



# REFLECTIONS



The Newsletter of the Northwest Airlines History Center  
Dedicated to preserving the history of a great airline and its people.  
**NORTHWEST AIRLINES 1926-2010**

## THE QUEEN OF THE SKIES

### Personal Retrospectives

by Robert DuBert

*It's hard to believe that they are gone.* Can it be possible that it was 50 years ago this September that this aircraft made its first public appearance? Are we really all so, ahem, elderly that we remember 1968 as if it were yesterday?



Photo: True Brand, courtesy Vincent Carrà

This plane had its origins in 1964, when Boeing began work on a proposal for the C-5A large military airlifter contract, and after Lockheed won that contest, Boeing considered a commercial passenger version as a means of salvaging the program. Urged on by Pan Am president Juan Trippe, Boeing in 1965 assigned a team headed by Chief Engineer Joe Sutter to design a large new airliner, although Boeing at the time was really more focused on its supersonic transport (SST) program. A launch customer order from Pan Am on April 13, 1966 for twenty five aircraft pushed Sutter's program into high gear, and in a truly herculean effort, Joe Sutter and his Boeing team, dubbed "The Incredibles," brought the program from inception on paper to the public unveiling of a finished aircraft in the then unheard of time of 29 months. We're talking, of course, about the legendary and incomparable Boeing 747.

**THE ROLLOUT** It was a bright, sunny morning on Monday, Sept. 30, 1968. At 11:10, the giant hangar doors of Boeing's Everett plant opened, and as a band played Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March no. 1*, the very first 747 was rolled out, to the astonishment and delight of the large audience of Boeing employees, other officials and representatives from the 26 airlines who had placed orders for the new aircraft, including Northwest, whose initial order was for 10 planes. For the champagne christening of the aircraft, Boeing invited each airline to send a stewardess, and Northwest selected SEA-based **Suzanne Quarles (Thompson)**. She remembers the event: *"In late Sept. 1968 I was asked by my Seattle In-flight supervisor Fran Duvall to represent Northwest Airlines at the rollout of the Boeing 747 on Sept 30. at Boeing Field in Everett WA. At the time all Northwest Orient's in-ternational flying was done out of the Seattle base and the airlines represented at the rollout were predominantly international carriers. I was pleased to be selected for this honor even without knowing the full extent of the extravaganza. There was much celebration in Seattle over this new aircraft. Each of the 26 air-lines who had purchased or were negotiating purchase of the 747 sent a uniformed stewardess representative to the event.*

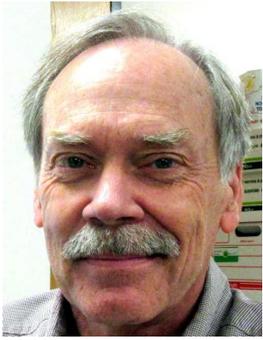
*I received much attention, one might call it notoriety, for my uniform. Though it was only one day before we were to change into our fall/winter uniform in classic navy, white and red I was*

*told I must wear the "caterpillar" uniform of bright green, rust, yellow and navy horizontal stripes. While the other beautifully dressed stewardesses could have been snide, they instead laughed with me and I was immediately accepted into this group of lovely gracious women. The representatives from Air France, Lufthansa, BOAC, Alitalia etc. (were) in classic, conservative, meticulously tailored navy or black uniforms, with crisp white blouses, trim hats, leather bags and gloves. But they embraced me in my stripes, green polyester shirt, beanie, bare hands and plastic clutch purse. We shared an amazing camaraderie.*



Suzanne Quarles, right, with an unidentified stewardess, from a National Geographic documentary about the history of the 747.

*How I was chosen for this honor? Perhaps it was for my sense of humor. I definitely needed it in that uniform! We were* cont. on p4



### From the Executive Director

The Northwest Airlines History Center Museum (NWAHCM) has now been open for five months. What a difference five months can make. The most celebratory fact is that the memory of the preceding 12 months the museum was closed is fading quickly. Since the NWAHCM opened, our visitor count has held steady at 100 plus per month. We have not seen these attendance numbers since we vacated the former Wings building; they are reminders of how good all the volunteers feel when the history of Northwest Airlines and its legacy partners are on display

for everyone to see. We are encouraged that as our new location becomes established in the public awareness, our visitor count will increase. This is your personal invitation to come see how good your airline's history looks.

Along with that good news, there are two other developments worth mentioning. The NWAHC is investing in an electronic inventory management system for the museum's retail store. We have been looking into several systems, any of which will enable us to assign stock numbers, track sales, manage ordering, and help this growing part of the museum to operate efficiently. We selected a vendor, signed a purchase order and are looking forward to installing the system this month. A key component of this investment will be to enable the NWAHC to operate an online retail store presence so items are available to a wider audience. While we are still searching for a new webmaster, this represents one of those behind-the-scene improvements for our future.

The other news is that the NWAHC has established a relationship with St. Catherine's University, in St. Paul, MN, to use the NWAHC's archive as a learning site for graduate students interested in a career in Archive Studies. Through one of their students, who is now a volunteer at the museum, I contacted the faculty professor who teaches Archive and Special Collection courses at St. Kate's, and we are working on an academically approved practicum (the academic term for hands-on learning that meets class requirements) that should be ready for the upcoming fall semester in September. This is exciting news as it means we will begin to process our donations, catalog and photograph them, and have the means to begin sharing more of the rich history of the 14 airlines that are our collective history. We will then know what we have and be able to change displays, tell the stories of former employees—and employ these artifacts to illustrate those stories. We will also be able to tell new stories about events that helped build America's commercial aviation network, and about the unknown "thing," that gizmo, and how or why it was important enough that an airline invested in it. As the Collection Manager (among other hats), this is the backbone of the museum that I have been slowly working on—and now help is on the way to actually "just do it!" Wait until you see some of the hidden gems in our archive!

So, stay tuned, come in and visit, become a member and help support these important steps that are building the Northwest Airlines History Center. If you were around Northwest Airlines in 2007, you may have heard this phrase, "A new day." We'll repurpose it—with a good-news spin—as it certainly is a new day for the Northwest Airlines History Center. CAVU. ➔

### MUSEUM INFORMATION FOR VISITORS

**Current Schedule: open Wed-Thurs 11am-6pm, Fri-Sat 11am-5pm.**

**Closed Sun-Tues and major holidays.**

**(Operating schedule subject to change: Call 952-698-4478 for latest schedule)**

**FREE Admission (special events may incur a charge).**

**FREE Parking: use hotel spaces in the ramp garage marked with blue lines.**

**Metro Transit Blue Line Light Rail: American Boulevard stop.**



### THE NORTHWEST AIRLINES

#### HISTORY CENTER, Inc.

Founder **Henry V. "Pete" Patzke**  
1925-2012

**Museum:** Crowne Plaza Aire MSP  
Hotel

3 Appletree Square  
Bloomington MN 55425  
952-876-9677

**Archives and Administration:** 10100

Flying Cloud Dr., Suite A-306  
Eden Prairie MN 55347  
952-698-4478

[nwahistory.org](http://nwahistory.org)

facebook: NorthwestAirlinesHistory  
Center

Executive Director **Bruce Kitt**  
Museum Director **Chuck Huntley**  
Directors **Chuck Huntley, Fay Kulenkamp, Bill Marchessault, Vince Rodriguez, Jeff Schwalen**  
Collection Manager **Bruce Kitt**  
Retail Sales **Fay Kulenkamp**  
Director Emeritus **Jerry Nielsen**

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Editor **Robert DuBert**  
[robert.dubert@gmail.com](mailto:robert.dubert@gmail.com)

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Email **\$30** (correspondence and digital edition newsletter via email.)

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Chuck Huntley

## From the Museum Director

### Greetings to everyone,

First and foremost, I want to share with you some of the visitor totals for our new museum: November 154, December 292 (which *includes* the 747 retirement party Dec 20th visitor total of 110), January total 150. While January was down slightly, it was actually quite good as we (and others) were adversely affected by unusually cold and bad weather as well as the Superbowl.

We continue to receive inquiries and requests for group tours.

Our volunteer museum guides (docents) continue to make excellent efforts to engage visitors. They've also been instrumental in coming up with new ideas and suggesting changes which improve the museum experience for everyone. As a result, we continue to receive, overall, *very* positive comments from guests. All this helps us realize that the efforts we've put into our new location are paying off.

One of our goals has been and will continue to be adding to, changing or modifying the displays, based on visitor feedback, suggestions or the realization that they aren't working as well as we hoped. I wish to give a special shout out to Bob DuBert for traveling to MSP to completely rearrange the Republic-timeline display cabinets to place them in more of a chronological order. Bob has also been instrumental in creating new and improved placards for the displays.

We continue to reach out via social media to inform the public about the museum, the various changes we've made, and to let people know that we are always on the lookout for historic items. One example: an Alaska Airlines pilot saw one of our donation requests posted on the Republic Airlines facebook page. He then contacted us and subsequently donated his pilot father's uniforms, badges, etc. from Hughes Air West and Republic Airlines!

I was recently granted access to video files at Twin Cities Public Television which contain archival footage specifically related to Northwest as well as to two episodes of the program **Lost Twin Cities** which contain stories about NWA. TPT gave me permission to use these items for the museum. They along with other video files will eventually become part of a video display in the museum.

Last but not least, I want to state, loudly and clearly, what a great job our volunteer museum guides are doing! The group consists of people who have been our "regulars" as well as new volunteers; most of the latter have had no direct connection to the airline industry but simply love the business. The volunteers cover shifts ranging from once a month to several times a month. Often, some volunteers cover extra shifts simply because we don't have the coverage.

That said, we need to add more people to our current docent pool. So please...consider volunteering. Offering to cover a shift even once a month is helpful and very appreciated. By all means, please have your friends or family contact me if they also might have an interest. As a reminder, no previous connection to the airline or aviation industries is required, just a willingness to serve. ➔

## WE GET VISITORS!

It is especially gratifying when we get visiting groups from other organizations who are connected with the world of aviation. One such group was from the Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 1229 from South St. Paul, who visited us on Jan. 16 and were greeted by Bruce Kitt and Jeff Schwalen.

Photos: Bruce Kitt



For the most current NWAHC news, be sure to check out our facebook page and "like" us!  
Facebook.com/northwestairlineshistorycenter

Cont. from p1 treated to luncheons the two days preceding the roll-out and a scenic train ride along the Puget Sound coast. There was gaiety in the air throughout the days. This was the largest and most revolutionary passenger plane of the time and everyone felt the excitement. The evening before the rollout, dinner was arranged for the corporate officials of the 26 airlines represented and we stewardesses were included. Mr. Nyrop did not attend but I was invited to join the table with Lufthansa and Alitalia presidents and representatives. I carry to this day the beautiful soft black leather passport holder the president of Lufthansa presented to us at the table.

The day of the christening each of us was given a bottle of champagne wrapped in ribbons of red, white and blue to break over the hull of the shiny new plane. We stood together on an engineered catwalk, positioned just below the emblems of the purchasing airlines affixed to the aircraft. There was an iron railing on which we broke the bottles.



Photo: National Geographic

*I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to participate in this event. The 747 remains my favorite plane. I flew almost exclusively Asia flights and the 747-100 and the 747-200 the rest of my career."*

Keynote speaker for the rollout ceremony was US Secretary of Commerce and former president of American Airlines Cyrus Rowlett Smith, who noted, *"The sales of the 747 will contribute to our international balance of trade and strengthen our balance of payments. The 747 is a national asset. It will make a new contribution to the prestige of United States aviation!"*

Suzanne Quarles Thompson retired from Northwest Airlines in 2005 after a long career as stewardess, flight attendant and purser. The prototype 747 rolled out in 1968 never served with an airline but was instead used by Boeing for many years as a testbed for continual improvements to the 747 and for testing of the GE, Pratt & Whitney and Rolls-Royce high-bypass engines used on the 777. After complete restoration, this first 747 was placed on permanent display at Seattle's Museum of Flight.



Photo courtesy Suzanne Quarles Thompson

**SERVICE AT NORTHWEST** Northwest Airlines (Boeing customer number 51) accepted delivery of its first 747-151 on April 30, 1970. Over the coming decades, a total of 56 747s (various series) served with Northwest, including two 747-135s and three 747-227Bs, acquired used from National and Braniff.

**LAVERNE and SHIRLEY** National Airlines was infamous for its

L-R, Northwest employees Paul Soderlind; Glen Doan; Len Larson; Gordie Bickel; Russ Ward; and Boeing training pilots Paul Bennett and Paul Maeir during the handover of Northwest's first 747-151 on April 30, 1970. The nose section of this aircraft, N601US (ship 601), is installed in the America by Air Gallery of the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum in Washington and anchors the museum's permanent exhibition of the history of airline travel. Photo: NWAHC Archives.



suggestive advertising campaign featuring flight attendants —"I'm Cheryl, Fly Me"— and also gave planes feminine names. When Northwest purchased two 747-135s from National (Patricia and Linda) in 1976, Northwest employees renamed the planes Laverne and Shirley, after the main characters in a popular 1970s television sitcom. Below: Linda/Shirley



**THE 400** In 1984, Boeing announced plans for an improved version of the 747, which would incorporate a longer upper deck, a "glass" cockpit designed around a two-person crew and reduced operating costs. The program for the 400 series was officially launched in 1985 following an order from Northwest for ten aircraft. As launch customer, Northwest participated in some of the product testing and FAA certification trials. **Gail Diercks** (MSP) was selected to serve as lead flight attendant for the crew who conducted the FAA-administered emergency evacuation tests and domestic proving flights. She remembers: *"My manager called me in and asked me if I would like to do the proving run. On Jan. 29, 1989 we did the FAA evacuation test in a hangar at MSP. FAA Chief Inspector Lou Martin officiated. Most departments at Northwest sent over employees to serve as passengers for a full-load evacuation test. I did a crew briefing and gave the commands for the evacuation. We did it just once, evacuated everyone in less than the required time of 90 seconds, and everything went off really well.*

*The following day, my crew worked flights to JFK and DTW. We did simulated meal services while other Northwest employees onboard (mostly department managers) checked other aspects of the operation, all monitored by the FAA. It was stressful of course, but it went very well, and once you got into the swing of it and realized that the FAA was there to work with us, the atmosphere relaxed. Lou Martin was great!*

*The third day, on a flight from DTW to SFO, an unannounced emergency drill was conducted, and we landed in PHX to check the station's readiness to handle an unexpected 747. They did fine!*

*Everywhere we went, we conducted tours of the new plane.*

*The whole experience was very interesting, my crew worked well together, it was great. You couldn't ask for anything more!"*

Gail Diercks began her career at NWA in 1962 and retired in 2006. Below: Jan Taylor, Craig Ringstad and Gail Diercks after the evacuation drill. Photo courtesy Jan Taylor



**Roger Bonderud**, former NWA station manager in Winnipeg, Manitoba (YWG), recalls the arcane delivery process for the 747-451 fleet: *"I was NWA station manager in YWG 1984-90. In late 1987, Tom McGinity, NWA VP-Purchasing requested to use my office at the YWG airport for a meeting. This was repeated several times during the next few months. At the conclusion of his final meeting in my office with Boeing sales reps, Mr. McGinity informed me that NWA and Boeing had just signed a \$2+ Billion airplane order that included 10 747-400's (at the time, the largest commercial airplane order on record). Due to more favorable "off-shore" financing provisions of the US tax code, all negotiations were conducted outside the USA and the first revenue flight (for each aircraft) had to operate internationally. Each time a new -400 was delivered they would run it up to YWG and insert it as a Q (equipment) substitution for one of our daily YWG-MSP scheduled DC-9 flights. Can't recall for sure but believe they did this for each of the original 10 -400s as they were delivered from Boeing."* Below: 747-451 lifts off from YWG on a delivery flight with revenue passengers. Photo: Roger Bonderud



**Brian Planer** was a flight attendant on one of those delivery flights, and describes a complication: Feb. 8, 1989, *"The crew reported at MSP at 2:15 am to ferry the aircraft to YWG departing at 3:15 am and the 747-400 would substitute for the DC-9 scheduled out of YWG at 6:00 am and would be the first (revenue) flight of the aircraft. Left MSP 30 minutes late and had a mechanical in YWG. We were not allowed to leave the aircraft unless we left as a group. At 2:00 pm we were almost out of duty*

*time when the mechanical was fixed. Flight 784 was scheduled to depart at 3:15 pm but we would have been illegal so the first 7 passengers that checked in for flight 784 were boarded and departed at 2:40 pm arriving in MSP at 3:48 pm."* 12 flight attendants for 7 passengers, on a brand-new 747. What an experience for everyone! Brian was a crew member (for training) on the first scheduled revenue 747-451 flight, on Feb. 9, MSP-PHX, and treasures the certificate presented to him on that occasion (see p12, digital edition).

**FINALE** From what I have been able to determine, the last Delta 747 flight carrying revenue passengers was a charter for the Buffalo Bills, which brought the team home to BUF at 1am on New Year's Day, 2018. Arrival scene at BUF. Photo courtesy John Rotella



For this article, I asked former Northwest employees on facebook for brief insights on what the 747 meant to them personally and to their airline careers. Below are just a few of the responses I received:

**BYRON NITZ** *"It was my Mt. Everest, top of the world to me. Every time I went to work I opened the door to hangar 7 and was in awe that I actually got to perform maintenance on this great aircraft. It was always my motivation to do a good job."* Mechanic Aircraft Structures, MSP.

**WAYNE ANDERSON** *"I was an instructor and check airman on the 747-400. The greatest airplane I ever flew either at Northwest or in the Air Force."*

**CINDY WACHOLZ** *"LOVED bringing Military home from war on the 747."* Flight attendant, ORD.

**KEVIN ELDER** *"Oh so many stories, if she could only talk. She was a showstopper! When she moved, people watched."* Equipment service employee, BIL, FAR. Equipment service chief, MSP.

**JAMES MOLBREAK** *"The 747-400 was the adventure of a lifetime. It was just a special, fortress of an airplane."* Pilot DTW.

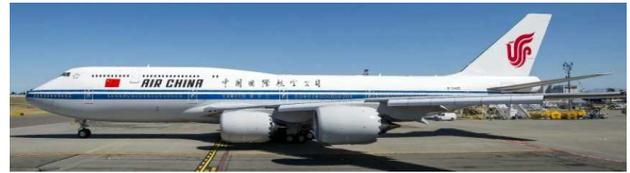
**RANDALL STEFFAN** *"The mammoth 747 represented global power, prestige, recognition, style and luxury that only a world-class carrier could provide. I was fortunate to fly her both domestically and internationally, and it was an honor and privilege to be a part of her fabled history at Northwest Airlines!"* Purser, SEA.

**SHONTIN PATANASORN** *"Started my career on the 747, it was all we had in NRT. Took us everywhere, the big red tails were all you saw there. Those were the happy times, past but never forgotten."* Flight attendant, BKK.

**ATHENA ANNENGA** *"Our dedicated fleet of 747 cargo freighters were workhorses back in their prime. These beautiful beasts flew billions of pounds of commodities to and from the US and Asia and created a one of a kind world-class cargo operation with ANC as its hub."* Cargo Ops and Sales Manager, ANC.

Cont. on p6

**ADDENDUM** There were a total of 1419 747-400s built. Northwest received the first, and the last was delivered to Kuwaiti cargo airline LoadAir in 2009. In 2005, Boeing announced that it would build the 747-8, which offers an upper deck extending nearly half the length of the fuselage, a completely redesigned wing, more efficient engines and a greatly improved interior. Currently, Lufthansa, Korean Air and Air China operate the 747-8 in passenger service and the type has been selected by the USAF to replace the two aging 747-200Bs which serve as Air Force One in the presidential fleet.



Want to fly on a 747-400? With the withdrawal of the United and Delta fleets from service, no US carrier operates them in passenger service. But 18 operators remain, British Airways having the largest remaining fleet (36). →

## HAIL and FAREWELL!

Last December, Delta Air Lines sent some of the remaining 747-400s, all ex-Northwest, on a “Farewell Tour” series of celebratory events in ATL, DTW, LAX, MSP, SEA and Paine Field (PAE) in Everett, WA, where the 747s were built. Below are photos of some of these parties, taken by Brock Bucklin (MSP) and Robert DuBert (DTW), unless otherwise noted.



Left: NWA brand imagery on the video display in DTW.  
Right: Attendees await to board the 747 in MSP for the self-guided tour.



Left: Gail Diercks signs an engine nacelle in MSP.  
Right: Maria and Jason Greene wait their turn to board the 747 in DTW. The Greens are the administrators of the *Always A Redtail* page on facebook, a great place to keep in touch with NWA people.



Farewell Tour crew members present a \$10K check to the Flight Path Learning Center Museum in LAX.  
Photo: LA World Airports



Ship 665 is cut up at Pinal Airpark in Arizona, to create souvenir PlaneTag keychains, sold at the Farewell Tour stops. Photo via facebook.



# News and Announcements

**PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!**

**Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018, 9am-3pm**

**THE MSP AIRLINE COLLECTIBLES SHOW and SALE**  
Arrangements and further details to be announced.



NWAHC Executive Director **Bruce Kitt**, left, recently attended the annual conference of the Airline Historians and Archivists Association, held this year in San Francisco and hosted by the SFO Museum and United Airlines. The group was treated to a tour of the United Airlines maintenance facility. *Photo courtesy David Stringer*

At the University of Wisconsin-Superior, former Northwest Airlines executive **Rick Moran** teaches courses in business management, public relations, marketing, advertising, entrepreneurship and air transport management. For over the past two years, some of his students have acted as consultants to the NWAHC, in 10 week, community-based learning modules. One student, Haley Davis, designed our new logo incorporating a 747 tail. Most recently, students advised us on the use of social media, especially facebook and instagram, to broaden our reach. *Above: Rick Moran. Photo: University of Wisconsin-Superior. Below: students Paige Akervik; Jingjing Fu; Taylor Johnson; Sugkyung Lin with Bruce Kitt. Photo courtesy Bruce Kitt.*



*Photo: NWAHC Archives*

On Feb. 17, retired NWA Capt. John F. Hanson presented a program about his love of aviation and his career in the airline industry at the Wings of the North Museum at Flying Cloud Airport in Eden Prairie, MN. Of special interest was his role as captain of NW85 on Oct. 9, 2002, when his 747 suffered a major rudder malfunction, making it nearly impossible to control. Through a combination of skill, resourcefulness and determination, Hanson and his crew brought the aircraft, its crew and passengers to a safe emergency landing in ANC. Hanson, whose career began at North Central Airlines on the CV-580, was featured in REFLECTIONS, March 2016. *Photos: Bruce Kitt*



# REPUBLIC AIRLINES

## FAMILY TREE PROFILES

by Robert DuBert



The histories of many of the eleven airlines which comprise the corporate genealogy of Republic Airlines have a repetitive quality about them—a visionary entrepreneur buys a few war-weary C-47s, starts an airline serving a handful of cities, the airline struggles financially and is either acquired by or merges with another airline to create a larger carrier. It's a sequential saga that eventually ends on Jan. 30, 2010 when Northwest Airlines disappears into the corporate brand identity of Delta Air Lines, whose market capitalization of just under \$40 billion makes it the largest airline in the world. As Yul Brynner used to say, "Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera."

What really makes the individual airline histories compelling are the fascinating personalities behind them, and none are more so than Albert Zimmerly, Sr. and Nikola Bezmanovic, aka Nick Bez, the founders of the airlines that are the subject of this report.

**ALBERT "Bert" ZIMMERLY** was born in 1907 near Vancouver, Wash. His older brother Fred learned to fly in 1928 and gave Bert flying lessons, leading to his license in 1931. In 1934, the brothers purchased an aviation fixed-base operation (FBO) in Lewiston, Idaho, and began operating Zimmerly Bros. Air Transport Service, which offered flying lessons, service and repairs and operated charter flights for passengers and freight to remote backcountry airstrips, contract flights for the US Forest Service, and air ambulance services in the sparsely populated, densely wooded areas of the Pacific Northwest. In 1938, they relocated across the Snake River to a larger airport in Clarkston, Washington. Their fleet consisted of an assortment of small aircraft and a larger TravelAir.



Photo: FLYING magazine.

In 1939, Fred left the company to join Northwest Airlines, returning to help his brother whenever he was furloughed by Northwest, which apparently was fairly often. Bert flew most of the flights for the company, and during fire season was especially busy. A typical day might include 10 hours of flying, airdropping bales of hay for the mule packs of the firefighters, airdropping hot lunches and ice water to the crews on the fireline, and delivering pumping equipment and other supplies.



Bert Zimmerly.  
Photo: Lewiston Tribune

When America entered World War II in 1941, Zimmerly was awarded a contract by the War Training Service (an outgrowth of the Civilian Pilot Training Program established by Gen. Hap Arnold in 1938. REFLECTIONS, Dec. 2017) for pilot training for the US Navy, and by war's end Zimmerly had graduated over 1700 cadets. As the war progressed, Zimmerly realized the potential for an airline service to link Idaho towns poorly served by ground transport, and launched Zimmerly Airlines on an "experimental" basis in 1944. Scheduled service between Pocatello and Coeur d'Alene (with

intermediate stops in Burley, Twin Falls, Boise and Lewiston) began in 1945, using a small fleet of Boeing 247Ds, acquired from Canadian Pacific and Pacific Northern Airlines. In 1946, Zimmerly acquired the assets of Empire Airlines, a company existing only

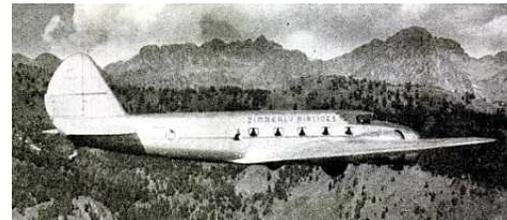


Photo: FLYING magazine

on paper, in part because Bert Zimmerly liked the grand-sounding name, but probably also because Empire had rights to serve cities in Washington, and later that year the airline, now renamed Empire Air Lines, was awarded a Federal Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to serve a series of airports in Idaho and Washington.

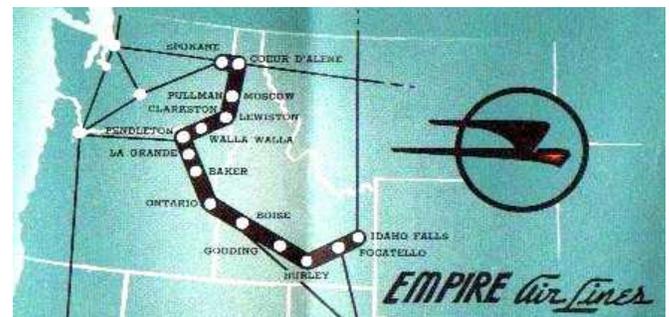


Photo: TimetableImages.com

In 1946, Bert Zimmerly, seeing a need for larger aircraft, placed an order for three of the proposed Boeing 417 twin-engine airliners, but Boeing canceled the project, and Zimmerly was forced out of the company he had founded. In 1948, Empire would instead acquire war-surplus C-47s.

Zimmerly returned to his Zimmerly Air Transport FBO, where he resumed flying until his death in a weather-related crash in 1949. His wife Edna continued operating the FBO and appeared in a full-page advertisement for Chevron in 1950 (see p. 13 of the digital edition). She sold the business in 1953. Fred Zimmerly enjoyed a long career at Northwest Airlines, retiring in 1970. Empire Air Lines continued in operation but struggled financially, eventually merging with West Coast Airlines in 1952, an airline founded by Nick Bez, who we shall meet shortly. Bert's son Bert, Jr., and grandson Steven, are corporate pilots.

In 1992, Albert Zimmerly, Sr. was inducted into the Idaho Aviation Hall of Fame, and he is an honoree on the Wall of Honor at the Udvar-Hazy Center of the National Air and Space Museum in Virginia.

**NIKOLA BEZMALINOVIC** was born in 1895 in Brac, one of 79 islands in the Adriatic Sea archipelago off the Dalmatian coast of Croatia. There, fishing and the sea was a way of life but offered limited opportunities. At age 14, Nikola borrowed money from his father for steerage passage to New York—as he told the *Seattle Times* in 1969, “I had no relatives, friends or acquaintances in the United States, so I was on my own.” He worked in a Brooklyn restaurant until he earned enough money for a train ticket to Tacoma, Washington, where he joined a community of other Croatian immigrants. He subsequently went to Alaska, acquired his first fishing boat, and worked as a superintendent in a fish cannery. In 1922 he bought an abandoned fish cannery near Sitka, the first in a series of aggressive business moves which would lead to his owning the three largest tuna and salmon canneries in Alaska, two gold mines and a large fleet of fishing trawlers. Along the way, he changed his name to Nick Bez, which was easier for people to spell and remember.



Photo: New York Times

Realizing the need for improved transportation in Alaska and the coastal Pacific Northwest, Bez started a small charter airline in 1931, called Alaska Southern Airways, in part to support his business operations. In 1934, he sold the company, at a profit, to Pacific Alaska Airways, a Pan Am subsidiary set up to gain a foothold in Alaska.

Right: An Alaska Southern Airways baggage label. Timetable images.com.



As his wealth grew, Bez became a supporter and major contributor to the Democratic Party, and when President Harry S. Truman visited Seattle in 1945, it was Nick Bez who took him and Washington senator Warren Magnuson on a short fishing trip, with Bez rowing the boat.



A Puget Sound fishing trip. Pres. Truman, standing. To his left is Sen. Magnuson. Nick Bez is at the oars. Photo: Carmel Finley collection

In 1946, Bez launched his second airline, with a small fleet of converted C-47s. Called West Coast Airlines, its slogan “Serving the Evergreen Empire” matched its route structure which extended from Bellingham, Washington to Medford, Oregon. In 1949, Bez negotiated a merger deal with Southwest Airways, but approval was denied by the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), which instead suggested a merger with Empire Air Lines, which Bez then pursued. The merger was consummated in 1952 with the launch of West Coast Empire Airlines, later shortened to WCA.



The Official Airline Guide. Image: Robert DuBert

There followed several years of slow, steady growth, and West Coast Airlines entered the jet-age in 1958 as the first airline in the world to operate the Fokker F-27 turboprop. DC-9s joined the fleet in 1966.

In 1963, Nick Bez acquired 34% of the stock of Pacific Airlines (the former Southwest Airways) as a prelude to a friendly merger, but the CAB blocked the move and Bez was forced to sell his shares. However, patience and persistence paid off in 1968 when the CAB, seeking to reduce subsidy payments to local service carriers, approved the merger of two financially struggling airlines, Pacific and Bonanza, with fiscally stable West Coast Airlines. Combined operations began on July 1, 1968 and the new airline was called Air West, with Nick Bez as CEO and Chairman of the Board.



But Air West began losing money almost immediately, and within a few months Bez was in negotiations with two legendary airline personalities, Howard Hughes and Donald Nyrop, over the future of Air West. But that's a story for a future article. →

For another photo related to this article, see p.13 of the digital edition.

**TO READ MORE ABOUT THE AIRLINES OF REPUBLIC**

Stringer, David. [America's Local Service Airlines](#), American Aviation Historical Society, 2016. Excellent historical data.

Love, Terry. [The Republic Airlines Story, 1945-1986](#), Schiffer Publishing, 2012. Especially good for photos.

Proctor, Jon. [Air West, a Tri-Merger](#), *AIRLINERS* magazine, Vol. 16, nos. 1&2, 2003.

# WINGS FOR THE STARS—Part 3 (continued from REFLECTIONS, Dec. 2017)

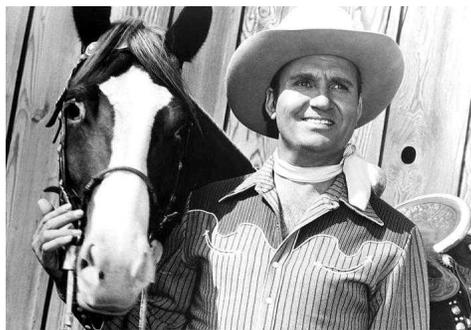
Previously on **WINGS FOR THE STARS**: We've seen photos of celebrities who flew Northwest or Republic and whose photos appeared in the airline employee newsletters. We continue in a section about lesser-known film and tv stars who enjoyed successful careers and who were well-respected by their peers. The original photo captions appear in italics.

**1943 Gene Autry** 1907-1998. *"Just a flip of the wrists and Sgt. Gene Autry sends the pistols whirling just as he did in countless movies as filmdom's top cowboy. The trick gets a smile of approval from guards at the St. Paul Modification Project. Autry honored project personnel on his nationwide radio show." (note: the St. Paul project was one of two aircraft modification centers operated by Northwest Airlines during World War II.)*



Gene Autry was an actor, singer, songwriter and rodeo performer who is best remembered for appearing as *The Singing Cowboy* on "The Gene Autry Show" tv series in the 1950s. His recordings of Christmas songs such as "Here Comes Santa Claus" and "Frosty the Snowman" endure as popular holiday classics.

*Below: Autry with his horse "Champion."  
Photo: Fine Art America*



**1950 Marilyn Maxwell** 1921-1972 *"How do you like my 24-gallon hat?", comic Bob Hope asked Minnesota football coach We Fesler. Hope and Marilyn Maxwell were in Minneapolis for a personal appearance."*

Maxwell was a singer and MGM contract actor who performed with Bob Hope during USO overseas tours, enter-

taining troops during World War II and the Korean War. Her long-time affair with Hope was an open secret in Hollywood and with the press corps.



*Below: Marilyn Maxwell publicity photo.  
Photo: Great Entertainers Archives*



**1958 Burgess Meredith** 1907-1997 *"is seen arriving at Seattle-Tacoma via NWA after a flight from the Far East. He has been on-location in the Philippines and Hong Kong, shooting for 'Blaze of Night,' a movie drama of present-day life in the Orient."*



Burgess Meredith's career as a writer, director, producer and actor on Broadway and in film and television spanned over six decades. He appeared in over

100 movies and 40 tv shows, and his later career garnered renewed acclaim when he played the role of 'The Penguin' in the 1960s tv series "Batman" and the 1966 film spinoff.

*Below: Meredith's The Penguin, with Cesar Romero, The Joker, in a scene from 'Batman.'  
Photo: pinterest*



**1958 Sessue Hayakawa** 1889-1973 *"ever the gentleman, helps stewardess Mary Burr deplane after he arrived at New York's Idlewild International Airport via Northwest. He now is appearing in the play 'Kataki,' his first appearance on Broadway since 'Love Story' in 1926. Mr. Hayakawa is well-known to moviegoers for his role as the prison camp commander in 'The Bridge On the River Kwai.'"*



Born Kintaro Hayakawa in Japan, he adopted the stage name Sessue ('Snowy Field') when he began an acting career after graduating from the University of Chicago in 1912. As a major star during the silent film era, he portrayed brooding, "exotic" and forbidden lovers of white women, eventually becoming typecast in roles as a sinister villain. After World War II, he seemed to appear

in every film about the Pacific war. Hayakawa satirized his status as film's leading Asian villain in the 1958 comedy "The Geisha Boy," which starred Jerry Lewis.

Below: Director David Lean, Alec Guinness and Sessue Hayakawa during filming in Sri Lanka of "The Bridge on the River Kwai." Photo: The Red List



**1959 Greta Thyssen 1927-2018**

"Studios, German-born actress Greta Thyssen is a girl who takes her work seriously. She utilizes a few remaining minutes before her Northwest Orient flight from New York to Manila to study a script for her upcoming movie 'The Man,' portions of which are being filmed in the Philippine Republic."



Thyssen, who was actually Danish, was crowned Miss Denmark in 1952. She attempted a film career modeled after Marilyn Monroe, and achieved modest stardom when she appeared in three of the Three Stooges movies.

Below: Greta Thyssen with Moe Howard, Shemp Howard and Larry Fine. Photo: ThreeStooges.com



**1959 Haya Harareet** b.1931 "Israeli actress Haya Harareet, star of the epic 'Ben-Hur,' is shown deplaning from a Northwest airliner at Cleveland after a flight from Pittsburgh for a series of personal appearances."



Haya Harareet appeared in a total of nine films, including the 1959 American-produced "Ben-Hur" (in the role of Esther) and 1962's "The Interns." She lives in Buckinghamshire in the UK.

Below: Haya Harareet with Charlton Heston, in a scene from "Ben-Hur." Photo: The LA Times.



**INTERMISSION**

Now let's take a look at some of the famous musicians, classical and pop, who flew Northwest.

**1946 Lauritz Melchior** 1890-1973 "famous Wagnerian tenor of the Metropolitan Opera, flew Northwest Airlines to the Twin Cities for a concert this week." From left: stewardess Thelma Wittenberger and Melchior's wife Maria.



The Danish-born Lauritz Melchior was a "heldentenor," a type of opera singer

with a powerful voice suited to heroic roles. His fame derived from his performances of the operas of Richard Wagner at the Met and other major opera houses.

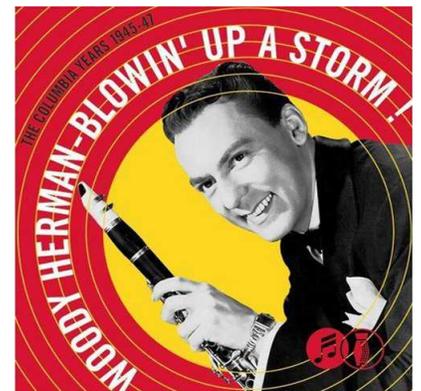
Photo: Columbia Records



**1948 Woody Herman** 1913-1987 "Tunesmith Woody Herman, who wrote the song 'Northwest Passage' in honor of Northwest Airlines, was in the Twin Cities for a one-night stand recently."



Woody Herman was a clarinetist, saxophonist, singer and big-band leader whose career spanned over 50 years. His series of big bands were called "The Thundering Herds" and their signature song was "Woodchopper's Ball."



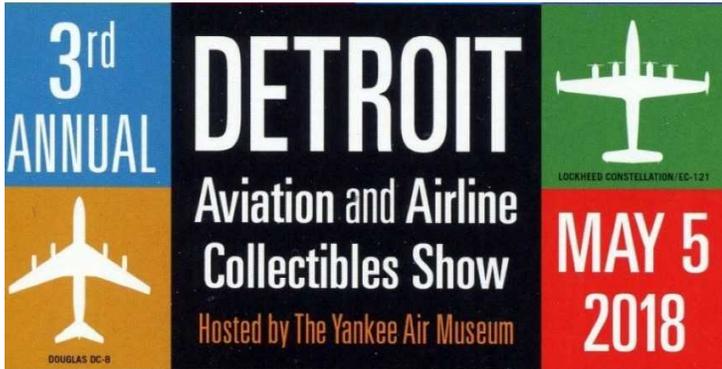
Well, I'm out of space again. In the next installment, we'll see more musician/NWA flyers, from Eartha Kitt to The Rolling Stones, as well as some major figures from the world of sports. Buh-bye for now. ➔

Digital Edition Extras



Above: the certificate presented to Brian Planer after the first Northwest scheduled revenue 747-400 flight. Photo courtesy Brian Planer via facebook.

Left: the personalized, engraved silver loving cup presented to Suzanne Quarles by Boeing after the christening of the first 747 on Sept. 30, 1968. The inscription reads: "To Suzanne Quarles on the occasion of her christening the first Boeing 747 Jet Transport, Sept. 30, 1968." Photo courtesy Suzanne Quarles Thompson.



Willow Run Airport, Ypsilanti MI  
Saturday May 5, 2018 9am-3pm

For more information: 734-483-4030

YankeeAirMuseum.org/events

Facebook: DetroitAviationShow



THE MSP AIRLINE COLLECTIBLES  
SHOW and SALE  
Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018  
Details to be announced



# ZIMMERLY Airlines

July, 1950

FLYING

39



Quick picture of  
**ZIMMERLY  
AIR TRANSPORT**

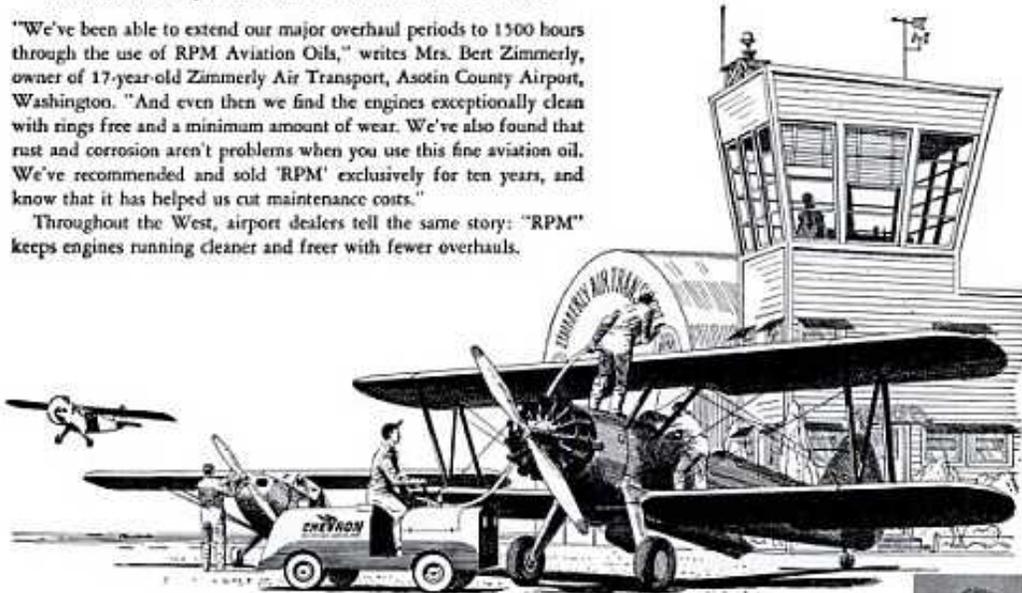
ASOTIN COUNTY AIRPORT, WASH.

Crop dusting, spraying; Charter Service; Student instruction; 24-hr. service; CAA approved repair station; 1 mi. from Lewiston-Clarkston.

### How Northwest pilots extend overhauls to 1500 hours

"We've been able to extend our major overhaul periods to 1500 hours through the use of RPM Aviation Oils," writes Mrs. Bert Zimmerly, owner of 17-year-old Zimmerly Air Transport, Asotin County Airport, Washington. "And even then we find the engines exceptionally clean with rings free and a minimum amount of wear. We've also found that rust and corrosion aren't problems when you use this fine aviation oil. We've recommended and sold 'RPM' exclusively for ten years, and know that it has helped us cut maintenance costs."

Throughout the West, airport dealers tell the same story: "RPM" keeps engines running cleaner and freer with fewer overhauls.



### TIP OF THE MONTH



"Know your plane thoroughly—or don't fly"

"The safety rule we stress today in flight training is the same rule that helped us train 1,725 Army and Navy pilots without accident: keep your plane in perfect shape *all the time*. Check it *yourself*. Always, our first lesson to each new student is the inspection and care of the plane—and that lesson never grows old."

MRS. BERT ZIMMERLY, OWNER, ASOTIN CO. AIRPORT

### "We're looking forward to saving money!"

"All 20 planes at this field are now using CHEVRON 80/87 Gasoline and we're highly pleased," Mrs. Zimmerly writes. "It has ended take-off knocking and pre-ignition, and we're realizing considerable reduction in fuel costs." CHEVRON 80/87—the first light-plane gasoline with a controlled take-off rating—may be used in some makes of engines up to 600 horsepower.

