

Horizons

Learning Later, Living Greater

How to Fly: An Exceptional Pilot's Guidelines for Getting off the Ground

Have Big Dreams and Pursue Them! Captain Don Wright had dreamed of flying ever since childhood when he first heard about the exploits of Charles Lindbergh. At age 13 while he and his mother were leaving Berlin on a DC-4 during a 24-hour flight home, Don was invited to the cockpit to “help fly the plane.” He had always wanted to fly, but the thrill of being in the cockpit with the crew in the face of turbulence and ice buildup on the wings increased his determination to become a pilot.

Adapt-to and Enjoy Whatever Circumstances You Find Yourself In. Don spent many early years in and around Buffalo. During the war, while his mother and maternal grandparents were at work, he was often left alone, which suited him because he was then free to roam the neighborhood. When Don was seven his mother, concerned that he was becoming too independent, sent him to live on a farm with a childless couple. While there, he attended school in a one-room schoolhouse and spent two very happy years learning about farm life, playing with other children, running trap lines for muskrats and skunks (and getting sprayed!) and raising a dog.

Hang-In There: You'll Learn Something! At age ten Don was sent to board at Linsly Military Institute in Wheeling, West Virginia. Although regularly whipped by his housemaster, he stoutly refused to cry. Don admits that he was not a saint and earned a goodly share of demerits. Still, when that stressful year was over, he came away having a deep appreciation for the discipline, orderliness and rhythms of military life and he'd learned how to make friends.

See Everything As “A Great Opportunity.” Don's family moved frequently; from Buffalo to Berlin, Germany to Panama, to El Paso Texas, to Mexico for a summer, to Ayer and then Cotuit, Massachusetts, then to Yokohama, Japan and finally to Boston. He attended numerous schools and while “I got passed around like a hot coal” amazingly he always remained “the happiest guy”. His life was varied and interesting and whatever the ‘next’ event, he viewed it as “just one more adventure.”



L to R, Don Wright with wife, Polly and daughter, Diana.

photo credit : Joan Eaton

Learn to Beg. Don loved to read but never thought of himself as a great student. He particularly struggled with math and the sciences and often had to charm his way into being passed on to the next grade. Still, holding his dream, in 1955 he made important first steps by graduating from Wentworth Institute of Technology and earning an Airframe and Powerplant Mechanics license and a Ground Instructor's license. He went on to install engines for Sikorsky Helicopter, suffered through three months of management/union conflicts, and enlisted in the Air Force later that same year. He spent a couple of years as a mechanic on the Super Constellation RC – 121 and passed tests to become an Aviation Cadet. Within 18 months he earned the gold bars of a 2nd Lt. and the silver wings of a jet pilot. His first duty station was Valdosta, Georgia, flying the magnificent F-86 fighter.

He was then assigned to be an instructor pilot in a series of aircraft, the T-33, T-37 and the supersonic T-38, and was selected to fly the U-2 high altitude spy plane, the most important and satisfying job of his life. After eleven adventurous years (1955-1966) as a Captain in the Air Force, he joined American Airlines, where he stayed until 1994 as a co-pilot, Captain and instructor.

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“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

The Personal Experience of a Study Group Leader: Sheldon Boege

I gave my first course in January during the winter term of 2003. It was a six-week course on energy that the Curriculum Committee titled “A World of Energy” after demurring on my suggestion of something like “Energy, Where it Comes From, Who Uses it, and What is its Future?” My titles never survived the CC’s review process, for which I am grateful. Anyway, I had spent over a year preparing the material, pestering John Callahan about what the course should be like, and Peter McKee, who was president at the time, and who knew his science. Both had extensive experience in academics and teaching. I also asked the New London Town Office if I could use their projector, since AIL didn’t have one and I wanted to employ PowerPoint to illustrate my talk. I was told, ‘sure, we never use it anyway.’ I think that was the first time PowerPoint was used in an AIL course (times have changed!).

The first day of the course was also my first day off crutches, thanks to a hip replacement done in early December. Not a gifted public speaker, I struggled with my panic, made it through the two hours and hobbled off to lunch at Peter Christian’s where Betsy and I were to meet some friends from Connecticut. About fifteen minutes into the meal I blacked out, likely from anemia from the operation and from the massive adrenaline hit from giving the course and the inevitable let down afterward. I hadn’t eaten any breakfast, either.

The next week I took a headcount (which I do at every class, every session) to see how many participants decided to stick it out for another class. No one had given up, and at the end of the course, the ratings were fairly good, except for one, probably the guy who asked me whether the distance from the earth to the sun affected climate (there is about a 4% difference between perihelion and aphelion, a fact I should have, but didn’t, know. I got a D in college astronomy - long story.)

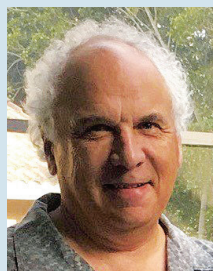
In the 2006 spring term Bill Dowd and I gave an eight-week lecture and discussion course on Current Economic Issues from an Economist’s Perspective. Some of the sessions were difficult; for example, Bill struggled mightily on day 3 to explain Ricardo’s theory of comparative advantage and somehow managed to do it. I took the easier topics. Day 8 was left open and as the June 8 session approached, the two of us were desperately casting about for discussion topics. Bill then came up with an idea: let’s break into two teams to discuss the pros and cons of a bankruptcy of General Motors. You have to know that Bill had been the chief operating officer of Fleming Companies, one of the largest food distributors in the United States – before it went bankrupt in 2003, long after he left the company.

Bill volunteered to lead the group proposing bankruptcy and my group took the opposing side. We all researched the topic and the discussion was spirited and interesting. Then, almost to the day, two years later, GM petitioned for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. I still hear from class members all these years later about the prescience of the eighth day’s topic.

New Study Group Leaders



Fran Philippe



John Peterman



Robert A. Lyon



Amanda Rafuse



Betsy Boege

A New England College graduate, **Fran Philippe** earned her master’s degree in education from Antioch New England Graduate School and her +30 from Lesley College and BU. She is a happily retired teacher of grades 5 and 6 who is enjoying the many pleasures that life provides, especially outdoor activities.

An educator for 40 years, **John Peterman** most recently served for 23 years as the headmaster at Brookwood School in Manchester, MA where he started a performing arts program. His passion for the performing arts began as his father directed high school students Ann-Margret, Mandy Patinkin, Christine Ebersole and dozens others who would go on to Broadway or Hollywood fame.

Bob Lyon received his Ph.D. in pharmacology from the Albany Medical College, Albany, NY, followed by post-doctoral work in receptor second messenger systems. Bob spent 30 years with the Proctor & Gamble Company in a variety of pharmaceutical and health care roles. Bob has a lifelong interest in drugs of abuse and has taught this material for several years.

Amanda Rafuse has 20 years of acting, directing, teaching, and consulting for theaters in Minneapolis, New York, and across the country. She joined Northern Stage in 2013 and now serves as the newly established Director of Artistic Outreach. Amanda holds a BA from Notre Dame, MFA from the University of Kansas City – Missouri.

Betsy Boege studied East Asian History in graduate school and lived in Asia for eight years, including two in Japan. Involved with AIL in many capacities since moving to the New London area in 2001, her husband Sheldon joins her for her first course for AIL.

Winter 2018 Courses

Registration is now open for the Winter Term. Most courses begin the week of January 14, 2019. If you didn't receive a catalog in the mail you can view it online with full course descriptions, including start dates and times, at www.colby-sawyer.edu/adventures/courses.html. On this same webpage you can register for courses and pay your annual 2018-2019 membership dues if you have not already done so. Or you can call the AIL office at **603 526-3690** for further information.

The course registration deadline is Friday, December 14th. Register now to ensure a place in the course(s) of your choice.

- **How Science Was Born and Why it Matters Today** / *Richard Schwemm*
- **Summer of '41 . . . Williams and DiMaggio** / *Maynard Goldman*
- **PERFECT PIX** / *Joseph Fanning*
- **Broadway, The American Musical** / *Fran Philippe*
- **The Two Lives of Eisenhower** / *John Roberts*
- **A Food Film Feast** / *Ginger Milord*
- **Golf: Major Architects and Their Championship Courses** / *Ace Eaton*
- **100th Birthday Celebration of American Performing Artists** / *John Peterman*
- **Land and Water – The Connection** / *June Fichter, Geoffrey Lizotte, and Kathleen Stowell*
- **Aviation Yarns III** / *Don Wright*
- **Fenollosa and the Preservation of Japanese Art in the Meiji Period** / *Betsy and Sheldon Boege with Professor Jon Keenan*
- **Drugs of Abuse: A Pharmacologic Perspective** / *Robert Lyon*
- **Backstage @ Northern Stage: World Premiere Plays – Venus Rising** / *Amanda Rafuse & The Northern Stage Team*

Save the Date!

Thursday's Child at the Coach House Restaurant
at The New London Inn
Thursday, December 6th

Please dine with fellow AIL members and supporters. Book a table with your friends and enjoy a mouth-watering dinner while helping a worthy cause. It's a delicious combination! Net proceeds from the evening help provide scholarship assistance to a deserving and outstanding Colby-Sawyer College student through the Adventures in Learning Achievement Award.

Reserve your table by calling the Coach House Restaurant at (603) 526-2791.

Why is Lifelong Learning so Important?

Wikipedia defines lifelong learning as the continuous building of skills and knowledge of an individual through experiences encountered in the course of a lifetime. These experiences could be formal (training, counseling, tutoring, mentorship, apprenticeship, higher education, etc.) or informal (experiences, situations, etc.). Lifelong learning, also known as LLL, is the "lifelong, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. As such, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability.

Lifelong learning can be socially invigorating while also improving memory and cognitive abilities. Activities such as volunteering can be a learning experience while making the life of the volunteer meaningful and at the same time offering benefits to society. Lifelong learning allows us to continue to use our minds, one of our most important "muscles" we often forget to exercise as we age!

As part of the Rush Memory and Aging Project conducted in Chicago, a study of more than 1,200 elders, participants underwent cognitive testing for up to five years. The study revealed that cognitively active elders, whose average age was 80, were 2.6 times less likely to develop dementia and Alzheimer's disease than those who were cognitively inactive.

Published last year in the online edition of *Neurology*, the study also showed that frequent cognitive activity during old age was associated with a decreased risk of mild cognitive impairment, a transitional stage between normal aging and dementia, as well as a slowed decline in cognitive function. Stimulating the brain by visiting a museum or attending a lecture, class, or concert, for example, can increase the number of brain cells and connections between brain cells. Physical exercise improves blood flow to the brain, encouraging development of new brain cells.

Lifelong learning provides so many different benefits plus the opportunity for wonderful social interaction. Take advantage today, sign up for one of the many AIL courses and/or consider being an AIL volunteer.

How to Fly: *continued from page 1*

Test Your Metal: Among his more harrowing experiences, a few stand out. Early in his Air Force career, while Don was a lieutenant piloting a T-38 Talon (a young pilot's dream machine) on a practice flight, the plane was almost out of fuel, trying to land and the nose gear didn't come down. He and his co-pilot were advised to bail out. Fire was a definite risk due to the magnesium underside of the plane but Don decided to land anyway. While fire retardant foam quickly covered the center of the runway he managed to slide the plane roughly, but safely, to a stop.

The second experience occurred in 1964 as the Vietnam War was escalating. All pilots were required to take survival, escape and evasion training in the event they became prisoners of war. Don endured the harrowing simulation of becoming a POW, including having buckets of ice water being thrown at him, being held in ice water until he was numb, deprivation of food and sleep, being hooded, prodded by gun butts, and shoved into a tiny 5' X 5' dark cell, interrogations, survival in the wild on 600 calories a day, and solitary confinement. It was all very real. Don was able to hold on to his sanity with sheer determination, playing mind games and forcing himself to recall happy times.

The U-2, also known as the Dragon Lady, was perhaps his greatest thrill to fly. Difficult to master, the training was arduous. Among the rigors was time spent in an altitude chamber designed to duplicate lack of oxygen in jet flight and being fastened into a helmet and pressure suit designed to remove nitrogen from the blood and thus prevent the bends. Then, to simulate gaining altitude to 70,000 feet, engine failure or an explosion, he was placed into a test tank where the air pressure was just short of unbearable and asked to perform various tasks. He experienced "a moment of controllable panic" before he was returned to sea level.

Fall in Love with Someone Wonderful: Love of flying seems to be a common denominator in the Wright family. Polly, his wife of 57 years, earned her flying license after time as a flight attendant. Together, they raised three terrific boys: Walt and the twins: Tim and Andy. Walt was a Marine fighter pilot and Tim is a United Airlines Captain. Tim married his lovely Dianna who is also a United Airlines

Captain. Andy is an executive with The New York Times. Looking ahead, Don sees the possibility that there may be at least one grandson who is eager to follow in his flying family's footsteps.

When You've Reached an Age When You Can Retire, Enjoy It! When Don retired from commercial aviation he taught on flight simulators, co-founded the Kearsarge Community Presbyterian Church in New London and became active in AIL. To date, he has offered two courses on Aviation Yarns and two on the history of aviation. Among his numerous hobbies are maintaining and riding in his grand collection of antique cars.

Have A Life-Long Philosophy and Pass It On! What one enjoys most while listening to Don reminisce or while reading his book, *Life is a Piece of Cake - A Whisper from the Silent Generation*, is experiencing the absolute joy and exhilaration he felt while flying, both for the United States Air Force and American Airlines. Additionally, throughout his story, beginning with his family of origin and continuing with his wife, children and grandchildren, countless friends and various experiences through the years, one senses his appreciation of how each person and event helped to move him forward to become all that he always wanted to be and expected of himself. Each one provided "wind beneath his wings."

Writing his memoir was a seven-year labor of love. Don's is a remarkable testimony as well as a much-needed voice for the stressful time in which we are presently living. His optimism, enthusiasms, grit, integrity, "can do" attitude, and overall inner contentment during each stage of his life serve as precious reminders of the values and treasured relationships that helped him and can also help to shape each of our own lives. During the process of compiling his book Don relished re-visiting special times with his family and close friends, reviving memories of pivotal times in his life, and then seeing the highlights come together neatly into what is a truly inspirational memoir.

Don is leading the course Aviation Yarns III during the upcoming AIL Winter 2019 term.

Katrina R.B. Wagner

Hospital Days

AIL was once again represented at the New London Hospital Chamber Night and the Hospital Day Parade in early August. The handsome 1960 Rolls Royce owned by AIL member Mark Kellett was the anchor for our parade entry. All spiffed up, looking like a million bucks and sporting AIL banners on three sides; Mark drove his beauty of a car with fellow passengers Skip Wareham, John Roberts and John's granddaughter Eliza. Betsy Boege, Harry Tether, Joanna Henderson, Julie Machen, and Randy Hanson, walking ahead of the Rolls, threw out candy and carried the big AIL banner.

It was a hot day, but no rain this year, and our fans were out to cheer us on and admire the Rolls at several spots along the parade route, especially for AIL members, at the always popular Woodcrest Village. Even the radio announcers commented on the Rolls' slick appearance as we came up to their stand across from the library.

The Chamber night on Thursday, two nights before the parade, was also a success. We gave away every Fall Catalog we brought, plus other handouts, and held our annual drawing for a free AIL membership.

Joanna Henderson



photo credit: S. Wareham

AIL Fall 2018 Term Memories

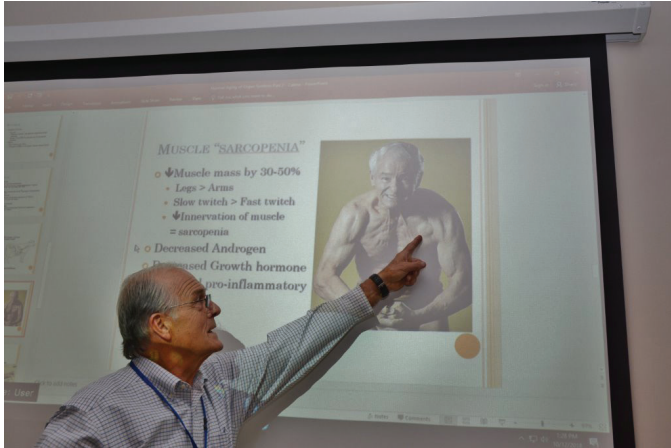


photo credit : Joan Eaton

Don Catino points out a muscular man's pacemaker.



photo credit : Joan Eaton

Ellie Taylor concentrates on her work in Fran Wilson's class



photo credit : Joan Eaton

Class members share a light moment with Richard Hesse in his course on John Winant.



photo credit : Joan Eaton

Gene Lariviere recounts stories from the 1968 election



photo credit : Deb Rucci

Neil Shifrin discusses environmental concerns with Don and Sue Elliott



photo credit : Joan Eaton

Sarah Reeves presents Martin Luther to a roundtable group

photo credit : Joan Eaton



Kent Hackmann leads discussion on the legacy of Stuart England for the American Colonies

photo credit : Joan Eaton



Scott Rappeport continues a discussion on volcanoes during break.

photo credit : Joan Eaton



Rosa Lee Richards discusses a psalm with Ginger Milord and Lucy Mueller in her *Poetry for the Ages* study group



Brenda Watts enthusiastically endorses the work of women in World War II.

photo credit : Joan Eaton



ALL members visit the Peabody Essex Museum to view the exhibit, The Empresses of China's Forbidden City.

photo credit : Deb Rucci



photo credit : Nina Tasi



Adventures in Learning
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Adventures in Learning's *Horizons* highlights the activities of the lifelong learning program at Colby-Sawyer College.

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Inclement Weather Policy

AIL follows Colby-Sawyer College's policy on weather-related closures and delays. If the college is closed, AIL classes are cancelled. If the college has a delay, morning AIL classes are cancelled and afternoon AIL classes will be held. Please check the Colby-Sawyer College website at www.colby-sawyer.edu.

The AIL Office will be closed for the Colby-Sawyer College winter break, December 24, 2018 through January 4, 2019.