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**SWEET HOME,
CHICAGO** Executive
Airport

Hello Dean,

"A Tale of Two Cities" - a novel by Charles Dickens about the French Revolution

"A Tale of Four airports" - an email by Henry Fiorentini to show PWK in perspective to other local airports

You probably don't think about 'the airport' other than the place you fly out of, most of the time. And for most of you, PWK has been here since 'forever' and probably will be. Here's some interesting perspective. Consider 4 airports

- Sky Harbor (OBK)
- Glenview Naval Air Station (NAS)
- Meigs field (KMCG)
- Pal-waukee / Executive (KPWK)

I've condensed hours of research into this one email, and here's the summary

What do they all have in common:

All were founded as 'small' airports, circa 1930

What does PWK NOT have in common with the others:

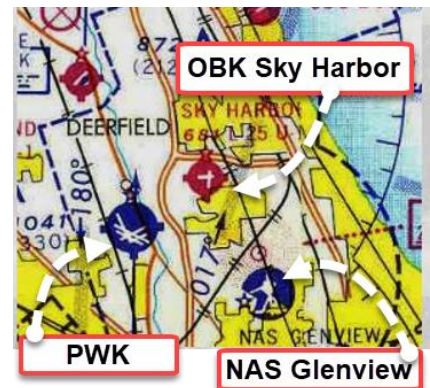
PWK is the only one that is still an airport.

Perhaps the biggest surprise to most is OBK as an airport – it was (and possibly still is) the reserved designator for "Sky Harbor Airport" that was a 'first cousin' to PWK. Here it is on a sectional map:

And from the archives:



A sad 1977 view of the abandoned hangar at the closed Sky Harbor (photo by George Thompson).



How did the other airports die? Here's a simple synopsis:

(K) OBK : Financial failure – just couldn't make enough money as an 'airport' to pay the bills, in 1973

NAS: When the government handed over a very well equipped, and ready-to-go airport as part of the 'peace dividend' in 1995, the citizens of Glenview decided to turn the airfield into parks, townhomes and shops.

KMCG: While it is often difficult to discuss Meigs with any pilot without intense emotions (invariably invoked by the devious way that Daly did it in the middle of the night), even the FAA admitted "It's your airport – just pay us back for the money we gave you and we'll go away", and Chicago did (about \$1.3M) and the FAA raised no more complaints.

Daley could have predicted that

“The *majority* of the people of Chicago would rather have parks, playgrounds and theaters than an airfield”

Per the inset at right (and countless others), the 99% of the people who are NOT pilots, DO want a place for concerts, picnics and weddings (yes a BIG entourage of weddings take place there). WE don't like it, but 99% of the others do.

KWPK: Opened in 1925 as as Gauthier Flying field, renamed PalWaukee in 1928. Purchased by George Priester in 1953, who installed the 5,000' 16/34 runway in 1965 and got a control tower in 1967 (replaced with the current one in 1997). In **1986**, Priester sold the property to the cities of Wheeling and Prospect heights (the dividing line is a horizontal line about 1/3 of the way up from Palatine road). “Funding from Prospect Heights and Wheeling was provided through airport revenues and had no effect on the municipal taxes for the two communities.”

Most would agree that the above line “.. *no effect on taxes*” was key in getting the citizens to buy the land and keep it open as an airport. Glenview got their airport for free and wouldn't keep it open as an airport, and nearby Sky Harbor made it clear that “airports can *cost* you money”

On October 17, 2006 Palwaukee Municipal Airport was renamed Chicago Executive Airport. The PWK designation will remain forever, just as ORD for “Orchard Field” will always be O'Hare.

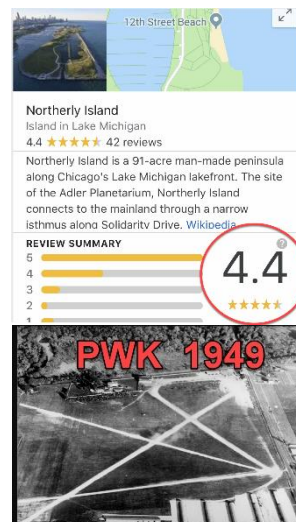
So, back in 1986 – with Charlie Priester wanting to get out of the airport business – and nearby Sky Harbor having financially failed just a few years earlier, he got a buyer to keep it open as an airport. And a good thing he did, or we would probably not have an airport. The FAA does not give money to private airports, only municipalities, and without FAA money, it's nearly (or totally!) impossible to keep an airport in the black. And the townships of Wheeling and Prospect Heights presumably agreed to the purchase only because it will benefit their citizens: – it makes money for them and lowers their tax burden. Certainly not out of some sense of Nobless Oblige (“Obligation of the Nobles”) and certainly not because the families prefer jets and piston noise to parks and playgrounds. NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) is the common specter faced by many airports.

And adding another “Where did it go???” airport, from member Jim Schneiter: Chicagoland airport in Lincolnshire – just 5 nm north of PWK:

Hi Henry –

If you want, you can add Chicagoland Airport to your list. Located just 5 miles north of PWK, it was a great little airport and home to over 80 GA airplanes.

By way of history, the Village of Lincolnshire ‘stole’ Chicagoland Airport from Art Schelter back in the ‘70s. **They started dramatically raising his property taxes to force him to sell the airport** to the Village. Art finally had to cave and the airport closed the end of September, 1978. **The Village wanted the land to develop into an office and light business park.** The entire office complex on the S.W. corner of Milwaukee Ave. and Rt. 22 was built on the old airport land.



One common misconception that I hear from my fellow pilots is that the city (Wheeling and Prospect Hts) are either under some obligation or subsidy to keep PWK open as an airport, which is not true at all. “But they are a non-profit” some say when told that the landlord (Wheeling/Prospect Heights) needs to make money off of T-Hangars etc., but that is a false argument. Hospitals and other organizations are ‘non profit’ but that only means that they don't have stockholders. Our landlords have every right to make a profit off of this. We are not a park or a library or a pool. Probably none of the citizens are even pilots. Probably the only reason that they don't tear down the airport like Glenview did was because it lowers their property taxes. Our landlords get zero financial assistance, or in-kind benefit for hosting an airport in their back yard from the state or the federal government. The only money they get goes directly into the airport infrastructure to keep it as a ‘viable business venture’ that generates its own profits. Unpleasant

as that is, that is reality. If we don't deal with the facts as they are, we are just kidding ourselves and wasting everyone's time. So I lay out the facts so that we can work together honestly, and productively.

Without getting technical, the airport generates about \$2M in property taxes to the 2 communities. This is 'free money' in the truest sense of the word since the airport puts no drain on the schools (the largest consumer of property tax dollars), fire or police, and they pay for their own infrastructure/improvements.

So our best argument to 'state our case' is not to Jamie, and not even to the Board of Directors, but to the citizens who vote to elect/retain/replace those mayors who appoint the BOD. To drive that point home, there was a recent referendum on the "Master Plan" and runway extension with an OVERWHELMING majority of votes AGAINST. The "powers that be" (aka, the mayors and therefore the BOD) took notice. They take their orders from the citizens – as it should be in a democracy.

Perhaps we could start a modest outreach to the community to show them what it's like. ETC. member Steve is 'the face of the EAA Young Eagles free-flights-for-kids' program at PWK, and that's a good start. I'd be happy to start an "Old Eagles" program for the parents (citizens) to show them 'from the air' what it looks like, what discretion pilots have, and what mandates (e.g., IFR approaches) they are bound to. *If nothing else, it shows that we pilots are trying to communicate and not just adopt an 'us vs them' approach.*

As an appendix, here's a statement from the airport about how much they contribute to the local economy which lowers the voters' tax rates, which is (IMHO) the largest, strongest rebuttal to the irate citizens that often show up at CEA Board meetings to complain about the airport, saying

"Why do we have to put up with that airport? Why can't we just close it down like they did Meigs???!!!!"

Annual Fiscal Impact on Taxing Entities

The Airport and related activities are estimated to generate approximately \$3.25 million of annual tax revenue for local taxing entities and \$2.25 million for the State of Illinois.

- Local property taxes generated by the airport and on-site businesses are the largest source of local revenue, estimated at \$1.8 million for 2019.
- Sales taxes, including visitor spending, are estimated to comprise the second largest source of local revenue at approximately \$1.1 million for 2019

The co-existence between the airport (and its FBOs, private pilots, etc.) and the local citizen/voters is a delicate balance. It's not as simple/easy or 1-sided as some would like to think.

Sincerely,



Henry Fiorentini

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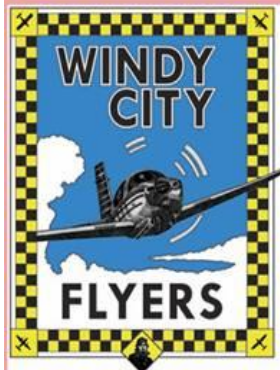
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