



DAC - MDC - Boeing Retirees
of California

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Roundup

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Bill's Corner

As I write this in late July, we are finally having some warm weather in coastal SoCal. I've been watching the daily highs at Pismo and thinking about flying there for a day to walk on the sand and be lazy, but it is cool and overcast most days. The effect of terrain on weather in SoCal is amazing – I saw a daily high for Pismo and nearby towns of San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles of 68, 88 and 108 on a recent day. Coincident with the arrival of hot weather is the start of fire season, with a number of major fires and a record amount of acreage burned for this early in the season. Living in forested mountain areas is wonderful but comes with a higher risk of fire.

The visit to the Mercedes facility in our old assembly buildings 80 and 84 was really good. Our thanks to Jim Phillips and Rolf Sellge for organizing this. There is a separate Roundup article with more detail and some pictures.

Our October luncheon should be a great one, as always. Speaker and subject are covered elsewhere in this Roundup, but I will take this opportunity to encourage you to attend.

Boeing just announced selection of Kelly Ortberg as Boeing's new president and CEO replacing Dave Calhoun. Ortberg, 64, brings over 35 years of aerospace leadership to this position. He began his career in 1983 as an en-

gineer at Texas Instruments, then joined Rockwell Collins in 1987 as a program manager and held increasingly important leadership positions at the company prior to becoming its president and CEO in 2013. After five years leading Rockwell Collins, he steered the company's integration with United Technologies and RTX until his retirement from RTX in 2021.

Ending the stream of problems and recovering Boeing's reputation will obviously be Job 1. The value of the stock, which many of us care about, will take care of itself in that case. I am sure we all wish him well in this new position that we can assume will be very high pressure with intense scrutiny from investors and the public. BTW Boeing had to waive its mandatory retirement age of 65 for top executives in making this selection.

October 2024 luncheon

Our program for October will focus on two items: the D-Day Squadron of DC-3 / C-47 / R4D / C-53 airplanes and the recently refurbished Spirit of Douglas DC-3, presented by Geoffrey Thomas. The D-Day Squadron was a short-term union of DC-3 type airplanes put together for the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landing. The activities occurred over a period of more than a month as airplanes traveled from Connecticut to England and on to France for the D-Day reenactment. The next step was to Berlin to celebrate the role of the DC-3 in the Berlin Airlift. Finally, the airplanes returned to the US and ended the tour

at EAA Oshkosh. There were about 11 airplanes participating in the program, although not all made it to all events. The airplanes were from the US, UK, France, and New Zealand. Geoffrey attended this event and should be able to recreate the program and atmosphere of this event.

The second part of Geoffrey's presentation will focus on one of the planes in the D-Day event, the Spirit of Douglas, a C-53 owned by a New Zealand couple. The airplane has recently been restored and is currently registered as N8336C and was previously known as the Spirit of Benovia. This airplane has a year of touring planned before going to her new home in New Zealand. A documentary record of this tour will be made by award-winning French filmmaker Gregory Le Moigne. A news release said it will be released "in the fullness of time" which means we may live to see it (or maybe not) 😊



MDC/Boeing Retirees Visit Mercedes Classic Car Center in Joyous Return to Workplace Home

By Jim Phillips and Elayne Bendel

Author Thomas Wolfe once famously wrote that "you can't go home again." But 26 former MDC/Boeing employees and family proved Wolfe wrong during a recent visit to the Mercedes Classic Car Center USA.

The Classic Car Center USA is located in two former Long Beach aircraft final assembly buildings and for years many of us who worked there were intensely curious about what Mercedes has done since leasing the facilities about a decade ago.

At last, thanks to Jim Phillips and Rolf Sellge, who arranged a visit to the site, some of us got to

find out what is happening there. And what a wonderful surprise it was!

Where once Douglas jets flowed along the final assembly lines, Mercedes has built a beautiful showroom, display, and parts/artifacts sales area along with metal and upholstery shops, large restoration and new car processing areas.

Unlike the old MDC buildings 80 and 84 which had once been behind the aircraft plant's security perimeter, the Classic Car Center is open to the public and directly accessible from a new road--Cover St.---off Lakewood Blvd.

Even prior to our entering, Rolf put us in the mood for what we were about to see by driving his beautiful historic Mercedes 190SL and parking it just outside the center entrance.

Once inside, our hosts Mike Kunz and Nate Lander provided us with an excellent overview of the purpose and business of the Classic Car Center.



My guess is that they were as excited about hosting us as we were to visit; they were very interested in work in the aircraft hangars before Mercedes occupied them. Questions flowed freely from guests to hosts and vice versa.

A sign on the showroom wall echoed our feelings. It was meant to refer to the restored cars, but we also took it to mean the rebirth of our MDC buildings.



Today the former MDC Bldg. 80 bears little resemblance to the aircraft hangar. Right next to the Classic Car Center door are examples of the original 1880's vehicles built by company founders Karl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler.



Formula Libre class, and a Mercedes-powered Indy car sister to an Indy 500 winner driven by Al Unser Jr.



We were surprised to learn that the name Mercedes came from an early transaction with a wealthy customer who agreed to order 35 vehicles if they were named after one of his daughters---Mercedes.



Gone are the 60-foot ceilings required for aircraft production, and on display in the still spacious, but more intimate, showroom area were examples of some of Mercedes' most famous vehicles. Among them were two iconic 300 SL gullwings from the mid-1950s, a slightly newer model, a UN armored executive transport, an extremely rare racer once driven by famous drivers Juan Fangio and Stirling Moss in the

Behind the display area was the spotless workshop where restorations were in progress. Nate and Mike explained that Mercedes has the capability to restore virtually any company-built vehicle with as-original materials, fabrics and paint. Resto-mods with newer items are not offered. Their restorations are neither fast, nor inexpensive. They can run \$1 million or more

and take several years. But the end results cannot be distinguished from original, and the restored vehicles are prized and valued accordingly.



We were astounded to find out that only one other similar Classic Car Center---in Germany--is operated by Mercedes.



But the huge size of the former MDC hangars enables another important function there. A large portion of Bldg. 80, where rows of DC-9s/MD-80s and all of Bldg. 84, where up to 12 DC-10s less tail fins could have fit whole, are now a Mercedes prep center serving all the company's dealers west of the Mississippi River. The cars arrive at Long Beach harbor and are

brought to the processing center. Some have added equipment installed or in-transit damage repaired, and all are cleaned and made ready for sale. Our former hangars can hold up to 5,000 new Mercedes before they head to their owners! Nate and Mike said Mercedes had been eyeing these buildings for years prior to leasing them. After aircraft production ceased in 2006 there was a period where it looked possible they would become movie studios, and Mercedes shot a commercial there. After that Mercedes recognized their potential for their own business uses and when the studio idea fell through, they were able to work out an acceptable lease arrangement.

Nate considers himself an unofficial site historian and has collected a number of photos of aircraft production there and facilities floor plans but is still looking for more. He said working there is like being part of an archaeological dig. They are continually finding artifacts from the aircraft days including Cleco fasteners and tools. During our visit he produced a framed list of first aid procedures from the MDC days he said would be displayed in the showroom area.

It was impossible for us to walk through the buildings and not have workplace memories come flooding back. We shared some of them with our hosts. The current occupants' reverence for the facility's heritage was very pleasing for us but is not surprising given the long history and tradition of Mercedes-Benz. The fact that the Fly DC-Jets sign still crowns the building they work in may also be part of the story.



Regardless, as our visit came to a close, it was clear they are putting the historic buildings to excellent use and we are grateful to Jim, Rolf and Mercedes for allowing us to visit. We hope they remain a part of the community for many years to come.

Former SAS Scandinavian Airlines DC-9 took to the skies over Southern California for a skydiving mission after more than a decade



Recently, N127NK, a 55-year-old DC-9-21 “Hot Rod,” did just that. Multiple loads of jumpers had a chance to experience history aboard the 488th Long Beach-built Douglas DC-9. Skydive Perris, a skydiving facility just 50 minutes from downtown, hosted the event.



The “Jump the Jet” events have been in the works since 2020. Skydive Perris, a skydiving facility at Perris Valley Airport (L65) in Perris, Calif., made waves in late November 2020 by announcing the jet would soon return to service for the first time since 2013. According to its Facebook page, the facility, located just 50 minutes from downtown Los Angeles, hosted at least three jump runs this past weekend. The events followed a successful test flight on May 7, 2024. Event organizers said the events were only open to licensed jumpers, who paid \$150 each for the opportunity. Observer seats and tandem jumpers were not permitted.

Although this aircraft is a privately owned skydiving jet, it still bears an FAA registration. Thus, once jumpers boarded the aircraft, they

were subject to a standard FAA safety briefing by a specially trained Florida-based flight crew. Like passengers aboard a regular commercial flight, all passengers must be seated with seat belts fastened and tray tables and seats in full, upright, and locked positions.

Once airborne, this workhorse of a machine only takes four minutes to reach a jumping altitude of 13,500’ AGL. At altitude, the tail exit opens, and the jumpers begin their exhilarating dives back to earth.

One has to imagine that this particular skydiving aircraft isn’t the most efficient choice. Even with a light load, the slowest a DC-9 can fly is roughly 125 knots. This limitation, combined with a narrow single aisle and the small exit, makes it difficult for the process to be as efficient as more suitable skydiving aircraft options – particularly for formation jumpers. Nonetheless, the experience must have been pretty amazing – especially for avgeeks who love this historic workhorse of a bygone era.



SAS Scandinavian Airlines DC-9-21 (SE-DBO) at Dusseldorf Rhein-Ruhu (DUS).

The history of N127NK stretches back over half a century. Initially registered as SE-DBO, she was delivered new to SAS Scandinavian Airlines on 1 May 1969. She would serve with SAS for over two decades, briefly changing hands with Swedish carrier Nordic East Airways from 1991 to 1992. She was one of just ten DC-9-20s ever

built (all for SAS). Her post-SAS career saw her serve with various airlines throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium. Under a new US registry, N127NK, she flew for low-cost US carriers Spirit, ValuJet, and Allegiant Air.

(This article contributed by Dave Harland. He is a copywriter for the aviation industry and is owner of "The Aviation Underwriter.")

Incoming President and CEO Robert Kelly Ortberg Begins New Era at Boeing



Boeing's new President and CEO formally took the reins at the company on August 8, 2024. A youngish-looking 64, Ortberg nevertheless has years of experience running a large aerospace concern, Rockwell Collins.

As Bill Rickard mentioned in his column, after five years leading Rockwell Collins, he steered the company's integration with United Technologies and RTX until his retirement from RTX in 2021.

This experience will prove invaluable as he oversees the reintegration of Spirit AeroSystems back into Boeing after the company agreed to purchase Spirit earlier this year. Spirit manufactures major components of Boeing aircraft structure at its Wichita, Kansas, plants, but since its separation from Boe-

ing in 2005 it has diversified into other related areas with other customers. Airbus will assume control over Spirit's European operations.

Ortberg faces no shortage of challenges, but already he has made some decisions that are widely praised. While Boeing's headquarters are in Arlington, VA, Ortberg determined that his home base will be Seattle, WA, where many of Boeing's commercial manufacturing facilities are and where the World Headquarters used to be located.

In a widely publicized upheaval, Boeing in 2001 decided to move its headquarters away from its commercial manufacturing base in an effort to better connect with other customers in its increasingly diversified business. It chose Chicago over Dallas and Denver as its new HQ. A second decision then moved the HQ to VA in 2022.

At the time, some industry observers had criticized the move to separate the senior management team from the manufacturing center. Recent events have increased the volume of the critics.

Ortberg's choice of the Seattle area for his home sends a message to government officials, employees, suppliers and customers alike that he will be placing a high priority on getting the production and quality issues there on a much firmer footing.

During his first day on the job, Ortberg got out on the factory floor, touring the 737 assembly line at Renton, WA and getting a firsthand look at daily operations. He appears to be off to a good start.