

Jim's Perspective...

First Airline Flight

With the first week of August underway, I think we have entered that period of summer where we see many family vacations taking place. Summer sports, summer camps and school educational activities are usually finished by August, and families can now get away before fall school starts to kick in starting in mid-August. It is an exciting time of year for all families, including my family and my parents' family when their kids still lived at home. My parents usually planned the family vacation in August because, in part, I was always playing Little League Baseball in June and July.

My summer vacation schedule undertook a major change when I turned 16 and started working a full-time summer job as a greenskeeper at Holmes Golf Course in Lincoln in the summer of 1966. My parents planned a trip to Flathead Lake in Montana sometime in early August that summer. The family drove to the lake, but I stayed in Lincoln because I could not be gone from work for roughly two weeks. I had my own 1964 four-door Chevy Corvair to drive to work. My parents really wanted me to spend some time with the family in Montana so they scheduled airline flights to get me to Missoula, Montana for a short vacation. I left Lincoln on Saturday and got back to work the next Wednesday. The high school kids who worked at Holmes Golf Course during the summer always worked weekends and were off work for Monday and Tuesday. So I spent three full days at the lake, but missed only two days of work, which was fine with my boss.

I had never been on a commercial airline flight. It was my first time in the air! My parents arranged for me to wear my sport coat and a tie. I don't remember a whole lot about the airline flights, but flying was very different back then than it is today. When I got on the plane in Lincoln, the men were dressed up in a suit and tie, and the women all wore high heels and a dress. Most of the men and many of the women were smoking. My flight from Lincoln landed in Denver. I took a smaller commercial airline plane that landed in Missoula where my dad picked me up. One very funny thing about the flight to Denver, was that most folks on the afternoon flight ordered a cocktail from a stewardess (now flight attendant!). I decided to do that too! I ordered a beer! There were no questions asked, about my age. No request to check my driver's license. Just a smile, and then a beer! I knew then that I was flying the friendly skies! I did not tell my mom and dad that I had a beer!

Yes, flying back then was very different than today. Airline flights in the late 1960's and through the 1970's always involved a lot of cigarette smoking. The cabin of the plane reminds me of the boardroom scene in the movie *Mad Men*. Back then, planes were usually not very full. Many times the middle seat was empty. I remember too, in the early days when Janie and I would fly somewhere, we often stepped on-board the plane carrying a bottle of wine to sip on while on the flight. Yes, you could bring your own booze onto the plane. I think most airport terminals had liquor stores back then, so that you could buy your liquor at the terminal before boarding the plane. Also, if you were having a cocktail in the airport bar, and it was time to board the plane, the bartender would pour your drink into a plastic cup which you carried on board the plane. The

overhead bins of airplanes back then were netting, not closed compartments. However, in one respect, flying today is much better than back in the sixties and seventies. Back then, I remember occasionally hearing on the news that a commercial airline had crashed, killing all on-board. There could be a couple of serious accidents each year. Fortunately, not so, today.

Airlines still have a dress code, but there is not much to it as near as I can tell. Airlines' appearance rules are found in a legal document called a contract of carriage. This is a legal agreement you enter into with an airline any time you purchase a fare. By purchasing a ticket, you are automatically agreeing to follow the rules and terms listed in the contract of carriage. This contract also deals with other travel matters such as lost luggage and overbookings.

Somewhat related to the above, is the enormous change in the style of men's fashion, and, specifically, the disappearance of the business suit or a coat and tie. Today, everything is "business casual." Throughout my working career, I almost always wore a suit to work. There were certain dress code rules, or rules of style, that applied to wearing a suit, none of which is followed today. For example, in the old days, if you wore a pinstripe suit, you wore a plain-colored shirt such as a white shirt or blue shirt. With the plain-colored shirt, you wore a striped tie. If your suit was just one color, such as a black suit, you wore a striped shirt and a plain-colored or solid tie, or a paisley tie. Well, it was acceptable to wear a plain white or blue shirt with a black suit, but if you did, you usually then wore a striped tie. Finally, it was always important to maintain a correct "gig line." This is a military term and dress code requirement. The gig line involves your tie, your belt buckle and your pants zipper. The tie, belt buckle and zipper all had to line up in a straight line down the front of your body. Also, part of the gig line requirement included that your tie is knotted in such a way that the low end of the tie does not extend below your belt buckle. I can't believe how many times I see the tie extending way below the belt buckle. It looks even funnier when the man buttons the middle button of the suit jacket and the tie sticks out below the buttoned suit and looks like a tail! Many men now wear sneakers with their suit – don't get me started! Business suit style is gone!

OK, I'm done. I am sounding like older adults in the sixties who complained about sixties mod-styled items such as bell-bottomed pants (which I wore), mini-skirts, long hair (which I had), paisley shirts (had this too), go-go boots and flip hairdos! The go-go boots really gained popularity after the release of Nancy Sinatra's 1966 number one song, "*These Boots Are Made for Walkin*." It was all so kinky! It was just "outta sight!" The go-go boot was first introduced by a French designer. The term "go-go" came from the French phrase *la gogue* which means "joy and happiness." My parents would really laugh at this article because all of a sudden, I have become them!



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