



“When I started out it was very stressful, but you reach a point where you realize certain things are beyond your control. I know that when I get there, I get there.”

WINGING IT

THINK YOU’VE GOT A LONG COMMUTE?
THESE EXECUTIVES FLY HUNDREDS OF MILES TO WORK.

WRITTEN BY **SUSAN R. MILLER** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PATTY DANIELS**

HOW FAR IS YOUR COMMUTE TO WORK?

IS IT A QUICK DRIVE AROUND THE CORNER, OR DO YOU DREAD GETTING BEHIND THE WHEEL BECAUSE OF THE LONG HAUL TO THE OFFICE? PERHAPS YOU CARPOOL, OR TAKE TRI-RAIL, OR SOME COMBINATION OF BOTH. ¶ THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU’S ANNUAL AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY FOUND 8.1 PERCENT OF U.S. WORKERS HAVE COMMUTES OF AN HOUR OR LONGER. ABOUT 600,000 FULL-TIME WORKERS TRAVEL AT LEAST 90 MINUTES AND 50 MILES. ¶ THAT’S A LOT OF TIME AND GAS MONEY. ¶ BUT THESE COMMUTES PALE IN COMPARISON TO THOSE MADE BY THE FOUR EXECUTIVES YOU’RE ABOUT TO MEET. ¶ THEY HAVE TO HOP PLANES TO THE OFFICE. ¶ AND THEY’RE NOT ALONE. IN 2011—THE MOST RECENT FIGURES AVAILABLE—ABOUT 51,000 PEOPLE WORKED IN FLORIDA BUT LIVED IN ANOTHER STATE, WHILE 91,500 PEOPLE WHO CALLED FLORIDA HOME COMMUTED OUT OF STATE ON A REGULAR BASIS. ¶ IT’S NOT EASY BEING A ‘SUPER-COMMUTER.’ YOU’RE AWAY FROM LOVED ONES FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME, AND ARE CONSTANTLY DEALING WITH FLIGHT DELAYS, LOST LUGGAGE AND GETTING STUCK NEXT TO PASSENGERS WHO NEVER STOP TALKING. ¶ WHY WOULD ANYONE CHOOSE SUCH A NOMADIC EXISTENCE? ¶ WE ASKED FOUR SOUTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONALS WHO’VE RACKED UP ENOUGH FREQUENT-FLYER MILES TO KEEP THEM ALOFT FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

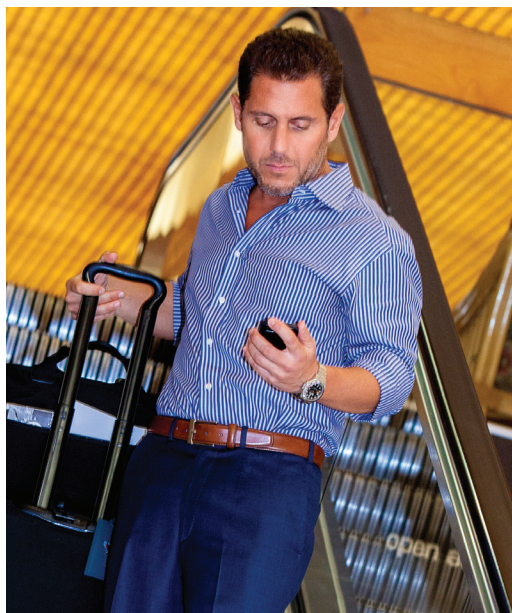
ON THE ROAD AGAIN

NAME: BRUCE HIMELSTEIN, 58
POSITION: CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, LOEWS HOTELS & RESORTS
COMMUTE: BOCA RATON TO NEW YORK, N.Y.

When Bruce Himelstein joined Loews about a year ago, the company understood that he wasn’t going to uproot his family and move to New York. Instead, Loews executives agreed he could continue to call Boca Raton home and commute every week, spending weekends with his wife of 34 years, Brigitte, their three daughters, and grandchildren.

Living life on the road is nothing new for Himelstein, who’s worked in the hos-





“It’s a certain breed who is built for the lifestyle, but it keeps it exciting. It’s better than sitting at the same desk or cubicle day in and day out.”

pitality business for 30 years, including stints at Marriott and The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company.

“If you choose this career, you’re going to travel,” he says. “It enables me to see some wonderful places and spend time with interesting people.”

There have been some family benefits, too.

“I’ve taken my girls and my wife on a lot of trips with me,” he says. “They understand when they are in a hotel, it’s daddy’s work. It’s a second home and they get it and they enjoy it.”

Himelstein says you might be surprised at just how many people commute long distances for their careers.

“I see probably a half a dozen of the same people every week on the same flights, so I know I’m not alone doing this,” he says.

A native New Yorker, Himelstein met Brigitte in the Big Apple and they’ve lived in other places too, including Washington, D.C. But when they moved to Boca Raton a few years ago, they decided this was where they wanted to settle down.

“My family is pretty well-en-sconced in South Florida,” he says.

And while he’s got his travel routine down pat, what doesn’t always run as smoothly are the airlines or Mother Nature. Mechanical failures and bad weather can delay or even cancel his flights.

“When I started out it was very stressful, but you reach a point where you realize certain things are beyond your control,” he says. “I can’t make the plane go when I want it to go. I know that when I get there, I get there.”

KEEPS LIFE EXCITING

NAME: BRIAN CASUTTO, 42
POSITION: EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES, COUNTRY LIFE VITAMINS LLC
COMMUTE: BOCA RATON TO LONG ISLAND, N.Y.

Life on the road—or in the case of Brian Casutto, in the air—isn’t for everyone, but the recently transplanted Boca Raton husband and father of three boys, Luke, 5, Jake, 12 and Zack, 14, says he loves it.

“It’s a certain breed who is built for the lifestyle, but it keeps it exciting. It’s better than sitting at the same desk or cubicle day in and day out,” Casutto says. “It’s got its perks.”

He’s been making the commute from South Florida—he recently moved from Miami to Boca Raton—for about 10 years.

He and his wife, Jennifer, have been together for 22 years and married for 17, and he says the long-distance relationship works.

Casutto flies to the company’s Long Island headquarters every other week, spends a week visiting key accounts and sales managers across the country, and works from his home office one week each month.

He says his key to seamless travel is being aware of the best times of day to fly, and taking advantage of the perks he receives for being a frequent flyer, such as being able to bypass tightened security measures. And, he notes, carry-on luggage is the only way to go. “I don’t go near a baggage carousel,” Casutto says.





{ “I have a lot of friends who live in New York, so we have a social life here. But I have a family life in Miami.” }

“Any frequent flyer would do the same.”

And while he often sees a lot of the same passengers and crew, he hasn’t gotten chummy with any. “Maybe I give them a nod, but not a hello.”

Although flight delays can prove frustrating, Casutto believes he’s actually in a better position than some of his colleagues who live closer to the office.

“If I have to come to New York for an early meeting and jump on a 6 a.m. flight out of Fort Lauderdale to either JFK or LaGuardia, I’m at my desk by 9:30. I sometimes beat people who live locally,” he says. “Sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic is a lot more stressful compared to sitting in an aisle seat watching TV for a couple of hours.”

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

NAME: ANDREA VARAT, 31
POSITION: CO-FOUNDER, TOP SECRET SOCIETY, A WOMEN’S LINGERIE COMPANY
COMMUTE: MIAMI TO NEW YORK, N.Y.

“I’m not sure if I commute to and from Miami or to and from New York. I’m still confused about where my home is!” says Andrea Varat, a Miami native who has apartments in both cities.

When in Miami, she crashes at the apartment she shares with her sister and company co-founder, Michelle. In New York, she lives with her husband, Spencer, an investment banker she married in May. She’s been commuting for

two-and-a-half years—throughout their entire courtship.

Her schedule sounds exhausting: She goes to Miami two to three weeks out of each month, taking an early morning flight on Monday and returning home to New York on Thursday night.

In many ways it’s the best of both worlds: “I have a lot of friends who live in New York, so we have a social life here,” says Varat. “But I have a family life in Miami.”

What’s her secret to stress-free travel? “Global Entry, it’s the best invention ever,” she says of the airline program that allows for expedited clearance. “You don’t have to take anything out of your bag, no shoes off. You can get to the airport a half hour before your flight and you’re OK.”



The number of frequent-flyer miles she has racked up also has its advantages.

"It's taking me on a nice honeymoon," she says. "We're going to Hong Kong, Bali and Singapore."

Being away from her new husband is the toughest part. However, because of the demands of Spencer's job, he often leaves for work early in the morning and doesn't return until late at night anyway.

Will she keep commuting once they start a family?

"It's not a definite 'no,' but we have to figure where we're going to live once kids come into play," she says. "We have some time for that."

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

NAME: LARRY FELDMAN, 63
POSITION: RESTAURANT DEVELOPMENT AGENT, SUBWAY OF SOUTH FLORIDA AND SUBWAY DEVELOPMENT CORP.
COMMUTE: BOCA RATON TO MCLEAN, VA.

Larry Feldman fondly recalls visiting his grandmother in South Florida, when as a child he'd walk out of the airport and feel the "waft of warm air that entered my soul."

"From cancelled flights to not being able to get your bag when the flight is cancelled, that's all part of the craziness."

So, when the chance to live here arose 25 years ago, he gladly made Boca Raton his permanent home.

Feldman, an attorney by training but an entrepreneur at heart, opened his first Subway restaurant in 1979 across the street from Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Today, he's ap-

proaching the 1,300 mark. Building his business has meant being away from home ... a lot.

"I would leave on a Monday, work through the first week, stay over that weekend and work the following week, and then come back home," Feldman says. "I did that for 10 years."

The only thing he appreciated about the time away from home was the return flight and the joyful reunions that followed.

"God bless my wife, Diane, for making it happen," he says. "Having three athletic, rambunctious sons, they always seemed to end up in a doctor's office or hospital, usually orthopedics, when I was out of town," Feldman says.

Despite his success, he still gets on a plane every month to visit his corporate headquarters in McLean, Va.

It's not something he relishes.

"The more I travel, the more it becomes a grin-and-bear-it situation. I just had the flight from hell," he says. "It's more about people who don't care and the lack of customer service, that's the most frustrating part."

In fact, the frustration has reached such a crescendo that Feldman has been in talks with a company about flying privately.

"From cancelled flights to not

being able to get your bag when the flight is cancelled, that's all part of the craziness," he says.

On a positive note, he's racked up plenty of frequent-flyer miles. So many, in fact, that he and Diane are planning a trip next spring to Singapore, Hong Kong and Vietnam. ○

