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Turning Finals – The Long Way Home

By John A. Marshall

Pan Am Captain Bob Ford didn't consider himself a hero or even a visionary pioneer in a fledgling industry. That was a role that benefited the Lindberghs and Musicks of the world. Nonetheless, Ford was a man thrust by events and circumstance into a situation that placed him in a unique position; one that provided him with a certain amount of notoriety, and even earned him a photo and a column in TIME magazine. (January 19, 1942.)

The year was 1941, early in December. The Pacific Ocean had been a simmering cauldron of unrest for many months. The Japanese government had fortified its garrisons not only on the home islands, but further to the south, sending fresh divisions of troops to Okinawa and points south, loading troop ships that were ready to sail to Hong Kong and the Philippines. When the armada of warships launched the fighter attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, Bob Ford and his crew often, along with twenty-one passengers aboard the Boeing 314 flying boat Pacific Clipper, were nearing the end of a four day flight from San Francisco to Auckland, New Zealand. Their schedule called for the crew and aircraft to layover in New Zealand for three days and then retrace their route to California the way they had come. It was not to be, and the next five weeks were to provide an adventure the like of which none of them could have ever dreamed.

Before leaving the seaplane base at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, Ford had been handed a thick packet of orders, a protocol which he was to follow in the event of Japanese action in the Pacific prior to his return. The plan had allowed for many contingencies, but none that envisioned a scenario in which the entire ocean would be closed to them, prohibiting their return. In the event of hostilities, the first directive in the plan Ford carried called for the crew to await further orders, wherever they might be.

It was a soft spring morning down under as the Pacific Clipper droned southward toward Auckland. The

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serenity of the routine flight was suddenly shattered when Radio Operator John Poindexter intercepted what he thought would be a routine message from Auckland. Instead came a message from the company via Canton Island announcing the bombing of Hawaii. The unthinkable had become a startling reality, and in the blink of an eye the Pacific Ocean had become a war zone. Poindexter raised the Pan Am station at Auckland, and Ford exchanged a few terse words with the station manager to make sure that the harbor and landing facilities were safe and secure. In heavy silence the big flying boat continued on and made an uneventful landing in Auckland Harbor.

For a week the crew haunted the communications room at the U.S. consulate waiting for orders from the company in New York. In the meantime the war news that reached New Zealand every day was more and more frightening. Japanese forces were moving southward at a breakneck pace; soon Australia and then New Zealand would be at risk. Ford chafed at the delay. He ordered all identifying markings on the Pacific Clipper painted over, except for a small American flag left on the side of the fuselage. It's presence was to be a lucky one, once they began their long journey homeward. The flight engineers, Homans "Swede" Rothe and John "Jocko" Parish, spend the days seeing to the health of the Boeing, running the engines and taking care of even the most minor of squawks.

Finally, on December 15th, word came from New York. Ford and his crew were to fly their airplane back to America the long way around, westbound. It was a daunting assignment. The route would take them west to Australia, up through the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, through Saudi Arabia and down the long African continent to the Belgian Congo (Zaire), across the south Atlantic Ocean, northwards through South America and the Caribbean to New York. They faced a journey of over 30,000 miles over oceans and lands that none of them had ever seen; they were flying into the teeth of a burgeoning world war, to places where loyalties and allegiances would be questionable at best. They had no maps or charts for the journey, and very little money. They would have to do all their own planning, judging each succeeding leg on its merits; purchasing fuel and oil along the way, as well as the food, they would eat. Just how they would complete their mission Ford had no idea. Their first orders were to backtrack to Noumea, pick up Pan Am's station personnel there, and deliver them to

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Bank balance as of January 31, 2026 was \$5,187.03. The opportunity to renew your membership with your donation is on a form on page 8 of this newsletter,

Thank you to the individuals who donated funds to help keep us going! We have received a large anonymous donation of \$5,000 plus many of you have sent in extra money. We have been approved for a grant from the Pan Am Historical Foundation, all of which will be reported on and reflected in the next issue. THANK YOU!!!

Please consider sending your dues as soon as possible, and any extra you might wish to donate to keep it going! Be sure to clip and send in your check if you'd like to continue to receive the newsletter. Thank you!

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Australia, to remain for the duration. When the Clipper arrived, Ford told the startled station manager to round up all his personnel, that each person could bring one suitcase, and they would leave in an hour. As the sun rose above the placid green sea, so did the Pacific Clipper. She landed at Gladstone, Australia six hours later.

Money had been a nagging worry. The pooled resources of the crew, while adequate for a short Auckland layover and the trip back to San Francisco, would hardly see them around the world. When they landed in Gladstone, there was a great deal of interest in the huge flying boat. One of the young men who came down to the harbor to see her was a banker, who engaged Ford in conversation. Eventually he asked, "How are you fixed for money?" Ford admitted they were nearly broke. The banker went immediately to his bank (it was a Saturday morning), opened the vault, and handed the stunned Ford five hundred American dollars. It was an unexpected windfall that was to finance their trip all the way to New York.

Their next leg was across the Australian continent to Port Darwin, where they would jump off for the Dutch East Indies and then India. But first they were confronted by a problem that would plague them all the way to North America. They were informed that there was no aviation gas available, but the crew was welcome to all the automobile gas they could load. They had little choice. Ford conferred with his engineers and formulated a plan. They would transfer what remained of the aviation fuel into the center wing tanks, and load the auto gas into the wings. They would take off and make their initial climb on the good stuff, and once they had leveled off, effect the transfer to the lower octane fuel. Neither Ford nor either of the engineers would venture a guess as to just how the high-bred Wright Double-Cyclone engines would react to such a spartan diet.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

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.

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.

How to spot—and stop—imposter scams.

Investment scammers are getting more savvy and increasingly personal. They may pose as investment professionals, leaders of trusted financial institutions, all to gain your confidence and trust. With vigilance and a few tips on imposter tactics and techniques, you can recognize these fraudsters and steer clear of their traps.

Here are four signs to watch out for:

Too-good-to-be-true offers. If you're getting an unsolicited investment offer, especially one claiming guaranteed or unusually high returns, watch out. Opportunities that sound too good to be true probably are.

High-pressure tactics. Messages or social media ads that demand your attention are trying to press your panic button. Don't fall for any urgent requests to act immediately to "protect" your account, avoid losses, or accept a special offer.

Contacts from out of the blue. Unexpected messages you receive through social media, messaging apps, texts, or emails you didn't initiate are often a good sign you're being targeted by a fraudster.

Access and download requests. Think twice if you receive any requests to download software, share one-time passcodes, or allow remote access to your device. You never want to give fraudsters access to your accounts or private information.

If you encounter any of these:

Stop. Don't give out or confirm any personal information (even if they already have it). Never send money, open new accounts, or take any action without stopping to verify what you are doing is legitimate. We'll never contact you through social media or messaging apps to offer investments or request personal information.

Drop. Scammers can't reach you if you disengage. Hang up the call, ignore the chat, swipe past the ad, or leave the group and then block the phone number or profiles so they can't contact you again. Then report the incident as spam or scam to the company or platform where you received it.

Stay informed, stay protected.

(from Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.)

If you enjoy reading the Clipper Pioneers newsletter, and would like to continue receiving it in your mailbox, please send in your renewal if you haven't already, for 2026. The membership renewal form is on page 8.

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

PAN AM MUSEUM CRUISE APRIL 25 - MAY 2, 2027

Welcome Aboard the Magnificent AmaMagna - An Unforgettable Voyage with Purpose

Set sail on a once-in-a-lifetime journey along the legendary Danube River, where timeless history, vibrant culture, and stunning landscapes come together — all from the luxurious comfort of the AmaMagna.

This isn't just a cruise. It's a celebration of heritage, a gathering of kindred spirits, and a meaningful way to support the Pan Am World Museum! Join fellow Pan Am enthusiasts and adventurers as you explore the heart of Southeast Europe in unparalleled style and sophistication. April 25 - May 2, 2027

PRESENTING GEMS OF SOUTHEAST EUROPE on AmaWaterways AmaMagna

If you are thinking of joining us, don't delay! Take full advantage of our discounts, extended solely for our group. We've had a wonderful response so far, it's sure to be another fabulous trip!

Only \$400 deposit - balance is not due until 90 days before cruise. (\$200 is non-refundable).

For more information, visit <https://thepanammuseum.org/travel/cruise2027>

Start planning for the 3rd Biennial Pan Am World Museum Fundraiser Cruise!

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

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.

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); Margaret O'Shaughnessy-Director of the Foynes Flying Boat Museum; Edward Trippe; and Mary Lou Bigelow.

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/>

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>

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

*...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 new 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. 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.

Tips for getting a good night's sleep

When you're feeling tired and frustrated, it can be tempting to look for a quick fix. But natural sleep remedies for older adults can work just as well—or even better—than medications. Here are some smart sleep habits to adopt:

1. Keep a steady sleep schedule. Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day helps support your body's natural sleep rhythms.
2. Make sure you have the right mattress. You spend a lot of time in bed—so choosing the best mattress for you can make all the difference in the quality and duration of your sleep. Adjustable beds, for example, can help you achieve the ideal sleep position and relieve pain that's causing sleep disruptions. Some even have anti-snore features. If pain keeps you awake, consider purchasing one of the best mattresses for back pain, rated by our team.
3. Avoid heavy meals right before bed. Indigestion from a big meal can make it hard to fall asleep, so keep evening meals and snacks light. It's also a good idea to avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime—since they can all interfere with sleep.
4. Keep napping to a minimum. When you sleep too much during the day, you may feel too alert to settle down at night. Limit daytime naps to no more than one hour and try to restrict them to earlier in the day.
5. Wind down before turning in. Create a quiet, calming bedtime routine to help your mind and body relax. This may include reading or listening to your favorite soft music. If you're feeling stressed, try meditation or journaling.
6. Avoid screens right before bed. The blue light emitted by smartphones, TVs, tablets, and computers can disrupt our body's circadian rhythms. Unplug from all devices at least 60 minutes prior to bedtime and keep them out of the bedroom.

Another key part of sleeping well is creating a sleep-friendly bedroom environment.

(from <https://www.ncoa.org/article/6-sensible-sleep-tips-for-older-adults/>)

Pan Am 100th Anniversary Legendary Voyage - Oct. 2027

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! RETRACE THE CLIPPER ROUTE BY SEA

Journey along Pan Am®'s historic Clipper route, visiting 19 ports and 13 countries over 28 days.

INTRODUCING PAN AM'S NEWEST PORT

Spend a day at RelaxAway, Half Moon Cay™, named the #1 private island 20 years in a row.

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19 Ports - 13 Countries - 2 Heritage Brands - 1 Legendary Voyage - 28-Day Legendary Voyage - Pan Am 100th Anniversary - Zuiderdam - Roundtrip Miami - Oct. 30, 2027

Contact Your Travel Advisor to Book Today - @tourwithorit Orit Rindner - Tel: 850-270-7745 BOOK EARLY & SAVE - Holland American + Pan Am Reserve your place today and receive up to 60% off our most popular amenities plus added benefits and upgrades.

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: _____

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Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Amount: \$ _____

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