

Electrical design engineer and aircraft radio officer **Ralph Armstrong Conly** died on May 28, 2010, in Sunnyvale, Calif., from complications of a stroke. He was 92. Ralph was born Feb. 17, 1918, in St. Johnsbury, Vt., to John and Edna (Armstrong) Conly. He lived in the Bay Area for the past 62 years, moving to Sunnyvale in 1955. After graduating from St. Johnsbury Academy in 1936, Ralph attended Massachusetts Radio School in Boston, receiving his 1st Class Broadcasting license and 2nd Class Radio telegraph license. He began his career in radio engineering at WQDM, St. Albans, Vt., where he worked from 1937 to 1940 as transmitter engineer. He continued his electronics career as a flight radio operator/officer (FRO) with Pan American Airways, a pioneer in civilian international aviation. Between 1940 and 1950, he crewed on almost all of Pan Am's routes over both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in aircraft that included the airlines' famous "Clipper" flying boats. He started at Pan Am's home base at Dinner Key, Coconut Grove, FL, in 1940, and flew all over the world, including Pan Am's Caribbean & South American routes as far as Rio de Janeiro, trips to Paris, Frankfurt, and Vienna, and routes to India, Brazil, Casablanca, Cairo, Calcutta, Australia and many more exotic locations. During World War II, Ralph flew with Pan Am's Africa-Orient Division, operating the on-board radio communications for the "Cannonball," the world's fastest air passenger and cargo transportation plane at the time. The operation transported soldiers and helped supply much-needed provisions and equipment to Allied troops in India, Burma and China via Brazil and Africa, under contract with Air Transport Command of the U.S. military. (In January 1994, after years of intense advocacy work led by a retired PAA flight engineer on behalf of the men of PAA-Africa, Ralph received his Honorable Discharge certificate from the Air Force for his contributions to the American war effort. As a former member of the Pan American Airways ATC group, he was awarded the World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, and the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal.) In 1951, Ralph entered the field of electronics research and design, joining magnetic-recording pioneer Ampex Corporation in Redwood City, Calif., where he remained the rest of his career. Ralph is survived by his wife Elsie Conly; brother Donald Conly; sisters Dorothy (Dot) Cutting and Eleanor Gonyaw; son Chris Conly; daughters Kathy DeMattei and Meg Dondero; grandchildren David, Gaddiel, Jehiah and Dan DeMattei, Justin Dondero, John Conly, Elizabeth Jones and Mishal-Ann Conly; two great-grandchildren; many nieces, nephews, cousins and in-laws. He was predeceased by his parents and siblings Raymond, George and Ruth Conly, and Marion Stanyon. At his request, no formal services will be held; however, there will be a casual gathering for family and friends, to celebrate Ralph's life, at a later date. (Contact Ralph's daughter, Meg Dondero [nutmeg@myfam.com] for details.) In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in his name to The Pan Am Historical Foundation or The Autism Society.