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How Did the O-2s Get to Viet Nam?

By Stu Apte

It's 1967 or maybe early 1968, I forget, and the Air Force has bought a mess of Cessna Super Skymasters and called them O-2s. The Cessna factory at Wichita, Kansas is pumping them out at a pretty good clip and your problem is to figure out how to get them to Vietnam where they are needed.

Your choices are: 1. Fly them to the West coast and turn them over to the Army for transport by cargo ship. 2. Take the wings off them and stuff them three at a time into the belly of C-124s and fly them over. 3. Fly them over under their own power with no C-124 attached.

Question: Which method was used?

Right! Every single one of those puppies was hand-flown across the Big Pond to Vietnam. That sounds like it might have been a Mickey Mouse operation. Believe me, it wasn't that good. Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) was running that show and their knowledge stopped somewhat short of knowing anything about ferrying airplanes. The Air Force had a perfectly good organization called the 44th Aircraft Delivery Group which operated worldwide and managed the ferrying of all aircraft; except the O-2s. AFSC contracted with some outfit in San Francisco to deliver the planes to Saigon. The contractor hired a bunch of civilian pilots who couldn't find honest work elsewhere. Since the O-2s were technically "public" aircraft (as opposed to civil or military aircraft) no pilot's license was necessary to fly one, and I'm not sure that all of the pilots

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Click on the "Members Only" button on the righthand side. The password will be: captain.

Dues are \$20 a year or \$40 for the 2 remaining years. Make them payable to Clipper Pioneers, and mail to Jerry Holmes at 192 Foursome Dr., Sequim, WA 98382.

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had licenses. Some of them were pretty good, but the rest of them were the most god-awful collection of unqualified scruffy-looking alcoholics you ever saw. The dregs of the flying profession. The deal worked like this.

The pilots were given a plane ticket to Wichita, where they got a quickie checkout in the O-2 if they needed one. Then they launched in bunches of four and headed for Hamilton AFB on the west coast of California. Enroute, they were instructed to carefully monitor and record their oil consumption, which, of course, they did not do. That type of pilot does not monitor and record oil consumption.

At Hamilton, the Air Force removed all the seats except the left front one. The seats were shipped to Vietnam by air, which is what should have happened to the rest of the plane, too. Extra fuel tanks were installed in the vacant floor space followed by the pilot himself. He had to crawl over the co-pilot tank to get to the left seat. Next, they installed an oil tank on top of the co-pilot tank followed by a small emergency HF radio on top of that.

Now, the pilot was truly locked in. To get out, he could either wait for someone to remove the radio and oil tank or crawl out the emergency escape window on the left side. Takeoff must have been something to watch. With all that fuel, the planes were way over max gross weight. They had no single engine capability at all for about the first five hours of flight. If either engine hiccupped, the pilot went swimming.

The route was Hawaii (Hickam), Midway, Wake Island, Guam (Anderson), Philippines (Clark) and Saigon (Tan Son Nhut). The Hamilton-Hickam leg was by far the longest; nominally about thirteen hours.

The O-2s were carrying fuel for about fourteen and a half hours of flight.

Navigation was strictly dead reckoning. The pilots took up a heading based on wind calculations and flew out their ETA hoping to be lost within range of a Hawaiian radio station. They had no long range navigation equipment. The fuel tanks were disposable and were dropped off as they were no longer needed. The fuel pumps were not disposable and the pilots were instructed to bring them back along with their dirty underwear and the HF radio.

The trip was supposed to take about a week and each pilot carried an airline ticket from Saigon to Wichita to go back and pick up another plane. For this, the pilots were paid \$800 per trip with the flight leader getting \$1,000. They planned on averaging three trips a month and getting rich doing it. How come I know so much about this? Well, I was the Director of Safety at Hickam AFB and every single one of over 300 O-2s passed through my domain and created almost constant headaches. Before this all started, I had no idea what an O-2 even looked like, much less any knowledge of the overall ferrying scheme.

The trouble started with the very first flight and began with the extra oil tank. The reason for determining oil consumption on the Wichita-Hamilton leg was to know how much oil to add during the really long legs.

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There were no oil quantity gauges. Shortly after takeoff from Hamilton, boredom set in and the pilots would give the oil tank wobble pump a jab or two and squirt some more oil into the engines. The O-2 didn't need that much oil. All this did was over-service the engines which resulted in fluctuating oil pressure. The pilots didn't like that at all, so they added more oil which led to more pressure fluctuation. Meanwhile, they were totally lost and not getting much closer to Hawaii.

Time for the old MAYDAY call on the HF radio. When that call came in, the Coast Guard in Hawaii was running a very interesting seminar on sea rescue in downtown Honolulu. I was attending, which is how I found out that we had an O-2 problem. The Coast Guard shut down the seminar and launched their C-130 and a pair of cutters to find the O-2s, which they did.

They herded them to the nearest runway which happened to be the Marine Corps Air Station at Kanehoe on the Northeast side of Oahu.

I drove over the mountains to Kanehoe to find out what the hell this was all about. That's when I saw my first O-2; actually my first four O-2s. Aside from being ugly, they were all soaked with oil overflowing from both engines and they didn't have ten gallons of gas among them. One had flamed out taxiing in from landing. They had been airborne for 14 hours and 45 minutes. The Coast Guard was really pissed when they learned the full story and was making noises about sending someone a bill for the rescue effort. I must say, I agreed with them. That silliness continued for three or four weeks with every single flight of O-2s getting into some sort of trouble.

At Hickam, the O-2 pilots were fairly easy to find. Most of the time they were draped over the bar at the O-Club; a situation which was attracting the attention of the Officers Wives Club; always a dangerous thing to do. I went to PACAF Headquarters and told them what was going on and they were absolutely appalled. Civilian misfits ferrying Air Force airplanes across the Pacific to a combat zone? No way! Between us, we began firing off messages to get this idiocy stopped.

AFSC couldn't understand what the problem was and probably still doesn't. Hamilton AFB was taking a lot of heat for participating and allowing them to launch at all. I was agitating about the stupidity of this through all the safety channels. I think I may have mentioned that when the inevitable accident occurred, they better hope it was out of my area. If I had to investigate it, they were definitely not going to like the report. I was prepared to write most of the report right then before the accident even happened.

AFSC backed down and agreed to let the 44th Aircraft Delivery Group run the operation. The 44th wasn't too happy about that because the civilian pilots didn't seem to take instructions very well. Nevertheless, that brought some organization to the festivities which included things like mission planning, briefings, weather analysis, flight following and escort. The O-2s weren't allowed to fly unless accompanied by a C-47 or C-7

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**REMINDER: CLIPPER PIONEERS NEWSLETTER'S
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Caribou who could fly at their speed and handle the navigation. That wasn't much of a problem as there were two or three of those planes being ferried each week to Vietnam .

That procedure eliminated most of my problems and things settled down to a routine. The delivery rate to Vietnam was slowed somewhat, but I think more total planes actually got there because of it. During the entire process, only two planes were lost. One ditched due to engine failure on the Wake-Guam leg. The pilot managed to get out of the plane and bobbed around in his life jacket until picked up by a Japanese cargo ship. The other crashed in the Philippines, killing the pilot. I never knew the circumstances.

We had, of course, the occasional problem at Hickam. I remember one pilot who landed nose gear first and managed to snap the gear off completely and ding the front propeller. I went out to see what had happened and got a load of bull**** and a strong whiff of gin from the pilot. The plane (he claimed) was nose heavy on landing and the elevator trim was inoperative. He couldn't get the nose up. Furthermore, his transmitter was out and he couldn't tell anyone about his problems. I checked the plane and found the elevator trimmed full nose down, but the trim switch and trim tab worked just fine. Just to the left of the trim switch, I noticed that the microphone toggle switch was actually bent backwards. After several hours of martinis, the pilot was trying to trim using the mic switch. He trimmed the plane full nose down while trying to talk to the control tower on the trim switch. Case closed.

None of these accidents consumed any of my time. I had learned another quirk in the AFSC way of doing business. Appearances aside, the aircraft were not Air Force aircraft and wouldn't be until they arrived in Saigon and were formally delivered and accepted. Since they weren't, technically, Air Force aircraft; they couldn't have an Air Force accident. The planes weren't registered as civil aircraft, so they couldn't have a civil accident either. They were in regulatory limbo and any accidents were non-events. Nobody cared. That suited me just fine. I had other things to do and I couldn't see how an investigation of stupidity would contribute anything to the Air Force safety program.

Incidentally, how do you suppose they got the O-2s out of Vietnam and back to the United States ? They took the wings off, stuffed them three at a time into the belly of C-124s and flew them back. AFSC was not involved which, I later learned, tended to improve almost any operation.

Share Your Memories

Thanks to the guys who have sent us stories!

You are a part of this wonderful "family". Are there memories you've written down that you'd like to share with us in this newsletter - short or long? Have you come across an interesting article that you'd like to share with us? Would you share pieces from a book you've written? Please send them along, so others can enjoy! We'd love to hear from you! Please send them to Jerry or Sue by email to: sue@clipperpioneers.com.

Pan Am was the airline that practically invented aviation. It pioneered air navigation and communications, and its list of "firsts" in the industry is awe-inspiring. Known as the "Queen of the Skies," it was the benchmark by which all other airlines were judged. ~Helen Davey.

A Look Back: The Era of Explorations

The first small planes soon gave way to ever larger craft, spanning ever longer distances. As the 1930's began, Pan Am's small fleet of land planes was complemented by newer, bigger and faster flying boats. Constantly expanding route networks soon spread out from bases in Miami and Brownsville to encircle the Caribbean, and then the whole of Latin America. By mid-decade, the ultimate hurdle was bested, and Pan Am's "Clippers" were crossing the vast Pacific, while Pan Am subsidiary airlines flew in China and Alaska. By the decade's end, the ultimate flying boats, Pan Am's fleet of Boeing B-314s were linking all the continents in the Northern Hemisphere. *(from <http://www.panam.org/explorations>)*

Pan Am Philadelphia Area Pilots (PAPAP)

We meet the second Tuesday of every quarter at the Continental Inn in Yardley, PA at 1200 for a bit of BS before going to our private conference room upstairs for lunch.

Been going on since 1992 and it's a great way to stay together. Contact: Chris Blaydon [215 757 6229](tel:2157576229) or cblayd@aol.com

Flying Boat Reunion clip now available for viewing

A 15-minute special that aired April 27, 2016 on Ireland's popular RTE TV show "Nationwide" is now available for viewing. China Clipper First Officer Robert Hicks (94); Merry Barton, daughter of Folger Athearn (Pan Am's station manager in Noumea, New Caledonia in 1941); Director of the Foynes Flying Boat Museum Margaret O'Shaughnessy; Ed Trippe and Mary Lou Bigelow were interviewed during the Foynes Flying Boat reunion. <http://www.rte.ie/player/us/show/nationwide-21/10566026/>

Come Join the Santa Rosa Breakfast Group!

The Santa Rosa Breakfast group meets about every six weeks. They have 17 pilots, FA's and FEO's that get together to discuss the old days. Anyone in the Sonoma, Napa, and Marin county areas north of San Francisco who would like to join them should email Dave Criley at davecriley@comcast.net, and send your email contact. They started out with 5 and have grown to 17. *~from Dave Criley*

Pan Am Historical Society has a Facebook page. You can view it here:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pan-Am-Historical-Foundation/226994925218>

Layovers for Pan Am

Check out Pan American layovers at www.paacrewlayover.com, where some 81 cities and over 161 hotels are shown in photos.

Please update your email address and phone number if it's been changed!
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or email to: jerryholmes747@gmail.com

At the Beginning of the Golden Age of the Flying Clippers

As we open the ***Golden Age of the Flying Clippers***, we find the world in a deep economic depression. The United States has just been through what will have been, the two worst years of it. Franklin Roosevelt has just been elected president of the United States — and will remain so for an unprecedented 4 terms — and Adolph Hitler has just come to power in Germany. There are only 48 states in the Union. Alaska and Hawaii will not be added for almost 30 years. Prohibition has just been repealed. Thanks to Hollywood, New York's Empire State building will now have *King Kong* forever associated with it.

If you are "lucky" enough to be an airline pilot you will earn \$8000.00 per year. A dentist earns \$2391.00; an electrical worker, \$1559.00; a public school teacher, \$1227.00; a secretary, \$1040.00; a steelworker, \$422.87; a waitress, \$520.00.

A new Pontiac coupe costs \$585.00 and is powered with a gallon of gas costing only 18¢. A wool suit is \$10.50. Chicken is 22¢ a pound and milk is 10¢ a quart. A six room house with a two car garage in Detroit will cost you \$2800.00. If you have the time, a 60-day 11-country tour of Europe will cost you \$495.00. Round trip airfare from New York to Chicago is \$86.31 and from Chicago to Los Angeles is another \$207.00.

(from: <http://www.flyingclippers.com/timeline.html>)

Flying on the Clipper - a Treat for Passengers

Clipper passengers took their meals at real tables, not their seats.

For most travelers in the 21st century, flying is a dreary experience, full of inconvenience, indignity, and discomfort. That wasn't the case in the late 1930s, when those with the money to afford trans-oceanic flight got to take the Boeing Model 314, better known as the Clipper.

Even Franklin Roosevelt used the plane, celebrating his 61st birthday on board in 1943.

Between 1938 and 1941, Boeing built 12 of the jumbo planes for Pan American World Airways.

The 314 offered a range of 3,500 miles — enough to cross either the Atlantic or Pacific — and room for 74 passengers onboard. Of course, modern aviation offers an amazing first class experience (and it's a whole lot safer), but nothing in the air today matches the romanticism of crossing the ocean in the famed Clipper.

The Model 314's nickname Clipper came from an especially fast type of sailing ship used in the 19th century.

The ship analogy was appropriate, as the Clipper landed on the water, not runways.

On Pan Am flights, passengers had access to dressing rooms and a dining salon that could be converted into a lounge or bridal suite.

The galley served up meals catered from four-star hotels. If you want to sit at a table to eat with other people these days, you have to fly in a private jet. There was room for a crew of 10 to serve as many as 74 passengers.

On overnight flights, the 74 seats could be turned into 40 bunks for comfortable sleeping. The bunk beds came with curtains for privacy.

*...and God will lift you up on Eagle's Wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun and hold you in the palm of His hand.*

IN MEMORIAM

Paul Monte "Pete" Ryden of San Jose peacefully left this world to be with his Savior early on the morning of February 3, 2017. He was 89 years-old. Pete was born in Minneapolis, MN on August 17, 1927 to Paul and Ebba Ryden. A true patriot, he longed to contribute to the war effort in WWII but was too young in the early days of the war. So at age 15, he and a couple friends concocted a scheme to help the Royal Canadian Air Force with reconnaissance missions over Germany. It didn't work. He eventually served his own country in the U.S. Navy before pursuing a career in aviation. Pete enjoyed a lifelong love affair with flying and loved every day of his career as a flight engineer for Pan American World Airways, for whom he traveled the world for almost forty years. He was also active in the leadership of the flight engineers union.

Daniel James Hennessy, "Buster" or "DJ" to his friends, a man of many accomplishments, passed away peacefully this past Monday, February 13, 2017. Buster was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in November 13, 1921. He lived a colorful and adventurous life. His favorite hat is his well-worn Stetson but throughout his life he wore many hats. In his early teens, he was a horse jockey for the Vanderbilts and won a race against Seabiscuit before Seabiscuit became famous. He was the kid in the neighborhood that had a horse named Pete. As a serviceman, he was a World War II pilot for the US Army Air Corps. As an airline captain, he has flown passengers on a Boeing 707 around the world for Pan Am Airlines.

Russ Emrich died at age 90 on Jan. 30, 2017. He was in Berlin from about 1964 until 1974, and finished his Pan Am career in New York, then retired to the hills of Las Vegas. His kids will spread his ashes near Red Rock Canyon which he loved.

Captain Robert Lee Bragg, aged 79, died in Harrisonburg, Virginia, on 9 February 2017 at Sentara RMH. He was born in Ward, Alabama, 14 September 1937, the son of William Branch Bragg and Sara Louise McDonald Bragg. Captain Bragg graduated from U.M.S., a private military school, in Mobile, Alabama. After U.M.S., he attended Auburn University where he was a member of the Arnold Air Society, an R.O.T.C. Honorary society, and was the founder of the Pershing Rifles, another R.O.T.C military honorary society. He graduated from Auburn University in 1959 with a degree in Aeronautical Administration and a commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force. While in the Air Force, he flew the T-34, T-37, T-33, C-121C Constellations, and C-130E Hercules. After leaving the Air Force in 1964, he was employed by Pan American World Airways.

For more information about each of these friends who will be missed, click on "In Memory Of..." at our website: www.clipperpioneers.com. Know of someone from Pan Am who has passed? Email the obit to Jerry Holmes at jerryholmes747@gmail.com

Having trouble viewing the membership list online? When you open the list, go to the top of your screen - you should see that it is set at a percentage. Click on that to make it larger.

Don't forget to check out our website at: www.clipperpioneers.com

Government imposters want to get to know you

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the FTC want you to know about a scam in which callers posing as federal employees are trying to get or verify personal information. This is a government imposter scam.

Sometimes, the caller asks you to verify your name, and then just hangs up. Other times, he or she might ask for detailed information — like the last digits of your Social Security or bank account number. Imposters might say they need this information to help you or a family member. But their real reason is to steal from you or sell your information to other crooks.

Your caller ID might even read “HHS Tips” or “Federal Government” when they call. The phone number could have the “202” Washington, DC area code, the headquarters for many federal agencies. The phone number may even be for a real government agency. But don’t be fooled: Scammers know how to rig their caller IDs to show false information.

So how can you tell the caller is an imposter?

- The federal government typically will contact you by U.S. Mail first, **not by phone or email**.
- Federal agencies **will not demand personal information** like your Social Security Number or bank account number over the phone. Also, just because the caller knows details about you, doesn’t mean she is trustworthy.
- The caller typically asks you to send money – often via wire transfer, by using a prepaid debit card, or maybe by sending you a fake check to cash. Federal agencies **will not** ask you to use *any* of these methods to send money for *any* reason.

...and what should you do?

- **Hang up.** Do not give out any personal or financial information.
- **Contact the Department of Health and Human Services OIG** at 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477) or spoof@oig.hhs.gov
- **File a complaint with the FTC** at ftc.gov/complaint or 877-FTC-HELP.
- **Learn more** about government imposter scams and sign up for the FTC’s Scam Alerts.
- Pass on what you’ve learned to older consumers and others.

(by Lisa Lake, Consumer Education Specialist, FTC - <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/>)

Weight Loss & Fitness

Advertising claims for weight loss products and services inevitably over-promise. The products and services themselves almost always under-deliver. Changing your diet and exercising more are the keys to successful weight loss. Find out how to evaluate weight loss and fitness claims before you buy products or services that claim to make it fast or easy to slim down or shape up.
