Fans of *Superman* comics probably remember the Man of Steel's encounter with "Bizarro World." For those of you who were not Superman fans, in Bizarro World, everything was backwards. Good guys were bad; bad guys were good. You get the idea.

Sometimes I feel like I am living in Bizarro World. In fact, I am absolutely convinced that the airlines and the TSA are now being operated by Bizarro CEOs and Bizarro Directors.

Here's why I think we are in Bizarro World:

First, most airlines now charge passengers to check bags. This decision must have been made based upon Bizarro logic.

When I board an airliner, I have noticed that one reason boarding takes so long is because many passengers spend precious time trying to force their carry-on bags into the overhead bins. Often the passenger is someone who is really not quite tall or strong enough to hoist their fifty-nine-pound suitcase over their head and try to stuff it into a space clearly designed for a much smaller bag. I have marveled at passengers carrying two or three bags onto the aircraft despite the stern signs at the gate that warn them to take one bag.

Normal logic, I argue, would predict that if the airlines charged for carry-on bags, more people would check their luggage.

Fewer carry-on bags = faster boarding.

Airlines are regularly "graded" on their on-time performance. This is a measure of how close to departure time the aircraft "pushes back" from the gate. It has nothing to do with take-off. Since Normal logic suggests boarding would be much faster and smoother if passengers did not carry so damned much luggage onboard. This could lead to better on-time performance.

I hope that by now you thinking ahead and saying to yourself, "Hey, I'll bet deplaning would be faster with fewer carry-on bags." Only in Bizarro world would think otherwise.

Second, checked bags may be thoroughly screened, swabbed, opened, and rifled without creating those long lines at the security gate. Last year, I arrived in Las Vegas to find a nice note from the TSA in my checked bag. The note thanked me for understanding why it was important for TSA to open and search through my luggage. Everything was folded almost neatly and nearly returned to its place in the bag.

Once again, Normal logic suggests that if the airlines discouraged carry-on bags, then the TSA agents could take their time giving every bag a good going over, without slowing the check in process.

Win-win.

This past Christmas, some Nigerian guy named Abdulmutallab tried to blow up an airliner bound for Detroit. In the wake of that incident, there have been outcries to step up airport security. Inevitably this has led to hand-wringing discussions of longer check in lines as more carry-on bags are opened for more thorough screenings.

News reports have even hinted that part of the profiling done for international travelers is whether the passenger checks bags. No checked bag = security threat. In most recent attempts on airlines, the terrorist <u>carried</u> something onto the airplane. That might not happen if the bags were checked.

By now, you have probably correctly guessed that I check my luggage (see above). Contrary to anecdotes to the contrary, my bags almost always arrive at the same airport at the same on the same airplane as I do. But it is pissing me off that I now have to pay $50 for the convenience of <u>not</u> dragging heavy bags through the airport, holding up the boarding line, and hitting passengers with my bags as I board.

Common sense has not worked on most flyers. So I say, "Hit them in the wallet." Thus, in the "Normal world," airlines would discourage carry-on bags by charging for them, but encourage passengers to check luggage for free.

Therefore, I conclude that I am living in Bizarro world.