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An Unknown and Abiding Danger of Flight: The Human Element of Surprise

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

Quickly, the years pass and things seem to change. Sometimes they seem to change for the better and sometimes for the worse. Yet, some things never seem to change at all. Human nature and the ability to surprise everyone with the things you do is an impressive example of human consistency in my estimation. Closely related is human stupidity.

At Pan Am in the early 1970s, when I was a first officer, we had an experienced flight attendant who accidentally walked out the rear door of a B-707. Since it was quite a distance from the ground, she broke her arm badly. She was actually lucky she didn't do something far worse.

After being off flight status for several months while her arm mended, she returned to duty and was showing some of her friends how she had accidentally fallen out of the plane, and - you guessed it - she once again fell out of the same door and once again broke the same arm. Talk about history repeating itself.

Now you know how the red strap used to cross the door at the back of the B-707 came to be known, at least for some, as the "Barbara strap." I don't know whether or not the strap's namesake actually ever heard it referred to in that way or, if she did hear reference made to a "Barbara strap," whether or not she smiled. If I were a betting man, I'd guess she would have cringed or winced rather than smiled. She was certainly guilty of learning the hard way!

During the 1980s, on a Pan Am flight from London (LHR) to New York (JFK), we had a purser named Victoria, based in London, who was "unique." She had short blonde hair and had a penchant for dressing like the late Queen Mother, with big hats and fluffy clothes. She always dressed as if she was headed for the

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

An Unknown and Abiding Danger of Flight: The Human Element of Surprise

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palace or a formal tea. To her credit she was always coming up with ideas to do more than what was required. She was creative and, at heart, a very kind person. Another descriptive word that comes to mind for her is “flamboyant.” This particular flight would give her another opportunity to do something different. The equipment was a B-747-100 with an upstairs lounge. Victoria was assigned to the upstairs lounge, which at the time was business class with fifteen passengers.

I left the cockpit to visit the lavatory, which was outside the cockpit. What I saw completely surprised me. Victoria, thinking she was doing something out of the ordinary and nice, had personally brought on board fifteen floating candles, which had been lit and placed in front of each passenger.

What I told Victoria was that her efforts with the candles were very much appreciated but that I thought it would be a good idea to at least blow the candles out as we might hit some turbulence and cause a real problem – like fire. Although I doubt she really believed there was a problem, she did as I asked and blew out the candles – probably figuring that she could come up with something equally nice and different next time. For me the phrase “Victoria by Candlelight” always comes to mind whenever I think of her. It just seems to fit.

Ten or so years later, during the early 1990s, our B-747 was en-route from Auckland (AKL) to Sydney (SYD); and, we were about one hour from Sydney when we got a call on the intercom that one of the flight attendants had been involved in a serious accident. When I asked what had happened, here is what I was told: a flight attendant was working in the lower lobe (in the lower cargo area) where the galley was located and when she finished with her galley duties needed to come up to the main deck area. She walked over to the elevator and, thinking she was stepping into the elevator itself, got into the area which was under the elevator. Seeing no controls, she shouted as loudly as she could for those in the galley to bring her up. Those in the main galley thought she obviously saw that the elevator was in the upper position, and, therefore, they sent the elevator down – right on top of the flight attendant who was in fact standing under the elevator.

It knocked her down but, as soon as the flight attendants heard her screaming, they immediately stopped the elevator, went down, and pulled her out of the elevator shaft. The purser thought that the flight attendant had broken her back. I got on the PA and asked if we had a doctor on board, which we did. I talked to him and asked if he'd look at the injured flight attendant. He graciously did so and reported back that, although she had been very seriously injured, he didn't think she'd broken her back.

I then notified Sydney Air Traffic Control and asked that we be granted priority handling and asked whether or not we could have the speed restrictions removed so we could make as quick an approach as possible. Our request was granted and as soon as we landed and parked there was an ambulance beside the plane. Moreover, several flight attendants from Qantas were there to assist the injured flight attendant. It was very efficiently handled by all. She remained in the hospital some six weeks recovering from her injury.

Sad to say, nothing was ever done to prevent such an accident from happening in the future. For example, the elevator door was never modified to prevent door openings when the elevator was not there. I even suggested that, at the very least, colorful streamers could be hung under the elevator so you'd always know whether or not you were in or under the elevator. It would have cost next to nothing. That didn't happen either.

If there's a lesson in all this, it's that you should always be aware of your surroundings – no matter where you happen to be. After all, you can't depend on humans getting any smarter over time.

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An Unknown and Abiding Danger of Flight: The Human Element of Surprise

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It's hard to determine which of these incidents was the worst. It's often hard to differentiate degrees of "dumbness." But, I think the worst example of stupidity I can think of - because it happens so often and is so common - occurred very recently. My wife and I were flying to Munich (MUC) about three years ago and my wife, who likes red wine, asked the purser, "What red wines do you have today?" Her reply was, "Oh, the normal stuff." She had no enthusiasm for her job or for providing service to her passengers and that's dumb, dumb, dumb. She should have been glad she had a good job. I answered for my wife, "Bring us a glass of the normal stuff then." I should have said something else.

The Great Atlantic Air Race

By Rich Selph

In his fun piece, Bob Kloepper recalls an Air Race contestant crawling up through the lower 41 hatch on a 1969 cargo flight to LHR. For a moment, I thought that was me. I did exactly the same thing, but was competing westbound leaving LHR.

For the 50th anniversary of the first transatlantic flight in 1919 by Alcott and Brown, the Daily Mail sponsored the Great Air Race. With satellite synchronized time stamps at the tip of the BT Tower in London and the Empire State Bldg in NY, contestants clocked out at one and clocked in at the other at any time during the week of the competition. Seven categories in each direction ranged from supersonic to light aircraft. Three hundred forty eight attempts were made, fifty per day.

My westbound attempt had an exciting beginning. A London station rep had a friend, Ian Hunter, the British Isles Road Racing motorcycle champion! I hopped on the back of his machine at the bottom of the Post Office tower. Middle of the night darkness and deserted streets masked the right angle screeches down the narrow streets out to the motorway. The speed on the M 1 was unnerving. Race rules specified that breaking any laws was disqualifying. When I tried to raise my head to check the speed, the wind stream almost blew my helmet off. I decided not to worry. Even if a bobbie spotted us, he would have no chance to catch us!! I jumped off at LHR and into the Pan Am rep's station vehicle, out to the waiting 707 freighter and up into the lower 41.

Early in the race week, amid huge press coverage in London, the Brits were enthusiastic and BOAC pilots were flying at the barber pole across the pond when racers were aboard. Captain Dick Mayhew, a man of impeccable integrity, was unconvinced by this explanation, however, and insisted it would not be fair to other competitors to fly faster than standard M.82 cruise. The best laid plans..... Luck came to my

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The last print issue of this newsletter was scheduled for Dec. 2018. However, because of quite a few requests to keep the newsletter going as a print edition, it has been decided to continue with it until the funds run dry, while leaving sufficient funds to keep the website going for awhile.

We'd like to have more stories to share! If you have a story you'd like to send, please send it in sooner rather than later! Email to: sue@clipperpioneers.com.

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

The Great Atlantic Air Race

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rescue, however. The predominant westerly winds turned and I had easterlies which proved far more significant than the cruise speed.

Prior arrangements with customs at the JFK cargo terminal had been rejected, but when I came running in with my orange race 'bib' flying behind, the agents just enthusiastically waved me on. An efficient, though not nearly as hair-raising, motorcycle ride took me to the Empire State Building.

Not surprisingly, the RAF won the overall fastest in both directions. My wind assisted efforts produced an elapsed time of 7:06, to win the Fastest Overall, non Supersonic, Westbound, by 15 minutes! (A Pan Am winner in another category was Susi Scribner, 17 year old daughter of Kim Scribner.)

Ann came with me to the Awards ceremony in London where Prince Phillip presented the Rothmans Trophy, an original work of art, and 4000 British pounds (US \$9600 at the time). At only 29, I was thrilled. I haven't won an air race or \$10K or pretty much anything since.....

More Memories of Captain Jack Priddy

by John Frisbie

Excerpts from pages 94, 95 of "My Soaring Adventures", an autobiography.

Just out of my three years in the USAF training Command, my first months as a junior co-pilot with a big airline were "playing catch up". I was able to share a two story garage apartment with two other new hires, Dick, Schieber, US Navy and Ed Moore, US Marines. They were a month ahead of me in training as I was delayed by a bout with mumps contracted from my niece and nephews. As a result I was assigned to the DC-7C instead of the DC-6 which my roommates were already flying.

On the evening before my first flight with Pan Am my "buddies" brought out their bottles of Duty Free Scotch (a perk of the shorter range DC-6 fuel stops). They toasted to my initiation into the mysteries of flying with a crew - a large crew after single engine, solo Air Force flights. The next day when I reported for my first trip I was quite hung over! Captain John Priddy put me into the co-pilot's seat and I flew most of the trip to London including the landing! To this day I have no idea if Captain Priddy knew I was hung over, but it was a blessing for me. The weather for an approach to London North was bad, close to minimums. It was a good approach and landing, my first on the line (our check out flight had been very brief!) The crew seemed to be OK with it. But I was dying to get some rest! At the Kensington Palace Hotel I fell asleep in the huge bathtub and woke up as my mouth was just going under.

A few weeks later I met Captain John at Idlewild for another flight. Remembering that he had previously told me he lived on Long Island's North shore, I asked him if he could recommend a nice romantic restaurant there. I had just met a charming German stewardess on my last trip and wanted to impress her. (She is now my wife of over 60 years). It worked, the restaurant was indeed charming and romantic and I have always been indebted to a fine gentleman and a damn fine pilot!

Gratefully, John B. Frisbie and Angela Wallenberg Frisbie, Boca Raton, FL

October 29th, 2018

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

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 Hudspeth

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

Earl (Bud) Lemon passed away one week short of his 93rd birthday on December 17, 2017 in Watsonville, California. Earl was married to Evelyn Lemon. Their marriage was a true love affair of 66 years until Evelyn's death in 2013. Earl is survived by his two sons, 4 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Earl served as a Navigator in the Marine Corps during World War II in the Central and South Pacific. He also served in the Marine Corps as Navigator for 5 months after the war ended flying the American Military officers around China accepting the surrender of the Japanese. On July 1946 Earl went to work for Pan American Airlines as a Navigation Instructor in San Francisco. Earl used the GI Bill to earn his commercial pilot's licence. Earl joined Pan American's flight crew as a Navigator in 1955. Earl served as Navigator on the DC 4, DC 7, Stratocruiser, and 707. He flew the 707 and the 747 as First Officer and Captain. Earl often talked about the flight in 1957 he served as one of the Navigators on the Pan American Stratocruiser Clipper America, first airliner to service Operation Deep Freeze in McMurdo Sound Antarctica. After retiring as 747 Captain from Pan American in 1984, Earl and Evelyn loved working their kiwi and avocado farm in Watsonville. Earl and Evelyn also loved fishing together on Eagle Lake in California where they also had a cabin. Earl was kind, loving, hard working and a devoted family man.

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

Role Models

by David Heathcock

I was very lucky in my Pan Am career, but there were some things I could have done differently. Among them, was not getting more stories out of the WWII Captains I flew with in the early years. They usually didn't say much about their part in the big war, I think because they felt they didn't do more than everyone else, and there's usually someone around that did something more heroic than you did.

I did have a conversation once with Captain Jim in Miami. No one liked flying with him much because he preferred to be called Colonel rather than Captain, and he was a real stickler for detail. Also, Jim didn't always alternate landings if he thought you were unworthy. I got along pretty well with him, perhaps because I was a training captain at the time, although that usually didn't impress anyone. I had one simulator check with Jim, and the man never made a mistake. The check mark would have been placed somewhere between "outstanding and unbelievable" as the old joke goes. I guess attention to detail helped keep him alive in the B-17's.

I asked Jim a version of a question I was often asked whenever a stranger discovered I was an airline pilot. "Did you personally have any really close calls, in the missions over Germany?" Jim thought for moment and said "I once landed with only two people on the airplane that weren't dead or bleeding, if you ever saw the

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Role Models

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film of a B-17 landing with most of the horizontal stabilizer shot off, that was my airplane, but a different mission." I didn't ask for any more details. Anyway, something in the cockpit was making my eyes water a little, so I just looked out the window for a while.

Thanks Gentlemen, you were our role models.

On a lighter note, a few of the phrases that I remember from the good old days

Captain Pat speaking to a mechanic about whether or not the radar was going to get fixed. "Excuse me, but I think you are under the impression that we are having a **discussion** about this." Captain Pat was standing beside the station manager in San Juan when a baggage cart came by and a couple of bags came flying off. Pat said. "You seem to be a little understaffed these days." The station manager said. "No we're about where we should be." Pat said. "You need to have someone to come along and run over those bags." When the copilot returned to the cockpit after chatting up a lady in first class for some time Pat asked. "Did you get her number?" The copilot smiled and said. "Yes I did." Pat said. "Was it a toll-free number?"

My good friend Howard and I both passed up the opportunity to go with United One. Howard said "I was telling people that the only thing United had to offer was more money and security, then I realized how stupid that sounded and I quit saying it."

I'm not very original and the only thing I recall saying of note was to the flight engineer in Berlin when he asked. "What should I call you Captain or Dave, or what?" "Your Grace or Your Lordship will be fine." I replied. His response to me will remain unpublished, but we became good friends.

I flew with Captain Bill when he was a Captain in Miami. During the Miami days, we finished-up a grueling 15 day charter in Washington, DC where we ended up with two white and three black flight attendants on the last leg. They were all great workers and as beat up as we were. Bill had a conversation with scheduling and said. "We're all finished and off to Miami and all the flight attendants are free to go." One of the black flight attendants started to jump up and down and said. "We is free, we is free, Captain Taylor has set us free." Bill turned beet red and didn't know what to do or say until he got the joke, then we all laughed for a long time. I later flew with Bill when he was age retired as a Captain and remained in Berlin as a Flight Engineer. I told the co-pilot. "If you don't like what I'm doing, blame him, he's the one I learned from."

Our own Harvey Benefield certainly deserves a mention. His recent Iran story was very interesting, but I remember hearing a 5-minute version from another cockpit crew member at a party right after the event. I asked him, "What did Harvey say when they were pointing guns at you? Reportedly Harvey said. "Why couldn't Braniff have this route?"

***Please update your email address and phone number if it's been changed!
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or email to: jerryholmes747@gmail.com***