

# Straight to the Gate: Ron Bodnar

8/22/2017

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Captain Ron Bodnar grew up with the belief that only special people get to fly.

His love for flying started at a very young age when his father would take him to the airport to watch the airplanes take off and land. "I had no idea at the time who got to do that," said Ron. "I always thought that must be very special people who got to fly airplanes."

It was a Sunday treat for the duo. That treat grew into a passion for the Washington, D.C. based captain. "When I went to college I found out there was an opportunity through the military to become a pilot," said Ron.

He tested for the pilot flight training program right after graduating from Arizona State University. Next thing he knew, he was on his way to becoming a pilot. "I went to Quantico for Officer's Candidate School and then down to Pensacola for Naval flight training to become a Marine Corps pilot," he said.

As Ron tells it, after getting his "Wings of Gold" he was selected to fly helicopters. That eventually led him to flying Marine One for President Ronald Reagan.

"It was an honor to fly for the President of the United States," said Ron. "I did many landings on the White House

lawn, Camp David and around the country with the president.”

Still the big silver birds of American Airlines were calling Ron’s name. After completing his four-year tour of duty, Ron applied to American.

“I have always loved American, and never even thought I would have an opportunity to fly for them,” he said. “My application got accepted and I was called down for an interview. A few months later I was training in Dallas/Fort Worth.”

Thirty years later, Ron is still doing something he loves.

“I love flying for American. I believe all of our team members - pilots, flight attendants, gate agents, mechanics - are a big family. The most wonderful thing about American is we get to treat each other like family and we also treat our customers like family,” Ron said.

And he wouldn’t change it for anything. “If I had to do my career over again, I wouldn’t change a thing,” Ron said. “Flying for American was one of the best things that has ever happened to me.”