

AA Airlines

On a recent business trip, my travel agent booked me on AA Airlines because of its on-time reliability. I had traveled far and wide, criss-crossing this wonderful nation of ours, and consequently had flown most of the major airlines but had never heard of AA Airlines. Being a good traveler, I reported to the gate early on my departure date. At the gate I noticed a pilot with AA on his cap. To kill a little time I began to ask this pilot about the history of AA Airlines and he told me this story.

One day, at the end of a flight, he saw what appeared to be an old airplane sitting in an isolated part of the airport, apparently abandoned. On closer examination he found the aircraft not to be old at all, but of the type and model that is most used in the airline industry today. However, it was apparent that this airliner had been poorly maintained. Bolts were missing, paint was chipping off, the interior was in such a shape and smelled so bad it would make you want to vomit. Although abandoned by its managers and seemingly in bad shape, the pilot, knowing the aircraft was in the prime of its life, felt that he could rehabilitate it and once more make it into a useful aircraft.

Upon boarding the plane, in an attempt to locate flight logs to learn the history of the aircraft, the pilot noticed a sign taped to the cockpit instrument panel which read "powerless- do not attempt to fly. This plane is unmanageable"

At this point the pilot told me that his life, too, was unmanageable at one time and he had been powerless over alcohol. He was reborn through the grace of God and now lives a wholesome, loving, and productive life with his new manager. He said he believed a rebirth was also possible for this plane.

Once locating the plane's log, he discovered some similarities between the history of the airplane and his own life, increasing his belief that the plane would once fly again. The flight logs revealed the old manager of the plane started to cut the jet fuel with an effort to cut costs. At first it was just a little alcohol, but then seeing it seemed to be running fine on the mixture, more and more alcohol was added until its total fuel intake was straight alcohol.

However, the logs revealed that once on alcohol, things were not fine. The plane was being brought in for service more frequently, its arrivals were late, and on some mornings it wouldn't start at all, disappointing many passengers. Its behaviour disheartened businessmen and families who had trusted in its reliability. Its engines became loud and obnoxious. Its exhausts polluted the air of many cities to the point that it was eventually banned from many airports throughout the country. In contacting the previous owner, the pilot was given the plane with a warning that it would take a power greater than himself to restore it to flight status. In thanking the previous owner for giving him the plane, the pilot replied that he knew of such a higher power.

Under new management, an inventory was taken of all the planes defects. One day, while taking that inventory the pilot was approached by another pilot who had heard that he had taken over the aircraft. In speaking with the visitor, the AA pilot said "Look what a mess this plane is in. The paint is chipping the windows are broken, the engine turbines are burned out, the seats are ripped and the instrument panel needs to be replaced". The visitor replied "This is really going to be a tremendous job to restore this plane!" "It sure is, but I am entirely ready to have all those things removed and replaced" said the AA pilot, and he did. The pilot called the airport maintenance crew and they tore out, removed and carted away all that had to be replaced.

Again relying on the flight logs, the pilot made a list of all the airports which had banned the aircraft from its facilities. One by one he contacted the airports either by phone or letter, explaining that the airplane was now under new management. He asked each that they reconsider their ban and offered to make amends for any damage his airplane had done in the past.

Many of the airports lifted their bans and welcomed the craft. However, there were still some who remembered the disruption this aircraft caused and remained firm in their ban. The pilot was not discouraged that he did not receive 100% acceptance at first, but was joyous that he could start flying into many of the cities, and knew the performance for his aircraft would soon speak for itself and that others would come to believe and forgive.

Today that old looking, abandoned airplane is turning heads in disbelief, as people who flew that airplane in its alcohol burning days are seeing for themselves a remarkable recovery. Its new manager continues to take daily inventory, getting rid of anything that would disrupt the fine service. To insure safe travel along the straight and narrow, he makes daily checks of the Manufacturers' Handbook, speaks with, and listens to the one who created the airplane.

Because of the pilot's great success, he now assists other airplanes who have similar problems and serves without payment.

As the conversation ended, the pilot was joined by his co-pilot and their flight crew, for it was time to board, and of course the flight was going to be on time.

As the flight crew left to board, I was able to get a glance at their nametags. The pilot was Clarence Snyder, and the co-pilot, Hal Hill. It is to these two men & their flight crew that I dedicate this story. Because, you see, I was that old abandoned airplane.

John, New Jersey

