

## **NORMAN MIDBOE – BIOGRAPHY** (written by Eugene C. Miller Sr. in 1999)

The following was taken from Gene Miller's book *"Pilots Along the Red River Valley"*

**Norman Midboe** was born at Northwood, North Dakota, on January 25, 1922. His father Sander and mother Annette were engaged in farming just four miles south of Northwood. Midboe grew up on the farm, doing the farm chores like most farm boys were known to do. He attended a one room grammar school in the area and had what was important in those days, and 8th grade graduation on June 5, 1936.

Norman attended and graduated from Northwood High School on May 19, 1940. He farmed for one year and then started taking flying lessons with Titus Richards, Airport Manager of the Grand Forks Municipal Airport, on October 21, 1941. Norman was then 19 years of age. He made his first solo flight in a 50 h.p. Taylorcraft N20048 on October 30, 1941. Midboe started working for the City of Grand Forks as a field attendant on November 1, 1941, earning approximately \$35 per month. He kept at his flying and went for his first dual cross country flight with his instructor Titus Richards on November 26, 1941. He then went solo cross country two days later. He received his private license No. 209561, when signed off by Vincent Cavasino. Titus Richards hired Midboe as a full time



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Assistant Airport Manager on January 1, 1942. His salary was \$75 per month. Midboe spent \$30 for room and board, \$40 for aircraft rental, and \$5 for incidentals. He continued working full time until April 18, 1943 and later received a salary raise to \$125 per month. Over the period of time from April 18, 1943 until May 3, 1944, Midboe acquired his commercial pilot's license and flight instructors rating. Melvin O. Wood signed him off on August 10, 1943 and he received his rating No. 209561. Midboe was employed in early 1943 as a flight instructor for the Jolly Flying Service in connection with training Army Air Force students under the War Training Service. The intent of the program was to determine if students had the potential for becoming bomber and fighter pilots in the Army Air Force. He was also appointed as part time Assistant Airport Manager for the city and served as Clearance Officer for clearing all civil aircraft arriving and departing from the Grand Forks Airport during World War II. Upon termination of the War Training Service program, he again worked full time as Assistant Airport Manager at a salary of \$125 per month until he was inducted into the Army Air Force Cadets on September 1, 1944. Midboe was sent to Wichita Falls, Texas for boot training, then moved on to the Aviation Cadet Center at San Antonio, Texas for preliminary ground training for all cadets. At this stage of the war, and with many civil programs suspended, nearly a thousand former flight instructors were put through the cadet system. They got the full treatment: Midboe went to schools at Carlstrom Field near Arcadia, Florida for Primary Training in Stearman aircraft; then to Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia for Basic Flight Training in North American AT-6 aircraft; and on July 31, 1945 transferred to Napier Field near Dothan, Alabama for advanced flight training. As a result of the war's end (WWII) on August 15, a telegram came from the training command headquarters stating that all pilot schools would be closed immediately for all cadets not desiring to remain as pilots in the post-war air forces. This ended Midboe's training as a fighter pilot and he elected to get a discharge from the service and get

back to his job as Assistant Manager at the Grand Forks Municipal Airport. There, he observed, to do some commercial flight instructing in his spare time.

Midboe was indeed a busy pilot upon returning to Grand Forks. Working under C.J. Amundson, then manager of the airport at the time, he flew part time for Jim Montgomery's air service, crop spraying from 1952 until 1960, doing charter work, and instructing. Midboe continued to serve as Asst. Airport Manager and flew numerous flights with T. Evenson, whose aerial photos appeared in the Grand Forks Herald. He also gave flight instruction to a large number of Army ROTC students from UND in this era. On November 14, 1960, the city council appointed Midboe as acting Airport Manager. One of his main concerns was the deterioration of the runways. By 1961 there were 55 aircraft stationed at the old airport location snuggled in close to the west side of the city. Larger aircraft were now using the runways and more traffic was being generated. On January 17, 1961, the Grand Forks City Council voted to construct a new airport—Midboe was right in the middle of the planning and construction. On February 1, 1964, the \$3 million airport was made operational for all aircraft.

On May 23, 1965, Northwest Airlines inaugurated 727 fan-jet service. On July 15, 1966, the North-South runway at Grand Forks was extended from 5300 ft. to 6500 ft. and on March 21, 1968, the large 150'x100' hangar was moved from the old airport to the new site. Then many developments occurred on the airport which Midboe helped plan. Heavy duty taxi-ways, more runway extensions, more taxi-ways, and on March 26, 1971, the FAA put in a temporary airport control tower. As Airport Manager, Midboe was more and more involved with administration and he flew less as pilot in command. His records contain a most complete picture of the development at Grand Forks. On November 18, 1975, the Grand Forks City Council eliminated the positions of Airport Manager and Assistant Manager and created in their place a position of Airport Administrator. At this point Midboe's title became Airport Business Manager. He served along with the Assistant manager Thomas Breton whose title had been changed to Airport Operations Manager. The city filled the Airport Administrator's job on June 1, 1976 by appointment of the council, but airport tenants became very disgruntled and the position was eliminated after one year and Midboe continued to run the airport under his new title. In December of 1981, his council approved a whole new runway and taxi-way complex to cost \$3.5 million in federal funds and \$500,000 in city funds. Midboe retired from his airport Business Manager's job on January 31, 1984. From the time of the move from the old airport on February 1, 1964, until twenty years later on February 1, 1984, Midboe was able to increase the valuation of the new airport from three million dollars to fifteen million as a result of improvements during that period. Also, in the twenty-year period noted, the airport generated sufficient revenue from operations to enable operation at no cost to the taxpayers of the City of Grand Forks. Tax funds did build some of the new improvements. Midboe's ongoing career and association with both "stick and rudder" and the administrative chores of airport operation, are unique. He accumulated approximately 4100 hours of flying time.

Airport staff visited Mr. Midboe on two occasions, in 2007 and 2011, and heard many stories about his love of the airport, aviation and travel. During the first visit, he agreed to donate his airport related scrapbooks to the Chester Fritz Library in Grand Forks. After retirement, Norman and his wife traveled extensively around the world and he had accumulated many scrapbooks full of those memories as well.

Sadly, Mr. Midboe passed away in 2015. Below we've copied his obituary from the *Grand Forks Herald*:



**Norman S. Midboe**, age 93, Woodside Village 4004 24th Ave. S., Grand Forks, ND, Died June 24, 2015 in Grand Forks, ND.

Norman was born January 25, 1922 in Northwood, ND, the son of Sander and Annette Midboe. He graduated from Northwood High School in 1940. After spending one year on the family farm he moved to Grand Forks in October of 1941 and learned how to fly aircraft at the Grand Forks Municipal Airport. He also became Assistant Airport Manager serving under Manager Titus Richards. After considerable flight training he acquired a commercial pilots license and a commercial flight instructor rating. During 1943 and 1944 he was employed as a Flight Instructor for the Army Air Force War Training Service at the Grand Forks Airport. This was followed by active duty in the Army Air Force during the remainder of World War II.

He returned to Grand Forks and resumed his duties as Assistant Airport Manager on January 1, 1946. He served in that capacity until November 14, 1960 at which time he began to serve as Acting Airport Manager. On January 1, 1961 he received a permanent appointment as Airport Manager. He was one of the key figures in the planning and construction of the new Grand Forks International Airport located four miles west of the old airport and north of Highway 2 that was opened for public use on February 1, 1964. Up until his appointment as Airport Manager, he was very active on a part-time basis as a Commercial Flight Instructor and instructed numerous Grand Forks businessmen and others in the art of flying. He was a Charter Member of the Civil Air Patrol which had its beginnings during World War II and which civilians had to join in order to remain eligible to fly during the war. During his flying career he also did a considerable amount of aerial crop spraying.

Under his management from 1961 until February 1, 1984, the airport was under constant development. The original construction cost of the new airport was approximately three million dollars and at the time of his retirement, the airport had reached a value of approximately 15 million dollars and was free from all dept.

He married Fay Leino on December 8, 1943 in Grand Forks. Following his retirement, he and his wife Fay did a lot of traveling to about 50 countries all over the world.

He is survived by his daughter, Beverly (Mike) Moulton of Nielsville, MN; one granddaughter, Marie Moulton & 4 Great Grandchildren of Oceanside, CA; and a sister, Alice (Marvin) Johnson of Velva, ND

He was preceded in death by his brothers, Kermit and Carl; sisters, Evelyn (Merrill) Francis, Ellenore (Roy) Eidoen and Tillie (Charles) Kerbaugh; and his wife Fay.

Funeral Services will be 2:00 PM Wednesday, July 1, 2015 in United Lutheran Church of Grand Forks, ND. Visitation will be Tuesday from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM with a 7:30 PM Prayer Service in Amundson Funeral Home of Grand Forks. Visitation will continue for the hour before the service in the church. Burial will be in Memorial Park South Cemetery of Grand Forks. Military Honors will be provided by the American Legion Post #157, The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #3817 and The North Dakota Army National Guard.