

**PRESIDENT**

STU ARCHER  
7340 SW 132 ST  
MIAMI, FL 33156-6804  
(305) 238-0911

**VICE PRESIDENT**

CG "DINO" VLAHAKIS  
54 WESTVIEW LN  
LEBANON NH 03766-2016  
(603) 448-3729

**TREASURER / EDITOR**

GENE PATTERSON  
1202 EAST RIDGE VILLAGE DRIVE,  
CUTLER BAY, FL 33157  
(305) 235-7613

## **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*

The endless brown of the Sudan gave way to rolling green hills, and then rocky crests that stretched across their path. They flew over native villages, and great gatherings of wildlife. Herds of wildebeest, hundreds of thousands strong, stampeded in panic as the Clipper roared overhead. The grassland soon turned to jungle, and they crossed several small rivers, which they tried to match to their maps. Suddenly ahead they saw a large river, much bigger and wider than others they had crossed, and off to their right was a good-sized town. The river had to be the mighty Congo, and the town was Bumba, the largest settlement on the river at that point. From their maps they saw that they could turn and follow the river downstream to Leopoldville. They had five hundred miles to fly

Late in the afternoon they raised the Congolese capital of Leopoldville. Ford set the Boeing down gently onto the river, and immediately realized the strength of the current. He powered the ship into the mooring, and the crew finally stepped ashore. It was like stepping into a sauna. The heat was the most oppressive they had yet encountered; it descended on them like a cloak, sapping what energy they had left.

A pleasant surprise awaited them however, when two familiar faces greeted them at the dock. A Pan American Airport Manager and a Radio Officer had been dispatched to meet them, and Ford was handed a cold beer. "That was one of the high points of the whole trip," he said.

*~ continued on next page*

### **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.

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

*~ continued from previous page*

After a night ashore they went to the airplane the next morning prepared for the long over-water leg that would take them back to the western hemisphere. The terrible heat and humidity had not abated a bit when the hatches were finally secured and they swung the Clipper into the river channel for the takeoff. The airplane was loaded to the gunnels with fuel, plus the drum of oil that had come aboard at Noumea. It was, to put it mildly, just a bit overloaded. They headed downstream into the wind, going with the six-knot current. Just beyond the limits of the town the river changed from a placid downstream current into a cataract of rushing rapids; pillars of rocks broke the water into a tumbling maelstrom. Ford held the engines at takeoff power, and the crew held their breath while the airplane gathered speed on the glassy river. The heat and humidity, and their tremendous gross weight were all factors working against them as they struggled to get the machine off the water before the cataracts. Ford rocked the hull with the elevators, trying to get the Boeing up on the step. Just before they would enter the rapids and face certain destruction, the hull lifted free. The Pacific Clipper was flying, but just barely.

Their troubles were far from over, however. Just beyond the cataracts they entered the steep gorges; it was as though they were flying into a canyon. With her wings bowed, the Clipper staggered, clawing for every inch of altitude. The engines had been at take-off power for nearly five minutes and their temperatures were rapidly climbing above the red line; how much more abuse could they take? With agonizing slowness the big Boeing began to climb, foot by perilous foot. At last they were clear of the walls of the gorge, and Ford felt he could pull the throttles back to climb power. He turned the airplane toward the west and the Atlantic. The crew, silent, listened intently to the beat of the engines. They roared on without a miss, and as the airplane finally settled down at their cruising altitude Ford decided they could safely head for Brazil, over three thousand miles to the west.

The crew felt revived with new energy, and in spite of their fatigue, they were excitedly optimistic. Against all odds they had crossed southern Asia and breasted the African continent. Their airplane was performing better than they had any right to expect, and after their next long ocean leg they would be back in the hemisphere from which they had begun their journey nearly a month before. The interior of the airplane that had been home to them for so many days was beginning to wear rather thin. They were sick of the endless hours spent droning westward, tired of the apprehension of the unknown and frustrated by the lack of any real meaningful news about what was happening in a world besieged by war. They just wanted to get home.

After being airborne over twenty hours, they landed in the harbor at Natal just before noon. While they were waiting for the necessary immigration formalities to be completed, the Brazilian authorities insisted that the

*~ continued on next page*

**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"

*~ continued from previous page*

crew disembark while the interior of the airplane was sprayed for yellow fever. Two men in rubber suits and masks boarded and fumigated the airplane.

Late that same afternoon they took off for Trinidad, following the Brazilian coast as it curved around to the northwest. It wasn't until after they had departed that the crew made an unpleasant discovery. Most of their personal papers and money were missing, along with a military chart that had been entrusted to Navigator Rod Brown by the US military attache in Leopoldville, obviously stolen by the Brazilian "fumigators."

The sun set as they crossed the mouth of the Amazon, nearly a hundred miles wide where it joins the sea. Across the Guineas in the dark they droned, and finally at 3 AM the following morning they landed at Trinidad. There was a Pan Am station at Port of Spain, and they happily delivered themselves and their weary charge into friendly hands.

The final leg to New York was almost anti-climactic. Just before six on the bitter morning of January 6th, the control officer in the Marine Terminal at LaGuardia was startled to hear his radio crackle into life with the message, "Pacific Clipper, inbound from Auckland, New Zealand, Captain Ford reporting. Overhead in five minutes."

In a final bit of irony, after over thirty thousand miles and two hundred hours of flying on their epic journey, the Pacific Clipper had to circle for nearly an hour, because no landings were permitted in the harbor until official sunrise. They finally touched down just before seven, the spray from their landing freezing as it hit the hull. No matter — the Pacific Clipper had made it home.

The significance of the flight is best illustrated by the records that were set by Ford and his crew. It was the first round-the-world flight by a commercial airliner, as well as the longest continuous flight by a commercial plane, and was the first circumnavigation following a route near the Equator (they crossed the Equator four times.) They touched all but two of the world's seven continents, flew 31,500 miles in 209 hours and made 18 stops under the flags of 12 different nations. They also made the longest non-stop flight in Pan American's history, a 3,583 mile crossing of the South Atlantic from Africa to Brazil.

*~ continued on next page*

### 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.

---

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

---

## The 'Round The World Saga of the "Pacific Clipper" ~ continued from previous page

*As the war progressed, it became clear that neither the Army nor the Navy was equipped or experienced enough to undertake the tremendous amount of long distance air transport work required. Pan American Airways was one of the few airlines in the country with the personnel and expertise to supplement the military air forces. Captain Bob Ford and most of his crew spent the war flying contract missions for the US Armed Forces. After the war, Ford continued flying for Pan American, which was actively expanding its routes across the Pacific and around the world. He left the airline in 1952 to pursue other aviation interests.*

*The Crew of Pacific Clipper: Captain Robert Ford; First Officer John H. Mack; Second Officer/Navigator Roderick N. Brown; Third Officer James G. Henriksen; Fourth Officer John D. Steers; First Engineer Homans K. "Swede" Roth; Second Engineer John B. "Jocko" Parish; First Radio Officer John Poindexter\*; Second Radio Officer Oscar Hendrickson; Purser Barney Sawicki; Asst Purser Verne C. Edwards*

*\* Poindexter was originally scheduled to accompany the Pacific Clipper as far as Los Angeles, and then return to San Francisco; he had even asked his wife to hold dinner that evening. In Los Angeles, however, the regularly scheduled Radio Officer suddenly became ill, and Poindexter had to make the trip himself. His one shirt was washed in every port that the Pacific Clipper visited.*

*This article originally appeared in the August 1999 Issue of Air and Space Magazine and is reprinted by permission of the author. From <https://www.panam.org/pan-am-inspirations/634-saga-of-the-pacific-clipper>*

## Updated Pan Am Clippers Book and a Request for Memories

Just wanted to make the members aware of two items. First my book the Pan American Clippers - The Golden Age of Flying Boats published by Boston Mills Press/Firefly was issued in 2007 and 2011.

Last Oct. 2019 a new updated edition with 16 new pages and many new photos including ones of Bob Hope and his troupe during WW II on a stopover in Botwood. Including the story of the Nazi spy on the Lisbon flights. 300 plus photos.

I write for Vietnam magazine and doing a large feature on Pan American in the Vietnam War. Would love to hear from some with their memories. I am a veteran of the US Marines. My niece was on one of the baby flights out of Nam. I write for Aviation history as well and had a chapter in Hunting the Wind on the Pan Am Art Deco Terminals. Last piece in Aviation History was on the 1931 Lindbergh/Morrow flight across the Canadian North.

Thank You, Jim Trautman

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

## Crime Prevention Tips for Seniors

As crime increases, especially toward seniors, we need to become more aware of our surroundings and more watchful. Following are some tips along those lines:

### General property crime (theft, vandalism, break-ins)

Seniors spend a lot of time at home. Being vigilant and adding layers of protection make it harder for a perpetrator to act. Preparation and awareness are key to reduce a senior's chances of being the victim of a break-in or theft. Here are crime prevention tips for senior citizens to protect themselves and their property:

- Keep up the lawn and outdoor appearance of your home – unkempt landscaping gives thieves a place to hide and signals that someone might not be home.
- Have a professional or family member help you install security lights on the outside of your home.
- Put interior lights on timers to turn lights on in the living room or near the front door for a lived in look, especially if you go to bed early.
- Consider a home security system or a medical alert system, which can often be used to contact authorities in any type of emergency.

### Purse Snatching and Robberies are on the Rise

Robberies and purse snatching are traumatic for anyone. But for the elderly, there's added danger since they're more likely than younger victims to experience a serious injury. It's not common in all areas but might be something you're concerned about and should always be prepared for by:

- Minimizing the number of things you carry with you at a time – can you carry a few essential items that fit in your pockets?
- Concealing cash or cards when out and about.
- Walking with a friend or family member when possible.

Former Marine and nationally certified law enforcement trainer Morgan Ballis of Campus-Safety.us explains: "Avoidance is the key – and if you can't avoid risks, increase your level of awareness and begin formulating plans through when/then scenarios." For example, WHEN you need to make a cash withdrawal at the bank, THEN use the ATM machine inside during business hours and conceal the cash before you exit.

Ballis says, "Trust your gut, your life experience has given you the baseline necessary to know when something isn't right." Be sure to listen to it and be alert when out and about.

*(Excerpts from Crime Prevention Tips for Seniors - [www.safety.com/senior-crime-prevention-tips/](http://www.safety.com/senior-crime-prevention-tips/))*

---

## A step back into history

Nov 22, 1935 - Flying boat "China Clipper" takes off from Alameda, California, carrying 100,000 pieces of mail on 1st trans-Pacific airmail flight

---



---

## 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)

---

## 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

---

## 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](http://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](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

---

## 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

**Gerard Ignatius McAlinden Sr.** passed away at age 87 with his family by his side, on October 28, 2020, in Skillman, NJ. Gerard was born in Hopewell, NJ, to Merritt and Ethel McAlinden on May 14, 1933. He was an avid motorcyclist, purchasing his first motorcycle at nine years old; he loved antique Indian motorcycles and later taught all of his children how to ride. After graduating from Princeton High School, Gerard served in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict. Next, he began his career as an explosives specialist, joining his brothers, Joe and Merritt, at McAlinden Corporation, pioneering uses for explosives in precision demolitions and industrial cleaning applications for the petro chemical industry.

Gerard also had a deep love for aviation, learning to fly light aircraft in the late 1950s, later lead him to flying crews all over the country for McAlinden Corp. He enjoyed being a pilot so much that he joined Pan American Airways, where he retired as a captain in 1988, amassing over 20,000 hours in the air and around the world.

**James Floyd "Jim" Bennett**, 88, of Crescent City, Fla., passed away peacefully at his home on Sept. 9, 2020, following an extended illness from kidney disease.

He was born on Nov. 8, 1931, and raised in New Lexington, Ohio and graduated from New Lexington High School in the class of '49 and established a long career in aviation. He taught flying at Ohio State University-Don Scott Field before being hired by Pan American Airlines in 1955. As an international pilot, he flew for Pan Am for 30 years, working his way to Captain and Check Captain. The last six years (1985-1991) of his career was with United Airlines as a Check Captain following United Airline purchase of Pan Am "Pacific Division routes." He logged over 38,000 international flight hours flying to every continent worldwide. Before the jet age he started his Pan Am career flying the Boeing 377 Stratocruiser and the Douglas DC-4. As the jet age developed he flew the Boeing 707, Boeing 747-100, -200, -300, and the B747-SP (Special Performance). He ended his flying career in 1991 as a Check Captain with United Airlines flying the all new "glass cockpit" advanced Boeing 747-400.

**Captain Norm Davies** died on September 21, 2020. He was hired by Pan American in 1965 and retired from Delta in 1996. Norm was born on June 7, 1936 and raised in Hackensack, New Jersey. He attended Blair Academy and Bucknell University. After graduating in 1959, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps and was trained as a U.S. Naval Aviator in Pensacola. Norm served on active duty as an A-4 Skyhawk Light Attack Pilot. He was discharged in June of 1964 and remained in the reserves for a number of years. He was hired by Pan American World Airways in 1965. He flew as an international pilot on 707's and then later on 747's. During his line flying days, he was based in Washington, D.C., Boston and Los Angeles. After becoming a captain at Pan Am, he served as Manager of Flying in West Berlin and was promoted to System Chief Pilot in New York. Following the merger of Delta and Pan Am, Norm served as Delta's Chief Pilot in JFK and then returned to line flying for his last year at the airline, flying the B-767ER until his retirement in 1996.

**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**

## HEALTH TIPS

### Take Supplements as Necessary

Some supplements help support a healthy immune system. Before taking a supplement, always ask your doctor if it's safe, especially if you're taking a prescription medication. Some supplements they may recommend include calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B6, or vitamin B12.

Take supplements or multivitamins as instructed to boost your immune system.

### Wash your hands frequently.

Washing your hands on a regular basis is another excellent way to stay healthy year-round. Viruses can live on surfaces for up to 24 hours. It's possible to become ill if you touch a virus-covered surface and contaminate your hands, and then touch your face.

Wash your hands with warm soapy water often, and for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your nose, face, and mouth with your hands.

You can also protect yourself by using antibacterial hand sanitizer when you're unable to wash your hands. Also, disinfect surfaces around your home and workstation frequently.

### Learn how to manage stress.

Chronic stress increases your body's production of the stress hormone cortisol. Too much cortisol can disrupt different functions in your body, including your immune system.

To reduce stress, increase physical activity, get plenty of sleep, set reasonable expectations for yourself, and explore relaxing, enjoyable activities.

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).

**WISHING ALL OUR PAN AM FAMILY AND FRIENDS A  
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

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

***Email or write to:***

***Clipper Pioneers, c/o Sue Forde, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim WA 98382  
or email to: [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com)***