



# FAM14

A PUBLICATION OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY

## LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

SPRING 2026

Welcome to this spring edition of our FAM14. I am happy to report that the Aeronautical Society is thriving! Our Board and members are passionate about supporting the Louis A. Turpen Aviation Museum and its growing collection. Lou would be thrilled with the Society's growth and success.

It is because of our generous supporters that we are able to deliver our vision, and for that we want to say thank you. We are in a strong financial position which allows us to deliver our mission to significantly increase the knowledge and appreciation of aviation history through acquisitions, educational lectures, and seminars. Another Society activity supporting our mission is to honor an aviation leader with the Achievement in Aviation Award, so I am thrilled to announce that the 2026 recipient will be David Cush. In addition to other airline roles, David served as Virgin America President and CEO from 2007-2016, an exciting period in aviation as well as SFO's history. David's dedication and efforts have impacted global aviation for decades.

Regarding past and future acquisitions, we continue to support the digitization of the historic Pan Am Film Archives which will be held by the Museum. In addition, we are working with the team to identify other purchases for the SFO Museum collection which we can support. In the last year, the Aeronautical Society provided funds for the commissioning of a Model Boeing 40A 33" wingspan aircraft and a model of the 1937 SFO Terminal Building. We will provide more details once they are received including updates on how the SFO Museum plans to include them in next year's Centennial exhibitions.

And speaking of the Centennial, we're just starting work to prepare for a very special event on the Airport's 100th anniversary. Stay tuned!

In closing, I would like to thank you for your support in preserving the history of aviation through the SFO Museum program.

**John L. Martin**, President, SFAS

## 2025 SFAS GALA: A FUNDRAISING YEAR UNLIKE ANY OTHER!

The 2025 Gala not only celebrated a remarkable milestone, 25 years of the San Francisco Aviation Museum at SFO, but also, one of the best fund-raising years. Since opening its doors, the Museum has served as a vibrant center for preserving and sharing the rich history of aviation in the Bay Area and beyond. Through exhibitions, educational programs, and community engagement, the Museum has inspired generations to explore the world of flight.

The sold-out crowd listened with excitement to the Society Board President, John Martin, who talked about the program, which included honoring



Continued on pg 2

## LAUGHTER AT THE MUSEUM!

On April 9th, the San Francisco Aeronautical Society hosted Movie Night at the SFO Aviation Museum. Nearly 100 attendees laughed their way through *Airplane!*, a 1980 comedy. From the opening credits, throughout the movie, to the closing credits, hilarity filled the Museum. *Airplane!* has long been recognized as one of the funniest movies ever made ... and, movie attendees wholeheartedly agreed. Attendees were treated to complimentary wine, non-alcoholic beverages, popcorn and candy before the start of the movie. Guests were still smiling as they left the Museum and wanted to know when the Society would host another Movie Night. The great news is that planning has already begun for another Movie Night in the Fall. Stay tuned!



## 2025 SFAS GALA (continued)

Angela Gittens with the 2025 Achievement in Aviation Award, a presentation by Jennifer McCabe, Director of Airport Museums, highlighting the Aviation Museum's evolution over the past quarter-century and its future plans. Airport Director Mike Nakornkhet took the stage and reminded all that the International Terminal was "developed as part of an overall plan to grow SFO into a world-class international airport." This remains something they are focused on through today, with the iconic International Terminal remaining one of the top gateways to the world.



Mike Nakornkhet



With excitement rising for SFO's centennial next year, the Gala's participants' and Society Members' energy is stronger than ever. From powerful conversations to extraordinary support, 2025 showed what happens when passion, purpose, and community come together. The San Francisco Aeronautical Society is not just soaring — it's climbing to new heights with every event, every partnership, and every inspiring story shared along the way.

If you are interested in becoming a member, donating or getting involved at the next event, please click here: <https://sfaero.org/join-give/how-to-donate/>

## ANGELA GITTENS HONORED WITH 2025 SFAS ACHIEVEMENT IN AVIATION AWARD

The Society's 2025 Annual Achievement in Aviation Award celebrated Angela Gittens' lifetime of leadership, mentorship, and trailblazing achievements in airport management. When Angela stepped onto the stage, the applause wasn't just for her extraordinary career — it was for her homecoming, to the very airport where it all began.

"Angela began her aviation career at SFO in 1983 and went on to lead two major U.S. airports and serve as Director General of Airports Council International," said John L. Martin, President of the Aeronautical Society Board. "Her leadership helped shape the future of global air travel, with lasting impact on safety, service, and professional development across the industry."

She dedicated the honor to her mentor and the Museum's namesake, Louis A. Turpen, who "brought me into this dazzling business of aviation and mentored me into positions and success beyond my tenure at SFO."

From her start at SFO to leading airports in Atlanta and Miami, and then guiding Airports Council International, Gittens' impact has stretched across continents. "It takes every sector within the aviation ecosystem to get results," she said. "People dedicated to ensuring that

*the world's communities reap the benefits that aviation brings."*

To close her speech, Gittens turned personal. "My parents instilled in me a strong sense of integrity — work hard, do a good job, and be kind," she said. Now aged 107 and 108, and recently recognized by Guinness World Records as the longest-married couple in the world, she smiled and added, "Doesn't hurt to have good genes!"



John Martin and Angela Gittens

Martin summed up what many in the room felt. "Angela embodies the very best of what this award represents," he said. "Her career reflects not only professional excellence, but the courage, generosity, and mentorship that lifts others. She's an inspiration to all of us — and especially here at SFO, where her journey first took flight."

Congratulations, Angela Gittens!



## COURAGE, CONVERSATION & COMMUNITY

The San Francisco Aeronautical Society wrapped up the year on a high note; with powerful conversations and inspiring leadership at the packed Courageous Conversations event featuring Angela Gittens. Courageous Conversations are ongoing discussions hosted by SFO. Introduced by Airport Director Mike Nakornkhet and joined by COO Jeff Littlefield, Angela walked the audience through her remarkable journey: from criminology classes to San Francisco General, to being hired by Louis Turpen at SFO, and eventually rising to lead some of the world's busiest airports.

Her career wasn't a straight line — and that was exactly her point. "There's great value in mentoring — in having someone push you to try things," she said. "My philosophy is, 'What's the worst that can happen?' Every challenge is a learning opportunity."

On leading Atlanta-Hartsfield Airport through the Olympics, she shared one of her core leadership strategies: "You learn by listening. The line workers know everything going on in the airport."

As Society Board member Jean Caramatti said, "Angela was incredibly



Jeff Littlefield, Angela Gittens, Susan Kim

engaging — you could hear a pin drop," and Eric Starks, another Society Board member, added, "Her insight on communication and engaging with people was incredibly useful."

As part of the overall Society mission to advance the knowledge and appreciation of aviation, there will be more community events in the coming year.

## CONSTANTLY ENRICHING SFO MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

SFO Museum's Aviation Collection continues to grow at a remarkable pace, with approximately 15,000 objects added between 2025 and 2026 across 150 accession groups—far exceeding the typical annual intake of 4,000 objects. The majority of our acquisitions (about 85%) come through donations, complemented by 10% transfers from Airport and City departments, and 5% purchases.

Among the most significant recent additions is the ongoing gift from Seattle-based collector and former airline captain Jon Simmonds, whose contributions now include more than 150 high-quality airline posters dating from the 1920s to the 1960s. The Museum also acquired over 700 first- and business-class amenity kits from the 1990s–2010s through the John Spear collection, as well as more than 8,000 objects from the Robert Behr airline history collection, encompassing passenger amenities, advertising, photographs, and ephemera from the 1930s onward. Our own strategic purchases have further strengthened the collection, including the Mario Zamparelli design



Trans World Airlines (TWA) advertisement mockup circa 1960

files—featuring original artwork and mock-ups for TWA and Hughes AirWest from the 1960s–1970s—and a group of photographs and documents related to Pan American Airways executive Richard Barkle. Looking ahead, the Museum has begun receiving and organizing the first digitized assets from the Pan Am Historical Foundation Film Archive, with select footage already identified for use in upcoming exhibitions. Additionally, the Museum is developing a proposal to acquire a substantial portion of the late Dr. Charles Quarles' airline history collection, an exceptional and comprehensive archive with particular strength in mid-century aviation material culture.

And finally, in preparation for SFO's 100th anniversary in 2027, the Collections team is also actively gathering materials through internal transfers from departments such as AirTrain, Marketing Communications, and Airfield Lighting.

We look forward to welcoming you at the SFO Museum and exploring the other terminal displays as well. For more information about all of our current and future collections, please visit our website: <https://www.sfomuseum.org/>

Jennifer McCabe  
Director and Chief Curator | SFO Museum



Western Air Lines poster, circa 1950



## SAVE THE DATE

This year's SFAS Gala and Fundraiser will be held on **Thursday, November 5, 2026**. It will be a special evening as the Society honors David Cush, the 2026 Achievement in Aviation recipient. David has dedicated the majority of his career to aviation including CEO of Virgin America. His strong corporate culture and inclusive teamwork has made him the global leader he is today. We hope you will join us for this wonderful evening and opportunity to support the Society's important work in celebration of aviation history. [www.sfaero.org](http://www.sfaero.org)



# FAM14

A PUBLICATION OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY

**FAM14** is the abbreviation for the world's first transoceanic Foreign Air Mail route, which originated in San Francisco and linked the East and West by air. The **FAM14** masthead photograph, on page one, was taken by Clyde Sunderland and shows the Pan American Airways' *China Clipper* over the city of San Francisco on November 22, 1935, departing on the first trans-Pacific commercial flight to Manila, Courtesy of Pacific Aerial Surveys.

The San Francisco Airport Commission Aviation Library and Louis A. Turpen Aviation Museum is located at San Francisco International Airport, International Terminal, Pre-Security, Level 3. It is open daily from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, closed holidays and for private events. The telephone number is (650) 821-9900. For additional information and to learn about volunteer opportunities, please contact the SFO Museum at (650) 821-6700, or email [curator@flysfo.com](mailto:curator@flysfo.com) or visit [www.sfomuseum.org](http://www.sfomuseum.org).

**SFO MUSEUM**

**CONTACT!** For Society general inquiries about membership, donations and other programs please visit our website or contact us at:

**SAN FRANCISCO AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY**  
P.O. Box 250250, San Francisco, CA 94125-0250  
**T: 650.821.6720 | F: 650.821.6721**  
**[info@sfaero.org](mailto:info@sfaero.org) | [www.sfaero.org](http://www.sfaero.org)**



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### San Francisco Aeronautical Society

*President:* John L. Martin; *Vice President,* Ed Barnes; *Treasurer,* Ken Johnson; *Directors:* Jean Caramatti, Angela Gittens, Catherine Mayer, Ivar Satero, Eric Starks, Ken Turpen, Chris Zwingle.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY GALA**  
**Thu, Nov 5, 2026**  
For further information,  
please contact:  
[winslowevents.com](http://winslowevents.com)

**SAN FRANCISCO AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY**  
P.O. Box 250250  
San Francisco, CA 94125-0250

