

When flying the friendly skies, the airport grounds me

Although not even close to the fiasco a recent United Airlines passenger experienced, I was thinking back about some of my travel woes over the years.

I've observed escalations of passengers on several flights, but my most memorable experiences have taken place in airports.

John and I used to own a timeshare in Mazatlan, so we often traveled to Mexico. After making several trips, it became apparent how addicted I am to Tillamook cheese. Seriously, I went through withdrawal. I would have settled for any cheddar cheese, but you couldn't find it anywhere — not in stores,

not at restaurants, nada. One particular trip, I decided to remedy that by bringing a pair of Tillamook cheese baby loafs. I'm not sure why I thought I needed four pounds of cheese for 15 days, but that's what I packed.

To ensure it would be in decent shape by the time we landed in the hot and humid climate, I froze them. I also decided to wrap each package in aluminum foil.

I didn't think that through very well.

Yup, it pretty much looked like I was smuggling drugs. Oh, and to really add to the appearance of international drug smugglers, my hus-

band brought a couple of pounds of ground coffee. For the uninformed, coffee is often used to mask odors to throw off drug detection dogs.

My realization of how this all appeared flooded my brain as we headed to customs at the Mazatlan airport. John dropped his bag of coffee while rifling through his backpack. Trying not to panic, as sweat poured off my brow, I thought maybe they wouldn't make a thorough search of our bags.

This was the late-1980s and when you stepped to the front of the line, you pressed a button. If you got a green light, they waved you through. And, a red light meant more in-depth searches.

The odds were against

us. Each previous visit, we had gotten the green light. We were due to be detained.

I had packed the foil-wrapped cheese in the center amongst clothes — lots of clothes. Luckily, they merely did a cursory search and we were on our way.

During another trip to Mexico, we were heading home and John's carry-on baggage caught the attention of security. Soon, there were several agents standing around talking in hushed tones — not that I could have understood what they were saying as my Spanish is muy poquito.

Finally, one of them pulled out the questionable item — a Costco-sized package of double-AA batteries. The best

we could figure is they thought it was a package of bullets when viewing it through the baggage scanner.

Another time we arrived in the United States and were going through customs in Los Angeles. Once again, the x-ray machine seemed to alert on something in John's bag. The agent asked what was in a side zipper compartment.

Trying to save her the odoriferous encounter of the running clothes he wore that morning — which, by then, were ripe after stewing in a plastic bag for hours — John said, "You don't want to open that."

Well, of course she did after a statement like that. I have sinus issues and my sense of smell isn't

that great, but I'm gagging now just thinking about it.

All of these experiences have added additional considerations when I'm packing. However, I still periodically raise the eyebrows of security agents as they come across weird items in my bag. Although, none have blinked an eye about my TENS machine during several post 9-11 flights when security is supposedly heightened — that's a whole other column in itself.

Tammy Malgesini is the community editor. Her column, Inside my Shoes, includes general musings about life. Contact her at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539.



Tammy Malgesini
INSIDE MY SHOES



BOARDMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Scholarship Breakfast

Wednesday, May 17, 2017
7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Port of Morrow Riverfront Center

Please join us for breakfast this month as we recognize our 2017 Chamber Scholarship recipients

Boardman Police Officer & School Resource Officer George Shimer will be giving an informational presentation about the programs & duties Boardman Police Department provide for our community.

Kris Barnum, Student Success Coach for BMCC will be sharing insight and programs available for students after graduation

Sunrise at Boardman Café will be providing delicious breakfast burritos

Breakfast cost is \$12.00 per person

To RSVP contact Boardman Chamber of Commerce by May 12th

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