

Biography

Captain Tex Searle

2007



I grew up in the small town of Delta, Utah. Farming and ranching were the main sources of income in that time period. My dad owned large acreages of alfalfa and grain he grew as cattle feed to support the raising of livestock and to supply the slaughter house he owned, nowadays called a meatpacking plant. And yes, I helped them dress out many a prime beef for the Nevada Hotel in Ely, as well as other markets in southern Utah. With my dad's interest as a butcher in the markets, there was plenty of farm work delegated to keep the youth in our family busy. In my younger days there were always horses available to throw on saddle and ride, and there were others needed to be broken to the bridle and saddle. I became fairly proficient at roping cattle to be loaded and trucked to the slaughter house. With little interest in farm work my dad's interest was to oversee the operation. After retirement, along with his mining interest he became a gentleman farmer raising alfalfa seed to be sold to western markets and much of it going overseas.

Delta was on the old Salt Lake City and Los Angeles airway route. I would lie on my Dad's large stacks of hay to watch the old tri-motors and bi-planes flying mail and passengers. It was there my desires grew that I would become a pilot and haul the mail. I remember a barnstormer at the old Sand Hill Strip giving rides and going in debt to take my first airplane ride in a Travel Air 6000. I remember how small everything looked and how slow we seemed to travel over familiar landmarks; how noisy and the feeling of awe I cherished. My desire to fly had become a passion.

How well I remember December 7th, 1941. A friend and I were flying over the Delta Reservoir in an old Taylor Craft. I was fourteen and he was about sixteen. He had soloed a short time before so I knew him to be an excellent pilot. We made low passes and swooped and turned, it was wonderful. When we landed and had tied the T-Craft down, the radio operator stepped from the small CAA (Civil Aeronautics Administration) shack located among the tamaracks and announced the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. Not only did I not know where Pearl Harbor was located, little did I know of the ramification of consequential events this would have on my life and the other young men living in Delta and surrounding area. The following day at a specially called assembly in our high school, we listened to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on the radio asking congress for a declaration of war against Japan and Germany. The implication of those words in that assembly would mean that twenty young men sitting in that high school assembly would soon give their lives for their country. The Delta area would be devastated with manpower shortages.

In the year 1942 at age 15 my prayers were answered. Carter and Woodhouse a flying team were at the old strip to give flight instruction. Cost would be \$65.00 for a solo permit. I sold a steer and with a craving lust headed for the strip and struck a deal. After two blissful hours of cross-controlling and steering a roller coaster ride through the heavens while striving to hold straight and level flight, the deal quickly collapsed when my mother discovered one of her progeny had sold his four-legged asset and was living his dream. Once again I was back on the haystack.

In the fall of 1944, Army Air Corp recruiters were at the school to sign up potential cadets. I almost broke the pen while grabbing it to get my signature on the dotted line. Seven of us were to report to Fort Douglas for physicals and a battery of tests. From this, three of us survived and were sworn into the Army Air Corp Reserves the 28th of September 1944. I soon received letters from friends already in the service encouraging me to bail out of this program. U.S. supremacy in the air war over Germany had been achieved, and soon would be winding down. Many flight schools were to be closed and only a few cadet trainees would make it through the program to win their wings. Letters were sent asking for us to be released from the program. There was no answer, and the alternatives—we could be assigned to any army program they desired of us.

In January 1945, while in Salt Lake I realized I had just walked by a Navy Recruiting Station. I turned around; walked in and in 30 minutes I had enlisted and was to be a Navy Recruit waiting my call for boot camp training. I said nothing of my Air Corp Reserve status. On February 16th I boarded a troop train for San Diego, it was a good move and I enjoyed the training. After completing boot camp I was given a short leave. When I arrived at my parent's home a letter from the Army Air Corps awaited me. Something was said about the winding down of training facilities and I was given three choices, #1—to be an infantryman, #2—a ground crewman, #3—a discharge from the reserves. I chose discharge, had it notarized and today I have my discharge papers from the Air Corps Enlisted Reserve dated the 22nd of May 1945 showing I had served seven months of inactive duty. After boot camp I was reassigned to North Island for further training. From there I shipped out on the USS Antietam named for the Civil War Battle, a newly built large Essex class carrier with its 27,000 displacement tonnage. With a compliment of almost three-thousand crew members and one-hundred and four aircraft, we were under way to join Admiral Halsey's third fleet in the Pacific, a fleet of veteran fast carriers and war ships preparing for the invasion of Japan. After departing Hawaii and well out to sea, the Captain made an enouncement, "An atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima leveling the city to the ground." Not understanding anything about this atomic stuff I thought little about it as we continued to our intended destination. Three days later another announcement was made telling of a second bomb having been dropped on Nagasaki.

I loved the ocean, I would rest many hours aft on the fantail watching the ocean swells and the phosphorus water stirred up by the ship's four large screws. Off Marcus Island we were over taken by a typhoon with winds that reached 130 miles per hour. With waves measuring over 70 feet from trough to crest that continually hammered the ship. At that point in time I thought the ocean was the enemy and my favorite viewing area, the fantail was off limits because of surging foam and green water. I believe that was the only time I had thought about being back at the farm cutting alfalfa with my dad's Farmall Tractor.

Because of high wave action it was necessary to keep the bow of the ship heading into the high waves. The bulkheads in the interior of the ship snapped too and fro from the heavy stress on the ships 900 foot long hull being bowed up and down; like drums they sound. Because the ship was rolling from side to side caused by the high wave action, when coming off watch it was necessary to strap ourselves in our bunks that we might keep from being pitched onto a deck that might put us in harms way—as we might be run over by some seasick sailor racing to a head before he upchucked. Even then some of those upchuckers didn't make it, so pillows were snuggled around our heads to ward off the stench.

The following morning the PA announced all hands not on duty were to make their way topside immediately to the hanger deck. There to locate their respective divisions with all hands wearing life preservers. The scuttlebutt was heavy with rumors with everyone second-guessing of what they imagined. The center of the storm itself had passed on, but the deck still rolled beneath unsteady feet as wind lashed at our bodies. With most of the ships complement of just under 3000 men waiting at parade rest on the deck, it was a long morning. Then, early that afternoon the long awaited announcement came. A section of the underwater hull on the port side had weakened and bowed inward eighteen inches. From the interior side of the ship the steel hull crushed a catwalk (walkway) into an accordion like shape against a 600 PSI steam turbine in the number three fire room. The turbine was badly gouged but not holed in. If the turbine had ruptured, the port side of the ship would have blown out and the ship would have went down taking a large part of her crew with her. Other damage sustained by the ship was the loss of gear lockers and smashed bulkheads up forward. Another carrier, the USS Hornet riding out the same storm had to make way for dry dock duty in Pearl when her bow section plunged into high sea's causing a forty-five foot section of its flight deck too collapse onto the lower bow section of the ship.

We changed course for Guam and there the ship would receive repairs to the damaged section. While awaiting repairs being made in Guam the Japanese had surrendered and the fleet had moved into Tokyo Bay. This must have been a grand scene—with surrender

terms being signed on the Battle Ship Missouri, numerous Navy carrier planes along with hundreds of B-29s circling Tokyo Bay displayed the air strength of our country. One of those pilots flying the B-29 was Captain Jack Schade who in later years flew as a senior captain for Frontier Airlines, and I had the privilege of pulling gear for him during that time period with Frontier.

In the year 1274, Kublai Khan, the Mongol conqueror, sent a great fleet of ships to invade Japan. A typhoon hit this fleet and destroyed it. The Japanese called this typhoon Kamikaze, or Divine Wind, and the Antietam had the misfortune of having been engaged by one of those so called Divine Winds as the Japanese would call it, and they almost won. A setback for us—we were unable to join up with the fleet entering Tokyo Bay. After repairs were made we received new orders to join with the 7th fleet operating in the Yellow Sea where our planes would patrol over China and assist in the occupation of Korea. It was while several of our F6F Hellcats were flying sorties near Port Arthur they received anti aircraft fire believed to have been fired by the Russians. This almost caused an international incident, and then things went quiet.

Patrolling off China our ship would soon be known as another Galloping Ghost of the China Coast.

There was a second typhoon that we got in the way of. We were anchored at Okinawa and with the wind picking up all vessels were straining at their anchors. Orders were received for the Antietam to move out to sea without delay. As I watched other ships getting underway also, I remember one oil tanker especially. The waves would sweep over its decks from bow to stern the length of the ship, and it looked to be more submarine than tanker. Although this typhoon had even more strength than our first typhoon we suffered less damage other than the gear lockers up forward. Several ships were in distress and calling for assistance. There was one DE—Destroyer Escort. A smaller version of a DD Destroyer that had rolled over with all hands still aboard. There was an ensign washed overboard from a CVL Jeep Carrier, and as I remember it was the USS Cabot. In trail the Cabot was a destroyer following at its rear. The waves now at seventy feet and building, to keep from capsizing the bow of all ships must keep into the wind. Visibility was down caused by wind blown spray from the waves. The destroyer spotted the stricken ensign dead ahead. As the destroyer moved along side him, a net was cast out and the ensign was hauled aboard alive and well. It was a miracle at sea, a slam dunk.

We were the first carrier in the Pacific to take aboard a new air group flying the latest hot fighter, that was designated the F8F Bearcat. I was observing landing operations of these new fighters all flying smartly in formation waiting to land. As one made its approach to the aft flight deck for touch down—but something looking amiss, the landing signal officer, signaled wave off to the Bearcat. When the big Pratt & Whitney revved up for the go around, the torque rolled the fighter over on its back, and the four-bladed prop began chewing wood out of the flight deck. I ducked down below the deck edge for protection, but the mate next to me was slow to react, and was hit with splinters of wood from the flight deck. The fighter continued sliding on its back until slipping off the port deck edge into the sea. When going over the edge its canopy exploded showering plexiglas throughout, and then I saw it, an arm from the elbow down spewing blood among the shattered fragments. Some things you never forget. The sailor standing next to me had several small splotches of blood on his white T shirt from flying splinters, the first thing he uttered, “I wonder if they’ll give me the Purple Heart for this.” All he received was some kind of reprimand on his record for unauthorized presence on the flight deck during air operations.

There were several appalling aircraft accidents. While the F4U Corsair was being catapulted off the deck, as it became airborne it instantly nosed up, then continued over onto its back as if performing a loop. For protection I dropped onto the catwalk just aft of the deck edge elevator and ducked under the deck edge. As our ship moved under the inverted aircraft maybe one-hundred above the deck, it looked as though the F4U would nose dive into the deck edge elevator, but it rolled slightly and hit the water a few feet off the port elevator. A following destroyer rushed over to stand over the spot of impact, but nothing was recovered.

There was the F6F Hellcat that lost power on its take off from the flight deck. With luck riding the F6F that day the pilot had hit the water just enough to the starboard letting the big hull of the ship slide safely by him, but from fifty-five feet above was almost hit from a rain of several life rafts crashing onto the water near him. Soon over the ship's loudspeaker we heard, “There’ll be no more of that” Soon a DD destroyer spotted the unfortunate pilot bobbing up and down in his Mae West. There were several more accidents, one involving another F6F. One of our SB2C Helldivers stalled out just aft of the ship. Most of the ship's pilots were pulling a second tour of duty and had racked up several Japanese Zekes, so these were seasoned pilots.

I was below decks in the mess hall when there was a shattering blast. I thought we had been broadsided by another ship, and I ran to my station on the flight deck. I could see smoke and fire from several of our aircraft. I noticed stretcher bearers hurrying toward the deck edge catwalk not far from our big turrets five-inch-guns. We were never informed by the ship's command what actually happened. Later scuttlebutt had it that when the five-inch shell exited the barrel it immediately exploded caused by a defective fuse that scattered shrapnel over the flight deck killing two Marines and one Airdale. Other Marines manning the 20 millimeters on the catwalk were also wounded. Of the aircraft that were holed in and caught fire, the big concern was the full fuel tanks and loaded munitions aboard the

burning aircraft. The fires were soon brought under control, and in the aftermath several of our aircraft made a contribution to the sea.

In the post-war era the Antietam served as sort of unofficial good will ambassador. We laid into ports at Hong Kong, Tsingtao, navigated the straights to anchor in Manila Bay. Saipan, Okinawa, Eniwetok, Tokyo, Hawaii were destinations on our calling list. When checking the duty roster I discovered one temporary slot open for anyone fortunate enough to be chosen to board the USS Moore, a DD class destroyer for a one week duty cruise to Shanghai and return to Tsingtao. The USS Moore would make the run up coast until reaching the Yangtze River, then after passage up the Yangtze and into the Whangpoo River, we anchored off the Shanghai Bund. Wilford Watts, an old school chum from Delta, was the ship's master at arms, and from that day forward I went to the head of the chow line.

A vessel from India, or maybe it was Turkey—I'm not sure moored along our starboard beam and I became acquainted with one of the crew members who could speak some English. He informed me that by saving all his money, and when returning home, he would be able to afford another wife. I don't know if he was pulling my leg or not, but he seemed serious. Why would he want to do that? He related to me that it was a custom to have as many wives as one could support.

The cooks aboard his vessel prepared some of their food out on the open deck. I watched as they mixed enough dough to fill a washtub. Then they flattened the dough and rolled portions of it with large rollers until it was about ¼ inch thick. My recent acquaintance explained what they were concocting by holding his hands out and letting the fingers dangle, meaning noodles. I managed to wrangle an invitation to join him for chow—but the duty officer of the tin can I was on wouldn't give permission for me to leave the destroyer, even though I would only be a frog's leap away. I've always enjoyed dining at someone else's table.

When the USS Moore pulled anchor to return to Tsingtao, I remained topside to watch the hundreds of Chinese junks, sampans, and strange vessels with their superstitious eye that plied the inland water way. Many were friendly and while waving they fired off what would sound like fire crackers. Nowadays when I have the opportunity to watch reruns of Steve McQueen in Sand Pebbles, a movie about a gunboat patrolling on the Yangtze—I remember a time that I also voyaged the Yangtze, only my time was under a more pleasant circumstance.

After my return to Tsingtao, the Antietam was making preparations to get underway for Guam. I was informed I had accumulated enough points and would be discharged from the service and on arrival at Guam I would transfer to a distribution center. I had mixed emotions in knowing I would be leaving shipmates whom together we had shared this great adventure. In telling my shipmates goodbye, I would be leaving the Navy and its proud traditions which I cherished. I loved it at sea, we would spend many an evening on the fantail shooting scuttlebutt and watching the blazing sun sink below the ocean horizon, and now it would all come to an end. I was now a petty officer third class and enlistment personnel were encouraging me to sign over with the regular Navy, that the opportunity of becoming a Chief Petty Officer within a year was a tempting possibility, if I'd just sign on the dotted line. My knowing that I was just a country boy at heart with a wonderful family at home—I gave a salute to the officer of the deck, and a lasting tribute to the flag on the USS Antietam, then swaggered down the gangway for the last time—not looking back, I couldn't let my shipmates see the tears in my eyes.

At Guam I was transferred aboard the ex Italian luxury ship Hermitage for a two week voyage to San Francisco. The trip was interesting; there was a compliment of all the services aboard. An Army non-com I talked with showed me a small bag filled with gold teeth he had collected on Okinawa. An Army sergeant showed me a small bag that held many diamonds. He didn't explain how he had gotten them, but he did say he had pulled duty time in Tokyo. As for myself, I had collected two Japanese rifles—one model 25 and a model 31 with bayonet. Both were stolen at the distribution center on Guam. Several officers among others lost prized articles as well. Not much could we do with the short time we were there. After sailing under the Golden Gate Bridge I was bused to Shoemaker where I received my discharge the 15th of July, 1946, then handed a ticket for a ride home on the Southern Pacific Railroad.

I had planned attending school in Chicago, but until the next sign-up I hired on as a fireman for the Union Pacific Railroad firing the old steam locomotives. I kept the fires burning on everything from switch engines to the big Mallets. They were all oil burners, which meant a lot less work than coal burners. I worked the Southern Division out of Salt Lake City to Las Vegas. I discovered the stories were true and there was romance in the era of the historic steam locomotives. But with the coming of diesel powered engines—that proud tradition of romance vaporized into the past. As I now look back at that time period, and the proud tradition of romance in aviation that suffered a similar fate when the airlines started phasing in the jets, thus putting out too pasture the old reciprocating engine aircraft. I was fortunate in that I was there while romance in both railroading and aviation held its course. As Captain Jack Schade relates, "The leaves are falling." So there are fewer old time pilots left to reminisce of those days, and as for the old steam locomotive engineers, "They've come to the end of the line."

While waiting to get back into school, I attended a basketball game in Hinckley, Utah. Folks get upset when I call it a suburb of Delta. One of the cheer leaders that caught my fancy was Esther Knight. I thought she was the prettiest girl I had ever seen. It took some doing, but after many pleadings and a proper introduction we began dating. I almost lost interest in leaving for school.

When the time arrived I must leave for school, by then I had obtained my private license and now working on my commercial. But that would have to wait until after finishing school.

In 1949 having finished my schooling in Chicago and receiving my graduation certificate. I sold my Indian Motorcycle and boarded a Grayhound Bus for Utah. I haven't missed riding on those wretched cobblestone streets with a motor cycle in the winter time. More than once the rear end of the Indian switched opposite ends and I found my self headed back in the direction from which I had just come.

Arriving home almost broke and needing a job I went to work for US steel in Provo as fireman on a diesel switch engine. That was dreadful. All there was for me to do was look for signals on my side of the engine and attempt to keep a grouchy engineer and a bullheaded conductor from tearing each other apart. Esther and I had renewed our dating and that part of my life was good.

Our family often spent a great deal of time in the mountains, camping, fishing, and always interested in locating that big mineral deposit. As often as they could, an older brother and brother in law joined with us in prospecting the Spor Mountain for fluorspar. How can I ever forget that day we were checking claims we had registered as Bell Hill Mining, named for a lost sheep that from its neck hung a bell. It had rained hard and washed the top soil off several mounds of soil made by burrowing rodents, now exposed was the most beautiful purple fluorspar one could ever hope to find. From this two large pits were opened up and wooden structures built for hoisting the ore into trucks. They made a fifty mile run over unimproved desert roads in hauling the ore into Delta, there to be dumped into railroad hopper cars. Eventually it was necessary to change from the open pit mining method to go under ground. To recover ore from depth a shaft was sunk tapping into the ore body several hundred feet under ground. Ore was shipped back east to the Continental Ore Buyers, and also the West Coast. CF&I in Pueblo, Colorado bought large tonnages as did Grant Butcher Steel in Portland Oregon.

My mother explained that in their early married life my father (bless his good nature) always wore a Stetson Hat and a handlebar mustache, and drove a lively team of horses pulling a Studebaker Wagon. In his senior years he still wore the Stetson but gave up his Studebaker to drive fine automobiles.

Esther and I were married the 18th of Oct 1950. I had bought from my folks a Studebaker convertible to drive while on our honeymoon in Las Vegas. My eldest son Douglas was born in 1952, and works as a financial consultant for the Fidelity Company in Salt Lake City. My daughter Vicki, born in 1954 graduated from Texas Woman's University College of Nursing, and after further schooling is now in cancer research that involves much traveling. Our youngest son Shawn is a practicing physician in Phoenix, Arizona. With my young family we enjoyed camping and many fishing trips, the boys and I enjoyed hunting deer in the Oak Creek Mountains and best of all was the excellent pheasant hunting in the Delta area. All that has changed now, but the memories still exist.

In 1951 I bought a small Cessna 140 to use as a company plane. This gave me the opportunity to build flying time. Soon I received my commercial license, and on several occasions Mike Jense, the proprietor of Central Utah Aviation, called upon me to ferry planes where ever needed. This gave me the opportunity not only to build flying time but also the experience of flying different types of aircraft. Spor Brothers who mined the property next to ours had bought three surplus aircraft, the AT-6, the BT-13 and a Ryan PT-22. As they didn't fly themselves they permitted several of the local pilots to fly them. Leo Burraston, the manager of the Delta Municipal Airport and ex Navy flight Instructor gave the instruction, and for gas alone I had the opportunity of taking instruction in all three. The little Ryan PT-22 was a dream to land.

My instrument flight check was taken in a Cessna 140A. With its Lycoming 115 hp engine it flew very well. After some stalls and tight turns and demonstrating I could fly the Charley Pattern, and then after struggling to locate my self on the old Salt Lake low frequency range, I shot the instrument approach to a landing and soon after I received my instrument rating. I then began camping on the doorstep of Frontier Airlines in Salt Lake City. Frontier was an up and coming airline who flew the Rocky Mountain Empire, and this was more to my liking, especially after having met several of their pilots I wanted even more to fly Frontier.

Being persistent they hired me, Chief Pilot Scott Keller in knowing there were many more qualified WWII pilots than I, just to get me off the door step the door was opened. I was given transportation to Denver, there to take written test and a physical. Having successfully met these requirements I returned to Salt Lake for procedures training in the old Link Trainer, the same type of trainer that thousands of WWII pilots had taken training in and Captain Jack Kettler was the instructor. Having Chief Pilot Scott Keller as my training instructor in the DC-3 was a great experience, and it was there I first fell in love with DC-3s known through out the world as

the Grand Ole' Lady.

Flying copilot in the DC-3 was out of this world. The captains I flew with were all ex Army Air Corps pilots with the exception of two ex Navy pilots. To survive flying in the Rocky Mountains with its harsh environment they had to be good. Some had flown for the Army Air Transport Command; others flew bombing missions over Europe. Captain Jack Schade flew the B-29 on the long three-thousand mile over water run to Japan and back to Guam. Captain Bert Hall who served as a Commander in the Navy flew over one-hundred different types of aircraft. These were not all your small aircraft; they were the latest high performance fighters in that time period. His log books shows he flew all the different fighters such as the early F4F Wildcat, The F6F Hellcat, and the F4U Corsair. He flew them all including the Kingfishers on up to the large flying boats. And how about Captain Bill McChrystal who had more DC-3 documented flying time than anyone in the world—a total of 17,111 hours. “Yes, I say again—pulling gear for these gentlemen—I was in hog-heaven.”

In 1958 I upgraded to captain on the DC-3 and flew this historical airplane for ten years before being type rated in the Convair 340, a nice airplane but under powered. Then the Allison Propjet 580 came on line and called the Mountain Master by the Frontier pilots, and later the B-737 that I flew for ten years before retiring from Frontier in 1985.

About 1983 my nephew Steve Searle and I as partners bought a Steerman bi-plane converted over for spraying or seeding. A wonderful stable machine to fly with its 600 hp Pratt & Whitney and drooped tips tailored to fit both upper and lower wing tips, and of course an enclosed canopy to ward off spray. With its highly rated lifting capacity it acquired the name “Hog.” With the drooped tips of the lower wing leaving a ground clearance of only eight to ten inches, landings were cautiously made in meadows or unimproved roads to keep the drooped tips out of harm's way. Neither Steve nor I ever scratched a tip. Business was good and soon dictated we buy an additional sprayer to keep up with the demands from farmers. This we were not prepared to do, so after the sale of the Steerman, Steve continued his professional career as Superintendent for the Kansas City Division of the Union Pacific Railroad and I continued my career with Frontier. “But, the experience gained was worth the ride.”

In those days of flying DC-3s with their round engines along with other reciprocating engine aircraft, there was camaraderie persisting among the crews that was hard to explain, but it was there. As the new jets were phased in replacing the old recip, the camaraderie among the crews changed, it's hard to explain but flying seemed to take on more of a business attitude, but the feeling that this was an all family airline still persisted. Even today, twenty-one years after Frontier closed its doors for the last time, employees of that time period still gather for monthly luncheons, picnics and other yearly social events—and they still remember.

After my retirement from Frontier I took on the Director of Training position for Majestic Airlines based in Salt Lake City. One of the reasons for this, they had a variety airplanes including several DC-3s, others were the beautiful Lear-Jet, the twin Beech 18, and the classy Beechcraft Turbo Baron, as well the Aero Commander with its 340-hp engines. I wanted to fly them all. I taught ground school, gave flight checks in various aircraft, and upgraded about a dozen pilots for their first captain experience flying the Grand Ole' Lady. Several of the retired pilots from Frontier came aboard. There was Captain Seymour Isaacs who during WWII flew B- 17s over Europe and had his share of being hit with flak; he came aboard because of wanting to fly the Lear. Other aircraft that Captain Isaacs flew while in the service were the C-54 that he flew across the Pacific in weather so thick his navigator couldn't take any celestial shots to locate a position. The one fighter he flew was the F-80 shooting Star. He flew the large Lockheed Constellations while serving in the Air Force. Then while serving as chief pilot on the DEW Line the boxcar shaped C-119 he flew was used to haul oil drums and other needed supplies above the Artic Circle. Some called the C-119 the high-handled wheelbarrow because of its twin boom tails. He also flew the B-24 converted over to haul cargo as well as the C-81 Packet, another high-handled wheelbarrow. There was Jack Schade who flew twenty-six combat missions over Japan in B-29s and he also experienced flak hits, and was anxious to again crawl into the cockpit of the Grand Ole' Lady. Captain Al Kendell came aboard, a veteran captain for Frontier who was one of the last of many to be accepted for pilot training in WWII, and it was Captain Kendell who checked me out in the Learjet. Captain Ron Rasmussen flew the early B-47 bombers with eight jet engines strapped below its sweepback wings while serving in the Air Force. Considering what they had flown and under what conditions, where would you find more experienced pilots than these gentlemen? My how times change, the oceans can now be navigated with a hand held GPS and aircraft that do all the thinking for you. Captain Rasmussen flew copilot for me in the Lear, and together we flew charters for the Veterans Administration transporting doctors to their scheduled appointments at various hospitals throughout the west whenever and wherever they operated clinics. During our layovers Ron would pull out his banjo and crack me up playing some of my old favorites.

I don't think you would find many charter operators or mail contractors that had more experienced pilots than these gentlemen, and why did they come aboard Majestic? For the same reason I did—the love of flying. Even now I'm in awe thinking of the accomplishments these ex warriors engendered in their life time, and though I was serving as Chief Pilot at the time, whenever Captain Schade and I flew together, I crawled into the right seat out of respect for this accomplished veteran of the air wars, and long time

Frontier Airlines pilot. We made several trips to Alaska together and flew Alaskan bush to locate the proper islands. It was like reaching back in time for those early flying experiences and I believe we found them. My association with the Grand Ole' Lady was a grand ride, and yes, flying with all those accomplished veterans, many who have flown west, none could have had it any better than I did, and I say it once more—"It was a grand ride."

Esther and I have retired to a Condo Residency for seniors in Lehi, Utah. I spend enjoyable times riding ATVs with my nephews throughout the House Mountain Range in Western Utah. To enjoy the most beautiful scenery that the public as a whole has not yet discovered. Life has been good and I still look up when I hear the sound of an aircraft flying above.

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Tex was 80 years old in 2007 when he wrote this autobiography. He was 90 years old on March 25, 2017 and still living in Salt Lake City. His wife Esther passed away on March 25, 2010 and in 2011 he remarried "...a lovely lady I once courted in the late 40s." She passed away in early 2013. I received a folder of Tex' material from Billy Walker on Aug 26, 2017 when he brought a load of Frontier memorabilia to the FYV-FSM Reunion. Tex is the author of a fabulous book about his Frontierre Airlines career titled "The Golden Years Of Flying."

-Jake Lamkins
(11/14/17)

This second, undated and shorter autobiography was found in the papers given me mentioned above. It is addressed to Billy Walker in response to a questionnaire from him. I've used the title Biography since that is what Tex called them.

-Jake Lamkins
(11/16/17)

Captain Billy Walker
Aviation Questionnaire

Hi Captain Billy,

I was born March 25, 1927 on my dad's farm in Delta, Utah. Although he never farmed himself he leased out land. He bought livestock and owned a small meat packing plant where I had my share of dressing out beef and quartering them up for delivery to the markets in southern Utah and prime beef to the Ely, Nevada Hotel where many westerns movies were produced. So I learned to break and ride horses, rope cattle at a very young age and transport the cattle to their final destination. I enjoyed lying on my dad's large stacks of hay and watch the old mail planes on their run between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City.

I attended schools in Delta and graduated from Delta High School. I was inducted into the United States Navy on the 16th January 1945. After Boot Camp and some schooling on North Island I shipped out on the aircraft carrier USS Antietam. At sea we were training for the invasion of Japan. One of my first assignments was the flight deck casualty power cable crew. If the ship suffered flight deck damage such as from Kamikaze suicide bombers, power was restored in bypassing the damaged area with the emergency cable. Near the end of my Navy service I was being trained in CIC (Combat Information Center).

The ship received extensive damage from a typhoon and we diverted to Guam for repairs. We were there under repairs when the war ended and we missed the grand fleet entering Tokyo bay and the show of force by our army and navy air power.

At my discharge from the Navy I held rating Petty Officer 2 Class and then once more I began taking flying lessons. During that period of time I attended Coyne Chicago in Illinois and presume the school name now is Coyne of University Chicago. After graduating in 1949 I returned to Delta.

I was a member of the Delta JCs. We completed many civic projects such as street signs and etc. As a member of the American Legion Post 135 Delta, I participated in honoring our deceased veterans. As old age finally caught up with me, I no longer serve on a regular basis.

I purchased a Cessna 140 in 1949 that I might build the flying time required by the airlines. I flew sheep men to find lost sheep. Cattlemen to find lost steers and horse wranglers to locate the wild horses ranging on the desert. Anything to make a buck and purchase the fuel that keeps the Cessna in the air and fills my heart with joy. In the early 1950s serving as a Warrant Officer in the Utah Civil Air patrol I flew search missions in the PA 18 and the L-5. The war surplus PA 18 acquired by the Utah CAP I ferried from the Maiden

Training Base at Missouri to Salt Lake City.

I camped on the step of Frontier Airlines in Salt Lake and to get me off that step Chief Pilot Scot Keller opened the door and invited me in. It was a whole new world. I was flying the Grand 'Ole Lady and with the best pilots of any airline. I served with Frontier almost 29 years before retiring in 1985. Aircraft I flew during my Frontier career were the DC-3s, CV-340s. The CV-A340s and CV-A440 were better known as the Allison Prop-Jet 580. The 580s were a wonderful plane to fly. We felt safe and confident in climbing out of the Rocky Mountain valleys in any kind of weather. The 580s had almost as much power in one engine as the WWII B-17 had in all four Wright 1200 h/p mounted engines. And then the Jet-age came to Frontier, the B-727, and then came the B-737 and others. They were nice to fly but that old time feeling of romance in the air was gone with the phasing out of the old reciprocating engines.

Received my Commercial Pesticide Applicator aerial license in 1979. I received my Ground Instructor and Advanced Instructor ratings in 1993. I held Pilot Certificate 1237268 issued by the Forest Service to transport their representatives through out the West.

While employed for Majestic Airlines (charter and mail carrier) I served as Training Director and Chief Pilot. Our aircraft consisted of the Lear Jet, DC-3s, D-18s, TwinBarron T58 and the Cessna 206 based in Salt Lake City and Alaska.

While employed for Rocky Mountain Helicopter I served as Fixed Wing Advanced Ground Instructor and as Chief Pilot for the company owned DC-3.

Aircraft I at one time owned, 12BC Taylor craft, Cessna 140, Stearman PT-17, Stinson Voyager 150 and the H-35 Bonanza.

The following light aircraft I've checked out and personally flown: Piper Navaho, J-3 piper cub, Aronica Champ 7AC, Ercoupe, Stearman PT 17 Hog, Stinson Voyager, Bonanza H35, Taylorcraft 12BC, Piper Twin Apache, Stinson L-5, L-16, Cessna 180, Cessna 170, Cessna 172, Cessna 182, Cessna 210, Piper Pacer, Piper TnPacer, Aronica Sedan, Piper Cruiser, Piper Twin Comanche, Piper 140, Piper 180, Bellanca 150, BT- 13, AT-6, Metro Liner, King Air 200, Twin Cessna 404, Twin Cessna 414, Cessna UC 78, Twin Beech 18, Ero Twin Commander, Twin Beechcraft Turbo Barron.

I accumulated over 27000 hours; most of it over the Rocky Mountains and of those hours 7,190 were nighttime hours, and 2,355 hours of logged instrument time.

When the day arrives you must hand over the keys to the front office and say goodbye to a career that was full of wonderful things and places, I wouldn't have had it any other way. Many of those wonderful memories can be relived again from my novel, "The Golden Years of Flying."