



In March of 1962 County Commissioner Art Jens dedicated a new communications tower as the Grand Junction Walker Tower, referring to it as a "local skyscraper"

Walker Field Tower was Only "Skyscraper" for Many Years

Soon this tower is going to make way for a new one.

On that late-winter day, over 7,000 people attended the dedication and toured the new tower named to honor Walter Walker, long-time publisher of The Daily Sentinel who had died in 1956. Mr. Walker was recognized for his foresight in the development of Grand Junction air facilities. For years the airport was called Walker Field, also in honor of the publisher's devotion to air travel on the western slope.

Carl Alstatt, airport manager, Joe Lacy, Grand Junction City Manager and Andy Prinster were recognized for their work in regard to the tower.

Eddie Drapela, an almost-legendary area aviation pioneer, told of his early flying days, when Grand Junction's airport had no tower and the runway was just a dirt strip. Drapela contracted with

the government to provide civilian flight training which developed into the Navy cadet flight training program during WWII. Drapela later moved to Denver where he owned and operated a flight service.

The new tower, constructed at a cost of \$300,000, was the third to be built in Colorado. The other two were in Denver and Colorado Springs.

For the enjoyment of the public visiting that day the organizer had a T-33 plane which was used as a trainer for pilots during WWII.

A DC-6, which during the 1950s, was considered to be the best in that class of plane was also on display. The DC-6 was the first Douglas model to have a pressurized cabin.

Short helicopter rides were also available for those brave enough to take a ride.