



Rhode Island Aviation Hall of Fame

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2013

Contact: Frank Lennon 401-831-8696

Honorees for 2013 include a World War II fighter ace who flew with Chennault in China, a Naval Aviator who rose to leadership positions in three airlines, and a well-known philanthropist who was one of the first female flight instructors in the state.

November 8th awardees have East Greenwich, North Kingstown, Providence, Newport, Wakefield and Charlestown connections, and include graduates of Moses Brown, Chariho and Hope High Schools, University of Rhode Island and Providence College

PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Aviation Hall of Fame will induct five new members and recognize the service of two other individuals at their 11th annual ceremony and dinner to be held at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in Cranston on Friday evening, November 8th.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. Tickets cost only \$55 each (\$100 per couple) and can be obtained by emailing riahof@aol.com, or logging in to our website at www.riahof.org. For further information, please call 401-398-1000 or 401-831-8696.

Guests of honor (and senior serving aviators) will be Rear Admiral Walter "Ted" Carter, US Navy, President of the US Naval War College, and Brigadier General Mark Jannitto, US Air Force, Deputy Adjutant General of the RI Air National Guard.

The five inductees (all deceased) are:

Born in Pride's Crossing, MA, **Mary Ann Lippitt (1918-2006)** was a descendant of an old and influential Rhode Island family that was very active in Rhode Island business and politics. She was a cousin of the late Senator John Chafee and current Governor Lincoln Chafee. As a teenager she enrolled in the first Gray Ladies training class and the first nurses aide class for the RI Red Cross. She took special training at Ft. Devens during World War II for work with psychiatric patients. In 1944 she learned to fly during a visit to Virginia. Mary Ann was soon a skilled aviatrix, and she worked as a flying instructor in Virginia and served in the US air postal service before returning to Rhode Island. She was one of about a dozen women pilots in the state. In 1946 she formed Lippitt Aviation at Hillsgrove (now T. F. Greene Airport), making her one of the first women business owners in Rhode Island. A Providence Journal article from 1946 on Miss Lippitt's new business reported that "her personality must have been designed to win the friendship and confidence of people who want to fly." In those early postwar years, a woman flight instructor was an anomaly, but teaching people how

P.O. Box 28581 • Providence, RI 02908 • (401) 831-8696 • FAX (401) 831-8707

to fly was her greatest enthusiasm, and she accumulated thousands of hours in the air before selling the business in 1972. During the 26 years she owned the company, she also operated a charter flight service with a fleet of up to four planes. She also competed at least once in the famous "Powder Puff Derby", the transcontinental flying races for women pilots. After selling her company Miss Lippitt devoted herself to charitable and civic causes, including serving as Chairman of the Board of the RI Red Cross, President of the Boards of Bannister House and the Women's Center, and Board Member of the Providence Public Library, Gordon School, John Hope Settlement House, the Animal Rescue League, Preserve Rhode Island and Community Prep. Brown University recognized her services to the community by awarding her the President's Medal in 2004. Miss Lippitt made significant donations to many local charities including the Providence Public Library, which has named the exhibition hall at the Central Branch in her honor; Brown University where she funded professorships in the Medical School; and Butler Hospital.

Long-time North Kingstown resident **William Grosvenor Jr. (1920-1980)** was born in Providence and attended St. Mark's School in Southborough, MA. He entered Harvard to study geography and geology with the class of 1942, listing his home address as Ruggles Avenue in Newport. Fascinated with both sailing and flying, he serviced airplanes for W. E. Wiggins Airways and earned his private pilot's license at Norwood airport. He left college in November, 1940, to enlist in the Army Air Corps. He received his wings and was commissioned on July 12, 1941. Two weeks later he joined the 22nd Pursuit Squadron in Puerto Rico, training on the P-36 and P-40. Three days after Pearl Harbor he was assigned to the 51st Fighter Squadron in Panama, flying security patrols over the Panama Canal. In November 1942 he arrived in China where he flew 132 missions (286 combat hours) under General Chennault with the 75th Pursuit Squadron, the "Flying Tiger Sharks". {This was the group that took over from the AVG, or Flying Tigers.) On this tour he had 5 confirmed kills and 3 probables. He returned to the US, and with another ace helped form the Air Commandos. He returned to combat with the 2nd Air Commando Group in 1944, serving as Squadron Commander and flying more another 60 missions (273 combat hours) in the India/Burma/Thailand area. He added 2 confirmed kills and several more probables. Bill was awarded many medals for valor and outstanding service, including the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross (3 clusters), Bronze Star, and Air Medal (4 clusters). During his flying career he survived three air crashes, and was the first pilot to survive while ejecting upside down from a P-40. On another occasion he was rescued by the OSS in China. He continued to serve in the Reserve after the war, eventually attaining the rank of LTC. He worked for Sealol Corporation in Warwick, for more than 30 years, seldom speaking of his combat achievements. He died in a boating accident at the age of 60 in 1980.

Raised in Providence, **Harold Edminston Lemont, Jr. (1920-2003)**, was an aeronautical engineer and inventor who graduated from Moses Brown School, and Rhode Island State College (now URI). He specialized in helicopter design and was a prolific inventor, developing more than 30 helicopter rotor systems. His Reverse Velocity Rotor, designed in the 60's, is still the fastest rotor system in existence. His work is displayed in aeronautical museums across the country, including the National Air and Space Museum. The Gazda Helicospeeder, which he designed while he was still in his early 20's, is on display at the Hiller Aviation Museum in northern California. He received commendations from NASA for his work in hydraulics. Mr. Lemont was co-founder of the American Helicopter Society and was an active member for sixty years. During this time, he worked for many major aircraft companies, including Bell, Jacobs, Gazda, Hiller, Piasecki, Sikorsky, and Hughes, many of whom today continue to build on his work. After retiring from Sikorsky, he founded Lemont Aircraft Corporation and worked on new products and applications of advanced aerodynamic mechanical technologies.

Providence-born **Martin R. Shugrue, Jr. (1941—1999.)** was a Naval Aviator and airline executive who played a pivotal and at times controversial role in unsuccessful attempts to keep Pan American World Airways and, later, Eastern Airlines from failing. He was known as a gregarious executive who had a knack for getting along with union leaders and the rank and file. He graduated from Hope High School and Providence College and joined the Navy. As a young LT (jg) aboard the USS Wasp he flew co-pilot for the air group commander on an anti-submarine hunter aircraft involved in the recovery of Gemini 6A and Gemini 7, the first space docking

mission. Three years later, flying off USS Yorktown, he was also involved in the recovery of the Apollo 8 space capsule. He also flew McDonnell Douglas A-4 jet bombers. After six years in the Navy, he joined Pan American World Airways in 1968 as a flight engineer. After being furloughed in the 1970 pilot cutbacks, he joined a management training program and rose rapidly through the ranks. He worked in personnel and labor relations at the company's headquarters in New York and then had "line" responsibilities in Washington and later in London, where he was responsible for Western Europe. He then returned to Pan Am headquarters where he served as senior vice president for human resources, then marketing and sales. In 1983 he was elected vice chairman of Pan Am's board. He left Pan Am in 1988 to become president of Continental Airlines. He was later appointed trustee-in-bankruptcy of Eastern Airlines and moved the company almost to a point of recovery, but was thwarted by the rising fuel prices caused by the Gulf War. With his own capital and other financing support, he started the new Pan Am in 1996. He died unexpectedly of a stroke in 1999 at the age of 58.

Alabama-born **Richard Warren Blackman (1939—2013)** made a major contribution to aviation in RI through his lengthy service with the Civil Air Patrol (CAP). Richard enlisted in the Alabama National Guard at 15 years old, serving for 3 years. Upon graduating high school in 1959, he enlisted in the Navy, with hopes of one day becoming a helicopter pilot. Already a Master Plumber, the 18-year-old was assigned as a Boiler Tender/Fireman aboard the USS Allagash, AO 97, home-ported in Newport, RI--where he met the woman who would become his wife of 52 years, Patricia A. Conway. He left the Navy and went to work for the Providence Gas Company. In the late 60's, Richard enlisted in the Naval Reserve, then the RI National Guard. He had considered, again, going to Helicopter School, with the Viet Nam War raging. In 1978, Richard finally satisfied his lifelong desire to fly by attending flight school at North Central Airport. He joined the 102nd Composite Squadron of the CAP, and by 1980 he was heavily involved in RI-EMA training, search and rescue missions and radio communications monitoring. He often served as Mission Commander on the Wing's many Search and Rescue Missions in the 1980s and 90s – most notably the search for John F. Kennedy Jr.'s downed aircraft. He became Squadron Commander, successfully completed CAP National Staff College, and was invited back to the College as an instructor. He eventually became RI Wing Chief of Staff. He was slated to become Wing Commander, but lung disease grounded him. In his years of service to CAP, he mentored hundreds of children, teaching them the wonders of flight and aerospace technology. His love of children was manifested in a most unusual avocation: he was a very successful clown! He was the founder of the Blackman Family Clowns who entertained at area schools and hospitals. He was known as "Grandpa Muggle" to the kids of the Cranston school system. Another of his passions was flying remote-controlled aircraft, and he volunteered at various schools giving demonstration flights. He was also the first male assistant Girl Scout leader in the United States.

Both recipients of our Special Recognition awards are still living:

Charlestown resident **Lawrence Webster**, born in Wakefield in 1947, is an award-winning mechanical engineer known in aviation history circles as the "aluminum undertaker" because of his extensive work excavating air crash sites. He has earned national recognition for his meticulous rebuilding of vintage aircraft, often using hard-to-find parts from the remains of the by now more than 60 wrecks he has collected and stored behind his barn. He also helped launch the Quonset Air Museum, worked to establish a memorial to deceased pilots at the abandoned Charlestown airfield, and is compiling a database of every air crash that has ever occurred in New England. Larry was valedictorian of his class at CHARIHO High School, and earned his engineering degree from the University of Rhode Island. He volunteered at the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks, CT, where he did most of the work restoring a WWII Hellcat fighter. He also helped launch the Quonset Air Museum, worked to establish a memorial to deceased pilots at the abandoned Charlestown airfield, and began compiling a database of every air crash that's ever occurred in New England.

In 2004 he was named Aviation Historian of the Year by the Northeast Aero Historians, and received a gubernatorial citation in recognition of his "many years of work advancing our knowledge and understanding of aviation in Rhode Island."

Paul Broadnax, the child of two well-known and influential Boston-area classical musicians, was drafted into the Army toward the end of WWII. Already an accomplished pianist and vocalist, the Army assigned him to support Army Air Corps units at both Shepard Field in Wichita Falls, Texas and to Lockbourne Airbase in Columbus Ohio where Tuskegee graduates were assigned. He played with the Tuskegee Airmen military band and dance band. Later in life, Broadnax has entertained many Rhode Island audiences during a career that has seen him twice nominated as the Boston Music Awards Jazz Singer of the Year. In 2003 he was named Musician of the Year by the Boston Musicians' Association. He plays regularly with the Reggie Centracchio quintet, the musical group led by the former Rhode Island Adjutant General.