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In this Issue...

- The Single Seniority List....ALPAWatch dares to Tip Toe into this touchy subject

In Upcoming Issues...

- Compass ALPA Representation
- Part-Time Flying Resolution carried over from NWA ALPA. What is it?

I haven't seen an ALPAWatch Newsletter in a while. Did I miss something?

No, our last issue was March 1, 2009. We have been busy with some internal efforts and we also have been catching our breath. The non-stop events of the merger kept us very busy. The relative calm period after the merge of the NWA and DAL MEC's offered us a chance to relax just a little. And now... it's back to work!

As a reminder, ALPAWatch favors the terms FNP's (Former Northwest Pilots) and PDelta (Pre-merger Delta) over the more popular and catchy Delta North/Delta South terms. ALPAWatch believes that these two pilot groups will be more effective if they merge into one group. Our concern is that the terms Delta North/Delta South will never go away and thus hinder the great efforts being made to merge these groups together.

“The Single Seniority List....ALPAWatch Dares to Tip Toe into this touchy subject”

Who Won and Who Lost?

Sorry to disappoint you, but if you think we can answer this question, we can't. We know this an emotional and volatile subject and just bringing it up is risky, but we think we can offer some perspectives. Also, we are fairly certain that the union is not going to go anywhere near this subject, so this is likely to be the only information you are going to get.

First, the process was fair. By that we mean that both sides were very prepared and professional. They both did an excellent job of representing their respective groups. We found no situations of impropriety. We were on high alert for the slightest indications of any actions that could unfairly influence the outcome of the SLI (Seniority List Integration). We ran down and reported on any and all of the situations we detected ([ALPAWatch Newsletters](#), Merger Issues, 10/07/08 and 10/31/08). In the end, we feel confident to say it was a fair and impartial process.

Who likes the results and who does not?

While preparing this Newsletter, the input we received was, shall we say *passionate* at the least. It has been a real effort to touch on that passion and yet not spark a war of words between the two groups.

It is often jokingly said that the perfect seniority list integration means no one likes the result. If that is a true measuring stick, then this SLI was successful.

But is the SSL (Single Seniority List) fair? There are 12,000 plus opinions about that question. We have not conducted a poll, but anecdotal evidence clearly shows that almost no pilot or group of pilots likes the SSL. It is interesting that in the first few weeks after the award, there was a sense among some FNPs that it was fair; that the baby had been split down the middle. But as time has gone on, most FNPs seem less than satisfied with the SSL.

The arbitrated award method favored a percentage solution over a date-of-hire solution. Without passing judgment, the percentage solution vs. a date-of-hire solution clearly favors PDelta pilots.

Most of the FNPs are having a difficult time accepting the fact that PDelta pilots got to keep their 25 percentile gain achieved by the pension buyouts by their senior pilots. Additionally, the award did not fully recognize the disparity in retirements between the two groups.

The PDelta pilots, again in very general terms and certainly with exceptions, seem to believe that that SSL is fair. Of course, had the arbitrators favored a date-of-hire solution, PDelta pilots would have just as valid complaints as the FNPs do now.

The purpose of this Newsletter is not to pass judgment on the award. What we are trying to do is help to make both sides aware of how the other side is accepting the award. Soon the real pilot merger will begin. FNPs and PDelta pilots will start flying with one another. When we do, this subject is bound to come up. The PDelta pilots need to understand that most of the FNPs feel they lost a lot of seniority due to the merger. The FNPs need to understand that the PDelta pilots are not the ones responsible for the SSL and not all of the PDelta pilots gained seniority, with respect of date-of-hire.

Other factors influencing the perception of the SSL.

Other factors include differences in *circumstances* and *culture* between the two groups. The circumstances are that the SSL has not really affected anyone in either group yet. Everyone can certainly see what the SSL means to their career down the road, but since we have not reached SOC yet the real effect of the SSL has not been experienced. However, culturally the FNPs are quicker to see all the real and potential pitfalls of the SSL. Because of the long and tumultuous labor/management relationship at NWA, and the recent loss of confidence in the ALPA, FNPs are always spring loaded for trouble. These real and potential pitfalls, the SSL and the merger in general, often dominate crew conversations among FNPs. In fact the merger as a whole dominates the atmosphere for FNPs while it is not an everyday topic for PDelta crews. That is starting to change somewhat for PDelta now that they are going through the changes to reach SOC. The merger is just now becoming more real for PDelta pilots.

Here is another thought when assessing what the SSL did to your career.

The age 65 factor.

We think that one of the reasons the SSL's perceived fairness has deteriorated over time is because the reality of the SSL and the damage caused by the change in mandatory retirement age to 65 are being lumped together.

After the change to age 65 became reality, many pilots maintained a mental image of retiring at age 60, or certainly less than age 65. At that time, few pilots did the research required to see how much seniority they had lost if they retired at 60 but their peers continued to 65. Once the SSL was announced, pilots began studying what their seniority will be at 60 and 65. The damage caused by changing the retirement age to 65 became lumped in with any damage the SSL caused. In most cases, the age 65 change (assuming you intend to retire before age 65) did as much damage to your career as the SSL did. This is less true as you move toward the top of the list.

If you have access to some of the seniority prediction tools out there, you can run the numbers for yourselves since everyone's situation is different. Assuming you intend

to retire before 65 and your peers do not, in almost every case you will find that most of the disappointment about your seniority number is more attributable to the age 65 change than the SSL. And here is another news flash for you. Not many pilots are retiring at 60. The latest early retirement offer did not help much. A total of 215 pilots signed up. What might have encouraged more pilots to sign up would have been some other incentives that were not offered and are now not likely to materialize. More about those incentives in the next ALPAWatch Newsletter.

Another point to keep in mind is that the true impact of the SSL will not be known for many years, if ever. Will the combined DAL achieve the synergies it predicts or will downsizing rule the next decade or more? What will happen to the size of the protected fleets? There is no way to predict what will happen to Delta or what would have happened if Delta and Northwest had stayed separate. ALPAWatch called for a fair SLI process that would produce a fair SSL. We characterized a fair SSL as one in which every pilot would experience a similar career path as though the two parties had remained separate. That was a reasonable goal going into the process. However, using that standard to measure the results is impracticable for the reasons above.

Why didn't/doesn't the union want to talk about this subject?

The truest answer is that to do so would be political suicide. But to be fair to the union, opening a dialogue on the subject would turn to debate, that would most likely turn ugly, polarize the two groups and do more damage than good. In the end, the award would still be as it is today. Nothing would change.

ALPAWatch is reluctant to touch on this subject as well and we will likely draw criticism from all sides for publishing this Newsletter. We are publishing and walking this fine line because during the SLI process we promised we would, regardless of the outcome. Again, we hope that by fulfilling our promise to the pilots, we don't spark debates that could permanently undo the fragile acceptance the two groups have for one another.

So where does this leave us?

The SSL was decided by a panel of 3 Arbitrators, not by NWA ALPA, DAL ALPA and certainly not by the line pilots. ALPAWatch carefully watched the process for any hints of improprieties and found nothing to make us believe that the process was not completely legitimate. For this group to move forward, we are going to have to keep that fact in mind.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have two choices for our future. Accept the award and move on or start fighting. Fighting is not likely to result in a change for either side, but will hurt everyone. If legitimate issues come to light that need to be debated, so be it. But before fighting for fighting sake starts, ask yourself this. What remedy am

I seeking and at whose expense? The inherent problem with seniority is that one persons gain is always at another's expense.

Thank you again for participating in ALPAWatch. With the participation of pilots such as you, ALPAWatch will be successful in obtaining the Union Leadership that the Pilot Group deserves, and in doing so regain our fair compensation, our quality of life, our future, and our dignity.

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