

Suburban Retiree Wins AA Sweepstakes Brian Knapp

Naperville resident Bill Sage is not much of a gambler but he was able to beat 75,000 - 1 odds and win a free trip to Las Vegas in an online sweepstakes offered by American this past November.

Turns out winning the sweepstakes was the easy part for Bill. Picking family, in-laws and friends who would accompany him would prove to be a bit more trickier. The sweepstakes allowed Bill to invite up to 99 people of his choosing for travel to one of several destinations.

"We were thinking we'd take about



Prior to boarding, Bill Sage and his friends were treated to a breakfast buffet at the gate

25 people, but it just kept expanding," Sage said as he packed for the trip. "I seem to know a lot of people now."

Sage, who is 65 and retired along with his wife, Arlene, finally settled with 52 people to bring with them. He approached the problem analytically: inviting his family first, starting with his wife, a number of relatives and then friends including five of his team mates on his bowling team and "a couple of fishing buddies. We picked some people that we thought were compatible with other people," he said.

Included in the group was a couple

who were friends of Bill's daughter, Jenny Hobbs. They were recently married and are treating the trip as their honeymoon.

The "You, Your Friends and a Plane" sweepstakes was a Midwest promotion offered mainly in the Chicago area to promote American's profile here. It drew nearly 75,000 entries where Bill's name was randomly chosen last December.

A high point of the trip will be the plane ride, Sage said. He and his friends will have an entire S-80 jet to themselves for the round-trip.

"This will probably be the first and last time I sit in first class," he said.



(From left) Agents Kim Hidaka, Tomica Pack and Andrea Higginson greet sweepstakes winner Bill Sage while checking him in



Sweepstakes winner Bill Sage and a plane full of his family and friends cheer in excitement just before leaving for Las Vegas