



History

The History of the Grey Eagles, American Airlines, & APA

The Inception of The Grey Eagles

In the spring of 1962, the President of the Kiwis, Boots Johnston Hogate, invited all retired pilots of American Airlines to visit the Kiwi National Convention on May 10, 11 and 12 at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City. Twelve retired pilots accepted the invitation. They were Willis Heath Proctor, James H. Burns, Joe B. Glass, E. M. "Kit" Carson, Duncan McCullum, Sam R. Ross, Victor J. Miller, Howard B. Cox, Howard H. West, Edward Carmack Bowe, Robert J. Rentz and Ernest A. Cutrell. Being impressed with the strong feeling of fellowship and camaraderie among the Kiwis, the pilots felt a spark igniting their own smoldering desires of six years for an association where they, too, could continue and meld their strong friendships over the future years. These twelve pilots met at the American Airlines General Office Executive Conference Room in New York City on May 11, 1962, at 10:00 AM. They met again at 9:00 AM on May 12, 1962. During these all-day meetings, they adopted a name and a set of bylaws, and thus: THE GREY EAGLES organization was born.

Originally compiled by: Cecil M. Hefner with the help of many Grey Eagle members. Minor changes by Grey Eagle Historian, Joe Sellers, thru Flagship News articles and other media 04/04/2022.

[A List of All Grey Eagle Presidents](#)

[Grey Eagle Presidents](#)

[This pdf file contains an early history APA by J. R. Lyons.](#)

[History of APA](#)

[Link to the History of American Airlines](#)

[Making The World's Largest Airline: The History Of American Airlines](#)

[Another Link to the History of American Airlines](#)

[American Airlines History: Founding, Timeline, and Milestones](#)

[The story of airline unions up to deregulation.](#)

[Flying the Line](#)

[Vintage AA videos beginning in the 1930s. Very fun to watch!](#)

[Video Page](#)



Ernest A. Cutrell Grey Eagles Member of the Month for July

Each month we will feature a new Member of the Month for the Grey Eagles.

Ernest A. Cutrell

Back in 1920, there were no medivac rescues or hospital helicopters to get to emergencies faster. But it is thought that Plainfield's own Dr. Ernest Cooper was the first physician to make a professional call by way of an airplane, thanks to the popular, dashing aviator, Ernest A. Cutrell. Having received a call to see a sick child in Clayton, Indiana, Dr. Cooper called Cutrell and was able to make the trip to Clayton in nine minutes. "It's great dope," said the doctor.

Ernest Cutrell was born in Tippecanoe County, Indiana, in 1896, grew up in Guilford Township, and graduated from Central Academy. From 1919 to 1922, he was a "barnstormer" in Plainfield, offering rides (for \$1 a minute) and shows around the area. By 1936, he was a captain for American Airlines. In 1942, he was granted a leave of absence from American to join the Air Transport Command (ATC). Initially ranked as a first lieutenant, Cutrell was promoted to lieutenant-colonel by 1944, when he was made commanding officer of the Navigation and Landing Aids unit.

Col. Cutrell's enduring legacy is his work in the development of instrument landing systems, making difficult landings in bad weather less dangerous. He received numerous awards for his contributions, including the Octave Chanute Award of the Institute of Aeronautical Science, the Legion of Merit Medal, and the Air Medal from the military for "meritorious achievement as a pilot of exceptional professional initiative, courage and skill."

On March 15, 1960, Capts. Rentz, Cutrell, and Burns were forced into retirement when the new Federal Regulation mandating age 60 Retirement became effective. Capt. Cutrell continued to fly for many years afterward. He qualified on B-52s and KC-135 tankers at Castle Air Force Base, Calif., in a transition course for Air Force Reserve officers—a testament to the fact that some pilots can indeed fly beyond age 60, including flying jets. He was 64 years old at the time.

Ernest A. Cutrell was one of the twelve American Airlines pilots who helped found The Grey Eagles in 1962. He was unable to make the photo that was taken of the other eleven pilots at the American Airlines General Office, Executive Conference Room, in New York City to commemorate the event. He was also a mentor to a young Ernest K. Gann, who paid homage to him in *Fate is the Hunter*, Gann's classic 1961 book about his own experiences as an airline pilot.

Captain Ernest A. Cutrell, the subject of many national news articles, including in the Saturday Evening Post, died in 1985.

1957 First Air Safety Award
E. A. "Ernie" Cutrell American

Helped develop standards for centerline approach light system, which was adopted as a national standard.

Capt. Cutrell was a pioneer in instrument flying and blind-landing experiments. In 1946, he was presented the Chanute Flight Test Award for his contribution to aerospace sciences, an honor given to Howard Hughes just a few years earlier. In 1957, Capt. Cutrell became the first recipient of the ALPA Air Safety Award for his work on runway approach lighting. He was also a mentor to a young Ernest K. Gann, who paid homage to him in *Fate is the Hunter*, Gann's classic 1961 book about his own experiences as an airline pilot.



E. A. CUTRELL



Ernest around 1917-18 in his World War I Army Signal Corps uniform