

## *Delta Air Lines Historical Route Schedule*

*Recreated by Jay Schneider DCA523*

The 87 flights in this package include:

- Delta Air Lines (DAL) October 10, 1943 Schedule with Timetable
- 1946 route additions
- Ship 41 flight of 1993

Very Special Thanks To:

- Vicki Escarra, Executive Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer, Delta Air Lines, Atlanta
- Marie Force, Manager – Archives, Delta Air Transport Heritage Museum, Delta Air Lines, Inc. Atlanta. Provided from the DAL archives the scans of the October 10, 1943 Delta Timetable brochure contained with these flights, and a copy of the 1941 Delta pilot's handbook "Practical Radio Range Data." Without these documents, this route would have been impossible to reproduce accurately. Visit <http://www.deltamuseum.org/> for info about DAL history, Ship 41 and the DAL Museum in Atlanta
- Norm Topshe, DAL Pilot from 1941-1975, DAL employee of 51 years. Provided in-depth, personal information during numerous phone conversations regarding the DAL route and the Ship 41 flight that was not available in any documents. Also provided the Ship 41 photo and data sheet.
- Phil Edwards, Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, Washington D.C. Provided extensive research and rare 1939 CAA radio navigation manuals.  
<http://www.nasm.si.edu/>

Routes were created using FSNavigator 4.6, Microsoft's FS2004, the 1941 DAL Pilot's "Practical Radio Range Data" handbook, 1939 CAA radio navigation manuals.

### **1941-43 DAL Route Info**

Delta's roots date back to 1924, when Huff Daland Dusters was founded as the world's first aerial crop dusting organization. On June 17, 1929, Delta inaugurated airline service with the first passenger flights over a route stretching from Dallas, Texas to Jackson, Mississippi, via Shreveport and Monroe, Louisiana.

DC-3 service was added in 1940. In 1941, the company moves its headquarters from Monroe to Atlanta, Georgia.

In October 1943, Delta expands service from Ft Worth, Texas to New Orleans, Louisiana via Alexandria and Baton Rouge.

By 1946, Delta's service includes a route north between Cincinnati, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois and south from Savannah, Georgia to Miami, Florida via Brunswick and Jacksonville.

Norm Topshe, one of Delta's original 40 DC-3 pilots, says "we rarely flew the DC3 over 7500 feet. Usual altitudes were 2-4-6 and 3-5-7 thousand. Often flying around weather, but mostly flying right through it."

In 1944, Delta flies their first converted DC-3 cargo ship Delta No. 43. Delta continues to fly DC-3s for cargo service through 1958.

### **Details of Delta's "Ship 41" flight of 1993:**

Norm Topshe, retired Delta pilot at the time in 1993, along with pilot Sergio Rodrigo and mechanic Gene Christian, in the jump seat, rescued from cargo service what had been DAL's "Ship 41" NC28341 last flown by Delta in 1958, at the San Juan airport and flew it to Ft. Lauderdale to begin its restoration. Norm and Sergio shared the piloting duties.

After 5 years and \$5-million of painstaking restoration to better than new condition by hundreds of volunteers and Delta mechanics, with James Ray heading the restoration, Ship 41 is the only original DC3 currently owned and flown by an airline. A direct outgrowth of the Ship 41 restoration project became the Delta Air Transport Heritage Museum.

Norm says, "...Because we would have a long over-water flight we replaced the two engines. We were 3500 lbs under the normal empty weight of 13,500 lbs, took 800 gallons of fuel, burning 85 gallons per hour running the engines at 550hp.

Sergio Rodrigo and I took turns flying the aircraft while the one other handled the navigation, emergency procedures, flaps, gear and brakes. I piloted the takeoff from San Juan on runway 10, while Sergio, and Gene Christian the mechanic in the jump seat, took pictures out of the windows.

We stayed on that heading for only about one-half mile, because we had to avoid hotels ahead, then we turned left toward the ocean. Just after takeoff from San Juan, while still in sight of the airport and before reaching 5000ft we lost all hydraulics. We discussed whether to turn around and land at San Juan or continue to Ft. Lauderdale. Either way we'd have to land using emergency procedures so we decided to continue to Ft. Lauderdale because we didn't know how long – maybe a week or more - we'd be stuck in San Juan awaiting repair.

Every 30 minutes we checked the carburetors for ice. Halfway through the flight, at about Grand Turk Island, the radio stopped functioning. We could not transmit to anyone. We had been in communication with Delta's dispatchers and they did not know what happened to us. We lost all electrical power too. We had our compass and a GPS to keep us on track so we never flew more than one mile off our planned course. At one point we thought we were starting to have a right engine problem, but that was not the case.

About 150 miles out of Ft. Lauderdale we ran into low clouds, and as we had no chance to top the cover, and were flying VFR, we dropped from 5500ft with only 1 mile or less of visibility to 3500ft with 3 miles of visibility.

For our approach to Ft. Lauderdale, Sergio flew the plane and I handled the emergency landing procedures, manually pumping the gear because the hydraulics were gone, flaps and brakes.

We circled the airport once from the south to the west and landed on runway 27R, with our final approach beginning at about 2.5 to 3 miles from the runway. The flight plan we filed was for 6 hour 30-minutes, and we flew it in 6 hours and 31 minutes! "

When we arrived in Ft. Lauderdale everyone was surprised to see us! They said, "What happened? Where have you been? We thought you were down!" Since they had lost communication with us, they had contacted the Coast Guard who was out looking for us.

We spent several days in Ft. Lauderdale, where the engines were replaced and set to Wright for a major overhaul at \$32,000 apiece, then flew to Peachtree airport as it would have less traffic than Atlanta. Then three or four days later we flew the final few miles to Atlanta International. Those engines are still being used today with a second set for backup!

They were good engines! That saved us! Everything else quit but those engines we replaced in San Juan kept working!"

Today, from April to September, Delta flies "Ship 41" on tour around the United States.

### **Norm Topshe's Career:**

During his career, Norm flew many types of aircraft. He first soloed in 1936 then barnstormed. He joined Delta Airlines in 1941 first flying the Lockheed 10. Then, Norm was one of Delta's original 40 pilots to fly their new DC3s. Half were pilots, half were co-pilots and three were supervisors.

For two years during World War 2, Delta Airlines had a modification program with the military modifying 1,000+ aircraft, over-hauling engines/instruments, training Army pilots and mechanics. As soon as an aircraft was modified, pilots like Norm performed a test flight around the airfield.

"The engines didn't even cool after we landed," said Norm, "when a ferry pilot came aboard and flew it away!" Among the aircraft Norm flew at this time were P51's, P38's, the Vultee Vengeance, the Lockheed Hudson Light Bomber/Reconnaissance, and the Douglas SBD Dive Bombers.

Commercially for Delta, Norm flew the Lockheed 10, DC-3, DC-4, DC-6, Martin 440, DC-7, DC-8, Convair 880, and the Boeing 747. Norm flew the 747 for four years before retiring in 1975. The DC-3 was Norm's favorite to fly. However, "the 747 gave me the most joy to fly because it was stable, easy to fly, has great features and is highly maneuverable!" said Norm.

After several years as a consultant to Delta, he returned to flying for seven more years as a liaison between the pilots and management. During this time he flew in the jumpseat, flying many routes and types of aircraft. The last time Norm flew Delta's "Ship 41" was 2000 – 2001...sixty five years after his first solo!

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