

Unforeseen Consequences, Boeing Edition

Nobody asked but ...

I don't want to rehash the details, to second guess, to play "I told you so." It looks as though, however, that complication has led again to unforeseen consequences. It seems that a collision among customers, research and development, marketing, and multitudinous governmental regulatory agencies has produced another snarl of buck passing and finger pointing, diluted responsibility and destroyed accountability. One American airline says that because they have 24 of the aircraft models in question, they will be cancelling an average of 90 flights a day for the foreseeable future.

The constellation of problems stem from a gaggle of causes. Pricing and optional features have led to a matrix of bad outcomes that are being felt throughout the world, not least by the hundreds of people killed so far. Past users of the global aviation system have died, current users have been displaced, and future users are thrust into deep uncertainty.

I have experienced over the weekend, a model in miniature of the above snafu. Kilgorette and I undertook a Spring gardening project starting on Saturday, the making of a new hosta bed next to the woods near the house. It wasn't until after dark that my lovely bride discovered that the pinkie finger on her left hand had quit working properly. Mystified as to the cause, she took some analgesic and went to bed. From there things spun out of control. By morning, the pain was excruciating. Kilgorette now remembered getting a thorn in her gloved finger, and pulling it out. By evening we were in a Lexington hospital's ER. We got home by 3am Monday morning with instructions to see a hand surgeon later in the day. I had to cancel my 2 Monday classes. In the afternoon, Kilgorette was scheduled for surgery Tuesday. We also fell into the clutches of Big Pharma. Tuesday, many hours were spent at a surgery site. Wednesday, I am able to meet with my two classes, but I need to hasten off on a 5-city tour in the late afternoon to get her to physical therapy. Then on Friday, I will have to miss the weekly meeting of the philosophy discussion *klatch* while Ms. Forelle and I go to follow up with the hand doctor. I have learned that the human hand is an amazingly complicated appendage.

Now I get it — the intense meaning of the saying, "a thorn in the side." I also realize that, at least in part, airplane features are being designed by the same types as those who dream up television remote controls.

— Kilgore Forelle