

In Memory of Captain Sherman Hart

April 21, 1929 - March 21, 1999



In news reports of Sherman's passing, a family member wrote the following, which was printed in the *Virginian Pilot*: "Capt. Sherman Hart of Virginia Beach took his last flight into eternity at 7:40 p.m., Sunday, March 21, 1999 at a local hospital. He earned his eternal wings at the age of 69 years."

I thought to myself, how wonderful and appropriate this statement was. Then my thoughts went back to 1959 when I first met Sherman. I was a young man working at the Norfolk Airport with aspirations of becoming an aviator. To be a pilot was what I most desired in life. I was fortunate enough to have access to an airplane, but I was limited in funds for repairs and fuel. Plus, I was having trouble finding a flight instructor.

Then I met a fella by the name of Sherman Hart. I explained to Sherman my need for a flight instructor. After we talked for a few minutes, Sherman said, "OK, I'll help you." At that time we made an appointment for my first lesson...six and one half hours later Sherman soloed me. Then we flew for two more lessons. Afterward, I informed Sherman that I would have to postpone my flying because my financial resources had been depleted and I could no longer pay for his services. I explained to Sherman that, "When I accumulate more funds, I will get back with you." Sherman's reply was simply, "Don't worry about it. We'll work that out later." He said, "As long as you can buy the gas and keep the airplane flying, then we'll just keep going."

So, over the next few years, Sherman continued to take me through my private and commercial licenses as well as instrument and multi-engine ratings. When I was qualified, I applied with Piedmont Airlines. With a recommendation from Sherman, I soon was hired as a First Officer.

In 1966 Sherman was promoted to Captain. Needless to say, I was very happy and pleased to fly with this man, who had done so much to enhance my career.

As years went by, Sherman and I went through the normal process of upgrading to different types of aircraft. In

January 1979, I became a Piedmont Captain. Although we never flew together again, we always kept in touch by phone or visiting in each other's home. Oh, by the way, I thought finding a flight instructor was a challenge, but trying to pay Sherman back for all of his kindness was the real challenge.

Please let me share with you two quick stories.

The day came when I was to go on my first solo cross-country. Sherman said, "Don, how about flying me over to Emporia, Virginia? I'll stay and you can take your first solo cross country flight back to Norfolk." I replied, "That's OK with me." Arriving at Emporia, Sherman got out of the airplane and was about to close the door when I asked the question, "Sherman, suppose I get lost?" Sherman replied, "Just keep flying East until you come to a big body of water. Then turn left. You'll be OK." He smiled and laughed, closed the door and he was gone.

About 15 years ago during a conversation that Sherman and I were having, I suddenly remembered that he had said that I was going to be his last student. I asked him why he had he come to that decision. He looked at me with that Sherman smile and said, "Teaching you to fly made my hair turn gray prematurely...some of your flying put the fear of God in me...and sometimes you about drove me nuts." Then, he laughed.

Because of my good fortune in meeting Sherman, I can look back on my life and my career with much happiness and pride. And I can say, "Thank you, my very best friend."

In closing, as I think of my friend, I would like to believe that on the fated Sunday evening when Sherman left us to be with our Heavenly Father, a voice somewhere said, "Arriving Piedmont Airlines Capt. William S. Hart...your life...well done!"

*Captain Don Holloman (CLT)
Retired*

