



## **PASS Mourns the Loss of Founding President Howard Johannssen**



Howard Johannssen, founding president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS), AFL-CIO, passed away at his home in Maryland on October 22, 2022, the union announced today. He was 79.

“Howard was what we all aspire to be. PASS is what we are because of his sacrifices and principles,” said National President Dave Spero.

The seed for PASS was planted in the 1970s after an incident at JFK International Airport involving Johannssen and an air traffic controller when a fire broke out. Johannssen, an airways facilities technician with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), saw the smoke coming from under a doorway but the technicians weren’t trusted to have keys. He grabbed a fire extinguisher to knock the door down and an air traffic controller, who also smelled the smoke, came out and helped. “We put that fire out,” said Johannssen. “The next day, I find that I’m going to get a suspension for destroying government property. And the controller who helped me got a reward!” This was just one of many incidents of disparate treatment between the workforces that resulted in the birth of PASS.

Johannssen convened a meeting in February 1977 with 50 other FAA technicians from across the country to found the Professional Airways Systems Specialists. He served as PASS’s national president until 1994. “I was a union man all my life,” Johannssen liked to say. “I was on my first picket line with my dad at four-years-old.”

“He was passionate about his union,” continued President Spero. “He spoke with everyone he met about the importance of union membership and working for the greater good. That passion is the foundation of our success.”



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As an Air Force Veteran, Johannssen always aimed to serve his country and his fellow Americans. He is survived by his wife, Maura, son Kristopher, daughter-in-law Kerry and granddaughter, Jillian. PASS extends condolences to his family and will always honor the great contributions of Johannssen and continue the important work he started.