

Davis Yogi started his leadership of Hawaii's airports in 2002. As a business owner, specifically an aviation business owner, I was glad to see Jerry Matsuda move on but another individual without any aviation experience was concerning. I initially found Davis to be approachable and open to discussing issues that effected our business. I was hopeful.

At Kahului Airport, there was an issue that was becoming more critical over time. The FAA nationally was concerned about "runway incursions" at airports across the country. A runway incursion is any occurrence at an aerodrome involving the incorrect presence of an aircraft, vehicle, or person on the protected area of a surface designated for the landing and takeoff of aircraft. The Honolulu FAA Airport District Office (ADO), under the leadership of Tweet Coleman, discussed this issue with DOT-A and were looking for a solution in time.

Background...

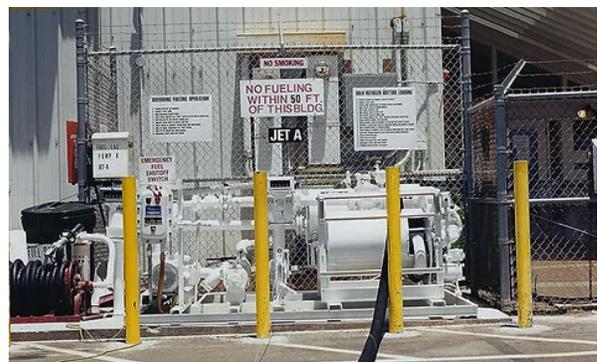


The Kahului Airport continued to see airline arrivals and departures increase over the years. In the late 80's we saw the direct flights from the mainland with Western Airlines (DC-10) and United Airlines (DC-8 & DC-10). Hemmeter Aviation was the airline fueler in those early days. Jet-A fuel was trucked from the fuel supplier facilities, located at the harbor just a mile down the road, and put into fuel storage tanks on the east ramp of the airport. The fuel would then be transferred to trucks that would fuel each airline before departure. All these trucks would need to cross the runway to the main terminal.



Each fuel truck was marked with a number on the side and top of the truck, visible to the tower. Each truck had a designated radio mounted in each cab that would communicate with tower ground control for authority to cross the runway. As the years went by, the traffic increased which certainly increased the runway crossings. We recognized the problem as well as the liability and would prefer to not put our drivers and company in a negative environment. From the early days, my discussion with the Kahului Airport FAA tower chief, Bob Rabideau was to find a solution. The solution was basically simple... either get the fuel on the right side of the airport or build a perimeter road. The solution was also costly and who was to pay for this. Everyone wanted a solution, but no one wanted to pay for it.

By 2002 (over 15 years since my discussions with the tower chief), Bradley Pacific Aviation (BPA) was pumping the fuel into the airlines. We had access to the Pacific Helicopters underground tank and used this system to fill our trucks. We made improvements to the system with new pumps, piping, and filtration components but it still was a 10,000-gallon tank. This tank was far too small, but we had no other choice while we looked to make positive changes. The DOT-A under the previous airport administration (Matsuda), vigorously tried to keep BPA from using this fuel system. The complaints came from the other FBO's. Century Aviation was relentless on erroneous reports to the DOT-A. I received several cease and desist letters from the DOT-A, based on irrelevant rules and regulations. I countered each letter and kept the pump pumping.



BPA continued to make dramatic changes in its fleet of refueler trucks across the state. BPA was spending millions of dollars in newly manufactured trucks. The 10,000-gal fuel truck was the optimum tool for fueling an airline and cost \$250,000. This refueler was made for airport use only and was not capable of being road legal. BPA was recognizing that without a perimeter road or a proper fuel facility on the main terminal side of the airport, it needed to develop a road legal solution. A 5,000-gal tank on a double axle could be built to bring Jet-A fuel from the harbor directly to the wing of the aircraft. This truck needed to have many bells and whistles to meet all the concerns of federal, state, county rules as well as meet all the requirements for the airlines. This new tool had half of the capacity of the larger trucks and would nearly double our driver requirement for the same fueling. This truck came at a cost of \$180,000 plus.



When the state was looking to give the FAA District Office their solution to “runway incursions” it was easy, ALL RUNWAY CROSSINGS OF FUEL TRUCKS WILL STOP. I asked for a longer-term plan which would include a new look at a perimeter road and or new fuel facility.

Even though I normally do not meet with the FAA Airport District Office (ADO) because I recognize their role is between the owner of the airport and not its users. I set up a meeting with Tweet Coleman (ADO Manager). I was looking to understand their specific position with the state. I was told they weren't looking to eliminate runway crossings immediately; they were looking for a plan that could be implemented in due time. They weren't trying to minimize their concerns of runway incursions but to have a practical operational solution. General aviation aircraft from the small single engine to the large private jets parked on the east ramp all had to request permission to cross the runway to taxi for take-off. The east ramp did not have a taxiway to ends of the runway. Runway incursions, even though they were rare, came primarily from those aircraft misunderstanding the communication from ground control in the tower.

I then met with Davis Yogi and his staff to look for a more practical solution. If Bradley Pacific Aviation is the only fuel service provider at the Kahului Airport and you restrict its ability to fuel aircraft, wouldn't you recognize this to be everyone's problem not just ours. I stated that the ADO was not looking to stop runway crossings immediately but have a plan that would be acceptable. They stated that ADO mandated the closure. I then set up a meeting to have BPA, DOT-A and ADO all meet at the state airports office so we could collectively discuss the solution. We were sitting in the DOT-A conference room waiting on Davis Yogi to arrive. When

he arrived, he stated, he called this meeting to make it clear that the state's position was to stop fuel trucks from crossing the runway. I stated with all do respect, I called this meeting because I feel that we need to discuss the ADO's need for a plan and not the state's immediate shut down. My bringing everyone together was to be a positive direction. It was not. The FAA would not talk about what they told me privately and later informed me once again that it's the DOT-A, as the owner of the airport, to dictate policy. Even though they would have accepted a longer-term solution.

Upon leaving the meeting, Davis told me in the future that he would not meet with me concerning airport fueling operations. I needed to go through Hawaii Fueling Facility Corporation (HHFC) and their representative would bring the concern to me. It was clear he did not understand the HHFC's role and how they operated. My friendly competitor, Airport Group International (AGI) had the current contract to manage HHFC's pipeline and storage capabilities in Hawaii as well as fuel airlines in Honolulu. Davis would have me go to AGI so they in turn would meet with DOT-A on my behalf. Really?

BPA continued to build new road legal trucks for the Maui operations as quickly as possible. We stopped using 10,000-gal refueler at the Kahului Airport and shipped them to other locations. Over time, BPA had more than 15 – 5,000-gal refueler trucks at that location alone.

BPA was now moving all the Jet-A fuel on the road. Even though Century Aviation's airline fueling was reduced to nearly zero, they were still pumping into private aircraft. They were pleased with BPA discontinuing its 10,000-gal refuelers at Kahului and then moved on to stopping us on the road. As we say, Hawaii is a small community especially politically... everyone knows people. Century had the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) investigate BPA for multiple violations. BPA could pick up fuel from the suppliers, at the harbor, that came from its own purchased inventory, but fuel purchased by each airline required PUC authority. We knew that and set up an arrangement that met the law. It didn't stop the investigators. BPA trucks would access the harbor storage multiple times a day and the violations went back retroactively from the time we started, and the fines went into the tens of thousands of dollars. From the beginning, BPA contracted with Action Fuel, which was an authorized PUC hauler in Kahului. We leased the trucks to them while they were on the road. The drivers/fueler were also positioned to meet the laws of Hawaii. It might seem convoluted, but we needed to get creative to meet each agencies requirement. We went to a PUC hearing with our attorneys and were successful on all accounts.



What I don't understand, is the lack of support from the DOT-A and others. Stopping unnecessary runway crossings was inevitable. It was how it was implemented that caused frustration. It pushed us on the road quicker than we may have liked, but BPA was the only one

that was able to do so. The PUC is a State of Hawaii commission and if the DOT-A truly was concerned about safety they would have assisted with positive dialogue to the PUC. If BPA didn't continue to spend hundreds of thousand of dollars in providing the solution, the airlines would not have been able to refuel. Century didn't have the expertise nor the capitol, but they did have friends. If we went away due to the competitors' antics, would the DOT-A go back to runway crossings, probably not. Who would have stepped up to ensure that the airlines schedule would not be interrupted? Absolutely no one.

The airlines serving the islands in Hawaii recognized Bradley Pacific Aviation as THE professional aircraft fueling company. We were on-time, safety conscious, impeccable equipment and record keeping with fair pricing. That is how we grew so quickly. The DOT-A looked at us differently.

I didn't dislike Davis Yogi, I just didn't think because he did a good job with a teachers strike, he is now ready to run all the state airports in Hawaii's tourist-based economy. If he had more airport experience he would have fared better.

2003 - Davis Yogi is ready to depart and he makes way for Brian Sekigushi.