

Father and son share passion for flying

By Ann Reich, Guest Writer

One of the memorable days for a commercial airline pilot is putting on the crisp-looking official uniform and taking to the skies for the first time. For Mark Gravesen, Captain of a Delta Airbus 320, that day was in 1986 when he was hired by Republic Airlines. For Mark's son, Chad, that day was in January 2015 when he became a First Officer of an Embraer 175 for Compass Airlines.

Father and son both discovered a love of flying at a young age while growing up on a family farm in northern North Dakota near Kenmare. The sky overlooking beautiful prairie farmlands and potholes was their training ground. Mark makes Kenmare his home and commutes to Minneapolis for his flights. For now, Chad is based out of Los Angeles, CA.

Although nearly 30 years separates the beginning of Mark's and Chad's commercial airline careers, their paths had many similarities. Both knew they wanted aviation careers as teenagers, both received their private pilot's licenses in high school, both graduated from the University of North Dakota School of Aviation, both were flight instructors and both flew weather modification several summers to gain flight hours. One difference – Mark was a charter pilot in both Jamestown and Williston in the early 1980s and Chad became an aerial applicator for three years.



Mark and Chad in uniform in the Delta Airbus 320.



Chad's latest flying passion is wingsuiting. He is on the left in the green suit. Wingsuit flying is the sport of flying through the air using a wingsuit, which adds surface area to the human body to enable a significant increase in lift.

And, there is another difference in the way these two pilots take to the sky. For a hobby, Mark enjoys flying his Cessna single-engine aircraft around the Kenmare area. Chad has taken to the air in different ways: aerobatics, skydiving and wingsuit flying. While Chad likes to fly planes, he really likes jumping out of them. Mark admits, with a smile on his face, he has not attempted that yet.

While there is nearly three decades of difference in the time of their flying careers, both agree that meeting many people and seeing different parts of the country is a highlight. But, Chad, noted a specific moment meaningful to him. It was the opportunity to fly in the jumpseat of the Delta Airbus 320 with his dad, the Captain.

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