



PHOTO BY JOHN FRISCHMAYER

Sheila Bateman of Walla Walla gets off a Horizon flight to Walla Walla this morning, the company's second day of service. She is assisted by Jody Nicholson, Horizon station manager.

# Horizon Air's new flights take to WW skies

By JO AN MENDEL  
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Cascade Airways director of operations today called Horizon Air's new service to Walla Walla "strictly predatory competition."

Horizon flights between Walla Walla and Seattle began Sunday as expected. The airline was handling passengers and phone calls at its counter space in the Walla Walla City-County Airport terminal although construction of its facilities wasn't completed.

Horizon, based in Seattle, is the first Walla Walla competition for Cascade Airways since Cascade took over Columbia Pacific Airlines in 1978.

Horizon is flying 18-passenger pressurized jet props on the Walla Walla leg of its five-state service.

Tim Komberec, director of operations for Cascade, said Horizon was not adding any new service than what travelers could get from his company. Horizon goes to the same

points but is leaving about 30 minutes before a Cascade flight, Komberec said.

"We're not afraid of the competition, but I can't say we're overjoyed in seeing it," he said.

Passenger Tim Copeland, taking the 9:30 a.m. Horizon flight out of Walla Walla, said he was glad Horizon added Walla Walla to its schedule.

Copeland, who travels by plane about twice a month for his computer software company, said he has had excellent service with Cascade. Copeland said he prefers Cascade's larger aircraft, but Horizon offered a better departure and arrival time for this trip.

Cascade flies 79-passenger, 48-passenger and 19-passenger planes to Walla Walla, where its maintenance facility is located. "We call Walla Walla one of our two major homes," Komberec said.

Copeland also said he was pleased with Horizon's offer of nonstop flights between Seattle

and Walla Walla.

Two of Horizon's flights are nonstop from Walla Walla to Seattle. Horizon president Milt Kuolt said today that Horizon will be changing all of its Seattle to Walla Walla flights to nonstop.

Kuolt said he did not have exact numbers of advance boardings scheduled but he said they exceeded expectations.

Kuolt also said Horizon does not intend to start a price war with Cascade.

Komberec said, however, that he views Horizon's special fares in June as a price war, though it may be short-term. He said Cascade does not intend to change its level of service to Walla Walla or its fares, but the company would have to match Horizon fares if there is a long-term price war.

Komberec added that Cascade's larger and faster planes, which stop in Pasco enroute to Seattle, make up much of the difference in a nonstop flight offered by Horizon. He said

Cascade's flight takes about 20 minutes longer, but there is more passenger comfort and service.

Dianna Maul, a Horizon vice president, said the company decided to serve Walla Walla because of passenger demand. More air travelers will be able to get around the five-state region without changing airlines as a result, said Don Welsh, also a Horizon vice president.

Maul, Welsh and one other passenger arrived on Horizon's flight this morning.

Cascade has served Walla Walla since 1971. The Spokane-based company started with a small commuter service to Walla Walla while Hughes Air West was serving the city, said former airport manager Doug Winn.

Hughes Air West stopped flying to Walla Walla in 1974 and Cascade became the only regional carrier serving Walla Walla for a time. Winn said Cascade and Hughes were never competitors because Cascade took customers Hughes couldn't serve.

Columbia Pacific Airways began operations at the airport in 1977, also offering commuter service. A February 1978 crash of a Columbia Pacific plane at the Richland airport contributed to Columbia's demise, Winn said.

Cascade took over Columbia's operations in late 1978, once again becoming the only regional carrier for the Walla Walla area.

Komberec said Cascade has increased its level of sophistication and service over the years. It adds about \$5 million a year to the community's economy, he said.

Cascade flies to 21 airports. Walla Walla is the 24th airport for Horizon.

Airport manager Gail Reed said 20,575 passengers flew out of Walla Walla on Cascade flights in 1984, while 20,632 passengers flew in that year.

The airport board last Tuesday approved a one-year lease with Horizon for terminal space.