

AUTUMN 2017

# BUSINESS AVIATION MAGAZINE

Onwards and  
Upwards!

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# OPEN FOR BUSINESS

## East Coast meets West Coast

In October 2016, Meridian, which has received a slew of awards over the years for the exceptional customer service it delivers at its New York area Teterboro FBO, officially opened its purpose-built west coast FBO at Hayward Executive Airport. The event was celebrated at a grand opening reception on December 15th, attended by some 150 guests, including the Hayward Mayor and City Council.

The Hayward facility features a newly constructed 6,300 sq. ft. terminal with support offices, plus a 30,000 sq. ft. hangar, capable of handling aircraft on the scale of a Global Express or Gulfstream G650, plus 3.5 acres of ramp area.

Meridian CEO Ken Forester talked to *BAM* about the company's plans for Hayward.

**Q: You are now well ensconced on the west coast. How are things going at Hayward?**

**A:** Hayward is moving along much as we expected. It is always a bit of a slow haul when you are the second FBO on a field that has had only a single FBO for the past six years. We're deep into an education and sales process that spans the region.

Our goal is to attract as many of the neutral customers going into Hayward as we can. For those using the other FBO or other neighbouring airfields, our job really is to try to show them why we could do so much more for them.

On the plus side, we have now filled our 30,000-square foot hangar and we are working on using that facility to attract more aircraft management business to the very strong portfolio of customers we have at Teterboro. The message we focus

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on bringing is that we operate at a very high level, providing an absolutely first-class customer experience, at Meridian Teterboro, which is why our people there keep winning awards for us. We have worked very hard to move that standard out to Hayward, which until now has not been a particularly busy executive airport and where service levels have historically not been anything like the level we provide for our clients at Teterboro. I am very satisfied that how we run the facility at Hayward, and our staff training, has all transferred very well to the West Coast. We believe we can really make a very visible difference there.

Carlos Rodrigues, our line service manager and training officer, moved out to Hayward with his family, when we started working on the facility. He is outstanding both in terms of his technical knowledge and in his understanding of the Meridian culture. He has a great ability to communicate that to others. Carlos started off as our Operations Manager out there and a few weeks ago we promoted him to General Manager at Hayward.

**Q: How are things at your Teterboro FBO?**

A: Teterboro is as busy as could be. We had a tremendous week, following Labor Day. The day after the holiday is always frantic. We started the day with 67 arrivals scheduled,



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and this just grew and grew through the day. The summer of 2017 has been exceptionally busy for us, which is very gratifying, and it looks like business is going to continue strong through the Fall.

We took over the former AIG hangar at the south end of the airport recently when AIG closed their flight department. That gave us an additional 22,000 square feet of hangar space and 11,000 square feet of offices and shops. We are now moving into our rebuilt Hangar 12, which is 40,000 square feet. We tore the old one down and rebuilt it on a bigger scale, so that has given us some very useful additional hangarage.

Our aircraft management fleet continues to grow on the east coast, and we are seeing strong demand on the charter side, which is very pleasing for owners. We are now an authorised Part 145 repair station for Global jets at Teterboro, so things have been moving forward in a very gratifying way.

**Q: What is the basis of the success you are enjoying at Teterboro**

A: It always comes down to people and the customer service culture you instil in the organisation. We have a wonderful group of experienced leaders here at Meridian, with tremendous longevity in the team. Dennis O'Connell, the President of Meridian Air Charter, started here in 1985; Steve Chandoha, the President here at Teterboro started his career with us in 1988; Aida Libiran, our VP of Accounting started as a bookkeeper with us in 1985, the same year that Betsy Wines, our VP of Customer Service joined; Mike Moore, VP of Aviation Sales joined in 2008. Kirk Stephen, our Director of Marketing, is doing a tremendous job and he has been with us for six years now. There are many others in the company I could mention who have a 20 or 30 year history with Meridian.

This really is a business where people make the difference and become your key differentiator. This is what I love about business aviation. |BAM

