

# Flight Line

Southern California Wing  
455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010  
(805) 482-0064



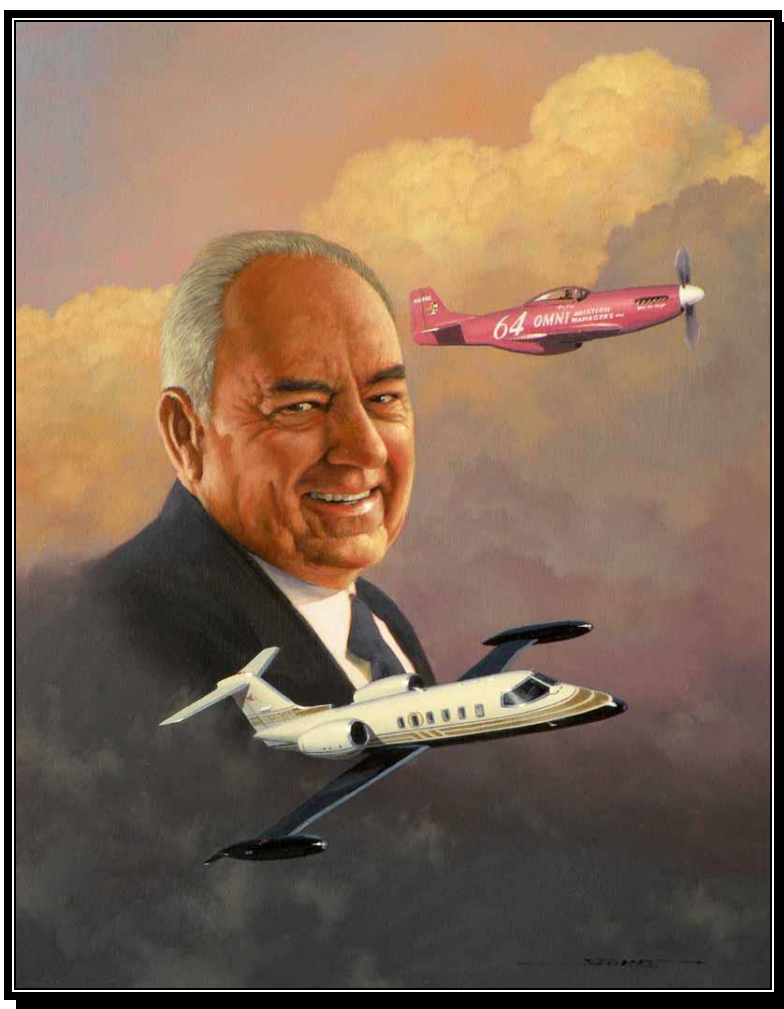
COMMEMORATIVE  
AIR FORCE



**Remember D-Day – June 6, 1944**

June, 2020  
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Clay Lacy  
Outstanding Aviation Pilot and Entrepreneur  
Member So Cal Wing of CAF No. 3627

See pages 3-12 for his story

**To Educate, Inspire and Honor Through Flight and Living History Experiences**

# June 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Museum Closed	2 Work Day	3	4 Work Day	5	6 Work Day D-Day Anniversary
7	8 Museum Closed	9 Work Day	10	11 Work Day	12	13 Work Day
14	15 Museum Closed	16 Work Day	17	18 Work Day	19	20 Work Day
21 Fathers Day	22 Museum Closed	23 Work Day	24	25 Work Day	26	27 Work Day First Day of Summer
28	29 Museum Closed	30 Work Day	Museum Open 10am to 4pm Tuesday - Saturday 12pm to 4pm Sundays Closed Monday and Major Holidays			

## STAFF AND APPOINTED POSITIONS

Wing Leader	* Jason Somes	(818) 292-4646	wingleader@cafsocal.com
Executive Officer	* Chris Liguori	(310) 430-2779	exo@cafsocal.com
Adjutant	* Roland Fogel	(805) 428-6806	adjutant@cafsocal.com
Finance Officer	* Paul Willett	(818) 469-8480	finance@cafsocal.com
Operations Officer	* Mike Hohls	(805) 410-2498	ops@cafsocal.com
Maintenance Officer	* Trace Eubanks	(805) 325-1513	maintenance@cafsocal.com
Safety Officer	* Al Kepler	(818) 399-2006	safety@cafsocal.com
Development Officer	* Kathy Newhard	(805) 857-2881	development@cafsocal.com
Education Officer	* Charlie Carr	(805) 200-7220	education@cafsocal.com
Gift Shop Manager	Berthany Smith	(805) 482 0064	museum@cafsocal.com
Friends Coordinator	Ceci Stratford	(805) 630-3696	cecipilot@sbcglobal.net
Air Show Officer	Jason Somes	(818) 292-4646	ops@cafsocal.com
Facility Officer			
Personnel Officer	Yvonne Anderson		membership@cafsocal.com
Film/Events Manager	LaTanya Barber	(805) 302-8136	barber.latanya@gmail.com
Public Info Officer	Pat Brown	(805) 479-2221	pio@cafsocal.com
Public Info Officer	Lucien Pillai	(805) 300-4580	col.luc.cafsocal@gmail.com
Historian	Ron Fleishman	(805) 586-4119	oldplanec46@aol.com
Training Officer			
Wing Photographer	Arash Afshari	(805) 279-1599	acafshari@gmail.com
Collections Manager			
Newsletter Editor	Dave Flood	(805) 402-8356	dmpflood31@gmail.com
Newsletter Production	Casey de Bree	(805) 205-0494	scdebree@aol.com
Webmaster	Will Cunningham	(805) 570-3515	col.will.cafsocal@gmail.com
Librarian			
Displays/Artifacts Mgr.	Charlie Carr	(805) 200-7220	education@cafsocal.com

HANGAR PHONE (805) 482-0064  
HANGAR FAX (805) 482-0348  
WEBSITE www.cafsocal.com  
E-MAIL admin.cafsocal.com

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## Submittal Deadline - 15th of the month

Southern California Wing  
455 Aviation Drive  
Camarillo, CA 93010-9501

## Clay Lacy

Thanks in part to Wikipedia



Hershel Clay Lacy, born August 14, 1932, is the founder and former chief executive officer of Clay Lacy Aviation, established in 1968 as the first executive jet charter company in the Western U.S. They celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018.

Clay's professional resume includes: airline captain, military aviator, experimental test pilot, air race champion, world record-setter, aerial cinematographer, and aviation business entrepreneur.

Lacy has flown more than 300 aircraft types, logged more than 50,000 flight hours and accumulated more hours flying turbine aircraft than any other pilot in history.

He is also a member of our Southern California Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, and has been since the beginning days of our Wing. Some of the first meetings of our Wing were at Clay's hangar at Van Nuys Airport. We are most proud to include him as our Southern Cal. Wing fellow member!

In January of 1952, Clay joined United Airlines a co-pilot on the Douglas DC-3 aircraft, and was stationed at Los Angeles International Airport, where he was based for his entire airline career.

During his time with United Airlines, Lacy flew the Convair 340, Douglas DC-3, Douglas DC-4, Douglas DC-6, Douglas DC-7, Douglas DC-8, Douglas DC-10, Boeing 727, and Boeing 747-400. He retired seniority No. 1 in 1992, after 41 ½ years of incident-free flying.



Here's Clay in front of a DC-3 he started his airline career with, and a 747-400 that he ended up flying.

Between 1964 and 1972, Clay found time between flying for United Airlines and running his private business, to fly his P-51 Mustang in air races across the United States. In 1970, he placed first in the Reno Air Races Unlimited Class competition.

In the early 1970s, in partnership with Continental Camera Systems, Inc., Lacy helped revolutionize air-to-air cinematography with the Astrovision camera system. He is credited with more than 3,000 film projects for the military, motion pictures, and television, including most airline commercials. Clay recorded most of the action-packed aerial sequences in Paramount Pictures' *Top Gun* (1986).

With 29 world speed records under his belt, Lacy's name has appeared in many newspaper headlines and aviation record books. On September 19, 1962 in California's Mohave Desert, Lacy and fellow Air National Guard pilot Jack Conroy attracted national attention when they made the first flight of the "Pregnant Guppy," a Boeing 377 Stratocruiser, modified to carry the Saturn rocket booster in support of the U.S. space program. The aircraft carried its first payload for NASA to Cape Canaveral one year later.

On July 17, 2010, Clay was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame for his achievements as an aviation pioneer. The same year, he was awarded the Pathfinder Award by the Seattle Museum of Flight and the Federal Aviation Administration's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award. In November 2011, Lacy was inducted into the Kansas Aviation Hall of Fame in Wichita, Kansas.



## Clay Lacy: The Planes I've Flown, and The People I've Known – Part I

By Di Freeze *Airport Journals*

"All through your life, you meet people and do things that change the course of your life," Clay Lacy reflects. "Different things impress you at different times."



**Clay Lacy has flown more than 300 different aircraft types, has over 30 different type ratings and has accumulated over 50,000 flight hours, reportedly more than any other human.**

The course of Lacy's life has definitely held twists and turns, but really, it's always had one central theme, leading him to say that he's led a very "narrow life."

"It's always been in aviation," he explained.

Lois Lacy says if her husband ever has time to pen his bio, he should name it, "The Planes I've Flown and The People I've Known." Why?

Lacy, the founder of Clay Lacy Aviation, has flown more than 300 different aircraft types. He has over 30 different type ratings and holds 29 current world speed records. As for flight hours, he's accumulated over 50,000—reportedly more than any other human. He logged those hours in various areas, including military and test flying, air racing, aerial photography, aircraft sales and a four-decade-and-seven-month career with United.

"I really overdosed," he says with a chuckle.

And, his involvement in aviation has definitely led him to meet "a lot of interesting people" including aviation legends, presidents and celebrities. His history intertwines with that of Bill Lear, Allen Paulson, Jack Conroy, Danny Kaye and others.



**Clay Lacy's DC-3**

As he begins to tell his tale, his good friend John W. Myers, 92, listens attentively. Myers, who at one time served as chief pilot for both Northrop and Lockheed, still flies his own Citation II.

"I know what I'm talking about, and he's the finest pilot in the whole damn world," he says of Lacy.

Every now and then, he contributes to the story, usually with a clarifier: "And he did all this WHILE he was flying for United!"

### **"The Air Capital of the World"**

When asked if the rumor is true that Lacy produced a family Bible in his latter years with United to prove he was a year younger, for one more year of flying, the answer is, "Absolutely not!"

"It was two years and I straightened it out with my birth certificate," he chuckles. "My certificate was off by two years."

As to why his certificate was off, frankly, it was due to a small fib. But let's begin at the beginning. Lacy knew what he wanted to do with his life since he was 8 years old. Thankfully, he had several people before and after then steering him in that direction.

It helped that he was born in Wichita, Kansas - the "Air Capital of the World"—home to Beechcraft, Cessna, Mooney, Swallow and many other aircraft manufacturers.

And his father, in direct and indirect ways, also contributed to his desire to fly.

"My dad got tuberculosis when I was about 4, and had to go to a TB sanitarium," Lacy said. "It was about a mile away from Wichita Municipal Airport. My mother went there on Saturdays and Sundays to visit him, but I couldn't go in; I had to stay in the car. I would sit there, near final approach, and watch those airplanes. I could see them all coming over fairly low and landing."

During that period, Lacy's dad temporarily got better, and came home for a few months.

"When I was in the first grade, TWA brought a DC-3 to Wichita, and put it on display for a day so people could come out and see it," he said. "My dad took me out of school that day to go out and see it."

Another person who influenced young Lacy was Clarence Clark, a neighbor. Clark had been chief pilot for Beech at the Travel Air Manufacturing Company. Later, he had gone to work for Frank Phillips, founder of the Phillips Petroleum Company, whom he met when Phillips arrived in Wichita to demo a Beechcraft model. In 1927, Phillips created one of the earliest corporate aviation departments, hiring Billy Parker to head it. He also opened Frank Phillips Field, in Bartlesville, Okla.

After Lacy's father died in 1939, Clark and his wife invited Mrs. Lacy and her 7-year-old son on a trip to Bartlesville.

"We stayed there about four days, and Clarence took me out to the airport with him, when he went out to the office. He didn't fly during those four days," said Lacy. "Phillips had the most beautiful flight operations department. The floors were painted and the airplanes shined. They had two Lockheed Model 14s (Super Electras). They had just gotten their first Lodestar (Model 18). He let me sit in the airplanes."

The flight department was definitely impressive, as was something else involving Clark. On a trip through South America, he had brought along an 8-mm movie camera.

"He took these pictures out the window, and you could see the Andes Mountains sticking up through the clouds, and everything," Lacy said. "Boy, when I saw those movies, and went down to Phillips 66, there was no question in my mind what I was going to do. I was really hooked on airplanes."

There were other people and situations in those early days that firmly cemented his future. When he was five, he was tutored in the art of airplane model building by eight-year-old Fred Darmsetter, his next-door neighbor. (Darmstetter now lives in San Antonio, where he works for an oil company. About three years ago, Lacy showed his gratitude for those early lessons by chauffeuring him back to Oshkosh in a DC-3.) Lacy also recalls that he graduated to gasoline-powered models about four years later, through another friend.

It was shortly after his dad died that Mrs. Lacy took her son for a ride in a Staggerwing Beech.

"The pilot's name was Dave Petersen," Lacy recalled. "He used to fly over town on weekends every 15 minutes."

The person most influential in getting young Lacy into the air for good, however, was Orville Sanders, who began buying surplus liaison aircraft such as the L-4 (Piper Cub) and L-3 (Aeronca) shortly before World War II ended.

"Orville was a wonderful guy who helped me so much," Lacy said. "He was having a guy bring these airplanes in to a golf course that was next door to my grandmother's farm. They were landing on a fairway. They'd land either in the morning, or when nobody was there. This guy was letting Orville pull them up along a hedge there, by the highway. I wasn't old enough to have a driver's license but I had a motor scooter (a Cushman) out there on the farm. I already knew a lot about airplanes so I started stopping there and talking to him.

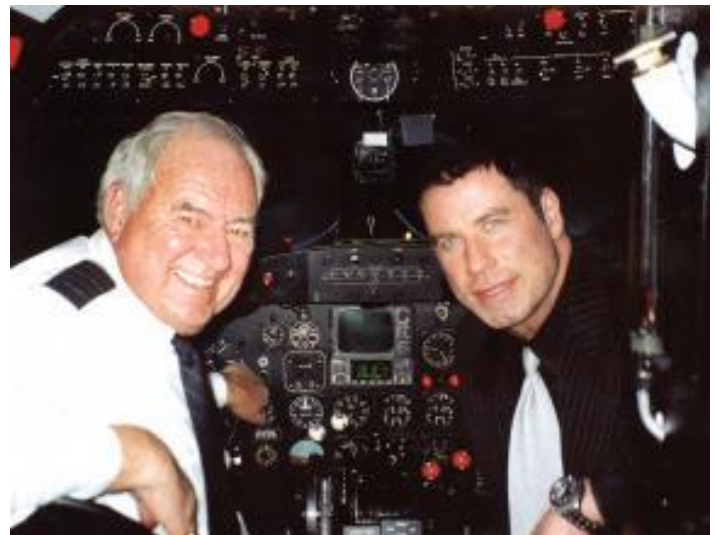
"When I met Orville, he was out there painting with dope and things, barely sanding the stars off; just repainting. Hell, these airplanes were just a year old. I started helping him paint airplanes and do other things. I knew quite a bit about dope, and how to use a spray gun. I probably knew more about it than Orville did, because he was just getting into it."

In exchange, Lacy received flight time.

One day, Sanders told Lacy his dream of building an airport, and expressed that his grandmother's farm would be the perfect site.

"I talked to my grandmother. She knew nothing about aviation, and had never flown in an airplane," Lacy said. "Her son was farming the land, but she said she'd talk to him, because she knew how bad I wanted to fly. They made a deal, and she rented him initially about 40 acres, enough for a half-mile runway and an area for hangars."

In 1945, Sanders established Cannonball Airport, named for its proximity to the "Cannonball Highway" (U.S. Highway 54) and later renamed Westmeadows.



**Clay and John Travolta during a CA Coast flight in Clay's vintage DC-3 to celebrate John's birthday.**

"After he put the airport in, and I started flying solo, he would send me all over to get airplanes," said Lacy. "He thought I could fly anything. He would send me to get airplanes I never checked out in, and a lot that I'd hardly

even seen—just pictures. I mean, reasonably complicated airplanes at that time."

Lacy enjoyed working at the airport so much that he regularly arrived there one summer month even when it was shut down.

"Orville took a partner in," he said. "They shut it down for a month, because they were squabbling. They put it in receivership. There was no activity. I just stayed out there, because he asked me if I could watch the place, for flying time later."

Although Lacy says he's led a "narrow life," since his career has always been aviation-related, in truth, he diverted once. At 13, he didn't mind the fact that the work he was doing didn't pay anything but flight time, but he did get a little envious that his next-door neighbor, who worked in a grocery store, usually had pocket money.

"He had a few bucks to spend on things," Lacy said. "I didn't realize that I didn't really care if I had any money. All I did was go to the airport, anyway. My mother and grandmother would give me just enough money to be able to get there and back. Anyway, I thought I needed to get a job, so I got one in that grocery store."

Lacy recalls that he reported in about six a.m. one morning.

"The guy showed me how to shoot water to clean off the produce, keep them wet, and a few things like that," he said. "The whole time I was there, I kept thinking about the airport. By about nine o'clock, I was thinking, 'This is a real drag!' About 11 o'clock, I told the guy, 'Sir, I think I'll only work today.' I was supposed to work until 3, I think. He said, 'Well, that's okay. In fact, if you want to take off at noon, take off.' He gave me probably about three bucks for six hours. I took off and went back to the airport."

### Flying with United

With all the experience he was getting, Lacy decided it was time to get a student permit. He did so at the age of 14. With that piece of paper—which added an additional two years to his age—it was easy for Lacy to gain his private pilot license and instructor's rating two years a head of time.

And that is how, at the age of 19, with 1,500 hours already logged, he was able to persuade United Airlines to hire him, in January 1952.

"I was so lucky to get a job with United at an early age," he said. "That set a lifetime career for me."

The supposed 21 year old was sent to Denver for training, and would soon be copiloting a DC-3.

"In those days, new hires usually went to Chicago or New York," Lacy explained. "I was the youngest and had last choice, but all the other pilots were either from New York or Chicago, so that gave me the choice of Los Angeles or San Francisco."

Lacy gladly chose Los Angeles.



Clay Lacy as a young United Airlines Pilot



Clay's beautiful vintage DC-3 in United Airlines colors



## Clay Lacy: The Planes I've Flown and The People I've Known – Part I, contd.

**Clay Lacy** (born August 14, 1932) is the founder and chief executive officer of Clay Lacy Aviation, established in 1968 as the first executive jet charter company in the Western United States.

*His professional career includes serving as airline captain, military aviator, experimental test pilot, air race champion, world record-setter, aerial cinematographer and business aviation entrepreneur.*

*Lacy has flown more than 300 aircraft types, logged more than 50,000 flight hours and accumulated more hours flying turbine aircraft than any other pilot.*

*We at CAF-SoCAWing are proud to have Clay as a fellow member. He has been a generous donor to our Wing, and we appreciate all he has done to help us attain our present status as a CAF Air Base.*

*We continue (from the January issue of "Flight Line") excerpts of a comprehensive biography written by Di Freeze and published in "Airport Journals" several years ago. These excerpts on Clay's life will continue over several more "Flight Lines."*

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### Diversification courtesy of the Korean War

Lacy was enjoying his position with United, when, due to the Korean War, the draft board began sending him messages.

"I was afraid I would get drafted in the infantry or something," he said. "I went through all my options and I found out about the Air National Guard, right here at Van Nuys. They had a program where they could send you to Air Force pilot training. I got in that program, and took military leave from United, starting January 1 of 1954."

At that time, the California wing was flying the North American P-51 "Mustang," but they were soon to transition to the North America F-86 "Sabre," a swept-wing jet fighter. Because of that, Lacy headed to Nellis Air Force Base for training in that aircraft. He returned to the California ANG in August 1955, where he would fly the F-86, and later, the T-33 and C-97.

Upon his return, Lacy would be very active with the Guard, as well as flying a full schedule for United.

His experience in the area of instrument flying would help his wing in a definite area of weakness for Guard pilots, and eventually put him in charge of instrument training. In early 1956, the Air Force was scrutinizing the Guard in that area.



**The North American F-86 Sabre jet fighter – which Clay flew during his stint with the Air National Guard**

"The Guard was under a lot of pressure," Lacy said. "Most of these fighter pilots weren't very current on instrument training. Fighter pilots don't fly much instrument time. Plus, when you get to jets, you go a lot faster, further and higher. They were having quite a few accidents, especially on cross-countries, where weather was involved. I think we'd lost seven airplanes in one year.

"The Air Force was on us. Smokey Caldera came over and gave us a big talk, and said he was giving us an award. Everybody thought, 'An award for what?' He said they'd researched the entire free world and we were directly ahead of the Chinese Nationalists, in Taiwan, on the number of accidents per flight hours flown."

With this in mind, the wing was facing a random operational readiness inspection.

"They evaluated different classes of readiness, from instrument training, to gunnery to formation," Lacy said. "The military advisor worked it out where I would be the 'random' guy who was going to do the instrument flying. He always acted like he didn't like airline pilots, but he figured I knew how to fly."

Lacy went up with a major whom he succeeded in completely befuddling.

"We flew cross country and shot an approach, I think at Fresno," Lacy said. "Then, we came back here. Van Nuys didn't have any instrument approach in those days, but I had all these approaches figured out off of the Burbank localizer. I decided that's how I was going to receive.

"This guy had never heard of that. When we made an approach on Burbank ILS, for Van Nuys, he heard me transmit, but he never heard anything on the radio, any feedback, when I would talk. I should have been explaining to him what I was doing, but I wasn't. When we landed, he said, 'How in the hell were you receiving?'"

Later, during debriefing, in which Gen. Clarence A. Shoop, wing commander, and Col. Bob Campbell, group commander, were present, the major explained his system, in which he rated formation flying, instrument flying, etc., from one through 10.

"This major gets up and he says, 'I never have seen a 10 on one of those reports, but I have to give you a 10 on this instrument training section. He said, 'I only flew with Lt. Lacy, but he was so good, I didn't know what was going on half the time!'" Lacy chuckles

The major added that if Shoop or Campbell got a chance to, it would be worthwhile to fly with Lacy. Later, Shoop took Lacy aside, and told him anytime his United schedule permitted him to get away on Saturdays, he'd love to fly with him.

"He said, 'I'm real weak, rusty on instruments. When you kind of get me in shape, start on Bob here,'" Lacy said. "They really wanted to get up to speed. I flew with Shoop some, but I really flew a lot with Campbell. He worked religiously at it. I got him to where he was very proficient, and then he could instruct it."

Lacy also began developing training syllabuses. "When we went to summer camp, Bob Campbell started giving check rides to the group operations officer, then the squadron commanders, and then the squadron operations officers," Lacy said. "He was failing all of them. They were all mad at me. He really got behind the program, and we really did get our instrument proficiency. We went from the worst accident record in the whole Air Force practically, to an award by 1957 or 1958—most improvement, best instrument training program, and all that."

Lacy says going through Air Force pilot training and being a member of the Guard was instrumental in many ways for different roles he would play in aviation later.

"It was a great place," he said. "There were so many great people there that I got to know."

One person Lacy would meet during that period was Jack Conroy, who would become one of his best friends.

"Immediately when we met we got to be great buddies," he said. "He was an airline pilot. No one in the Guard in those days was an airline pilot except Conroy and me. He was flying all the different airplanes. He checked me out on the B-25, C-47, all these airplanes that other people weren't flying. Of course, I was flying DC-3s on the airline."

Through Conroy, Lacy met two of his childhood idols, Herman "Fish" Salmon and Tony LeVier. Lacy says he knew all about the Lockheed test pilots/midget airplane racers through magazines he read when he was a teenager. He remembers walking down the road one night, in either 1947 or 1948, and spotting two cars pulling trailers.



**Tony LeVier's G-ARUL "Cosmic Wind" racer at the 2009 Cosford Air Show. It was built in 1957 at the Lockheed plant.**

"I couldn't believe my eyes," he said. "On the trailers are these airplanes with the wings off; Cosmic Wind was the one Tony flew. I would have loved to have just seen those guys!"

Lacy chuckles and says, "It turns out they were in a bar. They were getting tired of driving. I found out all that later, when I told them about it. LeVier says, 'Why the hell didn't you come in? I said, 'Number one, I was under age to go in a bar. And, I wouldn't have had the nerve to go up and talk to you.' We all got to be great friends later."

#### **Executive aircraft sales and the Pregnant Guppy**

Conroy also introduced Lacy to Allen Paulson, who would become another good friend and play an integral part in another facet of Lacy's career.

In 1952, Paulson, a TWA flight engineer who had served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, formed California Airmotive at Burbank Airport. After meeting Paulson, Lacy would spend quite a bit of time flying with the pilot.

"He had a private pilot's license, but he didn't have an instrument rating," he said

Lacy said that at first, California Airmotive was mainly a parts business, but once surplus aircraft began flooding the market in the late fifties, Paulson began buying and selling various aircraft.

"They were beginning to surplus quite a few by 1958," Lacy said. "The first airplanes he bought were three Convair 240s; Western had turned to Lockheed Electras. Later, he bought all of TWA's Martin 404s. We sold those, 240s and Convair 340s for corporate airplanes."

In the process, said Lacy, there were a lot of trade-ins.

"DC-3s and that sort of thing," he said. "I was flying everything—Lockheed Lodestars, Learstars, you name it."

In 1959, Lacy was juggling three aviation careers. He still had a full schedule for United. Besides ferrying aircraft for



Paulson, he would also usually train pilots for the aircraft that were sold. And, he was still active in the Guard. In fact, his connections through the Guard continued to supply him with opportunities. For example, General Shoop was vice president of operations for Hughes Aircraft.

"Through him, I got a lot of connections and even business from Hughes, with the airplanes that Al Paulson and I were selling," he said.

At that time, he estimates he flew 120 hours a month, but sometimes up to 140.

"If I had to relive my life and just drive the speed limit, I'd be two years behind," he chuckles. "I'd get out of an airplane in LA, run and get in my car, go tearing over to Burbank, and take off and go do something else. I was crazy; I really went way overboard, but I had a lot of fun!"

To make all of the pieces fit together, Lacy sometimes traded trips with other United pilots, and the airline graciously let him drop others. Then, in 1960, Lacy went to Denver for a year to work in United's flight training center.

"I would work about four days a week, then come back," he said.

In September 1961, he was recalled to active duty with the Guard, due to the Berlin Crisis

"We stayed at Van Nuys, so I could continue with my other activities," he said. "By that time, we'd switched to the C-97, which was a transport plane. We never did go to Berlin. We flew primarily to Japan, with some trips to Vietnam."

Lacy remained on active duty until Aug. 30, 1962. Following his release, he would begin flying as captain on the Convair 340, after which he would quickly move to the DC-4, DC-6 and DC-7.

### **In September 1962, Lacy and Conroy test flew the Pregnant Guppy.**

Conroy, said Lacy, had left the Guard, but returned when they began flying the C-97. Later, he decided he wanted to start an airline in Hawaii, and began thinking of doing so with Boeing 377 Stratocruisers.

"The Stratocruiser wasn't successful from an economic standpoint, but, they were wonderful for passengers—probably the epitome of comfort," said Lacy. "It had a lounge downstairs. With United, for instance, if you were flying to Hawaii, you'd go down a circular stairway, and there would be a Hawaiian guy down there fixing drinks. And they had sleeper versions, like Pan Am; probably 30 people could have full sleeping accommodations."

Conroy had heard that Lee Mansdorf in Burbank had acquired several surplus aircraft, including Stratocruisers, and decided to visit him about leasing or buying a couple. When he did, he

found out that Mansdorf was working on another idea. He wanted to modify an aircraft to transport the Saturn launch vehicle.

"Mansdorf had planned to open the top of it like a clamshell, and lower the booster in there with a big crane," Lacy said. "Well, Jack had a better idea. He thought they could take the tail off, slide the booster in, and put the tail back on. Jack got into that program, and was successful in building the Guppy in a period of about a year."

With financial backing from Lloyd Dorsett, the two men formed Aero Spaceline, and work began on the conversion, including lengthening and enlarging. Wernher von Braun, NASA's rocketry chief, made a couple of interested trips to Van Nuys.

"Jack really needed some kind of letter saying that NASA would use it, because he was running out of money; von Braun couldn't give him the letter because they didn't have money appropriated for it," Lacy said.



The "Pregnant Guppy" – a converted C-97 designed to transport the Saturn launch vehicle for NASA

### **The Lear Jet**

By early 1964, Lacy had resigned from the Guard.

"I just didn't have time for it," he said.

One of the reasons was his recent involvement with the Lear Jet. The jet and its inventor are popular subjects during a rowdy storytelling session at Barron Hilton's Flying M Ranch on one recent evening.

"Bill had several one-liners," says Lacy. "If someone said, 'You can't stand up in it!' he'd say, 'Can you stand up in a Rolls Royce?' If they said, 'It doesn't have a galley—for food!' He'd say, 'If you want to get a meal, go to Club 21 or home; I built a little plane to get there in a hurry.' If they said, 'It doesn't have an enclosed lav?'—because he had a little emergency lav, and if you really had to go, you could pull a curtain—he'd say, 'I don't know how many of my friends just want to fly around taking a shit!'"

Also, Lear dismissed the size of his cabin, as opposed to more spacious cabins you could easily walk around in, by saying, "If you want to take a walk, go to Central Park."

When Bill Lear decided he wanted to develop an executive airplane, he first studied the Marvel, a molded fiberglass turboprop designed and built for the U.S. Army by an engineering team headed by Dr. August Raspet. Lear liked the design because it was a pusher. He called Raspet several times in early 1959, with specifications for a pressurized five-place corporate airplane, and asked for his recommendations. He had his artist Ted Grobs draw the twin-engine turbo pusher, which metamorphosed on paper into the Lear Model 59-3, or, more specifically, the Eight Place Executive Airplane Twin Turbofan.

Then, in the summer of 1959, Lear asked Mitsubishi to bid on developing the prototype with him for what he would call the Lear-Mitsubishi Executive Transport Aircraft. Mitsubishi was interested, but wanted a small production contract to support the cost of developing the prototype. With things still up in the air, a year later, Bill Lear Jr. introduced his father to the P-16, a Swiss fighter-bomber he had test-flown, designed by Dr. Hans Studer, which didn't make it as far as production.



Swiss fighter-bomber FFAP16 – designed by Dr. Hans Studer

Equally impressed, Lear Sr. hired Studer to help him convert it into a fast corporate jet. However, he didn't have the blessing of his board at Lear Inc., in Santa Monica, and was advised to keep the Lear name out of the project, so he created the Swiss American Aviation Corporation. Work soon began on the SAAC-23. By mid-1961, the basic design of the aircraft was completed. On paper, it would cruise at 500 mph, with a max speed of 600, and have a range of 2,000 miles.

Lear was a little behind other American small jet designers. Lockheed's JetStar and North American's Sabreliner were already on the market, sporting a million-dollar price tag. But Lear considered his strictest competition the Jet Commander, which, like his jet, was still on the drawing boards.

In 1961, Elton McDonald, the owner of Sales Incentive Company and one of California Airmotive's customers, who had recently acquired a Martin 404, called Lacy. He wanted the pilot to fly him from LA to Lear's home in Palm Desert the following morning.

"Bill had asked Elton and Justin Dart, who was chairman of the board of Rexall, to come out and talk to them about the jet," Lacy said. "He told them he was taking off to Switzerland, but before he went, he wanted some orders." Bill was taking orders for \$275,000 apiece; he wanted \$10,000 to get a delivery position. Justin gave him two orders and Elton gave him one."

In 1962, with most of his attention focused on his jet, and needing the funds to develop it, Lear would agree to sell his stock in Lear, Inc., when the Siegler Corporation expressed an interest in merging with the company. His 470,000 shares, at \$22 each, put \$10.3 million in his pocket. Another 100,000 shares, in trust funds, gave him \$2.2 million more.

He was also now able to call his jet whatever he liked, and chose the name Lear Jet. However, various problems in Switzerland soon compelled Lear to bring his project back to the States. Lacy laughs and says one was that he couldn't talk to anyone there.

"Bill always wanted to go out in the factory," Lacy said. "He'd ask every guy, 'What are you doing?' Then he'd say, 'Well, why don't you do it this way?' But in Switzerland, they all spoke French, Italian or German. It drove him crazy."

Lear would consider Wichita, Grand Rapids, Mich., and Dayton, Ohio, before moving the operation to Wichita. The City of Wichita had helped the decision by offering to raise \$1.2 million in industrial revenue bonds for Lear Aero Spaceway, to be built on a 64-acre cornfield on the northern edge of the airport.

"At first, he bought a lot of the bonds himself," Lacy said. Ground was broken in August 1962. In January 1963, Lear and 75 employees moved into their new building.

One way Lear could stretch his money was by skipping the prototype step in the process. In October 1963, serial number 23-001, N801L, made its first flight from Wichita's Mid-Continent Airport, nine months after initial assembly began.



Lear Jet 23 - N801L  
**Lear Jet 23 – N801L**

*To be continued...*

## Clay Lacy: The Planes I've Flown and The People I've Known – Part I, cont'd.

From "Airport Journals" by Di Freeze

Shortly after that, McDonald again called Lacy, and asked if he would make a trip to Wichita.

"Bill had realized he couldn't build an aircraft for the original amount," Lacy said. "He wrote a letter to everyone, saying he needed more money. It was still cheap, but Elton wanted me to see what was going on."

Lacy recalls that after the initial 10 or so buyers, the price of the Model 23, bumped at that time to \$375,000, would go to \$545,000 and \$595,000, for later buyers.

By then, Lacy was checked out in the Boeing 727 tri-jet, which United would begin flying in February 1964. When he arrived, Lear treated him like a long-lost brother.

"Bill would take anybody in that was interested in his project," he chuckled. "I had known him from out here in California, before he started on the Lear Jet project, but not that well. I'd flown with him a couple of times when he was building autopilots, and on different occasions. Also, Bill Jr. was in the same unit of the Air National Guard, and he knew I was flying the 727, and knew a lot about jets."

"He told me, 'Any time you have off, come back here. Stay at my house.' He offered me a hundred dollars a day to follow him around at the plant. I never turned in a bill," Lacy chuckled. "I had a house there, because my grandmother had recently died. It was a mile and a half away from the factory. I started going back there. It was fun, because it was such an interesting, exciting time."

Lacy's first impression of the jet was that it performed like crazy, but that it was a "basket case."

"Pressurization, hydraulics, you name it," he said. "But old Bill corrected things in a hurry. When I first flew it, you'd add power, and the pressurization in the cabin would go down 10,000 feet a minute. When you'd take off, the power went off."

Lacy explained to Lear that the 727 had a modulating valve, and told him he thought that was what the Model 23 needed.

"He said, 'Well, I'll find out how it works,'" Lacy recalled. "He started checking around."

February 1964, the flight test team had flown nearly 50 test flights, establishing a speed record during one flight of M.0905 (699 mph), making it the fastest business aircraft in the world.

By that spring, Lear had gone through deposit money, and had exhausted his bank credit against further deliveries.

That worked in the favor of several who were hoping that Lear would change his mind about selling the Lear Jet through factory direct sales.



**L to R: Clay Lacy, Bill Lear and Danny Kaye in Lear Jet mock-up**

"He was going to have three colors and three interiors; that's it," said Lacy.

But as Lear got closer to putting the jet into production, he was running out of money at the same time.

"The banks had quit loaning him money, so he started thinking about a distributorship program," Lacy said. "Anytime I had a chance, I would encourage him, because I thought that was a good idea. Then, he really started considering it, because he figured he could get five distributors to order five airplanes, and have them put down a healthy deposit on each."

As Lear thought about it, Lacy talked to Paulson about the idea as well.

"I wanted him to go back and see the airplane, meet Bill and see if he could get a distributorship," Lacy said. "He was always busy. I had interest in a Mustang, and one day he said, 'Why don't we fly the P-51 back there tomorrow? We flew to Wichita. I think that was around April of 1964. Al got a flight in the number-two jet. He had never been in any kind of a jet; he was impressed. Then he really wanted to get into the distributorship. I kept going back to see Bill, and I'd ask him what was going on with the program. Bill wanted me to be involved with selling them. We got the distributorship and probably set it up in about July of 1964."

Lear divided the country into six sales regions. It was decided that California Airmotive would be the Lear Jet distributor for 11 Western states, serving that purpose out of Van Nuys Airport. Lacy, who served as manager of sales, would be one of the first pilots to receive a Lear type rating.



## Clay Lacy, continued...

Money coming in for franchises and deposits on jets did supply Lear with funds, but it didn't look like even that would see the jet through certification. However, in the meantime, help came in an unexpected way. In early June 1964, Lear test pilot James Kirkpatrick and FAA certification pilot Donald Keubler, left seat, took Model 23 up to evaluate single-engine departures.

Keubler was evaluating the jet's performance on one engine. After several successful runs, he forgot to retract the wing spoilers after one landing. The aircraft flew a short distance before crash-landing in a cornfield, off the end of the runway.

"Both pilots walked away from the wreckage unhurt, but the aircraft burned up," Lacy said.

The landing had broken a fuel line. By the time firemen got the flames under control, there was nothing left but a charred airframe. What seemed to be a great tragedy held an unexpected blessing. After all, there would be insurance money. But, that wasn't all. A second Model 23, Lear Jet #2, which Dart had bought, was at that time sitting in the hangar.

"Bill asked for the required FAA certification personnel to be available for Learjet flight-testing fulltime—around the clock if necessary."

Lear received formal FAA certification on July 31, 1964, just seven weeks after the crash, and, four months before the Jet Commander was certified.

"He had 14.7 million dollars in it," said Lacy. "Even in those days that was cheap."

They had gotten through certification, but now Lear needed funds for production. Going public seemed to be the only way he could raise more money. He applied to the Securities and Exchange Commission for permission to offer Lear Jet common stock to the public.

On Oct. 13, 1964, the first production Model 23 was delivered, to the Chemical and Industrial Corp., of Cincinnati, Ohio. On Nov. 30, 1964, Lear Jet became publicly owned, when Lear sold 550,000 shares for \$10 each, retaining a 60 percent ownership and remaining president and chairman of the board.

That same month, California Airmotive took possession of N1965L, serial number 23-012.

"When I brought that airplane to Van Nuys, it was the very first corporate jet on the airport," Lacy said.

He explains the significance of the N number for their Lear Jet.

"I reserved a bunch of numbers, so that each year we could put a new number on our new demonstrator, if we

stayed in business," he said. "So, it was for 1965 Lear. I reserved that number through 1982 Lear."

When N1965L arrived at Van Nuys, it wasn't exactly in showcase condition.

"It just had raw seats setting in it," Lacy said. "Interiors weren't something they had set up for; they built the planes so fast, and they hadn't thought that much about what the interiors were going to be like. We flew it around, gave some demonstrations to people. But then we said, 'We have to get this interior in.' I didn't mind giving demos to pilots to see how the plane would perform, but if people were going to be riding in the back..."

The jet arrived back in Wichita in January 1965, and returned in April ready for serious demonstrating.

"In addition to flying for United, I was flying that jet probably close to 100 hours a month," Lacy said.

With the idea of quickly getting the Lear name to the public, Lear asked Lacy to help him.

"He called me one day from the Beverly Hilton," said Lacy. "I went over and he asked me what I thought the direct operating cost was to fly the Lear Jet per hour. Jet fuel was about 14 or 15 cents a gallon. Engine overhauls were supposed to only be like \$25 an hour. I figured around \$150. Then, he told me to go through the phonebook and call anyone who he thought would talk up the Lear Jet, and give him or her a demo ride. He said, 'Send me a bill every month for how many hours you flew,' He also gave me a lot of names, like Art Linkletter and his friends."

Of course, one of California Airmotive's biggest advantages was their proximity to Hollywood.



Clay with Jimmy Doolittle

To be continued...in next "Flight Line"

## Clay Lacy: The Planes I've Flown and The People I've Known – Part I, cont'd.

from "Airport Journals" by Di Freeze

### "Come Fly With Me"

Frank Sinatra had been crooning about the romance of flight even back in 1957, when he recorded "Come Fly With Me." He would be one of the first celebrities to fall in love with the Lear Jet

"We flew Frank about 20 times or more," Lacy said. "We sold him a Lear and he featured it on a special. We used to trade him time."

Danny Kaye would do more than buy a Lear Jet.

"Danny had a Queen Air," Lacy said. "I had barely met him, but I knew he flew, so I got a hold of his file and invited him out for a demo. He came out and I was flying with United. There happened to be a guy here from Lear Jet. He took Danny up and scared the hell out of him. Danny wasn't going to fly in it anymore."

Lacy called Kaye's pilot and asked him where he might want to go. The pilot told him that Kaye and partner Lester Smith had a radio station in Portland.

"I called Danny and he told me he didn't like the plane," Lacy said. "He said that it was hard to fly. I said, 'Do me a favor? Fly in it again. We'll fly to Portland.' He said okay, so we flew up there. He loved how fast we got there."

The following day, Lacy took Kaye up to shoot landings.

"We shot landings for maybe an hour and a half," Lacy said. "I knew how to not make a guy feel stupid, and to not let him get too far into trouble. I made him feel like he could fly it. I knew how to demonstrate it and make it a crapshoot. Danny became absolutely hooked on the airplane that weekend."

Early the next week, when they flew back to Van Nuys, Bill Lear had just landed. "They met, and they got along great," Lacy said. "Danny told me a few days later, 'I just don't want to fly an airplane. I want to get involved.' That's why, with a little pressure from Bill, Danny bought into the distributorship."

At that point, California Airmotive became Pacific Lear Jet, whose principals were Paulson, Kaye and Bill Murphy, in the car business, who had also been a silent partner in California Airmotive. Lacy had a small ownership as well.

"I think it was five percent," he said.

Lacy and Kaye spent quite a lot of time together in the cockpit. They flew about 200 hours together, including three UNICEF flights.

During the first year in operation as a Lear distributorship, California Airmotive/Pacific Lear Jet sold 14 jets. They demonstrated to a variety of people, including many business owners. Lacy says it surprised him to see how many heads of companies, such as Barron Hilton, of Hilton Hotels Corporation, and C.N. Ray, founder of Sea Ray Boats, were pilots.



**Jack Conroy and Clay Lacy review the route they will fly the next day, May 21, 1965, in Lear Jet N1965L, to set five world records (which still stand) and be the first civilian aircraft to fly coast to coast between sunrise and sunset.**

"We'd sit them in the left seat, and let them do the flying," he said. "It seemed like over half of the CEOs that flew had been pilots in the service and had their own airplanes. A lot of these guys had been fighter pilots. They were people that weren't afraid to take a risk. So, after the war was over, a lot of them took risks, got into business, and did well."

California Airmotive found several ways to promote the Lear name, including giving away flights in their demo for winners of the "Dating Game"

"In the program, the guy had a model of the Lear Jet on his desk," Lacy said. "Every week we gave a trip to the winners, from San Francisco or Las Vegas."

In 1955, Conroy had set a coast-to-coast roundtrip speed record as the pilot of an F-86. Ten years later, on May 21, 1965, Lacy and Conroy, with five passengers on board, retraced Conroy's earlier dawn-to-dusk transcontinental flight. The Lear 23's 5,005-mile roundtrip from Los Angeles to New York and back of 10 hours, 21 minutes (elapsed time of 11 hours, 36 minutes) set several world records

"We were the first to fly a civilian aircraft coast to coast between sunrise and sunset," Lacy said.

Reprinted from "Flight Line" – Jan., Feb., Apr., May, 2014

## Planes Clay Lacy Has Flown at CMA



Clay with his beautifully restored Douglas DC-3, in United Airlines colors, with the name Mary O'Connor on the nose. She clocked over 7 million miles as a stewardess for United.



Clay flew this Douglas DC-2 to CMA to show it off. What a gorgeous renovation of an old-timer! He flew it up to Seattle – where it is now in the Boeing Museum.



Clay flew this Pilatus PC-6 STOL aircraft in several of Wings Over Camarillo air shows.



Appearing at a number of our airshows – Clay flew this great Grumman F7F "Tiger" – owned by Joe Clark. What a crowd-pleaser!



Clay set a transcontinental record in a Learjet 23 (N1965L) in 1965 – much like this one he flew at CMA.



In 1970, Clay placed first in the Unlimited Class Competition at the Reno Air Races in his P-51D.



## Friendship One Flight

From "HistoryLink.org Essay 10491" by Margaret Riddle,  
September 6, 2013

### The Plan

Following the 1987 Paris Air Show, Joe Clark, Horizon Airlines co-founder, and Clay Lacy, United Airlines pilot and aviation executive, visited Bruce McCaw, pilot, philanthropist and aviation historian, at his Bellevue home, and over a bottle of Scotch the three began plans to break the around-the-world flight speed record of 45 hours, 32 minutes, and 53 seconds that had just been set by aviator Brooke Knappe in a Gulfstream III. They mapped out a possible route, using a small globe and a length of string. The decision was made that day to approach United Air-lines' president and C.E.O. Eddie Carlson for support. Aviation publicist and charity-auction fundraiser Dick Friel got involved in the project, and the group decided to make the flight a fund-raiser for childrens' charities.

Clay Lacy, who was at the time a commercial pilot for United Airlines, put together a formal presentation that persuaded Carlson, who particularly liked the charity connection. Carlson agreed to lend the group a United 747-SP, a plane used for commercial flights, for a weekend.



Bruce McCaw, Joe Clark and Clay Lacy with  
"Friendship One" 747-SP

Lacy, Clark and McCaw formed the Friendship Foundation and named the plane "Friendship One." They offered seats aboard the historic flight to the first 100 passengers who donated \$5,000 each, with the money raised to be given to childrens' charitable organizations around the world. Donors also became automatic members of the Friendship Foundation.

The 100 donors were easily found, with a waiting list of at least 35 more.

A crew was chosen: Clay Lacy as captain; with Verne Jobst as co-captain; Gary Meermans as pilot; and Bob Jones as relief pilot. Many of the paying passengers were connected with aviation and had flying experience – so it was joked that Lacy had the largest backup crew in the history of flight.

Four companies sponsored the trip: the Boeing Company Pratt and Whitney, United Airlines, and Volkswagen.

### The Take-Off

Friendship One left Boeing Field at 7:14 p.m. on January 28, 1988, carrying the philanthropists, several celebrities, a crew of 18 volunteers, half a dozen journalists, a two-day supply of food and beverages, two exercise bicycles, 37 foam mattresses, and a replica of the airplane. Celebrities aboard included former astronaut Neil Armstrong; Aerospace Medical Association member Dr. Alan Rapp; Lt. General Laurence "Bill" Craigie, pilot of America's first jet, the Bell XP-59; Moya Lear, widow of aviation pioneer Bill Lear; stunt flyer Bob Hoover; and Eddie Carlson.



747-SP "Friendship One" ready for take-off.

Friendship One headed east, with plans to refuel first in Athens, Greece, and then in Taipei, Taiwan, before starting the home stretch. The expected arrival time in Seattle was Saturday morning, January 30<sup>th</sup>.

### One Long Party

Making passengers comfortable and happy on what would be a very long flight was the job of Cabin Service Coordinator Lois Lacy and flight attendants

Kay Crab, Kathy Flanagan, Fran McNally, Roy Rabanal, Ingrid Vincent and May Weiss. The mood was festive and the trip became an extended party, with movies, board games, exercise bikes, cocktails – which ran out very soon – and a continuous feast. Those who wished to sleep were offered a foam mattress, but few slept the first night.

For most of the trip, passengers saw only clouds and darkness below them – but approaching the first refueling stop the Greek islands came into view. On schedule, Friendship One landed in Athens at 7:55 a.m. Seattle time on January 29, but lost precious minutes during refueling. For security reasons, passengers were told to remain on board. The plane's second stop, in Taipei, went more smoothly, but runway changes caused a slight delay.

### The Landing

As Friendship One approached Boeing Field, passengers were told they had broken the speed record. They erupted in cheers and began toasting the event as the plane circled the field in a "victory lap." Friendship One landed at 8:45 a.m. on January 30, 1988 – after circling the world in 36 hours, 54 minutes, and 15 seconds – a new record. They had flown 22,997 miles at an average speed of 623.59 miles per hour. After landing, passengers and crew assembled for photos in front of the plane.



The record was officially sanctioned by the National Aeronautics Association the following month. Not only did Friendship One break the around-the-world

average speed record by more than 100 m.p.h., it also set 11 records for the fastest flights between various cities. But the victory was short-lived – less than a month later, it was bested by Al Paulson, flying a Gulfstream IV, and then again in 1992 – a new record was set by an Air France Concorde SST.



### All For A Good Cause

The one record that remained unbroken for Friendship One was the raising of \$500,000 for children's charities. The foundation chose half of the recipients, and the other half were chosen by the passengers. Among the beneficiaries were:

UNICEF, Seattle Children's Hospital and Medical Center, Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children, education programs at the Boeing Museum of Flight, Children's Hospital in Los Angeles, and The City of Hope, a cancer-treatment center in Duarte, California. The original \$500,000 was invested and soon grew to \$700,000. After distributions, a small remaining amount was used to create an ongoing Friendship Foundation fund within the Seattle Foundation. As of 2013, it still existed, dedicated to benefitting children.

At the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event in 2013, Clay Lacy gave a fitting tribute to the plane that made the flight: "Interestingly, the 747-SP was probably the best plane to do this. No newer airplanes go any faster. The 747 was, in my opinion, the best, most outstanding airplane ever built...I loved to fly it. It was like the Rock of Gibraltar, and I loved to ride in it better than any airplane flying."

## Letter To Clay Lacy

*Editor's Note: This letter to Clay Lacy was written by Pat Brown, a long-time member of CAF, and currently Co-Public Information Officer of our Wing. She and her husband Cliff (now deceased) were among the early founders of our Wing. Clay was already a member of CAF when our Wing was started in 1981, and the early membership meetings were held at his hangar at Van Nuys Airport. Clay was involved in our Wing procuring its first plane, the C-46 (then named "Humpty Dumpty").*

December, 2019

Dear Clay,

The memories of many years with the CAF keep coming back to me. Since I am now at the Wing facilities three days a week, I find I am currently one of the few beginners left. I often think of my departed husband Cliff and how we were involved with our Wing from the beginning. We were married for fifty-one years, and had so much fun attending air shows – all the way back to the 1960s.

I remember us using your hangar on Roscoe Blvd. at Van Nuys Airport for the really successful formation meeting of our Wing. That was in 1981, and you were so busy that you had to leave the meeting early to fly somewhere. Back then, we had no idea our Wing would become so big, and that we would have so many aircraft! Nor did we have much of a plan, other than getting an airplane that we could fly to air shows and make some money to cover our costs. And now...wow! We owe you so much!

When we got the SoCal Wing going, we found that a lot of us were going to the Mojave Air Races and to many of the same air shows. We loved the air races better than the air shows sometimes.

I will never forget your first check ride in the C-46 down in Harlingen, Texas. That was in the fall of 1981. Cliff and I were hanging around the airplane, since we were seeing it for the first time. We were looking it all over, and you walked up with Vern Thorpe and said you were going to take it for a spin, and would we like to ride with him. Of course, we said "Yes!" and got aboard. We were thrilled.

It was like flying in a box car with no windows. You got in and started the engines and taxied down to the runway. We thought you were

having a long run-up of the engines – but then you came out of the cockpit, opened the door, and put down the metal ladder and went out. We had no idea we were even back on the ground! We had not felt any take-off or landing. I got up and looked out the open door and saw that we were not still in Harlingen. We looked out the cockpit window and saw you in a phone booth on a little airport, with cattle all around us. We had no idea where we were. Vern told us that you had needed to make a quick phone call – and would be right back.

You did come back and got us ready to go again. What smooth take-offs and landings! We were very impressed! Much better than any of our airline flights before and since! Wow! That was so wonderful – we were grinning from ear to ear. And we knew that we were going to remember that ride forever!

I figure that I have been to about 100 air shows over a twenty-year period – mostly in the C-46 "China Doll." I flew on her so much since I was always selling our PX merchandise at air shows – under her wings. With all the other pilots, we could always feel the take-offs and landings. After all – it was a big old plane with lots of creaking sounds. But nobody could fly that old plane like you could – and make the take-offs and landings so smooth!

You are the best!

Best Regards,

Pat Brown





## Group – D-Day Invasion

Courtesy: Col. Avery Willis

Around nearly every English port, large or small, could be seen the build-up for the D-Day invasion. In the woods and along the roads, tent cities sprang into existence, occupied by thousands of soldiers. New roads were laid, complete with checkpoints to bar civilians. Miles of trucks loaded with equipment lined these roads, their front ends pointed toward the ports.



**American troops marching through Weymouth, on their way to Warmwell, a point of debarkation for the D-Day Invasion.**

The men of the 474<sup>th</sup> could sense the imminence of the operation. In early June, all personnel received orders to bear their arms constantly – pilots, their pistols; ground officers and crew chiefs, their carbines. Foxholes were to be dug near each P-38's parking place. As of June 3, all personnel were restricted to base; those who had been away were recalled. The booms and wings of the groups planes received the distinctive black-and-white striping that would identify Allied planes during the invasion. The 474<sup>th</sup> adjusted the boom striping. Instead of the white-black-white-black-white paint scheme, the pilots created a black-white-black-white-black pattern that gave the bold markings on each boom a white background.

The movement of tens of thousands of soldiers and their equipment had begun on June 3. The men flooded the embarkation ports in a highly orchestrated ballet that matched each unit to the ship that would deliver it across the channel. The invasion of France, originally planned for June 5, had been aborted because of bad weather in the English Channel. Many ships had set out on the evening of June 4, expecting to land on the following day; but

when the weather deteriorated, they were recalled. The invasion was rescheduled for June 6, for which a narrow window of good weather was forecast.

Group and squadron commanders and intelligence officers were called to preliminary meetings on June 4. There they learned of the invasion plans.

Before dawn on the morning of June 5 the 474<sup>th</sup> placed pilots in warmed up P-38's for two hour shifts on a constant scramble alert, ready to take off at a moment's notice. Early in the afternoon Major Hedlund and Captain Nuckols, the commanding and operations officers, were ordered to Group Headquarters for a special briefing with the other squadron leaders to hear of a special mission. Each of them was instructed to select the pilots they wanted on the mission and to report back to Group at 4:00 p.m. for further orders.

Arriving at the briefing room the selected pilots of the 428<sup>th</sup>, 429<sup>th</sup>, and 430<sup>th</sup> squadrons stared at a large map on the wall. The map revealed invasion-fleet assembly areas from the Isle of Wight to the landing beaches south and east of the Cherbourg peninsula. The pilots realized that since they were so close to the English Channel, they had front row seats for the invasion.

The briefing ended in less than an hour. The 474<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group was to fly cover over the invasion fleet and to engage any German aircraft that might try to interfere. The 474<sup>th</sup> would be broken up, augmenting six other P-38 squadrons; the 428<sup>th</sup> would join three of these other squadrons in providing coverage.



**Maj. Leon Temple, CO 430<sup>th</sup> F.S., 474<sup>th</sup> F.G.**

The commanding officers and selected pilots of the 428<sup>th</sup> were sequestered. They ate alone and then waited in the alert room for the mission to begin.

Slipping their lines or weighing anchor in the early evening hours, four thousand ships left England's ports, harbors, quays, bays, and estuaries for a rendezvous off the Isle of Wight. Tugs, salvage vessels, troop transports, hospital ships, smokers, barges, causeways, a monitor, colliers, oilers, fire boats, frigates, minesweepers, bombardment ships, LCIs, LCTs, LSTs, trawlers, Mulberries, destroyers, cruisers, battleships, corvettes, and a multitude of miscellaneous craft were organized into sixty distinct convoys that had converged at a point just south of the Isle of Wight called "Piccadilly Circus".

Tension mounted as the mission time approached. The usual pre-mission banter was absent as the men wondered how the Germans would respond to the invasion. Finally it was time for each man to strap on his flight gear, parachute, and dinghy. The mission started taking at 9:37 pm. Plane after plane of the 474<sup>th</sup> roared down the grass runways of Warmwell into an angry-looking evening sky.

Once into formation, the three squadrons went their separate ways climbing quickly into heavy clouds at 4,000 feet. Once through they headed southeast to their rendezvous points with the other assigned squadrons. Once they met up, they dropped back through the clouds to begin their patrol.

For several thousand feet all that was seen was a gray, gauzy, undulating mass of clouds whipping past the pilots' windshields until they suddenly broke through the clouds. Although the sun had set at 9:17pm, there was still enough light to see the panorama unfolding before them. From horizon to horizon the English Channel was filled with ships of every size and shape.

Below the cloud cover at 4,000 feet, the pilots crossed the channel toward the Cherbourg peninsula. The men tried to be on the look-out for enemy planes, but their eyes were constantly dragged back to the scene below them.

Twilight came at 10:00pm. The sea darkened.



**Part of the vast armada that stretched across the English Channel on D-Day**

Little by little, night hid the might of the Allied forces on the water below. Now it was a flotilla in the air that mesmerized the pilots.

The transports that carried the American 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions and the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division had lifted off from dozens of inland airfields. Their goal was to seize key objectives ahead of the Normandy invasion, and they began passing over Warmwell not long after the 428<sup>th</sup> had begun its protective mission. Hundreds of C-47s passed over toward the French coast. As darkness fell, they turned on their blinking green and amber navigation lights.



**C-47 Dakotas dropping their paratroopers behind enemy lines in France on D-Day**

It looked like a massive Christmas display, constantly changing as the planes crossed the channel at various altitudes. Time crept by and still the airborne armada came on, a seemingly endless display of military might.



Over the darkened landmass of France, other lights began to join the constantly shifting light configurations of the airborne invasion force. Tracer shells of white, red, and orange soared lazily upward toward the masses of planes. Red and white blossoms of flak, like briefly glimpsed ornaments on a Christmas tree, appeared among the green and amber lights.

Just before midnight, the 428<sup>th</sup> headed back toward Warmwell, flying above the southbound transports. When the pilots arrived, they found that in order to land, they were forced to circle down through the endless stream of transports and bombers, now towing gliders. Cautioned again to remain silent about what they had seen, the pilots headed for the Bachelor Officers' Quarters for some needed sleep.

Early in the morning of June 6, the bombers and C-47's that had flown south began to return. Many returned to their home bases, but those that were damaged made for the nearest fields. Warmwell was soon crowded with planes that had been riddled with small arms-fire, or pierced or scorched by flak. In order to maintain the combat readiness of the 474<sup>th</sup>, ground crews cleared each arriving aircraft from the runway as quickly as possible. The runway was soon lined with torn and battered planes.

The 428<sup>th</sup> was involved in only one combat mission during the daylight hours of June 6. The squadron successfully dive-bombed a railway bridge over the River Seine at Oisel. For the 430<sup>th</sup> it was a painful day. A dive-bombing attack of a road on Cherbourg Peninsula was followed by low level strafing runs in support of the invasion. Just southwest of Carentan Major Leon Temple was hit by flak and dove into the ground exploding. This was followed by "Joe" Belford going down at Periers. He was also hit by flak. The 430<sup>th</sup> flew one more bombing mission that afternoon.

**Lest We Forget**

**We Will Always Remember Them**

**June 6, 1944**



**P-38s strafing and bombing Nazi trains on D-Day**



**Aviation Art by Nicolas Trudgian  
P-38s wiping out Nazi supply trains prior to D-Day**



**Lockheed P-38 Lightning with D-Day stripes.**



**© Photo by Charles Turner  
View of the Normandy invasion on D-Day**



## Wing Photo Page I



© Photo by |Dave Flood

Col. Ceci Stratford tightening the last bolt on the PBJ's left wing on March 8. Dick Russell had remembered that Ceci was the one to take the last bolt off the wing when it was removed many years ago.



© U.S. Marine Corps Photo

Chris Birdt, Jeff's son (left), standing guard over his fellow Marine who is scanning for I.E.D.s in Afghanistan. Keep Chris in your prayers.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Aviation Museum's new Tuskegee Airmen Exhibit. This material was in a display in the theater lobby when the movie "Red Tails" was playing.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Col. Thomas Van Stein creating a painting of the PBJ's left wing "hanging". Thomas is a very accomplished painter, and is also a member of our PBJ Restoration Team.



Thomas's painting of AVG pilots shooting down a Zero over Kweilin, China in WWII. This painting hangs in our Aviation Museum.



Thomas's "fantasy" painting of our C-46 Commando "China Doll" flying "Over The Hump" (Himalayas) carrying needed war materials to Chinese troops in Kunming, China from a base in India. You can also find this painting in our Aviation Museum.

Reprinted from "Flight Line" of April, 2012

## One Killed, Simi Pilot Hurt In Air Race

By Scott Sonner, *The Associated Press*, Reno, Nevada

*Two airplanes, in the Formula One Class, collided in the air Friday at the Reno National Championship Air Races, killing one pilot and injuring a Simi Valley pilot in the third fatal crash there in four days.*

Five-time defending champion Gary Hubler, 51, of Caldwell, Idaho, was killed in the crash shortly after 9:30 a.m. on September 14, 2007 at Stead Airport just north of Reno, race officials said.

It marked the 18th fatality in the 44-year history of the air races. It also prompted the suspension of the competition the rest of Friday, but race officials said it would resume today as scheduled.

The pilot of the other plane involved in the accident, Jason Somes, of Simi Valley, a member of our Wing and one of our fighter pilots, was taken to Renown Regional Medical Center with non-life-threatening injuries.

Hubler's plane apparently clipped the back of Somes's plane before crashing. Somes was able to land his damaged aircraft, race officials said.

"Jason's incredible pilot skills saved his life," said Ken Gottschall of Oxnard, a pilot and longtime friend. In the collision, the canopy of Somes' plane came off and hit him in the face, his friends said. "There were huge pieces of his aircraft missing," Gottschall said. Somes had "some pretty deep cuts" to his face but is fine, Gottschall said in a phone interview from Reno.

Steve Barber, Wing Leader and a friend who has flown and helped train Somes as a pilot, flew to Reno in his Beech Baron, and brought Somes home on Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>.

Somes, in addition to his facial injuries, also had scrapes, cuts and was sore, Barber said. "I just thank God he's alive," he said.

*-Star staff writer Sam Richard contributed to this report.*



©Photo by Dave Flood

**A Formula One racer much like Jason Somes's**  
Reprinted from "Flight Line," October, 2007

## "Blue Thunder" Fly-Over

Beginning on April 28, 2020, the U.S. Navy's and U.S. Air Force's demonstration aerobatic teams, the Blue Angels and Thunderbirds, conducted joint fly-overs of New York City and Newark; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; and Atlanta. The fly-overs were a tribute from our military and our government to the dedicated men and women on the front lines of this Covid-19 virus that has affected so much of our way of life – the doctors, nurses, EMTs, hospital workers, grocery store workers and drivers, deliverers, firemen and women, and police officers.

AMERICA STRONG ! WE SHALL OVERCOME !



**USAF Thunderbird F-16 Fighting Falcon in joint formation with US Navy Blue Angel F/A-18 Super Hornet**



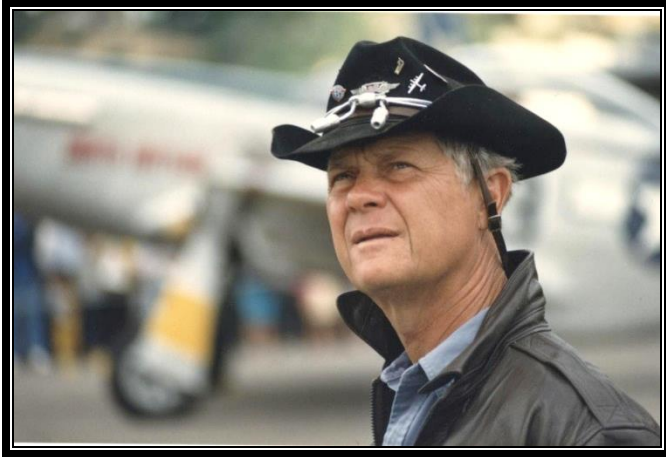
**"Blue Thunder" formation over New York City**



**In tight formation over Washington, D.C.**



## Randy Sohn has Gone West



Sohn, Randall Lee of Savage Minnesota.

Born - Feb 1934 in Lake Park Iowa

Died - April 1 2020

Randy is survived by his wife Judith Joy Sohn, daughter Sari (Jim) Hughes, son Mike (Luwela) Sohn and grandson Dayne Sohn; he was preceded in death by his parents Casey and Molly Sohn and sister Patty.

Randy was born to be a pilot, although he began life in the cornfields of Minnesota. He was a complex man who rose above a fairly pedestrian background, exercising his creativity, determination and ingenuity to achieve extraordinary things. Randy went from his first flying lesson in January '53, to the Air Force in August '53, to graduating in the Reese AFB '55 class of aviation cadets. He and his first wife JoAnn married in '56, had Sari at Reese AFB in Lubbock TX, and Mike at Offutt AFB in Omaha NE.

The family settled in Minneapolis where Randy became a pilot for North Central/ Republic/ Northwest Airlines in May 1960 and retired flying DC10's and 747's in 1994. Randy became a Flight Instructor rated for multi-engine aircraft in 1958, and added most WWII aircraft over the following years as an actively involved member of the Commemorative Air Force.

Randy married Judy in August '91, moving to a quiet lake house with a multitude of storage buildings for all his cars, magazines, and books. He was inducted into the EAA Warbirds Hall of Fame in 1998. He was an

enthusiastic participant in multiple aviation foundations, interest groups, and forums, as pilot/ instructor/ check pilot/ tractor aficionado/ mentor/ raconteur/ writer.

His family finds his astonishing Google presence to be as baffling as it is heartwarming. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has placed his computer in remote quarantine, so the multitude of his memberships and accomplishments known only to his iMac will have to be shared by his friends on the many global forums and websites in which he so delighted.



Photo by Scott Slocum

Randy helped fly our CAF B-29 Superfortress "FIFI" out of China Lake, CA after a crew of CAF mechanics put her together from several derelict B-29s that had languished at the Naval Base for many years. The flight crew had planned to make a trial flight to check things out, but as they ran up the engines prior to takeoff, the Navy told the B-29 crew that once they took off they were on their way to Harlingen, Texas – there would be no returning to China Lake.



Our Wing sends condolences to the family of Randy.  
May he forever rest in peace





## Commemorative Air Force

**455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010**

**(805) 482-0064**

Volume 14, Number 2

[www.cafsocal.com](http://www.cafsocal.com)

May, 2020



© Photo by John Cutright

**A big smile by Col. Randy Sherman after successfully soloing in our F6F Hellcat fighter.**

Dear Friends of the Museum,

First and foremost, we hope that this email finds you and your families healthy and well during these trying times. As always, we at the Wing appreciate your support and donations to help us meet our mission.

This quarter's article features our own Dr. Randy Sherman. We're so fortunate to have him in our wing and are proud of ALL that he does at Cedars Sinai Hospital.

**MUSEUM CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE:** Our museum is continuing to be temporarily closed to the Public due to COVID-19.

**All aircraft have been grounded temporarily, so no flights or rides, also due to COVID-19.**

**Gift Shop:** Members & Friends of the Museum receive 10% off and now free shipping until June 30th. Share with your friends/family that we've announced for the Public a Mother's Day & Father's Day Sale!! Get last minute gifts at our online gift shop. USE code **2020** to get 10% off & free shipping! Here's the link: <https://www.cafsocal.com/museum/gift-shop/>

**Virtual Museum Tours:** Check out our website and Facebook accounts. We have our wonderful Docents providing virtual tours! Website: <https://www.cafsocal.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/officialcafsocal>

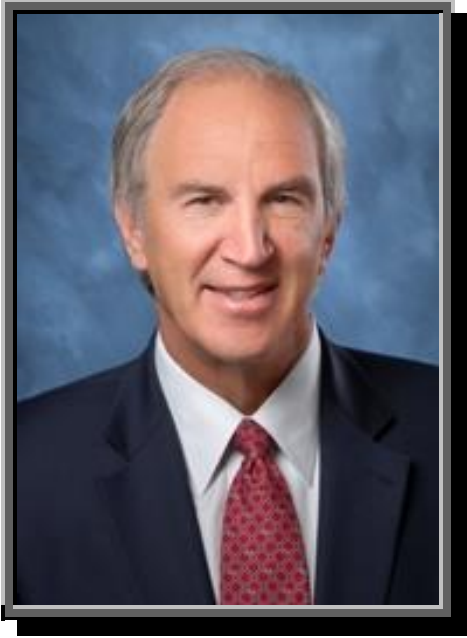
**Air Shows:** Our participation at the following airshows has been confirmed, and as of this date we're planning to participate. However, due to the uncertainty of the "stay at home" rule, there may be changes. We'll keep you posted.

- Oct 2-3 Prescott, AZ
- Oct 3-4 CCA Sacramento
- Oct 3-4 PT Mugu Airshow

**CAF SoCal Annual Holiday Party:** Saturday, December 5, 2020. More information to follow in the coming months.

Ceci Stratford, CAF SoCalWing Friends Coordinator

## Randy Sherman, MD, FACS



In the Best of Hands : Here and around the world, Dr. Randy Sherman repairs devastating wounds inflicted by nature and accidents. Only family and flying, perhaps, bring him more happiness.

Dr. Randy Sherman serves as the vice chairman of the Dept. of Surgery at the Cedars Sinai Medical Center.

Dr. Sherman is a diplomate of the American Board of Plastic Surgery as well as the American Board of Surgery and holds the Certificate of Added Qualification in Surgery of the Hand specializing in reconstructive microvascular surgery, aesthetic and reconstructive breast surgery, hand surgery, cosmetic surgery, and the care of difficult wound problems. He has served as a director of the American Board of Plastic Surgery as well as the American Board of Surgery.

Dr. Sherman earned his medical degree from the University of Missouri - Columbia in 1977. He completed general surgical training at the University of California, San Francisco and the State University of New York at Syracuse. His plastic surgery training took place at the University of Southern California in 1985 after which he joined the faculty in the Departments of Surgery, Orthopedics, and Neurosurgery.

Dr. Sherman serves as the Chief Medical Officer of **Operation Smile**, a global medical charity concerned with the reconstructive surgery of children with congenital and acquired deformities.

As founder of the Southern California Chapter of **Operation Smile**, he has participated in and led *Operation Smile* medical missions to most of the organization's partner countries. In 1999, he participated in **Operation Smile's** World Journey of Hope, which circled the globe in a flying hospital bringing reconstructive surgical services to

more than 5,000 children. He has served on the **Operation Smile's** Board of Governors, more recently the Board of Directors, and has most recently been appointed as the chief medical officer. In this capacity, he has been a consultant with the United States Navy in the planning and deployment of several humanitarian missions involving the USNS Mercy and Comfort hospital ships, including the most recent medical mission to provide relief for earthquake victims in Haiti.

Dr. Sherman has authored numerous articles, chapters, and books in his specialty and has lectured national and abroad. He served as the reconstructive surgery section editor for the Journal of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, as well as on the editorial boards of the Journal of Reconstructive Microsurgery, the Journal of Hand Surgery, the Annals of Plastic Surgery and Surgical Rounds.

When not in the operating room, Dr. Sherman is a commercial pilot and flight instructor rated in single and multi-engine aircraft, floatplanes, helicopters, sailplanes, jets and WWII warbirds. He serves as an FAA designated Senior Aviation Medical Examiner and is a volunteer pilot for the Santa Monica Museum of Flying and the Lyon Air Museum. He also serves as a trustee for the American Air Museum in Duxford, England. He writes for both *Plane & Pilot*, and *The Pilot Journal*.

Randy pilots underprivileged children on flights in his plane when he isn't playing jazz piano with his band, *Surgeons of Note*, at meetings of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons.

He is the proud father of Max Lassen Sherman.

Randy has just recently soloed in our F6F-5 Hellcat.



**Randy (L.) with Bob Goff and his DeHavilland "Beaver" seaplane. Bob introduced Randy to a young Ugandan child who had been abducted and mutilated by witch doctors. Randy helped to bring the child from tragedy to hope within a few months.**

Randy – we are so proud to have you as a member of our CAF-So Cal Wing. Thank you for all you are doing for our Wing!



## Col. Randy Sherman Solos in the F6F

© All photos by John  
Cutright



Col. Randy Sherman taxiing out to the run-up spot at Camarillo Airport on his first solo flight in our Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat "Minsi III" fighter.



He's off! Randy's takeoff looks good – and he is now into his solo flight in the type fighter that helped the U.S. win the war in the Pacific.



Here's Randy after having "slipped the surly bonds of earth, and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings" \*– doing his required solo fly-by over CMA.

*\* High Flight, John G. McGee, Jr.*



A picture-perfect landing after a memorable solo flight – all systems AOK!



Randy back on "terra firma" after his successful flight – pulling in to our ramp.



Some friendly pilot de-briefing from his good friend and check-pilot Steve Barber.



Like everything else he does, Randy dives headlong into whatever it is that needs doing! Congrats, Randy on your successful solo!



## So Cal Wing's F6F-5 Hellcat: History©

By Bill Coombes, *The Dispatch*, Fall, 1998.

"All of the airplanes in the CAF fleet have checkered pasts: after all, most things fifty years old or more are bound to have interesting tales to tell. The CAF's Hellcat, N1078Z, is certainly no exception, and one could even say its past is more unusual than most. The tale of this 'Cat begins with a bit of an identity crisis. It seems that our Hellcat should more accurately be termed an Alley Cat, as its official designation, according to the FAA, is "S & S Special Grumman F6F." It is a parts airplane, consisting mainly of an F6F-3 fuselage mixed with a considerable number of F6F-5 parts and modifications. It even has the brakes off its arch rival the F4U Corsair. Its lineage, then, is rather difficult to assess, and our 'Cat's story all starts with the first owner, Col John Sandberg of Minneapolis, Minn .

It was Col Sandberg who discovered this particular airframe or at least the majority of it, derelict on the airport at Fergus Falls, Minnesota in 1961. As Sandberg said, it was "a real bad airplane," having been stripped of everything removeable and then used for target practice by the locals. Several important things were missing, big pieces as well as little. In the later category were the Grumman data plate and any Navy serial number, making the identification and establishment of ownership "interesting." The airport manager accepted the responsibility of selling the hulk and soon Sandberg found himself the owner of most of the pieces of an F6F. After temporary yet time-consuming repairs, the Hellcat was ferried back to Minneapolis, and the next two years were spent restoring the big Grumman and registering it with the proper authorities.

There was some initial thought given to using the Hellcat for aerial photography, and then there was a plan to race the rather chunky fighter. Toward this outcome the wings were clipped seven inches on each panel, the intercooler openings in the cowlings were filled in, and a general lightening of the airframe was done. Several years later, Sandberg decided to part company with the Hellcat after an engine failure and subsequent forced landing. After repairing the airplane it was flown to Harlingen for an airshow and left there. Sandberg said he would be willing to sell it to the CAF if a sponsor could be found for it. Col Lloyd Nolan, sensing an opportunity not to be passed by, bought the airplane for \$20,000. Several months later, in the fall of 1970, Col Ed Messick bought the airplane from Nolan with the assurance that it would continue to fly with the CAF. Messick later donated the Hellcat to the CAF.

Some restoration of the airplane was done, and it flew with the CAF fleet regularly until a variety of problems kept the F6 grounded. First was a problem with the fuel tanks delaminating, which led to the need for a new engine, one of three it has had, which was followed by some hydraulic problems. While these problems were

being attended to, the airplane acquired a new paint scheme, its former VF-12 USS Randolph giving way to a tri-color blue over blue over white Navy scheme, with markings as used on Lt. Francis Fleming's VF-16 Hellcat, circa 1943. However, a series of nagging mechanical gremlins kept appearing.

By 1986, the Hellcat was one very tired airplane, badly in need of a major restoration. Col Joe Mabree stepped forward to accept responsibility for 1078Z and in July of that year it arrived at Classic Aero, Inc., at Mabree Ranch to begin what would become a 12 year project. Initial examination of the airplane revealed some interesting items. For starters, the wings were still clipped, although they had the correct tips on them, fitted with liberal amounts of Bondo; the flaps worked, asymmetrically on occasion; two of the four upper cowl flaps were bolted shut; the oil cooler shutter was bolted open; the hydraulic system needed a complete rebuild from the sump out to each individual system; almost all the tubing in the entire airplane leaked and needed to be replaced; and the induction system, cobbled together out of aluminum and galvanized flex tubing was "quite a mess," in the words of Classic Aero's Ken Shugart.

Additionally, the main and tailwheel tires were deeply gouged; the hinge mechanism for folding the wings was seriously corroded; the wiring was "heat treated," being generally old, cracked and worn; more Bondo had been used all over the airplane to disguise forty years worth of dents and dings; and the entire horizontal stabilizer was loose, moving about 1/2 inch in all directions. On the plus side, the engine checked out perfectly! With a determination to see the F6F back in the skies, Col Mabree gave Shugart the go-ahead and work commenced/

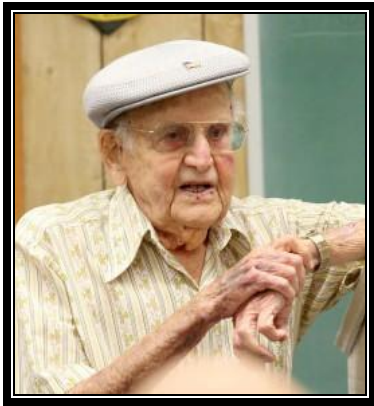
When one sees the big 'Cat today, with fully 50 percent of the skin on the entire airplane being new, with an entirely hand-built induction system, all new tubing throughout the airframe, etc., one realizes that this is essentially a factory-fresh Hellcat, rebuilt by essentially a two-man crew. A few new sponsors came forward, but the primary financial responsibility, which was significant, was borne by Col Mabree until Col David Price stepped into the picture in October of 1995 to provide funding to finish the Grumman.

Today, 1078Z has completed its test flights and has performed flawlessly. Painted in the 1944 Navy scheme of all-over dark blue with white markings, the big fighter makes a beautiful sight against the white clouds and clear skies over CAF Headquarters. Such sights, common fifty years ago, serve to remind us of the need to keep these magnificent aircraft in the air, as a reminder to all Americans of the accomplishments and sacrifices, for us today, of yesterday's generation."

Reprinted from "The Friends Newsletter," February, 2016

# 105-Year-Old Veteran of D-Day

By Anne Constantin Birge and Ron Birge



Lt. Col. Sam Sachs, US Army Reserve (Ret)

On 26 March 1915, Sam A. Sachs, the oldest of three children, was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He's had quite a storied life and now lives in Lakewood, CA. His plans for his 105th birthday party were shattered with the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. So, instead of birthday bash, Sam is asking for birthday cards! He especially was delighted and surprised recently when the Sultans' Car Club, Long Beach, CA, had a parade of their vintage vehicles to honor him and his birthday.

So you know a bit about WWII Lt. Col. (US Army Reserve, Retired) Sam A. Sachs. The following information about him is from various Internet articles:

In 1931, and while still in high school, Sam joined ROTC. In Oct 1940, at age 25, he registered for the Draft. Later, he was called to fight in WWII. As a 1st Lt., Sam first went to Fort Benning, Georgia. Later, he was assigned to the 82nd Airborne, 325th Glider Infantry to pilot gliders, affectionately known as *Flying Coffins*. On 6 June 1944, the 30-year old officer flew an unarmed glider carrying eight troops, machine guns and ammo, through anti-aircraft artillery fire, for their D-Day landing at Normandy, France. Upon landing the glider on a farm about two to three miles from Utah Beach (the farthest west of the five landings), Sam found only one bullet hole in the glider's fuselage. Until the war's end in 1945, Sam served as Company Commander in Casablanca, Morocco, Africa; Naples, Italy (see 1943 Naples picture) and other locations. He was also part of a group which helped liberate prisoners from a German concentration camp.

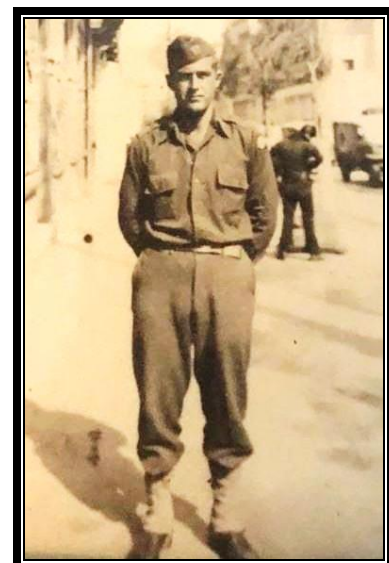
In 1946, Sam met Ida, bride of 58-years (she passed in 2005). Then, Sam attended the University of Southern California, where he obtained his teaching credential. He taught in several southern California schools, with his first teaching assignment at Wilmington High School. He then taught at Compton Junior High School, Roosevelt Adult School (east LA) and from 1955 to 1982, he taught at Huntington Park High School.

After Sam served with the US Army Reserves for 32-years, he retired as a Lt. Col. In 2017, Sam was honored by the 63rd California Assembly District, as the Lakewood, CA Veteran of the Year. On 6 June 2019, 75-years after helping liberate France from Nazi Germany's grip, Christophe Lemoine, Consul General of France - Los Angeles, presented Lt. Col. Sachs with the *French Legion of Honor*. He also said, that by decree of French President Emmanuel Macron, Sam was appointed a Chevalier (Knight).

Should you want to send a birthday card to our WWII Hero and Veteran, his address is:

**Lt. Col. (US Army Reserve, Ret) Sam A. Sachs**  
c/o Mom and Dad's Manor House  
4340 Conquista Avenue  
Lakewood, CA 90713

Let's shower Sam Sachs, a WWII Veteran who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today, with a lot of birthday cards, so he has an absolutely spectacular 105<sup>th</sup> birthday!



Here's Sam as he looked during WWII in Naples, Italy

## Wing Maintenance Report

By Trace Eubanks, Wing Maintenance Officer

I hope everyone is doing well and remaining optimistic that this quarantine / stay at home / social distancing / mask-wearing / pandemic will end soon.

Like all other organizations in the field of entertainment, we are taking a heavy financial hit due to the lack of revenue we normally generate from Air Shows, Museum attendance, and Events. Several temporary protocols were set in place to help save on our monthly expenses and many more are being discussed amongst Staff . But we will get through this and before you know it things will slowly return back to normal.

I have a lot of news and updates to share with you since my last email; some good and some not so good. Let's get the bad news out of the way first.

### Mustang

Sadly I must announce that our beloved P-51 Mustang MOW will be leaving the So Cal Wing later this month. MOW Management has decided not to renew the lease agreement with the CAF and move the aircraft to another location. It's been an honor and a pleasure to have experienced and worked on this incredible aircraft. We've enjoyed MarOWar for over 10 years now; but maybe it's time for us to start looking for our own Mustang.



### Bluebird

Last week Crew Chief Mike Perrenoud and his team; Tom Newhard and Matt Norklun with the

assistance of Joe and Michael Fragala completed the engine installation on Bluebird. Following a few adjustments with the help of Pete Regina the engine ran beautifully. Congratulations to Mike P. and his team. Click here to watch first start up after adjustments;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bu3CjsJDBTI>

### Engine Run-up

Last weekend several members showed up to assist with performing an engine run to all of our aircraft. As these engines sit for long durations, oil and lubricants slowly begin to drain down in the sumps. Moisture trapped within these power plants begins to oxidize causing rust to form on major internal components. To help reduce this occurrence, each engine must be operated to allow the lubricants to recoat the internal components thereby reducing oxidation. It's our goal to schedule these engine runs at least twice per month.



Mike Hohls firing up MOW during engine runs

### Tow Bar

Remember that tow bar from hell? The one that damn near twisted your arm off when you lifted the tongue? And a wingnut to secure it? Well, not anymore. It's been redesigned, rebuilt and ready for use. This model even comes with a handle.





## USB Terminals

Several of our aircraft will soon be outfitted with USB ports in the cockpits. These outlets will allow our pilots to plug in their mobile devices and tablets to help with navigational applications. Jason Somes was able to acquire several units at no cost (about \$400.00 per unit) for our unit. Martin Mohan has agreed to oversee the installation of these devices. Aircraft slated for these units are; SNJ 290, SNJ Bluebird, PT-19, Ercoupe, F24 & PBJ.



## Cordless Loaners:

(2) Makita Cordless Drills with (2) chargers and spare batteries were left near the back door of the Maintenance Hangar. Since no one has claimed them I'm assuming they were left as a donation. Therefore, I placed them in the Maintenance Office on chargers for your use. **PLEASE return each drill once you are done using them.**



## Spontaneous Consequences

Aside from Lazy Larry, how many safety violations can you identify in this picture?  
(No, this was not staged).



- 1) Cardboard box stuffed with rags and diapers soaked with Mineral and Motor oil.
- 2) Next to 1 gallon can of alcohol "fuel".
- 3) Next to 1 spray bottle of mineral spirits.
- 4) Next to 1 compressed spray can of paint.
- 5) Next to 1 pile of blue paper blankets.
- 6) Next to 1 Aircraft only 12 inches away.
- 7) Next to 1 other aircraft only 12 inches from it. (not shown)
- 8) On a table draped with oily carpets.
- 9) On a day when the inside of the hangar was over 90 degrees.

Please dispose of all oil soaked rags in fireproof containers specifically designed for oily rags to prevent spontaneous combustion resulting in a fire.

## Wood Shop

A huge thank you goes out to the Wood Shop Boys; Bob Fischer and Rob Mawer for constructing these new spark plug boxes made with polyurethane inserts. They also made a new Milwaukee and Dewalt charging station located in the Wood Shop.



Additionally, a big shout out to Ron Missildine, Dick Troy, Keith Bailey, Al Kepler and Mario for their efforts in clearing out the superfluous items and straightening up the back of the Maintenance Hangar. It looks great!

Finally, thanks to Tom and Kathy Newhard for their continuous efforts in maintaining the Museum and our facilities. Tom recently repaired a water leak in the wall of the men's restroom and Kathy has ensured that all facility responsibilities are being addressed during this lock down.



Tom and Kathy Newhard

Please contact me anytime if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you,

Trace

Col. Trace Eubanks  
Director of Maintenance  
Commemorative Air Force  
Southern California Wing  
455 Aviation Drive  
Camarillo, CA. 93010  
[maintenance@cafsocal.com](mailto:maintenance@cafsocal.com)  
805.325.1513

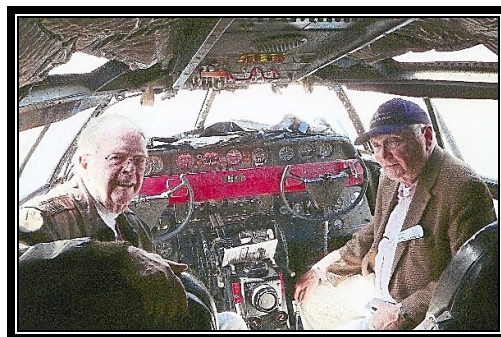


Photo by Larry Kates

**Wayne Brown, in left seat of our C-46 *China Doll*, was a pilot who flew C-46s "Over The Hump." He visited our WWII Aviation Museum on March 31, 2009, along with Pitch Johnson (right), who flew Wayne down to CMA from San Jose in his Gulfstream 200.**

Wayne graduated from flight school in 1944. He became an I.P. for the C-46 Commando. They practiced flying over the Sierras. In December, 1944 he was transferred to India. He flew from India to Kunming, China for the remainder of WWII, and then some, since he didn't have enough points to go home at war's end.

Most of Wayne's missions involved carrying 130 octane gasoline for the aircraft stationed in China. They would strap 12 drums of fuel on each side of the cargo space, and fly at night at 28,000 feet loaded and then 33,000 feet empty. Wayne loved the C-46 – he thought it was a terrific airplane.

Both men subsequently made generous donations to our Wing. We are very pleased that Pitch and Wayne visited our Doll, and look forward to seeing them again in the not too distant future. Thanks to them for helping us to "Keep 'Em Flying," and to Bill O'Neill for this article.



Photo by Dave Flood

Photo taken with Steve Brown, CAF's President, on his visit on May 16. From left: Norm Swagler, Steve, Robert Albee, Joe Peppito, Cliff Brown, Sarah de Bree, Casey de Bree, and Ceci Stratford.

Reprinted from "Flight Line," June, 2009



## John Deakin Flies the CAF's B-29 "FIFI"

by John Deakin



John flying in "FIFI" over Puget Sound with Merrill Wien

I was recently invited to join that small group of pilots in the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) who regularly fly the world's only remaining flyable B-29. Ground school took place in Midland, Texas, ...and several training rides and one check ride later, I was given the rare "Letter of Authority" giving me PIC privileges in the B-29.

The word "awesome" is badly overused, but I cannot help but use it to describe the airplane, and the experience of flying it. It is not that it is such a good airplane (it's not), or that it flies well (it doesn't), but the history! This is the WWII "Very Heavy Bomber," the largest airplane used in WWII, and the one that did such yeoman service in the Pacific. Doolittle and his B-25s brought the war to the mainland of Japan first, but it was the B-29 that did so in a big way, first from China, then from Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. It is also the model that in the end dropped the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing the war to an abrupt end, saving millions of lives, both American and Japanese.

Of about 4,000 made, a few rest quietly in museums, never to fly again; one is under restoration (possibly to flying status) by Boeing volunteers in Wichita; while only "FIFI" labors on, touring the USA, and celebrating the men and women who contributed to the Allied victory in so many ways. It is a very real history lesson just to see her, to touch her, and to tour the cockpit, as thousands do every year. To fly her gives me goosebumps!

### You Always Remember Your First Time....

I remember the first time so well. It was July 28, 1997, and I was attending Oshkosh. ...Randy Sohn had been the "Daddy Pilot" of the airplane since the beginning, for he was the one who ferried it out of dead storage in China Lake in 1971. Randy asked, "You wanna take the left seat?" Hoo, boy, who do I have to kill?



Here's John – in the left seat of the CAF's "FIFI"

The flight was a blast. I'd had NO exposure to the airplane at all - the ride to Dubuque was the first time I'd been near it. Randy was talking me through, apologizing for sounding like a firehose, but actually, his comments were well-timed and appropriate. Very quickly, he started talking less and less, and I began enjoying it more and more (there's a connection there, somewhere). The local TV station had a crew on board, and one big camera was set up in the bombardier's compartment, looking back at me. Look, Ma, I'm a TV star!



### Full forward view – looking past the pilots' seats

I can remember at first being a bit too busy with the new airplane for the significance of the flight to sink in. However, as things settled down, and we began beating up the city at 1,000 ' agl, I rolled into a left turn, looked all around from that huge greenhouse and every hair on my arms stood straight up. I got all choked up as I thought, "My God, Mrs. Deakin's little boy Johnny is flying a B-29, and this is no dream!" Thanks, Randy, for a golden memory I'll take to my grave.

I don't really get emotional over airplanes, but that flight was extraordinary.

*Note: Thanks to John and Avweb for these excerpts.*  
[www.avweb.com/news/columns/182150-1.html](http://www.avweb.com/news/columns/182150-1.html)

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