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Cold War Airline

by Captain William B. Nash, Ret., Pan American World Airways

Our DC6B Four-Engine Airliner was en route from Frankfurt to Berlin flying the south corridor over East Germany. By radar, electronic navigation, and visual means, we were carefully maintaining the very center of our sensitively restricted route to the divided city.

Without warning we found ourselves surrounded by five Soviet Mikoyan-Gurevich (MIG) tactical fighters, closing in on us in tight formation. I clicked on the auto-pilot. It held a straight course better than any human. I did not know whether the fighters were flown by Soviets or by Luftstreitkraefte/ Luftverteidigung GDR pilots. Both were forbidden to be in the corridor. These intruders were close and they were sitting on silk. They could bail out in the event of collision. Our crew and passengers could not. The jets on our left moved in close to us, apparently trying to spook us away from them toward the corridor edge - only 12 ½ miles away.

This irked me, so I eased back the throttles and dropped the gear and some flap, and they would wobble and almost stall out trying to fly that slow with jets. This put them in high dudgeon and they gave us a super buzz job, racing close to us from all directions. Eventually they gave up or ran short of fuel and left us.

That was just one of the ways the communists tried to make us give up keeping the Western allied

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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.

Cold War Airline

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portion of Berlin free. The cold war was still hot. This was the reason for the existence of the Pan American World Airways Internal German Service (IGS).

Berlin, divided into East and West Berlin, controlled by Britain, USA, and France in the Western portion, and the Soviet Union in the Eastern portion, was 192 miles behind the Iron Curtain in the south corridor. However, the communists wanted total control and tried their best to get the Western allies out of Berlin.

In the Four Power Agreement the Soviets refused to permit West German Airlines to fly over East Germany to Berlin, so one airline from each of the allied nations provided this service: Air France, British European Airways (BEA) and Pan American World Airways (Pan Am) for West Berlin; the Soviet Aeroflot Airline served East Berlin's Schönefeld airport from other cities behind the Iron Curtain.

Our three "air tunnels" (corridors) from West Germany to Berlin had roofs of 10,000 feet flight level, floors of 3000 feet, and were 25 miles wide. Frankfurt, Hannover, and Hamburg were the first destinations at the Western ends.

If we ventured out of a corridor, the communist interceptors could force us to land in East Germany - or worse, use us for targets if we did not comply. An Air France airliner, barely out of the north corridor, was shot down and fell inside the corridor. Air France eventually quit flying the corridors. BEA and Pan Am continued.

The communists would attempt to disrupt our communications and radio navigation sources by broadcasting high volume noise, sounding like eight bars of discordant clarinet practice, blotting out and making our frequencies unusable. They wanted us to wander out of the corridors.

Sometimes they would shoot high flares up all across the corridors. Had one ever hit us, it would have stuck to the airplane skin and burned us. They were magnesium flares and burned hot enough to set us afire. We would have to turn back.

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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 September 30, 2025 was \$7,078.93. 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 if you haven't already! Be sure to clip and send in your check if you'd like to continue to receive the newsletter. Thank you!

Cold War Airline

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I transferred from Miami to the Internal German Service in 1962. I was a widower with three young children and my mother in the household, and they were all eager to go to Germany with me. They were to join me as soon as I had found a suitable home for us. So for the time being I preceded them to become established in the new flying area and to find a home.

World War II had beaten up Frankfurt and few undamaged hotels existed. Pan Am paid to rebuild a small hotel in the forest near the airport, called the Unterschweinstiege (translated to mean under the pig sty in Frankfurt dialect) for international crew overnights. It has since grown into a huge 550-room 5-star hotel, renamed Steigenberger, with all modern accommodations. A restaurant in the hotel is still called the Unterschweinstiege. I managed to stay there a couple of nights, then moved from "Under The Pig Sty" to the old Palace Hotel in town. Since the Germany Pan Am base was then Frankfurt, they put me right to work, leaving me not much time to seek housing for the family.

The first morning I reported for a route check, I was early at the airport checking the weather. The check pilot said, "what do you want to do that for? We're going anyway" - and that's the way it was for the next 15 years - lots of instrument flying. We had "look-see" as the only landing minimum. So we always "saw" the approach lights - even if they were under us. Other airlines said Pan Am still flew when the birds were walking. While flying in the IGS I landed at an alternate airport only once.

Our IGS flight crew consisted of 166 pilots and flight engineers, and 109 German stewardesses. Some of our pilots commuted from the USA, Spain, England, or France. One pilot lived in a windmill in Holland. I found a new house in Waldtrudering, adjacent to Munich and brought my family to Germany. It was an easy commute via Pan Am to fly my schedules. The children attended the U.S. military base school in Munich. My mother found that she could have groceries delivered, and also made some nearby friends.

Within 3 years after my arrival, the IGS base was changed from Frankfurt to Berlin. I found a small but comfortable studio apartment in Berlin, which was considerably less expensive than hotels while on flight duty. Most of our pilots and their families moved to Berlin, but since Berlin could have been overrun by communists in any 24 hour period, I had no desire to put my family there. I put together a "walk-out kit" in the event that I was trapped in the divided city.

During my fourth year we began to fly the jet - the Boeing 727 - a great "schoenes kleines Flugzeug."

The communists continued to harass us in the corridors. At our 500 mph jet speed it would have been easy to slide out of the corridors. We watched our headings even more carefully. On the approach into Tempelhof airport in Berlin, the usual final approach was over East Berlin. Often, at night, the communists aimed a huge powerful spotlight directly at our cockpit to blind us. I would put on dark glasses and look only at the instruments. The copilot wore dark glasses and told me when we were below and abeam the second floor of some apartments close on our right. Touchdown was then imminent.

CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

AVi8 Air Capital Completes Business Case Review for Pan Am® Relaunch; Initiates FAA Certification Process

MIAMI – (October 9, 2025) – AVi8 Air Capital (“Avi8”) announced today that it has successfully completed its comprehensive business plan for the potential relaunch of Pan American World Airways® as a scheduled commercial airline. In June 2025, Pan Am® Brands, a division of Pan American Global Holdings® LLC, and Avi8 Air Capital announced a strategic partnership to evaluate the feasibility of reintroducing Pan Am® as a scheduled commercial airline.

As a result, Pan Am® has formally initiated the certification process with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a key step toward re-establishing Pan Am® as a U.S. Part 121 scheduled carrier (subject to all FAA and US DOT approvals). Avi8 has assembled a world-class team to lead the certification effort and has received strong initial support from aircraft lessors and key vendors.

Once certified, Pan Am® will be headquartered in Miami and operate a fleet of Airbus aircraft, subject to all FAA and DOT approvals. Further updates on the certification process and other milestones will be shared in the coming months.

About AVi8 Air Capital

AVi8 Air Capital is a specialized aviation merchant bank and strategic consulting firm providing expertise in airline strategy, fleet financing, and operational management. The firm has a proven track record of success in airline startups, restructurings, and large-scale aviation investments and in the last 40 years has launched two US based regional express airlines, privatized a major international airline, and led the 121 certification for the launch of two US part 121 scheduled airlines and also led the development of a \$2 billion aircraft leasing platform for a major investment bank.

For more info: www.avi8air.com.

About Pan American Global Holdings® Pan American Global Holdings®, LLC, is the owner of the Pan Am® brand, a name synonymous with glamorous airline travel, products and world class experiences. For more information visit www.panam.com.

Media Contacts: Cindi Perantoni Rodgers / LMA Consulting M: 305-962-9206

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. Funds are dropping, and we may not have enough to continue without your help! Form is on page 7.

Writer seeks Pan Am pilots to interview

My name is Jason Ross. I am a writer who is attempting to speak with former Pan Am pilots who went on to fly with United, following the purchase of the Pacific routes in 1986. I'm looking to interview several pilots for the writing of a potential book focusing on United's purchase of the Pacific.

A little about myself. I grew up fascinated with aviation and especially aviation history. Influenced by family members who worked for Pan Am and served in the Air Force, I started my career as an Air Force officer. Over time I became passionate about organizations' cultures and how they have led to success or failure, and everything in between. Ultimately, this led to my interest in the acquisition of Pan Am's Pacific routes and individuals' experiences with the acquisition. If you are interested in sharing your experience, I can be reached at jason.r.ross@gmail.com. Thank you again for your help.

Best regards,
Jason Ross

How to Cancel a Subscription

PIRG [Public Interest Research Group] recommends these strategies if you are having trouble canceling a subscription:

- Think twice about that free trial subscription.
- Never use a debit card. Always use a credit card.
- Read the terms and conditions and watch out for pre-checked boxes.
- Keep copies of emails or text messages sent to you when you signed up, and any screenshots of your efforts to cancel, or any notes from a phone call, including the name of who you spoke with.
- Put reminders in your calendar. If it's a one-year subscription, schedule a calendar reminder for maybe a couple of weeks before the automatic renewal date, and again a few days ahead of time, and just cancel then. Don't wait until the last minute.
- Remove any credit card information from your account if you can, to ensure you aren't charged for another billing cycle.
- Complain to the FTC and your state attorney general if you have problems canceling.

Places to Visit

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/ttimages/ao1.htm>

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.

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

There are no obituaries to report this month.

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.

Stranded in the Sky: Untold Story

Philip Jett is the author of STRANDED IN THE SKY: The Untold Story of Pan Am Luxury Airliners Trapped on the Day of Infamy, which combined the stories of the Anzac, Hong Kong, Pacific, and Philippine Clippers, with a great deal of original research. The book debuted before a large group of Pan Am clipper families on Treasure Island in San Francisco in May of 2023. He may be available to speak to Pan Am groups or associations without charge. If interested, you may visit his website at www.philipjett.com and email him at philip@philipjett.com. His book is available in hardback, paperback, and eBook.

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!

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Amount: \$ _____

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

SFO PAN AM RETIREES ASSOCIATION MEETING REGISTRATION

Saturday December 6, 2024

Contact: Al Gilbert, asgilbertus@gmail.com (415) 516 0359

Our Christmas luncheon will be held on Saturday, December 6, 2025 at Michael's at Shoreline in Mountain View. No-host Beer & Wine at 11:30 and lunch at 12:30.

Our speaker will be Nancy McAllister, President of World Wings International. Nancy joined the family business in 1973, following in her Pan Am pilot father's footsteps, and flew through 1986.

After a long storied history of camaraderie and philanthropy, World Wings International will be merged with the Pan Am Museum Foundation at the end of 2025, and we look forward to hearing about the history and future of World Wings International.

Also, "just in time for Christmas," I will be signing and selling copies of my book "Pan Am Stories: You Can't Make This Up." Books will be \$10 if pre-purchased during registration, and \$15 at the door. 100% of sales proceeds benefit the Pan Am Museum Foundation.

Please complete and return the registration form on the bottom by November 29th

SFO PAN AM ASSOCIATION

When: Saturday December 6, 2025

Where: Michael's at Shoreline Golf Club, 2960 North Shoreline Blvd, Mountain View, CA 94043
(650) 691-9305

Time: 11:30– No-Host Beverages

12:30 – Lunch - Choice of:

- o Roast Beef, English Cut, Au Jus -\$47
- o Broiled Salmon, Lemon Beurre Blanc - \$43
- o Breast of Chicken Marsala -\$38
- o Spinach & Cheese Tortellini -\$35
- o Stir Fry Vegetables with Noodles -\$35

Mail to: Al Gilbert, 285 Humboldt Rd. Brisbane, CA 94005 (Tel: 415 516 0359)

Name: _____ Phone _____

Beef _____ Salmon _____ Chicken _____ Tortellini _____ Stir Fry Vegetables _____

* Guest(s) Name(s): _____

Beef _____ Salmon _____ Chicken _____ Tortellini _____ Stir Fry Vegetables _____

_____ Copies of "Pan Am Stories: You Can't Make This Up" (\$10)

Amount enclosed: _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO "Al Gilbert"