

Traveling in good company

By Jeff Davidson

My daughter Valerie and I had finished a seven-day cruise in Alaska. We disembarked from the cruise ship at about 8:30 a.m. and took a long taxi ride to the Vancouver airport. When we arrived and saw the flight schedules, there was a possibility of taking off several hours sooner than our scheduled flight. After clearing security and making our way down the hall, we only had a few minutes to get to the gate (clear on the other side of the airport) to see if we could make the departing flight.

Even though we walked a considerable distance, apparently we still had many, many minutes before arriving at the gate. So, we devised a quick strategy. Val, 13 years old at the time, would handle both of our rolling luggage carts and walk the halls at a normal pace. I would sprint ahead to save some minutes and reach the gate attendants while there was still time

for us to board.

I ran down the hall for what seemed like an endless amount of time and finally reached the proper gate. When I arrived, I was panting heavily, had no luggage, appeared disheveled, and needed a moment to collect myself. I was dehydrated. I told the gate attendant that we would like to board this plane because it would save us three and a half hours of waiting around in the Vancouver airport.

NOT UP TO STANDARDS: The attendant looked at me, called someone else over, and both of them studied my ticket for a while. They looked at me again and then in an official tone, one of them said, "The plane is about to take off. We're not sure if there's room, so it doesn't look like it's a go." With that, I kind of collapsed into a heap. I was exhausted from the sprint and they had given me a perfunctory answer, not going through the normal motions of attendants who are sincerely

inquiring about any more room on a plane.

"It must be me. They're reacting to my hasty arrival, with no luggage, and no daughter to be seen... they are judging me as a security risk."

When all looked hopeless, into the lounge area and up to the gate attendants strode my daughter with our two luggage carts. With her infectious smile and high charisma, the gate attendants realized that everything I was said was true. I was here with my daughter, and we could save three and a half hours if they could seat us.

OPEN THE GATES: Suddenly, everything shifted. The gate attendants said that we could board the plane. I looked at Val, and she looked at me. She didn't realize what had happened, but I knew immediately. Two seats were available, not quite next to each other, but close enough. It was a triumph to be on that plane. We arrived in Chicago, had a nice time walking the halls there, and then boarded

our plane to Raleigh, getting home much sooner in the day than otherwise. Not all airport and airline stories are negative!

Jeff Davidson is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He is an expert on work and life balance issues. His website is www.BreathingSpace.com.