

# Air Illinois cuts, others resume Lincoln flights

By Tricia Waters

For some airlines serving Lincoln, flights are running nearly as well as they did before the air traffic controllers strike in August.

However, other airlines are cutting flights and laying off workers, locally and nationwide.

Many airlines slashed flights to major U.S. airports because of Federal Aviation Administration regulations limiting the amount of air traffic the busy airports could handle during the air strike.

Other airlines have experienced substantial drops in passenger numbers and face skyrocketing fuel costs. Therefore, they have cut flights for economic reasons.

Air Illinois indefinitely suspended all services to Lincoln, effective Tuesday. The airline had offered two daily round trips to St. Louis.

Jane Small, Air Illinois city manager, said she laid off four workers in the customer service department. The workers were placed on furlough and could be rehired later, she said.

Air Illinois President Roger Street said earlier the carrier hasn't deleted plans for future service to Lincoln.

The airline is retaining its counter space at Lincoln Municipal Airport.

Jack Radican, United Airlines city manager, said about 2,100 United workers will be laid off nationwide, probably by the end of this week. About 800 flight attendants and 1,300 ground personnel will get furloughs, he said. Some of the workers will fill vacancies elsewhere, Radican said.

After the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Union began its strike, United reduced its two daily round trips from Lincoln to Denver to one trip. United's three daily Chicago round trips were decreased to one trip.

Radican said the cutbacks might continue until April, or they might end in October. The number of flights depends on the FAA schedule that airports must follow, he said.

Continental Airlines will return to its normal schedule of two daily flights to Denver Oct. 1, Continental city manager Nila Spencer said. The airline cut one flight on Aug. 4 because of the PATCO strike and increased flight costs, Spencer said.

"We anticipate that once the schedule is posted on a permanent basis, it'll be easier for people to see that

flights are running normally," she said.

Airlines have had trouble with the media's emphasis on dangers that PATCO reports, Spencer said. Some regular customers have been deterred from flying, she said.

Air Midwest is another airline returning to normal operations. The airline cut one of its four daily flights to Kansas City last month because of high fuel costs and a decrease in passengers, city manager Dennis Bowers said.

"It seems like boardings are approaching the pre-strike level," he said. The airline normally boards about 800 people a month in Lincoln, he added.

"We look for things to pick up, especially since Air Illinois decreased their services and Continental is down," Bowers said.

Lincoln's Frontier service escaped flight reductions and city manager Jonnie Jones said the company doesn't foresee any. Frontier offers nine daily round trips to Denver and St. Louis.

Although services have decreased, the city managers said they have plenty of available seats on flights out of Lincoln.

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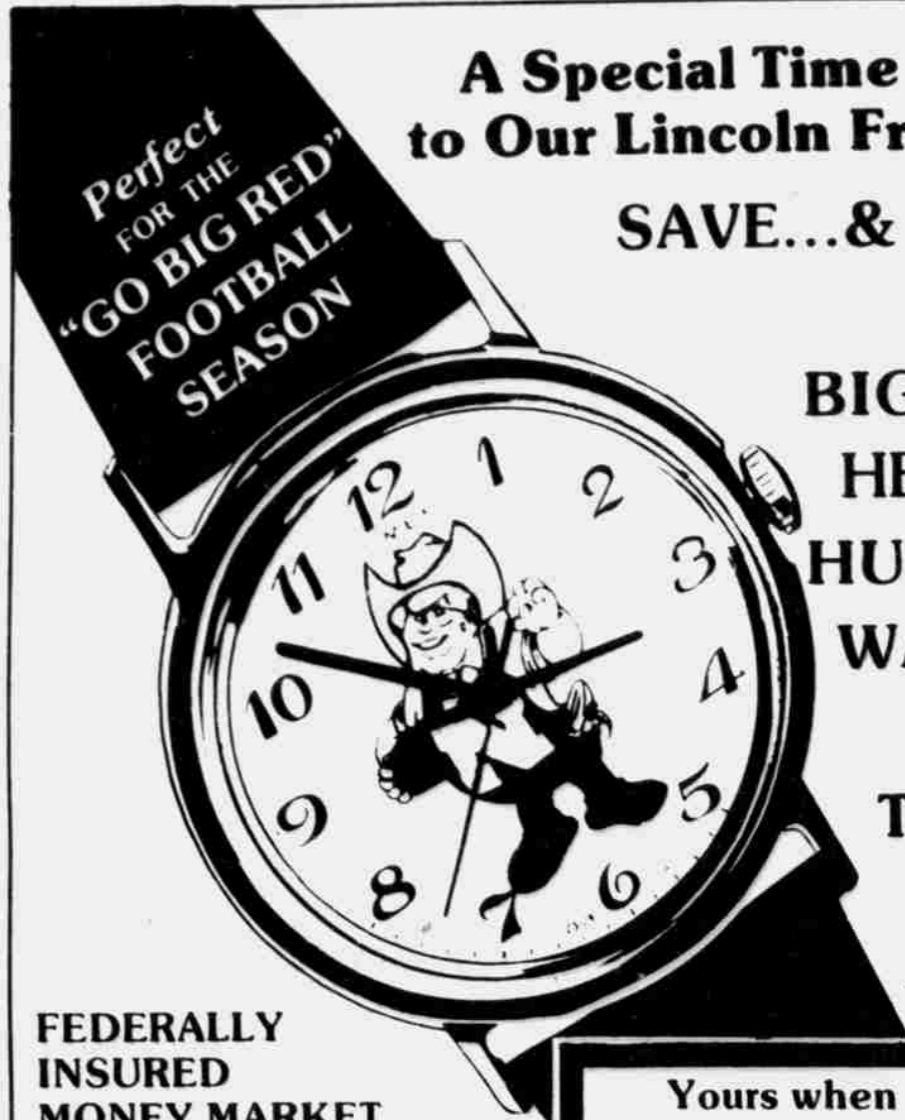
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