

Spreading a Bit of Pixie Dust: Flight Crew Bags

by Cam Matthews, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

Many of us head to Walt Disney World fully expecting lots of magical pixie dust to be sprinkled our way by smiling cast members.

But have you ever considered how fun it might be to give the magic and pixie dust a push? Wouldn't it be wonderful to start the trip by spreading a bit of magic? At the end of this month, I will be officially retired as a high school teacher. For 32 years I loved my job, but since I taught high schoolers, appreciation was often lacking. So over the years, I've tried to think of others whose occupations may leave them feeling under-appreciated, and then find a way to say thank you.

Several years ago I was reading a trip report on the PassPorter boards written by an older gentleman who was flying to San Francisco with his wife. He mentioned that they were planning to make thank-you bookmarks to give to each member of the flight crew (pilots and attendants). I mentioned that I liked his idea and might borrow it. That got the wheels turning in my brain, so I talked to Stefanie, our daughter, about her handing out little gifts to the crew when we flew out of Nashville headed to Disney World in June, and a new family tradition was born.

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□As we boarded our plane back in June 2009, Stefanie handed out small gift bags to both pilots and the flight attendants. The gifts were a big hit, though each was really very small, including: a few Dove chocolates, several Werther's Original Butterscotch candies, a Fortune-Telling Fish, and a thank you card. We even got special attention during the opening announcements and each pilot and flight attendant personally thanked Stefanie, who was beaming with the attention. We were especially tickled that each told us what their fortune-telling fish had told them about themselves.

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□Over the years the bags evolved and became slightly bigger. We had started with snack-size Ziploc bags and graduated to sandwich-size bags. Because I wanted Stefanie to learn consideration, she was always involved in the process of selecting items for the bags, as well as designing the thank-you cards (business card size) that went into each. In fact, it was her idea to make bags for both the flight down and the flight home. Because we are traveling to Walt Disney World, a Disney item of some sort usually makes its way into the bags. We've included party favors, little Disney figures bought at Dollar Tree, and small

notepads. When we went during the holiday seasons (Halloween and Christmas), we selected a Disney holiday item.

We also learned some valuable lessons with each trip. For example, we quit including chocolate after we discovered it melted in the back of the car on the two-and-a-half hour trip to the airport. (By the way, we did remove the melted chocolate.) We also paid attention to what the crew praised the most in each bag, and tried to make the next bags more appealing. Some flight crew members have kids with whom they share the toys; others do not. So packing the bags full of toys didn't always make for a fun thank you bag. Instead, we started to include some more practical items.

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□ On our most recent trip this past June, I enlisted the help of my niece and nephew, whose family was accompanying us to Walt Disney World. Over spring break we shopped at Deals and Wal-Mart to find the items they wanted to include. I had given them some basic ideas of what we had included in the past. Since that list could be helpful to you as well, I'll list it here:

- 1. Disney toy
- 2. Post-It Notes and/or notepads
- 3. Pens and/or pencils
- 4. Gum and/or mints
- 5. Hard candy
- 6. Funky magnets or paperclips
- 7. Thank-you cards

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□ Since we make a minimum of 14 bags, cost is a consideration. One way to keep costs down is to buy multi-packaged items. Another way to be cost efficient is to shop at dollar stores and discount stores. Both Wal-Mart's party aisle and Target's dollar section have been good resources. One spring a fellow PassPorter mentioned in my pre-trip report that she had seen some cool items at Wal-Mart, including miniature 8-balls. We not only got the mini 8-balls, but mini decks of Uno cards. The crew loved them both. We have spent anywhere from \$10 - \$30 to purchase the bags plus the items to fill them.

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□ The thank-you cards I make at home using a business card template and Disney clip art. The message on each is short, reading, "Thanks for making our trip magical," or some such phrasing, and finishes with our names. These cards are printed on cardstock and then cut apart to include in each bag.

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□ When we got back home, my sister and I sorted and spread out all the goodies (including the thank-you cards) on the kitchen table. Once all the goodies were ready, the kids grabbed a bag, and began the filling

process, circling the table a number of times. The bags for this past June were stuffed with party favors from a small kit bought at Wal-Mart, with each bag getting two of the toys in any combination the kids chose. Then they added butterscotch and cinnamon hard candies, small notepads, pens, mechanical pencils, gum, Smarties, Dum Dum suckers, and colorful clips. The total cost for bags and goodies came to \$30, a small price to pay for making someone's day.

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□We've never had a problem with the crew accepting the bags, though I know a few folks from the PassPorter boards who have not been so lucky. We have only flown Southwest and have always been pleased with our flight crew, and they have even shown appreciation in a variety of ways. Stefanie was always mentioned in the opening announcements. One summer on the flight home she was given a large bag of the little pretzel packages and another large bag of peanuts. I ended-up taking a lot of those to school as rewards for my students. Another time, every one of our flight attendants was male, something that just tickled Stefanie. Because we didn't rush to get off the plane and then had to make a restroom stop, we wound up walking with these gentlemen on the way to baggage claim. They thanked all three of us over and over, telling us how in general flight attendants are under-appreciated, but even more so the men. Once my husband Luke and I were given drinks on the house (or is that the plane). But the very best time was when Stefanie was invited to "fly" the plane. We never do this expecting a reward. But I do believe in the old saying, "What goes around, comes around."

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□We'll be headed back to Disney World early in October, and I've already started gathering goodie bag supplies. First on this year's list is the return of an original item, the Fortune-Telling Fish. I had first bought these at Pier 1, which no longer carries them, but I recently discovered I could buy a gross of them at Oriental Trading. I already have Halloween Ziploc bags from 2009, so I'm ready to begin another magical thank you by spreading some more pixie dust before we even reach the Disney bubble.

About The Author: Cam is a Co-Guide for the Disney World and Globetrotting trip report forums and the Library, Darkroom and Porch forums on the PassPorter Message Boards. She already preparing for her next Disney World vacation in October of this year.

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