

ONE **GOOD TURN** DESERVES ANOTHER

ALSO: STEPPING UP TO THE MIC IN COMEDY SCHOOL / THE BUSINESS OF SPORTS-MEMORABILIA AUTHENTICATION

DEALS GAP, NORTH CAROLINA

APRIL 01, 2014

# AMERICAN WAY

AMERICAN AIRLINES + AMERICAN EAGLE

## HERE'S YOUR HOST

**JIMMY FALLON**

has a new show in  
**New York City**,  
still with that signature  
sparkling wit



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(pg. 14)



# Take a Chance on Her

**I WAS AT** the American Airlines ticket counter at Los Angeles International Airport not too long ago when I witnessed one of the funniest requests I'd ever heard, at an airport or anywhere.

To preface this story, think about your own travel habits over the years, and think about the one thing you absolutely want to avoid as part of your flying experience. I don't think I'll offend my bosses by pointing out that regardless of how comfortable our cabins have become, no one wants the middle seat.

So as I was standing at the counter at LAX, and a man was checking in for his flight to Dallas, imagine my surprise when I heard him request a middle seat.

I wasn't the only one surprised, mind you. No, the ticket agent stopped typing and looked up at his face. "Excuse me?" she queried. "Did you just request a middle seat?"

"Mhmm," he murmured, "and toward the rear of the plane, too, if you don't mind." By now, the other ticket agents were taking notice and listening in. The man didn't so much as crack a smile. His was a poker-faced expression. He looked to be in his mid-30s and unassuming: He had a shock of brown curly hair, khaki pants, hiking boots and a plaid shirt. He had a backpack slung over one shoulder, and he was alone.

"So let me get this straight," the gate agent started. "You want a middle seat in the rear of the plane. Do you want me to assign you Group 4 for boarding as well?"

"Sure, if you can do that," he replied. "Actually, is there a group higher than Group 4?" Now all the passengers waiting in line started chuckling. The man didn't let on as to whether he heard them. He just continued checking in in the most peculiar manner that any of us — travelers, employees, passers-by — had ever heard.

I laughed out loud during that exchange, then

I laughed out loud while waiting in line to clear security. I laughed out loud in the men's room; I laughed out loud waiting to board the plane; then I laughed out loud in my middle seat. Each time I laughed, I was met with curious stares, and similarly curious reactions. I was traveling alone, so I might have been a strange sight for regular folks who just happened to notice a guy laughing with nobody around him. Some folks smiled at me, several started laughing themselves because I became the subject of their laughter, and some ignored me, which I found even funnier because why not acknowledge someone who's clearly happy?

Broken down further: What makes a comedian good? Broken down even further: Who makes a good audience? The sheer fact that some people laughed at me while I was laughing and others ignored me without cracking a smile illustrates two things: 1) I'm no comedian, and 2) I am a good audience, because the man at the counter, most likely an aspiring comedian (because this was, after all, L.A.), executed a joke, and I laughed at it long after its delivery. Whether his shtick was intended to get a laugh out of the ticket agents or out of the passengers standing in line is unknown. But whatever he was doing was working.

We have the quintessential comedian on the cover of this issue. As the recently crowned host of *The Tonight Show*, Jimmy Fallon is now the king of comedy (page 52). Fallon is famous for his delivery, but he's equally acclaimed because of his unexpected shock humor. Look no further than a December 2013 appearance on *Saturday Night Live*, his comedic alma mater. He opened the show with a halfhearted impersonation of his favorite singers, when out of nowhere appears Paul McCartney to sing a duet. That was funny because it was so unexpected. Like the man at the ticket counter at LAX.

Someone who also appreciates good comedic

delivery is frequent contributor Kathleen Parrish, who pitched a story to us about comedy schools. "OK, but you know you have to go, right?" was our reply to her pitch. And she happily agreed (page 58).

So it got me thinking: What if Jimmy Fallon brought Kathleen Parrish on his show to test whether comedy school worked? There's no better way to test your comedy chops than on the grandest stage with the grand master himself by your side. Whaddaya say, Jimmy? Take a chance on Kathleen.

When I got out of my seat to use the restroom on the DFW-bound flight from LAX, I walked past that funny guy sitting in a middle seat in the back of the plane. I saw him and immediately started laughing. He looked to the person seated to his right, then to the one at his left, then he looked at me and nodded and smiled a satisfied smile. He was trying to be a comedian, and he was searching for an appreciative audience.

He found one.

  
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Editor

-  Want to talk to Adam? Reach him at [editor@americanwaymag.com](mailto:editor@americanwaymag.com)
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