

40 FORTY YEARS OF AOPA

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AOPA 124393

This month AOPA celebrates its 40th Anniversary. Forty years is a long time. To put it into better perspective, the Wright Brothers first flew at Kitty Hawk only 35 years before that. Less than 20 years prior to AOPA's creation the Great War, called "the War to End War"—now called World War I—had come to a close.

Not quite a decade before AOPA's founding, Wall Street's Black Friday marked the beginning of the depression. It helps to bring the picture into sharp focus to realize that more than 35% of AOPA's present 225,000 members weren't even born, and an additional 30% of today's membership was less than 10 years old, when AOPA was formed.

Looking at the size of our association, from any angle—membership, professional staff, physical plant, worldwide activities and budget—it is hard to realize that it all began as the result of an almost casual conversation in a Georgia duck blind. Before blowing out the candles on the cake, it seems appropriate to stand back and take an overall look at what AOPA is, why and how it was created, how it developed, who runs it and how it works.

By 1938, civil aviation in the United States was dominated by a handful of airline executives who controlled the flow of federal cash subsidies to air carriers by influencing the assignment of airmail contracts. This situation finally came to a head in a series of congressional investigations and resulted in the enactment of curative legislation known as the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, which created the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) as part of the Department of Commerce.

The CAA had two functions. First, it was charged with the responsibility of "economically regulating" the airline business through its subordinate Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), much as the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) regulates railroads, trucks

and buses engaged in interstate transportation. Second, the head of the CAA was charged by the Congress with the duty and responsibility to create and enforce a body of regulations "as he may deem necessary . . . to insure the safety of aircraft and the efficient utilization of [the] airspace." The interpretation of those few words, which have continued through dozens of amendments of the original Act, has been the source of disputes between the regulators and the users ever since and is, in fact, a foundation-stone of this association.

Shortly after the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act, America's air carriers, individually and through their own Washington-based, professionally staffed lobbying organization, the Air Transport Association (which had been formed on August 4, 1927, to orchestrate the apportionment of those lucrative airmail routes), began to throw its weight into the creation of new civil air regulations. Their position, for which they lobbied strongly, was that the efficient use of the airspace meant that, as in Europe, the skies along airline routes, over all airports served by airlines and near large cities served by airlines should be reserved exclusively for airline use and that private flying should be excluded by regulation.

In the fall of 1938, three men crouched in a duck blind on the Georgia coast: Laurence P. Sharples and his brother Philip T. Sharples, both of Philadelphia and both dedicated sportsman-pilots (as they were called then) and their hunting guest and good friend, Ed Noble, the new Chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Authority. Inevitably, their conversation turned to matters of civil aviation.

The chairman laid his problem before them candidly: the CAA heard regularly from the air carriers and ATA's staff of politically wise professional advocates, seemingly reasonable requests for Civil Air Regulations that would naturally favor their commercial operations. The only communications received from private aviation

interests came from temporary, ad hoc groups that had sprung up in different parts of the country. What the CAA got from them, he said, was a package of uncoordinated and frequently contradictory points of view and much grumbling. They were primarily locally formed federations that addressed only parochial needs.

No permanently staffed, adequately funded and independent groups existed. Aviation political action committees were manned by uncompensated, impermanent volunteers. Once the pressure was off they disappeared from the scene as ground fog disappears before the morning sun. Since Noble foresaw a tremendous potential growth in American aviation activities over the next 20 years, he continued, it would be helpful to government officials if private flying had a single strong, coherent, articulate, knowledgeable organization that would match that maintained by the airlines. It would be an educational aid to help the government's regulation, writers understand the problems that proposals under consideration might create for private aviation.

Soon after returning to Philadelphia, the Sharples brothers invited three close friends who had special and unusual knowledge of aviation to discuss the formation of a full-time, professionally staffed association of private flyers as envisioned by the CAA's chairman.

The aviation background, professional qualifications and business credentials of the three invitees were outstanding. John Story Smith was an avid pilot, owner and operator of a major flying facility named Wings Field (which still is in full operation only a few miles north of Philadelphia) and an executive of the Jacobs Aircraft Engine Co. C. Townsend Ludington, also a sportsman-pilot, had, with his brother Nicholas, built the Camden Airport (which at that time was the major airport used by airlines serving Philadelphia) and had personally begun one of the earliest passenger airlines using multi-engine aircraft (three-engine Stinson SM-6000's) known as the "New York, Philadelphia and Washington Airways Corp." (motto: "Every Hour on the Hour"); everyone simply called it "Ludington Lines." The third man was a long-time private and military pilot who was also a member of one of Philadelphia's most prestigious law firms: Alfred L. Wolf. None of the five were wild-eyed zealots. On the contrary, they were mature, well-seasoned, capable business leaders, cautious and analytical in approaching the problem that had been laid before them.

The founding of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association did not happen overnight. For almost nine months, the five men not only worked together but met with as many contemporary aviation leaders as they could. Prior to incorporation the drafts were shown to some 75 people. They worked to gain acceptance of their concept from fixed-base operators, manufacturers and insurers. The founders tried to assure them that the new association would aid general aviation. A pilot or owner "sponsor" from each state and each principal region agreed to the concepts of the proposed association.

First, they agreed that to qualify for membership, one had either to have flown an aircraft as pilot-in-command—that is, to have soloed—or had to be or have been an aircraft owner. Those requirements would nail down the fundamental community of



Founders Philip T. (left) and Laurence P. Sharples saw the need for a unified, independent voice of general aviation back in 1938.

Blowing general aviation's horn—that's what AOPA has been doing for 40 years.





interest of the membership. Then they tackled a touchy issue and made a decision that they anticipated would be the most critical of all.

After reviewing the organizational structures of many associations, clubs and guilds and assessing the patterns of change and shifting policy positions under changing leadership, and noting the incidence of such "democratically run" associations that crumbled because of internal politics, they decided that there should be strong leadership from the board of trustees. They wanted to provide continuity and consistency in the association's policies. The members elect the trustees annually. In addition, members express their approval and endorsement of association activities by renewing or by *not* renewing their membership by paying—or not paying—their annual dues. To make such expressions valid, it was further decided that here would be no multi-year dues programs, no lifetime, one-payment memberships. Everyone would be on an annual basis.

The founders decided that the trustees of the association should receive no compensation for their services. However, they reserved the right to appoint or to consent to the appointment of salaried professional staff members who would serve private flying through the association. And, finally, they agreed that the overall purposes of the association would be to make flying more useful, less expensive, safer and more fun.

In April 1939 the board of trustees of the soon-to-be-formed organization hired as its first-time employee a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance who had been the first president of the Intercollegiate Flying Association (NIFA—originally National Intercollegiate Flying Clubs, NIFC), John B. Hartranft, Jr., known to his friends as "Doc."

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Pilots queue up for ID cards and licenses after private aviation was grounded shortly after Pearl Harbor was bombed. AOPA got lightplanes back off the ground when it spearheaded establishment of the AOPA Air Guard, that grew into the Civil Air Patrol.

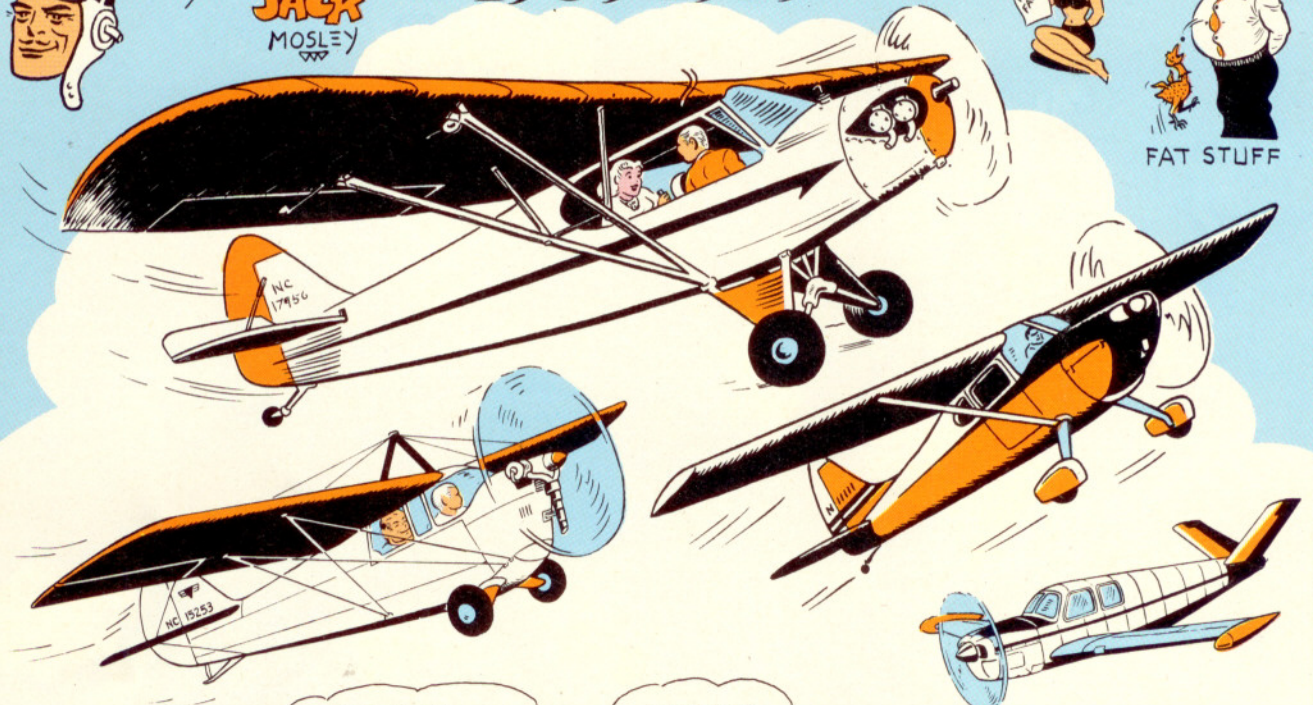
Salute to AOPA's 40th Anniversary 1939-1979



FROM ZACK
**SMILIN'
JACK**
MOSLEY



FAT STUFF



IT'S A LONG-
FLIGHT CURVE FROM
JENNYS, CUBS AND
"AIR-KNOCKERS" TO
"HOT-PROPS", TURBOS
& JETS BUT--

--MOTHER
NATURE'S
LIL' DE-ICERS
HAVE
ALWAYS
BEEN
STREAM-
LINED!



DOWNWIND
JAXON



SMILIN' JACK CHARACTERS
COURTESY OF
CHICAGO TRIB.-N.Y. NEWS SYND. INC. ®

by "BRAVE COWARD ZACK"
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The association's first office was more than modest (it was shared with several crates of potatoes). It had a telephone, a typewriter and a box of stationery bearing the name that all had agreed on as being most descriptive: "Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association."

The founders consulted with one of the leading state aviation officials whom they all knew, New Jersey's Director of Aeronautics Gill Robb Wilson, for advice on proceeding further with their proposed project.

Executive Secretary Hartranft was not waiting to be told what to do. From his vegetable-bin office he began to write to anyone who had any aviation status in the United States, from magazine editors and publishers to motion picture stars who flew, as well as to government officials and officers in existing flying associations. He had a high percentage of answers indicating considerable interest in a national representative association.

The founders felt that, although mass communications were vital to inform the public and the association's members what was being done, the creation of their own magazine would tend to cut off any news coverage or editorial recognition from existing publications. Wolfe met William B. Ziff who, with B. G. Davis, published *Popular Aviation*—the forerunner to *Flying* magazine. Ziff as publisher and Davis as partner and then managing editor were operating out of Chicago. When the founders of AOPA asked if Ziff would consider having his newsstand-circulated magazine as the official AOPA magazine, he went a great step further and agreed also to finance the organization to the extent of \$1,000 a month for two years. In late April 1939 Doc Hartranft moved AOPA's offices to a two-room suite in Chicago's Transportation Building where *Popular Aviation* was published. Bill Ziff had helped AOPA over its first and, at that time, most formidable hurdle: working capital, with which to earn its own livelihood.

Although AOPA's founders had the means to lend AOPA money, they realized that to do so could stifle independence even before it got started. AOPA's contractual arrangement with Ziff-Davis was strictly on business-like terms and allowed the Ziff-Davis organization no control over AOPA's policies.

In May 1939, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of New Jersey. In June, the first public advertisements soliciting membership (at dues of \$3.00 a year) appeared in aviation magazines, complete with the downswep-wing insignia that had been designed by Hartranft, inspired by the wings of the Royal Air Force. Within days, membership applications accompanied by checks began to fall through the mail slot in the door.

By the end of 1939, AOPA had 3,000 members and money in the bank. Not much, but enough to show that someone out there agreed with the concept. After Gill Robb Wilson had been awarded AOPA membership No. 1, and Doc Hartranft No. 2, the five founders received theirs. One of the first paid-for-memberships, No. 9, went to the famous motion picture actor and pilot, Brian Aherne. No. 29 was Igor I. Sikorsky; No. 554 was King Michael of Rumania; No. 849 went to Zack Mosley, cartoonist and creator of "Smilin' Jack."

AOPA was busy in its first year of existence, processing membership applications (which were arriving at the rate of almost 25 a day) and gearing up to meet the policies that the trustees had established.

Despite its low budget and relatively small membership, a mass fly-in was scheduled to Lake La Belle, Oconomowoc, Wis., in February 1940, and drew a surprisingly large attendance to the frozen lake get-together.

In June, AOPA launched campaigns for better air-marking systems, for airport lighting for night-flying operations and for the creation of new and improved community airports.

For a short time in 1940, AOPA's activities were restricted because of a move to New York City where *Flying Magazine* was to be published, including issues with a special *AOPA Pilot* insert bound into copies circulated to members at a reduced subscription rate. In 1940, recognizing the gathering war clouds on the horizon, which might result in the ban of much civil flying, AOPA worked with the U.S. Power Squadron to simulate a disaster drill to prove the usefulness of lightplanes for the relief and evacuation of afflicted areas. In August Hartranft set up the "AOPA Air Guard," designed to use civilian-owned-and-operated light aircraft for patrolling coastal waters and international borders in the event of war. His fertile mind was always coming up with something that would give AOPA members an advantage that no one else had.

In January 1941, AOPA made its first survey of all airports in the United States listed by the CAA—and many not so listed: privately owned strips used by members for their



Expedition to Antarctica? No, it was AOPA's first mass fly-in, which drew 40 airplanes to frozen Lake La Belle, west of Milwaukee, Wis.



Zack Mosley, long-time AOPAer and creator of the Smilin' Jack cartoon, signs the guestbook for a "cute li'l de-icer." Zack honored AOPA's 40th anniversary with the cartoon facing.



An early—and lasting—contribution of AOPA occurred in 1941 when it convinced the CAA to number runways according to their magnetic direction.

own convenience. Eventually, this would be an annual service, leading to the present *AOPA's Airports U.S.A.* Also in 1941—38 years ago—the AOPA-Hertz rental car discount program was offered to members. In addition, in 1941 AOPA successfully convinced the CAA that airport runways should be numbered according to their magnetic direction, as is done now. By the end of 1941, AOPA had nearly 5,000 members and was picking up momentum daily.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, everything changed. Immediately, the government banned all private flying as unnecessary. Membership plummeted as the nation reorganized for a war to be fought on two fronts, half a world apart.

When many young men went into uniform, J. B. Hartranft, Jr., was among them, wearing the uniform of the U.S. Army Air Force. Assigned to headquarters in Washington, D.C., he took AOPA with him—and there it was to stay. Astonishingly, during 1942 membership grew back to the 3,000 level because Hartranft was relentlessly selling the concept of using privately owned aircraft to supplement the strained strength of military aviation for such missions as coastal patrol, looking for enemy submarines surfaced to recharge batteries along coastwise shipping lanes, and the advantages of low-altitude, slow-flight scrutiny of ocean beaches for signs of possible submarine-borne landing parties.

It was a successful campaign. The AOPA Air Guard became a “grasshopper” air force. Small aircraft, bearing a triangular insignia enclosing a three-bladed propeller, were common sights along U.S. beaches and borders—the beginning of the Civil Air Patrol.

AOPA's unending efforts to convince the government's multiple layers of military and civil bureaucracy had its effect, especially when the nature of Hartranft's efforts were communicated via the newly created membership service, the *AOPA Washington Newsletter*. By the end of 1943, while the war was still going full blast, AOPA's membership rose to 5,000 and by the end of 1944, to 8,000, notwithstanding the complete elimination of all personal, recreational flying activities. AOPA's Washington staff was up to eight people.

When the government's ban on private flying was suddenly lifted on May 17, 1945, AOPA (which had 17,000 active members on the rolls) was flooded with membership applications. In the last six months of 1945 more than 6,000 new members came in. Another 10,000 followed in 1946. The staff was simply overwhelmed. Nevertheless, AOPA's Hartranft, now general manager, arranged with Lloyds of London to provide members with accident coverage, then unavailable in the United States because private flying had been defined by the courts as “an ultrahazardous activity.”

AOPA made friends (and garnered members) but also created enemies when it began a vigorous, aggressive attack on service, equipment and repair facilities that were reported to be “gouging” private flyers. People sat up and took notice when the little, privately funded association took on the government-financed, foreign (and therefore foreign air carrier) dominated provisional International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)—which had been created by an international treaty to which the United States was a party. Private flying was not represented.

AOPA had comprehended what would happen if the “uniform regulations” affecting air safety were molded by European air carrier thinking. Because of the treaty the United States had to follow suit, and the anti-private flying position that had virtually destroyed such activities abroad could be imported here.

A means of providing a voice for general aviation was explored at length, with the ultimate decision to establish an international general aviation organization. Following consultations with ICAO officials, it was decided that the new general aviation organization would be modeled after the International Federation of Air Line Pilot Associations which speaks in ICAO for the interests of the airline pilots.

After WW II, AOPA membership soared, as did private aviation activity. Here, lightplanes stretch the parking facilities during a fly-in to Rehoboth Beach, Del., in 1952.





Max Karant once rode his single-place Mooney Mite to do battle with bureaucrats and to represent AOPA. Today his Twin Comanche, N13K, is a familiar sight at many airports.

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association of the U.S.A. spearheaded the formation of the International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations (IAOPA) on February 2, 1962, with four other groups joining AOPA-U.S. to form the nucleus of what was to be the permanent organization. The latter came into being on October 22, 1964, and was accorded the same accredited "observer" status as other international counterparts. IAOPA now consists of 21 member organizations with a combined membership of over 252,000 pilots.

AOPA never let up. Slashing attacks were made on airport fueling and lease monopolies at publicly owned airports, particularly where they developed on former military air training bases turned over to local or municipal authorities. By December 1946 there were 47 people on AOPA's Washington staff—the trustees had set a rule of thumb that the ratio should be kept at one staff member for every 1,000 members—but it was hard put to keep up with membership growth and its resultant demands; every few months, it seemed, new staffers were hired, which meant relocating the offices to larger quarters to accommodate them. Progress may have been momentarily slowed, but it was never stopped.

When members complained of being victimized by aircraft salesmen who had saddled them with expensive equipment heavily plastered with invisible and unascertainable liens, AOPA opened an aircraft title-search office in Oklahoma City, where all airmen and aircraft records are maintained.

An *International Flight Guide* was published in 1947, as was an easy-to-understand booklet explaining the simplicity of navigating by the new system that was slated to replace the old four-leg, low frequency radio ranges. Called the "VOR" system ("very high frequency omnidirectional radio range"), it was static-free and far simpler. AOPA coined a new name for it: "Omni."

By 1948, not yet 10 years old and having survived the almost four-year dearth of private flying during the war, AOPA's membership was nudging 50,000—more than half of all the registered pilots and certainly most of the active pilots. But new problems were brewing—or, to put it more accurately, old problems were rebrewing.

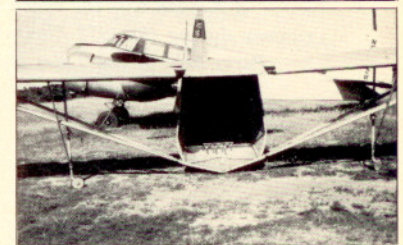
Before the war, the backbone of most major American airlines were 24-passenger, 170-mph Douglas DC-3's. With the return of peacetime operations, however, the long-haul or "trunk" carriers—American, TWA, Eastern and United—began to acquire larger, faster, four-engine aircraft with nonstop transcontinental capability: Douglas DC-6's and -7's and Lockheed Constellations. In turn, they sold off their DC-3's to smaller, intrastate "feeder lines," which were springing up like weeds everywhere. Surplus military aircraft—Curtiss C-46's, Douglas C-47's and C-54's (the military designations of DC-3 and DC-4 aircraft) began to provide scheduled air carrier service, regulated by the Civil Aeronautics Board, to communities that had never before had such transportation available.

As airlines expanded, the airport/airspace confrontation between "commercial" and "private" aviation, all but forgotten during the war years, flared up again. So did the issue of regulations to ensure the "safe and efficient" use of the airspace. The issues required much of AOPA's attention. Doc Hartranft, his hands full with the problems of running a sizeable organization undergoing growing pains, needed help to carry on the fight against the trend towards unnecessarily restrictive rules and regulations that could infringe upon the rights of private fliers. In May 1948 the beleaguered Hartranft hired Max Karant as the association's assistant general manager. The former editor of *Flying*, he was a veteran journalist as well as an active pilot. They were to make a great team.

With Doc remaining in the background, creating programs of special services to members, Max assumed the dual function of being private flying's fiery advocate before the CAB and Congress and the communicator to the membership through *The AOPA PILOT*, which was bound into special AOPA editions of *Flying*.

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During an AOPA outing to Nantucket, Robert E. Fulton demonstrated how to convert his Airphibian roadable airplane from a two-seat automobile into an airplane—and vice-versa.



Karant soon acquired a reputation as private flying's Horatio at the Bridge. As the association's most visible spokesman, he had the personality of a guard dog straining at the leash, ready to spring, teeth bared, if he perceived any threat to AOPA members' right to fly. Particularly any suggestion that private pilots should be arbitrarily or summarily barred from using what some people called "airline" airports brought immediate reaction from Max. Blunt, tactless, outspoken, no one ever had any doubt where he stood on any aviation issue.

While Max was out front wielding his broadsword, Doc was methodically putting together a structured staff that would serve dual purposes of dealing with the problems of government and responding to the needs of individual members. When a pattern of complaints indicated that members were having problems finding selections of up-to-date sectional charts when planning vacation or business trips by air, he began an AOPA chart service. A flurry of queries about the best routings from new-pilot members resulted in a flight-planning assistance program. The AOPA Air Safety Foundation was separately incorporated to promote flying safety and flight training. An AOPA Life Insurance Plan was inaugurated to provide full insurance to members without aviation restrictions or extra premiums. During the early 1950's, AOPA retained Washington legal counsel to assist in the formulation of membership activities.

When the staff grew to 50 in 1951, AOPA's headquarters were relocated to a newly constructed building in suburban Washington, D.C., to accommodate them and allow for expansion.

In 1954 Arthur H. Frisch, former head of Ziff-Davis circulation and promotional activities, and publisher of a small newspaper, was hired to be AOPA's business manager. Charles P. Miller was hired from the Voice of America to be managing editor of AOPA's publications and to study the possibility of creating a completely independent publishing venture, an association journal to be called *The AOPA PILOT*.

By that time, the complicated governmental bureaucracy required AOPA to attend more than a dozen meetings a week on technical problems with the CAA and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), as well as presenting testimony before congressional committees. No longer was the business of working with the government at any level a simple matter of dealing in loose generalities. AOPA had to have its own cadre of experts on issues involving air traffic control, airspace, airport capacity and technical requirements for equipment. Acquiring and maintaining such a staff would be expensive, but there was no other course.

Hartranft decided 60,000 members were needed to make such staffing possible. The magic number was achieved in 1957.

Within weeks, Victor J. Kayne, a former air traffic controller and the first tower chief at Washington National Airport, was taken on board to handle ATC problems that arose



Cover of the first issue of the AOPA PILOT, March 1958.

A Navion uses the beach as a runway during the 1958 Plantation Party held at the Tides Hotel, St. Petersburg, Fla.





with the CAA; Robert G. Armstrong, a retired Navy admiral experienced in airways structuring, was named as AOPA's airspace specialist; and Cyril Thompson, a former official of the Airport Operators Council, became AOPA's spokesman in the conflict between airlines and private planes.

To coordinate the efforts of all the different "spokesmen" of AOPA, and to assure consistency in AOPA's positions, a policy and technical planning program was initiated.

That same year, 1957, to bring AOPAers together in a convivial social environment, Art Frisch (who was by then also handling membership promotion) produced the first general membership fly-in to a Southern plantation in Gulfport, Miss.—hence the name "Plantation Party," which has stuck to AOPA's annual get-togethers ever since.

Since 1955, AOPA had been dissatisfied and critical of the dominating influence of the Department of Commerce over the operations of the CAA (by then the Civil Aeronautics Administration) in such matters as requesting funding for airports and airways improvements and new air traffic control equipment, including modern radar. The Department, because of its position over the CAA, was able to block funding requests, although it was clear to anyone who knew anything about aviation that a new era was dawning which demanded immediate action.

By the middle of the decade, a revolutionary new breed of airplane was beginning to appear overhead: civil jet airliners—the Boeing 707, Douglas DC-8, the French Caravelle and the British Comet—which scorched the skies at 550 mph, more than nine miles a minute, or a mile and a half every 10 seconds. The Department of Commerce ignored the situation, but the public became concerned by all that it read and heard about "instantaneous closure rates" in jets flying head-on towards each other and allegations that the time-honored "see and be seen" method of separation was no longer valid if midair collisions were to be avoided. To anyone who did not fly and did not know of aviation's rules of the road that stratified aircraft altitudes according to direction of flight, the arguments for "positive control" were frightening and persuasive.

When the catastrophic accident between two airliners did happen, though, it did not involve jets. Both airplanes were piston-engine, propeller-driven aircraft going the

Not all AOPA get-togethers need runways. This time a yacht hosted a number of AOPA amphibians and floatplanes.



William T. Piper, Sr. (right) presents a Piper Tri-Pacer to William J. Meehan, a winner in the 1956 AOPA membership contest.

The 1963 AOPA Plantation Party drew more than 3,000 people and 1,000 airplanes to Palm Springs, Calif. Exhibit airplanes fill the parking lot at the Riviera Hotel.



same direction at a closure rate of less than the speed children ride bicycles. Hidden from one another by "blind spots," one had simply climbed out of a cloud bank into the belly of the other—126 people were killed.

That collision over the Grand Canyon in 1958 generated a clamor for change in the administration of the nation's airspace and for a system of "positive control" that would forevermore prevent any more midairs in the "crowded skies." The pressure grew so great that Congress, after two decades of ignoring, constantly underfunding and expressing complete disinterest in civil aviation, was goaded into action. In record time, it passed the Federal Aviation Act, which created a new, completely independent agency—the Federal Aviation Agency. It was given quasi-Cabinet rank, since both the administrator and deputy administrator would be appointed by the president, with the advice and consent of the Senate, and would report directly to him.

What seemed to have been a simple solution soon backfired. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a former five-star general, named Elwood R. Quesada as the FAA's first administrator and directed him to make air transportation safe for the flying public. The hard-driving, highly regarded "Pete" Quesada, a military pilot and retired Air Force general, made it clear that he did not consider private pilots to be part of the flying public. He believed, as European government aviation officials did, that military and air carrier aviation were national assets, essential to the nation's growth and development. Private flying, as far as he was concerned, amounted to no more than a nuisance, a hazard to operations of other types of flying with no transportation value.

Citing his congressional duty to issue regulations to ensure the safe and efficient use of the airspace—and stressing that what he was doing was in the interest of safety—Quesada forthwith had his minions put private flying's feet to the regulatory fire. Severe flight physical requirements were imposed, thereby grounding many AOPA members; restrictions on airport access were devised and (so-called) user tax programs set into motion. The future of private flying was on the line. And the battle began.

While other groups pussyfooted about, taking "forthright" stands and inventing phrases such as "general aviation" and "utility aircraft," FAA's Quesada had one opponent that stood up and fought for what it believed.

AOPA was always ready to wade in and tangle, again and again, no matter how great the odds. Using the new publication *AOPA PILOT*, first published as an independent association journal in 1958, AOPA marshalled opposition from the grass roots of aviation during three years of relentless head-butting, controversy and acrimony—all duly covered in the aviation press. AOPA's membership jumped to 80,000 and its Washington staff to 65. Private pilots recognized that they had a fearless champion, not a fancy Dan but a pier six brawler fighting their battle, rather than a self-styled "statesman" or conciliator who might very well compromise them out of existence. In the words of Admiral Ernest J. King: "When things get tough is when they send for the sons o' bitches." As far as Pete Quesada was concerned, Max Karant filled the description to a T.

While Karant was gathering most of the publicity, keeping in the public eye by repeatedly sticking his thumb in Quesada's eye—"fighting city hall," as it were—Vic Kayne's government affairs team was constantly working with the regulatory nuts-and-bolts people inside the FAA headquarters. The slow, tedious pace of day-by-day progress did not rate the news coverage that the head-to-head slamming did, but in those almost daily meetings with the Bureau of Flight Standards and Air Traffic Management and Facilities, AOPA openly and freely exchanged ideas with agency staffers who had to make the system work and be both safe and efficient for all users.

In most cases, AOPA's quiet, reasonable approach was understood and adopted. The association was blossoming out as a major force in civil aviation because it had expert technicians in positions related to an FAA specialty. In the meantime, its well-publicized, continuing confrontation with bullying Big Brother was bringing in new members at the rate of 67 a day.

Soon after the election of John F. Kennedy, a new FAA administrator came on the scene. An experienced military test pilot and, perhaps more importantly, a general aviation pilot who flew everything from single-engine airplanes to turboprops and who was also a lawyer experienced in



Rubbing elbows. FAA Administrator Najeeb E. Halaby travelled the country to meet with general aviation pilots in a series of "hangar sessions." Here he talks with AOPA brass (left to right): Max Karant, Halaby, J. B. Hartranft, Jr., and J. Story Smith, an AOPA founder and a trustee.



William F. "Bozo" McKee was sworn in by President Lyndon B. Johnson to succeed Halaby as FAA head. He tried to establish a low profile but was quickly thrust into the limelight by the furor resulting from a midair collision between an airliner and a lightplane.

the ways of Washington politics: Najeeb E. Halaby, "Jeeb," as everyone called him, made it a point to pour oil on the troubled waters, traveling to all corners of the country, meeting general aviation pilots in a series of hangar sessions.

As honcho of what he called "the Friendly Aviation Agency," Halaby created a new position: Special Advisor on General Aviation Affairs, which he later elevated to Assistant Administrator for General Aviation Affairs. In time, the flames died down and the fires were banked. Once in a while an ember from the Quesada conflagration would flare up and the AOPA fire department would have to throw some cold water on it, but mostly, it was a quiet time. The AOPA *User's Guide and Directory* was published and the 180° emergency turn course was developed by the AOPA Air Safety Foundation, followed by the 360° course. The *Airport Directory* was published, the "Pinch-hitter" course was originated, and the preplanned flight routing program was announced. After Kennedy's assassination, Halaby remained as FAA administrator until replaced by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. The new appointee was William F. McKee, a retired four-star Air Force general who did not fly. The resulting mood in Washington aviation circles was: "Oh-oh. Here we go again."

But Bozo McKee was a low-profile guy who didn't make any waves, especially since he had read the political handwriting on the wall: a big push was being mounted in Congress to create a new Department of Transportation, The FAA would become merely one of eight formerly independent agencies, all with different interests: the FAA, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, the National Highway Traffic Administration, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, the National Transportation Safety Board and the United States Coast Guard.

Whether he wanted it or not, Administrator McKee was projected into the limelight by a midair collision between an airline aircraft and a lightplane. Although the lightplane pilot was shown ultimately not to have been entirely at fault, lightplane flying was bent, folded and mutilated by the press and the cry went up to bar light aircraft from the skies around "airline" airports. Again, AOPA moved in vigorously to set the facts straight for the public. When congressmen who should have known better talked about "positive control," membership shot up over the 125,000 mark, a substantial endorsement of AOPA's unremitting battle against regulations flowing from ignorance of both regulators and lawmakers.

Again, Congress and the FAA had responded by slipping into the panic mode. While irresponsible critics were lashing out at problems they did not understand, AOPA and other aviation associations representing diverse aviation interests were working with the FAA to ascertain why the accidents had happened and how they could have been prevented by some logical, sensible solution.

That meshing of sometimes opposing positions with a complete freedom of professional give-and-take when considering issues of aviation safety was the real public benefit of having an independent Federal Aviation Agency. The salutary situation was soon to be destroyed by congressional action, when in 1966 the Department of Transportation became the umbrella organization for all transportation modes and the FAA was downgraded to a "modal administration," the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

It can be understood, in the light of history, why icy chills raced up and down the spines of Washington aviation association people. Almost overnight, the key top-to-bottom rapport that had been established on professional grounds would be eroded, if not totally destroyed, when the FAA became subordinate to a cabinet-level department full of non-experts in aviation. The situation would revert to the old Department of Commerce/Civil Aeronautics Administration relationship, where the administrator of the FAA would be no more than a political waterboy, a sometimes-listened-to inferior to a raft of new secretaries, deputy secretaries, associate secretaries and their assistants.

Almost immediately, DOT took over, expertise or no. Quickly, the new superstructure began a program to ascertain how much general aviation "users" should pay for their "fair share" of the system—paying several million dollars to economic consulting firms to find out what general aviation was in the process. They never did find out. All they knew was that there were 160,000 airplanes out there and that they were going to tax them. Nowhere in the cabalistic squiggles of the economists did they reflect that 100,000 of those airplanes were single-engine craft, flown only personally and never near large-hub airports. But that was only the beginning.

General aviation's worst fears were confirmed during the summer of 1968 when, because of a combination of factors—a breakdown and resulting outage of key radar coverage serving New York airports, a line of violent thunderstorms that lingered for hours along the northern Atlantic coastline, a program of heavy overscheduling of both international and domestic flights to and from New York airports—the entire northeast quadrant of the air traffic control system became saturated with inbound traffic that could not land. The system simply fell apart.

Airliners inbound to Kennedy, Newark and LaGuardia airports had to be diverted and

landed at places as far away as Bermuda, Charleston, S.C., London, Los Angeles, San Francisco—places thousands of miles away; they were held on the ground, denied takeoff clearances, because New York ATC could not accept one more airplane.

Guess who was blamed by the Secretary of Transportation? General aviation. "Private planes." The Secretary of Transportation did not know enough about air transportation under his control to realize that 95% of the "general aviation" airplanes using the large New York airports are in reality "common carriers for hire."

What happened? The Secretary of Transportation decreed that the Port of New York Authority, which operated Kennedy, LaGuardia and Newark airport had the right, possibly the duty, to impose admittedly unreasonably high and discriminatory landing fees on general aviation users to *limit their use of the public airports* that operated with tax-paid air traffic control equipment. This was DOT policy, binding on the FAA.

It was necessary for AOPA, while continuing technical discussions with engineering and flight operations departments in FAA, to expand its efforts and include philosophical and social-benefits dialogues with the swelling cast of characters in the monolithic DOT bureaucracy. The association had sometimes been accused of reacting shrilly to issues, restrictions and regulations already set in concrete during the Quesada confrontation.

However, the creation of person-to-person communications through which government officials could be apprised of the existence of operational problems they had never thought of had worked wonders in the latter-day relationship with the FAA. Now, some people on the policy level of DOT are beginning to listen and understand once again. Not everyone can explain all of the ins and outs of aviation's myriad of problems for neophytes to the complex business. Aviation's advocates have to know how the marbles roll through the tubes in Washington, and what starts them rolling. And, most important, *who* starts them.

By the 1970's, there was a perceptible change on the Washington aviation scene. Instead of the officials of various organizations constantly circling each other, stiff-legged, ready to snarl and snap, the overall seriousness of the situation created a new atmosphere of cooperation and ecumenical coordination. AOPA exchanges views and confers regularly with the dozen or so aviation-oriented groups to work out uniform industry positions, which are sometimes stated before Congress by one person speaking for the entire industry. There are frequent differences of opinion and disagreements on policy among Washington's aviation spokesmen, sometimes bluntly and vigorously stated on both sides, for each association represents constituents who take a slightly different bite at the apple and cannot always agree on every point. But, at least they talk—which was not the case 15 years ago—and the group position has often had tremendous political clout.

AOPA is entering a new era. The original five-man board of trustees has expanded to 10—one of whom is a woman. Philip T. Sharples, he of the duck blind, still graces the board as a member—emeritus. Alfred L. Wolf is still an active trustee and contributes "Legally Speaking" every month to *The AOPA PILOT*. He is vigorous as AOPA's general

counsel as well. Doc Hartranft, retired from AOPA's presidency, is now chairman of the board of trustees.

The old order changes. After 30 years of service, Max Karant has officially retired as senior vice president, but still serves as a consultant and is in his office nearly every day. Charles Miller and Arthur Frisch have also retired, their slots filled by a younger generation sophisticated in the ways of Washington and experienced pilots, as well.

Doc Hartranft has been succeeded as president by John L. Baker, a lawyer who has a broad background in aircraft manufacturing, government operations and flying. A former jet fighter pilot and Assistant FAA Administrator for General Aviation, Baker still climbs into and flies any airplane within reach, from a Pitts to prop-jets, because he loves flying. He is impressing the stamp of his personality on our association; discerning, perceptive, thoroughly professional—and not averse to raising hell, as necessary.

Who knows what problems we will face in the future? Fortunately, instead of starting from scratch, we all have a strong, effective champion: AOPA, now 40 years old and the largest pilot's association in the world. □

And a general aviation supporter is recognized. Sen. Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev) is presented AOPA's Laurence P. Sharples Award for 1978 by AOPA Chairman J. B. Hartranft, Jr. and AOPA President John L. Baker for his "consistent and strong efforts in behalf of general aviation."

