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They Didn't Know What They Didn't Know

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

After United acquired the Pacific routes from Pan Am in the late 1980s and later as they expanded elsewhere as Pan Am faded into history, they gradually started changing things -abandoning what had worked so well for Pan Am. For instance, it was apparent that United knew nothing, absolutely nothing, about flying internationally. Believe it or not, they didn't even know that there were such things as flying organized tracks when flying the Atlantic and the Pacific - sort of like the yellow lines on a highway. I learned that they knew nothing when I prepared to fly United's inaugural flight from Miami (MIA) to London (LHL). United got the right to do so under emergency authority after Pan Am went bankrupt.

In what I considered a routine procedure, I asked the United dispatcher for the organizing track printout. He didn't even know what I was referring to. No one had "informed" him that they ran East and West, that they were published daily, and that you needed to use the East tracks when flying to Europe the West tracks when you headed home. As far as I was concerned, it was a no-brainer.

I was also amazed when early in my years with United when I was called during a layover in Hong Kong and asked to stop on my way back to New York to drop off some parts in Taipei even though I'd have to dump some fuel because of our landing weight. They added that if I wouldn't do so, they'd have to send the parts by truck. By truck? Did they even know where Taipei was located? However, I merely said, "No." But after a short pause I added, "And you owe me eight hours as I'm required to have undisturbed rest on a layover." That was greeted by utter silence. I was irked to say the least.

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They Didn't Know What They Didn't Know

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I would have to admit my last example of United's total lack of international experience affected me personally rather than professionally. It had to do with food - my food. To keep it simple, since United lacked experience and common sense, they initially stowed the meals for the cockpit in the tail galley rather than in the upstairs or first class galley. I discovered what they were doing on my first United flight. After leveling off, I rang the bell for our meals to be served. The response from the purser was not acceptable. It was something like, "All our passengers come first." He also suggested that our meals would have to be balanced with their breaks. I was not prepared to be "understanding." I was used to something better. In no uncertain terms, I informed him that they would have to do better serving the needs of multiple crews on long flights which had rotating rest schedules of their own at the same time they served the needs of the passengers - and they'd have to start doing it on this flight. I was hungry.

During the first year or so I flew for United, I would have to say that their service and expertise was sad at best. As a result, they lost a significant number of passengers to other airlines and only gained them back gradually and by changing. It would have been so much better if they had thought things through and kept the best of what they had acquired from Pan Am, but I suspect that's asking for too much.

A Stressful Night in the Office

by Charles Cutting

An old saying in the flying business

"Hours and hours of boredom with a few moments of stark terror!"

Late in the 1980s I flew the world as a Boeing 747 captain for Pan American World Airways. This story is regarding a flight that still remains crystal clear in my memory. We were a crew of twelve that deadheaded an aircraft from London Heathrow airport to Nice France. Our firm had contracted with a major tour company to move three hundred vacationers from their French sojourn back to New York City.

Now twenty-four hours later in the late evening the aircraft passenger loading is in progress. Forty feet up on the flight deck of "Fat Albert" the crew returns to the cockpit. Entering the office we hang up our coats and hats, slide our briefcases next to our seats and tie them down with wire hooks. Now a background whine of three phase motors coming up to speed, red, white, and green lights on the instrument panels flash on and off in their test modes. I pick up the headset that dangles off the control yoke and fit my personal ear piece in place. The snap of seat adjustments break into my thoughts as height, fore and aft, and back angle are all set in place. Once settled down in my nest, I lean forward to crosscheck the inertial navigation waypoints already inserted by the copilot. Next I pull down the oxygen mask to check that life giving air is available in emergency and that the interphone to all other cockpit crewmembers is checked with their individual responses.

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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

A Stressful Night in the Office

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There is a sudden groan and shake as the landing gear struts compress down to the added load of three hundred passengers filing into the passenger compartments. From the depths of my uniform shirt pocket I pull out the bug sheet and post it on the instrument panel. This little slip of paper has the three airspeeds required for our departure. V 1 indicates speed after which we can no longer stay on the runway if the takeoff is aborted. Once past this point we are bound to continue the takeoff run to V2 the speed required for liftoff, and last the 2&3 engine climb speed necessary to gain altitude after an engine failure. All these numbers were derived in the dispatch office, our first stop on arrival at the airport this evening. They are determined by the forecast temperature, pressure altitude, gross takeoff weight, and runway length, at estimated time of takeoff.

The ground maintenance supervisor comes on board and leans in the cockpit door to report the aircraft has been fueled and all external work is complete with the closure of the cargo doors. The tower is contacted for clearance to JFK. With the flight departure route in hand we run through the "Pre Start Check List", follow with Start Check List", "Pre-Taxi" and "Taxi Check Lists. With receipt of taxi clearance we are under way. Now with creeks and groans Fat Albert # 743 lumbers out to the runway. Takeoff clearance comes in over the headset and we give a last notice to the cabin attendants to be seated. The brakes are held steady while spooling up the four Pratt and Whitney engines. With loud roar and vibration the aircraft rears up against the restraint of brakes. In moments the engine gauges all report the required power settings on target. Brake release provides a sudden lurch as the aircraft starts to trundle forward. Speed builds as we eat into our available runway. V1 is passed and now we are committed to flight. All is in order as we approach V2 and with a slight backpressure on the yoke the nose wheel lifts off the runway. On the mark of V2 the Boeing 747 lifts off into the night sky.

The pace of cockpit activity slows as we climb out on our prearranged route of flight. Now we have a moment to enjoy the night sky and watch the necklace of lights that border the Golf of Lion. Overhead a myriad of stars light our way. The airways clearance takes overhead Toulon and then a turn to the north-west sends us over the heart of France. Below in the darkness, pools of pale light mark the cities we pass over as we drone upward toward our 31,000 foot cruising altitude. Our next checkpoint is located forty miles off the south coast of Plymouth England. The cockpit is quiet now as we all drift in our private thoughts. There is a long night ahead as there is nothing but station keeping and paperwork to occupy our minds. Time is consumed by boredom, broken only by the required crosscheck of instruments and navigational fixes. A welcome break is provided by the occasional entrance of our flight service with hot coffee and a moment of repartee. In the passenger compartments many people doze after their frenetic vacation on the French Riviera while others converse in low tones.

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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!

A Stressful Night in the Office

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A sudden ring on our interphone brings us to our senses. "Captain this is the senior purser speaking. One of the forward stewardesses just reported to me that someone has strapped a five gallon can into the far corner of the empty front row of the business class section." All of us in the cockpit are shocked bolt upright. From the flight engineer comes mumbles of J**#-@%#*.

In response, my first question is, "Did you use the Public Address system to enquire who left the container in the seat?"

"Yes of course captain, first in English, then French, and finally in German. We have repeated the request three times and there has been no response."

"Didn't someone see it on our departure from the terminal?"

"With the turmoil of the last of the three hundred passenger arrivals it somehow went unnoticed."

"OK I will send the flight engineer back to investigate."

(A note of background is due here. In the days of this event, Coca Cola and Pan American World Airways were the two most identifiable logos in the world. With this fact in mind, terrorists struck at Pan Am repeatedly to make their point against the western world. They blew up a brand new Boeing 747 at the Cairo airport: next they blew the side out of a Boeing 727 in the Caribbean, and then the most infamous of all was the destruction of a B-747 over Lockerbie Scotland in December of 1988. These miserable curs have no respect for human life. Their sick attitudes are unbelievable to the western mind. At the time of the Lockerbie event, I departed London, Heathrow for JFK just hours before this tragedy occurred. I was spared only by the luck of the draw! Now as this event unfolded I was therefore in a state of apprehension.)

A call to London Control connected us with the ground people and we declared an emergency. We explained our concern over the unknown content of the tin container in the front of the business section. I requested to fly north to a holding pattern that would keep us over an uninhabited area. This was immediately granted, and we flew to a new location and started a fifteen mile orbit in the night sky over southern England. The reason for this move was to help the investigating teams in the event we should explode due to a terrorist bomb. One of our first thoughts was to see if it would be possible to get down into the forward cargo hold. Should we be able to accomplish this, we might be able to descend the aircraft to our cabin altitude of 7,000 feet. The concern was that we did not want to change pressure altitude of the cabin in the event we were dealing with a pressure operated bomb. If this were successful, could we squeeze past the cargo bins to open a cargo door? If this proved possible, we could then drop the five gallon can overboard without changing the ambient cabin pressure.

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Bank balance as of December 2020 is \$8,059.82. If you'd like to contribute to keep the Clipper Pioneers going, please send your check payable to: Clipper Pioneers, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim WA 98382.

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

A Stressful Night in the Office

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In my trips through the hanger maintenance department in the past, I had seen the passenger compartment central carpet pulled aside and a floor panel removed that allowed access to the cargo area. Alas after pulling the carpet to one side we were confronted with rows and rows of screws. The engineer had only a pair of pliers and a screw driver so this possibility was immediately discarded.

Now I requested that the flight engineer go back and check that there was not a detonation trigger under the can. We had previously been given instructions during one of our rechecks on a technique to accomplish this inspection. He soon returned to say there was nothing under the can. OK let's unscrew the cap, was my next request. While doing this, you put your ear against the can and if you hear a ratcheting noise, immediately stop. We should then move the container to a main entry door and surround the can with blankets and pillows, depressurize the aircraft and fly to the nearest airport. After a few minutes, the crewmember returned to say that the top came off without difficulty or noise. He had then shined his flashlight down into the open can and reported that it was filled with a dark liquid that prevented his seeing into the depths. Not one of us had ever seen nitroglycerin, but we decided that it was an unlikely possibility for this amount of dark liquid. Back in the cockpit, we held a conference and decided to take it to the lavatory and dump it down the toilet. This action would assure us that nothing was hidden in the dark depths. This was accomplished and we found nothing. A call to London control ended the emergency and we requested reactivation of our flight plan to JFK.

Late in the night, we arrived in New York without further incident. The holding delay over England had put our arrival forty-five minutes behind schedule. With the final shutdown checklist complete, I took a moment to slump back in my seat to unwind from a long hard night. The tension involved in an incident of this type can literally suck the energy out of your body. In the background I could hear the weary passengers trooping off the aircraft.

One of the flight service stepped into the cockpit with this message.

"A lady perhaps in her twenties is fuming mad. She says that she spent the last of her vacation money to buy a five gallon can of VIRGIN OLIVE OIL and now the container is empty!"

"Send her up to the cockpit and I will speak with her." After a few moments she arrived in a very belligerent state. I explained the present day concern of terrorism and the terrific strain that she had put my crew through. Then there was the cost of several thousand dollars to put the aircraft into orbit for forty-five minutes over France. I then asked her why she had not answered the purser's calls regarding the abandoned can. The answer she gave was that she had been partying on the final days of her vacation. Once she arrived on the aircraft she collapsed into her seat and in moments she was in an exhausted sleep. She had heard nothing. My next question concerned the can. Why had she stowed it in the empty business section? The wire handle with the heavy load provided a lot of pain to her hand. She thought the simple solution was to store in an empty part of the aircraft.

Her high anger was now replaced with sobs. I said "If you will write a note, I am sure our company will reimburse you for the loss of your VIRGIN OLIVE OIL." "No I don't want to cause any more trouble." She then apologized profusely, turned and left the cockpit without a further word.

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.

*...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

Captain Gerard (Jerry) McAlinden passed away at the age of 87 with his family at his side, on October 28, 2020 in Skillman, NJ. He was a Korean War veteran, an avid motorcyclist and an explosive specialist, joining his brothers, Joe and Meritt at McAlinden Corporation, pioneering uses for explosives in precision demolitions. Jerry retired from Pan Am in 1988. He will be missed.

William "Bill" Ingram, age 94, of Tallahassee passed away on November 10, 2020.

Bill was born in Miami but grew up in Pelham Georgia. With a strong curiosity for airplanes, at the age of 14 he built a true to scale airplane glider in his backyard. After graduating high school Bill attended Dahlonega North Georgia College.

Knowing he was interested in flight aviation, he enlisted in the Naval Air Force. After serving his country he continued to follow his aviation passion and became a licensed aircraft mechanic at Emory Riddle in Miami. There he also attained a licensed instructor certification. With a new family living in Miami he worked For Pan-American World Airways as a mechanic while attending the University of Miami. Without the funds to afford an automobile, he would ride his bicycle to work and home. Bill later moved his family to Moultrie Georgia where he taught aviation at Spence airbase. There he wrote his own curriculum and educated aspiring pilots from all over the world in basic aircraft physics. He was a "natural at teaching" according to his students and was the first teacher to have a yearbook dedicated in his honor.

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 Sue Forde at sue@clipperpioneers.com, or mail to: Sue Forde, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382

Safety Tips: Identity theft, fraud, and financial crime

Sweepstakes, phone calls, mail scams, even household help stealing identifying documents are some examples of this serious crime. Fraud from identity theft has reached alarming levels, especially among the elderly. The Justice Department and law enforcement partners recently announced the largest coordinated sweep of elder fraud cases in history to stop elder identity theft and financial fraud.

Seniors and their loved ones should follow these steps to protect their identity – and savings:

- Do not believe any callers who claim to be from any governmental agency like the IRS, Social Security or Medicare. Government agencies do not conduct business over the phone.
- Do not provide money or personal information to charities or strangers over the phone. If you want to make a donation, send a check in the mail so it can be traced if there are any issues.
- Know when the postman comes and take in your mail quickly. Give your postman any outgoing mail or drop it into a USPS mailbox.

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Safety Tips: Identity theft, fraud, and financial crime

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- Keep financial and personal documents in a locked safe.
- Decide who will handle your financial matters and care should you become unable to do it yourself.
- Sign up for identity theft protection and credit monitoring services to get alerts about inquiries or changes to your credit report.
- Use a paper shredder to destroy documents you don't need.

Chelsea Brown, CEO of Digital Mom Talk and a Certified Cyber Security Consultant suggests: "Senior citizens can protect themselves online by investing in their online privacy." In her experience, many of her clients became victims of identity theft scams through their Facebook public information. "The easiest way to prevent this is to pay for a company like "DeleteMe" to remove all personal data from the internet," she says. "Senior citizens can also learn how to turn off their geotagging and what to share and not share on social media and coupon sites."

from Safety Team

New Pan Am Book – Missions of Mercy and Evacuation Flights

There is a new book out on Pan Am, entitled "Pan American Airways: Missions of Mercy and Evacuation Flights" by Charlie Imbriani.

The book focuses on Pan Am's missions of mercy, which became part of the Pan Am culture, and Pan Am's Evacuation flights. The narrative takes us from Pan Am's earliest days through WW II, the Cold War, Berlin, Cuba, and Vietnam. It also covers the Iranian evacuation of 1979, and much more. The book places Pan Am into the historical context in which these events took place. By framing the book in this manner, Charlie was able to place Pan Am into 20th Century American history where it belongs.

Charlie's career with Pan Am spanned 27 years mostly at JFK. He worked in Operation, Passenger Service including the Clipper Club, and in outside sales where he worked for Dick Blair in the White Plains Sales Office. In 1991, he went over to Delta and managed Delta stations in St. Petersburg Russia, Gainesville Florida, and Tallahassee, where he retired and presently resides.

There are numerous front-line Pan Amers featured in this book. If you are interested in history and Pan Am, and enjoy real life drama with real people doing great things, this book is for you.

BTW – The book can be accessed on Amazon under my name: [Charlie Imbriani](#) or the title: [Pan American Airways: Missions of Mercy and Evacuation Flights](#)

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

Email or write to:

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