

It's common knowledge that the best sight is hind sight. We can always get a clearer picture of an event when we look back on it. Whether we are reading history books or looking back on our own life, the past is full of moments that generate a shoulda response. They shoulda gone that direction ... I shoulda made that choice... God shoulda thrown another meteor at us and started all over again at that time.

We love looking backwards because we are all geniuses when we do. I'm an absolute genius when talking about the 60s, which is somewhat ironic coming from a guy who in the 60s was a care-free teenager with more salt water on the brain than knowledge and whose name was never brought up in conversations about gifted programs. Yet here I am now able to explain anything you need to know about the 60s in masterful articulation. I am in awe of myself.

I enjoy reading books about history, especially our country's history. I find it fascinating that you can read every book on the Revolutionary War and you will never come away with a clear explanation of how we won that war. There is none. We just won it, that's all we know. But there will always be another professor who will write another book and we will all read it and come away with the same thought ... 'There's no way we should have won that war ... they should have kicked our butts ...' That's the fun of hind sight.

I was thinking the other day about one part of history where I think we really dropped the ball. Actually there are about a million places in history where we dropped the ball, but this story is not about my genius ... well actually it does reflect my genius, but let's move on ....

As I was sitting at a railroad crossing watching a very long train pass by, the thought occurred to me that our country really blew it when it comes to our railroad system. Depending on where you live, the story varies a bit, but generally speaking our railroads have been reduced to simply moving goods from point A to point B - and we are not the goods being transported.

When planes got to a point where they could take on passengers, everybody wanted to fly. With a country this big, the thought of getting to another part of the country in a few hours was quite an exciting thing. The more our air travel developed, the more our railroad system became reduced to transporting lumber and memories of how it use to be.

I remember how much fun it use to be to take the girls to the airport just to watch the planes take off and land. As a single parent, this was always a great activity that entertained the girls at no cost to the old man.

But the times, they are a changin' as the days where air travel and visiting airports were an exciting and enjoyable experience have been replaced by security checks, long lines and rude business people who think because they fly more often, they deserve more courtesies than you.

Simply put, flying the unfriendly skies today is a dreaded experience that I avoid unless I absolutely have to... and I'm thinking I am not alone on this. The sad news is that I often don't have any choice, which brings me back to the trains.

My home town is San Diego and I live now in Nashville. If everyone is getting together at Moms, I have two choices .... I can deal with airports that have no customer service, filled with anxious, rude people so I can get on a four hour flight that comes with no customer service, filled with anxious, rude people and see Mom by supper time (and her always great home cooking), or I can jump in my car and drive for four days - with another four days driving back - and spend whatever time left on visiting the family .... well nobody has that much time, so I really am left with no other choice but to put up with flying with a bunch of rude, anxious people. What fun!

I wish we could have had better vision to see that when planes began taking people to all corners of our world, there would always be a need for an alternative travel experience. In this post 9-11 era, I am certain that I am not alone in saying that given a choice, I'd much rather grab a train for a two day run to San Diego and avoid the horrible airport experience if I could. Unfortunately that's a choice I don't have and there is little reason to think I ever will.

Europe has kept train travel as a viable alternative to planes and they seem to be doing very nicely with it. We certainly dropped the ball on the opportunity to keep railroad travel as an attractive alternative to air travel for those of us not so consumed by fast-paced lifestyles.

If nothing else, if we kept trains as an alternative to planes, maybe the airports would work a little harder to provide some friendlier customer service.

We shoulda known better.

Just A Thought

