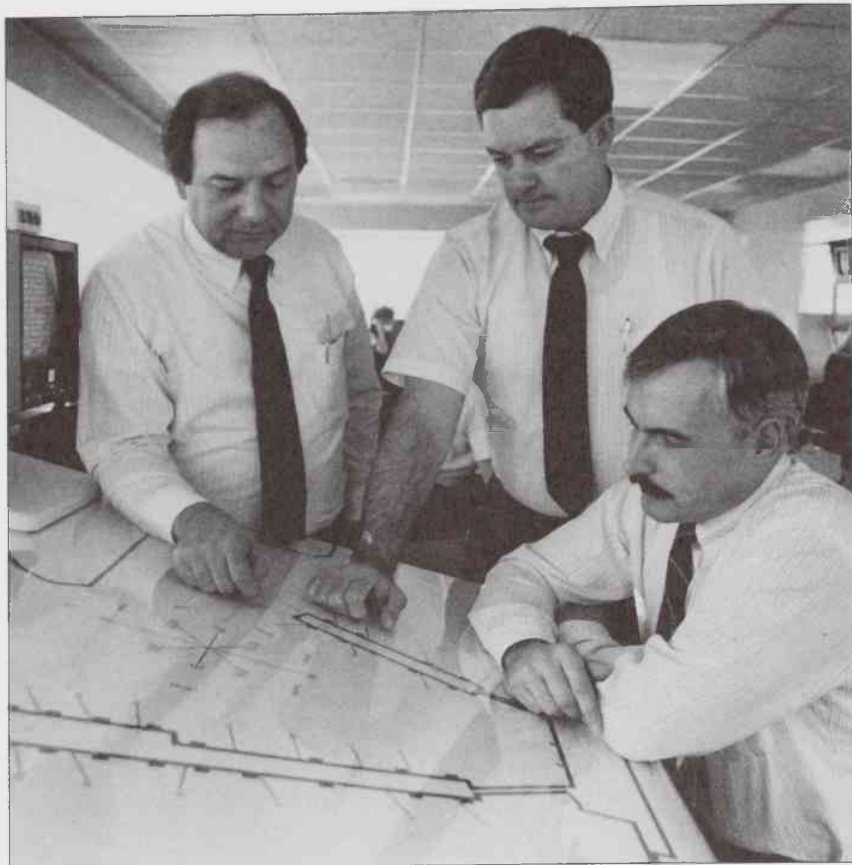


(l to r) Doyle Keever, performance manager for the Charlotte tower, and supervisors Dan Campbell and Steve Yancey look over a ramp sketch while discussing gate parking on Concourses B and C.



Charlotte tower a clearinghouse for operations

Controllers at the CLT FAA tower joked that on the first day employees in Piedmont's tower took over ramp control, our aircraft would end up nose-to-nose.

But the Piedmont team has kept everything running smoothly since taking over this major function on March 14. In fact, since these employees began coordinating the entire sequence for our aircraft on the ramp, the procedures have been completed with barely a hitch. With over 200 departures daily, that means guiding up to 19 aircraft simultaneously which is no small feat. And those Piedmont experts have made sure that none of our aircraft has wound up "nose-to-nose."

"There are only three ways in and out of our gate area, and it can get really congested," Doyle Keever, performance manager who spearheads the operation, said. "We work closely with the FAA tower whose people in turn do a fantastic job getting our aircraft to and from the ramp.

"The operation is fascinating to watch, especially on a good day when things are running smoothly."

Ramp control is just one of the tower's many functions. Just as AOCC (Airline Operations Control Center) centralizes all Piedmont operations from offices in Winston-Salem, the Charlotte tower, atop Concourse B, is a central point from which all CLT operations can rotate. Working as a team, employees representing all aspects of operations—maintenance, passenger movement, catering, fuel, crews, as well as aircraft sequence—work together to coordinate Piedmont's CLT service.

"Instead of each group working independently as we did before, we now rotate everything out of this department. In turn, dispatch gets one call instead of numerous calls from each department," Keever said. "We're a clearinghouse for all information pertinent to our operations."

This team effort is paying off.

"Now, if there's a need to know about passenger protection, crews, fueling, or whatever, we can call one person to get the information," Pierce Swing, manager-passenger movement, AOCC, explained. "Time is of the essence, and we have to make decisions very quickly. The tower enables us to make decisions quicker and often better because all of the information we need is right at hand.

"I think the tower is one of the better things we've done for the hub." Additionally, the tower has

helped expedite flights in and out of Charlotte and thus improved the on-time performance at Piedmont's largest hub.

"The presence of the tower, and particularly the capability of sequencing aircraft for departures, has significantly improved our downline reliability," Jim Tabor, manager-system performance, INT, emphasized.

For example, Tabor pointed out that in January 1986, there was a 19 percent difference between the number of flights that departed the gates on time from CLT and the arrival at the next station. By January 1987, that difference had been reduced to eight percent, and in March, it dropped to five percent.

"Delays associated with the sequencing of aircraft have been reduced substantially because our people are now in control," Tabor said.

Our tower officially opened December 1. The facility had housed Eastern's ramp coordinators, but when Eastern cut back its service at CLT, the tower was closed and Piedmont quickly negotiated for the space in addition to the gates Eastern vacated on Concourse B.

"We had to build from scratch, fashion out what we thought we would need," Keever said.

Keever, along with supervisors Steve Yancey, Dan Campbell, Henry Butler, and Ronnie Baker; Watson Furr, station manager; and Noel Keener, operations manager; looked at what other airlines with similar operations had before setting up a workable plan for Piedmont.

"We have about 40 people working in the tower, and all of them have been chosen for their ability to learn," Keever said. "Everyone here volunteered. All came up through the stations and are well-acquainted



Brenda Barrett, customer service coordinator, checks for options available for misconnected passengers.

with how a station operates, so they have empathy with the agents."

The tower's large, open room provides our employees, 12 on each shift, with a 360 degree view of our airport operations. Here, people in maintenance, catering, crews, and operations, as well as a representative from Lockheed, work closely to keep Piedmont's CLT operations running smoothly. When problems do arise, they can work together to find a solution before calling dispatch in Winston-Salem.

"For several years, we had a staff of six people following our operations from a small room in operations," Keever said, "but they were very limited in what they could do. Our new facility is a real effective means of getting information out, and our people are doing a good

job coordinating with one another."

When the major expansion program at Charlotte is completed by the end of this year, Piedmont will begin operations out of a new tower. An 80-foot-high control tower will be located over the connector between the two concourses, and we will control all traffic as it comes into the terminal area to concourses B and C, and the commuter concourse. The expansion will enable us to easily handle 275 to 300 flights daily.

"The present tower provides us with a proving ground for the new facility," Keever added. "We'll know exactly what we need for future growth."



Scott Westbrook (front) and Tim Cheek (second from front) handle air-to-ground radio operations. Westbrook follows the times of the various flights while Cheek keeps in contact with the crew of an incoming aircraft. Besides Cheek is Herbert Padgett, maintenance supervisor.