

## DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (DIA)

*By Cindy Peters*

My husband and I bought our home in 1988 north of Denver. At that time, it was a new community surrounded by open fields and horse ranches. The community had an amazing view of the entire mountain range. There were only 2500 families in our community. We heard a new airport might be built 10-15 miles away from our home. The flight patterns indicated little noise from planes which turned out to be true.

I remember when our 9-year-old son Nathan answered our doorbell one day. Nathan yelled to me, "Mom a short man is at the door." My husband and I said, "What the heck!" We were shocked to discover that it turned out to be the Denver Mayor Peña and his wife. They were giving out information in the neighborhood about the positive things the new airport would create. They raised exceptionally good issues of the need for the new airport. Both Mayor Peña and his wife were very informed, charming, and down to earth people.

DIA recently celebrated its 25-year Anniversary. My family, friends and neighbors drove out to the grand opening in 1995 and it was quite the grand opening. We brought blankets, umbrellas, and picnic baskets of food to DIA. We went out to watch the most spectacular air show we had ever seen. This air show included the Blue Angels, the Thunderbirds, a Galaxy Transport plane, an Apache Attack helicopter, an F-16 Eagle Fighter jet, a Stealth bomber, and many other attractions.

DIA officially opened on February 28, 1995. DIA has a runway which is the longest runway in North America. DIA covers 33,531 acres of land. It is the largest airport in North America by land mass and second largest in the world behind King Fahd International Airport. DIA has six runways. DIA cost 7.8 billion dollars. Just think of how much the airport would cost today if it were built. I can only imagine the millions of people who have traveled through our impressive airport since that date.

Currently DIA employs over 35,000 people. DIA is a major hub for United Airlines, Frontier Airlines and Southwest Airlines. In 2019 DIA was the 5<sup>th</sup> busiest airport in the U.S. and the 18<sup>th</sup> busiest in the world. The airport is the primary economic engine for the State of Colorado and generates more than 26 billion for the region annually. Mayor Hancock initiated a bill which was approved in 2015 to expand commercial development at DIA.

I think many of us in Denver are immensely proud of our Denver International Airport. Sometimes I catch myself still calling it the new airport. It is hard to believe it has been 25 years since DIA has been open. My, how time flies!