

Air Travel For The Birds

As I seethed and smoldered through nearly eight hours of airport waiting on a recent weekend, I contemplated the American dream and its phenomenal progress.

Frozen food, for instance, that magical time-saving treat that tastes exactly like styrofoam; air-conditioning, that has taught us sweating is abhorrent and imprisoned us in refrigerated cocoons, shut off from nature; communications technology that encourages our rude interruption of telephone conversations to take "calls waiting."

Then there's the modern magic of instant transportation. A continent, once traversed painstakingly over several days by automobile, (earlier by horse, then covered wagon) can now be crossed in mere hours, high above it, eliminating the former leisurely view of people and places.

What a deal! No more fighting the traffic, enduring the boredom of daylong driving, grabbing fast-food sandwiches along an interstate, wasting valuable time in "getting there."

Well, I'm here to tell you what most of you already know: the deal stinks! We have traded control of our travel lives and a good deal of money for the alleged efficiency of getting from City A to City B before we can say "Bon Voyage!" Emergency trips in which time is of an essence may, indeed, be a valuable boon. In the case of normal vacation travel, however, going by air is too often a nightmare and should be left to creatures born with wings.

Take my abovementioned trip ...please! While not typical, it was not at all an unusual occurrence. I had reserved seats for a quick round-trip visit to see a grandchild's stage performance, all according to guidelines of Senior coupons. When I called a few days ahead to inquire about changing my departure to the preceding day, I was told I could only accomplish it by stand-by status. I remarked that I just might try that. End of conversation.

Forty-eight hours later I had decided against a change of plans and appeared at Wilmington International Airport at the appointed hour, only to be told I was not booked on a departing flight, only on the returning one. My telephone buddy at USAir had concluded I was requesting a cancellations of my original flight and took prompt action, although I had said nothing to that effect. Fortunately, an accommodating local representative secured a seat for me as far as Charlotte, where I was reduced to standby. A piece of cake, I decided, and my initial anger turned to good cheer.

Several hours later that mood changed. I did NOT make the flight I had booked so carefully many weeks earlier that was now subject to a "left-over" seat. An abrupt, "You didn't get on," from a cool Charlotte USAirean scuttled evening plans for a happy reunion with my little family.

The next standby ritual was productive; lucky me, I got a few inches of space on the most completely "no frills" flight I've ever experienced—no storage space, tiny seat space, not even an "express beverage service" for a 90-minute flight, and no attendant. However, I arrived safely that night, having lost precious hours of an already skimpy weekend.

As I waited through that endless afternoon/evening at a Charlotte USAir gate, I heard repeated variations of these refrains: "Flight number so-and-so will not depart at gate 34, but will now depart from gate 19," and, "Flight number such-and-such, scheduled to depart at 3:14 p.m., will be delayed. The new departure time is 5:49."

Back to my weekend from hell. The one full day I spent with my family included several hours in 95 degree heat at a Little League game, which folly led to an attack of heat exhaustion. After a sick and sleepless night, I was physically incapable of boarding my flight home the next morning. Giving the devil his due, I report with gratitude that I was awarded a seat on the afternoon flight...no standby ordeal! The new departure time arrived; I was strapped in properly; we taxied out to the runway.

Then this: "We are returning to the gate; a sonar light is on that shouldn't be on and we must fly a mechanic in to fix it." Back to the gate; off the plane and in line at the ticket counter to be re-booked. Another couple of hours of waiting; finally a plane, boarded and aloft without incident, and, at last, home again. I kissed the ground.

A lingering concern was for that distant mechanic being flown in for repairs. Why does the metropolis of Lexington, Kentucky, not have a resident USAir mechanic and how long, I wondered, did it take the imported expert to get there? I hope he chose to drive.

As I dwelt on this unfortunate trip, I counted the wondrous gifts of air travel that we accept without complaint: crying babies, uncomfortable seating, a restricted view of anything, food that does not deserve the name, and occasional bouts of terror due to strange sounds and bumpy weather. All this on top of aforementioned delays is what we get in exchange for the hope of getting somewhere in a hurry.

What strange bargains we make in the name of progress!



**Marjorie
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Calabash Missionary Days Recalled By Ambassador Academy Bible Teacher

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN
Elizabeth McMurray, 85 years young, is still teaching the Bible, now in the Ambassador Academy at Lake Waccamaw.

This has been her life work for more than 50 years, seven of which she spent in Calabash, her first missionary location after graduation from Columbia Bible College. The Kannapolis resident recently described those Brunswick County experiences in a column appearing in Kannapolis's *The Daily Independent*, reprinted below with the publication's permission:

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"Exploring the Inland waterway along the North Carolina coast in his houseboat, Rev. Arthur Marshall was seeking points that needed a gospel witness. So intent was he in establishing a ministry in Calabash and other locations that he was loath to enter the hospital for what he foresaw as a terminal illness. He longed to place someone to live and work among these people of good English stock.

"I had just been graduated from Columbia Bible College and was under appointment by the Episcopal Church as an educational missionary to China. Being unable to go overseas due to a health problem, I seemed to be the answer to his prayer.

"In the fall of 1939 I arrived bag and baggage in this sleepy, isolated, rural village of some 200 residents. The chief means of livelihood here were fishing, shrimping, oystering and conducting fishing parties on the inland waterway. The lives of these fisher folks were geared more to tides than to clocks. Time meant little to them and church services were to be attended at dark regardless of the designated hour.

"About a year later, I was joined by Jettie Odell, another Bible College graduate. Our church ministry was expanded to three sites in Brunswick County and one in Onslow County, 85 miles away. Since our minister was able to visit only once a month, our job description seemed to be to tackle anything that needed attention. Perhaps with more zeal than knowledge, that was exactly what we did.

"The four-room cottage provided for us served as a community center. Our living room was multipurpose, providing a meeting place for classes, socials, youth gatherings, the home demonstration club and vacation Bible school.

"We conducted weekly Bible classes at two stores in nearby villages. We learned that two ladies stranded on a lonely country road at night could be frightening. We, therefore, welcomed a man, handy with cars, and his wife who went with us frequently.

"One night "Chevy" was def-

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initely not hitting on all cylinders. Our chauffeur generously suggested coming up the next day to work on the ailing car. Since this was volunteer labor and he lived some distance, I thought it would be better for him to drive "Chevy" home and be ready to work the next morning.

"Some time later strange reports reached us of the unusual role of the church car on that particular night. The rumors were that our 'Chevy' was humiliated and embarrassed by being commandeered into the rumrunning business all that night. She would not be suspected of such unlawful activities by the revenue officers.

"Once when we had guests, we had to meet the bus for a friend coming to assist in vacation Bible school. We would leave in plenty of time, get stuck, go for help, get unstuck, meet the bus on which our friend did not arrive, return, only to find it was time to meet the next bus.

"The war years came along and because we were engaged in church work, we were given the priceless privilege of purchasing a brand new, shiny Nash. The only problem was the defective brakes. An envious bystander watching my difficulty in parking the car on an incline remarked, 'A limousine and no brakes.'

"These were the days of rationing—gas, food, shoes, cooking oil. It was said that some of these fish lovers actually fried their fish in motor oil or mineral oil.

"Sometimes when there was a death in the community, a funeral director was not called. A local carpenter fashioned a crude coffin. Jettie and I on occasion lined the coffin with cotton batting and covered it with satin salvaged from an evening gown.

"Once after frenziedly completing the coffin and rushing out in the country for the funeral of a little girl not of our congregation, we learned there was to be no minister and no funeral arrangements had been made. We were asked to take

charge. Fortunately, we were able to stop the school bus and use some of our church children as a choir for the funeral.

"One summer we had had frequent night prowlers. There were smudges on our bedroom windows and chiseling on our front door frame.

"A friend loaned us a 25-automatic pistol and advised us to let the community know we were armed.

"When a friend was spending the night with me, we decided it was an appropriate time to practice our shooting. Out we came and fired a few rounds

"Some time later we heard 'the rest of the story.' All of our shots did not go straight up in the air. One bullet went awry and wended its way straight for a neighbor's outdoor bathroom in which he was making a nocturnal visit. He never knew which of us hit the strange target.

"After seven years with the Inland Waterway Mission, I resigned in 1946. Now when I return to Calabash, I can hardly believe my eyes. I feel like a modern Rip Van Winkle.

"Today this is no sleepy, isolated rural community, but a modern, sophisticated, affluent resort. Golf courses have replaced sand beds. An amazing number of famous seafood places entice people from far and near. Condos, gift shops, a bank, a brick church, and a post office mark a new era in the history of Calabash. Paved roads, snarled traffic, and thriving real estate businesses show me Calabash has come into her own."

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McMurray said she remembered many Calabash families from her years there. "I knew the Becks and the Higs and the Thomases," she said. "I have returned there many times since I left in 1946, but it's been a couple of years since my last visit."

Among Brunswick County people who remember her fondly is Dr. Ralph Johnston, superintendent of Brunswick County schools. He said she taught him and his wife in Kannapolis schools, where the Bible was offered in the curriculum.

McMurray also taught this subject in Whiteville public schools for five years, following her time in Calabash, then moved to Kannapolis where she continued this career for the next 20 years before retirement.

The new status didn't stop this energetic woman. She simply turned her attention to New Guinea for the next two years, teaching the children of missionaries. "That was one of the last stone-age civilizations," she said. "The native religion is spiritism."