

Industry notes

New airlines are making national headlines

The Civil Aeronautics Board has approved the proposed merger of Republic Airlines and Hughes Air West. Republic, a recent product of the Board's generally favorable policy toward mergers, was created by the union of North Central Airlines and Southern Airways.

The Republic merger with Air West will create the country's 11th largest carrier in terms of revenue passenger miles. Presidential approval was not required because there won't be a formal transfer of route certificates. Hughes Air West will become a subsidiary airline, named Republic Airlines West.

New shuttles to start soon

Hourly helicopter shuttle service between the Kennedy, LaGuardia and Newark airports in New York may start soon. The flights will be operated with twin-engine, six-passenger Agusta

109 helicopters. The helicopter shuttle flights will be offered by a company called New York Air which has no connection with the New York Air that will start jetliner shuttle flights between LaGuardia and Washington National on December 14.

The latter New York Air is a subsidiary of Texas Air Corp., the recently formed parent holding company of Texas International Airlines. The CAB has tentatively granted a certificate to the Texas Air subsidiary which was founded to compete in the New York-Washington shuttle market. The New York Daily News reported that New York Air would hold auditions for jobs with the new carrier. They expected 5000 try-outs for the 100 openings for agents and flight attendants. The company requested theatrical type hopefuls who were to be given only one minute each to "sell" their personalities and reasons for wanting a career aloft. Ted Hook of Backstage restaurant and the Onstage cabaret was to be one of the judges.

The CAB also decided it should issue a certificate to People Express Inc., for operation of a new Newark-based airline. People Express was founded this past spring by a group of former Texas International executives. Donald Burr, former president of TXI, is chairman; and Gerald Gitner is president and chief operating officer. He is senior vice president of TXI. People Express said it plans to offer high frequency, lower priced service between Newark and several eastern cities with either DC-9s or 737s.

In late September Western and Continental airlines filed with the CAB asking approval of their merger plans. It marked the second time in as many years that the Los Angeles-based companies sought to consolidate their operations. Citing possible antitrust problems the Board rejected their first application 14 months ago. The companies say they expect approval this time because of the increased competition in the industry in the past year resulting from deregulation. The companies announced their intent to merge into a new company to be called the Western and Continental Transportation Corporation.

It's a napping traveller's dream

According to the Journal of Commerce there is a new product coming out that will turn long airport layovers from nightmares into sweet dreams.

A Salt Lake City firm, Sleep-a-Matic, is busily producing a new device to accompany the television chairs familiar to most air travellers. The sleepers resemble a lounge chair with a formica hood that offers weary air travelers privacy and quiet in chaotic terminals.

The response to the invention has been overwhelming. The firm is installing 10 sleepers at New York's JFK airport, and is working to fill orders from about 50 airports across the nation.

When not in use, the bottom of the chair is folded up, giving the contraption the look of a slightly-square egg. The customer inserts a quarter for each 15 minutes of desired sleeping time. The chair automatically uncurls and the drowsy traveller crawls onto a 6-foot-long pad.

At the end of the allotted time, a high-pitched tone sounds in the head booth. Once the bed is vacated, the pad returns to its upright position.

Another advantage in addition to comfort and privacy is safety. Belongings such as brief cases and handbags can be placed in the head rest area of the "egg", out of reach of all but the occupant.

Icelandic government offers help

The air fare war over the North Atlantic has dealt a severe blow to Iceland's national pride and economy. Until the government offered to buy a bigger share of Icelandair the company was faced with dropping its transatlantic route. The airline once carried 300,000 passengers a year or 5 percent of the business between Luxembourg and New York and Chicago.

The fare wars go back to the mid-1970s and the introduction of the Skytrain service by Britain's Sir Freddie Laker. Since then the major airlines have also cut rates to get business.

Before Laker, Icelandair, founded as Loftliedr after World War II by young pilots flying war-time Skymasters and later cast-off Cloudmasters from Pan American and SAS, offered fares 30

percent below standard fares charged by major commercial airlines.

Loftliedr bypassed air traffic treaties by staying out of the International Air Traffic Association (IATA) and by using Luxembourg as its European base.

American students made it their carrier for summers abroad, and in Europe Greeks, Italians, Germans, Frenchmen and Dutchmen flocked to Luxembourg to use the airline, which once ran as many as 25 flights a week each way.

The airline made a stopover at Keflavik Airport resulting in a tourist boom in Iceland. Travelers who would never have thought of going to Iceland stopped over for a day or a week to see the geysers and volcanoes or to fish for salmon. Hotels and restaurants sprang up.

The government will increase ownership in the airline from 6 percent to 20 percent which the carrier hopes will allow it to fly the Atlantic for at least another three years.

There's less water in the air

The airlines are going to great lengths to save fuel. As an example, Japan Air Lines reduced the weight of each of its wide-bodied 747s by 90 pounds by switching to a lower-density exterior paint. With lesser reductions on smaller planes, the step was expected to save the airline 800,000 gallons of fuel yearly.

Aboard its 747s, Lufthansa German Airlines has begun rationing water. The line has removed one of three water tanks and has installed a system that automatically adjusts the water volume according to the number of passengers, reducing the water volume by as much as a metric ton a flight.

Company officials say they saved \$1 million in fuel costs by carrying less water last year and expect additional savings of \$1.5 million in 1980 as they fine-tune the system.

747 to have bigger bulge

A version of the Boeing 747 jetliner, which allows about 44 additional passengers and extends by 23 feet the aircraft's signature bulge atop its forward section, has been unveiled by the Boeing Commercial Airplane Co. Current versions of the plane carry about 462 passengers.

The 747 SUD (for "Stretched Upper Deck") will have 37 of the additional passenger seats in its upper deck, and seven downstairs by replacement of the jet's circular stairway with a straight one, Boeing said.

The increased passenger payload was designed to help offset increased fuel prices and other costs. The stretched upper deck will be an optional feature and won't be standard with the 747.

Half of name jettisoned

British Airways has dropped the word "Airways" from its logotype to give its planes "a bold new look."

From now on, only the word "British" will appear on the state-owned carrier's planes, airport transport and tickets.

"In this one word, we express our own confidence that in this field, British is best — and that we are the best of British," Roy Watts, the airline's chief executive officer, said.

Nonetheless, a spokesman emphasized that the company isn't changing its name — just its image. "We are still British Airways," he said, adding that the full name would still be used in advertising and billboards.

Virginia's Aviation Hall of Fame inducts Piedmont's T. H. Davis

Piedmont President and Founder Thomas H. Davis was inducted into the Virginia Aviation Hall of Fame in August.

Davis is the first out-of-state winner of the award. The Hall of Fame was established in 1978 and is administered by the Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society.

According to Ray Tyson, secretary of the Society, the group tries to honor people in two categories. He said, "We look for those Virginians who have made significant contributions to aviation in general, and those persons who have made significant contributions to aviation in Virginia."

Other inductees at this year's ceremonies in Fredericksburg included Ivor Massey of Richmond, Dr. Richard Whitcomb of Hampton and State Senator Charles Colgan of Manassas.

In accepting his award Davis said, "Virginia has always been very important to Piedmont. Our airline serves more cities and passengers per year in Virginia than any other carrier. Piedmont began service in Virginia in 1948. We also have more general aviation operations in Virginia than any other company. In addition, Virginia is home to more Piedmont stockholders than any state except North Carolina, which is our headquarters. We're not only glad to have contributed to aviation in Virginia but most grateful for this honor you've accorded us."

Massey is credited with being a major factor in the creation of the Virginia Air National Guard in 1947 and a continuing dominant force in Virginia aviation.

Dr. Whitcomb, recently retired as head of the Transonic Aerodynamics Branch at NASA's Langley Research Center, developed two revolutionary principles which have changed the course of aviation history. The first was an aeronautical concept known as Area Rule which made supersonic flight possible just after the sound barrier first was broken. The inventor scientist also came up with the supercritical wing for planes that fly at subsonic speeds.

Senator Colgan, owner and operator of Colgan Airways, was selected for the Hall of Fame because of his outstanding support for aviation legislation and for championing the cause of aviation in Virginia.

New general aviation officers named

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1977 Culler received Beechcraft's Frank E. Hedrick Award for Excellence in service operation management. Mrs. Culler is the former Elizabeth Hayes. They have five children and five grandchildren.

Gardner joined Piedmont in 1974 as general manager of Piedmont Piper Sales. Previously he was manager of dealer development for the Piper Aircraft Corporation.

A graduate of Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania, Gardner also attended Duquesne University Law School. He is a licensed commercial pilot, who also holds multi-engine and instrument ratings. He is married to the former Mary Ann Lamberson. They have a son and a daughter.

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