

Remember Memorial Day

by Bob Coburn

In a previous life, I was a pilot for a major airline. I truly enjoyed greeting the passengers as they came on the plane before I hopped into the cockpit to begin the flight. On one Memorial Day, after having several passengers wish me a Happy Memorial Day, I altered my normal routine of making my greeting PA from my cockpit seat to standing in front of the passengers and using the flight attendant's hand held microphone to offer my greeting.

I began by welcoming all aboard and giving a brief account of the flight we were about to take together, then I apologized in advance if anyone considered what I was about to say, a lecture. I started by asking if there were any veterans on the flight. Since several raised their hands, I asked that if anyone was sitting next to these individuals to thank them for their service. I continued with the admonition that I too was a veteran and my FO too. I assured them that no one who volunteers to serve their country in the armed forces does so to die for their country, but everyone is willing to do so if so called. I continued to say that this day is Memorial Day, not Veterans day, and although some of you have wished me a happy Memorial Day, it is not a happy day.

We probably recognize this day at an unfortunate time of year for this most solemn remembrance. It is the end of school, graduation for some, the beginning of grilling season and generally the beginning of good weather and family activities to enjoy. But today is not a happy day. It is a day to memorialize/remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is a day to reflect on how fragile life is and how costly the freedom and liberty you enjoy today is, and how careful we all need to be before we accept allowing this country to go to war. I thanked them again for flying with our airline today and assured them that we couldn't do it without them. Several passengers applauded, which was unexpected, and I thanked them. After the flight there was one woman who did tell me as she left the plane that it WAS a lecture.