

around the industry

The Air Transport Association reports that the nation's airlines in August accounted for more than 40 billion revenue passenger miles of service, an all-time record high in airline passenger traffic. RPMs rose 8 percent in August over August 1986 and were up 12.7 percent for the first eight months of 1987.

For the first eight months of 1987, domestic traffic was up 10.1 percent and international traffic, up 24.7 percent, over the same period in 1986. Load factor rose 1.5 points to 63.9 percent for domestic travel and 7.8 points to 66.8 percent for international.

American plans to begin daily nonstop, round-trip service between Raleigh/Durham and San Juan on December 2. Service from San Juan will continue to Barbados.

A survey conducted during the past summer by the Gallup Organization for the Air Transport Association shows that 72 percent of the adult population (126 million) has flown and 30 percent flew during the past year. Fifty-two percent of all trips within the last 12 months were for pleasure or other personal reasons. Those who flew during the past year averaged 3.4 round trips each.

Flight delays in the nation's airport and airway system dropped 32 percent in August from the previous month, according to preliminary Federal Aviation Administration figures. This was the largest monthly drop since January. The August delay figure was also 23 percent below the number for August of last year. In the four-month period May through August, flight delays dropped by 10.6 percent from the same period in 1986.

A new airline, MGM Grand Air, launched service in September with a fleet of three Boeing 727-100s that have been lavishly refurbished so that each of the aircraft's 33 passengers enjoys the best of first-class accommodations. The all-frills carrier, which flies nonstop between Los Angeles and New York (JFK), is targeting business travelers and entertainers who will be able to pay \$818 each way for the coast-to-coast service.

Continental has announced several new programs aimed at improving customer service. According to *Aviation Daily*, next year the airline plans to open "Continental University," an educational and training center available to all employees; new employee training centers in Washington, D.C., and Newark; consumer relations training for their 14,000 employees who deal directly with consumers; and relocation of the airline's consumer relations department, which has grown 264 percent since last February, to larger quarters. The airline also plans to automate its ticket refund system and add computer enhancements to its OnePass frequent flyer program, install a refund hotline, employ more special passenger service agents, and establish employee incentive programs. Continental's new advertising campaign, begun in September, points out its past service problems and promises better performance.

Air travelers, especially business passengers, ranked rapid passage through airports as their highest priority in a recent survey conducted by the International Foundation of Airline Passengers Associations. Thorough security and availability of flight information were also ranked high by the almost 30,000 frequent flyers polled.

Airline Economics predicts that North American traffic, including Canada and Mexico, will climb to about 493 billion revenue passenger miles by 1990, up almost 30 percent over the 383 billion recorded in 1986.

Governor George Deukmejian has signed legislation banning smoking on airline flights that begin and end in California, the first law of its kind in the U.S. The law, which is effective January 1, also bans smoking on intrastate bus and train trips and in 75 percent of the space in airports and other public transit centers. The law will effect PSA in particular. The airline, the largest in the state, has 525 flights daily, half of them within California. On December 8, Piedmont will begin its first intrastate flight in California when it inaugurates service between Los Angeles and San Diego.

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up for discussion

Have a question about Piedmont? This column, "up for discussion," gives you an opportunity to ask questions about your company.

All questions must be signed and include your name, title, and location. Your name will be withheld from publication and will not be revealed when your question is sent to the proper department for an answer. Unsigned questions will be automatically discarded.

When related questions are received, they will be consolidated and answered as one question. As many questions and answers as space allows will appear each month in "up for discussion."

Send your questions to *Piedmonitor* Editor, H440, or One Piedmont Plaza, Winston-Salem, NC 27156-1000.

Q. Piedmont prides itself on being a high quality passenger service and on-time airline. We have a multi-million dollar ad campaign to inform the traveling public of this.

Recently, a hiring freeze has been instituted and several stations have been told they are "over staffed." I am a supervisor at one of these so called "over staffed" stations, and I don't have enough manpower to provide proper Piedmont service now.

How can the home office justify the money spent on an ad campaign and not supply the personnel to provide this service?

A. An in-depth study was undertaken to review our staffing methods and techniques. During this study, we did slow down transfers and new hiring. That study is complete. Station managers have been briefed on the new guidelines, and they will soon be receiving further details from regional directors. All station personnel should be included in discussions about new manning concepts. You may already have been briefed as you read this. As to backing up our advertising with good service, I believe you would agree that we really already do that. Our personnel costs represent the single biggest part of our budget. Advertising, at about 2 percent of our costs, is among the smallest.

Bob Reed
staff vice president-stations

Q. A couple of years ago there was an article in the *Piedmonitor* in which one of our vice presidents at INT was quoted about airline image and how it related to safety. He stated that one of the reasons Piedmont takes such great care in maintaining the interior and exterior of each of our aircraft is that it has been proven that the public feels that a plane that looks good is safer. We supposedly took that idea seriously and, hence, the fresh and new appearance of our fleet. It has been noted that lately, however, our 737s and 727s (added well before our F28s and 767s) are starting to look very poor, especially in the exterior paint job. Is exterior paint being ignored now due to the impending merger?

A. You are correct to observe that an unattractive exterior appearance can raise doubts. It suggests lack of interest and that in itself could lead individuals to negative conclusions.

You are right to address this issue in terms of the confidence level of our passengers as well as our employees. Before moving on to explain how over the next several months our fleet appearance will improve, permit me to emphasize two points.

We do not and will not compromise safety. This is a cardinal rule. Our efforts in this area are well substantiated. The dollars we invest in people, material, equipment, and facilities focus on this basic premise. Safety is the primary reason we come to work.

The second point relates to USAir. There have been no decisions between the two companies to let fleet appearance go or deteriorate. The basic reason why some of the aircraft flying today make us less than proud has been our dynamic growth. Our fleet size is such today that former methods for upgrading appearance cannot keep pace with the need. Which leads me to share with you how we are addressing this issue.

Beginning in October and lasting for several months, aircraft are being removed from the flight schedule for the sole purpose of painting exteriors. In the past, turning a paint job was a lengthy process, but with a much smaller fleet we were able to visit the demand. What we have done includes the following: established new methods which reduce the downtime for paint by more than half; added 20 painters to the workforce; and implemented a scheduled cleaning operation that will also enhance exterior appearance.

We have "eye-balled" the fleet during the past 30 days. The worst cases are being addressed first. The results of these efforts will be recognizable in a very short time.

George Mason
vice president -
maintenance & engineering



Benefits extended to part-timers

In order to assure equitable treatment for all Piedmont Airlines employees following our merger with USAir and the subsequent integration of the two work forces, Piedmont recently announced the following policy changes applicable to part-time agent and clerical personnel:

- Effective November 1, all Piedmont Airlines part-time agent and clerical personnel are provided medical, dental and life insurance benefits. Family coverage will also be available for purchase at group rates under these plans.

- Effective January 1, 1988, airline part-time agent and clerical personnel also will

become eligible for holidays and improved vacation and sick leave benefits. Details will soon be published in standard practices.

- All part-time and former part-time airline personnel will receive 50 percent credit for their part-time employment since May 1, 1979 for classification seniority purposes.

- All agent personnel formerly with Empire Airlines will receive classification seniority credit to their Empire date of hire, including 50 percent credit for their part-time service since May 1, 1979.

