

A Happy Passenger
by Abe Mittleman

Too often in our business you hear stories of passengers that are in one way or another dissatisfied by one thing or another about some drivers. Although past TLC administrations have placed emphasis at times on drivers who deserved commendation for their service, it seems recently that the current administration has for the most part abandoned this policy and instead is more inclined to emphasize what is wrong with many of the drivers. They especially pick on drivers who refuse to take passengers from Manhattan to the outer boroughs. I also want to point out how communication between passengers and drivers in current times is lacking and in some cases non-existent due to the disturbing apparatus with commercials blaring from the back seat monitor.

Well here is a story of how public relations could and should be. I try to treat all my passengers with respect. They are paying a premium price for the service I give. I take pride in transporting them to wherever they want to go. I also enjoy conversation. And if from time to time I can give them meaningful advice, I am proud to do so.

Following is an email from a passenger I had several months ago. I had long forgotten about this fare. But, I was thrilled to recall this fare upon receiving this email:

Dear Abie-

Greetings--- I rode in your cab from 21st st. in Manhattan to Park Slope, Brooklyn, last December, and you gave me your card, which I kept. You and I had a great (to me) conversation about life, including topics of food, health and relationships: I had just finished treatment for breast cancer and you gave me a great pep talk. Do you have any memory of this? I'm sure you have great conversations with your passengers all the time, so perhaps it wasn't as momentous to you as it was to me.

But I'm writing you now because I just graduated from the Master's of Illustration program at the School of Visual Arts (where you picked me up last December to go home) and for part of my thesis project, I made an illustrated tribute to my ride in your cab. My thesis topic was healing after breast cancer treatment, and I found our conversation to be very de-isolating and healing for me. So I illustrated it, and made something between a comic-book and a picture book.

(illustration will follow)