

# Hotel Update



*Jay Lyle (PIT)  
Chairman, Crew Accommodations Committee*

The New Year is now behind us and I hope it was as exciting as you wanted it to be. As another year has passed, I'd again like to thank committee members past and present for their work during the previous 12 months. We have seen quite a few changes this year, including having a few members step down and losing another to retirement.

There were also many base and aircraft changes among the committee members. As of now we have J.H. Smith (Smitty) on the B-737-3/400 in BWI. An opening exists in BOS, but Bob Crowther has been pinch-hitting there when we need him. We also need a committee member in DCA, as Russ Sanders will be transferring to PHL upon completion of Airbus training. In CLT, we have Bob Barrich, who is on the B-737-200 and Chris Minor, who is on the B-757 but heading to the international division. In PHL we have Lew Brown, B-767I, who is waiting on Russ's arrival. We could also use another member there on the domestic side. We are represented in PIT by Steve Guttman, MD-80, Jack Hines, B-737-3/400, John Geehan, awaiting training on the F-100, and me, B-737-3/400. If you happen to run into any of these members on the line, please thank them for their hard work.

Since my last article, we had our annual meeting in Pittsburgh along with a scheduled quarterly meeting with AFA and management. I like to get our committee members together with some of our management folks who don't

do onsite inspections, just so they have a chance to voice their opinions on hotel issues face to face.

We are also going to divide cities among committee members more than we have done in the past. There shouldn't be any noticeable change for the line pilot. I'll still be the primary collection point for the OF-310 forms and e-mails. I'll then send copies to the appropriate committee members for their action. You might receive a response from someone other than me in this instance. I hope this will provide a quicker response time as well as freeing up some of my time for other issues such as crew meals, crew rooms, etc. For example, Lew Brown will be the point man for European hotels, with Smitty covering the Caribbean.

## Hotel changes

One change I don't recall talking about is the Houston overnight hotel change. In November we changed from the Clarion to the Sheraton at the airport. This hotel is much closer to the airport for our short overnights. I also believe the rooms are of a better quality. Should we have a long overnight in this city, the hotel has a shuttle schedule for transportation to the local mall. We don't really like to rely on hotel shuttles but in reviewing the overnights in Houston, we had only four long overnight crews in the last six months. Three of those were in October (the last time we had a scheduled long overnight there).

Another change I didn't have a chance to report on was the change in CAK to the Hilton on

*“ We are also going to divide cities among committee members more than we have done in the past. There shouldn't be any noticeable change for the line pilot. ”*

*“ It is a good idea to ask about the layover hotels on a trip in cities where we use multiple hotels for either a long or short overnight. ”*

December 1. This change was prompted due to the ongoing transportation problems at the Sheraton. We tried working with the Sheraton to fix the problem, but they were just not willing. During our search for an alternative, we were able to strike a deal with the Hilton, which is a bit further from the airport but is able to handle the transportation the way we want. We mostly have short overnights in this city, but when we do have the occasional long, there should be enough around the hotel for the crews to do. I received one complaint on an unscheduled layover there, and I hope the problems that occurred have been corrected and will not be repeated.

We have also made a change from the Crown Plaza in White Plains to the Ramada in Armonk New York. We have had many problems with the Crown Plaza since we have been there. The travel time to the Ramada is much quicker. We've been using the Ramada for over a month, and I've yet to hear of any problems.

Management made a decision to use a second hotel in DCA for our short layovers. The new short hotel is the Crown Plaza which started on January 1. I posted a notice on our website and there were a few crew broadcasts about the change. But with the trip pairings being wrong, we did have a few crews head to the Double Tree instead of the Crown Plaza for the short overnight. Unfortunately, problems such as this are going to occur because of the time lag for printing the pairings. If we are able to get a change that benefits us, and the trip sheets will be wrong for a month or two, we feel that is an acceptable trade off. Where this might happen again very soon is in DTW, but I'll get to that in a minute.

One way to avoid being surprised is to ask Scheduling what hotels they show for the overnights on your trip. They are supposed to have the most current information in the computer. It is a good idea to ask about the layover hotels on a trip in cities where we use multiple hotels for either a long or short overnight.

As I've discussed before, every once in awhile the program ignores the minimum and maximum rooms we have at certain hotels and prints the trip sheets wrong. Our management then has to go back through the overnight printouts and readjust the overnights to what we were able to secure from the hotels in that city. This is also a good idea if you're splitting on a trip, or the first leg is a deadhead and you plan

on meeting the crew at the down-line station and will not check in at a computer terminal.

### **Hotel inspections**

We have completed inspections in BWI, but have made no decisions on changing the short hotel. We also made a trip to Rochester to review both the long and short hotels. We're closer to a decision in this city and it looks like we will be staying put at both of these hotels. The Marketplace Inn is now in the process of a renovation, and they are promising improvements to the hotel. This hotel was recently sold, and I had a chance to meet the new owners and convey to them why we liked the hotel in the past. The attention our crews have come to expect is not supposed to change. The owners are renovating the rooms, adding new heating/air conditioning units and redoing the walls, carpet, and hall lighting. They are also adding a workout room, redoing the restaurant but still keeping the pub atmosphere and adding a national flag to the hotel. I looked around in town at two other hotels, but I didn't feel they offered anything we didn't already have where we are now.

I was in Detroit looking for a new long hotel on January 10 and 11. I believe we have found at least two hotels that would be much better for our long overnights. We are in discussions with the hotels and our management about making the change. We're pushing for a change for around March 1, which means at least the March, and possibly the April trip pairing, could be wrong. We are trying to wrap this up as quickly as possible so the trip sheets can be correct. The Detroit long hotel was on a list our management asked us to produce when highlighting some of our most problem cities. We ended up with 25 hotels on that list. We submitted it the second week of December and it's been very quiet from management ever since. I'm trying to push for more changes, and many of the hotels on the list are coming up for renewal. We are trying to schedule many site inspections in these cities so we can make changes as needed.

Upcoming inspections that are high on the list include EWR long and IND long. Other inspections include FRA because of the added flights, Paris because of the added flights and larger planes, and Manchester because of the new service. Also on the fix list is our Tampa long hotel which has already been inspected.

No action has been taken yet by our management.

The LAS contract is up at the end of January, and we will make a trip to look at some full service hotels. I was very disappointed in the LaQuinta because they relocated some of our crews this past fall. That was one main advantage we had at this hotel, as they always kept our crews no matter what was going on in the city. All the other gaming and full service hotels wouldn't commit to keeping the crews during large conventions and events. If we're going to be relocated, we might as well be in a full service gaming hotel.

We resolved the RSW hotel situation, though. We'll be staying where we are for the next two years.

### **Crew meals**

We finally had the long-awaited menu presentation by LSG catering company at their Dulles kitchen on January 14. With me was Bob Barrich from the committee and AFA's secretary/treasurer. LSG prepared 12 breakfast meals, eight lunch meals and four dinners for us

to preview and make changes on. What we came up with will be 12 variations of the breakfast meal, eight different lunches and eight dinner meals. These meals will be broken into weekly rotations to try and keep the variety up. For breakfast there will be three different meals changed each week. In a packet of five, there should be two hot meals and three cold meals. The hot meals will be eggs of some sort on either an English muffin or croissant. We tried to find a bagel that would fit, but they were too big. The cold meals will be a mixture of cereals and fruit. One cereal meal will have two bowls of the same cereal instead of one.

For lunch we went with all cold meals. There are four different salad types and four different sandwiches along with chips, fruit, and something sweet. For dinner, the lunch salads will be served along with four different hot meals. In each lunch and dinner pack there will be two choices between the sandwiches and salads. For dinner, the choice will be one hot item and one salad.

After we made the changes to the meals, we eliminated items that have been stocked on the

*“ We finally had the long awaited menu presentation by LSG catering company at their Dulles kitchen on January 14. ”*

## *Disapproval List*

**DTW long** — A very poor location

**EWR long** — Another very poor location.

## *Watch List*

**SDF** — This hotel was our top comment generator. My problem is that on previous hotel searches, all we found were hotels in as poor a location. I've felt we would trade one problem for others without being any better off. We are continuing to work with the Holiday Inn to solve the problems. I will continue to look for better options. Any suggestions?

**CLE short (Ramada)** — Management is supposed to make a trip to see this hotel first hand and start the process of finding another hotel if the Sheraton at the airport can't handle all the rooms we need.

**IND (Quality)** — This is a very poor hotel. A trip is scheduled to review all hotels in this city as all three contracts are up. I hope to come out of there with a new short hotel.

**IND (Ramada)** — I like being able to walk to the hotel but the location with FedEx operations at night makes sleeping tough, especially in the old east wing. If the management of the Ramada will not give mid-tower rooms, we'll have to consider not renewing the contract.

The total was 150 e-mails and OF-310 forms or notes that we were able to respond to since my last article. Of those, 16 were favorable, five were on hotels we have changed, five were about crew meals, and four concerned training rooms. We did have a slight problem getting some forms forwarded from PHL but that should be solved now.

*“As always, if you’re running late you can always call the hub trackers and order a meal down line if your meal break has been eliminated.”*

airplanes. The catering company then took a photo of each meal along with the contents and weights of each portion. This information will be loaded into a computer and sent out to all catering stations informing them of what the meal should consist of and the size of each portion. This is the first time our management has been this specific on what is to be included in the crew meals. This should help standardize our meals and bring up the quality of all the meals. I hope we will have meals we will want to eat. Our next task is to get the program fixed that inserts our crew meals in the trip pairings. We are entitled to crew meals if we takeoff before 7:00 a.m and on duty for more then six hours without a one-hour break between flights. As always, if you’re running late you can always call the hub trackers and order a meal down line if your meal break has been eliminated. We will still be looking for your feedback on the meals and what you would like to see added and deleted from the meal choices. We will be trying to make adjustments based on feedback and just to keep the variety up every six months or so.

I hope it will only take a couple of weeks to get the new menus out to the caterers on the line. After that is accomplished, we will then go back and try to find out why the computer program that puts the crew meals in the trips has not been fixed. I know we have had to go through at least one new boss of Crew Planning, but it seems our previous request has not been acted on. I have been waiting on this issue because I was hoping to have the new menus in

place before this was done. In the meantime, it would be a great help if crews continue to notify us of trips that don’t have meals scheduled when they should.

### **Training hotel rooms**

We have also been working on the training rooms for Miami. The A-330 will be doing all ground schools in Miami along with some simulator training. We will also still have some B-737, B-757, and A-319 simulator training in Miami as well. We have made our recommendations known to management and are waiting for them to act. As of this writing, they still haven’t made a decision. I hope they make a decision soon, as pilots are heading to Miami in January for A-330 training. We’ve not spent any time on Dallas or Seattle. The reason for this is that we have been told that the only off-campus training we will be doing in the near future will be in Miami.

Thanks to all who have participated in the committee’s work by sending us OF-310 forms, e-mails, and notes on problems as well as positive experiences at our hotels. Please continue to let your committee know your experiences on the line.

*Have a good overnight!*

