



# Reflections

*Dedicated to preserving the history of a great airline.*

***The headlines in Nelson, B.C., Canada on November 1, 1935 read:***

## **HUGE AIRLINER CRASHES IN NELSON, PASSENGERS AND CREW ARE NOT HURT**

Circles Nelson in Darkness Before Slipping Into Field to Land on Rocks  
Passengers Climb Out Unhurt, Heaping Praise Upon Pilot for Skillful Handling  
Airliner was out of Montana and had come from Billings  
Last Circled Over City at Low Altitude with a Monster Searchlight Picking Out  
Possible Landing Place

Attempting a forced landing near the Silver King road after several times circling Nelson, when lost in consequence of storm conditions south of the line and at least 100 miles north of its course, a huge Lockheed Electra 10A airliner of Northwest Airlines, Inc., bound from Billings Mont. to Spokane, carrying three airman and four passengers, crashed at 10:05 o'clock Wednesday night (Oct 30, 1935) on Alex Moore ranch, without injury.

The seven occupants were: Frank C. Judd of Spokane, pilot; John Underwood of Billings, co-pilot; W.D. Mitchell of Billings, deadheading Northwest Airlines co-pilot; H.H. Underhill of Spokane; Carl D. Whalen of Seattle; Mrs. O.W. Salisbury of Minneapolis and Merle H. Guise of Fairbanks.

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***"There was no more shock than coming down on a cushion."***

**Unidentified passenger**

The safe landing was almost miraculous, for the great cabin monoplane came on a narrow tongue of land, just avoiding a gully, and digging in gently with the right wing resting on the fence and extending over the roadway. A passenger stated there was no more shock than coming down on a cushion.

No statement was made by either pilot as to what had occurred, but passengers disclosed that the twin engine airliner, with accommodations for 10 passengers plus mail, express and baggage, was carrying out a regular run between Billings and Spokane.

*Continued on page 3*



## President's Message

by Bruce Kitt

The structure of commercial aviation can be viewed as a three-legged stool. The first leg is business – Brittin, Carr, Hulse, Zimmerly, Bez, Converse and Hayward and their ideas and plans. The second leg is government – the Post Office; the CAA/CAB/FAA; the DOL - and the rules and regulations they required the airlines to follow. The third leg is labor – the you and I who translated the plans and regulations into the successful airlines that fostered the careers we enjoyed.



Hand-in-hand with the you and I, are (and were) the labor organizations that represented us. As companies come and go, so also do the various labor groups. Northwest's aircraft mechanics, represented at that time by The Air Line Mechanics Association, signed the first labor agreement of the Northwest corporate family in 1937. The Air Line Pilots Association has the distinction of representing all the pilots continuously under its organizational name since 1940. In 1946 ALPA began representing flight attendants through their Air Line Stewards & Stewardesses Association. Ground service employees began their union representation in 1946 with the IAM. In 1952 BRAC began representing reservation and office employees. For all the known unions there have been several smaller, less recognized labor groups for the meteorologists, radio operators, foremen, and others. Labor's representation spanned the job descriptions of most non-management employees of all major airlines and local service carriers flying the American airways. Since the 1940s they have been on the property as long as the employees; they are an integral part of the airline transportation business.

It's interesting, however, to see how little unions' presence is represented at the NWA History Centre. There are agreement books for the major unions, yet nothing for the small unions and associations. There are few pins, buttons and signs; little literature and virtually no pictures. We all received mailings, wore cause-related buttons, maybe even carried informational or picket signs, but there is little to show for all that.

When we want to sit down and tell our grandkids about the good old days, the stool we sit on should be balanced. History matters. Please remember the three legs.

Thank you to everyone who responded to our annual fundraising campaign. It's never too late to add your financial support for the work the dedicated volunteers do to keep the History Centre open. Visit . . . Volunteer . . . Support. Contribute memorabilia and artifacts. The museum is here for you. ✈



David Johnson



Sandy Judd Johnson

**The Nelson, B.C. Incident** (page 1) contributor **David Johnson** is an early Minnesota Aviation descendent in his own right, as is his wife **Sandy Johnson**, Frank Judd's daughter. David's grandfather, **John O. Johnson**, was the first man in Minnesota to fly an airplane off level ground. According to The St. Paul Dispatch, on Jan. 25, 1910, Johnson piloted his plane off the ice on White Bear Lake. The March 2007 issue of **History Matters** (available for browsing at the NWA History Centre) tells all about it. ✈

**Nelson, B.C. Crash . . . Continued from page 1**

Storm conditions resulted in the course being lost, though that fact was not known at the time. The plane was in radio contact with the stations, but static made it impossible to understand the signals, and the beam control failed to work.

When the lights of Nelson appeared, all on board were under the impression that the town was Wallace, Idaho, and a westward course was continued to Trail. But because the gasoline supply was by that time so low as to necessitate a forced landing, the liner circled back to Nelson as offering better landing possibilities. After circling the westerly part of Nelson several times, taking in the C.P.R. flats, golf course and Silver King road ranches, the liner eventually made the landing; the man at the controls showing remarkable skill in picking his ground as revealed by the searchlights in the base of the nose.

In effecting the landing, the landing gear was withdrawn into the body and the huge monoplane landed almost flat. Its undercarriage was damaged and the left motor cowl was bent back. There was also said to be some damage to the right wing which tore some of the fence. The fence followed a rock pile which would have been unhealthy to land on. A few yards ahead was another fence crossing the plane's path at right angles.

**The Landing Field**

Immediately after landing, radio contact was established with Northwest Airlines in Spokane and the crash reported, the safety of all concerned advised. In a few minutes the area was packed with cars and scores of Nelsonites were exclaiming over the miraculous escape of all travelers from injury. The passengers were taken to the Hume hotel in Nelson. Pilot Judd and co-pilot Woodhead accompanied Staff-Sergeant C.G. Barber to British Columbia police headquarters, with mail and baggage. While at the police station they reported to Northwest officials, whose instructions included sending the passengers via train to their destinations.

To get clearances for passengers, mail, plane and themselves, the airmen had to satisfy the customs office. The police, finding J. G. Bunyan, customs collector, was in the Salmo area, called Martien Robichaud, deputy collector, who arrived and took charge. The airmen were hoping the clearances would be given for the 12 United States mail bags, the passengers and for themselves.

Arrangements about the plane will come later, and it is expected the Northwest Airline mechanical superintendent or some other operating official will arrive here to assume charge. While the airmen allow it to be inferred that the liner was not seriously damaged, it is understood it will have to be shipped out, presumably in taken down condition, as it is a huge machine. ➔

***The above story is excerpted from unattributed newspaper clippings in Frank Judd's collection. Story and photos submitted by David Johnson, Frank Judd's son-in-law, and his wife Sandy.***

**Post Script:**

Instead of disassembling the plane, "Big" Jim LaMont and his crew went to Nelson, B.C. and repaired old No. 68. On Nov. 13, 1935, Frank Judd and Jim flew the plane out. **David Johnson.**

*Ed note: Frank C. Judd was with Northwest Airlines from 1931-1974. His NWA career included positions ranging from Pilot no. 15 to Vice President of Operations. He died in 1985.*



Bob and Nancy Johnson

★ **Bob Johnson - Gold Star Volunteer!** ★

When Pete Patzke was forming his cadre of Northwest Airlines history buffs, with the idea of establishing a museum, one of the first people he called was Bob Johnson.

"I left Northwest in 1960. How did I end up as one of the original members of the NWA History Centre Board of Directors in 2002, 42 years later? Probably because I stayed in touch with many Northwest people during those 42 years; today, those who are left are among my best friends. Pete Patzke, founder of the NWA History Centre, and I worked together in the 1950s and saw each other socially now and then. Pete remembered my intense interest in Northwest's history and 42 years later he invited me aboard.

After serving with the U.S. Army, Bob returned to Minnesota and attended the University of Minnesota Journalism School while also working at the St. Paul Pioneer Press as night-side copy boy. Late in 1950, he answered a NWA want-ad for a flight steward, and was hired to fly Northwest's government-contract Seattle-Tokyo Korean Airlift flights. The Korean War had started earlier that year. Bob remembers this as an exciting time; one example, leaving Tokyo for Shemya on the same day Gen. MacArthur left for the U.S. after being fired by President Truman.

In the summer of 1951 the phone rang. It was the University of Minnesota Journalism School asking "How would you like to work in Honolulu?" "I couldn't turn it down," he says, "I became waterfront reporter, aviation and feature writer for Hawaii's morning newspaper, *The Honolulu Advertiser*." Bob modestly admits this was a choice assignment; his excellent grades at the U of M having paid off. Although Bob enjoyed considerable success at the newspaper, with lots of by-lines and a big lead story, he was eventually attacked by homesickness, exacerbated by the limitations imposed by a \$220 per month salary. He realized he wouldn't be getting back to Minnesota very often, if at all. While in Hawaii, Bob became friends with Bert Talbot, Northwest's Hawaii Sales Manager. "I told Bert I wanted to get back with Northwest. He set me up with an interview with George Masters, Northwest's Director of Public Relations.

"I walked into George's office in the old headquarters building at 1885 University Avenue in St. Paul. It was April 2, 1952. George was an old newspaper man, most recently with the Associated Press. He'd worked on a number of papers, including a couple of years in pre-war Japan. He also owned the Prescott, Wisconsin, paper. We chatted for about 10 minutes. "When do you want to start," he asked? That sort of floored me. "Well, I said, how about Monday?" "Why don't you start tomorrow," he suggested. "Then you'll get paid for the weekend."

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"George gave me a free hand to do things my way. I owe George Masters a debt I can never repay," Bob says. In 1952 the Northwest Airlines Public Relations department boasted twelve professionals, based in Tokyo, Seattle, St. Paul, Chicago and New York. Bob was involved with media relations activities in St. Paul, and was editor of the company's employee newspaper, *The NWA News*. During this time the publication won an "Award of Excellence" (first place) from the Northwestern Industrial Editors Association and the coveted "First Award" from the International Council of Industrial Editors.

*Continued on page 7*



## The City of Richfield Honors Northwest Pioneer



President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented the Air Mail Flyer's Medal of Honor to Northwest Captain Mal Freeburg in 1933. (Captains wore only two stripes in those days.)

Mal Bryan Freeburg was elected Mayor of Richfield in 1942. Many NWA history buffs are aware of Mal's well-publicized acts of derring do as an early Northwest pilot, but until now his service as Mayor of Richfield was not well known beyond the walls of Richfield City Hall. The Richfield Historical Society figured all facets of this legendary favorite son's life deserve attention. The City of Richfield has declared Saturday, June 12, 2010, Mal Freeburg Day and has planned a free event, open to the public. (See information below.)

### MAL FREEBURG DAY IN RICHFIELD Saturday, June 12, 2010

Veterans Memorial Park  
Lyndale and Portland in Richfield  
2:00 PM–5:00 PM  
Free—Public Invited

Northwest Airlines pilot Mal Freeburg of Richfield made heroism routine during the 1930s:

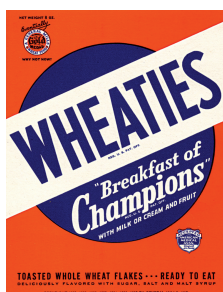
- Safely landed damaged airliners TWICE
- Saved an onrushing passenger train from a burning railroad bridge
- Served as a daring test pilot
- Honored by President Franklin D. Roosevelt

#### Mal Freeburg Day Activities at Veterans Park

- Experimental aircraft displays
- Radio controlled airplane demonstrations
- Numerous aviation history displays
- Food vendors
- Northwest Airlines memorabilia for sale, and more!

#### KIDS! Toddlers to Twelve

Become Future Flyers by "piloting" 8-inch Mal Freeburg balsa wood airplanes and receive a pilot's "license" from real Northwest pilots (planes cost \$1.00)



Sponsored by the Richfield Historical Society in cooperation with the Northwest Airlines Aviation Centre, Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame, Retired Northwest Pilots Association and the Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 25

### 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.

Saturdays

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**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](mailto:editor@nwahistory.org) or call Anne @ 612-865-5377.



Holman Field, St. Paul, MN

## Hangar Talk . . . Stories from *Reflections* Readers

The questions (and answers) seem to go on and on about the award-winning North Central logo. In the September 2009 issue a story spotlighting volunteer **Don Swanson** included a photo of him painting a smile on “Herman” at the NWA History Centre. That story posed the question, “*Does anyone know who created and named Herman?*” The December 2009 *Reflections* reported that **Lona Falenczykowski**, former North Central stewardess, found a partial answer in Robert J. Serling’s book *Ceiling Unlimited, the Story of North Central Airlines*, where it was learned that **Karl Brocken**, a Milwaukee design consultant, was hired by Wisconsin Central **President Francis Higgins** to develop the airline’s logo. But wait! Who nicknamed Herman? Serling says in his book the mallard duck logo did not originally sport a nickname . . . “*The origin is obscure, but ‘Herman’ seems to have been used in cartoons drawn by a company pilot and was quickly adopted by mechanics when painting the first planes.*” So once again, we turned to you, our readers and experts, with the question, “*Now we just have to find the company pilot /cartoonist who named ‘Herman.’ Does anyone have any ideas?*”

You didn’t let us down! In early March, **Dave DeBace** responded with the answer. He identified the pilot/cartoonist we were looking for as **Bill Engelking**, retired Wisconsin Central, North Central, Republic pilot. Dave was just a kid when he met Engelking, through his dad, who was also a Wisconsin Central pilot. I called Bill in Chandler, Arizona, where he lives in retirement, and he confirmed the story.

Name That Plane! The March, 2010 issue of *Reflections*, page 8, asked readers if they could identify the airplane that pilot L.S. “Deke” DeLong and Ronnie Stelzig, flight dispatcher, were standing in front of. **Bruce Kitt** and **David Johnson** both correctly identified the airplane as a Hamilton H-45, C7523, fleet number 20. Bruce tells us the ship entered the NWA fleet on 9/1/1928 and was lost in a fire sometime in February 1933. Northwest flew 9 Hamiltons from 1928 until 1941.

### Who Are These People . . . And What On Earth Are They Doing? . . . from page 8

According to the *Northwest Airlines News* of December 21, 1951, **Mary Quimby** needed a special footrest so her feet wouldn’t dangle at her desk. **Pete Patzke** is the gallant co-worker who adjusts it for her. *Ed. note: Double your fun by telling us what department they worked in and where we might find them today? We think we know where Pete Patzke is.*

### Another Radio Operator Who Made Good at NWA: Eugene Skelton

The March 2010 issue of *Reflections* spotlighted some folks who began their NWA careers as radio operators. **Carrol Skelton Gobel** wrote to tell us that her dad, **Eugene Skelton**, joined NWA in 1939 as a radio operator in Spokane and rose through the ranks to Director of Quality Control before retiring in December, 1972.



NWA History Centre board members Wayne Snyder, Jerry Nielsen, and Mary Fryer joined Anne Kerr at the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame Banquet on April 24, 2010. Anne received the Minnesota Aviation Writer of 2009 Award for her book *Fujiyama Trays & Oshibori Towels, Recalling a time when commercial flight was an adventure and the Boeing Stratocruiser ruled the skies*. Copies are available for \$17 at the NWA History Centre gift shop.



**Bob Johnson . . . Continued from page 4**

"The 'First Award' was not given annually. It was given only when the judges felt a publication was worthy of it.

"The post-war period, 1948 to the late 1950s, was a very trying time for Northwest. We lost seven planes between 1948 and 1952. Five of our 25 Martin 2-0-2s and two DC-4s. We were strapped for equipment most of the '50s, virtually out of money and being avoided and scoffed at by a segment of the traveling public. 'Fly Northwest for Eternal Rest.' 'Northworst Airlines,' etc. We grounded the 20 remaining 2-0-2s in 1950.

"Can you imagine what would happen to an airline today if it lost seven planes in four years? We carried on with an assortment of DC-4s, DC-3s, DC-6Bs we could scrounge, a few Lockheed Constellations and the great old Boeing Stratocruisers, which certainly helped save our bacon. To this day, in my opinion, the Stratocruiser still ranks as the finest commercial airliner ever built from a passenger comfort standpoint."



Northwest's famed General Office fast-pitch softball team leaving to play a "championship game" with a hated rival, Jack May's NWA Milwaukee aggregation. Center fielder Bob Johnson, far left and Pete Patzke, second from top right, currently play for the NWA History Centre board of directors.

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***"It was great at NWA in the 1950s, because you could still talk with people who had been with the airline almost since its beginning. People who actually knew 'Speed' Holman, Rosie Stein, Jim LaMont, and Col. Brittin and could tell you about them." Bob Johnson.***

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"We were a close-knit group at the General Office then. We worked together and played together and we felt, many of us, that each morning we came to work we were helping the airline survive one more day. It was that critical. My work also put me in touch with the great people at our St. Paul Holman Field Overhaul base and at the Twin Cities airport, and with Northwest people throughout our domestic route system. The Northwest people were the greatest group of people I've ever worked with."

By 1960 the Northwest PR department had shrunk from 12 people to two people. Bob Johnson and Bill Pollock. Bob got laid off on November 4, 1960 due to the Flight Engineer's strike and was not rehired. NWA then had a one-man PR department (Pollack) for five years.

Bob's post-Northwest years included stints with Bruce Publishing Company, St. Paul; KSTP-TV, St. Paul; two years with the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington D.C. and then back to St. Paul and 22 years with 3M before retiring 23 years ago.

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***"Coming back to the NWA History Centre eight years ago was like coming home again."***

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"Coming back to the Northwest History Centre, eight years ago, was like coming home again," says Bob. He continues to serve on the Board of Directors, volunteers as a host at the museum, and keeps his journalism skills honed by writing articles for this quarterly newsletter. A couple of years ago Bob researched, wrote and edited the book ***Voices From the Sky, Little-Known and Long-Forgotten Stories About Northwest Airlines' Earlier Years***, which is available for purchase at the NWA History Centre gift shop for \$18. ➔



8101 34th Avenue South  
Bloomington, MN 55425



Who are these people?  
And what on earth are  
they doing??? **Page 7**



### 1st Annual Red Tail Golf Outing

Sponsored by NWA History Centre, Inc.  
(Limited to 96 Golfers)



**Golf Tournament - 18 Hole Best Ball  
Scramble - Mixed Foursome  
Monday August 9, 2010  
River Falls WI  
Kilkarney Hills Golf Course**

**\$87.50 per golfer**  
Includes golf, cart,  
range balls, lunch,  
dinner and two drink  
tickets

**11:30 - 12:30 Registration and  
Lunch  
1:00 p.m. Shotgun Start  
6:00 p.m. Dinner and Awards**

#### Registration Form

#### Names of Players

**Team Contact** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **St** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_  
**E-Mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**1.** \_\_\_\_\_ **2.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**3.** \_\_\_\_\_ **4.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tear off and mail with fee to NWA History Centre, Inc., Attn. Pete Patzke, 8101 34th Avenue South  
Suite B-747, Bloomington, MN 55435      Phone: 651-762-4263      patzke@nwahistory.org**