

## SUMMARY OF AVIATION HISTORY OF HAROLD WALTER



I was born into aviation. First, a little background will help explain. My Aviation Uncle, Dale Walter, lived across the street, and he was like a father-brother and special friend, although 18 years older than me. He

designed, built and flew airplanes. He learned to fly on a Jenny and soloed his Heath Parasol that he built at age 18. He owned a Standard J-1, Kari-Keen, plus several others. Another special friend was Jim Knight who bought a WWI surplus Jenny, and later was a test pilot on one of Al Mooney's early airplanes. My first airplane ride was in the Kari-Keen at the age of 7. Aviation persons were very kind and considerate, and I believe that they helped me to understand aviation.

My Cousin, Carl Walter, had an airport at Sedan, KS. He gave me flight instruction beginning in 1944. My Uncle Dale said, "You need an airplane. I'll pay for half and you pay half." We bought an Aeronca C-3. I soloed it in 1945.

The summer between my Junior and Senior High School year, I worked at a small Wichita field called Country Club Airport. Andy Bland was the operator.

In my Senior High School year Dale and I rebuilt a couple of J-3 Cubs – one was my responsibility, and the other his.

There was model airplane building and flying.

I enlisted, rather than be drafted, in the US Army just before school was out. It was the tail end of WWII, and there were too many in the Army Air Corps, so that I spent my time in Army Ordnance.

I went to Spartan School of Aeronautics to get an A&E (A&P) so that we could continue rebuilding airplanes. Dale was killed when lightning struck his Taylorcraft. I decided to continue with a

college education after graduation from Spartan. From what is now Wichita State University, I received BA, and MS degrees in math and physics with a minor in Aerodynamics.

Before obtaining my BA, I responded to a Cessna ad for a mathematician, and was hired as an Aerodynamics Engineer in the Research Group. Professor Alexander Petroff was head of the department, and I consider that I received a personal aero education from him. He had started the School of Aeronautical Engineering at the university in 1928.

At the elimination of the Research Department I went to Boeing Wichita as a Dynamics and then Aerodynamics Engineer.

From Boeing it was on to General Dynamics missile division in San Diego. I worked as a Dynamics Engineer on the Atlas. After a year I transferred to the Airplane Division at Lindbergh Field. I received a patent on the horizontal tail system of the STOL Convair Charger.

Beech called for me to come to Wichita as an Aerodynamics Engineer. I was the Project Aerodynamicist for the Super King Air Model 200 with its 'T' tail. Its handling qualities were my primary responsibility. Business and Commercial Aviation Magazine pilot evaluation of the Model 200 gave it the highest rating that it had given for any airplane (their words).

I was Chief of Aerodynamics at Beech until low sales, and International Marketing asked that I help sell airplanes. Later, I went back to engineering to work on the Beech Starship. Its handling characteristics needed a lot of tweaking. I felt honored to spend time in Mojave with Burt Rutan and Doug Shane with the Starship POC (85% scale Proof of Concept) model built by Burt's employees.

At Beech I tweaked airplanes to improve characteristics. Test Pilot, Bud Francis, put a name on one of my mods, "Walteron". That stuck. Many still know about "Walteron", who probably don't know me. I have an email that includes a comment that says that I am responsible for the excellent handling qualities for which Beech airplanes are noted. Beech doesn't patent anything because of being a member of GAMA.

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Although most of my career was as an Aerodynamics Engineer, test pilots often asked me to go along on a flight to help evaluate characteristics – flew the Starship on about the 4<sup>th</sup> flight.

Pilot certificates and ratings are: Commercial, Instrument, Single and Multi-engine, Glider, Flight Instructor

I was a member of AIAA (American Institute Aeronautics and Astronautics) for over 25 years, and served as local Treasurer for awhile.

After retiring from Beech in 1991, I gave tours as a volunteer for nearly 20 years at the Kansas Aviation Museum, where I am a life member.

I authored and self published a book “Airplane Beans”, which is primarily about my aviation background. Much has happened since the book was completed.

The Kansas Wing of OX5 asked me to give a talk at one of the meetings, and I joined the organization at that time. I was quickly put on the Board, where I became Kansas Wing President. Later, I was on the National board where I became National President for two years, and then Secretary. I received OX5 awards.

I liked every place where I have worked, and feel very fortunate to know and to have known many persons along the way.

As Chief of the Beech Aero Group, persons under my supervision have been successful, including:

- Ashok Agnohitri, was a major engineer on the Osprey at Bell Helicopter.
- Bob Curnutt was a major engineer for Boeing’s flight simulators.
- Bill Thomson got his Phd when he worked for me.
- Peter Herr became a VP at Beech.
- David Bernstorf became a VP at Beech.

## APPENDIX: THE LAST FEW YEARS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING

- Board of Directors of OX5 Aviation Pioneers Kansas Wing
  - Office positions in Kansas Wing
  - President of Kansas Wing
- Board of Directors of OX5 Aviation Pioneers National
  - Office positions in Nat’l
  - President of Nat’l
  - Secretary of Nat’l
  - Vice Pres of Nat’l
- Awards Chairman for OX5 National

## AWARDS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED:

- OX5 National
  - Member of the Year
  - Clifford Ball Best Newsletter
  - Presidential Citation
  - Distinguished Service Award
- EAA Chapter 88
  - Member of the Year
  - Good Apple Award from Wichita School system for Aviation presentations for EAA’s Young Eagles program