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Women's History Month

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Good morning!

March, as you know, is Women's History Month. I recently had occasion to read an article in *The New York Times*, written by Gloria Steinem who made an interesting point. She said that Women's History Month tries to fill in the missing half of the human story. When I consider the role women have played in history, I suspect they account for more than half of the human story. Anyway, I was interested in her account of a woman pilot named Jerrie Cobb.

The glass ceiling...

Back in the late fifties, Jerrie Cobb completed all the grueling tests that were used to select the original seven Mercury astronauts.

She wasn't supposed to pass the tests, of course, but she did. So NASA issued a new requirement. All astronauts had to be test pilots. This effectively ruled out virtually every woman in the United States. The only way to be a test pilot was through the military, and, back then, the military didn't allow women to fly.

Today we would say that Jerrie bumped up against the glass ceiling. But to her, it must have felt like running into a brick wall.

I know many women and minorities in this audience and throughout the FAA are encountering their own glass ceilings: those invisible barriers that keep them from moving up in the organization.

My goal before I leave the FAA is to remove forever as many of those barriers as I can.

Run by white males...

But let me back up a little and tell you what I saw when I came to this agency almost 3 years ago. I saw an organization of some 53,000 people run largely by white males. I saw an organization that said it wanted to "do the right thing..."; that said it was committed to equal opportunity; and that said it wanted to improve its record on affirmative action.

But I also saw an agency that had made very little progress in increasing the numbers of minorities and women in its work force. And what progress had been made was in the lower grades.

I saw an agency that conducted seminars and workshops about how to succeed in the FAA. It had a strong black coalition, a strong Hispanic coalition, and good mentor programs. But the sad reality was that minorities and women had been virtually locked out of the top jobs.

After 20 years of affirmative action programs, the culture had not really changed.

Now some people will say, "We don't talk about affirmative action any more. We talk about work force diversity."

The definitions...

I think it's important that we understand the definitions. Affirmative action is the action we take to eliminate artificial barriers to the recruitment and promotion of minorities, women, and the handicapped. Diversity in the work force is the result.

I think it's equally important to understand what affirmative action is not. It is not somebody

getting something that they don't deserve at someone else's expense.

Managers tell me they would like to promote more minorities and women, but "there aren't enough good candidates."

I can't buy that. I can look at the records in any region and find where scores, even hundreds, of minority and women candidates were passed over for supervisory promotions by the selecting officials. When I see a region that promotes over 300 white males but only 20 minorities and women, I have to ask "why?"

"No presumption of competence..."

In a speech last year at the Diversity Summit, Santiago Rodriguez of the Apple Corporation said, "There is no presumption of competence for people of color or women in non-traditional jobs. If we hire a minority or a woman who turns out to be a superstar, we pat ourselves on the back and say, 'We got ourselves a good one.'"

No presumption of competence! I agree with Mr. Rodriguez.

We who are white males are lucky. We were born into a society that presumes us to be competent until we prove ourselves otherwise. Some of us just don't get it: Minorities and women must prove themselves every day, lest they be presumed incompetent.

Valuing the differences...

Managing a diverse work force is about valuing the differences in people. It's about understanding, accepting, and appreciating those differences.

If I could accomplish only one thing while I'm at the FAA, it would be to change the way we value people. To give everyone a fair chance, while encouraging differences. And I believe that's really what all of us want—just a fair chance.

I don't want to leave you with the impression that the FAA's affirmative action programs have been unsuccessful. We are bringing more minorities, more women, more handicapped employees into the work place. White women, in particular, have made real headway at getting into supervisory development programs and competing for promotions.

And while we can take pride in this modest achievement, I've put our managers on notice. It isn't enough to improve the status of just one group. I expect the same level of progress for all minorities and disadvantaged people in our work force.

Help someone else up the ladder...

And now a word for those women who have already made it up the ladder. You probably didn't get there by yourself. Someone probably helped you, and you need to keep in mind that there are hundreds of

others coming up behind you. This is your opportunity to give something back—to help someone else up the ladder. It's the best way I know to earn the respect of your peers and leave a legacy of true success.

What troubles me is, more often than not, women and minorities who rise in the organization tend to abandon their peers. If you are going to successfully overcome the pernicious effects of the old boy network, you're going to have to supplant it with a network of your own.

Make a lasting difference...

The FAA has been what it is for a long time, and I'm often asked if I really believe that I can make a lasting difference in an organization that has resisted change for a quarter of a century.

The answer is "absolutely." Take a look at some of our latest SES appointments. You'll see people like Fanny Rivera and Woodie

Woodward...Gerald Franklin and Dick Rodine.

Maybe you don't know them. Woodie is a white woman and our new Southern Region Deputy Administrator. Fanny is the Deputy Regional Administrator in the Western Pacific Region. She's Hispanic. Jerry is an African American and the Deputy Administrator in the Central Region. Dick Rodine was just recently selected as the Superintendent of the FAA Academy. And while he's a white male, he has distinguished himself as an agent of change.

A creative mix...

But these people weren't picked just for their cultural diversity. These are people who share my values and my vision.

They believe, as I do, that differences in color, gender, and ethnic background are differences that make a difference. They are differences which ensure a diversity of thinking in our agency...a

creative mix of viewpoints and attitudes...an environment in which new perspectives on old problems can flourish.

Change in the way we screen...

On another front, we've made an important change in the way we screen applicants for air traffic



controller jobs. The new screen takes a single week, so it doesn't require applicants to quit their regular jobs. And it's totally objective and blind to color, race, and sex. We'll begin using this new screen this spring. In fact, you can use it for yourselves while you're here at this conference.

Trainees hired under this program will also benefit from improved training programs which will allow them to become full-performance controllers much sooner than was possible under the old program. This is good for everybody: the employee, the agency, and the public.



ATC a young work force...

But it also highlights a problem: Air Traffic has a very young work force. Almost everyone has been hired within the past 10 years—including many who are now in the supervisory ranks. We don't have the normal age gradations which tend to make room on the career ladder. Many of you are now ready to move up that ladder. And you're frustrated because you can't get into any of the supervisory development programs.

The reality is that most of our air traffic supervisory positions are already filled by people who are still relatively young. Most of them are going to stay in these jobs for a very long time. So there's the problem, what's the solution?

It depends on you...

The fact is, enriching your work life and creating advancement opportunities is going to depend mostly on you. You must be prepared to move laterally: to search out openings anywhere in the organization which will broaden your experience. You must become a well-rounded professional with a risk-taking resume—not a narrow specialist who never strays from a safe, straight-ahead career path.

You've got to decide whether you want a career in air traffic or a career in the FAA.

For those of you interested in Senior Executive Service positions, and I assume many of you are, horizontal assignments are virtually a requirement. And the competition will be keen. The FAA employs some 50,000 people, yet there are only 188 SES positions in the entire agency. Air Traffic has only 20 of those. Those who make it are going to have to be very, very good.

Candidate Development Program...

We do have programs that will help. The SES Candidate Development Program now includes a woman who was selected from the GS-14 ranks. That's a first.

We're making Individual Development Plans available for all minority and women employees at the GS-13 through 15 grades.

SOAR...

Just this week we began the final round of selecting candidates for the new System of Advancement and Recognition program, which we call "SOAR." Far too often, we find that women and minorities were being steered into support positions that have no real promise.

The SOAR program moves them into line organizations where they can develop their management potential.

These and other programs we think will raise that glass ceiling, or better still, eliminate it. Studies show that one of the biggest barriers for women seeking line jobs, is that men feel uncomfortable working with them. One of the goals of our diversity management programs is to change that perception.

Shock!

And while I'm on the subject of the work place relationship between men and women, I'd like to talk about another important subject.

Last December, with my management team, I attended a workshop on sexual harassment in the FAA. I was shocked and appalled at what I heard. The Regional Administrators and other top managers who were with me were all convinced. This conduct has to stop!

Stop sexual harassment...

As a result of that meeting, I directed that a special agency-wide action plan be developed that would end sexual harassment in our work place. The action plan includes a strong policy statement, which you will be seeing shortly, and a letter to all employees that will be included with your pay slips in April.

The plan also calls for continued emphasis on training in cultural diversity to confront our biases head-on and to make clear to all of us the consequences of our behavior, whether it is intended or unintended.

We don't have the resources to take that training everywhere at once. But when we look at the pattern of sexual harassment complaints, we find that an overwhelming percentage of them come from one organization...one organization alone: Air Traffic! So we're targeting large Air Traffic facilities first, and the top management in each region, to undergo some serious awareness training. Once you've been through this training, you'll see how powerful it can be.

Dignity and respect...

Let me be very clear: I expect all employees to be treated with dignity and respect. Sexual harassment demeans the individual and it demeans the FAA. It must stop.

So, let me sum it up.

Work force diversity is about fairness, about doing what is right, and about respecting differences. It's about allowing all America into the work force. And providing training and development opportunities so that everyone has an equal chance for a top job. But mostly it is about recognizing that we are all part of the human family.



These are personal values that I have believed in and tried to live by all my life. I hope that what I have done at the FAA has communicated these values.

Necessity will eventually compel us all to change. But I would like to think that as an agency we don't wait until circumstances force us to act. I would hope that our sense of fairness will move us to eliminate all arbitrary and artificial barriers and to welcome into our ranks all those who share our love of aviation and our commitment to public service.

The FAA is a very special organization, like no other in Government. I have come to love it as I know you do. Let us demonstrate the leadership that I know we possess. Let us set the example for Government, industry, and all of America.

Thank you.