

Has Landed  
**The Eagle**



**BOB BURLINGAME**  
Tile King, Pilot  
Aircraft Owner

Say the name Bob Burlingame and what first comes to mind? Oh, he's the guy who once ditched a F-8 Crusader aircraft into San Francisco's Bay, the guy who pilots a Citation 525 Jet to his 4,200-acre slice of Idaho paradise for a little wilderness R&R, the guy considered so cool by his sons Seamus and Kevin that they'd rather work with him than for anyone – that Bob Burlingame? Or do you mean the "Tile King," the CEO behind Eagle Roofing Products Company, the Southern California manufacturer of those concrete EagleLite slabs so essential that 300,000 homes around the Southwest have him to thank for their quality roofing and fine good looks?



Or is it the former Navy flyer you think of, the guy whose youthful nerve routinely thought nothing of screaming a Jet Fighter down onto an aircraft carrier, his eyes blinded by the settling sun, the seas boiling man. Or Burlingame the one-time instructor of advanced fighter- and tactical-flying who once took to 45,000 feet above San Francisco a recruit eager to learn dog-fighting technique, only to have the guy flub a 90-degree turn and drive his Crusader's tail into Burlingame's wing. From there it was a stall, a spin, an ejection, a chute that popped open prematurely at 20,000, a bail-out bottle of oxygen that didn't last long enough and...well, let's just say Bob Burlingame even today can see clear as day, when he closes his eyes, the murky, muddy bottom of San Francisco Bay, where his plane repos, still.

Reposing is what you almost never link to Bob Burlingame, lover of aviation, the guy who since flight school in '55 has owned and flown a flock of phenomenal aircraft: A Saratoga. An old '50s Twin Commander, the one plane he says he "rode hard and put away wet." A 680 turbo-prop for mountain- and weather-flying. A 690B, then a roomier 690D.

And then? Well, eventually, it would have to happen. Bob Burlingame would yearn for a little something to remind him of his four years in the Navy fleet, his following eight in the reserves. "I kept thinking," he recalls of his enduring love affair with aircraft and their acquisition, "it would be nice to get back into jets." Which brings us to the single-pilot Citation Jet. It has thrilled to for the last year and a half. It's thanks to this that he gets his quiet time.

Of course, when you say the name Bob Burlingame, you would have to think, now here's a guy who probably could use some quiet time. After all, as head of Burlingame Industries, the country's largest manufacturer of high-speed, automated roofing tile production equipment, with facilities in Southern and Northern California, Phoenix and China, Burlingame is a man very much in demand. First by sons Seamus and Kevin, in their thirties and pilots both, who after college joined their old man in the family business and are now vice-presidents and stockholders and together with Dad make a trio so inseparable they're like the Three Musketeers of tile-making aviators. And then by suppliers, customers and just about everybody in the home-building universe who has to have what Burlingame offers. Others might sum this up as a "dedication to prompt personal response to customers," as has been said of Eagle Roofing. It is this



and more, of course. But it's not so much what is said as it is what that will make obvious that Bob Burlingame, President and CEO, deserves a little Citation escape time, if only for a reflective moment or two to savor all the success he can't seem to slow.

Take the facts: From the day Kennedy was assassinated, which happened to be Bob Burlingame's first day of work, the fateful day he said to himself, "Bob," he

said, "you want to know where the best deal is? It's in the tile business. That's where the money is..." From that day on this born businessman put together joint ventures that built tile-manufacturing machinery so state-of-the-art that in 1981, recalls Burlingame, the Australians offered "more money than I've ever seen." For an eight-year stint away from the business



raising cattle on the 4,200-acre Idaho ranch he by now had acquired, a working ranch that in 1990 became the Flying B Ranch hunting and recreational retreat, Burlingame again was wanted: suppliers and customers weren't happy with the non-Bob Burlingame tile operations out there. So unhappy they clamored for his return to the tile-making life. In 1989 the Tile King was won by all the wooing, and began again the savvy deal-making that seems a Bob Burlingame gift. And like the first go-round where healthy alliances resulted in ongoing business expansion and super satisfaction among customers, Bob Burlingame and success seemed to be a simpatico relationship, especially with Burlingame Industries' new ventures – a Chinese facility that produces colorful cementitious flooring tile, and recently-opened Northern California and Phoenix facilities – that are expected to more than double business.

"Pretty exciting," he says.

Pretty exciting that such success can prove the viability of the Burlingame business philosophy. Which is? A good company, says the CEO himself, "runs from the bottom up, not from the top down. If you think you can sit up top and tell people how to do their jobs, you're wrong." Indeed, with the credo that the employee, not the customer, is always right, Burlingame's management method is one

of "spending a lot of time with our key people," listening to even the lowliest staffer, getting to know his 500 employees personally whenever possible, keeping his door always open and above all, ensuring his managers' and workers' ideas, input, working conditions and very well-being are respected. The corporate culture that he thus builds is one of superb

communication and, ultimately, extremely productive alliances with other businesses – not to mention personal relationships that are loyal and long-term.

"We take care of our people first," says Burlingame. "Because if we get the right people we automatically make sure our customers taken care of. We always start with the basics – our people. You can't do it all yourself. You work as a team, after all." Truly, he adds, "it's the relationships you build that

make the difference." And this includes perhaps the most important of all, the one with his sons. "I like to see to it," says Burlingame, proud and devoted dad, "that both my boys are very happy."

And let's not forget, if who're talking about is the Bob Burlingame to whom family, flying and fabulous tile are what make life worthwhile, you pretty much have to believe that's got to mean lots of great relationships – for those who land in this Eagle's realm.

