



HISTORY OF

DELTA GOLDEN WINGS, INC

**DELTA GOLDEN WINGS IS A FRATERNAL
ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE AND RETIRED PILOTS OF
DELTA AIR LINES, INC. FOUNDED IN NEW ORLEANS
ON NOVEMBER 16, 1968**

1970 – 1979

**Originally written by:
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ARTICLE III, Section 2. In addition to Regular Members, there shall be a category of Honorary Life Member. Award of such membership shall be by a majority vote of the members present at each annual reunion.

ARTICLE III, Section 3. Regular Members shall pay annual dues of \$10.00. Dues are payable on or before January 1st of each year. Unless by reason of extenuating circumstances dues are not paid by April 1st of each year, the delinquent person ceases to be a member, and his name shall be dropped from the roster.

ARTICLE IV, Section 1. (add to this section) All officers and directors will pay all personal expenses at reunions.

It was also at this reunion that the proposed designs created by Mike Winicki and his committee were placed on display for membership review. Subsequently, a vote was taken and the present emblem, the gold wings superimposed over a Delta red, white and blue widget with the outer perimeter in gold, was adopted.

Mike Winicki and Fritz Schwaemmle met in Atlanta with Dick Maurer, attorney for Delta Air Lines, seeking permission to use the Delta widget for our emblem, cards, stationery, etc. We were granted that permission in a letter which Tommy Bridges signed in behalf of the Delta Golden Wings and returned to Dick Maurer

The membership present and voting at the reunion elected the following officers:

Tommy S. Bridges, president	1-year term	
Benjamin S. Catlin, vice president	1-year term	
Glenn F. Doolittle, Secretary	2-year term	
Harrison E. Croft, Treasurer	2 nd year of 3-year term.	

Mr. Jack James, retired FAA and a good friend to many of the pilots at the reunion, delivered an outstanding address. (excerpt, Delta Golden Wings Newsletter #7) After reading the text of his speech, I feel that as the current Historian (F. W. Miller) it is my responsibility and privilege to include it in its entirety into this document. Not only does it portray a close and personal insight of our founder's humanity, from which sprang his greatness, but it also tells of the role that we, the airline pilots, have contributed to the history and the development of American aviation. . . .

"I am indeed honored and very grateful for the opportunity of being here today to participate with you, your second anniversary of the Delta Golden Wings. When Tommy Bridges at a QB (Quiet Birdmen) meeting some time ago invited me, I felt highly honored, and very delighted because it gave me the opportunity to greet many of my old friends that I might not otherwise see again. Many I had known before there was a Delta Air Lines.



I hesitate to name names because I have such a lousy memory. I worry about my memory, as a matter of fact it is so bad at times, I cannot remember what I am worrying about. But I have conjured up from this poor memory a few dedicated professional stalwarts that at one time or other I have served with. Those that I have missed, blame it on my poor memory, but sound-off, I want you on my list.

I want to congratulate each of you on the formation of THE DELTA GOLDEN WINGS. Now that you have reached the age of ease, or, where the "Life of Riley" begins, you have many fun years ahead, and there is no better way to enjoy three or four days a year than this type of organization, where you can keep in contact with each other.

I have had the honor and privilege of attending some American Airlines "Grey Eagles" conventions and I can assure you that they have a BALL. The great thing about it is that it gives the "better half" a chance to greet their counterparts and everyone has fun.

I had the honor and pleasure of being on Delta's inaugural flight from Monroe, Louisiana to Atlanta. I don't recall the passengers other than Mr. Woolman, his Monroe backers and myself. The pilot,

the best I can recall was named Greer. He didn't remain long with the Company. I understand he went back to the dusting business, apparently he couldn't get the dust out of his blood.



I would like to talk to you about two of my most favorite subjects: ONE MR. C. E. WOOLMAN AND THE AIRLINE PILOT.

It was my privilege at one time to frequently meet with the top officials of all airlines, and I most humbly state here and now that I am most grateful for the opportunity that providence gave me in knowing one C. E. Woolman. He was, I believe without a doubt, the finest gentleman I have ever known. His integrity, his sense of fair play, gentleness, acute business judgment, wit humor and that never to be forgotten broad smile from ear to ear made him a giant among men. He had that unique character and bearing that attracted I believe, everyone. I loved him more than my own brothers. We had many pleasant business transactions and social visits - both in his office and mine.



I vividly recall my last visit with him in his Atlanta office. As Chairman of the Regional Air Space Committee covering - 8 southern states, the Caribbean area including Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Panama, we had many meetings in Atlanta. One day at the conclusion of one of our meetings, and on my way out to the airport to return to Ft. Worth - by Delta of course, I decided to drop by his office for a quick hello. I had about 30 minutes before flight departure and left my cab waiting outside. I stopped at the reception desk to inquire if he was in. He came dashing down the steps and threw his arms around me and we walked back to his office. We had such a good visit - reminiscing over old times and discussing the history of the various model airplanes he had on his desk. I suddenly realized I had to get going as I just had time to make the flight. He said he wasn't through visiting and would call operations and request a hold. I advised against this, and told him that I would drop in again on my next visit and allow more time to visit. He said "Can I depend on that?" I assured him I would. I didn't get back soon enough and didn't learn of his death until too late to attend his funeral.

His picture is in the largest frame, and in the middle or heart of all the airline presidents hanging in my den - still heads and heels over the rest in my humble opinion. I'm sure you good people loved him also. Without a doubt, the Good Lord has received him with open arms - with a well done C. E.

Now I would like to say something about the Airline Pilot. I doubt that you pilots fully realize the tremendous contribution that you have made in the history of American aviation. Your contributions have kept America far ahead of the rest of the world in civil aviation. May I add military aviation also. Regardless of your individual contribution during World War II, your greatest contribution to military aviation in my opinion happened in the middle 30's when you convinced the Army Air Corps that they had a lot to learn about flying, and particularly flying the mail. Those poor kids didn't have a chance, but they didn't die in vain. With World War II coming up, the Air Corps just had time to prepare for it. Believe it or not, without your contribution - we could not have put a man on the moon.

You just have to swell with pride, as I do when entering an airline terminal to see the hordes of people swarming in the lobby - enplaning - deplaning. To see the magnificent airports and terminal buildings. To see the beautiful jet aircraft with all the sophisticated equipment to tell you what your aircraft is doing and where you are at all times.

Modern electronic airways - with antiquated air traffic control systems. A real full fledged computerized operation. As a Captain, you are making more money than you thought existed a few short years ago. Beautiful stewardesses to fetch your lunch and coffee - pretty cozy, I'd say.

Well, we know it hasn't always been that way. It's a far cry from the old days flying the airmail or the early passenger service. You probably were flying a single engine with minimum engine instruments, a compass and probably a bank and turn for navigation, a speed of 110 - 125 miles per hour with three hours fuel supply, navigating by a Rand-McNalley road map, weather reporting geared to agriculture, no communication facilities, airports only at the larger cities, no carburetor or surface deicing facilities, not too reliable engines and poor maintenance due to the economic condition existing at the time.

When customers were scarce, which was most of the time, the take home pay was hardly sufficient to keep the family alive.

On several airlines, the pilot sold tickets, collected them, loaded the customers baggage, flew the trip and arranged local transportation for the customer at his destination. These were the depression years and you were thankful to earn a dollar, particularly if it involved flying.

As an Airline Inspector on a regular, but small salary, I made more than one loan to operators in order that he could dole out a little to employees so that they could have a little food on the table. I can assure you that Delta was not one of these.

There was one great redemption in all of your hardships that the present generation of pilots will no longer enjoy. YOU were the boss. YOU made the decision to go or no go. YOU interpreted the weather and filed the flight plan. YOU flew at an altitude YOU chose. There was no radar monitor means to spy on you. YOU were a distinct individual, not a computer, or accountable to a computerized system. I am not knocking computerization as it is a great and necessary function in this highly competitive and sophisticated world of ours. I'm just trying to emphasize the contrast in the state of the art, whereby in the early days the individual enjoyed a wide latitude for action as against subjugation to almost complete automation today.

The younger pilots will never know the thrill of flying you and I enjoyed for years. It just has to be in a single open cockpit airplane - down on the deck in a fog, snow, sleet, rain or thunderstorm. You are dodging water towers, houses, windmills - maybe carrying a load of ice, and past your "point of no return", and you happened to be over east Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama or Georgia whereby a forced landing, particularly a "dead stick" one could be all she wrote.

The fruits of your daring and dedicated efforts along with the many Noble brother pilots who gave their lives are the dominate reason for the public's wide acceptance of Airline Transportation today.

Did you know that of the first 40 airmail pilots - 31 lost their lives in the service? I'm sure you will recall the long list of the "In Memorial" pilots that ALPA published.

You have survived the most dangerous, dramatic and romantic era of flying. YOU are to be congratulated - but don't forget that the good MAN upstairs had an interest in YOU. You truly flew in the days of the "Wild Blue Yonder" We had never heard of the word "ecology" let alone knowing what it meant. That reminds me of a story of a couple from Texas who made an overnight stop at Salton Sea located in the south east part of California. There was a heavy dust or smog in the area, and they asked the motel clerk what it was. "It's just smog", he said. "Lately we've had a great many Los Angeles people come over for the weekend and - exhale."

I don't recall filing a violation on a single airline pilot. However, I once was required by law to file on a group of pilots on one airline because of exceeding all flight time limitations on orders of the operator. The pilots tipped me off and requested an investigation.

Without a doubt, I am your greatest booster and admirer. I know what you have gone through to qualify and maintain your qualifications as an Airline Captain. I cannot think of any individual profession or endeavor that is subject to the multiplicity of checks - physical mental and flight that you pilots have been and are continuing (those still flying) to be subjected to. No wonder so many Airline Captains have suffered heart attacks - not from flying, but from worry of the oncoming checks. By the time you are comfortable in one aircraft, here comes another to take your time -training - training.

I recall a short time ago, a group of members in my club was discussing the questions as to what profession or individual who had to have the most skill and responsibility in our everyday life. The vast majority selected the skilled Surgeon. That makes sense - doesn't it? Particularly so if you had an operation whereby his skill has saved your life.

To the average individual, the Surgeon is thoroughly skilled and knowledgeable about the human anatomy. His many years of schooling, interning and practice qualifies him to know just where to place the hypodermic needle, the knife, the stitches and the drugs to use for your recuperation.

He truly is a wonderful person to have around in need - no one denies this. However, he is responsible for only one life at a time, and he is dealing generally with the same type of organism and anatomy each similar operation.

He is great - skilled and devoted to fulfilling the medical code. However should he make a wrong diagnostic, or the knife slips and he loses a patient, he, in most cases suffers no personal hazard physically, legally, or the loss of his license to continue to practice his profession.

I couldn't stand it any longer and joined in the debate. I came out loud and clear for the Airline Captain, and here are just a few of my contentions.

QUALIFICATIONS: To begin with, the Airline Captain of a regular scheduled airline is required to serve many years of training and apprenticeship, perhaps more than the surgeon. He is required to pass a multiplicity of very rigid oral, written, flight and physical tests and demonstrate over many years service

as a copilot, his qualifications and responsibilities to earn his Captaincy. Thereafter he is constantly under the surveillance of the Operator, the Federal Aviation Agency (insurance) and others. He must undergo bi-annual flight and physical examinations to determine maintenance of his qualifications.

The Airline Captain is required to be fully conversant with the limitations of the aircraft, power plants, all components and accessories, all communications systems and be able instantly to interpret the myriad of instruments installed in the cockpit, including appropriate emergency procedures in the event of equipment malfunction or other troubles.

The Airline Captain must be thoroughly conversant with: flight planning, aircraft load computations, fuel management, airways electronic navigation, airborne radar interpretation, map reading, interpretation of weather reporting, alternate and terminal airports, air traffic control procedures at all destination and enroute airports, low approach procedures at all airports including alternates, communications procedures, airway terrain including all danger and restricted areas, etc. Now let's take a look at some of his other responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES: The Airline Captain is entrusted with a multi-million dollar aircraft. He normally has a crew of 5 or more under his supervision for which he is responsible to see that each carries out their respective duties. Each flight has a passenger manifest from a few to approximately 400 breathing human beings for which he is concerned in giving a comfortable and safe ride.

He is responsible for both the crew and passenger welfare and conduct, including an occasional hi-jacker who wants to go to Cuba or Timbukto. He is constantly alert to decision making for the safety of the flight - particularly in-flight weather conditions, and during marginal conditions at the terminal or alternate airports.

He must be a super instrument pilot and be extremely alert when landing during marginal weather conditions with attendant problems such as thunderstorms - tricky windshifts- crosswinds and precipitation in all forms. No two flights are exactly alike. We can be sailing along in beautiful flight conditions with no visible signs of trouble and all hell breaks loose, such as entering or leaving jet streams. The Good Man upstairs has his own way of reminding us that He is still the MASTER.

The Airline Captain must keep alert for the other aircraft who may have strayed into his assigned altitude, while at the same time maintaining his own. He is piloting a huge monster that should something go wrong, he cannot pull over to the side of the road and stop like a car, bus or train. He must do something with this monster quick and intelligently or it will do something with him and his cargo. Now let's look at some of the hazards for the Airline Captain.

HAZARDS: As stated before, the Airline Captain is continually under surveillance physically mentally and professionally. A failure in any part may subject him to "grounding." He is expected to conform to all Company, local airport and Federal regulations. A violation of either could subject him to "grounding." I defy anyone who says he can make flights constantly without a violation. It is next to impossible, but you can get hung if you do.

In my day as an airline inspector, Chief of Airline Inspection and Director of Civil Aviation, I instructed my Inspectors to use good judgment and reasoning before filing violation reports. Now, and for several years, the Inspectors are directed to file a report regardless of the circumstances. In other words, they cannot use their own discretion, but must submit their reports to Washington and let the administration and legal desk jockeys make the assessment. They have taken the aviator out of aviation and placed it in the hands of Washington yokels who, in my opinion, are not qualified to make flying judgment decisions.

The Airline Captain is further subjected to other physical hazards such as: Mid-air collisions, near misses, structural failures, component failures, flying geese, birds, kites, balloons and perhaps UFO's

I can assure you that I had no trouble in getting the debaters at the club to switch their votes to the Airline Captain.

Frankly, in my opinion, there is no possible way to equate with any profession or occupational endeavor that requires the combinations of infinite skill, responsibilities and subject to the professional pressures and physical hazards that are attendant to the Airline Captain. He is a real dedicated man to his profession, and in my opinion belongs in a class head and heels above all other professional groups.

May I say to you great ladies in the audience - you are BLESSED WITH THW BEST. Taking a quote from Winston Churchill - as many owe so much to so few.

I have spent the better part of my life alternately bleeding, starving and enjoying so many interesting experiences and pleasant associations with you.

In conclusion, I want to again congratulate each of you in getting DELTA GOLDEN WINGS up and away. May you have many good times together.