

# PIREPS

## PIREPS

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**NEBRASKA**

Good Life. Great Journey.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

## Nebraska Tuskegee Airmen

By Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D.



Tuskegee Airmen were the first African-American aviation unit in our World War II Armed Forces. (Photo credit: Library of Congress archive)

On September 2, America celebrated the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. Nebraskans made many contributions. One group, African-Americans from Omaha, volunteered for pilot training at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

According to the book, *Black Knights-The Story of the Tuskegee Airmen*, five became pilots – Alfonza W. Davis, John L. Harrison, Jr., Woodrow F. Morgan, Ralph Orduna, and Edward W. Watkins. In all, almost 1,000 African-American pilots and nearly 14,000 navigators, bombardiers, instructors, aircraft and engine mechanics, control tower operators, and other maintenance and support staff were trained from 1941 to 1946.

## Pireps has Gone Electronic

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They flew more than 15,000 sorties between May 1943 and June 1945. American bomber crews often requested the “Red Tails” to escort them, which was the nickname for these outstanding aviators who painted the tails of the fighter planes a distinctive deep red. Tuskegee Airmen earned a stellar reputation for bravery and aerial skills. In 2012, Hollywood produced a blockbuster movie, *Red Tails*, to dramatically honor these brave Americans.

Robert Russa Moton was the visionary leader of the Tuskegee Institute, who believed in aeronautical training and engineering. Moton died in 1940, before the Tuskegee Airmen program took flight.

According to a March 31, 2017 Associated Press story, John L. Harrison, Jr. was 22 when he became one of America’s first black military pilots. “We were Americans, we were young, and we wanted to defend our country, just like everyone else,” Harrison said in a 2009 oral history.

Fellow Tuskegee airman Eugene Robinson said that becoming a pilot was a childhood dream of Harrison’s after seeing airplanes in Omaha, where he grew up, and reading in a magazine about black men being trained as pilots. Robinson said it was a big dream for a black child during segregation. “He wanted to fly an airplane, like so many young people.”

According to a February 23, 2018 Netnebraska.org interview by Jack Williams with Robert Holts of Bellevue, who during WWII served as a military draftsman in support of the 332nd Fighter Group and 477th Bombardment Group, later known as the Tuskegee Airmen, African-Americans served in many aviation support roles.

The Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum in Ashland opened a permanent Tuskegee Airmen exhibit. It includes flight suits, portraits of Tuskegee Airmen from Nebraska, and even a uniform from Paul Adams, a Tuskegee Airmen pilot from Lincoln who died in 2013. Curator Mark Strahle thinks the exhibit fits perfectly with the museum’s mission.

“The dedication, the commitment, and then the continuing influence of the Tuskegee Airmen nationwide is of such importance,” said Strahle. “We’re interested in the human story, the inspiration that comes from people overcoming difficult barriers and still taking good care of their country and their nation and their honor.”

Moton Airport and our Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site are featured in *America’s Amazing Airports* book. Today, our National Park Service hosts an excellent aviation museum. Virtual tours are available at [https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee\\_airmen/index.html](https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee_airmen/index.html). ■

# Lots of Charts

By Jesse Schulz, NDOT Meteorologist

In forecasting weather, and especially for aviation, we use a lot of charts to help display the different hazards that might be approaching. Charts such as convective outlooks, Airman’s Meteorological Information (AIRMETS), Significant Meteorological Information (SIGMETS) and upper air soundings, when put together, help paint a picture of the atmosphere and what potential hazards lie ahead.

As many readers are aware, AIRMETS and SIGMETS are the most important charts in aviation. An AIRMET is always issued every six hours and gives weather information such as visibility, potential turbulence and freezing levels. This *may* contain hazardous weather and should always be heeded. A SIGMET, on the other hand, is only issued for significant weather. Typically, they are issued for thunderstorms, but can be issued for severe icing, severe turbulence, dust storms, or volcanic ash lowering visibility. These should be taken seriously every time. But have you ever wondered how a map like this is produced? There are many different variables and models that go into the process; perhaps the most important is the current state of the atmosphere.

There are hundreds of models that help us predict the weather. They are all just a bit different in their scope, time frame and the science behind them. However, they all have one thing in common: They must have a starting place from which they can predict the future state of the atmosphere.

One way we assess the current state of the atmosphere is by sending weather balloons up into the atmosphere. There are almost 900 locations in which a weather balloon is launched, including 92 locations in the US. They are launched twice a day, and sometimes more if there is some impending hazardous weather. Attached to the balloon is a “radiosonde.” This measures different meteorology variables such as temperature, relative humidity, pressure and wind speed. All these variables are important to understand the current state of the atmosphere. From here, this data gets ingested into models and weather forecasting to produce AIRMETS, SIGMETS and convective outlooks.

Weather balloons, along with sensors at airports, play one of the biggest roles in helping predict the future state of the atmosphere and how safe the flying conditions will be. Without knowing what is going on in the present, it is tough to predict what will come in the future. With the correct tools at our disposal, this becomes much easier. ■

# Logbook

By Kim Stevens

I was reading through my logbook recently, trying to make heads or tails of the chicken scratches I made in the "Remarks and Endorsements" section. A word to the wise – take the time to write distinctly, or better yet, keep a separate log where you can go into greater detail about each of your flights.

You may not appreciate it at the time, but believe me, later in life when you take a flight down memory lane, you will appreciate the added details. And take your time. Looking back, now nearly 30 years, I must have rushed through the process each time I logged a flight. My penmanship was awful, and I couldn't decipher many of the notes I scribbled in.

Now that I'm just a bit older, I find myself thinking back trying to remember the flights that I've taken and, unfortunately, my logbook doesn't offer much help. When I think back, I believe my attention was just on the growing numbers; seeing the total needed for pilot in command (PIC) increasing and dreaming of the day when I would have to buy a new logbook to capture all of the many hours I was sure to accumulate.

Well, looking back now, I wish I had taken more care in describing each flight, what I was doing and who was with me; notes to help me remember the significance of each flight and what I learned. I am amazed at how many folks I've given rides to in the first hundred hours or so after earning my Private certificate. In most cases, it was just the first name and to be honest with you, I don't have a clue who some of them were.

So, to all you young folks out there, and to those in my generation who might be having a little more difficulty remembering things, do yourself a favor and take the time to record details of each flight, even if it doesn't seem significant at the time.

## Discernible Flights

Soloed after 10 hours on May 9, 1979. My first solo cross country was from Omaha/Norfolk/Columbus/Omaha on June 10, 1979. I wish I could make out the names of the folks that endorsed my logbook at those airports; the person in Norfolk was an airline transport pilot (ATP). On my return to Omaha, my instructor signed my logbook, "Arrived OK." Was he expecting a different outcome?

## Director's View

### Accredited Airport Executives



Ann B. Richart, AAE

I'm delighted and proud to announce that Nebraska has a new Accredited Airport Executive! The American Association of Airport Executives created the Accredited Airport Executive (AAE) designation in 1954 to recognize those airport management professionals who have demonstrated their commitment to professional airport management, their experience in dealing with the broad scope of airport management responsibilities and have attained the highest professional mark in the industry. In order to become an AAE, a person must pass a written exam, successfully complete a writing requirement and pass a comprehensive oral examination.

In August, Matthew Aubry, Operations Manager at Eppley Field, completed all three requirements and became Nebraska's newest AAE. Matthew demonstrated extreme dedication and persistence by completing this process during the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. Matthew joins six other Nebraska AAEs:

#### Nebraska Accredited Airport Executives

Matthew Aubry, AAE	Operations Manager	Omaha Airport Authority
David Haring, AAE	Executive Director	Lincoln Airport Authority
Thomas Laming, AAE	Senior Analyst, Air Service Development	Omaha Airport Authority
Stephen McCoy, AAE	Director, Air Service & Business Development	Omaha Airport Authority
Michael Olson, AAE	Executive Director	Central Nebraska Regional Airport
Ann B. Richart, AAE	Aeronautics Director	Nebraska DOT
Robert Selig, AAE	Board of Directors	Lincoln Airport Authority. ■

On a long cross country going from Omaha to Keokuk, IA, and then on to Springfield, MO, I noted that I lost my vacuum pump—no other details. I apparently spent the night in Springfield and flew back to Omaha in a fixed plane the next day.

Another entry had me ferried down to Mobley, MO, to pick up a plane and fly it back to Omaha for service. Today, I wonder what kind of service was required! At the time, it was just the chance to build some free time.

On January 5, 1980 my logbook shows that I experienced a poor landing. The fact that I even admitted it, tells me now that it must have been a humdinger.

The entry for a flight to Spirit Lake, IA, says there was a low ceiling and I learned about the purpose of a Control Zone – yet no other details. All I

remember from that flight was that I flew three friends with me – one being a new girlfriend for a picnic at the Spirit Lake airport. The girlfriend on board might explain a lot.

Other entries, again with no details, include a deflated nose wheel and experiencing no right brake after landing. Curiously enough, the flight I remember very vividly (without the need for details – and there were none), was three hours in a C-206TC, back in September of 1981. The reason I remember it so well, you might ask. It was a combination checkout in the aircraft with my instructor, with a special cargo. The rear seats were taken out to make room for a body bag – with body. Creepy. I kept looking back and listening for strange noises. And Halloween was still a month away! ■

# Captains' Stories

By Dan Petersen



Onboard radar shows a Required Navigational Performance (RNP) approach to 16L into Reno. All needed information is on the Primary Flight Display as well as the Navigation Display. The whole route can be seen with fixes, altitudes, terrain, and all of the primary flight data.

When I was a young flight engineer on a Boeing 727, I used to listen intently to all the stories that the “old” captains I was flying with told during our flights while at cruise altitude. Most were about what it was like back in the 1960s when they were first officers (FO) on the Constellation or the B-707 and how they navigated across the Atlantic using a navigator or using Doppler radar to calculate drift to correct their heading. Some stories about other eccentric captains that they flew with were highly entertaining, but could not be repeated in polite company.

Even though I do not consider myself old at all, I have been catching myself telling stories about what it was like back in my day. I started my airline career 31 years ago and have seen many changes during that time, some of which my FOs can hardly believe.

One night we were flying from New York to Miami on an offshore airway called an Atlantic Route. I commented to the young FO that this airway used to be a non-directional [radio] beacon (NDB) airway that was almost 200 nautical miles (NM) long. The FO wondered how we could do that. I explained that it was highly inaccurate as the needle was waving about. Some enterprising pilot made a chart that we could crosscheck to determine how well we were doing on the airway by plotting the distances from Distance Measuring Equipment (DME) stations along the coast to the airway.

This was, of course, not approved and was unofficial, but it was a big confidence booster.

Most of the FOs I fly with grew up with glass cockpits that provide wonderful pictures of the whole flight and they easily can see where all the airports are by looking at the navigation display. In the “steam gauge” days we used to dial in a VHF Omnidirectional Radio Range (VOR) frequency and looked at the Radio Magnetic Indicator to see where the needle was pointing. They cannot imagine flying like that, following needles and moving Course Deviation Indicators (CDIs) to follow airways instead of following the “magenta line” using GPS and auto-sequencing of waypoints, in today’s aircraft.

I definitely have not seen the changes that my predecessors have experienced. Some started on the DC-2 and finished their careers on the B-747 like Captain Bob Buck, who wrote *Weather Flying*, but I have seen many changes. Many safety improvements have been made. It is much easier to maintain situational awareness with all the avionics that we now have, and it is comforting to have Ground Proximity Warning Systems and Traffic Collision and Advisory Systems these days.

It is still fun to reminisce at times, and, yes, I do have some entertaining stories of eccentric captains that I have flown with that I cannot share here. ■

# Aviation Art Contest 2021 Now Open for Ages 6 through 17

By David Morris



Since 1986, the Department of Transportation/Division of Aeronautics has sponsored an annual Aviation Art Contest for the benefit of our youth. The program goal is to motivate and encourage young people to become

more familiar with and participate in aeronautics, engineering, math and science. There are three age categories of contestants: 6-9, 10-13 and 14-17 for boys and girls. This year's theme is "A Friendlier World with Air Sports."

When we think of aviation, our first thoughts go to the sky. We imagine what it would be like soaring through the air in a glider, floating across the sky in a hot air balloon, or maybe even twisting and looping through clouds in an aerobatic plane. Working together, a group of aviation enthusiasts can accomplish what one person alone never could. The friendships created in this process are one of the things that keeps people coming back to air sports again and again.

Air shows, of course, offer it all. Everyone is invited to share in the joy that sport aviation produces. Pilots love talking about their planes, ground crews share the work required to keep everything safe and in top shape. A single parachutist in the sky can hold the attention of hundreds of people below. Air sports bring people together and creates friendships that connect people from all over the world and of all ages.

For youngsters ages 6 through 17, it is time to get out your favorite artist supplies and give free rein to your imagination by creating a poster that represents your thoughts when you think about the theme of "A Friendlier World with Air Sports" for the Aviation Art Contest 2021. Due date for all entries is January 19, 2021. For further details and/or an entry brochure contact David Morris at the NDOT – Division of Aeronautics: david.morris@nebraska.gov or call 402-471-2371. ■



## When to Retire?

By David Moll

When should a person retire? The airlines require a mandatory retirement age of 65 due to Public Law 110-135. But who cares what politicians think, since they played a huge role in creating the pilot shortage?

Nevertheless, I've had quite a corporate career. Craig Scheffert, Duncan Aviation's then Chief Pilot, gave me my first ride in a Learjet (N10CB, a Model 24B) on a deadhead leg from Minneapolis to Lincoln in August of 1975. I bet my eyes were the size of grapefruits when the throttles were pushed forward while the vertical speed hit 6,000 feet per minute (fpm).

If my memory is correct, I have flown over 30 different Learjets, from the 23, 24, 25, 31, 35 and 55. My type ratings also include the Hawker Siddeley series, Falcon 10, Citation models 500, 560XL, 650 and 750. Duncan leased me to Northrop Aircraft Corp for their Peace Hawk program in Saudi Arabia, flying a Lear 35 as a Captain around the Kingdom and throughout Europe (at the ripe old age of 25). For quite a few years, I was the Chief Pilot for the nation's most successful hotel broker. After 50 years of safe flying, the FAA presented me the Wright Brothers Master Pilot award. It's been a fun ride and I'm back in the section of the United States I enjoy the most: Nebraska.

### Safety First

For all of you who think flying with a woman is bad for your marriage, one of the best pilots I've ever flown with was a woman. Therefore, here's my question: Does professional behavior stop when the engines stop? Does showing up with a scraggly four-day growth of beard make you look professional? Nope, it only makes you look like a bum. Does wearing an airline type uniform make you look professional? Nope, it only tells any and all criminals you have access to an airplane and, therefore, so can they.

To all who think a safety management system (SMS) and all of its paperwork and procedures are magic for safety, again, the answer is "no." Safety first comes from being honest with yourself about your performance, a constant striving to be better, plus honesty about knowing your equipment the best you can. These personal initiatives give you the tools necessary to follow safety procedures.

After 52 years since my solo, what was my favorite airplane? The Lear 31A and the Falcon 10 were the best flying airplanes, bar none. The Citation 10 was the most comfortable, and of course, the fastest. The Pitts S-1T was the most fun. The Cessna 421 was the most challenging to descend from high altitude without super cooling the cylinders. My point is that every airplane I've ever flown was the best at something. It's still a thrill looking at the world from 41,000 feet. However, it's time for me to write a new chapter in this life story. I am a Certified Pistol Instructor plus a Concealed Carry Instructor. Hopefully, I'll see you on the range. ■

# Big Changes Ahead for Lincoln Airport

By Tom Winter



Photo By David Morris  
A temporary hangar was constructed at the Lincoln airport in preparation for the Offutt Air Force Base aircraft coming to Lincoln.

During the October meeting of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 569, David Haring, Manager of the Lincoln Municipal Airport, assisted by Chad Lay, Planning and Development Director, and Bob McNally, Operations Director, provided information about the present and near future of the Lincoln Airport (LNK).

Most significant are the huge changes in store for 2021. For 18 months, the USAF operations at Offutt Air Force Base will take place in Lincoln while the main Offutt runway is torn up and redone. The impacts include:

- LNK will be busier.
- LNK will receive up to \$30 million (\$26 million for projects, and about \$4 million for being general contractor) to:
  - upgrade an existing hangar,
  - build an entirely new hangar, and
  - enlarge the west apron.
- LNK will be Charley Air Space 24-7, or at least 24-5. (Current tower hours of operation are 6 a.m.-10 p.m.)

According to the Offutt website: “The Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC) has awarded a \$143.9 million contract to replace the 11,700-foot runway...During the two-year project, the 55th Wing’s fleet will conduct flight operations out of Lincoln Airport, roughly 50 miles away. Funded by AFCEC, preparations are underway by Lincoln Airport Authority (LAA) to provide an alternate location for the aircraft at Offutt while the runway is replaced. The LAA is making the necessary adjustment to their airfield and facilities to accommodate Offutt’s operations, and is scheduled for completion by August 1.”

News Channel Nebraska added: “The Lincoln Airport Authority expects the move to include anywhere from 300-350 employees, and 18 aircraft.”

Other topics of discussion included:

- Completion of Runway 17-35 rehab in 2019, including updated lighting.
- LNK has used \$3.8 million of \$5.8 million COVID-19 relief money from FAA to balance the budget, atoning for lost revenue.
- Business at LNK is down 80%, approximating the worldwide 70% downturn, but an improvement over the nadir earlier this year of being down 90% from 2019. LNK has four flights a day, three to Chicago, and one to Denver. These planes are 50-seaters.
- Other projects coming up: enlarge East Ramp parking areas; repave the south lot off West Adams Street; and renovate North Park Road which goes around the airport.
- What can be done to get Approach and Departure back to Lincoln? It is unseemly for the Capital of the State not to have its own Approach: To land at Lincoln, you must call Omaha Approach. Bob McNally answered: “We made that case years ago. But it wouldn’t hurt for the FAA to hear from pilots. McNally provided the following contact information for Omaha Approach (aka Tracon R90):

Mark Grant  
Air Traffic Manager  
Omaha TRACON - R90  
402-682-4340  
Mark.grant@faa.gov ■

# UNO's Scott Tarry Appointed to Nebraska Aeronautics Commission

Article and photo courtesy of the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)



Scott Tarry, PhD, Director of the Aviation Institute at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) was recently named to the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission.

The Director of the Aviation Institute at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) will be joining a select group of Nebraska experts in providing leadership and guidance to the state's airports and aviation agencies.

Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts recently named UNO's Scott Tarry, Ph.D., to the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission. He will serve on the commission until 2025.

Tarry is also a Distinguished Professor of Aviation within UNO's Aviation Institute and director of the NASA Nebraska Space Grant Consortium, as well as the NASA Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR).

"Nebraska's ninety-one public use airports, large and small, are critical to the mobility and economic competitiveness of communities across the state," Tarry said. "I'm honored to serve on the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission and help guide the state's decision-making when it comes to future maintenance, expansion, and improvements to the aviation infrastructure in Nebraska."

Established in 1935, the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission is housed within the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). Commissioners serve five-year terms alongside four other members to generally make decisions regarding public funding and planning for state airports and hiring pilots for state agencies.

These appointees allocate state and federal funds for airport construction and maintenance projects; designate and approve future airport locations; arrange and authorize aircraft purchases on behalf of the state; select and approve pilots to be approved by state agencies; and consult with the NDOT director to formulate regulations and policies specific to aeronautics.

Tarry joins four other commissioners from across the state in this new role: Michael Cook of Bellevue, Diana Smith of Beatrice, Dick Trail of McCook, and Tom Trumble of Lincoln. Additional information can be found on the NDOT's Aeronautics Commission website. <https://dot.nebraska.gov/about/aeronautics-commission/> ■

## Events Calendar

**York Airport (KJYR),  
EAA Chapter 1055 Fly-in breakfast  
(free-will donation) on the  
1st Saturday of the month, 8:00-10:00 AM.**

**Crete Airport (KCEK),  
EAA Chapter 569 Fly-in breakfast  
(free-will donation) on the  
3rd Saturday of every month, 8:00-10:00 AM.**