

## **The Great Pastrami Caper!**

{Or, How to Smuggle pastrami into the U.S.A!}

By *Michael M. Tickenoff*

This is one of those stories that time enriches, and due to the fact that my teen age daughter does not want me to tell it any more must mean it has some merit.

Becky was fourteen years old and right at that age where her father was not the coolest guy to be seen with, no less traveling all the way to Australia with. We went there for my cousins wedding and after visiting for several weeks we were preparing for our departure when my lovely cousin Sarah asked if there was anything special we would like to be taking back with us. It so happened that one of our relatives happens to be a maker of fine pastrami and other cured meats and his product is forever in demand. My wife happens to love pastrami and the quality of this cure was what I thought would be the perfect gift, besides all the other little things we bought.

The night before our long flight home my cousin Jack and his lovely wife Sarah invited a large group of family and friends over to their home for a casual but tearful send off. It was one of those special one of a kind gatherings, a memory to be cherished.

Now you got to know Sarah, she is a very loving person and will go to all extent to make sure you are not without your favorites and so she served the greatest pastrami sandwiches you ever saw. She also happens to be one of the great Australian sandwich makers and she did not fail her reputation this night. They were huge, piled thick with the best pastrami you ever tasted and on top of that she ordered us an extra five pounds to take home as a special gift to my wife.

Being an experienced traveler she knew that the airlines were not always able to provide for our eating habits and so further prepared at least six extra huge tasty sandwiches for our long journey and stopovers.

The next day we said our good byes and away we flew on our first leg of a 12 thousand mile trip. It was afternoon by the time we arrived in Sidney and a two hour wait brought us to our first carefully packed pastrami sandwiches and they were fantastic! Then we were in the air, but due to extreme weather conditions a great storm was coming our way and our plane hit terrible turbulence and not many people enjoyed eating their dinner. It was several hours before our flight settled down and the evening lights had been turned on. This is sort of a cozy time in a big jet and so with that everyone went to sleep. It must have been a few hours into the night when I awoke with hunger pulling at my senses. My daughter also awoke and we began to talk very low and I asked her if she was hungry. "Sure, but everyone is sleeping, what can we eat," she asked me?

"Hey, we got some of the best sandwiches in the world right here in my shoulder bag, don't you know that wars have been fought for food like this?" And with this I handed her a massive pastrami sandwich, filled and stuffed with heaps of our favorite meat, layered with kosher sliced pickles, saturated with a hot tangy mustard, all bundled up in fresh dark rye bread and a few other most interesting morsels. So right there and then, about 35 thousand feet over the South

Pacific in a 747 plane full of 498 sleeping souls we began to tear and chew our way into these blessed works of master culinary creations!

It was about half way through my sandwich when I noticed some activity taking place throughout the sleeping and dim lighted plane. Service lights began to pop on all over. I looked around to see numerous heads rise up out of deep sleep and I wondered what might be going on. I heard the head stewardess get up from her own sleep and woke up another stewardess to check out why all the lights were going on and grumpily asked, "Everyone should be sleeping by now what seems to be the trouble?"

The investigating stewardess soon came back with some odd requests from the passengers, that they wanted to be served the same food that the other passengers were eating. The strange thing was that no one had been served anything because it was far past mid night and, "Who wanted to eat at this time," I heard her ask?

The lights kept going on and now most of the passengers were wide awake and talking and all the stewardess were up and running. A whole load of snacks had to be prepared and as they sent these out, complaints came back that they wanted the other food that was being served; but the head stewardess told everyone that this is all they had. This resulted in some frustration and finally caused me to realize that it was our two pound scented packed and extremely powerful pastrami creations that had set off the hunger pangs for more than five hundred people. Once I realized this, I told my daughter to keep her sandwich down and to chew it without being noticed, for we might get mugged for our sandwiches in the riot which might start at any time! Soon we were finished with our gracious meal, and with a most satisfying feeling we drifted off to a deep sleep while 498 other passengers complained and continued to sniff the air to see where the heck that most delicious smell was or had been coming from, but Ha, we were not found out.

The flight landed into Los Angeles about 5:00 am in the morning and everyone as usual had to pass through customs. This was the norm and we all lined up in the walk ways lined with iron rails and now we began the most difficult part of the entire trip.

My daughter Becky asked me what those many one-way windows above were and I explained. They were most likely observation windows where government agents watched the people for suspicious looking characters...like us and I laughed. The lines soon began to move but it would be a long while before we would reach the desk of entry; for we were nearly at the far end. I was starving and thought of nothing but those delicious sandwiches waiting for us as soon as we passed customs. Then I spotted a site that I had not seen in my travels before, a customs agent was strolling among the crowd of 500 passengers and he was following a very small dog on the end of a long leash. Then I realized, just like on the movies, that this was a drug dog and it was actually looking or sniffing for drugs that might be brought into the country. It was really neat to see the government actually earning their keep and doing something to stop the drug traffic and I watched with the greatest curiosity. My curiosity grew greater and greater as the little dog slowly began to as if sniff the air, and got a little excited and began scanning the vicinity while slowly looking directly at us. It soon targeted itself like a long spear with a cause aiming its entire existence towards me and my daughter. I would guess that it was about ten feet away when I saw its tail rise up, its head snap around and suddenly its tongue began to sort of reach out and as if

taste the air. The most interesting thing about this site was that this little dog which I will name Sniffy was looking directly at me and my bags!

In an instant the little hound was going crazy around my bag. He was doing everything except ripping it open and his handler had to actually pull him off. There were several things that took place at this moment; one of them being the crowd quickly stepped away from me and my daughter, as though they had discovered that a bomb was soon to go off!

The narcotics agent slid his hand down to his side covering what I thought to be a gun but it was most likely a beeper and his face lit up with the biggest brightest smile you could have ever seen. In another second, I realized everything that was happening. The hound dog Sniffy had located my sandwiches, but then I remembered the extra five pounds rapped up in blocks laying at the bottom of my carry on bag---O NO! And now I comprehended that this young agent was thinking that he had got the bust of his career and would soon be on his way up the ladder of law. The way this agent was smiling I could already see the President himself pinning Accommodations on this guys chest!

What made this whole matter worse was that I wear a beard and we had just got off a 12 hour flight and it was about 5:30 AM in the morning and we were looking pretty shabby! I began to worry a little myself, and thought of the possible delay that now stood before me like a mountain. This wasn't all that bad until I saw my daughter standing with the crowd as if distancing herself from me and my stupid pastrami. I could only imagine her embarrassment in this possible international incident. With the headlines reading, "Father and daughter Drug Smuggling Ring broken at LAX," and I couldn't blame her for not wanting to stand by my side, I did not want to be standing there myself!

Then came the other agents, surrounding me as they escorted me up to the front of the line to the main investigation counter. There, right in front of 498 weary passengers, they began to interrogate me on my trip. The head agent now appeared on the scene and asked me to open my bag. I complied and unzipped the bag and reached into the bag and pulled out a neatly folded bag which contained at least two or three huge pastrami sandwiches; the last of our stash. Sniffy went nuts, and nearly tore loose from his handlers grasp. With snapping and barking he furiously tried to get hold of my extraordinary sandwiches. The young agent just stood there gleaming, knowing now for sure he had surely intercepted the biggest haul of all times.

Then one agent asked me what was in the bag and I casually replied, "Pastrami sandwiches!" Nearly all the agents snickered the word, "Sure!"

I began to explain, "See, it's like this, my cousin Sarah in Australia is the greatest sandwich maker in the southern hemisphere and knowing that my daughter and I had a long trip home with several stops here and there, we would be needing something to eat along the way and besides, you know how airline food tastes, and so packed us some of her best known sandwiches." the head guard was not listening but asked me to open up the bag and remove the contents and with 498 passengers, at least 6 federal narcotic agents, numerous behind the window watchers all looking on and who were thinking they were witnessing a drug bust and a possible shoot out drama right there in front of them watched on with near breathless attention.

With careful deliberation I slowly opened the folded bag and spread out the remaining sandwiches on the counter. I could here the passengers begin to snicker but the guards stood there refusing to be fooled by this bearded trickster and made me open up the sandwiches.

I unfolded the wrappings and right then and there revealed some of the greatest pastrami creations in the world! Huge, delicious slices of dark rye bread slices bulged open with thick cuts of deep red spicy slabs of pastrami hanging out and everyone stood silent for a moment, that is all except for Sniffy!

Truly, at 6:30 in the morning, these beautiful creations had to be challenging everyone's hunger pangs. I tell you now, it might have been a bad scene but those sandwiches could have made it onto the front cover of New York's most glamorous culinary magazine, they were beauties!

Poor little Sniffy went mad, but to calm him down I offered him a little reward of a slice of pastrami that was bulging out from the side of one master piece, but immediately the guard yanked Sniffy back and I was sharply and angrily rebuked by the young guard. In a very undignified tone, he then told me, "Don't dare give my dog a piece of that meat, for his drug sniffing days might be over. For you could and possibly you have already done it, by ruining his sniffing ability with that totally illegal food!"

I thought, "Illegal food," what illegal food? Then I remembered that my daughter had read a sign on the wall describing all sorts of items that were forbidden to be brought into the country and "meats" was one of them. Hey, I reasoned with my daughter, these are sandwiches, master pieces, works of art, they ain't meat! The crowd now began to work in my favor, for time was passing and connecting flights were waiting. This stupid pastrami caper was getting old quick and the tired out travelers wanted through the gates. Now that the glory of a great bust was turning out to be a laughing matter, most of the big gun guards had disappeared and the young guard stood there with the passport agent and went for the last try and told me to pull out the rest of my things inside the bag. Then I pulled out another wrapped package and for sure now he thought he had uncovered the real plot. He smiled again and told me to open up those block shaped packages. So I picked one at random and undid the foil and exposed one of the most beautiful cured reddish chunks of pastrami you ever did see.

The passengers now began to realize that it was me who had awakened the entire plane load of people in the middle of the night with my pastrami sandwiches and began to murmur among themselves. The guard stood there dumbfounded for several moments as Sniffy was now foaming at the mouth. The only thing he said was, "This dog cost the government about seventy thousand dollars to raise and train and you have maybe ruined its sniffing powers with that meat," and with that he said, "take your meat and get the hell out of here!"

Hey, I did not protest his crude announcement in the least but immediately wrapped my blocks of pastrami back up, tossed them into my bag and in an instant the passport agent stamped our passports and with a smile told us, "Welcome back to the U.S.A!"

I looked back at all the other passengers and realized, instead of being last through the check out line, we had been nearly the first and with a great smile on my face I waved good bye to all of the other 498 tired passengers who were now waving good bye and a few of them were clapping as we went through the main doors!

From that trip on, my young teen age daughter refuses to travel with me, for she says that was the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to her. I just tell her that this was an experience for her to remember and now she knows how to smuggle pastrami into the United States and get through long immigration lines first!

By *Michael M. Tickenoff* ©

Around 1991

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There comes a time when earthly mysteries and serendipitous phenomena's come together and give birth to new worlds of thought and so it is with our story called, "Angel Eyes!" There is an intelligence which first introduces itself and then goes on to foretell these wondrous changes. In time, all science and the highest levels of brilliance will be humbled and made to bow down to these unimaginable powers, not yet understood. This simple story leads each reader right up to the edge of this distant realm and still allows the adventurer to think and ponder on what might be taking place right in front of his very own eyes. This is no ordinary tale of fractious illiteracy but a story of depth and new far reaching thought. A short tale of one precocious mind, which is not just shown but is actually brought into the university of what real intelligence is all about; and it is privileged enough to earn a life changing Degree!

This is a story worth owning and becoming a part of, for one day you just might have the opportunity to have such events come into your own vision. This enlightening story just might be the formula that will help each of us to prepare ourselves for a higher intelligence and a new born hope.

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This story is bound to become a classic in this 21st Century. If you ever had the experience to taste the lasting spice of "The Fiddler On The roof" your taste buds will once again come alive in this bountiful tale of life and all it has to offer. If

good character is meant to be a standard of humanity then this story challenges that ideal. A twist in fate brings about circumstances where both beauty and ugliness rise up and exposes the human character for its unknown condition of reality. If character were a picture, this story will paint another Mona Lisa, truly a lasting portrait of humanity at its best and at its worst. This tale is where fate meets faith and beauty comes alive in unexpected challenges. This tale is a lasting memorial where the perceptions of selflessness and selfishness is carved there upon. Reality cannot hide from circumstances and purpose is often revealed in unusual situations. An intriguing challenge arrives to a peaceful village and forces these peasant inhabitants to seek a most perplexing resolution to what they come to understand as an impossible stalemate. Unwanted drama creates overwhelming concerns and the entire episode strains every villager to their wits end. Their earlier decisions brought joy and prosperity but fate twists and turns their good fortune into a most difficult dilemma. This industrious village takes the chance with destiny, challenging possible consequences by manipulating good for gain but events lead their futures into one great lesson of life and an unexpected resolution, not of their own making. Once the residence of the 21st Century comes to know this tale, they will undoubtedly realize the deeper aspects of human nature. With the wisdom of this narrative, men might then consider their challenge of fate and destiny! <http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/285426>

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This unique one of a kind story not only introduces the reader unto another of Michael's extraordinary character but it also presents a strange encounter with a mind boggling experiment gone right? Michael, through his unusual story telling ability is slowly creating a framework, building a team of characters which will be welded together by happenstances and united by commitment in a greater series of adventures in the future. The Pitt Stop Puzzle Mystery is another unique techno-mystery with a twist where the readers will slowly come to know personally, these exciting new characters through a chain of intriguing circumstances. The scene is set in a tiny X-mining town tucked away on a long desert highway. The curtain slowly rises up on a totally unexpected stage of mysterious and very strange events which lead Luke and Wally into a most inventive plot. One that turns out way more complicated and dangerous than they were expecting. Luke Mitchner, a freelance investigative Journalist is on his way home from a long tiring assignment but waylaid by his friend and Editor Dustin Arrow to make a quick side trip to a small mining town called the Pitt Stop. He soon meets up with Wally Justin, a rather likable giant of many talents. There they work, linking their skills together in unraveling this high desert mystery. They soon become friends and partners in a

strange technological enigma, and are soon both embroiled into a most interesting set of circumstances. They finally get near to figuring things out when they stumble into something way larger than they ever expected. Serious consequences arise and things get bumpy as the plot gets deeper and they provoke the secrets of invention! These strange events forge a lasting bond with them, and more awaits their exciting lives as the team of characters is slowly brought together and eventually will be forged into a powerful force for higher callings and outrageous adventures. <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/340243>

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