice, that the plane to which it had been attached was mortgaged.

The plates were attached after Northwest, on April 1, 1953, put up the 20 airplanes as security on a \$21,800,000 loan, of which \$6,800,000 was to refinance the balance then outstanding on previous loans and \$15,000,000 for the purchase of six Lockheed Super Constellations.

A new bank credit agreement was entered into, and on October 29, 1954, the company became debt-free when it prepaid \$1,790,000 in loan payments.

So, the plates came off. Best of all, they'll stay off! For when Northwest established its new line of credit, it was specified by the company and agreed by the bankers that there would be no mortgage.

From Northwest Airlines News, February, 1955



NWA STP mechanic Robert L. Wadsten happily removes plate from Stratocruiser cockpit.

Visit the NWA History Centre Gift Shop Soon

NEW ! Exclusive! Denim shirts emblazoned with the names of all thirteen airlines that make up the Northwest Airlines legacy .

S-XL \$49.95 2X-3X \$59.95 plus postage. Available at the gift shop December 18. Place your order now!



See photo of denim shirt on Bruce Kitt, page 2, and at www.nwahistory.org



Loads of gift ideas for airline historians, NWA alumni and everyone who misses seeing the red tails. Clothing, hats, mugs, jewelry, books and more. Stop in and browse.

New Feature: Mystery Airport



Can you identify this wonderful Art Deco NWA terminal? If so, please E-mail editor@nwahistory.org.



Recognize the face? And what is he doing? Give up? See page 6 for answer.

★ **Fay Kulenkamp - Gold Star Volunteer!** ★



So You Want To Be A Flight Attendant?

Fay Kulenkamp has some advice for you. “First, you have to be in shape, Fay says. “It’s physically and emotionally demanding. Commercial aviation is a tumultuous industry; be prepared for schedule changes, odd hours, strike uncertainties and layoffs. It’s no longer the glamorous job it used to be. But meeting interesting and famous people, flying with a fun crew and enjoying travel benefits, make it all worth while.”

Fay should know. Now a member of the NWA History Centre Board of Directors, she was a Northwest Airlines Flight Attendant for 36 (thirty-six!) years, starting back in the days of height and weight requirements and mandatory retirement at age 32. It was a time when new male flight attendants had automatic seniority over the women.

Fay well remembers her 1968 flight attendant training class. “I was the only trainee who had never flown before. So on the Friday before our first weekend training flight, I told my classmates: ‘If I’m not back in class on Monday, I’m probably on my way home on a Greyhound bus!’” Fay did just fine and it turned into a rewarding career with fond memories.

Fay enjoyed meeting many celebrities along the way. “Comedian Red Skelton was one of the nicest people I’ve ever met. Everybody wanted his autograph. Not only did he oblige, he drew clown pictures on napkins for passengers.” Fay remembers Senator Eugene McCarthy. “He was interested in hearing our political views; I can see why he appealed to so many young people.”

During a boring delay on a flight to Honolulu, Fay challenged Heavyweight Champion Mohammed Ali to an arm-wrestle. “I thought he would slam my arm down quickly, but he was kind and let me pose a good match. He even said I was quite strong,” Fay says.



Red Skelton and Fay Kulenkamp

Elvis Presley was another encounter. “I had just worked a trip from Tokyo to Honolulu and was still in uniform at a breakfast buffet at the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Elvis, his wife and daughter were there. He actually came over to ask how I liked being a flight attendant, where I was from and where my schedule was taking me! He seemed very interested in aviation.”

Fay also recalls working a Vikings charter. Bud Grant was quiet and very polite. The star players were in the first class section and Bud, the media, and the rest of the players rode in coach - at the very back of the B-727 aircraft.

Fay flew on many aircraft: Lockheed Electra, Boeing 727-100 and 727-200, 707-720, 707-320, 747-200, 747-400, and 757; Douglas DC-9 and DC-10; MD-80, and Airbus 319 and 320. Her favorite was the Boeing 747-200. “It was the best aircraft Northwest ever owned. Easy to work (with enough help, that is) and with by far the best safety record. It was beautiful. I thought of it as a ‘Gentle Giant.’ I remember the first time I saw it parked out by our hangars. It dwarfed all the other aircraft in the vicinity! The Boeing 727-100 holds memories of a different sort. Sometimes it was difficult for the pilots to get weight and balance right for takeoff. When that happened the metal tail would scrape as we rotated, a scary sound when you’re sitting in the aft jump seat.”

Her love of animals and work with the Humane Society were instrumental in Fay’s efforts to assure proper treatment of pets on NWA flights, resulting in the “Priority Pet Program.” *Continued on page 5*

Fay Kulenkamp ... Continued from page 4

Fay has always supported union representation and served on Professional Standards, Grievance and Legislative committees with ALSSA, ALPA and the Teamsters throughout her 36-year career. Fay says, "I firmly believe that unions have always been good for both the employee and the company." Three Northwest strikes, none by flight attendants, gave Fay layoff status for a total of a year and a half. She worked in retail during the first two strikes, and during the third strike, in 1976, she developed her own retail business which she still operates today. The 1970s were rocky times for NWA between labor and management. Fay recalls a conversation she had with C.E.O. Donald Nyrop, who was a passenger on her flight one day. "I told Mr. Nyrop that people do a much better job when they are happy, and that if NWA could make more money than any other airline with his employees being not-so-happy, think what he could do if the employees were happy." I thought, "There goes my job! Then he asked me what job I would like in the general office if I were to work there. Without hesitation I said, vice-president of company morale. He smiled, rolled up the sports page of his newspaper and tapped me on the head with it!

"We went through many strikes with Mr. Nyrop, and his management tactics weren't always popular. But, I'll admit he was the one who brought financial stability to our airline and earned industry respect for it. He helped make Northwest a great airline."

Fay is a native of St. Paul's storied West Side. She attended Humboldt High School, as did presidential candidate Harold Stassen. She comes by her airline heritage honestly. In the mid to late 1920s, at St. Paul's Holman Field, her grandmother, Eunice Hulett, made sandwiches for the first Northwest Airways passenger flights on the Ford Tri-Motors and early Hamiltons. Her supervisor was NWA legend, Camille 'Rosie' Stein. Fay's grandmother knew Northwest's founder, Col. Lewis Brittin, and the equally legendary 'Speed' Holman, Northwest's first pilot and operations manager. "My grandmother was in love with Speed Holman," Fay says, "but she said all the girls had a crush on him in those days."

Fay has been a board member at the NWA History Centre since 2005. She is particularly active in eBay sales and fundraising projects for the museum. "Board member John Peterson encouraged me," she says. "I came over to look around the History Centre and saw displays of old Northwest promotional tote bags, company logos, union pins, old uniforms, display cases filled with Northwest history and tons of old photographs. At a large round table sat a group of retired Northwest mechanics (the backbone of our airline) talking shop. It was like going back in time, and somehow I felt like I was home again." Fay says, "I have no regrets about my career choice. Over my 36 years at Northwest Airlines, there have been many changes. I don't miss the circus, I only miss the clowns." ✈

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

Publisher

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NWA History Center Hours

Monday through Friday

11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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Members: *We'd like to hear from you! 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

Remember our Anonymous-Contributor-Named-Al who provided us with that spiffy yarn about Captain ‘Deke’ DeLong’s Fargo overfly a couple of issues ago? Well, Al has struck again with another gem. Anonymously, of course.

During the 1950-1953 Korean War, Northwest Airlines operated and crewed UN-99, the United Nations DC-3 Flagship which nosed around Korea checking on things. Al was a crew member on that plane. (For the full story, see the book *Voices From the Sky*, Chapter 17, available at the NWA History Centre.)

“One day we landed at Kimpo,” Al recalls. “I was walking across the tarmac towards the terminal, what was left of it. A jeep trundled up. It was driven by a four-star general with a bird-colonel beside him. It stopped.”

The general nodded towards the plane. “You’re with Northwest Airlines?” he said. “You fly that thing?”

“Yessir,” I said. “Crew of three.”

“Being with Northwest Airlines, what privileges does that give you?” the general asked.

“Sir,” I said. “It gives me the privilege of being in Korea.”

The general cocked his head a bit with a half-smile. “Touche,” he said, and drove off.

“I didn’t know who he was until I saw his picture on a *Time* magazine cover a little later,” Al says. “He was Curtis E. LeMay, U.S. Air Force Commanding General, Strategic Air Command.” → *Contributed by Bob Johnson.*



Gen. Curtis E. LeMay

We love putting out a call for information, as it often yields unexpected results. For instance, last issue we asked for your help locating a MSP-based stewardess named “**Holly**” who flew IDL-SEA in late 1960 with **Capt. Woody Herman** and the “anonymous” flight engineer who shared the story with us. Holly was runner-up for the Miss Montana pageant that year, and our **Hangar Talk** story told of a fake radio interview the flight deck crew engineered (no pun intended) with Holly and her hometown radio station in Ennis, Mont. We wanted to hear Holly’s side of the story.

Here’s what we heard from **Jim Bestul**, retired NWA captain:

“Sounds like **Holly Hudson** - married to NWA pilot **Dave Nelson** - now **Holly Nelson**. As a junior Electra captain, I used to have her on my crew on 0600 departures MSP to MKE and back. She would ride the swing at Diamond Jim’s in Mendota, getting off at about 0400 and reporting for the early morning flight. She was, and still is, a great gal! Once during a snowstorm we wound up in Fargo instead of MSP. Because of crowded conditions (as I remember, there were seven NWA planes grounded there) she volunteered to stay on the airplane and serve drinks to the passengers, mostly businessmen, as long as it took. When conditions improved, we took off for MSP, but things got worse and we ended up back at FAR that evening. We were out of time so we shut down, but I’ve never seen a happier group than those guys as they deplaned in FAR. Thanks to Holly, they had been partying all day.” *Continued on page 7*

Hangar Talk . . . continued from page 6

Ed. note: Great story, Jim, but not the same “Holly.” We called Holly Hudson Nelson and learned that she didn’t start flying until the mid-sixties, after this incident took place. However, she confirmed all the other details of your contribution to **Reflections**, and we wouldn’t have wanted to miss it for the world!

Katharine Taylor Peterson set the record straight:

“This was **Halley Pasley** from Ennis, Montana. (Ed. Obviously the “anonymous engineer” can’t spell.) She was in my 1959 graduating class. She is a beautiful woman but just too trusting of the people who played tricks on her. She is now married, as most of us ended up, for one could not be married and keep working in those days. (Many were secretly married.) Halley married a man named Bob Adam, and they live in Montana. I hope to visit the NWA History Centre soon. I have a graduation picture of our class to donate.

I loved the Stratocruiser and will support the Stratocruiser seat fund, too. Oh for the good old days!”

Ed.note: Amen, Kathy. Thanks for steering us to **Halley Pasley Adam**, as the subject of the story in the September **Hangar Talk!**

Mystery picture on page 3: The man is retired Northwest Airlines Captain **Ray Dolny**, one of our valuable History Centre volunteers. What is Ray doing? “I’m not sure,” he says, “Some sort of H.C. project.



I’m taking ball-point pens and note pads out of little burlap bags and putting them into separate boxes.”

Awfully exacting work for an airline captain, don’t you think? → B.j.

Bob Johnson was shopping for a 7-wood at a local thrift shop in Arizona and ran into **Byron G. Webster**, nephew of the fellow who was the official (but not the actual) first Northwest Airways passenger. (See page 25 in **Voices From the Sky**, available at the NWA History Centre.)

Webster says the ticket is still in the family but whoever has it won’t give it up. He hopes that they will donate it to the NWA History Centre Museum someday. →



F.Y.I. On January 6, 2011, the **History Channel** will air a program on the latest theories regarding the 1971 D. B. Cooper skyjacking of Northwest Flight 305. The program is “**Brad Meltzer’s - Decoded, episode #107.**” The NWA History Centre played a small part in the program. →



NEW “NORTHERN LIGHTS” BLUE GOES IN STRATOCRUISER
Seat being put in place by STP aircraft mechanics
Kermit Krusson, left, and Joe Frantz.

Before →

← After?



Where are Kermit and Joe when we need ‘em?

Please help us restore our sad-looking Stratocruiser seats to their original “Northern Lights” glory!

Send your donation to NWA History Center, 8100 34th Ave So., Bloomington, MN, 55425, marked **Stratocruiser Seat Fund**. We’ll create a Stratocruiser corner at the museum showcasing our B-377 artifacts. Thanks!

NWA History Centre



8101 34th Avenue South
Bloomington, MN 55425



***Holiday Greetings from all of
us at the NWA History Centre***

NWA History Centre Reflections

December 2010

***Especially now, with Northwest Airlines but a memory,
and the famed red tails absent from the sky . . .***

***. . . we ask you to consider the NWA History Centre
when you make your year-end giving decisions.***

There is much work to be done. Your NWA History Center is the beneficiary of many additional artifacts, photographs, slides, film, and documents as a result of permanent changes at some former NWA facilities at MSP and elsewhere. All of these need to be stored, identified, catalogued, displayed and made available for aviation historians, researchers, writers and NWA alumni, now and in the future. We need your help to preserve the heritage of Northwest Airlines.



A worker removes the NWA logo from the Sioux City Iowa Reservation Center. To the right, the Northwest name has already been removed, but leaves an imprint. The goal of the NWA History Centre is to leave an imprint for historians and for the families and future generations of the Northwest workers who made her great.

***The NWA History Centre, Inc. is a 501(c)(3)
corporation. Your donations are tax deductible.***

Mail your contributions to Bruce Kitt, NWA History Centre, 8100 34th Avenue So., Bloomington, MN 55425