

LEAN ON ME



Jennifer L. Borst



Foreword

Lean on Me. . .

*“You just call on me brother
When you need a hand,
We all need somebody to lean on”*

So goes a line from Bill Withers’ 1972 soulful tune “Lean on Me”. The song is about people coming together in time of need. It is also a way to say thank you to those who unselfishly provided a hand to our brother or sister when they needed it.

When our brother, friend and colleague Mark Witsoe learned he would face the fight of his life- -literally, a fight for his life, little did anyone know then that those words would become the mantra for this booklet of personal stories about somebody to lean on. Fewer still would have imagined then that those who encouraged Mark were also inspired by him through his positive attitude, courage and inner strength. The theme of “Lean on Me” is a tribute not only to Mark, but also to those who provided support and hope to him as well. Things most worthy of doing are done with others.

Simply said, the moral of this and the stories told here is - -we all need somebody to lean on- -Thank you Mark!

Gary Peterson ...Leaning on SWAAAE

Having given enormous thought to answering the question of who has “stood by me” or whom I have been able to “lean on” throughout my career in airport management (and beyond) I have concluded that there is only one answer. SWAAAE has stood by me. This organization formed a half century ago in some hangar in the Central Valley of California (as California Association of Airport Executives CAAE) has always been there when I needed someone to lean on.

SWAAAE is where I learned to be an Airport Manager, coming up under the post WWII Original Managers, like Ray Burdick, Jim Chapel, Jim Monger, Ralph Tonseth, Hal Wight, Jim Mummert, R.C. Smith and other Airport Manager legends. SWAAAE through its conferences and programs put me in touch with our founders so I could learn how they had built success in an increasingly complex industry.

SWAAAE also provided the opportunity for me to connect with my peers who were “coming up” and coming into our own as Airport Managers. Learning with and from modern legends of Airport Management like Robert Olislagers, Brent Shiner, Rod Dinger, Barry Rondinella, Klaasje Nairne, Bob Trimborn and Randy Berg allowed me to grow in ways that built the character and qualities that would ensure my future success.

SWAAAE also provided the connections and networks that allowed me to build working relationships with a cadres of talented consultants that provided the services needed to plan, build and operate my airports. Mike Shutt, Jim Harris and Kevin Flynn are just a few of the professionals that have come my way through SWAAAE. SWAAAE is also where I met and began to support (and

sometimes hire) the next generation of Airport Managers who are quickly becoming legends in their own right. Todd McNamee, Gretchen Kelly and Brett Godown are only a few stars shining so brightly in our future.

SWAAAE is where I learned how to be a leader. Holding important Board and Committee positions I learned how to work with others and to hone the important skills required for leading and managing organizations. With the support and guidance of talented Executive Directors like Mark Witsoe, Hal Bostic and Julia Ratti, we were able to grow our organization to what it is today.

There is no doubt, no question, SWAAAE is about people, yet no single one of us could do for each other what we have done together as SWAAAE. For all of the beautiful stories in this booklet, all the ways we have been there for each other all the different connections we have made, none of this would be possible without SWAAAE or possible without those thousands of hands and hearts that have built, sustained and passed this organization from one generation to the next.

Mark Witsoe... Leaning on Larry Gesell

Larry Gesell has been a confidante of mine for many years. As a new professor at Arizona State University, Larry did his best to warn me, the student, of the ups and downs of the airports' profession. He tempered my excitement with the likelihood that I would never be able to put down roots as changing cities or states with every new position were commonplace.

He cautioned me that the general public would associate my name with airport noise and pollution. Larry also advised me of the

vulnerabilities I would experience with airport tenants and local pilots who would see me as the robber baron taking their very last dollar in rent and fees. He warned me that the governing body, be it the city or county owning the airport, would view the airport as a liability and a problem that wouldn't go away.

Then even with all this counselling, Larry turned around and supported my bid to be the first intern at the Santa Maria Public Airport under a program led by his protégé, Brent Shiner. When I struggled in my first decade in the profession, Larry continued to be a trusted advisor, colleague, and friend.

It was a most satisfying experience when, in later years, Larry representing ASU, Brent Shiner as Conference Chair of the Airport Management Short Course in Monterey and I as Executive Director of SWAAAE posed for a photo at the Monterey Marriot. Very memorable! Thank you Larry.

Mark Witsoe...Leaning on Todd McNamee

Todd McNamee and I have known each other for many years, mostly through our association with SWAAAE. We did considerable work together in the production of the Chapter conferences and implementing a succession model for the conference committees.

After hearing of my health situation, Todd kept in touch with me throughout my treatments and recovery.

Todd's many phone calls and text messages always had the delicate balance of timing, friendship, and care to brighten even my most difficult days. Sometimes I was not in a position

to respond to a text message, but Todd understood my challenges. Recently, he helped organize a small celebration of my return to health.

I sincerely appreciate his kindness and generosity.

Mark Witsoe...Leaning on Brent Shiner

It was difficult time for me after learning that I was diagnosed with Stage IV colon and liver cancer. I was just 51 and outwardly healthy. With the feeling of shock, came an unusual sense of embarrassment. It was like I had done something wrong and was being punished.

I circulated my bad news to intimate family members, superiors at work, and a few friends. The task of sharing this with many of my dearest colleagues at SWAAAE last year was a bitter pill knowing that I might not be around for very long. As soon as he heard my trouble, my great friend and colleague, Brent Shiner, came to my aid. Brent started calling me every two weeks or so keeping up on my condition and treatment. Visiting me during an early chemotherapy session, he offered to be a conduit of news to a group in SWAAAE and those from our shared past.

I knew his dad, Steve Shiner, pretty well. He passed away a few years back from the same terrible disease. Brent shared his Dad's stoicism and strength in the face of discomfort and pain while still living each day out to its fullest. Not sugar-coating the longer-term prospects, Brent provided me with a positive view of the weeks and months ahead. In a similar vein to the Pilot's mantra, "keep flying the plane", I got a shot in the arm of courage passed down from his dad.

Fortunately, my situation improved in two important aspects. The chemo-treatment worked pretty well and didn't generate any significant side-effects. Secondly, my oncologist regularly consulted with two other Kaiser surgeons and they picked up my case to have the cancers removed by sequential procedures. In the meantime, I didn't give up and tried to look forward to something every day even if was just a cup tea or plate of salad.

Brent was there for me to lean on when I needed it most.

Brent Shiner...leaning on Robert "O"

Today, as I write this, it is Father's Day 2014, but my story is a reflection dating back to just a few weeks before Father's Day in 2000. The annual AAEE Conference was being held in Boston, and I was representing SWAAE as President.

Although each of us greet these yearly gatherings with much pride, enthusiasm, love for our career and an even greater love for our friends and colleagues, this conference found me filled with much sadness. Just before Charlene and I left to attend the Boston conference, we learned that my 80 year old father was only weeks away from succumbing to colon cancer. Not only was he a wonderful father, he was also a Purple Heart recipient and a WWII fighter pilot flying the P-40 Warhawk. He flew countless air/ground support missions in Viet Nam and retired a Colonel in the U.S.A.F. After retirement, he built several experimental-type aircraft so he could continue to fulfill his passion for flight. He also trained an immeasurable number of men and women in our armed forces to fly, including one civilian...me.

My father's imminent death was known only to my family and a few close friends, but I was never able to conceal my sorrow. From the moment we arrived in Boston my mind was in a constant fog, my heart was in persistent pain and my eyes were continually blurry.

I arrived early for a committee meeting. It was in a large room with a large oval-shaped wooden table centered in a sea of surrounding chairs. The room slowly filled with cheerful members. Each new arrival found spirited friends greeting each other as they worked their way around the room.

Almost completely oblivious to what was going on around me as I sat in my chair with a blind stare looking down at the table. I happened to look up for a moment just when Robert Olislagers was walking past the doorway and he spotted me. I smiled at him through hazy eyes and sunk my head back down between my hands. Within seconds Robert was kneeling down beside my chair with his arm around my shoulders. I will not reveal exactly what Robert said in his tempered, whispered tone, but he bestowed upon me a genuine message of encouragement, friendship and understanding. I will relate that every word in his solemn consolation about the fast approaching death of my father lifted my spirits and made me know that I was not alone in this ordeal which, until then, had become the most overwhelming torment in my life.

It may be that Robert would be hard-pressed to remember the memorable moment that changed my life, my heart and my spirit forever. Nevertheless, I want to take this opportunity to publicly say to Robert Olislagers, "Thank you Robert".

I will never forget what you did for me and how intensely emotional and supportive you made me feel about family, colleagues and my SWAAAE companions for the rest of my life. I truly appreciate the friend that I could lean on when I really needed somebody.

Brent Shiner...leaning on Larry Gesell

Graduating from Arizona State University is a day I will always remember. It was a day filled with the fusion of pure excitement and extreme anxiety. Job prospects in any aviation endeavor were tough to come by, but opportunities to pursue my passion of airport management were tougher still.

Just weeks before graduation, the Aeronautical Technology Department posted a small number of job opportunities. The perfect job listing caught my eye and captured my imagination. The County of San Luis Obispo in California was advertising a one-year internship which was under the tutelage of Larry Gesell (soon to be a Ph.D.). Larry was Airport Director for both the County airports, San Luis Obispo, a small commercial service and general aviation airport and Oceano, an even smaller general aviation facility.

Along with several hundred applicants from all over the U.S., I submitted my application and waited anxiously for a reply. The delay seemed extra-long and agonizing. Several calls and letters to Larry went unanswered. When word of an interview finally arrived I learned the delay was due to the unexpected passing of Larry's wife. Unfortunately, Larry had been surrounded by hundreds of young job seekers at the most upsetting time of his life. Even under

such traumatic circumstances, Larry maintained his professionalism and continued with the internship program.

I was fortunate enough to be selected by Larry for the job. The pay was trivial (\$500/month), but it also included a beach cottage located directly adjacent to the Oceano airfield. I thought I was in heaven!

Larry soon became my very good friend, mentor and guidance counselor. Larry had already written several books on the administration of public airports and aviation law. Larry guided me, supported me in every way, and was key to my big break. I went from being an airport intern at Oceano to Airport Director for the County of El Dorado, California at the Lake Tahoe airport.

There was never a question that Larry could not answer and he always made himself available to listen to my complaints, worries and all those pent up frustrations, particularly when I was unable to make airport projects move fast enough.

Larry later moved to the academia segment of airport administration and became a professor and Ph.D. at my alma mater, ASU.

I want to say thank you to Larry for giving me my big break. He gave me the foundation on which to build my airport management career, a profession I love so much. If Larry had not hired me as an intern back in 1982, I don't think my passion for airports and airport management would have been realized.

Larry, you have been a true friend over the years and a most respected teacher, mentor, tutor and counselor to countless other youths in this field of aviation. I will never forget what you did for me and my family. Thank you Larry!

*Casey Denny...leaning on Larry Gesell,
Mike Williams, Lynn Kusy,
Jennifer Maples & SWAAAE Board*

Sometimes as we look back on those who gave us strength to carry on, it is difficult to single out just one individual.

"You know that feeling when you're leaning back in a chair, and go too far, and almost fall, and then catch yourself? I feel like that all that time." A quote by Steven Wright.

Challenging events that occur in our careers and personal lives can often feel like we are falling, actually sometimes it's more like we are failing. As you go through those moments, and everyone does, it's encouraging to have friends, colleagues, and mentors to lean on along the way.

For me, there isn't just a single such situation that comes to mind, but 20 years of consistent support from my friends in SWAAAE and I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to express my gratitude.

To Dr. Larry Gesell, for introducing me to a career field I didn't even know existed! That introduction resulted in a rewarding profession, lifelong friendships, and the ability to provide for my family.

To Bill Critchfield, who mentored an eager kid, providing insights and perspectives that I continue to pass along to my students today.

To Mike Williams, who grew with me, who started me on the path to accreditation, and who continues to model patience and professionalism for me.

To Lynn Kusy, for things too numerous to mention, and in ways I'm still discovering.

To Jennifer Maples, for helping me finish accreditation, and being there to listen when I really needed it.

And finally, to my SWAAAE Board of Directors, who have supported me throughout my latest challenges, who continue to focus on the opportunities ahead of us, and who inspire me with their guidance and support, I offer a heartfelt and huge "Thank You".

As past AAAE Chair Mark Brewer quickly recognized and stated, "It's good to be SWAAAE".

Barclay Dick...

Friends, Memories & Laughter to Lean On

When asked, nudged is probably a better word, about sharing a story, the first one that came to mind was the SWAAAE Summer Conference in Burbank. As expected, Tom Greer was the consummate host. Tom made certain there were enough bars at every social event so no one had to stand in line for a drink. And, every drink was complimentary. But, the story of the conference was Shelly Michelle, Miss USO, who was the featured entertainment at the banquet. Ah memories! But on second thought that might be a story for another venue. When you come to Tucson, call me and we'll talk.

A great thing about a career in airport management is you make friends all across the region, if not all across the country. Wherever you go, either for business or pleasure, you have the reassurance of knowing a friend is nearby. On the flip side, the unfortunate thing about a career

in airport management is, upon retirement, your friends are spread all across regions and nations and you don't see them as often as you'd like.

Take the time to look around: the friends you see will be your friends for a long time to come. As your career and/or retirement move you about, stay in touch. Many airport friends I don't see as often as I would like and some I haven't seen for far too long. I encourage you to do better than I and see your airport friends regularly. Certainly, whenever you're in Tucson, there is an open door and a friend to lean on if you need a hand or just a handshake.

Perhaps the best thing about an airport management career and the friendships you develop is the contact with your counterparts to seek advice or information and receive it promptly, completely and with no questions asked. That brings me back to Tom Greer. When I was with Arizona's Aeronautics Division, I had an occasion to call Tom to inquire about an individual planning to come to Arizona with flat-bed trailers to pick up some aircraft parts from a storage yard. The individual claimed to be from Monterey and alleged he was the father of Secretary of State Condoleza Rice. He said his daughter had directed him to get the aircraft parts that were awaiting shipment. The parts were to be returned to California where this gentleman would reassemble them for her use. The aircraft parts when assembled would consist of a business jet and a fighter/bomber. I called Tom to see if he knew who the guy was. Suffice it to say that no arrangements were made to deliver any aircraft and/or parts to the gentleman.

When asked what we'll do in retirement, many of us respond that we'll play more golf or

go fishing. Please, have another avocation with which you can become involved. As good as the golf and fishing sound, you won't do so much of either that it keeps you as busy as you ought to be. I found pottery, which I pursue with delight. After 10 years, I can make a mostly three-dimensional object, some of which might actually be able to contain something. Find something you'll enjoy doing, in addition to the golf, fishing and travel. Life is full of surprises; embrace them with delight!

To all my friends at the conference, I miss you. To all of you at the conference that I never met, I'm sorry to have missed the opportunity. SWAAAE is a great organization of good people. Enjoy it and them.

Finally, congratulations to Randy Berg, "you big lug" (as John Kinney would say), on your election to Chairman of the AAAE. AAAE and you are fortunate to have each other.

Remember, let me know when you'll be in Tucson for an AzAA, SWAAAE, AAAE or ACI-NA meeting so we can make time to get together. AzAA, SWAAAE and AAAE should all have my contact information. Additionally, my home phone number is in the local telephone directory.

Be well and have fun.

Barclay Dick
President, 1993-94
(gosh, was it really 20 years ago?)

Hal Bostic...SWAAAE, leaning on friends

The Southwest Chapter American Association of Airport Executives has been more than a professional organization to me. It has given me the opportunity to work closely with many talented airport directors, managers and airport consultants. The Chapter has also provided an opportunity for me to establish some life-long friendships that Carroll and I cherish.

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts the Chapter gave me was during my service as Executive Director. Working closely with so many airport professionals, I began to appreciate the diversity of management styles and that each of them could enjoy success in our field. I was able to take away some great qualities from so many fine individuals and occasionally observe some behaviors that I chose not to emulate. I realized that you had to develop your own unique style of management and remain true to it. This lesson served me well and allowed me to fully enjoy my airport management career.

The lines between our professional lives and our personal lives blended nicely at many of the Chapter events and we never missed an opportunity to laugh, enjoy each other's company and not take ourselves too seriously knowing that we would soon return to the day-to-day challenges of running our organizations. I recall addressing the Chapter shortly after being elected President and looking down from the podium at a table of close friends. Each of them had a big grin on their face with one front tooth blacked out. My friends always knew how to keep things on the light side.

The work we do as airport professionals is very important and the information we share with each other through our organization is

important to maintaining our personal health as well as the overall health of our airport system.

I wish you the best in your personal and professional lives.

Gary Mascaro...leaning on a discovery!

For anyone who has wondered what this SWAAAE thing is all about, I was skeptical at first, too. Being heavily involved at the state airport association level, I questioned how a regional organization could provide anything the state couldn't. The Arizona Airports Association is a very robust group, one of the most active in the country, so there was a pretty high bar set from the beginning as far as I was concerned. Plus having also been involved on the other end of the spectrum with AAAP, I wasn't quite sure where SWAAAE fit in to my association world. Then I was approached, invited, and strongly encouraged to get involved by a few people I knew and respected, and eventually I ran for the board.

I will admit to remaining slightly aloof while observing the membership and the even the Board at first, but it became apparent early on that my concerns were misplaced and that SWAAAE had not only value, but a purpose that was clear to anyone taking the time to discover it.

One of the events that really hooked me was the Airport Issues Roundtable, hosted and facilitated by Michael Hotaling of C&S. Sitting in that room with airport managers and executives from three different states, discussing issues, generating ideas, and addressing the big-picture problems of our industry was an opportunity unique to SWAAAE and demonstrated the value of our collective knowledge and efforts.

On a personal level, the Board was extremely supportive when my brother was seriously ill and I underwent surgery. The family aspect of SWAAAE really showed through during that time, and I truly appreciated the support. Since then, the conferences, meetings, and interaction with other members have served to only solidify not only my interest, but my commitment to SWAAAE.

I am proud to be a member of this organization that so clearly values its members in such a unique and meaningful way. I say to any of you who are standing back, trying to decide whether or not to get involved... what are you waiting for?!?

Gladys Diva Brown-Wiggins...leaning on Selena Birk and a "McNamee" moment

SWAAAE has been a great support system for me providing me with insight and an ability to garner professional relationships that I can count on as well as lean on.

I recall the encouragement I received from Todd McNamee after a tough phone call from him about an advertised position for which I had applied but had not been recommended. And even though I was not selected, I provided a sufficiently interesting response to Todd for him to encourage me to attend my very first SWAAAE conference and would ensure we would meet face-to-face.

A very inspirational person I met through SWAAAE after that first conference was and is a very trustworthy confidant and one of my mentors, Selena Birk. Her experience and extensive knowledge as well as her love for understanding the importance and need for a

strong airport/aviation infrastructure just made me feel more accepted. Selena is encouraging, has great insight, resourcefulness, and is always willing to introduce or take a person by the hand to help them get to where they want to be...not just where they need to be. I still remember the day; she personally walked me around to various leaders in the industry to tell them to share their story but to learn more about me too- I knew then that she was different and someone I could lean on throughout the years.

Selena has been one of the many blessings that came my way by being a part of this organization. Selena and many others will be there as I grow in the industry and establish myself professionally in the years ahead.

I don't know if Selena is aware of how much her words and support have inspired and encouraged me to never settle, keep moving forward, take a second to evaluate, establish work/personal balance, and regardless of the challenge to create the solution to motivate positive change.

There are several others in our industry that I would never have had the opportunity to meet had it not been for SWAAAE. They are scattered throughout the region... in Nevada California, and of course those in Arizona.

It is my hope that those who attend the conferences and participate in SWAAAE understand the importance of their contributions to others and to our industry.

Klaasje Nairne Winegarden and Ken Nairne...leaning on Todd McNamee

I met Todd McNamee soon after he moved back to California in 2001. His eagerness, humor and winsome smile won me over in a heartbeat.

When the SWAAAE Board felt it was time to part ways with the Sheraton Hotel in Monterey, the long-time hosts of the Airport Management Short Course, we began our tenure at the Monterey Plaza Hotel. It was a risk, but the Board really wanted to make the Short Course the standard of excellence of Airport Conferences and The Plaza Hotel provided that high standard of excellence. As President, I was honored to select Todd McNamee and Scott Smith as Chairs for this inaugural debut at our new venue. They did not disappoint! Todd and Scott imparted knowledge and humor. When I called and needed someone to lean on, Todd and Scott answered.

A few years later, Scott left the Ventura Airports and Todd was appointed Airport Director. Todd's involvement with SWAAAE continued to grow. He was elected to the SWAAAE Board, became President and now is on the Board at AAEE. Quite a resume for a young man who continues to represent the profession he loves!

But now to the softer side...Todd has always been there to lean on during times of great stress and sorrow. He helped my late husband Kenny walk down the sidewalk during one of the Monterey "Adventures". Kenny had grown weak, first from his battle with cancer and then from a heart attack and heart disease that really sapped most of his strength. Todd gave him an arm to lean on as they walked. It was offered, not asked!

Then when Kenny passed away in August of 2010, Todd took the time to speak at Kenny's funeral. As I said, Todd is a true friend who never disappoints. He just helps when you call, no questions asked.

And finally, Todd greeted Don Winegarden, my friend who I would later marry, with graciousness and that ever present humor...he called him "NUBO"! Oh and by the way, Todd and Ann attended the wedding too!

SWAAAE brings you friends for life!

Klaasje...leaning on Barclay Dick and Brent Shiner

When I first came to the San Luis Obispo County Airports in late 1989, you couldn't fill a thimble with what I knew about airports. I was a finance gal. And it took me a while to even have an interest in what was going on outside the office, on the airfield or in the air. My job was to get the airports in the black...a feat accomplished in 1992. So now what?

The year was 1994. Things were rolling along at the airports, but I was languishing. I was urged by my friend Brent Shiner, then at our "rival" airport in Santa Maria, to attend the SWAAAE Summer Conference in Sacramento. Barclay "Barky" Dick was then the outgoing President.

There was an aura surrounding that conference. Something, and I cannot describe exactly what it was, bit me in the proverbial rear end and I got hooked on aviation. Discussions on the patio outside the conference rooms invigorated me. Brent and Barky took the time to just talk to me.

We talked a lot about diversity during that conference. It was a subject that needed discussion! When I attended my first conference in Monterey in 1990, the attendees were 90% male, retired from the military and not very welcoming. Brent and Barky broke the ice and spent time with me. It took me awhile to feel accepted, but they kept up the dialogue and then in Sacramento, they finally got it through my head that I could do this work outside the box and enjoy the ride.

I returned to San Luis Obispo with a renewed vigor, something I had not felt in several years. I started involving myself in other things besides the numbers. Not to say those aren't important, but it's just one element of airports management.

Barky and Brent continued to encourage and support me. I ventured out, learned new things, even from the other side-the airline folks-and found new joy and a love for my work! Even through times of stress and struggle, it was easily the best job I ever had.

Thank you for being there guys when I had problem you understood.

Klaasje...leaning on the experts

Jim Harris, David Full and Mike Shutt

As stated in another story, I finally became inspired to get interested in this airport management business at the 1994 Summer Conference in Sacramento. Just about that same time, we had solicited proposals to develop a Master Plan for San Luis Obispo Airport (SBP).

The airports in San Luis Obispo are under the jurisdiction of the County and are a division of the General Services Department. The department

head, Duane Leib, was not very eager to embark on the master plan process in that an earlier effort had fallen on its face; however, George Rosenberger, the Assistant General Services Director, was a convincing influence, so we decided to move forward. George gave me the project as he saw a renewed spark in my curiosity.

We selected Coffman Associates to develop our Master Plan. Wow, was there a lot to learn, but with the help of some real experts, this really got to be fun! Jim Harris led the charge; Steve Wagner part of the cavalry and we awoke a sleeping giant! So many projects, so little time and so little money, but we were on our way and flying high!

One of the projects was a 500 foot runway extension. Oh the furor from the neighbors, but we needed the additional length to get our existing commercial fleet in the air without weight restrictions. We took the Plan to the Board of Supervisors and it was approved, pending an Environmental Assessment, on a 5-0 vote!

Then we proceeded with the solicitation for the environmental work. We selected Environmental Science Associates. David Full then with ESA was the principle for the work. He told me at the outset that I would learn more about our project through the Master Plan environmental process than I ever thought possible and he was right! The dissection of the projects, evaluation of their significance, the design and engineering with Mike Shutt, the continued work with Jim Harris and then the meetings with the public, with the FAA and finally another appearance before the Board...another 5-0 vote of approval.

We followed the 1996 Plan with an update and another EA/EIR in 2006. This would prove to be quite a coup. The Plan included an

additional 1000 feet to the runway and EMAS at both ends to meet runway safety requirements. Again, with the help of "experts" we received a 5-0 vote from the Supervisors. A few years later, we had cause to celebrate with Jim, David and Mike in attendance, at a ribbon cutting ceremony of the extended runway complete with EMAS on November 30, 2007.

I tell you this detail because I came to know all these experts through SWAAAE. The relationships that were built, specifically with Jim Harris, David Full and Mike Shutt, became the foundation for the future of SBP, my future, my love for airports and a love for those involved in this wonderful world of aviation. In the end, it's the people...that's what makes the work worthwhile!

Thanks to the "experts" for giving me the knowledge, perseverance and most of all, lasting friendship to carry on.

Rod Dinger...leaning on Mike Shutt

When I began thinking about what story I wanted to share, I was conflicted. There are so many worthy of consideration as I've been active with SWAAAE since 1989. I decided to make Mike Shutt, Consulting Engineer and great friend, the subject of my story.

Mike was a terrific guy who mentored me in many areas. He was particularly helpful in my dealings with the FAA and CalTrans. Mike was very personable and had a way about him that made you feel as if you were his best friend. He established a comfort level with all around him that was unsurpassed. He just had an incredible way about him - a voice of reason.

My father suffered some serious heart issues in the late summer of 2009. The time frame was coincidentally close to the same period when Mike found out that he had a serious and very rare form of blood cancer. Although I called him and asked if I could visit during his fight with this terrible disease, he would casually say not right now as he wanted to get stronger before he had visitors. He would be optimistic over the phone about his future and never let on how serious and life threatening this dreadful disease was impacting him. As it was, we would talk at least once a week.

I recall one conversation very clearly. As my father was still recovering from heart surgery, I made one of my weekly calls to check on my friend. Mike answered and I quickly asked how he was doing. Mike said, "No...let's not talk about me. Please tell me how your father is doing?" That exchange really lets you know the kind of person Mike Shutt was and why he will always be remembered as a selfless first class individual. Sadly, Mike passed away soon after that conversation. I never got to see my friend and mentor again. I learned many things from Mike and still miss him dearly.

On another note, I would like to express my appreciation to the membership for their support over these many years. First as a member of the SWAAAE Board, as Chair in 2005/6, and most recently as one of the AAEE board representatives. I love how so many of our tribe is there to give advice, and that several have asked, and actually followed, some advice from me. Talking with other national chapter representatives and some AAEE staff has led me to believe our Chapter has a unique chemistry and comparatively positive

culture. I encourage you all to do your part to embrace and preserve this culture now and in the future.

Klaasje...leaning on Mike Shutt

As I was reading Rod's story, I could not help but add my perspective on my dear friend Mike Shutt. How can you capsulize the feelings you have for someone so unselfish, dedicated and caring.

Although I had met Mike at several SWAAAE conferences, I did not really get to know him until his firm was selected to do the engineering work on our first runway extension at San Luis Obispo. I won't get into the details of the project, because in reality, that's bricks and mortar. What I will iterate is the same thing Rod expressed. Mike had a way of calming the crowd. He was always available for phone calls, advice and occasionally, a relaxing dinner, a game of golf and a glass of Bushmills.

Mike became a treasured friend, ally and confidante. We shared many things, even when we had "kid" issues. He was a dear friend to my late husband, Ken, too. He also liked to talk and watch baseball. We watched a 2002 World Series game - you know Angels vs. Giants - at our home together, complete with hot dogs and beer. It was great fun!

When Mike became very ill, I did not find out until September of 2009. Kenny - the name by which most of you came to know him- and I were returning from a four week adventure in our little camping trailer. We were nearing Santa Rosa, so I gave Mike a call. It was then that I found out that he was gravely ill. I asked if we could stop by,

but he said he wasn't feeling so well. He asked me to call him when we returned home. I called him a few days later.

We talked at length. He told me about his battle with blood cancer. His trips to Stanford and how this dreadful disease made him tired. But, he wanted to talk about Kenny as he was fighting for his life with advanced heart disease. Even in Mike's crisis, he let me lean on him for strength. Mike passed away later that year. Miss you!

Welton Trang...leaning on Jennifer Maples

I was first introduced to SWAAAE in early 2012. I was a college student just beginning his career in airports. There have been countless individuals who have helped me tremendously, but one person went above and beyond: Jennifer Maples. More than anyone, Jennifer Maples contributed so much to my current success.

My story as it relates to Jennifer did not immediately begin after being introduced to SWAAAE. I recall seeing Jennifer at the 2012 Airport Management Short Course in Monterey. I was new and a bit shy, so making introductions was sometimes difficult for me, but then six months later at the Summer Conference in July I was formally introduced to her and to be honest I do not know what occurred that sparked and began to build our relationship. But, it was during that Conference that Jennifer became my mentor.

Since the summer, Jennifer has been there every step of the way...from school to my current position as Airport Ops Assistant at Long Beach. She was always available for questions when I needed help with projects at school, but she truly

went the extra mile after graduation when I had difficulty in securing a paid position. I applied for positions at countless airports and organizations. The "application exercise" became more and more demoralizing, but Jennifer was always there to encourage me. She would make contact with persons she knew at the various airports to which I had applied and personally recommend me.

But of all the things she did, one truly stands out...she opened her home to me. I had an interview with an airport in the Phoenix area, but couldn't afford a hotel the night before my interview appointment. Jennifer quickly offered to allow me to stay at her home. And that night she even helped me prepare for my interview.

Jennifer is that person you can lean on when you need a helping hand. She is an extraordinary individual who has gone beyond mentor...she became an amazing friend!

Todd McNamee...leaning on a little humor! "The Launching of Baby Peter Airlines"

As you know, Ann and I combined our assets about 2 years and nine months ago to create JT Aerospace, which officially opened June 16, 2001. JT Aerospace is very successful and is now producing high quality communications, navigation, and articulation products. I see a sporting goods spin off in the future.

We again combined our assets to start a new business, Baby Peter Airlines (BPA). We celebrated the 2 year anniversary of JT Aerospace by rolling out the newest addition, the Peter Jet (PJ) from the hangar on June 16, 2003. Since the roll out, BPA has made amazing progress.

The first overnight mission was somewhat frantic, the technicians responsible for PJ were fatigued and there was no sign of a break to allow the techs to get any sleep. Things smoothed out the next morning though, and the entire staff had a chance to relax.

By the second day at the home base facility, things were going well. A schedule was established. Every 3 hours PJ took on fuel and off loaded cargo. Some HEAVY cargo! This immediate adherence to a schedule is better than most of the major airlines! The only incident was a hydraulic leak while the technicians were swapping out a seat cover. The hydraulic fluid sprayed the technicians, the upholstery, and even the tarmac!! All hands responded immediately and the fluid was cleaned up in a fashion that would make the EPA proud.

All is going smooth now. JT Aerospace and Baby Peter Airlines complement each other well. There are MANY similarities in the business lines. We look forward to a long and prosperous life with our new ventures, and we hope to share more news with you soon.

Todd and Ann McNamee - The "Mac Flyers"
as transmitted in an e-mail, June 2003

Todd McNamee...leaning on relationships

What follows is my story about how I became a part of this wonderful thing called SWAAAE and what SWAAAE means to me.

My wife Ann and I grew up in Ventura County, California but were living in Mississippi back in 2001 and we wanted to move back to

California to be with family and friends. We were pregnant and about to start our own new family. I also was hooked on airport management and was a recent grad from Embry-Riddle who had been mentored by the amazing Bruce Frallic, AAE from Gulfport, MS.

I was introduced to the wonderful people of SWAAAE in January 2001 at the Airport Management Short Course in Monterey while seeking employment in the Airport Management industry. I was immediately welcomed with open arms (literally!) and knew that I had found a special group of people that I would call friends and family for the rest of my life.

I was able to use Gary Petersen's "Open Space" to let everyone know I was looking for employment and Gary even pulled several folks aside from my generation to talk to me about how to best break into the industry. This was the beginning of my new "Rat Pack" made up of Martin Pehl, Eric Peterson, Chris Hastert, and Gretchen Kelly.

I was asked what I wanted to do. I explained I was interested in Director and Manager positions based on my business background and aviation experience. They gave me varying advice but what I remember most vividly was Martin's cautionary advice to not "set my goals too high", advice I took to heart and appreciated.

As we all know, positions in airport operations are a common starting place. Others approached me along the way to tell me about potential opportunities. Austin "the Wiz" Wiswell made me aware of an airport inspector position at CalTrans, Richard Fernbaugh informed me that Barry Rondinella was leaving Santa Maria and there might be something there. Then a family friend informed me of a potential

opportunity in Ventura County. I knew these were all good options and potential opportunities.

One thing that has created success for me all my life is relationship building so I was eager to get to know folks and create some meaningful new relationships. That week I met many people including Randy Berg, Bob Trimborn (these names are important as you will see), and the wonderful group of ladies that included Klaasje Nairne, Hazel Johns, and Karen Ramsdell. Nothing personal fellas, but the ladies were impressive!!

On my drive back from the conference I stopped by and met with Barry Rondinella and Gary Rice in Santa Maria. Barry was kind enough to give me an airport tour and some insight on what was in store for me. It turns out, Gary Rice used to work with my airport management instructor and mentor Bruce Frallic. My letter of recommendation from Bruce that totally over sold me definitely had Gary's attention!

The next day before I traveled back to Mississippi, I stopped by Ventura County Department of Airports and introduced myself to Scott Smith, the interim Director. He also gave me a tour of Camarillo airport and some insight into the industry. Everyone was so kind and generous with their time!

A few months passed and I was working with Austin to get hired for the CalTrans gig, with Gary to take a position with Santa Maria airport, and with Scott to work as the Deputy Director in Ventura County, but Ventura County was home so I placed emphasis on that position.

As it turns out, my first interview panel for the job at Ventura County included Randy Berg and Bob Trimborn. Remember I met them at the SWAAAE Monterey Conference? Remember how important relationship building can be?

The interview went well and led to a second interview. That panel included Scott Smith and Gary Rice. Gary Rice.... Holy Crap!! I'm trying to get hired by him too!! So now I'm freaking out! After Ann calmed me down I decided to reach out to both Scott and Gary and come clean with them in that I was going for positions at both of their organizations. Looking back now, they obviously already knew that, but I needed them to know that I genuinely appreciated all of their support and that I would be grateful for the opportunity to work with either one of them.

So I was hired as the Deputy Director of Airports for the County of Ventura on May 7, 2001 and am now living about one mile from where I grew up. I was then promoted to Director in August of 2008 when Scott Smith chased his kids and grandkids to Houston, TX. Looking back, I made the right connections, built the right relationships, and maybe even had some of the right stuff to make this happen. But ever so important was how SWAAAE made all of this possible.

I can't thank all of you enough for helping, supporting, mentoring, sharing, guiding, and caring about me enough to do what you did for me. I will be forever grateful.

So 13 years later and all this has happened. I have also served as one of your many SWAAAE President's, on the Board of AAEE, and on many conference and regional planning committees, and I enjoy every bit of it! But mostly I enjoy golfing with my buddy Rod, having a drink with Barry, talking to Gary about organizational

madness, sharing family stories with Chris, and so on and so on. I also enjoy giving to new comers in the same way you gave to me and watching them grow in the industry that I love so dearly. And I'm really glad that I was able to support Mark Witsoe in some small way, as he dealt with his health issues. Mark, you are an incredible individual and a true friend.

I've been to weddings and funerals with my SWAAAE family. I've watched many of my SWAAAE family members expand their families as I have with new baby boys and girls. Dogs and cats too! This is life as I know it and love it.

In closing, I thank you all, my extended family and friends aka SWAAAE. I'm proud to know you and you make me a better person. I love you all!

Jennifer Maples...leaning on "AWESOMENESS"

I joined SWAAAE in the late 90s as a wet-behind-the-ears intern at Sky Harbor, still unsure what I wanted to be when I grew up. We hosted the summer conference in 1997 - the first airport industry conference of my career, but definitely not the last. It was at that conference I had my first taste of what it meant to be a part of something special, something bigger than myself. At the time, Mark Witsoe, Brent Shiner, and Randy Berg were heavily involved in their respective roles within the organization, and they left a positive and lasting impression on that young intern.

Fast forward 15 years - or about 30 in "airport years"! Mark, Brent, and Randy have all moved on, but their legacy remains, but they are still connected to this organization even if it is no longer a part of their "prescribed" affiliations. In the intervening time, several others have come

to the forefront of the association, in official and unofficial ways. I, too, have played my role, shifting from impressionable, wide-eyed intern to a slightly weathered and a little worse-for-wear mentor, enjoying the opportunity to contribute and be a part of what is now more than just something special, but a true family.

The word, "family," is sometimes overused as a way to promote something, a marketing ploy used to appeal to our desire to belong. But I am here to tell you, SWAAAE is the real deal. To borrow a concept from Barry Rondinella, I would be hard pressed to vote anyone in SWAAAE off my island!

My story is still in the works, the outcome uncertain. Afflicted with an illness doctors have yet to diagnose has sidelined me for the last 3 months. Unable to work, yet actively participate in the industry I love, has left me with some pretty heavy questions about my future. I am enduring countless medical procedures, giving me cause to wonder just how far healthcare has really come since medieval times! Yet, through all these health challenges and moments of uncertainty, my SWAAAE family has encircled me, lifting me up with words of encouragement, emails, text messages, phone calls, visits, and the like. My hero, Jennifer Mills Pysker, actually took the afternoon off from her job - that one on the dark side (A.K.A., the airline industry) - and drove me to one of my many torture sessions... um, I mean, doctor's appointments. She even offered to get me pie as a treat but only if I behaved. Evidently inflation has done away with lollipops - you young whippersnappers probably don't even know what I am talking about!

So many have reached out to me during this time, there are too many names to mention, especially as I would probably forget some. But they know who they are... wonderful, sincere, and caring people.

Words can't really do it justice, so I will just send out a big hug to all of you, and hope to give you one in person when I see you next. Thanks for being awesome!

Jennifer Maples...leaning on Appreciation Admiration, Inspiration and Humbleness

When considering the invitation to acknowledge our SWAAAE brethren in appreciation and admiration, my mind flooded with names of those who have played a role in my journey over the years. We are each on our own course in life, and it was difficult to choose among so many whom have crossed my path in a meaningful way. While this may seem like a long list, it is by no means exhaustive... the memory isn't what it used to be! With great esteem and abundant thanks to you, my friends, my SWAAAE family.

Dutch Bertholf, Lynn Kusy, Jim Harris, Tom Greer, Carl Newman, Jim McCue: Mentors all, they saw in me something worth investing in, and inspired me through their examples and counsel.

Welton Trang & Sean Moran: The next generation, those who actually seek out and listen to my advice... a great and humbling reward.

Veroneka Reade & Klaasje Nairne: Two of the strongest and bravest people I know, who give to others despite their own challenges.

Scotty Malta: A gentle soul who has his priorities in order, and is always willing to lend an ear.

Jessica Mullen: She demonstrates what it means to contribute to the cause, filling the need willingly.

Spencer Stewart: A spiritual rock and one I can always count on to share cigars with. He even brings his own, unlike the rest of you - and you know who you are!

“Uncle” Howard Paige: The title says it all. So glad he adopted us, and we are the better for it!

Michael Hotaling: Best facilitator on earth. Smarter than the rest of us but doesn't flaunt it, and lets us think it's our idea!

Wes Davis: “Sir Smiles-A-Lot.” Wes is always a ray of sunshine no matter what is going on around him.

Bill Ingraham: Consistently amazes me with his thorough consideration of any topic, and he is the smartest recovering Luddite I know.

Scott Van Gompel: Dreamsicle. No other words necessary.

Jon Stout: Best Vanna ever! And he has Clout. Stout for VP in 2015!

Gary “Guru” Petersen: I always come away from our conversations a better person for the imparting of his wisdom and our sharing of ideas.

Stevie Rao: “Remembers me when” (Tequila shots notwithstanding) and yet still claims to know me. I think I'm getting the better end of that deal.

Katie Elsberry: The Glue that holds us together.

Gary “How ya doin’ Mascaró: Always manages to find a solution instead of lamenting the problem. His leadership on the original Best Practices is... wait for it... Legendary!

Gladys Wiggins: A wonderful encourager with a vitality that makes the Energizer Bunny look like a snail on downers.

Jon Faucher: An innovative, think-outside-the-box kinda guy, whose departure creates a big gap on the board. It's not going to be the same without you, but we'll try to carry on through our tears. Sniff!

Barry Rondinella: Island Host, A.K.A. Ricardo Montalban II, with the tan to prove it! And a good friend who genuinely cares, even though he tries to hide it.

Rod Dinger: Wonderful supporter, one who would cheer me on even if the race was already over because he sees the best in everyone, and wants us to see it, too.

Mark Witsoe: Mr. SWAAAE himself, epitomizing what we are about, and a significant part of our history. I credit him for my involvement in SWAAAE - he invited me to have a seat at the big kid's table and helped me find my place in serving the organization.

"The Todd" McNamee: The man, they myth, the legend! A leader and visionary who doesn't take himself too seriously, knows how to have a good time, and helped me learn the value of collaboration.

Jennifer "Mills" Pysher: In a class all her own that defies definition and can't be conveyed by mere words, but exists somewhere in the lofty reaches of sheer awesomeness - times infinity!

Eric "EP" Peterson: The best listener I have ever known, and photographer extraordinaire. Once he arrives...eventually. Mostly awake...sort of. (Just part of your charm, right Sweet Love?)

Casey Denny: What words define "hero?" He faces adversity with courage and grace, exemplifies self-sacrifice for the greater good, and is one of the most genuine and humble people I know. I want to be like Casey when I grow up, and I am honored to call him my friend.

So to all of you, thanks for letting me lean on you when I wasn't strong or when I could be someone to lend a hand and call you friend!



Acknowledgments:

In any endeavor with SWAAAE, there are many to thank not only for the stories they contributed and were a part of, but also the time and resources they provided. Our heartfelt thanks to the following:

Randy Berg, Selena Birk, Hal Bostic, Wes Davis, Casey Denny, Rod Dinger, Jim Harris, Lynn Kusy, Jennifer Maples, Todd McNamee, Robert Oislagers, Gary Peterson, Eric Peterson, Barry Rondinella, Jorge Rubio, Brent Shiner, Robert Trimborn, Klaasje Nairne Winegarden, Karl Zittel.

*Cover graphics by: Jenny Borst
Printing by: Coffman Associates*