

Robert W. Prescott... "Bob"



May 5, 1913 - March 3, 1978



Bob greets the airline's first CL-44 "swingtail" . . . 1961.

Bob, below right, with historic thoroughbred race horse shipment on a Budd Conestoga . . . 1945.



In Memoriam: Robert W. Prescott

Robert William Prescott — visionary and stalwart pioneer of the air cargo industry, colorful World War II fighter ace, founder and president of Flying Tiger Line — died March 3 of cancer at his home in Palm Springs, California. He was 64.

Bob Prescott founded Flying Tigers in 1945, and served as its only president and chief executive officer until his death, and was chairman of the airline's parent company, Tiger International.

Bob was born in Ft. Worth, Texas on May 5, 1913. After high school, he joined his father in the trucking business. In 1934 he moved to California, attended Compton Junior College and entered Loyola Law School, Los Angeles.

He left school in 1939 to enlist in the U.S. Navy as an aviation cadet, training at Pensacola, Florida. He was commissioned as an ensign in 1940, and served as a flight instructor until September, 1941, when he resigned his commission to join General Claire Lee Chennault's American Volunteer Group (AVG) in China.

Prescott participated in five major campaigns while serving as a flight leader for the AVG, popularly known as "the Flying Tigers." When the AVG was disbanded in July, 1942, he returned to the United States and began flying with the Intercontinental Division of Trans World Airlines. He was co-pilot of the famous "Mission to Moscow" flight of Ambassador Joseph E. Davies in 1942.

Later that year he returned to China as a captain with the China National Aviation Corporation, flying military supplies into China from India over the

famous "Hump." He completed more than 300 flights over the treacherous Himalayan route.

He returned to the United States in November, 1944 and on a trip to Acapulco, Mexico, met a group of Los Angeles businessmen associated with Samuel B. Mosher, Los Angeles oil pioneer and magnate. They were exploring the possibility of establishing an airfreight line along the west coasts of the United States and Mexico. Prescott convinced them that a better idea would be a transcontinental route across the United States. They agreed to match whatever capital he could raise, and Bob was appointed to find aircraft and set up the airline that was to become Flying Tiger Line.

He found 14 Navy surplus Budd Conestoga cargo aircraft and collected \$89,000 from friends who had flown with him in China. This sum was equalled by Mosher's group. A month or so later, he landed his first three loads — a planeload of grapes from Bakersfield to Atlanta, flowers from California to Detroit, and furniture from New York to California. Flying Tigers was off the ground.

A four-year fight for official government certification ended in 1949 with approval of the nation's first commercial all-cargo route. Twenty years later, in mid-1969, Flying Tigers was awarded the first scheduled transpacific all-cargo route. Last year, Congress and the President approved the deregulation of the airfreight airlines which now enables Flying Tigers to offer expedited freighter service to all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Bob had witnessed his original fleet

of World War II surplus aircraft grow into a multi-million dollar fleet of Boeing 747 and stretched DC-8 jetfreighters.

During that time he was many times recognized as a leader in air transportation. He was a member of the board of the Transportation Association of America and had been a member of the Board of Directors of the Air Transport Association since 1969. In 1973 he was named "Man of the Year" by the National Defense Transportation Association for outstanding contributions to the field of transportation. He was active in civic affairs, was a trustee of the City of Hope, held regional industrial chairmanships in the United Crusade and was an honorary member of the Air Line Pilots Association and the Wings Club of New York. Last year, Northrop University conferred an honorary Doctor of Science degree upon him.

Bob Prescott is survived by his wife Anne-Marie, two married daughters, Mrs. French Reill and Mrs. Kirsten Smith of Los Angeles, and three grandchildren. He also leaves a sister, Mrs. Marquerite Lionberger of Fort Worth, Texas, and a brother, L. Roy Prescott of Midland, Texas. Bob's son, Peter, was killed in an airplane crash in 1965.

A giant amidst his peers, Bob Prescott was described recently as a symbol for all the men in World War II who had a dream about aviation, and of all those who worked hard to realize that dream. He was the only man who succeeded in building a scheduled airline from the more than 300 such air transport enterprises which mushroomed in the late 1940s that has survived to this day.



Bob and a Constellation bearing Flying Tigers' early logo . . . 1957.



Bob, above right, growing up in Texas.



In the
AVG . . .
1942.

Articles like the one at left — tracing Bob Prescott's life and accomplishments — have been published in major newspapers, magazines and news sources around the world. Little wonder. His story is an impressive one: A young man of modest background becomes a World War II hero; starts an airline under doubtful conditions and has the audacity to make it work, plowing headlong through staggering odds to build the world's largest all-cargo airline.

From that, of course, came the honors and awards; the honorary degrees and memberships; the well-deserved titles of "industry leader" and "air transportation pioneer." Such a man is just the sort in whose memory you would expect a City Council to adjourn, as did the Los Angeles City Council following his death; just the sort whose story should be incorporated into the Congressional Record of the United States, as it was on March 8, 1978.

But the facts of Bob Prescott's life only suggest the kind of person he must have been to have made it all happen. This Flying Tiger Line memorial is a tribute to his professional achievements, certainly; but more, it's a toast to the man — to the flair and grace, the courage, determination, ceaseless optimism, sense of humor and humanness that met so splendidly in the body and spirit of Bob Prescott.

On the following pages, friends, colleagues and family reflect about Bob and inspire each of us to remember him in our own personal way.

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Bob Prescott: There's Only One

By Leonard S. Kimball

Len Kimball probably knew Bob Prescott as well as any Tiger could, working closely with him through 27 colorful years. Kimball joined Flying Tigers in 1948 and headed the public relations department from 1950. He retired as vice president-public relations in 1970 but stayed on an additional four years as a consultant.

Putting it simply, Bob Prescott was both the most inspiring and most memorable human being I ever met. He had the common touch — but also the tempered dignity which commanded respect and an intellect which demanded respect.

Bob seldom required more than five or ten minutes to see the core of a problem. He could make instantaneous decisions yet, as he put it, he could “turn on a dime” if the decision was wrong. He had no compunction about correcting himself if he saw that he was on the wrong track. I always thought his days in China with (General Claire Lee) Chennault taught him how to make quick decisions, but also to be flexible about them. Bob was always ready to hear a contrary opinion; in fact, I often thought that he looked suspiciously at the man who lacked an argument.

Bob's consummate humanness dawned upon me one day when, after making a horrendous boo-boo, I hastened to his office, determined to confess before anyone else could relate how much of a fool I had been.

He listened as I blurted on; but halfway through my confession, he interrupted me. “Listen,” he said, “I've made a million mistakes, so forget it. But,” and he paused. “Remember this: Make the same mistake again and I'll think you're stupid!”

Bob taught you how to do first things first. One day I lugged a big pile of paperwork into his office. I was trying to convince him I needed more help. I stacked the pile on his desk to illustrate how many problems I had. Then I started to talk, when he swung around in his chair and lifted a pile of papers twice the size of mine from the table in back of him.

“You've got problems!” he remarked. “Hell, I've got twice as many and I'm not asking for more help.” I soon learned the difference between more important and most important, and what could really be left undone. Of course, you had best not neglect what really did need to be done!

Along the same line . . . quitters had no place in the Prescott regime. One day, a man came in grumbling about his lot. After reciting his woes, he threatened to quit. That was a major mistake with Bob Prescott, who quickly shot back: “All right, if you want to quit, go ahead and quit.” Prescott didn't have time for the man or woman who couldn't grasp the spirit of “Can do.”

Bob taught you early to solve your own problems. He never asked when you came to work, or when you quit. He only wanted to see the job done. An employee came to him with a headful of problems. Prescott cut him short: “Listen,” he said, “you're here to find solutions; bring me solutions, not problems.” He would talk with interest and animation about your proposed solutions, but not a minute about your problems. As before, I thought the days in China had taught him how to think through problems.

Something else you never brought Bob was talebearing talk — unless you were ready to go to the mat. No sooner had you told your tale than he would whirl in his chair to his dial panel, punch the button and summon to his office the person about whom you had talked. Then, with the other person confronting the first, he would say: “All right, go ahead and tell your story.” Prescott settled problems “now”; he once said he never liked to let the sun set on them.

Teamwork was one of his greatest principles . . . maybe ahead of all else. I had featured him prominently in an issue of Tigereview. He called me to his office, and waving the paper in my face, he said: “Look, why the hell so much Prescott in here? There are a lot of other people making this place work; you get them in here and leave me out for awhile.”

Bob also had no time for something he called “drunk talk.” He loved a party after work; he could tell more stories than most anyone he met — all with a touch of his endless and inimitable humor. Many you had never heard before, even if you'd often heard him spinning yarns. What he hated was someone bending his ear with office problems during these relaxing times. “That's a lot of drunk talk,” he would say in quick dismissal.

Bob Prescott was the most open-minded executive I ever met. He wanted to hear your proposition. It is appropriately inscribed in Latin on the humorous Prescott coat-of-arms that hung for so many years in his office: “Propone

Quid Meo” — “Make me a proposition.” He loved to hear you, argue with you; but once a decision was made, even if you didn't agree, he expected you to pitch in one hundred percent. If you disagreed strongly enough and you had some additional opinion, he'd listen to you again. If you lost again, it was time to forget it and get with the team. He could also reverse himself. It didn't happen often because the solutions arrived at were usually on the ball, but if they turned sour, he'd be the first to reverse. (He said that in the early days, it saved the company a few times!)

Bob had patience and understanding. One day a fellow Tiger and I took a long lunch peppered with a number of martinis. We had concluded that Prescott was making a lot of mistakes, and we were out to save him from himself. We returned to the office — which was a mistake in the first place — and went immediately to his office to air our views. We had hardly begun solving problems for him when he interrupted us. “O.K., I get the message . . . but why don't you invite me to go with you next time. I like those kinds of lunches, too!”

Besides his real love for his fellow man — his humanness — he was a man who never wasted time kidding himself about himself. He had great confidence and unlimited courage, but he never wore either on his shoulder. Yet, you always knew it was there, and it made you want to work for him; really work, to help solve the problems. Maybe his



Prescott coat-of-arms: “Make me a proposition.”



Prescott with actress Jayne Mansfield, publicizing a Flying Tigers United Way campaign.

remark during one of the airline's many crises defines Bob's approach to life: "Listen, I'll be a pioneer and a volunteer — but never a martyr."

In the dreary days of the mid-1950s after the proposed Flying Tigers-Slick merger had fallen apart, Prescott told a group of us one day that we'd better start looking for jobs. Flying Tigers' fortunes were scraping bottom. I don't know one of us who quit. We had great faith in the company and the future of airfreight and unconsciously clung to our association with Prescott. He was just that kind of man. You don't find them too often. Maybe once in a lifetime . . . if you're lucky.

We volunteered to take pay cuts — anything to keep the airline alive. There was no such thing as "hours;" we'd work until the job was done. Prescott was visibly moved. "I guess if you guys feel that way, we'll give it another try," he said.

That was the low spot. From then on, Flying Tigers flew ahead to become the world's largest and most successful air cargo line. Just a week before he died, in a thoughtful note to one of his Flying Tigers staff, Bob summed it up like this: "It's difficult to express the pride I feel at what has happened to a struggling idea I had so many years ago."

Bob had a feel for just about anything that happened in the airline. Such as the first time we painted our trucks. We showed him a design, he looked at it and suggested a slogan no one could beat. We carried it around the country on the sides of our trucks for years: "Another load of freight faster by Flying Tiger Line." He also coined such phrases as "anything, anywhere, anytime" and "If you can get it through the airport gate, we can fly it." When he became involved with starting a restaurant chain, he suggested the name "Hungry Tiger" because he said he'd never seen a tiger that wasn't hungry.

And then there was the great Washington lobster feast. Bob was fighting mad that Flying Tigers wasn't permitted to carry the mail; that the passenger lines had it all to themselves at an outrageous 80 cents per pound compared to the 20 cents we'd proposed. The airline "invaded" Washington, tak-

ing a full-page ad in the Washington Post with a headline shouting that a pound of lobster could fly across the country lots cheaper than a pound of mail — 16 cents versus 80 cents. That morning, on the desk of every congressman, senator and agency head having anything to do with postal rates, there was a package containing a live lobster with cooking instructions. At least that was the plan. How we made the point! Some of the lobsters were dead and smelled. Bob heard about it, from some angry, some disappointed, but all impressed "recipients." In a city where surprises are a dime a dozen, and a non-event mostly, Flying Tigers was a one-day wonder — the talk of Washington. It was all Prescott's idea. Eventually, we got the mail.

In fact, it was a repetition, in a way, of the same idea that got Bob into airfreight in the first place. The general rate for flying property in 1945 was 80 cents a pound. Bob guessed that it could be done for 20 cents a pound, so that's what he charged. It had to be intuition — because nobody really knew — but what great intuition. That proved to be the basic rate for many years.

As it was to follow, this same razor-sharp intuition paid off again and again. However, it wasn't always as much guesswork as some people thought; Bob, beneath his banter, was a thinking man. He used to call it "Prescott's luck" — but there was nothing blind about it. He always knew what he was doing.

Take 1950, when he bought the airline's fleet of C-46s, paying twice what American Airlines bid. People began calling the deal "Prescott's Folly." A short time later, the Korean War broke out. Flying Tigers not only had the C-54s that enabled us to become the biggest single contractor on the Pacific Air Lift, but with the C-46s we had the biggest domestic airfreight fleet — and how we filled them! Prescott's seemingly high bid paid off a thousand times over.

Bob loved to "needle" you — not out of meanness, but because he wanted you to think. His "needle" was a long one. I felt it for several years after we put on an inaugural service celebration for the new Constellation aircraft in San Francisco, with several hundred shippers at the airport, drinking cocktails and eating lunch, and waiting for our proud new bird . . . which never showed up. Operations said I'd never told them we needed a plane; I swore I had, but I couldn't prove it, and Prescott never let me forget it. His needling was a reminder that putting things like that in writing was just as important as thinking and talking about them.

Repartee and banter were his forte — a master artist. He hated to make speeches . . . never wanted to preach to people. Just joust with them; make them think . . . and it made him think. Not too surprisingly, Bob was the only person who could write a speech for Bob. His thinking was too original for

anyone else to match. I guess that's the way of the great masters, in painting, writing, or anything. The copy can never be as good as the original. And when he wrote a speech, it was always, in the vernacular, "a beaut."

Bob's office door was open to anyone who wanted to see him. He put up with a good many time-wasters, but as the sales department beat the bushes looking for any pound of freight and making a lot of empty calls, Bob looked in every corner for an idea, knowing he'd need a hunk of listening patience but also knowing that every now and then he'd find a gem. For instance, few people know that it was Bob Prescott who originated the idea of economy air travel back in 1948 when, to fill up his near-empty eastbound freighters, he sold a little group of businessmen on leasing some of the planes, putting in seats and selling an eastbound ticket for \$99, compared to the \$150 the passenger lines were charging. It made millionaires out of the four men who grabbed the idea.

Bob gave his employees great freedom of action, for action was what he wanted; but he also charged you with the responsibility. He explained it to me once thusly: "Look, you're the expert here in your field, otherwise you wouldn't be here. I don't know a damn thing about your job, so you go ahead and do what you think should be done. But remember this: You'd better be right!"



Bob receiving Los Angeles County proclamation from Supervisor Warren Dorn, center. On the left is Len Kimball.

Stories of Bob are endless. Each of us who knew him has a bagful. I'd like to leave mine this way: The kind of a man, the kind of a leader he was, it is little wonder now that his company and he were the only ones that survived intact with the same basic team that started out after World War II. All the others that barged into the airfreight field — some 300 or more — either failed or were drastically reorganized. Few people seem to realize that, but it is the story of the Flying Tiger Line, and no one else can claim it. I'm sure that Bob is up there right now, saying: "Take good care of my baby."

At right: Bob with United States President Lyndon Johnson.

Below left: Bob, second from right, as co-pilot on the famous "Mission to Moscow" flight of Ambassador Joseph E. Davies . . . 1942.

Below right: Flying Tigers founder cuts cake in Taipei, Taiwan on the occasion of the airline's 25th anniversary and first anniversary of scheduled airfreight service between the U.S. and Asia . . . 1970.

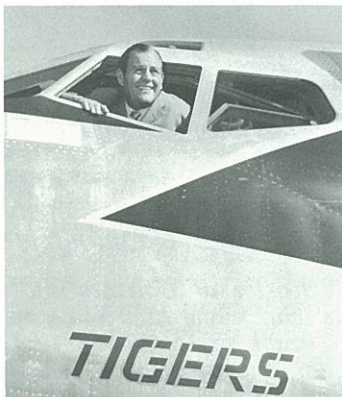


Bob, We'll

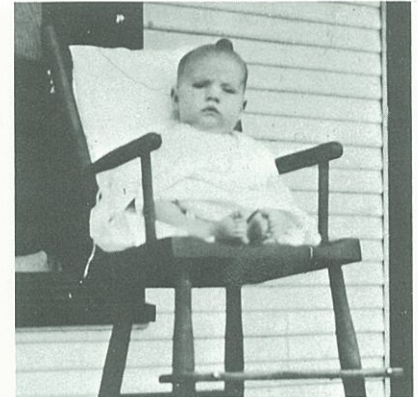
by Wayne Hoffman

Wayne Hoffman joined Flying Tigers in 1967 as chairman of the board and was subsequently elected president of the airline's parent company, Tiger International. Following Bob Prescott's death he was elected chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Tiger International, and has assumed the presidency of Flying Tigers. The following tribute to Bob is taken from the eulogy delivered by Hoffman at the memorial services held March 7.

When Robert W. Prescott was born 64 years ago in 1913, the state of Texas still had the aspect of a frontier. A young boy growing up in a large family in that place and in that day quickly learned, I am sure, a certain resourcefulness. Moreover, if he was a lad of high spirit, quick intelligence and possessed the courage of a riverboat gambler, he might be expected to grow up and make a name for himself.



Inspecting his airline's first jet-powered freighter, above, a Boeing 707 . . . 1965.



Small boy in Texas!

Bob with automobile ready for shipping on board a Budd Conestoga . . . 1945.

Miss You

And Bob Prescott did. He lived to see himself honored with a prominent display in the new Smithsonian Aerospace Museum in Washington, D.C. as one of the giants of the airline industry. Bob received many other awards and honors, by which he may be remembered, but the most important memorial, one that lives and grows, will keep his name alive long after we, here, are all dead and gone. That memorial is the Flying Tiger Line, a company of people, which from its inception in 1945 until now, has had only one president — Robert W. Prescott.

When Bob first started flying as a Naval Cadet in 1939, he had no grand scheme to become a captain of industry. He did have exuberance and wit, qualities which stayed with him all his life and were, in fact, a Prescott trademark. He subconsciously used humor to ease the pain of adversity, to puncture pomposity, and in general because he had that happy capacity to see the absurd.

He joined the American Volunteer Group (to keep from getting himself killed instructing flying students, as he was later to say) and became a fighter ace. He subsequently flew cargo over the Hump into China and also served as a TWA transport pilot. In that incarnation he was a member of the crew of the famous Mission to Moscow. All of these experiences, although by no common design, became invaluable to him in life as founder and head of Flying Tiger Line.

That the business prospects for an all cargo airline in those days were lean did not dampen the spirits of the young Flying Tigers. Instead they developed improvisational skills which became the envy of the industry, including the several hundred other such companies which entered the air cargo business, only to fail one by one.

When I first became acquainted with Bob Prescott twenty years ago, it was because, as a young businessman, I was curious to learn more about Flying Tiger Line and why it was succeeding where so many others had failed. I found my answer, and in the process acquired a life-long business colleague and friend.

Bob was the catalyst in developing an attitude — a Tiger Spirit, if you will — whose ingredients are a blending of concern for people, indomitable opti-



Prescott and Hoffman in the cockpit of Flying Tigers' first B-747 jetfreighter, with Boeing President E.H. "Tex" Bouilliou, at right . . . 1974.

mism, intelligence, a gambler's instinct, and hard work. This spirit will live on, and will assure Flying Tiger Line's continued success.

I thought I knew Bob very well; my family and I had been together with his family on numerous occasions. We had taken trips abroad together, and, after all, he and I had worked in double harness together for more than a decade. Between football games, boating, golf tournaments in the desert and various outings together, we had developed an easy relationship. Our business relationship was reinforced by mutual trust and honesty and our occasional disagreements, sometimes vociferous, were quickly ended in conciliatory handshakes.

But I did not fully appreciate the extent of Bob's courage until his illness. In a sense Bob's two-year losing fight to cancer was a sublime human victory. It was a triumph of the human spirit. Through painful surgery, upsetting chemotherapy, and other constant reminders of his vulnerable condition, he fought back. If he could swing a golf club, he was out on the course, getting angry when he missed a shot, as though he could still afford the luxury of being upset by little things. If he could make it to the office, he came to work. Never once did he say, why me! On the contrary. Days before his death, he said to me, "The world does not owe me a thing. I had my allotted time, and I made the most of it."

Bob had one vulnerability. He hated to be alone. In this regard, he was doubly blessed with two loving daughters and a loving and devoted wife who helped him in every humanly possible way. He certainly left knowing that he had a family who loved him.

I hope he knew, too, that there were others who loved him and were hoping for his ultimate recovery. We all have our special reasons for not soon forgetting our friend.

Bob always joked that he left the tough jobs for me, and he did it again. For the last time.



Bob and Anne-Marie . . . Christmas 1970.



Bob with daughters Kirsten, left, and French . . . Christmas 1975.

High Flight

by John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

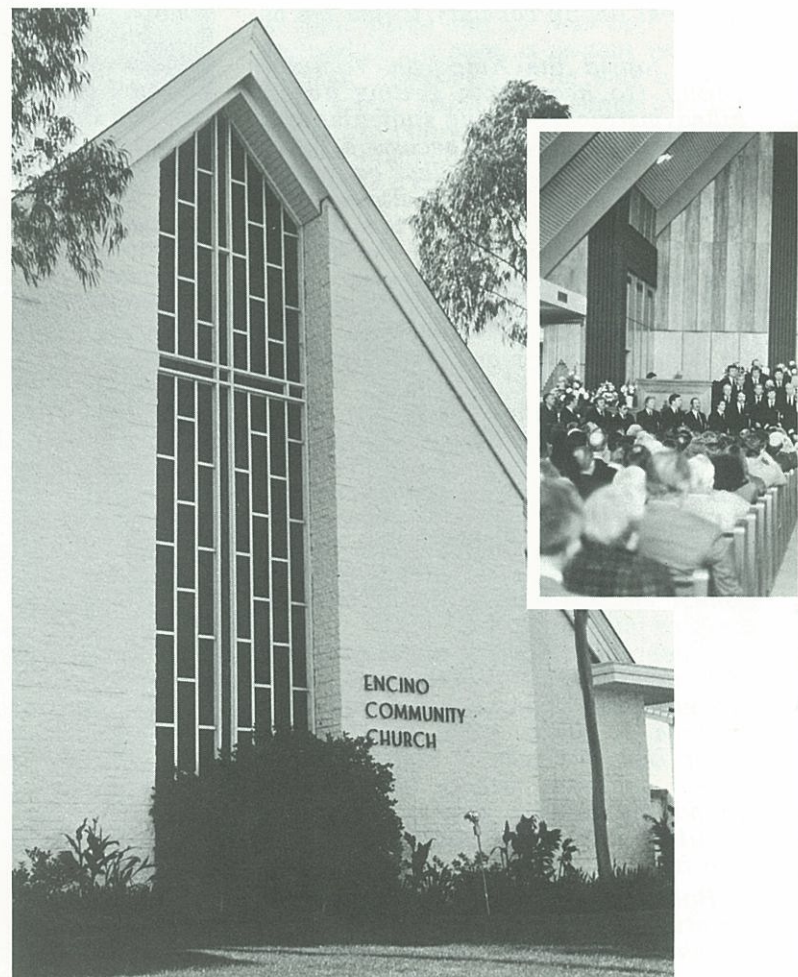
Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered
wings
Sunward I've climbed and joined the
tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, and done a hundred
things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and
soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along,
and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air
Up, up the long delirious burning blue,
I've topped the wind-swept heights with
easy grace,
Where never lark or even eagle flew
And while the silent uplifting mind
I've trod
The high, untrampled sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face
of God.



Many with quiet tears on their faces, scores of pilots surrounded the flag-draped casket as the memorial services began and the poem "High Flight" — a favorite verse of pilots — was read aloud.



Floral arrangement from the Clipped Wings, former flight attendants, was one of many decorating the church.



Memorial services for Robert W. Prescott were held in the afternoon on Tuesday, March 7 at the Encino Community Church in Southern California. Conducted according to Bob's own wishes, they included the playing of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," readings of the poems "High Flight" and Rudyard Kipling's "If" by the church's minister, Dr. Clifton King, and a closing organ rendition of the song Bob had delighted Christmas Party audiences with for years . . . "Frankie & Johnny." Wayne Hoffman delivered the eulogy, and Art Linkletter presented his "reflections" to the more than 700 people who had come to pay tribute. Some had to be content to listen to the services projected over speakers in the church courtyard. Following the services everyone was invited to the Prescott home, where friends and family swapped stories and warmed to their many memories of Bob.



Reflections

by Art Linkletter

Art Linkletter, veteran of the entertainment world, is also a veteran of Flying Tigers' world, having served on the Board of Directors through most of the airline's development. The following "reflections" of his friend, Bob Prescott, were presented by Linkletter at the memorial services.

Let us reflect for a few moments on the joy in the life of our friend Bob Prescott. Everyone who knew him and spent any time with him felt his own life take on an extra dimension, an extra kind of excitement. Vitality is the word for it.

I know that most of you here could supply your own personal story to illustrate that thought. For some it would be the memory of a night out on the town — almost any town, almost anywhere; but wherever, filled with laughter, stories and perhaps even a touch of strong drink. For others it might be a moment of high danger in the skies above India or China or the Himalayas, when a fighter pilot like Bob was a mighty reassuring buddy to have nearby. Many of us who served on the Board of the Flying Tiger Line years ago will remember Bob gambling the future of the company; millions of dollars on decisions to buy more and bigger planes when companies like ours were going bankrupt all around us. And then there were the soft and quiet moments when Bob sensed there was a personal problem; and he always stood by to give his firm reassurance and warm advice.

You know, the whole life of some people is a kind of a partial death; a long, lingering death bed, so to speak, of stagnation and nonentity on which death itself is but a seal. Not so Bob. After my first weekend with him at Sam Mosher's Ranch, as a new member of the Board, I decided I would never try to out-work him, I would never try to out-drink him, out-draw him at stud poker, or out-lie him when it came to a good story.

He was a lusty, gutsy guy, and in the 25 years that we've been friends, I've marveled at the way he squeezed every bit of juice out of life. Even to directing that these funeral services should end with a chorus of "Frankie and Johnny." That's Bob.

Many years ago, when I was interviewing children on the air, I asked a

little five-year-old boy what he wanted to be when he grew up, and he surprised me with a one-word answer. He said "alive." And that was the supreme accomplishment of Bob Prescott. He was "alive" all of his life.

Well, these crowded years we've known each other have slipped by, filled for both of us with our quota of triumphs and tragedies and travels and fun. Then just a couple of summers ago, Bob and I were walking through the great redwood trees of Northern California's Bohemian Grove, which he loved so much. We were swapping stories and comparing notes about the fun on tap for the evening ahead when he shocked me by telling me that within a few days, at the conclusion of the Grove, he was flying East for a major operation on his throat. He managed that kind of a nervous Prescott laugh and said: "If they would only hold off a couple of years, I could get the whole thing free on Medicare." And it did seem a little ridiculous to be serious about an operation — even a major operation — because Bob, for most of us, seemed absolutely indestructible. He still seems so, in retrospect. And then God's fingers touched him, and he slept.

Well, we're not here to say good-bye to Bob, because he's not really gone — you know that — so long as there remains in our hearts, in our minds, the love and the laughter and the life that he shared with us. We, his family and his friends, are Bob Prescott's living memorial.



Bob and his son Peter, at left, with Linkletter, on the right, and Los Angeles Mayor Norris Poulson pose for photos with "Sita" the elephant, who had just arrived in Los Angeles via Flying Tigers . . . 1959. Peter Prescott was killed in a plane crash in 1965.

From dream to reality Bob Prescott built his Flying Tiger Line, and in the course of his life established himself as one of the industry's — indeed the world's — greatest men. On these closing pages are some milestones of his career and a final, beautiful tribute written by Anne-Marie — Mrs. Robert W. Prescott — for her husband . . . “Bob”.

(Anne-Marie's verse was hand-lettered by Flying Tiger Phyllis Rathburn.)



Piloting a P-40 . . . 1942.



Loading flowers on board one of his freighters — a Budd Conestoga . . . 1945.



Bob and Anne-Marie Prescott meet United States President John F. Kennedy in Washington . . . 1962.



Bob poses by his photo, featured in the Smithsonian Institution Air and Space Museum's "Giants of Air Transportation" display . . . 1976.



Bob and Samuel B. Mosher, who helped finance the airline in 1945, look over a model of the CL-44 "swingtall" aircraft about to join the Flying Tigers fleet . . . 1961.

Bob

That day, the light first met your eyes
your motto was: "I can".
And in the process of your life
you built a monument to man.

To all of us, whose life you touched
you were a man about his job.
A noble soul, with humble heart
"Don't call me Sir - my name is Bob."

You had a vision - and the mind
that could grasp what lay ahead
and you walked with careless ease
where angels feared to tread.

The meek are blessed, theirs is the Earth.
You said, "That is not true;
the meek will only get what's left
when men like I am through".

To match your dreams, you liked to bite
off more than you could chew,
knowing that if things not jelled
your Luck would see you through.

When illness struck, you kept your 'sprit
and rolled the dice once more.
"Come Lady Luck, and show your smile
the way you have before."

You fought your battle to the end
not ever thinking you might die
and to every miracle prescribed
you answered, "Baby, let us try".

When all the cures we found had failed
and there was nowhere else to grope,
it was not your pain that made you weep
but abandoning your hope.

Still - Who is greater in this world
than that Man who tries.
His Soul will soar to victory
even though he dies.

Your time had come - your Sun has set,
the shadows paint the deep.
You lived your life - and did it well.
Go to sleep my Tiger - go to sleep.



Saluting the 25th anniversary of his
Flying Tiger Line . . . 1970.



Bob
Dresser