

August 3rd

“Deacon” Jones

is a pioneer in the world of air traffic control. This father of six girls was born in Whiteville TN on August 3, 1930. This was the sort of town where everybody knew everybody. Deacon’s aviation experiences began in 1944 as a high school student. He would also become a farmer and then a chemist. Eventually he safely directed airplanes at both Jacksonville Air Route Control Center (ARTCC) and Memphis ARTCC.

Deacon often accompanied his father, Dr. Paul David Jones, via horse and buggy. Dr. Jones was a much-respected doctor in the Milan Tennessee area who traveled to the homes of his patients. Like other doctors, he often accepted his pay in chickens and other means of bartering. Deacon’s mother had multiple sclerosis and therefore was not able to travel with her husband. The family sometimes earned good money, raising, and selling rabbits and goats – they were not rationed by the government, and were great for cookouts, stews, and dumplings.

In 1944 Milan High school offered aeronautics. Deacon took flight lessons in the eighth grade from a German family who had a flight school in Milan TN. The wife’s leg (Freda?), who was also a flight instructor, had been blown off in an accident. Roscoe Turner helped her to get her pilot’s license. The airport (Boen Field) had a dirt runway and was funded by President Franklin Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration. Most of the airplanes were constructed of cardboard and cloth. After almost flying into low hanging power lines, he decided that flying was not for him. Instead, he played “guard” on the football team and graduated from Milan High School in 1948. Deacon attended Union University in Jackson TN and earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Memphis State.

He worked as a chemist before the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) hired him in 1959. The Civil Aeronautics Administration changed to the FAA in 1958. He survived an eight-week air traffic training program for college graduates in Oklahoma City, OK. It had a sixty to eighty percent failure rate. His



roommate was Lindy Beaver, a Cherokee Indian from Little Rock AR. Beaver’s family owned an electrical company. Beaver decided to stick with the family business instead of controlling airplanes.

Deacon’s first FAA assignment was Jacksonville, FL ARTCC, who had computers and radar as part of their air safety technology. While in Florida during the Cuban Crisis, he served on the city council and worked part-time for the police department. He earned several awards and commendations, and also learned how to make bombs. He transferred to Memphis ARTCC (ZME) in 1969 - where there was no radar separation. The non-radar ten minute and one-thousand-foot rule was king! Although he did not strike during the famous 1981 Professional Air Traffic Control Organization (PATCO) walkout, equipment at ZME sorely needed to be upgraded. Deacon worked in every area at Memphis ARTCC and was assigned as a temporary supervisor. When Jones retired in 1984, ZME had upgraded equipment to include radar tools and computer flight plan management.

Don “Deacon” Jones – helped to break new ground in the world of air traffic control.

“AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL – ONE OF THE BEST THINGS THAT EVER HAPPENED!”