

Speaking on a shoestring!

By Craig Harrison

Early in my career I accepted a low paying speaking engagement from an impoverished client requiring me to travel from Berkeley, California to Organ Pipe, Arizona.

Unable to drive thirteen hours each way I figured I'd find a discount flight, discount ground transportation and scrimp where I could to help my client stay within budget.

Airport parking was out of the question. A week's parking could feed a family of four for a month! But airport shuttles are pricey too.

Luckily I found *Semi-Super-Shuttle*! Half the price, half the van. As the packed shuttle screeched to a stop its side door magically opened. Upon entering the driver pointed to a hand-scrawled sign "All passengers pay in advance." I did. He slammed the door shut and we lurched forward. My seat...the wheel well. Some drivers spare the air. This driver spared the spare! As we sped around the first corner the sliding door flew open. No wonder they demanded payment in advance. Suddenly the term "easy drop-off" took on new meaning.

After a harrowing ride to the airport I was actually relieved to be flying a puddle jumper to my destination.

Like me at the time, my air carrier lacked national recognition: Fly-By-Night Airline. Something about needing the daylight hours to solar charge their propellers. If Southwest is a discount airline, Fly-By-Night is a deep discount airline. Critics call them SouthLess Airlines; They too dispense peanuts — you just have to shell your own.

To their credit, Fly-By-Night was ultra efficient. Everyone multitasks. The elderly man who checked me in also carried my bags to the plane...on his way to the cockpit.

I don't want to say it was working class airline, but when I asked about in-flight entertainment they asked what I could do. Two sets later I finally got to return to my seat. They did let me keep the boa. (And no, this wasn't *Snakes On A Plane!*)

Upon landing in Organ Pipe the client had promised ground transportation. Imagine my surprise when I was met curbside by a sign with my name on it...hanging from the neck of a burrow. To say I felt like a donkey is an understatement. A short gallop later we trotted into the parking lot of their preferred hotel.

There are hotels, motels, and no-tells. My suspicions were aroused upon check-in. The lobby sign touted rates for weekly, daily and hourly stays. My fears were confirmed upon passing lobby vending machines dispensing both life insurance and edible apparel. The hotel touted free movies. Who knew I was the featured star? I went screaming when the in-house entertainment started streaming from a webcam mounted on my TV.

No wakeup call was needed. The police paddy-wagon sirens did the trick...at 3am. No need for a late checkout this trip. My program that day went well, and my planner drove me back to the airport...by tractor. Fly-By-Night welcomed me like a returning astronaut, if only for two more sets on the return flight.

Speakers constantly tell me "travel ain't what it used to be." To which I reply "Thank goodness!"

Craig Harrison, chief expressionist of Expressions of Excellence!TM, began his humor career at the age of eleven going door-to-door in Berkeley California selling Used Jokes. The co-founder of NSA's Storytellers PEG, Craig also formed [LaughLovers — The Cantu Comedy Club](#) as a joint NSA/NC-Toastmasters venture in the SF Bay Area. A thirteen-year NSA member residing once again in Berkeley, Craig is known as its only resident opposed to "free" speech. Visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/humor or call 510/547-0664 for more laughs.