

Aerie News

The Eagles Aerie News of the **USAir**

Third Quarter 2024

Soaring Eagles

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Messages from your Officers

Soaring Eagles Write

Board of Directors

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| Webmaster | 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

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By the time you read this, there will be less than three weeks until the kickoff of the 47th Annual Soaring Eagles Convention/Reunion on Oct 25th In Tampa Fl.. Oct. 2, 2024, was the cutoff date for the Special Soaring Eagles room rate. If you waited too long and missed the deadline for the hotel reservations, call me. Although I make no promises, I will try to get the discounted rate for you, but I must advise you that it is based on room availability.

At the moment we have over eighty folks that have signed up for the Convention/Reunion and we are once again looking forward to having a great weekend reminiscing with old friends and colleagues.

One of the most important things that we do during the Convention is to elect board officers. This year we will be electing a President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, and Secretary/Editor of the Aerie. Treasurer Andy Skiba, and Webmaster Paul Sturpe were both elected to two-year terms in 2023, and therefore are not up for election until 2025. Despite my solicitation for candidates for all of these positions no one has offered themselves for any of these positions. During the election process there will be an opportunity for those interested in serving to nominate themselves or someone else for

any open board position. If you intend to nominate someone else, please verify that they are willing to serve. If you would like to offer yourself as a candidate for any of these open positions, it's not too late. You can submit a written resume to me, and I will see that it is provided to the entire membership before we convene in Tampa on October 25, 2024. When I first joined the board in 2011 the First Vice President automatically moved into the President's position, and the Second Vice President moved up to the First Vice President position. The vacated Second Vice President position was then filled by someone who volunteered to serve. That system worked until Bill Leefe the Treasurer at the time was audited by the IRS who insisted that formal elections had to take place to comply with IRS regulations. The fix for that was to conduct the elections and nominate the candidates for the offices that they would have moved into under the old system. In 2016 the late Gene Conway was to succeed me as President but got sick about six months into his term, and the board asked me to come back and serve out his term which I did. Next in line to move up was Tony Garofalo who also became ill and was unable to serve. Second Vice President at the time Gerry Milburn moved into the President's position. Dan Friel, and Chris Emmanuel who were Vice Presidents at the time had no interest in moving up at the end of Gerry's term, so Gerry Milburn and I induced John Davis to stand for election as President which he did and served in that position in 2018. In 2019 John Davis and I were both candidates for President. I was elected and have been there since that time. This year we have a situation where Judy (Schmidt) Colbath 1st Vice President or Steve Flom 2nd Vice President are content to remain in their current positions rather than to move into the President's position. I refer to my own situation later in this message.

Two of the things that I have tried to do to keep the membership engaged is the "Monday Morning Stories", and the "Thursday Throwback" feature. I have plenty of photographs to keep the "Thursday Throwback" feature going for quite a while, but I rely on you the members to provide the Monday Morning stories. Out of over 800 members less than twenty have submitted stories for me to publish. It's about your stories and experiences, not mine. Unless I get more material from you the members, I will have to discontinue the feature or start publishing reruns. I'd prefer fresh material. Start writing!

Speaking of membership engagement, it is very disappointing to send out emails to over eight hundred members, only to have less than 50% of them even bother to open the messages. On some rare occasions the number has been slightly higher. Equally disappointing is the fact that we continue to have difficulty in getting more than 50% of those obligated to pay dues to do so. If you're reading this message, it shows that you were interested enough to open the message. My question to you is how do we get the other 50% interested? Were our experiences any different than theirs?

I was first elected to the board back in 2011 as Second Vice President under the late Captain John Gilbert and have been there ever since in one capacity or other. My personal view is that every organization should consider a change in leadership periodically lest stagnation take place. Perhaps this is a good time for some of our younger members to consider assuming a leadership position. I think I have made my position very clear on why I have continued to stay on as President over the years. It's really very simple. My commitment has always been to follow the very first paragraph in our Constitution & By-Laws, copied below.

SECTION 1. The purpose of the Soaring Eagles is to continue the close friendships and associations of the members, to promote their general welfare, to utilize their experience to promote and contribute to the interests of aviation in order to maintain the legacy of USAir and assist those active pilots and flight attendants who are approaching retirement with the solutions to problems relating thereto.

The legacy mentioned in the above paragraph was forged by those who flew for Allegheny Airlines, Lake Central Airlines, Mohawk, Airlines, Pacific Southwest Airlines, Piedmont Airlines, Empire Airlines, Trump Shuttle, and America West Airlines. These are the airlines that made up USAir from which we derive our name "The Soaring Eagles of USAir "

Surely there is someone else out there who has that same commitment. Make yourself available.

Joe

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Flight Attendant Judy Schmidt
Colbath

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Wow! How time flies. I can hardly believe that another year has passed and I'm off to Tampa in October for recurrent reminiscing with old friends and colleagues. Joe's recent Monday Morning Story about how our Airline family was very much like our own families really struck a nerve with me. We may not have agreed on everything, but we remained a family in the end. I am so looking forward to seeing all of my Airline family and meeting some other family members that I didn't know I had.

If you haven't made plans to attend the convention/reunion, do it now times a wastin.

Judy (Schmidt) Colbath

**SECOND VICE
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Captain Steve Flom

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Dear Members, with this last Aerie before the convention I hope everyone is getting excited for another great time. I am looking forward to seeing my US Airways family. It made me recollect this story.

Karen and I were sitting in the boarding lounge in DCA getting ready to do some non reving. The captain who came off the inbound flight was a good guy who had flown as my co-pilot numerous times while I was based in DCA. When he saw us there he came over and said he had flown with my son Chris (Chris spent his first year flying out of DCA) and had a problem. As any parent can relate, when I heard those words my mind went into overdrive wondering what "problem" could have happened. He said that as they were getting to know each other in the cockpit he told Chris, I flew with your Dad, and I flew with your Uncle (my brother Kevin flew out of Washington for quite a while). He said his problem came when he also had to say.....I flew with your GRANDPA. He said it made him feel old. We had a good laugh.

My point to the story is like my family, a lot of us have family members that also worked at US Airways. But the great thing is we are all an extended US Airways family and Soaring Eagles allows us to have that family reunion once a year. See you soon. Bring your stories.

Steve Flom

2nd Vice President

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

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Flight Attendant Judi Todd

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Happy day everyone. Again here I am sitting with my two kitties (Bonnie & Clyde) on my lap and writing my Secretary's message to you. Soon I will be seeing a lot of you at the Reunion/Convention at the end of October. I am so looking forward to being with you again. Your board has some different ideas to make your attendance with your Airline Family more enjoyable. Our Hospitality room is going to be sooooo much fun this year (and again I am asking for loads of help from you all). Any suggestions for what you would like would be greatly appreciated. I'm game for "almost anything" see you soon.
Judi

WEBMASTER'S MESSAGE

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Captain Paul Sturpe

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Did you know? The program for our 47th annual Convention/Reunion is posted on our website. Go to <http://usairsoaringeagles.org> and click on the tab that has a rotating "New" sign.

As a matter of fact, whenever I update the Soaring Eagles website, I try to attract your attention by showing a "New" gizmo. That should lead you to whatever is new.

Once again, I would love to have any additions or corrections that you might be aware of. Want to see something else on our website other than death notices and obituaries? Yes, me too. Just send your ideas to the email address listed below.

So long until next quarter.

Paul Sturpe, Webmaster

webmaster@usairsoaringeagles.com

TREASURER'S MESSAGE

(239) 693-9285

Captain Andy Skiba

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Here we are, just a month away from our reunion/conference and we have met the minimum attendees for the cruise and other events.

I have been bugging a couple of my retired fellow pilots to come to the reunion for a great time but one is recovering from back surgery and the other is also recovering from a medical even so....

I guess we need to get that second generation of retired pilots and flight attendants who are still full of vim and vigor to sign on to our Soaring Eagles membership now.

It looks like we will at least match last year's number of attendees and perhaps do a little better.

Still plenty of time to get those registrations and checks to me for this year's reunion. Joe and your officers have lined up some new and exciting entertainment for this year's reunion.

Bring your dancing shoes and be prepared to have a great time and renew old friends and make new ones.

Andy Skiba

Treasurer, Soaring Eagles

“SOARING EAGLES WRITE”

The Peanut Flight

It was my first flight on my scheduled block for the month. I was a Captain on the DC-9 based at PIT. My FO was someone that I had not flown with before and did not know. Our last leg of the first day was Boston to Toronto. Boston catered the flight. A small bag of peanuts and a beverage were the only things on the menu. The station agent placed the large plastic bag of peanuts on the galley shelf. The galley bulkhead was directly behind the FO's seat on the DC-9.

As I recall, we were pretty close to a full load of passengers heading for Toronto. Our departure was normal and it was the FO flying the airplane. Once we got to 10,000 feet we lowered the nose of the airplane to pick up our enroute climb speed and since the ride was smooth and forecasted to be that way I turned off the seatbelt sign. The flight attendants usually would use that as a signal to start preparing the galley for the inflight service and would turn on the galley power. Right after we started our enroute climb we smelled a strong odor of burning plastic. A quick check of our cockpit electrical panel was normal so I called the flight attendant to check the galley to see if anything was burning there. She quickly returned and said everything in the galley appeared normal. BY this time, the smoke was getting stronger and the FO and I were about to put on our smoke masks and tell Boston center we needed to return to Boston. Just before we had the masks ready to put on, the cockpit door opened and the male flight attendant told us he found the problem in the galley. The large bag of peanuts had been placed on top of the hotplate that heated up the coffee and smoldered but not up in flames yet. Once the bag was taken off the heating pad the smell dissipated and the rest of the flight was normal. Close call but no emergency.

Next week I'm on the same flight but with a different FO.

We departed Boston for Toronto and just as we started our climb out of 10,000 feet there was the plastic smell again. I did a quick check of our electric panel and all was normal but the smell was getting stronger. I called the flight attendant and told them to check and see if the large bag of peanuts was laying on the coffee warmer pad.

Sure enough, the Flight attendant returned and said the bag of peanuts was in fact starting to smolder and once the bag was removed from the hot pad the smell was gone.

The FO looked at me and said; “How did I know that the peanuts were laying on the hot pad?” I just looked at him and took my right hand with the four fingers spread out and placed it on my shoulder where my Captain Epauettes were. Without saying another word we continued on to Toronto.

I'm sure the FO thought I was the smartest Captain he ever flew with.

Andy Skiba

Another Monday Morning Story

I was flying Captain on a 737 on the 23rd of December.

It was the last leg of a 3 day trip and we a full evening flight from West Palm (PBI) to the “Burg” (PIT). We had an extra flight attendant working the trip since it was a dinner flight with a full load. I knew the extra flight attendant quite well since I had first met her when I was a new hire copilot assigned to Newark (EWR). Her longtime boyfriend was a DC-9 Captain so she usually flew on his trips but had picked up the extra FA trip with us on the 737. The flight attendant were really busy in the cabin getting everything properly stowed and securing the galley with the caterer loading the meal through the rear cabin door. The flight attendant seat were located right next to the galley on the opposite bulkhead wall.

Besides the full load of passengers in the cabin we had a jump seat rider in the flight deck so we were really maxed out with people.

We finally got all the required paperwork, closed up the doors and were cleared to go. The taxi out and takeoff were all normal and the co pilot was flying this leg. As we reached 10,000 feet we lowered the nose and accelerated to our normal climb speed of 320 knots. Before I had a chance to turn of the seat belt sign the cockpit door opened and our senior flight attendant turned to me and said ”MY SEAT BELT IS HANGIN OUTSIDE THE AIRPLANE AND BANGIN AGAINST THE SIDE OF THE AIRPLANE”.

I thought about my options?

1. Do nothing and hope it would go away.
2. Risk it chafing against the door seal and having a rapid decompression.
3. Having the seat belt buckle bang a hole in the skin of the airplane (same risk as option 2)
4. Having to explain to maintenance how the outside of the airplane was all beat up.
5. What would I write in my letter to my base chief pilot?

My only real option was to return to West Palm and see what the damage was and if OK we could just get a new release and amended fuel load and get back on the flight to PIT.

Now I did some real creative work with ATC (Air Traffic Control) and told them that we had an intermittent door light and we would have to return to West Palm.

ATC was very accommodating and gave us a quick turn back to PBI and started our descent from 10,000 feet.

Next was my passenger announcement telling them the same story as ATC got, (Intermittent door light).

Our return and landing was uneventful and after we were clear of the active runway we stopped on the taxiway and the copilot went back, opened the rear service door and pulled in the bad boy seat belt which had no visible damage. The door seal was OK and everything associated with the door was fine.

Since we didn't return to the gate at PBI, the station got us an amended flight release for the lower amount of fuel we now had onboard (used some going and returning). Worked up the new weight and balance and covered our butt with the FAA paperwork requirements all by radio.

As we were taxiing back to the runway I made another magnificent announcement telling our passengers that all was well and we would be taking off again for Pittsburgh. As we were waiting for our takeoff clearance from the control tower our cockpit door opened and our flight attendant told us that some passenger told her that he was going to miss his connection at PIT and wanted to get off at West Palm. (Same flight attendant that had her seatbelt hanging outside the airplane).

I said to her, "Tell the passenger that he had a ticket to Pittsburgh and that's where he was going".

The flight to PIT was uneventful other than being about 15 minutes late. Since it was the end of the trip for us we all headed for home late that evening.

The next morning I figured that I better call up the base Chief Pilot, (Jack Semenko) and ask him what he wanted in my letter explaining my unscheduled return to PBI. Before I even got finished Jack interrupted me and said "Yes, Your unscheduled return to West Palm". He explained that the FAA was standing in our systems control center and saw that our flight had made an unscheduled landing back at West Palm. He went to wait for our arrival at PIT.

I told Jack that I didn't see anyone from the FAA when we got off the airplane.

He said the FAA wasn't waiting to talk to the flight crew since we did everything right. He was waiting to talk to the flight attendant whose seat belt was outside the airplane. (I think maintenance tipped him off.)

He wanted to ask the Flight Attendant how she fastened her seat belt for the original take off from West Palm. ???

I never did work with that flight attendant again. I think she may have been fired.

As an aside comment, When the seat belt started banging against the side of the airplane as we started to speed up for our enroute climb my good friend flight attendant was sitting next to the FA who didn't have her seat belt fastened and asked what that noise was? Her seatmate said "That's my seat belt hanging outside the airplane and making noise". Our extra flight attendant said "You better go up and tell Andy what it is". She replied, "If I do he's gonna be mad".

I never get mad at flight attendants since they are providing my beverage service.

Anyhow, everybody got home for Christmas.

Captain Andy Skiba