

Aerie News

The Eagles Aerie News of the **USAir**

Fourth Quarter 2023

Soaring Eagles

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Paul Sturpe

Secretary

Judi Todd

Past President

John Davis

Advisors to the Board – Bill Leefe, Bob Knapp, Butch Schofield, Ron Natalie

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(276) 632-9941

Captain Joe Kernan

Joekernandc9@yahoo.com

To my fellow Soaring Eagles,

Another successful Soaring Eagles convention/reunion is in the books. If you were unable to make it this year, plans are already underway to make sure that the 47th convention/reunion is just as successful. Many people came up to me to thank me for my efforts in making the event a success. While I appreciate those kind words, I must say it was a team effort.

First Vice President Judy (Schmidt) Colbath handled all of the menu selections for both the Meet & Greet, and the Sunday buffet. Judy obviously did a good job as I haven't heard one complaint about the quality of the food. As a matter of fact, quite the opposite we have received positive comments about the food service.

Second Vice President/Treasurer Elect Andy Skiba took over the chore of preparing the identification name tags, and addressing the envelopes that members pick up when registering. It may not sound like much, but it is somewhat time consuming and tedious work, and I thank Andy for doing it.

Judi Todd in addition to getting the “Aerie” published which you are reading now, also kept the hospitality suite humming when we weren’t engaged in other activities. She had a number of helpers that I will not name because I may inadvertently leave someone out. You know who you are, so I simply say thanks to Judi and all of you that pitched in to make the hospitality suite hospitable.

Outgoing Treasurer and new Webmaster Paul Sturpe handled all of the registrations, collected all of the fees, and helped with computer issues as we prepared for the event. Paul also had to make several payments to the Yacht Starship prior to the cruise. Unfortunately, when some members had to cancel their plans to be with us Paul had to process reimbursements to them. Thanks to Paul for his significant contribution to our success.

All I did was bug the hell out of you to get hotel registrations and registering with Treasurer Paul Sturpe done early. That was easy.

The Saturday evening cruise on Tampa Bay has become very popular, and we plan on doing it next year.

Finally, the last member(s) of the team are all of you that were present this year. You will know that the positive energy, and good vibes were palpable, and the event couldn’t have been successful without you. It was so nice to see some of the fellows, and gals that flew with me on the line.

Please make plans now to attend the 47th Soaring Eagles convention/reunion to be held at the Tampa Westshore Marriott on Oct, 25,26,27, 2024. Bring a new member or a guest. Meanwhile share our website address with your contacts, and if they are eligible, they can download an application for membership there.

Usairsoaringeagles.org

See you in Tampa in October 2024.

Joe

The State of the Organization

In my view the State of the Organization is good. We continue to make good use of our two main communications tools in keeping our members up to date on current events, and items of special interest. Our webmaster Paul Sturpe has done a superb job of transforming the website that we inherited from Gerry Milburn Milburn into a state-of-the-art website. Many of these improvements took place at the same time that Paul was also serving as our Treasurer. We thank Paul for his nearly seven years of service as Treasurer, and we look forward to ongoing improvements to the website under Paul's leadership.

In the election that we have just concluded, we elected the first second generation pilot to the board with the election of Steve Flom as Second Vice President. Steve's father Bob Flom served as Soaring Eagles President in 1996, and again in 2009. Kevin Flom is our newest member, so it looks like the "Flying Flom's" are coming back. Congratulations Steve on your election, and welcome to Kevin.

Speaking of new members, I have had the pleasure during the last year to welcome fourteen new members to the Soaring Eagles and nearly half of them were pilots. Of course, we welcome all new members be they pilots or flight attendants, but we just want to keep a nice balance.

With Paul Sturpe stepping down as Treasurer, we congratulate Andy Skiba on his election to Treasurer, and we wish him well in taking on one of the most important functions on our board. He is obviously well qualified, and I look forward to working closely with him in keeping us fiscally strong and being responsible stewards of the funds entrusted to us.

Most of our members have already retired, but from time to time I am called upon to assist widows or spouses of members with retirement and insurance issues with American Airlines. I am disappointed to report that my go to person at American for assistance in these matters was hired away from American by Southwest Airlines. Misty Hambright was the Director of Benefits Administration at American, and all I had to do was call her and describe the particular problem to her, after which she would assign the issue to a subordinate who would usually resolve the issue. Apparently, she was too employee/retiree friendly as she is no longer at American. If you call the number advertised as American Airlines Benefits you are not talking to an employee of American Airlines, but to a third party that has been hired by American to administer the benefits. When I return from this Convention, I intend to write a narrative of how one of our widows has been treated shabbily by the so-called American Airlines Benefits Department. To put it mildly she has been batted around like a ping pong ball in a

Chinese table tennis match. We were so fortunate to work for the company when we did, when you were treated like a family member, and not just a number.

Congratulations to Judy (Schmidt) Colbath who has once again been elected to the First Vice Presidents position.

Judi Todd continues to get the Aerie out in electronic form which saves considerable resources. Thanks, Judi. Judi is not up for election until next year.

We have a good strong board and I look forward to working with the entire board in growing this organization into the future.

As a prudent organization I hope that everyone will be looking forward to the time when a leadership change at the President level should take place. Sooner or later the baton must be passed to others, and I hope whenever that takes place the person that succeeds me has the determination to preserve our Family. Heritage, and Legacy as described on our commemorative coin.

Joe



Joe, Judy, Steve, Judi, Paul and Andy

(724) 378-7025

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Flight Attendant Judy Schmidt
Colbath

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Boy that was fun!

I was so worried after Joe Kernan tasked me with planning the menu selections for the meet and greet, and the buffet that something would go wrong. Wow, I was relieved when folks started commenting about how good the food was at both events, and the idea of the buffet Sunday seemed to be well received.

I was honored to be re-elected First Vice President, and I think I know what task Joe is going to assign to me for 2024. Recruitment is a given, and I suspect planning the menu for the 2024 event is in my future.

I really enjoyed seeing some of the regulars, but I especially enjoyed seeing many new and younger faces. I know that Joe has been talking about getting some of the younger members involved, and the election of Steve Flom is a move in that direction.

Please make a commitment to attend next year and bring a new member with you. Oct. 25, 26, 27. Same time, same place.

Judy

**SECOND VICE
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Captain Steve Flom

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Dear Members,

This is my first contribution to the Aerie. Having just returned from the convention where I was elected I would like to thank you for your votes for me as Second Vice President.

It is always great to see the pilots and & flight attendants that were part of a great career and to retell and hear some of those stories that made it special. I am sure the stories get better with each retelling. It was also great to see new faces and I look forward to seeing more next year. Be sure to tell your friends how fun it was, and of course there is the hospitality room with a great bartender.

I would like to thank those that contributed the special items for the auction. It is always fun to shop and then to bid on memorabilia. If you have any items for next year's auction, please bring them on down.

It's for a good cause,

Steve Flom

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

(619) 417-7274

Flight Attendant Judi Todd

judiwtodd@gmail.com

I'm just sitting here (with my kitty on my lap) thinking about how fast time flies by. Just a couple weeks ago I was in Tampa at the Soaring Eagles reunion/convention and now Christmas is around the corner. We have so much to be thankful for. It was so nice to see all our old friends and to meet new ones. I so enjoyed listening to everyone reminiscing about our airline lives. I can say that all of us are so grateful for flying when we did. Times have changed. I also like to receive your stories (that you didn't have time to tell at the reunion)!so keep sending them to me so I can put them

In the Aerie so others can enjoy them.

Looking forward to seeing all of you next October in Tampa. Judi

TREASURER'S MESSAGE

(828) 478-1133

Captain Paul Sturpe

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From the Treasurer

You missed out on a good time if you were not able to be at the 46th Convention/Reunion. We miss everyone who doesn't come and hope you are able to make it next year.

This will be my last report as Treasurer/Web Master. But wait, there's more. You aren't getting rid of me so easily. The duty of Treasurer is being turned over to Any Skiba on January 1, 2024. As of that same date, I will be continuing only as Web Master.

So, remember your 2024 dues are due in February. Remember to send dues money to Andy as well as any other monies (donations, etc.) starting January 1, 2024. Andy's address will be posted on our website prior to January 1.

As Joe said in his State of the Organization (See the "Minutes" tab on our website, <https://usairsoaringeagles.org/>) we hope some of you younger guys and gals will step up to take on some of these duties.

So long until next quarter.

Paul Sturpe, Treasurer/Web Master

**TREASURER ELECT
MESSAGE**

(239) 693-9285

Captain Andy Skiba

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Another successful Convention (Eagle Gathering) is history. Only to be talked about by the first time attendees. This was my second year to attend and we met with some good friends that we hadn't seen in over 25 years. Time has a mysterious way of disappearing but this reunion of retired pilots and flight attendants is a great way to make up for those forgotten years and recall all the good friends, fellow employees and memorable times we had during our working years for USAir, and the airlines that created USAir.

The WestShore Marriott went overboard in the quality of rooms, food, and service this year to make us want to keep returning again. Of a particular note, our banquet comedian, RC Smith, picked up on a few of the banquet attendees as prime targets for repartee. He also learned that we can give as well as take when it comes to quick wit and a fun night's entertainment.

Overall the convention was outstanding in every regard. The memorabilia auction after we returned from the dinner cruise was lively and very competitive by the bidders. Allegheny and Mohawk airline items went for higher prices that we never could have imagined and I acquired an original oil painting of a Boeing 737-200. The first Boeing that I got checked out on. It will be a great addition to my aviation art collection. Over \$2000 was added to our "Save the Stinson" project. Much more is needed to get the historic airplane project back to flying status so if you know a corporation or a well healed donor for a worthwhile cause let Joe Kernan know.

As a final note, I keep encouraging inactive Soaring Eagles to attend the next year's convention and bring a new member or guest with you. Each year we lose members due to the aging process. We are now seeing some of the second generation of pilots and flight attendants starting to become active members. You are really needed to keep the Soaring Eagles alive and fun.

Andy Skiba

“SOARING EAGLES WRITE”

This was my first time attending a Soaring Eagles Convention and “A Big Wow!” I certainly was not disappointed! My daughter who lives in Tampa joined me and we’re planning to go again next year. I only knew two people when we arrived but it didn't take long to strike up conversations immediately and felt like we knew each other for years. The amount of planning put into the event was evident..could not have been better. Looking forward to next year and hoping to reunite with more faces from the past and once again those that I met this year.
Carol Soltis and daughter, Cheryl

I can't begin to tell you how very much I enjoyed myself at the reunion. It was wonderful to see my airline family and get to catch up; it was like being on the jump seat again. You know what I mean. In between trips it could be months, maybe even a year or so since you've flown with someone, but that didn't have any effect on just picking up where you left off the last time you flew together with that colleague.

Working in the Commercial Aviation Industry, in whatever the capacity, is a career like no other. It was a career that became my life. It not only provided me income, but it became my social life as well. I mean really, how many people can have breakfast at home in the states and enjoy a meal relatively just a short time later in another state or country for that matter? But..... truly what made all of it the BEST were the friendships that were forged; a real bond between all of us. Let's face it as it takes special people who literally don't mind living out of a suitcase and ready, if necessary or especially as a reserve, on a moment's notice to fly wherever needed.

No, I was the one who was blessed to have had the opportunity to be a part of USAir, and I can tell you I was sorry to see my career end and retire. I still say I should have stayed even today. My thirty-three years of service to our Company was my pleasure and gave me a hundred-fold back in return. The greatest are the wonderful colleagues and lifetime friends I made that I can proudly call my "Airline Family." Though I love my family, "they say" you don't get to choose them. I am so fortunate that in the end USAir chose me and now I'm a part of the sweetest family ever.

I thank you again Joe and to all of the Board Members of the Soaring Eagles that made this year's reunion another success; I'm already looking forward to the next.

Lorraine

PS: Keep the funny stories coming, and I'll go through the rolodex of my mind for a funny story of my own.

To all of the Soaring Eagles Board Members,

Thank you for all that each and every one of you contributed in time to make the 46th Soaring Eagles Reunion a success.

Your efforts were well worth it as evident in the attendance. Each year more of our colleagues appear to be attending and that's wonderful. It's so special to spend time together with our "Airline Family."

Though many of us are retired, it meant so much, to me personally, to still feel a part of the greatest career, that of a Flight Attendant, working for USAir. And..... so fortunate to have worked with the most wonderful group of people that, as I've said, have become extended family to me.

Though it had been a while since I'd seen the majority of my colleagues, it was like sitting on the jump seat again and just picking up where we left off.

From the start of the reunion Friday evening at the cocktail party to the wonderful dinner cruise on Saturday evening aboard the Starship Yacht, culminating to the lovely buffet dinner Sunday evening along with entertainment and dancing; everything was great. I didn't want it to end. But,.... as all things must do just that, I will look forward to next year's reunion and perhaps seeing even more of my "Airline Family."

Many thanks again to all of you,

Lorraine M. Genola

I thought the conference was exceptionally well done. I have attended many conferences and believe this to be one of the most professionally organized and well thought out. Everything stayed on schedule and the events were great.

Looking forward to next year.

All the best.

Tom Kreamer

Hi Judi

I enjoyed meeting you and talking about how Bert was involved with the training at The Atomic Energy Commission on the F-227 when I flew there.

You did a great job of keeping the Soaring Eagles's hall facilities tidy, fully stocked with treats and drinks, creating a pleasant, "I want to visit" atmosphere. The hospitality area was always inviting with plenty of airline photos and mementos to generate conversation.

The food events were also spectacular-high quality, delicious, and abundant in all three locations. The Friday reception area Hors D'oeuvres started everything off in high quality and stimulated great conversation opportunities. Our yacht trip was very enjoyable, and as mentioned, highlighted with great cuisine which was very tasty and plentiful.

The last night's buffet was also fabulously appetizing with many choices. Joe Kernan is a fantastic caring president who absolutely energized the entire event.

All of the leadership team devoted great care in the preparation for the reunion and all participated in making it enjoyable and orderly.

These efforts from our leadership's team created a wonderful atmosphere for great conversation and relaxation. You know, nothing is greater than laughing and sharing stories from our wonderful days at US Air and in my case Allegheny Airlines previously.

Those times remain some of my fondest memories. No one really understands the life of flying as a crew on a daily basis throughout all the seasons with weather conditions, maintenance issues, passenger issues, scheduling issues, and so on. That's why these events are so important. We all traveled to many wonderful destinations and had great fun doing it because we did it together.

Please tell everyone that if they possibly can, to come to the Soaring Eagles 2024 celebration of the greatest airline in the world. US Air!

Jim Medlock

2/12/79 New Hire Class -US Airways Retired Captain
B-737, B-757-B-767

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Hi Judi.....Thanks for all your work every year. It's much appreciated. I always have a great time. I'm still trying to recruit more people!! Happy Holidays. Barbara Gonzalez

The most enjoyable part of the event is seeing and socializing with who's still around. The means of doing so is usually well planned, congenial, and fun. Joe, Judy and the gang do a great job. The Hotel is very nice, very accommodating and not awfully expensive. It gives a discount. You can choose the events you'd like to attend or not. Florida in October has the very best weather anywhere. The only downside, if you want to call it that, is getting there. Air Travel isn't for sissies, most of the time. But it's worth the effort. And it's nice to be seen.... Before you're viewed.

Bob Klenke

Reunion was great. It's always good to catch up. I Loved the boat ride and my fish was outstanding. Thank you. The Marriott is always very nice too. It's all about the people that makes our work life very special. My non airline friends can't believe we still like eachother

Nancy Windingland

I thought the reunion was fantastic. I did not go on the boat trip but attended everything else.

The buffet was delicious, far better than last year.

Loved the music.

The comedian was hysterical, however,

I am not a prude but the F word being said constantly was a little too much.

I thought it rather uncomfortable as did some other people I talked to. His audience was not a bunch of young people.

The hotel is always so cold but there is nothing we can do about that.

Thanks Judi for everything you do to make this event such a success.

In appreciation

Carol Baker

Wonderful event! Having not seen most from many years past, my husband, Fred and I had a great time! I don't know why I never participated when invited prior other than thinking, this is a pilot event. Also, in years past, I helped Kathy and Bennett with their annual summer party. There, I would enjoy many of our DCA based crew and employees.

Isn't it so much fun to recall overnights and memorable trips on very historical aircraft? Yes, little did we know, we were making history!

Thank you for inducting me as a newbie to Soaring Eagles class of 2023!

Much appreciation,

Michelle Dennis Morris

This was our first convention. After 39 years with the company, including 10 years at PSA, I found that I had worked with only two other pilot attendees. That was somewhat disappointing. It was an ideal environment for making new friends.

The hotel was pleasant. The convention room was a nice size and well stocked with beverages and snacks. Our room was good. Clean and comfortable. Good hotel location in that several restaurants were close by. Free parking is becoming a rarity, so that was good too.

The cruise—at first it was a bit rushed. They took our drink orders right away and our drinks came about the same time as the first meal course. I would have preferred to have time for a few drinks and conversation with friends before being seated for dinner. I expected the cruise to be narrated, but it wasn't. No big deal about that... Having bus service to/from the cruise was a great idea.

The auction was fun. I hope there are more goodies to bid on in the future. It would have been nice to have a microphone for the auction and business meeting. Poor Joe was losing his voice. I wore my hearing aids and still had trouble hearing everything.

We departed Sunday after the business meeting, so we weren't present for the dinner.

Lastly, I cannot express how welcome my wife and I felt in spite of not knowing many folks. Also, many thanks to those who arranged the convention, especially Joe Kernan. I can only hope that I will have half of his energy and be as sharp when I am his age.

Respectfully,

Doug and Judy Stansbury