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Captain Michael Gitt Papers - The Airline Pilot (ALPA Newsletter), 1949-1964

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"IF IT DOESN'T FLY, I'LL LEAVE THE COUNTRY..."

[[picture1]]

[[picture2]]

--IN and Acme Photos

IT DID

In two short phrases--"If it doesn't fly, I'll leave the country" and "It felt so good I just pulled her up"--the most dramatic moments in 1947 aviation history were born. The first was spoken on August 1, 1947, by Howard Hughes when his giant flying boat was under fire by a Congressional committee; the latter by the same man a few months later on November 2, 1947, when he unexpectedly took the largest airplane the world had ever known into the air on an unscheduled flight as his dramatic answer to the critics who had contended it would never fly. These pictures show the inside and the outside of the controversial, but vindicated, sky giant, the 700-passenger Hercules flying boat. At the top is the forward flight deck being inspected by Howard Hughes (center) prior to its first test run. The lower photo shows the Hercules just as it took off on November 2, 1947, during what had been scheduled as its final run in Los Angeles Harbor. Without warning, Hughes casually lifted the mammoth craft off the water to an altitude of 70 feet for a one-mile run. "I didn't decide to take it off until I actually did," said Hughes, "We were on the step and it felt so good I just took it off." The Hercules is scheduled for more extensive flight tests early this year, but the most dramatic moment, and probably the most gratifying to Hughes, is past; the moment the Hercules, several years in the building, became airborne and proved to the world that it would fly.

[[right margin]]

Sacrificial Lamb Of 1940 Politics

the one question, 'Is It Safe?' And if it is not safe, it is not sound. In air transportation, no matter what the advancement or developments are, if they are unsafe they are sound."

Although in its original guise it was referred to as the Bureau of Air Safety, it was in this testimony by Mr. Behncke that the idea for the body later known as the independent Air Safety Board was first conceived and advanced.

Parallel Situation

At the time the independent Air Safety Board idea was born, a situation paralleling that of today in many respects existed: air safety was at a low ebb as the result of a series of fatal crashes; the regulatory and investigative agencies were combined under the bureau of air commerce; and little was being done because of the inter-subservience and political ties existing between the agencies administering the nation's aviation activities.

The Air Line Pilots Association's fight for an independent Air Safety Board was not relished by the industry nor by many others more politically than safety inclined, but despite the opposition, it became a part of our federal aviation structure when it was incorporated into the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938.

Opposed by Many

It functioned from August 22, 1938, to June 30, 1940, during which period not a single accident marred the nation's air safety record



compared to the 453 persons killed prior to its advent and the 1,016 casualties of which 880 were deaths and 136 serious injuries, since its abolition.
Despite its unequalled world

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