



## **Airway Pioneer Member Ralph Cowles**



Ralph was born to Mitch and Vivian Cowles in Sentinel, Oklahoma in the winter of 1921. He lived in Sentinel until he was a teenager, when he married his childhood sweetheart Dorothy Jeanne (Jeannie) and moved with their families to Visalia, California. Ralph and Dorothy have two children, Ronald and Lynda, both born in California.

Ralph worked in the aircraft industry during the Great War (on P-38s) and later as a carpenter and all forms of construction during the years following the war. His last years in California were spent in a little mountain town called Pollock Pines where he worked for Pacific Gas and Electric, owned his own Television Business and worked for another TV business in Camino, California.

In 1956 the wanderlust captured Ralph and he packed everything the family owned into a small home built luggage trailer and moved the family to Anchorage, Alaska in search of a better life. In Anchorage, he worked for Alaska Electronics as a technician until he joined the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in 1957. With the CAA he worked and trained at Fairbanks, Alaska Radar Approach Control and Anchorage International Airport as an electronics technician in Radar and Communications.

In 1958 while attending Radar School in Oklahoma City, Ralph was selected as an instructor in the Communications Equipment School. Being an instructor was a major highlight in his life and he loved the work and the students. The hundreds of students throughout the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) he taught and mentored in their new career path remember him for his kind and helpful nature.

The RIF of 1966 gave Ralph an opportunity to go back to Alaska. He worked as a Communications and Radar Technician at the old Anchorage CERAP on Elmendorf AFB. He was also part of the team that built the Elmendorf RAPCON and was one of the first technicians in the new RAPCON. In 1968 Ralph was allowed to move back to his beloved instructor position at the FAA Academy. He taught at the Academy until his retirement in July of 1979.

**After retirement, Ralph and Dorothy moved into their vacation cabin near Lone Wolf, Oklahoma. He built a beautiful home from the ground up with his own hands and moved in for the rest of his life. Ralph loved animals and took in any stray that came by and cared for hundreds of them. During this time Ralph fulfilled a life long dream and passed his Amateur Radio license exam and became KC5CNB. He also helped Dorothy until she passed her test and became KC5EEO. Both of them enjoyed their ham activities and made many new life long friends in the ham community. Always a FAAer, Ralph used to say his home looked like a Flight Service Station, with all the antennas on the roof.**

**Ralph's last career move came out of necessity; they needed water that was fit to drink. He worked with his neighbors and built a water and sewer system for the community. He served as chairman of the Boydville Water Board until he was hospitalized in June of 2001.**

**Ralph passed away in Oklahoma City, from Congestive Heart Failure on July 23, 2001. He will always be loved and remembered by his family and many FAA and Ham friends.**

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