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## AN INTERVIEW WITH A REAL FAMOUS PERSON

*“ . . . . . you define a good flight by negatives: you didn't get hijacked, you didn't crash, you didn't throw up, you weren't late, you weren't nauseated by the food. So you are grateful.”*

- Paul Theroux

Sometimes I feel like I'm letting you down. I keep slipping down that primrose path of being a columnist, the freedom to write about anything, so long as it is remotely linked to travel. So I write about my personal travels and I answer your letters, and I tell you about voyages that cost more than a house in Winnetka, and real deals that cost less than a mocha grande at Starbucks.

But today is different. Today I am not a columnist. Today I am an actual reporter. Today I have a scoop.

What I did was meet with my new best friend, Art Armstrong, who just happens to be the CEO of AmDelited, one of the world's largest airlines. I think you'll agree he was pretty candid during my interview. I hope you'll agree that I asked all of the right questions. My wife says that I'm starting to look like Mike Wallace. I hope you will feel like I'm starting to sound like him. Here is a partial transcript of the interview that took place on October 29th, at a Stuckey's restaurant almost exactly between Dallas and Atlanta:

RT - “Well Art, let's start with the really big question. The one question that is on everyone's lips. To paraphrase Joan Baez, who actually once said “don't bother me, I'm talking to my broker” when I approached her at a phone booth in Mill Valley, California, where have all the toilets gone? I mean 310 seats on a DC10 and there's always a line outside the four johns. What's the deal?”

**AA - “Richard, its questions like that that make me understand why you are one of the better aviation writers in syndication today. So let me tell you straight up that AmDelited recognized this problem several years ago. That's why we were the first major airline, after Alitalia, to dispense with most of our drink service. We've also cut down our food portions. Now if our passengers would only refrain from eating on the day prior to boarding our planes, we think the restroom overcrowding situation would be solved.”**

RT- “You know Art, we're friends and all, but I gotta tell ya, those airline seats are kind of tight. Is there anything that you guys can do to give us a squosh more legroom. My voice actually goes up several octaves when I sit more than one hour on one of your 757's.”

**AA - “Now that's a bum rap. I'm 5'11" and I fit in those seats just fine. At least the ones I've tried up in front of the plane. I do hear that the ones in back are smaller. But again, AmDelited is working on behalf of our customers to solve this problem. Once the seatbelt sign has been turned off, people are free to stroll about the cabin to wait in line outside the lavatory. It's good exercise and it does get you out of those seats”.**

RT - “Art you've got a whole bunch of 737's in your fleet. Isn't that a plane that has had problems with its elevator control during takeoff, climb, and landing. And didn't the FAA cite the

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plane for having “unsafe condition” because of the restrictions on the elevator controls? And Art, isn't the 737 the most used aircraft in America?

**AA - “Well that’s all true but if you were a real aviation reporter you would tell the whole story. We’re going to have all of those planes fixed before the end of the year 2000, just like the FAA has mandated. Now let’s talk about something important. Did you know that we’ve increased our take-offs from O’Hare to Columbus. We now have thirteen flights a day and seven of them leave at 9:00 am.”**

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