



W. A. "Pat" Patterson

United Airlines

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Motivator ... innovator...decision-maker ..



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Business strategist and humanitarian



. : Slide show: .



A man of courage and conviction with
great faith in the free enterprise system



. : Slide show: .



An executive who ran his business and personal lives on the highest plane of morality



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William Allan Patterson



. : Slide show: .



The man who gave Illinois and Chicago the distinction of being the headquarters of the world's largest airline



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He did it in an era of pioneering ...
when every move was a gamble ...



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...and every success was a breakthrough.



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Pat was born in 1899 on a windswept
sugar cane plantation...



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... on the tropical island of Oahu,
Hawaii.



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When he was 13, Pat's widowed mother moved to San Francisco, leaving him at the Honolulu Military Academy.





Pat sneaked out of the academy one day and headed for the wharf.





There he persuaded the skipper of a schooner to take him on as a cabin boy in exchange for passage to San Francisco.



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That was Pat's first major decision --
an awesome one for a boy so young.



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Later, he would make countless others





--- decisions that affected the personal lives of customers, employees and stockholder of United Air Lines.



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In San Francisco, Pat sailed through grammar school with ease earning two medals for scholarship and achievement.





His mother wanted him to continue on to high school. But Pat answered a help wanted ad in the newspaper and got a job as an office boy in San Francisco's Wells Fargo Bank.





With job-hunting out of the way, Pat turned his attention to self-improvement and spent the next 13 years in night school.



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By 1927, having picked up a bride and a few promotions along the way, Pat was assistant to the vice president in charge of "new business" loans.



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While his boss was out to lunch one day, Pat had his first encounter with commercial aviation.



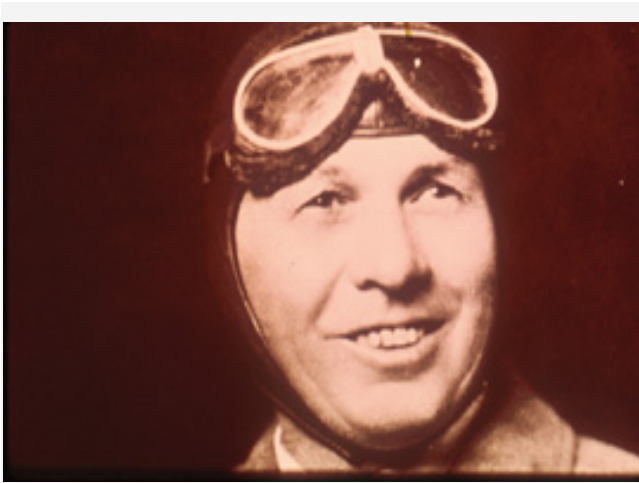
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A stranger approached and, after much hesitation, confided that he was looking --not very hopefully-- for a \$5,000 loan.



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The stranger was Vern Gorst, founder and president of Pacific Air Transport.





He was toying with the idea of recovering an engine from an airplane that had plunged into San Francisco Bay.



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Pat talked Gorst out of trying to recover the plane.



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But he was curious ... intrigued by this fledgling industry.



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So Pat joined Gorst on a visit to the airline's base at Crissy Field, and a lifelong love affair with commercial aviation began.



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The loan eventually found its way to Gorst's pocket and Pat found himself on the carpet.





Pat's boss didn't think much of the flying machine business and he was concerned that if the loan went sour young Patterson would lose confidence in himself.



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So Pat stayed close to the flying machine men. After the loan was repaid he continued to hang around the little airline's hangar and offices ---



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--- giving counsel and answering questions.



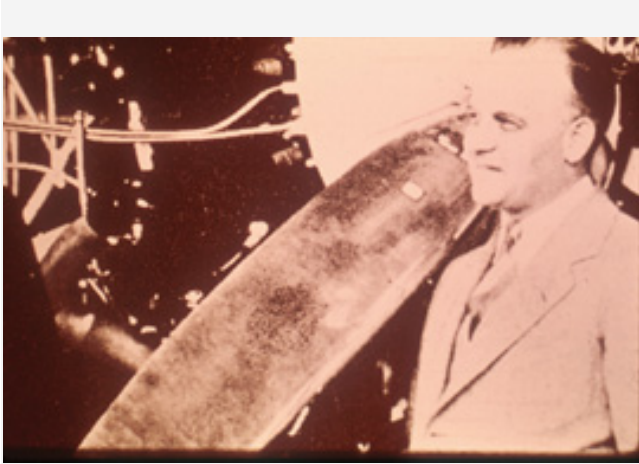
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Eventually, Gorst, on Pat's advice, sold his company to Boeing Air Transport



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Boeing's president, Philip G. Johnson, in turn, sold Patterson on the idea of becoming his assistant.



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In January, 1929, at the age of 29, Pat moved to Seattle with his wife, Vera and their baby daughter to begin a new career



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Things moved swiftly for Patterson in Seattle.





In 16 months he was made assistant secretary of Pacific Air Transport, one of the Boeing companies.





It was the first in a series of promotions that would eventually put him in charge of all of Boeing's family of airlines.





Pat had an abiding respect for other people's opinions and he listened to the suggestion to add a third member to the flight crew ---



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--- a flying nurse who would take tickets, serve food and keep passengers happy.



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In short, a stewardess.



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"Who needs helpless females aboard?"
complained the pilots.





But Pat hired eight nurses and thus was born one of the more delightful careers of the twentieth century.





A firm believer in face-to-face communication, Pat quickly became a familiar figure in the airline's shops, hangars and airport offices.





"I've come to talk over some company problems with you," he'd often say. "But first, let's take up your own problems."





While Pat was patiently welding together a firm, unified organization, developments occurred in Washington that threatened to blow the airline industry apart.



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By Presidential decree on February 9, 1934, all government air mail contracts were cancelled.



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Thereafter, mail would be flown by U. S. Army pilots.



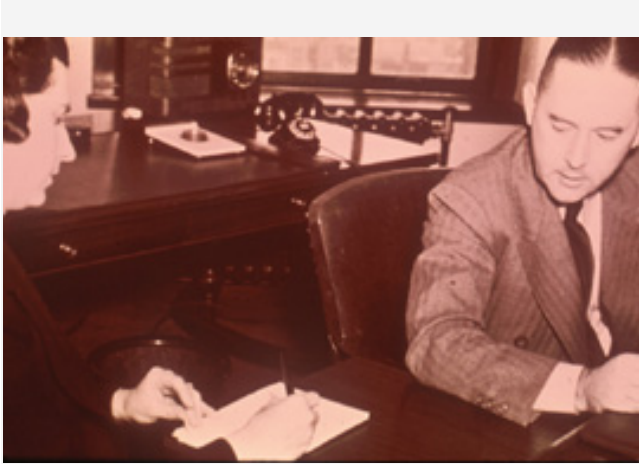
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In a panic, most airlines curtailed schedules or closed down completely.



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But Pat decided --even at a loss of a million dollars a month -- to keep United's planes aloft.



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The Army, inexperienced in fierce winter flying, lost a dozen of its flyers and smashed up \$500,000 worth of airplanes.





President Roosevelt quickly reversed his position and called for new bids on air mail contracts.



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At the same time, a Congressional edict stipulated that no airline whose officials had participated in the so-called "Spoils Conference" that triggered cancellation of the air mail contracts could bid on mail routes.





In addition, Congress barred those officials from the airline industry for five years.



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The Congressional edict wiped out
Boeing Air Transport, Pacific Air
Transport ---



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--- National Air Transport and Varney Air Lines, Boeing's four airline subsidiaries.



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It left United Air Lines, Inc., the management corporation, as the conglomerate's sole organization qualified to bid on the new mail contracts.





It also banished Phil Johnson and a number of other pioneer airline presidents from the U.S. air transport industry.



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At age 34, Pat was elected president of United Air Lines. He was facing massive challenges.



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He had to bid on the routes, recoup the losses brought on by air mail cancellation---



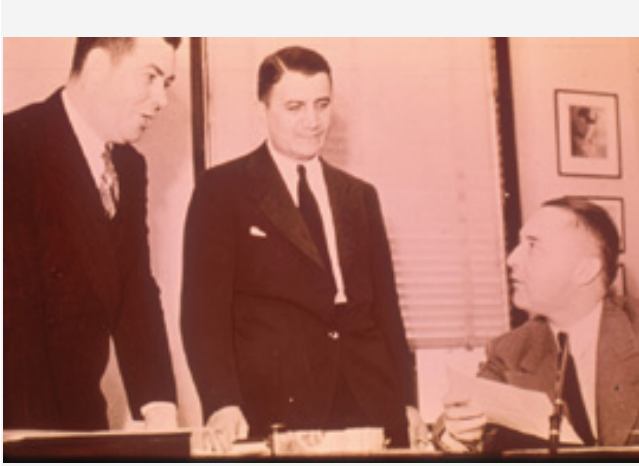
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--- and re-equip for expanded
passenger and cargo operations.



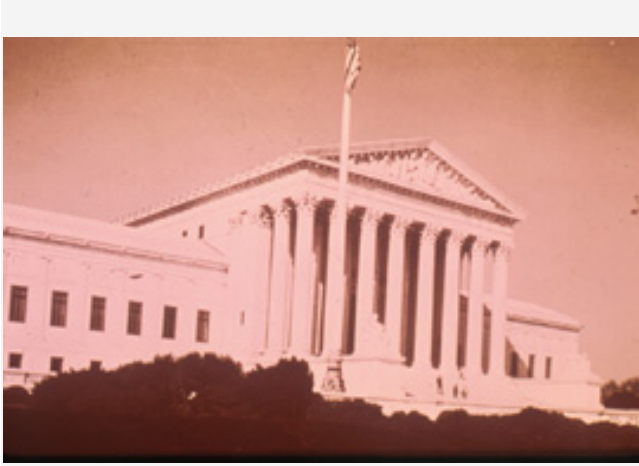
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Pat was busy, but not too busy to remember that the government had done his boss, Phil Johnson, a grave injustice.



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United filed a court suit to clear
Johnson ---





---and recover the company's losses during the period of mail cancellation. The "long suit", as it came to be known, dragged on for 9 years before it was settled.





Although the court rejected United's claim for damages ---





--- it ordered the Post Office Department to reimburse the company for mail compensation withheld during the cancellation.



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More important, the court officially vindicated Phil Johnson.

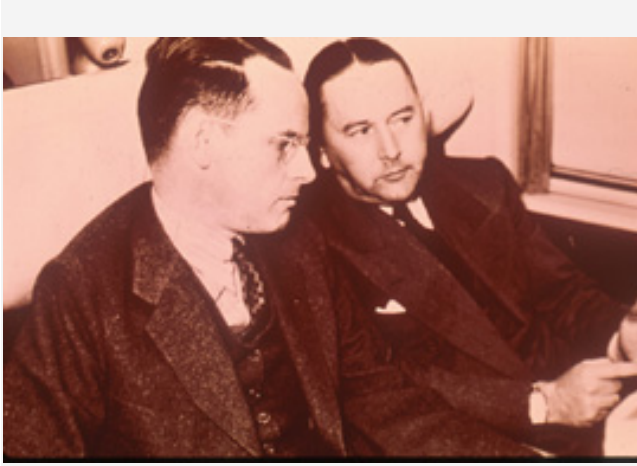


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Meanwhile, Pat set to work building up United's passenger and cargo business.





One of his ideas for improving service came from his constant travels. He felt he was growing wings from the inevitable chicken dinners served aboard planes.





Pat hired a dining service expert to come up with a method of providing passengers with tastier, more varied inflight meals.



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The result was the first flight kitchen launched by any airline.



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It provided tasty food --



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---packed in thermal containers ready for service.



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Pat was dedicated to safety and this dedication led to the development of ...



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--- the DC-4, a four-engine triumph
designed by Douglas ---



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--- to operate thousands of feet above
the highest mountain on the continent.





Pat shared the DC-4 technology with other airlines."Safety," he said," is not something to be patented for anybody's exclusive use."



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United pioneered the development and evaluation of autopilots ---



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--- equipped a Boeing 247 as a "flying laboratory" ---





--- and sent a DC-3 chasing after thunderstorms for inflight evaluation of C-band radar.





The DC-3 research program ended in a \$4 million project that made United the first airline ---





--- whose fleet was completely radar-equipped.



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Knowing that planes are only as sound as the men who fly them, Pat established a medical department to keep his flyers fit.



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He later expanded this program to cover non-flight personnel.



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United's medical department became a model for the air transport industry and in 1966 ---



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Pat was presented the Airline Medical Directors Association Award for his contributions to aviation medicine.

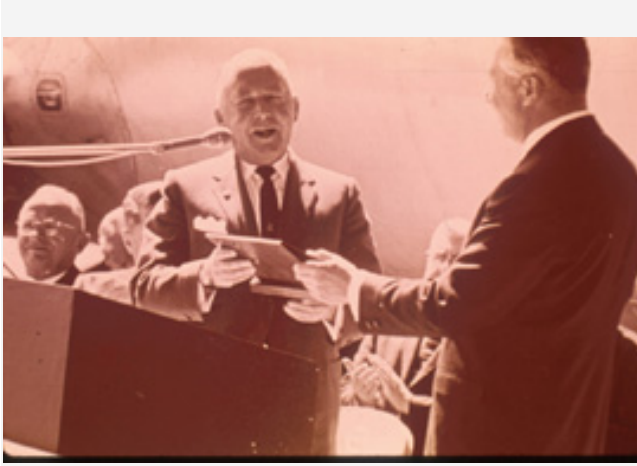


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It was only one of the great number of honors bestowed on Pat by a grateful industry.





On accepting one of his many awards Pat once said, " The greatest danger always in receiving an honor is for one to develop in his own mind an agreement with those who might have selected him".



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"I appreciate your judgement, but I also want to express my gratitude for all those deficiencies I know you must have overlooked in reaching your conclusion".



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One of Pat's more meaningful tributes
came from ...





... the International Council of
Industrial Editors which named him
"Communicator of the Year" in 1966.





It was a most appropriate recognition for Pat mastered the art of communication as few executives did.





When growth of the United family made it virtually impossible for him to meet his thousands of employees face-to-face, Pat turned to other means.



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He launched his own question and answer column in the company magazine, and ---





--- instituted a formal recognition program.

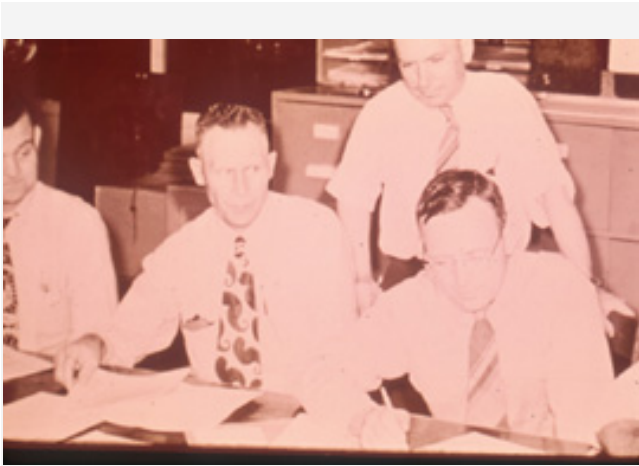




In the post World War II period Pat foresaw that the era of propeller-driven planes was coming to a close.



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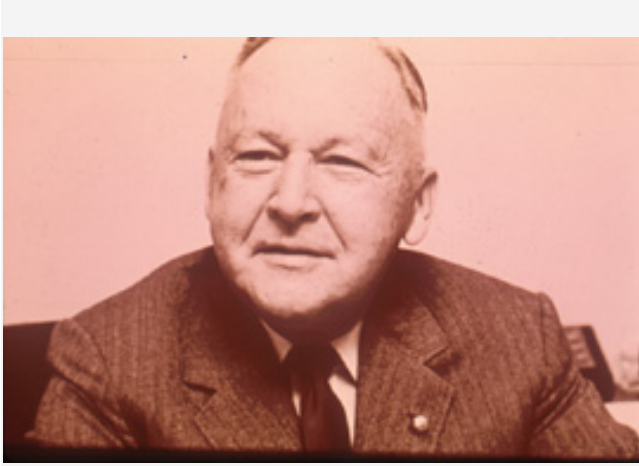
He put the company's best brains to work exploring jet possibilities.





When Pat signed the \$175 million contract for 30 DC-8s on October 25, 1955, he called it, " The most important decision in United Air Lines' history."





Five years later, on July 28, 1960, he signed his name to an even more important document ---



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---the merger agreement with
beleaguered Capital Airlines.



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And when the merger was formalized
on June 1, 1961 ---



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--- United became the undisputed giant of the airline industry.





A grateful board of directors promoted him to chairman of the board and chief executive officer on September 26, 1963.





Before he retired in 1966 Pat made one more dramatic move that caught the attention of the airline industry.



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He announced plans to make United an all-jet airline, placing a whopping \$750 million order for 119 jetliners.



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It was the largest equipment order by a single airline.

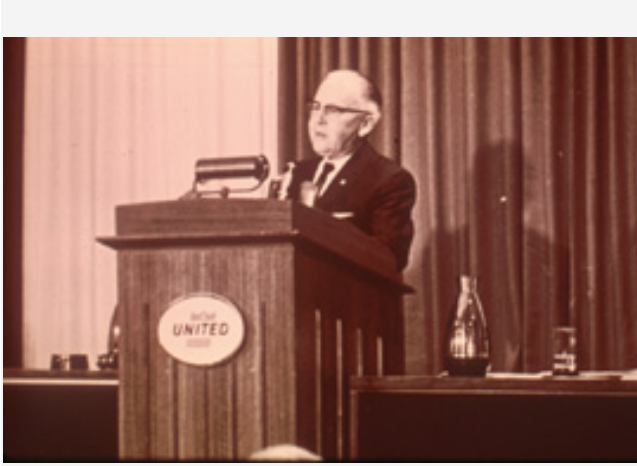


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On April 28, 1966 Pat addressed his last stockholders' meeting at United and rang down the curtain on a spectacular career.





He had built not only what many considered the best airline but also the biggest.



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It had taken time. But not so very much time.



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In only four decades the young man with his eyes toward the skies had made a tremendous contribution to a vital industry ---



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---and had become one of the most respected aviation leaders in the world.



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It was not a fluke. It was the man
himself who made it possible.



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He once said, " You have an idea?
Hang on to it."



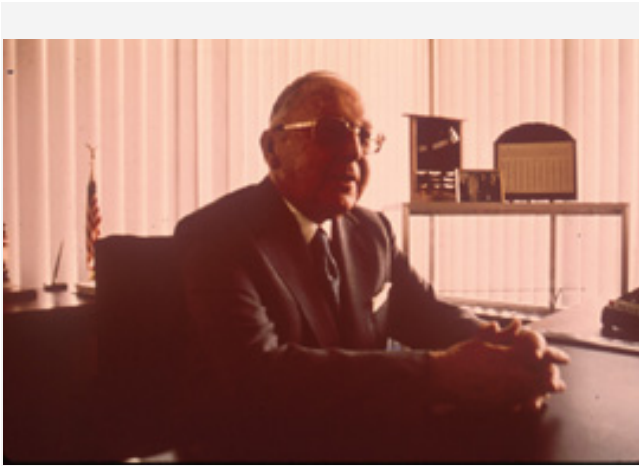
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"It's the most valuable thing in the world."

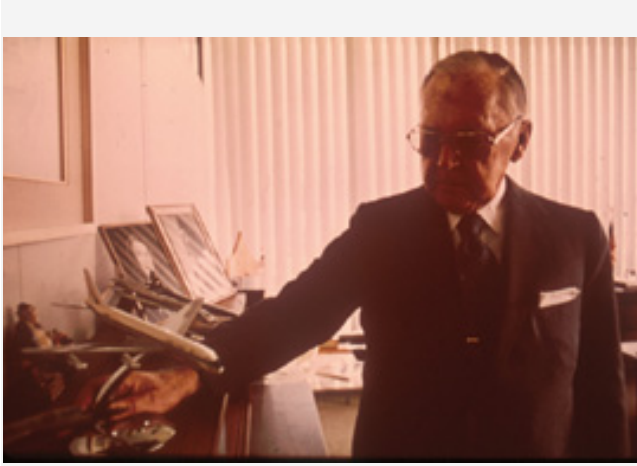


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"Nurture it! Test it!"





"And remember! You can grow a toadstool overnight, but it takes time to grow an oak."





And then he added --- "I was engaged in what I believe to be the most thrilling industry in the world -- aviation."

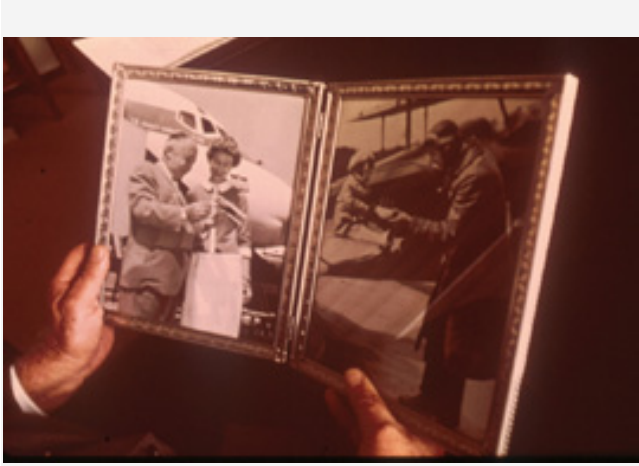


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"My heart still leaps when I see a tiny two-seater plane soaring gracefully through the sky."





"Our great airlines awe me. Yet I know they were not produced in a day or a decade."



. : Slide show: .



And then his parting comment, " It may take years to put your idea into action."



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" But if it has real worth, time will prove it."



. : Slide show: .



"And you will have something that
will endure."

