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TURNING FINALS: GOING HOME

(Continued from previous issue)

by John Marshall

We got a wave-off from the maintenance chief, and called for taxi clearance. We were cleared to runway 34 Right, nearly a straight shot down a long parallel taxiway. I turned out of the ramp and onto the taxiway and faced what looked like a wall of dirty gray cotton, with the taxiway disappearing into its maw. We ran out the flaps and ran the checklist, with me keeping my eye on the dashed yellow taxiway centerline with its green lights. At first I could see half a dozen dashes ahead, then as we taxied further into the cottony envelope there were fewer and fewer until I was creeping, seeing only one segment of the dashed line at a time. The edge lights were barely visible. The sun had fully set now, but it wasn't yet fully dark. We were taxiing in a gray murk, with no definition, no boundaries. The tower controller broke the silence with the news we had all been dreading. "Clipper, the RVR (Runway Visual Range) now on runway 34 right is now less than 50 meters, touchdown, mid, and rollout," he said. "What are your intentions?"

I brought the Boeing to a full stop, and we all looked at each other, the letdown and disappointment written on our faces. We had no choice but to return to the ramp and wait it out. After a brief discussion with the Italian controller we were cleared onto the runway to taxi back to the ramp that we had left minutes earlier. It was easier said than done. I released the brakes and crept forward, peering into the gathering darkness. Five faces pressed against the flight deck windows looking for anything familiar, a turnoff, a light, anything. The fog had descended so rapidly it was as though we had been lifted by a giant claw and dropped into a bowl of curdling milk. There was a certain ludicrous irony about the situation; for a brief moment I was tempted to laugh. I considered dropping a crewmember out of the forward hatch onto the concrete below with a flashlight; a strolling Diogenes, he could lead us to light and safety. I thought about asking the tower to send a

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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.

TURNING FINALS: GOING HOME

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follow-me car, but any vehicle they could dispatch would soon be just as lost as we were. We would have to blunder it out ourselves. I crept forward a few meters, and the visibility seemed to improve just a bit, a few feet perhaps, but enough to make out a couple of taxiway lights. Emboldened, I eased the Boeing up to the dizzying speed of four knots. Finally, after an eternity, the green lights made a gentle turn to the left, and I realized that we were at the departure end of 34 right. All the lights were on full intensity, and I eased onto the runway. Bathed in an eerie glow, I lined the airplane up firmly on the runway heading and headed back. The runway centerline lights were bright enough to follow now, and I found a turnoff sign that I was able to read. I sensed rather than saw the lighted stanchions that defined the ramp, and gingerly turned the big airplane into the parking place. There was no one to be seen, our Ops people couldn't find the ramp either. When we finally shut the engines down we had clocked forty minutes since we had departed.

Now came the tough part. I knew that there was no way the visibility was going to improve much before morning, given the swiftness and finality with which it had descended. We had some decisions to make. After a time, which was not far off, we could all legally pull the plug and bail out of the situation, and head back to the hotel. But what of our airplane full of GI's? The Ops rep was quick to drop the news that there were no rested crews in the city, that it would be morning before anyone was legal. I went downstairs to explain the dilemma to the colonel. There was an anticipatory buzz among the troops as I explained the situation. They were much too disciplined to audibly complain, but the disappointment and frustration were clear. I went forward in search of the purser, a venerable lady from Miami of undetermined seniority. "Maryanne, here's the situation. This airplane isn't going anywhere until the fog lifts, which probably won't be until morning. There isn't another crew here if we abandon ship. The five of us are going to stick it out, but I need to know about your girls."

She cut me off with an upraised hand. "We've already talked about it, John. We've decided that if these guys can make the sacrifices that they have, the least we can do is to see them safely home. We're staying with it, no matter how long it takes." She looked at me with two big green eyes and smiled. I could have kissed her.

It was a long night. The colonel asked if there was any way his troops could get off the airplane, and I replied that it was strictly verboten, but if he could guarantee that no one would lose sight of the airplane, he could let them off in groups of fifty, and I would take the responsibility. To hell with it, I thought. There isn't anyone around that could see us anyway.

We cleared a space behind the last rows on the upper deck, and took turns dozing there on a mattress of blankets and flimsy pillows. The girls fired up the galleys and fed everyone; by dawn the situation was taking

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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>

Bank balance as of Feb. 28, 2023 was \$16,204.63. The opportunity to renew your membership with your donation is on a form on page 7 of this newsletter, which will go toward continuing forward. Thank you to the those who have mailed in your donations in 2023 already! Be sure to clip and send in your check if you'd like to continue to receive the newsletter. Thank you!

TURNING FINALS: GOING HOME

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on the atmosphere of a gigantic house party, with a very captive guest list. The minutes and hours crept by, the fog no thicker, but no thinner, either. Finally tinges of gray appeared in the windows, and suddenly the visibility began to improve. We hurried through the departure ritual once again, wiping the cobwebs from our tired brains, and by the time we got the engines started I could see almost across the airfield. I tried not to think about the nine hour crossing still ahead.

The trip itself was anticlimactic. Nine hours and three minutes after we lifted off we touched down at Kennedy Airport. I could hear the applause wafting up the stairwell and into the flight deck. Four hundred very tired GI's disembarked, into the waiting lounge where cookies and cake, balloons and banners greeted them. There had been a bonding of sorts that long night and day, and we were almost sorry to see it end. I'll tell you one thing; I have never been prouder of a crew, ever.

Midnight Sun – Report #66

By Richard Van Gemert

As printed in Business & Commercial Aviation, Nov. 2009

To most people Flying Boats mean majestic Pan Am Clippers, silver tea service with crumpets, and South Sea island girls wrapped in sarongs, waving. But to me they're cramped, hard-used machines, tepid coffee from a thermos washing down bologna sandwiches. As for island girls, there was Ms. "Cerlette the Cat" on Kodiak who could do amazing things on a saloon stage, but if she waved a come hither, it was best to run for the door.

My flying boats were jammed with vacuum tubed radios, sonobuoys, depth charges, and black magic stuff I still can't reveal. Back in 1962, our mission was to find the Soviet subs coursing south along the Santa Barbara Channel.

We boat aviators alternated among several positions. On this particular night mission, I was on the middle deck of our Martin P5M serving as technical coordinator, essentially overseeing everything except flying or navigating. Before launching from Whidbey Island NAS, we got a full briefing during which, among other things, we learned that the weather would be lousy -low ceilings, rain, fog, strong winds, and 12-foot seas.

Once on patrol the first officer, who was the plane commander, advanced RPMs on both props. This was SOP to help the electronics operator identify anomalies transmitted from the sonobuoys we'd deployed. However, this time the port prop kept advancing until it was screaming. A runaway. It roared past 4,000 rpm, its redline.

I could hear the pilots proceeding to shut down the engine and try to feather the prop, but without success. Evidently the thing had gone beyond the low-pitch stop and was actually heading towards reverse pitch. We were in a bad way.

The U.S. Navy, as a matter of technical policy, did not require that its twin-engine flying boats maintain flight on one engine. The thinking was to load the aircraft with as much as it could carry on two, and if one failed, so be it; the runway was everywhere and infinitely long. The flaw in that premise was the runway undulated, and once the sun set, and especially if moonlight was blocked, it disappeared from view. Essentially, there

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Midnight Sun – Report #66

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was no such thing as a successful night ditching.

When our left prop went beyond the stops we were cruising at 2,500 feet, and we immediately started down at 800 fpm. Something unpleasant was going to happen and quickly.

“Ditching stations!” I shouted to all who could hear. There were 13 officers and enlisted on board that night. Everyone knew the drill, for we had practiced again and again. We cinched our harnesses and secured our stations. Long seconds later came the impact. Whooomp!

We were airborne again. Nothing seemed broken. Nobody screamed. And again, Whooomp! the jarring, and we were airborne a third time. Briefly.

Then Whaam! We were stopped. I looked around. The aircraft was whole. We were rising in the swells. The lights were on. No one shouted. There was no alarm. I began to move. “We’re OK back here,” I hollered towards the flight deck as I scrambled to check the situation aft.

Reaching the ladder to the lower deck, I saw water coming up. I quickly confirmed all the watertight doors were locked tight, and concluded that some part of the fuselage aft of the step must have been cracked in the hard landing. Whatever, we were going down.

I scrambled through the flight deck’s overhead, joining the forward crew on the wing. Someone launched our life raft in front of the wing, and it was immediately snared under it. At the same time, the crewmen in back launched their raft successfully, so we on the wing jumped into the water and swam to it. Now there were 13 of us we’d all survived uninjured - clinging to a seven-person raft.

As the Martin Marlin settled its T-tail began descending upon us. One sailor pulled out a knife, cut our tether, and we drifted clear just as the airplane disappeared in a chorus of bubbles and explosions of mini depth charges used for target range locating. Seconds later we were utterly alone, half of us immersed in 53 degree water, 150 miles from land, and evidently without any near likelihood of rescue since no one had successfully transmitted an SOS before splashdown.

As we began to chill, assess, and worry, an impossibly bright light appeared in front of us. Only those who have spent nights on a blackened sea can fully appreciate just how dark dark can be. It was one of those utterly black nights in which your hands disappeared before your eyes. And yet we were suddenly bathed in light as if from the sun. Then came the voice of God: “This is the USS Sea Dragon on patrol in United States waters. Identify yourselves.”

We had managed to come to grief in the exact place and time our Navy’s second nuclear submarine was surfacing after completing some trials en route to Hawaii. It had spotted our lights as we were impacting the sea. Had we come down just aft of the submarine, it may not have seen us at all. Instead of dying of hypothermia or drowning, we were all presented with bottles of brandy, which we gladly consumed as our clothes dried in the reactor room. The next night, the Navy had us back in the air on another mission.

I’ve thought about that night often and learned that you can improve your odds by being prepared - every crew member did exactly what he had been trained to do to optimize his chance of survival and working together under stress. Beyond that, it’s really helpful to be lucky, which I was that night. So, knowing how important that can be, I wish all of you some really good luck when you need it most.

PAN AM 15 DAY MIAMI TO ROME CRUISE



Dear Pan Amer's:

Come join us on our next transatlantic reunion cruise on Royal Caribbean's Explorer of the Seas. Reserve restful days at sea to splurge in Spain, France and Italy with ports of call to die for. It's going to be fabulous – don't miss out – bring family and friends along ! Your cruise includes gourmet meals, entertainment, accommodations, group activities, cocktail parties and much more.

Itinerary – April 23, 2023 from Miami to May 8, 2023 Rome, Italy

Date	Port	Arrive	Depart	Boarding
Sun 23Apr2023	Miami, Florida	-	4:00 PM	Cruising
Mon 24Apr-01 May	Cruising High Seas	-	-	Docked
Tue 02May2023	Malaga, Spain	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
Wed 03May2023	Cartagena, Spain	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
Thu 04May2023	Palma De Mallorca, Spain	7:00 AM	5:00 PM	Docked
Fri 05May2023	Provence (Marseilles), France	9:00 AM	6:00 PM	Tendered
Sat 06May2023	Nice (Villefranche), France	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	Tendered
Sun 07May2023	Ajaccio, Corsica	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	Departure
Mon 08May2023	Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy	5:00 AM	-	

Rates from:

Inside \$859 / *Inside Virtual Bal / Outside \$959 / Balcony \$1399 / Suites \$1999

Prices: Per person, subject to availability at time of booking and do not include port charges and taxes (\$354.pp) or amenity fees (\$150.pp) (cocktail parties, pay restaurant get togethers, etc).

*Interior with Virtual Balcony – High-definition screen that spans floor to ceiling, providing real-time views of the ocean and destinations. Inquire on pricing.

Deposit \$450.pp. ; all major cards accepted. Mail amenity fee check to Stuart Archer upon reserving (7340 SW 132 St., Miami, FL 33156). Insurance, available and advisable on invoice.

More information in future emails. Call 1-844-278-9745 Air & Sea for flights.

To reserve: call Carmen 786-252-7838.

Cruise information call former Pan Am Capt. Stu Archer 305-238-0911.

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

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/>

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.

Flying Somewhere? Useful Tip for Air Traffic

FlightAware is a free flight tracker that will change what you think about live flight tracking and aviation data. It can be seen at: www.flightaware.com/

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

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

Retired Captain Edward M. Rizzi of Sherman, CT, passed away peacefully on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023. At a young age, he became enamoured of aviation. He became a pilot with Pan American World Airways in 1951. Over a 39-year career, he advanced from co-pilot on piston engine propeller planes to early jet airliners, to captaining the Boeing 747. He retired in 1990 as the Senior Captain at Pan Am in New York.

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**

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! :)

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

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

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!

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Amount Donated: \$ _____

(Make check payable to: Clipper Pioneers and mail to: P. O. Box 3457, Sequim WA 98382)

Thank you for your continuing support of the Clipper Pioneers!

**PAN AM MUSEUM FOUNDATION
COME CRUISE WITH US!
Join us on a fabulous luxury Silversea Cruise!
Mark Your Calendars: August 2 - 9, 2023
CRUISE ITALY & CROATIA IN STYLE**

Come sail with us in Pan Am style and support the Pan Am Museum! Enjoy exclusive amenities and guest benefits by booking your suite through this fundraiser.

We've secured the very best pricing and a liberal cancellation policy for our exclusive PAMF group (all pricing excludes airfare and transfers). In addition, our special pricing will be guaranteed until Dec. 31, 2022.

Open to friends and family! Space is limited! Many suites offer a 3rd guest with a pullout couch.

Venice to Venice: August 2 - 9, 2023

VOYAGE ITINERARY

Silver Spirit – 7 Days

Leaves Port: August 2, 2023

Voyage SL 230802007

Day 1: Venice (Departs at 7pm)
Day 2: Trieste, Italy
Day 3: Zadar, Croatia
Day 4: Hvar, Croatia
Day 5: Dubrovnik, Croatia
Day 6: Split, Croatia
Day 7: Kvarner Bay, Croatia
Day 8: Venice (Arrive at 8am)

For More Information

**The Pan Am Museum Foundation
board@thepanammuseum.org
www.thePanAmMuseum.org**

What's Included prices starting at \$4,400 per person

Shore Excursions (1 per port/per day)
All beverages included at all times including premium
liquor and wine selection of 150+ bottles
Personal butler service in every suite category
24-hour room service
1:1 Crew to guest ratio
Fully customized mini bar
\$350 Ship Board Credit per suite
All crew gratuities
Exclusive PAMF Welcome Cocktail Reception and other exclusive onboard events
8 Fine dining options offering culinary excellence
Onboard activities and live entertainment
High speed WiFi
Pillow menu

Visit their website for more information: <https://www.thepanammuseum.org/cruise-benefit/>