

## [Clients: How Well Do You Treat Your Very First Clients?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on November 13th, 2014

If things go well in your career, eventually larger and perhaps more important clients will replace those who came to you first. How will you treat those first clients who are no longer as important to you as they once were?

I never forgot those first clients. I believed that if it was not for those clients, I would not have had the opportunity to get the larger clients.

I have recently discovered what it feels like to not be the “top dog” customer of my favorite airline. When Nancy and I lived in Virginia, I regularly flew on [Delta Airlines](#) and [US Air](#) (after it acquired [Piedmont Airlines](#)). I have over a Million Miles on Delta, so I am a permanent Silver Medallion member, which doesn't mean much more than boarding a plane slightly earlier than the half of the passengers who have no status.

Even though I rarely flew on [American Airlines](#), I joined their frequent flyer program when it started. When we moved to Dallas in 1996, and Delta essentially moved out shortly thereafter, I became a loyal American Airlines passenger. When American started the [Executive Platinum status](#), I earned it every year, but one by flying over 100,000 miles. For many years, I also purchased the [American Airlines AAirpass](#).

To show you how important being Executive Platinum was to me, two years in December I made roundtrip flights to Los Angeles in December, just to get the miles. Each time I would get off the plane at LAX, go to Starbucks and get a latte and re-board the same plane back to Dallas.

It was a heck of a way to spend Saturdays in December. If you think that is taking a flying status to an extreme, keep in mind that I was one of well over 20 passengers on each flight doing the same thing. I also talked to a flyer one time who told me he actually traveled to Tokyo, got off the plane slept a few hours and returned to Dallas just to keep his executive platinum status.

Several years ago, I received mail from American Airlines. When I opened the envelope, I was ecstatic to learn I had become a ConciergeKey member. You can read about it [here](#). I confess, I have never received the kind of service I received as a ConciergeKey member.

I can tell you many stories. I will just tell one to give you the idea. A few years ago, Nancy and I were returning from Ireland. The plane from Chicago was late getting to Dublin, so we were late returning to Chicago. While we were rebooked on a later flight to DFW, the plane landed at O'Hare so late we would have missed that one. We were met at the gate by a ConciergeKey professional who whisked us away in a cart, help get our bags, get us through customs, personally rechecked our bags to Dallas and took us to the gate where our flight to Dallas was boarding. It was incredible.



Did you see the 2009 movie [Up in the Air](#)? If you did you likely remember the scene near the beginning when the George Clooney character and the Vera Farmiga character are comparing their elite status. They match pretty evenly until he pulls out his ConciergeKey card. You can see George Clooney throw his ConciergeKey card on the table in the trailer below or link to it [here](#).

[UP IN THE AIR \(2009\) - Official Movie Trailer](#)



So, where am I now? Unfortunately, (or maybe fortunately given the stress of air travel and staying in hotels), I am coaching far fewer lawyers than the 120 I coached just a few years ago and as a result I no longer fly 100,000 miles a year. If I flew to Tokyo and back every weekend in December I doubt I would reach 100,000 miles this year.

As you will see on the card above, my ConciergeKey status expired in 2011. No one is there to meet me at the gate when things go wrong now. I was never really sure what I had done to be asked to be a ConciergeKey member and I truly never understood what I had done, other than getting older to lose the status. All I know is that once I had it, I really miss not having it.

I have 4,959,459 Million Miler Miles, almost 5 Million. When I reached 1 Million Miles, I became a lifetime Gold member. When I reached 2 Million Miles, I became a lifetime Platinum member. When I reached 3 Million Miles, I was thanked and reminded that I am a lifetime Platinum member. When I reached 4 Million Miles, I was thanked again and reminded again that I am a lifetime Platinum member. I assume the same will happen when I reach 5 Million miles.

Why do I care? What difference does it make?

If any of you have reached the top elite status of your favorite airline you know what a big difference it makes. Among the many differences is just how you are treated. On American, I no longer receive the several system wide upgrades that Nancy and I used to fly in Business Class to Europe and Hawaii. I rarely get upgraded now and I have to pay for it when I do. It is a world of difference.

To American Airlines credit, I have been asked many times for my opinion and I have told them repeatedly that when those of us who have close to 5 million miles on American reach 65, or pick an age, we should get 5 years Executive Platinum status without having to fly 100,000 miles.

Oh, there is one nice part of my flying story. Back in the early 80s when Piedmont Airline offered its first airline clubs, Nancy and I bought lifetime memberships for I believe \$300. When US Air acquired Piedmont, we became lifetime US Air Club members. That did not do us much good when we moved to



Dallas. But, now that American and US Air have merged, we have lifetime Admiral's Club membership.

**Cordell M. Parvin** built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkins & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm's attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, [www.cordellparvin.com](http://www.cordellparvin.com) or contact him at [cparvin@cordellparvin.com](mailto:cparvin@cordellparvin.com).