

THIS IS/WAS DON PARRISH

This document is a brief summary of Don Parrish's life. It was prepared early in the year 2015 for his family, relatives and anyone else who just might give a damn,

DON PARRISH

Conceived in a blueberry patch Donald Lamert Parrish was born in Berwick, Nova Scotia, on April 7, 1935. His chosen parents were Ardythe Lavina (Ward) and Lurman Ellsworth Parrish. The name Lamert was from his Grandfather Parrish, while the name Donald was somewhat abused over the years. He was referred to as Droopy Drawers in the pre-school days, Zeb and Bird Seed during school attendance and finally Don within the working world.

Don grew up in the small community of Rockland with a population of approximately 110. Their house had two bedrooms but no bathroom, running water or central heating. These inconvenient circumstances were not uncommon in rural Atlantic Canada during this period.

The community school consisted of one classroom with the facilities once again being outside. The teachers over the years varied from 18 to 70 years old. They indeed were challenged, as their responsibility encompassed students from kindergarten up to and including Grade 10. Don attended this school for the full gambit and advanced to Berwick High School to acquire Grade 11. This, in 1952, provided the matriculation level required to enter University. He had half the text books but with a lot of last minute study and a relative as the University Registrar, acceptance at Acadia was obtained. This option however was never undertaken.

Don's reflections on those informative years were basically good with only two bad experiences. At the age of ten the loss of his Mother and four years later, a fall which caused the rupture of his appendix. The 14 days in hospital over Christmas was minor compared to the Doctor's upfront request for payment in that three days had passed since the accident.

On an up-note, Don's hero was his Dad and his Brother Lawrence was his early protector. His three younger Sisters, affectionately referred to by Don as Lavina Belle, Isabel and Doorbell (Tamey), were a delight and a blessing to his Step-Mother Netina (Atwell).

The apple industry and construction opportunities as a laborer were seasonal and the need for room and board money was a fact of life. Don went to trade-school in Halifax as a student welder and on graduation worked in the Halifax shipyards and with various construction companies. The seasonal problem however remained so Don entered the RCAF Officer flying training program. The highlight of this endeavor was the 120 hours logged as a Lancaster bomber crew member whereas, during the war, his parents had given him a cardboard Lancaster to play in.

On leaving most of his stomach in the Atlantic Don left the RCAF and worked for the Marconi, Special Services Division in Montreal. He undertook an extended assignment in the Canadian Arctic as a company air traffic controller and radio operator. Morse code was the communications media, while hourly weather observations were taken outside regardless of the temperature. He worked an 84 hour week but time was still available to walk where no other human had likely ventured. He had his 21st birthday on Brey Island and later that year saw his first non-Eskimo female in 11 months.

On his return to the orchards of Nova Scotia Don applied to both Environment and Transport Canada for a permanent job. He chose Transport and undertook Air Traffic Control (ATC) training. He was licensed in Moncton tower and proceeded onwards to Sydney where he not only qualified but married the love of his life, Eileen. Within months Don was accepted for ATC Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) training in the Montreal Area Control Center (ACC) where he qualified and worked as both a controller and operational supervisor for the next 17 years. This was a busy challenging unit but one which provided considerable job satisfaction.

Political unrest became prominent in Quebec and Don's lack of skill in the second language led to his banishment from Montreal in 1976. Concurrently, he had applied for and was accepted as a Headquarters Standards Officer/Inspector. In June, Don and Eileen with their four wonderful daughters; Cheryl, Vicki, Sandra and Lisa moved to the Nation's Capital. Their two sons, Dennis and Christopher, elected to remain in Montreal.

In Ottawa, Don spent a number of years evaluating ATC facilities in Canada and on request the United States. He also investigated and reported on numerous ATC incidents, aircraft near misses and various aviation related accidents with the Transportation Safety Board (TSB). He was continually involved in the day to day safety of the ATC system and the delivery of quality control service to it's users.

In the latter years Don moved upwards in the Transport management structure; as the Superintendent of ATC Evaluations, Superintendent IFR Operations for Canada and General Manager Gander ACC. He retired from the Public Service in Ottawa as Division Chief, Air Traffic Services Evaluations. Gander, with it's 275 employees, proved interesting but his positions as an ACC Supervisor and the Superintendent of Operations were the favorites. In these, decisions were fast, experience based and not subject to bureaucratic delays.

On a Friday in January 1993 Don left Transport Canada and on Monday joined a small Canadian aviation consulting company as their Director, Aviation Services. Soon after this change the Bermuda government was in need of a consultant to assess their aviation requirements and, while Don was on the Island, the Canadian company was purchased by a large multi-National, SERCO.

The Canadian arm of SERCO won the Bermuda contract to both manage the airport Air Navigation System (ANS) and hire and train Bermudians. This included crash, fire, rescue personnel, air traffic controllers, ground electronic technicians, meteorologists and weather observers. Don accepted the position of Project Manager for the transition from the United States Navy (USN) to civilian operations. To help effect the changes necessary he employed up to 61 Canadians. Eileen and Don stayed on the Island for six months of non-stop work, Eileen dealing with the new arrivals and Don the contractual obligations.

SERCO opened the doors to the world for Don in that they also managed ANS facilities in England, Gibraltar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates(UAE). The company asked him to move to England for two years and manage their aviation section and related contracts. They settled on six months, with the work being done basically from Canada. He ended up making a number of trips to England, one to Australia and six to the Middle East to effect change in the UAE/Bahrain ATC operation.

After some 3 ½ years of full time employment Don elected to start his own consulting company "DONPAR". The company's one employee worked primarily for SERCO but also KPMG, Bombardier and an organization in Montreal called IAMTI (the International Aviation Management Training Institute). He was their resident lecturer on ANS management, operational supervision, investigations and course director when required. Don also lectured for IAMTI in Malaysia, the Middle East and Poland.

Meanwhile, SERCO in it's quest to get into the United States aviation market, opted to purchase one of three American companies which had acquired a number of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) control towers. A due-diligence of two of the companies was required and Don was asked to conduct the operational assessments. This involved considerable travel in the southern and western United States. One service provider was selected and Don was then responsible to introduce the company to their new staff at two facilities in Alaska and another six units in the western States. He felt that Flagstaff control tower, just south of the Grand Canyon, was the best geographic location acquired by the company.

Near the end of the desired 3 1/2 years on his own, Don was asked to join an American company in Charleston SC on behalf of Serco to bid on a contract in Antarctica. He never got to McMurdo Sound but the company won the contract and the search was then on for staff. One Canadian from Saskatoon went as a meteorologist with ATC and all other positions being staffed by retired USN personnel.

These data are intentionally not presented in the first person as it could possibly be translated as boasting. This is or was not his style. The aviation community considered Don an ATC/ATS guru being fully qualified in all facets of the environment. Retirement occurred at age 65, a heart attack at 75 and 85 is the future.

Don's early and life wishes were:

To see the arctic, the desert, the tropics and as much of the world as possible,
To marry a beautiful, talented and forgiving women,
To have a job where he could learn from and work with skilled people,
To have children who were happy and content with their lives as adults, and
To retire near the ocean and live at least to the age of 80.

Thanks for your interest,



Sadly missed: Whitney West (Uncle), Ed Pittman (Father-in-Law) and Harold Parrish (Cousin)