



Silver Eagles Newsletter

October 2016

Silver Eagles,

We have no new members this month. The Fiftieth Reunion is on and probably will happen late in April. Bob Trainor provided some travel news. I encourage all of you to do likewise! We got a lot of responses to the Sully movie. **Ted Lopatkiewicz** actually wrote an article for the Washington Post that I forwarded earlier. He shared it directly with his newsletter email group and a lot of the comments were from this group.

New Members: None

Board News:

Well, the **Fiftieth Reunion** is in the planning stages!! The NTSB has formed several groups and is looking for suggestions and assistance from us to make this a great success! On Wednesday September 28, **Ray Smith, Bridget Serchak, Jim Hall** and I (**Jim Henderson**) joined a phone conference with **Lorenda Ward** (our inside person), Don Karol and Gloria Noguera. The following is from the Board.

Planning activities have commenced in earnest for the NTSB 50th Anniversary celebration planned for 2017. The NTSB team organizing the celebration activities welcomes “Silver Eagle” volunteers wishing to participate in planning activities or any suggestions regarding how we can all recognize the outstanding accomplishments of our agency. An e-mail address has been established for those wishing to submit suggestions or questions to the planning committee: NTSB50thAnniversary@ntsb.gov

The following is a brief overview of planning activities to date:

1. Planning Committee Formed: A planning committee consisting of 20-25 volunteers has been formed and divided into four teams:
 - a. Employee Engagement Team: (Team Lead – Gloria Noguera / “Silver Eagles Liaison” – Lorenda Ward) – Purpose of the team is to engage in outreach to active and retired NTSB personnel to ensure maximum “inclusion” of employees in all celebration activities. The

Employee Engagement Team will also be planning an outside event (ie. party, BBQ, etc.) if there is significant interest in attending such an event.

b. Event Team: (Team Lead – Susan Kantrowitz) – An NTSB Annual Awards Ceremony is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, April 27, 2017. The team is working on possibly including 50th Anniversary Recognition activities with the Awards Ceremony or possibly holding a separate event around the same timeframe.

c. Product Development Team: (Team Lead – Jennifer Bishop) – The Product Team is working to develop a written product documenting our 50-year history similar to prior NTSB editions of “Lessons Learned and Lives Saved.”

d. Communications Team: (Team Lead – Chris O’Neil) – The Communications Team is working on developing all video imagery, web design and media relations related to our 50th Anniversary. The team will be looking for opportunities to highlight the NTSB’s 50th Anniversary throughout the year through advocacy events.

2. Theme or Tagline for 50th Anniversary Developed: “Making Transportation Safer: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”

3. Challenges Identified:

a. Funding for some activities: (Commemorative gift, Boardroom event reception, outside employee event, etc.)

b. Time constraints: April 2017 is right around the corner. Volunteers welcome.

c. Inclusion: Goal is to ensure maximum inclusion of active and retired personnel and allow us the opportunity to all celebrate our accomplishments.

4. **Silver Eagles Support Needed:**

a. **Participation and attendance at any events planned.**

b. **Spread the word to other retired NTSB personnel not already on the “Silver Eagles” distribution list.**

c. **Help planning and organizing any outside NTSB event as part of the Employee Engagement team.**

d. **Provide historical documents and / or photos for possible inclusion in any video or written products.**

e. **Volunteer to assist any planning team you may want to participate in.**

Feel free to submit any suggestions or questions to: NTSB50thAnniversary@ntsb.gov

During the meeting **Ray** volunteered to help the Product Development Team with the production of this half a century’s “Lessons Learned.” I volunteered to work with the Employee Engagement Team to get the word out. Actually it wasn’t much of an ask since I’d be trying to get all of you involved anyway.

Currently the dates are not fixed. The tentative date for the Awards Ceremony is April 27th. I suggested that they try to connect with that date since I really enjoy NTSB's

Award's Ceremony. The last mention of a date was sometime near the end of April. I believe they said April 1 was the date for the final plan – and that seems late.

I know that they plan to put together some kind of video and that they asked for photos showing our people at accident sites. I said that I was sure our past employees would provide some. Hope I wasn't wrong!

They want to find a location for an informal social gathering outside the event. **Jim Hall** and **Ray** both mentioned that the Smithsonian had provided space in the past. That informal event is likely to cost attendees something because justifying funding may be difficult – but who knows! I think that **Lorenda** volunteered for that. (Hey, she is the party person!)

Forgive me, my notes were hastily taken, but send a message to the above email address if you can provide suggestions, photos, want to tell a story, or just want to be kept in the direct NTSB loop. I'll continue to forward info as I receive it.

I note that **Hector Casanova**, **Chris Julius** and **Linda Jones** also offered to help. They just couldn't make the phone conference.

The following messages are from NTSB through **Lorenda Ward**, our inside person:

Hi All,

I am pleased to announce that **Tim LeBaron** has been selected for the detail as the Deputy Director – Regional Investigations. There were a number of strong candidates -- I very much appreciate their willingness to help and I learned a lot from the discussions with each of them. Ultimately, Tim had the combination of experience, Board-wide familiarity, and enthusiasm that I thought were the best match for this detail.

Tim will begin this assignment next Monday (9/26). Please give Tim your support as he serves in this position for the next four months.

Thanks,

John DeLisi

NTSB Colleagues,

I am pleased to announce the selection of Mr. **Paul S. Sledzik** as the Deputy Director, Office of Safety Recommendations and Communications (SRC).

Paul is a proven leader who has excelled in leading teams in crisis response, policy development, and collaborative inter-agency projects. He has attained high-quality results in program development and implementation while successfully leveraging human capital and financial resources.

A seasoned coalition builder and communicator, Paul joined the NTSB in 2004 as a Medicolegal Operations Manager in the Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) Division, Office of the Communications. In that role, he successfully managed the federal, state and local forensic

response for transportation disaster victim identification. In 2010, he was promoted to the position of Director, TDA, in SRC, where he managed the division's response to 44 accident launches in all transportation modes, and developed specialized training on disaster assistance issues for regional air safety investigators and surface modal divisions.

Since February 2015, Paul has supported the SRC Director in managing the full range of SRC programs, which include safety recommendations, public affairs, government and industry affairs, safety advocacy, digital services, and transportation disaster assistance. He ensured program consistency in messaging to the media, elected officials, transportation industry officials, family members and survivors of accidents, advocacy groups, and the public.

Paul holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Rhode Island and a Master of Science degree in ecology and evolutionary biology/biological anthropology from the University of Connecticut.

He assumes the SRC Deputy Director position effective 9/18/16. Please join me in congratulating and welcoming Paul as our newest member of the Senior Executive Service.

Sharon Bryson

Member News:

Bob Trainor - Susan and I went on a church choir trip in June. In 10 days we visited Prague, Vienna, Salzburg and Munich. Very scenic cities and country sides. American influence was obvious from the git-go. The first indication was the Burger King as we departed the Prague airport for the ride into town. Before the trip was over, we saw McDonald's, KFC, and Starbuck's in all four cities. People were great, and the weather even reminded us of home – low 90's with humidity.

There were dozens of comments on the **Sully movie**. I have appended those at the end of this newsletter, but you can search for your favorite past employees from this list:

Bob Benson, Linda Jones, Ron Schleede, Susan Coughlin, Sylvia Livingston, David L. Mayer, Phyllis Kayten, Ken Peppard, Tom Haueter, Tom McCarthy, Ed Dobranetski, Hector Casanova, Bob Trainor, Sandy Browne, Kay Sommerfeld, Carl Dinwiddie, Cliff Zimmerman, Bob Barlett, and Chris Julius.

I still am unable to reach Mike Weber. It said his mailbox is full. **HELP!!

Don't forget the Silver Eagle Website: www.precisionwrite.com/SilverEagles.html

Happy and Scary Halloween!!

In spite of all of this news, remember, this newsletter still needs NEWS!! And about the Fiftieth, I'm kinda patting myself on the back for putting bees in the ears of anyone who would listen at NTSB over the past few years. I hope that a bunch of us can get there! I'd love seeing everyone in person.

Messages on Sully Movie:

Bob Benson - For the contact list, please replace my land line phone number with these cell numbers on the contact list: 540 424-2140, 540 424-3025. Email address remains the same. Susan says howdy. (She ran our son's daycare decades ago. Coincidence?)

Regarding the movie "Sully", please **see attached photo** of the director, Clint Eastwood, and one of his leading ladies. That movie...well, it did not portray an NTSB investigation correctly.

Linda Jones - I was so glad to read your response to "Sully". My friends here seem to think that just because I worked for the NTSB that makes me an expert (No, I did NOT tell them that), and I've had more people ask for my response to the movie. I loved it, but I could see what they were thinking. It's funny that the same phrase was used, but my response was/is to the effect that we're the guys with the white hats, and never would have reacted the way it was portrayed. *Later:* Here's a good idea: Someone get hold of Bill O'Reilly and have him write another book. Maybe then the Safety Board will get a "fair and balanced" hearing.

Ron Schleede - Good on you Ted! I've been active on FB and some blogs ranting about the factual errors and depiction of the NTSB in the trailers. Many others, who know how it really works and how it went down during the investigation, including me, are not going to waste money on this trash. Sully was a true hero and the NTSB folks did their routine excellent work.

Susan Coughlin - Bravo, Ted!

Sylvia Livingston - Well said, Ted!

David L. Mayer - Thank you, Ted. Just like when we worked together, I never knew when a letter to the editor would be a good idea...but you always did. In this case, this was a tool I did not consider. I am so glad that you did this. All the best to you...and to all former and current NTSBers.

Phyllis Kayten - Short and sweet and very well stated -- I especially like "it's no accident". Thanks for taking the time to write this.

Ken Peppard - Thank you for speaking out on behalf of all who hold the agency in high regard and for correcting the misconceptions of the NTSB that are made in that movie.

For decades the hallmark of NTSB investigations has been a tireless dedication to factual accuracy and professionalism that has served the public well.

While I believe the majority of the public know that, movies sometimes take on a life of their own and rewrite fact with fiction.

Thanks for letting the public know that the NTSB indeed saw that Sully did an excellent job in managing a changing, deteriorating circumstance. We all should be so fortunate to have him up front.

Tom Haueter - Unfortunately, there are many people who believe the movie. None have bothered to read the NTSB report or care to look at the public docket information. The movie only adds ammunition to those who want to mistrust the government. It has been surprising as to how many airline pilots I have talked to in the last week who truly believe that the ntsb was out to get Sully, as if destroying pilot's lives was the Board's primary mission.

Tom McCarthy - Saw Sully at the Udvar-Hazy Center IMAX theater where I am a volunteer docent and was asked to leave after yelling at the screen that the depiction of the Safety Board's investigators was BS. Not really, but was upset. Ted - Good job! Always been proud of the work and progress that has been accomplished in aviation safety and accident investigation by NTSB. My time at the Board was special because of all you good folks.

Ed Dobranetski - Saw the movie and was shocked that the IIC was portrayed as such a jerk. But being a former NTSB investigator maybe I was biased. There were no other "bad" guys in the movie. The wrong message was sent, but nobody except NTSB investigators will know the portraying of the investigation was not "factual."

Hector Casanova - Truly EXCELLENT !!!!

Bob Trainor - I saw Ted's letter in the post, and read that Bob Benzon had also weighed in about the NTSB's conduct of the investigation. Kudos to Ted, Bob and any others who have publicly addressed the inaccuracies in the movie. I am proud of my career with NTSB, and I know I'm in good company with people like Ted and Bob.

Sandy Browne - I put a synopsis of the answer to the movie on face book and it got a lot of interest. Those of you on face book might do the same?

Kay Sommerfeld - Jim, many thanks for your efforts to share these stories with us. You get a big gold star from this silver eagle!!!! (I had to put this out! LOL)

Carl Dinwiddie - The NTSB is the World's Gold Standard for accident investigation.

If I recall correctly, there have been 3 major airline accidents in the U.S. since 9/11 - pretty good record and the math on the safety statistics if how safe it is to be a passenger on a United States Part 121 flight is not matched by any other human endeavor.

And besides those facts, to me it's the issue of smearing the 300 plus NTSB employees I had the pleasure to work with for 33 years. I know of no group that could surpass the quality of NTSB employees. I was in the NAVY and worked for the FAA, but, neither can match the quality, dedication, and professionalism of our NTSB employees.

I know I'm preaching to the choir, maybe I should send this to Clint.

Cliff Zimmerman - I think you right Carl, you should send it to Clint. Perhaps the all knowing Mr Eastwood could learn something new, as he obviously has a miss understanding about why we do our work the way we do.

Bob Barlett - Carl's comments are spot on. Hopefully, NTSB will take some action to educate the public and media about what truthfully happened in the investigation.

In any case, these pieces should be sent to each U. S., Senator and Representative in addition to media news directors and industry publications.

Chris Julius - Well said, Carl. Yowza, was that ever a surprise to see how they mangled an already great story with a fictitious villain! Skiles was well played, though, I have to say.

I was also totally unaware that I would see a colleague in film. Captain Lori Cline, one of our check airmen, was the pilot flying the TEB sim runs.

Mixed thoughts on the whole thing, but we all know that the NTSB work behind the scenes and in the air that day was superb; and I tell anyone that will listen every chance I get.

We have two new members this month, AND we have news! YEAH!

New Members:

Vernon Grose (Former Member appointed by Pres Regan)

Roger Cox (finally got back to us, thanks to the Misenciks!)

(See contact list)

Board News: None

Member News:

Bob Benzion - For what it is worth, Susan and I are doing fine. Six-months-and-a-day in Florida for the tax dodge and six months back up here in Fredericksburg, VA. Works out well for us.

I am finally divesting myself from the NTSB. For many years before my retirement and since retirement in 2011, I taught a couple of classes at the NTSB Training Center out in Ashburn. Very rewarding, but the outdoor accident exercise became a bit much. So, your great web efforts to keep us all in touch will be much appreciated.

Joe Kris - I'm heading to Scotland in a few weeks for a few days of golfing with the guys.

Also I'm back in DC about once a month for the next 7 months as part of a DHS SES development program. If you are up for a trip into the city perhaps we can meet up for dinner and call in a few other NTSB alum (i.e; Chris and John) too. (*Sounds like a plan! Any other Joe Kris fans that want a heads up when that happens?*)

Vern Grose - As for something informal to share, I just published my 4th book, DEATH Is Not FATAL, that contains several NTSB stories that might interest group members. It's what caused me to try and locate Les Reingold . . . Link: <http://tinyurl.com/gu6kerz>

Roger Cox - I retired from NTSB in March. I dropped by to see Paul and Sally Misencik today and Paul reminded me about the website you maintain. I'd like to give you my contact information so you can include me in the retiree group. Right now, I don't have much to report, but I may have some travel news to pass on one of these days. If anyone in the group is planning any meet and greet events I'd like to be on the mailing list for that. Please let me know if there is anything else I can provide to you. Thanks for volunteering to run the site.

Danielle Elizabeth Roeber Wolfe – said, “I forgot. My last name changes to Wolfe after I got married December 12, 2015.”

(See contact list)

Misc:

This request from **Vernon Grose** through **Bridget Serchak**:

We had a couple of suggestions for location **Les Reingold**. Bob Benzon said that he wrote a couple of articles for the Smithsonian magazine Air and Space. A query to them might yield a contact point, and **Brent Bahler** said there is a Lester Reingold living in Silver Spring. He is in the phone book (anywho.com) if Vern wants to call and see if he's the one. (*I passed this onto Bridget. My last contact with Vern indicated that he hasn't been able to contact Les.*)

This bit of news from **Carol Roberts**:

Real-Life Investigators Object to Portrayal in 'Sully' Movie

By JOAN LOWY

Investigators say they object to their portrayal in a new movie based on the "Miracle on the Hudson" river ditching of airliner seven years ago after striking geese.

Losing thrust in both engines but still managing to land an airliner full of people in the Hudson River without the loss of a single life is plenty dramatic. But the drama in 'Sully,' the movie about the "Miracle on the Hudson" ditching of U.S. Airways Flight 1549, doesn't stop there.

And that's a problem, say the former government accident investigators involved in the real-life investigation into the 2009 accident. The public, as well as pilots and others in the aviation industry, who see the movie may get the wrong impression that investigators were trying to smear the pilot, Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, they said.

"We're not the KGB. We're not the Gestapo," said **Robert Benzon**, who led the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation. "We're the guys with the white hats on."

The film, scheduled for release in theaters on Friday, portrays investigators as more like prosecutors looking for any excuse to blame Sullenberger for the mishap.

Could the plane have made it back to LaGuardia Airport if Sullenberger, portrayed by actor Tom Hanks, had turned it around? Did the thrust in both engines quit after the plane struck a flock of geese or was there still some power in one? Was the US Airways captain's performance affected by other factors? When was his last alcoholic drink? Was he having problems at home?

It's true that those questions were asked, and many more, over the course of the 18-month investigation, but that's just part of NTSB's meticulous investigation process that is intended to find all possible flaws that contribute to a crash, investigators said. That way the board can make safety recommendations to the government, industry, labor unions, aircraft makers and others in an effort to prevent future accidents. Thirty-five safety recommendations were ultimately issued as a result of the Flight 1549 investigation.

Investigators recalled Sullenberger and co-pilot Jeff Skiles, portrayed by actor Aaron Eckhart, as comfortable and cooperative. Pilot union officials representing them were present during all the interviews and at later public forums.

"These guys were already national heroes," said Benzon, who is now retired. "We weren't out to embarrass anybody at all."

But that's not how it comes across in the film, directed by Clint Eastwood.

"Until I read the script, I didn't know the investigative board was trying to paint the picture that he (Sullenberger) had done the wrong thing. They were kind of railroading him into 'it was his fault,'" Eastwood said in a publicity video for the Warner Bros. film.

Hanks told The Associated Press in an interview that a draft script included the names of real-life NTSB officials, but Sullenberger - who is an adviser on the film - requested they be taken out.

"He said, 'These are people who are not prosecutors. They are doing a very important job, and if, for editorial purposes, we want to make it more of a prosecutorial process, it ain't fair to them,' " said Hanks. "That's an easy thing to change."

Malcolm Brenner, a human factors expert who was among the investigators who interviewed Sullenberger the day after the ditching, said he recalls being extraordinarily impressed at the time with both pilots and how well they worked together in the midst of the crisis. He said he's also been impressed since then with how Sullenberger has used his fame to promote aviation safety.

"I think there is a real integrity there," said Brenner, now an aviation consultant. "I happen to be a big fan of the man."

Tom Haueter, who was the NTSB's head of major accident investigations at the time and is now a consultant, said he fears the movie will discourage pilots and others from fully cooperating with the board in the future.

"There is a very good chance," said Haueter, "that there is a segment of the population that will take this as proof of government incompetence and it will make things worse."

[I must say that I haven't seen the movie, but the trailer makes us appear sinister.]

Don't forget the Silver Eagle Website: www.precisionwrite.com/SilverEagles.html

Happy ummm... hopefully I'll get my next one out before Halloween... ahh... Al-Hijra (Islamic New Year – something to do with using the moon instead of the sun.) – or Rosh Hashanah! In spite of all of this news, remember, this newsletter still needs NEWS!!

Jim Henderson