



# TRANS WORLD AIRLINES DAWN TO DUSK

**T**rans World Airlines, with one of the most recognized U.S. airline symbols, TWA, departs the world's skies in almost the same industry environment in which it came into being—the end of an unfettered period of expansion marked by consolidation of airlines. Born of a 1930 merger, TWA had most of its assets purchased by American Airlines on April 9, 2001, to end TWA's run as the longest-flying air carrier in U.S. commercial aviation. Still, its 71 years of flying millions of passengers throughout the world, of recording achievements that won't be quickly duplicated, of establishing sterling standards of operations, safety, and professionalism, mean that it will forever be recorded in the annals of aviation history as one of America's most prestigious airlines.

TWA was created on Oct. 1, 1930, when Transcontinental Air Transport and Western Air Express merged to become Transcontinental & Western Air, Inc. (T&WA).

Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) had been formed on May 16, 1928. The carrier's financial backers named Charles A. Lindbergh to head the technical committee that oversaw development of the line and made all initial decisions involving technical or operational problems. Lindbergh's influence was so great that TAT became popularly known as "the Lindbergh Line."

At TAT's helm was Clement M. Keyes, who was a promoter of multi-million-dollar aviation corporations, including National Air Transport (NAT), and who later formed North American Aviation. Paul Henderson, then general

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## PART I

**As TWA ended its 71 years of continuous operations, it was the United States' longest flying air carrier.**

By Esperison Martinez, Jr.  
Contributing Editor

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manager of NAT, became TAT vice-president. But Lindbergh was in charge of planning and developing TAT's infrastructure and its route structure, which forsook the lighted airways of mail routes across the country in the early 1920s.

After more than a year, all was in place—routes over new terrain, newly created landing fields, selected aerodromes, new weather reporting facilities, meshed rail/air schedules, and many other operational needs.

Securing pilots to fly the about-to-be-purchased 10 Ford Trimotors was an equally laborious task. Three men took on the job: Paul F. Collins, pilot veteran of World War I and postal mail flying, became general superintendent; John Collings, ex-chief pilot at Ford, headed up TAT's eastern division; and Max Cornwall, the western. Collins directed the search for pilots with multiengine time, of whom he found few. In all, TAT hired 38 pilots, and 17 needed further training. Many began with fewer than 500 hours. Captains received \$500 per

month; copilots, \$250.

TAT was developed to carry passengers, not mail, unlike most other airlines in those days. TAT's transcontinental air/rail service would take passengers cross-country in 2 days instead of 3, as rail-only travel required. On the west-to-east schedule, passengers would board a Ford Trimotor at Los Angeles at 8:45 a.m. (PST), deplane at Clovis, N.M., at 6:54 p.m. (MST) for a night rail trip to Waynoka, Okla., via the Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, followed by an 8-hour 8-minute Trimotor flight to Columbus, Ohio, then onto the Pennsylvania Railroad to arrive in New York City the next morning at 10:05.

Lindbergh inaugurated TAT's coast-to-coast air-and-rail service on July 7, 1929, using east-to-west routing. Enconced in Gov. C.C. Young's office in Los Angeles, Lindbergh, at precisely 6:05 p.m. (EST), pushed a button that sent a signal to New York's Pennsylvania Rail Station where the *Airway Limited* train awaited. Amid a great deal of fanfare, which included political and cinema celebrities, a band, and radio broadcasts, the *Limited* caught the signal and moved out on the first leg of the country's first scheduled transcontinental air-rail link. The train arrived at Columbus, Ohio (Port Columbus) at 7:55 a.m. the next morning. Five thousand people braved drizzling rain to witness the transfer of the 20 transcontinental rail-to-airplane passengers who, having each paid \$350 (air portion \$290 for a 16-cents-per-mile fare structure), would fly on the next leg aboard the two Ford Trimotors, *City of Columbus* and *City of Wichita*. *Columbus*,

departing at 8:15 a.m., was the first aircraft airborne. Capt. Dean Burford, co-pilot H.H. Zimmerman, and courier D.W. Dudley were the crew members. The first west-to-east flight was made aboard the *City of Los Angeles*, piloted by Lindbergh and Eddie Ballande, a noted Glenn Curtiss test pilot, Navy World War I instructor, barnstormer, and movie stunt pilot.

TAT's air/rail transcontinental service was to prove momentous, as historians said, "for the inception of an idea—intercontinental air travel."

Two months into TAT's operations, a Trimotor crashed, killing all on board. Within a year, passenger interest had withered, and losses mounted. Within 18 months, TAT recorded \$2,750,000 in losses. Still, its owners were able to weather the financial storm. Within a few years, the carrier would be thinking of globe-circling flight.

TAT weathered the storm by acquiring two airlines—one sought, the other "directed."

On Nov. 16, 1929, TAT bought Maddax Air Lines, a profitable Southwest carrier, and began its move out of a financial hole and toward an air-only transcontinental service. Just 18 months earlier, Maddax had begun Ford Trimotor service between Los Angeles and San Diego, followed by Los Angeles–San Francisco service. In 1929, Maddax opened service from Los Angeles to Phoenix and southern California locations. By the time TAT bought Maddax Air Lines, it was operating 16 Trimotors along with two Lockheed Vegas and two Travel Airs. Having carried 40,000 passengers in 18 months, business was obviously good, but a carrier could not be sustained on passenger service alone and needed a contract to carry the mail. Maddax knew that no mail contract would be offered and accepted TAT's buyout offer.



The pilots Maddax Air Lines brought to the TAT–Maddax merger were a proud and very experienced lot who became top number holders on the eventual TWA seniority list. These included, among others, Arthur C. Burns (11), Daniel W. "Tommy" Tomlinson (14), Ernie Smith (15), Henry G. "Andy" Andrews (16), Felix Preeg (18), Goodwin T. "Ted" Weaver (21), and Albert D. "Major" Smith (38).

TAT's second acquisition, more "directed" than "sought," was Western Air Express (WAE). Incorporated on July 13, 1925, by a wealthy Los Angeles group to capture one of the private airmail routes that the U.S. Post Office was offering, WAE gained the CAM-4, Los Angeles–Salt Lake City, route. But WAE had no airplanes, or pilots, only desire and determination.

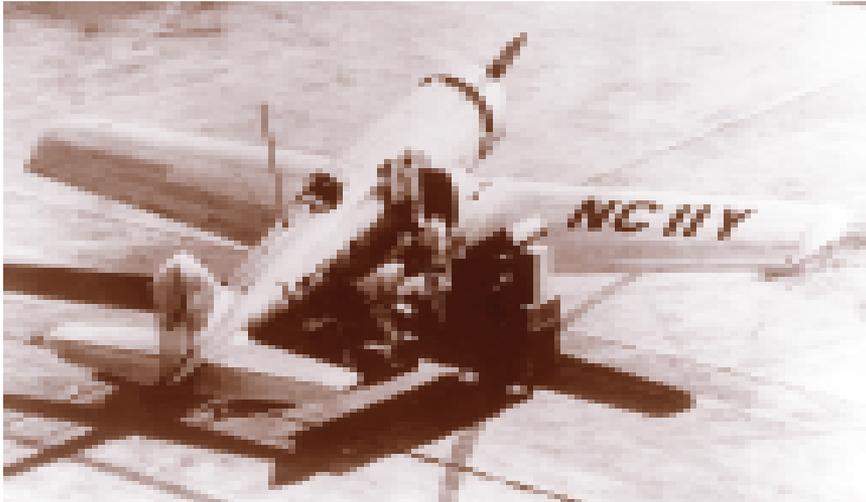
Undaunted, Harris Hanshue, WAE's founder, began creating an air carrier. One of his first moves was to hire Maj. Corliss C. Moseley, a World War I pilot and a highly respected, well-known West Coast aviation authority. Moseley quickly added an old college classmate, Fred Kelly, a 1912 Olympian and ex-military pilot, who became equipment procurer and selected the Douglas M-2

as the carrier's first aircraft. Three more Army aviators were added to the roster: Maury Graham, Al DaGarmo, and Jimmie James.

These pilots, the initial cadre selected to haul the mail on the CAM-4 route, were cautious to the point of inspecting from the ground the route they would fly while delivering the mail between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. During their 2-week inspection, they laid many "markers" visible from the air to reveal where a forced landing might be managed. This certainly paid off. The first WAE mail flight took place on April 17, 1926, and within the first year, pilots made 36 forced landings using those markers.

Carrying its first passengers only 1 month after startup, WAE ended 1926 carrying 209 passengers. But the financial mainstay and key to the airline's existence would prove to be its mail contracts, which in 1926 were paying \$1,500 per flight and cost WAE only \$360 to operate.

The late 1920s marked a time of public enthusiasm for flying, unfettered regulation, and great freedom of action, resulting in a proliferation of new carriers. WAE's growth was continual and



impressive, and its route structure expanded with acquisitions. But the stock market crash of 1929 also affected the aviation sector economically. By 1930, WAE had built a solid reputation as a passenger carrier; still, it discovered that, without mail contract routes, it could be awash in red ink. Early in 1930, WAE bought the Aero Corporation of California to gain its subsidiary, Standard Air Lines, in hopes of snaring the southern transcontinental mail route. With the purchase of the carrier came pilots like Jack Frye, who would in time become head of TWA, and other notable flyers such as Paul Richter, Walt Hamilton, and Lee Flanagin.

WAE found itself caught in the reorganization of the transcontinental airmail route system, under the auspices of the Watres-McNary Act. Postmaster General Walter Folger Brown had developed a vision for the nation's airways, especially its transcontinental system. He did not believe more than one company should serve a single route and forced WAE, TAT, and PAIC (Pittsburgh Aviation Industries Corporation) to merge and become Transcontinental & Western Air, Inc. (T&WA), which be-

came better known as TWA, an acronym that became official in 1950 with the name change to Trans World Airlines. Company ownership was split 47.5 percent each to WAE and TAT, and 5 percent to PAIC. Harris Hanshue became president of the newly formed airline.

The new company received the mail contract on Aug. 25, 1930, and made the first all-air-service coast-to-coast U.S. flight on October 25. The flight took 36 hours, including a 12-hour stop at Kansas City. It was the start of an auspicious but dubious future.

Auspicious because TWA would eventually become one of the largest U.S. air carriers; dubious because the airline's immediate future was fraught with the uncertainty caused by the Depression, merged operations, and dependence upon mail subsidies. Hanshue never really got heavily involved in "leading" the company, and directors seemed to act individually regarding company needs; consequently, the operation had no management cohesiveness. Richard Robbins replaced Hanshue in early 1932.

Financially, the newly formed company also did poorly, losing as much as \$200,000 per month during its first year of operation and carrying only 36,613

passengers, for a systemwide load factor of 3.9 passengers per airplane. The Los Angeles to San Francisco route accounted for the greatest amount of traffic, averaging 22 passengers per day, 7 per airplane.

A devastating blow to the company's operation came just 5 months after its first coast-to-coast flight. On March 31, 1931, a Fokker F-10 that came from WAE during the merger crashed in a Kansas cornfield. Famed Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne, one of the nation's best-known personalities, was one of its fatally injured passengers.

The precise cause of the crash was never determined, but another F-10 from WAE had evidence of dry rot in the wooden wing. The fleet of F-10s was grounded. Eventually all of the company's wooden airplanes were intentionally destroyed, after their engines and other usable equipment were salvaged. As staggering as the accident was to the company's good fortunes at the time, the crash helped set the tone for the high aircraft standards and safety practices that would come to be identified with TWA.

Robbins advanced this movement by establishing an equipment task force of himself, Lindbergh, and pilots Jack Frye and Tommy Tomlinson. After serious reviews and discussions, the group set new requirements for the next generation of T&WA equipment. A letter outlining the company's needs, dated Aug. 2, 1932, to leading aircraft manufacturers called for an all-metal trimotor monoplane; powerplants optional; 14,200 pounds gross weight; complete instrumentation, including night-flying equipment; cruising range of 1,060 miles at 150 mph; crew of two; 12 passengers minimum capacity; and ability to take off with two engines from any T&WA airport.

Thus was born the Douglas DC-1. It

was to bring new design, performance, and economics to the world of commercial aviation.

Assured by Donald Douglas's team that its two-engine design would be able to operate on one engine, Robbins et al gave the go-ahead in September 1932 for one prototype of the DC-1. The prototype was to be the first commercial transport of the Douglas line. Near disaster resulted from the first test flight on July 1, 1933. Test pilot Carl Clover was at the controls. Shortly after takeoff, he lost one engine but regained it when he lowered the nose down. When he raised the nose again, both engines sputtered. He managed to get the airplane down safely. Fortunately, the problem proved to be only a poorly designed carburetor float.

The only DC-1 ever built was delivered to T&WA in December 1933.

T&WA ultimately ordered 25 stretched (two additional passenger seats) DC-1s, designated the DC-2, at a cost of \$65,000 each. It entered service on May 18, 1934, on T&WA's Columbus-Pittsburgh-Newark route.

The passenger side of the T&WA operation proved to be unprofitable within its first year; mail contracts provided the cash that kept the airline alive. Hence, T&WA mail aircraft needed to be swift and dependable. Originally, the single-engine Northrop Alpha was selected for use. Powered by a 450-horsepower Wasp engine, the Alpha could carry a 1,000-pound payload at an average speed of 150 mph and had a landing speed of 61 mph. Its inaugural flight with T&WA was on April 20, 1931.

By the end of the year, the airline had ordered 13 Alphas; four Lockheed Vegas were also part of the fleet. Among the pilot group to first relay the mail across the country in these airplanes were Harlan Hull, Cliff Abbott, Ted Moffitt, Swede Gulien, and Bill Coyle.

The mail contracts garnered from Postmaster Brown's "spoils" conference



were to last only 4 years, ending in 1934. But that was sufficient time for the course of commercial aviation to be set. The competition among carriers forced improvements in operations, lifted standards for equipment and facilities, and paved the way for the commercial aviation scene in which TWA would come to play such an important role.

While managements reorganized, rebuilt, and renamed the surviving air carriers during those formative years, the industry's pilot force was undergoing a metamorphosis of its own. Historians have chronicled well the plight of Depression-era airline pilots: pay cuts, reduced authority, loss of status, rigid discipline—all leading to the pilots' being compared to chauffeurs rather than to sea captains. The adverse working conditions had led a clandestine movement toward self-protection—the formation of a national pilots' union.

In early 1931, T&WA changed its pay formula from mileage to an hourly rate. The company claimed it was a compromise that beat a flat pay rate; the pilots

believed it would eventually lead to reduced pay through management-established flight-average duration times for which pilots would get paid. This move further aggravated a nervous pilot force, and in late May 1931, a small group of T&WA and United pilots secretly met and approved a plan to form a new national organization. A few months later, on July 27, 1931, a pilot convention of "key men," held in the Morrison Hotel in Chicago, officially established the Air Line Pilots Association. Organizing began, but membership was kept secret, as public exposure was sure to lead to a pilot's removal from a carrier's payroll.

Union recruiting at T&WA proved difficult because of management intimidation, but pilots like Hal George were convinced of the union's value and traversed the airline's routes explaining its worth; although the pilots achieved little initial success, ultimately their efforts were rewarded with members signing up.

In 1933, most operators were intent on "reforming" the pay system and copying T&WA's hourly rate. The threat was so acute that ALPA threatened a nationwide shutdown to stop it. T&WA's response was to create a company union—the TWA Pilots Association. Management intended to control the pilot workforce; many pilots who willingly became TPA members did so because they feared the threatened ALPA nationwide shutdown would cost them their jobs or because of management intimidation. The T&WA MEC chairman at that time, Waldon "Swede" Golien, led the pilots out of ALPA. Seventeen pilots remained loyal to the national union, and some other pilots simply quietly maintained memberships in both organizations.

The full character of the in-house union was exposed during congressional hearings concerning the crash of

*(continued on page 54)*



# THE FIRST AIRLINE STRIKE

Hitler's defeat and the end of World War II marked enormous changes for U.S. airlines. With the end of years of shortages and rationing came an enormous pent-up demand for travel. During the war years, the airlines' schedules had been reduced to bare skeletons, providing little service simply because the carriers had few airplanes and even fewer pilots—the military had commandeered both.

War's end meant that the airlines could once again acquire all the airplanes they might want—not just new ones from the factory but also hundreds of used airplanes from the military at bargain prices.

Before the war, the venerable Douglas DC-3 was the industry standard, with more of those 21-passenger airplanes in service throughout the world than the combined total of all the other airliners. But war's end changed all that. The airlines could now acquire the much larger, much faster DC-4s and Lockheed Constellations. Because of their greatly increased size and speed, one of these new airplanes could do the work of six or eight DC-3s. They were far more productive. Further, they were but precursors to the far more advanced airplanes then on the drawing boards. A technological revolution was in the offing.

A revolution of a different sort was brewing in the airline boardrooms. For years, strong, charismatic individuals, most of whom had once been pilots, had headed the important airlines. The famous Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker led Eastern; Gen. C.R. Smith steered American; pilot-visionary Jack Frye

► *Capt. Ruppenthal was a member of the TWA MEC during the strike and later served on the pilots' Negotiating Committee for various contracts, as MEC chairman, and as executive vice-president of ALPA for a short time. He later earned a Ph.D. and taught at Stanford University.*

By Capt. Karl Ruppenthal  
(TWA, Ret.)

headed TWA; and W.A. Patterson, a capable, no-nonsense banker, ran United.

Each of these men had certain idiosyncrasies, which the pilots recognized (and sometimes used to their advantage). Rickenbacker believed that his captains were the best in the industry. They reputedly would bring their flights to destination when the weather was so bad that the other carriers cancelled. While he was a tough negotiator, Rickenbacker could usually be counted on to give his beloved captains a raise.

United's Patterson was more democratic. In his book, copilots were important, too. More than once, contract negotiations with United had produced an increase in copilot pay. They often were the best-paid in the industry.

Traditionally, ALPA negotiated with one airline at a time. Whichever airline was next in line to negotiate a contract (and that was usually TWA or American) would be asked to meet the industry standard. That airline was asked to match the captains' raise that had been negotiated on Eastern, the copilots' raise negotiated with United, plus some improvements in working conditions.

The airlines had complained long and loud about these tactics, which they called "whipsaw negotiations." Now, they determined to do something about it. They proposed industrywide bargaining, under which all pilots would be covered by one nationwide contract. Pay and working conditions on every airline in the industry would be standard. The entire airline industry would negotiate but a single contract with ALPA, and contract negotiations would occur no more frequently than once a year.

Under this arrangement, all pilots would be subject to one industrywide contract. The two rates of pay would be \$1,000 per month for captains, and

\$300 per month for copilots. Pilots would be paid no formula pay—no gross weight pay, no mileage pay, no pay for training, no pay for weather delays, no pay for any other items that current contracts cover.

A spokesman for the airline industry summed up the industry position: an airplane was an airplane was an airplane. All airplanes were pretty much the same.

At that time, the airlines had no formal programs for training their pilots. Copilots basically learned what they could from the captains with whom they flew. They were commonly considered to be trainees, under the tutelage of the captain with whom they flew. Thus, reasoned the airlines, copilots were entitled to no more than a trainee's pay. During the war years, the airlines had had an acute shortage of pilots. The shortage was so great that meeting the Army's need for transport would have been virtually impossible unless pilots on wartime transport duties flew more than 85 hours a month, which had long been the industry standard. After much debate and considerable soul-searching, ALPA agreed to a wartime extension.



AIR LINE PILOT, MAY 1946

To ameliorate the shortage, and to help in the war effort, flight-time limitations would be waived for the duration of the war, and pilots might fly as many as 100 hours per month (they were sometimes prevailed upon to fly even more).

And so, the airline industry proposed an increase in allowable monthly hours. The pilots' monthly pay would be based on the assumption that all pilots could be required to fly 100 hours a month. They also proposed relaxation of the on-duty limitations.

As the war wound down and U.S. industry returned to peacetime, much of industry—including the airlines—was in considerable turmoil. Wartime legislation provided that no one would be disadvantaged because of having served in the armed services. The law provided that their jobs would be preserved.

On the airlines, the seniority system meant that the pilots who returned from military service often displaced other pilots who had been deemed essential to keep the nation's airlines running and who had not gone off to war. These pilots had stayed at home to make it possible for the airlines to provide at least skeleton airline service. As the servicemen returned, they frequently displaced other employees. Considerable disruption resulted. For a pilot who was accustomed to flying as captain, being "bumped" back to copilot status because of the return of a more senior serviceman was particularly painful.

Less evident, but acutely important, were the problems caused by returning colonels and generals. Some of them were very competent executives on loan from the airline executive suites. They, too, returned home from the war expecting to return to the offices they had temporarily vacated. They, too, often "bumped" the presidents, vice-presidents, and other officers who had



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taken their places for the duration. Well-regarded Paul Richter returned to TWA as executive vice-president, seeking to displace John Collings, his wartime substitute. And Gen. C.R. Smith returned to American, where Ralph Damon had served as president during the war years. For reasons never made public, Damon was selected to head the effort to restructure industrial relations in the airline industry and to institute industrywide bargaining.

At that time, Howard Hughes was TWA's controlling stockholder. He and TWA President Jack Frye made an exceptional team. They were bold and inventive. Further, they had vision. TWA was the first airline to fly nonstop from coast to coast (albeit with an occasional refueling stop in Kansas City when westerly winds were strong). TWA was the first to pressurize its airplanes, the first to provide coffee freshly brewed on board, the first with in-flight movies. Hughes and Frye dreamed of round-the-world schedules. They were full of ideas. But they were novices in dealing with contract negotiations.

The year was 1946. For various reasons (or perhaps by default), TWA was cho-

sen as the battleground for the proposed industrywide contract. Aided by various professionals from the Air Transport Association, Ralph Damon was designated as the industry's chief negotiator. Although the negotiations were held at TWA's headquarters (which were then in Kansas City), TWA's executives had no formal role in the negotiations.

The parties talked for many weeks but made virtually no progress. The two sides were simply too far apart. TWA's pilots wanted a contract with TWA that would provide some modest pay increases. But Ralph Damon and his people insisted that they would negotiate for the entire airline industry and not just TWA. They insisted on an industrywide contract with flat pay coupled with an increase in allowable monthly hours. The negotiations had much talk but no give.

Many fruitless days and countless hours of talking made clear that the parties could not reach an agreement. Neither party would budge seriously from its initial bargaining stance. The negotiations were completely stalemated.

Privately, several of the pilots on the negotiating team admitted that they were in a particularly difficult spot. Some of them were in a financial bind, as were



## It would be the first real strike in the airline industry, and a strike for which neither side was well prepared.

a number of their friends. In returning to their airline domicile from their previous military base, they had incurred moving expenses. Some had no savings. A monthly guarantee of \$1,000 sounded like a lot of money to some captains. And the Damon team offered a raise of \$20 a month to copilots who were already on flat pay, because for pay purposes they were considered as trainees.

But the pilots had to look beyond their immediate financial needs. An industrywide contract would cost ALPA an important bargaining tool: It could no longer play one airline against another. It could not secure an advantage for the captains on one airline, followed by a raise for the copilots on another. Airline contracts would no longer recognize that the needs of pilots flying for short-haul carriers differ widely from those of pilots on long-haul routes.

Gone would be wage differentials for flying faster airplanes, for heavier airplanes, for night flying, for training, for deadheading. If flat pay became a reality, negotiating raises of any kind would be much more difficult.

Further, what if the proposed industrywide negotiations should founder? Did anyone really believe that the pilots would be allowed to strike?

If industrywide negotiations failed, pilots could, in theory, strike; but that would be unthinkable in America, a country dependent upon reliable airline service. The strike and the threat of a strike would forever be foreclosed from the pilots.

The TWA pilots' Negotiating Committee spent many hours in meetings devoted to strategy and tactics. They had many frank, and sometimes heated, exchanges. The negotiators were told of copilots who had bought houses and were behind in their mortgage payments. Some desperately needed more money, and they needed it soon.

Bush Voights, a highly regarded TWA captain, was a member of the Ne-

gotiating Committee. He tried to intervene with Howard Hughes to persuade him to break with the industry. Hughes had often asked Voights to be his copilot when he flew a new airplane or engaged in some flying adventure. Other captains asked Richter for his help. But to no avail. While Richter had returned to his former desk at TWA, he appeared to have been shorn of his authority.

The Negotiating Committee could find no easy way out of the dilemma. It could capitulate and accept what Damon had offered. It could continue the fruitless negotiations forever. Or it could call a strike on the airline. And so, with great reluctance, the Negotiating Committee recommended a strike. It would be the first real strike in the U.S. airline industry, and a strike for which neither side was well prepared. The TWA pilots had authorized a strike on March 26, 1946, by an 812-9 margin.

The pilots' Negotiating Committee, together with the TWA Master Executive Council, announced the strike, stating that the airline would be shut down as of Oct. 21, 1946.

And then the problems began. Although the pilots in general agreed that something drastic must be done, to some the idea of a strike was abhorrent. We consider ourselves to be professional people, they argued. True professionals do not strike. (This was well before the day when strikes were called by teachers, nurses, doctors, and various other professionals.)

Many pilots, of course, feared that the company might try to break the strike. It could operate some flights using management personnel, and it might persuade some pilots to join their ranks. The strike could disintegrate.

Some pilots questioned how they would get home. If the strike began when they were on a flight to Detroit, how would they get to their home base in Kansas City? And what about the pilots stationed in Frankfurt, Rome,

and Cairo? Questions concerning money abounded.

Not only did the paychecks stop coming for pilots, they stopped also for the flight engineers, the hostesses (now known as flight attendants), the mechanics, and the other ground personnel. ALPA had no strike fund, and most of the other employees were not even organized.

Some pilots in Los Angeles, New York, and Detroit managed to get part-time or temporary jobs. But in Kansas City (TWA's largest domicile), the situation was more difficult. TWA was one of the city's largest employers. With so many TWA employees out of a job, the city simply did not have enough available jobs to employ them. Even when an employer had a vacancy, most were reluctant to hire someone who they knew would be temporary. They knew that when the strike was over, most employees would return to TWA.

ALPA President Dave Behncke had his hands full. He was doing his best to bolster the Negotiating Committee on holding the line, to get the negotiations restarted, and to provide at least some money to the out-of-work pilots.

That last item was not an easy job. ALPA had no strike fund; further, it had no surplus funds at all. Some pilots had never joined ALPA. If dues were raised or an assessment for strike benefits for the TWA striking members was begun, pilots might simply quit the union. Some pilots did not fully appreciate the fact that the battle was not just between the TWA pilots and TWA management, but was a battle that would profoundly affect them all. Such pilots might continue dutifully to pay their dues, but refuse to pay strike assessments. And then what?

For several days, ALPA leaders discussed the importance of strike benefits. After all, they reasoned, the TWA

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## TWA (from page 13)

a T&WA DC-2 at Kirksville, Mo., on May 6, 1935. Sen. Bronson Cutting had been killed, along with the pilots, Harry Bolton and Ken Greeson, and one other passenger; nine others survived. Testimony by the company union president, Harlan Hall, an executive pilot, revealed how thoroughly the management controlled the union and how quickly pilot interests were cast aside.

By 1936 the in-house union had withered away, pilots having deemed it ineffective and finding it unconcerned with advancing any pilot-interest work or operational issues, except for those that management wanted pushed. Former in-house union members began returning to ALPA's rolls.

One of the positive remnants of the TPA experiment, reinforced by the Cutting accident hearings, was T&WA management's increased awareness of the need to recognize the value of independent pilot voices relative to operational safety and efficiency.

No doubt this new management enlightenment played a role in T&WA's

becoming the second carrier to sign an ALPA pilot contract, on July 18, 1939.

Historians have suggested that had the TWA in-house union succeeded, such creations would have proliferated in the industry and piloting as a "profession" probably would not have developed.

By the time the ALPA contract was signed, T&WA, becoming more commonly known as TWA, had weathered the consequences of the political change in government when President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in March 1933. Scrutiny of the manner in which the government awarded air mail contracts during Postmaster Brown's "spoils conference" began in earnest during September of that year. Following congressional hearings and Attorney General investigations, President Roosevelt on Feb. 9, 1934, cancelled the air mail contracts—putting T&WA, among others, out of, and the Army Air Corps into, the mail delivery business. T&WA placed its entire roster of workers on furlough and began hemorrhaging about \$250,000 per month, far exceeding the \$130,000 profit it recorded in 1933.

But the commercial carriers were to

soon be back in the mail carriage business. President Roosevelt called a temporary halt to the Air Corps involvement on March 10, 1934, because of the high accident rate the Air Corps was experiencing. The Army became active again on March 19 and continued to meet its schedules until its last schedule flight on June 1, 1934. But the die was cast. In March the government asked airlines for bids on carriage of the mail, pending enactment of new legislation that would become the Air Mail Act of 1934.

T&WA, by virtue of its award of the Los Angeles to Philadelphia transcontinental route, joined with United, American, and Eastern as one of the largest U.S. airlines. T&WA also gained a new president, Jack Frye. Named in December 1934, he departed 12 years later, in 1947. His leadership moved T&WA pilots from Trimotors into pressurized cabins and into the renowned "Connie," while positioning the carrier to span the globe.

*Part II will cover the Howard Hughes years, equipment modernization, TWA's postwar expansion, and the consequences of fuel shortages, deregulation, and corporate manipulations.*

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## First Strike (from page 16)

That they alone should bear the trauma and uncertainties caused by a strike, in addition to all of the financial costs, was simply not fair.

Eventually, the ALPA leaders voted to pay benefits to the striking pilots. The actual amounts voted were minimal, but the ALPA board members felt that these amounts were about all that the nonstriking pilots on the other airlines would be willing to contribute. But a significant precedent was established: ALPA would pay strike benefits to pilots on an authorized strike.

Persuading many pilots to pay their strike assessment was difficult. ALPA had virtually nothing in its treasury, and the strike assessment funds were slow in coming in—so slow that they were not paid to the striking TWA pilots until many months after the strike had been settled.

While the financial pressures on many of the pilots were substantial, for many of the hostesses, they were severe. Poorly paid, they lived from one

paycheck to the next. And when those paychecks stopped coming, the hostesses could not pay the rent.

Bob Overman, a well-liked, senior captain in Kansas City, addressed that problem. At a general meeting of all Kansas City pilots, he described the seriousness of the problem. Then he passed the hat, asking every pilot who possibly could do so to contribute. Emergency loans were made to those pilots and hostesses who were truly in distress. And thus began the first airline credit union in America. Not only did TWA formally establish a credit union, ALPA did likewise.

Further, ALPA members in general began to appreciate the value of an emergency plan. ALPA's Board of Directors took a realistic look at the Association's finances and bolstered them. Then, perhaps for the first time, the pilots recognized the importance of a realistic strike fund—not just pious hopes that striking pilots could somehow be compensated, but actual funds on hand, which could be useful in contract negotiations, since their existence could convince recalcitrant management that a strike could actually take

place. And, of course, funds could be sent quickly to striking pilots in the event a strike actually was called.

The TWA strike of 1946—the first real airline strike—was a seminal event. Its impact on the U.S. airline industry was doubtless greater than any other. That strike prevented the airlines from instituting industrywide bargaining.

Had it not taken place, pilots today would be flying 100 hours a month, with no consideration whatsoever for the type of airplane they fly. In 1946, all captains would have received a salary of \$1,000 a month—no training pay, no sick pay, and no deadhead pay. Pilots flying a B-747 would receive no more than those flying a Fokker Friendship, a DC-3, or any other airliner.

And pilots would have virtually no possibility of negotiating improved pay or working conditions under threat of a strike. That was clear then, and it is even more clear now. The nation could not afford, and would not permit, a nationwide shutdown of the airlines. The threat of a strike as a negotiating tactic would no longer exist.





# TRANS WORLD AIRLINES DAWN TO DUSK

*(Part I discussed T&WA's transcontinental beginnings, its early passenger and mail history, and its role in introducing the DC-1, which brought new design concepts, improved performance, and profits to the airlines.)*

**T**&WA, by virtue of its government-awarded Los Angeles-to-Philadelphia transcontinental route during the 1934 airmail contract proceedings, became one of the Big Four U.S. airlines, along with United, American, and Eastern. T&WA also gained a new president, Jack Frye, who was named in December 1934 and departed 12 years later, in 1947. His leadership moved T&WA pilots from two- and three-engine airplanes into pressurized cockpits and the renowned four-engined "Connie," while positioning the carrier to span the globe.

T&WA's move from the twin-engined Douglas airliners to the Boeing 307 Stratoliner was significant for two historical reasons: The move signaled development of the world's first pressurized commercial air transport, and Howard Hughes would gain control of the airline, which would benefit greatly from his progressive thinking.

Frye firmly believed that airline success would come only when passengers were carried comfortably, and that meant flying above the weather. To this end, he turned to Capt. "Tommy" Tomlinson, who had already set U.S. and world aviation records and had conducted thunderstorm research in T&WA's venerable, but modified, DC-1.

Flying a T&WA Northrop Gamma, modified for extremely high altitude research, Tomlinson discovered the jet

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## PART III

**Howard Hughes plays a major role in T&WA equipment modernization, which contributes greatly to T&WA's post-war expansion, interrupted by the consequences of economic recessions, fuel shortages, deregulation, and corporate manipulations.**

By Esperison Martinez, Jr.  
Contributing Editor

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stream, among other high-altitude flying findings. Upon landing after a high flight, he told meteorologists, "My God! I had winds of 100 to 150 miles per hour"—an astounding discovery and adventure in that day. Capt. Tomlinson's research shows T&WA's bent for advancing the technology that shaped commercial aviation and the airline dependence on its pilots to succeed.

From this research came the impetus for developing the Stratoliner, to fulfill T&WA's desire for a four-engine transcontinental transport with a pressurized cabin. Boeing, owing to some of its own preliminary works, had sketchy plans available. Negotiations went quickly and smoothly, and on Jan. 29, 1937, T&WA ordered five Boeing 307 Stratoliners, with delivery of the first set for Dec. 22, 1938.

Between the time T&WA placed the Stratoliner order and Boeing's promised delivery date, Frye's vision clashed with the practicality of T&WA's major

stockholder, John Hertz (yellow cab and rental car mogul), who believed the price of the new airplane, which Frye saw as T&WA's future, was too much for the financially strapped airline. The dispute caused problems with the delivery, and the order was cancelled.

### Enter Howard Hughes

Frye then turned to Howard Hughes, who, sensing a major opportunity, surprised onlookers and bought enough shares to gain control of the company.

The Stratoliner contract was resurrected in September 1939, and delivery of the pressurized, all-weather airliner was made on May 6, 1940, with the inaugural flight following on July 8, 1940. Pan American had already taken delivery of its order for four Stratoliners and had begun using them in June on routes to South America.

After T&WA's shakedown period with the Stratoliner, it proved popular with passengers and dependable and reliable throughout its commercial service, which was to be short-lived.

At the onset of World War II, the largest U.S. airlines were pressed into military service via contracts to transport men and supplies. On Dec. 24, 1941, T&WA was signed to provide Army transport needs to any place in the world. The airline sold its five Stratoliners to the government and formed its Intercontinental Division (ICD) to operate within the Army Air Forces. The ICD would be the nucleus of what would become the Air Transport Command. Eventually, T&WA pilots would also fly a fleet of C-54 and C-87s that the government procured. According to

T&WA pilot records, the ICD effort concluded in April 1946, having amassed 238,741 operational flying hours (179 mph average speed); 9,528 transoceanic flights; a load factor of 84 percent of capacity over 42 million miles, or 235 billion pound-miles; and 44 T&WA lives and nine C-54s lost. The experience during these operations readied T&WA for the transatlantic operations it would begin following the war.

### Lockheed Constellation

Once the Stratoliner situation with Boeing had been settled, Howard Hughes's vision turned toward more-advanced, larger, and faster airplanes, talking with Frye about future equipment even before the first Stratoliner was delivered. The new airplane would be big—carrying 50 passengers and 6,000 pounds of cargo, it would be fast with over-weather capabilities, it would be luxurious, and it would fly across the continent nonstop. But most importantly, all talk and plans pertaining to it would be highly secret.

Many meetings with Lockheed contacts resulted in an order for 40 Constellations at a cost of \$425,000 each to be bought by the Hughes Tool Company, as would be all future aircraft purchases.



***T&WA, in its early years, used Ford Trimotors to carry passengers coast to coast, and marked them, even then, with the letters TWA.***

Announcement of the Constellation program, which had managed to stay a tightly held secret, just a few months before Pearl Harbor caused a sensation within the aviation industry. But T&WA was not to immediately reap the rewards of its marvel; war needs prevailed. All Constellations that came off the assembly line were designated C-69s and went into military service.

However, the airline did accept the first Constellation, dressed in T&WA livery, and after its acceptance flight, turned it over to the military. The acceptance flight—Burbank to Washington, D.C.—was a record-maker. On April 17, 1944, Hughes and Frye flew the cross-country trip in 6 hours 58 min-

utes. Although the Constellation was to have given T&WA a healthy 3-year lead over its competitors in operating the highly sophisticated transport, the war eliminated that possibility. Owing to the “Connie’s” transport configuration, the government gave production preference to combat aircraft, so that Lockheed manufactured only half of T&WA’s original order for 40. Hughes had contracted to retain buy-back rights from the government, so at the war’s end, a sizeable fleet returned to T&WA.

On July 5, 1945, T&WA gained temporary authority to serve Paris, Rome, Athens, and Cairo, finally placing the Constellation into commercial service on Feb. 5, 1946, when it made the first commercial flight from Washington, D.C., to Paris, via La Guardia. Capt. Hal Blackburn commanded the crew of co-captains Jack Hermann and John Calder, flight engineer Art Ruhanen, plus a navigator, a radio officer, and two cabin attendants. On February 15, the inaugural Los Angeles-to-New York flight became reality.

Several events hurt T&WA’s operations and precipitated a drop in T&WA stock price from \$71 a share to \$9, along with a loss of \$4 million in 1946. The 18 Constellations on order were cancelled. The T&WA Board of Directors voted Jack Frye, ever the visionary, out of office. Although the company was experiencing equipment, financial, and la-



***A Ford Trimotor with TAT markings sits aside a TWA jumbo B-747 in a graphic display of equipment growth at T&WA/TWA. The Trimotor took 36 hours to make the coast-to-coast flight; the B-747 takes 6.***

AIR LINE PILOT FILE PHOTOS



bor problems, Frye wanted to buy more Constellations; Hughes and the Board did not. In early 1947, Douglas introduced the DC-6, which proved to be serious competition to the “Connie” fleet. But the next year, T&WA placed a new-model Constellation, the L-749, into service.

In 1950, the carrier officially changed its name to Trans World Airlines (TWA), and its bottom line improved, owing mainly to the success of its international division and increased transcontinental traffic. TWA later replaced its short-haul fleet of DC-3s with Martin 404s and 202As. For its transcontinental and international routes, TWA on April 1, 1955, introduced the L-1049G to compete with the Douglas DC-7, which United and American were flying.

For 25 years, the elegant, streamlined Connie, with its distinctive triple tail and long fuselage, dominated TWA skies. The airplane underwent much modification, culminating in what has been referred to as the “most luxurious piston aircraft,” the L-1649A. The last TWA Constellation flight, Flight 249, took off from Kennedy Airport at 3:15 p.m. on April 6, 1967. The crew of Capt. Joseph Duncan, First Officer Richard Green, and flight engineer George Martin closed a chapter of TWA aircraft history as TWA prepared for the commercial jet transport.

### Jet age

Just as the Douglas series of transports, the Boeing Stratoliner, and the Lockheed Super Constellation had played such vital roles in TWA’s development during the piston-engine era, the jet-engined Boeing 707, 727, and 747, along with the L-1011 and the DC9/MD 80, would become the airline’s vital equipment in years to come. During the 1950s, 1960s, and through the early 1970s, TWA further developed its first-class character for which it will long be remembered. The carrier would acquire

airlines and international routes that spanned the globe, its pilots would set many aviation records, and its safety record would be second to none.

But all that was not entirely evident from the Boeing order pad for the first American commercial jet transport, the Boeing 707, which showed 186 aircraft ordered by the nation’s airlines, except for TWA, whose order tallied “0.” This was not for lack of interest. Howard Hughes continued to dominate TWA and its planning and equipment procurement. He was working with Convair to develop a jet larger and faster than the B-707; the deal collapsed at about the same time that his company, Hughes Tool, which bought all of TWA’s airplanes, suffered a serious cash flow problem that was not publicly evident. Ironically, TWA was earning good profits.

Hughes’s resistance to ordering the B-707 wilted; and on March 2, 1956, he allowed an order for eight “domestic” B-707s to be placed; his executives were aghast at the meager number and aircraft type. Ultimately, the order was increased to a total of 33 as of Jan. 10, 1957. On March 20, 1959, TWA inaugurated jet transcontinental service from San Francisco to New York with its single Boeing 707, almost 2 months after American’s B-707 coast-to-coast flight on Jan. 25, 1959. The first TWA B-707 flight over the Atlantic was on Nov. 23, 1959. In that year, TWA experienced its best financial year to date.

The Convair 880 was brought on line in 1960 to supplement the long-range B-707. The CV-880 was faster than either the B-707 or its competitor, the DC-8, and helped TWA pilots set many city-pair speed records. The jets’ voracious thirst for fuel, however, caused TWA to sell them in the early 1970s.

In the meantime, Howard Hughes’s financial problems with Hughes Tool had deteriorated to the point that on Dec. 29, 1960, his financial backers placed his TWA stock (78 percent of all company



stock) into a 10-year voting trust, repossessed all the aircraft, and ousted Hughes from control of the airline. By 1965, TWA’s value had zoomed up, and its stock was again in the range of \$97 per share. The airline had revenues exceeding \$500 million and a profit of \$50 million, and paid its first dividend to stockholders in 30 years. Hughes sold his holdings for \$550 million and cut his last ties with the airline.

The upswing of TWA’s fortunes at this time is attributed to Charles Tillinghast, a Wall Street lawyer and former Bendix executive who was named TWA president in May 1961. His acumen was to TWA’s business growth what Lindbergh, Frye, and Hughes’s acumen had been to TWA’s aeronautics growth. Tillinghast guided the airline to attaining financial success it had never before reached. By 1969, TWA earnings reached more than \$1 billion in sales; revenues quadrupled over 1958 rates, and the number of employees tripled.

This startling success is tied to the thought and planning that went into developing its jet fleet, workforce, and routes. On Oct. 1, 1962, TWA inaugurated the first fully automated doppler radar system of navigation on scheduled transatlantic flights—the New York to London flight was the first



*During the 1930s and 40s, the Douglas DC-3 (above) and the Lockheed Constellation (left) became part of the growing fleet of airplanes of T&WA/TWA.*

### Shaggy 70s

TWA, when it retired the Constellation fleet in 1967, became the first U.S. airline to boast an all-jet fleet. At the end of 1969, TWA's fleet consisted of 232 airplanes: 124 B-707s, 64 B-727s, 25 CV-880/890s, and 19 DC-9s. And that fleet would grow. On Feb. 25, 1970, the carrier inaugurated B-747 service from Los Angeles to New York, becoming the first to offer any B-747 service in the United States. Two years later, on June 25, 1972, TWA began L-1011 service and flew the first flight, St. Louis to Los Angeles, on autopilot from take-off to landing.

But the 1970s were not to be all golden. Along with the rest of the airline industry, TWA would experience hijackings, which began in 1968; the ill effects of an economic downturn; the oil embargo of 1973 to 1979; labor strife; and the deregulation of the U.S. airline industry, which over a prolonged period would change the face and character of air travel.

The airline industry and particularly the pilots were fighting an uphill battle to overcome the menace of hijacking, which by 1972 had reached 160 recorded U.S. airplane hijackings. They started as political hijackings, with most destined for Cuba. TWA had three airplanes commandeered and directed to Cuba during 1968 and 1969.

Worse was yet to come—terrorist hijackings, which had been renamed “skyjackings.” On Aug. 29, 1969, a commando unit of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) sky-

jacked TWA Flight 840 enroute from Rome to Athens. An armed duo ordered Capt. Dean Carter, First Officer Harry Oakley, and Second Officer Hobart Tomlinson to fly to Damascus. Once there, the terrorists released the passengers and crew and blew up the airplane. A few weeks later, the PFLP hit again, taking six airliners. Terrorists took over TWA Flight 741, a B-707 flying from Tel Aviv to New York, and directed it to land in the desert near Amman, Jordan. Three other hijacked airplanes were forced to the same point. In all, 595 passengers and crew members were kept aboard their airplanes for some time, until removed, and then the skyjackers blew up all the airplanes.

TWA Capt. Tom Ashwood, as an ALPA national officer, was highly instrumental in the U.S. and international effort to solve the hijacking menace. The United States finally passed the Antihijacking Act of 1974, which put into effect many of the security measures still used today.

Although the fear of being skyjacked may have deterred some air travelers, the real cause of low load factors during the 1970s was the depressed economy and severe fuel shortages, coupled with overcapacity. Interestingly, the introduction of the B-747 at such a financially precarious time was reminiscent of TWA's introduction of its DC-1 during the Depression. TWA's fleet of 232 jets, coupled with delivery of widebody jets at a time when many small carriers and fleets were being restructured or established, helped create tremendous overcapacity and traffic stagnation as the traveling public was sharply reducing its air travel.

The carrier's bottom line began to get worse, and TWA pilots suffered heavy furloughs—700 pilots were on the street at the end of 1971, a number reduced by only 123 by 1974. Looking for a way out of its financial hole, TWA exchanged routes with Pan Am in 1974

transatlantic flight ever operated without a professional navigator aboard.

TWA began its B-727 service on June 1, 1964, and started replacing its short-haul airplanes with the DC-9. By the late 1960s, the TWA fleet of B-727s had grown to 50, with more on order. International expansion was on the upswing, with service reaching several African countries, and with the airline securing Pacific authority and engaging in around-the-world flights. The most telling mark of TWA's growth is that in July 1969, it took the spot as top transatlantic carrier away from Pan American for the first time. The B-727 was looked upon as the “savior of TWA.”

The change from pistons to jets and the surge of hiring had an effect on the pilot force as well. To meet the challenge, TWA established the Jack Frye International Training Center in Kansas City. Dedicated on April 26, 1962, the Center employed more than 240 people and was equipped with six state-of-the-art simulators. The Center task was formidable because from 1963 to 1965, TWA added 600 new pilots, and 640 flight engineers also went into pilot training. In addition, pilots needed 7 weeks of training to make the transition from pistons to jets. The retraining included 21 days of ground training and 10 days of simulator work.



AIR LINE PILOT FILE PHOTO

***TWA inaugurated Lockheed L-1011 service on June 25, 1972, making the first flight, St. Louis to Los Angeles, on autopilot, takeoff to landing.***

and dropped its around-the-world service along with some other routes.

By 1976, the carrier had financially begun to reach level flight and recalled all its furloughed pilots; but the pilot hiring hiatus that began in 1970 lasted until 1978, when the airline hired 12 pilots.

The next year, 1979, the air carrier's identity started to become clouded as it became part of a new order: The Trans World Corporation was formed and included Canteen Corporation, Hilton International (bought in 1967), Spartan Food Service, and Century 21 Real Estate.

TWA's earnings thus became corporate earnings; and in 1980, TWA contributed more than \$3 billion of the \$5 billion that the entire corporation earned.

In the same year, drained of its capital, the airline began furloughing pilots again, benching 670 through 1981—the effects of deregulation were setting in.

To stave off a furlough of 200 more, TWA pilots accepted reduced flight hours and pay to 72 hours a month—pilot givebacks would become a constant management demand in future negotiations.

### **Glide toward dusk**

Effects of the unfettered competition that the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 brought on would touch every major airline, spawn dozens of new small carri-

ers, establish fleets of small airplanes, and create unbearable loads of debt for the larger carriers. The smell of bankruptcy was in the air. Braniff was the first large airline to fall under the heavy debt brought on by expansion. It declared bankruptcy on May 12, 1982. Others, such as Eastern Airlines followed; TWA would not be forced to file for reorganization until Jan. 31, 1992.

But during those 10 years, the carrier underwent a massive upheaval in its organizational structure, financial outlook, route structure, and workforce.

In 1982, TWA began operating new widebody equipment and made its first transcontinental Boeing 767 flight, Los Angeles to Washington, D.C.

Debt brought on by equipment purchases, rising fuel prices, fare wars, and instability were the plague of the time, and in November 1983, TWA was cut away from the corporate “family” to fly on its own as a new public company.

By 1985, TWA was on the brink of collapse, and Frank Lorenzo was bidding for the airline.

To thwart the “scourge of labor,” TWA's unions backed Carl Icahn's 52 percent purchase of the company on September 26. This was the midst of the “Go-Go 80s,” when the Reagan Administration's laissez-faire pro-business policy encouraged Wall Street junk bond dealers and corporate raiders, among others. TWA acquired Ozark in September 1986

and recorded profits for 1987 and 1988, when Icahn bought another 23 percent of TWA and convinced the stockholders to take the company private. The process took some \$610 million out of TWA, earmarking \$469 million in cash, and \$196 million in preferred stock for Icahn; and more than \$539 million was added to TWA's debt. By now, the unions fully recognized Icahn as a “corporate raider” and no longer backed his ownership, comparing him to Frank Lorenzo.

The Gulf crises that began in 1990 made TWA's debt of \$2.8 billion totally unserviceable out of operating income. Within 6 months, TWA's cash was gone.

Icahn was battling fare wars; demanding large givebacks from pilots and other labor; and selling valuable assets, including route authority from New York, Los Angeles, Boston, and Chicago to London to American Airlines for \$445 million in July 1991 and the Philadelphia and Baltimore routes to London to USAir for \$50 million in May 1992.

On Jan. 31, 1992, TWA filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection from its creditors.

TWA's total workforce had made clear that any “givebacks” would happen only if Icahn left. On Aug. 24, 1992, creditors agreed to give employees 45 percent equity in TWA for concessions of 15 percent. The following January, Icahn resigned, relinquishing all control and interest, but taking away with him a deal that allowed him to buy blocks of discounted TWA tickets and resell them through his Internet website, a deal that would come to haunt TWA's future financial stability.

On Nov. 3, 1993, TWA completed its reorganization and selected William R. Howard as chairman of the Board and CEO. In April of the following year, Jeffery H. Erickson was named president and chief operating officer.

In 1995, TWA successfully completed a second financial reorganization.

CAPT. IAN DUNCAN (TWA)



time completion rates. With liquidation a near certainty, the airline refused to be buried. On Jan. 10, 2001, Capt. Compton announced: “TWA voluntarily filed petitions in the U.S. District Court in Delaware for relief under Chapter 11 of the US. Bankruptcy Code. American [Airlines] will purchase TWA’s assets out of bankruptcy and ul-

**Two of the numerous paint schemes TWA used during its 71-year history, are shown on a TWA DC-9 behind a code-sharing TransStates Jetstream 41 (above) and on a Boeing 767 (right).**

In February 1997, Gerald L. Gitner was named chairman and CEO, and on Dec. 3, 1997, Capt. William F. Compton was named president and COO, putting a pilot back into control of the airline after a long line of business executives. Capt. Compton became president and CEO on May 25, 1999.

For the seemingly ageless airline, the 1990s proved a rocky decade. Its flight operations continued as did innovations in passenger services that brought praise from airline industry publications. About the time that the second financial reorganization was completed, in mid-1995, TWA added a distinctive new aircraft livery. As if its new livery signified a fresh start, the carrier made its first new aircraft buy since before the Icahn days, ordering 20 new B-757-200s on Feb. 12, 1996, and 5 months later, 15 new MD-83s.

Two significant equipment events marked 1998:

- on February 20, the last of TWA’s Boeing 747s was retired; and
- on December 9, TWA placed its largest aircraft order in the company’s history—125 B-717s and A319/A320/A321s, plus options for 125 more.

The B-767 widebody had become the airlines’ main international aircraft. But 1999 ended with a \$353 million loss and



CAPT. IAN DUNCAN (TWA)

the distinction of TWA’s being the only large airline not to turn a profit that year. Indeed, TWA had not turned a profit since 1988.

The first three quarters of 2000 produced a \$115.1 million loss, and in January 2001, Standard and Poor’s Credit Watch noted that TWA remains “vulnerable over the longer term because of its limited route structure, weak financial profile, and lack of significant alliances with other airlines.” In the preceding 12 months, TWA stock shares lost 55 percent of their value and stood at \$1.32 per share at the time of the S&P report.

Clearly, the financial lot of TWA made turning the company around impossible for the newly appointed pilot CEO. But on the operations side, the employees, following Capt. Compton’s management, did improve the performance in the air: TWA flew a record 26.4 million passengers in 2000 with high customer satisfaction and consistent on-

timately will integrate the TWA system into its own.”

Thus, dusk has descended upon the familiar TWA livery recognized in so many parts of the world and by the many people whose lives it has touched. TWA leaves the national aviation scene in much the same way it came in: A marriage of airlines during a weak economy marked by an unregulated environment that sports unbridled competition and with a pilot in command of its operations, directing a stalwart workforce and a resolute pilot group flying an improving aircraft fleet.

All TWA pilots, the glue of the venerable carrier, will carry memories of *their* airline, the glorious ups and the dismal downs it has experienced; the unselfish giving of the “brotherhood” to help correct errant financial paths; the pride, professionalism, and character that labeled it “A Pilot’s Outfit.”

To them, its spirit will always live as “Go TWA!” ✈