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**Bob Greene**

## Sioux City SUX, and that's OK

By **Bob Greene**, CNN Contributor

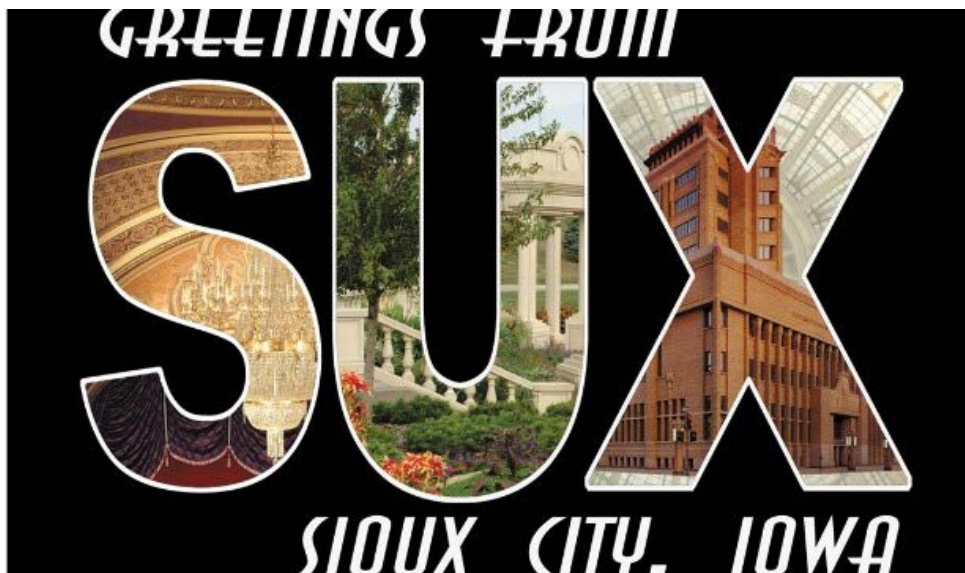
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### Sioux City SUX, and that's OK

updated 8:57 AM EDT, Sun May 5, 2013



Bob Greene says Sioux City airport's identifying initials have long been a headache for the city, so it decided to make lemonade out of lemons.

### We need women designing buildings

updated 11:47 AM EDT, Sat May 4, 2013

John Cary and Marika Shiori-Clark say legendary architect Denise Scott Brown was snubbed by the profession,

#### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Bob Greene: The acronym for Sioux City's airport has long been a headache
- Greene: The city tried to change it, but FAA would only act if it was a safety issue
- So the city "very successfully made lemonade out of lemons"
- Greene: Now you can buy SUX postcards and mugs and proudly wear SUX T-shirts

**Editor's note:** CNN Contributor Bob Greene is a best-selling author whose 25 books include "Late Edition: A Love Story"; "Chevrolet Summers, Dairy Queen Nights"; and "When We Get to Surf City: A Journey Through America in Pursuit of Rock and Roll, Friendship, and Dreams."

(CNN) -- "We don't really care what the federal government wants to call us," Aran Rush was saying the other afternoon. "We know that we're a good place."

Rush is the executive director of the convention and visitors bureau in Sioux City, Iowa, and we were discussing what has happened to the little airport with the big problem.

The problem was never the airport itself. By all accounts, Sioux Gateway Airport, serving Sioux City and the surrounding area in northwest Iowa, northeast Nebraska, eastern South Dakota and far southern Minnesota, is



Fly Sux T-shirts are flying off the shelves.

a fine facility.

But the three-letter identifier -- the three capitalized letters that appear on baggage-claim tags, that are used nationwide to refer to the Sioux City airport, that pilots and air-traffic controllers use to designate Sioux City

-- has long been a headache for the town.



Bob Greene

Every city, in this era of marketing and branding, likes to present itself as something special -- a destination that is sparkling and inviting, a wonderful place for families to settle in, or for businesses to set up shop.

So, to the dismay of Sioux City, it has not been especially helpful that, for as long as there has been commercial air travel into the town, travelers have glanced at the tags on their checked baggage and have noticed that the official designator for the town is:

SUX

Yep. Generations ago, federal aviation regulators gave Sioux City that identifier. It was a shortened version of "Sioux." That was in the years before those three letters took on a somewhat unfortunate tone.

Los Angeles International Airport was LAX; O'Hare International Airport in Chicago was ORD; LaGuardia in New York was LGA; Sioux City was SUX.

No big deal.

Until it was.

No city, no airport, wants to be connected to those letters. It's not a great calling card, not an ideal howdy-do to the world beyond the town's borders. Many people find the word (however you spell it) offensive -- and if you, by chance, think the word is not very nice, try to consider how the proud citizens of Sioux City have felt.

On two occasions -- in the 1980s, and again at the beginning of this century -- Sioux City earnestly and formally petitioned the Federal Aviation Administration to change the letters. The word just wasn't doing the town any good.

On both occasions, nothing happened. I covered Sioux City's second attempt to get rid of SUX; a spokeswoman for the FAA at the time signaled to me that the town's odds of getting three new letters were slim.

The Sioux City airport director at the time told me the FAA informed him that the only reason it would change a three-letter identifier was for safety considerations. He conceded that he didn't know how SUX could be construed as a safety issue, "unless pilots are laughing so hard when they hear it that it distracts them from doing their job."

The reason I got back in touch with Sioux City's leaders last week is that recently the federal government has shown it will speedily get



and it's time she and other female architects were treated equally to men.

### The invisible women who hunt terrorists

updated 8:03 AM EDT, Fri May 3, 2013



Susan Hasler, one of the analysts who hunted the al Qaeda leader, says the role of women in terrorism investigations is often downplayed

### GOP senators feel heat on gun control

updated 6:37 PM EDT, Thu May 2, 2013



Joe McLean says several senators who voted against background checks have taken hits in their approval ratings.

### Close Guantanamo now!

updated 1:50 PM EDT, Fri May 3, 2013



Dean Obeidallah, Margaret Hoover and John Avlon on Gitmo, Jason Collins and a special election in South Carolina.

### What's racist about a talking goat?

updated 11:46 AM EDT, Fri May 3, 2013



LZ Granderson went online to see the "racist" Mountain Dew ads, expecting to see some really offensive stuff. Instead, he saw some really silly stuff.

### Obama pays attention to Latin America

updated 8:41 AM EDT, Sat May 4, 2013



GOP strategist Ana Navarro says President Obama is bringing a positive message of unity to Latin America.

### Why a Democrat has a chance against Mark Sanford

updated 8:41 AM EDT, Fri May 3, 2013



John Avlon says changing demographics make victory possible for centrist Democrats in Southern cities.

### Why FBI and CIA didn't connect the dots

updated 10:37 AM EDT, Thu May 2, 2013



Bruce Schneier says preventing terrorism seems easy in hindsight but the task is much harder than most people realize.

### What Amanda Knox can and can't tell us

involved in aviation-related issues when it wants to. Congress stepped in to ease air-traffic delays caused by federal spending cuts; the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration, to put travelers' minds at ease, backed off on its plan to allow passengers to bring small knives onto planes.

So I wondered if Sioux City was still trying to persuade the government to allow it to get rid of those three dreaded letters

"We decided to go completely the other way," said David Bernstein, president of the airport's board of trustees. "The FAA wasn't going to change it, so it wasn't going to do us any good to whine about it."

Thus, the town made a bold decision:

It would embrace the SUX designator. It would make it part of Sioux City's charm -- a whimsical part of the civic personality.

T-shirts were printed up with those three capital letters on the front; hats and postcards and coffee mugs and balsa-wood airplanes and silver-wing pins were manufactured, all jauntily bearing the letters. On I-29 between Sioux City and Omaha, Nebraska, a big billboard was rented, displaying, in huge type, those letters, as a way to lure passengers to the airport in Iowa instead of the one in Nebraska.

"In warm weather, you can walk around Sioux City and see people wearing the T-shirts all the time," Bernstein said. "At our coffee shop in the airport, between one-third and one-half of net revenues come from the sale of items with those three letters on them."

The city -- in the words of tourism director Rush -- has "very successfully made lemonade out of some lemons. Our treating the situation with good humor has emblemized the spirit of Sioux City -- one of grit and determination, something no label from the government can change." The airport commission's Bernstein said that "it's better to be memorable than to have three initials no one can really recall."

In fact, in the spirit of all this, the town ended up renaming the official website for the airport; it is now www.flysux.com.

And who, on a national scale, can argue with that message? These days, with overcrowded planes, long security lines and hefty fees to check baggage, flying often really does ... well, you know.

What will Sioux City do about the letters in future years? It could once have sought counsel from two of the most famous people ever born there: twin sisters Ann Landers (Eppie Lederer) and Dear Abby (Pauline Phillips), who left Sioux City to become the two most renowned newspaper advice columnists in history. But both have passed away, and are no longer available for commiseration.

So the town is on its own. The mayor, Bob Scott, a lifelong resident, told me that he wants the world to know that Sioux City doesn't do what those three letters on the baggage tags says. It is, he said, a great place to live, "and we're thankful for that."

He sends emphatic word to potential visitors that they will be warmly welcomed:

"Absolutely. We'd love to have them.

"And," the mayor said with a laugh, "they can buy a T-shirt."

updated 10:13 AM EDT, Thu May 2, 2013



Nina Burleigh says Amanda Knox is finally speaking for herself, yet the only real question remains: Who did it?

### America is ready for Madam President

updated 10:10 AM EDT, Thu May 2, 2013



Stephanie Schriock says America is ready for a woman in the White House, and you can help.

### Martha Stewart on Match.com? Don't laugh

updated 7:37 AM EDT, Wed May 1, 2013



Pepper Schwartz says Martha Stewart's going public about online dating may help people over 50 who want romance but are afraid to go after it

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**jpcooper** · a day ago

If one was traveling from Sioux City ( SUX) to Brazil ( DIQ) that trip would really SUX-DIQ!

213 □ | 1 □ Reply Share ›

**jpcooper** > jpcooper · a day ago

On the other hand if you were traveling from Sioux City ( SUX ) to Korea ( PUS).....Well, that might not be a bad trip!

154 □ | □ Reply Share ›

**joe** > jpcooper · 21 hours ago

If you're going to Korea, you'd be better to start out at Likiep Island in the Marshall Islands (LIK), or Wenatchee, WA (EAT).

22  |  Reply Share ›

**Viva Boston** > jccooper · a day ago

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade! Sweet!

22  |  Reply Share ›

**Charlie Johnson** > jccooper · a day ago

while the Film Actors Guild would not protest your first example they might protest your second.

17  |  Reply Share ›

**Dale Bowles** > jccooper · a day ago

Your reply should have 100x more likes than the original post.

1  | 2  Reply Share ›

**Tinwoods** > Dale Bowles · a day ago

Wrong. People always favor originality over copy-cats.

10  | 1  Reply Share ›

**anonymous** > Tinwoods · 20 hours ago

except that they are both written by the same guy, in case you didn't notice...

8  |  Reply Share ›

**Dale Bowles** > Tinwoods · 18 hours ago

Maybe you prefer SUX DIQ over SUX PUS but i prefer the latter so yea, it deserves more likes.

1  |  Reply Share ›

**Wrath of the Raff 1.7** > Tinwoods · 18 hours ago

SUX my @ssss Tinwoods!  
MUMUMUAHAHAHAHHAHHAH!!

|  Reply Share ›

**MikeyZ** > jccooper · a day ago

Okay, never one to back down from being offensive, I offer this:

I believe Sioux City has two sister communities, Sipitang in Malaysia, and Spanish Wells in the Bahamas. Usually you can get to either destination through their mutual connection hub Cumana in Venezuela, but you almost always have to use the intermediate destination Cochin. Most people choose one final destination to the exclusion of the other.

So if you SUX, COX to CUM, do you SPT or SWL?

114   Reply Share ›

**MikeyZ** > MikeyZ · a day ago

And my gracious thanks go to the moderators for letting this one through.

33   Reply Share ›

**disqus\_tmvkwx9LhA** > MikeyZ · 21 hours ago

As long as it is not a rant against liberals it will go through,

17   1  Reply Share ›

**Sam Alam** > disqus\_tmvkwx9LhA · 19 hours ago

As long as the CrookPublican can make money out of that name, everything is ok.

1   1  Reply Share ›

**ToadWarrior** > MikeyZ · a day ago

well done

10   Reply Share ›

**Eger Martinez** > MikeyZ · 20 hours ago

Imao!!!! hhhahahaaha clever

2   Reply Share ›

**Don** > MikeyZ · 19 hours ago

Very good!

1   Reply Share ›

**Booyakasha** > jpcoper · a day ago

How about Sioux City (SUX) to Cochin (COK)...

27   Reply Share ›

**Rachael Harven** > Booyakasha · a day ago

A good site name Flyinsux

7   Reply Share ›

**Mike** > jpcooper · a day ago

How about Sioux City (SUX) to Pensacola (PNS)?

10   Reply Share ›

**Pete/Ark** > jpcooper · a day ago

creative...this should be a playground for punsters...

13   Reply Share ›

**Tinwoods** > Pete/Ark · a day ago

It is. And usually really, really terrible ones.

But enough with the airport acronyms as sex talk. It was only funny the first dozen or so times.

2   Reply Share ›

**Lucy Fussbudget** > jpcooper · 19 hours ago

It couldn't be that bad, or 2 billion people wouldn't be doing it every day.

1   Reply Share ›

**Frank Booth** > jpcooper · 20 hours ago

That is rather dirty!

1   Reply Share ›

**RaceBannon** · a day ago

I applaud the citizens of Sioux City for taking the route they did and embracing the moniker!

Trying to get a bureaucracy the size and weight of the FAA to change 3 simple, little letters is a nonstarter. You may as well ask for the sun to rise in the west. Unfortunately that says a lot about our government.

59   Reply Share ›

**Gerald Spencer** > RaceBannon · a day ago

It is a good thing that the government is not sticky notes, at the

whim and influence of all those who really shouldn't have any influence.

20  |  1  Reply Share ›

**bambubi1** · a day ago

I'm from Sioux City, and when I fly there I have to bring back a crate of SUX stuff for my friends. From my perspective it's just good marketing.

BTW flight 232 crashed there about 20 years ago and thanks to a well trained and prepared emergency system, most of the people survived, they made a movie about it with Charlton Heston.

44  |  Reply Share ›

**MikeyZ** > bambubi1 · a day ago

Reminds me of a colleague, whose friends would travel to the South on business frequently and bring him back airport souvenirs. He has many shirts, coffee cups and other mementos from friends that say, "I wish I were in Dixie."

He had no ties to the deep South, although Dixie was his wife's name...

14  |  Reply Share ›

**trenches** > bambubi1 · a day ago

Of course you would like Charlton Heston!

1  |  2  Reply Share ›

**boogbop** · a day ago

I love this story . It really tells you haw to take a negative and turn it into an asset. It is a skill sadly lacking these days . Go SUX ( I mean Sioux city !)

24  |  Reply Share ›

**moosedrool** · a day ago

At least its not FAT like Fresno CA. How would you like that on your bag tag?

24  |  Reply Share ›

**Pete/Ark** > moosedrool · a day ago

particularly if you if you forgot to remove the old tag from Baltimore....

25  |  Reply Share ›

**Pete/Ark** > Pete/Ark · a day ago





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