

Submitted by Billee McConachie

After 36+ years as an airline pilot (PWA, Canadian & AC) I, along with many of us, was witness to or part of a variety of events, some most entertaining and others not so much. We will leave the “others” for a future conversation.

This event took place in the mid 80’s during my time with PWA, flying mostly domestic routes on the B-737.

Our crew had assembled at the Ops Centre located on the south side of YVR and, with all being ready, we boarded the crew bus for a short ride to the main terminal. As we made our way through the terminal towards our departure gate our in-charge flight attendant noticed that I had something on the seat of my pants. After boarding the aircraft, on further examination, it was determined that I had sat in some chewing gum possibly on the crew bus, but the source was never actually established. Time was now of the essence as we all had our duties to perform in readying the aircraft for departure.

This day’s trip was scheduled Vancouver – Calgary - Edmonton (YVR-YYC-YXD) and return. It was a beautiful morning on the West Coast with a favourable weather forecast for the entire route. What could be better than a scenic route over the Rocky Mountains on a beautiful day.

We pushed back on schedule and taxied out for departure on runway 08 (runway 08L did not yet exist). We were cleared into position and then cleared for takeoff; it was the first officer’s kick at the can so his leg to fly to YYC.

Once airborne, we were cleared enroute and commenced our climb to our planned cruising altitude. During climb our in-charge flight attendant, whom I will refer to as RW. for the purpose of anonymity, entered the flight deck with offers for the first coffee of the day which we graciously accepted. A few minutes later, RW returned with our coffees in hand and advised us that they were about to start the breakfast service. She also informed me that dry-ice had been the cooling agent in the onboard catering and that if I liked she could use the dry-ice to freeze the gum and easily remove it from the seat of my pants.

We are all aware of the many talents our FA’s had accumulated over the years in dealing with similar non-standard challenges on any given flight.

After a short period of time while cruising at our assigned altitude RW returned to the flight deck offering to remove the gum from the seat of my pants while the passengers dined on their sausage & egg breakfast. Hard to believe a full hot breakfast service on a 1 hr. 10 min. leg but hey that is what the service was back in the day compared to the almost non-existent in-flight meals of today.

Being somewhat anxious in having the gum removed from my pants I said, "Great how do we do this?" RW said, "No problem, take your pants off, I need to take them to the galley to apply the dry ice". I am going like, "Take them off right now?" She said, "Ya get 'em off".

I said, "Well, I have to get up out of my seat and stand up to get them off" so she left while I got out of my seat and dropped my gear and sat back down. Seconds later RW returned, gathered up my pants, and disappeared. So here I am sitting in the left seat in my jockeys while the FO is trying to maintain his composure, me wondering if the passengers can hear his laughter through the flight deck door.

After about 20-25 minutes had passed the FO asked if I could get him descent clearance; it was time to start down. I called ATC and requested descent; we were cleared to descend and to contact Calgary terminal. During our descent I rang the FA call button at which time one of the FA's, not RW, answered and I asked her to put RW on. She replied, "I can't, we are busy picking up trays and preparing the cabin for landing "; got to let them do their job - right! So, we level off at 10,000 feet and start slowing to 250 knots.

As always, it was a little choppy on the leeward side of the Rockies, so I turned the seatbelt sign on, standard ops. Once again, I rang the FA call button. This time RW answered, and I asked, "How are you making out with my pants?" Her reply "What pants, I don't know what you're talking about" and hung up her handset!

Now, under the control of Calgary terminal and receiving radar vectors, my focus had to be on assisting the FO and performing the PNF (Pilot Not Flying) duties. As he continues to fly the aircraft, he is still trying to suppress his laughter but not really all that well; imagine his perspective.

We began our final approach, I contact Calgary tower, thinking to myself, what if? I do not know what. I just felt moderately naked and vulnerable, thinking that if our passengers or flight ops were privy to this it would not end well.

The FO's landing was proof of his ability to perform under abnormal conditions. During the rollout, I take control and follow the taxi instructions issued by ground control. Approaching the terminal, I pull up to our assigned gate and come to a complete stop.

I set the parking brake and shut the engines down as the FO, through his laughter, says, "You should see yourself and the look on your face". Once parked at the gate in Calgary, when the bridge is married to the aircraft, the aft cockpit window is within the confines of the bridge and canopy, allowing an unobstructed view of the flight deck.

I turn the seatbelt sign off; the doors are opened as the deplaning process begins. The FO gets out of his seat and exits the flight deck as he heads out to complete his walk around. So, there I sit all alone in my jockeys unable to do anything but just sit there. The YYC passengers have now deplaned and the YXD passengers remain onboard, eliminating any chance for me to leave the flight deck. As I sit there, I hear some tapping on the window, so I look over my left shoulder and there are two female agents and RW peering through the window. Well, I had to laugh myself knowing full well I had been had, "big time".

I then take it upon myself to pick up the PA microphone and, in my most authoritative baritone voice, (YXD passengers still onboard) announce, "Will the in-charge flight attendant report to the flight deck immediately". A couple of minutes later RW enters the flight deck, as I turn around, I see her standing there with my pants on and her skirt hiked up to her waist, claiming, "What do you want now?" Then realizing just how humorous the ordeal had been, I broke up in laughter once again.

RW then leaves again, returning almost immediately with my pants draped over her arm and to my delight not a trace of gum to be seen. I put my pants on and left the flight deck to find nothing but laughter and smiling faces among the crew the agents and, yes, the passengers as well. I do not know to this day just how much the passengers were aware of and really do not care to know; after all, we were professional airline pilots, "right".

In conclusion, I can honestly say that "RW was the only flight attendant who ever got into my pants."

Those were the days my friends. Keep your head up in the corners with lots of top rudder!

Billee McConachie