

The Answer Is No!

*By Loweta Kimball*

A Call Center, possibly the busiest operating area for any airline, manages hundreds of calls received during its 24/7 work schedule. A unique section of Call Centers is the Customer Service area or Trouble Shooting area as it is called in-house. A typical day in the TSA will leave you laughing, crying, in shock or just plain befuddled by the type of questions asked. Questions so unique you need only a one word response – usually ‘No!’ For example, a caller who requests you call the airline pilots to tell them you are running late so please hold the plane; or the caller who wants to heat their special meal in the microwave on the airplane.

In training for Call Center positions, we are cautioned to not give out ‘however’ responses because that only leads to more creative requests.

The longer I worked in the Call Center the more enjoyable receiving calls became. Each day I heard stories suited for a Jay Leno monologue.

In writing this missive, I thought to divide the stories into Pre 9/11 and Post 9/11. I believe you will be shockingly mused.

#### Pre 9/11:

- My dog is ill. May I hold him on my lap?
- How wide are the isles on the airplane? I want my son to ride his tricycle on the plane so he won't be bored.
- I called earlier to make a flight to Hawaii and was told you don't fly there. Will you make a reservation to Los Angeles then schedule AmTrak from LA to Hawaii, please?
- Will you ask the pilot to slow the airplane and open the door when he flies over the Grand Canyon? My husband died and I promised to scatter his ashes over his favorite vacation spot.
- I am flying into Seattle to pick up seafood from Pike's Market. Will you please hold the plane? I will pick something up *for you*. What do you want?
- My two small children are flying alone. Will you put them both in the same seat? They are well behaved.

#### Post 9/11:

These questions were somewhat frightening because I thought everyone over the age of five had heard about or read about changes in security throughout the airline industry. Well, here are a few who didn't.

- My dog is sick and needs medicine every two hours. Because my flight is 2-½ hours, during the flight can I go down to the luggage area and give him the medicine or will the person in the luggage area do it for me?

- I just purchased a lovely pre-decorated Christmas tree. I don't want to take it apart because it is too difficult to put together. Can I stand it up in the back of the plane or do you have any suggestions? (This one required 'No!' and 'NO!!'.)
- I need an extra seat for my child to sleep. He is three years old so he can sleep anywhere on the airplane.
- I need to fly to Kansas City for business, then to St. Louis. Can I fly to both places on the same ticket?
- I need to fly to Florida and Alabama but I don't want to take all the luggage both places. Will you keep some of it for me? What is the charge?
- And, finally, a YES! response. If I carry my clothes in my arms, is that considered luggage?

The more strict the rule, the more creative the question, but pre/post 9/11 the answers are still No!