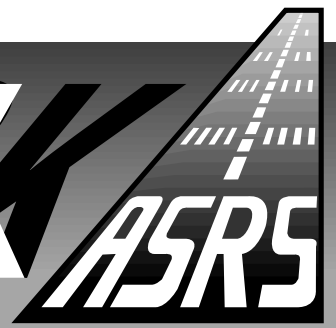


CALLBACK

From NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System



Number 204

June 1996

From There to Here, With Your Support

ASRS Celebrates Its 20th Birthday

An anonymous wit once observed that “a diplomat is a person who remembers a lady’s birthday, but forgets her age.” Putting a more festive (if less discreet) spin on that advice, *CALLBACK* is proud to announce both the birthday and age of the NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System: the program’s birthday occurred on April 15, 1996, a date which also marked the 20th anniversary of ASRS operations.

As ASRS enters its 21st year, the program has met the test of time, fulfilled the early hopes of its founders, and achieved many “firsts”:

- ★ Processed more than 338,000 total aviation incident reports without violating a single reporter’s confidentiality;
- ★ Issued more than 2,500 alert messages of all types;
- ★ Responded to more than 4,800 database search requests;
- ★ Performed more than 90 Quick Response research efforts for the FAA, NTSB, and NASA;
- ★ Published 56 research reports and papers;
- ★ Returned information to the aviation community through its two award-winning publications, *CALLBACK* (in its 17th year of publication), and *Directline*, an aviation safety journal.

In its 20 years of existence, ASRS has become the world’s largest, and longest-operating, incident reporting program. Without any doubt, it has also saved lives.

Yet as important as all these achievements are, it is not the ASRS as an organization—but the aviation community it serves—that is the real story. For at one time, the ASRS did not exist. Many years of effort were required for the idea of a national reporting system to take root in the aviation community, and to gather its support and trust.

A Phoenix from the Ashes

The precipitating event for the ASRS was a tragedy that occurred on December 1, 1974. On that Sunday morning, Trans World Airlines (TWA) Flight 514 was inbound to Dulles Airport through cloudy and turbulent skies, when the aircraft descended to 1,800 feet before reaching the approach segment where that minimum altitude applied. Flight 514 collided with a Virginia mountain top, with the loss of all lives on board.

According to the accident report issued by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the crew’s decision to descend was the result of inadequate depiction of altitude restrictions on the profile view of the approach plate, and confusion in interpreting air traffic terminology. The NTSB investigation uncovered another disturbing, yet provocative, detail. Six weeks prior to the TWA crash, a United Airlines crew had very narrowly escaped the same fate, during the same approach, and at the same location.

United, however, had instituted a new internal reporting program, the Flight Safety Awareness Program. Under this program, crew members were encouraged to report anonymously any incident they felt involved a safety problem for the company. The United pilots involved in the Dulles incident had reported to their company program the ambiguous nature of the charted approach. Other United pilots were made aware of the potential trap, and the FAA was notified of the circumstances. Unfortunately, there did not exist at the time any generally accepted method to assure the broad and timely dissemination of this information to the aviation community.

The NTSB comments on the need for a national incident reporting system, and the collaboration of aviation industry groups, finally led to significant action. In May 1975, the FAA issued Advisory Circular 00-46, announcing the implementation of a confidential, non-punitive incident reporting program. The FAA assumed a sponsorship role for the new program, but turned to a neutral and highly respected third party—NASA—to collect, process, and analyze the voluntarily submitted reports.

Under a Memorandum of Agreement between the two agencies in August 1975, NASA began operating the newly designated Aviation Safety Reporting System. Thus the blueprint for the ASRS was set: FAA would fund the program and provide its immunity provisions, while NASA would set program policy and administer operations.

ASRS: The Future

What lies ahead for the ASRS? Here are some of the activities that ASRS is currently undertaking, with the advice and support of our advisory oversight group:

- ✓ A renewed focus on and expansion of the ASRS alerting function. A new alerting product, the *ASRS Operational Issues Bulletin*, is likely to be distributed through the cooperative efforts of aviation industry groups this year.
- ✓ Continued efforts to find ways of increasing the participation in the program of the maintenance and flight attendant communities.
- ✓ Conversion of the ASRS database to widely used commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software.
- ✓ Expansion of Internet services to make ASRS research publications available to users, as well as additional issues of its safety publications.

As always, the ASRS program users and the aviation community are our greatest resources. As you celebrate with us the 20 years of accomplishment that are the fruit of your support, we invite you to share with us, and also with your organizations’ policy makers and representatives, your suggestions for increasing the use, and usefulness, of the ASRS within the aviation community. ▲

ASRS Recently Issued Alerts On...

Autopilot rate gyroscope failure in a B747-100
Ambiguous taxiway signage at a Louisiana airport
Extraneous GPWS warnings near a California airport
Inconsistent Tower/ASOS indications at a Missouri airport
Loss of separation for two carriers in Venezuelan airspace

*A Monthly Safety Bulletin
from*

**The Office of the NASA
Aviation Safety Reporting
System,
P.O. Box 189,
Moffett Field, CA
94035-0189**

March 1996 Report Intake

Air Carrier Pilots	1815
General Aviation Pilots	637
Controllers	83
Cabin/Mechanics/Military/Other	33

TOTAL 2568

Bill Reynard *A Lawyer for All Seasons*

Editor's Note: This tribute to Bill Reynard, NASA Director of the ASRS from 1980-1996, is deeply indebted to the following individuals, who also made major contributions to the ASRS throughout this period: Edgar Cheaney, the Battelle ASRS Program Manager from 1977-1987; Rex Hardy, *CALLBACK*'s Editor Emeritus; and Dr. Charles Billings, Chief Scientist (retired) of NASA Ames.

On April 10, 1996, in one of the poignant ironies that life sometimes offers, William (Bill) Douglas Reynard, the NASA Director of the ASRS since 1980, died from long-term complications related to an earlier heart transplant. Less than a week shy of ASRS's 20th anniversary, the man who was most responsible for guiding the ASRS to its present status as a worldwide model for aviation incident reporting systems—and who we hoped would be here to celebrate his and the program's achievements—was taken from the helm.

Those who shared Bill's sense of humor would agree: It was no way to treat a lawyer. For Bill was a paradox of our contemporary culture—a respected practitioner of a much-maligned profession, who earned the reputation within a tough industry of being a lawyer that solved problems, rather than making them.

“The Only Lawyer They Really Trusted”

Bill had received his Juris Doctorate degree in 1969 from The Ohio State University College of Law. In 1976, he joined the NASA Ames staff following an illustrious career as the Vice President of Operations for the National Aviation Trades Association, and as Director of Special Courses for the AOPA Air Safety Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Bill's first assignment at NASA was as Legal Counsel to the ASRS. In these early, crucial years, he helped create the legal framework for the program's operation, and dealt successfully—which is to say satisfactorily to all parties involved—with every one of the many legal issues that arose. It was a complicated, difficult job that he performed with great success. In 1980 he was appointed NASA's Director of the ASRS, a position that required him to set policy for and oversee all of ASRS's operations.

Several of Bill's activities as an attorney, outside his work at the ASRS, honed the professional set of ethical standards that he was to adhere to, strictly, throughout his career. One of these was his volunteer work as a legal arbitrator to help settle disputes outside the costly court system. Bill became the most animated when he could describe how he had helped relieve people's distress by creating decent settlements of their disputes with others. He strongly believed that this was the essence of what lawyers are for. Skillful and shrewd, but also considerate and meticulously fair, he was increasingly in demand for his arbitration feats. The added coincidences of his appearance and name—Bill was a red-haired Reynard—cemented his reputation as a genial “fox,” and lifted his lawyerly skills into the realm of fable.

Bill also had a brilliant, if brief, career in actual courtroom litigation. An *aficionado* of RX-7 sports cars, he was once ticketed for speeding, pled not guilty, and successfully represented himself in traffic court—the only time in his life as a lawyer that he appeared in the role of barrister. He was inordinately proud of this 100 percent success record, which eclipses such

underachieving defenders as Horace Rumpole, Perry Mason, and Clarence Darrow.

Let Dipsticks Beware

Bill was a commercial pilot who had earned instrument and multi-engine ratings before he arrived at NASA. His solid operational background and abiding interest in everything that flew were no doubt at the root of his polite intolerance of “dipsticks”—those who took an overly academic view of aviation issues, or a joyless approach to life and work.

No one ever beat Bill in spotting where the fun lay in any situation. A characteristic incident occurred in 1981, when Bill and the founding Editor of *CALLBACK*, Rex Hardy, were invited to fly to Acapulco to receive an award made to the publication by the Flight Safety Foundation. Rex, a decorated Naval aviator and corporate test pilot, tells the rest of the story:


“On our first morning in Acapulco, I walked out onto the beach in front of our hotel and was astonished to see Bill strapping on a parachute. The chute was attached by a long rope to a jeep stationed several hundred feet down the beach. Before I could express my views on this behavior, the jeep was barreling along the hard sand and Bill was high aloft over the water's edge. After a run of some distance, the jeep came to a gradual halt and Bill slowly descended to the sand, exhilarated. I declined to undergo the same experience.”

From his very first days at the ASRS, Bill recounted a lengthy string of uproarious lawyer jokes. But his wit and humor were far more than entertainment for others. Constantly present, they powered the zest and optimism with which he lived his life and did his work; they sharpened the points he made in argument; they relieved tensions in the people around him; they leavened his wisdom; and they made him memorable.

Crisis Equals Opportunity

When Bill called a meeting and opened it with the announcement, “We have another golden opportunity,” his colleagues knew that they faced a program crisis, that Bill would figure out a way to solve it, and in solving it, convert it to an asset. In the best and worst of times, Bill's constructive rationale for action was the same: “This gives us a great opportunity...”

Although he collected many prestigious aviation industry and NASA performance awards during his career, Bill Reynard will be most remembered for the singular contributions he made to aviation safety over 25 years of unselfish, dedicated service to AOPA, NASA, and especially to the ASRS—for which we and the nation owe him a considerable debt.

At the crossroads of a new era, the ASRS has (to use Bill's words) another “golden opportunity.” We hope that we've absorbed the gift of Bill's time with us, and the lessons he imparted through his friendship and humor: of how to be smart, dedicated, empathetic, and positive—and most important—of how to keep on having fun. 

A Celebration of Life ceremony, attended by his family and many friends, was held for Bill Reynard on April 16, 1996 at Stanford University Hospital, in Palo Alto, California.