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Ke'ahole Airport a challenging task

By J. F. CUNNINGHAM
Advertiser Aerospace Writer

The Kona Coast will have a beautiful new \$14.5 million interisland airport as of 6 a.m. Wednesday.

When the 6,500-foot runway at Ke'ahole Point, seven miles north of Kailua-Kona, opens to traffic at that time, the old airport on the outskirts of town will close.

Seasoned interisland travelers and the airlines will breathe a great sigh of relief when that combination of events comes to pass.

GONE WILL BE the restrictions on jet passenger loads at Kona and no longer will pilots have to practice special skills to get in and out of a cramped strip pushed right up against a population center.

Ke'ahole will offer DC-9 and 737 pilots clear over water approaches and all the take-off room they will ever want.

Passengers will enjoy the comfort of a handsome terminal complex composed of 15 Polynesian pavilions designed by Honolulu architects Aotani and Oka.

WHAT HAS blossomed on the Mt. Hualalai lava field in just 13 months and right on schedule marks no simple achievement.

It took 3 million pounds of dynamite and 2 million cubic yards of excavation and embankment to work the site into an airfield.

"I seriously doubt if another airport has ever been built on such a site," says Jack M. Curlee, project manager for Bechtel Corp., engineering design and construction management consultants for the job.

Homer R. Castonia, Bechtel's resident engineer, said it presented him with difficulties never before faced in his long career.

"EVEN MAKING a sim-

ple telephone call from out there is a problem," he says.

"And all problems become more acute there than on a normal job. But when we're through you're really going to have a good sturdy airport."

"The foundation is 12 feet of rocks up to three feet in diameter, topped by six inches of smaller rocks, then nine inches of gravel. "Covering all that are four inches of asphaltic concrete."

ALTHOUGH SOME enterprising air taxi or private pilot may beat anyone else to Ke'ahole, the first scheduled flight into the new airport is the Hawaiian Airlines Early Bird trip which

will manage the airport while Kraft is away.

WILLIAM J. MULLAH-EY, a man who literally helped build Pan American World Airways into the first transpacific airline, will be honored at a testimonial luncheon at the Outrigger Canoe Club at noon tomorrow.

Reservations for the no-host affair are being handled by Bill Pope (telephone 395-3609).

One prominent guest will be retired Pan American Chairman Harold E. Gray, one of the early pilots who used to land clippers at the mid-Pacific way stations Mullahey helped construct. Gray, former astronaut John Glenn and ex-envoy to

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skywritings



leaves Honolulu at 6:25 a.m. and reaches Kona at 6:59 a.m.

Aloha's initial landing will be made by Flight 380 which will arrive at Ke'ahole at 8:24 a.m.

Dedication by Gov. John A. Burns, Federal Aviation Administration Pacific boss Phillip M. Swatek and Big Island Mayor Shunichi Kimura will be at 10:30 a.m.

HONOLULU AIRPORT Manager William H. Kraft is on a seven-week round-the-world vacation.

He and his wife left yesterday on Pan American's Flight 1 for Tokyo.

Before they jet home via the West Coast, they will ride 17 airlines, not to mention boats and even donkeys, Kraft said before departure.

Superintendent of Operations Frederick Hemmings

Australia Edward Clark, will be here this weekend enroute to Melbourne.

They will be guests aboard the flight leaving here at 1:15 a.m. Tuesday to inaugurate Pan American service to Australia's second city. Pan American will extend three of its nine weekly Honolulu-Sydney trips on to the capital of Victoria state.

AMERICAN Airlines will announce plans this week to start flying to Australia on Aug. 1.

That carrier's New York-Honolulu-Sydney service will be on a thrice weekly basis.

Three frequencies a week were all that Canberra would grant a second U.S. airline entering the Australia scene.

The Aug. 1 date is the same announced earlier by

American for inauguration of daily Boston-St. Louis-Honolulu, Detroit-Chicago-Honolulu and New York-Honolulu services, plus flights between Honolulu and New Zealand, American Samoa and Fiji.

BOAC WILL start Wednesday to extend two of its Honolulu-Sydney trips weekly into Melbourne.

Qantas already has four transpacific flights a week continuing on from Sydney to Melbourne.

Arrival of the initial Pan American trip and the dignitaries aboard will coincide with the official opening of Melbourne's new Tullamarine Airport.

THE AIR Travelers Association, recently organized in the San Francisco Bay area, will launch a nationwide membership drive aimed at creating a potent voice for consumer rights.

In an endorsement of that goal, Alfred D. Bell, Jr., national president of the Travelers Aid Association of America, says:

"There is a compelling need for an organized vocal body to speak for millions of air travelers. Just about every clearly-identifiable group within the airline industry is organized with the exception of air travelers

who pay for everything through tickets and taxes."

William A. Jennings, the Burlingame attorney who founded Air Travelers and is the association's president, says one of its first moves will be to open the Federal files on consumer complaints against the airlines.

THE CIVIL Aeronautics board has conducted studies of airline handling of such complaints but has kept the findings secret.

Only after pressure from Ralph Nader's team of consumer advocates did the CAB make public one of its 1967 studies.

"We know that there are thousands of complaints by air travelers every year," says Jennings. "But what we still want to know is what the airlines are doing to resolve them."

Jennings says his organization has budgeted more than \$100,000 to get off the ground.

TWO JAPANESE engineers are in the U.S. to study possible jet engine replacements for the turbo-prop power plants on its YS-11A airliner.

Nihon Aeroplane Mfg. Co. would like to convert the YS-11 into a jet because it is now expected to be the principal Japanese-built passen-

ger aircraft for another four years at the very least.

Plans for the YX, Japan's first jet transport design to be charted for production, have slipped to the point that 1974 is viewed as the earliest it could be in commercial operation.

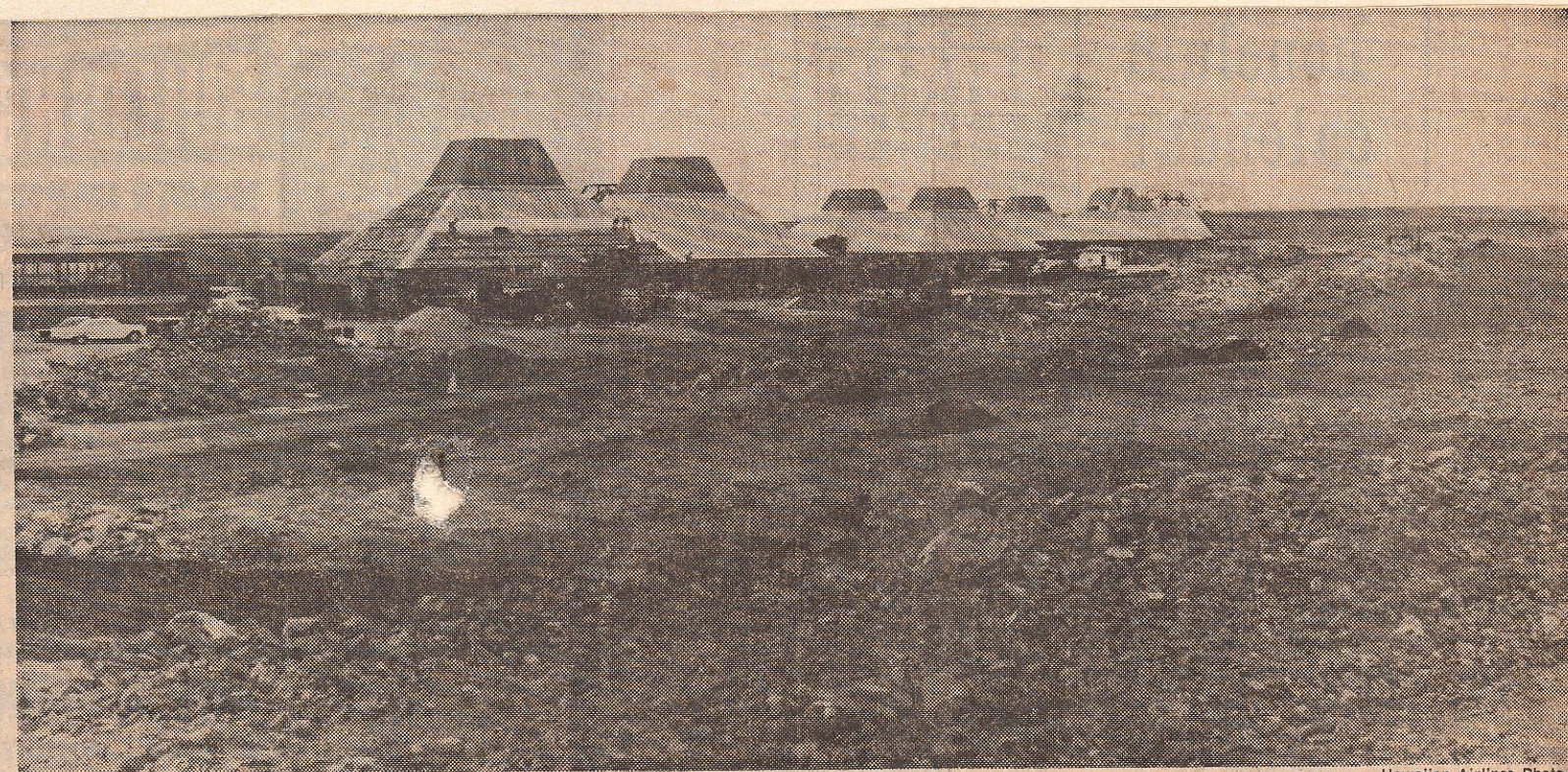
YX development began following a 1967 market survey but did not reach final basic design stage until this

year. Government and private participants have not yet reached final agreement on sharing the \$83.3 million development costs.

The YS-11 is the 60-passenger twin-engine transport which was operated here by Hawaiian Airlines while the interisland carrier awaited delivery of more jets.

Nihon has hopes of stretching the plane's fuselage as well as outfitting it with jet engines. It is eyeing both the General Electric TF34 and Rolls Royce-Trent jet power plants.

Goals are to limit development cost to \$7 million and to sell as many as 150 of the jets in Japan and abroad.



Hawaiian Airlines Photo

Polynesian pavilions, shown abuilding, are finished at Ke'ahole.