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A Pan Am cockpit story

By Ash Cutchin

This event occurred sometime in 1969 (I believe). I had flown as polar navigator from SFO or LAX to London. The remainder of my pattern was to operate as RCO from London out to either Tehran, or New Delhi or beyond, and back to London, before returning back to LAX or SFO as navigator. My first leg east out of London (with a different crew) was to Frankfurt, Germany where I sat in the jump seat behind the famous 707 Captain Francis Scott Key Lewis, of whom I had heard a few stories. Scotty must have flown the leg from LAX to LHR, because it was the First Officer's leg to Frankfurt. Everything went well until he landed rather hard in Frankfurt. In operations Captain Lewis informed me that I would be his copilot on the next leg, FRA to Istanbul. I thought that maybe if I did a good job, he might let me fly the next leg to Tehran.

At top of descent for Istanbul, Capt. Lewis looked over his shoulder and said to the First Officer, loud enough for the Flight Engineer and me to hear, "I'm gonna show you how to land this damned airplane!" I knew they had flown together before, but I did not know how much. It was my first trip with any of them. I did my copilot duties per the flight operations manual, and only spoke when required, such as reading the checklist and responding when necessary, and talking to ATC.

Scotty carried about 10-to-15 knots excess airspeed all the way down to the runway threshold of runway 5 at Istanbul. By the way (and I knew this) there is (or was) a significant cliff drop off at the other end of runway 5. You may remember that Istanbul is also a military field and it had big rectangular "distance-remaining" signs alongside the runways. As we floated in ground effect some few feet above the pavement, my peripheral vision saw these huge signs go by. I saw 8, 7, 6, 5, thousand feet remaining.

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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. 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.

A Pan Am cockpit story

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You may remember this was before the Crew Concept training we had, and I was reluctant to remind the captain that we had not yet touched down. So, I sat there quietly.

But I was also a flight instructor, and I was determined not to let him kill us, so at sign 4, I quietly moved my left hand over beneath his, planning to gently lift his right hand and retard the throttles to idle... to hell with the "Captains are sky gods" culture prevailing in 1969. As he felt my hand touch his, he slapped mine away, chopped the throttles and we touched down much harder than the First Officer had done in Frankfurt. And to make matters worse, he had to brake rather hard as we turned onto the taxiway at the far end of the runway. I could look down and see the bottom of that cliff beyond the very short overrun.

It was a horrible landing, and as we arrived at the blocks the only sound anyone made was the checklist commands and responses. Scotty got up out of his seat without a word and went into operations. We then flew to Tehran almost in complete silence. I returned to the jump seat as ordered. I don't remember very much about the rest of my pattern.

What I do remember, however, is that a few weeks later I received a call from SFO. "Captain Evans would like to see you in his office at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow," his secretary informed me. Chief Pilot Don Kinkle was in 747 training somewhere, so the Assistant Chief Pilot, Hank Evans, was in charge. My mind went through a thousand dreadful possibilities as I drove down from Santa Rosa the next morning. I was no longer on probation, but I was afraid that would not count for much, and I never even thought of asking for an ALPA officer to accompany me. I simply sat and waited for whatever was in store. I had never even met Captain Evans. He politely invited me into his office and read me a letter he had, which had been addressed to Pan Am Vice President Charles Lindbergh. It was from a first-class passenger who was on a first-name basis with Lindbergh, and it said in so many words, that in his long years as a Pan Am passenger, a recent landing in Istanbul was the worst experience he had ever had, and something should be done about it. So then Captain Evans asked me to explain what had happened. I told him, reluctantly admitting that I came close to retarding the throttles myself, with no training about how to do it correctly. I was about as nervous as I had ever been up to that point in my flying career, which I thought was about to end. Hesitating briefly, I finally said, "Captain Evans, I don't want to make any kind of written report, but if you insist that I do, I have no choice but to say I agree with that passenger. It's the worst landing I've ever seen." WHEW, I couldn't believe I had actually said that!

Then Captain Evans told me to relax. He had already heard from the First Officer and the Flight Engineer, and they said the same thing I had said. "I have decided what to do," he said. "Because that was Captain Lewis's retirement trip, and he has already retired, I will write to this passenger, thank him for his concern, and tell him that the pilot who made that landing is no longer a Pan Am employee. Maybe he will think we fired him."

That was fifty-five years ago. As a foot note (if my memory serves me correctly) it was not long after that event, and after a few accidents, that the FAA instituted the Crew Concept training program. We younger pilots were encouraged to speak up with vigor whenever we observed a Captain's mistakes. I suspect that new culture has saved many lives since 1969.

Bank balance as of December 29, 2023 was \$22,796.01. The opportunity to renew your membership with your donation is on a form on page 5 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!

Flight Plans Are Only Just That

by Captain Bill Nash, Ret. Pan American World Airways

The sudden loud hard metallic knock sat us straight up in our seats. A quick scan of the instrument panel indicated no problem, so we thought perhaps it was a bird strike. We would check the airplane skin when we landed at Porto Alegre, Brazil, in an hour.

All engines purred along smoothly until we pulled the throttles back on the final approach. Then a giant hand seemed to grasp our Douglas DC4 and violently shake it. Quickly we feathered number two prop and landed. The instruments had revealed the problem engine this time.

No sign of a bird strike, and this was no longer just a fuel stop, but became a triple overnight. We took our 35 passengers to a hotel, and that night the maintenance chief called me. He was full of amazement that # two engine had run at all for the last hour of our trip. It had swallowed one of the large sodium-filled exhaust valves and ball-peened it thousands of times between the piston head and the top of the cylinder, turning it from an umbrella shape into a ball, which I still use on my desk as a paper-weight. That was our sudden loud knock an hour before landing. Bless Pratt and Whitney engines.

Since the Rio-based crews were not yet checked out on DC4 aircraft to fly the Rio-Buenos Aires Route, we flew all the round trip from Miami.

At the hotel our 35 passengers complained and grumbled continuously, so I kept ordering drinks for them on Pan Am's account til they were happy again. Each morning they awoke with grouchy hangovers until they were quenched again. Pan Am got quite a good will bill.

After an engine was flown in and changed, our trip to Buenos Aires was uneventful except for passenger hangovers. We didn't realize what still lay ahead for us.

On the return north-bound flight, approaching Rio from the south, we found the weather barely open as we passed Sao Paulo. At Rio we were on top at 12,000 feet and the clouds were solid all the way to minimums. During our conversations with Rio there was no hint of what was really going on down there.

We entered the "stuff" and worked our way down. On the final there was nothing in sight at the minimum altitude, but knowing the area, I descended 200 more feet and the runway was right ahead. I felt pretty good about getting my passengers in when the weather was so grim, but a few moments later, as we taxied to the ramp, we were surrounded by trucks, jeeps, and men bristling with guns.

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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

Flight Plans Are Only Just That

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The Brazilian Air Force boarded us and told me they were confiscating our airplane. Those guns still pointed at us from all directions, so I told them they could have it.

At the terminal, we kept our passengers together and learned Brazil was having an internal conflict. The Army wanted one president; the Air Force wanted another, and some other unit wanted still another. Galeao airport is on a large island connected to Rio de Janeiro by a bridge. The Army held Rio. The Air Force held the island, but they couldn't fly in that weather. Each force had rigged the bridge to blow up. The food was running out at the airport. We checked our galley, but the soldiers had been there before us. Some of the passengers were children. All the next day, the weather was down. Pan Am personnel had no control over the situation and no suggestions.

Finally, we rounded up 2 big trucks and did a little surreptitious siphoning to get enough gasoline for them.

Then I went to the Air Force end of the bridge to see if they'd let us cross over to Rio. I tapped on the shoulder of the Captain in charge. He turned around and with big eyes he said, "Hallo Beel! What the hell you doin' here?!"

He was a former Brazilian "FAA" inspector, now in the Brazilian Air Force. We had enjoyed many a good time at his Copa Cabana Beach apartment parties.

After our greetings settled down, I asked Milton if I could take two truckloads of passengers across the bridge.

"Well Beel, I won't blow you up - but I don't know about those guys over there."

I could see the wires stretched to a foot square hole in the bridge. The same was true on the other half of the bridge, controlled by the Army.

I said, "I'll ask them. Can I walk over?" Milton replied. "Ok, but I hope I don't lose a good friend!" At the center of the bridge, I stopped and held up a white handkerchief. I was motioned to come ahead. They came forward to meet me with unlowered rifles. At the last 20 feet of the bridge they stopped me. They had recognized my uniform.

In my part Spanish, part Portuguese, and part English, I apparently made them feel sorry for the innocent passengers and their ninos. They agreed to let us pass, but with a thorough inspection of baggage and passengers, while Army tank guns were leveled at the trucks.

It worked out ok - and we made it to our hotels.

After Brazil had had three presidents in four days, we were cleared to continue north. I was pleased, since we were the first marooned plane to go. I had taken many photos of the "revolution-election", and hoped to offer them to Life Magazine first - but that was not to be either.

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Don't forget to check out our website at: www.clipperpioneers.com

Flight Plans Are Only Just That

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Forty miles from Belem, which is located at the mouth of the Amazon, number four engine oil pressure began to wiggle, then dropped. We punched the feathering button, aware that this crew would be on the ground again longer than planned. Yes, we were on the ground with my great reel of photos, while other planes flew over us to the north with their photos.

After three days, Pan Am gave us a south-bound plane to turn around, if we would physically switch the baggage loads. There was a strike among the Brazilian loaders going on. Our crew worked hard during a hot tropical night, except for one of our two stewards. He refused to work, saying his job was not loading, - so he went to sleep on some cardboard boxes in a hanger.

When we left for Miami - he didn't. We left him there sleeping. Seems we "couldn't find him."

The passing of a special friend - Jerry Holmes

I take the privilege as current editor of the newsletter to express my deepest sympathies to the family of Pan Am Captain Jerry Holmes who recently passed away (see page 7). I'd known Jerry for many years when he lived in Sequim, when he was the editor of the Clipper Pioneers, and subsequently turned it over to me to do. He was always gracious, and always had great stories to tell of his adventures when working for Pan Am. Makes me wish I had recorded some of them to print! We kept in touch after he and Louise relocated to Florida, and he was kind enough, along with Stu Archer, to proof the newsletter before it went out. He helped to keep this newsletter alive and well, and we will miss him greatly. ~Sue Forde

The PanAm World Fellowship Golf Classic is run by new people, still called Pan Am Golf. The new website is www.panamgolf.com. This year Oct.2024 will be in Las Vegas, NV.

RENEW TODAY!

In order to keep the newsletter and website going for the Clipper Pioneers, it's time for renewal dues of \$50 00. If you haven't already, please send it to: Clipper Pioneers, P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382. Thank you!

Your Name: _____ 0 _____

Address: _____

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(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 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 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

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.

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

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



Jerry and Louise Holmes

Jerry Holmes – October 27, 1934 – January 10, 2024. Beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, passed away peacefully on January 10, 2024 at the age of 89 with Louise, his wife of 65 years, at his side. Jerry was born on October 27, 1934 in Muskegon, Michigan to Stella Howe and Lawrence Boozer. When he was four months old, his father died of a heart attack, and he was subsequently adopted by his oldest half sister and her husband, Inez and Henry Holmes; he was their only child. Jerry graduated from Muskegon High School in 1953, and briefly attended Ferris College before deciding to follow his lifelong dream to fly. He joined the Navy in March 1955 as a cadet, and served his country until being honorably discharged in 1959. He met and married the love of his life, Louise Christensen, in the fall of 1958. They married just two months later, on December 22, 1958, and eventually settled in Grand Rapids, where Jerry worked as a corporate pilot. A few years later, after a brief stint at Eastern Airlines, he got his dream job with Pan American Airlines, where he traveled the world and eventually became a 747 Captain, all while raising his three children William, Andrew, and Jacqueline with Louise. During these years, the family lived in Madison, Connecticut and Titusville, Florida.

After raising their family, Jerry and Louise relocated to Temecula, California in 1987, where he finished his career as a 747 Captain for United Airlines. After retirement, they moved to Sequim, Washington, where they were active in the local Car Club and enjoyed spending time with their many friends and loved ones. Jerry was active in retirement with the Pan American Clipper Pioneers Club, publishing the group's newsletter for many years. In 2019, they moved to Vero Beach, Florida to be closer to their family.

Jerry is survived by his wife of 65 years, Louise; his children William (Tina), Andrew (Nola), and Jacqueline (David A. Edwards); nine grandchildren Stefanie Williams (Mikel), Michael, Jennifer Offringa (Kyle), Michelle Marietta (Joseph), Kathryn, Rachel Hershberger (Trent), Angela Sowder (Wesley), David (Hailey), and Hope Edwards; and nine great grandchildren, Eleanor, London, Lennon, Joseph, Owen, Jenna, Maurice, Roman, and Parker.

Services are private. The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, donations in Jerry's honor be made to the Treasure Coast Food Bank, www.stophunger.org, 401 Angle Road, Fort Pierce, Florida 34947.

John (Jack) R Young quietly passed away on on October 2, 2023 at Marin Health Hospital with close friends nearby. Although born in New York state on Jan. 2, 1938, Jack grew up and received his university education in New Jersey. Shortly after getting his degree, Jack entered Naval Pilot Training where he received his wings in the summer of 1960. Jack separated from active duty in 1964 and was immediately hired by Pan American as a pilot based in San Francisco. In 1981 Jack was promoted to Captain B-747 which is a position he held until retiring in 1991. He was preceded in death by his parents, Vincent and Dorothy Young. A celebration of life is planned, date to be announced.

*...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

Robert "Bob" Ober passed away on December 6, 2023. The following was written by Dave Ober: My sister and I owe our existence to the fateful day in 1960 when Robert "Bob" Ober — while sneaking his friend back into the University of Buffalo infirmary — mistakenly entered our mother's room during her recovery from chicken pox.

Following a mischievous adolescence in which he stole an airplane, launched a rocket from inside his college dorm and ran all-night underground poker games, Bob tried his hand at professional golf until he "matured" to embark on a career as an airline pilot for Pan American and Delta airlines.

Bob, 83, was first and foremost a dedicated husband for six decades, sharing a lifelong love affair with Lynda that included high daily doses of laughter. A committed father and grandfather, Bob embraced his family with every fiber of his energetic and colorful existence. He had an insatiable curiosity, an enormous heart and unending generosity, spending most of his time focusing on the problems of the world and the well-being of others. Bob died on Dec. 6 of an aortic dissection.

John Thorup, former PanAm pilot and check engineer, died in Tucson, AZ on Jan 11, 2024.

Roger Pierce Wicker passed away on July 4, 2023 in Dallas, Texas from pancreatic cancer. He was born in Prescott on October 20, 1935. World War II brought him and his family to Dallas where his father worked building airplanes for the war effort. Roger graduated from Sunset High School 1954, went to college in Arlington Texas and studied Mechanical Engineering. He joined the Nav and went to flight training in Pensacola and got his wings in 1958 in Corpus Christi. He flew various aircraft for the Navy including the P5M Seaplane and the Gruman 8A-16 search and rescue aircraft. In 1966, he was hired by Pan American Airlines as a Navigator on the 707. He flew for Pan Am for 20 years before he was hired by United Airlines in their purchase of the Pacific routes. By then, he was flying the 747. He became captain on the DC8, the 757 and the 767 and retired in 1995 with his wife Catharina to their farm in Arkansas, where they raised cattle.

Charles (Chuck) Cutting, a beloved commercial airline pilot for Pan American World Airways, passed away on October 3, 2023, in San Jose, California, after a brief illness. Born on February 28, 1930, in Pacific Grove, California, Chuck had an esteemed career as an airline captain, spanning an impressive thirty-five years.

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: Clipper Pioneers, attn: Sue Forde, c/o P. O. Box 3457, Sequim, WA 98382.

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