



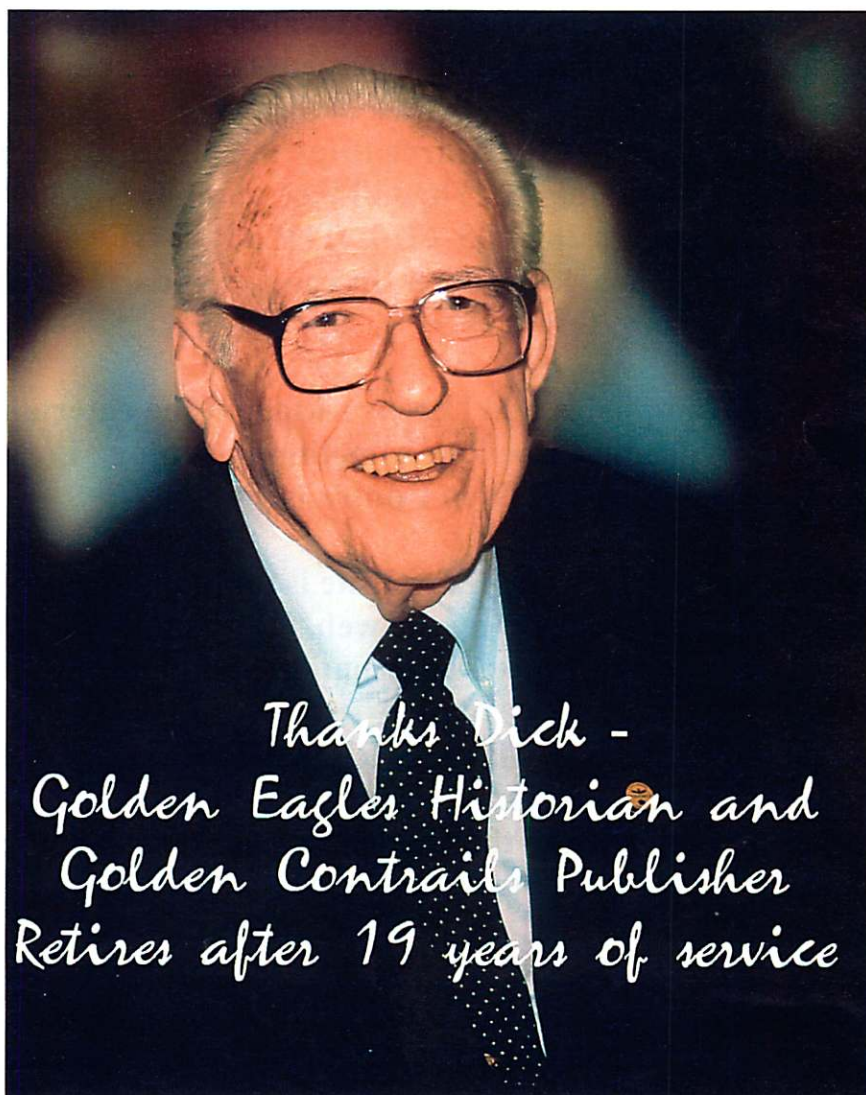
# **GOLDEN CONTRAILS**

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... and off' the setting sun is pleased to trim the clouds with molten sails,  
and lace the way of passing jets with golden condensation trails.

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April 2009



*Thanks Dick -  
Golden Eagles Historian and  
Golden Contrails Publisher  
Retires after 19 years of service*

## **CAPTAIN'S CORNER**

**Where has the time gone? It seems just yesterday that I was going to LAS to escape hurricane IKE. Here it is time to start making plans for the remainder of the year.**

**Even though our 2009 convention is still month's away, plan on joining us this year in HOUSTON. As many of you will remember we have changed the dates from September to October to try to avoid the hurricane season. The BUSSINESS MEETING, LADIES AUXILLIARY LUNCHEON, and CONVENTION will be October 10<sup>th</sup> at the Houston Airport Marriott. The golf is scheduled for the 9<sup>th</sup>, and will be a one (1) day event this year. Sid Alexander will host the tournament again and you can see his comments included in this copy.**

**Rooms have been reserved at the Marriott for the nights of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> at the rate of \$105/night. The toll-free number is 1-800-228-9290 or the local number is 281-443-2310. THE CUT-OFF DATE is September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 so mark the dates on your calendar. Better yet, call now and make reservations.**

**Gary and Ranelle Humphries and I are working on the entertainment for this year and we promise it will be something to enjoy. Look for our announcement in the August Golden Contrails.**

**Thanks to Birdie, the Golden Eagles website is up to date. He will have details of the convention and golf on the web. Log onto the site at [www.thegoldeneagles.org](http://www.thegoldeneagles.org) for more information about our organization.**

**You may remember in LAS, CAPTAIN DICK GRIGSBY, passed the torch as historian to Shaun Ryan. Dick, I would like to THANK YOU for the many years of service to the Golden Eagles. You have been a friend and mentor to the many that have served at any level in the organization.**

**We are in the process of working out the details to go to a digital format for the Golden Contrails. Shaun Ryan, Birdie Bertrand and the Board of Directors are working on the procedures and all will be informed when the details are complete. Look for details in the next issue.**

**Once again, I urge each and every one of you to attempt to bring one new member to the convention. So get off of your *duff* and call someone you have been meaning to call and invite them to join and come on down to the IAH convention.**

**Have a pleasant Spring and Summer. As you make your plans for the rest of the year, plan on being in IAH this fall, who knows you might even get to fly the simulator again. YOU WILL ENJOY IT,**

***Bob Shelton***

From the Publisher-

This being my first try at publishing, all I can do is ask your indulgence in advance and promise you I will get better as we go along. Fortunately, this is an endeavor where mistakes can be fixed (if noticed) ahead of time and do not call for an accident investigation board. I can see that I have a lot to learn and I have come to appreciate anew the work that Dick Grigsby has been doing for the last 19 years. THANK YOU DICK FOR A JOB WELL DONE! Besides Dick's picture on the front cover, I have reproduced on the back cover the award we gave him for his outstanding work in our behalf. Dick will continue to help in getting the *Golden Contrails* printed and mailed and hopefully in pointing out any problem areas I may have in the publishing end. I will also gladly accept any (within reason) criticism you feel will help improve the product.

Shaun

# **Golden Eagles 2009 Golf Tournament IAH**



The Golden Eagles 2009 Golf Tournament will be at Woodforest Golf Club, Montgomery, TX. Directions to the golf course from IAH and The Woodlands are on the next page. Will pass all information onto Bertie and have him put it on the Web site.

Dates: Fri. Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> Tee Time 8:30 AM  
Shot gun start.....and more?



Cost: \$70.00...for golf and prizes

RSVP DEADLINE: Sept.29th \_\_\_\_\_ it's gonna be fun!  
\_\_\_\_\_ cut \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

**Sid Alexander**

(Golf/ Coordinator IAH 2009)

57 Blush Hill Dr

Conroe, Texas 77304

(936)890-4601

email..elsid@consolidated.net

**SOFT SPIKES**

\_\_\_\_\_ single@\$70.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Handicap\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

\* Anybody can play...handicap...No handicap...never played, its okay!

## Woodforest Golf Club at Fish Creek



## Directions & Map

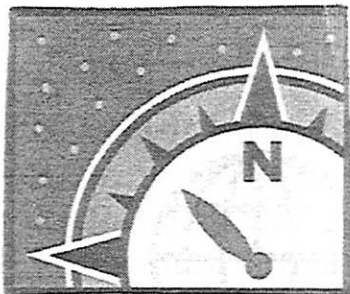
Located just 15 minutes north of The Woodlands. From I-45 North, take exit 81 and travel seven miles west on FM 1488. Turn right (north) on FM 2978/Honea-Egypt Rd. Continue three miles until you see the Woodforest Golf entrance at Mulligan Drive.

From The Woodlands, take Hwy. 242 west to FM 1488. Turn left (west) on FM 1488 and continue several miles before turning right (north) on FM 2978/Honea-Egypt Rd., or take The Woodlands Parkway to FM 2978 and turn right (north). Continue three miles until you see the Woodforest Golf entrance at Mulligan Drive.

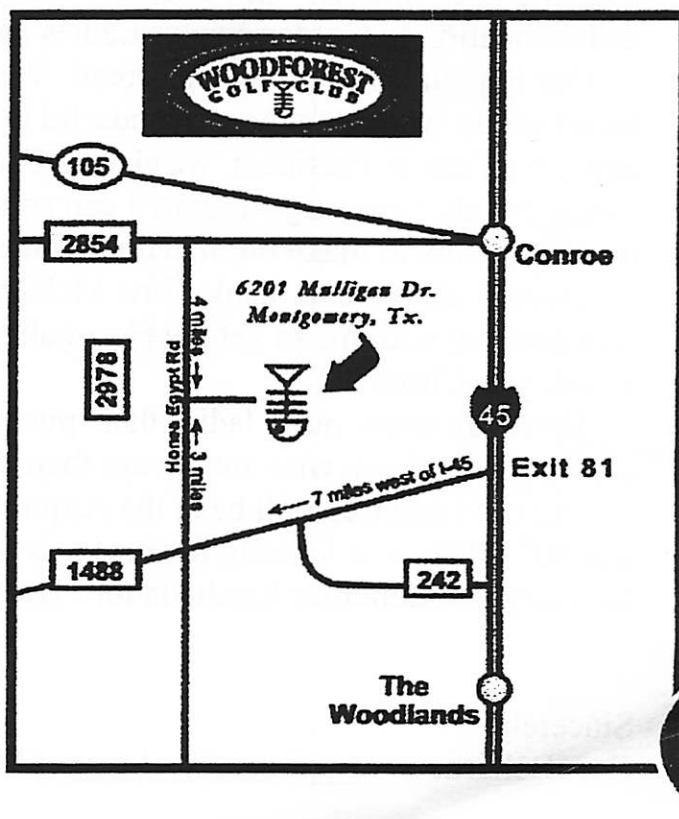
6201 Mulligan Drive  
Montgomery, Texas  
(936) 588-8800

FAX (936) 588-8802

Directions/Map



**From IAH Airport, go West  
to I-45. Go North on I-45 approx.  
25 miles to Exit 81. Follow from  
The Woodlands.**



## **A Message to The Ladies Auxiliary From B.J. Bellerue**

It was an honor to be elected President of our wonderful ladies auxiliary. I thank you for the trust and confidence you have placed in me and I will endeavor to make the next two years just as delightful and fun as in the past.

I want to thank Renelle Humphries for the outstanding job she did as our president for the past two years. She was always on top of every situation and kept us informed through her letters in the Golden Contrails. She really showed her dedication to our group when hurricane "IKE" hit Galveston, Houston and all the surrounding communities – She stayed in touch with me daily to make sure all would go well in her absence. We missed you Renelle, and all the wonderful ladies from the Houston area that were not able to attend The Golden Eagles meeting in Sept. due to "IKE". I sincerely hope that all of our families in the path of "IKE" are getting their lives back to normal and are able to accomplish the goals they set.

There is another lovely lady that I want to recognize. Cynthia Starr has been our secretary for the past 4 years and has always, without fail, been at our meetings and done a terrific job! She has always been a joy to work with and is a "treasure" in our group. Thank you Cynthia for your service and dedication to Golden Eagles Ladies Auxiliary.

Our September meeting was great! We have a few new members in our ladies group which is always wonderful to see. We elected new officers and along with me as President, we elected Sharon Clough, Vice President and Jackie Furuli, Secretary. I know I can count on these terrific ladies for the next two years to make our meetings fun and successful!

I would also like to thank Chris McKenzie for all of her help, and coordinating with me to get the Hospitality Room set up and running. Thank you Chris!

There are many other ladies that "pitched in" to help out, so my heartfelt thanks to all of you who are always there to lend a helping hand.

Our next meeting will be at the Airport Marriott in Houston on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 2009. I'm looking forward to a wonderful gathering with our ladies auxiliary and delicious luncheon too! Hope to see you all there.

Sincerely,

B. J. Bellerue

[bbellerue@aol.com](mailto:bbellerue@aol.com) (702) 269-1419

## **Golden Contrails History**

**Golden Contrails was originally begun in the early 1960s as an “in house” monthly publication to keep pilots abreast of current policies and procedures system-wide.**

**I had been chosen to fill the newly created position of Director of Flying (system chief pilot) and I quickly recognized the need for such a line of communication.**

**Since Continental’s image was at that time centered around “Golden Jet. Gold Carpet Service, Proud Bird With the Golden Tail,” to name the magazine Golden Contrails was a natural follow-on as well as an inspiration for the short poem, “Golden Contrails.”**

**I prevailed upon one of our Dallas Captains, W. C. (Dub) Ewing to do the art work of the heading, which at that time lacked the present Golden Eagles emblem, but included the poem.**

**In business meeting of the Golden Eagles in 1990, Captain Don Ballard , president, it was decided to begin publication of a similar communications organ. Since Continental had abandoned the project, I requested that Golden Eagles be assigned proprietary rights to the name and we began publication on a quarterly schedule, now a triennial one.**

**It has developed from rather primitive copy done at home on my old typewriter to its present, somewhat more sophisticated form. Its success has been dependent upon the cheerful and reliable input from succeeding Golden Eagles officers and members. Mailings have grown from a skimpy 125 to over 600 and we are grateful to those members who regularly assist in the “stuffin’ @ mailing.”**

**It has been a great personal pleasure to provide this service to our members and their families.**

**Richard S. Grigsby, Editor**

**Golden Contrails.**





## *The Reserve Captain's Corner*

Hello All!

I hope this finds everyone healthy and retaining a little bit of wealth! We are gearing up for another great convention this year, no hurricanes allowed. I was disappointed to miss seeing everyone in Las Vegas last year, but Ike had other plans for me. What a great job BJ and all of her helpers did at the last minute. I know Ranelle was very grateful to have had her to call on.

Be sure to mark your calendars for this years event in Houston. We are working to make this the best yet. Looking at some great entertainment and of course organizing the ever popular hospitality room. Be sure to let anyone who has not attended or has not joined our membership know about our convention. It is a great time to catch up with old friends and war stories and our continued existence depends on our membership helping get the word out.

Remember, this is your organization, please send any input you have and consider volunteering to help out. We are going to need a new President Elect this year so step up and take a turn. It is not a permanent commitment and you will always have plenty of help and support from former officers and board members.

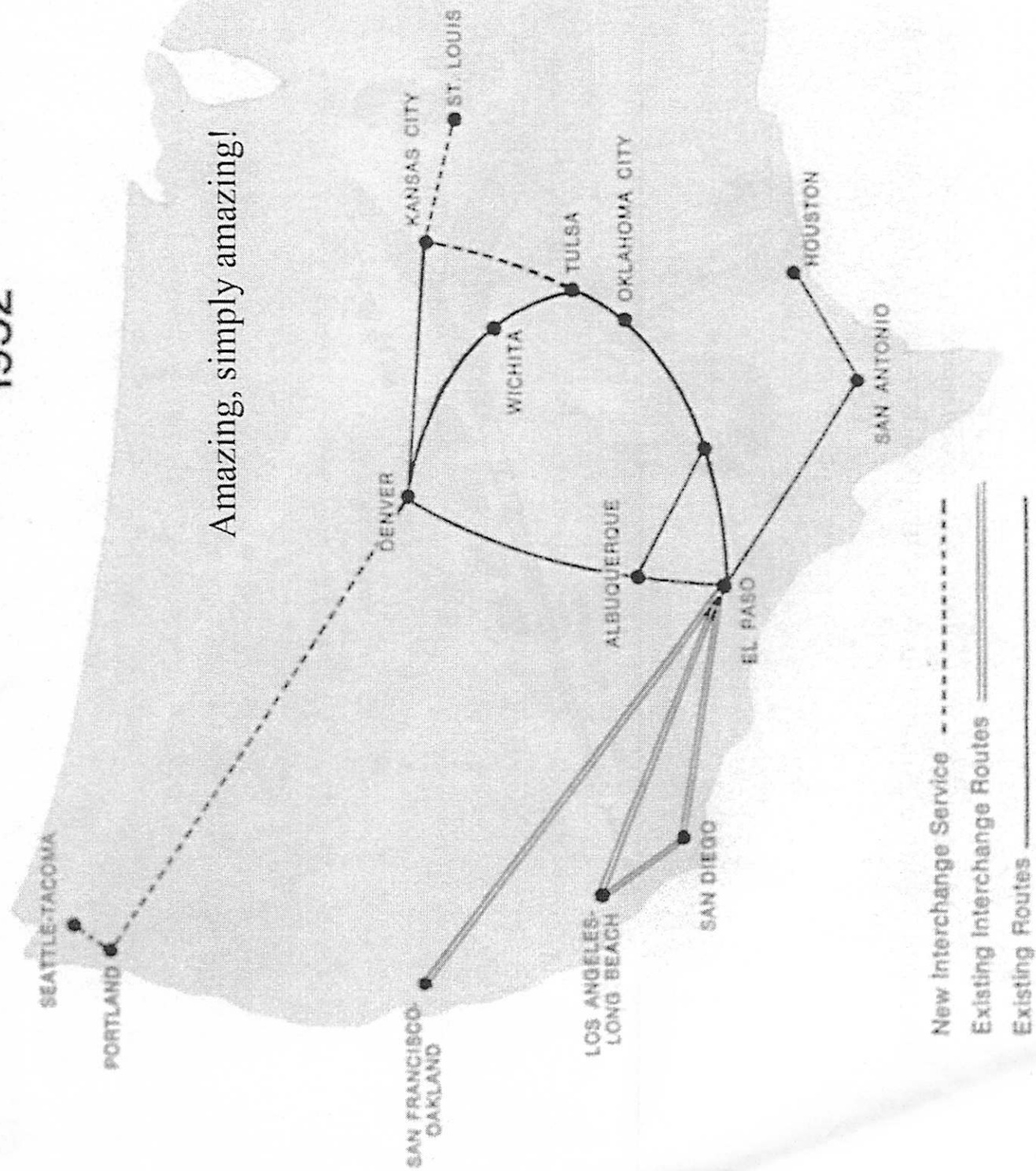
Mark your calendars today! Looking forward to seeing you all!

Gary



# CONTINENTAL AIRLINES 1952

Amazing, simply amazing!



New Interchange Service - - - - -  
Existing Interchange Routes ====  
Existing Routes - - - - -



## Lockheed Vega with Varney Speed Lines/Continental Airlines Markings

Part of a collection of historical photographs donated to the Golden Eagles

by Ken Lawrence

## VISIT TO QATAR

by Haldis Toppel

A travel log, Part I - Christmas in the Desert

**Background:** Our son Curt is playing professional volleyball in Qatar. We decided on short notice to visit him over Christmas and New Years. You may ask: "Where is Qatar?" It is a peninsula in the Persian Gulf next to Saudi Arabia. The Capital is Doha. We left on December 18 from Los Angeles via Denver for Frankfurt, Germany, visited Kurt's sister and niece in Aachen and in Neckargmuend (near Heidelberg) and continued on December 22. from Frankfurt to Doha. We returned home on January 10.

December 23, 2008

We have had a very "interesting" trip, starting out with a small carry-on each, two suitcases and Curt's custom golf clubs. We arrived safe and sound at Curt's apartment in Doha on December 22, but this trip has been jinxed with just about every mishap imaginable. But all is well that ends well.

It all started with a chaotic three hour check in on December 18. at United Airlines at LAX. After waiting for nearly two hours in line and at the counter to get an agent to check our baggage for an international flight via Denver, I (Haldis) finally approached a supervisor insisting with measured politeness that we were about an hour away from our schedule departure and needed to be checked in NOW or we might miss our flight. That brought about the threat to be escorted out by airport security. A counter agent took pity and checked us and our luggage in. We made it to the gate as the flight was boarding. Our baggage did not fare so well but more about that later.

Departing Denver, we sat on the taxiway for over an hour blanketed by a major snow storm and got de-iced twice. We made up the lost time by cruising with 200 mi/hr tail winds in the jet stream with the associated turbulence and bumpy ride. Arriving over Frankfurt on schedule, we had to hold for 30 minutes while the bomb squad prepared to detonate a WWII bomb found under a construction site at the airport.

Once in Germany, we filed a missing luggage report and then spent four wonderful days with Kurt's family in Aachen and Neckargmuend taking in the full spirit of the Christmas Season. The various train trips to get there, however, were uncharacteristically punctuated by unpublished schedule changes, late arrivals/departures and missed connections, which left us shivering in the winter cold at drab railroad stations, dragging along our carry-on luggage which was all the airline had left us with.

The flight from Frankfurt to Doha with Qatar Airways was on time, friendly, and the food was good and plentiful. We had been able to collect our two lost suitcases in Frankfurt and were happily reunited with them at Doha baggage claim. Curt's golf clubs were delivered to him six

weeks later. The traditional Christmas goose, purchased in Aachen for our Christmas day dinner, had passed deep-frozen in our carryon luggage through all the thorough security checks.

Curt met us cheerfully at the Airport. We are his guests at a rather elegantly furnished hotel apartment provided to him and his Cuban team mate, Walter, by his volleyball team, Al Arabi Sports Club. Walter speaks mostly Spanish with some English which can lead to a three way conversation in English, Spanish, and German. Other than visiting the "Hypermarket" which sells every imaginable food from all corners of the globe, we have not seen much of Qatar yet. The currency is Qatar-Real (QR) and the conversion rate is fixed by the government at a steady 3.64 QR per Dollar - no need to watch the currency market. Food prices are by and large similar to the US, but local food, especially fish, is exceptionally reasonable.

Curt's hotel is in a very Arabic older part of town with bland concrete buildings, dusty streets and mama-papa stores. The Muezzins have powerful voices, and the winter weather is comfortably warm, similar to California.

According to Wikipedia, 80% of the population is foreign workers. Few are north or south Americans, some east and west Europeans and many are from Asian nations such as the Philippines, India, Thailand, Pakistan, etc. as well as nationals from neighboring Arab countries.

Many of the locals can be recognized by their spotlessly white tunics (Thobe) for men along with their flowing scarf (Ghutra) which is held in place by a braided circular rope (Ogaal). Thobes resemble button-down shirts, but are floor length. The wearers' wealth might be reflected in elaborate gold and diamond-studded cufflinks. Women wear black robes (Abbaya) and head scarfs (sheila) with or without a veil. Exquisite jewelry and Gucci or Louis Vuitton purses are not uncommon. Sleeves and front panels of the abbaya are often elaborately embroidered with silver threads.

In contrast to the stories we hear about the drudgery of mandated heavy burkas elsewhere, this age old clothing is fascinatingly beautiful and worn with pride, grace and dignity, and most importantly, voluntarily. An increasing number of Qataris are choosing these lightweight, flowing gowns for ease of use and convenience. It gives men a rather regal appearance and allows the scarf to be draped back behind the shoulders in an individual and often elaborate fashion. It seems to be in need of frequent adjustment especially when trying to impress females. Women can hide a bad hair day or an outbreak of acne or a rush out of the house without makeup. How convenient to hide behind the veil with only your eyes showing and you look absolutely beautiful. Other than in neighboring Saudi Arabia, women in Qatar have the freedom to vote, drive a car, and wear the traditional gowns or western clothing.

December 24, 2008

In Qatar, "Sunday" is on Friday. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were regularly scheduled volleyball training days for Curt, 3 hrs. in the morning and 3 hrs. in the evening. With a great deal of diplomatic persuasion Curt negotiated the evening of the 24th and all of the 25th off. Since the following day will fall on a Friday, it is off anyway. We ended up canceling the

planned trip to Dubai for New Years so Curt did not have to ask for special privileges again for December 31 and January 1. Training will be as usual. No harm done, we will be spending New Years Eve at the famous Sheraton Hotel in Doha.

We brought Christmas decorations with us for a center piece on the dining room table and constructed a make-believe Christmas tree from some pine twigs we had brought along with the goose. On Christmas Eve we enjoyed fresh lobster from the Hypermarket at about \$2.50 a piece. When we started to sing Christmas songs, the Muezzin called for the Evening prayer from a nearby minaret. Walter had joined us for the evening. Silent Night, Rudolph, and O Christmas Tree were unfamiliar and foreign to him. It was a strange collection of languages and cultures that joined hands that evening to express the Christmas spirit of unity and love of all mankind. As we started dinner, the phone rang. The coach asked for Walter and Curt to please meet him at the gym as soon as possible since the administration contingent has just arrived and wanted to speak to them regarding some contract issues. Curt negotiated a half hour wait to be able to finish dinner. Yes, of course, it was a day like any other in Qatar.

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December 25, 2008

#### A travel log, Part II - What a difference a day makes

It is Christmas Day. The goose has been defrosting in the refrigerator and is ready for the oven tonight. We have been en route for a week and are beginning to shake the jetlag from the 11 hour time change. The mid-day sleep attacks have become less severe, and the bouts of wakeful tossing at night less frequent.

Curt had negotiated the day off from volleyball training. We left for a city-tour after breakfast. Our hotel is located near old-town towards the south-eastern part of the Doha bay in the Al-Hilal district. The streets and buildings in the area are dusty grey with an occasional flare of arabesque architecture or design on some of the high rise apartment buildings or hotels. As you leave the major streets, the roadways get narrower, the layout more convoluted. Street signs are rare. Addresses are often identified by a descriptor rather than a number. Our hotel address is: Royal Wings Hotel, Al-Hilal Street opposite Gulf Times (the publication headquarter for the local English speaking newspaper), Doha, Qatar.

The many pedestrians are mostly working class locals, many dressed in the traditional abbaya or thobe, going about their daily business. Small mama-papa stores provide walking-distance access to bakeries, fast food outlets, and various groceries and vegetable stores. The sweets stores are brimming with artfully decorated pastries and cakes and a huge display of beautifully arranged candy platters.

You definitely feel out of place walking through this area, but not insecure. The locals keep a polite distance from us but respond with a ready smile and greeting if addressed. There is hardly any crime in Qatar. Expatriates (foreigners) are deported for the slightest misdeeds. Liquor and



drugs are non-existent and penalties for violent and non-violent crimes are severe. Police cars are a rare sight, but photo-enforced speeding or red-light violations carry an uncontested 7,000QR fine (about \$2,000); violators may also face deportation. Being drunk in public is a major offense, and allowable blood alcohol level for drivers is zero.

The locals, especially the children, steal glimpses of us, just as we steal glimpses of them, always respectfully cognizant not to stare at them. The temptation is certainly there to take in the wondrous faces, clothing and city life in more detail. The baker told my husband that customarily, only men shop at the bakery, so Kurt was right at home there. Women with or without the veil or in western clothing seem to enjoy the sweets shops. Two shoe shine men sit side-by-side on the ground in front of tiny wooden structures crammed with assorted shoe paraphernalia, their legs cross-folded under them like bungees. A pair of teenage girls with the abaya and head dress but without veil approach, the front of their unusual abbayas swinging wide open with every youthful stride, exposing fashionably tight jeans. I was amused by the little boys perhaps eight or ten years old, playing a pickup soccer game in the alley behind their home, and lifting the tiny white thobes above the knee with one hand to give them kicking freedom.

The City of about 400,000 surrounds the half-moon shaped Doha bay. "Ring Roads," three lanes in each direction, follow the curvature of the bay in widening concentric circles. Cross roads converge towards the bay like spokes on a wagon wheel. Where main roads cross, the intersections are replaced by expansive roundabouts, a three-lane clockwise flow of traffic around a large center island. Roundabouts allow for the continuation of traffic without stopping at the intersection and they prevent cross traffic collisions. There is seldom a break in the center divider between roundabouts as far as 1/2 mile apart. If you know your way around town, access to any part of the city is fast and efficient with this futuristic traffic engineering model. To navigate with any sense of direction, however, is virtually impossible.

Driving in Doha is no task for the timid. Traffic can be heavy. The roundabouts, intended to facilitate traffic flow and traffic safety, pose a special challenge to even the most daring driver. Depending on where you enter and exit, the three lane configuration may require you to braid yourself, first left then right, through all three lanes in short succession, becoming entirely dependent on the courtesy and vigilance of other drivers who are being cut off in the process. If you miss your intended exit, you can keep going in circles until you find it again, but only if you have the sense of direction of a carrier pigeon or the photographic memory of a camcorder to remember where you came from and where you are going. Watching Curt drive from my backseat vantage point gave me a severe case of the nerves and I flatly refused to get behind the wheel, well, for the first two days at least.

We headed for the Corniche, the most spectacular Ring Road, a six lane traffic mainline along the bay connecting old town Doha on the south-eastern stretch of the Bay with the newly developed business district along the north-western stretch. The center dividers and roundabouts are bountifully landscaped with colorful flowers, trees, and grass strips. The street is flanked by children's playgrounds, parks, a long ocean front promenade and architectural marvels of mosques, museums, and high rises without compare. The view towards the bay is open and offers a fascinating vista of the entire coastline. Considering that Qatar lacks natural

sources of sweet water and depends solely on desalination plants for its water supply, the rich flower beds and grass strips, the many trees, and the intricate fountains and waterfalls, are truly a display of splendor of this valuable resource. It takes 2.5 gallons per day to keep a tree or one square foot of grass alive. In Qatar, bottled drinking water, at \$4.00/gal, is far more expensive than gasoline at 65 cent a gallon.

The Corniche passes by the grand mosque of Doha with its one-of-a-kind spiral minaret, and the king's palace on the inland side. On the ocean you can't miss the newly opened Museum of Islamic Art, an architectural masterpiece of intricate relationships of space, light, and color, reminiscent of LA's Disney Hall in concept, but very different shape. We strolled along the promenade, passing by the well maintained wooden dhow boats in the fishing harbor and watched individuals and families take in the winter sun of Qatar while quietly glancing out to the sea. We felt an all-embracing sense of relaxation, serenity and peace. Conspicuously absent on sandy beaches were bathing sun-worshippers, as this would be considered indecent.

Back in the car we continued toward the fascinating skyline of the new Doha business district, visible from across the bay. As we drew closer, the multitude of architectural marvels took shape: thirty, perhaps forty high rise buildings, some still under construction, each an architectural wonder in itself, unique, expressive, artistic. Every one of them a single attraction, if placed downtown Los Angeles, or any other city for that matter. It must have been an architect's dream to be given the opportunity to combine freedom of design and unbridled creativity with innovative engineering. As we drove among the buildings, Curt discovered his passion for photography. No matter where the camera was pointed, you could not take a bad picture. The possibilities of framing form, color, and design were endless.

Back home, we popped the goose into the oven, prepared corn, carrots, mashed potatoes and gravy and enjoyed a delightful Christmas dinner. With great efforts of charade-like gestures and sounds from all the Toppels, we finally managed to describe the bird sufficiently to Curt's Cuban roommate to identify it as "ganso" in Spanish. Once Walter knew what he was eating, he had a second helping.

We said Good Night and Feliz Navidad, and Merry Christmas and Froehliche Weihnachten and went to sleep tired and happy.

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January 1, 2009

### Part III - Happy New Year

In Qatar, January 31st is once more a day like any other, except in the major hotels. We settled for the much lauded \$150 per seat New Year's celebration at the famous Doha Sheraton. The pyramid-shaped hotel with its crowning cap is a major landmark at the far end of Doha Bay and



situated on its own 70 acres of exquisitely landscaped lagoons, pools and various recreational amenities.

The event turned into as much of a superlative as the hotel itself. The reception began with a wine/champagne greeting in a country where alcohol is strictly prohibited and only allowed at specified hotels. The "buffet" was an extravaganza without equal, built along both sides of the 150 ft hallway along the grand ball room. Sparkling ice sculpture and mega-sized tropical flower arrangements graced the tables. Huge whole baked fish, artfully shaped and decorated, seemed to leap out of imaginary waves. Bread and watermelon sculptures defied description. Salad, cheeses, and hors d'oeuvres lined up next to three foot high lobster and prawn pyramids which seemed more artificial than designed to be consumed. Lobster, prime rib, a whole lamb, beef, fish, fresh oysters, tiramisu, cream brule, crepe suzette, just to name a few of my favorites. The two pages of menu listings are far too many to mention or describe. 89 cooks and chefs had prepared the food. 300 employees were working on the event for 400 guests, designed to cater to an eclectic collection of lighthearted, fun loving European, Middle Eastern, and Asian expatriates (foreigners) mingling in an atmosphere of Qatari elegance.

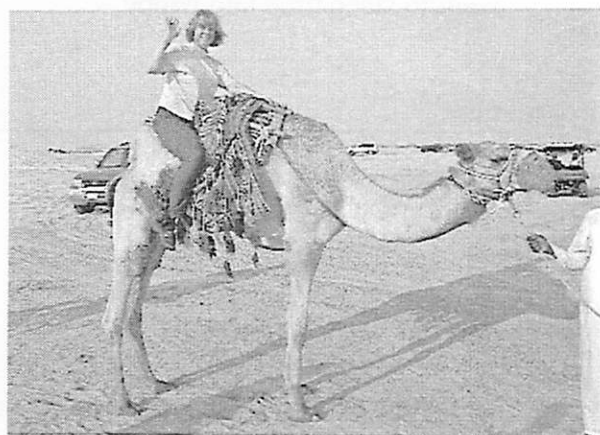
The lively band began to play early in the evening. The dance floor was crowded with couples from their twenties through their eighties. Son Curt summed up the scene when he defined the crowd as "definitely over 30" and the music as "definitely under 30" and "everybody is dancing up a storm." The ambiance was clearly a reflection of the vibrant and adventuresome spirit of Qatari expatriates celebrating with unbridled enthusiasm.

When 20 "Crazy Feet" tap dancers took the floor in ever-changing colorful costumes and click-clacked to Rap, Mozart, Strauss' Vienna Waltz and then switched to Greek, Argentinean, and Bavarian rhythms, all concerns about a boring evening were drowned. Two little girls, about eight and ten, performed their solo show to a standing ovation, and the lead dancer, Angelo Borer, brought the house down with his electrifying finale.

The collection of guests at our table was the quintessential Qatari melting pot: Russian, Bulgarian, Pakistani, and of course us German-Americans. We went home tired, happy, and content, reminiscing about the lavish food, the unusual tap dancers and the boundless energy on the dance floor and our interesting and unusual table neighbors. We learned the next day that all New Year's celebrations in nearby Dubai had been canceled on short notice in deference to the recently erupted Pakistani and Palestinian conflicts.

January 2, through 9 2009

Part IV - Qatari Excursions



We spent 18 days in Qatar, four of which in bed with a major bug. The rest of the time became a most interesting excursion from the primitive to the super-luxurious. All-day trips were limited to Fridays, the only day Curt had off from volleyball practice.

#### The Dunes:

The guided Safari to the dunes of Qatar, about 1 ½ hrs south of Doha, began with our driver filing up the 4x4 SUV with 65 cent per gallon gas in Al Wakrah, and a leisurely stop at the edge of the desert for a short camel ride. In preparation of the drive through the sand, our driver reduced the pressure on his SUV tires until they resembled the flattened hoof of a camel. Curt and I were busy making ourselves look silly by climbing onto the saddle of a colorfully decorated tourist camel that conveniently rested low on the warm sand with its legs folded under it. We were desperately clinging to the saddle to keep from being ejected, when the gentle beast suddenly straightened up its hind legs before rising up on the front ones, and then cruised off into the desert with a soft and pleasant gate.

Back in the car, we entered into a wonder world of pure sand, contoured by the wind over the millennium into ever-changing, sharply defined ridges and valleys, with a thousand shades of light and dark, gray and yellow, ocher and gold. The tire tracks left in the sand were reminders of our fragile existence in this wondrous but inhospitable land where the wind will soon erase all evidence of our presence.

Our driver jarred us back into reality with his “dune bashing” antics, suddenly racing down a steep incline and up the other side of the narrow valley, laughing heartily at our fearful cries. One more wild ride, another cruise skirting a steep ridge by inches, a loop up a steep hill and back down again, and we cried mercy.

The evening was spent with a colorful array of tour groups at a traditional campsite where Arabic food was prepared over an open barbeque and arabesque music invited a cheering group of young visitors to join in rhythm on the dance floor.

On our way home we could not help but marvel at the incredibly clear, black night sky with its millions of stars sparkling onto the Qatari desert.

#### Al Zubara Fort:

Every web site and every tour book in Qatar presents the Al Zubara fort and museum located on the northwest coast of the peninsula as one of Qatar’s proudest tourist destinations. It was rebuilt in 1936 on the site of an old fort and constructed using the ancient Qatari mud and wood methods. We were excited to make the 80 mi trip through the sparsely populated desert to visit the replica of ancient civilization. Curt’s car would be our trusted steed. We had acquired the best map of Qatar that money could buy, (it was five years old), and studied the route. Curt’s navigation confidence approached complacency when he discovered that we would be traveling through the city via the “Middle Ring,” a route he was intimately familiar with, and then connect directly with the “trans-Qatar” highway heading north. The cut-off near Al Khor to the all-important fort would certainly be clearly marked.

Three miles northbound on the "Middle Ring" we were directed onto a detour due to construction closure of the road ahead. Once off the Ring, we were on our own through the irregular streets of the city, without further detour signs. A sense of direction is useless in a layout of semi-circle and tangential streets, and Allah only knows where we ultimately ended up in the city. We found our way back onto the "trans-Qatar" highway an hour later, after Curt had figured out how to use the GPS system on his newly acquired cell phone. We did not fare much better at the Al Zubara cutoff. Not a single sign or marker. GPS to the rescue! Definitely not tourist friendly, but technologically advanced satellite cell phone and internet connections are available at the most remote corners of the land

As we traveled north, the desert took on a rather disappointing look of rock-strewn wasteland, punctuated by huge walled compounds, an occasional oasis of saltwater resistant palm trees, power lines, a multitude of transmission towers, and countless road construction sites. It was not the untouched expansive desert landscape we had anticipated. To make matters worse, a major sand storm was brewing angrily under an overcast sky. Soon the visibility dropped to less than a mile with an ominous dark gray hue in the distance.

We arrived at Al Zubara, chilled to the bone by the cold Qatari winter storm, sand corns stinging our faces. And there he was, the Qatari exiting the fort in his traditional white thobe and ghutra, covered from head to toe, unfazed and utterly comfortable with the elements. His head scarf, usually draped elegantly behind the shoulders, was now securely rapped across his face, leaving only the eyes uncovered. The purpose and convenience of this garb could not have been demonstrated with more clarity.

The gray fort itself was a solitary, empty, two-level structure with thick walls, fascinatingly beautiful in its stark simplicity. The alternately rounded and square lines of the building and its observation towers gave the otherwise massive fort a pleasing balance. The white and maroon Qatari flag flew proudly high above the walls. A lonely cannon in front looked more like a left over Hollywood prop than an artifact of the past but it drew the visitor's attention for lack of anything else around but the fort itself.

Once inside, our stimulus driven western minds experienced a strange sense of ghost town emptiness. We were the only people there. No signs, no chair, no pamphlet, no docent guide. The unrestricted access to the entire structure, its rooms and corridors made you feel like an unintended intruder. You begin to tread lightly, respectfully. You are left to your own imagination, like a picture without a caption. You are elated to come upon the "museum" which consists of two unlit rooms with a wooden sandbox filled with non-descript chards. You search for clues to connect the past in front of you with the presence. And you slowly realize that you have entered as a guest into virgin territory, without flashy attempts to entertain the casual tourist, but proudly showing off the treasures of the land with innocent simplicity.

We explored the grounds, and investigated the grated well. Curt ventured to the upper level, where prisoners were once kept. This part of the fort could only be reached by a narrow shaft and an unusual, built-in ladder which was constructed such, that the wooden rungs and the corner of the shaft form a triangle.

As we approached the gate to leave, the single caretaker approached us with outstretched hands for a tip. After all, he is condemned to live in this ghostly place in a small wooden shack ready to unlock the doors to the fort at all hours, whenever guests arrive. A car full of Russians and another with Swedish students had just driven up and will keep him company a while longer.

We stopped near the northernmost city of Al Ruways for dinner at a small Mom/Pop coffee shop, the only restaurant we could find. The "city" turned out to be a collection of several small and mid-sized homes, surrounding a colorfully landscaped roundabout in its center. Where there is a will there is a way in bridging the language gaps. Our hungry looks towards the kitchen conveyed the message to the waiter/cook to bring us each several slender and most delicious meat and vegetable wraps. Kurt and I had two, 6'9" Curt needed three to fill up. At the end the waiter offered us each in friendship a large homemade cookie from a jar. The bill, including soft drinks, came to \$4!

Curt's GPS got us home safely that evening.

January 2, through 9, 2009

Over the next few days we visited the most exquisite collection of Arabic treasures at the fabulous Museum of Islamic Art. We visited downtown Doha and the Doha Mall and the Doha Souq Waqif, a collection of native shops operated by locals in the old Qatari tradition. After recovering from a mean bug, we visited The Pearl, Qatar's counterpart to Dubai's The Palm, an artificial island dredged out of the shallow golf waters, with mega-luxury, mega-exclusivity, and mega-prices. It is the dream of every mega-jetsetter including my son.

On January 9, 2009 Curt drove us to the Doha airport and we said good bye with heavy heart. It ended an excursion of a life time for us; it started a lonely six months stay for Curt in a land without the casual night life, an occasional drink and a happy female companion at the side. This Californian will not be able to strip down to his shorts at a sunny beach and take a dip in the cool water without being arrested for indecency.

THE END

The publisher wishes to thank Haldis Toppel for her interesting and very well written article on her travels to Qatar. This is a part of the world that is not familiar to most of us and her article brought it into focus very nicely. If the author's name does not seem familiar to you, look up her article in the December 2008 issue which has a photo of Haldis during her MAC flying days. Thanks again for a great article even though it served to remind me to do my traveling throughout that part of the world in my armchair!

Shaun

# GOLDEN EAGLES TREASURER'S REPORT

11/19/2008 – 3/12/2009

Balance (checking) 11/19/2008	\$ 9,942.21
<i>Inflows (checking) 11/19/2008 to 3/12/2009</i>	
Dues Received	\$ 8,100.00
Postage Fund Donations	1,460.00
Total Inflows This Period	\$ 9,560.00
<i>Disbursements (checking) 11/19/2008 to 3/12/2009</i>	
Office Supplies	\$ 70.98
Transfer to CARE Fund	2,600.00
Late Dues Reminder - Printing	53.00
Late Dues Reminder - Postage	105.00
Remembrance Donations	100.00
Contrails Printing & Postage	2,937.26
Webb-site	175.00
Total Disbursements This Period	\$ 6,041.24
Balance (checking) 3/12/2009	\$ 13,460.97

Balance (CARE) from 11/19/2008	\$ 2,509.34
<i>Inflows (CARE) 11/19/08 to 3/12/2009</i>	
Donations Received	\$ 270.00
Transferred from Checking	2,600.00
Interest Earned	0.94
Total Inflows this Period	\$ 2,870.94
<i>Disbursements this Period 11/19/2008 to 3/12/2009</i>	
Donation to CAL CARE FUND	\$ 5,000.00
Total Disbursements this Period	\$ 5,000.00
Balance (CARE) 3/12/2009	\$ 380.28

Balance Certificate of Deposit from 11/19/2008	\$ 10,153.60
Interest Earned	\$ 199.10
Balance of CD 3/12/2009	\$ 10,352.70

We gratefully acknowledge the following donors to the "Postage Fund". Your contributions defray from the ever-increasing costs of mailings. This list was compiled from donations received as of March 10<sup>th</sup>; all donations received after this date will be acknowledged in the next issue of Golden Contrails. If your name was omitted, please let me know so that you can be recognized.

Sid Alexander	Ron Alverson	Bob Appleton
Newt Ball	Bill Basnight	Doug Batchelder
A.J. (Bud) Battley	Jerry Becker	Ken Bellerue
Mike Bender	Ron Bennett	Bill Berkley
J.T. Bertrand	Don Bishop	Dick Boudreau
Bill Brennan	Harold Burton	Jim Caldwell
Guy Cassey	Tiger Childers	Bruce Coffin
James Coleman	Ray Combest	Russ Coonley
H.A. Cooper	Wesley Coss	George Cramp
M.V. "Bud" Dixon	Tom Doherty	Carl Domschke
Ken Duncan	Ray Durden	Bob English
Jim Farrow	Mark Farrow	Dick Fell
Myrte Ferris	Ellie Frazier	Gene Freeman
Don Griffen	Stephen Grimes	Dick Grigsby
Bernie Hallee	Mrs. L.V. Hart	Larry Hartman
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Nick Hooke	Tom Horne	Jerry Hunsinger
Joe Kent	Russ Kincaid	Robert Kinsey
Doug Kricken	Larry Kruchten	Kenneth Lakes
Blake Lamar	Eric Mahnerd	Leif Mauritzson
Jack McGowan	Russel McKnire	Jim McMekin
Ed Mehlin	Butch Meier	Max Meinen
Glen Mitchel	Don Morris	Ralph Musser
Diane Myers	Larry Nelson	Bob Poland
LaRue (Johnson) Pierce		Randy Rawls
Frank Rhodes	Lou Rich	E. Jean Sanwick
Paul Shelton	Mary Esther Simmons	
Kieth Smith	Charlie Starr	Kelly Steel
Don Straight	Art Swanson	Bob Sykes
Bonn Tanner	Cal Templeton	Allen Timms
LaVerne Thornberry	John Wall, Jr.	James Waters
A. Scott Tomlinson	Dennis Welckle	B. R. Whitaker
James "Mike" Wade	Kip Wintenburg	Joel "J" Worley
R.B "Bob" Wilson		

## A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Bill Broshears	Dennis Callahan	David Hughes
Jerry Irwin	Lester Smith	

THANKS TO YOU ALL

*Charlie Starr*

**Charlie Starr, Treasurer**  
4328 Sunset Beach Circle  
Niceville, FL 32578-4820

March 11, 2009

Greetings Members:

On January 14, 2009 the company issued Employee Bulletin #1 titled: **CO TO IMPROVE PASS TRAVEL POLICIES FOR CO-WORKERS.**

This bulletin covered multiple items concerning active employee and buddy pass riders as well as a couple of important items for retirees that I would like to bring to your attention.

- 1). Lower the F/C fees for those employees and retirees with less than 25 years.  
(25 years and better all fees are waived)
- 2). Dress code changed for F/C to same as coach, should be neat and well groomed.
- 3). Most important and I quote:  
"Board retirees in priority based on years of active service with the company,  
with priority going to retirees with the longest tenure at the company".

We finally gain recognition for our previous years of service. Each retiree will have a "board year" which will be the current year minus their years of **active service**. Active service is your original date of hire through your retirement year minus any time off the property for furlough, leave of absence, disability, strike, etc.

These changes have been implemented effective March 1, 2009 so the next time you list for a flight you should note a different # after your SA4R which will represent this date. A spouse traveling alone on a SA4P classification will be afforded your Board Year for listing and boarding purposes in their cabin class.

In closing, if you have the 25 years service **ALWAYS** list for First Class, you may just get lucky.

K. D. Thompson  
Travel Liaison

**This just in from Pleggie, Jr.**

**I don't know if you remember, but I have a large collection of wings, hat badges and service pins. Can you help me find some of the old wings and hat badges from CO prior to 1964? I did get Dad's old Indian Head wings and the wings issued after that one. No hat badges, though. I am also looking for any Pioneer wings and hat badges. See you in HOU in October.**

**Sincerest regards,**

**Cliff Pleggenkuhle, Jr.**



An email received on Jan 17, 2009 from Roger Paskell:

Captain George Matyk

Jewish Star Boarding House

5945 Capistrano

Woodland Hills, CA 91367

818-888-8112

For those of that keep up with old friends, George is now living at the above residence home. He suffered a stroke, in fact a couple of them and was unable to continue to live at his old home. He is able to remember most of you some of the time and none of us some of the time. In spite of that he would like to hear from you.

An e-mail received from Joe Dentz on Jan 28, 2009

Subject: Bob Pries

I just spoke to George Hemminger who has been in contact with Bob's sister and his son. Bob has serious heart problems, a three-way bypass and further complications. I don't have much in the way of details other than he is in the University of Washington Hospital, is in intensive care and cannot receive phone calls at this time. I will pass along any additional information as I receive it.

Joe Dentz

An e-mail from Ken Lawrence received on March 4, 2009

My son is building a radio controlled F8F Bearcat model which he will finish in the paint scheme that was used on the Smirnoff sponsored Bearcat Mira Slovak flew in the Reno Air Races. I have been unable to ascertain the color of Mira's helmet when he flew the plane. I had the thought that one of the retirees might remember this elusive item. Any help you could give me on the subject would be appreciated.

Ken Lawrence

[kenlawrence@q.com](mailto:kenlawrence@q.com)



This was a 50 foot level skip bomb delivery looked like in the F-100. If the airplane about to deliver the bomb is at 50 feet, how high do you think the airplane with camera on board is? This is done at 400 KIAS. I'm sure glad that Continental didn't know I was doing things like this on my days off from the airline! If you doubt that this was taken from another aircraft, the original photo has just a little bit of the wingtip showing in it. I will admit that it was a two seat F-100F and the photographer was in the back seat but he sure had to have a lot of trust in the guy driving!

## *The Crop is Merely Man*

*The angel of death swept low one morn  
before the sun was up*

*Sprinkled a few drops here and there  
from an over-flowing cup.*

*And as this gentle shower,  
each drop on mission bent,*

*Moistened the eyes of loved ones on earth  
from which the departed are sent.*

*The angel of love with magical wand  
from place to place did go,*

*And touched each spot where death  
had been and gave new life below.*

*Think not that there is strife above,  
for such is not the plan.*

*They plant and grow and reap, for 'HIM'  
the crop is merely man.*

*How wasteful, do you say, My Friend,  
think not that all is gloom,*

*For do we not grow flowers  
if only for the bloom.*

*And as it is with flowers that  
lend this world some beauty*

*Each life that gives something worthwhile  
has surely filled its duty.*

*By: Harold Shire*

An e-mail sent February 6, 2009

Dear Friends of Ken Wenger:

I am Ken's daughter, Vicki, and I'm sorry to give you this sad news in an e-mail, but we wanted to make sure to reach as many of Dad's friends as possible.

Sometime early this morning, Dad passed away. The coroner said it was probably a heart attack as it appeared to have happened very suddenly and there was no apparent trauma, as might occur with a fall.

My siblings and I are working on the funeral arrangements, but we won't have anything finalized until tomorrow evening at the earliest. If you would like to be contacted when arrangements are made, please either e-mail me [Elektra54@aol.com](mailto:Elektra54@aol.com) or call at 714.222.6266.

If I don't have the opportunity in the coming weeks, I'd like to thank you all very much for the friendship you shared with Dad. He was one of the good guys...

Vicki Cannefax

Bob,

It is with great shock and sadness to inform you that Ron Alverson passed away this morning, Monday, March 23rd. He was at home with Sandy in Cayucos, CA. He had a heart attack January 2nd, and has been doing very well. I just talked to him two days ago. He sounded great and he said he has been feeling good.

I have no other information right now. I will let you know.  
Below is their address.

Jo Allen

1625 Cass Avenue.  
Cayucos, CA 93430-1347



Dave Bigelow, 69, went missing Friday while trying to set a high-altitude glider record. Debris from what is believed to be his glider was found yesterday on Mauna Loa.

## ***Missing Glider Pilot often caught 'big air'***

**By Robert Shikina** (HNL Star-Bulletin)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Jan 18, 2009

For more than a year, Big Island resident Dave Bigelow made plans for the perfect moment when wind and weather conditions would allow him to sail his glider to 40,000 feet.

On Friday, he believed that day had come.

"It was probably the most perfect day and he was just bouncing with excitement," said his friend and fellow glider pilot Woodson Woods. "He said, 'this is the big one.' He was always going to go up to 40,000 feet."

Bigelow was towed into the air in his single-seat Glaser-Dirks DG-400 glider from the Waimea-Kohala Airport and radioed his friends shortly before 1 p.m.

"I'm at 28,000-feet and I'm going over to Mauna Loa to catch the Mauna Loa wave," he said to Woods, referring to an updraft above the volcano well-known to glider pilots.

Friends never heard from him again and reported him missing that evening at 6:20 p.m.

Searchers found what appeared to be glider wreckage at the 7,800-foot altitude on the side of Mauna Loa at 1:06 p.m. yesterday, said Ian Gregor, a Federal Aviation Administration spokesman.

But the high winds prevented them from reaching the site to confirm it was Bigelow's glider.

"It may or may not be until we get some confirmation," said Big Island Battalion Chief Raymond Rowe. "There's a lot of debris on our mountains from old crashes way back. What this one is has to be determined by putting somebody on the ground."

The debris was located within Volcanoes National Park, he said. Rescuers will try to drop search crews at the site this morning, Rowe said.

Bigelow, a retired Air Force captain who flew F-102 fighter jets in Vietnam, had been researching his routes and testing his equipment for a year to prepare for the record-setting flight, friends said.

"He was just very well-prepared in anything he did," said Woods, president of the Mauna Kea Soaring club, of which Bigelow is a member. "It's just a mystery to us. As a pilot, what we call a good stick, he was one of the best."

Bigelow had broken the state's high altitude record for a glider set by Woods back in 1969. In that flight last April, he sailed without engine power at 33,500 feet, higher than Mauna Kea. Bigelow posted online a video of his record-breaking flight in which he is seen scraping ice off the inside of his cockpit with a credit card.

After serving eight years in the Air Force, Bigelow worked as a commercial pilot for Continental Airlines and later Aloha Airlines. Bigelow, known as "father bird" by his wife, had been flying gliders since the late 1970s, taking his two sons and wife on flights from Dillingham Airfield. The pilot's remains were recovered Sunday by National Park Service rangers.

Dan Bigelow and others speculate his father likely suffered a problem with his oxygen supply and fell unconscious, a comforting scenario for his family.

"If he did black out, I can't think of a better way," Bigelow said. "It's like he got to 40,000 feet and God said, 'You're close enough so I'll take you from here.'"

**Lawrence Robert Bossler  
Beechcraft Duke N37D  
Palm Desert, California  
Thursday, April 15, 1976**

## **BLACK MOUNTAIN**

**We sat on the mountain, Richard and I.**

**Black Mountain, they had called it. Why? The pathway upward had been dotted with tiny daisies, alive with purple-tinged cactus pears, bright blooms atop. Our granite-strewn perch was pleasantly warm in the desert sun. Why *Black Mountain*?**

**I glanced up to the spot where the Duke's tail had fallen. A single white scrim, curving over the summit ridge, muted the light below. Of course! This is the lair of the lovely lenticular, that treacherous Circe, veiling violence with her mantle, luring the modern Argonaut to his doom!**

**Today is Good Friday, I thought. Why *Good Friday* for such a soul-shattering day?**

**Words tumbling about the rocks. Golgotha... what a horrible name! Golgotha... Place of the Skull... the Cross! Black Mountain... Place of the shear... the Crash!**

**What a way to die! What better way for him, really? Where is he? Down there? In that gully?..... NO!**

**Easter coming soon. "He is not here. He is risen. He lives!" Well then, so does he.**

**Time to go, Son. So long, Larry. So long for now.**

**Richard Sherwood Grigsby, Jr.**  
**Beechcraft QueenAire N711KW**  
**Camarillo, California**  
**Thursday, August 25, 1977**

**I sat on the mountain.**

**Black Mountain it is!**

**So long, Richard. So long for now.**

**Dad**

***Surely I come quickly. Amen.***  
***Even so come, Lord Jesus.***



Benness, known to many as "Bim", entered this life with a love of the ocean and a desire to fly. After taking his private pilot's license, he joined the US Navy in June, 1941. Having already completed flight school, he was able to go directly into the Navy with a minimum of initial training and was on board ship December 7, 1941. Awakened by the now famous "Good Morning, Guts of America - you are at War!" His ship was sent on to the Pacific Theater where he began his flying career. He taught others to fly and come back safely and in one piece. The end of WW 2 found him with Continental Airlines as a co-pilot until the Korean war, where again, he taught others to fly with a brief stint at the end of the war, flying missions himself. Back with Continental Airlines as Captain, doing what he did best - flying - until retirement at age sixty. Then to Boeing to teach pilots about computers. Retirement was not easy for him, so he remained in the computer field on a personal level, helping those who needed his expertise.

Benness was loved and respected by family and his family of pilots and computer friends alike. The comments have been many and

include: "A consummate pilot..." "A good, generous and loyal friend..." "The pilot we all wanted to be..." "What an Uncle..." "My Grampy!" I never heard him say a negative word about anyone. A kind and loving man to the end. Our beloved pilot has gone West.

Benness requested cremation and will be taken to sea on Friday, February 6, 2009 about 11:00 AM. Your prayers are greatly appreciated.

Doris E. Richards

A poem we both love:

**The Circle**

**All is a circle within me.**

**I am ten thousand winters old.**

**I am as young as a newborn flower.**

**I am a buffalo in its grave.**

**I am a tree in bloom.**

**All is a circle within me.**

**I have seen the world through an eagle's eyes.**

**I have seen it from a gopher's hole.**

**I have seen the world on fire**

**And the sky without a moon.**

**All is a circle within me.**

**I have gone into the earth and out again.**

**I have gone to the edge of the sky.**

**Now all is at peace within me.**

**Now all has a place to come home.**

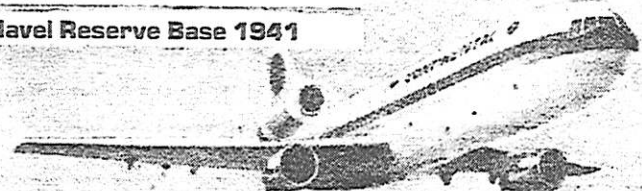
From: Poems by Nancy Wood - "Spirit Walker

**Benness M. Richards**

**The Robert Taylor of the Airline**



**Oakland Naval Reserve Base 1941**



**We really move our tail for you**

**VB2-OTU-2 U.S.N.A.S. Lake City, Fla.  
July 1943 - Bim Richards-Bob Olson**

**RETIRED ON DC-10**





*To Dick Grigsby from all his friends in  
the Golden Eagles for his outstanding  
work as historian and publisher of*  
**THE GOLDEN CONTRAILS**

