

TO BAD THIS CAME TOO LATE....



It could have saved a Lindbergh Field controller much embarrassment. I believe it was in 1972 that Walt Martin, new to the air traffic control system, took his first “fam” flight. Walt took this flight on the newly established American Airlines DC10 non-stop service from San Diego to Boston. He was welcomed aboard by the First Officer, and settled in the jump seat when the Captain arrived carrying his flight case and a cup of steaming, fragrant coffee. He also greeted Walt, placed the case on the deck next to his seat, placed the coffee cup in a convenient spot, opened the case, took out the papers necessary for his pre-flight preparations and started them. Walt, remember this is his first time in a jump seat, first time in a cockpit, was eager to see everything about the flight and leaned forward, a bit too far forward. He collided with the coffee cup, the cup turned over, the coffee flew out – directly into the still open flight case. As Walt recounted this, the pilot was very courteous, and made every attempt possible to dry out and salvage the case and the contents. I believe Walt made some offer to help, which was politely refused. Walt wisely spent several hours in silence as the DC10 bored through the skies to Boston. Although I am sure this permanently affected the Captain’s opinion of air traffic controllers and quite possibly his opinion of the ATC system, we must give him and American Airlines credit for not ejecting Walt from the cockpit prior to takeoff. He may have been waiting for a chance to do so after takeoff, but let us not consider that in our judgment. As I recall, Walt never did take another “fam” trip, at least not from San Diego.