

Starry Passengers Many Factors Make Flight Safe

The "airline of the stars" is a slogan already claimed by another airline, but through the years Piedmont has had its share of celebrities too. From the back files is offered this photographic sampling of the many illustrious employees of show business who took a Pacemaker and liked it.

(Part two of a series by Robert Serling, Aviation Editor, United Press International)

ROUTINE is, perhaps, the best word to use in describing commercial aviation today. It is applicable to 99 percent of the 1,500,000 scheduled flights operating in the U. S. annually. How about the other 1 percent? They may be out of the routine for reasons ranging from minor mechanical difficulties to rare emergencies. And in the case of the latter, there is a vast buffer area between an emergency and an actual disaster—an area made up of such accident-preventing factors as rigid, even ruthless pilot training, alternate mechanical and electronic systems to take over for components that have malfunctioned, and myriad emergency devices that literally transform an emergency into routine avoidance of trouble.

An airline flight can be compared to an iceberg, which has three-fourths of its body hidden from view. Likewise, what a traveler sees on a flight is only about 25 percent of what has gone into that flight. He comes into contact with the ticket agent, baggage handling, ramp personnel and—once on board—the cabin attendants.

He does not see the weather planning, the pilot-dispatcher conferences, the pre-flight in-

spection. Nor, for that matter, has he seen the experiments and tests that went into the design of the aircraft in which he is flying. Seldom is he aware of the vast human-electronic system that controls air traffic and keeps it separated safely. He assumes his plane has been maintained carefully, but he would be surprised to know how carefully.

Safety is predominant, primary and positive with the airlines. More people are directly concerned with the safety of each flight than the number devoted to passenger service itself—which figuratively is only the top part of aviation's iceberg. More money is spent to assure safety than on any other phase of airline operations—and safety is the one area in which there is no corner-cutting for economy's sake.

In 1961, for example, the U. S. scheduled airlines wound up with a net loss of \$37,000,000. Yet this did not keep them from shelling out \$60,000,000 just to train and flight check crews, nor spending \$574,000,000 on maintenance and inspection of aircraft!

THE MOST TELLING argument for the safety of modern air travel comes from a section of the American business world that would look with a jaundiced suspicion on the odds in favor of

the "house" at a Las Vegas gambling table—namely, the insurance companies.

These coldly impersonal, fantastically conservative firms, who once charged \$1 for every \$5,000 of flight insurance, now offer \$10,000 protection for 25 cents. This is double the protection for one-fourth the price, or odds of 40,000 to one against a fatal mishap. Actually, the odds are even greater because the 25 cents includes such underwriting costs as commissions, profits and airport rent. The actuaries of an insurance company follow the laws of probability as rigidly as the earth follows the law of gravity; they literally do not place bets on unknown quantities or vague possibilities.

Life insurance rates for airline pilots are the same as those for grocery clerks, bank tellers and all other citizens whose daily exposure to danger approximates that of a chess player. This item assumes more significance when it is realized that 30 years ago many insurance companies refused to insure pilots, and those who did charged stiff premiums under their "hazardous occupation" rules.

This is why an airline pilot will tell you, in more seriousness than humor, "the most dangerous part of my job is the ride to the airport."



TV personality Jack Lescoulie poses with Agent J. W. Helms.



Queen of the Twist June Wilkerson.



The Brothers Four as they leave Lynchburg.



INT secretaries swoon over John Payne.



Faye Emerson arrives to play a one-night stand.



Julian Morton grins at the Tobacco Queen.

eight minutes, or nearly five and a half years of continuous flying.

Renews Itself

During that time these airplanes have undergone several major overhauls, a maintenance procedure which involves stripping the aircraft down to its bones and literally building it over again. By this process, required periodically for any type of aircraft, the DC-3 changes and renews itself like a living organism. That's why experts estimate it is possible for the Three to continue flying indefinitely.

Another reason the DC-3 continues to fly is that she's so safe. With a large wing surface the Three is very stable at slow speeds, and unlike some of her more temperamental sisters, she has no eccentric flying characteristics. Pilots love her because in addition to her stability, she is a "forgiving" airplane and if necessary can practically fly herself.

War Stories

There is a story that a few years ago a C-47, the Air Force equivalent of the DC-3, ran out of gas over Missouri farm country. The pilot and crew parachuted to safety as the engines failed. A few moments later the pilot-less plane landed gently in a field. The damage it suffered was to a wing as it hit a haystack.

Many stories came out of World War II illustrating the outstanding air worthiness of this airplane. One of the most amazing happened during an instrument flight of an Army C-47. A mid-air collision with another C-47 cut 18 feet off one wing as cleanly as if a surgeon had been at work. The pilot, Capt. Loyal Penn, flew the airplane with 18 feet of wing missing to the nearest air strip, brought her down, and landed as if it were just a routine flight.

Piedmont came by some of its DC-3's by rather unusual methods. For instance, number 54V made a unique arrival by water. The airplane was being used by the U. S. Coast Guard at Elizabeth City, N. C., as a ground

training lab for mechanics. Piedmont bought the Three but due to security regulations was not allowed to visit the Coast Guard station and make enough repairs to get the plane airborne.

There was nothing left to do but put it on a barge, ship it out to a little Manteo landing strip off the North Carolina coast, and work on it there. After putting on an engine, propellers, landing gear, wings, and control surfaces, the DC-3 sturdily climbed into the air and flew to Winston-Salem for more maintenance work.

War Heroes

Several of Piedmont's Threes were veterans of World War II. Military versions of the airliner carried troops, delivered supplies, and performed aviation feats which are still legends. Maintenance crews at Piedmont's Winston-Salem base had to repair a number of bullet and shrapnel holes on these airplanes before proceeding to other work.

One can imagine that these grizzled old warrior DC-3's must have been more than a trifle startled when, after entering the maintenance hangar as wounded, dirty, he-men, they emerged to find themselves transformed into clean, dainty "Peggy Pacemaker."

The company described this change in "sex" by putting out a little booklet in the mid-1950's titled, "How I Became a Lady, by Peggy Pacemaker." In it the transition from Army workhorse to Pacemaker was traced.

"I just knew they couldn't make a lady out of me," wrote "Peggy." "We had always yelled and bellowed and I just didn't think we could learn to speak softly and be quiet. And if we didn't, we wouldn't be wanted by anyone. Can you think of a more terrible fate than not being needed by anyone?"

All Ladies

Piedmont made ladies out of all the Threes it purchased, regardless of their backgrounds. They were so well behaved that by 1958 a fleet of 21 were flying 4,726 hours a month, with an average during the working day

of one take off and one landing every minute and a half.

Though most flights were routine and therefore not very colorful, still there is that occasional exception. Such was a chartered DC-3 flight to Lexington, Ky., a few years ago, when a Captain was surprised to find that he was not only flying an airplane but a very active courtroom as well.

It seems a wealthy man had discovered that his sister and her husband had become dope addicts. After futile months of begging them to go to the federal hospital at Lexington, Ky. and try to be cured, he decided to take care of matters himself.

LEX Charter

He called Piedmont, chartered a DC-3 for Lexington, and invited his sister and brother-in-law along. On board were a doctor, three nurses, a sheriff, and a judge. By the end of the trip the couple was flying higher on morphine than they were in the airplane. The moment the landing gear touched the Lexington runway, the judge convened court, issued his orders, and when the aircraft came to a halt the sheriff escorted the pair to the hospital and, let us hope, a cure from their addiction.

There are other stories told about the Three, some happy, some tragic, and some dealing with incredible recoveries by DC-3's suffering mid-air mishaps which might have downed an aircraft with less will to survive.

They have ardent fans all over the world, with their comments ranging from an approving nod to lyrical praise.

Perhaps the attitude of those who fly it, and the spirit of the aircraft itself, is best summed up by a Piedmont commuter who once said, "I would wrap my arms around this old gal and give her a big hug everytime I get on. I know she's going to get me there and back with no fuss."

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Around The System

PROMOTIONS

F. C. Livengood, Stk. Clrk. to Buyer, INT-A
G. A. Ficke to Ld. Agt., CVG

TRANSFERS

G. D. Schuman, BAL to DCA
W. C. Clark, DCA to INT

NEW EMPLOYEES

Phil White, Jr. Stk. Clrk, INT
Raymond Sutcliffe, Jr. Stk. Clrk., INT
R. W. Sutphin, Linecrew, CPA
Betty Brannock, Jr. Gen. Clrk., INT-P
David Cooper, Cleaner, CVG-F
David Chalmers, Co-op Trainee, INT
Nancy Mabe, Sec., re-employed, INT
L. C. Wilson, Flt. Instr., re-employed, ORF-FB
Richard Iden, Oper. Agt., DCA
G. W. Geyer, Oper. Agt., DCA
David Morris, Oper. Agt., HTS
T. B. Cecchini, Oper. Agt., DCA
B. J. Thompson, Oper. Agt., FAY
W. E. Foster, Jr. Mech., INT-FB
B. D. Shelton, Jr. Stk. Clrk., INT

BELOVED MATRON . . .

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the Martin 404 taking its place.

This particular Pacemaker has an especially proud history. It was bought from United Airlines, and was one of the original Douglas airliners built to United's specifications. In its day it was the fastest, most convenient form of passenger travel, zooming across the U. S. continent in only 19 hours. Number 40V was flown by such aviation immortals as Jack Knight, the first pilot to fly air mail at



Faithful Lady

night, Hamilton Leigh, and many other famous air mail pilots.

At present it has spent 60,025 hours and 42 minutes in the air, a total of nearly seven years of continuous flying. The other remaining Piedmont Three, 56V, has a record of 47,688 hours and