American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Faithful MD-80 customer says goodbye to iconic airplane

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There are often tangible things that our brains associate with memories. For some, it's the tune of a popular song that was playing during a first kiss, the scent of a home-cooked meal always served by a favorite relative or the familiar feel of the pages of a book that gets read over and over again.

For William "Hutch" Pegler, that thing is an airplane — the McDonnell Douglas MD-80.

Hutch began a career in banking 25 years ago this month. It's a career that he loves. It's taken him all over the world and led to 1.8 million lifetime miles on American Airlines. The MD-80 was there for him from the start.

"To me this plane represents an era where I was building my career. All of the hours I spent on that bird going everywhere, at least twice a week from 1994 to the early 2000s," Hutch said. "So seeing it go, it makes me a little nostalgic about where I am now, celebrating 25 years in the banking industry. Those were my formative years and a really important time in my life and in my career."

His first-ever business trip was on an MD-80.

His first time sitting in the first class cabin was on an MD-80.

Just earlier this year, he routed his family from New York City to Jacksonville, Florida, through Dallas-Fort Worth, just so they could fly on an MD-80.

He estimates he's easily flown hundreds, if not thousands, of flights on the aircraft that at one point made up 40% of the airline's fleet.

So, appropriately, Hutch plans to be on board American Flight 80 Sept. 4, when American flies its final MD-80 revenue flight heading from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport to Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD).

"This is a special treat for me because I fly most often from LaGuardia, and we don't get a lot of MD-80s up here anymore," Hutch said. "But for me, as a long time American Airlines guy, it's something I want to be a part of."

He'll be in excellent company, joined by nearly 40 other members of a Facebook group he belongs to made up of top-tier frequent flyers as well as American Airlines retirees, current team members, self-proclaimed AvGeeks and probably some unassuming customers who think they just booked a regular flight to ORD.

But, there won't be anything regular about it for Hutch.

"It was such an iconic airplane," he reminisced. "The way that it looked, how quiet it was up front … It was such a special plane."

Aviation enthusiast and AAdvantage member Hutch Pegler visits the cockpit before a recent flight.

The Pegler family stop to pose in front of an MD-80 on their way to the Rose Bowl in January 2017.