

Complaint about air service

The following was sent to James J. Flood, Chief Executive Officer, Wien Air Alaska:
Dear Mr. Flood:

On Friday, May 6, 1983 an employee of this agency had an unfortunate experience at the Wien ticket counter at Anchorage International Airport. As the result of an obvious error on the part of ticket agents working that morning, Ms. Dora Moore was prevented from participating in one of the most important events in her life.

Ms. Moore had been invited weeks earlier to be the featured commencement speaker at the graduation exercises of Kuskokwim Community College in Bethel. Two years ago, Ms. Moore had earned her own Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from KCC, and the college wished to honor her professional work in the field.

It also wished to direct her commencement remarks, in English and Yu'pik, to young people of the Delta in order to encourage them to consider the opportunities of post-secondary education.

The college was delighted when Ms. Moore accepted the invitation, and she eagerly looked forward to the event.

Ms. Moore left her Anchorage residence at 6:30 a.m. Friday, May 6, arriving by taxi at Anchorage International Airport at 6:45 a.m., 45 minutes prior to departure of the Bethel flight.

As usual, the lines at the ticket counter were very long, so Ms. Moore stood and waited. And she waited. And she waited.

Having flown to Bethel many times on Wien, she fully expected the ticket agents to call out closure of the flight and allow any remaining Bethel passengers to go to the head of the line in order not to miss

it.

There was no such call. Finally, Ms. Moore went to the head of the line and politely asked if they were going to call out closure of the Bethel flight.

She was told, in no uncertain terms, to get back in line. She did.

The Bethel flight departed, leaving Ms. Moore (and other passengers holding confirmed space) standing in line at the Wien ticket counter.

There was no call to close the Bethel flight from any ticket personnel, despite her urgent request. The agents were busy closing the Prudhoe Bay flight, which departs at the same time. Dora Moore went home.

She never gave her KCC address. The college had to scramble, with little more than six hours notice, to revise its commencement ceremony.

If this were an isolated incident, it could be chalked up to staff error or to misfortune. But it has happened before.

I estimate that this Agency has paid close to \$1 million in airfares to Wien Air Alaska and its predecessor lines during the past 18 years. Much of our travel is directed toward the Bethel region and its villages.

Our staff members stand there in your lines, morning after morning, trying to get to Bethel and beyond, and during the past year several of us have been left stranded.

Part of the problem, clearly, is that the Prudhoe Bay flight departs at the same time and ticket agents are jammed.

But has any Prudhoe Bay passenger working for the oil and gas industry, ever been treated that way?

When these two flights conflict and overburden Wien staff, I wonder whether the Bethel flight has ever been

attended to and Prudhoe Bay neglected?

Today, Ms. Moore received a letter of apology from Mr. John Bridgman, Passenger Service Manager at Wien, for the "mishandling you received on our Bethel flight recently."

That is a decent gesture, but it would be better to receive some assurance that the airline will try to avoid this kind of treatment in the future. Mr. Bridgman's letter makes no such commitment. It says that Wien is sorry.

Therefore, I am requesting you, as Chief Executive Officer, to deal with the issue. Please write to me and tell me what specific steps your company will take to instruct Anchorage ticket counter personnel to give equal attention to the closing of departures, including those Bush flights which are scheduled against Prudhoe and Deadhorse.

In consideration of the thousands of flights we have purchased from Wien, I think this Agency, Dora Moore and all the other Alaskans who will still be here after the oil is gone, deserve appropriate corrective action, not another apology.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Lohr
Executive Director
RurALCAP

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