

Air Safety Awards



ALPA honored 10 of its members during the Air Safety Awards Banquet, which highlighted the Association's 52nd Air Safety Forum, held in late July in Washington, D.C. This year's awards banquet, held on the 75th anniversary of the day that ALPA received a national charter from the American Federation of Labor (now the AFL-CIO), was a particularly fitting celebration of ALPA's 75th birthday.

ALPA's president, Capt. Duane Woerth, kicked off the evening with a champagne toast to "the real heroes of ALPA, the line pilots who are flying tonight, who fly every day. People don't know their names, but they do it right, day in, day out."

Capt. Dennis Dolan, ALPA's first vice-president and also president of the International Federation of Air Line Pilots Associations (IFALPA), saluted ALPA's longstanding and ongoing "tremendous influence internationally" through IFALPA and ALPA's unparalleled support of the international organization.



Capt. Rick Clarke (United) received an ALPA Presidential Citation.

ALPA honors its members who work to advance aviation safety.

By Jan W. Steenblik
Technical Editor

Woerth praised Dolan for stepping in during the dark days of September 2001 and shouldering the responsibility for rapidly and effectively ramping up and coordinating ALPA's aviation security efforts while Woerth was extremely busy working with high-level government officials and handling security issues at higher levels.

ALPA Presidential Citation

Woerth presented to three deserving pilots the ALPA Presidential Citation, given "in recognition of unselfish personal dedication and longstanding service in the advancement of air safety in the world's air transportation system with resulting benefits to all who fly."

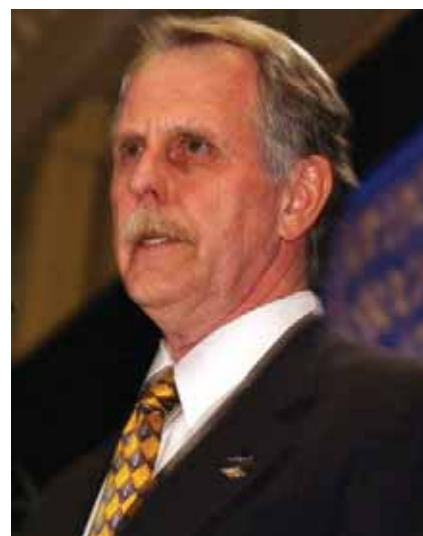
Capt. Rick Clarke (United), Woerth said, "is a United Airlines B-767 captain nearing retirement, but around ALPA, his name is synonymous with safety management systems. By advocating SMS throughout the airline industry, he has, in a sense, taken the Association's motto—Schedule with Safety—to the next level."

A successful SMS, Woerth noted, "breaks down departmental silos. The result? Information is shared. Latent weaknesses that can contribute to future problems are identified and addressed."

SMS implementation requires three components: strong leadership support, a good risk-management program, and most importantly, employee

involvement—ALPA's primary role. Adopting this program helps airline managements save money *and* enhance safety.

"As an SMS advocate," Woerth explained, "Rick's work has been particularly noticeable up north, where safety



Retiring first vice-president, Capt. Dennis Dolan, received praise from Capt. Woerth at the awards dinner.

management systems are embedded in Canadian Aviation Regulations. In the United States, Rick and his fellow SMS advocates have made real headway: the FAA recently published an advisory circular that promotes SMS."

A retired U.S. Navy captain and pilot, Clarke also worked for 4 years as a staff engineer in ALPA's Engineering and Air Safety Department in the late 1970s and early 1980s, while earning an MS in Safety from the University of Southern California.

ALPA Presidential Citation

As an ALPA volunteer, First Officer Frank Condefer (who retired from Northwest on August 8) has spent much of his time communicating to

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the airline industry and the public that what appears to be a relatively simple task—transporting goods from Point A to Point B—requires careful planning, communication, and follow-through, particularly when those goods are hazardous.

“In his role as the Northwest MEC’s Dangerous Goods Coordinator,” Woerth explained, “Frank has tangibly improved training and education for cargo pilots and other employees who manage air freight. His hard work and tenacity have paid off in the form of enhanced standards, and he con-



F/O Frank Condefer (who retired from Northwest Airlines on August 8) received a Presidential Citation.

tinues to press for universal signage criteria and immunity programs for shippers who report discrepancies.”

Condefer also served as the local air safety chairman for his Council 55 and is the secretary-treasurer of the ALPA President’s Committee for Cargo.

A retired U.S. Air Force pilot and Vietnam War veteran, he is active in such groups as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Order of the Daedalians, a fraternal organization of military pilots.

“When it comes to dangerous goods, Frank is a ‘one-man committee,’” Woerth declared, “and we won’t truly be able to replace him when he retires. But his legacy and hard work will continue on in his contributions

to making cargo and hazardous goods transportation the safe and successful operation it is today.”

ALPA Presidential Citation

Woerth presented the third Presidential Citation of the evening to Capt. Rick Valdes (United).

“Capt. Rick Valdes is not shy,” Woerth pointed out. “Ashy man could not achieve all that he has accomplished throughout his personal and professional life, and in the role he continues to play for our Association.

“The presentation of this particular Presidential Citation has a unique twist,” he continued. “Rick is being recognized for his efforts to define English language proficiency standards in our industry. Yet, at the age of 12, he arrived in the United States in 1961 from Cuba, unable to speak a word of English.”

Today, Valdes is an IFALPA representative to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), working with the Professional Requirements in Common English Study Group. In March 2008, a new international aviation requirement will go into effect regarding worldwide minimum English language requirements for pilots and controllers. Valdes has spearheaded this effort, pointing out that effectively dealing with irregular operations, incidents, and accidents requires more than just an understanding of ATC English phraseology. It necessitates a mastery of the language if pilots and controllers are to work together effectively.

Valdes also is the United MEC Central Air Safety Vice-Chairman and a member of the United Pilot-Dispatcher Communications Group.

Valdes joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1966 at the age of 17, serving in the Vietnam War 1967–68 and on active duty until 1971. He began his flying career ferrying new Cessnas from Miami to Caracas, Venezuela. He then worked as a flight instructor and started his airline career at Lloyd Aereo Boliviano, based in Cochabamba, Bolivia. He later became an FAA air carrier inspector. In 1979, he gradu-

ated from Barry College in Miami. He flew for Ryan Aviation and People Express before moving to United Airlines, where he flies as a B-767 captain today.

“Rick’s story is a great American story,” said Woerth, “and an even greater ALPA story.”

ALPA Superior Airmanship Award

Midwest Airlines Flight 8134 was an MD-80 charter flight for the New Jersey Devils professional hockey team



Capt. Woerth, right, presents the third Presidential Citation of the evening to Capt. Rick Valdes (United).

on the night of Feb. 3, 2006. Capt. Matt Klingsporn and First Officer James Findley had experienced no problems with the airplane during the positioning flight from Milwaukee to Newark.

As they taxied out in the darkness at Newark, bound for Toronto with 37 members of the team aboard, the two pilots performed all the appropriate checklist items, including the standard check to ensure that the flight controls move freely and properly.

Klingsporn was the pilot flying. As the lightly loaded airplane accelerated down Newark’s Runway 22R, Findley called “V₁” at 123 knots. At 127 knots, Findley called, “Rotate.”

As Klingsporn started to pull back



Midwest Airlines pilots Capt. Matt Klingsporn, center, and F/O James Findley, left, receive ALPA Superior Airmanship Awards from Capt. Woerth.

on the control yoke, he quickly realized that it did not feel normal. Even with full back pressure on the yoke, the nosewheel was not coming off the pavement—the airplane was *not* going to fly. Klingsporn said later that the airplane felt as if it was being held on the ground “by a magnet.” He immediately made the decision to reject the takeoff, even though the airplane was traveling several knots faster than V_1 and was still accelerating.

Klingsporn and Findley superbly performed their duties as “pilot flying” and “pilot monitoring” and followed the rejected takeoff procedure flawlessly. The airplane stopped before reaching the end of the runway with no damage and no injuries.

After returning to the ramp, Klingsporn physically checked the cargo loading while Findley checked the brake temperatures. The cargo had been loaded properly.

In the dark, the pilots could not see that the right elevator control tab was jammed in the up position; the elevator had been forced into the nose-down position by the airflow during the takeoff roll. When a maintenance engineer got up to the horizontal stabilizer, he found that a small machine screw, totally unrelated to the elevator control system, was the culprit.

The screw had somehow entered the area where the control rod connected to the control tab. While the tail

was vibrating during the takeoff roll, the screw bounced up and jammed between the horizontal stabilizer spar and the control rod just as Klingsporn was moving the control yoke, jamming the tab, and causing the elevator to deflect nose-down at more than 130 knots.

Klingsporn’s instant decision to reject the takeoff was crucial to this dangerous situation’s having an uneventful outcome. If he had hesitated, the 10,000 feet of runway with which he and Findley started might not have been enough to stop their MD-80. The airplane was not going to fly, under the circumstances, and these two pilots faced a situation for which they had not been specifically trained and which easily could have led to disaster if they had not handled it with superior airmanship.

ALPA Superior Airmanship Award

In the early morning of March 6, 2005, Air Transat Flight 961, A310 service from Varadero, Cuba, to Quebec City, leveled off at FL350 just south of the Florida Keys. Aboard were 261 passengers and nine crewmembers. At the controls were Capt. Martin Gauthier and First Officer Benoit Loiselle.

Shortly after reaching cruise altitude, the pilots heard a loud BANG! Through the airframe, they felt vibra-

tions lasting a few seconds, and the airplane entered a Dutch roll.

Gauthier disconnected the autopilot and turned the seat belt sign on. Loiselle called “Altitude,” and Gauthier noticed that the airplane had climbed to FL359. He started a slow descent back to FL350. The airframe vibration had stopped, and the pilots heard no more abnormal sounds. The Dutch roll, however, continued.

Gauthier reengaged the autopilot but found that the autopilot did a poor job of handling the Dutch roll, so he disconnected it again and continued to fly the airplane manually.

Loiselle asked Miami Center for a lower altitude, and Gauthier slowed the airplane down. No messages appeared on the electronic centralized aircraft monitoring (ECAM) displays in the cockpit. No fault lights came on. The cockpit displays also said both yaw dampers—systems that prevent Dutch roll—were on and working.

As the airplane descended, the Dutch roll decreased; by FL250, it had completely disappeared.

Gauthier talked to Air Transat’s dispatch office in Montreal and decided to land in Miami. Loiselle informed air traffic control of their intentions and leveled off at 10,000 feet. The two pilots completely reviewed the information about the airplane’s systems available to them through the cockpit displays to try to find out what had happened at FL350. Again, all of the displays were normal.

The pilots again reviewed with the company their options for landing. Given the normal handling of the airplane, plus the fact that Air Transat had maintenance facilities in Varadero, and the potential for immigration problems in Miami, they jointly decided to return to Varadero. They were cleared to climb to FL190 and flew directly to the airport from which they had started.

The weather in Varadero was clear and the winds were light and variable. Gauthier hand-flew the approach, which was normal until the flare. He was landing in a slight crosswind, and when he pushed on the left rudder pedal during the flare to align the

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Capt. Martin Gauthier, center, and F/O Benoit Loiselle (Air Transat) receive their Superior Airmanship Awards from Capt. Woerth.

airplane with the runway, the airplane did not react. He pushed the pedal all the way to the stop without result.

While taxiing to the gate, Gauthier conducted a full rudder check. The ECAM flight control page showed a normal rudder check with full rudder displacement to the left and right.

At the gate, Gauthier asked Loiselle to conduct an external inspection of the aircraft. Loiselle soon returned to the cockpit to report that the airplane was missing its rudder. Most of the actuators were still attached to the airplane, but only a very small part of the rudder itself remained.

The structural failure involving loss of the rudder on the A310 is still under investigation.

ALPA Superior Airmanship Award

On the evening of June 9, 2005, US Airways Flight 1170, Boeing 737-300 service from Boston Logan International Airport to Philadelphia, lined up on Runway 9 and began its takeoff roll. Aboard the airplane were 103 passengers, plus six crewmembers.

Capt. Henry Jones was the pilot flying. In years past, the term for his copilot, First Officer James Dannahower, would have been “pilot not flying.” These days, however, thanks in large measure to last year’s ALPA Air Safety Award honoree, Capt. Robert Sumwalt (US Airways, Ret.), the proper term is “pilot monitoring.” On this calm spring evening, these two superb professional airmen would show just how appropriate the new, more accurate term is.

As the Boeing gathered speed, Jones’s attention was intently focused on the runway ahead of him and the feel of the airplane. Dannahower was monitoring the instruments.

Just as Dannahower called “Rotate!” he saw, in his peripheral vision, another airliner—an Aer Lingus Airbus A330 with 260 passengers and 12



crewmembers aboard—hurtling toward them from their left side. The Airbus was taking off on Runway 15R, which crosses Runway 9. The captain of the Irish airliner had rotated early, but was not going to miss the US Airways flight by more than mere feet.

Dannahower said, “Keep it down!” and pushed forward against the control yoke to prevent Jones from raising the nose of the B-737.

The A330 roared overhead as the B-737 was less than a second away from the intersection of the two runways.

The B-737 shot through the intersection, traveling more than 200 feet per second. Jones lifted off in the last 1,000 feet of Runway 9. As they climbed out, Dannahower told Boston Departure Control, “We just had a near miss.” One of the Aer Lingus pilots added, “We concur.”

Subsequent investigation into this very serious incident revealed that one air traffic controller in Boston Tower had cleared US Airways Flight 1170 for takeoff on Runway 9 while a different controller had cleared Aer



Capt. Henry Jones, second from left, and F/O James Dannahower (US Airways) receive their Superior Airmanship Awards from Capt. Terry McVenes, ALPA Executive Air Safety Chairman, left, and Capt. Woerth, right.

Lingus Flight 132 for takeoff on Runway 15R. As both flight crews began their takeoffs, the airport terminal blocked their view of the other airplane. During the near miss, the airplanes came within an estimated 170 feet of each other—about the length of an A330 wingspan.

The FAA's Eastern Region later presented to Jones and Dannahower its Regional Safety Award, which said, in part, "your immediate assessment of a potential midair collision, followed by your decisive action and outstanding airmanship, avoided a catastrophic accident and ensured the safety of all 381 passengers and crew aboard both aircraft involved. Your actions in this matter demonstrated the highest level of skill and judgment in air carrier operations and reflect great credit upon yourself and US Airways."

Woerth said, "To borrow a line from the Aer Lingus pilots, 'We concur!'"

ALPA Air Safety Award

Woerth presented the ALPA Air Safety Award, the Association's highest award for a line pilot for aviation safety work, to Capt. Lindsay Fenwick (Northwest).

A native of New Zealand and a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy with master degrees from Stanford University and the University of Minnesota, Fenwick worked for the Douglas Aircraft Company before joining Hughes Airwest in 1979. That airline merged with Republic, which later merged with Northwest.

From his early years as a Northwest pilot, Fenwick led efforts to develop the Northwest Airlines Safety Action Partnership (NASAP) program, which helps bring safety issues to light before they become major problems.

Fenwick also has served as the chief accident investigator for the Northwest pilot group for 10 years. He has represented ALPA during several NTSB accident investigations and was formerly the U.S. representative to the IFALPA Accident Analysis Committee. His expertise in the international area led to his selection

as IFALPA Executive Vice-President—Technical Standards.

Chairman of ALPA's Accident Analysis Group and a member of the Association's Accident Investigation Board, Fenwick has been one of the



Capt. Lindsay Fenwick (Northwest) received the ALPA Air Safety Award, the Association's highest award for a line pilot for aviation safety work.

linchpins of ALPA's Basic Accident Investigation and Advanced Accident Investigation courses. He has made it standard practice to recruit new pilots into ALPA safety work at the local, national, and international levels, serving both as a mentor and as a role model for a future generation of airline pilot safety representatives and accident investigators.

In accepting the prestigious ALPA Air Safety Award, Fenwick thanked his fellow pilots in the Northwest MEC Air Safety Committee for their support.

"Almost 20 years ago," he said, "during a most contentious merger, Capts. Greg Cardis and Dick Duxbury fashioned an integrated safety committee that has stood the test of time. Capt. Bob Aaron and First Officer Brit Etzold have taken up the reins and continue to fight the good fight, and Greg, as always, is the guide on the side."

"The Northwest MEC and the staff in the MEC office have always given

the safety geeks all the help we have needed."

Fenwick also acknowledged the help of Northwest management, saying, "When it comes to supporting the travel needs of its pilot safety volunteers, management has consistently done the right thing."

He added, "Many of us benefit from a mentor or two along the way. Capt. Paul McCarthy [Delta, Ret.] encouraged or hoodwinked me into taking on tasks that I am sure I wouldn't have volunteered for. So thanks, Paul, for your influence and guidance and the efforts that you continue to make on behalf of pilots worldwide."

"Over the years," Fenwick noted, "like many people in this room, I have lost a number of friends, classmates, and colleagues to aircraft accidents. The assertion that aviation is not inherently dangerous is just plain wrong.... Aviation can be made acceptably safe, but that's not the natural order of things. Aviation, especially commercial air transport, is reasonably safe because of the concerted and coordinated efforts of literally thousands of people—designers, mechanics, controllers, dispatchers, and especially, pilots. If we assume for a minute that aviation is not inherently dangerous, we leave ourselves open to the sorts of carelessness, incapacity, and neglect that produce very serious consequences indeed."

"We've done such a wonderful job over the last 75 years that a goodly segment of the traveling public believes that air travel is inherently safe," he asserted. "I don't want to burst their bubble, but that's not the way it is. I know, and you know, that it will take a continuing effort to preserve and improve the enviable safety record that has been achieved."

"The continuing assaults on our profession will not cause airplanes to suddenly fall from the sky, but they gnaw away at the fabric that forms part of the safety net of our air transportation system," Fenwick warned. "We must remind those who would dismantle an eminently workable arrangement that there will ultimately be a price that must be paid." 🌀