



# Contact!

MAY 2005 ISSUE

Our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion was held Saturday April 23, 2005 at the Sportsmen's Lodge. Guest speaker Dick Rutan was both motivating and inspirational as he related in an audio video presentation the trials and tribulations that had to be overcome in his quest to set the record for the first unrefueled nonstop flight around the world. The aircraft, **Voyager**, with a



939 pound airframe, built mainly of composites, took off from Edwards Air Force Base with 7000 pounds of fuel. It took nine, long and grueling days for pilots Dick Rutan and Jeanna Yeager to accomplish the task in the Burt Rutan designed aircraft. The aircraft landed back at Edwards with just 106 pounds of fuel remaining. The aircraft now hangs in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. along with the Wright Brothers *Flyer*, Lindberg's *Spirit of St. Louis* and other historical record holders. Also part of Dick's



program was video of **SpaceShipOne's** record setting first flight into space with now Astronaut Mike Melville at the controls. The

video was taken from ground cameras, chase aircraft, and the space ship itself and with Dick's narration, made for fascinating viewing. Also shown was an interesting Hal Cope developed

video, reflecting the history of DC-2 N39165, also known as **Mercer's Deuce**, during the time it was operated by Poddy and Ruby Mercer. The video entitled *Ruby's Baby* was to have been a surprise for Ruby and presented to her at the Reunion. Unfortunately, Ruby was ill and unable to attend but Hal got her a DVD copy so she can watch at her convenience. More on *Ruby's Baby* elsewhere in this issue. The 116 attendees began the event with a John Loustau hosted cocktail hour (and a half). Dave Simmons then kicked off the luncheon by announcing the honored guests at his head table, Jack Lewin, Ralph Cox, Ed and Lynn Hogan and Paul Carlson. He also noted the Hawaii contingent of Dick and Elaine Draper and Jack Pedesky. After lunch and the program was the drawing for door prizes which included a three day two night stay at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas, a digital camera, a GPS equipped mapping program, two framed photographs and several books. The Reunion Committee of Mary Lou Paulson, Hal Cope, Marge Sorthun and her crew of Addie McAndrews, Jerry Senft, Harry Edelstein and Jan Wantink can all take a bow for a job well done.

**We get Mail...**Aviation Mechanics classes at Glendale College cancelled. Daily News, March 12, 2005.

Glendale has a history of aviation beginning with Roy Knabenshue flying dirigibles over Glendale in 1906, L. C. Brand flying from his front lawn in 1917 and the opening of Glendale airport in 1923. When war clouds were gathering in 1938, the U.S. Government organized training facilities to prepare our country for the coming hostilities. The Curtiss-Wright Technical Institute was established at Grand Central Air Terminal and Glendale College began its aviation maintenance



and ground school programs. Thousands of pilots, designers, mechanics and technicians were trained in Glendale and they went on to help win WWII and to establish Southern California as a major center of aviation development.

At the very least, Glendale College has a contract with the current students in its aviation mechanics program and they should allow currently enrolled students to finish their courses and graduate from Glendale College like the thousands who have before them.

If the College decides to discontinue the program in the future, they should realize that they are killing the last connection with over 60 years of aviation development that includes the Army Air Corps, Major C. C. Mosely, Jack Northrop, Glenn Martin, Howard Hughes, Burt Kinner, Amelia Earhart, Charles Lindbergh, the birthplace many of the scheduled airlines and the beginning of rocket propulsion development.

As the Walt Disney Company commits to preserve the historic Grand Central Airport Terminal building, Glendale College votes to discontinue the other half of that history; the aircraft maintenance program and ground school.

Glendale College is following the same path that the City of Burbank has taken; disconnection from its aviation history and destruction of the historic equity of its citizens, past and present. If the Glendale College Aviation Department has to close, then its history should be well documented and preserved. If you don't want to do that in Glendale, let me know and I'll do what I can to bring it over here to Burbank where we know what we've lost...J. Ron Dickson. Burbank, CA

**Ed Note:** J. Ron Dickson is associated with *Aviation History of the San Fernando Valley* and is on the Board of Directors of The Burbank Aviation Museum. Visit his website at <http://www.godickson.com/ahsfvstory.htm>

**Ruby's Baby by Hal Cope,,,** I always thought Ruby Mercers husband "Poddy" was Ruby's baby. I was wrong it seems. Ruby tells me their DC-2 N39165 was her "baby". I talked a lot about Ruby's baby at our recent Aviation Pioneers Association directors meeting and became interested in learning more about the N165. Here is what I discovered.



*N39165 on roll out in Coventry England 2003*

According to Ruby, they purchased N39165 from North American Aviation. At the time it had the original DC-2 interior of 14 seats, mesh overhead baggage racks and wicker seats. The original interior was replaced by a 23-passenger interior, commonly found in the DC-2's larger sister, the DC-3. Ruby personally did a lot of the work to convert the DC-2 and in the process it became her "baby."

N165 began life with the US Navy on September 7, 1935 and was discharged from the Navy on August 24 1944. After going through a series of owners she was acquired by Mercer Enterprises in 1954.



*Ruby*

N165 was sold by the Mercers in 1968 to Colgate Winston Darden III. Mr. Darden constructed a hanger on his property in South Carolina where N165 remained until 1999 when she was ferried to the Netherlands and turned over to the Dutch National Aviation Museum. In 1984 N165

flew London to Melbourne in a reenactment of the MacRobertson Air Race of 1934. She now appears in air shows in Europe and has been part of the Dutch National Aviation Museum Aviodrome collection since 1999. N165 is now in the same livery as "Uliver" the DC-2 that KLM used to participate in the 1934 London-Melbourne race.

Poddy and Ruby used N39165 for ad hoc charter. However, their main use for N165 was flying the horse race track routes. N165 was also a movie star. The film was "Back from Eternity" made in 1956 starring Robert Ryan, Anita Ekberg,





*Poddy & Fish Salmon*

Rod Steiger, Phyllis Kirk, Gene Barry and others. The story line was taken from an earlier John Farrow film "Five Came Back" when the pilot, (Robert Ryan) finally gets the aircraft in flying condition but discovers that he can only take five of its eleven passengers.

Twentieth Century Fox required the DC2 to be "in the studio" for most of the filming. The aircraft was flown to the

Santa Monica airport from Burbank where the wings were removed. It was then towed, at night to avoid most of the traffic, from Santa Monica to the Fox studios in Culver City and reassembled. Poddy was the Technical Director on the film.



*N39165 in KLM livery first flight after licensing*

I flew this grand old lady a couple of times from Burbank to the race track at Del Mar. How lucky could I get to be a part of this lady's history! Bottom line Ruby's "baby" has not done too badly for herself and we are happy she has found a fitting and dignified retirement.

**Obituary...** Alex Harris passed away in May 2004 at age 90. His love of flying began at age 16 when he purchased his first plane, a Parks P-1. It was an early self assembled bi-plane made of wood wire and cloth, powered by an OX-5 engine. He began his flying career training RAF pilots from 1939-1940. During World War II he traveled the world, flying the Burma Hump and trans-pacific routes to the South Pacific, Australia and New Guinea. After the war, he flew the Berlin Airlift, the Haj in Arabia, routes in Central and South America, China and Hong Kong bringing back gifts and wondrous stories of his

adventures. He flew for North American Airlines, Great lakes Airlines, Admiral Airlines, California Air Freight and was Chief Pilot and Director of Operations for Seattle's Air Club International during the 1970's. He is survived by his three children, Bob, Steven and Sue Harris as well as five grandchildren.

**Announcement**  
**2006 APA ANNUAL REUNION**  
**SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 2006**  
**SPORTSMEN'S LODGE**  
**Watch for further info...**

**As told by Dick Neumann...** What was the secret of the Non-Skeds? It was the people. Good ones, bad ones, sharp ones, dull ones, adventurous ones and ambitious ones. Among others, it was the independent travel agent that advertised and attracted passengers and then looked for a carrier to move them. There was a love hate relationship with the agents as they bargained and brokered seats and flights between operators. At times operators ended up paying as much as 50% commissions to get enough passengers so it paid to move their aircraft. Ed Daly started out in Chicago generating enough revenue and passengers as an agent to end up as an operator with his own certificate, World Airways. Also in Chicago were the McLynn Brothers, Denny and Jimmy. Denny would pay downtown cabbies a commission for dropping off their airport bound passengers where he could hustle them a ticket on one of the non sked flights. He also brought up loads of newly processed sailors from Great Lakes Naval Training Station, putting them up in local hotels and motels until he could find carriers to move them.

In New York, Wally Lapp would advertise cheap aircoach flights in newspapers and phone books. He would load up his passengers on a bus at his NY location and send them on a leisurely ride to Teterboro Airport while he raced ahead to the airport to find a carrier to move them. Also in New York, Buzz Scott, a Canadian, operated a major aircoach agency with a dozen people to answer phones and handle ticketing covering New York, Connecticut and New Jersey. Bob Blake and Herb Kielson were also major producers in the area.



In San Diego, Terry Grant would hire water taxis to take him out to the Navy ships so he could accumulate a load of Navy personnel with leave papers heading east. Clint Moen also worked out of San Diego with the sailors as well as Marine recruits going on leave out of Camp Pendleton. Bob Gott would bring up a load of passengers to Burbank from the Long Beach area in an old hearse he converted to a limousine. Moe Swidler and Murray Friedman were major producers in the San Francisco Bay area.

Some of the carriers like North American and Great Lakes developed their own exclusive agencies with offices in all the major cities so they could better control their passenger flows. They would also book shuttle flights to get their passengers up and down from Oakland and San Diego in a more organized fashion to support their Burbank operations.

Check in times at Teterboro, La Guardia's Marine Terminal, Chicago Midway, Oakland and Burbank were frequently massed confusion and mayhem but after all of the flights finally departed and the overbooked passengers were tucked away in some motel for tomorrow's flights all of the counter and gate personnel would head for the local airport bar for a well deserved night cap.

**Obituary...** Fritz Hutcheson, founder and President of US Aircoach, one of the pioneer aircoach operators of the early 1950's made his last flight west on May 12, 2005 at Pasadena, California. He was 89 years old and had been in declining health for some time. He is survived by his wife Betty, two sons, two daughters and grandchildren. He remained in touch with many of the principals in the nonsked airline industry over the years and testified at a special Civil Aeronautics Board hearing in Los Angeles in 1977 looking at recertificating supplemental carriers. In more recent years he directed and owned a special pre-prep service on new automobiles shipped to his Point Magu/Oxnard facility. After their sea voyage the cars were readied for and trucked to dealers all over the western US. His company was servicing as many as two thousand vehicles per month. Fritz Hutcheson was a true aviation pioneer and ever a real entrepreneur. Anyone desiring to contact the family should send their mail to APA, Attention Hutcheson Family and it will be forwarded.

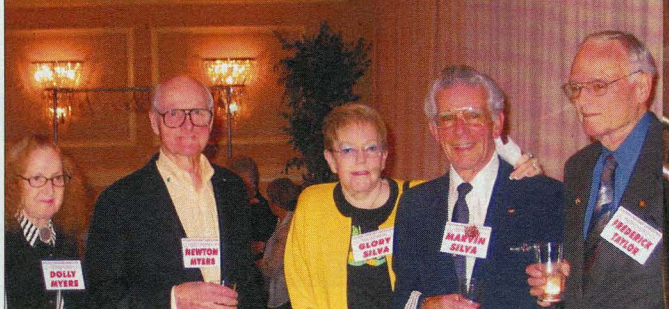
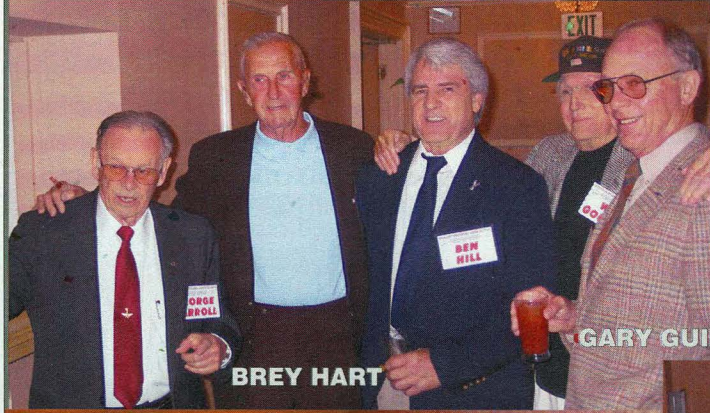
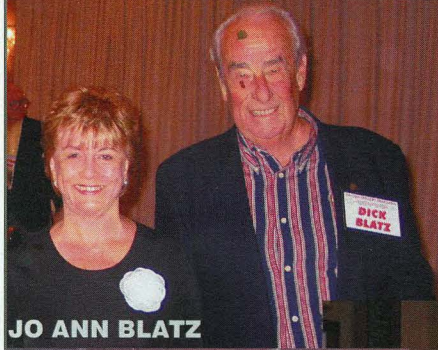
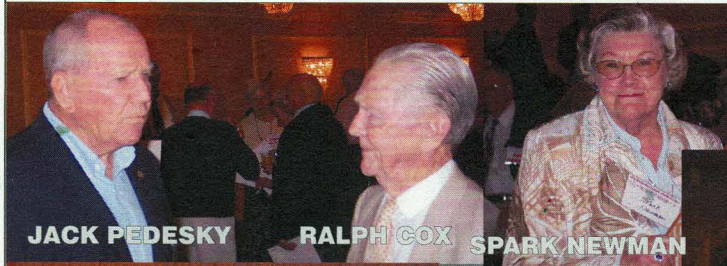
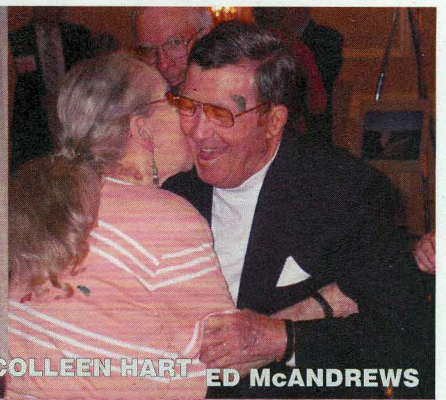
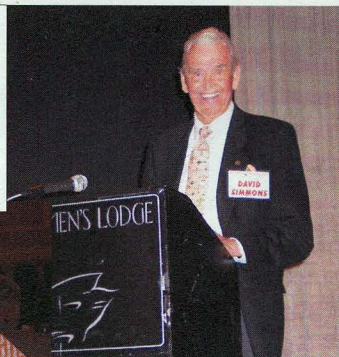
**Obituary...** Glenn St. George passed away December 10, 2004 at age 84. He enlisted in the Army Air Force the day after Pearl Harbor and spent the rest of his working career flying, designing and selling airplanes. Late in his career he was still flying water bombers and worked on the stretched DeHavilland Dove in Long Beach. He is survived by his wife Lana St. George who made a generous donation to APA in memory of her husband.

**Honors and Awards...** Fred Taylor was recently honored by the Federal Aviation Administration. For his 50 years of service as an FAA repairman he received the Charles Taylor (no relationship) Master Mechanic Award. (Charles Taylor designed and built the engine for the Wright Brothers 1903 Flyer.) In performing his duties as a "designated airworthiness representative" Fred traveled the world making sure the aircraft he inspected were safe for flight. Taylor's name is placed in the Role of Honor on display at FAA headquarters in Washington, D.C. Congratulations Fred!

**Chairman's Message...** Last year at this time we were questioning whether our membership could continue to support having annual reunions. The attendance at our April 23, 2005 Reunion answered the question with a resounding YES!!! We have also received terrific support from our membership in the form of dues and donations all of which help sustain the organization and help defray some of the expenses of the reunion. We wanted to note the absence at the Reunion, due to illness, of two of the Aviation Pioneers Association's founding Directors, Ida Hermann and Ruby Mercer. Both of these lovely ladies have added so much to the organization with their support and by their presence at Directors meeting and the Reunions. We wish them both a speedy recovery. We wanted to welcome a couple of first timers, Jack Lewin and Frank Lang and acknowledge some long distance travelers, Jack Pedesky, Dick and Elaine Draper from Hawaii and Ralph Cox from New Jersey. Our guest speaker, Dick Rutan, is truly a participant in some of aviation's great adventures. He kept his audience on the edge of their seats during his entire performance. We can only wonder what he is going to do next. For your information, our next



Reunion is scheduled for April 29, 2006. More information will be provided as it becomes available. Mark your calendars now. Plan to attend and keep up your support for our organization. Thank you.



SEE YOU IN 2006



AVIATION PIONEERS ASSOCIATION  
PO BOX 7031  
TARZANA CA 91357-7031



Capitol Airways Lockheed 1049H



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