



# ***GOLDEN CONTRAILS***

December 2014

..... And oft' the setting sun is pleased to trim the Clouds with molten sails  
And lace the way of passing jets with golden condensation trails



## **Convention 2014**



### **Gone West**

It is with sad hearts we remember two of our original Golden Eagles, Captain  
Ken Alrick and  
his wife of 69 years Luverne Edith Alrick (nee Estes)

Ken was a gentleman to fly with and a consummate professional who set high  
standards

for all that flew with him and made better pilots of us all.

He and Luverne were staunch supporters of the Golden Eagles  
and passed away only weeks apart. We will miss them and wish them  
clear skies and calm winds on their journey west.

## Thoughts from the Editor

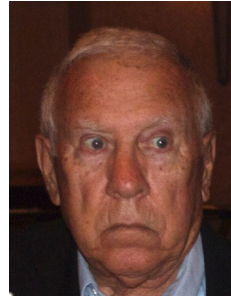
### Shaun Ryan

Here we are again at a post reunion issue following the great (In My Humble Opinion) reunion in Denver. I would like to personally thank Don Gentry for pushing for a new location and then for helping to make it such a great time for everyone who attended. The hotel was conveniently located and fully equipped for our needs, the service was great and the banquet a success. The hospitality room was, as usual, a place where stories of past flying exploits could be swapped and upgraded to bigger and better ones with little or no regard for the actual facts. The golf tournament was at a beautiful course and enjoyed great weather. Thanks to Ben McKenzie for setting it up and running such a fun event. Gail Grover and her volunteers from the Ladies' Auxiliary did their usual magic in setting up the hospitality room and the banquet tables and providing entertainment at the banquet. They also helped immensely in manning the raffle after dinner. A special note of thanks goes to our "auctioneer" Bob Shelton who amazed us with his ability to coax so many bids on the donated items. And, as always we have to thank the many volunteers who keep the hospitality room functioning smoothly and the food and liquor in good supply. It always seems to be the same group and we appreciate them.

I was very pleased to see the great turnout at the convention and hope that Denver can be a permanent addition to our rotation.

We have a really good collection of photos from the convention and while I supplied the camera, Gail Grover did all the photographic work and did it beautifully. I have found that having a pretty lady take the pictures helps in the cooperation of the subjects as opposed to an old, gray haired pilot like me.

A good example of a pretty girl taking Cal Templeton's picture and me taking it is shown below. I rest my case.



My Photo



Gail's Photo

*Shaun*



**Holiday Greetings from Shaun and Linda**

## The President's Corner

### Don Gentry

A special Holiday Greeting to our Golden Eagle members. Our 2014 reunion in Denver is behind us. I hope that all who attended had a good time. For those who could not or did not attend, you were missed. I want to thank all those who helped to take the reunion to Denver. It was especially good to see so many of the Denver local area chapter members in attendance. They are a good addition to the Golden Eagles. On the whole we had a good year. Behind the scenes your Secretary Charlie Starr and your Treasurer, Tom Doherty put in many hours to get our roster up to date. Trust me, that was not an easy task.

We did have one set back, when the health Insurance program that your President Elect Bill Chambers had to work so hard on, was put on the back burner by the insurance attorneys. We will keep you posted on this issue. As we move into 2015 your nominating committee headed by Bill Chambers would like to solicit folks to fill the offices of Pres. Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. Also Berdie Bertrand our Webb Master has indicated that he would like to find a replacement. Our 2015 reunion will be held at the Double Tree Hotel on Kennedy Blvd, Houston International Airport on October 8-11. This is the same Hotel we used in 2013. So put the date on your calendar and plan on a good time with your buds. I want to take this opportunity to wish you Happy Holiday's and may God Bless you and yours!

*Don*



## **The President-Elect**

### **Bill Chambers**

The Local Area Chapter (LAC) concept is alive and well in our Kingwood LAC, with a record turnout in mid November of 27 members. That record fell when we had 31 players attending last Tuesday, December 2nd. If you are a Golden Eagles member and you are in Kingwood on any Tuesday morning, please join us at the La Madeleine restaurant

at Kingwood Drive and Lake Houston Parkway between 0830 and 1000 or so. Other established or new LAC's are in Conroe, TX, The Woodlands, TX and Denver. We hope to have meeting info available for each LAC in future emails as well as on the Golden Eagles website.

If you enjoy coming to our annual conventions, consider how much more enjoyable it would be to see your old pals (and new friends) on a weekly or monthly basis! These meetings have unique appeal for the LAC members, who would not miss a gathering. We have no meeting agenda except to share camaraderie with others like you. Best of all, there is no annual fee for the LAC's beyond the \$35 Golden Eagles membership fee. If you want more information about LAC's please send an email to Captain Dave Newell ([davebnewell@gmail.com](mailto:davebnewell@gmail.com)) and he will get your message to the appropriate party, or contact Captain Bill Chambers (BILL CHAMBERS) for questions regarding the startup of a new LAC in your area.

*Bill*



## **Famous Quotes on Government**

“If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it is free!”

P.J. O'Rourke

### Some Comments from your "SCRIBE" – a.k.a. your Secretary – *Charlie Starr*

By the time you read this, Thanksgiving will have come and gone – and I hope everyone not only enjoyed their fill of traditional gastronomical delights, but also paused to give thanks for all of the blessings that we enjoy. And, as you read this, we'll be preparing for the Holiday Season – whether it be celebrating Christmas and the New Year, or the celebration of Hanukah. I know that I join the other officers and members of The Golden Eagles in wishing each of you the very best of The Holiday Season and a great New Year.

As we look back on 2014, one of the highlights of The Golden Eagles' year was the annual Convention/Reunion – held in The Mile High City of Denver this year. For those who missed it, let me say that it was truly one of the best ever (and that's saying a lot, considering some of our past events). The weather was perfect, attendance was exceptional, and the food and entertainment outstanding. While it took a lot of work by many, I'd like to offer special recognition to our President, Don Gentry and Ladies Auxiliary President, Gail Grover. A job well done!!!!

With the New Year, 2015 (and dues renewal time) almost upon us, I'd like to make an appeal to all remembers to please remember that dues checks should be sent in by January. While this reminder is published in the December issue of Contrails and sent to all by e-mail, the time-consuming and costly task of sending out individual reminders to those who forget is a daunting task each year. One other reminder (yes, I know that we all tend to forget things like this): but when you move, change e-mail addresses or phone numbers, please let our treasurer, Tom Doherty know. Mail is only forwarded for a

short period, and e-mail is never forwarded to a new address. Please, don't become a "Lost Soul"! One other note; dues payments, postage fund contributions, and CARE donations should be sent to our treasurer, **Tom Doherty, 7 McCormick Way, Salem NH 03079-2816**; if you send them to me, I have to forward them to Tom.

Another quick reminder; **The Golden Eagles CARE Program** – a charitable program to aid our fellow Continental (and now even United) employee who may have suffered a grievous loss (such as from a hurricane, flood, accident or serious illness) has been reinstated – this program was temporarily suspended at the time of the merger as our distribution and vetting agent, Continental Cares, was realigned with the United Cares program. In the years that our Golden Eagles CARE program has been in effect, we have been able to collect and distribute almost \$30,000 to needy fellow co-workers. Not a bad record that brings recognition to our organization as well as providing aid to those in need. Please consider making a tax deductible contribution to **The Golden Eagles CARE Program**. Checks can be sent to our treasurer, Tom Doherty.

*Season's Greetings  
to all*



#### **IMPORTANT**

**The new password for accessing the Golden Contrails and Roster on the website [www.thegoldeneagles.org](http://www.thegoldeneagles.org) will be:**

**traytable** (all in lower case)

## **NOTES FROM YOUR TREASURER - TOM DOHERTY**

Greetings from Salem, New Hampshire. As I write this, we are in the midst of our first winter storm and there is snow accumulating for the first time this season. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving and traveling by either road or by air should be interesting. We are so much looking forward to getting to Naples, Florida and enjoying the nicer weather there.

The convention in Denver was a rousing success by all measures. There was plenty of good food, good music, and good fellowship. The hospitality suite was the center of activity and everyone enjoyed hanging out and telling stories. The golf tournament was well attended and we had perfect weather. However, it had no beneficial effect on my score! Many of us went to the United simulator building for a tour of the museum and a simulator ride. It was great being in the simulator with no pressure to perform - just to have fun. The banquet included a wonderful meal followed by dancing and a raffle and an auction. Don Gentry and Gail Grover worked tirelessly to make the convention the great success that it was. Thanks also to Ben McKenzie for organizing the golf tournament. For those of you who did not make it to the convention, we missed you and we hope you will consider coming to the 2015 convention in Houston.

Once again we are approaching dues renewal time. Dues are \$35.00 for members and \$20.00 for associate members and are due in January 2015. Please send your dues to:

**GOLDEN EAGLES**

**C/O TOM DOHERTY, TREASURER**

**7 MCCORMICK WAY**

**SALEM, NH 03079-2816**

Please be sure to include any change of address, phone number, e-mail address, etc. so that your membership file can be up-dated.

We have reinstated our CARE program and are now accepting donations. We have committed to raising money for the program and have pledged to make an annual contribution on behalf of The Golden Eagles of up to \$5,000.00. Donations to this fund are tax deductible.

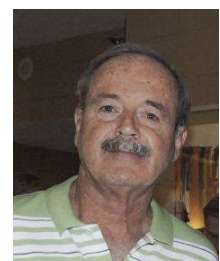
With the rising cost of mailing the Golden Contrails three times a year, any contributions to the postage fund will be greatly appreciated. Costs can also be reduced if members would chose to receive the Golden Contrails electronically via the computer. If you choose this option, please indicate this on your dues renewal form or send me an e-mail.

I attended the local area chapter meeting of The Golden Eagles in Kingwood, Texas on November 18. There were 28 members present and everyone had a great time. We also have local area chapters that meet routinely in The Woodlands, Tx., Conroe, Tx., and Denver, Co. It is a great way to keep in touch with fellow members in between conventions. It would be great to see members from other areas such as California and Florida, just to name two, establishing their own local area chapters.

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**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**TOM DOHERTY**



**Dues Renewal, Postage Fund Contribution or Information Update Form**

Dues Renewal: \$35.00 per year (Dues are annual – due January of each year)

Postage Fund Contribution: Voluntary, at your discretion

Golden Contrails Magazine – for Associate Members: (for those not eligible for regular membership ONLY) \$20.00 per year

Member information changes can be e-mailed to: Tom Doherty as noted below

**Please Print**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Cell (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

If making a dues payment or postage fund donation, please make check payable to The Golden Eagles and mail to:

**The Golden Eagles**  
**C/O Tom Doherty – Treasurer**  
**7 McCormick Way**  
**Salem NH 03079-2816**  
**Phone 603-898-6874**  
**e-mail [jkated@aol.com](mailto:jkated@aol.com)**

☐ If you wish to receive the Golden Contrails magazine only electronically (on the website), please check here. You will not be mailed a magazine.

If making a contribution to **THE GOLDEN EAGLES CARE PROGRAM** – please send a separate check

# FROM YOUR BEAN COUNTER (aka: TREASURER'S REPORT) *Tom Doherty* – Treasurer

Report Period 7/27/2014 – 11/13/2014

## CHECKING ACCOUNT

Bal. (Checking) from 7/27/2014	\$ 22,550.47
Inflows (checking)	
Membership Dues	\$ 1,625.00
Postage Contribution	339.00
2014 Banquet/Luncheon Deposits	6,772.00
Convention Bar Donations	330.00
Convention Raffle Proceeds	996.00
<b>Total Inflows This Period</b>	<b>\$ 10,062.00</b>
Outflows (checking)	
Contrails Printing	\$ 2,238.56
Contrails Postage	426.60
Remembrance Donations	100.00
Postage (general)	113.55
Misc. Office Expenses	98.97
Banquet Refunds	98.00
Hospitality Room Beverages	554.23
Hospitality Room Food	2,308.83
Convention Entertainment	2,200.00
Convention Audio/Visual & Setups	721.70
Convention Transportation	300.00
Convention Banquet & Luncheon Meals	7,327.97
Convention Raffle Purchases	573.36
Convention Decorations	523.76
Convention Materials Shipping/Mailing	343.04
Convention Misc.	289.39
Convention Reminder Printing	254.40
Convention Reminder Postage	264.50
Hotel Deposit for 2015 Convention	500.00
<b>Total Outflows This Period</b>	<b>\$19,236.86</b>
<b>Bal. (checking) 11/13/2014</b>	<b>\$ 13,375.61</b>

## CARE ACCOUNT

Bal. (CARE) from 7/27/2014	\$ 712.33
Inflows (CARE)	
Contributions	\$ 1,175.00
Interest Earned	00.05
<b>Total Inflows This Period</b>	<b>\$ 1,175.05</b>
Outflows (CARE)	
None	\$ 00.00
<b>Total Outflows This Period</b>	<b>\$ 00.00</b>
<b>Bal. CARE 11/13/2014</b>	<b>\$ 1,887.38</b>

## SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Bal. (Savings) from 7/27/2014	\$ 18,110.70
Inflows (Savings)	
Interest Earned	\$ 1.23
<b>Total Inflows This Period</b>	<b>\$ 1.23</b>
Outflows (Savings)	
None	\$ 00.00
<b>Total Outflows This Period</b>	<b>\$ 00.00</b>
<b>Bal. (Savings) 11/13/2014</b>	<b>\$ 18,111.93</b>

## A Special welcome to our NEW MEMBERS

James Anstett	Bruce Barnes	Ernest Coulson
Frank Eby	Thomas Frieling	Robert Haven
Peter Hernandez	Roger Hill	John Leahy
Vincent Liscano	George Mathes	Jim Morehead
Stephen Poppe	Jerald Rich	Leon Scarbrough
Robert Schalit	John Stegmoller	James Wells

## A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE POSTAGE FUND!

Ken Bellerue	Tom Buckley	Ray Combest
Wesley Coss	George Davies	Joseph Dentz
Mike Doyle	Bob English	John Gaylord
George Hemminger		Virgil Hemphill
Dick Hillman	Tom Horne	Gary Humphries
Karen Kahn	Blake Lamar	Ben McKenzie
Wayne Nakagawa	Brad Near	Randy Rawls
Bob Shelton	Charlie Starr	Ken Stillwagon
Haldis Toppel	Jim Walsh	Robert Warner

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**traytable** (all in lower case)









## Ladie's Auxiliary

### Gail Grover

My first acknowledgement and "hats off" goes to President Don Gentry. Without his devotion and energy for the Golden Eagles we would not be marching into Houston in 2015 with such confidence or excitement. He is the GE EVEREADY BUNNY. As funky as he felt, with bronchitis and fever, he kept his team energized and up-beat as we did not think Denver would show. And so what if we went a bit over the top with providing some extra "fluff"(to use Pam Meyner's word") It was so worth it if we want to go forward.

My next "hats off" goes to Francia Gentry, queen of ticket sales and our Hospitality Suite hostess. Since I was not a local, she stepped up to make sure all was ready for check in and hospitality suite ambiance. And as always, without question or fail...before I can think it or express it, Pam Meyners gets it done.

The Ladies Auxiliary meeting was most productive.. (a nod to past Pres. Chris McKenzie) who handled the scouting and nominating process. Our President elect for 2016 is Jamie Doherty. She was asked and she accepted to hold a position. Not until the day before our meeting, was she asked to hold the Presidents position. She was thrown into a fire pit but she will soar with the thoughtful and professional support of Vice-Pres. elect Jackie Furulli and Sec. elect Kay Newell. My special thanks to Carolyn Farrow for her generous gift of lovely centerpieces for our luncheon tables, and to Alice Powers who once again sent us special table favors. She has been doing this for the past 35 years. I think, Alice, you deserve to retire from this job if you would like to. At the close of our meeting, we established the Ladies Auxiliary Executive Board to help assist and support the future Ladies Auxiliary officers.

We are all catching our breath after the unexpected turnout in Denver. We are jotting down ideas for our gathering in 2015, so let us know our triumphs and screw-ups. Start saving your \$,s for the raffle of memorabilia. We sold out of raffle tickets and rooms in Denver and ran out of ExCon luggage/flash tags. History Making!!!!!!

Sending WAVES of Love to all and enjoy your holiday season.

*Gail*



### Famous Quotes on Government

The only difference between the tax man  
and the taxidermist  
is that the taxidermist  
leaves the skin.

Mark Twain

**Editors Note—This is an article submitted by Don Griffin and it sure brings memories of some great 5 day layovers in Caracas. Thanks Don—this is just the type of memories we need.**

Ah, the thrills and trials of flying the big, skinny, jet airliners. On about September 1984, Continental Airlines had begun service to Caracas, Venezuela. The trip went from Miami to Maracaibo to Caracas. The route of flight took us over Cuba through the Mayan Corridor. We had to request clearance to enter Cuban airspace and if refused, had to return to Miami for more fuel and go around Cuban airspace to the east. This refusal only happened once but got everyone's attention when the plane returned to Miami. Today, on the way down, the Cuban controller cleared us through the corridor and we had an uneventful flight to Caracas. After crew rest, we were to return by the same route.

Leaving Caracas, our Boeing 727 flew in clear weather to Maracaibo. Here, we refueled and filed our flight plan to Miami. This was handled by Varig Airlines, under contract to Continental. This clearance included the route, altitude, airspeed and time of arrival in Miami. International flights generate lots of paperwork—much more than domestic flights. All of our information was here, but some was in Spanish and it was hard to find exact locations. However, it was the same route we had done several times in the preceding months. After signing the release, we started the jet and took off. Continental had a policy that we were to never fly over Mexico from Caracas. Not a problem as the Caribbean is a large body of water and the jet routes are few. We were returning on Jet Route Upper Amber 6, taking us over Cuba on a more or less direct route to Miami.

Imagine our surprise, cruising along at FL350, when Kingston Center asked, "Continental, where are you going?" To say there was a note of apprehension in

the cockpit was mild. We replied, "going to Miami on Upper Amber 6 at Flight Level 350." A long pause ensued and then Kingston Center replied, "it is customary to fly the route you filed. From Maracaibo, Varig filed you Lower Blue 4 over Mexico." "Well Kingston, we're on Upper Amber 6 and would like to continue on this routing," was the best we could say in a very apologetic tone. Kingston Center in the heavy British accent replied, "Fine, I will refile you on Upper Amber 6 but you are about 5 minutes from the Cuban Air Defense Zone for the Mayan Corridor and they don't know you are coming. Good day."

Remember about this time that Russia shot down a Korean Airlines 747 that strayed into Russian airspace? Well, my comment was "Anyone on the crew with a camera? Want some close up shots of a MIG-21?" I had visions of landing in Havana, big international embarrassment and being the guests of Comrade Fidel.

Shortly thereafter, we called Havana Center, identified ourselves and asked permission to use the Mayan Corridor. The reply came back, "Fine, Continental, cleared as requested, have a nice trip." LOVE the Cubans!

After that, we had an uneventful trip back to Miami and Houston and we called it a day.

Footnote from Don Griffin: The only other time I was near Cuba was in 1962 and flying the U.S. Air Force RC-121D Constellation on the Cuban missile crisis. Small World.



## **Some Non-Rev Help**

### **From Bill Chambers**

The new phone number for the Employee Travel Center (and othe UAL departments) is 877-825-3729. From international locations use 847-825-3729. For website issues or password resets on Flying Together or employee RES, retirees should call the IT service desk outside of normal business hours.(800-255-5801.

Some useful information is nicely summarized in the ETC's "Fall Pass Travel Newsletter" available on the Flying Together>Travel home page.

Find out about:

- A. Carrying the correct travel documents to avoid deportation.
- B. How to re-deposit your pending vacation passes
- C. Imputed income and how to track it. (The Pass Travel Report does not work on a Mac so find a friend with a PC to generate yours.
- D. Taxes leaving Belize, Columbia, Honduras and Panama must be paid to a United rep at the airport.
- E. Buddy pass riders now must pay baggage fees. This does NOT affect retirees since we don't have buddy passes. Our Enrolled Friends still check bags for free.
- F. The Enrolled Friends election period for travel in 2015 will be in November and December of 2015. The Enrolled Friend tool will be found under the Pass Rider link in Employee Services>My info.

#### Flying Together Access Reminder

Keep in mind that our login password to the Flying Together web site must be refreshed every 90 days. If you do not access the web site very often, here

Are some steps to resetting your password online.

1. Use Internet Explorer as your browser
2. Go to "flyingtogether.ual.com" web site
3. At the login page, select the "password reset link in the grey area at the bottom of the login page and follow the prompts to reset your password

If you experience any login issues, please call the United Help Desk at 1-800-255-5801 or 1-847-700-5800.

### **More advice from Jerry Schofield**

If you have your wallet stolen or forget and leave your ID at home. Getting through security can be a chore. If ou have no picture ID, you will need 3 items that will prove you are the person on the boarding pass. (copies of licenses etc. are NOT acceptable) If you do not have the necessary items, you will have to fill out a form with all your pertinent information. The form has to be reviewed by the supervisor on duty, then a call is made to Washington to verify the information. Plan on an additional hour to accomplish everything. After verification, they will inspect your luggage prior to releasing you to the departure lounge. BEST ADVICE: keep an empty prescription holder or script and a small packet containing old IDs, drivers license or other ID with a picture as a backup in your carry-on. You will be good to go in 15 minutes!

**Editor's Note:** Many thanks to Bill and Jerry for providing these helpful tips. If you don't non-rev much, it is hard to keep up with the multitude of changes we face and these hints should help.

### **Famous Quotes on Government**

"I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts." Mark Twain

## Book Review

My gosh, if only Miss Clark, my high school English teacher could see me now! I used to dread the monthly book reports she assigned and seldom got a better grade than a “C” unless the book had something to do with airplanes and flying. Now, here I am with another book report at the age of 76 -go figure!

After the “Air Mike” edition of *Golden Contrails* was published, I received an email from a very interesting lady who makes her home in Guam and taught writing for 18 years at the University of Guam. She was also a very experienced scuba diver and it was that skill that enabled her to meet and befriend Kimiuro Aisek who is considered to be the man who put wreck diving on the map as Truk Lagoon’s Master Diver.

(Editor’s note: The names Truk and Chuuk are both used in this book as the District of Truk became the State of Chuuk in 1986 with the founding of the Federated States of Micronesia)

Since most of the history of the local area consisted of oral stories told and retold, Dianne decided to write a biography of Kimiuro to preserve these stories in a permanent way. The book starts with Kimiuro at age 15 meeting up with the first of several Japanese military personnel who were to befriend him during Japan’s control of the island. It then takes the reader through the remainder of WWII in Truk, including the disastrous sinking of the Japanese fleet that was anchored in the lagoon.

After the surrender of Japan, the Truk area is now being administered by the United States and we follow Kimiuro as he learns the ways



of the Americans who will be his new friends for the rest of his life. His rise through the ranks of mariners is a story in and of itself but the real story is in the growth of the sport diving industry as epitomized by wreck diving in the Truk Lagoon. How this quiet, gentle man became the father of wreck diving and Truk Lagoon’s Master Diver is totally fascinating and is made even more so to any of the employees of Air Micronesia as almost an entire chapter is dedicated to the importance of Air Mike to the economic viability of the entire area.

If you are a history buff this book is for you. If you are a serious recreational diver, you will love the descriptions of the various wrecks and will be inspired to visit them. If you helped make Air Mike become what it is today, you will feel right at home. Thanks Dianne.

# A 20 Minute Symphony

by Denny Pistoll

THE day dawned rainy and blowy with a wind over the back at the Lookout Mountain launch. This time, regrettably, the forecast was exactly right. Imagine! Only later that afternoon did we see some clearing and signs of a shifting wind towards the "proper" direction. Watching the trend provided just enough catnip that a small number of us loaded gliders and went up the mountain for a closer look. Despite a low, grey ceiling with dark clouds still roiling, evidence of a frontal passage was obvious as the sun creased the overcast revealing a few blue slivers of hope. So, in a flurry of optimism, we off-loaded our gliders and set up

.With a consistent, laminar, incoming wind and clearing clouds conditions were becoming ideal. Ridge soarable? As the inscrutable philosopher might language it; a definite possibility. Last in the group to go, a smooth breeze caressed my face as I strode to the ramp. As we all did this day, I had a wire crew assist which is a huge help in keeping the wing stable prior to launch in any significant wind. As the cliff edge this is not a place to lose balance with a miss-step in an errant gust, this is a more than reasonable precaution. As is custom, I thanked my crew in advance for their invaluable help which was to occur presently.

Off launch I immediately ascended into the invisible wave of air that rolls up and over the mountain crest creating what, in the world of mountain flying, we call the lift band. I went up and above ridge but not very much... just a little. I was above the tree-tops but by my calculus not quite high enough to actually turn in and get onto the ridge proper. Others had... Ah, to be with them!!! The rub was that the lift band was weak and very narrow. The breadth of this band varies with both air density and velocity and knowing its limits is a fine collaboration of art and science and

maybe a dollop of luck. Nevertheless, I had it for a short while gleaning what I could, flying kind of a figure eight-type pattern out in front and near but not over the summit. So many times the duration of a flight pivots on that one critical turn that puts you on and above and thereby solidly in the lift band or, conversely, out into the valley, flushed and descending for the Landing Zone. A "sledder". This is a somewhat unwarranted and derisive term that describes a flight that garners no lift and just glides straight from launch to the Landing Zone.

The weighty consideration here is that lurking right adjacent to lift is sink - that deceitful Lorelei; a temptress always promising but never delivering. It is an immutable law of nature that what goes up eventually comes down. Sink shows no mercy, no advance warning, and can change fortunes on a dime. So when committing to a turn into the mountain you must know with unwavering certainty that if you encounter sink you'll have adequate clearance to safely escape terrain. On this point one needs to be coyote cautious and laser focused. In flying there a sense of total immersion and immediacy where one lives in the now and does not think about yesterday or tomorrow.

After a dozen or so passes I gradually I lost what small purchase I had on the lift band and had to turn out into the valley where the terrain clearance opened from 100' to a breathe easier, 1300'. The valley air this day was surprisingly buoyant, not any sustainable thermals but delightfully smooth with nary a ripple. I glided out bathed in silent tranquility soaking in the panorama. Before me were forests on the cusp of autumn blanketing mountains gradually absorbing into the far horizon in fading shades of mauve. Below the ridges were lush valleys, many still swaddled in lingering tendrils of fog from the passing front. It was a glimpse of our world from a most unique vantage, and what an awesome sight it was!

Next page

Over the LZ I circled for a few minutes losing altitude eventually reaching the point of setting up my approach. There was a light ground breeze which is golden in that landing with any kind of head wind - even a trickle - allows for a slower ground speed thereby making landing much easier... particularly helpful when your legs serve as the landing gear.

Landing comfortably close to my target cone in a butter smooth LZ, I was joined shortly thereafter by the rest of the gaggle as the lift turned off on the ridge and even the big dawgs were getting flushed. Within the next few minutes six other gliders were back on the ground.

It is in the breakdown area packing up our gliders where we always enjoy the shared camaraderie of all who plied the sky that day and compare what we flew, felt and observed. The afterglow is gratifying in the unique way one feels acquiring the finish line in a foot race. It's a cocktail of planning, anticipation, exhilaration, and accomplishment; a feeling that far transcends any recorded logbook metric. In this case, my flight was a scant 20 minutes... a piffle, a sledder, hardly worth even a footnote anywhere much less a piece in an aviation publication. Short though it was, it was a wonderfully fulfilling and powerful experience. My flight was a departure from planet Earth and a defiance of gravity in lock step with mankind's long standing quest to challenge our ground-dwelling fate. It was not an ethereal experience, far from it, but one of real substance chocked with the essence of what we call the majesty of free flight. It was a symphony played on nature's stage in accordance with her own stern and uncompromising rules. A symphony that begs a reprise and one that holds the potential that next time you may go further, get higher and stay longer. But mostly, it was a symphony whose harmony sweetens our lives, lifts our spirits and, in turn, keeps us coming back for more.

**Thanks Denny    Ed.**

## **A Desert Christmas**

The full moon o'er the desert hangs  
As many years ago  
The Star hung over Bethlehem  
Where cradled far below  
'Mid straw and angel glow.

While shepherds plodded to'rds the star  
And wise men gathered 'round  
And angels "Halleluia" sang  
For joy at what was found  
That God his gracious love had poured  
On David's holy ground.

Now Christmastime to many folks  
Means holly-wreath and snow  
And evergreen and frosty air  
And sprig of mistletoe  
And cozy hearth with stockings hung  
And fireplace aglow.

But Christmastime, it seems to me  
Means desert still and bright  
The brilliant star, the balmy air  
The moon's white-bathing light  
Where angels can come down and sing  
And shepherds watch the sight.

**A repeat of a poem by Dick Grigsby,  
our first editor of *Golden Contrails*.**

**Circa 1952**



Golden Contrails

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**Water? What Water?**