



*We welcome letters to the Editor from pilots in good standing. We will edit them if necessary, but we will make every effort to preserve the author's meaning. Letters must include the writer's name and phone number. We will publish only letters that have not been sent to other persons or posted publicly – e.g., in crew rooms. Please keep your letters to 200 words or less.*

**SJ JOBS AND PAY**

Once upon a time, not that long ago, a cursory examination of an airline pilot's suitcase could reveal, and not to any particularly appreciable degree of objectionable opprobrium, a half-bottle of good scotch and a three-pack of prophylactics. Today, of course, a similar scan would more than likely turn up a bottle of designer water and a pair of jogging shorts. While any value judgement of the relative morality of these different suitcase commodities may be moot, any such debate is really beside the point. The point is the ever-changing tenor of the times and, specifically, how we, as pilots, allow and continue to allow, these changes to change our profession for the worse.

To be sure, security screening, drug and alcohol testing, the incipient installation of cockpit video cameras, and other assaults upon our professional integrity are the knee-jerk reactions to high profile events. But our collective response to these reactions was, and remains, our responsibility. And, to our detriment, we are remiss in the discharge of this onus.

I daresay that back during those halcyon days of "Old Grand Dad" and "Oh-don't-let-me-be-a-'dad'" overnight accoutrements, any bureaucratic demands to be frisked before work and urine-analyzed after would have been met by the pilots of that era with a somewhat contrast-

ing degree of alacrity to that with which those demands are met by the pilots of today. Be that as it may.

But it must also be noted that it is probably beyond mere coincidence that during that era, the monthly pay of a Second Officer could purchase a Ford Mustang. A First Officer's monthly stipend could sit him in a T-Bird, while a Captain, on 85 including claim, could cruise the countryside in a Caddy. By the way, the yearly pay of that era's "employee number one," based in Crystal City, worked out to be just about four times a four stripe W-2.

Today, of course, my monthly Captain wage won't buy a set of wheels like a Caddy. And if I got a fourth of Mr. Wolf's W-2, my four stripes would spend the rest of their days in a closet.

Unfortunately for me, my four stripes got a little closer to the permanent aroma of camphor with acquiescence of this pilot group, and others, to the demand for regional jets voiced by the several, in the truest sense of the word, managements.

Make no mistake about it. Regional jets exist for one reason and one reason only: managements see them as a vehicle to cut pilot pay. Despite all the propaganda dispensed by the RJ lobby about small town jet service, increased passenger feed, market acceptance and competitive response, RJs are nothing less than the outsourcing of our jobs. They are New York Air with an airworthiness certificate.

I just worked a four-day that consisted solely of LGA/someplace turns. This trip revealed the scheduled term times to be accurate right down to the month. Here's why: LGA can handle about 75 operations per hour. Period. An air traffic controller could care less if the 150 knot ground speed blip intercepting his scope's localizer overlay represents a 65-seat Brazilian Jungle Jet or a 200-seat French table-top TV tube. Three miles in trail is three miles in trail. And, until somebody figures out a way to invent more airspace, or invents a time machine to take us back to the pre-EPA and pre-NIMBY days when "airport improvements" facilitated flight operations rather than fast food outlets, three miles in trail will remain three miles in trail.

Given this politically correct fact of life, sooner or later the bean counters will do the math, and come to this shocking conclusion: there are more bucks in more butts; and blowing a one-in-70 shot for a slot for six butts from Savannah just doesn't pay like depositing 200 butts from Atlanta. Solution? Bigger Brazilians. SJ response: stretch the Savanna Jungle-Jet, and field "if you build it, they will come" dreams. And just who will be in the pointy end of those 120 seat stretch jobs? Here's who: other pilots with our jobs. Now that the small jet/small check die has been cast, managements will demand any planes made in Brazil be flown by pilots for wages they'd make in Brazil.

Back in days of yesteryear, when we carried our luggage and flight bags, I grabbed gear for Captains earning \$80,000 in 1980 dollars. It was a 70-seater BAC-1-11. So here's our challenge: Are we going to keep future 120-seat regional jets paying like 120 seat B-737s, or will we continue down the path of concession that sees today's 70-seat RJ pay \$60,000 in 2000 dollars?

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B-737-3/400*

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#### **CORPORATE CULTURE**

On behalf of pilots Gibson, Kerr and Nemeth I would like to thank pilots Peck, Thyrrre and O'Kane for their letters to the editor of the March 2000 *US AIRWAVES*. We welcome the

opportunity to engage our fellow pilots in thoughtful debate.

First to Andy Peck: You are absolutely on point about Delta. They have in fact squandered their culture in the recent years. We have only to look at the latest fury between management and the pilots concerning B-777 wages. The "family" atmosphere was destroyed by the treatment certain employee groups received after giving concessions and then having their concessions given to management in the form of bonuses. Nonetheless, Delta was able to create a different future for itself in contrast to what was occurring at Eastern during similar time frames. And the lessons Delta afford us should not go unnoticed. Both their early successes and their current difficulties are examples of how culture is an important aspect of business.

Also, I am afraid the use of "we" may have mislead some readers. We have been very careful not to point fingers or lay blame at any particular group (peculiarly, the pilots). The use of "we" was intended to mean "all of us within US Airways," including management and labor. All are keenly aware of past mistakes, and what makes the most sense is to move ahead into the future. One of the key elements, we believe, is our culture.

To Peter Thyrrre: Thank you for taking the time to write your letter. I agree that the employee numbering system is a part of our culture and we should look at what values it creates for all of us.

To Richard O'Kane: Thank you for that wonderful letter about Lori-Ann Dixey. Your letter points to the significant impact one individual can have within a large organization. Would that we had more employees like her and more like you who appreciate them.

And thanks to the many pilots who have stopped to comment on the letter to us in person.