



Captain SS "Steve" ALBULET

CAW TCA AC



11 Nov 12

Initial Flight Plan

42,000+ Hours

06 Jun 06

Final Flight Plan

Steven Stanley Albulet was born in Dysart, about forty miles north of Regina, Saskatchewan. When he was very young the family moved into Regina where his father had a coal and wood business. He attended Haultain public school and Central Collegiate in Regina. His parents felt that Steve should become a pharmacist like his older brother George. Initially he intended to do this, however, when he was about twelve, R.J. Groom, who had the number one commercial flying license in Canada, caused local excitement when he brought his Jenny, registration AAA, into town, and from then on they used to talk about airplanes a lot around the store. Steve was always thinking about airplanes and folks said he should learn to fly and when Lindbergh flew the Atlantic that convinced him.

In spite of the initial opposition of his parents, Steve Albulet decided that he wanted to be a professional pilot. Because no financial support was forthcoming from home, he earned the money for his training by working at drug stores after school and repairing cars on Saturdays.

Steve found he could use his motor mechanics training to make extra bucks. Men who came to the store would let him take their cars home for a grease and lube job which brought him four or five dollars. For this work he got ten dollars, which brought him a whole hour of flying. He soloed on a Cirrus Moth, and got his private license.

In order to qualify for his commercial licence, Steve had to complete fifty additional hours of flying. Art Brazier, the mechanic at the Regina Flying Club, suggested that he and Steve build their own aircraft in order to reduce their flying costs. Although Art was not interested in getting his commercial licence, he was also a flying enthusiast. They chose to build a small, high-winged monoplane called the Heath Parasol. Steve secretly cashed in his life insurance policy, which was worth \$200, to purchase a thirty horsepower engine to power the aircraft.

One day when it was not completely finished he pushed it out of the hangar, ran it down the field, and got airborne. He quickly closed the throttle and landed - but he was thrilled. It flew, and that he had made it himself. Art and Steve's Heath was called the Pilsner Pup. The Pilsner brewing company supplied one case of free beer a week to the hangar staff of the Regina Flying Club and requested this endorsement in return. Although Steve didn't drink, he felt obliged to cooperate. The first long flight that Steve made in

this aircraft was to an air meet at Glasgow, Montana.

Steve was able to now build his time up barnstorming. For a fee of \$2.00 per person, he would fly two passengers up to a height of 1,000 feet, do a stall turn, which was exciting for the passengers and then land. In 1935 when he had nearly enough for a commercial Steve was offered a job by Karels Air Service of Regina. He accepted this position which consisted primarily of servicing the mining industry in the northern part of the Prairie Provinces. Steve had a crash course in flying an aircraft with floats before beginning this work. He flew Karels new Gypsy Moth to Cooking Lake near Edmonton, had floats installed and taught himself to fly using floats by taking off and landing two times. He had a total of about seventy-five hours when he landed in Edmonton. He then flew to Fort McMurray using a hand-drawn map and landed on the river at that location after dark.

They wanted him to go to Winnipeg, pick up a Gypsy Moth they had purchased and bring it to Regina. This flying time would qualify him for his commercial license and he already had an air engineer's ticket. He was to take the machine to Goldfields where there was a lot of mining activity and fly prospectors.

Steve states that, on one occasion while he was working for Karels, he was told to fly a sheriff from Humbolt, Saskatchewan, to several locations north of that community. Just after he landed at the first location, the sheriff handed him a pistol and said, If they come after me, just fire a few shots in the air. In 1936 he was employed by Arrow Airways of The Pas, Manitoba. He flew a single-engine Fokker monoplane and a Waco aircraft for this company and his work consisted primarily of flying trappers in and out of their hunting grounds; flying their furs out in the spring; transporting mining equipment, supplies, and crews; and occasionally delivering mail to isolated communities. Steve also completed four of his five mercy flights during this period of time. An account of one of these flights follows:

In 1937 two men were severely injured trying to raise a caterpillar tractor which had fallen through the ice on a lake north of Flin Flon, Steve had to fly in and out of the area at night using a flashlight to read my instruments: his Fokker wasn't equipped for night-flying. The men at the site of the accident lit a large signal fire on the lake to help guide me in. After he landed, they strapped the two men on to large planks and then pushed them into the cargo bay. Both made excellent recoveries.

In the same year, the New York Times, via Canadian Press, reported that Steve Albulet was fined \$2.00 and costs in police court for obstructing traffic by parking his plane outside his suburban home. He tied the plane, engine running, to a tree with part of the plane across the sidewalk. Steve notes that this report is not completely accurate and is somewhat misleading. It sounds like he landed on the street in front of his house. Actually, he was running-in the engine on a Monocoupe after its wing had been removed at the Regina airport and it had been towed to Regina Auto Body. The aircraft wasn't tied up outside his home. It was tied up at Regina Auto Body. The rest of the story is true.

In the fall he flew south. The water was very low at Ft. McMurray and he damaged a float in landing. So he put wheels on the machine and left for Edmonton, using the main

street of Ft. McMurray as a runway. Steve thinks he is the only pilot who has done that. From Edmonton he returned to Regina where, for a while. Soon he was hired, to fly a single engine Fokker by Arrow Airways, a branch of Canadian Airways that worked out of The Pas. He was based at Sherridon Manitoba. He was both pilot and mechanic, and he did a lot of flying out of Sherridon. Mostly he served trappers and when he was not busy doing that, his Company would move him down to The Pas to do mail runs to a number of small communities.

On one occasion Steve flew a Winnipeg man named Jack Christie to a spot and was to pick him up on an arranged day. However, the day before he was due Steve was in the area and decided to advance the pick up date because a storm was coming in and the next day the weather would be bad. When he got there he found Christie lying in his sleeping bag in the open. He had not even set up his tent, a first task for anyone out in Canada's northlands.

Steve left Sherridon and Arrow Airways in April of 1939 to join Trans Canada Air Lines. He started in the airline as a First Officer but by September of 1939 he and Jack Crosby were teamed up for promotion. In March 1940 they were both promoted. In his first years as Captain Steve flew the prairies as far west as Lethbridge, and, on occasion, Winnipeg east as far as Montreal. In 1944 he got a place on the CGTAS, but before he could take a flight he was asked to return to Winnipeg to run the flying school. He used to spend his holidays flying in the bush for Lamb Airways, and, in fact, this is how he started his son, Jeff, in the flying business

In 1943, on his days off in Winnipeg, Steve would instruct for the Company, and in one month logged 175 hours. . From 1944 until his retirement in 1969, Steve flew the Atlantic for T.C.A. and then Air Canada flying Avro Lancastrian, North Star, Lockheed Super Constellation, and Douglas DC-8 aircraft. He only had one orientation flight to Prestwick, Scotland and back to Montreal before taking over as Captain.

An earlier aircraft Steve flew on trans-Atlantic operations occasionally developed engine problems. On one occasion, after attempting to land a North Star at Greenland where the field was fogged in, Steve eventually touched down at Goose Bay with two and a half engines running.

In 1947 Steve Albulet was involved in the first stage of the dramatic rescue of sixty-nine persons aboard a flying boat named the "Bermuda Queen" which had been forced down in mid-Atlantic. Before it landed on the ocean, he and the other members of a T.C.A. North Star crew located and then helped guide the flying boat to a U. S. Coastguard weather ship. The other members of the crew were George Lothian, Chief Pilot, Atlantic; Ken Frazer, Navigator; Ken Taman, Radio Officer; and Stewardess Mary O'Neil. In his book entitled *Flight Deck*, George Lothian notes that Steve was Captain and flew the aircraft. As one would expect, the crew worked as a team during their part of this rescue. This incident received international press coverage and was front page news in Steves home-town Regina.

In Lancastrian days he had one westbound crossing that produced twenty-five and a half hours of flying time in one duty period. Their first stop was at the Azores and then on to Bermuda and finally Montreal, battling thunderstorms all the way. From 1944 until

his retirement in 1969, Steve flew the Atlantic, retiring with 1,498 crossings.

In Montreal he was connected with a big overhaul shop whose owner was also the Cessna dealer. Steve used to deliver Cessna's to Montreal from the factory for him, and has brought in 150 aircraft in his time. In 1965 he developed a fishing camp on Hudson Bay. He had a Cessna 206 and when he had time off after an Atlantic trip he would fly there and enjoy a few days in the bush. In the beginning it was just a fun thing, but then he got licensed as a carrier and started to bring fishing parties in.

Steve retired from Air Canada three years early so that he could help his wife, who was quite ill. He and Wilma married in 1940; she was a stewardess on the airline. They had three children, Jeff, who is an Air Canada Captain, Donna, who is married and Sue-Ann, who arrived ten years later and is also married. Wilma passed away in 1976.

Some years later he remarried, to Rhoda Yazinski. Vic Yazinski was also a bush pilot who was with TCA in the early days but had since left.

For a while, after his retirement, the fishing camp kept him busy, it developing into quite a business using two aircraft for transportation, his 206 and a Cessna 185. But when the James Bay power development was complete he said to heck with it, left everything, sold his house in Montreal and he and Rhoda moved to the west coast.

Son Jeff was then involved in a small floatplane air service that docked in the Fraser River near New Westminster and wanted his Dad to come in with him and his partner. Steve did for a while. In a few years they sold out

Steve continued to fly his own airplane however, using it for fishing trips and taking it south to California every winter. Steve Albulet has a lot of flying time. During his lifetime, he logged over 42,000 hours of flying time in fifty-seven different types of aircraft and made nearly 1,500 transatlantic crossings.

Today the Albulets live in Burnaby, convenient to everything they need. In the winters they go to Hemet in California, a place in the desert near the San Jacinto Valley. They have a trailer with two push outs and everything in it. He helps some friends with a couple of airplanes, doing maintenance work. What does Rhoda do? He says she goes to exercise class every morning, which is a pretty typical response from a married man whose major interest, all his life, has been airplanes.

Update:

Stephen Albulet, air pioneer, husband to Wilma (deceased 1976) their children; Donna (Bill Richards), Jeff (Madelon) and Sue (Pat Williams), grandfather and great grandfather and in later life, husband to Rhoda (deceased 2004), passed away peacefully June 6th, 2006 in his 94th year in Coquitlam, B.C.



