



Fred W. Kelly Story (Part II)

by Sydney J. Albright

C.N. (Jimmy) James, Herbert Hoover, Jr., and Fred W. Kelly. (1930, Alhambra Airport). Plane is a Boeing 95.

Pensively, Fred W. Kelly sat across the dining room table at a friend's house in Santa Monica last April. His thoughts drifted back over the past 50 years — his winning the Gold Medal at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm; barnstorming in Cuba; joining Western Air Express as its first pilot in 1925.

Deep in thought, he toyed with the handle of his coffee cup, then reached into his pocket and pulled out a plastic pill bottle. He opened it and shook some powdered cream into his coffee. "This stuff tastes better than real cream," he said softly.

He took a couple of sips, then put the cup down. "I remember when we first put coffee on our planes — back in 1928. That was when we got the Fokker F-10 trimotors. At first, the copilot had to serve it, then we got stewards. Copilots today don't know how good they have it . . .

"That was quite a year for Western Air — 1928. The Guggenheim Foundation asked us to set up a 'model airway' between Los Angeles and San Francisco to prove that flying passengers was good business. They loaned us \$180,000 to buy three F-10s. It was a big turning point for Western."

Indeed it was. "By the time operations started on May 26, 1928, Western had learned some invaluable lessons in airline operation, lessons that put them in the front rank of aviation progress.

"Primarily, they had learned that to induce the public to travel by air they must be offered every safety and comfort offered by other means of travel. Technical aids to safety such as multi-motored planes, radio and weather information must be perfected until foolproof. No longer must passengers be considered supercargo to be tossed in with the mailbags, as had been done on the Los Angeles-Salt Lake City run."¹

Air-to-ground radio was still in the experimental stage in 1928. Western's engineers were experimenting with a unit light enough to be carried in the planes. On Nov. 6, 1928, Western was granted wave lengths for eleven of its ships and along with Boeing Air Transport became the first airline to use two-way radios.²

"Its range was limited," Kelly recalls. "We could use it if we were about 15 to 20 miles away, but it was tough in hilly country."

(Photos by Author and Western Airlines.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Prior to joining Western in 1962, Albright was a news-writer at KABC Radio and KPFK-FM in Los Angeles. After receiving his master's degree in journalism at UCLA, he joined the faculty of the Department of Journalism, taught news communications at the graduate level, and earned a B.A. degree in political science.

Albright served as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force, flying both transports and jets, mostly in Japan and Korea. Born in Yokohama, Japan, Albright received his secondary education in the Far East and Australia.





Pilot Kelly with Bebe Daniels, Motion Picture Star

Two men were responsible for the development of the two-way radio: Thorp Hiscock of Boeing, and Herbert Hoover, Jr., son of the former President. Hoover was with Guggenheim but came to Western as head of radio engineering on Feb. 1, 1929.

The two men pooled their research results with Western Electric Company and by 1930 had perfected the radio for airplane use.

"Hoover was a likeable chap and a good friend of mine," Kelly said. "He was a quiet, unassuming fellow. He knew what he was talking about and you respected him for it."

Hoover also coordinated research on other early flight instruments, including the radio marker beacon and the directional radio compass.³

Kelly's first experience with the radio compass almost brought him to grief: "I was fascinated by the radio compass. We had one installed on a Boeing 95 I was flying back from Salt Lake City one day. I was just south of Milford, Utah, crossing the Escalante Desert. I got so engrossed in the instrument, I wasn't watching where I was going. The next thing I knew, the wheels were rolling on the ground! The passengers thought I was doing it on purpose!"

The F-10s really put Western into the big time. They were considered huge airplanes; the passengers didn't have to sit on the mail sacks anymore but, instead rode in style and enjoyed meal service. The airline set up a series of weather reporting stations along the Los Angeles-San Francisco route⁴ which made flying safer and smoother; and route expansions elsewhere in the West all contributed to Western's rising fortunes.

It was a surprise to everyone that airlines could be profitable, and Western was. One sign of this success was moving from Vail Field to a new airport constructed by the airline at Alhambra on Valley Boulevard.

"One day in 1929, Pop Hanshue, Western's president, William May Garland, one of the company's backers, Jimmy James, another of Western's first four pilots, and I went out to see this chunk of land in Alhambra," Kelly said. "It was 188 acres, mostly a sewage farm.

"Jimmy thought it would be too small for the airport. I thought so, too. Pop said, 'if it doesn't turn out to be a good airport, at least it'll be a good investment for subdivision or for oil.'"

They went ahead with their plans; a terminal was built and was considered the most modern in the world. Nearby was what came to be called the famous "Hex Hangar" named for its six-sided shape. Six planes could be brought in at one time, towed in by the tail. A slight incline in the floor made it possible to evacuate the entire building in less than two minutes, in case of fire.

The new airport was dedicated on April 17, 1930 — Western's fourth anniversary of service — amid an avalanche of publicity. Western's fleet was put on display; a huge crowd came out to see; and Gov. Clement Calhoun Young of California was there to make a speech.

But Kelly and James were right. The field was too small. After Bart Cox cracked up an F-10 on a go-around, Hanshue decided to look for a new airport. In 1932, after only two years at Alhambra, Western moved to Burbank Airport.

Despite that, the company was doing fine. By May 1930, Western and its affiliate lines had routes covering 15,832 miles . . . the largest air transportation system in the world.

While Western was bathing in the sunlight of success, a dark cloud crept across which saddened the hearts of aviators across the nation.

It all began on January 10, 1930. Maury Graham, one of Western's "Four Horsemen," kissed his wife Alice goodbye in Los Angeles. He climbed into his open-cockpit Boeing 95, loaded with mail, including negotiable securities said to be worth over \$1 million, and took off alone for Salt Lake City.

On the first leg of his trip, he ran into rough weather but landed safely at Las Vegas. He asked the man to refuel quickly because he said he thought there was a break in the weather ahead. Then he was on his way again.

It was the last time anyone saw him alive.

Not till seven months later was the full story of that fateful flight revealed:

As Maury flew over St. George, in the southwest corner of Utah, black clouds thickened before him. They became worse as he approached Zion National Park. He let his plane down and headed low for the pass near Cedar City. He could barely see ahead of him. He had to turn back.

"He dropped flares over Upper Smith Flats and Lower Smith Flats," Kelly relates. "For some reason or other, he couldn't land and kept flying around trying to find safety."

Hours later, word was flashed back to Los Angeles that Graham was overdue at Salt Lake City. Everyone was sick at heart; Maury was a grand guy and a top pilot. What happened to him? Offers of help poured in.

Search headquarters were set up in Las Vegas, which was closer than Salt Lake to where they thought Maury was. Kelly and James flew to Las Vegas from Los Angeles in



Big crowds came out to see the F-32 in 1930. It was one of the most spectacular planes of its day. Shown here at the dedication of the new Western Air Express Airport in Alhambra, Calif., on April 17, 1930.

their Boeing 95s. Al DeGarmo, another of the Four Horsemen, who had left Western and was flying for Boeing Air Transport, also flew into Las Vegas. He took leave from his company to help look for his old flying pal.

"All reports were being channeled into Vegas," Kelly continued. "A storekeeper north of St. George said he heard a plane flying up and down. He saw him and waved a lantern. Because the weather was so bad and the plane was flying so low, he knew that the pilot must have been in trouble. Some guy in Ely, Nevada, reported hearing a plane."

Late that day, Fred and Jimmy were able to fly close to where Maury disappeared, but were held back by a cloud-bank. "The next day, I flew into Zion Canyon. I had a mechanic with me — Evan Lewis. He said he'd parachute out to help Maury if we found him. The flying was tough; we were below the tops of the mountains. We'd never seen so much snow that winter. We thought there must have been snow all the way from Cajon Pass to the North Pole."

The search continued without success until Feb. 12. Weary and discouraged, Kelly, James, DeGarmo and the others returned home. All hope of Maury's survival was gone.

Speculation about what happened to Maury was rampant. Some thought he had absconded to Mexico with his load of negotiable securities. It wasn't until June 24 that the first part of the mystery was solved.

In the Kanarra Mountains, 22 miles south of Cedar City, "some kids were looking for some more staples to fix a fence," Kelly said. "They saw something red in the distance and thought it was a barn where they could get some nails. It was Maury's plane."

They jumped on their horses and raced back to Cedar City to report that they had found Graham's plane. One horse collapsed from exhaustion.

They searched for Maury but there was no trace of him. It was apparent that Graham had survived the crash or crash-landing. He had removed the cowling from the fuselage and used it either for shelter or as a sled. It was found about 75 yards away from the plane. The mail bags were all there — unopened.

Word of the discovery was flashed back to Los Angeles. Kelly and James flew in an F-10 to Cedar City and proceeded to the site. Jimmy Carson, the pilot who took DeGarmo's place when Al left Western, joined them.⁵

They looked for Maury for a while then returned to Los Angeles that night with the mail.

The curious flocked out from Cedar City to see the wreck. It was in rugged country but that didn't seem to deter the crowd. They stripped the plane. By the end of the day, there was hardly anything left. James was able to salvage the canvas side panel from the plane. On it was painted "Western Air Express" and the familiar Indian head and arrow insignia. The panel was presented to Maury's wife.⁶

Graham was a very determined person and very likeable. He had sworn off smoking and to help him keep the vow, he carried a one-pound coffee can with him on his flights. In it was raw wheat. Whenever he had the urge for a cigarette, he would munch on a mouthful of wheat.

On July 17 — more than three weeks after the plane was found — James Folger Allen, Alice Graham's cousin from Los Angeles, was out looking for Maury. He was walking along the edge of a stream and spotted some wheat growing on the other side of a log. Thinking this somewhat strange, he went over to take a look.

There was Maury Graham's body.

The wheat had grown right out of his pockets.

He was wearing his red Western Air sweater and had his revolver and gun belt with him. When he died, it appeared he was trying to open a can of tomatoes. In his jacket was a pocket compass.



Maurice F. Graham

A wooden cross was placed on the spot where he was found.

Maury was found six miles from the plane. Evidently dazed from a head injury, he had wandered toward the unscalable cliffs that dropped into Zion National Park before he collapsed.

Kelly and James again made the sad trek to Cedar City, this time to bring Maury's body back to Los Angeles. Alice asked Maury's two comrades if they would scatter his ashes along the route. "Maury would like that," she said.

On July 21, 1930, Al DeGarmo, Jimmy James and Fred Kelly climbed into a single-engine Boeing 40-B-4, carrying Maury Graham's ashes. It was the last time the Four Horsemen were to fly together.

It was on this flight that the final dramatic footnote was written to the Saga of Maury Graham:

The flight took off from Alhambra Airport at seven in the evening. Fred was the pilot, sitting in the open cockpit. The rest were in the cabin.

"We were scattering Maury's ashes along the way," Kelly said. "I remember it clearly. We were near Las Vegas and there was a big thunderstorm in front of us. Lightning was flashing and it was raining. I could see a thin part in the rain so I headed for it.

"Suddenly, while I was flying through it, our engine sputtered, then quit. Al yelled out of the cabin: 'switch it over to the other tank, Fred!' I did, and the engine started up again. I'd let one fuel tank run dry.

"I guess it was Maury's way of saying goodbye . . ."

Beginning with the loss of Maury Graham, 1930 turned out to be a rough year for Western Air. It also started out a bit rough for Fred Kelly.

During the search for Graham, Fred logged more than 150 hours of flying time. On the night of February 22, Fred was flying alone in his Boeing 95 near St. George. The weather was bad and he was tired so he landed at a local



Boeing 95 that Maury Graham crashed in Utah, 1930. Shown here in 1929 at Vail Field. Fokker F-10's in background.



Graham's plane, as found in the Kanarra Mountains near Cedar City, Utah (1930)

airfield. He walked to the nearest telephone to tell Salt Lake that he was going to sit out the weather.

"I ran into a mechanic there who asked me what happened. I told him. He said he'd take me back to the plane in his car. I wanted to take a nap in the beacon shack at the airport but he wouldn't leave me.

"I climbed up the tower to see how many beacon lights I could see ahead. There were two, which gave me about 15 miles visibility. I told him the weather was getting better and that I would take off, which I did. What I was really going to do was take off then circle around and land on the back part of the field and take my nap.

"We'd turn on our landing lights and if we could see the ground, we were below 500 feet. My altimeter read 3,500 feet so I turned my lights off. I had set my altimeter in Las Vegas. It didn't occur to me that, now that I was in a low pressure area, the reading would be off.

"I couldn't see that the land was rising. The next thing I knew, I hit the top of a hill. The wing hit first and snapped the plane around. I was thrown out and knocked cold.

"When I got my senses back, I saw the plane was on fire. I just laid there and watched it burn for a few minutes when the supply of .45 ammunition I always carried in the plane got to poppin' off.

"I thought that would be a helluva predicament after cracking up the plane to get shot by one of my own .45 bullets! So, I ran to hide behind a rock. I heard a big noise and looked up and there was the engine — a ball of fire — rolling down the hill."

It was raining and cold, so Kelly bundled up in his parachute and waited till daylight. He had a sharp pain in the neck. The next morning, he walked to the road nearby and hailed a passing car. They gave him a ride to the Arrowhead Hotel in St. George where he was able to phone Los Angeles and tell them what happened.

At the hotel, he ran into Ernie Longbreak, whose mechanic took Fred to the airfield at St. George. Ernie was a private pilot who helped in the search for Maury Graham. Ernie flew Fred all the way back to Los Angeles.

By the time they got there, Fred couldn't turn his head or move his right arm. He was taken to the Good Samaritan Hospital where it was revealed that he had suffered a broken neck!

Kelly wore a leather neck brace for six weeks.

The accident did have one bright aspect for Fred Kelly. It enabled him to fly the Fokker P-32.⁷ This giant four-engine plane had just been delivered to Western. It was the biggest commercial aircraft in the world. Carrying 32 passengers, it was one of the most spectacular planes to come along in many years. At that time, no one would have guessed that two years later the plane would be junked.

With his neck in a brace, Kelly was assigned as copilot on the F-32 on the Los Angeles-San Francisco run. He would wear the brace until he arrived at the airport, then take it off.

"It wouldn't have looked good for the passengers to see the brace; they'd think we had a bunch of broken-down pilots . . .

"Pop Hanshue, Warren Bovard and his dad, George Finley Bovard, president of USC, all signed the brace.



The two young ranchers who found Maury Graham's plane, June 24, 1930.



*Fokker F-32 at Grand Central Air Terminal in Glendale, Calif.
(Photo - Roger Clarke)*

"I remember when I first saw that F-32, Si Morehouse was flying it into Alhambra. I said to Jimmy James: 'That airplane's too big!' and Jimmy said to me: 'Aw, Fred, you're old fashioned!'"

With the advent of big cabin airplanes, the pioneering days in commercial aviation were coming to a close. The bravado of the open-cockpit boys was giving way to the cool professionalism of the "father image" type of pilot of today.

The state of the art of flying was advancing rapidly. Planes could carry more passengers, fly faster, operate more dependably, and instrument flying techniques were being developed which helped overcome weather problems.

Though the F-10s were flying the route between Los Angeles and San Francisco since 1928, and later on other routes, Kelly flew mostly the Los Angeles-Salt Lake City route in open-cockpit planes: the Boeing 95 and 90-B-4.

The reason for this was that in 1929, Western won a contract to fly night mail. Kelly liked to fly at night, and it paid more. The open-cockpit planes were used to carry the night mail, along with the occasional passenger. The F-10s and F-32s were used primarily for passenger service during the day.

In 1934, the company took delivery of its first Douglas DC-2. The following year, they acquired the twin-engine Boeing 247D. With that, open-cockpit flying ended and the pioneering days were over.

Western's fortunes, which were riding so high in 1929, came upon hard times in the years that followed. Big financial interests in the East and government intervention brought so much pressure on Western that the company almost went out of business.

Were it not for Pop Hanshue's stubborn determination to keep Western going, that might indeed have happened.

The merger between part of Western and with Transcontinental Air Transport to form Transcontinental and Western Air (TWA), a merger forced by the Post Office Department in 1930, ended with the cancellation of all air mail contracts by the POD in 1934.

This was a deathblow to many of the airlines at the time, and almost was for Western, too. The line was reduced to its original Los Angeles to Salt Lake City route, plus a spur to San Diego.

TWA continued on its own,⁸ taking with it many of the routes originally developed by Western. More important, many of Western's employees went to TWA. But not Fred



F-32



The F-32 ended as Mobil Gas Station in Los Angeles.



Part of Western's Fleet when it moved to Burbank in 1932; Boeing 247D's and Douglas M-4.

Kelly. He couldn't leave the company he helped put on the map.

Fred and a handful of other pilots flew the token daily roundtrip flights on Western's meager routes.

Kelly was a bright spark, during these dark days. He never lost his sense of humor; he was still the jolly prankster as always.

Occasionally, he would delight in startling the spectators that lined the fence next to the passenger terminal at Burbank. Taking off in an F-10, he would open the side window of the cockpit and toss out some "cherry bombs" as he passed by the terminal. On hitting the ground, they'd explode with a loud BANG!

In 1937, Kelly was made system chief pilot. The dignity of the position and burden of responsibility the job entailed didn't change Fred Kelly a bit.

"He'd still do anything for a laugh," said Art Cheney, one of Fred's few pilots.

Kelly took a group of Salt Lake-based pilots on a familiarization flight to Ketchum, Idaho, near Sun Valley. "We were having a good time," Kelly recalls. "I was sitting in the back with some of the boys and we were razzing the guys in the cockpit. I guess they got a little tired of it, so they locked the cockpit door.

"The hinges were on the cabin side. I pulled the pins out, then went back to the intercom and told them in the cockpit that there was some trouble back in the cabin. They opened the door and the thing fell off. Then we really gave 'em a horselaugh!"

Not content with that prank, Fred decided to keep things interesting in the cabin, too. He sneaked up on one of the pilots and set fire to the newspaper he was reading.

"They must of thought I was a helluva chief pilot!"

Behind it all, Fred was a top-notch pilot. He knew his stuff. He was an excellent instructor and when certain instrument flying techniques hadn't been devised yet, he devised them.

Checking out George Oberdorf in the DC-3, one day, Kelly chopped the throttle, simulating an engine out. Oberdorf went through the prescribed emergency procedure of feathering the prop, but feathered the wrong one!

"Fred, I was sure you were going to flunk me on that one," George said, reminiscing with his old instructor more than 20 years later.

"I didn't flunk you, George," Fred said, "because you handled the plane so well in every other way. I knew you were a good pilot and I figured that you'd learned a lesson you wouldn't forget."

He didn't. "It was a high point in my life," Oberdorf said.

The transition to instrument flying didn't come easy to many of the early pilots. But Kelly was fascinated by it. He tried his best to make the transition easy for other pilots. On instrument training, for example, the pilot he was checking would be flying under the hood. While he was flying the lesson, Kelly would trace his path in red pencil on a map so that when it was all over, they could go over the flight.

This is done automatically by Link Trainers today, but in those days, the idea was a new one.

Kelly also devised the "race track" holding pattern, now in standard use in instrument flying. Whether or not he was the first, Kelly doesn't know, "But I never heard of it before."

Dec. 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor. The nation went to war; so did the airlines. The government commandeered most of the planes to help in the war effort. They took all but three of Western's DC-3s and a recently acquired Lockheed Lodestar.

Kelly, then 50, went to Salt Lake City and personally offered his services to General "Hap" Arnold. "Hap said I was too old."

Old or not, World War II kept Fred Kelly busier than ever. Western Air Lines — as it was now called — was assigned two main war missions: ferrying men and material to Alaska — called the "Sourdough Operation" — and training pilots for the Army Air Corps. Kelly was put in overall charge of Western's military mission.

"On the home front, Western dug into the big job ahead. More schedules were operated with fewer planes; green personnel were trained for every phase of the business — pilots, mechanics, field helpers, traffic office and reservations workers. Military contract flying, both in this country and Alaska, had top priority."⁹

"They faced the winter of '42, which according to the sourdoughs was the worst since '98 — temperatures in Fairbanks and White Horse sank to '65 below for weeks at a time. Airports were still dirt strips; there were no radio navigation facilities. Sleeping bags aboard the planes gave pilots slim hope of catching up on sleep.

"Gasoline hoses snapped like glass. Altimeters would be off as many as 1,000 feet either way. Compass fluid would seal the instruments as though encased in a jello pudding. Pilots had to shut off only one engine at a time during refueling, quickly firing it up again before it got too cold to start. Then the procedure would be repeated on the other side."¹⁰

Kelly flew on the first flight of the Sourdough operation. "We had seven or eight planes up at White Horse. We wanted to fly to Anchorage, but the dispatcher wouldn't let us go as a group because of bad weather conditions. Bert Mooney, Marv Jenkins and I put our heads together and figured we could make it.

"We asked the dispatcher if he would let just one plane go. He finally said OK and we took off in our C-47. We made it to Fairbanks, unloaded, loaded up again and were off to Anchorage. There, we got a load for Nome, went back to Fairbanks and then to White Horse.

"The other group was still there. They were all asleep. I wrote a note and put it on Pat Carlson's plane.¹¹ I told him if he wanted to make a try, ask permission to go alone. Then we left for Edmonton, which was headquarters for the operation.

"Pat was put in charge of the Alaska operation and did a great job."

Kelly liked Alaska and used every excuse to fly up there. "It was hard work to get pilots to fly there, but I liked it. I hired Jack Orwig from United by telling him that if he would fly the Alaska run out of Edmonton, he could be a captain, so he did."

Today, Orwig is a senior captain with Western.

Also part of Kelly's responsibilities during the war was the pilot training mission in Salt Lake City and at Fairfield, Calif., placed under the direct supervision of Herbert Richards.¹²

When the war ended, Western was beset by financial difficulties. It had to readjust to civilian operations, finance new airplanes and expand its system.

While it was a difficult time for Western, it was also a difficult time for Fred Kelly. Early in 1946, he experienced heart pains when he would exercise. "The doctor told me I had too much 'cholesterol'. I'd never heard of it before. He put me on a diet and I've been on it ever since."

The doctor put him in a hospital for a month. "Jimmy James came to see me, one day, and brought what looked like a can of peanut brittle. I opened it up and out jumped a big toy green snake!" It was just the tonic Fred needed. "Did I have fun with the nurses with that snake! It did me more good than the doctor did."

Because of his health condition, Kelly was relieved of his chief pilot duties. He continued to fly for a short time then asked to be grounded. "I didn't want to fly with a heart condition. Doctors couldn't find anything wrong with me but my heart still hurt."

Fred Warren Kelly took off his wings after 17,000 hours of flying time.

He was assigned public relations duties for the company and made speeches before schools, service clubs and other groups. He even went to New York to appear on the Ed Sullivan Show, wearing his captain's uniform.

But continued ill health and a slipped disc operation made Fred increasingly discouraged. He thought maybe a change would help.

Fred Kelly and Jimmy James and attractive representatives of Navy, Marines and Army publicizing V-Mail during World War II.





L.D. (Pat) Carlson and Carl Eaker, pilots in Western's Sourdough Operation in World War II. Carlson was in charge of the operation, reporting to Fred Kelly. They flew men and material to Alaska for the Air Transport Command.

"In 1950, I went to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to help get the airport in shape. Bill Wallace had a gas station there. He was getting pretty tired of it and offered it to me. All I had to pay for was the inventory. I asked Western for a leave of absence and was given it.

"In August, business was good. The next month, business was half that of August. Each month after that, profits dropped by half until December when there was nothing. I still had to pay \$150 a month rent, so I quit the business."

Then occurred a bizarre incident in Kelly's life — a mystery that remains unsolved to this day:

When Fred returned to Los Angeles, he was contacted by his younger brother Lyle, who lived in Mill Valley near San Francisco. Lyle said he was arranging a deal to fly several shipments of gold from Mexico to Paris, France, and to Morocco in North Africa. Each shipment would be 50,000 ounces. They would be paid \$1 an ounce to ship the gold.

The gold was to be picked up from the mine and flown to Juarez on the U.S.-Mexican border, and from there to Los Angeles. At that point, TWA would fly the gold the rest of the way. Lyle knew Fred understood the air cargo business, which was the reason he was brought in on the deal.

Everything was arranged and Fred called his brother to tell him. Lyle said that he'd meet Fred in Los Angeles to complete the deal.

Fred never heard from his brother again. He called Lyle's wife, who said he had disappeared. It was reported to the police but no trace of him has ever been found.

Heartbroken, Fred once again started looking for a job.

Terrell C. Drinkwater, who had taken over as Western's president on January 1, 1947, heard that Fred wasn't doing anything and called him back to the company. Kelly was put in charge of security and also resumed his public relations duties.

But it didn't last. Fred was discouraged. "The company gave me every chance to get ahead and prove myself, but I just couldn't seem to do it."

Louis Welch owned a motor overhaul concern for Ford products. He asked Fred to join him as an inspector, at a higher salary. Kelly accepted. Fred Kelly, who all his life had been first — in the 1912 Olympics, in Cuba, at Western — couldn't bear the thought of no longer being first.

Sadly, Fred went to see Stanley R. Shatto, then Western's vice president of operation, and asked to leave. "Stan said OK, but said that he would like me to stay because he felt I was doing a good job. But I didn't think so." On Sept. 23, 1951, Fred W. Kelly retired from Western Air Lines.

It was many years and many heartaches later before Fred Kelly was to see Western again.

The first of these heartaches was on the night of November 1, 1954. His only son, Fred, Jr., was driving his car near the Kelly home in Glendale, when it hit a culvert in the road and went out of control. Young Fred, 20, was critically injured and died several hours later.

The year 1960 was the lowest point in Fred Kelly's long career. It was a year of tragedy. Myer & Welch, where Fred was working, took a financial nosedive and he was released.

Then came the most crushing blow of all. On April 13, that year, a smoldering fire began early in the morning in his wife Marie's bedroom. By the time Fred noticed it and

tried to help, it was too late. She died of smoke inhalation.

Their beautiful, spacious home on Chevy Chase Drive now held too many unhappy memories. Fred couldn't bear the loneliness and despair. Somehow or other he had to pull the remaining threads of his life together and start again.

He sold the house and moved to a small apartment near his sister in Long Beach. After a short time, he bought a trailer and moved into Shady Acres Trailer Park on Long Beach Blvd. To augment his income, Fred sold shoes, socks and ladies hosiery.

In 1964, sunlight crept back into Fred Kelly's life. He was contacted by Western and invited back to see the company he helped guide through so many hard years. It was the beginning of a new chapter.

Then 74, Fred still stood erect and proud. There was a warm twinkle in his eye and the boyish, almost shy smile would light up his face. He'd talk about the old days and all the warmth of fond memories would return.

On June 1, 1965, Western inaugurated its Fanjet Com-muter service on the Los Angeles-San Francisco route. Fred and Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan were invited to participate in publicity activities commemorating the new service. Once again, Fred Kelly was to receive a paycheck from Western.

In the same month, the company re-inaugurated service to West Yellowstone. The new airport was completed – on the site that Kelly recommended years earlier. Again, Kelly was there on his old publicity job.

In April, the following year, Kelly and his old flying mate Al DeGarmo, now the only survivors of the Four Horsemen, joined in helping Western celebrate its 40th anniversary. Together they traveled to major cities in the West and were interviewed by dozens of newspapers, radio and television stations. Once again, Fred Kelly was No. 1.

Later that year, Kelly sold his trailer and moved to Applegate, Oregon, not far from Florence, where his chum DeGarmo lived.

With the Olympic Games taking place in Mexico this year, Western again called upon Fred's services. As an Olympic Gold Medal winner, Kelly was a natural subject for sports writers to interview. He traveled throughout the West and also went to Washington, D.C.

He went to Lake Tahoe, training site for the U.S. track team. Fred's health problems have gone. He works out

regularly on his Exercycle. At Tahoe, he donned a track suit and, at 77, jogged around the track with two athletes of this year's Olympiad.

When the team left aboard a Western charter flight bound for Mexico, Fred was aboard. He attended the Olympics and there he met Willie Davenport, minutes after he won the gold medal in the 110-meter high hurdles. Davenport's time was 13.3 seconds, "A hurdle and a half faster than I was," Kelly said.

Both have left their mark in athletic history.

Kelly stared into his cup of coffee for a moment, then sat back in his chair. A slow smile crept across his face. "I was just thinking . . . When I was back in Washington a couple of months ago, talking to Bob Addie at the *Post*, we were browsing through the Olympic record book and came across my name. They spelled it 'Kelley'.

"Now there's *fame* for you," Fred sighed. "Can't even spell my name right."

FOOTNOTES:

1. Hereford, Jack and Peggy, *THE FLYING YEARS*, Los Angeles, Western Air Lines, 1946, p. 22.
2. Ibid.
3. The directional radio compass was the work of G. Kreusi, a Swiss engineer hired by Western.
4. The flights were from Vail Field, located where the City of Commerce now stands, to Oakland Airport. Passengers went the rest of the way to San Francisco by ferryboat.
5. Carson now lives in Alpine, Calif., near San Diego.
6. The panel is now in the Western Air Lines Museum in Los Angeles. Alice Graham Rose lives in Los Angeles.
7. Western flew two F-32s: NC33N and NC334N. See Scheppeler, Robert H., "The Fokker F-32", *AAHS JOURNAL*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 1966, pp 110-117.
8. TWA considers Western, along with TAT-Maddux, as predecessor companies. The designation of the initials "TWA" were changed from Transcontinental and Western to Trans World Airlines in 1950.
9. Hereford, op. cit. p. 98.
10. Ibid, p. 99.
11. L.D. (Pat) Carlson, now a retired Western Air Lines captain, is living in Burbank, Calif.
12. Richards is retired and lives in East Sound, Washington.



Kelly pinning coveted wings on Ted Homan for his first flight as a Western Air Pilot. Homan is now a Senior Captain with Western.