

When an in-flight incident creates conflict between a duty crewmember and a high-ranking passenger on a trans-hemispheric flight, a junior officer learns an important lesson regarding the difference between personal and professional RESPECT.

Background:

Because I was junior in rank, I was often chosen for missions that might result in long delays in being away from home, Travis AFB, CA. My orders were to navigate a C-141 "Starlifter" to McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, via Christ Church, New Zealand. Our flight was to Hickam AFB, Hawaii, for refueling, then to Pago Pago, Samoa, before continuing, on to Christ Church NZ. With no lack of trepidation, I was both elated and challenged with the task before me.

It was customary that ranking passengers were given slight accommodation to access the flight deck for seating out of **respect** and courtesy for their rank. Accordingly, one of the passengers, a full colonel, was invited forward by the Aircraft Commander, a captain, and seated adjacent to my workstation in the aircrew compartment, adjacent to the forward bulkhead of the airplane.

At the limit of our radio aids, I plotted our position and dead reckoned a navigational fix to be taken by solar observation. As I started to extend the sextant through a periscopic port, I was overcome with the smell of burning manure and looked down to see our passenger-Colonel with the biggest, ugliest, blackest cigar imaginable. I attempted the SunShot doing the best I could, but I was nauseated before I could return with the celestial observation. I politely asked, "Sir, excuse me, but would you please extinguish your cigar, or step into the cargo bay." With utter disdain, he retorted, "Captain, if you don't like my cigar, you go to the cargo bay!" So, I did.

I gave the crew a heading and quietly removed myself to the cargo bay where I unfolded several jump seats, grabbed a blanket and promptly lay down in the fresh air. I could anticipate what would happen and it was not long before my thoughts were confirmed. A position report (AIREP) was due on the hour, so it was not long before the aircraft commander (also a Captain) came storming off the flight deck. "Nav, what in the hell are you doing?" I replied, "Sir, I have been ordered off the flight deck by higher authority." He looked aghast at me when I told him what had happened. He was thoughtful for a moment, and then said, "I will get back to you."

I only heard part of the conversation..., "Colonel, I respect your rank, but on this airplane, I am the Aircraft Commander. **Your behavior leaves no room for respect for you as a person, regardless of your rank!** " Now, unless you put that cigar out, or get your ass off my flight deck, I will have security meet us on landing and have you escorted off the airfield.

I the door slammed again, and the AC called from the stairway, "Nav, get back to work." I returned to the Nav station, completed the AIREP, transmitted our position, and continued to navigate the remaining six- hour over-water flight to Pago Pago. The Colonel kept his face buried behind a newspaper and never uttered another word for the remainder of the trip.