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**Subject:** Miami and the airlines

**To:** "Milo Wolff" <milo.wolff@quantummatter.com>, "Milo Wolff" <milo.wolff@worldnet.att.net>

Milo,

I had my pilots license in my pocket before I finished high school.

Right out of high school I went to Miami to see the air show in 1950 and never returned.

I bought an Aeronca 7-AC champion and flew it all over south Florida 'till my money ran out.

I was coming back from Tampa over the Calusahashie river bridge at night when my compass leaked all the fluid out over my leg. I remembered my path from Miami was straight over that bridge so I flew directly over the bridge going back and noticed where the shadows of all the cockpit reinforcing bars were and I simply kept all those moon shadows in the same spot and flew back that way toward Miami.

When the sun came up, I flew toward the sun.

Came right into Tamiami airport that way with about 15 minutes of gas in the tank when I landed.

It had a wooden prop and someone showed me where the wood looked darker so I asked Avex for some varnish and instead got old shellac that I painted all over the prop.

Came back a few days later and took off and at about 500 feet of altitude all these spots were coming all over the windshield. I had to go full throttle just to stay at the same altitude and whenever I turned I would lose altitude and the cylinder heat indicator was in the red.

I had to turn to come back and there were big pine trees surrounding the airport back then. I was so low that I lost sight of the asphalt runway but then saw some black through the trees and headed the plane for that. Many of these tree tops, by this time, were above me and I had to avoid these.

I just made it. The propeller looked like it was painted with krinkle paint. I guess I was one lucky kid that my money ran out separating me from that airplane.

I joined the army and went to Germany for three years. There I worked on and flew a few times - when the officers were gone - Stinson L-5s and Cessna L-19s

I had three years of German in high school and made enough on the black market in Germany to buy a Piper PA-12 super cruiser when I got out.

This I flew from New Jersey back to Florida where I went through Embry Riddle to get my aircraft mechanic's license.

I had only 20/200 vision in my right eye. A government inspector flew with me and got me a commercial waiver but I knew no airline would ever hire me with one eye that bad so I went the route of airline maintenance.

The first airline I worked with for about three years was Riddle Airlines. I saw John Paul Riddle guide Arthur Vining Davis - in his 90s then - around the wet spots one day. Davis dropped two million into Riddle Airlines and lost most of it.

I worked for the non skeds and then got into National while I started a surplus store in Hialeah, Florida. I came into work one day and the DC-6 that we had worked on for over a month and had almost finished overhauling was burned to a crisp.

One of the cleaners had spilled some solvent on an electrical multiple outlet box. They should have just left it alone. But then they pulled the plugs out of the box and the sparks set the wet carpet on fire. Even then if they had told someone, the a/c might have been saved but they tried to stomp the fire out themselves. By the time people were alerted the magnesium flooring had caught fire and that was all she wrote. You can't put a magnesium fire out.

While at National I started a better store on the circle in Miami Springs. National was laying off sheet metal workers so I talked to the union rep and got myself laid off as a sheet metal worker. The store and National together was a bit much. Eventually they called the metal men and me back but I never went back.

I sold the store and then went to the Congo with Aerovias Panama where I was Inspector of their flotilla of C-46s and DC-4s. I liked the Congo.

I had a friend who was in Germany and when we lost the UN contract I visited my friend who was trying to convince this young gal to come back to the states with him. She was going to come and then she wasn't and then she was but finally mutter and grossmutter were all crying one day and she said a final NO to my friend. So my friend and I roamed around going to Switzerland and Italy and after about a year we

came back to the states on the Hanseatic.

I think I spent about two months myself in Ireland and England back then too leaving my junk with my friend in Germany with his shatsi.

You had to stay out of the states 18 months then to avoid paying US taxes. And this I most certainly did.

After that I came back to Miami and got on with Pan Am.

I was at my best on the line. We had a good line radio shop at Pan Am. Bob Thiebert and Oscar Buschbom ran it.

Oscar just died a month ago. He knew the radio end of it while Bob was an old timer at Pan Am and knew the political side and that combination really worked beautifully.

But then came deregulation and Pan Am came unglued.

I worked for a year as electrician at the Miami Herald and then got into Eastern's Airlines Lockheed 1011 Service center.

If ever you go to Miami, Milo, take the Miami Herald tour. Their presses can print a one ton roll of news print in 20 minutes and they have 64 of them.

They start printing the comics for the Sunday paper on Wednesday. Getting the Sunday paper out on Saturday night is one incredible event. When I was there 35 trucks could be loaded automatically on one side of the building and about 50 on the other side manually. As soon as one truck was loaded another would pull in and this continued all Saturday night. They put several million papers out - each one weighing a pound a piece - every Saturday night.

The lockheed L-1011 airliner was a disaster. The RB 2-11 engine in it bankrupted Rolls-Royce. That airplane plus that engine helped send Eastern into bankruptcy too.

I loved Miami and the aviation scene, Milo. I sold parts and things and had rental property there and it was a good life. I was talking to my cousin the other day about it and he said, "It was country when we first went there."

It sure was.

He and his brother came there a bit after me. We are all here in Tennessee now.

Fitz

