



## Plane Queer: Labor, Sexuality, and AIDS in the History of Male Flight Attendants

By Phil Tiemeyer

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In this vibrant new history, Phil Tiemeyer details the history of men working as flight attendants. Beginning with the founding of the profession in the late 1920s and continuing into the post-September 11 era, *Plane Queer* examines the history of men who joined workplaces customarily identified as female-oriented. It examines the various hardships these men faced at work, paying particular attention to the conflation of gender-based, sexuality-based, and AIDS-based discrimination. Tiemeyer also examines how this heavily gay-identified group of workers created an important place for gay men to come out, garner acceptance from their fellow workers, fight homophobia and AIDS phobia, and advocate for LGBT civil rights. All the while, male flight attendants facilitated key breakthroughs in gender-based civil rights law, including an important expansion of the ways that Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act would protect workers from sex discrimination. Throughout their history, men working as flight attendants helped evolve an industry often identified with American adventuring, technological innovation, and economic power into a queer space.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"A stunning success and an enormously important contribution to not only LGBT history, but also to the labor, feminist, legal, aviation, and AIDS historiographic literatures. . . . *Plane Queer* is essential reading for anybody interested in LGBT history. . . . Pick the book up. Read it. You won't be disappointed, I promise."

(Chrislove *Daily Kos* 2013-10-08)

"In this seemingly narrow demographic, Tiemeyer finds notable achievements in equal rights, from the first workplace health benefits for domestic partners, in 2001, to a 1984 legal decision forcing an airline to reinstate a flight attendant with AIDS, which he argues was a key step in the run-up to the 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act."

(Don Sapatkin *Philadelphia Inquirer* 2013-04-23)

"Tiemeyer's fascinating, in-depth study reveals that the very assumption that male flight attendants are gay has led to major conflicts--and major progress."

(Jim Gladstone *Passport Magazine* 2013-08-01)

#### From the Inside Flap

"Tiemeyer takes a completely original approach to a fascinating subject in aviation history and American history. He deftly reconstructs the careers of gay flight attendants and relates them to changes in urban nightlife, the technological and regulatory revolutions in aviation, the cold war backlash against homosexuality, the civil rights movement, feminism, neoliberalism, and the AIDS pandemic. His postmortem on the "patient zero" legend of Gaëtan Dugas is nothing short of a revelation."—David Courtwright, author of *Sky as Frontier*

"Phil Tiemeyer's terrific book delivers the long, forgotten history of the male flight attendant. That history stretches back to the dawn of commercial aviation, and was characterized by waves of toleration and scorn in which the male steward was repeatedly drawn in and then forced out of the occupation. Through jack-of-all-trades research methods, Tiemeyer has broken the boundaries that separate labor, legal, and LGBT history, and given us a unique vantage on the history of AIDS. Pioneering and important." —Margot Canaday, author of *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America*

"*Plane Queer* demonstrates the usefulness of thinking about the treatment of workers seen as "gender-queers": those who refuse to act in the ways expected of individuals of their sex, regardless of their own sexual orientation. In doing so, he expands notions of gender rights, queer rights, and the impact of homophobia on all workers." —Ileen A. DeVault, Professor of Labor History, Cornell University

About the Author

**Phil Tiemeyer** is Assistant Professor of History at Philadelphia University.

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