

## COAST TO COAST, TWA SOARS AGAIN

As told by Kaye Chandler on her website, "Spirit of TWA" A Living Legend. Visit [www.spiritoftwa.com](http://www.spiritoftwa.com) for the complete story and photos.

*This special "Skyliner" version compiled & edited by Carl Barley.*

### Aircraft: 1937 Lockheed Electra Jr. 12A, NC18137

The aircraft was owned by TWA from 1940 to 1945 when Ruth Richter-Holden's father was Executive Vice President, and was used for high-altitude research and an executive transport.

In 2005, through a twist of fate, Ruth Richter-Holden was introduced to the plane when the owner contacted her looking for historic details in order to sell it. Driven by a faint memory and gut feeling, Richter-Holden purchased the 12A sight unseen and as she exclaims, "brought her back to TWA."



### The Crew:



Ruth Richter Holden



Capt. Curt Walters



Capt. Kirk McQuown



Kaye Chandler

Veteran commercial pilots Captain Kirk McQuown and Captain Curt Walters, co-guardian, will command the 12A, with Ruth Richter-Holden as co-pilot. Also on hand will be Kaye Chandler, retired TWA flight attendant turned film documentary producer, who will accompany the team to document this historic event. Former TWA VP Corporate Communications, Jerry Cosley is assisting in the Kansas City stop over as well as communications for the trip.

### Eastbound: September 18, 2008

#### Santa Maria, California, September 18, 2008

Departure perfect. Weather perfect. We are on our way to New York. To add to the excitement, we have the internet in flight. This is way too cool. 2008 Technology with a 1937 airplane.

Todd Burke, VP Corporate Communications for JetBlue (he's also a former TWAer), called two weeks ago and asked the impossible, "do you think Ruth Richter Holden would be interested in flying the 12A to New York for our grand opening?". It took Ruth a couple of phone calls and the answer was a resounding YES! A trip that should take at least 2 months to put together, we did it in 2 weeks.

Ruth coordinated the flight plans, and hotels, while Curt ensured "Miss Ellie" was ready to fly. Me, I was busy designing a website, camera equipment, "new" laptop learning about Blogs, and all of the other thousand details that needed completing.

With teamwork from so many - we did it. And history is in the making, with the inclusion of TWA's oldest flying aircraft, "The Spirit of TWA".

Ruth Richter-Holden, the daughter of TWA co-founder Paul E. Richter, Jr., begin a nine-day journey bridging aviation history with its future. She and her crew are flying a 1937 Lockheed Electra 12A, one of TWA's first executive aircraft, from California to New York City, culminating in the celebration of JetBlue's new Terminal 5 at John F. Kennedy International Airport on September 22, 2008. "JetBlue's new Terminal 5 at JFK will literally connect to our aviation history, via the famous 'flight wings' of Eero Saarinen's landmark TWA Flight Center," said Todd Burke, Vice President, JetBlue Corporate Communications. "We stand on the shoulders of the pioneers of our great industry, and our celebration would not be complete without Ms. Richter-Holden and her crew representing the great people of TWA."

### Winslow, Arizona, September 18, 2008

Right on schedule. Upon landing we were greeted by Orville Wiseman, proud owner of Winslow Airport. Winslow airport's terminal area contains two unique relics from the infancy of the U.S. airline industry. The Terminal Building and the T.A.T. Hangar. The terminal looks like a movie backdrop from the 1930's. Classic adobe design. To the left of this delightful terminal is the hangar, once owned by Transcontinental Air Transport.



### Hays, Kansas

We laid over in Hays, Kansas. Our itinerary for today includes stopping in Topeka, Kansas 11a.m., Kansas City (early noon), MO (downtown airport), laying over in Taylorville, IL.

Hays airport is a small, friendly stop. Taxiing in just off of the runway were dozens of large rolls of hay, with classic farm houses in the background. I'm learning small airports are fun, people are friendly, and very laid back. A couple of the airport locals took a mini tour of "Ellie" and one man said he was grateful to simply look at history.

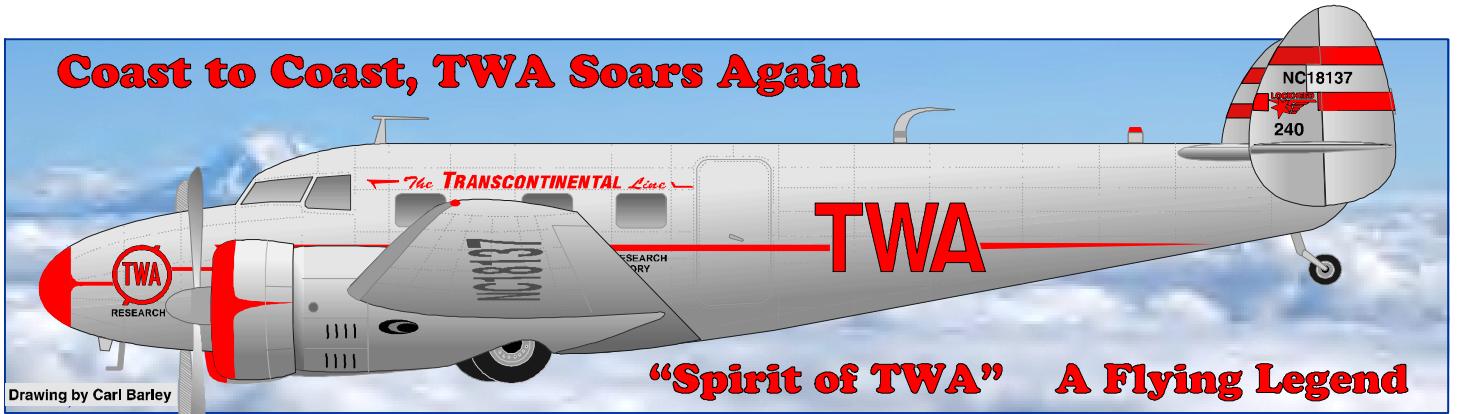
Friday morning we had a warm send off from the local people at Hays Airport. Everyone stopped by to take a few pictures, meet Curt and Ruth and of course a photo op of "Miss Ellie".

### Topeka, Kansas, September 19, 2008

We flew in to Topeka, KS so Ruth could wish a warm hello to a dear friend, Keith Horton, retired TWA engineer. Keith was hired in 1941, retired 1980. We had lunch with Keith, who is quite a character. Next stop, Kansas City. Continued page 14



# Coast to Coast, TWA Soars Again



Drawing by Carl Barley

## "Spirit of TWA" A Flying Legend

"Jocko" meets "Miss Ellie"



JFK Photo by Giacomo "Jocko" Liberatore



JFK Photo by Giacomo "Jocko" Liberatore



Capt. Curt "Rocky" Walters

JFK Photo by Giacomo "Jocko" Liberatore



JFK Photo by Giacomo "Jocko" Liberatore



STL Photo by Charles E. Schmidt



Inside "Miss Ellie"

CMH Photo by Mary Al Fricke



Ona Gieschen and Ruth

MKC Photo by Jerry Cosley



MKC Photo by Jerry Cosley



MKC Photo by Jerry Cosley

## **Kansas City, Missouri, September 19, 2008**

Of course we were well received in Kansas City. We stopped for refueling. Karen Holden Young, Ruth's daughter met our flight. A moment for a quick family reunion. Mother and daughter had a lot of catching up.

## **Taylorville, Illinois, September 19, 2008**

We arrived at Taylorville on schedule. Ruth picked Taylorville because they offered a hangar. With all of the rain storms last week she felt that a "port in the storm" might be what "Ellie" would need. Not the case. Weather was perfect. The Taylorville airport is surrounded with corn fields, open space and friendly people. We will overnight at Taylorville.

## **Columbus, Ohio, Rickenbacker, September 20, 2008**

Today we are on our way to Lancaster, PA. This was primarily a refueling stop. We will return to CMH on our westbound Coast to Coast tour. We are going to follow TWA's original route New York City to Burbank, CA.

## **Lancaster, Pennsylvania, September 20, 2008**

This is an overnight and refueling stop. Tomorrow we will fly into JFK Terminal 5.

## **New York, JFK Airport, September 21, 2008**

What an experience - we landed JFK on schedule and were greeted by a parade of flashing lights escorting Spirit of TWA to Terminal 5, JetBlue Gate 9. And guess what - we are the FIRST airplane to park at JetBlue's new terminal.

And what a new terminal - something into the future. The gala JetBlue is putting on tomorrow is going to something out of this world. This will be one of the finest terminals in this country. Absolutely beautiful and they have done everything right. Entirely high tech, you can even order food from your gate and have it delivered. Gourmet, classy and exciting. It is the real WOW factor.

JetBlue gave us the red carpet treatment - well it took 7 men about an hour to lay out the red carpet - no wrinkles allowed. Ellie has never had such a grand welcome, and well deserved. What a history this wonderful airplane has had.



Once parked at the gate, Ruth opened the door and said with her arms waving; "we're here". A gathering of JetBlue and former TWA employees were there to say welcome. I think we all had the moment of realization of what this was all about. A legacy of the past here to greet an icon of the future.

We were treated like royalty. Curt Walters is the best Captain I have ever had the honor to fly with, and Ruth Richter Holden is like working with the energizer bunny - she just keeps going and going and going and going. What a trooper.

Monday morning we were treated to a complete tour of the new Terminal 5 - state of the art production. Every consideration to enhance their passengers travel experience has been taken into consideration.

We started our morning with a private tour of the Eero Saarinen building, now in a state of complete restoration.

Show time, and JetBlue knows how to do it. Our own Todd Burke, VP JetBlue Corporate Communications was the pivot point for this extravaganza. The employees were first to share in the festivities. They were welcome to tour the new facilities, then a family style B-B-Q was available for all.

## **The Return Flight:**

On its return, the flight plan for the 12A will pay homage to its beginnings and follow TWA's original Coast to Coast passenger service routes from the 30s, through Kansas City - TWA's headquarters for 40+ years. Flight plans mirror TWA's "Sun Chaser Flight 1" from New York to Burbank, California, with stops in Columbus, Dayton, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, Wichita, Albuquerque and Winslow. TWA was one of the first airlines to offer coast-to-coast service. The Kansas City stop will be September 25, with the Burbank finale September 27th.

## **Westbound, September 24, 2008:**

May not be able to make all planned stops due to President Bush at JFK, weather (mid-west) and other minor problem...so late departure from JFK. May only be able to stop at either Columbus or Dayton, then SUS to be at MKC by 1 p.m. on the 25th.

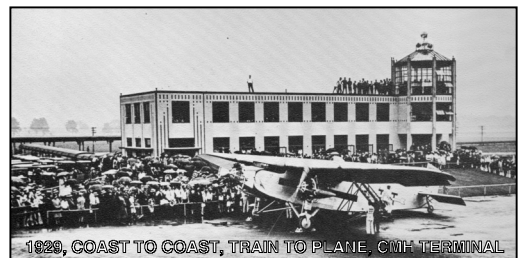
## **Wheeling, West Virginia, September 24, 2008**

Spirit of TWA has landed HLG 2:09 p.m. on schedule...our schedule. 12A flies best with fuel. We also loved the Air Museum/Terminal at HLG during the fuel stop there. Spent an hour looking around it.

## **Columbus, Ohio, September 24, 2008**

This is an overnight stop. Had a wonderful reception on arrival. Many wonderful TWA'ers on hand to meet us. Aviation Historian Jim "Jet" Thompson invited the crew to dinner after

the wonderful welcome. He suggested we might enjoy dinner at the TAT Ristorante Di Famiglia



since it was named after the predecessor of TWA. We had a fantastic dinner, loved the food & we had some special attention from Tony Carrova, brother of the owner. We also drove past the historic old TAT terminal building before heading to the restaurant, and thoroughly enjoyed seeing that.

## **St Louis, Missouri, September 25, 2008**

Departing CMH 25 September with next stop SUS, "Spirit of St Louis" airport, with ETA about 09:30 a.m. at Executive Beech, Inc. 532 Beechcraft Road, Chesterfield, MO. Departure SUS at 11:30 a.m. 25 September to MKC with ETA MKC still as scheduled 1:00 p.m. Departure MKC early 26 September.

**Kansas City, Missouri, September 25, 2008**

Arrived Kansas City 1:05 p.m. right on schedule. This was "Ellie's" home during the early 1940's. We had a great reception & reunion with lots of our TWA family. On September 26, we departed Kansas City right on schedule. "Ellie" (*Ruth's nickname for the Lockheed Electra*), is on her way back to her California home.



**Hutchinson, Kansas, September 26, 2008**

Diverted to Hutchison to feed Capt. Kirk and the 12A.

**Albuquerque, New Mexico, September 26, 2008**

Change of schedule: Cancel ABQ -- we need to go to Double Eagle - AEG 2:00 p.m. Will drop in at Double Eagle a bit for fuel then overnight at Winslow. On to Bullhead City a.m. 27<sup>th</sup> then BUR at 3 p.m.

**Winslow, Arizona, September 26, 2008**

Scheduled fuel and an overnight stop. Photo shown here is Winslow's historic old adobe terminal building.



In the morning we will be off to Burbank, our final destination and the conclusion of our nine day journey.

**Bullhead City, Arizona, September 27, 2008**

Scheduled fuel stop. "Ellie" flies best with fuel.

**Burbank, California, September 27, 2008**

The POWER of your Presence is requested at a reception to honor the last leg of the historic cross country flight of the TWA 1937 Electra 12A aircraft. Piloted by the daughter of co-founder of TWA, Paul Richter. Ruth Richter Holden, and crew will arrive Sat., Sept. 27th. Location: Atlantic Aviation Bob Hope Airport (Burbank) 10750 Sherman Way Burbank, CA. "Party" Time : 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Please bring, wear, and share your memorabilia and conversation pieces that honor the history of TWA.

**Spirit of TWA completes 'Coast to Coast'. Sun Racer landing BUR at 2:52 p.m. Thanks to all. "We Did It."**

**Los Angeles, California, September 28, 2008**



On the way home to Santa Maria, we planned this special stop at Los Angeles to celebrate Captain Curt "Rocky" Walters' retirement party, being hosted by American Eagle, at LAX.

Congratulations Captain Curt "Rocky" Walters.....

**Santa Maria, California, September 28, 2008**

Returned "Ellie" to her hangar for a well deserved rest. A superb performance by aircraft and crew! An on-time performance that would make even TWA proud.

From September 18, to September 27, 2008, Ruth Richter-Holden, the daughter of TWA co-founder Paul E. Richter, Jr., (*and TWA Seniors Club member*), flew a nine-day journey bridging aviation history with its future.

"Ellie", Sparkling in her TWA livery was the show stopper. Everyone wanted their picture taken with our little lady. Crowds stood patiently waiting to take a peak at her elegant interior. Captain Curt and Ruth were surrounded with enthusiastic visitors all eager to learn more about a by-gone era. We all felt the sense of pride as the little lady shined, proudly displaying the grand name of TWA.

"We're so thankful to JetBlue for the opportunity to share in their festivities. It was an honor to take part as JetBlue has the same positive management energy and mission of caring for its people and passengers, that helped build TWA's legacy. "We were very proud to be there to toast them as they made their own history."

**"The Spirit of TWA"  
1937 Lockheed Electra 12A  
NC18137  
Oldest Flying TWA Aircraft #240  
1940 to 1945**



**TWA's "Flying Laboratory"**

In the historical development of upper-altitude flight, over weather flying, the 12A tested static discharge and de-icing equipment used on today's modern aircraft

- Engines.....Pratt & Whitney R985.....450hp
- Range..... 800mi
- Cruise.....200mph
- Gross Weight.....8650 lbs
- Wing Span.....49.6 ft
- Length.....36.4 ft

**Designed by**  
Hall Hibbard Richard Von Hake Kelly Johnson  
**Landing Gear**  
design by Lloyd Stearman

**Built in 1937, Burbank, CA.  
Original Price \$39,500**

**Original Owner**

Bob Six, Continental Airlines 1937 -1940  
Passenger and mail

**Famous Flyers**

- Jack Frye Paul E. Richter
- Tommy Tomlinson Chuck Yeager
- Howard Hughes Bob Hoover
- Aubrey Keif Col. Bud Anderson
- Ret. Capt. Barry Shiff Bob Six

**NC18137**

Owned by Ruth Richter Holden  
Daughter of Paul E. Richter, TWA founder, Executive V.P.

**Lockheed Electra 12A Guardians**

Captain Curt "Rocky" Walters  
Co-owner  
www.twaspirt.com

Pilot Ruth Richter Holden  
TWAspirit@yahoo.com  
www.spiritoftwa.com



**Coast to Coast "Spirit of TWA"  
Columbus, Ohio September 24, 2008**



Left to right, Ed McCain, Bob Shopik, Capt. Don Peters, Capt. Kirk McQuown, Jim Willis, Ruth Richter Holden, Don McMillen, Jerry Hoffman, Lou Parkinson, Leo Dauer, Carolynn Dauer, Joe Cuddy. Kneeling in the front row, Mary AlFricke, Sue Bergman, Jim Thompson. *Photo courtesy of Mary Al Fricke*

**TWA SENIORS SKYLINER**

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Visit our TWA SENIORS WEBSITE

<http://www.twaseniorsclub.org>

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