



## Silver Eagles Newsletter

May 2016

**Silver Eagles,**

George Kobelnyk from Alaska was killed in an airplane crash in Alaska on Wednesday April 20. A media link is below. Many of us knew George. He was quite a guy.

[Former NTSB investigator was pilot in crash that killed 4 near Chugiak](#)

We have no new members this month, but the passing of George Kobelnyk brought some invaluable contributions. Plus – since the news is so limited this month, I've provided my thoughts about a once and future member.

**New Members: None**

**Board News:**

Input from **John Drake** on the mystery photo from last month, “Pictured are **Bernie Moffett, Paul Misencik, and Keith McGuire.**” Anyone disagree?

Got this from **Bob Benzon - A George Kobelnyk Story:**

Many years ago, I was up in Anchorage on one of my headquarters directed Alaska investigations. As the investigation wound down we 'created' a day off and George offered to fly us around a bit in a Cessna on floats. Landing on lakes, looking for bears, elk and reindeer, you get my drift. He actually talked me through my first and only water landing, which was pretty darned cool. George then said, you wanna see some bald eagles? We agreed, and he landed shut down the engine to drift about 300 yards from two nests. We begged him to crank 'er up and water-taxi closer for photos. He refused saying..."Nope. Those birds have been up here a lot longer than we have...let's let them do their thing". That was much cooler than my water landing.

George is on my sad list of lost flying friends.

And this from **Ron Mickle** - Thank you for forwarding the information about **George**. My condolences go out to Susie and the kids. In addition Jim, I would like to offer these comments about George, who was my friend.

We all go through life living with accomplishments and making mistakes we wish we could do over. When it comes to **George Kobelnyk**, I've known few pilots and fewer aviators that raised the bar to such an academic and skill level when it came to aviation and aeronautics.

I first met George when we were stationed together in the 120th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter) in the late 1970's. We flew together in Alaska in the Army, based at Bryant Army Airfield, Ft Richardson flying "slicks". From tactical insertions into tight LZ's, whiteout snow landings or supporting firefighting by flying water buckets, George was one of the most technical aviators I ever flew with.

When I left the Army and moved back to Alaska, George got me my first civilian job flying an old Bell 47 at Wilbur's Flight Ops over Turnagain Arm. He got the biggest kick from the look of disbelief on my face when they had to bungee cord an old, blue box VHF radio to the center console with the telescoping antenna extended out the right door. The humor did not stop there. George enjoyed life, and flying was his life. During my first flight and checkout in the B47, George was all over himself watching me struggle with hovering (I was coming from the Huey in the Army). He was laughing so hard in the cockpit that I could hear him through the headsets and downwash. Any further thoughts of how great an aviator I was, was lost in the Lycoming exhaust. I'm sure I provided enough fodder to George and Susie to keep them laughing for years. Eventually that job lead to flying for ERA Helicopters in the Aleutians and the North Slope. George and I stayed in touch during those early years through BBQ's and other outings.

During one work rotation I was flying out of Cold Bay supporting an offshore rig in the Bering. George, who was with the NTSB at the time, sent me a message through our Cold Bay operations that he was passing through on his way to Dutch Harbor to work an accident. I picked George up at the "huge" Cold Bay terminal and took him to the flight crew's trailer where the war stories started in earnest. George knew that I was a former Aviation Safety Officer in the Army, since he was instrumental in recommending me, even as an inexperienced W-1, to replace the outgoing Safety Officer in the 120th at Bryant AAF. During that one meeting in windy Cold Bay, George thought enough of me (why, I'll never know) to encourage me to apply for an opening with the NTSB in the Anchorage office, something that had never crossed my mind. Several months passed, it was the dead of winter on the slope when I got a call at ERA's base operations...it was George. The chief of the office asked him to call me and offer me the job. The Anchorage NTSB office had a great team in George, **Marc Stella**, **John Osgood (chief)** and **Katie Morehouse**. It was George who took me in as a new investigator and taught me the particulars of field work. I thank George for that!

As the years went by I left Alaska and then moved back, several more times. During my last stint in Anchorage, George gave me my biennial flight review (as we knew it then). We took my wife Joanie along who was anxious to get a more aerial perspective of Alaska. Guess we should have told her about the stalls, because George and I both were entertained by her comments.

It was George who pushed me to get my commercial fixed-wing/instrument/helicopter certificates, and never stop the education process. He was the consummate aviator, an educator, and mentor...a real professional. He touched a lot of people's lives in so many ways. I'm proud to say he was my friend.

And from **Chris Julius** - RIP, George. A tough guy with a kind soul.

A note from me, **Jim Henderson**. I was truly impressed by **Karen Bury**, our inside person and soon to be member, from the first time I heard her at a Surface Accident Investigation Course. Among the grumbly rail and highway investigators she participated and asked intelligent questions. Not that the others weren't intelligent, but, you know the room, "Why do we have to sit through this [stuff] again!" Much later when she rode herd over Bernie like few people could do. As his interpreter, she put forth a human face. Bernie was perhaps too intelligent for us mere mortals! LOL Last, but not least, Karen had a great mind when it came to critiquing our analyses in reports. Sometimes it stung, but you knew that she was right.

**Misc:**

Don't forget the Silver Eagle Website: [www.precisionwrite.com/SilverEagles.html](http://www.precisionwrite.com/SilverEagles.html)

**News, please!!**

Welcome to the beginning of the Summer! I, for one could use the end of the spring showers. Fifteen days and counting – a new record for National Airport.

Jim Henderson