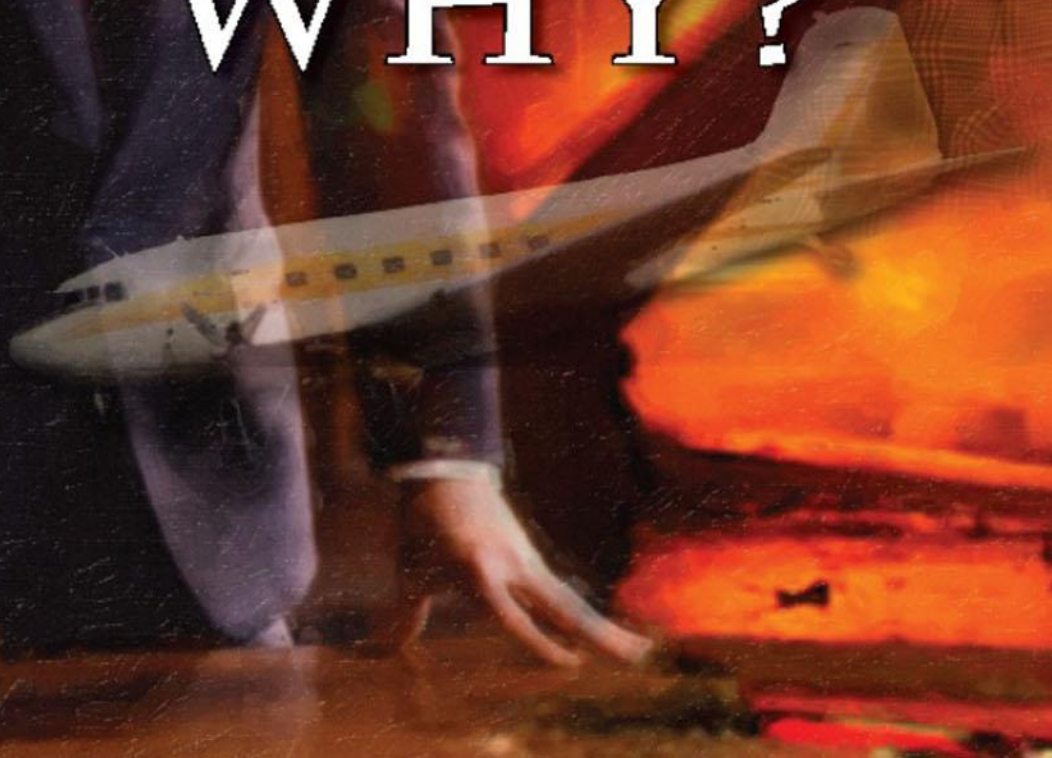


HUGH BOWEN

WHY?



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Hugh Bowen

A hard beginning maketh a good ending.
—John Heywood, 1546



Eloquent Books
New York, New York

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Eloquent Books
An imprint of AEG Publishing Group
845 Third Avenue, 6th Floor — #6016
New York, NY 10022
www.eloquentbooks.com

ISBN: 978-1-61897-633-8
SKU: 1-61897-633-8

Printed in the United States of America

This book is dedicated to all those passengers, crews, and others who have been killed or injured in aircraft accidents. Though intolerably sad, their death and suffering have not been entirely in vain. Finding the cause of the crashes has enabled us to fly now with great safety.

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1

The Flight In

Around Minneapolis in that December, the snow had only just begun to layer the ground in whiteness. Nights had been cold, but the daytime temperatures had risen high enough to temper the first thrusts of winter. Christmas day was mild. Doug and Mary Olsen took a walk in the afternoon, strolling along in the northern sunshine. They waved to their neighbors as they went by, wishing them a Merry Christmas. Children played on the slopes, trying out the sleds that had been put under the Christmas trees the night before. Many of the people in the area were of Scandinavian descent and followed the custom of opening their presents on Christmas Eve. Both Doug's and Mary's families had been in America for five generations, around Minnesota and Wisconsin, and they happily kept up the old ways.

This year Doug and Mary had a good laugh; they'd given each other watches. Doug had given Mary one for evening wear,

with interchangeable casings of different colors. Mary had chosen a *navigator* watch with a rotating bezel, stop/start knobs and other features. A pilot friend told her it was what the best pilots were wearing those days. Doug had chuckled that between them they would be sure to get to the hospital on time. Mary was six months pregnant with their first child. Her mother was already impatient to have grandchildren.

They walked to the end of the street. Country lay beyond, with tree limbs standing stark against the winter sky. Doug thrust his hands into the pockets of the jacket.

“So what do you think, Mary, about the job?”

“You mean about being an instructor pilot?”

“Ya. It’s what happens once you’ve enough hours.”

Doug kicked a pebble along the street. They walked on a bit. Mary slipped her hand into his pocket to join her hand with his. They’d talked of it before. It seemed no less inevitable than growing up, to grow into full adulthood, full manhood.

“How soon do you have to decide, Doug?”

“When Art asks me. Next week, I guess. As you know, I’ll be more desk bound and it means being away more, coming home late.” Doug kicked another pebble, sending it tumbling down the roadway, like he’d done when a boy.

Mary found it difficult to tell her husband how much she admired him. Doug really cared. He’d joined the Air Force out of college and done five years; then decided that the military life was not for him. North Airways had snapped him up. Not just because he was Air Force trained, but because the people who had interviewed him and given him check rides found him to be

the steady, capable, well-put-together young pilot they were looking for. When he'd joined they were still flying the C 54 for cargo. He had moved up to the passenger Cormont 450, still a piston-engined plane but with more advanced systems; then converted to the Cormont 650, a prop-jet, going to the flight school and putting in the hours on the flight simulator. Having cleared the course he was certificated for the right-hand seat; that is, of first officer or co-pilot.

All the time Doug studied. Being a pilot means being a perpetual student. But alongside that was the actual experience of flying; of leaving the ground, ascending like Icarus, joining the stars; but always aware of the dangers of flying "too high," of melting one's wings. At night he would see the North Star and Orion's belt and know that the plane's course was right by the milestones of heaven.

Though, to be accurate, they were pretty earthbound. North Airways was a *puddle-jumper* airline. They flew to the smaller places like Wausau and Manitowoc, coming in low over the cornfields. The airfields were not big and glamorous. Aircraft, like the Cormont 650, configured for twenty-eight passengers in the case of North Airways, were suited to the short runways; and their prop-jet engines were more economical than pure jets for the low altitude flying.

Doug had done well and been promoted to captain. He had 11,000 hours plus in his log-book and not a single adverse remark on his record sheet. A long time back he'd heard the saying: *There are old pilots and bold pilots, but there are damn few old, bold pilots.* That's how he approached his work. One night

he'd lost an engine just after takeoff. He'd had to push the throttle of the remaining engine to the limit, through the gate. Then he'd nursed the engine along and brought the ship back to a safe landing. His emergency procedures had been right on and he'd been commended. Doug took pride in what he'd done, though he wasn't one to flaunt his feelings. The stock he came from was not from that mold.

In many ways Mary was like her husband, clinging to the values she'd been brought up on, but very much her own person. She was teaching in the middle school in Wheaton and deeply involved with young minds grasping at ideas. Having their child would mean giving that up. The paycheck she contributed to the household expenses would stop. The extra Doug would be bringing home, if he accepted the job, would make up some of the difference.

“Do you feel ready for it, Doug?”

Doug looked up at the clear sky. A white contrail striped the blue dome. A few high cirrus clouds, mare's tails, had appeared. The weather would be changing. Pilots, like farmers and sailors, learn to read the signs.

“Yup! Somebody has to do it and do it well. If nothing else, I don't want to fly with some Johnny who doesn't know his stuff!”

Mary squeezed his hand. “Do what you think best, Doug. When I married you, I knew I was marrying a pilot.”

Doug had the week off over Christmas and New Year. He was using the time to convert their second bedroom into a nursery. It entailed breaking through a wall to have their own bedroom connect to it.

He'd started the job, but hadn't got on as fast as he'd hoped. He hadn't felt so great. He'd had a cold and, on Mary's prompting, taken antihistamines and vitamin-C pills. The antihistamines stopped him feeling so stuffy. But he didn't like taking them. He hated taking pills and these ones made him drowsy. He liked natural things and would say, not only as a joke, that having colds was good for you, they beefed up the immune system. In any event the cold had cleared up and now he felt fine. Yesterday he'd run into Dr. Smaarten, their doctor, in the hardware store. The doctor had commiserated with him. The bug was going the rounds.

"The worst is over, doc," Doug told him cheerfully.

"Colds mostly cure themselves, the truth be known. Drink plenty of fluids, Doug; don't work too hard and eat that pumpkin pie Mary makes. I tell you that's so good it'll cure anything!"

Mary brought him coffee. Doug sat in the window with his cup, gazing out to the nearby woods. Art Lindbletter would be talking to him when he got back. Art was the Director of Flight Operations at North Airways and what he didn't know about the Cormont 650 wasn't worth knowing. He'd been in on the aircraft since its design stages and had flown it through its proving trials. As Doug well knew, Art didn't stand for anything second-rate in his pilots or ground crew, and that suited Doug fine.

Doug finished his coffee and went back to work. In size he was just about average: 5 feet 9 inches, 175 pounds. His light brown hair had a way of flopping over his forehead. His face was rugged rather than handsome and his natural expression

was on the serious side. He kept himself fit by jogging, lifting weights, and playing tennis in the summer. He liked being the handyman around their house being, in his own way, as house proud as his wife.

That evening Doug eased himself into a wing back chair, pleasantly tired. Mary was putting dinner together. She came in to share a glass of wine while Doug watched a college football game. He told her, "I'll have the job done tomorrow."

"Hey! These are supposed to be your days off. Take it easy. How do you feel?"

"Good! Except for my thumb! I hit it with a hammer! Isn't that a classic? It's nothing though. I want to finish up and have everything set. I don't know how much free time I'll have after I take the job."

"You've made up your mind?"

Doug nodded. "I guess I always had. I just needed a bit of time for the idea to sink in and to talk with you about it. I don't like making decisions in a hurry."

"Oh, I know!" Mary replied with a laugh, remembering the deliberate way Doug had courted her. She thought he'd never pop the question. But, at least, they were very sure by then.

In bed that night they fell asleep in each other's arms. Doug's hand rested lightly on her stomach, on the child they had created, on the promise of their future.

Mid morning the phone rang. Doug was working on the doorway between their room and the new nursery. Mary answered it and called up the stairs that it was for him, making a face as she told him, "It's Stan."

Stan Fletcher was the dispatcher for North Airways at Minneapolis airport and, among his jobs, was to make up crews for the flights.

“Shit!” Doug muttered.

He picked up the phone in the bedroom.

“Hey, Doug! Merry Christmas!” Stan said.

“And to you, I hope. But I know you’re going to disappoint me!”

“OK, you’ve guessed it. Brod called in. He’s down with the flu. We’re all right except for Flight 458 round the loop and into O’Hare this evening, the captain’s seat.”

“Am I next up?”

“Yes, you’re it, Doug. You’re the only one left. The weather isn’t great. There’s a messy occluded front coming in from the north, but it’s not too bad. The wind will pick up a bit. It’s not cold enough to worry about icing and it doesn’t look as if any of the airfields will be closing. But we’ve got to reckon on minimums with the low cloud and rain. You’re all set, aren’t you? I have you figured at 106 hours on the 650.”

“That’s right, Stan. I went over the hundred the trip before last.”

“So you’re OK on requirements. How about regs?”

“No problem. Some wine last night with dinner, that’s it.”

“Good. It’s a five o’clock departure, Doug, so you’ll have to move your bones. Sorry to do this to you, buddy. How’s Mary?”

“Fine, thanks. At least, she was until you phoned!”

“Yeah... one day you may have this job.”

“I’ll resign first! Just kidding. Who am I flying with?”

“Les DeGrange.”

“Roger. See you in a bit.”

Doug put the phone down and shrugged his shoulders. It wasn't unusual to have to fly a stand-in flight. They all did it from time to time. It's what he had to expect, too, now that he was fully qualified on the Cormont 650. He had accumulated the required number of hours and landings to fly the aircraft and land it under minimum visibility conditions. As for regulations, “regs” among aviation people, he led a temperate life-style, liking his glass of wine of an evening, provided he didn't have to fly until the next day. That was about it.

“Looks like I'll be overnight in Chicago, but we'll see,” Doug called out to Mary.

He showered and shaved. Mary packed a clean shirt and underclothes and put his toiletries in his overnight case. She looked over her shoulder to see her husband buttoning up his uniform. Doug took pride in his appearance, something she knew and admired about him.

“Is there any mail from the office?” he asked.

“No, I didn't see anything. Maybe it's taking it's own sweet time in getting here. It's Christmas!”

“I guess,” Doug agreed.

He closed the top of his flight case. He brought his home with him rather than leave it at North Airways. That way, whatever documents he received, either at home or in his office mailbox, would be in one place. If they needed to stay in his flight case, they were in the right place. If they didn't, they ended up in the files he kept at home.

At two o'clock he climbed into their Chevy. Mary kissed him good-bye.

"Take it easy, hon," Doug said, backing the car down the driveway.

Mary went inside. She never really worried about Doug. Flying was very safe. She knew that. But she was always thankful when she saw the car coming in the driveway again and Doug climbing out and giving her that special smile he kept just for her.

The drive to Minneapolis airport from Wheaton took Doug the usual 40 minutes. He went past the stadium and the cluster of motels to park the car in the North Airways lot. He put on his cap, grabbed his cases, locked the car, and walked over to the Flight Office.

Stan was on the phone. Doug helped himself to a coffee and looked over the Assignment Board. It confirmed that Les DeGrange would be flying with him. Nancy Fortmeister would be the flight attendant.

"Hi, Doug," Stan said, putting the phone down. "Sorry to bust into your week but the good news is that, with any luck, you'll be back this evening. We've got crews to cover everything else."

"You don't need me to bring something back tomorrow?"

"Not unless we get a change. It's just Flight 458 this evening we were stuck on. We've got a bit of shuffling to do, however. Dick Powers is at Wausau. Pick him up and take him on to Milwaukee."

Captain Powers was the North Airways senior pilot under Art Lindbletter, with more than 20,000 hours, and very well

respected. Art would ask Dick to do check rides on new pilots and those on the promotion list. That way he had a trusted second opinion to put with his own.

“Right,” Doug said; “What’s our loading like?”

“You’re going to be light out of here, but you’ll have a good pick up along the route. There’s some machinery at Wausau to be loaded and taken into O’Hare. Passenger-wise you’ll be close to full out of Green Bay to Milwaukee and the same for going into O’Hare.”

Doug phoned Mary to tell her he could be back late that evening. He’d let her know.

Les DeGrange came into the office. “Hi, Doug; how goes it? Poor old Brod, eh! I went round to his house to take his kids to a game. It’s that damn Asian flu.”

“I had a touch of something myself. Made me feel droopy for a couple of days,” Doug told him. “But the bug didn’t like me, I guess. I hope you didn’t catch anything from Brod.”

“No way! I never get sick. I wish I did sometimes!” Les grinned. “I’m the guy they rely on to keep ’em flying!”

Doug grinned too. He’d flown many hours with Les. Les was one of the best First Officers they had and a very likable fellow.

“It looks as if we could be back tonight, if we can find a ride,” Doug told him.

“You’re such a married man, Doug! I’ll phone Susie after we’ve got in at Chicago and have seen what’s what. Perhaps she deserves a night off!”

Stan laughed, “That poor Susie! Give her a break!”

Susie was Les's wife about whom he was wildly passionate, which he took no pains to hide. Doug grinned as Les made a pretense of bopping Stan one. But it was time to get on with it. "Let's get the show on the road, Les. I see we've got 4268, Stan."

"Ya, back from a 500 hour service, checked this morning, the sheet's in your box."

Doug found the aircraft's *squawk sheet*, otherwise known as the Aircraft Status Report. The crew that had last flown the aircraft would have noted anything they had found faulty, and maintenance would have annotated what they had done about it. Doug and Les went through it.

"H'mph," Doug grunted as he read that the right hand engine wasn't putting out full power; it was within limits though. The plane would have a tendency to pull to the right. Not that that was entirely bad. The torque of the two Allied engines at takeoff power made it pull to the left. You used rudder to keep the plane straight down the runway. Putting a little less power on the right engine than the left was a usual way to balance the plane and help it fly straight.

"We'll just watch it, Les. It shouldn't be a problem."

"Sure, Doug. I see they've still got a crap shoot going on with the NAV receivers, swapping them around."

"Yah. I'll be glad when we have all the planes fixed up with the new equipment. That goddam Brawlins company! They're still behind on the change over. We're last on their list, I guess. The big-boy airlines get first pickings. Not that it should matter this evening. We have a full complement of boxes and they're all

checked out, it says here. Let's hope we don't get any sticky needles or funny flags."

Needles were the pointers on the various instruments that occasionally stuck in some position or were slow in moving. *Flags* were red pop-ups that appeared on the sides of the Flight Director instruments. They covered over the data appearing there when there was a problem with the information. *Funny flags* was the pilots' name for when the flags came up when nothing was wrong with the data.

"We've had funny flags before!" Les commented.

"That's for sure," Doug agreed.

Doug and Les went through the papers in their boxes. They put the various updates and notices in their notebooks and the notebooks in their cases. Doug didn't see anything that particularly took his attention, just routine stuff. The distribution was pretty good but it could be a few days before something caught up with him.

They filed their flight plan. Met briefed them on the weather. The wind was light from the north. No wind shear was predicted. Wind speed would pick up a bit, but not enough to cause any problems. Clouds would be down to 200 feet in places. The low clouds were fractostratus followed by altostratus up to 12,000 feet. That meant they'd be flying in cloud or between cloud layers. No stars tonight.

Les DeGrange put on his raincoat and went to the flight line. It was sleeting at four o'clock in the afternoon. He had his flashlight with him and shone it up into the wheel wells and at the other items on the outside of the aircraft that it was his responsibility to check.

Doug boarded. He hung up his coat and jacket in the small closet back of the cockpit and stowed his case behind his seat, the one on the left in the cockpit. He took out his notebook containing the airfield *cards*. These were cards that fitted into a slot at the top of the control column, the yoke. The cards provided up-to-date information about takeoffs and landings at each airport. Every so often there were changes and the pilots had to know about them. Doug switched on the power and went through the preliminary ground checks, pushing the yoke up and down, right and left. Les checked the motions of the control surfaces outside.

Les was glad to board after having his upturned face spattered with cold sleety rain. "She looks to be in one piece," he told Doug in the cockpit.

"OK. Let's get her to the gate."

The tower gave them permission to taxi. The two men monitored the gauges that relayed what was happening in the engines: temperatures, pressures, revolutions, horsepower. At the gate the ground crew brought the dock to the door. Nancy Fortmeister, smart and cool, with her blonde hair tied back over her head, came on board. She went back to check on the food service truck delivering coffee, drinks, etc. A few minutes later the passengers came on board.

Doug and Les went through the pre-take-off checklist. The sharing of the work between the two pilots was part of the safety drill. The procedures ensured that the aircraft was flight worthy and that nothing had been overlooked. The need to be thorough was ingrained in Doug and Les, and the two of them respected each other for the care they took.

Eric Doakes was a passenger on Flight 458. He had hoped for a direct flight to Chicago, but none was available to arrive there before the North Airways flight, even though it was a puddle-jumper.

Eric was a large man, not in very good shape, and somewhat overflowed the confines of the narrow coach seat. He'd asked for a window and, given a choice, he'd opted for the second to last row on the right side. He didn't mind being in the tail. It was easier to get another drink from the flight attendant and, too, most people preferred the front seats. That made it more likely the seat next to him would be unoccupied though Nancy, after greeting him on board, told him that later on they expected the flight to be full. He undid his shoelaces knowing his feet would swell, they always did. He flew North Airways often, making the rounds of clients and prospects for the insurance agency he worked for in Minneapolis. The flight attendants welcomed him on board by name, like Nancy had done just now. It made him feel at home.

They were taxiing. Eric looked out at the airport scene. The sun had set. Dusk was turning into night. Rain swept over the airfield, mixing with the snow slush at the sides of the taxiways, where the blue lights gleamed palely. Nancy went through the safety/emergency procedures. Eric had heard it a hundred times. The Captain came on.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is your captain. Welcome aboard North Airways Flight 458 bound for Chicago O’Hare, with intermediate stops at Wausau, Green Bay, Manitowoc, and Milwaukee. We are number three for takeoff. Make yourself comfortable and thank you for flying North Airways.”

He and Les completed their checks and paperwork. The 650 was all set to do what it was built to do. They received clearance for takeoff. At the end of the runway Doug straightened up the plane. Then he opened up the engines by thrusting the two throttle levers forward to the “*Takeoff power*” position.

“Nine seventy-one, four thousand,” he said crisply, as he did the action.

Les followed Doug’s actions with his left hand on the levers. As the movement stopped, Les checked to see that neither engine exceeded 971 degrees in temperature or an output of 4,000 horsepower. Those were the limits for the engines.

Les watched the needles climb. He eased back the left engine a tad.

That’s how an aircraft’s two pilots work together. The captain gives the order and executes it himself to give a gross adjustment to the desired position. Then the co-pilot fine-tunes the settings. In this way the captain is free to scan the scene outside and steer the plane down the runway to lift-off, while the co-pilot ensures that the engines are at their proper and safe settings.

At takeoff speed Doug eased the stick back. The plane lifted off and climbed skyward.

“Gear up, flaps fifteen,” Doug called.

Doug engaged the Auto-Pilot/Flight-Director System in its *Heading* mode. The aircraft turned onto the heading to depart Minneapolis. They were in cloud, climbing steadily. Doug throttled back the engines to their *climb/cruise* setting. Les retracted the flaps all the way. The aircraft was cleaned up and on its way.

The two pilots checked things out. They informed the ground of their takeoff and reported their course, height, and position. They were given their vector to fly and tuned their VOR, a radio navigational system, to the Wausau beam. When they had locked onto it, Doug let the autopilot fly the aircraft. Their job was not, in a sense, to actually fly the aircraft, though they could always take over directly. Rather their job was to set, adjust, monitor and manage the systems that controlled and steered the aircraft.

Flight 458 was under IFR, Instrument Flight Rules. Under IFR a plane is flown on instruments until landing is imminent and the pilots can see the threshold lights of the runway. Only then do the pilots relinquish the instruments and put the plane down by manual control and visual reference. All this was thoroughly familiar to Doug and Les. They'd done it hundreds of times, in real aircraft and in the training simulators.

In the simulators you could repeat takeoffs, landings, maneuvers, procedures and drills until you had perfected them. The instructor could throw every malfunction and emergency in the book at you. You could "crash," but with damage done only to your pride. The instructor would point out what you should have done. You did it again. As long as the wings didn't fall off, a properly trained pilot, keeping his head, should be able to "*put out the fire,*" almost whatever it was, and bring his ship down safely.

Being proficient, passing the tests, gave a guy a lot of confidence. He could truly feel himself the captain of his ship and the master of his soul. Doug didn't share such flights of poetic

fancy with others, even though he would quietly entertain them himself.

Doug took Flight 458 into Wausau. It was a cinch. They broke out of cloud 300 feet above the ground. They could see the runway threshold lights from two miles out.

On the ground, as Stan back at Minneapolis had told them, there was cargo to be loaded.

The ground crew was handling a piece of heavy machinery and stowing it in the cargo bay. It took a bit of doing. Les checked its positioning and the fastenings after the ground crew were finished. Shifting cargo could be dangerous, especially at low speeds, when sudden changes in the center of gravity of the aircraft could cause trouble. They fell ten minutes behind schedule. Doug noted it on the flight report and radioed the agent at Minneapolis about the delay.

Dick Powers had been watching the loading from the comfort of the airport lounge. Now he came on board. Doug greeted his colleague, "Hear you need a lift, Dick."

"Ya, to Milwaukee. I'm flying a ship out in the morning."

"No sweat. We have seats in the cabin as far as Green Bay. After that we're due to have a full house to Milwaukee. You may have to ride the jump seat in front with us."

"That's OK by me, Doug. Just so long as I get there."

"Sure thing. As soon as we're finished loading, we'll be off. Les is checking the cargo."

Doug had Les land the plane at Green Bay. Doug acted as his co-pilot. It was good practice. Both knew each other's jobs that much better.

They cursed because the co-pilot's Flight Director instrument was acting up, showing *funny flags*. Les did the drill to correct the situation by turning the instrument off and then back on again. This *re-initialized* it. The instrument re-tuned itself to the signals relayed to it via the onboard computers contained in the NAV boxes behind them. Les checked it out. It was performing OK. Doug and Les crosschecked between the two sets of instruments to make sure of it.

Les noted the malfunction on the squawk sheet, suggesting that the NB3.1 NAV receiver, an older model, might be to blame. Maintenance would have to check the system and correct it. It was a nuisance, but not serious, an intermittent fault, readily knowable and easy to correct, and the instruments on the pilot's side were operating just fine.

At Green Bay, as expected, they took on more passengers. They had a full load. Doug told Dick he had to come up to the cockpit and ride the jump seat; a small seat that pulls out to occupy the narrow companionway behind the two pilots. On the Cormont 650 the jump seat is not the most comfortable way to fly. It has minimum padding and no armrests. Instructors, check-ride pilots, and technicians doing flight checks, use it.

Tonight it wasn't too bad for Dick Powers. He'd only have to ride the seat for the short hops to Manitowoc and Milwaukee.

Doug and Les were busy. They no sooner had the plane off the ground, on course and trimmed out, than they were preparing to put it down again. Dick thought they were doing a fine job. They went through the procedures and handled the ship in a well-drilled easy manner.

Doug chewed some gum. It helped to clear his ears as the air pressure changed. He said, "I guess my ears are still a bit gummed up from the cold I had."

He offered the packet to the other two men. Dick took a piece, saying, "Thanks; I tell pilots to chew gum when they have any thought their ears might give them trouble. I learned that in the Air Force a long time ago."

Doug and Les concentrated on their work. Perhaps, Dick thought, they were minding their P's and Q's with him there. But it didn't seem so. It looked to him they were performing in the way they naturally did together.

Dick saw the problem with the flags. It happened on the leg to Manitowoc. Les cleared it easily enough. Doug talked it over with them. They agreed that provided it became no worse on their way to Milwaukee it would be safe to go on to O'Hare and have it dealt with there. Doug was the captain of the ship, no matter that a pilot senior to him was on board, so it was his responsibility and his decision.

The flight proceeded and the *funny flags* did not recur. Doug put the plane down at Manitowoc, Les at Milwaukee. The cloud base was around 250 feet and they had no trouble in flying down the ILS (Instrument Landing System) glide slope and seeing the runway lights in good time.

Dick Powers knew about Doug being up for instructor pilot. As far as he was concerned Doug was fully qualified both as a pilot and a person. He would tell Art that.

"Thanks for the ride, guys," he said, when he deplaned at Milwaukee. "Happy New Year!"

“Same to you, Dick,” Doug replied, “take care.”

As they were filling out the flight log, a young North Airways pilot came aboard. Doug recognized him as Bob Street, a very keen type. Bob was a year out of the Marine Corps, but he behaved very much as if he was still in it. “Captain Olsen, sir.”

“Hi!”

“I’ve just seen Captain Powers and he said I could ask you for a ride into O’Hare, sir.”

“Sure, but it’ll be on the jump seat. We’re full, I believe.”

“I’d prefer that, sir; to ride with you.”

“Glad to have you on board, Bob. Hang your coat in the closet with ours. We’re a bit cramped up here. Put your flight bag by your feet and make sure your belt is fastened properly. That jump seat contraption wasn’t exactly an engineer’s shining hour when he designed it.”

The gangly young pilot, all 6’ 2” of him, maneuvered himself into the seat, tucked his flight case and his long legs under it, and did up the seat belt.

The flight from Milwaukee to O’Hare would take half an hour or so. Eric Doakes was glad they were almost there. Flying wasn’t a bit glamorous to him. It just went with his salesman’s job and he put up with it. He asked Nancy for a cup of coffee. It would help him wake up. The seat next to him was empty again. As far as he could see it was the only empty seat on the flight. Must be his lucky night!

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