

The transition from mothballed, antiquated aircraft to factory-fresh flight deck is captured in the photos on this and the following pages. Below, left, work begins in the Mojave Desert as the cockpit is removed from the aircraft. Joe Maknauskas, center photo, works on the stripped cockpit in Atlanta. The original team, at right, included (L-R) Jim Hearn, Joe Maknauskas, Bill Tinsley, Leo Ruschell and Jim Zinsli. Shortly after this picture was taken, Zinsli was killed in a private aircraft accident. Mechanic John Fletcher stepped in to fill the void and the work continued. Delta's first 880 was ship 902, right. This aircraft set the continental speed record from San Diego to Miami. The photo, and the one at the top of Page 19 were provided by retired Delta pilot, Dick Tidwell.



880 Brings Delta Legacy to Atlanta Heritage Row

Delta's Technical Operations Professionals
Restored the Flight Deck of a Famous
Aircraft to Factory-New Condition
For An Educational History Exhibit

The Convair 880 was one of three aircraft which introduced jet transportation to the traveling public when the decades changed from the '50s to the '60s. Known as the fastest commercial aircraft in the skies and designed as an intermediate range aircraft, the 880 was the ideal complement to the Douglas DC-8 and the Boeing 707.

From 1960 to 1973 the Convair 880 sped across the skies in Delta colors. Delta initially ordered ten of the swift planes for its fleet and eventually took delivery of 17 air-

craft before the end of 1962.

With its center of activity in Atlanta, Delta and its jet fleet helped open the southern city to all the potential that air transportation brings to a thriving metropolis. An 880 cockpit seemed a natural choice as the central attraction of the "International City" segment of "interactive exhibits" at the newly opened Atlanta Heritage Row.

Located in Underground Atlanta, an historical shopping district in downtown Atlanta, the entertain-

ing exposition is designed to provide a taste of Atlanta's history and refer those with whetted appetites to museums, sites and exhibitions around the city which can fully satiate the curiosity of the visitor.

Delta's corporate participation in Atlanta Heritage Row was coordinated by James Callison, senior vice president—Legal and Corporate Affairs & Secretary. Acting as Delta's liaison on the project, Callison has had a guiding hand in the direction of the presentation and has since accepted a position as a



T. P. "Pre" Ball and Dana Jones sit in the refurbished 880 cockpit in Atlanta. Former Chief Pilot Ball said he was impressed by the craftsmanship in the renewed flight deck.

Through a Pilot's Eyes

The Convair 880 Remembered

T. P. "Pre" Ball, Dana Jones, John Leedy and Dick Tidwell all gathered at one end of the table. Conversation was well underway. All had been pilots for Delta. All had flown the Convair 880. This special meeting was held to remember that airplane.

Ball reminisced about his first sighting of the aircraft. While preparing for the aircraft in ground school at Convair in San Diego, an instructor came into the class and invited the pilots to watch an 880 make its approach for landing.

"The aircraft had its nose cocked up to the usual 880 attitude, which was pretty steep, flaps out, gear down, the throttles shoved up and the black smoke just pouring out of all four engines," he recalled. "It was an impressive sight."

Jones remembered sitting in class to learn about the aircraft and its systems and using mimeographed pages and crayons.

"We colored in the oil system, or we colored in the fuel system, and so on," he described. "We didn't have the notebooks and manuals that we have now."

"After finishing ground school, we went straight to the ship," Jones continued. "Obviously they had done a good job, because we got in and we felt comfortable, although it was the first time I'd seen the aircraft."

Leedy was captain on a DC-7 when he decided to try his hand at the jet. "I loved the airplane," he said. "I thought it was the best airplane I've ever flown."

"I remember that the engines would go from idle to 103 percent in three seconds," exclaimed Tidwell.

"That's right," agreed Ball. "Fastest acceleration you ever saw."

Delivering a message for all the pilots to the people who worked on each facet of the 880 refurbishment, Tidwell said, "I want them to know that they have done a fantastic job on this cockpit. It is perfect."

director of Atlanta Heritage Row.

From Concept to Reality

The task of finding, moving, refurbishing, and installing the 880 cockpit at the site was accomplished by many of the same people who converted the forward portion of an L-1011 into a movie set last year (see the July 1989 issue of the *Delta Digest*).

James Ray, supervisor—Tooling and Ground Equipment; Bill Tinsley, an analyst in the same depart-

wrench—one of the guys would come up and give it to you because he knew you were going to need it. Credit also has to be given to the people in the shops at the TOC."

"We had a lot of support from them," agreed Maknauskas, who became so dedicated to the project that he returned a day early from his vacation to assist in moving the cockpit from the hangar to the exhibit site August 13.

"I spent six months on this project and I wanted to see it through to

Ship 906, right, served Delta for 13 years. The gutted cockpit, below, left, is quite a contrast to the finished product, center. At right, the crew that moved the cockpit into place (L-R)—Robert Padick, Leo Ruschell, Greg Bowker, Bill Tinsley, Ron Anderson, Jim Hearn, Joe Maknauskas and John Fletcher.



“... everybody at Delta can take pride in this job ...”



ment and Mechanic Joe Maknauskas inspected several aircraft in the deserts of the Southwest on behalf of Heritage Row before finding an 880 with enough of the original equipment intact to be refurbished. The cockpit was cut from the aircraft and transported to Atlanta where the rebuilding began.

"It definitely was not fun in the beginning," Tinsley remembered. "Everything was so nasty and dirty. We made the decision early to strip it down to the bare frame. We even brought in a steam cleaner to get all the desert sand out of it. The only things we didn't take out were the windshield and the control columns."

John Fletcher, mechanic, noted that the teamwork in rebuilding the 880 was a highlight of the project. "You didn't even have to ask for a

completion," Maknauskas explained.

Mechanics Leo Ruschell and Jim Hearn were also integrally involved in the rejuvenation of the cockpit, handling all of the rewiring to make the lights, bells, buzzers and radios functional. Hearn remembered the aircraft as, "probably one of the prettier airplanes we ever had."

As it went into place in Atlanta Heritage Row, Hearn noted, "It looked great and gave you a feeling of satisfaction and pride in Delta."

"The most fun came in comparing the beginning product to the finished product, actually seeing it take place," commented Ruschell.

"The people at Delta are really proud to put out a product that looks like this to the general public," Tinsley stated. "What is seen

on the line everyday—the aircraft in Delta's fleet—is reflected in this 880 cockpit."

"I really enjoyed when 'Pre' Ball came out to the hangar to look at it," said Tinsley. Ball, former chief pilot at Delta, flew the acceptance and delivery flights of the first 880 acquired from Convair. "It made me feel good that he appreciated it so much. I enjoyed him enjoying it."

"I would like to commend all of them for a nice job," Supervisor James Ray said in congratulating the team upon completion of the project. "Seeing something like this installed in the public eye—I think everybody at Delta can take a lot of pride in this job."

The cockpit used in the Atlanta Heritage Row project came from the first 880 built by Convair. James

Ray noted that this aircraft just happened to be the one in the best condition with a majority of its components still in place.

Known as C/N 1, it was flown as a test aircraft by Convair for several years. It was sold to TWA in October of 1964 for which it flew until December 20, 1973. The aircraft was then stored in Kansas City until its move to the desert in California.

A record-breaker in Delta's hands

The speed record for commercial jet aircraft was set by the Delta crew who took delivery from Convair of the first 880 to enter commercial service. The record would stand for nearly a decade until the supersonic Concorde was built.

After the acceptance of ship 902 on February 10, 1960, Captain T. P.

“Pre” Ball, Captain John H. Longino and Flight Engineer Dick Tidwell flew the aircraft (with a passenger complement which included Delta President C. E. Woolman) from San Diego to Miami, setting a speed record for commercial aircraft. The trip was completed in three hours, 31 minutes and 54 seconds with an average speed of 665 miles per hour and reaching a top speed of 779 miles per hour during one stretch

tions,” he recalled. “It was the fastest, and remains the fastest, [commercial] U.S. subsonic jet ever built. Although there were very few of these aircraft built [editor’s note: 65], it made an indelible mark on U.S. commercial aviation.”

But its speed was also its downfall—the engines used a great deal of fuel and when the fuel crisis of the ’70s hit, the aircraft was no longer profitable to fly. Delta retired its last Convair 880

The skyline of Atlanta becomes a backdrop for the completed cockpit as it is readied for removal from its trailer at Underground Atlanta, the historic shopping district in which Atlanta Heritage Row is located.



The 880 “made an indelible mark on U.S. commercial aviation.”

of the journey.

Julian May, senior vice president—Technical Operations, said, “The 880 was the fastest and most attractive, aerodynamically, of all the jet aircraft. At that period in commercial aviation, speed was the driving criteria. The 880 was the ‘Queen’ of our fleet.”

In 1958, May was assigned to the General Dynamics plant in San Diego for Delta. “I worked with the Convair engineering and contracts personnel . . . in order for the final design to meet Delta specifica-

January 1, 1974.

Some of the pilots who flew the 880 share their views of this speedy addition to Delta’s fleet, on page 18.

Corporate teamwork aids Heritage Row

Atlanta Heritage Row is sponsored by corporate citizens of the metropolitan Atlanta area with support from some charitable foundations as well. When the city of Atlanta began exploring ideas for the historical display, Delta was one of the companies who ex-

pressed interest and has been involved nearly since its inception.

"We are especially interested in educating the more than 200,000 visitors who are expected at the exhibit each year concerning Atlanta's strong dependency upon transportation, and particularly air transportation, for its civic greatness," noted Callison.

Director of Atlanta Heritage Row, Lili Ott, agreed that transportation has played a pivotal role in Atlanta's emergence as a metropolitan center.

"After all, the city began as the terminating point of the Western and Atlantic Railroad coming from Chattanooga, earning its first name, Terminus," she said.

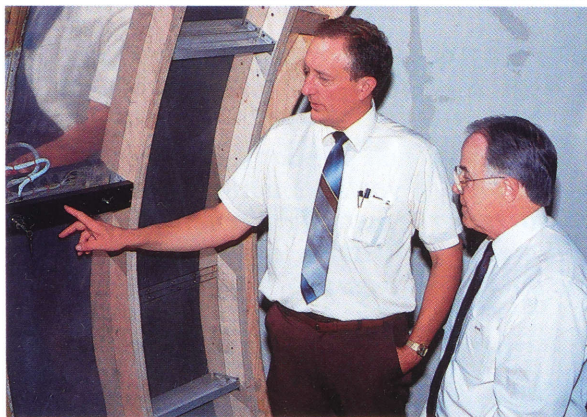
From the Indians who had lived along the banks of Peachtree Creek, through the Civil War and on into the era of the "International City," interactive displays invite visitors to walk through Atlanta's history.

The last exhibit, featuring Delta's 880 cockpit, reveals the importance of Atlanta as an emerging international city. The lighted cockpit instruments gleam as the radio crackles with live conversation between the control tower in Atlanta and arriving and departing flights. A lighted display on an adjacent wall depicts the electronic "glass cockpit" of the MD-11. A video presentation by CNN is also presented in the "International City" era and visitors are encouraged to view a 15 minute video in the theater in which notable dignitaries share their vision of Atlanta.

Admission to the 7,000-square-foot hall is \$4 for adults, \$3 for students and seniors and \$2 for children 3-12 years old. It is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday and closed Mondays. Through the end of 1990 Delta personnel are offered a special "two for the price of one" adult admission with the coupon which appears in the August 17 issue of the *Delta Dispatch*.

Tickets for Atlanta Heritage Row are available at the "Delta clock tower," a kiosk located just outside the building at the intersection of Upper Alabama Street and Pryor Street. The clock faces, which appear in the tower atop the kiosk, were designed by Delta's Jim Rutledge, manager—Creative Services. He is also responsible for various displays and plaques used on the kiosk and in the 880 exhibit.

Souvenirs of a trip to Atlanta, including Delta mementos, are sold in the gift shop near the theater in the exhibit hall.



(Top to bottom) Bill Tinsley and Joe Maknauskas checked dark nooks and crannies as they stripped the cockpit.

James Ray and James Callison kept tabs on the progress of the project.

Nearing completion, those involved and Delta dignitaries signed the last panel to be placed in the cockpit: (L-R)

"Tommy" Thompson, Russ Heil, Bob Coggin, Julian May, James Callison, Rex McClelland, Tom Roeck and James Ray; standing in the cockpit are Tinsley, Ruschell, Anderson, Maknauskas and Fletcher.

The front line professionals and Senior Vice President Callison gather around Lili Ott, director of Atlanta Heritage Row.

The purpose: to provide an educational setting for visitors, such as these children, to learn about aviation's contribution to Atlanta's heritage.