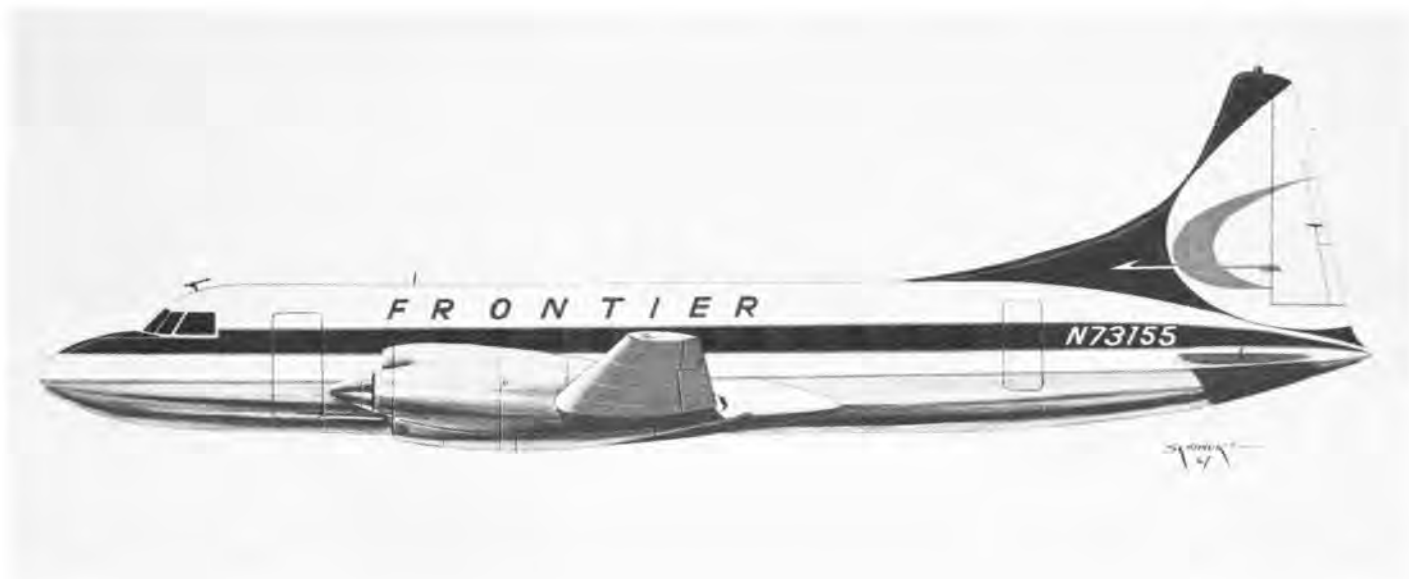




THE FRONTIERSMAN

By ROGER BENTLEY with illustrations by LEROY A. SKIDMORE

World War II dramatically and forcefully proved the capability of aircraft for moving personnel and equipment. Now the Civil Aeronautics Board, charged with fostering and regulating commercial aviation in the United States, envisioned the role that an expanding air industry would play in pacing the anticipated growth and prosperity of the country's economy. To bring this concept of an expanded air age to many hundreds of small towns and cities which had not previously been served by the trunk airlines, and to air link these communities with their major trade and governmental centers within each geographical region, the local service airline industry was conceived. Across the United States a dozen or more new airline names were enthusiastically painted along the fuselages of recently acquired fleets of converted DC-3s. High on hope, low on cash and with the blessings of both the Civil Aeronautics Board and local Chambers of Commerce, the fledgling airlines undertook their "devine destiny" to tie together by air over 500 towns and cities across the country.

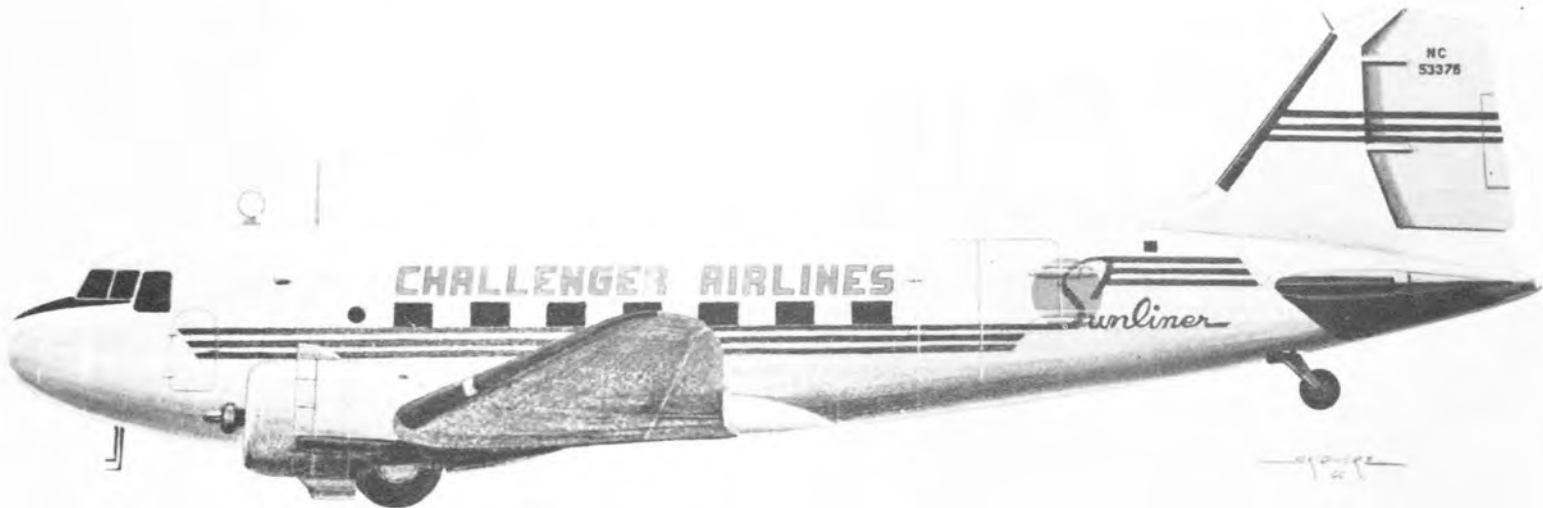
One of these "feeder" lines was Monarch Air Lines. Its founder, Ray M. Wilson, was one of Colorado's aviation pioneers. A certificate of convenience and public necessity, plus an air mail contract were issued and awarded in March 1946. The Denver based airline began service on November 27, 1946 to Durango. Other services were soon started to Albuquerque, Salt Lake City and Grand Junction.

To assure day and night all weather operations throughout its system, Monarch Airlines had to install its own navigational radio system known as "H" markers, since

most of the routes over the high country of the Colorado Rockies were not on established Federal airways. Circuitous ground transportation, up and down and around the Continental Divide, plus great distances between isolated communities along Monarch's routes soon proved the worth of the dependable DC-3 schedules. The five Douglas liners were registered: NC64421, NC64422, NC64423, NC64424, and NC66610.

Challenger Airlines was another "feeder" to receive its certificate on March 29, 1946, but under its founding name, Summit Airways, Inc. The name was changed in January 1947 and scheduled operations began on May 5, 1947 from their home base, Salt Lake City. This original route was through Kemmerer, Rock Springs, Rawlins, Laramie, and Cheyenne (all in Wyoming) to Denver. That summer two more routes were established, one between Billings and Salt Lake City via the Big Horn Basin and another between Riverton, Wyoming and Denver. Ten Wyoming communities were served by the airline air-linking them to terminals of Denver, Billings and Salt Lake City.

Wyoming's expanding oil industry was quick to plan travel itineraries and cargo shipments of drill bits, replacement parts and core samples around Challenger's twice daily, round trip services. The real opportunity to prove its value to the people of Wyoming came with the paralyzing blizzard in February 1949. Energetic Challenger pilots flew thousands of passengers who had been immobilized by roof-high snow drifts which blocked highways and railroads



over much of the state. Tons of fresh meat, bread, produce and Red Cross supplies filled practically every schedule and shuttle flight to its capacity as Challenger's "Sunliners" roared onto snow-swept airports across Wyoming.

Challenger's first president was George Snyder of Salt Lake City. After a few months, the late Donald A. Duff took over presidency and transferred the airline's general offices to Denver. In the first seven months of operations, Challenger carried 16,507 passengers and handled over 45,000 ton miles of air cargo. The four "Sunliner" DC-3s were registered: NC65135, NC65276, NC65385, and NC53376.

A third airline in the frontier sections of the West to be founded in March 1946 was Arizona Airways. Intra state service began at once on three routes out of Phoenix; one to the east, one south and the other to the north-west. One of the airline's specialties was a full day's sightseeing trip on Sundays over the scenic Indian country of Northern Arizona plus a good portion of the spectacular Grand Canyon.

The company's president, the late H. O. "Rocky" had hopes that the need for air service in Arizona would prove popular enough to travelers and shippers to defray the cost of operations. However, by the time the Civil Aeronautics Board, with Federal aid, issued a certificate of convenience and necessity with an air mail contract between Phoenix and El Paso in January 1948, Arizona Airways was financially exhausted. The company's three DC-3s were registered: NC75028, NC64910, and NC57985.

In 1948 Challenger made some moves that were unique in airline operations by consolidating some of its major functions with Monarch Air Lines. The two airlines joined traffic and sales direction, and station supervision at the administrative level, with each company maintaining its own individual sales force and station personnel. A second consolidation involved maintenance and overhaul activities. Aircraft, engines, and accessories of the two companies were maintained at one place in Denver.

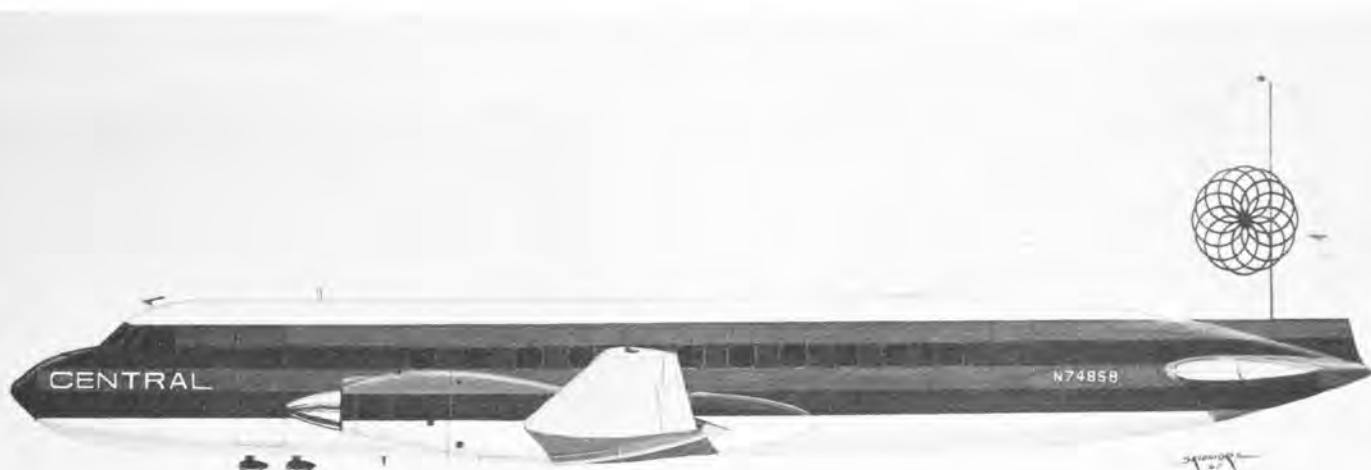
The first official part of two merger plans got underway when Hal S. Darr, president of Monarch Air Lines, bought controlling interests in Challenger Airlines in December of 1949. By combining general offices and maintenance functions, sufficient economies were effected to strengthen both airlines. A few months later, in the Spring of 1950, additional approval was received from the Civil Aeronautics Board to effect merger of Monarch and Challenger with the

A NEW ... FRONTIER

routes of the struggling Arizona Airways. Out of this union was formed a new company, Frontier Airlines. On June 1, 1950, the new red and green colors of Frontier took to the air on extensive north-south air operations between Montana and Mexico to serve 40 towns and cities in seven states in the Rocky Mountain West and the Southwest. Feverish oil activity in the Willison Basin brought about the addition of seven more cities to Frontier's routes to extend the airline into eastern Montana and western North Dakota between Billings and Bismarck.

The next 17 years showed a constant endeavor to improve service, increase load factors and develop a reputation for dependability.

Then in late 1967 Frontier added the 40 city unduplicated network of Central Airlines with the 70-point route system already serviced by Frontier. Central Airlines began service on September 15, 1948 with a Beechcraft Bonanza, but after a very few months it was obvious that larger aircraft would be needed. By May, 1951, DC-3s were winging over a simple route system that covered most of Oklahoma with fingers extending to Amarillo, Wichita, Dallas/Fort Worth and Texarkana. The aircraft that Central included in the merger were: DC-3s: N15584, N15837, N19937, N285SE, N49541 and N75277. Rolls Royce Dart powered CV-600s: N74850, N74851, N74852, N74853, N74854, N74855, N74856, N74857, N74858, N74859, and N74860.



The new Frontier network covers 12,600 miles and in the United States is exceeded only by United, Eastern and Delta. In addition to the 11 CV-600 and 6 DC-3 from Central Airlines, Frontier has 4 DC-3s, 21 CV-580s and 5 B-727-100s. On order are 17 more CV-580s and 5 B-727-200s.

Lewis W. Dymond, 47-year-old chairman and president of Frontier says that the airline's aspirations do not end with Central. He plans to go shopping again, and with the financial backing of RKO General, a subsidiary of the

General Tire & Rubber Co., he can well afford to speculate. It is Mr. Dymond's contention that in order to make unprofitable feeder lines subsidy free, the local carriers need more trunk routes. To achieve a stature worthy of handling major routes, he predicts that the present 13 local carriers will have to merge into about four strong regional companies.

Frontier Airlines today is the "King" of the local carriers—a worthy achievement for the frontiersman who founded Arizona, Central, Challenger and Monarch airlines.



The second of Monarch's DC-3s, NC64422 at Denver, 1947 (Photo—Don Edwards)

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