

THE GOLDEN EAGLES



Golden Contrails

April



2022



**Front cover photo courtesy of
Shaun Ryan**

***I think I still have
some unfinished
procrastinating to do
from yesterday.***

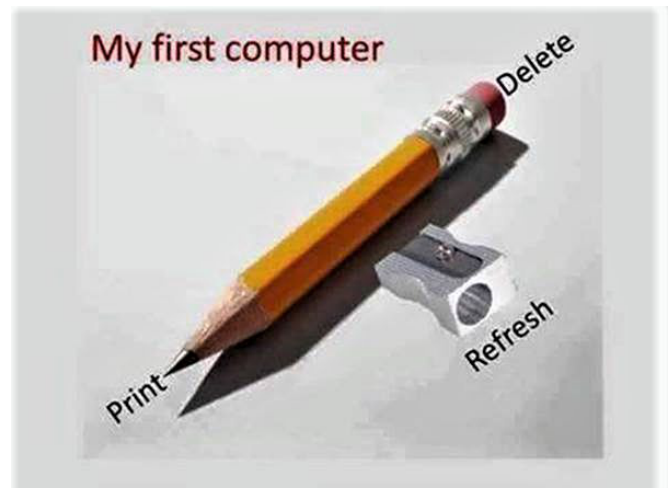

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**VIETNAM
VETERAN**

THESE OLD MEN...
By Pat Ewing

Now we stand behind old mens faces,
Speak of forgotten times and places
So bent are those who wouldn't break,
Who did fearsome things with lives at stake.
Their shadows sharp and darker then,
Now fading away are these old men,
But no one can steal the legends bold,
Not thieves nor liars nor growing old.
To never weave excuses that some men must,
But to stand with men who earned our trust,
And speak of what we did back then,
Before we became, these old men.



Editor's Notes

It's Spring, so time for another edition of the Golden Contrails, but it seems like I just finished the December edition. Time flies except when you're riding in the back of an airplane wearing a mask!

The "passing" of General McGee, also known as Colonel Mac to some of us and "Dad" to our friend and fellow Continental retiree Ron McGee was widely publicized in the media when it happened back in January. Those of us who had the opportunity to meet him followed the news coverage with heightened interest. Since I was aware that Darryl Christian had a close acquaintance with the "Colonel", (prior to President Trump promoting him to Brigadier General), I asked if he would provide more insight into the impressive history of this great American. You will find that well-crafted article later in this edition.

I have also included a several page piece on the combat history of the Navy "AD", also known as the "Sandy". This was submitted by one of our members (I think), but I have sadly misplaced the name of the person who provided it...my bad! There was still quite a lot of "lore" probably mixed some exaggeration floating around Naval Aviation when I was starting my pilot training.

I also want to call your attention to the "borrowed" article on Covid insurance, reprinted with permission of the RUPANEWS, thanks to Editor George Cox, and Pat Palazzolo for his well written and extremely useful information.

I am including (once again) a narrative of a recent trip that I took in the Crew Room section. I was completely unaware of the availability of covid insurance, and luckily did not need it...this time! Although it has probably been quoted all too often..."hope is not a strategy", so traveling internationally without this coverage going forward is fraught with risk,,,at least until there is some return to pre-pandemic policies.

Gary

All past editions of the Golden Contrails are available at:

www.thegoldeneagles.org

Golden Contrails

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Reports

President

Changing “hats” to write the President’s Report sometimes finds me scraping the bottom of the barrel in terms of reporting anything more than already mentioned in the “Editor’s Notes”. This would not be an issue if one of you would like to step forward and take over the reigns of President, Editor or any other position on the board. As you can imagine, these positions are filled with excitement and high compensation!

So, if you believed that last sentence you may be in need of some therapy, but even if that is the case, you can still volunteer! If we denied anyone a chance at all this glamour just for being crazy, we might all be out of a “job”. In all seriousness, some of us have been riding this trail for quite a while, and are starting to get a bit saddle sore. Every organization needs fresh ideas and experiences from time to time, so we really do need some of you to “step forward”..

As you should know by now, the big news is that we are having another Reunion in early May. This time we will be back in Las Vegas, which was always the most popular venue when we did conventions. This location tends to be more convenient for those living in the Mountain and Pacific time zones, but we always have members from all other parts of the country. It’s Las Vegas, so there is something for everyone! From what I hear, Dave is thinking of auditioning for a chain-saw acrobatic act at Circus Circus, so how can you miss that? Oh yeah...free snacks and booze in the Hospitality Suite! Need I say more?



Gary



I said, "It's not a matter of how many times one falls. It's a matter of how many times one picks themselves up and tries again."

"That's not how a field sobriety test works", the officer replied.

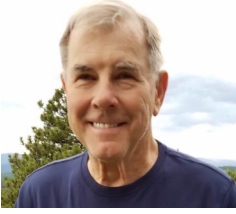
A PESSIMIST sees a dark tunnel

An OPTIMIST sees light at the end
of the tunnel

A REALIST sees a freight train

The TRAIN driver sees 3
idiots standing on the tracks.

Executive Vice President/Email Coordinator Report



Dave Newell



Dave is currently under reconstruction. Apparently his knees are feeling the effects of all his past bad behaviors, so he's going into the shop for some replacement.

Look for him to return in the next edition with a spring in his step and a red cape on his back!

Sometimes it is great to be the Editor, so I can have "fun" like this, but maybe he'll get even in the next Monthly Update.



I hope everyone had a great holiday season, and everyone is ready for Spring weather! We are planning four cruises, the *Golden Eagles* Las Vegas reunion, and family visits to nine grandkids all around the country for this year to keep us busy. I hope all of you have something lined up to make your 2022 a great year.

Speaking of our *Golden Eagles* Las Vegas reunion (May 3-5)...go to our *GE* website, and click on REUNIONS to pull up all the details. We will have a hospitality suite at the *Tropicana* hotel, to all meet together and coordinate our fun with all the great Las Vegas meals and shows. Hope to see many of you there!

While on our *Golden Eagles* website, click on the LAC menu, then HOUSTON AREA to see information on the Houston area quarterly lunches...*everyone* is welcome to join us! The next one is booked for Monday, May 2 (then August 1 and October 31). Other LACs have regular events as well...check them all out! As always, please update your roster information and send in your crew room updates using the links on the website.

On the *Golden Eagles* finances front, our bank account as of March 8 has \$42,743 on the books, and all our bills are paid up. A few of you are still sending in "dues" payments, even though you are already a *full lifetime member* as of 2020! No need to keep paying!

NEW and RE-JOINED GE MEMBERS:

(November 12, 2021 thru March 8, 2022)

George Kuybus, Stan Lindholm, Christopher Maurer, George Rayl, Tom Heidorf, Dennis Kaiser, Rodney Horn, Ronald Wohlschlaeger, Leonard Rzewinski, Gary Baker, Charles Horn Jr, Keith Lamb, Lee Hannibal, Marc Embry, Britt Owens, Philip Stein, and Ed Stapleton

"Welcome Aboard!"

*Everyone have a great
2022 Spring/Summer!*

Bruce



www.thegoldeneagles.org

email: brucesprague@mac.com

NEW PASSWORD: *radar* (all lower case)

- > You **DO NOT** need this password to *login* to our website!
- > It is **only** needed for the "Roster", "*Golden Contrails*", "Officer Documents", and the "Archived Blast Emails".
- > The password changes three times a year.

Secretary

Greetings from the Tucson Basin!

We are in our perfect weather season with warm days and clear, cool nights. I'm down in the observatory looking at the sky on many nights, hiking and docenting at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum during the days, and working on Golden Eagles duties in my (very) spare time.

My main job remains entering member dues and information into the database and running the monthly (usually) rosters. I also try and keep my fellow officers from spending all the money unless they share with me. So far, the money seems to be where it is supposed to be. Oh, well.

Great seeing so many new members each month! Of course, you only have to join and pay dues once and you are good for life. (This is a good place for a life – or not much life left – joke but I think I'll try and refrain.) Keep encouraging your old friends to join!

Pam and I took our first flying trip in two years up to Jackson Hole last month. No problems except that it was REALLY COLD. Amazing how thin my blood has gotten in Tucson. And we are off to the Galapagos (via Quito) at the end of March! I'm starting to remember why I like traveling so much. Hope you all will be comfortable enough to head out soon.

I'm planning on attending the LAS event in May. Looking forward to seeing many of you!

David Rossetter
GE Secretary



A nice, calm and respectable lady went into the pharmacy, walked up to the pharmacist, looked straight into his eyes, and said, "I'd like to buy some cyanide". The pharmacist asked, "Why in the world do you need cyanide?" The lady replied, "I need it to poison my husband."

The pharmacist's eyes got big and he exclaimed, "Lord have mercy! I can't give you cyanide to kill your husband, that's against the law! I'll lose my license! They'll throw both of us in jail! All kinds of bad things will happen. Absolutely not! You CANNOT have any cyanide!"

The lady reached into her purse and pulled out a picture of her husband in bed with the pharmacist's wife.

The pharmacist looked at the picture and said, "You didn't tell me you had a prescription."

Safe Passage Home



It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better.

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again.

Who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause.

Who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

—Teddy Roosevelt

Friends,

Greetings from Annapolis Maryland.

During these unsettled times of geopolitical uncertainty and conflict, the never-to-have-been expected magnitude of societal challenges we are experiencing in this, the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave, I have found joy in remembering many wonderful relationships made throughout life.

I have remembered and celebrated many dear friends who have passed, but have not been forgotten.

It seems not a day, or certainly a week or month, that Captain Dave Newell does not, faithfully, notify and post the name and obituary of a friend “gone west.” I’m confident there is not one among us that does not drift into a moment of solitude as memories of times past, full of laughter, sorrow, adventure, and storytelling surface.

All of this...while memories of our friend, off the gate, airborne, heading 270, going vertical through flight level 610, accelerating past m8 with a smile and living the dream, now come true, flood our minds and imaginations – all the right stuff at all the right times, reminding us of what great aviators we were, have been, and always will be! Fly Navy!

And, indeed, of the many things we share...there is always storytelling!

On January 16th of this year, I came to know that a friend had passed – and now was well established, on course, and approaching the western horizon. I was moved to email Dave, seeking permission to post a notification to the Golden Eagles of the passing of this friend and American hero, known to many as Colonel Mac, Brigadier General Charles McGee.

Dave subsequently passed my inquiry up the chain-of-command to our Golden Eagles President and Golden Contrails editor, Captain Gary Small, who writes back to me within hours, as he is traveling in the Nordic with his son, “Make it for the April issue and cleared for takeoff.”

So, here goes...It is my pleasure to introduce to you: Brigadier General Charles McGee USAF Ret.

Born For a Time Such as This



Born a native son of America's heartland in Cleveland Ohio, "Colonel Mac" arrived on the planet on 7 December 1919, locked and loaded, inheriting a Midwest legacy of service, a determined will to overcome difficulty, and demonstrated valor...he was ready to start his day.¹

His grandfather was formerly enslaved and his father served as an [Army chaplain](#) in [World War I](#) and during the [Battle of the Bulge](#) in the Second World War. His Father was also at various times a teacher, social worker, [African Methodist Episcopal](#) minister (ultimately a [Unitarian](#) minister and one of the first African Americans as such), and later an activist during the [civil rights movement](#) of the 1950's and 1960's. The family frequently moved during Charles's childhood.^[3] He had two siblings, his older brother, Lewis, and younger sister, Ruth. His mother died shortly after his sister was born.

As a child, McGee was a member of the [Boy Scouts of America](#) and earned the [Eagle Scout](#) award on August 9, 1940. He later served in district and regional positions in the Boy Scouts. At the [2010 National Scout Jamboree](#), he was recognized with the [Distinguished Eagle Scout Award](#).^[5]

McGee met [Salem Baptist Church](#) member Frances Nelson in April 1942. They were married at her home by his father on October 17, 1942. They had three children: Charlene, Ronald, and Yvonne. Two days after their wedding, he was sworn in as an [aviation cadet](#).^[6]

¹ Photographs and some text of a historical nature throughout this article were taken from public online records.

Equality of Opportunity Breeds a Warrior

It was in 1942, while studying engineering at the University of Illinois, on his 22nd birthday, that Japanese aircraft bombed Pearl Harbor; the following day, America officially entered World War II.

After hearing of the US Army Air Corps' new program to allow African Americans to train as combat pilots, McGee enlisted. Before leaving for training, McGee married Frances. Two days after their ceremony, (Welcome to the Army, Fran!), McGee received his orders and became an aviation cadet. In time, he became a commissioned officer and member of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Upon arriving in Tuskegee, McGee, having experienced discrimination while growing up in the northern United States, noted that, in Alabama, where Tuskegee Airfield was located, the racism was much more blatant. "Back in those days, the city of Tuskegee was off limits, and the sheriff wasn't a friend. You didn't buy gas or walk down the street in certain areas," McGee said. But flying lifted his spirits. Even his early training rides sometimes became spiritual experiences. "Flying up to 45,000 feet to watch the sun set and stars come out," he said. "It makes you realize we human beings are just one small aspect in a mighty grand universe."

A warrior is born – Mac graduated from Class 43 – on June 30, 1943.

Over There

After earning his wings and a 2nd Lieutenant's commission in June 1943, McGee joined the 302nd Fighter Squadron, part of the racially segregated 332nd Fighter Group, one of the units of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

Stationed in Italy, McGee flew P-39 Airacobras, P-47 Thunderbolts, and P-51 Mustangs on attack missions and bomber escorts. On 24 August 1944, McGee was escorting a group of B-24 Liberator bombers over Czechoslovakia. While flying his P-51, named Kitten, partially after his nickname for his wife and partially as a reference to his crew chief, who "kept that engine purring like a kitten," a group of German fighters pounced on the bombers. McGee engaged, chasing a FW 190 into a dive before shooting it down.

McGee ended his combat time in World War II after 136 missions, and then became an instructor for the 477th Bombardment Group (Medium), a group of African Americans training to become B-25 Mitchell crews.

Despite his decorated service, McGee faced harsh discrimination upon returning home. "In Europe, I was Charles McGee," he said. "When you came down the gang plank in America, it's, 'Oh, you're black.' It was blacks this way, whites that way." Even when serving in the United States, McGee was forced to leave his family behind, because African Americans were not allowed to buy or rent homes in the areas around the bases at which they were stationed.



Tuskegee Airman Charles McGee stands in front of his P-51 Mustang *Kitten* during World War II.

Korea – Here am I, Send Me

When the Korean War began in 1950, McGee had recently become the base operations officer at Clark Field in the Philippines. He quickly joined the 67th Fighter Bomber Squadron and flew his favorite aircraft, the P-51 (now redesignated F-51) Mustang on 100 combat missions. After Korea, McGee held several command positions around the US Air Force, including commanding the 44th Fighter Bomber Squadron, flying F-80 Shooting Stars.



USAF pilot Charles McGee during the Korean War in 1951. McGee was a Tuskegee Airman during World War II and was promoted to Brigadier General in 2020.

Good Morning Vietnam – Smile, You’re on Candid Camera



By 1967, with the Vietnam War increasing in intensity, the Air Force assigned McGee to command the 16th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in South Vietnam. Flying RF-4 Phantom II jet fighters on dangerous unarmed photo reconnaissance missions, McGee completed 172 combat missions and earned his first of three Legion of Merit awards.

Retirement – Well, Sort Of

After returning to several other leadership positions in the Air Force, McGee retired from service as a Colonel in 1973. With a total of 409 combat missions across three wars, he had earned the Legion of Merit twice, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, and was awarded a Bronze Star, among many other awards.

After retirement, he went back to college to earn a degree and continued to serve in a variety of leadership positions, including the Boy Scouts, while helping to create and promote the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. He also made time to visit other institutions, organizations, civic groups, and public libraries, signing books, speaking at family day programs, and participating in lectures. His willingness to share his story provided all with a first-hand account of history, and many walked away moved by the chance to hear from and speak to McGee.

My personal experience was...ask and he would come.



Brig. Gen. Charles McGee stands on a stage during a family day at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center.

Military Honors



McGee was recognized for his combat and military service with a number of military decorations, including: [Legion of Merit](#) with [oak leaf cluster](#), [Distinguished Flying Cross](#) with two oak leaf clusters, [Bronze Star Medal](#), [Air Medal](#) with 25 oak leaf clusters, [Air Force Commendation Medal](#) with oak leaf cluster, [Army Commendation Medal](#), [Presidential Unit Citation](#), [Korean Presidential Unit Citation](#), Hellenic Republic World War II Commemorative Medal, along with many related campaign and service ribbons.^[13]

USAF photo of Major McGee receiving the [Distinguished Flying Cross](#) in Korea in 1951

Civilian Honors

On March 29, 2007, at a ceremony inside the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, President [George W. Bush](#) and the U.S. Congress collectively awarded the [Congressional Gold Medal](#), the nation's highest civilian award, to McGee and all other surviving and deceased Tuskegee Airmen.^[17]

In 2011, McGee was inducted into the [National Aviation Hall of Fame](#) in Dayton, Ohio.^[36]

On February 4, 2020, McGee was promoted from Colonel to Brigadier General.^{[1][37]} It was authorized in legislation introduced in December 2019 shortly after his 100th birthday, by Maryland Senator [Chris Van Hollen](#) and Representative [Anthony Brown](#).^[28] McGee was a special guest at the [2020 State of the Union Address](#), where President [Donald Trump](#) pinned the stars to his uniform in the Oval Office before delivering the address that day.^[1]



McGee, second from left, receiving the [Congressional Gold Medal](#) with other Tuskegee Airmen in 2007



McGee being promoted to [brigadier general](#) on February 4, 2020

Present and Accounted For



Tuskegee airman Charles McGee and his great grandson Iain Lanphier react as President Donald Trump delivers his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2020. McGee, one of the last surviving Tuskegee Airmen who flew 409 fighter combat missions over three wars, died Sunday, Jan. 16, 2022. He was 102.



Super Bowl 2020 Coin Toss

Personal Reflections in Closing –*It All Started in Scouting*

I first met Colonel Mac many years ago in the Continental Houston Training Center, introduced to him by his son, our friend and fellow Continental pilot, Captain Ron McGee. During our conversation, we discovered we were in fact neighbors...I felt famous! At the time and throughout several decades following, Mac lived in Bethesda, Maryland. My family and I lived in Annapolis. Col Mac and I knew right away that we had something very important in common: BEAT ARMY!

After discovering we were “neighbors,” he shared that he and several other Tuskegee Airmen would soon be speaking at the Army–Navy Club on Farragut Square in Washington D.C.

Bette and I determined to go to hear him speak.

Upon arrival, we found the room packed, with a good number of the audience comprised of teenage boys and girls.

Col Mac and others spoke of the rigors of training to fly and then told stories that celebrated America and those who have served. (Always stories! Ask me someday about the story that begins “...and then one day we showed up with P-51’s and drop tanks.”) After having answered questions from the audience, a young teen stood and asked, “What can I do to be like you?” Without hesitation, Mac replied, “Become a Boy Scout!” He then went on to herald the opportunities and virtues of Scouting.

Wow! I grew up in Southern California and rose through the ranks of scouting – Cub Scouts to Sea Explorers and then continued to actively support scouting as an adult. Maybe not so much support for Scouting anymore, but it was a different time and place.

And it so happened at the time I was serving as a Baltimore Area Council Charter Organization Representative, in the process of standing up a new Cub Scout Pack and BSA Troop in our home church –never having been too shy to ask for a favor, I asked if he would come alongside me and help. He said, “YES!”

Later, while serving as the President of the Annapolis Council of the Navy League of the United States, I was seeking a special speaker for our next meeting at the United States Naval Academy. (Once again, he said “YES” as he saw me coming!)

(I think it always gave him great joy and cause to flash his legendary smile when the USAF Colonel received and returned a smart salute, as he passed through the gates at USNA!)

And then...well, you get the idea. Standing straight, silver gray hair, immaculate uniform, clear and strong voice, smart salute, Col Mac looked for opportunities to pay back and pay forward in support of the nation, always promoting, in the most positive way, the men and women of the military services to the community, as well as to families, and America's youth.

In closing, here's a thought I must share: go out and find a hero, tell everyone about him or her...and Gary may let you write an article too!

With great admiration for a true American hero and with warmest personal regards to each of you,

Darryl Christian

What Happened To New York Air?

New York Air was a startup airline that served the 'Big Apple' in the early and mid-1980s. Based out of the city's LaGuardia Airport (LGA), it was a subsidiary of the wider 'Texas Air Corporation' holding company. Let's take a look back at the story of this interesting carrier.



New York Air flew eight Boeing 737-300s over the years

Formed to compete with Eastern Air Lines New York Air came into existence in September 1980, when its parent company, the Texas Air Corporation, announced plans for a low-cost startup in the northeast of the US. It was able to do so following the deregulation of the airline industry in the country, as government intervention would no longer prevent the expansion of the Texas Air Corporation.

New York Air's initial plans were to run a shuttle service between the three key East Coast cities of Boston, [New York](#), and Washington DC. This would compete with Eastern Air Lines' 'Eastern Shuttle' brand, running on an hourly basis. It looked to get ahead of its competition by adding aspects like free drinks and snacks, reportedly known as 'The Flying Nosh.'

It took just 90 days for the airline's first President, Neal Meehan, to find and train a team of staff, and New York Air commenced operations in December 1980. Just five passengers were onboard the first flight from [New York LaGuardia](#) to Washington National (DCA). Nonetheless, it soon found its feet, and had achieved a 62% load factor by April 1981.

New York Air's fleet

Over the course of its seven-year history, New York Air operated various US-built narrowbody jetliners. According to data from [ATDB.aero](#), the least numerous of these was the Boeing 737-300. New York Air flew eight of these twinjets in its final years on lease from Continental Airlines. This figure accounted for just 16% of its 50-aircraft all-time fleet.

The carrier also flew two rear-engined designs from McDonnell Douglas. These came in the form of the DC-9-30 and the MD-82, of which it flew 20 and 22 examples. It also canceled acquisitions of five MD-82s. New York Air leased many of its DC-9s from Texas International Airlines, but some came from abroad, such as [Swissair](#) and Air



New York Air endured a turbulent few years, losing millions of dollars with Meehan ultimately resigning as President in July 1982. Nonetheless, his replacement, Micahel Levine, was able to steady the ship by reworking New York Air as a full-service carrier. With a consolidated network and a new model, it registered a profit for the first time in 1983.

Further growth continued throughout the mid-1980s, until the Texas Air Corporation saw it necessary to merge New York Air into Continental Airlines. This helped Continental, which Texas Air Corporation also owned, become the third-largest US airline. New York Air ceased operations in February 1987, bringing an eventful seven years to an end.

There I Was, Shutting Down Newark Airport

By George Rayl

Sept 10, 2001 was a beautifully clear day in the Northeast, as some of you might remember. I was a EWR based B757/767 Continental Capt./Check Airman scheduled to start a three-day domestic trip with day 1 being a EWR-LAS flight pushing at 0800. Check-in, preflight and push were normal with a EWR pilot and four IAH F/A's.

We were departing runway 22R and pushed from Terminal C. We were assigned normal taxi instructions that took us just to the East of the FAA control tower which was on the left side of our B757. Just before taxiing past the tower, I thought I saw black smoke and flames coming from the new fire department that was being built north of runway 09/27. This was behind the control tower's normal line of sight as the traffic pattern dictated them to monitor the field looking east. I immediately asked the F/O if he saw the smoke and fire but he said no as he was clearing traffic off our right. After taxiing past the tower I could see a huge increase in black smoke and now larger flames coming from the rooftop of the under-construction building. Yes, you guessed it.....they were installing an asphalt roof that morning and somehow it caught fire.

I asked the tower if anyone had reported "the active fire on the new fire station north of runway 27" and the immediate response was "No" but you could hear, via ground control frequency, the fire bell going off from within the tower followed by all sorts of communication and confusion as they looked behind them and saw what was happening. They immediately said "all EWR taxiing traffic stop and hold your position; EWR airport is now closed and all airborne traffic continue your instructions for now; airplane on final go-around".

The current fire station at EWR was under the control tower we were next to so I had a great view of seeing the doors coming open and three fire trucks scrambling out with lights and sirens on. After crossing the runway and approaching the new construction site they stopped (as there was a eight foot construction fence built around the building), raised their foam/water cannons to douse the fire actively spreading on the roof....smoke was very black and thick at this time. Unfortunately, the fence was at a distance from the roof/fire and their streams of water/retardant fell short. Ok, now they needed to get through/around the fence to get closer. I had a wonderful view of everything except how they got through, as it was all ground level and there were construction vehicles and material partially blocking my view. After what seemed a rather long time, but probably 45-60 seconds, the streams of water/foam started up again and the fire was brought under control fairly rapidly.

Now the problem was Crash, Fire and Rescue (CFR) capabilities for the airport. It seems the three fire engines had expended all their retardant or they were below the minimum level the regulations required to operate a safe and functioning response to any other emergencies on the airport. So EWR was STILL closed but now because of insufficient CFR ability. As the fire was contained, fire engines were sent back to the current fire station, replenished with required material and NOW Newark was safe to reopen for commercial aviation. As we were closest to runway 22R, we were given taxi instructions first and the first aircraft to depart EWR after an hour delay.

The trip to LAS was routine but we had some good conversations about what we had seen and the F/A's and passengers obviously wanted more information on what we saw. After arriving in LAS I found out our IAH F/A's had been assigned another flight for the next morning and we would depart with a new F/A crew later in the day.

The following morning (9-11-01), I awoke about 0400 local and started doing some union grievance work as I was the CO pilot grievance chairman. About 0800 I walked up to the hotel restaurant for breakfast when I saw our F/A's from yesterday coming back out of the lobby, apparently to their new rooms. I asked the obvious question, why they weren't on their assigned flight going back to IAH.

They were upset and somewhat agitated and said "Don't you know what is going on?.....the Twin Towers in New York City were hit by airplanes and are falling down". This made no sense to me so I entered the hotel lobby and witnessed on multiple TVs the replaying of the Twin Towers being on fire and then collapsing. I immediately tried to call my wife...yup, no cell phone service on the East coast (I lived in New Jersey) so I called my twin brother in CA (that call went through). He was a United pilot based in SFO to let him know I was ok and tried to get more information from his perspective. He was worried as he thought I may have been on the flight that was reported to have just crashed in PA.

The next several days, most of you can recall, was extremely confusing and frustrating trying to understand what actually happened and why. When was the US airspace going to open up? How were we going to get home and when, etc.? What about the families of the almost 3,000 casualties?

We had multiple crews from EWR, IAH, LAX and CLE at the hotel so we spent most of Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday and Thursday at the pool trading information, listening to new rumors, and just trying to cope with this tragedy. Of course, trying to call Continental scheduling was impossible and they didn't start updating the computer until Thursday. Late on Thursday I found out I was scheduled to deadhead on Friday at 1100 LAS-EWR on a 737.

On Friday, when having breakfast at the hotel I saw an EWR 737 crew I knew and asked what was happening to them. They were deadheading back to EWR on a 1300 flight. I had noticed that our scheduled flight had F/A names but no pilot names assigned. So I asked if they would come to the airport early and maybe be prepared to fly the plane back if no other pilots showed up. Good thing that happened as no other pilots ever did show up so we were finally able to get 30 customers and ourselves back home. As an FYI...we also didn't have the required number of F/As to crew the 1100 flight back to EWR so I went into the terminal and was lucky enough to find a deadheading F/A to work our flight home.....but that is part of another story.



<https://nypost.com/2001/09/11/big-blaze-at-airport-firehouse-burns-up-newarks-schedule/>

So let me get this straight. I go to To the grocery store and buy a lb. of sliced ham wrapped in plastic, a loaf of bread in a plastic bag, a gallon of milk in a plastic jug, a pack of napkins wrapped in plastic, a Greek salad in a plastic container, a plastic bottle of mustard and a plastic bottle of ketchup, and they won't give me a plastic bag to carry it home because the plastic bag is bad for the environment?

Travel Report

Employee Travel Center (ETC)
+1 (877) 825-3729
etc@united.com

Retiree Travel information

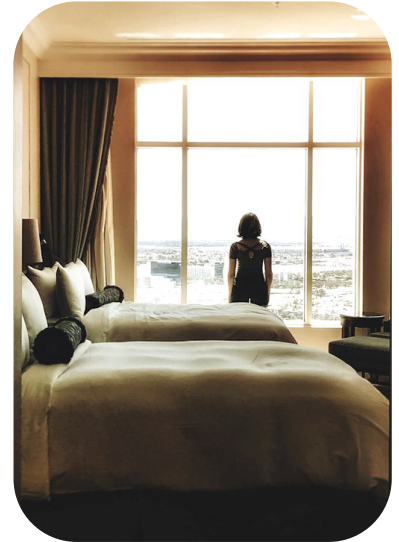
Feb 2022

Captain Pat Palazzolo
rupapasstravel@rupa.org

Covid Travel Insurance, a new requirement

for traveling overseas.

And what you need to know if you test positive while overseas.



Covid Travel Insurance:

Many countries are now requiring proof of travel insurance before entry into their country. The insurance must cover all covid related treatment, and many countries require the policy to cover quarantine costs. Most of these countries also stipulate a minimum insurance amount. Some countries require you to purchase specific policies from insurance companies from their own country in order to make sure that the policy you have meets that country's requirements.

For airline employees and retirees the cost of these policies are remarkably low because these policies are designed for the general public and the cost is based on how much money you would lose if you couldn't make your flight or lost your deposit on your hotel. But since most of us travel standby and have access to hotels with minimal or no cancelation penalties, the cost for a policy for us is much smaller.

Fortunately there are three web sites that will compare travel insurance policies:

- travelinsurance.com
- insuremytrip.com
- squaremouth.com

The most important thing for standby travelers is to ensure we have coverage for quarantine if we test positive before departing the other country for home, which could run a couple of thousand dollars without insurance. Some policies will only cover the person who tested positive and no one else in your family. So if you have to isolate but the others in your family don't have toothy may not cover their accommodations while waiting for your quarantine to end.



Not all who wander are lost

If you're going on a cruise, make sure you have Covid travel insurance in case you test positive before leaving from the US and have to cancel your cruise.

Coverage on these policies varies widely so it's important that you read the fine print and include in your due diligence a call to the website asking if the policy includes coverage for the cost for quarantine, who it covers and doesn't cover, and what the exclusions are if any. There are hundreds of policies, some great and some terrible. These websites will help you navigate them.

Remember when UAL and ALPA negotiated the pilots' disability plan several years ago? There was a provision that you could not opt out unless you first had a meeting with a flight manager. The reason? It was such good deal ALPA wanted to make sure you hadn't lost your mind by wanting to opt out. Well it's the same here. if you opt out of getting Covid travel insurance expect a call from me to make sure you haven't lost our mind. Just kidding.

What you need to know if you test positive while overseas.

The quarantine period varies from country to country. Before you travel overseas, read the country specific Covid information listed in the State Department website <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisoriesCOVID-19-Country-Specific-Information.html>

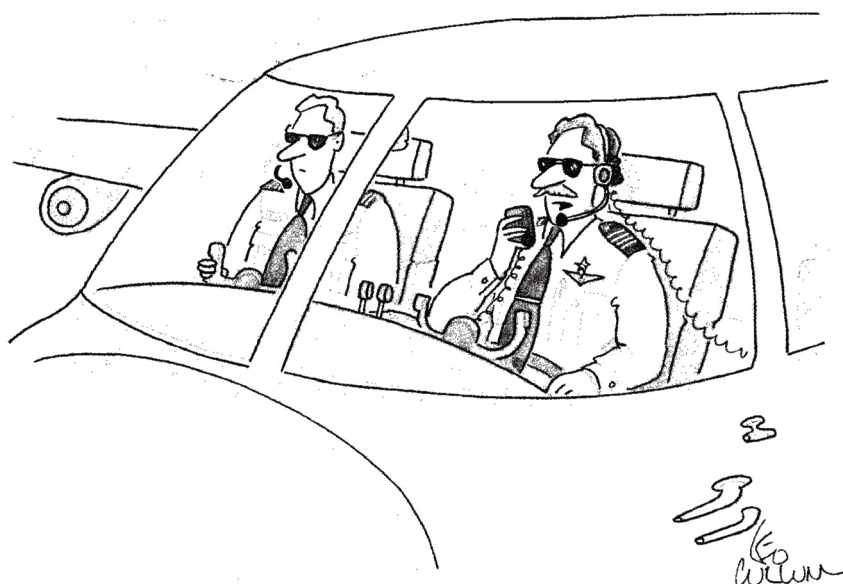
This website has comprehensive information including entry and exit requirements for every country in the world. **It is imperative that you read the fine print including any website links listed !**

Checklist:

1. Buy a comprehensive travel insurance policy. The cost after testing positive can be expensive if you don't have good coverage.
2. Make sure your policy has adequate "trip delay coverage." Trip delay benefits in certain policies generally cover or reimburse additional accommodations for quarantine, meals, phone calls, and local transportation for those who need to isolate. But policies only cover a certain amount each day (the amount can be selected before purchase) so travelers might need to make up the difference.
3. Use a credit card with a high spending limit. Even with insurance you may have to pay up front and file for reimbursement later. And keep copies of everything including quarantine orders if available.

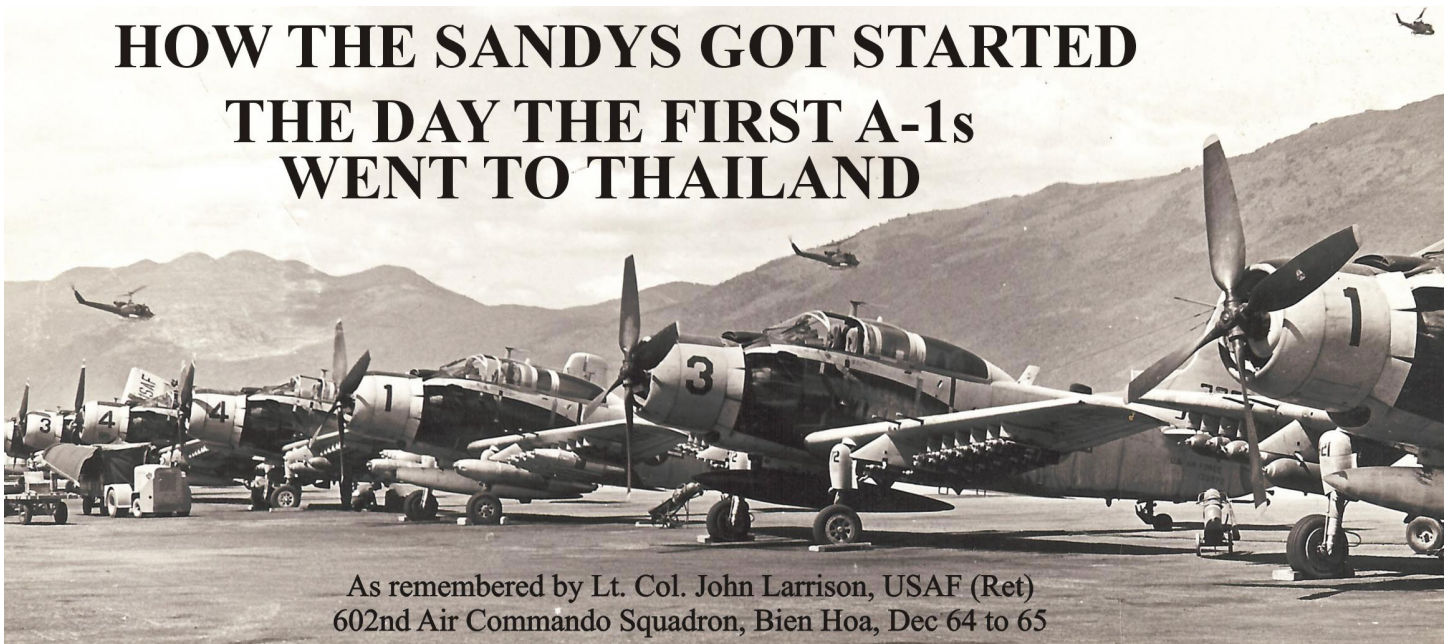
Be safe.

Pat



"The flight time today is five hours in first class and twelve and a half in coach."

HOW THE SANDYS GOT STARTED THE DAY THE FIRST A-1s WENT TO THAILAND



As remembered by Lt. Col. John Larrison, USAF (Ret)
602nd Air Commando Squadron, Bien Hoa, Dec 64 to 65

There are many stories about the Sandy's and the excellent Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) work that they did during the Vietnam war. Even though the A-1 was an old aircraft for the day, it was once a first line attack aircraft for the Navy. It was best known as the Navy's AD series during the Korean war period. We in the Air Force were very lucky that there were many of them still available for refurbishment and use in Vietnam starting in 1964. The political requirements of the time were based on post Dien Bien Phu agreements. The agreements made the introduction of post Korean War weapons systems into the counter-insurgency actions of Vietnam a "No-No." However it was a very versatile aircraft and one that we were proud to tell people would carry any weapon in the inventory, up to and including a nuclear weapon. The problem of how one would drop a nuclear weapon from an aircraft with the low speed of the A-1 is another story. That story could be best told by the many Naval aviators who flew the AD on "Sand Blower Missions" during the post-Korean Cold War period.

In addition to its excellent capabilities as an air to ground close air support aircraft, it also came in a two seat, side by side model, which fit the government's cover story of, "we are just there to train Vietnamese pilots." More about that later. The bottom line was, in the very early days of Vietnam (1963--1964), the Air Force was having its problems using T-28s and B-26s in a close air support role. The aircraft were not designed for the stresses of those missions. This led to aircraft losses plus unneeded publicity from pilots' letters home telling of the poor equipment. In short, a "fix" had to be found. Enter the A-1 and the Air Force pilots trained to fly it at Hurlburt AFB starting in 1964. One more historical point of interest before I get back to how the A-1 s first entered the CSAR role. Back in WW-II, Hurlburt Field (or Eglin AFB, Aux #4) was the base where the Doolittle Raiders trained for their short take-off runs in B-25s to launch from a Navy carrier for the first air strike on Japan.



Now let's go back to late July 1965. There I was, stationed at Bien Hoa Air Base, South Vietnam, a young Air Force Captain straight out of five years as an instructor pilot (T-33 and T-37) in the Air Training Command. I had been selected for a tour in Vietnam, trained at Hurlburt (Oct-Nov '64, Class Express-8) to fly the A-1E, and left the US for Vietnam just prior to Christmas 1964. One additional minor historical note, this was just in time to be present at Bien Hoa for the first Bob Hope Christmas tour of South Vietnam. Just another of the benefits of being in a war zone.

At the time of this story I was very happy to be flying the A-1E and I was over halfway through my 12 month tour of duty with the 602nd Air Commando Squadron (ACS). Today was to be a significant event in that tour. I just didn't know, until months later, how significant it would turn out to be. It also will tell you how, when, and where the first A-1s were involved in what later grew into the Sandy operation.

On this day, I was scheduled for my flight lead checkout after proving myself with over 100 missions and flying as an element leader for several weeks. My logbook shows that it was 27 July 1965. I was scheduled for an early morning takeoff, which called for a 0500 brief. Although I did not expect any problems completing the check flight in a satisfactory manner, I arrived at the squadron about 0430 to ensure I would be ready. As I approached the squadron building, the level of activity immediately got my attention. The squadron was not normally as active this early in

the morning. As I walked in, all the lights were on, maps were all over the place, and several members of my flight were poring over them. It was then that I learned that our early morning four ship had been alerted to fly to Udorn, Thailand, on a "special mission."

I made a quick check of the scheduling board. It was still just as it should be, I was shown as lead and my flight commander was listed as element lead to act as check pilot. I informed him that due to the special mission, I guess the line-up would be changed and he (a major) or one of the Colonels would lead the special flight, as they normally did. I assumed this might happen because ever since the war had escalated, and we were able to drop our "training" cover story, we had gotten a lot of news coverage on our combat involvement. I have to assume that it was due to this news coverage that, on missions that had a potential for some publicity, scheduled flight leads were sometimes changed. The "brass" just happened to decide to fly that day. But, to my surprise, I was told to go ahead with my flight lead check as planned. The only reason I could see for this strange turn of events was the early hour, or no one knew what it was all about. In this case I think it may have been both. None of us were informed of the nature of the "special" mission or the need to fly to Udorn; Just get there ASAP. All I knew was that I wanted to get my flight lead check signed off. At that point, in typical fighter pilot fashion, I believed I could handle whatever the mission was. I was soon to learn that there was little additional information available on what the mission was all about. We had lots of questions and no answers.

As flight lead, I was told to go to Wing operations and be briefed by the Wing Operations Officer. As I remember he was a full colonel. Now I'm in the big time. But, maybe now I would get some good information on what our task was. Not so. The first problem I saw was that the mission was classified Top Secret. So I informed the Colonel that I only had a Secret clearance at the time. You have to remember, I was a young captain and I guess a little more of a "straight arrow" than I would want to admit. But, in true fashion for the period, the lack of a proper clearance was not a problem for the Operations Officer. So we skipped over those minor classification details, just 'don't tell anyone' was enough, and pressed on.

I was given no details on the nature of the mission and learned later that the Frag Order did not even tell wing operations what it was all about. All I was told was to get a flight of four A-1Es to Udorn ASAP. There was one input provided by the Operations officer. He was concerned about the weather over Laos. This was due to his reasoning that it looked like we would not get over Laos until after daytime heating caused thunder-storms to build over the mountainous terrain.

Therefore, we were directed to fly a southern route, southwest from Bien Hoa, across the Vietnam delta then dead reckon west out over the South China Sea, around Cambodia, northwest toward Thailand, enter Thailand, over Bangkok, and head northeast direct to Udorn. It should be noted that Cambodia had broken relations with the United States several weeks prior and I was therefore told that overflying Cambodia was a "No-No."



I returned to the squadron with not much more information for the flight than we had before I was briefed by the Ops Officer. Navigation and mission planning to get from Bien Hoa to Udorn ASAP was the first priority. I assumed that some navigational data must be available in the squadron. Wrong! All of the preplanned mission kits we had in the safe were so outdated it was necessary to prepare a new flight plan from scratch. The estimated time enroute was 5 hours, 37 minutes. Based on the flying schedule from the night before, the four planes were all in our normal combat configuration. This configuration only provided one 150 gallon drop tank mounted on the center line station for

external fuel. This plus internal fuel would give us 6 hours, 10 minutes of flight time. Not a lot of time for a flight from Bien Hoa to Udorn plus any fuel reserve. I checked with maintenance on a possible down load of the 150s and hanging of our 300 gallon tanks. But, due to the time required to de-fuel the already full 150 gallon tanks and the need to get there ASAP, we decided to "press-on" and go with the 150 gal tanks. They would get us there and we did meet minimum VFR fuel requirements. With the fuel situation solved, maintenance now wanted to know what weapons load we wanted. Damn, this was going to be a real flight lead check out. Lots of problems to solve, decisions to be made, and "chances to excel." With the shortage of fuel, I figured we couldn't afford to have any more drag than was necessary. So, I requested 2.75" rocket pods for all aircraft; ten pods each aircraft, five on each wing. These were the smaller, seven rockets per pod not the bigger ones the jet jocks carried. I also requested the breakaway nose covers to reduce drag. Normally drag was the last thing an A-1 pilot worried about. We had never used these covers before, but what the hell, it sounded like a good idea. I had no idea what type of target we might be asked to hit, if any, but figured we could shoot up, or scare the hell out of, whatever might come our way with that many rockets. Each aircraft also had its normal four wing mounted 20 mm cannons with 200 round each.

With those decisions behind me, the next problem was how to file a flight plan from Vietnam to Thailand. I still have a good laugh every time I think about this situation. You also have to remember, our normal operations did not require the filing of a flight plan for training or combat missions. We flew many missions in and out of Bien Hoa in those early days both VFR & IFR and never filed a flight plan. But being the bright young fighter pilot I was, I had a plan. I knew we had a USAF NCO in base operations and he must process and file flight plans every day for the many transient aircraft departing Bien Hoa for all parts of the world. While the rest of the preparations were being completed, I went to base operations to see what was required to file a flight plan from Bien Hoa to Udorn. By now our flight had grown from the original four pilots to: two spare pilots, an aircraft mechanic, a weapons NCO, toolboxes, and some spare parts. The extra right-hand seat of the A-1E was a plus in this case. Again keep in mind, at this point in time; no one knew why we were going to Thailand, or for what!

The fact that we had these extra seats is another highlight of the political aspects of the war. Once the war had escalated (only a few weeks prior to this point in time) we no longer had to have Vietnamese observers in the right seat as part of our "training Vietnamese pilots cover story" when we flew combat missions. But, that's another story for another time. I would love to tell you about the Observer I used to sign out of jail every morning on a hand-receipt, fly him on two missions, and return him to jail. We were now flying daily combat missions and performing very little of the Vietnamese pilot training, A-1 check outs, and air to ground training that was originally used to cover our early combat involvement in the war.

Back to Base Ops, I was told I would be required to file an international ICAO flight plan to fly to Thailand. Hell, I was a fighter pilot and not a "heavy" driver. I guess if I had ever heard of an ICAO, it must have been at one of those annual instrument refresher classes. But, I had never seen one, let alone filled one out. No problem – Press On. It was time to implement my plan. I just knew that the base operations NCO should be able to help me. Have you ever noted the number of times an NCO bailed you out of a bad situation? But, this time I was wrong. He had the forms, but had no idea on how to complete one. At this point it was, "what the hell time" Udorn was waiting. If he didn't know how to fill it out, then he wouldn't know if it was right or not and someone wanted us at Udorn ASAP. I completed the ICAO form myself by first filling in what I was sure of and guessed at the rest, turned it in, and pressed on, just like I knew what I was doing.

As I studied the maps and route of flight, I was concerned about the Thailand ADIZ penetration we would have to make as we flew in from the sea toward Bangkok. For the younger troops who have limited or no knowledge of an ADIZ [Air Defense Identification Zone], find an old head and have him tell you about it. It should be good for a few stories. An ADIZ is much like some of the current "No Fly" zones but you could penetrate the ADIZ if done properly. In this case, they were identification zones drawn on maps to aid in identification of aircraft penetrating a defined area from outside that area. If your penetration of the ADIZ was not within a given plus or minus miles and/or minutes tolerance from your flight plan, you were identified as an UNKNOWN and would be intercepted for positive identification. It was going to be sporty to hit the ADIZ on time and at the right place following about two hours of over water dead reckoning navigation. We would be too far from any navigational aids during most of the over water legs for a good position fix. I had no idea what the situation would be if we were intercepted (by what and by whom) as we flew into Thailand's airspace. But, we were committed and I would work that problem when we got to it. "Press-On" was the name of the game that day. It is also important to remember that, at this point in the war ('64-'65), those of us flying in South Vietnam were unaware of USAF operations in Thailand. We had heard of some Air America type operations, but had no idea of the scope and location of most of our forces in Thailand-an interesting point as our flight progressed into Thailand.

I can't remember what time we got airborne that morning, but it was not as early as it should have been. My copy of the flight plan shows that we proposed off at 0345 Zulu. I have long forgotten what the factor is to change Zulu to local time in Vietnam. Back to the preflight: one additional decision had to be made; do we arm the rockets pods? This was a preflight or end of the runway task to remove the "shorting Plug." Hell yes! It was obvious to me by this time that the brass either did not know what to tell us or they didn't care. I figured it would be a sad story if we got there, had a target, and could not fire the rockets we had hauled all the way to wherever we were going. So, I gave the word, to remove the shorting plugs during preflight and we will be ready for whatever comes along. Start-up, taxi, run-up, take-off, join-up, and departure on course went as planned with no more problems or required decisions. I had all three aircraft on my wing and passed over Saigon headed southwest across the delta toward the island of Duong Dong off the south coast of Cambodia. As I said earlier we were not permitted to over fly Cambodia. "Close" was OK, but "over" was not. We were VFR all the way and I don't even remember making any position reports.

About three hours into the flight, it was time to work the ADIZ problem. I felt this would be "no sweat." I would just pull out the Enroute Supplement and look up the procedures. It was all there, who to call, what frequency, and what to report—just like we had been told during annual instrument school training. Now we had the frequencies and required calls to penetrate the ADIZ. The next problem was that no one would answer us. We tried all listed frequencies, plus some others, but made no radio contact. We were now past the point of no return and I was not about to turn around anyway. Once again, "Press-On" was still the name of the game. I figured we would have some air defense interceptors on our wing any minute. Just like everything else, I would work that problem if they showed up. But, they never did. No calls, no answers, no interceptors. Some ADIZ they had!

The next problem was a little bigger. As we flew over Bangkok, our first good position fix for over three hours, I called for a fuel check. Number two informed me that his engine was running rough when he leaned out the mixture, that's "recep" talk to you jet types. Therefore, he had been running in a "rich" mixture setting. So now, his fuel was lower than the rest of the flight's fuel. He suggested that we could land at Bangkok for fuel. For some reason, I just didn't think dropping in unannounced with armed aircraft would be a good idea. Remember, I had told them all to pull the shorting plugs on the rocket pods to arm them prior to take-off at Bien Hoa. I found out later that this was one of my better 'calls' of the day. A few years later, I learned that the Thai Government would have been very displeased with armed A-1Es landing at Bangkok's civilian Don Muang Airport.

They were trying to keep the presence of the USAF undercover, and had not admitted that there were any USAF aircraft in Thailand. We were later told that landing at Bangkok would have created a major political incident. Boy, what a way to bust a flight lead check! But I still had a wingman with a fuel problem.

The best I could calculate was that he would have zero fuel over Udorn. This was not a good situation. One of the pilots in the flight had gotten

a letter from a friend who said he was flying F-105s out of Korat. A quick check of the maps and I informed the flight that we would continue enroute direct to Udorn; however, at a point about half way from Bangkok to Udorn we would be about 40 miles west of Korat. At that point we would take another fuel check. If my wingman was still too short to safely make Udorn, we would go to Korat for landing. We could safely make Korat even with his minimum fuel condition. That was the case at the fuel check. He was, as expected, still short of fuel. So I turned the formation toward Korat not knowing really what we would find there. But, I had to get the flight on the ground SOON! It was only about ten minutes after the turn to Korat that the airfield appeared on the horizon. **Yessss !!** The USAF was there. It looked like the world's longest ramp and it had F-105s from one end to the other. What a happy sight. I contacted the tower and received landing permission with no problems. I often wonder why the tower accepted us so easy. We were soon to learn why.

We taxied in and were met by a group of F-105 pilots who let us in on what was really going on and what our mission was all about. Earlier that morning, they and other aircraft, had just staged the first air strikes on the SAM sites around Hanoi. They were now turning around aircraft for follow up strikes and air cover missions. However, they had lost a few aircraft and had seen some good chutes following aircrew ejection. Our mission was to have been to provide on-site low level air cover for search and rescue operations during the attacks. Based on all this, we received a priority turn around, fuel, and were back in the air headed to Udorn in very short order. This time, we filed no flight plan, no nothing, just pressed on ASAP to pick up what appeared to be our need for low altitude search and rescue tasking.

The flight to Udorn was short and upon landing we were immediately taken to Search and Rescue operations area. There we were given the whole story of the air strikes on the SAMs around Hanoi earlier that morning. However, our FAG Order had been delayed in Saigon for some reason and had not reached Bien Hoa until very early that morning. Our mission was to provide low level air cover just west of Hanoi for search and rescue

operations. There was an airborne command post directing activities and jet aircraft providing high cover and MIG cap. We were to stay low and were told that the SAMs currently in use were ineffective below 5,000 feet. However, at that lower altitude, small arms and anti-aircraft fire became more effective. Our best chance was to stay very low. But because we had not been there that morning, they had a new plan for utilizing the A-1s. We also learned that they had requested deployment of A-1s to Udorn several times in the past with no success.

The priority of the SAM strikes appeared to be the thing that caused Saigon to approve their request this time. However, the late approval and tasking had delayed our departure from Bien Hoa. Now that we were at Udorn, the current SAR plan was to put two of the A-1s on airborne alert in an area west of Hanoi, pending a contact with any downed aircrew by other search aircraft. The other two A-1s were to be on runway alert as replacements for the other two if necessary. This would provide two aircraft close in for quick response and two as backup and replacement. We were to rotate between air and runway alert during the search by other aircraft or a radio contact with downed aircrews. Search and Rescue Operations were sure some of the aircrews had made it to the ground based on visual reports from earlier strike aircraft. However, their current status was unknown.

The six of us were seated in a large briefing room for the detailed briefing on our portion of the operation and the overall mission. A curtain was pulled back to display a very large, wall-sized map of Northern Thailand, Laos, and North Vietnam. Just like in the WW-II movies. It had numerous colored "dots" all over it.

We soon learned that the dots represented known anti-aircraft gun emplacements. The different colors represented various sizes and type guns. In South Vietnam, small arms fire, with an occasional 50 cal. automatic, was the worst we had to contend with. So, this was a real eye-opener and "adrenaline pumper." Our route of flight to and from the forward holding area took us north over Laos and close to several areas that were almost solid with colored dots. Many of the colors represented radar aimed large caliber guns. Needless to say, we were very quiet and paid very close attention. Part of the way through the briefing, someone stepped in the back of the room and announced that the mission was delayed. This took some of the pressure off and the adrenaline level dropped some. But, about the time we were back to normal, someone stuck their head back in and announced that they had a possible contact and the mission was "GO." Back up with the adrenaline! Then it would be delayed again! This happened three or four times during the one hour plus briefing.

At the end of the briefing, the mission was placed on hold. We were instructed to set up our aircraft in an alert status, eat, and obtain quarters for the night. It was getting late in the day and they wanted us rested for a full day of alert starting early the next day. In hindsight it is interesting to note that, at that time, they never asked us any questions about the capabilities of the A-1E. I believe we must have all assumed that, since they had requested us for the mission, they knew what our capabilities were. As the rest of the events unfolded, we found out that this was not the case.

We arrived at our aircraft early the next morning but contact still had not been made with any of the downed aircrews. However, the airborne SAR and mission aircraft were all monitoring SAR radio frequencies in hopes of a contact. Pending better information on possible downed aircrew locations, we placed two of our A-1s on strip alert and the other two set up as backup. That afternoon while my wingman and I were on strip alert, word came in that a Navy pilot had been shot down in southern North Vietnam well north of the DMZ. A good chute had been seen by his wingmen and contact had been made with the pilot on the ground. A rescue mission was underway and helicopters were enroute to the site. We were scrambled to provide low air cover for the pickup. The Navy wingmen were low on fuel and were about to depart the area and to return to their carrier. As we launched, the other two

A-1s picked up the alert at Udorn. We had a low deck of broken clouds, so we did not get to see much of the landscape. But we hoped that the gun crews on the ground would not see us either. Our route of flight was due east to the Laotian border, northeast across Laos and into North Vietnam to the pickup site. As I recall, it was less than a one-hour flight. But at that time I was not watching the clock.

As we approached the area and were directed to the tactical SAR radio frequency, we found out that the two H-43s had arrived on site. Remember this was 1965 and there were no Jolly Greens. The H-43s had made radio contact with the pilot on the ground. The pilot had been able to eject away from the target area his flight had just hit and had not encountered any personnel on the ground-yet. Therefore, one of the H-43s was going straight-in for a pickup ASAP. The Navy wingmen had provided the initial air cover. As we arrived at the pickup point, the lead H-43 was successful and was coming out with the pilot. We took up escort positions as the two H-43s headed back toward home and friendlier country. We were informed that the pilot was in good shape with only minor cuts. The H-43s were slow and did not have much range. But they were the best available at the time. The "Jolly Greens," which replaced the H-43s, were a great improvement to later SAR activities.

On the way back, we were monitoring radio calls between the H-43 and the airborne SAR Command & Control aircraft that was also in contact with SAR Operations at Udorn. We soon sorted out that the H-43s were flying out of a base known as "Naked Fanny," and they only had enough fuel to return there. They could not take the Navy pilot to Udorn as was being requested by Udorn Operations. Udorn was very eager to get him there because the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, had landed in his KC-135 for a "look see" at the war and was departing very soon.

Someone had figured it would be a great "Photo Op" for the Secretary of Defense to meet a fighter pilot who had just been shot down and rescued by SAR operations. But there was a small problem. The helicopters would have to land at their home base for fuel before they could proceed on to Udorn. This delay plus their low cruise speed would not get them to Udorn in time to meet McNamara.

I had no real idea what was going on, or really where we fit into this situation. But I figured if we had more information, maybe we could help. I called the Command & Control aircraft and asked what "Naked Fanny" was. We were surprised to learn that it was a small airfield just inside Thailand on the border of Laos. The H-43s were operating out of there to place them as close to Laos and North Vietnam as possible. We learned that Naked Fanny was "Fighter Pilot" talk for Nakhon Phanom, (also known as NKP) which we then located on our maps. OK, so what was at Naked Fanny? We were told that all they had was 3,000 to 4,000 feet of Pierced Steel Planking (PSP) for a runway.

OK, now I saw the BIG PICTURE. Saigon wanted the Navy pilot back at Udorn to meet McNamara, but the helicopters could not land for needed refueling in time to get him there before McNamara left. No way could the KC-135 land at Naked Fanny. But, WE could! Why not land the A-1Es at Naked Fanny, transfer the pilot to an A-1 and fly him to Udorn before McNamara left. We had plenty of fuel plus the crew chief's parachute and helmets which had been left on board in the aft cockpit. As for the PSP runway, no problem. Due to an engine emergency a few months earlier in South Vietnam, I had made an emergency landing on a Vung Tau 1,500-foot PSP taxiway because their only runway was closed for some heavy maintenance. Therefore, I expected that a landing and takeoff at Naked Fanny would be no problem.

I informed the control ship that we could land and transport the pilot to Udorn in time to meet McNamara. I'm not sure they understood what our capability was or whether or not we could really do it. However, we presented them with a solution to their problem so they bought it. A few minutes later we were coming down initial approach to Naked Fanny, two A-1Es and two H-43s in loose formation.

The H-43s pitched one way and we pitched the other. I don't know why, it just seemed like the thing to do. Landing was as planned, no problem. The PSP runway was dry and longer than we really needed. To the best of my knowledge, we were the first A-1s to ever land at Naked Fanny.



The rescued Navy pilot was taken to the flight surgeon. He was in good shape. Following a quick check-up and a couple of Band-

Aids on his forehead, he was ready to go. He may have stopped at the "Local Club" for a cool one, but I put him in the number two A-1E and we were bound for Udorn in short order. After all, Mr. McNamara was waiting.

We never got to see any of Naked Fanny except the runway and ramp area or to meet any of the crews stationed there. At that time, it looked very primitive and very much out of the way. It reminded me of the TV show, "McHale's Navy," only it was Air Force and on dry land. I would have loved to have had the time to meet some of the troops and hear a few of their war stories, but we had things to do and places to go.

It was a short flight on to Udorn with the Navy pilot for the meeting with McNamara. The Navy pilot got to meet him; however, I never even got a chance to talk with the Navy pilot or learn his name or Squadron. I have included a picture of him standing on number two's wing just prior to take-off at Naked Fanny. We were taken directly to SAR operations for a debriefing. They were hot to learn about the A-1E and its capability. I guess we figured everyone knew how versatile the A-1E was, but they didn't. They could not believe the ease with which we had solved their problem and wanted to know, "what else can the A-1 do?" We must have been in debriefing for over an hour just describing the A-1's capabilities.

From the flexibility of fuel loads (three stations, each of which could handle a 150 or 300 gallon fuel tank) to any type of ordnance on 12 wing stations (6 on each wing). We also had the four 20mm internal wing cannons. We covered the

complete spectrum. They also liked the radio communications we had onboard: normal UHF, plus VHF, FM, and even a trailing wire antenna for HF when installed. The "E" model's aft cockpit, better known as the blue room due to the blue tinted canopy, could be equipped with four passenger seats, litter carriers, or extra fuel tanks. The Navy had used it with a search radar hung on the wing and operators in the "blue room" for a submarine patrol. It was also fitted out as an ECM aircraft. By the time we were out of debriefing, the Navy pilot and McNamara were both long gone and it was back to "strip alert."

Following a day of "no contacts" with any of the crews who were believed to be down in the Hanoi area, we were told that Saigon had insisted that we return to Bien Hoa the next morning. This time we planned an early departure to use the northern route: Udorn to Ubon then across the southern end of Laos to Kontom, Vietnam, and then south over Ban Me Thuot to Bien Hoa. This was a much shorter route than the way we had come.



The next morning I again lead our four ship flight off, joined up, and pressed on home to Bien Hoa. Over the mountains, we ran into cloud cover and climbed to over 10,000 feet. Our A-1s had oxygen systems but I am not aware that any were used by the Air Force or that they were ever serviced. We figured we were OK below 14,000 feet without oxygen and pressed on with no problems. In fact, it was a funny thing that we all felt better as soon as we passed back into South Vietnam. It was almost like it was home, a safe place! It just goes to show you how you can adapt to a situation and feel at home even in a dangerous environment.

A few weeks after our return to Bien Hoa, the 602nd ACS set up a rotation of four aircraft into Udorn for two-week periods. The initial purpose of these TDYs was to provide low altitude air cover for the SAR operations in North Vietnam and Laos. Within four months of the start of these TDY rotations, I rotated back to the States. Once home, the information I received from other pilots returning from Vietnam indicated that the A-1s did such a good job that the whole 602nd ACS was moved to Udorn, within a few months after I left. From that beginning, the operation grew into what became known as the "Sandys" and soon moved to Nakhon Phanom.

Following those first TDYs, Sandy pilots flying both the dual seat "E" and single seat "H" models, insured a place in the history of the Vietnam War for the A-1s and all who flew that great airplane. Thanks again **NAVY!** I had no idea that that first mission to Udorn in 1965 would develop into the important role the Sandy's played in the recovery of many a downed aircrew. I am just very pleased to have been there and help "plant the seed" that grew into the Sandy operation. Oh yes, I passed my Flight Lead Check and completed my year in Vietnam in December 1965.

Update: At a recent reunion of the A-1 Skyraider Association, I was very pleased to hear many stories told by A-1 pilots from the late '60s and '70s who flew missions that all A-1 pilots can be proud of. There are not many more satisfying (and hazardous) missions than the recovery of downed aircrew. Most interesting is the fact that the need for a Sandy-type mission is still with us. The A-10 was developed to be the A-1 replacement in the Jet Age. It too performed in an excellent manner. Some of the Sandy pilots still attend the annual gathering of the Society of Combat Search and Rescue (SCSAR) association. There are some great war stories at those meeting and a lot of discussions about what worked and didn't work. A lot of information on the A-1 and aircrews is available on the A-1 Skyraider web site: <http://skyraider.org>

After being married for 50 years, I took a careful look at my wife one day and said, "Fifty years ago we had a cheap house, a junk car, slept on a sofa-bed and watched a 10-inch black and white TV. But hey I got to sleep every night with a hot 23-year-old girl. Now ... I have a \$750,000 home, a \$45,000 car, a nice big bed and a large screen TV, but I'm sleeping with a 73-year-old woman. So I said to my wife "it seems to me that you're not holding up your side of things."

My wife is a very reasonable woman. She told me to go out and find a hot 23-year-old girl and she would make sure that I would once again be living in a cheap house, driving a junk car, sleeping on a sofa bed and watching a 10-inch black and white TV.

Aren't older women great? They really know how to solve an old guy's problems!

Delta 15 on 9/11

Here is an amazing story from a flight attendant on Delta Flight 15, written following 9-11:

On the morning of Tuesday, September 11, we were about 5 hours out of Frankfurt, flying over the North Atlantic.

All of a sudden the curtains parted and I was told to go to the cockpit, immediately, to see the captain. As soon as I got there I noticed that the crew had that "All Business" look on their faces. The captain handed me a printed message. It was from Delta's main office in Atlanta and simply read, "All airways over the Continental United States are closed to commercial air traffic. Land ASAP at the nearest airport. Advise your destination."

No one said a word about what this could mean. We knew it was a serious situation and we needed to find terra firma quickly. The captain determined that the nearest airport was 400 miles behind us in Gander, Newfoundland.

He requested approval for a route change from the Canadian traffic controller and approval was granted immediately -- no questions asked.

We found out later, of course, why there was no hesitation in approving our request.

While the flight crew prepared the airplane for landing, another message arrived from Atlanta telling us about some terrorist activity in the New York area. A few minutes later word came in about the hijackings.

We decided to LIE to the passengers while we were still in the air. We told them the plane had a simple instrument problem and that we needed to land at the nearest airport in Gander, Newfoundland, to have it checked out.

We promised to give more information after landing in Gander. There was much grumbling among the passengers, but that's nothing new! Forty minutes later, we landed in Gander. Local time at Gander was 12:30 PM!...that's 11:00 AM EST.

There were already about 20 other airplanes on the ground from all over the world that had taken this detour on their way to the U.S.

After we parked on the ramp, the captain made the following announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, you must be wondering if all these airplanes around us have the same instrument problem as we have. The reality is that we are here for another reason." Then he went on to explain the little bit we knew about the situation in the U.S.

There were loud gasps and stares of disbelief. The captain informed passengers that Ground Control in Gander told us to stay put.

The Canadian Government was in charge of our situation and no one was allowed to get off the aircraft. No one on the ground was allowed to come near any of the air crafts. Only airport police would come around periodically, look us over and go on to the next airplane. In the next hour or so more planes landed and Gander ended up with 53 airplanes from all over the world, 27 of which were U.S. commercial jets.

Meanwhile, bits of news started to come in over the aircraft radio and for the first time we learned that airplanes were flown into the World Trade Center in New York and into the Pentagon in D.C. People were trying to use their cell phones, but were unable to connect due to a different cell system in Canada. Some did get through, but were only able to get to the Canadian operator who would tell them that the lines to the U.S. were either blocked or jammed.

Sometime in the evening the news filtered to us that the World Trade Center buildings had collapsed and that a fourth hijacking had resulted in a crash. By now the passengers were emotionally and physically exhausted, not to mention frightened, but everyone stayed amazingly calm. We had only to look out the window at the 52 other stranded aircraft to realize that we were not the only ones in this predicament.

We had been told earlier that they would be allowing people off the planes one plane at a time. At 6 P.M., Gander airport told us that our turn to deplane would be 11 am the next morning. Passengers were not happy, but they simply resigned themselves to this news without much noise and started to prepare themselves to spend the night on the airplane.

Gander had promised us medical attention, if needed, water, and lavatory servicing. And they were true to their word. Fortunately, we had no medical situations to worry about. We did have a young lady who was 33 weeks into her pregnancy. We took REALLY good care of her. The night passed without incident despite the uncomfortable sleeping arrangements.

About 10:30 on the morning of the 12th, a convoy of school buses showed up. We got off the plane and were taken to the terminal where we went through Immigration and Customs and then had to register with the Red Cross.

After that, we (the crew) were separated from the passengers and were taken in vans to a [small](#) hotel. We had no idea where our passengers were going. We learned from the Red Cross that the town of Gander has a population of 10,400 people and they had about 10,500 passengers to take care of from all the airplanes that were forced into Gander! We were told to just relax at the hotel and we would be contacted when the U.S. airports opened again, but not to expect that call for a while.

We found out the total scope of the terror back home only after getting to our hotel and turning on the TV, 24 hours after it all started.

Meanwhile, we had lots of time on our hands and found that the people of Gander were extremely friendly. They started calling us the "plane people." We enjoyed their hospitality, explored the town of Gander, and ended up having a pretty good time.

Two days later, we got that call and were taken back to the Gander airport. Back on the plane, we were reunited with the passengers and found out what they had been doing for the past two days. What we found out was incredible.

Gander and all the surrounding communities (within about a 75 Kilometer radius) had closed all high schools, meeting halls, lodges, and any other large gathering places. They converted all these facilities to mass lodging areas for all the stranded travelers. Some had cots set up, some had mats with sleeping bags and pillows set up.

ALL the high school students were required to volunteer their time to take care of the "guests." Our 218 passengers ended up in a town called Lewisporte, about 45 kilometers from Gander where they were put up in a high school. If any women wanted to be in a women-only facility, that was arranged. Families were kept together. All the elderly passengers were taken to private homes.

Remember that young pregnant lady? She was put up in a private home right across the street from a 24-hour Urgent Care facility. There was a dentist on call and both male and female nurses remained with the crowd for the duration.

Phone calls and e-mails to the U.S. and around the world were available to everyone once a day. During the day, passengers were offered "Excursion" trips. Some people went on boat cruises of the lakes and harbors. Some went for hikes in the local forests. Local bakeries stayed open to make fresh bread for the guests.

Food was prepared by all the residents and brought to the schools. People were driven to restaurants of their choice and offered wonderful meals. Everyone was given tokens for local laundry mats to wash their clothes since luggage was still on the aircraft. In other words, every single need was met for those stranded travelers.

Passengers were crying while telling us these stories. Finally, when they were told that U.S. airports had reopened, they were delivered to the airport right on time and without a single passenger missing or late. The local Red Cross had all the information about the whereabouts of each and every passenger and knew which plane they needed to be on and when all the planes were leaving. They coordinated everything beautifully.

It was absolutely incredible.

When passengers came on board, it was like they had been on a cruise. Everyone knew each other by name. They were swapping stories of their stay, impressing each other with who had the better time. Our flight back to Atlanta looked like a chartered party flight. The crew just stayed out of their way. It was mind-boggling.

Passengers had totally bonded and were calling each other by their first names, exchanging phone numbers, addresses, and email addresses.

And then a very unusual thing happened.

One of our passengers approached me and asked if he could make an announcement over the PA system. We never, ever allow that. But this time was different. I said "of course" and handed him the mike. He picked up the PA and reminded everyone about what they had just gone through in the last few days. He reminded them of the hospitality they had received at the hands of total strangers. He continued by saying that he would like to do something in return for the good folks of Lewisporte.

"He said he was going to set up a Trust Fund under the name of DELTA 15 (our flight number). The purpose of the trust fund is to provide college scholarships for the high school students of Lewisporte.

He asked for donations of any amount from his fellow travelers. When the paper with donations got back to us with the amounts, names, phone numbers and addresses, the total was more than \$14,000!

"The gentleman, an MD from Virginia, promised to match the donations and to start the administrative work on the scholarship. He also said that he would forward this proposal to Delta Corporate and ask them to donate as well.

As I write this account, the trust fund is at more than \$1.5 million and has assisted 134 students in their college education.

"I just wanted to share this story because we need good stories right now. It gives me a little bit of hope to know that some people in a faraway place was kind to some strangers who literally dropped in on them.

It reminds me how much good there is in the world."

"In spite of all the rotten things we see going on in today's world this story confirms that there are still a lot of good people in the world and when things get bad, they will come forward.

Yesterday morning, I bought two six packs of beer on sale at the local store. I placed them on the front seat of the car and headed back home.

I stopped at the gas station where a drop-dead gorgeous blonde was filling up her car at the next pump. It was very warm, and she was wearing tight shorts and a skimpy top which was wide open.

She glanced at the beer, bent over and knocked on my passenger window. With her braless breasts almost falling out of her flimsy top she said, in a sexy voice, "I am a big believer in the barter system, old fellow. Would you be interested in trading sex for beer?"

I thought for a few seconds and asked, "What kind of beer you got?"

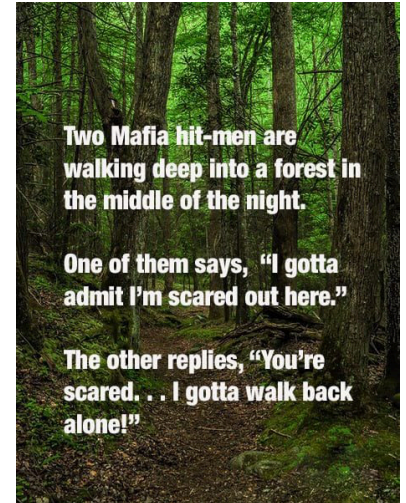
The arrogance of old age!

The Crew Room

Lynn Rippelmeyer...What Have You Been Up To?

I wrote a book! Actually 2 -a duology, a 2-book set.

The first, Life Takes Wings, is available to order on my website www.LynnRippelmeyer.com for a signed copy. Or for cheaper, but longer wait, from your favorite online or brick bookstore. It's about the journey from TWA flight attendant to first female 747 pilot. The second book, soon to follow, Life Takes Flight, is the rest of the career - PEX-CAL-UAL with lots of ups and downs (pun intended). According to pilot friends, it's a good read, but would love any feedback. Lynn Ripp



Two Mafia hit-men are walking deep into a forest in the middle of the night.

One of them says, "I gotta admit I'm scared out here."

The other replies, "You're scared. . . I gotta walk back alone!"

Dennis Lonneman...What Have You Been Up To?

Signing up and figuring out Medicare which wasn't as hard as I thought, just have to do your homework. And starting on some projects I put on the back burner for a number of years.

Marc Embry...What Have You Been Up To?

retired last sept. and moved to the Marathon in the Florida Keys, boats are my newly desired form of transportation now.

Bill Bulfer...What Have You Been Up To?

Made the big mistake of moving to my wife's home town of Merced, Ca. though it is closer to her daughters. Was not into politics back in Houston. Used to be a "blue dog Democrat". There are no more of those. It's changed a bit and not getting any better. ;-(

Now too old with too much junk so we're making the best of it. Enjoying the geography. My shop supports the Cockpit Companion and English cars.

Spend my mornings researching and writing about the 737; something I've always enjoyed.

Just bought a log cabin home from Ikea



George Rayl...What Have You Been Up To?

I don't know how many cookies it takes to be happy, but so far, it's not 27.

Retired in May 2013 and consulted for United for merger issues in training and operations for 2 years. United had a CO purge in 2015 and got rid of just about all former CO employees then. Flew for 2 years for Great Lakes Airlines (a p135 regional out of DIA), then flew corporate for 15 months for Peabody Energy out of Flagstaff, AZ. They sold plane in Sept 2019 and I retired again. Am presently working with Raven Career Development assisting pilots to get their dream job in aviation. Happily married in Grand Junction, CO to Patty, have 5 adult children and 9 granddaughters. Golfing and hiking are a big and enjoyable part of our lives.

Gary Small...What Have You Been Up To?

In what has become something as an unplanned tradition, my son and I made another one of our “polar bear” exploratory trips to Scandinavia in January. When asked “why there and then?”, I usually explain that “there” is due to his interest and sideline of publishing articles on reinvigorated mill towns in northern Europe, which differ from the many swathes of old mill properties in New England that have been abandoned to ruin. The “when” is due to slow time in the business cycle of his primary profession. This prompted an observation from Golden Eagles member and former Denver Chief Pilot Darryl Christian to paraphrase Howard Cosell by saying he admired my enthusiasm if not my intelligence in making this trip. (This was probably not the first time he questioned my intelligence when he was the boss)!

We knew that we were going to need to pass a covid test for each national border, so I researched and bought Abbott Labs monitored “self-test” kits. For Finland this required the test be conducted no more than 48 hours upon ARRIVAL, so timing was a bit critical, considering the departure and total travel time. We were leaving on a Monday evening to arrive late afternoon on Tuesday, so we started the process after breakfast on Monday with a fair amount of trepidation. The plan was to allow enough time for a second (in person) test if the initial one returned a possible “false positive”. In the event that one or both of us failed a second test, we would need to start cancelling all downline hotel and travel arrangements. For anyone who has not played this game of travel Russian Roulette, it is worth noting that the authorities require either the “PRC” test which can take up to 48 hours for results, or an “antigen” test. The so called “Rapid” tests available at some airports will not qualify. There are several self-test home kits available, but for travel purposes, a monitored and recorded test is required. The ones we used involved using a smart phone app to start the process, which directed us to a website. The first thing to happen was that the remote monitoring individual observe the breaking of the seal on the kit, followed by a step-by-step set of verbal instructions with the kit in full view via the device (laptop etc) camera in real time. Once the nasal swap was completed, placed in the kit with test solution applied and resealed, the kit had to remain in view of the camera during a 15 minute countdown. When the time elapsed, another remote technician examined the results portion of the kit and ultimately confirmed the negative covid status. An email was sent with an official lab report properly date / time stamped along with a similar result appearing on the smart phone app.

We departed JFK via Boston on FinnAir non-stop to Helsinki in what appeared to be a brand new Airbus 350. We had to show our covid test results at the gate in JFK and again on arrival at Helsinki, but the documentation was perfectly acceptable.

We spent 3 days in Helsinki and its environs, then took a train up to Tampere, which was the mill town focus of the trip. This was Finland’s largest mill town and not entirely coincidentally the location of Lenin and Stalin’s first meeting. The reason for this is that at the time, Finland was a Grand Duchy of Russia and Lenin was stoking the workers into what would become the beginnings of organized labor in the area.

We would be heading up to Vaasa to pre-position ourselves to take a ferry across the Gulf of Bothnia (upper arm of the Baltic Sea) over to Umea Sweden, but some research made us uncertain if authorities in Sweden would accept our self-testing kit results. Although there was “rapid” testing available close to our hotel, the “antigen” tests would require a taxi ride of several minutes to the outskirts of town. After an early breakfast, we called for a taxi at 0830 which took us to the “clinic”, which was nothing more than a “drive-up” location with mini trailer and a drive-through lane. This was on the edge of a frozen lake and next to the endless forests that dominate Finland. It would take very little imagination to hear wolves howling in the trees. We assumed that we would go into the trailer, but were told to take our turn in position between the cars in line. So we “foot taxied” in formation between the cars until it was our turn, got our nasal passages invaded and were told that we would receive results via email in about 30 minutes. We then tried calling for a taxi...but no cell coverage! We trudged through the snow out to the highway bus stop in hopes of hailing a taxi or a bus...but this was the “boonies”, and oh yeah...at 0945 it was still dark! Eventually a taxi did stop and we got back to the hotel, where we waited nervously for our results, since a “positive” would mean return to Helsinki and sit it out until we could get a “clean bill” to head back to the US.



Fortunately, we passed and resumed our trip to Vaasa. The next day we took the only bus of the day to the only ferry of the day. This is a large ocean-going ship with 2 passenger decks and room for several large trucks and other vehicles. There were less than 20 passengers and we were not asked for tickets or covid test results upon boarding. This made me think that arrival in Sweden would be the checkpoint, with quarantine for anyone not providing proper covid documentation. The ship left on time and pushed through ice for a little over an hour. Eventually, we left the ice behind and were somewhat startled by the sudden lack of ice scraping noise on the hull.

When we arrived at the ferry terminal on the Swedish side, there was literally no checking for any documentation! We simply walked off the ship seeing no one. The entire covid test ordeal on the edge of the wilderness was pointless!

We spent the next few days working our way down the coast of Sweden, ultimately arriving into Stockholm for the last three days before heading home. Once again, we passed our "self-test" kits and were relieved to be able to access our flights back to the US on Iceland Air via Reykjavik.

All flights were less than half full and we each had a whole row in coach to ourselves on every leg. Although no masks were required in either country, except for the planes and trains, Finland did have particularly obnoxious (5pm) bar and (6pm) restaurant curfews. This seemed a bit more palatable given that it was getting dark around 3pm. Sweden was, and has been open for the entire duration of the global lockdowns. We were asked for our "covid pass" (vaccination cards) at a couple places in Finland, but we enjoyed going maskless for the most part during the entire trip. Lo and behold...we did not get covid! Anything more that I would say on the subject of these protocols would devolve into a rant, so...

I was unaware of the availability of covid insurance as described in Pat Palazzolo's article presented earlier in this Edition, or I would have definitely done some "CYA" by getting some.

"If you eat someone that was vaccinated, do you still need a jab? Asking for a friend."





During 2022

- **Denotes Golden Eagles Member**

Bob Roney*	Jan 6, 2022
Tom Root	Feb 3, 2022
David Klaue	Feb 2022
Jack Sherer	Feb 9, 2022
Ed "Bud" Cox	Feb 16, 2022
Harry Cameron*	Mar 7, 2022

High Flight

by John Gillespie Magee Jr.

"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered
wings;

Sunward I've climbed and joined the
tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds -
and done a hundred things You have not
dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
high in the sunlit silence.

Hovering there I've chased the shouting wind
along and flung my eager craft through
footless halls of air.

"Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy
grace, where never lark, or even eagle, flew;
and, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
the high un-trespassed sanctity of space,
put out my hand and touched the face of
God."

Golden Contrails

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