



Peter Cecchinelli

January 19, 1943 - May 18, 2009

Captain Peter Jerrad Cecchinelli died peacefully at home on May 18th, 2009 surrounded by his loving family after a courageous one-and-a-half year battle with cancer. Pete was born in Rockford, Illinois on January 19th, 1943 to Frank and Katherine “Betty” Thatcher-Cecchinelli. Pete grew up in Rockford, Illinois where he graduated from West Rockford High in 1961. He went on to the University of Illinois in Champagne. He graduated from the College of Aviation in 1963 with a degree in Aviation Maintenance and Airline Transport Piloting. He began his commercial career with United Airlines in 1965. He was in the Inactive Air Force Reserves from 1964-1971. He was based in Chicago, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles. He flew the Caravelle, DC-6 and Boeing 720. He was promoted to Captain in 1983 and was Check Airman on the Boeing 727, DC-8, DC-10, 747 and 747-400. Peter accrued more than 22 thousand hours of flying time before retiring from United Airlines after 37 years and 7 months of service. His final flight was to Auckland, New Zealand where a celebration was held. He loved to fly and left behind the reputation of being a great pilot. He was active in the Airline Pilots Association with the Engineering and Scheduling Committees. Pete enjoyed attending the Retired Airline Pilot Association luncheons with friends.

On July 3rd, 1965 Pete Married Karen J. Gras of Rock Springs, WY, his wife of 43 years. Pete and his family moved to Fort Collins, CO in 1972. He and his wife Karen loved to travel the U.S. and Canada in their motor home. They made many good friends both in Colorado and during their travels.

Pete was admired by many for his kindness and generosity and will be greatly missed. He leaves behind his loving wife Karen Cecchinelli; daughters, Lisa Cecchinelli and Laura Cecchinelli Barnes; son Wade Cecchinelli and wife Cyndi; grandsons Devon Cecchinelli, Josh Cecchinelli and Trevor Henderson; granddaughter Kelsey Barnes; his brother John Cecchinelli; sister Elaine Thornton; nephews Michael Thornton, Bradley Thornton, and Frank Mathew Cecchinelli; and uncle and aunt, Lewis and Marilyn Moore of Rockford, IL. Visitation will be held from 6:00 to 8:00 PM Thursday, May 21st at Goes Funeral Care, 3665 Canal Dr., Ft. Collins. A celebration of Peter's life will be held at 11:00 AM Saturday at Harmony Presbyterian Church, 400 East Boardwalk, Ft. Collins. The family requests that any memorial donation please be made to the Food Bank for Larimer County or Pathways Hospice of Larimer County.

Tribute Wall



“ *Peter Cecchinelli*

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM



“ *Pete, I can never really express how much admiration and respect I have for you. After knowing you I believe the old saying "The good die young" is true, because you are far too good and far too young. Thank you for showing me that there really are good people in this world. Now there is one less, and few as good. You will live in my thoughts forever.*

Cyndi Cecchinelli - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ *I am sorry to learn of Pete's death so late. I wanted to say he was not only a stellar pilot and Captain, but also a gracious gentleman and just a fun person to fly with. I was new to the 747-400 as an instructor pilot and while on a trip to Narita, Pete showed me a lot about the jet and how to operate in the international 'friendly skies'. I am so sorry for your loss.*

Deb Ings - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ Dear Cecchinellis,
I was very saddened to read of Pete's passing. My first meeting with him was when we were looking to buy in the neighborhood, and we spoke on the phone..he reminded me so of my dad, also a United pilot. I valued his opinion, knowledge, and input while on the board, and enjoyed his sense of humor. I remember asking him how he liked driving that huge RV, and he laughed and reminded me he flew 747s..That was Pete. He was kind, warm, and one of a kind. I am so glad to have known him. With much sympathy, Cathy Sorensen

The Sorensens - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

LN

“ A tribute to Pete.
Thank you Pete for the years we spent together in the cockpit of a DC-8.
Thanks for getting me so interested in recreational veheciles that I bought one and Terese and I enjoyed RVing for sixteen years. That started in Jan 1981.
Thanks for the loads of firewood you hauled down to our house in Arvada in the late 70's.
Most of all Pete, you were one of the most professional pilots that I had the opportunity to work with.
May God bless you in your New Life.

Linda and Dick Neal - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RP

“ There were two of us who worked at the south walmart, Carol and myself. It was always a highlight whenever Peter would stop by and check into the various rifles and shotguns we had. He was always a pleasant nad interesting person to talk to. I would like to express my deepest condolences on your loss. He will be missed.

Ron Piotraschke - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

TB

“ *I am so sorry for your loss, my thoughts and prays are with your family.*

Todd Brigham - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

CP

“ *Pete was a pilot's "PILOT". He was very well respected by his crew members, friends & at United. Karen, you will be blessed by your loving family during this very sad time. We will keep you all in our thoughts & prayers. God Bless.*

Captain Garth (retired) & Olivia Peterson - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

DJ

“ *To the Family of Peter Cecchinelli*

My mother (Shirley McCook) and Peter's mother were friends before either of us were born. So I guess I was his friend for his whole life. Its too bad we did not communicate more during our adult life.

I will miss him.

The last time I saw Peter was at my mother's 50th wedding annaversary. We talked about the DC-10. He from a flying view point and me from working on its design and testing.

When we were growing up I never called him Pete. He was always Butch to me. We spent a lot of time in his basement playing with his trains.

Know that I'm thinking of each and every one of you.

Dennis Johnson - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RT

“ Dear Karen, Lisa, Laura and Wade,
Your Dad was a great guy! What fun we always had in the Parkview neighborhood! Driveway parties were the best!
I know that Pete was a big inspiration to Brady who is now 'Living the Dream' as a pilot.
God bless.
Romie

Romie Tobin - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RB

“ Hospice of Larimer Co.

Richard and Frances Brose - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

JL

“ Pete and I were both pilots with United early on in Chicago but only expanded our friendship after I moved to Fort Collins in 1978 and caught up with him. We flew DC-8's some and finally bid schedules together to share trips out of Stapleton. Before I retired in 1982 we got to fly some DC10 trips together, most memorable those to Hawaii. In Colorado we shared many projects together such as clearing beetle kill and cutting firewood at Stove Prairie cabin. Several years ago Pete once again came to my rescue and helped me build a special ramp so that I was able to bring my beloved Sandy home from the nursing home, for about 2.5 yrs, for which I will be forever thank full.
As you all know, that is what Pete was all about. We will miss him!
See you higher up, Pete
To Karen and family, proud to know you, and God's peace to you all.
Jack

John R (Jack) Lange - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RW

“ Karen and family,
My thoughts are with you.
Love Sue

Ray and Anita Wall - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RK

“ Pete will always be remembered as the helpful neighbor...but more importantly he was, and shall remain a dear friend.

Robert & Lou Ann Kendall - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

TF

“ We had known Pete for nearly 5 years and in that time he was always a wonderful & helpful neighbor and friend. I will miss him running out to tell me as I spray my weeds "it's gonna rain you know!" then it did! LOL He would eventually come out and say "hey Jen, when are you going to spray your weeds? We need rain!" We will remember Pete, not for how he left but for how he lived. All our best, The Stephenson's

The Stephenson Family - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

CM

“ Pete was always considered to be one of dad's best friends. When I would be down to Laramie, Dad and Mom would often want to know what Pete was up to, and if they could come up for a visit. Dad would always bet a dinner on the Rams- Cowboys games (I believe that Pete won most of those bets, as Dad would not brag much after the games, which he certainly would have if he won). Mom and I will certainly try to be there for the funeral, and if there is anything we can do don't hesitate to ask.

Cliff Mitchell - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

BW

“Pete and I were classmates at Rockford West H.S. Occasionally he would ride with me as I had a car during our high school days and he only lived about six blocks away. If I remember correctly, Pete's Grandmother had a small grocery store, nearby, on my paper route. Pete's desire to fly was always with him in high school and he talked of it often. We lost track of each other after graduation as he went off to college and I joined the Navy. In 1968 I took a traveling job for the next 20 years where I was on airplanes weekly. I always listened for Pete's name when they announced the crew and kept my eyes open in the airports to see if he was passing through. He was a fine person all the time I knew him and may he rest in peace.

Bob Wood - May 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM