



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.

**CHECK RIDES**

The subject of the "Training" section (March issue of *US AIRWAVES*) on "check rides" was interesting. A NASA study comparing performance errors between DC-9-30 and MD-80 crews was very revealing. Neither group was inept or dangerous, but the efficacy of advanced automation did not result in superior performance. Many confounding factors could be at work; not the least, the MD-80 crews had less experience in their aircraft than their contemporaries did.

Ironically, the very fact that low time crews were able to operate very close (no significant difference) to more seasoned crews, is an interesting fact. The response to the spike in DC-9 check ride failures is puzzling to me. Intrinsically, check rides are worthless, if they are only considered good when everything goes well. In too many cases, overzealous check pilots forget that we, the flying public, do not want to ride behind some failure, so rather than sending us crews that fail, why not send us crews that are trained?

Here is a quote from General Normal Schwarzkopf's autobiography, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, Bantam Press, 1992, Page 244. While talking with his battalion and company commanders before they left for the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, he said,

There's something I want you to remember,...The NTC is the National Training Center—not the National Testing Center. I expect you to make mistakes. I want you to use your initiative. I'd rather have you fall on your ass in peacetime than in war, because in peacetime it doesn't cost lives.

Check rides have never, by themselves, prevented an accident. Good training has.  
Good flying to you!

Dud Tenney  
(retired)

**RETIREMENTS**

Since I have been flying International out of PHL for the last couple of years I have made an effort to attend several 'retirement' receptions both at the gate and outside customs when captains return from their last trip overseas.

Certainly, there have been many because of both the seniority level of the B-767 and the early retirement incentive program.

On all occasions, there is *no one* to meet the retiring individual that is a representative from either the PHL chief pilot's office or US Airway's management. I don't believe anyone is expecting a Rolex watch, but a firm handshake thanking them for all the years of service to the company would be greatly appreciated by all. Hopefully this practice will change and our senior pilots who are passing into retirement will be thanked for a job well done!

James P. Garbett (PHL)  
B-767/757

[Note: This issue is being addressed by the Membership Services Committee. See Membership Services' article in this edition. –Editor]

**APA SICK-OUT 1**

In the MEC Chairman's column titled "Focusing on the Future," Chris Beebe makes the

argument that “a serious mistake has the potential of causing serious harm. Look at American Airlines, for example ...”

Making this statement publicly is potentially destructive to our pilots and to the “image” of the airline pilot. Captain Beebe made a serious error of diplomacy in publicly making this statement. Regardless of his opinion, it should not have been printed in *US AIRWAVES*.

I am not saying that the labor action was right or wrong. What I am saying is that this statement, publicly declared, has the clear potential to damage ALPA, the APA, and US Airways pilots in future relations with the American Pilots Association.

James Braun (PIT)  
B-737-3/400

#### APA SICK-OUT 2

MEC Chairman Chris Beebe’s April “*Focusing on the Future*” says the “*actions of the American Airlines pilots significantly damaged the image of the airline pilot in the public’s mind, and could bankrupt their union.*” He cites this as an example of a serious mistake potentially “*causing extreme harm.*” However, labor conflicts should not be judged on what the public thinks. Suggestion of bankruptcy should await the outcome of their appeals. As a union leader, Captain Beebe’s statement is piling on against the American pilots and their union, the Allied Pilots Association (APA).

Recall the Duke and Spellacy cases where ALPA was found guilty of failing in their Duty of Fair Representation (DFR). There was an in-house reluctance to describe ALPA guilty until the appeals were completed. ALPA settled out of court with the Duke group for an amount sealed by court order, and the Supreme Court would not hear the Spellacy appeal. Should we not give our brother pilots at American the same benefit of the doubt until their appeals are complete?

Recall the US Airways mechanics’ strike of 1992. The MEC at that time took a position that resulted in our pilots crossing the IAM picket lines. In 1997 we had members of other unions picketing our own MEC office. In hindsight, both incidents appear as embarrassing mistakes perhaps caused by perceiving self-interest instead of common goals in a labor conflict.

Captain Beebe laments that “*Even ALPA has been blamed by people who think that our union represents the American Airlines pilots.*” The

Association has big shoulders. I am far more concerned about what happens the next time a pilot is unable to commence his or her duties because of a defocusing concern over an external event. Part of ALPA’s “*Schedule With Safety*” motto is to not fly when you are not fit. In line with that, Council 94 reps have in the past told their pilots that if they can not get themselves recomposed to safely fly after being accosted by airport security, then do not fly the airplane.

Later, Capt. Beebe asks, “*Should we increase our involvement with other pilot groups in regard to national and international alliances...?*” He also says, “*We also must actively work to improve respect for pilots...*” Both Capt. Beebe and the *US AIRWAVES* editors should have seen the inherent conflict of these two statements with Beebe’s opening censure. Both should have recognized the ongoing legal appeal process. Both should have understood that even though the APA and ALPA-represented Reno pilot issue ignited some anti-labor types in Congress, there will always be those issues and those factions. For example, a group plans to ask Congress to eliminate the RJ-limiting provisions in negotiated scope clauses.

Regardless of personal opinions about APA or the American Airlines pilots, it was a serious mistake for our Master Chairman to rebuke them in our union magazine. The American pilots, like those at Northwest, fought a battle for the profession a few years ago. They have my enduring respect for that, and during their appeal on their latest dispute I will extend to them the benefit of any doubts I may have, particularly on misdirected blame onto ALPA or the public’s image of the airline pilot. I am more concerned about the image of our own MEC in the world of unionists and how it and the US Airways pilots are going to conduct their contract struggle of 2003. Wouldn’t it be ironic if the same group Captain Beebe blames for damaging the image of airline pilots is also the group with whom we are united in our next contract negotiations?

John Davis (PIT)  
B-757

