

**PRESIDENT**

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

VICE-PRESIDENT

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

TREASURER / EDITOR

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

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International Intrigue Puts Pan Am in the Middle

by Captain Robert Lee Bragg, edited by Dorothy A. Boyd-Bragg, Ph.D.

During the early 1970s, Pan Am was interested in selling all their B-707s at give away prices. They were looking forward to acquiring the L-1011 and/or the B-747. In the process, Pan Am encountered Robert L. Vesco, one of the truly "great" con-men of all time, who was then CEO of International Controls Corporate (ICC). Did he ever get a deal from Pan Am!

Without having a gun at their back, Pan Am sold Vesco a B-707 for next to nothing. Vesco had initially intended to try to get a B-720 from American Airlines – which, simply put, was a short B-707. But, he quickly changed his mind after realizing that he could take Pan Am to the cleaners very easily - as he had already done to so many others doing the course of his checkered financial career. My role in all this was that I met one of ICC's directors on a B-707 flight, talked to him, and ultimately recommended that ICC consider the B-707 rather than the B-720. Undoubtedly, he carried the word back along with my recommendation.

Vesco flew the B-707 he'd purchased from Pan Am to Geneva, Switzerland, immediately after the deal was completed to meet with Bernard "Bernie" Cornfeld, CEO of Investors Overseas Services (IOS), another of the scam artists written up at some length by the likes of Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. On his first trip to Geneva, Vesco was apparently already interested in taking over IOS from Cornfeld, which then had about 400 million dollars in assets. Cornfeld, on this occasion, was certainly no match for the likes of Vesco. Wish I really knew more about the skullduggery involved.

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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 per year. Once you've paid through 2018, no more dues are required. Make them payable to Clipper Pioneers, and mail to Jerry Holmes at 192 Foursome Dr., Sequim, WA 98382.

International Intrigue Puts Pan Am in the Middle

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Vesco purchased IOS from Cornfield for approximately five million dollars. The deal was even more one-sided than the earlier purchase from Pan Am. Vesco in the end made the deal even sweeter for himself by failing to pay either Pan Am or Cornfeld the full purchase price. As anyone interested in the history of crooked finance knows, Cornfeld was soon ousted from IOS and Vesco flew his B-707 back and forth the across the Atlantic with great regularity. It is my understanding that he wanted the B-707 mainly to fly to Geneva to bring money back in the years he was with ICC - not that he didn't also fly elsewhere as well.

Unfortunately for Vesco, he made one of his pilots extremely angry by failing to pay him back wages. The pilot, A.L. Eisenhower, ultimately flew the plane from Panama to Mexico City to New York where it was repossessed by Pan Am, who had only received a minimal deposit for the plane. Pan Am got their money for the B-707 in the end, but they also foolishly purchased not one or more B-747s but a veritable fleet of twenty-five. Eisenhower got his revenge and wrote a book about his years flying for Vesco. It was aptly called *The Flying Carpetbagger*.

In the end, both Cornfeld and Vesco shared remarkably similar fates. Cornfeld faced jail and aimless wandering in the years before his death in London in 1995. Vesco, although he prospered for a time, also ultimately faced prison and exile before his "probable" death in Cuba in 2007. In a sense, both men essentially ended their days as wanderers.

If you look in Robert Vesco's dealings in the years after he dickered with Pan Am, it sort of makes you think that Vesco was just "practicing" when he was negotiating with Pan Am. His success certainly did not help the financial situation at Pan Am and likely contributed to its initial decline. At the very least, both Vesco and Cornfeld were interesting characters, and, if you really look at the pair, they make Bernie Madoff look like he was just following in their footsteps.

Thanks to the guys who have sent us stories!

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 - short or long? Have you come across an interesting article that you'd like to share with us? Would you share pieces from a book you've written? Please send them along, so others can enjoy! We'd love to hear from you! Please send them to Jerry or Sue by email to: sue@clipperpioneers.com.

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.

REMINDER - TIME TO PAY YOUR ANNUAL DUES IF YOUR ENVELOPE SHOWED 2017 IN DEC.

(Your envelope will denote the date through which you are paid.)

**Don't miss an issue of the Clipper Pioneers' newsletter -
send in your check today!**

**Make payable to: Clipper Pioneers c/o Jerry Holmes,
192 Foursome Drive, Sequim, WA 98382.**

Mariaches in the Rain

By Bill Nash

We were on our way from Brownsville, Texas, to Mexico City. "We" constituted First Officer Ovie Snider and myself, a cargo C-46 loaded to 48,000 pounds, and minimum fuel for an instrument flight plan. This particular flight was unexpected. Our dinner had just been served at the hotel when the dispatcher phoned to ask if we could take off in an hour with a special load.

We were at the airport in 45 minutes. The dispatcher shoved a flight plan at me. "To save time, I made this out," he said. "The weather looks good."

I checked the flight plan and meteorological forms. The forecast predicted ceiling and visibility unlimited en route, with terminal weather excellent.

We took off at sunset. It soon became dark but the night was clear except for a few scattered cumulus. At Tuxpan, on the Atlantic coast, we were cleared by Mexico Air Traffic Control to proceed to Mexico City via Tulancingo, a holding point 44 miles from the Mexico City range. Our assigned altitude at the holding point was 13,000 feet.

That seemed unusually high. Eleven thousand should have been plenty, so I asked for the current Mexico City weather. It was - ceiling 3000 feet, visibility seven miles, light rain - plenty good enough, but distinctly at odds with the forecast. Between Tuxpan and Tulancingo we found ourselves beneath a steadily lowering stratified overcast and soon were on instruments. At Tulancingo we were advised to hold. A Mexican DC-4 had just passed there ahead of us and, due to the terrain, only one airplane at a time could make a range approach.

The DC-4 missed its first approach. That seemed strange, in the light of the flight conditions, so we requested another weather report. It was now - ceiling 2000 feet, light to moderate rain, visibility six miles - still not bad, but I asked Ovie to locate our alternate airport diagram in his operations manual and have it ready if we should need it. He could not find it in his manual or in mine. It seemed more than coincidence that both pages would be missing, so we checked the index sheets closely. The airport was not listed! Either it was no longer an acceptable alternate - or the field no longer existed!

I was silently cussing out that Brownsville dispatcher under my breath, when I remembered that I had signed that flight plan too, and was also to blame. However, looking up the alternate before leaving to see that it EXISTED didn't occur to me, especially since I had once been based in Brownsville, and the airport had been a regular alternate at that time. We learned later that the airport had recently been converted to a cow pasture, but the dispatcher, even though it was his area, somehow missed the decommissioning of the field and presented us with a bummer. He had chosen the alternate because it was only fifteen minutes from Mexico City, and the weather was forecast to be excellent. Using this close an alternate, we would need less fuel and the dispatcher could load more cargo.

At this disconcerting discovery, I briefly considered heading for Tampico, 140 miles behind us on the coast, but that would put the fuel on the hairy edge. Also, a good part of the cargo was medical supplies for a virus epidemic, and there was no reason to believe we could not land at Mexico City. So I elected to continue.

The DC-4 landed on its third approach and we were cleared to make ours. On the final leg of the approach blinding rain tore at us. Turbulence shocks shuddered the airplane and cargo. My windshield wiper blade snapped into a horizontal position and moved back and forth without wiping. There was now no forward visibility. Ovie's blade was skipping so that he couldn't see either. The "wrap-around" windshield of a C-46 develops a film of water on it in the rain and, without the wipers, forward visibility is an indistinguishable blur.

I was beginning to suspect that this wasn't our day when the tower called and advised that the airport had just been closed! Weather had suddenly gone below minimums, with ceiling under 400, scud at 200, visibility one-eighth mile, deluging rain.

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Mariaches in the Rain

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We advised the tower that we did not have fuel for the 180 nautical miles to Tampico and asked them to turn the field lights up to full intensity. Mexico City had to be it.

To spice up the situation the wind reversed. It was now 25 to 35 knots with gusts - from the northeast. We could no longer make an instrument approach - not with that wind behind us. We had no choice but to make a visual approach with next to no visibility. We were cleared to land on runway five - if we could find it. At 350 feet we could discern the blur of the city lights ahead, but were more interested in locating the beacon on Penon Hill. This little topographical gem is 300 feet high, halfway down runway five on the north side. It's inside the pattern, about 2000 feet from the runway.

When we found it, I put it on our left and we had a downwind leg, but could not see the runway. We passed the tower beacon, which is north of the beginning of the runway, put approach flap and gear down, continued 20 seconds, then completed a 280 degree left turn, and watched intently for the runway. We couldn't risk descending below our 350 feet because of the hill. The first thing we saw was the beacon of Penon Hill, flashing indistinctly to our left, which meant that we were too far down the runway to land.

The rain grew even more dense, and we were using rated power to maintain our altitude. Evidently the violent downpour destroyed some of our power and some of our lift, which was critical enough anyway at a high altitude airport (7,347 feet) with a heavy load of cargo. Fortunately temperature conditions were not conducive to carburetor icing. That was a good thing. We could not risk further loss of power by a trial application of carburetor heat. The manifold pressures were normal for the altitude.

Our airspeed had dropped off to 100 mph as we had tried to retain the precious altitude with the gear and approach flap down. When we saw Penon Hill, we pulled up the gear and began bleeding the flap up to go around again. The airplane climbed only reluctantly. It demanded take-off power for four full minutes to laboriously build up the speed to a thin 105 mph; enough for a barely safe left turn. We were both sitting as lightly as we could in those seats. Twice again we maneuvered through this same hair-raising circuit, except that we left the gear until we might see the runway - which we didn't.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

A Note from Stu Archer about the Upcoming Cruise...

If you have never visited Horta in the Azores, our Pan Am Cruise 22 April 2018 will be making a port call there.

There is so much Pan Am history there and several photo shops with great photos of the B 314's Yankee Clippers still available. First flight landed there May 21, 1939, we will arrive there 89 years later, 29 April 2018. Next on to Lisbon, the next stop for the Clippers, with plans to meet at the famous Pan Am place to eat, restaurant BONJARDIM, to many of us "The Chicken House."

We will continue on, visiting Vigo and La Coruna, Spain, Le Havre, France and arrive at Royal Caribbean's destination, Southampton, England 6 May 2018. This will be a historical trip with a lot of Pan Am history.

All Pan Am folks and friends are welcomed, please help by passing the information to others. More information on the next page... *Stu Archer*

***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 Cruise Reunion set for 2018 - Royal Caribbean's Navigator

Dear Pan Amer's:

We are very excited about our next (and much asked for) Pan Am Reunion Transatlantic Cruise from Miami to Southampton, England. The crossing will be a 15 day trip to Portugal, Spain and France. The cruise begins with six relaxing days at sea where you can melt away stress, relax poolside reach out to old friends and much more. Enjoy gourmet style dining in their top notch dining rooms or be pampered totally in the specialty pay bistros. Remember to leave a little room for savoring favorites in the different ports of call stops.

Your price includes: registration fee towards amenities, Vegas style shows, use of pool, tours of kitchen and such. Food is virtuously non-stop and even room service can be ordered up to midnight free. Games, movies, etc.. Look forward to great times at get together's and cocktail parties. We are on the beginning stages with Royal Caribbean to plan special tours at the different ports at prices only available to the Pan Am guests.

Rates: are per person, double occupancy, cruise only and based on availability at time of booking. Port charges are \$230.; government taxes are additional and fluctuate daily. **Singles** pay 200% of cruise, port charges and deposit plus one time tax. Once our allotment is gone, prevailing rates will take effect. We check prices to make sure you get the best, taking everything into consideration. Call to reserve now; a deposit of \$450 per person will lock in the current price which may increase in the future. As usual, all major credit cards are accepted but checks are preferred in an attempt to keep down credit card fees and pass the savings toward our onboard amenities, parties and the like. Insurance is available and highly suggested; call for your quote. Contact Stu Archer, former Pan Am pilot and cruise consultant, at 305-238-0911. Email stunjune@aol.com. More info to come. Call ChoiceAir **800-533-7803** for Royal Caribbean's best air quote.

Inside from \$799 /	Outside from \$1099 /	Balcony from \$1859.
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<u>Date</u>	<u>Port of Call</u>	<u>Arrive</u>	<u>Depart</u>	
Sun 22 Apr 2018	Miami, Florida	-	5:00 PM	Boarding
23-28 Apr 2018	Cruising	- -		Cruising
Sun 29 Apr 2018	Ponta Delgada, Azores	7:00 AM	3:00 PM	Docked
Mon 30 Apr 2018	Cruising	- -		Cruising
Tue 01 May 2018	Lisbon, Portugal	10:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
Wed 02 May 2018	Vigo, Spain	11:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
Thu 03 May 2018	La Coruna, Spain	7:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
Fri 04 May 2018	Cruising	- -		Cruising
Sat 05 May 2018	Paris /Normandy (Le Havre), France	7:00 AM	9:00 PM	Docked
Sun 06 May 2018	Southampton, England	5:30 AM		-

<p>CALL CARMEN JAQUET – INTERLINE TRAVELS, INC. 786-252-7838 Direct Line – 1-888-592-7245 456 MERLIN CT., TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301</p>
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<p>Information about cancellation of the Ireland Reunion on next page.</p>

Pan Am Reunion scheduled for Foynes, May 2018 has been cancelled

Margaret O'Shaughnessy has reported that the Pan Am Reunion in Foynes & Limerick has been cancelled due to a local reservoir overflowing and flooding the Museum on November 10, 2017. The museum was devastated, and the entire museum exhibitions destroyed, so they will have to start from scratch. "All our work for the past 27 years is gone," Margaret said in a recent letter. The B314 got about a foot of water all through it, so there is a big job of restoration there. They have begun a small new build schedule and a new Irish Coffee Lounge. With insurance, grant money from the government and a loan from the bank, the plan is to proceed on Jan. 1st. Since they cannot be sure of opening by March 2018, they decided to cancel the reunion and refund all registration fees and charges.

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

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, and send your email contact. They started out with 5 and have grown to 17. ~from Dave Criley

Pan Am -- Personal Tributes to A Global Aviation Pioneer

As many of you know, the Pan Am Historical Foundation recently published the highly acclaimed *Pan Am -- Personal Tributes to a Global Aviation Pioneer*, a book that caught the attention of Pan Amers and aviation enthusiasts around the world. The initial sales have been excellent and now into the sixth month since publication, the orders continue to come in.

This book may very well be one of the best -- if not the best -- book ever published about Pan Am. Rebecca Maksel, in the respected aviation journal *Air & Space*, published by the Smithsonian, wrote this about the book: "*Pan Am—Personal Tributes to a Global Aviation Pioneer* is just that: An insider's look at the airline from those who worked there. In addition to a history of Pan Am, the book also includes the esoteric: an interview with artist Milton Hebard, who sculpted the 15-foot bronze signs of the zodiac that graced the façade of the Pan Am building at JFK; a reminiscence from an employee who worked at Pan Am's Counter Vanderbilt, the largest ticket counter in the world; and a mournful remembrance from a flight attendant who flew aboard the White House press charter the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. Readers will learn about flights behind the Iron Curtain and Pan Am rescues of American citizens stranded by wars, revolutions, and earthquakes. The airline even had a waiting list for passengers interested in future trips to the moon."

This book belongs in every Pan Amer's library, and we are fortunate to have inventory available from the original print order to offer a special price of \$35 per single copy to friends and family of Pan Am. For those wishing to purchase five or more copies, the savings will be even better at \$30 per copy. Shipping will be free for orders within the United States. For international orders, please add \$50 per copy for shipping due to USPS international postage rates. Visit www.panam90book.com to order.

*...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

Roy Wallis Tucker, age 73 of Fayetteville, GA, passed away October 24, 2016 after a valiant two-year battle with Glioblastoma Brain Cancer. Born in 1943 in Great Falls, Montana, Roy was the oldest son of the late Brig. Gen. Robert W. Tucker and Emily H. Tucker. He was hired by Pan American Airways in 1965 and joined the Delta family in November 1991, when Pan Am was acquired by Delta. At Delta, he acted as Program Manager for the A-310 and MD-11 programs. In 1996, he was part of the crew who flew the Olympic Flame from Athens, Greece to Atlanta for the Olympic Games. He retired from Delta in 2003 after a combined PanAm/Delta career of 38 years of service.

Captain Jim Simmons Pan Am (747) passed away December 14th 2017 at my home in Grover Beach CA, he was a resident of Crystal Lake Woodinville Wa He was born in Seattle on May 20th 1930 Worked in the IGS based in SFO SEA JFK AKL.

Edna Lenhart Aikens was united with her beloved husband of 63 years, Pan Am Flight Engineer John Aikens, on August 2, 2016 at the age of 96.

Francis "Frank" Ricchi, 87, passed away on Tuesday January 16, 2018 at his home surrounded by his loving family and friends. He was a long-time friend of the Pan Am community, stellar aviator, flight instructor, check pilot, former Marine and just all around good guy made his last flight into the sunset this past week. Frank (sometimes known as the "Red Wop" because he had red hair) had the unique talent as a flight instructor to point out a discrepancy in a fellow aviator's performance without projecting any feeling of rejection or failure.

Captain Jerry Millon passed away on Jan. 6, 2018. He worked for Pan Am from 1951 – 1985.

Regis "Guy" Conti known as "Mr Wonderful" passed away August 25, 2017 in Hospice By The Sea in Boca Raton, FL. Regis Sr, "Guy" had a very full life being born August 11, 1928 in Pittsburgh, PA. His achievements include High School Valdelectorian, Spartan School of Aeronautics, USMC, A&P for National Airlines, Flight Engineer for Pan Am (DC-6, DC-7, B-707, B-727, B-747), Pilot for United Airlines (L-1011, B-747). Based in JFK, MIA, Berlin IGS, SFO, & LAX.

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

Layovers for Pan Am

Check out Pan American layovers at www.paacrewlayover.com, where some 81 cities and over 161 hotels are shown in photos.

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

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

Through the Iron Curtain

by Robert Kloepper

This tale is set in the middle of the Cold War..... 1975. It was a ferry flight from HEL to WAW in a 707 B-Adv. The plan was to fly airways toward CPH and then turn south to enter Poland via the corridor. The Captain was talking, the First Officer (me) was flying, and in a few minutes the Engineer was sweating.

The plane climbed like a scalded ape and we arrived at TOC in a hurry. MPT told the controller to cancel our plan, we will proceed direct to WAW. The controller said that was strictly forbidden and not allowed. MPT told him that he misunderstood. He was not asking permission, he was telling him. MPT said turning out of your airspace toward the southwest and "good day". We eye-balled a heading and away we went.

I asked the MPT two questions . "Will we be shot down and how is the weather in Siberia this time of year?" He answered "No and fine". MPT contacted a nice sounding young lady at Riga radio. I thought Riga was a suburb of Moscow. I didn't know. He told her of our plan and she responded with an altitude in meters and requested the usual routine info.....company, registration number, SOB, FOB, etc.

We flew along with MPT talking, me flying, and FEO sweating.....see paragraph 1. MPT asked her how our heading looked for WAW. She said not too good and gave us a better one to try. I was enjoying myself looking at the clouds and of course looking for any MIGs in the area. The rest of the flight was routine as was the approach and landing at WAW. The PanAm rep met the plane and asked how we beat the flight plan by so much. I told him that we took a short cut through the USSR. He laughed so hard that he almost fell down the steps.

I thought that would be some feed back on this but I never heard a word from anybody. Now 40 years later the statute of limitations has expired. My log book is gone now for years and I don't recall the Captains name. If he reads this, will he please contact me?

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/>

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.

A new website has been created for Lockerbie. It can be viewed at www.lockerbie103.com. It might be a worthwhile site to check out, especially for those who plan on visiting Lockerbie. Be sure to enter the web address in the browser (not Google Search, etc.) with the www. Otherwise, they will get hundreds of Lockerbies and 103s and may not find the web site after 15 pages. ~Claude Hedspeth