

EPISODE 236

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[0:00:08] IP: Hello and welcome to episode 236 of Avtalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[0:00:17] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. How's it going, Ian?

[0:00:19] IP: It's going all right, Jason. How are you?

[0:00:21] JR: I'm good. I'm good. Yeah. That's all I got. It's just another week with a lot of news.

[0:00:26] IP: Just another week with a lot of news. Shall we dive right in?

[0:00:30] JR: We should. Let's dispense with the small talk and get straight to it.

[0:00:35] IP: Excellent. Excellent. This week, we've got a good show. We've got plenty of news. Some very unusual things have happened and some interesting things. We've also got Chris Sloan, who is the Founder and Curator of The Airhive, an online aviation museum. We're talking with him later in the show. We've got some good stuff in this particular episode.

We begin in Scandinavia, where Air France KLM and Castle Lake, the investment group, have agreed to take a stake in SAS. What this means for investors is that current investors in SAS seem like they're going to be wiped out. If you're flying SAS, well, I hope you are okay with leaving Star Alliance for Sky team.

[0:01:26] JR: Yeah, this came out of left field. I mean, yesterday SAS on its regular facing Twitter account just said like, "Here's a link to a press conference." They didn't say what the press conference was. There was no lead up into it. It was just, "Hey, here's a press conference." I turned it on actually before it started and turned it off, because I got bored waiting for them to start. I did not think it would be Air France KLM is buying 19.9% of the equity and 5%

of the convertible debt of SAS and making it eventually, possibly one day into a full subsidiary of the Air France KLM group.

As Ian just said, it will almost immediately begin the process of withdrawing itself from the Star Alliance, of which SAS was a founding member. This is the first time an airline alliance founding member airline has actually withdrawn from that alliance, which I thought was interesting. They're going to begin the process of joining Sky team. Of course, Air France KLM, members of Sky team and winding up new partnerships with all of those airlines. This really, really came seemingly out of nowhere, but makes sense.

[0:02:38] IP: It makes sense. I mean, SAS is a very interesting airline, because it's an airline split among three countries that have had historically a vested interest in the airline's success. As a commercial entity, the airline has had a lot of trouble, especially throughout the pandemic and recently. They began bankruptcy proceedings last year and have started to come out of that with restructuring and things of that nature. They had been looking for new equity partners. That part's not surprising. Nor is, I guess, the eventual tie up with another airline. Lufthansa had been the often-floated name for that tie up.

[0:03:30] JR: As is commonplace –

[0:03:32] IP: As is commonplace throughout Europe. I mean, really, this is just further consolidation. I mean, you're going to end up with IAG, Air France KLM, and the Lufthansa group will own pretty much all the airlines.

[0:03:44] JR: Every non-Ryanair airline seemingly.

[0:03:47] IP: Yeah. I mean, unless you're a low-cost carrier in Europe, you will be owned by, or maybe even if you are low-cost carrier in certain –

[0:03:54] JR: Even then, it's not safe. This one really was surprising though, since Air France KLM is now going to have a fortress hub in Northern Europe at this point, where they've got, obviously, Paris on lockdown with Air France, Amsterdam on lockdown with KLM, well, whatever's left of Amsterdam. We'll talk about that later. Then you have the SAS hubs,

presumably in Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm to varying degrees each. The Air France KLM group is really going to be heavily concentrated in Northern Europe, which is why it would have made a little more sense for maybe IAG, or Lufthansa group to want to snatch up SAS since it would have given them a little more range in that region, since Air France KLM is already so heavily concentrated up there, it would have made a little more sense for Lufthansa group, or even IAG. I guess, if you're looking to go to Northern Europe, somewhere that isn't in the UK, you better be a Sky Team elite.

[0:04:55] IP: Yeah. Of course, my Sky Team status just ran out.

[0:04:58] JR: Condolences.

[0:04:59] IP: I know. I know.

[0:05:00] JR: It's worth something.

[0:05:02] IP: Yeah. Well, and there is that. Yeah, nothing has changed hands yet. This is all still subject to approvals and regulatory actions and things of that. But the investments come as they will take a stake and then that stake could eventually turn into, I believe it's a two-year period, could eventually provide a pathway for Air France KLM to becoming a controlling SAS shareholder.

As they begin their equity stake, they won't have control of the airline. The airline will remain separate nominally, but it will become a member of Sky Team. Then over a few years, Air France KLM will have the opportunity to become a controlling shareholder.

[0:05:47] JR: Yeah. Air France KLM won't control the airline, at least for two years or more, probably. SAS will remain independent with its own fleet, its own network, its own crew, yet to be seen about back office, headquarters and things like that. Already, of course, we're seeing from day zero, the influence of Air France KLM, where SAS is leaving its alliance, which is no laughing matter. That's a dramatic change, especially for a founding member like that. Wouldn't be surprised if Air France KLM has some undue influence on SAS. But as an entity, as a whole, SAS will remain as is for the time being, though, the clock is really probably ticking on that.

[0:06:27] IP: Yeah. Yeah. We would be remiss if we didn't mention what's happening in SAS in the next month or so. Jason, I refer to, of course, the final 737 flight by SAS.

[0:06:40] JR: Yeah. SAS really drew down and quickly drew down its 737 fleet throughout COVID. It had a good number of 737s in its fleet, ranging from the unpopular 600 to the 700 to the 800. I don't believe it had 900s, but it was a significant chunk of SAS's short-haul fleet. The final flight for SAS will occur on November 19th. DAG Viking will operate that. I believe, that is a 700. I think it's from Oslo to –

[0:07:15] IP: It's from Stockholm to Oslo.

[0:07:17] JR: Stockholm to Oslo. There it is. That's a fitting flight for them. Yeah, really quick, interesting transition for SAS out of the 737 to the A320neo. Basically, just the A320neo aircraft. I don't believe they have any 319s, any 320s. Everything they've taken recently has been the 320neo.

[0:07:37] IP: We'll be on that flight. Not Jason and I.

[0:07:39] JR: Oh, you got me excited there for a minute.

[0:07:41] IP: Sorry.

[0:07:42] JR: This was news to me.

[0:07:43] IP: No, no, no. Gabriel will be on that flight, so we'll have video from the final SAS 737 flight from Stockholm to Oslo. Check back in November for that. If you want to be on the flight and you're available, you should definitely book your tickets soon. I think they are going quite fast.

[0:08:01] JR: Yes. I wouldn't be shocked if they're long gone by the time you hear this.

[0:08:04] IP: Well, there you go. Get on that, or just look for the video, because we'll be onboard. That's planes leaving. Let's talk about planes coming in. United ordered a lot of planes this week. A lot, a lot of planes. Jason, how many planes did they order?

[0:08:22] JR: They ordered, well, they converted 50 options for the 7872 firm order. That would be 50 787-9. They also topped off with options for 50 more 787s, which is that they really have quite an addiction to the 787s, since they have a lot of aircraft in their fleet that need to be replaced over the years. But it doesn't stop there. United will also be taking 60 more A321neo aircraft and new purchase rights for 40 more. These orders all come through for the 787-9 from 2028 through 2031. The 321neos between 2028 and 2030, so this really rounds out United's order book through the end of the decade.

[0:09:11] IP: That, to me, is the interesting part. I think, Andrew Nocella, the United Chief Commercial Officer, also said this yesterday. I don't know if he said in so many words. He basically said, "We're anticipating that we won't get planes on time, so we're ordering a lot of them."

[0:09:28] JR: He did imply it. He outright said, "It's really disappointing and we can't get the planes when we wanted them, so we're going to order a whole bunch."

[0:09:38] IP: And go from there. That's interesting to me is that United's not only anticipating future growth. I mean, with these orders they obviously are. But they're also anticipating future, or continued strain on the supply chain in getting those aircraft in a timely fashion. Why not just order a lot of them and get options for a lot more and hope that we can get those planes about when we say we want them?

[0:10:08] JR: Yeah. You know what else United says is probably not going to get better anytime soon, Ian. I think we all know this is airspace congestion and airport congestion in the US, they don't expect to get better anytime soon. United is really looking to up-gauge its fleet and the operations at some of its key hubs, especially here at Newark, a model of operational excellence. They're looking to up-gauge a lot of their fleet. I'm a little surprised that they're going all in, all 50 of these options converted to the purchases will be for the 787-9, rather than the 787-10 at all. I figured, they'd sprinkle some more of those and since they were really insistent

that they need to up-gauge existing flights, that need to have fewer flights with a higher capacity, but then they order the middle-sized aircraft. Why not the 10?

[0:10:57] IP: Isn't the up-gauging really about the domestic operation? Because they said they're going from, I think it's a 104 seats in the average departure up to a 145 seats in the average departure. I think the up-gauging really is less about the international departures, although United does do a fair amount of domestic flying with wide bodies. To me, the up-gauging was really about slipping in the A321neo as a replacement for smaller and older 737s. That was my read on the situation.

[0:11:30] JR: I mean, I would think it's going to be both, because the situation at some of its hubs like Newark is not getting better anytime soon. Maybe it will come down to having to operate four flights to Heathrow every day, instead of five and maybe balancing that out by having five, or four 787-10s, instead of nines might be beneficial. I don't know. It just seems a little odd to go all in on the dash 9, when they do have 10s in the fleet. Maybe they're not as impressed with the 10 as we might think.

[0:12:01] IP: Yeah, I don't know. That's an interesting question.

[0:12:03] JR: One thing we do know is that they don't even want to talk about the very longstanding A350 order. It was brought up on the call and they're like, "Yeah, we're not going to comment on that. It's a good aircraft, but come back in 2030 when we're ready to talk about that."

[0:12:22] IP: Poor A350 order.

[0:12:23] JR: It's still there. It's still on the books.

[0:12:25] IP: There's just got to be money just sitting there.

[0:12:28] JR: I mean, maybe United's plan is just to keep the money for those aircraft in a high yield interest account and just cancel the order and call it a day in 2030. I don't know. Don't expect me flying an A350 with United any time, before at least, I don't know, 2032 at this rate.

[0:12:45] IP: Hey, the longer they push this off, the more valuable my United A350 keychain becomes.

[0:12:51] JR: That's right. That's right. Wow, that was a long time ago.

[0:12:54] IP: That was a long time ago. Was that 2015?

[0:12:58] JR: It was a long time ago.

[0:12:59] IP: It was a long time ago. Oh, man. All right. United's taking more planes. They're taking a lot of them and they're going to take them through the end of the decade. China Eastern also ordered a bunch of planes. They're ordering 100 C919s. That's interesting, because they went from a handful to we'll take a hundred.

[0:13:20] JR: Yeah. Not atypical to have this token order. When the Comac C919 first was out for order, I guess, the major Chinese airlines, I don't know if they decided to order, or were told to place an order and they placed a token order for the C919. Air China ordered five. China Southern ordered five. China Eastern ordered, I think, five. China Eastern is so far the only airline to actually take delivery of the C919 with just two so far. But apparently, Chinese Eastern likes what they like, or they've, I don't know, maybe been told to order a hundred, but the aircraft has worked out well enough so far that they have ordered a firm order of 100 C919s, and they had some interesting stats out for the first two aircraft that they've taken delivery now, which have been in service for a couple of months.

They say, as of September 26, two C919 aircraft have flown 867.19 hours of commercial operations and 296 commercial flights with an average passenger seat rate of more than 73% and more than 35,000 passengers. That's a lot for two planes. Looking up the data on B919A and B919C, they seem to be operating quite reliably. Not that many flights today. They're not pushing it all that hard, but it's just interesting to get a look at some of the statistics for an aircraft that we don't really see all that much into.

[0:14:51] IP: Yeah. If they're ordering a hundred, whether or not they wanted – I mean, one assumes that you don't order a hundred aircraft, unless you really want to.

[0:14:58] JR: Or, unless someone tells you really, really hard and loud.

[0:15:01] IP: You really, really need to. I mean, it'll be good to see. Honestly, I would love to fly it.

[0:15:06] JR: I would, too. Field trip to Shanghai, please. But these aircraft are really weighted towards the end of the delivery range. It's not like they're taking these all that quickly. These new orders of the C919 range from 2024 to 2031, and they say, five are planned to come in 2024, 10 from 25 to 27, 15 per year from 2028 to 2030, and then a whole batch of 20 in 2031. It's really an increasing number of aircraft towards the end of the decade.

Yeah, I guess, the China Eastern group, because I don't know if these will all end up at China Eastern. There's a chance they could end up at some of the subsidiary groups, I think. They did not say that, but I wouldn't be surprised, because they like what they see, and I'd very much like to fly this aircraft one day.

[0:15:55] IP: Yeah. There's another aircraft that I would like to fly, Jason, and that, it's the upcoming Japan Airlines A350-1000.

[0:16:02] JR: Not as upcoming as we thought, thanks to the delays. It was supposed to go into service here to New York JFK from probably Haneda in November, but that seems to be pushed back maybe to December, because I'm just waving my hands around, pointing at everything. JAL has a reputation to live up to. It is widely regarded as one of the most exclusive best first-class products on the now admittedly aging 777-300ER, which I flew earlier this year on a really good redemption rate from American. But it makes that product look like a basic economy compared to what they're about to roll out on the 350-1000.

[0:16:42] IP: It's a four-class configuration with a first-class suite that seats up to three people.

[0:16:47] JR: Sure, why not?

[0:16:49] IP: This is a really interesting thing to me. Because they've got this seat that's two seats, and then across where the footrest is they've got the obligatory seatbelt, so that you can dine with your companion. Let me ask you this. Has anyone ever actually done that?

[0:17:04] JR: Yes, I did it when I flew on JAL in first-class. I did it. We dined as a couple in the one first-class suite. It was not particularly comfortable, because even in this new first-class suite, your backrest is half of the IFE screen. It's not particularly comfortable. But admittedly, it's a fantastic way to dine if you find yourself in first-class in a seat that has this.

[0:17:29] IP: All right.

[0:17:30] JR: You're not spending the whole flight there. It's an option.

[0:17:32] IP: Anyone I've ever asked, they're like, "No, I've never done that. That seems silly."

[0:17:36] JR: They insisted that we do it.

[0:17:38] IP: Well, there you go. The first-class suite is huge and features, basically, three seating arrangements, and then make the full thing a bed. We'll put pictures in the show notes, because I'm not describing this thing the way it should be properly described. The suite has a seat that turns into a bed, and then there's a seat that you can either leave as a seat and have a sitting area next to the bed, or you can recline that seat fully, and then that also becomes part of your bed. You have a double wide bed, but only that's three quarters of the way. I guess, you can end up sleeping diagonally?

[0:18:20] JR: I don't know how it works. Can you book two passengers into one first-class suite, or are you moving someone else from economy into that seat? I don't really know. I don't think they really explain the mechanics of how that's supposed to work, but I don't think it's the first time we've seen this. I believe, Etihad on its A380 business studio thing with that. They have three different types of business class. I think they've had that in the past as well. It's not unique, but it's certainly new to JAL.

[0:18:49] IP: Then, the business cabin is nice. It's a business cabin. There are now doors on these suites. I don't think there's anything particularly game changing, although I should mention the headphone-less –

[0:19:02] JR: Yes. I was waiting for the audio.

[0:19:05] IP: Jason, you know much more about that than I do, so I'll leave that one to you to explain.

[0:19:08] JR: Both first and business class, which is a little surprising that business class would have this, since it's a bit denser, has the option to have the inflight entertainment audio played through speakers built into the headrest. I think it's called Yuffini, or I'm not sure. I think it's a saffron thing. I have demoed this in Hamburg at the Aircraft Interior Expo. I can assure you, at least from the demo I participated in, it will not be a cabin full of random noise. Like, if you're on the New York City subway and someone comes on with a Bluetooth speaker, because it's showtime, you are almost certainly not going to hear this outside of your business and/or first-class suite. I believe, this is the first committed airline to roll this out. It's the first deployment of it in the real world. It is going to be super interesting to see how this performs in the real world.

I love this as a concept, because there are plenty of times I would like to lie down, but also watch a movie, but it's really hard to lie down with noise canceling headphones on, because they're big, bulky, and annoying. Also, even if you're not watching content, just being able to play white noise, or something over that. I know personally, it would definitely help me sleep, even if I'm not watching a movie, or anything like that. I'm really excited to watch other people fly this. I won't tell it at all. I should have waited a year.

[0:20:33] IP: Ah, you should have. Or you can go again next year.

[0:20:36] JR: Yeah, sure. Can I borrow some points?

[0:20:39] IP: Mine are all gone. The premium economy seats look extremely nice.

[0:20:45] JR: I think they're the roomiest in the world on any airline.

[0:20:50] IP: Yeah. I'm very interested in these premium economy seats. They've got their shell seats. The seat reclines within its own shell, which is not new, but it seems like it has a lot of room. Also, the interesting thing to me is that it has a leg rest that comes all the way up to be flush with the seat in every seat. It's not like the leg rest, where in sometimes in premium economy where you get the leg rest in the bulkhead seat, and then there's a little foot thing in the rest of the premium economy seats behind them. This has a full leg rest that comes up to meet the seat pan in each seat. I think that's a really neat idea.

[0:21:33] JR: Yeah. It's also, I believe, the first electronically controlled premium economy seat, because usually, they're just press a button, or pull a lever and recline, or whatever. I think this one is the first fully mechanical, or fully electronically controlled seat, which is definitely interesting. I don't know if it actually is the widest. I believe there are other JAL premium economy seats that are a bit wider than that, or have a bit better pitch. It is also has economy, which is nice.

[0:22:05] IP: Yeah. The economy is still nine abreast and the pitch is 80 centimeters, or 33 inches.

[0:22:11] JR: It's very, very good. If you can find the JAL A350-1000 at an airport near you, I would highly recommend booking it.

[0:22:20] IP: There you go. As Jason mentioned, those are supposed to roll out in November. But in fact, will probably enter service near the end of the year is what JAL said now. I would not be surprised if we saw them a little bit later than that. In other news, Alaska retired its last Airbus aircraft this week. They are now officially for the mainline, at least an all-Boeing airline.

[0:22:50] JR: Once again, that basically eradicates any hint that Virgin America ever existed, really. Virgin actually happened to be the launch operator globally of the A321neo, which was surprising that it would end up at Alaska, who wanted nothing to do with the Airbus fleet. But they have finally succeeded in their quest to become an all-Boeing operator with a single common fleet. Good for Alaska. That has positives that is good in many ways. Not great from a

passenger point of view, because I really enjoyed flying on those 321neos on Alaska since they were a bit more roomy.

Just to make sure passengers weren't confused at all, that Virgin America was ever a thing at any point. Basically, at the same time on Monday of this week, Alaska also sent the last remaining 737 in the more to love livery out to the desert to be repainted, because we just can't have people remembering that Virgin America was ever a thing.

[0:23:49] IP: They did not waste any time sending that aircraft out.

[0:23:51] JR: Love is canceled at Alaska. There's no more to love. 737s only. Please, disregard any history of the Airbus at Alaska Airlines. That was a mere blip in time that is not to be remembered.

[0:24:05] IP: It's the part of history we don't want to think about.

[0:24:07] JR: Yes. As a passenger, I would prefer to go swing the other way around, but it makes a lot of sense for Alaska to go back to being a 737-only operator, as long as you don't think about all the E175s that operate on its behalf.

[0:24:24] IP: Oh, we'll get e-mail for that one. Podcast@fr24.com.

[0:24:28] JR: Well, they don't have the Dash 8s anymore, so two steps closer this year.

[0:24:32] IP: Fair enough. Let's take a quick break. When we come back, we'll chat with Chris Sloan from TheAirhive.net. We'll be right back.

[BREAK]

[0:24:45] IP: Welcome back. We are joined now by Chris Sloan, who is an aviation journalist and the Founder and Curator of TheAirhive.net. Chris has just released The Airhive 2.0, which is a wonderful online museum of everything aviation. We're talking everything from flight routes and behind the scenes tours, historical aircraft interior, memorabilia, menus, timetables, you

name it, it is here. Chris has joined us to tell us today about the launch of Airhive 2.0 and to take us into the depths of his collection. Chris, thank you so much for joining us.

[0:25:27] CS: Oh, thank you and thank you for pronouncing it correctly, because Jason always was like, “Air Chive,” because that's how it's spelled, “Read, like you mean like the onion? You mean, like something that would differ? I'm like, “No, it's Airhive.net.”

[0:25:39] IP: Yes, yes. I got the play on words. Jason, unfortunately, isn't joining us today. We can bash him all we want and he'll never hear it, because he doesn't actually listen to the podcast, so it works out perfectly. Looking through here, it's basically a history of commercial aviation from beginning when? When does the collection get started?

[0:26:02] CS: I mean, the collection, I think the oldest pieces, artifacts in the collection are in the late 20s. You're right. I mean, it really begins at the beginning, the dawn of commercial aviation. I think maybe the original very, very first Pan Am timetable between Key West and Havana is featured in there. It goes all the way from the beginning and really to the present, but interestingly enough, so many of the documents and you the remember in the old days, you could get – things made of this crazy substance called paper. The idea is timetables and brochures and all that and a lot of the physical items, I mean, a lot of that stuff doesn't exist anymore, so I was really happy to create what I call, I mean, affectionately, my wife calls this airline hoarders anonymous. Yes, it is pretty vast.

[0:26:52] IP: What got you started down this road? Because I mean, this has been the new website, the newly released website is basically version 2.0, but you've been doing this for a few decades now?

[0:27:04] CS: Absolutely. I mean, I started collecting when I was five-years-old. What that meant was taking the bus downtown to the airport and scouring ticket counters, or going to city ticket offices on trips and vacations and bothering those poor people, or calling 800 numbers, or having the cojones to call airlines collect and, “Can you send me a timetable, or a brochure?” And actually became pen pals and wrote the CEO of Delta. I collected this stuff for years and years and years. I grew up in a town that is really a – it's the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and then Miami. Tulsa was unique, because that's where the American Airlines was the largest private

employer. I mean, I had my seven-year-old birthday at the maintenance hangar, and that was so many people work for American and Boeing and Rockwell and Spirit Aerosystems came out in Tulsa.

You were surrounded by it. Just always had a passion for the history and the wonder and interesting enough, the American Airlines Museum, the CR Smith, one of the very best ones actually began in Tulsa in the basement of the airport and it was started by locals. Tulsa is the world's largest – that's American's maintenance base main one, that's the largest in the world. I collected and collected for years and years and years. About 20 years ago, literally in 2003, I had this storage warehouses of this stuff are very perfectly, God, I went through, I don't know, a million Ziploc bags and models everywhere. I was like, what good is this stuff if it's just here for me to see? It's like, “Oh, it's going to be great if I started a museum?” I'm much too lazy for that. But like Flight Path, or CR Smith, or Futures or Flight, or the Museum of Flight, wouldn't it be great to have a brick and mortar?

It was like, it's again, doing this people this – it does nobody any good, unless it shared. My wife was hoping, she was like, maybe this mean like a bridge maybe to getting rid of it and putting it somewhere else? It does look there is, yeah, the man cave that spill it over. I've always carried a camera and photographed everything as well. I really just wanted to share it. I launched it 20 years ago. Actually, this is the fourth iteration, fourth version of the site, because back then we were doing it and I was coding it in really bad dream weaver with horrible Photoshop. It's come a long, long way. I've continued to collect and then had a lot of people contribute. It's, yeah, I just like to think it's –

What's unique is, I think is a little different is, almost easier to say what it isn't, because what it isn't is sure, they're airplane photos, right? But I'm not “a plane spotter site.” There is a lot of aircraft, but it may be in bone yards, or maybe the cabins, or I spend a lot of time on the terminals, or in hangars, or in the network operations control. As an airline photographer, I mean A net, or plane spotters, or I mean, I suck compared to them. My photo skills are maybe slightly better than Brett Snyder's, because I think he admits he sucks at it when it comes to shooting airplane.

What I tried to do with this museum is be where others aren't. you'll see pictures of external airports, but I know Jason really, when he misses LaGuardia's leaking roofs and overpriced pretzel stands, so isn't it cool that you can go back and see what LaGuardia and these terminals look like in the mid-90s? Or isn't it interesting to see what is an American Airlines, or Song Airlines, or what cabin look like from the 90s and 2000s. Like, British Airways, what was the world's first sleeper seat, true lie flat? What does that look like? Besides all the timetables and maps.

That was that was the inspiration is, can I share what most people don't get to see, or what doesn't exist elsewhere? Because there's frankly so many great sites and museums. It was like, what am I going to bring to the party? Well, let's try to bring some something different and super comprehensive.

[0:31:15] IP: How big is the collection at this point? I mean, it's electronic, so I guess what storage size are we talking about?

[0:31:21] CS: It's about 65,000 files. Storage size, I mean, believe it or not, it was 14 gig that we've scanned and that scanning has happened over 20 years. I mean, in the beginning, I did a lot of it. I mean, I still do a lot of it, but I've had groups do that. But then there's a tremendous amount of models that I have, including some really unique, unusual, massive models and airplane seats. My desk is the wing of the first L-1011, so there's a lot of that physical stuff. Yeah, it's two storage units and a crazy man cave. It could probably fill a small airport, actually. Anybody have an airport terminal they can loan me? Because I can't.

[0:32:05] IP: I was going to ask, have you ever given thought to partnering with an airport and putting some of this stuff on display?

[0:32:11] CS: Well, actually, some of it is. You're right. That's what I really want to do. Ultimately, I want to find a place where it'll be seen physically by people. I've been looking at as you get older, you start to – or maybe that's my wife again saying it's like, sometimes I'm afraid to go on vacation. I might come home and I might have the house cleaned out. If you go into the Miami airport, for instance, on top of concourse, E American's concourse there, you'll see my six-foot long TWA 747 cutaway, because it literally was just too big for the house. Or on terminal TWA

Hotel at JFK, a number of years ago with the Museum of Modern Art opened it up after for really only one day, because a lot of stuff went wrong. They had a huge collection of airline and memorabilia and art along with the aesthetic.

I loaned parts, bits and pieces of the collection out physically and hope to do that a lot more and ultimately, probably find a long-term home for a lot of this stuff, because I've never been ever, ever, ever – I've always been a buyer and collector. I've never been a seller and I don't really want to get into that business. There's a few museums have contacted me and I've been talking to about eventually lies, or start delving it out in pieces. Why, you want something? Well, I know you're just moving to a new house. Certainly, you got plenty of room.

[0:33:32] IP: No, no, no, no, no.

[0:33:34] CS: You wouldn't like a whole stack of airline safety cards from Aerlingus from the 70s? Come on.

[0:33:41] IP: I think we could find somebody to take those safety cards. Let's dive into the collection. We've talked about the pictures. We've talked about the seats and the menus and things like that. What are some of the more, shall we say, unique items in your collection?

[0:33:54] CS: Well, I think the most interesting, some of the weirdest stuff and some of the stuff I love most is a friend of mine. Do you remember Laker Airlines, Laker Airways?

[0:34:02] IP: Yeah, Freddie Laker.

[0:34:03] CS: Freddie Laker. Freddie Laker, Jr. is a friend of mine and he was moving, leaving Miami where he was mostly raised between here in the Bahamas, and he was leaving. We actually worked in the same building. He was moving up to a new home, leaving Florida, because that's the cool thing to do right now and his wife gave him similar orders. He said, "Hey, why don't you come over and I've got some of dad's stuff for you." It's like, "Oh, cool. Yeah, of course." I'm like a, I don't know, a trash pickup for an old airline memorabilia. People somehow know to call me.

One of the coolest thing, he gave me a lot of really rare stuff. I think the coolest thing, the two coolest things is Sir Freddie Laker was knighted by the Queen of England in 1979, or something for creating Laker Airways, which we could do a whole story and what was unique and innovative. He gives me the hat that he was wearing signed by the Queen with all the photos of him being knighted in the front-page story and all the London newspapers with the papers. I've got it sitting right here. Sometimes for Halloween, I put on the top hat. I thought, it's like, well, that's crazy.

Then the other thing, every year, he'd buy a new Rolls Royce. There was always a photo of Sir Freddie, who really was the inspiration for Richard Branson and a true legend and not only just from airlines, but a legend in terms of being somebody who worked their way up through the class system and was an entrepreneur in a country that wasn't built that way. He always would buy a new Rolls Royce every year. They always kept the same license plate, FAL1, the exact same physical piece on the car, and he gave me the license plate. Then he gave me a model DC-10, which is a kid's toy that had never been open that his dad said, "I want you to give this to your son." He's like, "Well, I never had any kids. You've got kids. Why don't you take it?" There's stuff like that. Or there's the very first – the DC-10. They only made these three gigantic cutaway models, about six feet long. One was passenger, one all cargo, one combi. Bought this about 20 years ago.

It's a cutaway that McDonald Douglas used to haul around the world to air shows before the DC-10 was built. Much to my wife, she grew in that, lives in the living room. The Concorde. We have a concord cutaway, the actual model that was in the factory lobby at Filton, where they built it. It's a cutaway in Atlantic models and who's like, been amazing to me. They've done restoration on those kinds of things. We got these really interesting models. I have a pair of, sitting in a pair of first class. Well, they feel like first class, but they're actually coach sheets from PSA airlines from the 70s. They look like, I mean, super flower child. If I got an airplane with orange sheets and flowers, it probably made people ill. There's a lot of that.

I mean, the L1011 model handed out at the inaugural, at the rollout. There's a lot of those some interesting physical pieces that I think are really unique. That's the stuff I like physically displaying. I think, probably the best stuff in the collection from a personal standpoint is we named our son after a brand of airplane. We have a complete collection of Alexander Calder

memorabilia and very special models of those airplanes and hand-signed lithographs. I realize, I'm opening myself up to being robbed now that I think about it.

Yeah, we keep this stuff under, because some of it's pretty priceless and valuable. We keep that, a lot of stuff off premises in fairly high security, because some of this stuff, particularly some of these, and some of these old brochures and silverware and plate, some of this stuff does have true historic value. If you'd like a can of unopened brand of coffee grounds from 1976, I'd be more than happy to send that to you. That's sitting right here.

[0:37:54] IP: Oh, boy.

[0:37:55] CS: Then people send us really interesting models and books and things that are from crazy, old company property of literally schematics of aircraft. It's a really interesting collection. As you can tell, I babble on about it because it's – I just love nothing more than to share it with people.

[0:38:15] IP: Chris, one of the things about The Airhive is that it's not just your stuff. Though, I'm still trying to wrap my head about how much stuff you have. But it's not just your stuff. It comes from other people as well. People have contributed to The Airhive over the years. How does that work? Who has contributed and how can anyone contribute?

[0:38:38] CS: I certainly can't have everything, nor would I want to. There's immense amounts of material out there that I think so much people have lying around in their house, former executives, former pilots, you name it, flight attendants, or fans. Some of the best stuff we've had has come from contributors. Now we've really added a function where you can join, upload galleries of photos and pictures, or even, and we'll credit you, of course, or even, we like to say, it's on loan to the digital museum. Or even, a lot of people physically send us stuff, which we'll scan and photograph as well.

I mean, I had a retired pilot who sent us, well, we got these amazing models, which was great. Also, this pilot never got off an aircraft that he didn't take every piece of silverware in his 40-year career off of. I had boxes of soap from a certain airline, or boxes of toilet paper. That might have been a little much. I've had amazing contributions. Jeremy Dwyer-Lindgren, Tom Harris, Seth

Miller have all been a great contributors, because they have amazing, interesting collections and they're probably bigger buyers and source than I am.

Even, we've had a couple of ex-airline executives, which is really fascinating, some senior level airline executives for major U.S. carriers, who are the same airline nerds who've been collecting since they were kids. One guy sent 5,000 timetables and route maps. He said, "I'm under orders to get rid of this, but I don't want it thrown away. I want it held, because I would like to get it back, maybe. Right now, I have to get rid of it, just because I've got too much in my house." That has really helped the collection, as well as a lot of photos.

[0:40:19] IP: Chris, thank you so much for joining us today. This has been a fascinating walk down aviation history. Is there anything that I didn't ask you about that you want people to know about The Airchive?

[0:40:31] CS: Well, thanks, man. Another thing that's just really cool about it that, again, you don't see everywhere is I've been obsessed with tracing first flights and trying to break a Guinness World record that probably doesn't even exist anyway. That's to be on the first inaugurals of new routes, new airlines, new aircraft. It's like on the first flight of the A380, or the in revenue service in the 787 and the A220 and the A350. Or the very last commercial flight, the DC-10. Or if you ever want to be on the Sophia 747SP, or the only flying DC-8, the NASA Lab. I mean, that stuff is all on there.

Or, the very first flight of what it was like on that first flight of Avello, or early first flight of JetBlue to the West Coast. It's a lot of interesting first flights, last flights, industry events, deliveries, going into network operations, control, going into literally the offices, that not just the training, which is cool, but people's offices, the headquarters. You want to see what airline executive offices look like? Or the, I don't know, what's the Delta Commissary look like? It's actually interesting. A lot of that behind-the-scenes stuff is really interesting I think one of my favorite flights, the very last, the MD-80 where I was the only passenger flying one of them to the desert. It's like, what is the very last flight of an airplane that's going to be turned in the beer cans by the end of the day?

A lot of that stuff is, I find is the stuff and a lot of scrap yards, stuff you just don't see maybe in as many places. I think that would be great and for you to see. If you follow us on social media, we are on – I don't know what do you call ex-Twitter. You can X us @theairhive and Facebook and My Face and LinkedIn and all that. We exist and try to produce a lot of content and again, it's been a blast being here. Please, guys. Everybody's welcome aboard. We won't lose your luggage.

[0:42:29] IP: Thanks so much. We've been talking with Chris Sloan, who is an aviation journalist and the Founder and Curator of TheAirhive.net. Chris. Thanks so much for joining us.

[0:42:38] CS: Thanks, dude.

[BREAK]

[0:42:44] IP: Welcome back. Jason, I know that you have done some traveling with Chris, as well as I have and contributed indirectly to The Airhive. I mean, you've played around with the new site. What stands out in your mind?

[0:42:58] JR: Just the absolute wide range of everything Chris has is quite remarkable. Anytime you see anything interesting, or you're following a weird airline, just send a picture of whatever you're doing to Chris and he will Airhive it and it will be on the website forever for everyone to see, because just the number of defunct airlines that he's flown that no longer exists, I think is what's most interesting to me. Because sometimes it's hard to find information, or pictures about airlines that are no longer with us and Chris seems to be the authority on that.

[0:43:30] IP: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that's the – just starting at the beginning of the collection and working away forward chronologically is a lot of fun.

[0:43:38] JR: Yeah. Things like, I flew Song a lot as a kid with my parents. That was Delta's airline within an airline in the early 2000s. I have no pictures of that, or anything. That was before camera phones were a thing, but Chris might have the world's most comprehensive collection of Song photos. Except for maybe the airline guys, because I think they worked with Song for a while, too.

[0:44:03] IP: This was most unexpected and the headline out of the Sydney Morning Herald is I mean, stark, but it's a good headline.

[0:44:14] JR: It caught my eye.

[0:44:15] IP: It caught your eye. Qantas IT blunder leaves corpses in coffins on the tarmac.

[0:44:21] JR: Wow.

[0:44:22] IP: What?

[0:44:23] JR: That headline catches the eye. Qantas, which is no stranger recently to bad headlines, to the point where CEO ran away and said, "Nope, I'm done," or maybe they chased him off. I'm not sure which happened exactly there. But Qantas was apparently transitioning its freight infrastructure to the cloud and it did not go well. They apparently have had 10 days of just nothing really happening with its freight system, so stuff is just piled up everywhere at its major hubs and it's apparently one of the few freight forwarders at some of the major Australian airports, to the point where produce was left to rot, even though it was supposed to be expedited, since it was air freight.

Unfortunately, caskets were apparently not able to be timely processed to where they needed to go, except there's one interesting bit here, where apparently the band Kiss was supposed to play at the AFL grand final and they were able to find the band's gear. Good not to piss off a couple tens of thousands of fans waiting to see a band, where they wouldn't have to go on stage and say, "Sorry, we can't play. Qantas lost our gear." That at least was averted, but yeah, not great, because apparently, Sydney Morning Herald says Qantas controls 25% to full quarter of Australia's inbound air freight. That's a lot of freight to go wrong for over a week.

[0:45:45] IP: Yeah. I mean, it's incredible, the amount of goods that have piled up. It really makes you think about how everything really needs to go right all the time.

[0:45:57] JR: Especially for a country like Australia, it's not like you can't plop a cargo container on a train and have it on the rails to Australia. That's not going to work too well. Air freight is critically important to Australia. To have it go offline for 10 days is that's going to cost Qantas a lot. I don't know, maybe it come out of Alan Joyce's balloon payment that they're trying to call back.

[0:46:19] IP: Maybe. The interesting thing to me is that it's a question of being able to find the stuff.

[0:46:25] JR: Air tags. Put them in everything.

[0:46:26] IP: Yeah. There you go. They're saying that everything is still arriving. But when it gets there, they can't tell you where it is. The freight porters haven't been able to send it on its way, which is just crazy to me. Wouldn't you be able to just put it somewhere and say, "Okay, this is where it is?"

[0:46:45] JR: I don't know. If it's anything like seaports, where there could be tens of thousands of shipping containers, and no one knows where anything is if the system goes down, I guess, it's a bit like that. But you're dealing with such a lower quantity when you're looking at air freight. I don't know. A lot of questions to be answered. If your shipment of whatever coming in and out of Australia is delayed, you probably know why now.

[0:47:08] IP: There you go. This was big news near the end of last week. It was first reported as Spirit AeroSystems CEO, Tom Gentile, abruptly resigned. But in excellent fashion, I think, as we've come to know, a reporter that we lean on on a regular basis, Dominic Gates at the Seattle Times, pulled no punches. "Struggling with defects, Boeing supplier Spirit AeroSystems fires CEO." That was his headline there.

Spirit AeroSystems, of course, is the company that manufactures, among other things, all of the 737 fuselages. They're also the company that has been dealing with a number of manufacturing defects, including having to drill multiple holes into the fuselages. This is when we talked about the snowman a few episodes ago. All of that piling on, they said, it's time for a new CEO. Now,

the former Boeing Senior Vice President and former Deputy Secretary of Defense, Pat Shanahan, will take over while they search for a permanent CEO. Jason, your application is in?

[0:48:23] JR: No. No. Normally I'd say, "Yeah, a CEO position at aerospace company." But no, I don't want anything to do with Spirit AeroSystems. I don't know who would at this point. We've discussed this in the past, how they've just keep screwing up everything there is to screw up with the 737 and 787. It's good to see accountability that the leader of the company was exited, probably a little too late at this point, because the damage is well in excess done. It is super interesting that a former Boeing top executive would be pulled in. It just shows you how close Spirit and Boeing are. It's a relationship that one can't survive without the other. One is really holding back the other from being successful. It will remain to be seen how well Shanahan can hold Spirit back from the brink, because it has not been a good situation there.

[0:49:17] IP: Yeah. Hopefully, this is a ship-writing moment over at Spirit AeroSystems and things improve.

[0:49:24] JR: Or Boeing just says, screw it and buys them outright.

[0:49:28] IP: I mean, they in not the distant past said, "No, we're not going to do that." But who knows at this point? I mean, whether or not that's something that we don't know, that's something that could be on their plate or not.

Recently, the FAA reauthorized Mexico's safety rating as category one, which means that Mexican Airlines can now launch routes back into the USA and vice versa. Aero Mexico will launch 17 new routes to the US, mostly as part of its joint venture with Delta. That's wasting no time and that's a lot of routes.

[0:50:08] JR: That's exciting. Yeah. the code share is obviously very important, but there are a lot of new routes being introduced that I'm sure they've been waiting for a very long time to be able to announce and actually put into the world, because there's been really a lack of capacity between the US and Mexico since this whole thing started. I'm sure, a lot of people will be excited to see these routes. I cannot find the list right now, but it's exciting for those who want to

fly to Mexico. I think there's some new cities involved, like Detroit, I believe is getting a route to Cancun, was it?

[0:50:46] IP: we've got Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, McAllen, Texas, New York, Salt Lake City and Washington, DC.

[0:50:56] JR: Nice. Trying to pull that list up, but the Aero Mexico site is not cooperating with me. Maybe they were hacked by that other Mexican startup airline that I think also launched this website this week.

[0:51:09] IP: Oh, the reincarnation of Mexicana?

[0:51:11] JR: Yeah. I think they actually have flights for sale now, which I couldn't get the website to work, which I don't know. That's surprising. Airlines are difficult. But, yeah. Interesting times in Mexican aviation, for sure.

[0:51:24] IP: Very interesting times. It's also interesting times for Russian aviation, because Aeroflot has settled with another lessor, this time paying off SMBC aviation for the planes that it previously stole.

[0:51:38] JR: Well, remember, this is an insurance settlement once again. This time it's for 710 million dollars for jets previously leased to Russian state-owned airline Aeroflot. Aeroflot's not really paying anything, I don't think. This is all coming from an insurance settlement. In this case, it's related to 16 aircraft and their engines. An interesting look at actually what the value of 16 unidentified aircraft and their engines are worth, because apparently, it's 710 million dollars.

[0:52:09] IP: All right then.

[0:52:10] JR: Yeah. SMBC also had aircraft, at least out to S7, Ural, Nordwind, and Nord Star before terminating those on 2022. Yeah, that's a pretty penny to have come into you from an insurance payment, almost three quarters of a billion dollars. That's something to sneeze at, but still, there's a lot left to be paid out.

[0:52:31] IP: Yeah. I mean, good for them. But I mean, I certainly would have rather had the aircraft back, because then you could lease them out to somebody else.

[0:52:42] JR: They're never coming back.

[0:52:43] IP: They're never coming back.

[0:52:45] JR: They're on a field somewhere after being landed with no fuel.

[0:52:48] IP: Preparations continue to remove the Ural Airlines A320 from the field. They're discussing taking the seats out to lighten the weight. They're building fences around the aircraft. They're waiting for the ground to freeze. This is going to be one of those things where we get weekly updates on how they're doing all of these things. Then one night, they're just going to chop the thing up and call it a day.

[0:53:10] JR: They're going to do it. We're going to get 144 P sideways video off someone's camera phone from 2009 posted to Russian social media. It's going to be awful, but we're all going to watch it.

[0:53:22] IP: There you go. All right, what do you say we close the show with an interesting list of aircraft that Schiphol put out? These aircraft are no longer welcome to fly to Amsterdam. It's quite a long list.

[0:53:38] JR: Ever. You will no longer see a list of 87 aircraft type, or really, it's less than 87, because the list repeats itself quite a bit. But there are 87 types of aircraft that Schiphol has outright, or will outright ban from commercial passenger, or freight operation ever to come back into the main Amsterdam hub here. This will come into effect in, I think, March 31st of next year. The Dutch are really, really, really making sure that they do everything they can to make sure KLM is not a successful airline.

In this regard, we have a list of 87 aircraft codes, at least, that will no longer be welcome. Some of them are interesting choices. Most of them, you would never have to worry about, because I'm pretty sure –

[0:54:24] IP: You would need a time machine to prevent from flying.

[0:54:28] JR: If you are an airline that operates a Boeing 707 Combi, you are no longer welcome back in Amsterdam. If you operate an Ilyushin IL-76, which I don't know, might be possible these days, you cannot –

[0:54:41] IP: That one makes sense. That one makes sense.

[0:54:42] JR: - go to Amsterdam. If you operate an Antonov AN-30, you are no longer welcome back in Amsterdam. There are actually some interesting head-scratchers here, like the 767 freighter is no longer allowed in, but the 767-passenger aircraft is not on the list, I presume. At least, they're welcome, but that problem sorted itself **[inaudible 0:55:04]**.

[0:55:06] IP: But the 767-200 freighter.

[0:55:08] JR: Yes, if I said 300, I meant 200.

[0:55:11] IP: No, no, you just said 767 freighter. I think the –

[0:55:13] JR: Oh, yeah, yeah. Okay, yeah, the 200, the 200 freighter.

[0:55:16] IP: The 200 freighter is no longer welcome, which I think affects –

[0:55:18] JR: That is a big, big difference. Possibly. Yeah, that wouldn't be terribly surprising, but there are very few aircraft on this list that you would ever presumably see again. I mean, there's a slight chance you might see a 747-200, or 300 in a very odd circumstance, but there are some oddities here. They went out of their way to include the Antonov AN-225. That's just rubbing salt in the wound.

[0:55:45] IP: Right. I was like, no one went through this list and was like, have any of these aircraft ever flown here in the last 10 years? Do any of these aircraft continue to fly anywhere in the world? Nobody went through this list.

[0:55:58] JR: No. It's comical to just look through, because if you own a Grumman Goose, you're going to have to fly elsewhere.

[0:56:04] IP: You have to fly it somewhere else.

[0:56:06] JR: Or, if you are the SANS corporation with the only known, I think, L-1011 in service, other than the rocket-launching, sorry, you can't go to Amsterdam.

[0:56:17] IP: Bummer.

[0:56:18] JR: Yeah. It's just a weird list, just that formality here, saying, "Hey, look at all these aircraft we banned, because they're too noisy." Well, none of these are really –

[0:56:26] IP: None of those fly here anymore.

[0:56:28] JR: These are things. They don't really have to worry about them, but if you have a time machine and you happen to fly back a DC-10 and then to operate in passenger service, well, you're going to have to do it elsewhere.

[0:56:39] IP: A DC-10 time machine. That would be cool. DC-10 time machine.

[0:56:43] JR: I mean, on this list, the DC-10 is probably the least interesting aircraft you could bring back. I'd probably go with something like, I don't know, the AN26 would be fun.

[0:56:53] IP: And loud.

[0:56:54] JR: 747SP. Specifically noted. I don't know if any of those are in existence. The only ones I think are government operated, which is excluded from this list, so you might see the 747-300 on this list. Do not fret, Air Force One can still go to Amsterdam.

[0:57:13] IP: There you go. All right, how about we call it an episode? Episode 236. Thank you all so very much for listening. We very much appreciate it. If you would be so kind as to leave a

rating, or a review, we'd appreciate that even more. You can do that wherever you find your podcasts and this podcast, whatever platform you listen to it on. Thank you so much for listening. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[0:57:41] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]