

A Q&A WITH CAPT. LEE MOAK, ALPA PRESIDENT



By *Air Line Pilot* staff

AIR LINE PILOT SITS DOWN WITH ALPA'S NEW PRESIDENT TO TALK ABOUT HIS VIEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION AND THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY.

***Air Line Pilot:* What, in your view, are the greatest threats facing the U.S. and Canadian airline industries?**

Moak: EMIRATES—and other airlines with similar business models. These companies are well-funded and don't have to live by the same rules as our airlines.

U.S. and Canadian airlines can compete with any carriers in the world, but we *must* establish a strategic plan to level the playing field. It is imperative that we develop a cooperative relationship among regulators, management, and labor and shape the direction in which globalization will materialize on our continent.

The number of Open Skies agreements is expanding exponentially. The U.S. is now a party to almost 100 Open Skies agreements. Globalization is here to stay. Within these agreements there are several facts that we need to accept: government-supported airlines throughout the world have an economic advantage;

there are countries that outlaw the unionization of airline employees; and not all Open Skies agreements are created equal. With that in mind, we need to ensure that our contracts, our safety standards, and our flying are not negatively affected.

ALP: Similarly, what are the greatest threats to ALPA today?

Moak: Independent “unions” are one of the greatest threats. By their very nature, they ignore the fundamental concept of unionism—that we are better together than the sum of our individual parts. It is important to stress that this concept is multi-tiered. Yes, ALPA is the most powerful pilots union in the world. And because of that, all airline pilots should want to be members of ALPA.

But this concept goes beyond just ALPA. Because, on a macro-level, it isn’t ALPA that needs all airline pilots speaking with one voice to be successful. It is the airline piloting *profession* that needs one voice to be successful.

I’ve been doing labor union work with ALPA off and on for my entire career at Delta, and one thing I have learned is that if you get 12 pilots together in a room to discuss an issue, you are going to hear at least a dozen different opinions. However, as professional airline pilots, in the end, we typically agree on 95 percent of the issues. We shouldn’t let the other 5 percent keep us apart. Going it alone is never successful. ►►►

ALP: What do you think are or should be ALPA's highest priorities in collective bargaining? Contract enforcement? Safety? Security?

Moak: There is a myth that exists that suggests

that ALPA headquarters drives the agenda at the local level. That's simply not true. Local pilot leaders chart the course of negotiations and—through consensus of their members—make the decisions on priorities. At the national and international level, our highest priority is to help pilot leaders at different carriers visualize favorable contract patterns across the industry and provide the resources to reach a contract that ensures the greater good for the entire profession. Contracts that focus solely on self-interests will inevitably lower the high standards that this union has established for eight decades and in the end hurt all of us.

ALP: Tell us about the contributions that strategic planning can make—and already has made—to individual pilot groups and to the Association as a whole.

Moak: There are many examples that I could relay. I will briefly touch on the strategic planning and cooperation between the pilots of ExpressJet and Atlantic Southeast. Upon learning about a proposed merger, the Master Executive Councils developed a plan to best serve the interest of both pilot groups. They formed a Joint Negotiating Committee to achieve a single contract with the company. The Committee is reviewing both contracts to find common ground and also determining where enhancements can be made. The group has been working together to prepare for negotiating sessions slated to begin early next year. I commend them for their efforts.

Similarly, at Delta, strategic planning is critical to accomplishing anything. As a group, we examine environmental changes, set goals, understand the opportunities for goal completion, assign tasks to complete the goals, and regularly benchmark progress. It is also important to communicate the elements of a strategic plan to the members. Maybe Yogi Berra said it the best: "*You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.*" Strategic planning is critical to achieving your goals—without it, you can work really hard and end up somewhere other than where you wanted to end up.

ALP: What lessons do you think other pilot groups—and ALPA overall—can learn from the

MY SPECIFIC GOAL AS PRESIDENT OF THIS UNION, AND AS ONE OF THE ELECTED NATIONAL OFFICERS, IS TO MAINTAIN ALPA'S POSITION AS THE VOICE OF THE AIRLINE PILOTING PROFESSION—WHETHER IT IS IN THE REALM OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, LEGISLATION ON CAPITOL HILL OR PARLIAMENT HILL, OR SAFETY AND SECURITY.

successful merger of Delta and Northwest? What was the secret to the success of that merger?

Moak: It is crucial to be and remain actively engaged. The pilots of Delta

and Northwest were involved from the earliest stages with management, and this involvement helped to bring about a successful merger, which closed with a pilot contract in place and a seniority integration process established. It was an airline industry first and has hopefully set the stage for and helped other groups in their efforts.

ALP: Do you have any specific goals in mind for changing ALPA's structure, communications, legislative priorities, or allocation of resources?

Moak: My specific goal as president of this union, and as one of the elected national officers, is to maintain ALPA's position as the voice of the airline piloting profession—whether it is in the realm of collective bargaining, legislation on Capitol Hill or Parliament Hill, or safety and security. And we, the elected pilot leaders, will do whatever it takes to ensure that happens.

ALP: How do you view ALPA's role vis-à-vis IFALPA, the associations of pilots who fly for global airline alliances, the European Cockpit Association, and other international groups?

Moak: I mentioned earlier that globalization is here to stay. We need to remain actively engaged and a leader in discussions, movements, and resolutions in all international and global topics. Already, we have a solid foundation in this area, due to our dedication, commitment, and expertise in the global arena. The relationship we build and cultivate with our international counterparts is paramount to our survival in this aggressively competitive marketplace.

ALP: Can you discuss ALPA's ongoing efforts to organize pilot groups that are not already part of the ALPA family?

Moak: I believe that every airline pilot on our continent should belong to ALPA. They should want to belong to ALPA. There is the strength in numbers argument, but beyond that, it's our responsibility to give other pilots groups a reason to want to join ALPA. Our reputation as the expert on all things related to our profession is unmatched, and we must continue to capitalize on this reputation through continual efforts to better our profession and the professional lives of the pilots we represent. ☈