

[August 18, 2008]

Victoria Osteen, wife of Joel Osteen, the Chosen One of the Salvation Business, was acquitted on August 14<sup>th</sup> of assaulting airline stewardess Sharon Brown on December 19, 2005 after Osteen allegedly threw a big hissy fit because a spill wasn't cleaned up, chop-chop. She and her family were subsequently thrown off of the plane.

In her suit, Brown sought an apology plus 10% of Osteen's net worth. But what started out as Girls Gone Wild quickly degenerated into She-said, She-said. The topper was the pilot, whom, having sworn in his disposition that Brown and a crew member blocked Osteen's raging-bull charge for the cockpit, pulled a Sgt. Schultz, and testified that he saw nothing, absolutely nothing. So why did the FAA have Osteen cough up \$3,000 after it determined that she had interfered with Brown? Your guess is as good as mine.

For those of you who with lives, Joel and Victoria Osteen are the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker of the Baby Boomers, but with a lot less make-up (on her, anyway; I'm not so sure about him). Co-pastors of Lakewood Church in Houston, begun by Joel's father, it boasts the largest congregation in the country. Their brand of Old Time Religion - a mix of feel good self-help and New Ageism - has been denounced by critics as "cotton candy theology". Not only does God want you to be rich, the Osteens tell their flock, He wants the Osteens to be rich, too: The New York Times reported that Lakewood (aka the Osteens) raked in \$55 million in 2004 alone. And while poor Victoria is forced to rub shoulders with the Great Unwashed in first class, Joel flies the friendly skies in a Learjet "to do the Lord's work". He even said in an interview that if Jesus were alive today, He'd own a Learjet, too.

What caught my eye, however, was Brown's request of 10% of the Osteens' net worth. While the pundits giggled at what 10% of their net worth must be, I was thinking: who was the idiot who advised her to go after their net worth instead of their gross income? As any Hollywood bean counter will tell you, thousand of movies have grossed trillions of dollars, but their combined net haul has been nada! Mega-churches and other non-profits operate by that same "logic". The Pope lives like he's richer than, well, God, yet, officially, he's flat broke. Joel dresses in custom-tailored suits, lives in a \$2 million compound, and received a \$13 million advance for his latest tome, but, like Jim and Tammy Faye before they self-imploded, he, too, is a charity case, and that Learjet "belongs" to the church. Thus, had Brown won, she would have had zero luck squeezing blood of out of the Osteen Turnip!

And how funny of the Osteens' lawyer, Rusty Hardin, to slam Brown for attempting to "extort" his clients! Retaining Hardin - who does neither windows or pro bono - for such a simple case is downright bizarre. Why did they hire him? Who paid his fees? And why hasn't anyone accused Hardin of extorting the Osteens? But I digress.