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Sometimes, It's Hard to Be First

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

While my all-time most memorable "first" undoubtedly was when I was flying for Pan American Airways when I literally jumped out of the cockpit of a B-747 following the Tenerife crash in 1977, there were several other firsts while flying for Pan Am and still other firsts a bit later when I was flying for United. For example, while flying for United I was the very first to fly CRAF (Civil Reserve Air Fleet) in 1991 during the Gulf War, more generally called Operation Desert Storm. In all, I flew a total of ten CRAF missions during that war and regard it as some of the best flying I ever did. I also flew the inaugural flights for United from San Francisco to Shanghai, from San Francisco to Frankfurt, and from Miami to London. Inaugural flights have always been memorable for me because I basically like new things, including new routes, new trips, and new destinations.

The only one of the inaugural flights for Pan Am that I remember because of unusual events was the one from Rio to Panama. Several hours after departing from Rio, the purser came up to the cockpit and informed me that we had on board a Korean passenger who had flown from Soule, Korea, to San Francisco and then to Rio and hadn't gotten off when she reached her destination in Rio – she was still on board. I can only guess how she remained undetected. Perhaps, she had merely fallen asleep and somehow escaped detection. I told the purser that there was nothing we could do. The "stowaway" would just have to be sent back to Rio as soon as possible. It was a memorable Panama trip in other ways as well. Let me tell you why. On this inaugural occasion, I remember nearly landing on the wrong runway. I can't think why I didn't rate this "first" higher on my list of firsts – probably, because I wasn't the first to do it.

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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.

Sometimes, It's Hard to Be First

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To be specific, while a captain flying Pan Am's inaugural flight in the early 1980s from Rio to Panama's Tocumen International Airport, about fifteen miles from Panama City, I almost landed on the wrong runway. In my own defense, I should say that the runway in question was new – in truth, it was an addition or extension to an existing runway and still technically, I suppose, under construction.

The original runway was about 8,800 feet. The new runway was about 10,000 feet in length, closer, and was very much in the process of being built when we flew into Panama. Both were to be known as runway 03, one left, the old runway, and one right, the new runway – both being parallel runways. In addition, I should mention that the new addition was not marked with the usual X's, which was and is the usual way to designate a closed runway.

To be even more specific, the day was beautiful and we were flying on a visual approach. The ATC told us to report when we had the runway in sight. The co-pilot and I thought we saw it, and he reported back to the tower. The controller then said that we were not lined up on the runway. He went on to say that we were in fact lined up on a new runway that was not yet in service, despite the lack of X's. We looked again and, sure enough, a little further back, we saw the old runway and moved to the left and landed without issue.

A bit later, the co-pilot and I reported the incident to operations. In a rather tired voice, we were told that the issue was nothing new. The controller, in fact, went on to say that many pilots made the same mistake everyday and that he would once again ask them to paint X's where they were needed. I didn't get the impression that he felt there was much chance of success. Somehow, I understood all too well his frustration.

I later learned that he was, in fact, telling us the truth. About a half dozen pilots lined up on the very same wrong runway in Panama during the latter stage of constructing the new runway. Not a happy statistic. In the end, I resolved never to comment on pilots who land on the wrong runways. I know first hand how easy it is to do. I kept my promise.

Lastly, and somewhat uniquely, while flying for Pan Am, I likely achieved the distinction of being the first and only pilot ever to back up a B-747. This latter "first" is likely one of the more unusual during the course of my career and probably the hardest to explain. It happened about 1985. I guess I would have to say that many of my "firsts" while with Pan Am are capable of being described, at the very least, as "diverse" and "different."

In 1985, Pakistan's Karachi Airport had some modern and innovative equipment but no push carts that worked. That's right, their push carts had no "get up and go"! Push carts are simple little things but absolutely essential if you want or need to back up an aircraft, especially a large one like the B-747.

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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.

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

Sometimes, It's Hard to Be First

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Our B-747 was parked in a space that had a sizeable steel stanchion light behind it. I simply could not avoid hitting it by turning in either direction. Backing up was the only option if the flight was to depart on time. I backed up very slowly under my own power at about two miles per hour until the issues associated with the lamp were things of the past. After the deed was done, we in the cockpit decided not to tell anyone for fear of upsetting those in charge at the airport. We knew that they would be fearful that we had possibly injected some metal objects, like a screw, from the ramp area. I never had the least indication that we had done anything of the kind but thought it best to keep this "first" a closely guarded secret – until now.

Teheran Christmas

by John Marshall

The year was 1977. I was a first officer on the 747 out of New York, with not too bad seniority. Needless to say, I was stunned when I got my December line and discovered that I was not only flying over Christmas, but would spend Christmas day in Teheran, a layover that definitely was not high on my list of favorites.

It was a flight 2 and 1 trip, out to Bangkok and back, and on Christmas we would leave Delhi at the usual 3 AM and head for Iran, arriving mid-morning.

We had picked up three Los Angeles-based flight attendants in Bangkok (Crew tracking worked in mysterious ways) and after arrival at Mehrabad Airport our tired and unhappy little bunch boarded the crew bus and headed for the Intercontinental. We were greeted in the lobby by a jaunty Pan Am rep who informed us that the company had a suite reserved for us to help celebrate the Christian Christmas, and if we wished, we could go up any time. We all looked at each other. The captain looked around at the crew and with uncanny timing, saved the layover. "Come on, guys. Let's at least go up and have some eggnog". Tired as we were, we felt that if the Company had gone to that effort, it would be impolite to refuse, and we went upstairs.

We walked into the suite and were stunned to find a fully decorated Christmas tree, a table laden with wine, eggnog and plates full of snacks. A tape player in the corner softly crooned Christmas music. The LA girls had been together for several days and had purchased trinkets for the crew.

We sang carols and exchanged the small gifts and dined on the tasty local snacks laid out for us. We were surprised to see the day passing into the afternoon, when our delightful Pan Am rep stopped in and informed us that a table had been reserved for the crew that evening at the Royal Peacock Restaurant, the fanciest at the hotel. Dinner would be on Pan Am. Fully into the spirit of the occasion, we all met for drinks and dinner, that lasted well into the night. We were a happy, bonded crew that retired to bed. Thankfully, we had a late pickup the next morning.

I spent several Christmases out on the line, in places like Tokyo, Sydney, and Frankfurt, but this holiday in Teheran was definitely one of the most memorable.

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

The One Martini Flight

By Captain Robert Lee Bragg Edited by Dorothy A. Boyd-Bragg

My long association with the B-747 essentially began with 747 training in New York (JFK). I made some really good friends in the process, especially Jim MacQuarrie, who perished when Pan Am 103 fell from the sky over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, and Dave Jones. We all ultimately flew as 747 captains.

When we trained on the B-747, the culmination of the training was a flight from JFK to Stewart Air National Guard Base near West Point, New York (SWF), which had previously been an Air Force Base. At the time of our training, there were no 747 simulators. It was the real thing - a real flight.

Our scheduled flight was unexpectedly cancelled due to high winds. We got the word while Jim, Dave, and I were at Jim's commuter apartment. To "console" ourselves, we each had a martini. Then the phone rang, and we were informed that the flight had been reinstated.

When Jim hung up, we looked at each other and simply said, "Yes." We actually said it in unison. Essentially, rightly or wrongly, we decided to fly despite the martini.

When our check flight was all over, we were actually complimented by the FAA observer, Pete Goutiere. Coincidentally, Pete had earlier given me my rating on the B-707. On this occasion, he literally told all of us that it was the best 747 check ride he'd ever done. We welcomed his words. Pete later turned out to be a good, personal friend. He flew with each of us several times. He generally flew with me from New York to Beirut. I don't think he ever learned what we'd done. At least, I never confessed. Drinking and flying certainly don't mix.

Flight 7 is Missing – the search for my father's killer

By Ken H. Fortenberry

Ken Fortenberry has written the book "Flight 7 is Missing – the search for my father's killer", which is available on Amazon. Here's the synopsis:

Dubbed by The New York Times as one of the "most vexing and unexplained" mysteries in aviation history, the crash of Pan American World Airways Flight 7 in November 1957 resulted in 44 deaths and remains officially unsolved to this day.

But Ken H. Fortenberry, an award-winning journalist whose father was the copilot and navigator aboard the ill-fated plane, has devoted nearly sixty years of his life to unraveling this cold-case mystery, and has come to a staggering conclusion: that the victims of the crash were murdered.

A remarkably researched book packed with information and emotion, Flight 7 Is Missing: The Search for My Father's Killer is a gripping page-turner that reads like a fast-paced murder mystery. Join Fortenberry on his crusade as he tirelessly tracks down every possible lead and eventually exposes the person he believes responsible for this tragic crime.

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. 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

PUERTO LIMON – Come to Puerto Limon ready to meet a raw and beautiful side unlike any other in Costa Rica.

COLÓN, PANAMA – Home to the Panama Canal's Atlantic Ocean entryway, Colón is the second-largest city in Panama.

COLÓN, PANAMA – Cartagena de Indias boasts romantic colonial architecture and a Caribbean coast glittering in shades of bright white and aquamarine.

ORANJESTAD, ARUBA – Welcome to Aruba— or as the locals say, Bon bini. Here Dutch traditions mix with island charm.

WILLEMSTAD, CURACAO – Curaçao is a treasure trove of cultural attractions, rich history, and natural scenery — from desert landscapes and rugged cliffs to 38 spectacular, and mostly secluded, beaches.

Check out the website - www.clipperpioneers.com - for more detailed information about the ports of call - where you can go and what you can see!

Don't miss out - come and join us on this fun cruise with your fellow PanAmer's!

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

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

William "Bill" Thomas Ray passed away on November 14, 2019 at the age of 93 after a long battle with dementia. Bill was born in Chapel Hill, NC to William Oscar Ray and Maggie Woods Ray. He attended Chapel Hill High School and went on to attend North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC, graduating with a degree in architectural engineering. While at NCSU he joined the Air Force ROTC, was an active member of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity, and was president of the Beaux Arts Society. After graduation from NAI, he was given a chance to fulfill his dream of flying when he was hired by Pan American World Airways as a Flight Engineer. The first aircraft he flew was a Boeing 377 Stratocruiser; Bill flew many different aircraft while employed at Pan Am including the DC-6, DC-8, B707, B747, and B747-SP. He soon became a Check Flight Engineer and an instructor, but was always the happiest in the cockpit of a jet. In his nearly 33 years with Pan Am he had the opportunity to see the world and meet many interesting people. He loved to tell stories of meeting many of his flying heroes like Charles A. Lindbergh, Pappy Boyington, Chuck Yeager, and Jimmy Doolittle.

Rube Kreider went in for a couple of stents and his heart didn't take the stress and gave up. There will be only a private family service. Rube was with us in Berlin for a couple of years, he was a new hire with David in 1966 and we went to Hong Kong together. They lived in Conn and a dozen or so years ago moved to an adult community next to Hilton Head.

Lyman A. Slack, Jr, 85, passed away in Gainesville, FL on December 25th, 2019. After graduating from The Ohio State University, he entered active duty in the United States Air Force. Earning his pilot wings he was assigned to the Strategic Air Command, where he flew B47's and B52's. He proudly served for 10 years. Lyman considered himself a legacy of sorts of Pan Am, his first contact being during WWII when his father was project manager for Pan Am's Airport Development Program, building three airports. His next connection with Pan Am was as a teenager where he competed and won several awards flying in the PAA LOAD competition. The event was a promotion by Pan Am for Clipper cargo. Joining Pan American World Airways in 1966 he continued his flying career for the next 25 years, and was flying the 747 out of Miami when Pan Am ceased operations. In retirement he continued with his lifelong hobby of building and flying model aircraft. Lyman is survived by his wife Marilyn, two children from a previous marriage, his son Dr. Dean Slack and wife Victoria of Naples, FL and Stamford Ct. and his daughter Dr. Dawn Slack of Bowers, Pa.

Paul T. Keeslar passed away on Sept. 8, 2019 in San Leandro, CA at age 80. He was born June 8, 1939 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Agneta, their three children – Lisa, Erik and Tor, and their three grandchildren – Nina, Olivia, and Stella. A career airline pilot, he earned his pilot wings in the US Navy and flew as a Naval Aviator briefly onboard P-2V Neptunes and ultimately onboard P-3 Orions before retiring as a commander in the Naval Reserves. After leaving active duty in the '60 he became a commercial airline pilot flying first with Pan American World Airways and then United Airlines. Over the next 35 years, he qualified on nearly all the commercial aircraft of the day, helped write pilot training publications in the 70's and 80's, served as a check pilot in the '90s, and ultimately rose to Captain of the Boeing 747-400 before retiring.

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

A New Twist to Social Security Phone Scams

The Inspector General of Social Security, Gail S. Ennis, is warning the public that telephone scammers may send faked documents by email to convince victims to comply with their demands. The Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has received reports of victims who received emails with attached letters and reports that appeared to be from Social Security or Social Security OIG. The letters may use official letterhead and government “jargon” to convince victims they are legitimate; they may also contain misspellings and grammar mistakes.

This is the latest variation on Social Security phone scams, which continue to be widespread throughout the United States. Using robocalls or live callers, fraudsters pretend to be government employees and claim there is identity theft or another problem with one’s Social Security number, account, or benefits. They may threaten arrest or other legal action, or may offer to increase benefits, protect assets, or resolve identity theft. They often demand payment via retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency such as Bitcoin, or pre-paid debit card.

Inspector General Ennis urges continued vigilance against all types of phone scams no matter what “proof” callers may offer. As we continue to increase public awareness of phone scams, criminals will come up with new ways to convince people of their legitimacy. Social Security will never:

- threaten you with arrest or other legal action unless you immediately pay a fine or fee;
- promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment;
- require payment by retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency, or prepaid debit card; or
- send official letters or reports containing personally identifiable information via email.

If there is ever a problem with your Social Security number or record, in most cases Social Security will mail you a letter. If you do need to submit payments to Social Security, the agency will send a letter with instructions and payment options. You should never pay a government fee or fine using retail gift cards, cash, internet currency, wire transfers, or pre-paid debit cards. The scammers ask for payment this way because it is very difficult to trace and recover.

If you receive a call or email that you believe to be suspicious, about a problem with your Social Security number or account, hang up or do not respond. We encourage the public to report Social Security phone scams using our dedicated online form, at <https://oig.ssa.gov>. Please share this information with your friends and family, to help spread awareness about phone scams. *For more information, please visit <https://oig.ssa.gov/scam>.*

(from <https://blog.ssa.gov/inspector-general-warns-public-about-new-twist-to-social-security-phone-scams/>)

Please update your email address and phone number if it's been changed!

Email or write to:

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