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Planes barely miss collision

United Press International
IRVING — Inadequate air traffic control computer systems are creating an "incredibly dangerous situation" that is responsible for incidents such as the near-collision of two jetliners over Texarkana, officials of the Airline Passengers Association said Wednesday.

APA President James R. Philon said near-collisions and computer failures that cause loss of communication between airports and pilots are becoming more common. The Aviation Safety Institute reports there are as many as 20 narrow misses a day, he said.

Two American Airlines jets, carrying 230 people, came within 600 feet of each other Tuesday night when the Fort Worth "en route traffic control" center, one of 20 in the nation, was without computer capabilities — knocking out radar screens — for four minutes.

Federal Aviation Administration officials were investigating to determine if the problem was related to a weekend outage at the Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport. Computer failure left the airport without radar for eight minutes and without radio communication for four minutes.

"It's an incredibly dangerous situation, incredibly dangerous,"

Philon said. "And it goes beyond DFW. Outages across the country are incredible. They're sitting there with worn-out equipment — Korean War vintage — and sometimes not even parts are available.

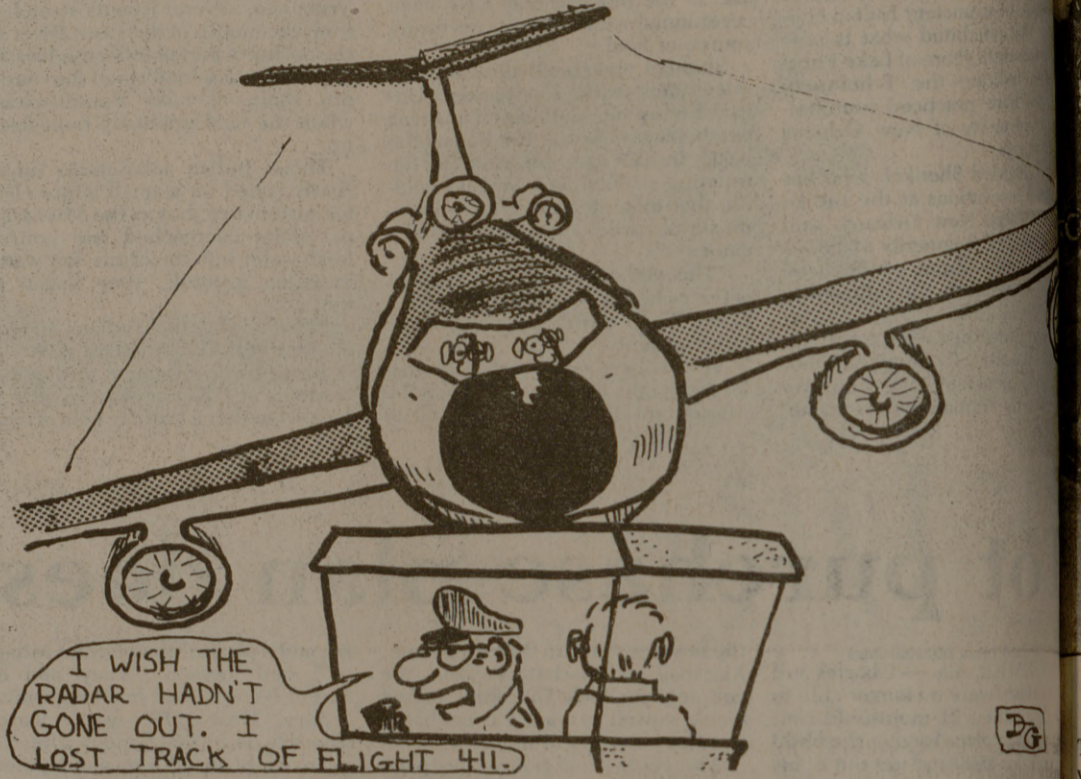
"The most sickening part of all this is there's 3.8 billion dollars in a trust fund in Washington that's earmarked for just this kind of improvement. And it's sitting there not being spent because they're buying artwork in Atlanta to put in the new terminal."

APA spokesman Dean Medders said the FAA would provide more sophisticated computers in 1980 but that an air controllers organization said the new system would be outdated quickly. The auxiliary computer system is even worse, he said.

"We're dealing here with a backup system — broad band — that's 20 years old," he said. "It's not as good as the primary system but with all these outages, it's needed."

FAA spokesman George Burlage said the weekend computer problem was caused by a power fluctuation and failure of the auxiliary computer but no cause had been determined for the Tuesday night problem.

The planes, both "stretch" version Boeing 727s, were inbound to Dallas from Little Rock and Nashville.



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TRILOGY: PART I

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Many Americans losing sleep

United Press International
CHICAGO — About 15 to 20 million Americans suffer chronically from insomnia, according to a recent report in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Drs. Thomae J. Coates and Carl

E. Thoresen of Stanford University reported that nonprescription medications have little impact on insomnia, except for "placebo" effects, and hypnotic drugs obtained by prescription often lead to dependence, tolerance and escalating doses.

High Court backs family in debt case

United Press International
AUSTIN — A low-income family which pledged its television, refrigerator, and washer and dryer as security for a loan to meet living expenses is entitled to \$26,000 in damages because

the loan company solicited criminal charges against the man to force payment of the debt, the Texas Supreme Court ruled Wednesday.

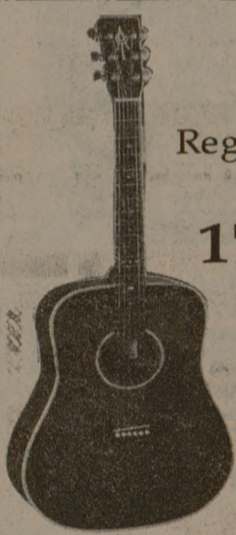
The court, without written comment, upheld lower court decisions awarding the \$26,000 to James M. Myers, a Dallas resident who borrowed \$298.25 to help meet living expenses while he lived in Wood County.

Myers had obtained the loan from Northeast Texas Credit Corporation, headed by Bruce

Lloyd. Lloyd and his daughter Clara Ziegler, were accused of Myers' suit of malicious criminal prosecution and unreasonable collection efforts.

Myers borrowed the money in October 1973 and signed a note for 24 monthly payments, pledging his household appliances as security.

He moved to Lamar County in April 1974, where he failed to make enough money to meet his living expenses and fell behind on his payments.



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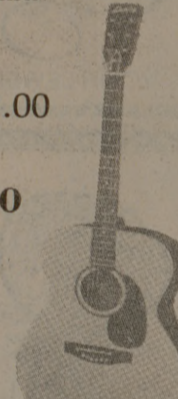
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Accused hijacker tested for sanity

United Press International
EL PASO — A Massachusetts teen-ager charged in a weekend attempt to hijack an American Airlines jetliner to Iran has been transferred to a Missouri hospital to undergo tests to determine whether he is "presently insane."

Gerald James Hill Jr., 18, of Chester, Mass., was transferred to the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners at Springfield Tuesday on the order of U.S. District Judge William S. Sessions.

Hill's court-appointed lawyer, El Paso attorney John Langford, submitted a motion Monday seeking an evaluation for Hill, who was discharged from the Army in October for "mental reasons," according to an FBI agent.

Langford also filed a motion Tuesday seeking postponement of Hill's preliminary hearing before a U.S. magistrate, which had been set for Thursday.

Langford's first motion requested that Hill be examined "to determine if the defendant is presently insane or otherwise so mentally incompetent as to be unable to understand the proceedings against him" or to aid in his own defense.

Although Sessions ordered the center to evaluate Hill "as soon as possible," the defendant could remain at the Missouri facility up to 90 days.

Hill is charged with assaulting, intimidating and threatening crew members on the Los Angeles-bound flight last Saturday. If convicted, he could face up to 20 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. If evidence is presented indicating a deadly weapon was used in the assault, he could face a maximum life sentence upon conviction.

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