



AIRPORT BEACON

A publication of  Muskegon County Airport

Fourth Quarter
1
2006

From the Airport Manager

Submitted by Marty Piette

I hope everyone had a chance to get to the Muskegon Air Fair this year. As you may know, there were a lot of changes this year with respect to new management, vendors, air acts, etc. There certainly was plenty of publicity surrounding this year's show. This year's Air Fair was indeed different, and I had a great time. So did my wife and kids. The weather was perfect, which was a blessing given the late July show dates. The huge warbird display was amazing. The acts were refreshing. And there can not be enough said of the commitment of those that are involved in putting on the show. I hope you had a chance to go.



And with this year's Air Show over, it is time to look forward to autumn, and of course, snow. We have been lucky with less-than-average snowfall the last few years, and hopefully, we will be equally fortunate this year. I want to thank in advance the men and women of the Airport staff that keep the runways open and terminal sidewalks clean. It is not an easy job, but your dedication is appreciated, not only by me, but the tens of thousands of people that come through our Airport each year.

United Way

Submitted by Pam Homan

The 2006 Muskegon County Employees United Way Campaign got underway on September 22 and runs through October 20. The goal for Muskegon County is to beat last year's total of \$104,000.

Airport employees have consistently made generous pledges over the years to this very worthy organization. Candy and ice cream are available for sale with the proceeds being given to the United Way.

We have also received donations from Executive Air Transport, The Brownstone Restaurant, and Prestige Landscape that will be used for the County's end of campaign raffle and online auction prizes.

Thank you to all of you who support the United Way of the Lakeshore. If you would like more information about United Way, please go to www.unitedwaylakeshore.org.



Business Profile

Submitted by Marty Piette

United States Coast Guard

With the tenth season of U.S. Coast Guard search and rescue operations coming to a close, it seemed appropriate to highlight them in this quarter's Business Profile Section. The U.S. Coast Guard has been operating from the Muskegon County Airport since 1997, providing emergency protection for commercial ships and recreational boaters on Lake Michigan, and contributing to the security of several nuclear power plants in the region. The U.S. Coast Guard operates in Muskegon during the busiest summer months between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The U.S. Coast Guard recently signed a five-year lease extension when they moved into their new hangar facility, guaranteeing their presence in Muskegon County until at least 2011.

Editors Note: On behalf of the County, thank you to the U.S. Coast Guard for their daily commitment to protecting the citizens and visitors of West Michigan. Hopefully, when people see your bright orange helicopter overhead, they remember your mission and appreciate the fact that you are based here in Muskegon, saving lives while protecting our country.



USCG Facility Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
August 15, 2006



AIRPORT BEACON

Fourth Quarter

2

2006

MKG History

Taken from "Muskegon County Airport a History" compiled by Mildred M. Christiansen, April 1976

Mildred Christiansen began working at the airport in 1951. She shared a tiny office with the Airport Manager on the second floor of the old terminal building using borrowed furniture. She was secretary and bookkeeper for the manager and the Airport Committee, along with many other responsibilities.

Mrs. Christensen learned to fly in Tulsa, OK in 1942 while active in the Civil Air Patrol, completed six months of Woman Pilot Training as a WASP at Avenger Field, Sweetwater, TX where she became a rated Air Force pilot on October 9, 1943. She spent the next fourteen months ferrying new aircraft (solo) from factory to airfields all over the United States, and transporting Air Force personnel, accruing 900 hours flying time and 200 hours instrument time in a period of two years. She completed instrument flying school at Love Field, Dallas, TX and officers' training school at AFTAC, Orlando, FL. Mrs. Christensen held a single and multi-engine commercial pilot license and had logged time in over 25 kinds of aircraft, including DC-3, B-26, and B-24.



Many politician candidates have come and gone through Muskegon County Airport. Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy was at the airport campaigning in 1960, and again as President in 1962. Other politicians at the airport included Gov. Spiro Agnew in November 1968; Barry Goldwater in November 1972; Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace in May 1972; also John Glenn in 1973. House of Representatives Republican leader, Gerald Ford visited here several times. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands landed at Muskegon County Airport on April 10, 1965. Jimmy Carter visited Muskegon in 1975 as guests of local Democrats. When Major Alfred Worden circled the moon (Apollo 15 Mission), his brother, Jim Worden, was a pilot employed by Executive Air Transport. George H.W. Bush came to Muskegon during the early 1980s as Vice President and Dan Quayle was here about 2000. Of course, the most recent visit was from George W. Bush in 2004 as President.



September 20, 2006



It's coming ...



1978 Airport Terminal



1978 Airport Terminal
Baggage Claim



1985 Airport Terminal

(Photos Courtesy of Ken Price)

Fun Tidbits

- The first jet airplane to land at Muskegon was an Air Force training plane flown by Captain Richard L. Bugai on March 10, 1952.
- The first propjet service was initiated at Muskegon County Airport by North Central Airlines in 1967.
- In the late fifties, a tri-county airport to serve Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa Counties was proposed in the Coopersville/Marne area. Kent County eventually rejected the proposal and moved ahead with plans for development of the present Gerald R. Ford International Airport.
- Muskegon County Airport has a snowblower that will blow 4,000 tons of snow an hour.
- Muskegon County Airport's main runway systems are 11 inches thick.

Employee Spotlight



If you hear laughter, you are probably near our Station Manager for Northwest Airlines, Deb Nielsen. Passengers love it and look forward to seeing her, especially on those early morning flights.

Deb has been with Northwest in Muskegon for 13 years, 8 of which she has been the manager. Prior to her airline career, she was with Howmet. She is a graduate of Muskegon Catholic Central and Baker College.

Always friendly, she caught the eye of Jim, a Mesaba pilot who flew into Muskegon. Not long after, Jim and Deb were married. Four children and a new granddaughter round out her family. Eric, Deb's oldest son is currently stationed in Iraq. Amy, also in the military, is stationed in Bremerton, Washington. Sarah and her husband Shawn live in Muskegon and just made Deb a new Grandma with the arrival of Anastacia Jeanne. Ricky is a senior at Mona Shores. Deb keeps joking about retirement, but we all know, she's much too young for that!

Runway 14/32 Shift and Extension

Submitted by Marty Piette

Anyone that travels Grand Haven Road can easily see the progress of Phase I of the runway shift and extension project, which is in full swing and on schedule. As of this writing, all clearing has been completed, and paving has begun on what will become Grand Haven Road. The newly relocated Grand Haven Road should be open for traffic in early October. In the meantime, crews are working on grading and paving the interior perimeter road. The perimeter road will be used by airfield vehicles to get from one side of the airport to another without having to cross active runways and taxiways. The completion date of Phase I is October 31. Phase II will begin next year in late Spring, which will involve the extension of the runway and construction of a parallel taxiway. At this point, it looks as though there will be more construction work to do in 2008, specifically more taxiway work and relocation of the fire station. Fiscal year 2007 funding from the Federal Government is not going to be as much as hoped, so some things will probably have to be deferred until the following year. As is always the case, we never know exactly how much money is available until it's in the bank, so we plan for the worst and hope for the best. The bottom line is that safety is paramount, and we will be in compliance with Federal Runway Safety Area requirements. As always, if you are interested in more information or a diagram of the work, please stop by Airport Administration during business hours.



AIRPORT BEACON

Fourth Quarter

3

2006

Newsletter WOWs

Below are a couple excerpts from emails sent to the Airport.

"...Muskegon is just plain easier and the restaurant is one of the best at any airport."

Doug Platt

"People at the security gate were very helpful and friendly. Explained well, Baggage checkers were helpful and friendly too!"

Christie Faltinowski

Congratulations!

Kevin Straley from Midwest was told that Muskegon has received the highest amount of compliments of any Express Station and of three-quarters of all stations on the Midwest system! They also received the least amount of complaints of any station.

Conde Nast Traveler Gives Midwest Top Rating

Midwest Airlines placed first in the single-class domestic airline category for *Conde Nast Traveler* magazine's 9th annual Business Travel Awards. Midwest also earned the highest scores for Seat Comfort/Leg Room, Food, and Cabin Service. In their October issue, Conde Nast editors said: "As for single-class airlines, Midwest narrowly edges out JetBlue, knocking that carrier to No. 2 after two years in the top spot."

Employee of the Month

August Paula Lamb, Mesaba
September..... Aimee Kooi, Brownstone

Airport Contact Info

Airport Administration

231-798-4596, x-220

Airport Maintenance

231-798-4596, x-227

Air Travel Marketing Consultant

231-798-4596, x-262

Northwest Airlines

800-225-2525

Midwest Airlines

800-452-2022

AIRPORT BEACON

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Fourth Quarter

4

2006

Transportation Committee

Bill Gill, Chair
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Charles L. Buzzell
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Marvin R. Engle
Louis A. McMurray
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Questions, Comments, Suggestions?

Submit to:

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Interesting Facts

Misconceptions

Grand Rapids can land aircraft in poorer weather conditions.

Fact: Muskegon and Grand Rapids have identical precision navigation systems, radar and tower operations. Airline landing minimums at Muskegon and Grand Rapids are both the Federal Aviation Administration's U.S. standard of 1/2 mile visibility and 200 foot cloud ceiling height.

Traveling east to Detroit to go west takes significantly more time.

Fact: Scheduled flight times to western destinations via Detroit is similar to flight times via Chicago. GRAND RAPIDS IS ONE HOUR AWAY ON EASTBOUND I96.

Airport determines level of airline service and fares.

Fact: The community profile and support by travelers determines the level of airline service, fares and size of aircraft airlines will commit. In other words, usage drives airline services.



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