



REFLECTIONS



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

Northwest Airlines 1926-2010



Capt. and Mrs. Sutter, with a newspaper report of the 1977 hijacking of a Northwest flight, captained by Sutter. Photo: Bob Johnson

HIJACKED! "On a 747 flight out of Tokyo Haneda to the west coast, via Honolulu. May 8, 1977, 5:27 pm departure", Red recalls. "First Officer Bill Engen and Second Officer John Blais were up front with me. 500 miles out, flight steward Bill van Heuven comes in and says we have a hijacker onboard. You got to be kidding, I said. 'No', Bill said, 'he's got a razorblade at the throat of Miss Sekine, our Japanese escort (interpreter). He wants to go to Moscow and come up here and talk with you guys.'"

"I told Bill to tell the fellow to give us five minutes to arrange things and we'd see him. I said go back and get the crash ax and stick the handle down your leg inside your pants, and to cover the blade with your shirt (*ed: Steward van Heuven was a former US Marine. See REFLECTIONS, Fall 2013*). Told Bill Engen to fly the plane."

The hijacker (*ed: Bruce Trayer, 25*) then entered the cockpit with the Japanese girl in front of him and Bill behind. "He leaned over towards me and repeated that he wanted to go to Moscow. I told him we were on our way and to let the young lady go, not to harm her. Then, Bill van Heuven hit him twice on the head with the flat side of the ax and he (Trayer) fell down. Bill and flight steward Bob Fisher and F/O Blais dragged him, kicking, screaming and swearing like you couldn't believe, into the lounge, bandaged his head and tied him up, bound his feet and gagged him. Three US Army officers, onboard as passengers, helped."

Capt. Red's 747 returned to Haneda, where a contingent of Japanese police and officials hustled the hijacker off the plane,

THE FLYING SUTTERS

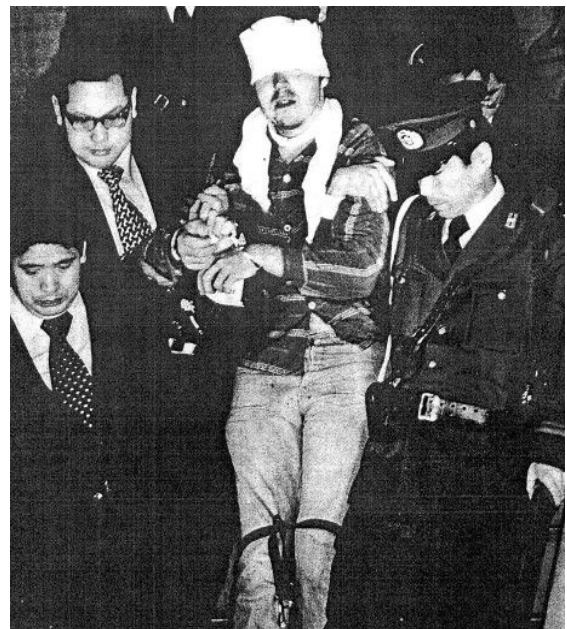
Homer "Red" and Dorothy Sutter,
a brief memoir.

By Bob Johnson

Two remarkable people visited the NWA History Centre recently, to talk about Northwest Airlines as it once was, and to tell a bit about themselves. They are retired Capt. Homer "Red" Sutter (he'll be 96 on October 18) and his wife Dorothy, a former Northwest stewardess. Red's memories of almost 40 years of flying, about 40,000 flight hours total, could fill the archives at Smithsonian Air and Space.

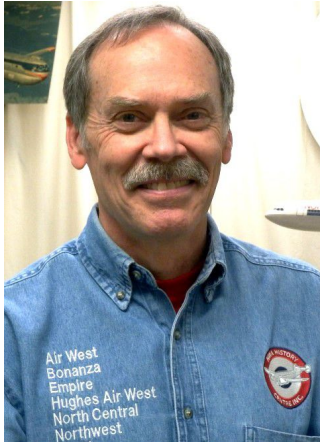
Here's one special memory:

for medical attention and then to jail. Red recalls, "We went to the local police station to make statements. Northwest did a great job, rounded up another crew, and the plane and its passengers were back in the air 90 minutes later. My crew and I left the next day. The hijacker was a big guy, about 6 foot 2, from Prairie du Chien, Wisc. He wanted to go to Moscow not as a political statement but because, he said, 'The Russians don't put additives in their food.' He was a nut case."



Hijacker Bruce Trayer in custody at Tokyo Haneda Airport. Photo courtesy Red Sutter.

President's Message



Bruce Kitt Photo: Joe Callaci

YOU did it – thank YOU! Your financial response to the 2014 Spring Solicitation Drive gave the NWA History Centre (NWAHC) the equivalent of one year's rent for the gallery display area. This is a big achievement on your part that represented an even bigger worry for the NWAHC. Please excuse me if I sound like your local PBS station, but we could not have done it without you. It is also the absolute truth that without your ongoing support the NWA History Centre could not exist. Thank you!

An interesting statistic became apparent as we acknowledged the contributions we received: we send our letters for support to everyone--members, donors--we even send appeals to people who contact us out of the blue with requests or questions! Interestingly, the largest group of contributors are people who *are not members* of the NWAHC.

In some cases they have contributed to the NWAHC for several years, but have not chosen to become members. Unfortunately, these people will not read our words of thanks as they won't receive this, or any issue, of REFLECTIONS. If you know of someone that this describes, please encourage them to join so they can reap the rewards of their interest and generous support.

The NWAHC was the intersection of two organizations that we're involved in, the **Airline Historian & Archivist Group** (see p. 6) and **AirSpaceMinnesota** (A/SMN). Both are newly created collaborative efforts at roughly the same stage of development, one with a national focus, the other a state. I serve as the Chairman of the A/SMN History Committee and have been working with the Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation, the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame, the Minnesota Aviation History and Education Center and A/SMN to craft a collaborative working partnership for how we will work together to ensure public access to our respective collections.

Recently, a large airline reference collection was being broken up as a result of the death of the collector (a supporter and member), and the NWAHC was offered all the information pertaining to the 13 airlines that are the focus of our museum. The family also asked for help in finding homes for the rest of the collection, either parceled out to other airline museums or in its remaining entirety. I mentioned the upcoming **Airline Historian & Archivist Conference** that I was going to attend and offered to bring several binders to show and sound out other museums regarding their interest in receiving material relevant to each museum's collection. The binders generated a great response with virtually the entire collection being spoken for by multiple museums. Mission accomplished...until the **National Airline History Museum** (NAHM) said they would take the entire collection to ensure it remained intact. Taking a page from what is being done at the A/SMN History Committee, we had a long conversation to discuss access, sharing and the intention of the NAHM, and out of that crafted a formal agreement between the seven airline-focused museums. I am pleased to say everything the donating family, and the public, could have hoped for - that the collection remained intact, properly housed and available for research, and that the collection be known by the collector's name - has been realized. It is exciting to see what museums can accomplish by *working together* - the preservation of our respective airline histories. Your continued support keeps the NWAHC involved in these efforts. 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)

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.)

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cont. from p.1 But there was more to the story: "As the hijacking was happening, an elderly lady passenger onboard had a heart attack. Two Army nurses, traveling as passengers, said there was no way she could make it to Hawaii, so we had to return to Tokyo anyway. She was carried off, and I think she may have died. Yes, we all earned our pay that day."

EARLY CAREER Red Sutter is a native of Springfield, Ill. His dad was a coal miner at the nearby New Citizen mine. He attended Springfield schools and the city's junior college. "I wanted to be an accountant", he recalled. "That seemed to be the thing to be in those days."

But other interests intervened. At age 16, he had full responsibility for running a Shell gas station near his home, whose retiring owner told him, "It's yours". That, school, and then flying. "I learned to fly. Four of us spent \$400 for a 40-horse Taylorcraft, a good airplane. We sold it after a while and bought an 85 hp. Luscomb Silvair." Soon, Red was giving flying lessons. One of Red's local friends was destined to become another well-known Northwest name—Capt. Ralph Render (*ed.: see REFLECTIONS, December 2013*). "Ralph had been working at the Springfield airport before he hooked up with Northwest. He called me one day and said 'Hey, come on up here and fly for Northwest. It's a good outfit.' So I did, although I took a beating pay-wise. My Springfield endeavors were producing about \$700 a month. I started at Northwest for \$195 a month, although \$50 a month raises were fairly frequent." Red attended NWA's pilot training school in Rochester, Minn., and signed on as a co-pilot in March, 1942.

As the years progressed, Red flew everywhere Northwest ever went, including western Canada, Alaska and the Aleutian Islands during Northwest's "Northern Region" operation during World War II. He made Captain in 1947, the same year NWA was awarded its Orient routes. He first flew the Orient for five years, via Anchorage and Shemya Island, in the lumbering old DC-4s. "The DC-4 was a good airplane", Red says.

THE AIRCRAFT As with all pilots, Red has opinions about the airliners he flew—the Douglas DC-3/C-47, DC-4, DC-6B and DC-7C; Martin 2-0-2; Lockheed L-1049G Super Constellation and L-188 Electra; the Boeing 377 Stratocruiser, 707, 720B and the various 747 models. His favorite? "The 747", Red says. "I loved it, I really did. I fell in love with that plane." Adds wife Dorothy: "When he came home after checking out on the 747, he raved about it. He said it was so much fun to fly. Compared to it, all the others were just work."

About the Electra: On St. Patrick's Day, 1960, after leaving Chicago, a Northwest Lockheed Electra bound for Florida and flown by veteran captain Ed LaParle and and F/O Joe Mills, nose-dived into a field near Tell City, Indiana, killing all onboard. "That shook us up", says Red. The Electras went back to the Lockheed factory for some spar and engine mount modifications. We were careful with them for awhile, didn't exceed 225 knots. They became, in my opinion, a very good airplane. They were fast, maneuverable, did tight turns, and you could take them in and out of relatively small airports."

Regarding the tragically flawed Martin 2-0-2 (*see REFLECTIONS, December 2013*): "I flew them as long as we had them", Red recalls. "I was one of the lucky ones who didn't get killed. Finally,

after one blew up in the sky near Reardan, Washington, we (the pilot group) said 'no more', and they were grounded and sold off. I think we just missed losing a couple more. One of them could have been mine, on a Duluth-Twin Cities flight, when the flaps malfunctioned. There are a lot of Martin 2-0-2 stories out there, none of them good." (*ed: the exact cause of the Reardan crash on Jan. 16, 1951, was never officially determined.*)



Martin 2-0-2 msn 9144/N93054, the ship that crashed at Reardan. Photo from *The Martinliners*, Gary Killion (out of print).



Capt. Sutter at the controls of a Northwest B-747: "It was fun to fly. It made all the others seem like work." Photo courtesy Red Sutter.

LORE Back in the "olden days", rumors persisted that at least a few senior Northwest captains would bid a trip to Washington, D.C., every month or so. Their purpose: to replenish their stash of favorite libations (no proof, of course, if you'll pardon the pun). At that time, such exotic fluids were reportedly less expensive in the nations' capital. True? "I guess so", admits Capt. Sutter. "I had one of those Japanese aluminum suitcases, you know, the ones that were supposedly fashioned from the fuselages of downed Zeros. I'd take it to Washington and fill it up—for my friends. Coming back, the suitcase was so heavy you almost had to have it on wheels." It wasn't a money-making proposition: "I sold it (the liquor) to my friends for what I paid for it. That's all."

OP-ED Red Sutter on Northwest president Donald W. Nyrop: "Sure, we pilots had issues with him now and then. Nothing personal. But look at the record. He saved and enhanced the company and made it into one of the most efficient and profitable airlines in the world. His record speaks for itself." *cont. p. 4*

cont. from p. 3

FLYING FAMILY Red and Dorothy have been married 60 years. How did they meet? "Back in the old days", Red says, "when we came in off a flight, some of us would give rides to our people who needed them, to the bus stop or their homes if they lived nearby. I gave a ride to a girl who lived a few blocks from me, who shared a home with Dorothy. She (Dorothy) came to the door. I looked at her and said 'This is it!'"

Dorothy worked for the Northwestern National Bank in downtown Minneapolis, and remembers, "This fellow I just met said I should go to work for Northwest", she recalls. "I didn't think much of it at first, but then I thought about it, and I did." I flew as a stewardess for 2 ½ years, 1942-4, many times on those miserable wartime DC-3 Twin Cities-Chicago layover flights. Also some Twin Cities-Seattle, with all the intermediate stops. Believe me, I'll never set foot in a DC-3 again. Absolutely never!" she vows.

Did she marry Red while she was flying? "No. I resigned for marriage, as you had to do in those days", she says. "But there were rumors. I knew several girls who married in secret but kept flying. Of course, they had to leave when they were expecting."

Red retired on Nov. 21, 1978, after 36 years at NWA. Then what did he do? "Nothing", he says. Dorothy retorts, "Oh yes, you did. You went back to school." Yes, he did—to a vocational training program in Minneapolis. "I took a course in auto mechanics, so I could fix cars", he recalls. "And a course about steam engines; they've always interested me. And a picture-framing course. And I palled around with fellow retired pilots Bill Atkins and Bob Askland."

For more information on hijackings at Northwest, including the 1977 incident, see REFLECTIONS, Fall 2013. For more about the ill-fated Martin 2-0-2 at Northwest, and Captains Ray and Ralph Render, see REFLECTIONS, December 2013. All back issues are available online at <http://nwahistory.org/>. Capt. Red Sutter appears in the television program *Lost Twin Cities 4*, broadcast on Twin Cities Public Television and available online.

There was travel, too, but Red and Dorothy admit to a more sedate lifestyle now, spending most of their time in their comfortable home in Chanhassen, Minn. They've raised three children. Daughter Beth maintains the family tradition as a flight attendant for Delta and daughter Sandra works for Wells-Fargo in Hong Kong. Son Patrick is president of the Borton Volvo dealership in suburban Minneapolis. "It's been a grand flight", Red and Dorothy say. Would they do it again? "You bet we would!" However, Dorothy adds, "But **not** in a DC-3!" → BJ



"We're the guys who kept you flying", Northwest History Centre volunteers and retired mechanics Dave Trautman, Ray Carlson and Joe Olson (L-R) jokingly remind Red and Dorothy. Combined, the trio logged almost 100 years in Northwest's "Engine Shop". A fourth member of the "Thursday Gang", Arlye Weisheim, was absent when this photo was taken. Photo: Bob Johnson.

A NORTHWEST AIRLINES BLOG—Q&A with ANNE KERR

What is a blog? It's short for web log, a personal logbook created on the internet. Here's one definition: BLOG (noun): a website containing a writer's experiences, observations, opinions, etc., and often having images and links to other websites. (Dictionary.com)

Entries in a blog, called "posts", can be added as often as the blogger desires, and most blogs are "interactive", meaning that the reader can add comments to a post, thereby joining in on the conversation.

The best blog devoted to the history of Northwest Airlines and its employees is created by our own resident expert blogger, Anne Kerr, on her website <http://LadySkywriter.com/>. I asked Anne to explain the blogging process, in the following Q&A:



Q: What prompted, or inspired, you to create a blog?

A: *My book, Fujiyama Trays & Oshibori Towels, was the inspiration. At a book marketing seminar, I learned the value of a website and*

blog to promote and sell the book. And that has been true for me, but my real satisfaction comes from the interaction with my readers.

Q: How did you get started?

A: *The son of a friend of mine owns a marketing firm and he designed a great website for his mom's business. I hired him to set up the website and blog.*

Q: Did you consider using any of the free, fill-in-format blog creation sites, such as Weebly.com?

A: *He chose Blogger for my blog, because it is easy to navigate and I could use it to produce the blog myself. I would recommend it to anyone wishing to start a blog. You don't need a personal website, and it is very easy to setup and begin using. Just go to Blogger.com and follow the prompts for setting up a **free** blog. My whole website, including the blog, is in the process of changing to WordPress, which will give me added flexibility. I'll have to report to you later on how WordPress compares to Blogger after I've had more experience with it.*

Q: How often do you post to your blog?

A: *I strive for at least one post a week. Since I started in 2008, my frequency has varied, sometimes skipping months or posting twice in one day. My advice to anyone beginning a blog is to **be consistent** in frequency of posts. If nothing new comes up in a month, readers will lose interest. At a seminar I attended last winter, I learned that 1-2 posts per day will increase your readership by up to 65%!*

Q: Any overall theme to the topics you cover?

A: *I started out pretty much married to Northwest Orient Airlines in the 1950s, the years I flew and of which I had first-hand knowledge. I have since broadened my scope significantly. When my website and blog are converted to WordPress, I will include all the airlines of the Northwest family tree. And I'm planning to include guest bloggers!*

Q: Costs involved, if any?

A: *Costs for maintaining a blog vary, but are very manageable. If a blogger wants his or her own personal website, he or she can go to GoDaddy.com to purchase and secure a "domain" name. This costs \$12/year. "Hosting" fees are extra, \$60/year. So a person can reserve and protect a domain name and secure hosting for a blog for under \$75/year. A bargain!*

Blog posts can be long or short and can include photos, illustrations, and other images. Most important is that a blog is **timely and immediate**, catching the news while it's "hot". As an example, here's Anne's post of June 5, 2014, the day before the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy during World War 2, with a tribute to Northwest pilots **Dick Brown** and **Joe Farrell**, who flew B-26 bombing missions in support of the landings on Utah Beach. Anne's post includes Brown's memoir, which reads, in part:

THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2014

D-Day Pilot Dick Brown Remembers . . .



l-r Dick Brown and Joe Farrell with their Martin B-26 Marauder bomber

Photo courtesy Richard Brown

June 6, 1944, retired Northwest Airlines Captain Dick Brown participated in the D-Day invasion, a significant turning point for Allied forces in WW II.

Today, 70 years later, his memory of that day is crystal clear:

"We knew something was up," Dick said. "We heard this huge racket around midnight. We all ran outside and looked up. The sky was full of C-47's towing gliders. By 5 a.m. we were taking off from our base in England in lousy weather - 500 ft. ceiling and raining. We had to form up under the clouds, then climbed up in formation. When we came out on top it was daylight, so we tried to regroup and join with other aircraft. Over the channel we found a hole in the clouds and descended down to 1500 ft. to get under the cloud layer. The channel was full of ships as far as we could see. We headed for our target on Utah Beach and we could see landing craft about 1/4 mile off shore. We got shot at by ground fire but didn't lose any aircraft over the target so we headed home."

He flew 66 missions, the last on September 12, 1944. "I arrived back in the states in October, 1944, and after some R&R at home I spent the winter towing targets for B-24's out of Harlingen Texas. I was discharged in May, 1945 at Fort Snelling and went over to Northwest Airlines to apply for a pilot job. They told me it would be a couple of months and I got a call from them in August."

Thus began his 36-year career as an airline pilot.

Check out the blog section of ladyskywriter.com, where you'll find the complete archive of Anne's posts in the right-hand column, a vast inventory of anecdotes, stories, tributes, and memories, with hundreds of photos and illustrations, all reflecting her interests and sensibility but which also constitute a Northwest Airlines historical archive *not found anywhere else*. Post your own comments—Anne would love to hear from you! Want to start your own blog? An easy way to "test the water" is to create a Facebook account and post there. Facebook functions much like a blog, and is completely free and easy to use. And don't forget to scope out the NWAHC and Northwest Employee Facebook pages! See you online! → RD

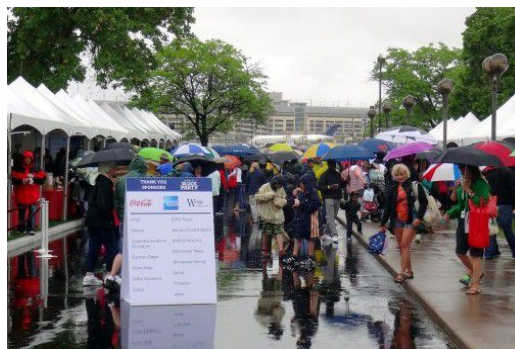
(for more on Dick Brown's career, see the Sept. 2006 issue of this newsletter)

WHAT A SUMMER IT WAS!

Summer 2014 was a busy one for the NWAHC and our volunteers, as we participated in these airline-related and community events:



THE DELTA BLOCK PARTY, June 7. The calendar said June, but March-like temperatures and all-day April showers didn't deter hundreds of Delta employees and Northwest and Republic alumni from attending the annual Delta MSP Block Party on the muddy grounds of the former Republic corporate headquarters. Party-goers enjoyed complimentary food and drink, and the opportunity to learn more about the various Delta employee organizations and vendors who offer discounts through the Delta Perks program. NWAHC volunteers were there, answering questions about our operation, and handing out brochures, newsletters, and balsa-wood gliders for the kids. Below, left: L-R: Bob DuBert, Betty Buresh, Susan Rostkoski, Bruce Kitt and Gordon Gilbert. Photo: Sandy Elliott.



THE SOUTH LOOP CREATIVE PLACEMAKING CHARETTE, June 12-20. The HC held center stage on June 17 during this inaugural presentation by the City of Bloomington, which showcased the development occurring in the neighborhood. Attendees learned how rail and air transportation have influenced the city's growth, and how Metro Light Rail has helped catalyze an exciting new commercial and residential project planned for the area across the street from the HC. Charette-goers enjoyed a visit to the HC, a first-time for most. The City of Bloomington responded with a commemorative video of the history of NWA, *Northwest Airlines-Remembered and Celebrated*, available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxFSS40Tt7w>



L-R: Dianne Herrmann, Marion Kordich and Gail Diercks with the City of Bloomington staff photographer. Photo: Bruce Kitt.



Bloomington Port Authority Director Shane Rudling presents the South Loop Master Plan, showing the new development across from the HC. Photo: Robert DuBert.



Bruce Kitt welcomes Charette visitors to the HC. Photo: Robert DuBert.

THE 2nd ANNUAL AIRLINE HISTORIAN and ARCHIVIST CONFERENCE, July 16-18. Hosted again by Southwest Airlines at their headquarters in Dallas, this year's conference included 19 representatives from six museums, five corporations and one university, a veritable Who's Who of historians and archivists dedicated to the history of the airline industry, including our own NWAHC President and Curator, **Bruce Kitt**. Sessions were devoted to museum administration, including presentations on the activities of each organization, how to research airline history, management and preservation of museum collections, and curation software and nomenclature protocols. Bruce was part of a panel discussion on collaboration between institutions, with a goal of establishing a common set of curatorial procedures which might foster joint projects and information sharing among the various airline museums and airline corporate archives. Informal events included a tour of Southwest's new Training and Operational Support Building, and a gala dinner under the wing of DC-3 *Flagship Knoxville*, pride of the CR Smith Museum of American Airlines. The NWAHC enjoys a respected high-profile in the wonderful world of airline history, thanks in no small part to Bruce's tireless efforts, on and behind the scenes. Thank you, Bruce!

Conference participants:

1940 Terminal Museum, Houston Hobby Airport. Michael Blutworth; John Graves.

Alaska/Horizon Airlines Archives, Boeing Field, Wash. Tim Fahey; Mike Tobin.

American Airlines, CR Smith Museum, DFW. Tim McElroy; Jay Luippold.

Boeing-Douglas Archives, Long Beach. Pat McGinnis.

Boeing-McDonnell Archives, St. Louis. Mary Barr.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Prescott, Ariz. Melissa Gottwald.

Frontiers of Flight Museum, Dallas Love Field. Randy Hinshaw

National Airline History Museum, Kansas City, Mo. John Roper.

National Museum of Commercial Aviation, Forest Park, Ga. George Hamlin.

NWA History Centre, Bloomington, Minn. Bruce Kitt.

Southwest Airlines Archives, Dallas Love Field. Sherie Blanton; Richard West.

TWA Museum @ 10 Richards Road, Kansas City, Mo. Pam Blaschum; Karen Holden Young.

United Airlines Historical Foundation, Chicago, Ill. Barbara Hanson; Carole Tye.



Above: With *Flagship Knoxville* at the CR Smith Museum.

Photo courtesy Bruce Kitt.



Key: 1-Roper; 2-Kitt; 3-Tobin; 4-McGinnis; 5-Blanton; 6-West; 7-Graves; 8-Blaschum; 9-Tye; 10-Young; 11-Hamlin; 12-Hanson; 13-Fahey; 14-Blutworth.

OLD TIMERS GATHERING, CENTENNIAL PARK, EDINA, MINN., AUG. 3. Approximately 150 NWA alumni and their families and friends gathered for an informal Sunday afternoon in the park, enjoying picnics, paddle boat rides, and a Dixieland band concert. The HC offered a "pop up" gift shop in the Pavilion. The event was organized by **John Horn**, former president of Northwest Airlines, and sponsored by the Donald Nyrop Memorial Fund and the Edina Community Foundation, whose goal is to raise money to commission two art sculptures, one saluting Donald Nyrop and Northwest Airlines, and the other for Hal Carr and North Central.

Photos: Joe Calacci/Bruce Kitt/Karen Jensen.



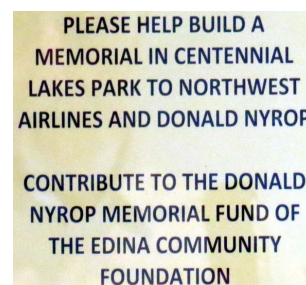
Shopping frenzy in the HC Gift Shop.



Dixieland Band concert.



John Horn with Gail Diercks.



LOST TWIN CITIES 4 PREMIERE, AUG. 13-SEPT. 7: This Twin Cities Public Television program, filmed in part at the HC (see REFLECTIONS, June 2014), was broadcast several times in the Twin Cities local market, in conjunction with a national PBS pledge drive. Instructions for viewing this program online will be posted on the HC Facebook page as soon as it becomes available.

Many thanks to our NWAHC volunteers, who staffed the above events.
We couldn't do it without you!

Delta Block Party: Betty Buresh; Bob DuBert; Sandy Elliott; Gordon Gilbert; Art Gorgen; Carol Hall; Bruce Kitt; Vicky Pritchett; Vince Rodriguez; Susan Rostkoski; John Yuen.

South Loop Charette: Gail Diercks; Flora Dreyer; Bob DuBert; Kay Ferrell; Anne Kerr; Carol Hall; Doug Hall; Dianne Herrmann; Judy Jurgensen; Bruce Kitt; Marion Kordich; Steve Marks; Elaine Mielke; Karen Roth; Don Swanson; John Yuen.

Old Timers Gathering: Betty Buresh; Gail Diercks; Flora Dreyer; Sandy Elliott; Kay Ferrell; Dianne Herrmann; Karen Jensen; Bruce Kitt; Bill Marchessault; Elaine Mielke; Susan Rostkoski; Uli Taylor; John Yuen.



A Scheduler answers a sick call.

Photo: Claudia Rote.

NOW IT CAN BE REVEALED! CREW SCHEDULING AT NORTHWEST AIRLINES

By Robert DuBert

AT ANY AIRLINE, the work schedules of pilots and flight attendants differ from those of employees who work on the ground—flight crews bid their schedules monthly, and their job assignments, called “trips”, take them away from their base (and their homes) from 1 to 6 days at a time, sometimes longer. Each day is different, and the crew roster changes with each trip, sometimes with each day and each flight!

MANAGING THESE DIVERSE CREW schedules falls to a department generically referred to as “Crew Scheduling”. At Northwest Airlines, this was actually a layered team consisting of Schedulers, Crew Coordinators, and Duty Managers. Recently, I met with NWA retirees **Betty Buresh, Sandy Elliott, Carole Mulcahy** and **Claudia Rote**, to learn more about how this system worked (*ed: I'll refer to them as The Four*). All held a series of jobs at the airline, including Reservations, Ticketing, Purchasing, etc., finishing their careers as Schedulers and Coordinators in MSP. Mulcahy, who began her career as a Scheduler at North Central Airlines, summarized the Northwest organization:

“Pilot Schedulers and Coordinators were under Flight Operations. The Flight Attendant (F/A) Schedulers were under Inflight. That did present some problems but nothing major. The Schedulers worked in their office under a Duty Manager and assigned trips to crew members who were at base. The Coordinators worked in the SOC (System Operations Control) directly with the Planner, who made all the decisions regarding flight cancellations, etc. Coordinators had some input with the Planner as to what changes would work or not work, but the ultimate decision was the Planner's and then the Coordinator had to make it work. All crew members were under the direction of the Coordinator once they reported for their flight assignment.”

This was a 24/7/365 operation, however, there was no Duty Manager on the midnight-8am shift.

PILOTS CALLING TO REPORT their unavailability to work due to sickness were required to give a reason, aka an “excuse”. The Four note that pilots especially hated this (F/As were not required to specify their illness). Schedulers were required to enter the reason in the pilot's computerized file, *verbatim*. The three most common excuses were hemorrhoids, diarrhea, and gout (!). The Schedulers' difficulty with correctly spelling “diarrhea” led management to post a big sign on the office wall, with DIARRHEA in large letters, as an aid (*ed: alas, no photo of this exists.*) Flight attendants offered other reasons. In hilly SEA: “I can't get down my driveway because of the ice”. One F/A in MSP, claiming to be snowbound in her house, was told “We have a Duty Manager with 4WD who will come and get you.” In DTW, where the majority of F/As commuted to base from distant cities, being “Unable to Commute” was a vexing problem, and too many of those calls would result in job termination.

At holiday time, sick calls were especially “innovative and frequent”, according to The Four, with the 4th of July, Halloween and Christmas generating the most. Below are some actual reasons given by pilots who called Scheduling, unable to work:

☎ “My nose hairs caught on fire while I was lighting my hot water heater.”

☎ From a pilot's wife: “Can my husband be released from his trip? The garage door came down on our pet hamster and killed it.”

☎ “I've got a pain in my lower unit.”

☎ (From the airport terminal): “I've got a headache. Can someone bring me some Advil?”

☎ “Do I have to work on my birthday?”



Left: Betty Buresh, Pilot Scheduler, at her desk in Bldg. F at MSP. All Schedulers, Coordinators and Duty Managers worked from Bldg. F, and covered all the crew bases with the exception of some functions at NRT.

Photo: Claudia Rote.

ONCE CREW MEMBERS BEGAN their trips, they fell under the aegis of the Coordinators, who handled the relatively uneventful changes to crew schedules resulting from flight delays, cancellations and other irregular operations. But Coordinators, armed only with a computer and a phone, had to be ready to deal with unusual and bizarre situations befalling Northwest crews, who could be hundreds, even thousands of miles away. From the midnight-8am shift:

☎ An early morning call from a pilot, in a hotel on a layover: he wakes up, gets out of bed, naked, opens his room door to retrieve his complimentary *USA Today* from the hallway. The door closes behind him and locks. Wrapping himself in the newspaper, he goes downstairs to the front desk, calls the Coordinator to report that he might have to briefly delay his flight departure. (*ed: The Four relate, good-naturedly, “The pilots were the best entertainment in town!”*)

☎ A late evening crew arrival at a layover city in Iowa: due to irregular operations, the crew is told that they will be taken by taxi to another Iowa city for departure the following day. Around midnight, the captain calls the Coordinator on his cellphone—“The taxi has broken down, my crew is walking down the highway, and the wheels have broken on a flight attendant's suitcase.” It takes some doing, but a replacement taxi is finally located to rescue the disgusted crew.

☎ A crew is on an RST layover: for reasons now forgotten, the morning departure to MSP must be canceled. The Coordinator calls the captain at the hotel to inform him of the cancellation, and requests that he notify the rest of the crew. About an hour later, the Coordinator receives a phone call from the RST airport, from a furious Northwest captain demanding to know why neither he nor his crew were informed that the flight is canceled. What happened? When the Coordinator called the hotel, the front desk clerk connected her to an American Airlines captain *with the same surname*, whose crew was also on a layover at the hotel. As the

disgruntled NW crew trudge back through the terminal to return to the hotel, they pass a bewildered AA crew hurrying to their now delayed departure for ORD.

☎ A blizzard in MSP: a pilot, returning from his trip, calls the Coordinator to complain that he can't find his car in the snowdrift-covered employee parking lot.

COORDINATORS SOMETIMES FOUND THEMSELVES in the role of an empathetic "surrogate parent"; when they received calls like these:

☎ One day, before Thanksgiving, a flight attendant calls the Coordinator to ask how to cook a turkey: "Do I have to take it out of the plastic bag?"

☎ On Sept. 11, 2001, a flight attendant on a New York layover, distraught and in tears, calls the Coordinator, sobbing that she can see the ominous columns of smoke from her hotel window.

Indeed, the 9/11 catastrophe proved a bonding experience between flight crews and Crew Scheduling, testing the patience, resolve and endurance of everyone as the Schedulers and Coordinators strove mightily to calm frazzled nerves, bring the crews back home and restore the normal operation of the airline.

Scheduler Claudia Rote, right, discusses a problem situation with Duty Manager Jim Sykora, left, and Scheduler Ken Sheila, center. Photo courtesy Claudia Rote.



HUMAN NATURE BEING WHAT it is, some crew members occasionally resented the changes imposed on them by what some irreverently dubbed "Screw Scheduling". Flight attendants were often apprehensive about calling the Scheduler, dreading the recorded message "There are changes to your schedule for this month." But the relentless mission of Schedulers and Coordinators was to keep the operation going as smoothly as possible, and their's was a high-pressure job. True, the pay was good—Schedulers and Coordinators were at the top pay grade within their union employee group—and they earned every penny! While they genuinely appreciated those crew members willing to go "above and beyond", any flight attendant who might consider "waiving legalities" risked the ire of fellow crew members and union representatives, who felt these moves might undermine the union's bargaining position during contract negotiation time. At times, there could be high-wire tension on all sides. Sandy Elliott treasures a certificate, created by Coordinator Rob Brown in honor of her 2009 retirement, a humorous satire in which a fictional tribunal places her on a "Decision Making Leave" for her alleged uncivil treatment of pilots. Sandy, of course, was guilty of no such thing! In fact, The Four remember that "99.9%" of interactions with crew members--their fellow employees--were mutually respectful, professional, courteous and even pleasant (!).

AT 11:59 pm on DEC. 31, 2009, Crew Scheduling at MSP shut down forever and all functions were assumed by Delta Airlines in Atlanta. The department scattered, some taking similar jobs with Delta in ATL, some choosing retirement, others pursuing new

careers. Betty Buresh, Sandy Elliott, Carole Mulcahy and Claudia Rote, in retirement, speak of their time as Schedulers and Coordinators with a palpable sense of achievement, with deep appreciation for their motivated team of coworkers; those who worked the midnight shift in SOC shared an especially strong bond. All speak of the fulfillment that came from doing an exciting, demanding and often stressful job well, one that called daily on their reserves of quick thinking, steady judgment, and problem-solving expertise.

They are **proud** of the work they did for Northwest Airlines. →



Sandy Elliott with her Decision Making Leave certificate. Photo: Robert DuBert.



L-R: Andrew Papaleo, Director of Pilot Scheduling; Betty Buresh; and Tim Rainey, VP-SOC. Papaleo is now Managing Director--Crew Planning and Analysis, for United Airlines in Chicago. Photo courtesy Betty Buresh.

"THERE ARE THREE CHANGES TO YOUR SCHEDULE FOR THIS MONTH. YOU WILL BE VOICED THESE CHANGES BEGINNING NOW. PLEASE WAIT."



L-R: Sandy Elliott, Betty Buresh, Carole Mulcahy and Claudia Rote pose with vintage office equipment at the NWA History Centre, Aug. 2014. Photo: Robert DuBert

A Reminder: All back issues of this newsletter, HISTORY MATTERS and REFLECTIONS, are available online at nwahistory.org in the "News" section.



For the most up-to-date news, see the NWA History Centre page on Facebook.



News, Stories, and Announcements

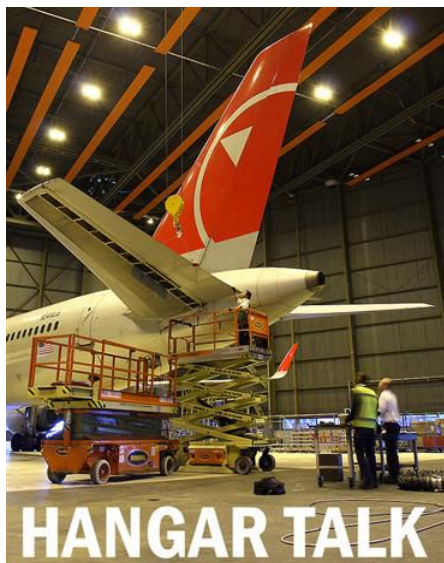


Photo: Dirk Jan Kraan

GRANT AWARD The NWAHC is pleased to announce that it was recently awarded a \$5700 Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant from the Minnesota Historical Society, whose grant mission is "to support projects of enduring value for the cause of history and historic preservation across the state". This grant will allow the HC to upgrade its computer system and curatorial software, and allow data-sharing with other museums.

FLASH! Republic Airlines Retired Employees Picnic, Apple Valley, Minn.

WHEN: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2014 (as always, the 1st Saturday after Labor Day).
WHERE: AMERICAN LEGION PARK, APPLE VALLEY. West of CEDAR AVE. and 5 blocks north of COUNTY ROAD 42 at: 14521 Granada Drive. From Cedar Ave., exit onto 145th St. West by the GMC Dealership. Go two (2) blocks to Granada Ave., turn LEFT and go to the Legion Hall. Watch for the large American Flag.
TIME: 10:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. Lunch will be served from 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.
COST: \$12.00 per person payable at the picnic facility. If possible, please bring the correct amount as we may not have change. This includes your lunch and all beverages. The menu is: Hamburgers, Brats, Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, Beans, Chocolate Chip and Sugar Cookies.

IN MEMORIAM

JOSEPH E. MCKERNAN: 1941-2014. Died on July 15, Bloomington, Minn.

Joseph was a mechanic at Northwest for 37 years, and a regular volunteer at the HC, especially during its early years.

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* obituary:

<http://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/24187/?fullname=joseph-e-mckernan>

JOHN R. SCHILLINGER: 1924-2014. Died on June 27, Bloomington, Minn.

"Smilin' Jack" was a naval aviator during WW2, a pilot for North Central and Republic, and a regular volunteer at the HC until recently.

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* obituary:

<http://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/21823/?fullname=john-r-schillinger>

Don Swanson, retired NC/RC/NW mechanic and close friend of "Smilin' Jack" writes: "I first met Jack at North Central when I worked the flight line back in the DC-3 days. That was a cold plane in winter, and I recall that Jack covered his legs with a blanket, said his feet got cold in the DC-3. There were times I watched him ask kids as they boarded if they wanted to look at the cockpit. He would put his red and white hat on them and they would laugh; he never turned down a chance to do that. Jack always reported for work in his company uniform, but once in the cockpit, he would put on that red and white polka dot hat. I asked him why he always wore that; his answer was 'Swannie, I want to be like everyone else', nothing more. That was the Jack I knew. Because of his travels in the Navy, he had picked up a little Russian, and on one flight he transported a Russian dance group. He made an announcement in his broken Russian, the dancers replied in broken English, and they all laughed. Jack told me he learned something that day: 'governments don't make people. Love and friendship could be found everywhere.' Once, when he was flying a CV-580 to Fargo, he had engine trouble and was forced to land in Watertown, S.D. On the ground, they faced a 3 hour delay for a replacement plane. Under Jack's orders, the crew took all the beer and liquor off the plane into the terminal, where they gave it to the passengers. Jack played the jukebox, and when the replacement plane arrived, nobody wanted to leave! In his career with North Central and Republic, Jack flew the DC-3, Convair 340/440/580, and retired on the DC-9 in 1984. I enjoyed Jack just for being who he was, and for his stories that made us all laugh. I never met anyone who enjoyed life more than he did. Aviation has lost a great person, and none of us will ever forget him and his smile." → DS (ed: *Smilin' Jack's autobiographical memoir*; *Flying With Smilin' Jack, a Pilot's Life in the Air*, is available for purchase in the NWAHC Gift Shop, and from Don Swanson. Highly recommended!)



Calling all Collectors: TWO AIRLINE COLLECTIBLE SHOWS IN OCTOBER!



Saturday Oct. 4 The 28th Annual Atlanta Airline Collectibles Show
 Delta Flight Museum.

9a-4p, Admission \$5. For more information: <http://deltamuseum.org/>
 50 vendors, and an excellent opportunity to see the fabulous Delta Museum.

Saturday Oct. 18 The Minneapolis Airline Collectible Sale and Get Together.
 For complete information, see p. 12. Mark your calendars now!





OUT & ABOUT

Visiting the Arlington National Cemetery Arlington VA 22211

Open 365 days/year. 8a-7p Apr-Sep, 8a-5p Oct-Mar
<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/> 877.907.8585 Free Admission

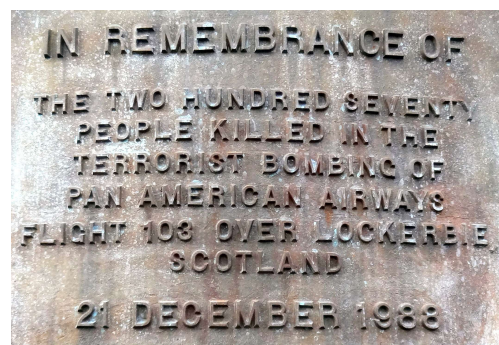
Nearest airport: DCA

Ground transportation: Metrorail Blue Line *Arlington Cemetery*
 \$2.15 peak, \$1.75 off-peak

We've all been to Arlington to visit the major sites, including the grave of President Kennedy, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Arlington House (the Custis-Lee Mansion). But for NWA alumni, Arlington is worthy of a pilgrimage to visit the airline memorials *and* a very special gravesite. It's an easy daytrip from many cities served by Delta.

THE LOCKERBIE CAIRN

On Dec. 21, 1988, a terrorist bomb exploded onboard Pan Am flight 103, which crashed into the small town of Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 passengers and crew and 11 on the ground. Later, the town shipped 270 blocks of locally quarried sandstone to Arlington, where builder Frank Klein, whose daughter Patricia was on the flight, crafted this memorial tower in the form of a traditional Scottish burial monument called a cairn. Each block represents one of the victims of the disaster.



THE PENTAGON GROUP BURIAL MARKER

On Sept. 12, 2002, the remains of the 184 victims of the 9/11 terrorist hijacking of American Airlines flight 77 and subsequent crash into the Pentagon were interred at Arlington, and this five-sided memorial was placed over the gravesite. Panels on the marker include the names of AA 77's 6 crew members and 58 passengers killed in the crash.

Photos: Robert DuBert



THE GRAVESITE OF LT. COL. LEWIS HOTCHKISS BRITTIN, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF NORTHWEST AIRWAYS



Lewis Brittin served in the Spanish-American war as an artilleryman, and rose to the rank of Lt. Colonel in the Quartermaster Corps during World War 1. He and second wife Leona Kimberg Brittin are buried near the southern edge of the cemetery.

Note: the Brittin grave markers are difficult to find. See the Visitor Center for a map when you visit.

Center photo: Minnesota Historical Society Archives.
 Others: Robert DuBert



Digital Edition Exclusive Extra

In August, Anne Kerr attended an airshow of radio controlled models, presented by the Southern Minnesota Model Aircraft Club, where one of the major attractions was this gigantic NWA Boeing Stratocruiser flying model, built by Carl Bacchuber of Mayville, Wisc., in 2004, and now owned and flown by Jeff Quesenberry of Apple Valley, Minn. 12 feet long and with a wingspan of 15 feet, the model thrilled Anne and the rest of the spectators. Here's a video of this astonishing model in action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-GarSQJ9bw>

Bacchuber, a self-described "semi-retired recluse", has built a dazzling array of radio controlled models, including several airliners, whose accuracy and craftsmanship put him in the top rank of the R/C modelling field. For more information on him and his accomplishments:

<http://www.carlb-rcplanes.com/>



Photo: John Billingsley

(ed.: I posted this photo with a brief story on the NWAHC Facebook page, where it has received, to date, 140 "Likes" and has been seen by 15,984 people, by far the highest reach an HC post has generated!)

Airline Collectible Sale & Get Together Minneapolis, MN

Saturday, October 18, 2014 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**