

Cartwright ends 45-year maintenance career

"I remember when I was with another mechanic, Ace Thompson, in Cincinnati shortly after the airline was started," Howard Cartwright, vice president-maintenance and engineering, reminisced.

"Piedmont had a fleet of five aircraft then, and we were standing by a Delta plane, talking about their large fleet of 25, and wondering if Piedmont would ever grow to that size."

Then he chuckled, "I still can't remember what we decided."

Cartwright, who retires this month, has seen Piedmont grow since the company's early days as an aircraft sales and service operation to the large organization it is today. And he readily admits that he's still surprised at our phenomenal growth. "I hope I've contributed some small part to Piedmont's success," he said.

Cartwright's love for flying began when he was a young boy. "My father worked for Tom Davis' father," Cartwright explained. "After Tom Davis learned to fly, he'd bring me over to the airport and take me flying. I liked being around the airport, and when Mr. Davis offered me a job, I accepted. Fortunately, I stayed with it."

Cartwright's employment date is given as February 18, 1948, but he really began working for the company in 1941 when he was 17 years old. "There were just a handful of people—10 or 12—when I first started working on the line," he said. He moved inside as a mechanic trainee, then in 1944, took leave to serve in the U.S. Army Air Corps as an aerial engineer and airplane mechanic. He returned in 1946.

"We were waiting to receive certification from the CAB to start the airline," he said, "and it was taking longer to get it than Mr. Davis had anticipated. So Mr. Davis asked that if anyone could find another

job temporarily, to leave until we could get approval to begin service. I decided to leave in 1947 and opened a gas station, promising to come back when he needed me."

Less than a year later, the airline division was formed after receiving a three-year temporary certificate from the CAB, and Cartwright returned to Piedmont as a mechanic to help the airline get ready for its first flight on February 20, 1948.

He soon was promoted to lead mechanic, inspector and foreman. In 1951, he was named superintendent of maintenance and, in 1961, was promoted to director of maintenance and engineering, and in 1969 was promoted to his current position.

During the past 38 years, Cartwright has been in charge of maintenance and engineering for eight different aircraft. "I've liked them

all," he said, "but from a maintenance standpoint, I like the 737 the best. I like the design and systems on it, and it is fairly easy to maintain."

Cartwright used to fly, and has had his private license since 1946. He, along with three other Piedmont employees, owned a Taylorcraft, a two-place side-by-side aircraft, for a while. "Wish we still had it today. Probably be worth something," he said with a grin.

He also rode on many of Piedmont's early inaugural flights. "They were all exciting," he said. He particularly remembers 1961 when Piedmont had a major expansion program including the addition of service to Atlanta and Baltimore. At about the same time, Piedmont purchased 17 Martin 404 aircraft, making us the owner of the largest fleet of modern, pressurized aircraft in the local service air transport industry. "For a company Piedmont's size, these were major undertakings which meant a big job for us in maintenance."

Cartwright doesn't as yet have any major trips planned after he retires. "I'm just going to piddle around my garden and mess with my tractors and cars. I also want to spend some time at Lake Norman doing some fishing." Then he added with a touch of sadness in his eyes, "The biggest thing I'll miss is the people here."

And many people will miss Cartwright. He would like to "just fade away" but since he officially announced his retirement a few weeks ago, people have been stopping by to let him know how much they've enjoyed knowing and working with him. One person aptly described the feelings of many when he said, "You're Piedmont, and it's hard to see you go."



Cartwright



Wells and Beeler

GAG co-sponsors Bonanza In 10th Air Race Classic

Thirty-five aircraft were in a race last month from Santa Rosa, CA, to Toledo, OH—a distance of over 2,000 miles—vying for first place in the tenth annual Air Race Classic.

Among the flyers were two women, May Cay Beeler and Anita Sasser, who were co-sponsored by Piedmont's General Aviation Group (GAG) and Air Services, Inc., a subsidiary of GAG. They flew a Piedmont F33A Bonanza in competition against some of the best female pilots in the country, and although they didn't win, they did well in the four-day competition.

"The race is held to promote women in aviation," Beeler, co-host for "PM Magazine" on WFMY-TV in Greensboro, explained. "We were the rookie team. The other pilots had anywhere from 5,000 to 40,000 hours, and the average age was 65." Beeler and Sasser, both in their 30s, were the youngest team with the fewest hours to their credit.

"The Bonanza performed beautifully," Beeler said. "I learned more about flying in the two weeks we took for the race than many people learn in a lifetime." She carried a video camera with her on the flight, and a cameraman flew to Toledo to film the finish. The story appeared this month on a segment of the popular evening television show.

"The race was good publicity for the aircraft itself," Rob Wells, Beechcraft sales manager, INT, said. "It's the first time we've co-sponsored an event like the Air Race Classic, and we were very pleased with the results."

So were Beeler and Sasser. The enthusiastic pilots look forward to doing even better in competition next year.