



You can shoot an insurance salesman and he will turn it into a pitch of how uncertain the future is and why you need life insurance. These guys don't recognize the concept of sales resistance. The only thing that stops them is they think there is too high a risk of paying off. It was a nice comforting thing to

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see those machines in the terminals. It is like knowing the rats haven't deserted your sinking ship yet.

But that is the sort of thing I think about when we take off. I have to have something to think about. They make me turn off my palmtop computer. This thing is the size of a pencil case and they think it is going to disrupt the planes radios at the front of the plane. ("Flight 123 you are cleared to take off." "Sorry, Control, no can do. Somebody is running a palmtop.") Well, it is better than what Indian airlines put people through, but that is another story.

Of course, airlines now all have their own magazines dedicated to serving their passengers with tattered covers and half-finished crossword puzzles. (Or is that a misplaced modifier?) (Why is it I always sit in the seat where someone knew "15 across: President who succeeded Ronald Reagan" but never someone who knew "18 down: Permian ungulate"?) They of course have a cover story about some exciting star like Keanu Reeves, the first male to win the Marilyn Monroe acting award given to someone for impersonating an actor and having everybody fooled except the audience. Now he also has the distinction of being the Mnemonic you want to forget. But what I like are the ads, obviously aimed at a business crowd. There will be one disguised to look like a newspaper ad with a headline that says "New book makes it too easy to become CEO of your company. Experts say it takes all the sport out of climbing the corporate ladder." Do people really believe that stuff? I guess if you are an executive type it really gets the pulse pounding and the blood flowing. But I think they only work on would-be business executives who are a little starved for oxygen. I think it was in rarefied oxygen that some executive decided it was a pretty good idea to build a Disneyland in France.

The oxygen is something that I have never completely understood.

If you or I were designing an oxygen mask, there wouldn't be much to it, would there? There would be a plastic mask (orange is fine) and a plastic tube. That is all it would take, right? Why do they have them in a plane where the feed is through a plastic bag? I mean, I don't mind, I am just afraid the time will come and I will want to breathe with mine and it will collapse. I will breathe in and I will be sucking wind. I am afraid any oxygen they give me will get lost in the bag. I mean, I can lose my comb in my right pants pocket. How do I know I will be able to find the oxygen I need in that bag? Won't it get lost? I mean, isn't this like trying to sip a drink through a garbage bag? It doesn't work. Seriously, I am getting to the point that I am hoping I never need oxygen on a plane.

More about my needs on a plane next week. [-mrl]

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