

Charlie Erskine: A Maine Man!

Charles Samuel Erskine was born in North Newcastle, Maine, on June 16, 1901. He was the eldest in a family of four, two boys and two girls. He went to Cony High School in Augusta, and he worked for a short time as a conductor on Central Maine Railroad. He was married during that time to Elvina Thompson of Waterville, and they had their first daughter, Elaine Erskine (Dow).

Two years after the birth of their first child, Charlie, as he was known, went to work at the Wyman Dam as a steam shovel operator, and during his several years living in Bingham, he and Elvina had a second child. He had wanted a boy and was going to call him Patrick, so when it turned out to be another daughter, she was named Patricia. He scribbled a “penny post card” – now in the family scrapbook – to his parents which reads: “Wyman Dam, June 12. Dear Ma & Dad, My luck still bad. Baby girl this p.m. 4:30. All well and doing fine. Will see you soon, Love to all, Charlie.”

Since his coveted son never arrived, Patricia became Pat the tomboy who tried hard to replace the son Charlie had wanted. She went to work with him when the family joined him during school vacations at one construction job or another around the world.

When he worked for Centriline Corporation lining water mains under the streets of big cities, Pat went underground to manage the second camera flash so he could get pictures of the beautifully smooth concrete pipe lining. As he met every challenge in his life, Charlie Erskine expected the very best from himself and those around him.

Charles took Pat flying with him when he bought his Cessna 150 and later his 172. As she moved toward her teenage years, he got a special pillow to push her forward in the right seat, and he made attachable blocks for the plane's pedals so she could reach them. He taught her how to handle the controls, and then on every flight he had her "take the wheel for a minute" while he checked a map or his logbook ... all the time carefully monitoring every move she made and every instrument in the cockpit. When she was in her twenties, Pat earned her pilot's license, and how he laughed when *she* took *him* for a ride when he visited her in California.

Although the Wyman Dam was Charlie Erskine's first construction job, he knew he wanted to stay in the that field, and he went to work for Sanders Engineering Company "... as Steam Shovel Operator for the construction of La Regadera Dam in Columbia, South

America. “During the years that followed, he steadily climbed the crew – he called it “team” – ladder to become superintendent.

Through his years in construction, Charlie went to work for Mowlem-Centriline (later Centriline Corporation), then Raymond Intrernational. He came home from England for his daughters’ Colby College graduation, from Arabia for Pat’s Salem, Massachusetts, wedding, and from Aden to California for a weekend to meet his namesake grandson, Charles Erskine Howlett. (For those who haven’t had to study geography to keep up with, “Where’s Daddy?” Aden is off the Arabian Sea near Yemen, Oman and Ethiopia.)

Throughout his life, Charlie Erskine maintained his hobby of taking and developing pictures of all things important to him. The albums of photographs of his crewmembers, special events, job challenges and memories provide a family history that starts with his first camera when he was a shovel operator at Wyman Dam.

His descendents treasure his photograph albums and the role that dam played in launching his construction career and our fascinating, challenging lives.