



SPEED'S NEWS



SPEED HOLMAN CHAPTER-54
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CHAPTER 54 MEETING: MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1986 7:30 p.m. SANBORN AVIATION

Dear Chapter 54 Members and Friends:

Happy, happy holidays to all of you and your families! This is one of my favorite seasons (after spring), but I do think we need some snow. How will Santa get here?

Now, I'd like you to look ahead to February 14th, and think of your sweetheart. We have planned our chapter banquet for that date, with festivities at AWADA's again this year. A brochure including menu and cost info will be sent out later. If you have ideas to honor your sweetheart, or suggestions for the program, please let Rosemary know ASAP.

There was lots of newsworthy information in my HQ Report this month. I want to share as much as possible with you, so here goes:

ANN LANDERS: Is there any pilot left in the country who has not heard about Ann Landers' column which referred to us all as fat cats? EAA HQ received many phone calls and offers this advice, "Don't just complain. Sit down and write her a letter. Refute the charges made in her column. Correct the misinformation that she has been a victim of herself. Stand up for your rights! Sure, she will receive a letter from Paul, but she deserves a letter from each and every aviation enthusiast in this country." (So, let's do it!)

PIPER A/C CO.: As many members know, the Wickes (furniture) Company has attempted to take over the Lear-Siegler Corp. which owns Piper Aircraft. As of this writing their take-over bid was premature. Lear-Siegler plans to proceed with its reconstruction plans and Washington rep David Scott reports that two possible purchasers for Piper have been found: Aerospatiale of France, and Sabreliner, Inc. of St. Louis. No doubt there are some companies that believe Piper's assets would be attractive if only they could be picked up at a bargain price.

CHALLENGES: The January issue of SPORT AVIATION will contain a "Special Report to Members" on various legislative and bureaucratic threats to our future in aviation. The report will also contain an update on the product liability crisis. (Look for these items.)

97-

Union calls for resignation of doctor who OKs pilots

By Matthew Breis and Andrew Schneider
PITTSBURGH HERALD NEWS SERVICE

The Air Line Pilots Association is calling for the immediate resignation of Dr. Frank Austin Jr., the federal air surgeon who has recertified hundreds of pilots with health conditions so severe that the Federal Aviation Administration's medical consultants said they shouldn't fly.

"It is our opinion Dr. Austin should be replaced immediately," said Richard Stone, ALPA's executive chairman for aeromedical resources.

"I don't think he [Austin] shows good medical judgment," said Mr. Stone, the highest-ranking pilot dealing with medical issues in the 46,000-member union that represents pilots at 49 airlines. "He doesn't even listen to his own people and people called on to be experts before him."

Neither Dr. Austin nor the FAA would comment until they had received word from the ALPA, said Richard Stafford, FAA public affairs spokesman.

The ALPA, which is holding its annual convention in Miami, called for the air surgeon's resignation Monday after the disclosure that Dr. Austin had granted extensive exemptions to pilots with medical problems such as heart attacks, heart diseases, diabetes requiring insulin, and strokes.

Federal records obtained by The Pittsburgh Press show that in 1985 Dr. Austin granted 994 exemptions, or special issuances, that represents approval of 75.1 percent of the applications pilots submitted. In 1984, the last year Dr. Homer Reighard was air surgeon, Dr. Reighard granted 584 special issuances, or 46.7 percent of the requests.

Of the 994 exemptions, or special issuances, 598 were given to private and student pilots and the remainder to professional aviators.

Soon after taking office, Dr. Austin stopped using a panel of leading cardiovascular specialists retained by the FAA to review seri-

ous medical problems of pilots applying for special consideration. Dr. Austin, certified as a specialist in aerospace medicine, later reinstated the panel after what he characterized as a "fire storm of criticism." But he has still chosen to ignore their advice, he said.

Government documents showed that Dr. Austin either acted unilaterally or overruled the panel when he granted special exemptions to scores of commercial pilots from all major airlines and to hundreds of aviators who fly corporate jets, charter airplanes, helicopters and private single-engine planes.

Dr. Austin, 62, federal air surgeon since Oct. 1, 1984, defended his actions by saying he had the authority to ignore the panel and did so because he wanted to reduce a large backlog of pilot requests and deemed the aviators in question "safe."

"O'Brien shows what can happen," said Mr. Stone, referring to the Aug. 3 crash in Alamo, Calif., of a helicopter flown by a pilot with severe heart disease who had received a special issuance from Dr. Austin. Both the pilot, Joseph O'Brien, and a passenger were killed. Investigators say Mr. O'Brien had a heart attack shortly before the crash.

"If it had been a large aircraft, there would have been a congressional investigation," said Mr. Stone, a pilot for Delta Airlines.

The union is not alone in its complaints.

Dr. Robert Wick Jr., then president of the Airlines' Medical Directors' Association, in a 1985 letter to members said that Dr. Austin "is really creating a revolution in aeromedical certification. He's disagreeing with about 50 percent of his consultants' decisions and issuing certificates to pilots with conditions never before certified."

"We now have a significant number of airline pilots flying as captains following multiple bypass surgery, heart attacks, and strokes with considerable residual damage," said Dr. Wick, who is medical director of American Airlines.

Matthew Breis and Andrew Schneider are reporters for The Pittsburgh Press.

Washington Times 11/19/86