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My Adventure the Day the Pope was Shot

by Bill Hoover

(Note: This write-up by me was originally intended for a professor and his class in the aviation department of Auburn University. That is why the first few sentences may seem awkward and why there is a rather long explanation of the aviation Q codes and how the SelCall worked.)

On May 11, 1981, I left JFK as the copilot on a Boeing 707 destined non-stop for Rome as Flight 110. We arrived in Rome the next morning, May 12th. We made our way to the layover hotel, got some sleep, went out for a little exercise walking, had a great, as usual, Italian dinner, and then off to bed to rest up for the Flight 111 back to JFK.

The pickup from the hotel was perfectly normal and all the flight attendants and cockpit crew took a small bus to the airport. We went directly to operations near the tarmac, and the Captain and I started in on the huge pile of papers that constitute an international flight of this non-stop length. There were all the custom papers, the flight plan, the dispatch release, the weight and balance, the long list of Notams, the over ocean weather charts, the weather observations and the weather forecasts. Nothing unusual for a flight like this.

But what was somewhat unusual was when a group of military police came into operations to speak with us. In short order, they informed us that we would have as one of our passengers in first class, Cardinal Antonio Casaroli. He was, we were informed, the Secretary of State for the Vatican. The second highest person, just after the Pope. He was traveling with a small entourage of younger priests, and was on his way to JFK for further transfer to Boston where he was to receive some kind of honorary degree.

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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.

My Adventure the Day the Pope was Shot

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The Captain and I proceeded to the airplane. The flight engineer was already there doing the pre-flight inspection. The captain and I started all the cockpit preparations after the Captain had made his flight briefing to the cabin crew. He informed the cabin crew of the Cardinal's presence on board. As we did the final paperwork, we noticed outside the cockpit windows a fleet of black official cars approaching the front airplane ramp. The cars stopped and an elderly man in clerical dress, whom we assumed was the Cardinal, got out with some younger men. They said good bye to people, and then boarded the airplane from the L1 door. Nothing unusual so far.

We locked up the airplane, I called ATC for the clearance, and we began the pre-start checklist. The rest of the departure was perfectly routine, as were the first few hours of the flight to Kennedy. The weather was beautiful and the flight over the Med was spectacular. We departed the coast of Europe just north of Lisbon and began our ocean crossing portion of the flight. When we got out of VHF range, we switched to High Frequency (HF) radio and used both Shannon Radio and Santa Maria in the Azores to relay our position reports to oceanic air traffic control. Still nothing unusual.

Then, when we were about two hours west of the Portuguese coast and now a few hundred miles north of the Azore Islands, the SelCal warning went off. For you young guys, this SelCal was a code you put into the HF receivers that would activate when someone was trying to call you on HF. The particular code you put in would only activate when a sender transmitted that code to your receiver. When the code was triggered, it sounded a two tone warning in the cockpit similar to the Avon Lady. That two-tone warning told you that someone was trying to call you on HF. The whole purpose of this SelCal system was to relieve you of the duty of monitoring very poor and very squeaky HF radio throughout the entire flight.

Well, the Selcal warning went off, and I immediately went to the HF transmitter and called, "Clipper Flight 111 answering SelCal." I thoroughly expected either Santa Maria or Shannon Radio to come back to me, because these were the areas we were transiting. But, the answer came back from New York HF Radio, and that was unusual. We were not yet within their air communications area. But, I answered and told New York Radio to go ahead.

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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>

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

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They came back loud and clear and said that we should standby for an important message from the President of Pan Am, I think his name at the time was Seawell, and also from the U.S. State Department. I acknowledged their message and said that we would standby. This was not sounding good. A message from both the head of Pan Am and from the State Department, and sent to us via New York Radio when we were not in their area of operations: what the hell could all this be about.

The cockpit was dead silent. Everyone was thinking that something serious was up, but what could it be. I had the navigation plot lying on my lap at the time, and I took it up almost automatically and using just my fingers to measure took a stab at how far we were from The Azores. My suspicions were that this message may be something to do with a bomb. The Azores were the closest land, but they were still much further away than I would have liked.

New York Radio came back a couple of minutes later and said, "We have a message from the President of Pan Am and from the U.S. State Department. Are you ready to copy?" I answered in the affirmative. They then said, "You have Cardinal Casaroli, the Secretary of State for the Vatican onboard. You are to inform the Cardinal that the Pope has been shot, and that he, Cardinal Casaroli, should return to Rome as soon as possible." We acknowledged the message. Then we just sat there for a couple of seconds and looked at each other. The first to speak was the Captain. He said, "I am not going to just go back there and tell that old guy that the Pope has been shot without some proof. How do we know that this message is legitimate?" Seemed like an honest question, and one that I had not thought of. The Captain then came up with an idea. He got on the HF and called New York Radio back. He told them that he wanted authentication for the last message that they had sent us. He told them that he wanted them to come back, after talking with Pan Am, and tell him the Captain's date of birth and his employee number. They came back with the correct info just a few minutes later. He had no choice; he had to inform the Cardinal that the Pope had been shot. Remember, all this time, someone still has to be flying the airplane and keeping it on course to New York.

The Captain got out of his seat, put on his hat, and headed for the first class to tell the Cardinal the bad news. While he was gone, the SelCal went off again, and it was New York Radio asking for our fuel onboard. Pan Am operations was going to consider turning us around in mid-Atlantic and taking the Cardinal back to Rome. Incredible what an airline will do sometimes. I gave them the fuel on board. I just could not believe that they were willing to turn the airplane around in the middle of the Atlantic. The Captain came back to the cockpit and said that he had delivered the message and that the old Cardinal had taken it rather well, much better than the younger priests accompanying him. I then briefed the Captain on the possible mid-ocean turnaround.

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Email or write to: Clipper Pioneers, c/o Sue Forde, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim
WA 98382 or email to: sue@clipperpioneers.com***

My Adventure the Day the Pope was Shot

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A few minutes later, a message came from Pan Am operations saying that a turnaround for Rome was not possible. It was not because of any fuel or crew limitation, but because Shannon Oceanic Control was having some sort of labor problems, and they would not authorize a mid-Atlantic reclearance. And, here again you will see how a good airline can come up with solutions. Pan Am New York operations told us to continue to New York and said that they had booked the Cardinal and his entourage on the Pan Am evening flight back to Rome. Furthermore, they were taking some seats out of the first class cabin on that flight and installing a lay-flat bed for the Cardinal. We were to tell the Cardinal all this. So, we continued towards New York Kennedy Airport.

About half way across the Atlantic, the purser came up and said that the Cardinal had asked if there was any way that he could call the Vatican. The Captain told her to tell the Cardinal that we were in the middle of the Atlantic and there just was no way to communicate with the Vatican. I had been a shortwave radio operator, a Ham, since I was a young boy, so I was quite comfortable with HF and how it worked. And being with Pan Am and using HF throughout the world, I knew my way around the HF frequencies and facilities. I interrupted the Captain and his talk to the purser and said that I thought that we could indeed get through to the Vatican, and I told him that I would like to give it a try. He told the purser to hold off telling the Cardinal that it could not be done.

While we normally used AIRINC commercial HF radio stations, like Shannon Radio, Santa Maria Radio, and New York Radio to communicate with operations and to relay our position reports to the appropriate oceanic control agencies, I remembered that there was another commercial radio station situated in the Swiss Alps that was called Berna Radio. This was an old and powerful radio station with a great location and had been in operation since before World War II. They specialized in radio communications with ships at sea throughout the world, but in a pinch they would also handle aviation reporting. And, I remembered that they were quite good with phone patches. I dug out my old Pan Am worldwide communications data card and found several HF frequencies for Berna Radio. I picked the one that I thought would be good for the time of day and our location, 8864kcs, and gave it a try. "Berna Radio, Berna Radio, this is Clipper 111; how do you read?"

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

PAN AM FOLKS AROUND THE WORLD-2021 WORLD WINGS CRUISE

Inviting all Pan Amer's to join us later this fall for our 2021 Annual Convention, "Tropical Dreams", on board the luxurious Celebrity Equinox for a 9-night Southern Caribbean cruise sailing RT from FLL, 29 Oct - 7 Nov.. More information can be found at their website: <https://worldwingsinternational.net/cruise2021/> or for more information PLEASE CONTACT ROSIE FOR NANCY G. MCALLISTER preswwi@gmail.com

Bank balance as of June 30, 2021 is \$9,575.10. Thank you to the many who have mailed in your donations to keep this newsletter going! 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. (See back page of this newsletter).

PAN AM Reunion - MARCH 4-13, 2022

9 Night Southern Caribbean Cruise on Radiance of the Seas r/t Miami

Welcome back to the resumption of our annual Pan Am reunion cruises – and how we have missed them! Next March we embark on Royal Caribbean's beautiful luxury liner Radiance of the Seas to exciting and captivating islands in the Caribbean where the ultimate goal is to exceed your expectations by making this cruise not just a vacation but, an adventure at sea. GREAT PRICES, MAKE A DEPOSIT as soon as possible, IT WILL BE SOLD OUT QUICKLY.

These wonderful ports of call include:

Dominican Republic, St. Croix, St. Kitts, St. Maarten, San Juan and Labadee, Haiti.

- ◆ While onboard indulge in the spa, build a scrapbook of memories or simply relax poolside.
- ◆ Dine on gourmet food as well as 24-hour room service.
- ◆ Be entertained by world-class performers from across the globe that keep you busy morning to night.
- ◆ Socialize with Pan Am friends in our well known get together cocktail parties, customized amenities and select meeting areas.
- ◆ Enjoy Broadway musicals, spectacular shows, thrilling casino action, live comedy and music, bars, dancing and much more.

It's going to be a great cruise, come join us. Call in your Crown & Anchor number and dining selection. Family and friends are welcome.

Cabins: from

* Inside **\$649** / * Ocean view **\$759** / * Balcony **\$1009**

Rates are per person, cruise only, double occupancy, *Non-Refundable and based on availability at time of booking. Port charges/tax are additional at \$402.71 per person. Checks gladly accepted (address below) and all major credit cards.

Junior Suites and Suites pricing upon request and availability.

Deposit \$250 per person upon reserving; final is due 12/4/2021. Cabins are capacity controlled. Singles pay 200% of cruise fare and port charge.

Amenity fee of \$125. per person for onboard activities (parties, gifts, etc.) to be made out to Interline Travels and mailed separately to the address below (no credit cards for this); due with final balance or earlier at your convenience.

Insurance will be available according to your cruise price. More information with your invoice.

**To reserve call: Carmen 786-252-7838 , Email interlinetravels@yahoo.com
 Stu Archer (Pan Am pilot/cruise organizer) for information ~
 (305-238-0911) Email StuNjune@aol.com**

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

Clyde Stuart Eberhardt passed away on June 28, 2021. In his 20's, Stu flew DC-3's for North Central Airlines and flew F-84F and F-86 planes for the Air National Guard in Springfield, IL. As a young teenage boy, Stu knew that flying was in his blood. He would bike to nearby Arlington Heights, IL airport and offer his services to clean and service airplanes in exchange for lessons and flying time. This strong work ethic and passion for flying led Stu to become a flight instructor at age 18. In his 20's, Stu flew DC-3's for North Central Airlines and flew F-84F and F-86 planes for the Air National Guard in Springfield, IL. He was also in the Marine Corps Reserves from 1968-69 flying A-4's in Alameda CA. He was also in the Marine Corps Reserves from 1968-69 flying A-4's in Alameda CA. It was in 1964, though, that he began working his dream job as a Pan Am Captain. His international routes allowed him to take his family to countries such as Germany, Fiji, Australia, etc. for months at a time. Pan Am, however, eventually filed for Chapter 11 in 1991, and Delta Air Lines became Stu's new "work home". He retired from Delta in 1996. Over the years, not only did Stu become one of the most exceptional pilots of his generation, but many people who crossed paths with Stu often commented on Stu and Marilyn's generosity and utter selflessness in the giving of their time, advice, knowledge, and hospitality. Many were in awe of Stu's talent as a pilot, but his kind actions as a human being propelled him into the stratosphere of "awesome" to many who knew him. Stu was a beautiful blend of "badass cool" and "humility" that drew so many people to himself. Stuart is survived by Marilyn, his wife of 61 years; his two sons Jim and Bill; his two daughters-in-law, Sandi and Dawn; and his 5 grandchildren, Julia, Megan, Nathan, Nick, and Kalli. His presence in this world will be missed by so many, but especially his family. *(Read more about Stu at <https://clipperpioneers.com/stu-eberhardt/>)*

George Van Houten of Larkspur, CA, died August 10, 2020. He is survived by a son in Munich and a daughter in Bali and 5 grandchildren. He was a 747 Captain when Pan Am went bankrupt.

Rich W. Selph was born in Pittsburg, PA, on December 21, 1939, and tragically died after an accident on his scooter on January 19, 2021. Rich was the only child of Edith and Vern Selph of Pelham, New York. He graduated from Pelham High School in 1957 and attended Dartmouth College. He became a Naval Aviator choosing to fly C130s in the Marine Corps. He joined Pan Am in January of 1965, flying the many routes and airplanes of Pan Am. He was assigned to Berlin in 1973 and loved flying the "corridors". When Pan Am sold their Pacific Division, Rich brought his family to San Francisco in 1986 to fly with United. He retired as a 747-400 Captain at age 60. Rich always said he was blessed to find a job he loved - flying! Rich and Ann were married in 1965 and enjoyed a wonderful, adventurous, full life together for 56 years with their four children and seven grandchildren. He was an excellent husband and father. He brought joy to his family by sharing his love of adventure; he taught Ann and the children to ski, sail, explore the world and live in many different places, both in the US and Europe. But, most of all, he instilled in his children a love of learning. With his great brain he imparted critical thinking, causing many "lively" conversations. Rich had a joyous laugh, making all those around him want to be in his company. He loved his friends and always gave generously of himself. He stayed connected to many friends from all eras of his life. No matter where he lived, he participated and gave back to the community. Rich left behind the broken hearts of Ann, his children Elizabeth, Brac (Daina), Catherine (Aaron) and David (Christine). His seven grandchildren, Braeden, Van, Chloe, Benjamin, Lucas, Amelia and Isabelle Ann will very much miss his playfulness, humor and love. *(Reprinted and expanded at the request of Ann Selph)*

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

The Thirty-Sixth Annual Clipper Pioneers' Luncheon

Thursday, August 19th, 2021

ARRIVAL BY SEA:

- 1) 9:30 AM arrive Bridgeport; **parking instructions are on separate sheet.**
- 2) Ferry leaves Bridgeport promptly at **10:30 AM, arriving at 11:45 AM.**
(Check www.88844ferry.com/default.aspx for changes.) or call 1-888-44ferry.
In Port Jefferson, walk across the street to "**The Meadow Club**", formerly Schafer's
Lunch will be from 12:00PM to 4:00 PM.
Your return ticket is good for any departure you select.
Sea Leader-AL VALE (203-778-2993), will have ferry tickets and roster at Bridgeport.

ARRIVAL BY LAND: PARKING

- 1) Early Birds, in the restaurant parking lot.
- 2) Shopping Mall lot south of "**The Meadow Club.**"
- 3) Parking on the street (West Broadway) where allowed.
- 4) Municipal lot across from "**The Meadow Club**", fee charged.
LIRR-Reduced fare for Senior Citizens, Short cab ride from the Port Jefferson Station to the Restaurant.

RESERVATION: Please return by July 31, Thank You!

Tear Off and enclose with Check Made Payable to: Dennis O'Connor
Mail to: Dennis O'Connor, 623 Muncey Road, West Islip, NY 11795-1813 **EMAIL:**

EMAIL: mh85dennis@aol.com

COST: Penne alla Vodka \$45, Chicken Francese \$52, 10 OZ. NY Strip Steak \$58.
This price includes lunch, tax, gratuities and a complimentary glass of wine for each diner.

Choose ONE selection per person; Entrée, Dessert and Salad Dressing. Entrée

Entree

- () 10 Oz. NY Strip
- () Chicken Francese
- () Penne alla Vodka

Dessert

- () Triple Layer
- Chocolate Cake

Dressing

- () Raspberry Vinaigrette
- () Caesar
- () Bleu Cheese

Walk-On Boat People pay \$17/per person for round-trip =

\$

NAME(S) for roster and name tag: _____
