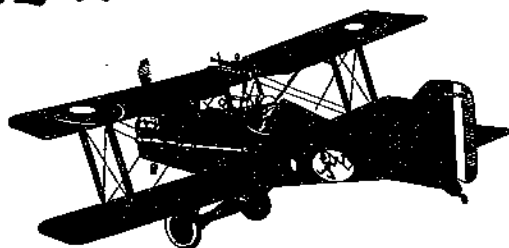


MIDWEST CHAPTER
U.S.A.



Cross & Cockade



I was born June 11, 1929 and no matter what my father said I did not cause the crash of '29. I can't remember when I did not love airplanes. I know I was building models when I was five or six. I still have a few I built in my early teens. Do you remember when you could buy a stick model for five cents? But most were ten cents, twenty-five cents got you a big-kit. High school found me building Free-flight gas models.

I started flying lessons June 6, 1946 with Schumacher Flying Service at Harlem Airport (J-3,N-31048 at \$9.50 per hour). After high school, my folks had no money for college, no the six hundred dollars for A&E school at Midway airport. I joined the Army Air Corps in 1947 since they said they would send me to A&E school. I was 18 and you had to be 21 to be a cadet. Got my Air Corps A&E and was sent to Hamilton Field, Calif. to crew AT-6's, then AT-11's and C-45's. Sent to Engine Conditioning school for R-2800s and A-26's. That got me crewing C-46's. My enlistment was up in 1950, but Mr. Truman said I was doing such a good job He would like for me to stay in service another year and help in the Korean Police Action. But while on leave to go there, the CO called and said I wasn't going there, but to keep going east to Mitchel Field, Long Island, N.Y. where I crewed C-47's, B-25's and ended up on the B-17. Got out in 1951 and got an aircraft mechanics job at American Airlines working on Convair 240s, DC-4s, DC-6&7s. In 1956 I was upgraded to Flight Engineer, Flew DC-6&7s, Electra L-188s, Boeing 707s and 727s, DC-10s. I "Flew side-saddle" 20,758 hours both domestic and international, plus volunteered during Operation Desert Shield. In November 1991, I had 40 years with American, and was due to go back down to the "Funny Farm" (recurrent Training) in December. So-not liking the games we have to play in school, I retired December first.

I have owned airplanes since 1966, starting with a 1946 7AC Champ. I still like flying the S.E.5a son Mark and I built the best. Being a W.W.I. nut I just had to build a two-winger. Started in 1972, nine short years later I flew it, got it to Oshkosh and received a "Liny" award. Mark and I were both surprised and happy-- not bad for a first homebuilt. In 1982 just before Oshkosh, I crashed N-8040Z very badly, both the S.E. and myself. To make a long story short, I was off work two years, in and out of the hospital to mend me piece by piece. I was told I may never walk again and would not fly. I told everyone-especially the doctors-"If God did not want me I was born to fly, and this I will do, AND in N-8040Z once again. My crash had to be pilot-error, one week of my life I do not remember I do not even remember going flying. My son Mark gave me all the the assurance I needed when he told my wife he was taking me to his new home so I could tell him how to fix a few things. I had steel rods in my back to mend my broken back, had to have a removable cast on while walking. My right ankle was in a cast, and I had a patch over my left eye. He put me in the 170. I could not work the brakes because of the foot cast. Once on the runway he said "Lets Fly", I did, flew over the crash site, shot two landing at our field on George's farm. First landing I flared a little

high, next one "right on". mark said "not bad for a one-eyed pilot, want to shoot a few more"? I said, "at least one more, only at Naper Aero, it's blacktop and narrow". Once on that runway, I never worried if I'd fly again. I was all smiles when I got home--BAD! My wife said to Mark, "You took him flying-how could you?" He said, "No, Mom, Dad took me flying.

I had to build a new fuselage, lower wings and gear. Again, it took a few years. But N-8040Z is flying once again. It has a new placard on the instrument panel however, which I received from my kids (6): "Don't Do Anything Stupid". I won't. Have flown her to the U.S. Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio for the W.W.I. Dawn Patrol Rendezvous twice and many fly-ins. The first S.E. we painted as my good friend 1st Lt. Raymond Watts, who not only flew with the British in famed 84 Squadron in 1917 but also with the U.S. Air Service 25th Aero Squadron in 1918. The second S.E. should be different. Having met Capt. Ray Brooks at Oshkosh one year, painted the second S.E. like his while in the 95th Pursuit Squadron, Kelly Field, Texas, in 1919. It sure turns a lot of heads when it taxis up to the gas pumps.

So there you have it--the life and times of a 81 year old UFO, (United Flying Octogenarian), who loves to fly, lives to fly. I have a 1918 S.E. 5a, 1965 Baby Ace "D", 1950 Cessna 170A, and a 1941 J-3 Cub to fly. So I am a very lucky guy. There are a lot of other things I do and like, but nothing else comes close to the thrill of flight--well, maybe the landing.

Just for the LOVE of Flight,

I Remain,

Bob Zilinsky