

Flying High

Oct. '96

Inflight Service Dept. Newsletter

Vol. 1.1

EDITORIAL

Dear Friends

Here's the first issue of 'Flying High', our very own news letter. As crew, we generally tend to live from flight to flight, losing touch with our families while flying, and losing touch with colleagues while at home. Our lives seem to be a little dis-continuous. A journal dedicated to our department will go a long way in bringing us all together.

"How can a newsletter do that?" you ask. 'Flying High' is our own magazine. It shall function as our channel of communication, a sort of bridge to the communication gap. If there is something you would like everyone to know about, if you have an idea, or feel strongly about something, just write it down and send it over. Your subject can be anything. Believe me, your colleagues are certainly interested in knowing your views.

The recent past has seen some changes in our airline. TMI was recruited to device a course specially for Air India -- 'Working Together'. The hierarchical system in our airline has been streamlined; agreements have been reached with various unions linking wages with productivity (I hope our director Mr. Mukherjee and the AICCA will also work towards signing an agreement.) Changes like these will surely bear fruit in nursing our beloved Maharaja to his erstwhile glory.

Our own dept. 'Inflight Service' is now headed by a full director; our cabin crew training center is doing an excellent job in conducting refreshers and the theme 'Working Together Works' is a big hit with all crew. Our managers seem much more approachable and willing to give a patient hearing to our problems. On the whole an atmosphere of positivity seems to be prevalent.

So, let's get down to business. Let us add to the process of reconstruction that has begun in our organization, and be able to proudly say that we are indeed 'Your palace in the sky'.



FLYING HIGH
IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
JRD TATA
AND THOSE AIRINDIANS WHO DIED
IN THEIR UNIFORMS

Goals Of FLYING HIGH

- To create in us an awareness and understanding of each others' views.
- To provide an opportunity to identify our collective aims.
- To give each one of us an opportunity to air his/her views.
- To highlight any problems faced by us.
- To report on developments in the airline with the idea of educating, informing and entertaining.
- To try to improve and to positively influence our lives.
- To do all these things with the view that AIR INDIA may progress and become the best airline in the world.

Ab Dilli Dur Nahin

Though this may be the fond hope of many a politician, I do not refer to elections or politics, nor to the yearning hearts of those crew who would like to opt for the base at Delhi. What I am referring to is the Delhi of yore; kings' paradise and travellers' goal.

*Wither has fled The visionary gleam,
Where is it now The glory and the dream*

And it is not just Delhi that seems to be losing its splendour. Our dear Maharaja is going through turbulent times of his own. Has his visionary gleam been dulled? Has his glory faded?

Surely our dream that **Air India** should be the best in the world, is still alive; surely our aspiration that we may give our best to the Maharaja in a free and fair environment, is still intact. We do have the conviction, the commitment, the skills and the energy to pursue our goal. Then, what is holding us back?

The answer to this is neither simple nor apparent. But what is obvious is that we have not fully understood the massive advantage of collective goals over personal goals.

Our personal goals are based totally on our individual perceptions and desires; they are formed in isolation from others who are involved with us and when pursued single-mindedly, often lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

Oh! Don't get me wrong. Personal goals are important; but they *must* be in harmony with a collective aim. If all of us clearly spell out our individual and personal goals, we would get to know the differences and similarities in our needs and hopes. Adjusting our mutual aims, we could then arrive at a common ground which will be for the benefit of all of us.

These collective goals, when merged with the needs of **Air India**, will give us a sense of mission which will produce the much needed synergy that can propel us forward to take on the challenges presented by this 'fiercely competitive world', giving us a deep sense of satisfaction and happiness in our personal and working lives. Some of you may differ from what is written here.

Turn to page 3

Interview

As the founder chairman of Karuna Jyoti Welfare Scheme, can you tell us how this idea was conceived?

It started in 1992 with the unfortunate death of five crew members within a short span of time. Though each one of the cabin crew fraternity was moved by these untimely deaths, contributions towards the bereaved families were collected by a few friends of only one of the deceased crew. At the same time we also had two of our crew members on long sick leave (2 years and 4 years). I felt very strongly that something needed to be done. I started speaking to some friends. I was told that Mr. K S. Surinder had similar ideas. I got in touch with him and we exchanged ideas. It was then that some of us thought why not institutionalize this collection drive. Later we formed a committee to frame rules and regulations. And you can see we have a working scheme.

Do you think it will stand the test of time?

Yes. It will. You see, I did some research and studied many other schemes from different organisations. This study gave us the knowledge of what would constitute a scheme that would be viable for years to come.

How does it work?

'Karuna Jyoti' means 'Light of compassion'. As the name suggests, this scheme has been created to promote a spirit of caring & camaraderie; towards alleviating the stresses related to unfortunate tragedies. Karuna Jyoti works on the simple principle of members contributing for each others' welfare. Karuna Jyoti has been conceived for the benefit of each one of us. I think it is the duty of all crew members to join this scheme.

Have all crew become members of this scheme?



Mr. P. Chandrasekar, Founder Chairman of Karuna Jyoti Welfare Scheme

Unfortunately not. Initially it was very encouraging. About 60% of the crew became members, and still are. But there are about 200 crew who have shown willingness and purchased the Constitution & application booklet but are still to submit the application and nomination forms along with the authorisation letter. This is a very distressing factor. Hence on behalf of the Karuna Jyoti Scheme committee, I request the crew to fill up and submit the forms at the earliest so that our membership can be increased.

How can a crew member contribute to make Karuna Jyoti a success?

No amount of money can compensate a lost life or a disabled colleague. Yet, every little bit that can be made available to the disabled member or the next of kin, goes a long way in making their lives a little bit better. The amount of compensation is directly proportionate to the strength of the membership. The larger the membership the more the compensation. So I appeal to all crew members to take it upon themselves to find out from their closest colleagues if they have enrolled in Karuna Jyoti. If all of us take interest we will have full membership in ten days.

What are the future plans for Karuna Jyoti?

First I would like to make it very clear that Karuna Jyoti is not just a financial scheme. In the event of a mishap there are so many things that need to be done: which doctor to consult; admission into hospital; medicines to be bought; someone to just be physically present to offer comfort to the family. All these things need people. We need volunteers who are ready to devote some time during such periods so that we can reach out to people more effectively.

Second, we would like to establish a branch in Delhi for Delhi based crew. Though we can handle the administrative tasks from Mumbai, we need active **local** participation from members. Volunteers are the backbone of a support scheme like Karuna Jyoti and I cannot stress enough on the effectiveness of a committed team of volunteers.

I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to many of our crew, who gave enthusiastic and whole hearted support to the scheme. To name only a few are K S Surinder, Sanjay Lazar, P N Murali, Francis Vijayrangam, Ranjit Rowkavi, M K Padmanand, Myvannan, Sagar Katrekar, J P Singh, P Muralidhar, Charles Uttangi and Zareer Dadachandji. I would like to specially thank my wife Kunda who gave invaluable suggestions and supported me throughout.

Editor's Note:

As a large membership base is important for a scheme like Karuna Jyoti, maybe membership could be opened to all employees of the Inflight Service Department.

Self Assignment System - Facts or Fantasy !

The self assignment system was first conceived of in 1989 and put on trial in the summer of 1991. In 1992 it was adopted as a system of crew scheduling for all cabin crew.

The objectives while designing the self assignment system were:

- To introduce the concept of self assignment.
- To provide an opportunity to plan a series of flights / time off days for a period of one month
- To increase the stability of the flight roster by reducing the daily changes.

- To reduce the transportation cost by the reduced number of changes.

Though most of these objectives have been realized, some problems such as bracket flying still remain. We expected that these problems would be resolved as the system evolved, but today, it functions in more or less the same manner as it did four years ago. In fact there were even attempts to revert to the earlier system or other systems of crew scheduling.

When the self assignment system was

first adopted as a system of scheduling for all cabin crew, the urgent need of the hour was to set up a computer environment for accepting bids. According to the original plan, the first step in this direction was the setting up of a network of terminals that would be used to process bids - much in the same way a reservation system is used to book passengers on flights. A fully functional and tested software package was developed *in-house* in 1993 to transact and manage the processing of bids.

Self Assignment ... from page 2

A hardware platform consisting of a network of computers was required to run the application. Six workstations were proposed to transact bidding through any of these terminals. The Local Area Network for this purpose was scheduled to be set up that year.

In the second phase remote bidding from selected sites was envisaged. Initially three sites were identified. These were to be located at

- Air India building, Nariman Point.
- Old Airport, Santa Cruz.
- Andheri West - A specific site was to be identified for this purpose.

Terminals connected to the main server at Inflight Service Dept, were planned to be set up at these sites. Work in this direction was planned to start in 1993 and be completed by that year end.

In the third phase of development, it was planned to establish worldwide links through Sitatex where communication would then have been possible from any Air India station that was linked to Air India's main computer system. This was slated for the year 1995.

To some of us this may sound like an extract from a science fiction story but these projections have been well documented and discussed in detail in reports submitted way back in 1990. Of course one should remember that the task of designing and launching a system is completely different from the task of implementing it. The latter is a coordinated task requiring the participation of other agencies within the organisation.

In the meantime crew who opt to bid continue to commute to the office to exercise their bid preferences. Actually this is the true reason why the system has survived through the difficult years. The system lives on today only because the majority of us take the trouble and make the effort to self assign ourselves on the roster.

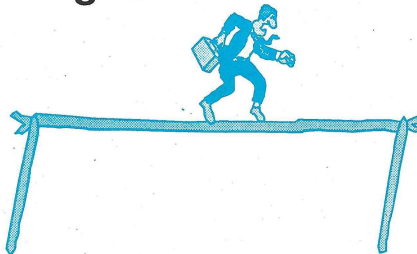
Today, in the revived industrial environment there is renewed hope that efforts to initiate progress would bear fruit. Discussions are indicative of a joint intention to steer the system through the computerized environment as originally planned. There is a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel.

In the future editions of Flying High we shall attempt to illustrate the projections of the self assignment system incorporating present-day communications technology. Meanwhile let us congratulate the editorial group who have taken it upon themselves to launch this news letter.

Francis Vijayarangam

Anil Mohan

jogging running, & other such nasties to keep you within the prescribed (under) weight.



Well my friends, it looks like I have finally fallen into the dreaded kilogram pit. Seems I have to bring my weight down to a measly 66.2kg or else... Yes, Yes! I can hear your gasps of disbelief. "What?" you exclaim, "You mean Vasu? our muscular and sinewy Vasu" (See picture above) "is OVERWEIGHT?" Unbelievable, what?

Like it or not, I have to start doing something to knock off a little weight. Aerobics is probably a good idea; you know; how those girls do it on Star TV? On second thoughts, it may not be such a good idea. My eyeballs couldn't possibly stand the strain.

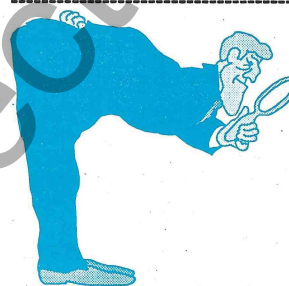
Maybe jogging..... no! no! I'll never forget the time I had to be carried home with my thighs firmly stuck to my back. Thumbscrews couldn't have been more

painful. No. Jogging is definitely out. What about joining a gym? That's it! After all Air India does offer the facility of joining gyms. Let's see. All I would need are three hours commuting time and a pair of nose-filters. Why nose filters? Have you ever smelt concentrated sweat?

Hmm. We seem to be running out of ideas. No! Wait! What about flying? Maybe if I flew regularly, avoided the shahi-tukdas, the ice creams, the payasams, the gulab jamuns, the chocolates, the black forests, the cream caramels.....

Hmm....I can see that life is going to be pretty hard!

Vasu



Chicken feed

And there was this flight purser who quit flying for the quiet life of chicken farming. Given the Air India penchant for excellence, the farm was soon the best in the area and our friend was doing very well for himself.

Envyng the farm's success, three hustlers decided to con the ex FP. Posing as a health inspector, one of them visited the farm on a weekend. During the 'inspection' he turned to our friend and asked "What do you feed the chickens?"

"The best wheat money can buy" replied the unsuspecting FP.

"What? With the whole of north India suffering from wheat shortage, you feed your chickens with wheat?" asked the 'inspector'. "I'll have to fine you 10,000 Rupees." and pocketing his 10,000/-, went away whistling.

The next weekend the second hustler, also posing as a health inspector visited the farm, and after his 'inspection', asked "What do you feed the chickens?"

Remembering that 'wheat' would land him in trouble, "Rice" answered our hero, "The best rice that money can buy."

"With the whole of south India suffering from rice shortage you feed your chickens with rice? I'll have to fine you 10,000 Rupees." said the 'inspector' and pocketing his 10,000/-, walked away happily.

As the plan had worked well twice, the following weekend, the third hustler visited the farm, also posing as a health inspector. He too went on his 'rounds' of the farm and then asked "What do you feed the chickens?" "Feed sheed nothing" said our valiant hero. "I give them 50 Rupees meal allowance and they eat whatever they want!"

Ab Dilli...

...from page 1

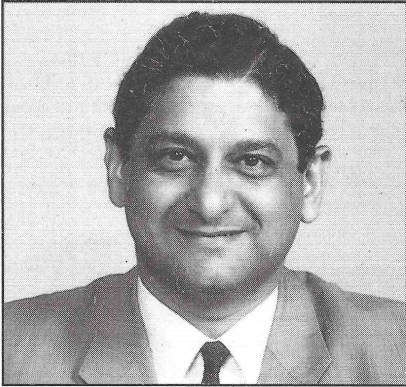
That's where this newsletter can be invaluable. It is here that newer ideas can be comingled in the cauldron of general opinion and better alternatives found.

It does not matter if you are in the Catering or Cabin Crew Divisions or whether you are a management or a union category. Your answers to the questions given below can help us all to determine what our true path should be and how we should proceed on it. When you answer these questions, answer them with total honesty to yourself. Answer them so that the answers are in tune with your conscience. Then send them to us. We will print as many responses as we can.

1. What do I truly want from my job in Air India?
2. Why do I want it?
3. What am I ready to do to achieve what I want?
4. What, according to me, are the needs of Air India?

To quote Kennedy: "The task before us may not be completed in this year. It may not get done even in this decade... but for God's sake, let us begin."

J. P. Singh



Mr. S. Mukherjee Dir. IFSD

Following his Bachelors degree in science, Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee, better known as Shanu Mukherjee, joined the commercial department of Air India in 1969. Starting as a sales supdt at Delhi, he moved up and held various managerial positions in India and abroad. After a two year stint as the Deputy Commercial Director - Marketing and sales, he joins us as the Director - Inflight Service & Business Development. Mr. Mukherjee, who is fond of Indian classical music - his favourite ragas are Malkauns and Behag - is very clear about the goals for our airline: He would like to see *Air India* as one of the best in the world.

"My aims for the department," says he, "are to build a dedicated team, break down barriers, and restore and maintain a high level of morale." He sees morale as the key which will help enhance standards of service to the passenger. "After all, it is the passenger who is the reason for our existence," he argues, "and it should be our common endeavour to strive towards being known, recognised and applauded for being one of the finest airlines."

This seems like a much needed breath of fresh air for our department. Morale is certainly the key to good performance and restoring morale in the IFS dept seems to be high up on Mr. Mukherjee's list.

Apart from Indian classical music, our director is also an avid golfer. Whenever he can find the time - which is not often enough - he is at the greens trying to improve his handicap. Photography is another passion of his for which he tries to find time.

Well, Mr. Mukherjee, we all look forward to working as a team to restore *Air India's* place as one of the best, and to bringing back the pride in being *Air Indians*.

Waxing. But ... Not in Vain

Initiative may be found in the most unlikely places, and none was more surprising than that of a young Japanese gentleman who traveled with us out of Tokyo.

Gathering the waxy red covering of the mini Babybel cheese from all the passengers around him, he proceeded to push, pummel and squash it into a malleable plasticene-like substance. From this, using his ingenuity, he began to fashion miniature dinosaurs, T'rexes and stegosaurus. Within a short span of time (Millennia?) he managed to create a veritable Jurassic park on the tray table.



Lukily I had my camera on hand and so am able to share this amazing bit of creativity with you - though I'm sure you would have been more impressed if the dinosaurs could have been persuaded to say - cheese!

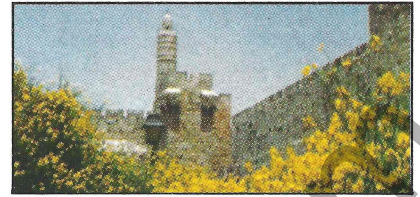
Nona Shedde

THE PROMISED LAND

Ever since Air India started flying to Tel Aviv, crew have been lining up to bid for these flights. After all, this is a new station and who doesn't like visiting a new place. Add to this the religious significance of Israel and you have the answer as to why Tel Aviv flights are so much in demand.

Israel is a beautiful country with splendid beaches that offer swimming, snorkeling and other water sports. You don't swim? No matter. A walk on the beach is a truly rewarding experience, specially if you like watching TV serials like Baywatch. For the religious minded Israel is paradise, with its Wailing Wall, Dome of the Rock, the Jordan Valley, the city of Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee... the list is endless.

The best way to get around is by bus; even for sightseeing. Israel has an excellent transport system. There are also privately owned mini



Jerusalem

buses which charge the same fare as the public buses and follow the same routes. EGGED buses connect every point in Israel and their frequency is very good. If you should want to travel to Eilat, the farthest point from Tel Aviv, it would take you five hours by these buses. For this route you may need to book your seat in advance. EGGED offers an ISRABUS pass that costs 219 Shekels and allows you unlimited travel for one week on all EGGED bus lines. So, for the equivalent of about 70 American Dollars you get the freedom of choosing when you want to visit which place. And remember, this pass is valid for one week! The ISRABUS pass can be bought at any office of Egged Tours.

EGGED also runs a Jerusalem Circle Line (#99). This line takes you to thirty six interesting sites at Jerusalem. You can get off the bus at any site, do your sightseeing and then board another #99 to the next site. Circle Line tickets are of two kinds - those valid for one day and those valid for two days. The ISRABUS pass is not valid on this particular route.

If you feel that taking buses is rather a hassle, you could always opt for the 'ease' of the conducted tours. Frankly, I found the freedom offered by the ISRABUS pass better value for money.

Taxis that run between cities charge about 30% more than buses. The taxi fare from Tel Aviv to Haifa is 22 Shekels while the bus fare is 17 Shekels.

Though the official exchange rate of the US Dollar was around 305 Shekels to 100 Dollars at banks, I found that one did not necessarily need to change money to the local currency. The American Dollar is accepted even by the shorma seller. (As your change will be given only in Shekels single dollar notes would be useful here.) What's more, the exchange rate offered is much better than what you would get at the bank. Sometimes you may need to ask for a 'good rate'.

If you plan on taking your family to Tel Aviv, the Israeli consulate requires the following papers to process your visa application:

- Two application forms.
- Two recent photographs.
- NOC.
- A letter from our Dept. that you are operating the flight.
- Another letter from our dept. that you are operating the flight and are taking your family with you.

If a child is on the mother's passport there is no need for a separate application but two photographs are necessary.

The visa normally takes three working days to process and costs Rs. 610.

The Israeli consulate is located at:

'Kailash', 50, Peddar Rd. Mumbai 400 026.

Phones : 386 2793/4/5.

Now that you have the first issue of Flying High in your hands, what do you feel about our own news-letter? Do let's have your suggestions and ideas. If there is anything you would like to share, an unusual incident, a funny experience, anything at all, just jot down what you'd like to say and drop it in any of these pigeon holes: 35254, 35248, 36707, 38583 or 35307.

What's more, we would like to build a team of people to bring out this newsletter. People who can collect interesting information and help in realising the goals of Flying High. If you are interested in doing this kind of work do get in touch with us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Edited by S. R. Vasudevan.

Assisted by J. P. Singh, Keith Puri, Nona Shedde, Sheriyar Karim and Ashok Shedde.

This Newsletter is published by the Inflight Service Department, Air India and is for internal circulation only. Printed at Air India press Santacruz.