

About “As I See It”

Ronnie Turso, a native New Yorker, has been a professional entertainer since the age of eight. He is a veteran of the Broadway stage appearing most notably as Friedrich in “The Sound of Music” with Mary Martin and as Winthrop in “The Music Man” with Robert Preston. Since then, he has done it all – from actor to singer to songwriter and entertainer...and now – author. Over the last few years, he has been writing personal topical commentaries (a la Andy Rooney), and recently compiled them into this book appropriately titled, “As I See It”. Many of these mostly humorous vignettes are footnoted with personal anecdotal experiences of his youth...evidencing the old axiom: ‘Everything old is new again.’ Witty some of the time, insightful most of the time, and thoughtful all of the time...it will make you think. Here is an excerpt:

SECURITY

I fly a lot. Through the years, I’ve flown thousands of miles. Not as much as some, but more than many. So I’ve had my share of frustration with lost and/or damaged luggage, surly flight attendants (there were only women when I started flying, and they were called stewardesses) and missed, cancelled or delayed flights. But all in all, it’s still the best way to get from point A to point B in the shortest amount of time. Until 9-11, it was a pretty efficient system. Sure, it had its bugs, but it still got you where you were going with a minimal amount of discomfort. The airlines did everything they could to calm people’s fear of flying, warranted and otherwise. And witnessed by the numbers of people flying before 9-11, it seems they were doing a good job. But fear of flying is back, and all this new security, or lack of it, is the cause. No, I take that back! As I see it, it’s not the security per se, it’s the political correctness factor in the security that causes *me* uneasiness.

Prior to the WTC attack, all of us passengers were in the same boat (hopefully not the Titanic): everyone got the same treatment; except the first-class passengers, of course. But they paid extra to be treated like they were actually someone who deserved it. And hey, if you got it, flaunt it, I always say. Now it is undeniable that the times have changed and new security measures have to be instituted. And I, for one, heartily agree with most anything that they want to do for the security of my fellow travelers and myself. See, I’ve got nothing to worry about. They can strip me down to my skivvies for all I care...I’ve got nothing to hide (don’t go there, friendly reader!). And just knowing that they are taking the time to be sure that I have no hidden devices (or agenda), while maybe making me feel a little uncomfortable, is a small price to pay for the security of my country. What *really* does bother me, is that they’re not doing the same thing to everybody...and that’s due to political correctness.

Let’s say that the authorities are looking for a male suspected of mass murder. He’s 6’4”, 250 lbs., 30 to 40 years old, Caucasian, bald, with a tattoo of Elvis Presley on his right forearm. Let’s just say, for the sake of argument, that I fit that profile exactly, minus the tattoo of Elvis (I would never let myself be mutilated, even for the King). It would be no skin off my back (no pun intended) if I were to be singled out for questioning...because as much as I might fit the profile, I haven’t done anything! Okay, I know that sometimes mistakes are made, but they are rare, and worth the discomfiture to get a madman off the street, in my opinion. But that’s not what’s happening. Instead, the new federal security people

are pulling Grandma Doris, with her brocaded wicker handbag, out of line and giving her the pat-down thrill of her life (not to mention a heart attack)...and *that* worries me. Especially since the guy in the muscle shirt and Elvis tattoo, who was next in line, is walking down the gangway due to the guidelines that just because he fits the profile, he can't be singled out, or it could be considered discrimination. *It's crazy!!!* To make matters worse, consider that an 85 year-old Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, who had the audacity to be wearing it, had it taken from him and thrown in the trash. Abhorrent behavior! I don't think that that situation was ever resolved. If it was, it wasn't made public. But I *was* glad to see that the National Transportation Board admitted recently that there needs to be more common sense and experience on the screening line, and finally issued a list of items that security screeners should be aware *could* be dangerous! Just in case there was any doubt in their minds, they put it in writing. So don't even try to get any of these items past that crack security detail, because they're looking for them now. *No lie folks, this comes right off their website:* Bull Whips and Cattle Prods, Dynamite, Hand Grenades, Plastic Explosives, Pellet Guns, Hunting Knives, Sabers and Swords, Transformer toy robots (they can be formed into a gun) and well, it goes on and on, but I think you see my point.

Years ago, there was an Army Surplus store on 42nd Street just off 8th Avenue that sold all kinds of interesting things, not the least of which was an inert 100 lb. aerial bomb. It was basically an empty shell and weighed maybe 10 lbs. I bought one and carried it through the streets of Manhattan, aboard several subway trains to my home in Woodside, with only the slightest stirring of a few wary straphangers. It was a great conversation piece, and I held onto it for years, even transporting it to California, until it became a little cumbersome to have around. Through the years it had become bent and dented in some places, some of its pale blue paint had flaked off, and rust spots were beginning to appear. So, with mixed emotions and much reticence, I deposited the decrepit looking thing on the curb next to the trash barrels for pickup. *This is at least ten years prior to 9-11.* In a matter of about a half-hour, the helicopters were flying overhead, and the house had been cordoned off by the LAPD. Even though I explained what it was...and it's elaborate history...they refused to let me near it until the bomb squad had checked it out. As if someone would actually fill a 100 lb, dented and slightly rusted, World War II surplus aerial bomb with explosives, and put it in front of an innocuous residence in the middle of the San Fernando Valley! It didn't help my cause that my father-in-law and I were laughing so hard that tears were streaming down our faces...it was so Keystone Cops, we couldn't help it. At that point, I wanted to keep it. After all that had transpired, it would have been another great story to tell, but they wouldn't let me. One of the bomb squad guys, who, by the way, was also laughing, threw it into the backseat of his car. Now he has a story to tell too. Just as well, it was too big to be a carry-on, and I doubt that it could pass the TSA screeners at JetBLUE...I think.