

Dec 2010

Stuck in Jo'burg

Delta Air Lines seems to think that Africa's time has come. I read on the Net that eight cities are being served from the US, with more to come soon. If the load factors between Atlanta and Johannesburg are any indication, they are probably right. Joan and I are down here for the second time this year, and last time, we used 200,000 F/F miles to get home through Paris. I am out of miles, and may standby for several days to get in business class. Oh well, we could be stuck in worse places. It's 4:30 PM as I write this (9:30 AM in Atlanta). I notice that the temperature in Atlanta is 18 degrees, and it is 72 degrees here.

The irony of my daughter's family living in Jo'burg is not lost on anyone in our family. There is a fine line between fathers who help their grown children, and those whose help is interference. My son-in-law was offered a good position in Jo'burg a number of years ago, and I didn't think it was a good idea to bring my two small granddaughters here. I had been here once before, just passing through on my way to Botswana on "safari". But I had read about the violence in the newspapers, and I had met a few expat refugees from here. I really didn't think they would be safe here. So, being the involved father that I am, I talked them out of it.

I have changed my mind, and I think they are as safe – or safer – here as they would be in Atlanta. General MacArthur said the greatest cause of war was undefended wealth. That is from my memory, so it is paraphrased. I looked at the Atlanta Journal Constitution home page on the web a few minutes ago, and the two featured stories were the cold weather records, and the fact that intended crime victims in the metro area were turning the tables on the perpetrators. A Georgia Tech student who shot one of the would-be robbers who accosted him in a supermarket parking lot in Rockdale County was featured. The article also has a list of similar incidents that have happened in and around Atlanta recently.

<https://www.ajc.com/news/local/potential-crime-victims-turning-the-tables-with-sometimes-fatal-consequences/NtlwddnI16LsWOk5P5OVUO/>

The following are a few of the other headlines from the home page:

- [Uproar over youth coach's racist posts](#)
- [17-hour manhunt ends in arrest](#)
- [Robbery suspect turns self in](#)
- [MARTA cop stole equipment](#)
- [Black segregation at new lows](#)
- [Escapee nabbed 18 years later](#)

I have a sling box on my Atlanta TV. I put it there so I could watch the Dawgs, and Jackets on my computer from anywhere in the world. Of course, that also allows me to tune into the local Atlanta news. I don't watch it very often, because it's not very interesting. The local news shows are mostly about crime, or at least it seems that way to me. Now that I think of it, the Dawgs and Jackets were not very interesting this year either, but how bout Cam Newton. My point is that the wealth in South Africa is protected –as are the neighborhoods - and in the US people are just beginning to realize that protection is needed.

I am sitting behind a series of walls with lots of electronic protection as well. I have come to the conclusion that the biggest divide in the US is not racial. We are more divided by economics, education, and ideology than race, and the divide is getting wider. The gap between the rich and poor in South Africa is enormous, but in the middle class up, I don't see much of a gap. We worshiped at Bryanston Bible Church on Sunday. If we lived here, it is probably where we would belong, and it looked to be fifteen or twenty percent black. I was a guest for golf at what I am told is the most exclusive golf club in Jo'burg last week. We were in the bar for the nineteenth hole, and there were about twelve men spread around the room, having refreshments. Four were black businessmen. My son-in-law is involved in a startup business that gives every appearance of succeeding. His partner – who also happens to sign his checks – is a very distinguished, successful businessman, who incidentally is black.

The political problems here are incredible, as they are in the US. SA may eventually go the way of Zimbabwe; I pray it will not. But right now, I am not so optimistic about the life my US grandchildren will have. I know they will all know God, so their long-term future is assured.

Meanwhile, I know I can't make up the difference that Delta's troubles cost me in pension, and medical with free business class travel, but we're gonna try. If you old Widgets are not already too old, and you have never been to the bush, the business class sleeper seats are very comfortable, even for a 6'5" old duffer like me. Seeing the animals in their natural habitat alone, not to mention the beauty of the whole country makes the trip worthwhile. I would put Cape Town in my top six most beautiful cities in the world.

We are hoping to get two business seats out of here before Christmas, but if we don't, we should be home by Easter.

Merry Christmas, and don't forget the reason for the season!