

Steeves Summary: Mayhem at Toronto Airport

August 3rd, 2005



After many hours of confusion, we are safe and sound in the apartment at the AIM headquarters in Toronto. It was supposed to be a routine flight to Toronto to join with British Airways to London. It turned out to be anything but routine.

We landed in Toronto half an hour late after flying around bad weather. After we landed they told us that we would have to wait in a parking area for a while as the airport had shut down ground operations due to thunderstorms in the area. Everyone was disappointed that we would have to sit for an extra half hour on the pavement before we went to a gate. Half an hour turned into an hour, an hour turned into an hour and a half. Passengers were getting restless cramped into a small regional jet. It was then that we smelled smoke and noticed billowing black smoke coming from behind another parked airplane.

During the thunderstorm, an Air France plane run off the end of the runway before bursting into flames. It took a while for the news to circulate around the plane. It was hours later that we found out that all 300 people on the plane were able to escape. Concern about connecting flights faded as the realization of the event grew. Some people on our flight still managed to complain about the delay, hunger, lack of room, and their inconvenience, but in general people handled the situation calmly.

After five hours parked on the pavement, they towed some empty planes away from the gates to allow us to get off. I was able to call my father and ask him to get me some phone numbers for contacts in Toronto. John Brown, the director for AIM Canada had come out to the airport to meet us for a few minutes between flights. His few minutes turned into hours, but we were able to call him and keep in contact until our luggage came out two hours later. He had verified with British Airways that our flight was not leaving Tuesday night.

It happened that the apartment in the AIM office was empty. He brought us back to the apartment, ordered us pizza for a late supper (after skipping lunch) and let us relax. Although we are between homes, we feel that we have family here looking after us.

Despite the tragedy and confusion of the day, God has blessed us with caring hands.

We'll find out later today what will happen, but this day made us realize how much bigger the world is than us.

Michael and Bernadine, Evan and Julianne

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