

The Night A Man Almost Won A Beauty Contest

By Mrs. Alverta Wilson

It all started in February 1950, when my husband Ray was executive vice president of Monarch Airlines (one of Frontier's four predecessor companies).

Ray was notified that the University of Denver School of Aeronautics was sponsoring a stewardess beauty contest and dance, and all airlines serving Denver were invited to submit entries.

Monarch had a small problem — no stewardesses. Like many small airlines in those days, its cabin attendants were males. But Ray didn't want Monarch to be left out of the competition.

"I'll use a steward," he told me, "and I know just the one — Glenn Gettman."

"Just how are you going to get his name by the entry committee?" I asked.

"Simple. I'll change it to Glenna Gettman on the application."

The next problem was the said happily-married Mr. Gettman, whose natural reaction was to tell the executive vice president of Monarch Airlines what he could do with both the idea and the application. Ray persisted.

"Is this an order?" Glenn finally asked.

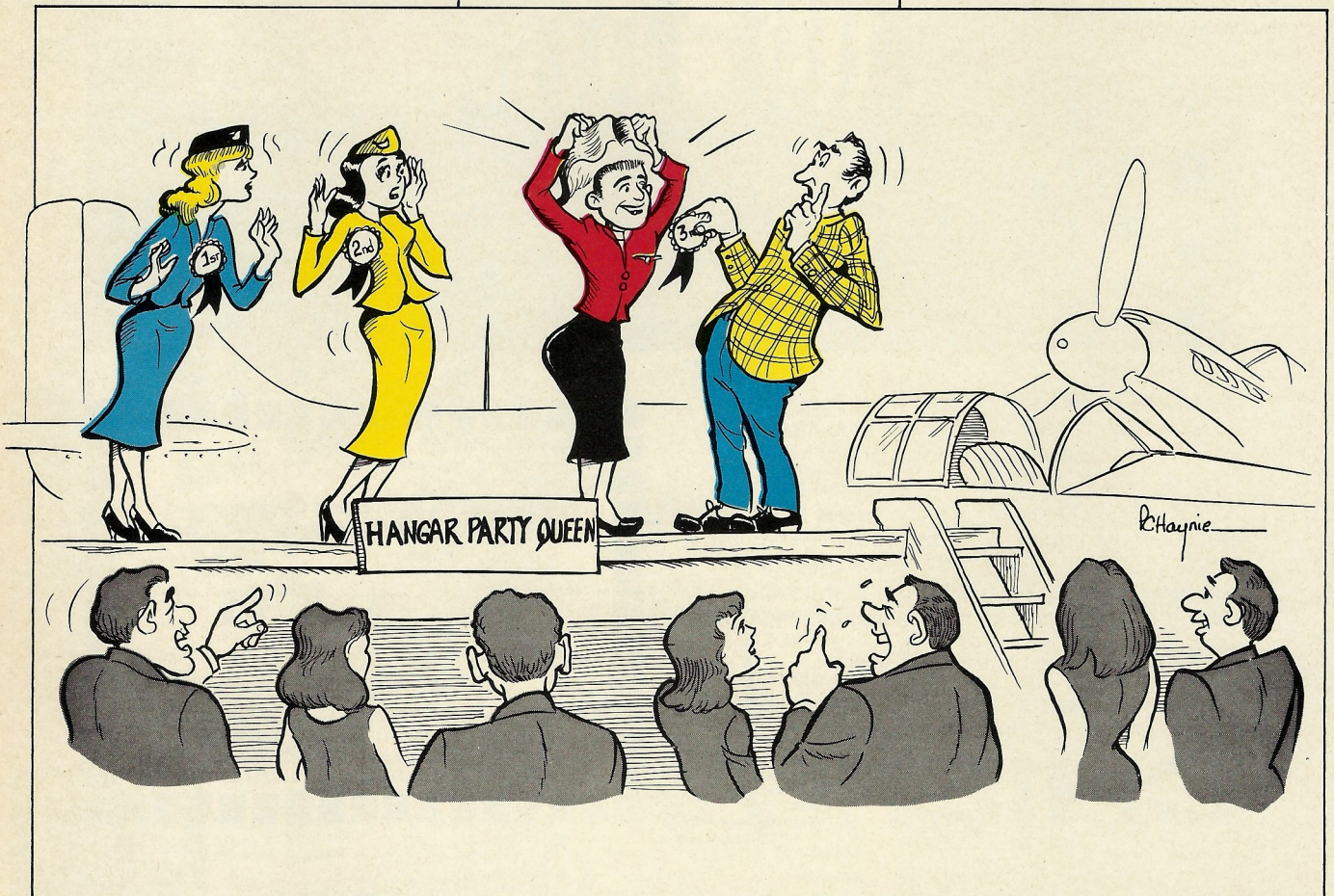
Ray just grinned. "Glenn, let's just say it would be nice if you'd participate."

"Since you put it that way, okay," Gettman surrendered, "but frankly, this whole project looks kooky."

Kooky it undoubtedly was, but challenging — and the first step was Glenn's transformation. Fortunately, I knew a good makeup artist in the person of Fern Whitler, who was a representative for Hattie Carnegie cosmetics and Fashions International. Fern spent hours perfecting Glenn's makeup and it was none other than Glenn's wife who made a stewardess uniform out of one of her husband's old steward outfits.

The uniform didn't look bad, either. Skirts were down to the ankles in 1950 so "Glenna" at least was in style — which was just as well inasmuch as his knobby knees wouldn't have passed inspection in a mini-skirt.

The big event was held inside a big hangar at Sky Ranch Airport in Denver. A platform for the band and beauty contestants was erected over the wing



of a P-59, America's first jet fighter, and the stewardesses began parading before an audience of more than a thousand persons. The girls represented Challenger (another Frontier predecessor), United, Braniff, Continental and Western — and then came "Glenna" of Monarch.

By this time, Glenn had gotten into the spirit of the thing and his walk across that platform was something to behold. It would have made Jean Harlow seem demure by comparison — he put quite a swing in his backyard and I remember one woman in the front row remarking, "Doesn't she think she's something."

The audience picked the winners and it is the absolute truth that not more than five people in that hangar knew Monarch's entry wasn't kosher. First place went to Vicky Finner of Challenger and the runner-up was Joan McElin of Braniff.

And third place?

Glenna Gettman of Monarch!

Glenn walked up to receive his third place award and went into an immediate act of female petulance — climaxed by his throwing his wig on the floor, exposing a very manly crewcut. He stalked off stage, grabbed his cute wife who was standing at the edge of the platform, and kissed her soundly.

"Glenna" Gettman, sporting a curly wig, won third prize in an Airline Stewardess Beauty Contest Saturday, February 25, 1950. The steward for Monarch Airlines is shown receiving congratulations from Ray Wilson, Executive Vice-President.

Fern Whittler looks over her make-up job on Glenna.



The audience was 'in hysterics, but the laughter wasn't universal. The stewardesses who hadn't placed in the competition didn't think it was very funny and left in an indignant huff, as I recall it.

A few months later, when Monarch and Challenger merged, along with Arizona Airways, to form Frontier, Glenn lost his job as a steward because the new airline decided to hire female cabin attendants. He worked as a station agent, reservationist and crew scheduler, learned to fly in his spare time, and today is a Frontier captain! He and his wife, Esther, have two sons, both married.

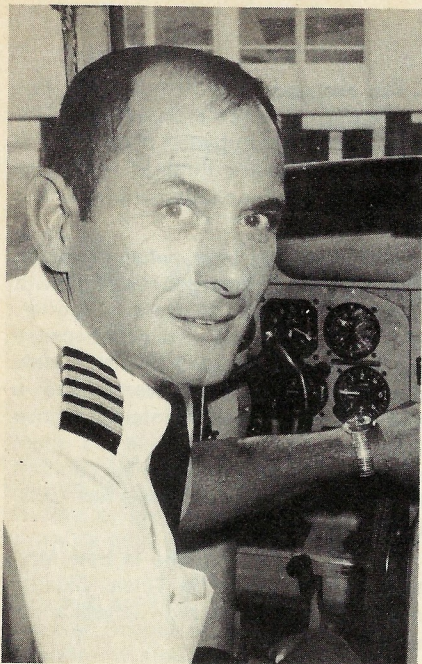
And Vicky Finner? She is now Mrs. Ivan Hobbs, resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and has a son in high school and a married daughter.

How do the beauties look 24 years later? Turn the page —

Beauty contest winner, Vicky Finner of Challenger Airlines. Challenger later joined with Monarch Airlines to form Frontier.

Photo courtesy of The Denver Post





(Left) Captain Glenn in the cockpit of his Convair 580 prior to departing Denver on Flight 19, 1973. (Center) Mrs. Vicky Finner (Hobbs) 1973, mother of a married 22-year-old daughter and a 17-year-old son. (Right) Captain Glenn Gettman and Ray (Pappy) Wilson, October 31, 1973.

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