

McCain stayed grounded in flight arrangements

For a long time, he refused to fly DC-Phoenix nonstop

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USA TODAY

As a senator from Arizona, John McCain successfully fought for hard-to-get nonstop flights between Washington and Phoenix, among other cities.

But when Phoenix-based America West Airlines began service from Washington's close-in Reagan National Airport to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport in late 2000, McCain wasn't on the packed flights.

He took the longer way home for years, booking flights that required a connection in another city.

Flights at Reagan Airport are restricted to a distance of 1,250 miles, though Congress has sporadically "exempted" certain flights from that "perimeter rule." McCain led an effort to repeal the rule in 1999. It failed but ultimately helped lead to exemptions that included up to three daily nonstop flights on the 1,979-mile route between Washington and Phoenix.

McCain's refusal to take the new nonstop was his way of stubbornly sticking to a vow he made in response to criticism that he wanted the flights only so he could shorten his commute.

"To John, that was such an abhorrent thing to be accused of, he just took it off the table and said, 'OK, I won't fly it,'" American Airlines CEO Doug Parker recalled. "I don't think any other member (of Congress) would make that statement."

Parker was an executive with America West from 1995 through its merger in 2005 with US Airways, when he became CEO of the combined carrier. He lived in Arizona until US Airways merged with American in 2013 and he became CEO of American. He is a McCain family friend, counting McCain's son Andy among his close friends. The two went to graduate school at Vanderbilt University. Another McCain son, Doug, is a pilot for American.

McCain's refusal to take the nonstop flight tripped him up occasionally. Parker recalled that McCain missed a Phoenix event where he was scheduled to in-



John McCain imposed strict limits on himself as to what flights he would take.
2008 PHOTO BY TIM J. MUELLER FOR USA TODAY

"He wouldn't take the nonstop even to get to an event on time."

Doug Parker
American Airlines CEO

roduce President George W. Bush, who beat him to become the Republican nominee in 2000.

It wasn't sour grapes. His connecting flight had been canceled.

His replacement: Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., who had taken the nonstop flight to Phoenix.

"He wouldn't take the nonstop even to get to an event on time," Parker said.

McCain eventually relented, though no one recalls exactly when. Parker said it was only in recent years.

He said McCain told him he took the nonstop flight to make it home for the graduation of one of his children and was surprised no one noticed and criticized him.

"He finally said, 'OK, no one seems to care. I think the statute of limitations has run out.'"

Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., said McCain avoided the flight for "years and years" after Flake arrived in Washington in 2001.

When he finally started taking the flight, Flake recalled, McCain said, "I've done my penance, I guess."

"Nobody said a thing about it. Nobody cared by that time," Flake said.

Sen. Jeff Flake's, R-Ariz., favorite McCain-on-a-plane story involves the Washington-Phoenix flight.

A few years ago, Flake was heading home on American's nonstop flight from Reagan National to Phoenix. A passenger sitting next to him in row 20-something was excited when she sat down. Flake figured maybe she recognized him.

Turns out she had passed McCain, who was sitting in his favorite window seat a few rows ahead of Flake, in coach class, and she was thrilled.

"She said, 'John McCain is on the flight. John McCain is on the flight,'" Flake recalled.

The woman had no clue who Flake was and asked him, "Have you ever flown with him before?"

"I said, 'Yeah, once or twice.'"

It was the weekend of the annual Phoenix Open golf tournament, and Flake's seatmate wondered if he was a golfer competing in the event.

A passenger seated in front of the pair finally piped up and said, "Hey, lady, he's the other senator from Arizona!"

STATE-BY-STATE

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Hazel Green: No damage was reported after a minor earthquake (magnitude 2.1) rattled northern Alabama at 7:22 a.m. Monday.

ALASKA Juneau: NOAA officials are meeting this week to develop priorities for marine navigation in the Arctic and around Alaska.

ARIZONA Phoenix: State prosecutors say Jon Richard Rattray has been indicted in a real estate loan fraud scheme estimated at \$6 million.

ARKANSAS Gould: A state official says three inmates have died in less than 24 hours at a southeast Arkansas prison, possibly from drug use.

CALIFORNIA Fullerton: Police Chief David Hendricks has been placed on leave over a disturbance involving a Lady Antebellum concert.

COLORADO Aspen: Aspen Skiing Co. will be recruiting about 1,200 new employees at \$13.50 an hour.

CONNECTICUT Stamford: An artist who created a sculpture of a heroin spoon and placed it in front of the Purdue Pharma headquarters can get it back, a judge has ruled.

DELAWARE Felton: A Kent County woman died last week after being exposed to rabies.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Toray Lamond Guider, 43, was hospitalized after jumping off a Beltway bridge to avoid oncoming traffic after escaping a rollover crash with minor injuries.

FLORIDA Key West: The U.S. Coast Guard has rescued Robert Vonnegut, 62, whose boat was reported overdue by a day in the Florida Keys.

GEORGIA Atlanta: A judge sentenced Kai Brockington, 36, to 3½ years in prison after he pleaded guilty to bliking \$668,000 in a charity scheme.

HAWAII Honolulu: The Navy is destroying munitions recovered at Pearl Harbor in controlled detonations.

IDAH0 Lewiston: Horizon Airlines made its last flight into the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport.

ILLINOIS Urbana: The University of Illinois is offering free tuition and fees to qualified in-state students whose family income is below \$61,000 annually.

INDIANA South Bend: Country star Garth Brooks has set Oct. 20 for his University of Notre Dame show, the first concert at the football stadium.

IOWA Des Moines: The General Services Administration bought the former Riverfront YMCA property for \$6.5 million.

KANSAS Salina: The Smoky Hill Museum is launching "Notorious," featuring 13 figures with Kansas ties.

KENTUCKY Frankfort: Investments in Kentucky's state worker pensions earned more than \$1.4 billion during the 2018 fiscal year.

LOUISIANA Baton Rouge: Outdoorsmen are being asked to help stem the spread of an insect they believe is killing off Roseau cane.

MAINE Brunswick: Walter Skold, founder of the Dead Poets Society of America, was buried under a special tombstone he commissioned.

MARYLAND Annapolis: David Trone, Total Wine & More co-owner who is running for Congress, expects to recover from cancer.

MASSACHUSETTS Amherst: Amherst College is changing the name of the Lord Jeffrey Inn to disassociate itself with an 18th-century British general.

MICHIGAN Monroe: The River Raisin National Battlefield Park is undergoing a \$100 million upgrade.

MINNESOTA Duluth: A public works crew has unearthed several wooden coffins, but officials say they contain no remains.

MISSISSIPPI Oxford: A historical marker is planned to honor Elwood Higginbottom, the last black person killed by lynching there in 1935.

MISSOURI Columbia: Leishi Tang voluntarily surrendered her Corgi

named Rou Rou after she was seen beating the dog on a video.

MONTANA West Glacier: Glacier National Park officials have deployed a camera and empty "decoy" tent to watch for a bear that's believed to have torn into a tent.

NEBRASKA Kearney: A new \$89 million veterans home welcomed hundreds at an open house.

NEVADA Las Vegas: McCarran International Airport had its busiest month in July with 4.4 million passengers.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Concord: The city is cutting down 22 white pine trees due to needle blight.

NEW JERSEY Trenton: Gov. Phil Murphy rejected a bill imposing a 5-cent fee on plastic carry-out bags.

NEW MEXICO Santa Fe: The last memorials to Confederate President Jefferson Davis have been removed from rest areas on I-10.

NEW YORK New York: New York City is poised to reactivate 140 speed cameras in school zones.

NORTH CAROLINA Holly Springs: Democrat Sydney Batch says she'll remain in her race for a state House seat despite breast cancer.

NORTH DAKOTA Watford: Pipeline company Taga Resources is promoting the use of microbes as an alternative method to clean up spills.

OHIO Fairborn: The faculty union at Wright State University has set Oct. 1 as a strike date if its members reject a fact-finder's report.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: The new half of the U.S. Highway 77 bridge over the South Canadian River is open, KTOK radio reported.

OREGON Eugene: The Eugene Police Department intends to lease or purchase surveillance cameras in a trial project.

PENNSYLVANIA Yardley: Henry Guzikowski Jr., 54, faces animal cruelty charges after dead and live

animals were found covered in feces at the New Jersey farm he owns.

RHODE ISLAND South Kingstown: A research vessel in the Canadian Arctic carrying a 36-member University of Rhode Island team ran aground Friday, but officials say all are safe.

SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia: Two funeral home workers were indicted after officials say they left a body to rot for nearly three years because the woman's family owed them money.

SOUTH DAKOTA Buffalo: The state may spend \$1.2 million to plug 40 wells that have been idle since a natural gas project fell dormant.

TENNESSEE Knoxville: Peyton Manning has donated \$1 million to the University of Tennessee to establish an experiential learning endowment.

TEXAS Seagoville: Police Officer Sam Click's body camera captured Click and a neighbor rescuing a family from their burning home.

UTAH Salt Lake City: Bonnie Foerster, 74, cried when a state judge declared her and her longtime lesbian partner, Beverly Grossaint, legally married. Grossaint died in May at 82.

VERMONT Montpelier: Con Hogan, a longtime state official, has died at 77.

VIRGINIA Fredericksburg: Discussions are being focused on how to tell a more complete history of the city's controversial slave auction block.

WASHINGTON Spokane: U.S. Highway 395 has been renamed for former U.S. House Speaker Tom Foley.

WEST VIRGINIA Marietta: The steam-powered W.F. Snyder will mark its 100th anniversary Sept. 15 at the Ohio River Museum.

WISCONSIN Madison: Foxconn Technology Group says it will invest \$100 million in innovation research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

WYOMING Laramie: University of Wyoming officials say they expect about 1,750 freshmen to attend classes this fall, up 3 percent from 2017.

From staff and wire reports