

Once in a lifetime

I saw him for the first time at the Business Class check-in at the Delta counter at Dublin airport. He didn't seem to fit the business class passenger mode. He seemed in his early seventies, grey haired and of slender build. Surely, I thought to myself, he is not still working in the business field when he should be retired.

After I had checked in for my same flight to Atlanta, he began chatting with me as we headed toward security, customs, immigration and boarding gate. "I'm excited about this trip," he commented and went on to explain, "Having flown across the Atlantic for years, using economy class, I am in for a treat with today's trip. You see! This is my first time ever flying Business Class, even if I don't fit the business class mold. I am just headed over to the States to visit some friends." How lucky, I thought to myself, as he rambled on. "Did you ever see any of those YouTube videos of people who fly business class on various airlines. They compare and critique their experience and post it after their trip. What a life they have, enjoying the best an airline has to offer and making money on it. Everyone should have a chance to travel business class at least once in their lifetime. Well, today, it is my turn. And I am going to enjoy it"

"You know what was interesting!" he asked, and continued, "When I went to book my business class ticket, Delta wanted to know my address, my cell phone number as well as my birthday. I thought asking for all that information was a bit unusual. They told me that Delta wanted to be on a first name basis with their elite travelers."

Soon it was time to board the flight. I looked around to see if I could see him. I spotted him, standing proudly on the boarding mat that indicated "priority boarding." I could see that the temperature of his excitement was rising as he shouldered his carryon bag. I felt that, maybe, he was looking down on the regular passengers who were about to be corralled into matchbox sized seats for a long and cramped eight hour journey. Instead, he was hoping to be wined and dined with the best Delta could offer as well as be able to crawl into a makeshift bed to catch some shut eye after a satisfied full stomach. The rest of us – the economy folks - would suffer through a choice of either pasta or chicken and you would need a microscope to find the bits of chicken.

As Atlanta was his final stop, I was curious about what he thought of business class and the amenities and perks that were on offer. I was lucky to catch up with him again at the baggage claim carousel.

"My dining experience on the flight was sky-high," he continued, "I had a choice of five entrees – Beef Brisket, Chicken breast, Mushroom Ravioli, Sea Trout, Lamb. The flight attendant even gave us a choice of Orange Juice or a Mimosa, in a real glass. as a pre-flight drink." All I could say was: "They all sound so good."

"The flight home is going to be even better," he continued. "It will be a night flight and I will be able to stretch out in my fully reclining bed with a real pillow and blanket and sleep while I travel on this magic carpet at 560 miles per hour and skywards at 40,000 feet." "And I will bunk down in a strange bed, hoping to get a few snoozes" he said.

"Don't feel so bad," he consoled me. "Maybe, someday, you will get your chance. Maybe, you should add it to your bucket list. In the meantime, just dream about it and one day your dream might become true. Maybe, like me, you might get lucky, fly business class and not have to pay a penny for the trip."

So, it seems, some people happen to be in the right place at the right time; have the connections that allow themselves to fly on someone else's magic carpet; grab the limelight that will propel themselves into elite status to enjoy the fringe benefits that come with rewards that will catapult themselves sky high.

As for myself, I think I need to check my bucket. It might have some holes that allows my list to evaporate. Maybe, I just need a new bucket and a new list that will include a more nebulous experience.

Then again, maybe good fortune will knock at my door some day; hoping that I am there to answer the invitation to a once in a lifetime experience.