

# THIS GUY'S THE LIMIT™

## TOM HOPPE

Tom Hoppe was born in Minnesota, lived here and there, but mostly grew up in New York's Spanish Harlem tenements until an "urban renewal" dislocation caused his family to move into the heart of the Bronx. His mom, Ethel, was a cosmetician while stepfather Bob was in show-business performing in Broadway musicals. That is, until the realities of family life required that he get a "real job" in the insurance business. After spending two uninspired years at Fordham University, Tom jumped at the opportunity to see the world and escape the grind of urban life by becoming an Aviation Cadet and a United States Marine. It was 1960.

Tom entered flight training at Whiting Field in Milton, Florida and soloed the Navy's primary trainer, the T-34 followed by the more complex T-28 and earned his instrument rating in the Twin Beech C-45. While in the U.S.M.C. Tom was involved in what he calls "vertical envelopment" (read helicopters). He flew Model H-34, the Corps' mainstay, in which he logged in excess of 2500 hours.

Tom left the Marines in '65 and went to work flying choppers for Air America. For the next two years, Tom flew the mountains and jungles of Laos. He picked up downed Airmen and flew men and equipment in and out of

some of the most treacherous terrain in South East Asia. Ask Tom about "The Rats at Site 36". It wasn't the rats, it was an auto rotation into a rice patty that had Tom think that life might be "less exciting" state side. Within months Tom Hoppe was flying for TWA.

Tom flew the Convair 880, the 727, the L1011 and the MD 880, a ship he casually refers to as the "Douglas Death Tube". In total, Tom spent 33 years with TWA, and retired in the Spring of 2000 having logged more than 20,000 hours.

Tom and his wife of 29 years, Dinah, have two children, Chris 28 and Cindy 24. The Hoppe's have made their home in Woodstock since 1976. The yellow "Sub-Sonic Tropo Cruiser" Tom purchased after retirement is actually N216AC an American Champion Aurora. Tom Hoppe is one of the fascinating people who contribute to the character of Galt Airport.

**ONE  
ZERO  
CHARLIE**

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