



Montgomery Flight – 1904



Moffett Field – 1933



China Clipper – 1936



Hiller XH-44 – 1944



NASA Ames Research Center – 1981

# Northern Wings

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The Aero Club of Northern California

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Global Flyer over Sierra Nevada

## 2007 Crystal Eagle Dinner delayed as Fossett vanishes

With the disappearance of aviator and adventurer Steve Fossett, the honoree for the 2007 Crystal Eagle

Award, the Aero Club of Northern California has postponed the annual event until early in 2008.

Fossett, the only man to fly solo around the world non-stop – in both an airplane and a balloon -- was to receive the award at the annual Crystal Eagle Dinner Oct. 20. The award is presented annually by the Aero Club of Northern California to honor those whose achievements are among the highest in aviation.

Fossett has been missing since Sept. 3 when he took off from a private airstrip near Minden, Nev., in a single-engine Citabria Decathlon aircraft to scout dry lakes as possible locations for his planned attempt to break the world's land speed record by driving more than 800 mph in a jet-powered car.

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Steve Fossett in cockpit of Global Flyer -- Virgin Atlantic Global Flyer photos

## San Jose's 'New Airport' terminal topped off

Construction is charging ahead on Mineta San Jose International Airport's new passenger terminal facilities, with a milestone reached recently and a 2010 completion target firmly in sight.

As the final steel beam was hoisted into place to complete the frame of the new North Concourse of the James M. Nissen Passenger Terminal, hundreds of construction workers and community and political leaders attended the traditional topping out

ceremonies Aug. 10. Among them was Norm Mineta, the former San Jose mayor, congressman and U.S. secretary of transportation for whom the airport was renamed by the city council in 2001.

The 380,000-square-foot North Concourse, costing \$324 million, is the first major component of San Jose's "New Airport" program to replace or rebuild passenger facilities over the next three years.

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-- Northern Wings photo

**S.J. Mayor Chuck Reed, Aviation Director Bill Sherry and Norm Mineta at North Concourse topping-off.**

## Ronald Reuther, 78, founder of Oakland air museum, dies

Ronald T. Reuther, 78, a former Aero Club board member and founder of the Western Aerospace Museum in Oakland, died Oct. 4 after a long battle with cancer.

Reuther, who spent decades as an Air Force, National Guard and commercial pilot, served on the Aero Club's board of directors from 2003 to 2005, when he resigned for health reasons.



**Ronald Reuther**

At the October 2006 Crystal Eagle Dinner, the Aero Club presented Reuther with a National Aeronautic Association Certificate of Honor for his life-long contributions to the advancement of flight.

Reuther had logged more than 5,000 flight hours in military and civilian aircraft. Air Force duty took him to Europe, Africa and the Middle East in the mid-1950s. He flew in the National Guard after leaving active military service.

As a civilian, Reuther was a zoologist by profession. He was manager, director or curator of five city zoos -- Lodi, Cleveland, Indianapolis, San Francisco and Philadelphia.

In 1980, Reuther was one of the founders of the Western Aerospace Museum at Oakland International Airport's North Field. A Belvedere resident, Reuther later was museum executive director and lectured on aviation history, in particular on Amelia Earhart.

## Steve Fossett vanishes; Eagle Dinner delayed

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Days of aerial searches and satellite surveillance have failed to turn up a trace of the legendary aviator in the rugged and barren Nevada desert. The search was officially suspended on Oct. 2.

Fossett, 63, is best known for setting 117 world records, including five non-stop circumnavigations of the globe as a solo balloonist, airplane pilot and sailor.

In 2002, on his sixth attempt, Fossett became the first person to make a solo balloon flight around the world. He took off from Western Australia on June 19 and landed more than 13 days later in Queensland, Australia, covering 20,626 statute miles.

As an airplane pilot, Fossett made the first solo non-stop and non-

refueled flight around the world from Salina, Kan., in 67 hours in the Virgin Atlantic Global Flyer in 2005.

The next year, again alone aboard the single-engine jet Global Flyer, he set the absolute record for the longest flight of any aircraft in history, going around the world in 76 hours 43 minutes and covering 25,766 miles non-stop unrefueled.

As a glider pilot, his world records include the Aug. 29, 2006 flight with co-pilot Einer Enevoldson that set the absolute altitude record for sailplanes at 50,727 feet.

Fossett grew up in Garden Grove, Calif., and graduated from Stanford University. He founded and managed a Chicago-based financial trading company.

## San Jose Council names Sweeney to SJC Commission

Frank Sweeney, a retired newspaper journalist and member of the Aero Club Board of Directors, has been appointed to a three-year term on the San Jose Airport Commission.



**Frank Sweeney**

Sweeney's term will run through June 2010. The seven-member commission advises the San Jose City Council on aviation issues, including the \$1.3 billion

passenger terminal expansion at Mineta San Jose International Airport.

A private pilot who has logged time in 16 types of aircraft over the past 33 years, Sweeney was a reporter and editor at the San Jose Mercury News for 37 years, retiring in 2004. He wrote about aviation, transportation, government and science issues. He is editor of Northern Wings.

A journalism graduate of San Jose State University, he served as an antisubmarine warfare specialist in the Coast Guard and Reserve in the early 1960s.

### Aero Club of Northern California 2007 Board of Directors

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and newsletter editor

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# Ernie Renzel, Father of SJC, dies at age 100

Ernest H. Renzel Jr., known as the “Father of San Jose Airport,” died Sept. 15 at his home in San Jose’s Naglee Park neighborhood where he had lived since the 1930s. He was 100 years old.

The airfield – the runways and the land – at Mineta San Jose International Airport is named “Ernie Renzel Field” for good reason. More than 60 years ago, Renzel, a civic-minded wholesale grocer, led the public drive to build an airport in San Jose. He headed the Citizens Airport Committee in a campaign to “get San Jose out of the horse-and-buggy era,” as he put it.

The committee, with representatives of three dozen fraternal and civic organizations, in 1939 identified the best location for a municipal airport -- 483 acres of open land a couple miles north of downtown San Jose.

Renzel led the negotiations to sell the land to the city. He and his committee promoted a \$300,000 bond



-- Frank Sweeney photo

## Ernie Renzel with daughter Jenifer at Renzel Field dedication in 2004.

campaign in 1940 to finance the purchase. But development was delayed during World War II when the federal government banned civilian flying within 150 miles of the West Coast.

In 1947, Renzel was on the San Jose City Council and had served as mayor. Renzel convinced Jim Nissen, who with two others had leased 16.4 acres of the airport land and operated a small flying service, to sell his business, become the city airport

manager and build the airport.

The first commercial airline flight at San Jose Municipal Airport took place on Feb. 1, 1949, when a twin-engine Southwest Airways DC-3 with two pilots, seven passengers and 2,550 baby chickens landed.

In 2003, the San Jose City Council at the request of the Aero Club of Northern California named the airfield for Renzel and the new passenger terminal complex for Nissen, who developed the airfield into a modern jet airport by the mid-1970s.

# SJC event marks topping off new North Concourse

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The \$1.3 billion project includes replacing the 1965-vintage Terminal C with a new Terminal B. Terminal A will be expanded, and a new 3,400-space rental car parking garage and improved roadways will be built.

The nine-gate North Concourse is scheduled to be completed next year and go into service in 2009.

It will have an automated state-of-the-art baggage sorting and explosive detection system to replace temporary screening facilities.



-- Northern Wings photo

## North Concourse framework towers over television crews.

## History Corner

# Civic campaign brought Moffett to Bay Area

As the Great Depression deepened in the early 1930s, a real estate agent began a campaign to get more federal money into the South San Francisco Bay Area. The Navy was looking at the San Diego and the Bay Area to base one of its huge airships.

Laura Whipple worked with chambers of commerce from San Jose to San Francisco, convincing them to donate \$276,000 in 1931, with which they bought 1,000 acres of farmland and offered it to the Navy for one dollar. That clinched the deal that created Moffett Field.

The Navy spent \$5 million to build what was then called Sunnyvale Naval Air Station -- in Mountain View. In return for its local investment, the South Bay got hundreds of new jobs.

When the base opened in 1933, the 785-foot-long airship USS Macon, a dirigible with a rigid frame supporting the helium-filled cells that provided lift, was based in cavernous Hangar One.

"You could put 12 Goodyear blimps in Hangar One," said Carl Honaker, who was the last executive officer of Moffett Field before the Navy left in 1994. "You could put one Macon in Hangar One."

But the era of giant airships was about over.

"The Macon had problems with its tail rigging," said Honaker, now the president of the Aero Club of Northern California. "In a storm off Big Sur, it lost control and gently flew its way into the ocean. All but two crew members survived."

The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, the forerunner of today's space agency, opened Ames Research Center next door in 1940. Ames, on the cutting



**Moffett Field's Historic Hangar One** -- Northern Wings photo

edge of aeronautical research, took Santa Clara Valley into the space age and now operates Moffett Field.

The base went under Army control in the late 1930s, but was given back to the Navy in 1942 and renamed Moffett Field after the Navy admiral who died in a crash of another airship off the Atlantic Coast. The Navy built two more giant hangars and based coastal patrol blimps during World War II. In the 1950s, Moffett Field was a fighter base, and later was home for the Navy submarine-hunting P-3 Orions that Honaker flew.

"Moffett Field was one of the driving forces behind Silicon Valley," Honaker said. The space agency could use its airfield and tap "the brain trusts nearby at Stanford, Cal and San Jose State. It brought in talent. Then Lockheed came in, and other defense contractors. Moffett was one of the sparks that helped create the postwar era start of Silicon Valley."

NASA Ames Research Center has operated Moffett Field since the Navy left 13 years ago.

## The Aero Club of Northern California

**2500 Cunningham Avenue  
San Jose, California 95148  
(408) 929-1060**

Chartered in 1981 as a chapter of the  
National Aeronautic Association



-- To keep the public informed of the importance of aviation and space flight to the nation's economic progress, its security, and to international understanding.  
-- To support a vigorous aviation and space education program for students at all levels of learning.  
-- To recognize and honor those who make outstanding contributions to the advancement of aviation and space flight.