

# Piedmont Piper Sales moves into old Sky Club

Too often too many people, employees included, think of Piedmont as an airline only.

Of course we are an airline, but we are a lot of other businesses too.

The following story is the first of several the Piedmonitor plans for future issues on some of the not-so-familiar divisions or businesses that make up Piedmont Aviation, Inc.

The Company didn't even start out to be an airline! When it was incorporated on July 2, 1940 Piedmont Aviation, Inc. was authorized under North Carolina laws as an aircraft sales and service operation. The distributor franchises from Piper Aircraft Corporation and from Stinson Aircraft were the basis of Piedmont's beginning.

A weekly payroll ledger which has survived since the summer of '41 lists a total of 13 employees. The handwritten record also shows the sum of the weekly payroll was \$338.75.

Piper and four of those 13 'originals', Bill Barber, Howard Cartwright, Eddie Culler and Tom Davis continue as vital forces in today's Piedmont. Back then they had five or six airplanes and offered flight training, a charter service and some repair and overhaul facilities. These were the primary activities of the Company up until the outbreak of World War II.

During the war years Piedmont devoted its entire efforts to the war program through government contracted flight training schools. After the ending of hostilities Piedmont re-entered and expanded its aircraft sales business.

A Company advertisement from a football program of the Carolina-Maryland game in October, 1946 pictured a Piper Cub Trainer and a Piper Super Crusier. The copy detailed Piedmont's operation of "one of the first flight training schools in the South to be approved by the Veterans Administration for flight and ground school training as provided for in the G.I. Bill of Rights."

The maintenance facilities continued to expand and Piedmont Aviation became one of the best-known repair and overhaul points in the Southeast. Between 1944 and 1946 the Company had established 14 dealer organizations and within one year sold over 100 airplanes within North Carolina (more than the total sales of all other makes of aircraft).

And so it went, success fostering success. The Airline Division was formed in '47.

By 1950, sales of airplanes were so good that an expansion ensued with another fixed base operation established in Norfolk. By 1955 the sales and service income from the General Aviation Division had reached over \$2

million. There were many times in the early years when the general aviation business kept the airline going.

Beech became part of Piedmont's general aviation activities in 1955. And in only five years Piper and Beech had become so competitive, with several overlapping types of aircraft, that in order to satisfactorily serve both it was necessary to split the General Aviation Division. The Beechcraft distributorship comprised the General Aviation Division and Central Piedmont Aero was formed to handle Piper Aircraft.

The story of Piedmont's Piper operation continued adding chapters of success. By 1967 Central Piedmont had grown to the point where further division was required. CPA became the model dealer or retail division and Piedmont Piper sales was created to handle the Piper wholesale operation.

Piedmont's Piper activities made up one of 33 Piper distributorships in the United States last year. And in the 1974 fiscal year (October to October) Piper ranking of distributors Piedmont was fourth in sales. They actually made 128.3 per cent of quota sales. This fantastic record seems even better when examined in comparison with the national average of 86.4 per cent. In most of the 34 year association with Piper, Piedmont has ranked among the top ten distributorships.

Piedmont Piper Sales has recently moved into new headquarters. The old Sky Club on the second floor of the Smith Reynolds terminal building has been completely renovated to accommodate the PPS staff. In addition to the new offices Piedmont Piper Sales also has a new General Manager, William D. Gardner.

Just prior to joining Piedmont Gardner was manager of dealer development for the Piper Aircraft Corporation in Vero Beach, Florida. Pete Powell, Jim Campbell and Paul Sayers are working with him. Their combined responsibilities involve the wholesale activities of Piper planes and parts, including the expansion of the 14 Piper dealerships in North Carolina and Virginia.

A native of Washington, Pennsylvania, Gardner is a graduate of Washington and Jefferson College. He also attended Duquesne University Law School. He is a commercial pilot with instrument and multi-engine ratings.

Central Piedmont Aero, which is the Piper retail division under the direction of General Manager Lucien Wrenn, will be the next feature in the Piedmonitor's look at the 'other' businesses of Piedmont Aviation, Inc.



Pete Powell, left, is the wholesale manager for Piedmont Piper Sales and Paul Sayers is distribution service administrator. The bookcase area in Paul's office was originally part of the decor in the Sky Club.



The Sky Club's fireplace was retained when the renovation work was done on the second floor of the Smith Reynolds terminal. And it was put to good use on the cold, wet day Piedmont Piper Sales held open house. Frank Hazelwood, president of CORPAC in Atlanta, at left, and William Flemister, Piper's Atlanta regional sales manager seemed impressed with Piedmont's additional Piper facilities.



A special blueprint paint scheme highlights the engineering features of the new Piper turboprop Cheyenne. The Cheyenne represents Piper Aircraft's bid for a major part of the corporate twin turboprop market. It is, of course, available through Piedmont Piper Sales.



PPS General Manager Bill Gardner and his secretary Sue Warren are located in offices new to them but familiar to all of Piedmont's oldtimers. Once "the" gathering place for social and business activities, the Sky Club has been converted into office space for Piedmont Piper Sales.