

Guitar guy, harmonica man liven up a dreary wait at Gate 66

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At Gate 66, the collective groan humbles, then rumbles, then builds to an invective-riddled roar in a scant few seconds.

A pilot has called in sick. The San Francisco-to-Boston flight will depart late. Really late. Maybe three hours. Maybe six.

What? What! Passengers stomp and whine and sigh and, resigned to the misery, wander off to eat up time

over taste-free sandwiches and \$7.59 beers.

Well, most do.

But not the middle-aged, blue-blazered man with the guitar, who started his trip earlier on this morning in Portland, headed to Boston via San Francisco.

And not the gray-haired guy with the harmonica, who announces to anyone in earshot that he had the option of catching an earlier flight, but opted for this one ... this insultingly late

one. ... arrrgh!

No. They stay put at Gate 66, where the guitar case acts as a conversation starter and one thing leads to another and wouldn't you know it, but they play plenty of the same songs, guitar guy and harmonica man do.

"Your Cheatin' Heart." "Folsom Prison." "Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms." All the standards for music men of a certain age.

They take out their instruments and warm up their voices,

and a third fellow sitting nearby says into his Bluetooth phone, "Yeah, I'm at the airport and there's a singalong going on." And harmonica man says to anyone in earshot, "Have any requests ... besides, 'Shut up!'?"

Just as he laughs at his own joke a little old lady with a bright white perm hollers out from Gate 64, "On Top of Old Smokey!"

The guitar strums and the harmonica whines and travelers who as a general rule avoid eye contact

glance at each other and smile.

But not skinny Ms. Tight Pants, Ms. Snakeskin Flats, Ms. Louis Vuitton Bag, who asks loudly in her imperious New York accent to anyone in earshot: "Are they horrible? They're HORRIBLE."

"Oh, my God. Oh, my God."

"Horrible. Horrible."

"Oh. My. God."

"They think they're good?"

"They think they're good."

"Oh, my God. Horrible."

And guitar guy and harmonica

man and a dozen or more singalong passengers move on to "Irene Goodnight," and when it ends, applause erupts all the way from Gate 66 to Gate 64.

And Ms. Tight Pants, Snake-skin Flats, Louis Vuitton bag New Yorker says, to anyone in earshot "Oh. My. God."

Around her, passengers cringe. Her voice could grate cheese.

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