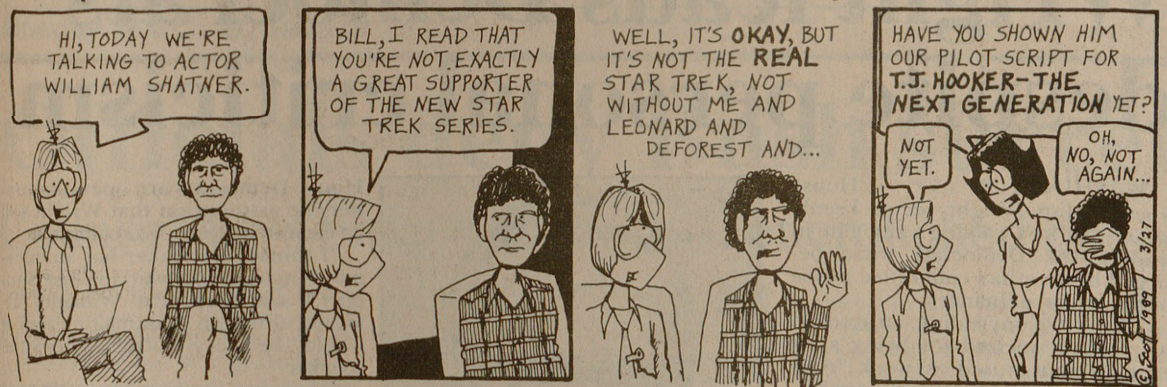
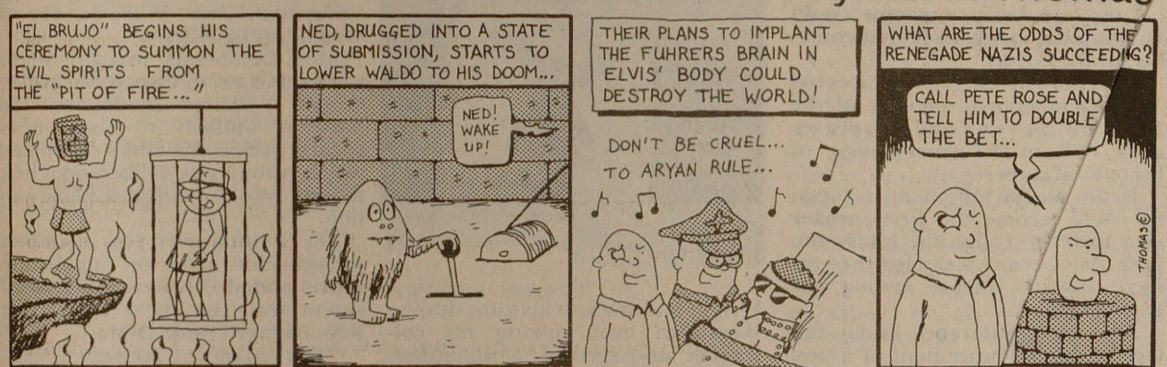


Warped



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Airline fares expected to rise during summer, officials say

HOUSTON (AP) — With the approach of summer — typically one of the busiest flying seasons of the year — and Eastern Airlines on the brink of collapse, airline travelers can expect to see fewer discount fares, more restrictions and higher full fares, industry officials say.

Airline officials insist that great bargains are still available provided the traveler plans at least two weeks ahead, is agreeable to stops along the way, and will travel at off-peak times.

Even then, you still may end up seated next to someone who paid hundreds of dollars less than you did for the same service.

"It just plain stinks," Dan Smith, spokesman for the International Air Passenger Association in Dallas, told the *Houston Post*. "The prices assigned to each seat can change on a daily basis."

It's also common for customers to be quoted two different prices within a day.

Airline officials call that practice "yield management," a computerized fare system that continually switches prices based on the number of passengers booked on a flight.

"Airlines are getting so sophisticated in their yield management programs that they can go into their computer system and tell a week in advance how many seats they'll sell for that flight," Tina Ruffeno, president of the Texas Passenger Travel Association in Houston, said.

"Then they'll take out all the cheap or discounted seats and force the corporate traveler to pay it or travel on a less-traveled flight they're trying to fill up," she said. "And two days before that highly traveled flight leaves, they'll go back into the system and see they haven't sold as many seats as they wanted and discount the fare again," she said.

This airline alchemy has flourished since the 1978 Airline Deregulation Act began to phase out govern-

ment involvement in the airline industry.

Before deregulation, the cost of an empty seat was passed on to all the other passengers, said David Swirenga, assistant vice president for the Air Transport Association, which represents the country's largest airlines.

Air carriers now reserve a few seats for the last-minute flier at a higher price and reward passengers who buy tickets in advance with lower fares.

The result has been discount fares never before dreamed possible and skyrocketing standard fares. Today about 90 percent of the nation's air travelers are flying on a discounted fare.

The losers in this game of supply and demand are corporate and emergency travelers who don't have the luxury of planning their trips weeks in advance or the flexibility to comply with fare restrictions, industry observers say.

"The business traveler is in an 'I gotcha,'" Ruffeno said. "They're frustrated because they don't have a lot of choice. The airlines know that and take advantage of it by jacking up the price."

A traveling salesman at Houston Intercontinental Airport last week lamented the price of his \$860 round-trip ticket from Washington.

"I try to plan in advance to keep the fares low," Willie Brown of Reston, Va., said. "Yet sometimes a customer says, 'Be here tomorrow,' and you have got to go. It's cheaper to fly to Hong Kong. I flew there, round trip, for \$729."

Airline officials, however, insist they care about corporate travelers, who fill up at least 50 percent of their flights.

"The business traveler has to have a seat available at the last minute because they can't always plan ahead," David Messing, a Continental Airlines spokesman, said.

'Quick Response' advocates claim system will save money for retailers

DALLAS (AP) — Advocates of a concept dubbed "Quick Response" claim the system could save retailers \$9.6 billion a year, and at the same time help the nation's apparel and textile industries battle foreign competition.

But analysts are divided on whether retailers will sign on in high enough numbers to reach the levels needed to reap those savings.

Two studies released in Dallas this month tout the advantages of Quick Response, a concept generally credited to Roger Milliken, chairman of textile manufacturer Milliken & Co., as an offshoot of his Crafted With Pride campaign to bolster the domestic textile and apparel industry.

Milliken conceived of textile and apparel manufacturers and retailers sharing product and sales information across the board in an effort to "play the competitive advantage (of U.S. manufacturers) — time," according to Doug Smith, a partner in the Dallas office of Andersen Consulting, which opened a permanent exhibit on the concept at Dallas' Infomart trade center.

Andersen Consulting, a unit of Arthur Anderson & Co., and Kurt Salmon Associates, presented results of separate studies to about 100 top executives of apparel, textile and retailing companies in Dallas recently.

The studies were done for the Voluntary Industry Communications Standards Committee, which is seeking to develop uniform methods of gathering and sharing sale and inventory data among the industries.

Advocates concede that despite the technological demands of the system, the key is a willingness for all parties to share information, for example, of competing retailers telling a common supplier how sales are going.

"Quick Response is, first and foremost, a new and different way of doing business," Andersen's study says. Companies must "create new partnerships across the pipeline, with the manufacturers and textile mills, and... share sales information through the entire pipeline."

Monroe H. Greenstein, a retail analyst with Bear, Stearns & Co. in New York said he doubted fashion retailers would be willing to participate, although he said retailers who sell basic apparel, which makes up the bulk of the market, probably will go along.

But Kay Norwood, who follows retailing, apparel and textiles for Interstate-Johnson Lane in Charlotte, N.C., said the competitive advantages offered by Quick Response will force competitors to go along.

"If your competitor is doing this,

and has a better apparel assortment than you, and getting sales because of it, for you not to be involved is cutting off your nose to spite your face," she said by phone.

Under the VICS system, retailers would daily gather sales information generated from using Universal Product Scanning, point-of-sale terminals.

That information would be used to reorder needed products immediately, all using computer tie-ups with apparel suppliers. The apparel industry, in turn, would be tied similarly to textile manufacturers who supply the material to make the clothes.

The system can significantly reduce the lead time needed to order and restock items, with some studies indicating the time from making fabric to shelf can be reduced from 66 weeks to 30 weeks or even further.

Andersen Consulting's study says department stores could save \$3.7 billion a year, after an initial investment of \$1.6 billion and annual maintenance of \$139 million. Mass merchants would save \$3.9 billion, after \$1.3 billion in startup and \$159 million annual costs. Specialty stores could reap \$2 billion in annual savings, with startup costs of \$684 million.



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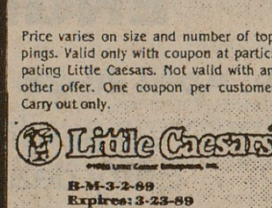


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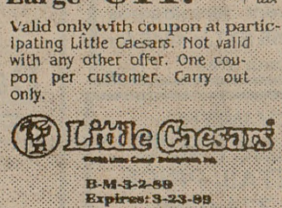


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