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Artistry in Air: The Story of the Younkins

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Artistry in Air: The Story of the Younkins

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Journalism

by

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Abstract

For sixty years, a Northwest Arkansas family has dominated the world of general aviation by drawing upon its wealth of expertise, innovation and exceptional talent. Jim Younkin, an electrical engineer, invented an autopilot series that revolutionized the industry. His son, Bobby became one of the top aerobatic pilots in the world and Jim's grandchildren, Matt and Amanda, also became critically acclaimed performers in the air show business. Like his father, Matt is ranked among the best of pilots in the industry. Jim also received national recognition for his stunning recreations and restorations of historical aircraft. Bobby operated Younkin Airshows, until he was killed in a mid-air collision in 2005. Following the tragedy, Matt and Amanda continued to operate the company. During this time, Amanda married air show pilot Kyle Franklin and they created a new act together which operated under his business. Tragically, Amanda died, after the Franklin plane crashed during a performance in 2011. Because the Younkin's story is at the intersection of at least three theoretical research fields, it serves as a unique model providing important research information. This 52-minute film will detail the Younkins' story and their significant contributions to aviation history, by approaching it through the lens of family business theory, performance theory and performance psychology.

Because family business is considered the dominant form of enterprise in the U.S. economy and the issue of succession is one of its most important aspects, how the Younkins handled the continuation of their airshow business was of particular significance. As a family business transfers from the first generation to subsequent generations, its success rate diminishes. Despite the loss of family members from two generations in less than six years, Younkin Airshows has continued to thrive with Matt in the primary leadership role. In seeking to understand how this

family was able to overcome the statistical odds and sustain their business, the qualitative interviews with Jim, Matt and Jeanie Younkin were crucial. Each of them provided key insight into the family dynamics of the group, particularly, Matt's interview as he explained the physical and psychological factors that contributed to building family resilience. This resilience was also the result of a high level of trust between family members that had developed through intergenerational leadership within the family business and allowed them to overcome adversity. In addition, they shared a desire to preserve the Younkin family "brand" and experienced high levels of job satisfaction as they each contributed to it with their individual talents.

Finally, through a shared passion for aviation augmented by high levels of resilience, trust and job satisfaction, the Younkin family's ability to rise above the tragedies that accompany a high-risk occupation are clearly demonstrated in this film. It will provide a unique case study in future research where family business theory, performance theory and performance psychology theory intersect.

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Introduction

For more than half a century, a northwest Arkansas family has been at the forefront of general aviation with pioneering work in avionics, aircraft design and aerobatic flying. Their talent and innovation, encompassing three generations, has not only given rise to their legendary status, but has enabled them to build successful businesses in aviation. Jim Younkin, his son, Bobby and grandchildren Matt and Amanda crafted careers based on a passion for aviation which defined them as individuals and as a family. Like most stories of human endeavor however, their's is not without its triumphs and tragedies--and it is fascinating to attempt to understand how they managed those factors from both personal and business perspectives. Because the Younkins represent a unique model in family business research; they operate in a high-risk aviation category and there are no known studies documented in this specific area--the information gathered from this film has the potential to be highly beneficial to this continuously expanding field.

Family controlled businesses are central to the United States and global economy and are the predominant form of enterprise representing both large and small companies. In the U.S., family businesses are considered the “backbone of the American economy, accounting for approximately sixty-four percent of the U. S. Gross Domestic Product (Astrachan & Shanker, 2003). From a global perspective, “The success and continuity of family businesses are the economic Emerald City for a large portion of the world’s population” (Gersick, Davis, Hampton and Landsberg, 1997). While the majority of these family businesses plan to pass their companies on to the next generation, a much smaller number actually succeed. Research shows that “only 30-percent of the family firms survive the transition to second generation and only

ten-percent make it to the third generation” (Beckhard and Dyer, 1983). These dynamics of family business reflect, in one sense, the experiences of the subjects of this study, the Younkin family. Critically, however, and central to this analysis, family business theory, on which this study draws heavily, fails to make visible the psychological, emotional and technical complexity of the Younkin family’s experience. This is particularly apparent when looking at the issue of succession. Research in the field of family business demonstrates that “succession is the most important issue that most family firms face” (Handler, 1994). The reasons for an unsuccessful passing of the company torch are varied, but research shows that succession is more than just a single action and that it is instead a process that takes place over time. This process, however, is not always seamless or continuous and can in fact be “disrupted by the untimely death of an older generational member or a potential successor” (Handler, 1994). The Younkings, like all family businesses deal with questions of succession. But what happens when the very logic of your family business forces the question of succession to be up in the air?

In the 1960s, Jim Younkin, a University of Arkansas electrical engineering graduate and former instructor, invented the first practical autopilot for general aviation, by improving designs that were left over from World War II. In addition to his pioneering avionics work, he gained fame for his antique aircraft restorations and in his building of replicas of 1930s air racers. Working on Jim’s first restoration was his son, Bobby, who learned to fly and became a world renowned airshow pilot. Bobby founded Younkin Airshows in the 1980s, but was killed while performing at an airshow in 2005. Bobby’s son and daughter Matt and Amanda, who were both pilots, decided to ‘follow in their father’s footsteps’ and became air show performers. While Amanda and her pilot husband created their own act, Matt, with his sister’s assistance, took over

Younkin Airshows. In 2011, the family suffered another tragedy, when Amanda's plane crashed during a performance. She was so severely injured, she was unable to recover and died two months later. The deaths of Bobby and Amanda within a five-year span represents the loss of two generations in the family business. While there is research that examines succession in a family business in the advent of an untimely death, no study has been found that examines the loss of two generations at virtually the same time. In *Loss and Continuity in the Family Firm*, Fredda Herz Brown writes, "Homicides and accidental deaths often create the most intense sudden-death reactions in families since they are not only unexpected but violent," (Brown, 1993). The deaths of both Bobby Younkin and his daughter Amanda Younkin Franklin after air show crashes devastated their family and the relatively tight-knit air show community. Much like the famous high wire circus performers known as the "Flying Wallendas," the Younkins were entertainers in a potentially dangerous occupation and two generations paid the ultimate price. In a study of U.S. civil air show crashes between 1993 to 2013, researchers found that "fatalities were associated with four major risk factors; fire, pilot error, aerobatic flight and off-airport location" (Ballard & Osorio, 2016). The study, published by the federal Department of Health & Human Services, further found that the majority of fatalities involved pilots performing aerobatic maneuvers. Due to the entertainment factor, air show pilots get a special surface level waiver to fly lower than the Federal Aviation Administration requirement of 1,500 feet above ground. This documentary film, *Artistry in Air: The Story of the Younkins* will be a first of its kind because it presents the Younkins' story as the representation of an unusual family business model which is at the intersection of family business theory, performance theory and performance psychology.

Literature Review

For the majority of people, “the two most important things in their lives are their families and their work,” (Gersick, et al, 1997). Family businesses uniquely combine these two areas, thereby creating a hybrid to the typical business model. In addition, when a kinship group represents ownership, it can further blur the lines of the company hierarchy. In fact, because there are numerous variations on this theme, it has been difficult for researchers to offer up a clear-cut definition of family business. This unique intertwining of family and business has led researchers to study family business not only utilizing theories from business, but also by looking through the lenses of economics, psychology, sociology and other fields. Not surprisingly, family business research continues to be an emerging field.

This film examines three major factors of family business theory-resilience, trust and satisfaction. Though these factors can be subjective and impacted by numerous influences, they are important considerations particularly when applied to succession in the family business. In addition, because the Younkin’s airshow business success is based on entertainment value, performance theory will also be applied in this study.

Resilience is defined as the capability to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning following a disruption. In the chapter, *Family Resilience in the Wake of Loss*, in the *Handbook of Family Resilience*, authors An Hooghe and Robert Neimeyer write, “Although it is not prominent in grief literature, a few studies have begun to point to contextual factors, such as family characteristics, that are important for the ability of the grieving individual to adjust to a new life following the loss,” (2013). With the death of their father, Matt and Amanda Younkin experienced a significant alteration to their family structure

which “changes family organization and patterns of interaction,” (Hooghe & Neimeyer, 2013). Because this loss was shared by the siblings, they pulled together and developed a determination to not only meet the financial obligations of their father’s performance contracts but to continue his legacy and their heritage in the air show industry. As Brown notes, “Sharing the loss, in whatever way family members are capable, is vitally important to their adjustment over time,” (1993). As a result, Matt and Amanda’s sibling bond was strengthened and they became joint decision-makers in their family’s business. In relying on each other’s talents, they managed to forge a new direction for Younkin Airshows and maintained its viability in the industry.

Trust is a firm belief in the integrity, ability or character of a person or thing engendering confidence or reliance. According to the Conway Center for Family Business, a non-profit organization providing educational resources for Ohio family businesses, nearly three-quarters of family firms believe they have a stronger culture and values than non-family firms. It is this environment that many researchers credit for breeding trust among coworkers. In *Environmental Dynamism, Trust and Dynamic Capabilities of Family Businesses*, author Yong Wang (2016) writes, “The reason why family businesses can exist as a unique business form for centuries is not because of any idiosyncratic role this type of business can play in the economy, but due to high level of trust in firms,” (Wang, 2016). This trust, according to Wang, is the major underpinning for that firm’s dynamic capabilities, which are defined by Wang as the company’s abilities to “renew, reconfigure and recreate their capabilities,” so that it may remain viable in a competitive market (Wang, 2016). Wang’s research includes results from a quantitative survey with a sampling frame outline based on the Hemscot Company Guru Database and included 137 useful responses from family businesses. A previous assumption that familial trust resulting from

bonds between coworkers will influence a company's dynamic capabilities is confirmed in this survey.

Matt and Amanda Younkin learned much about the family business from their father Bobby. From an early age, they attended airshows, helped him in his hangar and flew recreationally with him. As soon as they were old enough, they both got their pilot's license. As a result, their family bonds fostered a passion for aviation and the family business as well as further enhanced sibling trust. After their father's death, this trust was critical in planning for the future of both the business and their own careers. The vacancy in leadership of the company created through Bobby's demise caused a shift in the dynamic capabilities of the company. The siblings reconfigured the family business with Matt logging hours of extra training to be able to fly his father's airshow routines and Amanda taking on substantial behind-the-scenes work. What is even more remarkable is this was accomplished in the relatively short time frame of less than one year.

Satisfaction in family business is influenced by many factors and is often personal to the individual family member. Personal fulfillment in helping to maintain a thriving family business is not necessarily 'all work and no play' however, and researchers have found that having an element of fun on the job is important. In his book *Keeping the Family Business Healthy*, author John Ward writes, "Enjoying activities together builds rapport, friendship and ease of communication among family members," (Ward, 1987) and that can place members of the family business on more equitable ground. Family bonds ensure members are comfortable with expressing suggestions or opinions and receiving them, without fear of reprisal. Satisfaction can also be realized by an individual in utilizing a unique talent. In an article for the American

Psychology Association, writer Kirsten Weir summarized that a joint study conducted by Washington University and Brigham Young University found that “people seemed more satisfied with and found greater value in applying their special talents to their work,” (Weir, 2013). Weir cited the work of Colorado State University associate professor Dr. Michael Steger and his colleagues in developing a tool to measure this deeper job satisfaction based on three components; the feeling the work has some purpose, evidence that the meaning derived from work meshes with the meaning one feels about life in general and the idea that the work is part of ‘the greater good’ or that it “is a calling.” Certainly, Matt describes his sister’s passion to get out from behind the scenes and become a wing walker in that vein and Jim Younkin refers to Bobby’s ability to entertain through aerobatics as “a gift.”

One of the most comprehensive family business research overviews used in this study is based on the twenty-five articles that have been most influential in shaping the research in this field. *Intellectual Foundations of Current Research in Family Business* identifies these articles based on a citation analysis of articles published from 2003-2008 in four journals that dominated family business research. While the authors found that some of the works provided theoretical basis for future inquiry, others contributed to the field by providing “empirical evidence of relationships that affect the way theory is applied by identifying contingencies that were previously unanticipated or not incorporated into theory,” (Chrisman, Kellermanns, Chan, Liano, 2010). During the six year interval studied there were more than 182 family business articles published with more than 9,000 citations. From this comprehensive study two dominant theories emerged that are often used in the study of business management; agency theory and resource-based view theory. Agency theory deals with the behaviors of business principals and

their agents—a common example would be the relationship between shareholders as principals and company executives as agents. Resource-based view theory, as its name implies, focuses on the resources of physical capital, human capital and organizational capital within a business and how they help it create a sustainable competitive edge. These theories were utilized in formatting questions regarding the current business model of Younkin Airshows in the wake of the loss of its principal owner.

It is clear that the Younkin family shares a passion for aviation that has created a solid foundation for building a successful family business. “Family climate plays a pivotal role in explaining family business culture and performance, largely through the infusion of family values in the business culture” (Bjornberg & Nicholson, 2007). Family climate can be measured on six scales: open communication, adaptability, intergenerational authority, intergenerational attention to needs, emotional cohesion and cognitive cohesion. This research tool is known as the Family Climate Scales and it is a “self-report measure of whole family functioning formulated for the field of family business research” (Bjornberg & Nicholson, 2007). Of particular interest is the effect intergenerational authority and intergenerational attention to needs has on succession in family business. Growing up in the early days of aviation, when an airplane was considered “high-tech,” Jim Younkin’s passion and vocation were dramatically influenced by building and flying model airplanes. He passed this knowledge and enthusiasm on to his son Bobby by building and flying models with him, and also by taking him flying. Bobby not only followed Jim’s pattern with his children, but he also took them to airshows, where they could watch him perform. Despite the loss of his father and sister, Matt, who is now a father of two, takes his children to airshows to watch him perform, lets them play around his hangar and gives them

aviation inspired toys. One can clearly observe the principle of succession being put into play, particularly as intergenerational attention to needs are met, family values are instilled and emotional bonds are strengthened.

By the 1980s, Bobby had built a reputation as an innovative pilot in the airshow industry, where performance excellence was top priority. “Every one of us puts on a performance in our society. Whether through the clothes we wear, the conversations we hold or the food we eat, all are a performance designed as a signal-system to ourselves and to others of our place within our social group” (Goffman 1969:28). Bobby Younkin was no exception and trained continually to hone his skills, eventually becoming known as one of the best pilots in the industry. In his 1977 seminal work, “Performance Theory,” Richard Schechner states “performance is an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group,” (Schechner, 1977). He goes on to say it is affected by audience/performer interaction. This is evidenced in the airshow industry where pilots entertain an audience, but they also perform their skills for themselves and other airshow pilots. Younkin Airshows is a family business and it’s success rests in a large part on its Younkin name which has become iconic in the world of aviation. Jim invented revolutionary avionics, won awards as a top builder and restorer of antique aircraft and built a reputation for innovation and quality. Subsequent generations added their own contributions to this “brand” name by broadening its scope to encompass thrilling entertainment as another of its hallmarks. Third generation family members were highly motivated to protect and maintain the highly recognized family brand and in the process built individual reputations that extended beyond the brand.

Performance psychology specifically studies the factors that allow both individuals and groups of individuals to flourish. “Most recently, performance psychology has included the study of the psychological skills and knowledge necessary to facilitate and develop peak performance guidelines into best practice for sport, business, fitness and the performing arts,” (Terry, 2008). Rooted in 1920s sport psychology, it could be applied to most human undertakings and “most often it has been applied to high-end performers who want to be the best in their field,” (Terry, 2008). Aerobatic pilots fit in this category and Bobby, who was considered to be among the best by his peers, achieved feats in airplanes that were never designed for aerobatics like the Lear Jet and the twin Beech 18. Both of these aircraft were designed to transport people and freight. During interviews, some pilots alluded to the pressure they felt from the airshow industry to “keep things fresh” for the audience by bringing in more innovative acts, Matt has apparently done this without pushing the boundaries of safety. He became the first to offer a night aerobatic act in the Beech 18, which brought accolades from the airshow community and its supporters.

Film Review

Five documentary films were reviewed as part of this study. The first film, *Codfellas, the Family Business*, is about three generations of a family that owned and operated fish and chips shops in Essex, United Kingdom. The film is narrated by Kosta Panayi, the grandson of the company founder who had emigrated from Cypress. There were in-depth interviews representing each generation, including one that describes the innovative way the interviewee turned her shop into a more upscale eatery without upsetting family members who supported the traditional family business model.

Charcuterie is the story of a Texas couple who were inspired to start their own business after a trip to Spain ignited their love of fresh meats, produce and the “slow food” movement.

Lawrence and LeeAnn Kocurek managed to combine his executive chef talents with her business skills to launch an exclusive gourmet meats company. The film highlights the family’s mutual respect, satisfaction in their work and their commitment to succeed.

The Undertaking is the story of Thomas Lynch, a small-town funeral director who also wrote an award-winning book about his profession. His father started the company and his sons are continuing in the business. This is a moving documentary due to the reverence that the family displays as it conducts business, as though they have a spiritual calling in their occupation. The younger generation takes its cues from the authoritative older generation and family trust is a major factor in the business’ success.

American Wine Story centers on a cross-section of wine producers in the United States and highlights the story of a 38-year-old vintner who dies just weeks before the fall harvest. Jimi Brooks’ sister moves from another state to take over the business until his son comes of age to inherit it. His neighbors and business competitors join efforts to get his grapes harvested and keep his operation afloat. This film focuses on the family dynamics of sibling accommodation, dedication to the family business and family adaptability.

The final film *Road* was closer to the subject matter of the Younkin documentary than any of the previous films reviewed. It is the story of an Irish family which races motorcycles, the most dangerous of all motorsports. Racers compete on closed country roads at speeds of up to 200 miles per hour. Ireland and the Isle of Man are two of the few locations in the world where the sport still survives. The film focuses on two generations of brothers who have dominated this

sport as they navigate its triumphs and tragedies. This film in particular documents the psychological factors the riders go through dealing with the fatal crashes of two family members and the tension between the fear of becoming the next victim and the need of upholding the family tradition. This is a similar struggle within the Younkin film.

Hypotheses

This qualitative study builds upon previous research examining family business with specific emphasis on succession and adaptability when the loss of family members is experienced. This study focuses on how surviving family members rely on resilience, self-efficacy, trust and satisfaction to maintain both business and personal success in the airshow industry. These topics are framed through the field of performance theory, performance psychology and utilization of the Family Climate Scales to format questions. This is accomplished by using in-depth interviews in a documentary film. Because family business research is still an emerging field and no research was found linking it with performance theory or performance psychology, this is a study that will add a unique perspective to that body of work.

HQ1: Members of the Younkin family business develop resilience in coping with loss because of family dynamics based on a shared passion that motivates the individuals within the company than family business members that do not share a professional passion.

HQ2: Members of the Younkin family business demonstrate high levels of self-efficacy when they receive positive reinforcement from airshow industry officials, their peers and the audience than family businesses members that do not have positive reinforcement from industry, competitors and customers.

HQ3: Members of the Younkin family business experience higher levels of trust because of intergenerational leadership than family businesses that do not have such leadership.

HQ4: Members of the Younkin family experience high levels of satisfaction because of the family business reputation and the surviving members motivation to continue building it in preparation for the next generation than family members who do not contribute to the business reputation.

The most important aspect of this study is to examine the motivation of individual family members in preserving the family business name and continuing to look toward the future to ensure the company's success in the airshow industry. It will also address the issue of succession through the unusual case of the loss of two generations within a short time span.

Methodology

This research project is a case study using the qualitative interpretive paradigm research method. Since this project culminates in the creation of a documentary film, the majority of research will be conducted using intensive, unstructured, one-on-one interviews. An unstructured interview format will allow the interviewer the freedom to ask a variety of questions to obtain the required information (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; see Appendix A for examples of questions). The study will begin in September, 2017 and will finish in September, 2020.

The four categories of subjects to be interviewed are Younkin family members, airshow industry officials, aerobatic pilots and friends. This case study will research the Younkin family business history and will detail their successes within the aviation industry. Case studies have four important characteristics: the particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive. The particularistic form of a case study focuses on an environment, phenomena or program. The case

study for this research will look at the Younkin family business history up to current time and will focus on family dynamics and shared values as crucial underpinnings for the company's success.

The descriptive form of a case study is to have a detailed description of the topic in the final project. This will be accomplished through a 52-minute documentary film about the Younkin family. The heuristic segment of a case study helps readers/viewers understand what is being studied. This project will study an established, specialized family business operating in a high-risk industry. Lastly, in the inductive form of a case study, this project will attempt to prove that family climate, intergenerational authority and shared values create a positive foundation for company succession and longevity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The research of this film is conducted in the field with in-depth interviews and supporting video segments. These are enhanced with archival images and film. Design of the script and film evolved as new information was discovered and incorporated where appropriate. Most films are represented by a three-act structure and this documentary will be no exception. The first act will introduce Matt and Jim Younkin, surviving members of the family. In addition, Jim's first restoration, a 1928 Travel Air biplane will be introduced as it serves as a train for the film. The antique aircraft ties three generations of the Younkin family together as they either worked on it or learned to fly in it. This first act captures real time family interaction, which has traditionally been hard to research and gives histories of both Jim and the biplane.

The second act will give historical background of the family members, including those who are now deceased. The third and final act will return to the current living family members and will focus on their relationships after the tragedies and their plans for the future.

In creating this documentary, the filmmaker/researcher decides which visual elements will best tell the story. The interviews provide most of the information used in the film. Cover footage is taken from various locations including the hangars of both Matt and Jim, the Arkansas Air Museum, the Experimental Aircraft Association's AirVenture at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, air shows and the annual Antique Airplane Association fly-in at Blakesburg, Iowa. Historical images are from the Younkins' personal family collection, museums and private collections with special permission. Archival footage also comes from the personal collection of the Younkins promotional tapes and home movies, and private collections with special permission. Treatments of the open, segues and keys have a theme that is cohesive with the film title for overall continuity. Narration is provided by a professional air show announcer. Music is acquired from the university's student account at Artlist.io.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as the field of family business research continues to evolve, particularly in respect to where it may intersect with performance theory and performance psychology, it is expected that this research project serves to illuminate this unique convergence through the telling of the Younkins family story. The film provides specific examples of intergenerational authority and attention to needs, two critical measurements in assessing family business climate, through the use of photos and home movies. Younkins children are shown playing with airplane-themed toys, mimicking their parents in the hangar and at later ages building and flying model airplanes together. This familial cycle of interaction has carried across three generations and is currently in the fourth generation. Personal interviews also attest to this aviation inculcation. In discussing both personal and familial goals as they built their aviation careers, the

Younkins provide insight into how their aviation business has not only survived, but thrived, even after the loss of two key family members. In first hand accounts, the film's subjects discuss how they adapted to the loss by embracing additional skills to safeguard the business. Amanda, learned the mechanical expertise to assemble and disassemble aircraft and she learned to wingwalk. Matt developed a proficiency at aerobatics in a short time frame in order to fill a financial need to honor contracts to keep the business solvent. Simultaneously, Jim provided support both emotionally and physically as Matt was acquiring his skills. In the study of business management, these actions are considered to be examples of resource-based theory, where physical capital, human capital and organizational capital are utilized in order to keep a sustainable edge in the marketplace. It is also expected that through the film, researchers will gain better understanding of the family business dynamics displayed by the Younkins as they developed resilience, relied on trust and experienced a high degree of satisfaction in careers that demanded excellence with each and every performance.

In creating this film, I, too, like the Younkins, had to learn to adapt. Much of this ability was learned in the Documentary I and II courses. Learning to create a film with another person allows for creative differences and collaboration. As filmmaking partners, one learns to make the most with the various skills set of each. The complex stages of creating a joint film as graduate course work before actually creating a solo thesis film, was crucial in my development as a filmmaker.

Before this film was complete, Jim Younkin passed away. I did extensive research and shot interviews with him at the beginning of this project due to his age and in the event of his death, but there was a finality in the realization that I could never tap into him again for additional

information. Bobby's wife, Jeanie was reluctant to appear in the film and I had to rely on the relationship I built with Matt to help persuade her to participate. Her words would be critical in addressing the loss of both her husband and daughter, but due to the emotional nature of this part of the story, I had to be sensitive and compassionate in the interview.

Due to COVID-19, my editor was quarantined for three weeks over the end of November into December which was the critical time to complete the film in order to graduate in 2020. The proverbial "silver lining" in this incident was that Matt Younkin received the highest award from the International Council of Air Shows on December 10, 2020 and the film was able to include this before the final edit.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Examples of Interview Questions

Questions for Younkin family members:

1. What led you into the field of aviation in the first place?
2. What types of activities did you do as a young person that led you towards it?
3. What skill set did you rely on to help you achieve success?
4. Describe (person's) personality and how it fits into the airshow business?
5. How does the airshow industry consider which acts to include in a show?
6. How does the airshow industry view success? How do you see it?
7. How did/do you handle the deaths of your father/sister as you continue the family business?
8. How did relationships with other family members help or hinder?
9. Did Younkin Airshows have a succession plan in place prior to any deaths?
10. Had you even discussed it informally, casually in passing?
11. What values were passed from previous generations that have made a significant contribution to your career/reputation?
12. Can you share some anecdotal information about family members that exhibit shared family resilience, trust or satisfaction?
13. (Based on the Family Climate Scales) Matt, how much influence did/does grandfather Jim have on the way you make decisions for the business today? Do you conduct business in the same way your father Bobby did?

Questions for colleagues and friends:

1. How have the Younkin family had an impact in aviation? Can you give specific examples?
2. How would you describe their family climate as they conducted their air show business?
3. Can you share any anecdotal information to this effect?
4. Bobby Younkin has been described as being among the best aerobatic pilots in the world---how is this measured/determined in the industry?
5. What are some of the personality traits that the Younkins exhibit that have contributed to their handling of the tragedies and their accomplishments?
6. Do you feel that their satisfaction with their career path has been a critical part of their success?
7. In a continual push to keep air show acts “fresh” for the audience, do you think safety is marginalized to a degree? Why or Why not?
8. Amanda Younkin was 25 when she died--how did her brief life impact the air show industry?

Appendix B

Film Script

Artistry in Air: The Story of the Younkins

OPEN: (Black screen with QUOTE)

“The Younkin family has touched directly or indirectly almost everybody in aviation.”
-Doug Rozendaal

(Opening segment with Matt flying the biplane that Jim and his dad restored and he took his check-ride in)

VO) As Matt Younkin flies his 1928 Travel Air 4000-- he connects deeply with the men in his family who came before him---the ones who lovingly restored, rebuilt and flew her and in doing so, forged reputations that would make the Younkin name iconic in the world of aviation. His grandfather Jim, born just a year after this airplane rolled out of the factory, grew up during the ‘Golden Age’ of aviation and selected this plane as his first historical restoration. Matt’s father, Bobby worked alongside his dad and when the aircraft was finished, took his turn in the cockpit on her test flight. Knowing what this airplane meant to his family, Matt soloed in her, the day he turned sixteen.

MATT) 40:04) “... it was 19 degrees outside and I bundled up in every layer of clothes I could put on and then put coveralls and a jacket over the top and 40:25) the first flight we did around the pattern was terrible. (photo) 40:33) and uh, my instructor said, “OK, that’s it--let’s go back to the hangar.” And I thought, well, shoot, I’ve screwed this up, 40:46) and he told me to stop on the taxiway and he got out and said, “Well, you’re on your own.” I said, “Are you kidding--after that? He said, “No, I was waiting for that. We would have flown for an hour until you did that because I wanted to make sure that you could recover this airplane after a terrible landing. And so he sent me out 41:42) and anyway I made the best landing I’ve ever made before or since in that Travel Air.”

VO) It was the Travel Air biplane that sparked the aviation dreams of a young Jim Younkin (photo) who grew into a gifted engineer, inventor and award-winning builder. The beautiful aircraft not only worked its charm on Bobby, who became one of the best aerobatic pilots in the world but it also launched the career of Matt--a popular air show performer, who continues that legacy. Three generations are tied together by this antique airplane, which served as the original muse for their craftsmanship and innovation, and as a result helped elevate their aviation expertise into an artform.

Animated TITLE appears) Artistry in Air: The Story of the Younkins (music up full)

Full Screen black-QUOTE) *“The Travel Air to me is one of the purest forms of aviation that a person can experience--it’s an incredible piece of history.”*

-Matt Younkin

VO) When the Travel Air Manufacturing Company was established in 1925 by aviation pioneers Walter Beech, Clyde Cessna and Lloyd Stearman,(photos) it initially built a series of predominantly open-cockpit biplanes, like the Younkin’s. The fledgling aviation company was hustling to fill an increasing demand for aircraft in both the business and private sectors and for use on the air racing circuit. In 1929, Bentonville, Arkansas native Louise Thaden, who had been hired by Beech as a salesperson, flew her Travel Air biplane to victory in the first women’s cross-country air race, beating famed aviatrix Amelia Earhart. (historic footage of race) Including Thaden, seven of the twenty pilots, chose to fly Travel Air planes in the race which had been nicknamed the ‘Powder Puff Derby,’ by humorist Will Rogers. Travel Air had the reputation for being reliable, fast and showy. Those same qualities were also valued by barnstormers who flew into rural areas, performing stunts and selling rides to the crowds that would inevitably show up for the air spectacle. (historical footage) Young Jim Younkin was among the spectators in the 1930s. The thrill he felt watching that day propelled his dream for restoring and rebuilding historic aircraft so that future generations would be linked to aviation’s glorious, innovative past. (pics of restoration or beauty shots of plane in hangar)

FULL SCREEN Black w/ QUOTE)

“Grandpa is the smartest man I ever met--he can do anything once he puts his mind to it. He was trained as an electrical engineer, but he prides himself as a gageteer.”

-Matt Younkin, pilot

VO) For James Ray Younkin, the tinkering began early on. Born in Fairfield, Iowa, (Photo) the year of Louise Thaden’s victory, he grew up in a time when the novel sound of an airplane engine could make people stop what they were doing.

JIM) 00:06:59) *“Anytime an airplane flew over, everybody came out of their homes to see the airplane fly over and aviation from an early age began to be part of my life.”*

VO) Jim, along with older brothers, Bill and Bob grew up building and racing model airplanes--a popular hobby for the youth of the 1930s and 40s.(Comet Model footage) Jim dreamed of soaring through the skies (photo on trike) and then at age five, his dream came true because his dad owned the local Ford dealership. (photos)+(footage from Oshkosh of Tri-motor)

JIM BITE) 00:59:00) “The Ford Motor Company was sending a Ford tri-motor, an early airliner from town to town. So we traveled up to the town from which it was going to depart and I got to ride back to Fairfield in the Ford Tri-motor. But my brother--eight years older than I, got to ride in the airplane that flew alongside the Ford tri-motor and what do you think it was? It was a Travel Air like the one I possess even now. I was envious of him getting to fly in that open cock-pit bi-plane ‘cause I sure knew what they were!”

VO) From that very moment, Jim was captivated by the idea of flying. He continued building and flying model airplanes--and even won a model airplane design competition sponsored by his hometown newspaper. (photo) He built a replica of his winning entry years later and it is still treasured by the family today. (Matt & Kim w/ model) Like most of his peers, Jim’s heroes were not only real life aviators, like Charles Lindbergh and Jimmy Doolittle, (Photos) but also the fictional ones.

(Up Nat sound of Radio show “The Adventures of Jimmy Allen- boy pilot Episode 001)

JIM BITE) 00:07:01) “Every afternoon after school, we’d all run home to see Jimmie Allen and his flying aces--to hear them on the radio and then there was a time when some aviators set up a field right on the edge of Fairfield, put up some bleachers and they put on an airshow--these were barnstormers--aviation was the “high-tech” thing of the day and it really drew the interest of everybody.”

VO) Competing with Jim’s love of airplanes, was his passion for music. He learned to play his brother’s clarinet and after his family’s move to Fayetteville, Arkansas, he picked up the saxophone and bass sax. He marched with the high school band and moonlighted in a dance orchestra for extra money. (photos) With the start of World War II, his brothers joined the Navy and trained as pilots. (photo/footage) Jim graduated the year after the war ended and enlisted in the Army, where he landed a coveted spot in their dance orchestra. He also learned to fly in a J-3 Piper Cub, many of which were left over from military pilot training.(historical footage) Using the GI bill to attend the University of AR, (photo 1951) Jim received his degree in electrical engineering and later taught in the department. (yearbook photo)

MATT) 32:30) “My grandpa’s most cherished award that he ever got was the Golden Chicken Award. When he was a professor at the University of Arkansas, they gave the Golden Chicken award to the--basically the biggest jerk of a professor in the department--and the kids all voted.(award photo) It usually took 2 or 3 years to be eligible and my grandpa won the first year he was teaching.”(yearbook photo)

VO) Longing to combine his engineering training with aviation, Jim took a job with what was then an electronics leader in aviation, Collins Radio. At the suggestion of a co-worker, he began work on a low-cost solid state gyro slaving mechanism making it easier for a pilot to maintain his

directional heading. By 1962, Jim was working for Mitchell Industries in Texas, where he developed the Century 1 through 4 series autopilots. Because they were light-weight, low-cost and more reliable than the World War II era technology, they revolutionized the industry. A majority of autopilots in general aviation today are based on these Younkin designs.

DOUG) 05:53?) "I have a 1978 Baron that has a Century 3 Series Autopilot that was designed in 1965 some 50 or 60 years ago and is still a very capable autopilot."

SUSAN Dusenbury) 11:50) "I appreciate what he did--I've used that heading bug on the airlines throughout my career and boy, what an invention that was! To just reach up there and turn a knob and have the airplane go where you want it to."

VO) By the late 70s, Jim retired from avionics and returned to his first love--the airplanes from his boyhood. When his brother Bob brought him what would be his first restoration project--the 1928 Travel Air 4000--Jim was smitten.

JIM) 33:09) "When I was a young boy--there were Travel Air biplanes and I fell in love with the Travel Air...so naturally I wanted to build a Travel Air."

VO) And, build it he did. Even with help from his son Bobby and brother Bob, the workload involved in restoring and re-engineering the aircraft from its life as a crop-duster back to its original configuration was immense. But the teamwork paid off and when it came test flight day, each Younkin took a turn in the cockpit.

MATT) 02:22) "Bob flew the airplane around Springdale airport and he landed and left it running and handed the helmet and goggles to my grandpa who got in and flew around the airport and when he got done, he left it running and he gave the helmet and goggles to my dad and my dad flew it around the airport---so on its first flight, it had three different pilots basically before the oil ever cooled off."

VO) The Herculean restoration was praised by many people in the aviation community. In fact, the beautiful biplane served as the backdrop when Jim and his second wife Ada were married in a 1920s-themed wedding and flew off in it.(wedding photo)

VO) Not long after, Jim began looking for an easier project and decided to build a replica of the Travel Air Mystery Ship, so called because it was kept under wraps until it made its debut on the racing circuit in 1929. Using original factory plans, Jim built the aircraft and flew it to the Beechcraft Manufacturing Corporation where he showed it off to Walter Beech's widow, Olive who was the CEO of the company.(photo) He also took it to the Experimental Aircraft Association's fly-in at Oshkosh, WI, where it wowed the crowds.

JIM) 21:40) "When I took the Mystery Ship there, they had never seen anything like it in that day and time. It was the fanciest home-built of its day."

VO) He celebrated the success of his racing replica by going to a local bar with some buddies where the conversation quickly centered on another pilot's ambitious plan to build a replica of the famous Howard DGA-6 dubbed *Mr. Mulligan*.

JIM) 22:00) "And I thought--and I'd had a few beers--and I said, "huh--I think I'll build one of those. As soon as I said those words--it was now 'cast in stone.'"

VO) Jim promptly got to work. Since the one-of-a-kind pioneering racer had crashed in 1936, there were no original blueprints or plans to follow. It took Jim and his brother Bob 8,000 hours to construct the replica based on existing photographs and drawings. When it made its debut at Oshkosh in 1982, just like the Mystery ship replica had done, it captivated the crowds. (Up nat sound of plane whizzing by, engine roaring) Even today, *Mr. Mulligan* is still a crowd pleaser. Jim's friend and fellow pilot Doug Rozendaal has flown the airplane several times to the annual Antique Airplane Association's fly-in at Blakesburg, Iowa. (various shots of Blakesburg)

DOUG) 03:03 "This is the belle of the ball here in Blakesburg. I've had numerous people come up to me and several other times I've had this airplane and say to me this is their favorite airplane--number one favorite airplane of all time. 01:50) The Howard folks(Benny Howard photo) made money winning air races so they could fund their commercial aviation venture and this is the airplane that brought home the bacon to make that happen."

VO) He is quick to point out that while the airplane is an important part of aviation history, there's much more it conveys.

DOUG) 02:25) It also tells the story of what a guy in AR can do when he puts his mind to it. Jim is incredibly industrious, and an artisan and an engineer. He brought those things together to build an airplane like this. It's just really an amazing testament to his determination and ability."

VO) These annual fly-ins have a family reunion atmosphere so Jim and his wife Ada look forward to seeing old friends and colleagues. But it's Jim Younkin and *Mr. Mulligan* that truly hold court. (Blakesburg video) When it's not turning heads at fly-ins, the *Mr. Mulligan* sits on display at the Arkansas Air Museum in Fayetteville, Arkansas--a museum Jim helped establish and visits often. (jim telling David about planes, museum) To no one's surprise, his retirement hobby turned into a business called Historic Aviation and he operates it from his hangar in Springdale, AR.(Jim going to work, looking over engine) It paved the way for more projects; among them his famous Mystery Pacer, a Boeing Stearman dubbed *Goliath*, and in 1989, he designed a hybrid of sorts called a mullicoupe. With elements of both a monocoupe 90 and a *Mr. Mulligan*, only four of these unique aircraft were created. Mark Holliday owns one and periodically flies in from his Colorado home to talk airplanes with Jim. (footage from Matt's hangar)

Mark Holliday) 03:21 “a mullicoupe is a little airplane with a big engine that goes fast. And uh, that’s what attracted me, I guess you could call it a childhood dream.”

(Mullicoupe flies off)

VO) In 1997, Jim was inducted into the EAA’s Vintage Aircraft Association’s Hall of Fame. It’s president Susan Dusenbury says her organization couldn’t find a better ambassador than Jim Younkin. (photo of Susan & Jim eating sandwich)

SUSAN) 01:19) “Jim is an endearing genius. I love him--we all love him--we love Jim for what he’s done, for the person that he is--we love him for his involvement in this--we all consider him a friend and he’s at the very heart of the vintage aircraft movement--the very heart of it. 05:23) Jim set the bar on craftsmanship and who would not be inspired by the Mystery Ship, Mr. Mulligan or by the Mullicoupe?”

VO) Jim launched his third career in 1999, founding the TruTrak Flight Systems company in order to design experimental-category avionics. It introduced the first digital autopilot and standard autopilot servo to the general aviation market. Another first came in 2001, when Jim was inducted into the Arkansas Aviation Hall of Fame along with WalMart heiress and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art founder Alice Walton.(photo/program cover) She was honored for leading the effort to make the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport a reality and Jim was honored for his numerous accomplishments in avionics, aviation restoration and re-creation.

VO) Jim sold TruTrak to his partner in 2013, but kept his hangar located next door to the company.

He can often be found here, working with his tools, checking over his airplanes and their engines and occasionally still flying. Frequently, he shows up at his grandson’s hangar, giving advice or waiting to be called on to lend a hand. (Matt’s hangar video)

KRISTI) 10:52) “He comes around all the time just to play with something or his excuse is “I just needed to measure something” and he’ll get in and be pulling parts off and changing and tweaking and he loves to do that kind of stuff--but he’s always right you know--it’s always whatever he comes up with is great!”

MATT) 26:20) “I don’t think he’s ever seen a task that he couldn’t figure out a way to accomplish--that’s what his gift in life is and he’ll be very blunt in telling you that. But he also calls it his curse because at the same time, he can’t turn his brain off. He can’t sleep at night because he’s always up designing something in his head...or fixing somebody else’s problems...He’s just always, always fixing something one way or the other and uh, he’s well-respected in aviation for that reason.”

FULL SFULL SCREEN BLACK w/ QUOTE)

“Aerobatics is kind of like an aerial circus--people come to shows to see the impossible.”

-Bobby Younkin, aerobatic pilot

(Up nat. Sound from air show announcer Bobby Younkin in Lear Jet)

VO) When Bobby Younkin tore through the skies at 400 miles per hour in his Learjet and began his aerobatic maneuvers, it turned the air show world on its ear. It was a first--a feat that had to win special FAA approval and would place him in a different class from other air show performers. During the week, Bobby was a Learjet charter pilot--on weekends, he was an air show rock star. Bobby just seemed to be a natural, his dad remembers thinking.

JIM) 00:05) “Bobby went up with me in the Decathlon--he had about 10 hours of training from the local instructor of the airport at that point in time and so I did a slow roll and he said, “ You came out down on the right. Let me try it. And he did a 4-point roll which is harder yet and I thought, oh, maybe this is for somebody with a special gift, which I don’t think I have.”

VO) Jim and Bobby built and flew model airplanes as he was growing up, so it was easy for him to transfer those skills to a full-scale airplane. And later, as a young working pilot, flying freight in a Twin Beechcraft, Bobby came up with the idea of turning that aerial workhorse into an air show performer. In 1989, he found just the right plane, modified it and began winning national acclaim for his stunning performances.

UP NAT FULL Bobby in BEECH act)

VO) Other acts would follow, including aerobatics in a military trainer AT-6, and in a replica of the Curtis Pitts’ 1940’s air show plane, *Samson*. With the launch of his *Samson* act, and as an homage to one of his childhood heroes, air racer Roscoe Turner and his pet lion Gilmore (photo)--Bobby got a lion cub and named it Samson.

JEANIE) Clip #1) 00:58) “I was looking in the *Thrifty Nickle*, a little local newspaper and said “Bobby, there’s an ad in here for a 3-month old lion cub and so he grabbed that thing out of my hand and I didn’t think anything more about it. 01:15) “And he comes back that evening with a little dog carrier and that lion cub in it...and he said I looked at him with a dead-pan face and said, “where are you and that lion gonna live?”

JIM) 07:05) “I don’t know how you explain that--it’s not a very practical thing--the lion was a little cub when Bobby bought it and they would wrestle and then now we’ve got a full grown lion in the backyard and Bobby would be out there wrestling with the lion.” (home video, tape 7-11, 03:07)

JEANIE) 03:07) “The way that Samson and Bobby bonded was amazing. Bobby was actually his “person”--Samson didn’t really like anybody else. 03:15) Samson would come up and get in his lap, even when he got up to 450 pounds.”

VO) Unlike Turner’s Gilmore, who was equipped with a special parachute,(photo) Samson only flew once, the day Bobby brought him home, after that he was grounded. (home video)

VO) Bobby’s reputation as a pilot and his dad’s reputation in antique aircraft converged in 1995 when Hollywood cast both Bobby and the Travel Air biplane in a World War II era movie, *The Tuskegee Airmen*.

MOVIE clip up Full)

VO) Bobby and the biplane were not alone on the silver screen. Movie credits also were bestowed on Jim’s Travel Air Mystery Ship. Because it was the only replica of its kind still flying at the time, it was used in the 1988 movie, *Pancho Barnes*, starring Valerie Bertanelli. The aircraft also served as a set piece in the 1991 film, *The Rocketeer*. (Flim clips) The beautiful planes Jim had created certainly contributed to his notoriety, but his son’s extraordinary talent was beginning to eclipse his own.

JIM)15:11) “When Bobby first started doing aerobatics and he would be introduced as Jim Younkin’s son--As time went on and he became more famous, pretty soon I was introduced as Bobby Younkin’s father (laughs) I don’t care about that.”

VO) In 2002, at the top of his career, Bobby teamed up with veteran air show performers Jimmie Franklin and Jim LeRoy to form the *X-Team* and created an act known as the “*Masters of Disaster*.” The name would prove to be prophetic.

(Up Nat sound Greg Koontz in hangar)

VO) Fellow aerobatic pilot Greg Koontz, who has been a friend of the Younkins for years, said Bobby was upbeat about the thrilling new act.

GREG) 02:50) “He told me--’Greg, I’m livin’ the dream--I’m flying with my heroes’ and he was very excited about that. But as a personality, he didn’t have the ego of air show pilots--you know, a lot of air show pilots think they’re movie stars all of a sudden and you know it’s a small business really, a lot of people appreciate your flying, but we’re not NASCAR, you know.”

VO) High-energy and action-packed, the *Masters of Disaster* act shattered the airshow mold. It combined exquisite aerobatics with a mock dog fight, pyrotechnics and loud rock music. It was THE act to see. But, there were plenty of people who were critical--saying it pushed beyond the limits of safety. One of them was Jim Younkin.

JIM) 03:17) “At the end of the airshow I said to Bobby, ‘It’s not a matter of if there will be a mid-air--it’s a matter of when.’ I said ‘it’s too dangerous--you should not be doing this.’”

VO) Just a few months later, on July 11, 2005 at an airshow in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, time ran out for the *Masters of Disaster*. Jimmie Franklin’s son, Kyle was in the announcer’s booth, narrating the performance.

KYLE) 17:00) “Essentially, the way I view everything that happened that day was Bobby & my dad--they were coming in the D-manuver--both realized at the exact same time that this is a bad thing--I don’t want to be here--and they both flew very similar to each other and as they both realized this is not good, I’m out, so they both avoided--they broke off--what they were supposed to do and tried to get out of there but they both avoided to the same spot and they were both killed instantly. And, uh, a lot of people called it “the crash heard round the world” because it was a very dramatic accident and when word got out that it was Jimmy Franklin and Bobby Younkin, it just devastated the air show industry.”

VO) What was even more difficult was that Bobby’s daughter Amanda, whom Kyle was dating, was also at the airshow and was reeling from the loss of her father.

KYLE) “I didn’t know how to comfort her, ‘cause I had just lost my own father, too.”

VO) Despite the double tragedy, Kyle and Amanda would go on to marry just a few months later (wedding photo) and in time would create their own air show act together. Theirs was a union of two of the best known families in the air show business--a fulfillment of their famous fathers’ legacies. And, though their love story would echo the triumphs of their heritage---it would experience a catastrophe of its own.

FULL Screen Black QUOTE)

“Amanda was just everybody’s sweetheart.”

-Greg Koontz, aerobatic pilot

KYLE) 4:39) “I never knew Bobby had a daughter until around 2000 when her and her mother came to OshKosh--they apparently came pretty regularly, but I never put 2 & 2 together. 7:08) Since we’d both grown up in the air show business, we really clicked there.” (dating pics)

VO) It wasn't long before Amanda and Kyle were dating and spending as much time with each other as they could either at air shows or on free weekends. That was when Kyle was introduced to Bobby's lion.(dating pics)

KYLE) 11:21) Amanda and I would go out on a date down in AR and I'd end up taking her home. 11:35) he had a pet lion in the backyard. 11:45) that was definitely eerie and different--whenever you bring the girl home, about to kiss her goodnight and all of a sudden you hear this loud lion roar that's only about 20 feet away (lion roar)..& it's like don't make dad mad 'cause he can feed you to the lion and there won't be any evidence."(Laughs)

VO) Despite the lion's protests, early one morning, Kyle flew his airplane from his home in Neosho, MO and landed on the grass airstrip in front of Amanda's house. Rousing Amanda from bed, her mother Jeanie, who'd been in on the secret landing, watched from the house as Kyle presented her daughter with a bouquet of roses and then dropped to one knee. (home video)

JEANIE) Clip #2 08:20) "She was not expecting it--it was THE most romantic thing I had ever witnessed. It was just beautiful. Kyle just adored her and she worshipped the ground he walked on."

VO) After the wedding, just months after their fathers fatal crash, Kyle, Amanda and Matt made the decision to carry on their families legacies. Kyle was already an air show performer and Amanda was handling logistics and scheduling, but Matt had to make the career decision of his life.

MATT) 13:55) "The reason for going into the air show business or getting proficient in aerobatics and trying to do this was not because I had something to prove. There was actually a financial need to try to repay some of the air show deposits that my dad had taken on the following season that he wasn't able to fulfill. And it was easier and better for me to do it in the airplane than to try and figure out how to do it by other means."

VO) The "Sons of Legends" as Kyle and Matt were known, relied on Amanda heavily during this time as they focused on their flying.

MATT) 15:58) "She had WAY more personality than either Kyle or I did--probably combined. Amanda was the one everybody loved. They tolerated us you know, but she was kind of --the resin that kept us together as a family. She booked the shows, she traveled with Kyle, she helped him put the airplanes together and she was a licensed pilot. She would ferry the Super Cub shows for Kyle--she just kinda did what needed to be done."

GREG) 07:28) “you don’t see mechanics that pretty very often you know (chuckles) but she was really working on the airplane--it wasn’t a pose--I walked up and took an Iphone picture of her ‘cause I just said “that’s Amanda right there.” (photo)

VO) While she was proficient in airplanes, she was passionate about animals. Having grown up with an assortment of both domestic and exotic varieties (Matt leading her on a pony as toddler)

(Up nat sound, Amanda & parots) Amanda loved just about anything with four legs, particularly her dogs. They went everywhere with her, including on the airshow circuit. (photos or home video)

JEANIE) 10:10) “ She had this special dog--a golden retriever named Jackson and I think he was the smartest dog I’ve ever seen. He was so loyal to her--amazing and they were just like best buddies.”

VO) Amanda’s other passion was to become a wing-walker. Matt tried to talk her out of it, and Kyle also tried to dissuade her, but because he had started out as a wing-walker for his father, his words didn’t carry much weight. In 2009, the same year her father was posthumously inducted into the Air Show Hall of Fame, Amanda got her big break. Filling in for Kyle’s regular wing-walker who couldn’t perform, she took to it immediately, finding it too exhilarating an experience to pass up. This air show sweetheart delighted in transforming into her swashbuckling persona known as “Scandalous Scarlett,” in the act called *Pirated Skies*.

Up full music of the act)

KYLE) 38:01) “She was more of a showman in some ways than Bobby was or even Matt. 39:17) When she took over the act, it just clicked--it really did--and her showmanship and her wingwalking abilities--39:40) she knew exactly as the wingwalker, she would know what looked good up there.”

VO) They received rave reviews from fans and fellow pilots alike and appeared on the cover of aviation magazines.(photo) This golden couple’s career trajectory seemed as limitless as the skies in which they flew. Then...on March 12, 2011, at an air show In Brownsville, Texas, the unthinkable happened.

(Up nat sound--Brownsville Newsclip from youtube)

KYLE) 48:48) “We had just finished doing I believe the tork roll maneuver. 49:34) we came outof the maneuver and as soon as I pulled and got the nose up, I felt the engine quit--just instantly (snaps fingers)--I felt everything quit and I knew immediately of all times this is THE worst possible spot because she’s on the top wing, generating drag(??) and was feeling if I did anything, tried to make a turn at all--we were done. And

so I saw this little open area that was only you know, maybe 40 x40 foot circle in the midst of all the brush and everything and so I'm holding the airplane as long as I can to try to get down there, to give her time to get down and to just try to just set us down in a good spot and not hard.(??) From the time the engine quit to the time we hit the ground was 13 seconds.(??) I remember thinking that it wasn't that bad and then the next thing I remember is opening my eyes and having fire all in my face and I kind of closed my eyes again and I realized I had a hold of Amanda and we're in the fire, but why can't I get her out?"

VO) The couple was transported to a nearby hospital, but as rescue workers knew from the crash site--Amanda's injuries were much worse than Kyle's. Though she fought hard to survive, after 76 days, she succumbed to her injuries and passed away at age 25. Her death stunned the aviation community and brought an outpouring of sympathy.

GREG) 06:20) "Amanda was like a--another daughter to me and uh, (emotional) I thought a lot of her. I uh, the whole incident almost made me quit. I've lost a lot of friends in this business, and uh, that one just touched too close."

VO) Even in her all too short life, Amanda accomplished more than many young people her age would have. In gracing the skies with her breath-taking performance...an aerial ballet more fitting of a princess than a pirate, she realized a cherished dream. And in doing so, she inspired many people, especially young girls. Amanda's brilliance as an air show performer, her approachable personality and her love of aviation, demonstrated that there was never a dream that was too big to attain.

Full Screen Black- QUOTE)

"Matt's a naturally gifted pilot, so he doesn't let the air show noteriety go to his head--he's really just a down-to-earth guy."

Kristi Younkin

(UP nat sound, squealing pig and Matt rides it around)

VO) Matt grew up in an idyllic setting for a young boy--acreage for the Younkin's array of animals and a grass airstrip in front of the house where he could watch his dad takeoff and land.(home video) Like his father and grandfather, Matt grew up flying model airplanes and honing his skills via radio control. (up nat sound of model airplane flying-home video) His interest in aviation led him to develop a special bond with his grandfather.

MATT) 24:05) "Every Sat. morning we would go over to Grandpa's hangar, you know one way or the other and he would make something for me on his tools, --it didn't matter what kind of an airplane I requested, there was a pretty good chance that he was gonna make it in 10 or 15 minutes and I'd have something to play with the rest of the day."

VO) Matt and Jim's weekly get-togethers became routine over the years and are still honored today. More often than not, though, Jim finds his way over to his grandson's hangar. (Jim chatting, sitting)

KRISTI) 08:41) "Grandpa and I are kindred spirits--his words and I agree. He will regularly come over, have a cup of coffee in the morning and just gang up on Matt with me--'cause we'll start talking about something we know Matt doesn't agree with and just "poke the bear, poke the bear" and it's so much fun."

VO) Along with a good sense of humor, Matt inherited a love of music from both his dad and granddad. He played the trombone in high school and college and would often join Bobby and Jim in an informal jazz trio.

(Up sound Jazz trio-home movies)

VO) Though he and Amanda had traveled to air shows with Bobby, Matt never planned to follow in his father's footsteps but was focused instead on becoming a commercial airline pilot. He had however, already had a preview of what his airshow career could be.

MATT) 11:42) "I always enjoyed aerobatics--I always enjoyed riding through a routine with my dad in the backseat of a T-6 or whatever else he was flying at the time that he would take me with. 11:55?) And my dad actually took me out in the Super Decathlon and we worked on some slow rolls--which is the basis for most aerobatic maneuvers. 13:08) I transitioned from that into some of the vertical maneuvers and before long I was able to do everything that my dad did in his Decathlon routine that he showcased at Oshkosh and Sun N'Fun and I even came up with a couple of really cool maneuvers that I had just thought--why, I know the airplane will do it--I just got to figure out how--that I added in my routine."

VO) Just months after his father died, Matt performed in his first air show and he hasn't looked back. Although he's a fully-rated flight instructor, he spends up to six months of the year as an air show performer. He does between 22 and 28 shows annually including the biggest and best-known (Matt signs autograph) weeklong shows; *Sun n' Fun* in Lakeland, Florida and the granddaddy of them all, the EAA's *AirVenture* in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. (footage from tarmac of oshkosh) Matt's nighttime aerobatic display in his twin Beech, the first of its kind, is one of the most popular acts. (night footage)

MATT) 20:10) "I'm one of the few 'Type B' personalities in the air show industry. I would consider myself easy-going and not ego-driven and coming home and hugging my wife and holding my kids is WAY more important than dazzling the crowd with my craft on the weekends."

VO) His flying reflects that perspective and he cherishes time spent with his family. His wife, Kristi, who's also a pilot, and their son Robert travel with Matt usually but his daughter Kimberly gets to go primarily when she's out of school in summer. When Kimberly was born, Matt began a new tradition--to get his baby in the air as soon as possible. B (Matt loading baby Robert on plane)

(UP nat sound Kristi gettin out holding baby--"yep first flight and he's 26 hours old")

KRISTI) "By his first birthday, he had 100 hours of flying time and had been to 18 states and Washington D.C.--so this kid was born into aviation."

VO) Even when the family is not traveling, they can be found at their hangar in Siloam Springs, AR. The children playing outside, while Matt works on projects. But he's never too busy to stop and be part of the fun. (video of Matt & kids)

(Up nat. Sound, kids in Beech "flying"---out on tarmac playing with toy airplane)

JEANIE) 5:58) "I couldn't be more proud of him--From the minute he was born, the minute he could hold something--he always had an airplane in his hand, you know, always, it's been his dream. He idolized his dad & Bobby taught him a lot in the airplane field and the way Matt has grown into this incredible man is just (gets teary) brings tears to my eyes."

VO) Even though Matt doesn't 'push the envelope' when it comes to his flying, he had a close call in 2009 when he crashed his grandfather's mullicoupe near his hangar in Siloam Springs.

KRISTI) 14:08) "Matt had a problem with the fuel system, lost the engine and decided to make an emergency landing at the model airplane field. It would have been a great plan however, there was a power line at one end of the field and Matt caught it with one of the gears, so it flipped it--destroyed the plane, put Matt in a pretty bad situation---he's had lasting effects from that accident, but Grandpa decided he was gonna rebuild the mullicoupe and he and Matt have spent the last ten years working on it." (pics of accident)

VO) Matt's goal was to get the plane flying by April of 2019 as a surprise for Jim's 90th birthday celebration. Convinced the airplane would never get off the ground again, Jim couldn't believe his eyes, when Matt and Doug Rosendaal flew it in just in time for the party. (party shots)

KRISTI) 15:37) "He was blown away by the fact that it was there. Then he basically set up shop in front of it and told stories the whole day which was so cool to see."

VO) Surrounded by family, friends and many of the airplanes he had restored and built, Jim was honored in one of his favorite places--the historic wooden hangar of the Arkansas Air Museum. Many guests flew in for the occasion, eager for BBQ, birthday cake and to share stories of Jim. It was a fitting tribute to the man who had made a lifetime of contributions to aviation. (party shots)

CAMELIA SMITH, pilot/friend) ?? "I didn't know I was living next door to an aviation legend, but when I was going to fly in the women's air race, Jim took me up and gave me some pointers beforehand."

(Airplane roars overhead....in Land Rover Commercial excerpt)

VO) Jim's riveting replicas coupled with Matt's piloting skills, continue to be a casting director's dream. Matt flew the Mystery Ship in a 2006 commercial spot for Land Rover. In 2012, he received one of the top honors for air show performers--the Bill Barber Award for Showmanship at EAA's AirVenture. He was the first second-generation recipient, as his dad Bobby received the award in 2004.

Matt VO on the awards in his office/home)"I've got hanging on my wall, I've got a photograph of my dad in the blue and gray show Beech in this beautiful bank. And I've got one of me on the other side after I won my award. These pictures sum up my career, right there."
(Matt looking at the photos, close-ups)

VO) For all his honors, awards and accolades, Matt keeps everything in perspective and doesn't look too far into the future. He takes his children flying, but he isn't necessarily planning to 'pass the torch' to either Kim or Robert. That's a decision that will have to be made by them.

Matt VO) 31:45) "They love flying with mom and dad--it's just incredible. I'm not gonna push either one of my kids to like this--if they do that's great, if they don't I understand."

VO) And, whether they decide to fly professionally or not, the one constant for them will be the 1928 biplane which Matt plans to pass on to them. Their legacy resides in the hum of the engine, the touch of the stick and in the feel of a graceful bank on the wind. Just like their father did, this newest generation of Younkings will have the privilege of experiencing flight in its purest form. From father to son, father to son and daughter, the Younkings' passion for what they do runs deep--defining them as individuals and as a family. From autopilots to air show pilots, they have mastered what many people only dream of and as a result, have become one of the premier families in the industry. With their extraordinary talent and innovative spirit, the Younkings have not only enriched the world of aviation and won their rightful place in its history, but continue to add to its ongoing story by giving us endless reasons to simply marvel at their Artistry in Air. (Matt flying in cockpit) (various cuts of clips from other Younkin family members)

In Memorium: (PHOTO)
Dedicated to Jim Younkin
1929-2019

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