

What Makes a Generation Great?

By Capt. Duane Woerth, ALPA President

Many of you, I'm sure, have read Tom Brokaw's book *The Greatest Generation*, which tells the story of the generation of Americans who fought, won, and returned home from the Second World War. What made them the greatest was not the suffering and sacrifice they experienced in war. If suffering and sacrifice were the criteria for greatness, the Russians would win the title easily, because Russian casualties were 20 times greater than those of the United States and Canada.

No, the "Greatest Generation" became the greatest for what it accomplished after the war. The "Band of Brothers" came home bloodied and forever changed by what they had gone through. But they converted that shared hardship and sacrifice into a unity of purpose and an absolute iron will to enjoy the full fruits of their labor. These men and women built the postwar trade union movement and the highest standard of living ever for working families. They built what the world called the "American Dream," and it's for that achievement that they are the greatest.

So, what are future generations of airline pilots going to write about us? What will they be saying at ALPA's 100th anniversary? This is a pivotal moment in the history of our profession and union. Pilots have just fought the bloodiest five-year airline labor war in history. There has never been anything like this in scale or scope. God knows how we have suffered—but now what? Will we spend the next years

Now it is this generation's turn to demonstrate that it has the mettle to take its place among the giants of ALPA. Your defining moment has arrived, and history awaits your response.

blaming one another for the past, or will we find the inner strength of character to convert our shared adversity into a unity of purpose to recapture, once again, the full value of the fruits of our labor?

Our ALPA founding fathers set an eternal example when they shook off the effects of the Great Depression to build our union. Half of them were killed in aircraft accidents—half of the remainder were fired for being union leaders. But they never quit. They resisted the temptation to blame each other for the anguish visited upon them by hostile managements and governments and slowly built this proud profession.

As ALPA turns the calendar from 2006 to 2007, and as we live through a transition of elected leaders, it is up to you—the line pilots—to harness the unity and camaraderie that

exist from our shared experiences to build for the future.

Now it is this generation's turn to demonstrate that it has the mettle to take its place among the giants of ALPA. Your defining moment has arrived, and history awaits your response. My faith is strong; I believe that we can and will soon begin conducting the largest across-the-board offensive campaign this union has ever waged.

The bankruptcy era is over. Management's ability to hide



JOCELYN AUGUSTINO

behind a judge's black robe is over. The most hostile anti-union government the western hemisphere has ever seen will be thrown out of office—very, very soon. ALPA will soon be able to use its political muscle to restore the right to strike. ALPA will be able to use its financial muscle to conduct truly coordinated bargaining from coast to coast. We organized 12,000 pilots in 24 months with our last Pilot Unity Campaign, and ALPA can do it again.

This generation of pilots, the warrior-survivors of the bloodiest airline labor war ever, will earn its place in history by what you build from this day forward. Take your example from the pilot delegates who attended the 75th anniversary Board of Directors meeting and left united and confident in their collective strength. They are the vanguard of a membership that will build a 21st-century pilot union for ourselves and future generations of airline pilots. No matter your views on the issues before us, that must be the legacy we build together.

Lastly, on a personal note, on December 31 I will bid you farewell from the desk of the president. Thank you for the privilege of serving. It has been a profound honor.