

## PROFILE: Bob Reeder



### Position:

Vice President, Information and Communication Services

### Location:

RAD building, Seattle

### Age: 51

### Hometown:

Five different towns in California and Idaho

### Family:

Wife Kathy and three children, Jeff, Julie, and Jason, all college students.

### Education:

Bachelor's degree in Quantitative Business Management, Idaho State University, 1970

### Experience:

Eighteen years in various leadership positions in information systems at Deere & Company in Illinois. Joined Alaska Airlines in 1990 as director of applications development.

### Responsibilities:

Lead the division that handles all aspects of Alaska's communication and information technology needs — from telephones to computers. If you use a computer, telephone, radio, manual, e-mail, use the internet, or receive any information via computer print-out (like your paycheck), you are using some of the services of this division.

Bottom line, we are the division that helps Alaska's competitive position by using computer technology to efficiently and effectively create excellent product differentiation.

### Interests:

My family is my biggest interest. I also enjoy skiing, bicycling, listening to everything from Willie Nelson to Pavarotti, the beach, mountains, sun, scuba diving, and kicking back with a good book.

### Favorite vacation:

A week with extended family in McCall, Idaho.

### Favorite movie:

M\*A\*S\*H with Donald Sutherland, Elliot Gould and Sally Kellerman.

### Last book read:

"Into Thin Air," by Jon Krakauer

## THE WAY WE WERE: Berlin Airlift marks 50th anniversary

### Retired Alaska pilot remembers his part in crisis

For most Alaska Airlines employees, the Berlin Airlift is just another chapter in a history book.

For retired chief pilot Warren Metzger, however, it's a page right out of his very own life.

Fifty years ago this month, Metzger was among a crack team of Alaska pilots who carried supplies from New York to Germany during the airlift. They used DC-4s chartered by the U.S. Government to fly 87 missions.

"We took off from New York, stopped in Newfoundland for fuel, then flew on to Shannon, Ireland, or Pestwick, Scotland, for more fuel before the final leg to Germany," says Metzger. "One time the winds were favorable and Captain Floyd Wacha and I made it from Gandor to Munich nonstop."

Little did Metzger and his fellow pilots know they were participating in the opening battle of the Cold War.

When World War II ended, the victorious powers divided Germany into zones of occupation, with the Soviet Union, under Joseph Stalin, controlling the area around Berlin.

In June 1948, the U.S., France and Great Britain announced that a new independent German nation would be formed by consolidation of the three occupied zones. Stalin saw this as a threat to the Soviet Union and blockaded all road, rail and water access to Berlin. Within a week, the Soviet blockade had left Berliners with just one month's supply of food.

Stalin didn't think the West would risk another world war over the divided city. He hoped a prolonged blockade would force the West to withdraw.

President Truman asked Gen.



**FREEDOM FLIGHTS:** Berliners watch a C-54 land at Tempelhof, Berlin, in 1948.

Curtis LeMay, U.S. Air Force chief in Europe, if he could supply Berlin by air. He said yes and the Berlin Airlift was born on June 25, 1948. Within days, round the clock sorties were dropping up to 13,000 tons of goods a day, supplying more than 2.5 million Berliners with food, medicine, clothing and coal.

Because authorities feared a Soviet attack, only military aircraft were allowed to fly into Berlin. So Metzger and the other pilots would off-load their cargo in Munich, Dusseldorf or Frankfurt, get a few hours sleep and head back to New York for another load.

"We were never on the ground long enough to do much more than sleep," recalls Metzger. Still, he remembers how friendly the German people were to the pilots flying the airlift. "Of course with the name Metzger, they claimed me as one of their own," he says.

Most German cities had been ravaged by bombing during the war, "so there wasn't much to do even if we did have time," he says. "Once we took a taxi into town and I gave the cab driver a pack of cigarettes as a tip. He was very grateful."

Metzger and other pilots also bought boxes of candy to give to the German children.

The flight from New York to Berlin took many hours in a DC4. "We loaded 18,000 pounds of cargo and all the fuel we could carry," he says. "Even so, we really had to

watch it, or those engines would get pretty quiet."

Metzger says the westbound leg could be particularly harrowing as they usually encountered strong headwinds. "He remembers how Dave Thompson and Art Clune almost had to ditch in the North Atlantic. If that wasn't bad enough the low-flying aircraft had a tendency to ice up."

Metzger says he carried mostly canned food and sacks of flour to Germany. But the cargo on the return flight could be more interesting. On his last trip Metzger brought 65 German war brides to the United States.

Metzger's participation in the airlift ended after three months when he began flying Jews from Germany to their new home in Israel. That assignment turned out to be a little more exciting as the Arabs developed a habit of shooting at the Alaska planes — planes that would eventually carry 22,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel as part of Alaska's second-most renowned airlift, the fabled Operation Magic Carpet.

The dogged effort to supply Berlin from the air succeeded so well that Stalin lifted the blockade on May 23, 1949 — 10 months and 18 days after it had been imposed. During that time, the West delivered 2.3 million tons of supplies on 280,000 flights — and lost 78 airmen in crashes and accidents.

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

### What is your favorite place to go fishing?

**Tom Keown**  
CSA  
Juneau



"Fishermen don't usually tell you where the best fishing spots are, but the 'breadline' near Tee Harbor in Juneau has been good lately."

**John Quinn**  
Senior Engineer  
Seattle



"I've had the best luck at Safeway. I use ten and twenty dollar bills for bait."

**Keith Megargle**  
Engineer  
Seattle



"I like Kodiak for salmon and halibut."