

WHEN THE SUN DOESN'T Shine

This year is expected to be very tough for our business all over the world. Fewer people are flying, but a lot of people still are. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that the world's airlines last year flew about 2.3 billion passengers. This year they will fly about 2.2 billion passengers, IATA predicts. Revenues will take a serious tumble, and, with staffs reduced, overworked people will be stretched even further. This isn't the easiest time to dedicate resources to aviation safety; in the absence of an obvious safety threat, it is not the first thing people think about.

It is a funny thing about our business: Those 2.2 billion passengers flying this year still expect to arrive safely. We have to find a way to continue doing our jobs. Lucky for us there are some people who know that the continual pursuit of safety cannot stop when the sun refuses to shine. The Flight Safety Foundation owes a profound thanks to our members who keep contributing during difficult times. We also owe a very special thanks to a major new benefactor who has made a lasting gift to support aviation safety.

The Foundation has received a major gift from the estate of Manuel Maciel, a modest and hard-working man known to his friends as Manny. Manny was born in the Azores and immigrated to the United States in the 1940s. He worked nearly all his adult life at California's Sonoma County Airport. He started as a ramp service employee and eventually ran his own fixed base operation, Sonoma Aviation Fuel Services. Pilots from all over the U.S. knew him for his outstanding service and friendly manner. Even though he owned the place, he didn't think twice about working the ramp and pumping gas himself. After living on that ramp for 54 years, he sold the business and started a small restaurant on the airport where he could remain with his aviation family.

Few people realized that this frugal and industrious man was also an astute investor. He amassed a significant estate that ultimately he left to the aviation community he considered his family. When he died not long ago his will revealed that he had dedicated several million dollars for aviation safety research. His trustees distributed this substantial gift to the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association's Air Safety Foundation, the American Bonanza Society and the Flight Safety Foundation.

The Foundation will use his gift to fund two programs. First, some of it will be used to support some near-term work on the safety of helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS). In the U.S. there has been an alarming increase in HEMS accidents, and we intend to help by bringing some of the data gathering and analysis techniques from airline and corporate aviation to bear on the problem. In funding this work, Manny's gift will help people stay safe on the worst day of their lives.

The remainder of the gift will launch an endowment, its earnings indefinitely funding research programs. I'll ask the Foundation's think tank — the Icarus Committee — to identify key aviation safety issues requiring targeted research. That work will be conducted under the auspices of the Manuel S. Maciel Chair for Aviation Safety Research.

Thanks to our members, and dedicated people like Manny, we can keep doing what is needed to support safety in our industry — even when the sun doesn't shine.



*William R. Voss
President and CEO
Flight Safety Foundation*

