

# Small airports fill need in area flight plan

By Doug Funke  
staff writer

Not all aviation originates from major metropolitan airports.

Smaller facilities such as Big Beaver Airport, a private field in Troy owned by Anna Main, and the Oakland-Troy Airport, a county airport at the Troy/Birmingham city limit, rarely seem to draw attention unless a crash or forced landing occur there.

Crashes are actually rare — and most often are attributed to pilot error.

Both airports are used primarily by businesses, contributing to the growth and economic stability of neighboring communities. Yet the airports' safety and usefulness is sometimes questioned.

"Why don't people learn how to fly so they know what they're talking about," counters Main. A pilot herself since 1947, Main doesn't easily surrender preconceived notions of the non-flier.

"People are ignorant of aviation.

The average person doesn't fly and has odd ideas. They think anyone who flies is a daredevil.

"We've been in business since 1945, and I never considered it (airport) unsafe except when individuals made it unsafe," she added.

Chris Lentini, manager of Oakland-Troy and also a pilot, agrees that lack of knowledge is often at the root of the few complaints he receives.

"AIRPLANES SEEM to be a very visible item. They get the impression only the very rich fly around and use airplanes for personal pleasure. The opposite is true," he said.

Actually, business users predominate nowadays, said John Heige, who co-manages Big Beaver Airport, and Lentini.

"A lot of businesses in the community benefit from this airport being close by," Heige said. "These small, local airports — I don't want to say they're almost necessary — they're very convenient for people who do travel for business.

"You can go from here to another field somewhere else that isn't accessible by a commercial field," he said.

Lentini estimates that 80 to 90 percent of all air traffic at Oakland-Troy is business related. During the winter months, the facility averages 20 take-offs and 20 landings per day, he said. Those figures double during other seasons.

"AN AIRPORT is almost like an extension of the road system," Lentini said. "If you compare it to cars, it's as if every single car on the road is purely for fun. Like people don't drive to work.

"Most flying is done for business purposes. Most driving is done to and from work or for business purposes," he said.

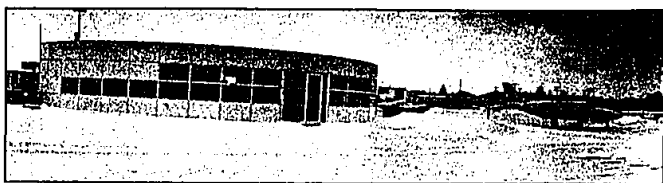
Both Oakland-Troy and Big Beaver airports were around long before industrial and residential development sprouted around them, Lentini and Main said.

"That's been the defense of airports all around the country," Lentini said. Typically, small airfields were built in isolated, open areas, then development occurred and the new arrivals complained about the airport, he said.

Main said she's experienced some problems in the past with developers and builders, erroneously telling would-be buyers that her airport would soon be closing.

"I let 'em know we're not going to close," she said. "I try to sympathize with 'em. Most people are reasonable. Every once in a while you get a crank. You can't do much with cranks."

EACH AIRSTRIP has only one runway. Big Beaver's is 2,400-feet long, Oakland-Troy's 3,800. Neither has a control tower. Pilots can activate runway lights at each by using a special radio frequency.



The new terminal at Oakland-Troy Airport was built last year after the county assumed ownership of the airport.

An occasional small jet will use Oakland-Troy; only props are allowed at Big Beaver. About 120 planes are stored at Oakland-Troy, Lentini said, about 50 at Big Beaver, said Main.

Main said she didn't know how many planes take off and land at her facility every day and wouldn't speculate on a number. Her airport is profitable, but not by a large margin, she added.

Oakland-Troy is close to breaking even financially, Lentini said, but not quite there. Both he and the county have invested too much in the facility to have it close, Lentini added.

Few residents or business people have expressed safety concerns about living and working so near their airports, the pair said.

The physical layout of their facilities seldom — if ever — contributes to a crash or forced landing, they added.

"I THINK statistics compiled by the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) attributes more than 90 percent to pilot error, misjudgments and so forth," Main said. "Rarely can you blame the airport unless they park a truck in the middle of the airport."

Lentini speculated that two recent crashes and a forced landing near

Oakland-Troy were caused by equipment failure and/or pilot error. "Airport design . . . was not a contributing factor in any of these accidents," he said.

Frank Roach, a pilot from Oak Park, said he finds Big Beaver to be a safe airport. "City fathers won't approve building off either end of the runway," he said.

Roach said he believes most accidents are caused by pilot error, which is preventable.

Ken Strobel, a Troy resident who occasionally flies out of Oakland-Troy on business, described the airport as absolutely safe.

"Oakland-Troy can be viewed as a reliever airport for Metro or Oakland-Pontiac for that matter," Strobel said. "It is the business airport for south Oakland County."

Main partly blames the media for sensationalizing the infrequent crashes which occur. "It's just like bad teen-agers. The only publicity the airport gets is when something happens bad."

"Understanding is probably the best thing we can do — explain or teach them (public) what we're doing," Lentini said. "A lot of times they become better neighbors, more understanding."



"An airport is almost like an extension of the road system," said Chris Lentini, who notes most traffic at Oakland-Troy is business-related.

Staff photos by  
Stephen Cantrell



Anna Main, owner of Big Beaver Airport, believes the smaller airports have outstanding safety records. The accidents that do occur are usually because of pilot error, she notes.

## INSIDE ANGLES

Know someone doing something notable? Let us know. Write: Inside Angles, Farmington Observer, 3203 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

**BRENDAN D. FITZPATRICK**, son of Brendan and Elaine Fitzpatrick of Farmington Hills, has received a four-year Army ROTC scholarship. He was selected for the scholarship on the basis of comprehensive tests, high school scholastic achievement and extracurricular activities. The scholarship covers full tuition, textbooks and laboratory fees and pays a monthly subsistence allowance. Upon graduation and completion of the ROTC program, he will be commissioned as a second lieutenant. Brendan is a student at the University of Notre Dame, Ind.

**STUDENTS FROM** area middle schools will be joining in a creative competition, turning snow into icy art for Franklin Village Merchants Association's "Snowcoming Snow Sculpture Contest," from 1-3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 26 in Franklin Village. Visitors are welcome to watch on Franklin Road, one mile west of Telegraph Road, south of 14 Mile Road.

**AIRMAN 1ST CLASS SUZANNE M. DELONGCHAMP**, daughter of Alice Delongchamp of Farmington Hills, has graduated from the U.S. Air Force communications operations specialist course at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. Graduates of the course learned how to operate communication systems and analyze the effectiveness of communication security measures. In addition,

they earned credits toward an associate degree in applied science through the Community College of the Air Force. She will now serve at RAF Chicksands, England, with the 6950th Electronic Security Group. Suzanne received an associate degree in 1983 from Oakland Community College, Pontiac.

**JANE PHILLIPS**, daughter of Sally and Charles Phillips of Farmington Hills and a 1983 graduate of Harrison High School, has been inducted into the Golden Key National Honor Society in recognition of scholastic achievement and excellence. Jane, a junior at Michigan State University, has also been honored by the Sphinx Chapter of Motar Board, the National Senior Honor Society at Michigan State University as one of the top seven percent of her class.

**DON JEAN**, a sophomore at the University of Michigan was selected to play in the All-American College Marching Band during the Presidential Inauguration activities in Washington, D.C. Events included "The 50th American Presidential Inaugural Gala," "The National Pageant of Young Americans," and "The 50th American Presidential Inaugural Parade."

**PATRICK J. McDEVITT**, of Farmington Hills was given dual honors as Salesman of the Year and National Salesman of the Year by the Dakin Co. at its annual sales meeting held in San Francisco. The awards are given in recognition of superior sales achievements as well as outstanding service contributions to the company and its customers. This is the second consecutive year McDevitt has won these awards and the first to do so in the company's history.

**ALICE NICHOLS**, a long time resident of Farmington, was presented the Jaycees Distinguished Service Award for her numerous contributions to the community in the field of the arts. She received the award at the Farmington area Jaycees 18th Annual Community Leadership Prayer Breakfast held at Glen Oaks Country Club. John Gross, WXYZ sports reporter, was the key note speaker.

**JOHN RONAYNE ANSTETT**, son of Bob and Estelle Anstett of Farmington Hills, has been awarded academic honors at Oakland University. Students granted this standing must earn a 3.5 grade point average.

**THE NORTH FARMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL** Band and Orchestra Boosters are sponsoring the annual citrus fruit sale during January with delivery scheduled for about March 1st. The cost is \$9 for a small box and \$18 for a large. The fruit is shipped from the Florida Indian River region. Proceeds from this sale are used mainly for scholarships and to help defray expenses for band trips. Band and orchestra members will be canvassing most neighborhoods to take orders. You may also order by calling the North Farmington High School Music Department at 625-8380 or by mail to 32900 13 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, 48018.

## Market helps sponsor child ID program

WDIV-TV's News 4, Pepsi, Farmer Jack and the Michigan Jaycees are joining together to sponsor a 15-week Child Identification Program to take place at all 65 Farmer Jack stores in Michigan.

The program began Jan. 19 and continues each weekend.

Inspired locally by News 4 Anchor Carmen Harlan's weekly "Child Search" reports and the growing national efforts to help find missing children, the Child ID Program offers parents the opportunity to bring their children to a Farmer Jack store and register for a free child identification

card. Two cards will be provided; one for the child featuring current information and a photograph, and the other for parents containing vital information about the child and the child's fingerprints.

By keeping fingerprints on record, in emergency situations parents can provide authorities with necessary information.

Experts estimate 1.6-million children are reported missing nationally each year. In Michigan, 4,000 children are reported missing annually.

Carmen Harlan's "Child Search" reports

air on News 4 at 5 and 11 p.m. each Monday and on News 4 at 11 p.m. on Fridays. The "Child Search" project, produced by Lisa Hahnower, is coordinated in conjunction with other NBC stations across the country. Since Channel 4 began the reports in April 1984, more than a dozen reunions have occurred nationally and four reunions have taken place locally.

For more information on the News 4/Pepsi/Farmer Jack Child ID program or the location of the nearest Farmer Jack, call 1-800-433-2652, weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## STANDARD BROKERAGE SERVICES, INC.

If you make your own investment decisions, now is the time to start trading with Standard Brokerage Services. You'll always get competitive discounts on commission fees as well as courteous service.

Simply call 643-6505 in the Detroit metro area; outside the Detroit area, call 1-800-227-1490; or in Indiana call 1-800-662-9589 to place your order. We'll execute it promptly. You'll receive trade confirmation both by phone and in writing. And you'll get a complete monthly statement. You can even settle your trade by using your Standard Federal checking or savings account.

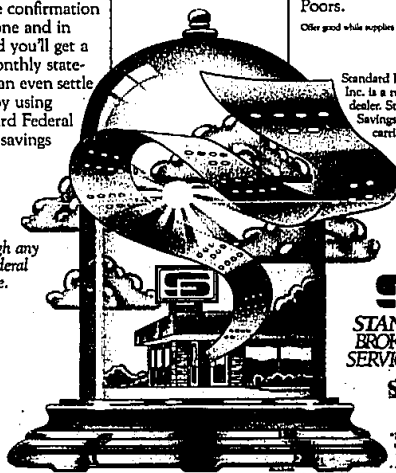
**SAVE UP TO 70%\***  
on commission fees

With one call you can place trades, get market information, and receive an immediate status report on your account. And qualified investors can borrow on margin at very reasonable rates. Now, for a limited time, with your next trade...Get your copy of the Outlook Annual Forecast special year end edition, published by Standard & Poors.

Other good while supplies last.

Standard Brokerage Services, Inc. is a registered broker-dealer. Standard Federal Savings is not. Accounts carried by National Financial Services Corporation.

Trade through any Standard Federal Savings office.



**STANDARD BROKERAGE SERVICES, INC.**  
SBC

\*70% savings based on a recent survey and on the dollar value of the transaction. 1/25/85.