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**GEORGE J. PRIESTER AVIATION MARKS 80TH ANNIVERSARY**

WHEELING, IL (MARCH 25, 2025) – In the infancy of corporate aviation, George Priester foresaw its growth potential and transformational possibility. He recognized flying as a business tool, and that vision led him to begin an aviation business in 1945.

Decades after Priester opened a flight training school outside of Chicago, George J. Priester Aviation celebrates its 80th company anniversary in 2025 as a multi-generational, family-run private aviation services leader, managing and operating aircraft across the U.S. and internationally.

“My grandfather, George, was an aviation pioneer,” said Andy Priester, Chairman of George J. Priester Aviation and its affiliated brands – Priester Aviation, Mayo Aviation and Hill Private Aviation. “He saw the immense value that air travel would have for businesses, communities and individuals.

“His vision still drives us 80 years later, and each of our clients feel his impact when they entrust us to provide our aviation solutions. We continue to prioritize fostering customer-focused local relationships that enhance our global operations.”

**Flight School Beginnings**

Even before George Priester began his business, he had been involved in aviation, solo piloting in 1928 and then becoming an instructor pilot in 1938. He founded the company that would bear his name as a flight training school for military veterans in 1945 at Palwaukee Airport (PWK), Illinois. More than 5,000 pilots ultimately attended the school.

He bought the underdeveloped airport to start a Fixed-Base Operation (FBO) in 1953 and along with his son, Charlie, they transformed PWK into a business aviation hub. From 1953 to 1986, they expanded the airport from five employees on 108 acres and gravel runways to 200 employees on 300 acres with five expansive paved runways. It grew from hosting around 60 aircraft to more than 400, becoming the busiest privately owned airport in the world.

“Charlie took the seeds planted by George and transformed them into a successful business, focused on operational excellence and customer satisfaction,” said Andy Priester of his father and grandfather, who preceded him as company leaders. “Charlie grew the company in an evolving market, and adapted its future to meet the customers’ needs.”

**Investing in Aircraft Management**

The company sold the airport to its neighboring communities in 1986 and sold its FBO in 2001 to focus its growth on jet charter and aircraft management. It modernized its fleet and approach to operations, adapting again to shifting aviation trends.

In 2013, Andy Priester stepped into leadership of the family business, continuing the legacy established by previous generations. In 2021, Andy transitioned into the third generation of ownership, taking over from Charlie. With a deep commitment to preserving the company’s core values while driving innovation, he focused on expanding Priester’s capabilities. Its reach and influence branched beyond the Midwest, working with partners to provide larger resources to customers. Under Andy Priester’s leadership, the company has expanded further, aligning itself with similar family-run operations that have prioritized personal service and solutions.

George J. Priester Aviation now operates with three major bases in the U.S. – Priester in the Midwest, Mayo in the Rocky Mountain West and Hill in the Southeast. It manages nearly 90 aircraft across its three brands and is a leader in charter operations, with its 1945 Card serving customizable jet card needs of travelers.

“Eighty years is an incredible milestone for anything, especially in an industry that has changed so much,” said Andy Priester. “We are extremely grateful for the countless opportunities we’ve had to serve our clients, our friends.”

Attendees at the NBAA’s Schedulers & Dispatchers Conference are invited to connect with the George J. Priester Aviation team this week at Hall H, Booth 210 in the New Orleans Morial Convention Center.

**About George J. Priester Aviation**

George J. Priester Aviation is among the world’s most experienced global private aviation companies, specializing in aircraft management and private travel solutions. With over 200 years of combined experience, it is among the elite private aircraft management companies that hold the highest safety accreditations including the ARGUS Platinum rating, Wyvern approval, and Air Charter Safety Foundation certifications. It serves as the parent company for Priester Aviation, Mayo Aviation and Hill Private Aviation.

For more information, please contact Priester Marketing at 847-537-1133, or visit [www.gjpaviation.com](http://www.gjpaviation.com).