

# Frequent Flyer

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## Frequent Flyer

My work life has returned to near normal. I only stayed home one week when I would have been flying somewhere, and I open my mail without gloves or a protective mask. The main differences are that I have to get to the airport two hours before departure rather than just one, and I can't some of the flights I became used to.

Our personal life, on the other hand, is still feeling the aftereffects of the death of Anita's mother. Almost all our Saturdays have been occupied with work on the house, and Anita lately has been going down on Wednesdays as well. We have worked on it for three months and still don't have it to the point where we can show it to a potential buyer.

### September 11 Aftermath—

I was not in the Atlanta airport when a Gainesville Georgia, breached security by running through an exit, because he was afraid he would miss his flight. The airport was evacuated and shut down for three hours. Eventually, he was identified and arrested.

However, I was flying home through Atlanta that night. My 7:30 PM flight from Jacksonville to Atlanta did not leave until 9:30. When we arrived in Atlanta, we sat on a taxiway for 30 minutes before a gate became available. This allowed me less than 30 minutes to get from the end of one concourse to the end of another. When I arrived at the gate, they had to open the jetway door just for me. Since I had a very long layover planned, I arrived home about 90 minutes late. To my pleasant surprise, my luggage arrived on the same flight.

According to the November 6 issue of The Atlanta Constitution, "Miles flown by paying passengers [with Delta] fell 24 percent" in October. Northwest declined by 29 percent and U.S. Airways by 34 percent. Traffic for British Airways went down 25 percent.

Delta's traffic included a 20 percent decline in domestic routes and a 35 percent slide on international flights. Total seats occupied fell 8.5 percentage points to 60.5 percent as the carrier reduced flight capacity by 13 percent.



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At Northwest, the percentage of seats occupied fell 8.9 percentage points to 66.3 percent from 75.2 percent.

U.S. Airways ... said domestic traffic fell 34 percent as the airline cut the number of available seats by 25 percent.

Domestic airlines posted a combined \$2.4 billion loss for the quarter ending September 30, even if you count the \$2 billion in federal aid.

Before the 11/12 crash of Flight 587, American Airlines looked like one of the likely survivors, and air travel was recovering. On September 30, they had \$2.3 billion in cash and \$8 billion in aircraft and other assets available to use as loan collateral, despite a \$414 million third quarter loss. Even if the cause of the crash is determined to be accidental, fliers may choose other airlines if they choose to fly at all.

In a related development, the Belgian airline Sabena has declared bankruptcy. According to the November 7 issue of The Atlanta Constitution, demand for Trans-Atlantic travel has fallen a third since 9/11.

Walt Disney Company said attendance at its Walt Disney World theme park in Florida is off 25 percent from last year. Four Seasons Hotels says its revenues are down 17% from last year.

### Monday Night Football—

You may remember when I bought my Packer tickets last summer that I also bought a set to the Tennessee Titans-Baltimore Ravens game. I had originally intended to sell all of them, but as the date approached I worked out my schedule so that I could attend. Therefore, I was not flying on 11/12, the day of the American Airlines crash. Dan Caldwell had originally bought one of my tickets, but he felt ill on game day so he dropped by and gave me his ticket to sell to a friend of Ray's.

Anita had to go to school that night, so I invited our friend Doug. He came over to the apartment after he got off work, and I drove my car downtown. We decided to park across the Cumberland River from the stadium and walk across a bridge. We were pleasantly surprised at how close to the bridge we were able to park.

We got to the stadium in good time and waited to meet Ray and waited and waited. Unfortunately, we got our locations mixed up and were waiting on opposite sides of the stadium. After 45 minutes, I started to wave Dan's ticket to sell it. The first prospect offered \$10 for it, although the face value was \$37.50. Last summer all the single game tickets were sold out in 45 minutes, but because the Titans had lost more games than they had won this season, the value had dropped. My respect for Titans fans also dropped. I eventually gave up and sold the ticket for \$10.

Doug and I were in different sections so we split up. When I found my section, I bought my supper of beer and bratwurst and sat down to watch the game. Later I got some nachos. The seat was on the end zone, but high enough that I had a good view of the entire field. The highlight of the pre-game festivities was the flight of a trained Bald Eagle named Challenger from the arm of one handler in the upper deck to another on the field. The first half was a boring exchange of punts except when the Titans attempted a field goal. The snap was high, and the holder, former Packer Craig Hentrich, could not hold on to it. He recovered, however, and attempted a pass into the end zone that was intercepted by the Ravens.

The second half was more exciting, but the temperature dropped. Titan quarterback Steve McNair was stopped at the Ravens goal line by Corey Harris, another former Packer, as time expired, and the Ravens won 16-10. After Doug and I met up after the game, we walked back across the bridge, albeit much slower because of the mass of people.

### Organ transplants—

In a series of stories 30 years ago, Larry Niven postulated a revival of the death penalty to provide organ donors. The November 11 on-line version of The New York Times reported that Americans are traveling to China to receive organs from executed prisoners. Few, if any, of the donors consented. China is executing about 5,000 prisoners annually. Foreign recipients pay about 10 times more for the transplants than Chinese citizens, according to the article.

*Star Trek*—

The July-August issue of Hospitality Technology has an article titled “Starship Enterprise: Beaming up real-time data for centralized control.” It concerns using an Internet-based network to centralize data processing functions. Section headings are “You will be assimilated,” “Make it so,” and “Resistance is futile”. On the first page is a picture of the Enterprise E, but the show is never mentioned in the text.

### Comments on #223

The Draft—

I don't think we'll have to worry about a reinstatement of the draft. Only Special Forces are fighting the ground war in Afghanistan. Large armies of conscripts are probably obsolete anyway.

Mike Weber—

Our cat charges into the kitchen whenever one of us walks there in the hope we will feed her.

Gary Robe—

I've had several instances of flying since 9/11 where I got to the airport two hours ahead of time and then took only 15 minutes to pick up the boarding pass, check luggage, and go through security. On the other hand, there have been times when I've waited in line at security for 30 minutes or more.

Janice Gelb—

When Anita and I visited Maggiano's in Philadelphia, we didn't make advance reservations and only had to wait a few minutes to be seated.

Do you prefer that all Worldcon panels and readings stop at 6 PM each night?

You're too late. Anita and I saw *The Musketeer* already. Actually, I was curious to see how they would handle the story and did not have high expectations. As I thought, it was a mediocre movie with some interesting fight scenes.

When I visited my Jackson, MS, office the week after September 11, I got caught up on my trade journals and industry magazines. I also found them weird to read.

Don Markstein—

I've felt for a long time that the Sixties really began with the JFK assassination. In his book *The Fifties*, David Halberstam dates them from the 1960 presidential election, because of the importance of the televised debates to Kennedy's victory.

Arthur Hlavaty—

I'm finishing my comments on November 21 so let's see how your NFL predictions are doing.

You listed the Chargers, Cardinals, Browns, Redskins, Patriots, and Bengals as incompetently managed. The Chargers are 5-5, the Browns 5-4, the Redskins 4-5, the Patriots 5-5, and the Bengals 4-5. You considered the good teams to be the Broncos (currently 5-5), the Buccaneers (4-5), the Ravens (6-4), the Titans (4-5), the Colts (4-5), the Seahawks (5-4), the Jets (7-3), the Dolphins (6-3), the Vikings (4-5), the Eagles (6-3), the Rams (8-1), the 49ers (7-2), the Saints (5-4), and the Lions (0-9). The Bears (7-2) caught me by surprise, too, and I didn't expect the Lions to be as bad as they have been. Obviously, I am satisfied with the Packers' (6-3) start.

Guy Lillian—

Re a parking lot called Lancelot in *Shrek*: At Disneyland and Disneyworld, they name the parking lots after Disney animated characters such as Goofy and Pluto.

Richard Dengrove—

Anita and I occasionally attend Tarot reading parties at a friend's house. Our friend claims to be psychic, and her readings for us have had mixed results. However, she has a friend's whose readings have been quite remarkable in accuracy of their predictions.

Our friend has also introduced us to a group of people who all claim to be UFO abductees. We met them at her house, but declined an invitation to take an out of town trip to visit them. I remember the comedian, activist, and sometime presidential candidate Dick Gregory claim the CIA had custody of a flying saucer when he spoke at my college during the Seventies.