

Reflections

The Quarterly Journal of the Northwest Airlines History Center































September 2024

Volume 22, number 3

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Mesaba history series concludes + Gordy **Newstrom interview**

Farewell to our dear friend. Bill Marchessault

Kansas City road trip to the TWA Museum and Airliners International

Our mission:

We explore and celebrate the generational impact of commercial aviation by bringing together resources, experiences, and community.

Our values:

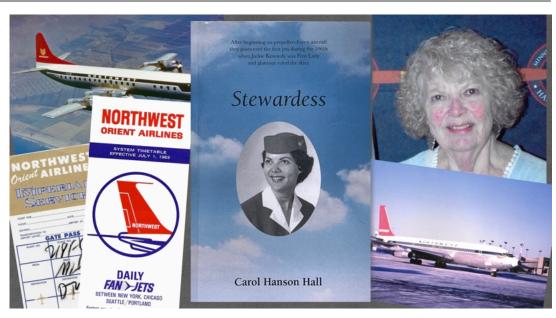
Welcome - We embody the encouraging and positive environment that has always been part of our story.

Preserve - Both the history and future of the industry

Educate - Learning comes in all forms, at all ages, in many methods. We encourage curiosity, exploration, discovery, and dreaming.

Connect - Just as air travel brings people together, we create spaces for those connections to happen.

Inspire - Flight shows us anything is possible.



Small town to Stratosphere

Carol Hall joins the ranks of NWAHC alumni book authors by Scott Norris

Visitors to the museum will often have the pleasure of talking with Carol Hall and Vince Rodriguez Saturdays 11 am - 2 pm. Carol is a longtime volunteer, having joined on in 2013. Having been a Northwest flight attendant from 1960 through 1988, Carol finds her docent experience an extension of her former job. "I thoroughly enjoy chatting with guests; it's always fun to point out the many uniforms I wore during my 28-year career. And I find it gratifying that our guests leave so many favorable comments in our sign-in book. It makes me feel that I've contributed a little something to their good experience."

A University of Minnesota journalism graduate, Carol is a long-time freelance writer. Her column, "Memories," has appeared in Minnesota Good Age magazine since 2004. Carol's stewardess experiences often are the topic of her column, as are those of her youth spent in rural Minnesota.

Carol also has now written a book that was released in July. Titled, simply, Stewardess, it is a memoir of her early days flying for Northwest in the 1960s, told in short episodic chapters. In that time, mostly women were hired for the job, and it was one of the few that afforded a degree of social freedom and was seen as glamorous and full of adventure. Qualifications required applicants to be young, slim, single and attractive. Work rules decreed that stewardesses could not work beyond age 32 or if they got married at any age. Concurrently, a significant technological transformation was taking place in commercial aviation. Pilots were training on brand-new narrow-body jets while the old propeller-driven aircraft were being phased out. Consequently, Carol was trained on both types of aircraft. Since she flew well into the jet age, she enjoys the distinction of working trips on everything from Northwest's 44-passenger DC-4 to the Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet.

A LIFE IN THE SKY to page 5

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)

Management:

- Directors: Jeff Schwalen, Mike Vetter, Scott Norris, Kimm Viebrock, Tim Haskin, Jayne Stenstad, Chuck Huntley
- · Directors Emeritus: Jerry Nielsen and Wayne Snyder

· Collections Manager: Bruce Kitt · Museum Manager: Chuck Huntley

Museum Address: (do not send mail here)

Crowne Plaza AIRE Hotel

3 Appletree Square, Bloomington MN 55425

(952) 876-8677

Archives and Administration: (our mailing address; open for research by appointment only)

10100 Flying Cloud Drive, Ste A-306, Eden Prairie MN 55347 (952) 698-4478

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Bluesky:

Web www.northwestairlineshistory.org Facebook: NorthwestAirlinesHistoryCenter LinkedIn: Northwest Airlines History Center Instagram: Northwest Airlines History

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Twitter / X: @NW_Airlines

Northwest Airlines History Center YouTube: Email: info@northwestairlineshistory.org

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northwestairlines@comcast.net Editor: Scott Norris

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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. Or, call for the free hotel shuttle from either terminal.

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 on the uppermost level (do not use spaces not reserved for the hotel) and cross into the hotel's second floor. You may need to buzz the door for entrance, as a safety protocol.

The museum is located on the third floor, above the pool area, and across from the Fitness Center. Patrons needing elevator access must coordinate with the hotel's front desk due to security reasons.

For photo directions on navigating the hotel, please scan this QR code on your phone:



Memberships

Annual membership dues are the main source of funding for the NWAHC; we encourage you to join!

- \$30 level receives REFLECTIONS digital edition early access via email
- \$35 level receives REFLECTIONS print edition by U.S. Postal Service (U.S. mailing addresses only)

Boarding Announcements

From Chairman Mike Vetter



I am happy to announce our summer remodeling project is completed! Through the work of our dedicated volunteers, many of the exhibits have been updated and positioned to present a clean, uncluttered museum experience.

While one of our new exhibits feature a one of a kind 1940's NWA stewardess uniform, you

can still strike the old famous gong that Buster Keaton performed in those Northwest Orient ads in the 1960 's.

I hope you will come out to our museum for a visit. We are open Thursday, Friday and Saturdays, 11:00-5:00 and admission is always free!

—Mike



Donor Thanks

The Board and all the volunteers at the Northwest Airlines History Center would like to thank our donors for their contributions. Donations enable our ongoing operations, outreach efforts, and work to design and gain approvals for our new permanent museum.

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Wayne Snyder The estate of Roger Hauge

\$500 - 999Michael Garrison

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Jillayne Reeder William Werdin Julian Hamilton Patricia Rummage Raymond Cox
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Kennedy Kohlbrand

Scott Johnson

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Check your basements and storage boxes!

Do you have physical materials, recordings, or electronic files to contribute to our museum? Please contact our collections manager at **bruce.kitt@northwestairlineshistory.org** or (952) 876-8677 with details of your items, photos if possible, and how we can reach you. We can not accept materials without this vetting step. Also, please do not bring materials to our museum location in Bloomington as we aren't able to process them there.

We are especially interested in items that help us tell stories or demonstrate concepts and procedures; records and correspondence; video, audio, and photos of facilities, aircraft, and staff; training materials and reference items; and union communications. More common items that are already well-represented in our collection may be declined as we are short on storage space!

Buy wise to support the NWAHC!

Visit our online store, with world-exclusive designs on a wide variety of items - from shirts to mugs, travel gear to puzzles, and more, at **shop.northwestairlineshistory.org.** Or scan this QR code to jump to our store directly.

We also offer surplus materials and new apparel and pins for sale on **eBay** under the handle "cyberglitz" - the assortment changes every week!



Compass Readings

Remembering Founding Director Bill Marchessault

With sadness we report the passing of our longtime Board member and NWA FA Bill Marchessault, on July 25, 2024 at the age of 75, after an extended illness. Bill had been with our organization from the beginning, retiring from his Secretary position on the Board only last year, and many of you may have met him at merchandise tables at events such as RNPA cruises and dinners, and our annual October memorabilia sale.

Bill was a gifted storyteller, and adept at relating with others, being the eldest of seven siblings. He served in the Navy during the early part of the Vietnam War, worked at Donaldson's Department Store in the early 1970s, and graduated Normandale College with a business degree before signing on with Northwest in 1973, as one of the few male flight

attendants in that era. Using his business background and apparel know-how, with NWA's blessing he developed logo gear and clothing sold for decades (often by him directly on the flight deck and in the briefing room!) Providing exemplary cabin service across the world, Bill flew all the way up to 2020.

Bill's funeral was held Thursday, August 8 with well over 200 in attendance. He considered everyone who flew with him part of his family. He had asked memorials be sent to the Lewy Body Dementia Association, or the NWAHC.

Comments on our Facebook page included:

Bill was a character, in the best possible way, and a charming gentleman to his fellow crew members and passengers. I always enjoyed my time spent with him on the airplane. - Eric Lenz

Will miss him. I flew with him on 12-day Tokyo flights. The laughter and camaraderie made the trip. Goodbye dear friend. - Terri Ken-Kurita

Loved working with Bill. You knew the customers would get top-notch service when he was running the cabin. And he didn't forget about the pilots. May he Rest in Peace. - Jeff Lundquist

The kindest, most thoughtful man. He personified NWA. - David Rivard

Bill was a great guy and quite the gentleman. I bought many hats and shirts from him and happily stored merch behind my seat up front for him. - Rob Ross

I loved his stories and so did everyone else. We will miss you, you'll be forever in our hearts up in the air. - Pam Throne





From Page 1: Carol Hall: a life in the sky

"The 1960s were dubbed "the golden age of air travel," Carol says. "We pampered passengers with excellent meals and drinks and extra attention. Seats were comfortable, with ample leg room, making flights more enjoyable. I'm happy to have been a stewardess then. I've shared many of my most memorable experiences in the book."

Stewardess by Carol Hanson Hall is available through Amazon.com. Copies also can be purchased in-person at our museum gift shop. Carol now joins our first editor, Anne Kerr, and volunteer Robert Johnson in publishing Northwest Airlines recollections - Anne's history, Fujimori Trays and Oshibori Towels, and Robert's collection, Voices from the Sky, are also available for sale at our museum.

St. Paul Modification Center presentation

Our Collections Manager, Bruce Kitt, was invited by the Eighth Air Force Historical Society of Minnesota to present information from his interviews and research about the NWA-managed World War II era B-24 bomber modification complex located at St. Paul's Holman Field. Bruce met with the group in July and a YouTube video has been posted at bit.ly/B24-mod-NWA. Bruce and Noel Allard from the MN Aviation Hall of Fame are now working on an expanded presentation for later this season.



MN Aviation Career Exploration Camp visits

For the evenings of June 18 and 25, our museum hosted visits from this year's cohort of high school age ACE Campers and their mentors - 90 people in all - to learn how the people of Northwest and Republic laid the groundwork for commercial aviation in the Northland, and the technological and service innovations they created. Since 1991, over 2,000 students have graduated from MN ACE Camp, which provides summer opportunities for ground instruction, flight and simulator time, visits to and speakers from airline and private operators, government facilities, and equipment manufacturers and suppliers. To learn more, visit **mnacecamp.org**.





Contribute your expertise!

Would you like to help plan an airline-themed party? Do you enjoy talking with teachers and developing lesson plans about science, social studies, or aeronautics? Know how to hobnob with city planners and politicians? Have a flair for photography?

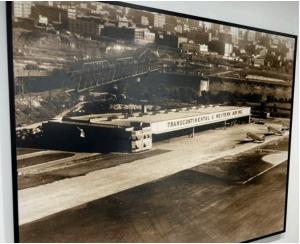
To ramp up our operation and build new community connections, we're looking for people with broad personal experience and effective communication skills to assist us - whether on a project basis, an on-call or scheduled volunteer, or even to join our Board. **No airline employment experience is necessary** - just a love of travel and history.

Your know-how in areas like grant research and writing, classroom and continuing education, event planning, collaborating with other museums and nonprofits, legal and intellectual property matters, government relations, or information technology can make a big difference! If you are interested in coming aboard, please email **northwestairlines@comcast.net**.

Compass Readings

Kansas City road trip - June 25-28, 2024

The annual Airliners International collectors' show allowed us the opportunity to visit our compatriots at the TWA Museum, located in a former company hangar at the downtown Kansas City airport. The Airline Archivists and Historians Association (AAHA) conference ran concurrently. Scott Norris and Bruce Kitt represented the NWAHC there.















northwestairlineshistory.org

Banks of display cases line many of the rooms converted into gallery space, and each separate room has its own theme, such as a walk-through timeline, a memorial to crew who had lost their lives, a recreation of Howard Hughes' office, full-size flight simulators and briefing rooms, and a private lounge.

Several massive cutaway models and arrangements of uniforms in various galleries invite extended careful attention, and a large jet training cabin can even be used for private events.

The pride of the collection is a Lockheed 12-A which flew as a test aircraft for TWA in the 1940s. The museum is open Wed-Sat, and admission is \$12.

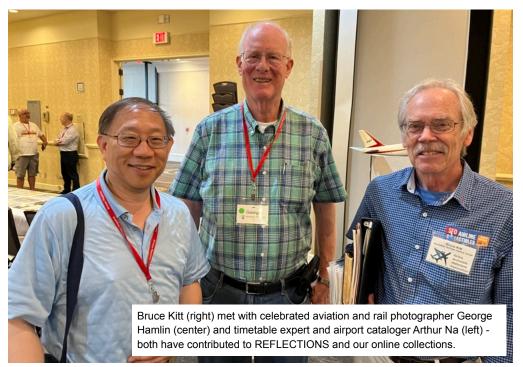


Airliners International used two large ballrooms at the MCI Airport Hilton, again seeing notable growth of attendance by teens and young adults who enjoy collecting diecast models and running flight simulations. Several vendors debuted impressive 3-D printed ground equipment and even full terminal buildings and towers accurately modeled on dozens of real airports. The star of the show was a 10-foot-wide Boeing 727 in PSA livery.

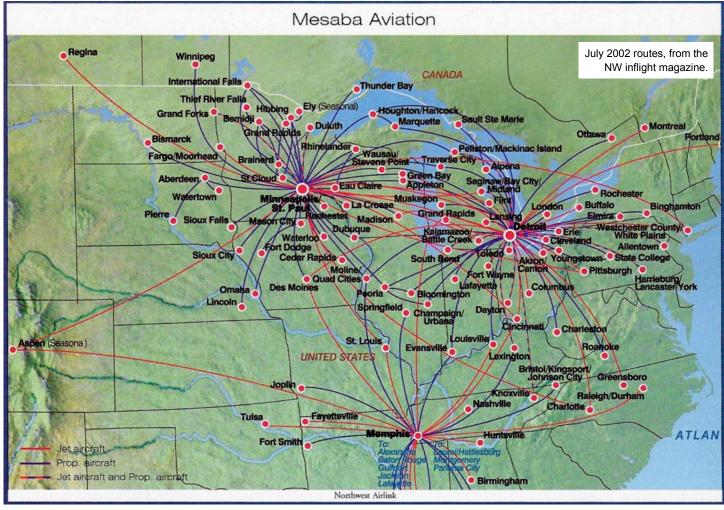
We talked with a number of vendors during the event and their interest is high in coming to the Twin Cities collectors' show on October 12 (see back cover for details.) - at press time we are looking at a record number of sellers! Networking with historians, authors, photographers, and high-level collectors was enjoyable as well as productive. The keynote presentation at the AAHA conference dealt with Digital Asset Management, with much helpful information we will need as we expand. We also had insightful conversations with the Pan Am Museum Foundation, Flight Path Museum LAX, and the new Flying Tiger Line Historical Society about our experience this past year with fundraising software.



Scott Norris took a tour at MCI overhaul and recycling operator Jet Midwest, taking the opportunity to rest on the flight deck of a JAL 777-200 coming off lease.



Mesaba History, the conclusion by Neil Ralston



For previous installments discussing the story of Mesaba in its 80th anniversary year, please refer to REFLECTIONS' March 2024 and June 2024 issues.

Part 3 - Turbulence 2000-2012

Mesaba Airlines entered into the 2000s riding high after tremendous growth throughout the 1990s. It entered the new millennium with nearly 3,400 employees and 106 aircraft – 36 quad-jet Avro RJ-85s and 73 workhorse Saab 340 turboprops – serving 103 cities in 27 states and Canada under the Northwest Airlink banner. Paul Foley was in the role of President and Chief Executive Officer, having taken over from Bryan Bedford in October 1999, and Carl Pohlad retained his position as Chairman of the Board.

An early bright spot was the opening of a new 126,000 square foot maintenance and training facility at the Cincinnati/ Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) in February 2000. Designed to perform heavy maintenance checks on the Avro RJ-85 fleet, the airline predicted that the new facility would create 150 new jobs by the end of 2002. However, storm clouds were beginning to brew on the horizon – both literally and figuratively. In May 2000, a portion of the maintenance hangar in Detroit collapsed during a wind storm. During reconstruction, the hangar was enlarged by approximately 60,000 square feet and reopened in June 2001.

Shortly thereafter, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) resulted in a profoundly negative impact on air travel. Northwest reduced Mesaba's flight activity to approximately 80 percent of 9/11 levels, gradually restoring Avro activity but leaving Saab flying at the diminished level.

During this time, hints of labor unrest surfaced as contact

During this time, hints of labor unrest surfaced as contact negotiations between Mesaba's management and its pilot union covering pay, job security, and work rules began in June 2001.

A labor agreement proved to be elusive, so a federal mediator joined the talks in August 2002. In the midst of the labor negotiations, John Spanjers assumed the role of President and Chief Operating Officer. Adding another factor into the mix, Mesaba Holdings, Inc. purchased Montana-based commuter Big Sky Airlines in December 2002 as a growth vehicle to diversify the operation with another major airline partner.

The standoff between management and the pilot union came to a head in December 2003 when the National Mediation Board declared that the negotiations were at an impasse, starting the clock on a 30-day cooling off period before the pilots could strike on January 9, 2004. Anticipating a strike, Mesaba cancelled all flights on January 10 so that aircraft could be positioned at its maintenance bases. The two sides reached a tentative agreement the following day, narrowly averting a strike and allowing flights to resume. In addition to increased pay and improved work rules, the agreement included a provision that parent company MAIR's subsidiary Big Sky Airlines would not fly aircraft with more than 19 seats unless

With the new pilot contract in place, the situation at Mesaba stabilized for a season. In April 2005, its airline service agreement with Northwest to operate the RJ85 and Saabs was extended for another ten years. The new contract also included a provision for Mesaba to begin operating 50-seat Bombardier CRJ-200 regional jet aircraft.

piloted by Mesaba crews.







Regional carrier Mesaba Airlines followed Northwest Airlines Inc. into bankruptcy on Thursday, a victim of Northwest's cuts as the big airline shrinks to try to fix its own financial problems.

Mesaba parent MAIR Holdings Inc. said the bankruptcy was prompted by "cash shortages and significant fleet changes and uncertainties imposed on it by Northwest Airlines," which is Mesaba's only customer.

The company said it expects to keep flying while in bankruptcy.

Mesaba's schedule, passengers and planes all come from Northwest, and its financial problems did, too. Flying under the Northwest Airlink name, Mesaba ferries passengers between Northwest hubs and outposts around the upper Midwest, where it is often the only air carrier.

Northwest entered bankruptcy court on Sept. 14 and is cutting its domestic schedule to avoid unprofitable routes.



However, with the ink barely dry on the new airline service agreement, Northwest filed for bankruptcy protection on October 13, 2005. When Northwest withheld payments and disclosed intentions to curtail RJ85 flying, Mesaba had little choice but to follow in its benefactor's footsteps and pursue bankruptcy protection itself (although parent MAIR did not.) This led Mesaba to seek large concessions from its workforce, reversing the labor peace gained in 2004. The RJ85 fleet was phased out, with the last flight occurring on December 1, 2006. This left Mesaba with a fleet of 49 Saab 340s.





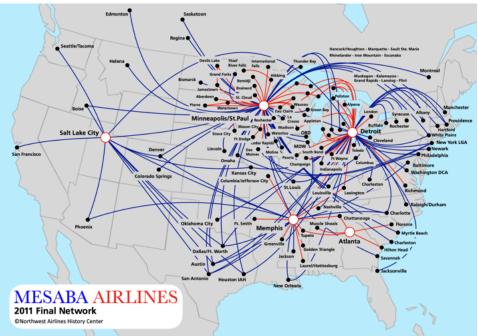
After reaching agreements to cut worker pay and benefits, Mesaba emerged from bankruptcy in April 2007 as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Northwest. It began to grow again as Northwest assigned new 76-seat CRJ-900 aircraft, along with 50-seat CRJ-200s, to the Mesaba fleet. The sale of Mesaba to Northwest led to the dissolution of Mesaba Holdings in July 2008 and the liquidation of its Big Sky Airlines subsidiary. (Ed. note: REFLECTIONS will feature the history of Big Sky in a 2025 issue.)

Mesaba's world changed yet again with the merger of Northwest and Delta in October 2008. As a result, Mesaba became a Delta Connection carrier. However, Delta's philosophy of ownership of regional affiliates was different than Northwest, and it sold Mesaba to competitor and peer Delta

Connection carrier Pinnacle Airlines (the former Express I Airlines) in 2010. At the time of the sale, Mesaba was operating 41 CRJ-900s, 19 CRJ-200s, and 32 Saab 340s. Displeased with the financial performance of the regional network flown by its turboprops – many in subsidized Essential Air Service routes – Delta announced that it would end Saab flying at the end of 2011. The last day for Delta Connection Saab 340

flights was November 30, 2011.

On January 4, 2012, all of Mesaba's jet flying was transferred to the Pinnacle Airlines operating certificate. In April 2012, Pinnacle filed for bankruptcy protection due to its deteriorating financial condition, partly due to the challenges of integrating Mesaba and its other subsidiary, Colgan Air. After announcing plans to wind down all turboprop flying, Pinnacle officially surrendered Mesaba's operating certificate on July 31, 2012, marking the rather abrupt end of the once "mighty eagle".



Prior to the Saab shutdown and certificate transfer to Pinnacle, Mesaba's network stretched coast to coast and served five Delta hubs. Saabs (red lines) filled in former ATR-72 services out of Atlanta, much of the initial Memphis Republic Express network, and the core Mesaba system from the late 1980s.





A Chat with Mesaba's Founder, Gordon Newstrom

Excerpted from the October 1986 edition of **Mesaba on the Move** newsletter - many issues are now digitized and available on our website.

Mesaba Aviation had its beginning on July 4th, 1944. The first day of operations anyway. I had been in the service and had been teaching a Navy Class Program in Albert Lea for about two years. When I was discharged, I bought a training airplane — a J3 Cub, and I flew it home to Northern Minnesota to begin work. A friend had been running the airport in Coleraine, and asked me if I would be interested in coming to the airport to begin running an aviation operation. I said yes, so I opened up service in Coleraine. By 1945, I had 2 airplanes there and I said, "Doggone it, if I am going to operate off this field, I'd need a hangar too." So I built one and began running a full-fledged aviation business.

In 1950, I was approached by 5 fellas from Grand Rapids, who expressed an interest in my coming to that airport to take over facilities and open up my business there. I had 5 persons working for me in Coleraine, and when I was asked to come to Grand Rapids, there was only one person running the whole airport. By 1952, I built a respectable hangar and one year later I built a T-hangar. I paid for it all myself.

Well, in addition to things I was doing in Grand Rapids, I had a flight operation in Deer River too, and I a lot of students down at Mora, Minnesota, where I used to fly to teach lessons. A good number of my students were G.I.'s learning to fly under the G.I Bill. But we also chartered flights. I remember my first charter aircraft—a Waco K7 that I bought in 1947. I bought it in Bemidji and I think I paid about \$4200 for it. I used to fly to Minneapolis mostly, but on occasion, I would go to Chicago. The first trip I took to Chicago, I brought a patient to a hospital who had been badly burned in a house fire. I also used to do a lot of work for Blandin Paper Company which does business in Grand Rapids. In fact, Blandin helped me buy my first twinengine Beech aircraft in 1962. There weren't many trips turned down in that aircraft, I'll tell you that!

I started flying scheduled service in 1967. I was flying between Grand Rapids and Minneapolis, down in the morning and back to Grand Rapids about 3:00 p.m. I was trying everything to get people flying, but back then there were a lot of people skeptical of flying, especially small airplanes. I promoted the heck out of our service and with our Cessna 172, which is a bigger plane, business began to take of. We had five or six pilots that alternated between flying scheduled service and giving flight lessons. If I remember right, we charged about \$20.00 round-trip between Grand Rapids and the Twin Cities.

(In reference to the name of the company) In Northern Minnesota, there are a lot of Mesaba's with a lot of different spellings. For example there is Mesabe with an "e", Mesabi with an "i", and then Mesaba. I just didn't like the looks of Mesabi and I didn't like the looks of Mesabe! So I picked Mesaba. And I thought it was fitting since we were started on the Mesaba Iron Range. In fact, we had the biggest aviation operation on the whole Range.

I had an offer for the whole operation in 1970, around the 4th of July, and I thought it was pretty good, so I sold the Company. The buyers were the Halversons of Duluth who bought all of my planes - about 15 by then —and I sold them my buildings, too. Then I stayed on as General Manager for five years. I still have my business cards as general manager of Mesaba Aviation. Every now and then, I take one out and hand it to someone, just for the fun of it. Then of course, the Swensons bought the Company in 1977 and look where it is today!

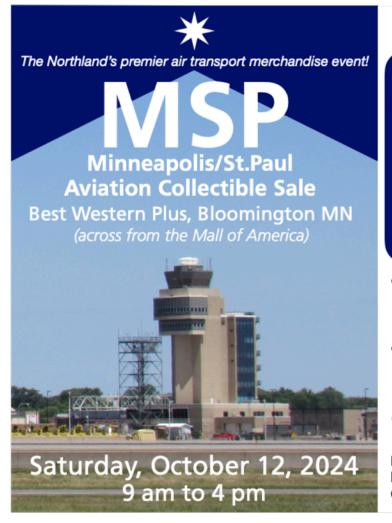
The Halversons bought Mesaba's first Beech 99 in 1972. It was airplane #8099R. Later that Beech was repossessed because the Halversons owed too much money on it. Three years ago (1983) when Mesaba was beginning to expand, I was out on the airport and here Rob Swenson flew that very same Beech 99, #8099R, back to Mesaba again to add it to the fleet. I don't know how many owners it had had since it had first left the Company, but it had 10,000 more hours on it when it came back.



It takes a lot of dog-gone hard work and promotion, promotion, promotion to be successful in this industry. You know, a lot of people say you have to be crazy to fly, and if you're not, it helps a lot anyhow. I have been crazy about this business for as long as I can remember.



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For table space, contact Bruce Kitt at (952) 698-4478 / bruce.kitt@northwestairlineshistory.org or Keith Olberg at (651) 423-5111 / airwaysgifts@juno.com