

Airline Lunches

I put my carry-on in the luggage compartment and sat down in my assigned seat. It was going to be a long flight from Perth. 'I'm glad I have a good book to read. Perhaps I will get a short sleep,' I thought.

Just before take-off, a line of diggers came down the aisle and filled all the vacant seats, totally surrounding me. I decided to start a conversation. 'Where are you blokes headed?' I asked the digger seated nearest to me.

'Puckapunyal. We'll be there for two weeks for special training, and then we're being deployed to Afghanistan. After flying for about an hour, an announcement was made that lunches were available for five dollars. It would be several hours before we reached Melbourne, and I quickly decided a lunch would help pass the time...

As I reached for my wallet, I overheard a soldier ask his mate if he planned to buy lunch. 'No, that seems like a lot of money for just an airline lunch. Probably wouldn't be worth five bucks. I'll wait till we get to Pucka'. His mate agreed.

I looked around at the other soldiers. None were buying lunch. I walked to the back of the plane and handed the flight attendant a fifty dollar note. 'Take a lunch to all those soldiers.' She grabbed my arms and squeezed tightly. Her eyes wet with tears, she thanked me. 'My young bloke was a digger in Iraq, it's almost like you are doing it for him.'

Picking up ten lunchboxes, she headed up the aisle to where the diggers were seated. She stopped at my seat and asked, 'Which do you like best - beef or chicken?' 'Chicken,' I replied, wondering why she asked.

She turned and went to the front of plane, returning a minute later with a dinner plate from first class. This is your thanks. After we finished eating, I went again to the back of the plane, heading for the rest room. An old bloke stopped me. 'I saw what you did. I want to be part of it. Here, take this.' He handed me twenty-five dollars...

Soon after I returned to my seat, I saw the Captain coming down the aisle, looking at the aisle numbers as he walked, I hoped he wasn't looking for me, but noticed he was looking at the numbers only on my side of the plane... When he got to my row he stopped, smiled, held out his hand, and said, 'I want to shake your hand.'

Quickly unfastening my seat-belt I stood and took the Captain's hand. With a booming voice he said, 'I was an army pilot a long time back... Once someone bought me lunch. It was an act of kindness I never forgot.' I was embarrassed when applause was heard from all of the passengers.

Later I walked to the front of the plane so I could stretch my legs. A kid who looked about 18 was sitting about six rows in front of me reached out his hand, wanting to shake mine. He left another twenty-five dollars in my palm.

When we landed I gathered my belongings and started to depart. Waiting just inside the aeroplane door was a man who stopped me, put something in my shirt pocket, turned, and walked away without saying a word. Another twenty-five dollars!

Upon entering the terminal, I saw the soldiers gathering for their trip to up to Puckapunyal. I walked over to them and handed them seventy-five dollars. 'It will take you some time to reach Pucka. It will be about time for a sandwich. God Bless You Blokes.'

Ten young blokes left that flight feeling the love and respect of their fellow Aussies. As I walked briskly to my car, I whispered a prayer for their safe return. These soldiers were giving their all for our country. I could only give them a couple of meals. It seemed so little....

**A digger is someone who,
at one point in his life, wrote a blank
cheque made payable to
' AUSTRALIA '
for an amount of
'up to and including my life.'
That is Honour, and there are way
too many foreigners in this country
who don't understand it.'**

May you have the strength and courage to pass this along to everyone on your email mates list....

I JUST DID!

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