

**PRESIDENT**

HARVEY BENEFIELD
1261 ALGARDIAVE
CORAL GABLES, FL 33146-1107
(305) 665-6384

VICE-PRESIDENT & SECRETARY

STU ARCHER
7340 SW 132 ST
MIAMI, FL 33156-6804
(305) 238-0911

TREASURER / EDITOR

JERRY HOLMES
192 FOURSOME DRIVE
SEQUIM, WA 98382
(360) 681-0567

May 2015 - Clipper Pioneers Newsletter

Vol 50-5 Page 1

The end of an Icon: A Boeing B-314 Flying Boat Pan American NC18601 - the Honolulu Clipper

by Robert A. Bogash (www.rbogash.com/B314.html)

In the world of man-made objects, be they antique cars, historic locomotives, steamships, religious symbols, or, in this case - beautiful airplanes, certain creations stand out. Whether due to perceived beauty, historical importance, or imagined romance, these products of man's mind and hands have achieved a status above and beyond their peers.

For me, the Lockheed Super Constellation is one such object. So is the Boeing 314 Flying Boat the Clipper, (when flown by Pan American Airways) - an Icon in the purest sense of the word.

The B-314 was the largest, most luxurious, longest ranged commercial flying boat - built for, and operated by Pan Am. It literally spanned the world, crossing oceans and continents in a style still impressive today. From the late 1930's through the Second World War, these sky giants set standard unequalled to this day.

Arriving from San Francisco at her namesake city, the Honolulu Clipper disembarks her happy travelers at the Pearl City terminal. The 2400 mile trip generally took between 16 and 20 hours depending upon winds.

The Honolulu Clipper - NC18601 - began life as NX18-01 - the experimental registration for the first airplane of the 12 eventually produced. Although Boeing did not build a prototype, and did not call this airplane a Prototype - in fact, it was a Prototype. It was "rolled out" from Boeing's original Plant 1 on the Duwamish - 1 Jun 1938. The factory was way too small, and the majority of assembly took place on the ramp outside the factory doors.

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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.

The end of an Icon: A Boeing B-314 Flying Boat

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Famed Boeing Test Pilot Eddie Allen conducted a taxi test on Elliott that had more than its share of bugs which all needed shaking out before it could enter service.

The small vertical fin, attached to that huge body, proved to be woefully inadequate in providing directional stability and control, both on the water and in the air. Boeing quickly removed the fin and replaced it with two at the ends of the horizontal stabilizer. Eventually, it was necessary to have three fins in order to "get it right."

The following is Wellwood Beall's recollection - close, but not 'spot on.' In a mid 1960s interview, Wellwood Beall, chief engineer on the B314, remembered the first Boeing Clipper flight. He had the plane barged down the waterway from old Plant 1 to Seattle's Elliott Bay in 1938. Boeing test pilot Eddie Allen took off, flew a sweeping circular route, and landed.

"How did it go?" Beall asked anxiously.

"The plane won't turn," Allen replied. "There's not enough rudder."

The test pilot had completed his horseshoe-shaped flight by powering up on two engines on one side and powering down on the other two. "We took the plane back to the plant and added another vertical tail," Beall said. "While the second tail helped, there was still not enough rudder."

He recalled going along on a flight and opening an overhead hatch in the tail section. He stuck his head out of the hatch, expecting a great rush of wind. Instead, the air barely mussed his hair. "So we went back and put a triple tail on that bird and then she finally grabbed air."

Other serious problems involved the size, shape, and location of the sponson, or sea-wings. And, the airplane had a very bad porpoising problem on the water. Eventually, however, the location and geometry of the hull step was adjusted to resolve that problem.

The Honolulu Clipper's first Trans-Pacific flight began 16 March 1939 under the command of Capt. Kenneth Beer. Beer was Number 19 on the Pan Am pilot seniority list. The airplane was christened after arrival at BR, Pearl Harbor. The last leg, from Manila to Hong Kong, carried 45 people, including 30 paying passengers - at the time, a world record.

Loss of a Legend

On Saturday, 3 Nov 1945, the Honolulu Clipper was enroute from Hawaii to San Francisco with 26 passengers on a routine military flight (all B-314's were acquired by the military after the beginning of WW II, but were still operated by Pan Am). The Captain was S. E. "Robby" Robinson.

Five and a half hours after departure, Nbr 3 engine began back-firing and shooting flames. It was shut down and the prop feathered. Robbins, a pilot for 27 years, elected to return to Pearl Harbor. A short while later, Nbr 4 engine also began acting up. After nursing it along for about an hour and a half, it also was successfully shut down. Seven and a half hours after departure, at about 11 PM local time, the crew decided to land in the ocean (not a ditching, as some have referred to it - a ditching is the intentional landing of a landplane in water. This is one BIG advantage of a Flying Boat!) In total darkness, at 11:07 PM, the airplane was successfully landed, with no damage, about 650 miles east of Oahu.

The airplane maintained successful radio contact with shore stations in California and Hawaii, rescue aircraft, and rescue ships closest to their location. Ultimately, five ships made for the disabled airplane.

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The end of an Icon: A Boeing B-314 Flying Boat

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The Englewood Hills, a merchant tanker, was the first to arrive, and by 8:00 AM, had taken all the passengers on board.

The Honolulu Clipper and the San Pablo

The crew, that had remained aboard, were joined by aviation mechanics from the escort carrier Manila Bay, now also on scene. They tried unsuccessfully to repair the aircraft's engines, and the ship ultimately took the airplane in tow. The weather turned bad, and after seven hours, the tow rope broke. The carrier maintained a loose formation with the airplane for two days until the arrival of the seaplane tender San Pablo.

The San Pablo intended to hoist the Clipper out of the water onto her deck. However, on November 7, a big wave crashed the airplane into the ship, causing major damage to the Clipper. Based on the costly damage inflicted on the airplane, and the time and effort required to re-snag her, Navy command in Pearl Harbor ordered salvage efforts to be terminated and the airplane to be sunk. It took 30 minutes and 1200 rounds of 20 mm shells for the Honolulu Clipper to slip beneath the waves.

The crew, that had departed for Pearl aboard the carrier, said they were glad they didn't have to watch her final moments. She had flown 18,000 hours and now she was gone.

(from <http://www.slideshare.net/Art37/honolulu-clipper-the-end-of-an-icon-1747128>)

Keep the memories alive! Send in your stories to sue@clipperpioneers.com. If you know of upcoming events, can pass on good stories by others that you think our members would enjoy, or any other information, please pass that along to us too!

Tips for Staying Active

1. **Choose activities you find interesting and manageable.** You are more likely to stick to an exercise routine if it's fun.
2. **Check with your doctor before you start a new exercise routine.** Some activities may not be appropriate if you have been sedentary for a long time or suffer from obesity or a chronic illness.
3. **Start slowly and aim for small improvements.** Be guided by your doctor about how long and how frequently to exercise. Keep track of your progress in a training diary for added motivation.

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

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

B-314 Clipper flying boat aviator celebrates 100th birthday

By Julia Prodis Sulek, for Beam Magazine, March 2015

LOS GATOS - On Gerry Mahan's 100th birthday Wednesday, his extended family and nearly two dozen longtime pilot friends will gather to honor one of the last living aviators who flew the famous Clipper sea-planes in the early years of transoceanic air travel.

Taking off from the waters of the San Francisco Bay as early as 1942, Mahan would fly under the Golden Gate Bridge from Treasure Island before the giant luxury aircraft gained altitude. "It looked like you could get your feet wet," Mahan said in an interview from his Los Gatos home this week.

Carrying 15 crew members and 18 wealthy passengers, who dined in lounges and slept in draped bunks on the way to Honolulu, the Pan Am flight could last as long as 24 hours.

As Ken Follett wrote in his 1991 novel "Night Over Water," the Boeing 314 Clipper, named after the 19th-century sailing vessel, was "the most romantic plane ever made ... it was enormous, majestic, unbelievably powerful, an airborne palace."

Back then, when passenger flights across the ocean began in the 1930s, crowds would gather to watch them take off and land, and the pilots like Mahan became celebrities of their day, wined and dined by diplomats near and far. "It was one hell of a great experience," said Mahan, who lives with a caregiver in his hilltop home, with views of the Mineta San Jose International and Reid-Hillview airports, where he once owned as many as a dozen private planes and taught one of his daughters to fly. "It was a magnificent life. If I had to do it all again, I'd do it the same way."

At a time well in advance of modern navigation aids or weather forecasting, he remembers flying over the Pacific in a Boeing 314 Clipper no higher than 8,000 feet to keep oxygen for the passengers in the cabin. Sometimes he flew as low as 1,000 feet, he said. Navigating by both the stars and the waves, he would throw a marker flare out the window to triangulate his position.

"You needed help to keep from getting lost," he said.

"He's one of the oldest living people who flew when we didn't have transoceanic routes," said Tom Bleier, 56, a private pilot and businessman who meets with a group of pilots, including Mahan, on Tuesday mornings at Le Boulanger in Los Gatos. "The idea of flying to far-reaching nations was closer to being an explorer and adventurer than what we perceive of a pilot today." He spent most of his career with Pan Am, including five years based in Rio de Janeiro. Throughout his life, he has flown more than 40,000 hours, soaring into stratospheric territory for pilots, Bleier said.

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

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

B-314 Clipper flying boat aviator celebrates 100th birthday

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Over the course of his career, Mahan remembers ferrying first lady Eleanor Roosevelt to Hawaii and General William Westmoreland to Vietnam. During the war years, Pan Am's highly trained pilots remained with the airlines but often shuttled soldiers to war zones.

He always carried a camera and his golf clubs, he said. A large closet in his home is filled with boxes of slides he took of the exotic locales he visited. He has flown around the globe 100 times, he said, flying a Boeing 707 on a trip that would start in San Francisco and, with many stops in between, end in San Francisco.

A scratch golfer, he was often invited to play in Bing Crosby's Pebble Beach tournament. He also says he played golf in the Philippines with then-president Ferdinand Marcos. "I got to know every politician in each country," he said. "When you're a pilot flying in, you're in great demand."

Born in Kansas on Jan. 14, 1915, Mahan was raised by his grandmother until he ran away at the age of 13 - about a year after Charles Lindbergh gained international fame for completing the first solo flight from New York to Paris. "The freight trains were running in my direction," Mahan joked.

He settled in Southern California and lived with his aunt. He sold shoes to put himself through UCLA. By age 18, he owned his first plane, his daughter, Luana Davis, 72, said. He flew for TWA before joining Pan Am in 1941. He flew everything from DC-3s to 747s, retiring out of San Francisco in the mid-1970s. He taught his oldest daughter, Luana, how to fly when she was just 11. She spent her career flying for Federal Express.

"The guy is brilliant," Davis said. "He's my whole life."

After his retirement, mandated by age 60, he continued to fly private planes and attended the Oshkosh air show in Wisconsin every year.

The era of the great Clipper planes was short-lived, with most sold for scrap by the early 1950s. By then, aviation technology developed during World War II surpassed the B-314s, and runways that were once too short for the Clippers were extended.

It's been a few years since Mahan has flown. He walks with the help of a cane. He can't hear well and tires easily. But he lights up when he remembers his flying years. A party Wednesday at Harry's HofBrau in San Jose will celebrate those memories.

"I have dreams I'm flying," Mahan said. "But those are just dreams. I'll never fly again. But I've had it all."

Watch your credit activities to stay safe

In this day and age of constant identity theft, fraud and scams, it's a good idea to keep tabs on your bank accounts, credit cards and other investments that might become compromised.

You also can check your credit reports — for free — every few months by visiting AnnualCreditReport.com or by calling 1-877-322-8228. Federal law allows you to get a free copy every 12 months from each of the three nationwide credit bureaus — Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Accounts on your credit report that you don't recognize could indicate identity theft. Visit ftc.gov/idtheft to find out what to do.

Pan American Cargo: A Reflection

From its beginning in 1927 as an international airline, Pan American was committed to its role as the premier cargo carrier. Mail and Express, which is what air cargo was called, were a vital part in the development of the airlines of that era.

In the early airline years passenger traffic was somewhat inhibited by the limitation of the aircraft in service. However, despite adversities, two years after its founding in 1929, Pan American became a major carrier with a 12,000 mile route system linking 23 countries.

By 1934 Pan Am's mail and cargo services were performed by 85 aircraft over a network of 32,000 miles.

During the war years 1941 to 1945, Pan American became the principal air carrier to the U.S. Government. Pan Am's subsidiary airline, China National Airways Corporation (CNAC) alone flew 28,000 round-trip flights over the Himalayan Mountains carrying cargo, mail and troops to embattled China.

In 1947 Pan Am initiated round-the-world service providing passenger, mail and cargo service to vast areas of the world.

Inaugurating the jet era in aviation in 1959, Pan Am offered jet service to its cargo customers. In 1963 Pan Am became the first airline to offer cargo service on Boeing 707-321C all-cargo freighters, with round-the-world jet freighter service in 1965. Continuing its leadership role in air cargo, Pan Am initiated Boeing 747 cargo service in 1970.

Throughout the years of aviation progress and in concert with America's world leadership, Pan Am's "Clipper Cargo" played a dominant role in all of the major conflicts in the second half of the Twentieth Century. From World War II to the battlefield of Korea, Viet Nam, the Cold War and Desert Storm, Pan Am Clipper Cargo delivered the air cargo services which its pioneering in the field had brought to such high levels of skill and reliability.

(from <http://www.panam.org/pan-am-stories/428-pan-am-cargo-a-reflection>)

Keys to living a long, healthy life include:

- Make healthful lifestyle choices—don't smoke, eat right, practice good hygiene, and reduce stress in your life
- Have a positive outlook
- Stay as active as possible—mentally and physically
- Take safety precautions
- See your health care provider regularly and follow his or her recommendations for screening and preventative measures

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

Jack Barberry died in his home at Eagles Landing in Williamson, GA around 6:00 pm March 27, 2015. This is one of the communities with a private runway surrounded by over-sized lots with space for a residence and a hanger which is what Jack had. He left all his antique (and junk) collection of aircraft parts to a museum named after him, at a nearby small airport, Peach State Airport, GA2.

Ed Perry passed away on February 21st, 2015 in Rancho Santa Fe, CA., at the age of 96. He joined PanAm in 1942 and flew for 37 yrs. Based in Seattle he flew for the Navy out the Aleutian Islands till Pan Am reclaimed the Alaska Div., then went to Florida, where their group was known as Perry's Raiders. Transferred to New York and finished his career in Los Angeles. Moved to San Diego in 1970 and pursued his love of sailing. Everyone loved his stories and he will be sorely missed.

Hud Gillis passed away today 23 March 2015 at the age of 92. He has been living in Florida for the past 10 years. He retired as a 747 Capt in SFO, he had been based in Rio, Miami, and Berlin during his career. His call sign was W6SVQ.

Robert (Bob) Somers died peacefully at home on Feb. 24, 2015, surrounded by his loved ones. He was 98. His gentleness and wisdom will be deeply missed by everyone. His family is forever grateful for the way he blazed such a fine trail for all of us to follow. Bob was born in Kansas on the farm his grandfather homesteaded, on July 9, 1916. He was the second of seven children to Charles and Anna Somers, who were wheat farmers. Bob attended Cowley College in Arkansas City, Kansas, then, literally, took to the air. As a young man, he discovered aviation and went on to train pilots and fly clipper ships. Bob was also a glider pilot and taught glider flying during WWII. In 1943, he was hired by Pan American World Airways, his life-long career.

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

Share the Memories...

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

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.

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!

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

Don't lose your wallet in fast-money scams

IF YOU RECEIVE a message on a social media site from a person who claims to be able to help you flip hundreds of dollars of upfront money into thousands in minutes, it's a scam.

Scam artists appeal to victims by capitalizing on the belief that it's possible to make money with very little effort. If you're having financial difficulties and need the money, it seems like the answer. Scams based on flipping money are nothing new. A modern variation of the scam targeting millennials involves the use of social media to lure in victims. Scammers have legitimate-looking online profiles. They have real-sounding usernames and followers. You'll find photos of satisfied participants posing with stacks of cash along with testimonials about how easy—and fast—it was to make that money. They may post a phone number to contact them.

Once you do contact them, here's how a version of this scam works: They tell you to go to a convenience store and purchase a reloadable prepaid money card and to load the card with the upfront money (\$100, \$200, \$300, etc.). They convince you that the greater the amount of money you put on the card, the more money you will make. They ask you to send them the card information, which includes the card number, the PIN, the code on the back of the card and a receipt of transaction. They promise that once you do, your card balance will increase and your cash will be available to you in minutes.

As soon as you provide the information they are asking for, they are able to access the funds on the prepaid card. Your money is gone and they disappear—their phone number is no longer working and they block you from contact.

Take the following steps to avoid becoming a victim in this scam, and others like it. When in doubt, don't. If anyone contacts you online and requests upfront money online, don't engage with them. Report them to the social media site you are using.

Don't always trust your friends online. Scammers can hijack friends' social media accounts to like and share their own posts. If a friend contacts you with an offer online or requests money or any information from you, call the person directly to confirm that is really who is asking before you act.

Be careful using prepaid cards. Treat a prepaid card the same way you would treat cash. Never give out a PIN or any prepaid-card information online.

In general, use common sense when evaluating income-generating opportunities online. If an opportunity looks and sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

If you are the victim of a flipping-money scam, report your experience to whichever social media site you were using at the time. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at ftc.gov and with the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at ic3.gov. The FTC is the nation's consumer protection agency. The IC3 is a partnership between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center that shares information with other appropriate government and law enforcement agencies.

FTC representative C. Steven Baker says, "It is very important that victims complain; we know most never do." The information you share will be provided to law enforcement and could prevent future crimes from happening. The websites ftc.gov, ft2i.gov and ic3.gov have more information and tips on avoiding these and other Internet scams.

(from Consumer Connection, Nov. 2014)