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## SeaPort has served our region well

Two or three decades ago, flying wasn't just a means of getting somewhere in a hurry, it was an adventure and a special experience during which passengers were pampered and treated like royalty.

Almost every flight of any distance included a fancy meal served with a dramatic flair. It was common to see men in coats and ties and women in dresses because it was a dress-up occasion. That, of course, was before it became necessary to undress, in part just to get through security. Now the focus isn't so much on fashion as it is on easily shedding enough footwear and garments to get past the TSA.

It's not surprising airlines are hanging on by a thread and the number of people choosing to go by air continues to plummet. It isn't just the recession that's causing people to either stay at home or find other alternatives, it's the fact air travel is still the fastest way to get from point A to point B, but it comes at a price. Destinations may still be attractive, but getting there by air is not an enjoyable part of the experience on most major airlines.

Usually, folks in Eastern Oregon, pay an even greater price in service and convenience - particularly when it comes to travel. Not so in the case of air travel. We have SeaPort, the upstart airline that is celebrating its first anniversary of providing service from Pendleton to Portland and back.

Travelers on SeaPort are able to zip into the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport minutes before departure, show a piece of identification, hand their baggage to someone who will carry it to the plane, and go through a collegial boarding process that includes both travelers and pilots. Getting onto a SeaPort flight doesn't include the demeaning boarding process now popular with larger airlines who go through a long series of privileged access routines before they finally all but announce "OK, riff raff, it's your turn, and please hurry."

For those who travel on SeaPort on a regular basis, it's often a first-name welcome. If circumstances don't permit access to a certain flight, it's easy to change to another.

On the trip to Portland, there's van service to PDX for those who need it and pickup via a simple call. SeaPort acknowledges that baggage is an essential part of travel and therefore they don't charge extra for a normal suitcase. They also offer each of their seats at the same charge without feeling it necessary to gouge passengers with alternatives.

SeaPort staff members, whether they are ground crew or pilots, aren't tired, cranky, and arrogant - they're eager, appreciative, energetic and seem to radiate an understanding of the fact that it takes customers to make the business go.

Those who haven't yet had the experience of traveling via SeaPort, haven't yet had the privilege of understanding what's it's like to have your own special carrier. No, the flights aren't long enough to make it practical to offer gourmet meal service, but all the other pieces are there.

Congratulations to SeaPort on their first anniversary and thanks for making air travel what it used to be.

We're glad its airplanes visit Eastern Oregon each and every day.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board, comprised of Associate Publisher Kathryn Brown, General Manager Wendy DalPez, Managing Editor Skip Nichols, News Editor Daniel Wattenburger and Senior Reporter Dean Brickey. EO Publishing Co. Board Chairman Mike Forrester and former EO Editor George Murdock also contribute editorial content. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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