

I REMEMBER DAVE HYDE

by Mark Ingram, Frontier Airlines pilot

I first met David during my second (or so) week at Frontier, when he was the captain of an evening flight on which I was riding the pilot jumpseat from Denver to Springfield, MO (SGF). Once we leveled off in cruise flight, Dave asked the first officer, Phil Lindner, if he would mind trading seats with me, so that I could get some idea of what it would feel like if I ever made it through ground school and simulator training - and actually got to fly a jet on the line. Phil gladly obliged, and once I was situated, Dave disconnected the autopilot so that this turboprop-only pilot could get the feel of a real jet.

Everything was fine for about five minutes, until Dave noticed that the A system hydraulic quantity was fluctuating wildly, and was on its way down. He had Phil trade places with me, just in case the abnormality increased in severity. Well, shortly thereafter we lost the entire A hydraulic system, and told Center that we would have to divert to Wichita - which was right out in front of us on our route to SGF. We went through all of the checklists, and notified Wichita Operations that not only were we about to land there, but that because of the loss of nosewheel steering, we would have to be met by a tug that would tow us off the runway and to the gate.

As we proceeded with the approach and checklists, I was called upon, at the appropriate time, to reach down from my position on the center jumpseat, open the three alternate gear extension doors, and yank the handles attached to the cables that released the uplock mechanisms - allowing all three landing gears to freefall to their down and locked positions. I no longer recall what flap setting we were required to use, but it almost certainly was either flaps up or else a partial extension that required a higher-than-normal approach speed.

In any case, the approach and landing were textbook and once we were at the gate, and the passengers were deplaned, we got busy coordinating with Frontier Maintenance (in Denver) to get the airplane fixed. After discovering that a hydraulic pack (I forget the exact terminology) had failed entirely, and after two successive business jet charter flights were dispatched from DEN carrying various repair parts, it was determined that David and Phil (and the flight attendants) should head to a hotel room there in Wichita, and then fly the airplane back to DEN sometime later in the new day that had dawned as we wiled away the night hours.

I hung around the Wichita terminal until the early morning flight back to DEN (about 6:30 AM, as I recall), got on it, and eventually ended up asleep in the afternoon in the seedy "Brandin' Iron" hotel room that I had just left the day before. At least I got some studying done that weekend!

On another level the story had an unexpected - and happy - ending: It seems that Phil was still on probation with Frontier, after having come back from a long furlough that followed his being hired in 1979, and had somehow got on the "bad list" of some or other management pilot(s) - with his continued employment beyond probation seriously in doubt. Dave wrote a letter to management commending Phil for an outstanding performance under adverse conditions and considerable pressure, and lo and behold, Phil made it off probation - eventually to transition to Continental Airlines, where he is still employed as this is being written.

One minor footnote: Dave and I both messed around with Radio Shack Trash-80 Model 100 laptop computers (I still have two of them!), and he invited me to his house in Denver to work on perfecting a program that he wrote - and let me use gratis every day on the line - to calculate duty and trip time and rig, per the terms of our ALPA pilot contract. It made it a breeze to do what other pilots spent considerable time and effort doing at the end of each trip, and I always got oohs and aahs - or sometimes sighs of envy - when others saw me whip out the Model 100 and finish my calculations in seconds. It was a nice touch, and typical of Dave's generosity.

Another minor footnote: When I got back to Denver, I told the Training Department that while I very much appreciated their arranging such valuable - and realistic - training while on my jumpseat flights to and from home, they really did not have to make it that realistic to achieve the desired effect. I said that I would be quite content to do that kind of exercise in the simulator rather than in the airplane ... but hey, David Hyde has never been one to cut corners with training, right? <grin>

So, many thanks to Dave for his outstanding leadership and support not only to Phil and me, but to a lot of other people at Frontier Airlines (and no doubt at Boeing) as well. May your retirement be fully as rewarding as your distinguished flying and training career.

