

WILLIAM L. MACK
27 RAMBLING BROOK ROAD
UPPER SADDLE RIVER, NJ 07458

Biography

The start of my aviation interests:

Our family lived in an apartment on 80th street, Jackson Heights. 80th Street ended just one block away. At the end of the block was the old Holmes Airport. I didn't know very much about airplanes but they sure were interesting. I spent many hours just observing the many activities at the airport.

On weekends they would sell sightseeing rides around New York City. The original **Goodyear Blimp** was based at Holmes Airport and they also sold sightseeing rides. My Dad and I took a ride in the blimp one weekend. The high point of the blimp ride was the fact that they flew to the downwind side of the Empire State building and simulated mooring the blimp to the Empire State building. Don't know the purpose of the simulation but it sure was a thrill to look down into the city streets from our "observatory".

I guess that my Dad saw my interest in flying and the next weekend we rode out to the **Roosevelt Raceway** where they raced cars around the old "pretzel" raceway and had a landing strip. Dad had an old friend, Jack Cummings that owned a biplane tied down at the raceway. Jack took both Dad and I on the most thrilling, (to me) flight. During this visit I got to sit in one of the early Texaco corporate biplanes. In one of the hangars I viewed the shiniest airplane I ever saw! The airplane was a Lockheed 10 or 12 owned by **Roger Wolf Kahn**, a local industrialist involved with **Leroy Grumman**. The name on the side of the plane was "ROWEKA". I must have been impressed to have remembered those details of over 70 years ago. Let's face it; I was forever "hooked" on aviation.

Holmes Airport, Flushing Airport and North Beach Airport were all within the range of a short bicycle ride. **North Beach Airport** was the future site for '**LaGuardia**' **Airport**. I can still remember the sky writers writing: "Let's call it LaGuardia" to honor Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, an avid WW1 aviator, and yes, it became the now famous **LaGuardia Airport**. Many a day was spent watching the progress of the airport construction. It was a most beautiful sight. The stone arches of the Grand Central Parkway leading into the hangar line and the tidal lagoon. Unfortunately, the tidal lagoon gave way to the huge parking area now at the main entrance to the airport.

As the airport construction ended our interest turned to the Pan American Clippers. I spent many days observing the action at the Marine Terminal while sitting on the sea wall. Most interesting was the washing of the salt water off the airplane after it was put on the "trolley" that followed the tracks bound for the Pan American maintenance hangar. I witnessed the departure of the

Dornier twelve engine "DOX", at the time the "DOX" was the largest flying boat in the world. Quite a sight to see!

World War II was beginning and our point of interest became the anti-aircraft battery at LaGuardia. The battery was quite primitive by today's standard. It consisted of a "listening" section that acoustically listened for airplanes, a "lighting" section that would illuminate the airplanes and then the 40MM firing platform that fired at the airplanes. I also recall that a "contingent" of P-47 fighter planes was based at LaGuardia airport for air defense.

It was mid 1942, the battle of Midway had just been fought, and my cousin Charlie had been aboard the carrier Yorktown when it was sunk. Charlie spent several hours in the water awaiting rescue.

I had 5 cousins that were all in the service. Two were Air Force pilots, Cousin Charlie aboard the Yorktown, Cousin Louis was a submariner, and cousin "Bobbie" was a Coast Guardsman. I considered joining the service but was too young at 16 years of age. I altered my baptismal certificate so that I "became" 17 and signed up with the Naval Recruiter for a "kiddy" cruise. (A kiddy cruise was for youngsters (17 and 18) that ended when the individual reached 21 years of age.

I was inducted in October 1942.

Completed boot training in January 1943 at the Newport Rhode Island Naval Training Base.

Assigned to Aviation Machinist Mate School at NATTC, Memphis, Tennessee.

Airborne Radar Operators Training at NATCC. Memphis, Tennessee.

Aerial Gunnery Training, Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida.

Then off to Treasure Island, California for Fleet assignment. My assignment was to TORPRON 12 (Torpedo Squadron 12) aboard the Aircraft Carrier Saratoga.

Joined the Saratoga in Noumea, New Caledonia. Flew as mechanic/gunner on two familiarization flights. The Saratoga was ordered back to San Francisco for rehabilitation and re-arming. On the trip back, the squadron established a record of 16 combat flights in ten days. This was an effort to make the Japanese believe that we had several carriers in theatre.

Transferred off the Saratoga while in dry dock and assigned to the Los Alamitos Naval Air Station as plane captain for the Torpedo Training Squadron and then on to VF 301 the F4U Fighter Training Squadron.

Transferred to the Bureau of Aeronautics Representative at Goodyear Aircraft Company in Phoenix, Arizona. Our job at Goodyear was in receiving new PB4Y1 aircraft from the Ford Willow Run factory and outfitting them with the Government Furnished Equipment (GFE Armament). We had 90 some aircraft, in the desert that had to be run up every week to maintain flight status. All necessary maintenance had to be performed prior to entering the GFE

installation hangar. When the GFE installation was completed the flight crew arrived and the aircraft were dispatched to active duty.

Transferred to Naval Air Station, Camp Kearney, Kearney Mesa, California. Then on to the PB4Y advanced line maintenance school at NAS Hutchinson River, Kansas. Completed the schooling, then my class was kept on to transfer the entire school to the Naval Air Station Minneapolis, Minnesota. The transfer of the aircraft necessitated removal of the engines and wings and loading the fuselage onto freight trains for shipping to NAS, Minneapolis. Thought that our job was done. However, we were held over again, this time to re-assemble the planes. It was a difficult assignment but the knowledge and benefit gained was priceless.

Transferred to Naval Air Station, Crows Landing, California. CASU (Carrier Aircraft Service Unit) F-11 was being formed and trained. My job was trouble shooting aircraft and engine problems and rectifying them. This was another rewarding and interesting experience.

Now onto commando training at Naval Training Station, Point Mugu, California. At Mugu we were outfitted with all sorts of survival gear, knives, canteens, helmets, bayonets and carbines. Training was comprehensive and intense involving hand grenade and rifle training along with continual physical training. We learned how to climb both up and down on cargo nets off the side of a ship and swim with survival gear. We survived!!

Suddenly, CASU F-11 was ready and the next recollection I have was being on a transport ship leaving the dock in San Francisco while the band played "Sentimental Journey" Ironical!!

Our journey was long and quiet. Lots of rumors! Then one day our Chief Petty Officer advised us that tomorrow we would be in a harbor on Okinawa. Our cargo net training to board the landing craft would come into play. He outlined the procedure that the landing craft would be following to the landing on the beach. He then stated that we were not to worry about getting our feet wet as a lady from the Red Cross would furnish dry socks after the landing. I think he was lying!

We arrived by truck overland from the landing on the beach to the Yonabaru Naval Air Station, Okinawa presently under construction. The Navy CB's were working day and night to complete the runway. The first year went slow; we slept in tents with very little (no) amenities. Our main objective was to keep our airplanes in service which we did with pride.

During my time at Yonabaru I studied in preparation for my request to become a Naval Aviator. Those "little wings of gold" became an obsession with me. I took the necessary tests and passed!! Now I would be waiting for acceptance and assignment. Then President Harry Truman gave the OK to drop nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the war came to an abrupt end. All flight training ceased along with my dream. My Chief Petty Officer noted my disappointment and offered a suggestion that I should apply for Advanced Engine School which was one of the best Navy offerings.

My "kiddy" cruise came to an end and I decided to come home and have a try at civilian life.

Civilian Biography: William L. Mack

Well here I am! It is **July 1946**, an experienced Aviation Machinist Mate First Class with great credentials, lots of enthusiasm and ambition but alas.....no job.

American Overseas Airline (AOA) ran an ad in the local paper for experienced aviation mechanics. I applied and fortunately was offered a position on the swing" shift. The AOA hangar was at the Marine Terminal at La Guardia airport. The task was the modification of war surplus Lockheed Constellations and Douglas C-54 airplanes from their military condition/status into compliance with FAA regulations and convert them into passenger configuration.

During my tenure with AOA I was able to continue a course of study to achieve my FAA certification as a licensed Aircraft and Power plant Mechanic. I successfully completed the FAA certification and went on to become a Senior Aircraft Mechanic with AOA. American Airlines bought controlling interest in AOA and moved the modification shop to hangar 5 at LGA. In 1948 American established their main maintenance base at Tulsa, OK. The mod center employees were offered positions at the Tulsa base. I respectfully declined as I had just married my childhood sweetheart, rented and furnished an apartment and just wasn't ready for a new adventure.

It is now 1948, I heard about the New York Air National Guard establishing a new squadron and hangar at Westchester County Airport, White Plains, NY. Interviewed and was assigned to the 102d Radar Calibration Squadron as senior maintenance supervisor. Initially the 102d had two C-47 cargo airplanes for their flight activities and finally were assigned two B-25N bombers for the calibration effort. I achieved the rank of Master Sergeant for the unit. In 1951 the Air Guard offered pilot training for qualified individuals. I was encouraged to apply but they did not accept married men in cadet status. I would have to try another route or give up my dream.. As a Master Sergeant (First Three Grader) the opportunity for a commission was available if all the testing was satisfactory. To make a long story short, I had to pass the Air Force Qualifying Test (AFQT) and pass the officer candidate board to be commissioned. When commissioned I could attend pilot training as a "Student Officer" and could be married. I then tested and passed the pilot training requirements and. In 1951 my dream came true; I was assigned to Primary Training Class 52B at Perrin Air Force Base, Sherman, TX. Satisfactorily completed primary training and was assigned to Reese Air Force Base, Lubbock, TX for advanced multi-engine training in the B-25. In March of 1952 I graduated, received my silver wings and went on vacation with my bride!

In mid 1952 I was assigned to the 137th Fighter Squadron flying F-51 Mustang fighters, attended the annual field training exercise at Spaatz Field, ANG Training Base, Reading Pa.

While at Reading I received a call from an associate with an offer to join him at Federal Telephone Laboratory (FTL) as a co-pilot/mechanic. This was a great and interesting job. FTL was engaged in airborne electronic research. We flew a Ryan Navion, a DC-3 along with a Navy R-3D and an Air Force Boeing B-17 on bailment contracts with the federal government. FTL developed modern day TACAN for the Navy. The B-17 was involved in development of the ability for an airplane to "listen" to radar and radio signals and locate them without penetrating hostile air space. They also developed an "alerting" device that alerted a pilot that a radar "lock" was on his airplane and evasive maneuvering was necessary to evade the "lock". Many of these developments are included in the electronics "suite" of combat aircraft. TACAN became the world wide navigation standard for air traffic control.

In 1955 my boss became the Chief Pilot for Cluett Peabody (Arrow Shirt Company) and asked me to join him in his new position. I gladly accepted and spent the next few years enjoying the travel. Cluett operated a Beechcraft model 18 and a Lockheed Lodestar. I achieved my initial Airline Transport Pilot certificate while at Cluett Peabody.

In 1957 an opportunity to join American Oil Company (AMOCO) was offered, the position of Captain and the pay was excellent and I spent the next three years happily flying a Douglas B-26 that was outfitted for corporate use.

1960 was my year! National Distillers and Chemical Corporation had just purchased a brand new turbo prop Gulfstream G-1 with another on order and I was offered A Captains position! I spent the next 31 years with NDCC and rose within the ranks to Assistant Chief Pilot, Chief Pilot and ultimately Aviation Department Manager. During my tenure I flew:

- Beechcraft Model 65, 80,
- Swearingen Merlin 1
- Grumman G1, G2, G3
- Lockheed 1329 Jet Star
- Dassault Falcon 20
- Dehaviland Hawker 400

NDCC built the first corporate hangar at Teterboro in late 1959 and:

- Certified an approved FAA Repair Station at TEB FSDO.
- Jules Decrescendo was Principal FAA Inspector.
- Lee Weems, Maintenance Manager/ Supervisor.
- Bill Mack, Director.

There were many initiatives and accomplishments for the NDCC flight operation.

- Several "Best of Class" awards at Reading Air Shows.
- 1960 first G1 flight to Europe.
- 1961 first "Doppler" Navigation flight
- 1968 First "outfitted" corporate G2 in service.
- First Teterboro to London flight with Litton Inertial Navigation System.

January 8-10 1982 G3 N100P the “Spirit of America” established a new Teterboro Airport to Teterboro Airport Round the World Record of:

47 hours 38 minutes and 41 seconds

At an average speed of: 490.81 MPH

Bill Mack in harmony with the Gulfstream Aerospace requirements did the flight planning.

On Board Crewmembers;

Harold Curtis	Aviation Manager
Bill Mack	Chief Pilot
Robert Dannhardt	Assistant Chief Pilot
Lee Weems	Maintenance Manager
Scott Curtis	Major USAF, Federation Aeronique International,

January 22, 1982 G3 N100P ‘Spirit of America’ established a new speed record from San Diego, CA to New York City, NY

4 hours 14 minutes

At an average speed of: 559.26 MPH

Bill Mack retired from Quantum Chemical on June 24, 1991 after 31 years of service