

HISTORY, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND FUTURE FOR FPAW

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Good Morning. It is a real pleasure to be attending this, the sixth annual meeting of the Friends and Partners of Aviation Weather. When I say sixth, I am counting the 1997 Dallas meeting as the first. We have come a long way since the Dallas meeting, on a rough and sometimes controversial path – evidence that there are numerous problems and agendas in our community. Along with our successes and failures, I think we have learned one fundamental lesson, that **we get more accomplished through collaboration than through confrontation.**

A few months ago, when Bruce Carmichael first asked me to make some remarks about the history of FPAW, I did not think there was enough material to “fill up” the 15-minute speaking period. But as I began to gather material, I realized what a rich and fascinating history this group has had. As such, I want to share a few thoughts from a user’s perspective about the events that lead to the first Friends/Partners meeting, some of the accomplishments since that time, and where the future may lead us.

Let’s start with the early 1990’s. It was a period filled with rapid scientific and technical advances, as well as institutional changes that had a dramatic impact on the aviation weather community. Computer horsepower had been unleashed with the advent of the PC. Innovative groups in the academic and private sectors were developing computer generated weather graphics. Many of you remember some of the early efforts - radar graphics provided by Kavouras (the Radac system) and WSI (the Nowrad system), as well as the FAA/NCAR Aviation Weather Products Generator effort.

In conjunction with new PC based weather products, the other revolutionary development of the early 1990’s was the Internet. The combination of the PC, the Internet, and the early weather graphic products quickly fueled the end user’s dissatisfaction with existing government products and services.

Concurrently, there were events taking place in Washington that would eventually spawn FPAW. The first event was the 1993 FAA Aviation Weather User’s Forum, which many of you may remember. The forum produced a user needs document as long as your arm, and from the standpoint of the FAA, nearly impossible to address. The second event took place at NWS Headquarters over a period of years - namely budget cuts that led to the eventual demise of the Aviation Weather Branch, and from a user’s perspective, decreased support for aviation weather.

As 1994 dawned, the FAA realized that the User’s Forum had just muddied the waters, and as an aid in finding its way through the aviation weather “swamp”, the FAA funded an NRC study on aviation weather. In 1995, the NRC published the results of that study: “Aviation

Weather – A Call for Federal Leadership”. The NRC report summarized the critical needs of the nation’s aviation weather system, and as a primary recommendation, called upon the FAA, and not the NWS, to take the federal leadership role for aviation weather.

Two years passed with little progress toward implementation of the NRC report recommendations. Adding to growing user discontent was the apparent unresponsiveness by the NWS Office of Meteorology to aviation issues. About the same time, another event took place that would break the logjam – Ron McPhearson, the new Director of NCEP, had a vision for specialized national meteorological centers that would bring better forecasting services to the users. Thus, the Aviation Weather Center was created, with new director, Dave Rodenhuis. As director, Dave wasted no time in dealing with aviation weather issues - he started interacting directly with the aviation weather users.

It did not take long for the using community to see that the potential for significant change in aviation weather had shifted from NWS Headquarters in Washington, to the AWC and Dave Rodenhuis. As part of Dave’s plan to address the concerns being raised by users, he advocated development of a strategic plan for the AWC and national aviation weather services. Thus, he solicited government and industry support for such an effort, and on April 4, 1997, the first meeting an ad hoc strategic planning coordination team took place at United Airlines Headquarters outside of Chicago. The “team” consisted of ten representatives from the FAA, NWS, OFCM, NCAR, and United Airlines.

(Rich Przywarty - NWS Office of Meteorology, Dave Sankey - FAA Aviation Weather Research, Rich Wagoner - NCAR/RAP, Dave Rodenhuis - AWC, Skip Wright – OFCM, Dorothy Haldeman - NWS Office of Meteorology, Fred Mosher - AWC, Carl Knable – United Airlines, and Bill Dillon - Strategic Planning Consultant.)

The meeting results were positive, and three additional meetings of the coordination team quickly followed – May 9 at OFCM in Washington, June 16 at ATA Headquarters in Washington, and July 21 at the AWC in Kansas City. During that period, Dave Rodenhuis found “sponsors” for this effort – Bruce Carmichael of NCAR and Paul Smith of the NBAA. These two gentlemen were pivotal in setting up the fifth meeting of the coordination team, which was hosted by the NBAA at their Sept. 22-24, 1997, convention in Dallas.

By the time of the Dallas meeting, word was spreading throughout the aviation weather community about the strategic planning effort. As such, many of the key government, industry, and union stakeholders were in attendance:

Rich Przywarty - NWS, Skip Wright - OFCM, Dave Rodenhuis - AWC, Dave Whately – FAA, Rick Huewinkel – FAA, Jaiwon Shin – NASA, Mike Edwards – ARINC, John McCarthy – NCAR, Bob Massey – ALPA, Wayne Sand – Aviation Weather Consultant, Bill Sears – ATA, Warren Qualley – American Airlines, Dale Foster – Southwest Airlines, Carl Knable – United Airlines, Rich Wagoner _ NCAR, Ken Leonard – FAA, Lynn Sherretz – FSL, Dave Ladwig – USAF, Ton Carney – Purdue, Bill Phaneuf – ALPA, Bruce Carmichael – NCAR

To say that the meeting was contentious would be an understatement. There were many political and institutional issues serving as a backdrop to this meeting. Turf issues, leadership issues, and personalities all played a part in the three-day meeting. At times, it appeared as if the group would self-destruct. What came out of the meeting was a decision not to proceed with the strategic plan. This was a disappointment to Dave and many members of the coordinating team, but in lieu thereof, it was agreed to schedule an annual meeting of all the parties interested in aviation weather. The proposed meeting would provide a collaborative forum – one in which the using community could express its needs to government and academia, and the latter groups could report on progress toward meeting aviation weather goals. Bruce Carmichael of NCAR agreed to coordinate the annual meetings. Thus was born the “Friends of Aviation Weather” (subsequently, the word “Partners” would be added, but that is another story), and the five annual meetings leading up to this meeting of the FPAW.

Organizing and planning FPAW meetings has not been an easy task, and at times it appeared that the whole concept might fold. As such, there are a few people that should be recognized for their leadership roles and dedication to keeping this effort alive: first, Dave Rodenhuis, who had the courage to engage the using community, and the unending passion to change the system: Bruce Carmichael, for sustaining user engagement, and providing leadership and guidance for these meetings; Paul Fiduccia for his passionate and sometimes tenacious role as moderator; the NBAA for sponsoring this event; the folks from the FAA and NWS who support this meeting; and last, but not least, the members of the using community - trade groups, pilots, and union representatives.

Has FPAW made a difference? In 1997, we did not have the AWTT Board, IIDA, ITFA, EDR turbulence downlink, ADDS, the NCWF, and many other projects, too numerous to mention. We have an ongoing, positive dialogue on aviation weather between the public, private, and academic communities. But we have just scratched the surface, as many problems still need to be resolved. From a scientific standpoint, convective storms, turbulence, and icing continue as significant hazards to aviation as well as impacting the nation’s ATC system. Technical issues include cockpit weather uplink. There are also political issues of significance, one being the ongoing debate over public versus private roles in the provision of aviation weather services. There are also what I would like to call the “eternal” issues such as the need for adequate weather training for pilots and ground support personnel (this issue may be mitigated by cockpit uplink, however, even with the best of products, you still can’t teach good judgment).

What about the future? We are an “instant gratification” nation and we expect rapid results in everything that we do. In 1984, John McCarthy led an FAA sponsored Aviation Weather Task Force that issued a report with many recommendations for improving the aviation weather system. Several years later, John and I were having dinner one night in Montreal, and talking about the 1984 report. He said to me: “Carl, I used to think that we could solve all of our problems in 5 to 10 years. I now believe that a person is lucky to see one or two major problems solved in a career.” I think John was right in his assessment of the situation at the time – the late ‘1980’s. But I think FPAW has changed the aviation weather landscape in that we have seen the beginnings of significant change. It has taken a long time to get started, but we now have momentum, and it won't take as much time anymore! Using the collaborative efforts of FPAW,

it is within our grasp to see John McCarthy's original vision come to pass – solving major aviation weather problems in the 5 to 10 year time frame. We've gone from a time-scale of "infinity" to several years for making changes! That's real progress and should be our hope and goal for the future.

Thank you.