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## Central America

*By William Nash*

Navigation in Central America called for some interesting innovations. Mexico City had the only precision approach system. Pan Am and some of the nations had installed omni-directional signal beacons at airports which we could use to follow to or from the station and descend on for instrument approaches. However, summer thunderstorms often generated far greater power than our beacons, causing our instrument needles to point at the storms rather than at the beacons. For several airports, we worked out using powerful local broadcasting stations since they produced stronger signals than anything else nearby although their use was not approved for that purpose.

We could sneak into San Jose, Costa Rica, this way, coming in from the Pacific coast at Punta Arenas and following the meandering track we had marked on our maps to the airport.

Medellin, Columbia, though it is not in Central America, was the southernmost destination on our Central American missions. The route from Panama to Medellin crossed Turbo, Colombia, the area of the world's heaviest rainfall, then to the headwaters of the San Jorge River and south through rugged canyons below the ridges to Medellin. With an overcast below the ridges, we did our zigzag navigation through these canyons until we came to Antioquia, (we called it Annie Oakley) a small red-roofed town on a river that ran left to right in a canyon across our course. Just beyond Annie Oakley a canyon wall rose in front of us to a

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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 \$60 for the 3 remaining years. Make them payable to Clipper Pioneers, and mail to Jerry Holmes at 192 Foursome Dr., Sequim, WA 98382.**

## Central America

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plateau. We would spiral up to the overcast until we could see a huge dead tree. Once we saw it, we knew we were looking all the way across and could squeeze between the overcast and the plateau. After passing the dead tree, we could drop down into the valley to Medellin. If the clouds covered the plateau, we made a 30 degree climbing spiral into the overcast, then headed for our Medellin beacon or favorite broadcast station, to make a descending racetrack descent to the airport.

The entire area was blessed with Mayan and Aztec temple ruins. We could please our passengers and benefit the airline by circling the pyramids of Chichen Itza, Uxmal, Tikal, Tulum and others. Indian names given to towns and natural resources in those areas were rhythmic and slipped off the tongue with ease: Chichicostanango, Quetzaltenango, Tulancingo, Quintana Roo, Chilpancingo and Thuanatepec.

In approaching Tegulcigalpa, Honduras, from the south, we could find the proper valley when we saw two small peaks on its southern ridge. The runway there was short with the terminal directly at one end of the single runway and a 1500 foot crevasse at the other. Under certain cloud conditions, we had an approach from San Salvador that startled First Officers who had not yet experienced it. We would climb up along rising ground on the downwind leg then, while climbing, call for gear down and add power. Then, still following the rising terrain, we'd add more power and drop a little flap while continuing to climb to the final approach, and then suddenly see the runway, add flap and land short – since the runway was humped. If we landed too far down the runway, we'd be going hell-bent downhill for the terminal. Strangely, the cloud ceiling climbed with us on this approach. It was an odd characteristic of the area. The new co-pilots thought so too.

One night in Panama, a very embarrassed assistant chief pilot, training, landed on the wrong side of the canal; not at the wrong end, the wrong airport. In another incident one of our pilots experienced an engine failure while taking off in Panama flying a C-46. He dropped down out of sight of the tower controller, so the controller reported the plane had crashed. Meanwhile the pilot was busily zigzagging and dodging the highest terrain, unable to climb on one engine with the newly approved 48,000 pound max load.

Personally, having flown Pan Am 's C-46 cargo planes for 3 ½ years, I liked the big fat bird. 45,000 pounds was the gross weight they had been built for but, by some sleight of hand, our operations department had gotten the FAA to approve 48,000 pounds. The loss of an engine at a takeoff weight of 48,000 pounds meant a pilot had to do a lot of things in a hurry to fly on the hairy edge with the remaining engine.

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## A History Tidbit...

The China Clipper inaugurated the first trans-Pacific airmail service on November 22, 1935 with 111,000 letters on board. It returned to San Francisco on Dec. 6, 1935.

*(from [www.flyingclippers.com](http://www.flyingclippers.com))*

<p><b>REMINDER: CLIPPER PIONEERS NEWSLETTER'S LAST PRINT EDITION WILL BE DEC. 2018</b></p>
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## Wise Words from Will Rogers

Will Rogers, who died in a 1935 plane crash with his best friend, Wylie Post, was probably the wisest man this country has ever known.

### ABOUT 'GROWING OLDER...

First — Eventually you will reach a point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it.

Second — The older we get, the fewer things seem worth waiting in line for.

Third — Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me; I want people to know 'why' I look this way. I've traveled a long way, and some of the roads weren't paved.

Fourth — When you are dissatisfied and would like to go back to youth, think of Algebra.

Fifth — You know you are getting old when everything either dries up or leaks.

Sixth — I don't know how I got over the hill without getting to the top.

Seventh — One of the many things no one tells you about aging is that it is such a nice change from being young.

Eighth — One must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been.

Ninth — Being young is beautiful, but being old is comfortable.

Tenth — Long ago, when men cursed and beat the ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft. Today it's called golf.

And, finally — If you don't learn to laugh at trouble, you won't have anything to laugh at when you are old.

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## BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU LEAVE YOUR CAR PARKED AT THE AIRPORT

Here's an experience that happened to a friend of ours, the knowledge of which could benefit us all. While on short a trip, someone broke into their car parked at the airport. Their insurance papers were in the car (as required by law) which gave the perpetrators access to their address. Not only that, the remote garage door opener was also in the car which gave them easy access to the inside of the house. They went to the house and "unloaded" the entire contents. Lesson learned?

**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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## I Land on Top of the Pan Am Building in New York

*By Cliff Pierce*

I had been head to head with the teamsters union most of the day. They represented the clerks who worked in Crew Scheduling, and I had told them that I was going to have to fire one of them. It was more complicated and nasty because the clerk was black.

I was pooped. I'd gone to bed at 9:30 PM and was in a deep sleep at 10:15 when the phone rang. It was Don Kinkel, the Chief Pilot, my boss. There was a critical meeting to be held the next day in New York. They needed me to be there. Could I get up and catch the Pan Am midnight flight to New York leaving SFO in an hour and 45 minutes? There would be a helicopter to take me from JFK to the top of the Pan Am Building.

I figured if they could arrange that, I could arrange to get there. When I got to the airport, there was someone waiting to take my car and the crew bus to get me out to the aircraft. I had arrived at the plane with five minutes to spare. Within a few more minutes I was settled down in a first class seat, covered with a blanket and was for the second time that night fast asleep.

I woke up as I felt the landing gear scrunch down on the runway at JFK. Sure enough, as we got to the gate a ten-passenger helicopter sat 100 feet away, rotors turning slowly. In less time than it takes to write about it I was down the steps, across the apron, into the 'chopper and up into the skies over Long Island. It was 8 AM.

A few miles away loomed the skyline of New York City, the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, the Statue of Liberty and my destination, the PanAm Building. We would land on its roof. Crossing the East River we were barely higher than the skyscrapers ; we and low-flying seagulls watched taxis, busses and thousands of other commuters inching their way across the Brooklyn Bridge and spreading out into the streets of Manhattan. It was just seven hours since I had left my bed in California, and I was in this strange environment.

Down among the buildings our pilot picked his way around the tallest until we hovered over the one with the distinctive anvil shape. On the roof was a man standing next to a wind sock, It was hanging straight down. That was good. As we settled, the small platform began to appear larger and larger and just before our wheels made contact, it actually looked roomy enough to take us. We had landed, but we were still 600 feet above the ground.

The conference room was on the 59th floor, just one level down. All I had to do was walk down one flight of stairs, and I was there. I was greeted warmly and apologetically by my New York associates who had caused me to be there. I shrugged it off - - - no problem - - -all in a day's work! When can I go home?

The meeting ended at 5 PM. The helicopter to JFK was to leave at 5:15. I was on it.

The pilot sort of yanked it up into the air and flung it off the roof, backing out over the side giving me a rare view looking straight down onto Lexington Avenue 600 feet below. I hoped that he would keep in mind that the Chrysler Building was not far behind us!

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Email or write to Jerry Holmes - 192 Foursome Drive, Sequim, WA 98382  
or email to: jerryholmes747@gmail.com***

## I Land on Top of the Pan Am Building in New York *~ continued from previous page*

Within ten minutes I was back at JFK and was climbing up into the 707 headed for SFO. We were airborne at 6:00. I picked myself a nice first class seat. The stewardess was friend of mine and had a martini in my hand within minutes after the wheels left the ground.

For the next five hours as I ate dinner, sipped a glass of wine and listened to stereo music through my headset I watched our beautiful country unroll seven miles below -- the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, the Great Plains, the Platte River that had guided the wagon trains west, the Rockies, Grand Canyon and High Sierras. I couldn't stop looking. While other passengers were watching a movie, I was seeing the greatest show on earth!

We glided into SFO at 8 PM. I went to my office in the PanAm hangar, got my car keys, found my Chevy and was back home by 9:00.

Since leaving home last night, I had crossed the continent twice, had spent about ten hours in New York City and was now back in my own living room in California just 22 hours later.

On a good day on a flat road in Kansas, the wagon trains would have made about seven miles in the same period - if they were lucky.

For me it had been another adventure, another slice of life working for Pan Am.

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## ***Been to Frankfurt Before?***

The German controllers at Frankfurt Airport were a short tempered lot, they not only expected you to know your parking location but how to get there without any assistance from them. So it was with some amusement that we (a Pan Am 747) listened to the following exchange between Frankfurt ground and a British Airways 747 (Speedbird)

***Speedbird:*** "Good morning Frankfurt, Speedbird 206 clear of the active."

***Ground:*** "Guten morgan, taxi to your gate."

*The BA 747 pulls onto the main taxiway and stops.*

***Ground:*** "Speedbird, do you not know where you are going?!"

***Speedbird:*** "Standby ground, I'm looking up the gate location now."

***Ground (with typical German patience):*** "Speedbird, have you never been to Frankfurt before?!"

***Speedbird (coolly):*** "Yes, in 1944, but I didn't stop."

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## **Share the Memories...**

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

Have you come across an interesting article that you'd like to share with us? Send that along, so others can enjoy! We'd love to hear from you!

## 2015 Clipper Pioneer Convention

The convention was held aboard the Serenade of the Seas, a beautiful cruise ship out of Boston, this April 24.

After a 6 day ocean crossing, we, all 80 of us, toured 8 Western European stops during the next 9 days. During the crossing, a number of “get acquainted” cocktail parties were held, to discuss the past and swap lies.

The European stops included Cork, then Plymouth in the UK. After arrival in Le Havre, near Paris, we filled 2 busloads of us to tour the spectacular invasion beaches of Normandy, then on to Cherbourg. During the next few days, we all enjoyed some of the charming canal laced cities in Belgium and Holland, and the Tulip Festival near Amsterdam.

After a day in Gothenburg, Sweden, we ended the cruise in Copenhagen, Denmark. Some attendees stayed on to the Northern continuation of another cruise, and some continued for a few days in other parts of Europe.

Then again, some of us headed home the next day.

Sometime during the last few days, in uncharted waters, somewhere between Holland and Sweden, we held the Clipper Pioneer meeting. In attendance were 12 members. Names available on request. Annual elections were held and new officers were voted in as follows:

President: Captain Stuart Archer

Vice President: Captain Dick Vitale

Secretary/Treasurer: Captain Jerry Holmes

That afternoon, a final cocktail party was held and conversations continued.

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## MORE TIPS FOR STAYING ACTIVE

1. **Make exercise a social event.** Invite friends along or sign up for a class so you can meet new people while getting fit.
2. **Improve your flexibility.** Suggestions include yoga, stretching exercises, lawn bowls or dancing.
3. **Build muscle tissue with strength training.** For example, you could lift weights or perform a modified form of calisthenics.

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***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.



*...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 B. George** died peacefully in his Gig Harbor, Washington home on May 13 at the age of 80, after enjoying an extraordinary life complete with many great friends and a loving family. Roger was born April 16, 1935 in Summit, New Jersey. As his sense of adventure would have it, Roger enlisted in the United States Air Force and qualified as a pilot in 1955, where he delighted in flying-in his words- "anything the military would trust me with" (but he seemed to have a soft spot for the F-102). After ending his military career in 1965, Roger went on to fly for his beloved Pan American Airways until 1985, and finished his career as a 757 Captain with United Airlines, when he reluctantly retired in 1995.

**Frank J. Bull**, 92, of Atlanta, passed away Thursday, Oct. 9, 2014. Born in Chattanooga, Frank was a founding partner of Bull & Kenney Architects and Bull, Brown & Kilgo, Architects AIA. In WW II, Frank was a Navy pilot, flying B-14's. He flew for PanAm before receiving degrees from Georgia Tech in 1948 and 1949.

**James A. Livers** passed away Oct. 21, 2014 at the age of 93. He joined PanAm in 1942 and was in training to fly with Air Ferries. After WWII, he stayed in PanAm, flying a variety of equipment, finally becoming a captain on 747s. He always spoke of this airplane as being wonderful to fly.

**Capt. Fred M. Taylor**, 93 of Woodland, passed away April 18. He was born in South Carolina. During WWII, at the age of 20, Fred enlisted in the Army and attended advanced flying school at Moody Field, GA. He was assigned to pilot a B-17 Flying Fortress with the Eighth Air Force. Stationed at Deenethorpe, England, Fred flew 32 missions from May, 1944 to Aug. 1944, including a bombing mission in support of the amphibious landings on D-Day. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak-leaf clusters and two battle stars for his service in the Western European theatre. Following his final mission, Fred was assigned to an air base in Oklahoma where he trained pilot recruits. After the war, Fred joined Pan American Airways. His career as a pilot took him to every major city on six continents. During the Vietnam war, when many pilots refused to go, he volunteered to fly government contracted R&R flights for our soldiers, out of Da Nang. After 36 years with Pan Am, he and his wife, Bernice retired in Woodland, to be close to family.

**Michael Earl Denham** was a pilot with Pan American (1965-1986) flying the 707 and the 747 and later United Airlines (1986-1996) flying the 757, 767 and finally the 777 as Captain. Prior to his commercial flying, he was in the Navy where he flew F8's. He passed April 13th from lung disease and will be missed by his wife of 57 years, 3 kids and too much family to count.

**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)**

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

## Protect Yourself from Investment Fraud

Investing your money is a popular topic, especially when measured by the number of solicitations most of us receive regularly from people who want to offer investment opportunities. And seniors seem to get more than their share of offers; in fact, Americans 65 and older are more likely to be targeted with these offers than the younger population.

Don't let the fact that an estimated 80% of these offers carry the potential for fraud scare you from making an intelligent decision on where to invest your hard-earned cash. You can logically navigate your way through the obstacles by following some basic "rules of the road" in weighing investment advice. To assist you in this process, the Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) Office of Investor Education and Advocacy has made available a helpful document titled "A Guide for Seniors: Protect Yourself Against Investment Fraud."

The SEC document identifies steps you can take to insulate yourself from many of the tactics scam artists use to push a fraudulent investment product on the unsuspecting public. From asking questions and then verifying the answers, to avoiding the tendency to succumbing to the charms of a con artist, to setting your own pace in the decision-making process, the Guide is a handbook designed specifically for seniors.

To order a copy of the Guide online, visit [Publications.USA.gov](http://Publications.USA.gov) and enter the term USSEC in the "Enter Search Text" field, click the "Search" button, and scroll down to locate the Guide. While you're on the website, you might want to check a few of the other helpful documents.

## Tips to Consider Before Investing

- 1. Check It Out.** It's fairly simple to check out financial advisors and investments. You can "Google" the advisor you are considering, along with products they sell or promote. Be sure they are registered with the SEC and FINRA and check to see if there are any filed complaints against them.
- 2. Invest Only with a Reputable Company.** Require that your funds are managed and invested in a custodian account that is in your name and held by a reputable brokerage. Be sure you receive investment statements directly from that brokerage each quarter.
- 3. If It Sounds Too Good to be True...** You've heard it before but it bears repeating: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Be very wary if you are promised great profits or "guaranteed" returns. While many fraudsters make big promises that raise red flags in your mind, some promote only slow and steady growth. Be on guard.
- 4. Get It In Writing** - Be suspect of any investment opportunity that isn't written. If someone tells you they don't have time to put it in writing, or that you must keep it a secret, it's a sign warning sign.
- 5. Take Your Time Before Buying** - Don't let someone pressure or rush you into buying anything. Be skeptical of "once in a lifetime" opportunities, especially if it is based on "inside" or confidential information. It's a good idea to give any purchase at least 24 hours before a final decision.