

# What inspired you to choose your career?



### **William S. Soldan**

*President and CEO,  
Aero Alliance Insurance Services Inc.*

I was a full-time snow ski instructor at Vernon Valley/Great Gorge in New Jersey, working with several airline pilots who taught skiing part-time, and I began inquiring about working for the airline industry. I was advised if I was serious about aviation, I should attend Embry-Riddle. After visiting the Daytona Beach campus, I was excited about pursuing a career in aviation, even though there were no mountains in sight. My days at Embry-Riddle led me into a successful career as a professional aviation insurance broker. My pilot experience trained me to appreciate the complexity of aircraft, the importance for continuous flight training to be a good underwriting risk, and the value of FBOs in serving the avia-

tion community. The aircraft-engineering course gave me an understanding of airframes, engines and components, which was valuable when I handled manufacturers liability risks. My aviation management courses helped me compete for business and ultimately start my own insurance brokerage firm. And thanks to the Embry-Riddle career center for leading this horse to water. During my career, I've handled the insurance needs of airlines, international airports, financial institutions, corporate aviation, manufacturers, and satellite users. I also got to travel to London, France and Switzerland with my clients to meet underwriters and negotiate insurance coverage.

— *Class of '83*



### **Zane Rowe**

*Vice President, Financial  
Planning and Analysis,  
Continental Airlines*

I've always had a strong interest in aviation. I grew up in South Africa, which, being a relatively small country at the end of a continent, helped me realize the importance of aviation to link both families and businesses to the rest of the world. I had family scattered around the world and would fly relatively often to visit them. I soon grew an appreciation for all it took to operate an airline and how important aviation was to bringing the world together. I decided I'd like to be more than just a passenger in this business. I've also had the benefit of working with talented professionals at many levels within my organization who have greatly influenced my career path. While the airline sector's complexity, financial challenges, and volatility have all contributed to an interesting job, it's the strength of the team I've worked with that has affirmed my career choice.

— *Class of '91*



## **Rima Jabbur**

*Artist*

In 1983, I was enrolled in a portraiture drawing class at the Maryland Institute College of Art. My instructor, Abby Sangiamo, was one of the most charismatic and intelligent teachers I had ever had. These qualities, combined with a wry sense of humor, completely captured my attention. As I got to know him better, I was even more impressed by his sensitivity and humanity. He conveyed complex technical information in a methodical and analytical way that made sense to me. His classes were entirely engrossing. I was coming out of a background in philosophy — I had already completed a B.A. — at a time when art programs offered very little structure. They were still under the influence of Abstract Expressionism, and experimental, conceptual ideas were in full swing. I did not have the temperament for this approach. Abby sensitized me to the beauty of line, form, and design. To this day drawing is my first love. Another quality that pulled me toward figurative realism was a shared intense interest in psychological content. I was convinced Abby recognized my abilities and inner motivations. I will never forget the thrill of having my work singled out and given such serious consideration during critiques. I think that the student-mentor relationship creates, and perhaps even results from, a deep pre-existing bond that is the basis for all lasting careers that may be characterized as a “calling.”



## **Wasim Gulzar Khan**

*Community Development Manager, Professional Cricketers Association, England*

I decided I wanted to play professional cricket from an early age, but had no direction or idea how I would do it in an all-white-dominated sport in England. Once I knew I had it, I sacrificed a lot in order to realize my dream. It was a teacher who spotted me in the playground, purely by luck, one break time. He saw something in me and sent me for trial at a club that was renowned at the time for being racist. From that day on, he encouraged and pushed me, made me feel secure through his encouragement and, more important, made me believe I belonged in that alien environment through the concept of positive reinforcement. After seven years of determination, fighting prejudice, stereotypical thinking and people’s negativity, I signed as a professional cricketer and in doing so broke the cycle and became the first all-British-born professional cricketer in England. I learnt to create my own luck by working hard and living a dream for over 10 years, going to the verge of playing on an England A tour in 1995.



## **Gregory A. Feith**

*Aviation Safety Consultant*

Embry-Riddle’s co-op program put me on my current career track. When I began at Riddle, I wanted to fly and evolve to some level of management at an airline. Because the degree program required two semesters of co-op participation, I applied to and was accepted by the National Transportation Safety Board program. I wanted to see the “bad” side of aviation and knock my over-inflated flying ego back down to a respectable level. During the summer of 1980, I was assigned to the NTSB’s Los Angeles field office, and after a very brief introduction to the staff, I was launching on general aviation accidents with seasoned investigators. It was during my third accident investigation, while standing on top of a 9,000-foot mountain near Truckee, Calif., combing through the wreckage of a Cessna 210 where a family of five had perished, that I decided I wanted to be the Dick Tracy of aviation accident investigation and contribute to the prevention of future accidents. After 22 years with the NTSB and thousands of aviation accident and incident investigations, including the ValuJet DC-9 in the Florida Everglades, and now as an international aviation safety consultant, I am using the skills, abilities and knowledge attained in 25 years of aircraft accident investigation to promote and enhance aviation safety.

— *Class of '96*



### **Neil Morrow**

*Tooling Director, Adam Aircraft*

Ever since I was 17 I've had a plan for a small aircraft transportation system. It helped that I grew up surrounded by innovative and entrepreneurial people. My father, Ray, had a company making navigational equipment for aircraft, which was acquired by UPS. One of his friends is Burt Rutan, the world's best custom aircraft designer. When my dad came up with the concept of using small aircraft to transport people, Burt said the planes should be made of composites for the best efficiency and fuel economy. Then my cousin, Rob, who was a professional snowboarder, asked me to help him start a company to build snowboards, just as I was finishing high school. Of course I said yes. I saw it as a way to learn as much as possible about composites. When we sold the company 10 years later, we were the nation's No. 3 snowboard brand. Along the way I earned degrees in business economics, from Willamette University, and in aerospace engineering, from Embry-Riddle. In 2001, my dad and I started SkyTaxi, an on-demand air service for travelers. The company has proved there is a market for small aircraft. I've since moved to Adam Aircraft, which is making the first plane for that new transportation system I've always dreamed of.

— *Class of '01*



### **Ron J. Riley**

*President, Riley Consulting Inc. and Professional Inventors Alliance*

One of my earliest memories is when I was about five years old and I received an electric jeep. I also remember spending many hours at the dining room table with my father, learning to read. I had a great deal of trouble with school, and I have no doubt that my father's efforts to teach me to read set the stage for later years, when I discovered a love of math and science. In seventh grade, I became an avid reader of science fiction – and fact –, which played a significant role in forming my worldview, ethical standards, and the mind set that makes me a prolific inventor across multiple disciplines. Science fiction is a great educational tool, because it allows concepts to be taught in a setting where readers' social and technical prejudices are not immediately triggered, allowing them to learn to look at problems from different perspectives. I also had the benefit of participating in an engineering club at General Motors Institute (now Kettering University) from 7th to 12th grade. There I was exposed to state-of-the-art developments such as metal-cutting lasers, plasma cutters, image intensification X-ray, plastic molding processes, and numerous metal fabricating processes. This exposure was a crucial element in my becoming an inventor of automated electrified monorail systems.



### **Dee Gill**

*Freelance Journalist*

I was attracted to journalism in high school because of the voice it gave me – one of confidence and authority that I had pitifully lacked until that point. As a reporter for the school newspaper, I suddenly felt I had the right to voice opinions and to ask whatever questions I wanted of authority figures, and astonishingly, they usually answered. It was quite a realization for a painfully shy but always curious kid. Of course, I've long-since figured out that anyone has the right to ask questions and be heard. But for me, it took the framework of journalism to give me the nerve to exercise it. Before finding journalism, I had planned to write the world's greatest novels. I quickly realized there were few job ads for great novelists and decided that journalism was a more practical route to getting paid for writing. I've never regretted that choice. The job has given me a greater understanding of people, from unemployed workers to politicians and social activists, and made me a better person for it. I'm at ease with them all, and I find them all interesting. And I don't miss being shy at all.