

# COMPTON'S



# The Pride



## Yes.

The smiling Eskimo face still graces the tails of Alaska Airlines jets. In fact, the new exterior design unveiled last week as part of an image enhancement plan for the entire company not only retains the Eskimo, but gives him even greater emphasis.

No longer connected to the blue stripe running the length of the aircraft, the Eskimo now has visual prominence on the tails of the aircraft.

At the same time, the script used to spell out Alaska has exploded into a 10-foot-tall sweep of letters that can be easily read from a block away.

In comparison, the name stenciled on the fleet since

the mid-1970s is written in an ordinary printer's font that is used for many purposes. The new typeface is custom designed and is as unique as the airline itself.

Vice President/Marketing **Bill McKnight** characterizes the new paint scheme, which includes a deepening of the blue and green colors, as "really bold, very aggressive. It's a visual wham. The word Alaska and the Eskimo's face really pop off the aircraft."

Alaska has considered updating the exteriors of its aircraft for several years, McKnight said, but until the Seattle-based firm, SGS Design, came on board last July, proposed designs were "run-of-the-mill; they lost everything that this design retains."

Some even eliminated the Eskimo. But the Eskimo

symbol is an integral part of the Alaska Airlines image, according to Chairman and Chief Executive Officer **Bruce Kennedy**.

"In addition to emphasizing our strong ties to the state of Alaska, the Eskimo adds a human element that most corporate images lack," Kennedy said.

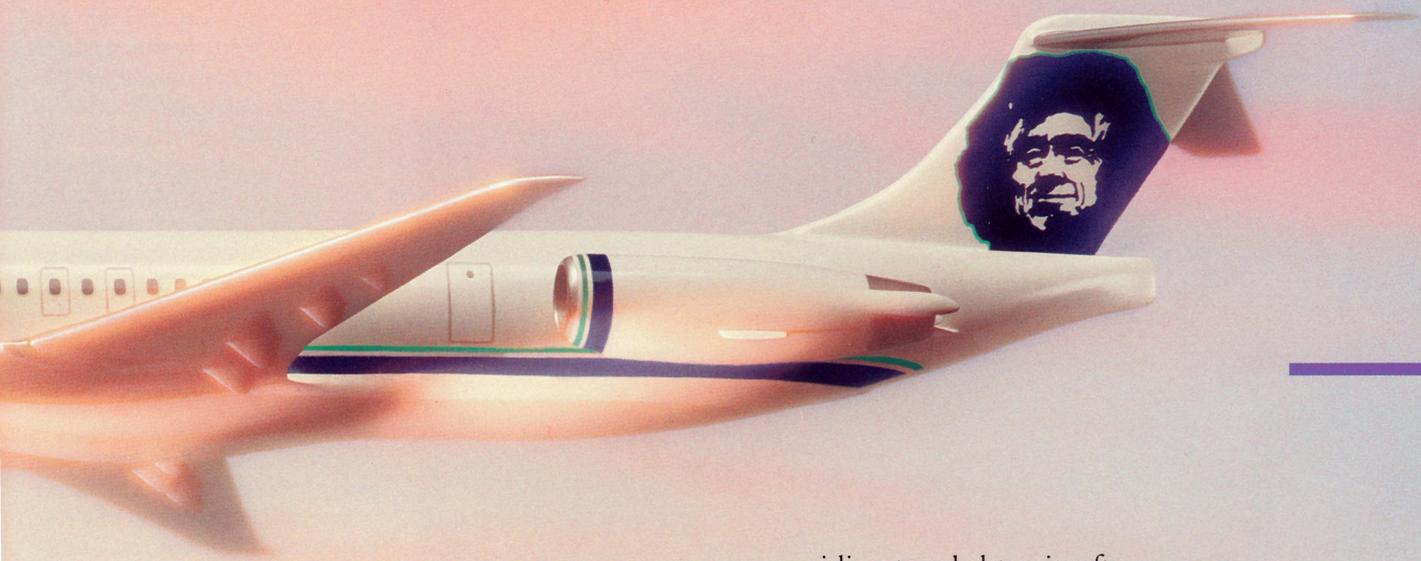
SGS Chairman Cynthia Lute said that she and her associates John Fikkan and Rob Lancaster approached the project with a goal of using "the lore and reputation of Alaska Airlines" as the basis for their design scheme. Toward this end, they visited the state of Alaska, conducted extensive interviews with McKnight and Kennedy, and delved into reports drawn from consumer and employee surveys. The

surveys suggested that the company has an image that is "rugged," "youthful," "individualistic" and "classy."

With these concepts in mind, the three worked from the inside out to redesign the interiors and exteriors of the aircraft. While the exteriors are a sort of traveling billboard for Alaska Airlines, the interiors are far more subtle and designed for passenger comfort. The colors are muted shades of blue, charcoal, pale gray and tan, highlighted with hints of gold. Geometric patterns woven into the fabrics of the seats, carpets and bulkheads are drawn from patterns found in Native art.

The end result is a rich look that is unique to Alaska Airlines. "I've never seen anything like it at any other airline," McKnight asserted. He described the look as contemporary and professional.

# Continues



Other impressions offered by employees who had an early glimpse of the look were “modern,” “friendly,” “comfortable,” “warm,” “elegant” and “polished.”

A polished look will help communicate Alaska’s service quality to the public, McKnight said, explaining some of the reasons behind the decision to revamp the company’s image.

“The entire presentation of our product will have greater appeal,” he continued. “That’s important because our appearance has an impact on the public’s overall perception of the company. We want to look like we’ve got it all together. Our image should tell people that we offer a better product

than any other airline on the West Coast.”

According to Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer **Ray Vecci**, Alaska’s current image is disjointed, because the various pieces evolved individually. Looking at the aircraft as an example, he explained the velour seat fabric in current use was first installed in late 1982, the flight attendant uniforms came in 1985, the Eskimo first adorned the aircraft in the early 1970s, and the exterior paint scheme evolved about 15 years ago.

Vecci said that safety requirements recently mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration provided another reason for going ahead with the design project at this time. The rule changes require

airlines to upholster aircraft interiors with fire-resistant materials and to replace the seats with new models that are able to withstand a high level of force on impact.

“The interiors had to be redone anyway,” Vecci continued. He also pointed out that aircraft have to be repainted on a regular schedule, food service items wear out and have to be replaced frequently, and employee uniforms are changed periodically.

“All that made it natural to look at a comprehensive design that could be implemented as one project,” he said.

At this point, only two MD-80s are painted and decorated in the new look. The rest of the fleet will be redone within the next two years as they go through routine maintenance or are taken off the

line for other modifications.

In the meantime, SGS Design has turned its attention to food service items, cabin supplies, uniforms, signs and stationery. The image enhancement project does not mean an immediate “out with the old, in with the new.” New items will be phased in as supplies are diminished.

Staff Vice President/Inflight Services **Bill Cox** believes that “employees and customers are going to love (the fresh look). There’s no doubt in my mind,” he said.

“We can all be extremely proud,” Kennedy agreed. The revitalized image “retains Alaska’s heritage and the special features that make this airline unique. Yet the look has been brought into the ‘90s to more accurately reflect the company’s personality.”



# *“It’s going to be dynamite”*

Cynthia Lute, chairman of SGS Design, the company that gave Alaska its new makeover, admits that her firm “targeted Alaska Airlines. We really wanted to do a design project for your company,” she explained, “because it’s our hometown airline.”

It was a project that promised to be fun, she said. “Alaska’s ethnic heritage offered us an opportunity to do something very distinct. We tried to create a design that would really convey the character and history of the airline. So many airlines don’t have much personality — a design has to be created out of thin air.”

Drawing from the company’s 58-year history in Alaska for inspiration, SGS developed three different designs for the interior and a couple versions of the exterior and presented them to a committee of company officers for review. The objective of the different plans was not to remake Alaska Airlines, but “to create a setting that will make the aircraft, the food, the passengers and the employees look good,” Senior Designer Rob Lancaster said.

Ideas came from diverse sources. For example, Lute explained that the shades used in the interiors are reminiscent of “the colors you see in Cook Inlet as you’re flying in.”

“Crossroads of Continents,” an exhibition of Siberian and Alaskan Native artwork, also helped spur the designers’ imaginations. Tapestries

**Native motifs from Alaska, the Northwest, the Southwest and Mexico have been woven into the fabric of the company’s new aircraft interiors.**

designed for the bulkheads and patterns woven into the textiles of seats are stylized renditions of patterns found in the Native art of Alaska, as well as Mexico, the Southwest and the Northwest.

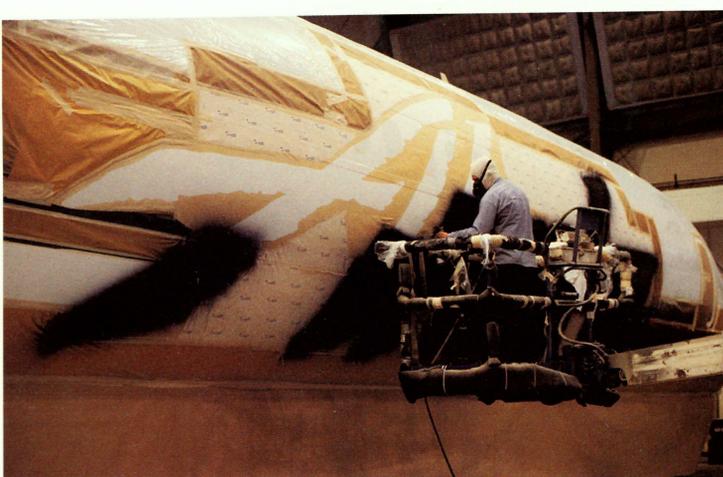
Besides looking wonderful, however, all the pieces have to be functional and practical. In fact, improving the practicality of things like the seat fabric or the coffee cup used in first class was one of the reasons behind the design changes. For example, the first class coffee cup currently in use has a tendency to slosh, and the shape of the dishes used in coach restricts what can be served in them.

The fabrics being installed on the seats and bulkheads look good, but they also are more durable than the materials used up to now.

While fashioned in the same color schemes and decorated with similar patterns, the various elements of the project are not meant to look identical, Lute said. Instead, all the parts are complementary, like pieces of “an excellent conversation.”

“It was great to design food service items for an airline that has a reputation for serving some of the best food in the industry,” she concluded.

“What we’re doing is simply continuing an ongoing effort to improve our product quality,” said Vice President/Marketing **Bill McKnight**. “Passengers and employees alike spend a long time in our aircraft; we want to make it



look attractive for them. Now our presentation will be equal to our product, and our customers will get a lot more value for their money.”

In a nutshell, he said, “It’s going to be dynamite.”

## Remodel process already underway

A team of employees from the maintenance and engineering department has been working for several months on a plan to repaint the company’s

fleet and install new interiors.

Installing interiors takes up to three weeks per aircraft, according to **Art Peterson**, project engineer. The complete renovation will result in aircraft interiors with stronger seats and new upholstery, bulkhead tapestries and floor and wall coverings. Each MD-80 aircraft will be outfitted with a new standard galley. Galleys in the Boeing aircraft will be redecorated. An aft coat closet will be installed in all aircraft that do not already have one. Several small compartments called “dog houses” will be added at various places in the passenger cabins for storing emergency equipment.

The new interiors will add about 1,000 pounds to the weight of an MD-80. Much of this additional weight can be attributed to the new galleys, which feature larger ovens and more work space for flight attendants.

Alaska Airlines has a contract with Tracor Aviation of Santa Barbara, California, to paint the first five aircraft in the new livery. Three will be MD-80s and two will be B727s. Tracor is using a new, “high-volume, low-pressure” painting process.

“Painting aircraft is a very demanding process,” says

Painting aircraft is a demanding process. Here dark blue paint is applied over a stencil to create the new signature.

Manager/Maintenance Planning **Steve Adams**. “The sheer scale of the stripping and surface preparation requirements, and the need to apply finishes in a closely controlled environment can be very challenging.”

Adams explains that it takes about 10 days to paint an aircraft. The first step involves washing the aircraft, sanding old paint, etching the aluminum skin with acid for better paint adhesion and applying a corrosion protective solution called alodine.

Next a coat of primer is applied, followed by three coats of white polyurethane enamel. “This will give us a very deep, high-gloss finish,” says Engineering Technician **Mike Moor**, who is in charge of the repainting project.

The underbellies will be painted gray. “We are using a hard, scuff-resistant paint that will help protect the bottom of the aircraft from water, rocks and other debris,” says Vice President/Maintenance and Engineering **Fred Schubel**. “It also will improve the appearance of our aircraft.”

On or about the fifth day, mechanics apply self-adhesive stencils to the aircraft. These outline the Eskimo face, the word Alaska and the blue and green stripes that run along the length of the fuselage.

The new livery really begins to take shape on the sixth and seventh days. That’s when the Eskimo face is filled in with color and the blue and green stripes are applied. During this process, mechanics work around the clock, applying one color during each shift.

The last two or three days are spent applying FAA-required safety placards, painting the bands around passenger doors and completing final touch-up work. The paint is then allowed to cure for at least 24 hours.



With their fresh fabrics and patterns, the seats are comfortable as well as attractive.

The crowd of employees at the Seattle unveiling was estimated at 800 to 1,000 individuals.



# Employees get the first look

Pleasing everybody is about as likely as tropical temperatures on the North Slope, but if there was ever a day when almost everybody was pleased it was May 15, the day employees and the public first saw Alaska's new look.

By the end of the day, the first Alaska Airlines jet painted and outfitted in the new style had been displayed in Seattle, Portland and Anchorage. The next morning it continued on to Fairbanks, Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan. Judging from random interviews with employees, shareholders, members of the press and the public, the look met with nearly unanimous approval everywhere. Even air traffic controllers in the airport towers radioed their approval.

The day started with the dramatic unveiling of a freshly painted MD-80 at the Seattle hangar before a crowd of nearly 1,000 employees and media representatives. It was a markedly festive event with spirals of blue and white balloons for decoration and big band music to set the mood.

Employees from other Seattle buildings arrived at the hangar on tour buses rented for the occasion. People from all departments mingled, munching on pastries, waiting for the announcement. Speculation on what the design would look like was rife and anticipation couldn't have been higher.

**Jeff Adams**, manager/passenger revenue accounting, characterized the event as "tasteful. It's nice that the company went to this much effort for the employees," he said.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer **Bruce Kennedy** addressed the gathering, referring to his audience as "a cross section of our 6,000 employees around the system."

Gesturing at the party-like surroundings, he said "this may seem elaborate, but we wanted you to see our new image first, before we show it to the shareholders or the public. When you see it, I think you'll agree we have a good reason to celebrate."

He remarked that the look of the airline's fleet is "very personal, because it is the embodiment of our company." It is also "the tool of our trade," he said, "and our trade is service."

With that, the theme from "2001: A Space Odyssey" exploded from the speakers, and the crowd shifted forward straining for a look as the huge double doors of the hangar were slowly pushed aside.

As the gap between the doors widened, an MD-80 rolled into view and turned to show its profile. There was a spontaneous burst of applause and more than one employee had tears in their eyes.

Employees were welcomed to tour the plane's interior by an honor guard of co-workers who stood alongside a red carpet leading to the airstairs.

The reviews were very positive. Aircraft Mechanic **John Gustafson** said, "It's a



**A red carpet led employees in Seattle to the aircraft for their first tour of the new interior.**

nice change. I like the size of the logo and the deeper colors. The public's going to like it."

Commenting on the interior, Reservations Agent **Michele Terral** said, "I like the

textures and the color scheme. It's fresh. I especially like the carpeting." Her companion, Consumer Affairs Supervisor **Barbara Breaux** found the new interior decoration to be "soothing to the eye."

Sure, there were a few grumbles. Though approving of



**Music, fresh flowers, balloons and streamers helped create a party-like atmosphere for the initial unveiling.**

the overall look, one customer service agent thought the interior needed burgundy accents. Two or three other employees would have removed the blue and green stripes from the engines. Overall, however, the most common response was "it's great."

Special events also were held in the other cities the plane visited and at the annual shareholders meeting at the Museum of Flight at Boeing Field.

In Portland, the control tower allowed a "fly by" of the airport. Captain **Jim "Zip" Trower** and First Officer **Lon Lowe** brought the aircraft down low over the runway with the landing gear up, then flew above the clouds again before turning around for a proper landing. Exciting for passengers in the aircraft, people on the ground said it was something to see from their vantage point, as well.

The spectacle was repeated at Boeing Field and Anchorage, and in Sitka the flight came down close over the city itself. Weather permitting, similar flyovers were planned for Wrangell and Petersburg.

About 250 guests and employees were on hand to view

the plane at Anchorage, and an additional 200 attended a morning reception the next day at Fairbanks, including the city mayor and other civic leaders. Large numbers also turned out for receptions hosted by the Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan stations. Station Secretary **Barbara**

**Lentz** estimated that a majority of Juneau's 129 employees were at the airport that day.

**Sue Mellin**, special assistant to the regional vice president, said the Anchorage crowd "just loved the whole look. They were extremely impressed with the high quality of the fabrics." Fairbanks Customer Service Agent **Judy Rogers** said she and her co-workers thought the new look was "gorgeous."

"We like that airplane," Sitka Customer Service Manager **Pat Verney** said, summing up the consensus opinion.

Employees from almost every department devoted long hours to planning and organizing the events on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 15 and 16.

Senior Vice President/Public Affairs **Jim Johnson** said that as the coordinator behind the scenes, **Lou Cancelmi**, assistant vice president/corporate communications, "pulled off a road show that worked like clockwork. There were so many things that could have thrown off the schedule," Johnson said, "but Lou had everything so well under control, it all came off perfectly. It was two days we won't soon forget."

# Makeover will take two years

The new image program, which will completely transform the look of Alaska Airlines, will take at least two years to implement fully. This will allow time for final design work to be completed, manufacturers to produce various items and for existing stocks of stationery and other materials printed with the former design to be used up. Implementing the program over time also will help to control costs and minimize disruptions caused by the changes.

By the summer of 1992, the transformation will be complete. All aircraft will sport the new look, ground equipment and facilities will have a face lift, and new in-flight service items and employee uniforms will be in use.

**AIRCRAFT** The first aircraft to display the new design is the MD-80 unveiled May 15. By July its sister ship, two B727-200s and a new MD-80 will be painted in the new livery. Painting the rest of the fleet will begin this fall and will take the equivalent of one aircraft out of scheduled service continuously for almost two years. Plans call for repainting all MD-80s by May 1991, followed by the B727s and B737s.

New interiors will be installed in about 75 percent of the MD-80s during scheduled maintenance checks in Oakland. The rest of the MD-80s will receive new interiors when the aircraft are down for other work. Installation of new

interiors in the B727s and B737s will begin after the MD-80 fleet is finished.

## PRINTED MATERIALS

Manager/Airport Services **Rexanne Forbes** says that ticket jackets with the new design will be introduced systemwide during the next few weeks. "We stopped ordering the old envelopes several months ago in anticipation of the change," says Forbes. Other stationery items and printed materials will switch to the new look

will have been changed. "Many of the changes will occur naturally as the result of previously planned construction projects," says Director/Facilities **Ron Suttell**.

**UNIFORMS** New uniforms for flight attendants and customer service agents will be introduced in 1992. "It will take at least two years to design and manufacture new uniforms," says Forbes.

"We are just beginning to work on a new uni-

customer service agents and flight attendants will receive new scarves, ties, shirts and blouses. "Flight attendant uniforms are in need of replacement," says Blackburn. "By issuing new accessory items, we can extend the life of the uniforms until 1992 and coordinate the change with the introduction of new customer service agent uniforms. Coordinating the uniforms of both work groups will improve the consistency of our overall image and enable us to use the same vendor for both groups. This should result in a better price and better service on uniform items."

## IN-FLIGHT SERVICE ITEMS

The debut of new uniforms will coincide with the introduction of a complete new line of in-flight service items. Much of the design work on that project has already been completed.

"Eventually everything with which the customer comes in contact, from swizzle sticks to playing cards, will be redesigned to reinforce the company's new image," says Lancaster.

According to Lancaster, much of the glassware that will be used in both first class and coach will be standard commercial products. "It would be too costly for us to produce our own molds," he says. On the other hand, first class china and other serving items will be custom designed and produced for Alaska Airlines. SGS plans to make a design proposal to the company for new first class china next month, after which the company will ask for bids from various manufacturers.



**Redesigned in-flight service items such as these coach utensils will be introduced next year.**

over time as final designs are approved and existing stocks are depleted.

**SIGNS** The backdrop of the Seattle ticket counter was the first to showcase the new Alaska Airlines signature typeface. All other stations will be equipped with new signs as soon as possible. By this time next year, the signs on all gate podiums, jetways, trucks, buildings and more

form design," says Robert Lancaster, senior designer for SGS Design.

**Myra Blackburn**, manager/flight attendant administration, says, "We have some ideas on what new uniforms should look like, but before any decisions are made we will talk to employees so that we can incorporate their ideas." This will be done through the Alaska Airlines employee uniform committee.

In the meantime,