

Non-Skeds: The Story of America's Supplemental Airlines, Part 2



BY David H. Stringer

One of the more successful non-sked entrepreneurs was Irving E. Herman, who operated several large irregular carriers including Great Lakes Airlines. Note the painted rectangles that border the round windows on this Great Lakes DC-4. This was an attempt to make the old bird look like a more-modern, pressurized DC-6. (Bob Russo photo via John Corpening)

SURVIVAL

While the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) grappled with how to handle the unregulated mass of companies that made up the irregular carriers, the regulated scheduled airlines made it quite clear that they wanted the non-skeds to be put out of business. Despite the fact that the large irregular carriers were claiming that they were creating their own traffic and not infringing on the revenue stream of the regulated airlines, the scheduled carriers estimated that they lost over \$13 million in revenue to the non-skeds during 1948.

In the CAB's initial attempt to bring some order to the irregulars by issuing letters of registration, 142 companies were recognized via this process. At first the Board did not define exactly what constituted "infrequent, irregular" service, but eventually ruled that it meant only three flights in some markets, and up to eight flights in others during any one-month period.

In 1948, at the request of the United States Senate's Small Business Committee, the CAB launched a full-scale investigation into the large irregular carriers, supposedly to determine their rightful place in America's commercial airline hierarchy. The CAB's guidelines for its investigation were contained in a memorandum written by Louis Goodkind, Associate Director of the Board's Bureau of Economic Regulation. His memo was a private, internal document for CAB staff. It was never intended for anyone's eyes outside of the Civil Aeronautics Board. If the contents of Goodkind's memorandum had been released, then Congress and everyone else would have been made aware of the CAB's true attitude toward the non-skeds.

The secret memo was made public five years later, in 1953, by investigative newspaper columnist Drew Pearson. He revealed that Goodkind's sole mission, outlined in the 1948 memo, was to put all of the non-scheduled airlines out of business. The vehicle for doing this would be scrutiny of each company by the CAB, with a planned goal of denying operating authority to every applicant. In the memorandum, Goodkind stated that all letters of registration would be revoked and each carrier would have to appear before the Board to apply for a regular Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, which would turn them into a certificated carrier, or for permission to continue operating as a non-scheduled airline. In Goodkind's own words: "Either procedure has the advantage of affording a means for ultimately terminating the operations of this group of carriers." The CAB, under pressure from the regulated scheduled airlines, had decided that it was time to bring an end to the problem of unregulated, non-scheduled airlines once and for all.

The CAB's purge of the non-skeds began on April 18, 1949, when the Board summarily abolished authorization for all of the irregulars and began the process of having each company apply for a certificate, or for permission if they wanted to stay in business. Of the first 103 applicants to approach the CAB, the majority of them were turned down. The few from that group that were approved to function as non-scheduled operators were considered too small to offer any competitive threat to the scheduled airlines.

In the Board's defense, something had to be done. Aside from the fact that the CAB was frustrated by carriers ignoring



Seattle-based Sourdough Air Transport operated primarily between that city and airfields in Alaska. C-46F N95451 was photographed by Bill Larkins at Oakland, California.

the Board's complex and restrictive operating rules, companies could not be allowed to continue in business if they routinely flouted safety regulations.

On January 2, 1949, a DC-3 (NC79025) of non-sked carrier Seattle Air Charter attempted to take off from Boeing Field in Seattle when weather at the airport was below minimums for safe operation. The passengers on board were Yale University students on their way back to New Haven, Conn., following the Christmas holiday. The wings of the aircraft had been treated with alcohol after accumulating ice, but the pilot assigned to the trip refused to fly. The owner of the company then reportedly took his place. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper stated that "families and friends watched from the airport administration building as the plane took off and then veered right. The plane crashed into a Boeing hangar and burst into flames". There were 14 fatalities and 16 survivors.

As the saying goes, one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch and, unfortunately, there were quite a few bad apples among the non-skeds. In an attempt to keep the public from confusing any of the non-certificated carriers with the reputable scheduled airlines, back in 1946 the CAB had proposed revoking the letter of registration for any large irregular carrier that used the word

'way' or 'line' in its name, "either alone or in combination with any other term, for example... airways, airlines, etc." Although it appears that the ban on these terms was not enforced, many of the irregulars played it safe and chose names that avoided those two words.

On June 7, 1949, a C-46D (N92857) of non-sked carrier Strato Freight departed from San Juan, Puerto Rico, with a group of farm workers on board. The aircraft suffered engine failure on takeoff and crashed, killing 53 people. There were 28 survivors. If that sounds like a lot of people to be aboard a C-46, it was because 12 of the passengers did not have seats.

But, as stated before, there were some bright, healthy apples among the rotten fruit. And, just as the Civil Aeronautics Board was on the verge of putting the whole group out of business, world politics intervened and gave the more qualified non-skeds an opportunity to prove themselves. And they responded by doing a stellar job.

BERLIN

In response to Joseph Stalin's blockade of Berlin, which cut off all land and water access to the German city, British and American military personnel began supplying food, medicine



Modern Air Transport was one of the few non-skeds to survive all of the CAB's attempts to eliminate, then rationalize, this group of air carriers. C-46 N50549 is pictured in this Bill Larkins photo. Modern survived until the 1970s, by which time it was operating a fleet of Convair 990 jets.



Bill Larkins captured Transocean Air Lines (TALOA) C-46 N68968 with his camera. Perhaps the most famous and most respected of all the non-skeds, Transocean's operations stretched around the globe.

and all of the other necessities of modern life to the metropolis via air from June 24, 1948.

The Berlin Airlift lasted for over a year, ending in September 1949, although the blockade was officially lifted on May 12 of that year. During the airlift, the United States Air Force and the United States Navy used virtually every C-54 at their disposal, most of them from the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) fleet, to keep the continuous supply line open. The aircraft flew back-and-forth between Rhein-Main Air Base, outside of Frankfurt, and Berlin, and between Weisbaden Air Base and Berlin. Many of the necessary supplies had to be flown across the Atlantic for positioning at Rhein-Main and, since the MATS C-54s were tied up flying the corridors to and from Berlin, the commercial airlines were called upon to fly the supplies to Europe and to take over military transport operations within the United States normally handled by MATS. The bulk of this transport power, of air crews and aircraft, came from the biggest available source: the non-skeds.

Seaboard & Western Airlines operated 106 transatlantic flights in support of the airlift. Transocean Airlines operated 48 round-trip DC-4 missions across the ocean, the eastbound flights loaded with coal and other commodities for Berlin. Meanwhile, Slick Airways hauled supplies domestically to Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts where they were transferred to the overseas flights.



Inter-American Airways
(1946-48) baggage label



Skyways Int'l. Trading & Transport
(1946-1951) baggage label

The non-skeds proved how valuable their services could be to the military. The need for a large amount of excess lift on short notice, without disrupting the schedules of America's certificated airline network, could only be met with the aid of the vast pool of aircraft and crew members supplied by America's large irregular carriers.

Consequently, the military's view of the non-skeds was in contrast to the CAB's view.

As the calendar page turned from 1949 to 1950, another government entity was taking serious interest in the plight of the non-scheduled airline industry: The United States Congress. Members of that bicameral body were being contacted by their constituents who owned large irregular carriers. These citizens wanted to know why a government agency was deliberately trying to put them out of business. The senators and congressmen were curious. They, too, wanted to find out why this government-led attack was taking place on American entrepreneurs. The Civil Aeronautics Board would be called upon by Congress to account for its actions. And, so would the operators of the non-certificated airlines. →

**PART THREE OF
"NON-SKEDS: THE STORY OF
AMERICA'S SUPPLEMENTAL
AIRLINES" IS IN THE WORKS**

PARTIAL LIST OF LARGE IRREGULAR CARRIERS OF THE U.S. OPERATING IN 1948

In its November 1, 1946, edition, American Aviation magazine printed a complete list of the names of every company operating under Section 292.1 of the Civil Aeronautics Board's (CAB's) Economic Regulations, along with each outfit's headquarters address and fleet composition. Section 292.1 outlined the parameters for operating non-scheduled service, which was meant to be offered on an irregular basis with small aircraft. There were 714 organizations, most of them small companies operating within the letter of the law, such as Aberdeen Flying Service in South Dakota, which owned a fleet consisting of one Waco and a Piper Cub J-3.

But, also on that list were companies such as American Air Export & Import Company (AAXICO), which operated a fleet of seven DC-3s, and Mutual Airways System, which served as the "exclusive agent" for 18 companies operating a total of 72 DC-3s and four DC-4s.

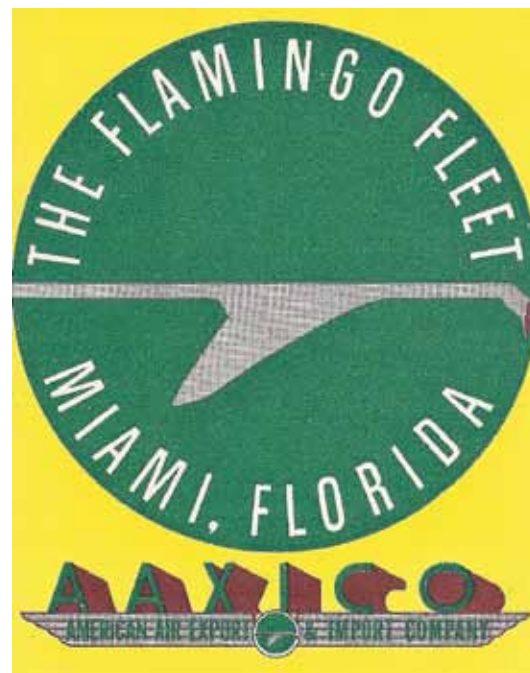
In order to deal with the problems being created by the Non-Skeds that were flying large aircraft in competition with certificated carriers, the CAB first had to separate the entities that would be classified as Large Irregular Carriers from the smaller companies that were operating under the intent of the Board's regulation.

By 1948, 142 companies could be identified as falling into the category of Large Irregular Carriers. The directory below includes the names and operating bases of 128 of the "non-sked" firms known to have been active in interstate charter or irregular operations (passenger and/or cargo) using DC-3 aircraft or larger in 1948. Airlines engaged solely in intrastate service are not included in this inventory.

The list has been assembled using information obtained from John Corpening's book, "FORGOTTEN FLIGHTS: NON-SCHEDULED AND SPECIALTY AIR CARRIERS OF THE UNITED STATES 1945 – 1978".

LARGE IRREGULAR CARRIERS ("NON-SKEDS") KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN 1948:

AAXICO AIRLINES (Miami, FL)
ADMIRAL AIR SERVICE (Base unknown)
AIR AMERICA (Burbank, CA)
AIR AMERICA'S AIRLINES (Burbank, CA) – Umbrella Company for low-fare operations by various large irregular carriers.
AIRBORNE TRANSPORT (Jamaica, NY)
AIR CARGO TRANSPORT (Newark, NJ)
AIRLINE TRANSPORT CARRIERS (Burbank, CA)
AIR SERVICES (Burbank, CA; Newark, NJ; Miami, FL)
AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATES (Seattle, WA)
ALASKA AIRLINES (Anchorage, AK; Everett, WA) – Certificated by the CAB in 1951.
ALL AMERICAN AIRWAYS (Miami, FL) – Not to be confused with local service carrier of the same name.
ALLTRANS AIRLINES (New York, NY)
AMERICAN AIR TRANSPORT (Miami, FL) – Operated as "The Cloud Coach"
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL AIRWAYS (New York, NY) – Operated Boeing 314 Flying Boat, which ditched in Chesapeake Bay due to fuel starvation.
ARCTIC-PACIFIC AIRLINES (Oakland, CA; Seattle, WA)
ARGONAUT AIRWAYS (Miami, FL)
ARNOLD AIR SERVICE (Anchorage, AK)
ARROW AIRWAYS (Burbank, CA)
ASA INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES (AEROVIAS SUD AMERICANA) (Miami, FL; Los Angeles, CA)
ATLANTIC, GULF & MIDLAND AIRWAYS (Little Ferry, NJ)
ATLANTIC NORTHERN AIRLINES (Maxton, NC)
BIXBY AIRLINES (Long Beach, CA)
BLATZ AIRLINES (Burbank, CA)



AAXICO baggage label

BRUNING AVIATION (Springfield, MA; Ft. Wayne, IN)
 CALASIA AIR TRANSPORT (Oakland, CA) – Renamed Overseas National Airways in 1950.
 CALIFORNIA AIR CHARTER (Burbank, CA)
 CALIFORNIA EASTERN AIRWAYS (Washington, DC; Oakland, CA; Burbank, CA)
 CALIFORNIA GROWERS AIR EXPRESS (Burbank, CA)
 CAPITOL AIRWAYS (Nashville, TN; Wilmington, DE) – Not to be confused with Capital Airlines, a certificated carrier.
 CARCO AIR SERVICE (Albuquerque, NM)
 CARIBBEAN AMERICAN AIRLINES (Miami, FL)
 CENTRAL AMERICAN AIRWAYS (Louisville, KY)
 COASTAL AIRLINES (Miami, FL; Philadelphia, PA; Portland, OR)
 COASTAL CARGO (West Trenton, NJ) – Operated passenger service as Coastal Air Coach.
 COLUMBIA AIR CARGO (Portland, OR)
 COMMERCIAL AIRWAYS (Rochester, NY)
 CONNER AIR LINES (Miami, FL)
 CONSOLIDATED AIR TRANSPORT (Pasco, WA)
 CONTINENTAL CHARTERS (Miami, FL) – Operated Boeing 307 Stratoliner.
 CURREY AIR TRANSPORT (Oakland, CA)
 DILLER AIR TRANSPORT (Pittsburgh, PA)
 DOLLAR AIRLINES (San Francisco, CA) – Owned by the Dollar Family, who also operated The Dollar Line Steamship Company. Renamed South Pacific Air Lines in 1957.
 EAGLE AIR FREIGHT (Santa Barbara, CA)
 ECONOMY AIRWAYS (Newark, NJ) – Operated passenger service as Economy Aircoach.
 FEDERATED AIR LINES (New York, NY)
 FLAMINGO AIR SERVICES (Avon Park, FL; Teterboro, NJ)
 FLEETWOOD AIRLINES (Brownsville, TX; Oakland, CA)
 FLYING TIGER LINE (Burbank, CA) – Certificated by CAB in 1949 for scheduled cargo service.
 FREIGHT AIR (Miami Springs, FL)
 GENERAL AIRWAYS (Portland, OR)
 GLOBAL AIRWAYS (Philadelphia, PA)
 GLOBE FREIGHT AIRLINE (Hartford, CT)
 GOLDEN NORTH AIRWAYS (Fairbanks, AK)
 GREAT LAKES AIRLINES (New York, NY; Burbank, CA)
 GULF AIRWAYS (New Orleans, LA)
 GULF & WESTERN AIR LINES (Houston, TX)
 HARRINGTON'S AIR SERVICE (Mansfield, OH)
 INTER-AMERICAN AIRWAYS (Miami, FL)
 INTERCONTINENTAL AIRWAYS (Burbank, CA)
 INTERNATIONAL AIR FREIGHT (Lantana, FL)
 ISLAND AIR FERRIES (Bohemia, Long Island, NY)
 JOHNSON FLYING SERVICE (Missoula, MT)
 KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN SKYWAYS (Kansas City, MO) – Subsidiary of KCS Railroad.
 LATIN AMERICAN AIRWAYS (Miami, FL)
 LOS ANGELES AIR SERVICE (Burbank, CA) – Renamed Trans International Airlines in 1960.
 MACKEY AIR TRANSPORT (Ft. Lauderdale, FL) – Received CAB certificate in 1952. Renamed Mackey Airlines.
 McFERRIN AIR EXPRESS (St. Louis, MO)
 METEOR AIR TRANSPORT (Teterboro, NJ)
 MIAMI AIR LINE (Miami, FL; Greensboro, NC)
 MODERN AIR TRANSPORT (Trenton, NJ; Miami, FL)
 MONARCH AIR SERVICE (Chicago, IL)
 MUTUAL AVIATION (Buffalo, NY)
 NATIONWIDE AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE (Miami, FL)
 NEW ENGLAND AIR EXPRESS (Teterboro, NJ)
 NORSEMAN AIR TRANSPORT (Springfield, MA; Newark, NJ)
 NORTHERN AIRLINES (Seattle, WA)
 NORTH STAR AIRCOACH (Miami, FL)
 OCEAN AIR TRADEWAYS (Maxton, NC; Wildwood, NJ) – Renamed United States Overseas Airlines (U.S.O.A.) in 1950.



Resort Airlines baggage label



Robin Air Lines brochure (John Corpening)



Standard Air Lines brochure

ORTNER AIR SERVICES (Wakeman, OH)
 PACIFIC AIR LINES (Burbank, CA) – Not to be confused with local service airline of the same name.
 PACIFIC AIR TRANSPORT (Redding, CA; Santa Rosa, CA)
 PACIFIC ALASKA AIR EXPRESS (Anchorage, AK)
 PAGE AIRWAYS (Rochester, NY)
 PAUL MANTZ AIR SERVICES (Burbank, CA)
 PENINSULAR AIR TRANSPORT (Miami, FL)
 QUAKER CITY AIRWAYS (Burbank, CA; Philadelphia, PA) – Operated Boeing 307 Stratoliner, which crashed May 10, 1958.
 RAINIER AIR FREIGHT LINES (Seattle, WA)
 REGINA AIRLINES / REGINA AIR CARGO (Miami, FL; New York, NY) – Renamed Imperial Airlines in 1960.
 RESORT AIRLINES (Miami, FL) – Certificated by the CAB in 1949 to operate scheduled air cruises, which were Inclusive Tour Charters (ITC's).
 RIDDLE AIRLINES (Miami, FL) – Certificated by the CAB for air cargo service to Puerto Rico in 1951. Renamed Airlift International in 1963.
 ROBIN AIR LINES (Burbank, CA)
 ROYAL AIR SERVICE (Burbank, CA)
 SAFEWAY SKYCOACH – Umbrella operating name for services by various large irregular carriers.
 SANTA FE SKYWAY (Wichita, KS) – Subsidiary of Santa Fe Railroad.
 SEABOARD & WESTERN AIRLINES – Certificated by the CAB in 1955 for scheduled transatlantic cargo service. Renamed Seaboard World Airlines in 1961.
 SEATTLE AIR CHARTER (Seattle, WA)
 SKYTRAIN AIRWAYS (New Orleans, LA)
 SKYWAYS INTERNATIONAL (Miami, FL; Washington, DC)
 SLICK AIRWAYS (Burbank, CA; San Antonio, TX) – Certificated by CAB in 1949 for scheduled cargo service.
 SOURDOUGH AIR TRANSPORT (Seattle, WA)
 SOUTH EAST AIRLINES (Charlotte, NC; Miami, FL)
 SOUTHERN AIR TRANSPORT (Miami, FL) – Purchased by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1960.
 STANDARD AIR CARGO (Seattle, WA) – Renamed Standard Airways in 1953.
 STANDARD AIR LINES (Long Beach, CA)
 STEWART AIR SERVICE (Hawthorne, CA)
 STRATO FREIGHT (Hartford, CT; Albany, NY)
 SUPAIR (Concord, CA; El Paso, TX) – Billed itself as “The Original Skycoach”
 SUPER SKYCOACH – Umbrella operating name for services by various large irregular carriers.
 TRANSAIR (St. Petersburg, FL; New York, NY) – Reservations and ticketing by the Dresser Airways Agency.
 TRANS ALASKAN AIRLINES (Anchorage, AK; Seattle, WA)
 TRANS AMERICAN AIRWAYS (Burbank, CA)
 TRANS ATLANTIC AIRWAYS (Long Beach, CA; New York, NY)
 TRANS CARIBBEAN AIRWAYS (New York, NY) – Certificated by CAB in 1957.
 TRANS-LUXURY AIRLINES (Teterboro, NJ)
 TRANSOCEAN AIR LINES (Oakland, CA) – Perhaps the most famous and most respected of all of the large irregular carriers. Known as TAL or TALOA, Transocean's operations stretched around the globe. Transocean will be covered more thoroughly in a later installment of this series.

TWENTIETH CENTURY AIRLINES (Charlotte, NC)

UNITED EXPORT COMPANY (Miami, FL)

UNIVERSAL AIRLINES (Washington, DC; Miami, FL; New York, NY) – Operated Boeing 314 Flying Boat, which caught fire at Gibraltar in 1947.

U.S. AIRLINES (St. Petersburg, FL) – Certificated by CAB in 1949 for scheduled cargo service.

VETERANS AIR EXPRESS COMPANY (Teterboro, NJ) – Billed as “The Veteran’s Airline”.

VIKING AIR LINES (Burbank, CA)

WATERMAN AIRLINES (Mobile, AL) – Subsidiary of Waterman Steamship Company

WESTAIR TRANSPORT (Seattle, WA; San Antonio, TX)

WILLIS AIR SERVICE (Teterboro, NJ)

WINGED CARGO (Philadelphia, PA) – Passenger division was WINGED AMERICA.

WORLD AIRWAYS (Teterboro, NJ; Oakland, CA; Atlanta, GA) – Initially operated Boeing 314 Flying Boats. World Airways was the last of the airlines once designated as large irregular carriers (supplemental airlines) to go out of business. World Airways ceased operations in 2014.

WORLD WIDE AIRLINES (Anchorage, AK; Oakland, CA)

YAKIMA SKY CHIEF (Yakima, WA; Seattle, WA)



TALOA Transocean Airlines baggage label



Trans Atlantic Airways brochure (John Corpening)



Waterman Airlines brochure