

A consumer's tale

The sardine who caught the giant's ear

Take heart, Mr., Mrs., Ms. Consumer, apparently your raised voices are sometimes heard.

Even the giants, like American Airlines, are listening.

And hearing, too. During November, a trip took my wife and me to San Diego, Calif. Marilyn made the round-trip arrangements well in advance so that we could qualify for American's SuperSaver fares and trim our transportation costs.

The run out was fine, no problems.

ON THE RETURN, we got our seat assignments at San Diego airport, which incidentally is regarded by the professional pilots' association as the third most dangerous place in the nation to land.

What Nos. 1 and 2 are I do not care to know. Some far off day I might find myself on a plane landing at one of them.

Anyway, as we entered the plane in San Diego the pretty attendant waved us, along with about 50 others, to the last rows in coach.

Looks like a full house, I thought. We were crammed in, three to a row, starting from the back of the cabin.

What shook me was that the first 15 to 18 rows in coach were occupied by only half a dozen people. Being the inquisitive type, I asked the attendant,



Tom Riordan
Executive Editor

"Hey, how about letting us sit up there?"

Her reply was formal and frosty, "I'm sorry, sir, you can't."

THAT'S WHEN I learned all about America's "separate full-fare coach section, including pre-reserved seating on all flights, priority access to carry-on luggage and round-trip check-in."

What this all meant to me was that SuperSavers are the folks to be herded to "the back of the bus."

There was considerable muttering about this policy by my fellow SuperSavers as we stared up front at the oasis of empty seats.

So there we sat, cramped together in the narrow three-to-a-row seats, all the way to Chicago.

But there was one slight consolation.

While poking through the jacket on the rear of the seat in front of me, I discovered an invitation from American's C. H. Startup, director of consumer relations.

In a few innocent words, he invited me to say how I liked my present ride.

WITH THAT, I flipped out my ballpoint pen and started writing. My goal was to be biased with a bite.

My prose gilded along as I thanked Mr. Startup for the dried nuts, soft drinks and delicious beef luncheon with which his hovering personnel plied me and my fellow SuperSavers.

Then my tone began to turn -- or should I say the phantom blade I was now deftly wielding -- to how it felt to be treated like herded sheep.

The first thing I did when we landed was mail my missive.

About three weeks later, a flowery response from Mr. Startup turned up on my desk.

He graciously said he was sorry about the displeasure I suffered.

Then he began to share with me some of the marketing strategy at American.

SuperSaver has been a big success, so much so that "business travelers paying full fare urged us to give them what they wanted."

This, he explained, is services "that would recognize their full-fare status and help them meet the tight travel schedules to which they are usually committed."

I yawned.

"In evaluating our services over the coming months," he closed, "We will certainly take your comments into consideration."

As I yawned again, there was my dour thought: fat chance.

And I promptly forgot about American Airlines, Mr. Startup, SuperSavers and full-fare travelers.

THEREFORE, YOU can imagine my reaction when on Dec. 27 another note arrived.

This one came from Randall Malin, vice-president, passenger sales and advertising for American in New York.

Mr. Malin told me that his firm relies "heavily on customer correspondence such as yours."

Then came the surprisingly and delightful clincher: "It is now quite clear that the majority of our passengers do not favor the change we made. Accordingly, on Jan. 8, 1979 we will discontinue offering separate coach sections . . . and provide the same services for all of our coach customers."

How about that? No yawns, here.

Customer expressions do count.

First aid for Fido?

No one likes to consider the possibility that some day a pet might be injured in an accident.

Yet given the fact that most dogs and cats are free to roam the house and neighborhood, it's best to be prepared to administer first aid to your pet.

The first step in providing first aid should be to take precautions against being bitten or scratched—even if your pet is normally good-natured. Do not assume that a pet in pain will recognize a familiar voice or face. Use a blanket or jacket to cover the pet's head, or convert a scarf into a temporary muzzle so you can examine the animal safely. To examine a cat, you may need a friend to restrain the cat's feet while you hold its head.

In any accident, the most obvious injuries will be broken bones or heavy bleeding. Broken limbs usually stick out at an unnatural angle and must be immobilized with a temporary splint and some taping. The splint and broken leg should be wrapped firmly together to prevent further movement which may cause additional bleeding or tissue damage.

The easiest method to control heavy bleeding is direct pressure over the wound by applying a clean handkerchief with your fingers. Blood that is bright red and spurting out rhythmically comes from an artery; darker, slower flowing blood comes from a vein. If you are unable to stop the blood in a few minutes using a pressure bandage, you may have to try a tourniquet. A tourniquet is a narrow strip of material (a tie, stocking or belt) tied tightly between the heart and the wound. Tourniquets must be loosened at 5 to 8 minute intervals so that the tissues below the tourniquet are not completely deprived of oxygen and blood.

If your pet has stopped breathing, you must apply artificial respiration. Lay the pet out on its right side, and gently pull the tongue out of its mouth as far as possible. Apply even steady pressure on the rib cage, with your hands. Press down approximately every five seconds. Do it slowly but with strong pressure to the chest area. The firm pressure also massages the heart. You may have to work on the animal a half hour or more. There's always the possibility of reviving an animal as long as there is a heartbeat.

Heavy bleeding, trauma, pain and severe fright all contribute to the development of shock, even if major injuries are not present. Major symptoms of shock in animals include pale, grayish gums and lips. Treat shock with warmth and comfort. Cover the animal with blankets and speak soothingly.

If the animal is fully conscious, stimulants such as warm coffee or strong tea may be given by the spoonful into the corner of the mouth. In small doses, they will stimulate the heart and blood circulation, fighting against shock. If the pet is unconscious or semi-conscious, do not give it anything by mouth. Liquids may strangle an unconscious animal by passing into the lungs instead of the stomach.

While you are administering first aid, someone else should locate a board or stiff cardboard for transporting the animal to the nearest veterinarian. If necessary, tie the pet down so that he does not injure himself further. If you are away from home and have to move an injured animal, use a blanket or even a coat. Slide the animal onto the material and have several people pick it up at the corners.

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