



I pay my fare and I ask my questions, fair enough?



Plane inquisitive

Giving flight to high anxiety

I'm one of those people who are always asking questions. It comes from being a journalist, I suppose, or maybe it's just because I'm a born stickybeak. I'm particularly curious when flying and often pepper the cabin crew with pesky queries such as "What the hell was that?!?", and "That glass of wine isn't for the pilot is it?"

It's all to do with anxiety and perhaps having watched *Flying High* one too many times. I wish I was like my late father who was very relaxed about hurtling through the air in a metal tube. He would saunter on to the plane at the last minute, self-administer a medicinal wee dram of scotch, fall asleep instantly and wake up at the destination.

We lived overseas during my childhood and flew all over Asia, and he never changed his style. On a flight from Tokyo to Hawaii, we flew into a storm and the turbulence was horrific, but he just snored.

Sadly, I'm a white-knuckle flyer and that's why I ask so many questions. On a recent flight home from Canberra, my curiosity was sparked when I noticed a stewardess going into the cockpit. Her colleague, a tall bloke called Steve, stood in the aisle nearby looking sombre.

Naturally, I expected the worst. The captain had suffered a heart attack, I figured, the hostie was giving him mouth-to-mouth and Steve was about to ask if anyone on board was a pilot. I beckoned Steve over, but he waved me away. When the hostie left the cockpit, Steve came over to me.

"Now, can I help you sir?" he asked.

"Yes, what's wrong?" I asked.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"The way you were standing there, I thought you were about to make a dramatic announcement."

"No, that's just standard procedure," he replied. "When someone goes into the cockpit, one of us has to stand guard."

"Oh," I said. "I see." He smiled at me, the way one might smile at a lunatic, but at least my fears were allayed.

I'm in a business where inquiry is part of my daily work and on a plane, well, I pay my fare and I ask my questions, fair enough?



On a flight to Bali some years ago, I became particularly curious when the cabin crew began rushing past me. I tried to see what the commotion was and noticed two feet sticking out into the aisle. Somebody was lying on the ground, obviously.

Any anomaly of any description upsets my equilibrium on a plane and I wanted to know what the hell was going on. So I stopped a stewardess as she rushed by.

"Is everything all right?" I asked.

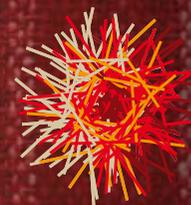
"Are you a doctor?" she enquired.

"No," I said, "I'm just anxious." She looked puzzled, then annoyed and went to assist. I think somebody had fainted. Half their luck.

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