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## My Longest Check Ride

*by Gene Woerner*

I was the Captain on Clipper 842 from SFO to HNL on a stormy February evening in 1983. It was going to be a six day trip to Guam via Honolulu and return.

When I reported to Dispatch in the PAN AM hangar at the San Francisco International Airport, I was met by Captain Chris Wharton. He informed me that he would be conducting a line check to HNL that evening.

It was not my first line check ride as Captain on the B747. I had been checked out on the airplane for about a year and a half. I had never had any interaction with Captain Wharton before that evening.

Having heard about Captain Wharton, I certainly wasn't at all thrilled to have him as my Check Airman that evening. He had a reputation for being a no-nonsense, strict, by-the-book Check Pilot, having downed a number of Pilots during his career. It was going to be a very long five hour flight to Honolulu that night. By this time the First Officer, whose name shall remain anonymous, had shown up. I had not flown with him before, but knew him by reputation.

He was known at the San Francisco base as a nonconforming smart ass, who thought the company owed him more than his salary. I knew that he wasn't the most popular First Officer at the base, and many crew members had made disparaging remarks about having him as a crew member. So not only was it going to be a long night, but also a long six day trip.

After the briefing in Dispatch and arriving at the airplane, we settled into the cockpit to begin our start and flight preparations. I had already briefed the Flight Attendants in the presence of Captain Wharton.

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### No Password Needed for Members Only Section of the Website

Please note - we have changed the access to the online newsletters so that you will no longer need a password to access them. GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT: [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com). To request a current membership list, email [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com) with your request. Click on the "Members Only" button on the righthand side to access the current and previous newsletters.

## My Longest Check Ride

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I was going to fly the first leg to Honolulu and the flight was expected to be a mostly smooth Pacific crossing.

From the departure briefing - to engine start, taxi, takeoff and climb to cruise altitude - everything was routine and by the book. After we were settled at our cruising altitude, Captain Wharton asked to see all of our Flight and Company manuals.

He checked mine first, and luckily, I had just brought all my manuals up-to-date, which seemed to please him. He was now looking at the First Officer's paperwork. Immediately, he noted that his manuals were way out-of-date and hadn't been revised in months. He didn't buy the First Officer's excuse, and informed him that he was in violation of FARs, as well as Company regulations.

Needless to say, it was a very sterile cockpit for the rest of the flight. The cruise, descend and landing at the HNL airport was also routine. It was a glorious evening in Honolulu and we could see the airport miles out. After securing the aircraft at the gate, Captain Wharton informed the First officer he would be removed from further flying and would be deadheading back to San Francisco the next day.

After checking with crew scheduling, he determined that there were no unassigned First Officers available for our flight to Guam the following day; therefore, scheduling assigned Captain Wharton to me as the First Officer for the rest of the pattern.

'Oh Shoot', I thought, 'now the check ride really begins!' At Dispatch the following evening, Captain Wharton told me before our departure to Guam, that the check ride was over and he was here to help and would act as my First Officer, and hoped that we would enjoy the rest of the pattern.

I offered him the leg to GUAM which he gladly accepted, and we had a relatively pleasant trip with a fun layover in Guam, thanks also to a fun Flight Service crew.

Even though the rest of the flights went well, without any issues, it was still stressful and I was relieved when we shook hands after leaving the cockpit on our return at SFO.

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## Open House at Tempelhof AFB in Berlin

*By Captain Carl Stevenson*

It was a beautiful summer day in Berlin. I was the Captain on a scheduled Pan Am 727 flight from Tegel to Frankfurt.

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**Bank balance as of March 31, 2022 is \$6,904.76** With the current balance, we can print a few more months of the Clipper Pioneers. The opportunity to renew your membership with your donation is on a form on page 8 of this newsletter, which will go toward continuing forward. Thank you to the many who have mailed in your donations in 2022 already! Be sure to clip and send in your check if you'd like to continue to receive the newsletter. Thank you!

## Open House at Tempelhof AFB in Berlin

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We had a full load of passengers and three IGS Flight Attendants plus our first officer and flight engineer.

As we became airborne, we heard Air Traffic Control ask if we could make a low pass over Tempelhof AFB where they were having Open House for the 4th of July. We said we would be happy to comply with their request.

I made an announcement to our passengers that we would be making a low flyby over Tempelhof for the 4th of July Open House. We lowered some flaps so we could fly slowly at a low altitude over the runway.

It was quite a sight to behold, with thousands of spectators watching as we made our slow, low pass; many were waving.

We raised our flaps and continued climbing to our corridor cruising altitude to Frankfurt.

A stewardess came to the cockpit to tell us that one of our passengers was upset with what had just happened. She was a German actress named Elke Sommer. I said to bring her to the cockpit. When she entered the cockpit, I asked Miss Sommer what the problem was. She said that she wasn't expecting to be flying that low shortly after takeoff.

I explained that I had made an announcement about what we would be doing. She claimed she didn't hear it.

After landing in Frankfurt, the Stewardess told me why Miss Sommer didn't hear my announcement. She was busy hugging her young boy friend.

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## Another T-28 Memory

*by Irv Soble*

As a member of USAF Pilot Training Class 58-N, I flew the T-28A after first flying the T-34.

Before I tell you about one of the most memorable days in my life though, I must first tell you about my T-28 flight instructor, Mr. Marian P. Ives. Mr. Ives was a civilian, as were all our Primary instructors, but he was also a Lt. Col. in the ANG, as well. He was the meanest human being I had ever met, who started insulting his students the moment their engine started. He was a screamer's screamer and would swear at his students incessantly. He believed entirely in negative training, confiding in me once that he wanted his students to hate him, so that they were more likely to love their aircraft. I didn't believe in negative training then, nor ever, for that matter, but I would put up with anything to get my wings.

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

## Another T-28 Memory

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We were 126 student officers in our class and in our initial briefing, we were advised that the Air Force would only allow 42 of our class to graduate from Primary. That's all the slots that were available to our graduating class. We were seated 3 students and an instructor at each table, and the Squadron CO told each of us students to look at the Student to his left and to his right, because 6 months from then, they wouldn't be there. What a way to begin pilot training. Obviously, only those who wanted to fly badly enough, were able to finish.

Anyhow, one beautiful day, I was in the back seat of my T-28, with the hood covering the whole back cockpit, on an instrument flight, with Mr. Ives doing his absolute best to keep me miserable.

One of his favorite ploys was to play country music as loud as possible on the interphone and then when I was struggling with some timed maneuver, he would try to further distract me with a question like "Looootenant, what's the outside air temperature?" followed by, "Is that Centigrade or Fahrenheit?" followed by "What would that be in Fahrenheit?" followed by, "You stupid, M-F S-O-B, you just missed your altitude", or some other infraction. I know that he loaded me down more than his other students, but I was to learn later that he just expected more from me.

On this day, at this time, I was flying straight and level at 8000 feet, when the stick was suddenly slammed to one side. This was followed by an incredible jolt that bottomed my seat and literally had me drop out from under my earphones and baseball cap. There I was, sitting on the floor, wondering what this SOB had come up with now to further torture me. I felt like we were in a right turn, lifted the hood to look out, and couldn't see any left wing. Now what the heck had he done with that wing? I raised my seat, pulled back the hood, put on my hat and headset and looked where Mr. Ives was staring.

I looked just in time to see another T-28 explode after diving into the ground. There were no chutes. I looked back to what was left of my left wing and could see that it extended only to the end of the flap. There was no aileron or wing for the aileron to attach to. Furthermore, this would actually be the first asymmetrically winged aircraft, for the left wing was slightly swept back and the right wing was slightly swept forward. Most importantly though, we were still flying after that head-on collision.

I felt a little foolish then when I said in my most respectful student manner, Mr. Ives, are you aware that we don't have all of our left wing? When he turned to look, and his shoulders seemed to go higher than his head, I had my answer. Mr. Ives then became the kindest person I could ever know. He said to me in the calmest voice imaginable, "Looootenant, we equals now. What do you want to do?" "Do you want us to try to land this f—ckin thing or do you want out while we can still get out?"

I was a bachelor, and he was married with 6 kids, so I answered "Mr. Ives, you have 7 more reasons to live than I do, so you make the decision and I'll follow you."

"OK then", he said. "You watch the left wing and if it touches the horizon while we're above 2000', you blow the canopy, and we'll go over the side. Below 2000', we'll stay with the aircraft. I'll keep making 360s to the right and gradually work us back and down to the runway."

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

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## Another T-28 Memory

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Well, as it turned out, we came out a little short and had a longer straight-in final than either of us would have liked. We flew that final in a God-awful powered slip, and I couldn't help thinking that I wouldn't bet a nickel on our chances of making this one unscathed. On that seemingly forever final, I made so many promises to God. My commitments seemed endless. I never prayed so much in my whole life before that flight. When we touched down safely, I never felt so happy. I also instantly forgot all the promises I made. I think I've spent my entire life trying to make up for those forgotten promises.

The moral of this story is, of course, that I continue to love the T-28 and its part in bringing me home safely. I thank God also for the skill and courage of Mr. Ives. He and I became best friends as you can imagine, but he never let up on me, especially in my instrument training.

When it finally came time for me to take my first instrument flight check from the Air Force's designated examiner, I never had such an easy ride. I even scored first in my class in instrument flying.

When I told Mr. Ives, he just winked and walked away. I could see he was smiling, but he didn't seem surprised. How could that be, because I certainly was.

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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/>

**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).**



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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

*There are no reported obituaries for this issue.*

**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**

## Checking Out Can be Something Else

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

While checking out as a B-707 captain in late 1977, I flew with a check pilot who, as was the norm, flew as my co-pilot for twenty-five hours. We opted to fly Pan Am's round the world flight which was an extremely popular option at the time. It went from New York to Frankfurt to Istanbul to Berlin to Damascus to Tehran and back to New York.

I had just come off the B-747 as co-pilot. I had previously flown the B-707 about six years earlier. I had apparently forgotten how to land the 707 because I "planted" it in Damascus. I came in and made a really hard landing. I landed with a bang. It was so bad I actually asked those in the cockpit what I was doing wrong. As I recall, I phrased it something like, "If anyone knows what I'm doing wrong, please tell me."

The engineer said, "I think you are leaving the auto pilot on too long. You ought to take it off auto pilot sooner and get used to the feel of the plane." He had obviously been an instructor and a good one. It was just what I did and had no more trouble.

Thinking back to the landing in Damascus, I was, indeed, leaving it on auto pilot much too long during the descent, typically to one thousand feet. He was exactly right, and it brought out an extremely valuable lesson for every pilot. Always ask those you fly with for advice. Typically, they have already seen what you're doing wrong. They are often more aware of what you are doing – wrong – than you are.

After flying as a B-707 captain for several years, I had the opportunity to check out on the L-1011 as captain, and I was in the first class that Pan Am had — before they even got an actual plane or a simulator. The instructor of the first class had never even seen the 1011.

I learned very quickly that the 1011 systems were basically just like the C-130 systems, which made perfect sense since both were Lockheed systems and they had just taken the system off the C-130 and implemented it into the design of the 1011.

The newly designed L-1011 had an improved emergency system. If you lost all three engines, there was a ram air turbine (R.A.T.) system that would drop out of the fuselage and the prop would turn and give you enough hydraulic power to control the airplane.

## To Your Good Health...Tips for Maintaining It

**Prioritize Sleep —** Your Mood and Immune System Are Counting On It - When it comes to taking care of your health and well-being, sleep is pretty much always part of the answer. Getting enough good-quality sleep keeps your immune system running at its best to fight off infections. Scientists know sleep is also one of the top ways we can help keep stress in check, as sleep deprivation can make us more sensitive to the effects of stress, ramping up our reactions (or overreactions). Finally, the brain needs sleep to function; without it, you'll be less patient and focused, make poor decisions, and be more moody, irritable, and emotional.

**Work. It. Out -** Spending a lot more time at home does not mean you get to be a couch potato. Staying active not only keeps your body healthy physically (keeping your risk of chronic health issues down and lowering your chances of acute illness), it also helps up your mood and well-being. Exercise releases endorphins (hormones that make you feel good!), sharpens focus, and aids sleep. Staying physically active also lessens the risk of mood disorders, boosts energy, and improves mood overall. Talk about a one-two punch against the midafternoon slump!

**Avoid Mindless Snacking; Eat Intuitively Instead.** Are you now spending your days within eyeshot or arm's reach of your snack drawer? Rather than self-impose strict rules on what foods are off-limits, try intuitive eating. It's not a diet so much as a way of eating that's all about giving your body what it needs when it needs it. Intuitive eating doesn't restrict any specific foods or have you counting calories. It's a practice in which you listen to your body and pay attention to what you need in the moment. Is it time for a meal or a snack? You eat when you feel hungry, and you stop eating when you feel full. For inspiration, look no further than Instagram.

(from <https://www.everydayhealth.com/wellness/top-self-care-tips>)

## RENEW TODAY!

In order to keep the newsletter and website going for the Clipper Pioneers, it's time for renewal donations. If you haven't already, please send your donation to: Clipper Pioneers, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382. Thank you!

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*Thank you for your continuing support of the Clipper Pioneers!*