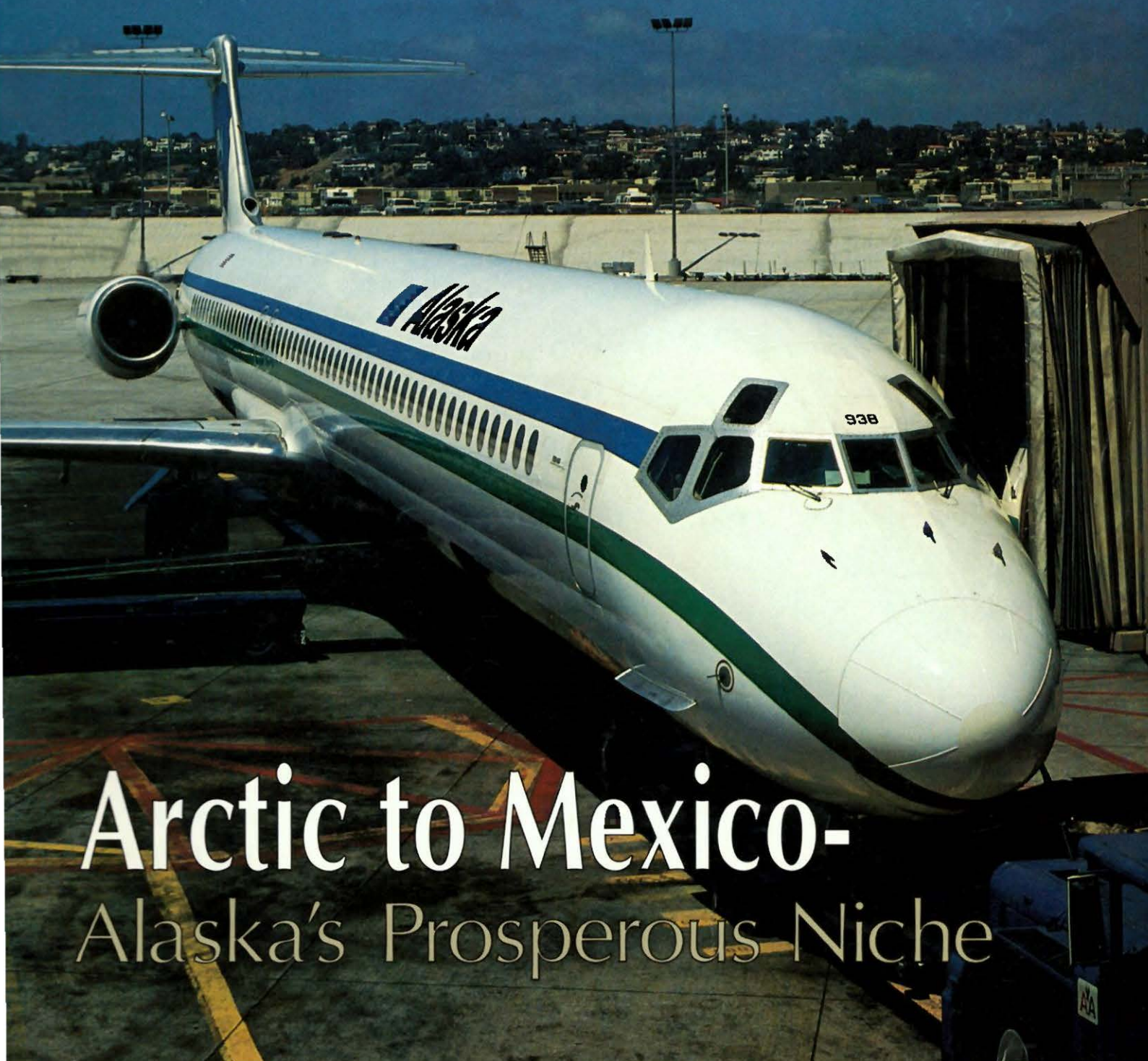


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Arctic to Mexico-
Alaska's Prosperous Niche



Horizon Air: Alaska's Independent Sibling

*Against the trend of taking a major partner's name,
Horizon maintains its identity and its passengers.*

*
By Paul Seidenman &
David J. Spanovich

The disappearance of some of the most famous names in aviation continues to be a legacy of deregulation, and nowhere is this more apparent than with the smaller airlines feeding passengers to the majors and nationals. Today most fly under the names and codes of their senior partners, usually followed by the word "Express" or "Commuter."

But one airline is somewhat of an exception. Horizon Air of Seattle has managed to keep its own identity, and reservation system, even though it is owned by Alaska Air Group, the holding company for Seattle-based Alaska Airlines. While the airline code shares with its sister company, it also participates in a code sharing relationship with Northwest. Alaska Air Group, in fact, allows Horizon Air to operate as an autonomous company, instead of just another commuter division.

Founded in 1981 by a group of Seattle investors headed by Milton Koult, Horizon began operations

between Seattle and two other Washington state cities, Yakima and Pasco, using two Fokker F-27 turboprops. In June 1982, the airline acquired Air Oregon, adding Oregon destinations to the growing airline's route structure. In December 1983, Horizon purchased Salt Lake City-based Trans Western, giving the airline access to Salt Lake City and several Idaho communities. In mid 1985, Horizon decided to go into a code sharing arrangement for the first time. The regional airline contracted to feed passengers to United, primarily at Seattle. But that relationship was short-lived because in December of 1986, Horizon's investors sold the airline to Alaska Air Group, and in February 1987, the carrier began code sharing with Alaska Airlines.

The new ownership allowed Horizon to expand even more. In January of 1989, the airline went into another code-sharing arrangement with Northwest. Then, in May of that year, Horizon acquired the routes of San Juan Airlines, a failing carrier in Port Angeles, Wash., giving Horizon its first Canadian routes: Seattle-Vancouver and Seattle-Victoria.

As of Dec. 1, 1990, Horizon had evolved into an all-turbine, mostly-leased fleet of 50 aircraft with an aver-



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age age of three and a half years. The fleet of 32 Fairchild SA-227s, 15 de Havilland DHC-8-100s, and three Fokker F-28 MK 1000 jets operates under Horizon's own colorful livery with the Horizon Air name prominently emblazoned on the lower front part of their fuselages.

"Although we code share with Alaska and Northwest, people in our area still know us as Horizon, rather than an extension of either airline," said Horizon president John Kelly. "For example, we actively solicit tour groups under our own name, and today, 65 percent to 70 percent of our traffic is origin and destination (O&D)," he said. "The remaining 30 percent to 35 percent is interlined primarily with our two code-sharing partners."

The carrier's aircraft today serve 32 cities in five states (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Utah), plus Vancouver and Victoria. In 1990, U.S. authorities granted Horizon the right to fly a Seattle-Calgary nonstop service, but inaction by the Canadian government is delaying start-up until at least the spring of 1991. The airline did, however, gain Portland-Vancouver nonstop authority in July 1990.

Besides its passenger service, Horizon is increasing its cargo business. "Air cargo is considered to be a very valuable and significant profit center for Horizon," said Kelly, who explained that the airline not only solicits larger shipments, but also promotes its GoldStreak program, a high priority, counter-to-counter small package service.

Kelly cautioned that while Horizon has grown rapidly through mergers, continued growth will be carried out on a very measured basis to assure continuing profitability under present economic conditions. "We will be concentrating on enhancing service within our present structure; perhaps adding some cross-border routes—mainly between Washington state and some of the smaller, Canadian markets," he reported. Kelly noted that, with the build-up of Alaska Airlines in the California market, Horizon may look into expanding into California to serve as a feeder operation for the carrier, although it now is undecided.

Kelly reported that the airline also is studying the possibility of some fleet changes at Horizon, despite the fact that the carrier's aircraft are relatively new. With the Seattle-Calgary service only a few months away, the airline plans to lease two more DHC-8-100s, with the possibility of bringing yet another DHC-8 on line to replace an SA-227 now used in selected markets. In fact, Kelly reported that some SA-227 services already have been upgraded to the DHC-8 as those markets have expanded. All this implies that Horizon may be getting out of the 18- to 19-passenger aircraft business. "We are looking at several alternatives for Metro III replacement, mainly in the 30-plus passenger size. In addition to the DHC-8s, candidates include the new Dornier 328 and the Embraer EMB-120 Brasilia. We are also considering the British Aerospace Jetstream 41, which, of course, is a 27-seat to 29-seat aircraft. If we do purchase the Jetstream 41, it would probably be used in combination with additional Dash 8s." Horizon might also re-

place some of the SA-227s with the new Fairchild Metro 23.

Kelly also is keeping all options open regarding the future of Horizon's jet operations, which must be decided before the carrier's F-28 leases expire in 1996. He said it is very likely that the F-28s could be phased out in favor of large 40- to 50-seat turboprops, but the airline also could acquire a larger jet such as the 100-seat Fokker 100. "With an aircraft of that size, we would be able to achieve productivity gains," Kelly reported. "But that's getting up there close to the size our partners use. All of our equipment decisions will be based upon market conditions at the time."

Since being acquired by Alaska Air Group, Horizon Air has remained largely a profitable carrier. According to the Alaska Air Group's annual report, the company earned \$6 million in operating income in 1989 on revenues of \$132.5 million. Operating profit was more than double the \$2.9 million earned in 1988. But the report also says that Horizon's 1989 pre-tax income of \$3.6 million was down from the \$5.2 million of 1988, although the 1988 pre-tax income was enhanced by \$3.6 million from the sale of some aircraft delivery positions.

Trends in passenger boardings continued upward, with a 13.6 percent increase in 1989 over the previous year, and a 1989 load factor of 52.3 percent, up from the 49.9 percent for 1988. Capacity in 1989 increase by five percent.

The latest available 1990 statistics continue to indicate profitability. According to Alaska Air Group's third quarter (1990) report, the airline had a pre-tax profit of \$2.52 million for the first nine months of 1990, compared to a \$3.9 million pre-tax profit from the same period during the previous year. Along with this, the company's passenger load factor was 49.6 percent, down from the 51.5 percent load factor that prevailed during the first half of 1989. Revenue passenger miles increased to 266 million, and capacity increased to 535 million available seat miles from 445 million.

Market conditions remain favorable for Horizon, perhaps because it all but owns the markets it serves. Horizon's system is based firmly on two major hubs at Seattle and Portland. The Portland facility is the airline's operational hub. There are two smaller hubs at Boise and Spokane.

The airline's 550 daily flights include two heavily traveled air corridors—Seattle-Portland and Seattle-Spokane—in which Horizon is the dominant carrier. In fact, in conjunction with Alaska Airlines, the carrier operates an hourly shuttle between Seattle and Spokane, and a half-hourly shuttle on the dense Seattle-Portland route. Horizon is the primary carrier in both markets, and with the recent pull out of NPA/United Express from many of its Pacific Northwest markets, the carrier is the only game in town at many destinations in its service area.

"We have been impacted by the rise in fuel prices, but it has been somewhat mitigated by the changes in the markets we serve," Kelly said. "For example, we have been helped a great deal by a very large pull-back by NPA from a number of cities in Idaho, Washington

and Montana. Also, both Northwest and United have dropped their Seattle-Spokane service, making us the dominant carrier between those two cities. It certainly has helped us buttress the negative effects of spiraling fuel prices."

But Horizon still is forced to take measures to keep its finances secure in recent economic times. "We are shopping a lot smarter for fuel, and planning our aircraft movements so that they refuel at airports where fuel tends to be cheaper," Kelly said. "Along with this, we are restricting hiring of both pilots and management to essential hiring. At this time, no layoffs are planned."

In fact, for at least the first part of 1991, pilot hiring will be based mainly on attrition and some expansion. According to George Bagley, Horizon's senior vice-president of operations, the airline expects to hire between 20 and 30 pilots during the first six months of the year, which is about half of the 60 to 70 pilots Horizon hired in 1990.

As Bagley explained, the minimum qualifications for an interview with Horizon are 1,200 hours with at least 300 hours of multiengine time. However, he stressed that the company prefers applicants who have at least 1,500 hours, with 500 multiengine hours. A four-year college degree is considered an asset, but is not mandatory. All applicants must have an FAA first class medical certificate, and commercial, instrument and multiengine ratings. Neither an ATP, nor pilot-in-command experience is asked for, and none of the minimum

flight hours need be on turbine-driven equipment.

Bagley said that since Horizon operates under both a FAR Part 121 and 135 certificate, many pilots are attracted to the airline. In fact, he noted that it is common to see applicants coming in with between 2,500 and 4,000 hours of flight time, especially now that several major airlines have reduced on pilot hiring. "We don't want to discourage lower time pilots from applying with us, because many of them make excellent pilots and employees. We do encourage less experienced people, if they are able to fill all of the other criteria that we look for. In fact, we have passed over applicants with impressive logbooks."

Bagley pointed out that Horizon looks beyond an applicant's logbook when screening for new pilots. "We look for somebody with a

shared set of values; someone who has the same goals we have," he said. "We operate a service business and only part of that business involves flying the airplane. Those who just want to fly aircraft do not fit in here." Bagley said that the airline needs people who interact well, not only with fellow employees, but with the passengers. "At Horizon, we look upon pilots as franchise managers—people who are running their own businesses. If they are not focused on customer service as a priority, their decisions won't be right."

Bagley advised that any pilot who wishes to fly for Horizon Air just to build flight hours to be considered for work at a major airline need not apply. "There has to be some other reason," he said. "Many of our people come here because they like the idea of living in the

Horizon Air Financial Profile*

	1988	1989
Operating revenues	\$113,385,000	\$132,521,000
Operating expenses	\$110,523,000	\$126,527,000
Operating profit (loss)	\$2,862,000	\$5,994,000
Net profit (loss)	N/A	N/A

*See Alaska Air Group financial profile on page 24 for consolidated financial totals including Alaska Airlines.

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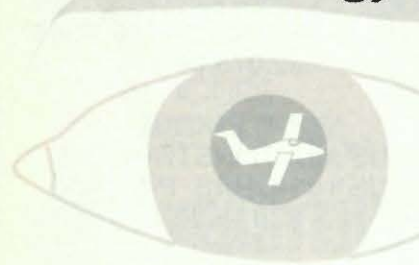
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Pacific Northwest, which offers a high quality of life at a reasonable cost of living. Also, a number want to work for us because of the kind of company we are." He reported that about 60 percent of the applicants at Horizon seriously are considering the airline as a career position. That percentage, he notes, appears to be growing.

Along that line, Bagley urges applicants to do their homework before applying for a job with Horizon. "I want an applicant to impress us with the fact that he knows enough about our company so that he can make an intelligent decision about working for us."

Horizon Air gives definite preference to those looking for a long-term career with the company. For this reason, the airline especially likes to hire retired military pilots. "They are experienced and mature, and have had an excellent track record with the company," he said. About 20 percent to 25 percent of Horizon's pilots are former military pilots, but they do not constitute the largest single group. Some 40 percent come from the air cargo sector, with the majority from small cargo feeder operations. The remaining group of pilots come from air taxi, charter work, or directly from flight instructor backgrounds.

Any pilot wishing to apply for a job at Horizon Air must send his or her resume to the company's personnel office: 5515 N.E. Transport Way, Portland, Ore. 97218, Attn: Chief Pilot. Bagley said that the promising resumes, which specify the minimum qualifications Horizon looks for, are forwarded for review to either Ted Blahnik, Horizon's chief pilot for the DHC-8, or to Tom Gerharter, the chief pilot for the SA-227. If an applicant's resume is attractive enough, the chief pilot's office will contact the applicant to arrange an interview. According to Bagley, the company averages about 40 unsolicited resumes per week, and of that amount, about 30 make it to the chief pilots' offices.

Horizon provides a pass on its own planes, or requests a pass on Alaska, to bring the applicant to Portland where the interview process takes place. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to get to the nearest airport served by either Alaska or Horizon.

Phase I of the screening process consists of three separate 30-minute interviews with Gerharter, Blahnik, and a personnel representative. According to Bagley, this one-on-one approach to the interview process puts the applicant more at ease than the traditional interview board at other airlines. "At this stage, we encourage the applicant to talk about his or her flying career," Bagley said. "We give them every opportunity to talk about this in great detail."

The applicants are expected to bring all certificates and relevant documentation to the interview, since the airline likes to check credentials on the spot.

Phase I is a make-or-break situation. If the three interviewers decide that the individual is not for Horizon Air, they let him or her know

and a two-hour written test, both given on the same day. The simulator check is done in a non-motion base trainer, and evaluates the applicant's ability to scan instruments, while the written test covers airman proficiency and knowledge of federal air regulations.

Normally the interviews, the simulator check and the written test are conducted within a single day. Then, Horizon will put the applicant up at a hotel in preparation for the airline's pre-employment physical examination the following day. The airline does not reimburse meals, but then, the applicant is advised not to eat for 12 hours before the physical. Bagley said that anyone with a current FAA first class medical certificate should have no trouble passing the physical, which includes drug screening. There is no psychological test.

After the physical, the applicant is sent home with a call-back date. On the call-back date, usually within seven days, the applicant finds out if he or she made it through the screening process. During the waiting period, Horizon Air not only evaluates the applicant's performance, but also carries out the five-year background check required by the FAA. Bagley said that all employers listed on the application are checked, as are some personal references.

When the applicant calls back, he is told that he either will go into a hiring pool or will not be considered for employment. "Those not considered are told why, but in very general terms," Bagley reported. "We might tell them they did not do as well in the simulator or on the written exam as we would have liked, for example, but we never go into very much detail."

Over the years, about 80 percent of those interviewed have been chosen for Horizon's hiring pool. Bagley said that when Horizon is in a hiring mode, an offer of employment is made within 90 days of the screening process. The applicant gets a call-back time during that 90-day period to learn when he or she is to report for initial training. A new pilot is hired as a first officer for either the DHC-8 or the SA-227. While the employee can indicate an equipment preference, the ultimate decision is based on the staffing requirements of the company.

New pilots also can voice a preference for domiciles. Horizon has two pilot bases, one at Portland and one at Boise, Idaho. While the airline's SA-227 and DHC-8 pilots are based at both locations, Horizon's F-28 pilots all are domiciled at Portland.

All the company's pilot training is done at Portland. During the training period, the airline puts pilots up in hotels, usually two to a room, at company expense. There is no relocation package for new-hire pilots. Horizon's training program consists of one week of company indoctrination, which includes a cockpit resource management course, and a two-week aircraft training course incorporating the ground school for the specific aircraft the pilot will fly, a daily half-day period of academics and a daily half-day of cockpit procedures

pilots to FlightSafety International's Salt Lake City facility, while those who will fly the DHC-8 go to FlightSafety in Toronto. However, Bagley noted that in mid-1991, FlightSafety's Seattle training center will have both a DHC-8 and an SA-227 simulator on site and Horizon pilots will train there. In addition, the company expects to introduce line oriented flight training (LOFT) to the simulator portion of the training regime then. The current week-long phase of simulator training normally involves four days of training and two travel days. New pilots will experience 12 hours of actual simulator instruction time, with six of those hours spent at the controls and the other six spent as the non-flying pilot in the simulator's left seat. Aside from teaching the pilots how to fly the aircraft, the course also covers emergency procedures. This phase of training ends with a two-hour simulator check ride.

Upon successful completion of the simulator training, the pilot goes back to Portland for two more hours of instruction in the actual aircraft, normally one that is overnighing at Portland. Training ends with a formal one-hour check ride in the airplane.

The final phase of training, known as initial operating experience or IOE, begins once the new pilot reports to his or her assigned domicile. IOE normally involves a minimum of 20 hours but, according to Bagley, Horizon actually schedules 40 to 45 hours per pilot for IOE. During this period, the new pilots are flying in revenue service, but are under the direct supervision of a check airman who makes suggestions as needed. Horizon's entire training program takes about eight weeks.

Bagley said that Horizon Air pilots are discouraged from commuting. "We want our pilots to live near their domiciles because commuting interferes with the pilot's ability to rest between work periods and this can adversely affect job satisfaction," he said. But Bagley also noted that the company realizes that commuting may be necessary for many new-hire pilots. "We understand that, in some cases,

there's a reluctance to take children out of school until the end of the term, or there's a working spouse who needs to remain on the job until other employment arrangements are made." Bagley said that for the commuting pilot, the airline has jumpseat agreements with most carriers.

Upon starting with the carrier, pilots must pay a one-time charge of \$500 for uniforms, but the company will finance that purchase over a one-year period. After that, the airline will replace components of the uniform at its expense. Dry cleaning of uniforms also is paid by the company upon receiving a dry cleaning receipt.

A new-hire first officer begins at \$14,400 per year on both the SA-227 and the DHC-8. (The company does not put newly hired pilots into the F-28.) Pay increases to \$18,000 the second year, \$21,600 the third, and then in the fourth year, a first officer will earn \$23,400. Money improves upon movement to the left seat. Right now, according to Bagley, it takes about 24 months to make the transition because of Horizon's low 20 percent annual attrition rate. A first-year captain on all aircraft makes \$24,000, going to \$27,000, \$30,900, \$33,900, and \$36,000 in years two, three, four and five, respectively. Starting in the sixth year of employment, longevity and equipment become the determining factors for pay increases. In year six, for example, an F-28 captain makes \$40,000. Bagley said that top pay scales are reached after 17 years. Under current rates, an F-28 captain earns \$66,300; a DHC-8 captain, \$61,850; and an SA-227 captain earns \$43,400.

Bagley explained that eligibility for the left seat is based on seniority number. In addition, pilots must have a logbook totalling 3,000 hours, of which 1,500 must be multiengine, fixed wing and at least 1,000 hours of time must be with Horizon. Pilots, however, can transition from one piece of equipment to another as first officers, but only after serving at least 24 months in the right seat of the aircraft on which they presently are assigned.

"A Horizon pilot normally begins in the right seat of the Metro III or Dash 8, then goes to the left seat of either aircraft; then to the left seat of the F-28," Bagley said. "About 90 percent of our new captains go to the left seat on the Metro III. After about two years, they go to the left seat of the Dash 8." He explained that with present attrition rates, making the left seat of the F-28s will take about 10 years.

Bagley pointed out that while there is no flow-through agreement, Alaska Airlines gives preference to Horizon Air pilots. Alaska Airlines reports, however, that a Horizon Air pilot being considered for employment at Alaska must have at least two years with Horizon and a first-rate recommendation.

In addition to salaries, Horizon Air offers a standard benefit package that includes a fully-paid medical/dental plan for all employees. There are added charges for inclusion of dependents. At this time, the airline also offers a 401(k) retirement plan to which Horizon contributes 100 percent of what the employee puts in, up to 10 percent of annual salary. Employees are vested in the plan on the basis of 20 percent per year, and are fully vested after five years.

Bagley said that vacations are 2.8 weeks for the first five years, then 4.2 weeks per year after that. Horizon also allows 12 days yearly for sick leave. As with most airlines, Horizon pilots and other employees receive free passes on Horizon for themselves, dependents and parents. There also are pass privileges on most other airlines, although nominal service charges are involved with other carriers, including Alaska Airlines.

Regarding the day-to-day working conditions, Bagley said that Horizon Air pilots are scheduled on the basis of five-week periods, instead of the traditional 30 to 31 day per month periods at most other airlines. As with most small operations, duty time is demanding. On the average, the workday includes four block hours daily, also figured as eight duty hours or 12 trip hours. Typically, Horizon Air pilots do just under 10 overnight trips per month. The normal stage length for a trip is about 200 statute miles, or about one hour of block time per flight.

Horizon Air pilots, who have an in-house union, recently negotiated a new duty time agreement with management. It calls for a maximum of 12.5 hours of duty time per day for the SA-227, with the DHC-8 and F-28 at a maximum of 13.5 hours per day, each. Duty time refers to the time the pilot checks in for his first trip and checks out after his last trip of the day.

Working conditions at the airline were a major issue a few years ago, when the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) tried to organize the Horizon Air pilots. In a hotly contested election that happened in 1988, ALPA lost by a mere six votes. But the carrier's pilots believe that their own organization, known as Horizon Air Pilots, is working. Don Campbell, president of the pilot group, explained why.

"Management has always shown a willingness to communicate, and I think that's the key to the success of our relationship," he said.

A new pilot handbook, which was negotiated

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over a one-year period, is Horizon Air Pilots' contract with management. The handbook, which now covers 442 Horizon Air pilots (as of Nov. 15, 1990), went into effect on Sept. 1, 1990. Campbell pointed out that it focused primarily on pay and scheduling:

"The scheduling portion of the handbook clarified some of the areas that were considered very nebulous," Campbell said. "We feel that we have made a lot of progress in making the pilot's scheduling system more equitable, based on the amount received." Campbell feels the handbook now spells out the absolute maximum for duty days.

He also added an interesting observation regarding why ALPA did not succeed at Horizon. "I believe that a lot of pilots rejected ALPA because they felt the union might have more of a national perspective, and possibly reject a contract which the pilots themselves might have liked. There was a feeling of giving up local control, and many of the pilots did not want to get into a situation that would put them into an adversarial relation with management. In fact, none of the pilots felt that they and management were at odds."

Campbell believes that many pilots view the handbook as an "experiment." He pointed out that Horizon's management is an enthusiastic supporter of the agreement and that the company's president, John Kelly, stresses open communication.



CHANGING FLEET: Horizon is upgrading some of its markets from the SA-227 to the DHC-8.

forth and we're very happy with the way that our pilot group is representing us to manage-

The pilot felt that Horizon has an outstanding training department. "The quality of training that they give you is far superior to the

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(Photo by Paul Seidenman)

Arctic to Mexico- Alaska's Prosperous Niche

*Alaska Airline's dominance over much of its
West Coast route structure may protect it during market instability.*



By Paul Seidenman &
David J. Spanovich

With another industry shake-out looming for the airlines, it appears that two types of carriers ultimately will survive: major airlines with a global market, and smaller operations that manage to carve out a solid niche. Seattle-based Alaska Airlines is an example of the latter. When the company started as McGee Airways in 1932, the carrier operated a single engine, three-passenger Stinson between Anchorage and Bristol Bay, Alaska. The company, which changed its name to Alaska Airlines in 1944, now flies more than 300 daily jet flights between destinations on a route structure that stretches between the Arctic and Mexico.

With secondary hubs at Anchorage and Portland, the carrier's major hub at Seattle appears to be the basis for the airline's niche. According to Andrew Nocella, an analyst with AVMARK Inc., a Washington, D.C.-based aviation consulting firm, the airline's Anchorage-Seattle route is the carrier's most important market. Nocella says load factors on the run consistently are in the 55 percent to 60 percent range, and the airline commands about 65 percent of that market in which Delta, Continental and Northwest also compete.

Of the 35 cities on the Alaska Airlines system, 14 are in Alaska and four are in Mexico. The airline also serves Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz.; Portland and Redmond/Bend, Ore.; Boise, Idaho; and Seattle, Spokane and Bellingham, Wash. Perhaps the most promising area of recent and continuing growth is California where Alaska now serves the three Bay Area airports of San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose, with routes north to Portland and Seattle, and to the Southern California cities of Los Angeles, Ontario, Palm Springs, Orange County, San Diego, Long Beach and Burbank.

Alaska Airlines operates a fleet of 58 aircraft including 27 B-727-200s, one B-727-100, seven B-737-200 combs, and a total of 27 MD-82s and MD-83s. In addition, the airline has three B-727-100s on lease to Alaskan oil companies.

In January 1990, the airline announced a major order for a new fuel-efficient fleet of narrowbodied aircraft. The order includes 20 MD-90-30s, with another 20 on option. Alaska also announced its intention to lease from International Lease Finance Corp. 20 new B-737-400s, with options for four more. Along with these orders, Alaska Airlines will accept another 8 MD-80s between 1991 and 1993.

The MD-90s, expected to be delivered December 1994 through the end of 1997, will allow the airline to phase out its B-727 fleet. Between April 1992 and April 1994, the company plans to take delivery of the B-737-400s.

With a fleet average age of only eight to nine years old and a system structure that offers a pilot some of the greatest variety of flying conditions in the country, it is no wonder that Alaska Airlines receives nearly 200 pilot resumes per week. Perhaps because of this, the airline also is highly selective about pilot hiring.

To be considered for employment with the carrier, a pilot applicant must have at least 1,500 hours of total aircraft time. Of that amount, 750 hours must be multiengine and at least 500 hours must be pilot-in-command time. The applicant also must have the ATP and FE or FEW. Alaska Airlines prefers a four-year college degree, but will accept an applicant with at least two year's of college.

According to Tom Johnson, Alaska Airline's chief pilot, a typical pilot applicant exceeds the airline's minimum requirements. The applicant has 5,000 hours of aircraft time, of

which 80 percent is pilot-in-command time. In addition, most applicants have a four-year degree and have what Johnson calls, "a considerable amount of jet or turboprop time." Alaska does not have a turbine engine requirement.

"About 60 percent of our applicants are coming from a regional or commuter operation, bringing about 4,000 hours of aircraft time, while another 30 percent have come from the military," Johnson says. "The remaining number usually comes from air taxi or corporate aviation backgrounds, and we even have a few from the major airlines."

Because Alaska Airlines and sister company Horizon Air both are owned by Alaska Air Group, Horizon Air pilots receive special hiring preference at the larger carrier. To qualify, Horizon pilots must fly for the smaller carrier for at least two years and must have a first-rate recommendation from Horizon. However, Johnson did point out that no flow-through agreement or single seniority number exists between the two airlines to move senior Horizon pilots automatically to Alaska. Despite this, he insists the hiring preference helps Horizon Air. "It provides pilots who are looking to eventually go to a large jet carrier with the incentive to stay with our sister company for at least two years," Johnson says.

Besides the basic requirements and piloting skills, Johnson says Alaska Airlines especially looks for an applicant with a high level of motivation, an outgoing personality and the ability to interact well with passengers. "We want our pilots to be highly visible to the passengers and to generate a positive image of the company," he says. Johnson tells the story of one pilot who carries a Polaroid camera and takes pictures of children sitting in the cockpit with a captain's hat on. "We don't require our pilots to do this," Johnson says, laughing, "but it's that kind of attitude that wins us a lot of friends—and a great deal of repeat business."

Johnson also stressed that at Alaska Airlines, there is no upper age limit, except for the age 60 rule mandated by the FAA. "We even had some who have continued to fly with us as flight engineers past 60," Johnson says.

Applying for a piloting job at Alaska begins with a written request to the company's Seattle-based human resources department for an employment packet and an accompanying pilot supplement. The pilot supplement asks for information about ratings and flight hours. Request the information by writing to Alaska Airlines Inc., Box 68900, Seattle, WA 98168, Attn: Human Resources. The completed packet and supplement are returned to the Human Resources office which weeds out those that do not show the minimum requirements. Johnson checks out the surviving applications, evaluates them and decides which ones his office will telephone to schedule interviews.

Johnson says there is little an applicant can do to prepare for the interview, except maybe to buy some simulator time to sharpen instrument skills. "This is especially important for those pilots who have a high number of hours, but may not be very current," he advises. The applicant, however, should have his logbooks and ratings available for inspection.

If the applicant does not live near Seattle where the interviews take place, the airline provides a pass for transportation on Alaska or Horizon Air. It is up to the applicant to make his/her own arrangements regarding transportation to the nearest airport that either carrier serves. Alaska Airlines will not pay for this part of the trip.

Once in Seattle, the company pays for the applicant's hotel accommodations, but not meals. Johnson says the hotels normally are within walking distance of Alaska Airline's corporate offices and Flight Operations and

Cufley says that before the check, the applicant receives a briefing on the simulator and is told exactly what the exercise will involve. "The check ride involves a lot of navigation work and nondirectional beacon (NDB) type approaches," he says. "This is done because a number of airports we serve in Alaska have no radar. There are no tricks such as simulated engine failures or emergencies, just straight up flying."

According to Cufley, the simulator check ride eliminates about 30 percent of the applicants. The 70 percent who do pass the simulator portion, he remarks, are current pilots or have just graduated from a top flight school. "It also helps to be very familiar with non-precision approaches and to have a significant amount of current instrument time," he says.

Following a passing grade in the simulator, the applicant goes before a pilot interview board made up of assistant chief pilot Tom Cufley, two line captains, the senior check engineer and a human resources department representative. The interview normally lasts 45 minutes.

"The board focuses mainly on the applicant's background, recent experience and qualifications. In fact, we focus heavily on recent experience," says Cufley. "A number of military pilots, for example, may have the required number of hours for a position with us, but may have spent the last several years behind a desk."

According to Johnson, the board tries to create a relaxed atmosphere. The participants ask the applicant several general questions, such as, "How did you get started in aviation?" and "What do you know about Alaska Airlines?"

"We urge our applicants to do their homework and impress us with some good reasons for wanting to come to work with us," Johnson says.

The board also asks how the applicant might cope with certain examples of in-flight problems to test the pilot's cockpit resource management (CRM) skills. This, Johnson says, is to see how compatible the applicant would be with the airline's CRM procedures.

After the interview, the board takes about five to 10 minutes to evaluate the applicant, using what Cufley calls "a complex grade-point system." Also, while it has not happened to date, any member of the interview board can veto an applicant that the other members approve of.

If the applicant passes the interview, he/she then takes a psychological test, which is administered by Alaska Airlines and sent to an outside psychologist for scoring. The two-hour test, known as the Minnesota Multiphasic Psychological Inventory (MMPI), looks at temperament, personality traits and attempts to evaluate how well the applicant reacts to pressure. Although it is not a pass/fail situation, it does have weight in the hiring decision. Tom Cufley reports that the airline has hired some who have not done well on the psychological tests.

On the following day the applicant undergoes a complete medical exam at a clinic

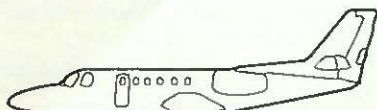
Alaska Airlines New-Hire Pilot Qualifications		
Qualifications Breakdown	Alaska Airlines 1990 (Jan-Jun)	National Airlines 1990 (Jan-Jun)
No. pilots hired	45	761
No. pilots surveyed	39	226
Age ranged:	23.9 - 53.5	20.6 - 60.3
Average -	37.6	36
Lowest Visual Acuity:	20/70	20/400
Education (%):		
Master's	23.1	15.9
4 yrs. college	71.8	58.4
2 or 3 yrs. college	5.1	22.1
Less than 2 yrs. college	0	3.5
Hours ranged	2500 - 13,000	850 - 22,000
Median hours—	5490	5356
% jet hours	79.5	68.6
% turboprop hours	74.4	77.9
% neither jet nor turboprop hours	2.6	5.0
% rotor hours	7.7	9.5
% civilian only	33.3	60.2
% previous military	66.7	39.9
Certificates (%):		
Total with ATP	100	88.5
Total with FE or FEw	87.2	78.8
ATP + FE	35.9	28.8
ATP + FEw	51.3	43.8
ATPw + FE	0	0.4
ATP only	10.3	15.9
FE only	0	1.3
ATPw + FEw	0	2.2
FEw only	0	2.2
Neither ATPw nor FEw	0	3.5
Fleet Breakdown:		
B - 727	27	27
B - 737	7	7
MD - 80	24	24
Total	58	58
Orders/options:		
B - 737	20/4	20/4
MD - 80	12/0	12/0
MD - 90	20/20	20/20
Total	52/24	52/24

Training Center, and both facilities are within walking distance of the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Normally, applicants are asked to come in the night before the two-day interview/screening process, which begins at 6:00 a.m. with a simulator check ride. The simulator portion is done at the Flight Operations and Training Center in an MD-80 or B-727 simulator. The 45-minute check ride, which the applicant must pass to be considered for employment, is conducted by Tom Cufley, Alaska's assistant chief pilot.

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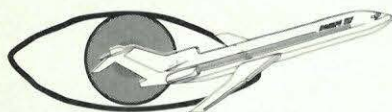


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Alaska Air Group and Alaska Airlines Financial Profile

	1988	1989
Alaska Air Group		
Operating revenues	\$814,365,000	\$916,537,000
Operating expenses	\$743,825,000	\$846,576,000
Operating profit (loss)	\$70,540,000	\$69,961,000
Net profit (loss)	\$37,473,000	\$42,935,000
Alaska Airlines		
Operating revenues	\$701,447,000	\$784,799,000
Operating expenses	\$632,146,000	\$719,279,000
Operating profit (loss)	\$69,301,000	\$65,520,000
Net profit (loss)	N/A	N/A
Available seat miles (ASMs)	7,256,400,000	7,925,500,000
Revenue passenger miles (RPMs)	3,944,200,000	4,376,500,000
Load factor	54.4%	55.2%

Stock code: NYSE - ALK
52-week stock high as of 12/13/90: \$26.00
52-week stock low as of 12/13/90: \$13.88

Renton, Wash. Preparation for the medical calls for abstinence from food for at least 12 hours before the examination. The applicant also must have an FAA first class medical certificate. Visual acuity can be as low as 20/70 but must be correctable to 20/20. Cufley reports the company will not hire a pilot who smokes.

The airline pays for the comprehensive physical which includes eye, hearing and blood testing, drug screening, treadmill, lung capacity, and electrocardiogram tests. The airline requires that height and weight be in proportion to each other. An interview with the manager of employment concludes the interview/screening process.

Before Alaska makes a decision to hire the applicant, the airline does the FAA's mandatory five-year background check. The chief pilot's office informs the applicant by phone and by follow-up letter, usually within two weeks after the interview, if he/she is chosen for a training class. According to Johnson, the applicant is told in advance how many people will be hired. "When we make an offer of employment, we give the applicant a selection slot number. That number represents the applicant's place in line in comparison with the total number of people the airline plans to hire for the next training class. If the applicant's number exceeds that amount, he or she is then moved up the line for a subsequent training class," Johnson explains.

Pilots start as flight engineers on the airline's B-727-200s, or as first officers on the B-737-200s or MD-80s. Like all carriers, Alaska Airlines is affected by the rise in fuel prices since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and consequently scaled back its pilot hiring plans. It even let go some management people, but has not furloughed any pilots so far.

"Prior to Aug. 2, 1990, we had anticipated hiring about 75 pilots in 1991," Johnson says.

"That would have been to cover the then-projected attrition rate, and what was to have been a 10 percent to 15 percent market expansion. At this time, no expansion is planned for the coming year resulting from the Gulf situation and changes in the economy. For that reason we are keeping hiring to a minimum and are now looking at one class of eight to 12 pilots for all of 1991."

Another reason for the revised hiring schedule, Johnson explains, is because of the fleet changes at the airline. Three of the carrier's B-727s end their lease terms in March and April 1991, and will be returned to their owners. This will free up about 45 pilots for new assignments. As of Nov. 15, 1990, Alaska Airlines has 761 full-time pilots.

Johnson reports that expansion for Alaska Airlines in 1991 is expected to be minimal. The only new routes planned are between Anchorage and the Soviet Siberian cities of Magadan and Khabarovsk, which begin service on June 17, 1991. The new routes will be operated by B-727-200s three times per week, summer only.

Pilots who are hired must complete a three and a half-month training period in Seattle. Pilots are responsible for finding their own lodging and making their own living arrangements during this period.

The training process includes indoctrination in company procedures, instruction in aircraft systems, and cockpit procedural and cockpit resource management training for the assigned aircraft. Following the classroom portion of training, the new pilots undergo two weeks of instruction in the appropriate simulator. Because Alaska has a Phase II MD-80 simulator, the pilot can receive an MD-80 type rating at the end of the simulator phase with no actual airplane time required. Pilots hired for the B-727 and B-737, however, currently train in

continued on page 29

Phase I type simulators and therefore are required to have two two-hour sessions of airplane time before entering the initial operating experience (IOE) phase of training.

Alaska Airlines has a B-727 and an MD-80 simulator on site, but the airline sends pilots for the B-737-200 to Canadian Airlines International's simulator in Vancouver, British Columbia. On occasion, however, Alaska Airlines does use a B-737 simulator in Seattle owned by Simulation Training Inc.

The IOE phase of training is scheduled for what Tom Johnson calls "a minimum of 25 hours." "We find that 737 pilots average about 35 hours of IOE due to the difficult flying conditions in Southeast Alaska and the Arctic—the places where our 737s mainly fly. Our 727 flight engineers, on the other hand, average about 13 hours."

When training ends, Alaska assigns pilots to one of the airline's three domiciles. Seattle is the airline's largest domicile, housing the carrier's entire B-727 fleet and most of its MD-80s. Currently Seattle is home base for 640 pilots. Some 77 pilots also are domiciled at Long Beach, Calif., the company's MD-80 base, while 40 pilots are at Anchorage, the B-737 base.


Johnson notes that pilots may voice an assignment preference. He also points out that commuting is discouraged, but is not disallowed. For those who wish to commute, Alaska has jumpseat arrangements with several other airlines. Pilots may commute on Alaska, but must pay a \$5 commuter pass fee.

The choice of pilot domicile figures in the speed of progression through the cockpit. "It's now taking about four years for our Anchorage pilots to make captain on the 737-200, but at Long Beach and Seattle, it's now taking around five years to become an MD-80 captain," Johnson says. The normal progression at Alaska is B-727 flight engineer to first officer on either the B-727, B-737 or MD-80. "Once the pilot makes the right seat, he'll usually stay in that seat until he makes the captain's seat on that same piece of equipment," Johnson says.

Under contractual agreements with the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), which represents Alaska's pilots, first officers serve at least two years on the same aircraft type, but this is waived for first officers who have the combination of high seniority and the qualifications to bid for the captain's seat. At Alaska, those bidding for captain must have at least 2,500 hours of total aircraft time, including 1,000 hours as a first officer and at least 500 hours in type or on the aircraft of another Part 121 carrier before joining Alaska.

Pay and benefits at Alaska Airlines are good by industry standards. Under the ALPA contract, pilots are guaranteed at least 75 hours of flying per month, but pilots normally are scheduled for up to 85 hours monthly. Alaska has a B scale, and the pay rates for pilots hired after April 30, 1986 as first or second officers on

continued on page 42



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One Pilot's Long Route to Alaska

Alaska Airlines pilot Jeff McCormack flies from the icy landscapes and treacherous weather of the Alaskan Arctic to the languid resorts of the Mexican Pacific Coast on the carrier's north-south route structure. Hired by the airline in December 1987 as a B-727 second officer, McCormack, who is based in Seattle, now is a first officer on one of the airline's MD-80s.

McCormack began his aviation career as a teenager by picking up his private license from a flying school at Oregon's Lake Oswego airport. He then received many of his subsequent ratings through the flight technology program at Oregon's Lane Community College where he has an associate's degree.

He spent the next couple of years at an FBO at Aurora (Oregon) State Airport, a small general aviation facility just south of Portland. After accumulating more than 1,000 hours there as an instructor pilot, McCormack got his first real break flying for Mountain Valley Air Service, a Part 135 carrier based at Pearson Air Park in Vancouver, Wash. According to McCormack, it presented an excellent time-building opportunity.

"I started flying Cessna 182s for Mountain Valley as a reconnaissance pilot under a contract they had with the U.S. Forest Service," he said. "In the summer of 1976, I got about 500 hours just for spotting forest fires. It was all single engine, VFR work, but it built time."

McCormack soon graduated to Mountain Valley's Piper Seneca IIs, used by the company in bank check transport. "This was all IFR, all cross-country flying through all kinds of weather. Flying over the Cascades in the middle of the night was tremendous experience," said McCormack. "You really got involved with ATC, the IFR system, and mountain flying, as well as twin-engine operations." McCormack pointed out that the Piper Seneca also gave him de-icing experience, and more than 1,000 hours in a turbo-charged piston aircraft.

By the end of 1978, McCormack, with more than 2,500 hours, was hired by Air Oregon. After 700 hours in a Piper Navajo Chieftain, McCormack upgraded to the left seat of a Fairchild Metro II (SA-226) twin turboprop. Horizon Air bought Air Oregon in June 1982. By December of that year, with an additional 2,400 hours of SA-226 experience, McCormack transitioned to the right seat of Horizon's Fokker F-27, then to the captain's side of the cockpit a few months later.

He quickly advanced, becoming a line and proficiency check airman on the F-27 in 1984. By September 1985, with 2,500 hours on the 50-passenger turboprop, Horizon chose McCormack to head the program that brought the de Havilland DHC-8-100 turboprops into the com-

pany. "Between September 1985 and January 1986, I was essentially in management," he said. "The Dash 8 program meant developing the flight manuals, the training program, checklists, and emergency procedures."

For a two-year period after January 1986, McCormack was senior check airman and captain on the DHC-8. Then he was hired by Alaska Airlines as a flight engineer on the B-727. He explained why he made the jump to a long-haul jet carrier:

"It had actually been my plan all along to work for Alaska. Horizon was great, but I had decided as far back as 1979 that Alaska Airlines was my career goal. It is in the Northwest, has a pilot base at Seattle, is growing, and always had a reputation of being a premier airline with a great West Coast route structure. I did not want to go East to work."

Getting hired by Alaska, McCormack pointed out, was not easy. He originally applied in 1979, but did not have the qualifications they wanted then. He made another application in 1983. "When I applied the second time, I was competing with a lot of current Part 121 flight engineers. Most of them were coming from Continental, which had declared its first bankruptcy, and Braniff, which had ceased operations less than a year earlier. So there was not much hope of getting on with Alaska then."

Not willing to give up, McCormack made his third application in 1985, but at that time, the airline was looking for pilots with high jet time. McCormack said that he believes it was the combination of his credentials, plus Alaska's willingness to give Horizon Air pilots hiring preference, that finally made the carrier hire him in 1987.

For McCormack, Alaska is the ideal company. "It has a wonderful route structure for me. No time zones to speak of, and it offers any kind of flying you want. In fact, the routes to Southeast Alaska offer the most beautiful flying in the world. You have all IFR approaches and no vectors or holds. In the winter, when Alaska weather gets a little nasty, you can bid south. Of course, our Southern routes offer high density flying, especially in the Los Angeles Basin, but Mexico has little in the way of air traffic."

McCormack believes that success with a carrier like Alaska goes back to basic flight instruction. "If you want to be a professional pilot and work for someone like Alaska Airlines, I'd suggest attending a flight school with a solid instrument program, which will make you get your IFR rules and procedures down pat. Without a solid foundation in instrument flying, you have little to build on toward a career with an airline as selective as Alaska Airlines." ♦

—Paul Seidenman



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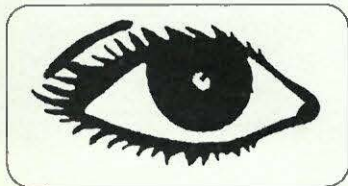
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Horizon Air
continued from page 19

day, and that is it. You must figure your own fuel load, weights and balances, as well as alternate airports and the weather conditions."

The only negative thing that the former pilot added was that Horizon is typical of most regional airline operations regarding pilot workload, and that pilots often were fatigued. But he did note that the scheduling improved even during the period that he worked for Horizon. "It went from a manual to a computer-based system, but I think that it still needs a lot of improvement."

Stephen Brown, an SA-227 first officer, has just returned to Horizon after a one-year leave of absence the company granted. Brown joined Horizon in mid-1986, when he got into flying as a career change. He was impressed that Horizon took him with only 1,400 hours at the time. A former engineer with the Boeing Co. in Seattle, Brown said he had mostly private flying experience, with about 600 hours of instructor time.

Brown feels that some positive changes regarding employee relationships have come about since ALPA was defeated in 1988.

"If you look at trip times on a monthly

basis, scheduling compares favorably even with Alaska Airlines," he said. "We will fly four to eight legs per day, while a pilot with a major will fly one to four. However, we have seen a lot of improvements, especially over the past couple of years."

Brown, who is based at Portland, gave some tips to people who may want to go to work at Horizon:

"The company definitely prefers people who express an interest in living at the domiciles and they do ask applicants, in interviews, how well they feel that they will get by on their first year's salary," he said. "Frankly, they expect some very good answers to this and they deliberately look for people for whom this will not make for a financial hardship. Also, an applicant's attitude weighs a lot, not only with regard to getting hired, but staying. Management's attitude is very positive and they expect the same from their employees."

Horizon, then, offers pilots the combination of sophisticated aircraft, a good geographical location, and challenging flying. As the Horizon Pilots' Don Campbell put it, "This is a job for people who really want to get into hands-on flying. It's demanding work, and at the end of the day, you go to bed tired—but proud." ♦

Military separation
continued from page 33

situation of the cockpit environment just beats an office environment head over heels."

Dave, 40, an Air Force C-130 pilot, decided to get out after seven years of service. Originally hired by Republic Airlines (which later merged with Northwest), he now is a first officer on the B-757. "I was reaching a dead end in my military career where I was going to a less desirable assignment. I was very fortunate because back in 1979 the airlines were hiring very heavily." Is he happy with his decision? "Definitely," he says. "The airlines had always been my goal. I'm happy with the fact that I still have a job. Of course the Eastern and Braniff guys are saying 'If I'd only stayed in (the military) I'd still have a job.' That has to be factored in. But the airlines have enabled me to provide my family with all the things I'd always wanted to."

Gary, 39, was an instructor and flew F-4s in the Air Force before leaving in 1979 to practice law. He missed flying and obtained current flight time by flying corporate and commuters before he was hired by Pan Am.

"I've never had second thoughts," says the B-727 first officer. "I'm proud I was in the military. There aren't too many people who can say they've paid their dues to their country. But I didn't want to make it a career."

Michael, 43, captains a B-737 for a major airline. He was 31 when he left the Air Force as an F-4 instructor pilot in 1978 after nine years in service and went directly with the airlines. Two years later he was furloughed. Five years

passed before he could rejoin the airline.

Michael says the main reason he left service was to have more time with his family. "My wife was all for it; she backed me completely because I was working a 12- to 14-hour day between my flight commander duties in the squadron and being an instructor pilot, flying at least twice a day."

He says that his wages were cut in half when he started with the airlines but that it didn't bother him since they had adequate savings. The possibility of being furloughed wasn't really a concern then.

"When I first flew with the airlines, it was fantastic with the time home I had with my family. It was all it was stacked up to be. But all that was destroyed when I got furloughed. I can remember laying awake at 3 o'clock in the morning, thinking how I was going to make my house payment," he relates.

He made ends meet by starting his own business and flying for the Reserves. Michael said his business mushroomed. Today he attends to the three jobs of an airline captain, a business owner and flying for the reserves.

Michael says, "I don't regret what I did. It turned out well except my time with my family now has been even worse than it was with the military because of trying to juggle three jobs."

When he left the service for the airlines, did the decrease in flying responsibility, going from pilot-in-command to flight engineer or first officer, bother him? "Well, I didn't mind because of what it was going to lead to. But I really missed being upside down." ♦

Al Ebberts is a Texas-based writer. He previously wrote about training contracts in Career Pilot.

all the airline's aircraft types range from \$26.05 per hour in the first year to \$51.45 per hour in years four through five for a first officer, or \$47.69 per hour for a flight engineer. After five years, the pay scale, effective May 1, 1990 through April 30, 1991, provides a pay rate of \$69.55 for a second officer, \$79.33 for a first officer and \$120.42 per hour for a captain. Those rates are for all aircraft types. After 11 years of employment, the ALPA contract calls for a maximum of \$77.33, \$88.25 and \$124.93 per hour for second officers, first officers and captains, respectively.

Along with the basic pay rates, the ALPA contract calls for premium pay for international flying at rates of \$4 per hour for a captain and \$3 and \$2 per hour for a first officer and flight engineer.

The contract also calls for per diem pay of \$1.40 per hour of trip time where overnighting

occurs, and \$1 per hour for trips that begin and end within a day. Typical stage lengths are 600 to 700 nautical miles, and pilots normally fly about three to four legs per day.

The airline's benefit package includes profit sharing and retirement and savings plans. One of the pension plans is the Fixed Income Plan and is fully funded by the company. Pilots are enrolled automatically after one year of service and at least 400 hours of employment, with 100 percent vesting after five years. A parallel plan, in which the pilot is enrolled at the same time as enrollment in the Fixed Income Plan, is the Pilots Investment and Savings Plan. Under this plan, the company contributes 2 percent of the pilot's prior monthly pay. Vesting in the plan is 100 percent at the start. The pilots also are permitted to make periodic contributions to the Pilots Investment and Savings Plan as well.

Alaska Airlines provides a fully-paid medical plan, with a health maintenance organization

(HMO) option in most areas, plus dental, orthodontics and vision health coverage. Other benefits include short-term disability insurance, life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment insurance. The basic life and accidental death and dismemberment plans provide \$100,000 of coverage.

Pilots earn sick leave at the rate of five and a half hours per month up to a maximum of 1,000 hours. Vacation begins at a rate of 12 days in the first year, with accrual of two additional days per year. This gives the pilot 22 days after six years and 30 days after 10 years. Maximum vacation is 40 days after 25 years.

Pilots flying for Alaska in the 1990s will see an airline growing in a controlled and conservative fashion. For example, Tom Johnson says, the airline chooses to stay with the B-737s and MD-80s/90s because by maintaining a two-aircraft family, training costs are less than if the airline stayed with three types—as it now has—over the long-term. The B-737-400 will be used system-wide, with the MD-80s and MD-90s staying primarily on the north-south routes within the lower 48 states. The company elects to keep the B-737-200s, which operate throughout the system in the summer but operate mainly in Washington state and Alaska in the winter.

"Our 737-200 combis see heavy use in freight service, particularly at night and in Alaska," Johnson says. "Very few comparable aircraft are available today, so I can see us staying with our older 737s for the foreseeable future."

Although the B-727s are slated for retirement, Johnson says that if the market warrants, they too might stay on the property a little longer. "The main drawbacks of the 727s are noise and fuel burn. If we keep them, we may have to hush-kit or re-engine them."

Throughout the 1980s, analysts put the profitable airline on the watch list as a possible takeover target. Parent company Alaska Air Group's stock is traded publicly on the New York Stock Exchange. Interestingly enough, the holding company itself participated in the merger frenzy of the last decade with its 1986 buyout of Long Beach, Calif.-based Jet America, one of the post-deregulation start-ups. And the company's current management, headed by Chairman Bruce Kennedy, gained its position in 1972 with the ouster of management that pushed the airline to the brink of collapse.

In June of 1990, the Alaska Air Group management entered into a deal with International Lease Finance Corp. (ILFC), in which the Beverly Hills, Calif.-based aircraft leasing firm purchased a 17 percent stake in the holding company through Alaska Air Group's Class B preferred stock.

AVMARK's Andrew Nocella is cautiously optimistic that Alaska Airlines will stay independent. "As long as they don't step on their toes, the majors will tolerate them, especially within California," he says. "But the truth is that they don't have quite the market strength they command north of Seattle elsewhere on their route structure. California, Arizona and Mexico represent their weaker links. So far, the major airlines do not consider them to be much of a threat in those places."



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Alaska pioneers new technology

Flying for Alaska Airlines often means departures and landings in some of the worst weather in the country. Heavy fog, snowstorms and other poor visibility conditions result, much of the time, in cancelled flights or expensive diversions. It was for this reason that in October 1987, Alaska Airlines became the first commercial carrier in the world to certify its B-727s for a head up display (HUD) system, developed by Flight Dynamics of Portland, Ore.

Very simply, the HUD, which is mounted above the left seat of the cockpit and pulls down when deployed, is a holographic system that displays the pilot's primary flight instruments at eye level, with the data appearing to be outside of the cockpit window. The advantage is that under low visibility conditions, the pilot can read his instruments yet never take his eyes off the outside of the aircraft.

Flight Dynamics originally certified its HUD, known as the HGS 1000 WS system, on the B-727-100, but Alaska gained certification for the device on its B-727-200 fleet which sees service throughout

the Alaska Airlines system. The HUD was certified for Category IIIA approaches—700-foot runway visibility range and 50-foot decision height and certified for takeoff at 300 RVR. Alaska Airlines made its first Category IIIA landing on Oct. 9, 1989, using the HUD on Runway 16R at Seattle, with Capt. Paul Zaborowski in command of a B-727-200. Conditions were 800 feet of runway visibility range and a 50-foot decision height.

Alaska Airlines chose the HGS 1000 WS after investigating the use of available autoland systems for the B-727-200. The airline determined the B-727 autoland was not as advanced as the HGS 1000, and pilots using the HUD could fly the aircraft more accurately. The HGS 1000 WS can be used in all phases of flight.

To date, the HGS 1000 WS has almost 8,000 flight hours with Alaska. The airline actively is studying certification of the HUD on the MD-80 as well as its B-737-200s and the new B-737-400s and MD-90s. ♦

—Paul Seidenman

But, Nocella also says that recent events may pose a challenge for Alaska close to home. "When Continental announced it would sell its Seattle-Tokyo route to American, we at AVMARK realized that some profound changes would be taking place at Seattle. American is likely to establish a small hub there to feed that Tokyo flight, and this could siphon off some traffic from Alaska Airlines. However, the other side is that American does not have any resources to make Seattle another Chicago or Dallas/Fort Worth. In fact, they have instituted little expansion at San Jose (Calif.), their newest hub, due to lack of resources."

Alaska's pilots give the airline high marks as a place to work. Gorg Willis, a Seattle-based MD-83 first officer, came into Alaska Airlines with the Jet America merger, completed in October 1987, a year after the carrier was bought by Alaska Air Group. Willis started with Jet America after nine years as a Naval Reserve C-9 (DC-9) pilot.

"In a deregulated market, Alaska Airlines provides stability," Willis says. "They are very careful about routes and equipment. We fill a niche that the major east-west carriers either cannot, or are not willing to do."

Willis calls Alaska Airlines a pleasant place to work. "You can talk to the people you need

to talk with if you have a problem. Tom Johnson is always approachable."

Noting that the airline was in an expansionary mode up the Gulf Crisis, Willis says that during that period, some growing pains occurred. "Scheduling and training were somewhat overtaxed, but that is normal when go through a period in which you hire several hundred people. But, I think that most of that is behind us."

As a long-time resident of Alaska, Ross Clement eagerly went with Alaska Airlines in late 1988. The Anchorage-based B-737-200 first officer flew for the Alaska Army National Guard for many years and was a B-737 pilot for the now-defunct Wein Air Alaska. Since he started with that airline in 1971, Clement has racked up more than 18 years of experience in the B-737.

"Pilots for Alaska Airlines have to be open-minded and aggressive, but very safety-conscious at the same time," Clement says. "As for the airline itself, it's a super company and a good operator. If you like living and flying in Alaska or the Pacific Northwest, it's an ideal employer."

Clement reports that Alaska continues to offer good advancement opportunities, not only to move to the captain's seat, but in jobs



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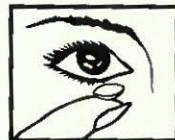
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BASES AT SEATTLE, LONG BEACH: Alaska's MD-80 series aircraft are based predominantly at Long Beach, Calif., but some are part of the fleet based at Seattle. The MD-83 pictured sports Alaska's old paint job.

related to flying such as training. He also notes that the company's emphasis on quality airmanship opens many opportunities, especially for the older pilot. "Alaska expects its people to progress," he says. "They don't hire (life-long) copilots. You have to have the potential to make the captain's seat from the first day."

Steve Day, a Seattle-based B-737 captain and flight manager, is a 25-year veteran of Alaska Airlines. He watched as the company changed from a backwater regional operator to a noted national carrier. "I has gone from the 'everyone knows everybody' attitude to a more professional airline," he says.

However, Day also reports that Alaska still is small enough to have a family-type atmosphere, although that was more than case when he worked with only 50 other pilots a quarter century ago. He is a long-time B-737 pilot and is in no hurry to leave that aircraft type. "A lot of us stay on the 737 because it is used so heavily in Alaska. Flying in Alaska means you're not contending with a lot of traffic. Once you're cleared for approach, you just do your thing. I'm in the top 15 in seniority in the company, but I stay on the Alaska runs because it is the best flying on the airline."

Alaska Airlines began the 1990s as the nation's 12th largest carrier in revenue passen-

ger miles (4.1 billion at the end of 1989), and a new look that keeps the famous smiling Eskimo on the tail but splashes the Alaska name across the side of the forward fuselage. The Persian Gulf Crisis has had an affect on profitability. As its third quarter 1990 report showed, Alaska Airlines has a before-tax net income of \$42.015 million for the first nine months of 1990, down from the \$64.148 million in the comparable 1989 period. Yet, despite recession, revenues and passenger boardings both were ahead of the 1989 period. Those revenues were \$669.750 million, compared to \$595.386 million in 1989; with boardings increasing from 3.755 million last year to 4.119 billion in 1990.

Although it has come a long way from its simple beginnings in the Alaskan bush of 1932, the airline's continued profitability in the face of a serious recession and rising oil prices shows that much of its frontier spirit still is alive. ♦

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