

Grateful for Everything...

My wife and I left Missoula traveling to LAX today. My mind started wandering on our flight from Missoula to Salt Lake. Just how lucky the both of us were to be living in 2016 on a jet on a new adventure... of course assuming our jet did not fall from the sky, crash into a mountain side and then burn its contents into a black nothingness. A bad thought... I had better think about positive things or think about something else. Thank goodness we weren't traveling by horse or on foot over some bug infested, sun parched dusty trail. Instead jetting through the atmosphere being served our favorite beverage and a tiny (hardly worth opening) bag of overly salted pretzels. Not once did we have to stop our journey to kill a rabbit for lunch or to take a quick potty break behind some large rock or in clump of thorny bushes. Instead being able to use state-of-art air toilets with blue water. When flushed, the toilet will suck down a half a roll of toilet paper if the user feels inclined. A waste of paper, yet somewhat fun. ***I have never done this... only heard about it.***

After a smooth landing at the Salt Lake City airport starts another fast paced run-walk (my wife runs everywhere except when she is shopping) through the airport. A momentary stop at the Delta Sky Club. Why? We have five minutes or less to gulp down a bowl of spicy, hot cream of mushroom soup. Spending those precious few moments devouring our dinner-soup... out the door we run to our next flight to LAX. After zig zagging around a multitude of other travelers with our luggage rollers squealing at every turn and we find ourselves eventually passing in excess of twenty or more "slow" airport walkers only to finally arrive at our gate. In total amazement I stare at the airport monitors and realize we arrived more than 20 minutes prior to the first boarding call. Why the rush I ask my wife? I don't get it? I am sweating like a pig (if pigs really

do sweat) and breathing a bit like Darth Vader. My wife gives me one of her dumb looks and looks away. Incredibly at moments like this, my wife wonders why people stare at the both of us from time to time....they stare at me more than her. I don't get my wife's obsession with her "hurry up and wait" syndrome

On the flight from SLC to LAX I am sitting in the cheap seats with all the common folks. My wife on the other hand is sitting in First Class next to a skinny drag queen wearing sunglasses who was returning from a gig in Chicago. The person next to me was a young woman. A very attractive gal from Portugal. Her name was Annabella. A beautiful name for a beautiful girl. She was coming to America (more importantly to Hollywood) to be discovered. She had connections...? My mind was racing. I was truly feeling sorry for her. All the horror stories associated with people trying to be discovered in Hollywood. I tried to convince her to find the Adventures by Disney office located in LA and change her life by becoming a Disney Adventure Guide. Annabella acted like she had ever heard of anything about Disney except she thought that Disney Land was close to LA. She probably will ignore my suggestion about a career working for Disney. I do hope she becomes the next Jennifer Lopez. She has the looks and the personality... more important I hope she stays safe in life and is happy.

Cruising over an ocean of city lights we land in Los Angeles. Again the standard mandatory sprint through the LAX airport. This time running from arrivals to departures (Level 6 to Level 5 and back) multiple times to find the Uber Black Car requested by my wife. "Mind farts" are when you know something has to be one way, but in reality the brain has reversed the concept and it is the other way. I learned what the terms "Departure" and "Arrival" meant many years ago. So has my wife. After all she has flown over a million miles the past four years. The polar opposite of

these terms were not dispelled by the gym like workout of racing up one set stairs to the Arrival level and down another set of stairs to Departure level as a prelude to us finally finding our requested Uber car. My wife apologized for getting confused about the levels to our waiting driver, but not to me and yes I was sweating like a pig again. Michael, our Uber driver, said he understood what my wife was saying as I stood by the car dripping sweat with the driver looking me up and down. My wife sat in the back seat and I jump into the front seat so I would not drip sweat on her. Speaking in broken English Michael describes himself as Armenian. Michael realizes we know nothing about his country when I asked if it was located between the Caspian and Black Seas. Michael's response was, "Armenia has no beaches and no seas. Only mountains with about 2 million people. Armenia is a small country sandwiched between Turkey and Azerbaijan." My parting thought was I am sure the Caspian and Black Seas have to be close to his country. I'll Internet it when I get to the hotel. Michael stated that he works as an Uber driver sometimes 14 to 16 hours a day to pay for rent, for food for his wife and child, and for his \$600.00 weekly rental on the black Chevy Suburban he was driving. A brutal life at its best by most people's standards. A moment of silence by all of us as we arrive at our hotel. We tip Michael \$10.00 and say our goodbyes. Both my wife and I telling him we hope his dreams for his family and their lives all come true.

Into the hotel we go. Caroline was the guest host who we chose to check us into our room. Even though Caroline was young and beautiful she had to be at the top of her game to be successful at this task. My wife had made it more than challenging for the poor girl by making three separate reservations for our stay in Santa Monica. One reservation for our first night's stay paid with my wife's earned Honor Points. A five day reservation to be paid by my wife's client. A company she would be working with during the

week. A final night's stay again being payed for with Honor Points. My wife's request was she hoped we could stay in the same room throughout our stay in Santa Monica. Caroline did her best, sent us on our way to our assigned room, and to say "Life is Good" would be an understatement. The both of us holding our hot complimentary chocolate chip cookies, luggage in hand, extremely tired, and then pressing the elevator button. After wandering the eighth floor aimlessly for ten minutes we were totally blown away. Caroline booked us into the hotel's Presidential Suite over looking the Santa Monica pier and bay. A 1200 square foot room as complete as any standard upscale house could be. All we could do was look at each other and smile. We munched down our warm chocolate chip cookies staring into the distance at the colored lights highlighting Santa Monica pier. For a moment like this we each needed more than just one damn cookie. Almost instinctively my wife picks up the room phone and orders from room service a bottle of Francis Coppola wine and a quesadilla. Again admiring the lights of the Santa Monica pier through the ocean mist as we stuffed our mouths and tummys. One has to wonder if life could ever get better than this.

As I lay in bed thinking about the day... my primary thought was, "Wow... are we lucky." We are proud citizens of the United States of America and Grand Parents. We flew in a jet about a thousand miles as the crow flies without having to worry about being bit by a rattlesnake and not having to worry about starvation. Then adding warm chocolate chip cookies, wine, and a quesadilla to the mix. All eaten in a Presidential Suite overlooking one of the world's most exciting cities. As my wife and I fell asleep that night both of us said our bedtime prayers... mine including individual prayers for those special individuals like the LA Drag Queen I never met, Annabella and Michael. All special human beings we share this incredible world with.

As I tried to fall asleep late that night in the middle of LA. I found my brain would not stop thinking. After all I remembered when I went to LA to be discovered... once upon a time. It was November of 2012. I was premiering my Adventures by Disney Greece vacation movie that I had made upon the request of Josh D'Amaro who was the Senior Vice President of Adventures by Disney at that time. The Greek vacation movie of Cast Members Only was viewed by a sizable group of the Adventures by Disney staff as we drank wine and ate the catered hors d'oeuvres. My movie was a categoric flop... too long and too detailed. Worse yet ... boring. Needless to say the only people that loved the movie were my wife and myself. My dreams of working with Disney in my Dream Job was vaporized... but to this day I have never given up hope that someday... once again I might have an opportunity to work for Disney in some capacity doing what I love to do. Using my imagination. Some Dreams still may come true!

XYZ... Papi 7/10/2016

