

1. Individual determinations concerning the ability of senior stewardesses to continue to serve

Those who advocate the making of individual determinations as to the continuing capability of aging stewardesses fail to recognize the practical difficulties involved.

a. A fundamental principle of union representation requires all employees to be treated equally. The stewardess union would hardly be willing to permit determinations that some aging stewardesses cannot continue while others of the same age are permitted to do so.

b. Moreover, the determination that certain employees have become deficient as stewardesses because of the effects of aging, while others of the same age continue to be acceptable, would be highly objectionable to the women concerned. Charges of unfairness, favoritism, and subjective factors would be inevitable.

c. In contrast, reassignment applied uniformly to all at age 32 cannot be regarded as an indication of personal deficiency or failure. Like graduation from high school or college, the event symbolizes a new level of career development. It is true that a few women resent the policy as requiring a change from a glamorous flight job to what they regard as a more pedestrian way of life. This would be equally true, however, if the reassignment were at any age.

2. The American Airlines reassignment policy

The reassignment policy is based on three underlying considerations.

a. The fact that medical, motivational, and customer service considerations require termination of stewardesses at some point prior to age 65.

b. The fact that it is not feasible to determine continuing eligibility of senior stewardesses on the basis of individual differences in aging.

c. The fact that the beginning of a new career for former stewardesses should not be deferred beyond age 32.

Points a. and b. above have been discussed earlier in this paper. As to point c., American Airlines has sought and obtained the advice of an eminent industrial psychologist who regarded the following factors as significant:

a. Retraining will be needed to qualify stewardesses for new careers, whether the new job is inside the Company or outside the Company.

b. Studies have shown that the percentage of persons utilizing retraining drops markedly when the age advances to the 30's and 40's. A study published by Michael E. Borus in the September 1965 issue of the *Labor Law Journal* indicates that the correlation is as follows (p. 578):

Age	Proportion of graduates utilizing retraining, in percent
Under 20 years.....	82.2
Under 30 years.....	83.8
30 years and over.....	66.7
40 years and over.....	56.2

c. More job opportunities are available for a woman in her early 30's than for older women.

d. A stewardess in her early 30's adapts more readily to a new type of job and hence is more likely to succeed in her new career.

e. In addition, there will be more opportunities for advancement if job entrance is made at an early age.

Based on the foregoing considerations, the consulting psychologist retained by American concluded that the reassignment policy is in accord with sound personnel practice in providing for job transition. His only suggestion was that activities designed to help stewardesses transfer to new jobs be moved up to begin at age 28, and cover a range of four years.

CONCLUSION

The American Airlines reassignment policy is the best solution yet devised for the problem of stewardess aging:

a. It permits the airlines to provide the highest level of service for their passengers.