Opinion

Built-in air peril

Last year's strike by air traffic controllers helped to focus public attention on the vital role controllers play in air safety. The three airline crashes of recent weeks ought to stir interest in another aspect of aviation safety — the lack of aircraft design features that could better protect passengers.

Edmund J. Cantilli, a professor of transportation planning and engineering and executive director of the non-profit Institute for Safety in Transportation, noted the obvious examples in a recent newspaper article.

Passenger seats are attached to flimsy tracks rather than being bolted to the floor. The plastics used in airline interiors often emit deadly fumes and gases when burned. Aircraft aren't built to float, even momentarily. And most if not all commercial airliners lack the structural strength that might keep them from breaking up on the slightest impact.

Three of these four design defects almost certainly contributed to the loss of life resulting from the Air Florida crash in Washington, the World Airways accident in Boston, and the recent crash of a Japan Airlines 747 in Tokyo Bay.

Building safer planes involves the same public policy tradeoffs as those so often cited in auto safety debates. First, safety features tend to be expensive; and more expensive planes mean higher airline ticket prices. Second, sturdier planes would probably consume more fuel and so conflict with efforts to conserve energy and reduce operating costs. Once again, the flying public would end up paying more.

America's aerospace industry, still the best in the world, could no doubt design airliners with features that would save at least some passengers in all but the most grievous crashes. But the cost would be unaffordable, just as the sticker price for an automobile that could sustain head-on collisions at 40 miles per hour would exceed the financial means of most motorists.

So, the question for the airline industry, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the flying public is one of balancing costs, practicality, and safety.

In our view, passenger safety has been too little considered by the airlines and by the FAA. Surely, safer seats and less hazardous materials for interior finish wouldn't boost ticket prices that much. And the same might prove true for strengthening airframes and providing some minimal flotation capability.

Granted that all but a tiny fraction of both aircraft and airline passengers are never involved in an accident of any kind. But the toll of those who have died needlessly in survivable crashes over, say, the last decade should occasion second thoughts about passenger safety at the FAA and the airlines. Failing that, Congress should investigate on its own.

Presidential deception

Five American presidents — Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon — are now known to have secretly tape recorded some of their conversations and meetings in the White House. All were wrong to have done so.

Recent revelations about the taping ordered by President Kennedy underscored the violations of accepted ethical standards inherent in clandestine recording.

Sen. Russell B. Long, for example, expressed outrage at learning that his private conversations with Mr. Kennedy were recorded and preserved. Sen. Long had assumed that he was speaking to his president in confidence. He had every right to make that assumption unless informed to the contrary.

The truth is that surreptitious recording is an invasion of privacy pure and simple, whether it is done by a president of the United States or by any of the rest of us.

The only permissible exceptions, such as certain criminal investigations and cases involving espionage, are clearly set forth in the law and require a judicial warrant.

All presidents share an understandable concern about how history will judge them. And most go to considerable lengths to preserve a documented record of their tenure in office.

It would appear that this was at least part of the reason Mr. Kennedy had his recording system installed. Richard Nixon offered a similar explanation for his famous taping.

But whatever the motives, they are less important than the undeniable fact that any surreptitious recordings entail deception and invasion of privacy. And certainly they demean the memory of all former presidents who employed them.

If the United States is to remain an open society in which the privacy of every citizen is respected, appropriate examples will have to be set beginning with those who occupy the highest office in the land.

Letters from our readers

To The Carlisle Mercury:

Recently, the Kentucky Press Association began an editorial campaign of deception and misinformation designed to arouse suspicions by the public about the operations of local government.

While the Kentucky Municipal League, representing cities throughout the Commonwealth, is in no position to match the ink reserves of newspapers throughout Kentucky, it is important that citizens be made aware of the true facts regarding the introduction of House Bill 429. This bill attempts to save the public's tax funds so they can be utilized for needed purposes in each of our cities.

House Bill 429, sponsored by Representative Marshall Long of Shelbyville, was introduced for one purpose only. That purpose is to save the unnecessary expense of having the public pay for advertisements which are excessive and serve little useful purpose. The heart of the question is whether or not cities, using your tax dollars, will be required to spend thousands of dollars listing every check written by the city and whom the recipient might be, or simply making those records available to the public if anyone desires to see them.

The membership of the Press Association is protecting its financial interests and not the interests of the public. It is interested in maintaining a stronghold of required legal publication that in effect requires the public to subsidize the newspaper industry.

The argument the Press Association puts forth regarding the need to require such publication for the protection of "the public's right to know" is a smoke screen of deception. The public has every right to know and that right to know has been reiterated throughout the Kentucky Revised Statutes in the open meetings law, the open records law, laws requiring budgets, public hearings and audits. Other statutes also protect each individual's ability to obtain information which any citizen might wish to know about his government and its operations. The Press Association wants to require, by statute, that city funds be paid to newspapers to publish this information.

A newspaper welfare program is simply not affordable by our cities, and it is a disservice and an insult to the taxpayers to even suggest such.

Obviously, any information which may be of interest to the citizens in a given city will be published on the front page of every newspaper without any cost to the city, if the newspaper feels it will sell newspapers. If there is a hint of impropriety or wrongful doing you can usually find not only the information but a picture and sometimes even color to add emphasis to the story.

The cities have agreed to provide newspapers the information they speak about, but the Press Association is not satisfied with that. They want the General Assembly to mandate that cities not only provide the information, but pay for the publication of it! Hence, their true colors begin to show. The real interest is money — money that is needed by cities to maintain their police services, fire services, emergency medical services, public works and other forms of assistance that directly benefit you, the taxpayer.

Another argument presented by the Kentucky Press Association in a recent editorial was that they have made offers of compromise and concessions which could save local governments from 19 percent to 42 percent over the publication costs. While that single statement may be true, it is grossly misleading and is indicative of cases where some members of the press take statements out of context.

The simple fact of the matter is that due to a technical mistake in the very complicated legislative process of 1980, cities were required to double their cost of publishing financial information. It was an honest mistake by the General Assembly but a very costly one for cities. Now the Press Association wants to take advantage of that mistake by locking cities into that statutory error and by offering a slightly reduce the publication requirements.

If, in selling a basket of tomatoes, you double the price and then offer to give a 25 percent discount, only the most naive person really feels he has a bargain at hand. This is exactly what has happened. The real bargain being offered by the Press Association is that they are willing to give up a 25 percent increase in cost so that your city only has a 75 percent increase in expenses. City officials throughout this Commonwealth will defend the taxpayer's rights to have their tax dollars spent more wisely than in this ludicrous manner.

The Kentucky Municipal League will continue to heartily support the open meetings law, the open records law and any other laws which protect the publics' right to know about the operations of their city government. Not only is this proper in a democratic society, it also strengthens city government's relationship with its citizens.

By the same token, city officials will strongly protect the wise investment of the scarce resources available to provide public services to citizens and will not yield to private newspaper interests which cannot make it on their own without having the government subsidize their profits.

Sincerely,
Edwin L. Griffin Jr.
Executive Director
Kentucky Municipal League
Lexington

Agree or not

While trimming the state payroll, DHR turned down 82 federal jobs

by S.C. Van Curon

While the state Department of Human Resources was cutting more than 100 persons from its payroll last summer, the department turned down 82 jobs for the Division of Disability Determinations that were to be fully funded by the federal government.

This information came to light when the House Budget Subcommittee had hearings Jan. 23 on the budget for General Government, Finance and Public Protection.

Representative Hank Hancock, D-Frankfort, chief sponsor of a bill to give state employees more protection, brought out the information at the budget hearing. He said the information had been presented earlier before the Personnel Board.

Hancock referred to a letter from Richard S. Schweiker, secretary of Health and Human Services, to Gov. John Y. Brown Jr., dated May 14, 1981.

Schweiker wrote, "Recent Social Security studies have shown that significant numbers of individuals on the Social Security disability rolls may not be entitled to the benefits they are receiving."

Schweiker went on to explain that his department "has initiated an effort to sharply increase the level of review of the disability rolls this year." He pointed out that the state agency would be directly affected by the rapid acceleration in the number of continuing disability cases to be reviewed.

The state had refused to increase the staff and this was the reason for Schweiker's letter.

Schweiker asked the governor's cooperation in beefing up the staff to review Social Security beneficiaries in Kentucky.

"The Social Security Administration has alerted them to the fact that staffing sufficient to accomplish this initiative and legislative mandate will require a concentrated hiring and training effort," he wrote. "I am concerned to hear that they have been unable to increase their staff to recommended levels. I am requesting your support in ensuring that the administrative agencies in your state will facilitate the various activities involved in obtaining staff and taking action to supply the needed additional space and equipment." The letter specifically said, "As in the past, the necessary costs will be fully funded by this department."

The letter was turned over to William L. Huffman, commissioner of the Bureau for Social Insurance.

He wrote Schweiker, "The employees in the Division for Disability Determination have demonstrated their hard work and dedication in meeting the increased workload and are currently carrying a caseload of approximately 90 per examiner. We feel that we can address the increase in cases. Department for Human Resources Secretary Grady Stumbo has recently approved the purchase of additional word processing equipment that would also aid in the quick and efficient management of the DDB's caseload. All of this is designed to eventually have better case control, thereby relieving us of the necessity of hiring extra employees."

Hancock said at the hearing that turning down these jobs has lost the state $910,070 in wages, $31,296 in state taxes and cost $743,936 in unemployment insurance.

He said the state is 50th in the number of state employees per capita.

At the hearing Finance Commissioner George Fisher said, "I do not feel the employment of these 82 staff is consistent with the goal reducing staff and payroll at this time."

Hancock countered, "In reality what this statement says is 'no we don't want your money' or these fully 100 percent federally funded people and as a result Kentucky lost $1,187,296 completely federally funded employees."

Fischer responded, "One of the ways we do look at things is that the federal dollar comes out of my pocket just like the state dollar."

Hancock said this federal money could have been used to return some of the people who had been fired from other jobs to work.

Down Memory Lane

R. L. Talbert bitten by dog

Thursday, March 1, 1962

The Carrollton Jaycees honored James W. Shepherd with a merit certificate last Tuesday night for outstanding work in civic and club affairs. Shepherd, an attorney in Carrollton, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Shepherd of Carlisle.

BORN — To Mr. and Mrs. Ronnie Maureen Jon, Kenneth Allen, Feb. 23 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Marion McDonald a daughter, Theresa Lynn, Feb. 23 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. William Tolliver a son, Tracy Warren, Feb. 21 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Purvis a son, Gary Herbert, Feb. 24 at the Nicholas County Hospital. To Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mathias of Lexington a daughter, Nancy Browning, Feb. 26 at the St. Joseph Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Wells a daughter, Kimberly Terese, Feb. 21 at the Harrison Memorial Hospital.

MARRIED — Miss Bernice Ann Vice and Everett Snow Jr., Feb. 16 at the home of the Rev. W.O. Claypool in Lexington. — Miss Carol Hamilton and Raymond Libby, Saturday, Feb. 24, at the Carlisle Christian Church.

DIED — Mrs. Verdie Wilson Stockdale, 87, widow of R.H. Stockdale, Mt. Sterling, Sunday at Mary Chiles Hospital. — Mrs. Pearl Quiett Anderson, 77, Middletown, Ohio, widow of Joe Anderson, Feb. 25. — L.D. Cook, 80, Paris, Route 3, Saturday, at home in Cynthiana. — Mrs. Bessie Aldea Myers, 57, wife of Guy Myers, Tuesday at home in Paris. — Garvey Curtsinger, 75, Thursday, at home in Lawrenceburg.

Thursday, February 26, 1942

Mrs. John W. Henry celebrated her 94th birthday Sunday and her daughters, Mrs. B.J. Alexander and Mrs. W.G. Irvin entertained with a dinner for immediate members of the family in her home.

Mrs. G.C. Myers sold the building occupied by the Blue Grass Produce Company on Railroad Street to Misses Mayme and Lydia Gore.

MARRIED — Miss Dorothy Leona Myers of Afton, Okla. and Floyd Francis Davis of Bluejacket, Okla., Feb. 15. The bride is the niece of Mrs. Wallce Blair of Myers.

DIED — Thomas H. Myers, Sunday, Feb. 13. — Charlton McFarland, 35, Wednesday at the Johnson Memorial Hospital. — Kelly Denton, 55, Saturday at home in Moorefield. — Granville Pendletown Campbell, Friday in a Lexington hospital. — Mrs. Catherine Van Arsdall Willis, 69, Lexington, Wednesday at Good Samaritan Hospital. — Walter C. Parker, 89, Paris Pike, Tuesday at home.

Thursday, March 7, 1922

The February farm of the Nicholas Circuit Court adjourned last Friday after being in session for nine days.

R.L. Talbert, son of Mr. and Mrs. Colville Talbert, was bitten on the knee by a dog last Thursday. The dog was killed and its head was found to contain no trace of rabies.

The residence of James M. Allison on West Main Street was offered at public auction last Saturday, but was withdrawn after it had been bid to $3,800.

MARRIED — Miss Hazel Woodall, of this county, and John W. Wilson, East Union, March 1.

DIED — Mrs. Joseph Fitzwater, 53, Feb. 12. — John Alvin Cassidy, 77, of Paris, a former native of Nicholas County, Monday. — Charles Patrick Connell, nine months old, on the 28th. — Prof. Jesse T. Hazelrigg, 37, on the 28th.

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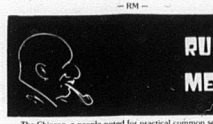
Op-Ed page

Business suits never change much . . . but you can sock it to them



When Herbert Hoover went fishing, he always wore his business suit and necktie. That way, if he caught a big one, or prosperity came around the corner, he was ready to have his picture taken. Unfortunately, neither happened and all Herb got for his effort was muddy suits and a big depression.

It is amazing how the business suit has hung on so long as the accepted dress around the office coffee pot. Every couple of years, the designers have widened or narrowed the labels, taken away or added cuffs and a few more little naists, but generally the suit has remained recognizable.

I am glad to know I won't have to throw away my two perfectly good 20-year-old suits just when I got them bagging in the right place. Even with the lapels a shade out of style, they make my imitations of Al Capone look very authentic.

A few years ago, Burlington Industries surveyed 2,000 men of all ages and occupations and found out that 75% of them hated to wear suits. (See, I'm not so strange afterall). Many say they are drab and uncomfortable and make them feel like a faceless cog in the system. But none had any alternate suggestions and, even if they did, bucking the uniformed establishment would cause them more trouble than it was worth.

There are however a few fringe benefits to wearing a suit at all times. Your wife is not likely to ask you to rake the leaves, or wash the windows, or chop kindling, or slop the hogs when you are wearing your Sunday-go-to-meeting best.

My rebellion against the set suit styles is in the sock department where I really shine. The sock explosion around my house blends in with the soap, pep and crackle taillight zone of breakfast.

"If I had known you were going to wear that, I would have laid you out different socks."

"No one will ever know," I assured her. "I'll let my pants sag down over them until I get to the office. Then I'll soak them in stale coffee grounds until they coordinate."

The one concession I allow my wife is she gets to pick out the socks I'll wear for the day. Often she gets them wrong. Sometimes it is through communications, when she awakens me with "what are you wearing today?" and I answer with his kippers he told him wife that the magic had gone out of their marriage. It was better, he said, that they part and, since to quote the Bard, "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly," he would appreciate it if she could pack her things and depart swiftly. He was leaving that very day himself on a business trip to the continent and would be gone for two weeks and it would be nice if she had cleared out by the time he returned.

The wife showed no visible signs of outrage at this turn of events. She said that if that's what her soon-to-be-ex-husband wanted she would, of course, not stay where she was not welcome. She would go. "Her lawyer would be in touch. It was all very civilized.

Draw a curtain here to signify the passage of two weeks.

The husband returned from his business trip. When he entered his apartment, he was pleased to see that his wife had kept her word. She had gone and taken her belongings with her. All seemed to be in apple pie order. Whistling cheerfully, the husband carried his bag into the bedroom and was starting to unpack when he realized that he had been hearing, ever since he entered the room, the muffled sound of what seemed to be a tiny human voice. Puzzled, he began a search of the room. Finally, he zeroed in on the noise. It was coming from under the bed. Getting down on his hands and knees he looked and found his wife had taken her revenge.

There on the bedroom floor was the telephone, off the hook as it had been for the past 14 days, and coming from it was a voice he had heard many times before, when he and his wife lived in New York City. From 4,000 miles and a pile of long-distance dollars away it was saying, over and over: "When you hear the tone, the time will be (pause) 11:43." Beep. "When you hear the tone, the time will be. . ."

—RM—

As I can recall, Nash was the first to have them: automobile front seats that had reclining backs. They advertised you could sleep on them when you laid them down.

Anyone who could afford a new Nash in those days didn't need to sleep in their cars, so the innovation never went over, except with the young cats, who had other ideas how to use them but, luckily for them, didn't have the scratch it took to buy a Nash.

Now I notice some of the new cars are back to advertising reclining front seats and my wife asked me the other night, "How in the world are you going to drive that car while lieing on your back?"

"With your feet," I told her. "The animals you meet on the highways ought to be able to handle it nicely."

It is one thing to have the passenger's seat reclining so the occupant can take a nap, but with the driver all laid-back, who is minding the store? Until he has extra long arms or a rubber steering column, he may have a little trouble even reaching the wheel. If they'd just put a little white funeral lace around the seat, at least he'd be laid out ready for burying.

I can think of a lot of improvements' they could put on automobiles, but reclining drivers' seats is not one of them. Now a bay window in thiwide door for mooning your snooty neighbors as you drive by—that's an improvement.

Onward, upward.

An editor's random thoughts...

by Warren R. Fisher Sr.
February 25, 1937

Today there comes the whistle of a cardinal, a flute-like call that cuts through the air of a winter's day with icy clearness, now somehow softened, mellowed in the sunshine; the chickadee's thin singing his mating song and even the harsh chatter of the sparrow takes on a softer note. One day soon the rusty creaking of the blackbird will come to ears, long attuned to silent fields and trees, with the freshness of an earth reborn. A very pest in our trees in May and June, the creak of the purple grackle is as invigorating as a spring tonic. When we hear him we shall know that daffodils have flung out their chalices of golden beauty to the dew.

A true herald of the spring is he and another authentic prophet is the flicker, in his gray black-barred and yellow lined coat and trim black vest. When he rattles out his rapid "cuh-cuh-cuh-cuh," and his mating song comes more softly to the ear, a sound like that made by the swishing of a willow wand, you shall know that on a sunny bank the first violet blooms.

"The brown buds thicken on the trees.
Unbound the tree streams sing.
As March leads forth across the leas
The wild and windy spring.
Where in the fields the melted snow
Leaves hollows warm and wet.
Ere many days will sweetly blow

The first blue violet."

Ever the birds are painting word pictures of the spring, but not more sweetly or so truly perhaps as the robin's song, the bluebird's whispered note, the harsh yet invigorating creak of the purple grackle. "Oh the whole," wrote John Burroughs, "the poets have not been eminently successful in depicting spring. Our delight is in a few things. The drying road in early March; a single wild flower; in the April woods, the restless herds, the sheep steering for the uplands, the cow browsing in the highway or bawling to call in the bushes, the first fires, the smoke going through the shining atmosphere from the burning of rubbish in gardens and old fields, each of these simple things fills the breast with yearning and delight, for they are tokens of spring. The best spring poems have this singleness and sparseness. Listen to Solomon:"

For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

Ever the birds have heralded for poets and lovers of Nature the approach of the rebirth in beauty. For Solomon the voice of the turtle dove proclaimed the end of winter, as for me a solitary red bird, forsooth, has heard the distant footfalls of the "pilgrim steps of Spring."

*****

In his sprightly column in the Lexington Leader, Joe Jordan wonders why Kentuckians call a ewe a "yo." My guess is that it is a survival of the Anglo-Saxon pronunciation of the word. According to Webster, ewe is from the Anglo-Saxon "eowu." The pronunciation of the letters "e" and "o" together gives a "y" sound. Perhaps the "u" is silent, or was slurred by succeeding generations. I hope some student of words will agree that I have guessed it, for I should like to have reason for a pronunciation that has come much more trippingly to the tongue all of my life than the allegedly correct one.

*****

"His words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at his command," wrote Milton in his Apology for Smectymnuus. Fortunate the man who has learned the use of words, the art of combining them in their simplest form in smooth flowing prose. The ancient writers were masters of the art. The Old Testament abounds with instances of honey-flowing prose, usually in words of one syllable. Isaiah and David and Solomon all had the "feel" for words as did the author of Job. Shakespeare had it, of course, and Theophile Gautier and our own Lafcadio Hearne. The poets naturally play lovingly with words, even if no more effectively than great prose writers. Which brings me to a poem in point, that I wish I might have written. It is by Joseph Auslander. Perhaps you, too, will like it.

WORDS

Words with the freesia's wounded scent I know
And those that suck the slow, irresolute gold
Out of the daffodil's heart: cool words that hold
The crushed gray light of rain, or liquidly blow
The wild bee droning home across the glow
Of rippled wind-silver; or, uncontrolled,
Toss the bruised aroma of pine; and words as cold
As water torturing through frozen snow.
And there are words that strain like April hedges
Upward, lonely words with tears on them;
And syllables whose haunting crimson edges
Bleed: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"
And that long star-drift of bright agony:
"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!"

The Idle Rambler

by James C. Smith

It is ironic that Edwin Griffin Jr., the executive director of the Kentucky Municipal League, should be the first to press of using "the people's right to know" as a "smoke screen" to promote its own financial interest.

The only smoke screen involved in the current debate over the requirement for local governments to publish financial statements has been thrown up by Mr. Griffin and his organization. They keep talking about the cost of publishing the statements.

The cost is not the issue here. Don't let Griffin confuse you. At issue is an effort to obtain financial information about local government that the public has a right to know.

Yes, The Mercury receives income from the publication of legal advertising. But, contrary to Griffin's assertions, we can survive without it. In fact, the amount is such a small fraction of both our income, and the city's budget, that looking at the figures show clearly that the money is not the issue.

The total cost of legal advertising published by the City of Carlisle in the last fiscal year amounted to just two-tenths of one percent (.002) of the city's budget.

This newspaper received $860.26 from the city for legal advertising in the 1981 fiscal year. While not to be sneezed at, we hardly undertook major physical improvements and planned Hawaiian vacations with that money — just as Mr. Griffin probably didn't take off to the Bahamas with the $176 his organization received in dues from Carlisle during that year.

The law that requires public disclosure of governmental finances was created for a very good reason. It was created because the average taxpayer cannot afford to take off work for a day and go down to city hall and wade through the city's records to find out where his tax money was spent. He has the legal right to do so, but it is quite impractical.

But that same taxpayer can sit down after supper with a copy of his local newspaper and look over his government's financial affairs. That is why KRS 424 was created.

As to Griffin's charge that such a law constitutes "a newspaper welfare program," I must take issue.

The law was designed to make the government share the responsibility of keeping taxpayers informed of how their money was being spent.

In order to disseminate this information, the newspaper provided the most logical avenue. And for providing this service, the newspaper receives compensation — just as lawyers, accountants and directors of municipal leagues receive compensation from taxpayers' funds when they render a service to a city.

Certainly times are tough and money is tight. Cities must look toward economizing measures. But they must not economize at the expense of the public's access to information on where and how politicians are spending their hard-earned money.

Two-tenths of one percent of the budget is a small price to pay for keeping records out in the open and sticky hands out of the till. Two-tenths of one percent is a small price to pay for a free and open society.

Something Extra Special is about to happen to benefit you the residents of Carlisle & Nicholas County!

For more information read next week's edition of The Mercury.

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