

# Please Flush When You're Finished !

Since the tragedies that took place September 11, 2001, things have changed on all airliners. We now have a new improved bullet-proof Cockpit door that locks. It's supposed to be so strong that burley firemen with a large fire axe would require more than a few minutes to get into the cockpit. Heaven help us if we are unconscious, and the airplane is burning.

This was another one of those tired morning departure from the East Coast that pushed off the gate just before dawn. Our circadian rhythms couldn't have possibly been more out of kilter. It was 4:00 am in Phoenix and 3:00 am if you happen to live on the West Coast like I do. And, we had already been up for at least two hours. Needless to say that everyone on this crew is operating on less than normal rest. If you are lucky you might get a few minutes more than four hours rest---if your lucky!

Fred and I were flying a three-day trip, and it was the first time that we had flown together. We seemed to get along fine, however Fred seemed to be a little anal, but we all have our flaws. If he wanted to be anal it was fine with me. He was capable and he did his job. We didn't have a lot in common as a result our conversations were brief.

The First Class flight attendant has a calm quality, very kind blue eyes, a pleasant face, a beautiful smile and the typical eye-catching body of a thirty-something-year-old American girl. My first impression of her was that she was attractive, but on the shy side. However, I soon realized that she was anything but shy as her personality was that of a mama bear with cubs. I was part of the story and witnessed much of it myself. Everything below is Beth's own words as she tells her story.

We had been airborne long enough to reach cruise altitude and, the cockpit crew called needing to use the restroom. When this happens, the cabin crew has to drop what they are doing and accommodate the cockpit crew. All of this is new procedure since 911. When one of the pilots leaves the cockpit then the one remaining must be in his seat to monitor the flying of the aircraft. One flight attendant must sit in the cockpit while the pilot uses the restroom. The pilot either calls or makes a secret knock and the flight attendant who is inside the cockpit opens the door for them. She or he will

look through the peephole in the cockpit door in order to ascertain that all is safe and secure before opening the door to allow the pilot in. The first class flight attendant who was me is supposed to guard the cockpit door from the cabin side. This procedure takes place each time a pilot needs to use the facility. Usually, both pilots do it one right after the other which saves time giving the cabin crew more service time for the passengers.

After the Captain finished the first officer went in the lavatory and did his thing. As soon as he finished and the flight attendant who was stationed inside the cockpit returned, I decided that I would use the facility myself, in order to save time, of course. Well, lo-and-behold, the first officer didn't flush, so before I could use the toilet I had to flush it. I thought to myself that that was rude and un-thoughtful. I immediately placed him in the bone-a-fide jerk category of pilots that I know.

About two hours later, the same scenario took place. I stayed close to the lavatory door to see if First Officer Fred was going to fail to flush again. Sure enough, Freddy didn't flush!

"Excuse me Fred, but didn't you forget to flush?" I politely asked.

"No I didn't forget to flush. I don't flush. I don't touch anything in there. I did once, and it caused me to become very ill. I don't touch anything in aircraft lavatories. Okay?" He replied with all the authority he could muster.

"Well, as-a-matter-of-fact, you are going to touch something in there today because you are going back in there right now and flush the toilet! Why should any of my First Class Passengers have to flush for you? Why should anyone of the crew have to flush for you?" I was peeved. If it hadn't been for the curtain between the passenger seats and the forward area, all of the First Class passengers could have seen just how upset I had become. I'm sure that they might have heard the conversation, but I hope not.

Fred looked at me eye-to-eye and stated, "This conversation is over!" He then called the cockpit via the flight-phone, and the flight attend inside opened the door to let him in.

I followed him into the cockpit and told the Captain, "Freddy here refuses to flush, and I don't think it is right for any of my First Class passengers to have to flush his toilet. I'm not going to flush it for him, and I don't think any of the crew should have to flush it for him."

Before the Captain could say a word Fred looked at me and stated again, "I told you this conversation is over!"

"Okay, the conversation is over. And, now I'm going to lock the forward lavatory and placard it out-of-service. Then when we get to Phoenix, I'm going to hand carry an irregularity report describing in detail what has happened here to the Chief Pilot myself."

The Captain interrupted and said. "Hey, hey, hold your horses, don't lock or placard the lavatory inoperative. I'll go flush right now, and when you get to Phoenix you do what you have to do. Okay?" the Captain said as he got out of his seat. Then, we went through the whole security scenario again as the Captain went into the lavatory and flushed the toilet. As he returned to his seat we made eye contact and I could tell that he was a little proud of me standing my ground about the flush.

I hated it that the Captain had to get up and flush. However, I was committed to lock the lavatory and placard it out-of-service if it didn't get flushed, and I wasn't going to flush for Freddy ever again.

I filled out the irregularity report, and hand carried it to the Chief Pilot after we landed in Phoenix just like I said I would. The pilots in the Chief Pilots office were appalled after reading my report and asked only a few questions. I really thought that nothing would become of it, but a week or so later I passed the Captain on one of the concourses at Sky Harbor.

He looked my way with a big grin on his face and said, "Hey Beth. I thought that you would like to know that Fred got called in to the Chief Pilots Office. I'd bet that he will flush next time." The Captain was laughing about the whole thing. As I look back the event was humorous, although, when it was happening it was serious business!

Three weeks later, I flew with Freddy again, however, I was working the very back of the aircraft and didn't have any direct contact with him. I did receive a cold look from him a time or two. I checked with the first class flight attendant, and he did flush the one time he used the toilet. Maybe, I did thousands of first class passengers a great service, I hope so.