



EAA CHAPTER

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• A LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION — BOX 229 HALES CORNERS, WISCONSIN 53130 •

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DECEMBER 1986 NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER SCHEDULE: Please note that there will not be a regular meeting on the first Tuesday in December. Instead, we will be having our annual Christmas party at the Legionnaire Club on December 14. The cash bar will open at 6:30 and dinner will be served at 7:00. Also remember to bring a gift and identify as MALE or FEMALE. The deadline for reservations is November 29 so by this time everyone should have their reservations turned in to Duane Drahota along with a check for the dinner. I hope to see you all there!

Air controllers' skills deserve great applause

Dear Ann Landers: My husband is an air traffic controller — one of those "inexperienced loathsome creatures" hired after the strikers were fired.

I realize there are mediocre controllers, just as there are mediocre doctors, mediocre pilots and everything else. However, I feel that these men and women have been taking an unfair rap from the media. All we hear about is the number of near-misses and the delays at airports, and inexperienced controllers are blamed.

Sure, there are more near-misses and longer delays, but there is a lot more air traffic. You can be sure there will be even more near-misses and delays two years down the road. This isn't because of inexperience. It's because of government regulations on the number of flights allowed and the amount of air traffic at any given time.

Controlling traffic is not a matter of seeing two planes on a radar screen and keeping them five miles apart. It's seeing a radar screen filled with airplanes and keeping them ALL five miles apart. It's a matter of pilot alertness and skill and weather that can change within seconds. It's also a matter of hundreds of

small aircraft NOT under the air traffic control system. These private planes are a serious hazard. Sometimes they pop up out of nowhere and give the controllers anxiety attacks.

I have been to my husband's air traffic control center and observed those men and women in action. The dedication and professionalism they bring to their jobs is truly heroic. I would place my life in their hands anytime. Too bad they aren't appreciated. Sign me

A Wife in Chicago

Dear Wife: As a frequent flier I can tell you I appreciate the controllers, but air travel these days is mighty frustrating. After a while, however, you learn which airlines have fewer cancellations, the best meals and the most accommodating service. I favor American, Pan American and Braniff.

According to Time magazine (Sept. 1), the Air Traffic Control System is operating with 2,000 fewer fully equipped controllers than before President Reagan ordered 11,438 fired in 1981. Since many of the replacements are relatively inexperienced, they tend to be more cautious, which is good.

Donald Engen, administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, says one of the reasons for crowded skies is that the number of airlines has jumped from 38 in 1978 to more than 250 today. He says: "We need more airports. We are short of places to land."

J. Patrick Foley, vice chairman of Braniff, says: "The controllers do a miraculous job. They are federal employees, hired and trained by the Department of Transportation. As time goes by the equipment is becoming more sophisticated and the controllers more experienced. We are optimistic."

Lowell Duncan, a vice president of American Airlines, says the controllers are dedicated and competent, but they are undermanned. He also recommends that we develop new technology to assist the controllers in tracking aircraft.

As a consumer, I believe the small, privately owned aircraft that wander into commercial aircraft space presents a serious danger to all who fly. These private planes should be forced by law to carry more radar and collision avoidance equipment, and they should be banned from all major airports during peak hours. This is easier said than done, however, since the private aircraft are owned by fat cats who have a lot of clout in Washington.

885 So 46th Str
Lincoln, Ne 68510
Nov 16, 1986

Dear Ann Landers,

I was appalled at the errors in your article, "Air controllers' skills deserve great applause." I would first like to correct misconceptions advanced by the controller's wife:

#1 - It is not a matter of "hundreds of small airplanes suddenly popping up out of nowhere." Radar service areas are usually about 40 miles in diameter. Most radars 'see' traffic about 60 miles away. If the controller is alert, he will have the "small" airplane in sight on his scope well before it reaches his area of responsibility.

#2 - The congestion is basically not caused by "more and more small airplanes." There are fewer small planes flying today than there were ten years ago. Mr Donald Egan properly addresses the problem, when he says the number of airlines has jumped from 38 in 1978 to more than 250 today. Each one of these airlines want 'prime time' for their airline. The result is that three or four times per day the system is horribly overloaded by, not "small" airplanes, but rather by the ones she wants to protect -- the big ones.

As to your errors, Ann, let me point them out, not to embarrass you, but to keep you from making future errors:

#1 - You mention that you like certain air lines because "they have fewer cancellations, the best meals and most accomodating service." Not once do you mention their safety record, yet because Ann likes them, many will pick them as being safer on which to travel.

#2 - You mention that controllers are "relatively inexperienced." It has been several years since the firing. How many years do you feel it takes to become "experienced?" On the other hand, there always have, and there always will be some coming and some going. What about the "inexperienced" replacement? Don't you realize that he or she may well be the one who is controlling the airspace in which you travel. Just like picking a doctor, they have to work on someone in order to get experience. Frankly, as a pilot with many years of experience, I have no more qualms of being directed by one of the fledglings than I do of a 40-year veteran.

#3 - You mention that "small planes who wander into commercial aircraft space present a serious danger to all who fly." I agree completely, but then, don't 'big' airplanes who wander a hundred miles or so off course into Russian airspace also present a danger to us who fly? Big planes and "small" planes are both flown by people. Just because they fly a behemoth doesn't make them a bit safer than me in my 2-place Cessna 120.

#4 - You mention "that all small planes should be banned from major airports." If this were done, then who do you think would

train your fledgling airline captains? Do you think it would be safer to put these pilots in the seat of a DC-10 for training? Just due to their size they would automatically have to land at the larger airports -- along with your "commercial" traffic.

#5 - As to "small planes carrying more radar and collision avoidance equipment, let me give you an example of the cost factor. I fly a Cessna 120. I paid \$6500 for this plane. Do you think it would make sense to put \$20,000 to 100,000 radar in a \$6500 plane?

#6 - Last, but not least, these 'private' aircraft are very few owned by "fat cats who have a lot of clout in Washington." Most are owned by private citizens - milk men, bookkeepers, small business men, hair dressers, etc. As for "clout in Washington," I wish we did have some, as we would get Federal money to build reliever airports for "small" planes. We would much rather land in traffic with other small planes than to be sandwiched between two big ones.

I do happen to agree with you, "Air controllers deserve great applause" but not any more than do the pilots who pilot planes in that airspace. The controllers risk only their reputation. We pilots risk our lives and those of our passengers.

Consider also that without those "small" planes flying into "commercial aircraft space," who do you think would be flying all your food, machine parts, cancelled checks, etc from small airports to large ones? I have no doubt that many copies of your column are flown daily from large hubs to small cities by "small" airplanes.

It is unfortunate, but many people fear to fly. It is terrible to have an uninformed person add to those fears when you know so little about which you speak.

To become informed, call John L Baker of the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association, 421 Aviation Way, Frederick, Maryland 21701. Also call Paul H Poberezny of Experimental Aircraft Association, Wittman Field, Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He heads up an organization which hosts the EAA fly-in in August each year with over 15,000 "small" planes on the field at once. It has nearly 5 times the landings per hour of O'Hara the same week.

I think a public apology is in order.

Sincerely,


Lester H. Christiansen

CC: John Baker & Paul Poberezny



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