

# Too much scary reading



**You can't beat a system you can't understand**

By Sam Bari

Not long ago, I flew up north to visit my son and his family. I chose one of those airlines that offer open seating. You know the carriers – they're cheap. Passengers are herded together at the boarding area, then an attendant opens a door to a narrow passageway that acts as a funnel to give ticket holders access to the plane, one person at a time. It's a joyous exercise. Cattle going through the chute at a slaughterhouse are treated more humanely.

I admit, I couldn't resist. I had to moo. Then everybody started mooing. The airline personnel looked a bit panicked. Try it sometime. The experience is funny and kind of satisfying in a perverse way. As far as I know, legislation has yet to be passed against mooing, so they couldn't do anything about it.

Anyway, I was one of the first passengers on the plane, so I chose a seat halfway down the aisle that appeared to have extra legroom. The window seat was about a foot from the side of the fuselage, which provided even more space. However, the window was a small square in the emergency door. I didn't care. The more room the better.

As expected, the flight was packed. After everyone boarded, not an empty seat was available. Before departing, the stewardess gave her little oxygen mask demonstration and pointed out emergency exits in case of an "unscheduled" landing.

Then she said, "Passengers seated next to emergency doors must be at least 16 years old and

capable and willing to open the door should the need arise." She looked directly at me as she said this. "If you do not want this responsibility, I will be happy to arrange another seat for you," she added.

I looked around. The only person who might be willing to take my seat was sitting between two large women, both of whom had babies. Although I wasn't thrilled with being the first one out in case of an emergency, I decided to take my chances.

As we taxied down the runway, all I could think about was what would happen if the plane had to make an emergency landing like the one that landed in the Hudson River not too long ago. If I opened the door at the wrong time, I would be blamed for letting the water in. That was upsetting. So I pulled out that emergency booklet they provide for neurotic paranoids such as myself, and read about the procedures in case something like that happened.

After reading the first couple of pages, I was really sorry I did that. I couldn't find anything about "when" to open the door. The instructions were explicit, and the word "should" was used a lot more than I would have liked.

"Should" the cabin lose pressure, an oxygen mask "should" drop down in front of you. Put the mask on and breathe normally. Oxygen "should" come out.

Then it said something about using the seat as a floatation device and it "should" keep me buoyant until help arrives. I wanted to read things like, "If this plane so much as burns out a light bulb, a starship will come down and swoop it from the sky and park it in a safe place where no harm will come to anybody." I wanted to read, "If this plane makes an emergency landing in water, do not open anything. It will float." But the safety booklet didn't say any of those things.

All of this reading about what to do in case of this or that failing was very disturbing. I just knew the next paragraph would mention something like, "Should you expire from fright," when the man next to me tapped my arm. He spoke with a heavy Russian accent.

"Don't read that, he said. "It will just frighten you." He was right.

"Me, I am a cab driver," he continued. "When I come to this country, I think I should learn to read and speak English. Worst thing I ever did was learn to read. Now I know that all the signs on the road are intended for me. If I read all the signs, I wouldn't have time to drive. I would go three miles per hour. People would be mad. So I stopped reading."

He made sense. So I stopped reading and immediately felt better. Emergency doors are just another part of that system we can't understand.

## Where in the World is the Jamestown Press?

Jason, Michelle and Sara Iacovelli of Jamestown took the Jamestown Press along on a recent trip to China. Here, they pose on the Great Wall of China in Beijing. Their trip took them to Beijing and then further south to Guangzhou before returning back home in early August.



## Muldoon photos on display at Roger Williams law school

"The Art of Photography," an exhibit by Jamestown photographer Eileen Muldoon, will be on display until Jan. 5 at the Atrium Gallery of the Roger Williams Law School in Bristol. The exhibit is part of the Bristol Art Museum's outreach programs in the community and in Rhode Island.

The RWU Gallery is located on the second floor of the law school and is open to the public for visiting from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Visit [www.bristolartmuseum.org](http://www.bristolartmuseum.org) for more information.

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