

No Shortcuts

“There is no shortcut to achievement,” said the American scientist and inventor George Washington Carver. “Life requires thorough preparation—vener is’t worth anything.” Unfortunately, ALPA recently witnessed a proven accident-investigation process cut short to create the veneer of



cause rather than the achievement of safety. More encouragingly, ALPA also has witnessed the achievement made possible when a thorough plan of action is followed to its completion.

After learning of the Asiana Flight 214 accident, I am certain every ALPA member felt as I did the sting of the tragedy and a new sense of determination to prevent such an accident from happening again. ALPA volunteers were immediately on site to support the crew and passengers and provide all possible assistance to the NTSB investigation.

To ALPA’s alarm, rather than embarking on a thorough field investigation focused on finding every factor involved in the accident, the NTSB almost immediately, and highly uncharacteristically, began releasing the technical data it discovered incrementally and without context. Predictably, the individual pieces of information invited uninformed interpretation by everyone from drive-time DJs to flight simulator game enthusiasts. The resulting frenzy of speculation has distracted—and we may find it will have detracted—from thorough accident investigation, which the agency is charged to perform.

As the world’s largest nongovernmental aviation safety organization, our union has worked during its eight decades of history with the airlines and regulators to hone a proven and internationally recognized investigatory process that holds paramount preventing future accidents. The result has helped to make air transportation in North America safe beyond geopolitical or historical compare.

ALPA calls on the NTSB to evaluate the necessary balance of news media interaction and public disclosure that is essential to ensuring the quality of the investigative process. Prematurely releasing information during the Asiana Flight 214 field investigation created what is at best a dangerous distraction and at worst a presupposition that will undermine efforts to identify all the contributing factors. Only through those efforts can the airline industry take the necessary steps to prevent future accidents, which is the only true measure of safety achievement.

In encouraging contrast, ALPA has also recently witnessed the real achievement that is possible with a time-tested and thorough approach to moving our industry forward. While a

particular process may evolve, achievement results only from resolute focus on the single objective of progress.

In this issue, you will read about new FAA pilot qualifications that *increase the minimum requirements for pilots to serve as first officers* and reflect many of ALPA’s recommendations because of our participation in the FAA’s Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) process. ALPA took no shortcuts in our role on the ARC; the concerns of our pilots and the work of our union show throughout the new regulation.

If you’ve visited ALPA’s “What the 1,500-hour rule means to you” website (www.alpa.org/1500rule), you already know that ALPA made clear during the ARC process that not all training is equal. We pressed hard for the “restricted ATP” that allows applicants to be eligible with varying amounts of flight time experience. In other evidence of ALPA’s perseverance, the new regulation requires that first officers be type-rated in the aircraft they fly, and the FAA has maintained the current medical certification requirement for most airline first officers.

The coverage of ALPA’s 59th Air Safety Forum in this issue reveals many more ways ALPA pilots don’t tolerate shortcuts on safety.

Likewise, ALPA is pursuing real achievement in eliminating pilot fatigue by working in every way possible to bring cargo pilots under the FAA’s new fatigue rule and by engaging in Transport Canada’s process to make the final recommendations for drafting new science-based rules for Canadian airline pilots.

Our union’s opposition to shortcuts is no less real in the security arena. More than 2,000 ALPA members have voiced support for ALPA’s determination to continue, and to build on, the Federal Flight Deck Officer program as a critical component of risk-based aviation security.

Similarly, in collective bargaining, ALPA’s Alaska Airlines pilots followed a thorough negotiating process that resulted in a new five-year contract that increases pay by nearly 20 percent over the life of the agreement, contains job security and work rule improvements, and protects pilots’ retirement and insurance benefits.

That U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt admired George Washington Carver and sought his advice on agricultural matters is no doubt attributable, at least in part, to Carver’s commitment to taking no shortcuts.

ALPA is here to make certain that our industry’s achievement is never cut short.

Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA President