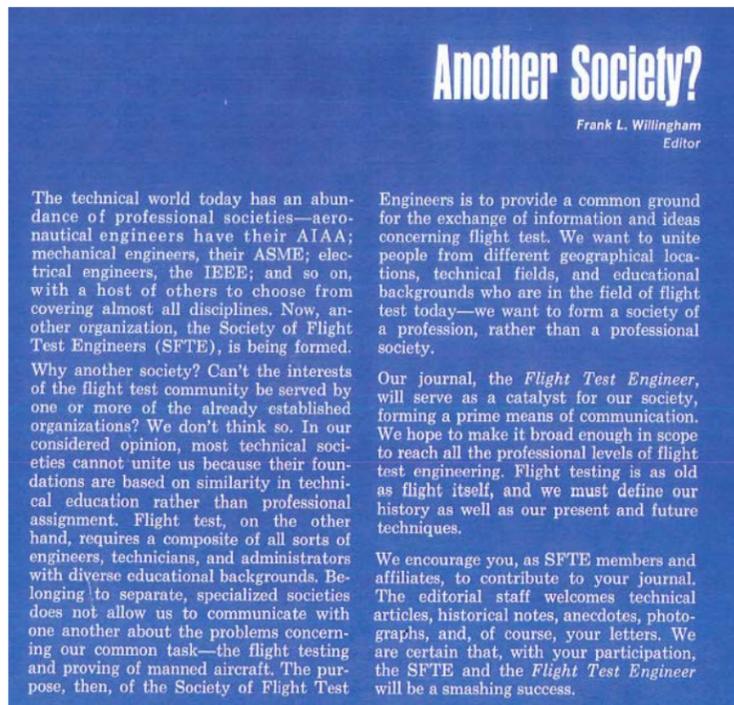


## Where Do We Go From Here?

In the past six months, graduates from test pilot schools all over the world have joined the ranks of our esteemed profession. For a year, each student put their nose to the grindstone, and while they learned the academic foundations of flight test, the world changed. Aircraft certification requirements have evolved. Innovative technology has appeared. Electric aircraft have progressed in leaps and bounds. And a million other things have changed incrementally—things that many will overlook have advanced in important directions. For the graduates, this milestone is an important transition, and for the rest of us, their arrival, together with a fresh page on the calendar, gives us the chance to look at where we have been, and answer the question posed above: “where do we go from here?” In this edition of the *Flight Test News*, we welcome the graduates, shower them with advice, and ponder the way ahead for our Society and ourselves, regardless of where we are in our own careers. To begin, consider these words from July 1969, from the earliest issue of the technical journal *Flight Test Engineer*, the Society of Flight Test Engineers’ first publication.



Many of the things said at the genesis of our Society apply today, especially this: “The purpose of the SFTE is to provide a common ground for the exchange of information and ideas concerning flight test. We want to unite people from different geographical locations, technical fields, and educational backgrounds who are in the field of flight test today.”

Our first challenge is to exchange information and ideas, but which ideas do we exchange? And how do we exchange them? The Board of Directors and SFTE chapters use the

*Flight Test News* to share three specific kinds of information and ideas. First, there is news. This appears in almost every issue of *FTN* and on our [website](#) and Facebook [pages](#) and [groups](#). For example, this issue includes news about Flight Test graduates. The second kind of information is technical. I reiterate here my encouragement to members at every level to use our every-other-month technical *FTN* issue as a place to brainstorm and share incomplete concepts, as a way to get feedback on early stage ideas. As these ideas mature, you may consider preparing a symposium technical paper. But if you want to rapidly prototype knowledge and explore its application, then *FTN* is a laboratory where you can test ideas before presenting them on stage. Of course, we will also use *FTN* to highlight award winning technical papers after the fact, to encourage circulation.

The final flavor of information is harder to define. Some call it “soft skills” or “fuzzy topics.” It’s the kind of advice that appears monthly in our *Spotlight* interviews. Many notable leaders have suggested that wisdom is not just learning from one’s own mistakes and experience but learning from others and not repeating it. This includes topics that are clearly not technical but are still essential to our profession and our lives. One question posed recently by a veteran FTE applies to the new graduates and the veterans alike: “*What do the next steps in my career progression look like?*” As he asked that question, I imagined a million humorous ways to answer that. A quick internet search revealed even more images, like [this classic](#), which depicts a straight line to success and contrasts it with what actually happens, a path that looks more like a pile of spaghetti. I think there is a lot of truth in these ideas (and it reminds me of an important technical principle called regression to the mean, an idea I hope to flesh out in the next technical issue of the *FTN*).

If I were to attempt to answer this FTE’s question, I would paint a mental picture using agricultural metaphors. Some people see plants known as annuals, like green peas, and observe the complete life cycle occurring in a short period of time. In one season, it goes from seed to harvest, and after yielding its crop ceases to exist. They often think that a career is like this linear life cycle, growing quickly and bringing forth “fruit,” the hallmarks of achievement at various levels and stages of their careers. Finally, when the career is over, one enjoys the retirement years living off the bounty of the crop. On the other hand, some describe a career more like the life cycle of a tree, which grows during the spring and summer and during the autumn sheds its leaves and falls dormant for the cold winter months, only to begin its growth cycle again the following spring. This seems like a slightly more accurate picture of what happens in a professional career.

If I could extend the metaphor even more, I would add several steps. We prepare the soil, getting our hands dirty and working up a sweat. One might even grunt aloud or skin one’s knuckles during the exertion required to remove rocks and brush. Once prepared, we plant the seed and begin to nurture it. Although we cannot observe it, a transformation takes place beneath the soil. We continue to water, weed, and feed the young plant. In this stage, the thorns on its stem may even scratch our skin. Finally, as the sapling shoots upward, we continue to labor but only within a small sphere of influence, for we cannot control the wind, rain, sun or shade. Each growing season brings new challenges. Though the process remains unchanged and relatively simple, it does require hard work, and it’s important to emphasize that the level of exertion ebbs and flows.

In closing, I would say this: continual growth, without any pause, may not always be possible or desirable. The growth cycle of a tree described above illustrates that principle, but in addition to this general advice above, I wanted to include specific action steps anyone can take right now.

- 1. Always have a mentor, a friend, and a pupil.** When you find yourself in a season of personal dormancy, you can invest more in the development of the friend and pupil.
- 2. Seek counsel and wisdom from a multitude of sources.** The process of seeking counsel fills periods of plateau with useful activity, and it may contribute to the growth of additional relationships, with mentors, friends, and pupils.

You may find that others direct questions your way as they navigate their own career progression and growth, and this cross-pollination will ultimately benefit an entire workplace ecosystem.

**How would you answer:** “*What do the next steps in my career progression look like?*”

## President’s Message

The days of 2015 are gone, and what an incredible year it was for the Society. Our members saw the first flights of aircraft such as the Airbus H160, Bell 525, Mitsubishi Regional Jet, and Sikorsky MH-53K. Our members also accomplished certification of the Bombardier C-Series and Honda Jet. Some of our members’ projects have even made headlines outside the atmosphere. In the past year I have been able to visit two civilian test pilot schools, both of them corporate members of the Society. At both schools I saw their livery of test aircraft had grown, signaling optimism that the improving economy will spur even more investment and innovation in our industry. I also participated in what I believe was another first: Pax River Chapter broadcast an event on the web.



In November our Board of Directors approved plans to hire an Executive Director and an Associate Director. Jaime Silva and Kristen Faison have been hard at work, reaching out to our membership and continuing improvements to how we do business. Let me take a moment to explain the Board’s objectives. When the search committee began looking for a new Director, we found an amazing, diverse pool of talent. Some lived in the Lancaster area and others far away from California. Some had decades of experience in flight test, and many were gifted communicators. While any of the candidates could have served alone, the heavy demands on that individual might have led to a compromise. The Society has two fundamental membership groups, Corporate and Individual Members. The Board adopted a team approach to serving its constituents, where the Executive Director could focus on Corporate Members while the Associate Director could focus on Individual Members. Each Director serves part time, one from our corporate office in California, and the other from Texas. We are very excited and hope that all members appreciate the new arrangement and enhanced service.

The Board of Directors is now in the second year of our two-year term, and in the summer the Society will hold elections for eight positions, four as Officers and four as Directors. The Board meets once a month via web conference, and every member of the Board is assigned secondary duties to report on during these meetings. There is also our Technical Council. Its members contribute to the SFTE Handbook, the SFTE credentialing program, and serve as judges for technical papers at our symposia. Serving as a Chapter Officer is another way to learn and gain experience. Our Society thrives because of its members’ service. In 2016, please volunteer as a leader, organizer, or contributor. You will find it more rewarding than you could possibly imagine!

## Contact *Flight Test News*

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Newsletter – <http://www.sfte.org/services/sfte-news>  
 Facebook – <http://www.facebook.com/FlightTestEng>  
 LinkedIn – <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/SFTE-Society-Flight-Test-Engineers-1164057/about>

## Flight Test News



<http://www.sfte.org/>

### Flight Test Safety Workshop – Call for Papers

Make plans now to attend the 2016 Flight Test Safety Workshop, from 2-5 May 2016, at the Crowne Plaza Melbourne, Florida. The theme of the workshop is “Flight Test Safety Issues with Fly-by-Wire aircraft and associated control systems”. Fly-by-Wire has become the norm for control systems today and will grow in years to come. Many aircraft currently under development, manned and unmanned, involve Fly-by-Wire control. Recent mishaps during flight test of these systems point to the potential for unique hazards and risks for flight test of these aircraft. The goal of this workshop is to identify and discuss these hazards and their associated risk to prevent or reduce the impact of flight test mishaps. It is time to direct our focus on the risks associated with flight testing these systems and share some of the more recent lessons learned. Presentations should be limited to 25 minutes. Please send paper/presentation proposals to the 2016 Flight Test Safety Workshop Chairman, Mr. Bob Hood via [susan@setp.org](mailto:susan@setp.org). The deadline to book your room is Sunday, 10 April 2016. **The deadline for abstracts is 12 February 2016 to allow time for appropriate consideration.** A limited block of rooms is reserved for \$105.00 per night. To book your hotel reservation, please call 321-777-4100 or visit <http://www.setp.org/workshop/2016-flight-test-safety-workshop.html> or <http://flighttestsafety.org/workshops>.

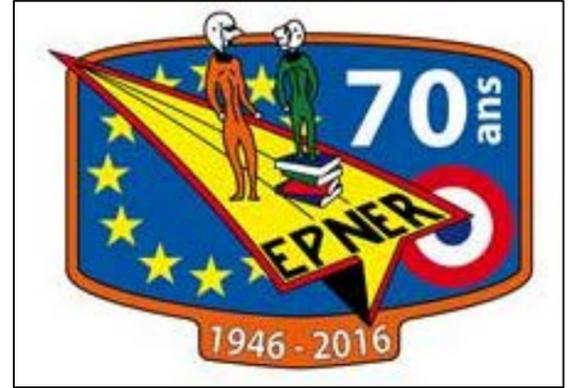
### SFTE Congratulates Newest TPS Graduates

USAF Test Pilot School graduated eight new flight test engineers on December 11, 2015. The [Edwards AFB Public Affairs](#) office reported the following FTE graduates: Matthew Alsleben, Capt. John Beilstein, Capt. Brian Davis, Capt. Stephen Kennedy, Capt. Michael O'Connor, Capt. Bryan Snyder, Capt. Phillip Woodhull, and Capt. Kita Yoichiro (Japan).

Graduation information for other Test Pilot Schools was not available at the time of publication.

### EPNER Celebrates 70 Years

According to [Colonel David Caroff](#), Director, the French Test Pilot School EPNER will celebrate its seventieth anniversary on the 7th of July at Istres. Many members of SFTE are former EPNER students, and EPNER hopes they will visit.



<http://www.defense.gouv.fr/dga/liens/l-epner-ecole-du-personnel-navigant-d-essais-et-de-reception>

Please contact Col Caroff for more information.

### SFTE European Chapter – Call for Papers

The 2016 European Chapter will hold their annual symposium in May this year, so the call for papers has a short deadline. Those interested should submit abstracts by January 31, 2016. Notification of paper selection should occur on February 28th, 2016. Final papers are due on May 1, 2016. Contact Reinhard Exner or Sebastian Rommel with questions, or visit [www.sfte-ec.org](http://www.sfte-ec.org). This year’s symposium will feature papers based on the theme of “Keeping the Balance between Performance and Safety.”

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### Editor’s Note

The coming year promises to bring many changes. For the past year, I’ve dreamed about the many ways that Flight Test News can continue to improve and serve the members of the SFTE. For example, perhaps a podcast would be an entertaining and informative way to connect with members and present interviews previously only available in print. Though it will probably not happen in time, a podcast would be a great way to present the Greatest Airplane of All Time Tournament. (Note: We will hold the tournament again in March, and I expect to offer more ways to engage earlier, with an aircraft nomination process, for example. What ideas do you have to make it better? Please let me know.) One of the things I would really like to do is see more of our members jump into the writing process, whether that’s an opinion-editorial piece or a technical article or an interview, or even just an announcement. I hope that Chapter President’s will use the space available in the Flight Test News to share their story. I think it would benefit us a whole to hear what’s going on at the chapter level, and it will free up chapter resources to upload that newsletter requirement to the Society level. News, announcements and calls for papers are welcome from the chapters.

Often, a serendipitous encounter with a member results in a remarkable exchange of ideas—I’ve seen that happen over coffee and over email. For those email encounters, I wish you’d realize how valuable your written words are. It would be a simple thing to change that email into an article. Please consider doing that.

In the coming months, we will feature a full length story on a member, hinted about in the previous issue. We would still like for someone to do a book review in support of that feature. Please contact [director3@sfte.org](mailto:director3@sfte.org) if you are interested in that opportunity. If you have other ideas for book reviews, whether that’s a new biography or a text book, we’d be delighted to print those too. We even accept written reviews of technical papers or talks from local or national symposia.

Finally, I would like to encourage everyone to begin to brainstorm the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SFTE. At that time, I would really like to publish a journal-like, printed report of the Society, to include historical anecdotes, technical articles, interviews, member and chapter statistics, and the like. Please consider what content you would like to see in that publication and how you can make that happen. It will take a team effort to bring all the moving pieces together.