

# *Hotel Updates*



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

**D**ue to my busy schedule and the responsibilities of the Communications Committee, I have not yet been trained to administer the Crew Accommodations web page as I had planned. Therefore, I pledge not to state a firm date for completion of such tasks when schedule coordination with others is necessary. However, I feel that the web page will help the committee better communicate with our pilots. Hopefully, the time we have spent working on the pilots' behalf this month will make up for the delay. As more committee members are trained, keeping the web page current will become easier.

## **Crew rooms**

First, a tip of the hat goes to John Geehan (PIT) for taking the time to travel around the system with company personnel to review crew rooms. Thanks also to the MEC for lending their full support on this issue. We will probably give John a break on the second round of cities, depending on how many more come up.

Here's the latest on crew room reviews: In Orlando, we will be taking over the old reservations training room. Tampa presently accommodates only one crew per day, but we have acquired space there. In Miami, we have not yet acquired space, and I am not sure how a proposed plan to share space with ground personnel in Miami meets the requirement for private

and quiet facilities. New furniture, computers, and phones have been ordered for all three stations. In Fort Lauderdale, the station was already working on facilities when John arrived. Space has been allocated, and the furnishings have been ordered. In Albany, crews were unaware of an existing crew room for which new furnishings have been ordered. In Richmond, no extra space is available within the limits of US Airways' lease. A suitable room has been found, but the Company must negotiate with the airport for it. We have also asked for some improvements in the LGA lounge, located on the Shuttle side of the terminal. Forthcoming should be a copier, extra computer tables, and a rack for coats and garment bags. In the latter part of April, John traveled to EWR, PVD, and BUF to review the crew rooms there.

Lastly, inspectors made a trip to RDU, which could be the toughest location of all. The security constraints at this airport are quite tough, and no extra space currently exists within the limits of US Airways' lease. When construction of the new US Airways Club is complete, part of the old club should give us enough room for a lounge. We are also making sure there will be easy access to the lounge, just as CCAir has in the main terminal. Please let us know if there are other cities that have "productivity breaks."

Although there has been no official word regarding the crew room grievance, there has

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been some activity. There was also a trip to BHM, as we now have a three-hour layover in this city. We knew this was going to be a problem, as US Airways leases only 1,100 square feet in BHM. When more information becomes available, I will get it out to you as quickly as I can.

During the week of March 5, a committee member traveled with management personnel to Florida to look for additional space in order to improve the crew rooms in most of our Florida cities.

### **Crew meals**

The Committee has been receiving comments regarding stations where the respective catering companies are not following the prescribed menus, and we have been forwarding this information on to the Dining and Cabin Service Department. We have also received some replies from the offending kitchens outlining changes that will bring them back into compliance.

I have also received word that, in response to the grievance that we filed in February, management is working on the computer program that schedules crew meals. I will try to find out what progress has been made and report the results in a later article. I have not yet learned when we might be able to schedule a new menu presentation, but complaints about meal content have gone down recently. I hope this means that the catering companies are coming into compliance with the current menus. The Dining and Cabin Services Department has been following up on our reports and copying me in on replies from the catering companies.

### **Other hotel and transportation news**

Another long-festering problem involves the phone charges at the Tremont House in Boston. We received a report that the new general manager of the hotel had finally dropped the phone charges. While that turned out to be false, we used this opportunity to make another run at the hotel to get these charges waived. After a few phone calls from your committee and some work by our management, the new general manager decided to drop the phone charges for our crews as of April 11. Any 800, local, or credit card calls should no longer incur access charges. The e-mail sent by the hotel mentioned nothing about the length of calls, so you may want to check this out. Your committee will certainly follow up as well.

Your committee also worked on a problem involving a pilot whose computer was damaged by a hotel van driver. He was having trouble resolving this incident on his own. He gave us a call, and we were able to help him in this instance. We were lucky in that the incident happened at a hotel that values our business. The management company running this hotel understands what housing airline crews can do for the hotel's overall performance. In light of this experience, may I suggest that when traveling with a laptop, you might want to think twice about giving it to the driver to put in back with the other luggage. I personally keep my computer with me and will hold it on my lap if necessary. Fortunately, we were able to resolve this situation to the pilot's satisfaction, but there is no guarantee we will be as successful the next time. Innkeepers' liability in many cases may extend to the van, but might only cover \$50 to \$250—nowhere near enough to fix, let alone replace, a computer.

We conducted an inspection in Richmond to review the short overnight hotel and possible alternate hotels for our business. The current hotel, the Holiday Inn, has done a very good job with our crews, and I can't recall receiving any negative comments about it. We also received a very good offer from the Hilton, which we had previously used. With so many hotels now situated around the airport area, all could use more business. For that reason, management will enjoy a drop in rates, and we will be able to keep or improve the quality of the hotel we use. Since the Holiday Inn has done a very good job, our choice was difficult. The Hilton admitted that they made a mistake in asking us to leave two years ago. They also agreed that, with a NASCAR race the following weekend, the timing was very bad. We were not sure that we wanted to give them a second chance, only to be treated poorly once again. Ultimately, with a new hotel manager and a strong commitment from the management company, we selected the Hilton. We will find a better room product and 24-hour room service, which the Holiday Inn couldn't match. Only time will tell if we made the proper choice. If it turns out we didn't, at least we will have learned that the management group running the Hilton can't be trusted. We would then be unlikely to use them in any other city for a long time.

In Brussels, we will be using the Golden Tulip Atlanta. It is located in the center of the city, at Boulevard Adolphe Max 7. The hotel,

which has been closed for two years while undergoing a major renovation, was scheduled to open on April 19. When we were there in March, most of the sleeping rooms were completed, and they were concentrating on the public space. The rooms were quite large and spacious. Sleeping rooms with one bed have bathrooms configured with a shower stall and a bathtub. Rooms with two beds have the standard tub and shower. When we arrived for the inspection, the general manager, who has worked in many other hotels housing airline crews, was there to walk us through. The hotel has promised that there will be no wait for our rooms. The general manager also suggested that we use only courtyard rooms to cut down on noise from the local streets. However, in reviewing the street side rooms, we noticed no noise from the outside. All rooms have new double-glazed windows. The breakfast room will be located on the top floor of the hotel. The hotel's dinner restaurant and health club will not be open until July. The shopping area is right out the back of the hotel, and there are

many restaurants in the local area. The transportation has not yet been finalized, as there is some disagreement with the station personnel as to what company will do the best job. Of course this will be finalized before the start of service, but not before this issue goes to press.

We also visited Pensacola in hopes of finding a new overnight hotel. We inspected six hotels on this trip, of which only one could come close to solving most of the problems our crews have been encountering in PNS. Management feels that the current hotel (the Ramada) is the best choice. Your committee strongly disagrees with this assessment, so we filed a grievance that was to be heard on April 11. Due to scheduling conflicts, that hearing had to be canceled. Not wanting to drag this out until May, when the next round of hearings would be held, I asked for and received an informal meeting with Captain Gibson to discuss the differences in opinion about the choices. Because the meeting was put together rather quickly, one manager couldn't be there,

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### *Disapproval List*

**ERI**—The location for all overnights is very poor. The rooms are also a bit old.

**LAX**—The Culver City location for long overnights is very poor.

**PNS**—This city is new to the list. During the inspection process, we saw a better alternative to the current hotel in town. We need to make a change here. The current hotel is too distant for short overnights, and the long hotel has very little around it. Crews have to rely on the hotel to shuttle them from place to place.

### *Watch List*

**ALB short overnight**—The condition of the hotel and van service has been very poor.

**BNA long overnight**—The location is poor, though there were no comments this month. (I know the hotel didn't move.) We are waiting for an inspection and additional comments to push it up the list.

**CHS long overnight**—This is a poor location for a long overnight. Since its selection, our overnight volume has increased to warrant the use of a second hotel.

**EWR transportation**—Problems persist with the driver's attention to detail. The van company has been read the "riot act." Is service improving?

**MSY**—Our demand for hotel rooms in this city now merits the use of two hotels. The location for short and long overnights is questionable.

The OF-310 count was down a bit for March with 42 reports. The count for April was 74 reports. Of these, three addressed old hotels, six contained positive comments, 11 concerned meals (or lack of them), and one dealt with crew rooms. Also, seven reports addressed overflow relocations to different hotels. These proved to be very helpful in letting us know that management was using a hotel that we knew nothing about. As a result, we were able to get some things straightened out.

**“ When you run into a problem on the line, or you would like to pass along a complement about a hotel, please submit a form. ”**

but a department representative attended. He was able to discuss the department’s views, but had never actually visited the hotel in question. We constructively explored the issues, and will continue the discussion in hopes of resolving the problem. If not, we still have the grievance on file.

Management said that since there were not many negative OF-310 reports concerning this hotel, it must be doing OK. Here is another example of why your committee stresses the importance of the OF-310 forms. It may take us a while to get all the results we desire, but we will get them. While many in management come and go, our pilots are here until retirement. I’ll again make my plug for your participation in this process. When you run into a problem on the line, or you would like to pass along a compliment about a hotel, please submit a form. When your committee and management discuss hotel changes, we need documentation, both positive and negative. As I learn more about database management, our web page comment form should enable us to improve the quantity and quality of available information. So, please get involved with your union. Your feedback enables us to better represent the line pilot.

We also talked with the Holiday Inn in BWI about the reoccurring morning van problems, especially on weekends. Again, our management helped to solve this problem in order to eliminate delays caused by crews who could not get to the airport in a timely manner. The hotel has adjusted the van drivers’ schedules to have

more drivers on duty in the morning. They are also training a front desk person to drive the van in the mornings. Additionally, if things get backed up in the lobby, a driver is supposed to pull around to the side of the hotel and load the crews there, out of sight of the other guests. This should solve the problems, but we would like to hear from you. I would have preferred to see a reservation system set up so that crews could reserve a time to head over to the airport.

Remember, your committee doesn’t recommend getting on a van that is overcrowded. If the hotel wants to put more folks on, I would get off and wait for the next van. If you are at the airport and another van will not be there within our contractually required time, get a taxi. While the hotel should cover the expense, be prepared to pay for it yourself and submit an expense form.

Speaking of participation, we have added to the ranks of the Crew Accommodations Committee. Please check the gray pages of this *US AIRWAVES* for the new members. We are still looking to add another member each in BOS and PHL. It would be most helpful to have a domestic pilot volunteer in PHL. Give me a call, and notify your local council representative to express your interest. With regard to the many volunteers from domiciles in which we are adequately staffed, we must first focus on those domiciles in which we are inadequately staffed.

That is it for the month. Please keep the comments coming, and have a good overnight!



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