

COLTON WHITE #18
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INTERVIEW WITH PAPA W THE PILOT



Do you have a grandpa that used to be the most wonderful, most amazing jet pilot ever?

Well, I am fortunate enough to have one. My name is Colton White. I interviewed him on January 29, 2007 at four o'clock in the afternoon. His name is Garner Presley White. He worked as an airline pilot for Eastern Airlines.

Eastern Airlines was located in Atlanta, Georgia. He worked there from 1960 to 1989. To do this job he had to go to college, study the weather and take training. He had to keep a time log book and a navigational book. In training you had to have a certain amount of hours of practice flying a plane. My grandpa was able to pass the required testing after only 750 hours of training. This number of hours was lower than the average amount of time it took other people in training to pass the required testing. He believed that this was due partly to the fact that he was an airline mechanic for Delta Airlines before becoming a pilot. He believes that the experience he gained as an airline mechanic gave him the advantage in his testing to become an airline pilot.

When he first started working for Eastern Airlines, he was a flight engineer which is also known as a second officer. There is a three man crew in the cockpit which includes the flight engineer. A flight engineer's duties are many. They must make sure that the air conditioning and heating systems are up and running, balance the fuel in the aircraft, and do a walk-around visual check of the aircraft. The walk-around includes checking the landing gear, engine, wings and other major parts on the outside of the airplane. Another important duty of the flight engineer is to calculate and make sure that the landing speed and weight are within the proper range. As a flight engineer he was assigned to an aircraft called the Lockheed Electra. This was a four engine turbo prop airplane. This airplane held approximately 55 passengers. He worked in this capacity for a short two year period until there was an opening for a co-pilot position.

After being successful with a bid for an opening, he began his next position as a co-pilot. The co-pilot was also known as the first officer or co-captain. Commercial airline trips are flown in "legs" or parts of a complete trip. As co-captain my grandpa usually took turns with the captain flying the different legs of the trip. Some of the duties of co-captain were checking for any visual damage on the plane including "bird strikes," fuel leaks, tire inflation, and brakes before and after the flight. He was also responsible for checking the navigational equipment. As a co-pilot he was assigned first to a Douglas DC-9 airplane. This was the first airplane that he flew on that had two jet engines. The DC-9 held approximately 65 passengers. The Airbus A300 was the next airplane he was assigned to. This aircraft held between 266 and 300 passengers. In order to keep his training up to date, he had to fly and train in a simulator once every year. He worked as a co-pilot for about sixteen years until he was able to successfully advance to a pilot's position.

The pilot is the highest ranking officer on the airplane. He is responsible for the entire trip whether he is flying the whole time or not. It is the duty of the pilot to speak over the intercom to the passengers about all kinds of issues. He must remind them of safety issues, weather situations, flight conditions, and the estimated time of arrival (ETA) of the flight. The captain does all the paper work involved with the trip. Every trip begins with a dispatch release package which the pilot must sign. When the captain is flying the co-captain communicates with the different air traffic control towers and vice versa.

My grandpa liked his job a lot and said it wasn't really like work at all. During his career he flew to many distant places. He said some of his farthest flights were to Montreal, Canada; Toronto, Canada; and Haiti, Dominican Republic. He stated that these flights were long and hard. According to my grandpa, today's planes have jet engines instead of reciprocating engines

with propellers. He also said that the navigation system has changed drastically. The crew went from a three man crew to a two man crew because of the newer technology. He said that he and his buds had a blast flying together. Then I asked him if he still had contact with his buddies. He said that every Thursday he and fifteen other airline buddies go to bible study.

My grandpa had an interesting job. As an airline pilot, he was able to see many different places and different types of people. Layovers were sometimes at the beach, the mountains, the desert or a city covered with snow. He loves flying as much as he loves life.