

However, it must be understood that many general aviation pilots *are* instrument rated and have aircraft equipped with electronic navigation and communications equipment (avionics); they *do* use the ATC system under instrument conditions and as time goes on will use these facilities more and more, because they must operate on an appointment schedule and on the business aircraft is the most efficient form of transportation available to him.

Canned Instrument Flight Plans.—General aviation pilots file instrument flight plans only when they need to file them to go from one place to another under instrumented conditions. It has been stated in public communications media that certificated air carriers file instrument flight plans for every flight and that they are therefore under "positive control" at all times. Let us for a moment examine this misconception.

First of all, the premise of those who advocate positive control is that if *all* aircraft aloft were at all times operating on instrument flight plans—even under the best of visibility in good weather—it would positively guarantee prevention of aircraft collisions. This premise is erroneous, the terminology misleading, and the conclusions fallacious. The fact that an aircraft is on an instrument flight plan does not guarantee traffic separation except from other aircraft also on instrument flight plans when both are operating under actual instrument conditions.¹³ The fact that an air carrier or *any* aircraft is on an instrument flight plan does not in any way guarantee it separation from any other aircraft flying—whether on visual flight plans, instrument flight plans, or no flight plans, if the weather is clear and visibility good enough for VFR. All pilots flying under VFR conditions are still responsible by the law for avoiding collisions. The results clearly, precisely, and undisputedly impose upon every pilot the legal duty to look out the windshield for other traffic.

The certificated carriers operate on published scheduled approved by CAB, on the basis of which the carriers can and *do* file in advance a series of instrument flight plans using the airline flight numbers. These are called "canned" flight plans. However, under VFR conditions most air carrier pilots, particularly those of the local service airlines, will cancel their instrument flight plans as they roll out to take off positions or they will cancel their IFR very shortly after they are airborne and proceed VFR. For the record, *all* air carrier aircraft do not fly on instrument clearances at *all* times.¹⁴ In good weather they are not required to, nor does it always make sense when the average flight time for a local service carrier is approximately 30 minutes.¹⁵

How an IFR Plan Works.—There is no mystery to the operation of the system, although many aviation writers and fliers try to make it sound mysterious. Suppose that an airplane pilot is going to institute an instrument flight plan from Washington National to LaGuardia Airport, New York.

Sometime prior to the flight, the pilot, as required by law, would review the status of all navigation aids and facilities along the route he would take then would notify ATC (through a flight service station, a control tower, or a direct phone call to the center) certain information including his point of departure, point of origin, routing, and requested altitude. This communication would then be sent to the Washington Air Route Traffic Control system at Leesburg, Va., which would ascertain available airspace on the routing requested; Washington ARTCC (Washington Center) would then contact New York ARTCC (New York Center) to cooperate in creating a course and altitude that would fit in with New York's available airspace under the existing and forecast traffic situation. New York and Washington Centers would strike a bargain for an airspace reservation which would be transmitted to the pilot. In the meantime the pilot would be on board his aircraft at Washington National, would call Ground Control and receive clearance to taxi out to a ramp area adjacent to the end of the active runway, where he would pull off to one side and contact Instrument Flight Plan Clearance Delivery on a special frequency. In time his clearance would come through something like this: "ATC clears November 1 2 3 4 Poppa from Washington National to Robbinsville VOR via radar vectors to Churchill,

¹³ The duty is still upon the pilot in command to be vigilant for other traffic at all times. Under actual visual flight conditions a midair collision caused by loss of communication or failure to follow controller's directions is legally indefensible.

¹⁴ There is an agreement among the air carriers that in some parts of the country they will operate on instrument flight plans particularly on routes in the triangle formed by Washington, Boston, and Chicago. All pure jet aircraft do fly on instrument flight plans, but propeller driven local service aircraft have no such requirement.

¹⁵ *American Aviation*, May 1967, p. 31; *Flight*, June 1967, p. 69.