



TAILPIECES

by Joel Chusid

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Menu Driven Site

There are plenty of collections to satisfy the curiosity of airline nostalgia fans. Here is one, actually maintained by a prestigious institution, Northwestern University, on airline menus. In 1997, alumnus George M. Foster donated his collection of inflight, railroad, and ocean liner menus dating back to 1928, and last year the University released the digitized copies online for "non-commercial research." It is a trip down memory lane with airline names of the past such as CP Air, Pan Am and BOAC with some modern indexing such as the menu for the 1961 South African Airways flight from Salisbury, Rhodesia, which has been updated to the current name of Harare, Zimbabwe. The menus themselves provide a glimpse of the days when people actually dressed up for dinner and air travel. Mr. Foster's handwritten comments are also intriguing. On his Northwest Airlines flight from San Francisco to Minneapolis in 1978 he pronounced the broiled tenderloin steak "boiled as usual." Dig through the collection at <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/transportation/digital-collections/menus/>.

First Class to Nowhere

Ever heard of Air Hollywood? Well, it flies thousands of people all over the world without ever leaving the ground, and it is not even FAA approved. Air Hollywood is the film maker's dream – a set of airplane and airport mockups in Pacoima, California, used for filming commercials, television shows and full length movies. Founded in June of 2001 by

Talaat Captan, Air Hollywood suddenly found itself in demand a few months later when, post-9/11 tighter restrictions limited access to aircraft and simulators by outsiders. There are wide-bodies, narrow-bodies, cockpits, airport sets and more, and everything comes apart to allow precise camera angles. The "airline's" website, www.airhollywood.com, provides footage and a fascinating insight into the world "where filmmakers fly first class." The sets have hosted movie stars and formed the backdrop for films like *Kill Bill*, *Intolerable Cruelty* and that Listerine commercial where the guy with bad breath falls asleep on his seatmate.

Not Your Airline of Choice

Leather seats, ample legroom, free food and a generous baggage allowance are all standard, but ICE Air would not be an airline you would want to fly on. ICE stands for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and it is also known as the "deportation airline." Featured in a Wall Street Journal article last fall, ICE operates from locations like Alexandria, Louisiana, and Mesa, Arizona, that are close to detention centers, carrying deportees back to their homelands, mainly in Central America with three daily flights to Guatemala City and two to Tegucigalpa. Service was also inaugurated to some Asian points.

The airline has a fleet of ten aircraft, including Boeing 737s with leather seats. Basic meals are served and service is polite. Passengers are frisked before boarding, and security agents serve as flight attendants. Business has been brisk and load factors run high – about 75,000 passengers flew ICE Air last year, 50% more than two years before. The U.S. government foots the bill, so the passengers are considered "non-revenue." The airline operates much like a commercial carrier, even right down to overbooking. Yes, occasionally a "non-revenue" deportee might get "bumped" for someone with a higher priority.

Soaring to New Legal Heights

Under some state laws, bars and restaurants have been held legally accountable for serving alcohol to patrons who became inebriated and injured themselves or others or caused property damage. But what if this occurs at 40,000 feet over the Pacific? A Japanese couple is suing United Airlines for serving too much Burgundy wine, which resulted in domestic violence, on a flight from Osaka to San Francisco. The husband struck his wife six times while clearing customs – of all places – after landing. He was arrested, charged with disorderly conduct and assault and sentenced to 18 months of probation.

Legal fees and court costs exceeded

\$100,000 which the couple wants United to pay. In addition, they are also demanding compensation for the "pain, suffering and loss of income" as a result of the "deliberate and reckless behavior" endured at the hands of flight attendants who continued to refill the husband's glass every 20 minutes. United plans to aggressively argue that the case is without merit and that the "crime" occurred outside of U.S. jurisdiction, let alone in any state. The case is unusual and will be decided in a Florida court.

Canary Luggage

People will try to bring anything on an airplane as previous *Tailpieces* can confirm. A few months ago, Brazilian authorities detained a man who had managed to check a bag onto his flight from Lima containing 200 canaries. Upon arrival at São Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport, authorities made the discovery. It was not disclosed why the bag was suspect, but it could be some of the birds were singing. About a third of the canaries had died, but the ones who survived the journey were "deported" back to Peru while the man was charged with animal trafficking.

JetBlue South Takes Off

Speaking of Brazil, it seems to be a good place to start a new airline. The country's air transportation system has been plagued with ATC issues, and during the holidays, newspapers scrutinize the airlines' punctuality. Two years ago TAM was skewered in the press at Christmastime, and this past December, GOL, which had earlier bought bankrupt Varig, took a front page beating in the press.

Azul, founded by JetBlue's originator, David Neeleman, began service just before Christmas from Viracopos Airport in Campinas, near São Paulo. The company plans to serve 25 cities within a year with brand new Brazilian Embraer 190 and 195 jet aircraft, growing the fleet to 42 by 2012. Campinas is home to many companies and a large population, and the airport has been underutilized. Taking into account the country's long distances between cities, the airline's strategy is to use low fares to attract passengers from buses. No middle seats, seatback screens and other amenities are featured.

Neeleman was born in Brazil and is glad to be building another airline in his "second home" country. We wish him success. By the way, "Azul" in Portuguese means blue. A contest that attracted 150,000 entrants chose "Samba" and "Azul." "Samba" actually received more votes than Azul, but airline executives decided to stick with the color. To be fair, prizes were awarded to those who suggested either name.