

PILOTS, HOTELIERS, ON THE RUNWAY



Richard Estenson

Romancing the Past with His Hangar Hotel

Richard Estenson wanted to be a fighter pilot so badly his blood pressure went sky high. At the University of North Dakota, he completed the intensive fighter squadron training with flying colors, but he faced just one problem. His blood pressure would sky rocket at the prospect of becoming a part of the elite force, so much so that he couldn't pass the stringent physical required of all fighter hopefuls.

Even though his dream was thwarted, his goal of working in the field of aviation was certainly not. He used his electrical engineering degree to land a job with NASA in Houston. There, he joined the Ellington Air Force Base flying club and bought a B36TC Bonanza, and later, a pressurized Cessna 340 Twin.

Spontaneously, Estenson and his wife flew to Fredericksburg, Texas, they fell in love with the small town, moved there, and became entrepreneurs. Their first business was the Fredericksburg Brewing Company; the Hangar Hotel came next.

Estenson wanted people to have a memorable hotel in Fredericksburg, and he let his passion for aviation guide the way. "I decided the hotel would have a World War II/South Pacific aviation theme," he says. "It was a powerful period in our past; it provided for unique architecture and fit in well with

Fredericksburg's aviation past."

He created the Hangar Hotel next to the runways of the Gillespie County Airport, as a kind of immersion destination. You can taxi your aircraft right up to the hotel and park in their transient spaces.

The imposing, wooden structure of the hangar, an old 70-foot water tower, a vintage searchlight and transplanted palm trees create the realistic scene. Once inside the hotel, the theme becomes even more detailed. The rich smell of bomber jacket leather, smooth dark carved woods and airy rattans conjure the exclusivity of an O-Club. Hotel staff dress in period-style uniforms and in the background you hear a familiar tune... "*There'll be blue birds over the white cliffs of Dover.*"

Between running the hotel and the brewery, he continues to find the time to do what he loves most, flying. Often it's in the 1946 North American Navion displayed on the hotel's ramp. He fully restored the airplane to fit the theme of the Hangar Hotel.

Little did Estenson expect that his very first flight was a clue to his future of promoting the past!

To experience the Hangar Hotel yourself, go to HangarHotel.com, 830.997.9990.