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KAI TAK'S CHECKERBOARD

By John A. Marshall

The sun was sitting precisely on the top of the distant hills, hills that were in mainland China, and might as well have been on the moon. Our 747 was bouncing heavily through the descent, down to ten thousand now, on vectors to Cheung Chau VOR, where we would start the notorious Checkerboard approach to Kai Tak's runway 13. Thousands of pilots had done this before me, and many would afterwards, but this was my first, and a more exciting, gut-grabbing, white-knuckle approach I could not have imagined.

We were racing a typhoon into Hong Kong, when it was still the British Crown Colony. Mainland China airports were not yet available as alternates, the airport at Canton (Guangdong today) was closed to us, even though it was a mere 50 miles up the river. Our filed alternate was Kaohsiung, in Taiwan, hours away. Now headed almost due west, we bounced along in the tops of the clouds, as wisps raced by the windscreen. Below we caught tantalizing glimpses of the incredible harbor with its carpet of lights, pin pricks that reached as far as we could see.

Kai Tak's history as an airport goes back nearly 90 years, to 1925, when a failed investment scheme left a large tract of reclaimed land vacant, a long finger-shaped appendage that jutted southeastward into Hong Kong Harbor. Aviators in the region saw that an airfield could be profitably built on this landfill, and the first flight from Kai Tak occurred in 1925. A seaplane base was soon built, with a slipway for seaplanes.

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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.

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

Dues are \$20 a year or \$60 for the 3 remaining years. Make them payable to Clipper Pioneers, and mail to Jerry Holmes at 192 Foursome Dr., Sequim, WA 98382.

SHARE YOUR STORIES WITH US! Email to Jerry Holmes at jerry@clipperpioneers.com

KAI TAK'S CHECKERBOARD

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The first commercial flight took place in 1936, with the arrival of an Imperial Airways flight from Malaya, and in 1936 Pan American World Airways began service from the United States west coast with Sikorski and Martin flying boats, the biggest airplanes of the time. A Pan Am S-42 flying boat that was anchored at Kai Tak on the morning of December 8, 1941 was destroyed by Japanese bombers. The airport suffered severe damage, and it did not become fully operational again until after the war.

A quick check of the weather at Kai Tak was not reassuring; the winds had picked up to 30 knots, with gusts, out of the east. The typhoon had picked up its skirts and was hustling along. It had begun to rain. For the first time the butterflies began doing barrel rolls in my stomach, and I worried first of all, would we be able to handle the crosswind after flying the checkerboard, and then about the fuel. Kaohsiung was far away; and I mentally calculated that we could make one pass and then that would be it. If we diverted it would be through the southeast quadrant of the typhoon, something I wasn't looking forward to. Over my shoulder I rechecked with the engineer. We would reassess after the approach, if need be.

The Checkerboard was constructed in 1974 as an ingenious way to make approaches to runway 13 more reliable in dicey weather. It was an innovation like no other, and quickly became notorious among the world's airline pilots. The procedure consisted of an instrument guidance system that terminated two miles from the face of a mountain, barely 600' above the ground. If you were lucky, you were looking at the two large checkerboards, beautiful orange and white squares that beckoned you on. At that point you had to have visual contact with runway 13, out the right side window, only 600 feet

Below, and requiring a 48 degree gut-wrenching right turn to line up with the runway. On the approach plate is the ominous statement, "The right turn must be made at the middle marker as any early or late turn will result in loss of terrain clearance." Who ever dreamed this one up?

Inbound now to Cheung Chau we descend to 6000 feet, and suddenly break free of the clouds. The harbor and the city of Hong Kong itself are ahead and to our left, I can see the Star ferry inching its way to Kowloon. Kai Tak Airport itself is on the mainland, northeast of Kowloon itself.

The rain starts again, blurring the windscreen. It is time to stop sightseeing and concentrate on the approach. Over Cheung Chau now we head straight west, tracking the DME. At 7 miles we start the sweeping right turn to intercept the IGS localizer, down now to 3000 feet. Gear down, and then landing flaps. Back in and out of the clouds. Raining harder now, we start the wipers, those impossibly noisy clanking Boeing wipers. Surprisingly, with each sweep we catch glimpses of the terrain below. In a few minutes it will be full dark. Closing on the Outer Marker, and Hong Kong Approach clears us to tower frequency.

It gets rougher, and my number one calls the tower. "Roger, Clipper Five, Hong Kong tower. Report approaching middle marker and starting turn. Wind is 090 degrees at 22 knots, gusting to 30. You are cleared to land."

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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>

KAI TAK'S CHECKERBOARD

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The IGS localizer comes off the far side of the instrument and slowly inched toward center. The flight director announces a capture. 9 DME now, nine miles from the checkerboard and the rock-hard side of a mountain toward which we are hurtling at one hundred sixty knots, nearly two hundred fifty feet per second. In and out of the clouds now, we are on the IGS glide path, creeping closer and closer to the harbor below. Suddenly the screeching dashes of the outer marker fill the headset; I look quickly down to adjust the volume on the marker receiver. The blue light on the instrument panel flashes in synch with the beeps.

Suddenly we are out of the enwrapping cloud and the magnificence of the harbor and Kowloon burst into view, like a curtain quickly raised. Ahead is the most glorious sight...the two catty-cornered red and white checkerboard billboards, floodlights lighting them in almost celestial glory. A quick glance out the right windscreen, and there was the runway, at an impossible angle, less than a mile away. Raining harder, with the wind gusts buffeting the big airplane, slowing into vulnerability as we get lower and slower.

Now things happen quickly, and simultaneously. The radio altimeter is useless here, we are glued to the pressure altimeter. It is nearing seven hundred feet above the runway, and the DME counts steadily down through four, then three, and at two point two we start the unbelievable turn onto final. I quickly realize that we are going to undershoot because of the wind, so I shallow the bank just a bit. The almost uncontrollable impulse is to level off, but that would be disastrous. It would mean an almost sure miss and, if we could manage the fuel, go through the whole thing again. I force the big Boeing to seven hundred feet per minute down, pointing the nose at the beckoning runway lights ahead. We scream through alleys and canyons of apartment houses on either side, looking into kitchen windows. The third officer on the jump seat behind me will say later that he actually saw people watching TV! This can't be real, we are in the throes of a carnival ride, and in a minute we will wake up.

A quick confirmation that the checklist is done, the five green gear lights shine reassuringly, and final flaps is confirmed. We have a drift angle that is unbelievable, as we crab into the wind land rain. I call for wipers on high, and their annoying clank increases. Now we flash over the highway in front of the airport. None of us are looking at the altimeter now, the first officer is calling speeds...we have a considerable additive for the wind, and I will have to plant this baby on in the zone to get her stopped. Now over the runway, and I kick out the crab and lower the wing. We float, buffeting, for just a little, and

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WILL THIS BE YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER?

**If your envelope date ended with 2015
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Don't miss an issue of the Clipper Pioneers' newsletter - send in your check today!

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KAI TAK'S CHECKERBOARD

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then the left wing and body gears make contact. I wrestle the rest of the airplane to earth, with lots of body English. Speed brakes and spoilers out, and all four engines now into screaming tortured reverse. The airplane shakes and shudders as we slow, and finally we are at taxi speed.

I slowly exhale, and the mood in the cockpit is one of exhilaration, almost giddy in its excitement. Bring it on, typhoon whatever your name is. We have just survived the Kai Tak heart attack!

Eventually the sheer volume of air traffic overwhelmed Kai Tak, and in the late 1980's the Hong Kong government began searching for a new site. It was eventually decided to build a new airport on Chek Lap Kok island in Hong Kong harbor, which opened in 1998. The last commercial flight departed Kai Tak on July 6 of that year. Un-ceremoniously, it was a Cathay Pacific ferry flight, all the way to Chek Lap Dok. Kai Tak Airport is now a terminal for ocean-going cruise ships. We will never see an approach like the infamous checkerboard to runway 13 again.

Healthy Tips: Amp Up Your Fitness

If there's one step you should take for improving your health and helping you steer clear of chronic disease, it's exercise, experts say. And it really is never too late to start.

"I have known patients who have started exercising in their 70s and reaped great benefits from it," said geriatrician Carmel B. Dyer, who is director of the Division of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston.

Exercise helps control body weight, lower your blood pressure and strengthen your muscles, which helps you avoid injuries by making you less likely to fall.

And an increase in muscle mass helps your body metabolize drugs more like a young person does, Dyer said, which means medicines can be cleared from the body more effectively.

Physical activity has also been linked to a decreased risk of dementia, she said.

Older adults need not join a gym or suffer through rigorous workouts. Milder activities such as walking, gardening or anything to keep moving would be sufficient, CDC's Moore said.

(from www.livescience.com - <http://www.livescience.com/35863-grow-old-gracefully-tips.html>)

Treasurer's Report – Jan. 2016

The balance in the treasury is \$37,883.95. I am still receiving dues payments for 2016. Other than a few taxes, our only costs are producing the newsletter and maintaining the website.

Jerry Holmes, Treasurer

PAN AM REUNION CRUISE EXPLORER OF THE SEAS MAY 27,2016

Dear Pan Amer's:

I was delighted with all your gracious letters of thanks in your last Transatlantic reunion cruise. It was a great success and now we call attention to our next 2016 reunion cruise which will be Alaska.

Alaska: Now bigger than ever. **Explorer of the Seas®** takes on the Last Frontier, as the biggest, most innovative ship to ever cruise Alaska. Enjoy views from every room, thanks to new Virtual Balconies that bring real-time outdoor sight to interior staterooms. No journey stays with you, mind and soul, like an expedition through Alaska. From the blue ice of massive glacial fields to the stunning grandeur of the scenery and wildlife, everything big, bold and breathtaking. The ship is beautiful and packed with all the action of Royal Caribbean's Signature innovations—with plenty of time for relaxation, fine dining, and beautiful ocean views. Not to mention experiencing the awe and wonder of being up close to the fascinating glaciers in Alaska. Cruise to the Hubbard Glacier, as well as Tracy Arm Fjord, where the twin Sawyer Glaciers can be seen. Look out for harbor seals, wolves, bears and other wildlife that inhabit this glacial wonderland.

We take this opportunity to invite you, your family and friends to join us on this fabulous Pan Am cruise. The ship sails roundtrip Seattle making transportation easy to get to and return home. Great rates are being offered so everyone may choose the best cabin for your budget.

Itinerary –		Departs	Arrives	
Fri 27 May 2016	Seattle, Washington	-	4:00 PM	Boarding
Sat 28 May 2016	Cruising	-	-	Cruising
Sun 29 May 2016	Alaska Inside Passage	-	-	Cruising
Sun 29 May 2016	Juneau, Alaska	12:00 PM	9:00 PM	Docked
Mon 30 May 2016	Skagway, Alaska	7:00 AM	8:30 PM	Docked
Tue 31 May 2016	Tracy Arm Fjord, Alaska	7:00 AM	12:00 PM	Cruising
Wed 01 Jun 2016	Cruising	-	-	Cruising
Thu 02 Jun 2016	Victoria, British Columbia	9:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
Fri 03 Jun 2016	Seattle, Washington	6:00 AM	-	Arrival

Prices:

Inside Cabins from \$599. / Outside Cabins \$1059. request Balcony from \$1389.

Rates - per person, double occupancy (singles pay 200%) and based availability at time of booking. Port charges, taxes and fees are additional at \$412.91 per person. Deposit is \$250. per person (credit card or check). Book Early and lock in your price. Once our allotment is sold, cabins will be at prevailing rates. More information with your invoice. **This invitation is open to all Pan Am, their family and friends.** To reserve or for information please call Interline Travels ASAP or you may miss out on these prices. It's going to be a good one – DON'T MISS OUT !!

Carmen Jaquet, Pan Am Cruise Coordinator INTERLINE TRAVELS
 1-888-592-7245 / cell 786-252-7838 interlinetravels@yahoo.com .

Stu Archer, former Pan Am pilot & cruise consultant
 305-238-0911 (stujune@aol.com)
 INTERLINE TRAVELS, 456 MERLIN CT. , TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301

*...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

Roger "Doc" Harris passed away on January 2, 2016, after a long battle with cancer. He was surrounded by loving family at his home in Hurricane, Utah. Roger served his country from 1956 to 1964 as a fighter jet pilot in the U.S. Air Force. Upon his separation from the service, he continued his flying career as a pilot for Pan American Airlines for 26 years. Following his retirement from Pan American, he developed and owned a sporting clays business, Hooker Creek Sporting Clays, in Cottonwood, California.

Carl C. Schott, 80, Coronado resident of 59 years, passed away at his home and surrounded by family, on the ninth day of October, 2015. He was born on May 1, 1935. Born in Sandusky, Ohio in 1935, Carl found his calling in life as a pilot for the Navy, flying in and out of North Island in Coronado. He had three tours of duty flying before resigning his commission and joining Pan American World Airways. He thrived as captain flying around the world, combining his love of flying with his passion for travel, for more than 26 years.

Robert M Toomey, 83, died March, 25, 2015, at Poudre Valley Hospital, Fort Collins, Colorado. He was born in West Springfield, Massachusetts and attended the state University. He was studying to be an engineer but when the opportunity to join the Air Force Cadet program became available, his longtime ambition to fly, won. Bob retired from the AF reserves as a Major and enjoyed every minute. He flew military aircraft and was then certified in Air Traffic Control. He was assigned to the Canadian border radar site during the cold war and also flew out of Duluth. He worked for the FAA for 6 years, in air traffic control and flight standards. Capt. Bob, was stationed in New York, San Francisco, Auckland New Zealand and Berlin Germany from 1964-1991. Bob loved his job, he loved Pan Am and thought the Pan amers were very special.

Captain Robert J. Murphy, Oviedo, Fl. passed away in November 2015 at the age of 97. Born in Texarkana, Arkansas, he was a military instructor in Corsicana, Texas before joining PAA where he was based in Brownsville, Guatemala, New York & Miami where he retired as Captain. After retiring he spent many years living on Lake Jessup in Oviedo enjoying boating & orchids.

Capt. Charles E. 'Chuck' Bassett, long time resident of Jensen Beach, FL and Ridgefield, CT passed away on June 27, 2015. He was 100 years old on February 28, 2015. After graduating from Purdue University with a degree in engineering he completed military flight training with the Army Air Corps in San Antonio, Texas. In 1940 Pan American World Airways hired him where he flew for 35 years.

Richard H Peeples passed away in March 2015.

John W Bethel passed away in Sept. 2015.

Lennert "Lenny" Thorell passed away on Dec. 9, 2015. He was a legendary personality. Wishing him a speedy non stop flight to the eternal kingdom.

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

*...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

Thomas Dustin Foley passed away on November 26, 2015. Tom was born Nov. 16, 1921 and raised in Omaha, NE. His love of airplanes took off during high school when he began barnstorming around Nebraska. He had an adventuresome 40 year career with Pan American World Airways beginning in 1942.

Rudolf "Rudie" William Niemi passed away on Nov. 12, 2015. Born in March 1931, he began his aviation journey by getting his pilot's license, then became a flight instructor and finally joined the commercial airline industry in 1955. His first job landed him in San Francisco flying the Boeing Stratacruiser for Pan American Airways. Just prior to his first job, while at a drive-in restaurant in San Leandro, he met his lovely bride to be, Millie. They married in 1956. After years of flying out of San Francisco, Rudie and Millie had the opportunity to relocate to Guam where he flew SA16's (float planes) in the Trust Territories.

Robert "Bob" Lange passed away September 30, 2015 after a brief illness. Bob was born in Milwaukee, WI on August 16, 1938. Bob attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He joined the NavCad Program and was commissioned and received his wings in 1962. He was stationed in Barbers Point, Hawaii and was a Veteran of the Vietnam war. Following his service, he pursued a career with Pan Am. He was on the last Pan Am flight out of Sao Paulo. A year later he joined United Airlines and flew with them until 9/11. Bob's hobby was classic cars. He spent many hours in the garage of his home with his son, Dan, restoring and maintaining his 1955 MG-TF and his 2 vintage Porsche coupes. Bob will be remembered as a dedicated family man. He flew world over but for him there was no place like home. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Kathy, his son Dan, daughter Terry and 4 grandchildren.

J. Ned Corman passed away on May 4, 2008. When both Pan Am and the USMC both offered him regular employment, he opted for the airline. Thirty-five years later, retiring at age 60, he had no regrets. His list of airplanes included the DC4, DC6, DC7, L749 Constellation and B377 Stratocruiser. He made captain in a Boeing 707 during the Vietnam War, and finished his career in the left seat of a Boeing 747.

Paul B. Moser flew west on August 15, 2015. He lived in San Rafael, CA.

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.

Scammers fake Social Security email

The subject line says "Get Protected," and the email talks about new features from the Social Security Administration (SSA) that can help taxpayers monitor their credit reports, and know about unauthorized use of their Social Security number. It even cites the IRS and the official-sounding "S.A.F.E Act 2015." It sounds real, but it's all made-up.

It's a phishing email to get you to click on a scammer's link. If you do, a scammer can install malware — like viruses and spyware — on your computer. Or, the link might send you to a spoof site — a lookalike website set up by a scammer to trick you into entering your personal information.

by Amy Hebert , Consumer Education Specialist, FTC <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/articles/screen2.jpg>

Heard Around....

You will feel much more intelligent after reading this.

Brains of older people are slow because they know so much. People do not decline mentally with age, it just takes them longer to recall facts because they have more information in their brains, scientists believe.

Much like a computer struggles as the hard drive gets full, so too, do humans take longer to access information when their brains are full.

Researchers say this slowing down process is not the same as cognitive decline. The human brain works slower in old age, said Dr. Michael Ramscar, but only because we have stored more information over time. The brains of older people do not get weak. On the contrary, they simply know more.

Also, older people often go to another room to get something and when they get there, they stand there wondering what they came for. It is **NOT** a memory problem, it is nature's way of making older people do more exercise.

Do you have an upcoming event that would be of interest to the other members? Please forward the information to sue@clipperpioneers.com.

***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***

Pan Am Reunion planned at Foynes Museum in 2016

Pan Am Captain Don Cooper (coop@maxthrust.net) and Margaret O'Shaughnessy (margaret@flyingboatmuseum.com) have been working together on plans for a Pan Am reunion at the Foynes Museum this year. Details are not available yet, but bus tours around Ireland are planned. Contact John Madden (jmadden@asktravelworld.com) about tours.