

A Lot Can Happen in a Year



*Chris Beebe
MEC Chairman*

We're coming up on the one-year mark since the merger proposal between US Airways and United was announced. That's one whole year of rumors, media reports, newspaper articles, US Airways press releases, and investor announcements stating what's going to happen with the proposal. I believe this has been particularly hard on our pilot group because we had just come off a threatened Company shutdown at the end of March 2000 during the AFA negotiations. Then, the merger was sprung on us. We moved from one turning point to another with barely enough time to feel good about the fact that all labor groups at US Airways were under their respective contracts and would be for at least a couple of years. Additionally, these "cost-competitive" contracts negotiated with all of the organized labor groups on the property were supposed to spawn additional growth.

It has also been frustrating watching our Merger and Grievance Committees, along with counsel, continually grieve and arbitrate sections of our contract to confirm management compliance with our contract referencing the merger. We have grieved Sections 1(C)1, 1(C)3, and 1(F) of our contract since the merger was announced. Your Merger and Grievance Committees should be commended for their commitment to these protections for all of us.

The merger agreement termination date of August 1, 2001, is only a few months away, and we still continue to ponder what management seems to like to call our "uncertain future." I know that doesn't really make you feel great about your career at times. Uncertainty breeds discontent, and, at this point, pilot unity may be

a hard sell for this group. I believe, though, that the only course of action that will get us through a merger, or a fragmentation, or Contract 2003, will be our resolve and our willingness to see these events through as a unified group. I believe that there is a lesson learned with the resolve that the United and Delta pilots have shown in their recent negotiations with their respective managements. We can see that the fruits of their collective unity have helped us with our parity process.

Parity plus one percent

On May 13, ALPA received the final pay increase amount from the arbitrator—16.99 percent. That pay increase should be in your June 15 paycheck. I want to thank Paul DiOrio (BOS) and Donn Butkovic (PIT), our Parity Review Board members, for their work during the past five months. The amount of time they spent on this Board to bring you this raise—working seven days a week at times—is a testament to their dedication to the pilot group and ALPA.

After much debate at a special meeting, the MEC voted to accept the pay raise for the full 16.99 percent, and directed the Board to offer the Company an improvement in productivity in the S Reserve system. The MEC viewed this course of action as an instrument to bring us closer to the MEC's stated goals of furlough protection for all pilots and longevity credit for all furlough time for pay, vacation, and retirement.

Let me make it clear that this isn't something we're giving to the Company. We are not attempting to barter anything for addi-

“The MEC viewed this course of action as an instrument to bring us closer to the MEC's stated goals of furlough protection for all pilots and longevity credit for all furlough time for pay, vacation, and retirement.”

“ The parity process that was negotiated with the Company was carefully constructed to take advantage of future events. ”

tional cash. It’s a trade—we offer them improved productivity, and they give us additional job security, namely, no-furlough protection for all our pilots. There is also potential to gain some kind of modification to the current contractual seniority accrual for pay purposes for pilots while on furlough, as well as other job security enhancements for all pilots. These have been, and will remain, high priorities for the MEC.

These changes, if made, will not result in any furlough of US Airways pilots or any reduction in the parity pay increase. If the Company accepts the MEC’s offer, the Negotiating Committee would fully develop and negotiate final contractual provisions.

Remember, this is the first year that we’ve gone through the parity plus one percent process. We have two more years in which the process will be used. Next year, the new Delta pay rates, which at this time look as though they will include an increase above United’s new pay rates, should be in effect. Their new rates will be counted in the process next year and should help us the way that the United rates helped us this year. It’s another example of how the contract negotiations process supports us. By the time our next contract negotiations come along, we’ll be that much farther up the scale.

When parity was first introduced, many pilots were of the opinion that it would result in an automatic pay cut. It’s important to reinforce that when the parity review negotiations were concluded, the opinion of the Negotiating Committee—and, in fact, the majority of the MEC at that time—was that the anticipated pay increases of the United, Delta, and potentially the American pilots, would result in the beneficial parity review that you are now seeing. The parity process that was negotiated with the Company was carefully constructed to take advantage of future events.

Contract 2003

That’s right, I’m already talking about the next contract and our preparation for Section 6 negotiations. Our contract becomes amendable on January 3, 2003—that’s only a year and a half away. We must prepare and strategize for this now because the outcome of the UAL/US Airways merger proposal is uncertain, as I’ve said many times.

The last time I mentioned planning for Contract 2003 was in my May 2000 *US AIRWAVES*

article, before the merger plans were announced. What a difference a year makes. Life has become a lot more complicated for all of us since then.

To prepare for our future, at the MEC special meeting in May the MEC discussed the formation of a Strategic Planning Board and possible candidates for this Board. Here are some of the issues the Board, if created, will likely be discussing:

- Do we keep parity? Obviously, the parity process has been good to us this year, and hopefully next year, but most of that has been due to the considerable gains negotiated in the lucrative new contracts of other pilot groups. The Company may think that parity did not turn out the way they planned, and want to drop it in favor of more traditional procedures.
- Now that US Airways Chairman Stephen Wolf has taken the dubious position to investors, consumers, and the government that US Airways may not be able to survive at its current size, how do we protect ourselves? The provisions included in our present contract have certainly given us protections in the case of a merger or fragmentation, but the climate surrounding airline deals has changed drastically in one year. If there is no merger, we will be considering the best ways to guard our jobs.
- Will the U.S. economy continue to falter? The economy makes a difference, of course, in nearly every aspect of running a successful airline, and an economy on a downswing will dramatically change the way management approaches contract negotiations. The past 10 years have been very good for consumers, but if a recession is on the way, airline travelers—especially business travelers—could start pulling back, decide to drive to more destinations, or cut back on their travel altogether. If the outlook is negative, an appropriate plan must be devised so that we can prepare for it assertively.
- Can no-furlough protection for every pilot on the US Airways system seniority list be achieved? Over 1,000 US Airways pilots do not currently have furlough protection. The MEC and the MEC officers have made this one of our highest priorities.

Goals must be developed now so that the MEC can prepare for all contingencies—merger, no merger, fragmentation, downsizing . . . all of

these require their own goals and strategies. It is time to start taking inventory and deciding what we really need, what we want, and what we don't want, and how we will hold our management to the commitments they made to us in 1997.

Comair pilots' strike

While I'm on the subject of contract negotiations, I want to talk about the Comair pilots' strike. I sent a letter to you about a month ago that stated the importance of this strike and the reverberation it will have on the airline industry and, therefore, on all the pilots in the United States.

At the time this magazine went to press, the Comair pilots had been on strike for over 50 days. They had also just resoundingly voted down a National Mediation Board settlement proposal that they felt was unacceptable. Many of these pilots are paid paltry sums of money for flying commercial jets, and they are overwhelmingly united to increase their pay and improve their working conditions that they've had to accept because the airline industry is rooted to the belief that "regional" airlines, which are raking in the cash, can't afford to pay their workers what they're worth.

These pilots' careers are uncertain. Their futures are uncertain. They are facing a company that is playing hardball and is led by Delta management, therefore giving Comair a lot of resources at hand. However, our Comair brothers and sisters are still not falling for management threats and rhetoric, and they remain united. When they voted down the settlement offer, they knew that no new talks would be scheduled with the NMB for at least 30 days. That's another month of wondering how to pay the mortgage, the car payment, or worrying how they will be able to pay for groceries, never mind their kids' college education. I think that every ALPA pilot can learn from their non-sense stand, and I believe that helping these pilots during their strike, whether it is through jumpseat use or a monetary contribution to their Family Fund, is one of the most noble ways in which one ALPA pilot can help another. If you would like to make a contribution to the fund, make your check out to:

Comair Pilots Family Fund
ALPA MEC
8100 Burlington Pike, Suite 280
Florence, KY 41042

Staffing issues, contract abuses

Once again, the Company is insisting that the airline will be properly staffed soon. I don't know what their idea of "soon" is, but I'm sure they don't mean next week. Meanwhile, the operation of our airline certainly isn't improving—that's apparent by the hundreds of canceled and precanceled flights we are experiencing—and contract abuses are increasing. Management is clearly preoccupied by the outcome of this merger, and their eagerness to push the merger through the Justice Department is affecting their ability to run the airline.

I know I've said it before, but you are the last line of defense when it comes to defending and protecting the Contract. If you think you've been wronged, don't wonder about it—find out. Call the MEC Contract Hotline at 800-USAIR MEC. Call your rep. Their numbers are in the gray pages in the middle of this magazine. Call a member of the Central Scheduling Committee. Their numbers are in the gray pages too. If you're a reserve and you have a question, you can call Jed Thomas, the Central Scheduling Committee reserve specialist. Also, take a look at that committee's recent *US AIRWAVES* articles. There's a wealth of information contained in them. Listen to the Code-a-Phone for updates on these issues—it's our most timely way of getting information out to you. Also, a few weeks ago, the Communications Committee debuted the MEC FastRead, which is a weekly e-mail update sent to all US Airways pilots who have their e-mail address on file with ALPA International. The FastRead not only contains merger, contractual, and negotiating news, it has links to internal documents and external news, so you have quick access to more information. If you're not already getting the MEC FastRead and would like to, call Wendi Darr at ALPA International at 703-689-4163 so that she can add your e-mail address to our database.

Our Legal Staff and Grievance Committee members at the MEC office are there to help, too. (In fact, MEC Attorney Paul Girdany has written an article about Miranda rights for this issue.) If there's ever any question, give someone a call. If we guard our contract, our vigilance will pay off.

ALPA International

It's also important to note what has been happening at another ALPA carrier. Atlas Air

“Management is clearly pre-occupied by the outcome of this merger, and their eagerness to push the merger through the Justice Department is affecting their ability to run the airline.”

“ Harmonization keeps marching forward, and this is something that we have to be acutely aware of in the United States. ”

pilots have been embroiled in a conflict with their management for over two years. When this pilot group chose ALPA to represent them in April 1999, their management immediately retaliated by denying them participation in Atlas Air’s profit-sharing plan, which excluded unionized employees. Atlas Air brought this matter to court, ALPA countersued, and although the court’s decision initially went to the company, it was eventually won by ALPA in appeals court in November 2000. The court found that the exclusion of unionized employees from the profit-sharing plan was a violation of the Railway Labor Act.

Atlas Air decided not to appeal that decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, and instead decided to settle the dispute with ALPA. Atlas Air restored full back pay, interest, and other compensation relating to the company’s retaliatory pay cuts. Kudos to ALPA’s Legal Department for their tenacity in this case. These kind of decisions will make companies take another look before trying to take away another group’s right to unionize. This resounding victory is just one of the reasons why we pay our dues money to ALPA. Our international structure is always there to support us when we need it.

You should also know what may be coming down the pike for U.S. pilots. The European Commission has harmonized pilot licenses, which means that if you have an EC license, you can fly for any of the EC countries. I attended the IFALPA conference in May and talked to many pilots who have EC licenses. Harmonization keeps marching forward, and this is some-

thing that we have to be acutely aware of in the United States. You should also note that most of the EC countries allow their pilots to fly to age 65. When you look at these EC standards, it’s not hard to understand how they could start to gradually encroach on our country’s standards. Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) has already introduced legislation that will change the pilot retirement age from age 60 to 65. He’s since retreated to age 63, but ALPA and the FAA are vigorously opposing any change. This battle, when it is fought, will be contentious.

A couple of notable things will be happening at the upcoming Executive Board meeting (the Board is comprised of the MEC chairmen of all ALPA pilot groups). The Board will be voting on, and is expected to approve, the Merger Agreement between the Continental and Continental Express pilots and ALPA. The Agreement will then go into effect June 1. Also, the Board is expected to approve John Cox as ALPA International’s Executive Air Safety Chairman. John was the US Airways MEC Central Air Safety Chairman for many years and played an instrumental role in the NTSB investigation of the crash of USAir Flight 427. This position is the top pilot air safety position in ALPA, and I am proud to have a US Airways pilot with his skills and dedication holding a post this important and influential.



The following are management Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) volunteers and would *only* contact you in a CIRP capacity following an incident. The CIRP helps pilots recognize and deal with the normal stress reactions associated with being involved in an accident or critical incident.

Randy Hass*	PIT	412-561-0272	ASPEN 8583	rhass@ix.netcom.com
Gary van Hartogh**	PIT	412-747-3219		vhartog@usairways.com
Tim Bronson	PIT	412-366-1133		imav8n@compuserve.com
Mike McGraw	PIT	757-340-0496	ASPEN 7704	70774.2602@compuserve.com
Bryan Purdum	PIT	724-457-9431		
Skip Stocknick	BWI	410-266-7529		sstocknick@earthlink.net

*Chairman **Vice Chairman