

March 8, 2008

The Life of Melvyn Ott

- Melvyn J. Ott age 65, retired Northwest Airlines Captain of Merritt Island, Florida flew west on his final check February 7, 2008.
- Mel "Tarmack" Ott was born on April 6, 1942 in Aberdeen, South Dakota to Orville and Marcella Ott. As a young boy Mel was a typical farm kid who worked with his family to raise cattle and wheat. He attended Groton High School and lived in the rural Verdon area. As a young boy Mel had the chance to hunt with Marine Corps ace Joe Foss and his first airplane ride was with his uncle, Capt. Jack Volkel, a Northwest



Airlines pilot who owned a personal DC-3. Mel was inspired to be a professional baseball player after attending South Dakota State University but after talking with several baseball scouts he decided to pursue flying. Mel convinced his father to purchase a Cessna 150 so he could amass flight time and provide flight instruction, and in 1965 he was hired by Northwest Orient Airlines as a second officer (S/O) on the B-707.

- Mel flew 32 years with NWA flying the B707, B727, DC-10, B747, and B747-400. He was routinely flying orient routes since the early 1980's. Mel was given the nickname "Tarmack" since he was repeatedly seen on the ramp area smoking. In 1980, Mel moved to the southwest Florida coast along with his wife Shirley, daughters Stephanie and Stacy, and son Randy. Mel was very active in boating and named his boats "Jetlag" referring to the tiresome time zone travel of a long haul wide body pilot. In 1990 Capt. "Tarmack" flew the inaugural New York to Tokyo nonstop 747-400 flight. Mel was also an active general aviation pilot and longtime Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) member, owning several aircraft including the complete Grumman aviation line and a Christen Eagle II. In 1998 he finished a Curtiss Falcon replica biplane that was featured in several popular aviation magazines and made the front cover of EAA's "Sport Aviation" in 2001. Mel had taught his son Randy to fly, and he was later hired by United Airlines. He would often follow his son to aerobatic contests in which his son competed in an Extra 300S. Mel also like to camp at EAA Oshkosh and EAA Sun-N-Fun, often going early to get the best possible camping spot and always taking his small dog "Curtiss" with him.
- Mel also was active with personal Computer Flight Simulation, in which he was a beta tester for various companies, including Microsoft, that market the flight simula

tion software. He also authored a book about flying the B747-400 and was well known within the flight simulation community (AvSim)

- Mel is survived by his wife Shirley of 43 years, daughters Stephanie Ott-Schwartzberg and Stacy Kamp, son Randy Ott and two grandsons, Tristan Kamp and Brady Schwartzberg, all living in Florida. He is also survived by his brother Jerry Ott, and sisters Anita Voss and Donna Job.
- Mel will be honored at the 2008 EAA AirVenture "Oshkosh" with his name on the Memorial Wall at the EAA Oshkosh campus reflecting his dedication, spirit, and passion for aviation.
- Later this summer his remains will be scattered over the Atlantic Ocean as he requested.
- Dad, may you have strong tailwinds on your flight west, excellent weather for the approach, plenty of fuel upon arrival and many cold beers and fellow aviators waiting for you at the bar! May you enjoy your meals at the "Captain's Table". Your contrails will never fade and your legend and memories will live on forever.