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NAPERVILLE CHOSEN AS SITE FOR NEW CHICAGO AREA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This could well be the highlight of my journalistic career. I am going to be able to share a genuine scoop with you today. I've got information so hot it's going to have the editors at the Tribune and the Sun Times scratching their heads in disbelief. I've got the lowdown on the third airport.

I think you know the background. The Governor of Illinois, George Ryan, wants to put the new airport that Chicago desperately needs in a place called Peotone. The Mayor of Chicago, Richie Daley, wants to add a few runways and stuff out at O'Hare.

This has caused a kind of gridlock between two powerful politicians. As someone who writes about travel, I've been following all of this closely, but I've had a hard time gathering information.

First, I had to find out what a Peotone is. I decided to make random calls to Wheaton, Romeoville and Fox Valley to see if I could find out . Here are some of the answers I got:

- "It's a brand of hearing aid"
- "It's the sound you get when your woofer and your tweeter are not in synch"
- "It's a lucite paint"

It turns out that none of these is correct. I found out that Peotone is a town somewhat south of the loop. Since my cherished readers will be among those using the new airport wherever it is built, I decided to try to do some research on Peotone. Here's what I found out:

1 - The residents of Peotone fought on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

2 - The closest current airport to Peotone is Shreveport, Louisiana.

3 - The local residents feel that the opening of a major airport would boost the local economy. But so would the opening of a Dunkin Donuts.

No, Peotone just won't work. It just takes too long to get there. It would be the first time that travelers would need a passport just to get to the airport.

The Mayor of Chicago says he has a better plan. Richie Daley says that there is room to build new runways out at O'Hare. He wants to double the number of planes coming in or going out of O'Hare. This would also increase the number of stands in each terminal selling bratwurst for \$9.95. In order to comprehend the brilliance of the Mayor's plan, you have to understand how underutilized O'Hare is at the present time. Lots of gates are empty, planes

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almost always leave exactly on time, there are never any traffic jams. Doubling capacity would not seem to be a problem.

Of course, whenever you increase the size of an airport you have to wonder what the folks who live near the airport think about it. For years, residents of Bensenville and Elk Grove Village have been enjoying the happy buzz of commerce piercing through their walls and ceilings. They are, I imagine, totally pleased with the prospect of a larger O'Hare.

Now that's where the gridlock comes in. Neither the Mayor or the Governor has been willing to give an inch. For weeks it has appeared that no airport would be built. That is until early yesterday.

I got a phone call in the morning from my secret source in Springfield, Barry Boring, a top aide to the Governor and a specialist in Travel-related legislation. Barry has been keeping me up-to-date for years. It was Barry who let me know that the Beatles had broken up.

Anyway, Barry swears that he is absolutely positive that Edgar and Daley have reached a compromise to build the new airport in Naperville. That's right, Naperville, the hub of the western suburbs. He has faxed me a memo that lists all of the reasons that Naperville was selected:

- The total number of Naperville residents who fly on airplanes exceeds the number of Peotone residents who fly on airplanes.
- The Naperville plan to convert Ogden Avenue into a runway accommodating 747's was a "definite plus".
- The airport would help Naperville achieve it's "Population 500,00" growth plan and move the completion date up to 1997.
- Naperville already has all of the necessary "close to the airport" fast food outlets in place.
- Passengers waiting to connect to planes in early July could spend an hour at Ribfest.
- Most of the pilots for major airlines already live in Naperville, making it possible for them to walk to work.
- It would help Naperville make up for the loss of Boston Chicken

It is my understanding that the specific site to build the new airport has not been selected. Barry tells me that Naperville has so much open land, the legislators in Springfield and the Aldermen in Chicago will have a wide choice of locations.

We understand that several architectural firms are already working on design themes for the new Naperville airport terminals. At this point, Barney says the only thing for sure is that the interior will have a duck motif. An innovative people-mover featuring body shells of Jeep Cherokees will move travelers from the terminal to the planes. It's going to be beautiful..

As soon as I hung up, I called the press offices of several major airlines to see if they were aware that the new airport would be located in Naperville.

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Surprisingly, they had already heard the news. Here's what they had to say about the plan:

American - We're thrilled. We already fly from Naperville to more cities in Europe than anyone else"

Delta - We're going to offer more flights from Naperville to New York than any other carrier. Of course, they'll be a convenient change of planes in Atlanta."

United - It's great. We're the Chicago area's hometown airline, and when we say hometown, we, of course, mean Naperville.

Southwest - We'll be entering the market in a competitive way, charging \$29.00 to fly from Clow Airport in South Naperville to the new airport.. This 20 minute flight will shave several minutes off normal commute time".

Now that the ball is rolling, I'm going to need your help. If you've got a name for Naperville's new international airport, please send it in. I'd love to have one of my readers name the thing before the downstaters start working on it.

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