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## **Pan Am's Pacific Clipper Journey in World War 2 ( written 1999): The 'Round The World Saga of the "Pacific Clipper"**

*by John A. Marshall - CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE*

When they disembarked the crew of the Pacific Clipper received an unpleasant surprise; they were told that they would be unable to refuel with 100 octane aviation gas. What little there was was severely rationed, and was reserved for the military. There was automobile gas in abundance however, and Ford was welcome to whatever he needed. He had no choice. The next leg of their journey would be many hours over the Indian Ocean, and there was no hope of refueling elsewhere. The flight engineers, Swede Roth and Jocko Parish, formulated a plan that they hoped would work. They transferred all their remaining aviation fuel to the two fuselage tanks, and filled the remaining tanks to the limit with the lower octane automobile gas.

"We took off from Surabaya on the 100 octane, climbed a couple of thousand feet, and pulled back the power to cool off the engines," said Ford. "Then we switched to the automobile gas and held our breaths. The engines almost jumped out of their mounts, but they ran. We figured it was either that or leave the airplane..."

They flew northwesterly across the Sunda Straits, paralleling the coast of Sumatra. Chasing the setting sun, they started across the vast expanse of ocean. They had no aviation charts or maps for this part of the world; the only navigational information available to the crew was the latitude and longitude of their destination at Trincomalee, on the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Using this data, and drawing from memory, Rod

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## The 'Round The World Saga of the "Pacific Clipper"

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Brown was creating his own Mercator maps of South Asia. Ford was not only worried about finding the harbor, he was very concerned about missing Ceylon altogether. He envisioned the Clipper droning on over India, lost and low on fuel, unable to find a body of water on which to land.

As they neared the island they could see a cloud bank ahead. Ford said, "There was some low scud, so we descended. We wanted the maximum available visibility to permit picking up landfall at the earliest moment — we didn't want to miss the island. All of a sudden there it was, right in front of us, a submarine! We could see the crew running for the deck gun. Let me tell you we were pretty busy getting back into the scud again!"

Ford jammed the throttles of the Clipper forward to climb power, the engines complaining bitterly. Their 150 mph speed soon had them well out of range of the sub's guns, and the crew heaved a sigh of relief. It would be difficult to determine who was the more surprised; the Japanese submarine commander or the crew of the Clipper, startled out of their reverie after the long flight.

It was another hour until they reached the island, and the Boeing finally touched water in the harbor at Trincomalee. The British Forces stationed there were anxious to hear what Ford and his crew had to report from the war zone to the east, and the crew was duly summoned to a military meeting. Presiding was a pompous Royal Navy Commodore who informed Ford in no uncertain terms that he doubted Ford would know a submarine if it ran over him. Ford felt the hackles rise on the back of his neck. He realized that he could not afford to make an enemy of the British military, the fate of the Pacific Clipper rested too heavily in their hands. He swallowed hard and said nothing.

It was Christmas Eve when they began the takeoff from Ceylon and turned the ship again to the northwest. The heavily loaded Boeing struggled for altitude, laboring through the leaden humid air. Suddenly there was a frightening bang as the number three engine let go. It shuddered in its mount, and as they peered through the windscreen the crew could see gushes of black oil pouring back over the wing. Ford quickly shut the engine down, and wheeled the Clipper over into a 180 degree turn, heading back to Trincomalee. Less than an hour after takeoff the Pacific Clipper was back on the waters of Trincomalee harbor. The repairs to the engine took the rest of Christmas Eve and all of Christmas Day. One of the engine's eighteen cylinders had failed, wrenching itself loose from its mount, and while the repair was not particularly complex, it was tedious and time-consuming. Finally early in the morning of December 26th, they took off from Ceylon for the second time. All day they droned across the lush carpet of the Indian sub continent, and then cut across the northeastern corner of the Arabian Sea to their landing in Karachi, touching down in mid-afternoon.

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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)***

## The 'Round The World Saga of the "Pacific Clipper"

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The following day, bathed and refreshed, they took off and flew westward across the Gulf of Oman toward Arabia. After just a bit over eight routine hours of flying, they landed in Bahrain, where there was a British garrison.

Another frustration presented itself the following morning as they were planning the next leg of their journey. They had planned to fly straight west across the Arabian peninsula and the Red Sea into Africa, a flight that would not have been much longer than the leg they had just completed from Karachi.

"When we were preparing to leave Bahrain we were warned by the British authorities not to fly across Arabia," said Ford. "The Saudis had apparently already caught some British fliers who had been forced down there. The natives had dug a hole, buried them in it up to their necks, and just left them."

They took off into the grey morning and climbed through a solid overcast. They broke out of the clouds into the dazzling sunshine, and the carpet of clouds below stretched westward to the horizon. "We flew north for about twenty minutes," Ford said, "then we turned west and headed straight across Saudia Arabia. We flew for several hours before there was a break in the clouds below us, and damned if we weren't smack over the Mosque at Mecca! I could see the people pouring out of it, it was just like kicking an anthill. They were probably firing at us, but at least they didn't have any anti-aircraft."

The Pacific Clipper crossed the Red Sea and the coast of Africa in the early afternoon with the Saharan sun streaming in the cockpit windows. The land below was a dingy yellowish brown, with nothing but rolling sand dunes and stark rocky out-croppings. The only sign of human habitation was an occasional hut; every so often they flew over small clusters of men tending livestock who stopped and shielded their eyes from the sun, staring up at the strange bird that made such a noise. The crew's prayers for the continued good health of the four Wright Cyclones became more and more fervent. Should they have to make an emergency landing here they would be in dire straits indeed.

Late in the afternoon they raised the Nile River, and Ford turned the ship to follow it to the confluence of the White and Blue Niles, just below Khartoum. They landed in the river, and after they were moored the crew went ashore to be greeted by the now familiar hospitality of the Royal Air Force. Ford's plan was to continue southwest to Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo and begin their South Atlantic crossing there. He had no desire to set out across the Sahara; a forced landing in that vast trackless wasteland would not only render the aircraft forever immobile, but the crew would surely perish in the harshness of the desert.

Early the next morning they took off from the Nile for Leopoldville. This was to be a particularly long overland flight, and they wanted to leave plenty of daylight for the arrival. They would land on the Congo River at Leopoldville, and from there would strike out across the South Atlantic for South America.

**TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE**

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

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## Why Do Some Pilots Have Such a Hard Time Understanding the word “Fuel”?

*By Captain Robert Lee Bragg - Edited by Dorothy A. Boyd-Bragg, Ph.D*

### **CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE**

Things I'm afraid didn't improve. Our next flight, the next day was from NRT to SIN - once again about 8-9 hours. Once again, I asked him as we were getting close to sin, "How long could we hold, if we needed to?" Once again, he had no clue.

To make the story short, I couldn't in good conscience pass this co-pilot. I wouldn't have willingly flown as a passenger with this man. He had no understanding of fuel considerations - at all.

Pilots that disregard or don't even know the very basic rules stated at the beginning of this story can cause serious and even fatal consequences. The following are several appropriate examples:

A classic example of fuel deprivation would be AVIANCO FLIGHT NUMBER 52, a regularly scheduled flight from Eldorado International Airport, Bogotá, Columbia, (BOG) to New York (JFK) in 1990. It was a 23-year old B-707.

Due to delays related to fog and wind, this particular flight was ordered to enter holding patterns three times by the time he arrived at JFK. The reserve fuel supply, which would be needed to divert to another airport, was greatly exhausted. The pilot, Laureano Caviedes, finally was able to make an approach, but he missed the approach and had to re-enter a holding pattern. Air Traffic Control (ATC) was apparently unaware of the fuel situation. No emergency had been declared.

On a vector to position the flight to make yet another approach, the flight had all four engines stop due to fuel starvation - one after another. The flight crashed on Long Island with a large loss of life. The crew lost all fuel awareness and basically just ran out of fuel due to allowing ATC to hold the flight too long. Be aware that if you run out of fuel you fall from the sky - quickly. Declare an emergency if necessary, sooner rather than later. Newer planes clearly indicate how much fuel you've got. Boeing designers obviously had the dumb pilot in mind. Yet a similar situation occurred in a B-747 at about the same time. Captain Jack G. held over JFK a bit too long before he diverted to Newark, New Jersey (EWR) - even with the new fuel monitors installed. There was no good reason for waiting as long as he did. He and everyone else on board the B-747 were, however, lucky. They all walked away.

Those on SWISSAIR FLIGHT 111, a McDonnell Douglas MD-11, flying from New York (JFK) To Geneva, Switzerland (GVA) in 1998 were not as lucky. Some two hours after departing from JFK, smoke was detected in the cockpit. The flight was then very close to Halifax, Nova Scotia. They could have elected to land as soon as possible - straight in at Halifax, which had runways long enough to handle the MD-11 and more. Instead, the crew elected to circle and dump fuel to lower the landing weight of the flight.

Typically, it takes 30-45 minutes to dump down from max take-off weight to max landing weight. They knew they had been in the hour for two hour burning fuel. Smart pilots know not to dump too much. Swissair did not dump too much. They obviously took to heart the oft-told joke about why the letters "HB" are at the beginning

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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>**

## Why Do Some Pilots Have Such a Hard Time Understanding the word “Fuel”?

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of all Swiss plane registration numbers. The joke begins by asking, “Why is “HB” on the tail of every Swiss plane. The answer was, “To remind them that “HB” stands for “Haben Sie Benzin? In German.”

Jokes aside, while dumping and circling, Swissair flight 111 spiraled out of control, crashed into the ocean, and killed everyone on board. Accordingly, probably ranking right up there with “don’t dump all your fuel” is the one saying that spells out that any time there is evidence of smoke or fire onboard the plane, get the plane on the ground, just as soon as possible. Dumping fuel should be a secondary consideration. Just declare an emergency and land.

One more example and I’ll be quiet. It’s an early example and should have been instructive and perhaps even mitigated some of the later disasters. I’m thinking of United Flight 173. In late December of 1978, a DC-8-61, was flying from JFK to Denver and on to Portland, Oregon.

The flight departed Denver for Portland with a required fuel load of—31,900 pounds of fuel—the flight had 46,700 pounds of fuel on board. Fuel to destination plus 45 minutes plus contingency fuel of 20 minute. The flight plan time was 2 hours 26 minutes.

The flight departed Denver at 14:47 with an ATA Portland of 17:13. The flight arrived in the Portland area at 17:05

Upon approaching Portland, during the approach, being flown by the co-pilot the gear was lowered and the crew felt that the gear being lowered created a strange, unusual noise and an unusual yaw to the right. To shortened, the story the crew became very involved with their gear situation that there fuel state was forgotten.

At 18:02 the crew began the approach. At 18:06 the flight lost # 4 engine, due to fuel starvation—in a very short interval the aircraft had the remaining three engines flame out - all from fuel starvation. The plane crashed some 6 miles east of the Portland airport, killing two crewmembers and eight passengers.

The following words are taken directly from the NTSB accident report NTSB-AAR-79-7.

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the accident was the failure of the captain to monitor properly the aircrafts fuel state and to respond to the low fuel state and the crew members advisories regarding fuel state. This resulted in fuel exhaustion to all engines. His inattention resulted from preoccupation with a landing gear malfunction and preparations for a possible landing emergency.

Another very early aviation lesson that should be learned by-all crew members is that anytime an in-flight emergency occurs one crewmember should be assigned the duty of flying the airplane while another crew member should be assigned the primarily duty of handling the emergency.

Enough said about “fuel,” if you haven’t gotten the point now, you never will.

### **ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS**

**JUNE 7,2021 – JUNE 17, 2021 Round trip Copenhagen**

**WILL NOT BE HELD DUE TO UNCERTAINTIES OF TRAVEL DUE TO COVID-19.**

**STAY TUNED - We’ll let you know when / if it’s rescheduled.**



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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 [cbayld@aol.com](mailto:cbayld@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).

*...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

**Tad Howard Bingham** of Amalga passed away peacefully on Thursday, September 24, 2020, at the age of 86. Tad was born to Howard Rulon and Violet Woolf Bingham in Logan on January 23, 1934. Growing up in Amalga, Utah, Tad graduated from North Cache High School in 1952. After graduation he attended Utah State University and studied engineering. Deeply fascinated with airplanes as a young boy, he gave into the urge during his junior year at Utah State and joined the Naval Aviation Cadet Program.

**Sumner K. "Bud" Hushing II** June 24, 1919 - March 31, 2020 - died at 100. He was born in the Panama Canal Zone, and reared in Illinois and Virginia during the Great Depression. Sumner earned a law degree in 1941, just before World War II. Following his brother Bill into the Navy, Sumner first served aboard ships, then transferred to flight duty. In 1945 he became an airline pilot with Pan American until retirement in 1979 at the mandatory age of 60. During his time with PanAm he also flew in both the Berlin Airlift and Vietnam Airlift. After his retirement, Sumner spent several years in the South Pacific, finally settling in Palm Beach. In 1992 he met Adele Siegel with whom he enjoyed a remarkable partnership. Sumner was active as a board member in Palm Beach Navy League and Palm Beach Pundits and a lifetime member of the American Legion. In the end, Sumner passed quietly, at home, and not alone, just as he had wished. In death, as in life, he "did it his way." He is survived by all three of his children, Otamay, Sumner III and Mikele, three grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter. A Celebration of his Life will be held when time and circumstances permit. Donations in Sumner's name can be made to the Navy League Palm Beach Council

**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 Sue Forde at [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com), or mail to: **Sue Forde, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382****

## MORE MEMORABLE MOMENTS 2 - by Larry Black

Our morning departure out of JFK was uneventful as the 707 was climbing to its initial cruising altitude. We departed the coast and started our climb to our final cruising alt to 35,000. Approaching level off, the aircraft went into a Dutch roll. The pilots were putting in corrections, but nothing was stopping the roll. As FEO, I didn't remember any procedure for this situation, so I reached up and turned off the series yaw damp switch. Control was regained. We turned back to JFK. On the ground, maintenance replaced the Series Yaw Damper black box, replaced the crew and the flight was on its way to London.

During a return charter flight from Portugal, the station manager Juan Marillio was pushing for an on-time departure. We questioned the location of our crew bags. Juan said the bags were intermixed with the passengers' bags. Arriving in NY, no crew bags were found. They arrived the next day from South America.

Remembering eating at one of Rio's restaurants still makes my mouth water. Pork slow roasted over an open fire plus black beans and rice topped with chopped onions and tomato in olive oil was a real treat. The restaurant was mainly outside, roofed with a vine-covered trellis which made a perfect area for rats to run as we ate our delicious meal.

## How to Stop Unwanted Calls on a Landline

Install a call blocking-device.

If your home phone is a traditional landline that doesn't use the internet (VoIP), you can buy and install a call-blocking device. Call-blocking devices are typically small boxes you attach to your phone.

Some devices use blacklist databases of known scam numbers but let you add numbers you want blocked. Other devices rely on you to create and update your own blacklist of numbers to block.

Some use blacklists to:

- stop unwanted calls
- divert calls to voicemail
- show a blinking light when an unwanted call comes in
- connect callers to a recording with options so a real caller can still get through

Some devices also use whitelists of approved numbers. That helps you limit which calls get through, or lets you to set up "do not disturb" hours during which calls go straight to voicemail. There are also devices that try to weed out robocalls by playing a prerecorded message prompting callers to press a number to continue the call.

See what services your carrier offers.

Some services are free, but some charge a fee.

## HEALTH TIP

**Cut out herbs before ops.** Some herbal supplements – from the popular St John's Wort and ginkgo biloba to garlic, ginger, ginseng and feverfew – can cause increased bleeding during surgery, warn surgeons. It may be wise to stop taking all medication, including herbal supplements, at least two weeks before surgery, and inform your surgeon about your herbal use.

You are a part of this wonderful Pan Am "family". Are there memories you've written down that you'd like to share with us in this newsletter? We've gotten some great response, and there will continue to be interesting stories coming in the upcoming months. Please share yours with us, as well! Please send them to Sue by email to: [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com).

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

***Email or write to:***

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