

My career in Aviation by Mel Maynard

I have often been asked how I was able to attain a flying career with the airlines when I didn't have any experience, to speak of, and was beyond the age limit that the airlines would even consider. So I decided it was time to share this with everyone.

This is my story about a career that I had only dreamed of, and felt could never be possible. I have made the licenses and ratings in blue that were necessary for my future in aviation.

Following my discharge from the Air Force in 1953, I took flying lessons in Sioux City, IA, and earned my Commercial Pilots License by Christmas of 1955.

I worked for Graham Flying Service in N. Sioux City, S.D., overhauling aircraft engines in the late 1950s. It was there that I earned my Powerplant Mechanics License.

In 1962, I, along with my wife Charlotte and our 3 daughters Melody, Marilyn, and Lori, moved to Broomfield, Colorado, where I worked for six months overhauling aircraft engines for a company called Kensair. Then after a two and a half year stint as a filling station owner, I once again went to work as an aircraft mechanic, for Combs Aircraft at Stapleton Int'l Airport. While working for Combs Aircraft I heard a small still voice in the back of my head, that told me to get my Airframe Mechanics License. So, I attended the Emily Griffith School of Opportunity in the evenings to earn that license, not having a clue as to where that might lead, or what good it would do me.

Then, after getting that license, I discovered that a flight school had a link trainer in a back room that they leased from Combs, and for \$50 I could get 10 hours of instrument training, which I did. I had no clue as to why I was doing this. This made me still 20 hours short of being qualified for my Instrument Rating. Then I found that I could get a discounted price (since I worked for Combs) to rent an airplane, and a flight instructor, to get the remaining 20 hours that I needed, to earn that rating.

Charlotte and I discussed whether or not to spend more money on my pursuit of a career in flying, and both of us agreed that even though I was already 35 years old, which is 5 years over the age limit to be considered by any airline, that it was time to go for broke and get the rating so I would be qualified, in case a corporate flying job would become available. So Charlotte borrowed the money from the Credit Union where she was employed, and I "went for it".

While I was in the process of getting the remaining 20 flight hours necessary for my instrument rating, I discovered that Frontier Airlines was looking for Career Flight Engineers, and flight time (I only had 250 hours total in J3 cub type A/C) and age, didn't matter, as long as you had the following ratings: Commercial Pilots License, Powerplant Mechanics License, Airframe Mechanics License, Instrument Rating, and had the Basic Flight Engineers written test passed.

Wow! It now looked as though a miracle had happened and maybe I was going to be qualified for the airlines after all.

So after getting my instrument rating, I settled in, and studied hard, to pass the written for the Basic Flight Engineers rating. Then I was qualified for employment with Frontier Airlines. I was hired by Frontier in June of 1967.

About two years after I was hired, there was a new union contract agreement signed and flight engineers were now allowed to bid into the pilot's seats. So, thereafter, I was privileged to go through training for, and was awarded, a co-pilot's position on the Convair 580 turbo-prop, later on the Boeing 737 and eventually as Captain on the 737.

While at Frontier Airlines I accumulated my Flight Engineers License, Multi Engine rating, Airline Transport Rating and a Type Rating in the Boeing 737.

Due to a slight medical problem I was forced to take a medical retirement from Frontier in 1985, at the age of 55.

After about four years of retirement I had a desire to once again return to the work force (preferably in aviation).

I studied for, and passed, the written exam for an instructor's rating, Then after some flight instruction, and a check ride, I earned my Single Engine Flight Instructors Rating in 1989.

In 1990 I was hired by America West Airlines, in Phoenix Az, to become a 747 flight engineer instructor, then shortly after I had become qualified for that position, I was informed that there was an opening for an instructor in the 737 simulator program, which I immediately jumped at, as that was my favorite aircraft and one with which I was the most familiar.

I got caught up in the big 3,000 employee lay-off in 1995, so I was once again retired.

While working at America West Airlines in Arizona, as a 737 Simulator Instructor, I was able to acquire my Multi Engine Instructors Rating, which came in handy in the late 1990s, when I once again become a 737 Simulator Instructor for Jet Tech Int'l, and Pan Am Flight Academy, in Phoenix. The Multi Engine Instructors Rating allowed me to make extra money by participating in aircraft check rides with students who were going for the 737 type rating.

I retired one more time, in 2001. That's my story in a nutshell, and, to quote the late Paul Harvey: "that's the rest of the story."

<Excerpted and edited from emails from Mel.>