American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

My American Dream: Steve Kornman

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When Steve Kornman was a high school student in Tucson, Arizona, in the early 1970s, his head was always in the clouds. He often daydreamed about becoming a flight attendant while doodling the logos of major airlines, including American, and Boeing 747 jets in his textbooks.

"I couldn't picture myself in a 9-to-5 job," said the now Dallas Fort Worth International Airport-based flight attendant.

After graduating from the University of Arizona, Steve applied to become a flight attendant at American and was accepted for an interview. But following a fuel embargo, the class was canceled. A couple of years later, he tried for TWA. At the time, few candidates were hired by the major carriers, he said. One out of every 124 applicants at TWA was selected after a third interview; Steve was one of the lucky ones.

"Having driven from Tucson to Phoenix, a 250-mile roundtrip, three days in a row hoping I made the cut each day, I was hired on May 10, 1975," he said. At the time, male flight attendants were not as common. In his class of 750 students, fewer than one-third were male. Alas, his dream had been realized.

"My first flight was from New York to St. Louis and then to Detroit," he said. "It was so cool checking all the seats and going back to the jumpseat. That's when it really hit me, and man, I was in heaven. You pinch yourself because it's something you wanted so badly. And when it finally happens, you can't believe it."

Steve was laid off from TWA from 1986 to 1989, but his heart never left the industry. He held a variety of positions, including working the ticket counter, pushing back aircraft and loading bags for United Airlines in Tucson. "All three certainly gave me an appreciation of what our colleagues do in similar positions at American," Steve said.

In 1989, Steve was recalled to TWA as a flight attendant, and in 2001, American acquired the airline. "After hoping and yearning for a job with one of the three big airlines, I can look back and say I worked for three," said Steve, referring to the three big airlines - TWA, American and United - at that time.

While at American, Steve has commuted from Tucson to New York, Chicago, Kansas City , St. Louis and now DFW. "Being at the airline helped me grow as a person," he said. "I've been to more places in one month than most people do in their entire lives. It gives you an education. You get to see the places you studied in school or see on the news."

Among the many highlights of his career include walking President George H.W. Bush onto an aircraft from the ramp; serving Cardinal Edward M. Egan, Archbishop Emeritus of New York, when he was the only one in first class; and meeting a number of his childhood heroes, including Mike Connors from the TV series "Mannix."

In addition to memories, Steve has collected aviation memorabilia over the years, some of which he began collecting before his career as a flight attendant. His biggest collection: miniature liquor bottles from numerous airlines. He has more than 10,000, several from now-defunct carriers, such as TWA, Pan American World Airlines and AirCal. Many of the bottles are now collector's items, he said.

Since working at American, Steve has served as an original member of the flight attendant tablet team, which morphed into the Flight Attendant Involvement Team (FAIT) Technology team, and he is soon completing a term on the Communications FAIT team. He will also soon be a wear-tester for the new uniforms. In his more than 40 years with the industry, his passion has never wavered.

"I never would have thought I would still enjoy the job so much and get paid for something I like to do," said Steve. "It's the best job in the world."

Steve Kornman poses with the 787 Dreamline after the delivery flight to Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1992, Steve worked a flight transporting President George H. W. Bush from Madrid to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport.

Steve's various name badges from throughout his career.