

***Merrill Field,  
Where Flying is  
Friendly***



***Providing over  
79 Years  
of Service***

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## **MERRILL FIELD BULLETIN**

*Current News About Your Airport*

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*Merrill Field Airport  
800 Merrill Field Drive, Anchorage AK 99501*

*September, 2009  
[www.muni.org/merrill1/merrill1.cfm](http://www.muni.org/merrill1/merrill1.cfm)*

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### **Merrill Field Aviation Pioneers honored at annual picnic**

The new roads that were built to access Merrill Field from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue were fittingly named to acknowledge Merrill Field pioneers, Richard & Ramona Ardaiz, Oren Hudson, Robert Reeve, Wesley & Helen Stoddard, and Joe & Anne Wilbur (see condensed biographies following this article). These extraordinary contributors to Alaska aviation were honored at the 2009 Merrill Field Picnic on August 19, National Aviation Day. The Municipal Airports Aviation Advisory Commission sponsored the event where Tony Follet, Commission Chair, welcomed all our aviation pioneers and guests. Municipal Manager, George Vakalis, was on hand to read a Municipal Proclamation signed by Mayor Dan Sullivan. Mr. Vakalis also presented a handsome portfolio containing a 1950 aerial photo of Merrill Field to Dick Ardaiz, Oren Hudson, Richard Reeve, Greg Stoddard, and Anne Wilbur. The Municipality of Anchorage is thankful to all our aviation pioneers for providing the backbone of Alaska's air transportation system and for making Anchorage the great city it is today. The Merrill Field staff extends our thanks to all the volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this picnic a memorable occasion for so many, and we offer special recognition to ACE Hangars; Aero-Metric, Inc.; Coca-Cola of Alaska/Odom Corporation; Indian Valley Meats; ML&P; MOA Reprographics and UAA, Aviation Division for their support.

#### ***Richard and Ramona Ardaiz (Aero Tech Flight Service, Inc.)***

Richard and Ramona Ardaiz began Aero Tech Flight Service, Inc. on Merrill Field in 1956. Celebrating 53 years of business this year, Aero Tech is the oldest flight training facility in Alaska offering training from private pilot certificates through airline transport ratings while operating single and multi-engine aircraft. They were the first school to offer training under the authority of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. An FAA pilot examiner since 1958, Richard Ardaiz was on the Municipal Airport Commission for six years and has been active with the Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation. A retired Senior Captain with Wien Airlines, he has over 44,000 hours of flight time. In 1998, Ramona was awarded the Katherine B. Wright Memorial Award for her significant contribution to the aviation industry. Together, Dick and Ramona helped thousands of students obtain their pilot licenses.

*(Biographies continued on back page)*

# Seasonal Snippets

## ✓ *Identify your covers*

Just as certainly as the seasonal winds will be howling, a pilot will be asking if anyone has found and turned in a wind-blown wing cover. You can help our efforts by marking your covers with your aircraft N number. If we know who owns the associated aircraft, we'll gladly inform the rightful owner that a missing cover has been found.

## ✓ *Prepare for seasonal changes*

The cooling temperature is the first sure indicator that the fall/winter season will be here soon, and the Airport maintenance staff is busy preparing for the first snowfall. Please help by removing all items and/or debris from your tie-down area that could potentially be pushed away with a pile of snow. Not only can items of value be lost or damaged; these items can also cause substantial damage to snow removal equipment and may cause blockage to the storm drainage system. Your cooperation and attention to this important request is greatly appreciated.

## ✓ *Wash rack reminder*

If you have been putting off cleaning your aircraft, you may not want to wait much longer. When the temperature dips below freezing, the pressure-wash system will be shut down for the season.

## Alaska 99s repaint Compass Rose

Our hats are off to the Alaska Chapter 99s for repainting the Merrill Field compass rose on Saturday, August 22. The new coat of paint brightens the compass rose, making it easier for pilots to use. The 99s volunteer this service to many airports around the state—a behind-the-scenes labor of love that never receives enough credit. Thanks to Patty Livingston and all the members who donated their time on a very pleasant Alaskan Saturday. We appreciate you.

### MUNICIPAL AIRPORTS AVIATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

The Municipal Airports Aviation Advisory Commission meetings are open to the public and held the first Thursday of every other month. Please call 343-6303 for additional information.

#### **Meeting Dates:**

Nov 5, Jan 7, Mar 4, May 6

#### **Commissioner Term Exp.**

Tony Follett, Chair	10/14/09
Rick Davis, V Chair	10/14/11
Don DeVoe	10/14/10
Dick Armstrong	10/14/09
Allen Kemplen	10/14/09
Erin Marston	10/14/10
Jim Powell	10/14/11

#### **Statistics**

Operations:  
August 08 – July 09: 169,617  
2009 Based Aircraft: 902

## Three Commission terms expire soon

The Mayor's office is looking for citizens who would like to take part in the Municipal government process and who are willing to work toward keeping our community a great place to live. In October, three Municipal Airports Aviation Advisory Commission terms will expire, and the following seats will be filled: owner of residential real estate property located within one mile of any municipal airport; business person who has a place of business on land leased from the municipality at a municipal airport; business person with a place of business in the municipality.

If interested, send a brief letter and résumé with your application to the Mayor's office. Application forms and additional information are available online at the Municipal Boards and Commissions website

<http://www.muni.org/Departments/Mayor/Boards/Pages/Howntoserve.aspx>. Applications are kept on hand for openings that may become available throughout the year. The three-year terms are subject to approval by the Anchorage Assembly.

# What's Happening at Merrill Field

It has been a busy summer construction season, and our capital improvement projects are still in progress. The contractor, Roger Hickel Construction (RHC) is working to finish up these projects by late September: *Rehabilitate Aircraft Aprons (Phases 4 and 5)*, *Rehabilitate Charlie South Apron*, and *Replace Taxiway Barrier Gates at Quebec and Golf*. The highlight of these projects is the installation of two new cantilever barrier gates where Taxiways Golf and Quebec intersect with Merrill Field Drive. The gates will help secure access to the movement areas from the roadway. Your patience and understanding in assisting us with aircraft relocations for these projects is appreciated. Your cooperation shows commitment in helping us provide a better, safer airport.

## Additional Projects on Merrill Field:

- *Sewer Main Rehabilitation, 2113 & 2301 Merrill Field Drive (AWWU project) – Completed*
- *Chugach Hangar Addition, 2540 East 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue (leaseholder project) – In Progress*
- *Stoddard's New Retail & Hangar Facility Construction, 2754 East 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue (leaseholder project) – Nearing Completion*
- *ML&P Main Conductor Replacement, north of Taxiway Alpha (ML&P project) – In Progress*
- *AFD Fire Training Facility Upgrade, east of Campground Transient Apron (AFD project) – In Progress*
- *UAA Building Demolition & Remodel, 2555 Merrill Field Drive, former ERA building (leaseholder project) – In Progress*
- *5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Glenn Highway Expansion (Alaska DOT project) – Nearing Completion*

## Reminder to monitor access points

Four (4) Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations have occurred on Merrill Field so far this year. Please **ensure that gates are fully closed** before leaving the premises so that unauthorized pedestrians or vehicles do not have access to the movement areas. Your assistance in guiding people to their intended destinations and away from restricted movement areas contributes to the airport's safety and security and is greatly appreciated by the FAA Airports Division, FAA Runway Safety Office and Merrill Field Management.

## Fall Aviation Events

October 1 – 16, Red Flag Alaska: Air Force Military Exercise. More information can be found online at <http://www.eielson.af.mil/library/redflag-alaska.asp>.

Annual Oktoberfest: Alaska Airmen's Association. Date to be announced; call 245-1251 for more information.

October 15 – 17, Aviation North Expo: Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge. For exhibitor and attendee information, contact Rachel by email at [Rachel@aviationnorth.org](mailto:Rachel@aviationnorth.org) or call toll free 1-877-427-5599.

October 30, AACE Fall Celebration: The Alaska Air Carriers Association and The Medallion Foundation invite you to attend the 2009 awards Presentation and End-of-Season Celebration at O'Malley's on the Green. Call 277-0071 or visit [www.alaskaaircarriers.org](http://www.alaskaaircarriers.org) for details.

November 5, 2009 Bride & Groom Fair: The Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum hosts this evening event. Call 248-5325 for more information.

December 3, AACA Holiday Fundraiser: The Alaska Air Carriers Association will be holding this event at the Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum. Call 277-0071 for details.

### **Oren Hudson (Hudson Air Taxi)**

Trained as a pilot in Colorado, Oren Hudson first came to Alaska ferrying planes for Northern Commercial Company of Alaska. Liking Alaska and Alaskans, he purchased a new Aeronca Sedan and started a flying service at Merrill Field in 1948 and later expanded his company with a Bonanza and Widgeon. He operated his business for over 57 years at Merrill Field, flying customers throughout the state of Alaska. Operating the amphibious Widgeon gave him the ability to serve float customers but still be based out of Merrill Field. In 2006, Oren celebrated his 50-year ownership of the Widgeon and his accumulation of over 11,200 hours of flight time in the aircraft. Oren is the current President of the OX5 Aviation Pioneers, an organization established, among other things, to perpetuate the memory of pioneer airmen and their great sacrifices and accomplishments to the development of civil aviation.

### **Robert Reeve (Reeve Aleutian Airlines)**

Born in 1902, Bob Reeve first came to Alaska in 1932 after extensive experience flying in South America over the Andes Mountains. Ernie Pyle, the World War II correspondent, gave him the name "Glacier Pilot" after learning Reeve routinely took off from the mud flats in Valdez and landed his craft on the many nearby glaciers. Reeve first began operating at Merrill Field in 1941. In 1947 he founded Reeve Aleutian Airways, an airline formed to serve the communities of the Aleutian chain. The airline operated for over a half century. The company operated out of Merrill Field until 1950 when it moved to Anchorage International Airport. Despite the move, the Reeve family continued to own aircraft, hangars and businesses at Merrill Field for over fifty years. Reeve Airmotive, now under different ownership, continues today as one of the leading aircraft parts suppliers in the state.

### **Wesley and Helen Stoddard (Stoddard's Aero Service)**

Wes Stoddard arrived in Anchorage in the summer of 1952 and immediately set up his aircraft repair business at Merrill Field, doing business as Stoddard Aero Service. In 1953 he moved to the north side of the field near the Reeve hangar. With his wife Helen, he worked at the field repairing and renovating aircraft for over twenty years. The business was truly a team effort with Wes doing the mechanical work and Helen doing all of the fabric work, painting, and upholstery repair. The Stoddards sold the business in 1973, and it continues to operate today at Merrill Field as a major center for aircraft parts in Alaska. Wes was actively involved in the community and aviation; he was the first President of the Alaska Airmen's Association. Helen Stoddard was instrumental in organizing the 99s Alaska Chapter.

### **Joseph and Anne Wilbur (Wilbur's Flight Operations)**

Joe Wilbur moved to Anchorage in 1952 to work as a mechanic. In 1954 he opened Wilbur Repair Services and offered services out of the same bus he drove to Alaska. In 1961 he met his wife Anne when he was her flight instructor and taught her to fly. Together, along with their children, they operated Wilbur's Flight Operations & Repair Service for forty-two years on Merrill Field, teaching three generations of Alaskans to fly. In addition to a certified flight school, they were a Piper and Cessna dealer for many years. In the 1980's they started and operated Wilbur's Inc. "the Family Airline" with scheduled flights to Cordova and McGrath as well as other small Alaskan communities. At one time the operation was one of the largest general aviation businesses in Alaska and had up to 56 employees. The Wilburs' service was instrumental in aiding victims of the 1964 earthquake.

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Merrill Field Airport, 800 Merrill Field Drive

Anchorage, AK 99501-4129

(907) 343-6303 ~ e-mail: [merrillinfo@muni.org](mailto:merrillinfo@muni.org)

David A. Lundebay, Airport Manager