



# Reflections

The Quarterly Journal of the Northwest Airlines History Center



September 2020

Volume 18, number 3

## In this issue:

The NWAHC Museum has reopened for in-person visits and also on video!

October Get-Together and other airliner shows cancelled due to COVID

40th anniversary of the Hughes Airwest - Republic merger: a look at RW's conclusion

## Our mission:

To preserve and display the memory of Northwest Airlines' colorful history.

To tell the stories of carriers merged and allied with NWA, and the stations and regions they served.

To show how the legacy of NWA carries on into the future.



Group photo for Gov. Harold Stassen's February 1948 western tour. At top: George Casey, Flight Mechanic; FO Spence Marsh; Capt. Carl Lamping. At left: David McConnel, NY Herald Tribune; Wallace Mitchell, Mpls. Tribune. Harold Stassen at center with FA Donna Haan at left and Rose Oedbauer at right. Continuing right: A.E. Floan, VP-Northwest; and from the campaign, Duncan Baird, ass't. trip manager; Adolph Giere, trip manager; Ed Larson, secretary. Carl Lamping collection via Bob Jaspersen donation to the NWAHC.

## Conducting an Aerial Campaign

Getting out the vote, at the speed of flight

—by Scott Norris

"All politics is local," goes the old saying, and the outcome of even a statewide or national race can hinge on a handful of precincts. Whether the campaign needs to address a specific local concern, get specific community leaders and critical funders on board, or stimulate voter turnout, there's no tactic more powerful than to place the candidate directly into face-to-face contact at the district level.

Even in today's COVID-infected environment with ubiquitous social networking and video meeting tools, both Presidential candidates are making their way to battleground communities.

Of course, moving a candidate from place to place is a logistical challenge: it's never a case of transporting one person. Among the campaign team, there are trip managers,

**CAMPAIGN PLANES to page 8**

# Preflight Checklist

## The Northwest Airlines History Center, Inc.

We are an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation registered in the State of Minnesota. Volunteer-staffed and volunteer-managed. We have no organizational or financial tie to Delta Air Lines.

**Founder:** Henry V. "Pete" Patzke (1925-2012)

**Directors:**

- Executive Director and Collections Manager: Bruce Kitt
- Museum Director: open position
- Directors: Bruce Kitt, Fay Kulenkamp, Bill Marchessault, Vince Rodriguez, Jeff Schwalen, Mike Vetter, Scott Norris
- Director Emeritus: Jerry Nielsen

**Museum Address:**

Crowne Plaza AIRE Hotel

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**Archives and Administration:**

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Twitter: @NW\_Airlines

YouTube: Northwest Airlines History Center

Email: [info@northwestairlineshistory.org](mailto:info@northwestairlineshistory.org)

REFLECTIONS is published quarterly by the NWAHC and is a membership benefit. Submissions are welcomed, and are subject to editing for content and length.

Advertising in REFLECTIONS is accepted to help us defray expenses and tell more stories to more people! Ad placement does not imply endorsement by the NWAHC, and ads need to be respectful and relevant to readers.

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Printed at Bayport Printing, Stillwater MN.



## Visiting the Museum

The NWAHC Museum is located inside the Crowne Plaza AIRE Hotel in Bloomington, MN, just south of MSP International Airport.

**Current schedule:** Thursday - Saturday, 11 am - 5 pm  
Closed for major holidays.

**Admission and parking are FREE.** (Special events may incur a charge.)

**Directions:**

**From the airport:** Use METRO Blue Line light rail from either Terminal 1 or Terminal 2 southbound and exit at the American Boulevard station. The Crowne Plaza AIRE is immediately east, across the street from the station. Trains run every 10 minutes and fares are \$2.50 peak / \$2 off-peak. Tickets are good for 2.5 hours of unlimited travel, so depending on the length of your visit, a separate return ticket may not be necessary.

**From the Mall of America:** Take the METRO Blue Line light rail outbound; American Boulevard is the third stop.

**In the Twin Cities Metro area:** Head toward MSP International Airport. From Interstate 494, exit on 34th Ave. S. and go south one block to American Blvd. Turn left (east) on American and then immediately right into (and under) the hotel. The parking ramp is on the left - follow the signs for free hotel parking (do not use spaces not reserved for the hotel.)

The museum is located on the third floor, above the pool area on the second floor, and across from the Fitness Center.

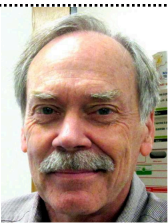
## Annual Membership

Membership is the main source of funding for the NWAHC; please join!

\$30 level - receives REFLECTIONS digital edition early access via email

\$35 level - received REFLECTIONS print edition by U.S. Postal Service

## Boarding Announcements



### From Director Bruce Kitt

While trying to be as optimistic as possible considering the havoc COVID is causing, the Northwest Airlines History Center (NWAHC) had to concede that we are not exempt from its effects.

The first change the museum experienced has been a reduction in the number of days we're open, from four to three days: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. This is a temporary concession to the coronavirus and once an effective vaccine has been approved and people are comfortable resuming their public outings, we expect to resume our four-day routine. Until then, we respect our volunteer's decisions regarding their personal level of comfort about being out and about.

The second result of COVID has been the decision to cancel this year's MSP Airliner Show and Sale. It is of no consolation that there have been no airliner shows this year – anywhere,

that as each show neared its scheduled date (including the annual show in PHX), it was cancelled. The airliner show gods are not smiling on anyone in 2020. Planned for the usual second Saturday in October, we held out hope MSP would be the first to host a regional show. As with all such shows, there are three components needed to insure a successful show and sale: vendors, volunteers, and the airline fans who can't get enough of Northwest, North Central, and Republic Airlines, and other airlines. Once again, the uncertainty revolving around this damn virus threw our optimism out of alignment and we decided to lean towards caution. Next year! and it will be bigger and better.

On an upbeat note, I am pleased to announce that our Editor, Scott Norris, has become our newest board member. Given the upheaval swirling around the pandemic and our efforts to bring more history online, having Scott's presence on the board, especially his understanding and experience with web details, gives us the understanding of how to translate grand ideas into realistic results. Welcome Scott.

Knowing there will be better days ahead, please stay safe and healthy. CAVU.



### From Editor Scott Norris

Museums and enthusiast groups all over the world are grappling with the same pair of problems:

- How do we keep people interested, and get the next generation to care?
- How do we keep the lights on and do the work?

With traditional methods like museum hours and shows stymied, we have to go where the people are - which means

putting even more content online like our digitized Timetables, Fleet Lists, and now Aircraft Photos. It's great to see these resources being used: the more I upload, the better we place in search results and the more visitors we get at the website, helping us with Question 1.

The next frontier for the website is e-commerce: you've been asking for it, and it helps Question 2. We are looking hard at starting a Shopify outpost as it will handle inventory we hold at the Museum as well as memberships, digital downloads, and print-on-demand items. We get it: shopping = support!

If you have Shopify experience and a few hours per week to help us set up POS, inventory, and /or listings, we'd love to hear from you! Many thanks, and enjoy this edition.

### Shop online and support the NWAHC!

- Treasure hunt! We offer surplus materials and new apparel and pins for sale on **eBay** under the handle "cyberglitz" - the assortment changes every week!
- Buying on **amazon.com**? Of course you are. Sign up for Amazon Smile and 1/2% of every purchase is contributed to our museum. Use the link at [smile.amazon.com/ch/41-2020975](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/41-2020975) to specify the NWAHC!

### Interested in donating materials?

Please contact our collections manager, Bruce Kitt, at [bruce.kitt@northwestairlineshistory.org](mailto:bruce.kitt@northwestairlineshistory.org) with details of your items, photos if possible, and how we can reach you.

We are especially interested in items that help us tell stories or demonstrate concepts and procedures; records and correspondence; video, audio, and photos; training materials; and union communications. Items from Hughes Airwest & its predecessors, and Southern are especially appreciated.



## Compass Readings

### NWAHC Museum Reopens in person, and on video

Museums across the Northland closed from March well into summer to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The NWAHC took the downtime as an opportunity to make modest yet strategic investments in its display cases during June and July by replacing traditional incandescent light bulbs with LED strips.

Not only is the energy usage needed to illuminate the cases significantly lower, excess heat in the cases has been eliminated, and less-damaging light frequencies are reduced.

The net result is we are able to display artifacts with better visibility and crisper color, with less light and heat damage, for lower operating costs!

Safety shields were also installed around the gift shop counter, and a hand-sanitizer station has been set up for volunteers and visitors to partake of.

Some exhibits like our interactive 747-200 Flight Engineer's station will also be removed as keeping it sterile is difficult.

Mask-wearing is required during visits to the museum (and also inside the Crowne Plaza AIRE Hotel.) Per Bruce Kitt's column on the previous page, operating hours have been shortened to 11 am - 5 pm Thursday through Saturday.

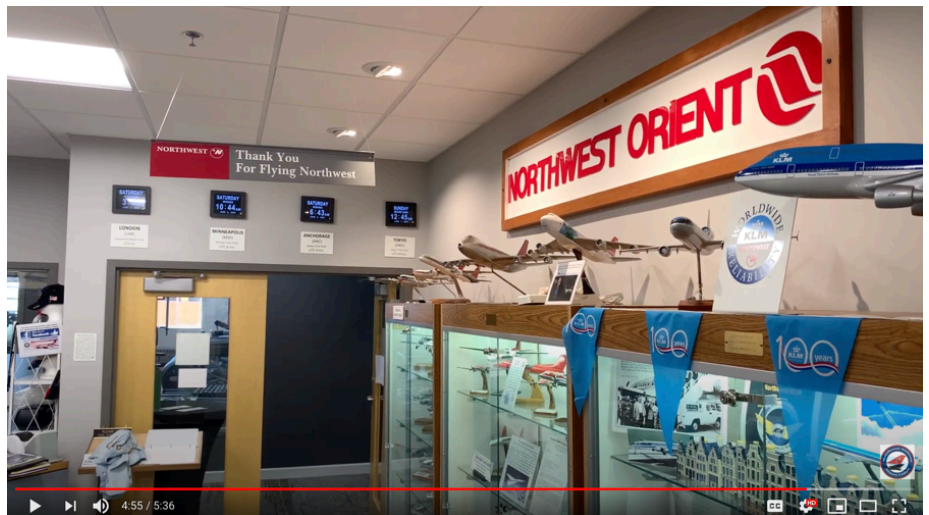
During early June we also filmed the museum and its displays, as well as the Crowne Plaza AIRE, to edit into the NWAHC's first video on its own YouTube channel.

The "Northwest Airlines History Center" channel went live in July, and we will be using it to expand our ability to share the materials and stories we've been entrusted with by donors and Members.

Our next video will focus on our Archive at Flying Cloud Airport. Future installments may include interviews, visits to significant sites, and digitally-converted historic media.



New display lighting is brighter, cooler, better for long-term presentation of artifacts.





## Aircraft Photo Gallery launches online

As our physical museum was shutting down in the early days of the pandemic, we received a request from historian and retired Southern/ Republic / Northwest FA David Stringer to assist him in finding archival photos of postwar aircraft [as described in last quarter's REFLECTIONS] for a pair of articles in Airways Magazine. At that time we also started working with Neil Ralston from MSP's Metropolitan Airports Commission, who is writing a comprehensive book on commuter airlines who've served the Northland.

With the file cabinets open, it seemed logical to just start scanning everything of interest - one quarantined summer later, we now have gallery pages for 24 different aircraft types posted for your viewing, and another 35 under development.

From the "Digital Archive" tab on our website, choose "Aircraft" to reach the central gallery hub. Enjoy, share, and send us your photos to include!



ABOVE: NC8410 at Boeing Field, August 1935. Photo from G. Williams / Boeing, via the James Borden Photography Collection.

BELOW: N721US in color on her delivery publicity flight, April 1961. Boeing photo, NWAHC archive.



## October Airliner Show Cancelled

While disappointing, the NWAHC and organizers of the Twin Cities Airliner Show and Get-Together have decided to cancel this year's event at the Best Western PLUS Mall of America.

The MSP show joins all other airliner shows in the U.S. and Canada in closing for the balance of calendar year 2020. At press time, only shows in the U.K. and Germany were still planning to be held.

We are grateful for the cooperation of the Best Western in allowing the event to be rescheduled for 2021 with no loss of deposit.

The 2021 event will take place on Saturday, October 9; 9 am - 4 pm. We look forward to seeing you next year!



## NWA-themed Face Masks Available!

Display your love of the Bowling Shoe livery with these new "city code" masks, just stocked at our Museum gift shop. They are machine-washable, crafted with poly fabric and comfortable ear loops. A pleated two-layer construction gives a snug fit, and includes a "pocket" for disposable filters should you wish to enhance the mask. Dimensions are 7" wide by 3.5" tall. Each mask is individually created and aircraft positioning will vary.

Priced at \$19.95 plus tax. Stop by our Museum shop or call (952) 876-8677 between 11am-5pm Thursdays-Saturdays.



## The Final Appeal of the Top Banana

### Analysis: How Else Could it have Ended?

The 40th anniversary of the Republic - Hughes Airwest combination falls on October 1 of this year. In Republic's short history, no other event was as consequential to the carrier's evolution - and in turn to Northwest's hub strategy in the 1980s-1990s.

When we look back on the thousands of employees who continued their careers and friendships for decades, the dozens of DC-9s and 727s which continued to fly in the greater fleet, and the marketing innovations started at RW which would become Perks and Business First at RC - and ultimately WorldPerks under Northwest - it seems like the combination was predestined. But was the Hughes-Republic tie truly inevitable?

### How did Hughes Airwest get to the state where a sale was the only option?

Howard Hughes' death in 1976 ignited a crisis at his holding company, the Summa Corporation, as he did not leave a valid will spelling out how the enterprise was to be owned and managed. Court-appointed administrators were put in charge who did not have experience in managing a diverse set of companies which included hotels and casinos, helicopter manufacturing, mining and oil extraction, and television. Rather, the directive given to the managers was to convert assets into cash, leaving only Hughes' vast real-estate holdings as the core of a future land development company.

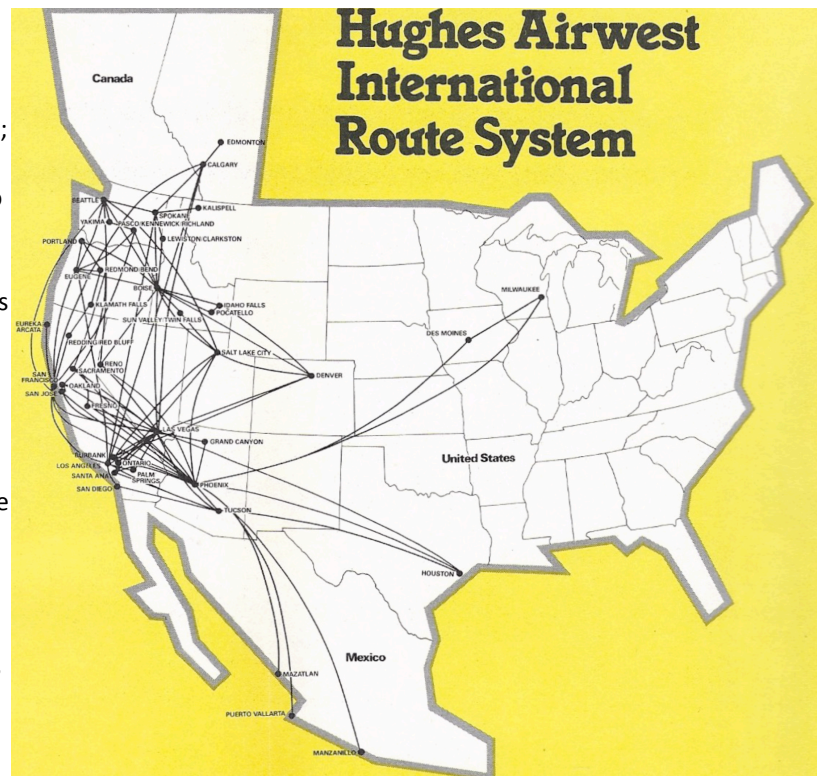
Hughes Airwest could not have been caught at a worse moment; having just implemented its new Zamparelli-designed interiors, uniforms, and graphics; just started a fleet transition program to add Boeing 727-200s and more Douglas DC-9-30s; and just applied to the CAB for additional route authorities into Mexico and the central U.S. For this, RW needed investment - and at this critical instant, Summa Corporation's caretakers informed management no more funding would be coming.

Any development at RW would have to be self-funded through cost savings and improved revenues. As Deregulation's first chapters were only being drafted, management would be unable to pivot quickly. The strategy they chose was constrained and conservative:

- Phase out F-27 propjet flying, petitioning the CAB to transfer service at most small stations to third-level carriers
- Fly DC-9s on longer point-to-point routings such as LAX-Calgary and SEA-RNO-PHX, reducing short-haul flying



Between the July 1978 route map (above) and the September 1980 map (below), we can see the only new station introduced was Houston Hobby, while three destinations in Mexico and twelve in the U.S. were cut. Additional service to Denver fed connections on other carriers, while petitioned service into the central U.S. beyond Milwaukee / Des Moines never materialized.





- Consolidate Mexico service to just the most-developed resorts and deploy new 727s there
- Pursue charter business aggressively
- Open multiple routes to regional hubs farther east - specifically Denver and then Houston Hobby - again to get longer stage lengths
- If any aircraft were left over, try to open longer stage flying to Midwest and Texas cities

These actions, while individually reasonable, in combination worked against each other. Passenger feed from smaller towns to regional centers was lost, and as a result business traffic loyalty from centers like Seattle and San Francisco slipped away. Without feed to long haul routes like Burbank-Denver or Tucson-Houston, the network became hollowed-out by the end of the decade.

RW's cash position deteriorated, and in September-October 1979, office staff, ticket agents, and reservations staff went on strike, grounding the airline. Hughes Airwest's back was against the wall, and Summa was becoming impatient to monetize their asset.

#### What other realistic merger options were available?

1979-1980 saw the North Central-Southern and Pan Am-National combinations, but other carriers were trying organic growth as Deregulation began rather than acquisitions.

- **Alaska** was starting its march down the coast to the Bay Area and Burbank/Ontario and would have been an excellent north-south fit - but was too small to organize the financing necessary.
- **Texas Air** (Frank Lorenzo) would have been a solid fleet match with a strong Mexico portfolio and intriguing Sunbelt traffic feeds. But he was too interested in hunting a Major carrier and probably considered Summa's asking price too high.
- **Allegheny** was reportedly kicking the tires, but could not put the investment together. Their strategy would have been the same as in the later PSA acquisition.
- **PSA** would have provided the core LA-Bay Area feed to make SFO a true hub - but was concentrating on its own growth plan & not interested in fixing Hughes.
- **United's** offer would have been rejected for excessive concentration along the West Coast, and they were not interested in bringing on DC-9s.
- **Western** likewise would have had a quick rejection as they competed head-to-head on many key routes.

As we tick off the unpalatable or nonsensical options, the merger roulette wheel does seem to land on RC. The other realistic outcome by the end of 1980 would have been a Chapter 7 dissolution and asset sale, with massive job losses.

In any scenario, the loss of short-haul flying and gradual disassembly of the Hughes network would have happened. While Summa's piling of debt into the terms caused many problems for Republic, the people, procedures, and planes that came from RW transformed RC into a competitive national carrier.

We remember the Top Banana with thanks and fondness in our display cases at the NWAHC Museum, increasingly in the digital archives on our website, and with photos below!



N9337 and N9344 at San Francisco in November 1979. Richard Silagi photo via Wikimedia Commons, GNU 1.2 license.



San Jose landing, Jan. 29, 1980. Bill Larkins photo via Wikimedia Commons, CC 2.0 license.



The 727 fleet assembled in Phoenix. Photographer and source unattributed.

## Feature Article

### CAMPAIGN PLANES from page 1

writing and communications staff, and the candidate's personal attendants and security. Usually local party officers and elected officials will ride between stops, as well as pool members from the press corps.

Only mass transportation and rapid communication makes this kind of effort feasible, so it is no surprise that once the US rail network reached significant reach (with its simultaneous spread of telegraph lines,) passenger coaches served as the first mobile command centers.

That campaign logistics needs to lift more and more mass, more quickly, cycle after cycle, at ever increasing cost, being a major component of candidates' need to meet with more and more deep-pocket donors, cycle after cycle, who can bankroll the effort, is quite a conundrum. On the other hand, efficient transportation has allowed more people overall to see candidates in-person over the years, and that should be better for society.

As commercial aircraft began to mature, it was grasped that speed was a significant advantage over rail, especially when considering the growing importance of Western states with their vast distances between population centers. However, range, reliability, capacity, and the availability of all-weather airports were limiting factors up to World War II.

While Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the first President to fly while in office, ultimately having a C-54 (military Douglas DC-4) at his disposal, it would be Harry Truman in 1948 using the VC-118 (military VIP version of the Douglas DC-6) "Independence" who debuted the use of airliners for whistle-stop tours.

Northwest, however, was also right there at the beginning with a month-long charter in February 1948 of Douglas DC-3 Ship 339 (NC45339) to former Minnesota Governor and then-president of the University of Pennsylvania, Harold Stassen. Running for the Republican nomination, Stassen undertook a 26-stop circle tour of the Western U.S. with this aircraft.

As noted in the front cover caption, NWA supplied six staff to manage transportation and inflight service: two Pilots, one Mechanic, two Flight Attendants, and Northwest's Vice President. The aircraft interior was modified with reduced seating to allow for private conferences, and the addition of a mimeograph machine so that campaign staff could write and print copies of materials customized for each locale.

In the following pages we will display photos and artifacts from several Northwest, Hughes Airwest, and North Central campaign charters. We will also post additional photos in the "Blog" section of our website, [northwestairlineshistory.org](http://northwestairlineshistory.org).



Teddy Roosevelt speaking from a railroad car, May 1907. (Underwood & Underwood / Library of Congress; copyright expired.)



ABOVE: Stassen, at right, discusses plans for upcoming stops with (from left) Adolph Giere, the campaign's trip manager, Ed Floan, Northwest Vice President, and Duncan Baird, assistant trip manager.

BELOW: Capt. Lamping converses with Stassen. Carl Lamping collection via Bob Jaspersen donation to the NWAHC.







Sandwich and coffee in the galley with Stassen and Donna Haan. All photos here from Carl Lamping collection / Jasperson donation.



Ed Larson, secretary to the Stassen campaign, runs mimeographs of a speech for distribution with the assistance of Rose Oedbauer of NWA.



ABOVE: Stassen at left, with Adolph Giere, take questions from Wallace Mitchell of the Minneapolis Tribune and David McConnel of the New York Herald Tribune. BELOW: How do ya like them apples? Rose Oedbauer and Donna Haan examining Washington's bounty in the galley.



ABOVE: We can assume the aircraft is on the ground in this shot as staff and reporters look out the starboard windows with FO Spence Marsh observing. BELOW: Stassen signs an autograph during the stop in Kansas City.







The 1952 contest between Republican Dwight Eisenhower, and Democratic challenger Adlai Stevenson was usually conducted with leased United and American propliners, but on Sept. 6, both candidates converged on Rochester, MN. Stevenson [lower left] used a pair of NWA DC-4s to shuttle staff and press between MSP and RST, while Eisenhower [upper left] hopped on NWA DC-3 N39544 for a personal day-trip to the lake country at Alexandria, MN. "Ike" returned on the same DC-3 to MSP the evening of Sept. 7. Each of the Northwest aircraft used crews of two Pilots and two Flight Attendants.

Both photos from the Northwest Airlines News, Sept. 26, 1952.



From George Werderich: "These photos were taken during the 1968 campaign. The first is with Nixon, myself, Capt. Bob Disch, and the Janesville, WI station manager. The second is with Disch and me at Stevens Point. They chartered North Central aircraft for this trip as larger jets could not land at many smaller cities. We used Convair 440, fleet # 445 on these. As I remember, this was one of my last flights on the 440, March 14. We picked up Mr. Nixon, family, and entourage up at Chicago Midway, which was unused at the time."





Ronald Reagan arrives at the Monterey, California airport with actor Jimmy Stewart on June 27, 1976, using Hughes Airwest DC-9 N913RW. Reagan used the RW aircraft for a number of campaign jaunts in and around California. Media reports say the campaign team called the aircraft the "Flying Banana" - did they not understand Hughes' "Top Banana in the West" tagline? (Photo from Monterey Herald archives, used for educational purposes.)



The Northwest Family was on different sides of the 1976 Republican nomination fight. Ronald Reagan, former movie star and Governor of California, ran a TV-friendly and celebrity-studded insurgent challenge against then-President Gerald Ford, using a chartered Hughes Airwest DC-9-30.

Ford, meanwhile, chose Kansas Senator Bob Dole as his running mate. Dole used Northwest 727-100 N478US to shuttle between events. In these photos donated by the family of Capt. T.J. Beedem, we also see Elizabeth Dole, who would become Secretary of Transportation under Reagan.





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## ***GIVE WINGS TO YOUR HEART***

**We are looking for volunteers like YOU to help us with:**

- Greeting and guiding our museum guests
- Designing and building museum exhibits
- Growing our e-commerce functionality
- Grant application and fundraising
- Community outreach & event planning
- Scanning and indexing historic documents and photos



Many of our ongoing projects are flexible to fit your schedule. And airline experience isn't necessary - just a love of history, adventure, and storytelling!

**Now boarding!**

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- Email us: [info@northwestairlineshistory.org](mailto:info@northwestairlineshistory.org)
- Or give us a call: (952) 698-4478