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## Three B-747's Over New Delhi

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

Pilots must be a bit like golfers. They both recall things, even minor things, with great clarity - forever. They both also like to "replay" interesting flights and holes. I've often wondered how many pilots are golfers and vice versa. I was, but only for a short time. I didn't have time to do justice to both pursuits, and I didn't like lugging my clubs with me nearly as much as I thought I would in the beginning.

One trip that I recall quite vividly, involved a flight from Karachi (KHI) to New Delhi (DEL) in the early 1980s. As we approached our destination, I suddenly appreciated that it was, indeed, a very, very crowded sky that day.

Approaching at the same time as my aircraft - a PanAm B-747, at 30,000 feet - were two other B-747's - one a British Airways B-747, at 27,000 feet, and the other a Lufthansa B-747, at 25,000 feet.

As the three of us got closer, the Air Traffic Controller seemed a bit flustered - even excited. Perhaps he was relatively inexperienced. It was certainly somewhat unusual for three B-747's to come in together. An experienced ATC would have started their individual descents further out in each case. In any case, instructions were not forthcoming, and the three of us "overheaded" the New Delhi airport at altitude and entered a holding pattern.

I was a bit bemused and, after a short while, I suggested to all concerned, including the tower, that each of

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## Three B-747's Over New Delhi

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us might want to descend in five thousand feet increments from our original positions, with the lowest leading the way. Each of us would keep the rest apprised of their descent in five thousand feet increments. All agreed that this was a reasonable approach, and it was done with efficiency. Each landed in sequence - with PanAm being the last to land. Even in the sky, or perhaps I should say, *especially* in the sky, common sense and practicality are to be appreciated and commended.

When the three B-747's were safely on the ground, I got to thinking about golf again. I concluded again that in the great scheme of things, I'd much rather be a good or better pilot than a great golfer. Lives depend on the skill of pilots; egos are merely enhanced by a good or better round of golf. I will admit, however, that occasionally a monetary reward is thrown into the mix to make it interesting, but that's merely my personal opinion.

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## Turning Finals - The Long Way Home

*By John A. Marshall*

Pan Am Captain Bob Ford didn't consider himself a hero or even a visionary pioneer in a fledgling industry. That was a role that benefited the Lindberghs and Musicks of the world. Nonetheless, Ford was a man thrust by events and circumstance into a situation that placed him in a unique position; one that provided him with a certain amount of notoriety, and even earned him a photo and a column in TIME magazine. (January 19, 1942.)

The year was 1941, early in December. The Pacific Ocean had been a simmering cauldron of unrest for many months. The Japanese government had fortified its garrisons not only on the home islands, but further to the south, sending fresh divisions of troops to Okinawa and points south, loading troop ships that were ready to sail to Hong Kong and the Philippines. When the armada of warships launched the fighter attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, Bob Ford and his crew often, along with twenty-one passengers aboard the Boeing 314 flying boat Pacific Clipper, were nearing the end of a four day flight from San Francisco to Auckland, New Zealand. Their schedule called for the crew and aircraft to layover in New Zealand for three days and then retrace their route to California the way they had come. It was not to be, and the next five weeks were to provide an adventure the like of which none of them could have ever dreamed.

Before leaving the seaplane base at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, Ford had been handed a thick packet of orders, a protocol which he was to follow in the event of Japanese action in the Pacific prior to his return. The plan had allowed for many contingencies, but none that envisioned a scenario in which the entire ocean would be closed to them, prohibiting their return. In the event of hostilities, the first directive in the plan

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**We'd like to have more stories to share! If you have a story you'd like to send, please send it in sooner rather than later! We appreciate you and the interesting stories you send in for all to enjoy! Email to: [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com).**

***Don't forget to check out our website at: [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com)***

## Turning Finals - The Long Way Home

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Ford carried called for the crew to await further orders, wherever they might be. It was a soft spring morning down under as the Pacific Clipper droned southward toward Auckland. The serenity of the routine flight was suddenly shattered when Radio Operator John Poindexter intercepted what he thought would be a routine message from Auckland. Instead came a message from the company via Canton Island announcing the bombing of Hawaii. The unthinkable had become a startling reality, and in the blink of an eye, the Pacific Ocean had become a war zone. Poindexter raised the PanAm station at Auckland, and Ford exchanged a few terse words with the station manager to make sure that the harbor and landing facilities were safe and secure. In heavy silence, the big flying boat continued on and made an uneventful landing in Auckland Harbor.

For a week, the crew haunted the communications room at the U.S. consulate waiting for orders from the company in New York. In the meantime, the war news that reached New Zealand every day was more and more frightening. Japanese forces were moving southward at a breakneck pace; soon Australia and then New Zealand would be at risk. Ford chafed at the delay. He ordered all identifying markings on the Pacific Clipper painted over, except for a small American flag left on the side of the fuselage. Its presence was to be a lucky one, once they began their long journey homeward. The flight engineers, Homans "Swede" Rothe and John "Jocko" Parish, spent the days seeing to the health of the Boeing, running the engines and taking care of even the most minor of squawks.

Finally, on December 15th, word came from New York. Ford and his crew were to fly their airplane back to America the long way around, westbound. It was a daunting assignment. The route would take them west to Australia, up through the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, through Saudi Arabia and down the long African continent to the Belgian Congo (Zaire), across the south Atlantic Ocean, northwards through South America and the Caribbean to New York. They faced a journey of over 30,000 miles over oceans and lands that none of them had ever seen; they were flying into the teeth of a burgeoning world war, to places where loyalties and allegiances would be questionable at best. They had no maps or charts for the journey, and very little money. They would have to do all their own planning, judging each succeeding leg on its merits; purchasing fuel and oil along the way, as well as the food they would eat. Just how they would complete their mission, Ford had no idea. Their first orders were to backtrack to Noumea, pick up Pan Am's station personnel there, and deliver them to Australia, to remain for the duration. When the Clipper arrived, Ford told the startled station manager to round up all his personnel, that each person could bring one suitcase, and they would leave in an hour. As the sun rose above the placid green sea, so did the Pacific Clipper. She landed at Gladstone, Australia six hours later.

Money had been a nagging worry. The pooled resources of the crew, while adequate for a short Auckland layover and the trip back to San Francisco, would hardly see them around the world. When they landed in Gladstone, there was a great deal of interest in the huge flying boat. One of the young men who came down to the harbor to see her was a banker, who engaged Ford in conversation. Eventually he asked, "How are

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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>**

## Turning Finals - The Long Way Home

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you fixed for money?" Ford admitted they were nearly broke. The banker went immediately to his bank (it was a Saturday morning), opened the vault, and handed the stunned Ford five hundred American dollars.

It was an unexpected windfall that was to finance their trip all the way to New York. Their next leg was across the Australian continent to Port Darwin, where they would jump off for the Dutch East Indies and then India. But first they were confronted by a problem that would plague them all the way to North America. They were informed that there was no aviation gas available, but the crew was welcome to all the automobile gas they could load. They had little choice. Ford conferred with his engineers and formulated a plan. They would transfer what remained of the aviation fuel into the center wing tanks, and load the auto gas into the wings. They would take off and make their initial climb on the good stuff, and once they had leveled off, effect the transfer to the lower octane fuel. Neither Ford nor either of the engineers would venture a guess as to just how the high-bred Wright Double-Cyclone engines would react to such a spartan diet.

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE**

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## 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](http://www.clipperpioneers.com))

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## Flying Boat Reunion clip now available for viewing

A 15-minute special that aired April 27, 2016 on Ireland's popular RTE TV show "Nationwide" is now available for viewing. China Clipper First Officer Robert Hicks (94); Merry Barton, daughter of Folger Athearn (Pan Am's station manager in Noumea, New Caledonia in 1941); Director of the Foynes Flying Boat Museum Margaret O'Shaughnessy; Ed Trippe and Mary Lou Bigelow were interviewed during the Foynes Flying Boat reunion. <http://www.rte.ie/player/us/show/nationwide-21/10566026/>

**Bank balance as of Dec. 31, 2021 is \$6,958.61.** 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.

# PAN AM Reunion - MARCH 12-20, 2022

## 8 Night Southern Caribbean Cruise on Jewel of the Seas r/t Miami

Dear Pan Am friends: It's about time to cruise !!

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 Jewel 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. These wonderful ports of call include:

### LABADEE, HAITI - SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

### PHILIPSBURG, ST. MAARTEN AND ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA

While onboard indulge in the spa, build a scrapbook of memories or simply relax poolside. Dine on gourmet food as well as twenty four 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    \$599 /    \* Ocean view    \$659 /    \* Balcony    \$999**

Rates are per person, cruise only, double occupancy, Non-Refundable and based on availability at time of booking. Port charges/tax are additional at \$361.35 per person. Checks are generally preferred (address below) but all major credit cards are accepted. Deposit \$250 per person upon reserving; final is due 12/2/2021. 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. Insurance is be available according to your cruise price. More information with your invoice. Junior Suites and Suites are on Wait List Status - pricing upon request when available.

To reserve call Carmen 786-252-7838 , Email [interlinetravels@yahoo.com](mailto:interlinetravels@yahoo.com)

Stu Archer (Pan Am pilot/cruise organizer) for information (305-238-0911) Email [StuNJune@aol.com](mailto:StuNJune@aol.com)



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## Pan Am Philadelphia Area Pilots (PAPAP)

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

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

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## Come Join the Santa Rosa Breakfast Group!

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

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## 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! :)

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## Layovers for Pan Am

Check out Pan American layovers at [www.paacrewlayover.com](http://www.paacrewlayover.com), where some 81 cities and over 161 hotels are shown in photos.

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## Check Out the Lockerbie Website

A website has been created for Lockerbie. It can be viewed at [www.lockerbie103.com](http://www.lockerbie103.com). It might be a worthwhile site to check out, especially for those who plan on visiting Lockerbie. Be sure to enter the web address in the browser (not Google Search, etc.) with the www. Otherwise, they will get hundreds of Lockerbies and 103s and may not find the web site after 15 pages. ~Claude Hudspeth

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## Pan Am -- Personal Tributes to A Global Aviation Pioneer

The Pan Am Historical Foundation recently published the highly acclaimed *Pan Am -- Personal Tributes to a Global Aviation Pioneer*, a book that caught the attention of Pan Amers and aviation enthusiasts around the world. Visit <https://www.panam.org/shop/669-panam90-book> to order.

### Thank You for the Stories You're Sending In! Keep 'em coming!!

We've been getting some good stories about memories of your times with Pan Am, and we want you to know we appreciate it! Keep them coming, and you will see them in the upcoming issues! Are there memories you've written down that you'd like to share with us in this newsletter - short or long? Have you come across an interesting article that you'd like to share with us? Would you share pieces from a book you've written? Send them to [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com).

*...and God will lift you up on Eagle's Wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,  
make you to shine like the sun and hold you in the palm of His hand.*

## IN MEMORIAM

**Don Browning** passed away on December 31, 2021. The very interesting life of Don Browning began in Cleveland, OH on May 5, 1934. The proud parents were James Clapperton Browning and Marguerite Triumphour Browning, known to all as Pappa and Granny. Don was an only child for 7 yrs and then along came his darling little sister, Judy. Don's long career in Aviation began in 1957 when he earned his wings in the USAF. His service career ended in Vietnam with "one more take off than landings". After his near fatal accident in 1966 he spent 3 months recuperating from his multiple injuries before joining Pan American Airways in Miami. We all said that career was "better than working for a living"! He traveled extensively through Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia and was still with the company when it ceased operation in 1991. That did not stop his need to fly and travel as he continued with his Captain's status with Air Canada and Southern Air, as well as Life Guard flying out of Ft Lauderdale. He finally hung up his wings in 2001 when he achieved his real estate sales license. Don was a self-made man. He is survived by his 5 biological children and 2 stepsons, 9 grandchildren, his sister and his wife of 40 years, Judy Hoffs Bailey Browning.

**Rob Robertson** was born May 6, 1932 in Priest River, Idaho, and passed away in 2022. He always told the story when he was working in the woods, it was pouring rain, his sack lunch soaking wet, he looked up and saw a plane and thought, 'those guys are up there in a warm cockpit, dressed nice, and having coffee served to them – that is what I am going to do!' He went to University of Idaho and ended up in Air Cadets. After the Air Force and Southern Airline, he finally got to work for Pan Am, the love of his life. Like everyone else, he loved flying for them – and boy, the stories! He did like flying troops out of Vietnam for R&R, but not flying them back. He is survived by wife Joanne, son Evan, stepson Mike Fugit, daughter-in-law Monica and a granddaughter and grandson.

**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

**Get a good night's rest.** Aging causes sleep to become lighter and more fragmented. For a restful sleep, practice good sleeping habits. An hour before bedtime, turn off screens. That is important because the artificial light in TVs and phones suppresses melatonin, a sleep hormone. Relax with soothing bedtime rituals like a warm bath or slow music. Create a space that is conducive to sleep by investing in a good mattress and making sure your bedroom is quiet, cool, and dark.

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***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)***

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## Stop, Look and Research before Giving to an Organization

These days, there are just so many reasons why people want to do something to help, to make a difference, to take action. In addition to volunteering or putting their feet to the pavement, lots of people are putting their hands in their wallets to try to make an impact. Once again, though, scammers will be there. As ever, they follow the headlines and pop up wherever there's money to be made. So, before you make a donation to support any cause, here are a few things to think about and do:

- **Do some research.** There are many good organizations to support. Search online for recommendations — and, when you've found one that's well thought of, check it out. Type the group or fund's name into a search engine, plus the word "scam," "review," or "complaint."
- **Consider how you pay.** Real charities won't ask you to pay by cash, money transfer, gift card, or Bitcoin. That's how scammers ask you to pay. So if someone tells you to donate that way, think about donating elsewhere.
- **Research crowdfunding, too.** Many funds that give real help spring up right after a tragedy. But scammers put up crowdfunding pages, too, and it can be hard to tell the difference. You want your money to go to help, so do some online checking to find the real, official funds that support the people or causes you want to support.
- **If someone rushes you, slow down.** Scammers want to get your money as soon as they can. They might start calling, pressuring you to give — or even saying you made a pledge. And, since you can't trust caller ID, you won't know who's really calling. So go back to the first bullet: do some research and then give. Just not in response to pressure.

Learn more about other ways to check out charities, and how to give safely, at [ftc.gov/charity](https://ftc.gov/charity).

(by Jennifer Leach, Associate Director, Division of Consumer and Business Education, FTC, from <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2020/06/donating-difficult-times>)

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## The Importance of Exercise

Exercising your mind is as important as exercising your body. By keeping your brain active you'll prevent cognitive decline and memory problems. Find a new way to do something you enjoy. Experiment with new recipes. If you enjoy crosswords, switch to more challenging puzzles. Improve your golf game.

Challenge yourself with a change of routine. Each day do a typical thing in an unusual way. Take a different route home from work. Try a new workout. Walk a different path. The key is to not get into a rut, and keep moving.

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## 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](mailto: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!

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