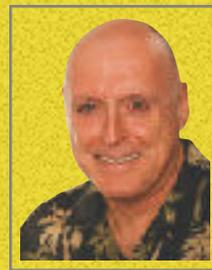


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



987 Finding Good Things About Traveling

I wouldn't call myself a great traveler. I would say "reluctant" is likely the best term I could use these days. My recent vacation marked the first time I've been off-island since Covid began. To be honest, I don't like traveling anymore. I'm Jerry Roberts, and I'll tell a little story, next, on The Extra Point.

My recently-concluded trip was the first since the pandemic began. Prior to that, I'd made three brief jumps to Saipan to conduct client training. Aside from those quick turnarounds, I hadn't been off-island for 10 years.

Prior to that, I'd done my share. Between 1996 and 2009, there were a number of trips to the mainland U.S., which included family vacations, visits to take care of my elderly parents, and about 110 short business excursions for Directions magazine.

In under 15 years, the old Continental Airlines and I had connected roughly 120 times, and I was happy to stay home for a while.

Travel had once been fun, reasonably priced, and my body held up to it better. What I saw as inconvenient flying times to the West Coast (leaving at "O-Dark-30"), wasn't a big deal. That changed over time.

What bothered me more was the general lack of comfort, mostly in the form of shrinking legroom. Less comfort and higher costs soured me on the experience. I pretty much opted out.

My wife and son wanted a Christmas vacation this year, especially after part of our family moved to California. I knew the cost would be high in terms of air ticket expense, and the physical aspects. I knew it might take days for my body to recover — in both directions — but their excitement was worth it all.

We wanted to avoid the hassles in Hawaii for

the unvaxxed, so we flew through Narita, with connection to San Francisco. One short leg, followed by a nine-hour journey, but at least the food out of Japan would be decent (per memory).

What I wasn't prepared for was the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

Never mind the food (it was good). Forget the upgraded entertainment system (the best ever by a wide margin).

The 787 is a trip back in time, to when airlines gave you enough legroom so you could stretch out and not need a chiropractor to get normal. In a word, it was GLORIOUS. Add a 150-mph tailwind, and we crossed the Pacific in just eight hours.

The return flight to Narita wasn't as much fun. We fought a big headwind, and it took almost 11 hours, plus we were back to "airline food" from the San Francisco inflight kitchen. It just wasn't appetizing. In addition, my back was hurting and it seemed more like 21 hours.

It was still the 787 Dreamliner with great legroom, but sadly, the experience didn't match the earlier one.

The flight back to Guam was cramped and my body wasn't having a good time, so I was in simple "endurance" mode. I just wanted it to end.

The story isn't quite over. During those 110 business trips mentioned earlier, I always felt the comfort of getting on a late-night flight, and being greeted by the Guam-based staff of Continental. No matter how tired I was, it gave me a boost of energy and I enjoyed the warmth of the hospitality all the way to touchdown.

(Con't.)

So, on this night, with my body aching and my mood sinking, I felt a difference in the attitude of the flight attendants. I knew they were Guam-based, and their personalities told me they were likely from the old Continental team.

If you flew in those days, you know what I'm talking about.

As I exited the aircraft, I thanked one of the male flight attendants. He replied, "It's always a pleasure to have you with us, Mr. Roberts."

That startled me, as I've explained how long it's been since I've flown.

Then, I remembered, a month earlier, the same man had said the same thing as I stepped off the Guam-to-Narita leg, which started our trip.

Maybe he sees me on The Point's Facebook feed, or from my picture with my weekly Guam Daily Post article, or from my past years as a frequent flyer. I don't know.

I thanked him, but didn't get his name. I wish I had. His smile, his attitude, and his warm words as I left the aircraft, along with the 787 experience, are my takeaways from the trip.

Those are the things I'll remember when I next think about traveling.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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