

LUCKY ME

LUCKY ME

**The Life and Flights
of Veteran Aviator
CLAY LACY**

STACY T. GEERE



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*This book is dedicated to
past, present, and future aviation
pioneers and to all who possess an
insatiable passion for flight. May your
stories travel through time for the
enjoyment of generations to come.*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Through the years, many people have encouraged me to document my life and accomplishments in aviation—from being the first to base a corporate jet at Van Nuys Airport to claiming victory at the Reno Air Races to making record-setting flights across the world for charity. With the celebration of Clay Lacy Aviation's fortieth anniversary in 2008, there seemed no better time to pursue that long-overdue book project.

Since I was a young boy growing up in Wichita, Kansas, my entire life has been luck. I was lucky that my grandmother allowed Orville Sanders to build an airport on her farm, where he introduced me to flying when I was only twelve years old, and that a fellow named Ernest Colwell allowed me to fly his plane on my first trip to

California four years later. Luck and timing were also on my side when I was hired by United Airlines and joined the Air National Guard, where I met people and did things that changed the course of my life.

As I look back at my diverse flying career, I am most thankful for the extraordinary friends, business associates, and mentors who have opened doors to opportunity and fueled my passion for aviation. I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my friends and colleagues who have contributed their personal recollections and stories to this book. Their spirit of innovation in regard to flying, determination in the face of uncertainty, and sense of adventure in exploring air and space have shaped and influenced my life tremendously.

I am thankful for their time, companionship, laughter, and enthusiasm.

I am also grateful to the special people, now deceased, with whom I shared my love of flight and many memories, including my mother and grandmother, and close personal friends Jack Conroy, Allen Paulson, Fish Salmon, Bill and Moya Lear, Hal Fishman, Johnny Meyers, and others.

Many thanks go to the dedicated employees at Clay Lacy Aviation for upholding an unmatched standard of excellence, professionalism, and customer service. Without their hard work and support, fulfilling my vision to set the global standard for private aviation could not have been accomplished.

In addition, I'd like to recognize the book's author Stacy Geere and all

who have provided photographs and historical background to preserve my legacy. While most of the information and images included in this book originate from my personal knowledge and archives, we have made every effort to provide credits and sources where possible.

It is my hope that the previously unpublished stories and photographs found on the following pages will provide you a sense of enjoyment and history flavored by humor, as well as the inspiration to realize the unlimited freedom and possibility flight offers.

Clay Lacy



Clay, 2009

FOREWORD

Among the many charges against her during the last witchcraft trial in England in 1712, Jane Wenham of Walkern in Hertfordshire was accused of, among other things, swearing, thievery, and flying. The judge noted, however, that there was no law against flying. Flying became a reality later in the eighteenth century when Pilatre de Rozier and the Marquis D'Arlandes were lifted by a balloon from the grounds of the Palace of Versailles in 1783.

A century later, Lilienthal in Germany, Pilcher in England, Moulliard in North Africa, and Montgomery and Chanute in the United States were experimenting with man-carrying heavier-than-air gliders with substantial success. They were the first aviators.

Octave Chanute wrote in 1893, "It seems, therefore, not unreasonable to entertain the hope that man may eventually achieve a mechanical success (if not a commercial one) in the attempt to compass a mode of transportation which so strongly appeals to the imagination, and that it may result in greater speeds than pertain to our present journeyings."

In the late nineteenth century, Ader in France, Hargrave in Australia, and Langley in the United States were attempting powered flight, if not with unquestioned success, at least with credible promise. To the surprise of every knowledgeable aeronautical expert, it was two brothers in Dayton, Ohio, Wilbur and Orville Wright, who

finally conquered the hitherto unsolvable problem by designing, constructing, and piloting their twelve-horsepower biplane in December of 1903.

Twenty years later, Orville Wright gave a radio address in which he talked about the aeroplane: "Twenty years ago my brother and I thought that its use would be principally scouting in warfare, carrying mail and other light loads to places inaccessible by rail or water, and sport. But the wildest stretch of the imagination of that time would not have permitted us to believe that within a space of fifteen years actually thousands of these machines would be in the air engaged in deadly combat."

World Wars I and II advanced aero-

nautical technology immeasurably. In just a quarter of a century, aircraft progressed from slow wood and canvas biplanes to high-speed all-metal fighting machines. These technologies also benefited the commercial sector, with passenger service expanding rapidly, and general aviation aircraft becoming more useful and ubiquitous.

High-performance aircraft and ever more advanced navigation and communication systems required ever more skillful and highly trained pilots. For young boys growing up during the Great Depression, the world of aviation was a magical world and many were attracted to its thrills, its adventures, and the possibility of escaping the drudgery and the heartaches of those very difficult economic times.

One such boy was Clay Lacy of Kansas, who soon became enamored

with everything about the world of flight. In *Lucky Me*, the reader will learn about how a boy fascinated with flight became one of the most experienced and respected flyers who ever fastened a seat belt. Few will come close to the breadth of his aviation accomplishments: as jet fighter pilot, senior airline captain, winning air racer, record-setter, superb aviation videographer, and all-around master of the air, as described by a very well-qualified group of his longtime friends and colleagues.

Having known Clay Lacy for four decades, I am confident that drinking deeply from this compendium of his life will allow the reader to appreciate his talents, achievements, and contributions as I do.

Neil Armstrong



Armstrong (left) and Clay, 1988

INTRODUCTION

Clay Lacy is one of the most versatile pilots in the history of powered flight. A world-renowned and record-holding flyer, his life embodies the evolution of the American aviation industry.

While Clay is a highly celebrated figure in aviation, few are aware of the close personal friendships and deep passion for flying that inspired his remarkable achievements.

Growing up in the farmland of Wichita, Kansas, Clay developed an early fascination for anything with wings. Through the years, he flew with and was inspired by true flight pioneers, from fearless test pilots who pushed the envelope of technology to courageous U.S. astronauts who expanded the boundaries of air and space.

Clay began flying at age twelve and had 1,500 flight hours under his belt when he joined United Airlines at age nineteen in the right seat of a DC-3. He

went on to fly F-86 Sabre jets for the California Air National Guard where he became the officer in charge of instrument training.

A visionary and entrepreneur, Clay was one of the first to foresee the need for jets in the air charter business. In 1964, he flew the first Learjet into Van Nuys Airport—located in close proximity to Hollywood’s burgeoning entertainment industry and other business centers—to shape a new era in corporate air travel and mobility. Four years later, with a single Learjet, he launched the first executive jet charter company in the Western United States. Today, Clay Lacy Aviation is distinguished as the most experienced operator of private jets in the world.

Clay, also a veteran air race champion and acclaimed aerial photographer, is the epitome of the professional pilot. He has flown more than 300 aircraft

types, logged more than 50,000 flight hours, established twenty-nine world speed records, and touched upon more aspects of aviation than any other person. A practitioner of quiet philanthropy, Clay’s contributions to worthwhile causes, especially those assisting children and future pilots, reach far beyond the aviation industry.

In addition to Clay’s professional endeavors, this book explores the life and legacy of an aviation icon through photographs and the recollections of his friends and colleagues—many whose legendary achievements are permanently engraved in history.

Most importantly, the following pages reveal how a young boy from the Midwest followed his dreams with passion and, through the joy of flying, stirred greatness in others.



Clay, 1976



"I have seldom met an airplane I didn't like."

Clay Lacy

LOG BOOK ENTRY ONE:

SIX HOURS AT THE GROCERY STORE

LUCKY ME

Clay Lacy was born in 1932 in Wichita, Kansas, the birthplace of aviation manufacturing. At five years old, while most boys his age were playing stickball or reading comic books, Clay learned how to build model airplanes from his childhood friends Fred Darmstetter and Jerry Shumaker. Clay thoroughly enjoyed assembling and painting the balsa wood planes and, as his interest grew, created his first gasoline-powered flying model at age eight. Captivated by the sense of adventure that flight offered, Clay embarked on a lifelong journey that would propel him from the wheat fields of the Midwest to the airfields of the world.

With aviation as a central theme, Clay experienced periods of excitement, discovery, and challenge during his youth. When Clay was only seven, the death of his father from tuberculosis had a profound impact on his life and indi-

rectly influenced his growing interest in aviation. "Before he died, my father was sent to a sanitarium located about a mile from Wichita Municipal Airport," Clay says, "but they wouldn't allow me in because I was too young. So, every Saturday and Sunday while my mother visited my father, I would wait in the car for hours watching planes take off and land from the airport."

Shortly after his father's death, Clay took his first airplane ride in a Beechcraft Staggerwing over town. Recalling that his mother purchased the flight from a pilot named Dave Petersen, Clay says, "When I had the chance to actually fly, I was absolutely sold. As I looked down at the houses, I remember what impressed me most was how good and clean the world looks from the air. I knew for sure that's what I wanted to do."

When Clay was just twelve years old, he noticed by chance a few airplanes

parked at the West Links Country Club located next to his grandmother's farm about three miles outside the city limits of Wichita. It was there he met his mentor Orville Sanders, a local businessman who had just started purchasing, repainting, and reselling surplus World War II liaison aircraft. Enjoying his first opportunity to work on real airplanes, Clay helped sand and paint the aircraft using the skills he had acquired building models. Sanders also told Clay of his desire to build an airport and offer Veterans Administration-funded flight training to U.S. soldiers coming home from the war.

The first woman in Kansas to earn a driver's license, Clay's grandmother possessed a progressive spirit and nurtured her grandson's aviation interests. "I spoke to my grandmother about building an airport on the farm," Clay says, "and she knew how badly I wanted to fly."

At Clay's urging, she helped fulfill

Sanders' dream by leasing him forty acres of farmland on which to erect a runway and hangars. "Within three weeks, they cleared a wheat field to accommodate a runway and a grass pasture to park aircraft," Clay continues. "Then, all of a sudden, planes were coming in!" In 1945, Sanders named the airfield Cannonball Airport. Both Clay's grandmother and Sanders were powerful influences in his life and among the first to recognize his immense potential.

Before the ink was dry on his pilot's license, Clay accumulated flying time while transporting aircraft to and from a nearby airport for fuel. As a teenager, he took the controls of dozens of aircraft types without a formal checkout. "I learned how to work on airplanes, recover them, and fly them," Clay says. "Just prior to my fourteenth birthday, Orville let me fly solo. After I obtained my student permit, Orville allowed me

to fly anything. He had so much confidence in me."

Clay worked on weekends and evenings after school, taking the bus and sometimes traveling the extra three miles to the airfield by walking or hitchhiking. After being issued a private pilot's license, Clay took his grandmother for an airplane ride as his first passenger. In 1948, at age sixteen, he earned a flight instructor rating.

Since then, Clay has spent almost every day of his life flying, though he shares the story of the few hours he wandered at age thirteen. "I spent all of my time working at the airport, but then I saw the boy next door making good money at the grocery store, so I decided to go there for a job." Clay reported to work at 6 a.m., but as the time dragged washing produce and bagging groceries, he decided it wasn't the job for him. "I went to my boss and

told him I was ready to go home. He let me leave at noon, and paid me for the hours I worked. That was the only time in my life I spent working outside of aviation."



At age nine, Clay is fascinated with model planes, trains, and boats. Notice the miniature train tracks to the left.

LUCKY ME



These are some of the earliest photographs available of Clay and depict life growing up in the farmland of Wichita, Kansas.

Above: Clay (circled) is a member of the Lincoln Elementary School choir in sixth grade.
Photo courtesy of Patsy Ann Boles.

Top right: At age six, Clay (left) rests on his bicycle in the company of neighborhood friends.
Photo courtesy of Fred W. Darmstetter.

Middle right: Clay's childhood friend Fred Darmstetter plays with a toy wagon at age seven. Darmstetter is credited with first introducing Clay to the hobby of model airplane building.

Bottom right: Even before taking to the air, Clay enjoys pushing machines to their limits.





These are Clay's "never sell toys," including (left to right) his 1946 Harley-Davidson motorcycle, 1957 Ford Thunderbird, and 1945 Schwinn bicycle.



From the time he was a young boy, Clay aspired to visit faraway destinations. At age sixteen, he flew a Stinson 108 Flying Station Wagon to Amarillo, Texas, where he took a photo of this directional sign with the plane in the background.



BARRON HILTON
RETIRED CHAIRMAN,
HILTON HOTELS CORPORATION

“Clay is probably one of the most recognized pilots anywhere, but at the Reno Stead Field, Clay is an absolute rock star. Between events, we’d retreat to the sanctity of the motor coach and spend many enjoyable hours swapping flying stories... Without any prompting, Clay would regale us with tale after tale. If you ever wanted to see a grown man cry, just ask Clay to tell his hilarious story about the Human Fly and every aviator within earshot will be reduced to tears. With his Kansas roots, and years on the radio, Clay tells his stories in a remarkably calm and understated way that belies their wild content. It’s just another reason why we love being with him so much.”

Every spring, Barron Hilton, retired chairman of Hilton Hotels Corporation, hosts an annual Easter gathering at his Flying M Ranch located seventy-five miles southwest of Reno, Nevada. Aviation greats from across the world arrive for the celebration, from astronauts and experimental test pilots to air race pioneers and globe-trotting adventurers. Some have been friends for years, and even decades. Hilton refers to himself as merely “a flying innkeeper” at the ranch—a playground for aviators who enjoy flying above the sprawling 800,000 acres without restrictions. “If it can fly, you can fly it here,” offers Hilton.

From the top floor of his resplendent headquarters building in Beverly Hills, California, Hilton reminisces about his experiences with Clay Lacy in the comfort of an expansive office suite. He says, “I’ve flown with Clay many times over the years. I can remember taking a demo

flight with him when he received his first Learjet. He let me take over the controls, and it was a thrill to take the reins of such a high-performance machine.”

Born in Texas, Hilton remembers riding his bike to Love Field Airport in Dallas to watch airplanes take off and land. “I knew right then that I wanted to become a pilot,” he says. In 1937 at age eleven, he moved with his parents and siblings to California. Hilton earned his pilot’s license on his own time while serving in the U.S. Navy and, after World War II, achieved his twin-engine rating at the University of Southern California Aeronautical School. Possessing a lifelong fascination with aviation, he earned his helicopter license at age sixty-five.

Also an accomplished glider pilot, Hilton first learned the pleasure of soaring in 1972 from German aviatrix and test pilot Hannah Reitsch. “It is the

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greatest thrill for me to climb up over southeast Nevada in a glider,” Hilton says. “There is no sound, no engine. There is a new dimension to the air around you when you are soaring. You can ride with the thermals for as long as two to three hours before coming down and landing.”

Remarking that Clay’s air-to-air photography work “has become legendary in Hollywood, and throughout aviation circles around the world,” Hilton describes an unforgettable photo mission. “We utilized Clay’s Astrovision system during a couple of the launch attempts I sponsored with the Earthwinds Hilton and Global Hilton balloon projects. I flew with Clay on a couple of flights in his camera-equipped chase plane, with me flying in the left seat while he managed the camera equipment and video crew from the right seat.

“In the end, the six attempts to be the first to circumvent the Earth in a manned balloon served merely as test flights for the pilots who eventually became the first to fly nonstop around the world, Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones. My friend, the late aviator and adventurer Steve Fossett, subsequently flew solo around the world, and I was proud to sponsor his command center at Washington University in St. Louis—but that’s as close as I got to helping achieve the last great plum in aviation history.”

While many guests frequent the Flying M Ranch year after year to share stories, unmatched hospitality, and a mutual passion for aviation, Hilton reminisces about those who have left the bonds of Earth. “One tragic event we all felt was the loss of Steve Fossett. We had all been together on Labor Day weekend at my ranch. Monday morn-

ing, Steve went out flying and never returned. During the intensive air search that followed, I flew with Clay in his Pilatus Porter as we looked for Steve. About forty individuals in a variety of fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft participated in the search. Clay flew as low as one hundred feet above the ground. We strained to see any trace of a plane or person, or an unusual sight, anything. And there was nothing.”

Transitioning to a lighter tone and fonder memories, Hilton describes his most enjoyable flight with Clay. “Perhaps my favorite flight with Clay was when we weren’t even in the same plane. We were flying back to Los Angeles from Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the final flight of the Global Hilton balloon. I flew my Citation, while Clay formed up with me in his camera plane



This sign at retired Hilton Hotels Corporation executive Barron Hilton’s famed Flying M Ranch in Nevada is a familiar sight to the many aviation greats who flock there for weekend retreats.

and shot some air-to-air video of me in the left seat.

“A year later, Clay was a weekend guest at the Flying M Ranch, and he said he had a surprise for me. I had just installed a large-screen projector system, and he popped in a video to help christen it. To my delight, I saw my beloved Citation, with me in the left seat, flying across the Great Basin. Thanks to my new audio system, the dramatic video was accompanied by the soundtrack of my life: “Come Fly With Me” by our mutual friend, Frank Sinatra. To this day, that video brings a smile to the face of everyone who views it, and it remains one of my most prized possessions.”

Aside from long weekends flying at his ranch, Hilton says he and Clay have spent significant time together in his recreational vehicle near the pits at the Reno Air Races. “Clay is probably one of

the most recognized pilots anywhere,” Hilton says, “but at the Reno Stead Field, Clay is an absolute rock star. Between events, we’d retreat to the sanctity of the motor coach and spend many enjoyable hours swapping flying stories with friends like [test pilot] Bob Hoover, [aviation executive] Joe Clark, and [Apollo 8 astronaut] Bill Anders.

“Without any prompting, Clay would regale us with tale after tale. If you ever wanted to see a grown man cry, just ask Clay to tell his hilarious story about the Human Fly and every aviator within earshot will be reduced to tears. With his Kansas roots, and years on the radio, Clay tells his stories in a remarkably calm and understated way that belies their wild content. It’s just another reason why we love being with him so much.”



Hotel executives Barron Hilton (left) and father Conrad Hilton pose in 1965 near an early Lear 23 owned by Rat Pack leader Frank Sinatra. The Hiltons were among the first entrepreneurs to recognize the business benefits of private air travel.



Clay (right) and fellow aviator Barron Hilton are ready for takeoff circa 2000. Photo courtesy of Barron Hilton.

"I remember my grandpa saying, 'Don't ever go up in one of those things!'"

Clay Lacy



As a young man, Clay is confident in his exceptional flying abilities and comfortable piloting all aircraft types, such as this piston-powered Douglas DC-6.



Look closely at this photograph of Clay standing near a Stinson Station Wagon and you'll see a small dog nestling behind the aircraft's right landing gear.



SEYMOUR (SI) ROBIN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
SENSOR SYSTEMS, INC.

“Clay is vertically integrated, and by that I mean he has excelled in many, many ways in the aviation industry—as airline captain, test pilot, air racer, and businessman. He has a knack for flying planes, any kind of plane. As a test pilot, he can sit in a plane, whether he knows the aircraft or not, and fly that thing flawlessly! When someone asks Clay, ‘Can you do it?’ he always answers, ‘I can do it!’”

Seymour (Si) Robin, executive vice president of Sensor Systems, Inc., a company that designs antennas for use on nearly every aircraft in the world, pulls out a yellow legal pad and says, “I made an outline of Clay’s achievements.” Robin sits behind his large desk stacked with file folders containing applications to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for inventions he has created. Immediately, stories about his time with Clay Lacy start flowing—their strong friendship, mutual enthusiasm for aviation, shared passion for inventions, and most memorable flying experiences. He has known Clay for fifty years.

The two pilots and entrepreneurs met in the mid-1960s when Clay was a captain for United Airlines. Robin says it was then Clay showed his skill as a businessman by launching a new service to transport passengers based

on their own needs without delay: an air charter business. “Clay’s office was housed at Van Nuys Airport in the old Roscoe Street building,” Robin begins. “He needed pilots and I knew everyone in the area, so I passed the word along. It was Clay who taught me many fine points of flying. He knows just how far to push you. And if he likes you, he goes easy on you.”

Robin continues, “Clay is vertically integrated, and by that I mean he has excelled in many, many ways in the aviation industry—as airline captain, test pilot, air racer, and businessman. He has a knack for flying planes, any kind of plane. As a test pilot, he can sit in a plane, whether he knows the aircraft or not, and fly that thing flawlessly! When someone asks Clay, ‘Can you do it?’ he always answers, ‘I can do it!’”

Describing one of his most vivid

LUCKY ME

flight experiences with Clay, Robin says, “We were in Van Nuys, California, and Clay climbed into a Staggerwing Beech that he had never seen before, and which is a very difficult aircraft to fly and land correctly. He took it up and flew it around. And, when he landed, he just greased it! He coached me on it later.”

Robin also recalls the time he went flying with Clay in a DC-2 over Sacramento, California, and the aircraft lost an engine. “Talk about pucker factor!” jokes Robin. “But Clay was perfectly calm and brought it down for a safe landing.” And, Robin remembers watching Clay land a Lear 24 “at just the right place” on a private airstrip near Clay’s vacation home at Pine Mountain Lake, California.

Noting that Clay “likes to fly and have fun,” Robin provides an example. “One day, the phone rang in my of-

fice and it was Clay. He said, ‘Si, I’ve got an idea.’ Before he could finish, I said I’d be right over!” Robin says Clay told him about planning the Friendship One flight, where each passenger would contribute \$5,000 to help feed the world’s hungry children. “At once, I wrote him a check. We traveled a distance of over 23,000 miles, with fueling stops in Athens, Greece, and Taipei, Taiwan. Clay said his goal was to shave at least six hours off the old record.” With a wide grin, Robin recalls his words to Clay at the end of the trip. “I told Clay, you may be a better pilot, but I’m better looking!”

With admiration, Robin tells about Clay’s final flight as a United Airlines captain. “Clay always uses his imagination. To celebrate his last flight with United, he flew his usual route across the Pacific in the Boeing 747. Then, he

climbed into a DC-3 and flew it and did the same in a Piper J-3 Cub, all to celebrate his retirement day.”

Robin concludes, “Most of all, Clay keeps a positive mental attitude. Nobody understands an airplane the way he does—from the construction to the mechanics to the systems and their limits. He is the most prolific pilot ever. All in all, he is a world-class aviator.”



In 2005, Clay (left) and Executive Vice President of Sensor Systems, Inc. Si Robin share a flight in Clay’s vintage DC-3. Photo courtesy of Si Robin.



CAPT. GENE CERNAN, USN (RET.)
APOLLO ASTRONAUT

“Clay commands respect when he is speaking to his peers, to other pilots. They know that what Clay says has meaning. While he can casually tell jokes and be funny, you know there is seriousness behind his comments, and that you ought to take his message with you. It is that creative spirit—for Clay, nurtured on farmland flying—which prompts you to do what others might be afraid to do.”

Retired U.S. Navy Captain Gene Cernan—astronaut, Naval aviator, author, and the last man to walk on the moon in 1972—takes time from organizing celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s Apollo Program to talk about Clay Lacy. “Clay must have had a passion as a kid for doing something different. I think his eyes were on the stars from the day he came out of the womb. And, they are still on the stars.”

Attributing a diverse background and deep passion for aviation as driving forces in Clay’s life, Cernan describes the special qualities exhibited by his friend and fellow aviator. “You must have a technical mind to understand the aircraft, and to aspire to be more than the pilot. You need to be willing to work, to know, and to understand your flying machine and your environment.”

Cernan recalls meeting Clay fifteen years ago at hotel executive Barron Hilton’s ranch near Reno, Nevada. “Clay is one of a fraternity of aviators who visit the ranch every year and share the same passion for flying. We fly airplanes, balloons, gliders—anything we can get off the ground. The common denominator of our group is aviation. Folks like [hotel executive] Barron Hilton and [actor and director] Cliff Robertson and Clay dream the impossible. And then, they go out and make it happen with an impulsive passion to do what other people were afraid to do, or couldn’t do, or wanted to see if they could do. It is that force that drives people toward becoming ‘a Clay Lacy.’”

Also praising Clay’s skills in the aerial photography realm, Cernan says, “Clay’s air-to-air photography is unbelievable. He knows exactly where to position his airplane in respect to another aircraft, or to

LUCKY ME

get the perfect shot of a mountaintop, or to capture the most overpowering view.”

Cernan—who served as mission commander of the Apollo 17 manned space mission and got the ultimate view when exploring the moon in the famous lunar rover for three days—says, “I was lucky to be at the right place at the right time. I got to call the moon my home and I’m proud of that. My dream came together after I graduated from Purdue University and became a Naval aviator. I never thought that experience would take me to the moon. However, you have to believe in yourself, never count yourself out, and just do your best. But, you are the only person who knows what your best really is. I think Clay believes that too.”

While he and Clay have shared several flying adventures and Alaskan fishing trips together through the years, with

a laugh Cernan tells a story about Clay that took place on the streets of Los Angeles. Cernan recalls, after attending a funeral service for a dear mutual friend, Clay offered to drive him to nearby Santa Monica Airport to catch his charter flight back to Houston.

“Now, Clay has flown everywhere in the world and never lost his way,” Cernan says. “However, that day while driving, he couldn’t find the Santa Monica Airport! We circled the wagons in an ever-decreasing loop, making left turns and six or seven U-turns. Finally, Clay spotted an airplane taking off. ‘There it is!’ he shouted. Clay has probably flown out of that airport a thousand times, but things look different from the sky.”

On a more serious note, Cernan continues, “Clay commands respect when he is speaking to his peers, to other pilots. They know that what Clay says has

meaning. While he can casually tell jokes and be funny, you know there is seriousness behind his comments, and that you ought to take his message with you.

“It is that creative spirit—for Clay, nurtured on farmland flying—which prompts you to do what others might be afraid to do. Clay could never have accomplished what he has without the passion and the basic skills to fly. When you add his knowledge and experience, and put it all together, his life story speaks for itself. Clay is the epitome of a professional aviator.”



(Left to right) U.S. astronaut Gene Cernan, hotelier Barron Hilton, and test pilot John Meyers enjoy the 2006 Living Legends of Aviation award dinner in Los Angeles. *Photo courtesy of Airport Journals.*

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PLANES
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AND TRIPS

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YOU THERE

PHONE
WICHITA

2-1347
KANSAS

In 1948, Clay created this sign in his own handwriting while working with businessman Orville Sanders to advertise charter flights in a Stinson 108 Flying Station Wagon. First introduced in 1947, the aircraft was ahead of its time and advertised as America's No. 1 utility plane.



F-86 Sabre jets line the tarmac at the California Air National Guard's 146th Fighter Wing based at Van Nuys Airport circa 1950s.
Photo courtesy of Van Nuys Airport.

LOG BOOK ENTRY TWO:

KANSAS SKIES TO GLOBAL SKIES

LUCKY ME

A flight instructor at age sixteen, Clay Lacy spent every moment possible flying. By age nineteen, he had accumulated an incredible 2,000 hours of flight time as both an instructor and ferry pilot. Reflecting on his relationship with Orville Sanders—who provided him the first opportunity to fly airplanes—Clay says, “Orville was one of the most important people in my life. I was so interested in airplanes and flying, that’s all I could think about. Orville knew I could fly well and let me do almost anything. By the time I was sixteen years old, I had flown many different types of airplanes without ever being checked out by an instructor. I learned a lot about airplanes and flying in a short period of time.”

In 1951, Clay noticed a United Airlines recruitment ad in *Trade a Plane Magazine* that would chart the course of his professional life. Convinced that

his chance of being hired was slim due to competition from experienced World War II veterans, Clay submitted his application for a pilot position with great reservation. Much to his surprise, one week later Clay received the first telegram of his life, from United Airlines, requesting an interview in Denver, Colorado. In January 1952, after a second trip to Denver for final testing and less than thirty days after the initial interview, Clay left his hometown of Wichita, Kansas, to join United Airlines as copilot on the Douglas DC-3.

In what he attributes to good fortune, Clay was stationed at Los Angeles International Airport. “In those days,” Clay says, “almost everybody wanted to come to California when they started working for the airlines, so most new hires ended up in Chicago or New York. However, most of my classmates were from Chicago or

New York and wanted to go back home. I had my choice of San Francisco or Los Angeles even though I was the youngest in the class and the last to choose where I would be based. It was pure luck.”

After pilot training, Clay made his first flight at the controls of an airliner on April 10, 1952. Flying for United Air-



Clay poses in his United Airlines uniform in 1953.

lines an average of eighteen days per month, he worked as a flight instructor at nearby Torrance and Van Nuys Airports on his days off.

Soon after, the Korean crisis intensified and draft boards issued letters for compulsory military service. In 1954, Clay took military leave from United Airlines to join the California Air National Guard at Van Nuys Airport. Upon joining, he was immediately sent to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, for Air Force officer training. Next, Clay attended primary training at Bainbridge Air Force Base in Georgia, and basic training at Greenville Air Force Base in Mississippi, where he received his first introduction to jet flying. He then attended gunnery training at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas, and Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Following training, Clay returned to

the Air National Guard at Van Nuys Airport flying the F-86 Sabre jet—the U.S. Air Force’s first swept-wing jet fighter—and became the officer in charge of instrument training. “That was an excellent time in my life,” Clay says. “Because of the Air National Guard, I met some of the people who changed the course of my life.”

After twenty months of military service, Clay returned to United Airlines and his Air National Guard unit, where he remained heavily engaged for the next five years. In 1960, he accepted a position at the airline’s flight training center in Denver, where he served as flight instructor on the DC-6, DC-7, and Convair.

However, during the Berlin crisis in 1961, Clay was called to active duty for one year. Following the 146th Air Fighter Wing’s transition from fighter jets to

transport planes (and name change to 146th Air Transport Wing), Clay flew the C-97 Stratofreighter, the military version of the Boeing 377 Stratocruiser, on missions to Japan and Vietnam. After twelve months of active duty and serving as chief standardization pilot, Clay returned to United Airlines in 1962.



Clay’s grandmother May Callahan (left) and a friend are seated in the back of a corporate Douglas DC-3 during a flight Clay piloted from Kansas to California in 1960.

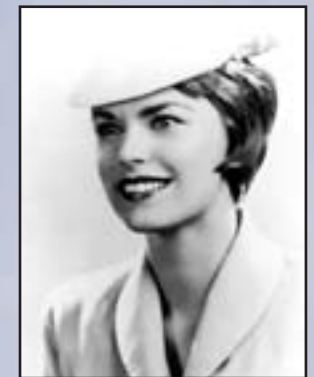


Left: In 1952, Clay joins United Airlines as a new copilot flying the Douglas DC-3.

Right: Clay’s wife Lois Lacy is pictured in her Continental Airlines stewardess uniform. Both Lois and Clay were age nineteen when these photos were taken.



Clay provides his mother Marie Lacy an up-close look at one of the U.S. Air Force’s finest fighter jets in 1956 at McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas. After joining the California Air National Guard and flying the F-86 Sabre jet in the early 1950s, Clay made frequent trips back home to Wichita to visit his mother and grandmother.



“Prior to flying a strange airplane, I would visualize how it should fly and it always did exactly what I expected. I’ve never had a surprise.”

Clay Lacy



W. A. Patterson, president of United Airlines, shows Mary O'Connor her name on the nose of the company's executive plane, a twin-engine Mainliner Convair circa 1953. O'Connor held the title of the "world's flyingest woman" with thousands of hours in her flight log. She joined United Airlines as a stewardess on the Chicago-to-New York route in 1932. Clay served as copilot during Patterson's first trip on the new Convair following the retirement of United Airlines' corporate DC-3. Photo courtesy of United Airlines.



Clay is pictured as an aviation cadet circa 1954.



Clay, a new U.S. Air Force lieutenant, dresses in full flight gear prior to a sortie circa 1955.



Clay stands in front of the Lockheed T-33 jet trainer in Greenville, Mississippi, while on leave from United Airlines circa 1955.
Photo by Bern Keating



Clay (second from right) completes administrative tasks as acting aerodrome officer for the California Air National Guard's 146th Fighter Wing based at Van Nuys Airport. Notice the band on his left arm imprinted with the letters "AO."





Clay joins fellow F-86 fighter pilots at Van Nuys Airport's Air National Guard ramp circa 1956. Pictured (left to right) are Don Gulotta, Clay, Swede Holdren, Lyn Winney, and Pat Riley.



COL. ROBERT (DUKE) TONRY, USAF (RET.)
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR,
CLAY LACY AVIATION

"I have flown with Clay during military missions to Vietnam, been part of his air racing team, and even convinced him to adopt the slogan 'Snoopy Goes Racing' on his P-51 Mustang. I was stationed on active duty in Japan when Clay, flying a Van Nuys Airport-based T-33 jet trainer for the Air National Guard, cut the ribbon to open the Van Nuys Airport runway extension. We share many memories."

Seated in the pilots' lounge at Clay Lacy Aviation headquarters, retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Robert (Duke) Tonry considers thoughtfully the stories from his fifty-seven years of friendship with Clay Lacy. Their shared history includes record-setting achievements, humorous anecdotes, somber tours of duty, and passionate accomplishments.

"I have flown with Clay during military missions to Vietnam, been part of his air racing team, and even convinced him to adopt the slogan 'Snoopy Goes Racing' on his P-51 Mustang," Tonry recalls. "I was stationed on active duty in Japan when Clay, flying a Van Nuys Airport-based T-33 jet trainer for the Air National Guard, cut the ribbon to open the Van Nuys Airport runway extension. We share many memories."

The two met in the early 1950s at the University of Southern California,

where Tonry was working on his doctorate degree, and became close friends. "The Korean War was on," Duke remembers. "And, with draft cards in our back pockets, riding double on Clay's Harley Davidson motorcycle, we arrived at Van Nuys Airport and joined the Air National Guard's 146th Fighter Wing."

Clay was assigned pilot training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, while Tonry was sent to the U.S. Air Force School of Aviation Medicine in Montgomery, Alabama. After completing an additional four years of active duty, Tonry returned to Van Nuys Airport as commander of the Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. Clay became an instructor pilot, transitioning from the F-86 Sabre jet to the C-97 Stratofreighter, a militarized model of the Boeing 377 Stratocruiser. "I made many trips with Clay to Southeast Asia in that

LUCKY ME

aircraft at the beginning of the Vietnam War,” Tonry says.

Among the many stories from their days in the Air National Guard, Tonry describes one involving Clay, fellow pilot Jack Conroy, and a lot of nervous radio chatter over the South Pacific. In 1961, the 146th Air Transport Wing (formerly the 146th Fighter Wing) was tasked with flying delegates to the annual U.S. Governors Conference held in Hawaii. “About fifteen aircraft were needed to transport the governors,” Tonry says. “Clay and I flew one of the backup aircraft from San Francisco to Hickham Air Force Base in Hawaii and were on standby in case of any mishaps. The wing commander at the time was Bob Campbell, who years later became chairman of *Newsweek Magazine*.

“Our friend Jack Conroy, always a

lighthearted guy, was captain for one of the other aircraft. At the end of the conference when it was time to fly the governors home, Clay and I waited on base for the planes to safely depart. We fully expected Conroy to be airborne when, to our surprise, he walked up to us! Clay asked, ‘Jack, what happened?’ and Conroy responded, ‘They left without me!’

“It turned out that Conroy had missed his own flight, so one of the instructor pilots took the controls and reported him missing. This irregularity caused chaos over the radio channels. Then, Campbell gave us the order ‘Get Conroy on the next flight!’ In his usual easy fashion, Jack wasn’t at all alarmed by the news.”

Tonry continues, “There were about forty passengers on standby who boarded our plane to fly to Travis Air Force Base



Clay's air race decal marks the year he claimed victory at the Reno National Air Races in 1970.

in California en route to Van Nuys Airport. The C-97 had clam-shell doors at the back of the aircraft, where it stayed very cool. That's where Clay and I stored strands of orchid leis and flowers that we had purchased from airport stands. Jack wanted to climb into the cockpit, but we told him to stay in the back.

“You might think Conroy was worried about the mishap, but he clowned around and entertained the passengers the entire trip. He even took the leis Clay and I had purchased and started handing them out to the passengers!”

After their first stop, Tonry says they landed at Van Nuys Airport, where they spotted an angry Campbell on the tarmac. “Clay said, ‘Let Jack get out first!’

So Jack got out, casually walked over to Campbell and said hello, and then handed him a lei!"

Tonry explains that Conroy retired immediately from the military and went on to build the famous Pregnant Guppy, which played a key role in transporting the Saturn rocket booster and bringing the U.S. to victory in the race to the moon during the 1960s.

Tonry also remembers with a smile his first time flying solo. "When I came back after four years of active duty, Clay told me, 'I'm going to teach you how to fly.' We agreed to meet at Van Nuys Airport at 7 a.m. on the day of my solo flight, so I arrived an hour early. At 7 a.m., no Clay. Then, at 8 a.m., I noticed some dust flying in the distance. Clad in a tuxedo, Clay drove up in his T-Bird convertible accompanied by a woman dressed

in an evening gown. Clay climbed out and said, 'Tell the tower it's your solo. Make three landings.'

"After I made the first landing, I saw the T-Bird drive off in the distance. Three days later, I finally got Clay to sign my log book and discovered that he had watched my other two landings comfortably from Sky Trails restaurant in plain sight of the runway. I learned then that with Clay, silence is an answer."

Clay's introduction to the air race circuit also inspires a flood of memories for Tonry. While most race planes were decorated with stripes or checks, Tonry remembers when Clay's P-51 Mustang was painted the color purple.

Allen Paulson, Clay's sponsor, had invested in a low-budget airline called Orchid Line that offered trips to Hawaii, Tonry explains. After trimming his fleet

of Lockheed Constellations with a stripe the shade of orchid, he ended up with a large supply of extra paint. "I remember Paulson saying to Clay, 'Have you thought about what color you want to paint the plane?' When Clay responded 'No,' he said, 'Good. Let's paint it purple. People will love it. They'll call it the purple people-eater!'" Tonry says that Clay's signature purple P-51 became an icon to the racing community.

Tonry concludes, "In his forty-one years of flying with United Airlines, Clay's record was incident-free. He had more flying hours at age nineteen than most pilots have in a lifetime. Clay understands airplanes. He feels the needs of the plane before anyone else. It's as if an airplane were part of Clay's anatomy."



(Left to right) Clay Lacy Aviation Administrative Director Duke Tonry, Clay, and Aviation Partners, Inc. Chairman and CEO Joe Clark reminisce about air race days near Clay's prized purple P-51 Mustang circa 1995.



This striking photograph taken from Clay's Learjet shows a backlit Boeing 747-400.



Photo by Jim Koepnick/EAA.

VERNE JOBST
RETIRED CAPTAIN,
UNITED AIRLINES

“When it came time for me to retire from United Airlines, Clay called during my last month of flying and said, ‘Would you give me a check ride in the 747-400 before you retire?’ I said, ‘Clay, it’s my last month! But maybe we can fly out of Chicago and go to Washington, D.C., overnight and back. If you make the arrangements, I’ll give the check ride.’ Just flying together was so much fun again.”

From his home in Chicago, retired United Airlines captain Verne Jobst indirectly credits legendary American explorer Charles Lindbergh—who piloted the first solo nonstop transatlantic flight in 1927—for launching his friendship with a modern-day aviation icon, Clay Lacy. “In 1987, I flew the Experimental Aircraft Association’s replica of Lindbergh’s plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, at the Paris Air Show to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of his historic flight between New York and Paris. Clay flew an airplane to the show and came over to view the Spirit of St. Louis. We had a wonderful time just talking about airplanes in general.

“A few months later, Clay called me out of the blue and said, ‘How would you like to fly around the world with me and set a new speed record in the Boeing 747SP?’ And I said, ‘That would

be fun.’ We became dear friends over a period of time after that.”

Jobst was first hired as a commercial pilot by Capital Airlines, but transitioned to United Airlines in 1961 when the two companies merged. While Clay was based in Los Angeles for his entire United Airlines career, Jobst spent most of his years flying commercial airliners out of Pittsburgh and Chicago, and was assigned to fly the Boeing 747-400 out of Los Angeles International Airport for a brief period before retiring. “After the merger,” Jobst says, “Clay and I may have seen each other passing in the hallways. But prior to our around-the-world flight in 1988 called Friendship One, we had never flown together before.”

With enthusiasm, Jobst describes his first experience flying with Clay. “We had two captains, two copilots, and two flight engineers on our Friendship One

crew. Clay and I executed the trip out of Seattle. United Airlines was generous in donating the plane because they trusted Clay and were confident in his leadership. The whole idea was to raise money for kids in need, and that's exactly what Clay did. There was no money taken out for the crew, the airplane, or any other expenses."

Jobst says his most vivid memory of Friendship One involves a U.S. astronaut, a KLM passenger jet, and historic radio transmissions. "We were flying over India and passed a KLM 747 passenger jet. The captain contacted us on the radio and asked, 'Are you Friendship One?' When I responded, 'Yes,' he said, 'We laid over in Bahrain last night and saw your departure from Seattle on television. What I want to know is how they got the in-flight pictures.'"

Describing the flight's global me-

dia coverage, Jobst explains how Clay took advance air-to-air photographs of Friendship One from his Learjet, showing the aircraft during both day and night. Prior to the actual flight, the photographs were developed and distributed via satellite, providing worldwide media outlets images to accompany their news reports.

Jobst continues with his memory of the radio conversation. "The next question the KLM captain asked was, 'Is Neil Armstrong onboard?' So I said in return, 'Just hang on a minute. I'll bring him to the cockpit.'"

"Then, I ran downstairs to find Neil and asked if he would mind talking with the KLM crew. Neil came back with me and I announced, 'KLM, this is Friendship One.' Then, I handed the radio to Neil and he said in a very straightforward voice, 'Hello KLM. This is

Armstrong here! The KLM pilot piped the conversation on the public address system so the passengers could hear. What a neat thing to happen on Friendship One with Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon! Neil has always been a very good friend."

After making a low pass and landing in Seattle to celebrate a successful mission, Jobst says one of Clay's first actions on the ground was to thank the students who staffed the flight's control center. "During the flight, we had a mission control center, just like the astronauts had, that was manned by kids. They were very professional. In fact, when we were talking to them during the trip, they were better-versed on their radio phraseology than we were! They were all youngsters, about twelve to fourteen years old. It was such an exciting opportunity for them. Clay has

a real passion for taking care of young people, and he proved it with the Friendship One flight.”

Jobst continues with the tale of another unforgettable flight with Clay in October 1991, just prior to his own retirement. “When it came time for me to retire from United Airlines, Clay called during my last month of flying and said, ‘Would you give me a check ride in the 747-400 before you retire?’ I said, ‘Clay, it’s my last month! But maybe we can fly out of Chicago and go to Washington, D.C., overnight and back. If you make the arrangements, I’ll give the check ride.’ Just flying together was so much fun again.”

The flight home from Washington Dulles International Airport, Jobst says, contained an element of surprise. “We flew with the same flight attendants on both legs of the trip. I did not know them at the time, but they knew Clay.

So, late at night, those ladies baked a homemade cake for me that said ‘Happy Retirement’ on top. It was basically my retirement flight and they knew it was a very memorable occasion for both Clay and me.”

During the flight home, the two friends also participated in a symbolic change of command. “Clay held No. 2 seniority with United Airlines at the time, while I was ranked No. 1. When we were up at cruise altitude, Clay pulled out two cardboard signs, one imprinted with the words ‘No. 1’ and the other with ‘No. 2.’ We took a picture with me holding the ‘No. 1’ sign and Clay holding the ‘No. 2’ sign. Then, I handed my card over to Clay because he would receive No. 1 seniority when I retired.”

Since then, Jobst says, he’s had the good fortune to fly with Clay in a variety of aircraft, including the time

he squeezed into the backseat of the Grumman F7F Tigercat for Clay’s check ride. Explaining that Clay is one of the few people with whom he’d feel comfortable riding in an airplane without access to the controls, he says, “With Clay, I’d fly anything, anywhere—even without having access to the controls, which is something I normally don’t do, especially on a check ride.”



Both antique aircraft aficionados, retired United Airlines captain Verne Jobst (left) and Clay in 2007 pose at the nose of the Grumman F7F Tigercat, which entered service in 1946 as the U.S. Navy’s first twin-engine fighter aircraft. This snapshot was taken just after Clay earned his type rating with Jobst, who served as the National Designated Pilot Examiner during the check ride.

LUCKY ME

Jobst also has flown with Clay in the vintage Douglas DC-2, which Clay purchased with close friends and fellow pilots Joe Clark and Bruce McCaw, and donated to the Seattle Museum of Flight. "If I lived in Los Angeles, I'd probably be working for him!" Jobst laughs. "We have a good time flying together no matter what we're in."

Summarizing their mutual love of aviation and near-parallel airline careers, Jobst says, "I learned to fly as a kid. From the time I was eight years old, I told my dad that I wanted to be a pilot when I grew up. But here I am at seventy-seven years old and I haven't grown up! I still want to be a pilot! Clay and I have talked about our passion for aviation and both feel exactly the same way. We'd rather fly than do absolutely anything else in the world."



Retired United Airlines captain Verne Jobst (left) and Clay hold up numbered signs indicating their respective orders of seniority with the airline while seated in the cockpit of a 747-400 in 1991.

This is Clay's final maintenance trip report while flying as captain for United Airlines. Ranked seniority No. 1 when he retired, Clay piloted his last flight for the airline on August 12, 1992, after more than forty years of incident-free flying.

The image shows three overlapping maintenance trip report forms for flight 816 on August 12, 1992. The forms are for 'AIRLINES NON ROUTINE MAINT.' and include fields for ACFT NO. (8174), REF. NO., FLIGHT (816), DATE (12 AUG 1992), MONTH (AUG), LOG PAGE, and STATION (921439, 921440, 921441). The middle form is highlighted in yellow and contains a handwritten note by Clay Lacy: "This is my last UAL TRIP after 40 1/2 years of flying UAL. During this period of time never had a serious mechanical and seldom a write up. UAL has the best maintenance personnel in the world. Thanks for over 28,000 hours of trouble free operation." The entry is signed "CLAY LACY".

Clay writes:

"This is my last UAL trip after 40½ years of flying UAL. During this period, I have never had a serious mechanical and seldom a write up. UAL has the best maintenance personnel in the world. Thanks for over 28,000 hours of trouble free operation."



Clay pilots a Lear 23 above Aero Spacelines, Inc.'s Super Guppy, the successor to the Pregnant Guppy, used to ferry oversized cargo components circa 1962.

LOG BOOK ENTRY THREE:
GUPPY AND FRIENDS

Throughout his years in the California Air National Guard, Clay Lacy was supported and motivated by a special circle of friends who helped pave the way for his extraordinary success as both an aviator and entrepreneur.

One of Clay's closest friends was fellow airline and Air National Guard pilot Jack Conroy, who introduced Clay to a network of individuals on the cutting edge of aviation, including famed Lockheed test pilots Anthony "Tony" Levier and Herman "Fish" Salmon. "Jack Conroy was a real vivacious fellow and knew everybody in aviation," Clay recalls. "In a matter of weeks, I met half the people who were well-known for aviation in California. I was ten to fifteen years younger than most of them, but they became my social network."

Conroy also facilitated Clay's early involvement in the aircraft sales business

by connecting him with former Trans World Airlines flight engineer Allen Paulson. In 1954, Paulson formed California Airmotive Corporation, a supplier of surplus engine parts and airline-type aircraft. In between flights for United Airlines, Clay helped Paulson grow his business into one of the largest dealers of used aircraft, particularly airliners, in the world. For years, Clay ferried a wide range of aircraft across the U.S. and South America, from the Douglas DC-3 and DC-4 to the Lockheed Constellation and Martin 404. During the week, Clay commuted between Colorado and California, working four days as an instructor at United Airlines' training center in Denver and three days with Paulson at Van Nuys Airport near Los Angeles.

During that time, Conroy also explored new aviation business ventures. In 1961, he formed the company Aero

Spacelines, Inc., which modified Boeing 377 Stratocruisers to carry the Saturn rocket booster in support of the nation's space program. Conroy visited the executive offices of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in Washington, D.C., to propose transporting the Saturn rocket booster among widely scattered manufacturing, testing, and assembly locations.

Conroy modified a Boeing 377 airliner to launch the first generation of Guppy aircraft, called the Pregnant Guppy and touted as the largest plane ever built. Since there was no hangar space large enough at Van Nuys Airport to accommodate the plane, modification crews worked entirely outdoors.

Conroy and Clay made the first test flight of the Pregnant Guppy on September 19, 1962, in California from Van Nuys Airport to the Mojave Desert. The

aircraft carried its first payload for NASA to Cape Canaveral, Florida, one year later. "The Pregnant Guppy really started speeding things up," Clay remembers. "We could transport missiles to Cape Canaveral in a day. If NASA had followed its original plan through the Panama Canal, it would have taken thirty days to transport the rocket components."

Clay recalls that Wernher von Braun, director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and leader of the U.S. rocket development program, visited Van Nuys Airport twice to check on the aircraft's progress and credited the Pregnant Guppy as "the single most important piece of equipment to put man on the moon in that decade." Conroy's engineers went on to develop the next generation of oversized aircraft, including the Super Guppy, a modified KC-97 Stratotanker with an inside diameter of

twenty-six feet.

Clay also made first flights in four other new or heavily modified airplanes, including the twin turboprop Douglas DC-3, the Tri-3 fitted with three turboprop engines (also a modified Douglas DC-3), the aerobatic sport plane Genie, and the turboprop STOLifter, a modified version of the piston-powered Cessna 337 Skylifter.



Air National Guard pilot and Aero Spacelines, Inc. founder Jack Conroy (left) sits with an unidentified pilot in the ready room at Van Nuys Airport, home to the 115th Fighter Intercept Squadron, circa 1965.



On the morning of its first full flight on September 19, 1962, the Pregnant Guppy was flanked by hundreds of police and fire vehicles used to block traffic and stand by at emergency aid stations under its proposed route. As pictured here, Jack Conroy, Clay, and flight engineer Bob D'Agnostini take the modified Boeing 377 Stratofreighter aloft without incident.



Clay admires the Pregnant Guppy after its first flight.



In 1962, Clay (right) and his grandmother May Callahan stand on the tarmac at California's Mojave Airport with the Pregnant Guppy in the background.



Jack Conroy (left) and Clay are interviewed by the news media following the first flight of the Pregnant Guppy in 1962. Clay's business partner Allen Paulson, owner of California Airmotive Corporation, observes from the right.

This is the front cover of an informational brochure for Aero Spacelines, Inc. circa 1961.



PHIL AUNE
RETIRED AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER,
VAN NUYS AIRPORT

“The rocket launcher was huge, and could not fit inside even a modern-day Boeing 747. Clay, Jack Conroy, and others went to work thinking about the best way to transport the rocket. NASA planned on shipping it through the Panama Canal because it was too large to travel by rail. So, Clay and Jack figured out a way to enlarge the fuselage of a four-engine Boeing 377, slice it open, remove the tail, load the rocket into the plane, and close it up again. That’s when they called it the Pregnant Guppy.”

Phil Aune, retired Van Nuys Airport air traffic controller, looks around the Clay Lacy Aviation conference room and smiles approvingly at the many photographs lining the walls and trophies displayed in the cabinet. “Clay is a catalyst,” he says. “He likes to get things done. Look at these awards. He deserves every one. He’s a role model.”

Aune, who retired at age seventy from the Federal Aviation Administration in 2006, served as an air traffic controller at Van Nuys Airport for an unprecedented forty-seven years. During that time, he developed a friendship with Clay and witnessed firsthand his accomplishments as a pilot.

“Clay knows everything that is going on in aviation. He is the keeper of the photographs and memories. If someone in the aviation community becomes ill or gets injured, the first thing

people ask is, ‘Does Clay know?’ Everyone understands that he will extend a gesture of some kind to show that he knows and wants to help. He gives to his employees and friends who need help, but he is very quiet about it.”

Speaking of the years Clay flew for the California Air National Guard and United Airlines, Aune continues, “Of course, Clay is a great pilot. I have seen him fly at various airports everything from F-86 fighters and C-97 cargo planes to massive 747 passenger jets. At Van Nuys Airport, you could count on Clay to turn off the runway after landing at the shortest distance possible—within 1,500 feet. I also remember watching Clay land in a DC-6 or DC-7 and, even when the wind was strong, turn off the runway in less than 2,000 feet. It was beautiful.”

Aune provides an eyewitness ac-

LUCKY ME

count of Clay's famous test flight of the Pregnant Guppy, a modified Boeing 377 Stratocruiser that flew Saturn-Apollo rocket system components from California to Cape Canaveral during the early 1960s. "I was a controller in the Van Nuys tower when Clay and Jack Conroy [founder of the U.S. aircraft manufacturer Aero Spacelines, Inc.] made the first flight of the Pregnant Guppy. NASA wanted a part of the rocket propulsion mechanism to be delivered as quickly as possible to Cape Canaveral in Florida.

"The rocket launcher was huge, and could not fit inside even a modern-day Boeing 747. Clay, Jack Conroy, and others went to work thinking about the best way to transport the rocket. NASA planned on shipping it through the Panama Canal because it was too large to travel by rail. So, Clay and Jack figured out a way to enlarge the fuse-

lage of a four-engine Boeing 377, slice it open, remove the tail, load the rocket into the plane, and close it up again. That's when they called it the Pregnant Guppy."

Speaking of more personal memories, Aune continues, "The thing about Clay is, he always thinks of others. Once, he invited me to fly in his Pilatus Porter with him, which I think is his favorite plane. It was a great experience. I also remember working at the Van Nuys Airport tower on August 12, 1992, when Clay made his last flight for United Airlines, from Los Angeles to Australia. It was a great honor when, prior to his last flight, Clay invited me, an air traffic controller, to ride in the cockpit of the 747 with him. Unfortunately, I couldn't get the time off work to join him, but Clay knew how important the invitation was to me.

"When I was scheduled to retire, Clay also asked if he could fly the last aircraft arriving at Van Nuys Airport—the last plane I would ever talk to as a controller—that day. I appreciated that more than I can say. Clay Lacy is my type of person. He's always around the airport, he's fun to be with, he knows everything about aviation, and he's serious about flying. With him, everything is aviation. Clay always has a goal. He's a leader, an icon, and a catalyst."



This original painting of the Pregnant Guppy is displayed in the Clay Lacy Aviation conference room.



(Left to right) Clay joins co-founder of Syncro Aviation Barbara Cesar, retired air traffic controller Phil Aune, and legendary test pilot Bob Hoover at Van Nuys Airport's Aviation Career Day event held in 2007. Photo courtesy of Phil Aune.



DR. FORREST BIRD
PHYSICIAN, INVENTOR, AND PILOT

“There was a Boeing 707 well ahead of us. We were coming in high with above-normal air speed. Near instantaneously, our Lear rolled right—past the vertical—in wake turbulence. Bill [Lear] instinctively, seamlessly continued the right roll and recovered. Later that moonlit evening, we wondered who came in with right rudder first. While I had upset training in many military jets, I am sure Clay’s instructions to Bill and my backseat listening made the difference.”

From his home in Sandpoint, Idaho, Dr. Forrest Bird—physician, inventor of the first pressure breathing regulator, and also a pilot—speaks of his friend Clay Lacy. “Clay is a grand fellow. I have known him for over forty years, starting in the late 1960s. We met in Texas when I was a technical training officer assigned to the air evacuation unit in the Army Air Corps and Clay was a pilot with the California Air National Guard and United Airlines.”

Bird—who is best-known for saving lives through his invention of cardiopulmonary medical respirators—discusses the two men’s shared interests in developing new aircraft capabilities, with Clay’s innovations focused on safety and Bird’s on improved medical uses. Instrumental in modifying the amphibious Consolidated PBY Catalina (one of the most widely used multi-role aircraft

during World War II) for long-range air evacuation missions, Bird says Clay appreciated his work to accommodate both a larger number of patients and farther range. “Clay understood the mechanism of an aircraft, any aircraft. He still has that unique ability.”

Describing Clay’s innovations as futuristic, Bird notes Clay’s work with Allen Paulson, owner of California Airmotive Corporation, in the 1960s. “At that time, Clay was working with Al Paulson on developing a push-pull type of engine, a combination of jet and prop. In their design, one engine was mounted behind the other, so that if one engine failed during takeoff, the other would take over and the plane wouldn’t yaw.”

Bird says while he, Paulson, and Clay often discussed their ideas and designs, the aircraft engine project ended when Paulson purchased Gulfstream Aero-

LUCKY ME

space Corporation and Clay pursued his jet charter business. "Clay and Al complemented one another very well. That plane would have been the top of the line for all time if they had completed it. That configuration was way ahead of its time."

Bird also comments on Clay's influence and achievements as a pilot. "Clay could look at a situation and figure out a way to make things better. He knew the Learjet so well that he actually taught Bill Lear—the aircraft's inventor—something about operating his own plane! Clay is a great teacher and a master in the Learjet. One day I was riding in the back of the Lear, with Bill Lear in the pilot's seat and Clay riding as instructor in the copilot's seat. Bill and Clay were discussing a recent incident in which an airplane had rolled upside down during a landing approach that

was too close to a jet airliner, with fatal results. Clay asked Bill what he would do if it happened to him."

Bird says Clay then demonstrated how to recover a Learjet without falling against the seat belt while involuntarily inverted. "He slowed the airplane to a slightly fast approach speed and rolled the airplane inverted, maintaining a positive g-force. Most important, he powered up, kept the airplane rolling, and came back to a near wing-level position. Clay's remarks were, 'If you have enough air speed and keep sufficient g-load to maintain fuel, you might survive; otherwise, you could impact in a near inverted position.'"

Describing Clay as "silky smooth" during three repeat demonstrations in which he never experienced a tightening seat belt, Bird says Clay asked Lear to repeat the same maneuver. "About

the fourth time, Bill had it down quite well. This could be a lifesaving maneuver if one was competent and other factors were favorable."

Some months later, Bird was copilot on a flight with Lear on final approach to Phoenix when they put to good use what Clay had taught them. "There was a Boeing 707 well ahead of us," Bird recalls. "We were coming in high with above-normal air speed. Near instantaneously, our Lear rolled right—past the vertical—in wake turbulence. Bill instinctively, seamlessly continued the right roll and recovered. Later that moonlit evening, we wondered who came in with right rudder first. While I had upset training in many military jets, I am sure Clay's instructions to Bill and my backseat listening made the difference."

Like Clay, Bird started flying early, at

age fourteen. He soloed in a Waco biplane with the encouragement of his father, a World War I pilot. While serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II, Bird became inspired to develop an advanced oxygen system that would allow pilots to breathe at higher altitudes. In 1943, he invented the anti-G suit regulator, allowing pilots to sustain increased g-loads without blacking out.

Following graduation from medical college, Bird continued his inventions, including: in 1955, the first medical respirator now used in hospitals around the world; in 1969, the Babybird respirator, resulting in a worldwide reduction of respiratory-related infant mortality from 70 percent to less than 10 percent; and in 1980, an intrapulmonary percussive heart-lung recruitment device.

As an innovative solution-seeker himself, Bird says of his friend, "There is no pilot as confident as Clay. While fly-

ing with him, I can easily see Clay's ability to solve problems. He looks at the facts and wants to make things better. He can go outside the envelope to solve problems. And Clay has a niche; there is no one like him. He is a superb pilot, brilliant businessman, and his personality is smooth, calm, and collected. He sets a hard example for others to equal because he is a perfectionist.

"Aviation has always been a major part of my life, as it has been of Clay's. He is a down-to-earth fellow. Ask anything of Clay and you will get an honest answer. He earns your trust because he gives his trust."



President George W. Bush stands with Dr. Forrest Bird after presenting him with a Presidential Citizens Medal on Wednesday, December 10, 2008, in the Oval Office of the White House. The Presidential Citizens Medal was established in 1969 to recognize U.S. citizens who have performed exemplary deeds of service for the nation.
White House photo by Chris Greenberg.



“I learned a lot from hangar flying.”

Clay Lacy

Clay's meticulously maintained Pilatus Porter is parked in front of the lodge at his ranch in Pistol Creek, Idaho. He transported almost all of the materials used to build the lodge in this aircraft.



GEN. JOHN R. (JACK) DAILEY, USMC (RET.)
DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

“It was just starting to get light. Clay made an aggressive turn on takeoff because he wanted to reverse course. The departure was unique. Normally, people take off, climb straight ahead, and set up a turn. Once the wheels were off the ground, Clay started the turn as the landing gear was coming up. We were going the other direction by the time the gear was full up. It was a matter of technique, all in one motion, really beautiful.”

John R. (Jack) Dailey, retired U.S. Marine Corps general and pilot, speaks from his director’s office at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., and immediately warms to the topic of the phone conversation—Clay Lacy. Dailey says, “I’m high on Clay Lacy. He is a great instructor. He knows and understands the aviation industry and sees trends for the future. Everyone goes to him for advice and, without hesitation, he gets directly to the answer. He’s an encyclopedia, a very learned man. He’s modest and fun to be with, and he’s the world’s greatest storyteller.”

Calling him a “clever guy,” Dailey recalls the time Clay managed to move some lumber up to his cabin in Idaho using his prized Pilatus PC-6 Porter, a civilian utility aircraft. “Clay had four-by-eight-foot plywood sheets to move. So he loaded the plywood in the Pilatus

and just let the ends of the sheets extend out both sides as he flew up to the cabin!”

Dailey praises Clay for his many film projects utilizing the Astrovision and IMAX camera systems mounted on a specially equipped Learjet. “He has marvelous filming capability, and a unique sense of feel for the plane, any plane. For Clay, it’s like putting on an old suit. I have seen him fly his Pilatus Porter, land within a 200-foot space, and back up and take off within that same 200-foot space. He is the consummate professional.”

The two first met at hotelier Barron Hilton’s legendary Flying M Ranch near Reno, Nevada, about a decade ago. Since then, Dailey has flown with Clay in many aircraft types, ranging from the aerobatic trainer Decathlon to the Lear business jet. A highly experienced and

LUCKY ME

decorated military pilot, Dailey flew 450 combat missions in Vietnam in the F-4 fighter and spent seven years at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration before joining the Air and Space Museum nine years ago. "Clay taught me how to fly tail draggers after all my years as a military pilot flying jets with tricycle gear. He had me flying and checked out in short order. He's a great teacher. He fine-tuned my technique."

Dailey describes one of his most unforgettable flights with Clay. "Clay likes to hand-tool his aircraft. I've never seen him use an autopilot. Once, Clay was pilot and I was copilot on a flight from Palmdale to Mojave in California, with [test pilot] Bob Hoover in the back of the jet. We were headed to see the pre-dawn launch of SpaceShipOne, the first privately funded human space flight. It was just starting to get light. Clay made

an aggressive turn on takeoff because he wanted to reverse course. The departure was unique. Normally, people take off, climb straight ahead, and set up a turn. Once the wheels were off the ground, Clay started the turn as the landing gear was coming up. We were going the other direction by the time the gear was full up. It was a matter of technique, all in one motion, really beautiful."

Dailey adds, "Bob gave Clay one of the greatest compliments he could provide to anyone and said, 'I really like the way this guy flies.' I've never forgotten that. It was my feeling exactly. When Bob Hoover says it, it means something."

With amusement in his voice, Dailey mentions another story that he says is best told by Clay himself. "There's a story that should be shared, and Clay can tell it better than anyone else. He had

an experience with a stuntman called the Human Fly. Clay was awakened one night by a phone call and the man on the other end said, 'Evil Knievel [the American motorcycle daredevil] told me to call you.' Clay explained to me, 'I knew right then this was going to be a wild one!' When I asked Clay what this guy's name was, Clay said, 'I don't even know. I always called him Fly!'

"The Fly wanted to ride on top of a DC-8, a four-engine airliner, as Clay flew inverted above an air show. Clay said, 'No, you can't do that.' But the Fly continued to press and finally got Clay to agree to fly him on top of the DC-8. During their second flight, they got caught in a rainstorm in Fort Worth, Texas, while filming a television stunt. The Fly must have really taken a beating since he ended up in the hospital emergency room after they landed.

“About an hour later after the weather started to clear, Clay called the Fly at the hospital and said, ‘Hey Fly. The weather’s clearing up. Are you ready to go?’ When the Fly said that he wasn’t sure, Clay responded, ‘Well, if you’re as tough as you say you are, get over here so we can go!’ And Clay put the Fly on the top of his airplane and flew him around. You would be rolling in the aisles if you heard Clay tell this story. I think it’s one of the funniest experiences he ever had!”

On a more serious note, Dailey shares that most people are probably not aware of Clay’s generous contributions to the aviation industry. “He is a great American. Clay is a donor to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near Washington Dulles International Airport. The whole facility has been built with private funds.” Dailey, appointed to lead

the effort to open the 765,000-square-foot facility, says the museum spans the history of aviation and provides a home for hundreds of aircraft, spacecraft, and warbirds, including the formidable B-29 Enola Gay, P-61 Black Widow, and Space Shuttle Enterprise.

Dailey contrasts his personal introduction to the world of aviation with Clay’s early experiences. Dailey, whose father was a U.S. Marine fighter pilot, always assumed he would fly for the military. He went on to spend thirty-six years in the Marine Corps, where he flew over 6,500 hours in a wide variety of airplanes and helicopters. By contrast, in his early teens, Clay created his own opportunity by persuading his grandmother to allow her farmland to be used as a landing strip. “Clay negotiated a barter agreement, even at his young age,” Dailey says. “Now, Clay does

that all the time. He says, ‘If you’ve got the gas, I’ve got the plane.’ Clay is truly a national treasure.”



Clay is a donor to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles International Airport as pictured here. Photo courtesy of National Air and Space Museum.



Press Communiqué

the human fly
l'homme volant

Communiqué de Presse

NEWS CONFERENCE - THE HUMAN FLY
RE: THE DALLAS AIR SHOW

The man who claims to be the greatest dare-devil that ever lived and attempted to prove it by riding on the outside of a DC-8 Jetliner, will test the outer limits of physical and mental endurance beyond the danger point, next month.

The Human Fly, who set a World's record of riding at speeds of 250 MPH, in California without the aid of any artificial breathing apparatus, says he will now try to travel at speeds in excess of 300 MPH. Engineers claim that the Fly will not be able to withstand the extreme pressures at that speed. They claim also that breathing will be impossible. The Fly, who experienced burns to his legs at speeds of 250 MPH and was able to control his breathing, has been doing extensive training in preparation for the 300 MPH Sky Walk. "I'm the greatest dare-devil in the world, he says, and I'm going to prove to the world that it can be done!"

The event is scheduled to take place at the Dallas Air Show in Dallas, Texas on Sunday, September 26, 1976.

The Human Fly made front page news two months ago when he became the first human being to ever "harnstorm" on a commercial Jetliner, over the Mojave Desert in California.

His promotional agent, David Levine, said that the "Fly", who wishes to keep his identity a secret, will donate a portion of his earnings to charitable organizations around the world. Levine says that his wish is to help other people stems from an automobile accident that he was involved in, in which his family were killed. Doctors claimed that he would never

In 1975, Clay performed a memorable stunt in California above the Mojave Desert by flying a DC-8 airliner with a Canadian stuntman called the Human Fly standing on top of the fuselage. Dressed in a white cape and red jumpsuit, the anonymous masked daredevil was airborne for fifteen minutes at 220 miles per hour.

This was the first of three stunt flights Clay piloted for the Human Fly and was performed live in front of an air show crowd without a prior practice. The second flight, staged for a television show in Fort Worth, Texas, was cut short by a rainstorm.

Clay describes how the third flight, also performed above California's Mojave Desert, aired almost live on national television. "The third time, we flew at twelve noon at Mojave, which was 3 p.m. in New York City. The segment was scheduled to air at 4:15 p.m. in New York, just over an hour after we landed. Time was very tight, so there was a mobile editing truck parked right on the taxiway. When the story went on air at 4:15 p.m. on the East Coast, there were still four minutes of original tape left to edit. The producer in New York threatened to cancel the story because he was afraid it wouldn't be finished in time. But the editors on the ground said, 'No, this is great! We'll get it done!'"

Photo by Dwight Brooks.

LOG BOOK ENTRY FOUR:
DAWN OF THE LEARJET

First Learjet Orders

In 1961, Elton McDonald, a former California Airmotive Corporation customer who had purchased a retired Martin 404 airliner in 1959, phoned Clay with an urgent request. He asked Clay to fly him the next morning from Los Angeles to Palm Springs, California, for a meeting with American inventor and Lear Jet Corporation founder William (Bill) Powell Lear. Lear had also invited Justin Dart, chairman of the board for the North American drug store chain Rexal, to participate in a discussion about his proposed new aircraft.

During the visit, Lear announced his plans to purchase an airplane factory in Switzerland to build a new business jet and said he needed orders in his pocket before he departed the next day. As a result, Dart placed two orders and McDonald placed one order with deposits of

\$10,000 per aircraft priced at \$275,000 each. Lear began operations in Switzerland, modeling the aircraft after a Swiss military jet.

Clay describes the birth of the early Learjet program. "At the time, jet airliners were flying at 550 miles per hour and most business aircraft like DC-3s were flying at 180 miles per hour. In 1959, Bill gave a speech in Wichita challenging the existing manufacturers to build a new, faster business jet by 1962 or he would do it. The basic Lear design came from the P-16 Swiss fighter. It has the strongest wing in the world, with eight spars."

However, various problems in Switzerland including language barriers caused Lear to move his factory to Wichita, Kansas, in 1962. "Bill said he needed to go back to the U.S. where he could steal the most engineers," Clay

explains. "So, he convinced the city of Wichita to sell bonds to build a factory." Although Lear had taken orders for nearly twenty aircraft, he realized he would have to raise the price by almost \$200,000 apiece to build them.

Receiving word of a dramatic price increase, McDonald asked Clay to visit Lear in Wichita—a journey that paved the way for Clay to develop a strong friendship with one of the most influential figures in his life. During the trip, Clay visited with Lear and toured the factory, sharing his ideas. Lear was so impressed by Clay's knowledge and expertise, he invited him to return to Wichita in the future. Although Lear offered him one hundred dollars a day to spend time at the factory, Clay visited many times and never charged.



Clay (right) stands with aircraft innovators (left to right) Bill Lear, Durrell "Dee" Unger Howard, and James D. Raisbeck circa 1970.

"I started going back to the factory," Clay recalls, "and stayed with Bill or at my late grandmother's house. It was probably the most interesting time of my life. The place was alive. Every morn-

ing, Bill would tour the factory and, when I was in town, would invite me to join him.

In one area, he had a couple of engineers developing the eight-track stereo. On every tour, he would ask someone what he was doing and suggest an easier way. It was always enjoyable for me and I always gained respect for his hands-on management."

Lear Distributorships

Bill Lear originally planned to initiate factory direct sales, but with funds dwindling, decided a distributorship plan could raise the money needed to

keep the program moving forward.

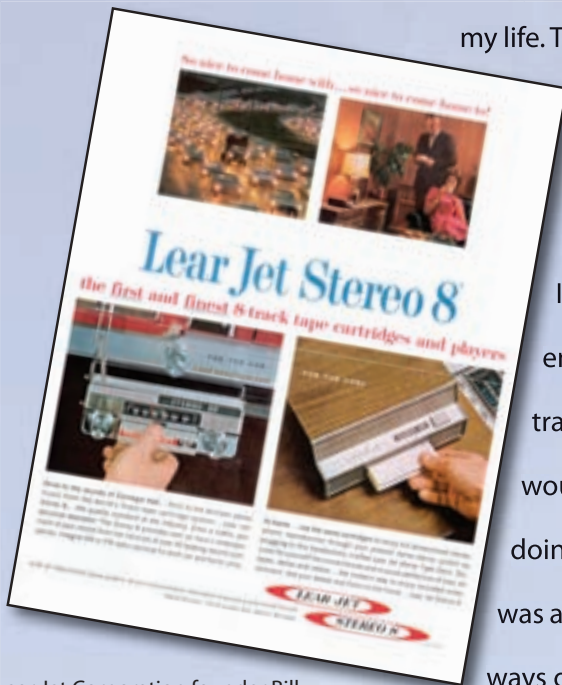
"Bill determined that five distributorships with initial deposits of \$250,000 each would be a huge help," Clay explains. "Soon after, Elroy McCaw [an early broadcasting industry magazine] visited Bill in Wichita and loaned him \$250,000 unsecured to complete aircraft certification and start deliveries. Elroy is my great friend Bruce McCaw's father. Having an interest in the program, I also took [California Airmotive Corporation founder] Allen Paulson to Wichita in a P-51, at which time we flew in N802LJ, the second Learjet ever built."

Duly impressed by the flight, Paulson signed up California Airmotive Corporation as the Learjet distributorship for eleven Western states and appointed Clay manager of sales. In 1964, Clay resigned from the Air National

Guard to focus on the venture and become one of the first pilots to earn a Learjet type rating.

Operation Boomerang

On May 21, 1965, Clay and longtime friend Jack Conroy flew the Learjet on a record-setting transcontinental roundtrip flight that made national headlines. This historic flight from Los Angeles to New York and back marked the first time a business jet made a roundtrip flight across the U.S. between sunrise to sunset on the same day. With Conroy's three children onboard, the total flight time was eleven hours and twenty-six minutes including two stops. This flight duplicated Conroy's earlier "Operation Boomerang" feat on May 21, 1955, when, flying an Air National Guard F-86 Sabre jet, he became the first pilot to fly roundtrip from coast to coast, dawn to dusk.



Lear Jet Corporation founder Bill Lear was world-renowned for his inventions, including the first car radio, general aviation navigation and autopilot systems, and eight-track sound system.

LUCKY ME

A print advertisement published in *Flying Magazine* shortly after Clay and Conroy's Learjet flight claimed, "The flight heralds a new era of executive mobility via Lear Jet. Perfect performance throughout the flight of this fastest flying, highest climbing business aircraft is more documented evidence that the Lear Jet makes sense!"



In 1967, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson made history by attending a Latin American Summit held in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Here, Clay stands in front of the Learjet chartered by NBC News for the event. Notice Air Force One in the background and the NBC News logo on the side of Clay's aircraft. Clay was retained to shuttle footage of the conference to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where it would be loaded onto an airliner destined for New York if needed. He later discovered that his primary mission was to provide an "escape aircraft" on standby for the president's use in case of emergency.

LEAR JET SETS NEW WORLD RECORDS!

PROVES PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ON 5005 MILE TRANSCONTINENTAL ROUND-TRIP — DAWN TO DUSK

Lear Jet N1965L with seven people aboard made a record daylight flight from Los Angeles to New York to Los Angeles on May 21, 1965. At an average speed of 556 mph at cruise altitude, the California Airmotive business jet spanned the continent with only one stop each direction. Total flying time for the 5005 mile flight was 10:21. Maximum take-off weight was 12,500 pounds.

The historic flight, with an official timer from the National Aeronautic Association on-board, set three world records for business aircraft: Los Angeles to New York (5 hours, 08 minutes), New York to Los Angeles (5 hours, 44 minutes - against headwinds to 98 mph), and round trip (11 hours, 36 minutes — including 1 hour, 14 minutes groundtime).

Lear Jet speed and reliability enabled Jack Conroy to enjoy breakfast and dinner in Los Angeles and transact business in quiet comfort while in flight as well as on the ground in both New York and Tulsa. The flight heralds a new era of executive mobility via Lear Jet. Perfect performance throughout the flight of this fastest flying, highest climbing business aircraft is more documented evidence that the Lear Jet makes sense!

Request performance data and demonstration flight

LEAR JET
Manufactured by LEAR JET CORPORATION Wichita, Kansas

Congratulations on record flight—Los Angeles

John M. Conroy, President of Aero Spacelines, Inc., builder of the Pregnant Guppy, flew with co-pilot Clay Lacy, flew the Lear Jet on a record setting transcontinental round-trip flight on May 21, 1965. This flight duplicated his OPERATION BOOMERANG feat of May 21, 1955, when, flying a military jet, he became the first man to fly coast to coast round-trip, sunrise to sunset.

Morning fueling stop—Wichita

This magazine advertisement touts Clay and fellow pilot Jack Conroy's 5,005-mile transcontinental roundtrip flight from dawn to dusk on May 21, 1965. At an average speed of 556 miles per hour at cruise altitude, Clay and Conroy flew the Learjet with only one stop in each direction during the historic flight. The flight set three world records for business aircraft: Los Angeles to New York in five hours and eight minutes; New York to Los Angeles in five hours and forty-four minutes; and roundtrip in eleven hours and thirty-six minutes, including one hour and fourteen minutes on the ground.



On May 20, 1965, the day before departing on their record-setting transcontinental roundtrip flight from Los Angeles to New York and back, Clay and Aero Spacelines, Inc. founder Jack Conroy discuss their flight plan.



The following day, Conroy (left) prepares to climb aboard the Learjet with his three children, who were passengers on the record-breaking dawn-to-dusk flight, as Clay smiles at the right.

“Speed has always been the most important catalyst in the development of the world.”

Clay Lacy



This is the first business jet (a Lear 24 with registration number N464CL) Clay purchased for his aircraft charter business in 1969.



ALICE RAND
 RETIRED EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT,
 CLAY LACY AVIATION

“Being on the Amazon River for an entire day and back home in my own bed by 9 a.m. the following morning was an experience, as a girl from Oklahoma, I never dreamed I would have. While working for Clay, I met people and saw places that other people just read about.”

Alice Rand, Clay Lacy’s first executive assistant, now retired from the aviation business, speaks from her home in Palm Springs, California. She recalls first meeting Clay in 1963 at the Lear Jet Corporation factory in Wichita, Kansas, where she worked for Learjet inventor William (Bill) Powell Lear.

Rand met Clay shortly before the Lear 23, then the fastest business aircraft in the world, made its first flight over Wichita less than a year after assembly began. “Nine years later, I went to work for Clay,” Rand remembers. “I loved working in the jet business.”

Rand says that Clay became good friends with Lear and his wife, Moya, during development of the early Learjets. Recognizing Clay’s unmatched piloting abilities and natural marketing skills, Lear appointed Clay manager of sales for California Airmotive Corporation, an

aircraft distributorship that was later re-named Pacific Lear Jet. The company’s close proximity to Hollywood attracted the interest of celebrities such as Danny Kaye, who invested in the distributorship after Clay impressed him with the aircraft’s speed and maneuverability during a demonstration flight.

In 1966, Kaye asked Rand if she would consider moving to Los Angeles to work for Pacific Lear Jet. She moved to the area and worked for the company a year before joining International Telephone and Telegraph as executive assistant to the vice president/director of operations. Rand explains how, in 1972, Clay opened the door for her return to the excitement of aviation. “Clay phoned and invited me to lunch, where he asked me to work for him. I missed aviation, and I agreed.”

Clay launched his business at Van

LUCKY ME

Nuys Airport in 1968, but Rand says that, in 1969, the company rented an office in a small building at the northwest corner of the airport with one leased Learjet, two full-time pilots, and one standby pilot. She notes, "Clay was flying for United Airlines and had limited time. I realized that it was up to me to figure out how to get the business going. When Clay asked me what I thought of naming the company Clay Lacy Aviation, I said, 'That has a snap to it!' He responded, 'Let's go for it!'"

Rand traces how she helped Clay grow the business. "I started writing letters to the travel departments of nearby companies, telling how fast and easily they could move their executive vice presidents from L.A. to New York, the Midwest, and other destinations. Then, I followed up with letters to large corporations and the travel departments of movie studios. I knew many people

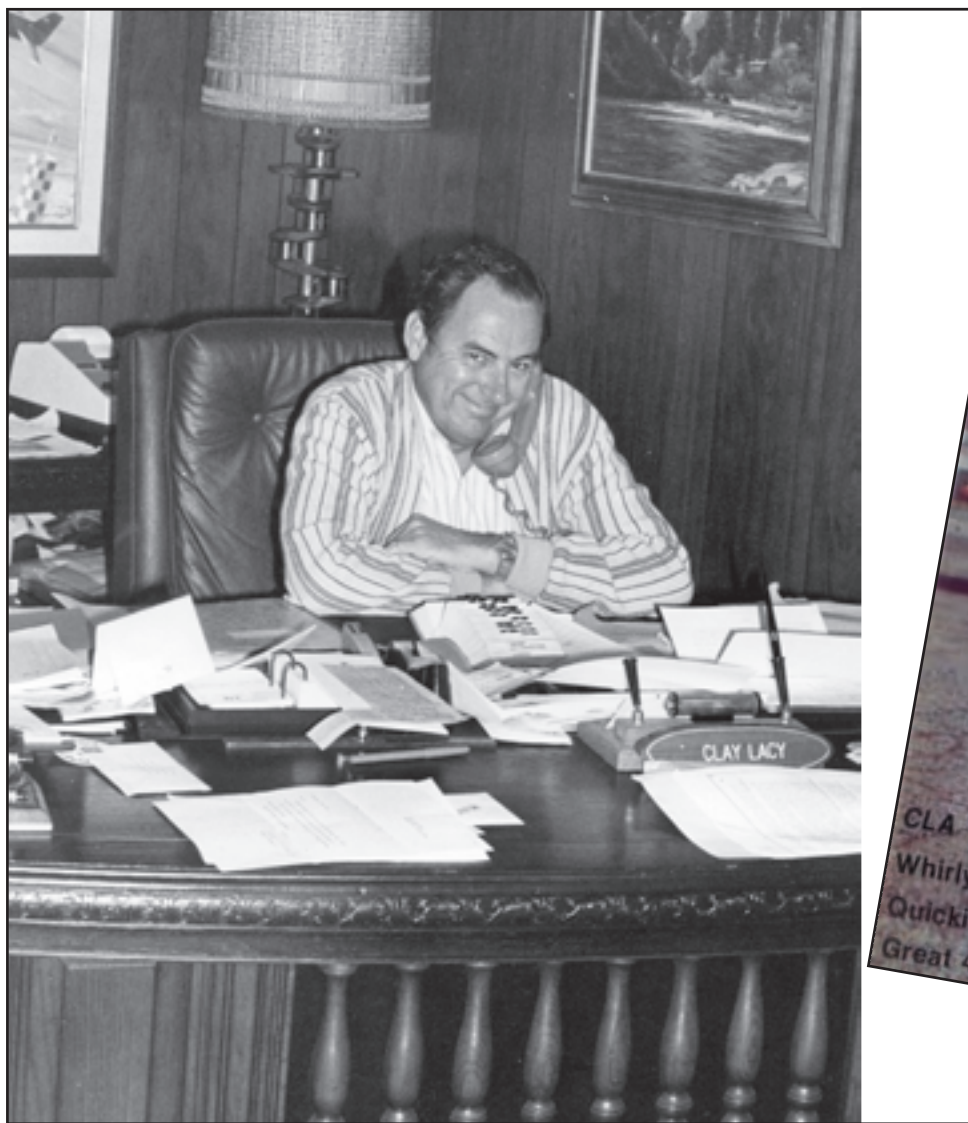
in the movie business through Danny Kaye. Within six months, the business took off." In what she describes as a major public relations coup, Rand and Clay were pictured on the cover of *San Fernando Valley Magazine* in June 1976, which recognized Clay Lacy Aviation as the busiest jet charter business in Southern California.

With appreciation, Rand recalls her groundbreaking flights with Clay. "Clay is the most generous person I've ever known. In 1973, he and five other pilots were planning a tour of every South American country, plus a flight over Antarctica, to benefit local students from Mount San Antonio College's 'Classroom in the Sky' program. He knew I didn't have enough money for the trip and how much I desired to go, so he paid for half the cost of my flight. I'll always be grateful for that. I cried when I saw Antarctica

and the penguins looking up at us! Being on the Amazon River for an entire day and back home in my own bed by 9 a.m. the following morning was an experience, as a girl from Oklahoma, I never dreamed I would have. While working for Clay, I met people and saw places that other people just read about."

Rand concludes, "I would trust Clay with my life. He was like the brother I never had. I once asked him, 'Clay, how do you land as skillfully as you do?' and he answered, 'Alice, I used to watch the birds. They just glided in to land!'"

"This man is outstanding. He's never forgotten his roots. He's the most talented pilot I've ever known. He can take a plane out and tell you all about it in minutes. I have seen him do that time after time—go up in a new plane and put that baby down in the space of a postage stamp! It was an honor to work for him."



Clay appears hard at work in his office located at the northwest corner of Van Nuys Airport on Roscoe Boulevard circa 1973.



Clay and executive assistant Alice Rand appear on the front cover of *San Fernando Valley Magazine* in 1976.



This pictorial published by the Professional Race Pilots Association in the early 1970s was used to attract new members.



CHUCK LYFORD
LAND, SEA, AND AIR RACER

“We filmed the Concorde for three days in a Lear 35 flying chase. One night, we coordinated a flight of the Concorde off the west coast of Scotland above a very low overcast. We positioned ourselves behind the aircraft and watched it fly into the sunset with its wingtips curling the clouds towards us. We took a very famous series of photographs. I will always remember that beautiful flight. It was probably one of the prettiest formation flights I’ve ever been a part of. It was spectacular because the clouds curled off the back of the big deltas like corkscrews.”

For the past fifty-seven years, Chuck Lyford has mastered some of the fastest boats, planes, and cars ever built. A hydroplane racer at age ten, Lyford later transferred his experience driving high-performance powerboats at top speeds to the air race circuit. In the early 1960s, he helped Nevada rancher and World War II ace Bill Stead revive the National Air Races above a barren stretch of land at Stead’s Sky Ranch near Reno, Nevada, where a 2,000-foot strip of dirt served as a makeshift runway. Both air race pilots, in 1964 Lyford and Clay met at the first competition held in the clear Nevada sky to launch a new era of American air racing.

“I flew a P-51 Mustang named after our team sponsor called the Bardahl Special,” Lyford recalls. “It was very fast because we applied all the technology developed for engines in race boats. If we didn’t break the plane’s engine,

we usually won the race! Most people treated the competition as an air show, but with our racing background, we treated it very seriously and created an environment of professionalism.”

Although Lyford was first introduced to Clay through air racing, he says it was Clay’s involvement with Bill Lear as a distributor of Learjets that forged their relationship. After recognizing the business jet’s potential to revolutionize the private aviation industry, Lyford and business partner Joe Clark founded Jet Air, a company that served as a Learjet dealer for Canada and the Pacific Northwest. As business developed, Lyford and Clay became close friends. “We spent a lot of time at Sky Trails Restaurant, the all-time great watering hole for everyone at Van Nuys Airport,” Lyford remembers. “Many times, at the end of the night, we’d end up at Clay’s

LUCKY ME

house. He hosted many functions.”

Through their years of friendship, Lyford and Clay have traveled the world together. Lyford recalls a particularly memorable flight in the mid-1980s during which he served as copilot for Clay on a photo mission to film British Airways’ Concorde supersonic airliner over Scotland. “We filmed the Concorde for three days in a Lear 35 flying chase. One night, we coordinated a flight of the Concorde off the west coast of Scotland above a very low overcast. We positioned ourselves behind the aircraft and watched it fly into the sunset with its wingtips curling the clouds towards us. We took a very famous series of photographs. I will always remember that beautiful flight. It was probably one of the prettiest formation flights I’ve ever been a part of. It was spectacular because the clouds curled off the back of

the big deltas like corkscrews.”

However, Lyford says some of his most enjoyable times with Clay occurred while the two traveled seaborne, not airborne. “Clay is a pure pilot, but I sparked his interest in boating. I basically taught him how to operate sailboats and powerboats. In return, Clay became my mentor for instrument flying.”

With laughter in his voice, Lyford describes the day he taught Clay how to sail on a trip the two took with their wives to Central America. “Clay had never been on a sailboat before, but I taught him how to operate one in a day. I told Clay that boating would be a lot of fun. We flew to Belize and rented two sailboats as if we were both qualified captains. After we arrived at the rental dock, Clay was nervous about being questioned on his boat operating experience, so he went to town to make a phone call. Clay

was gone for so long, the charter boat manager threatened not to let us leave until the next day. I told the manager, ‘This man has made literally dozens of crossings across the Pacific.’ But, I didn’t tell him it was in a plane!

“Finally Clay came back and I put my wife Pam on Clay’s boat and Clay’s wife Lois on my boat. Pam pretended to be Clay’s wife and Lois pretended to be my wife. Pam showed Clay how to undock the boat. Then, I undocked mine and we left. Clay had never even driven a sailboat, yet alone sailed one. Yet, he ducked out of the briefing and we managed to get the boats out of the harbor by switching wives!”

With amusement, Lyford describes how Clay’s first boating adventure narrowly escaped disaster. “The first night we went out to a very exposed location and a storm came up. The weather was

so rough, no one slept a second all night. I was afraid to venture over to Clay's boat because I thought he wouldn't speak to me! We finally got the boats going and started sailing down the coast of



Air race champion Chuck Lyford stands next to his high-powered P-51 Mustang named the Bardahl Special circa 1964.

Belize side-by-side. Lois went down to the cabin to retrieve the only nautical chart onboard. But, when she came up to hand the chart to Clay, it blew overboard. That was a disaster! I said, 'Don't worry Clay. I'll give you my chart'. So, I had to draw another chart by hand. It was complicated because there were reefs everywhere. I sailed off the drawing for the next couple of days. In the end, after a week had passed, it turned out to be one of the best trips Clay and Lois had ever experienced. After that, I introduced Clay to powerboats, which were much more his speed."

Despite a rough start, Lyford says, Clay is a very proficient boater and enjoys operating his own powerboat. For years, the two boated together every August—usually in the San Juan Islands and on up the coast of Canada—to celebrate their birthdays which are one

day apart. Today, their boats are docked next to each other at Roche Harbor in the San Juan Islands.

Lyford can't resist revealing a little-known fact about Clay. "He's a terrible skier," Lyford laughs. "I once took Clay skiing in Park City, Utah. The only problem was that he could only turn to the left. He couldn't turn right. I never figured out why!"

Currently a race car driver, Lyford summarizes that boat racing, air racing, and auto racing have been a part of his life for nearly six decades. "I live a wonderful life. I enjoy every day. Each day is a gift. I still fly wherever I go and my friendship with Clay is based on our love of airplanes. I couldn't imagine life without flying."

In late 1964, seven of the first twelve Learjets originally built line the factory ramp in Wichita, Kansas. The second to last jet bears the registration number N1965L and is owned and flown by Clay today.



“Every airplane I ever sold was an airplane I believed in.”

Clay Lacy

WILLIAM (BILL) POWELL LEAR: A PIONEER IN PRIVATE AVIATION

Born on June 26, 1902 in Hannibal, Missouri, William (Bill) Powell Lear was best known for designing and building the Learjet—the world’s first economical, mass-produced business jet that could transport executives in and out of small airports at record-setting speeds. With only an eighth-grade education, the self-made innovator and entrepreneur also held more than 150 patents for his inventions, including the car radio, eight-track stereo tape player,

autopilot for jet aircraft, navigational radio, and radio direction finder. He was awarded five doctorate degrees “Honoris Causa” from different universities.

Inspired by the design of a prototype single-seat Swiss P-16 fighter jet, Lear formed the Lear Jet Corporation in Switzerland and directed engineers to transfer the P-16’s aerodynamic features to a new corporate jet. Although Lear began work on the first Learjet Model 23 there, in 1962 problems with materials and production caused him to transfer aircraft assembly to Wichita, Kansas, under the new name of Lear Jet Industries.

Nine months after work began on the project, the Lear 23 made its first flight on October 7, 1963, from Wichita’s Mid-Continent Airport. On June 4, 1964, during a routine certification flight, the first Learjet crashed and burned in a

cornfield after takeoff. Attributed to pilot error, the crash did not injure either the Learjet test pilot or Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) pilot at the controls. A second Learjet that had been built and flown obtained certification from the FAA in August 1964. Chemical and Industrial Corporation of Cincinnati, Ohio, took delivery of the first production Learjet on October 13, 1964, one year after its initial flight.

The new business jet was an almost instant marketing and commercial success, with more than one hundred sold by the end of 1965 at an initial price of just over \$500,000 each. Lear Jet Industries went on to produce an improved Lear 24 known for its high cruising altitude and long endurance flight capability, followed by the Lear 25.

In 1967, Lear Jet Industries was sold to Gates Rubber Company of Denver,



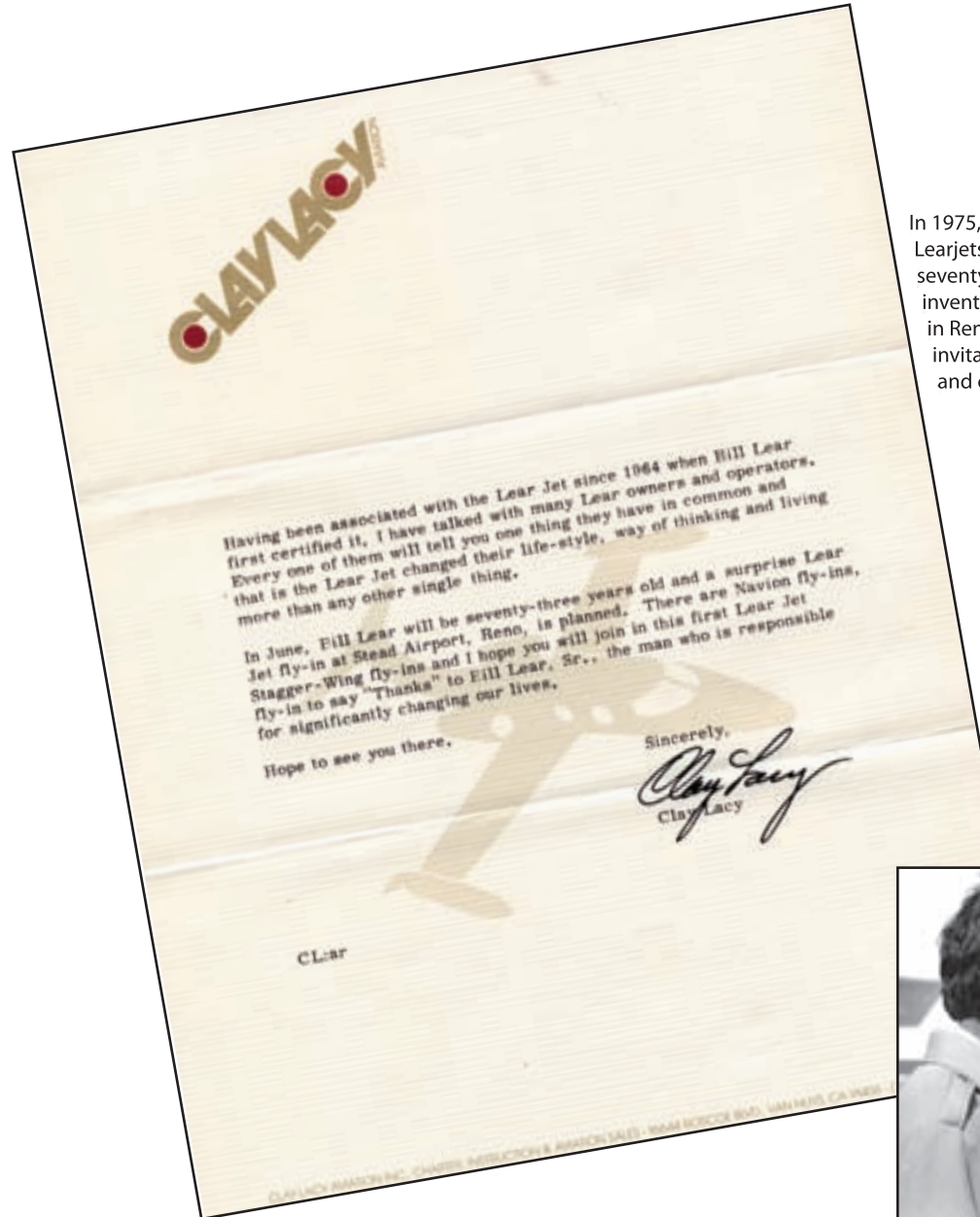
(Left to right) Clay, Learjet inventor Bill Lear, and actor Danny Kaye tour the Lear Jet Corporation factory in 1964.

LUCKY ME

Colorado, and renamed the Gates Learjet Corporation. Since 1990, the aircraft have been produced by the Canadian corporation Bombardier under the name Learjet, Inc. To this day, few products enjoy the Learjet's instant name recognition.

Although he died in May 1978, Lear is still revered in aviation circles as the individual most responsible for the introduction and use of jet aircraft for business and personal travel.

In July 2008, the Smithsonian Institute's *Air & Space Magazine* listed the Lear 23 as one of the top ten aircraft that changed the world. The editors wrote, "We looked for craft that had an impact beyond the realm of things that fly, that reached into the larger culture and touched even those who aren't frequent fliers or connected to aviation."



In 1975, marking the production of 500 Learjets, Clay helped organize a surprise seventy-third birthday party for American inventor Bill Lear held at Stead Airport in Reno, Nevada. Here is a copy of the invitation that Clay sent to Lear's friends and colleagues.



Lear (right) and Clay are pictured at the party, which opened with an unprecedented fly-in by twenty-five Learjets from across the Western Hemisphere.

WILLIAM (BILL) POWELL LEAR, JR.



At about age thirty, Bill Lear, Jr. sits in the cockpit of the Swiss P-16 fighter in Altenrhein, Switzerland, in March 1960.
Photo courtesy of Bill Lear, Jr.

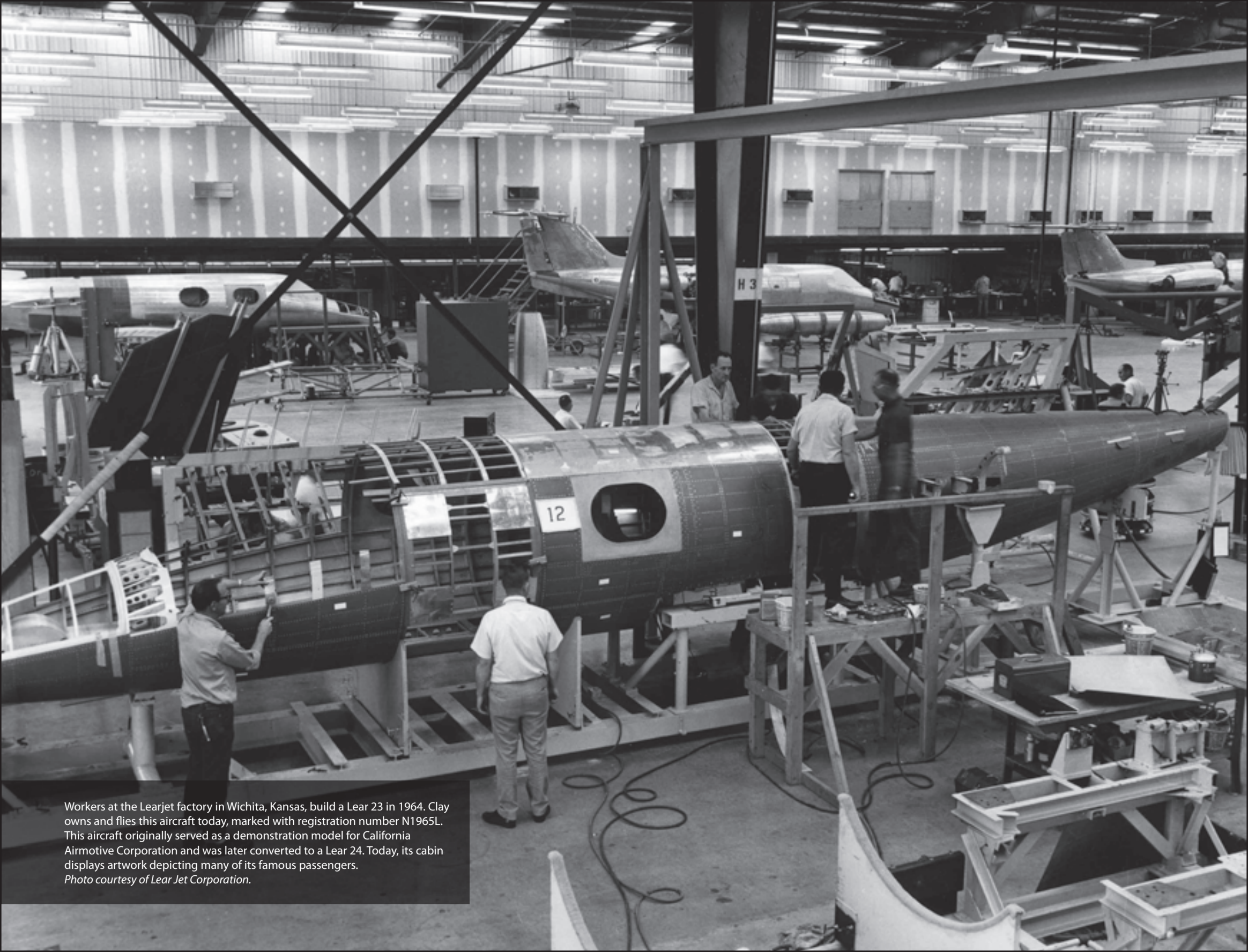
William (Bill) Powell Lear, Jr., who ran Lear Jet Corporation operations in Switzerland, conducted early flight tests in the experimental Swiss P-16 jet fighter to obtain specific data that was later used in the design of the Learjet. He was impressed with the aircraft, recognized it had a wing design close to what his father wanted, and sent favorable reports back home. His early flight tests cut expenses and eliminated the need for wind tunnel testing during development.

Shortly before his death in December 2009, Lear, Jr. said, "Clay and my father became very close friends during the early days of the Learjet. Clay had an instinct for putting deals together and this helped him progress to the point where he is today.

"Clay is a superb aviator—a pilot's pilot. He is an icon in business aviation and is well-known, well-liked, and admired throughout the aviation industry. He is especially a good friend of mine, I'm proud to say! Clay has flown just about everything there is to fly and his evaluations are widely sought."



The Swiss P-16 jet fighter (foreground) is parked next to a Lear 23 in Altenrhein, Switzerland, in 1964.
Photo courtesy of Bill Lear, Jr.



Workers at the Learjet factory in Wichita, Kansas, build a Lear 23 in 1964. Clay owns and flies this aircraft today, marked with registration number N1965L. This aircraft originally served as a demonstration model for California Air motive Corporation and was later converted to a Lear 24. Today, its cabin displays artwork depicting many of its famous passengers.
Photo courtesy of Lear Jet Corporation.

LOG BOOK ENTRY FIVE:
COME FLY WITH ME

LUCKY ME

In October 1964, one year after the Learjet made its first flight, Clay Lacy flew a Lear Model 23 (registration number N1965L) from Wichita, Kansas, to Los Angeles to become the first corporate jet based at Van Nuys Airport. Today, some 225 corporate jets are based there, more than at any other airport in the world.

“Bill Lear wanted to make Learjet a household name and Van Nuys Airport near Hollywood was the place to do it,” Clay says. “I believe we did a lot to make that happen. One day, I met Bill at the Beverly Hilton Hotel and he asked, ‘How much per hour does it cost to fly a Lear?’ I’m sure he knew, but we figured it out as follows. At fourteen cents per gallon, fuel would cost thirty-five dollars per hour; engine overhaul reserves would cost sixty dollars; and maintenance would cost forty dol-

lars per hour. The total direct cost was \$135 per hour.

“Bill then told me to take the Beverly Hills phone book and offer a demo flight to anyone I thought would talk about the Learjet. He was looking to go public with the stock. We offered the aircraft for movies and gave flights away on *The Dating Game*, a very popular television show at the time. The host of the show displayed a model of the Lear 23 on his desk five days a week.”

Hollywood’s love affair with the Learjet began with American singer, actor, and Rat Pack leader Frank Sinatra—an early buyer of Learjet Serial No. 31—who captured the romance of flight with his hit single *Come Fly With Me*. A Lear Jet Corporation receipt dated October 30, 1964, simply stated, “Please convey to Mr. Sinatra our congratulations and our intention to deliver him

the world’s finest business machine.”

Clay with Danny Kaye, also a pilot and one of the world’s most well-known comedians, flew many celebrities such as Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Kirk Douglas, Peter Lawford, Carol Channing, Cary Grant, and other famous actors and entertainers. “The Learjet attracted a lot of publicity,” Clay recalls. “We flew just about everyone in Hollywood. Because of these contacts, I was largely instrumental in making the Lear name well-known in a hurry.”

During his work as manager of sales for Lear Jet Corporation under the distributorship California Airmotive Corporation (founded by friend and business partner Allen Paulson), Clay became aware of the large number of influential and successful people, including business executives and CEOs, who piloted their own aircraft. One such person was



In 1964, Clay flew the first private jet into Van Nuys Airport to offer demonstration flights to the Hollywood celebrity crowd. Here, Clay (right) demonstrates the aircraft to stunt pilot Frank Tallman (left) and an unidentified public official. Notice the aircraft is fresh from the factory and missing an interior.

Barron Hilton, former co-chairman of Hilton Hotels Corporation, who is today known in aviation circles as “the flying innkeeper.” Since the mid-1960s, Hilton’s Flying M Ranch in Northern Nevada has served as a gathering place and social network for aviation greats and luminaries, from famous test pilots to U.S. astronauts.

In 1965, Kaye became partners with Paulson and the distributorship was renamed Pacific Lear Jet. That year, Lear appointed Kaye vice president of public relations and the distributorship sold thirteen airplanes. Over the next decade, Clay and Kaye became close friends and flew several hundred hours in the Learjet together, making four charity flights to benefit the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Starting with Serial No. 100, the Learjet was designated a Model 24 with

sixty-seven modifications. On March 17, 1966, it became the first business aircraft certified by the Federal Aviation Administration under FAR (Federal Aviation Regulations) Part 25.

The first flight of the newer model Lear 25 took place on August 12, 1966, in Wichita. However, due to financial difficulties arising from his other investments, Lear sold the factory to Gates Rubber Company in 1968 at which time it was renamed Gates Learjet Corporation. The sales and distribution system transitioned to factory direct sales, forcing dealerships to close. Paulson moved on from California Airmotive Corporation to launch American Jet Industries in 1973, which was renamed Gulfstream America Corporation in 1978 with the acquisition of Grumman Aircraft Engineering Company’s Gulfstream Division.

Clay, still flying for United Airlines,

started his own on-demand charter company in 1968 with one leased Lear 24 and rented office space at Van Nuys Airport. As business flourished, Clay purchased his first Learjet in 1969 and grew his fleet to five aircraft by 1980. In 1981, he built a premier fixed-base facility on a vacant parcel of airport property to accommodate increased demand for private charter and aircraft management services.

With a grin, Clay emphasizes the time-tested success of their early marketing efforts. “Many years later after Allen Paulson purchased the Gulfstream Company, we were driving out of Clay Lacy Aviation at Van Nuys Airport as a Gulfstream II corporate jet was taking off. We spotted a man on the sidewalk pointing out the airplane to his son. So I said to Al, ‘You know what that man is telling his son? There

LUCKY ME

goes one of those Learjets!”

Clay's desire to serve the individual needs of business and leisure travelers, while creating the perfect in-flight experience, evolved over the next four decades into one of the world's largest and most respected jet charter and management companies.



Clay (left) describes the features and maneuverability of the Learjet to aviation pioneer General James Doolittle prior to a demonstration flight in 1965.



Appearing right at home, Clay (left) and California Airmotive Corporation founder Allen Paulson rest their elbows on the nose of a Learjet circa 1965.



Clay provides a demonstration flight to actor and comedian Johnny Carson circa 1965.



Clay and fellow aviators enjoy a weekend retreat at hotelier Barron Hilton's Flying M Ranch located near Reno, Nevada. Pictured (left to right) are aerospace industry executive William F. (Bill) Ballhaus, Jr., adventurer Steve Fossett, Clay, famed test pilot Bob Hoover, and Barron Hilton.



Actor John Travolta (right) celebrates his fiftieth birthday in 2004 by taking a flight in Clay's DC-3.
Photo by Kelly Preston.

In mid-October 1965, Clay and famed entertainer Danny Kaye made the first of four flights in a Learjet to benefit the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Making stops in twenty-three cities across the U.S. in three days on the first trip and sixty-five cities in five days on the last trip, they helped promote a Halloween campaign that encouraged millions of American youngsters to "trick or treat" for donations to help the world's needy children.

However, as Clay explains, it is relatively unknown that the idea of traveling across the country to benefit such a worthwhile cause was borne of tragedy. "In October 1965, the first Learjet accident occurred in Jackson, Michigan. They had just dropped off Lear Jet Corporation Vice President Bill Sipprell in Detroit and the last radio transmission was at about 20,000 feet.

"At about 10 p.m. that evening, Bill Lear phoned me at home almost in tears to tell me about the accident. He kept asking, 'What could have happened?' The aircraft had just undergone a total rewiring and had a lot of electrical squawks, so I always believed the airplane had experienced electrical failure.

"After Bill and I spoke for about twenty minutes that night, he said he was going to phone Danny, so I called Danny real quick to let him know to expect the call. About forty-five minutes later, around 11 p.m., Danny called me at home and said, 'Put your clothes on and come over here as soon as you can!' So I arrived at Danny's house a little after midnight. He said we needed to figure out a way to make sure the public didn't lose confidence in the airplane. Pretty soon, he came up with the idea and said, 'I'm the ambassador at large for UNICEF. We'll make a trip to help raise money for UNICEF and instill confidence in the Lear.'

"At that time, Danny had a weekly television program that he normally recorded on Thursdays and Fridays. So, we had only from Sunday through Wednesday to do the first flight. We started in New York and went through twenty-three cities in three days. Danny got a lot of publicity at those stops and he always said we were flying a Learjet."

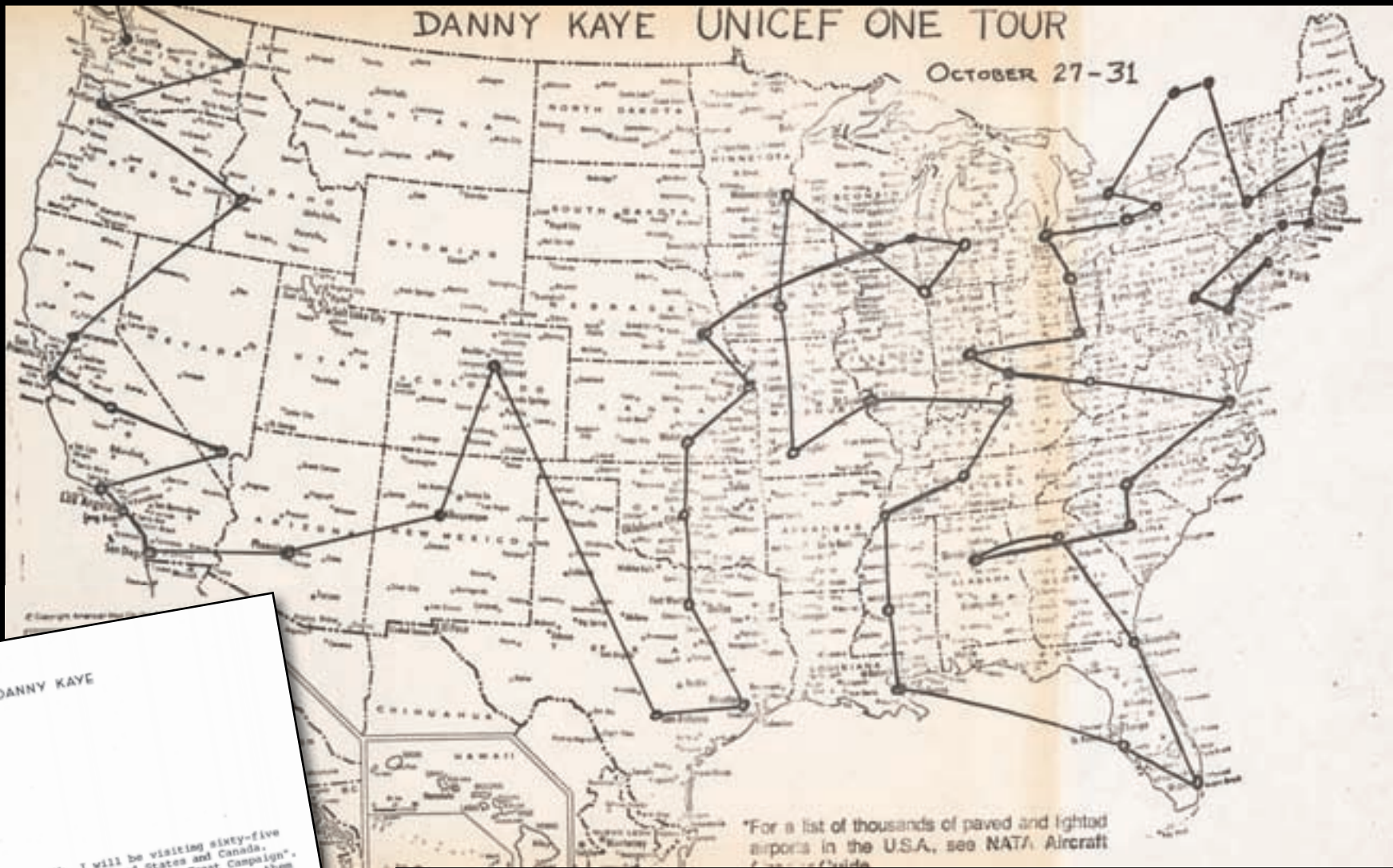
Clay and Kaye went on to make three additional fundraising missions for UNICEF, with the last flight in October 1975 originating at the White House with a send-off from President Gerald Ford and receiving Guinness Book of World Records status.



(Left to right) Clay, actor Danny Kaye, and inventor Bill Lear pose next to the Lear 24 called UNICEF ONE in 1965.



Clay (right) and Kaye share a close personal friendship circa 1965.



DANNY KAYE

Hi, Fellas!

On Monday, October 27th, I will be visiting sixty-five cities in five days in the United States and Canada. It's for the UNICEF "Halloween Trick or Treat Campaign". I will be meeting kids at each airport, talking to them for fifteen minutes, jumping into my Lear Jet huggie and tootling off to the next city.

I wish I had the time to come up to the tower and say hello to you fellows, but unfortunately, doing up to fourteen cities a day doesn't leave us much time to have a leisurely cup of coffee.

Since we're going to be on a very tight schedule, anything you can do to expedite our arrival and departure would be greatly appreciated by UNICEF, by me, and by kids around the world.

Looking forward to talking with you anyway -

All best wishes,

Danny Kaye

P.S. By the way, the plane will be called UNICEF ONE.

In October 1975, in their final UNICEF flight, Clay and actor Danny Kaye visited sixty-five cities across the United States and Canada in five days to help raise four million dollars in humanitarian aid for children as shown on this map. During the marathon tour, Clay and Kaye piloted a Lear 24 called UNICEF ONE for a total flight time of forty-two hours and forty minutes.



RONALD J. KOICHEVAR
RETIRED AIRPORT MANAGER,
VAN NUYS AIRPORT

“One rare combination distinguishes Clay: He is a truly outstanding pilot and a very good businessman. Also, Clay is always aware of what is going on in aviation. He meets the needs of his clients by providing a first-class fixed-base operator facility where their aircraft are taken care of, from maintenance and repair to fueling and storage. They know they can depend on the highest standard of service. He put Van Nuys Airport on the map for corporate aviation.”

Ron Kochevar, retired Van Nuys Airport manager, says, “The first time I took a ride in a plane, I was eight years old.” He smiles at the recollection. “It was a United Airlines DC-3 and Clay might well have been the pilot flying the plane. Our family was traveling for the day from Los Angeles International Airport to Catalina Island, a short fifteen-minute flight. As a little boy, I remember going up the aisle to our seats, and looking out the window and seeing the engine. The feeling of the takeoff lit a spark in me that set my course in life. It made me want to be in aviation.”

Kochevar continues, “I had seen Clay’s name and photos in the newspapers and aviation magazines. A good friend of our family was a United Airlines pilot, knew Clay, and talked about him many times. In 1971, I saw Clay

compete in the California 1000 Air Race in the DC-7. However, I didn’t actually meet Clay until I started working at Van Nuys Airport in August 1991.”

Pursuing his interest in aviation, Kochevar says he took flying lessons at Van Nuys Airport in 1966 and earned his pilot’s license one year later, during the same time period Clay founded his jet charter business. More than twenty-five years later, Kochevar returned to Van Nuys Airport as manager in 1991, leaving in March 1999.

Kochevar comments on Clay’s unique capabilities. “One rare combination distinguishes Clay: He is a truly outstanding pilot and a very good businessman. Also, Clay is always aware of what is going on in aviation. He meets the needs of his clients by providing a first-class fixed-base operator facility where their aircraft are taken care of,

LUCKY ME

from maintenance and repair to fueling and storage. They know they can depend on the highest standard of service. He put Van Nuys Airport on the map for corporate aviation.”

Kochevar says he and Clay talked many times about the importance of good community relations around Van Nuys Airport, especially in the area of aircraft noise. “Basically,” Kochevar says, “Clay wanted to demonstrate that you can fly any jet noisily or quietly. It’s a matter of technique—after takeoff, throttle back and reduce the climb gradient.

“So, with a portable noise monitor stationed at the end of the runway, Clay performed several takeoffs in the Lear 25. It was my first time flying with him. On his first takeoff, he eased the throttle back and leveled off, thus minimizing the noise. After that, Clay said, ‘Now I want to switch, so people can hear the

difference!’ On his second departure, Clay did not use any quiet jet departure techniques, resulting in an increased sound level.

“Afterward, we had some fun. Clay invited other airport staff to join us for a flight over some property he wanted to view. He climbed as if he was piloting a fighter jet, and within seconds, we were flying at an altitude of 16,000 feet. That was exciting. The noise test proved that what Clay said was true: You can fly a noisy jet quietly.”

Kochevar concludes, “Clay is a natural pilot. He can climb into any aircraft and, instinctively and intuitively, safely fly it.”



Clay accepts a baton passed in mid-air by members of the U.S. Army Golden Knights Parachute Team at Van Nuys Airport’s Aviation Expo 1998.



Clay demonstrates the unique capabilities of his Pilatus Porter, including a dead-stick landing, at the Van Nuys Airport Aviation Expo 2000.



Then the City of Los Angeles’ largest free family event, the annual air show was a favorite community tradition and featured dozens of military and civilian aircraft displays, aerial demonstrations, and exhibits.

Photos courtesy of Van Nuys Airport.



CARROLL SHELBY
AMERICAN AUTOMOTIVE DESIGNER
AND RACING CHAMPION

“Clay flew my heart. I had undergone twelve heart bypasses and had about two weeks to live. It was very strange. My new heart came from a gentleman who had an aneurism at a craps table, so I’m told, at a hotel owned by one of my very best friends, Barron Hilton. In cases like this, a recovery team usually returns the heart to the surgeon. But, because of my numerous bypasses, my surgeon—Dr. Alfredo Trento from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center—decided it was best to recover it himself. Clay flew him to Las Vegas to get my heart. I did not know Clay was the pilot until some time later. But Clay knew what he was flying and who it was for.”

Made famous by his unmatched impact on auto racing and design over the past fifty years, Carroll Shelby speaks of air races rather than road races when reflecting on his personal friendship with Clay Lacy. Both respected worldwide for their remarkable professional achievements, they share a passion for speed and performance, a spirit of innovation, and a love of aviation. “If I were in an impossible situation in an airplane, the one person I would want next to me is Clay Lacy,” Shelby begins.

“I first met Clay in the mid-1970s at the Reno Air Races when he was flying his P-51 Mustang, but I knew about him long before then. I got to know Clay better through my friendships with [hotelier] Barron Hilton and [test pilot] Bob Hoover. We all run in the same circles and attend various events together. We share a love of aviation, and that is the

basis for our friendship. There is no one in the business of aviation who doesn’t know who Clay is.”

Aviation has played a prominent role in Shelby’s life since he was a young man. After graduating from high school, in 1941 Shelby enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, where he learned how to fly during World War II. Famed military test pilots Chuck Yeager and Bob Hoover, who also entered the military with just a high school education, joined Shelby as aviation students and graduated as sergeant pilots, flying airplanes all day and washing pots and pans at night. “With just a high school education, I graduated flight school. We’d go out and fly missions and then pull kitchen patrol, washing dishes when we got back. I stayed in nineteen different places in Texas flying bombardiers and navigators.”

LUCKY ME

Shelby says sharing past flying stories during annual gatherings at Barron Hilton's famed Flying M Ranch near Reno, Nevada, helps his close circle of friends, including Clay, stay connected. Home to Hilton's personal collection of vintage and modern aircraft, the near million-acre ranch provides a place for aviators and astronauts alike to enjoy unrestricted flying, gourmet meals, and each other's company.

"On a weekend up there, you could hear a thousand aviation stories," Shelby says. "There are always tales from flying aces and famous test pilots about their victories or getting shot down or flying around the world setting records. Clay and Bob Hoover talk about how they got their pilot's licenses when they were about fifteen years old. Nobody would believe it if you didn't know them!"

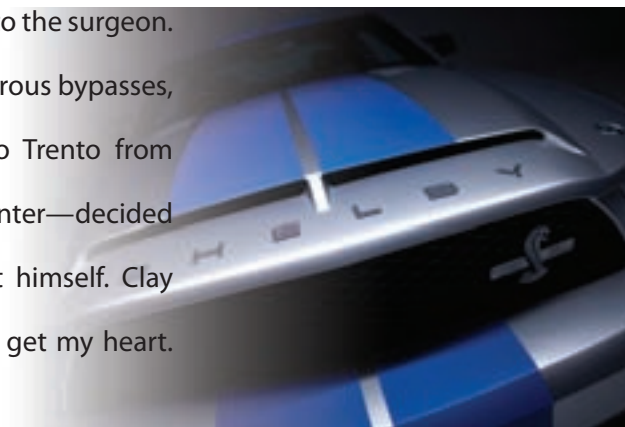
Mentioning that his wife, Cleo, is an

instrument-rated pilot, Shelby describes his most memorable flying experience with Clay—on a trip back to Van Nuys Airport after attending Oshkosh, an annual gathering of aviation enthusiasts held each summer in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. "I've been on at least one hundred flights with Clay. Cleo and I attend Oshkosh with him almost every year.

"One time, we were heading back to Van Nuys Airport in Clay's Lear 24 and my wife was flying as copilot. Barron Hilton had departed ahead of us in his Cessna Citation. About ten minutes out, the Van Nuys tower told us to make a 360-degree turn because we were approaching too close to Barron's plane. So Clay told the tower, 'I'll just land on the left runway,' which is only about 4,000 feet long. Clay just came on down. He had flown that jet for so many years, he just stalled it in. We had about 500

feet left on that short little runway after we landed. The tower said, 'I never saw anything like that before.' But Clay just took it as something normal."

On a more serious note, Shelby describes with gratitude the significance of a flight Clay piloted from Van Nuys, California, to Las Vegas on June 7, 1990, that saved Shelby's life. "Clay flew my heart. I had undergone twelve heart bypasses and had about two weeks to live. It was very strange. My new heart came from a gentleman who had an aneurism at a craps table, so I'm told, at a hotel owned by one of my very best friends, Barron Hilton. In cases like this, a recovery team usually returns the heart to the surgeon. But, because of my numerous bypasses, my surgeon—Dr. Alfredo Trento from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center—decided it was best to recover it himself. Clay flew him to Las Vegas to get my heart.



I did not know Clay was the pilot until some time later. But Clay knew what he was flying and who it was for.

“Though I’m not allowed to know the identity of the person who donated my heart, my ambition in life is to thank his wife. When the doctors performed my heart transplant surgery, they told me not to expect it to last for more than five years. But I’ve had my heart for twenty years now.”

Today at age eighty-seven, Shelby is the longest-living heart transplant recipient in the world and operates the Carroll Shelby Children’s Foundation, which reaches out to children across the world in need of organ transplants and critical care. The legendary racer, automotive manufacturer, aviator, and good friend of Clay’s offers a parting thought. “I love steam locomotives, airplanes, and automobiles. That’s my life.”



Carroll Shelby enjoys his custom 2008 Superperformance Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupe.
Photo courtesy of Carroll Shelby.



Shelby (center) and his wife Cleo celebrate a wedding anniversary with hotel executive Barron Hilton at the Flying M Ranch.
Photo courtesy of Barron Hilton.



"Time is everything."

Clay Lacy

Clay keeps his signature purple P-51 Mustang race plane in pristine condition.

LOG BOOK ENTRY SIX:

RENO, LOS ANGELES, CAPE MAY

LUCKY ME

In January 1964, Clay Lacy saw an advertisement for the first Reno National Air Races and asked his business partner Allen Paulson to sponsor his entry. The timing was perfect, and Paulson made a deal to purchase a North American Aviation P-51 Mustang for Clay's use within



a day. Between 1964 and 1972, Clay found time between flying for United Airlines and running his private charter business to fly his P-51 Mustang No. 64 in every Unlimited class air race in the country—taking the sport of winged competition to locations stretching from Reno, Nevada, to Cape May, New Jersey.

"I remember hearing about air races in the 1930s and '40s when I lived in Wichita, but I was too young to get involved," Clay says. "One day in January 1964, I was on a layover with United

Airlines in Reno when I noticed an ad for the first Reno Air Races to be held in September of that year. It sounded like fun and was something I wished to do."

Clay served as president of the national Professional Race Pilots Association from 1966 to 1970, championing air safety and developing standards to ensure the future of the industry. He worked with the event's founder Bill Stead, a Nevada rancher and hydroplane racer, to establish rules and regulations for the annual competition in which pilots qualify their airplanes in six race classes. He also helped elevate the event's visibility and status through increased corporate involvement.

"I tried to persuade all the race pilots to paint the names of businesses on the sides of their airplanes to give sponsors publicity because we were starting to get coverage by *ABC Wide World of*

Sports and other media," Clay recalls. "I told them, just give the businesses publicity and don't worry about the money. To this day, we never quite received the level of sponsorships we were aiming for, but it helped."

Flying with the character "Snoopy" painted on the tail of his signature purple plane, Clay consistently placed second and third in the competitions, but aspired to win a major pylon race. In 1970, with his race plane bearing the name Miss Van Nuys on its side, Clay claimed victory as national air race champion in the Unlimited class. The following year, he also placed first in a cross country race from Milwaukee to St. Louis and in the St. Louis Fighter Pilot Air Tournament. He went on to capture first place in The Great Race from London, England, to Victoria, British Columbia, flying a Learjet.

In 1970, Clay created worldwide interest when he and Paulson flew a four-engine DC-7 nicknamed Super Snoopy in the California 1000 Mile Air Race at Mojave, California. Racing against Grumman F8F Bearcats, Lockheed P-38 Lightnings, North American Aviation P-51 Mustangs, and other World War II fighters on a fifteen-mile course, this was the first and only time a four-engine airliner ever competed in a pylon event. The DC-7 finished in sixth place out of twenty, flying an average speed of 325 miles per hour.

When asked during the late 1960s why pilots race propeller aircraft in the age of lunar travel, Clay responded with the following quotation that was published in a Professional Race Pilots Association pictorial. "In air racing, the man and machine are equal, each being capable of about the same loads and

stresses. The race pilot holds control over the machine with his hands, while space travel requires huge rockets, hundreds of computers, and thousands of people in a team for a flight.

"True, astronauts have shown vividly that men make the critical contribution to the conquest of space. However, for many of us, there's a desire to keep alive a great period of aviation that began before some of us were born. For myself, the most rewarding part of being associated with air racing since Reno 1964 has not been the thrill of five-g turns only a few feet from the ground. Rather, it's been the privilege of knowing the wonderful people, pilots, crews, and spectators who share an interest in airborne competition."



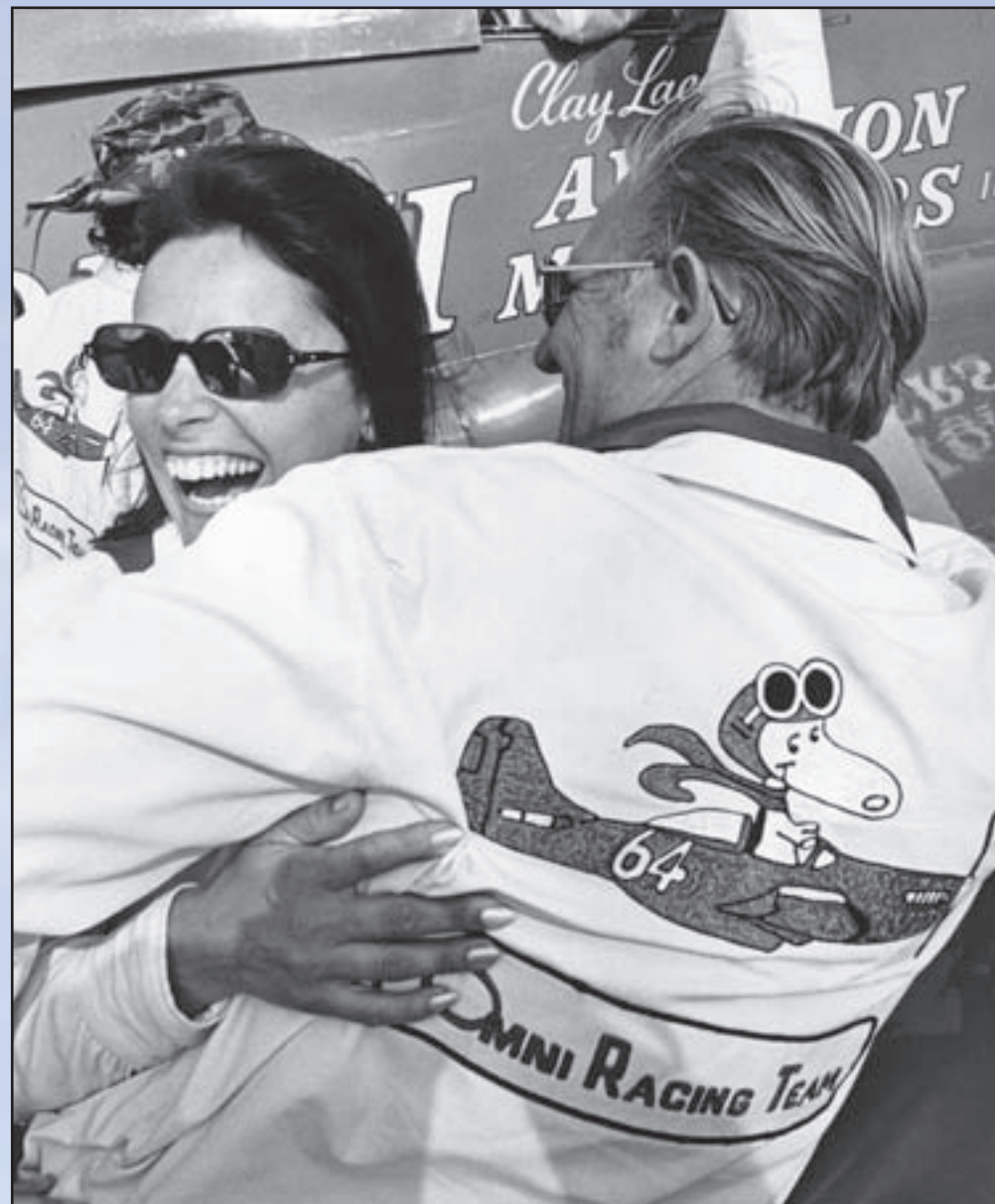
Clay smiles in the cockpit of his P-51 race plane circa 1968.



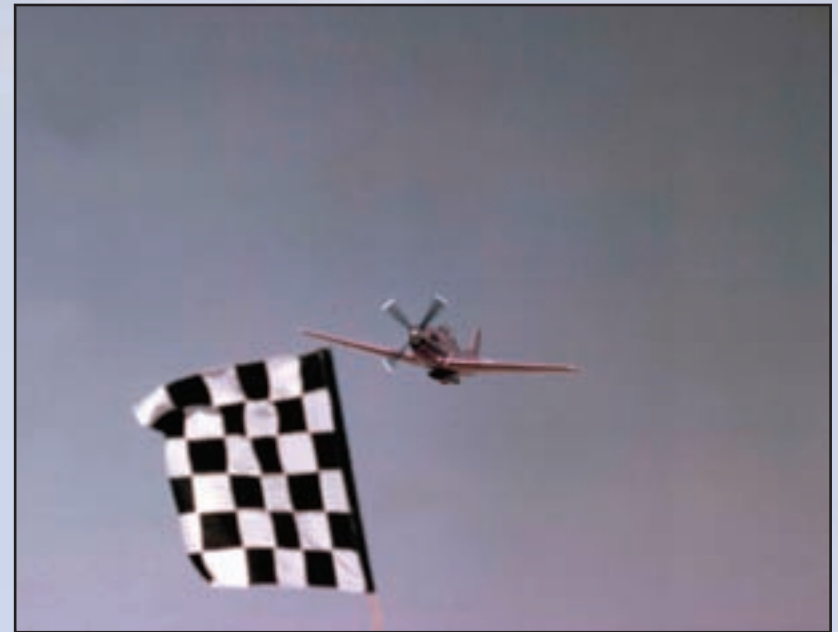
During his air race days, Clay formed a close personal friendship with Mojave Airport manager Dan Sabovich (above).



An unhappy Clay sits in the cockpit of his P-51 Mustang No. 64 after experiencing mechanical problems during a qualification attempt at the 1971 Reno National Air Races.
Photo by David Esler.



Clay's wife Lois Lacy and pit crew member Duke Tonry embrace after Clay wins first place in the Reno National Air Races Unlimited class competition in 1970.



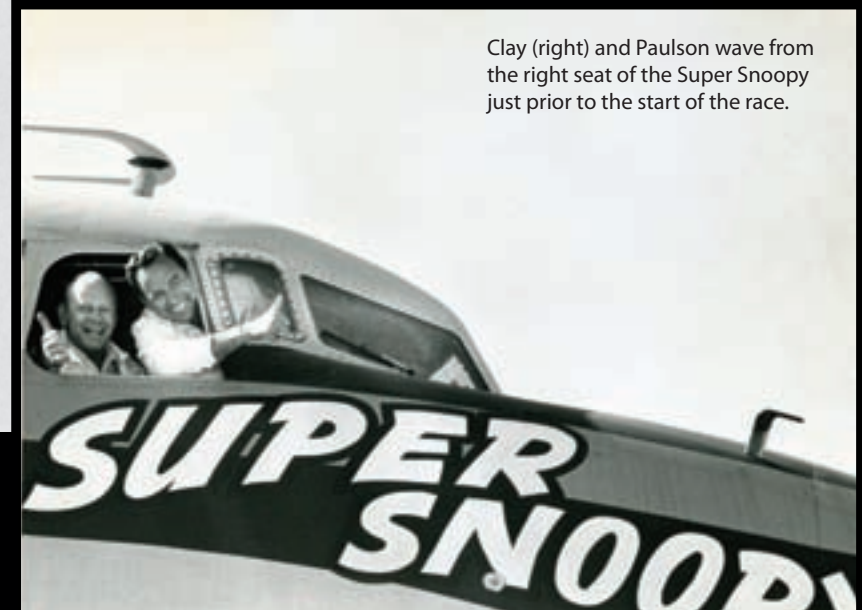
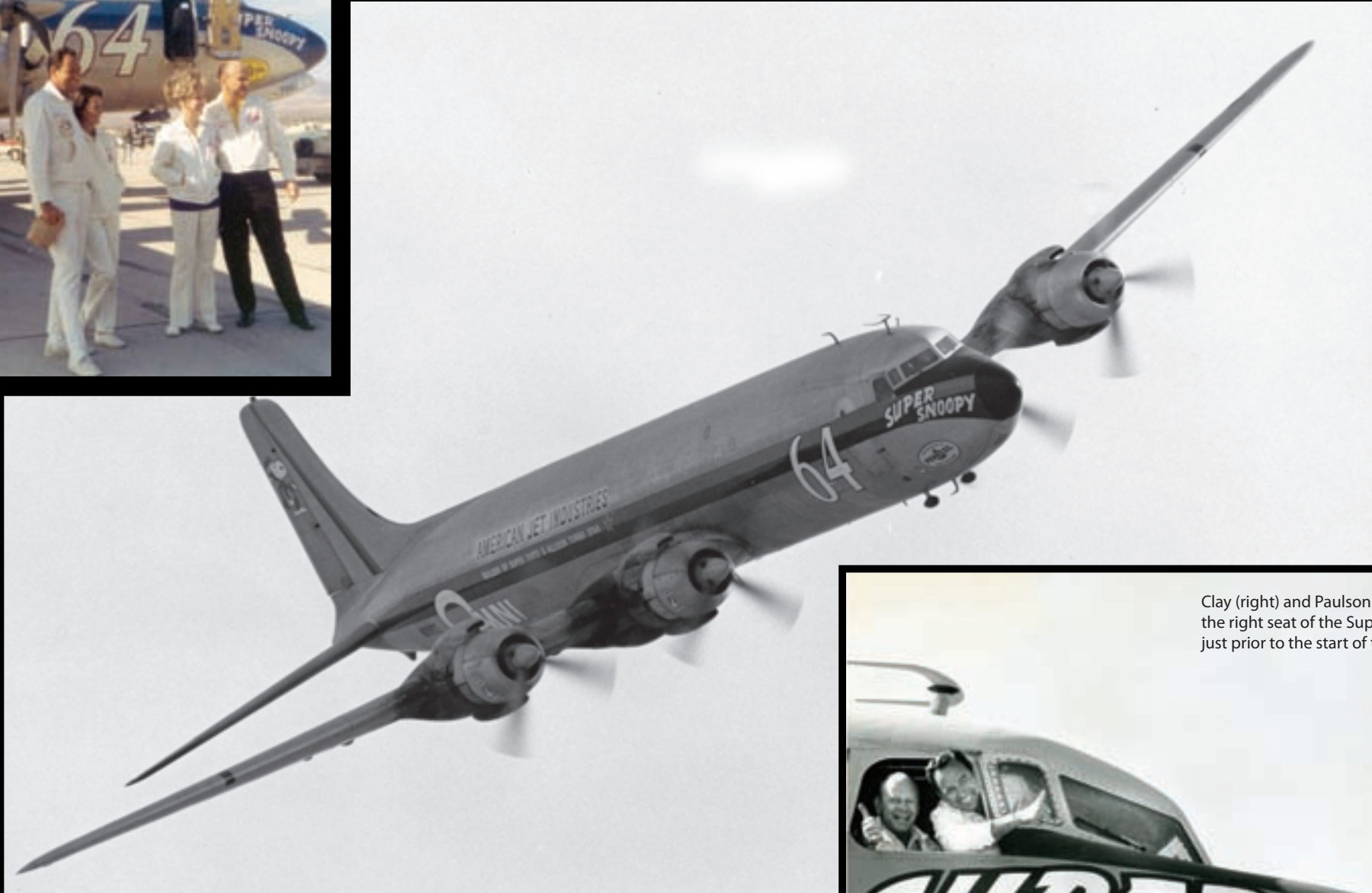
Top left: From 1964 to 1972, Clay competed in every pylon air race held in the nation. Here, Clay takes the lead in his iconic purple P-51 Mustang No. 64.

Bottom left: In 1965, Clay flies in first position during the Los Angeles Air Race in Lancaster, California.

Top right: Clay crosses the finish line at the checkered flag.

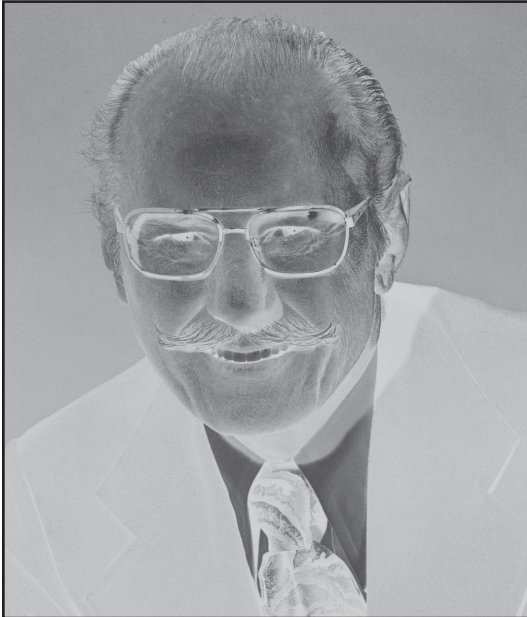


Clad in matching race crew attire, (left to right) Clay and Lois Lacy join Mary Lou and Allen Paulson, Clay's business partner and copilot, on the tarmac in front of the DC-7.



Clay (right) and Paulson wave from the right seat of the Super Snoopy just prior to the start of the race.

In 1971, Clay creates worldwide interest when he and Paulson fly a four-engine DC-7 nicknamed Super Snoopy in the California 1000 Mile Air Race at Mojave, California.
Photo by Jim Larsen.



ROBERT A. (BOB) HOOVER
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,
JET FLEET INTERNATIONAL, INC.
FORMER U.S. AIR FORCE TEST PILOT
AND AEROBATIC PILOT

“I remember one race at Fox Field near Lancaster, California, when Clay had to make a Mayday call because he lost control of his propeller, meaning it was not getting oil pressure from the engine and was uncontrollable. We lost many airplanes through the years because of that problem. Clay had to make an emergency landing, so I stayed with him throughout the approach and landing. The runway was very short, so I said, ‘Clay, there’s a dirt road off the end of the runway. Start looking for it as you get toward the end of the runway.’ And Clay landed on the runway as planned. He managed to get the airplane on the dirt road and saved the airplane.”

“Gentlemen, you have a race!” With that famous radio call, Robert A. (Bob) Hoover, highly decorated U.S. Air Force fighter pilot and world-renowned test pilot, and well-known for his many worldwide aerobatic demonstrations, officially started the Reno National Air Races from the cockpit of his yellow P-51 Mustang for many years. At the age of eighty-eight, Hoover, who says he has never retired, currently serves as chairman of the board for Jet Fleet International, Inc., a company that provides fueling and other aircraft services at more than 1,800 locations worldwide. With a smile and admiration in his voice, this preeminent aviator recognized by his wide-brimmed straw hat and charming Southern drawl, speaks about his friend Clay Lacy.

Hoover first met Clay in the late 1950s while demonstrating the capa-

bilities of the F-86 Sabre jet, the first jet aircraft capable of going supersonic in a vertical dive, at a military conference in Boise, Idaho. A test pilot for North American Aviation at the time, Hoover traveled across the world demonstrating the plane’s capabilities to many U.S. Air Force active duty, reserve, and Air National Guard pilots, including Clay. “I was extremely impressed with Clay from the first time I started flying with him,” Hoover recalls. “We had many mutual friends, and that was the beginning of our friendship.”

The two remained acquainted through the Air National Guard, but formed stronger ties during the height of modern air racing in the 1960s and ‘70s, when Clay competed as a race pilot and Hoover served as the official starter.

Hoover was instrumental in helping Nevada cattle rancher and World War II pilot

LUCKY ME

Bill Stead reinstate the races in 1964; they had been suspended in 1949 following a fatal race crash.

To launch each competition, Hoover describes, he took off first in the pace plane. The race planes, mostly modified World War II aircraft, joined up behind him one by one. Lining up with the race course at an altitude of 9,000 feet as judges observed from the ground, Hoover coached the pilots into position “wingtip to wingtip” to achieve a fair starting point. Once the planes were in proper order, Hoover announced, “Gentlemen, you have a race!” and pulled his pace plane straight up into a vertical climb, allowing the racers to add power and head for the first turn. “From that point on,” Hoover says, “each pilot was on his own on the race course. The planes were bunched up at the time I turned them loose, but in a matter of a few sec-

onds, the fast ones started pulling out ahead and the dueling began.”

During each race, Hoover also served as safety advisor and circled overhead, providing instructions and assistance to any pilots in trouble. “The races were very exciting and thrilling, but were fraught with risk,” he says. “Most people watching the pace plane thought I was showing off by rolling the airplane, but I wasn’t. I rolled my aircraft because, as the race progressed, the airplanes got spread out all over the race course. The objective was to know where each airplane was positioned at any particular time during the race in case of a Mayday call. When that happened, I would join the disabled aircraft and fly in close formation, while informing the pilot of the extent of the damage and providing whatever advice the situation required. I would stay with the crippled airplane

in close formation right until the wheels touched the runway.”

Saying he can’t remember very many races without a Mayday call, Hoover vividly recalls how Clay handled such an experience. “Clay raced every year and won the Classic Gold Unlimited Air Race, which involved the fastest race planes and the highest risk among the race classes. I remember one race at Fox Field near Lancaster, California, when Clay had to make a Mayday call because he lost control of his propeller, meaning it was not getting oil pressure from the engine and was uncontrollable. We lost many airplanes through the years because of that problem. Clay had to make an emergency landing, so I stayed with him throughout the approach and landing. The runway was very short, so I said, ‘Clay, there’s a dirt road off the end of the runway. Start looking for it as you



Clay (right) and aviation icon Bob Hoover cross their arms at the prop of Clay’s beautifully maintained P-51 Mustang.



Test pilot Bob Hoover kneels next to the P-51 Mustang he began flying for aerobatic demonstrations in the 1960s.

Photo courtesy of Bob Hoover.



(Left to right) Friendship One flight participants Hoover, U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong, and United Airlines captain Verne Jobst share a light moment in the aircraft's cabin as a videographer to the right documents the event.

get toward the end of the runway.' And Clay landed on the runway as planned. He managed to get the airplane on the dirt road and saved the airplane."

Having flown with Clay many times through the years, Hoover offers a behind-the-scenes look at many famous flights, including the time Clay set a new around-the-world speed record in the first United Airlines 747SP to raise thousands of dollars for children's charities. "Clay gave my friend [U.S. astronaut] Neil Armstrong and myself the opportunity to sit in the cockpit as we flew over the Indian Ocean at night. Clay was responsible for the planning and implementation of the entire trip. And, I do not believe during the time we were airborne that Clay ever had a chance to close his eyes because every time I went to the flight deck, Clay was at the controls even though he had two

back-up crews."

Hoover also describes the time a bird struck the wing of Clay's Boeing 727 during the historic Midway 2000 flight to celebrate the new millennium by flying across the international dateline. "We were headed to land on Midway Island, which is populated with Gooney Birds that can do severe damage to aircraft," Hoover explains. "Midway is a small island in the Pacific known for the Battle of Midway, which was a turning point during World War II. Clay planned the trip accurately so we would land after dark to avoid any problems, since the birds are typically active during daylight hours. But one of the Gooney Birds got airborne and hit the leading edge of the wing. It did some damage, but none of the passengers onboard knew what happened except for those of us who could feel it a bit."

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Hoover continues, “Clay has been through all kinds of things much more serious than that. I remember well the time Clay performed flutter testing—one of the most risky demonstrations you can do as a test pilot—on the Pilatus Porter, a Swiss-built airplane with a turbo-prop power plant. During the flutter testing, Clay lost both ailerons, one of the most serious things that can happen to a pilot. When you lose an aileron, you lose lateral control of the aircraft and it’s extremely difficult in some airplanes to keep your wings level.

“But Clay managed to get the plane down in a field, right-side up. The importance of this event is that he stayed cool and calm in a situation that has killed many pilots. I have learned that you must have self-control, no matter how disastrous the situation seems. You can’t go to pieces. You have to keep flying. A lot of

people don’t learn that self-control. But Clay was cool and calculated any time he had an emergency.”

Summarizing Clay’s career as a pilot, flying thousands of hours in hundreds of aircraft types and often in high-risk situations, Hoover pays tribute to Clay’s meaningful contributions to the aviation community. “Clay has had his hands in the hot boiling water on a number of occasions because of the kind of person he is. I admire Clay for all of his capabilities. What’s most unique about his background is that he’s done it all. He has evaluated more planes privately than anyone else and written articles regarding the findings from his flights. He’s informed many thousands of people in the aviation world about what it’s like to fly these many different airplanes. He’s skilled in so many ways. He can go from one airplane to another and feel right at home.”



Legendary test and aerobatic pilot Bob Hoover stands on the wing of his yellow pace plane Ole Yeller, a familiar sight on the air race circuit.

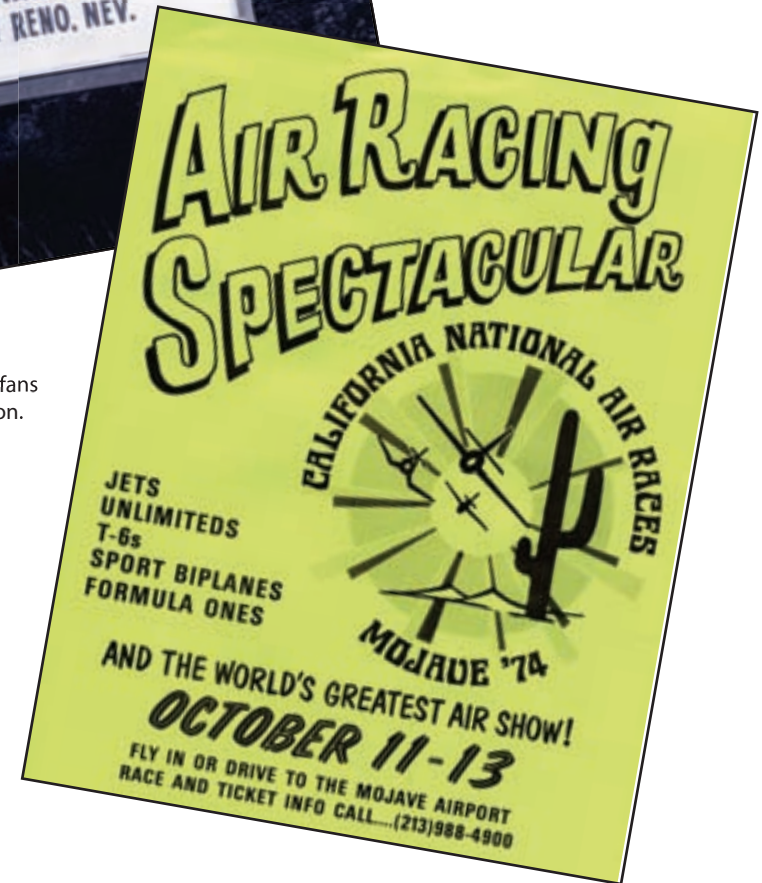
Photo courtesy of Bob Hoover.



Clay autographs photos for young air race enthusiasts.



These advertisements draw thousands of fans who enjoy the sport of winged competition.





*“Do something that you enjoy
and you’ll be successful.”*

Clay Lacy

Clay waves to cheering fans following an air race in 1972.

OMNI

Clay Lacy
**AVIATION
MANAGERS INC.**

NATIONAL CHAMPION 1972

Omni Uni

PENNZOIL

CHAMPION

PENNZOIL



CLIFF ROBERTSON
ACADEMY AWARD® AND EMMY® AWARD
WINNING ACTOR, DIRECTOR, AND WRITER

“The competition at Mojave was remarkable. He had entered many races before, but not in the DC-7. Clay... flew that great big four-engine aircraft and beat fifteen of those other guys flying fighter aircraft. It was remarkable and admirable. He’s a pilot’s pilot.”

Cliff Robertson—the handsome film star, Academy Award® winner, Emmy® Award winner, and director and writer of more than one hundred films—speaks about Clay Lacy. “We met in a general kind of way, probably at some aviation event, perhaps through the Experimental Aircraft Association or National Aviation Hall of Fame. Clay is a man you go to when you don’t have any answers. He’s all-prescient. I would go to him if I had any serious questions about aviation.”

Describing Clay as “everyone’s favorite uncle” and a “Midwesterner with a down-to-earth personality,” the long-time leading man and sailplane pilot continues, “There is no glitz, no flash, and no dance about Clay. It’s straight down the road.”

Robertson reflects further, “Clay is a modest man, and it’s hard to find that

kind of man. He doesn’t come on strong in a group. He’s tall, quiet, and lovable. He has a wonderful way of staying calm. If you were to pick anyone to be with in a tight situation, it would be Clay. He’s authoritative. He gives a sense of security, based on his experience.”

Robertson is proud that he introduced Clay to the movie business while directing the 1979 aviation film *The Pilot*, for which he hired Clay to serve as an aviation advisor and perform aerial photography. Clay captured images of the actors on film while flying both a Learjet and DC-8 equipped with specially mounted cameras. “That film opened a lot of doors for Clay in the commercial film industry,” Robertson says.

Describing Clay as one of the world’s most accomplished aerial cinematographers, Robertson notes, “He’s top-rated

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in anything that requires proven skill, whether it is photography or stunt flying or piloting an aircraft.”

Robertson also recalls Clay’s enthusiasm for competing in air races and describes one in particular. “The competition at Mojave was remarkable. He had entered many races before, but not in the DC-7. Clay, with Al Paulson as copilot, flew that great big four-engine aircraft and beat fifteen of those other guys flying fighter aircraft. It was remarkable and admirable. He’s a pilot’s pilot.”

Robertson says he also enjoys spending time with Clay off the movie set. Together, they attend gatherings at hotelier Barron Hilton’s famous Nevada ranch and the Experimental Aircraft Association’s annual Oshkosh Air Show held in Wisconsin. Robertson, Clay, and a close circle of friends also enjoy fish-

ing trips to Alaska, which have become an annual summer tradition.

“We fly up to Craig, Alaska, and then board the *Silverado*, Barron Hilton’s working yacht,” Robertson describes. “We sleep there and go out in the morning on a small fishing boat looking for salmon. We spend the entire day fishing, go back to the boat for lunch, and also have a nice dinner at night. It’s a group of flyers talking about their aviation days and experiences. The trip is very informal and the best part is everyone’s congenial attitude. We bring fish back and stories back. And, the stories are as big as the fish!”

Robertson says Clay has achieved worldwide name recognition. “No matter where you go in the United States or South America or Europe, you mention Clay Lacy, and people in the know all know Clay. Clay has a natural talent,

a love and acumen for the aviation industry. In addition, he has a youthful attitude. He’s never an old sourpuss. He’s a sage, very wise, and always willing to look at new ideas.”



In 2009, Clay (left) and actor/director Cliff Robertson together present the film *The Pilot* at the Reel Stuff Film Festival of Aviation hosted by the National Aviation Hall of Fame. The cinematic celebration of flight, held every spring, offers movie screenings at various Dayton, Ohio theatre venues, with each presentation introduced by a producer, actor, aerial coordinator, or cinematographer associated with its production. Photo courtesy of Ron Kaplan.

In 2003, Clay and friends stop by the Clay Lacy Aviation facility in Seattle on their way to a fishing trip in Alaska. Pictured (left to right) are director of the National Air and Space Museum Gen. Jack Dailey, U.S. astronaut Gene Cernan, actor/director Cliff Robertson, retired chairman of Hilton Hotels Corporation Barron Hilton, Clay, and World War II test pilot John Meyers.





During an Astrovision photo mission in 1977, Clay leads Mirage fighters over France while flying a Lear 23 previously owned by inventor Bill Lear for the filming of *The Concorde*.

LOG BOOK ENTRY SEVEN:

LIGHTS! CAMERA! AVIATION!

Since 1965, Clay Lacy has been the source of aerial photography on nearly 3,000 flights for the airlines and military, television shows, and feature films. In partnership with Continental Camera Systems, Inc., Clay revolutionized air-to-air cinematography with Astrovision, a unique relay lens system with periscopes mounted on the top and bottom of the fuselage and in the nose of the aircraft.

Filming breathtaking flying scenes and action-packed stunt work for major motion pictures has been part of Clay's lifelong work. It was Clay who recorded most of the hair-raising aerial sequences and dogfights in Paramount Pictures' *Top Gun*. His film credits also include everything from the movie blockbusters *The Right Stuff* and *Firefox* to an Emmy® Award winning network television special in which magician David

Copperfield made a Learjet vanish.

Among his most memorable movie projects, Clay faked the gear-up landing of a Learjet for *Capricorn One*; simulated a Mach 3 flight across the polar ice caps for *Firefox*; filmed a supersonic Concorde airliner being chased by a Mirage fighter jet for *The Concorde: Airport '79*; and captured spectacular stunt scenes in the James Bond film *Octopussy*.

Clay has also conducted flight test chase and photography for the aerospace industry for more than three decades. In 1977, Clay performed his longest photo mission ever when his Astrovision crew filmed an Eastern Airlines L-1011 passenger jet flying over each of the airline's destination cities. "That was the longest photo flight we've ever had," Clay says. "We flew for ten days straight." A member of the Screen Actors Guild and Directors Guild of Ameri-

ca, Clay has filmed virtually every airline commercial showing an aircraft in flight with his exclusive Astrovision-equipped Learjets.

June 8, 1966 is a particularly memorable day for Clay. As he prepared to fly to Edwards Air Force Base in Lancaster, California, for a publicity photo shoot, he was unexpectedly detoured to transport Rat Pack members Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin from Burbank Airport near Los Angeles to Palm Springs, California. Sinatra and Martin were eager to escape public and media attention following Martin's birthday party the night before. "The two had gotten into some kind of trouble at a Beverly Hills hotel, so they wanted to leave town in a hurry," Clay recalls.

After flying the duo to Palm Springs in Sinatra's privately-owned Lear 23 shortly after 6 a.m., Clay proceeded to

Edwards Air Force Base, where he loaded photographers into the back of the jet to capture the U.S. Air Force's cutting-edge North American XB-70 Valkyrie (an experimental strategic bomber designed to fly at high altitude beyond Mach 3) rendezvous with a contingent of jet aircraft, all powered by General Electric engines. On that day, filming took place out the window since it was prior to development of the Astrovision camera system.

Clay was positioned approximately 600 feet to the left of the formation, which included the Northrop YF-5A Freedom Fighter, Northrop T-38 Talon, McDonnell Douglas F-4B Phantom, and Lockheed F-104 Starfighter. As the final photos were taken, the F-104 collided with the XB-70, engulfing the F-104 in a fireball. The F-104 disintegrated and fell towards the desert 25,000 feet below.

Several seconds later, the XB-70 tumbled out of control and began to break apart, impacting about twelve miles north of Barstow, California. The F-104 pilot was killed and only one of the two XB-70 pilots ejected safely.

"We had been flying for about an hour and were almost finished with the photo mission when the horizontal stabilizer on the F-104 touched the wingtip of the XB-70 and then rolled over, knocking both its vertical fins off," Clay describes. "The XB-70 flew straight and level for about twenty-five seconds before it yawed and rolled, and then went into a flat spin. For a while, it looked like it was going to keep flying."

The fatal crash became known as the most expensive aircraft accident in aviation history and the darkest hour at Edwards Air Force Base. The exclusive photographs taken from the back of

Clay's Lear were published as a centerfold in *LIFE Magazine*.



Photographers in the back of Clay's Lear 23 capture the crash of the F-104 and XB-70 during a publicity photo shoot in 1966. The exclusive photographs were later published as a centerfold in *LIFE Magazine*.

LUCKY ME



Clay remains the major source of aerial photography for nearly every major airline in the world.



This is an Astrovision marketing brochure produced in the mid-1980s. With full video monitoring to film above or below a Learjet, the Astrovision camera system is able to rotate 360 degrees in any direction and tilt up and down with no speed or altitude restrictions. At its introduction, never before had any camera system provided such continuous and unrestricted use.

Top left: Clay (left) points out the Astrovision periscope in 1975.

Center left: Part of the Astrovision camera system, a nose cone is fitted to the Learjet for wide angle forward point-of-view cinematography and full video monitoring.

Bottom left: During the filming of the movie *Capricorn One*, released in 1978, Clay flies low over cars parked on the runway at Mojave Airport in California. A "dummy" landing gear is pictured falling in midair, creating the effect that it became detached from the aircraft above.



Dan Sherman, who worked loyally and tirelessly with Clay for over twenty years, edits video taken during an Astrovision film shoot circa 1985.



These movie posters depict some of Clay's well-known film projects. Since 1965, he has provided aerial photography for nearly 3,000 airline and military projects, television shows, and feature films. Utilizing his exclusive Astrovision-equipped Learjets, Clay has also conducted flight test chase and photography for the aerospace industry for more than three decades.





SCOTT W. PATTERSON
FORMER VICE PRESIDENT
AND GENERAL MANAGER,
CLAY LACY AVIATION
CORPORATE PILOT

"It was close to sunset over Southern California and I was trailing Clay so they could film my plane from the front. I was flying straight and level. During the reload, I saw the glow of the engines on Clay's plane and inched up close behind him, but he couldn't see me. Once the cameras were running again, Clay was startled by my tight formation and suggested with a laugh, 'Ah... when we are changing film, you can fly a little loose.'"

Beyond the tight security of a fenced parking area and camera surveillance systems, Scott Patterson provides a warm personal welcome in the gleaming conference room of a meticulous corporate aviation facility located at Bob Hope Airport in Burbank, California, where he serves as chief pilot of a privately-owned Boeing business jet. Natural light streams through clear rectangular windows, illuminating aviation photographs mounted on the walls. An accomplished pilot and aerial cinematographer, Patterson smiles and pulls out a folder of information.

He recalls his twenty-seven years working for Clay Lacy, from his start as copilot in 1975 to his senior positions as chief pilot and vice president and general manager. Patterson says he was "a gas boy" at Van Nuys Airport's Golden West Air Terminal when he first met

Clay. "I remember fueling Clay's purple P-51 Mustang and feeling in awe of him, surmising that he was an air race pilot," he says. "Little did I know how many opportunities Clay would offer me throughout my career."

In 1975, after piloting a Lear 25 on lease to Clay for his air charter business, Patterson was hired at the age of twenty-five to fly full-time by the famed air race champion whom he had admired from a distance only a few years prior.

Patterson remembers well his check flight with John Olsen Lear, the son of famed Learjet inventor William (Bill) Powell Lear, and earning Clay's approval in the cockpit. "I was very proud that I was able to earn Clay's confidence. It was hard to meet his standards of performance and service. He's a tough teacher. If you can learn from his critique, then you will be a better pilot."

LUCKY ME



In 1981, Clay films the SR-71 Blackbird reconnaissance aircraft for the *Call to Glory* television series with a T-38 supersonic jet in the background. The tip tank of Clay's Learjet appears at the bottom right of the frame.



Clay (right) meets with actor Clint Eastwood (left) and Astrovision crew members during the filming of the action movie *Firefox* in 1981 on location at Thule Air Force Base in Greenland, the U. S. Air Force's northernmost base.

Like Clay, Patterson says his fascination with flight originated at an early age. He took flying lessons at age fifteen; achieved his first solo, private pilot's license, and commercial and instrument ratings by age eighteen; and then became a certified flight instructor. Among his family's long lineage of aviators, Patterson's grandmother was a member of the Ninety-Nines, an all-women pilots' organization founded in 1929, and his grandfather was a member of the Quiet Birdmen, a fraternal organization of pilots founded in 1921.

In the 1980s, Patterson explains, Clay mainly hired former military pilots for aerial photography projects because of their experience flying in tight formations. However, Patterson, a civilian pilot, joined Clay for many air-to-air photography projects, including a promotional video shoot of the Lear 24 for the Na-

tional Business Aviation Association Convention. Patterson remembers flying the Lear 24 while Clay flew the film crew in the back of the Lear 25, when Clay suddenly announced the cameraman had to reload film.

"It was close to sunset over Southern California and I was trailing Clay so they could film my plane from the front," Patterson says. "I was flying straight and level. During the reload, I saw the glow of the engines on Clay's plane and inched up close behind him, but he couldn't see me. Once the cameras were running again, Clay was startled by my tight formation and suggested with a laugh, 'Ah... when we are changing film, you can fly a little loose.' I think this is when Clay accepted me as a good pilot for Astrovision and had confidence in my abilities. For the past twenty years, Clay and I have been the only pilots for this type of filming."

Many more opportunities came to Patterson under Clay's instruction. In 1996, Patterson joined Clay for a charter flight to China with fueling stops planned in Alaska and Russia. "Clay asked me to join him as copilot on the flight," Patterson says. "Well, it turned out that the Russian airfield snowed in, so we had to make alternate plans to refuel at another Russian airstrip. This was not in the original plan and we did not have any charts for the area. It was very tricky to make the arrangements en route, but Clay managed to refuel and be on the way in forty-five minutes. Clay has no fear of the unusual."

Patterson acknowledges Clay for enabling him to achieve his current success. "I am proud to say, Clay and I still remain close friends. His desire for perfection has rubbed off on me. No day is ordinary around Clay Lacy."



Clay (left) and copilot Scott Patterson sit in the cockpit of a Boeing 727 prior to the Midway 2000 millennium flight on December 31, 1999.



Clay and accomplished filmmaker and producer Doug Allen (circled) pose with their Astrovision film crew. Since 1975, Allen has served as director of photography on more than 1,000 flights with Clay involving sophisticated air-to-air situations, making him the most experienced Astrovision camera system operator of all time.



This is a photograph of an American Airlines MD-11 passenger jet taken from the cockpit of Clay's Learjet. See Clay's profile to the left.



DAVID B. NOWELL, ASC
DIRECTOR OF AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

“We mounted a periscope lens through the belly of the Lear 25, which allowed a 360-degree panoramic shot, and set up a monitor in the cockpit, giving Clay the same view as the camera. These camera angles had never been seen before. It knocked the socks off the industry.”

In the living room of his spacious Southern California home, David Nowell takes time out of his demanding schedule to recall experiences with his longtime friend, colleague, and fellow film industry pioneer Clay Lacy. The two-time Emmy® Award winner and highly sought-after director of aerial photography speaks modestly of his more than thirty-seven years of experience in Hollywood.

Nowell explains that in the early 1970s he was a young technician for the Van Nuys, California-based Continental Camera Systems, Inc., whose principal business was renting helicopter-mounted camera systems to television and movie producers, directors, and cameramen. He became involved with the company’s revolutionary Astrovision camera system that, for the first time, enabled a film to be shot from the

interior of an executive jet through a periscopic relay lens system.

Nowell shares some history. “Up until that time, the best aerial photography work in the movie industry consisted of camera shots from the front right window of a Learjet, the shot narrowly missing the right wingtip. Clay even mounted a camera in the door of his Learjet and later on his P-51 Mustang. This resulted in some good shots, but not much flexibility. Clay was the first to retrofit the bottom of his own Learjet with a periscope lens. With this mobile camera platform, Astrovision technology was born.”

After Continental Camera Systems closed its doors, Clay purchased the original two Astrovision periscope systems and gained a virtual monopoly on the market. Nowell explains, “Clay, with his vast experience flying all types

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of planes and interest in photography, saw the potential for the camera and put all the pieces together.”

Nowell smiles as he recalls early milestones. “We mounted a periscope lens through the belly of the Lear 25, which allowed a 360-degree panoramic shot, and set up a monitor in the cockpit, giving Clay the same view as the camera. These camera angles had never been seen before. It knocked the socks off the industry.

“We had more flexibility than ever before. In the early days on an aerial photo shoot, Clay was not just the pilot, but also the director. We really did not know what we were doing, but Clay figured it all out. He was always the pilot for these shoots, while I was the camera technician. I not only worked with Clay, I learned from him, and we had fun. He used to call me ‘The Kid.’”

Nowell explains that he and Clay performed a variety of aerial photography projects for the major airlines, U.S. military, and television and feature films, including the movie blockbusters *Top Gun*, *The Great Santini*, *Airport '79*, and *Octopussy*. For the next two decades, they completed hundreds of film projects and shot thousands of hours of footage, traveling the world and working from dawn to dusk. “Before each shoot we discussed the needs of the client and created a hand-drawn storyboard with the time of day, the weather, any airspace restrictions, and the position of the sun.”

Nowell tells of Clay’s amazing skill as a pilot when, during one of their Astrovision projects with Eastern Airlines, Clay was offered the pilot’s seat of the Lockheed 1011 Tristar passenger jet. “At that time,” Nowell says, “the aircraft

had capabilities that allowed computer-controlled hands-off landings on designated airfields. But, Clay didn’t use the computer system. He flew that L-1011 all the way to landing. The captain complimented Clay on the smooth landing and air traffic control said over the radio, ‘That sure was a greased-on landing.’ The captain replied, ‘Well it wasn’t me!’ That was the first time in his life Clay flew the L-1011.”

Another time, during an aerial photography assignment in Europe, Nowell says a chief pilot for Air France invited Clay to fly the famed Concorde, the only supersonic passenger airliner ever built. “Clay flew that plane without any specific training. He didn’t even read the manual,” Nowell exclaims with awe.

Nowell says he and other film crew members also enjoyed leisure time with



Clay (left) and Aérospatiale’s chief test pilot Jean Franchi stand next to a Concorde supersonic transport aircraft that Clay piloted during an aerial photography assignment in Europe in 1979.

Clay. "Once, after working on a shoot for Boeing in Seattle, we had two days between filming and Clay flew us to his Pistol Creek cabin near Idaho's Middle Fork of the Salmon River. We relaxed in the woods; caught, cooked, and ate fish; and told stories from the past. Clay's stories ranged from working with [Aero Spacelines, Inc. founder] Jack Conroy on the Pregnant Guppy project to air racing with [test pilot] Bob Hoover in Reno, Nevada. We also enjoyed Clay's recreational toys, including an amphibious plane and a '66 Cadillac Coupe de Ville convertible nicknamed the "Webb-mobile," that Clay purchased from actor Jack Webb of the *Dragnet* television series.

Years later, Nowell says with gratitude, as a wedding gift from Clay, he and his wife Patty spent their honeymoon at the same Pistol Creek cabin.

With admiration, Nowell concludes,

"Clay has intimate knowledge of how airplanes work. He can tell the mechanics where to look for a problem and they find it, right where he said it was. The most remarkable thing about Clay is that he can fly any aircraft. He is a natural, thinking not only in two dimensions, as in driving a car, but in all three dimensions in the air."



Clay (top row, right) stands at the nose of an Eastern Airlines L-1011 passenger jet in 1976 with an Astrovision film crew. During the film shoot, photographers in the back of Clay's Learjet captured air-to-air images above every Eastern Airlines destination city in the world. The photo mission lasted ten days and marked the longest of Clay's career at the time. Also pictured in the top row are pilot Scott Patterson (second from right) and aerial director David Nowell (third from right).

Photo courtesy of Lois Lacy.



Clay captures an image of an Eastern Airlines L-1011 passenger jet through the window of his Learjet. Notice the tip tank of Clay's aircraft in the forefront.

Photo courtesy of Lois Lacy.



This statue of Christ the Redeemer, a large art deco-style effigy, is located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and stands 278 feet high. The statue is located at the summit of Corcovado Mountain overlooking the city. During his 1975 trip to South America with aeronautics students from Mount San Antonio College, Clay arranged for a photographer on the ground to capture his chartered DC-8 flying over the top of the statue.

However, Clay tells the story of why the aircraft is missing from the photograph. "I positioned a semi-professional photographer who was documenting our trip at the base of the Christ statue on the hill and showed him exactly where I was going to come from," Clay says. "I planned to fly between the statue and Sugarloaf Mountain and did exactly what I told him. We were coming along just perfectly when somebody on the ground— most likely a tourist the photographer had allowed up there— accidentally kicked the camera tripod at the exact moment I flew overhead. So, he didn't get the shot." *Photo courtesy of Lois Lacy.*

LOG BOOK ENTRY EIGHT:
FLIGHTS FROM THE RECORD BOOK

The name Clay Lacy appears in many newspaper headlines and aviation record books. Throughout his illustrious flying career, many of Clay's closest friends and colleagues joined him on famous flights to benefit young people and raise thousands of dollars for charity.

In 1973, Clay and fellow United Airlines (United) pilot William Arnott made aviation and education history by organizing an around-the-world flight in a chartered United Douglas DC-8 jetliner for students in the aeronautics program at Mount San Antonio College located in Walnut, California. Two years later in 1975, Clay and the same crew flew 140 students onboard a chartered United DC-8 on an eight-day South American sojourn. These exotic tour flights, named "Classroom in the Sky," pioneered the concept of education from a jet plane. "The first time we flew around

the world, it was off the beaten path for United Airlines," Clay says. "At that time, they thought the world ended in Hawaii and started in Boston!"

One of Clay's most notable achievements was setting a new around-the-world speed record in 1988 with his thirty-six-hour, fifty-four-minute, fifteen-second flight in a United Boeing 747SP called Friendship One. With U.S. astronaut and Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong onboard as guest of honor, along with other aviation notables and celebrities, this record-breaking flight raised \$530,000 for children's charities worldwide. Clay and his wife Lois, along with longtime friends Bruce McCaw and Joe Clark, organized the flight, which averaged over 623 miles per hour and topped the previous record by 112 miles per hour.

"We had so many people interested



In 1988, a smiling Clay prepares for takeoff on a record-setting flight in a United Airlines Boeing 747SP called Friendship One.

in the Friendship One flight that we took 105 passengers instead of one hundred as we had originally planned,” Clay recalls. “The flight was extremely successful and United Airlines received tremendous publicity. It was an interesting trip. Everything went like clockwork.”

However, Clay does share a little-known glitch that occurred on the ground while refueling. “In Athens, the fueling company boosted the pressure on the fuel truck to make things go faster. However, the fuel truck driver didn’t realize that the fuel line cuts off if you boost the pressure too much. Thinking the tank was full, he tore away. We ended up fueling the plane with one truck. I was hoping to make the stop in thirty-five minutes, but it took about an hour. At the next stop in Taipei, things went better.”

A tribute to Clay’s reputation and expertise as a pilot, the Friendship One

flight also marked the first time in history the Federal Aviation Administration gave permission for a fully-qualified FAR (Federal Aviation Regulations) 121 airline crew to operate an airliner like a private charter flight under FAR 91, eliminating the need to change crews.

In 1995, Clay was one of the first aircraft owners to equip his Gulfstream jets with Blended Winglet™ technology developed by Clark. That June, in a Gulfstream IISP inscribed with the words “Wings of Change” across its side, Clay and Clark set world speed records during a flight from Los Angeles to Paris. The flight culminated with display of the jet at the Paris Air Show. On the way home, they also established a world speed record from Moscow to Los Angeles. Clay and Clark set yet another speed record in the Gulfstream IISP in 2003 on a flight from Los Angeles to

Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

Perhaps Clay’s most unique accomplishment of all was the 1999 Midway 2000 flight to celebrate the New Year. Clay and forty guests—a contingent of friends, aviation enthusiasts, and journalists traveling over the Pacific Ocean—were among the first to enter the new millennium. Clay piloted his Boeing 727 from Southern California by way of Hawaii and Midway Island to the International Dateline. Cruising just one-tenth of a mile west of the imaginary line where every day officially begins, the passengers then passed into January 1, 2000, while it was still 4 a.m. on December 31, 1999, on the West Coast. In a period of one hour, the group traveled through five date changes before celebrating the New Year on the ground in Midway Island twenty-four hours later.



In 1973, Clay helped United Airlines captain William Arnott (above) pioneer the concept of education from a jet plane by organizing an around-the-world flight in a chartered DC-8 for local aeronautics students called “Classroom in the Sky.”



During a stop in Rome, Clay (left) and wife Lois Lacy chat with "Classroom in the Sky" passengers.



This breathtaking photo of Mt. Everest was taken during Clay's 1973 around-the-world "Classroom in the Sky" trip.
Photo courtesy of Lois Lacy.



Members of the Ninety-Nines, an international organization of women pilots, onboard the flight presented this flag in honor of legendary aviatrix Amelia Earhart. Clay released the flag from the DC-8's landing light over Howland Island in the central Pacific Ocean, known as the island Earhart never reached. Clay recalls, "The Ninety-Nines wanted to drop Amelia Earhart a message that said, 'Hang in there, help is on the way!'"
Photo courtesy of Lois Lacy.



Passengers onboard the flight were treated to this once-in-a-lifetime view of the South Pole at high noon.
Photo courtesy of Lois Lacy.



Clay and some forty guests participating in the Midway 2000 flight celebrate being among the first to enter the new millennium. The route map is pictured to the left.

LUCKY ME



(Left to right) Friendship One's volunteer flight crew consists of copilots Bob Jones and Verne Jobst, captains Clay and Gary Meermans, and flight engineers Jim Roberts and Alfred Claves.

(Front to back) Clay, wife Lois Lacy, and volunteer United Airlines flight attendants May Weiss, Kay Crabb, and Fran McNulty prepare for takeoff on the boarding stairs of Friendship One. Take a second glance and you'll observe that May and Kay are identical twins.



The flight crew of Friendship One jumps into action. Clay (bottom left) is stationed in the jump seat across from flight engineer Alfred Claves. Pilot Gary Meermans (top left) and copilot Bob Jones are at the controls.



Clay signs his autograph on a highly customized 1988 Volkswagen Jetta donated by Volkswagen USA. The vehicle was stored in Friendship One's cargo hold during its record-breaking flight and later auctioned to raise additional funds for the nonprofit Friendship Foundation.

(Left to right) Fellow aviators and entrepreneurs Bruce McCaw, Joe Clark, and Clay share in the excitement of the record-breaking Friendship One flight for charity in 1988.

The three close friends formed the nonprofit Friendship Foundation with the ultimate goal of setting a new around-the-world speed record while raising funds for children's charities. Five hundred and thirty thousand dollars was raised from 105 passengers who donated \$5,000 each in support of children's education, health, welfare, and medical research internationally. These passengers plus the crew shared in the history-making event by receiving a world record certificate from the National Aeronautics Association.





BRUCE R. MCCA W
BUSINESS AND AVIATION
INSURANCE EXECUTIVE

“Clay exhibited his brilliance and maintained a speed of over 650 miles per hour, following a course that would maintain tailwinds as long as possible. To go around the world and chart a course so that you only stop twice is a great achievement on its own. We broke a world record, flying thirty-six hours, fifty-four minutes, and fifteen seconds, the fastest time anybody had ever flown around the world in 1988. Not many events achieve international press coverage, but most of the world’s media picked up the story. We were on the front page of every newspaper in the U.S. and others around the world!”

Bruce R. McCaw, business and aviation insurance executive and Clay Lacy’s longtime personal friend, says, “Clay’s career in aviation is far more than the forty-year anniversary Clay Lacy Aviation recently celebrated. His beginning as a flyer goes back sixty-four years. He has captured the passion and essence of flying in his business, and his depth of knowledge is unbelievable.”

McCaw, also a pilot, first encountered Clay in the early 1960s when his father, Elroy McCaw, served on the Lear Jet Corporation board of directors. “I have known Clay as well as anyone for the past forty years. We have spent time together, and I have grown to know him as a person. He has a perspective and understanding about airplanes and the industry that most others lack.”

In 1968, McCaw’s company hired Clay for an aerial photography assign-

ment to document the first flight of the Boeing 747. McCaw says he also joined Clay as copilot on occasional aerial photography projects, part of Clay’s pioneering development of the Astrovision camera system. “Clay’s real skill was that he knew how to fly the plane and maneuver it to get the perfect angles. Clay would direct the photographer on the intercom and tell him what to do, saying, ‘On the count of three, start rolling.’ His perspective was amazing, and resulted in a whole new era of aerial cinematography.”

However, McCaw says, it was during the 1970 Reno Air Races that he and Clay formed a close relationship. He describes accompanying Clay on several visits to Clay’s hometown of Wichita, Kansas, and frequent trips to Los Angeles, where he met many “extraordinary people” in aviation. “We had a conver-

LUCKY ME

gence of knowing many of the same people and spent a lot of time together at the Sky Trails Restaurant at Van Nuys Airport, a crossroads for worldwide aviators. When you walked into the restaurant, you could meet almost anybody in aviation, and Clay would be there having fun and telling stories.”

McCaw points out that, although Clay has traveled around the world, he “really loves the back country of Idaho” which he started visiting fifty years ago. McCaw describes how, for thirty years, he often flew with Clay to the Idaho wilderness of Pistol Creek—in Clay’s Turbo Porter or AT-6 aircraft—and landed on a dirt runway. They both owned rustic cabins there, built from lumber produced by a primitive, back-country sawmill.

During those trips to this isolated wilderness, McCaw says they saw one another every day and enjoyed fishing,

horseback riding, and hosting friends who flew in for dinner. McCaw, who frequently did the cooking, says there were no roads or stores. Most of the time, electricity was supplied by a Rube Goldberg device, a Pelton wheel generator driven by water from a nearby creek. Sadly, in 2000, the two friends watched video footage on their computers of their two cabins being destroyed by fire. McCaw has since rebuilt his cabin.

Speaking of memories, McCaw says, “The Friendship One trip represented the greatest highlight for me,” as well as for Clay and their good friend Joe Clark, founder of Aviation Partners, Inc. “The three of us organized the trip together, dreaming about it for months. We started planning in September 1987 and, by January, we were flying. It was the trip of a lifetime.”

Listing the many famous people and aviation greats aboard the flight to benefit children’s charities, McCaw continues, “Clay exhibited his brilliance and maintained a speed of over 650 miles per hour, following a course that would maintain tailwinds as long as possible. To go around the world and chart a course so that you only stop twice is a great achievement on its own. We broke a world record, flying thirty-six hours, fifty-four minutes, and fifteen seconds, the fastest time anybody had ever flown around the world in 1988. Not many events achieve international press coverage, but most of the world’s media picked up the story. We were on the front page of every newspaper in the U.S. and others around the world!”

McCaw says the funds raised from the flight were divided among fifty to sixty different charities selected by both



With precision, Clay lands a Tri-3 on a short and narrow dirt landing strip in Pistol Creek, Idaho.

the nonprofit Friendship Foundation and passengers, including United Way, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and several children’s hospitals. “We knew every organization, made personal contact, and put quite a lot of effort into selecting the recipients. And we invested money that, over twenty years later, is still supporting kids.”

McCaw describes other memorable flying experiences with Clay, including two “Classroom in the Sky” flights organized for aeronautics students from Mount San Antonio College, one in 1973 around the world, and the other in 1975 to South America. They flew over Antarctica on both trips. “In 1973, we flew over the North Pole, buzzed the Matterhorn and Mount Everest, and chased a total eclipse of the sun over the Indian Ocean. Over Antarctica, we

flew less than 150 feet off the ground, with 150 excited passengers in the back of the plane. On the way home, we flew to Brazil and even made a low pass over the Christ the Redeemer statue on the top of Corcovado Mountain in Rio de Janeiro.”

Though McCaw missed Clay’s famous millennium trip celebrating the year 2000—for good reason, due to the recent birth of his son—the two friends stayed connected. “I was the first person Clay called via satellite on the millennium trip, thirty seconds after midnight and crossing the International Dateline. It was the New Year 2000. We were thinking about each other.”

McCaw also remembers Clay’s tribute to Moya Lear, wife of Learjet inventor Bill Lear, following her death. “Many folks don’t know that Clay often organizes flyovers when close friends in



(Left to right) Entrepreneur Bruce McCaw, Clay, friend Nikki Sparks, and Clay’s wife Lois Lacy explore ancient ruins in Machu Picchu during the 1975 “Classroom in the Sky” trip to South America.
Photo courtesy of Bruce R. McCaw.

LUCKY ME

the aviation world pass away. I was on one memorable flight with him following Mrs. Lear's death when we flew over Reno, Nevada, Clay in his Lear and me in mine. We wound up buzzing downtown Reno, our Learjets in formation, celebrating her life."

Crediting Clay's grandmother with instilling a "Midwestern attitude" and "strong work ethic" in her grandson, with whom she shared a special closeness, McCaw continues, "Clay is honest to a fault, always modest. There is not a bad bone in his body. He has a sense of integrity. His fundamental outlook on life is that people are good."

Describing Clay as a great teacher, McCaw says, "He is always thinking, aware of the big picture and figuring out his options. When Clay gets into a plane, he thinks about the whole system and how everything ties together.

And he has a feel for where he is in the sky in relation to the sun, the shadows, and the clouds."

Reflecting on their long-term relationship, which includes frequent dinners at his home, McCaw concludes, "We couldn't be closer. Clay is the godfather of my daughter, Skye. He is insightful. He cares about people. It is his disarming way, his down-to-earth manner, and his lack of boastfulness that make others feel comfortable. He loves aviation as he loves people. Clay is at a different level, so totally different from the rest of us. Aviation is his life."



Clay (left) and Bruce McCaw, co-founder of Cellular One and McCaw Cellular Communications, sit in the cockpit of a Boeing 747 on the day of Clay's retirement from United Airlines in 1992.



McCaw's daughter Skye (right) celebrates her birthday in 2007 with her godparents, Clay and Lois Lacy.
Photo courtesy of Bruce R. McCaw.



Clay Lacy, Founder
President

National Aeronautic Association

Representing in the United States of America
The Federation Aeronautique Internationale
awards this



Dr. Clark Forester
Founding President

Certificate of Record



Bruce McCann, Founder

Clay Lacy, Captain
Gary Meermans, Pilot
Alfred I. Clayes, Flight Engineer

Verne Jobst, Co-Captain
Bob Jones, Pilot
James F. Roberts, Flight Engineer

for
U.S. National Record
Class C-1, Jet Engine
Speed Over a Recognized Course
Seattle, Washington to Athens, Greece
United Airlines Boeing 747, N147UA
"Friendship One"

Elapsed Time: 12 hours 33 minutes 33 seconds
January 29, 1988

673.44 mph (1083.75 km/h)

Walter F. von Karman
President

Wanda D. Adams
Council and Record Board



Dated January 29, 1988, this National Aeronautic Association world record certificate was awarded to the flight crew and passengers who made history onboard the famous Friendship One flight.



Kitty Hawk 100

LOS ANGELES - KITTY HAWK

**3 hrs 48 min
631 mph**

In 2003, Clay and his passengers deplane after setting a world speed record in his Blended Winglet™-equipped Gulfstream II SP on a flight from Los Angeles to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Pictured are (top row to bottom row, left to right) World War II test pilot John Meyers, Aviation Partners, Inc. CEO Joe Clark, news anchor Hal Fishman, test pilot Bob Hoover, and Clay.



JOE CLARK
CHAIRMAN AND CEO, AVIATION PARTNERS, INC.
CHAIRMAN, AVIATION PARTNERS BOEING

“I’ll never forget when we landed in Goose Bay, Labrador. We came straight in, landed, refueled, and then took off the other way. There were a large number of F-18 fighters parked on the ramp. When we departed, we headed west, but we needed to go east. So, about halfway down the runway, Clay pulled up and banked the airplane up to a sixty-degree turn about 300 feet off the deck. The tower came back and said, ‘Wow! We’ve never seen that before’... There are thousands of stories like that about Clay.”

Joe Clark, recognized worldwide for developing advanced technology winglet systems—an innovation that saves fuel, improves aircraft performance, and benefits the environment—speaks modestly of his own revolutionary contributions to the aerospace industry while reflecting on his friendship with Clay Lacy. A distinguished entrepreneur, aviator, philanthropist, and collector of antique aircraft, Clark describes the flight with Clay that changed his life.

“I met Clay at the Reno Air Races in 1965. Chuck Lyford, a friend of mine who used to race airplanes, introduced me to Clay and said, ‘Joe, you have to come for a ride in this airplane.’ So Clay took us for a ride in the Learjet. Clay and Chuck were in the front and I sat in the back of the plane with Susan Oliver, a well-known actress. We took off at Reno, Nevada, and I was so impressed with

that airplane. That ride really changed my life. Since that time, I’ve been in the aerospace industry.”

Clark went on to pursue various business ventures in private and commercial aviation, and in 1991 founded Aviation Partners, Inc. (API) with partner Dennis Washington. API is also majority owner in a joint venture with the Boeing Company and co-owner of the Clay Lacy Aviation facility in Seattle. To date, over 3,000 corporate and commercial aircraft produced by manufacturers Boeing, Falcon, Hawker, and Gulfstream have been equipped with Blended Winglets™, saving billions of gallons of jet fuel. Clark projects that by year-end 2014, the performance enhancement system will have saved in excess of five billion gallons of jet fuel and reduced global carbon dioxide emissions by 53.7 million tons.

LUCKY ME

“My company invented Blended Winglets™,” Clark explains. “We set numerous records in Clay’s Blended Winglet™-equipped Gulfstream, which we used to promote and build our image in the aerospace industry. Clay’s name has such great credibility. People who are in the know understand that he’s had a significant impact on the entire aviation industry, primarily in the area of airmanship. If you could use one word to describe Clay, it’s ‘flying.’”

Clark recalls with enjoyment a record-setting flight in 1995 from Los Angeles to Paris publicized by the late Hal Fishman, a television news anchor, accomplished pilot, and Clay’s close friend. “Hal Fishman was on the flight when we set a new world speed record in Clay’s Gulfstream IISP equipped with winglets. We took off at 10:30 a.m. and flew straight to Paris. When we landed

at Le Bourget Airport, we saw television satellite trucks from CNN and other media outlets on the ground. Hal went on the air for his 10:30 p.m. newscast, interviewing Clay and me live in Paris for *News at Ten Live in L.A.* The next day, he was back at the station! It was all choreographed that way. The cameras picked us up coming over the Eiffel Tower. It was great!”

Clark continues with another flying experience in Clay’s Gulfstream IISP. “I’ll never forget when we landed in Goose Bay, Labrador. We came straight in, landed, refueled, and then took off the other way. There were a large number of F-18 fighter jets parked on the ramp. When we departed, we headed west, but we needed to go east. So, about halfway down the runway, Clay pulled up and banked the airplane up to a sixty-degree turn about 300 feet off the deck. The

tower came back and said, ‘Wow! We’ve never seen that before.’” Laughing, Clark says, “There are thousands of stories like that about Clay.”

Since he and Clay fly together once or twice per week, Clark speaks knowledgeably about Clay’s unmatched piloting experience, from Clay’s early years flying for the California Air National Guard and United Airlines to his modern-day accomplishments operating a premier jet charter company and performing complex aerial photography shoots.

Though it’s not documented, Clark says, Clay has logged more hours flying in formation than anyone in the world. Clark attributes this distinction to the thousands of aerial photography shoots Clay has completed for the airlines, military,



In 1995, aviation entrepreneur Joe Clark (left) and Clay stand beside Clay’s winglet-equipped Gulfstream IISP with the words “Wings of Change” painted on its side at Van Nuys Airport before departing for a record-setting flight to Paris.

entertainment industry, and test flight community since 1965.

Revealing more of Clay's life history, Clark continues with a story Clay recently shared with him. "When Clay joined the Air National Guard, he was just twenty-two years old. At Air Force flight

training, they asked the class if anybody had flying experience. One person said he was a private pilot and another said he had logged 150 flight hours. Clay didn't say anything, but asked the instructor if he could speak with him privately after class. He told the instructor, 'I have 3,500 hours.' During primary training, they let Clay take all the tests with-

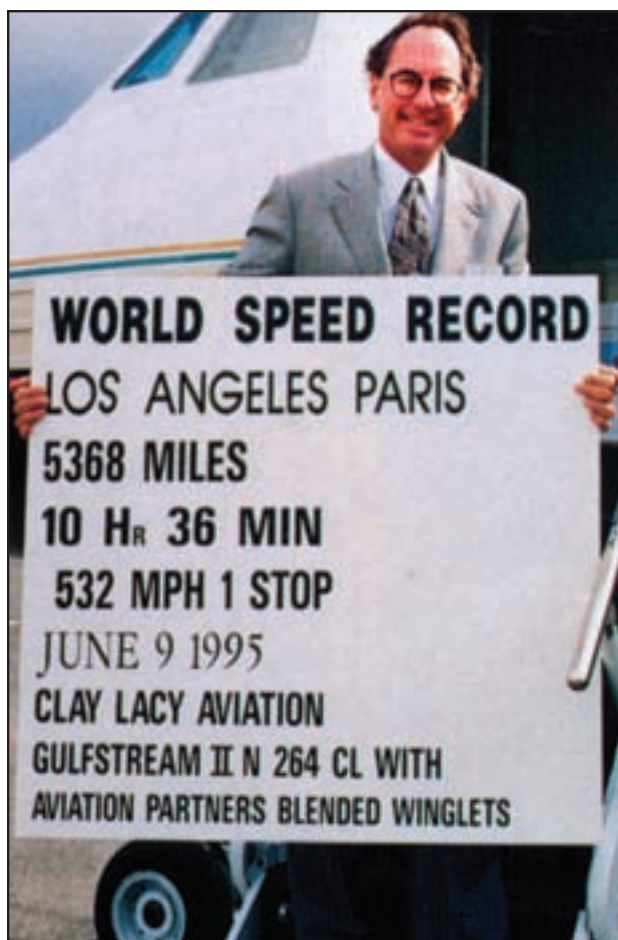
out attending ground school. In those days, they let you pass ground training automatically for scoring over ninety percent. The base commander offered to let Clay graduate three months early, but he said no and responded 'It's the only opportunity I'm going to get to be in flight training.' And that gets back to the crux of Clay's life. He has always been around airplanes. He's dedicated to flying."

During this time, Clay made tremendous contributions in the area of instrument flying, Clark explains. "The Air National Guard had a poor safety record flying with instruments in his squadron based in Van Nuys, California, where they flew F-86s. Clay took over the program and reduced the accident rate from seven in one year to zero." Of Clay's current involvement in helping to improve the national air traffic control

system, Clark says, "Clay has very valuable theories and philosophies."

Clark continues, "Clay also spends a great deal of his time training people. Whenever he's flying with someone, especially me, he's always training. Clay has a mindset of excellence when it comes to aviation. He doesn't fly just to get the job done. He wants to do it in the best, most efficient, and safest way. He's always thinking, 'How do I make this better? How do I make it work more efficiently?' That standard for excellence is reflected in his company as well. His employees pride themselves on their expertise and airmanship."

Remarking that it is not unusual for Clay to fly three or four different airplanes in the course of five to six hours, Clark says he and Clay have traveled across the world together. "I've probably done more unusual flying with Clay



Joe Clark holds up a sign describing the new world speed record Clay achieved on a flight from Los Angeles to Paris on June 9, 1995.

LUCKY ME

than anything else. I remember one time when we flew in a jet from Boise, Idaho, to Seattle, Washington, and never went over 1,000 feet the entire time. That was exciting. And we've done a lot of low-level flying for test work."

Clark describes another memorable scenic flight. "About five years ago, we took Clay's DC-3 to Oshkosh and the only time we talked to an air traffic controller during the entire trip was when we took off from Van Nuys and landed at Oshkosh. We flew at 1,500 feet the whole way, even over Monument Valley at the Utah-Arizona border. It was just gorgeous, like seeing the United States in a scenic cruiser."

Noting Clay's diligence before and during flights, Clark says, "When Clay flies, he checks not only the weather at the destination, but also the en route weather even if he's flying at high alti-

tude. And, he always carries VFR [visual flight rules] charts so he can land anywhere using visual flight rules if there's a problem."

Clark vividly recalls a travel adventure with Clay that took place not only in the air, but on land and at sea as well. His wife Jolene and Clay's wife Lois took part in this trip that followed their good friend Bruce McCaw's CART racing team to three continents. "We took a Gulfstream with winglets from Seattle to Nazareth, Pennsylvania, for an Indy cart race. We flew from there to Monaco for the Historic Grand Prix and then went cruising on a boat for a week. Then, we flew to the Canary Islands, fueled up, and headed to Brazil for another car race. We flew out of Brazil, stopped in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and then flew back to Seattle. We were gone for three weeks."

With admiration, Clark also acknowledges Clay for his generous but quiet support of scholarship programs, aviation organizations, museums of flight, and individuals—especially underprivileged children and students with financial need. "I don't think many people are aware of the number of individuals and organizations that Clay helps," Clark says. "He gives a great deal of his time delivering speeches all over the country for organizations such as the National



Clay (left) and Joe Clark celebrate setting a new world speed record in a winglet-equipped Hawker 800 on a trip from Maui to Las Vegas to open the 2003 National Business Aviation Association Annual Meeting and Convention.

Aviation Hall of Fame and Smithsonian Institute. He donates financially, but very quietly. He's a very private man and doesn't really speak about his philanthropy."

Clark concludes, "Clay is nine years older than I am. But, our vocation and avocation is one and the same. Clay lives his passion and I do too. If you can be in a business that you love, you never feel as if you've worked a day in your life."



The 2000 National Business Aviation Association Annual Meeting and Convention held in New Orleans, Louisiana, serves as a mini-reunion for Clay and his colleagues. Pictured (left to right) are Aviation Partners, Inc. Chairman and CEO Joe Clark, legendary test pilot Bob Hoover, Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation Vice President of Sales Bob Cooper, Litton Industries executive Joe O'Rendy, Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation founder Allen Paulson, Clay, and communications industry executive Bruce McCaw.

“Flying has always been my life.”

Clay Lacy



The shadow of Clay's Lear 25 is seen on this Boeing 777 passenger jet during an aerial photo mission. This was the first aircraft to receive United Airlines' current paint scheme.

LOG BOOK ENTRY NINE:
THE PILOT'S PILOT



Clay and wife Lois Lacy stand in the engine of a Boeing 747 passenger jet following Clay's United Airlines retirement flight on August 12, 1992.

One of the world's most respected and accomplished pilots, Clay Lacy has dedicated his life to airplanes and the aviation industry. He has accumulated more than 50,000 hours of flight time, more air miles flown in jet aircraft than anyone on Earth. To place Clay's flight time into context, it would take over five years of non-stop flying to achieve this accomplishment. In 1992, he retired from United Airlines with No. 1 seniority after forty-one years of service. Overall, Clay has flown more than 300 aircraft types and holds thirty-three different aircraft type ratings.

"I've done just about everything possible in aviation except space flight," Clay says. "While most people get locked into one area of aviation, I've touched upon more aspects of aviation than just about any other pilot. I flew for the military; started younger and flew

longer for United Airlines than anyone else; performed a limited amount of test flying; made first flights in five new or heavily modified airplanes; and also won the national air races."

Clay enjoys a personal collection of aircraft that inspire memories of his many flying adventures. Among his prized aircraft is a perfectly restored vintage Douglas DC-3, complete with an executive interior and authentic United Airlines paint scheme. In 1996, Clay also acquired California Airmotive Corporation's original demonstrator Lear 24, which he uses primarily for training and check rides. He also enjoys flying the jet for business and on trips back home to Kansas.

Clay still owns his purple P-51 Mustang race plane, along with a Pilatus Porter, Cessna 182, Beechcraft Barron, North American AT-6, Republic Seabee,

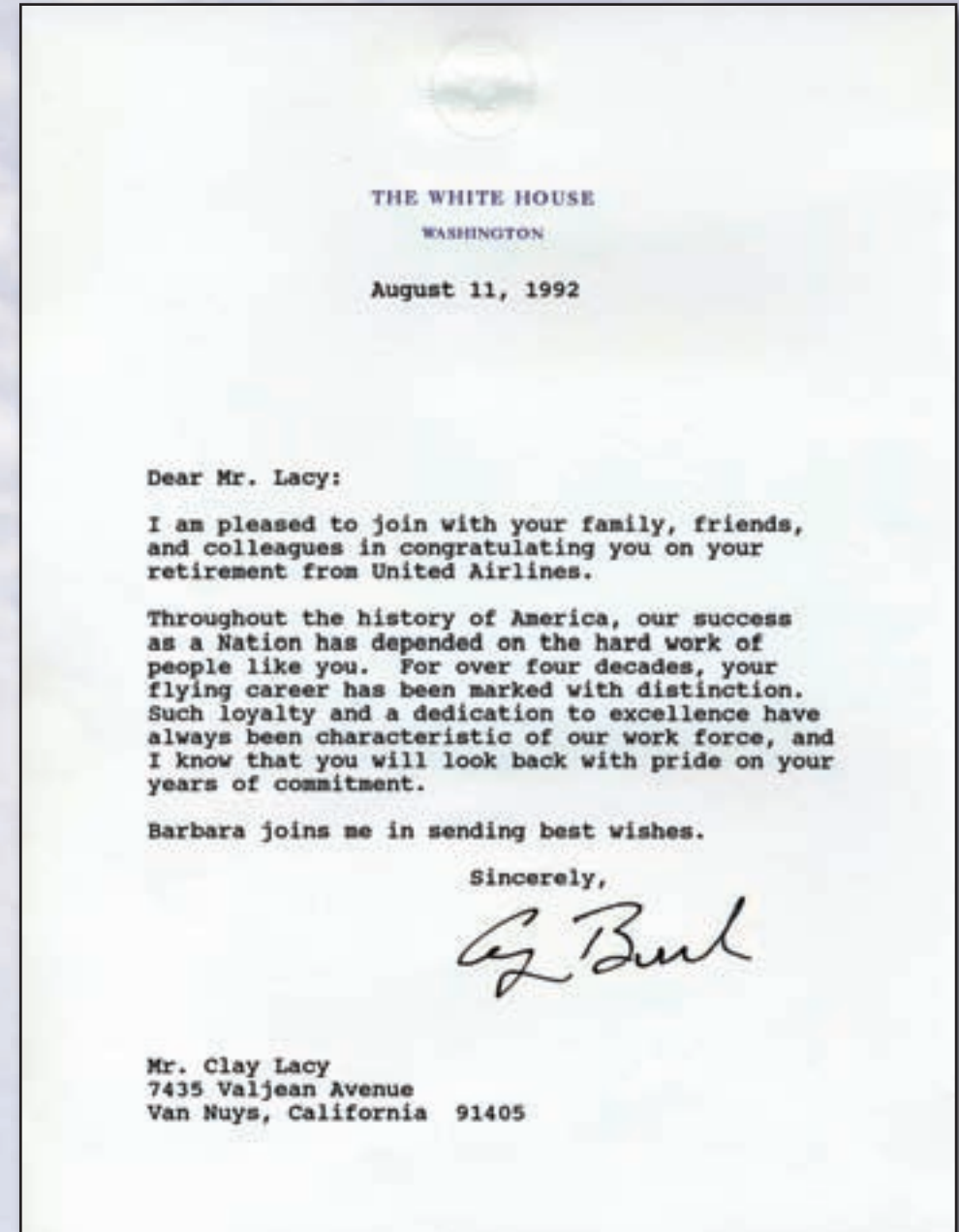
and a Bell 206 Jetranger helicopter.

Clay's contributions to aviation go beyond his thousands of hours in the cockpit and the many famous people he has flown. He is also admired for his strong support of philanthropic causes and efforts to help train and educate the next generation of aviation professionals.

In partnership with the Experimental Aircraft Association, the Clay Lacy Foundation provides scholarships to students at the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences at the University of North Dakota. In addition, the Clay Lacy Scholarship Program, administered by the Flight Path Learning Center of Southern California, provides future pilots financial assistance. To this day, Clay remains in constant demand as a pilot and aerial cinematographer and is the recipient of many prestigious industry and community awards.

Honors and Awards

- Aero Club of Northern California, Crystal Eagle Award
- Aviation and Business Journal, Lifetime Achievement Award
- City of Hope, Spirit of Life Award
- Duncan Aviation, Excellence Award
- Flight Path Learning Center, Honoree
- Flight Test Historical Foundation, Achievement in Aviation Award
- International Aerospace Hall of Fame, Inductee
- Living Legends of Aviation, Lifetime Aviation Entrepreneur Award
- National Air Transportation Association, William A. Ong Memorial Award
- National Aviation Hall of Fame, Inductee
- Professional Pilot Magazine, Writer of the Year
- Society of Camera Operators, Cammy Lifetime Achievement Award
- Society of Experimental Test Pilots, Member
- United Airlines Historical Foundation, William S. Arnott Legacy Award



This letter signed by President George Herbert Walker Bush congratulates Clay on his retirement from United Airlines and distinguished flying career.

LUCKY ME

Clay smiles after flying both the Douglas DC-3 (left), the first airliner he piloted for United Airlines, and Boeing 747 (right), the last airliner he piloted for United Airlines, on the day of his retirement.



11 August, 1992

Capt. Clay Lacy
Clay Lacy Aviation
7435 Valjean Ave.
Van Nuys, CA 91406

Dear Clay :

Welcome to the world of the Over-60 Aviators ! I thought you might invoke the Julian calendar to find a loophole . But you'll find that being a sexagenarian isn't all that bad -- you might even brag about it !

Riding back and forth across the Pacific was a wonderful way to collect a paycheck. Now reality sets in. It's time to start working for a living.


I know you will have little trouble adjusting. But if you need someone to help you over the bumps, give me a ring.

And by the way, sincere congratulations on a wonderful career with United.

Understandingly,

Neil
Neil A. Armstrong

*Sorry I couldn't make it out for the party. --
Be the best.
N.*


UNITED AIRLINES

September 9, 1992

Dear Clay,

You have undoubtedly received other expressions of congratulations on your retirement from United Airlines. However, we in the Los Angeles Flight Office would feel remiss if we did not add ours. It seems the years have passed quickly. Hopefully, they were filled with a sense of accomplishment, and a feeling of friendship.

Our past, as well as our future, depends on people like yourself who's dedication and sense of pride helps make United Airlines the great company it is.

We hope that your retirement will be as successful as your career. Thank you for your contribution from all of us in Los Angeles.

Ernie Macemans
Donny Erickson
Bill Wilson
Bill Schales
El Payne
Jim Munro
Jackie Utzinger
Sue Ross
Judy Taylor
Michelle Kaiser
Hammond Edwards
Los Angeles International Airport, Los Angeles, California 90009
PETE SCHAEFER
Carol Edwards

These are congratulatory letters from U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong and coworkers at United Airlines on the occasion of Clay's retirement.



Originally built in 1945, Clay's beautifully restored Douglas DC-3 is named "Mainliner O'Connor" in honor of the late Mary O'Connor, who joined United Airlines as a stewardess on the Chicago-to-New York route in May 1933. The aircraft is a replica of the original corporate DC-3 used by W. A. Patterson during his tenure as president of United Airlines.



Now mounted in the cabin of Clay's museum-quality DC-3, this is the original plaque displayed in United Airlines' corporate DC-3 in the early 1950s.



Patterson and O'Connor stand in front of United Airlines' corporate DC-3 circa 1950.

*“If the world’s decision makers
did not have corporate aviation,
we’d be ten years behind.”*

Clay Lacy



The interior of Clay's Douglas DC-3 provides both nostalgia and luxury.



RON KAPLAN
ENSHRINEMENT DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL AVIATION HALL OF FAME

“This is a gathering place for heroes. In July 2010, Clay was formally inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame at an enshrinement ceremony held in Dayton, where he was honored for his aviation achievements. The annual enshrinement ceremony attracts not only those who are being inducted, but all of the aviation fraternity.”

Ron Kaplan, enshrinement director of the National Aviation Hall of Fame (NAHF) in Dayton, Ohio—known as the birthplace of aviation—points out the framed portraits of air and space pioneers displayed along the curved gallery wall, and comments on their legendary achievements. Among the images chronicling the history of flight are those of Charles Lindbergh, Neil Armstrong, Gene Cernan, Bob Hoover, and many other aviation greats.

Kaplan says with pride, “This is a gathering place for heroes. In July 2010, Clay was formally inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame at an enshrinement ceremony held in Dayton, where he was honored for his aviation achievements. The annual enshrinement ceremony attracts not only those who are being inducted, but all of the aviation fraternity.”

Established by Congress in 1964, the NAHF is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission, Kaplan explains, is “to honor America’s outstanding air and space pioneers and to preserve and present their accomplishments.” Each year, a voting body comprised of over 130 air and space professionals from across the nation selects a handful of individuals to be recognized through enshrinement for their significant contributions to the advancement of aviation worldwide.

When he first met Clay Lacy in 2003 in Orlando, Florida, at the National Business Aviation Association Convention, the largest civil aviation event in the world, Kaplan says he was impressed by Clay’s friendly style and interest in the NAHF. The next year, Kaplan says he experienced firsthand Clay’s generosity, good nature, and dependability. “I was

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in a precarious situation that necessitated my asking Clay for a favor on behalf of the NAHF," Kaplan recalls.

As was usual, Kaplan says, a well-known Hollywood actor was invited and widely publicized to serve as master of ceremonies for the NAHF enshrinement ceremony, sharing the prestige with past emcees such as Jimmy Stewart, Cliff Robertson, Robert Conrad, Maureen O'Hara, and Harrison Ford. The actor accepted; however, his agent unexpectedly requested flight accommodations beyond the round-trip commercial air transportation NAHF could provide. Kaplan says, "They required a private jet—with a cabin large enough to stand in—to fly the actor and a companion from Bozeman, Montana, to Orlando for a few days, and then to Dayton for the ceremony and back to Los Angeles. As a nonprofit organization, we were not in a

position to handle that request."

Kaplan says that after "calling everyone in the private jet business asking for donations of transportation," he was able to make arrangements for the front end of the trip. However, he could not find anyone to donate the return flight from Dayton to Los Angeles.

"In desperation, though I felt I barely knew him, I phoned Clay, who confirmed he was planning to attend the enshrinement celebration," Kaplan recounts. "When I briefed him on our Dayton-to-L.A. challenge, Clay said, 'No problem. I can fly them back with us to Van Nuys.' I was proud to call the emcee's agent and assure her that not only did I secure a Learjet to fly the party home, the pilot was no less than aviation executive and icon Clay Lacy!"

But Kaplan's story contains yet another unexpected turn of events. "It was

that simple, or so I thought. A few days later, very close to the event, the agent called back with a change of plans for the return trip. On the flight to Los Angeles, the jet needed to stop in Bozeman to pick up three passengers, more luggage, and two small dogs. I was slack-jawed!"

He continues, "Racking my brain for a solution, I had but one route, and that was to phone Clay. It was one of those calls that, so important at the moment, is a conversation you can replay in your head as if it happened yesterday. After profusely thanking Clay again for his generosity, I somewhat apologetically and nervously asked if he would be able to help us again. Without a pause, Clay said, 'Sure Ron, I'll just bring a bigger jet.' It was that simple."

With appreciation, Kaplan characterizes Clay's willingness to help out



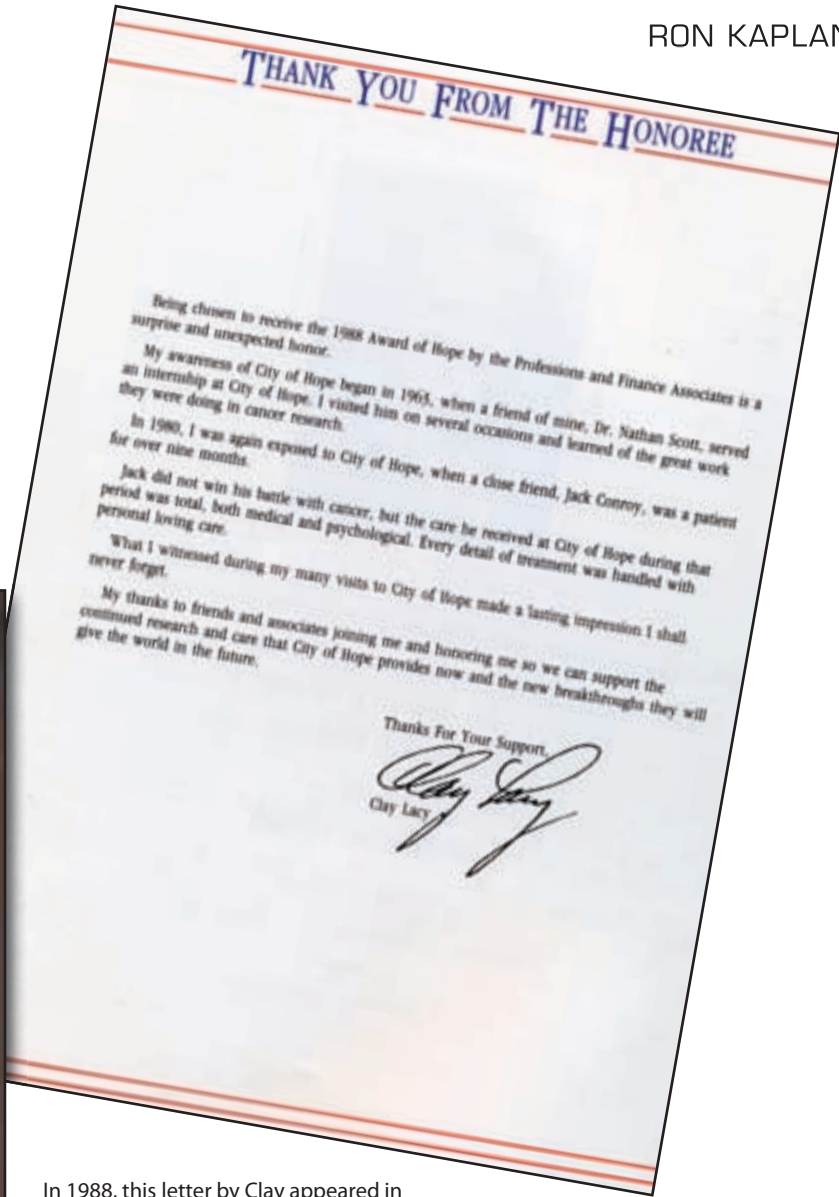
Clay stands between producer/director Brian Terwilliger (left) and National Aviation Hall of Fame Enshrinement Director Ron Kaplan after being inducted as a Living Legend of Aviation in 2004.

Photo by Lynn Krogh.

time and again. "Since then, I've had the good fortune to enjoy Clay's support for a variety of projects. And, to me, the spirit of Clay Lacy—his giving 100 percent and can-do attitude—remains personified in that generous reply. Thankfully, Clay has taken my calls many times, coming through for the Hall of Fame on occasions too numerous to list. It's inspiring, a treasure, and an honor to call him a friend."



Clay accepts the Crystal Eagle Award presented by the Aero Club of Northern California in 2003.



In 1988, this letter by Clay appeared in the official event program for the City of Hope's 31st Annual Award of Hope gala held in Beverly Hills, California. Clay was presented this handsome trophy for his support of patient care, research, and education at the world-renowned medical and research institution.



Clay (left) enjoys the company of air racer and Lockheed Corporation test pilot Anthony "Tony" LeVier in 1992.



Hamilton "Ham" Lee (left), the United States' first airline pilot, takes a flight with Clay to celebrate his one hundredth birthday on April 18, 1992. While Lee held the rank of seniority No. 1 during his entire airline career, Clay held the same distinction with United Airlines at the time this photo was taken.



MURRAY SMITH
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER,
PROFESSIONAL PILOT MAGAZINE

"I wanted a highly professional pilot who was familiar with these planes to provide my readers with valuable, professional information. I was a Clay Lacy fan from the first day I met him. He typified for me what I thought a professional pilot should be like. Every airplane fascinated him; it was an honest fascination. And, although I also loved airplanes and wanted to fly from the time I was five, Clay had a stronger case of airplane mania and love of flying than me or anyone else I ever met. Over dinner, I proposed to Clay that he become my flightcheck pilot."

Murray Smith, founder, editor, and publisher of *Professional Pilot* magazine, recalls first becoming acquainted with Clay in 1965 through Learjet inventor William (Bill) Powell Lear and California Airmotive Corporation founder Allen Paulson, for whom Clay worked as a ferry pilot and sales person. "I knew of Clay before I met him. He was a well-respected United Airlines captain, had started flying for the airline at the very young age of nineteen, and was known to be a born aviator. Bill planned to sell Learjets directly from the factory until Al and Clay flew to Wichita, Kansas, and sweet-talked him into letting them become West Coast distributors."

Smith speaks of combining his love of journalism and writing with his entry into the world of aviation technology. After earning a degree in journalism at the University of Illinois, in 1958 Smith

entered the U.S. Navy. Although he was already a licensed pilot and wanted to fly for the military, he was assigned as a technical journalist to Air Development Squadron VX-1, a test and evaluation unit that specialized in antisubmarine warfare research. During that time, Smith reported on the performance of all-weather equipment such as flight directors, flight management systems, improved navigation equipment, anti-collision devices, weather radar, and deicer boots.

Realizing there would be a growing demand in the corporate aviation industry for information related to flying during inclement weather, Smith conceived the idea and formulated plans for a magazine while flying as a research observer on long patrol missions in the nose of the Lockheed P2V Neptune. "The Neptune was my creative

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lab,” Smith says. Following an eighteen-month tour at the Pentagon, Smith left the military and founded *Professional Pilot* magazine in 1967.

Smith later envisioned a special feature for the magazine called “Flightchecks” that would evaluate new aircraft beyond avionics and individual systems, and provide an intuitive overview of the world’s most advanced business jets. Seeking the best pilot he could find for the job, Smith flew to California to meet with Clay, who accepted the offer.

“I wanted a highly professional pilot who was familiar with these planes to provide my readers with valuable, professional information,” he explains. “I was a Clay Lacy fan from the first day I met him. He typified for me what I thought a professional pilot should be like. Every airplane fascinated him; it was an

honest fascination. And, although I also loved airplanes and wanted to fly from the time I was five, Clay had a stronger case of airplane mania and love of flying than me or anyone else I ever met. Over dinner, I proposed to Clay that he become my flightcheck pilot.”

Explaining that Clay petitioned the Federal Aviation Administration to obtain the registration number N64CL for one of his Gulfstream II corporate jets, Smith says, “Clay is partial to the number sixty-four, since that was the race number on his P-51 Mustang and 1964 was a very good year for him in aircraft sales. He was manager of sales for Lear in the eleven western United States.

“One day, Clay told me this story: He was flying N64CL and talking with air traffic control. Then, another voice came on the radio and said, ‘N64CL? Isn’t that Clay Lacy’s Gulfstream II?’ Clay replied,

‘It sure is.’ Then the voice asked him, ‘Clay wouldn’t happen to be onboard?’ Clay answered, ‘You’re talking to him.’ After a short silence, the voice exclaimed, ‘I am sitting here with a copy of *Professional Pilot* magazine and reading the “Flightcheck” feature by Clay Lacy. And now I’m talking to him!’ After telling me this story, Clay laughed and said, ‘You see, Murray, you made me famous!’”

Smith continues, “Clay commands respect in the entire aviation industry. He’s the judge and jury. He will do almost anything to make sure the plane is safe or better-built. In 2005, Clay conducted a flightcheck in Wichita, Kansas, on the Raytheon Premier I (now produced by Hawker Beechcraft Corporation). After the flightcheck, Clay filed his critique as usual. Raytheon was so interested in his comments that they entreated him to stay overnight and meet with the chief



Clay appears on the front cover of *Professional Pilot* magazine in April 1985.

engineer to discuss his thoughts about their aircraft. Clay's point of view is: 'We can make this machine better.'

In 2007, when aircraft manufacturers and pilots asked Clay to compile his flightchecks into a book, Smith says he was pleased to waive his copyright privileges—in light of Clay's many contributions to *Professional Pilot*—to allow the book to be published. Calling it a "collector's item," Smith has a signed copy of the book, titled *In My Opinion*, proudly displayed in his bookcase.

Describing some of the more unusual aircraft Clay has flown, Smith says, "No one else can touch what Clay can do. As an experimental test pilot, Clay has flown some strange aircraft. He did a flightcheck on the Bell XV-15 Tiltrotor. In its name, the 'V' stands for vertical and the 'X' for experimental. This aircraft was the forerunner of the current V-22

Osprey Tiltrotor, which is now in service for military forces—mainly the U.S. Marine Corps—in Afghanistan and Iraq on a regular basis. The Bell XV-15 also led to production of the commercial Bell 609 Tiltrotor, soon to be certified for civilian use. Bell was appreciative that someone of Clay's stature would evaluate the aircraft. He is the only civilian pilot to do a flightcheck on the Bell XV-15 Tiltrotor."

Smith says that Clay also serves as the consultant on a supersonic jet project in honor of his late friend Allen Paulson, who dreamed of developing a business jet that could fly faster than the speed of sound. "Clay is working with Michael Paulson [Allen Paulson's son] to pursue Al's dream of developing a supersonic business jet."

Ending with a more personal recollection of Clay, Smith speaks of their shared time in the cockpit. "When I

come out to California, we often fly Clay's Gulfstream or another of his jets and he'll turn the airplane over to me. One time he said, 'Murray, I can tell how good a pilot is inside of thirty seconds.' 'How?' I asked. 'He steers the plane in a straight line,' Clay laughed. I guess he didn't want to hurt my feelings!

"I love flying with Clay; that's a real experience. He can make the airplane become a live thing. He can make it dance. Clay is doing what he was built to do. I am so glad that he learned to fly, because it helps make better airplanes. And I am glad to help tell his story."



In 2003, *Professional Pilot* magazine editor and publisher Murray Smith (left) and Clay take a break on the ramp in between flightchecks.



Clay Lacy



LOIS LACY (CLAY'S WIFE)
RETIRED UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT ATTENDANT

"Clay has had so many diversified experiences. And yet, there's a common theme running through them—it's all about flying. His life and experiences demonstrate that flying isn't just getting from point A to point B as a passenger or as a pilot. There are so many things you can do to make it fun, interesting, and different—the people, the places, and the planes."

In the comfort of her picturesque Southern California home overlooking the Huntington Beach Harbor, Lois Lacy presents a stack of leather-bound albums containing hundreds of treasured photographs from her life with Clay Lacy. The images inspire fascinating stories mixed with both humor and drama as she and Clay share memories.

Lois recalls first meeting Clay on a flight from Los Angeles to Vancouver, British Columbia, in a brand new Boeing 727 on which she was a flight attendant and he was the copilot. Speaking of her time with United Airlines, she says, "I absolutely loved flying. I was so fortunate to have a job where I would have worked even if they didn't pay me!" She and Clay later married and both retired from United Airlines with distinguished careers—Clay as senior pilot in 1992 and Lois as senior flight attendant in 1996.

Clay speaks of flying U.S. presidents, celebrities, students, and lifelong friends in private jets to exotic destinations across the globe. Lois joins in, adding names, dates, and anecdotes to Clay's colorful recollections. Their shared passion for aviation, world travel, and the company of good friends is woven through every story. Labeled neatly in Lois' handwriting, the images span the continents, depicting locations from Italy and Monaco to Rio de Janeiro and Taiwan.

Lois and Clay provide vivid descriptions of several historic flights, including Clay's 1973 around-the-world trip in a chartered United Airlines DC-8 with students from Mount San Antonio College. Pointing to a photo taken during that record-setting flight, named "Classroom in the Sky," Clay says, "This flight was scheduled to observe the longest

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eclipse of the sun in our lifetime, which we intercepted over the Indian Ocean by Somalia.”

Lois and Clay also identify breathtaking photographs of famous landmarks taken during that flight, including Mount Kilimanjaro, one of the largest stratovolcanoes in the world; Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world; and Antarctica, near the southernmost point on the surface of the Earth. It was the first time a United Airlines jet had ever flown around the world.

“One of my earliest memories of flying with Clay was in his P-51,” Lois remembers, “and landing at Santa Susanna Airport, which no longer exists. But, maybe that is a good thing, as Clay won’t be tempted to see if his flying skills remain honed! The runway looked about 500 feet long to me—too short to accommodate a powerful World War II

airplane. But Clay executed a perfect landing on that 1,700-foot runway.”

Continuing with a more recent recollection, Lois says, “And then we found ourselves in the jet age and what did we take people for rides in? A vintage DC-3, which Clay had beautifully restored. He loved to take people to dinner in Santa Barbara, California, flying off the coastline at sunset. We flew slow enough to savor the moment and create a beautiful memory for everyone.”

Clay and Lois travel through time with the turn of each page, describing unforgettable moments captured on film. Lois recalls how she helped organize logistics for the famous Friendship One flight for children’s charities in 1988. “I was the detail person and Clay would always have the big picture. I knew what needed to be done because I was a flight attendant. Spending thirty-six

hours on an airplane makes passengers tired and hungry. I knew you had to feed them and make them feel comfortable. That’s how we came up with the idea of moving people around and putting beds in the back of the aircraft so they could rest. Every time we stopped, we changed seats so each passenger had the chance to sit in first class.”

Clay adds, “No one was getting paid for this trip since it was for charity. Lois invited eight of her girlfriends who were flight attendants to come along. I also invited pilots who went for free—Gary Meerman, Verne Jobst, and Bob Jones. It was a fun deal!”

Together, Clay and Lois describe the down-to-earth nature and approachability of the Friendship One flight’s guest of honor, U.S. astronaut and Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong. “Neil Armstrong was so kind,” Lois says.



Clay’s wife Lois Lacy rides in the back of his World War II vintage AT-6 aircraft in 1971. Photo courtesy of Lois Lacy.

“He would talk to anybody who came up to him. Everybody could get a picture with him.” Clay says, “There were a lot of pilots onboard, so Lois and the other flight attendants took a tally and figured there were about seventy people with a pilot’s license on that flight. I remember Neil saying, ‘Clay, you have more backup on this airplane than I had on Apollo!’”

Lois concludes, “I was surprised at how well everything worked. Everyone was happy.” Clay adds, “It was an interesting trip. Everything went like clockwork. We had three sunrises and three nights on that flight.”

In contrast, Lois explains that she rarely flew with Clay on official duty for United Airlines. “I only flew with Clay when he needed a flight attendant and invited me to go!” she says with a smile. “Clay, remember that time?” Clay con-

tinues, “Lois was with me when I was on the East Coast somewhere on a layover. We came back to Las Vegas and were going to deadhead back to Los Angeles. Lois was a passenger, so she didn’t have a uniform with her.

“Well, dispatch realized there was an airplane going to Montreal that was short a pilot. They didn’t have a captain, and the airplane and passengers were ready to go. It was a real mix-up. So I said, ‘Well, I’ll fly it.’ At first, the dispatcher responded, ‘That’s great.’ But then he said, ‘That isn’t going to work. We’re short a flight attendant too.’ I said, ‘I’ve got my own flight attendant!’ So, Lois came up in her civilian clothes to help out.”

Images of special friends, now deceased, also lead Clay and Lois to share memories punctuated by both humor and serious reflection. They recall flying with the late Hal Fishman—a close

friend, accomplished aviator, and television’s longest-running news anchor—whose firsthand accounts of Clay’s record-setting flights were broadcast across the world. They also speak of their travels with Jack Conroy, a lifelong friend with whom Clay served in the California Air National Guard and shared pilot duties on the first flight of the Pregnant Guppy (then the world’s largest flying airplane).

Other photos bring to mind Allen Paulson and Indy 500 champion Sam Hanks, Clay’s best friends; Tony Levier and Herman “Fish” Salmon, air race and Lockheed Corporation test pilots whom Clay admired as a teenager; Danny Kaye, award-winning actor, singer, and comedian with whom Clay flew several flights to benefit the United Nations Children’s Fund; and many others who influenced and enriched their lives.



The right gear door of Clay’s P-51 Mustang tells the story of its enviable racing career up to the Reno National Air Races in 1971.

LUCKY ME

Clay and Lois also revisit the excitement and enjoyment of modern air racing. With Lois by his side in many frames, the images are picture-perfect, as if they had appeared in a magazine. Removing a photo of Clay's air racing team from an album, Lois points out with amusement the matching purple and white uniforms she and other female crew members modeled for the camera.

Clay, who served for several years as president of the Professional Race Pilots Association, explains, "We were trying to get air racers to look more professional and wear uniforms similar to those in auto racing. So, we came up with the idea of awarding a prize to the best-dressed crew. The head of public relations for the Reno Air Races, Roy Powers, thought it was a good idea since, at that time, the crews looked like cowboys! Unfortunately, even though our uni-

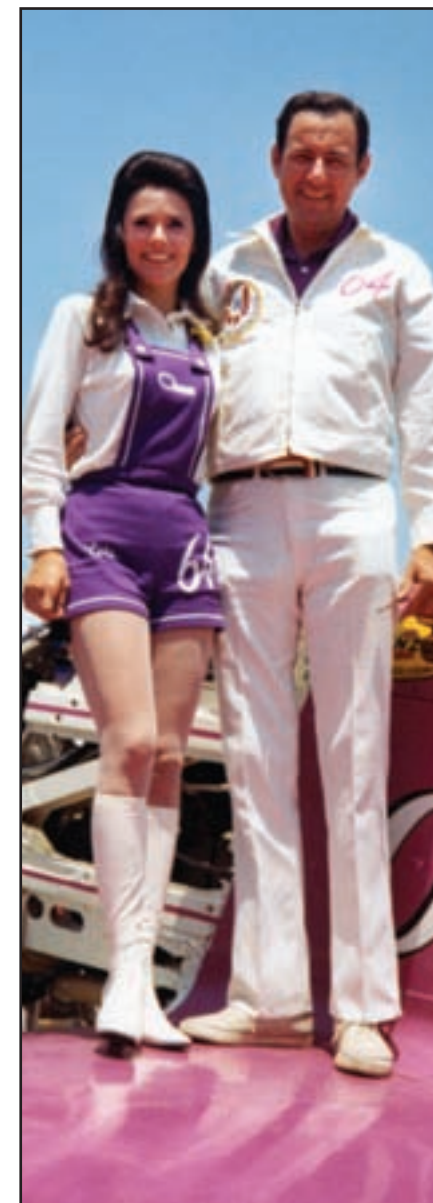
forms were the best, we couldn't win the prize since it was our idea. However, the following year, it changed the whole complexion of air race team uniforms."

Amid photos of exotic places, famous flights, and well-known people are images of a more personal nature. "As you can see, there are many family photos in these albums," Lois says. "In this picture, we were landing in a Learjet in Sondrestrom, Greenland, on my birthday. During our descent into Sondrestrom, I had been talking with an American friend who was stationed on an outpost in Greenland called Sob Story.

"All of a sudden, the weather closed in and we had to be talked down on a ground-controlled approach. This approach was in a valley between two mountain ranges that were about a mile apart and required very precise flying, as you can imagine. During this

situation, you are constantly cross-checking instruments while listening to the directions of the controller on the ground. There is no visual; you cannot see a thing. That's when Clay said, 'Okay, I want complete quiet. Lois, don't say another word until we land.'"

Clay continues with more detail, "Well, I knew that airport real well and the first thing we saw, actually, were some rocks going by on the side. It was white below." Lois recalls, "As I said, it happened to be my birthday and here we were spending the night in a snowstorm in Sondrestrom, Greenland. Fortunately for us, a USO crew that had been scheduled to leave that day was also grounded due to the weather. So we had a fabulous evening of dining and dancing at the small U.S. Air Force base that supported the Dew Line radar sites—the best birthday party ever!"



Clay and wife Lois Lacy stand on the wing of Clay's iconic P-51 Mustang race plane in 1971.

Though many stories remain untold and several photo albums lie untouched, the visit nears an end. Lois summarizes Clay's achievements in aviation. "Clay has had so many diversified experiences. And yet, there's a common theme running through them—it's all about flying. His life and experiences demonstrate that flying isn't just getting from point A to point B as a passenger or as a pilot. There are so many things you can do to make it fun, interesting, and different—the people, the places, and the planes."



Clay and his pit crew celebrate winning the 1970 national championship air race in Reno, Nevada. Circled on the far right is Clay's close personal friend and American race car driver Sam Hanks.



This is one of Clay's favorite photographs of friend Sam Hanks, taken when he victoriously crossed the finish line in first place at the 1957 Indianapolis 500.



CLAY LACY JETS

In 2008, Clay Lacy Aviation celebrated its fortieth anniversary as the most experienced operator of private jets in the world. Here is a bird's-eye view of one of each type of charter aircraft the company operates parked on the ramp.

LOG BOOK ENTRY TEN:
BUILT FROM THE SKY DOWN

LUCKY ME

Clay Lacy Aviation is proud to celebrate more than four decades as the world's most experienced corporate jet operator, offering the largest fleet and widest selection of aircraft available for charter with the most senior leadership team in the industry. Its more than 250 employees embrace the legacy of excellence and spirit of greatness synonymous with the Clay Lacy name, operating some sixty-five aircraft from facilities in several major U.S. cities.

Launching his air charter business with one leased Learjet in 1968, Clay foresaw the tremendous impact private aviation could have on the global economy. "I remember [Learjet inventor] Bill Lear creating a sign in 1965 that was ahead of its time," Clay recalls. "He rented a billboard at Dallas Airport where the passengers passed by that said, 'Welcome to Dallas. Your competition has been here and left in his Learjet!' Today, that's an absolute fact. Even with ad-

vancements in communications technology that enable business to be conducted electronically, most executives want to know and meet face-to-face the people they're doing business with. The corporate jet is responsible for growing business more than any other advancement in the past forty years."

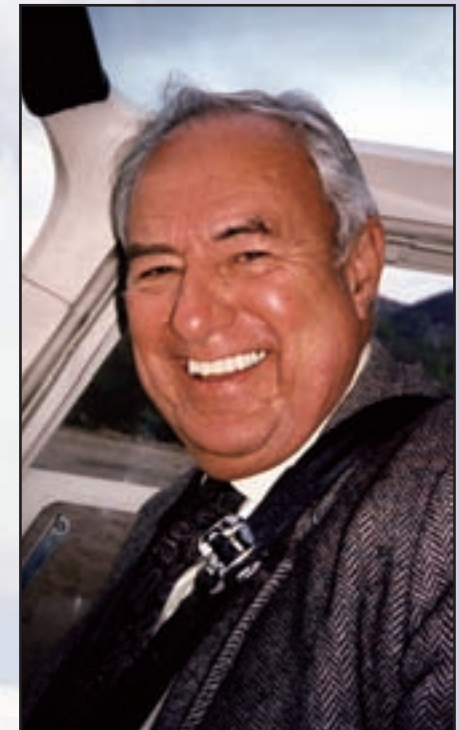
Founded on vision and passion, Clay Lacy Aviation offers a complete spectrum of aviation services under one roof. Its pilots, flight crew members, and support personnel are among the most experienced in the world, maintaining an unparalleled commitment to safety, quality, and efficiency.

Clay Lacy Aviation is the company of choice for business executives and CEOs, national and world leaders, professional athletes and sports teams, celebrities, and dignitaries. It is the only private jet operator in history to fly six U.S. presidents.

"Corporate jets allow business people to accomplish in one day what would take three days if they flew with an airline," Clay explains. "General aviation airports also support industry and bring business to communities in out-of-the-way locations."

As Clay Lacy Aviation continues to grow its facilities and operations, its mission remains to provide superior aviation services worldwide; to establish lifelong business relationships; and to serve the greater community through an honorable, environmentally conscious, socially aware, and financially strong company.

The entire Clay Lacy Aviation team under company President Brian Kirkdoffer continues the legacy of excellence that began nearly half a century ago when Clay Lacy—innovator, aviator, and entrepreneur—built the company from the sky down.



Clay, 2007



LUCKY ME



Top row, left: In 1960, Clay flies President Harry S. Truman (center) to Denver, Colorado, in the chartered DC-6 parked in the background.

Top row, right: (Left to right) President Gerald R. Ford, First Lady Betty Ford, and Clay are pictured following President Ford's first flight on a private jet after leaving office in 1977.

Bottom row, left: President George W. Bush (left) and Clay are engaged in conversation in 2005.

Bottom row, right: (Left to right) President George H. W. Bush, Clay, and First Lady Barbara Bush are pictured in 1994.



In 1988, this powerful image of Air Force One over Mount Rushmore was taken from a Learjet piloted by Clay and today remains the official photograph of the flying White House. At the time, the aircraft was being ferried from Seattle to Wichita, Kansas, for installation of interior avionics and electronic counter measures.



Clay Lacy built this company from the sky down.

Having flown since 1940, becoming a United Airlines Captain, building a world class charter fleet, flying countless Astrovision photography flights and compiling more air time than any humane being, Clay Lacy knows a corporate aviation customer's requirements. Clay Lacy Aviation was built on this unequaled experience.

CLAY LACY
Aviation



This advertisement highlighting Clay's unique background as a successful pilot, entrepreneur, and aerial photographer was produced to attract new clients for his growing jet charter business circa 1989.

ROBERT REDFORD

September 30, 2009

Mr. Clay Lacy
Chief Executive Officer
Clay Lacy Aviation
7435 Valjean Avenue
Van Nuys, CA 91406

Dear Clay:

I am pleased to join your friends and colleagues in congratulating you on the 40th anniversary of Clay Lacy Aviation. Having flown with your company for over 30 years, I consider your entire crew among the most qualified aviation personnel in the world. Not only does their quiet professionalism inspire trust and confidence, their warm hospitality makes me feel thoroughly at home.

Over the past four decades, your vision and passion have helped bring the freedom and mobility flight offers within the reach of people across the globe. In addition, you have not only pushed the boundaries of flight, but have expanded the horizon of the film industry through your pioneering aerial photography.

Your lifelong accomplishments and distinct flying career are a source of inspiration for all who know you. Thank you for our years of friendship. I look forward to sharing the skies with you again!

Sincerely,



This letter signed by actor, director, and longtime Clay Lacy Aviation client Robert Redford congratulates Clay on forty years of business excellence.



In 1999, television personality Vanna White, best known as co-host of the long-running game show *Wheel of Fortune*, stands in front of her Learjet at Clay Lacy Aviation as Clay (right) and her crew look on. This front-page newspaper article names Van Nuys Airport as the airport of choice in Los Angeles for top Hollywood talent due to its convenience, privacy, and ease of use.



Clay Lacy Aviation's airframe and power plant technicians are experienced in all aspects of aircraft maintenance, from minor repairs to the most complex requirements.





Clay Lacy Aviation's Boeing Field facility in Seattle, Washington, provides complete fixed-base operator services and passenger amenities, including premium line service, quick-turn refueling, comfortable passenger lounges, on-site catering, and private access to the ramp area.



Clay Lacy Aviation offers complete custom aircraft interior design and refurbishment services from its base at Van Nuys Airport.



Clay Lacy Aviation provides a full spectrum of aircraft and services to meet each client's mission and create a comfortable in-flight experience.



“People still like to do deals face to face. Nothing substitutes for looking someone in the eye and knowing who you’re doing business with.”

Clay Lacy

This is a sparkling view of Clay Lacy Aviation’s aircraft parking ramp at night.



BRIAN KIRKDOFFER
PRESIDENT,
CLAY LACY AVIATION

“Clay taught me that people of power, prestige, and influence somehow come through business aviation. He is unique. He knows everyone in the business and thoroughly understands every aspect of operating planes. Clay is a great supporter and promoter of all of general aviation. He is the world’s most outstanding pilot. And he gave me my start.”

It’s 9 a.m. on a typical Monday morning as Clay Lacy Aviation President Brian Kirkdoffer glances out a window overlooking the bustling aircraft ramp at Van Nuys Airport. He sits comfortably at the head of a conference room table against a backdrop of framed images depicting historic aircraft and famous flights. His words are punctuated by the sounds of private jets—from Lear’s to Gulfstreams—spooling their engines and taxiing to the runway for destinations around the globe.

Kirkdoffer, who joined the company in 1990, credits Clay Lacy with igniting his interest and successful career in aviation. “Clay taught me that people of power, prestige, and influence somehow come through business aviation. He is unique. He knows everyone in the business and thoroughly understands every aspect of operating planes. Clay is a great

supporter and promoter of all of general aviation. He is the world’s most outstanding pilot. And he gave me my start.”

Remembering how it all began, Kirkdoffer says, “Clay and my parents were friends. I saw him sometimes when he came to Seattle.” Describing himself as “a good student” and “eager kid” who wanted to learn how to fly, Kirkdoffer attributes his early appreciation for the excitement and importance of aviation to Clay’s influence. At age fifteen, Kirkdoffer took flying lessons from Clay, from ground school to his first solo. “At the time I didn’t recognize the impact of those events. All I knew then was that I liked him and trusted him and he taught me how to fly. That is someone you never forget—the one who teaches you to fly.”

Kirkdoffer’s entrepreneurial spirit took flight at an early age. “I always

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wanted to move ahead, and I suppose Clay saw that in me. When I was in the second grade, I taught kids how to do karate and charged them twenty-five cents." He smiles at the recollection. "And then when I was about twelve, I started a lawn care business with a friend." Kirkdoffer describes how, at age fourteen, he opened one of the first windsurfing businesses in the U.S. and received an offer from a European manufacturer to serve as a national distributor. He laughs, "Me, a fourteen-year-old kid! All I wanted was to purchase inexpensive equipment so my friends could afford to windsurf with me."

A University of Washington graduate in business administration, Kirkdoffer also launched a specialty wear company while attending college. At that same time, he became a flight instructor and clocked many flight hours

at Seattle's Boeing Field. He says with conviction, "I believe what Clay has said is true. You have to know your field very well in order to teach others."

Kirkdoffer planned to tour Europe after college, but Clay visited him a few months before graduation to make an offer that would forever change the course of his life. Posing the question, "Why spend money on travel when I can pay you to travel?" Clay asked Kirkdoffer to launch a new charter operation in Seattle and promised to teach him how to fly jets. He was to spend a few weeks at Van Nuys Airport learning the business before initiating the new venture. "Those few weeks grew to one month, two, and six," Kirkdoffer says. "I was learning a lot every day. Finally Clay said, 'You'd better find a place to stay in L.A. for a while.' I thought to myself, there goes Seattle!"

Beginning as copilot and then taking the captain's seat, Kirkdoffer recalls the challenge of flying the early Lear-jets. "I've learned from Clay ever since I first met him. With Clay, everything in the cockpit is efficient. Everything he says about aviation has meaning. He told me, 'I love flying,' and it is as natural to him as breathing is to the rest of us. When he was teaching me, he could see the results of my actions before I could."

With his talent and affinity for business, Kirkdoffer soon became Clay Lacy Aviation's self-appointed marketing director. Through his vision, Kirkdoffer grew the company's aircraft management business and acquired more than sixty managed aircraft over the course of twelve years. He has attracted and flown most of the corporate jets Clay Lacy Aviation manages, knows each owner personally, and has helped lead



In the late 1990s, Clay Lacy Aviation President Brian Kirkdoffer (second from left) serves as captain on a charter flight in a Gulfstream IISP for Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Margaret Thatcher (third from left). Also pictured are the flight's copilot Jack Ward (left) and cabin service attendant Marianne Schaedler.

the company's growth from thirty to 250-plus employees. The largest aircraft Kirkdoffer flew when he started, the Lear 35, is now one of the smallest in Clay Lacy Aviation's fleet.

Kirkdoffer says Clay brings more than a comprehensive knowledge of aviation to this very successful business. "Not everyone knows of Clay's generosity. He is a caring person with a good heart. He has helped many people fulfill their dreams. He has a special ability to hire individuals who are loyal, dedicated, and appreciate the feel of a family business. His love of aviation filters down. No one is more passionate about aviation than Clay."

Leaning forward across the table, Kirkdoffer emphasizes, "This is the private jet age. Providing global businesses with corporate jet service is the core of Clay Lacy Aviation. The most

productive entrepreneurs and business executives do not fly on commercial airlines, nor do they have the time to wait in airports. Everything we do is tailored to helping leaders be more effective.

The future of corporate air travel is phenomenal. Everyone in aviation knows Clay and the business grew just the way a building grows, piece by piece. If you truly love aviation, this is the company you want to work for."



Attracting the attention of the local and national press, Clay and company president Brian Kirkdoffer are featured in a business article showcasing a wireless Internet-outfitted Gulfstream 450 business jet available to clients.



Clay Lacy Aviation operates the widest selection and largest fleet of private jets available, including this sleek Gulfstream V.



TINA REGINA
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR,
CLAY LACY AVIATION

“Clay and I have a high regard for each other. We have, in a sense, grown up together. I learned from him and he gave me opportunities. Everyone respects him and wants to get in to see him. People ask me, ‘Is Clay in?’ all the time. And when he is in, the phone calls come from all over the world.”

Tina Regina has worked with Clay Lacy for twenty-nine years, first as office manager and more recently as administrative director of the corporation. She has seen it all, from Clay Lacy Aviation’s beginnings at Van Nuys Airport as a small charter company to its evolution into a world-class aircraft charter and management company. “I ran a flight school for a while,” she recalls, “and then I interviewed with Clay. I went from the little airplane business—which was a whole lot of fun—to this. This has been fun too, but it is a corporation. It’s big business.”

On entering the conference room from the lobby of Clay Lacy Aviation headquarters, Regina looks around at the spotless room, glistening trophies, and framed awards and smiles at her recollections. “When we first started, none of this was here. There was nothing on

the airfield like this building. There were just low-slung buildings and hangars strung around the airport.” Regina nods her head. “He built this.”

When she arrived at the company, Regina remembers, Clay was still a United Airlines captain and operated two Lear 24s and one Lear 25 with a handful of employees. At the time, Clay Lacy Aviation was training former military pilots for a Learjet type rating through the G.I. Bill that provided financial support to U.S. veterans. “We trained them and we hired quite a few of them,” Regina recalls. “It was a real busy time and fun. Even the instructors were flying charters at the time.”

In those days, Clay Lacy Aviation “was the place to be,” says Regina, adding that Clay understood the way pilots think. But he was tough on them in the cockpit. Regina vividly remembers her check flight

LUCKY ME

with Clay in the company-owned Cessna years ago. "He put me through a lot. He had me doing stalls. He sometimes asks questions when he already knows the answers. He wants to see how YOU fly, how YOU work the radio, where YOU are going to land." Clay later sponsored Regina in an all-women's air race at which she won second place flying with Audrey Schutte, a well-known aviatrix.

Regina describes Clay as a visionary who foresaw the need for celebrities and business people to fly on their own schedules into airports closer to their desired destinations. "It was just amazing. It started catching on. Soon a few wealthy celebrities bought jets, and within ten years, there was a huge explosion in the business."

In time, Clay integrated the jet charter company with his aerial photography business. "He loves aerial photography,"

she says, "and he was instrumental in developing the Astrovision aerial camera system," which made it possible to film stunts and movie shoots from angles never before possible.

Speaking of Clay's major attributes, Regina lists:

First, his philanthropy, specifically the scholarships for deserving students he provides through the University of North Dakota and Experimental Aircraft Association. "He is keen on getting good people into aviation," she says.

Second, Clay's vision. "He built his business from a simple operation, and look at it now," she notes. "The world has changed, but he is still part of it."

Third, his enthusiasm for flying. "He is amazing," says Regina. "He is always gracious. He wants people to enjoy and experience what he has experienced."

Fourth, his many activities as both a pilot and entrepreneur. "We even operated medical flights for several years, transporting donor organs and patients to major medical centers to save lives," she reflects.

And, of her relationship with Clay, Regina says, "Clay and I have a high regard for each other. We have, in a sense, grown up together. I learned from him and he gave me opportunities. Everyone respects him and wants to get in to see him. People ask me, 'Is Clay in?' all the time. And when he is in, the phone calls come from all over the world."

Regina speaks of the celebrities and famous people Clay has flown or who have been customers of Clay Lacy Aviation over the years, including actors and entertainers Danny Kaye, Frank Sinatra, Ed McMahon, Robert Redford, Johnny Carson, Lucille Ball, and John Travolta;

professional basketball player Earvin “Magic” Johnson; daytime talk show host and clinical psychologist Dr. Phil McGraw; and others. “It’s amazing all the accomplished people he knows and all the places he’s been all over the world. Working here has changed my life.”

Regina looks around the room and out the window at the private jets parked just outside the door. “He built this,” she says with admiration. “Imagine having the foresight to know this would happen. He has literally changed the aviation industry.” Regina pauses and adds, “It’s hard for me to consider retiring.”



As pictured here in 2006, Clay Lacy Aviation’s pilots, flight crew members, and support personnel are among the most experienced aviation professionals in the world.

A Cessna Citation corporate jet is flying directly towards the viewer, positioned in the center of the frame. The aircraft is silhouetted against a bright, glowing sun that is low on the horizon, creating a lens flare effect. The sky is a deep orange and yellow. Below the horizon, a vast, undulating sea of clouds stretches across the entire width of the image. The clouds are illuminated from below, giving them a soft, golden glow. The overall scene is serene and majestic, capturing a moment of flight at the end of the day.

"My whole life has been luck?"

Clay Lacy

This image of a Cessna Citation corporate jet flying above the overcast is found on the front cover of Clay's 1999 calendar. Each year, Clay publishes a sixteen-month calendar containing beautiful and unique aerial photographs from his vast personal collection.

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