

Nervous passenger fits the profile

By **MARIE P. GRADY**

It's finally going to happen. After years of getting stopped at security scanners at airports around the world, they are going to send me to Guantanamo Bay and lock me up forever on suspicion of being a terrorist.

How do I know this? Because Martin Bashir of ABC's Nightline told me so. I know I can trust Martin because I saw the Michael Jackson interview a few years back that landed him the Nightline spot. With his lilting British accent and his soft brown eyes framed by glasses, Martin got Jackson to trust him before nailing him for his strange penchant for sleeping with other people's children and dangling his own out of hotel windows.

Between that and the fallout after his trial on molestation charges, Jackson was forced to find solace in Ireland of all places, where I suspect he is building a new theme park called "Always, Always" land.

Besides, Martin's first name was my father's name, so obviously he can be trusted.

But even beyond his trustworthiness as a journalist, I know this because I saw his special report on the new state police security patrol at Logan Airport the other night. Apparently, the state police are using something called behavior recognition patterning to identify suspected terrorists, not to mention average criminals and other shiftless human beings of all kinds.

Called something like STOP, for "Stop, Talk to and Observe Passengers," the troopers study the facial expressions and mannerisms of passengers waiting in endless security lines. Among the expressions they are on the alert for: Nervousness, anger, hostility.

Among the behavior patterns: Frequently checking watches, talking on cell phones, watching behind their backs.

Martin even showed the sketches that guide the troopers as they look for tell-tale signs of hostility on passenger's faces: Eyebrows squinted downward, mouth tightly closed and turned down. In other words, they're not smiling and happy go lucky.

The troopers said they don't single out passengers who fit certain ethnic profiles, but, if for some reason they did, I should be safe. I have light blue eyes and skin so pale it turns red from a single dusty shaft of sunlight through a closed window.

Still, I could see myself in the sketch of the man showing potentially threatening behavior patterns. Come to think of it, the last time I was at Logan there was a sea of faces fitting the profile of the angry man in the sketches. There were people who seemed annoyed, pressed for time, nervous and even downright hostile.

If the cops did stop me at Logan it wouldn't be the first time.

I have been stopped at airports including London's Heathrow and Gatwick and set off alarms for unknown reasons at scanners in Connecticut and Boston. To be fair, I was stopped in London in the heyday of the IRA, and I know I wasn't imagining it when the soldiers dressed in camouflage and armed with machine guns at Gatwick gave me a second look. I would like to think they were just admiring me, but with my long dark hair, pale blue eyes and my shifty, nervous demeanor, there's a good possibility I fit a certain Irish ethnic profile in those days.

These days I still manage to capture attention. I am often the last passenger on board flights. During my last trip, they changed the gate on me as I nervously chain smoked outside Bradley International Airport in Connecticut. As I made my way to the previously correct gate I could hear my name being called over the airport intercom system. By the time I got to the right gate the stewardess was exhibiting all the signs of hostility the state troopers are on the lookout for at Logan.

I'm not really afraid to fly since I figure death would come quickly and, hence, relatively painlessly, as opposed to, say, getting hit by a bus and lingering in a coma for weeks on end. I just don't like to be laid out in a giant flying sardine can before it is absolutely necessary.

I don't even like being too near to the departure gates unless I absolutely have to be. Because the security lines are so long, making it harder to get back to the gates once you have stepped outside toward freedom, I often don't get in line until I absolutely have to.

All of this adds up to rushing at the last minute, frequent glances at my watch or my cell phone clock, squinty eyes and tightened lips. There is also the occasional pacing, downright hostile glances at other passengers who are bumping into me in their own mad dash to the sardine can and, more recently, the extra notoriety of having my name blasted over intercoms. There was also my agitated demeanor toward the hostile stewardess who told me they'd given away my \$500 seat because I had not dutifully been sitting in a hot plane for 45 minutes.

This is not to say that airports, particularly Logan, shouldn't be taking every possible step to prevent the carnage that started when several Al Qaeda terrorists boarded planes in Boston en route to the horror of 9/11. It's just to acknowledge ahead of time that I know I fit the behavior profile.

Come to think of it, I think a lot of passengers would. And Martin confirmed my suspicions. He reported over 100 people have been detained by troopers in Boston with

this program, which is modeled after an Israeli counter terrorism system. The official he interviewed could not say how many were ultimately charged with suspicion of terrorist activity.

But I figure I will eventually be one of them. Unless of course I suddenly become addicted to valium.