

CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I have been requested to document my remembrance of an aeronautical milestone accomplished by 1st Lt. Coman W. Rothrock, Jr., O-793381. This historical event was a blind landing under actual zero-zero weather conditions using a B-17 G with a coupled autopilot at Pinecastle Army Air Field, Pinecastle, Florida, during the period of mid October 1944 through January 1945.

During that period, 1st Lt. Rothrock, Jr., made a series of test flights using a B-17 G aircraft with a coupled electronic autopilot, the mission objective of which was to develop techniques for use of such equipment for low visibility landings. Lt. Rothrock was the Project Officer and Test Pilot for that program.

Although I did not personally fly on this mission with Lt. Rothrock, I was aware of his intention to attempt such a feat if all other factors would allow. He did this as a planned and a calculated mission, with full intent to make a full-stop landing under absolute zero-zero weather conditions, not as an accidental result of other factors. I firmly believe this was the first instance in aviation for a full-stop landing to have been made under actual zero-zero weather conditions by an aircraft of any type using an autopilot for primary attitude control of the aircraft.

I do not remember the exact date when this was accomplished, only that it took place during the time frame I have indicated. No notice other than local recognition resulted, due to the fact that a preponderance of our flights and test results had some level of classification attached.

Other individuals who had knowledge of this feat included Captain Ed Neff, Squadron Test & Development Officer, and Lt. Colonel Earl Tash (deceased), previous Squadron Commander and Test Director on the Air Forces Board of AFTAC, and the members of the airplane crew whom I do not remember specifically.

This historic flight was made at Pinecastle Army Air Field, Florida by Lt. Rothrock and his crew flying a B-17 G from Squadron "H" 903rd AAF-BU (Bomb Heavy) reporting to the Air Force's Board at the Air Force's Tactical Center (AFTAC) at Orlando, Florida.

I certify the above to be true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

*Thomas R. Waddleton*  
Subscribed and sworn to before me this

22nd day of March, 1988.

Notary Public in and for the State

of Washington, residing in Redmond

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES:

Feb. 26, 1988

*Thomas R. Waddleton*  
THOMAS R. WADDLETON  
Colonel, USAF (Ret)  
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