

Chris Longridge



Chris' connection with Boeing began in 1966 when he interviewed for an engineering job while studying metallurgical engineering at the University of British Columbia. Although offered a job, he turned it down to accept an offer from a small startup company in Toronto that was either going to boom or go bust. Six months later it went bust. Fortunately for Chris, that very same day Boeing was in Toronto looking for engineers. After an interview with Herb Lincoln, he received an offer, and this time he accepted, at a salary of \$9,650 per year.

His first day at Boeing was July 21, 1967 in the Metals Lab, working for Ray Zicarelli. Chris got to operate an electron microscope and other elaborate equipment, examining broken airplane parts to determine the causes of their failure. The parts came from all over various airframes, from landing gear to fin, and Chris found the work fascinating.

After six months with the broken parts, Chris was transferred to Everett to be on the brand new 747. He had a great boss, Don Goehler, who took the time to explain the real world of metallurgy to young engineers. His assignment was on critical forgings for the 747 which, if they ever failed, would have very serious consequences. After about a year and a half on forgings, he was asked by another Canadian metallurgist, Merv Cronie (who had earlier migrated to the Sales Department), whether he too would like to work in Sales. Coincidentally, some other Canadian metallurgists such as Graeme Howard and Fred Parkinson also arrived in Sales, causing some people to wonder about the necessary prerequisite skills needed for Sales. Chris was lucky to have moved to Sales in 1969, shortly before the "Will the last person leaving SEATTLE - Turn out the lights" sign went up near SeaTac. He avoided being laid off in the early 70s as was the fate of many of his former colleagues in engineering at the time.

In 1975, after having been an airline analyst on the Air Canada and Air Jamaica sales accounts under the direction of his boss Gene Pace and salesman Mark Holland, Chris was offered the job of Sales Director in London England. He reported to Harley Thorson for what was to be a 3-5 year assignment, one which in fact lasted 8 years. Chris and his wife Linda had two small boys at the time, David and Mark, ages 4 and 2, so it was a big adventure for them all. Chris saw plenty of sales activity with Boeing's British, Irish and French airline sales accounts. After 8 years had passed in London, Frank Shrontz, then head of Sales, asked him to return to Seattle, so the family moved back in early 1983 and Chris became Director of European Sales. In 1985 he was promoted to VP of Marketing, succeeding Carl Munson. Although having been an airline analyst before, there were many new things to learn about forecasting, advertising, public relations, and communications in Marketing. In 1987 he became VP Sales under Dick Albrecht, travelling all over the world to be with Boeing's commercial customers. Many new relationships with customers came from this assignment. Seven years later in 1994, Frank Shrontz, then

Boeing Chairman, asked Chris to become VP of Business Strategy where the task was to understand Boeing's current and expected competitors, and to formulate 20-year company strategies under a variety of differing external scenarios. In 1999 he briefly went back into European Sales to help with some specific sales challenges, before retiring in April 2000.

Upon his retirement, Chris was invited by Carol Burch, a Boeing exec who had left a year earlier to start her own business, to become a partner in her company, Dwaffler. She had formed the company to assist groups in strategic planning, and critical decision-making, and was in the process of developing software to assist persons trapped in countless meetings with incessant "waffling." Hence the name "De-waffler." Over the past 10 years, they have apportioned a considerable amount of their work to assist non-profits in the Seattle area, although they have done some commercial out-of-state and international jobs as well. Locally they have worked with ArtsFund, 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle Symphony, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Performing Arts Center Eastside, PONCHO, Museum of History & Industry, Seattle Repertory Theatre, United Way, and the Washington Wine Commission. They have also done some consulting work back at Boeing and with other aviation interests.

One thing that Chris didn't fully appreciate until after he retired was how much Boeing is out there really helping the community. In Dwaffler work with several boards of non-profits there is generally always someone there from Boeing. As a retiree, he is proud to see his former company playing such a huge role in supporting our community.

The Boeing person who impressed Chris most during his career was William M. Allen, the man who risked taking Boeing into the jet age. Just after Chris and Linda had arrived in London in 1975, Bill and his wife Meff came through there on their way to Amman for dinner with the King of Jordan. Chris went to Heathrow Airport to make sure Bill and Meff were able to change planes from Pan American to Royal Jordanian without any problems. During the bus ride between airport terminals, Bill asked Chris what his boys' names were and how they were doing with school. Bill mentioned that he and Meff would be coming back through London on their way home and he wondered whether he and Linda would like to go to dinner with them. Of course Chris said yes. So, a couple of days later, they all met for dinner in London's West End. Soon after sitting down, Bill asked Linda about sons David and Mark. This was the Chairman Emeritus of Boeing. He had remembered a salesman's son's names! Wow! It was a thoroughly memorable evening with Bill describing what it was like to be out on Lake Washington during Seafair when Tex Johnston rolled the Dash 80 over the crowd. Although Bill must have related that story hundreds of times before, he told it as if Chris and Linda were the first to hear it. Bill was genuinely interested in everyone and treated everyone in the same wonderful way, regardless of who they were or what they did.

Tex Boullioun who was president of the airplane company also provided some interesting experiences for Chris. Tex spent a lot of time in the UK, mostly trying to get the 757 launched. He not only visited prospective 757 customers like British Airways, Air Europe and Monarch but also spent many hours with Rolls-Royce and with British Aerospace, who almost became Boeing's partner on that airplane. In conversation with anyone, Tex would ask simple yet disarming questions that would cut to the chase and would usually, but not always, endear the listener to him. In those days, there were a lot of "characters" in top leadership at Boeing. They

were genuinely good people and often made the sales job much easier. Boeing's AOG (airplane on ground) teams' reputation was also a huge help to Sales. Their astounding work, often in extremely difficult circumstances, resulted in considerable admiration of Boeing and its customer care. Sales efforts were also enhanced considerably by all the drivers in Boeing Transportation. Their proud enthusiasm for the company and its products, as well as their willingness to help in whatever way they could, never failed to impress visiting customers who were being driven around Seattle.

Linda and Chris met at the University of British Columbia. Linda, although younger than Chris, graduated before him. Linda became a stewardess with United Air Lines until she "retired" to get married. In the late 60's she worked for Air Canada in Seattle but was again required to "retire" just before their son David was born. Briefly in the 80's, she handled reservations for Cathay Pacific in Seattle. Linda enjoyed travelling worldwide with Chris and she contributed extensively towards building many lasting relationships with customers. Their son David, after getting his engineering physics degree from UBC, started working at Boeing in Flight Test in 1990 and, like his Dad, moved into Sales where he now works with airplane leasing companies around the world. Son Mark graduated in civil engineering from the UW and supervises construction projects for the Port of Seattle.



For the past 14 years Chris and Linda have had a boat named "Flying Colors." They and the family enjoy cruising locally, in the San Juans and Gulf Islands, with five grandchildren, three boys and two girls, the youngest being one, and the oldest eight. Chris plays golf occasionally but has not improved his handicap at all since retiring. He remains intrigued by older prop-driven airliners and ocean liners and enjoys seeing former sales department colleagues including Pat Finnigan, Scott Gilson, Ron King, Pete Tracy and Hal Young, and others, to reminisce about "the good old days." Every third Wednesday of the month he looks forward to lunch with a group from Sales & Marketing who call themselves the Romeo (Really Old Men Eating Out) Group. For as long as his health permits, he hopes to continue working. It keeps him active and he gets to meet many new and interesting people. Chris certainly knows that things today in the airplane industry are very different than they were some years ago and looks back gratefully to the timing of his Boeing career.