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## TURNING FINALS - THE LONG WAY HOME

*By John A. Marshall*

Pan Am Captain Bob Ford didn't consider himself a hero or even a visionary pioneer in a fledgling industry. That was a role that benefited the Lindberghs and Musicks of the world. Nonetheless, Ford was a man thrust by events and circumstance into a situation that placed him in a unique position; one that provided him with a certain amount of notoriety, and even earned him a photo and a column in TIME magazine. (January 19, 1942.)

The year was 1941, early in December. The Pacific Ocean had been a simmering cauldron of unrest for many months. The Japanese government had fortified its garrisons not only on the home islands, but further to the south, sending fresh divisions of troops to Okinawa and points south, loading troop ships that were ready to sail to Hong Kong and the Philippines. When the armada of warships launched the fighter attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, Bob Ford and his crew often, along with twenty-one passengers aboard the Boeing 314 flying boat Pacific Clipper, were nearing the end of a four day flight from San Francisco to Auckland, New Zealand. Their schedule called for the crew and aircraft to layover in New Zealand for three days and then retrace their route to California the way they had come. It was not to be, and the next five weeks were to provide an adventure the like of which none of them could have ever dreamed.

Before leaving the seaplane base at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, Ford had been handed a thick packet of orders, a protocol which he was to follow in the event of Japanese action in the Pacific prior to his return. The plan had allowed for many contingencies, but none that envisioned a scenario in which the entire ocean would be closed to them, prohibiting their return. In the event of hostilities, the first directive in the plan Ford carried called for the crew to await further orders, wherever they might be.

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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).**

**The username will remain the same: panam. The new password will be: captain.**

**Dues are \$20 a year or \$80 for 5 years. Make them payable to Clipper Pioneers, and mail to Jerry Holmes at 192 Foursome Dr., Sequim, WA 98382.**

## TURNING FINALS - THE LONG WAY HOME

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It was a soft spring morning down under as the Pacific Clipper droned southward toward Auckland. The serenity of the routine flight was suddenly shattered when Radio Operator John Poindexter intercepted what he thought would be a routine message from Auckland. Instead came a message from the company via Canton Island announcing the bombing of Hawaii. The unthinkable had become a startling reality, and in the blink of an eye the Pacific Ocean had become a war zone. Poindexter raised the Pan Am station at Auckland, and Ford exchanged a few terse words with the station manager to make sure that the harbor and landing facilities were safe and secure. In heavy silence the big flying boat continued on and made an uneventful landing in Auckland Harbor.

For a week the crew haunted the communications room at the U.S. consulate waiting for orders from the company in New York. In the meantime the war news that reached New Zealand every day was more and more frightening. Japanese forces were moving southward at a breakneck pace; soon Australia and then New Zealand would be at risk. Ford chafed at the delay. He ordered all identifying markings on the Pacific Clipper painted over, except for a small American flag left on the side of the fuselage. It's presence was to be a lucky one, once they began their long journey homeward. The flight engineers, Homans "Swede" Rothe and John "Jocko" Parish, spend the days seeing to the health of the Boeing, running the engines and taking care of even the most minor of squawks.

Finally, on December 15th, word came from New York. Ford and his crew were to fly their airplane back to America the long way around, westbound. It was a daunting assignment. The route would take them west to Australia, up through the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, through Saudi Arabia and down the long African continent to the Belgian Congo (Zaire), across the south Atlantic Ocean, northwards through South America and the Caribbean to New York. They faced a journey of over 30,000 miles over oceans and lands that none of them had ever seen; they were flying into the teeth of a burgeoning world war, to places where loyalties and allegiances would be questionable at best. They had no maps or charts for the journey, and very little money. They would have to do all their own planning, judging each succeeding leg on its merits; purchasing fuel and oil along the way, as well as the food, they would eat. Just how they would complete their mission Ford had no idea. Their first orders were to backtrack to Noumea, pick up Pan Am's station personnel there, and deliver them to Australia, to remain for the duration. When the Clipper arrived, Ford told the startled station manager to round up all his personnel, that each person could bring one suitcase, and they would leave in an hour. As the sun rose above the placid green sea, so did the Pacific Clipper. She landed at Gladstone, Australia six hours later.

Money had been a nagging worry. The pooled resources of the crew, while adequate for a short Auckland layover and the trip back to San Francisco, would hardly see them around the world. When they landed in Gladstone, there was a great deal of interest in the huge flying boat. One of the young men who came down to the harbor to see her was a banker, who engaged Ford in conversation. Eventually he asked, "How are you fixed for money?" Ford admitted they were nearly broke. The banker went immediately to his bank (it was a Saturday morning), opened the vault, and handed the stunned Ford five hundred American dollars. It was an unexpected windfall that was to finance their trip all the way to New York.

Their next leg was across the Australian continent to Port Darwin, where they would jump off for the Dutch East Indies and then India. But first they were confronted by a problem that would plague them all the way to North America. They were informed that there was no aviation gas available, but the crew was welcome to all the automobile gas they could load. They had little choice. Ford conferred with his engineers and formulated a plan. They would transfer what remained of the aviation fuel into the center wing tanks, and load the auto gas into the wings. They would take off and make their initial climb on the good stuff, and once they had leveled off, effect the transfer to the lower octane fuel. Neither Ford nor either of the engineers would venture a guess as to just how the high-bred Wright Double-Cyclone engines would react to such a spartan diet.

*~ continued next month*

**PAN AM PILOTS**  
**Branson, Missouri Reunion**  
**May 13-17, 2013**

This is the planned schedule for the 13 May 2013 Pan Am Reunion.

Everyone I have shared this with has been enthusiastic with the planned Branson reunion. Starting in March 2013, Southwest Airline will begin service to Branson. Airtran currently serves Branson, Delta and American service Springfield that is about 45 minutes away. The host hotel, Westgate Branson Woods, will have a very reasonable price - \$69 plus tax, I believe and will provide a hot breakfast. As we finalize plans, I'll pass the info on. – Stu Archer

**Monday:**

Check in at WESTGATE BRANS WOODS 12:00 Noon  
Hospitality Room Open 5:30 p.m.  
WELCOME DELI BUFFET In Hospitality Room  
\$20.00 per person including tax and gratuity

**Tuesday:**

Hot Breakfast 10:00 a.m.  
THE CLAY COOPER SHOW  
\$35.00 per person including tax and transportation 4:00 p.m.  
THE SHOWBOAT BRANSON BELLE Dinner, Show and Cruise  
\$69.00 per person including tax, gratuity and transportation

**Wednesday:**

Breakfast 10:00 a.m.  
OH WHAT A NIGHT!! Tribute to Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons!!  
\$40.00 per person including tax and transportation 4:45 p.m.  
Dolly Parton's DIXIE STAMPEDE DINNER AND SHOW "the most fun place to eat in Branson!!"  
\$57.00 per person including tax, gratuity and transportation

**Thursday:**

Hot Breakfast 9:00 a.m.  
BUSINESS MEETING 9:00 a.m.  
LADIES TOUR AND LUNCH  
\$30.00 per person including tax and transportation 2:00 p.m.  
#1 HITS OF THE 60'S SHOW  
\$35.00 per person including tax and transportation 7:00 p.m.  
FINAL EVENING DINNER & Entertainment  
\$40.00 per person including tax and gratuity

**Friday:**

Hot Breakfast Depart

**Fill out and return the form on the back page of this newsletter to get an early reservation. Thanks for choosing Branson!!!!!!**

## Treasurer's Report

*By Jerry Holmes*

Finances – Checkbook - \$5,934.20

CD - \$34,496.56

Be aware that most of the CD money is to pay off the people who have paid in advance in the event the Clipper Pioneers ceases to exist. That is not planned for a long time, however.

We publish every month as long as there is material available, and so far, have plenty of that. Our expenses other than for the newsletter are nominal. The newsletter costs \$1,300 a month, including printing and mailing (October).

## DUES

It's that time of the year again – dues are due from some of us.

If the number after your name on the envelope is 2012, it's time for you to send in your dues. \$80 for 5 years or \$20 per year.

Please send it so I can get the whole thing wrapped up early.

Thanks! Jerry

## Monaco Report

*by Jim Kelso*

I've uploaded several more pictures from the 31st through November 3rd (many were shown in the background at the Gala dinner Saturday night) from our Pan Am Dixie Clipper Celebration in Monaco. If you haven't already seen them, please feel free to view, share, comment and upload your own photos to this site. Let anyone interested in the Pan Am family today see their friends and family from far away.

Although not relevant to the Monaco reunion, there are pictures from our returning cruise stopover in Tenerife, Canary Islands. This was a special moment honoring the 583 who perished in the KLM/Pan Am disaster, March 27, 1977. The memorial of the worlds worst air disaster, by Dutch artist Rudi van de Wint "stairway to heaven" has 583 pieces, each symbolizing a lost life.

You can access the photos by going to the Clipper Pioneers' website - at [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com) - then scroll down to see the link to the photos.

## Communications Overheard between Aircraft Crew and Tower...

"TWA 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 Degrees."

"Centre, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?"

"Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"

## **Pan Am Pilots' Retirement Foundation Inc.**

13615 South Dixie Hwy, Suite 114 - #518  
Miami, FL 33176 – 7252

### **President's Report to the Membership – November 2012**

Thanks to your help, we continue to provide financial assistance to former Pan Am and National cockpit crewmembers and their dependent survivors who find themselves in dire straits. We have been able to fulfill the Foundation's mission during this year.

#### **Trustee Duties**

The Trustees meet twice a year in Miami to conduct the formal business of the organization. In addition, we stay in touch via email and telephone to handle issues that arise between meetings. We have a Trustee who screens the initial requests for aid, and then stays in touch with those persons approved for aid. A Trustee is the Treasurer, supervising the part-time bookkeeper we employ, and maintaining liaison with Wilmington Trust, who holds our funds. Another Trustee is the Secretary. We have a Finance Committee whose main responsibility is to advise the Board on the investment of our funds. We also have a President and Vice President.

#### **Finances**

Contributions to Operation Dignity continue to decrease as our supporters pass away. We have had to dip into our principal during the last six years, and will probably continue to do so to meet expenses in the foreseeable future. The Trustees encourage continued giving to Operation Dignity because of the decreasing base of contributors, and the challenges of obtaining a reasonable return on investments. Here are the statistics for the last five years, as of July 1 of each year:

<b><u>Contributions</u></b>	<b><u>Benefits Disbursed</u></b>
2008 - \$19,164	\$68,436
2009 - \$19,728	\$54,336
2010 - \$18,054	\$55,136
2011 - \$18,064	\$45,795
2012 - \$16,099	\$56,387

In recent years, families of deceased crewmembers have asked for donations to Operation Dignity in lieu of flowers. Please keep this option in mind.

#### **Tell Us**

Please tell us if you change your mailing address. The Post Office only forwards mail for one year.

#### **Trustee Elections**

Please use the form on the next page to cast your vote for the Trustees to serve in the year 2013. Remember that in order for your vote to be counted, you must have made a contribution to Operation Dignity within the last three years. You can vote using your proxy, or you can attend the January meeting. We would love to see you. Thank you for your continued support! ~ *N. E. Patterson, Vice President*

Miami, FL 33176 - 7252



*...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

**Captain Kirk Otto** passed away on Nov. 28, 2012 in Minnesota. He was based in SFO for many years and lived in Danville, CA until moving to Minnesota after retirement. Kirk hired on with Pan Am in May 1942 and retired in May, 1980. Kirk was preceded in death by his wife, Milly.

**Emil Kissel** of Pacific Grove Ca. died December 5, 2012 at the age of 94. A lifelong aviation enthusiast, the test flight of a model flying wing procured a Boeing scholarship leading to an engineering degree from CCNY. Entering Pan Am engineering department in 1939, he found no romance in designing anchors for the flying boat and quickly transferred to Miami as a flight engineer on the B314.

**David Elvyn Flatter** died in a plane crash on Dec. 5, 2012. From the news report: "PAHOKEE, Fla. - Investigators have identified the pilot of the plane that crashed in sugar cane fields about one mile southeast of the Pahokee Airport Sunday. He was 80-year-old David Elvyn Flatter, of Lighthouse Point, according to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. Civil Air Patrol worked to track down the plane which is believed to have crashed around 12:45 a.m. The tail number for the plane is N118GG and is registered in Montana. Flattery was found deceased on scene, according to PBSO. The National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration are investigating the incident."

**Roy Wise** of Gresham, a former Wallowa Couny resident, died Dec. 28, 2011, in Gresham at the age of 91. After college at Eastern Washington University at Cheney, he became a certified pilot and started his own flying school. During the first part of WWII, he worked as an air traffic controller in Boise, Idaho. Later during WW II, he got his big professional break and was hired by Pan Am, for whom he worked 31 years. Initially he became a first officer on Pan Am's B314 flying boats. Even though he was a commercial pilot, Pan Am was an adjunct to the Navy and he flew military supplies and mail to ports all over the world. In later years, as Pan Am became known as a luxury international airliner, he flew many famous people to their destinations and was proud of it. After his wife Betty died, he took voluntary Pan Am assignments to fly soldiers in and out of Vietnam.

**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.

**PAN AM REUNION**  
**Branson, Missouri**  
**May 13-17, 2013**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST/SPOUSE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**HOST HOTEL: WESTGATE BRANSON WOODS**

Call 1-877-502-7058 for room reservations and mention GROUP CODE 24-914. Rooms not reserved prior to April 13, 2013 will be dropped from the group block and be accepted only on a space-available basis. You may select from several different room types when making reservations. (Traditional Queen, \$65.00/1 Bedroom Studio, \$72.00/1 Bedroom Standard, \$89.00). Hot breakfast for two people per room is included in the rate as well as hospitality room.

**PLEASE REGISTER ME FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

Reunion Activity Package \_\_\_\_\_ # of attendees x \$256.00 pp = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday, Oh What a Night! \_\_\_\_\_ # of attendees x \$40.00 pp = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Thursday, Ladies Tour/Lunch \_\_\_\_\_ # of attendees x \$30.00 pp = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Thursday, Hits of the 60's Show \_\_\_\_\_ # of attendees x \$35.00 pp = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL DUE.....\$** \_\_\_\_\_

A 50% deposit is requested by March 13 with final payment due April 13. Refunds on cancellations after May 6 will be on a case by case basis. Cancellations must be made by phone and authorized by a representative of "Gatherings Plus."

Mobility Restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_

Dietary Restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL REGISTRATION FORM AND CHECK PAYABLE TO:**

**GATHERINGS PLUS**

**P. O. BOX 1023, BRANSON WEST, MO. 65737**

**417-338-4048...[pamb@bransonmilitaryreunions.com](mailto:pamb@bransonmilitaryreunions.com) ~ Reunion**

**Website: [www.reunionpro.com](http://www.reunionpro.com)**