



REFLECTIONS



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

Northwest Airlines 1926-2010

IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES

NWA and the General

The Brief Presidency of Brig. Gen. Harold Ross Harris

by Robert DuBert

On Jan. 1, 1953, Harold Ross Harris, a distinguished military aviator and seasoned airline executive, became president and chief executive officer of Northwest Airlines. Fourteen months later, he was forced to resign by the same men who had hired him, stating that "Basic and irreconcilable differences have developed between myself as president and a group who presently constitute a majority of the company's board of directors."

In every divorce, there are two sides. In various accounts of the history of Northwest Airlines, the Harris period is generally dismissed as a failure. In this article, I attempt to tell Harris' side of the story, in his own words where possible. Principal references include the Harris biographies written by Justin H. Libby and Harris' daughter Alta Mae Stevens, and *especially* the original documents in the voluminous Harris Archive at Wright State University in suburban Dayton, Ohio, which contains the company reports, memos, board meeting minutes and other materials relating to Harris' 14 months as president. I suggest that readers review Ken Ruble's *Flight to the Top*, p. 125, and Jack El-Hai's superb *Non-Stop, A Turbulent History of Northwest Airlines*, pp. 131-3, 139, for brief overviews of the Harris presidency.

THE EARLY YEARS Harold R. Harris was born on Dec. 20, 1895 in Chicago. His family moved to Los Angeles, where Harold graduated from Manual Arts High School in 1913. His desire for a flying career dates from the day in 1910 when he and school-mate (and future aviator) Jimmy Doolittle attended an airshow in Los Angeles. In 1917, following the American entry into World War I, Harris enlisted in the Army Reserve Signal Corps, and attended aviation ground school at UC-Berkeley. After graduation, he eloped with Grace Clark, who would be his wife for 61 years. Assigned to the Army Air Service, Lt. Harris joined a unit in Italy commanded by Army Maj. Fiorello LaGuardia (future mayor of New York, and promoter of his namesake airport) which operated Caproni bombers in cooperation with the Italian Servizio Aeronautico. On July 25, 1918, Lt. Harris commanded a Ca.5 bomber on a reconnaissance mission from Torino to Lyon, he and his crew becoming the first Americans to fly across the Alps.

After the war, Harris was assigned to the Wilbur Wright and McCook Airfields in Dayton, Ohio, where in 1920 he was appointed Chief of the Flight Test Branch of the Army Air Service. The following year he commanded one



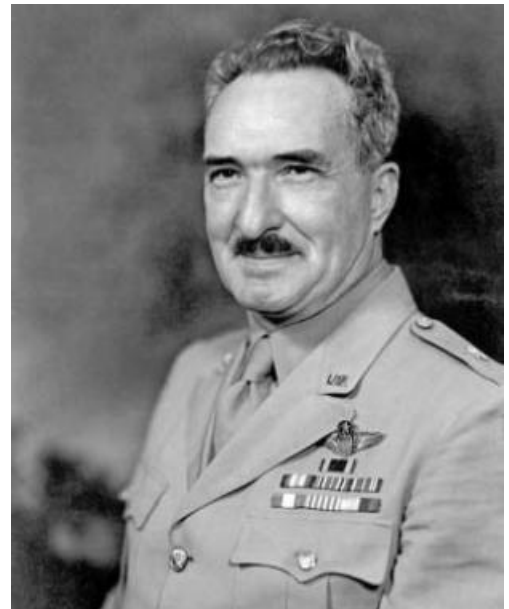
Lt. Harris during WWI.
Photo: National Museum
of the United States Air
Force, Dayton, Ohio.

of the Martin MB-2 bombers which bombed and sank the captured German warships *Ostfriesland* and *Frankfurt*, as part of Lt. Col. William "Billy" Mitchell's demonstration of the potential of military airpower. In 1922, he became the first pilot to perform an emergency bailout using a freefall parachute, when the Loening aircraft he was testing disintegrated in mid-air.

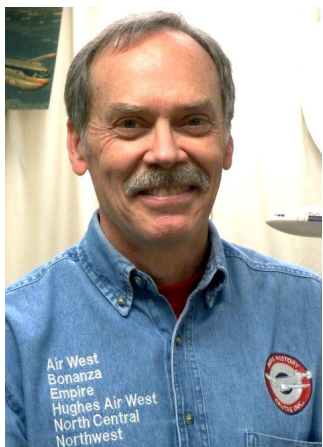
AN AIRLINE CAREER In 1925, Harris left the Army to become vice-president and operations manager for a tiny company in Monroe, La., named Huff-Daland Dusters, founded the year before by entomologist (insect specialist) Bert Coad and cooperative extension agent Collett E. Woolman. Harris worked with them to develop and perfect the technique of aerial crop dusting.

As a seasonal business, Huff-Daland in 1926 established a southern hemisphere base of operations in Lima, Peru, where Harris and Woolman sought and received authority from the Peruvian government in 1928 to establish passenger, mail and freight airline service (Woolman became sole owner of the Louisiana operation in 1928, renaming it Delta Air Service, then Delta Air Lines in 1930. REFLECTIONS readers will be familiar with that company).

On Sept. 16, 1928, a company named Peruvian Airways, half-owned by Juan Trippe (founder of Pan American Airways), began passenger service between Lima and Talara, Peru using the Huff-Daland operating certificate, flying a Fairchild FC-2 which at Harris' insistence was equipped with a lavatory. The following December, Trippe acquired Huff-Daland's Peruvian assets, and in cooperation with the W.R. Grace shipping



Brigadier General Harold R. Harris
Photo:USAF via Smithsonian NASM 2009-31234



Bruce Kitt Photo: Joe Callaci

President's Message

I feel like your flight captain: we're flying on to our destination but I've illuminated the fasten seat belt sign.

Through **AirSpaceMN**, a grant proposal for updated computers and ancillary equipment has been submitted to the *Minnesota Historical & Cultural Grant* program. Speaking as Chair of the **A/SMN** History Committee, that committee has formulated several steps we feel are needed to bring our respective organizations up to a basic level of ability before we are able to undertake any assignments **A/SMN** asks of us. To an organization, our computers are woefully antiquated and need to be updated. A proposal was submitted for each of our museums and I am pleased that the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame's request was approved. I'm optimistic that the remaining two grant requests will be awarded. Another grant that is in the works will tie each of our separate inventories into a collaborative network so that a search at one museum will look at each of the participating museum's inventory to see who has what. The NWAHC will utilize this Minnesota grant program to our maximum ability to help bring the NWAHC up to accredited museum best practice standards.

Regarding that seat belt light...welcome to the NWA History Centre, version 2014. "Our" building was sold in August 2013; we had to vacate our storage space on the 3rd floor, and we've signed a lease for the Lower Level – the museum's current location – that runs through 2020. We relocated the storage area across the street; Wings Financial will close the Bloomington branch, 8101 -34th Ave South, at the end of this June, and the NWAHC now has to pay rent, pay for internet service and pay for several other items that were formally covered by Wings' sponsorship of the NWAHC. Our challenge now is to remain financially sound until 2020 – our target date to become part of the **A/SMN** museum at Ft. Snelling.

March is our spring fundraising month and you will soon receive a request from us for financial support. As the seat belt sign announcement says, "Please return to your seat....", but then act on your pledge of support. Sit down and write a check to show that you also share the same vision for the future of the NWAHC. From now until 2020, these requests are going to be critical to the success of the NWAHC. When Wings Financial leaves our building we expect the number of visitors to the History Centre to drop. Whether you came to 8101 - 34th Ave South to bank or to visit the the NWAHC – or both – it is a symbiotic relationship that is now broken. That plus the doubling of the museum's operating expenses concerns us. Our financial reserves were never designed to be a substitute for revenue. *cont. on p.11*

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)

Advance reservations preferred for visits by groups of 8 or more.
Please call 952.698.4478

FREE parking Metro: LRT Blue Line American Boulevard



The NWA History Centre

Founder **Henry V. "Pete" Patzke**
(dec.)

8101-34th Ave S
Bloomington MN 55425-1642
952.698.4478
nwahistory.org

President **Bruce Kitt**
VP-Operations **Wayne Snyder**
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Editor **Robert DuBert**
BobNWFA@aol.com 734.678.7600

Reporters **Bob Johnson, Anne Kerr, Joe Callaci**

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company, formed the Pan American-Grace Airways Corporation (PANAGRA), and Harold Harris began working for Juan Trippe's new airline, as vice-president and operations manager.

WW2 When the U.S. entered World War 2, commercial airlines became an integral part of the war effort, and Harris rejoined the Army, serving in the Air Transport Command where his commanding officer was Maj. Gen. Cyrus R. Smith, the legendary president of American Airlines. Harris rose to the rank of Brigadier General, becoming ATC Chief of Staff, and one of his subordinates was a young attorney, Lt. Col. Donald Nyrop. In the course of his service during two world wars, Harris received several honors and decorations, and was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) by King George VI.

AA/PA After the war, Harris accepted C.R. Smith's offer to become head of American Overseas Airlines, AA's new international division. When AOA was sold to Pan Am in 1950, the deal included 8 B-377s, 7 L-049 Constellations, 5 DC-4s, and, ultimately, Harold Harris, who was placed in charge of Pan Am's Atlantic Division. While at Pan Am, Harris oversaw the introduction of a large fleet of DC-6B aircraft to his division, to replace the Connies and DC-4s. As with Panagra and AOA, the Atlantic Division was an autonomous operating unit within a large company, with its own administration, staffing, and aircraft. At all three companies, Harris ran, in effect, an airline within an airline. He would bring this experience to bear in the future.

MESS Northwest Airlines in 1952 was in a mess. The Martin 202 had been a disaster (see REFLECTIONS, Dec. 2013). Despite the full support of President Croil Hunter and the board of directors, a proposed merger with Capital Airlines was rejected, largely by shareholders based in New York. The common stock had not paid a dividend since 1946, making it difficult for NWA to obtain financing for capital purchases. The fleet consisted of 10 modern Stratocruisers (plagued with high operating costs and unreliable engines) and obsolete, unpressurized DC-3s and DC-4s. The company was steadily losing business to Pan Am in the Pacific. The overhaul facilities at St. Paul airport had been inundated by a flood. As El-Hai notes, "Hunter, out of ideas and willing to relinquish some of his responsibilities", approached Donald Nyrop, chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board, about taking over,

but Nyrop turned him down. Pressured by the New York-based directors, who represented a majority of the shares outstanding, Hunter launched a new search, and a field of 200 names was narrowed down to one ideal candidate: Harold Harris. Offered the jobs of president and CEO in October, 1952, Harris accepted, telling **TIME** on Oct. 20, "First I have to find out what the airline's all about. I'm going to break my neck trying to make it resume the position it used to have in this country. Something's wrong with the airline. I don't know what yet—except that they need new equipment."



Harold Harris and Croil Hunter. Photo: Wright State University Archives.

The quest for new planes, and a company restructuring plan, would ultimately prove Harris' undoing at Northwest. We'll look at both issues, but first, an excerpt from Harris' first letter to all employees, issued on Jan. 7, 1953, six days after his first day on the job: **"TO ALL EMPLOYEES** With the change in Northwest Airlines' executive management, effected by its board of directors, you as an employee will want to know the new management's philosophy. It will be my purpose, as president and chief executive officer, to make every employee aware that his work is an essential part of the overall operations; and I expect you to do your best in whatever job you hold. I shall expect loyalty—to the individuals with whom you serve, but above all to the company itself. With this attitude accepted as part of the day's work, I believe that we can make Northwest the best airline in the world." Harris had already identified poor morale and a general corporate inferiority complex as problems at NWA, and he would constantly urge that the company strive to become bigger and better.

AIRCRAFT NWA had already begun considering new aircraft, using an existing study by Trans-Canada Airlines as a start. TCA had evaluated the new L-1049E Super Constellation vs. the Douglas DC-6B for its transAtlantic routes (they chose the 1049E). The L-1049E was equipped with new Wright Turbo-Compound engines, which used turbines to capture the energy of the exhaust gases to generate more power. The

DC-6B used conventional Pratt & Whitney piston engines. On Jan. 2, VP-Operations Frank Judd presented his Engineering Project Report, in which he stressed the need for conservative prudence in weighing the options, noting pointedly that the Strato-cruiser was an example where the manufacturer, Boeing, had, in effect, over-promised and under-delivered. Noting that 6 1049Es could do the work of 7 DC-6Bs, he predicted that on the domestic system the DC-6B would yield more profit, while the 1049E would be superior on the international routes, "carrying a greater payload at a faster block speed." He was concerned about the reliability of the unproven Wright engines, stating "From the engine performance and reliability standpoints, the DC-6B has the preference", although Judd expected that other airlines would have dealt with potential problems by the time NWA would take delivery of any 1049Es. Regarding passenger appeal, "The Lockheed Company has given this factor major consideration in the development of the 1049E and in our opinion has come up with the ultimate in interior design and appointments." Judd concluded: "It is therefore the recommendation of the Mechanical, Inspection, Flight, Cabin Service, Communications, Stations, and Aircraft Engineering Divisions of the Operations Department.....that the DC-6B is the best buy for domestic route segments.....that the 1049E is the best buy for long-hauls, Honolulu, Anchorage, and the Orient." He added this contradictory caveat: "It is our opinion that on a system-wide basis the L-1049E shows a significant superiority over the DC-6B." However, in rigorous day to day operation, "it is believed that the DC-6B, which has already been completely proven in airline service, has a distinct advantage over the 1049E." In other words, there was *no* clear winner.

J.W. Mariner, Asst. VP-Sales, was unequivocal--the 1049E would "outsell, and therefore outprofit" the DC-6B: "The Constellation is definitely less expensive in terms of what it can produce, what it can sell, and what it can return. We are convinced that the Constellation is the ship. It would be a serious mistake to buy the DC-6B." Sales advocated buying up to *sixteen* L-1049Es.

Wm. J. Eiden, NWA's Director of Budget and Cost Control, added a note of caution: while agreeing with Judd that "more profit will be realized from the 1049E", he deemed Mariner's sales projections too optimistic, adding that interest charges on the purchase of 16 1049Es would total \$7 million.

Speaking for the pilots, W.R. Bullock of ALPA Council No. 1 stated, *cont. p. 4*

Continued from p.3

"Regardless of the aircraft decided upon, we would especially like to say that the pilots of Northwest Airlines will do the best job possible in either one."

Meanwhile, leaving no stone unturned, Harris wrote to United Airlines president Wm. "Pat" Patterson on Feb. 24: "Dear Pat: I notice that you have averaged a net operating loss on your Boeings (B-377s) of \$110,000 a month. It seems to me that United would be well advised to get rid of those airplanes, and right away. If you are interested in selling those Boeings, I am prepared to offer you between four and five million dollars for the lot, provided the deal can be made at once; or perhaps you would rather swap for some of our DC-4s. We own 18 DC-4s, and you could easily choose a few good ones out of that group." There is no record of a reply, but United did sell their entire fleet of six Stratocruisers to BOAC the following year, to fill in for BOAC's grounded Comet 1 jet fleet.

On Apr. 20, 1953, NWA ordered 6 L-1049E Super Constellations, the press release stating, "Northwest thus steps into position to be the first airline to fly 350mph Super Constellations on transcontinental and transPacific routes." The purchase price of \$21.8 million was financed by a loan structured through 14 banks, at an annual interest rate of 4%, final payment due on Dec. 31, 1959.

Then, in July, Harris negotiated a deal to lease 4 DC-6Bs from Flying Tiger and Slick Airways (two supplemental airlines), stating "The DC-6B is well-known as the lowest cost per mile, four engine equipment. I visualize that the four DC-6Bs will be the beginning of a larger fleet of DC-6Bs for our use, to be procured only as our financial results warrant." The six L-1049Es and four DC-6Bs would be the total fleet additions during the Harris' presidency.

RESTRUCTURING Like NWA founder Lt. Col. Lewis Britton, Harris liked to be addressed by his military rank, and Gen. Harris was disturbed by what he saw as an inadequate administrative structure at Northwest. "There were too many twilight zones where several executives-or none-might function." Too many managers treated positions in the Asian stations as temporary assignments, returning to the States just as they had mastered the ways of doing business unique to the Far East. He felt that top management was bogged down in a "morass of administrative detail with which it has still been encumbered in the St. Paul office" which distracted him from the larger task of strategic

planning for the company's future. On Aug. 1, 1953, with the approval of the board of directors, Harris introduced a new management structure at NWA which borrowed from his previous experiences at American and Pan Am. As part of the decentralized authority concept, he divided the company into two autonomous and equal divisions—the Continental, with headquarters in St. Paul, and the Orient, with headquarters in Tokyo, each headed by a vice president who would be part of a "newly created high second level of management" which would administer each division's day to day operations. Harris and a small group of six other executives would focus on strategy, long-term planning and policy determination, and would be based in Manhattan, along with necessary support staff. Why New York? As Harris explained in a Jun. 16 letter to all employees: "There are several reasons, all concerned with the future welfare of our company. New York is the center of the financial and business communities. Our ownership is largely held in New York. Our capital requirements are negotiated and administered there. It is the point of origin of the majority of international business travel. It generates the greatest part of U.S. domestic travel. It is a point where Northwest has long been lacking in identity with the public." Washington D.C., "the center of the CAB, which controls the destiny of all U.S.-flag carriers", would be quickly accessible.

NWA already had several offices scattered around the city. Harris planned to consolidate them in office space at 537 Fifth Ave., with a reservations office in the basement, a ground floor city ticket office facing Fifth Ave., other offices on the mezzanine, and a 5000 sq. ft. (slightly larger than today's NWA History Centre) System Executive Office on the 2nd and 3rd floors for Harris, six other top executives, and support staff.

NEW YORK

537 5th Ave.
"The Future Home of Northwest Orient Airlines"

Photo: NWAHC Archives.



The annual net added cost for the enlarged New York offices would be \$43,698, about the annual salary of one vice-president. The General Office would remain in St. Paul, but Harris supported a proposal to consolidate the G.O., the overhaul base and maintenance facilities at a new complex to be built by the Metropolitan Airports Commission at Wold-Chamberlain airport (the present MSP).

Gen. Harris summarized the changes for *Business Week*: "I've tried to make a neat package out of this business," adding "We're always ready to spend a dollar if we're sure of getting \$1.10 back."

YOUTUBE Given the hostility that would develop towards Harris from many in the Twin Cities, it's natural to wonder what Harris was like in person. Former public relations staffer (and HC board member) Bob Johnson remembers, "He wasn't a laid back guy; he was sort of a full speed guy." Thanks to YouTube, we can judge for ourselves. In 1953, Harris appeared on an episode of the weekly news program *Longines Chronoscope* (with the exceptions of recent CEOs Doug Steenland and Richard Anderson, Harris is the *only* Northwest CEO we can readily see on video). In a 12-minute interview, Harris seems somewhat gruff, is plain-spoken, answers questions directly and succinctly, and only cracks a hint of a smile when disagreeing with the premise of a question. He predicts rapid growth of the airline industry, and "a marked increase in airline activity to Asia."



Harold Harris, right, on *Longines Chronoscope*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6B0LSnuAPo>

DOWNFALL On May 4, the *New York Times* reported "Northwest Airlines is Flying High under Piloting of General Harris", and during the summer and early autumn of 1953, departmental and executive reports betrayed no hint of dissension within the board of directors. But in November, a steady stream of trouble began. Space doesn't permit a complete account, but here's a summary timeline:

Oct./Nov.: while touring company stations in Asia, Harris contracts amoebic dysentery,

possibly at a dinner party in Taipei given in his honor by Lt. Gen. Claire Chennault. He remains ill for much of the rest of the year. The common stock share price, 14 in January, slides during the 4th quarter to 9.

Nov. 20: Treasurer L.M. Holstad reports 4th quarter revenues to date are “below goal”.

Nov. 30: Board members request “special reports” from Harris, including a complete review of the System Executive Office project in New York.

Jan. 8, 1954: Chairman Croil Hunter recommends the purchase of additional DC-6Bs from Canadian Pacific Airlines, raising the question of possibly “getting out” of the Constellation purchase contract. Harris issues a full report per the Nov. 30 request, with financial projections for 1953-4.

Jan. 10: Three unidentified board members visit Harris to tell him, unofficially, that certain board members plan a search for a new president to replace Harris. Later that evening, Harris suffers a bout of paroxysmal tachycardia (type of heart attack) and is hospitalized in the Abbott Hospital.

Jan. 11: At a hastily convened board meeting, director Frank Reavis introduces a motion of no confidence, which passes but is not unanimous. The board grants Harris an indefinite leave of absence, rescinds its prior approval of all Harris' long-term plans, and votes to defer the quarterly dividend on the preferred stock. The common stock share price sinks to 7 1/2 within days.

Jan. 12: An unidentified NWA executive, without telling Harris, leaks word to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* that “Gen. Harris is out.”

Jan. 15: From his hospital bed, Harris issues a full, written defense of his position.

Jan. 25: Vice-presidents Judd and Mariner issue new reports about the Constellation purchase, completely reversing their positions of a year earlier.

Jan. 28: Harris tells the *Minneapolis Star* that he won't quit, says “I'm feeling fine”.

Feb. 12: Comptroller L.M. Holstad issues a report on revenue shortfalls, stating “A correction of this trend is urgently needed. Action should be taken immediately to reduce operating expenses.”

Feb. 23: Harris' attorney Malcolm MacIntyre advises that although Northwest is technically in breach of contract, “it would make a lot more sense for you and the company to sever relations rationally” and negotiate a revised separation agreement.

Mar. 4: In the office at 537 Fifth Ave., Harris officially resigns from NWA and signs a revised termination agreement.

AFTERMATH After leaving NWA, Harold Harris served as a consultant for a proposed

merger between Braniff and his former company, Panagra. In 1955, Smith, Barney partner William Harding recruited Harris to head a new firm, Aviation Financial Services, a consulting firm which specialized in brokering financial arrangements for airlines seeking new equipment. Harris retired in 1965, but remained active on the lecture circuit in aviation circles. He died in 1988 at the age of 92, and is buried in Falmouth, Mass. on Cape Cod. His grave marker reads, “Ahead in the dawn, a handful of bright stars, towards these he sets his course.”

Harris was succeeded at Northwest by Donald Nyrop. The company ultimately took delivery of 4 upgraded “Super G” Constellations in 1955, and for about 18 months enjoyed a competitive advantage over Pan Am on the routes to Asia until both carriers acquired the even more capable DC-7C. Nyrop arranged more agreeable financing for the Constellations, and eventually sold them at a profit. Though in service with NWA for only a short time, the Constellation remained a popular part of the corporate imagery and was featured on the cover of the final International Business Class Menu issued by Northwest Airlines, in Feb. 2009.



Robert DuBert collection.

The corporate restructuring and the System Executive Office were cancelled.

The 1953 Northwest Airlines Annual Report announced that Harold Harris had left the company, and that the net operating **profit** for 1953 was **double** that of 1952 (!).

MSP At the time, many Minnesotans were offended by the fact that Harris didn't buy a house in the Twin Cities and move his family there, taking that as proof that Harris “was going to move the company to New York”. That is but one of the misconceptions about the Harris chapter in the history of NWA which have been passed down in lore, accruing credibility by repetition. The truth of the matter was this:

Grace (Mrs.) Harris was a strong-willed woman who simply refused to leave the family's comfortable Connecticut home because Minnesota was too cold! Moving the General Office to New York was the last thing Gen. Harris would have wanted; as we have seen, he wanted to get away from what he called the “morass”. As for the Constellations, the notion that Harris somehow unilaterally imposed them on the company is also false, though some company execs tried to revise their paper trails when it became clear that Harris was “out”. Would NWA have thrived had Harris stayed? We'll never know. We *do* know that the company prospered under Donald Nyrop, whose policies of incremental growth, financial frugality, centralized administration and painstaking attention to even the smallest detail can be viewed as the opposites of the Harris approach. Yet in the decades which followed--the era of deregulation--Northwest found itself perpetually locked in an awkward fourth or fifth-place ranking, squeezed from above by the Big Three (United, American and Delta) and by the low-cost carriers from below.

In my opinion, Harold Harris was a visionary and capable leader who was simply a “bad fit” for a conservative midwest airline with majority shareholders whose investment horizon was short-term.

Essentially, I believe that Harold Harris lost his job at Northwest Airlines because the value of the company, as measured by the market capitalization of its common stock, declined by almost 50% during his watch. The directors who orchestrated Harris' ouster, however unfair and ruthless they might seem to me, simply *and* legally discharged their fiduciary responsibilities to the shareholders as they judged best. Such are the ways of the world of business. And the stock market *can* be irrational, driven as much by emotion and perception as reality, as any investor, small or large, can attest.

The ultimate irony may well be that, in the course of time, Northwest Airlines did disappear and Minnesota jobs were lost, when NWA was merged with a larger airline which Harold Ross Harris helped to get off the ground in 1925, and one whose headquarters is in a city decidedly *not* in the upper Midwest--- Atlanta. →

Many thanks to Dawne Dewey, Head of the Wright State University Special Collections, for her generous assistance with this project.

For a reference list and more photos, see p. 13 of the digital edition of this REFLECTIONS issue.

The opinions expressed are my own and not official policy of the NWA History Centre. RD

FAREWELL, OLD FRIENDS Delta Air Lines retires its last DC-9s

On Dec. 8, 1965, Delta became the world's first operator of the DC-9. As a result of the merger with Republic Airlines, NWA for many years operated the world's largest fleet of DC-9s, over 170 at its peak. Delta flew the last scheduled DC-9 flights on Jan. 6, 2014, but retained two aircraft as operational backups, due to delays in delivery of the B717 fleet. On Jan. 22, the final revenue flights were flown by N779NC, and the following day, N779NC and N782NC were ferried to their final destinations, thus marking the end of two eras—the withdrawal of the last remnants of the former Republic fleet from Delta's roster, and the end of the DC-9 aircraft type in service with a major airline.

This is an account of the ferry flight of N779NC to its new home at the Carolinas Aviation Museum in Charlotte.

Photos by Robert DuBert unless otherwise noted.

Originally ordered by North Central Airlines, DC-9-51 serial no. 48101 was completed on Nov. 29, 1979, and delivered to Republic Airlines on Dec. 7, 1979. Registered as N779NC, it retained this number for its entire operational life.

The aircraft at DTW, 1980.
Photo: Howard Chaloner.



N779NC was assigned ship number 9870 at NWA.
The aircraft on liftoff from ALB, 2007.
Photo: Conor Clancy.

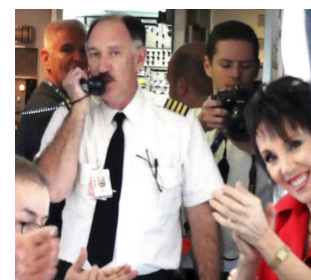


Jan. 23, 2014 at ATL--N779NC and N782NC (rear) at adjacent gates in the T Concourse. The former was headed for CLT, where it would join the aircraft collection of the Carolinas Aviation Museum. N782NC was bound for Thief River Falls, Minn., (TVF) and the Northland Community and Technical College, where it will be used to train students enrolled in the aviation maintenance technology degree program. The previous day, N779NC flew two turns, ATL-VPS and ATL-EWR, the final revenue flights.



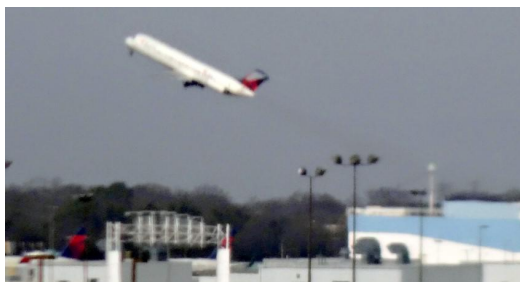
Onboard DL9944, the ferry flight to CLT.
Left: Capt. **Scott Woolfrey**, DC-9 Chief Line Check Pilot;
First Officer **Joel Schrader**.

Right: Capt. **Harry O'Nan**, Lead Line Check Pilot for the 757/767 in DTW, gave a brief history of the DC-9. Capt. O'Nan is also the Chief Pilot for the Carolinas Aviation Museum's flyable DC-3, and was instrumental in arranging the donation of N779NC.



As N779NC taxied for takeoff, passengers onboard saw N782NC lift off for TVF.

Coverage of the arrival in TVF:
<http://www.wdaz.com/event/article/id/22086/>





A festive atmosphere prevailed onboard the 33 minute flight. L-R: **Patricia Ringness**, Flight Attendant; **Nancey Price**, Crew Scheduling; **Capt. Jay Updyke**; **Pete Sansom**, Sector Manager, Operations/Customer Center; **Will Bruner**, Tech Ops; **Andrew Stoe**, Airport Customer Service.

Bruner, Price, Ringness and Sansom are all members of the Delta Air Show Team, an employee group who volunteer their time to staff events involving a Delta aircraft. Sansom, as Team Leader, plays a major role in events like this flight and is a member of the board of directors of the Delta Flight Museum.



The flight received a traditional water cannon salute as it taxied to the ramp area of the Carolinas Aviation Museum (CAM), on the perimeter of Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

Charlotte Observer coverage of the arrival:

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2014/01/23/4635083/deltas-last-dc-9-retires-at-charlotte.html#.UvehofldV8E>



Two generations of Douglas Aircraft Co. craftsmanship: N779NC was parked next to Eastern Air Lines DC-7B N736D, which is temporarily stored at the museum, awaiting an engine change. The other airliners in the museum collection are a Piedmont Airlines DC-3, and the USAirways A320 which ditched into the Hudson River in 2009. After its salvage from the river and the removal of its contents, the Airbus was trucked "home" to Charlotte, a USAirways' major hub, for permanent display at the CAM. An assortment of military aircraft complete the CAM inventory.



The handover ceremony: L-R—**Pete Sansom**; F/O **Joel Schrader**; **Floyd Wilson**, CAM founder; **Patricia Ringness**; **Wally Coppinger**, CAM Executive Director; **Capt. Scott Woolfrey**; **Capt. Harry O'Nan**.

Other fleet dispositions: N767NC was ferried to MSP where it will be used for fire training. N675MC, acquired by NWA after the RC merger, will go to the newly-expanded Delta Flight Museum. Unconfirmed reports state that some aircraft may go to PAWA Dominicana airlines.

N106US occupies pride of place at the CAM. On Jan. 15, 2009, this aircraft, operating USAirways flight 1549, lost power in both engines after incurring a massive bird strike on climbout from LGA. **Capt. C.B. Sullenberger** and **F/O J.B. Skiles** successfully ditched the plane in the Hudson River with no loss of life, an incident which became known as "The Miracle on the Hudson". The aircraft anchors a series of displays about aviation safety.

OUT & ABOUT: Visiting the CAM

4672 First Flight Dr, Charlotte NC 28208
704.997.3770

Open: M-F 10am-4pm; Sat. 10am-5pm; Sun. 1pm-5pm.
General Admission: \$12; Seniors 60+, \$10; Students and Active Duty Military, \$8; Children 5 and under, Free.
Ground transportation: taxi or rental car. The museum is located approximately 3.5 miles from the passenger terminal.
Info: www.carolinasaviation.org

Hail and Farewell.

Photo: JP DesCamp



Working the NWA White House Press Charters

from the files of Vicky Pritchett, Flight Attendant Manager

From the earliest days of our country, the President of the United States has travelled--first on horseback, then by coach, steam-boat and railroad. In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first president to travel by air. When possible, members of the press accompanied the traveling presidential party, but it wasn't until the early 1960s that a formal arrangement was devised, creating a small "press pool", consisting of representatives from the television, radio and print media, who would travel on Air Force One. The remaining members of the press would follow the president onboard commercial airliners chartered by the White House Travel Office. Until 1991, Pan Am and TWA operated these charters exclusively, but when Pan Am ceased operation in 1991, other airlines, including Northwest, were permitted to bid for the business. Each trip is bid separately, and awarded by joint decision of the Travel Office and the White House Correspondents Association. Typically, 100-150 members of the press accompany a presidential trip. The largest aircraft which flies as Air Force One, the Boeing VC-25A (modified 747-200B), has seats for a press pool of 12. Those seat assignments rotate on each flight, and the remaining reporters fly in the press charter aircraft.

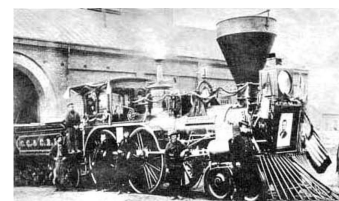


In 1994 and 1996, **Vicky Pritchett**, a Flight Attendant Manager in MSP, accompanied flight attendant crews on NWA press charters accompanying President Bill Clinton. In July 1994, the president attended the **G7 Summit** in Naples, Italy, a meeting of the leaders of the 7 wealthiest countries—the U.S., Japan, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The itinerary included side trips to Riga, Warsaw, and Berlin, to meet with leaders of the Baltic States, Poland and Germany. In July 1996, a Northwest press charter followed Pres. Clinton to Subic Bay, the Philippines, for the Summit Meeting of the 21 Pacific Rim countries comprising the **Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)** group. This itinerary included state visits to Canberra, Australia and Bangkok, Thailand.



FACTOID *The very first "White House Press Charter" occurred in 1861, when President-Elect Abraham Lincoln, traveling by two-car private train from Springfield, Ill. to Washington, D.C., found it necessary to add a train car in Cincinnati to accommodate newspaper and magazine reporters. (note: Vicky Pritchett did not work on this charter!)*

Right: the locomotive of Pres.-Elect Lincoln's train.



NWA operated White House charters using either 747-200 or DC-10-30 aircraft, both providing ample room for the press corps passengers and their gear. For the NW crews, a trip began with a ferry flight to Andrews Air Force Base (ADW), in suburban Maryland near Washington, D.C., to receive the press corps, who usually boarded at the last minute. In accordance with charter requirements, well-stocked mini-bars at each aircraft door, often with a "Boarding Buffet", were offered during every boarding, as were newspapers, including 100 copies of the *Washington Post* when available. Notes Pritchett, "when the door closed, it was a matter of a few minutes before it all miraculously disappeared into the storage areas for takeoff."

Regardless of seat assignment, all passengers received First Class service--all meals served on china, with glassware, always with a choice of at least two main dishes, including a beef option, as mandated by the charter contract. At some stations, catering provided local specialties--out of Sydney, the lunch offered choices of pan-fried barramundi and lamb eye of loin in addition to beef. At Manila, a honey calamansi mousse dessert was boarded, and in Bangkok, chicken satay. And with every meal, "mounds" of Godiva chocolates!



Service on a DC-10 press charter flight. Standing: Rosemarie Hayes, Susan Macloves, Jane Hakensen. Photo: Vicky Pritchett.

On all but the shortest flights, attendants had to "run" meals by hand (no meal carts) in order to leave the aisles free for the reporters to freely mingle with their colleagues. The onboard atmosphere was casual yet professional, as reporters worked on stories to be filed at each arrival station. Speaking of press charters in general, CBS correspondent Robert Pierpoint said the flights were "a time to play poker and eat good food". Robert Schieffer, host of CBS *Face the Nation*, remembers a "party ambience" on many flights.

On arrival at each destination, flight attendants gave passengers "Go To Bags" containing cookies, fruit, sandwiches and other snacks, and "Burn Bags" for the secure disposal of sensitive documents. Reporters boarded buses headed for en route "Filing Centers" where they could dispatch their reports, and then to their hotels. While the press attended official functions, NW crew members would enjoy sightseeing, shopping, dining, partying and resting on their layovers until it



L-R: Flight attendants Rosemarie Hayes, Frank Slitti and Jane Hakensen with a Boarding Buffet cart. Photo: Vicky Pritchett.

was time to depart for the next stop on the presidential itinerary. Vicky remembers the aircraft door mini-bars as being *especially* popular with the press during afternoon and evening departure boardings, after their hot and tiring days on the job.

What does Vicky remember most about working the White House Press Charters? It was the challenge of fostering a sense of teamwork among crewmembers who were often mixed crews from different bases who only met for the first time during briefings. And these crews would serve a discerning, high-profile passenger clientele. How well did they succeed? As Vicky reported, from the APEC trip, "Many raves from our customers regarding the service received in the past several days and verbal hopes of seeing that red tail in the future on other White House Press Charters. With respect and support for each other, we worked as teamplayers to achieve success, and we all left with great feelings of accomplishment in this most important endeavor. We did it!" →

Vicky's Photo Album

Photos
courtesy
Vicky
Pritchett



NW DC-10 cabin crew in Sydney, Australia. L-R: Frank Lasduk; Jane Hakensen; Rosemarie Hayes; Susan Macloves; Gina Slitti; Frank Slitti; Francesca Janis; Martin Wagner; Howard Albano.



Helen Thomas, Dean of the Washington Press Corps.

L: Air Force One
on arrival in Riga,
Latvia.



R: President Clinton
works the reception
line.



NW 747 crew with Air Force One in the background.



On behalf of her crews, Vicky Pritchett accepts thanks from President Clinton.



AirSpace Minnesota Announces Go Boldly Challenge to Honor Minnesotans Who Dare to Dream

"To climb the highest mountain, to discover new countries, to wander into limitless space or to throw a searchlight into the realms of eternal darkness is what makes life worth living."

Auguste Piccard, twin brother of Minnesota Aeronautics Pioneer Jean Piccard, who inspired Star Trek's Jean-Luc Picard

MANKATO, Minn., Feb. 21, 2014 -- AirSpace Minnesota today announced the **Go Boldly Challenge** at the Minnesota Science Teachers Association Conference on Science Education in Mankato, Minn. Created to celebrate Minnesota's remarkable contributions to technology innovation through aerospace and aviation, AirSpace Minnesota is committed to inspiring a new generation by showing what's possible when dreams and skills connect.

The **Go Boldly Challenge** will recognize Minnesotans of all ages who have achieved something extraordinary related to aviation or aerospace. Nominees should have a passion for aviation, aerospace or related fields, a positive approach to achieving a dream and ongoing commitment to gaining and using science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills.

Honorees will be recognized in five age groups: elementary, middle school, high school, college and adult. The first 50 applicants will receive aviator sunglasses and a **Go Boldly** AirSpace Minnesota T-shirt. Finalists in each category will be honored at the **Go Boldly Expo** on **April 26th, 2014** at the Downtown St. Paul Airport (9 a.m. – 5 p.m.) and receive a \$100 National Camera Exchange gift card.

The **Go Boldly Expo** is a free public event for students, educators and families featuring Apollo Astronauts Buzz Aldrin (first moon landing) and Harrison "Jack" Schmitt (last moon landing). The Go Boldly honorees will meet Minnesota astronaut Karen Nyberg, who recently returned from the International Space Station. The Expo includes main stage presentations, book signings and an interactive career showcase.

Applications must be submitted by **March 31, 2014 at 11:59 PM**. Nominations will be reviewed by industry leaders, including members of the AirSpace Minnesota Board of Directors. Honorees will be notified by April 19, 2014.

Nominate an individual, team, or yourself via the application at www.airspacemn.org.

AirSpace Minnesota is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to helping students discover their dreams and the creativity and value of skills and careers involving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). When dreams and skills connect, anything is possible.

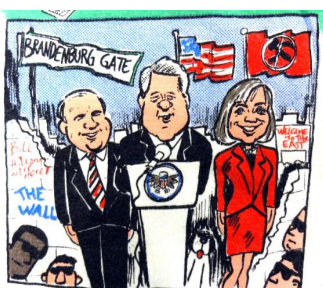
Contact: Kristi Rollag Wangstad, AirSpace Minnesota, 612.727.1737, email: krw@airspacemn.org

continued from p. 9

More from Vicky's Photo Album



Photo: Robert DuBert.



One of Vicky's souvenirs from White House Press Charters is this t-shirt, designed by Alexandria, Va.-based illustrator Mark "Gootz" Gutierrez, whose clients include the White House Press Corps, the World Bank, Freddie Mac and George Washington University. Pictured are the world leaders who attended the 1994 G7 Summit, seated at a poker table, while Boris Yeltsin of Russia hovers behind, saying "Comrades, Deal Me In!"



L-R: Jean Chretien; Helmut Kohl; Francois Mitterand; Bill Clinton; Tomiichi Murayama; Silvio Berlusconi; John Major.

L: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl with Bill and Hillary in Berlin, a state visit after the G7 Summit in Naples.

R: Vicky (2nd from right) chats with airport security staff at Riga Airport.





Photo: Dirk Jan Kraan

News Briefs and Announcements

There's a new **Facebook** page for NWA alumni, which has posts from employees in all job classifications *and* from stations all over the world. It's a *great* place to reconnect with friends and to post your photos. Type "Northwest Airlines" in the search box, and you'll find the page. Look for the screen shown here. Don't forget the NWA History Centre Facebook page, especially for your vintage historical photos and posts.



Pencil the date Sunday, Aug. 3 in your calendars for an NWA alumni event currently in the planning stage to be held in MSP. Info to follow in the next issue.

A reminder for our readers: all past issues of this newsletter—**HISTORY MATTERS** and **REFLECTIONS**--are found in the news/newsletter section of the HC website, nwahistory.org. The digital online edition of **REFLECTIONS** usually contains extra content not found in the print edition—check it out!

President's Message *continued from p.2*

The Board of the NWAHC is convinced that the goals of **A/SMN**, coupled with that Board's planned steps to build **A/SMN**, represents the best future for the NWAHC. There are many details to be discussed and agreed upon, but, there is much more to be gained in supporting the NWAHC until a Minnesota aviation and aerospace museum, dedicated to celebrating and remembering the airlines we worked for (whichever legacy family tree airline it was) is open to the public...and to you and your family. Please join us by sending in your pledge of support. Better yet, bring it to the NWAHC – we'd love to see you there. CAVU. ➔

In Memoriam
Helen Jacobson Richardson

Nov. 26, 1914—Jan. 6, 2014

By Bob Johnson

Helen Jacobson Richardson died on Jan. 6, 2014, in Bloomington, Minn. She was 99. In 1939, she was the third stewardess to be hired by Northwest Airlines, preceded only by Dorothy Stumph and Virginia Johnson. A native of Winthrop Minn., she was the daughter of Dr. Jacob and Alma Jacobson, immigrants from Norway and Sweden. She applied for a job as a stewardess with United Airlines on a dare from Robert Richardson, then a medical student and her future husband.

In the course of her brief airline career, she served as an assistant to Camille "Rosie" Stein, Northwest's first Superintendent of Stewardesses, where the two worked on writing stewardess training manuals and related documents. Her stewardess uniform is on display at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

Helen pursued a variety of activities throughout her life-- a homemaker helping to raise four children, a school volunteer, and a Bluebird (junior program of the Campfire Girls) leader. She helped design the Japanese Garden at the St. Paul YWCA and was active at St. Timothy Lutheran Church, St. Paul, where she and her husband were charter (founding) members. Helen's passing on Jan. 6 was the day of the couple's seventy-second wedding anniversary. ➔ RLJ

Her obituary in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*: <http://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/13989295/>

Tribute article which appeared a few days later: <http://www.startribune.com/local/241985051.html>

A tribute from Anne Kerr, including the story of Helen's friendship with two flight attendants who took her to visit an A380 super jumbo jet: <http://blog.ladyskywriter.com/2014/02/helen-jacobson-richardson-loved-4.html>

Helen's career with NWA is covered in detail in this feature-length interview with Bob Johnson in the Sept. 2008 issue of the HC newsletter **HISTORY MATTERS**: http://nwahistory.org/newsletter/08_sep_newsletter.pdf



Digital Edition Extra

Recently posted on Facebook:

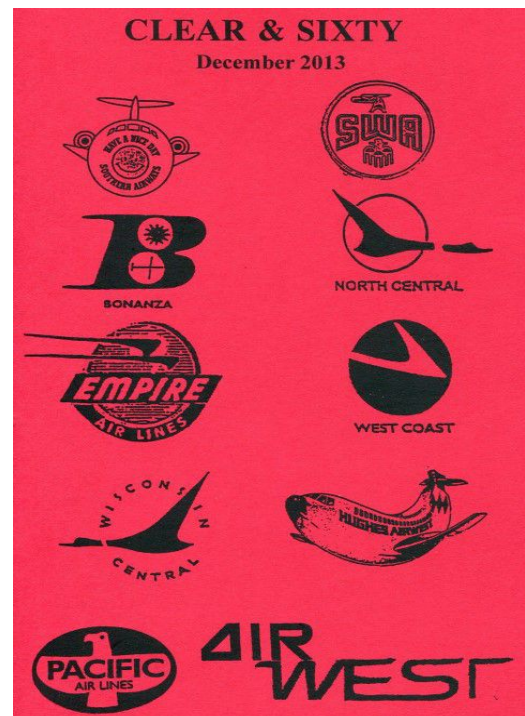
Winter 2006 in Buffalo, N.Y.

For more great photos, messages and anecdotes, see the Northwest Airlines Employees page in Facebook.



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Digital Edition Exclusive Extras

The former Northwest Airlines System Executive Office 537 Fifth Ave., New York NY

This trio of addresses occupies a full block between 44th and 45th streets. NWA offices were located in the basement and first three floors of the narrow center section building, which is **537**. The location is roughly halfway between Grand Central Terminal and Rockefeller Center. Photo taken in December 2013, by Robert DuBert.

Feature Article References

1. Libby, Justin H. Harold Ross Harris, American Aviation Historical Society Journal, Winter 2010.
2. Stevens, Alta Mae.and then what happened?....., Anchor House, Bloomington Ind., 2014.
3. Davies, R.E.G., Pan Am, Orion Books, New York 1987.
4. Davies, R.E.G., Delta, Paladwr Press, Miami 1990.
5. The Archives of Wright State University, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the NWA History Centre.



Decorations received by Harold Ross Harris

USAF Command Pilot Wings

Top row: Army Distinguished Service Medal; Legion of Merit; Air Medal

Middle row: World War 1 Victory Medal with Battle Clasp; American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two service stars; World War 2 Victory Medal.

Bottom row: Commander of the Order of the British Empire; Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy; Order of Abdon Calderón (Ecuador); Officer of the Order of the Sun (Peru).

Test Pilot For seven years after World War 1, Harold Harris served as a test pilot for the U.S. Army Air Service, principally at McCook and Wilbur Wright military airfields in Dayton, Ohio (the latter is now Wright-Patterson AFB). He flew and evaluated many unusual aircraft, two of which are shown below.

Upper: The Witterman-Lewis XNBL-1 "Barling Bomber", designed by Walter Barling in response to a request by Lt. Col. Billy Mitchell for a strategic bomber for the US Army Air Service. First flown by Harris in 1923, the aircraft was retired in 1928.

Photo: Bundesarchiv.



Middle-lower: The Emile Berliner Helicopter, designed by Emile Berliner. Test flown by Harris in 1924, it achieved a stable hover at an altitude of 15 feet.

Photos: Bundesarchiv.



In 1922, a Loening monoplane Harris was testing suffered severe aileron oscillation, and Harris baled out, using a free-fall parachute, thereby becoming the first airman to be saved by a parachute during a flight emergency. He landed in a backyard grape arbor, with the aircraft wreckage three blocks away. The grape arbor at 335 Troy St., Dayton, Ohio is now a stop on the Aviation Trail of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park.

Upper: the grape arbor at 335 Troy St., with Harris' parachute.

Lower: the aircraft wreckage at 403 Valley St.

Photos: USAF Archives.

