

Flying v. Trains

By Hap Hansen

I do not like to fly. If you happen to be flying with me, please do not ask about my excessively tight grip on the armrests. My white knuckles are the result of insufficient sunshine.

Many years ago, at our office in Hastings, Nebraska, I worked for the natural gas company. We had three dual prop airplanes and I was usually on one of them whenever we went to one of our seven-state service area. The Company only required a co-pilot when one of the senior officers was on board. None were, so that day, I sat up in the co-pilot's seat. We were soon on our way to Longview, Texas. It was a beautiful, sunny day. As we neared the Oklahoma border, we saw a dark, ominous cloud ahead of us. We were flying at 30,000 feet and the storm was 15 to 20 thousand feet higher. As we got nearer, the strong winds buffeted our plane around like a cork in a raging river. I wondered if the pilot would fly through the raging storm. But he finally turned to me and said jokingly, "Hap, let's do a 360 and get the heck out of here!" Incredibly I said, "What?" He just laughed and said, "Would you prefer a 180?" I breathed a sigh of relief and said, "I was wondering if you got your pilot's license in Albania!"

Now, for trains. When I was discharged from the Army in 1954, we came from overseas and our mustering-out location was San Francisco. After listening to recruiters for a couple of days, I finally boarded a bus to the Union Pacific railroad station. At the clerk's desk, I asked for a ticket to Nebraska. He replied, sarcastically, "We don't sell tickets, we sell reservations!" Flabbergasted, I didn't say a word. When we got to my stop in Nebraska, they parked the freight cars right in front of the station, which had all the bright lights. The passenger cars were several cars back, with the only light coming from the train's interior lights. Needless to say, I was not happy with trains.

Now, forward to two weeks ago. It was my daughter's 50th birthday, so I took her and her family to a restaurant in downtown Denver. Not wanting to fight traffic, they wanted to take the electric train to the downtown station. I reluctantly agreed. It was an uneventful trip both ways. I think that proves that I am not a spiteful person, even though I had refused to get on a train for more than 60 years!