

Several planes held at O'Hare during icy weekend weather

Pilot concern motivates flight cancellations

CHICAGO — American Eagle Airlines canceled more than a dozen flights out of Chicago after some pilots balked at flying in icy weather in the same type of plane that crashed a month ago in Indiana.

American Eagle said it canceled 14 commuter flights from O'Hare Airport on Sunday after the pilots demanded more weather safety information before they would take off in the ATR turboprops.

Three other pilots previously balked at taking off from O'Hare, also citing concerns about flying the French- and Italian-made ATR in foul weather, American Eagle said. Those flights were also canceled.

"No one refused to fly," said Bob Baker, chairman of AMR-American

Eagle. "It's like when a pilot says there's a mechanical problem with his airplane. When a pilot says, 'I think there's something wrong with this airplane, let's check it out,' that's not a refusal to fly. I think that's a legitimate function of command."

The American Eagle ATR-72 that went down in Roselawn, Ind., on Oct. 31 was flying to Chicago in freezing, rainy weather when it plunged to the ground. All 68 people aboard were killed.

Federal investigators have not determined the cause of the crash, but some pilots have suggested ice on the wings might have been responsible.

After the crash, the Federal Aviation Administration issued rules aimed at reducing the time ATR planes spend flying in icy weather.

The FAA acknowledged that some pilots have expressed concern about flying the ATR until the cause of the crash is found. But the agency said in a statement that it "would not per-

mit continued operation of these aircraft if it had reason to believe that the aircraft were unsafe."

At the same time, the FAA said: "The pilot in command is responsible for and is the final authority as to the safety of any flight."

The Airline Pilots Association said earlier this week it would "back up 100 percent the decision of its members not to fly in conditions that they feel are unsafe."

"Do not be intimidated into flying a flight that you feel should not depart," the union said in a taped message to pilots.

American Eagle said the ATR-72 and smaller ATR-42 have successfully flown 3.7 million times since they went into operation in 1985 and have flown safely in icy weather around the world.

ATR Marketing of Chantilly, Va., which markets the ATR in the United States, defended the planes as "among the world's safest aircraft."

Postal rates set to increase after losing \$1.7 billion in '94

WASHINGTON — The cost of mailing a letter is going up after the holidays — from 29 cents to 32.

The independent Postal Rate Commission approved the Postal Service request for the January increase on Wednesday.

But the commission turned down a plan to raise nearly all postage rates by the same percentage. Instead larger increases were approved for mailing printed matter, advertising and parcels. The increase for heavier first-class items was held lower. The package is expected to bring the Postal Service \$4.7 billion in added income in 1995, said Rate Commission Chairman Edward J. Gleiman. The post office lost \$1.3 billion in the just-completed fiscal year and \$1.7 billion the year before.

"The Postal Service clearly established its need for additional revenues," Gleiman said.

The increase is expected to cost the typical household an extra 60 to 75 cents per month.

The matter now goes back to the post office's governing board, which is expected to hold a special meeting in December to set a date for the increase — perhaps as early as Jan. 1.

The governors could reject the commission decision and ask it to

reconsider. That is unlikely, however, since the ruling has few major differences from the Postal Service's request and the agency urgently needs additional income.

Art Sackler of the Mailer's Council, a coalition of large mailing organizations that had spearheaded the original rate proposal, said that plan would have been preferable but characterized the decision as "neither great nor terrible."

But Jonah Gitlitz, president of the Direct Marketing Association, said higher rates for advertising mail will require businesses to look to other ways of delivering their message, causing a drop in mail volume and hurting the Postal Service.

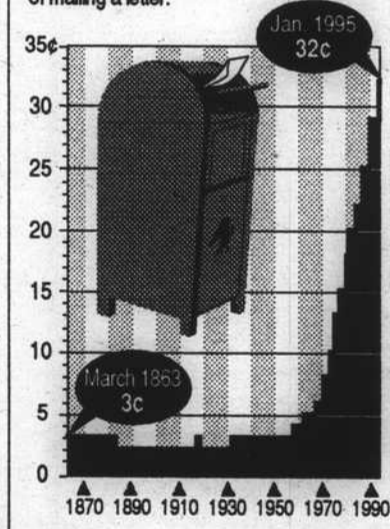
The Postal Service's request, sent to the commission in March, urged what amounted to a 10.3 percent rate increase for all types of mail.

The commission held the increase to 8.9 percent for a first-class stamp by setting a 20-cent post card rate instead of the 21-cent proposed by the post office and sticking with the current 23-cent price for each extra ounce of a first-class item. The post office had wanted the extra ounces to cost a quarter each.

To make up the difference, the commission proposed increases of 14

Stamp increase

The price of a first-class stamp will increase from 29 cents to 32 in January. With the increase, the typical household will spend an extra 60 to 75 cents per month. The cost of mailing a letter:



percent for second-class items such as magazines and newspapers and third-class advertising mail. Parcel Post would jump 18 percent and the special library rate would be increased a whopping 70 percent.

News... in a Minute

Speculation grows around O.J.

LOS ANGELES — O.J. Simpson cannot get a fair trial if his ex-wife's sister repeatedly accuses him of murder on television, his lawyers said Wednesday in a heated courtroom exchange.

"We've seen what appears to be kind of a media blitz," defense lawyer Johnnie Cochran Jr. said. "What has happened now is the court can hardly turn on the television without seeing Denise Brown."

Nicole Brown Simpson's sister has implicated Simpson, as has the father of victim Ronald Goldman. Both appeared on television Tuesday night.

Ms. Brown, 37, said she believed Simpson committed the June 12 murders outside Ms. Simpson's Brentwood home.

And during an interview this week on ABC's "Good Morning America," Goldman's father, Fred Goldman, echoed her suspicions.

Dark history of ship ends

NAIROBI, Kenya — The Achille Lauro's history of misfortune ended in flames Wednesday on the Indian Ocean, where nearly 1,000 passengers and crew fled in lifeboats as the listing cruise ship burned.

At least one death was reported. The ship burned into the night, tilting 40 degrees over to its port side off the coast of Somalia.

The Achille Lauro gained notoriety when Palestinian hijackers killed an American passenger in 1985. Its troubled past includes the death of an Italian fisherman whose boat was rammed in 1971 and two passengers who drowned trying to escape a 1981 fire.

The ship was carrying 581 passengers and 404 crew, said Capt. Ferdinando Lolli, a port official in Rome. Most of the crew was Italian, and the passengers mainly South African, German, Dutch and British. Ten Americans were on board — eight crew and a couple that boarded in Genoa. All were reported safe.

Israel recognizes same-sex couples

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Supreme Court handed Israel's gay community a major victory Wednesday in a landmark ruling recognizing same-sex couples.

The 50-page decision forces the national airline El Al to grant the partner of flight attendant Jonathan Danielevitz the same annual free tickets and other benefits given to husbands and wives of heterosexual employees.

The case had wound its way up Israel's court system for five years, reaching the Supreme Court after El Al appealed a regional labor court ruling in favor of Danielevitz.

El Al spokesman Nachman Kleiman said the company would "honor and abide by the decision in its entirety." He said there was no precedent for El Al extending the rights to unmarried couples.

Gay rights activists said the ruling would have widespread significance in Israel, which remains a relatively conservative society on homosexuality.

Prisoner beaten with Dahmer dies

PORTAGE, Wis. — A prisoner who was bludgeoned along with serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer died Wednesday after being taken off life support.

Jesse Anderson, sentenced to life in prison for killing his wife, died at University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison, hospital spokeswoman Lisa Brunette said.

Dahmer, who admitted killing 17 young men and boys, mutilating and sometimes cannibalizing his victims, died shortly after the attack Monday in a prison restroom he was assigned to clean.

Prison officials said Christopher Scarver was the sole suspect in the slayings. The 25-year-old man is serving a life term for murder.

Smith declined to discuss a motive for the attack or what investigators had learned in interviews.

Scarver, who was convicted of killing a former co-worker at the Wisconsin Conservation Corps during a robbery, had used an insanity defense at his 1992 trial.

He told one psychiatrist that he was the son of God and had heard voices that prompted him to murder Steven J. Lohman, 27.

Army ranks reduced

WASHINGTON — The Army, in a major reorganization that will cut 18,000 troops from its ranks, is prepared to deactivate the headquarters of the historic 1st Infantry Division in Kansas and the 4th Infantry Division in Colorado.

The proposals also include deactivating three combat brigades in Hawaii, Alaska and Kentucky, Pentagon officials said Wednesday. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

The reorganization plan does not involve closing any bases at this time.

Defense Secretary William Perry visited Capitol Hill on Wednesday to discuss the proposals. Given the sensitive political nature of the changes, officials cautioned that some last-minute changes were possible, and that it could be next week before a formal announcement is made.

Evangelist finishes sentence

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Evangelist Jim Bakker becomes a free man Thursday after nearly five years of incarceration in prison, a halfway house and finally at home for stealing millions of dollars from his followers.

The preacher whose smiling face once appeared on television in millions of homes across the country plans to keep a low profile, said his attorney, Jim Toms. He will remain secluded inside the home in the North Carolina mountains he has shared with his son during his house arrest.

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Commodity prices fall

WASHINGTON — Steadily falling hog prices and a sharp drop for corn pushed the index of prices received by farmers for their goods to a six-year low in November, the Agriculture Department reported Wednesday.

Although cattle prices rose slightly, they still remained low. Compared with November 1993, prices were 8.3 percent lower. The index is the lowest since April 1988.

The survey does not show the full impact of tropical storm Gordon on prices for sweet corn, tomatoes and other Florida-grown vegetable crops. Vegetable prices were surveyed in mid-November, just as the storm began pummeling southern Florida.

The influence of Florida's crop on national prices will be stron-

ger in December and January, because Florida grows half the nation's winter vegetables.

From October to November, prices also dropped for lemons and grapefruit while rising for eggs, tomatoes and potatoes. Compared with November 1993, prices fell for hogs, cattle, corn and oranges while rising for lettuce, cotton and wheat.

An overabundance of hogs, brought on in part by the growth of corporate mega-farms, caused prices to reach a 14-year-low. They fell to \$28 a hundredweight, down \$3.90 from October and \$14.50 from a year ago.

Corn prices fell 9 cents a bushel after the Agriculture Department earlier in November forecast a record crop of 10 billion bushels.