

AirTrafficController

10th Biennial Convention charts union's future, energizes activists

NATCA's 10th Biennial Convention - the largest gathering of its kind in the union's history - recently drew to a rousing close at St. Louis' Millennium Hotel, and sent over 1,200 NATCAvists to every corner of the United States energized about charting the union's course for the coming two years.

"This truly was a world-class convention," Fairbanks, Alaska, Tower Controller John Brown remarked. "It reflected the growth of the union as a whole, and showed we're bigger and smarter. The complexion of our union has changed over the years, but our ability to put on a great convention has grown."

For Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin, the high level of participation from every corner of the union marks a major convention success. "It was wonderful to see the high turnout across our bargaining units. This extensive participation was very exciting."

Opening Reception

On the eve of the convention, members gathered for cocktails and dinner at the Opening Reception, which took place in the Millennium Hotel and was sponsored by Northwest Airlines. NATCA President John Carr gave a speech at the event thanking the airline for its support, and Northwest Airlines Senior Vice President of Flight Operations Tim Rainey welcomed the delegates.

"The support of Northwest over the years really means a lot,"



SARAH CARMODY

Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., delivered an inspiring speech, and received a standing ovation as he took the stage and praised the work NATCA members perform. Brown observed.

After the reception, convention business officially kicked off the morning of Sept. 11. Ann Marie Taggio, a Charlotte Tower controller, sang the national anthem. After former Central Region Vice President Bill Otto welcomed attendees to St. Louis, Carr introduced the morning's speaker, Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., - one of NATCA's strongest supporters on Capitol Hill - after showing a video featuring some of DeFazio's impassioned floor statements against ATC privatization.

"When safety was for sale, he not only said 'no,' but 'hell no,'" Carr remarked, referring to DeFazio's steadfast opposition to last year's FAA reauthorization bill that included provisions for privatizing 69 towers.

Thunderous applause and a standing ovation greeted DeFazio as he took the stage. As he

reminded them of their heroic accomplishments that tragic morning three years ago, DeFazio also railed against the White House's destructive ideology.

Following his rousing address, Carr delivered his state of the union speech and reflected on events throughout the previous two years. "The little union that could has become a model for political activism. In Washington, D.C., our most powerful tool is our voice, and your voice is loud and clear. We've aggressively employed every conceivable technique in getting our message across. We may be small but our voice roars when we engage."

Brady Allred, facility representative at Salt Lake TRACON, lauded Carr's speech. "As a first-time convention attendee, it was really great to hear the state of the union from Carr. When you're

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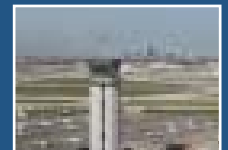
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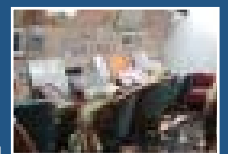
Learn about the most important happenings at the union's 10th Biennial Convention.



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entrenched in facility issues, it's nice to step back and see the scope of the organization as a whole."

Fairbanks Tower Controller Brett Lystad, another first-time conventioneer, drew inspiration from Defazio's speech. "Defazio was inspirational, and Carr's introduction and the video really helped put everything he's done for us in perspective."

After Defazio's speech, the chairmen of NATCA's national standing committees delivered reports updating conventioners on their committees.

Later that morning, Ed Wytkind, president of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department, riveted the audience with an address praising NATCA's heroism on Sept. 11, 2001, and slammed the Bush administration for its confrontational attitude toward American workers.

"Safety isn't just something that happens; it's the product of years of experience," Wytkind noted. "You can't put a price tag on that kind of professionalism. It's not about policy, it's not about dollars and cents; it's about right and wrong."

Tom Callahan, a controller at Bradley Tower in Connecticut, was glad to hear Wytkind's speech and see a broader connection to the union movement

at the convention. "The future of working Americans is becoming an issue, and Wytkind carries such passion in this debate."

In the afternoon, the convention body donated over 4,529 hours of leave to Tim Haines, a former Eastern Region vice president also known as the "Father of Reclass." Haines can no longer work traffic due to a medical disqualification and needed the leave time to qualify for full retirement.

Staffing Panel Discussion

Following that extraordinary gesture of generosity, the convention body took part in an innovative new addition to the convention format: a panel discussion focusing on staffing. Marlin introduced the panel and reminded conventioners that "everyone who has looked at the issue has criticized the agency" on staffing. Bill Black, senior vice president of public relations firm Fleishman-Hilliard, Great Lakes Region Vice President Pat Forrey and Department of Transportation Assistant Inspector General for Auditing Alexis Stefani all participated in the panel. Stan Collender, the general manager of Financial Dynamics Business Communications, rounded out the panel. Black explained



President John Carr and his wife, Jill, posing with the famous Clydesdale horses at the local party (top). Dallas TRACON Controllers Vangie Holcomb, Jeff Cooksey, and Mike "Hammer" Conely enjoy the local party (right).



NATCA's communications initiatives, Stefani discussed the FAA's need for effective attrition estimates and Forrey outlined staffing issues. "The problem will just get worse in terminal facilities as retirement looms overhead," Forrey remarked.

Scott Deeter, a controller at Savannah Tower



Attendees carefully weigh the options before them during the convention's proceedings.

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NATCA drives staffing message home to millions across United States

NATCA's efforts to educate Congress and the flying public on the seriousness of the impending staffing crisis included a highly successful summertime public awareness campaign that reached more than 31 million television viewers and radio listeners as well as over 18 million newspaper readers nationally.

By Sept. 1, NATCA members held press conferences in 16 cities to ask Congress for \$14 million to hire more controllers, generating massive attention from local newspapers, television and radio stations. Add to

that Federal Aviation Administration press conferences in 11 cities on July 21 and nine cities on Aug. 26 in which NATCA facility representatives stole the spotlight to convey their deep concerns over staffing and FAA inaction, and the campaign map includes 35 stops.

At all locations, NATCA officials outlined the fundamental difference between the union and the FAA's positions: The FAA wants to wait, the union wants to act.

"A plan is no substitute for action," President John Carr said of the agency's oft-

repeated promise that a December-delivered plan to Congress will address the issue and chart a future strategy for solving the crisis.

The issue received national television attention on CNN and NBC Nightly News in July and again on Aug. 28 with a story on ABC World News Tonight that included a familiar FAA idea for addressing the problem: Raise the mandatory retirement age of 56. But NATCA officials quickly dismissed the idea as nothing more than prolonging the inevitable.

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SARAH CARMODY



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Western Pacific Region Vice President Bob Marks gathers with members at the closing banquet (top left). New England Region Vice President Mike Blake poses with members from his region (top right). Union activists enjoy live entertainment at Grant's Farm (left). Dallas/Love Field Controller Raymond Andrae and his wife, Southwest Region Administrative Assistant Christine, laugh at the lighter moments during the closing banquet (far left).

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in Georgia, thought the panels were well-organized and helpful. "I'm impressed by the range of the panelists," he explained. "And it's nice to break up the day."

Later that night, conventioners descended on a multi-region party at the Train Wreck Saloon, which offered a chance to unwind after a long day planning the union's future. To further add to the excitement, New York TRACON's "The Henry Goode Band" and Cleveland Center's "Slant Zero" performed inside the venue.

Surprise Video Announcement

The following morning, on Sept. 12, Marlin introduced Vice Presidential Nominee Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., who addressed the convention body through a pre-recorded video announcement. "This administration wanted to rewrite the definition of national security," Marlin remarked, and said change was necessary. "We'll start by voting for people who are not trying to hurt you."

During his announcement, Edwards called NATCA members "the backbone of this [ATC] system" and pledged to address the staffing crisis if elected.

The next panel discussion featured NATCA's counsels: Christine Corcoran, legislative counsel; Eugene Freedman, policy counsel; Rita Graf, general counsel; and Marc Shapiro, labor relations counsel. Moderated by Black and modeled after the game show "Jeopardy!", the panel evaluated the impact of the elections on various issues important to NATCA. In summing up the Bush administration's political trajectory, Shapiro commented "Bush wants to extend management's rights at the expense of NATCA's rights." The group of attorneys discussed the impact of the Nov. 2 election on the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP) and the implications not only of the presidential election, but also how changes in Congress' composition can impact NATCA's agenda.

Houston TRACON Controller Keith Johnson lauded the presentation and saw it as a valuable addition to the convention schedule. "The procedure - debating amendments and resolutions - can get monotonous. This was a nice change of pace."

Local Party

As twilight approached, conventioners

flocked to Grant's Farm, a 281-acre wildlife preserve owned by Anheuser-Busch, for the local party. "The Henry Goode Band" returned to provide live entertainment, and members enjoyed barbequed meat while drinking freshly-brewed Anheuser-Busch products.

Good weather, combined with quality live entertainment and premium food, produced a truly memorable party.

"Compared to the parties at other conventions I've attended, this is undoubtedly one of the best," Houston TRACON Controller Eric Owens remarked.

Eugene Tower Facility Representative Steve Boyer echoed that sentiment. "The location is perfect - Grant's Farm is truly beautiful."

The park's staff provided NATCA members a tour of parts of the wildlife preserve en route to the party's location on the property, where members could watch exotic animals such as zebras and African cattle.

During the event, Carr thanked Anheuser-Busch for their help in making the party a success.

"The coming together of one of America's oldest unions - that of Anheuser-Busch employees - and one of its youngest is truly remarkable. This is the spirit of America," Bob Cassell, a controller at Hillsboro, Ore., Tower, remarked.

Nov. 3 and Beyond: Some Answers, Many Questions

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Controversial Debate

The convention's final day, Sept. 13, marked furious debate over a plan to change NATCA's national seniority system. The issue has ranked among NATCA's most controversial at past conventions, and this year was no exception. As Constitution Committee Chairman Bill McGowan explained, "you can't give one person seniority without taking it from someone else, so it will remain a divisive issue."

Kerry's Remarks

After preliminarily passing the issue, conventioners broke for lunch. When they returned, they watched a video announcement from Democratic Presidential Nominee Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., which was filmed on the heels of his meeting with the National Executive Board earlier that morning.

"I just want to honor every one of you for playing that remarkable role on that day," Kerry remarked in praise for controllers' heroism on Sept. 11, 2001. Further, Kerry vowed never to privatize air traffic control, and discussed his many years of experience as a private pilot.

Vote on 2008 Convention Site

After Kerry's announcement, members weighed whether to hold their 2008 convention at either Anaheim or Miami. Ultimately they chose Miami after listening to presentations on behalf of both cities.

In pitching Anaheim, Arizona TRACON Controller David Riley emphasized the California city's amenability to families.

Miami Tower Controller Jim Marinitti then took his turn at selling Miami to conventioners, emphasizing its festive atmosphere and close proximity to world-famous beaches.

Continuing the Debate

Subsequently, the convention body reopened debate on the seniority resolution, and after consuming a large portion of the afternoon session, the original resolution passed 180-109 via a standing count.

John Novak, a controller at Deer Valley Tower in Arizona, said the contentious debate showcased NATCA's strength as a union. "The passion with which people got into the debate was a little surprising but good - it shows how much they love the



Members from the Western Pacific Region gather at the convention's local party at Grant's Farm.



Great Lakes Region Vice President Pat Forrey and his wife, Maggie, relax as the closing banquet winds down.



Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin and Region X Member Yashoda Reddy enjoy the closing banquet.



NATCA President John Carr presents a Natty award to Dennis McGee for his service to the union.



Alaskan Region Vice President Rick Thompson and President Emeritus Mike McNally pose together.

union."

Closing Banquet

NATCA members donned their finest suits and dresses as they gathered one final time to bring the convention to a formal conclusion. Members watched an entertaining video compiled over the past few days, and New York TRACON controllers presented its Barry Krasner Award to Haines and delivered a moving tribute to the veteran controller. Subsequently, Carr presented several "Natty" awards to dedicated union activists and brought the convention to its finale.

Marlin, one of the Natty recipients, reflected on the convention's greatest asset: it underscores the union's commitment to

keeping its membership in charge. "Convention is what makes our union special. While we've moved on to different and constructive elements this year, we maintained the basic, unbridled democracy that truly characterizes NATCA."

NATCA Chief of Staff Adell Humphreys - another Natty recipient who spent countless hours working to make the convention a premier NATCA event - reflected upon its successful conclusion. "The members who attend take the business of the convention seriously, but they also take socializing seriously. It's a pleasure to give them a convention experience where they can have a good time after working so hard throughout the year."

Convention's exhibit hall features strong showing from business community

This year, an impressive array of vendors - 29 in total - exhibited at the convention, ranging from such staples as Raytheon to newly-minted corporate members like Floria Group.

Maria Harrison, the vice president of business development at Floria, said the decision to exhibit was an easy one. "From a company's perspective, we like to interact with not only executives, but also the users of systems as well - and NATCA events give us a great opportunity to do just that," she remarked. "As

a relatively new corporate member, it was great to get the word out that we're looking to market in this industry." Overall, Harrison was impressed by the quality of the exhibit hall and the convention. "This was a well-organized, well-supported operation," she commented.

NATCA's Marketing Specialist Katie Wittig organized the exhibit hall and was pleased with the number of exhibitors. "It's wonderful corporations want to market to our membership," she noted.



A representative from MIT's Lincoln Laboratory answers members' questions.



Want to learn more about NATCA's 10th Biennial Convention? Visit <http://viewconvention.natca.org> for videos, pictures and additional information.

NATCA's policy counsel testifies before Senate on dangers of an aging workforce

When the Senate's Special Committee on Aging held a hearing to examine federally mandated retirement ages, NATCA's Policy Counsel Eugene Freedman was ready to express the union's unwavering view on the subject.

"We face a staffing crisis in the next few years and the only solution to that crisis is to hire more controllers," Freedman said during his Sept. 14 testimony.

"Extending the retirement age is fraught with considerable problems of controller health, manpower distribution and the general safety of America's flying public."

Jagadeesh Gokhale, a senior fellow at the CATO Institute, testified that advances in technology and medical treatments allow people to work longer and remain healthy.

Freedman responded by explaining that controllers are prohibited from working when taking certain prescription as well as over-the-counter medicines.

He also emphasized that the stress of air traffic control can lead to significant medical problems, a factor that distinguishes it from other professions.

"NATCA must make sure the FAA doesn't attempt to seek a legislative band-aid solution to the controller

staffing crisis," he remarked. "At the same time, we must remain supportive of age 56 mandatory separation because the stress of this profession takes a toll on the human body and mind."

In his testimony, Freedman cited several studies to illustrate the dangers associated with extending air traffic control careers.

"Current studies concur with studies since the late 1960s warning that high stress levels, health complications and declining cognitive abilities make extending these careers extremely dangerous."

Others who testified at the hearing include: Abby Block, deputy associate director of the Office of Personnel Management; Capt. Joseph Eichelkraut, president of the Southwest Airlines Pilot Association; and Russell Rayman, executive director of the Aerospace Medical Association.



To read Freedman's written testimony, please visit www.natca.org/legislationcenter/FreedmanTestimony.msp.

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"We need to stop putting Band-Aids on the problem," Tampa Tower Facility Representative Tony Miller said. "We need to sew up the wound."

During the FAA's Aug. 26 media blitz, the agency only chose to hold events at facilities that do not have a serious staffing shortage and hastily canceled planned events in Indianapolis and Jacksonville, each home to an understaffed en route center.

But NATCA countered the FAA's message of "no problems here" by reminding travelers the National Airspace System is interconnected and the chances their flight will be handled at some point by an understaffed facility are quite high.

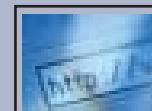
"You may fly out of a city that has an adequate staffing level, but there's no guarantee that the city you're flying into will be as lucky. The prognosis for the system as a whole is simple - fewer eyes on the skies can only lead to congestion, delays, and, yes, safety concerns," Carr stated.

Oakland Center Facility Representative Jeff Tilley, at a press conference in August, dismissed another theory from the FAA, that controllers don't really want to retire when they're eligible. Two controllers from the Fremont, Calif., center have submitted their retirement papers and 29 others are eligible to retire, Tilley said.

"They could all of a sudden tomorrow say, 'You know what? I've had enough,'" Tilley remarked.

Cincinnati Tower Facility Representative Randy Brindley echoed that sentiment during an array of interviews with local reporters in both Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. Brindley says he will reach retirement eligibility in February and he plans to leave the first chance he gets.

"I can see how the job has affected my health and I don't want to deal with that anymore," he commented. "My health and my family are going to come first."



To learn more about NATCA's staffing campaign, look at the union's extensive coverage at www.natca.org.

Low-cost carriers and changes in aviation drive up traffic at some facilities

Increased flights have transformed an already complex operation into a high intensity one,"

Midway Tower Facility Representative Ron Adamski commented on recent increases in capacity at his airport. "Midway isn't sleeping anymore."

The rise in low-cost carriers and the expansion of suburbs have led to spikes in traffic at Midway and many other once-quieter facilities across the United States.

The Low-Cost Option

Barry Wilson, the facility representative at Fort Lauderdale International Tower, said traffic at his airport is eight percent greater than this time last year. "Our traffic is reaching a point where it may really spike," he remarked. Similarly, traffic at Midway is seven percent greater than it was at the beginning of 2004.

"Usually, summer is our down time; this year, we expect our summer traffic to exceed its usual levels," Wilson noted.

It all began two years ago, when Southwest Airlines began offering service to Fort Lauderdale. Shortly thereafter, Jet Blue and Spirit joined their ranks. "It's a great arrangement for them - they don't have to compete against the big guys here," Wilson observed. "Now, the low-cost carriers are driving the boat."

The same holds true for Manchester Airport in New Hampshire, where Southwest Airlines claims around 40 percent of all traffic at the airport. Yet the number of air traffic operations at Manchester has remained consistent. "Air carrier traffic is consuming a larger

portion of our traffic count than in years past. Basically, the regional jets and Embraers have replaced the small general aviation aircraft we used to see," Manchester Tower Controller Craig Bielek explained.

Although traffic levels at Midway have also risen, Adamski observed a similar trend at his airport. "Over the past few years, Midway has steadily lost the very small general aviation traffic," he remarked. Also impacting Midway's traffic is GA overflow from the now-defunct Meigs Airport. "The combination of recent revitalization initiatives, the popularity of corporate jets and the closure of

Meigs push Midway to capacity."

Meeting Greater Capacity

Recently, the city of Chicago completed a

terminal expansion project at the airport, increasing the amount of traffic the airport could hold. Plans for constructing a new terminal and runway are currently in the works at Fort Lauderdale, and Manchester has added numerous gates in recent years.

These airports—Midway, Fort Lauderdale and Manchester—also offer passengers an alternative to nearby congested airports.

"Even though it's a longer drive to Manchester, it's a much shorter commute. It also fills a niche for people living in the greater Boston metropolitan area," Bielek offered. "Our continued growth also helps reduce delays at Boston Logan." Fort Lauderdale International, located near Interstate 95, similarly offers a convenient alternative to Miami International Airport, while Midway offers commuters a chance to avoid the long lines and congestion associated with

*"Our traffic is reaching a point where it may really spike."
-Barry Wilson*



BRENT BURCHAM

Chicago Midway Tower (above) and Manchester Tower in New Hampshire (below) have both experienced record increases in traffic in recent years.



MIKE BANEY

O'Hare. "The growth of the southern, southwestern and western suburbs in the Chicago area has brought many travelers to Midway who don't like dealing with O'Hare," Adamski noted.

In addition to creating an increased workload for controllers, the greater volume of traffic at reliever facilities have also impacted controllers in en route and approach control facilities.

System Stress

"Midway's growth has put a strain on Chicago area airspace," Adamski commented. "We are only 12 miles away from O'Hare, and our final uses

the southern portion of their airspace." This leads to delays at Midway and forces controllers to hold aircraft in complicated circular patterns near the airport.

The traffic influx at Fort Lauderdale has also taxed the airspace over southern Florida. "Because our airport has only one runway, controllers at Jacksonville Center have to keep our traffic online and line it up far out," Wilson commented. "This puts creates more work for those controllers."

The extra traffic at reliever airports, fueled largely by the expansion of low-cost carriers, is adding a dimension of challenge to controllers' work flow.



Presidential Perspective

Following is the guidance on seniority policy adopted at the union's convention in St.

Louis:

(Issued October 1, 2004)

The New Seniority Policy

Delegates to NATCA's September 2004 national convention voted to amend the seniority policy contained in NATCA By-Law A-3 as follows:

The following shall be used to determine seniority for the National Air Traffic Controllers Association:

- a. Cumulative NATCA Bargaining Unit Time;
- b. First Tie Breaker: NATCA Bargaining Unit Time;
- c. Second Tie Breaker: EOD/FAA;
- d. Third Tie Breaker: SCD;
- e. Fourth Tie Breaker: Lottery (the lottery to be determined at the local level).

For the purpose of facility release policies, seniority will be determined by facility time only as a bargaining unit member at that present facility.

"Cumulative NATCA Bargaining Unit Time" is derived by totaling all time together spent in each of the NATCA bargaining units.

"NATCA Bargaining Unit Time" is defined as the total time in a given bargaining unit represented by NATCA and as defined by the FLRA petition for representation of that unit.

Implementation of the Policy

Article IV, Section 4 of the NATCA Constitution provides

that "The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Association and shall be responsible for implementing all policies established by . . . the National Convention." Pursuant to this provision, the President held implementation of the amendment in abeyance until October 1, 2004 in order to facilitate a review and analysis of several key legal and practical issues concerning adoption and implementation of this policy.

Upon completion of a comprehensive review and analysis of the seniority policy adopted by the delegates to NATCA's September 2004 national convention and in accord with the authority vested in the President pursuant to Article IV of the NATCA Constitution, the President of NATCA has determined that the seniority policy is legal, enforceable, and shall be the seniority policy of the union.

The Legal Precedent that Permitted the Delegates to Amend the Seniority Policy at the National Convention

1. Power to Amend By-laws is Vested in Delegates to National Convention.

Article VIII of NATCA's Constitution allows for the amendment of the organization's by-laws. Section 7 of Article VIII provides the basis for the amendment of by-laws to be done at the national convention. The delegates to the September 2004 national convention acted in accordance with the provisions of Article VIII when the seniority policy was changed.

2. NATCA's Initial Adoption of a Seniority Policy at the September 1996 National Convention

Despite the language in Article VIII allowing for amendment of the union's by-laws by the delegates to the national convention, such changes have not gone unchallenged. NATCA initially adopted a national seniority policy at its September 1996 national convention. The policy was challenged by the FAA and individual bargaining unit employees who filed unfair labor practice charges with the Federal Labor Relations Authority ("FLRA"). These unfair labor practice charges claimed that NATCA breached its duty of fair representation by adopting a seniority policy, a condition of employment left to the discretion of the union pursuant to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement between the union and the FAA, at a union convention from which non-union members were excluded.

3. The Administrative Law Judge's Decision Finding a Breach of the Union's Duty of Fair Representation

An administrative law judge held a two-day hearing on these charges in May 1997 and issued a decision on July 17, 1997 in which he concluded that the union had violated its duty of fair representation by determining a condition of employment at a union convention which non-union members were not allowed to attend. In his decision, the administrative law judge likened adoption of the policy at convention to determination of a condition of employment by polling and noted that

it was established law that union members and non-union members alike must be included when a union conducts a poll to determine a condition of employment. NATCA appealed the administrative law judge's decision to the FLRA. While this appeal was pending, NATCA prepared for and held another national convention in September 1998. In an attempt to comply with the administrative law judge's decision while the appeal remained undecided, NATCA provided non-union members with an opportunity to register to speak on proposed modifications to the national seniority policy at the 1998 national convention. No non-union members availed themselves of this opportunity.

4. The FLRA's Decision Reversing the Administrative Law Judge and Finding that NATCA Acted Legally when it Adopted a Seniority Policy at the National Convention

On June 30, 1999, the FLRA issued a decision reversing the administrative law judge's decision and finding that NATCA acted legally when its union delegates adopted a national seniority policy at the 1996 national convention. NATCA and Ruckman, 55 FLRA 601 (1999). The FLRA concluded that the delegates to the 1996 convention were acting in a representative capacity for union members and non-union members on this issue and that adoption of the policy at the convention from which non-union members were excluded therefore did not constitute a breach of the duty of fair representation. The FLRA distin-

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guished the actions of the delegates at the 1996 national convention from cases where a contract leaves a condition of employment to the discretion of the union and the union takes a poll to determine that condition of employment. The FLRA reasoned that adoption of a seniority policy by delegates to a union convention who are acting in a representative capacity for both union members and non-union members is wholly distinct from polling cases.

The FLRA offered the following analysis and justification for its decision in NATCA's favor:

"[I]f the union delegates final decision-making [on a condition of employment] to a vote of employees, then both union members and non-union members must be included in the voting. . . . Here, the [Union] did not determine the seniority policy by a vote of its members. It determined its seniority policy by a vote of delegates to its national convention. These delegates operated as representatives of the employees. . . . The delegates were, thus, acting as representatives of the entire bargaining unit. . . . As long as the decision-making power is vested in union representatives generally, and those representatives properly carry out their representative functions, [other FLRA cases] do not dictate that non-members of the union be included as decision-makers."

The FLRA's 1999 decision stemming from the actions of the delegates to NATCA's 1996 national convention is now the accepted legal precedent with regard to adoption of a seniority policy by delegates to a union convention, remains unchallenged, and is cited as the leading case on this issue in the foremost reference book on federal sector labor relations.

As a result, the actions of the delegates to the September 2004 national convention with

regard to the manner of adoption of the modifications to the seniority policy complied with the applicable legal standard and are legally sound.

Questions and Answers Concerning Implementation of the NATCA Seniority Policy

Q: What determines seniority?

A: Cumulative NATCA bargaining unit time.

Q: What is cumulative time?

A: It is the total of all time spent in any of the NATCA bargaining units.

Q: What happens if there is a tie?

A: The first tie breaker is used.

Q: What is the first tie breaker?

A: The first tie breaker is determined by NATCA bargaining unit time.

Q: What is NATCA bargaining unit time?

A: It is defined as the total time in a given bargaining unit represented by NATCA as defined by the FLRA certification of that unit. The date of the certification is not relevant because NATCA bargaining unit time can include pre-certification time if the position is one subsequently included in the certification. What is relevant is the date an employee entered a unit that is now represented by NATCA.

Q: What happens if there is a second tie?

A: The second tie breaker is used.

Q: What is the second tie breaker?

A: The second tie breaker is entrance on duty (EOD)/FAA date.

Q: What is EOD date?

A: The date an employee entered on duty as an employee of the FAA for the first time.

Q: What happens if there is a third tie?

A: The third tie breaker is used.

Q: What is the third tie breaker?

A: The third tie breaker is SCD (service computation date).

Q: What is service computation date (SCD)?

A: It is a date assigned by the government that is used for benefit (leave, retirement) determinations and is based on how long a person has been in the federal service. This can include active military time or service with another federal agency. This date is found on an employee's SF-50.

Q: What if there is still a tie?

A: The fourth tie breaker is used.

Q: What is the fourth tie breaker?

A: The fourth tie breaker is a lottery to be determined at the local level.

Q: How is seniority treated for the purposes of facility release policies?

A: Seniority will be determined by facility time at their current facility and only for time they are in NATCA bargaining units.

Q: How does the new seniority

policy affect the bidding process?

A: Any bidding process based on seniority that commenced prior to October 1, 2004 should continue in accordance with the old seniority policy. In other words, if you have already begun your bidding process, you are not expected to stop, nor are you expected to rebid your schedule or leave. The effect of any such bidding should not last longer than one year (i.e., if you bid in September of 2004 for a schedule which is to run from January-December of 2005, that schedule stands in full force and effect using the old system. The next schedule or leave period bid must be bid using the new seniority system.)

For facilities which are commencing bidding on or after October 1, 2004, the following transitional implementation rules shall be administered:

1. *If you are able to create a list using locally available data, the new seniority system must be used. (For example, a small local where the numbers and types of employees are at a minimum and the list can be created, maintained and organized.)*

2. *If you are unable to create a list using locally available data you are directed to proceed with bidding using the old seniority system until such time as you have gathered the data necessary to effectuate the change, but in no case later than December 31, 2004. ALL BIDDING DONE ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2005 MUST BE DONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEW SENIORITY POLICY.*

3. *Any facility which is unable to compile the data necessary to effectuate a change to the new seniority policy must notify the NATCA National President in writing of their circumstances prior*

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to December 31, 2004. The President shall, in accordance with Article IV, Section 4 of the NATCA Constitution, make a full and final determination with respect to such facilities' bidding process.

Q: What is the starting point for counting time?

A: The starting point in time corresponds with the start date listed on an employee's SF-50 assigning him or her to a bargaining unit position. Once the employee enters the bargaining unit, all subsequent time counts toward seniority as long as the employee is employed by the FAA, in a NATCA bargaining unit position, and supported by the dates on the employee's SF-50s.

Q: What if an employee is assigned to a facility and is subsequently assigned to the academy?

A: The NATCA bargaining unit time will be the effective date the employee is assigned to a position that complies with the FLRA certification. The effective date will be the date on the employee's SF-50. Any time spent as a student at the FAA academy for initial academy training as a 2152 is expressly excluded under the FLRA certification and does not count for seniority.

Q: What if an employee attends initial training at the academy and subsequently is assigned to a bargaining unit position?

A: The NATCA bargaining unit date for seniority purposes will be the effective date assigning an employee to a bargaining unit position. (In this case, after training.)

Q: Does time at the academy ever count?

A: Any time spent as a student at the FAA academy for initial academy training as a 2152 does not count for seniority. However, time spent at the academy for other training (i.e., RTF) counts as NATCA bargaining unit seniority as long as the employee is in a NATCA bargaining unit position, supported by the date on their SF-50.

Q: Does CTI, FSS, co-op, pre-developmental, ATA or flight service position time count?

A: No, since these positions are not in any NATCA bargaining unit.

Q: How about Department of Defense ATCS Time?

A: Seniority accrued at DOD facilities certified by the FLRA with NATCA as the exclusive representative shall count as NATCA bargaining unit seniority.

Q: How about PATCO time?

A: If an individual had time in a position that would have been covered by a NATCA bargaining unit certification (had such a certification existed), that time is credited. For example, the time a fired PATCO employee was outside the bargaining unit does not count. However, all the time prior to their removal from the FAA spent in a covered bargaining unit position will count toward NATCA bargaining unit seniority.

Q: How is seniority defined when an employee voluntarily or involuntarily leaves the bargaining unit?

A: Any bargaining unit employee that voluntarily or involuntarily leaves the bargaining unit shall stop accruing seniority. Seniority will again start accruing once the employee returns

to a NATCA bargaining unit. (Note: Employees that serve in a position for NATCA, i.e., liaisons/technical representatives, remain in the bargaining unit and continue to accrue seniority.)

Q: How is seniority defined when an employee leaves the bargaining unit voluntarily or involuntarily as a supervisor?

A: An employee who voluntarily or involuntarily leaves the bargaining unit will not accrue seniority while serving as a supervisor or in any management position.

Q: How is seniority affected by disciplinary action?

A: In most cases, disciplinary action does not change the bargaining unit status of an employee. However, in the event that an employee is disciplined in a manner that removes an employee from the bargaining unit or reduces the employee's seniority, and the disciplinary case is successfully appealed, seniority will be restored consistent with the arbitrator or other appropriate authority's decision. In the event of an unsuccessful appeal, no seniority would be restored.

Q: How should we collect data for seniority purposes?

A: Each individual should request a copy of their respective OPF (Official Personnel File) and instruct the Agency to deliver the information to the local facility representative. A sample request form is attached. Any employee who objects to having the agency produce his or her OPF to the facility representative may request his or her records and provide copies of the SF-50s to the facility representative for calculation of their seniority

date. (Note: FAA maintains employee data in several different files and/or formats; e.g., training folder, IPPA report, CPMIS data, Official Personnel Folder, SF-50, etc.) In the event that there is a discrepancy between any of the dates needed for computing seniority, the employee's SF-50 will be the governing document.

Q: How do I know what the agency is providing me is accurate?

A: That will be up to each employee to determine from their own personal records.

Q: What if an employee refuses to provide data for computing seniority?

A: The employee will be considered with no seniority because there is no information to utilize and will be placed at the bottom of the seniority list.

Q: What is the national office doing to get this information?

A: The national office is requesting information from the FAA and will use all means legally available to obtain the employee information necessary to comply with By-Law A-5, which refers to "Seniority Policy Administration."

Q: Can implementation of this policy be postponed pending implementation of By-Law A-5?

A: No. The new seniority policy is legal, enforceable and shall be the seniority policy of the union, effective immediately and in accordance with the terms of this announcement.

Q: Who should I contact if I have any questions about the new seniority policy?

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A: Most seniority questions can be answered by your facility representative, your unit represen-

tative, or your NATCA local president. In the event you have further questions, you are encouraged to communicate with your Regional Vice President, the NATCA Executive

Vice President, or the NATCA President. The purpose of this guidance is not to confuse but to clarify. Your understanding of this policy and its application is essential for successful imple-

mentation in the field.



SAMPLE INFORMATION REQUEST

Date

Air Traffic Manager
ABC Tower
Hometown, USA 12345

Re: Information Request

Dear Mr./Ms. Manager:

In order to properly determine seniority for the bargaining unit members at XYZ Facility, the union requires certain information. Please consider this request in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 7114 (b) (4). This information is necessary to comply with NATCA's seniority policy. This information should include, but not be limited to:

1. My Record of Employment History depicted on the Integrated Personnel and Payroll System (IPPS);
2. My Enter on Duty Date (EOD) and Service Computation Date (SCD); and
3. My SF-50s.

I request that this information be delivered to my union representative within twenty days of the receipt of this letter. If all the information requested cannot be delivered within the specified time frame, I request that whatever is available be delivered within that time frame and the rest be delivered as soon as it is available.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me or my union representative at your earliest convenience,

Sincerely,

Ski the Rockies

Where: Breckenridge, Keystone and Vail Resorts in Colorado

When: Feb. 5 - 12, 2005

Cost: \$770*

Package Price Includes:

- ♦ 7 Nights Deluxe Hotel or Condo Accommodations
- ♦ Opening Night Dinner Reception
- ♦ Four Days Lift Tickets (Breckenridge, Keystone & Vail)
- ♦ Super Bowl Party
- ♦ Après-Ski Party
- ♦ Wind-Up Reception
- ♦ Taxes and Gratuity

**Rate quoted is approximate and is based on per person with two people sharing a single hotel room.*

Ski trip is open to NATCA members, as well as associate and retired members and their guests.

NATCA extends an invitation to members of the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association (CATCA) and the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA).

Information and registration package is available via e-mail or postal mail. Send an e-mail with your name, address, phone and facility/airline name to:

Milt Scherotter
c/o National Air Traffic Controllers Association Southwest
Region Office
1001 W. Eules Blvd Suite 215
Eules, TX 76040

Phone: 303/342-1235, ext. 2042
FAX: 817/354-8589
E-mail: natcaski@att.net

NATCA maintains strong presence at annual air show in Oshkosh

Driving north up Highway 41 in central Wisconsin in late July, it's easy to find your way to the sights and sounds of the Experimental Aircraft Association's annual AirVenture fly-in - they overwhelm the senses. Just a glance to the sky reveals dozens of aircraft, buzzing around Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh like bees around a hive.

Meeting the enormous challenge of choreographing the dance of so many planes - 10,000 was the official count - again was a team of 64 controllers from around the Great Lakes Region, proudly donning their familiar pink shirts for a heavy dose of adrenaline, excitement and fulfillment during the 52nd annual festival, which this year drew 700,000 visitors and featured the theme "Launching the Next Century of Flight."

Despite the frenetic pace of the work, which borders at times on harrowing, it's a labor of love for the controllers; an addiction that brings many of them back year after year.

"I love it!" exclaimed Palwaukee, Ill., Tower Controller

Peter Sutryk, who worked AirVenture for the fourth year in a row. He's also a flight instructor. "It's amazing how it all works. So many airplanes. But it works smoothly with all of my fellow controllers looking out for each other."

The key, added Sutryk, is "your head has to be on a swivel at all times."

That was definitely the case on a particularly busy evening midway through the week, when the airport re-opened to traffic following the daily air show featuring professional stunt fliers. When the runways are declared open, a mad dash to fly before nightfall begins, but it results in what controllers call a "gaggle" of airplanes that swarm at the staggering rate of 135 an hour with only the tiniest margin of air between them.

"It certainly gets busy around here but (that) night was the busiest anybody had ever seen it," remarked Fort Wayne, Ind., Tower Controller Mike Ramsey, in his fifth year working the event. "It was an amazing day."

That's saying something, considering that Wittman Regional Airport, during AirVenture,



Atlanta Center Controller Don Brown (left) and National Safety Committee Chairman Wes Stoops (right) helped man NATCA's booth at the Oshkosh show.

becomes the world's busiest - surpassing even Chicago O'Hare - with more than 2,500 takeoffs and landings on some days.

Not all of the controllers work inside Wittman Tower. Some bravely don bright orange vests and wield orange batons while standing on the taxiway, directing aircraft to and from the runways and sequencing the departures. And others, like Flint, Mich., Bishop Tower Controller Jill Ritchey, work from a temporary approach control facility seven miles from the airport.

The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel included Ritchey in a

feature story about the AirVenture controllers. Pilots heard Ritchey first as they arrived at AirVenture and the newspaper reported her transmissions.

"Welcome to Oshkosh. Everybody find someone to follow in. If you cannot maintain a quarter-mile space, break off, go back to Ripon and start over again," said Ritchey, over the radio, working her third Oshkosh event. EAA AirVenture 2005 is scheduled for July 26 - Aug. 1, although the finalized dates and theme will be announced later this year, EAA officials said.

Union members with small businesses delicately balance work and family

While he loves his job, Washington Center Controller Charlie Bentley also has another passion. "I really enjoy the outdoors and working with cattle - and it's great to have something to do in the afternoon after work," Bentley reflected. His enthusiasm for cattle led him to buying a farm near Winchester, Va., and starting his own small business, Robin's Nest Farm - where Bentley sells hay and provides animal husbandry services.

Home on the Range

Bentley has about 70 head of cattle himself, and his experience raising and caring for the herd allowed him to hone his knowledge of bovines and piqued his inter-

est in genetically improving cattle through artificial insemination.

"My business is really about getting better genetics into people's herds," Bentley explained. "I first became interested in the genetics of cows when I had to buy a bull for the first time. I began learning everything involved in selecting one - breed, size and temperament - and found it's really hard to know what to do."

"As I continued my research, I talked to bigger farmers to find out how they conducted their breeding. Basically, you can determine everything about the offspring of inseminated cows from the amount of meat they'll produce to the number of calves they'll have in their lifetime," Bentley com-

mented.

And he decided to impart his knowledge of cattle to local farmers, whose livelihood depend on maintaining a strong stock of cows and bulls. "Good genetics are sometimes all small family farms can rely on to make ends meet," Bentley remarked. When people purchase bulls for breeding purposes, they often have difficulty selecting a bull which would produce premium calves. Bentley's services, however, provide small farmers the opportunity to ensure calves of good stock when they breed their cows. "It's better than going to a livestock market, buying a bull, and having no idea what the genetic base and heritage of that bull

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Training Department moves courses to national office, forms 2005 schedule

Starting January 2005, NATCA's Training Department will begin holding basic facility representative and local union officer (formerly secretary/treasurer) training at the national office in

Washington, D.C.

"We'll have all the resources of NATCA

headquarters at our disposal, which is a great asset for us,"

Training Director Greg Llafet remarked.

The facility representative course will take place on the first floor of the Krasner Building in the McNally Conference Room, while the local union officer class will commence in the large confer-

ence room on the 5th floor of the national office.

Currently, the national office is upgrading both rooms with state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment to accommodate

online and PowerPoint presentations, helping ensure members will have access to the most advanced teaching procedures.

"We are excited that members are coming to Washington, D.C., to meet in their own building. We look forward to bringing more members in touch with national office staff than ever before," NATCA Chief of Staff Adell Humphreys remarked.

"We are excited that members are coming to Washington, D.C., to meet in their own building."

-Adell Humphreys

2005 SCHEDULE FOR NATCA TRAINING DEPARTMENT COURSES

Facility Representative Training	Local Union Officer (formerly Secretary/Treasurer) Training
Jan. 9 - 14	Jan. 9 - 12
Feb. 6 - 11	Feb. 6 - 9
March 6 - 11	March 6 - 9
April 10 - 15	April 10 - 13
May 8 - 13	May 8 - 11
June 5 - 10	June 5 - 8
Sept. 11 - 16	Sept. 11 - 14
Oct. 2 - 7	Oct. 2 - 5



Want to learn more about NATCA's training courses? Visit the members-only section of www.natca.org and click on "Training Center."

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is," Bentley added.

"Generally, only big farms take advantage of insemination, and I'm trying to bring it to the little guys too,"

Bentley remarked.

"With this help, the smaller farmers may have just enough of an edge to keep their farm running," Bentley

explained. And that, he said, makes his work worthwhile.

A Heavy Responsibility

Mike Willman, a controller at Chicago Center, is also president of Riseling Motor Express, a Montgomery, Ill.-based trucking company. But it's not a position description he flashes around often. "Really we don't have titles there. It's like an extended family," Willman remarked.

Riseling is a local for-hire trucking company which provides freight shipping services to customers in the Chicago metropolitan area and Iowa, Wisconsin and Indiana. "We ship finished goods and raw materials for our customers," Willman commented.

Willman and his sister run the company's operations and manage its 25 employees. Their father founded Riseling in 1977, when Willman was nine years old. "It's something I grew up with," he explained. Willman began working at the company part time in 1989; and nine years later, his parents suddenly passed away, and he inherited the business.

Despite the demands of working traffic at a busy en route traffic facility, Willman stepped up to the challenge. "I just can't imagine my life without

Riseling," he observed. "Our clients and employees depend on this little business."

After Willman and his sister took the reins, they planned out a schedule where he could run the business in his free time. "We've always found a way to make it work," he remarked.

And the high level of competition in the freight shipment industry keeps him on his toes. "We, in turn, have to set the bar high." In addition, juggling the company's finances is a daunting task. "Our invoices run over a 30-day period, and dealing with people who don't fulfill their obligations is difficult and can be stressful. My sister and I have had to take out loans for the business because of this," Willman noted.

While the time constraints fluctuate, running the business is nonetheless a 24-hour job. "When you aren't physically there, it's always on your mind," Willman reflected. He can undertake much of his busi-

"With this help, the smaller farmers may have just enough of an edge to keep their farms running."

-Charlie Bentley



COURTESY CHARLIE BENTLEY
Washington Center Controller Charlie Bentley poses with his family and Socks, one of his cows.

ness via phone, and typically spends 15-20 hours per week at the Riseling office.

Although running a shipping company is draining, Willman maintains a healthy balance between work and family. "I never sacrifice time with my wife and children, though I don't get much sleep," he said.

Carrying on the family legacy, however, makes the effort worthwhile. "Not many family businesses survive beyond three generations. We also contribute something to the local economy, and that's really fulfilling."

Boston TRACON controller's heroism averts disaster over New Hampshire

Boston TRACON Controller Ken Hopf's Aug. 9 day shift began like any other. However, as 5 p.m. rolled around, the atmosphere at the TRACON changed dramatically.

"I was posting a strip at the time," Hopf reflected. Then, a controller handed him a headset. "The pilot is incapacitated and they need help landing the plane," Hopf recalled his coworker remarking to him.

Thirty-year-old Jennifer Truman made the distress call to Boston TRACON, and had just climbed in the pilot seat of a Piper Malibu after both her parents had become incapacitated from medical conditions reported to have been stroke-related complications.

"She told me she had flown a Piper Warrior before, and I assured her it is very similar to a Malibu," Hopf explained in his

relaxed New England accent.

"I'm a flight instructor, so first I wanted to make sure she could understand and receive instructions," Hopf remarked. He said Truman confirmed she had received some flight instruction and "I felt relieved. I asked her if she could fly a heading, read it out to her, and she flew it."

"I didn't have to explain the basics but did have to coach her through the process."

Hopf said he felt reassured after seeing she understood his instructions, which was overcoming a major hurdle toward getting her back on the ground. But he still needed to figure out where to have her land. "During the conversation, she mentioned that she'd flown out of Laconia, N.H., and she had some familiarity with the airport there, so we decided to have her fly to Laconia," Hopf reflected.

"I then asked her to identify the landing gear and we deter-

mined it hadn't been retracted yet," he explained, which confirmed it was in position and ready for her when she landed.

"She said her mother was flopping around like a rag doll, and that was really disturbing," Hopf remembered. "We began to think carbon monoxide poisoning might have debilitated her parents - the plane had plenty of fuel and more than one person was incapacitated."

"I thought at first I might better explain the landing gear, but when she told me her mother was incapacitated also, I turned her directly to the airport."

Hopf then asked her to open a vent and "she'd calmed down but you could still sense her excitement."

As she approached Laconia Airport, she began to descend in preparation for landing, "She did a nice job, and I explained the importance of maintaining control as she landed, so we could

guarantee the paramedics could easily enter," Hopf remarked.

"She lined the plane up with the center line and guided it right in," Hopf reflected. However, as she came closer to the runway, she slipped out of radar range; however, "since she called in on the ground-based frequency, we kept her on."

Truman landed the plane without a hitch, and paramedics rushed her parents, who subsequently passed away several days later, to the hospital.

A number of factors contributed to the safe ending, Hopf recalled. "It was a combination of a lot of things. I'm a controller with 22 years of experience. Also, my work as a flight instructor - combined with Truman's ability to receive flight instruction - made all the difference."

"In my years of controlling, nothing like this has ever happened to me before."

NATCA's retired members keep themselves busy after ATC

After working strenuously to keep the flying public safe for decades, many retired NATCA members are enjoying a wonderful change of pace: the retired life.

Roger Baim is a retired NATCA member who spent his career as an electrical engineer in the Great Lakes region. Though he loved his work, Baim is equally enthusiastic about his retirement.

"I love it," he remarked. "It's very relaxing. I do a great deal of traveling and read all the time."

Baim did not always have it so easy. As an electrical engineer, he had a hand in some of the country's most modern facilities. These include new towers at O'Hare and Chicago Midway, Pontiac Tower in Michigan, Columbus Tower in Ohio and more.

"I just loved the work I did, but I was also ready for retirement," Baim said. "I still keep in touch with other retirees from the Great Lakes. We get together at a local mall on occasion and reminisce about old

times."

Lisa Eidson, a retired member who formerly worked traffic at Seattle Tacoma Tower in Washington State, has used her retirement to achieve her goal of obtaining a college degree.

"NATCA offered a program for members who wanted to complete their bachelor's degree and I jumped at it," Eidson remarked. "It was something that had gone unfinished my whole life and this allowed me to go back and finish."

Eidson is not one for just sitting around; the former controller is taking an active approach to her retirement.

"I'm building a house on the east side of the mountains near Seattle," she said. "We have about four acres and I'm acting as the general contractor. We're building it from scratch."

But does she miss the job?

"I do miss talking to airplanes, but I don't miss the shift work," she commented. "You really don't know how much it affects

you until you stop. You don't look tired and beat up all the time."

Larry Buggie, a retired member who previously worked at Oakland Center, has a different kind of schedule. He spends his days caring for his wife who suffers from Alzheimer's disease.

"I wanted to work a few more years, but I had to be here to help my wife along," Buggie explained. "I do a lot of cooking and cleaning around the house."

Buggie misses many things about his former profession.

"I can tell you exactly how many days it's been since I left," he said. "I miss the job and the people, but I don't miss the time it takes out of your life."

The air traffic control veteran makes sure to keep occupied during his retirement, however.

"I recently bought a '74 Volkswagen Superbug which I'm in the process of restoring," Buggie remarked. "It definitely keeps my hands busy."

Birds sometimes create major problems for air traffic controllers

Air traffic controllers specialize in maintaining control in any situation, but when birds interfere with aircraft they are working, NATCA members go into high gear to preserve safety and get passengers on the ground safely.

Sept. 17 was proceeding normally at Chicago O'Hare Tower, but the steady infusion was halted when a flock of geese interfered with an American Airlines flight, pilots deduced that at least one of the geese was "ingested" by the engine and declared an emergency. NATCA members took charge to ensure a smooth arrival for the plane as it returned to the airport.

"We stopped arrivals, stopped departures, stopped everything," NATCA's Chicago TRACON Facility Representative Ray Gibbons said. "Our response is as quick as it gets."

But O'Hare is not the only airport affected by birds. Controllers across the country are familiar with these incidents and they vary widely in their severity. To address this problem, *The Chicago Tribune* reported

Dallas/Fort Worth Airport is testing an experimental radar system called "Birdar," which is designed to detect birds. Ultimately, researchers hope this system will lead to technological advances capable of tracking flocks of birds.

Some bird incidents have a lighter side that guarantees the story will spread to facilities across the country.

"In one famous incident, an eagle dropped a big salmon on a departing Alaska Airlines 737, yielding the fish to a 'bigger bird,'" Alcorn explained. "Pilots thought they struck the eagle but in fact they had the fish jammed in their front slats."

Seattle Center Controller Paul Cox recalled a nasty bird strike during migratory season that tested controllers due to communication difficulties.

"I was working an A-6 (fighter/bomber) aircraft traveling between 300 and 400 mph when a flock of ducks smashed into it, bashing in the windshield and knocking the antenna clean off," Cox said. "Without the



Canada geese travel in large flocks and sometimes create a problem for controllers.

antenna, the pilot could hear us, but we couldn't hear him. Fortunately, his wingman was able to relay transmissions and keep us informed."

While controllers have procedures to follow in these situations, Cox believes professionalism is the key to a successful resolution.

"It's more a matter of keeping calm, using your head and getting the pilot to relax so you can get him on the ground as quickly and safely as possible," he remarked.

NATCA members pitch in to help brothers and sisters overcome hurricanes

NATCA members know teamwork is essential to keeping the skies safe, but when disaster struck in Florida after four hurricanes tore through the state, controllers banded together to help each other overcome hard times.

"Our members are constantly doing everything they can to care for their brothers and sisters in need," NATCA Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin said. "Even as the next storm was baring down on their own homes, our members were sending help to those who needed it most. Those in this union continually put the needs of others before their own."

When Hurricane Ivan barreled through Pensacola, it hit several NATCA members and their families hard, destroying some homes and severely damaging others. But their fellow members arrived to answer their call for help.

"The devastation here is incredible, yet so is the unbelievable response from the grass-

roots to the top," Cliff Murdock, NATCA's facility representative at Pensacola TRACON, remarked.

"The amount of caring, concerns and resources from NATCA members just astounded me."

"Controllers at Mobile/Bates Field Tower and Gulfport Tower hauled 20 generators, 25 five-gallon gas cans, extension cords, water and more to my house the day after the storm," Murdock said. "We got generators out to at least 15 NATCA families by early the next day. Those generators saved not only thousands of dollars in food, but averted much hardship for many people."

NATCA's Southern Region Vice President Andy Cantwell drove to Pensacola from Miami Tower after hearing stories of members in need of assistance.

"We brought tarps for people's roofs to at least keep the rain out," he explained.

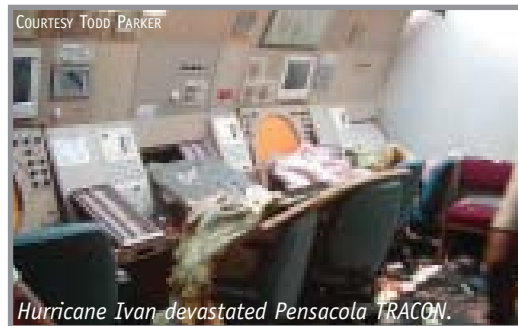
"Our members are incredibly self-sufficient and prepared for this disaster, something that can

make all the difference in the world," he said.

Pensacola TRACON also suffered significant damage during the storm. Part of the roof was ripped off the facility and radar equipment took a pounding as controllers riding out the storm looked on in horror. No controllers were injured. After much work, the TRACON became operational on Oct. 6.

With Florida devastated by hurricanes this season, NATCA has not forgotten the needs of members who suffered damage from Hurricanes Charlie, Frances and Jeanne. The union has set up a fund to help with relief efforts from all three storms.

"Ivan definitely wreaked havoc on our members, but we can't forget those who lost houses or suffered damage from Charlie, Frances and Jeanne," Dale Wright, NATCA's finance commit-



tee chair, said, adding that his is impressed with the amount members have contributed.

In addition, controllers at Monroe Tower in Louisiana recently organized a bake sale in their airport's terminal, raising \$400 for hurricane relief efforts from goods baked in their own ovens.

Those interested in helping with relief efforts can send a check made out to "NATCA Disaster Relief Fund" to NATCA's national office. The address is:

NATCA (ATTN: Dale Wright)
1325 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Combined en route/approach control facilities provide controllers variety

Honolulu is the most isolated place in the world," Honolulu Consolidated Control Facility (CCF) Controller Charles Zapf reflected in discussing his facility's idyllic location. "And I love it here - it's unlike anywhere else in the world."

The Federal Aviation Administration's three Center/Radar Approach Control (CERAP) and CCF facilities combine en route and approach control services, creating a work atmosphere unlike any other within the agency. The other two, located in Guam and San Juan, Puerto Rico, also offer unique working atmospheres in exotic locations.

Working Two Options

The workload variety Honolulu CCF offers its controllers is one of the facility's major selling points. "Every controller here works two options - any combination of approach, center and tower," Zapf explained. Because the CCF is located on the same grounds as the tower, controllers have the benefit of working in all three ATC environments. "We are able to learn the different rules applying to each option, improving the interaction among controllers and overall efficiency. You can see the big picture," Zapf commented.

Controllers at Guam CERAP also work two options - en route and approach control. "We're a smaller facility, so we have to learn both," Mike Franc, the facility representative

at the CERAP, noted.

San Juan CERAP controllers work a facility literally split down the middle. "On one side of the room, controllers perform en route functions; they work terminal approach on the other," San Juan CERAP Facility Representative Eddie Lopez remarked.

Miles of Ocean

Controllers at Honolulu CCF guide traffic over an area 550 miles north and south, and 800 miles east and west of the facility. "I like seeing all different kinds of traffic," Zapf noted. While much of the traffic controllers at Honolulu see consists of air carriers flying to and from Hawaii, they also work with a number of foreign pilots - primarily Asian and Canadian - which adds an exciting dimension to the daily routine.

At San Juan CERAP, where controllers hand off aircraft to Caribbean and South American countries, language differences add a level of complexity to their operation. "We routinely hand off planes to Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Barbados, where we sometimes run into a language barrier," Lopez remarked. Lopez's facility covers over 600 miles of airspace north and south, and 450 east and west. Much of it consists of ocean.

Guam CERAP controllers must also contend with occasional language difficulties. "We work with a lot of Korean and Japanese

aircraft. Sometimes the language problem is hard to overcome - you lose that common denominator," Franc reflected. The facility controls traffic within a 250-mile radius.

Working in the Blind

Because radar range extends only 172 miles into San Juan CERAP airspace, many of the operations controllers perform are non-radar in nature. "We have to perform non-radar operations on about 60 percent of our en route traffic," Lopez explained.

To conduct these highly complex operations, controllers must make calls into facilities to receive the coordinates of aircraft in their airspace, then mark specific points on a map and relay those to the pilots. "For example, we'll call a Venezuelan controller to receive coordinates and mark them on a map with a grease pen. The non-radar element adds juice to our daily workload," Lopez opined.

NATCA members at Guam CERAP also contend with non-radar operations. "We have two non-radar airports north of us. They are also non-directional beacons (NDBs), which aren't accurate at all. At nearby Saipan Island, we have to basically follow a 'one in, one out' pattern with the aircraft we send into the facility," Franc remarked.

Working at CERAP facilities provides controllers a remarkable experience unlike any other within U.S. air traffic control.

Retirement discussion panel helps answer lingering questions for NATCA members

On Sept. 10, Craig Reinhard, president of NATCA's retirement consultant firm, The IDPM Group, led morning and afternoon seminars for the membership at the Millennium Hotel.

The seminars, which consisted of a relaxed presentation style encouraging members to ask questions, outlined basic tenets of the Civilian Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), the two retirement plans covering NATCA members, and explained how NATCA members can best take advantage of what their retirement packages offer.

Tony Smith, a controller at Washington Center, attended the convention to participate in the retirement seminars.

"Reinhard brought up many good points. He provided many small details you would-

n't normally get from the Federal Aviation Administration regional office," Smith remarked. "The seminar was excellent. I will promote IDPM at my local when I get back."

Reinhard touched on issues such as how social security is taxed under CSRS and FERS, as well as the survivor benefits and health insurance plans each system offers to recipients.

In addition, Reinhard highlighted the nuances of how to apply sick and annual leave to retirement.

"It's a wonderful opportunity and a nice side benefit for people like me - those of us retiring within the next five years," Indianapolis Tower Controller Mike Nodley remarked.

Huntington, W.Va., Tower Controller David Nicolich lauded the seminar's



Craig Reinhard, president of IDPM, informed members about various retirement options.

informative value and Reinhard's relaxed style. "It gives you a strong foundation on which to build. Reinhard uses a common-sense approach and seems very knowledgeable when asked a question," he added.

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