

Tom was born in 1934 and raised in the Chicago area. After a couple of years at the University of Illinois studying engineering, the lure of flying jets called to him and so he signed up with the US Navy and began his flying career, finishing his flight training at the top of his class. That distinction propelled him into the best fighter squadrons. He served as a test pilot in the Navy's Test and Evaluation Squadron, where he managed the evaluation of the F8 Crusader weapons systems and assisted on other weapons development projects. Working with civilian scientists led to a separate education in the principles of infra red, lasers and radioactive isotopes – necessitating an Atomic Energy Commission license.

Always the lead in fighter tactics, Capt Friedrich was a 'Topgun' instructor at Miramar Naval Air Station, teaching fighter tactics. He was also an instructor at the Navy's instrument flying school.

He served in Vietnam, flying the F8 Crusader off the carrier Bon Homme Richard on 170 combat missions, receiving numerous citations and awards. As a Lieutenant Commander in Vietnam with the VF-191 "Satan's Kittens" squadron, he was the Maintenance Officer in charge of airworthiness, and even during the stress of combat, his squadron never lost a single sortie because of an unairworthy airplane. Tom was awarded a Navy Commendation Medal for that achievement.

In his twelve years of flying fighters, he accumulated 3700 hours in fifteen types – also flying helicopters and seaplanes. Most prominent types in his Naval career included the North American FJ3, Grumman F9F, Douglas A4, McDonnell F4 Phantom and Chance Vought F8 Crusader.

Always the adventurer, after leaving the Navy Tom hired on with Antilles Airboats flying seaplanes - helping Charlie Blair set aviation back 20 years! He served as Vice President in charge of Maintenance, implementing his corrosion control expertise learned as the squadron Maintenance Officer in the Navy. In less than two years, he accumulated more than 5000 water takeoffs and landings, flying the Grumman Goose, PBV Catalina and Sikorski S44 Flying Boat.

He then joined Grumman as an engineering test pilot. His assignment included development and production tests on the F14 Tomcat. In support of that program he also flew the A6 Intruder and F4 Phantom.

An additional assignment with Grumman involved Capt Friedrich in the development of the Gulfstream executive jet. In the Gulfstream manufacturing plant, he developed a system of ground tests incorporated into normal industrial engineering and QUALITY CONTROL which led to a 'ONE FLIGHT SELL'. He incorporated this program at the Peconic River assembly line where it also achieved the same positive results with the F-14 Tomcat.

In the course of his engineering flight tests for Grumman, he trained 60 Gulfstream II customer crews. He was seconded to Page Avjet to give technical advice and assistance in their Gulfstream II outfitting program. When president Idi Amin of Uganda purchased a GII in the mid 70's without an experienced crew, Tom volunteered to act as chief pilot for 2 years while training the Ugandan crew to operate the GII safely in an international environment. At that time he based in

Entebbe where his wife Kathy and his 3 kids, Stephen, Laura and Tom Jr. would join him in the summer.

While with Page, he recognized the need for larger, longer range executive transports and worked with Boeing to convert and develop the Boeing B727 Executive Jet. He was instrumental in equipping the B727 with new engines and auxiliary fuel tanks to provide eight hours of flight and a range of 3700 nautical miles.

For 15 years Capt Friedrich acted as the personal pilot of HRH General Prince Khaled bin Sultan, and set up the Prince's operation incorporated as Kalair USA. As Chief Pilot /Managing Director of Kalair, he had the distinction of outfitting and operating the first commercial Canadair CL600 as well as three Gulfstream GIIIs. In 1983 he put his Boeing experience to good use with the development of a B727-82 as a 'flying apartment', complete with all the amenities for comfort, communications and entertainment. He successfully completed a similar program in 1992 with a B707-321B with updated technology and a more commodious cabin.

Capt Friedrich was conscripted by General Khaled bin Sultan to fly his Boeing executive jet on his military missions in the Gulf War into combat zones under difficult and tenuous conditions. He held his civilian crew together, keeping morale high under threat of chemical warfare at places like Ras Mishab, Hafr al-Batin and even Kuwait City, through the oil fires and before the cease-fire – while achieving service not too different from Paris or Rome.

In his years with Prince Khaled, Capt Friedrich managed all the business relating to the airplanes which included the hiring of crew, negotiating contracts, overseas regulations and management. He supported the Prince's needs in the air and on the ground, far and above what would normally be expected. In his sixteen years of providing smooth, safe flying, he never missed a flight.

Tom always had fun with flying. For a time, he operated a Fouga Magister, a 1950s French twin jet military trainer. He held a 'letter of authority' from the FAA to train and recommend other pilots in the Fouga Magister. He has also held other FAA pilot designations in the past. With the vicissitudes of setting up this experimental airplane and many supplementary type certificates associated with the various executive jet projects, Capt Friedrich established sound credentials with the FAA.

In 1993 after tiring of Executive jet flying and missing the days of flying airboats with Antilles Airboats, Tom set up his own FAA Part 135 Air Carrier commercial operation with his two pilot sons, Stephen and Thomas Jr. Based in St.Kitts/Nevis. "Caribbean Clipper" operated a 1944 Grumman Goose N93GS for pleasure flights and transportation between the Leeward Islands.

Tom retired to his home in Scotland, before moving to Newburyport, MA to be closer to his 3 children the last few years of his amazing life.

License and Ratings

ATP Single and Multi Engine Land

B707 B-720 B-727 CL600 CV-PBY G159 G1159

Commercial Privileges Multi Engine Sea