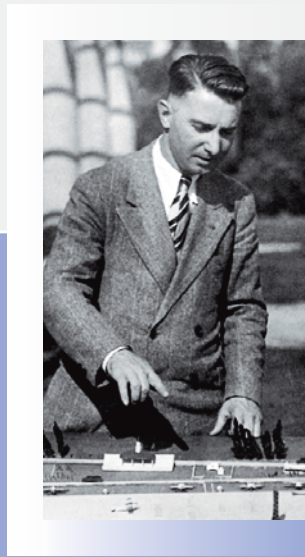


LAWA Executive Directors A Parade of Visionaries



Clifford W. Henderson

1928 >

1938 >

Col. Richard Barnitz



The first airport director was an aviation entrepreneur whose National Air Races played a significant role in selection of the current site of Los Angeles International Airport.

Clifford W. Henderson was named the airport's first director in 1928 when the City Council selected the Mines Field site. Henderson tirelessly promoted the economics of aviation—carrying passengers, cargo and mail, and stimulating manufacturers to design bigger, faster, more economical airplanes. Henderson, often called “the Barnum of aviation,” twice returned his National Air Races to Los Angeles. He headed these races from 1928 to 1939—originating what was to become the famed Bendix Trophy and Thompson Trophy competitions. The National/Cleveland Air Races were eventually discontinued because of World War II and the advent of the Jet Age that brought aircraft too fast for closed-course/pylon-style racing.

When Henderson left the airport to devote full time to the Air Races, he was succeeded by Colonel Richard Barnitz, a U.S. Army Air Corps veteran and former barnstormer from post-World War I days. Barnitz presided over Mines Field expansion and renegotiation of the land's lease with the city to 50 years. He also headed field operations when the

Air Races returned in Los Angeles in 1933. He retired in 1940.

Woodruff (Woody) DeSilva, who had been one of the original investigators researching airport sites in 1927, succeeded Barnitz. DeSilva's tenure was marked by further airport expansion to meet the growing demands of commercial aviation. But World War II, already a reality in Europe, was affecting Los Angeles Airport and particularly the aircraft manufacturers located on the airport, who built planes for Great Britain, France, Holland, Canada and China. Flying schools at the airport became popular attractions. With the U.S. entry into World War II in December 1941, the airport was taken over by the federal government in January 1942. DeSilva remained through the war years as airport director. He was also Ontario Airport Manager from 1960 to 1963.

When there were *two* jobs – airport general manager and airport director – Clarence M. Young was general manager from 1947 to 1950. Young succeeded DeSilva. He had come from Pan American World Airways and returned to PanAm in 1950.

The atmosphere of post-war America was reflected when Admiral John W. “Blackjack” Reeves, retired head of the Naval Air Training Command, served as airport general manager from 1950 to 1952. However,



Woodruff "Woody" DeSilva

1940 >



Adm. John W. "Blackjack" Reeves (left)

1950 >



Francis T. Fox

1959 >

Clarence Young (seated)



1944 >

Robert A. McMillan



1954 >



John J. Driscoll

a return to “business as usual” was recognized when Robert A. McMillan, former assistant Los Angeles City Attorney, served as Department of Airports General Manager from 1952 to 1959.

Under the management of Francis T. Fox, airport director from 1959 to 1968, Los Angeles International Airport, with the designation LAX, entered the Jet Age. Fox is credited with providing the impetus for the Jet Age terminal, dedicated in 1961. He supervised much of the airport’s expansive building programs that ensured LAX world-class status in the 1960s. Fox was a politically sensitive director who frequently spoke out on the significance of the airport in the region’s economy. Fox left the then-Department of Airports to take over all aviation operations and development for tycoon Howard Hughes’ Hughes Tool Co.

The longest-tenured airport director was Clifton A. Moore, who began work at LAX in 1958 as a building superintendent and retired as executive director in 1993. (*See separate Clif Moore feature.*)

Succeeding Moore was John J. Driscoll, who came to the airport from the City of Los Angeles Personnel Department. With his extensive management and administrative experience, Driscoll was the “right person at the right time.” Under his leadership, Los Angeles World Airports’ operating revenues increased 66 percent from 1992-1998. Operating income increased a dramatic 329 percent during the same period. Driscoll spoke out strongly about the need for Southern California regional airports to handle the Southland’s escalating air travel demand—making it clear that LAX alone could not meet the region’s future needs. Driscoll revived dormant plans to build the \$270-million, twin-terminal complex at Ontario International Airport, which opened in September 1998.

When Driscoll retired in 1999, he was succeeded by the present executive director, Lydia H. Kennard. The first African-American woman to head a major multi-airport system in the U.S., Kennard has a multi-faceted background in architecture, urban and facilities planning, engineering, construction and real estate law.

Her recognition of the role of airports as community neighbors, as leading economic forces in the region, and as focal points for domestic and international travel has served Kennard well. Moreover, she proved a calm, well-informed leader after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Three of the four aircraft that crashed that day were destined for Los Angeles. Since those historic, tragic days, Kennard has overseen the successful implementation of a myriad of federally mandated security measures, while balancing the need for passenger convenience at LAWA’s airports.

1968 >

Clifton A. Moore



1993 >

1999 >

Lydia H. Kennard

