

UP

One Man's Journey to Feminism

Peter W. Pruyn

he / him / his*

All photographs ©2020 Peter W. Pruyne unless otherwise noted. All rights reserved.

The text of this book is licensed by Peter W. Pruyne under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. This means you are free to:

Share: Copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.

Adapt: Remix, transform, and build upon the material.

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the following terms:

Attribution: You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NonCommercial: You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

ShareAlike: If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

For full details of this license see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Diagrams that are ©2020 Peter W. Pruyne may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes with attribution.

For additional copyright usage and permissions, see the Copyright Notices section in the Appendix.

Revision 2020-12-01

This book is available for free at:

upthememoir.com upthememoir.uk upthememoir.org

Cover photo: 7,500 feet over Galveston Bay early on a Saturday morning. ©2020 Peter W. Pruyne.

UP

One Man's Journey to Feminism

Peter W. Pruyn

he / him / his*

Content warning:
Contains descriptions of physical and emotional violence

* Pronounced “prine”. He/him/his: This is the set of pronouns I ask others to use when referring to me. People who identify as transgender or gender nonconforming may use pronouns that do not conform to binary male/female gender categorizations, such as “they, them, theirs.”



Figure 27: The open road. Somewhere in Montana on the drive from Alaska to Boulder City, Nevada.

5: Boulder City

Age 31
(1998)

“Most ‘conversations’ are monologues delivered in the presence of a witness.”
— Margaret Mead

After leaving Alaska, I decided to move to another place I had always wanted to fly: the southwest. In the southwest, one category of entry-level flying job is giving flight-seeing tours of the Grand Canyon. I was grateful for a fresh start in another geographic region of peerless natural beauty.

The following is the spiel I developed when giving aerial tours at Grand Canyon Air. It starts standing on a bus loaded with tourists after they’ve arrived at the airport. It is only in retrospect that I can see what I was actually doing on these flights was using the unique classroom of a small airplane to teach my passengers how man can impact a planet. While my jovial tone was designed to try and calm my passengers, beneath it I was seeding a complicated question: What are the dynamics of power in the relationship between our species and the Earth? What does it mean to ask a planet for consent?

Grand Canyon Air

On arriving tour bus:

“Good afternoon! Can everybody hear me back there? Good. Welcome to Grand Canyon Air. My name is Peter, and I will be one of your pilots today. Before we get started, they’re just a few things we’d like to go over with you.

“First, the flight you will be taking is about an hour and a half long, so if you’d like to use the restrooms before we go, they’re inside on the right. You may purchase a beverage or snack inside as well, but if you purchase a beverage, we ask that you buy one with a screw top, that way you can keep it closed while you’re in the plane. If you’d like to make any other purchases, we recommend that you do so after the flight, that way you won’t have to carry them with you in the plane.

“The aircraft that we’ll be taking today are the Cessna 206s and 207s that you see outside. Just like a big plane, they have the standard tab and buckle seat belt. To operate, insert the metal tab into the buckle like so; pull on the strap to tighten. To release, lift up on the buckle. Also on board each aircraft you will find in the ceiling your friend, the little blue airsickness bag. Should you feel nauseous, please don’t be embarrassed; it happens. The key thing here is that the blue paper bag contains a white plastic bag, and you should use the white bag, not the blue bag. Trust me; it works out much better that way.

“If you would like to smoke, we ask that you do so outside the front of the building. There are ashtrays next to the benches. If you have a camera, we ask that you disable the flash so it will not distract the pilot. And if you feel that your pilot has done a good job, gratuities are always appreciated.

Are there any questions?

“O.K., follow me.”

Inside the terminal:

“Hi, my name is Peter. I’ll be your pilot today. Let’s see; do we have everybody? One, two, three, ... four, five. O.K., we’re all here. Everybody ready? Follow me!”

Walking out to the plane:

“So where are you from? Oh, *comment sa va? En peu*. Have any of you ever been on a small plane before? Well, the main difference between a small plane and a big plane is that you get to see a whole lot more. I guarantee that this will be the most memorable part of your visit.

“This is the Cessna 206 that we’ll be taking. One of the things we’d like to do is to load it from the front to the back, and unload it from the back to the front. So, sir, would you mind being my co-pilot today? O.K., just hop up in there; watch your head and watch your step. O.K., if I could now have you two gentlemen sit in the second row; watch your head and watch your step. *Attention la tête!* And if I could have you ladies come with me around to the other side of the aircraft, I’ll let you in this door here. Just watch your step. Take your time.

“O.K., I’d like to explain to the four of you the operation of this rear door. Note that it is in two parts; the rear part closes first and opens second. To close the rear door, you have a latch at the bottom and at the top, and you just snap this lever up like that. Now what I’d like you to do, sir, is when I close this forward door, rotate this handle forward. That will lock the door. If you needed to open the door, you’d just pull the handle towards the back. Now I just want to show you one more thing. This right here is a landing flap. It is down for takeoff and landing. Note that when it is down, you cannot open this front door all the way. However, note that they made this little cut-out right here so you could open this door just this much. Then that would allow you to open the rear door. Does that make sense? O.K., so if you could just rotate that handle forward when I close the door?

“Thank you!”

After getting into my seat:

“O.K., welcome aboard. Everybody got their seat belts fastened? Because you’re a co-pilot, sir, you’re special so you get this shoulder strap that goes like so. Why doesn’t everybody just give a little extra tug on their seatbelts in case we hit any bumps along the way? As you know, we’d like to ask that you keep those fastened at all times and no smoking. And just in case you’re tempted, I’ve got a fire extinguisher up here on the floor. To operate, pull the pin, squeeze the two handles together, aim at the base of the fire. Up in the ceiling, you’ll find these white passenger briefing cards, as well as your friendly air sickness bags. Remember to use the white bag on the inside, rather than the blue bag on the outside. There are two emergency exits, the two rear doors and this forward door. They all open the same way: rotate the handle back and push open. We’d also like to ask that you keep your seat backs upright for takeoff and landing. You all have air vents in the ceiling.

“So what we’re going to do is, I’m going to take off and climb to our cruising altitude of five thousand five hundred feet. If I could ask you to just save your questions until we’ve reached cruise, I’ll let you know when that is, and then I’ll start telling you a little bit about what we’re taking a look at. It’ll be about half an hour to the Grand Canyon; we’ll spend about half an hour over the Canyon; and then about half an hour on the way back. On the way back I’ll descend and take a turn around the Hoover Dam, so be sure to save a picture for that. Are there any questions?

“O.K., *Allons z’je!*”

At 5,500 feet over the P.A.:

“How’s everybody doing? O.K., we’ve reached our cruising altitude of five-thousand five-hundred feet. A little ways back there we flew over the Colorado River. Just under the left wing tip you could catch a glimpse of the Hoover Dam. We’ll take a turn around that on the way back. The Colorado River is the border between Nevada and Arizona, so we’ll be over Arizona for the rest of the flight. We also passed Mount Wilson back there. It’s 5,500 feet tall. The area we’re flying over now is the Lake Meade Recreation Area, basically a National Park. Lake Meade is the largest man-made body of water by volume in the world and was formed, of course, when the Hoover Dam was built on the Colorado River. This is a desert eco-system; we only get about 3 inches of rain a year out here, so it’s very unusual to find a large body of water like Lake Meade out here. The water in Lake Meade can get pretty warm, in the 80s, so it’s very popular for water sports like water skiing, scuba diving, fishing.

“A couple of distinctive things about Lake Meade. One is you can see the blue-green color of the water. This is caused by local minerals in the area. Also, there are very few beaches on Lake Meade. This is caused by the fact that normally beaches take thousands of years to form as sediment builds up, but since Lake Meade is man-made, there hasn’t been a chance for this to happen. So the coastline is very sharply defined. I think it kind of looks like a satellite photo. Off in the distance, you can see the vertical cliffs of the west rim of the Grand Canyon ahead. We’ll be there in about 20 minutes.”

“Coming up on our right is the small town of Temple Bar. It’s named after a rock in the area that the Mormons called ‘Temple Rock’. It’s mostly now just a retirement community. You can see a trailer park, the marina, and the airport runway that runs north/south.”

“All the water that you see, the water we’ve flown over, as well as the water ahead of us now, is part of Lake Meade. So you get an idea for just how big it is. If you look pretty much straight down off the right side of the plane, you’ll just be able to make out a small landing strip running east/west. That’s there because there used to be a silver mine there called Joker Mine. This whole area has a lot of unique geology, of course. Ahead and to the left, you can see how those sedimentary layers have been rotated 45 degrees as they go into Lake Meade. On the far side of them, the erosion of the layers makes a really interesting diamond-shaped pattern that I’ll point out when we’re on the other side of them. Coming up on the right on the far shore of Lake Meade is Pearce Ferry. It’s named after a man named Pearce who ran a ferry from there to other points on the Lake. Since Lake Meade has so few beaches, this is one of the few points on the Lake where it’s a good point to launch a boat from.

“In addition to doing aerial tours of the Grand Canyon, Grand Canyon Air also drops off and picks up river rafters at dirt strips along the canyon. Since we’re coming up on the exit point of the Colorado River from the Grand Canyon, we frequently pick rafters up at the Pearce Ferry airstrip which is coming up on the right.”

“If you look under the left wing tip now, you can see those diamond-shaped patterns due to the erosion of those sedimentary layers I was talking about. I’ve never seen that anywhere else.”

“Down below on the right is the exit point of the Colorado River from the Grand Canyon. Note the color change between the Colorado River and Lake Meade. This is caused by the fact that the Colorado River is flowing fast enough to carry a lot of mud and sediment along with it, so it usually stays a muddy brown color. As the river dumps into Lake Meade, however, it has to slow down, and dumps the mud and sediment into Lake Meade. So you can see the color change between the brown muddy color of the Colorado River and the blue-green color of Lake Meade.”

“We have now crossed the west rim into the Grand Canyon. The canyon itself is about 280 miles long, so if we tried to fly over the whole thing it would basically take us all day. If you take a boat all the way down the canyon, it would take you about 12 days to reach this point starting from the north end. We’re flying at 5,500 feet; that’s about 500 feet above this plateau. It’s another 5,000 feet down to the bottom of the river, so the canyon itself is about a mile deep. At its widest point it’s 12 miles wide. This is a large sink-hole we’re passing on our right.”

“All of these smaller canyons have names. The one coming up on our right is called Bat Cave Canyon. That’s because there are bat caves down by the river on this side of the Canyon. In the earlier part of this century they used to mine the guano from the caves for fertilizer, perfume, and gunpowder. On the opposite side of the canyon, you see that white tent out there on the end of the that lookout point? That’s actually part of the Hualapai (pronounced “Wal-lah-pie”) Indian Reservation. Native tribes own a large amount of land around various parts of the Canyon. We sometimes take tourists into that little airport over there where they spend the day and have a buffet lunch under that tent. Also, if you look at the very end of that lookout point, you can see a small grey structure. They actually used to run a cable car from there all the way down to the opposite side of the canyon to get to the bat caves. Unfortunately, in the 1950s, an Air Force jet flew into the cable, so they decided that it would be a good idea to take it down.”

“Did any of you see the movie *Thelma & Louise*? You didn’t? You did? Remember what happens in the end? Well, it was filmed right there on that point. Yes, it is a long way down. We won’t tell them what happens in the end and spoil it for them.”

“Now we’ve climbed up to 6,500 feet for the leg back. At this higher altitude you can see how much more vegetation there is on that higher plateau. That 1,000 feet makes a big difference in the amount of moisture the area gets, so there is much more wildlife up there. Just under the right wing tip is Mount Dellenbaugh; it’s a dormant volcano. It’s about 7,000 feet tall. Off in the distance, those smaller mountains are also dormant volcanos. The lava flows from those volcanos actually create some of the largest rapids on the Colorado River more toward the north end.”

“Well, we’re now exiting the west end of the Grand Canyon. It’ll be about a half an hour back to Boulder City, and we’ll take a turn around the Hoover Dam. The area we’re flying over now is called the Grand Wash Cliffs. Because the land around here is so dry, when we have any rainfall there’s a lot of erosion and runoff as you can see. There are even flash floods in some areas.”

“Coming up on the left is a town called Meadeview. One of the strange things about Meadeview is that as you can see there are a lot more streets than there are houses. This is because after they started building houses, the government changed its mind about whether it would extend water service to new houses, so they stopped building new houses. That’s why it kind of looks like a ghost town.”

“One of the interesting things about Lake Meade is that before the dam was built, all that was here was the Colorado River, and there was a town on the river that they knew would get flooded when they built the dam. So the government bought out everybody in the town, and when the time came, they evacuated the town and flooded the area. But they left the town exactly as it was. So there’s actually now an entire town underwater here in Lake Meade that is now a popular spot for scuba divers.”

“So did you hear the joke about the duck? Who goes into a drug store? And he says, ‘Give

me some Chapstick—and put it on my bill.” (Rolling of eyes.)

“Why did the cowboy pitch his tent on the stove? Because he wanted a home on the range!”²³
(Sound of moaning over the engine.) “You know what the best part about all this is? You guys can’t just get up and leave!” (Laughter.)

“You see that channel ahead and to the right that goes through those dark hills to the west? That was the original site where they were going to build the Hoover Dam, but geologists then discovered that there’s a fault-line that runs through that area, so they moved the dam further downstream. The dark line of low hills over there are associated with the fault line. Directly over the nose in the distance, you can just make out the buildings of Las Vegas through the haze. You’ll see them better as we get closer. That’s Bonelli Peak on our right. It’s about 6,000 feet tall.”

“The mountain coming up on our right is called Fortification Hill. It’s actually a dormant volcano. You can see the dark lava flows here on the right. On the left end is a small mound where the lava would come out if it was still active. And just under the right wing tip you can see Las Vegas a little better. Just on the other side of Fortification Hill you’ll be able to see the backside of the Hoover Dam. I’ll descend and then make a turn around the front side.”

“The Hoover Dam is the tallest dam in the United States, so you can get an idea for how it could have created a body of water a large as Lake Meade.”

Back on the ground:

“Well, welcome back to earth. If I could just ask that you remain by the plane so we can all walk in together, and if you’d like to take any pictures by the plane, we can do that too. Oh, you want me in the picture, too?”

“O.K., everybody ready to go inside? O.K., follow me. So what did you think? Did you like it? Oh, good! I’m glad. There’s nothing like seeing it from an airplane, is there? Yes, it is big. It certainly is. And nobody got sick! How ‘bout that. What? No, actually, that was pretty moderate turbulence. Yeah, heavy turbulence is when your head is hitting the ceiling. We get that more in the summer with all the thermals. Yup.”

(Receive tip.) “Oh, thank you! Thank you very much. I really appreciate that. Thanks for flying with us today!

Au revoir!”

²³ For non-American audiences, this joke is a pun on two different meanings of the word “range” in American English. Range can mean a wide-open space of land. Meanwhile a “range oven” is a stove with individual burners on the top.



Figure 28: Top: View of the Grand Canyon from the south rim. Below is Boulder City Airport that we flew out of. The desert winds could be tricky.

Boulder City Sunset

During only my second week at Grand Canyon Air, I am approaching Boulder City Airport behind one of our most senior pilots. It's a typical day in the Southwest. The scenery is as beautiful as the weather: blue, blue sky with unlimited visibility. As I am flying parallel to the runway before turning onto final approach, my fellow pilot touches down on the runway. Over the radio, I suddenly hear him say, "*I'm off the runway.*" I look down and see that his plane is off the side of the runway in the gravel.

Apparently some very tricky winds, such as a dust devil—miniature tornados that can come out of nowhere—caught him off-guard and blew him off the runway. When the landing gear hit the gravel, the nose-gear collapsed, causing the propeller to strike the ground while the engine was still running. Not good. A prop-strike is a mandatory engine rebuild. Tens of thousands of dollars. Fortunately, he was fine and did not have any passengers on-board.

Still in the air, a moment later I see the white golf cart belonging to the owner of Grand Canyon Air drive out to the plane.

I would later learn from this pilot that the first words out of the owner's mouth when he reached the plane were not "Are you O.K.?" They were something like, "You Goddamn son-of-a-bitch, what the hell did you do to *my* airplane?!?!" Knowing that the pilot was one of our most experienced, I could only imagine that what happened to him could happen to any of us.

It had all looked so beautiful from the air.

Coincidentally, the next day is my day-off. After much soul-searching, in accumulation with other incidents of verbal abuse I have witnessed and experienced by management, I decide I don't need that kind of boss. This work is hard enough as it is without doubting whether the organization will be on your side if something happens. Beautiful scenery doesn't make up for ugly management. That day I draft and submit the following letter to the chief pilot.

15 October 1998

John Willoughby, Chief Pilot
Grand Canyon Air
1266 Ventura Road
Boulder City, NV 89093

Dear John,

The modus operandi of Grand Canyon Air is:

"Praise in private; chastise in public."

This is not a place where I would like to work.

You may keep my next pay check to defray any training costs that you may have incurred.

Sincerely,

Peter W. Pruyn

The next morning I pack my things and drive to the Pacific Coast Highway in search of a new job. Time to add a few more weeks of eating peanut butter & jelly sandwiches and sleeping in my car to my life.

Even though I know it's the right thing to do, I still feel like a failure. Again.

Memory: Science Class

I'm in Miss Bardon's eighth-grade science class in room 42. We sit in pairs with our lab partners at the black, hardtop tables whose surfaces are supposedly impervious to acid. Miss Bardon is reviewing the procedure of some experiment we are supposed to be continuing from last week. Somehow I remember that Sam Veltman and Willie Campbell, at the next table over, haven't done something with their experiment that they should have. It seems important enough to tell Miss Bardon about it. As I do so, Sam, the heaviest boy in our class, shoots me a look. I don't think anything of it. I see myself as helping.

After class, I stay after for a moment to speak with Miss Bardon about something. With the classroom now mostly empty of students, I turn and walk out of the room. The instant I pass through the doorway and out into the hall, Sam's meaty clenched fist makes a violent direct hit to my solar plexus, completely knocking the wind out of me. Involuntarily, I collapse to my knees and then to my hands. Gasping for air, my paralyzed stomach refuses to respond as it has my entire life to the urge to inhale. As felled prey, I slowly fall over onto my side in the fetal position, my mind reeling to comprehend not only what is happening to me but why. With my face now level with the white and black linoleum tile, my bulging eyes take in Sam's sneakers slowly walking away. Still gasping for air, I think I am going to die.

Sometime later, I would find out that Alex Renkas witnessed the entire event and characterized it as "a Mafia hit."

I never told anyone.

Postscript

Many years later I learn that around that time Grand Canyon Air was accused by the IRS of failing to pay air transportation taxes of more than \$250,000.

Several years later, they ceased operations.

Copyright Notices

The following copyrighted materials are being used without a license from their respective copyright owners, but under a good faith belief that my unlicensed use is done fairly and in accordance with Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976.

- American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed.* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), pp. 669-670.
- Christ, Carol P. *Patriarchy as a System of Male Dominance Created at the Intersection of the Control of Women, Private Property, and War, Part 1*, feminismandreligion.com, February 18, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://feminismandreligion.com/2013/02/18/patriarchy-as-an-integral-system-of-male-dominance-created-at-the-intersection-of-the-control-of-women-private-property-and-war-part-1-by-carol-p-christ/>.
- Collins, Michael. *Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), pp. 401-402.
- Eliot, T. S. *Four Quartets* (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1943), p. 59.
- Ely, Robin J., Debra E. Meyerson. "Unmasking Manly Men: The Organizational Reconstruction of Men's Identity," *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, 2006(1).
- Hallowell, Edward and Ratey, John. *Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood* (Touchstone Books, 1992), p. 158.
- Handbill distributed by the National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1919, "Seeing is Believing! Finish the Fight!", Florence Luscomb Papers, folder 640. Schlesinger Library for the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute.
- Hudson, Valerie M., Donna Lee Bowen, and Perpetua Lynne Nielsen. *The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide*, (Columbia University Press, 2020), p. 347.
- McCartney, Paul and John Lennon, *All My Loving*, 1963. Copyright 1963, Paul McCartney, Yoko Ono, Sean Ono Lennon, Julian Lennon.
- Miller, Bill. "Many Trails", *The Red Road*, Warner Music, 1993.
- Miller, Claire Cain. "The Problem for Women Is Not Winning. It's Deciding to Run", *The New York Times*, October 25, 2016.
- Pipher, Mary. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (New York: Penguin, 2005), pp. 254-255.
- Pruyn, Peter and Michael Sterling (2006). "Space Flight Resource Management: Lessons Learned from Astronaut Team Learning", *Reflections Journal*, Society for Organizational Learning, 7:2. These materials are sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration under Contract NAS9-20000. The U.S. Government retains a paid-up, nonexclusive, irrevocable worldwide license in such materials to reproduce, prepare derivative works, distribute copies to the public, and to perform publicly and display publicly, by or on behalf of the U.S. Government. All other rights are reserved by United Space Alliance, LLC.

Silkscreen Protesting Unequal Access of Women to Harvard, Red woman symbol with fist and equal sign worn at Harvard commencement, Amy Brodkey Papers, 1970-1972, Hollis #olvwork601147; and White Fabric Featuring Woman Symbol Printed in Red with Equals Sign Enclosed, Radcliffe College Archives Memorabilia Collection, Hollis #olvwork596564. Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Cinderella Liberator* (Haymarket Books, 2019), p. 18.

Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, (Ballantine Books, 1990), pp. 77, 87.

The following copyrighted and trademarked sources are used with permission.

Gwinn, Dave. "CRM", *The Pilot's Audio Update* (Belvoir Media Group, January, 1995). Used with Permission.

Aron, Elaine. *The Highly Sensitive Person: How to Thrive When the World Overwhelms You* (Broadway Books, 1997). Cover image used with permission of Kensington Books.

Weekend 1 Training Manual of the Two Part EMDR Therapy Basic Training (EMDR Institute, Watsonville, CA, 2016), p. 27. Used with permission.

Kramer, Vicki, Alison Konrad, and Sumru Erkut. "Critical Mass on Corporate Boards: Why Three or More Women Enhance Governance" (Wellesley Centers for Women, 2006). Used with permission.

Trademark by David O. Smith, 2016. Used with permission.