

*Two stories excerpted from “THE GOLDEN YEARS OF FLYING”
By Old Frontier Airlines Captain Tex Searle with his kind permission
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Standoff at the Elko Restroom

During the Propjet 580's descent in preparation for landing at Elko, Nevada, the crew observed dust from a strong westerly surface wind. Elko lies in a valley filled with hilly terrain surrounded by mountains. With the wind following the contours of the terrain, the 580 waltzed with the turbulence like a frivolous fat lady tripping the light fantastic.

After the passengers had deplaned, First Officer Gary Winn informed the captain he had to make a latrine check. The captain said, "I'll join you." After they entered the terminal and made their way into the restroom, the captain (he wishes to remain anonymous) made his move. He quietly waited until all the restroom patrons had departed, then, checking to see the shoes of First Officer Winn firmly planted on the floor beneath the latrine partitions, he called, "I'll see you on board." Opening the door to exit the restroom he said, "OOPS! Sorry about that," pretending he had bumped into someone.

Then he slammed the door and stomped back into the restroom. In a gruff voice he mumbled, "Them damn airplane pilots. I've got a hump back mule that rides better 'n that thing they're flyin'. If I couldn't make that critter ride better 'n that, I'd get a job herdin' sheep."

The captain then watched the feet of First Officer Winn slowly elevate until they disappeared behind the latrine door. Again in a gruff voice, he muttered, "The more I think about it, the madder I get." After kicking a metal waste container he stomped out slamming the door behind him.

Returning to the cockpit, the captain watched and waited for the return of his first officer. As departure time drew near. He was beginning to feel some concern. He watched as two station agents pulled a covered baggage cart out of the freight room and parked it next to the boarding stairs of the aircraft. The first officer hurriedly slipped out of the cart and gingerly made his way up the airstairs and into the cockpit without looking back.

Nothing was mentioned of the incident until they were at cruise altitude over the Ruby Mountains. With time to relax, First Officer Winn commented, "That cowboy you bumped into as you left the restroom doesn't like the way we fly. It's a good thing you left when you did, he was ready to shoot somebody."

"How come he didn't shoot you?"

"He didn't see me, I was standing on the commode."

"Do you always stand on commodes?"

"Only when I hear a mad cowboy."

Later the captain told him what really happened, and First Officer Winn, being the good sport he is, laughed. (Copilots have to do that.) After 25 years, Winn still hasn't forgotten that occasion.

PROFESSIONALS Captain B.B. Bagshaw and Captain Gary Winn

Pilots these days are considered by many to be glorified truck drivers who keep watch over hi-tech contrivances and remonstrate because they have to fly an old Boeing 707 or a 737-200 instead of a gleaming new 757 or 767. Just the same, you can rest assured the captain climbing into the cockpit of his polished marvel to commence his run is thoroughly qualified in all aspects to conduct that flight. He has demonstrated his skills to

Federal Aviation Examiners for the various ratings he is required to obtain. He has attended schools on every subject to meet those standards. He has been trained to know and understand the various weather patterns he may encounter in his career. Before each flight he studies all the latest weather charts for his route and is aware of the actual weather conditions forecast to be encountered.

He has studied and flown thousands of hours to climb the ladder of required ratings to qualify for that final step: the Airline Transport Rating.

Today, as you see the captain enter the cockpit, be assured that in times past he has flown copilot with captains who took him under their wing, and from their years of experience, imparted valuable knowledge and training. Through the years he has changed from a fledgling to a respected eagle.

He has completed specialized courses for the type of aircraft he will be flying this day. He thoroughly understands all the flight procedures for this particular aircraft.

He is knowledgeable and understands the operation of the various systems, as well as the backup systems. He understands the emergency procedures for unexpected problems, and is tested with oral and written examinations. He is required to demonstrate his skills in all phases of flight, including emergencies and weather related problems. Upon a successful completion he is awarded a Type Rating Certificate for the aircraft you are boarding.

It is an ongoing requirement that he demonstrate his skills every six months in the simulator to qualified check FAA airmen with a review on systems and flight procedures. During the climb to the top rung of the ladder, several hundred thousands of dollars have been consumed to qualify him for that left seat authority. During his career he will accumulate thousands of hours of experience flying the line. Experience is still the principal mentor and every flight is a learning experience.

He is required to know all the Federal Regulations pertaining to the profession and interpret them into airman's jargon. An airline pilot is the most regulated mortal on the face of the earth.

A well-trained flight crew has to accomplish an exact set of procedures to bring a turn of events caused by a malfunctioning component to a successful conclusion. This incident report written thirty years ago by First Officer Gary A. Winn is a good example.

On the morning of September 8, 1967 we were flying flight 504, a prop jet Convair 580, into Riverton, Wyoming. On the approach everything was routine. Captain Bagshaw called for gear down and the final check list, we observed the transit light was still on and only two green lights, one for the nose and one for the left main gear were indicating. The right main gear light was not indicating green. Captain Bagshaw requested I make a positive check by depressing a micro switch on the pedestal (a position indicator on the right gear), the results were negative. We discontinued the approach and initiated a go around.

We requested inbound flight 503 who was arriving in the area to fly along side and make a visual inspection of the gear. They confirmed the right main gear was still in its well, and the gear doors had not opened. The gear handle was recycled several times and the condition persisted. I flew the aircraft while the captain followed the procedure from the flight manual for "blowing" the gear up-latches. The results were negative as indicated by the lights and confirmed by flight 503. Stewardess and passengers were then advised of the situation.

After conversing with the dispatchers in Denver, it was determined the flight should continue to Denver where better equipment was available to handle a variety of problems. An amended clearance was issued and the flight was cleared direct to Denver via radar vector at an altitude of 17,000 feet. En route the procedures for gear up landings were reviewed at this time and all loose equipment in the aircraft was properly stowed.

Arriving over Denver at 10:00 a.m. the tower and company dispatch operated on the same frequency to expedite communications. Until the final decision was made to bellyland the aircraft, we tried almost every conceivable configuration to release the up-latches. Positive Gs and negative Gs were applied to the aircraft in an attempt to break the gear free and during these maneuvers we actuated the gear handle up and down with no success.

We tried several more applications from the emergency air bottle to blow the up-latches with no success. Seeking every available resource to solve the problem, the left engine was shut down to release the hydraulic pressure on the up-latches, but with no success.

With the fuel down to 1600 pounds a decision was made to bellyland the aircraft. Runway 17 was foamed while the captain went to the cabin to once again reassure the passengers and to inform them on the decision to land with all the gear up. At this time he informed them the last thing before landing would be the removal of the emergency window exits. The passengers were ready and seemed reasonably calm. The stewardess completed her procedures for preparing the passengers.

Turning a long final for runway 17 and following the captains commands, I dumped the pressurization. The emergency exit windows in the passenger cabin were removed and stored. The captain and I again reviewed the final procedures. Flaps were set at 28 degrees, an airspeed of 120 knots was maintained. At 1,000 feet from the runway the alternators and inverter switches were positioned off. I continually called out the airspeed and altitude, and placed both my hands on the E handles (emergency handles). At approximately 50 feet above the field elevation Captain Bagshaw gave the order: "E handles now." The E handle for each engine feathers the large propellers and shuts off the supply of oil, Fuel, and hydraulic fluid. In the same motion the overhead fuel tank switches and emergency power switches were turned off and lastly the master power switch was positioned off. During the remaining 50 feet of decreasing altitude, Captain Bagshaw was flying a powerless aircraft to a dead stick landing. In Capt. Bagshaw's own words he said, "I then concentrated on flying the aircraft to the center line of the foam. Touch down was made softly onto the foam. No great deceleration was noticed until after the foam ended, after which a rocking motion was felt until coming to a standstill."

"I looked back and yelled let's go. I saw two men exiting through the exit windows on the right side, and the rest exited through the rear service door except one elderly lady who was still sitting in her seat. I helped her to the rear exit where two passengers were standing and assisting everyone out. I checked back through the cabin and no one was inside except First Officer Winn. We jumped out with assistance from the two passengers and we all departed the immediate area."

The crew was highly praised for their professional handling of the incident, and that's what they are, professionals.

A little background on the pilots involved in this incident. Captain B. B. Bagshaw served in the U.S. Air Force as a fighter pilot. He flew the F86, and then was picked to fly the North American F100 Super Sabre, the first second lieutenant to do so. The Super Sabre was the world's first supersonic fighter, with a top speed of 910 mph, it was the first jet to exceed the speed of sound in level flight. It incorporated heat-resistant titanium alloys. It had a 1,060 mile range that could be extended via in-flight refueling. Bob was the highest time F-100 pilot in the Air Force when he separated from the service.

Captain Bagshaw flew many of the large jet transports in his career as an airline pilot. He served two years as a first officer with Trans World Airlines. He flew the Martin 404, and all models of the beautiful Lockheed Constellations. Wanting to be based in the west, he joined Frontier in 1958. After the demise of Frontier, he served with a number of airlines in the capacity of captain, simulator instructor and check airman. He is rated on the DC-3, CV-580, MD-80, B-737, B-727, B-707, B-720. At the present time he is working in the training program with Win Air based in Salt Lake City.

First officer Gary Winn followed his father's footsteps. He flew a variety of aircraft in his military career. He flew both the cargo version and the refueling version of the C-97. These aircraft were offspring of the famous B-29. He also flew the C-47, and 'old shaky', the huge Douglas built C-124 Globe Master. The Lockheed T33 he flew was a version of America's first jet fighter, the F80 shooting star.

Captain Winn, like Captain Bagshaw, went on to fly the large passenger jets. After Frontier Airlines was brought to the ground for the last time, Captain Gary Winn continued working in the training program of a number of airlines, and currently is a simulator instructor and check airman with Win Air in Salt Lake City. He is the son of General Alma Winn who was active in the military for thirty-eight years. General Winn first learned to fly in 1936. One of General Winn's assignments was base commander of the large Hill Field Air Base in Utah for two years after WWII, and then he headed up the Utah National Guard until his retirement in 1967.