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November 2018 - Clipper Pioneers Newsletter

Vol 53-11 - Page 1

A Brief History of Ransome Airlines

by David Laird

Pan Am always flew long international routes, but the domestic feed usually came from other airlines. In 1979, that lack of domestic feed prompted Pan Am to merge with National Airlines, but passengers near hub cities still needed feeder service not covered by the newly acquired domestic routes. In June of 1986, Pan Am purchased Ransome Airlines to meet that need, and like Pan Am, Ransome had a history of pioneering new ideas in the airline industry.

J. Dawson Ransome started Ransome Airlines in 1967. He had begun flying when he was sixteen years old in the late 1930s, and during World War II, the Air Transport Command under the U.S. Army Air Forces hired Dawson as a ferry pilot. He ended up flying "the Hump," the Asian supply route over the Himalayan Mountains.

After the war, he went back to work for his father, who ran a construction-equipment dealership which he had started in 1916 just north of Philadelphia. Dawson Ransome became the vice president in charge of sales, but his heart was not in it. He really wanted to get into the aviation business.

About that time, Dawson built a Pitts Special in his garage. His wife, Maryann, even helped him. She said that they hardly went out anywhere for about a year. A Pitts Special is a homebuilt aerobatic biplane, and Dawson flew it himself in many air shows. He later donated his Pitts to the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, where it is now on display hanging from the ceiling of the gift shop in Washington, D.C. Dawson owned a number of other airplanes over the years as well. One was a twin Beech that he used for some charter work, which eventually led to his starting an airline.

On March 2, 1967, Ransome Airlines started scheduled service from Philadelphia Northeast (PNE) to Washington National (DCA). The company initially had three airplanes with a total of twenty-two seats to

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No Password Needed for Members Only Section of the Website

Please note - we have changed the access to the online newsletters so that you will no longer need a password to access them. GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT: www.clipperpioneers.com. There is also new information about accessing the members' mailing list. See page 5 for details.

Click on the "Members Only" button on the righthand side to access the current and previous newsletters.

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sell, and it later experimented with service to several other cities including Richmond, Norfolk, Newport News, Baltimore, and Dulles. In those days, many fledgling commuter airlines did not last long. Ransome was losing money too but did not give up.

The big break came when Dawson Ransome decided to talk with Leslie O. Barnes, CEO of Allegheny Airlines. In 1970, after much discussion, Ransome joined Allegheny as one of the Allegheny Commuters. This decision proved to be an excellent move.

While I was in the Air Force as a navigator on a KC-135, I knew the place to be was at the controls as a pilot. When I was released from the Air Force, I got a job at a small airport doing flight instruction and charters to build flight time as a pilot, and in August 1971, Ransome Airlines hired me.

At that time, Ransome had twenty-two pilots on the seniority list. We were flying four Beechcraft airplanes which had been converted by Volpar Inc. in California to carry fifteen passengers with two pilots. Volpar took a Beech 18, put turbine engines on it, stretched the fuselage, and replaced the tail wheel with a nose wheel. The Volpars were equipped with weather radar, which was very unusual for any commuter airline. Our routes ran between Philadelphia International (PHL), Washington National (DCA), Northeast Philadelphia (PNE), and Trenton, New Jersey (TTN).

It wasn't long before the airline needed larger airplanes. Meanwhile, Lake Central Airlines had been flying Nord 262s when Allegheny bought the company. The Nord was a French-built high-wing, two-engine turboprop which carried twenty-seven passengers and one flight attendant. However, Allegheny disliked the Nords and parked them. Dawson Ransome thought that the Nords could help increase his company's passenger capacity, so he made a deal with Allegheny to purchase the airplanes. At the time they were painted in Allegheny's purple livery. Most of them were repainted before they were put into service, but the employees at Ransome joked about the flying grape.

The deal with Allegheny was not the only one that Dawson Ransome needed to make to fly the Nords. FAA and CAB were involved too. All the commuter airlines operated with Part 135 certificates, which governed charter companies and commuter airlines. Any airline operating aircraft with a takeoff weight over 12,500 pounds operated with a Part 121 certificate. The Nord's maximum takeoff weight was 23,370 pounds. Not wanting to need to comply with the more stringent rules of Part 121, Dawson Ransome lobbied the CAB for an exemption, and Ransome Airlines became the first airline to be exempted from that rule.

In May of 1972, Ransome Airlines started service with two Nord 262s. The Nord was an easy airplane to fly. The main landing gear was mounted on trailing-arm linkages, which meant that the wheels would move back and up as the airplane came down on the runway. We would frequently receive compliments for our smooth, squeaky landings.

Another first for Ransome Airlines was replacement service at Trenton. Allegheny had been servicing Trenton and getting a subsidy for it from the CAB. Ransome took over the service without subsidy and offered more frequent service. The new service was popular with the public and the CAB, and Ransome made a profit.

In March of 1974, Ransome retired the last Volpar from service, and I happened to be the captain on that trip. The Volpars served the company well for about six years, but they didn't carry enough passengers. For a couple years, Ransome operated a de Havilland Twin Otter between Trenton, Northeast Philadelphia, and Philadelphia International. The Twin Otter carried nineteen passengers, but its major drawback was a lack of speed.

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Over the next few years, Ransome added more cities. In 1979, Ransome was operating twelve Nords and again needed larger aircraft. The choice this time was the de Havilland Dash 7, a fifty-passenger short-takeoff-and-landing (STOL) aircraft powered by four Pratt and Whitney turboprop engines. We would often say that it could stop on a dime and give you nine cents change. It could land and come to a stop in 750 feet, and the takeoff distance was not much longer.

The Dash 7 facilitated another Ransome innovation. Washington National Airport had restrictions on how many arrivals and departures each airline was allowed. These allowances were known as slots. Ransome Airlines had many slots, but the Dash 7 could operate in and out of Washington without requiring a slot, which meant that we could add more flights. The Dash 7 would land on Runway 33 and stop before crossing Runway 36 (now Runway 01). The short landing allowed a simultaneous takeoff or landing on the crossing runway by most of the jets. Twice when I was flying a Dash 7 into DCA, we were cleared to land on Runway 33 and hold short of 36 when a 727 cleared to land on 36 elected to go around. One was Eastern Airlines, and the other was Pan Am. I have often wondered what the conversation was like in the cockpit. "What's a Dash 7?" or "Can they really do that?" I think most of the pilots operating into DCA were familiar with our operation since we did it several times every day.

Another Ransome exclusive was our RNAV routes between PHL and DCA and also RNAV approaches to DCA and PHL. We could fly from PHL to DCA on our own route and avoid most air-traffic delays. When we arrived in Washington, we would transition to the RNAV approach on the east side of the airport, land on Runway 33, and then hold short of 36. If the ceiling were less than 1000 feet, we would have to get in line with the rest of the traffic for an ILS approach. Arriving at Kennedy Airport in New York (JFK), we often used the STOL capability of the Dash 7 to avoid traffic delays. We could land on the east side of the airport on Runway 32, which was only 2500 feet long. It was no problem for the Dash 7 but way too short for any of the larger jets. Ransome Airlines had a very good relationship with Air Traffic Control. The controllers knew what we were capable of doing, especially with the Dash 7, so they often would get us in and out of the airports we served with minimum delays.

Ransome Airlines did some experimental work for the FAA with a microwave landing system (MLS), which was installed in a few of our airplanes. There was an MLS approach to 27R at PHL. It had a six-degree glide slope, which the Dash 7 could handle easily. On a normal ILS, with a three-degree glide slope, we would be around 1000 feet over the Philadelphia Navy Yard. On the MLS approach, we would be at 2000 feet. At twice the altitude, it made a strange view! With the advent of GPS, the MLS system was dropped out of further development.

Around 1979, with the introduction of the Dash 7s, Ransome Airlines became the largest commuter airline in the country, as measured by revenue-passenger miles. That record held for about three years. In the summer of 1982, Ransome Airlines broke off its relationship with USAir (the new name for Allegheny). Management thought we could do better as a completely independent company.

It did not go as well as they expected, so in 1984, they made an agreement to be the first commuter affiliated with Delta Airlines. Business was good with Delta even though it had no experience with commuter airlines. There were stories of passengers at LaGuardia coming down the stairs to go out on the ramp to board a Ransome airplane. Then they would go back inside and ask "Where is the Delta jet that is going to

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

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Albany?" Delta did not want its logo and colors on our airplanes. Only a small sign by the door said "Delta Connection."

The ATR 42, made by Airbus, was introduced in late 1986. It was faster than the Nords and the Dash 7s and carried almost as many passengers as the Dash 7. Ransome eventually had eleven ATR 42s.

In 1986, Pan Am had an agreement with Empire Airlines to feed passengers into Kennedy Airport to connect with overseas flights. After Piedmont Airlines bought Empire, Pan Am bought Ransome Airlines to fill the void. Pan Am renamed Ransome as Pan Am Express and changed our routes so that most of our flights were to and from Kennedy Airport. We still served PHL and DCA, which had been the backbone of our route structure for a long time. We had up to eighteen round trips a day between those two cities.

Pan Am reported that Pan Am Express brought enough passengers to Kennedy to fill up a couple 747s every day from all over the northeastern United States. Pan Am Express served the Northeast from Buffalo to Washington to Portland, Maine, and just about everywhere in between. The Dash 7s again served in a special way. Pan Am had started running a "shuttle" service between New York and Boston as well as New York and Washington every hour at half past the hour. The company wanted a departure from LGA to DCA at 9:30 PM, but Washington had a curfew that would not allow a 727 to land after 10:00 PM. Instead, Pan Am used a Dash 7 (or two) for that last departure because it was very quiet and therefore not subject to the curfew. The Dash 7 also flew the early departure out of DCA before the curfew ended at 7:00 AM.

In 1987 Pan Am management gave the approval to put the Ransome pilots on the main seniority list. The pilot's union, ALPA, was in favor of the policy. No other major airline had done that with any commuter airline that it had bought. The only exception I know is when Piedmont bought Empire, but Empire had a mix of jet and turboprop equipment. Ransome had only turboprops.

In order to keep enough qualified pilots at the commuter operation, only six or seven pilots were allowed to switch to the mainline each month. We were all added to the seniority list by date of hire. However, only one pilot at Ransome was hired before the last hiring that Pan Am had done in 1968. That one pilot was close to retirement age, so he did not switch. All the Ransome pilots were put on the list ahead of the new pilots that Pan Am started hiring at about the same time.

In the beginning, most of the Ransome pilots checked out as copilot on a 727. The new hires were being trained as engineers. Most of the 727 flying was for the shuttle, which made an easy transition for us since we had been flying into those airports for years. Ransome Airlines provided many well-experienced pilots which were added to the Pan Am roster. Later, Pan Am started some new crew bases for the Express operation. The company had small operations in Miami, Los Angeles, and Berlin, Germany, while still keeping bases at Northeast Philadelphia and Providence.

Ransome Airlines continued to fly as Pan Am Express until the end came for Pan Am in December 1991. Most of the Nords ended up in Australia. After that, TWA took over what had been Ransome and called it TWA Express. It had crew bases at Northeast Philadelphia, Washington, and JFK in New York but operated only until 1995. One problem was that the North Philadelphia maintenance base was too far away from the hub at Kennedy Airport. The assets were transferred or sold to other TWA Express airlines.

That ended the story of a great commuter airline. Ransome Airlines certainly left its mark on aviation history. Some colleges with aviation history courses even have a section about the company. I count it a privilege to have been a part of both Ransome Airlines and Pan American World Airways.

PAN AM REUNION CRUISE

APRIL 27, 2019

TAMPA TO BARCELONA

Dear Pan Amers:

Once again we prepare for our next and much welcomed Pan Am reunion cruise.

We are honoring the many requests to repeat a Transatlantic cruise with lots of wonderful and interesting ports of call. Our 14 day cruise, departs Tampa to Barcelona starting off with seven relaxing days at sea. Melt away land-based stress with a spa massage, build a scrapbook of memories or simply relax poolside. Plenty of time to reach out to old friends, enjoy movies and lots more. Expect a great time!

Embarking on an oceangoing adventure like this will be no doubt one of the most exciting moments of any traveler's life. The old saying that it's as much about the journey as the destination has never been truer. Adventures await you at each port, shopping, exploring famous attractions or sipping a cool drink in a romantic café. So, welcome aboard, I know this cruise will provide a lifetime of memories to cherish. Family and friends are most welcomed.

Rates: per person, double occupancy, cruise only, based on availability and subject to change. Singles pay 200%. Port charges and government taxes additional \$330.39 per person plus a registration fee (to help with amenities, cocktail parties and such) at \$125. per person. Call to reserve now; a deposit of \$450 per person will lock in the current price. All major credit cards are accepted but checks are preferred. Insurance is highly suggested and cost is based on category type cabin. More information with your invoice.

ITINERARY:

Sat	27 Apr 2019	Tampa, Florida	5:00 PM	Boarding	
Sun	28 Apr 2019	Key West, Florida	11:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
Mon	29 Apr 2019	thru 05 May 2019	Cruising	-	Cruising
Mon	06 May 2019	La Palma, Canary Islands	1:00 PM	9:00 PM	Docked
Tue	07 May 2019	Tenerife, Canary Islands	7:00 AM	5:00 PM	Docked
Wed	08 May 2019	Cruising	-	-	Cruising
Thu	09 May 2019	Malaga, Spain	12:00 PM	9:30 PM	Docked
Fri	10 May 2019	Cruising	-	-	Cruising
Sat	11 May 2019	Barcelona, Spain	6:00 AM	-	Debark

\$789 (Inside) _ \$929 (Outside) \$1698 (Balcony) \$2539 (Jr. Suite)

To reserve call INTERLINE TRAVELS 1-888-592-7245 (TOLL FREE) or Carmen's direct mobile phone 786-252-7838. For questions on cruise call Stu Archer (Pan Am pilot and cruise director) at 305-238-0911. Carmen 786-252-7838 INTERLINETRAVELS@YAHOO.COM

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

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/>

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.

Check Out the Lockerbie Website

A 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

Pan Am -- Personal Tributes to A Global Aviation Pioneer

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. Visit <https://www.panam.org/shop/669-panam90-book> to order.

Thank You for the Stories You're Sending In!

We've been getting some good stories about memories of your times with Pan Am, and we want you to know we appreciate it! Keep them coming, and you will see them in the upcoming issues! 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? Send them to sue@clipperpioneers.com or jerryholmes747@gmail.com

*...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

Kyle Robert Bradford, age 90 of Eaton Rapids, MI passed away on Wednesday, September 5, 2018. Kyle was born on December 27th 1927 in Hamlin Twp., MI to Clara (Kellogg) and Walter Bradford Sr. He attended Olivet High School and went on to honorably serve in US Navy and then US Air Force where he learned to fly as part of the Warrant Officer program. After leaving the service, Kyle spent many hours hanging out and flying at the Miller field airport in Eaton Rapids with his brother Lyle. He landed a job as a navigator for Pan American Airlines and during a furlough married Margaret Brown of Eaton Rapids. Together, they settled in California where he continued to fly for Pan Am and retired as a Captain of 747s in 1987.

"Captain" Richard (Dick) Mayhew, a long-time resident and active member of the Ridgefield community, passed away on September 20, 2018 in Danbury Hospital after a short illness. He was 98 years old. Richard joined the military in 1941 and after completing cadet training became certified as a pilot on March 30, 1942. He served as a Navy flight instructor, training pilots during WWII at air bases in Jacksonville, Miami and Deland, FL. He started his 34-year commercial aviation career with TWA in 1946. He moved to Ridgefield in the 1950's and flew for Pan American Airlines, as Chief Navigator for 17 years, and ultimately retired as a 747 Captain in 1980.

Rick Blake, long time Pan Am captain, passed away in April 2018.

James Albert Lytle, Jr. went home to be with the Lord at 100 years of age on Tuesday, September 25, in Naples FL. Born on April 4, 1918, James is survived by his wife of 77 years, Vivian Alexa Lytle, his four children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. James served in the United States Air Corps during World War II and continued on to fly for Pan Am for 32 years. After retiring as a Captain, James worked in real estate before fully retiring at age 92. A disciplined man who worked hard, James adored flying airplanes, loved playing golf, and was an avid sports fan. Above all else, James cherished his family; he was a man of faith and integrity, remaining loyal, kind and strong throughout all the days of his life. He treasured his wife, Vivian, and was a romantic throughout their long marriage. He leaves behind a legacy of faith, constancy and unconditional love.

We invite you to a celebration of Life in Loving Memory of **Tom Kewin** on November 4, 2018, at 280 Buena Vista Avenue, Mill Valley, CA. All are invited. We know that most of you are from out of town but just want you to have the opportunity to celebrate and perhaps see old friends. Kindly respond to tomkewinmemorial@kewin.com.

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

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

***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***

Memories of a VERY Junior Pilot, part 3

By Robert Kloepper

I was a 707 FEO for a short time and those seats started to go out the door. I stayed at JFK and was lucky enough to go on the 747 as an FEO at the bottom of course. There was a lot of flying and I had plenty of action while on reserve. I never had a line. I considered myself to be a pilot who happened to be on the panel. Even before CLR training much later at UAL, I never hesitated to throw suggestions around. Sometimes, I probably talked to much. I was told to shut up three times that I can remember.

First time we were flying from JFK to SFO in the middle of the night. We were filed way north because of the jet stream. At TOC, ATC cleared us direct to SFO and the pilot headed that way. I recommended that we not do that because of the wind. After a short, terse discussion, the Captain told me to shut up and mind the panel. I did! We busted the daylights out of the flight plan but I never said another word. Maybe they needed the extra time to finish out their month of flying.

The second time was during a B check. The check captain told me that I am getting ahead of the program. He told me that he is trying to check these two guys and I'm giving clues and help before it was appropriate. He told me just to be a good FEO and don't contribute unnecessary verbiage. Of course, I complied. He was right.

The third time was a flight from MIA to JFK. The Captain was from one of the offices in hangar 14. I had heard his name but didn't know him. I don't think that he had 747 captain seniority but I guess it went with his office job. There was an ATC hold on all traffic to the northeast. We were about number 6 or 7 in line for 9L. I said that I was standing by to start 1 and 4 when he was ready. The captain gave me a nasty, curt blast "Don't give me any check list prompts. When I want a checklist, I will call for it." I went into the nearest cocoon and clammed up. You know what is coming. When it was our turn, we lined up with two engines running. He called "Take off check list"! I don't recall exactly what I said. Knowing me it was a combination of irony, sarcasm, condescension maybe with a little humor mixed in. We had to clear the runway while things were sorted out. It was a very quiet ride from MIA to JFK.

I was always on reserve and for some reason I flew with a lot of SFO based crews. I was a fill in usually one way. I found it interesting that all of the SFO guys loved San Francisco but none of them actually lived there. When they found out that I lived in New Jersey they seemed fascinated that I actually liked living there. Usually, the MCO would feel obliged to talk in a strange way. New Jersey became New Joy See. I only knew two people who had a weird accent like that and they were both born and raised on Staten Island. Usually this horseplay stopped after a few minutes, but one MCO kept up all the way across the country. When we arrived at the JFK blocks, I didn't notice him leaving his seat and I ran the electric FEO seat all the way forward and caught his shoe between the seat and the center pedestal. It was an accident but I know he thought I did it on purpose. It was an accident!

My career with PanAm ended on PAC day in 1986. I always considered myself to be a PanAm guy. I never commuted but did end up commuting at UAL. I went JFK-SFO-MIA-HNL-ANC-ORD and finally to EWR and then retired shortly after 911. I was right. Commuting is awful. Why did I hang on for so long? An old fashioned reason. I needed the money to support myself and my family. I've been retired now for 17 years and many memories are still very vivid. I worked with a lot of great people. Adios.