



SUSAN PARSON

# Editor's Runway

## The Legacy of Echo Sierra

In your travels around America's general aviation airports, you may have spotted a post-1994 Cessna *Skyhawk* whose tail number ends with the letters "ES"—Echo Sierra. There are 100 airplanes bearing those initials, because Cessna chose that very appropriate way of honoring Ed Stimpson, the man who spearheaded passage of the landmark General Aviation Revitalization Act of 1994 (GARA) during his 25-year tenure as president of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA).

Whether or not you were flying at that time, Ed Stimpson and GARA affected your aviation life. Passage of this legislation paved the way for Cessna

and other manufacturers to restart production of small general aviation aircraft. It also opened the door for

new companies, such as Cirrus and Diamond, to introduce "clean-sheet" designs that incorporate the kind of human factors elements and technologies discussed in this issue. It is thus especially fitting to pay tribute here to Ed, who recently passed away after a courageous battle with cancer.

### A Class Act

There is no segment of aviation that Ed, a private pilot, didn't touch in his achievement-filled lifetime. While working in the State Department's international aviation policy office, I was privileged to meet Ed at GAMA in the early 1990s. I no longer remember the issue that took me to his office, but I will never forget how he lit up with enthusiastic encouragement when he learned that I was a newly-certificated pilot. Anyone who loved aviation found an instant friend and supporter in Ed Stimpson and, no matter how pressing our official business, he never failed to ask about my flying. I remember thinking how appropriate it was for Ed to be named chairman of Be A Pilot when he retired from GAMA in 1996.

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### A Natural Diplomat

Our paths crossed again in 1999, when then-President Clinton appointed Ed to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal. Still at State, I had the pleasure of working with him on a near-daily basis. Though not a "professional" diplomat, Ed's bonhomie and gift of gab made him a natural. I don't think there was anyone in ICAO who didn't know and love Ed, and he returned the favor. I was always amazed by how he could greet everyone we passed by name. That personal touch—his special gift—made him effective not only in Washington, but also on the international stage. On September 11, 2001, I was on the phone with Ed when we both learned of the terrorist attacks. His knowledge, experience, and steadiness were key to navigating the turbulent times following that terrible day.

### An Aviation Citizen and Statesman

Ed eventually retired from his ICAO post and went home to Idaho, but he never retired from aviation. He chaired the Flight Safety Foundation and served on the board of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and, most recently, on a DOT-appointed Independent Review Team to evaluate the effectiveness of FAA's safety oversight.

Although cancer cruelly robbed Ed's family and extended aviation family of his energy, enthusiasm, and unparalleled effectiveness, the legacy of Echo Sierra lives on—and flies proudly on the empennage of 100 "extra special" *Skyhawks*.

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