

WRIGHT BROTHERS MASTER PILOT AWARD

**Fairbanks Flight Standards District
Office Honoree 2006**



Captain Holger "Jorgy" Jorgensen

JORGENSEN, Holger. Called Jorgy by his friends, was born on January 26, 1927, in Haycock, Alaska a small mining camp on the Seward Peninsula in northwestern Alaska. His father, a Norwegian sourdough, died in a mining accident in 1934 and his mother, an Inupiaq Eskimo from Koyuk Alaska was left to single-handedly raise the six children. In 1942 as a young man of 15 years he, and his oldest sister, moved to Nome, Alaska. He went to work for Sumner Construction and was allowed to join the Alaska Territorial Guard at the age of 15 because part of his schooling included becoming fluent in the use of Morse code. Jorgy became a Sergeant in the guard at the age of 17. He worked hard at the construction job and in June of 1943 was able to move the rest of his family from Haycock to Nome. The construction business was very demanding and the little time that was left was spent in the guard, never-the-less in 1943 Jorgy found time to begin flying lessons in a 40 horse Taylorcraft, under the tutelage of Frank Whaley owner of the small flying school in Nome and Certified Flight Instructor. On July, 10, 1944, with Pearl Laska

(Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award Recipient in February 2006) as his new Instructor, he soloed at the Nome City Strip in a Piper J-5 Cub. Military service got in the way of further flight instruction as Jorgy was transferred from the Alaska Territorial Guard into the United States Army, due to the draft in 1945. He served at Ft. Wainwright and later at Ft. Richardson in the Anchorage area where he was assigned to the "Fish Camp" tending to dogs and maintaining boats for the Army Scouts. He was honorably discharged on November 22, 1946 a 19 year old young man who had already given 4 years of his life in service to his country!

In Fairbanks, in 1947 continued flight instruction to gain his Private Pilot Certificate and in 1948, using the GI Bill became a certificated Commercial Pilot. He began flying commercially in December of 1948 for Foster Aviation in Nome, Alaska. There he flew Stinson Voyager, Norseman and Beechcraft Staggerwing aircraft to the villages and mining camps around Nome. From 1948 to 1954 Jorgy flew in the winter months but worked on a construction crew in the summer as, in those days, you could make about as much money in a week working construction as you could in a month as a commercial pilot. In the spring of 1949 Jorgy operated a dozer in Fairbanks and was one of the first to break ground on a project that would become Fairbanks International Airport. It was fortune that landed him this dozer job in Fairbanks in 1949, because that spring he met Rosalie Gibler who was visiting her folks in Fairbanks for the summer. As the summer went by, Rosalie had fewer and fewer reasons to leave Alaska and on October 4, 1949 married Jorgy and

moved with him to Nome for the winter flying season. Over the years they were blessed with 5 children Irwin, Kathy, Holger Jr., Noel, and Roberta. Jorgy recalls that none of the kids got interested in flying because it meant you had to be away from home too much, that is, except Roberta who toured around Alaska with him in various aircraft.

In 1954 Jorgy went to work for Wien Airlines flying Cessna 170b, Cessna 195, and Norseman aircraft on wheels, skis, and floats in support of mining and trapping. In 1955 he began flying mainline with Wien as a co-pilot in the DC-3 and C-46, and in 1956 he was upgraded to Captain in both aircraft. During 1956 he was chosen along with 2 other pilots to perform a Demonstration of Wien's capability to give air support to the Dewline Early Warning Radar sites from Tin City, Alaska to the Fox Radar site on the icecap of Greenland. Jorgy flew from Barter Island to the Fox radar site landing at all the sites along the way, demonstrating the companies' ability to get the mission accomplished. As a result, Wien was awarded the contract. In 1959 Jorgy was the Captain of a medevac mission to the T3 ice island 1000 miles north of point Barrow. A man was very ill and needed medicine and a lift to a hospital for immediate help. The weather was bad at T3 and the C-46 did not have the fuel capacity to fly to T3 and return to Barrow the closest fuel resource, so the return fuel was loaded into the back of the airplane in barrels. The crew's very lives depended on being able to find the airstrip at T3 and land so that they could out of the barrels into the aircraft fuel tanks and safely return to barrow. Jorgy passed the point of no return using celestial

navigation and the weather got lower over T3. Using a sextant and the stars Jorgy was able to position the airplane over the airstrip at T3 and find his way under the 200 foot overcast to land on the ice runway lit with oil flare pots. Those of us who were putting this presentation together sat in silence as the events of this story were unfolded before us. After a couple moments of silence Jorgy became animated and passed on some wisdom that we should all pay attention to, when he said with great emphasis, "That was stupid...real stupid!" The upshot of it was that once the medicine arrived the patient was confident that they could now pull through the illness and refused to get on the airplane and be flown to a hospital. Jorgy refueled and from the barrels in the back and returned to Barrow with his crew and an empty airplane.

While at Wien Jorgy also flew as Captain of Fokker F-27 and was one of the first receive training the Boeing 737. With the merger of Wien and Consolidated in 1969, Jorgy went to work for Jim McGoffin at Alaska International Airways flying the Lockheed L-382 Hercules, otherwise known as the "Herc". Flying the Herc he went around the world on 3 overseas and in support of the North Slope oil fields. In 1976, having had enough overseas excitement, Jorgy took a job with Great Northern flying the Lockheed Electra L-188. Most of the flying was from Anchorage to the North Slope, but during the commercial fishing season he also hauled fish from King Salmon to Ketchikan and Seattle and to a processing plant in Petersburg.

In 1980 Jorgy took a job with Northern Air Cargo flying the Douglas DC-6.

During his time with Northern Air Cargo he took a leave of absence to fly a British Aerospace BAE 146, a 4 engine jet powered aircraft to the Aleutian Islands for Alaska Pacific Airways, shown here in Dutch Harbor. He returned fulltime to Northern Air Cargo in 1985 and from 1987 to 1989 served as Chief Pilot for the company. From 1989 to 1991 Jorgy flew Beechcraft 99 and Douglas DC-3 for Frontier Flying Service out of Fairbanks once again servicing the villages and mining operation of Alaska's vast interior. From 1991 to 1994 he flew DC-3's for Woods Air Service out of Palmer, Alaska. His last commercial flight was on May 31, 1994 in a DC-3 N777YA delivering a drill rig to Pt. Hope, Alaska. N777YA was the same aircraft he received his DC-3 type rating in while flying for Wien in August 1956.

Jorgy lives in Fairbanks Alaska, with his wife Rosalie. His children Kathy, Noel

and Roberta also live in the Fairbanks area, while Irwin and Holger Jr. make their homes on the west coast of the Lower 48.

Over the many years spent flying airplanes Jorgy has accumulated over 35,000 hours of flight time, 11 type ratings in large transport category aircraft and a Letter of Authorization authorizing him to operate a C-82 "Flying Boxcar", the B-25, and the F7F Tigercat. These aircraft were used as fire fighter aircraft; dropping fire retardant to quench the flames of the burning forests we are all familiar with here in Alaska. Jorgy has also flown many types of small aircraft flown over the years and personally owned 16 different airplanes.

Captain Jorgensen, thank you for your years of service and the example you have left for others to follow.