American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

A Trailblazer in the Sky

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Throughout March, American is celebrating Women's History Month by sharing stories of our female team members and the vital work they do to make us the world's greatest airline. For Miami-based First Officer Kathy Cosand, it's been a fulsome 41 years of flying. Read Kathy's story below.

Forty-one years of flying. Where has the time gone? People often ask if I've thought about my legacy - how I want to be remembered when I retire in two years. While I haven't, the fact that they ask speaks to how uncommon it remains for women to fly commercially.

The path is clearer today than when I started in the 1970s. However, it's still a male-dominated profession. Consider this: In 1976, I was accepted as the only Reservist in the first class of women trained as pilots in the U.S. Air Force; we were recently inducted into the Women in Aviation Pioneer Hall of Fame. I was the first woman to fly the C-141 Starlifter, the first woman to attend aircraft commander training and the first woman pilot awarded the Air Medal.

I upgraded to the commander's seat when I was 25, but three years later, with my first pregnancy, I was grounded. When I later became pregnant with my daughter, I was the first woman to receive a waiver to fly during my pregnancy. Yet all of this happened recently enough that I'm still flying.

Of course, with those firsts came a different challenge: balancing family and work. My Army dad and Air Force husband were career military, so I had no mentor to guide me into the civilian world. I wondered how my kids would do if I pursued commercial aviation. Ten months of separation during Operation Desert Storm showed me they'd be just fine. So, with the recommendation of a former squadron commander, who was also a manager at TWA, I started what would become my career at American.

From then on, I made it a point to help guide women seeking aviation careers. My Message: Never take no for an

answer, find creative ways to tackle challenges, don't be afraid to take a detour and, most importantly, have fun. It's during occasions like this — Women's History Month — that I'm thankful my path gives me a platform to encourage the next generation.

Speaking of which, long after I retire, you'll still be able to find a Cosand in the flight deck. My son and daughter, both military veterans, have also found a home as pilots for American. Some say they followed in my footsteps. I prefer to say they forged their own paths. Perhaps that's why legacy isn't really my priority. At the end of the day, I'm just a really proud mom.

Kathy Cosand
First Officer
Boeing 757/767
Miami, Florida (MIA)

MIA-based First Officer Kathy Cosand; her son, MIA-based First Officer Rob Cosand; and daughter, LAX-based First Officer Meaghan Camp

Photo Courtesy: Women in Aviation International/John Riedel