

Contact!

JUNE 2006 ISSUE

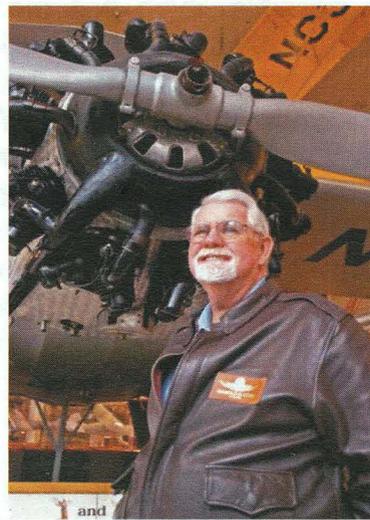
COPE NOTES...Once more the sun has dropped below the horizon on our Aviation Pioneers Association fifteenth reunion (2006). Bringing to close for another year a close comradeship of coming together to relive memories of days gone by, to recall friends who have "gone west" and the opportunity renew old friendships.



Les Dames Extraordinaire APA 2006
Nancy Anton, Lynn Hogan, Marge Wilson, Adrienne Rosen and Eileen Chambers. (Nancy, Marge and Eileen are Ida Mae Hermann's sisters).

While our number seems decline a few digits each year the essence of our airline pioneering lives on with those of us able to reunite. This year we missed the Grand Dame of APA, Ida Mae Hermann, along with old friend Dick Blatz. We also missed our Chairman, the one and only Dave Simmons, at the mike doing his MC duties as he has so faithfully done since the first reunion and who will be back at the mike next year. Ruby Mercer, Grand Dame in training, was also unable to attend but promised me she would be with us next year. Speaking of next year Len and Mary Lou (another Grand Dame in training) have set the next reunion for April 21, 2007 at the same lemonade stand the Sportsman Lodge. John Loustau graciously furnished the water for the "watering hole" and George Patterson supplied the music. Mary Lou arranged for the table settings and food and of course the cocktail hour the previous night. Brother Ed Hogan led us in the pledge to our

flag and Marge said grace. The program commenced with a short video of vintage aircraft taken at various air shows and was followed by a presentation by Brian Terwilliger the producer and director of a film about the Van Nuys Airport called "One Six Right". Brian talked to us about the making of the film and we saw film clips of some aviation scenes as well as of historical characters who passed through the airport over the years. Door prizes were given out including a seven day six night stay at Ed Hogan's Hotel on Maui, a three day, two night stay at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas, several beautiful pictures donated by Ruby Mercer, etc. Speaking of drinking I walked into a bar (for a glass of water) that advertised drinks for 10 cents. I asked the bartender/owner why so cheap. He advised he had hit the lottery and always wanted to own a bar and since profit wasn't a motive he set the price at 10 cents. I looked down to the end of the bar where three "old timers" sat but not drinking. Curiosity got the best of me so I ask the owner why their glasses were empty. The reply was... "Oh! They are old retired pilots waiting



for the half price happy hour." I was honored to fill in for Dave as MC which gave me a bird's eye view of the group and happy to see many old friends which brought back memories of the past. However, we should not dwell in the past for long. We need to look at the

future of our association. I am saddened to see our numbers dwindle but that is life. I want to see our contribution to the airline industry in the history books; I want our association to have a web site which will ease and expedite our ability to keep in

touch and exchange ideas and information; I would like to see a small display of our history at the Burbank Airport; and finally I would like to see an effort to bring young people into the fold to keep our memories alive after we are gone. My son Eric (Boeing 767 captain with Hawaiian) and Grandson Captain Daniel (flying C5's to Iraq), Jan Peterson daughter of Bud Milligan, our speaker Brian Terwilliger and "young" Ed Hogan are prime candidates for recruitment to keep our association from disappearing from view. Reach out to the young people in your families for potential young members and/or other young people who have an interest in aviation/airline matters in general and our history in particular. God Bless you all. See you next year God willing and the creeks don't rise....Hal

FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAMS TURN 25 YEARS OLD...American Airlines launched its AAdvantage frequent-flier program 25 years ago in May, 1981. Within days, United had rolled out Mileage Plus. By year's end, many U.S. carriers were offering similar promotions. The programs, which were originally supposed to run only a year or so, were meant to

UNITED
Mileage Plus

identify a carrier's most frequent and profitable passengers -- mostly business travelers -- and to

strengthen their loyalty by awarding free tickets and upgrades. Business travelers enrolled in droves. Just as the airlines had hoped, these passengers flew "their" airline whenever possible, even if it meant selecting less convenient times, taking a connecting flight instead of a nonstop, or paying more for a ticket. Within a few years, the airlines had discovered that millions of leisure travelers, who took no more than a few flights a year, were enrolling in the programs too. The airlines had signed up "partners" -- initially hotels and rental car companies and then long-distance carriers and credit card issuers too -- that awarded mileage. The programs have become so popular that customers look to earn miles anywhere they can. And, with miles now available for everything from mortgages to groceries, miles are piling up in frequent-flier accounts at an astonishing pace. U.S. frequent-fliers now have billions of miles stockpiled in the various programs. As many as 180 million people worldwide -- 120 million in the United States alone -- belong to programs offered by U.S. and international carriers. As the programs' popularity grew in the

1990s and more members started accumulating significant mileage, the airlines changed the rules. Most free tickets and upgrades became subject to "capacity controls," which meant carriers could limit

the number of awards. As more and more miles accumulated in member accounts,



mileage inflation became inevitable. Many airlines are increasing the mileage requirements for various awards. Some travelers are now disgruntled with frequent-flier programs. An estimated 14 trillion unredeemed miles are currently deposited in frequent-flier accounts worldwide, increasing competition for awards. Members complain -- with justification -- that they must jump an increasing number of hurdles to get free tickets or upgrades or that they cannot get desired tickets at all. Some carriers are denying upgrades for the cheapest international coach tickets. Still others are imposing fees: Some charge \$15 to book a ticket with a telephone reservations agent, and others will ding you \$500 (plus the required miles) to upgrade a coach ticket to business class on long-haul international flights. So, where does this leave frequent-flier program members? One fact is clear: Awards are more difficult to redeem nowadays, because too many miles are chasing too few seats. Exacerbating the problem is the airlines' cutback in capacity and an increase in the number of paying customers. Revenue-hungry carriers are tempted to allocate fewer free seats and upgrades on flights that are selling out. Yet the airlines cannot reduce the number of award seats so drastically that members (particularly leisure travelers who earn most of their miles through partner purchases) lose interest in the programs. Partner companies would start dropping out of the programs, and the carriers would lose the

American Airlines
AAdvantage

miles-selling revenue that helps keep them aloft. Tim Winship of frequentflier.com says "Today we have a

confusing dichotomy. The airline industry appears to be congratulating itself on a great idea it says has worked wonderfully. ... But behind the false front of sweetness and light lurks a dark repository of

billions and billions of unredeemed miles no airline executive really wants to talk about, or allow to be cashed in."

WHO GOT THE EXCESS BAGGAGE MONEY?...An internal American Airlines website was briefly and unintentionally left open to the public last week. The website, which was intended only for AA employees, gave details on just how much money the airline is generating after lowering its weight allowances for checked luggage. AA customers must now pay a \$25 surcharge for bags heavier than 50 pounds, up from the airline's previous no-fee maximum weight of 70 pounds. One AA newsletter included on the internal website said: "For the month of December 2005 we collected \$264,000 in excess, overweight and oversized bag charges. This is a 7% increase over December 2004!" The newsletter went on to call the fees an "an important ingredient" to AA's success, before simply adding, "Ka-ching!"

GETTING AWAY FROM THE COMPETITION...Southwest Airlines serves Boston via Manchester Airport in New Hampshire about a 60 mile drive to downtown. Southwest flies to Long Island Islip MacArthur Airport from which it serves New York City (Manhattan) approximately 50 miles away. ATA began non-stop service last week between Oakland and Hilo on the "Big Island" of Hawaii. In a press release, ATA says its service to Hilo will be the only non-stop service between Hilo and the U.S. mainland. In other new service, ATA last week began non-stop service between Ontario, Calif. and Honolulu. Alaska Air partner Horizon Air announced Thursday that it will begin service from Santa Rosa's

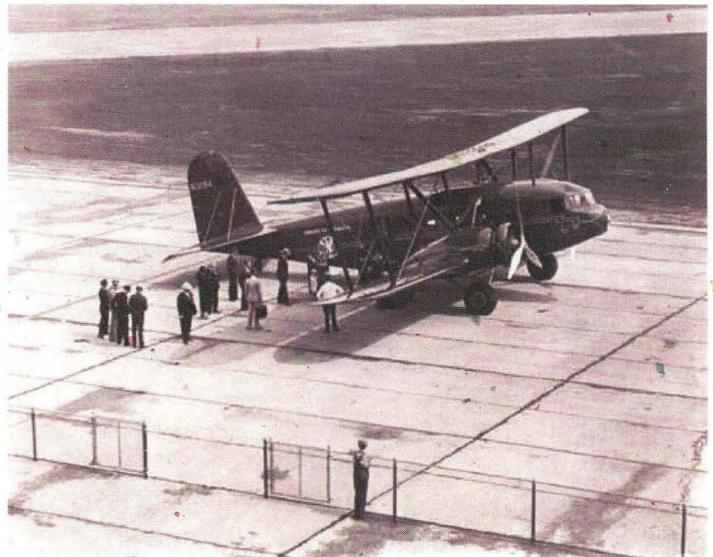


Los Angeles. The flights will begin March 20, 2007, and will be flown on 74-seat Bombardier Q400 turboprop aircraft. Santa Rosa is about 60 miles north of San Francisco. Vision Airlines will be offering service between Carlsbad Palomar Airport (near San Diego) and the Downtown Las Vegas Airport in 30 passenger Dornier 328 aircraft. Vision Airlines also offers flights between Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon. Allegiant Air will offer non-stop service

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between Stockton, Calif., and Las Vegas. The airline will utilize 150-seat MD-80 jets. Hawaiian Airlines will recall 22 furloughed pilots and will hire about 100 new flight attendants adding San Diego-Maui flights, daily service between Maui and both Seattle and Portland, Ore., also Sacramento-Honolulu.

AS TOLD BY DICK NEUMANN...The Curtiss Wright T-32 Condor II passenger aircraft flew for the first time on January 30, 1933. It was built in a biplane configuration with the fuselage consisting mainly of steel tubing, with the wings constructed of steel spars and aluminum ribs, all of which were covered by Irish Linen fabric stretched over wooden stringers. The linen was tightened with "Nitrate



Curtiss Wright T-32 Condor

Dope" thus creating a highly flammable structure. The aircraft was equipped with two supercharged Wright radial engines, producing 720 horsepower each. It was one of the first transport aircraft of its day to be equipped with a retractable landing gear and variable pitch propellers and was capable of cruising at 150 miles per hour. It was designed to carry 12 passengers in sleeper configuration and up to 18 passengers in day coach configuration. The cabin had large windows for better visibility, and passenger lighting and air vents were utilized. The Condor also had a heated cabin, not common on most aircraft of that era, which was driven by two small boilers attached to the engine exhaust manifolds. A lavatory with hot and cold running water was also standard. Both American Airways and Eastern Air Transport flew the T-32 Condor aircraft, but by 1936 most of the biplanes in airline service had been replaced by the Boeing 247,

Lockheed 10 Electra and the Douglas DC-2 which were twin engine, all metal monoplanes.

On the evening of December 28, 1934, the T-32 Condor, NC12363, designated as American Airlines Flight 3 from New York to California, departed New York with its first stop scheduled for Chicago. Veteran American Captain Ernie Dryer was at the controls of Flight 3 when the Condor encountered un-forecast icing conditions. Losing engine power as a result of carburetor icing and accumulating ice on the wings, struts and external bracing wires of the airplane, Captain Dryer, unable to maintain altitude made a forced landing on Wilder Mountain in the Adirondack Range in upstate New York. Captain Dryer and his brother Dale who was the co-pilot on Flight 3, along with a deadheading pilot and one passenger, were stranded on the mountain for four days before a search team reached them in a dramatic rescue effort. The cause of the accident was determined to be carburetor ice in both engines.

Shortly thereafter, American recovered the engines, propellers, instruments and landing gear, but due to the densely wooded area, the rest of the airplane which consisted of the cockpit, main cabin, wings and tail surfaces was left on Wilder Mountain. Some thirty years later American Airlines CEO, C.R. Smith decided the Condor would make a wonderful advertising tool and hired me to recover the airframe that had been left on Wilder Mountain since 1934. American Airlines had plans to restore the Condor and fly it around the United States as part of an advertising campaign. I put together a recovery party that disassembled the remaining parts of NC12363 and successfully retrieved them from the forest on Wilder Mountain. In the intervening period, C. R. Smith decided against using the airplane in an advertising campaign. Recognizing the historical significance of the Condor, I acquired NC12363 from American and now own the last known remaining Curtis Condor in existence.

Now some 72 years after NC12363 went down, I have approximately 95% of the airframe, 1000 original design and engineering drawings, samples of the original covering from the fuselage and wings and a photo library of photographs and films of NC12363 and other Condors. Along with a partner, we are attempting to put together a group to raise sufficient capital to restore the aircraft to a degree that is accurate in every detail, a project which could take as long as three years to five years to complete. However once the restoration of Curtis Condor

NC12363 is complete, it will be one of the rarest Golden Age Transport Aircraft in the world and a dream that I have nurtured for these many years will have come true.

SIR FREDDIE LAKER died on February 9, 2006, at age 83 in a suburban Miami hospital in Hollywood, Florida following complications from cardiac surgery to implant a pacemaker. Laker, originally from Canterbury, Kent, started working in aviation with Short Brothers. He was a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary during and immediately after World War II (1941-46). After World War II he went



into business as a war-surplus aircraft dealer. The Soviet blockade of West Berlin in 1948, during which all available

aircraft were needed to fly essential supplies into West Berlin, allowed his business to flourish. By 1954 he, as Channel Air Bridge, was flying cars and their passengers in Bristol Freighters from Southend to Calais; after various company mergers, he became managing director of British United Airways in 1960. In 1966 he departed to form his own airline, Laker Airways, using second-hand airliners from BOAC. The livery was a mixture of black and red with a bold LAKER logo on the tail. Laker Airways was committed to offering air travel as economically as possible with passengers being required to buy tickets on the day of travel and their meals being paid for separately. In 1973 the company submitted an application to the British Air Transport Licensing Board to launch its transatlantic service at a price almost one-third that of the major competition, marketing it as Skytrain. The application was not granted until 1977, after much legal wrangling (there were doubts as to Laker's economic viability and allegations of adverse pressure from a cartel involving the major airlines, who had meanwhile lowered their prices to just above Laker's level). Skytrain was extremely popular, and Laker was popular with the public and one of Margaret Thatcher's golden boys of industry. 1978 Laker was knighted for services to the airline industry. His airline became one of the early buyers

of the first Airbus A300, and in 1981 had plans to expand into Europe. His inability to finance his purchase of Airbus aircraft and DC-10's from Douglas Aircraft did him in though and Skytrain flew its last flight on February 6, 1982 when the airline went bankrupt. Laker was undaunted and almost immediately attempted to re-launch the airline on the back of a strong public following (a relief fund gathered over a million pounds, helped by an endorsement from the music band The Police who had used the airline to tour America). Laker, by now living in the Bahamas, got off the ground again in the early 1990s, moving his re-founded business' base to Freeport. Laker Airlines flew from there until it shut down in 2005. Sir Freddie Laker divided his final years living both in his waterfront home in Lucaya, Grand Bahama Island where he kept his yacht, The Lady Jacqueline, and in Florida. He is survived by his fourth wife, Jacqueline Harvey, a former airline hostess he married in 1985.

IDA MAE HERMANN passed away April 15, 2006. She was born June 22, 1917 and grew up in Cannonsburg Pennsylvania. Very popular throughout her school years, she also was an outstanding student. She attended Grace Martin Secretarial School and began her aviation career with



Capitol Airways in Pittsburgh. During WWII she became a government employee at the Miami Depot. It was at that time she met her future husband, Irving E. Hermann, a Navy Commander, who, at the end of the war, became a pilot for Pan American Airways.

After founding Great Lakes Airlines, Irv and Ida moved their base of operations to Lockheed Air Terminal in Burbank. A full partner with her husband, at a time when women were not accepted in what was considered "a man's world", she became a respected force in aviation. She was a founding director and avid supporter of the Aviation Pioneers Association. Some of Ida's favorite memories were the many Christmas parties she and Irv held for the children of their employees by turning their aircraft maintenance

hangar into a winter wonderland with rides, piles of presents for everyone and a special visit by Santa and one of his elves who flew in with stuffed Christmas stocking hanging from the airplane wings. She was talented, gracious, intelligent, fun loving and a devoted friend. She loved to cook and was a wonderful hostess. Ida will be sadly missed by all who knew and loved her. By Nancy Anton.

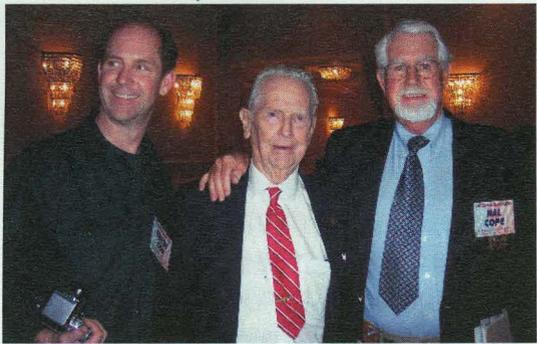


ROBEY SMITH passed away May 23, 2005 in Rancho Mirage, California. He was born April 5, 1917 and grew up in the Philadelphia area. At age 12 he was Assistant Airport Manager at his Dad's Philadelphia Air

Transport flying field. He soloed at age fourteen. While a student at Brown University he enrolled in the Civilian Pilot Training Program. He later flew for National Airlines. During WWII he flew as Chief Staff Pilot in the China-Burma-India Theatre. After the war he went to California where he flew for many of the non-skeds and became part of the management group at Currey Air Transport. In the late 1950's he became a Cessna dealer and Lear Jet distributor at Burbank, then Van Nuys. After selling his dealership he moved to Miami with his wife Patti where their Robey Smith Company became one of the largest jet aircraft brokers in the world.

Injured...Ruby's Baby the DC-2, formerly N39165, when operated by Mercer Airlines, was the subject of an article in our May 2005 newsletter. The aircraft suffered damages when the left hand gear collapsed on landing getting the prop blades as well. The aircraft is presently undergoing repairs by her current owner the National Dutch Aviation Museum. We hope she is back in the air again soon.





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