



THE SKY IS THE LIMIT - 40 YEARS FLYING FOR JET AVIATION

News / Business aviation



Once you commence in an aviation career, you immediately hear about the “aviation bug,” the immediate fixation on such a unique and intriguing industry that you just can’t get away from. However, it can be difficult to grasp what this really means until you sit down with someone like Peggy Lamneck, Lead Captain. Speaking with Peggy, there was is attribute that stands out stronger than anything else—her sheer passion for flight. For 40 years now, Peggy has been flying for Jet Aviation, working for only one account, and doing what she loves most.

Peggy's aviation journey began in the late 70s and 80s when she was looking for her best route into the industry. "Women in aviation back in this time were frankly scarce," stated Peggy. "They just weren't prominent." She was able to however, land herself a job as an air traffic controller in 1974 working for Jacksonville Control Center. It was evident that she quickly learned the ropes and became quite confident within a very short period of time. Four years after starting at Jacksonville Center, Peggy received the Outstanding Flight Assist award for instructing and guiding a non-instrument rated pilot, low on fuel and caught above a cloud back, safely to the landing strip at Brunswick Airport in Georgia. One year later, she also received the National Air Traffic Controller of the Year.

While working for the Control Center for five years, she began to fly part time with St. Regis Paper Company during her off time. The company quickly offered Peggy a full-time job. She had fallen in love with flying, so she decided to resign from the FAA. "My supervisor was incredibly kind and pulled me into his office. He said, 'I think you're crazy to do this and I'm not going to let you resign—I'll give you a three month leave of absence, let you get this out of your system, and you can come back in three months.'" Three months later, she walked right back into his office and said, "I love flying too much, I'm going to stay with it."

Peggy stayed with St. Regis for roughly two and a half years until they closed their flight department, subsequently bringing her to the northeast to pursue a new job as a pilot. After receiving a call from Executive Air Fleet (later acquired by Jet Aviation in 1988,) based in Teterboro, Peggy came in and interviewed with two companies—one of those happened to be the same account that she flies for today. The rest is truly history.

Staying with one account for such a long time is very much an anomaly—other opportunities always arise, especially within a time span of 40 years. If you ask Peggy what keeps her flying for this account, why she hasn't left—her answer is quick and confident, "I love the team, I am blessed with an incredible account, I love the responsibility that is placed upon me, and I love flying." It is very unusual to retain a crew for this long. Peggy explained that because she's the Lead Captain, she has people under her that could very easily be a Lead Captain on another account however they've all stayed put. "No one wants to leave the account," Peggy stated. "For me, it's the best account at Jet Aviation, I really still believe that. The way we treat the client, the client treats us—it's a seamless working relationship." Inevitably, Peggy has had a few changes within her crew over time, however that number is quite small. "Steve Grant was one my greatest mentors and ended up being our Client Services Rep. He was also a pilot and started helping me out on the account until we could hire more people. Steve was with us until he retired and ended up quitting his Client Service Representative role for every account but ours," said Peggy. "The next permanent hire to join was Wayne Brooks who's been with us for over 20 years now. Then came Doug Travis who's been on for 15 years. After flying with these guys for so long, they become family. You watch their kids grow up, go to bat mitzvahs, graduations—it's really quite incredible. The entire team we have now—Faye, Tucker, Doug, Wayne, Husam and me. You really couldn't ask for a better crew"

The experience that Peggy gained in the early chapter of her career gave her a significant amount of confidence and assisted to mold her into the Lead Captain she is today. During this time, she was sent to Shannon, Prestwick and Gander to observe North Atlantic Oceanic operations, gain insight, and pursue answers for a presentation that she delivered at the NBAA IOC Conference. "Presenting on the North Atlantic Operations two years in a row was a fundamental learning experience for me," stated Peggy. "Being able to sit on the Bombardier Global Advisory Committee for 10 years was also fundamental to my development as a pilot. It was a great experience and an

amazing medium to learn more in depth about the aircraft that I had been flying. During that time, Bombardier asked me if I would participate in the focus group for the Global 7500 which I gladly did.” Spending two years in the focus group, Peggy was able to witness firsthand how the information she had discussed helped to holistically shape the Global 7500.

From Peggy’s first flight with her account to her most recent, the evolution of business aviation has certainly been prevalent. She stated, “I can say that I’m immeasurably impressed with Jet Aviation and how they’ve cracked down on standardization. They are very by the book, firm yet understanding, and do everything they can do help you understand why we have what we have and do what we do.” It’s also quite obvious in the way that technology has progressed from the ‘80s until now. Peggy laughed, “I remember back with the first airplane I flew, a Challenger, there was no GPS, only inertial navigation, and even with that, you would have to periodically tell it where it is and how high you were at that point in order to get accurate enough information to continue your flight.” With the exponential advancement in technology, catering to GPS, approaches, avionics and the screen systems in the cockpit, the technological developments have been nothing short of amazing and have altered the industry in a very positive fashion.

Just recently, Peggy found herself joking with her crew when discussing an upcoming flight to South America. It’s common that pilots don’t exactly look forward to South American flights due to regular bad weather and thunderstorms. “How on earth did we ever do this without internet and the ability to see satellite imagery—only the radar on your aircraft showing what was directly in front of you,” she laughed. Finally, Peggy stated the remarkable growth in professionalism. “The growth in learning, working as a team and helping one another has been really incredible to watch,” she said. “There is more structure and training than ever before. In the early days, training used to consist of ‘here, read this manual and off you go.’ That is certainly not the case anymore.”

The opportunities and achievements that flying for over 40 years has given Peggy is no simple feat. Aviation has allowed her to travel the world, meet a plethora of people, and become an expert at her craft. Years ago, when the account started flying to Beijing, she once had a car and driver that took the crew up to the Great Wall. To this day, Peggy has kept in touch with the driver and has even met his wife and daughter. “It’s very nice to have that connection with people from all around the world,” she stated. Since the account has started flying again post-pandemic, Peggy has flown to India, Mexico, South America, and executed some domestic trips as well. “Aviation has opened my eyes to the sheer number of opportunities that are out there,” said Peggy. “It’s taught me that there are wonderful people everywhere, from all walks of life and that the beauty that exists on this planet is quite immeasurable. The memories and gratitude that flying has given me leaves me quite humbled and I couldn’t be more thankful for the life it’s provided me.”

Celebrating 40 years of flying at Jet Aviation, Peggy has undoubtedly set a high standard and has proven that quite literally, the sky is the limit.

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