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Air Safety (Continued)

director of the CAB's bureau of safety regulations. "The avenue to safety is strewn with many a costly safety 'gimmick' whose ultimate effect was worse than the defect it was designed to cure."

Bakke cites this example: In the late '40s, airlines were plagued by several fires that broke out in inaccessible baggage compartments. The fires themselves were traced generally to serious design boners that caused two new airliner types to be grounded for major modifications. Even while the Government and the aviation industry were correcting these deficiencies, pressure mounted for better fire- and smoke-detection systems, plus fire-extinguishing systems that could douse in-flight blazes in cargo compartments.

At a great expense, the airlines hastily incorporated such systems in their equipment. The problem seemed solved until a day in June, 1948, when an airliner was cruising near Mount Carmel, Pa.

The crew was suddenly alerted to an apparent fire in a forward baggage compartment. The pilot pumped carbon dioxide, a fire-extinguishing chemical, into the suspected area. He was giving Air Traffic Control a calm account of the incident when his voice became garbled and incoherent. The plane went into a sweeping spiral and crashed, killing all aboard.

The investigation disclosed two ironies. There was no fire in the baggage com-

partment; the new detection system had given a false alarm. And the carbon dioxide, intended as a lifesaver, had penetrated the cockpit, incapacitating the crew until they lost control of the aircraft.

In hastily designing a fire-extinguishing system for a baggage area, the engineers unfortunately had not eliminated all possibilities that deadly carbon dioxide might get into the cockpit.

"The bitterest irony of all," Bakke notes, "was to learn that this accident alone caused three times as many fatalities as had resulted from all the baggage-compartment fires in aviation history."

All airliners now have fire-extinguishing systems which will not allow chemical fumes to enter cockpits or cabins. This was achieved after painstaking research and thorough testing—an achievement, it might be noted, that made no front pages.

Bakke himself concedes that the coverage given major accidents inevitably overshadows the space allotted the solutions and the corrections; an air crash admittedly is dramatic.

"In my opinion," the CAB top crash-prober adds, "the 'fix' is the most dramatic part of the story and deserves to be accorded as much attention as the accident. Because it has not been, I believe the public has never fully appreciated the remarkable improvement in aviation safety over the last 20 years."



I was just thinking...

The Rev. Howard B. Smith
c/o National Church Headquarters
New York, N. Y.

Dear Howard:

I see by the papers that you gave a speech at the recent national convention. Thousands heard you, and thousands more read the newspaper account.

Maybe you don't remember me, Howard, but I've never forgotten you since the day I fell down in front of you on my roller skates.

You didn't get around to asking me for a date until three years later, of course, but you were worth waiting for. Even with your high-school freckles, I thought you were a combination of Cary Grant and Clark Gable.

All summer the four of us were together, you and I and our best friends, Mary and Bill. I always thought Mary was the prettiest girl in our class. Remember how we played tennis and danced and went to all the basketball games?

The thing I remember best of all about you, Howard, was the night you said you wanted to see me alone because you had

something to ask me. All the time I was putting on my new dress and popping the popcorn, I was imagining what I'd say when you invited me to go steady. It wasn't a matter of yes or no; it was how to say yes without blushing.

So you came, Howard, in the shining armor of your gray slacks and blue shirt, and I thought you were beautiful. After you'd eaten most of the popcorn, you looked straight into my admiring eyes, and you said,

"Say, do you think I have a chance with Mary?"

I swallowed a big gulp of astonished air and then I said: "Yes, I think you do."

And you did.

So that's about all I had to say in this letter, Howard, except for one thing. I was pretty interested in the subject of the address that won you such recognition.

It was entitled "Understanding."

You should have let me write the speech.

Fatty Johnson