

The rug heard round the world

Bill Hall/Lewiston Tribune

I fought the good fight again the other day against any airlines that comfort the wealthy while misusing unpretentious folk.

We were boarding a plane while walking the gauntlet of being stared at by wealthy people who sit up front where Daddy Pilot gives them liquid courage and flies them to our mutual destination. We arrive only a plane length behind the more moneyed fliers.

In one sense, that's an equitable transaction. They and their rich aunts have buckled down and earned a lot of moola in their gilded lives. They spend their fannies off (as they prove by sitting in the big seats).

That gives us the ability to amass all those cheap tickets into sufficient money to get the plane off the ground. Most of the big spenders, even with their more pricey tickets, would find it a stretch to pay for the flight without the help of all the flying peasants who subsidize them.

To be fair, the wealthy passengers in the front seats are kind enough to spend big wads of green backs to help generate the restoration of our economy.

A person thinks of things like that while being squinted at by the rich guys and gals as we pass through the section of the plane with the large, wealthy airline seats. They certainly do look us over before we go way back where conventional people sit in abnormally small seats, with about as much wiggle room as a strait jacket.

It was while I was parading through the front of the plane that I perceived a sour note - clothing.

Surprisingly few of the well-heeled were wearing outfits appropriate to their station in life. Most of them sat there in ordinary shirts, with a few of them wearing unremarkable blue jeans. I don't think there were more than half a dozen people who wore suits and ties and \$9,000 dresses, the way a rational person would expect. If you've got it, flaunt it.

But no. They just sat there with fancy smirks on their noble kissers, enjoying the procession of the riff raff. The wealthy were first to board and, at the end of the trip, first to leave the plane and go greet their brokers. Mostly, they just stared at us like a millionaire getting ready to buy another race track stud horse.

They were looking at us with an urbane expression that said, "Hello, loser. I am rich; what are you?"

It was ever thus in a teeter-totter world where wealth often has a jump on the less fortunate. True, many of those pudgy people in the wide seats are supplied with better food and drink. And that

can be ironic. It is the well-heeled passengers who can most afford the best food and drink and who get it for free.

And it is the passengers most hungry who aren't provided with tasty calories

But so what? Rank hath its privileges.

However, one part of airline travel really riles me: Not only did they let the wealthy passengers board first, but they mark those who waddle aboard first with useless little touches that tend to designate some among us are superior.

That airline the other day went too far in too silly a fashion, licking the boots of the wealthy passengers with the silliest slobber of all. They put a small throw rug on the floor as a separate path from the rest of us and invited the wealthy passengers in the big chairs to deviate from the ordinary path. It was a bit like a red carpet.

That rug was also an opportunity to declare everybody equal. So as I was walking the ordinary path to board the plane, I stuck my peasant foot out and stepped briefly and triumphantly onto the tacky carpet of those who had the big seats.

That's why this week's Fourth of July reminds us of the red coats. The early Americans were the ones who fought for what came to be their new country. When it came time to put the British in their place, our forebears threw those red coats into the mud.

Even today, when men and women fly, remember that our ancestors created a country where, in the new land of justice, people would share the air with birds.

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