BACKGROUND

A visit to the University of California, Institute of Transportation Studies library on the Berkeley campus revealed a treasure trove of published proceedings for the first twenty-four short courses, December 1960 through January 1983. These proceedings provide an insight into the topics of the times, the individuals involved and the evolution of the course content and location. This review was gleaned from those proceedings and the infallible memory of the writer who is still able to do two things at the same time - but often forgets what the second thing was.

The time period from the 25th course to the present time is "modern" history.

It includes the move to the Monterey Marriott Hotel, the transformation from CAAE to SWAAE, University of Arizona association and the present Monterey Plaza Hotel location. All this is well documented in the current SWAAE archives.

So now to the real history!

COURSE HISTORY: 1960 – 1983

In 1959, Fred Taplin, Airport Manager at the Hayward Air Terminal, was Program Chairman for the California Association of Airport Executives (CAAE). He was looking for a way to professionalize the winter conference which had become a social occasion rather than a learning opportunity. Walt Gillfillan was a Research Engineer and Lecturer at the UC Berkeley Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering (ITTE). At a breakfast meeting at the Air Terminal, the two concocted a short course format under the auspices of the University and in cooperation with the CAAE. The first course was held on the campus of Fresno State College, December 1-3, 1960. One of the presentations was by Walt Gillfillan and Professor Robert Horonjeff entitled, “Developing an Airport Master Plan”, the new rage at the time; Another by Leigh Fisher, “Airport Leases and Contracts”.

The course remained at Fresno State until 1966 when, for one time (January 1966) it was held at the ITTE Engi-

neering Field Station, Richmond. Fresno was a well-liked location, particularly for the Sands Motel where the Associations president was found one evening swimming with the young beauties behind the glass walled pool visible from the bar – fully clothed with suit and tie. However, the daytime academic structure remained un-tarnished.

There was one separate seminar offered in June 1966 at the University’s Conference Center at Lake Arrowhead. It was specifically focused on airport finance matters and was a test to see if a single-subject seminar would be a preferred alternative. It was not.

Another location was tried at the Alisal Ranch in Santa Barbara County (near Solvang) in January 1969. Its hard-to-find and to reach site was compounded by a giant winter rain storm. A significant number of the speakers did not arrive as scheduled, or not at all. Scratch another option.

A new location noted in the proceedings was Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove. The Short Course remained here from 1970 until the last year of the publication of proceedings in January 1983. Here, the courses flourished in the rugged venue of “Camp Asilomar”. Some of the memorable aspects were:

- No telephones; one pay phone in our Surf and Sand bivouac area
- Four men to a room, at least one will snore. To be avoided was Dick Zettel from the University and an unbelievable trumpeter from LAX operations
- No TV. Entertainment was the last guy in at night (short sheet) and four guys trying to share one head in the morning
- Jim Mummert’s well run Happy Hour with beverages magically found in the all-dry City of Pacific Grove.

Walking in the rain from the bivouac, to the mess hall, to the sessions, to the mess hall, to the Happy Hour, to the mess hall and then to the bivouac --- in January!

PROGRAM COMMITTEES

The success of the courses depended on the creativity of the Program Committee members in identifying current topics and appropriate, gifted speakers. Looking back at the individual pro-
grams, there is a remarkable similarity to today’s SWAAAE courses 25 thru 50. Maybe there are less “how to do” and more esoteric management topics that relate better to the management of more complex facilities. Yet, aircraft noise, lease conditions, master planning and land use compatibility continue to appear regularly even today.

In the early years, the composition of the Program Committee changed very little. Because of aftermath of WWII and travel costs, the Committee tended to be all male, all aviators, all white and most from northern California. The following is a sample from the Committee that planned the January 1975 Short Course:

- Chair, Bill Partain, Napa
- Jim Brians, Livermore
- Bill Critchfield, Torrance
- Ray Foreacher, Marin County
- Jack Tippie, Los Angeles County
- Frank Whitcomb, OAK

**COURSE SPEAKERS: A SELECT LIST OF FAMILIAR NAMES**

Approximately 400 speakers have supported the Association’s short course efforts over the 50-year span. Among these are names that are a trip down memory lane in these early years. Many also served as president of the Association, as well as several different airport positions. Here is a selected group from the first 24 short courses:

- Carl Hand, FAA, ADO
- Leigh Fisher, Consultant
- John Meacham, LGB
- Merrill Day, SAN
- Al Huber, Kern County
- Francis Fox, LAX
- Joe Crotti, Division of Aeronautics
- Clyde Barnett, Division of Aeronautics
- Arvin Basnight, FAA, Region
- Fred Taplin, Hayward
- Glen Plymote, OAK
- Woody Woodruff, ONT
- Pietrasanta, Consultant
- Bert Lockwood, LAX
- Frank Happy, FAA, Bay TRACON
- Ed Thurmond, Yuma
- Jim Nissen, SJC
- Bob Bresnahan, SNA
- Bill Shea, Division of Aeronautics
- Don Flynn, OAK
- Augie Compton, Consultant
- A.J. Parry, Consultant
- Jim Mummert, Hayward
- Jim Hunter, Santa Clara
COURSE SPEAKERS: A SELECT LIST OF FAMILIAR NAMES,
Cont.

County
R.C. Smith, Modesto
Herman Bliss, FAA, Region

Ralph Tonseth, FAT
Pat Farlin
Raul Regalado, SJC

Robert Wanamaker, El Monte
Walter Fell, San Luis Obispo

EPILOGUE

For older members of SWAAAE some of these events and names will bring back fond memories. For younger members, the events and names only represent what was, but isn’t any more. Be assured, however, that what we know today was made possible by those before us. Their legacy is the expectation that we should be able to do better because of their efforts.

SWAAAE wants to extend a special thanks to Will Gillfillan for kindly taking the time to reflect back on the history of the conference.