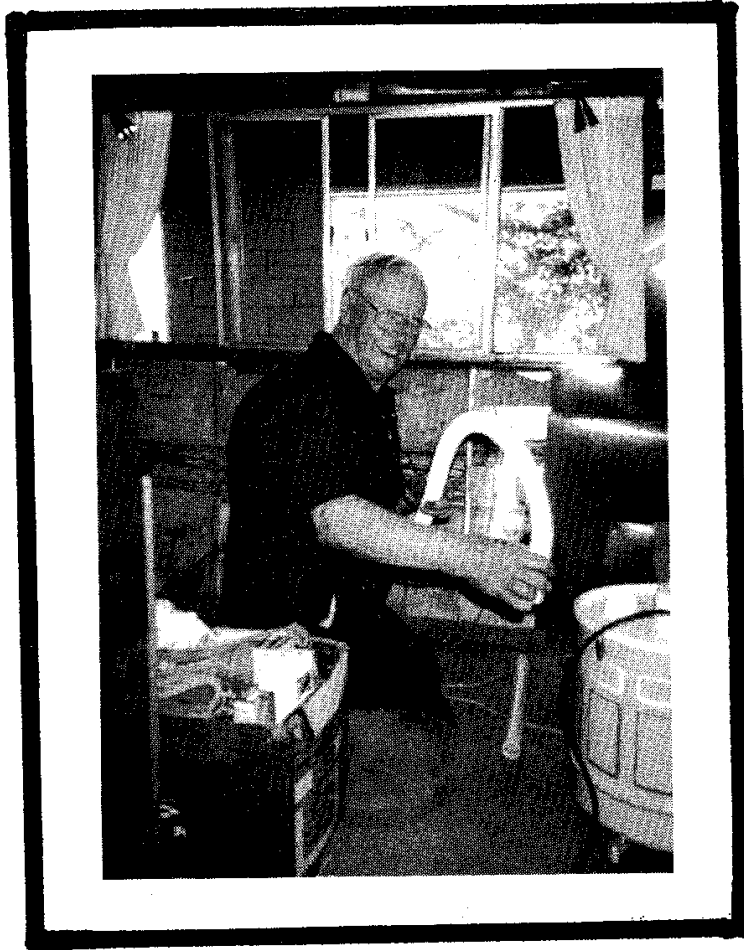


In Memory of Mr. L. D. Ryerson



It is with deep remorse that I report the passing of a very good friend and friend of us all, Mr. L. D. Ryerson, or Len, as most of us knew him. It was on 0845 on the morning of April 20, 1994 that he passed on in the presence of his wife Edy, and other family members and friends.

Talking with him the day before, he indicated he was comfortable with God's wishes, and I know he went easy. We shall surely miss his interesting story telling and his humor that he saw in so many things. He and Edy have been extra compassionate to Marlene and me, and we will be forever grateful. Thank you again, Len & Edy.

Len, as we all know, was a dedicated technical person regarding anything about the Ultra Van since he purchased their first Ultra Van from Hutchinson, Kansas. The Ryerson Ultra manual is a case in point. If you have seen the manual and read through it and comprehend the drawings, you know what I mean. He and Edy spent three years of their lives working on it. What dedication that was!

The small group of us that knew Len well are amazed at the many things he accomplished during his lifetime. The following are ones of main interest:

He was born December 10, 1910 at Spencer, Nebraska. His mother, who lived in Canada at that time was visiting relatives in Nebraska at the time of his birth. He grew up in Carbon, Alberta, Canada. At a young age he moved to Vancouver, British Columbia with his family. In September of 1934 he left Vancouver to visit relatives in Norfolk, Nebraska--driving his Model T Ford, with \$42 in his pocket.

After awhile he opened his own auto repair shop, and did very well, for the times. His business prospered by his hard work and fair dealings with his customers. Between this time and 1940 he was a shop foreman for a Ford service garage. While there he gained experience supervising men that would be beneficial later. He maintained the shop in a spotless manner. Each mechanic had to maintain a clean and spotless work area, or he was sent on his way.

Answering an advertisement regarding a job as an aircraft mechanic at Ryan Aeronautical Co., in San Diego, California, he departed Nebraska for the beginning of a long career in the aviation field. He wanted so desperately to get into aviation that he accepted the Ryan job at what he thought was the lowest of offers; but when he arrived he was informed that his manhour rate was about three times what he was expecting. He was on cloud nine. Again after showing the bosses that he was a hard worker and dedicated to the task at hand, he was put in charge of the engine build shop over older, more experienced employees.

The next opportunity for a better job came in early 1942. "Consairway" was a cargo hauling line operating out of Lindberg Field, San Diego. There again, after several months on the job, the bosses recognized the leader capabilities in Len, so they offered him the job of Maintenance Supervisor. With eighteen aircraft to maintain, service, and keep in the air it was a formidable job. A record was set under his supervision by his department getting all eighteen aircraft flying on assignment at one time. The record stood in the commercial air cargo field for several years. Well, by now you can get the feeling of how Len was driven by his desire to excel in anything that he did.

He and Edy were married August 2, 1941 after a courtship in the San Diego area. During this time he had his own airplane, a Ryan PT 21, which he flew up and down the California coast. An abrupt meeting with the metal prop one day slowed down his flying the PT 21, and soon it was sold.

A new aircraft maintenance job was taken with the "Air Transport Command", located at Fairfield, California. This was a military contract service that lasted for the duration of WW 2. More experience was gained here in how to operate with the military, and the politics of the job. Many trips to Washington, D. C. to iron out difficulties and contract for money & etc. kept him very busy.

"Flying Tiger Lines" was the next job assignment as Maintenance Superintendent. Here he set up a complete maintenance program and wrote a manual to implement it. Many friends were made here that would be beneficial in later years.

"Pacific Overseas Airline" was the next task, again as Maintenance Department head. Here he wrote up a new maintenance manual that was implemented; however, shortly after this the airline was dissolved.

The time had arrived now to make a decision: work for another aircraft company, or start his own business? With \$7500 & a partner, he and Edy opened "Mainten-aire" in North Hollywood, California in May, 1951. Their business was to overhaul & service aircraft accessories, such as hydraulic pumps, fuel pumps, generators, actuators, landing gear struts, cylinders, and many more items. At one time over 6400 different items were being processed through their shop.

I never had the pleasure of visiting their shop until after it was closed; but, from the photos I have seen and stories Len told of it, you could eat off of the floors and work benches. It was evident that this shop was his most cherished accomplishment. After twenty two years of operating the shop, very successfully, I might add, they decided to close it down and retire. When their customers were advised that they would be closing as of a certain date they begged them to carry on; but it was time for them now.

They had purchased their first Ultra Van in 1968, and they were now ready to travel. During later work years before retiring they were both active in scuba diving, square dancing, and camping with their two sons Lance and Lenny.

I think Len will be remembered by most of the Ultra members as someone who appeared very serious, but ready to help anyone with a problem. His heart was as big as he was. We all shall miss him very much.

One of our Ultra members called me recently and said that if there was any one of us that could be called "Mr. Ultra Van" in regard to Ultra technical matters, it would be Len. I'm sure we all agree.

Edy wants to stay active with the Club, so we will see her soon.  
Till Later, Pardner

Jim Craig