

**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

Navigation in Central America

by Bill Nash

Navigation in Central America called for some interesting innovations. Mexico City had the only precision approach system. Pan Am and some of the nations had installed omni-directional signal beacons at airports which we could use to follow to or from the station and descend on for instrument approaches. However, summer thunderstorms often generated far greater power than our beacons, causing our instrument needles to point at the storms rather than at the beacons. For several airports, we worked out using powerful local broadcasting stations since they produced stronger signals than anything else nearby although their use was not approved for that purpose.

We could sneak into San Jose, Costa Rica, this way, coming in from the Pacific coast at Punta Arenas and following the meandering track we had marked on our maps to the airport.

Medellin, Columbia, though it is not in Central America, was the southernmost destination on our Central American missions. The route from Panama to Medellin crossed Turbo, Colombia, the area of the world's heaviest rainfall, then to the headwaters of the San Jorge River and south through rugged canyons below the ridges to Medellin. With an overcast below the ridges, we did our zigzag navigation through these canyons until we came to Antioquia, (we called it Annie Oakley) a small redroofed town on a river that ran left to right in a canyon across our course. Just beyond Annie Oakley a canyon wall rose in front of us to a plateau. We would spiral up to the overcast until we could see a huge dead tree. Once we saw it, we knew

~ 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. 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.

Navigation in Central America

~ continued from previous page

we were looking all the way across and could squeeze between the overcast and the plateau. After passing the dead tree, we could drop down into the valley to Medellin. If the clouds covered the plateau, we made a 30 degree climbing spiral into the overcast, then headed for our Medellin beacon or favorite broadcast station, to make a descending racetrack descent to the airport.

The entire area was blessed with Mayan and Aztec temple ruins. We could please our passengers and benefit the airline by circling the pyramids of Chichen Itza, Uxmal, Tikal, Tulum and others. Indian names given to towns and natural resources in those areas were rhythmic and slipped off the tongue with ease: Chichicostanango, Quetzaltenango, Tulencingo, Quintana Roo, Chilpancingo and Thuantepec. (*ed. note: with ease??*)

In approaching Tegulcigalpa, Honduras, from the south, we could find the proper valley when we saw two small peaks on its southern ridge. The runway there was short with the terminal directly at one end of the single runway and a 1500 foot crevasse at the other. Under certain cloud conditions, we had an approach from San Salvador that startled First Officers who had not yet experienced it. We would climb up along rising ground on the downwind leg then, while climbing, call for gear down and add power. Then, still following the rising terrain, we'd add more power and drop a little flap while continuing to climb to the final approach, then suddenly see the runway, add flap and land short – since the runway was humped. If we landed too far down the runway, we'd be going hell-bent downhill for the terminal. Strangely, the cloud ceiling climbed with us on this approach. It was an odd characteristic of the area. The new co-pilots thought so too.

One night in Panama, a very embarrassed assistant chief pilot, training, landed on the wrong side of the canal; not at the wrong end, the wrong airport. In another incident, one of our pilots experienced an engine failure while taking off in Panama flying a C-46. He dropped down out of sight of the tower controller, so the controller reported the plane had crashed. Meanwhile the pilot was busily zigzagging and dodging the highest terrain, unable to climb on one engine with the newly approved 48,000 pound max load.

Personally, having flown Pan Am 's C-46 cargo planes for 3 ½ years, I liked the big fat bird. 45,000 pounds was the gross weight they had been built for but, by some sleight of hand, our operations department had gotten the FAA to approve 48,000 pounds. The loss of an engine at a takeoff weight of 48,000 pounds meant a pilot had to do a lot of things in a hurry to fly on the hairy edge with the remaining engine.

Bank balance as of Feb. 28, 2022 is \$7,316.00. With the current balance, we can print about six more months of the Clipper Pioneers. We will be including the opportunity in future issues to renew your membership, which will go toward continuing forward. 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.

Paris and a Lt. Colonel

by Captain Robert Lee Bragg, Pan American and United, edited by Dorothy A. Boyd-Bragg, Ph.D

While I was in the Air Force and stationed in Charleston, five of us went to Paris on a layover with a Lt. Colonel who had been based there. We spent a short night at a very basic hotel and experienced absolutely nothing that was worth remembering while there.

The trip back was another matter, much more memorable. We attempted to head back to the real world, Charleston, the following day which turned out to be the fifth of July, the ultimate holiday for the French - Bastille Day. Boy, do the French celebrate with enthusiasm! It took us hours longer than we ever dreamed to get back to the air force base in France. We barely made it, to tell the truth.

The C-130 which was our last hope for getting back to Charleston was at the very end of the runway and ready to take off when we arrived. I wasn't the only one who felt my stomach crunch. Then, for the first time in my brief military career, I realized that some officers did, indeed, have at least some memory of their own youth and a modicum at least of compassion. The plane waited for us. We got on the plane - just barely.

It actually taught me a thing or two for the future, including that one should never cut things too close and that spur of the moment things, like long, unplanned, over-night trips, seldom work out. The cost of such things, in terms of cash and stress, usually, is simply too great.

Healthy Eating Tips

Many people eat more than they need, especially when eating out or getting takeout. Try these tips.

- ◆ Remember, restaurants often serve more than one portion. If the portion is bigger than one serving, take home or put away the rest to eat later.
- ◆ When eating out or getting takeout, share a meal with a friend or save half of your serving for another meal.
- ◆ Avoid watching TV, your smartphone, or other devices while eating. You may not notice how much you are consuming if you're distracted.
- ◆ Consume your food and beverages more slowly and enjoy all the flavors and tastes.

from <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/healthy-eating-physical-activity-for-life/health-tips-for-older-adults>

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

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

Frankfort am Main, Germany, is my Kind of Town

by Captain Robert Lee Bragg, Pan American and United, edited by Dorothy A. Boyd-Bragg, Ph.D

The Intercontinental Motel in Frankfurt was impressive in the 1980s and still is. Since it was then owned by Pan Am, Pan Am crews regularly stayed there, and I never heard anyone complain!

One morning I was waiting in the lobby for the crew pickup when I was approached by an affluent looking American in a suit. His comment was right to the point, "Boy, bring my bag down from the 5th floor, room 510. I'm checking out." After a very brief pause, I replied, "Sorry sir, I'm an airline captain, not a bellboy." Later, upon reflection, I thought I should have handled it differently. I think I should have picked up his bag without comment. He looked like he could afford to be a big tipper. Sadly, I never had the chance to do it differently another time.

Later that morning, while I was sitting at the gate in Frankfurt (FRA) prior to departure doing our regular cockpit check, purser came in and said, "He's here. Our favorite restaurant owner is here. Gurt is on board, and we've put him in business class." I immediately had a good idea - I thought. I said, "When you get ready to serve, come and get me." When she did just that later, I put on my hat and straightened my tie, picked up his tray of food from her, and went into the business section and served Gurt in style. Saying as I did, "Welcome aboard, Gurt. I thought I'd just return the favor and serve you for a change." I really didn't care what the others in business thought. But, then when my eye caught a glimpse of the American who had mistaken me for a bellboy earlier that morning at the hotel, in business, I smiled as I imagined what he might be thinking now.

Gurt ran one of my favorite restaurants in Frankfurt. It was located about a block from the Intercontinental Hotel and situated near a gas station. Most crewmembers dined there and, among themselves, generally referred to the place as "The Gas Station." Gurt preferred to call it "Baslerecke," meaning something like "The Swiss Place."

Gurt had a wonderful memory. No matter how busy and crowded the restaurant was, he'd greet you with a smile and what he thought you'd be ordering. He'd always greet me with "Schweinshaxe (roast pork knuckle), Spatzle, Rotkraut, and Bier. He was usually right on target. He took all orders and remembered them without writing anything down, his wife served the food, and his cousin handled the bar. Gurt's restaurant ran smoothly and prospered.

During the day, the customers were largely Germans. In the evening, crew members from several airlines provided the bulk of the crowd. On some evenings, I think he had more than seventy-five crewmembers during the course of the evening. My meal generally cost about fifteen marks. The mark was then three to the dollar, so I got just what I wanted for about five dollars. I didn't realize how good I had it.

Every year, Gurt was known to make several trips to the United States. His loyal customers believed that he took money with him each time to deposit in American banks. If we were right, Gurt made a big mistake. The dollar weakened and the Euro soared. Too bad for him - he was a gentle and generous man. The Intercontinental would have been wise to have hired someone like him to manage their restaurant. He was that good.

PanAm Unforgotten by “Baseler Eck”

Submitted by Harry Frahm

A favorite spot during FRA layovers by PanAm crew members was the “Baseler Eck” restaurant, better known as “the Gas Station.”

The proprietor, Gerd, having a photographic memory takes meal orders to the amazement of everybody for a lot of guests without ever writing anything down – ever!

The “Gas Station” portion does not exist anymore. It has been replaced with flowering plants, but the “Baseler Eck” and the friendly owner, gourmet chef, waiter and all-around wizard, does. He is, however, missing the PanAm crew tremendously. Not only for his business, but for the gemutliche (cozy) atmosphere always present with PanAmers. Creating a bond between guest and host, it was more like family getting together for Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner.

Gerd sends a special note to all PanAmers who frequented his establishment: “I would like to thank all of you, from the bottom of my heart, for your patronage and the really good times we had experienced together. I am saddened not to see you anymore; your absence is hurting but my soul is filled with fond memories and will be with me forever. PanAm Unforgotten!”

A Documentary Series about Pan American Airways on PBS

When Pan Am's M-130 flying boat "China Clipper" took off for the first scheduled flight to Manila on November 22, 1935, it riveted the attention of people around the world. At that moment Pan Am vaulted to a commanding position and the world changed forever as a result. That's the story brought to life in "Across the Pacific." Newly unearthed archival motion pictures, photographs, and original sound recordings as well as stunning graphics, help bring this history back to life.

The film by Moreno/Lyons Productions tells the epic story of how Pan American Airways became the first to bridge the mighty Pacific - the first airline to cross any ocean. Focusing in particular on the contributions of Pan Am's visionary leader Juan Trippe, aircraft designer Igor Sikorsky, and radio engineer Hugo Leuteritz, the three-part program is currently broadcast on PBS. "Across the Pacific" premiered on VPM PBS in Richmond Virginia May/June 2020. You can watch each episode on the home page of the Clipper Pioneers website (www.clipperpioneers.com)

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/>

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

Pan Am Philadelphia Area Pilots (PAPAP)

We meet the second Tuesday of every quarter at the Continental Inn in Yardley, PA at 1200 for a bit of BS before going to our private conference room upstairs for lunch.

Been going on since 1992 and it's a great way to stay together. Contact: Chris Blaydon [215 757 6229](tel:2157576229) or cblayd@aol.com

Come Join the Santa Rosa Breakfast Group!

The Santa Rosa Breakfast group meets about every six weeks. They have 17 pilots, FA's and FEO's that get together to discuss the old days. Anyone in the Sonoma, Napa, and Marin county areas north of San Francisco who would like to join them should email Dave Criley at davecriley@comcast.net, and send your email contact. They started out with 5 and have grown to 17. ~from Dave Criley

Do You Know About Events that are Upcoming?

There are many events and get-togethers that may be of interest to our readers. If you know about one, or have a group that gets together on a regular basis - or even once in awhile - please let us know so we can share with our readers! :)

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

Charles H. Palmer was born in Denver, Colorado, June 12, 1929. He flew west into a beautiful sunset for his last big adventure as he called it, on November 17, 2021. It seems he was born with a special gene for fast transportation. It started with roller-skating in his pre-teens. It was a lifelong passion for the sport of artistic skating well into his 70's. He developed his love for fast automobiles at a young age by becoming a member of the Denver Timing Association where members proudly presented their Hot Rods. Charlie showed up with his "Barn Find", a 32 Ford Roadster. He converted it to a fast automobile which took honors at Bonneville, the fastest speedway on the Utah Salt Flats. After graduating from East Denver High in 1947, Charlie found work at a Ford Dealership in Denver. He worked his way up to parts manager when the Army called him for active duty in January 1952, prior to having enlisted in the USNR in June 1948 and was discharged in June 1954. He was stationed at the Naval Air Station in Denver. He was trained as an airplane mechanic. It was here that Charlie discovered what he wanted to do with the rest of his professional life. He took flying lessons whenever he could. Eventually he had earned a commercial license. The Spartan School of Aeronautics and Technology was the next step in his career. He had the good fortune to hire on with Pan Am. He put in 32 years of service as a flight engineer until the company declared bankruptcy. Charlie flew worldwide, starting with the DC-6 all the way up to the 747. His home base was New York. In November 1963 Pan Am sent him to Berlin to fly the IGS, the Inter German Service.

Robert Teagarden McCracken died at home on February 26, 2022. He was born July 30, 1924 in Wind Ridge, Greene County, Pennsylvania, just 21 years after the Wright Brothers' first flight and 3 years before Lindbergh's historic transatlantic flight. "Growing up on a farm family, he never dreamed of flying, but at 17 he received his father's permission to enlist in the armed services during World War II and chose to serve in the Army Air Corps. Robert trained on the B-17, where he became a Command Pilot at the age of 18. The same week his 8th Air Force squadron was given orders to report for combat duty both Robert's father and sister died. He was granted compassionate leave to attend their funerals but missed his deployment. Upon return, he trained on the B-29 for deployment in the Pacific when the atomic bomb ended the war with Japan. At that time, he was asked if he wanted to continue in the military (potentially attending West Point) or leave the service. He chose to leave and received an honorable discharge as a lieutenant. After Robert left the Army Air Corps, he taught flying at the Connellsville, PA airport to students studying under the GI Bill. He began his career with Pan American World Airways in 1951 as third officer and then navigator flying 14 day trips from New York to Johannesburg. He went on to fly the DC-6, the Boeing 377 Stratocruiser, then the DC-8, where he flew as first officer. He transferred from the DC-8 to the Boeing 707 with the goal to qualify as a Captain. He spent 12 years as Captain on the 707 on Pan Am's international flights. Robert then transferred as Captain on the 747 and spent the remainder of his career on the jumbo jet. He retired in 1985 with 33.5 years of service with Pan American.

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 Beauty of Turbine Engines

by Bob Crouse

We gotta get rid of those turbines, they're ruining aviation and our hearing...A turbine is too simple minded, it has no mystery. The air travels through it in a straight line and doesn't pick up any of the pungent fragrance of engine oil or pilot sweat.

Anybody can start a turbine. You just need to move a switch from "OFF" to "START" and then remember to move it back to "ON" after a while. My PC is harder to start. Cranking a round engine requires skill, finesse and style. You have to seduce it into starting. It's like waking up a horny mistress. On some planes, the pilots aren't even allowed to do it.

Turbines start by whining for a while, then give a lady-like poof and start whining a little louder. Round engines give a satisfying rattle-rattle, click-click, BANG, more rattles, another BANG, a big macho FART or two, more clicks, a lot more smoke and finally a serious low pitched roar. We like that. It's a GUY thing.

When you start a round engine, your mind is engaged and you can concentrate on the flight ahead. Starting a turbine is like flicking on a ceiling fan: Useful, but hardly exciting. When you have started his round engine successfully your Crew Chief looks up at you like he'd just let you kiss his daughter and was happy for you both!

Turbines don't break or catch fire often enough, which leads to aircrew boredom, complacency and inattention. A round engine at speed looks and sounds like it's going to blow any minute. This helps concentrate the mind!

Turbines don't have enough control levers or gauges to keep a pilot's attention. There's nothing to fiddle with during long flights. Turbines smell like a Boy Scout camp full of Coleman Lamps. Round engines smell like God intended machines to smell.

Pass this on to an old WWII guy (or his son, or anyone who flew them, ever) in remembrance of that "Greatest Generation".

Share the Memories...

You are a part of this wonderful "family." Are there memories you've written down that you'd like to share with us in this newsletter? Please send them to Sue by email to: sue@clipperpioneers.com. Have you come across an interesting article that you'd like to share with us? Send that along, so others can enjoy! We'd love to hear from you!

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
