8th ANNUAL

ARCHIE LEAGUE

MEDAL OF SAFETY AWARDS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2012

The ability to think quickly and remain calm under pressure while maintaining a situational awareness are all unique qualities that air traffic controllers possess. Without their willingness to jump right in to resolve complex situations, offer a reassuring voice to those on the frequency and coordinate their efforts with other controllers, this group of dedicated professionals wouldn't be as successful as they are today at maintaining the safety of the National Airspace System.

While many controllers often feel that they are "just doing their job," their hard work is viewed by others as remarkable and extraordinary. Named after the first air traffic controller, this program highlights a variety of "saves" – some which involve a team of controllers working together and others which are the result of one controller's efforts.

Air traffic controllers juggle a variety of variables and complex scenarios. Their ability to adapt to ever-changing situations while keeping their composure is a skill they have mastered. As a result of their commitment to perfection, our aviation system is the safest in the world.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Michael Huerta, Acting Administrator, FAA

Michael P. Huerta is the Acting Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration. He assumed this role on Dec. 5, 2011.

Huerta is responsible for the safety and efficiency of the largest aerospace system in the world. He oversees a $15.9 billion dollar budget, over 47,000 employees and is focused on ensuring the agency and its employees are the best prepared and trained professionals to meet the growing demands and requirements of the industry. Huerta also oversees the FAA's multi-billion dollar NextGen air traffic control modernization program as the United States shifts from ground-based radar to state-of-the-art satellite technology.

Huerta was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the FAA's Deputy Administrator on June 23, 2010.

Huerta is an experienced transportation official who has held key positions across the country. His reputation for managing complex transportation challenges led him to the international stage when Huerta was tapped as a Managing Director of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. The Olympics drew 2,400 athletes from 78 countries to Salt Lake City. Huerta was critical in the planning and construction of a variety of Olympic transportation facilities, as well as the development of a highly successful travel demand management system that insured the transportation system operated safely and efficiently.

Before joining the FAA, Huerta held senior positions at Affiliated Computer Services from 2002-2009 rising to the position of President of the Transportation Solutions Group; ACS is now a Xerox company specializing in business processes and information technology.

Huerta was commissioner of New York City's Department of Ports, International Trade and Commerce from 1986 until 1989. He then served as the Executive Director of the Port of San Francisco from 1989 to 1993. From 1993 to 1998, he held senior positions in the U.S. Transportation Department in Washington, D.C., serving under Secretary Federico Pena and Secretary Rodney E. Slater.

He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California-Riverside and a master's in international relations from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

Capt. Charles Hogeman

Captain Charles "Chuck" Hogeman was appointed as Aviation Safety Chairman for the Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA) on Aug. 1, 2011, overseeing air safety policy for the association's 53,000 represented pilots at 39 U.S. and Canadian airlines. Previously he served as Human Factors and Training Group Chair from 2008 until 2011, and Director of Pilot Training and Chairman of the ALPA Training Council from 2003 until 2006. In 2003, he was designated as an ALPA advisor to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) at the ICAO Flight Crew Licensing and Training Panel.

Capt. Hogeman began his career in 1977 with Commuter Airlines in Binghamton, N.Y. In 1978, he joined Denver-based Aspen Airways as a line pilot and spent 13 years there, eventually advancing to be director of training and chief pilot. In 1991, he joined United Airlines and was subsequently selected as a pilot instructor in the B757/B767 program. From 1996 until 2000, he managed and oversaw the development of United's line operational simulation training program for all United fleets and served on the Airline Transport Association's (ATA) AQP Working Group. He currently flies the Airbus 320 as a captain for United.

He holds an associate's degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Daniel Webster College, a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Southern New Hampshire College, and a master's degree in Technical Communication from the University of Colorado.

Bruce Landsberg

Bruce Landsberg has led AOPA's safety initiatives for more than 18 years. During his tenure, the organization has been nationally recognized with numerous awards for aviation safety leadership and educational program excellence. Now, as the president of the AOPA Foundation and the Air Safety Institute, he is responsible for a broad range of foundation activities to preserve the freedom of flight including safety programs, preserving airports, the image of general aviation and growing the pilot population.

Bruce writes the monthly "Safety Pilot" column in AOPA Pilot magazine, as well as a popular weekly blog on AOPA ePilot. He represents general aviation interests with the FAA, NTSB, National Weather Service, collegiate aviation programs and various industry groups.

A former U.S. Air Force officer, he holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in industrial technology from the University of Maryland. Bruce has logged more than 6,000 hours as an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) and holds gold seal flight instructor certificates. He has been an AOPA member for more than 40 years.

Dale Wright

Dale Wright is NATCA's Safety and Technology director, as well as a retired air traffic controller. After entering the U.S. Air Force in 1975, he began his ATC career at Berlin Center in Germany before later relocating to England AFB in Louisiana. Joining the FAA in 1983, Dale spent 17 years serving at Charlotte and Atlanta facilities before joining NATCA as ARS liaison and JPDO liaison in Washington, D.C., from 2000 to 2004. After returning to his town of Charlotte for two more years of ATC duties, Dale retired in September 2007 after 32 years of loyal government service and took over the director position he holds today.

Dale has served a variety of national-level committees, including the titles of both Southern Region member and chairman of the National Finance Committee. In addition to these significant union roles and his history of ATC experience, Dale is an instrument-rated pilot and aircraft owner.

SELECTION COMMITTEE

NATCA members nominated their fellow colleagues to receive the Archie League Medal of Safety. The committee listed above selected the award recipients from the nominees in each region.

Kristina Kurtz Anchorage TRACON

A non-instrument-rated pilot who was receiving radar service from an Anchorage TRACON controller encountered IFR weather while flying at night on Nov. 6, 2011. This is about the worst thing a controller wants to hear; these situations are predisposed to often end in accidents.

But this controller, Kristina Kurtz, has 24 years of experience and used quick thinking and resourcefulness in making sure this situation ended well. She was able to talk a general aviation pilot with no instrument experience whatsoever down through white-out conditions to a safe landing at Merrill Field, the VFR general aviation airport in downtown Anchorage.

Kurtz: *Are you IFR-capable and qualified sir?*

N15F: *I'd like to see some lights of Anchorage and if we can, then we can probably come in. But I can't seem to keep my GPS working so I'm kinda in the dark.*

Kurtz verified the pilot's limitations and instructed him to maintain his current heading and altitude. These were requirements of paramount importance because of the likelihood that the pilot would lose spatial relationship and fly into the terrain due to a lack of visibility outside of the cockpit.

Kurtz immediately took action to sterilize her airspace and frequencies and began to solicit the assistance of an instrument-rated pilot. The first two attempts failed – the first due to fuel limitations and the second was a Lifeguard flight. The third attempt succeeded in enlisting the help of a Cathay Pacific Airways pilot.

As the controller and Cathay Pacific Airways pilot began to acquire additional information in order to prepare the pilot for a descent from IFR to VFR conditions, the pilot exited the IFR conditions and reported the lights of the city of Anchorage in sight, although the intended airport was still not visible.

The controller continued to provide assistance and instructions to direct the pilot to the airport.

Kurtz: *At your twelve o'clock, six miles is Elmendorf Air Force Base, sir. I'm showing weather should clear up for you slightly in about another half mile.*

N15F: *Copy. Maintaining 17 hundred feet.*

Kurtz: *Merrill Field is now 11 o'clock, one mile.*

Kurtz worked the aircraft until directly over the airport, telling the pilot that the airport was directly below him. The pilot eventually – finally – reported the airport in sight and Kurtz then told him to keep the airport in sight and contact Merrill Tower for landing clearance.

N15F: *Thanks. Good day.*

This event had a safe ending because Kurtz possessed the wherewithal to ensure that an instrument-rated pilot was on frequency prior to issuing navigational instructions to the pilot while in IFR weather. The instrument-rated pilot could ensure that all necessary information had been obtained and all requirements satisfied to provide the highest likelihood of success in this emergency. This was an excellent example of resource management at its finest.

Larry Lescanec, Alaskan Region RVP:

Life is much different up here in Alaska, and so is aviation. As controllers, we see pretty much every conceivable situation and are trained and experienced to deal with anything. But the situation Kristina Kurtz faced – a non-instrument-rated pilot in IFR weather at night – was extraordinarily challenging.

Kristina met that challenge and used the array of skills, flexibility and determination that a professional acquires through 24 years of very hard work at this job. I'm sure this pilot understands how lucky he was to survive this situation, and to have had Kristina on the other end of his microphone.

Todd Mariani Kansas City Center

During the early afternoon hours of Aug. 10, 2011, air traffic controller Todd Mariani was working on one of the low satellite radar sectors at Kansas City Center (ZKC). A Van's Aircraft RV8 requested to descend while continuing to maintain clear weather VFR conditions.

Mariani lost radar identification with the pilot and terminated services just after he advised the pilot about ZKC's limited radar coverage in the area where the aircraft was located. About 15 minutes later, Mariani received another call from the pilot, asking for radar services again. This time, he was in difficult weather conditions and needed help.

The pilot was circling his scheduled destination, Elkhart Airport (EHA), which appeared to be closed when the pilot described large "Xs" on the runways. Unfortunately, at the time, Mariani was unable to locate the aircraft because he was too low for radar coverage and the pilot was unable to climb above the overcast clouds.

Mariani: November niner-six-three tango papa, are you circling Elkhart or have you passed Elkhart?

N936 TP: Nine-six-three tango papa. I'm circling Elkhart.

Mariani: November three tango papa, what does it look like over to your east?

N936 TP: I've got low ceiling at probably 4,500 to 5,000. How far east do I need to go?

With about two hours of fuel remaining and a GPS malfunction on board, Mariani searched for an airport that was reporting VFR conditions. He told the pilot that Liberal, Kan. (LBL), was about 30 miles to his east and VFR traffic was arriving and departing from there. The pilot seemed flustered by the inability to load LBL into his GPS.

At that point, controller Scott Barnes, working the low sector adjacent to Mariani, took over Mariani's airspace so he could fully assist this aircraft. Mariani got one radar hit on the aircraft 12 miles east of LBL, but the pilot was uncomfortable with the approaching thick clouds and started to return to EHA. He circled the airport again before Mariani calmly reassured him of the reported weather at LBL.

"I checked in with him every minute and kept reassuring him that we would get him somewhere safe," Mariani said.

Then, another airport, Hugoton, Kan. (HQG), suddenly emerged as a viable option. The airport was open and had fuel for the aircraft. It was also closer. Mariani was able to radar identify him again halfway between HQG and EHA. His heading was good and flight conditions were improving. Mariani called position reports for the pilot, who got the airport in sight. He landed without incident.

Mariani has been an air traffic controller for 22 years, with 10 years of military experience at five different approach controls. Currently, he has been with the FAA at ZKC for 11 years.

Kevin Peterson, Central Region RVP:

Working in bad weather conditions makes an air traffic controller's job difficult, especially if they are directing a VFR flight. This particular plane was running on low fuel with virtually no radar coverage and a GPS malfunction, making it an even tougher job to handle. With only clues from the pilot as to where he was, Todd was able to think fast to get him headed in the right direction towards an airport with stable weather.

With the help of his brothers and sisters at the Kansas City Center, Todd was able to fully focus on this event, handling it with swift ease and cool before it led to a potentially dangerous situation. He is an exceptionally experienced air traffic controller and made a great save that day and we are very proud of that.

Matt Reed Potomac TRACON

As the region that covers the nation's capital and some major international airports, the Potomac Terminal Radar Control facility (PCT) handles a hefty number of international flights. Sometimes, with different accents and looser grasps of English, the pilots of these flights are difficult to understand, or they use language that differs from standard U.S. aviation terminology.

On July 8, 2011, the perfect combination of problems occurred. But PCT controller Matt Reed was able to gamely handle the challenges that came his way and help an Airbus A330 commercial jet land without incident.

The Turkish Airlines flight was scheduled to land at Dulles, but was holding in New York Center airspace due to convective weather impacting IAD arrivals. The pilot, with a heavy accent, radioed into the TRACON that the plane was "fuel critical," non-standard terminology that is open to interpretation.

The Airbus' pilot said he had a maximum of "10 minutes" of fuel left; it is still unknown whether he meant 10 minutes total or 10 minutes until reserves kicked in. Either way, the situation required quick action to ensure the safety of those on board and Reed recognized that the proposed re-route would not get the aircraft anywhere close to IAD in 10 minutes.

To add to Reed's concerns, the pilot was adamant that he should still land at Dulles. However, Reed treated the case like a fuel emergency and required the pilot to land immediately at Baltimore-Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport (BWI) Against the pilot's initial wishes, Reed and the TRACON declared an emergency for the aircraft and diverted it to land at BWI – 12 minutes after the fuel conversation.

Matt Sullivan, the NATCA facility representative at PCT, said Reed's aggressive action may have saved the lives of the passengers and potentially also those on the ground had a catastrophe occurred near the airport.

"Matt did an excellent job, with no caveats," Sullivan said. "When you factor in that the pilot was hard to understand, using terminology that is not standard, it makes his quick action all that much more special."

Sullivan added that Reed is not just a great air traffic controller, but he is also devoted to protecting this country, and also working on behalf of his union.

"He is actually off at boot camp right now for the Virginia Air National Guard, and he is also the NATCA representative for the Chesapeake region," Sullivan said.

Sullivan said Reed is a perfect representative of all the hard-working controllers at Potomac TRACON, who safely guide tens of thousands of flights near some of the most sensitive and important landmarks in the United States.

"We deal with the President, with dignitaries, lots of international flights, you name it," Sullivan said of PCT. "So it's exciting to have a winner here, and it's great that it can be someone like Matt."

Phil Barbarello, Eastern Region RVP:

This year's Eastern Region award winner is not only richly deserving, his story is a testament to the great work that our controllers do at TRACONs, towers and control centers across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

An international flight with 237 people aboard was in real danger of crashing and very well may have were it not for the quick thinking of Matt Reed at Potomac TRACON. With the plane running dangerously low on fuel, Reed made a lightning-quick decision to direct the Turkish Airlines plane to land in Baltimore instead of at Washington-Dulles.

With all the additional challenges in his way, such as a hard-to-understand pilot who initially demanded to land at Dulles, it is truly remarkable how well Reed was able to perform under such high pressure and with so many lives at stake. Reed's work was the Eastern Region's best this year, and a prime example of how our controllers make American airspace the safest in the world.

Guy Lieser

Chicago Center

Steve McGreevy

Chicago Center

Chicago Center has jurisdiction over parts of seven states and some of the busiest airspace in the world, thanks to O'Hare International Airport, the country's second-busiest airport. But it was a save at a less busy airport in eastern Iowa that earned Steve McGreevy and Guy Lieser an Archie League Medal of Safety Award.

On the afternoon of April 19, 2011, in the middle of a major storm that paralyzed much of the Upper Midwest, McGreevy received contact from a Piper Seneca seeking to land in Dubuque, Iowa, a Mississippi River city of around 60,000 that sits at the far western end of the Illinois-Wisconsin state line.

McGreevy could immediately tell from the pilot's strained and nervous voice that something was amiss. McGreevy began the process of vectoring the pilot for an approach to DBQ. He also noticed that the plane was assigned headings that didn't seem to match the course the aircraft was actually flying. At this point, Lieser came over to sit with McGreevy and lend a hand.

The controllers suspected that the plane was encountering icing conditions. Everything seemed on course for him to land without trouble, when, at around 3,000 feet, the plane suddenly darted east across the river. While the pilot attempted to come back around for another landing, he struggled to keep his plane in line with the landing pattern. He stated that he was losing the localizer in his cockpit.

The weather was still terrible and the controllers tried to have the plane reroute to Davenport, another Iowa city further south along the river. However, the pilot had less than an hour's worth of fuel at that point, and the weather in the Quad Cities wasn't much better, making landing at Dubuque the only palatable option.

Guy and Steve talked down the pilot themselves, creating a plan of action that would enable the plane to glide in and touch down in Dubuque. Steve methodically directed the pilot down from 3,000 feet to around 1,000, at which point the pilot could make out the landing lights at the airport.

After he landed, the pilot said "thank you, thank you, thank you," repeatedly.

Lieser has over 30 years of controller experience, and McGreevy has 27. Toby Hauck, their ZAU facility president, said the two were able to help guide the plane to safety because they have supplemented their experience with over 5,000 hours of instrument flight time in the cockpit themselves.

In addition, Lieser is a certified flight instructor and a certified aircraft appraiser. Hauck said the two deserve this award, but that it should not come as much of a surprise that they would be considered.

"They both are excellent controllers, really reliable," Hauck said. "They are solid veterans, both very polished and strong union members. It's fitting that they receive an award like this. It is the combination of being a veteran and an experienced pilot that makes the two of them very good controllers."

Bryan Zilonis, Great Lakes Region RVP:

Relying upon decades of experience and aviation knowledge, two Chicago Center controllers were able to quickly assess the needs of an iced-over aircraft in distress and provide the necessary services for a safe landing. On April 19, 2011, Steve McGreevy and Guy Lieser were there to take control of this dangerous situation.

Between the two of them, they have logged over 5,000 hours of instrument flight time. Almost immediately upon check on, McGreevy could tell there was something wrong in the pilot's tone of voice. Concerned that they had an imminent situation developing, another veteran controller and pilot, Guy Lieser, sat at the sector to assist. Their assessment of the situation was an icing problem, so Mr. McGreevy coordinated with the tower to retain control of the aircraft longer than normal to assist the pilot with joining the localizer.

Steve and Guy decided the best thing to do would be to talk the pilot down themselves by lining the aircraft up for the localizer through very small course corrections and descent clearances. The plane broke through the cloud layer at 1,100 feet and could make out the landing lights of the airport. Mr. McGreevy stayed on the frequency with the pilot for a between-the-numbers landing with the pilot's last transmissions being, "thank you, thank you, thank you."

Chris Henchey

Boston Center

Ryan Workman

Boston Center

On Oct. 9, 2011, air traffic controller Ryan Workman began assisting the pilot of a Cessna 150 on a VFR flight plan en route from Fitchburg, Mass. to Caledonia, Vt. When the pilot reported on the Concord Sector frequency, it was apparent she was having difficulty with navigation.

The pilot indicated she was proceeding first to the Lebanon (LEB) VOR. Workman advised that LEB would be 35 degrees left of her present heading and then saw to it that she would be properly oriented toward LEB. At this point, Workman became concerned about the condition of the flight, so he asked for a controller with pilot experience. Enter air traffic controller Chris Henchey – a CPC for just 10 months at that point, working at his first FAA facility. Henchey was able to get the pilot headed in the right direction and then returned to his previous position.

But soon, there were more problems. The pilot reported that the plane's engine was running rough. Henchey came back over to help and began running through a checklist to help the pilot regain control of her flight. However, she began losing power just before her engine failed.

Henchey: *Try heading to the Concord Airport. That's the nearest airport and if you can, just keep that power full. And try to maintain your altitude as best as you can.*

N66248: *Sorry, there is no power. My prop has stopped, I'm just a glider I guess.*

Henchey: *November 248, roger. Do you see any highways or fields around?*

N66248: *Well, there's one below me just outside my left window. I'm up too high.*

Henchey advised the pilot to set up for maximum glide. She was losing altitude at approximately 700 feet per minute and Henchey determined that she would not be able to make it to Concord. He went over the engine failure checklist that he recalled from his time in a Cessna 152, asking her to try to start her engine one more time and to keep the field in sight. He then instructed her to call the aircraft emergency frequency when she landed in the field.

The aircraft descended below 2,000 feet before radio contact was lost. At this point, all the controllers could do was watch and hope that she would be able to glide to a safe landing in the field. As she hit 1,800 feet, the controllers watched the radar as she started to climb once again. The pilot was able to restart her engine, radio contact was reestablished and she was vectored to Concord once again for a safe, runway landing.

After the incident, the aircraft was inspected to find the cause of the engine failure. A mud wasp nest was found in the engine's air intake manifold. Without Henchey's help restarting the engine, this flight could have had a different outcome.

Mike Robicheau, New England Region RVP:

Our job as air traffic controllers requires us to not only direct every day sky trafficking, but also to help pilots that find themselves in dire circumstances. This event was one close call. After the plane lost its engine's capabilities, it got worse when the pilot lost radio contact with the air traffic controllers as she was heading down.

It's never easy to watch a plane on the radar not knowing their fate. Luckily, due to Chris' knowledge and experience, the pilot was able to reboot her plane and make it to the nearest airport. Chris Henchey and Ryan Workman did an excellent job assisting the pilot to get her plane's engine restarted before she nearly crashed and I sincerely congratulate them on their work.

Charlie Rohrer Denver Center

It was fate that Denver Center air traffic controller Charlie Rohrer took a training class focusing on hypoxia, a condition in which a person's body is deprived of adequate oxygen, the week of May 9, 2011.

The very next week Rohrer saved the lives of two passengers because of the knowledge he received from that training.

On May 17, 2011, the pilot of a Cirrus SR22 became incapacitated from hypoxia during the plane's ascent on a flight from San Bernardino, Calif. to Colorado Springs, Colo. His wife, the only other passenger with no flight training, was forced to take over the controls.

Rohrer first noticed something suspicious when the pilot began having difficulty breathing during their routine conversation. He immediately knew the displayed symptoms were that of oxygen deprivation.

Rohrer: *I think you might be experiencing some hypoxia. Would you like a lower altitude?*

N1WA: *One Whiskey Alpha...*

Rohrer: *You're barely readable, would you like lower?*

Taking quick initiative, Rohrer called out on his frequency for someone familiar with the Cirrus model. The pilot of a Great Lakes Airlines flight, headed to New Mexico, was listening to the exchange and offered to help. He coached the wife on what knobs to turn to get the aircraft down to a lower altitude, which would alleviate the hypoxic effects.

While the pilot coached the wife on a controlled descent, Rohrer simultaneously led the aircraft back to its emergency landing course as it was off course and heading towards the mountains.

Thirty minutes after signs of incapacitation, the pilot regained consciousness and was back at the controls. Rohrer instructed the pilot to land in nearby Farmington, N.M., but the pilot resisted.

N1WA: *I think I'm better off going to Colorado Springs…I'm not ready to land the airplane.*

Rohrer: *The problem with going to Colorado Springs is you gotta go all the way up to 17,000 feet and then we're in hypoxia again.*

The pilot finally lined up the plane for a landing at Farmington airport but, because he was still woozy, the Great Lakes flight pilot and Rohrer decided to declare an emergency. Rohrer then handed the pilot off to Farmington tower control where he and his wife landed safely.

The actions of Rohrer and the others involved that day resulted in a safe landing for the couple that came so close to tragedy; the wife had been minutes away from cutting the engine and deploying the plane's emergency parachute as a last resort, going so far as to read the onboard directions on how to operate the parachute.

Said the first officer of the assisting Great Lakes flight to FocusFAA: "[Rohrer] was great. I think he did a great job of trying to coach [the Cirrus pilot] down and coordinating our help in dealing with the situation."

Jim Ullmann, Northwest Mountain Region RVP:

Charlie Rohrer, like the rest of us controllers, has likely had many memorable days on the job over his great 22-year career. But I doubt he'll ever forget May 17, 2011. Nor will the pilot and his spouse whom Charlie safely guided back to the ground with a display of air traffic control excellence that rivals the very best we've ever seen either at Denver Center or elsewhere in our region or country.

He was calm, focused and supremely confident in quickly assessing and then reacting to the pilot's incapacitation. Charlie expertly coordinated the assistance of a nearby aircraft and did a great job of coaching the couple through the difficult moments of an unforgettable experience. I am extremely proud to have Charlie represent our region this year.

Ken Greenwood
Seattle TRACON

Josh Haviland
Seattle TRACON

Ryan Herrick
Seattle TRACON

"You know what? You just saved my life."

Some of the very best words a controller could ever hear were spoken by the pilot of a Mooney on Dec. 10, 2011, when it became clear that a harrowing turn of events – running out of fuel – would end safely at Renton (Wash.) Municipal Airport (RNT).

Had Seattle TRACON (S46) certified professional controller-in-training Ken Greenwood – a veteran of Boeing Field (BFI) with extensive knowledge of the area around Renton – not quickly noticed that the pilot was in fact turning away from RNT (toward BFI), the aircraft would have possibly hit the blast fence instead of clearing it.

Greenwood, an 18-year veteran, had less than 50 hours on position at S46 but displayed a calm, confident tone as he worked with his instructor, Ryan Herrick, to direct the pilot's descent from above a cloud layer. The pilot had called in VFR conditions above an IFR layer, looking for a VFR hole to get down and land at Auburn Municipal Airport. But Auburn would not remain his destination airport for much longer.

"We got a PIREP (pilot report) from another sector about a VFR hole 25 miles southeast of Sea-Tac," Greenwood said. "I gave a VFR vector towards Thun Field (PLU) and gave weather for Thun and TCM (Tacoma-McChord Field)." At that point, trainee Josh Haviland plugged in next to Greenwood. Haviland recently owned a pilot training school and is a flight instructor.

The pilot reported that he was already out of gas in one tank and almost out in the other, and was still on top of the cloud layer at 7,700 feet. Greenwood gave him a

vector towards Auburn airport and a descent clearance to 4,000 feet. "The pilot was very busy or distracted, possibly trying to set up his GPS," he said. "He was not answering all our transmissions and he was not flying the headings we issued very well."

At this time, several controllers were coordinating with SEA, BFI and RNT towers. All departures were stopped and VFR aircraft were being sent out of the VFR pattern at RNT. Herrick called SEA local assist to ask if they could see any breaks in the overcast.

At 3,200 feet, the pilot reported he had run out of fuel and that he was still in the clouds. Haviland suggested to Greenwood that he give the pilot the best glide speed and level flight. At 2,200 feet, the aircraft reached VFR conditions four miles south of RNT.

But at 1,600 feet, the pilot saw BFI, which was more than six miles to the northwest. Greenwood saw him start to turn towards BFI but then acted quickly and decisively to get him to turn back towards RNT. He got the airport in sight at 1,100 feet. A safe landing ensued.

Pilot: *You know what? You just saved my life.*

Greenwood: *Anytime, sir.*

Anytime, indeed.

Jim Ullmann, Northwest Mountain Region RVP:

If there were any doubt that air traffic control is very much a team profession, that was put to rest by Ken Greenwood, Ryan Herrick and Josh Haviland in a flight assist of an out-of-fuel and gliding Mooney. Greenwood's an experienced veteran but new to S46. Didn't matter. He displayed a command of the airspace and imparted a calmness on the frequency that carried the event.

Ryan was his trainer and expertly oversaw what was happening. And Josh, an experienced pilot and flight instructor, just happened to be sitting next to Ken. Add in some valuable teamwork from controllers at Renton, Boeing Field and Sea-Tac to keep the airspace clear for this emergency landing, and you had one of the best days in the history of S46.

Alvin Kent

Atlanta Center

Five minutes.

The pilot of a Cessna Skyhawk with a rough running engine was five minutes away from landing safely at an abandoned airport in rural southwestern Alabama on Nov. 10, 2011. The pilot was headed southeast from Meridian, Miss., to Dothan, Ala., and was just approaching the halfway point of the trip when he had to declare an emergency. Five minutes seemed so close, yet was frustratingly far away for this aircraft.

Luckily for the pilot, the controller on the other end of the microphone was 22-year veteran Alvin Kent of Atlanta Center. Kent knew his airspace like the back of his hand.

Kent: *The Pine Hill (Municipal) Airport is at 12 o'clock in about five minutes, do you got that much time?*

N813HY: *No, it's hitting on one cylinder, uh, everything's going.*

N813HY: *I'm holding at about 5,000 feet, uh, this is very bad, I don't see the airport… about five minutes?*

Kent: *Five minutes, if you can fly for five minutes you will go right to it.*

The fact that this abandoned airport factored into the incident at all is a remarkable testament to Kent's expert knowledge of the area and his ability to quickly execute a plan to assist the pilot. His calmness stood in stark contrast to the stress of the pilot's situation.

Kent knew that Pine Hill would be tough to find, hidden amongst a wide, mostly wooded area. He needed another set of eyes – and quickly. On his radarscope was a King Air that he was working. The aircraft was in the vicinity headed away from Pine Hill. With a quick and gutsy decision, Kent asked him to make a 180-degree turn back toward Pine Hill and see if he could spot both the airport and the Cessna.

Sure enough, the King Air pilot was successful. Kent went back to working the Cessna down.

Kent: *If you keep what you're doing, you'll make it with no problem. It's nine miles away, N3HY, the Pine Hill airport runway is east-west and it's about 4,500 feet long.*

Kent asked the King Air to assist the Cessna in helping to find the airport.

N813HY: *Okay, I've got a visual on the airport, I'm just about over it, the winds are what now?*

Kent: *Winds out of the north-northwest and gusting between 10 and 20 knots.*

Kent: *There's a chance that he (Cessna) might not be able to hear me when he turns final (approach); he may be too low, so if you hear him and I don't answer him, let me know please.*

A few moments later, the tension was broken with the sounds of the Cessna pilot on the frequency with good news:

N813HY: *Atlanta, we are on the ground at Pine Hill, sir.*

Victor Santore, Southern Region RVP:

To those outside NATCA, Atlanta Center might best be known as the facility that handles the crowded Atlanta Hartsfield airspace. But our membership knows an en route controller's responsibility is often all the way down to the ground, and they also issue approach clearances like terminal controllers do.

The service that veteran ZTL member Alvin Kent provided to the pilot of a Cessna Skyhawk with a troubled engine was, even by our own high standards of professionalism, quite extraordinary. Alvin calmly guided this pilot through a difficult experience and was literally the guiding light to – get this – an ABANDONED airport in rural Alabama. Alvin knows his airspace like the back of his hand. Another day at the office? Perhaps. But this was a wonderful job well done.

Frank Fisher

Corpus Christi Tower/TRACON

Greg Fleetwood

Corpus Christi Tower/TRACON

When the pilot of a Cessna Centurion radioed in and reported engine troubles on the morning of Sept. 6, 2011, a pair of veteran air traffic controllers at Corpus Christi Tower and TRACON (CRP) sprang into action to assist.

Frank Fisher, a 22-year veteran with 14 years at the CRP facility, had just received the position relief briefing from fellow veteran Greg Fleetwood and assumed the North Radar position. The pilot had been receiving VFR flight following at 7,500 feet en route to Houston from McAllen, Texas, and was about 12 miles south of Corpus Christi International. He needed to land right away; his single engine went from running rough, to barely running, to pouring oily smoke into the cockpit, to having to be shut down.

Fisher: *November 57S does it look like you're going to be able to make it, sir?*

Pilot: *I'm trying to, it's … I'm shutting the engine down. I'm coasting now.*

Frank and Greg's teamwork helped avert disaster. While Frank gave the pilot flight instructions and alerted a nearby Coast Guard helicopter to the situation, Greg contacted a nearby airfield – Cabaniss Field, just a few miles southeast of CRP – and told them to expect an emergency.

With time running short, the controllers managed to keep the pilot calm and direct him to Cabaniss, where the pilot made a safe landing. Kraig Kidd, the NATCA facility representative at CRP, said he had never submitted an Archie League nomination before this one, but he immediately knew Frank and Greg's actions were worthy of recognition.

"When I went back and listened to the tape, I was like, 'oh my God, this is special,'" Kidd said. "The way they handled it was outstanding."

Kidd has been at Corpus Christi for 14 years, he said, and went out of his way to mention how consistently strong Frank and Greg have been over their careers. He said the situation was extraordinary, but not the fact that they were up to the task.

"They're extremely reliable controllers and people in general," Kidd said. "And they're humble, too. I am sure they would say 'hey, anyone else would have done it,' because they're those kind of people."

The pilot later called the facility to pass along his thanks. He noted that he had filed an IFR flight plan, planning to cruise at 7,000 feet. But when he called to get it, there was no flight plan stored. Since the weather was good, he opted to go VFR instead, cruising at 7,500 feet.

"[The pilot] said without the extra 500 feet of altitude, he probably would not have made it to the airport," Kidd said.

And thanks to a lucky change in plans and the hard work of two dedicated, experienced air traffic controllers, the pilot and his plane landed safely and smoothly. For this, they are much deserving of an Archie League Medal of Safety Award.

Tim Smith, Southwest Region RVP:

The two winners from the Southwest Region proved nothing less than the epitome of teamwork and commitment. Taking into consideration the current circumstances and exploring all possible options, Frank and Greg quickly sprang into action to assist a pilot with major engine problems.

The aircraft ended up having to shut down his engine and coast. Frank directed him to Cabaniss Field, a Navy-operated outlying field, located five miles southeast of Corpus. Greg immediately contacted Cabaniss, and coordinated with them to clear the runways and to allow Frank to clear the aircraft for landing, without having to transfer communications at this critical time.

Thanks to their commitment, skills and incredible teamwork, these two controllers assisted in bringing this pilot in for a safe landing. We are proud to call them NATCA members and, on behalf of the entire union family, thank them for a job well done.

Kevin McLaughlin Southern California TRACON

Air traffic controller Kevin McLaughlin was working the Shore radar position in the Coast Area at Southern California TRACON on July 29, 2011 when a student pilot flying a Cirrus SR20 checked in on his frequency. He was at 4,500 feet and flying along the California coastline. A few minutes prior, the aircraft had a high oil and cylinder temperature reading. When McLaughlin confirmed this information, the pilot then advised that the temperature had decreased and he would continue on his heading towards Torrance, California (TOA).

With 24 years of experience as a controller – seven at SCT and 17 at Philadelphia – and 27 years of experience as a pilot, McLaughlin had all the right skills to assist this pilot. Soon, he would be using them.

Two minutes later, the pilot informed McLaughlin that his exhaust gas temperature gauge (EGT) was in the red. McLaughlin suggested he divert to the closest airport, John Wayne, Orange County (SNA) just 10 miles away. The pilot agreed and McLaughlin gave him vectors and weather information.

But one minute later, McLaughlin noticed the aircraft was continuing to descend. When asked why, the pilot said the temperature had gone down and he was going to continue to TOA. McLaughlin advised him to maintain his present altitude of 2,500 feet in case the engine failed over the ocean and the pilot needed to glide to shore. But the pilot continued to descend to a dangerously low altitude, confirming McLaughlin's suspicion that the descent-induced cooling had only temporarily solved the problem. He explained to the pilot that his oil temperature was decreasing due to the descent and the resulting increased airflow over the engine was causing it to cool. The pilot was trading critical altitude for cooling effect.

The pilot was beginning to fly near the high seaside cliffs of Laguna Beach when he finally agreed to land at SNA. At this point, he was now experiencing a rough running engine.

McLaughlin: *Do you have the coastline in sight there? You're almost below the terrain there on the coastline.*

N499SF: *I have a coastline in sight. I'm at 700 . . . 700 feet.*

McLaughlin: *Okay. Alright, can you see if you can level to be able to make the airport, sir? I'm concerned about your position there reference the terrain.*

McLaughlin declared an emergency for the pilot and then began to coordinate with the SNA tower to prepare for his arrival. McLaughlin instructed the pilot to climb to about 800 feet. The location of the airport was again called and the pilot advised it was in sight.

While balancing the aircraft's critical state and low altitude, McLaughlin was still able to consider the safest possibilities and worked with SNA to give the pilot the shortest distance to a safe landing, the opposite direction use of Runway 1 instead of Runway 19.

Ham Ghaffari, Western Pacific Region RVP:

We all know that pilots have the ultimate authority and the final say so over their aircraft. But sometimes, whether it's due to inexperience or whether it's not having access to all of the available information, pilots may not make the safest choices. That's when we're there to help them. This is also where the team concept comes into play with aviation. We are all part of a team with one goal in mind, safety.

In this case, the pilot's desires to continue to his destination while descending may have led to a very unfortunate situation had it not been for Kevin McLaughlin's diligent work. He had the wherewithal and expertise to share pertinent information with the pilot in command that ultimately led the pilot to make the best choice and divert for a safe landing. Terrific team work by a terrific safety professional. Congratulations Kevin.

ALASKAN REGION

Matt Quaid, Merrill Field ATCT
Bryan Geller, Fairbanks ATCT

CENTRAL REGION

Glen Jones, Kansas City (MCI) ATCT

EASTERN REGION

Dan Cone, Potomac TRACON

GREAT LAKES REGION

Jim Doyle, Neil McLaughlin, Cleveland ATCT
Mike Everson, Chicago O'Hare ATCT
Sean Hathaway, Albert Honegger, Chicago Center

NORTHWEST MOUNTAIN REGION

Andy Olson, Seattle Center
Andrew Pierce, Seattle Center
Denise Spencer, Seattle Center
Renee Soerink, Seattle Center

SOUTHERN REGION

Scott Shepherd, Lexington ATCT
Molly Welsh, Miami ATCT
Richard Smith, Memphis Center
Luke Potwine, Miami Center
Mark Summerlin, Jacksonville Center
Luke Alcorn, Jacksonville Center
Kenneth Palmer, Daytona Beach ATCT
Marc Ciprioni, Daytona Beach ATCT

SOUTHWEST REGION

Dar Doublet, New Orleans Moisant ATCT
Rachel J. Gilmore, New Orleans Moisant ATCT
Terry Kubisty, Little Rock ATCT
Bob Goodman, Little Rock ATCT
Scotty Cuyler, Abilene ATCT

WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

Dwayne Thornton, Northern California TRACON
Tom Gallagher, Northern California TRACON

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