

The Boeing 707 Water Wagon

The good old days ... life will never be the same.

WHEN MEN WERE MEN AND 707's ROAMED THE EARTH

In the age of the 'water wagon' 707's...

That smoke is from the 1,700 pounds of water injection the J-57s and freighter JT-3's used for take off. (Go to the overrun and suck the gear up). Those were the good ole days! Pilots back then were men that didn't want to become women or girly men.

Pilots all knew who Jimmy Doolittle was. Pilots drank coffee, whiskey, smoked cigars and didn't wear digital watches. They carried their own suitcases and brain bags, like the real men they were. Pilots didn't bend over into the crash position multiple times each day in front of the passengers at security so that some Government agent could probe for tweezers or fingernail clippers, or too much toothpaste.

Pilots did not go through the terminal impersonating a caddy pulling a bunch of golf clubs, computers, guitars, and feed bags full of tofu and granola on a sissy-trailer. Wearing no hat and having granny glasses hanging on a pink string around their pencil necks, while talking to their personal trainer on the cell phone!!!

Being a Pan Am Captain was as good as being the King in a Mel Brooks movie. In my youth, all the Stewardesses (aka. Flight Attendants) were young, attractive, single women that were proud to be combatants in the sexual revolution. They didn't have to turn sideways, grease up and suck it in to get through the cockpit door. They would blush, and say thank you, when told that they looked good, instead of filing a sexual harassment claim.

The Junior Stewardesses usually shared a room and talked about men...with no thoughts of substitution. Passengers wore nice clothes and were polite; they could speak, read AND understand English. They didn't speak gibberish or listen to loud gangsta rap on their iPods. They bathed and didn't smell like a rotting pile of garbage in their jogging suit and flip-flops.

Children did not travel alone, commuting between trailer parks. There were no 'Biggest Losers' asking for a seatbelt extension or a Scotch and grapefruit juice cocktail with a twist.

If the Captain wanted to throw some offensive, ranting jerk off the airplane, it was done without any worries of a lawsuit or getting fired. Axial flow engines crackled with the sound of freedom and left an impressive black smoke trail like a locomotive burning soft coal. Jet fuel was cheap and once the throttles were pushed forward they were often left there. After all, it was the jet age and the idea was to go fast (run like a lizard on a hardwood floor).

Except while flying over the deep oceans, "economy cruise" was something in the performance book, but no one knew why or where it was. When the clacker went off no one got all tight and scared because Boeing built their machines out of iron.

Nothing was going to fall off and that barber pole sound had the same effect on real pilots then, as Viagra does now for these new age guys. There was very little plastic and no composites on the airplanes (or in the Stewardesses' pectoral regions). Airplanes and women had eye-pleasing symmetrical curves, not a bunch of ugly vortex generators, ventral fins, winglets, flow diverters, tattoos, rings in their nose, tongues and eyebrows.

Airlines were run by men like C.R. Smith, Juan Trippe and Bob Six who had built their companies virtually from scratch, knew most of their employees by name and were lifetime airline employees themselves, not pseudo financiers and bean counters who flit from one occupation to another for a few bucks, a better parachute or a fancier title while fervently believing that they are a class of beings unto themselves.

And so it was back in the 60's when I was a young airline pilot...and like my youth, it never will be again! Damn!

Flying is the second greatest thrill known to man. And what is first, you ask?

Landing, of course!