

# 25th Anniversary Spotlights Tremendous Growth in Air Travel

(Editor's note: It was 25 years ago, on June 23, 1938, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Civil Aeronautics Act - legislation that created a Civil Aeronautics board with complete authority over the nation's airlines. The following dispatch goes back for a comparative look at U. S. commercial aviation in 1938.)

By ROBERT J. SERLING  
UPI Aviation Editor

Washington - (AP) - It was a year when the airlines cut coast-to-coast travel to 16 hours and proudly boasted they were carrying nearly 2 million passengers annually.

Twenty-five years later they were carrying more than 60 million passengers, the transcontinental trips were down to less than five hours, and supersonic flight of only two hours was a formal government-industry project.

The DC3 was the queen of the airways in 1938. In fact, the big technical aviation news of the year involved the initial test flights of the nation's first four-engine airliners - the Douglas DC4 and the Boeing 307, the latter to become the world's first pressurized transport.

"Sovereign of the Skies," Douglas advertisements dubbed the DC4. "It provides space for 42 passengers or luxurious sleeping berths for 30. It had a bridal suite, charm room for ladies, a separate dressing room for men, an electric kitchen, and a dining service up to the standards of exclusive clubs. The plane is sound-proofed, air-conditioned and steam-heated with hot and cold running water."

Only 25 years later, not a single DC4 was flying in scheduled U.S. airline service although there still were still about 200 DC3's operating.

**Expert Denounces**  
Not everyone looked with optimism on four-engine flight. One expert denounced four-engine planes as "impractical." He said the airlines didn't need bigger planes because they couldn't fill a 12 or 21-passenger airliner.

"I'm worrying about where they are going to get 40 or 50 passengers at a clip," he wrote in unwitting anticipation of the day when airlines actually would worry where they were going to get 125 or 130 passengers at a clip.

The airlines in 1938 were

carrying 3,500 passengers every 24 hours (in 1963, a single large airline carries that many every two hours). But the industry was well aware that the air travel market was untapped. One study showed that while the total number of passengers carried was just under 2 million, only about 200,000 actually flew enough times to reach the 2 million figure.

Fear was the chief obstacle. American Airlines in 1938 stunted its competitors with an advertising campaign that dared mention an unmentionable subject - safety.

American's ads, personally written by President C. R. Smith, carried the caption "Afraid to Fly?"

**Safety Begins**  
United wasn't quite that daring, but came out with a delicately-worded bit of reassurance that "It is United's policy to fly at least a half-mile above any elevation on its system."

In retrospect, many of the safety items taken for granted today were unheard of 25 years ago. The federal government, for example, was just beginning to test and evaluate an instrument landing system. Hamilton-Sandard's big project of 1938 was development of the first propeller-feathering device, to keep the prop on a dead engine from windmilling and creating control problems.

Airport inadequacies were a hot topic of the day, particularly with bigger planes around the corner. One national magazine published an article warning that only five airports in the country were capable of handling a plane as big as the DC4 - Cleveland, Oakland, Memphis, New Orleans and Wichita.

"The U.S. has hatched eagles for the world's airways and provided them with wrens' nests," the magazine said.

Douglas didn't agree and proved it with the DC4 test flights which showed that a DC4 required no more landing or takeoff room than the DC3.

The DC4 prototype used in these flights carried a triple-tail like the Constellation that would follow it a few years later. Douglas later shifted to a single tail and sold the prototype to the Japanese government which promptly crashed it into Tokyo Bay.

**Talk Mergers**  
Merger talks were in the news in 1938 just as today. TWA tried to buy Eastern for \$3.2 million and was blocked only when Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker raised about the same amount to purchase control of the airline he was working for at the time. Another merger rumor of the day was a well-founded but never-materialize report that TWA would absorb Braniff, Delta and Chicago and Southern.

That \$3.2 million price tag on Eastern underlined the airlines' poor financial standing. The same amount today would be half the cost of a single jet. The airlines needed customers so badly that five of them started carry-

ing wives free if accompanied by husbands. It was for a one-month experimental period but was dropped due to an enormous lack of interest on the part of wives.

**New Sleepers**  
The most heavily-traveled market was New York-Chicago, which the airlines served with 44 daily scheduled flights. On an average week day in 1938, there are 140 scheduled trips between the two cities.

For coast-to-coast trips, American and TWA introduced

The airlines in 1938 had 375 planes, 1,400 pilots and 300 hostesses or stewardesses. They now have nearly 2,000 planes, 13,000 pilots and 10,000 "flygirls."

Some of the scheduled carriers of the day have long since passed into limbo. Boston-Maine Airways, for example. Grand Canyon Airways. Hanford Air Lines. Mayflower Airlines. Miami-Key West Airways. Wyoming Air Service. TWA's corporate name was Transcontinental and Western Air, Chicago and Southern would soon merge

with Delta and Pennsylvania Central would become Capital.

The civil aeronautics act of 1938 brought a measure of benevolent control to the struggling industry. Until the law was passed, aviation authority was divided among three agencies. The bureau of air commerce, which was part of the commerce department, provided regulatory activities; the post office department awarded air routes and airmail contracts, and the interstate commerce commis-

sion fixed cargo and passenger rates.

**Rules of Act**  
The 1938 act: -Made the airlines' routes permanent and protected from outside competition. -Provided air mail pay as a regular federal subsidy instead of requiring competitive bids, an outgrowth of the Army's abortive attempt to carry the mail when FDR cancelled all private airmail contracts. -Established an independent civil aeronautics author-

ity composed of an administrator, a five-man civil aeronautics board to regulate airline economics, and an air safety board, charged with investigating accidents.

Two years later, the act was amended to set up a civil aeronautics administration under the commerce department (predecessor of the FAA), abolish the air safety board, and continue the still-independent CAB with its economic regulatory powers plus accident investigation.

Thus, June 23 actually was

the CAB's silver anniversary more than the birthday observance of a long-outmoded law. But it still seems opportune to honor legislation that ended chaos among the airlines and set the stage for the progress that was to follow.

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**George Fox College Building Condemned**

Newberg - (AP) - George Fox college will be barred by the state fire marshal from holding classes this fall in the three-story Wood-Mar hall.

College President Dr. Milo Ross said the school faces a serious crisis, since no funds are available to make needed improvements, estimated to cost from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

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