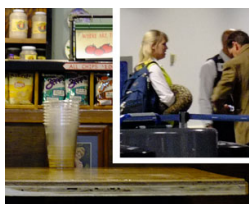


If you see me on your plane, get off. Take another flight.

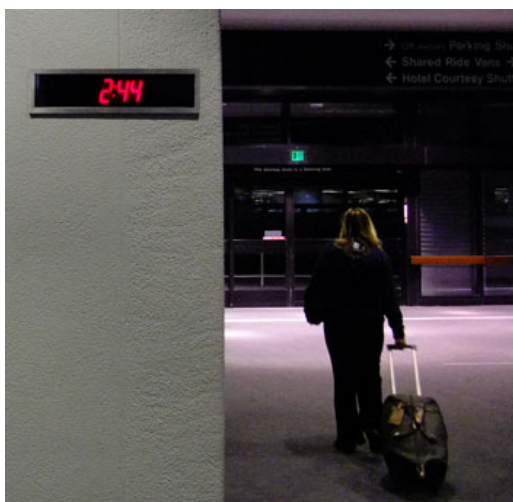
I may have posted something like this before; it's certainly a recurring theme. Last August it was my "exciting" red-eye trip to Wisconsin, where I finally arrived in Madison around 3pm, after being bounced off one flight, delayed on another and abused by airport staff (and that was when I was a "1K" on United, the highest "earned" level of passenger status, something you get for flying too much). The whole point to a red-eye is to get somewhere early.

Yesterday, heading back from DC (the annual Bicycle Summit/Lobbying event), we were scheduled to leave on a flight at 9:55pm. Why so late? Because the meetings could have lasted until 5pm, and it takes a while to get from DC downtown to Dulles/IAD airport (it shouldn't, but they have no decent transportation from the city to their main airport; it involves taking the Metro from downtown DC to West Falls Church and then waiting for the "Airport Flyer" to take you the rest of the way). Of course, our last meeting ended very early, 2:30 or so, so we could have taken a much earlier flight... and we still could have, if we had been willing to pay \$50 each for the same-day standby fee.



Ever wonder about the people you see slamming back a few before their flight? These folk had been sitting across from us at the restaurant near the gate, just going and going until the door to their plane was almost closed, then apparently had problems because their seats had been given away.

Had we known, we would have paid that \$50. We got to the airport with hours to spare, even after spending some time at the Smithsonian, and there was in fact a flight that left at 7:30pm with room. But our flight wasn't that much later and we had pretty decent seats and really weren't looking forward to the idea of middle seats at the back of the plane (the likely scenario had we changed planes). But that was before our flight was delayed... to 11:30pm. I think it was just past midnight by the time we finally got off the ground, and the loading process left much to be desired as people heading to their seats at the back of the plane were putting their carry-ons into the overheads at the front!!! Why is this so bad? Because while Becky and I and Steve and Teri were in rows 6 & 7, we had to put our luggage over rows 13 & beyond, fighting the tide against everyone trying to board the plane as we got back to our seats, and having to wait until every single person was off the plane before we could retrieve our luggage.



2:44am is not what you want to see on the airport clock, especially when your travel day is not yet over

At least row 6 in an A320 on United has fantastic legroom so it was a pleasant-enough flight, despite moderate turbulence here & there. Sleep? I don't know that I ever really slept, but rather alternated between conscious and comatose. We landed at 2:30am SF time, 5:20am DC, and were home around 3:30am. This is not the first time this has happened coming back! As I say, if you see me on a plane...