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FLYING CENTRAL AMERICA - Volcanos - Part 3

by Bill Nash

In about 1954 or 1955, on a layover in Managua, Nicaragua, I wandered alone to a rustic restaurant on lake Managua. As I was about to order, I heard a voice coming from a jovial group at a large table in the center of the room: "Captain, Captain, Pan American"! I looked up and one of the men at the big table was hailing me, "Come and join us, Captain! Welcome to Nicaragua!" I was not in uniform, but he had recognized me. I thought that was strange. I realized it was courteous to accept the invitation, so I joined the men at their table. In a few moments I realized I was in the company of Anastasio Somoza Garcia, the president of Nicaragua, and the presidents of two other nations: Jose Antonio Remon of Panama and Rafael Trujillo Molina of the Dominican Republic. They politely used English with me, and I tried my ruptured Spanish with them. They were kind enough to applaud my efforts. Looking around the restaurant, I could see tables with rough-looking men scattered about. Then I knew how I was known. When the president goes out, any strangers near him are identified by his "Secret Service".

Since I did not have to fly for two days, I accepted their generous offer of drinks and soon could hardly see what I was eating. These fellows all collected guns. Since I also was a gun collector we had something mutual to talk about. I made a big point of staying away from politics and so did they. They asked sound intelligent interested questions about flying. I told President Somoza how I used Nicaragua's 11-minute volcano for fun, and he really enjoyed that.

(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.

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(continued from previous page)

President Somoza insisted that I visit him the next day to see his gun collection. He sent an armored limousine for me, and fortified with aspirin I climbed in feeling quite grand, and a little hungover. We had an enjoyable lunch, then an enjoyable afternoon admiring and discussing his guns. Most were beautifully engraved presentation models. I drooled over a pair of pearl-handled gold and silver "Peacemaker" Colt revolvers. I wonder where they are now.

Six months later, President Remon of Panama was dead - assassinated. Six years later, President Trujillo of the Dominican Republic was dead - assassinated.

Persons aspiring to become dictators should realize that life can be "short" - I don't know about "sweet".

Managua is located at the north end of the very large lake Nicaragua, the south east end of which was once connected to the Caribbean Sea. Eventually this connection closed and sharks in lake Nicaragua were trapped in what became a large fresh water lake. The sharks, I believe, are now the only fresh water sharks in the world.

This lake once competed with the Isthmus of Panama for the location of a canal to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Some sly legislators in congress subtly influenced the vote by urging the U.S. postmaster to print U.S. stamps picturing erupting volcanoes and the word "Nicaragua" printed on them. Congressmen argued that volcanos and earthquakes would destroy a canal.

I learned that in this lake, not far from Managua, there was an island called Isla De Los Muertos - Island of the Dead, which was allegedly inhabited by spirits. Strange statues and idols of stone were scattered through the forest. No one knew anything about the origin of either idols or spirits. This place I just had to see. The local fishermen absolutely refused to take me. The word got around and no one would rent me a boat. Frustrated, I decided I'd have to make that visit in the future. That time has yet to arrive. The locals are deathly afraid of that island.

(continued on next page)

Keep the good stories comin'!

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.

Bank balance as of April 30, 2025 was \$10,239.48. 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. It's time to renew for the new year. Be sure to clip and send in your check if you'd like to continue to receive the newsletter. Thank you!

FLYING CENTRAL AMERICA - Volcanos - Part 3

(continued from previous page)

On a trip as a copilot on a C-46 flight with Check Captain Bob Pfaf, we took a load of U.S. dimes from New Orleans to San Salvador, El Salvador, just in time to pay the military their salaries. They used U.S. dimes for their currency, and Bob was told to get that cargo delivered in a hurry, so that the military did not rebel. He did.

One night in San Salvador, I was reading in bed. The room started to shimmy, and my bed danced away from the lamp. Mumbling to myself, I pushed the bed back to the light. Just as I started to read again, the bed tip-toed away from the lamp again. After two more times, I dressed and went downstairs. The desk clerk said, "So sorry, Senor. It is just one of our earthquakes."

Other than Brownsville, Texas, New Orleans was a northern destination of our Central American flights. We left Merida, Mexico, and arrived in early evening at our New Orleans hotel. We'd send our bags to the rooms while we bellied up to the shrimp and oyster bar. After a dozen raw oysters and a dozen steamed shrimp we would go upstairs, switch our uniforms for civies, head for Bourbon Street, and have dinner at perhaps Arnaud's famed restaurant. Our departure for the south run through Central America was the next night. We had time to stroll on Bourbon Street and enjoy the Dixie-Land bands.

When the French colony was formed at New Orleans there was a severe shortage of women to marry and begin families. The colony leaders asked France to send women. France emptied its prisons and shipped the female convicts to New Orleans. These ladies did not settle down but proceeded to practice their lucrative occupation - the world's oldest - that had gotten them sequestered in jail in the first place. This would not do. The colony fathers again sent to France for women - demanding that they be decent. This time, young ladies from the middle class were encouraged to go. They arrived with nuns as chaperons. The colonists had built a large log hall for them, which they were not permitted to leave until married. Men could come and do their wooing in the well-lighted hall in the presence of the nuns. A priest married them, and they were then free to join society.

It appears that the first women sent over were all barren, and the second group all prolific, for today New Orleans society claims much descent from the second group and none from the first.

Some supplies were brought to the colony by tough barge men, who floated their barges down the Mississippi to New Orleans. They were paid in the French Colonial currency, mostly in ten unit bills. These bills had DIX printed on them, the French word for ten. The barge men called them "dixies," and eventually referred to New Orleans itself as "Dixie". When Daniel D. Emmett composed his popular

(continued on next page)

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

If you enjoy reading the Clipper Pioneers newsletter, and would like to see it continue, please send in your renewal if you haven't already, for 2025. Form is on page 8.

FLYING CENTRAL AMERICA - Volcanos - Part 3

(continued from previous page)

marching song, he referred to the whole South as Dixie. Not many Southerners today realize that sobriquet was derived from early uneducated barge men who could not pronounce French.

As I write this (8/30/05), hurricane Katrina is still busy drowning New Orleans. How sad.

On a dark night, Capt. Jim Evans and a first officer were ferrying a DC 3 from the island of Cozumel to Merida, Mexico. Shortly after take-off, at about 500 feet, the pilots noticed that they were descending. Jim increased the power and eased the wheel back for more climb - and the descent increased. Soon they just stopped. "Well, what the hell," said the copilot." Jim said, "I second that." They aimed their flashlights at the side windows, and they saw - water! "How in hell did we do that!?", Jim exclaimed. They seemed to be floating well, so they put on life jackets, climbed out on a wing and up on the fuselage, and spent the rest of the night trying to figure out how they would explain this one to the chief pilot.

The blue light of dawn revealed the reason they had performed a skillful smooth water landing with a land plane: Number one engine Nacelle had snapped its upper engine mounts and allowed the engine to point forty-five degrees downward. Every time the captain had increased the power, the still running number One had pulled the plane down, until they eased into the water.

Soon a Cozumel fishing boat spotted the plane and crew and came to their rescue, towing their plane to shallow water. Airport ground crew then towed the DC 3 up on the beach and back to the airport. Mechanics from Miami brought two replacement engines and the plane was ferried to Miami for overhaul. This plane was back in service within four months.

Another unplanned landing was made on the Mexican Yucatan peninsula a few years later. Captain Don McLennan took off from Merida, Mexico, for New Orleans with a gross load of bananas. At about 700 feet one propellor flew off, went chop chop under the belly of the Curtis Commando C 46 and knocked off the other propellor. The engines raced and roared as Don chopped both throttles, shoved the nose down, and bellied into one of the many small sisal fields, separated by stone walls in the area - without hitting a stone wall -.

That airplane also was restored to fly again. Captain Vic Wright, our Cargo chief pilot liked to brag that his flight crew had sold all of the bananas to the natives by the time the rescue crew had arrived. Captain McLennan immediately put in a request for a transfer to New York.

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

NOTE: A couple of the stories here are repeated in another issue. We've left them in rather than change the way that Bill wrote these.

To Be Continued in the Next Issue

Protect Yourself Online

Protect Your Online Accounts with Strong Passwords and Two-Factor Authentication

Your online accounts may contain a lot of your personal information. Protect them with a strong password that's hard to guess and turn on two-factor authentication.

Passwords

When it comes to passwords, you have a few options: create your own password; choose an automatically generated password; or use a password manager.

If you create your own password, make it long. Aim for at least 15 characters. Use a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Since a long password can be hard to remember, you may find it easier to use a passphrase. A passphrase is a series of words separated by spaces. If you use a passphrase, make sure it consists of random words. Avoid using common phrases, song lyrics, or movie quotes that are easy for a hacking program to guess.

Choose an automatically generated password. Studies show that people aren't good at creating and remembering strong passwords. You can have your browser or device create a password for you.

Use a password manager. A third-party password manager also can create a strong password. To find a reputable password manager, read expert reviews. Make sure the password for your password manager is strong. And protect it like you do your other passwords.

Strong passwords can be hard to remember. But your browser and device can save your password. So can your password manager. And they can auto-populate your password the next time you log in to a website or app.

Use Two-factor Authentication

Using a strong password is an important step in protecting your account from hackers. But even strong passwords are vulnerable to cyberattacks. Using two-factor authentication adds an extra layer of security to your account. A hacker who steals your password can't log in to your account without the second authentication factor.

The most common type of two-factor authentication is a verification passcode you get by text message or email. This one-time passcode is typically six digits or longer and expires automatically.

The more secure types of two-factor authentication are an authenticator app or a security key. Choose one of these methods for more protection if you have the option.

Pick Security Questions Only You Can Answer

When you create an account, you may have to give answers to a few security questions. Some sites may periodically ask you to answer these questions as a security measure to confirm your identity. You also may have to answer them if you need to reset your password.

(from <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/protect-your-personal-information-hackers-and-scammers>)

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

Enjoy Listening to the Pan Am Podcasts

Now in the third season, The Pan Am Podcast brings the history of Pan American World Airways to life through engaging storytelling and insightful interviews with Pan Am employees, passengers, authors, and aviation enthusiasts. <https://podcast.thepanammuseum.org/>

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

*...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

Captain Arthur C. Villar, March 21, 1918 - November 7, 2024 (106 years young). Born in Methow, Washington, and graduate of Washington State University, Art took aviation courses and received his commercial pilot license. He took a position with Riddle Aeronautics in Florida for two years teaching both American and British cadets to fly for the military on the Boeing Stearman. Soon after in 1943, he joined Pan American World Airways, flying to Central and South America from Dinner Key, providing both mail and passenger service aboard the "flying boats". Art eventually flew from home bases of Miami, San Francisco, Hong Kong, New York, and returned to San Francisco. Along the way, Art flew: Commodore 540, Sikorsky S40, S-42, Martin M-130 "China Clipper", Boeing 314 "Clipper", Douglas DC-3, DC-4, DC-6, DC7C, Boeing 377 "Stratocruiser", Boeing 707, and retired in 1978 on the Boeing 747. During that time, Art flew to Hawaii, Midway, Wake Island, Guam, Philippines, Hong Kong, Sidney, Auckland, Fiji, Tahiti, Tokyo, Viet Nam, South Korea, Bangkok, Calcutta, New Delhi Terahn, Rio de Janeiro, Argentina, Guatemala, everywhere in Europe and around the world numerous times. He loved flying and enjoyed telling stories of the people and places he had seen. A great pilot, he was even a better man.

David R. Albert passed away peacefully on January 13, 2025, at the age of 89. A dedicated serviceman, accomplished pilot, lifelong adventurer, and cherished family man, David lived a life full of purpose, discovery, and quiet joy.

Born in Riverside, California on November 23, 1935, David graduated from Riverside High School before attending UCLA on a U.S. Navy scholarship. He went on to serve with distinction as a Naval aviator, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Stationed at Barber's Point, Hawaii, with squadron VR-21, David flew missions across the Pacific and retired from active duty in 1964.

In 1965, David launched a long and storied career with Pan American World Airways. From 1968 to 1988, he was based in Berlin, Germany, piloting international routes across the globe and volunteering for Rest and Recuperation (R&R) flights into Vietnam. He later joined Delta Airlines in 1991, continuing to fly until his retirement in 2003.

David's passion for aviation extended far beyond the cockpit. He mentored a young aspiring pilot, Eric Chayet, generously sharing his time, experience, and insight. What began as guidance grew into a lifelong friendship—a reflection of David's generosity and the deep connections he nurtured throughout his life and career.

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Foynes Flying Boat Museum, in Foynes, Ireland – features a full scale replica of the Boeing B314 "Yankee Clipper". This replica was created for the museum from detailed plans by a team specialising in movie sets. Check it out at www.flyingboatmuseum.com Enjoy images from Pan Am here: <http://www.timetableimages.com/timages/ao1.htm>

IN MEMORIAM

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In 1992, David married Joyce Bell, and together they made their home in Tiburon, California. Their house, nestled beside open space, brought David endless joy as he watched deer, coyotes, and birds from the windows. He was a fun-loving and devoted husband, a deeply cherished stepfather to Marc Malnekoff (Julie), Mara Malnekoff (Gregg), and Marnie Malnekoff, and a proud grandfather to Beck and Avi Franklin.

David will be remembered for his deep sense of service, his adventurous spirit, his boundless curiosity, and the love he gave so generously to his family and community. His was a life well-lived-rich with meaning, filled with laughter, and marked by quiet strength. He leaves behind memories that will be forever cherished by all who knew and loved him.

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.

Please Send Us Your Stories

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

RENEW TODAY!

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

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