

THE SAGA OF THE THREE STRIPED SKIPPER

Anonymous (From Parts & Pieces magazine 1993-07)

It's a great day for flying! I jump in the ol' jalopy and motor at breakneck speed for the employees lot. Its 55 minutes prior as I stroll into flight planning (maybe I should gas 'er up the night before next time). Well the captain is here with his nose to the grindstone - what a keener. Well it's CAVU from here to point of layover so a quick flourish of the old parker and it's time for coffee. 'C'mon Cap'n let's go. I can't think straight till the caffeine is coursing through my veins.' Man, this guy is too much - those NOTAMS don't change every week ya know. And another thing, what is it with this razor sharp pant crease and mirror shined shoes. All I need is a quick wipe on the back of the old pant legs and I'm good for another 5000 miles!

Where does the time go when you're having a java? I mean we solved all the airlines problems! Well I'm here 15 minutes prior to launch, isn't that what the book says.

The guy at the gate asks me if he can use the deck since we're full. (Why is he asking me?) "Well the old man said OK last time, so I'm sure it's OK this time".

Geez I sure hate having to slide by all these folks on the loading bridge!

I give the In-Charge my famous airline pilot smile and wink - she returns the smile only.

I toss my bag in the bin on top of the

Captain's (He doesn't expect ME to put his on top, does he?). I jump into the ol' chair and admire the view - what a day! The old man is sitting there all plugged in and says nothing to me. (I guess when you're making the big bucks you can pay someone to press your shirts.

He says he's gonna start the check if I'm ready - of course I'm ready, I'm here ain't

I? Of course he'll do the first leg, the

Captains always seem to wanna do the first eg - it's like he doesn't trust me! He seems a little on edge, probably stayed up late like me. Well at least he goes through the check without giving me any grief.

Man I could sure use another coffee - you'd think Dorothy could take a minute out of her busy life and check on our wellbeing up here.

What?? Emergency drills??? Well okay -sure - why not? (This guy really is too much!) Oh yeah, check the flaps up and then set MCT. (What is this a line check?)

Ah, here's the java, 'How's things with you

Dorothy? Still living with that accountant?

Yeah too bad! Well if you ever change your mind!" "Clearance delivery sure, sure no problem" "We still got 2 minutes" So we crank 'em up and taxi out - almost a shame to take the bread on a day like this!

"Say, I heard a good one last night - what's that? Oh yeah cleared all the way for 24R"

(This guy just doesn't appreciate humor!) Looks like we might have to wait a few minutes with this line up. Now he wants to shut down an engine, talk about your make work projects. There goes the cabin attendant bell, since he's got his hands full

I'll answer it. 'Yeah, a bit of a line up.

Should be quite a wait. Why say anything, they'll figure it out?" Captain sets the brake and glares at me. What's his problem now?

Well we finally get the go and blast off into the cool blue morning. Gear and flaps up and departure has turned us on course.

What's this? Looks like some left over CB's from last night. A quick scan of the radar shows a bit of contour. Looks like just a bit to the left will clear 'em nicely" I say. "Tell them we'll go around to the right" says the old man. Boy this guy never lets up does he?

Maybe he doesn't know! I've been here 15 years - He was probably a left seater after only 7 or 8!

Well we finally level off and the In-Charge comes up, "Too cold in the back right?" I say.

She says no but she wonders when the seatbelt sign is going to go off. Well it's clear and smooth and the Captain's diggin in his bag again so I flip it off and give her a wink (again). By the time he surfaces she's gone. He remarks that we are right at the top and maybe it could get rough. (Oh right Mr. Met knows all!) I check the plan and sure enough we're right at the top – I suspect he just checked it himself.

The next thing I know my coffee has gone full cycle. I pop off my belt and hop out of my seat "gotta go!" Sure enough the boss is bolt upright and suckin' Q when I return (I'd been back much sooner but Dorothy had her Aruba photos and there was a line up for the john!)

By this time the three black coffees I had for breakfast are wearing a little thin. A couple of ding-dongs on the ol' call button should produce some grub. "Any J Class left over?" "We haven't given the meals out yet
- I'll let you know. "

Now the boss asks me if I'd like to do a P.A. Well OK I'll do one but nobody listens to announcements anyway! Boy is this a great job or what? Someone serving you a hot meal and you get paid for it!

Now it's about time to start down. It seems things are backing up a bit and we'll have to hold a while. Better double check the flight plan.

Wow this Captain really is a magician, how did he know we'd need extra gas. Just lucky I guess! We are told to descend to FL240 and reduce to 250 knots.

You think this guy was paying for the gas himself the way he works this descent out to the last penny. Better make a little speech for the hold I say as I pick up the mike.

The old man stares off into space – thinking again I suppose. They clear us direct to the airport after our hold. Things are looking up.

I can see the runway and I tell approach control we can do a visual. They promptly clear us for a right hand visual.

The skipper asks me for an in-range check and by the way, 'where's the airport?'

Well isn't he Mr. Sarcastic all of a sudden!

For some reason I just don't seem to get along with this guy. I guess the last straw was where I pointed out the Sunny Buns

Nudist Colony on final approach. The engines were finally silent and the brakes set at the gate when he spoke. 'Can you do me a favour and bid around me in the future.'

You could have knocked me over with a feather. All this time I felt I was doing just fine. Maybe I had started to take things for granted. I had been focused more on the fact that I was not a captain and trying to prove I was! Being an F/O was an important job when I started out - what had changed?

Thanks to that Captain, I was able to refocus myself and do a good job as an F/O without trying to take over. And now that I'm a real four-striper, I've finally figured out why the captain sits here thinking an awful lot!