



3RD ANNUAL

ARCHIE

League

MEDAL OF SAFETY
AWARDS PROGRAM

JANUARY 29, 2007



Special thanks to Doug Church, Allyson Hunt and Laura Roose for their hard work in making the 3rd Annual Archie League Medal of Safety Awards a success.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association salutes the recipients of the 3rd Annual Archie League Medal of Safety Awards. Named after the nation's first air traffic controller, this award recognizes heroic acts by air traffic controllers – dedicated public servants running the safest aviation system in the world. All responded with skill and distinction. All ensured a safe and successful outcome.

CONTENTS

- 4** BACKGROUND
- 5** BIOGRAPHIES OF SELECTION COMMITTEE
- 6** ARCHIE LEAGUE MEDAL OF SAFETY AWARD WINNERS
- 24** SENTINEL OF SAFETY AWARD WINNERS



Archie League

MEDAL OF SAFETY

The ability to think quickly and remain calm under pressure while maintaining a situational awareness are all unique qualities that air traffic controllers possess. Without their willingness to jump right in to resolve complex situations, offer a reassuring voice to those on the frequency and coordinate their efforts with other controllers, this group of dedicated professionals wouldn't be as successful as they are today at maintaining the safety of the National Airspace System.

While many controllers often feel that they are "just doing their jobs," their hard work is often viewed by others as remarkable and extraordinary. At the National Air Traffic Controllers Association's 3rd Annual Archie League Medal of Safety Awards ceremony, the union would like to recognize several examples of the heroic work of its members. Named after the first air traffic controller, this event will highlight a variety of "saves" – some of which involve a team of controllers working together and others which are the result of one controller's efforts.

Air traffic controllers juggle a variety of variables and complex scenarios. Their ability to adapt to ever-changing situations while keeping their composure is a skill they have mastered. As a result of their commitment to perfection, our aviation system is the safest in the world.

Selection Committee

NATCA members nominated their fellow colleagues to receive the Archie League Medal of Safety. A committee, comprised of three individuals with a broad range of aviation experience, selected the award recipients from the nominees in each region. Below is a brief biography about the panel, Mortimer Downey III, Barry Krasner and John Nance.



Mortimer L. Downey III

Mortimer L. Downey held the position of U.S. deputy secretary of transportation for eight years, becoming the longest serving individual in that post. As the department's chief operating officer, Downey developed the agency's highly regarded strategic and performance plans and had program responsibilities for operations, regulations and investments in land, sea, air and space transportation. In a prior administration, he served as assistant secretary of the department.

Previously, Downey was the executive director and chief financial officer of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority and also worked at the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Budget and at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Yale University, a Master's degree from New York University, completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School and served as an officer with U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. He is currently chairman of PB Consult, Inc.



Barry Krasner

Barry Krasner, NATCA's President Emeritus, began his Federal Aviation Administration career in January 1982 at the New York Terminal Radar Approach Control and has been an air traffic controller in the LaGuardia Area ever since. He was involved in NATCA's organizing drive in the mid-1980s, served as both vice president and president of New York TRACON before being elected as the Eastern Region Vice President in 1988, and then served two terms as NATCA national president, from 1991-97. Krasner is currently serving as president of NATCA Membership Investments (NMI).

Krasner was a member of the negotiating team for NATCA's first contract, signed in 1998, and was chief negotiator for the air traffic negotiations on the 1993, 1998, and 2005 contract teams. He has also served as chief negotiator for all other NATCA-represented bargaining units. With the FAA, Krasner jointly instituted the Quality Through Partnership program during Vice President Al Gore's "Reinventing Government" initiative, and served as a member of the Department of Transportation's Partnership Counsel during the same time period. Krasner lives on Long Island, N.Y., with his wife, Sallie, who works in NATCA's Eastern Region office. He has three children and two grandchildren.



John J. Nance

John J. Nance, a native Texan who grew up in Dallas, holds a Bachelor's degree from SMU and a Juris Doctor from SMU School of Law, and is a licensed attorney. Named Distinguished Alumni of SMU for 2002, he is also a decorated Air Force pilot veteran of Vietnam and Operations Desert Storm/Desert Shield and a Lt. Colonel in the USAF Reserve, well known for his involvement in Air Force human factors flight safety education.

Nance has piloted a wide variety of jet aircraft, including most of Boeing's line and the Air Force C-141, and has logged over 13,000 hours of flight time in his commercial airline and Air Force careers. He flies his own turbine aircraft, was a veteran Boeing 737 Captain for Alaska Airlines, and is an internationally recognized air safety analyst and advocate, best known to North American television audiences as Aviation Analyst for ABC World News and Aviation Editor for "Good Morning America." Nance is the nationally-known author of 18 major books, five non-fiction: *Splash of Colors*, *Blind Trust*, *On Shaky Ground*, and *What Goes Up*, [all published by William Morrow], and *Golden Boy* [Eakin Press, 2003]; plus 13 fiction bestsellers, including *Orbit* [Simon and Schuster], which was published in March 2006 and is also in development by Fox 2000 studios as a major motion picture.

Jonathan Eisenmayer Fairbanks Air Traffic Control Tower

Air traffic controllers who work inside airport towers are responsible for many different functions, including – but not limited to – clearing planes for takeoff and landing and instructing pilots as to which taxiways they need to take to get on and off the runways.

A controller may tell a pilot to taxi to Runway X via Taxiway J and hold short prior to clearing the plane for takeoff. The same scenario occurs when a plane lands at the airport. It is important that the air traffic controllers monitor their radars and continually look out the tower windows to scan the airport for potential problems on both the runways and taxiways.

In Fairbanks, Alaska, controllers handle many general aviation flights all year long, but the number of aircraft going in and out of the airports can grow especially large during the fall and summer seasons. On September 8, 2006, during the prime fall hunting season, Fairbanks controller Jonathan Eisenmayer was working local control with a slightly larger than average

load of aircraft coming in and out of Fairbanks International Airport (FAI).

Aircraft N3536G radioed the tower for clearance to takeoff. With another aircraft, WAV501, on a 1.5-mile final approach, Eisenmayer instructed N36G to hold short of the runway, to which the pilot responded, “Holding short, ready for takeoff.”

Eisenmayer then turned his attention away from the holding aircraft and towards a runway crossing he was handling downfield. Upon completion of the crossing, Eisenmayer scanned the runway and noticed N36G positioned on the runway ready to depart as WAV501 was fast approaching.

Eisenmayer quickly assessed the situation and determined there was not enough time for N36G to exit the runway prior to WAV501 attempting to land, so he instructed WAV501 to go around and then told N36G to exit the runway.

Eisenmayer then called N36G on his radio and told him that he was not issued a takeoff clearance and that he needed to report back behind the hold lines.

With a third aircraft on a 1.5-mile final approach,

N36G was again instructed to hold short of the runway, to which the pilot read back, "Holding short, ready for takeoff."

As Eisenmayer watched, N36G appeared to cross the hold lines once again. Eisenmayer again instructed the pilot to hold short. Finally, the pilot understood what was meant by hold short and complied, allowing the third plane to land safely prior to his own departure.

The quick thinking on the part of Eisenmayer to scan the airport for trouble, even after confirming with the pilot to hold short, prevented a runway accident from occurring at FAI.

"This type of save is the very essence of why we have controllers with binoculars in towers at most of the busy airports," said FAI Facility Representative John Brown. "Eisenmayer's actions were very quiet but likely prevented a ground collision."

"Jonathan Eisenmayer was nearing the end of a long, busy afternoon session working the local control and controller-in-charge positions combined. His training, instincts and his pedigree kicked into gear as he immediately transmitted to a PA-31 to go around, avoiding a very likely ground collision with an errant C-172.

"Jonathan continued LC/CIC without missing a beat. He was even in compliance with the Federal Aviation Administration's imposed dress code, wearing a long-sleeved button-down shirt. Whether it was from the heat of the previous moment or the sun shining in the tower cab windows, Jonathan partially unbuttoned the top of his shirt, which made his T-shirt visible.

"Once relieved from position the acting manager called Jonathan into his office. Was it to say thanks or job well done for saving the lives of the individuals on both aircraft? No, it was to give Jonathan a record of conversation for having his shirt improperly buttoned.

"While we are appalled with the antics of the FAA, we are very proud to honor Jonathan's quick actions and commitment to safety, which extends to his father, ZAN Controller Tom Eisenmayer, an Alaskan Region 2006 Archie League Award winner."

*– Rick Thompson
Alaskan Regional Vice President*

Chris Thigpen Kansas City Air Route Traffic Control Center

To a distressed pilot, the calm reassurance of an air traffic controller's voice is their lifeline to safety.

Even experienced pilots encounter trouble and must rely on controllers to guide them home. Charles Schultz, piloting his Beech Bonanza, N1801V, on Oct. 10, 2006, found himself in this situation and turned to Kansas City Center (ZKC) controller Chris Thigpen for guidance.

Schultz was headed from Scott City, Kan. (TQK), to Hays, Kan. (HYS), when another ZKC controller, John Bloomingdale, noticed the Bonanza making erratic turns. He radioed Schultz to ask his heading and when it did not match what the radar indicated, Bloomingdale assigned Schultz a different heading. But Bloomingdale knew the Bonanza was in trouble.

Bloomingdale declared an emergency and turned to Thigpen, who was working the next position, for help. Bloomingdale knew that Thigpen, a private pilot, would be able to assist Schultz. This decision proved correct, as Thigpen would spend the next 30 minutes guiding the Bonanza to safety.

Thigpen sat down next to Bloomingdale and, according to ZKC Facility Representative Scott Hanley, "it was as if Thigy was a paramedic walking up to a train wreck. He was assessing everything, listening to John [Bloomingdale], watching N1801V, listening to the supervisor and checking weather at Great Bend, Kansas (GBD), HYS, and Russell, Kansas (RSL) all in a matter of seconds. Then Thigy took charge."

Thigpen cleared all other aircraft from the frequency and focused on the Bonanza. He realized Schultz was suffering from spatial disorientation and knew that he needed to level his wings, watch the artificial horizon and keep his eyes inside the aircraft. After 10 minutes of working with Schultz to level the plane and stay on a correct heading, Thigpen took that extra step of establishing a personal relationship with the pilot.

"N1801V, what's your name?"

"Charles Schultz."

"Hey Charles, my name is Chris. We are going to point you out toward Great Bend, Kansas."

"That's great."

From that point on, Thigpen referred to N1801V as Charles. Thigpen even asked him if there was anyone

he could contact for him to let them know he would be landing in Great Bend instead of Hays.

With Schultz experiencing spatial disorientation, his instruments were useless. Thigpen took away his instruments, gave him NO-GYRO vectors all the way and kept repeating for Schultz to keep his eyes inside the plane. As the Bonanza approached Great Bend, Thigpen had a fellow controller radio another aircraft in the area to turn the lights on at Great Bend, so Schultz would be able to locate the airport. “Thigy essentially flew the airplane, completed the checklists and ensured the airport was lit for Charles,” added Hanley.

Finally, after thirty minutes of vectoring, the airport was in sight. Schultz landed the plane safely and then called ZKC to personally thank Thigpen. “I really needed you tonight and you really came through,” he told Thigpen.

Because of Thigpen’s calm and reassuring voice, Charles Schultz was able to make it home safely that night.

HONORABLE MENTION

Scott Vancura, Lincoln ATCT

“No one can argue that Chris Thigpen’s calmness, professionalism, experience and assertiveness on October 10, 2006 saved another human being’s life. It took all of these outstanding attributes and the support of a number of other controllers around Chris to bring Charles Schultz, the pilot of N1801V, to safety.

“A quick and effective intervention was what Charles needed and was what Chris gave him. Charles was disoriented and was not able to keep his heading or, even worse, his altitude, steady. It was his great fortune that Chris, a private pilot himself, was available that evening. Once Chris was put in charge of the situation, he ascertained Charles’ condition and, using Charles, effectively operated the aircraft via remote control.

“Some situations deserve a little more recognition than others, because the actions of that one specific controller went above and beyond the call of duty. This is one of those situations and Chris was indispensable. I know that he appreciates the respect and appreciation from his peers.”

*– Howard Blankenship
Central Regional Vice President*



Bernie Nelson

Richmond Air Traffic Control Tower

With over 30 years of experience in air traffic control, Bernie Nelson has gained the expertise necessary to spot a potentially dangerous situation, take control and steer pilots out of danger.

On Tuesday, January 24, 2006, Nelson demonstrated this expertise as he prevented a Beech Barron from descending directly on top of a Lear Jet, as both aircraft attempted to land at Richmond International Airport (RIC).

N45KX, the Lear Jet, was handed off to Nelson from Potomac TRACON (PCT) and Nelson cleared him to land a visual approach onto Runway 20. Meanwhile, N320WD, the Beech Barron, was instructed by PCT to follow the Lear Jet toward RIC and check-in with the tower for a visual approach to Runway 20, directly behind the Lear.

Nelson, who was watching each of the aircraft's mode-c altitudes on the RACD, noticed the Barron descending out of 2300 feet directly over the Lear prior to checking-in for clearance.

The Barron then checked in with Nelson, who immediately asked the pilot, "Do you have the traffic below you?"

The pilot did not respond so Nelson instructed, "N320WD stop your descent. Do you have the traffic you are following?"

The pilot responded, "We had a Lear we thought we were following but I do not have him in sight at this time."

In a calm, controlling voice Nelson advised the pilot, "when you lose sight of him you can't keep descending. You are right on top of the guy."

Nelson told the Barron to stay at the current altitude and to fly heading 090 and maintain VFR, thus removing him off the final approach and from directly above the Lear. Nelson then contacted PCT and told them he was sending the Barron back to them for resequencing. After a few seconds, the Barron responded that he had the traffic in sight and again asked for clearance. Nelson denied the request, giving the pilot the frequency for PCT.

After the Barron was cleared from above the Lear, Nelson radioed the Lear to continue his approach and to land on Runway 20. The Lear pilot, who was able to hear Nelson move the Barron away from his aircraft, indicated that he had an RA, but did not take action because he

knew the controller had the situation under control. The Lear landed safely, as did the Barron after circling back around for a second attempt.

With his 30-plus years of experience, Nelson was able to control a situation that could have become disastrous had the Barron continued to descend directly onto the Lear.

“Mr. Nelson’s astute awareness and keen observation of his traffic helped to avert a potentially disastrous outcome between these two aircraft and the lives onboard,” said RIC FacRep Jeff Gaffney. “It is this type of experience and attention to detail that the users of the National Airspace System are going to sorely miss.”

Nelson walked down the control tower steps for the last time, into retirement, on January 3.

HONORABLE MENTION

Joy Aldrich & James Boshek, Albany ATCT

Brent BeVier, Albany ATCT

Jerry Turnbull, Kristen Laubach & Rick Mathis, Philadelphia ATCT

Brett Steinle & Albert Herazo, Pittsburgh ATCT

Jim Mostrando, Roanoke ATCT

Mark Hughes, Washington Center

Amber Mauro & Stephen Pologruto, Washington Center

“This save can only be described as the essence of air traffic control. Bernie Nelson, a veteran controller with more than 30 years of air traffic knowledge and skill has shown us all that experience matters. He has dedicated his career to ensuring our nation’s air travelers are safe.”

“Bernie’s actions are a testament to the preparedness and ability of our controllers throughout the Eastern Region and the country. He demonstrated the kind of situational awareness that comes from years of experience dealing with unusual and sometimes frightening situations that are sure to occur in a very fast moving and complex airspace system.”

“Bernie’s focus and excellent response is the hallmark of a professional always poised to make the difference in a life-and-death scenario. I am proud to represent such a fine NATCA member.”

*– Phil Barbarello
Eastern Regional Vice President*

David Murphy and Yasemin Parker Champaign, Ill., ATCT and TRACON

***“I would like to take this opportunity to say
THANK YOU for saving my life yesterday!”***

These were the opening words of an impassioned letter of gratefulness from St. Charles, Mo., pilot Willard W. Nickisch, signed on Sept. 14, 2006, a day after Murphy, a veteran controller who is CMI’s facility representative, and Parker, who was training on both of CMI’s radar sectors, worked to help Nickisch overcome extreme difficulty in flying his Seneca III and then vectored him to a safe, albeit unscheduled, landing at CMI.

Just as Parker called for a split of the combined radar sectors as traffic started to increase, she noticed the PA34 descending from its assigned altitude. She told Nickisch, who was returning to St. Louis from Michigan, to check his altitude when he reported, “I’m having a problem with my autopilot.” Parker asked Nickisch if he was declaring an emergency. He was.

Nickisch had inadvertently turned off his autopilot in a manner that left the aircraft in a full down trim position. He was struggling and, to Parker, seemed out of breath. “I thought he was literally having a heart attack,” she said. The plane pitched over and the pilot responded by pulling back the yoke. “It took both hands

and my legs to straighten and maintain altitude after the initial rapid descent,” Nickisch said.

Parker told every other aircraft on the frequency to stand by as she handled the emergency in progress, and also stopped departures. Then, Parker turned over the aircraft to her split position, manned at that point by Murphy, who then worked Nickisch down on a single frequency while Parker dug in and cleaned up the rest of her airplanes that were standing by.

Murphy continued to get information from Nickisch about what was happening in his cockpit. When Murphy learned of the aircraft’s lack of instruments and Nickisch’s diminishing positional awareness, he immediately began setting up for a surveillance approach. Said Nickisch: “[Murphy] was knowledgeable about using the information he had, to tell me when to turn and when to stop the turn, along with allowing me to descend to the prescribed descent altitude.”

Murphy said, “I tried to keep him calm and assured him that he was doing just fine.” At 1.5-2 miles from the runway, Nickisch reported the runway in sight and lowered the landing gear. He was then cleared to land.

CMI controller Karl Jensen said the facility’s entire

team provided good service, but added, “these two individuals made the hard decisions that ultimately were the difference between life and death.”

Parker’s trainer that day, Sheri Walsh, wrote glowingly of Parker’s performance in an official FAA report: “To sum this session up in a word ... WOW!!!! You handled this operation like most [full performance level controllers].”

Wrote Nickisch, in closing his letter: “*I am forever grateful to God (and the U.S. Government) for your being there. Please share my thanks and gratitude to the great people who helped me to live another day.*”

HONORABLE MENTION

Robert Nicholas & Don Wishowski, Chicago TRACON
Todd Parham & Stacey Parham, Cleveland Center
Scott Thornton, John Daniels & Dave Riley, Cleveland Center
Trent Tyler, Evansville ATCT
Peter Holysz, Ryan Ray & Davyd Swanson, Kalamazoo ATCT
Tom Goldman, Milwaukee ATCT
John Hermes, Milwaukee ATCT
Kim Bowe, Minneapolis Center
Glendon Rice, Sioux Falls ATCT

***“I am proud and inspired by the abilities demonstrated by Dave Murphy and Yasemin Parker. It is an honor to serve as their NATCA Great Lakes Regional Vice President.*”**

“Professionalism and poise under pressure is a skill that each and every air traffic control possesses. Pulling it together in a time of crisis is what this job is about. Whether it be a national emergency, as on 9/11, or a distress call from pilot Willard W. Nickisch, our talented workforce is ready to serve the flying public and keep them safe.”

***– Bryan Zilonis
Great Lakes Regional Vice President***

Stephen Schmalz Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center

In air traffic control, every day is a new day, a new experience and a new set of circumstances. Controllers are educated to be alert and prepared for anything and everything. It is not uncommon for a controller to have a day where all the aircraft are running smoothly and the weather is perfect and the next day the aircraft are battling high winds and rain with low visibility. The controller must be prepared for it all.

At the Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center (ZBW), controllers are responsible for all traffic above a specified altitude over Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and parts of New York and Connecticut, as well as over parts of the northwestern Atlantic Ocean. With airspace this large, the likelihood of something going wrong is high.

During the winter of 2005-06, veteran ZBW controller Stephen Schmalz found himself in radio contact with two separate pilots who had encountered difficult

flying conditions and who turned to him for help.

The first incident occurred on December 11, 2005, when a pilot en route to Morristown, N.J. (MMU) under visual flight rules suddenly found himself in instrument flight rules conditions. The pilot was not certified to fly IFR and declared an emergency to ZBW. Schmalz was working sector R05 at the time and proceeded to help the distressed pilot.

As the aircraft climbed higher to avoid the clouds, Schmalz solicited meteorological reports from other aircraft in the area and encouraged the pilot to look at his instruments to maintain a straight and level heading until he could be directed below the clouds.

Schmalz soon learned of a five-mile break in the clouds ahead of the aircraft and began to calmly direct the pilot in that direction. Schmalz reassured the pilot and told him to remember to keep a straight and level heading. Once the clouds opened up, the pilot was able to descend safely below and was passed off to New York TRACON (N90) for landing.

Approximately six weeks later, Schmalz found himself again on the other end of the radio with a dis-

tressed pilot whose aircraft was experiencing mechanical failure.

N434TB was flying from Charlottesville, Va. (CHO), to the Keene (N.H.) Dillant-Hopkins Airport (EEN) when the aircraft's electrical system died, taking the radio and transponder down with it. The pilot worked to turn off the nonessential electrical components, which allowed the radio to begin working again. He then radioed Schmalz for assistance in landing as soon as possible. Schmalz gathered all the relevant information, such as weather reports, airport information and pireps, and passed it on to the pilot, who requested to divert to Stewart International Airport (SWF) in Newburgh, N.Y. Schmalz vectored the pilot in that direction, lowering him to 7,000 feet. Once he reached that altitude, Schmalz turned the pilot over to N90 for landing approach.

In both situations, Schmalz used his air traffic control knowledge and experience to guide the distressed pilots home. With the help of controllers like Schmalz, the United States' airspace remains the safest in the world.

"Our region is honored that Steve Schmalz has been selected as our Archie League Award winner. Steve Schmalz is a longtime Area E controller at Boston Center.

"Steve had two saves this past year. The first save occurred when a Cessna checked in on Steve's frequency declaring a weather-related emergency. Steve confirmed the emergency and began to solicit other pilots on his frequency to find clear skies. Steve calmly assured the pilot and professionally directed him out of the bad weather. The Cessna landed safely.

"Steve also had another assist where a pilot experienced an electrical failure that caused a loss of radios and the transponder. He was able to reestablish radio communication with Steve, who then began giving him information on nearby airports, pilot reports and weather. The pilot decided he would need to divert to a different airport. Steve again, calmly and professionally, provided service to this aircraft so they reached the ground safely."

*– Mike Robicheau
New England Regional Vice President*



Ivy Sylvain Seattle TRACON

“Seattle Approach, Cessna 6725 Foxtrot is with you on 119.2.”

Veteran Seattle TRACON controller Ivy Sylvain picked up the target while handling a heavy load of departure traffic. The pilot of this Cessna had taken off from Bowers Field in Ellensburg, Wash., near the center of the state, and was headed west to Auburn Municipal Airport, just south of Seattle. Sylvain instructed the pilot to stay in Visual Flight Rules, below the Class Bravo airspace, pointing out that an overcast layer was at 3,000 feet.

The pilot was not qualified for Instrument Flight Rules, nor was his aircraft equipped for IFR. But he soon discovered that expectations of clear weather conditions were wrong. He found himself above a solid cloud layer and intended to find a hole to descend through. His fuel was low, not enough to return to Ellensburg or to proceed southwest to Olympia, where a hole in the overcast was reported.

Sylvain advised of low clouds in the Seattle area and told the pilot she would work with him to pursue the possibility of getting him down below the cloud

layer, back to VFR conditions.

“Uh, it looks like I might be able to get down through something right out in front of me. I’m just going to take a look at it.”

As the Cessna started descending east of Seattle, she asked him how it looked.

“Looks like I have a hole out in front of me. I hope it’s not just shadows.”

This statement “definitely got my heart racing,” Sylvain said. She pulled up information about an airport in the vicinity, Fall City, 25 miles east of Seattle, and told the pilot the runway direction, dimensions and composition.

A second private pilot, listening in, advised the Cessna of the low ceiling and gave him a stern warning: “I’m not going to tell you that you can’t try this, but I just want to let you know that if you try this and get down there and start fooling around and can’t get to where you *want* to go, you better have enough gas to get back to where you *can* go.”

The Cessna pilot reported having the ground in sight and continued his descent. But Sylvain then lost

radio contact and by the time she was able to re-establish contact, with the help of a Northwest Airlines pilot, the Cessna was headed the wrong way. But Sylvain provided course corrections via a second NWA pilot until she lost radar contact. The target reappeared a short distance from Fall City.

Soon after, the second NWA pilot, talking to the Cessna, reported good news to Sylvain:

“25Foxtrot has Fall City Airport in sight and he will give you a call when he gets on the ground.”

“I was in the room during this assist, working arrival, and Ivy did a great job,” said Seattle TRACON Facility Representative Dan Olsen.

Said Sylvain: “When it was over, the adrenaline let down and just plain relief almost made me cry. But I wanted to keep working.”

HONORABLE MENTION

Don Niemiec, Seattle TRACON

“Ivy Sylvain was working departures out of Seattle and did what so many of our members do on a daily basis; she accepted the additional workload of a VFR aircraft requesting services. Luckily for this Cessna pilot, he found an experienced veteran on the radio that day.

“The men and women I represent have some of the most challenging working conditions in the country; with mountainous terrain, rapidly changing weather conditions, limited radar coverage and often time little or no radio coverage. But these controllers don’t let it stop them from doing incredible things when the chips are down. If it takes relaying information to an aircraft in distress through another aircraft or using their cell phones when equipment fails, the hardworking professionals I represent get it done!

“Ivy had no idea the difference she would make in that pilot’s life when she sat down to work that day. Just doing her job? I say she saved someone’s life and that makes her a hero.”

*– Scott Farrow
Northwest Mountain Regional Vice President*



J.D. Smith

Pensacola TRACON

No matter what time of the day or night it is, or whether there are other people working in the control tower or not, air traffic controllers must always be alert and prepared for anything. Even if it is the middle of the night and the controller is working alone on a mid shift, that controller knows they must be ready for anything and everything.

This was the scenario facing Pensacola TRACON (P31) controller J.D. Smith when he reported for his mid shift on September 24, 2006. He was working alone in the TRACON while the actual Pensacola Tower was closed for the night. A late-arriving aircraft, a Northwest Airlink inbound to Pensacola from Memphis, was cleared by Smith to land on a visual approach to Runway 8/26 at Pensacola International Airport. Smith told the pilot to switch to an advisory frequency and to cancel IFR on the approach frequency after he landed.

After clearing the plane, Smith continued about his work in the radar room when he noticed on his radar

screen that the Northwest Airlink was lined up to land on Runway 17/35 and not the stated Runway 8/26. Runway 17/35 was a closed runway at the time and had been for a few months. Half of the runway was torn up and heavy machinery and debris littered what was left of the runway.

Knowing he did not have the plane on his frequency, Smith grabbed a tunable radio from inside the TRACON and attempted to call the pilot to alert him to his mistake. The call went unanswered. Smith then attempted to radio the pilot on the approach frequency, hoping the pilot was monitoring it. The pilot was and radioed back to Smith.

Smith notified the pilot that he was lined up to land on the closed runway and advised him to shift to the open Runway 8/26. After a few seconds of silence, the pilot realized his mistake and turned toward the correct runway, landing safely.

The quick action on the part of Smith prevented a possible major runway accident on the PNS runway. His alertness and knowledge of the area through the eyes of his radar while alone in the TRACON in the early hours

of the morning is a great example of the professionalism of the air traffic controller community.

“This save is remarkable for several reasons,” said NATCA Southern Region Safety Representative Perry Doggrell. “First, PNS tower is closed. Second, Smith was alone in the TRACON, and third, the airspace covered by P31 is quite large. In order for him to see all the airspace, his range on the scope must have been set to the maximum. For him to notice a plane was lined up on the wrong runway, on a 2-3 mile final, from a radar screen is incredible. There were no windows, so he could not look outside and see the aircraft approaching. He only had his radar screen.”

HONORABLE MENTION

Wayne Dombroski, Atlanta TRACON

Steve Jubb, Atlanta TRACON

Doug Blythe, Florence ATCT

James Fleming, Greenville-Spartanburg ATCT

Cristina Fitz, Louisville ATCT

John Ramirez, Orlando ATCT

Marco Colon, San Juan CERAP

“As the FAA cuts corners with staffing and closes facilities at night, all in the name of ‘fiscal responsibility,’ NATCA members have stepped up. They will not let the FAA erode safety. They go the extra mile. When left alone, with a closed tower and no relief for an eight-hour shift, they increase vigilance and work a little harder to keep the flying public safe.”

“Since the FAA’s new business mantra is ‘producing safety,’ and it keeps pulling workers off the ‘assembly line,’ the least it can do is acknowledge that the workers it has left are doing everything they can to give the customer that fine product. I’m proud to acknowledge J.D. Smith with an Archie League Medal of Safety Award.”

“Why can the FAA keep claiming, ‘safety was never compromised?’ Perhaps we should ask J.D. Smith and all the other recipients of this year’s Archie League Awards. Since the FAA doesn’t see fit to say so, I will: Thank you, J.D. Thanks to all our recipients. Not just from NATCA, but from me too.”

*– Victor Santore
Southern Regional Vice President*

Borden Byrd Dallas-Fort Worth TRACON

There are seven runways at the nation's third-busiest airport, Dallas-Fort Worth International.

It takes experienced, sharp and focused controllers at both the control towers at DFW and in the nearby DFW TRACON (D10) to ensure that the delicately balanced choreography of air traffic proceeds smoothly and safely every hour of every day.

On Aug. 24, 2006, it was the sharp eyes and quick reaction of D10 controller Borden Byrd that saved a possible collision between two jets – an American Airlines MD80 and a United Express regional jet – that had departed simultaneously off parallel runways 17 Right and 18 Left.

The MD80 took off on 17R on an RNAV departure that would have directed the aircraft to depart south with an eastbound turn approximately five miles south of DFW. The RJ took off on 18L on an RNAV departure that would have directed the aircraft to depart south, with a westbound turn approximately five miles south of the airport.

The RNAV departure requires the departing aircraft

to dial in the departure runway into their Flight Management System (FMS).

But on this day, the regional jet's pilots had set an incorrect runway in the FMS. After the jet began its ascent, it turned to the southeast, directly into a path toward that of the MD80. Both jets were approximately 1,500 feet off the ground and going 200 miles per hour.

"There was a trajectory that was begun there that could have put two airplanes together," said John Nance, a pilot and aviation expert who also serves on the Archie League Awards Selection Committee. "The fact was they left a piece of automation and put them in a bad position."

But Byrd observed the situation developing and turned the regional jet immediately to the west, out of the path of the MD80.

At their closest proximity, the jets were separated by seven-tenths of a mile and 400 feet – which, as a Dallas television station described it, is less than the distance between home plate and the center field fence at the Texas Rangers' ballpark, Ameriquest Field.

"In this particular case, a very sharp controller was watching very carefully," Nance said.

Archie League Award of Special Recognition

Pat Hart, Dallas-Fort Worth TRACON

The Archie League Medal of Safety Judges Panel, while selecting Borden Byrd's save as the best of the Southwest Region's nominations, were so impressed with fellow D10 controller Pat Hart's work on Feb. 7, 2006 in quickly separating two converging aircraft near Dallas Love Field that they have presented Hart with an award of special recognition.

A Citation 550 had departed DAL and was assigned an altitude of 5,000 feet. At the same time, a PC12 was inbound to DAL, also at 5,000 feet. Hart directed the Citation to climb to 8,000 feet on the same heading and continued about his work on his sector. Soon after, he noticed the aircraft had initiated an unauthorized turn to the left, placing it on a collision course with the inbound PC12. Hart immediately issued a right turn and 180-degree heading. With just seconds to spare, the Citation pilot located the other aircraft and was able to maintain separation.

HONORABLE MENTION

**Don Craig, Dallas-Fort Worth TRACON
Phil Enis & Phil Layman, Fort Worth Center
Scott Keller, Tulsa ATCT**

"Borden Byrd has been an air traffic controller for 29 years. On August 24, 2006, he did what he has always done, but most of the time his efforts, and those of all air traffic controllers, go mostly unrecognized. Their work may seem routine for most of us – up to the moment when it is not.

"We depend on equipment to function and others in the system to maintain vigilance and act according to standards and direction, but when a mistake occurs, air traffic controllers perform automatically and usually anonymously. We predict the worst and when it happens, we casually fix it, barely noticing that without action, the impact on hundreds of individuals, families and our nation's psyche could last lifetimes.

"The difference Borden made in the lives of the people on those flights, the people on the ground, and their families was huge, yet many of them have no idea what Borden did for them that day. I join with my fellow controllers in the Southwest Region in congratulating Borden for making a difference that day, and every day, in ensuring the safety of the national airspace system and upon his recent retirement from a profession he loves."

*– Darrell Meachum
Southwest Regional Vice President*



Michael Darling Los Angeles International Airport ATCT

It was, as the *Los Angeles Times* reported LAX Tower controllers' descriptions, "the closest call they have seen at LAX in seven years."

But standing between the episode of pilot deviation and the impending, unspeakable disaster near the end of Runway 25 Right (25R) on the afternoon of July 26, 2006 was quick-thinking Michael Darling, a veteran controller at LAX Tower for over 20 years.

The incident began when America West Flight 6008 (ASH6008), a regional jet, landed from Phoenix on Runway 25 Left, the airport's southernmost runway.

Darling, working the local control position in the tower, instructed the aircraft to depart the runway on Taxiway Mike and hold short of 25R. The pilot read back the hold short instruction.

Meanwhile, just prior to this movement, a departing United Express turboprop (flight SKW6037, to Monterey, Calif.) had been cleared for takeoff on 25R at Taxiway Golf on what is known as an "intersection departure," taking off less than halfway down the runway.

With the United Express aircraft on its takeoff roll

and going beyond the point at which it could have stopped, the LAX local control team watched as the America West aircraft, moving too fast to possibly stop at the hold short line, crossed the runway edge line of 25R. Darling quickly went into action, reacting to the situation and keying his microphone to alert the United Express pilot in a clear, authoritative voice.

"Traffic unauthorized crossing downfield!"

With that warning, the pilot was able to pull the aircraft up early – albeit at a slower speed than normal – and flew over the America West jet by less than 50 feet.

"I believe Mike Darling should be recognized for his quick thinking, as many people would have first tried to talk to the jet crossing the hold lines," former LAX facility representative Diane Aceves said. "In choosing to speak to the departing United Express pilot, Mike enabled him to avoid a collision."

In a post-incident report compiled by the FAA, the pilot of ASH6008, in admitting responsibility for the pilot deviation, stated that one of his reverse thrusters wasn't operating properly but that it was his full intention to hold short as instructed. The pilot said he got

confused when he reached the hold line and continued forward onto 25R, then stopped.

An FAA supervisor at LAX said in the report that, “had that been a larger aircraft departing, it would have been far worse,” of an outcome.

LAX controllers told the *Los Angeles Times* that the incident was the most serious near-collision at the airport since November 1999, when an MD-80 that had just landed mistakenly crossed in front of a departing Boeing 757. The United pilot saw the MD-80 and quickly got airborne, clearing it by 100 feet.

Thanks to Darling’s actions, the event had a safe outcome. Unfortunately, LAX Tower will soon lose Darling’s skills, determination and experience. He plans on retiring this spring.

“This award is a wonderful retirement gift to a longtime NATCA member,” Aceves said.

HONORABLE MENTION

Michael Gabrick, Phoenix TRACON
Joseph Gramm, San Francisco ATCT

“July 26, 2006 was just like any other day at Los Angeles International Airport. Air traffic controllers skillfully orchestrated the departures and arrivals in and out of one of the nation’s busiest airports, utilizing antiquated and non-functioning equipment.

“On this particular day, the Airport Movement Area Safety System, or AMASS, was not operating properly and controllers had to be in top form to compensate for that. AMASS is an alarm system designed to alert controllers to potential collisions.

“Michael Darling, a veteran air traffic controller with more than 20 years of experience, remained cool, calm, and collected throughout a most harrowing incident. Mike reacted instinctively and issued a safety advisory to a departing Skywest pilot on full takeoff roll and thereby avoided an imminent collision with another aircraft.

“Mike is a truly gifted air traffic controller. I would like to thank him for the service to his country and to this great profession. His experience and dedication will be greatly missed at LAX as he prepares for retirement this spring.”

*– Hamid Ghaffari
Western Pacific Regional Vice President*



Sentinel of Safety Award

Rep. Jerry Costello, D-Illinois

NATCA is honored to present a Sentinel of Safety award to Congressman Jerry Costello, D-Ill., for his steadfast dedication and commitment to the aviation industry. Costello began serving the people of Illinois in Congress in 1988 and was recently re-elected to his 11th term.

Costello, a senior member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure committee and now the new chairman of the House Aviation Subcommittee, has been a beacon for the aviation community throughout his tenure in Congress. A search of Congressional records yields literally hundreds of bills where the name 'Costello' and the words 'aviation safety' are found together.

Costello has fought to ensure that the United States continues to operate the safest and most efficient aviation system in the world. The language he has authored, the legislation he has introduced, and the oversight he has provided, have raised the bar for aviation safety in this country.

Throughout his career, Congressman Costello has stood shoulder to shoulder with NATCA. Regardless of the request, the Congressman and his staff have answered the union's call. NATCA is honored to call Congressman Costello a friend and an ally in the ongoing effort to ensure the safety and security of the flying public. We are now very proud to call him "Chairman Costello."

The list of Congressman Costello's accomplishments in the field of aviation safety is long and distinguished. Here are several highlights:

- In 1996, he co-sponsored legislation to ensure that

the primary responsibility of the FAA administrator was to enhance the safety and security of the commercial civil aviation industry.

- Immediately following the events of September 11, 2001, Congressman Costello co-sponsored legislation that required the screening of all passengers and property carried into the cabin of an aircraft be conducted by the federal government. In addition, this legislation provided for the expansion of the air marshal program on domestic and international flights.
- In 2003, he co-sponsored legislation that would improve and standardize training for commercial aviation cabin crew members.
- He co-sponsored a bill implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, which included significant improvements to aviation security.
- In February 2006, with Congresswoman Sue Kelly, he introduced legislation that would amend Title 49 of the Federal Code to provide a fair collective bargaining process for FAA employees.

In addition to co-sponsoring HR4755, the Kelly/Costello Bill, he determinedly debated a separate fair collective bargaining bill, HR5449, and won the hearts of NATCA members and their families across this country.



Jerry Costello

NATCA bestows its Sentinel of Safety Award to a member of the aviation community as a way of honoring the individual for his or her outstanding achievement in the advancement of aviation safety.



Rep. Steven LaTourette, R-Ohio

NATCA is presenting two Sentinel of Safety awards to deserving supporters of aviation safety issues.

The union is presenting a second award to Congressman Steven LaTourette, R-Ohio, for his dedication to the safety and security of the national airspace system. Congressman LaTourette was first elected to Congress in 1994 and was recently re-elected to his seventh term serving the people of Ohio.

As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman LaTourette has consistently introduced and supported legislation that makes aviation safety a priority. His use of Congressional oversight and his dogged pursuit of “common sense” legislative solutions make him a champion of this nation’s aviation professionals and the flying public.

Throughout his 12 years in Congress, LaTourette has been a solid supporter of NATCA. When the union needed a friend, its members could count on the Congressman’s support. That was no more apparent than in 2006. During the darkest time in NATCA’s history, Congressman LaTourette picked up our torch and led the fight to establish basic fairness and equity to FAA/union negotiations. Congressman LaTourette understood that a fairly negotiated and ratified contract would provide consistency and stability to the national airspace system, thereby ensuring the safety and security of the flying public.

LaTourette and his bill’s many supporters courageously and enthusiastically took to the House floor on June 6, 2006,

during debate. LaTourette was especially critical of FAA Administrator Marion Blakey’s move to impose work rules before the vote: “I am a pretty calm guy, but I really think that she just took her finger and stuck it in the eye of 268 members of this House (who co-sponsored the Kelly-Costello bill) and 75 of them happen to be Republican, 75 of them happen to be members of this President’s party. I am insulted.”

Congressman LaTourette’s efforts in 2006 are but one example of his legislative accomplishments to improve aviation safety. Here are some other aviation safety advancement highlights from his career:

- Co-sponsored Secure Transportation for America Act of 2001 which, among other things, established standards and responsibilities for the TSA
- In 2002, co-sponsored legislation that would allow pilots of commercial aircraft to carry guns to be used in the event of a terrorist attack or cockpit intrusion



Steven LaTourette





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