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## Leaving the Air Force and Joining Pan Am in 1957

*By John Frisbie*

My official hiring by Chief Pilot, "Chile" Vaughn was a bit dicey. In a very nice way he warned me about being a smart ass. It seems, the geniuses that ran Pan Am's Pilot Psychological testing service were a bit out of joint that I hadn't taken their test seriously. To Vaughn's credit (I hope) he hired me.

We were a small class of about ten, mostly just out of the service, Air Force, Navy, Marines with maybe two from civilian backgrounds and mostly not from New York. We were to fly on the DC-6.

We were sent to Long Island City, a big ugly building on the east side of the Queensboro Bridge, where Pan Am had its Personnel department, reservations and a lot of other stuff. After filling out paperwork we were sent quickly on the subway (before closing time) to Rockefeller Center in mid-town Manhattan to apply for passports. There, I ran into a snag. What I thought was a birth certificate was only a registration of my birth and the only immediate remedy was if I could produce someone who would vouch that they had known me like forever. And Mike Craig, who I had just met and became one number junior to me on the seniority list, spoke right up and said, "Oh yes, I've known John since kindergarten." I've never forgotten that kindness.

Then, we rushed (getting to be a habit) back to Long Island City on the subway where one of the guys said "These people (New Yorkers) have all been chasing one-too-many subways, they're nuts!" And I remember

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**Please note - we have changed the access to the online newsletters so that you will need a password to access them. We're hoping this will help past members who haven't paid their dues to do so, in order to read the newsletter. This password will also give you access to the membership & phone list. GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT: [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com).**

**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.**

## Leaving the Air Force and Joining Pan Am in 1957

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thinking, maybe out loud: "I wouldn't be caught dead living or working in this city." I ended up doing both for four years. How attitudes can be changed by a pair of pretty blue eyes!

One morning, after three days of ground school, I looked at myself in the mirror to shave and saw one side of my neck swollen way out. Having recently helped my sister nurse her children through this "childhood" disease I was afraid I knew what it was.

So I phoned my sister in Norwalk. She said to come on out. The 50-mile drive was like in a trance. She got me to bed in the guest room. The fever was already starting. I was delirious for several days and nights. I remember the night the fever broke. I thought I'd died. It was so peaceful and quiet and cool. She sensed something and came to check on me. My temperature was now in the cellar. Now, as I regained some sense of time I became very concerned about my new job. I called in at the first opportunity and was told to come into the medical office. The first thing they did was to take my temperature. It didn't register on the thermometer. The doctor came out, took it again and told me very sternly: "go home and don't come back until your temperature is normal".

After about a week I was able to go back to Pan Am and get medical clearance to continue my training. But I had missed my DC-6 class and joined the DC-7 class just starting. Who knows what effect that mumps had in putting me a few months later on a collision course with a young baroness from Germany?

The Pan Am training was professional and most impressive. So many things were different after the Air Force: Long range over ocean navigation, short wave radios and how to work them, flying according to schedules and, of course, foreign destinations with attendant languages, cultural peculiarities and geography. Things such as LORAN and Console stations and BFO (beat frequency oscillators) were all new to me. One of the ground school instructors who really stood out was our radio instructor. The equipment we were using made its share of noises when tuning to a new frequency. He was able to reproduce these sounds perfectly and always had your attention with his almost stand-up comic delivery.

Being part of a large flight crew was strange at first after flying alone in my T-33 in the Air Force. So was being served great meals during flights.

My two roommates were navy pilots, because they hadn't been set back by the mumps, had already had their first flights on the DC-6 and lorded it over the Air Force pilot (me) with all kinds of advice. They also brought out their duty free scotch from their Shannon stopovers and I got drunk the evening before my first flight. I was still pretty hung over for my first Pan Am DC-7 trip as 3<sup>rd</sup> officer, relief co-pilot. Captain John Priddy put me into the co-pilot's seat for the first leg to London. I have no idea if he guessed how hung over I was but he had me fly most of the whole way including the landing in London. The weather was bad, pretty close to minimums and I must have impressed them with my approach and landing, the first real one I'd had on the airplane. But I was just dying to get in to the bunk and get some rest.

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<b>Balance in bank account as of April 20, 2017 is \$31,552.45 ~ Jerry Holmes, Treasurer</b>
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## Leaving the Air Force and Joining Pan Am in 1957 *(continued from previous page)*

We flew to Hamburg, sat in an outdoor restaurant and I got my very first taste of Europe, at last. I remember that a woman sitting at a table nearby was smoking a cigar (remember, this was 1957, such things were totally new to me). It was all very pleasant and I believe I was able to enjoy the trip to London as a passenger as another crew took over. Now I had my first look at London, England, the birthplace of my ancestors. Well, in those days they hadn't cleaned up the air yet. You didn't see London from the air. Once on the ground I was struck by the foreign-ness of the place. Expecting it to be similar to the United States (after all they speak English, don't they?) it is a shock to discover that they do almost everything differently, if not backwards. The greatest shock I had was the traffic being like in a mirror, flip-flopped. Alice in Wonderland Land, it is! And then there is the supposedly common language, a very uncommon lingo it is. No wonder G. B. Shaw had so much fun with it. I think no one is more amused at the variety of ways of pronouncing and expressing it than the Britons themselves. It's the tower of Babel all over again!

The Kensington Palace Hotel where the Pan Am crew stayed was a gorgeous relic of Victorian glory days. Overlooking Hyde Park, it had high ceilings, vast lobbies and hallways and the rooms were enormous only to be outdone by the bathtubs. They were so large that it was possible to drown in one. One day after a long trip over, I fell asleep in a full bath and woke up with my mouth just slipping under the surface. The British have invented some of the most ingenious ways of ruining food. One particularly impressive device was a toast rack made of nickel steel, which most efficiently cooled the toast in seconds. There was no way with this device in service that anyone could possibly burn his fingers on a piece of toast. On the other hand, I thought the towel warmers in bathrooms very clever, especially in a climate that demanded anything that would supply warmth and dryness.

I soon learned to pay attention to which crew members valued tasty food and the ones who were only interested in saving money. But especially helpful were those who valued both. One of the latter, I forget who, recommended a small Polish restaurant close to the hotel. I found it to be excellent. On the other hand, the place where the flight engineers liked to go, "The Ballerina", was a greasy spoon in every respect. Since that time I dislike to use glass plates and cups because that's all they had there and they never were clean.

The London airport was not Heathrow; it was London North and consisted of a collection of wartime wooden barracks. You walked from one building where Operations gave you the flight plan, over to His Majesty's Royal Meteorology Service next door and then took a car across the ramp to the passenger terminal (another wooden barracks) where the DC-7C was parked. My job was to pre-flight the cockpit, especially all the radio equipment while the flight engineers examined the plane inside and out and conferred with the mechanics and double-checked the fuel load. The fuel was probably the most important factor, next to wind and weather and that together made the flight plan. The navigator was checking out his equipment, Loran, octant, drift meter and his charts. It was up to him and the Captain to make the flight plan work. The rest of

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**REMINDER: CLIPPER PIONEERS NEWSLETTER'S  
LAST PRINT EDITION WILL BE DEC. 2018**

## Leaving the Air Force and Joining Pan Am in 1957 *(continued from previous page)*

us just flew the aircraft in 2 hour watches or shifts. The flight engineers monitored the engines and electrical and hydraulics and air conditioning systems.

When wind and weather was pretty negative (especially going west against the wind) the fuel calculations were constantly checked against a chart called a "Howgozit". If all went against us it meant having to divert to an intermediate airport to refuel (if we had a wind bust) or wait for destination weather to improve. The wind forecasts (before satellites were even thought of) were amazingly accurate. This was also before there was much knowledge of Jet streams, the Tropopause, upper air lows and highs. It was done with surprisingly few reporting stations on land. We did have the weather ships, stationed in the Atlantic all year around just to gather weather data to fill in the gaps. Since modern navigational systems guided by satellite have evolved the weather ships and the brave men who manned them are no longer.

We were proud to be flying the latest and fastest airplane - the Douglas DC-7C. (Later, in 1958, TWA and others got the Lockheed Super Constellation H model. We were about equally fast.) The DC-7C had been designed as a stretch of the popular DC-6 to provide a larger cabin and greater range. The DC-7C could fly westbound non-stop from Lisbon to New York. The DC-6 had to re-fuel on even shorter routes from London or Paris to New York. But that was what made Shannon, Ireland such a popular spot with its duty free shops. It was my roommates on the DC-6 who, stopping in Shannon on the way home, always had the duty free booze. My flights over flew Shannon. But, the DC-7 wasn't so great after all. In the summer of 1958 the highly complex Wright 3350 engines began to "swallow" the power recovery turbines caused by overheating on climb out. That, in turn caused the 35 gallons of oil to leave almost as fast as we could shut down the engine. One July evening we had that very experience on the way from New York to London.

As we started our climb to over ocean cruising altitude number 3 engine went and we had to land at the nearest suitable airport, Halifax, Nova Scotia. There was barely enough hotel space for the passengers and most of the crew tried to sleep in the cold airplane. By morning a DC-6 arrived to take the passengers on to London. One of my former classmates was on it and, of course I took a ribbing for being on such an unreliable airplane. We ferried the plane back to Idlewild. Then the Chief Pilot issued a bulletin to use a faster climbing speed in the summer time to keep the engines cooler. It worked.

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## 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/>

***Please update your email address and phone number if it's been changed!  
Email or write to Jerry Holmes - 192 Foursome Drive, Sequim, WA 98382  
or email to: [jerryholmes747@gmail.com](mailto:jerryholmes747@gmail.com)***

## Medical Identity theft victims need to protect both medical and financial information

Having a trusted, comprehensive protection service is the first step. Some ways that you may discover you are a victim of medical identity theft include:

- You receive a bill for medical services from a hospital or physician that you've never visited. These bills may be in someone else's name.
- A collection agency calls or sends a letter regarding overdue payment on a medical account that does not belong to you.
- Your insurer sends a letter confirming a change of address when you did not request one.
- Medical insurance is denied because the benefits were used by an imposter.
- You receive notification from a hospital or doctor when a criminal has broken into their computer and stolen patient identities.

(1) National Healthcare Anti-Fraud Association

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## 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](mailto:cblayd@aol.com)

## 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](mailto:davecriley@comcast.net), and send your email contact. They started out with 5 and have grown to 17. ~from Dave Criley

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

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## Layovers for Pan Am

Check out Pan American layovers at [www.paacrewlayover.com](http://www.paacrewlayover.com), where some 81 cities and over 161 hotels are shown in photos.

## Share Your Memories

Please send your stories to Jerry or Sue by email to: [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com).



## EMERGENCY AT 35,000 FEET - A 747 Flight Anything But Routine

by Stu Apte

*A chapter from my memoir, "Of Wind and Tides", which I published in 2009.*

Our Pan-Am 747 flight from New York's Kennedy Airport to Tokyo, Japan's, Narita Airport in September, 1984, was a non-stop long haul, scheduled for 13 hours. On flights of this length we carried two first officers, each with a type-rating in the airplane, and two flight engineers. We had an upper and lower bunk bed in the back part of the cockpit area so the crewmembers not on duty could relax, read or grab some shuteye. At approximately 10 hours into the flight, I was in my customary left seat as Captain, and we were right on our flight plan, at 35,000 feet and picking up Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula on our radar, showing about 100 miles ahead. There we were scheduled to climb to 39,000.

We had left JFK on time at 11:30 a.m. and crossed Canada at our original assigned altitude of 33,000 feet. Approaching Anchorage, Alaska less fuel while maintaining the same true airspeed. Our positions were calculated by three Inertial Guidance System Computers, the same type the astronauts had used going to the moon. Basically, we were flying the same route as the Korean 747 Flight that had come to grief two years before by straying off course and being shot down by Soviet fighter jets. Something had gone wrong with the Korean flight's Guidance System programming—rumor had it they had probably inserted an incorrect number into their Inertial Guidance System; a tragic mistake I was determined would never happen on my watch.

With Kamchatka just ahead, I was thinking that once we had climbed to our new altitude, I would take a break and go back to business class to chat with an old friend who was on this flight, Leon Chandler, Vice President of Cortland Tackle and affectionately known by many as the "Fly Fishing Ambassador to the World." Hours earlier I had already taken advantage of the Captain's first choice for a break by going back into the cabin to have lunch with Leon. And now, once again it was getting to be time for me to take a break and let one of the first officers have some left-seat time. The instruments and gauges that gleamed back at the me and the Co-Pilot were pegged where they belonged. The flight couldn't have been going smoother.

Directly behind the Co-Pilot and me, however, facing his own side panel of instruments, was the Flight Engineer, Dennis Grevuli. The instruments he was reading were not so benign. Suddenly his voice lashed out: "Holy shit! We have a wing overheat light on the port wing."

~ TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE ~

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## IN MEMORIAM

**Robert Litchfield Buelteman** of Woodside, California, passed away at the age of 95 on January 20, 2017, after a long and extraordinary life. Born in Detroit, Michigan, on June 23, 1921, as the son of Esther Litchfield and Herbert O. Buelteman, he enjoyed a lifelong love of travel and exploration, whether it was from behind the windshield of one of his many beloved automobiles or from 35,000 feet at 570 MPH as Captain of a Pan American 747. He was predeceased by his wife Betty in 1996, his daughter Lisa in 1997 and his brother Herb in 1999. In 1949 he married the love of his life, Betty Virginia Dampier, and together they raised four children, Anne, Jane, Robert Jr. and Lisa.

**Captain Robert D. Larsen** (Ret), 95, died peacefully in his home on the morning of March 9th, 2017, with his wife and son at his side. Robert was born on, July 11, 1921, in Seattle Washington. The youngest of four children, he came of age in the midst of the Great Depression. Learning to make do with what was available, to not be wasteful and to work hard — were lessons which stayed with him until the end. He was studying dentistry at the University of Washington, rowing the eight-man shell for UW, taking flying instruction on Lake Union in a Taylor Craft with floats, and working at Boeing as a parts inspector in 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

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*...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

**John (Jack) E. MacNeil** passed away on March 2, 2017 in Sebring, Florida at age 93. He was born Nov. 14, 1923 in Beverly, Mass. He proudly served our country as a Navy pilot during World War II. He absolutely loved his 31 year career as a Pan Am pilot, and proudly retired as a 747 captain in 1981. After retirement, he moved to Florida where he had numerous friends who loved him dearly and enjoyed golfing as a past-time. Survivors include his three daughters, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Jean (Barry) MacNeil who passed away in 1986.

**Richard "Dick" Mayer** of Alamo died peacefully on Sunday March 5, 2017 two weeks shy of his 80th birthday. His daughters Debbie and Nancy were by his side. Born in Bend, Oregon to a sawyer father & pianist mother, Dick inherited their talents for machinery and music. His parents separated when he was 4, so he was raised by maternal grandparents until his mother resettled in the Bay Area. At 16, Dick's mother passed suddenly, so he returned to his grandparents in Oregon and graduated Roseburg High in 1955. Dick became a commercial airline pilot for Pan Am (1966) made Captain, then flew with Delta.

**Keith Randall Erlewine** of Sacramento, California was born on the prairies of Nebraska, married to his college sweetheart for 62 years and flew the world as a captain for the iconic Pan American World Airways. Keith was born in Ogallala, Nebraska to William Dale and Leora Erlewine. His twin brothers, Dale and Gale, were eight-and-a-half years older. He attended country school and participated in sports and music at Perkins County High School in Grant, Neb. He received an undergraduate degree in agricultural economics at the University of Nebraska Lincoln in 1955 and was a proud member of the Farmhouse Fraternity. As a senior, Keith married his college sweetheart, Rosemary Manning, on June 5, 1954, and they embarked on a magical life-long journey together.

**Stanley S. Smith** of Jacob Buck Pond Road passed away on February 25, 2017 at Maine Veterans Home. He was born on December 18, 1932 in New York City to Stanley V. and Angela (Swinburne) Smith. He was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and was a coxswain of the varsity crew in 1955. He was a member of Theta Chi Fraternity. Stanley served in the U.S.A.F. flying in the SAC, ADC and TAC, ending his military career flying the F-100. He flew as a commercial pilot for Pan American World Airways until a vision problem ended his career.

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

## Is there a doctor in the house?

*By Steve Walton, (Captain, ret.)*

It was a dark and stormy night: No it was actually a beautiful spring day when we departed EZE (Buenos Aires) on Flight 218, looking forward to a nice smooth trip over the mostly uninhabited and jungled landscape of South America.

It was 1975. I was the MCO (Co-Pilot to non-Pan Amers) and we were flying one of my favorite Aircraft, the B-707. Our flight plan called for a seven hour flight to our destination MIQ (Caracas, Venezuela).

We were about three hours into our flight, when the Purser came to the cockpit to inform us that we might have a medical emergency. A passenger was apparently having a heart problem, but there was a doctor on board who was attending to him. About 15 minutes later, the purser calls the cockpit and tells us the doctor asked her if she could bring him a sharp steak knife. That was enough to warrant a trip back to see what the hell was going on!

The captain (sorry, don't remember his name, but do remember he was a real good guy to fly with (Mia based)), suggested I go back, which I did. They were in the aft cabin in coach. The doctor met me as I approached, and proceeded to tell me that he thought the sick passenger was having a heart attack; and since he did not have his medical kit with him, the right procedure was to bleed him so as to relieve his blood pressure. I had him repeat what he just said 'cause I couldn't believe what I heard from a doctor!

The first thing I said that, No Way are you going to cut that man on this airplane. He then tells me this is accepted practice where he comes from (Brazil), and I said well, you are on an American Airliner now, and we do not allow any invasive procedure to be performed on this airplane.

I then talked to the supposed ill passenger who looked to be in his mid-40s and was apparently resting comfortably and not in any pain. He was given oxygen by the flight attendants, and also a couple of aspirin. At this point the doctor returned to his seat, and I returned to the cockpit and reported what had taken place. The Captain and Flight Engineer couldn't believe it either.

I was a little suspicious about what had just taken place, but that's just me, I guess. We were then about two hours out and were able to contact company on HF and advise MIQ to have medical standing by for a sick passenger. As it turns out, when we arrived at the terminal, our supposedly ill passenger gets up, and he and the doctor, and either his wife or girlfriend, all deplane together smiling as they leave.

To this day, I don't know if they were planning a scam in order to sue the airline for allowing him to cut or injure his buddy. We will never know, but it was one interesting flight.

## Take charge of your mailbox to further safeguard your identity.

One way to guard against identity theft is to remove your name from mailing lists. This will help limit the amount of unwanted mail you receive, and may help minimize the risks associated with identity theft. Some identity thieves will steal your mail or rummage through your trash in order to obtain your precious personal information. You could be at risk of identity theft if you don't have a locked mailbox, and thoroughly shred all mail and documents before throwing them out. Remember, the more unsolicited mail you receive, the longer it will take you to dispose of it.

To remove your name from mailing lists, visit any of the websites listed here, and follow their simple instructions. For your convenience, there are several different ways for you to remove your name from mailing lists. [www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs4-junk.htm](http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs4-junk.htm) ; [www.dmachoice.org](http://www.dmachoice.org) ; or [www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org).

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