

Going Up and Giving Back

Written by L.A. Plume

Wednesday, 03 May 2017 06:42



Dear L. A. Plume,

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ I had a situation arise yesterday as I was flying from San Francisco to New York. I boarded the plane in one of the last groups, and when I got to my middle seat I had to climb over an oversized man in the aisle seat who was oozing into my space. In the window seat was his wife, who was large but not large enough to ooze, so there wasn't very much room for me. When I went to put my bag under the seat in front of me, I encountered the man's bag wedged in there, and when I asked him why it was there, he replied that if he put it under the seat in front of him, there wouldn't be enough room for his feet. I told him that was not my problem. His wife offered to change seats with me but I didn't want to sit in the window seat in case I needed to get up, because climbing over them would have been an athletic feat I'm not sure I could have accomplished.□

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ Now, here comes the part where I usually ask the question and you tell me the answer, but this time I have a surprise for you: I have the answer and just thought I would share the experience. My first inclination was to remove the bag and hand it to him, but that seemed like too much work. So I simply reached up and pushed the button for the flight attendant. When she came to see what the problem was I explained that the gentleman didn't want to put his bag under the seat in front of him because then he would have to bend his knees, and he didn't want to have to do that. The flight attendant smiled and said, "Come with me," and led me to an empty row of seats with extra legroom.□

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You're welcome,
Merry

Dear Merry,

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Thank you.
L.A. Plume

Dear Ms. Plume,

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ I really hope you can advise on this question, because I'm in a quandary, and everyone I've asked has a different answer. If you have given someone a gift, and they no longer want or need it, should they offer to return it to you before they give it away or donate it? I'm not referring to an everyday gift (if there is such a thing) but something precious, expensive, a family heirloom, a signed book, or the like. In one of your columns, someone asked you about an autographed book she'd given to a friend who had died; she wondered if she could ask his wife for the book as long as the wife didn't plan to keep it for herself.□

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ It's awkward, it seems, to give back a gift that doesn't suit you. However, we all have gift receipts, and we often return gifts that don't work for us to stores.□

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Confused

Dear Confused,

It is a sticky wicket, the business of returning, re-gifting, or donating. I have a friend who gave me a sculpture that I absolutely didn't adore, but displayed for years. When I redecorated, I gave it to a mutual friend who *does* adore it for his beach house. When the first friend last came to visit recently, apparently she searched high and low for the sculpture, then complained to a mutual friend about how she'd packed it, brought it to me, and now couldn't find it. Fortunately, she didn't ask me about it, but I wonder if I need to borrow it back for her next visit, since I had no idea she thought it was such an important gift.

I think it all depends on the gift, under what circumstances it was given, and the provenance attached. I do believe it's possible that someone might have her feelings hurt when she finds out her treasure has gone elsewhere unbeknownst to her. You just have to try to discern if the item is something she might like to have back, or whether she'll be offended by your asking. In any event, it's probably not a good idea to take it to a local thrift shop.

L. A. Plume