

around Piedmont

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In the October 1988 issue of the *Conde Nast Traveler*, a panel of six wine experts ranked Piedmont's First Class/Business wine program in the top five among 27 international airlines.

The panel conducted the tasting on the ground and then re-evaluated the wines in the air at 35,000 feet. This unique method enabled the panel to observe how dehydration, inflight noise, vibrations, and turbulence affects one's ability to taste wine. The experts concluded that the dehydration experienced while flying seems to have a profound effect on the olfactory senses.

The two Piedmont wines selected for the competition were the Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve and the J. Lohr Johannisberg Riesling. Comparing the wines on the ground with the in-flight results, the most improved red wine in the competition was Piedmont's Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon (ninth to second), a rich, fruity wine.

CCAir, a Piedmont commuter airline based in Charlotte, had a record September boarding 75,771 passengers, an increase of 39 percent over the same month last year. The commuter flew 23,330,171 available seat miles during the month, up 46.5 percent over last year, and 10,549,036 revenue passenger miles, up 45.8 percent, for a load factor of 45.22 percent. CCAir serves 22 cities in six southeastern states with 240 daily departures.

Piedmont and CCAir recently signed an agreement for a new 10-year pact for CCAir to continue service as a Piedmont commuter which will transfer to USAir when the integration of Piedmont into USAir takes place in early 1989.

Henson Airlines, the Piedmont Regional Airline, also had a record September for passengers, RPMs, and ASMs. The airline boarded 139,768 passengers, up 25.9 percent over the same month last year, and flew 46,789,796 available seat miles and 23,606,920 revenue passenger miles for a load factor of 50.5 percent.

Jetstream International Airlines, a subsidiary of USAir Group, had a record September boarding 65,379 passengers, a 24.0 percent increase over September of last year. The regional airline, which operates as a Piedmont commuter to the Piedmont hubs of Baltimore and Dayton and an Allegheny commuter to the USAir hub at Philadelphia, flew 19,005,168 available seat miles during the month and 9,362,223 revenue passenger miles for a load factor of 49.26 percent.

Brockway Air of Burlington, VT, and Piedmont recently signed an agreement for a new 10-year pact for Brockway to continue service as a Piedmont Commuter Airline affiliate. The agreement will transfer to USAir when the integration of Piedmont into USAir takes place in early 1989.

Brockway, which serves 23 cities in five northeastern states, linking most with Piedmont's connecting hub at Syracuse, has been a Piedmont commuter carrier since March 1986.

The airline operates a fleet of 11 Beech 1900 and five SAAB 340 jet-prop aircraft. Five more SAAB 340s will be delivered to Brockway between December 1988 and mid-1989.

Under the terms of the agreement, Piedmont will provide ticketing, reservations and customer services for Brockway at the Syracuse hub.

Brockway Air had a record September boarding 48,642 passengers, an increase of 4.8 percent over the same month last year. The airline flew 15,825,883 available seat miles, and 8,499,401 revenue passenger miles, for a load factor of 53.7 percent, an increase of 3.5 points over September 1987.

Piedmont's employee newspaper, the *Piedmonitor*, under former editor Rosalind D. Chostner, recently placed first for 1987-88 in the magazines division in the annual state-wide competition sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators/NC.

SARs emphasize service

For an elderly passenger deplaning in a strange airport to be greeted by name by a pleasant Piedmont employee who whisks him off in a cart to a connecting flight leaves a lasting impression on that passenger. It makes that passenger feel important—special. And that is the objective of the new special assistant representative (SAR) position recently instituted at select stations around the Piedmont system.

The SAR is responsible for assisting passengers and customers, especially those requiring special assistance or who have special needs including handicapped passengers of all ages, the elderly, unaccompanied minors, and non-English speaking passengers.

"The SAR position was established to mirror image the existing staffing pattern at USAir stations," said Allen Perry, director-stations. The SAR positions have been implemented in CLT, MIA, BWI, EWR, LGA, SYR, DAY, and BOS—all stations have a high volume of passenger traffic. Ninety SARs have already been brought on-board.

"You can just imagine how invaluable the SARs can be to the station agents who were providing these services in addition to working the flights," Perry said. "Now the agents are able to devote their time to the flights which expedite service to our customers at the gates."

The SARs also assist and support agents and supervisors during regular and irregular flight operations. They greet flights and advise passengers of connections, delays, and general schedule or terminal information. They pull up the list of "special assists" for each flight on the CRTs and meet the flight with wheelchairs or carts.

"The elderly people in particular are so grateful when someone meets their flight with a cart," said Lori Staub, a SAR in BWI. "The BWI terminal is large, and they appreciate not having to walk from one end to the other."

Staub was in the first class of SARs trained at BWI. She transferred into a full-time SAR position from a part-time station agent position to have more constant contact with the public. Staub had had previous experience in the customer service area as a Piedmont agent and a travel agent.

"I didn't have any public contact as a ramp agent, and I found I really missed dealing with the people," Staub said. "This was a perfect opportunity for me."

For Veronique Asel, a SAR in Charlotte, the position gave her the opportunity to work with the public as well as with Piedmont.

In addition to speaking her native language, French, Asel also speaks Spanish and English fluently and has had travel school training and work experience with children.

"We have a number of Spanish-speaking passengers who come through Charlotte, and it makes traveling much less frightening for them to be able to converse with someone in their own language," Asel said.



BWI SAR Lori Staub uses a walkie-talkie to stay in touch with other SARs.

An obvious impression when talking with Staub and Asel is their enthusiasm, warmth, and genuine concern for others.

"These are just some of the qualities we are looking for in a SAR," said Martha Jenison, manager-station personnel. "Applicants are required to have at least one year of direct customer contact, but above all they must be service-oriented. In other words, they must always have the innate desire to want to help other people."

As Denise Park, BWI regional manager-station personnel, described it, the applicant must have high "woo" quality.

"It's an old-fashioned term but it's that ability to win someone over," said Park.

The selection process for the SARs is thorough. Prospective applicants are drawn from transfer requests in response to the Career Opportunity Bulletin postings as well as resumes from prospective new hires.

"We have ample resumes on file so we do not have to advertise the position outside the company," said Gwin Watts, regional manager-station personnel, CLT. "We carefully review the applicants and select those individuals

with the background that most clearly matches the qualities we want in a SAR."

Applicants selected are invited to a pre-employment session during which the position is described in detail. If the applicants are interested in the position, they complete a structured interview and then are offered the opportunity to take the training.

"They must successfully complete three days of training with an average of 85 on 10 tests," said Park. "Then candidates are offered the position."

Both Staub and Asel described the training as "intense." The training was developed and conducted by station personnel in cooperation with the Winston-Salem training department and materials from USAir's SAR training program.

Candidates had to learn city codes, aircraft types, the types of special passengers, communication skills, airport layout and facilities, proper techniques for lifting people, and how to pull up a passenger name record, operate a jetway and a cart.

Eventually, CLT will have 46 fulltime SARs and BWI will have 22. Anywhere from five to seven SARs will be on duty on each of the eight hour shifts that run from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

"The response to the SARs from both the customers and the station agents has been overwhelmingly positive," said Perry. "The addition of these positions will allow us to provide even more personalized service to our customers."



CLT SAR Veronique Asel receives instructions to meet and transport a passenger.



CLT SARs (l to r) Joseph Eyo and Joan Martin check the flight schedule before meeting a flight.