



HOOFBEATS

Southern Comfort Gaited Horse Club

Thank You from Liane Kerting-Vick

Dear Club Members,

Finally, I am able to communicate with the world again. We are finally up and running with WIFI. This was a challenging move only from the standpoint of dealing with the movers. Everything went well before they showed up, unprepared and understaffed, claiming that it was difficult to meet deadlines and get laborers. I don't want to even go into what occurred when they showed up in AZ; however, understaffed again.

Shortly after we arrived, Richard and I came down with covid, the Omicron variety, we were told, so we luckily were candidates for the monoclonal antibody infusion. We are both well recovered and we are thankful that this episode in our life is over. Meanwhile, we live in box city, still looking for all the parts that make a home, a home and function.

We love the house. We found a unique, Spanish Mission style home that checked most of the boxes we were looking for. I am very thankful for the extensive pipe fencing. We will be building some sort of barn for the horses in the near future. There are AZ State lands available to ride in behind our property. People raise all sorts of animals and fowl here. The weather is comparable to the Treasure Valley's, but I see we were even cooler than you have been recently. During the current monsoon season, we cool off in the afternoon and early evenings.

The main reason for moving here was Richard's health and he is benefiting from the warm temps. The other reason was the high maintenance of the Caldwell property which kept us so busy that we could not find enough time for recreation. I don't have anything to mow but the tractor will take care of most of the unwanted weeds.

Primarily, I wanted to explain to you the reason I had to cut back my participation in the club. If we weren't maintaining the property, we were packing and cleaning out. Still, with all we did, it was still a lot to move.

I so enjoyed our club activities and will MISS YOU ALL! I have so many good memories, and I learned a lot with the club's clinics, drill exhibitions and enjoyed our trail rides. I hope the club continues on, and I hope you will keep posting on FB so that I can keep up with your activities.

Happy Trails and Best Wishes to all of you and those people who I got to know personally during our time together! Much love to all of you,

Liane

Club website:
Membership forms,
previous
newsletters, articles
of interest and lots
of photos, plus a
fuller calendar are
all on our website:
www.gaitedhorseclub.com

Facebook:
PUBLIC group
page: Search for
"Southern Comfort
Gaited Horse Club"
and ask to join.
Club members, and
non-members can
post. This is a
nationwide page.

We also have a
PRIVATE page for
members only;
[contact me to be
added.](#)

Lifelight Insurance:
Group sign up is
done in June to get
a group discount of
\$10 off the typical
\$75/disk/year cost.

Sikorsky's Only Female Test Pilot

Melissa Mathiasen is a Sikorsky pilot. Her dream to fly began at age four when a helicopter landed near her home. "I still remember that helicopter crew, all wearing green Army flight suits," Melissa said. "They let me get inside the aircraft, sat me in the front seat, and put a helmet on my head. I never forgot that experience and it forged in me the desire to become an Army helicopter pilot."



Melissa joined Sikorsky in 2008 and is assigned to the Sikorsky Flight Operations Department, serving as Chief Pilot, Proposals and Contracts, as well as being a production test pilot for the S-92®, S-76® and UH-60M/S-70i. She spends half her time developing pilot support estimates for new business pursuits and the other half testing aircraft, assisting with aircraft deliveries and conducting customer pilot flight training. "I stay pretty busy," she said.

What Does a Test Pilot Do? The Sikorsky Flight Operations Department has dozens of pilots and flight operations experts. The pilots group provides experimental, engineering and production flight testing, as well as pilot training and aircraft delivery support to customers. All the test pilots are qualified in multiple models of aircraft. They generally have more one-on-one contact time with customers than most other departments, since they work with customers during aircraft delivery and flight training.

Flight Path Melissa's path to Sikorsky began at the University of Colorado, Boulder, where she graduated the number one cadet in her Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). Next, she spent 20 years on active duty with the U.S. Army, logging thousands of hours piloting Sikorsky-built Black Hawk® helicopters in conflicts, in disaster response and counter narcotic operations all over the world. After retiring as a lieutenant colonel from the Army, Melissa worked eight years as an S-76 helicopter pilot for an offshore oil and production company, providing transportation to and from oil platforms.

Base camp in Bosnia —>



Being the only female test pilot at Sikorsky isn't something Melissa thinks much about. "I've never felt like an outsider or different," she said. "I've been treated so well at Sikorsky and appreciate the Flight Office, other pilots and my leadership. It's a thriving environment. Everybody works together and respects each other. From day one, all the pilots and flight operations staff made me feel welcome and a part of this team. I'm not

the pioneer here. There have been three other lady pilots in the Flight Office at Sikorsky” Melissa added. “I just happen to be the only female pilot at this time.”

Flying the S-76A for
offshore oil support —>



Giving Back and Paying Forward

“One of the best things about my job is getting to work with kids and share my passion for flying,” Melissa said. “And the most amazing opportunity I have ever experienced was as an aircrew member for the S-92 Legacy of Heroes (LOH) World Tour. It was a six-month tour flying our Search and Rescue (SAR) configured S-92, traveling through Southeast Asia and India.”



The purpose of the tour was to pay tribute to Igor Sikorsky’s vision of building an aircraft that could save lives. At each tour stop, the Sikorsky team would celebrate heroes, highlighting their courageous and selfless acts. This included first responders, military and civilians who had braved extreme circumstances, natural disasters and vehicle accidents and saved many lives.

“It was a humbling experience and such an honor to heroes,” Melissa said. “We were able to work with non-governmental organizations and local military units to schedule ceremonies and S-92 demonstration flights. These flights increased our appreciation of how many of our heroes had used helicopters in their rescue efforts and allowed us to showcase the significant advantages the SAR-equipped S-92 can provide.

“In India, several young girls got to go on a flight, and one little girl asked us if we were flying them to heaven. I’ll never forget that child and her look of awe and wonderment. It really impacted us (the aircrew) as we reflected on the privileges and opportunities we have in our own lives.”

Melissa’s career advice to students? “Be open to opportunities. You never know who you are going to meet or who will influence your path in life.” A chance encounter at a young age with Army helicopter pilots gave Melissa the dream of a career in aviation, which she got to fulfill.

AND NOW SHE’S TRYING TO RETIRE SO SHE CAN ... RIDE MORE.