

Business in Perspective

Panorama Flight



By **W. Stephen Dennis**

For 45 years, Panorama Flight Service Inc., at Westchester County Airport, has represented and served HPN and the needs of aviation consumers from their base of operations.

Originally built as a defense satellite base for

New York City, HPN began the first scheduled commercial service from White Plains, N.Y., in 1947, the same year it was handed over to Westchester County for commercial and civil aviation use. Today, the air-

port—with two intersecting runways, of which the longest is 6,550 feet—has one of the largest based corporate fleets in the United States. It serves several commercial service operators and has over 400 based aircraft, including helicopters. Passengers from New York and Connecticut frequent the airport for its nonstop commercial services to 10 major cities. In recent years, HPN enplaned and deplaned over one million passengers annually.

In addition to being a regional transportation hub, 50 major companies, including four fixed based operations, are located on the airport's property. Of the four FBOs, only Panorama Flight Service is a "legacy FBO," meaning it's been there from the beginning. All the other FBOs on the premises have changed hands several times, but Panorama has been a suc-



Photos Courtesy Panorama Flight Service

A recent aerial shot of Panorama's new cutting edge facility at Westchester County Airport.

cessful family aviation operation from the beginning.

When Gene Condreas, president of Panorama Flight, was just a little boy, his father, Ted Healy Jr., used to bring

him down to the airport to watch all of the different planes land and take-off. Panorama was about 12 years old back then.

Grandmother Healy ran the terminal building newsstand/candy counter portion of the family business, while Grandfather Theo Healy Sr., the company founder, and his father managed the flight operations out of a four-by-four foot cubical/counter across the way.

"We were known as the 'Candy Counter Airline,'" he recalled. "I think that Grandma's sales were generating more revenue than Grandpa and Dad's, but no one really cared because they were all having fun!"

At that time, Panorama offered scenic rides around the Statue of Liberty and over the "Asphalt Jungle" for \$9.75 per person. As time went on, young Gene Condreas recalled that one of his grandfather's favorite topics was Westchester County Airport, and the "family dream."

"The dream consisted of the day that saw the Healy family owning and operating a premier FBO that specialized in servicing the general aviation community of Westchester County," Condreas said.

Healy Sr. did make his airport business dreams come true. Condreas says they acquired Panorama's first twin-engine aircraft and converted the business to an "on-demand charter service," while continuing to develop and expand the company, increasing its staff and scope of operations.

The company is proud of their proven track record and the many excellent customer and aviation related business relationships they have established over the years. Most importantly, Panorama is proud of the fact that this family owned and operated business spans three generations. From their inception in 1958, as a New York City sightseeing operator, Panorama Flight Service has continued to grow and evolve.

In 1961, they initiated a successful charter service. Ted Healy Jr., who had served as chairman and secretary, took over the family business in 1964. In November 1981, he moved Panorama Flight's operation into a new and modern facility at HPN; that was the year Panorama became a full

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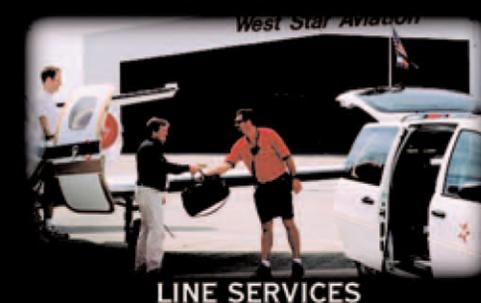
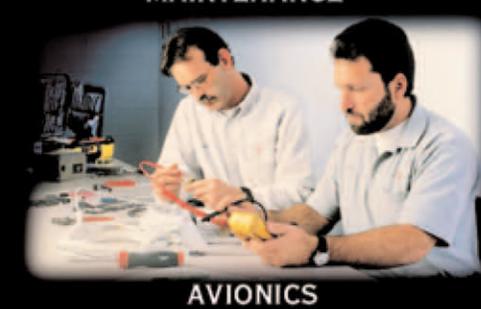
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service FBO.

At around that same time, Gene Condreas and his brothers, Ed Condreas and Ken Healy, joined the family business. Panorama began to serve the needs of the general aviation and corporate flying communities, offering the complete range of their current services. The only prob-



Ted Healy Sr. and Jr. in the early days of Panorama Flight.

lem was that they outgrew that new facility within a three-month period.

It was at this time that the three brothers began to fashion their own contribution to the long time "family dream."

"We began to shape and mold our own ideas into plans and goals," said Condreas. "The three of us wanted to further strengthen our family's commitment to the common vision that had been initially introduced to us by our forefathers."

Condreas said his grandfather had laid the foundation while his father had used all of his "wit, charm and business savvy to build a strong and sturdy platform they could continue to construct upon."

In March 1992, after many years as president, Healy Jr. retired and let the three brothers tinker with and reshape the family business's future.

New lease, new building

Seven years later, on Aug. 23, 1999, Panorama signed a 30-year lease with the County of Westchester for a 21-acre site on which they planned to build, own and operate a full service, one stop shopping facility, which had been their grandfather's dream.

"Our goal was to provide small aircraft users with a luxurious home away from home," said Condreas.

After the new lease was signed, Panorama invested approximately \$5,500,000 to construct new hangar and office facilities at HPN. They completed the new \$4,000,000 facility in 2000. Situated on 21.20 acres of land at the southwest end of the airport, it includes 132 outside tie-down spaces and 32 T-hangar units. The main hangar boasts 20,000 square feet of clear floor space plus an addi-

tional 10,000 square feet of office space.

"The general aviation community at Westchester has waited a long time for a facility like this," said Condreas. "We can now offer the luxury accommodations that are typically reserved for corporate aviation, and a facility that complements our high level of service."

For over 10 years, Panorama Flight Service has been serving the needs of major airlines operating out of HPN. The company has exclusive maintenance contracts with Northwest Airlines, USAir, American Airlines, United Airlines, Comair, USAir Express, Business Express and Continental Express.

"The improvements incorporated within our new facility have greatly enhanced our operational effectiveness and dramatically expanded our overall hangar and office areas of operations," said Condreas.

The key to success

While Gene Condreas serves as vice president and treasurer, and Ken Healy is responsible for managing the charter sales department.

Gene Condreas, who started working full time in the aviation business when he was 19, has performed virtually every job at every level within the organization. He has a reputation of being a dedicated, hard worker who has worked "shoulder to shoulder" with the line service employees on weekends to demonstrate his commitment to teamwork.

"The key to success is the customer," he said. "I'm constantly reminding my employees, 'You don't work for me; you work for the customer.' Because without the valued customer, there would be no paycheck."

Panorama is highly respected among its competition for being a long-term overall successful legacy FBO.

"It takes a strong and experienced management team, highly skilled and dedicated front-line employees, quality training programs, proven operating procedures, and state-of-the-art facilities to make an FBO work," said Condreas. "However, above all, it requires a steadfast commitment to consistently provide the highest level and quality of competitively priced aviation products and services attainable."

As a small, family-operated business, Panorama Flight is entrepreneurial, proactive and responsive to the needs of their customers. The company's reputation for providing exceptional service attracts aviation customers from the tri-state (Connecticut, New York and New Jersey) region and beyond.

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“Panorama employees thrive on opportunities to add value, be innovative, and go above and beyond what customers expect,” said Condreas. “Our operating philosophy, ‘Approach everything as if you were the customer,’ is more than an idealistic statement; it’s a time-honored practice that has allowed us to earn a reputation within the aviation community for providing exceptional aviation services and support.”

Panorama’s Flight Service offers flight training and aircraft rental services in a variety of modern, well-maintained aircraft. Their flight school/rental aircraft fleet consists of three new Cessna 172Rs, seven new 172SPs, one new 182S, one new Turbo 206, one 172RG, one Beechcraft Duchess and one Beechcraft A36 Bonanza.

The Cessna 172s are used for primary training/rental and the Cessna 182, Turbo 206 and 172RG and Beechcraft A36 Bonanza are used for complex training/rental. The Beechcraft Duchess is used for multi-engine training.

The in-house flight school offers both individual and classroom ground school training. They have a Computer Assisted Testing Service center that enables the flight trainers to offer computerized testing for a full range of FAA and FCC written exams. Panorama has the only computerized testing center at Westchester County Airport.



President Gene Condreas’ daughter, Christine Condreas, is head of customer service and human resources, with Joel Russell, airport manager.

“All of our flight school and rental aircraft are meticulously maintained in compliance with FAR Part 61 maintenance regulations,” said Condreas. “We also offer a pilot shop with an inventory that includes all training materials to educate the student from private pilot’s license through commercial rating.”

Panorama has been chartering executive aircraft since 1961. Over four decades of experience has enabled the company to become one of the most reliable and efficient charter and flight service providers in the northeast.

The FBO maintains an active aircraft sales department that serves the needs of customers in the tri-state area and beyond. Panorama Flight Service is a Cessna Sales Team Authorized

Representative. The company’s aircraft sales department supplements the lease-back and management programs for both the flight school and charter department. Through the first-hand involvement of their sales department, many of their aircraft rental and charter customers ultimately reach their goal of becoming aircraft owners.

Panorama believes that proper training is essential to maintaining their commitment to excellence.

“We utilize the Professional Line Service Training Program that has been developed by the Aviation Training Institute (Denver),” Condreas said. “The program is supplemented using the ExxonMobil Line Service Training Program. In addition to our own internal programs, our pilots and maintenance technicians receive initial and recurrent training at SimuFlite and Flight Safety International.”

As a result of the wide variety of services the company has to offer, a number of career paths/progressions are available at Panorama, which helps them attract and retain quality employees.

Panorama participates in several jet fuel discount programs, and is the preferred FBO of the Corporate Aircraft

Association at Westchester County Airport.

The company was recently honored to be among the top ExxonMobil dealers in the country, having won, for a third year, ExxonMobil’s Tiger Spirit program’s Silver Award for Excellence. Under this program, ExxonMobil dealers are rated in the areas of customer service, image, quality assurance and business promotion.

Whatever their formula for success, one thing is certain; Panorama Flight has been, is and always will be a family cooperation, and will continue providing exceptional customer service. Gene Condreas gives his home phone number out on his business cards, so that he can be reached 24/7. How many FBO presidents do you know who can say the same?

For more information, visit www.flypfs.com or call (914) 328-9800.

W. Stephen Dennis is the founder, CEO and president of Aviation Resource Group International, a leader in aviation advisory services since 1975. He has more than 25 years of varied aviation industry and executive and senior management experience covering specialized areas such as operational efficiency, profitability conversions, business development, strategic planning, marketing and corporate restructuring. He can be contacted at Steve@AirportJournals.com.

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