

A Salute To Don Flower One of Aviation's Pioneers



Don Flower

By K. Palmer Mandle

Donald C. Flower, Chairman of the Board of Don Flower Associates, Inc., died Saturday, April 26, 1980. The loss of Don Flower, was, in no small measure, a tragedy. It is, perhaps, an even greater tragedy that we salute one of aviation's pioneers after he is gone.

This article will be too brief an attempt at conveying Mr. Flower's importance to the aviation industry, to Wichita, Kansas, and to those who worked with and knew him. His contributions to aviation spanned 53 years. During those years Don Flower logged over 20,000 hours of flight time, made thousands of business contacts, and earned the respect of countless individuals all over the world. We salute you, Mr. Flower. We

salute you.

While attending high school in Orlando, Florida, Don Flower decided that he wanted a career in aviation. He was an adventurous young man. For aviation was a risky adventure at best. Flight was an experimental process.

After entering The University of Florida in 1924, Don Flower studied engineering while selling real estate on the side. In 1926, Don married his high-school sweetheart, Mildred Cook, and together, they set out to establish his career in aviation.

In 1927, he moved to Troy, Ohio, and began his aviation career with Waco Aircraft Company. His starting salary was an amazing \$.40 per hour or \$18.00 a week.

Don Flower worked at Waco Aircraft Company until 1940. In March of that year, he

moved to Wichita and joined Cessna Aircraft Company in the position of Sales Manager.

Mr. Flower is credited with introducing the Cessna Twin Engine demonstrator to Canada, in July, 1940.

Throughout the war, Don Flower was active in field service and engineering with both United States and Canadian Air Forces. After the war, he was in charge of both domestic and foreign sales until 1952.

In 1952, Flower resigned his position at Cessna to enter into a partnership with Jack Galbraith. The two men gave birth to an insurance agency catering to the needs of the aviation industry.

In 1957, he purchased the Galbraith interest and succeeded in building Don Flow-

er Associates Inc. into an agency of national and worldwide prominence.

The secret to Don Flower's success goes beyond the typical "hard-working" description. According to Alvin C. Burton, President of Don Flower Associates, Inc., Don Flower was a man unlike any other.

"First and foremost," said Burton, "Don Flower was a Christian. His beliefs resulted in a gentlemanly attitude and as a result, he treated all people in the same manner. The President of the United States was no more important than a line-boy. He (Flower) had a unique way of treating people. He was loved by many."

Mr. Charles Jones, Senior Vice President of Don Flower Associates, Inc., was no less complimentary. "In Mr. Flower's mind, all people were on one level," he said. "All men were important to him. He was very informal and kept everyone at ease."

Throughout the years, Don Flower did business and was associated with well-known personalities. Most of us, if given the chance, would find great excitement in knowing the likes of Orville Wright and a President of The United States. Don Flower, it would appear, was not impressed with lofty positions of titles.

In his memoirs, graciously loaned to this writer for the purpose of this article, Mr.

Flower did not mention his associations with Presidents, Kings, or financial giants. He did, however, mention his dealings with co-workers and individuals unlikely to be remembered. Indeed, all people were extremely important in Don Flower's eyes.

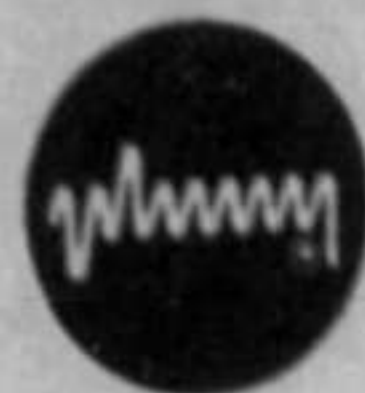
Mr. Flower's involvement in aviation was vast. He was an Underwriting Member at Lloyds of London, Chairman of the Board of Don Flower Associates, Inc., Past President of the National Pilots Association, Past President of the Sportsman Pilots Association, Domestic and International Sales Manager for Cessna Aircraft Company, Sales Manager for Waco Aircraft Company, and member of the Quiet Birdmen Pilots Association. He was also a member of the American Bonanza Society, International Flying Farmers, OX 5 Club, Mooney Aircraft Pilots Association, Cessna Skylane Society, and the Cessna Skyhawk Association.

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"General Aviation was like breathing to Don Flower," said Don Flower President Alvin Burton. "He was one of General Aviations greatest

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— Don Flower —

Don Flower continued . . .

salesmen. He was always concerned with aviation's future. He was never one to dwell on the past. He was always working on ways in which to improve the industry. The future of aviation was Don Flower's business."

Don Flower's contributions have not gone unnoticed. A man as respected and loved as Don Flower touches the hearts of those familiar with his work.

The Wings of Hope, a non-profit, non-political, non-sectarian organization in St. Louis, Missouri, has started a Don Flower Memorial Airplane Fund.

The Wings of Hope is in the business of bringing hope, health, and life to thousands of the world's poor, sick, and undernourished people. The Wings of Hope makes itself accessible to some of the world's most inaccessible regions.

Wings of Hope provides air transportation and radio communication services to field medical personnel, development programs, missionaries and others who are in need on four continents. Most of the humanitarian and charitable activities assisted by the Wings of Hope are found in North and South America, Africa, and Australia. Areas receiving support include Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Brazil, Tanzania, Nigeria, Rhodesia, Kenya, Surinam, New Guinea, Nicaragua, New Ireland, Paraguay, Irian Jaya, and Indonesia.

The Wings of Hope is the type of organization where one-third of the cost of the Cessna 185 Amphibious Aircraft for the services in Alaska under the Wings of Hope management. Another \$50,000 is needed to complete the purchase of the airplane and to begin support services for the aircraft when it is in the field.

National Wings of Hope Chairman, George E. Had-

daway, has announced that Wings of Hope will direct 100 per cent of all contributions to the Don Flower Memorial Fund to aircraft costs and services in the field. The Cessna 185 will serve desolate areas in Alaska and will carry a special identification number

of N 514 DF.

Don Flower was many things. He was one of aviation's greatest advocates and pioneers. He was a friend to all who knew him. All men were important to Don Flower. Don Flower's Christian beliefs were of utmost importance to

him as he lived. Those beliefs, no doubt, give comfort to his family and friends now that he is gone.

Through Don Flower Associates, Inc., his family and friends, and The Wings of Hope, Don Flower's ideals and

influence will continue to make a contribution to all of mankind.

One of the Wings of Hope creeds seems appropriate as Don Flower is now at rest. "Truely, Brotherhood spreads on Wings of Hope..."

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