



TAILPIECES

by Joel Chusid

Joel Chusid is the General Manager, North America for Hainan Airlines, China's largest non-state owned airline. An airline veteran and consultant, he has also contributed numerous feature articles to *Airliners*.

Contact him at joel@airliners.tv. (Unusual and interesting news items are always welcome!)

To Go or Not to Go

All Nippon Airlines created a stir last October when it announced that it would encourage passengers to use the restroom before boarding. The idea was to lessen total weight to reduce aircraft fuel consumption and carbon emissions. The savings would be significant. In fact, All Nippon estimated 4.2 tons of carbon dioxide would be reduced if half of the passengers did this. However, to add insult (and embarrassment) to injury, the airline also intended to have flight attendants, who the press dubbed "loo attendants," question the urgency if someone attempted to use the lavatory in flight.

The procedure was just part of an overall "going green" effort the airline implemented. Let it be known, this is not the first time an airline has tried this. Those of you who have regularly read my column can go back to *Tailpieces* in AL104 (March/April 2007) and discover that China Southern tried the same thing nearly three years ago. No word on China Southern's experience with the lav limits.

Room 360

Here is another innovative idea, and it flies. Speaking of "going green," my columns have covered airplanes recycled into homes, hotel suites, restaurants, youth hostels and, in the last issue, furniture. A Shorts SD-360 (G-SSWE, cn SH3705) is now starting a new life as a classroom at Kingsland Primary School in Stoke-on-Trent, England. With the school in need of additional space, the students were asked

what kind of classroom they wanted. Having recently visited a Concorde, an airplane was suggested. Over a two year period, one was found, purchased for £11,000 and refurbished with classroom seats, desks and laptops.

The Phoenix, as this hull is named, is now complete with Pratt & Whitney engines and a mock runway. The 360 is a boxy craft and was built in Belfast – the last one having come off the line in 1991. I flew on it quite often years ago. It was a comfortable, spacious commuter airplane, although unpressurized, rather slow and subject to encounter low altitude turbulence. This 360 was most recently flown by Emerald Air (formerly code G3), and it was operated on flights to Ireland and Spain. Spain? That's a long way in a 360 from England!

Suite Piece of History

While we are on the subject of recycled planes, here is another rather unusual hotel suite located at the edge of the Teuge Airport, just east of Amsterdam. Found in a junk heap and refurbished by a Dutch entrepreneur, this "five star" room boasts all the comforts including WiFi, a sauna and jacuzzi, bar, kitchen and flat screen televisions. This uniquely converted Ilyushin 18 is a Russian 1960s era four-engine prop plane that flew for East German carrier, Interflug, to places like Cuba, Vietnam and Moscow during the Cold War. It often carried East German officials, including leader Erich Honecker; hence the name, Hotel Honecker. The cockpit remains intact, including the seat for the "STASI" (East German secret police) officer who was there to be sure the plane flew to its intended destination. Hotel rates are about \$500 per night for two, and a conference room that can seat 15 is also available. At press time reports were that the hotel was booked heavily. One journalist said, "the Dutch like sleeping in crazy places," and this one was indeed a piece of history.

Your Attention, Pleasèd

Take a look around next time you fly and you will see that most passengers do not pay attention to the safety briefing. Virgin America sums it up pretty well when its announcement says, "For the .0001% of you that have never buckled a seat belt..." Actually Virgin has one of the more innovative methods of getting passengers to pay attention with a humorous cartoon that features a tech-savvy nun and a nervous bull-fighter, new to flying, whose bull exhibits a more blasé and confident attitude. I have flown Virgin a few times and have always found the video entertaining while driving the safety points home.

Recently Air New Zealand began using its "Bare Essentials of Safety" video that featured naked crew members with their

uniforms discreetly painted on. It also became a hit online. Now Thomson Airlines' latest briefing done by a cast of adorable kids, complete with teddy bears and toys, became an instant internet hit. Bloggers report that it is hard for passengers on Thomson to not pay attention. Check out all three videos on www.youtube.com.

In-flight Shoplifting Not Recommended

It is not a good idea to try to steal things off a commercial airliner. I recall people stuffing pillows into their carry-on bags and women carrying off sleeping babies in those American Airlines blue "non-fabric" blankets. Of course, pillows and blankets are now a thing of the past on most airliners. The 23-year old passenger on a recent Air Canada Jazz flight from Vancouver to Fort McMurray must have checked his brains in, along with his bag, at the check-in counter. He apparently lifted a couple of cans of beer from the beverage cart and, when confronted, attempted to flush the cans down the toilet. That would have caused some damage! The pilot chose to divert the Bombardier CRJ-7 regional jet to Kelowna where the airborne thief was arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

More Crews Behaving Badly

It is not just passengers who sometimes leave their brains at the check-in counter. How would you like to look up and find the cockpit crew of your flight trading punches at 30,000 feet? Air India Flight IC-844 was en route from Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates to Delhi, India, one day in October when a flight attendant was thrown out of the cockpit after reportedly resisting amorous advances by the captain and co-pilot. Another crew member intervened and a fight broke out. Flying the Airbus A320 over Pakistan, the captain threatened to make an emergency landing, but cool heads prevailed and the cabin crew proceeded with their duties as if nothing were wrong. Pending an investigation, the crew was subsequently grounded over the incident, and the story made headlines in the Indian press.

It had not been a good few weeks, PR-wise, for the Indian flag carrier. It endured a hunger strike by 20,000 employees in August over wages. In addition, there was the embarrassing incident involving two pairs of passengers who started their trip in Bangladesh, but both pairs ended up in the wrong country. One couple mistakenly deplaned at Kolkata instead of Bangkok, and the others erroneously stayed on board, instead of ending up in Delhi.

That's not all. Just a week before the fighting incident, a flight scheduled from Amritsar to London had to be delayed several hours after passengers noticed a rat on board. ✈