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Send us your stories...

Have a light-hearted or unusual airline/airliner/commercial flying-related story (length immaterial) that you would like to see in print?

Then please contact Debrief editor Stan Solomon either c/o Airways, (Fax: +1 208 683 7063), or Email: stansolomon@sbcglobal.net

(Complimentary goodies will go to sources of original material at our discretion.)

The Not-So Great Race: It seemed like a neat publicity stunt. No-frills carrier MyTravel Lite invited three journalists to 'race' from Jolly Old England to l'Arc de Triomphe (l'Etoile), in Paris. One would be booked on British Airways (BA) from Birmingham (BHX) to Charles de Gaulle (CDG), and another would fly the same route on Air France. The third, however, would fly MyTravel Lite from BHX to Beauvais (BVA), northwest of Paris. Although the marketing types did not bother to notify either BA or Air France, they did arrange to photograph what they expected would be their man's triumphant arrival. They got their picture—of the British Airways passenger arriving first, who also said he had paid less than MyTravel Lite's fare.

Sometimes They Come Back*: Your checked luggage, that is, Oklahoma's Governor Frank Keating received his back—only 13 years after it disappeared. Keating and his suitcase had parted company on a 1989 Washington-Tulsa flight. It recently arrived in the mail from San Francisco, where it had been living all those years on a shelf in a UAL security office. Inside were a calculator (batteries dead) and some wrapped presents for his mother-in-law. United said this was "certainly an unusual case." Although Keating was lucky, passengers from a Nigeria Airways Lagos-New York flight were last seen looking for theirs. Oddly enough, they were the very same passengers who had refused to hand over the *baksheesh* demanded by baggage handlers in Lagos. Airline officials said the luggage was *not* lost but had been set aside due to space limitations on the leased Air Atlanta Icelandic Boeing 747-200. Of course! Those 747s don't have all that much space, do they?

(*1991 movie, adapted from the short story by horror-meister Stephen King.)

Doggy-Style: A letter-writer to *Aviation Week & Space Technology* complained that *each year* the airlines reduce seat pitch (that whirring noise is the seats moving closer together), and that for his next flight he plans to "get a big dog carrier and ride in the hold" where it would be more comfortable. Wouldn't allowing this whiner down there with Rover and Muffy constitute animal cruelty?

Ten Little Engines*: How many engines would you want on your next over-water flight? According to a survey conducted on behalf of Virgin Atlantic, 51% of the 443 adult passengers polled "showed a specific preference for four-engine aircraft." Say, how many engines on Virgin's A340s? Let's count...one, two, three, *four!* Ah, we get it! Meanwhile, some 10% wanted "as many engines as possible." Perhaps someone could build a replica of the 1929-vintage 12-engine Dornier Do X.

(*Apologies to Agatha Christie, author of *Ten Little Indians*.)

Flying Funhouse: They use smoke and mirrors. Well, at least mirrors. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, designers for Boeing and Airbus try to "trick passengers into thinking they are comfortable—even when they are crammed into the middle seat at the back of the plane." For example, on Virgin's new Airbus A340-600s, already the longest (*Airways*, November 2002), there are wavy mirrors on the bulkheads to make the cabin seem even longer. They also make the flight attendants look thinner—and more attractive. Explaining the use of innocuous colors, an Airbus project manager said, "Nothing would make me happier than if the average passenger got off a plane after 12 to 18 hours and had no recollection of the cabin lining." Seems to us that after a 12- to 18-hour flight the average passenger has no recollection of his own name.

No One Move, Or I'll Faint! The 23-year-old Israeli Arab who allegedly tried to hijack an El Al flight was possibly the most inept would-be hijacker ever. Choosing El Al, with its air marshals, was his first mistake. A first-time flier, he was so frozen by fear that he could not make his move until the airplane was ten minutes away from landing in Istanbul. And the penknife he waved had a blade exactly 1.5in (3.8cm) in length. His friends told reporters that he is extremely sensitive, nervous, and frail. They say he usually faints when under pressure or upset. He will probably be fainting a lot after being sentenced to hard time in one of those notorious Turkish jails.

Nobody nose where United is headed. (As radomes cannot be installed upside down, this one must have been reversed in the stand when painted.)

"Attention...must be paid" Isn't *anyone* listening? Over the 2002 Thanksgiving weekend US airport screeners confiscated: 1,072 clubs or bats; 2,384 flammable items, including a welding gun; 20,581 sharp objects, including meat cleavers; and a brick. The brick was in the carry-on of a passenger departing from Washington Reagan National. Imagine the possibilities:

Screener: Wow, that luggage is heavy! Whaddaya got in there, bricks?

Passenger: Just one.

(*Linda Loman, in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.)

RUR*: Further proof that you sometimes cannot send a machine to do a man's job. The usually reliable online newsletter www.airliners.net obviously uses some sort of 'Gobot', or automated system, to retrieve aviation-related news items. It works quite well...usually. An exception was the headline: "Air Jordan Goes 1-on-1 With Ex-Lover." Turns out it had nothing to do with aviation. 'Air Jordan' is, of course, the sportswriters' nickname for basketball great Michael Jordan. The Gobot also picked up a BBC story on child runaways (memo to Gobot: runaway ≠ runway), and Apple Computer's 'AirPort' wireless technology. (*RUR—Rossum's Universal Robots—a play by Karel Čapek.)

Catchy: A newspaper ad for Aer Lingus included: "Now you don't have to think twice / About getting a really great price / You can click or just call / It won't matter at all / These fares are sure to entice." Almost as good as the Burma-Shave slogan of 1934: "Pity all / The mighty Caesars / They pulled / Each whisker out / With tweezers / Burma-Shave."

Quick Turns

"100-Plus NY Airport Workers Arrested," (newspaper headline). Aren't they rather old, even for airport workers? Wonder what they were charged with?



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