

## Not So Normal



By Capt. John Prater, ALPA President



**I often joke that my wife says** any person who spends so much time working with at least one other person in an enclosed space no bigger than a couple of bathroom stalls can't be normal. And, as usual, she's right; we airline pilots are not normal. We're extraordinary.

As airline crews we operate more than 60,000 flights a day, safely delivering our passengers and cargo in pressurized vessels that soar at 80 percent of the speed of sound, some 7 or 8 miles above the ground, or fly into strips made from ice or coral providing a lifeline to remote communities. Nearly every flight includes a little something that creates a challenge, yet you regularly make it seem routine and successful. Year after year, ALPA illustrates that the crews operating these flights truly are the greatest safety asset we can put in an aircraft. In the end, when systems fail, "It Takes a Pilot" to prevail.

At the 55th Air Safety Forum, our union honored those who triumph, who show superior airmanship in the face of extreme events, and those aviators who dedicate their lives to making airline flying the safest and most secure mode of transportation in history. If you ask these pilots about their experiences, more often than not they respond, "I was just doing my job." Because more often than not, we don't see ourselves as extraordinary; we fall into the monotonous normal, and we forget how often we go above and beyond just doing our jobs to make this industry better than how we found it.

That expectation is embedded in our culture, typified by the trust we earn on every flight. That responsibility falls on each and every one of our shoulders. As Capt. Randy Babbitt, FAA administrator, said during his keynote address at the Forum, professionalism is not something we or the government can regulate. We, as professional pilots, should and must lead by example.

It's up to us, brothers and sisters, to hold one another accountable—to set a goal and devise a plan to make air transportation even safer and more secure 5 or 10 years down the road. That's what Martin Eley, Transport Canada's director general of civil aviation, challenged us to do during his closing remarks, and I'm proud to say that this union has already taken that step. ALPA's Board of Directors started that process last October by clearly defining this union's safety and security priorities, and we're seeing measurable progress. In September the FAA's Aviation Rulemaking Committee on flight-time/duty-time regulations will make its recommendations.

If there's not consensus, Babbitt says that he'll take the findings and close the gap to ensure that we have a new rule. Transport Canada is closely watching every move the U.S. makes on this front. In fact, I personally promised Eley that ALPA would meet with him to review the proposed changes to the federal aviation regulations.

ALPA and the Transportation Security Administration also announced at the Forum that the agency has set the standards for the CrewPASS program, paving the way for nationwide expansion. This is an enormous win for us. The TSA is advancing an initiative that this union developed from concept to implementation to increase screening security while improving our members' work life. CrewPASS restores respect for those of us trying to get to work every day, and

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I'm eager for this ALPA initiative to reach every one of our pilots flying the line.

Together, we're achieving our goals with every successful takeoff and landing, with every action we take as professional pilots, and with the focused drive our strategic plan provides to this union. It takes a pilot to prevail, but it takes every pilot working collectively through our union to make these successes possible.

Today, I'm challenging you to share your experiences, offer your strengths, and embody the characteristics of a professional pilot. In a world where everyone's watching our every move, we need to make every move count. That covers the gamut from holding your head high when walking through the terminals to supporting each other in and out of the cockpit to standing up for each other and for the profession.

So, as you read the recognition of those who ALPA honored at this year's Forum (see "It Takes a Pilot: A Report on ALPA's 55th Annual Air Safety Forum," page 13), look at yourself in the mirror and know that you, and your union, stand ready to break away from normal and fly straight through to extraordinary.