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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 palace or a formal tea. To her credit she was always coming up with ideas to do more than what was

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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. To request a current membership list, email sue@clipperpioneers.com with your request. 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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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.

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The last print issue of this newsletter is currently scheduled for August 2019, when the funds run out. However, because of many requests to keep the newsletter going as a print edition, or as an alternative, an issue to be emailed to you that you can print out, we are looking at some possible options. **Please take time to read the update on page 8 and take appropriate action.**

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! We appreciate you and the interesting stories you send in for all to enjoy! Email to: sue@clipperpioneers.com.

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

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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.

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.

Memories about the First Class of Stewardesses

by Dick Edwards

In 1944 PAA graduated its first class of Stewardesses. This class of seven was making history moving into PAA's heretofore Man's World of airline flying. How must those seven gals have felt; on the one hand super joy and on the other trepidation; how would the flight crews accept them, and could they really live up to PAA's high standards for their flight crews? Well, they needn't have worried: they brought ingenuity and determination into the passenger cabins that only a Gal can bring.

This story occurred one morning at PAA's 36th Street Airport in Miami when the crew was getting their DC-3 prep'd for departure. As often was the case, the passenger stairs were not yet in place at the passenger door and so the little aluminum emergency ladder was hanging down for the crew member's use. This little ladder only had about two or three steps and of course it was just an open type frame ladder.

While I was standing there in Ops looking out at the plane, one of the brand new stewardesses walked up to the plane and surveyed the problem, how was she going to get up that open ladder into the cabin !! A ground crew guy was standing next to her and another showed up and flopped down on to his butt at the base of the ladder offering to "Hold the Ladder for Her safety" *Sure he was*. While I stood there in Ops watching through the big window, this brand new Stewardess calmly handed her clipboard to the ground

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

Memories about the First Class of Stewardesses ~ continued on from previous page

crew guy standing next to her and then casually removed the PAA Wings Insignia from her jacket. She then bent over and with legs slightly apart, used the flight pin as a big safety pin and proceeded to pin the front of her skirt through to the back of her skirt and Voila! the PAA powder blue short leg stewardess pants uniform was born!! With that she marched to the open frame ladder and climbed right up into the cabin like a Pro !! Now there was innovation of the first order. Such was the enthusiasm and determination that these first PAA Stewardesses brought to their new profession.

These new Stewardesses led those that followed in transforming the cabin operation from a Man's idea into a cabin that only a Woman can do. Like converting a house to a home, these gals converted the passenger cabin into a place that passengers flocked to enjoy. Their performance, outstandingly smart uniforms and their interface with their passengers made the PAA Stewardesses the best in the world. They added cabin professional status to the professional status of the cockpit crews. In time, the high professionalism of the cockpit crews and the cabin crews became the envy of the World's airlines; without question they were rated the best.

I would be seriously amiss if I didn't also acknowledge the roll of PAA's Operations Management during this time. Our Top Managers were true Leaders. Their encouragement and recognition of their personnel brought out the best in all of us. We were always enthusiastically encouraged to offer new ideas and innovation to improve our jobs. It was these exceptional managers that truly brought Pan Am to the pinnacle of the World's Commercial Airlines. In my opinion, the early 1940's were also the greatest time in commercial aviation to be a PAA flight crew member.

Round the World

By Carl Stevenson

During my first year with Pan Am I was a Navigator out of JFK. Pan Am came up with the idea of having all Navigators become qualified as Relief Copilots (RCOs) so as to navigate from JFK to LHR, then continue as RCO until HKG or HND, then resume navigation duties to HNL and SFO.

If my memory serves me correctly, the pattern was about 9 days. I remember telling my neighbors I'd see them in nine days.....after I fly around the world. They sometimes looked at me like I was crazy.

Flight 002 departed JFK daily for London, Frankfurt, Delhi, Bangkok, Hong Kong Tokyo and ending in San Francisco.

Certain days of the week Pan Am Flt 2 would stop at different cities, but always start at JFK and finish in SFO. On Fridays, for example, Flt 2 would fly LHR -FRA then continue to VIE, IST, BEY, THR, DEL, BKK, HKG, HND, HNL, SFO.

Flt 001 departed SFO daily and flew the same routing the other direction.

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.

35th Annual Luncheon to be held on June 20th

Welcome Aboard,

I'm pleased to report that the 35th annual luncheon will be held this year on Thursday, June 20th in Port Jefferson, NY. I will be sending out a couple of hundred notices via e-mail and/or postal mail to everyone on my mailing list.

Parking info for Bridgeport will be included for the "Boat People."

As many of you already know, Dan D'Angelico, who usually hosts this event, is unable to do so this year because of a family emergency. Dennis O'Connor, from West Islip, stepped in and volunteered to work with the restaurant and the ferry to make the event possible.

It's because of folks like these that we're still talking to each other after all these years.

Spread the word and well see you all on June 20th.

Al Vale

P. S, The complimentary glass of wine is no longer included with our meal.

Pan Am Last Flight to Hong Kong

By Kenneth Miskow

On February 10, 1986, Capt Jack Finn and myself were to fly Pan Am flight 805 to Hong Kong. Since this was to be the last Pan Am flight before United Airline took over the Pacific division, we were given blue cap covers with the United logo. Before our return flight as United 806, we were to change our white cap covers and wear the United blue caps. After twenty years as using the call sign "Clipper", it presented a dilemma getting used to using "United" as the call sign.

Getting ready to taxi out on the return flight, my call to the ground control was "Hong Kong ground this is Clipper err United 806, taxi." After arriving at the takeoff point, again "Clipper err United 806 ready for takeoff". After takeoff clearance was given, the Hong Kong controller said "I understand your problem. United 806 you are cleared for takeoff. Good luck United".

And thus a new career was started.

Treasurer's Report

The current bank balance is \$8,314.48 as of May 29, 2019. The amounts paid for the May 2019 newsletter were: Printing, \$329.01; Mailing, \$284.92; newsletter, \$400.00; website, \$103.95. Total, \$1,117.88.

Future outlook for Clipper Pioneers publication, based on the above rates (approximates):
June, \$1,120.00; July, \$1,120.00; August, \$1,120.00, totaling \$3,360.00. If we continue to print after August, we will have an envelope printing charge for more envelopes. The balance of the remaining funds would be used for keeping the website going and updated until funds run out.

We will keep you apprised in the next newsletter as to how many responses we receive with funds toward continuation of the newsletter.

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! Keep 'em coming!!

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

David C. Walchli passed away at his home March 1, 2019. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio and lived in Novato, California for the past 60 years. He was 87 years old. He graduated from the University of Michigan with a business degree. He was a pilot at Pan American for 25 years and went over to United when Pan Am sold their Pacific Division. He loved his flying career including his experience as a fighter pilot with the USAF. He also enjoyed flying his Piper Cherokee mostly in California and the west coast. He is missed by his wife, Gloria, 3 children, 9 grandchildren, and 1 great grandchild.

For more information and full obituaries 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 or sue@clipperpioneers.com, or mail to: Sue Forde, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382

Retirement

By Bob Kloepper

Many years ago, I worked in a large factory. One day one of the men retired after 30 tough years. When our shift was over, the entire shift clocked out and escorted the retiree to the parking lot. His wife was waiting there and after a nice farewell from all of us, they drove off to enjoy the retirement that the union had negotiated over the years. Leaving an airline is quite different. Few if any of the crew members that you worked with are there. Then too, sometimes part or all of your negotiated retirement isn't there. Sometimes the company isn't even there.

At Pan Am the retirement MO usually consisted of coffee and donuts in ops. Many guys took their wives on the last pattern. Maybe someone from the chief's office would come down for a handshake. There were some variations to this. I flew one long pattern and after it was over, the Captain boarded the crew bus and said that it was his last trip. No coffee, no donuts. We offered to buy him a beer at the airport hotel, but he declined. One of my favorite retirements, the Captain brought his wife along for a long pattern starting with flight 2 to LHR. His wife was in first class. At the last minute, the PSA came on board to remove her from first class. After quite an argument, the Captain collected his wife and the two of them went home leaving a plane full of PAX sitting there. (I hope that he reads this, I thought it was great.)

I retired from Pan Am twice. The first time was in NRT. I flew to NRT on PA 801 and returned on UA 800. I changed the emblem on my hat and celebrated in my room with a bottle of Sapporo. The second time I retired I mailed in the paperwork to the Pan Am building. I jokingly said that I would like a mantle clock. The paperwork went through, but I received a nasty return letter saying that I could "stuff" the clock. In any event I have been retired and have been receiving a small check for 33 years from Pan Am.

While a 747 FEO, I flew on the retirement pattern that I think was the "Gold Standard".

***Please update your email address and phone number if it's been changed!
Email or write to Sue Forde, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim WA 98382
or email to: jerryholmes747@gmail.com or sue@clipperpioneers.com***

Results of Poll and Where We Go from Here for the Clipper Pioneers

First and foremost, thank you to all who have graciously responded to the polls - it's been a great help!

To date, we've received 136 responses (out of approx 500 subscribers) - a good sampling, I think. Of those,

(a) all except two have expressed the desire - often strong desire - to continue the newsletter in some form.

(b) A strong majority expressed the willingness to pay more to defray the cost, and several included checks! (We are holding those checks until we determine the outcome of this newsletter request.)

(c) Most agreed that receiving the newsletter by mail would be preferable, but agreed to receive it by email. A very few don't have internet and/or email, so would still need to receive the newsletter by regular mail.

(As you may recall, you weren't billed for dues last year, since the plan was to shut it down.)

So here's what we'd like to do to see if we can keep 'er going.

(1) Send in your check for \$50.00 (or more, if you'd like to contribute more), payable to Clipper Pioneers. We will hold the checks until we receive enough funds to go forward with either print or email editions, monthly, every other month or quarterly (depending upon the amount received). In the event we don't receive enough to do any of the above, we will apply the checks toward maintaining the website, and will post stories and news there.

(2) If you agree to this plan, please fill out the form below and send it in with your check. (You can also fill out the form on the website - www.clipperpioneers.com - or email us - and then send in your check.)

(3) If you'd like contribute additional funds to help, you may do so. :)

Those of you without email or internet, please so indicate on the form. Thank you!

____ YES, I'd like to contribute \$50.00 toward the continuation of the Clipper Pioneers newsletter, preferably by mail (either monthly, every other month or quarterly, depending upon funds received; or by email if not enough is received to continue print editions). If enough funds are not received to continue either by print or by a newsletter sent by email.

____ In the event insufficient funds are received to continue the newsletter by the methods above, use the funds to continue the website, and post stories, obituaries and news there, please.

____ I would like to contribute more toward keeping the newsletter going. I'm enclosing \$____.

____ I do not wish to contribute \$50.00, and understand that I will continue to receive the newsletter for another issue or two, and will be able to access the website until funds run out for that to continue.

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Mail to: Clipper Pioneers, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382.

or email to: sue@clipperpioneers.com

or fill out the poll at www.clipperpioneers.com