



Georganne & Rich – On The Road

BY RICH KIZER & GEORGANNE BENDER

The Glamorous Life

How faking air sickness and hanging your undergarments on lamps can help you travel more comfortably

People who don't travel for a living think business travel is so glamorous. You get to see the world, eat at the finest restaurants, and stay at Five Star hotels! Actually, we see more of the world's airports and convention centers, eat at fast food restaurants, and stay at hotels where folks are sometimes less-than-thrilled to see us.

AIR SICKNESS

Nope, travel ain't all glamour, but it can be fun. We love Southwest Airlines because the people who work there really are friendly folks. They make us feel important, plus they get us to where we're going on time, which is a very good thing in our line of work.

If you've traveled on Southwest Airlines, then you know that they don't pre-assign seats. Depending on when you check-in, you are given a boarding pass for the "A" group, the "B" group, or the "C" group. This is not a class distinction; on Southwest all the seats are the same. The letter on your card shows when you are permitted to board the plane. Obviously, the "A" group is preferable because you get to board first. When we fly Southwest, Rich always grabs an open row and sits in the window seat. Georganne sits on the aisle, with the hope that the center seat will remain open, so we'll have more room.

On full flights, Georganne has been known to pick up the air sickness bag, hold it tightly in her lap, and stare at it

until it looks like everyone is on board and in their seats. If someone eyes the empty seat next to her, she coughs a few times, stares a little harder, and the person usually keeps on moving down the aisle. The flight might have just one open seat left when they close the doors, but there's a good chance that one open seat is the one between us. We've shared this trick for years in our seminars, and we know it works, because attendees have called to tell us so. One man even sent us a bottle of wine, along with a nice photograph of himself on the airplane holding "the bag."

NO GUARANTEES

As you would imagine, checking in to hotels isn't always glamorous, either. There's not always someone in a spiffy uniform waiting outside to open the car door and whisk us directly to our rooms. And, sometimes, even confirmed and guaranteed room reservations are neither confirmed nor guaranteed.

One memorable experience happened one winter night when we had to drive from one seminar to another, a trip that under normal conditions took about three hours. It was snowing that night, so our three hour drive was more like six, but we weren't too worried. We'd arrive at the hotel around midnight, in plenty of time to set up the meeting room, and sleep for a few hours before our seminar in the morning.

So we schlepped our bags through the

snow, and into the lobby, where the desk clerk informed us that it was late, and because of the storm, he had given our guaranteed rooms to other people. They were completely sold out and there just wasn't a thing he could do for us, except call other hotels to look for rooms. After 20 minutes of calling, he found another property – 57 miles away.

We looked at him like he was nuts. It was now close to 1:00 a.m., and this guy wanted us to drive 57 miles in a snow storm, then turn around and drive back in time for our 7:00 a.m. seminar that was at his hotel? Rich offered every solution he could think of until, exasperated, Georganne announced that we would be just fine sleeping right there in the lobby. There were two very nice couches, and we could each take one. Then she began to unpack her suitcase. Just as she was about to hang her undergarments on the lampshade, the desk clerk produced the night manager, who apologized, and miraculously, produced two rooms. This hotel's policy, it seems, was to always keep a few rooms open just in case some dignitary happened to show up. The desk clerk knew it, but he apparently didn't think we were important enough to suggest this to the manager, until we raised a ruckus.

And just like Southwest's air sickness bag, the old hanging-your-shorts-on-a-lampshade-in-the-lobby works, too. Just ask our good friend Bob Ferguson, owner of Ben Franklin Crafts, in Redmond, Washington.

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As bad as our experience was, we only verbally expressed our displeasure. We could have been like the two guys from Seattle who arrived at a Houston, Texas, hotel only to find their guaranteed room reservations had been given to other travelers. They also weren't real thrilled with the snotty and unapologetic desk clerk. Unlike our situation, there was no manager there to save the day, and the two gentlemen had to spend the night at another less-than-desirable hotel.

Rather than threatening to sleep in the lobby, these guys created a PowerPoint presentation for the management of the hotel, entitled, "Yours is a Very Bad Hotel". Then they unleashed it on the Internet to be viewed by millions of potential customers.

According to one slide in their presentation the "Lifetime chances of dying in

a bathtub are 1 in 10,455; The chance of the of Earth being ejected from the solar system by the gravitational pull of a passing star is 1 in 2,200,000; The chance of winning the UK Lottery is 1 in 13,983,816; and the chance of either of them returning to that hotel is worse than any of those." You can view the presentation in its entirety online at www.snopes.com/business/info/badhotel/frame.htm.

LUCKY IN LAS VEGAS

When you travel a lot, you are very aware that sometimes luck just isn't going to go your way, but then there are glorious times when it does. Like the time we arrived at the Mirage Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, only to find that our \$75 a night, heck-of-a-deal rooms, were not available. Some

mistake had been made somewhere, and the property was sold out.

This time the desk clerk didn't call for a manager, she didn't try to sell us more expensive rooms, and she didn't offer to find us another property. Instead she just smiled, told us our low rate would be honored for our entire stay, handed us our room keys, and told us to call her personally if we needed anything. Needed anything? She had given us two incredible rooms, plus an unbelievably luxurious 2,000-square-foot suite comfortably nestled in-between them.

So maybe travel isn't so bad after all. We've been lucky because our good travel stories far outweigh the bad. Knock on wood, our luck will continue. Maybe we're weird, but we actually enjoy business travel. Even the unglamorous parts. ♦