

The last word

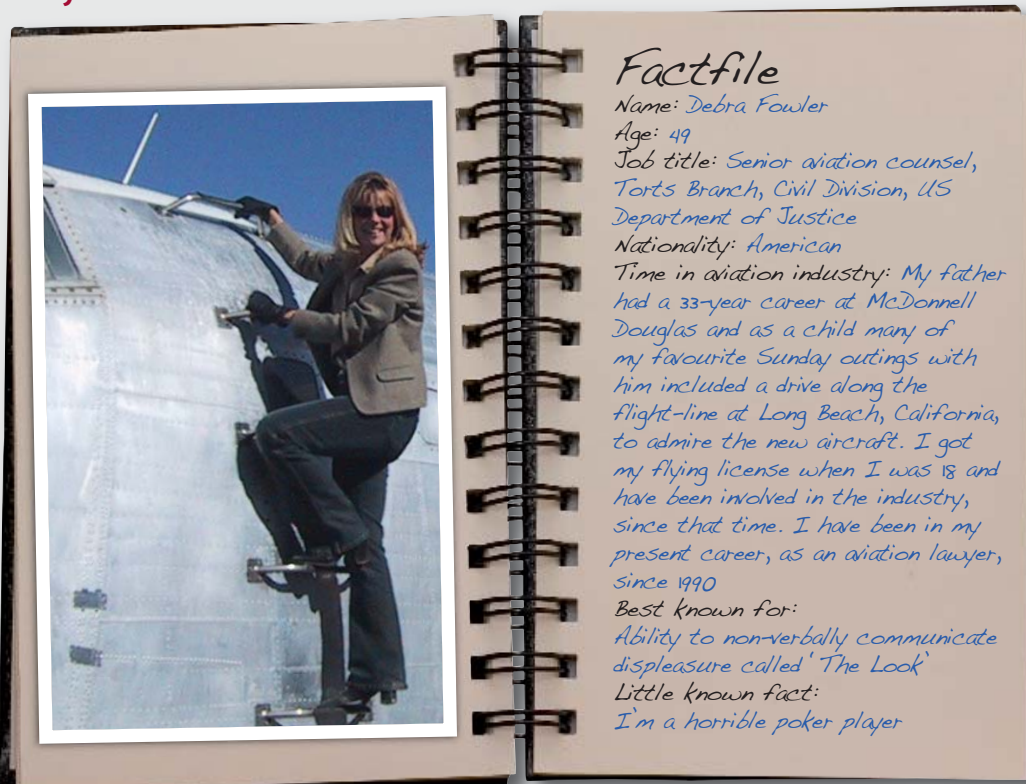
Debra Fowler of the International Aviation Women's Association (IAWA) speaks about the challenges facing the industry.

Do challenges still exist for women in the aviation industry?

Yes, women face challenges in aviation, as they do in many industries. Recognising this, the International Aviation Women's Association (IAWA) was formed 20 years ago by a handful of women in the insurance and legal sectors of the industry, where they could share their ideas and experiences. It has grown steadily and today we have over 200 active members from countries all over the world, all executives in various aspects of the aviation industry.

Why aren't there more female airport/airline CEOs?

While there is room for improvement, we are seeing more and more women in these positions. Colleen Barrett was president of Southwest Airlines before retiring last spring, Maria-Jose Hidalgo is CEO of Air Europa in Spain, Ragnilhur Geirsdottir was CEO and president of Icelandair, Beti Ward is CEO of Pacific Air Cargo and Joan Sullivan-Garrett is CEO of MedAir. In other top positions, Laura Wright is CFO at Southwest Airlines, Julie Southern is CFO at Virgin Atlantic and Kathryn Mikells is CFO at United Airlines. It was not so long ago that there was only one female airport director in the US but now there a number of women leading operations at major airports: Gina Marie Lindsey at Los Angeles, Krys Bart at Reno, Bonnie Allin at Tucson, Elaine Roberts at Columbus and Thela



Bowers at San Diego, just to name a few. Rosie Andolino is leading a multi-billion dollar expansion project at Chicago O'Hare, Dora Kay is head of international marketing for the Airport Authority Hong Kong and recently completed a two-year term as the chairman of the International Air Cargo Association.

How does IAWA promote the advancement of women in the industry?

IAWA provides a forum for networking, substantive industry discussions and positive reinforcement to help women pursue opportunities. IAWA holds annual conferences all over the globe, which have been increasingly successful, delivering an excellent informational product to our

delegates and tremendous networking opportunities, allowing attendees to renew old friendships and form new relationships. As part of our commitment to helping the next generation of women, we award four scholarships annually to outstanding women students in aviation programmes around the world and we continue to improve our website, publish monthly newsletters and hold regional gatherings.

How tough do you expect the next 12 months to be for the industry?

The industry has faced many challenges in the last decade but is resilient and exemplified by the pioneering spirit. Aviation is not just a profession, it is a passion, and IAWA brings

women together to share the adventure. We celebrate with each other in the good times and we help each other through the challenges.

What needs to be done to eliminate/reduce the hassle factor of flying?

In my experience, the most frequent complaint travellers have, myself included, is that security procedures need to be streamlined and more consistent, something which the TSA is working on in the US. Air traffic control delays are also a factor and efforts are under way to modernise and streamline air traffic control systems. Elsewhere the FAA is working on the implementation of ADS-B (Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast).

IAWA