RAA’s commitment to the next generation of aviators

Recognizing the future of regional airline professionals is essential to all members, RAA is offering FREE attendance, membership and exhibitor privileges during this year’s Annual Convention to all universities and colleges with aviation-related programs.

Professors, program directors, as well as students, are encouraged to walk the Exhibit Hall Floor, participate in general sessions, and learn more about this segment of the industry that operates over 50% of the nation’s commercial schedule.

Scholarship applications are available at www.raa.org or scan here. Don’t delay! Deadline is April 6, 2012.

Contact Staci Morgan morgan@raa.org to have your college/university added to the distribution list for more information.

Scholarships will be awarded without regard to gender, race, religion or national origin.

Save the date!

**RAA Summer Seminars**
Human Resources, Inflight and Drug & Alcohol Testing
August 5-7, 2012 St. Pete Beach, FL (Loews Don CeSar Hotel)

**RAA 38th Annual Convention**
May 6-9, 2013 Montreal
Saluting the women contributors of the regional airline industry

The Regional Airline Association, like the Women in Aviation, International, is committed to supporting the next generation of aviators—young men and women—and why we continue to develop our scholarship program, through the support of our Associate Member Council, identifying students for college-level studies in the field of aviation. New this year is an expanded scholarship program now open to all colleges and universities with aviation-related programs. RAA welcomes students, professors and program directors to visit the 37th Annual Convention in Minneapolis May 21-24 to network and learn more about regional airlines and its products and services.

RAA recognizes there are numerous remarkably talented women that hold critical roles in maintaining safe, professional and reliable regional airline operations. In our limited space in this Regional Horizons “Women in Aviation” Special Supplement, we are featuring some unique stories of RAA airline members and associate members. Recognizing WAI’s new “Bring Your Daughter to the Convention” program this year, we asked every woman in this supplement to share their advice with young girls thinking about an aviation career. We hope that you will find their stories interesting and inspiring.

A common theme throughout these women’s interviews is how they use their skills and passion to pursue their goals. In many cases, it’s a team effort highlighting hard work and a readiness to seize opportunities before you.

Enjoy!

Kelly Murphy
Regional Horizons Editor
Reaching Tomorrow Today

23rd Annual International Women in Aviation Conference

March 8-10, 2012
Dallas, Texas

Reaching Tomorrow Today

This year’s participants in the 2012 WAI Conference will be immersed in the tactics and strategies necessary for successful aviation careers. More than 3,000 women and men from all segments of the aviation industry are expected to attend.

This is the perfect conference to network, learn about the latest industry trends, hear top-notch speakers, find that perfect job, enjoy an extensive exhibit hall and so much more.

Nearly 50 education seminars have been scheduled covering numerous topics including military aviation, successful interview processes, human factors engineering and aviation training challenges. New this year is an entire day designated “Bring Your Daughter to the Conference Day” so that girls ages 10-17 can be introduced to the excitement and career opportunities available in aviation.

Visit www.wai.org for more convention details and to learn more about Women in Aviation, International and its over 8,000 women and men members!

Dr. Peggy Chabrian
WAI President & Founder

Women in Aviation, International is a nonprofit 501(C)(3) organization dedicated to providing networking, education, mentoring and scholarship opportunities for women (and men) who are striving for challenging and fulfilling careers in the aviation and aerospace industries. For more information about WAI and its Annual Convention visit www.wai.org
There’s an abundance of girl power at a small regional airline serving New England’s beautiful Block Island. Literally a lifeline to this fishing community off the coast of southern New England dubbed “the smallest town in the smallest state in the US,” New England Airlines (NEA) has served as the resident airline for over 40 years. The 12-minute flight onboard one of NEA’s Britten-Norman Islanders or Piper Cherokee Sixes is the preferred means of travel for many locals. Flights depart hourly in the summer with an adult paying $89 roundtrip from the Westerly State Airport.

Lois Bendokas, who co-owns the airline with her husband Bill, shares their inspirational story.

I was fresh out of high school when I came to Block Island and started working at the counter of the local airport diner. One day, a young pilot from Viking Airways, stopped in for a meal. What can I say? I was captivated by this University of Connecticut graduate that had been flying since he was 14! His name was Bill Bendokas, and as our relationship developed so did the company. When Viking went bankrupt at the end of 1969, we had the opportunity to get our own operating certificate shortly thereafter. Newly married and with a single Piper Cherokee Six, we launched a charter/freight operation called New England Airlines in March 1970.

Pilgrim Airlines Founder Joe Fugere was our mentor. Having started his small air taxi service out of the Waterford Airport with a few deHavilland Twin Otters, Fugere strategically became the third largest regional carrier operating in New England before being sold to Business Express. He offered Bill and I encouragement and advice.

Our chief pilot, Sue Cowley, flew for Pilgrim. Lynn Thoma, our senior pilot, and Susan Winkler, NEA’s director of maintenance, also are “locals” and have been with our airline for years. It’s fun, and basically, we’ve all worked together since we have been teenagers. During the winter we have four full-time and six part-time employees, the summer season demands additional pilots for the influx of island visitors. An amazing array of pilots come back every year for the summer season with our total number of employees growing to about two dozen. We can move from 50 to 280 people daily in high season and as few as 14 people a day in the winter. Year-round there is probably 900 inhabitants on the island, peaking to nearly 20,000 in the summer. While the ferry is another option to travel here, the trip takes about an hour compared with our 12-minute flights. We’ve flown everything from prescriptions, animals, farriers, lawyers, construction workers and medical staff. That’s why we truly serve this Block Island community as a lifeline.

While I have about 27 hours in my logbook, being a pilot wasn’t my passion. But I love being out and about with the traveling public. It’s so rewarding mixing with the different personalities. We are happy where we are at, and there’s never a dull day!
How and why did you get involved in aviation?
In 1992, I joined Air Nova, a small regional carrier based in Eastern Canada, as the Assistant Controller. I was introduced to the aviation industry early in my career so when the opportunity arose to take a position in this sector, I opted to test it out, but certainly did not plan on a 20-year career. As the years went by at a rapid pace, change was a constant and with that change came new opportunities. I have been very fortunate to have had the experience of assuming different positions at the company during a number of rather significant events. For example, a merger of four airlines into what has ultimately formed Jazz Aviation LP; a successful Initial Public Offering; a bankruptcy filing and successful emergence; and a period of very rapid growth during which we added to our fleet significantly within a relatively short period of time.

What has been your most significant accomplishment in your aviation career?
I would have to say the day Jazz went public as the Jazz Air Income Fund (which is now Chorus Aviation Inc.) in February 2006. At the time, I was Vice President-Corporate Strategy and thus was heavily involved in the process. A lot of our employees had been working toward this goal for a long time, so it was pretty special when it ultimately came to fruition.

What advice do you have for young girls considering a future career in aviation?
If you thrive in a fast-paced environment where the only constant is change, aviation is it. The industry is extremely fluid, and one day is rarely the same as the next. If you enjoy a dynamic environment, aviation is a very rewarding industry in which to work.

How and why did you get involved in aviation?
I arrived at Jazz in 2010 and serve as Director-Heavy Maintenance, Maintenance Planning and Programs and Records. Having grown up in a small town in Virginia without a commercial airport, I may not have been an obvious candidate for an aviation career. However, once I was introduced to the complex, competitive challenges in this industry, I never looked back! I now have more than 25 years experience in a surprising range of industry segments and functions. I have worked for an engine manufacturer, an aircraft manufacturer, and several airlines—both major and regional—in leadership positions that range from business strategy and acquisitions to sales and marketing, as well as operations.

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What has been the biggest challenge you have faced in your career?
I recognize my ability to identify market, operational and cost opportunities and to drive the changes needed to capture them. The people side of change management is the most challenging aspect of any new direction or objective. To help people understand “why change” I advocate carefully analyzing quantitative and qualitative information to catalyze change. I’ll admit I have no patience for “analysis paralysis”!

What advice do you have for young girls considering a future career in aviation?
This industry offers tremendous opportunity for those who are not afraid of change. Success requires the basics: do your best every day regardless of what is going on around you; always do what you say you’re going to do; be flexible; and go above and beyond to support others on your team. But you also have to take risks to drive change. Volunteer for projects, look for roles where you can contribute as well as learn a new skill.

Jazz

Jazz salutes women in aviation

Jazz employees have the knowledge and experience to serve a wide range of aviation-related needs: private charter services, ground handling services, airline training services, operational start-up assistance, consultancy services, and operational support services.

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How and why did you get involved in aviation?
My first job in the commercial world was working for the Russian airline, Aeroflot. Working there in different departments over 10 years helped shape my interest in aviation. Then Sukhoi, an aircraft manufacturer preparing to build the new Superjet, was looking for a young professional with marketing experience in the airline business to bring insight on the current and future needs of an airline. It was a busy and important transition for me going from an airline to an international aircraft manufacturer. I learned a lot about time management, working full-time and writing my thesis to complete my PhD in Economics from the Russian Economic Academy. I was also married and had a young son. Somehow when you have a new interest you can make it all work!

What are your responsibilities at SuperJet International and the highlights of being involved in a new aircraft program?
As Deputy Senior Vice President Sales for SuperJet International (joint venture between Alenia Aermacchi, a Finmeccanica Company and Sukhoi Holding) and as for my previous title with Sukhoi Civil Aircraft Corporation based in Moscow, I have an active management role in aircraft sales. I had previously negotiated and set up all vendor contracts for the Superjet SSJ 100-95 aircraft family. While it’s quite a challenging role, it’s very interesting to work on a new program in aviation and exciting to become one of the company’s leaders. I have learned how to handle customer expectations and work at a very high level of competition while looking to the future and understanding all the various operational issues and international regulations related to bringing a new aircraft program to the market.

What changes have you observed in aviation over the years?
Consolidation in the market is going on everywhere, particularly in the United States. What we used to call the regional airline is now a growing entity with emerging markets, a demand for larger aircraft and more capacity. As a manufacturer, we have to be very flexible and adapt to these market shifts, while managing costs. It’s very important that Sukhoi takes the right steps going forward, as there are other established players in this market around the world. This complex industry is very rewarding to work in because of the special people who are fully dedicated to their unique role. Really, aviation is one of the cornerstones of the world.

What is your advice to a young girl considering a future career in aviation?
If you have a passion for this industry, you won’t be disappointed, you will always find support. We need to see a big world, but also a small field. There are many amazing opportunities to pursue in different areas of this industry. You might get a degree in aviation or even in marketing or sales, there are many choices to find your way in life. If you are looking for the best future – for yourself and your country – strive for excellence in all areas of your life and be around the passionate people of the aviation industry.
Alexandria P. Marren
United Senior Vice President-Network Operations and United Express

How and why did you get involved in an aviation career?
As many in this industry, my story goes way back to when I was six-years-old. Being a first generation Greek, my father had our family traveling on a Boeing 747 to Athens to visit our extended family. I didn’t have a lot of family in the US, so the airline literally connected me to hundreds of my cousins! That’s when I got the aviation bug, I developed a real passion for it. As a Harvard University undergrad in the 1980s, I decided to work at People Express Airlines because it was a fun startup operation right after deregulation. I worked as a flight attendant, then in reservations, on the ramp and in customer service. In a short period of time, I became Manager-Customer Service in Newark and Chicago. Now with 28 years in aviation, I have spent half of my career in the field. Since I joined United in 1987, I’ve held positions in the customer service and operations departments with varying degrees of responsibility. In a recent role as Senior Vice President-Onboard Service from 2008-2010, I was responsible for overseeing worldwide flight attendant operations, catering, crew accommodation and flight attendant scheduling. Today, I oversee United’s day-to-day operation in the areas of operations control, flight dispatch, security, and operations analysis. I am also responsible for the overall performance of our regional partners, United Express.

What are your responsibilities at United Airlines and the highlights of being involved in an operation that is merging with another major airline?
It's a journey bringing together two large airlines, United and Continental. We are working together to build relationships among our teams and make us one airline. From an operational perspective we are making progress. We achieved a single operating certificate from the FAA in November – all our procedures reduced from 109 manuals to 44. We also merged the flight information systems to one, and next is the reservations system this spring.

What changes have you observed in aviation over the years?
There has been a shift since the 80s – fuller flights and more security as a result of 9/11. There have been many players in the business (over 180 bankruptcies since deregulation), and the key to success is to anticipate trends and be quick and nimble in response to what drives our business – fuel prices, internet pricing, world instability...you name it. To be ready for the future, we need to look ahead at major trends – such as advances in technology. United’s recent first bio-fuel flight with commercial passengers is an example of doing the right thing environmentally and financially.

What is your advice to a young girl considering a future career in aviation?
If you want a thrilling career with a fast-changing pace choose aviation. I have been at United for 25 years, and I’m still learning things every day. Have a passion to do your best! I was a flight attendant in the days that all payments were made in cash, airline travel was a privilege, and there was guaranteed profitability. Today, the average American has even more options to travel and more destinations to choose from to see the world.
GoJet Airlines

Captain Jennifer Zahn
GoJet Airlines, Director of Safety

How and why did you get involved in aviation?
I grew up flying with my parents. They were private pilots, and my dad built and restored airplanes. While growing up, I spent many of my weekends at the airport in Oconomowoc and Watertown, WI. If we weren’t playing with airplanes there, we were at a fly-in or pancake breakfast at someone else’s airport.

What has been your most significant accomplishment in your aviation career?
Everything from teaching someone to fly an airplane to earning a type rating has come with hard work and a great sense of accomplishment. I have flown for Trans States Airlines, TWA, American, and now GoJet Airlines. Without question, being the Director of Safety, a Part 119 Principle Officer of GoJet Airlines, has brought me the greatest sense of accomplishment.

What advice do you have for young girls considering a future career in aviation?
I would tell anyone interested in aviation to go for it. If I had done anything else with my life, I know I wouldn't be having as much fun.

Horizon Air

Alison Donway
Horizon Air, Director-Flight Operations

How and why did you get involved in aviation?
I had many childhood memories with my Grandad who was with the Army Air Corps in World War II, so in my early 20s I took my first flying lesson on Eugene, OR, and never looked back! I got my pilots license, then became a flight instructor for a couple of years, then to build time I became a pilot at a Part 135 carrier in Idaho called Salmon Air flying both cargo and passengers. In 2000, I was hired by Horizon Air as a first officer of the Bombardier Q400. After five years as a line pilot, I became interested in a leadership role and was promoted to Assistant Chief Pilot for Horizon’s Portland, OR, base. In 2010, I became AQP Manager and recently, I have become the airline’s Director-Flight Operations.

What is the biggest challenge you have observed in this industry?
The industry has changed so much, especially since September 11. There have been a whole wave of changes in the business model of airlines, so it’s very important to stay educated on the business side of aviation. Despite these changes, it’s great to see the sunrise over Mt. Hood from the cockpit!

What is your advice to a young girl considering a future career in aviation?
Follow your heart! Once you have made the commitment to pursuing a career in aviation, don’t be afraid of hard work and take advantage of opportunities that are presented to you. I don’t know if my five- and seven-year-old boys will pursue a career in aviation, but they are both seasoned travellers already!
**Susan Binger**
Manager Business Development

The opportunities I have found most rewarding to my career development in the aviation industry are the many networking opportunities with professionals in all areas of the aviation field. Wings supports and sponsors many aviation industry events and conferences which gives me the opportunity to offer the many valuable benefits of Wings Financial.

My advice for young girls thinking about a career in aviation is: Set your goals high and reach for the stars. There is no limit to who and what you can be. Follow your dreams.

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**Tiffany Kirk**
Education Coordinator

The opportunity to equip individuals with financial literacy has been most rewarding to my career development in the aviation industry. It is so fulfilling to see people empowered through education and more confident in making new financial decisions. Being financially savvy is a part of the foundation needed to have a long and healthy career in any field.

I encourage girls thinking about an aviation career to continue learning as much as possible from those already in the aviation field. One of the best ways of learning is through watching those who are where you would like to be. Also, stay current on news and developments in the aviation industry. This is an ever-changing industry, and the more you know, the more successful you’ll be in your career.

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**Michelle Burtley**
Business Development Manager - Eastern Region

The opportunities that I’ve found most rewarding have been the great people that I’ve met, and some have become close friends. Also, the various networking opportunities that I’ve had in the aviation industry have turned out to be wonderful working relationships.

The advice I would give to young girls considering an aviation career is to always be true to yourself. Have an open mind, and be open to all types of aviation opportunities because there are so many different types of jobs in this industry.
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