

Jackie McNeill



Born: 15 March 1932
Edmonton, Alberta

Died: 21 November 2017
Sidney, B.C.

Pilot
Restaurateur

Family: Wife Evie (Brazier)
First wife Lola
1 son, 3 daughters
Grandchildren

Queen Charlotte Airlines

P.W.A.

BC Air Services

Biography "*Forty Years Throttle to Bottle*"

Jackie's grandfather Jock was a trailblazer in the early days of Edmonton. He established the first taxi, bus and ambulance services and by 1919 had built the city's first airfield, first aeroplane hangar, and inaugurated the first air service between Edmonton and Calgary as well as establishing the first air ambulance.

Jackie grew up surrounded by aviators but when, at 15, he left school in Edmonton, he travelled north to work in the oilfields with a drilling crew. He was fortunate to have an employer and mentor, Gene Kiniski, who recognised his intelligence and drive and helped him continue his high school education by correspondence. He banked part of Jackie's wages for a future "nest egg".

In 1950 Jackie left the oilfield when it closed for the winter and went to Vancouver, where he worked as a lifeguard at Kitsilano Beach. He took flying lessons at Vancouver Aero Club, Sea Island, on a Fleet Canuck. Jackie quickly earned his private licence, but in the early 50's jobs in aviation were hard to get. Using his "nest egg" he rented planes to build up hours until he earned his commercial licence.

Jackie's first venture into commercial flying was with **Queen Charlotte Airlines, later P.W.A.**, where he was hired as a crewman on Stranraer's. Although a crewman, he filled the job of co-pilot and soon transferred to Mallards as first officer. During this time he was trained by **Henry Schindler** of **PWA**, qualified for IFR, earned his twin engine rating and learned Morse code. He flew the west coast for 2 to 3 years, flying regular runs into Tofino, Gold River, Tahsis, Zeballos and Kyuquot. When **PWA** got a contract to service the DEW line, Jackie tested on the PBV Catalina and spent several seasons flying to the Arctic.

During the 1950's **PWA** flew Mystery Tours on Sundays. The pilot would fly a plane load of passengers, who bought their tickets at the door, to a mystery location, where they could get an excellent lunch. Pilots could volunteer for the flights to make extra money and Jackie was a regular volunteer. He stayed with **PWA** from 1952 to 1969.

Jackie's next venture was with BC Air Services..B.C.A.S. operated a large variety of aircraft, including the Cessna Citation, for use by government officials. Their record for safety was not good and Jackie recognised the problem as being insufficient training and set about improving the situation. He distinguished himself as an innovative and creative pilot, working tirelessly to improve all aspects of flight safety. Working for B.C.A.S., he could live in Deep Cove. He loved the climate of the South Island and loved his life there with his wife, four children and German shepherd dogs.

In 1987 Jackie left .B.C.A.S. to be a consultant on a B-747 Canada Chinese International Freight operation. When the contract ended he joined the Dynam Group, who developed Real Estate, and stayed with them until the Real Estate recession in 1991.

In 1991 Jackie started new phase of his life, operating restaurants including Mary's, which he bought, renovated, and renamed Mary's Blue Moon, and Squid Roe in Sidney which he reincarnated as Boondocks. Both restaurants were filled with Jackie's aviation memorabilia. This is still at Mary's, though Boondocks no longer exists. (2024)

Jack McNeill's stories and reminiscences can be found in "Forty Years Throttle to Bottle" available at BCAM library

