

U.S. Commercial Aviation Winds Up Most Spectacular Decade in History

Washington - UPI - U. S. commercial aviation is winding up the most spectacular decade of progress in its history.

The 1950s have seen:
-Start of the commercial jet age.
-Vital advancements in air safety.

-A revolution in air traffic control.
-Emergence of air travel as the nation's number one transportation medium.

Ten years ago, the nation's railroads were carrying three times as many first-class passengers as the scheduled domestic airlines. That ratio is now completely reversed.

The airlines have expanded faster in the last 10 years than they did in their first 20.

In 1949, there were 45 certified airlines. There are now 55.

In 1949, the scheduled airlines served 638 cities. They now fly into 703.

Fleet Growing

In 1949, the U.S. commercial air fleet totaled 1,083 planes - more than half of them twin-engine airliners - offering 35,900 available seats daily. The most advanced jetliner planes - those of the Boeing 707 - consisted of a handful of tentative drawings.

Today, the commercial air fleet numbers 2,063 planes. These include 1,750 piston-engine airliners, 228 prop-jets

(jet engines hitched to conventional propellers) and 85 pure jets. Daily seats available: 130,000.

In 1949, the fastest cruising speed of a U.S. airliner was 315 miles an hour. It now is 590 miles an hour and will go up to 615 in 1960 when Convair introduces the 880 jetliner.

Ten years ago, the airlines employed 76,000 persons. They now employ 150,000. The payroll in the past decade has jumped from \$349 million to more than \$1 billion.

In 1949, the airlines carried 14.6 million passengers on domestic flights and about 2 million overseas. In 1959, they carried 49.8 million domestically and 5.8 million internationally.

Jet Age Arrives

By far the outstanding achievement of the 1950s was the unexpected smooth transition into the jet age. The cynics and pessimists warned that the new jets were far ahead of ground and air traffic control facilities. To a certain extent, this was and still is true.

But the gap was not as wide as feared, and what most of the gloomy forecasts failed to take into account was the enormous job of advance planning done by both the airlines and the federal government.

By the fall of 1959, U.S. jets

already had hauled their one millionth passenger - in only one year. Trans-Atlantic jets had flown more passengers in 12 months than the liner United States had carried in seven years. And the jets, although plagued by minor bugs, were not only operating with near-capacity loads but with a perfect safety record.

With the aviation industry's expansion of the 1950s came the inevitable growing pains. The decade saw some disastrous accidents, including the worst in commercial aviation history.

Grand Canyon Crash

On June 30, 1955, a United DC-7 and a TWA Constellation collided over the Grand Canyon. All 128 aboard the two planes were killed and a shocked nation demanded action.

The Grand Canyon tragedy pointed up the inadequacies of air traffic control and the inability of pilots to follow the old "see-and-be-seen" rule that had separated airlines since the 20s. Modern planes were simply too fast to rely on the human eye for protection.

Grand Canyon prompted the first moves toward modernization of the air traffic control system. But it took two more fatal collisions to galvanize Congress into major action. On April 21, 1958, an Air Force jet fighter rammed a United DC-7 over Las Vegas,

NeV., and all 47 aboard the airliner were killed. Only one month later, a National Guard jet trainer hit a Capital Viscount near Brunswick, Md., with 12 perishing on the transport.

Swift and drastic reforms followed.

CAA Abolished

1. Congress abolished the old Civil Aeronautics Administration (which had just celebrated its 20th anniversary) and set up a new Federal Aviation Agency with unprecedented powers in the field of air safety.

2. Congress voted huge new funds for improvement and modernization of an air traffic control system that had changed little since the days of the DC-3.

3. Under projects started by the CAA and continued by the FAA, the government hired several thousand new air traffic controllers, installed new "super-skyways" for transcontinental flights, bought millions of dollars worth of new electronic equipment including radar, put most military traffic under the same traffic control as the civil airlines, and established a new research and training center at Oklahoma City for ATC personnel.

By the end of 1959, some tangible results were evident. There were still frequent reports of "near-misses," but no further actual collisions. And the vastly-improved air traffic control system now is capable of handling 22,500 flights a day compared with only 10,000 in 1956.

More Radar Appears

The decade also saw other developments toward greater safety. Radar appeared with increasing frequency on the nation's airlines. By the end of 1959, about half the commercial fleet was equipped with the storm-warning "little black box" and all of the new transports coming off assembly lines carried radar.

Airport runway lighting was vastly improved at most major terminals, although much remains to be done in this field. Pilot training underwent a literal revolution by the introduction of electronic simulators. These realistic cockpit reproductions, used for both refresher training and transition to new types of aircraft, can train and test crews in everything from instrument landings to simulated emergencies.

New Control Gear

The airlines are the first to concede that greater safety remains a prime target. (In 1959, more than 300 persons died in commercial airline crashes. Major safety achievements are predicted for the 1960s.)

New 100 per cent electronic

MAIL TRIBUNE, Medford, Or. 3
Sunday, Jan. 10, 1960

air traffic control equipment now being tested and developed under the FFA is aimed at one goal: completely safe separation of all traffic in any kind of weather. There are more than 100,000 planes using the nation's airspace. But achieving the goal is not impossible; airlines land and take off today in weather that would have grounded them a decade ago.

The switch to jet-powered equipment is a safety development in itself. Jet engines are far more reliable than piston and up to 20 times less likely to fail. The aviation industry estimates that by 1965, the commercial air fleet will be about 75 per cent jet-powered.

Commercial aviation has grown up. Its brilliant new planes - the Boeing 707, DC-8, Convair 880, Lockheed Electra and Fairchild F-27 - are taking to the airways in increasing numbers. In the '50s, they brought the Jet Age to America. In the '60s, they hope to make those next 10 years aviation's Golden Age.

Love Said Behind Slaying of Girl

Tangier, Morocco - UPI - William Moore, confessed slayer of Barbara H. Mueller, says he strangled the 19-year-old New York coed because he loved her.

The 26-year-old Englishman's confession said he killed her in his apartment here Nov. 19 when she stopped by to tell him she was leaving Tangier forever.

Moore said he wrapped the body in burlap sack bought in a shop here and tied up the bundle with light cord. That night, he took it in a rented car to the woods outside the city and hid it in the bushes.

Miss Mueller's body was found Dec. 13. Moore was arrested six days later.

Mrs. Duncan Asks For New Trial

Los Angeles - UPI - The State Supreme Court has had under submission an appeal for a new trial for Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Duncan, 55, sentenced to death in the for-hire murder of her daughter-in-law.

Defense attorneys charged in court that pre-trial statements by Ventura County District Attorney Roy A. Gustafson might have influenced jurors to vote the death penalty for Mrs. Duncan and the two men she was convicted of hiring to kill Olga Duncan Nov. 17, 1958.

Gustafson denied making improper pre-trial remarks and labelled as false a statement attributed to him about having no qualms in sending Mrs. Duncan to the gas chamber.

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