

Larry Hall: From the Farm to the Jet Set

Golden State Jet Founder Builds Success on Personal Service, Attention to Detail

VAN NUYS – Growing up on a farm, Larry Hall was fascinated by the small crop-dusting aircraft that would swoop down over the fields, make a low pass along a row of crops, then tightly bank around 180 degrees and do it again.

“I would see the airplanes and I was really intrigued,” says Hall, who was born in Oklahoma and moved to California’s Central Valley with his family when he was about 7 years old. The boy’s fascination with aircraft amped up to a new level when he got an opportunity to take a ride on a small airplane. “From that moment on, I was hooked.”

Thus began Hall’s path toward a career in flight that would see him leave the crop dusters behind and make a name for himself as a widely respected and trusted pilot for the jet set. His skills and farm-nurtured values eventually provided him the opportunity to start his own jet charter company, Golden State Jet, which operates out of the Van Nuys Airport and prides itself on setting “The Gold Standard” in charter aviation, emphasizing personal service and attention to detail.

His journey illustrates the adage, “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”

As the young Hall became increasingly interested in flying, he was unsure what it would take to become a pilot, but he actively sought ways to prepare for a future in flight. After he graduated high school, he joined the Air Force, figuring it was a good way to be around aircraft.

While serving at Travis Air Force Base, near the end of his enlistment, he saw an ad in the base newspaper from the Napa County Airport seeking firefighting and line service personnel to perform functions like fueling and towing aircraft. He interviewed and took a pre-employment test, and a few days later he received a call telling him he was the only one who had passed the math portion of the test.

He got the job.

“I started getting to know the pilots,” Hall says. “And whenever I could, I was working on getting my private pilot’s license.”

One of the pilots at the airport told him, “When you get your license, come talk to me,” but Hall didn’t have the funds to complete his license quickly.

But, about a month after that conversation with the pilot, opportunity came in the mail, in the form of a Chase gold credit card. His pilot’s license soon followed, and he took up his pilot friend’s offer, becoming a co-pilot of a Piper Chieftain.

Around a year later, in 1985, Hall transferred to the Van Nuys Airport. “I’ve been here ever since.”

Hall says his career has demonstrated the importance of timing, and seizing opportunities when they present themselves. “You have to have the tools to do the job — in a pilot’s case, a license — and then you can look for the opportunities.”

Over the years, he has worked for just about every charter operator at Van Nuys Airport. In the 2000s, he was also doing some construction work on the side. By 2006, he’d made some good money building houses, and bought a Chieftain. Shortly after that, he saw a charter certificate for sale. He bought it and started Golden State Jet.

The company has grown in impressive leaps, as Hall’s knack for blending preparation and opportunity has paid off and enabled Golden State Jet to flourish. Golden State Jet transports its clients in style, aboard high-end private jet aircraft including a Falcon 50, a Lear 60 and a Citation S550. The company emphasizes attention to detail and serves a clientele that values quality, service and, in some cases, privacy and discretion.

The Lancaster resident is proud of the company he has built, and its culture of personal service, based on his own personal values.

“It’s not just a job. We focus on talking to people, providing them the personal attention and service that you would expect from a small business,” Hall says. “From our pilots’ in-depth training, to the impeccable maintenance that our team provides for the aircraft, to the way people are greeted in our office — it’s all about ensuring a great, positive experience for the client.”

There have been some lean years, but even as corporate travel dropped during the recession, Golden State Jet weathered it well thanks in part to its relatively small size.

And now, demand is high for Golden State Jet’s services, prompting Hall to seek additional aircraft to add to the charter fleet. Most of the planes in the Golden State Jet fleet are small to mid-size, but the company is considering adding a larger aircraft, such as a Gulfstream.

Meanwhile, Hall says he enjoys the variety of his profession, taking clients to a diverse array of destinations.

“We have a base of returning clients, about 80 percent, who fly with us on an ongoing basis,” Hall says. “There’s always someplace exciting to go to, and the destinations change seasonally, too. For example, in the winter we take a lot of clients on ski trip flights.”

Larry Hall is living his dream, and you can hear it in his voice, whenever he talks about flying, that same fascination and love for flight that inspired a young farm boy to reach for the skies — and make his own luck.