

## **Jon Proctor, aviation historian and 'Oh Lucky Man,' passes at 78**

Renowned commercial aviation historian, photographer and author Jonathan “Jon” Hibbard Proctor, 78, died April 22, 2020, four months after suffering a stroke, in Sandpoint, Idaho. A celebration of his life will be held in the Lee Hangar at Sandpoint Airport on a date to be announced, and a private family service will be held in Florida, where his ashes will be interred.

Jon was born April 18, 1942, to Capt. Willis Heath Proctor and Lucena (Wood) Proctor in Chicago and lived in River Forest, Ill., until 1957. The family then moved to La Jolla, Calif., when his father finished a long career as an American Airlines pilot, the first to retire under the “Age 60 Rule.” A pioneering pilot, his father had the distinction of flying in both World Wars and was one of the earliest commercial pilots.

Growing up in an airline family – brother Bill a TWA pilot, sister-in-law Ann a TWA hostess, and brother Bob in various positions with airlines – Jon was destined for a life in aviation. He graduated from La Jolla High School in 1960, earned an associate’s degree from Palomar College in 1963 and then took his first aviation job with Pacific Southwest Airlines in reservations at the San Diego Airport. Further studies at San Fernando Valley State College ended in 1964 when he started working for Trans World Airlines (TWA). His career with TWA spanned 28 years, only interrupted by a brief stint at Pan Am. Until retiring from TWA in 1991, he worked in many departments: passenger service, dining and commissary, and training at LAX; In-Flight service at the corporate office in New York City; Director of Customer Service, an In-Flight management position on the 747 and L-1011; and line flight attendant. Special



assignments included NASA's inaugural Spaceport Tours at the Kennedy Space Center as a tour escort in the summer of 1966, training cabin crews on loan to Saudi Arabian Airlines on that company's first 747s while based in London in 1977-78, and an around-the-world TWA charter flight.

Working during the early days of jet travel, Proctor witnessed aviation's exciting transition to the Jet Age and its iconic aircraft types. He had brushes with scores of celebrities, such as Bob Hope, but foremost through his career, he formed hundreds of friendships and many lifetimes' worth of memories. Jon's hobby of photographing commercial airliners as a child grew into a lifelong avocation that integrated well with his post-airline career as a writer and editor of commercial aviation publications.

After retiring from TWA, Jon worked for Federal Express in Connecticut as he commenced contributing to Airliners magazine, accepting assistant editorship a year later. That led to moving to Sandpoint, Idaho, in 1993 along with editor John Wegg, who then started a new magazine, Airways. Jon transferred to FedEx in Coeur d'Alene, and later his position with Airways was cut short. Within a few years though, he became editor-in-chief of World Transport Press' Airliners magazine and Great Airliners Series of books. He wrote the first and seventh books in the series, "Convair 880 & 990" and "Boeing 720." He went on to co-author the book "From Props to Jets" and co-edited "Trans World Airlines – A Book of Memories."

Retiring again in 2005, Jon lived in Florida for 18 months before returning to Sandpoint and taking a job at Home Depot in Ponderay. In his final retirement, Jon volunteered as a docent at Bird Aviation Museum and Invention Center in Sagle, Idaho, beginning in 2010, where he enjoyed close association with Drs. Forrest Bird and Pam Riddle Bird and his family of museum employees and volunteers. He was a member of the local chapter of EAA, Sandpoint 1441, and a Festival at Sandpoint volunteer for many years. Jon was affectionately known as "Uncle Jon" to many and was dubbed with titles such as "Mr. TWA" and "Oh, Lucky Man."

Jon was notified in March that he will be the inaugural recipient of the World Airline Historical Society's "Paul Collins Award" at Airliners International 2020 for his outstanding contribution to the preservation of airline history. He was president and webmaster of TWA DCS Alumni Association, attended Airliners International conventions for decades, and shared his expertise

through various speaking engagements. He was known for his kindness, loyalty, humor and encyclopedic knowledge of the commercial airline industry, particularly TWA. He loved a good road trip and would map a route around the country to see family, friends and high points. True baseball fans, Jon and brother Bill made it a tradition to cover spring training and attend MLB games together. Jon faithfully rooted for the Chicago Cubs, in addition to Gonzaga men's basketball and Clemson football. Jon enjoyed his daily walks on the Dover Trail and keeping in touch with his wide circle of friends from around the globe.

He donated his immense collection of commercial airline photography, framed artwork and memorabilia to the World Airline Historical Society, where his legacy as an airline historian is cemented.

Jon was preceded in death by his parents and brothers Dick, Bill and Bob Proctor. A lifelong bachelor who had "a few close calls with matrimony," as he put it, he is survived by his sister-in-law Ann Proctor; nephew Rick Proctor; nieces Penny Beebe, Joanne Proctor Spevack and Susan Proctor; cousin Dennis Brent and great nieces and nephews.

Memorial donations may be made in Jon Proctor's name to Sandpoint EAA Chapter 1441, P.O. Box 1301, Sandpoint, ID 83864. Look up [www.jonproctor.net](http://www.jonproctor.net) to learn more about his illustrious careers, books and collection of airline research material.

*- By Billie Jean Gerke*

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