



A new 'spirit' takes flight

Special livery jet caps Alaska Airlines' transition to an all-Boeing 737 fleet

By Paul McElroy

Alaska Airlines welcomed its newest special livery jet Aug. 28 in a ceremony representing the grand finale of one era and the start of another.

Following a farewell salute in the skies over Washington state's Mount Rainier, the carrier's last MD-80 taxied to a stop outside the Seattle Hangar before a crowd of some 700 employees and representatives from the Boeing Co. The final sightseeing flight of aircraft N977AS officially ended the MD-80's 23-year reign at Alaska.

Starting in 1985, the carrier operated up to 44 of the twin-engine jets as it expanded into California, Mexico



Don Conrad

History shared the tarmac Aug. 28 in Seattle, when the new 'Spirit of Seattle' pulled up next to Alaska Airlines' last MD-80. The event marked the end of an era for the venerable MD-80 after 23 years of service with the airline.

Continued on The Back Page

Boeing strike could disrupt aircraft deliveries, flight schedule

Depending on how long it lasts, the Boeing machinists' strike could disrupt the delivery of as many as seven of Alaska's 737-800s, forcing the airline to change its fall and winter flight schedule.

Aircraft production at Boeing's plants has been shut down by the strike, which began Sept. 6. The company will continue delivering aircraft that were completed before the strike and provide customers with spare parts.

Alaska Airlines has eight 737-800s scheduled for delivery by the end of the year — three in September, one in October, three in November and one in December. One of the jets was delivered on schedule Sept. 10.

Two of the September deliveries are to replace 737-400s scheduled to be returned to leasing companies next month.

"We hope to take delivery of the second 737-800 next week," said Irv Ber-

tram, associate general counsel and assistant secretary. "Beyond that, we don't expect to receive any new aircraft until the strike ends."

Andrew Harrison, managing director of planning, noted that all eight aircraft have been built into the schedule. Five of the aircraft are equipped for extended operations (ETOPS).

"We have some spare aircraft time, but not enough to completely make up for the loss of six or seven aircraft," Har-

rison said. "Plus, the new ETOPS aircraft are needed to support our growing Hawaii service. With the addition of Kona in November, we will have 38 flights a week to Hawaii."

Harrison said the airline has been able to re-engineer its schedule to cover most flying through December.

"After that, we may be facing a larger re-engineering of the schedule and possible cancellation of some lines of flying," he said.

Maiden flight

'B-1' test helps assure safety and quality of new aircraft

By Don Conrad

For nearly a century, The Boeing Co. has developed state-of-the-art design, production and testing systems for generations of civilian and military aircraft. But there's only so much that can be done on the ground, which is why the manufacturer test flies every plane it builds.

"Somebody has to fly the airplane for the first time," says Rod Skaar, Boeing's 737 chief production pilot. "We do it because we have the knowledge and experience. But, more importantly, it helps us achieve our ultimate goal—which is to deliver the safest, highest quality airplane possible to our customers."

The first flight of every Boeing aircraft, no matter what type, is dubbed a "B-1."

Considered a medium-risk flight, only essential air crew is allowed onboard. For a production aircraft like the Next-Generation 737-800, this includes two pilots and two systems operators—one to monitor aircraft systems and the other to test avionics and cabin interiors.



Boeing Commercial Airplanes

Alaska Airlines' new 'Spirit of Seattle' approaches Boeing Field to complete its successful B-1 test flight.

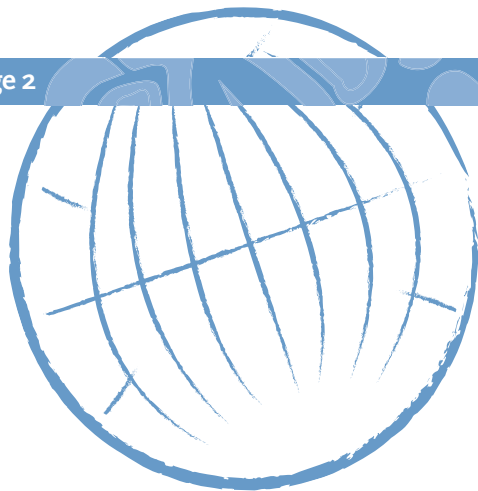
Other than a vibration monitor, the jet is configured to customer specifications.

B-1 flights last a little more than two hours. Boeing requires them to be conducted during daylight under visual flight rules, with a minimum of three miles' visibility and a 1,500-foot ceiling.

"This adds an extra margin of safety, but can disrupt our flight test program during rainy winter months in Seattle," Skaar says.

Before and during the flight, the pilots and sys-

Continued on The Back Page



Alaska's World

in August



In remembrance

Alaska Airlines repairs damaged memorial

When Washington Memorial Park Mortuary notified Alaska Airlines that vandals had damaged a bronze plaque honoring a pilot killed in a 1971 accident near Juneau, Ron Suttell sprung into action.

"The funeral home sent an emotional letter with photos asking us to replace the metal marker of a Boeing 727 'Golden Nugget' jet honoring Leonard 'Red' Beach," said Suttell, director of project of management in the Corporate Real Estate Department.

Beach was the first officer on Flight 1866 when it struck a mountain near Juneau in 1971. It was later determined a faulty navigation aid on the ground had misdirected the aircraft.

New, more durable vandal-resistant stainless steel plaques were selected for their long-lasting permanence and installed on the memorial.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 29



Around the world

Alaska joins Matchbox fleet with model of special livery

Three of Alaska Airlines' liveries will be featured as part of Mattel's Matchbox aircraft product line, known as the "SkyBusters." Starting this fall, the alaskaair.com livery will be available for sale worldwide at retail outlets such as Wal-Mart, Amazon.com and Toys "R" Us, as well as The Company Store.

The toy line will also include Starliner 75 and the standard livery. The toy planes retail for about \$2 each and will be distributed in the United States, Europe, Latin/South America and Asia, with packaging in multiple languages.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 26

Special livery

Paint the plane contest celebrates state's 50th

Alaska Airlines is inviting school-age children to create artwork to adorn a Boeing 737-400 in honor of next year's 50th anniversary of the carrier's namesake state. Students in kindergarten through grade 12 from public,

On the Web

August's most-read stories

- 1) Employees invited to MD-80 retirement, new livery event
- 2) Executive Q&A
- 3) Win-win: Employees meet on-time, customer satisfaction goals for June
- 4) Hello kitty: Lost cat is found and returned to owners
- 5) Alaska Airlines repairs memorial damaged by vandals

Read full versions of these and other stories online. Click the *News Archives* button on the alaskasworld.com home page, then click August 2008.

private and home schools in the state of Alaska can submit designs in the "Paint the Plane" contest that capture the theme of "The Spirit of Alaska."

Children of Alaska Airlines employees residing in the state of Alaska are eligible to enter the contest. All submissions are due by Oct. 18.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 21

alaskaair.com

Jenn takes over after Tim the Moose retires

Tim the Moose, the four-legged icon of the company's Web site, has retired, so to speak, and been replaced by a fresh new face — that of Jenn, Alaska Airlines' online virtual assistant.

The campaign featuring Tim had run its course. Tim the Moose was born in March 2005 as part of a marketing campaign. The idea was to show how ridiculous it was not to use alaskaair.com, and the airline's ad agency, WongDoody, came up with a moose that yearned to fly to illustrate this point.

Now, when customers log on to the home page to search for flights, instead of Tim's smug mug telling them to "wait, while we work on your request," they now see Jenn's smiling face.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 15

Employee services

Annual opinion survey and many events canceled

The annual employee opinion survey will not be conducted this year in response to concerns about the cost and accuracy of the study during the current industry turmoil. The survey, which measures employee attitude and

job satisfaction, has been held annually since 2002. Canceling the survey will save about \$100,000.

Several employee events scheduled for this fall and winter have also been canceled as part of ongoing cost reduction efforts. Among them are the Seattle employee reception in September, Anchorage employee reception in October and the 20th anniversary of service to Mexico celebration in Puerto Vallarta. Among the events that remain on the calendar is the Dec. 6 Children's Holiday Party in Seattle.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 14

Shared services

Alaska and Horizon merge benefits teams

The benefits teams at Alaska Airlines and Horizon Air are the latest to join together to increase efficiency and help the company cut costs. They officially merged into one group in early September. Although the teams are combining administratively, benefits packages for Alaska and Horizon will remain different and separate. To ensure competitiveness, each is tied to its own industry benchmarks.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 11

Seattle ramp

Company disputes arbitrator ruling on projected cost savings

An arbitrator ruled that Alaska Airlines violated its contract with the union that represented ramp service agents in May 2005 when it outsourced ramp work in Seattle. Alaska's contract with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) allows the company to outsource, however, vendor charges must be less than what it would otherwise cost the airline to perform the same work.

The arbitrator ruled the vendor charges were not less than the company's costs to perform the work in-house, in his opinion. The arbitrator directed Alaska Airlines and the union to attempt to reach a remedy. If they are unable to do so, the case will go back to the arbitrator for further proceedings. The company can also appeal the ruling in federal court.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 7

Keeping our promise

Employees exceed both performance goals for June

Alaska Airlines' employees exceeded two top performance goals for June by ranking No. 1 among relevant competitors in on-time performance and achieving 76 percent OPR customer satisfaction in an online survey.

— Posted to the Web on Aug. 5



Alaska Airlines dashboard

August 2008

DOT on-time performance

Goal: 80%

2008 78.7%

2007 67.1%

↑ 11.6 points

Scheduled completion rate

Goal: 99%

2008 98.8%

2007 98.5%

↑ 0.3 points

Baggage time to carousel

Average at SEA

First bag 17:42 minutes

Last bag 23:04 minutes

Mishandled baggage rate

Goal: 4 or fewer per 1,000

2008 4.3

2007 7.9

↓ 3.6 bags

Cargo shipped

Pounds of freight & mail

2008 12.2 million

2007 12.2 million

NC

Customer satisfaction overall OPR score

Goal: 72%

July 2008 76%

July 2007 66%

↑ 10.0 points

Load factor

2008 84.5%

2007 85.6%

↓ 1.1 points

Fuel cost

(AAG price per gallon, inc. hedging)

July 2008 \$3.61

July 2007 \$2.24

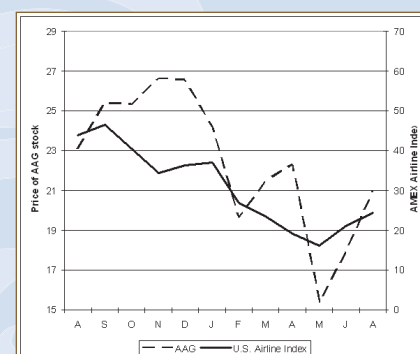
↑ 61.2%

OPR payouts

To be paid in Oct. \$100

Year to date \$500

Air Group stock price



Close (Aug. 29).... \$21.01
52-week range.... \$10.10 - \$28.56

A journey to Ukraine offers hope to orphans

By Mary Lynn Smiley

Alaska Airlines' employee travel privileges have given me the opportunity not only to see the world, but also try to make a small, positive impact on someone's life.

Feeling the need to give more of my time to serve others, I decided to use my two weeks' vacation to fly to Ukraine and work at a summer camp for orphans. I learned about this camp from a college friend named Karen, who works for a non-governmental organization promoting adoptions among local Christian Ukrainian families.

I told my dear friend, **Amanda Lau**, about my plans and she quickly joined my adventure.

Amanda, who works in Human Resources, and I had no expectations when planning our trip to Ukraine last July. We had next to no knowledge of culture, politics, living conditions or what to expect at the camp. We just wanted to serve and give hope where there was none.

With no expectations, we weren't prepared for the impact the trip would have on our lives.

Arriving in a country where no English is printed—let alone spoken—was a cultural shock. Neither Amanda nor I speak Ukrainian (the official language) or Russian (the common language), so we greatly appreciated a friend of Karen's meeting us at the airport.

She accompanied us before our long train ride to Nikolaev, our camp destination. Ten hours on a night train through the middle of a former Soviet country with only Russian ringing in our ears was daunting.

But after meeting Mikhael, our first "Ukrainian friend," we relaxed a bit. In three hours, using two Russian / Ukrainian phrase books and an even more fascinating game of charades, we managed to figure out that Mikhael was a 20-year-old hockey player going home to visit his family and girlfriend.

We shared why we were going to Ukraine and what we did in the States. "Stewardessa" was easy, but trying to explain human resources was a bit awkward. "Gives people jobs" sounded like she was a social worker. Needless to say, it was an entertaining three-hour translation conversation.

Arriving at the camp and seeing dozens of children quickly erased our

thoughts of uncertainty of purpose. Learning that there are 100,000 orphans in Ukraine and we were fortunate enough to spend a week with a handful of them was motivation enough to get over our loss of American "luxuries."

I'm referring to things like hot water for showers (it was a blessing we had running water) and seated toilets (these were under lock and key for use by orphanage care takers; orphans use squatty potties).

engaging and challenging the children to think outside what their culture tells them. We showed them models for healthy relationships and taught that love is more than a feeling. It's a choice.

They shared their dreams. Apparently, we will see them on television soon because they all hope to become famous movie stars and models.

Karen translated all of this for Amanda and me, although we made great efforts to communicate without a translator. Eventually, the kids would get frustrated and we'd yell across the field for Karen's help.

How quickly the kids attached themselves to us. After our first day at camp, younger ones sat next to us. By mid-week, they were already asking us to extend our stay. We spread our attention as evenly as possible, but Amanda and I nicknamed a couple of them "our babies."

One boy and girl made quite the impression. Pasha is 15 and he was by far the most advanced in English. He showed motivation and hopes to become an economist. Everyday, he asked something new he'd figured out how to say in English.


Pasha has a spark of life that is humbling to witness given his life as an orphan. Sadly, his zeal is the exception. More often than not, these children view their lives with apathy.

Natasha is a 13-year-old who doesn't have parents. She told her story matter-of-factly. But Natasha lit up when she recounted how her

grandparents pick her up every New Year and she gets to stay with them and experience having a family before returning to the orphanage.

It was heartbreaking to hear so many stories resembling Natasha's. Our last hours at the camp were filled with tears and prayers. The children cried because, for some, our team of adults represented the only example of a parent they would know.

My prayers were for their protection from life's trials. I had grown attached and couldn't bear the thought of leaving them alone. But I realized they weren't alone. By caring for them, hugging, playing games, braiding hair or simply smiling, we gave them hope.

I look forward to returning to Ukraine and seeing how my little babies are doing. 



Human Resources Generalist Amanda Lau (left) and Flight Attendant Mary Lynn Smiley befriended orphans in Ukraine this summer. Lau's sign reads, "Wave at me," while Smiley's reads, "Hug me."



The state requires orphans to go to these home-away-from-home camps on the Black Sea. These "resorts" are simply a more rugged version of their monotonous lives at the orphanage.

Amanda and I were able to participate with a group of Ukrainians, including Karen, teaching life skills to children ages 12 to 19. The state releases orphans at age 15-19. More than half the boys end up in a life of organized crime while more than half the girls become prostitutes.

We saw and felt the hopelessness in most of those we met. Our group's goal was to give them a foundation for making wise choices in life. That foundation was God and the reality that He created and loved every child at the camp.

Each day focused on a different subject—from relationships to finances—

My Turn

Reflecting on an era: Ode to the -80

Alaska Airlines is acquiring an aircraft that's 25 percent more fuel efficient than its predecessors, has auto-land capability, extended range and the latest avionics—including a flight management computer, Head-Up-Display and advanced monitoring displays.

Are we talking about the 737-NG or a newer aircraft like the 787? No, these were the advertising tags McDonnell-Douglas used when it introduced the MD-80 in the early 1980s. They sound very similar to advertising used on today's latest models.

Affectionately called the "Mad Dog," the MD-80 is often described as a flexible workhorse. We flew the "Mad Dog" from Magadan to Mazatlán and all points between, including Toronto, Southeast Alaska and Mexico.

What makes the "Mad Dog" a pilot favorite is its quiet, standardized cockpit, simple systems and no variants.

So MD-80 pilots and other employees may regard its 23-year storied career at Alaska with nostalgia. But with the high price of fuel, now is the time to retire it.

I'll carry many memories of the MD-80. I will miss the excitement of flying into Russia for the first time. On that "blue bird" day, the taiga forest appeared as a green carpet as we flew over the mountain to Magadan airport with no other airport or town nearer than 600 miles.

And I recall another memorable day when I flew a low-visibility auto-land into Portland in the morning and a visually stunning approach down the Columbia River Gorge a few hours later.

The MD-80 was truly a dependable workhorse.

— Dennis Mellen,
MD-80 fleet captain

Strategic Goals

1. Be No. 1 in safety and compliance
2. Work together to build a diverse and inclusive company where everyone is valued, committed and connected.
3. Deliver on core operational promises: run a reliable, on-time airline.
4. Make flying easy. Provide caring service and great value to keep and win customers.
5. Generate profits that adequately compensate our investors and enable us to fund our future.

Making the 'S'



1. Like all 737s, the 'Spirit of Seattle' fuselage arrives by rail at Boeing's plant in Renton, Wash. Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita, Kan., builds the 'barrels' and covers them with a thin green coating for protection during the 2,000-mile train journey, final assembly and flight testing. The coating is washed off before painting.



2. Overhead cranes position the fuselage in one of two final assembly buildings in Renton. Mechanics install electrical and hydraulic systems, plumbing and insulation blankets inside the fuselage. They also add the exterior doors and radome on the nose of the aircraft.



3. The 737 wing buildup process begins in a separate Renton building and culminates in the final assembly building. At its final stop, each set of wings receives hydraulic and electrical systems as well as optional blended winglets that add range, increase fuel efficiency and lower takeoff noise. All Alaska Airlines 737-800s are delivered with blended winglets and the carrier has retrofitted most of its 737-700s and -900s with them. About 90 percent of all airlines use blended winglets on their 737s.



4. An overhead crane lifts and holds each wing in place while mechanics install the landing gear next. The 737 then joins two inches per minute from one assembly team to the next. Spirit

'Spirit of Seattle'

How Boeing builds a 737-800 in 10 days

Like all 737s, Alaska Airlines' new "Spirit of Seattle" spent 10 days undergoing final assembly at Boeing Commercial Airplanes' plant in Renton, Wash. Significant pre-assembly work took place at a variety of locations before the aircraft was finished in the Seattle area.

These photos show the Spirit of Seattle as it progresses through major assembly steps—and is representative of how all Next-Generation 737s are built.

A key change occurred in late 1999, when Boeing switched from a static assembly line to a moving one to improve production quality and efficiency. A self-guided tug follows a magnetic line in the factory floor to pull each aircraft, which is assembled in about half the time it took under the old system. ➤



7. A tug tows the Spirit of Seattle out of the factory. The nearly completed aircraft spends about five days at Renton Airport before making its first flight, known as 'B-1.' Finishing touches in Renton include avionics installation, engine run and fueling. Painting takes up to three days and may occur in Renton or at Boeing Field in Seattle.



Avionics use laser alignment to affix it to the aircraft's 'moving line'—creeping forward at about 100 feet per hour. The Spirit of Seattle is in the foreground.



6. Mechanics complete interior installation and perform about five 'flight days' worth of functional testing before the 737 receives its engines. General Electric ships its CFM engine 'cores' by truck from Ohio to Renton, where Boeing adds hydraulic, plumbing, exhaust and fire suppression systems. Engines represent about one-third of the cost of a 737. While building the Spirit of Seattle, Boeing workers signed a banner (visible at left).



5. The vertical (tail) and horizontal stabilizers and painted rudder are added next. Pre-painting the rudder aids in balancing this flight control part during installation since paint can weigh up to 12 pounds a gallon. Mechanics also add floor panels, plumbing, tubes and ducts, and rig flight controls.

September 2008



25 YEARS

Derek Cope
Senior Airport Analyst/SEA

Stephen Drennon
Captain/SEA

Robert Edwards
Captain/SEA

James Farrage
Lead Line Aircraft Technician/ANC

Cecilia Feliciano
Customer Service Agent/SFO

Walter Fus
Captain/LAX

George Gwillim
Lead Stores Agent/SEA

Dennis Hamel
Vice President of Human Resources/SEA

Richard Hammerschmidt
Customer Service Agent/PDX

Charles Holt
Captain/SEA

Thomas Kemp
Managing Director Chief Pilot/SEA

Luann Martini
Customer Service Agent/SEA

William Miller
Captain/SEA

Lee Mitchell
Captain/LAX

Leslie Pierce
Customer Service Agent/SEA

Reginald Richards
Customer Service Agent/DEN

Richard Seidenstein
Captain/SEA

William Thomas
Captain/SEA

Craig Trounce
Customer Service Manager/HNL

Conrad Vlaming
Trax Analyst/SEA

David Worgan
First Officer/SEA

20 YEARS

Alan Bornstein
Line Aircraft Technician/SEA

Anthony Dixon
Ramp Service Agent/SEA

Tracy Hoirup
Aircraft Technician/SEA

15 YEARS

Kristin Brugman
Administrative Assistant/SEA

April Marsillo
Administrative Assistant/SEA

Catherine Van Nuys
Flight Attendant/SEA

10 YEARS

Maureen Abts
Station Duty Manager/LAX

Gilles Barkey
Line Aircraft Technician/LAX

Valentin Cesar
Flight Attendant/ANC

Elizabeth Ceske
Customer Service Agent/PSP

Kelli Crawford
Customer Service Agent/LAX

Timothy Cullen
Lead Line Avionics Technician/SEA

Glen Dierker
Regional Sales Mgr. Canada/YVR

Michelle Fearing
Assistant to Vice President
Seattle Operations/SEA

Crystal Fields
Lead Customer Service Agent/LAX

Benjamin Forrest
Captain/LAX

Melissa Gesford
Business Analyst - CRM/SEA

Chris Hamer
Line Aircraft Technician/SEA

Matthew King
FMS/RNP Procedure
Development Specialist/SEA

Lahcen Lhaoui
Line Aircraft Technician/LAX

Stephen Lovell
Aag Director Project Mgmt/SEA

Scott Marckmann
First Officer/SEA

Oscar Mendoza
Lead Line Aircraft Technician/SFO

Everardo Navarro
Customer Service Agent Mexico/PVR

Brian Nicholson
First Officer/LAX

Regina Noel
Customer Service Agent/SEA

Chris Notaro
Captain/ANC

Kathy Oberg
Flight Attendant/ANC

Benjamin Padua
Stores Agent/SEA

Jennifer Phonsavang
Customer Service Agent/ANC

Kelly Pierce
Lead Customer Service Agent/SEA

Wade Raboy
First Officer/SEA

Kenneth Rouser
First Officer/SEA

Jason Russell
Simulator Engineer/SEA

Jodeanne Ryan
Airport Affairs Analyst/SEA

Lisa Scott
Customer Service Agent/SIT

Emelita Soliman
Accounting Specialist/SEA

Gregory Stephenson
Flight Attendant/SEA

Mary Taylor
Credit Assistant/SEA

Brennan Thompson
Line Aircraft Technician/SEA

Sally Timms
Flight Attendant/LAX

Vicki Valentine-Miller
Flight Attendant/SEA

Mary Zimmerman
Lead Cargo System Control Agent/KVY

5 YEARS

Phillip Barnett
Customer Service Agent/LAX

Vardell Blau
Lead Reservations Sales Agent/PHX

Marianne Burger-Lewis
Reservations Sales Agent/PHX

Vincent Caputo
Mgr. IT Applications/SEA

Monica Gonzalez
Customer Service Agent/LAX

Jerome Kraus
Sr. Systems Analyst/SEA

Lakeshia Lee
Customer Service Agent/LAX

Erika Madrid
Reservations Sales Agent/BOI

Brian Martina
Quality Assurance Auditor/YXX

Augustine Matthews
Customer Service Agent/BRW

Andrea Parker
First Officer/ANC

Wasimahmedkhan Pathan
Customer Service Agent/LAX

Luis Perez
Customer Service Agent/LAX

Iris Ponce
Customer Service Agent/BUR

Christine Richbourg
Flight Attendant/PDX

Christopher Rickett
Business Analyst-Passenger
Service Technology/SEA

Patrick Samples
Sr. Applications Analyst/SEA

Amira Sandoval
Customer Service Agent Mexico/SJD

Clinton Vander Mey
Crew Scheduler/SEA

Martha Zapata
Customer Service Agent/LAX



Dependent recertification for students due Sept. 30

Employees with children age 19 to 25 have until Sept. 30 to complete the annual recertification process if they wish to continue their dependent's health care benefits and/or travel privileges for another year.

Alaska Airlines provides company-sponsored health care and travel

privileges for employees' children up to age 25 as long as they are full-time students (minimum 12 credit hours) at an accredited school. An affidavit of eligibility, with instructions, was e-mailed via FirstClass last week to employees with children in the affected age group. This includes children who are or will

have reached age 19 by Oct. 31.

Employees are encouraged to read the e-mailed instructions carefully as the forms and procedures needed to recertify a child differ from past years.

"Unless an affidavit of eligibility and school registration is received by Sept. 30, health care and travel

privileges for dependent children over age 19 will be terminated (retroactively) as of Sept. 1," said **Julie Roebuck**, manager of health benefits.

If you haven't received e-mailed instructions for your student, send a message to the Benefits Department at healthbenefits.inquire@alaskaair.com.

Dependent recertification forms are available online at:
healthbenefits.inquire@alaskaair.com.

Dear Alaska Airlines ... kudos from customers

My wife and I flew home to Seattle June 1 with our 4-year-old son, Gavin, after attending a family funeral in Denver. The agents in Denver seated the three of us in the last row, which meant we were the last passengers to get off the airplane.

As we were walking off the airplane, Gavin started asking about the pilots. We explained to him that the pilot and co-pilot flew the airplane from the cockpit.

First Officer **Mike Barrett** spotted us and invited Gavin to visit the cockpit. He helped Gavin into his seat, demonstrated the controls and let him pretend to fly the airplane.

Mike placed his own cap on Gavin's head and asked if we had a camera. Regrettably, we had packed it in our checked baggage.

Mike offered to take Gavin's picture with his own camera and send it to us. The picture arrived a few days later with a nice note from Mike.

Now we have a picture of Gavin as a young co-pilot with the hugest grin on his face!

Our thanks to Mike for helping our sad trip have a happy ending.

— B.T., Seattle, WA



Coming Up

Wed, Sep 24	M&E Tour / Seattle Hangar
Thu, Oct 9	M&E Tour / Seattle Hangar
Canceled	Employee Reception / Puerto Vallarta
Wed, Oct 15	Blood Drive / Seattle
Thu, Oct 23	AAG Q3 Earnings Announced
Sun, Oct 26	Seattle-Mpls./St. Paul Service Begins
Wed, Oct 29	M&E Tour / Seattle Hangar
Fri, Oct 31	Anchorage-Maui Service Begins
Tue, Nov 4	Election Day
Tue, Nov. 11	Veterans Day
Mon, Nov 17	Seattle-Kona Service Begins
Wed, Nov 19	Blood Drive/Seattle Hangar
Wed, Nov 19	M&E Tour / Seattle Hangar
Thu, Nov 20	Holiday Craft Bazaar / Gold Coast Center
Thu-Fri, Nov 27-28	Thanksgiving
Wed. Dec 3	Holiday Shopping / Corporate Office
Sat, Dec 6	Children's Holiday Party / ANC Hangar
Wed. Dec 6	Children's Holiday Party / Seattle Hangar
Sat, Dec 10	Blood Drive / Seattle
Wed, Dec 17	M&E Tour / Seattle Hangar
Thu, Dec 18	Employee Reception / Corporate Office
Thu, Dec 25	Christmas
Thu, Jan 1	New Year's Day

For more info on these events, click 'Employee event calendar' on the aw.com home page



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Editor: Paul McElroy Layout/Sr. Correspondent: Don Conrard

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Own a piece of Alaska Airlines history

Stores employees recently discovered 334 commemorative sheets in the back of the warehouse featuring photos of 25 aircraft flown by Alaska Airlines over the years. Originally proofs for a set of collector cards, the 13- by 18-inch laminated sheets include the Stinson SM-8A, Ford Tri-Motor, Lockheed Lodestar and 737-400 and other historic aircraft. The reverse features a complete description of each aircraft.

Originally priced at \$40, The Company Store has marked down the sheets to \$15 each for gold lettering and \$10 each for black lettering, while supplies last.

Sets of 25 collector cards cut from the commemorative sheets are available for \$5 each with gold lettering and \$4 for blue lettering.



The Company Store
20833 International Blvd. (Gold Coast Center)
Seattle, Wash. 98198
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Alaska's fleet now among youngest in the industry

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and the Russian Far East.

Minutes later at the hangar, a new 737-800 rolled up beside the retiring jet after completing its delivery flight to cheers and applause from the spectators. Adorned with Boeing's sweeping blue stripes and sporting Alaska's Eskimo on its tail, the "Spirit of Seattle" symbolizes longstanding business ties between the two local companies.

"This is a great day for Alaska Airlines," said **Gregg Saretsky**, executive vice president of flight and marketing. "The MD-80 was a workhorse that took us to some exciting new destinations. But the 737 is an efficient, versatile airplane that can hopscotch through Southeast Alaska as easily as it leaps across the Pacific to Hawaii."

Mark Jenkins, vice president of the 737 program at Boeing, and Alaska's MD-80 Fleet Captain **Dennis Mellen** also reflected on the milestone event in between the arrivals of the old and new aircraft.

"The crews who flew the MD-80 affectionately called it the 'Mad Dog' and it helped make Alaska Airlines what it is today," Mellen said. "We're proud to be part of that wonderful chapter in Alaska's history and excited about the next one."

The ceremony capped a 2½-year effort to accelerate retiring the carrier's 26 MD-80s and fly the Boeing 737 exclusively in order to lower costs, improve operational reliability and enhance passenger comfort. The carrier's fleet now has an average age of

about eight years—making it one of the youngest among U.S. airlines. The 737-800 is also about 23 percent more fuel efficient than the MD-80.

"When we decided in March 2006 to retire our MD-80s early, we knew we were making a sound and significant investment in the future of Alaska Airlines," Saretsky said. "With fuel prices more than doubling since then, that decision is already providing substantial savings in operating costs. And our

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— **DENNIS MELLEN,**
MD-80 FLEET
CAPTAIN

young, modern 737 fleet strengthens Alaska's ability to prevail when we need it most—during this extraordinarily challenging time in the industry."

Alaska Airlines committed \$750 million to the transition, which included the cost of replacement 737-800s, spare parts for the jets, early lease-return payments and write-downs on selling MD-80s the airline owned. Going forward, Alaska expects to save more than \$115 million annually, primarily from lower costs for fuel, maintenance, training and crew scheduling.


Several key safety systems are installed on every one of Alaska's 737s, making the airline's fleet the most technologically advanced among domestic passenger carriers. These systems help

pilots land in poor weather, warn them of terrain and manmade obstructions, and provide pinpoint navigation. See related story [link to fleet_event_technology].

The airline acquired its first Boeing twinjet in 1981 when it began flying the 737-200 Combi. Considered by many to be ideal for service within the state of Alaska, the unique aircraft—known as the "Mud Hen"—featured a movable partition. This enabled it to be quickly reconfigured to carry cargo or a combination of freight and passengers.

In April 1992, Alaska began operating the 737-400, several of which have been painted in special liveries. These include the Spirit of Disneyland (Mickey Mouse), Magic of Disneyland (Tinker Bell), Spirit of Make-A-Wish (Genie) and the Salmon-Thirty-Salmon. Last year, Alaska replaced its fleet of nine 737-200 Combis with five 737-400 Combis and one -400 Freighter.

Alaska began flying the 737-700 in July 1999 and soon after started operating the larger -900 model. The airline relied on the -700 and -900 to launch transcontinental service to Washington, D.C., as well as to Boston, Newark, Miami and Orlando after other carriers reduced capacity following Sept. 11.

In February 2005, Alaska welcomed the 737-800 to its family of jets. With a capacity of 157 passengers and range of nearly 3,400 miles, it is considered to be the backbone of Alaska's fleet. Equipped for extended operations, the -800 enabled Alaska to begin service to Hawaii in 2007. 

Preflight can take as long as the test flight

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tems operators test every system to make sure the aircraft conforms to Boeing's rigid specifications.

"We test everything as far as possible on the ground," Skaar says. "But there are some things that can only be checked in the air. For example, a loose galley door may only show up when the plane is flying."

The preflight phase of a B-1 can take as long as the flight itself.

It begins with the mother of all walk-around inspections. Both pilots start at the nose, walk down opposite sides of the aircraft, cross at the tail and then walk up the other side.

"The idea is to have as many eyes as possible on the airplane," Skaar says.

Following the walk-around, the pilots work through an extensive checklist covering electrical, pneumatic, avionics, hydraulic and flight control systems. This checklist can take more than one hour to complete.

Next, the pilots start the engines and taxi slowly to check brakes and steering. This is followed by a high-speed taxi test to make sure thrust reversers, anti-skid, maximum braking and other systems work properly.

"We also want to see if anything shakes loose," Skaar says.

Once these checks are complete, the pilots line up the jet at the end of the runway for takeoff.

The usual flight path for a 737 B-1 flight starts at Renton Airport, where the factory is located, and follows a counter-clockwise circle around the western half of Washington state. The pilots put the aircraft through its paces—testing flight controls, engine response, noise, vibration, avionics, over-speed warning systems, transponders, auxiliary power units and more.

At one point, each engine is shut down and restarted.

"We never actually stall an airplane, but we do slow down to the point where we get a stall warning to make sure the stick shaker is working," Skaar says. This maneuver is typically conducted at 15,000 feet.

High-altitude testing is done at around 41,000 feet, where the cabin is depressurized to a level where the oxygen masks drop. Pilots also test the cruise trim system.

"Airplane trim control is a big issue with the airlines because it affects fuel consumption, so we pay a lot of attention to it during a B-1 flight," Skaar says.

Following two touch-and-go landings at Moses Lake, 737 test pilots head for Boeing Field in Seattle (wide-body pilots return to Paine Field in Everett).

Any discrepancies—or "squawks"—are written up for Boeing to fix before the aircraft is painted.

"Most squawks can be addressed on the ground," Skaar says. "But sometimes we need to conduct a B-2 and, rarely, a B-3 flight."

Skaar, a former Air Force navigator, is among a handful of Boeing test pilots. Like their counterparts at Alaska Airlines, all have an air transport pilot's license. Many are graduates of the Air Force or Navy test pilot schools. Others have engineering or airline backgrounds.

With hundreds of airline customers, each with its own idea of how an airplane should be configured, Boeing pilots must familiarize themselves with the layout of each flight deck before a test flight.

"We don't want to be hunting for the airspeed indicator as we head down the runway for takeoff," Skaar says.

In addition to test flying new aircraft, Boeing pilots occasionally deliver jets to customers around the world.

Skaar happened to be the Boeing test pilot who conducted the B-1 flight for Alaska Airlines' new "Spirit of Seattle" 737-800, which was delivered during the MD-80 retirement ceremony last week. How did the aircraft perform?

"Not a single squawk," Skaar says. "It was perfect." 

Key information

Safety Reporting Hotline

In Seattle: (206) 392-9574
Toll-free: (877) 610-4039
Safety fax: (206) 392-9862
Safety officer: (206) 484 8208
E-mail: safety@alaskaair.com

Compliance & Ethics Hotline

In North America: (888) 738-1915
Elsewhere: (770) 613-6372

IT Help Desk

<http://ics.insideaag.com/helpdesk/default.asp>

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