

Airlines' Age Problem Expected To Grow in Era of High Speed Jet Craft

By ROBERT J. SERLING
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Washington, (UPI)—Don't rush to cancel your airline ticket if your plane Captain has gray hair and looks like somebody's grandfather.

Aviation's so-called "age problem" isn't really a problem at all yet. But it might become one as the airlines convert to high-speed, high-performance jets that could work handicaps on older pilots.

That is the careful, calm opinion of men who should know—medical experts who work with airline pilots, government air safety officials and pilots themselves.

Amid all the hullabaloo, these facts stand out:—All available evidence points against the age of a commanding pilot ever having been a factor in a fatal airline crash.

Most experts agree that current federal medical tests should be stiffened, particularly for older pilots, but they also point out that most major airlines maintain higher medical standards than the government itself.

More research is needed to determine whether new medical standards should be required for pilots of the new jetliners and prop-jets.

Accident Reports Studied

This reported studied Civil Aeronautics board accident reports on 87 crashes involving Commercial Airlines from 1946 to Jan. 1, 1959. Those reports revealed that there were 27 fatal crashes in which the CAB blamed the Commanding Pilot. In these accidents, one Captain was in his 20s, 16 were in their 30s, nine were in their 40s. The oldest was 50. The average age was 38.

The statistics added up to this indisputable fact: The average age of scheduled airline Captains involved in all types of accidents is under 40. And since 1946 there have been only two fatal crashes involving Captains 50 years of age or older.

No one denies that as a group, airline pilots are getting older. According to government records, there now are about 600 Captains (out of 14,000) over 50, and about 20 over 60. Ten years ago, there were only 300 Captains in their 50s and about a half-dozen in their 60s.

The increasing number has focused attention on the federal medical tests given to all airline pilots twice a year. They consist of vision and reflex examinations, blood pressure checks and other routine physical tests, about the same

as the average citizen would get from his own doctor. Starting in July, the Federal Aviation Agency will add Electrocardiograms to its tests.

Concern Voiced

But FAA Chief Elwood R. Quesada has voiced concern that even with Electrocardiograms, the FAA examinations still will fall short of adequacy, particularly for pilots who are 50 or older. He intends to appoint a "Civil Air Surgeon" who would be assigned the task of drawing up

new medical standards for Commercial Pilots, and adequate tests based on those standards.

"It is inevitable," one airline medical director commented. "The present tests are no stiffer than what the Interstate Commerce Commission requires for truck drivers."

The alleged inadequacy of the Federal tests, however, can be misleading. Most major Airlines have their own medical departments. Establish their own physical requirements, and operate their own medical test programs according to standards higher than the FAA itself requires.

What do these "Airline Medicals" think of the medical age problem? UPI questioned one of the leading Airline Medical directors who must remain unnamed. He gave these answers:

"Although all indications are that the present medical standards are adequate at this time, it depends on the type of equipment we are speaking about. If we consider high-performance Aircraft such as the pure Jets, I would qualify this by saying that as we learn more about the operation of such Aircraft, the medical standards may need another look."

No Specific Age Level

"At a certain age level, medical examinations should be more frequent and more searching in character. I do not believe there is a specific age level at which this should be done. The age level should be determined by physiological aging and not chronological aging. Detection of deterioration of judgment, skill and experience is really not a medical one, but is usually shown by cockpit performance. In this instance, the medical man, when he gets an inkling that a pilot is showing some increase in reaction time and lengthened cerebration (mental astuteness) time, should confer with the check-out pilots to find out how this individual is doing in the cockpit with relation to judgment, skill and experience."

"There is no particular age at which someone should be arbitrarily grounded or reduced to lower performance aircraft. This age will vary from individual to individual, and again we need better yardsticks of determining physiological age and forget about chronological age-up to a certain point. I do not believe that we should go beyond age 60 in chronological age, because according to the law of averages, there is more likelihood of sudden incapacitation beyond age 60 than at earlier age levels."

A medical director for another major airline called the present medical standards "adequate providing they are correctly interpreted and administratively enforced."

He said some FAA examinations, not the standards, appeared to be inadequate.

The present FAA examiner gets a very low fee for his examination and this in no way compares with the airline that has a well-organized medical department," this official said.

He also agreed with his colleague that 60 is the age at which skill, judgment and experience no longer offset physical deterioration for the majority of pilots. But he, too, declared that before 60, pilots should be judged by their physiological rather than chronological age.

The views of these air medicine experts mesh with the

thinking of the pilots themselves.

Clarence N. Sayen, President of the Airline Pilots Association, said: "no accident has ever occurred in scheduled air transportation due to physical failure of the pilot."

"While in-flight incapacitations occur," Sayen added, "they are not related to age, are not predictable by the medical profession, are not susceptible to an accurate medical assessment of probability, and are generally due

to such everyday things as stomach ache, diarrhea, etc."

ALPHA is firmly against setting any mandatory retirement age. Sayen declared that "an airline pilot can and should be able to continue to fly as long as he can meet and maintain adequate standards of proficiency, competency and health."

Unofficially, airline pilots are embittered over the furor about "aging pilots." In their profession, they rate experience and judgment far above wrinkles on his face and

crow's feet around his eyes parked in that left-hand seat, I figure he's a helluva lot better pilot than I am even though I'm 20 years younger."

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A co-pilot told UPI: "Sure a 55-year old Captain may have slower reflexes than a 35-year old. But the older guy doesn't get himself into situations where he needs those faster reflexes. When I see a bald-headed guy with wrinkles on his face and

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Mexican Workers Said Depressing California Wages

New York, (UPI)—The importation of Mexican farm workers has so depressed wages in California and other areas that it is a wonder that there still are domestic farm workers, a report of the National Sharecroppers Fund said today.

"But there are," the report said, and they averaged an annual income of \$892 in 1957, according to Department of Agriculture figures.

The situation for migrants is still one in which "cherries are better guarded in transit than children and the United States takes a census of migratory birds but not of migratory workers."

The report said that last August peach pickers were getting 15 to 18 cents a box in Sutter county, Calif., until "a labor shortage was certified and 933 Mexican nationals were sent for... on Aug. 6, the chief of the state farm placement service certified a base wage of 12 cents a box."

It said wages of tomato pickers in California's San Joaquin Valley had decreased 40 per cent over the last 10 years while the percentage of Mexican nationals hired as pickers has increased to 90 per cent.

The report said "by far the most encouraging action for improvement of migrant conditions has come in the Pacific Northwest where government officials in the employment service have firmly applied the Department of Labor regulations which give preference to domestic farm workers over Mexican nationals and provide for decent wages and working conditions."

It said the action of the Washington State Employment Service has resulted in no importation of foreign nationals during 1958 and a common hourly wage rate of \$1.25.

This contrasts sharply with California and Texas, where local farm workers migrate

out for jobs while the employment services certify labor shortages and bring in tens of thousands of low-priced Mexican nationals," the report said.

The National Sharecroppers Fund, of which Dr. Frank P. Graham is chairman, is a non-profit organization which has raised and disbursed funds to help farm and migrant workers for 21 years. The report was prepared by Executive Secretary Fay Bennett.

Two Asked To Quit at Roseburg

Roseburg, (UPI)—Douglas county Democratic party officials have asked for the resignations of County Judge V. T. Jackson and of County Welfare Administrator Mrs. Louise Baker.

The action by the party's executive board followed a proposal by the county's welfare commission to end public benefits to persons involved in labor disputes. The resolution charged that a recommendation by the welfare group proposed "to use the State Welfare commission to terminate labor disputes and serve as an employer weapon in labor troubles."

Jackson said the resolution was not intended to apply to those idled without action on their part, but only to strikers.

Jeanne Jewett, state welfare administrator, said in Portland the recommendation would be presented to the state commission at its meeting Friday.

The Douglas county welfare group took the position that unions and not the public should be responsible for supporting those involved in labor troubles.

Borah peak is the highest point in Idaho.

Sheriff's Office Could Police Boating Under House Bill 595

House Bill 595, now before the state legislature, is expected to give the sheriff's office more direct authority to police boat traffic on all bodies of water in Jackson county, according to Sheriff Joe Walsh.

This bill provides for licensing and registration of all boats of 12 feet or longer and of 10 or more horsepower. Each sheriff's office in the state would be authorized, under this bill, to enforce the regulations of the proposed law.

Regulate Boating

Several members of the water-ski club were appointed earlier this year to regulate boating on Emigrant and Howard Prairie reservoirs in the Talent project. Recreation facilities on Howard Prairie reservoir are scheduled for completion this summer and expansion of Emigrant reservoir is expected to be completed by 1961, James Callan, project engineer, bureau of reclamation said.

Emigrant is being used now for water-skiing, according to George Ketchum, president of the Rogue Aquatic Ski club. There is some water in Howard Prairie now, he added. The question is whether it can be used for recreation before the recreation facilities are completed, Ketchum said.

Family Recreation

The Rogue Aquatic Ski club is primarily a family recreation group, the president explained. The special deputies named by Walsh would operate by direction of the sheriff's office.

Violators of rules established by the county court or sheriff's office would be warned. Then if the violations continue, the special deputies would report the violators to the sheriff's office, Ketchum said. The ideal situation would be to establish regulations similar to those in operation on Lake Shasta, Ketchum said. Open water would be zoned for water skiing.

License fees which would be established under the proposed bill provides boats 12 feet or longer but less than 16 feet, would require a \$3 fee, 16 feet or longer, but less than 20 feet, \$5, and boats 20 feet longer, \$8 plus \$1 for each foot or part of a foot in

excess of 20 feet.

A registration list or lists of all boat owners and their addresses will be kept by the sheriff's office and provided by a marine board authorized by the bill.

The act authorizes the appointment of a five-member board of directors by the governor. Terms are to be for four years on a staggered basis beginning July 1. They would serve without salary.

A chairman and secretary would be appointed by the board and a full-time director would be hired at \$8,400 a year.

The state marine board must meet at least once every three months, according to the proposed bill.

Board's Duties

Duties of the board include devising a system of identifying numbers for boats, coop-

erate with state and federal agencies to promote uniform laws and enforcement for boating, advise and assist law enforcement officers in enforcing boating laws, construct, operate and maintain boating facilities. It may also acquire property for this and may accept gifts and grants of property and money.

The proposed law would enforce licensing of all boats over 12 feet whereas the present law on licensing boats is not enforced, Walsh explained. Three such licenses were issued last year and a total of about 12 since the licensing regulations were first established, he said. The present regulation provides for licensing of all craft over 16 feet and under 20 feet at a cost of \$5. Anything over 20 feet is one dollar per additional foot.

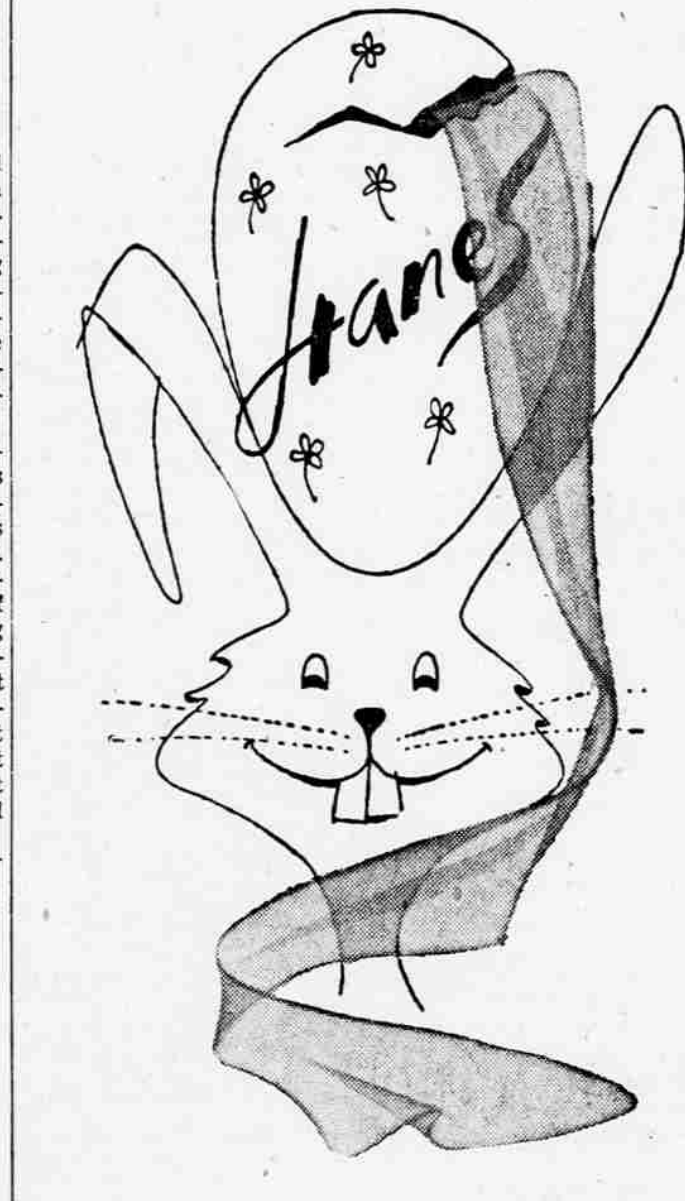


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