



ELLING B. HALVORSON
Founder and Chairman of the Board

Elling Halvorson is the founder and chairman of the board for Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters and Grand Canyon Scenic Airlines, as well as the patriarchal figure for the Halvorson family who, today, lead the company. With Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters founded in 1965 and Grand Canyon Scenic Airlines founded in 1927, together, the brands are the longest-running family owned and operated aviation tour companies in the world. Within the industry, Halvorson is not only well-respected but also considered one of the pioneers of aerial tourism.

The story of Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters began in 1965, thanks to the vision of Elling Halvorson. At that time, Halvorson owned a construction company specializing in remote area, high risk projects with challenging logistics. Halvorson took pride in mitigating risks through creativity and innovation. He was in the midst of a project to construct a microwave tower for AT&T atop the 9,400-foot Echo Summit in the Sierra Nevada Mountains when Halvorson purchased his first helicopter, a Bell 47-G3B1. This helicopter was used to carry workers and light construction materials more efficiently through the treacherous mountain terrain than the 1.5-mile tramway he had previously built.

The project that changed the course of Halvorson's career involved constructing a 13.5-mile-long water pipeline from the North Rim to the South Rim of the rugged Grand Canyon. At that time, it was largest contract the National Park Service had ever awarded. Today, this project remains the largest helicopter-supported construction project ever completed in the United States with more than 25,000 flight hours. As Halvorson and his team flew colleagues and clients to work sites within the canyon, the majestic scenery was so captivating that workers began requesting chartered helicopter flights during off hours. Halvorson recognized the golden opportunity that lay in front of him and the company was born and would make history by becoming one of the first aerial sightseeing companies in the world and the first to fly the Grand Canyon.



From the beginning, innovation has been one of Halvorson's primary objectives. Shortly after forming the company in 1965, Halvorson acquired a fixed-wing company, Grand Canyon Airlines, which would later become Grand Canyon Scenic Airlines. The move added six Piper Cherokee 6 airplanes to the existing helicopter fleet. He was a pioneer in developing quiet technology for the helicopter tour industry and his innovation challenged the leading helicopter manufacturers to address the need for quiet aircraft. It was his vision that led to the building of the company' renowned state-of-the-art helicopter terminals and facilities located at Grand Canyon National Park Airport and later at the Las Vegas/Boulder City Municipal Airport, along with his daughter, Brenda Halvorson, who serves as chief executive officer.

He co-founded Tour Operators Program of Safety (TOPS) in 1986, whose members abide by strict, self-imposed regulations that go above and beyond Federal Aviation Administration standards for operational procedures, pilot training and aircraft maintenance. Furthermore, throughout the years, he has played active roles in numerous professional organizations including the Helicopter Association International (HAI), National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA); American Helicopter Society; National Parks Overflight Advisory Group (NPOAG), U.S. Travel Association and United States Air Tour Association (USATA). In 2016, he received the esteemed Vertical Flight Hall of Fame Award during the Living Legends of Aviation Awards.

He remains dedicated to communities through donations and support for the Evergreen Hospital in Kirkland, Washington, which also houses the Halvorson Cancer Center; Seattle Union Gospel Mission and the family's non-profit organization, the Halvorson Charities Fund.

Halvorson and his wife, Barbara, have been married since 1953. Together, they have five children, as well as eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

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