

## Flight 403 Philadelphia/Rochester/Buffalo

by  
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"Excuse me, please. Pardon me. Yes, I'd like to get through there. I always get on the plane last, you see. I don't like to inconvenience people because of my affliction, so I wait until everyone else gets on.

"I know they ask for persons needing assistance in boarding but I don't fall into that category, you see. Pardon me, sir. I mean my affliction doesn't require a wheelchair or anything. I get by just fine with the help of my cane here.

"Sir, would you mind? I'll need to put my cane in there, along with my coat, of course, so I'll have to ask you to move yours, your coat, that is. I always need my cane handy because of my affliction. Now, if you'd just put the cane in the back and then my coat in front of it. Oh, while you're there, is there a blanket there? A pillow? No. Oh. Well, I'll have to see the stewardess about that right away.

"Stewardess! Miss! Yes, you see, dear, I need a blanket and pillow immediately after take-off. I'd really like it right now because it makes me much more comfortable. In fact, I don't want to be a bother because I am always conscious of not letting my affliction disturb others, but if I could have it right now. Oh, yes, well, I suppose you do have to get passengers seated. Well, anyway, as soon as you can.

"Hello there, baby. Oh, aren't you a sweetie pie! What's your name, honey? Oh, isn't that nice. I get to sit with you and your mommy and daddy. I have the seat next to the window. Yes, now won't that be nice. I'll just slide on in there although with my affliction I don't slide very well, hah, hah, hah. That's right, daddy will hold you and mommy can get out then while I get in. You are her mommy and daddy, aren't you? I mean these days it's hard to tell. It is a girl, isn't it? It's so hard to tell. I remember when they used to dress girls in pink and boys in blue. It was a lot easier then.

"There now, that's better. I'll just sit her quietly until my blanket and pillow come. Service on the airlines just isn't what it used to be, is it?

"I had thought of driving but Philadelphia to Buffalo is a long drive on your own and I wasn't sure my car was up to it. Oh, where are you going?

"Oh, you're going to Buffalo, too? Well, I wish I had known that. You see, I never take expressways or thruways. They frighten me too much so I like to take the route up and over the mountains but in March you're never sure just what you'll find.

"I'm going to Buffalo for a convention. I'll stay with my friend there which is a considerable saving. What are you chewing on, baby? Oh, my, it's a pink rubber balloon. I'd worry about that if I were you, mommy, but then you know best. But I do have some credentials for my recommendation. I operate a nursery school, you see. Well, it's really a pre-school. With my affliction and the help you get now-a-days, it's hard, but then, again, like I always say to my husband, somebody has got to give these little ones a good start in life and who better than someone like myself who has learned to cope with an affliction.

"Is she toilet-trained? Not yet? What a pity! I wonder where that stewardess is with my blanket and pillow. We've been in the air several minutes already. Don't put your thumb in your mouth, baby. Nice little girls don't do that. And you don't want buck teeth, do you? Do you speak English to her? She doesn't seem to understand me.

"In my pre-school, we're really big on toilet training as soon as possible. It makes things so much neater and tidier for all of us. The problem is, of course, that many parents who bring their children to us just don't see things the way we do and sometimes what we get done at pre-school gets undone again at home. Or maybe I should say what we get undone at pre-school gets done again at home, hah, hah, hah. Oh, I know. I have a great sense of humour. It's helped me so much to cope with my affliction.

"Would you mind pushing the button for the stewardess, daddy? I really would like to have my pillow and blanket now. It's hard for me to reach the button with my affliction. Thank you very much. I wonder what we'll get to eat on this flight. With the lack of service here, my car, I call it 'Old Gray' because it's an old gray car, hah, hah, hah, looks better and better.

"What are you doing, baby? Are you giving me the raspberry? Now, that isn't nice. No, I know you're not. You just think it's fun to do that with your mouth, don't you, although heaven knows why.

"Oh, yes, it's about the blanket and pillow, stewardess. I really require them right now. No, I knew you hadn't forgotten them but it is rather urgent.

"Really, the lip from these young things today! Frankly, I'm always happiest when I see a steward somewhere on board. I mean, I know, people say they are usually you-know-what, but really, I mean, men do

seem to have a way of taking control and helping a woman feel comfortable, especially one like myself with an affliction.

"Want to play patty-cake, baby? Do you know how? Here, I'll just move myself around a bit in the seat and we can play. Now, just put her on your lap, mommy. Why are you peeking between the seats at the person behind you, baby? That's not nice. Oh, well, I guess she just doesn't want to learn. There are learning moments, you know, and in my school we watch carefully for every one of them and make sure one is never lost. Of course, we try hard to structure learning experiences, too, or, after all, we really couldn't call ourselves a school, could we? When they graduate to kindergarten we want them to be ready. I mean, readiness is everything, isn't it? It's the other side of the coin of learning moments and we mustn't ever forget that.

"Well, it looks like they're finally getting around to some service. I'll just have ginger ale when she comes by, daddy. What with the cost of drinks these days it just doesn't pay to drink on planes anymore, that's what I always tell my husband although for some reason when we travel on a plane together he always seems to need one or two. Come to think of it, he seems to need one or two no matter what it is we do or don't do. Isn't that strange?

"Daddy, I left my Kleenex in my coat pocket. I'm sorry to bother you but if you could just get them for me, I really do like to have an extra supply nearby when I'm eating. Come on, baby, I'll teach you pat-a-cake. Still don't want to? I'd get her into day care soon, dear, or you might find you'll have a major socialization problem with her in the future.

"Thank you, daddy. A snack, stewardess? Really? I mean I know it's a short flight from Philadelphia to Rochester but it does surprise me that cutbacks have come to this. It used to be a full meal.

"Well, when I gad about in 'Old Gray', I always take my own lunch. It's so much more predictable and then the class of people one meets in cafeterias on the road is just sometimes so tacky. I do like mayonnaise on a sandwich, don't you? It greases the gullet, so to speak, hah, hah, hah.

"Do you really let your child eat olives? I mean the pits and all? Oh, yes, quite right, they are pitted and stuffed, yes, I see. Well, we are very careful about food at school. We publish a monthly food plan and parents know exactly what their children are getting; of course, there are those few who still insist on improper feeding but we are working to wipe that out. We let our children experience early on what good, clean living is all about. And frankly, we find franks and beans are a very economical serving per portion.

"We do help our parents a great deal, indirectly, of course. As soon as possible we teach our children the dangers of smoking and alcohol. And do we ever get through to them? I mean, when we tell the children how smoking and drinking shortens life and if their mommies and daddies are doing it, what a risk they're taking, why some of the children understand so much they just break right down and cry.

"Now, of course, there is the occasional parent who doesn't understand what we are doing along this line and complains, but that's only natural. Part of what we'll be talking about at our convention is the need for residential preschools where children could be kept in a totally-controlled environment. Isn't that an interesting possibility? What, oh, you need the tray already? Are we really ready to land in Rochester? Well, it does look like it, I guess.

"I always feel so rushed by these stewardesses. . . stewardi . . . hah, hah, hah. We really feel that it's important to take time over our food. I know that some people laugh at the idea that food should be chewed thirty-two times a mouthful, probably because of that stupid Bob Newhart show where Emily makes fun of it all the time, but that and pleasant conversation really do make for good digestion.

"What's that, daddy? Oh, you are for chewing and talking at the same time? Sometimes it helps one not hear what the other person is saying? Oh, my, we never encourage that!

"Oh, I do hate these landing operations. I always hold my nose and then blow. Of course, I'm used to pain what with my affliction and all. Here, baby, don't cry now. Look at me. This is how you do it. My, my, she really does seem determined to do things her own way. How's her ear wax? Do you have her ears syringed regularly? It's really a must. I have it done for myself twice a year. I never want anything to interfere with my hearing especially because of those learning moments. There's a strange workshop at the convention this year. It's something like 'Listening vs. Hearing' or 'Hearing vs. Listening', and I can't imagine what they'd be talking about. It all seems like just a matter of words if you know what I mean, hah, hah, hah.

"Oh, my, she really is screaming, isn't she? Children can get so noisy now and then. Wouldn't you like to hold her nose, mommy?

"Well, there we are down on terra firma at last. My ears have popped.

"Have yours? Oh, good. Well, I hope we won't be here too long, just long enough for me to stretch. I'll wait until everyone who is getting off has gone and then I'll just walk up and down the aisle so if you could get my cane ready for me, daddy? Good, now I'll just get ready for my little stroll.

"Well, that was really no time at all. There you go again, young lady, giving me the raspberries. That

really isn't nice. No, it isn't. The aisle seat? I'd rather not, no somehow I feel more a part of things, freer to be, when I'm near the window. Now, if you'd just get my cane back in place, daddy. And if you'd hold my pillow and blanket, mommy. No, I guess that doesn't leave anyone to hold the baby. Well, I won't try because of my affliction. Well, just put the blanket and pillow on daddy's seat, mommy, and I'll get them from there. Oh, you're moving to the aisle seat, mommy? Well, never mind. There. I've got them.

"Want to play pat-a-cake, baby? Not yet? I wonder why she keeps looking through the space in the seats to the row behind her? If she were my child, I'd take a look over my shoulder and see what's going on. There are all kinds of perverts after children these days, their minds as well as their bodies.

"Well, here we go again. Very short flight this time and they're always the hardest on the ears. Here, baby, this is how you do it. Look. Hold your little nose and blow. My goodness, she is a screamer, isn't she, daddy? I'd have those ears looked into as soon as you get home. There might even be a good doctor in Buffalo, you know.

"I suppose there's no food service Rochester to Buffalo. But then things have deteriorated everywhere. I still do fight the good fight at my school, however.

"Isn't that strange? She seems to want to play a game like pat-a-cake with the person in the seat behind her. Well, that's how it goes sometimes. . I always insist on my whole staff staying alerted for the learning moments because if one of us can't do it, another often can.

"Well, my goodness, that was quick. Here we go again. I wonder why they stop at Rochester at all. Here, baby, look at me. See, this is how you do it. You say they call it the 'picture city'. Why, daddy, what's in Rochester? Oh. I didn't know that.

"Say, why don't I take your address in Philadelphia? And if we happen to be coming this way again we could share the trip in 'Old Gray'. Oh, you're thinking of moving here permanently to Buffalo? Imagine that. Why? What's SUNY? Really? Imagine that, and in Buffalo. Well, I'll just give you the card for my school in case you decide to stay put in Philamadelphia. Yes, one of my children always called it that and I thought it was rather cute so I have, too. Now, they've all moved away from there. Never could understand why.

"You know, you really must think a lot about baby's socialization process as soon as possible.

"Daddy, while I don't mind being the last on, I do not like to be the last off. I don't know why. My husband always asks me that, too. So, mommy, if you'd get my cane as soon as we're at the terminal building and help me on with my coat, I'd be ever so grateful.

"There, now, baby. Don't fidget so. Proper toilet training would help a lot with that, mommy. And don't forget, daddy, mommy and baby will need your support through all of this.

"Well, I guess we're ready now. I'll just move along here as quickly as my affliction will allow. It's been so nice getting to know the three of you.

"Stewardess, if you could just help me down the steps of the plane. No, I'd rather not. Oh, I see, that nice young man at the bottom will come up. How nice to have a strong arm to lean on, young man. I have a friend expecting me and she's the nervous type. She likes to see me among the first off. Well, I do my best, my dear. It's not like the people who take up your time by insisting on a wheel chair or whatever.

"Thank you, young man. Sir, could I just take your arm to the arrivals area, please. I'll move as quickly as I can. Yes, I really do cope quite well under the circumstances and I've just had the most dreadful experience. Two young people and their totally undisciplined child sat beside me and me a nursery school teacher. I feel I always need to be teaching and you know how it is sometimes. People just don't give you credit for what you know. Oh, there's my friend. JESSICA!

"Thanks so much for your arm, sir. Jessica, we have got to head to the potty right away. My bladder is just about to burst. My back teeth are floating, hah, hah, hah. I was on this terrible plane with the stupidest young couple and their baby and was locked into the window seat and you know me and how much I hate disturbing people so I just sat there until Rochester and they wouldn't let me off the plane or wouldn't let me use the one on the plane while it was landed so I...."