

Podcast Transcription

Fly by Night: First Officer Mark Vaughan September 2020 Council 100 Chairman and Block 12 Representative

Captain Chris Lee My guest today is First Officer Mark Vaughan, who represents the L.A. based pilots as the Council 100 Chairman and Block 12 Representative. Thanks for coming, Mark.

First Officer Mark Vaughan Thanks for having me, Chris. It's good to be here.

Captain Chris Lee Tell the pilots a little bit about your background before you came to FedEx and what you've been doing since you've been at FedEx.

First Officer Mark Vaughan Well, I started my flying career in the Navy, was in the Navy for 21 years. Helicopter pilot and then a cargo pilot for the Navy flying DC-9s and retired in 2001 and got hired into FedEx on the tail end of the postal bid.

Captain Chris Lee What about your seat progression here at FedEx?

First Officer Mark Vaughan I started out as a DC-10 flight engineer, which was a great seat to be in and stayed there. I was a flex instructor in the schoolhouse for the DC-10 and also a standards check airman for a couple of years and almost rode the DC-10 to the very end and transitioned to the MD11, the right seat in 2009. And at the same time, I moved to the L.A. base. And I've been out there for 11 years in the right seat.

Captain Chris Lee Well, what made you want to get involved in volunteering here at the union?

First Officer Mark Vaughan It was a phone call from my block rep. Dave Wojtkowski called me, Wojo, and said, hey, would you ever be interested in running for Block Rep? And I had never thought of it before. I gave it some thought and said, sure, why not? My wife and I are empty nesters and I typically bid reserve, so I have a lot of extra time. So I thought this would be a good opportunity to serve the L.A. Base which I really like the base a lot, so.

Captain Chris Lee Well, your term began back in March of this year, so you have about six, seven months under your belt. How do you see your role as MEC representative?

First Officer Mark Vaughan First of all, it's to be the advocate, be the voice in the room for the L.A. base. To listen as much as possible to everybody out there and kind of have my finger on the pulse of what's important to the guys in that base. And though we're small, we do have something to say. To bring that message to the MEC and then be able to digest the union MEC perspective and take that back to the folks out there, the pilots I fly with and represent, and let them know where their union is going and what's happening.

Captain Chris Lee And typically, small bases are pretty tight-knit groups. So I'm sure you get an opportunity to communicate with them often.

First Officer Mark Vaughan Yeah, it's great. That's what I love about the base. It's small. We very soon get to know one another and know who people are. And I like that. I like that personal contact that we can get. So that's a great opportunity.

Captain Chris Lee Well, a great amount of focus at the table has been preparations for contract 2021. How's that going?

First Officer Mark Vaughan Well, we're fully engaged on preparing for contract 2021. I'm so impressed with the whole team here that's supporting that. It's just amazing how so many different threads come together to get us ready for that. The thing about the contract is we've got a good contract and we need to make improvements. And there's constant challenges to our current contract. Contract enforcement is involved. We're defending the current contract we have and making gains on our next set of negotiations. So our Negotiating committee is fully engaged. The MEC is fully engaged. And we have a strategic plan that's going to guide us through that. We have all the tools in place. What we really need is support from the membership to support the process, participation, active involvement as much as possible.

Captain Chris Lee Representing the L.A. base it's a little unique in that you guys have about 100 pilots. You have a wide range of seniority from very, very senior to people that have been hired two, three years ago. How do you see their role in the upcoming contract negotiations?

First Officer Mark Vaughan Well, I think it's like my role up to this point before being a block rep was, I participated as much as I could. I went to any meeting that was announced. I would go and even just knowing who the faces are that represent you and letting them know what you think. And on the part of the folks out in L.A. is just participate as much as you can, as much as you are able to do. My job is to listen and gather that information and take it forward. So please participate, particularly the survey. This is the thing that's going directly to the negotiating committee to let them know what the important issues are to the pilots. Someone asked me a question about these free-form sections of the survey where we get to put down just our general thoughts and like, who's ever going to read those? And I asked the Negotiating committee this question and they came back and said, we read every single one of them. So you can imagine it might be three or four questions like that on the survey and multiply that times 5000. That's 20000 little short paragraphs that they're going to read. That's a lot. And they have some help in aggregating words and kind of highlighting things and categorizing ideas. But every word you write will be read. And believe me, that's a huge chore on their part. But that's the kind of dedication we have on our end going forward. So I think it's a tremendous team that's helping us get there.

Captain Chris Lee Well, your pilots have not only been operating under the stress and uncertainty of the COVID pandemic but many of your pilots live in or near areas that have been impacted by the wildfires and Los Angeles also recently had an earthquake.

First Officer Mark Vaughan Yeah, it's unprecedented. The wildfires this year, and it seems like every year they get worse. And we have people all throughout the western part of the United States, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, every single one of those areas has been affected. And it's not even you personally who's been affected, but your community or your neighbor or someone close by. We're connected in these different population centers and it has an impact on us. And whether we realize it or not, that affects our stress level. And to add to that, flying in Asia and being quarantined in hotel rooms and

our normal routines for layovers are being disrupted where we are not able to socialize as much, we're not able to exercise as much. Those things are added stressors. Every single communication that I send out, my sign-off statement is, you know, take care of yourself. Look out for one another and fly safely, because I think those are three things that we can do for ourselves that will help us, number one be able to enjoy a career and a retirement and number two, just live a holistic, healthy life. So taking care of yourself is huge. And with that, the union has lots of resources available that you can tap into. We do have a pilot assistance line ([PATH](#)), and you may think that you don't need that. But until you stop and think about it and ask the question, you don't know what you don't know. And so having the ability to reach out and talk to a fellow pilot who can maybe direct you to some other resources is a huge, huge benefit that I really encourage you to take advantage of. In L.A., it's not just me. I've got Vice Chairman Jeff Belt, Secretary Treasurer Dave Wojtkowski, who is our former MEC rep. A tremendous body of knowledge with Dave and Jeff and then Kevin Berry. Kevin is involved in representing ALPA (Domicile Safety Team) for the L.A. base. We have Juan Leoncio, who is the Vice Chairman of Professional Standards. So we've got tons of people out there who are actively engaged in union work that are tremendous resources. What people may not realize is we also have a [Professional Standards committee](#) that is able to help you resolve any kind of conflicts that might develop on the flight deck between you and another crew member. It's a great resource to have where you are able to resolve conflicts in a professional way, get it resolved at the lowest level possible. The company likes the fact that they have ALPA representatives who can resolve those conflicts without them getting involved. And I think that's a good thing for everybody, for the company, for the individual pilots where we can have these things taken care of. There's nothing wrong with reaching out for help.

Captain Chris Lee Any final thoughts?

First Officer Mark Vaughan Well, I think there's a tremendous raft of challenges that are coming our way. We have COVID, already engaged in that. We have the upcoming contract negotiations, which there are huge issues at play here. And I think that it's time to pay attention to these things. There's a lot of distractors out there with the news and whatnot. So for us as a union, I think to keep our eye on the ball and keep our strategic focus underway will help us achieve our long-term goals. I think an essential part of that is you participating as much as possible with surveys, speaking up, attending meetings, letting people know what you think. And that's huge.

Captain Chris Lee Well, thanks for coming, Mark, and thanks for listening. If you have any questions, reach out to us via fdx.alpa.org and utilize the [PDR link](#). And as always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.