



REFLECTIONS



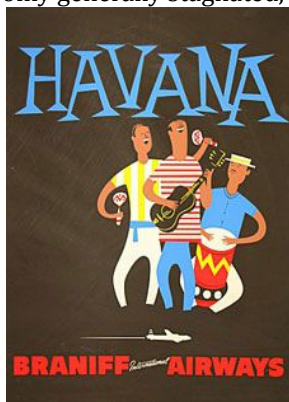
Dedicated to preserving the history of a great airline and its people.

Northwest Airlines 1926-2009



Charlton Heston in the 1972 film *Skyjacked*. Photo courtesy Brendan I. Koerner.

GENESIS It all began with the Spanish-American War of 1898, when the United States successfully intervened in Cuba's war of independence from the Spanish empire. After the war, while politically independent, Cuba remained economically dependent on the U.S., and American forces occupied the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station on a perpetual lease. In 1952, right-wing strongman Fulgencio Batista seized power in a bloodless coup, establishing a dictatorship which was officially recognized by the U.S. government. While the economy generally stagnated, Cuba during the 1950s was heavily



promoted as an exotic and hedonistic vacation destination for those wishing to enjoy a tropical interlude of vibrant nightlife, cheap rum, gambling and prostitution. Major American carriers Braniff, Delta, Pan American and National offered scheduled service to Havana's José Martí International Airport. Meanwhile, attorney Fidel Castro, in partnership with Argentine Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara,

resolved to overthrow the corrupt Batista régime by force. Their guerrilla campaign resulted in Batista's overthrow in 1959 and the establishment of a Communist dictatorship with Castro as Prime Minister. Castro nationalized all U.S.

Go to Cuba! GO TO HAVANA!

The Hijacking of Northwest 714

by Robert DuBert

Between 1961 and 1972, America's commercial airlines suffered an epidemic of 159 hijackings, the majority of them with Cuba as the destination. This is the story of Northwest Airlines flight 714, hijacked to Havana on July 1, 1968. For this report, I interviewed Captains Richard Conrad (via email) and Kenneth Warras (in person), who were the First and Second Officers on the flight, studied contemporary newspaper accounts provided by Warras, and scoured the archives of the Minnesota History Center and the NWA History Centre. Lastly, I relied on the newly-published *The Skies Belong to Us—Love and Terror in the Golden Age of Hijacking*, by Brendan I. Koerner, for the "big picture" historical context of this turbulent period. To paraphrase actress Bette Davis: "Fasten your seat belt. It's going to be a bumpy ride."

property in Cuba; the U.S. responded by severing diplomatic relations in 1961 and imposing a trade embargo in 1962. When the Soviet Union attempted to install ballistic missiles on the island later that year, the Kennedy administration responded with a naval blockade, an event which became known as the Cuban Missile crisis. Travel restrictions ensued, and by February 1963, commercial airline flights between the U.S. and Cuba were "temporarily" suspended. In 1965, by joint agreement, an airlift of twice daily "Freedom Flights" was established to transport Cubans desiring to leave for resettlement in the U.S. as political refugees. In July 1967, Mario Velasquez, 33, boarded one of those flights in Varadero, Cuba, destined for Miami. He left behind a wife and two young sons. There was no airlift service in the opposite direction.

HOMESICK Velasquez made his way to Chicago, with a vague goal of working in the film industry. The Latin American Committee of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago provided some initial support, and secured a room for him in a seedy single-room occupancy hotel in the rundown Uptown neighborhood of Chicago. Velasquez led a sad loner's life in menial jobs, his efforts to bring his family to America stymied. The desk clerk of the Mont Clare hotel would later report that "The man was obviously so homesick it was eating him up"; he missed his mother's home-cooked frioles, noted the *Sarasota Journal*. Apparently desperate, Velasquez → p3

President's Message

He's baaack! Dan Cooper, aka D. B. Cooper, is back for another fall season (timing and pun intended). Our editor, Bob DuBert, has written an engaging article on the spate of hijackings that Northwest experienced...and Cooper wasn't the first. Bob's article is the first to list all the known attempts and is an example of the articles and research we plan to publish as our archives are organized and mined.

And about Cooper, a new must-see is the **COOPER** exhibit that opened on August 24th at the Washington State Historical Society History Museum in Tacoma, Washington. The NWA History Centre has both donated and loaned items to support the display that runs until Jan. 5, 2014. The display opens with Cooper's hijacking of Flight 305 on Thanksgiving Eve, 1971, but is only part of the WSHS's larger display on the affect Dan Cooper had on airline travel and flying security, both on the ground and in the air. I urge those of you in the Pacific Northwest to make the effort to see the display. There is additional coverage about the display's opening evening later in this issue.

I also want to remind you of our October 12th Show & Sale. In addition to great nostalgic items for view and sale, we're pleased to announce that three authors will be present during the day: Terry Love, author of "The Republic Airlines Story, 1945-1986"; Kevin McGregor and Marc Millican, authors of "Flight of Gold"; and Valerie O. van Heest, author of "Fatal Crossing". That evening will be the all NWA-13 gathering (I like to use my all inclusive moniker to encompass the alumni of the 13 greatest airlines that were part of Northwest's corporate tree) and I look forward to meeting and greeting you.

And lastly, as some in the Twin Cities area are hearing, the building that houses the NWA History Centre has been sold. Wings Financial Credit Union sold 8101 - 34th Avenue South on July 15, 2013. The building has been on the market for several years so it hasn't been a bolt out of the blue to the History Centre's Board of Directors. The Board is working with the new owner regarding his future plans for the building and we will update you as we have more facts.

Lots going on, but relax, sit back and enjoy this issue of REFLECTIONS. CAVU →

NWA History Centre Visitor Information

Open M-F 11am-5pm, Sa 9am-1pm
Closed Sundays and major holidays
Admission FREE (special events may incur a charge)

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Bruce Kitt

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bought a one-way First Class ticket to Miami on Northwest Airlines, flight 714, departing July 1, 1968. On that day, he checked in for the flight, carrying a Walgreens bag containing an empty milk carton, inside which he had placed a .38 caliber revolver and ammunition.

NW 714 July 1, 1968. Boeing 727 *Regal Imperial Service*. Schedule: dep. MSP 1410 CDT, intermediate stop ORD, arr. MIA 1938 EDT. Crew (MSP base): Captain **Richard Simonson**; First Officer **Richard Conrad**; Second Officer **Kenneth Warras**; Stewardesses **Margaret Burt**; **Margarete Schmidt**; **Barbara Schlosser**; **Nancy Lee Stevenson**.

HIJACKED NW 714 began with an equipment substitution, a 727-051 for the scheduled 720B. The stewardesses remained on the trip, but a junior reserve flight deck 727 crew was called up (Second Officer Warras was still in his 6-month probation). The flight departed MSP with 26 passengers; 61 more boarded at ORD, including Mario Velasquez, who took his seat in Row 1. The flight was routine. Passenger Velasquez declined his *Regal Imperial* dinner, asking only for aspirin and a glass of water. During the initial descent into MIA, as stewardess Burt reminded him to fasten his seatbelt in preparation for landing, Velasquez pulled out his gun, grabbed her arm and started shouting in Spanish. She broke free, and ran aft toward the mid-cabin galley, to alert the flight deck by interphone. Velasquez, giving chase, stopped when he spotted stewardesses Stevenson and Schlosser sitting in row 6 of the First Class cabin. Grabbing Stevenson, he held a gun to her head, demanding, in English, "Open the door or I'll kill you! I'll shoot the lock off." Stevenson, her cockpit key stowed away, yelled for Schlosser to retrieve it, and began pounding on the cockpit door. The delay further agitated Velasquez. In the meantime, Burt had successfully contacted Capt. Simonson, who radioed Miami Air Traffic Control (ATC) with a request for an immediate emergency clearance to land in MIA. Simonson: "There was a heavy pounding on the door. I knew we were going to have to open it or risk injury to the girls." Finally, Stevenson and Warras simultaneously opened the cockpit door, and Velasquez stormed in, waving the gun at each of the pilots, demanding "Go to Cuba! GO TO HAVANA!" Richard Conrad remembers, "He had a revolver and I was looking down the barrel as he pointed it at each of us. I could see the rounds in the cylinder. He had the hammer cocked and my main concern was that it would go off accidentally. I told him we would do whatever he wanted. I seem to remember that he had a box of shells (bullets). He put them in his pocket and said he would kill us all." Simonson changed his request to Miami ATC: "Make that Havana". When the crew consulted their manuals, they discovered they had no navigation charts for anywhere south of Miami. Velasquez thought they were stalling; he seized Warras' headset to listen directly to the radio transmissions. Simonson and Conrad pointed out the Florida Keys to Velasquez to prove they were headed to Cuba, and a 727 crew (Conrad thinks it was Northeast Airlines) contacted NW 714 with the VOR frequency for Havana ATC. Unknown to all of them, the Air Force scrambled two jets (variously reported as F-101s or F-104s) from Homestead Air Force Base to intercept and escort the flight, but they never established radio or visual contact.

Conrad then contacted Havana Approach Control for landing instructions, and asked that the runway lights at José Martí International Airport (HAV) be turned on full to guide their final approach. NW 714 landed in HAV at 2018 EDT. It was the first Boeing 727 ever to arrive in Havana.

BIENVENIDOS A CUBA On arrival, Ken Warras lowered the rear airstairs and soldiers boarded the aircraft, removing Mario Velasquez without force. That was the last the crew would see or hear of him. (Brendan Koerner notes that while the Castro régime savored the embarrassment that hijackings caused the U.S. government, hijackers themselves were regarded with suspicion as potential troublemakers. After weeks-long interrogations at the headquarters of the Cuban G2 secret police, they might be sent to forced-labor camps or confined indefinitely in the Casa de Transitos, a dormitory for hijackers. There was no hero's welcome. I have been unable to discover the ultimate fate of Mario Velasquez). Two uniformed U.S. soldiers among the passengers were deplaned, questioned and released, as was terrified passenger Maria Vasquez, who had previously fled Cuba as a refugee. After much confusion, the passengers and crew were escorted into the upstairs dining hall of the otherwise empty airport terminal. The crew members were offered beer, which they declined. Everyone was served *ersatz* Coca-Cola (meanwhile, airport ground staff removed all liquor and *real* Coca-Cola from the 727). The Chargé d'Affaires from the Swiss embassy arrived, who would handle all negotiations (Switzerland had acted as the "protecting power" intermediary between the U.S. and Cuba since the 1961 break in diplomatic relations). Warras reports that everyone was well-treated by the airport staff, and that a dinner of steak, french fries and string beans was served (they found out later that the steaks were horsemeat). Warras had to return to the aircraft to search luggage to retrieve diapers for infants and medicine for a passenger with a heart condition. Hours of nervous waiting ensued as negotiations proceeded for the release of the 727, its crew, and its passengers. There were only hard benches for passengers needing sleep, and they were under constant surveillance; "We were even escorted to the ladies' room by Cuban stewardesses", reported one passenger.

HOMEFRONT Meanwhile, Northwest officials contacted the wives of Capt. Simonson and S/O Ken Warras, with news of the hijacking (Mrs. Warras first learned of the hijacking from a neighbor, who heard the news on the radio). Irma Simonson and Sue Warras took the news with uneasy but calm aplomb; they were military wives and knew all about risk - Dick Simonson had been a B-52 pilot in the Strategic Air Command and Ken Warras had flown search and rescue missions in the Gulf of Tonkin for the Navy during the Viet Nam war. As for Rich Conrad, who had worked as a civilian flight instructor before joining Northwest, the *St. Paul Dispatch* blithely reported that "Richard Conrad, 24, first officer, of 8330 Cedar Ave., Bloomington, is a bachelor and had no wife pacing the floor for him." Astonishingly, the local newspapers reported the complete home address of each pilot and stewardess!

SETBACK Finally, in the middle of the night, the Swiss Chargé informed Capt. Simonson that Cuban officials had decided that the 727 and its crew would be allowed to leave, but, for safety reasons, the passengers would be transported by bus to → p 4

cont. from p 3

Varadero Airport and flown to Miami by Airlift International, the charter airline which operated the Freedom Flights. The Cubans cited the 727's lack of life rafts and their concern that HAV's 10,000-foot runway was too short for the safe night-time departure of a fully-loaded 727. Capt. Simonson, aghast, argued forcefully with the *Chargé*, but the decision was final (*ed. note*: in fairness, the Cubans may have been simply unfamiliar with the 727's performance capabilities. Earlier in the year, a Delta DC-8 with 108 passengers had been allowed to leave HAV a few hours after it arrived). Simonson and the *Chargé* together informed the passengers, who seemed to take the bad news "pretty well", according to Simonson. Stewardess Schlosser would report that a passenger told her, days later, that "they all had a sinking feeling when they saw the Northwest plane leave without them." Before departure, Simonson had to sign an invoice for the airport fees, fuel, ground support (including Ken Warras's baggage handling!) and meals received by NW 714, payable in U.S. dollars; the Cuban peso is not a convertible currency on the world market, and the Castro régime welcomed the "hard" Yankee dollar income provided by hijackings. The 727 and its reluctant crew departed HAV, minus passengers, in the pre-dawn hour, arriving in MIA at 0635 EDT.

On arrival, the entire crew met with Customs officials and the FBI. Capt. Simonson conducted an improvised press conference. Exhausted, the crew gratefully accepted day-rooms at the nearby Doral Country Club for a few hours rest. Later that day, they deadheaded to ORD for more FBI debriefing, including positive identification of photos of Mario Velasquez. Finally, that evening, the crew returned to MSP, their simple "one day turn" trip to MIA at last completed.



The crew on arrival in MIA. L-R: Kenneth Warras; Richard Simonson; unidentified Dade County officer; Margarete Schmidt; Nancy Lee Stevenson; Richard Conrad; Barbara Schlosser; Margaret Burt. Photo: Minnesota History Center archives.



The hijacked 727, N475US, at MIA. Acquired new by NWA in 1966, it would be sold to the Mexican Air Force in 1977. Photo: ebay.

The Press Conference at MIA, July 2, 1968. L-R: Barbara Schlosser; Margarete Schmidt, Richard Simonson; Nancy Lee Stevenson; Margaret Burt. Photo: Minnesota History Center archives.



EXODUS Meanwhile, a small convoy of old military buses arrived for the Northwest passengers left behind in Havana. The passengers boarded, but the buses were unbearably filthy and smelly. Abashed, the Cubans instructed the passengers to exit, and the buses were hosed down, inside and out, with scant improvement. The passengers got back onboard, sat in the still-dripping seats, and endured what one passenger described as the "sheer misery" of a 90 mile, 2 ½ hour drive over bumpy roads, in the heat and humidity of a tropical morning, to the Varadero Airport on Cuba's northwest coast, where a shabby Airlift International DC-7C awaited to take them to Miami. But there weren't enough seats onboard for all 86 passengers! Undeterred (and surely fed-up by this point), they clambered onboard, children sat on parents' laps, three passengers wedged into seatsets meant for two, and one passenger sat in a cockpit jumpseat. The crush of bodies quickly overwhelmed the 7C's feeble air-conditioning, and the plane lifted off for the 55-minute flight to MIA, the passengers suffering their own version of the "refugee experience" enroute. Upon landing at 1228 EDT, the passengers deplaned and were quarantined briefly for questioning by Customs officials and the FBI. Northwest offered a lunch of sandwiches and coffee, the passengers retrieved their luggage and then dispersed, their hijacking ordeal at an end.



Appearing remarkably composed, the passengers from NW 714 deplane in MIA. The DC-7C N8219H was one of two in the ragtag Airlift International fleet. This aircraft would be sold to drug traffickers, and was shot down over the Columbian jungle in 1980 while on a smuggling mission. AP wirephoto, Robert DuBert collection.

AFTERMATH In the days that followed, the pilots debriefed with the Chief Pilot and Benjamin Griggs, VP for Flight Operations. The entire crew was fêted at a luncheon in the General

Office Dining Room. The pilots' recommendations that flight crews be issued navigation charts for the Caribbean, and that *all* cabin crew be issued cockpit keys, were quickly adopted and in fact became industry-standard in 1968. All crew members returned to their normal flight schedules, generally regarding the incident to be "no big deal", although Nancy Lee Stevenson, having borne the brunt of the hijacker's forcible manhandling, asked, "Tell me, do I look any older? I feel like I'm 40."



L-R: Stewardesses Margarete Schmidt, Margaret Burt, and Barbara Schlosser report for work on NW 714 the week after the hijacking. Photo: NWAHC archives

NW 714 was the seventh hijacking of 1968, and prompted Senate hearings, which proved inconclusive. While the government and the FBI favored more aggressive security measures, these proposals were (and had

been) resisted for years by the FAA and the airlines themselves, who worried that security screening of passengers and their luggage (not to mention armed guards on flights) was logistically impossible, too expensive, and bad for business - such measures might scare away potential passengers. The N.Y. *Daily News*, never noted for understatement, urged President Lyndon Johnson to "crack down forcefully on Castro with some sort of ultimatum to the bearded little rats to stop these outrages." For its part, the NWA Public Relations Department sought to calm frazzled nerves with euphemism, with a memo stating "Since air piracy became a frequent occurrence in the 60's, and there is no apparent solution on the horizon as we look into the 70's, special treatment of this type of emergency is in order. Hijacking, skyjacking and similar terminology is appropriate only in-house. In discussions with media, 'aircraft diversions' is considered more appropriate." A Northwest spokesman defended the industry's long-standing policy of total compliance with hijacker demands to reporter Marilyn Goldstein of *Newsday* (Long Island, N.Y.): "There's no other choice. It's the least dangerous course of action." Asked about specific instructions for stewardesses, he added, "They're told to do what they're told to do by the hijacker. If they tried judo or something, which they're not trained in anyway, they might endanger the passengers or themselves. Landing in Cuba makes it a little inconvenient for the passengers, but at least it doesn't kill anybody." Then, on July 12, there was an attempted hijacking of a Delta flight, followed by the successful hijacking of

a National Airlines DC-8 to Cuba on July 17. Attention turned elsewhere, and NW 714 was quickly forgotten by the public.

MORE Northwest Airlines experienced two more "aircraft diversions" and three thwarted attempts:

→ Jan. 22, 1971. **NW 334**, Boeing 727-051, MSP-RST-MSN-MKE-DTW-DCA. Out of MKE, Gerald Grant, 21, a member of the Black Panthers militant group and armed with a hatchet and a satchel allegedly containing a bomb, hijacks the flight and demands to go to Algeria. He settles for Havana. After a few hours on the ground in HAV, the aircraft, crew and passengers depart for MIA. The *Detroit News* calls it "a relaxed hijacking". The wife of Capt. Fred Wolter (in command of the flight) is annoyed because "he was going to finish wallpapering the bathroom this weekend", and the project is delayed.

→ Nov. 24, 1971. **NW 305**, Boeing 727-051, PDX-SEA. A passenger ticketed as Dan Cooper (not his real name) hijacks the flight, and demands \$200,000 ransom to release the passengers in SEA, and four parachutes. After receiving his demands, the aircraft departs SEA, "Cooper" deplanes by parachute over the Washington-Oregon border area, and disappears. This incident inspires several subsequent "copycat" hijackings, some of which, at least initially, are more successful. See the December 2007 and Fall 2012 issues of this newsletter for more information about NW 305.

→ Jan. 22, 1971. **NW 737**, ATL-MSP. During the flight, a man, 34, threatens a stewardess and attempts to enter the cockpit. The newspaper account is unclear, but the hijacker is arrested in RST, placed on another NW flight to MSP, and released.

→ Dec. 24, 1971. **NW 734**, Boeing 727-251, MSP-ORD-MIA. While enroute to ORD, Everett Leary Holt, 25, armed with a fake bomb and a pistol containing blank rounds, hijacks the aircraft and demands \$300,000 ransom to release the passengers in ORD, and two parachutes. On the ground at ORD, as the ransom is delivered, the passengers and crew escape, FBI and police surround the aircraft, and Holt surrenders.

→ May 8, 1977. **NW 22**, Boeing 747, HND-MSP. An hour out of Tokyo-Haneda, Bruce Trayer, 25, seizes a flight attendant, and holding a razor to her throat, demands access to the flight deck, where he demands that the aircraft proceed to Moscow. Another flight attendant, William van Heuven, an ex-Marine, grabs the cockpit crash axe and hits Trayer on the head, subduing him. U.S. Air Force Military Police passengers onboard restrain Trayer, the aircraft returns to Tokyo, and Trayer is arrested by Tokyo police.

With the exception of the Cooper hijacking, these Northwest incidents are absent from public awareness, forgotten save for some in the airline industry or people directly involved. And that's a good thing. Northwest hijackings were relatively benign affairs, with no injuries or deaths among passengers and crew, and no major aircraft damage or hull loss. Eastern, TWA, Pan Am, BOAC and others were not so fortunate. For this gratifying outcome, we can thank the calm, steady professionalism of the NWA crews *and* providential luck. Hijackings peaked in 1969, then tapered off a bit. Then, on Nov. 10, 1972, three men, armed with guns and hand grenades, hijacked Southern Airways flight 49, ultimately threatening to "crash" the DC-9 into the Oak Ridge National Laboratory nuclear reactor, near Knoxville. The concept of an airliner as a potential weapon of mass destruction had arrived. The time for delay and equivocation at an end, President Richard Nixon, on Dec. 5, 1972, signed an emergency order mandating the metal detector screening of all passengers and the examination of all carry-on luggage. Yet the industry policy of total compliance with hijacker demands persisted, for decades. And then came September 11, 2001. →→→→

The editor thanks retired NWA Captain Ken Warras, whose visit to the NWA History Centre earlier this year, and subsequent conversation with volunteer docent Don Swanson, prompted this report. RD

Northwest Airlines for the Millennial Generation



Dominick Grima and Jonah Robles at the HC. Photo: Robert DuBert

Dominick Grima, 20, and **Jonah Robles**, 19, are the sons of former Northwest Airlines employees—Dom's father Charles has been a mechanic for 34 years, working at Zantop, North Central, Republic, Northwest, and now Delta at DTW, and Jonah's mom Jodi was an MSP-based flight attendant. Dom and Jonah are best friends, self-described “Northwest Airlines fanatics”, and regular visitors to the NWA History Centre. Like so many of their generation, they communicate using social media, texting, and the media-sharing phenomenon of YouTube, where they each administer a channel and jointly operate a third channel, all containing video clips mostly devoted to the airline industry, with Northwest and Delta operations at DTW and MSP as their areas of special interest.

They visited the HC this past June, and I took the opportunity to interview the duo and learn about their histories with YouTube.

Q: How did you get started with YouTube?

D: When I first came across YouTube, the first thing I searched was “Northwest Airlines”, and I found many videos that I couldn't believe existed. In February, 2009, I launched my own channel, called **Meteors6**. Later I teamed up with Jonah to launch the **AviationBrothers** channel.

J: When I was in 7th grade, I heard about YouTube and decided to search “DC-9 Takeoffs and Landings”. At that point, I was just expecting (exterior) shots of takeoffs and landings, but instead I found videos shot inside the aircraft! Right then and there, that inspired me, and I shot scenes from my next flight, a Northwest 757-351 flight to Orlando. Since that day, I DO NOT leave my house without my camera when I fly. My YouTube channel is called **Jonahair747**.

Q: What equipment did you start out with, and what do you use now?

D: When I first started making videos, I used a Kodak EasyShare camera. It wasn't the greatest, but at that time HD (high-definition) wasn't a big thing. I now use a Sony HDR-CX230, which is 1080p. For editing, I use *Windows Movie Maker*. It's quick and easy to use. Now for major editing, I recommend *Cyberlink PowerDirector*, which has lots of features that make your videos look professional.

J: Back in 2007, I started with a Samsung 5 MP camera. I recently got a Canon Powershot SX-160IS. It has phenomenal color, 16X zoom, and stereo sound. For editing, I just use the basic *Windows Movie Maker*. I usually just upload the video straight from my memory card to YouTube. When I edit, it's usually when I want to collage a bunch of videos or still scenes together.



Dom's father Charles, at DTW. Photo courtesy Dominick Grima.



Jonah, age 5, with his mom Jodi onboard an NWA DC-9-31. Photo courtesy Jonah Robles.

Q: Do you have favorite aircraft?

D: My most favorite is the McDonnell Douglas DC-9. I love filming them, they are loud and always rocket out of any airport they depart from.

J: My favorites are the B727-200, the DC-9 (all series) and the DC-10.

Q: Any other YouTube channels you recommend?

D: **Delta747fan**, **MD881212**, **NWA1503**. I am very proud to have such awesome friends who all can discuss aviation activities.

J: **Helicopterpilot16**. His name is Tyler Hastings, and he is a very talented filmer on YouTube.

Dom and Jonah's YouTube clips are mostly “slice of life” scenes of routine operations at DTW and MSP. For obvious reasons, Northwest videos are the oldest in their respective

lineups, but the Delta videos show many former NW aircraft, including the rapidly disappearing RC/NW DC-9-50 fleet. Scenes filmed onboard NW aircraft show sights and sounds we can all remember from our own travels. And you may be amazed at how many viewers they have. Jonah proudly notes that on his channel, “I currently have 819 videos posted and STILL growing, along with 1,703 subscribers and 1,187,755 views total! YES, OVER ONE MILLION!” Unquestionably, they are helping to keep the memory of Northwest Airlines alive!

Both guys currently have jobs outside the airline industry, but working for an airline is their career goal. In the meantime, Jonah also works as a volunteer for the Airport Foundation MSP. Here's hoping that he soon lands his dream job. Any airline would be fortunate to have either Dominick or Jonah on the payroll. ➔ RD



Serving the Armed Forces Service Center at MSP

The NWA History Centre Salutes
GAIL DIERCKS, Vfc. (Volunteer First Class)

Gail Diercks doesn't come from a military family, nor did she serve in the armed forces herself. Nevertheless, Gail (she and **Flo Dreyer** are the Volunteer Coordinators for the NWAHC) proudly serves as a volunteer at the Armed Forces Service Center, located on the terrace level of Terminal 1 at MSP. Here's her story:

A Minnesota native and Richfield High School graduate, Gail joined Northwest Airlines in 1962, as a support staffer in the Pass Bureau and Pilot Training Departments. In 1964, she transferred to the Inflight Department and became a stewardess. During the early 1980s, the opportunity to work military charter flights came along, and out of curiosity, she seized the day: "I always wanted to do something out of the ordinary." Beginning with flights from St. Louis (STL) to Frankfurt (FRA), carrying military dependents stationed at Ft. Leonard Wood, she eventually found herself working military charters in support of Operation Desert Storm during the first Gulf War, the United Nations intervention in Somalia (UNOSOM), and the second Gulf War. What began as curiosity quickly developed into total dedication as her profound respect for our armed forces personnel – their selfless resolve and their citizen-soldier humanity - grew with each flight.



Photo: Robert DuBert



When not working the charters, Gail's other "out of the ordinary" activities included serving as Lead Flight Attendant for new aircraft-type proving flights, crew orientations, and FAA certification exercises, including the passenger evacuation testing of the 747-400 before it entered service with Northwest.

Although she retired from NWA in 2006, she began volunteering at the Armed Forces Service Center (AFSC) in the late 1990s. The Center, an independent organization, operates from space provided by the Metropolitan Airports Commission. Open 24/7, it is entirely supported by financial donations from veteran, military, and fraternal organizations, private businesses, and individuals. The facility includes lounge areas, a fully-equipped kitchen, free snacks and beverages, computers, wi-fi, bunk rooms for men and women, and, best of all, a warm smile and a friendly greeting – in short, *almost* all the comforts of home for our military personnel and veterans who are on the go.



For Gail Diercks, volunteering for the AFSC is the logical sequel to her work as a Northwest Airlines flight attendant, and she is grateful that retirement has allowed her more time to devote to the Center. To date, she has logged over 2500 volunteer hours there. She invites other airline retirees (or active employees) who live in the Twin Cities area to join her at the Center, in support of the men and women of our nation's armed forces. Her buddy Flo Dreyer has already accepted the challenge, and will soon join Gail in the volunteer ranks. When they're together, they are a veritable Dynamic Duo of energy, enthusiasm and commitment. Both Gail and Flo are perfect embodiments of the motto of the AFSC: *Serving Those Who Serve.* ➔



Photos at left, top to bottom:

Boarding a 747 military charter.

At the entry door to Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf's Command Aircraft.

On a crew layover in Cairo.

Photos courtesy Gail Diercks.

For information on the AFSC:
www.mnafsc.org



"The Armed Forces Service Center, Gail speaking. How may I help you?"
 Photo: Robert DuBert

Out & About



owns the 4-AT, and leases the 5-AT for the summer season from its owner, the Air Zoo museum in Kalamazoo, Mich. The EAA Ford flight program is administered and operated by three retired NWA Captains, formerly of the DTW base: **Cody Welch**, Program Chairman; **Colin Soucy**; and **Tom Leahy**. Below are three reports about the five intrepid NWAHC members- **Don** and **Judy Swanson**, **Kay Ferrell**, **Steve Marks**, and **Bob DuBert** - who Flew the Fords.

NWAHC members fly the Experimental Aircraft Association Ford Tri-Motor Air Travel Experience



This past summer, the Experimental Aircraft Association operated **two** Ford Tri-Motor airliners: a model 4-AT originally owned by Eastern Air Transport (corporate predecessor of Eastern Air Lines) and a slightly larger 5-AT, whose original owner was Northwest Airways, the corporate precursor of Northwest Airlines. The EAA

The EAA Ford flight program is administered and operated by three retired NWA Captains, formerly of the DTW base: **Cody Welch**, Program Chairman; **Colin Soucy**; and **Tom Leahy**. Below are three reports about the five intrepid NWAHC members- **Don** and **Judy Swanson**, **Kay Ferrell**, **Steve Marks**, and **Bob DuBert** - who Flew the Fords.

July 8, 2013. Anoka-Blaine Airport (21 miles north of MSP), Eastern Air Transport Ford 4-AT, reg. NC8407.

Don Swanson reports: "At the airport (ANE), four of us – Don, Judy, Kay, and Steve – gathered to take a flight on a 1929 Ford Tri-Motor. We met the captain, Colin Soucy, retired NWA pilot, and we became friends at once. A brief history was given on the Ford and all its owners to the present day. We were given our tickets (\$70 each) and after taking several photos we boarded the lovely Tri-Motor. Our adventure was about to begin. "All Clear to Start" was given and the nose engine coughed and started. Next, the left engine, then the right engine, and we taxied for a brief run-up. The cabin was very well-appointed and the leather seats comfy. It's a bit noisy but not bad. We all sat waiting for the three 450 hp engines to power up, and as they did we felt the surge and in no time left the earth into the clear blue sky. We climbed to one thousand feet, and a cruising speed of 90 mph. The large windows gave a great view. Now 90 mph may not sound fast, but in 1929 a Model T Ford on a dirt road could do 15-20 mph at best. All too soon we made a final approach and felt a slight shudder as the tires touched down. It was a living experience we will all hold near and dear to our hearts, as this was the way our airline began. The sun may have set, but it will never go down on NWA!"

Kay Ferrell reports: My first thought was, "I'm totally confident; this is going to be fun." (*ed. note: prior to flying the Ford, the oldest aircraft she had flown on was a Braniff Convair 340*). "We were allowed to explore the plane before the flight, and my thought was 'look at all those wires!'" As for the flight itself, "I expected more noise", and while "I absolutely could not have flown transcon on it, I would go on a short flight again in a heartbeat!" (*ed. note: the 4-AT operates with one pilot, and Kay was offered the chance to ride in the cockpit, but she declined. Ask her why.*)



The Eastern Air Transport 4-AT.

Photo: Don Swanson



Steve, Kay and Don prepare to board.

Photo: Judy Swanson



Capt. Colin Soucy checks the fuel load.

Photo: Don Swanson



Kay takes photos.

Photo: Don Swanson

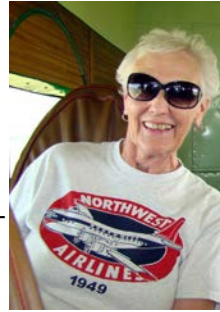


Photo: Don Swanson

July 10, 2013. Erie-Ottawa Regional Airport, Port Clinton, Ohio (on the Lake Erie shore, half-way between DTW and CLE), Northwest Airways Ford 5-AT, reg. NC8419.

Bob DuBert reports: “I chose this departure for three reasons – it was the Northwest aircraft, the airport (PCW) was the headquarters and operating base for Island Airlines (the last scheduled Ford Tri-Motor operator), and the Liberty Aviation Museum is next door (information below). My original flight on July 9 was canceled due to a mechanical, so I was on stand-by for the 10th. Would-be passengers should note that all Ford flights are operated on an 'experimental' basis, and passengers must sign a comprehensive 'Agreement to Waive Liability, to Assume Risk, and to Indemnify' waiver. An approaching storm front threatened, and I was lucky to get on the only flight to operate on this day. My flight experience was similar to those of Don, Kay, Judy and Steve, except that my flight had some turbulence and an exciting aborted first landing. Kay is right: flying transcon or *any* long distance on this thing must have been an ordeal, but it's still the best \$70 you'll ever spend for a Northwest Airways flight experience. Be sure to monitor the website, flytheford.org, for next summer's flight schedule! I interviewed Capt. Cody Welch, retired NWA Captain and Chairman of the EAA Ford flight program, who told me that the Air Zoo is tentatively planning to restore the original NW Airways livery scheme to the aircraft. That would be a dramatic improvement over the current quasi-military paint job. “

Northwest sold NC8419 to the co-founder of Northern Air Transport in Alaska in 1934. The aircraft passed on to an assortment of owners, but was leased back temporarily by Northwest Orient in 1956, to operate a transcontinental flight in celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the founding of Northwest Airways (for more information about this event, see *Flight to the Top*, Kenneth Ruble, pp. 148-150). After a rugged post-NWA career of barnstorming, dropping smoke jumpers on forest fires, and Grand Canyon sightseeing flights, it was acquired and restored by Kal-Aero of Kalamazoo, Mich., in 1991, and donated to the Air Zoo museum. For more information: <http://www.airzoo.org/> →



Judy Swanson.
Photo: Don Swanson



The 4-AT cockpit. Photo: Don Swanson



Bob and the Northwest Airways Ford 5-AT NC8419.
Photo courtesy Robert DuBert



Capt. Cody Welch. Photo: Robert DuBert



Left: NC8419 on arrival at Sea-Tac International Airport, Oct. 18, 1956, after completing a 20 stop, 51 flying hours transcontinental flight from New York City to Seattle, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of Northwest Airways.
Photo: NWAHC Archives



Visiting the Liberty Aviation Museum

3515 E. State Rd. Port Clinton OH 43452
419.723.0234 libertyaviationmuseum.org
Open 7 days a week: Su-Th: 10-4, Fr-Sa: 10-5
Nearest airport: DTW or CLE
Ground Transportation: car rental



This museum has a quirky dual personality, with half devoted to the Ford Tri-Motor and hometown Island Airlines, and the other half a collection of World War 2 items. You can see a Ford being restored to flyable condition by a crew of volunteers under the direction of certified mechanics. Military enthusiasts will enjoy seeing the flyable B-25 and riding on PT-728, the only operational PT boat offering rides to the public. The collection of Wehrmacht motorized equipment is truly unique – don't miss the rare *Gulaschkanone*! The on-premises retro Tin Goose Diner is excellent, serving classic American favorites, 7 days/week, 7a-7p. →

News, stories and announcements.

**Announcing the Hughes Airwest/Republic Retired Employees Association
FALL POTLUCK PICNIC, Wednesday Sept. 18, 2013, from 4-8 pm.
Tibbetts Creek Manor, 750 17th Ave NW, Issaquah WA 98027.**

HAW/RARE will furnish a spiral-cut ham, shrimp, soft drinks, coffee, tea, ice for drinks, paper plates, cups, plastic glasses, and eating utensils. Please bring a dish-to-share sufficient for 8 people (appetizers, salad, main hot dish or dessert), along with serving utensils. Per request of the Manor, please do not bring red wine as it stains the carpet!

The picnic will be held rain or shine; adequate seating indoors or out. West Coast, Hughes, Republic, Northwest and Delta employees and retirees are all welcome, as are guests.

For reservations: www.hughesairwest.com/Reunions.html



Photo: Dirk Jan Kraan

The 27th Annual Atlanta Airline Collectibles Show at the Delta Flight Museum

Saturday Oct. 5, 2013, 9am-4pm, admission \$5, children under 12 free.

The show includes a variety of vendors selling aviation-related items, and offers a special show rate of \$89/night. For reservations, call (800)468-3571 *by September 20* and mention the Airline Collectibles Show. The entrance to the show is the Delta South Gate off Woolman Place. For vendor table reservations and/or show information: (404)715-7886, email: museum.delta@delta.com

<http://www.deltamuseum.org/visit/events>



Don't forget the Minneapolis Airline Collectibles Show, Saturday, Oct. 12, 2013! See page 12 for details!

Proceeds benefit the NWA History Centre. If you've never attended an airline collectibles show, why not check out this one? They're a lot of fun, and you never know what you will find or who you will run into! Your editor will be there, looking for Eastern, BOAC and Cunard Line items!



At the Minneapolis AAA: L-R **Pat Tennesen; Nola Wagner; Jean Schreier; Anne Kerr.** Photo: Lori Martz

Our own **Anne Kerr**, always in demand, recently appeared with three other retired Northwest Orient stewardesses as guest speakers at the Women's Travel Club of the Minneapolis office of the American Automobile Association. Topics included highlights of their airline careers and changes in the airline industry over the past several decades. For more information, see Anne's blog: blog.ladyskywriter.com

STOP PRESS: Tacoma Aug. 23, 2013.

Bruce Kitt attends Gala Opening for **COOPER**
by Bruce Kitt

In 2012 **Fred Poyner**, Digital Collections Curator at the Washington State Historical Society asked if the NWA History Centre would be interested in supporting a planned exhibit on airplane security. The plan was to highlight the Thanksgiving eve 1971 hijacking of Northwest Flt #305 by Dan Cooper, then go into the increased security that has greeted passengers before and during their flights.

That cooperation was on display on Friday evening, August 23rd, at the Washington State History Museum

(WSHM) in Tacoma, Washington. Bruce Kitt, President of the NWAHC Board of Directors, was invited to join other contributors and patrons at an evening kick off to preview the public debut the next day.

Approximately 60 people gathered in the WSHM's foyer for an evening of music, food and drinks as the exhibit was explained and unveiled. Occupying several galleries, visitors were welcomed by a sign showing the way to their PDX-SEA flight. On entering the next gallery you're greeted by a Northwest pilot and stewardess, both wearing uniforms and items from the NWA History Centre. Other items, both donated and loaned, are dispersed throughout the exhibit. An audio excerpt from Bill Rataczak's September 2012 presentation at the NWA HC is also part of the exhibit as is an enlargement of a NWA Stratocruiser postcard, courtesy of Anne Kerr. It was very rewarding to see our museum playing such a prominent part in another museum's program.

Tom Kaye, a forensic scientist with Citizens Sleuths, gave an update on independent analysis of items from the FBI's evidence of the hijacking. I thought his talk did much to dismiss the theory of Kenny Christensen being Dan Cooper and provide information on the buried \$20 dollar bills found along the bank of the Columbia River in 1980. This should definitely be a destination for anyone in the Puget Sound area. **COOPER** ends on January 5, 2014. BK → (ed. note: for more photos and information, see p 13, REFLECTIONS digital edition at nwahistory.org)



Fred Poyner (L), Digital Collections Curator at the Washington State Historical Society, and **Bruce Kitt** at the Reception celebrating the opening of **COOPER**. Photo courtesy Bruce Kitt.



Photo: NWAHC Archives

THE SKIES BELONG TO US

Love and Terror in the Golden Age of Hijacking



By Brendan I. Koerner.
Illustrated. 318 pp.
Crown Publishers. \$26

Reviewed by Robert DuBert

In 1972, a disgruntled Army Viet Nam veteran named Roger Holder and his ditzzy massage therapist girlfriend Cathy Kerkow (another reviewer calls the duo an “aerial Bonnie and Clyde”) hijacked Western Airlines flight 701, bound for Seattle. They demanded

and received \$500,000 in ransom to release the passengers in Seattle and a long-range Western 720B to take them to Algeria. Once there, they joined the International Section of the Black Panthers militant group, led by Eldredge Cleaver. This was the longest-distance airline hijacking in American history and, for its hijackers, perhaps the most successful. Their tale forms the core of Brendan Koerner's new book, but airline employees and retirees will be rendered incredulous, dismayed and possibly infuriated by the events, now mostly forgotten, whose details Koerner weaves into the central narrative: the astonishing variety of the 159 hijackings between 1961 and 1972, the government's halting efforts towards implementing greater security, and worst of all, the effective lobbying of airline industry management and the FAA to thwart tighter security measures. Koerner, a *New York Times* columnist and contributing editor for WIRED magazine, unfolds the story in a brisk, engaging writing style which propels the reader forward like a Dan Brown novel, with an important difference - everything in this book actually happened! It's all meticulously referenced and documented in a 32-page section of notes, in itself a valuable reference. This is, quite simply, an important landmark book about a pivotal chapter in the history of the American airline industry during a time of profound social and cultural upheaval in the United States, whose consequences we live with today. →

FATAL CROSSING

The Mysterious Disappearance of NWA Flight 2501 and the Quest for Answers

By V.O. van Heest
Illustrated. 368 pp.
In-Depth Editions. \$19.95

Reviewed by Anne Billingsley Kerr

Valerie van Heest has documented, in absorbing style, a 10-year search for long-forgotten NWA Flight 2501. The Douglas DC-4 disappeared in the waters of Lake Michigan carrying 58 passengers and crew shortly after midnight on June 24, 1950. At the time, the loss of Flight 2501 was the United States worst commercial airline disaster. Six months later the Civil Aeronautics Board (precursor to the FAA) declared that there was not sufficient evidence upon which to make a determination as to probable cause.

Van Heest is a shipwreck hunter, one of the founders of the Michigan Shipwreck Research Association (MSRA), dedicated to searching for ships of historical significance. In 2002, shortly after MSRA's success locating the H.C. Akley, a bulk freighter lost in Lake Michigan in a storm in 1883, one of her associates suggested they go hunting for Flight 2501.

Word got to author and explorer Clive Cussler, founder of the National Underwater Marine Agency (NUMA) and he offered to help. For ten consecutive years, NUMA underwrote the expense of a professional team to assist in the search. Cussler joined the effort on two occasions.

Over the years the author sought out and interviewed anyone whom she believed could shed light on the incident, including relatives of passengers and crew. REFLECTIONS readers will recognize familiar names. Joe Kimm was NWA Chief Pilot when Flight 2501 was lost and is quoted and mentioned frequently. Felix Perry was on the NWA team sent to investigate. Donald Nyrop, H. V. Pete Patzke, Jerry Nielsen, Bob Gibson and Rick Cochran were also interviewed. Photographs were provided by the NWAHC, Joe Kimm and Rick Cochran.

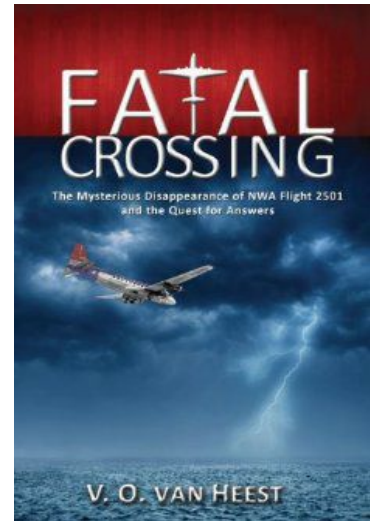
A compelling read for anyone in the Northwest Airlines family, Van Heest not only documents the diligent search, but serves up a heart-felt tribute to passengers and crew lost on Flight 2501. For more information: <http://northwestairlinesflight2501.com> →

Ed. note: both authors have been interviewed on local affiliates of NPR-- National Public Radio. These are fascinating to hear!

Koerner:

<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2013/08/06/daily-circuit-skies-belong-to-us>

Van Heest: <http://www.michiganradio.org/post/new-book-helps-answer-questions-about-mysterious-lake-michigan-plane-crash>



FLY C ★ S • THE VALLEY LEVEL ROUTE

CHICAGO
PEORIA
ST. LOUIS
TERRE HAUTE
LITTLE ROCK
HOT SPRINGS
EL DORADO
SHREVEPORT
BEAUMONT
PORT ARTHUR
HOUSTON
NEW ORLEANS
JACKSON
GREENWOOD
MEMPHIS
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EVANSVILLE
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FT. WAYNE
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vacation in
Gay-Romantic
HAVANA

ON ONE OF 4 ALL-EXPENSE Flying Cruises

A TYPICAL CRUISE
Chicago to Havana—Includes round trip transportation via C & S Dixieliner—5 days and 6 nights in glamorous Havana with hotel and meals paid—\$218.90, plus tax. Similar Low Rates From All Points. Consult your Travel Agent—or any C & S Office.

A promotion for a Chicago & Southern Airlines "Havana Flying Cruise", early 1950s. Perry Sloan Collection.

From **TIME**, Dec. 6, 1968:

TRAVEL What to Do When the Hijacker Comes.

In the first eleven months of 1968, 17 airliners containing over 1000 passengers had been hijacked to Cuba, however, observed **TIME** magazine, "nobody has yet thought to brief the poor passengers." The magazine offered an article containing these helpful hints:

"Don't panic. Hijackers, although unwelcome, can be congenial." In November, on Pan Am 281, hijackers had passed out souvenir bullets, while on Eastern 73, also in November, the hijacker, from his own money, bought drinks for passengers desiring them.

"Carry your International Certificate of Vaccination. Otherwise you may be inoculated at the airport."

"Do enjoy your stay. You will be allowed to circulate freely and make purchases at the airport shops. Havana cigars and Cuban rum are the best buys. Other bargains include East German cameras and beautifully embroidered Czech peasant blouses."

For passengers returning to Miami on an Airlift International flight out of Varadero: "Bring a bathing suit, because Varadero Beach, a 15-mile ribbon of white sand, is magnificent." Passengers on Eastern 73 went this route, and "were allowed to go swimming. They also got a free meal while two Cuban bands played bossa nova and blues in the background. ¡Hasta la Vista!"

Airline Collectible Show Sale & Get Together Minneapolis, MN

Saturday, October 12, 2013 9 am to 4 pm

Best Western Plus Motel / Across from Mall of America

1901 Killebrew Drive, Bloomington, MN 55425 - 952-854-8200

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



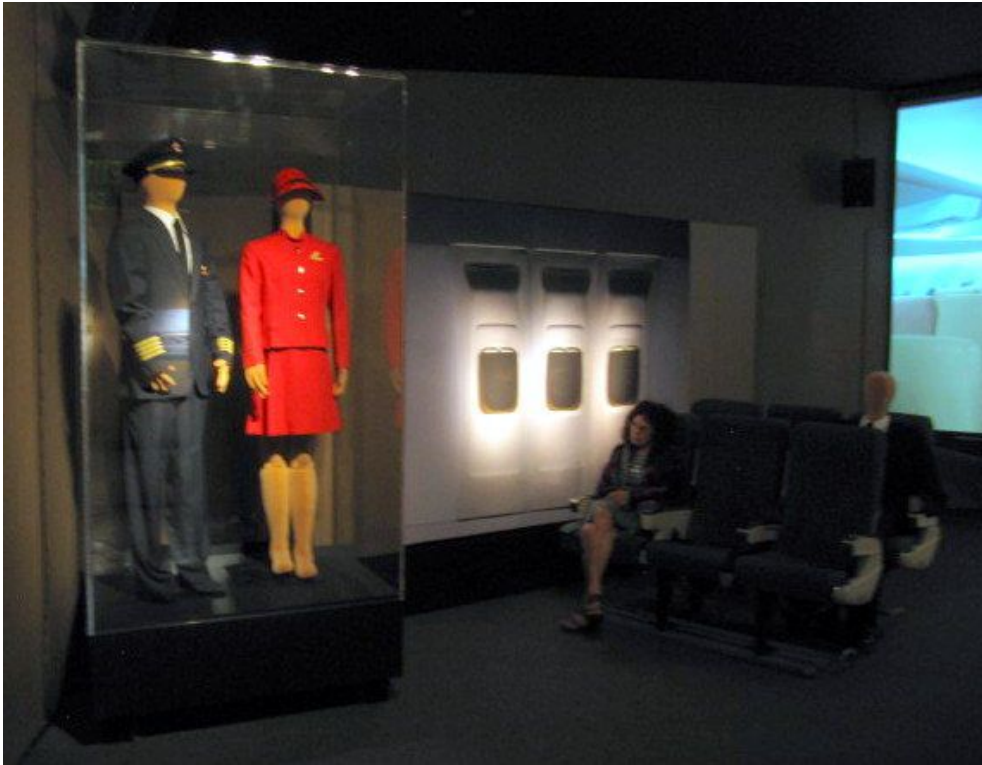
All admission proceeds benefit the
NWA History Centre

**Timetables · Safety Cards · Models · T-Shirts · China · Wings
Playing Cards · Postcards · Photos · Posters...and much more!**

For further information contact: **Bill Rosenbloom** or **Bill Marchessault**
(612) 386-5080 · bill@airlineposters.com
Or visit us online at www.nwahistory.org

Digital Edition Extras

Scenes from **COOPER**, at the Washington State History Museum. Photos: Bruce Kitt



For further reading:

The WSHS announcement page, with information about the exhibit:

<http://www.washingtonhistory.org/page.aspx?id=188>

The WSHS online collection about the Cooper hijacking:

<http://collections.washingtonhistory.org/results.aspx?hl=222>

Local press reviews:

<http://www.theolympian.com/2013/08/23/2685516/spotlight-on-nw-mystery.html>

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2013/08/23/2745469/spotlight-on-nw-mystery.html>

http://tdn.com/news/local/d-b-cooper-exhibit-opens-aug-at-state-history-museum/article_363ebb20-f008-11e2-a642-0019bb2963f4.html

<http://www.seattlepi.com/local/articleGallery/D-B-Cooper-parachute-tie-displayed-for-first-4749773.php#photo-5072324>

<http://www.tacomaweekly.com/citylife/view/d.b.-cooper-search-continues-at-history-museum/>

There's plenty more, but those will get you started. You'll note the similarity of the **COOPER** graphics to those of **MAD MEN**. This was intentional on the part of the WSHS. You'll remember, from the last issue, the participation of the NWAHC in the set design of a **MAD MEN** episode. Here's the link to the *Twin Cities Business* article about that project:

<http://tcbmag.com/Industries/Marketing-Advertising-PR-and-Media/Mad-Men-Flies-Northwest>