



“Flight of the Felix” Air Tractor Aerial Dance; 50 Years In Western Slope Agricultural Flying!

By Jessica Freeman, Guest Writer

Editor’s Note: Jessica Freeman is Executive Director of the Colorado Agricultural Aviation Association

“50 Years Strong”

In 2015, I had the opportunity to spend several days with the Felix family on the Western Slope, shadowing agricultural pilot Leonard Felix with Olathe Spray Service. The Felix couple opened their home to both myself and my two young daughters in the middle of the busiest part of their flying season. Olathe Spray Service is an aerial application service, better known as a commercial crop-dusting business.

We arrived in the evening and sat down to a lovely home cooked meal with Leonard, his wife Lou, and Leonard’s faithful dog, Radar. Leonard informed me that breakfast was at 4 a.m. and then we would head to work at 4:30 a.m. The trip to the office is short. We walked a couple hundred yards in the pitch black over a route that Leonard knew like the back of his hand before arriving at the OSS offices and airstrip. Leonard is always the first to arrive and the first to take off on the day’s spray jobs.

I was given a seat in one of the two spotter pickups that Leonard works with. Each sweet corn field that will have a harvest crew working within a ¼ mile radius, that day, is sprayed before the sun comes up.



Article photos courtesy of Jessica Freeman

We drive to the first field with a yellow beacon lazily flashing from the cab of the pickup. The drivers’ job is to scout the field for hard-to-see obstacles before the airplane arrives, and to communicate same with the pilot by radio.

We set up in position for the first pass as the aircraft arrives and begins the aerial dance of spraying the

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Steve Kelly, President

President's Message:

*50th Anniversary of the First
Apollo Moon Landing on
July 20, 1969*

The first landing on the lunar surface was a milestone of human ingenuity and progress, the story of which still excites many people throughout the world today. In July, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of this amazing achievement, recognize the thousands of people who made this possible, and hopefully, inspire a new generation to continue man's exploration of the cosmos.

Our society has recognized two Colorado Astronauts as Hall of Fame Laureates. John "Jack" Swigert (1988) was the Command Module pilot for Apollo 13. Due to an explosion of a Service Module oxygen tank, the mission was scrubbed and the crew safely returned to Earth after a legendary effort during which the abilities of astronauts and mission control were tested in a way never anticipated. Jack Swigert was elected to represent Colorado in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1982, but unfortunately died from cancer in December of that year.

James "Jim" Irwin (1984) was the lunar module pilot for Apollo 15. He became the eighth man to walk on the moon during one of the most scientifically productive missions of the Apollo series. This mission spent 67 hours on the lunar surface and used the Lunar Rover vehicle to travel 17.5 miles collecting 170 pounds of geologic samples, including some of the oldest samples found.

In Colorado, we will be commemorating these great achievements this summer. The week of July 13th through July 20th has been designated as Apollo Week at the "Wings over the Rockies Air & Space Museum" in Denver. Daily seminars and youth activities are being planned which will engage a variety of ages and educational backgrounds. Each day will be devoted to an in-depth exploration of a specific space flight topic, and featured sessions will bring astronauts and Apollo Program veterans, along with subject matter experts from universities, aerospace corporations, and government agencies to explore the technology that made the Apollo missions successful and what the future may hold for planetary exploration.

As many of us can visualize where we were at the time of that "...giant leap for mankind...", let's think about those millions of Americans who were not yet born in 1969. Our mission as a Society to honor, as Chuck Holmes once said, "...the Colorado pioneers of air and space who showed us the way, had motivated us to create a new refinement of the CAHS Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame." Our members will be pleased to see that this newly renovated Hall of Fame will proudly include displays highlighting the accomplishments of Colorado's noted astronauts, past and present. . . .

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Our Heritage
Hall of Fame Room!**

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Challenge Coin.**



**NOTE: We will email
future CAHS Journals!**

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The COB REPORT:

Women Laureates In Colorado Aviation History

Women have played a role in aviation since the very beginnings of powered flight, and our state of Colorado has had its share of ladies who have been true pioneers in this field. To date, there have been 19 women inducted in the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame, and as we mark the 50th anniversary of the Hall of Fame this year, we salute these women of achievement:

Babette Andre has had a distinguished career as an aviation journalist, including air traffic reporter for KOA and KHOW radio. She specialized in teaching mountain flying in her aviation career, with work for the FAA as an accident prevention counselor.

An active flight instructor in Eastern Colorado, **Lucile Bledsoe** served as the Secretary of the Colorado Aeronautics Board and the Wray Airport Commission, along with teaching at Northeastern Community College in Sterling.

Colorado Springs businesswoman **Patsy Buchwald** served as CEO of the Colorado Balloon Classic. She served with the Colorado Springs Airport Advisory Commission becoming its chairperson in 1996.

After first soloing in 1942, **Betty Clark** enlisted in the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program. After the war she became active in agricultural flying in western Colorado, running the flight operations for Mile High Aviation for many years.

Ann Frink joined the WASP program after soloing in 1941. After WWII, Ann became a flight instructor and owned an FBO in Pueblo, Colorado. She was very active in aviation education activities in southern Colorado.

Holding numerous ballooning records, **Dr. Carol Davis**, has been awarded the Montgolfier Diploma, the highest award granted by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale for ballooning world records.

Penny Hamilton Has been a leader in promoting women in general aviation. She is also the co-founder of the Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum at Granby Airport.

Michelle Kelley develops spacecraft hardware and software for the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP) in Boulder, CO, and had served as Missions Flight Director for LASP satellite projects, and the Ice, Cloud, and Land Elevation Satellite.

Doris Langher had a life-long involvement in aviation-soloing in 1934. She competed in air racing, aerobatics, and even barnstormed for a year. A flight simulator operator with United Air Lines for many years,



Lance Barber
Chairman

she was the 9th woman to gain an Air Transport rating.

Serving as a WASP in 1943, **Grace Birge Mayfield** ferried aircraft for the Air Transport Command. Attaining FAA instructor ratings she worked for CAHS laureates Harry Combs and Lew Clinton as a flight instructor.

Gwendolyn Mayo was founder and owner of Mayo Aviation which provided charter services and air ambulance flights throughout the U.S. and Canada from its base at Centennial Airport.

Active as a pilot since 1937, **Donna Myers** worked for Ray Wilson's wartime flying program and later Monarch and Frontier Airlines. She later served as the national secretary and national president of the 99s organization.

Elizabeth Pfister became a WASP pilot in 1943, ferrying aircraft. After the war she earned instructor ratings and competed in air racing. She later attained a helicopter rating and competed as a member of the U.S. helicopter team in world championships.

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Brian Richardson

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Aviation ARcheology:

***"The Last Ride
of Text 10"***

Boeing's B-52 Stratofortress has served in the United States Air Force (USAF) inventory since 1955 and it is projected that it'll remain operational until well into the 2040's. To put this aircraft's service life into perspective, there has been at least one recorded case of three generations of pilots from the same family having flown B-52s operationally; that's grandfather, father and son. That is a mighty impressive endorsement for a single aircraft design.

Between 1952 and 1962, Boeing produced 744 variants of this magnificent bomber. Many of those original airframes underwent extreme modifications and were re-designated as subsequent model numbers, the last of which was the B-52H. In December 2015 the USAF listed 58 on active service, with another 18 in reserve status. During the Vietnam War, 31 were lost as a result of combat action. Another 73 are listed as written-off due to peace time service related accidents. A number of unserviceable airframes have been relegated to museum or "gate guard" status. The remaining 500(+) airframes have either been scrapped or are awaiting a similar fate at Davis-Montham Air Force Base. Of special interest to the Colorado Aviation Historical Society **AvAr** program is one of those peace time accidents, which occurred near La Junta, Colorado, in the early morning hours of Friday, October 30, 1981.

On this particular mission, "Text 10" would be the call sign selected for Stratofortress AF #55-078, a B-52D assigned to the 22nd Bomber Wing, 2nd Bomber Squadron of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), stationed at March Air Force Base in Riverside, California. The aircraft and its eight man crew lifted off at approximately 23:03 hours Pacific Standard Time, Thursday, October 29th, on what was scheduled as a

diversity training mission. The mission profile had this crew flying from California to Arizona, up through Utah, over into Wyoming, down through Colorado, across Kansas and into Missouri, then down to its ultimate destination at Carswell Air Force Base, Ft. Worth, Texas. Along the way they were to practice high altitude celestial navigation, in-flight refueling, low-level tactical insertion and avoidance, and electronic bombing simulation. The assigned hard-deck was to be 400 feet, meaning that the aircraft was not to descend below 400 feet above ground level (AGL), unless it was intending to land.

At approximately 04:45 hours local time, "Text 10" impacted terrain roughly 10 miles due East of La Junta, Colorado. Cruising at an estimated 400 to 450 miles per hour, this 244 ton behemoth plowed through three different sand hills before coming to a final stop, nearly one mile later, in the dusty hill country of Southeastern Colorado. All eight crew members were killed in this accident and much of the aircraft wreckage burned before local firefighting crews managed to extinguish the resultant conflagration. Following a formal investigation, records indicate that the Air Force decided to bury the remaining debris

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Aviation ARcheology:

"The Last Ride of Text 10"

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in-place rather than deal with its laborious removal. Negotiations with the property owner were begun, but the final outcome is not revealed in any of the allied documents incorporated in that official report. By December 1, 1981, the remnants of "Text 10" were officially disposed of and pretty much forgotten.

Generally focusing on historic aeronautical properties that are at least 50 years of age or older, **AvAr**'s prime directive is to leave each site it visits undisturbed. Our philosophy is essentially to leave no stone up-turned, meaning leave everything exactly as you found it. While we might lift an artifact to examine and document it, we'll always place it back in the exact position we found it, guaranteeing continuity of the site. (Imagine



Original USAF photo showing actual path of destruction of "Text 10."

this... if every sightseer to these historic landmarks collected just one little souvenir on each visit, how long do you suppose it would take before any evidence of that site would still remain?) **AvAr**'s admonition to anyone visiting an historical site is – *if you need a memento, take a photo!*

So, why did **AvAr** select this relatively late, micro-crash site for evaluation? Several of our team members were interested in collecting specific data between early and late crash sites.

Comparative studies of materials decay, paint and undercoating erosion, as well as overt desecration of this relatively modern site were of prime interest. Data was gathered, evaluated and juxtaposed in order to develop a theorem. The final result of our investigation



AvAr Field Agent Charles Stockmver made the first find.

was that the official Air Force investigation was correct; pilot error!

How much of "Text 10" remains buried below the surface of those open plains east of La Junta is anybody's guess. **AvAr** has pinpointed the site where most of the wreckage is most likely buried. It will be left up to future archaeologists to uncover the remains of this deposit to determine whatever they may from the buried artifacts there. . . .



This terrain feature is believed to be the second hill impact point.

Important Journal Notice!

In the future, the Journal in 12(+) pages; full-color; will be eMailed to all Members who have submitted an eMail address to the Colorado Aviation Historical Society.

**Please send your email to:
Michael.CAHS@yahoo.com.**



Guest Editorial by Dr. Penny Hamilton:

Colorado Aviation Museum Celebrates Aviator Dwight D. Eisenhower in 2019

By Dr. Penny Hamilton

Grand County Historical Association, located at Emily Warner Field & Colorado Aviation Museum co-founder, and CAHS Laureate (2011).

Grand County, Colorado, was one of President & 5-star General Dwight David (Ike) Eisenhower's favorite places, even before he became President. After catching fish in the Fraser River, he enjoyed cooking those trout at the Byers Peak Ranch during the years 1948 through 1955. In aviation jargon, Eisenhower "flew west" at his death on March 28, 1969.

In recognition of this 50th Anniversary, this summer, the volunteers of the Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum will celebrate Eisenhower's aviation history when visitors stop by any Friday or Saturday, June 1 through August 31 from 11 to 2.

Admittance is free, family-friendly and wheel-chair accessible. Located on the Granby/Grand County Airport in the former Rocky Mountain Airways airline terminal. Fly-in, drive up, or even bicycle.

According to Dr. William Hamilton, museum co-founder, who states, "Some readers may not be aware that "Ike" was also an aircraft pilot. According to his Presidential Museum, he learned to fly while stationed in the Army in the Philippines. Eisenhower soloed in a Stearman PT-17 on May 19, 1937.

Later, he flew a Stinson Reliant and logged over 350 hours of flying from July 1936 to November 1939. Eisenhower was a Lt. Colonel, serving under General Douglas MacArthur. One of Eisenhower's flight instructors was William L. 'Jerry' Lee, who was training the pilots for the nascent Philippine Air Force.

Also, Eisenhower's Presidential papers reveal "Ike" earned a private pilot license in 1939 at Fort Lewis. This aviation knowledge was extremely important to Eisenhower in World War II planning as the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces," Hamilton concluded.

The Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum has a Stinson propeller on display as a tribute to Dwight Eisenhower, who was elected President on November 4, 1952, becoming our very first aviation pilot to hold that office.

Another aviation reference is in Eisenhower's At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends . "After World War II, I



Photos courtesy of Dr. Penny Hamilton

Bagpiper piping at one of the many events sponsored at Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum, Grand County, Colorado

had ceased to fly altogether, except that once in a while, on a long trip, to relieve my boredom and demolish the pilot's, I would move into the co-pilot's seat and take over the controls. But as the jet age arrived, I realized that I had come out of a horse and buggy background; recognized my limitations; and kept to a seat in the back."

Interestingly, the National Museum of the US Air Force says, "The U-4B, a U.S. Air Force version of the Aero Commander L-26, was used by President Dwight D. Eisenhower from 1956 to 1960 for short trips.

A pilot himself, President Eisenhower would often take the controls, primarily during trips between Washington, D.C., and his farm in Gettysburg, Penn. The first presidential aircraft to have only two engines, the U-4B was also the first presidential aircraft to carry the familiar blue and white paint scheme."

Eisenhower was a very take-charge kind of personality so I believe the above Aero Commander story but do understand his not taking the controls of the 4-engine Lockheed Constellation Columbine.

According to www.history.com, "While many think of Air Force One as the name of the President's airplane, Air Force One is actually a call sign applied to any aircraft carrying the American president."

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Guest Editorial by Dr. Penny Hamilton:
Colorado Aviation Museum Celebrates
Aviator Dwight D. Eisenhower in 2019

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In 1953, Eisenhower was our first President to travel aboard a plane designated "Air Force One."

First Lady, Mamie Eisenhower, who considered Colorado home, named their Presidential planes, Columbine I, II, and III, as a tribute to Colorado's State flower. Columbine flew them to Stapleton Airport on their many visits to Colorado. Logs from the Eisenhower Library indicated their Aero Commander flew into Granby-Grand County Airport during his many fishing trips to our area.

A few of the Eisenhower Administration Cabinet Secretaries and many important papers and bills to be signed by the President were flown in, too. However, the President did not fly on that plane to Granby. The Secret Service required Eisenhower to be driven from Denver to Fraser.

Eisenhower was also our first President to fly on a helicopter and the first to fly in a Presidential jet. He helped found the US Air Force Academy, and his Presidential L-26 Aero Commander (Columbine) was given to the Academy Skydiving team in 1969.

To learn more about aviation history and our many unique stories, plan on stopping by this summer. Information on all of our Grand County Historical Association museums and events are listed at www.grandcountyhistory.org. . . .



Photo from Library of Congress.

Aero-Commander: National Museum of US AF archive.jpg According to the National Museum of the US Air Force, this U-4B, which is the Air Force version of the Aero Commander L-26, was used by President Dwight Eisenhower. After he left office, this airplane was given to the U.S. Air Force Academy skydiving team in October 1969. The Cadets and other authorized jumpers used it in Colorado Springs for parachute training.



Photo from Library of Congress.

Mamie Eisenhower named the Presidential Lockheed Constellation airplane, Columbine, after Colorado's State Flower.

Women In Colorado Aviation

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Hazel Quinn was one of the first women pilots, A & E and A & P, in the western states and had a career as an aerial photographer.

Betty Jo Reed served as a WASP in WWII and later as an engineering test pilot for the Air Force Training Command. She was instrumental in the recognition later given by to Congress to the women who served in the WASP organization.

JoAnn Stone was active in search and rescue operations with the CAP for many years in western Colorado. She was involved in safety improvements at the Gunnison County Airport.

Patricia Sullivan served with the WASPs towing targets for gunnery practice. She later became involved in agricultural flying with Mile High Aviation in western Colorado, and active with CAP search and rescue operations.

Emily Howell Warner began her career with Clinton Aviation, eventually becoming the flight school manager. Her monumental effort to become an airline pilot with Frontier Air Lines made her a true pioneer in the aviation field and she has garnered national and international recognition for her efforts.

Veda Dyer Williams managed the Unvair Company in Aurora, CO. The company specialized in the production of parts for older antique and classic aircraft. . . .

Crop Dusting on the Colorado Western Front!

By Jessica Freeman

(...continued from Page 1)

field at low altitude. The plane lights up as it dives into the field, then as the plane climbs out of the field the exterior lights are turned off so that Leonard can see the light bar on the nose of the aircraft to line up the GPS for the next pass. The pickup rolls forward exactly 88 feet each time the airplane completes a pass to provide a second visual for the GPS line. And so the dance goes; lights on aircraft dives in; spray on as he speeds across the field; spray off and the airplane pulls gracefully over the telephone wires, lights off and the airplane makes an efficient turn; the pickup rolls forward 88 feet with the yellow flashing signal a visual cue to the pilot. Every time Leonard comes on the radio his voice is calm, like he is just relaxing in his favorite armchair, even though he is performing some very high intensity flight maneuvers.



Photo courtesy of Jessica Freeman

"Flight of the Felix!" Low altitude flight; life of the "Crop Duster."

When I returned to the house that morning Leonard still had hours of daylight work ahead of him. His sons Seth and Devan begin their busy days flying for Olathe Spray Service, a business Leonard opened almost 50 years ago, right as the sun rises. Leonard and his sons fly fixed wing Air Tractor aircraft as well as Bell helicopters during their daily operations around Olathe.

I walked through the front door to find my daughters happily baking cookies with "Grandma" Lou, like we had been a part of the family for years. That evening



Photo courtesy of Jessica Freeman

The "Felix" Tail Art, complete with insect spray pump!

Leonard was the last man at the office, finishing up necessary paperwork, then locking the office and walking back to the house for dinner. During the busy agricultural growing season, he is the first man to work and the last man home day in, day out; sometimes seven days a week for weeks on end.

This past September I found myself back in Olathe, CO to celebrate the end of Leonard's 50th season of crop dusting. Yes, you read that right, 50 years as a crop duster in the same small western slope town.

In those 50 years Leonard has served the farming community protecting crops; saved a friend's home from a fast-moving fire; flown wildlife surveys; and helped local authorities with search and rescues, when needed. His community service extends to serving on the Colorado Agricultural Aviation Board of Directors for over 40 years, serving on the Colorado Pesticide Advisory Committee for more than 20 years, and testifying before the U.S. Congress in Washington D.C. twice to protect aerial application.

This spring, as the snow melts and the agricultural season begins, Leonard will be deftly swinging into the cockpit of his Air Tractor to begin his 51st season of "ag flying." Leonard is a true aviator at heart, with a passion for flying with which most of us wish we were blessed. He once told me that the goal should be "to aspire, to inspire, before we expire!"

Crop dusting... Yes, you read that right, 50 years as a crop duster in the same small western slope town he calls home. . . .