

Feliz Navidad and other airport adventures

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When the news reported the security delays, weather delays, and holiday delays for flights, I determined that I would lessen my stress by getting to the airport in plenty of time. I figured that if I allowed an hour or more to make the 45 min trip to IAH, an hour to get through ticketing and security, I'd still have 90 min or more to grab a bite and read a book before boarding.

The drive took only 30 minutes. I got my bag checked and was through security in less than 10 minutes. When I was on the "other side" and finished with all my responsibilities, I was three hours early. One half-cooked personal deep dish pizza later, I was

2 hours and 45 minutes early.

So rather than bury myself in my book, I thought I'd see what living in the moment would net me.

Settling in a seat near my future gate, I watched the crowd. Parents were desperately trying to subdue children under the influence of Christmas candy and visions of Santa dancing in their heads. Weary souls seemed desperate to become under the influence with the next drink or two. Santa hats were askew. Teenagers were texting, listening to Ipods, and chatting live and in person all at the same time.

Soon a nice looking white haired man a few years my senior and casually well dressed motioned to the seat beside me. Attempting to not only

let him know that it was available but also that I was not opposed to conversation, I nodded and replied, "Sure but I hope your pizza is better than the one I just had ..."

Before I completely finished the thought, he interrupted, "No English."

Hmmmm ... thinking that this revelation would test my in-the-moment-making skills, I asked, "Lingua?"

"Italiano or espana," he replied.

"Lo siento, me espanol is muy mal," I apologized for my lack of vast knowledge of his second language and indicated that I knew nothing of his first.

Then he told me in Spanish that I was doing fine, he was going to visit his daughter, his son lives in Chicago, and would I like a slice of pizza?

I asked in very broken Spanish if he was an abuelo (grandfather) and he feigned great shock that I would think so and declared this to be a complete falsehood. We laughed and chatted just a bit more about where I learned Spanish and whether he was on time and in the right location for his flight.

I assured him he had at least 20 minutes and then two minutes later they began a rush boarding of his plane.

"Ahora!" I pointed at the line and began to help him gather his things. He struggled with closing the pizza

box and then stood searching the area and looking as though he thought he were forgetting something.

Suddenly, he looked at me, bent down, exclaimed, "Ciao!" and planted a kiss on me with more gusto than I've experienced in a while.

"Feliz Navidad!" I said with a smile.

"Feliz Navidad!" he shouted and was off.

And so goes the story of my Christmas kiss.

Enflamed by the sweetness of his gesture, I determined that I should reach out to a few other folks who by virtue of a

recent loss could possibly be dreading the holidays. I called each one and either left a message or had an incredibly sweet conversation with each. One chat lasted 45 minutes! When it was all said and done my experiment of "the moment" had totaled several great conversations, touching texts, and numerous smiles as I determinedly walked the concourse with a grin and made the effort to actually make eye contact with my fellow travelers.

Now that's a secure way to beat the holiday stress blues!

Feliz Navidad indeed!



Happy Holidays

to our friends and neighbors around town

We may provide the heat for your home, but nothing warms our hearts more than thoughts of the many good folks we've had the privilege to serve this past year.

Happy Holidays!

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