



Al Blackman: Loving His Job for 65 Years

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"Attitude is everything," says Al Blackman as he walks into the American Airlines Hangar 10 at JFK. Blackman, or "Blackie," has been working for American Airlines even before it was called American Airlines.

A graduate of Aviation High School in Manhattan, Blackie signed on as a structural mechanic with the American Export Steamship company repairing "flying boats" in 1942. "The flying boats were not as complex as today's airplanes," says Blackie. "It was basically all mechanical and most of our job was patching hulls when they rubbed against a reef or some rocks to keep them water-tight."



Al "Blackie" Blackman,
65 Years with AA

Blackie was drafted into the Korean war and was assigned to the 102 light aircraft and the helicopter maintenance unit in the Uijonbu valley across from the 4077 MASH. When his term in Korea was up, he returned to his native New York and continued working as a lead mechanic with AA.

Blackie has worked under the leadership of at least six AA CEOs and has outlasted several managers, co-workers, aircraft fleet types and even a few company policies. At age 82, Blackie is one of AA's oldest (and most highly respected) employees.



Blackie's wife and family joined New York area employees at JFK's Employee Appreciation Day to honor this milestone of milestones anniversary. General Manager Mark DuPont and Aircraft Maintenance Manager Devon Erriah presented Blackie with what is thought to be a one-of-a-kind ruby and diamond anniversary pin. Blackie's wife, Delores, wears all of his anniversary pins on a charm bracelet.

"Blackie is an amazing person," said John Iuliano, President TWU Local 562. "He comes to work full of enthusiasm ready to take on the challenges of the day and eager to share his insight. And let's not forget your not going to make it through the day without hearing a joke or two. Blackie's work ethics and his contributions have been and will continue to be an essential part of American Airlines success."

"Al, to me, represents the soul and pride of what makes being an AMT so extraordinary," said Erriah. "Al's history speaks for itself, but I'm most impressed by his unwavering dedication and drive to produce our product and get aircraft on the ready line for flight. Al is my personal Hero of Aviation."

In his spare time, Blackman works with a group of people at Floyd Bennett field restoring historic aircraft. The group known as H.A.R.P. operates under the auspices of the National Parks Service restoring planes of a bygone era. "I like working and I can," says Blackie, who has a constant fascination working on something that "can get off the ground."