

Airways

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B.CAL Post Postscriptum

Some of the inaccuracies and distortions contained in John Herbert's letter (*B.CAL Postscript*, *Mailbag*, May 2000) need addressing.

True, BA's profits fell in 1987, partly as a result of the B.CAL acquisition. However, subsequent years of profitability were derived in part from that same acquisition, and from the increased size, scope, and density of the BA network at Gatwick which resulted. The point of the B.CAL merger and the cost to BA seems to have been lost. Through the acquisition of B.CAL and Dan-Air, and the establishment of partnerships with the likes of CityFlyer Express and GB Airways, BA was able to build the critical mass necessary for a successful second London hub. Much of the real value of B.CAL was in the slots, routes, and infrastructure at Gatwick which BA—along with its franchise partners—has since developed into a fully integrated hub, and in the denying of these to a competitor should B.CAL have been taken over by another carrier—a perfectly rational and straightforward commercial objective.

The price paid for B.CAL should be seen in this light, rather than in a simple assessment of share value at the time. Moreover, the fact that Gatwick is now almost full is testament to the foresight and strength of this strategy, not its weakness. The acquisition by SAS of a 40% stake in British Midland [September 2000] was clearly a good move in terms of gaining ground at Heathrow, but should be seen in the light of the subsequent sale of half of this stake to Lufthansa. Given this development, and the still shifting sands of airline alliances, I hardly feel this qualifies as a 'last laugh'.

The statement that "Branson sued BA—and won" over 'dirty tricks' is highly misleading. This court action concerned a libel case, and the so-called dirty tricks case was pursued separately.

Mark Bedford—Crawley, England

CORRECTIONS, NOT PERFECTION

Singapore Airlines (August 2000) is not the world's largest operator of the Boeing 747-400. This distinction belongs to British Airways with 57 aircraft in service.

Greg Drawbaugh points out that Representative Jim Wright was mislabeled as a Republican, instead of a Democrat, in *Wright of Way?* (August 2000).

David Taweel (age 14) caught the typo in the August 2000 *New on the Airways* that upgraded Welcome Air's Dornier 328-110 to a 328-300 (JET).

And although Mancunians were delighted to learn that their city is the second largest in the UK (*Budapest-New York (JFK) Aboard a MALÉV Boeing 767-200ER*, June 2000), Birmingham still holds that rank.

Letters from readers to the editors are welcomed and should be addressed to *Airways Mailbag*, PO Box 1109, Sandpoint, ID 83864-0872, USA. Fax: +1 208 683 7063, Email: jw@airwaysmag.com. Anonymous communications will not be considered for publication, although identities will be withheld upon request. Email submissions require a city, state (country), and a telephone number. We reserve the right to edit published letters for space and clarity. Because of the volume of mail we receive, we regret that acknowledgements cannot always be made, nor can requests for information always be accommodated. Letters selected for publication reflect the opinions of the authors, and not necessarily those of the editors or publisher of *Airways*.

Joseph S Murphy

Pioneer commercial aviation publisher Joe Murphy died on July 13, 2000, in Guam, age 81. Born in New York, Joe worked for the New York Central Railroad and American Airlines at LaGuardia before joining American Aviation Publications in Washington in 1952. Twelve years later, Joe struck out on his own and formed *Air Transport World* with the first issue appearing in May 1964. He sold the publication in 1968, but remained with ATW until 1977 when he founded a new company, whose flagship magazine was *Airline Executive*, which he sold two years later. Not content with these accomplishments, Joe started yet another company, which published *Commuter Regional Airline News* among other titles, that he sold in 1990. Joe also formed the Society of Aerospace Communicators. He is survived by his wife, Virginia, of Chevy Chase, Maryland, and four children, a son and three daughters.

Beluga to the rescue (again). Following the feature in the September 1999 issue, Airbus A300B4-608ST No 4 (F-GSTD) was called upon to bring a new horizontal stabilizer to Las Vegas to repair an America West Airlines Airbus A320-232. The A320 (N655AW) was damaged on June 12 when, as it reached V1, the cowl latches of No 1 engine released, causing pieces of cowl to tear off and strike the tail. Following repairs in the open, the A320 was ferried to Phoenix on July 1.

At least seven other similar incidents have occurred following engine checks, according to a report published by the UK's Air Accident Investigation Branch. All new A320s will incorporate a modified latching system that will hold the cowl open if the latches are not fastened correctly, and the modification will be available as a retrofit.



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