

mention, that the customer - however much of an idiot he or she might be - has to be treated at least politely). After all, they are paying handsomely for the privilege! In contrast to some airlines, whose crew members appear to have missed this rather vital point, I have frequently been struck by the fact that Emirates crew members generally try to be courteous, also to those who are often treated very badly by some airlines e.g. migrant workers or less sophisticated or non-English-speaking travellers.

Having given credit where it's due, let's move on to the good stuff. On a recent flight with an airline which

dering... Like one female cabin crew member I overheard telling a passenger to take her luggage out of the overhead locker and place it in another locker. The passenger tried to explain to her that she would do so, but that she had a back problem and needed her daughter (sitting in the middle seat) to help her do it.

Unfortunately, she didn't even get that far with her explanation, as the less-than-service minded stewardess brushed her off, saying, "Yes, I have a back problem too, so I certainly can't help you!" Sadly, she stalked off too quickly for me to ask her whether it was wise for airlines to hire people with such severe back

**Another friend described an incident on a flight to Calcutta, where a novice passenger apparently decided to see what would happen if he turned the handle of the emergency exit! Narrowly avoiding explosive decompression, whereby all the passengers could have experienced flying in quite a different way (i.e., freefall) by being sucked out of the cabin door, the valiant stewards managed to prevent the door from opening**



is fond of bragging about its popularity, a steward was serving soft drinks in plastic cups. When one passenger took a glass, and made the mistake of asking him what was in it, he left all of us speechless by taking the glass away from her and saying (in a very school-masterish way) "If you don't know what it is, why did you take it?" The astonished passenger replied, "I took it because you offered it to me! I assume it's safe to drink, I'm just asking what kind of juice it is. Why did you take it away from me?" The man replied, "If you don't know what something is, you shouldn't take it! So you can't have this!" And so saying, he stalked off to the galley with his tray.

In that case, I have to say that the personality disorder may have been full-blown rather than borderline, but there are many other cases which leave you won-

problems that they cannot help passengers if the need arises! In that instance, the woman's daughter and another passenger were able to do the needful, but her embarrassment at this public rudeness was quite evident.

Finally, there are always those occasions where cabin staff members are not particularly reassuring in terms of competence. A friend of mine described how a steward explained the lack of water for washing in the toilets, on a flight from London to Dhaka. It was so cold outside, he told her, that the water in the tanks had frozen! Given that at high altitudes, temperatures are always that cold, this was hardly a convincing reply. Not to mention, that it raised the rather worrying question, as to whether the fuel in the tanks would then also start freezing... ■