

CP pilot honored for air rescue help

By Frederick A. Johnsen
of the *Union-Bulletin*

A College Place resident who flies for Cascade Airways, and his copilot were honored today in Seattle for their efforts in directing a distressed private aircraft to a safe landing in February.

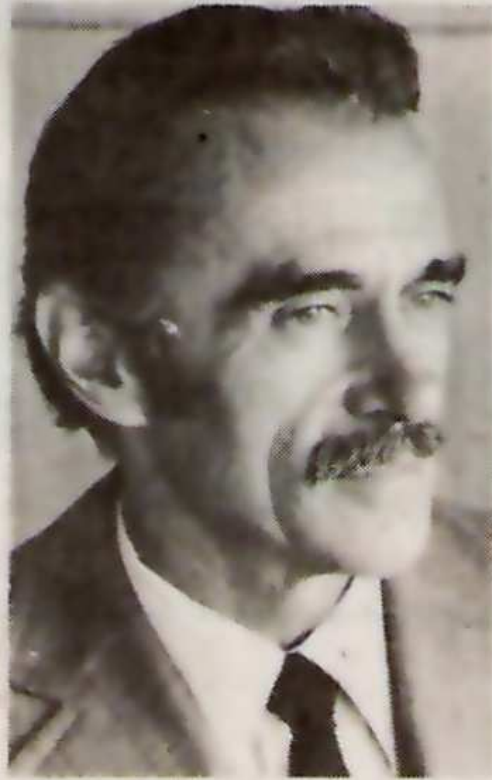
Gene Wing, 1211 Dewey Drive., College Place, and his copilot, Allen Brower, formerly of Walla Walla, were piloting a Cascade flight between Walla Walla and Spokane when they overheard emergency radio transmissions between the pilot of a light aircraft and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controllers in Seattle.

The Seattle FAA center monitors flights over much of the Northwest.

Heavy icing conditions were forcing the light plane to a lower altitude. The lower altitude put the light plane, which was over western Montana, out of range of the Seattle FAA ground radio transmitter, Wing told the *Union-Bulletin*.

The emergency happened at night, and the severely-iced light aircraft was in danger of flying into mountains as the icing made it impossible to hold altitude, according to an official of the FAA.

The FAA controllers in Seattle, John Cook, William Potter and Michael Anderson, could not radio the pilot to warn him of impending disaster.



Gene Wing

Wing and Brower offered to relay messages from the FAA to the light plane. The altitude of the Cascade flight was such that Wing and Brower could maintain radio contact with both the FAA center and the stricken plane.

One of the first messages relayed informed the pilot that he was rapidly closing on a mountain less than eight miles ahead, the FAA official said.

Wing and Brower relayed a suggested course change from the FAA, and the light Piper aircraft flew into a safer valley.

FAA radar contact with the low-flying plane soon was lost, the FAA spokesman said, but Wing and Brower maintained radio contact. Soon they

reported that the pilot of the endangered plane could see a highway in the valley below.

"Radioed advisories of power lines and other obstructions were passed to the PA-30 (light aircraft)", as it followed the highway, according to information released by the FAA.

Word was passed to the pilot that he was nearing the Thompson Falls, Mont., airport. A safe but slushy landing was made in snow at the airport, while the Cascade flight continued about its business in eastern Washington.

Wing had a flight instructor's rating by the time he graduated from high school in 1945. He has been a corporate pilot for Boise Cascade Corp. in Boise, and flew N3N crop dusters in the Walla Walla Valley before joining Cascade five years ago.

Brower has since left Cascade to become a copilot for Alaska Airlines.

Wing and Brower were honored in ceremonies at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport at 10:45 a.m. Also honored for their part in the rescue were FAA controllers Cook, Potter and Anderson, FAA officials said.

Scheduled to be present were Chris Walk, Jr., director of the FAA's Northwest Region, Mark Chestnutt, Cascade Airways president, O.F. Benecke, Alaska Airlines president, and other airline and FAA officials.