

## HISTORY 10

My wife says that fun has been the main motivating factor in my life. It's probably true, often at the expense of more important things like relationship with God and family, academics, work, etc. It may or may not be accurate, but one thing that is absolutely accurate is that I had more fun being a member of the "quartet" than anything I have ever done. Miller, Rox, and Cooper, were three of my all time favorite people, and I am enjoying my memories as I think about them. We called each other by last names. I don't know why, but I think it was because Rox was such an easy, unusual name.

Miller had come to Delta with C&S in 1953. Not enough people know that Delta Air Lines building the hub in Atlanta had more to do with the explosive growth of the Atlanta region than any other factor. I think it is an injustice that more people are not aware of Tom's contribution. First indulge me in building a brief case for Delta being the main stimulus to Atlanta's growth.

In 1960, in round numbers, the population of Metro Atlanta was 1,300,000. Charlotte was 700,000. In 2000, Atlanta was 4,112,198, and Charlotte was 1,499,293. Arguably, Charlotte or Birmingham would have been almost as good geographically as Atlanta to create the first true U S airline hub in. In the 40's, 50's, and 60's, Atlanta had visionary and honest city government. I don't know anything about the governments in other Southeastern cities in that era, but North Carolina had statewide and interstate banking while the rural Georgia counties kept the Atlanta banks from expanding. Now Charlotte is a major banking center, and Bank of America and Wachovia are headquartered there. They absorbed two of the three largest Atlanta banks.

Business follows nonstop air service, and even with Atlanta banks being held back, it was remarkable how business increased after each big route award. Atlanta government has not been so good in later years. I was CEO of the US subsidiary of BAA for almost two years in 89 and 90. BAA was formerly called British Airports Authority, and they own the major airports in Great Britain, including Heathrow and Gatwick. We targeted one city council member in Atlanta to work with because we thought he was honest. He was the first, or one of the first to go to jail on corruption charges. Since then, one ex mayor has served time.

Now, Atlanta has the most aggravating, inconvenient international arrivals terminal in the world, and it is still the world's busiest airport. The whole thing (not the international arrivals situation) was built on Tom Miller's vision.

Tom had an idea that "bunching" the flights in Atlanta so people could connect there would increase our business. He told me the story at the annual meeting of the Atlanta Athletic Club in 1970. He did a business plan, and made a presentation to Mr. Woolman. The first question Woolman asked was; "how

many new employees would it require"? I think Tom told me the number was sixty, but no matter what the number was, the boss said no. Miller was persistent, and eventually Woolman agreed. Tom said he was very nervous until his idea was proved to be correct beyond his most optimistic projections. In 1961 ATL boarded 3,500,000 passengers, and in 2000 the number had grown to 78,000,000. Remember the "Early Birds", and "Owly Birds"? Those were Miller's inventions, and we were on the golf course when I told him that his "inventions" had ruined my life. With no hesitation, he told me that if he "hadn't invented them", I would have still been a copilot. I gave him the last word on that one, because he was right.

Tom always had a second home that Cooper, Rox, and I as well as some others enjoyed with him. We played a lot of golf at Sea Pines Plantation in Hilton Head in the late sixties. He had a condo at Singer Island, near Palm Beach later, and then returned to Hilton Head with a house at Harbour Town.

Art Evans was a physician, and one of Tom's neighbors. He had a GM RV which was perfect for a five hour poker game on the way to Hilton Head. Whit Hawkins and Ernie Massey were both rising stars in marketing, and we could generally entice one of them to go with us and drive the bus.

Tom also kept a VW Beetle in the SAV hangar. The four of us went down there one Friday, and Tom's college student son Jim (now a retired partner from the Washington office of the King and Spalding law firm in Atlanta) was there for the weekend. Jim was driving the Beetle, and he met us at SAV. Tom didn't have any luggage, but Joe, Frank, and I each had a suitcase, and a set of golf clubs. It seems impossible, but somehow, we manage to get all that in the Beetle. Five fully grown (not mature, Jim was probably the most mature of the group) men, three suitcases, three sets of golf clubs, and one case of beer in a VW, and we played poker all the way to Hilton Head. It is an understatement to say that we were holding the cards close to our vests.

Delta finalized the purchase of Northeast Airlines in August 1972, and Tom, Joe, and Frank were in Boston in mid October, tying up the loose ends. Jim Gray was a Washington lawyer who represented Delta. Jim was with them, and they invited me to join them for a weekend of recreation at Jim Gray's summer home in Hanover New Hampshire. Jim and Tom drove to Hanover from Boston mid day Friday, and I met Frank and Joe late that afternoon at Northeast's general office. The three of us boarded a little twin "weed eater" feeder carrier to fly to Hanover. We were playing poker, I was sitting backwards, and the two of them were facing to the front. It was bumpy, and I was soon air sick. Rox and Cooper made several insulting remarks about Captain Hall, the big airline pilot having an upset tummy, and they asked if my husband also got airsick, and a few other things that will not be repeated. Rox changed seats with me, and within a few minutes, he was green. Cooper volunteered to change, and Frank declined on

the grounds that we needed at least one well person to drive the car from the Hanover airport to Jim's house.

We played golf on Saturday in beautiful weather, not a cloud in the sky, temperature mid seventies, leaf color at peak, and Dartmouth beating Princeton within earshot. The plan was a night of poker, golf on Sunday morning, and back to ATL Sunday evening. We didn't check the weather forecast. We awakened to almost a foot of snow. It was a long day. The closest open airport was Hartford. The drive in the snow took most of the day. Then Allegheny to DCA, and the last Delta to Atlanta.

Another time, the four of us were at Harbour Town. We were playing poker in the afternoon, after a round of golf. Miller remarked that it would be good if we had one or two more poker players. I told them about Tom Bailey, a United Pilot who was living in Sea Pines. He had been one of the Capital Airlines Pilots who played with us in New Orleans about ten years earlier. I found his name in the phone book, and he was home. He was based in New York, and he had two New York based TWA Pilots and one Pan Am pilot as his house guests. They came over, and Tom settled into the poker game while the other three mixed drinks and socialized. Bailey was intrigued with Delta Senior Managers hanging out with a pilot, and he told us that United management did not associate with the pilots. He asked; "How did you guys meet Gene?" I can't quote Rox, but to paraphrase, he told them I was in trouble with the FAA, and they were soft hearted guys who felt sorry for me, and defended me, and they hadn't been able to get rid of me since. He said they sometimes "felt like they had adopted me". Bailey thought Rox was kidding, he said; "That's funny, but how did you really meet?" Miller and Cooper confirmed that to be the real skinny.

Four pilots from three different airlines were amazed. They all said that if they were in trouble with the FAA, their legal departments would side with the FAA. That pretty much described the difference in Delta, and all the rest.

Rox, Cooper, and I decided that we needed a first rate interline travel agency. We formed a company called Interline International. I believe that we were the second interline agency in business. Pat Collins was the Alitalia Regional Manager in Atlanta, and we teamed with them for lots of our tours. Pat was a Southerner who looked like a twin brother of the Italian actor, Marcello Mastroianni. The first time I ever saw him, I did a double take, and it was interesting to be in public with him, because people were constantly asking him if he was Marcello. Some women did not want to take no for an answer.

Our biggest seller was a tour to Israel. We would put groups of forty together, and for awhile, we were running a weekly trip there. We were the first to offer tours to Moscow. Alitalia had one flight per week from Milan to Moscow. Our groups originated in New York, and we had about a two hour connection in Milan.

It was inevitable that we would eventually misconnect, and of course we did. Pat had introduced us to a first rate Italian tour operator. He picked our group of forty up in a bus, and took them to Yugoslavia for a week. We didn't have one complaint.

We always sent a group leader with each tour. Everything except meals was complimentary for the leader, and we had lots of volunteers. My brother Don conducted a couple of different trips for us. His last one was to Israel, and he called me after coming back to tell me that he had decided to not go on any more, and he had made the decision when a slightly inebriated woman called him in the middle of the night in Jerusalem because she couldn't understand how to operate that "fountain" that was next to the toilet in her bathroom.

Alitalia gave the three of us unlimited, space available first class passes, and we used them very often. We were on the way from JFK to Milan one cold rainy March night with Rox and two other, non airline couples from Atlanta, and the agent advised us that he only had two vacant first class seats. Rox was senior to me, and he took the seats. Joan and I were going to wait till the next night when we were informed that there was one first class seat available and a couple of coach seats. At 6'5", I was perfectly willing to spend another day in New York, but Joan insisted that we go on the flight with her in the coach seat and me in first class. I agreed, and we found an empty row very near the rear of the DC-8. The aisle and center seat were both vacant, and she sat down in the aisle seat. As soon as I turned to leave, two Italian soldiers leaped out of their seats, and collided as they tried to get the seat next to Joan. A wrestling match started, and I took her by the hand, and said: "we will go tomorrow."

As we walked back to the front of the aircraft, I noticed that an aisle seat in the first row of coach had a large carryon bag in it. I stopped and asked if the seat was taken, and the man sitting there said; "I guess it is now." The couple was hoping to keep the third seat empty, and they might have succeeded if they had put the carryon in the middle seat rather than the aisle. It was convenient because I was sitting in first class directly in front of her, and Frank and his wife were across the aisle. As I established Joan in her seat, some loudmouth stood up in the back of the airplane, and shouted; "Look at the big spender everybody, he is sitting in first class, and his wife is in tourist." That was just another in a long list of thousands of laughs at my expense.

It was the last month for Alitalia DC-8 service on the North Atlantic, and we noticed that all the airlines were clearing the ice off their aircraft with glycol as we arrived at the airport. That is, all the airlines except Alitalia. We pushed back, and there was a significant amount of slush on the airplane. We started to taxi to the runway, and I leaned out into the aisle, and told Rox that "they didn't de ice the airplane". He asked if I thought it would fly, and I told him I didn't know, and I didn't have any intention of finding out. We had flown Alitalia enough so that the senior steward knew us. I rung the call bell, and told him that we didn't want to

cause any commotion, but there were eight of us who had decided against going to Milan that night. I told him that the airplane had not been de iced, and to tell the Captain that he could take us back to the terminal, and we would quietly leave. I said; "Make sure he understands that if he doesn't take us back, we are going to open the door, and go down the slide."

He hurried to the cockpit, and the airplane came to a screeching halt. We sat there for a couple of minutes before the Captain informed us that we were returning to the terminal for "technical reasons", but we would only be delayed for about twenty minutes. All the passengers were directed to "deplane", and wait in the gate house. I apologized to the Steward, and said goodbye. He said; "Oh no Captain Hall, they are deicing, and please don't leave. There were no windows in the gate house, but they opened the door, and showed me the glycol was being sprayed.

Rox, and the other couples were spending about a week in Italy, and Joan and I took a train to Switzerland to meet Dick Feaman and wife. Dick was one of my roommates from my single days in New Orleans. We met back up with the group in Paris after several days at the Beau Rivage Hotel in Geneva. We stayed in a two bedroom, lakeside suite that didn't have a room number. It was simply called "The Duplex". It was on the top two floors of the hotel, and the bedrooms were at the top of a magnificent spiral staircase rising from the living room. It was the most elegant and sumptuous (and still is) hotel accommodations we had ever seen. I looked at the hotels website recently, and the large suites start at 3200 Euros per night. We paid \$55 per couple per night. Airline work did have its privileges.

It was the early days of video cameras, and I took lots of pictures which were put away and forgotten for many years until our daughters were in college (one of them at Dartmouth in Hanover). It was the first time they had seen the Geneva videos, and they told us that we were really tackily dressed. We explained that bell bottom pants for women and men were the style in that era. And my long hair and sideburns were the norm. My daughter Anne asked: "If it was so stylish, why aren't the Feaman's tacky?" We took another look, and they hadn't succumbed to the fads of the day. Dick still had a normal haircut, Brooks Brothers classic cut suit, etc.

Bullet Bob Davis was a good friend, and golf buddy, and he was Assistant Chief Pilot ATL. I always told him that his shorts were too tight, because he was so conservative. He did not appreciate my long hair and side burns and constantly threatened me with grounding if I didn't get a hair cut. It's pretty hard to be taken seriously as a disciplinarian if you are arranging a golf game with the "disciplinarianee" in the next sentence.

I had an interesting exchange with Bob before a PBI-ATL flight. My crew had laid over at the Singer Island Holiday Inn and the copilot and engineer had their

billfolds stolen from their rooms while we were on the beach. They didn't heed my warning to not leave them in the room, and they didn't have pilots licenses and medicals, and were technically illegal to fly. I called Bob about one minute before departure the next morning to tell him to get them legal with a wire from FAA. I knew him well enough to know that he would want me to cancel the trip, thus the reason for waiting till departure time for the call. Sure enough, he said; "You aren't legal, delay the trip until the FAA office in Ok City is open!" I just told him we had a bad connection, and I couldn't hear him. I let him rant on for a minute or two, and told him I couldn't understand what he was saying, and I would see him in Atlanta. He met us at the door when we pulled into the gate in Atlanta with a teletype making them legal. He was not happy with me, but he did laugh as he told me how incorrigible I was.

Rox and Cooper were being given more responsibilities about that time, and I was getting involved in real estate development. We sold Interline International to a company in New York. They later shut the company down, and absconded with thousands of dollars of tour deposits.

Lots more Quartet stories to come.