# The Skystar Miracle BY JOHN M. HAFFERT

# WHY WOULD OUR LADY WANT AN AIRLINE?

#### THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO FATIMA...

# BUT IS THERE SOME OTHER REASON NOT YET KNOWN TO US?

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# Imprimatur: Rev. Msgr. John R. Torney, Vicar General, Diocese of Metuchen

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# The Skystar Miracle

#### BY JOHN M. HAFFERT

ver the past forty years (during which I have been editor of two magazines and have written a dozen books) I have dealt with some amazing events: the Miracle of the Sun of Fatima, the miraculous Icon of Kazan of Russia, the "Green Miracle on Red Square," the "World's Greatest Secret," and even an entire book of wonders titled "Explosion of the Supernatural."

And now the true story of Skystar is one of the most amazing of all.

# The Queen's Airline

In 1985 giant 707 airliners, capable of carrying over 200 passengers, will be seen landing at airports around the world bearing such names as *Queen of the World, Queen of Carmel, Queen of Peace*, etc. They are part of an international airline called *Skystar*, a name deriving from that ancient title given in admiration and affection to *Our Lady (the Queen of Heaven): Stella Coeli*.

But why in the world would the Queen of Heaven need an airline?

Perhaps only part of the answer is to be found in the amazing 'Skystar story... which began back in 1967 with a "peace flight" around the world and then developed into multiple flights to Europe, carrying tens of thousands of people to the place where Our Lady (the Queen of Heaven) spoke of atomic war and of a way to peace.

It is a story of absolutely incredible obstacles... of the "impossible" coming into reality. And it is all woven into the most exciting and most important story of the twentieth century: The intervention of the Mother of Jesus appearing at Fatima prophesying "annihilation of several entire nations" but promising "an era of peace to mankind" if Her requests are heard.

And the great white and blue planes of *Skystar*, carrying pilgrims to "see for themselves" (like the shepherds going to the cave of Bethlehem), help thousands to know of this message of hope, and of how to obtain even now "an era of peace for mankind."

# The First World Peace Flight

It all began on October 13, 1967...50th anniversary of the miracle of Fatima, the "miracle of the sun."

The Pope had been to Fatima just six months before after promulgating the encyclical "The Great Sign" (calling the attention of the entire world to the Message of Fatima, a message of warning and of hope).

At that time it was almost unprecedented for the Pope to leave Rome. Pope John XXIII had been the first Pope to leave the Vatican in almost 100 years... and that was just five years before Pope Paul VI went to Fatima. (Pope John XXIII had gone to the Shrine of Loreto to pray to Our Lady for the success of the Ecumenical Council.)

In person or by television, millions upon millions of people saw the Pope at Fatima, with the Bishop of Fatima on one side, and Lucia — the only survivor of the three children who saw the visions of Fatima — on the other.

Now, just six months later, that same Bishop of Fatima agreed to participate in a "World Peace Flight" to carry replicas of the vision of Fatima (statues known as "Pilgrim Virgins") to nations around the world as a practical "follow-up" to the action of the Pope.

Fatima Travel, Inc., of Washington, N.J., chartered one of the largest aircraft at that time for this flight around the world, the *first* around the world charter flight in a large aircraft ever made. Painted on the side of the plane was the title of Our Lady of Fatima: "Queen of the World." Inscribed on the nose of the plane were the words of Her great prophecy and promise: "An era of peace for mankind."

#### Behind the Iron Curtain

What a sensation was caused in airport after airport by that giant plane, bearing the title *Queen of the World*, and carrying the Bishop of Fatima and representatives of the World Apostolate of Fatima (The Blue Army)!

At that time the Berlin Wall was a novelty. The life and death struggle of entrapped persons endeavoring to escape into the free world across the Wall were almost constant headlines.

Flying across Soviet-held territory, the great plane landed in West Berlin with the first "National Pilgrim Virgin" statue (enshrined to this day in a church near that famous Wall which gives such stark evidence of the fulfillment of the Fatima prophecy: "If my requests are not heard, error will spread from an atheist Russia throughout the entire world... the good will be martyred..."). One event after the other on that historic world peace flight would almost be enough to make an entire and very exciting book.

Immediately after Berlin, the "Queen's plane" flew into Prague, behind the Iron Curtain.

The Bishop of Fatima was seated in the front row of the aircraft. This was Bishop Venancio, the second Bishop of Fatima. The first Bishop, the Most Rev. Jose Correia da Silva, had died almost a decade before. And about six months before his death, Bishop da Silva was dozing in a wheelchair and suddenly straightened up, turned to Bishop Venancio and said:

<sup>&</sup>quot;Excellency, let us take Our Lady's statue and carry it to Russia!"

Bishop Venancio recalls that he smiled to himself, conjuring up a mental picture of Bishop da Silva holding the statue of Our Lady in his arms while he, Bishop Venancio, pushed the wheelchair across Europe and through the Iron Curtain!

# In the Bishop's Arms

We had just placed the statue to be delivered in Prague at the front of the plane and the captain came through. "You can't leave the statue there," he said. "It will have to be taken somewhere in the back of the plane and secured until after takeoff."

The captain spoke in English. Bishop Venancio had not understood and wondered why I was lifting the statue and taking it away from the front of the plane. I explained that it was just for the takeoff.

"Oh, but give it to me!" the Bishop said. And with that the statue was placed at his feet and he clasped it in his arms. The captain looked satisfied. And thus the Pilgrim Virgin statue crossed the Iron Curtain in the arms of the Bishop of Fatima, just as the first Bishop of Fatima seems to have foreseen shortly before he died.

It was amazing, considering the publicity that had now developed about this historic flight around the world that Czechoslovakia, one of the most intensely armed Russian satellites, had not rescinded our landing rights. But of course they knew it would have been bad publicity to be the only country to refuse a "Peace Flight." After all, what do *atheists* have to fear from a group of people *praying?* 

But when we landed at the airport, there was not a single person in sight. Apparently it had just rained, because a giant, perfect rainbow greeted us on the tarmac...the *entire* rainbow, from "pot of gold" to "pot of gold," in as brilliant and glowing color as any rainbow we had ever seen.

We felt that Heaven welcomed the Queen of the World flight...but soon learned the Communists did not.

They delayed us at the airport for two hours. Then they took us to the center of the city, took away the buses and told us we would have to walk to two different hotels and that the buses would not come back until the next day when we would go to the airport to continue our flight!

We immediately decided to remain there on the square and pray the Rosary until the buses would come back!

It is difficult to imagine the sight...over 100 people, about 150 pieces of luggage, the Bishop of Fatima in his purple, and the white statue of Our Lady of Fatima which we had intended to leave in Czechoslovakia if only we could get it to the Archbishop's residence up on the hill overlooking the ancient city!

As we began to pray the Rosary, the Cedok guides excitedly told us: "You cannot do this!" But we kept on praying as they went off to telephone, came back, made more threats, and went off again.

We continued praying the Rosary, decade after decade. And between each decade the Bishop would sing one of the fifteen stanzas of the Fatima hymn "Hail, Hail Mary!"

By now the word was spreading all through the great capital city: Pilgrims from America with the Bishop of Fatima and the statue of Our Lady of Fatima were down in that big square praying the Rosary because the Communists had taken away their transportation!

We had just finished the fifteen decades of the Rosary when the buses came back!

Without further ado we boarded the buses and as the guides were crying out in concern about the luggage, we called back that it was they who had told us to unload the luggage there, and one of us who knew German asked the lead driver to to up on the hill for a "view of the city"!

Within a half hour we were all gathered in the Archbishop's private chapel in the presence of the Pilgrim Virgin statue.

"Today we carry a cross," said Archbishop (now Cardinal) Tomasek, "but in the cross there is light, there is hope and finally there will be victory." And then the Archbishop added with a catch in his voice:

"And you have brought us the sign of our hope."

Two months later the Czechoslovak "spring" broke out... finally resulting in a Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia which so shocked the Communist world that it set back world Communism more than any single event in modern history with the possible exception of what happened after the Peace Flight to Poland in 1978.

# **Prophecy Fulfilled**

That first world peace flight in "Our Lady's plane" carried images of Our Lady of Fatima, "Queen of Peace," to Vienna, Lebanon, Israel, Persia, India, Thailand, Vietnam (then in the throes of a terrible war), Japan and finally Taipei, capital of free China.

Later we learned that this seemed to be in fulfillment of a prophecy of St. Catherine Laboure, made over 100 years before.

The saint had had a series of visions of Our Lady as Queen of the World. At first Our Lady had appeared to her in motherly intimacy (seated in a chair while the saint knelt beside Her with her hands resting on Our Lady's lap) and tears began to flow from Our Lady's eyes as She spoke of events which were to come into the world. And then Our Lady appeared standing across the sanctuary and holding a golden globe in Her hands which She said represented "the world, and each individual person in it" which She holds close to Her Heart. Finally She appeared standing on the world, crushing a serpent, with great rays of light streaming from Her hands followed by a vision of Her Heart beside the Sacred Heart of Jesus surmounted by a cross and surrounded by twelve stars recalling the apparition to the Evangelist John as recorded in the book of Revelation:

"A woman clothed with the sun and crowned with twelve stars."

After seeing these visions, which are commemorated by the "Miraculous Medal," St. Catherine prophesied:

"Oh how wonderful it will be (one day) to hear Our Lady acclaimed as Queen of the World! It will be a time of joy, peace and prosperity which will last a long while...and Our Lady will be carried like a banner and make a tour of the world!"

And on the 50th anniversary of the Communist revolution (also 50th anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun of Fatima!), Our Lady's image, carried like a banner, made a tour of the world, piercing the Iron Curtain. And on the side of the great plane Her Queenship was proclaimed as well as Her promise of "an era of peace to mankind."

# Six Continent Flight

Two years later, because of the great success of the 1967 flight, Fatima Travel again chartered a giant aircraft dedicated to the Queen of the World to visit *all six continents*.

One of the highlights of this six-continent trip occurred between *Egypt* and *Israel*.

There was no communication whatever between these two countries in 1969 so it was arranged for a legate of the Bishop of Fatima to have the ceremony of the crowning of the Pilgrim Virgin in Bethlehem at the very same moment that the Bishop of Fatima was doing the same in Cairo.

Little did we suspect that nine years later the Queen of the World plane would make the first civilian flight in history between these two nations! Yes: The first civilian flight between Egypt and Israel. But that is getting ahead of the story.

Perhaps what we most remember about that six-continent peace flight was the reception of the Queen of the World in Uganda, with thousands lining the roads from the airport into Kampala. And we were told later that the demonstrations in South Africa were perhaps the greatest religious demonstrations on that continent in its history.

A major result of these first two peace flights took place on May 13, 1971, 25th anniversary of the coronation of Our Lady at Fatima as "Queen of the World": National Pilgrim Virgin statues were crowned simultaneously in the capitals of fifty nations around the world, usually by the President of the Episcopal Conference, preparing the way for the Collegial Consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary made by the Pope, in union with all of the world's bishops, on March 24-25, 1984.

A perpetual memorial of this great event (the coronation of May 13, 1971) is to be seen in the Basilica of the Holy House of Loreto where a ceiling fresco depicts Our Lady as Queen of the World. The chapel was

was the same Lady I had seen in the sky that I came here to Bangkok. I cannot get through the crowds but I have seen Her. Would you be good enough to place these flowers at Her feet?"

Later that same day the Vicar General of the Cathedral came to the hotel with a Chinese gentleman who asked:

"Why don't you bring the statue to China?"

We laughed. We felt sure he might have been joking. It was not likely that Americans of the World Apostolate of Fatima (The Blue Army) and a statue of Our Lady of Fatima would be welcome in Communist China.

With great seriousness the Chinese gentleman explained that he was a personal friend of Chou En-Lai and that the invitation had come from the Chinese leader himself.

# The 1978 Flight

We were delayed in organizing that next peace flight because we could not find an aircraft for an entire month for less than \$1,000,000 just for the flight (a cost of \$5,000 for each seat on the plane). So we signed a lease-purchase agreement for a Queen of the World plane dedicated to the exclusive purpose of carrying the miraculous image of the Pilgrim Virgin in dignity around the world.

In his encyclical on the Queenship of Mary, issued in November, 1954, had not the Pope referred to this statue, the Pilgrim Virgin, as "the messenger of Her Royalty"? And had not the Pope said that "in this devotion and doctrine of the Queenship of Mary lies the world's greatest hope for peace"?

Since even monarchs of small kingdoms of the world have their private planes, did it not seem fitting that we should have a special plane for the "Queen of the World," carrying "the messenger of Her Royalty," and proclaiming to the world this doctrine and devotion upon which, according to the solemn words of the Pope in an encyclical to the bishops of the world, "lies the world's greatest hope for peace"?

# Between Egypt and Israel

Some day perhaps an entire book will be written on that 1978 extraordinary world peace flight. Who will forget the tens of thousands of South Koreans who made an All-Night Vigil on the border between North and South Korea? Who will forget that the Queen's plane, on Passover Day, made the first civilian flight in history between Cairo and Jerusalem?

The President of the United States (Jimmy Carter) refused to have anything to do with our request for this flight, saying that civilians were not supposed to be involved in diplomatic matters. We stressed that it was not diplomatic but that in the hearts of all people was a desire for peace, and that all who believed in God turned to Him in hope as their common heavenly Father and that Mary, as the Mother of Christ, represented God's mercy in these critical times even as She prayed for us at the foot of the Cross at the moment of the world's redemption.

It was actually during the peace flight that we received a cable from Israel giving the first permission, conditioned upon the permission of President Sadat of Egypt.

Sadat gave permission gladly when we arrived in Egypt, but there was no way of communicating the news to Jerusalem. There was no communication between the two countries!

But at the last moment we were able to make communication through the American Embassy, and thus on that most holy of all days (Passover), so important to Jew and Christian alike, we flew over the Sinai in the Queen's "flying chapel," bridging the distance between the two countries as there had never before been a civilian flight... with our "Passover" faith, hope and love.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem desired that the Pilgrim Virgin statue be "in Our Lady's own city" for May 1, but we had planned to be in Rome on that "May Day," celebrated throughout the world by the Communist International with demonstrations of power, and often with bloodshed and rioting in many parts of the world.

Rome had a Communist mayor in 1978 and the Premier of Italy was in the custody of the "Red Brigade" terrorist group.

Over 1,000,000 people turned out in Rome to participate in the reception of the Peace Flight of the "messenger of Her Royalty." It was probably the greatest religious demonstration in Rome in this century.

#### Permission Refused in Poland

But the most significant event of all was soon to follow.

During a two-day stop in Vienna, the Pilgrim Virgin statue was taken somewhat secretly to Budapest. Then we landed in Warsaw. There the Communist authorities would not permit the Pilgrim Virgin statue to leave the plane. So the pilgrims went without the statue to the great Marian Shrine of the "Queen of Poland" where the entire hierarchy of that nation was expecting the visit of the "Queen of the World."

All the bishops of Poland were there. Who would have guessed that one of them, within six months, would be the next Pope?

Cardinal Wyszynski, then the Primate of Poland, met the Queen of the World pilgrims and said to them very pointedly that they might be surprised at what had happened. His Eminence said:

"We are not always free to do what we would like."

Then a wire image was made (in outline) of the Pilgrim Virgin. It was carried throughout Poland, spreading the word that the Communist government had not permitted the image of the Queen of Peace to enter

their beloved land.

The national reaction, which almost seemed to prepare for the later "unleashing" of Solidarity in Poland, was so severe that the Communist Prime Minister went to the Cardinal and said:

"It was a misunderstanding. Tell them that they may come back and bring the statue."

The Cardinal took advantage of the reaction to pressure for the building of churches in Poland which the Communists had refused to permit for almost a quarter of a century.

Within six months, the Communist leaders agreed to the building of four churches. Only fifteen months after that historic peace flight we were back in Warsaw with the statue for the dedication of a church in honor of Our Lady Oueen of the World.

We arrived on August 22, Feast of the Queenship of Mary, just as Cardinal Wyszynski was blessing the church — the first *new* church he had been able to bless since he had been the Archbishop of Warsaw. And even as we were at dinner table after the blessing of the church, word came *that the Communist authorities had also agreed to allow the building of a seminary...* the Cardinal's principal desire and wish "before I die."

Shortly after the first peace flight of 1967 came the "Prague Spring." And now came the "Polish Summer."

After an historic flight to Communist China, the Queen of the World plane was used to make possible low cost trips to Fatima.

For a price considerably lower than even the cheapest possible air fare alone, a person was able to go to Fatima including fare on the *Queen of the World* plane, room with a private bath, all meals, all ground transportation: in a word, *everything* for an entire week! And many flights went *directly* from cities such as Cleveland, Chicago, New Orleans, etc. offering *non-stop service to Fatima*, often with continuing flights to Lourdes and Rome.

# **Major Impact on Apostolate**

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of these flights in bringing the reality of the Fatima Message to our nation.

"The story of Fatima is like a fairy tale," as one writer put it after a first visit to Fatima. "It seems just unbelievable that while we are trembling on the brink of atomic war there has been a heavenly intervention, a phenomenon in the sky (like an atomic explosion) witnessed by a hundred thousand, and a prophecy that annihilaton of nations will come...but that it can be avoided!"

But when one actually goes to Fatima, and stands at the spot, and sees the Shrine and the faith of thousands of people coming there to pray, "the reality of this divine intervention suddenly strikes home."

Suddenly one realizes: "It is really true."

One of the thousands of pilgrims who took advantage of these at-cost trips on the Queen of the World plane was James Adair, a Cleveland attorney and self-made millionaire.

First he went to please his wife. Then he went back taking his wife and all eight children.

"The impact on us was so great," Adair reported afterwards, "that since God had been so good to me I decided to take off a year and tell everyone about the importance of these trips to Fatima."

That same summer he organized eight full flights (almost 1,600 passengers!) out of his home city of Cleveland!

# **Opposition**

But on March 25, 1983, it was as though the great Red Dragon of the book of Revelation rose up to strike at the *Queen of the World*.

On that very day when the Holy Father opened a "Holy Year" (the 1,950th anniversary of the Redemption), the airline flying the Queen of the World plane was suddenly "grounded."

It happened at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when 188 pilgrims were waiting to board the Queen's plane in a New York airport for Fatima, Rome and the Holy Land...to open the Holy Year of Redemption.

The Federal Government had decided to clamp down on small airlines. Major airlines, vital to the national economy, were suffering drastically (some even on the verge of bankruptcy) because of the low fares offered by new companies just like us.

By chartering from other airlines *Fatima Travel, Inc.* was able to get that March 25th group to Fatima, Rome and the Holy Land, and honored all the other reservations.

But after ten months of incredible financial losses it was decided that the only way to continue the program would be to obtain the two certificates necessary to operate Skystar as a full-fledged airline.

Two certificates had to be obtained: One from the Federal Aviation Agency (a Certificate of Ability); the other from a separate agency to show managerial and financial ability.

Does all this sound "easy"?

Literally "volumes" of specially tailored books or "manuals" were required for the FAA Certificate, and for the other Certificate, legal fees ranged up to six figures in addition to thousands of man-hours of testimony, documentation, hearings, filings and refilings.

Before it was over...on New Year's Eve, 1984...it had cost over a million dollars!

If this has been purely a Blue Army venture, financed by the Blue Army, it would have been less difficult.

But the Most Rev. Jerome Hastrich, National President of the Blue

Army, had expressed the opinion of the entire National Executive Committee of the Apostolate when he said that he did not feel that the Blue Army should own an aircraft or get involved in the operation of an airline, but rather should work along with private parties who would undertake such a venture.

And the "private parties" ran out of funds!

At this point a generous offer came to buy the Queen of the World plane at a price which would cover all the costs and all the losses.

The "private parties" involved decided to sell the Queen of the World plane.

I was personally a principal and I just did not see how it was possible to continue any further.

Just before carrying out this decision, a call was made to Jim Adair.

"Be assured," I said, "we will continue the flights to Fatima because we can charter planes from other airlines."

There was a long pause. Then Jim Adair said:

"Well, if there is no Queen of the World plane, I would no longer be interested. It just would not be the same."

So before going ahead I spoke with the Handmaids of Mary Immaculate (the religious Community which administers the National Center of the Blue Army). They knew that the private parties involved in Skystar had been suffering greatly and their hearts were all in favor of alleviating that suffering. But when they heard of the decision to sell the Queen of the World plane, one of the Sisters said in a voice that almost bordered on trembling disappointment:

"Does that mean there would no longer be a Queen of the World plane?"

She was told that there would not be a *Queen of the World* plane, but "Of course we would still be able to get people to Fatima at low cost."

"Oh," was all Sister replied.

And then another of the Sisters said:

"Don't you think you could hold out just a little longer?"

So feeling that it might be God's Will, but not seeing how it could possibly succeed, the "private parties" decided not to sell and to continue even though it seemed hopeless.

But from that moment, when we decided in a spirit of sacrifice and faith, not to sell the plane, things began to turn around!

Captain James Woeber, a Delta Airlines captain, landed at an airport where he saw the Queen of the World plane "grounded."

"I was so impressed with the idea of that great aircraft dedicated to Our Lady," said Capt. Woeber, "that I wanted to be involved."

In the weeks which followed, at his own expense, Capt. Woeber flew to different parts of the country, contacted various lawyers and securi-



Above: More than a million people packed the square in front of St. John Lateran on May 1, 1978, to welcome the International Pilgrim Virgin statue during that year's historic World Peace Flight. In 1978 the mayor of Rome was a Communist and the Premier of Italy, Aldo Moro (a close personal friend of Pope Paul VI), had been kidnapped and held for ransom by the Communist "Red Brigade" terrorist group. Security during the Italian visit of the International Pilgrim Virgin as part of the 1978 World Peace Flight was unprecedented due to the kidnapping (and subsequent murder) of the Premier.



In the photo above, pilgrims from the 1967 World Peace Flight (the first time a chartered aircraft had ever flown around the world) are shown in a square in Prague, Czechoslovakia.



# Skystar...The "Miracle" Airline

At a dinner honoring Skystar executives and personnel, the Reverend John Engler said: "Skystar uses the air which is unseen to carry persons to places where they can touch the reality of God, also unseen"

Skystar aims to be a sound, highly professional airline for the convenience of the general public, with *pilgrimages* as its specialty (particularly pilgrimages to Fatima).

When Muslims think of their trek to Mecca (for which all the charter airlines in the world receive bids), Skystar will offer a plane named "Hand of Fatima."

Christians going to Bethlehem will be invited to "Follow the Star"... the airline with the special purpose of taking them in a spirit of prayer and reverence to the place of Christ's birth.

When devout Jews think of Israel and Jerusalem, *Skystar* will offer them the *Queen Esther* plane. (The name of Esther, one of the greatest queens of Jewish history and "prefigure" of Our Lady of Fatima, means "star".)

Below:

A part of the "miracle": The world's VERY FIRST Quiet 707 (with "hushkit") joined the Skystar Fleet after QUEEN OF THE WORLD!





Above: The Church of Our Lady Queen of the World, built in Warsaw, Poland, as a direct result of the refusal of the Communist government of Poland to allow the Pilgrim Virgin statue to travel in that nation during the visit of the 1978 World Peace Flight. National reaction to this "refusal" was so strong that the Blue Army was invited to return the following year, and Cardinal Wyszynski obtained authorization from the government for the building of four new churches...the first to be built in Poland since the Second World War. The church of Our Lady Queen of the World was the first of these churches to be built and was dedicated on August 22, 1979... Feast of the Queenship of Mary.

ties specialists, to prepare the documentation for a "private placement" to fund Our Lady's airline.

Later, a securities specialist told us that the work which Capt. Woeber did, with the help of attorney Josephine Rohr (of Albuquerque, N.M.) would have cost anywhere from \$75,000 to \$100,000. (They did it "for free"!)

And through this we now learned that almost as difficult as getting the FAA and CAB Certificates was meeting the legal requirements of the Securities Exchange Commission (S.E.C.)!

Not only weeks but months, and many thousands upon thousands of dollars were required.

Meanwhile, because of the Queen's plane, some 20,000 people had been taken to Fatima!

Many of these had returned as apostles. Many returned cured of physical illnesses. Even more came home transformed spiritually. And then came that glorious day, March 25, 1984, when Pope John Paul II accomplished that for which the world had been waiting for almost 50 years: The Collegial Act of Consecration of the World and of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in union with all the bishops of the world!

Shortly afterwards came the Skystar miracle!

#### No CAB Certificate

Although we had obtained the FAA Certificate (which is the most difficult and most expensive), the federal judge who heard the *Skystar* case found our financial picture now so weak that we were not issued the CAB Certificate. And despite the great work accomplished by Capt. Woeber, the judge did not see how we were going to raise enough money to establish an airline when we had exhausted all of our resources during those ten months when our plane was on the ground and we now needed *almost three million dollars* — just to bring the *Queen of the World* plane in compliance with the noise abatement laws which went into effect at the end of 1984.

But, oh, how many prayers were being said!

Sr. Mary Joseph, the Superior of the Handmaids of Mary Immaculate, hardly let a day go by when she was not praying for Skystar and the Queen of the World plane in the prayers of the Offertory of the Mass.

But where would we "find" three million dollars?

John Sistarelli, maintenance director of *Skystar*, was speaking to the company which was to put the muffler on the *Queen of the World* plane and said frankly:

"We do not have the money to pay for this muffler. Why don't you buy the *Queen of the World* plane, put the muffler on, and then sell it

back to us over a period of three years for the price of the muffler and the plane?"

(In other words, he was temporarily suggesting that the company *finance* the muffler, using the plane in the meantime as collateral.)

"I will have to take that up with our main company in San Antonio," the official for the muffler replied.

Meanwhile several of those who had participated in the World Peace Flight had volunteered to become directors of Skystar and to make substantial loans which totaled almost half a million dollars.

An invitation came from San Antonio, Tex., to meet with the principal owners of COMTRAN, a company which had invested thirty-five million dollars in the mufflers which planes like *Queen of the World* will require after January 1, 1985.

#### MONEY and the PLANES We Wanted!

I had to go to Hollywood at this time to see about a motion picture the Blue Army was producing on the Message of Fatima, otherwise I probably would not have gone to San Antonio, because I just did not believe that anything was going to come of this other than the possible financing of the muffler.

At this same time I had occasion to speak to Mr. Gabriel De La Rota, owner of *Jet Charter Service*, and I asked him why he was not sure the muffler for the 707 would ever materialize. "It is just too risky," he said, "and no airline can afford to remain on the ground waiting months for mufflers."

"The only one I would trust," he added, "is Tracor." (This was the very company to which John Sistarelli had spoken.)

As we talked further, Mr. De La Rota referred to a Mr. "J.".

"He is the man behind the *Tracor* hushkit," Mr. De La Rota said, "but I never got to speak with him." And he implied that perhaps if he had, he might have remained with the 707 program. But now it was too late because he had sold them to the military for \$1.5 million each.

Again I did not mention it, but it was Mr. "J." himself who had invited us to meet with him personally in San Antonio.

Mr. Fred Catchpole, President of *Skystar*, met me that night at the San Antonio Airport.

"It's unbelievable," he said. "They have decided not only to finance the muffler. They want to help finance Skystar."

#### Some Background

We have to back up here for a rather important explanation.

We knew, when we decided to go "all the way" with Our Lady's Skystar airline, that no airline could operate profitably with one plane.

But since we had to have an airline in order to operate the Queen of

the World plane effectively, we hoped that somehow we would acquire two more aircraft. And we knew the two we wanted.

We had kept in constant touch with Pan Am about the availability of two sister-ships which we had inspected when we bouth Pam Am #895 (which became the *Queen of the World* plane).

These other two planes were #894 and #897, and how we wished we had the two million dollars to buy them!

After Capt. Woeber came forward, as we said before, some members of the World Peace Flight had come forward with loans and we began to hope we might acquire those two Pan Am planes, #894 and #897.

But we were too late. Someone had come along and bought all six of the last 707's from the Pan Am fleet, including these two planes!

We tried to find out who had bought them. But they had simply disappeared out of the market. We could not even get information about them.

And now back to the story.

#### Really A Miracle?

"The big man" (Mr. "J.") proved to be a remarkably affable person.

"What we would like to do," said Mr. "J.", "is to finance the muffler for the *Queen of the World* plane, and also to give you two other aircraft for which we will arrange the financing. In addition we will invest \$3.2 million in stock in *Skystar*, and we will give you \$1,000,000 in working capital.

"You have Pan Am's plane #895," he went on, "and we happen to own #894 and #897. Those are the two aircraft we will give you."

(Now the reader knows why we call this the *Skystar* "miracle"! These were the very planes we had hoped [hopelessly!] to acquire!)

And then, as though he had all the time in the world, Mr. "J." began to talk about his mother. Within 24 hours I wrote this extraordinary story exactly as I recalled it:

# The Prayers of A Mother

Mr. "J." 's mother was a daily communicant. When she was dying of cancer, the doctor remarked:

"I do not know how she puts up with the pain."

Somewhat in amazement, since she never even gave an expression of pain, Mr. "J." asked his mother about it, and she said quietly:

"I offer it up for my sins."

"But what sins, Mother," he said, even more surprise. "You never commit any sins."

"I offer it up for you, for my family," she said simply.

And Mr. "J.", one of the business tycoons of America, went on to tell of two special instances of the power of his mother's prayers.

He was an Air Force Cadet and had to make a night flight to three check points.

This particular night he asked for an early flight "because my mother is coming." (Actually it was an excuse to finish early.) During the flight he was overtaken by dense overcast and became lost.

Two and a half hours later, with only five minutes of fuel left, he wrote a note to his parents: "Do not be concerned. I am not afraid. You have given me a wonderful life. I love you."

He put the note in his flight suit so it would be found on his body. He opened the canopy, put one foot out on the wing and began to roll out. As he looked down, through a small opening in the clouds he saw what appeared to be the lights of a landing strip!

He immediately rolled back into the cockpit, dove through the clouds and landed just as the plane engine sputtered and stopped! (It had to be towed off the field.)

It was his own home base!... where before his almost fatal flight he had said his mother was coming!

Later he became a test pilot. At the time of this next incident he was suffering from a sore throat and the Feast of St. Blaise was coming. His mother reminded him over and over to be sure to get to Mass that day.

To please his mother, he arranged that morning to have someone else take his place on a test flight while he went to Mass.

When he came to the airport later in the day, a friend was-weeping while cleaning out his locker. The plane had exploded on the field and his friend took it for granted he had died with all the rest of the crew in the explosion.

Mr. "J."... who had invested 35 million dollars in development of the 707 muffler... had decided that Our Lady's airline should not only have it, but should have the very first one in the world!

#### The Miracle Continues

From San Antonio I flew on to Hollywood for a television appearance and to find a new director for our film. From there I was scheduled on to Chicago to meet with a few promoters of the *Queen of the World* flights.

Only six promoters were present. One was Tim Heinan from Duluth. We discussed the sorrows and joys of filling this big airplane for trips to Fatima from individual cities around the country. For me it was a wonderful day. It was my first intimate contact with some of these marvelous apostles who have persuaded over 20,000 people to ride the Queen's plane to Her "throne" at Fatima.

Towards the end of the meeting, I happened to mention that I was concerned about the finances for *Skystar* and particularly in finding the expertise for a "private placement."

"I never realized how complex the laws are concerning securities," I explained, "and we are on the verge of being able to put together a wonderful financial program."

Tim Heinan said that he "might be able to help."

What an understatement!

He is a director of the tenth largest brokerage firm in America, specializing in "private placements"!

# The "Greater" Miracle...

Tim says today that he doesn't think that the intervention from San Antonio was a miracle as great as the fact that we came through the maze of securities laws unscathed.

I had not even known what a "private placement" was. I thought it was "normal" to ask people if they wanted to invest in a project, take their money, and go ahead.

But an offering must be carefully prepared. This is little less than a book giving every detail: Financial statements, prospects, biography of all officers, detailed list of any and all risks...and much more!

Further, after this has all been filed with a government agency, then each person approached must be apprised that they stand to lose every penny they invest (whether you think they will or not!), and the only ones who can invest in this initial phase must have a personal worth of at least a million dollars, or an annual income of more than \$200,000 a year!

Furthermore, after all is filed with the Federal government, it must be filed *in each of the states* in which we might contact even a single person. (And laws governing these matters vary from state to state!)

In total ignorance I contacted just some members of the World Peace Flight for help. And for two days Mr. Heinan sifted through every letter; through every bit of correspondence; scrutinized every date, every statement. And when he was finished, he said:

"You seem to think that the intervention of Mr. 'J.' was a miracle. To me this is an even greater miracle. It is as though you had walked through a jungle filled with ferocious beasts, quagmires, traps and hostile savages, and come out the other side without a scratch."

We then obtained the services of one of the top law firms handling such matters.

I learned later that of an approximate 1,000 companies which approach major firms to have them handle a "private placement,"

only about 10 percent are accepted. And out of 1,000 only about 70 are accepted by the underwriting firm which accepted *Skystar!* 

And how did it happen? How did we obtain the dedicated service of Timothy Heinan, a director of the tenth largest brokerage firm in the nation?

This part of the story is *really* a *miracle* in the fullest sense of the word.

Tim Heinan had been a member of the Blue Army since 1972 and is presently a Blue Army cell leader and president of the Blue Army Division of Duluth, Minn.

He was a graduate in business administration from Marquette University and later studied at Harvard and obtained his CFP degree in finance from Colorado's College of Financial Planning. As mentioned above, he is a director of the Advisory Board of the nation's tenth largest securities brokerage firm and a member of the International Association for Financial Planning.

(I personally heard him praised in high circles in New York as one of "the best in the field.")

Naturally, Tim is a very, very busy man. And he was about to say "no" when Sr. Rose Marie Larkin suggested that he come to that meeting in Chicago shortly after my meeting with Mr. "J." and my television appearance in Hollywood.

"I was actually saying 'no,' "Tim says even now with a touch of awe, "and I heard the word 'yes' coming out of my mouth instead."

The obstacles Tim encountered were such that if it had not been for this sign, which to Tim certainly seemed supernatural, it is doubtful if he could have persevered through it all.

# Was "Prejudice" Involved?

It turned out that there was some unexplainable prejudice in the bureaucracy handling the certification of *Skystar*. We believe it must have been religious prejudice.

Whatever its cause, at least two members of the Civil Aeronautics Board had decided that *Skystar* would *not* be certified! Evidence was gathered to prove this and Mr. Catchpole went to a higher authority and finally obtained the certification. In actual dollars it cost us almost twice as much to be certified as other airlines whose cases are known to us. Even after we had obtained the FAA Certificate once, we were forced to go through all the proving flights *again* at a cost of \$67,000!

This part of the story is an extremely unhappy one. And it need not be told in detail.

It reminds me of the time I had a little statue of Our Lady of Grace on the top of the mountain on my farm in New Jersey (where now stands the Blue Army Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary). And one day when I went up to pray at the statue, I found it smashed to pieces. I realized that someone who thought that devotion to Mary was idolatry had smashed it. And while I was saddened at the loss of the statue and of the dishonor to Our Lady, at the same time I felt a respect for the person who had destroyed it out of ignorace, thinking they were doing something to defend the honor of Jesus and for the glory of God.

And I feel the same about all of those who think that we are taking honor away from Jesus by giving honor to Our Lady as "Queen of the World." And while we have suffered by this ignorance, we understand it with love.

#### We Honor Her as Jesus Honored Her

They do not know that we honor Mary because God honored her...making Her Mother of His Son. And we hail Her as *Queen of the World* because, from the message and miracle of Fatima, we know that "God has entrusted the peace of the world to Her" (Jacinta).

How often Jesus spoke of the Prince of darkness...evil Prince of this world! And being a God of justice, as He died on the Cross, He entrusted us to His own Mother...a Mother of mercy. He wills that She be *Queen of the World* to wrest it from the Prince of the world.

And why do we honor Her images?

We honor Her images for the same reason one honors one's nation's flag: *They represent Her*.

St. Catherine Laboure, after seeing a vision of the *Queen of the World* in 1830, prophesied:

"Oh, how wonderful it will be to hear Our Lady acclaimed *Queen of the World!* It will be a time of peace, joy and prosperity which will long endure."

Then, predicting when this might begin, the saint said:

"Our Lady will be carried like a banner and make a tour of the world."

This prophecy began to be fulfilled in the Blue Army's World Peace Flights. The image of Our Lady of Fatima (known as the "Pilgrim Virgin" and referred to by the Pope as the "messenger of Her Royalty") is now annually carried around the world with Her title emblazoned on the side of the plane: *Queen of the World*.

To repeat:

We do not worship Her images any more than anyone "worships" one's national flag. And we do not "adore" Her... because adoration is due to God alone.

We honor Mary as God has honored Mary. We try to love Her as Jesus loved Her. And we try to make Her Queen of our hearts (and of the world) so that the Prince of darkness will be driven out and the Reign of Jesus will prevail over the earth.

To me the Skystar miracle is made up of many little parts.

When a Russian satellite was breaking up over the Atlantic Ocean, a fragment hit the windshield of the *Queen of the World* plane. By all rights the windshield should have shattered and the plane crashed. But while a great chunk of glass was taken out of the windshield, it held. And at that very moment *Our Lady appeared in the plane*, as many testified, and which was published in *Soul Magazine*. (See *Soul Magazine*, July-August 1983 issue, p. 15.)

And if these are indeed the days of the Apocalypse as Pope John Paul II said, then we must expect all kinds of forces to work against the triumph of the Queen of the World, even as we see the power of prayer working to make that triumph a reality.

Shortly after I had returned from that trip to San Antonio, Hollywood and Chicago, I had to leave for Fatima and I wrote a letter to Mr. "J.", thanking him and sending him a copy of the answers to his mother's prayers as told above.

# "More than A Program..."

When I arrived back from Fatima on August 8, 1984, I found a two-page, hand-written letter which reads as follows:

"Dear John:

"I certainly appreciated the article that you sent to me. As you know, my son and myself have ventured millions of dollars in the 707 program. Strangely enough, I had been worried about the venture and the amount of money we had risked; however, after meeting you I was reminded of what my mother used to tell me: 'The Lord works in strange ways.'

"I feel now that the 707 program is much more than a program to make money.

"If this program makes it possible for the Queen of the World plane to carry the message of peace in the world, and afford so many good people the opportunity to visit Lourdes and also to bring back the Message of Fatima, the success of this program will be much more than I had ever dreamed.

"With every passing day I understand more what my mother meant when she told me that she never prayed for me to become rich but only to be rich enough to have to do business only with people who were good and whom I liked. I feel that way about you and the people whom I have met with you.

"Your friend, M.J."

# The People

And indeed "the people" are the real miracle of Skystar.

Of the nineteen World Peace Flight members who came forward with

gifts and loans, most said that they did not care whether their money was ever returned or not. They wanted the "Queen of the World" to fly!

When, with big investment from Texas, the "prospectus" for the "private placement" showed that the airline would be financially viable, instead of rejoicing that their investment was secure (and would probably be making a substantial return), some were more concerned lest Skystar become a commercial airline!

Long consultations were held concerning this, and finally these first "directors" of *Skystar* asked Mr. "J." to restrict the amount of his investment so that Blue Army members could be given the opportunity of supplying what else would be needed, thus guaranteeing future control to Blue Army members.

# Large Part of "Skystar" Miracle...

Mr. "J." not only agreed, but even signed a binding contract that his corporation would have only two directors on a board of twelve and that only such matters as the sale of the company or removal of top officers would be subject to their veto.

Under the specific direction of our own law firm, the underwriters, the legal and technical advice from Mr. "J." 's company, and the input of our directors, I doubt whether any airline in history was ever begun on a more solid foundation. Certainly we may ask whether any airline ever began with more glorious principles.

Again, to me, the greatest part of the *Skystar* miracle has been the people involved, eminently including the extremely qualified men who are running *Skystar*.

Mr. Fred Catchpole, President of Skystar, had been certified to head an airline by the CAB even before he came to us. He had been the head of the Aviation Department of a Catholic college and had experience in every phase of aviation, plus a degree in Business Administration. And although not a Catholic, he was as excited and moved by the principles upon which Skystar was founded as any of us.

And our chief pilot, Capt. Joseph Dowalo, had a long history with Pan Am, and also a degree in Business Administration.

John Sistarelli, Maintenance Director, has already been mentioned in this brief history of the *Skystar* miracle. Mr. Nuno Berg, who has been handling the *Skystar* logistics since the *Queen of the World* plane began to fly, feels that "there is no 707 maintenance director in the entire world more qualified than Sistarelli"... who had been in charge of the maintenance of 707's for Pan Am for many years.

Because of Fred Catchpole's importance, the underwriters insisted that his life be insured for a million dollars. And he, Capt. Dowalo, and

John Sistarelli have initial three-year contracts with Skystar.

Tim Heinan now serves as a "Friend of the Board" and Jim Adair... frequently mentioned in this history... was elected Chairman of the Board, a position which he fills without salary!

Not only are most of the directors members of the Blue Army, but all of them have backgrounds and experience which would be extremely valuable to the formation of any company: In finance, law, business management, accounting, taxes, aviation (such as Capt. Jim Woeber). And they have all personally invested heavily, in addition to serving actively as directors.

And in the background, personally assisting me every step of the way, was a full-time volunteer: Mr. Joseph F. S. Blahut.

Joe had been teaching high schoool and he took an early retirement and came to work full-time at my side. He was there to sustain me when the discouragements were the greatest, and in many instances he became an "alter ego" to help make it all happen.

#### **Miraculous Conclusion**

Have we used the word "miracle" too often?

"Miracle" means in a simple sense something wonderful. In its absolute sense, it means something which cannot be explained by purely natural causes.

Behind all this is the fact that for five years prior to December, 1984, the 707, the workhorse of the skies (and with the best safety record of all great aircraft) had decreased in value because of a noise abatement law which would have made it necessary to re-engine the aircraft at a cost of \$20 million by 1985.

Two companies decided to produce mufflers that would save the cost of new engines. One of them was Mr. "J." 's company.

But by now most of the large airlines had sold off their 707's to the military. A few companies which still had 707's were afraid that the muffler might not be ready in time. And Mr. "J.", knowing that his company had the muffler, moved in and began to buy up some of these aircraft.

Perhaps there was no greater excitement in the whole aircraft industry as we approached the end of 1984 than the question of the mufflers...whether they would be out on time...and who would have the first ones!

Who would have thought that of all the some 1,000 planes requiring the muffler, Skystar would have the first?

Yet the very first muffler-equipped 707 was given to Skystar.

This, of course, put *Skystar* in a most enviable position because a great vacuum had been created in the charter market when so many 707's and DC8's were grounded by the noise abatement law at the end

of 1984.

(No new planes were manufactured to replace the 707 and DCM, the only planes with a configuration of about 200 and with long range capability.)

And charter airlines, even with mediocre management, are largely stable. We know of none that have ever failed unless they went into scheduled flights, because charters are paid for in advance. Indeed, the government requires that all money for a charter flight be placed in escrow in advance of the flight. And quite simply, the charter flight does not go unless it is paid for.

Of course, none of the initial directors of *Skystar* thought of "making money." Indeed, all were concerned about only one thing: That the *Queen of the World* plane should be available to carry the "messenger of Her Royalty" in dignity around the world, and to make possible low-cost pilgrimages to Fatima so that a growing number of people might experience the reality of the intervention of Our Lady to save us from atomic destruction.

However, in His goodness, God has provided!

# Right "To The Wire"

With the SEC restrictions (and since there were not dozens of Blue Army millionaires around!), despite heroic and often painful effort we came to that dreadful deadline...the "all or nothing" closing phase of the "private placement."

We were less than 10% short...but that was \$100,000!

With only three working days left to closing I had personally scraped up \$40,000 for a gift of stock to the Carmelite Nuns in Boston (my sister's community) and the Carmelite Nuns in Allentown. But where, in the remaining three days, would we get another \$100,000?

On January 2, 1985, a man came to see me.

I explained about Skystar and the deadline.

It turned out that this man, who wishes to be anonymous, was a *multi*millionaire who owned several major companies (in whole or in part). And he at once agreed not only to invest in *Skystar* but also to be a Consultant to the Board of Directors.

That January 2, 1985...what had persuaded him...just after New Year's Day and at the last hour of our deadline... to drive three hours through the rain to give us exactly \$100,000?...which he increased the next day (after reading the Skystar offering) to \$150,000?

I had never met him before. He had never met me. And until that moment he had not known of our deadline or our need.

And that was the "down to the wire" exclamation point on the Skystar miracle.

#### POSTSCRIPT

All of the above amazing story about *Skystar* going through stages of despair between March 25, 1983 and March 25, 1984 (and then suddenly emerging as a fully-financed airline with the *first* 707's requalified to fly under an American flag!) is a story without an explanation unless we consider the purpose for which *Skystar* was founded, the good it did in getting thousands to Our Lady's Shrines, and in a most special way to *St. Joseph*.

Those who read the book *Dear Bishop!* will know that everything that has been done in the World Apostolate of Fatima (The Blue Army) from the very beginning, was entrusted to St. Joseph.

And the same was true, in a very emphatic manner, in the case of the *Queen of the World* plane and the *Skystar* International Airline.

In the front of the *Queen of the World* plane is a picture of the crowned Pilgrim Virgin statue.

And at the other entrance is the picture of the statue of St. Joseph (originally kept in the Convent of the Apparitions in Pontevedra, Spain and which is now at the National Center of the Blue Army in Washington, N.J.).

Under that picture is inscribed the following prayer:

"Dear St. Joseph, all the projects we have ever undertaken for your spouse and Queen we have always entrusted first to you.

"Until now, they were all 'on the ground."

"Now, it is a question of a 'chariot in the sky' for the Queen of the World, that Her sacred image may travel in the dignity of a Sovereign.

"From the very beginning we entrusted this Skystar to you, dearest saint and spouse of Mary, and therefore have placed this picture of your statue from the Convent of the Apparitions at Pontevedra (and now at our Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Washington, N.J.) upon this aircraft.

"In this way, dear saint, spouse of Mary, Foster Father of Jesus and Patron of the Church, we honor you and confide to you this plane and all who will fly in it for greater recognition around the world of the Queenship of Mary."

# Completion

Finally, on January 7, 1985, the "private placement" was complete. Skystar, Our Lady's airline, was a solid reality. One of the most qualified and astute business people involved said that from that time on, Skystar (with the hope of being a "debt free" airline) was almost certain to flourish and grow.

# THE SKYSTAR AURA

Normally an airline goes out and looks for a market.

Skystar was formed by a market looking for an airline. And this market happens to be the largest travel market in the world. According to Travel Weekly, pilgrimages are the number one motive for travel, followed down the line by the motives of business and vacation or pleasure.

Several factors make up the "aura" of an airline. Pan Am had an aura of *dignity and experience*; Delta built up an aura of *service*. Some airlines looked to *innovation* (developed in a special way currently by American); People Express aimed at the bottom line, *price*.

Good service and reliability are, of course, primary requisites to the good image of *any* airline.

But each airline, to compete with others, tries to build up its *own* "special image"... a reason why over and above basic transportation a traveler would choose this airline.

Of its very nature, Skystar has two decisive factors in airline choice: price and purpose.

Skystar (offering "lowest prices to the most heavenly places") intends not only to give a special service to pilgrims, but also a special sense of "belonging and comfort" to all who fly in its comfortable and highly reliable fleet of 707's...the airliner regarded by many in the profession as the safest in the air.





Above: The Queen of the World plane now being used by Skystar International Airline is blessed on its inaugural flight in 1982 by the Most Rev. Constantino C. Luna, O.F.M., International President of the World Apostolate of Fatima (The Blue Army) and the Most Rev. Stephen J. Kocisko, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Byzantine Rite Catholics of the United States assisted by His Excellency's Auxiliary, Bishop Pataki.

Carrying almost 200 passengers and crew, the Boeing 707 was the first plane to receive the new muffled engines in accordance with the new noise abatement law.

The plane was acquired primarily to carry the International Pilgrim Virgin statue of Our Lady of Fatima on World Peace Flights, the most recent of which took place from March-April 1984. Pope Pius XII referred to the famous statue as the "messenger of Our Lady's royalty."

In his encyclical issued in 1954 on the Queenship of Mary, the Pope said: "In this doctrine and devotion (of Our Lady's Queenship) lies the world's greatest hope for peace."

Arrangements for Queen of the World flights are made by Fatima Travel, Inc., Washington, N.J. 07882. (Telephone: 1-800-222-0369, N.J. residents: 1-201-689-4600.)