

Alaska Airlines urged to pay more attention to its passengers' needs

Mr. O.F. Benecke, President
Alaska Airlines
Sea-Tac International Airport
Box 68900
Seattle, Wash. 98188

Dear Mr. Benecke:

As some correspondence between our office and yours has occurred during the past several months regarding the quality of air transportation in rural Alaska, and your Airline's provision of that service, I would like to share with you a recent personal experience which, I believe, exemplifies the treatment many of your passengers experience and which may explain the source of many complaints received by Alaska Airlines.

Yesterday, (Sunday, April 25th) I had reservations for your flight to Ketchikan, departing Anchorage at 9:50 a.m. Because I was ill, I called in at 8:00 a.m. requesting a change in reservations to the evening flight (5:30 p.m.) to Juneau, with a continuation of my Ketchikan travel to occur this morning. At that time your agent told me that I was confirmed on both flights.

So I went to the airport to check in at 4:30 p.m. The agent on duty then told me I had no reservation from Juneau to Anchorage, that the flight was full, and that I would have to standby, which I did, and didn't get on.

I then asked for reservations on this morning's 9:50 a.m. flight to Ketchikan, was informed that it was full and that I would be put on a waiting list. Later last night I called to see if I had been confirmed and was told that I wasn't on a list and that it would be senseless to try to get on the flight.

So I'm leaving, with luck, this afternoon, to spend the night in Juneau and to proceed to Ketchikan in the morning.

In my discussions with your agents, it was never hinted by them that ASA people might have made a mistake. It was suggested that I "didn't understand" and that I was fabricating the contents of earlier conversations. My efforts to seek relief for denied boarding were thwarted by the who contended that I wasn't denied boarding because I never

had a reservation.

I am not a liar, nor do I have special handicaps which may have led me to misunderstand your reservations agents. I resent the implication that I would falsely make a statement and I further resent the general attitude of your personnel toward the public. None of the agents with whom I discussed this problem ever gave any indication of caring whether I got to Ketchikan or not. For an airlines which is striving mightily to maintain its monopoly in Southeast Alaska, it would seem you might pay more attention to your passengers' needs—or, at least, not insult their integrity.

I renew my request for a reimbursement for the ticket price between Anchorage and Ketchikan.

And I look forward to discussing these and similar problems when we meet in Cordova next month with representatives of the Alaska Transportation Commission and the Civil Aeronautics Board.

Sincerely,
Philip J. Smith
Executive Director

PJS/so

cc: Jake Johnson, ATC
P.R. Steinman, III, CAB
Tundra Times