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Oct. 2019 - Clipper Pioneers Newsletter

Vol 54-10 - Page 1

## Flying the Boeing 314 Flying Boat

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE

*by William B. Nash*

Four or more stewards were aboard, depending on the airplane's configuration. The work was considered too heavy for stewardesses. Heavy, large capacity life rafts had to be handled, plus making up heavy bunks, handling hawsers, converting the dining room to a lounge and back, etc.

When on the water, our flying boats were operated under marine law, which all flight crew members were obliged to learn.

As pilots we attended quite a stiff ground school. In navigation class we were required to work out three star fixes by using spherical trigonometry, so that we fully understood the process. We learned to send and receive Morse code. During weeks in the shop we worked on engines. We studied and were tested on International law and Marine law. We practiced launching big life rafts and using the emergency equipment. Good swimming skills were required, as was a knowledge of nautical knot-tying and splicing. Learning a foreign language was encouraged. President Juan Trippe wanted us to be courteous, intelligent representatives of our company and country. A good knowledge of history was encouraged. Over time we had a series of home study required college courses to complete and to be tested upon, then entered into our records. One of the requirements to be hired as a Pan Am pilot was a four year college degree. Also, when I was hired on 08/14/1942, Captain Arthur E. La Porte asked me if I had been in scouting. He was very pleased that I was an Eagle Scout and aquatic instructor, as well as a High School teacher.

Our ground school was in Jackson Heights, New York. When learning to write down Morse code as I received it, I had trouble getting beyond ten words a minute. One cold day, I arrived at ground school, turned on the sending machine, and noticed immediately I was receiving twenty words a minute. What was different? Then I realized my hands were cold and stiff and I was forced to stay behind the transmissions. Writing them exactly when the letters were heard made one miss the next letter. That day, and from then on, I

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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](http://www.clipperpioneers.com). To request a current membership list, email [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com) with your request. Click on the "Members Only" button on the righthand side to access the current and previous newsletters.

## Flying the Boeing 314 Flying Boat

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successfully received the required twenty-five words per minute.

Among emergency procedures learned was the use of an axe. In 1942 on my first flight with Pan American, as a Fourth Officer on a Boeing 314 flying boat, I crunched the airplane - with that axe.

Out of New York, we had landed at San Juan. At departure from San Juan at dockside, I was standing in my place at the bow hatch ready to release the bow line. One engine was already running on the side away from the dock. Without a signal of any kind, some over-zealous member of the dock crew released the wrong line first - the stern line. Immediately the bow line, which was looped over one of the two bow posts in front of me, tightened beyond all hope of sliding it off over the lip at the top of the post. There was a hand-axe in a scabbard next to me, which, as I had learned in training, was for the purpose of cutting the line in just such an emergency. Due to the running engine and the bow post pivot-point, the 314's bow was swinging toward the dock. I snatched the axe and swung, being sure to use enough force to cut the two-inch hawser with the first blow. The line severed and we were pushed free by dock hands, and then the launches took over.

I looked back at the post and was aghast at what I saw. I had driven the axe through the line, through the post, and into the airplane hull. I had to pry the axe out of the hull with a screwdriver and a hammer, but it was still firmly stuck in the removable bow post. I had grim visions of being fired, on my first trip, for vandalizing one of Pan Am's prize aircraft.

I closed the hatch and, as Captain Briggs taxied out, took the bow post, with the axe now an integral part of it, up to him and displayed it. He said, "(expletive deleted)! You young guys sure come strong these days!" I was relieved when he followed with, "That's OK, Bill, you did the right thing and you did it fast."

I never had to use the axe again - but if I had, I suppose I would have swung it just as hard.

Prior to one of our large crews departing on one of our long flights to somewhere in the world, we all met on a previous day for a "pre-departure flight", during which the crew flew a B-314 for five hours together practicing every emergency procedure. At the same time we thoroughly checked the compasses with shots on the sun with the octant, and checked the compass deviation every twenty degrees. Of course, any necessary maintenance would show up and be completed upon landing. The captain's briefings were very detailed. The octants were also carefully checked, and the sea bombs were loaded for drift sights. All necessary charts and manuals were stowed. The stewards checked their equipment and saw that everything they needed was aboard.

Landing a large flying boat like the B-314 requires some important training and knowledge. Ideal conditions for landing are a level surface with a light chop, - and daylight. Landing on the water in a flat calm or at night was a different matter. The nose down glide approach to level off visually to land doesn't work on a calm sea. A calm sea lets you see right through the water. With very clear water a pilot cannot determine the

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**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](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com).**

**Don't forget to check out our website at: [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com)**

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## Flying the Boeing 314 Flying Boat

surface within a hundred feet and can dive into the water without leveling off. Therefore, to avoid finding ourselves swimming amidst a mess of airplane parts, we made nose high approaches with a descent rate of less than three hundred feet per minute. Any time the hull contacted the water it was a safe landing. The same nose high approach was used at night to avoid imitating a submarine.

Many years later, the standard approach with a jet airplane was also nose high rather than a glide and level off, but for a different reason. Jets have no propellers to blow air across the wings, assisting in sudden lift in case of a need for an immediate go-around. Jet engines require more time to spool up and give power when the thrust levers are advanced from off than do reciprocating engines when the throttles are pushed. By hanging out a lot of flaps and slats a jet can keep its nose and power up ready for an immediate “get the hell out of there”. The go-around is one of a pilot’s best maneuvers.

We did not land into swells exceeding three feet crest to trough. For instance, if we were about to depart Bermuda for Horta in the Azores Islands we waited until the forecast harbor surface, which was open to the sea, had swells forecast to be below three feet.

After one landing in the bay at Horta the crew noticed on shore a big pile of yellow bricks where a building had been. Upon asking the locals, they replied, “Do you remember that big round buoy to which they secured visiting ships? Twenty years ago it had drifted ashore so they anchored it and tied ships to it all these years. Well, they took it ashore to knock the barnacles off of it and paint it, and it blew the whole building down. It was a leftover wartime mine.”

Landing in the open sea was only done for emergencies or to rescue floating survivors. Then, if the sea was not flat, but had large rolling swells, we did not land as usual into the wind. Our procedure was to fly above a swell cocked downwind to stay over it and touch down on top of the swell, then turn downwind. To take off, we would climb atop a swell and cock the plane downwind to the degree necessary to stay there as we picked up speed for take-off.

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE**

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## Quick Lessons

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

I added checking the auto-pilot (A/P) at the gate prior to departure to my personal checklist immediately after the A/P failed on a Pan-Am flight in the early 1980s from London (LHR) to New York (JFK). You might say I was a quick learner.

As soon as we got to a thousand feet and tried to turn on the A/P as usual, we were very surprised that nothing happened. The big planes, like the B-747-100 we were flying, were designed to fly on A/P, for the sake of efficiency. But, on this flight, with the A/P malfunctioning, it was necessary for my first officer and I to fly the plane manually, in fifteen minute shifts, for the duration of the flight – about eight hours.

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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>**

## Quick Lessons

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To say the least, it was a long, tiring, and very tedious flight. We even had the engineer helping us fly the plane now and then - after we asked him to go down to the electronics compartment underneath first class, tearing up part of the carpet in the process of getting down into the compartment, to try to reset the A/P black boxes. Nothing worked. Boy, was that plane unstable. After such lessons learned the hard way, I really believe that serious pilots are very likely to develop their own checklists. I know I was constantly updating mine and started doing so very early in my career.

A classic example occurred when I was a new B-747 captain, departing from JFK. I was flying, and I suddenly ran into a lot of weather. It started during the climb, and I looked at the radar screen for just a second or two. When I looked up again, we were descending at 1,500 feet a minute, and we were only at an altitude of 5,000 feet at the time.

After that I made it a point during the departure briefing to make it clear that whoever was flying at departure would always ask the other pilot to look at the radar. The one flying would do just that, fly the plane. I had learned an important lesson when I did otherwise and checked my own radar. It could have been disastrous. We could have hit the water during our unexpected descent. Fortunately, nothing happened and another very good lesson was learned.

## Just Another R/R Flight to Danang, South Vietnam

*By Captain Eugene Woerner*

It was September 1968 and the Tet offensive was well underway in Vietnam. I was the First Officer on an R/R (Rest and Recuperation) flight from HNL to DAN. I can't remember who the Captain and the Flight Engineer were.

We had departed HNL at 0900 with a full flight of Military Personnel who had just completed their semiannual R/R in Honolulu. Most of them were probably married, as Honolulu was the only place where they could meet with their families on US soil. Most of the single GIs opted for more exotic places such as Bangkok, Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo and Sydney Australia.

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## 27th ANNUAL FAMILY REUNION und Oktoberfest

**Where:** Two Steps Downtown Grille - Ives Street, Danbury, CT

**When:** Sunday, October 7th, 2019 - from 1400 'til 1700

**What:** LUNCHEON BUFFET

**Beer and Wine:** NO CHARGE **Pay Bar:** AVAILABLE

**Cost:** \$26.00 per person, all inclusive



**Tell all your Pan Am Friends ~ Casual Dress ~ Copy this notice and pass it on!!**

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: ALAN VALE - WRITE REUNION IN MEMO**

**Contact:**

**Alan Vale**

**40 Britannia Dr.**

**Danbury, CT 06811-2612**

**(203) 778-2993**

**av747@att.net**

**Print your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**# in your party:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Print their names:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Just Another R/R Flight to Danang, South Vietnam** ~ *continued from previous page*

After a 90-minute fuel stop in Guam we had started our descend for the approach and landing to Danang. It was Midafternoon and our passengers were mostly resting and very subdued after a joyful reunion with their loved one's in Honolulu. This made the flight easy for our Stewardesses. Yes, they were still called that in 1968. We had made our arrival announcement and indicated that we would be making a very rapid descend with some steep turns on final approach and not to be concerned.

We were in communication with the US Air Force Air traffic controllers who had established radar contact with our flight and given a heading for radar vectors to land on Runway 17 R.

As I had landed in Danang several times before and was familiar with the approach, the Captain, who had never landed there, asked me to fly the approach and make the landing.

There always was a lot of Viet Cong activity in the mountains that fell sharply toward the base at Danang and during the flight briefing in dispatch in Honolulu we were told about unusually heavy and concentrated mountain enemy activity. For this reason, we stayed high and fast as long as it was safely possible.

We were on a tight base still over the South China Sea with the airport in sight as we were cleared to land. At this point we threw everything out, the landing gear and full flaps, used full speed brakes as well and descended at about 3000 feet per minute.

I was in a 30-degree banked turn on base ready to turn final to line up with runway 17R, the belly of the B 707 pointing and exposed toward the mountains when we felt a violent jolt and the whole airplane vibrated severely for several seconds. The Captain immediately informed the tower what had just happened and to have the emergency equipment meet the aircraft after landing.

There was no time to troubleshoot, we were pretty well committed to land and as the airplane was flying normally, we continued toward the sea level runway and landed without incident.

After landing we asked the tower if there was anything smoking or on fire and were told everything looked fine so we followed the "Follow Me" truck to our parking position on the ramp.

I made a cabin announcement to the troops, welcoming them back to IN country, apologized for the jolts and told them we had no idea what had just happened. After everyone deplaned the Stewardesses came to ask what had just happened, our best guess at that time, was that we most likely were hit by enemy fire.

This was confirmed when the three of us walked around the plane and the Captain found about a three-inch hole on top of the right horizontal stabilizer. That was the exit hole the bottom part of the stabilizer had the entry hole.

By this time a couple of the Pan Am mechanics met us and inspected the holes closer and informed us that we had been extremely lucky since the projectile had missed the elevator cables by millimeters. At that point we all took a deep sigh, slapped each other on the shoulders and thanked our lucky stars. It occurred to all of us that without elevator control we most likely would not be standing here on the ramp.

After conferring with maintenance in San Francisco and with the concurrence of the onsite mechanics it was agreed that they could use highspeed tape to patch the holes and that the aircraft could be ferried safely to Guam where further repairs could be undertaken.

We ferried the airplane to Guam with the Stewardesses relaxing in the back, each one of us grateful that we didn't become another statistic in the very unpopular Vietnam war.

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## 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](mailto:cblayd@aol.com)

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## 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](mailto:davecriley@comcast.net), and send your email contact. They started out with 5 and have grown to 17. ~from Dave Criley

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## 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/>

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## Layovers for Pan Am

Check out Pan American layovers at [www.paacrewlayover.com](http://www.paacrewlayover.com), where some 81 cities and over 161 hotels are shown in photos.

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## Check Out the Lockerbie Website

A website has been created for Lockerbie. It can be viewed at [www.lockerbie103.com](http://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

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## 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](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com) or [jerryholmes747@gmail.com](mailto: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

**Robert C. Preston**, a 35 year veteran of Pan American, died on Tuesday, July 16, 2019. He was 93 years old and is survived by his spouse and three children. He spent the bulk of his career as a flight engineer in the IGS before transitioning to the 747 and being based in New York and Miami

**Retired Pan Am/Delta pilot Lt. Colonel Daryl Gene Hubbard**, passed away on August 29, 2019 at age 83. Lt. Col. Hubbard joined Pan American 05-08-1967 and retired with Delta Air Lines, S/O based ATL/031. Lt. Col. Hubbard's first wife Faith passed in 1997. He is survived by his children and his wife Rev. Connie Murray Ichord plus many other family members..

**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](http://www.clipperpioneers.com). Know of someone from Pan Am who has passed? Email the obit to Jerry Holmes at [jerryholmes747@gmail.com](mailto:jerryholmes747@gmail.com) or [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com), or mail to: Sue Forde, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382**

## Comments from our Readers:

These are among the MANY comments received from our readers.

"My son Mark wants to take over "Clipper Pioneers" newsletter" - Col. Ralph Dilullo USMC (RET)

"Thanks for all your time and effort!" - Tom Sharpe

"I pass these newsletters on to 3 military pals!" - C. A. Heller

"Thanks for keeping us informed and keeping the newsletter 'flying'!" - Dan Lorenzo

"My husband was the employee. He passed away March 1, 2019. I continue to enjoy the newsletter!" - Gloria Walchli

"Good reading, look forward to each month's issue." - Peter Wenk

"Jerry - Thanks for all you continually do for our group. I enjoy the newsletter." - Tom Flowers

"Thanks for all you do, folks!" - Jim Heemstra

"Members might be interested in a new book just released: "PAN AM AT WAR...HOW THE AIRLINE SECRETLY HELPED AMERICA FIGHT WORLD WAR II" by Mark Cotta Vaz and John H. Hill. "

*~George Rogers*

**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](mailto:jerryholmes747@gmail.com) or [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com)**

## Update on the Clipper Pioneers Newsletter

**LAST NOTICE FOR RENEWALS.** Many of you have sent in your checks to keep the newsletter going. Thank you! If you are among the ones who have not, please send in your check. If you're not sure if you have paid, you can email me at [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com) to find out. This may be your last newsletter if you have not sent in a check.

Thank you for the many comments about continuing the newsletter. The Board is talking about sending out the newsletter every other month, instead of monthly. There are currently enough funds to publish monthly. Please let Stu or Jerry know what you think, and how often you'd like to receive the newsletter.

We also would love to print your stories / memories or other items to share with our other members. If there are times we don't have enough "new" stories to run, we'll run some of the stories from issues that were printed years ago that bear another telling. :)

Looking forward to keeping Pan Am - the greatest airline - alive in memory and in print. We'll also be updating and revamping the website to modernize it.

## Make Plans for our Next Cruise in 2020!

Dear Pan Amer's: I trust all of you got home safe and sound from our fabulous TransAtlantic cruise. It was wonderful meeting up with old friends and making new ones. I'm very happy to announce our next adventure is a great 11day cruise to the Caribbean. This is for all the Pan Folks and friends. Come join the fun, It is a great cruise and one of the very few for the entire year that will visit Panama and the best price of all. It's a great itinerary. If interested, get a deposit to Carmen, the only cabins available are those listed below.

### Serenade of the Seas Mar. 2, 2020

**Inside      \$1050   / Outside   \$1250 / Balcony      \$1950**

RATES - are "from", Non-Refundable, per person, cruise only, double occupancy and based on availability at time of booking. Port / government taxes are additional (\$398. per person); surcharge for amenities (gifts, cocktail parties, etc.) is \$125. per person.. Deposit is \$450.00 pe person. Major credit cards accepted but checks are preferred. Make out to Interline Travels, 456 Merlin Ct., Tallahassee, FL 32301.

To reserve call Carmen direct 786-252-7838; [INTERLINETRAVELS@YAHOO.COM](mailto:INTERLINETRAVELS@YAHOO.COM). For questions and further information call Stu Archer (for Pan Am pilot and cruise coordinator) at 305-238-0911.

### VISITING PORTS OF CALL

PUERTO LIMON

COLÓN, PANAMA

COLÓN, PANAMA

ORANJESTAD, ARUBA

**Check out the website - [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com) - for more information about the ports of call.**

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**Thanks to those of you who have sent us stories! Keep 'em coming!**

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