

# 'As great as ever'



**"It was a great airplane back then, and it's a fabulous airplane now."**

— Ruby Caballero, team lead, 747 Interiors

## The 747-8 extends an incredible aviation legacy

By Joanna Pickup

**W**ith a small computer balanced on his lap, Chuck Newcombe sat in the cockpit of a new 747-8 Freighter preparing to load customer-specific software into its onboard computer.

The aviation maintenance technician fired off one of the one-liners for which his co-workers have dubbed him "Jokes," and then settled in for the serious task of transferring Electronic Flight Bag software into the airplane's computer. The flight bag's electronic files of airline routes and maps is just one of the many new features of the 747-8 that Newcombe and his teammates have to install and test before getting the aircraft completed, ticketed and ready to deliver to customers.

It was lots of work, he said dryly. And not just for him.

"We've all worked really hard to get to first delivery of this incredible airplane," said the 23-year Boeing veteran, using an adjective to describe the 747-8 that has a familiar ring.

The Boeing teams that designed, developed and built the original 747 more than four decades ago are often called the "Incredibles" for the tremendous job they did. And the airplane that extends their legacy is itself, as Newcombe aptly described it, incredible.

More than 18 feet (5.6 meters) longer than the 747-400, the 250-foot-long (76-meter) 747-8 Freighter is the largest

commercial airplane Boeing has built and has significant improvements in payload and range, as well as lower emissions and noise reduction. It represents more than six years of hard work.

Boasting a maximum takeoff weight of almost a million pounds (454,000 kilograms) and more than 30,000 cubic feet (800 square meters) of cargo space, the 747-8 Freighter will allow airlines to ship more cargo than ever before to cities as far apart as Los Angeles and Melbourne, Australia. The additional cargo capacity provided by the 747-8 Freighter is essential to operators as they plan for long-term air cargo traffic growth.

Few understand the incredible journey of the 747 better than John Sudds and Ruby Caballero.

As one of the original 747 employees—the Incredibles—Sudds has seen a lot of change since his first day on the job in 1967. Now a principal technical designer, Sudds' first designs were hand-drawn with pencils on drafting tables. Measurements were taken with a wood ruler. He remembered getting stuck in a traffic jam on the

**PHOTOS: (Right)** The nose of a 747-8 Freighter. **BOB FERGUSON/BOEING** **(Insets, from left)** Rudy Caballero, team lead, 747 Interiors. **BOB FERGUSON/BOEING** The front of the 747-8 Freighter opens for cargo loading. **BOEING** Engines on the 747-8 are quieter and efficient. **BOB FERGUSON/BOEING**



two-lane road that once was the only route to the factory in Everett, Wash. It's now one of the state's leading tourist destinations and its biggest factory, served by a multilane freeway and dedicated highway interchanges.

"Everything has evolved," he said.

Sudds has been designing floorboards for 40 years. Looking at his computer screen filled with images of engineering drawings, he recalled being a part of the team that designed the first computerized structural drawings of the 747 and helped automate processes.

"It's exciting to watch how the product line, and the way we do our jobs, continues to change over time," Sudds added. "The plane is as great as ever."

Caballero, who has also spent the past

several decades on the program, agreed.

"I've seen a lot over the years," Caballero said. "I started as a mechanic installing all of the interiors, sidewalls, stow bins, you name it. Now everything is modernized and upgraded."

Although she still works on the same part of the 747—its interiors—she said there are always new challenges that must be met.

Caballero still has a 1970's issue of *National Geographic* where she was featured building the interior of 747. "Where does the time go?" she said, laughing at how young she looks in the magazine photo.

She paused and looked at the 747-8 Freighter behind her, "It was a great airplane back then, and it's

a fabulous airplane now," she said.

Or as Sudds put it, "The 747-8 is the airplane." ■

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**PHOTOS: (Below)** A 747-8 Freighter takes off from Paine Field in Everett, Wash. **BOEING** (Insets, from left) John Sudds, 747-8 principal technical designer. **BOB FERGUSON/BOEING** A 747-8 in final assembly. **BOEING** The 747-8 is readied for first delivery. **BOB FERGUSON/BOEING**



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