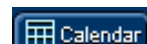


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Friday, September 28, 2001

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opinion **SALLY B. DONNELLY** TIME

SALLY

Jane Garvey Takes Back the Air

Sally B. Donnelly travels with the FAA head as she rallies the troops

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Thursday, Sep. 27, 2001

When Jane Garvey went flying earlier this week, she got just what she expected. And then she found out flying was the easy part.

Garvey, who is the head of the Federal Aviation Administration, was the first high-visibility Bush Administration official to fly

on a U.S. airline since Sept. 11. She flew on Monday the 24th without incident from Washington's Dulles International Airport — where one of the fated planes took off on Sept. 11 — to New York's John F. Kennedy Airport, to thank employees of the Federal Aviation Administration for their extraordinary work on that day and since, and to see for herself the new security measures her agency has implemented.

The differences in this new world? Garvey, like every other passenger, stood in longer lines, got grilled by newly assertive security guards, had to show photo identification repeatedly, and was twice stopped to get 'swept' by a guard with a sensitive metal detector. Then her plane got delayed for nearly two hours because of thunderstorms. Just like old times.

And then, that afternoon, as Garvey stood in front a small group of FAA staff in the New York field office, near walls peppered with the tragic images of the burning World Trade Center Towers and dozens of American flags, she began to explain how grateful she was for the professionalism of the employees.

The men and women of the FAA

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PRON

There are about 45,000 FAA employees in the world, and for the most part they are men and women who prefer to work behind the scenes. They're comfortable there. They man controllers' screens in darkened basement rooms, they maintain the complex computer systems that operate the world's busiest air traffic systems, and they anonymously keep the system flowing. The New York employees did that every day until Sept. 11, when their jobs put them in the front row of the country's worst nightmare. The FAA staffers in the room with Garvey on Monday afternoon, almost all women, stood expectantly, their hands clasped in front of them, their eyes red from hours of work and grief.

They momentarily straightened their shoulders, slumped from two weeks of stress and sorrow, for the Administrator's talk. "I just came to thank you," said Garvey, who is known for being meticulously prepared for official appearances. She is the public face of the FAA. Today was no different — despite 20 hour days, Garvey was sharply dressed in a pinstripe suit and her makeup in order, and she had already been smoothly meeting and greeting people in Dulles Airport for two hours. Then, she stumbled. "You are heroes in our minds," she gamely tried continuing, looking directly at a small group of people who were the first to know of the terrible events that the world would soon know. Her voice caught. Tears came to her eyes, "I know those of you have lost friends and family..."

Finally, help came from just those Garvey was trying to comfort. "That's okay, it makes us cry too," someone said. A few minutes later, Garvey said simply, "We're all still recovering."

And then she flew back to Washington.

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