



# GOLDEN CONTRAILS

August 2016

..... 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



North American B-25J in The Erickson Aircraft Collection





Republic P-47 Thunderbolt



P-51D Mustang



J2F "Duck"



Lockheed P-38 "Lightning"



Consolidated PBY-5A "Catalina"



P-39 "Airacobra"

## The President's Report

You will notice a modest increase in the number of articles contained in this issue, along with more broad subject matter scope than with past Golden Contrails issues. We can happily predict that these changes will likely continue, since RUPA (Retired United Pilots Association) has agreed to share articles for the common benefits of our members and those of RUPA. Newsletter editors of both groups have worked together so that all members of both can benefit from this cooperative effort. The authors of all shared articles will approve use of them before publication. While some of the articles are from company – originated sources, the point is that we are better informed to work in concert with RUPA whenever changes threaten our future.

Anyone who has written, edited and published any sort of newsletter with attendant deadlines will quickly appreciate the benefits of cooperative sharing of both subject matter and creative human resources. This will make possible a better newsletter for both groups, as both can more easily communicate and cooperate in other ways during the challenges that will certainly face us in the future.

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## Notes from the Editor

I have been doing some travelling since the last issue and have discovered one of the nicest Aircraft Museums I have been in. It is called the Erickson Aircraft Collection and is located in the little town of Madras,

Oregon which is about 117 miles southeast of Portland. As you can see from the pictures on the front cover and inside cover, the aircraft are displayed very nicely in a large hangar, are in like-new condition and most of them are in flying condition. This is a privately owned collection and features over twenty rare aircraft including the B-25 Mitchell, P-51 Mustang, Focke Wulf 190, B-17 Flying Fortress, F4U Corsair and many more. If you are in the Portland area this would definitely be worth a days trip to see these beautiful old aircraft.

As Bill has pointed out in his President's Report, we now have a working relationship with the Retired United Pilots Association and will be including some of the United Employee Bulletins and news reports that they use in their RUPA Magazine. I would like to thank our secretary, Gary Small, for his work in making this possible and also to thank RUPA for their contribution—I hope that we will be able to return the favor in the future.

Last, but not least, if you turn to the inside back cover you will observe some interesting travel photos I have taken on our trip this past Spring. The reason I am including them is in the hope that others who have similar photos from places of interest they have discovered during their travels will post them for the benefit of our members who are contemplating vacation plans. The resort is called Otter Crest Lodge and is located in Otter Rock, OR which is about 6 miles north of Newport, OR. We spent a week there and thoroughly enjoyed the entire coastline with trips to Tillamook, Lincoln City, Cape Perpetua and Reedport. The Devil's Punchbowl was within walking distance of Otter Crest Lodge. Let's try to make this a regular feature of the newsletter.



*Shaun*

## US Dept. of Transportation approves US airlines scheduled service to Cuba

Article courtesy of RUPA News



WASHINGTON, DC – As part of

the government's efforts to normalize relations with Cuba, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has approved six domestic airlines to begin scheduled flights between Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Minneapolis/St. Paul and Cuba as early as this fall.

"Last year, President Obama announced that it was time to 'begin a new journey' with the Cuban people," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "Today, we are delivering on his promise by re-launching scheduled air service to Cuba after more than half a century."

On February 16, 2016, Secretary Foxx and Department of State Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs Charles Rivkin signed a non-legally-binding arrangement to re-establish scheduled air service between the two countries. At the time of the signing, the administration announced that scheduled service would begin later in 2016.

The carriers receiving the awards are American Airlines, Frontier Airlines, JetBlue Airways, Silver Airways, Southwest Airlines, and Sun Country Airlines.

The five U.S. cities that will receive new scheduled service to Cuba are Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Philadelphia. The nine Cuban cities are Camagüey, Cayo Coco, Cayo Largo, Cienfuegos, Holguín, Manzanillo, Matanzas, Santa Clara, and Santiago de Cuba.

Under the new arrangement, each country has the opportunity to operate up to 10 daily roundtrip flights between the U.S. and each of Cuba's nine international airports, other than Havana, for a total of 90 daily roundtrips. Longer term, the arrangement also provides for up to 20 daily roundtrip flights between the U.S. and Havana. Collectively, U.S. carriers have requested nearly 60 flights per day to Havana, thus requiring DOT to select from among the proposals. **A decision on the Havana routes will be announced later this summer.** (Emphasis by editor)

## Get ready: Use the United app for all your travel needs

Article courtesy of RUPA News

(Posted June 10, 2016)



Coming soon, you'll be able to use the United app for your full employee travel experience at your fingertips while on-the-go.

You can already use the United app to check in and view boarding passes, boarding totals, seat maps and the standby list. When we launch enhanced features later this month, you'll be able to book and manage positive-space, space-available and myUA-discount flights and much more! We'll provide more details when the enhanced features launch.

To take advantage of these great new features on the app, link your MileagePlus number to your u-ID if you already haven't done so. Linking the two numbers allows the app to identify you as an employee and provide you with employee travel features.



To link these numbers, simply go to employeeRes > Quick Links > Employee Profile and add your MileagePlus number to your profile. The linkage can take up to 24 hours to process, so we're giving you advance notice so you can take advantage of the new features as soon as they're available. If you don't have a MileagePlus account, you can sign up for one for free on united.com.

(Posted June 13, 2016)

**The Employee Travel Center has posted an exclusive sneak peek of the United app in action! The video will show you how a booking is created from start to finish right from the app. This is one of many future enhancements you can expect later this month. Go to the Travel tab > Untied App and Pass Travel section to check it out!**

Stay tuned for more information, and, in the meantime, read our Q&A and quick reference guide on the Travel tab's United app and Pass Travel page.

Article Courtesy of RUPA News

## Jeff Bezos Ready to Beat Richard Branson in the Space Race



“Space tourism” was supposed to arrive years ago, but its chief apostle is yet to deliver and suddenly faces a formidable challenger. Look out, Richard Branson. Here comes Jeff Bezos rocketing into your space.

The Amazon billionaire’s once secretive program to take paying passengers to the edge of space now appears to be set to overtake Branson’s Virgin Galactic project to inaugurate space tourism. With a successful fourth test flight of Bezos’s New Shepard space vehicle, his very different approach to achieving reliable suborbital flight gives his company, Blue Origin, what seems like a competitive edge. In fact, after three successful tests in seven months, Bezos was so confident of his team’s design that the new test flight included a deliberate systems failure to see how well the capsule that would carry passengers survived a hard landing.

Bezos and Branson are both selling basically the same thing: a hot ride to just beyond 62 miles above earth where the boundary of space officially begins, followed by a few minutes of weightlessness and mind-blowing views on the way back to earth. However, while Bezos provides a ride in a capsule atop a rocket, Branson has bet on a ride inside what resembles the cabin of a small business jet, albeit punched aloft by a rocket and returning to earth in a long glide (Bezos’s capsule drops to earth under three parachutes and uses a last-minute rocket braking system to soften the landing.)

Since 2004 Richard Branson has been virtually a one-man megaphone for space tourism. After missing many deadlines for the launch of his Virgin Galactic SpaceShipTwo program a test flight in October 2014 ended in disaster and the death of one of the two pilots. The copilot actuated an aerodynamic braking device too soon and the vehicle was torn apart. A report on the crash by the National Transportation Safety Board was critical of both Galactic for its safety procedures and of the Federal Aviation Administration’s oversight of the flight testing. Testing is only now about to resume. (The first flights will be glides to earth, not rocket-powered ascents.)

The accident visibly shocked Branson. But his experience recalls that of other pioneers who pursued transformational ideas. Sometimes being first is costly and ends in having to watch others take the prize. Case in point: the jet age began with a British airliner, the beautifully-sculpted de Havilland Comet. But the British designers did not understand the stresses of jet flight on airplane structures and several crashes revealed a fatal flaw. By the time this was corrected de Havilland were overtaken by Boeing with their 707 and the Brits never regained their lead.

Branson’s designer, Burt Rutan, pioneered the concept of a reusable vehicle that could blast its way to the threshold of space and return to a runway like an airplane. Rutan’s SpaceShipOne won a \$10 million prize in 2004 for achieving the first manned private

To meet Branson's goal of flying six passengers and a crew of two on a suborbital trip Rutan took the original concept – the space vehicle launched from a mother ship—and scaled it up. The result was Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo and WhiteKnight Two, the mother ship. The problem with SpaceShipTwo has always been to generate enough rocket power to carry the heavier payload. After three years of powered test flights the vehicle remains far short of achieving its goals. The highest altitude so far reached is just under 13.5 miles, just one fifth of the apogee it must reach to qualify as suborbital flight.

The 2014 crash exposed tensions between the roles of the FAA and the NTSB over safety of both crew and passengers on space tourism flights. Chris Hart, then the acting chairman of the NTSB, admitted to confusion over who was responsible for what. Even though the FAA's "Recommended Practices" for space flight include the capability "to abort, escape or both" there is no escape mechanism for Virgin Galactic passengers. In contrast, the passenger-carrying capsule of New Shepard can eject from the launch rocket in case of an emergency and descend by parachute.

Article courtesy of RUPA News

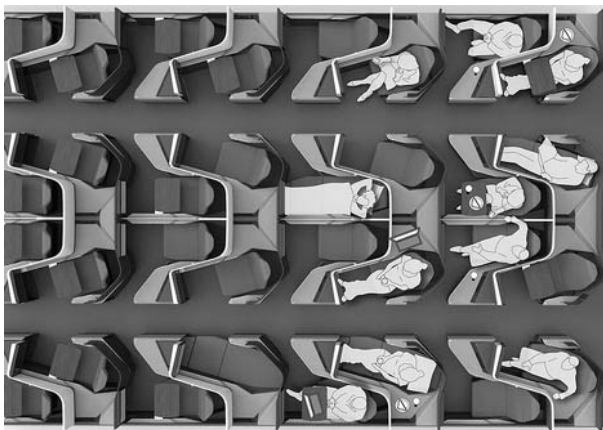
## United operating longest scheduled flight by any U.S. carrier



United Airlines launched the longest scheduled flight operated by any U.S. airline carrier on June 1, nonstop between the United States and Singapore. The nonstop flights connecting the two financial and tech centers will save travelers up to four hours' journey time each way compared with one-stop service. Measured by distance, the new route between San Francisco and Singapore is the longest scheduled 787 flight operated by any airline, and the longest scheduled flight operated by any U.S. carrier, at 8,446 miles. This nonstop service further enhances United's already unprecedented trans-Pacific route network and builds an even stronger gateway to the Pacific from its San Francisco hub.

United Flight 1 will depart San Francisco at 10:55 p.m. daily, arriving at Singapore's Changi Airport at 6:15 a.m. two days later (all times local). On the return, Flight 2 will depart Singapore at 8:45 a.m. daily, arriving at San Francisco International Airport at 9:15 a.m. the same day. Flying times will be approximately 16 hours, 20 minutes westbound and 15 hours, 30 minutes eastbound.

Article courtesy of RUPA News



## United unveils all new Polaris international business class

United unveiled its new international business class cabin on June 2, a revamping that it hopes will help it win back coveted corporate travelers who may have turned away from the carrier as its performance struggled in the wake of its bumpy merger with Continental. The new Polaris business class will ferry passengers traveling on long-haul intercontinental flights starting Dec. 1.

In an interview, United CEO Oscar Munoz said that the upgraded service, from a new custom designed seat to exclusive airport lounges, marks the carrier's biggest product overhaul in a decade. It also builds on a series of other moves, from upgrading the

overall fleet to bringing back free snacks in coach, meant to restore confidence in the airline. In order to win “back the trust of not only our employees and our customers . . . we have to make some serious investment,” Munoz said. “And we’ve been doing that . . . You’ve got to put your money where your mouth is.”



Business travelers and others who buy seats in the front of the plane play a vital role in bolstering an airline’s bottom line, potentially accounting for 25% to 45% of a flight’s revenue, according to travel industry analyst Henry Harteveldt. United hopes this new offering will boost its share of that segment of the traveling public. “That is of course the obvious intent,” Munoz said. “I want to win back customers and have that revenue share perk up. But at the same time we want to provide a win for the customer, and that’s the reason for the focus on sleep.”

The Polaris experience is designed to be restful, from the lie-flat seats inside suite-like pods, to the “Do Not Disturb” signs to the lavender pillow mist and gel-cooled pillows available if a passenger wants one. Flight attendants will receive special training and expedite the serving of meals to ensure passengers can rest without interruption. And before takeoff, international business class fliers can grab a shower or a nap inside one of nine new airport lounges, the first of which is scheduled to open at Chicago O’Hare on Dec. 1. Unlike typical airline clubs, including United’s, which are open to members who pay an annual fee, buy a day pass or anyone with a first or business class ticket, the new lounges will be exclusively for those traveling in the Polaris cabin.

Many of the offerings, whether it’s the pajamas that passengers can request on flights lasting more than 12 hours to the lie-flat seats or the seasonal in-flight menus, can be found on other airlines. But Munoz says that United’s emphasis on rest, along with heightened service and perks will add up to a distinctive experience. “The individual components may be like others, but at the end of the day, it’s the way you deliver the product that has us excited,” he says. “It’s the collective experience we’re selling from the lounge, when you first arrive, all the way to landing.”

The new offering could also help United better compete with international carriers like Etihad and Emirates, which are known for their luxe service, and have been expanding their presence in the U.S. Those overseas carriers are engaged in a battle with several major U.S. airlines who argue that they receive unfair subsidies from their Gulf-region governments.

“It clearly provides the frequent traveler an option,” Munoz says. Referencing an Emirates ad in which actress Jennifer Aniston is dismayed to learn that there’s no shower on a different carrier, Munoz added that “we’re never going to put Jennifer Aniston in her personal shower. That’s just not the way the model works in the U.S. We’re doing this to improve the level of experience for our customers period and that should compete well against other carriers here and other carriers anywhere.”

Gary Leff, author of the blog, View From The Wing, says United’s new lie-flat seat is better than what is found on British Airways and Lufthansa, and comparable to what is offered by American and Delta.

The seat is a “huge leap forward for them, better than many of their competitors (and) playing catch-up with American and Delta,” Leff said. United is “betting a lot on some of the soft amenities, their upgraded food, upgraded bedding, and that’s great. But they’ll acknowledge the seat is most important.”

As we update our fleet over the next several years to incorporate our signature United Polaris direct-aisle-access seating, we will be phasing out the first class cabin and moving toward a two-cabin experience for international travel.”

# Shrinking Pool of Future Pilots Keeps Major Airlines on Edge

Article courtesy of RUPA News

After coping with terrorism, bankruptcies and consolidation, the largest U.S. airlines are facing a new problem: They may start running out of pilots in as soon as three years. That looming pilot deficit will soar to 15,000 by 2026, according to a study by the University of North Dakota's Aviation Department, as more captains reach the mandatory retirement age of 65 and fewer young people choose commercial aviation as a profession. And that's in an industry where captains on the biggest international jets average more than \$200,000 a year -- with some pushing \$300,000.

A pilot shortage is already the bane of the often low-paying regional carriers that ferry passengers from smaller airports to hubs operated by American, Delta, United and other major airlines. That's worrisome for the major carriers because they typically use the smaller operators as a pipeline for hiring. "That is one of the things in my job I get to worry about every day and when I go to bed at night," said Greg Muccio, a senior manager at Southwest Airlines Co. "The biggest problem is a general lack of interest in folks pursuing this as a career anymore. That's what puts us in the most jeopardy."

Airlines are responding by changing hiring requirements, boosting signing bonuses at regional carriers they own and partnering with flight schools and university aviation programs. Muccio spends some of his time trying to interest college, high school and even elementary students in an aviation career, while he's working to extend the biggest three-year expansion of pilot hiring in Southwest's history.

The top three reasons would-be pilots are changing their career plans are the cost of flight training and certification, low pay at regional carriers and a 2013 regulatory change that mandated a six-fold increase in flight hours required to become a first officer, according to a study released last year by the University of North Dakota and the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Until recently, few pilots were willing to recommend the career, even to their own children, said Louis Smith, president of FAPA.aero, a career and financial planner for professional pilots. "That mood is changing," Smith said, as larger airlines have become profitable and picked up hiring to support expansion. "Still, the cost of learning to fly and the risk and impact of failure is a major impediment to building the pool of pilots."

**Costly Training:** Flight-training fees for a commercial aviation major total about \$64,500 at the University of North Dakota, the largest public aviation program in the U.S. That figure excludes tuition and room and board, which can add as much as \$105,400 for an out-of-state student.

Major U.S. airlines will hire as many as 5,000 pilots this year, mainly to replace retirees but also to support expansion, Smith said. Most will come from regional carriers, military retirees and flight schools.

Bankruptcies and consolidation may be triggered among regional carriers when the larger airlines increasingly seek to fill their pilot needs, said Elizabeth Bjerke, chairwoman of the University of North Dakota Aviation Department. Republic Airways Holdings Inc., which makes commuter flights for American, United and Delta, filed for bankruptcy in February, in part because of a pilot shortage. "The future is a little scary," said John Hornibrook, system chief pilot for Alaska Air Group Inc. "The pool is just not as big as it used to be. That's a concern for everybody down the road."

**Retirement Age:** More than 30,000 pilots -- or half the current total of 60,222 at 10 large U.S. airlines, United Parcel Service Inc. and FedEx Corp. -- will reach age 65 by 2026, according to data compiled by Kit Darby, president of KitDarby.com Aviation Consulting LLC. To help recruiting, Southwest has dropped its prior requirement that pilot applicants hold a certificate to fly its Boeing Co. 737s, which can cost as much as \$14,000. Southwest also has cut in half the time between an interview with a potential pilot and a job offer, Muccio said.

American Airlines Group Inc., which is adding about 650 pilots this year and 750 in 2017, gets about half its cockpit staff via "flow through" agreements that allow aviators at its three wholly owned regional carriers to move into jobs at the bigger company. Delta Air Lines Inc. has a similar deal with its Endeavor unit, while Alaska Airlines guarantees interviews to pilots from its sister company, Horizon Air. "Every major we've talked to, they are concerned beyond the next three to four years," said Jim Higgins, the principal investigator on the University of North Dakota pilot study.



At American's Envoy unit, the promise of a seamless move to a major carrier is a big draw, said Jon Reibach, the airline's director of pilot recruiting. Joshua Gimre, 22, who is accumulating hours as a flight instructor after graduating from LeTourneau University in Texas and joining Envoy, could become a captain at American by the time he's 45, with a 20-year flying career still ahead of him. "Once a young pilot interviews with us, that's the last airline interview they'll ever have to do," Reibach said.

Signing Bonuses: American's regional carriers -- Envoy, Piedmont and PSA airlines -- this month increased their signing bonus to \$15,000. Delta's Endeavor pays a signing bonus of as much as \$23,000 a year. It has the highest first-year salary at \$47,000, according to a database maintained by Darby. First-year pay at commuter carriers averages \$35,227.

A first officer, or co-pilot, on the smallest aircraft at large airlines earns an average \$55,054 his first year, according to Darby. That can increase to more than \$120,000 in his fifth year, flying the largest plane. A captain at top seniority flying the biggest planes averages \$208,828.

In March, JetBlue Airways Corp. initiated Gateway Select, where recruits with no flying experience undergo a series of screenings before being placed into a "rigorous" four-year study program to become pilots. The model, designed to recruit from a broader range of candidates and reduce training costs, is similar to those used in Europe and Asia.

At United Continental Holdings Inc., a new career path program designed "to counter the potential shortage of qualified pilots," involves two regional carriers and a flight-training school, according to a memo from the airline. Similar to a flow-through program, the plan provides a chance to move to the larger carrier. The airline will hire 650 pilots this year and as many as 900 in 2017. "The competition for the best and brightest pilots is heating up," United said in May.

Article courtesy of RUPA News

## Solar-powered aircraft soars

By Frank Eltman/Associated Press



CALVERTON, N.Y. -- A test pilot successfully flew a solar-powered prototype aircraft for a company that envisions manufacturing a fleet of drones to provide aerial internet service for an estimated 4 billion people worldwide. The test flight by Luminati Aerospace LLC took place at a former Northrop Grumman defense plant on eastern Long Island that once made military aircraft. Speakers at a ceremony before the flight recalled that Charles Lindbergh took off for his historic 1927 solo flight to Paris from an air strip in nearby Nassau County, and others noted that the spacecraft that landed men on the moon was built in the Long Island suburbs east of New York City. "This is a dream come true," Luminati founder and CEO Daniel Preston said. "Long Island is known as the Cradle of Aviation, and we want to do our part to keep it here where it belongs."



Pilot Robert Lutz flew the VO-Substrata aircraft for about 20 minutes in the first test flight opened to the public. The white aircraft features wing-mounted solar cells and has a wingspan of about 43 feet. Logos of several companies and other entities involved with its production are plastered on both sides, similar to the sponsor decals on NASCAR

race cars. The prototype aircraft allows for a pilot to control it, but eventually Luminati, which is based in Calverton, will build unmanned drones that can fly at 60,000 feet or more. Luminati hopes to start manufacturing by the end of the year.

Lutz said after his flight that the aircraft is "very birdlike." "You know you go up there and you feel like you're in the environment up there with the creatures," he said. "Hawks will be circling around, and they kind of flock to you. It's the only aircraft I've ever flown where I can hear a helicopter next to me. It's a little spooky but pretty cool."

Luminati paid \$3.4 million last year to acquire 16.3 acres of land from the operator of a now-closed skydiving facility on the former Northrop Grumman property, and it announced intentions to develop the next generation of drones at the site. Preston, who holds more than 1,200 patents, formerly founded and operated Atair Aerospace from 2001 to 2008.

He has repeatedly refused to disclose the identity of a tech company that reportedly is involved in the enterprise. Google, Facebook and others tech companies all have been involved with initiatives in the field. He confirmed that, besides private business uses for the drones, the company is interested in supplying aircraft for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance uses. "We view it as our patriotic duty to do so," he said.

He said using technologies combining solar power with wind energy harvesting and using composite materials to make ultra-light, ultra-strong aircraft, the goal is to keep the drones airborne perpetually. "I really can't think of any engineering project today that has a greater social impact than bringing communications for many people in the world that don't have it," he said.

Article courtesy of RUPA News

## Oscar shares a message with small-biz owners

Posted June 15, 2016



In addressing a significant small-business owners conference in June, Oscar shared that the secret to the success of our airline and any business is putting employees and customers first.

He told the audience that all companies must create stakeholder value, and at United this starts by elevating our employee and customer experience. "I'm going to do it by earning their trust every day. United will succeed through the caring nature and service of our wonderful employees, and that will build rewards for all of our stakeholders."

Oscar was a featured guest at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's America's Small Business Summit in Washington, D.C., a gathering of more than 800 business owners and chamber executives from across the country. The Summit was an opportunity for those leaders to hear from business and policy experts while providing a forum for their needs to be heard by Congress and larger enterprises. While United has corporate contracts with many of the world's largest corporations, we also serve the travel needs of countless small and medium-sized businesses across the globe.

Here at United, Oscar explained, we're focused on improving the things within and outside our control. "By the time many of you get on my beautiful planes and are greeted by my caring employees," he told the small-business owners, "you are already exhausted and livid. We have to return comfort to the travel experience from curb to gate." He mentioned that United is working closely with TSA to ease the frustrations of the security process, for example.

When asked how United can differentiate ourselves in a market where many customers buy on price, Oscar emphasized that United's 86,000 aviation professionals are the company's most significant competitive advantage. But he highlighted that we are supporting employees with terrific products, such as illy coffee, which will be on board July 1, and our recently unveiled international business class -- United Polaris. "I'm so proud of that experience. One blogger compared United Polaris and Emirates' offering and concluded that 'pound for pound' on a 777: 'UA wins.'"

**Editor's Note:** *The following article was submitted by Captain Bill Knowles and we thank him for his continuing efforts and look forward to additional ones.*

## D- DAY .....The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The radio had announced but a short time ago that the invasion of France, across the English Channel, had begun. The date was June 6, 1944.

From this date onward this day would be known as "D- DAY"

Across the British Isles, the width and length of the United States, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean in Canada, across the Pacific Ocean in Australia and New Zealand and in the Germany controlled Countries of Europe mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers would loudly proclaim their prayers for those dear to them who this day had joined the fight to end the seven year blight on Europe initiated by a man named Adolph Hitler.

The civilian world came to a stop as every minute the radios in the land would forward the news from France; later that day and in days to follow, when casualty reports were given, the churches of the land would fill with praying loved ones.

Families would gather together! We were not individual countries any longer....we were allied in this melding of families to finish what had been started and would now be our task to finish.

Finish it, we shall! This Allied effort that the world had never seen before would be victorious.

In a comfortable home in Canada a Mother and Father sat at their kitchen table after hearing the news of the invasion; their activities would center on the radio and the reports that came forth continually. "Now all of our three sons are fighting; I hope that Billie is wearing the turtle neck sweater that I knit for him." Much later, this Mother of three would find out, that, in fact, her youngest son had worn that

dark blue turtle neck sweater as he flew three sorties that day over the invasion beaches from a base in Southern England.

There were 11,590 Allied aircraft in the air this day and together they would fly 14,674 sorties before the ending of this D Day; the Navies of the United States and the Great Britain allied countries would operate two man submarines, large and small landing craft, destroyers, cruisers and everything in between in 6939 vessels.

Lead by General Dwight Eisenhower his staff had not missed one item in the planning and implementation of this largest, known to man, seaboard invasion; the pressure this day on this native of Kansas was beyond belief; to every Allied soldier, airman and sailor he was, simply, "Ike."

This body of water separating France and England stretched some 125 miles but across the channel it measured from approximately 25 miles to 125 miles; "not very wide," you say. Well yes but one has to know that this body of water is known for tortuous seas rising most any time of the year...not kind waters for attempting a crossing of 156,000 heavily laden troops intent on capturing the enemy on a fifty mile stretch of French shoreline.

"My God," the young pilot said to himself, "the sea looks like God has sprinkled the old channel with a thousand miniature ship toys all heading in one direction." By day's end that number would be multiplied by a factor of seven. It was, indeed, the largest invasion fleet ever seen by man, and would remain so to this day. At briefing the evening before, at an airfield a few miles inland along the southern coast of England, the pilots of a wing of Spitfire aircraft, of the Royal Canadian Air Force, were told that they would join their fellow soldiers and sailors in establishing a beachhead on the French coast. Their effort would amount to "keeping the aircraft of the bloody Hun from damaging our soldiers and sailors as they attempted to gain a foothold on beaches known as Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches."



At the same time the pilots of the United States Army Air Corps were receiving similar briefings regarding the American beaches named Utah and Omaha.

At numerous bases in England pilots of light and heavy bombers, aircraft employed in the towing of gliders, aircraft carrying parachute troops and a myriad of other specialty operations were being briefed on their forthcoming activities.

Breakfast that morning of June 6 was offered in one of the several tents that comprised the living, sleeping and eating quarters of the squadron since they had moved down from Biggin Hill; the usual powdered eggs, strips of bacon, somewhat soggy toast and mugs of tea did little to settle one's stomach and most of us spent little time in this beginning of the days routine. A trip to the latrine and then a ride or walk to the parked aircraft followed.

I left a letter to my parents with my "rigger" and asked him to deposit it for me and then walked around my aircraft [now painted with those invasion stripes of white over the normal camouflage standard paint scheme]; the invasion stripes were intended to provide a promise of positive identification to other aircraft and shipboard and ground based anti aircraft gunners. "What a terrible thing to do to this most beautiful of aircraft," I thought as I completed my walkaround. I was but a "sprog" pilot young, with limited experience in the aircraft I flew and mostly unproven; my aircraft was not new but she did have an almost new engine and, most importantly, she was mine. Each aircraft had a "rigger" and a "fitter" assigned to look after the mechanical well being of the aircraft; we were a very close team with equal concern for each other. "Bless 'em both," I thought as I worked my way into this deucedly small aircraft cockpit.

All components checked, the crew had given me assurance of the armament and fuel load prior to plugging in oxygen and communications equipment so now we watched for the start of the squadron leaders

engine which was the signal for all other aircraft to start engines. All cylinders fired off as planned, chocks were pulled and I was waved off by the crew.

I was 19 years old, proud as one can be but deep down in the gut I prayed that I would hold up my place in the forthcoming battles.

After takeoff we formed up north of the field and, in flights, headed for the English Channel crossing and our assigned area above Sword Beach; early daylight provided a view below of the landing craft and their support vessels. One could only marvel at this gathering of ships and the mission underway.

We would remain in our "pattern" for just under an hour, expecting at any moment to see aircraft of the Luftwaffe; I believe that all of us felt, in a way, cheated that the German Air Force elected to not make an appearance, however it resulted in a better chance of success for the troops below so, from all accounts it was a win, win situation. The replacement squadron appeared to the minute to replace us so we slanted off to make a place for them and steered a course for our base.

Later on the same day we would replicate our first sortie and with the same results. Still no German Air Force!

During dinner that evening there was little rejoicing; we all had views of the beaches below and could well appreciate what our comrades in arms were enduring....theirs had not been without great losses.

One hundred and fifty thousand plus troops had landed in France on June 6 carried there by ships, gliders and parachute.....there had been nine thousand casualties this day....nine thousand of the world's finest.... a bitter pill.

It was but a beginning of the end for the darkness that had covered Europe with its despair...its suffering, its great losses.

We would fly several more days of the same plan all the time watching those empty skies, empty of the enemies' aircraft. Hitler had decided, in another

show of faulted planning that the invasion of the Normandy beaches were but a feint and that the “real” invasion would come via the Pas de Calais [the narrower crossing across the English Channel].

This situation was about to change for us as the Luftwaffe began entering our air space and the next reprieve would take place almost a year later at war’s end after we crossed Germany’s border on the Rhine River. The German forces, land, water and air were formidable foes and our losses had mounted greatly as we passed through France, Belgium and the Netherlands after leaving Normandy. The blue knitted turtle neck sweater became a vital part of my flying uniform as it warmed the inner soul on those cold, damp early morning sorties against the Hun. At war’s end it was given to a befriended Dutch farmer who wore it till his own demise years later. Wartime for us lasted until the job was completed and then we returned to family and familiar surroundings. I had just turned 20!

June 6th, 1944 had seen us each mount our steeds to carry us through to fruition in our search for war’s end whether in tanks, ships of all sizes, trucks or aircraft... it would end on VE Day, May 8, 1945 eleven months after the Channel crossing to the French coastline and the beginning of our mission.

With success! With a gut filled with joy! With tears for those that we left behind; never to follow!

It was time to go home ; these Allied troops with a common cause. These Yanks, Canucks, Brits, Aussies, South Africans and New Zealanders....cut from the same mold. The world had not seen better!

Bill Knowles, Green Valley, AZ

## Because We Flew

*Source unknown*

Once the wings go on, they never come off whether they can be seen or not. It fuses to the soul through adversity, fear and adrenaline , and no one who has ever worn them with pride, integrity and guts can ever sleep through the call of the wild that wafts through bedroom windows in the deep of night.

When a good flyer leaves the job and retires, many are jealous, some are pleased and yet others, who may have already retired, wonder. We wonder if he knows what he is leaving behind, because we already know. We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those past times.

We know in the world of flying, there is a fellowship which lasts long after flight suits are hung up in the back of the closet. We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life. We also know how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and in his heart still is.

Because we flew, we envy no man on earth.

Author Unknown



## A Different Kind of Road Trip

By Gary Small



This tale begins sometime in the later half of 2008, when I was involved in the Shanghai “start-up” due to my (then) position as Manager of International Flying.

Although I had met Yue previously, we became friends over the course of several trips and meetings in Beijing and Shanghai with company ground staff, potential vendors and the China CAC (FAA equivalent...sort of). As background, Yue was “Our Man in China”, an American citizen working as a vendor with Continental on operational permits, OpSpecs and other matters. Yue is a native Chinese speaker, having grown up in Taiwan until high school age, when his family moved to the US. Yue’s father had originally been a medical student, but quit to join the Chinese Air Force and become a pilot after the Japanese “Rape of Nanking” in 1937, where 300,000 of 600,000 civilians and soldiers were murdered, representing the single worst atrocity of World War II (according to several sources). His father flew B17s in the Chinese Air Force until departing the mainland for Taiwan with Chiang Kai Shek in 1949, in the vain hopes of returning to the mainland and restoring Nationalist control over that country. After immigrating to the US with his family, Yue was able to

achieve full unaccented fluency in English, served a tour of duty with the US Army’s “Screaming Eagles” in Vietnam and then obtained Bachelors and Masters degrees in Engineering. He was offered employment by McDonnell Douglas at the Long Beach facility, where he worked as a structural engineer until a group of prospective buyers from China were touring the plant one day. Their interpreter was recovering from a bit of “overindulgence” the previous night and Yue was “drafted” to stand in as interpreter. Through a series of subsequent events, he became a “Tech Rep” for Douglas and other interests in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Continental acquired his services in 2000, during the Hong Kong route planning, and thereafter, Yue frequently represented the company in China (and at least once) in Ulan Bator Mongolia.

So at the conclusion of one of my “route prep” trips, Yue offered to take me to the Aviation Museum in Beijing to see “some MIGs”. As I was reaching the limit to recycling my skivvies, and with a building case of “get-home-itis”, I declined his kind offer and caught that day’s flight home...AND REGRETTED IT EVER SINCE. This “nagging itch” was the impetus for a trip back to China that I took in June of this year (2016).

The absolute first thing anyone needs to know about travel to the PRC is that you need a visa. Many of us had crew visas for China while we were working, but those are only valid when on a working crew and on the Crew Manifest. I learned this the hard way on my initial “business trip” to China when I was stopped at the Immigration counter. Perhaps I should have known that a crew visa and a business visa are distinctly different items, but that was a “learning moment” for me, as the PRC bureaucracy tends to show



very little sense of humor over lack of attention to detail. I would hasten to add that all of the print on these visas is in Chinese characters, except for numbers representing the valid dates, which are in the same (Arabic) numerals that we use in the West. So, unless one is able to read Chinese characters, it is impossible to tell by looking at a visa which type it is. In that instance, since I was representing the company, some “slight of hand goodwill” expended by our company staff got me miraculously listed as part of the “crew”. Of course, I was again put in “quarantine” on my departure until the ground staff rescued me again. The good news is that the current tourist visa is now valid for 10 years, where as it had previously only been useable for 6 months. If one is considering travel to the PRC (not including Hong Kong), it may be worthwhile to use the services of an “expediter” to handle the paperwork. I used VIPPASSPORTS in downtown Houston, as I had during my working years, and after a few exchanged emails with errors spotted and corrected, I received the new visa in about 2 weeks. Your mileage may vary if you can get it right the first time...but how many times did Harry have to yell at us to correct our FAA Class I physical paperwork to get it right? (Houston pilots will remember that Golden Eagles member Harry Cameron guarded the inner sanctum for Doc Conwell).

As of June 2016, United was still using 747-400 three-class service between SFO and PEK. There were plenty of seats and I was fortunate to get “Global First Class” both ways. Business First, which is between Global First Class and coach is also very nice and comparable to our original Business First on Continental wide bodies. All international flights in Beijing use the newest Terminal (3), which was opened in time for the 2008 Olympics. A monorail-style connector train between the terminals is used to arrive and depart

from the main check-in and immigration terminal. Clearing the Immigration and Customs lines was not particularly tedious, but the departure process can be arduous. I thought that I had packed in a manner similar in function to US procedures, where my laptop, cameras and liquid/gel containers could be accessed easily (I try to avoid checking bags and really have been working on the “zen” of packing light). None the less, I was subject to the “underwear show” of having the security people put the entire contents of my suitcase on display as they removed every electrical plug, adapter, charging cable and camera lens for separate scan. There are simply times when you have to hang on to your dignity in the face of near humiliation...but then we ARE pilots and do not lose our cool.



The actual visit was simply superb. For openers we did go to the “Aviation Museum”, which is actually a former air base with several flight lines full of various models of MIGs, in addition to an amazing collection of antique and modern military and civilian transport aircraft. The Smithsonian Air and Space Annex at Dulles is impressive, but seeing a whole flight line of MIGs postured for aerial combat tends to get one’s imagination going. The red star on the tail still quickens my pulse almost as much as it did going through aircraft recognition in pilot training

In addition to the aviation museum, Yue and I visited a “closed” section of the Great Wall and

made a 1300 kilometer road trip to Xi'an, where we spent 3 days visiting the Terra-cotta Warriors and other landmarks of that city, which is actually much more ancient than Beijing. We drove through some mountain villages that have seen almost no modernization, providing quite a contrast to the new skylines of Beijing and Shanghai. Highway tolls on the expressways are surprisingly expensive, amounting to close to \$100 (US equivalent) each way. Gasoline comes in various blends and while we were trying to avoid the high ethanol blends, we were not completely successful. Toll booths create enormous bottle-necks in traffic, while cars maneuver aggressively within inches of one another for position, as lanes do not always line up with the actual toll booth structures.



At one point on our return, there was a solitary police car sitting beside orange cones blocking the entire opposite direction of a 4 lane expressway. Traffic was literally stopped for miles with no exit options and people scrambling to the side of the road to openly relieve themselves. I continue to remind myself how fortunate we were to be going the opposite direction that day.

The China of today is very different from what it was in 1973 when I looked at the unsmiling Peoples Liberation Army guards across the barbed wire border crossing at Lok Ma Chau in the New Territories of Hong Kong. In many ways, the cities are actually more modern than some in the US. All of our popular branded products from fast food to designer goods are everywhere, and it can seem comparable to our favorite layover cities in Europe and the South

Pacific, but this is still a Communist country with total control over various infrastructures. There are cameras everywhere monitoring traffic and anything else you might imagine. The internet is highly censored, with anything having to do with Google (gmail) completely blocked. Microsoft has been pretty cozy with the political power structure though, because a Bing search does yield those items that aren't considered off limits. As a Mac user (primarily), I found it an amusing anecdote to learn that the name Microsoft, when converted to Chinese, can only be represented by the characters for "small" and "soft". Need I say more? One very valuable piece of advice that I learned after I hooked up with Yue is to use a commercial VPN (Virtual Private Network) provider. This process is common in corporate environments to gain access to a company's internal network. In this case, however, using a VPN gets one connected to a server outside of China, which permits normal internet access. While the technology is complicated, the use is not. One simply subscribes to a provider and software or configuration instructions are provided, that require the user to simply use a "connect button" and the rest is automatic. In addition to being useful in a restricted setting like China, it is also a means to secure one's internet use in public settings (airports, hotels, cafes etc). It was "Catch-22" to get the service while I was in China though...because it was blocked! I immediately subscribed, however, my first day back home. If interested, do an internet search for VPN providers. I am now using WiTopia, which Yue uses in China and it is working flawlessly.

If you go, be prepared for an occasional "surprise"...among other things...the TOILETS! The only Western style (sit-down) facilities that I saw were at my friend's apartment and at the Sheraton in Xi'an. Finishing that dish of spicy

noodles may test your self-control later in the day!

A final travel detail to remember is that checking PBT loads does not provide a complete picture of one's ability to non-rev. Many of the flights FROM China carry large amounts of revenue cargo and may be weight-restricted preventing the boarding of non-revs. A backup plan, perhaps having a refundable ZED fare ticket to Narita can save some unexpected grief.

Additional trivia...the locals pronounce the name Beijing with a "hard J"...as in Joy (NOT as Bei-zhing like we hear in the West). It is made up of two words (and also 2 Chinese characters) meaning Northern (Bei) and Capital (jing). The city referenced earlier as Nanking has also been known as Nanjing meaning Southern Capital, which was the (then) capital of China during the Japanese occupation of WWII and presumably the reason for the atrocities. Nanking/ Nanjing is still officially recognized as the capital of the Republic of China (also known as Taiwan). Beijing has been known by other names such as Peking (also Beiping or other similar sounding names) when Beijing was not the capital, since different dynasties located their capitals in other cities (such as Xi'an). Beijing was re-given it's current "Capital" name by Mao Zedong in October 1949.

The city of Xi'an is the location of the Terra-Cotta Army, which was positioned to guard the tombs of China's first Emperor and Qin dynasty, that made its capital there. Xi'an is also credited with being the eastern terminus of the Silk Road (silk route), which is believed to have originated around 114 BCE (per Wikipedia). This resulted in "Western" trade from the region around the Mediterranean and India, resulting in a very col-

orful Muslim Quarter with several blocks of "street food" and other fascinating sights.

United started direct 787 service to Xi'an this summer (2016), and I considered trying to take that flight and meet my friend there. Ultimately, we decided on combining the two cities and doing the "road trip" between them...and I'm glad we did!

*Editors Note: Many thanks to Gary Small for this fascinating look at a country that remains closed and mysterious to most of us.*



*"Comrade Small"*

## **Why I liked the Air Force**

A man was conducting an All Service member briefing one day, and he posed the question: "What would you do if you found a scorpion in your tent?"

A Sailor said, "I'd step on it."

A Soldier said, "I'd hit it with my boot."

A Marine said, "I'd catch it, break the stinger off, and eat it."

An Airman said, "I'd call room service and find out why there's a tent in my room."

Ed. Note: *This highly accurate statement of fact is courtesy of Cleve Spring, Editor of RUPA News.*



## THE GOLDEN EAGLES TREASURER / WEBMASTER UPDATE Bruce Sprague

HOME MEMBERSHIP LAC CARE CONVENTION TRAVEL CONTRAILS INPUT STORE CART(0)

I have been pretty busy with maintaining our website and all the GE treasurer duties, along with starting a new job as a 737 simulator instructor teaching military pilots to get their 737 rating. I never would have dreamed a few months ago that I would be back in the cockpit and calling out "TO/GA, Flaps 15" *and a lot more!*

I will find time, however, for that time of the year... the *Golden Eagles Convention October 3rd thru the 6th!* We are all heading to Las Vegas! Go to our website (see link below), and on the CONVENTION pull down menu you will find pages for all the details, *hotel reservations (due by Sept 7)*, the *Convention Form* to fill out (*due by Sept 16*), and links back to the STORE to pay for your meals and golf.

There will be a paper form option to sign up for the convention in this magazine...***however, we strongly urge you to use our online website form and credit card STORE.*** A mailed in form and check takes us volunteers ten times the effort to process, with more chance of errors (*and please...do not* send your checks to Tom Doherty or Charlie Starr!) 90% of you have already been using our excellent online tools, and have had no problems at all. ***If you have any problems, I will be glad to phone you and walk you thru the process....it will only take a few minutes!***



While you are in our website, go take a look at the current roster (Roster Download), and check over all your information. If you see anything amiss, then fill out the Update Roster Form so we can make the corrections. It is especially important that we have your current email address, *or you will not be getting frequent Golden Eagles blast emails with important information.* And by signing up to get your Golden Contrails online (vs. a printed copy), you will help save us a lot of money.

By the way....if you have not been surfing our website the last year, you might want to pull down all the menus (see the top of this page) and see what we have. There is a lot of great information up

on our site concerning our Golden Eagles, helpful travel information. and much more.

On the Treasurer front, your Golden Eagles books are all balanced to the penny, and we have a full accounting of what is going in and going out. Our Bank of America accounts have over \$42,000 on hand and our CARE account has about \$600. Speaking of the CARE fund....*please donate to this tax deductible worthy cause.* Likewise, all postage donations are appreciated as well.

### POSTAGE DONATIONS: (thru 7/13/16) "Thank You!"

Paul Grover, Charlie Starr, Martin Fedigan, Jim Stephens, Rick Masterson, Sandra Orozco, Wesley Coss, Ann Honan, Tom Russell, Lewis O'Brien, Ray Brendle, Bob Warner Donald Crabtree and Don Gentry

### CARE DONATIONS: (thru 7/13/16) "Thank You!"

Rick Masterson and Loyd Robeson

### NEW MEMBERS: (thru 7/13/16) "Welcome Aboard!"

Steve Sette, David Conner, Dorothy Clegg, Jackson Seltzer, Pat Wilcox, Loyd Robeson, Vaughn Thompson and Thomas Harper

*We will see you at the Convention in Las Vegas!*

Bruce



**www.thegoldeneagles.org**

**brucesprague@mac.com**

**1310 Buckingham Way, Kingwood, TX 77339**

### **NEW PASSWORD**

**flap** (*all lower case*)

*You **DO NOT** need this password to **login** to our website! It is **only** for the "Roster", "Golden Contrails" and the "Officer Documents".*

The Secretary's Report and other rants...

*"When you're in jail, a good friend will be trying to bail you out. A best friend will be in the cell next to you saying, 'Damn, that was fun'."*  
— Groucho Marx

If you read "A Different Kind of Road Trip", elsewhere in this edition, you might wonder if this month's "Groucho" reference reveals something I left out of the article. Well, in a word..."no". As a couple of retired guys, it's more fun to think about getting into trouble than actually doing it. Also, you will probably notice that we have added additional pages to this edition of the Golden Contrails with some articles that we have received permission to reprint, courtesy of the RUPANEWS. I hope you like the expanded content and share my appreciation for this generosity.

In terms of other "current affairs", we continue to solicit "portrait" style photos from those of you who have yet to send us one (I mean really...how hard is this?). Well for some of you, this may be more of a daunting task than for others. Although the "cameras" on today's smart phones will NEVER compare to a REAL camera, due to the simple physics involved in the composition of the lens and sensor (size of the digital "film"), it is REALLY easy to have a spouse or a friend (or the spouse of a friend if you're so inclined) point it at you and take the photo. We only want (and will use) a basic "head and shoulders" type shot, although I have made SOME exceptions if the dimensions of the photo were too small to crop. The ideal size photo for our use is a MINIMUM of about 640x480 pixels. In other words, about 3 megapixels. This would NORMALLY result in a file size of about 1 mb (megabyte). I have received photos from some of you as small as 10k in size, which is about 1/100 of the size we want. If you take a look at the Photo Roster and see

some photos that do not fill the frame, it is because the photo size is too small. On the other hand, some professional grade cameras take extremely high resolution photos, which would be overkill for our needs. I have such a camera that shoots at 36 megapixels and has a raw uncompressed file size of about 80 megabytes for 1 photo. A photo of this size would be simply too large to email, but I CAN shrink the resolution and file size down as needed. However, you can NOT increase resolution that didn't exist at the time the photo was captured. Think of this like getting a haircut. The barber (stylist) can always take more hair off while you are in the chair, but they can't put it back once it's cut (maybe they could with glue...but that would be ugly). Let me say it again, this Photo Roster is to portray the PILOT (or Associate) member only. We all love our spouses, airplanes, motorcycles, hunting and fishing trophies etc, but I am going to crop out EVERYTHING but YOU, if I can. Some photos have had the spouse or "significant other" so closely intertwined (get a room!), that I can't separate the actual member. I COULD send it to Shaun for some Photoshop magic, but he might have some fun with it and add a tail or other animal parts that don't belong (we hope). So unless you've found the Fountain of Youth, the photo you send me today will almost certainly look younger than if you continue to put it off and send one in later.

My Golden Contrails "Rant" wouldn't be complete if I didn't continue to bug you to use the website ([www.thegoldeneagles.org](http://www.thegoldeneagles.org)) to register for the Convention (Las Vegas in October), pay dues and update contact information. It's incredibly easy and saves us a BUNCH of extra work. We would actually rather take the time to walk you through the process on the phone than continue to handle paper, which we have to scan, email and / or physically take to the bank.

*Gary*



## Notes from the President Elect

Greetings from sunny New Hampshire. I have been enjoying travelling to Houston each month to attend the Kingwood LAC meeting on the 3rd Tuesday and the Conroe hangar of the QB on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. We always have a great time catching up with our old friends and I strongly encourage you all to find a LAC to attend. On the way home from Houston, I spend a couple of days in Naples on the boat. On a previous occasion, I took Hans and Carol Muller and George Davies on a trip to Keewaydin Island.

Our 2016 convention in Las Vegas is swiftly approaching (Monday, Oct. 3 - Thursday, Oct. 6). Along with our annual business meeting, this year's events will include golf, ladies' luncheon, dinner and dancing, and the ever popular hospitality suite. The golf tournament will take place on Tuesday at Angel Park Golf Club. It will be a one day event and all are welcome to play, regardless of ability. The only requirement is to have a good time. The business meeting, ladies' luncheon, and banquet will all be held on Wednesday. Thursday will be an opportunity to have an early morning coffee and a final goodbye with friends. Please look on the website to find all the details, including menus, dates and prices for all events. All reservations and payments should be made on the website in the STORE. Please be aware of the deadlines for all reservations. **Reservations for the Tropicana must be made directly with the hotel Tropicana reservations phone # 702 739-5400. DEADLINE FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS IS SEPTEMBER 7. DEADLINE FOR ALL OTHER EVENTS IS SEPTEMBER 16.**

It is extremely important to adhere to these deadlines. The Tropicana cannot guarantee the rate and availability to our members past September 7. Although there is a paper form available in the Contrails, you

are urged not to use it unless absolutely necessary. Please see website for instructions.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Las Vegas for a great reunion/convention.

*Tom*



### LADIES' AUXILIARY

Dear Ladies,



Our get together in October at the Tropicana in Las Vegas will be filled with good friends, good food and good fun and we will "let the good times roll". Our casino themed party will be a dressy casual event with a full buffet and after-dinner dancing.

The ladies' luncheon will give us the opportunity to reconnect with friends, share stories and conduct business.

The hospitality suite will be open Tuesday, October 4 for returning golfers and all who are arriving at the hotel that day. Beverages and snacks will be available with hot appetizers served around 5:00. On Wednesday, October 5, the suite will be open in the morning with coffee and breakfast snacks, and will close at 3:00 in preparation for the evening's festivities. Thursday, October 6, coffee and breakfast snacks will be available in the suite from 8:00-9:30. Programs with all the specific times and places will be available upon check-in.

See you all in October. Viva Las Vegas!

Jamie Doherty

[jkated@gmail.com](mailto:jkated@gmail.com)





**\*\*\*BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM, YOU ARE STRONGLY URGED TO COMPLETE THE ONLINE FORM AND TO PAY IN THE STORE ON THE GOLDEN EAGLES WEBSITE INSTEAD\*\*\***

PLEASE PRINT

LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Price Number Total

Ladies Luncheon \$35.00 ea. X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00

Banquet Buffet \$69.00 ea. X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00

No. in party \_\_\_\_\_ Meal Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00

No. playing golf \_\_\_\_\_ \$80.00 ea. X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00

No. renting clubs \_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00 ea. X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00

What is your handicap? \_\_\_\_\_ Golf Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00

GRAND TOTAL \*\$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00 \*Please remit this amount\*

Please send this completed form along with a check for the Grand Total payable to:

The Golden Eagles

C/O Bruce Sprague, Treasurer

1310 Buckingham Way

Kingwood, TX 77339-1667

**DEADLINE FOR MEAL RESERVATIONS AND GOLF IS SEPTEMBER 16**

**IMPORTANT - MAKE EARLY HOTEL RESERVATIONS DIRECTLY WITH THE HOTEL: DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 7**

**Tropicana Reservations Phone # 702 739-5400**

**You think you had a bad day!**

## **CHU LAI, VIETNAM**

I was one of a half-dozen replacements who checked-in with MAG-13 on August 2, 1969. The first thing we six rookies did was attend an Air Group briefing in an underground bunker protected by a thick layer of sandbags. This bunker served as our group intelligence center. Suddenly, an urgent radio call interrupted our briefing. We listened as one of VMFA-115s aircraft radioed-in to report a problem. The aircraft had been hit by enemy ground fire and could not lower its landing gear. The pilot was going to attempt a belly landing on the runway. At that news, we all raced outside near the runway to grab a good spot from which to watch the crash landing.

Crash crews raced to cover the runway with a layer of fire retardant foam while the damaged F4 circled overhead, burning down its load of fuel. Two arresting cables were strung across the middle of the runway. The cables were anchored on each end by a chain made with heavy, 40-pound links. The plan was for the F4 to lower his tail hook, to belly-land in the foam, to catch one of the arresting wires, and to come to a screeching halt. It did not quite happen that way.

After burning off most of his fuel, the pilot gingerly lowered the airplane onto the foamed runway. A spark set off the fumes in the jet's empty wing tanks and they erupted into flames. All one could see racing down the runway were two wingtips protruding from an orange and black ball of fire heading toward the arresting cables. The F4 hit the first arresting cable. We watched the cable snap and hurl its 40-pound chain links skyward. Then the plane hit the second arresting cable. It also parted and flung its chain links. The aircraft was now just a ball of fire heading toward the end of the runway.

Then we heard, Boom! Boom! The pilot had lit his afterburners. He was attempting to take-off without wheels! As the aircraft roared toward the end of the runway, it slowly struggled skyward. It got airborne and began to climb nearly vertically. Then, both the pilot and his backseater, the radar intercept officer (RIO), ejected.

We stared in wonder as the aircraft crashed into the nearby ocean. The two crewmen slowly floated down in their parachutes. The wind carried them over the ocean and they too soon splashed down. A rescue helicopter was on the scene immediately. Both of the F-4 crewmen, treading water, raised their right hand. This was a signal to the chopper that they were unharmed. The helicopter slowly lowered itself and plucked the pilot out of the water and into the safety of the helicopter. The helicopter then turned its attention to the RIO. As the helicopter slowly lowered itself over the RIO, the helicopter pilot suddenly lost control of his chopper, and he crashed into the water on top of the RIO. As soon as the chopper hit the water, its pilot regained control, got airborne again, and yanked the RIO from the water. Although the RIO was rescued safely, his leg was broken when the helicopter crashed on top of him.

That night at the Officers Club, the RIO sat with his leg elevated and encased in a full-leg cast. As he imbibed a few, he related his story: "First, we got the shit shot out of us. But, hey, that's okay, we weren't hurt. Then, we survived a belly landing. But, that was okay too, we weren't hurt. Then the pilot decided he'd take off without wheels, but that worked out well too. Then we survived an ejection and a water landing, but that was also okay, we weren't hurt. Then the damn rescue helicopter crashed on me and broke my leg!" He did not have to pay for a drink that night! **Ed Note:** *Source unknown.*





Otter Crest Lodge, Oregon



Devil's Punchbowl at Otter Rock, Oregon



*Golden Contrails*

*c/o Shaun Ryan*

*6610 N. Sutherland Ridge Place*

*Tucson, AZ 85718-1322*

[www.thegoldeneagles.org](http://www.thegoldeneagles.org)



Vought F4U Corsair in the Erickson Collection