



**PRESIDENT**  
STU ARCHER  
7340 SW 132 ST  
MIAMI, FL  
33156-6804

**VICE- PRESIDENT**  
HARVEY BENEFIELD  
1261 ALGARDIAVE  
CORAL GABLES, FL  
33146-1107

**SECRETARY**  
JERRY CASSIDY  
14530 SW 93 TERR  
MIAMI, FL  
33186-1057

**TREASURER**  
JERRY HOLMES  
192 FOURSOME DRIVE  
SEQUIM, WA  
98382

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX**

### **EMERGENCY AT 35,000 FEET A 747 Flight Anything But Routine**

Our Pan-Am 747 flight from New York's Kennedy Airport to Tokyo, Japan's, Narita Airport in September, 1984, was a non-stop long haul, scheduled for 13 hours. On flights of this length we carried two first officers, each with a type-rating in the airplane, and two flight engineers. We had an upper and lower bunk bed in the back part of the cockpit area so the crewmembers not on duty could relax, read or grab some shuteye. At approximately 10 hours into the flight, I was in my customary left seat as Captain, and we were right on our flight plan, at 35,000 feet and picking up Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula on our radar, showing about 100 miles ahead. There we were scheduled to climb to 39,000.

We had left JFK on time at 11:30 a.m. and crossed Canada at our original assigned altitude of 33,000 feet. Approaching Anchorage, Alaska less fuel while maintaining the same true airspeed. Our positions were calculated by three Inertial Guidance System Computers, the same type the astronauts had used going to the moon. Basically, we were flying the same route as the Korean 747 Flight that had come to grief two years before by straying off course and being shot down by Soviet fighter jets. Something had gone wrong with the Korean flight's Guidance System programming—rumor had it they had probably inserted an incorrect number into their Inertial Guidance System; a tragic mistake I was determined would never happen on my watch.

With Kamchatka just ahead, I was thinking that once we had climbed to our new altitude, I would take a break and go back to business class to chat with an old friend who was on this flight, Leon Chandler, Vice President of Cortland Tackle and affectionately known by many as the "Fly Fishing Ambassador to the World." Hours earlier I had already taken advantage of the Captain's first choice for a break by going back into the cabin to have lunch with Leon. And now, once again it was getting to be time for me to take a break and let one of the first officers have some left-seat time. The instruments and gauges that gleamed back at the me and the Co-Pilot were pegged where they belonged. The flight couldn't have been going smoother.

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**EMERGENCY AT 35,000 FEET** ~ *continued from previous page*

Directly behind the Co-Pilot and me, however, facing his own side panel of instruments, was the Flight Engineer, Dennis Grevuli. The instruments he was reading were not so benign. Suddenly his voice lashed out: "Holy shit! We have a wing overheat light on the port wing."

This was a serious warning—a death threat! A broken high-temperature high-pressure duct from one of the engines on that left-wing could possibly cause enough structural damage to have our left wing collapsed... making it a bad day to fly. Immediate and correct action was required.

While Dennis was getting out the abnormal procedures portion of the aircraft manual, I had already started retarding the throttle for the number one engine, the first step in the abnormal procedures for a wing overheat light. Dennis had quickly isolated the engine bleeds, from both engines on our left wing. These bleeds have many important functions within the airplane, the air-conditioning and pressurization just to name two.

By now the cockpit flight deck was crowded. The other First Officer and the Second Engineer were now out of the bunk beds and wanting to know what was happening.

Meanwhile the on-duty Flight Engineer was reading the abnormal procedures out loud. "Slowly retard either throttle on the overheat wing, and if the overheat light goes out, continue to operate the engine at that power setting."

That was exactly what I was doing. Unfortunately, the light did not go out until I had the No. 1 engine throttle all the way back to idle power, which hardly contributes any thrust. Now that the light had been extinguished, our next step, reading from the abnormal procedures, was to reintroduce the bleeds from No. 2 engine into the system.

For some unknown reason, when Dennis opened the bleed valves, the number two engine stalled, silently, without a *boom* like a backfire. The first indication was a bouncing EPR gauge and an erratic N1 tachometer gauge, then number two engine fire warning light came on, with the bell ringing loudly.

Now I recited the emergency engine fire drill verbatim, while the Engineer and First Officer did each of the procedures I called out, shutting down number two engine and shooting both fire bottles into the engine area, extinguishing the flames.

We are now 50 miles off the Kamchatka Peninsula, and I quickly told Vince Miller who was currently the on-duty First Officer in the co-pilot seat, "If we have anything else happen, I don't care what it is, immediately start broadcasting a Mayday on HF long-range radio guard frequency to the world, telling them what has transpired and that we are turning north to fly into the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia to make an emergency landing at the Russian Air Force fighter base. It's where the fighter plane shot down the Air Korean 747 two years ago because it flew into their airspace."

I knew two things for sure: One, even if nothing else happened, our work to make this flight have a happy ending was cut out for us. Two, I did not intend putting our airplane and passengers in the North Pacific Ocean.

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You can now access the mailing and phone list of your fellow Clipper Pioneers. Go to the Clipper Pioneer website - [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com) - and scroll down to the bottom of the home page. Click on "Members Only" - when the password box pops up, type in the username and password that is on page 2 of your printed newsletter. You will be able to access the current list of names, address, phone #s, and email addresses there.

**EMERGENCY AT 35,000 FEET***~ continued from previous page*

Now began four and a half hours with me literally glued to my seat flying the 747 on two engines. At a much slower airspeed, we were burning more fuel and could not climb to our programmed fuel saving higher altitude. Our fuel computations, however, kept showing the numbers we needed: We could make Tokyo, shoot a missed approach, if necessary, and still go on to our alternate, Yokota on the northern coast of Japan.

We were in VHF radio contact with Tokyo Control when we were 150 miles out. We knew then that the Tokyo weather was not going to do us any favors. On the contrary, it would add difficulties to our plight.

It was storming in Tokyo with low clouds, heavy rain and gusting winds creating a landing problem due to the low visibility. A precise instrument landing system (ILS) approach would be needed.

When made aware of our engines-out situation, Tokyo immediately wanted to know if we needed to declare an emergency, clearing the airspace of other aircraft as we got closer to the airport, giving me priority to land.

"Tokyo control, Clipper 801 affirmative," we called, "we are declaring an emergency and I would appreciate clearance from my present position, INS direct to the Narita airport outer marker beacon, for an immediate ILS approach."

"Roger, Clipper 801, squawk Ident on transponder code 0423, I have you in radar contact Clipper 801, you are cleared from your present position, direct to the Narita outer marker beacon for the ILS approach to runway three four left. You are clear to descend to 15,000 feet at your discretion, call leaving level 350. Be advised; landing conditions at Narita are reported to be occasionally below landing minimums by the last aircraft making a missed approach."

Not wanting to prematurely go to a lower altitude where we would burn fuel more rapidly, I decided to wait until I was about 75 miles from the airport before starting my descent.

After informing the other four members of the crew what my intentions were, I called for a pre-descent check and briefed everyone on the ILS approach procedures for runway 34 Left. I made an announcement on the PA to the passengers, telling them that we were starting our descent, and should be landing in about 25 minutes; also telling them about the poor weather conditions at the airport. I told the co-pilot to call Tokyo Control, informing them that we were leaving flight level 350.

The in-flight service director and the purser working in first-class were the only members of our cabin crew aware that we were having any problems whatsoever. As long as I was continuing the flight to our original destination, there was no need to create unnecessary anxieties among the passengers or crew. I could imagine my friend, Leon Chandler, back there in business class wondering why his old friend Stu had not come back to chat with him, as promised. When I had left Leon after our lunch, I had promised to return later into the flight.

Our meeting on this trip was entirely by happenstance. Leon had hailed me as I walked through the crowded passenger waiting area, and he was pleasantly surprised to find that his fishing buddy was Captain of the flight. [Another surprise for Leon came after the plane's doors were closed and I was able to have the purser move him from one of the worst seats on the plane in the very rear up to business class.]

As we began our descent, my thoughts focused on the challenge ahead: An instrument approach on two engines with the weather right on the minimums. Pilots train constantly in simulators for this sort of emergency, but this was for real.

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**EMERGENCY AT 35,000 FEET** ~ *continued from previous page*

“Clipper 801, switch to Narita Approach Control on 126.1. Happy landings.”

“Roger, Tokyo Control, thanks.”

On calling Narita Approach Control, we are further cleared to descend at our discretion for the approach to runway 34 Left, and they had us in radar contact.

Because of the yaw created by only having thrust from engines No. 3 and 4 on the right wing of the airplane, I was forced to hold a considerable amount of right rudder-pedal pressure to keep us flying straight ahead and not skidding off to one side of the ILS track. With my heart pumping a fast cadence and my mind speeding along as my eyes scanned the flight instruments, I was able to keep the crosshairs on the ILS instrument centered, indicating I was right on track and on glide path.

The minimum descent altitude is the point where the pilot must have some visual reference to the runway or execute a missed approach and fly to the alternate airport. As I approached the minimums, the rain was coming down in heavy sheets, pushed by gusting winds. This would be a difficult enough approach to make even with all four engines operating. I made a split-second decision to continue the approach slightly lower than the published minimum as long as I had the ILS centered, showing me I was exactly where I should be.

The first officer yelled out, “I’ve got the rabbit!” The flashing strobe light leading to the runway strobe light is known as a rabbit. “You’re right on center line for the runway ... fucking fantastic.”

Still working extra hard to plant this big bird on the center of the runway, I slowly eased the pressure off my now-shaking right foot, releasing most of the rudder pedal pressure, as I brought the throttles into idle power. I quickly slid my feet onto the upper portion of the rudder pedals, applying the brakes on all 18 wheels, and brought the Number 3 engine throttle up into idle reverse. We are hydroplaning down the runway because of all the rainwater, and if I applied more reverse thrust from my two operating engines, we would have been torqued off the runway by the asymmetrical thrust.

Actually, I was surprised at how well we stopped, still having a few thousand feet of runway ahead of us. After being in a hushed quiet during the approach and landing, the cockpit came alive with everyone at the same time shutting out yahoos.

Turning off the duty runway onto a taxiway, I looked back over my right shoulder at Dennis, the Flight Engineer who first noted the wing overheat light. I said with a chuckle, “You weren’t kidding a few hours ago when you said, “Oh Shit!”

I saw Leon Chandler in Customs, while we are waiting to retrieve our bags. He was all smiles with his right hand out, saying, “Great flight, fantastic landing, we didn’t even feel it touchdown. Did you hear everybody in the whole airplane applauding? But, my friend, you said that you were going to come back and visit with me before we got to Tokyo. What happened?”

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## **We’d like to hear from you!**

Thanks to those who are sending us great stories! We will be running them in future issues of the Clipper Pioneer newsletter. Do you have a story to share with us? Send it to us! We’d love to print it in the newsletter! Do you have information that would be beneficial to us? Send it along! Let’s share the good ideas! You can mail your articles, jokes, and other interesting information to: Jerry Holmes, 192 Four-some Drive, Sequim, WA - or email to [jerry747@copper.net](mailto:jerry747@copper.net).

**EMERGENCY AT 35,000 FEET** ~ continued from previous page

Putting my arm around his shoulder, I slowly walked him toward a slit window where you can see our airplane, parked facing us. Giving him a slight pat on his back I said, "Leon, old buddy, I was not able to get out of my seat to even go to the toilet for the last four half hours of the flight. We had two engines on the left wing inoperative, one because of a major engine fire and the other because of a ruptured high-temperature pressure duct. You might say that I was a little busy."

Looking out the window, he was rapidly turning pale. Slowly, as my words sank in, he replied, "Stu, nobody told us anything."

I explained that as long as I'm still taking the airplane to its original destination, there is no reason to create unneeded anxieties among the passengers or crew. None of the flight attendants even had knowledge of our problems

"We don't get paid the big bucks for just getting the airplane from point A to point B," I joked with him, trying to stem his anxiety even though he was safely on the ground. "It's for getting the passengers safely to their destination when things have turned into a can of worms."

The special crew bus that was taking us to the Kino Plaza Hotel was buzzing with Pan Am flight 801's 20 crewmembers talking about not knowing of the engine problems. I asked John, the in-flight service director, to see if he could get everyone to quiet down for a moment, I wanted to make an announcement.

After the buzz stopped, I said, "You are an outstanding crew and after we check into the hotel and get cleaned up, I would like to buy everyone a cocktail, say six o'clock local time." The bus was silent for a moment and then the buzz of conversation started again. They'd never heard of a captain buying drinks or anything else for the whole crew.

That was one of the most satisfying rounds of drinks I've ever plunked down for in my life. We had been tested, and we had not failed.

**CLIPPER PIONEERS FINANCES****3/6/08**

Our finances are in good shape; the expenses have been reduced considerably.

Accounts: Checkbook, \$21,692.00  
CD # 1=\$12,425.00  
CD #2=\$23,829.00

This seems like a lot of money but a large percentage of it is advance payment of dues. To date, \$38,400. of this is advance payments of dues.

Note: Each copy of the newsletter costs slightly over a dollar each, so each newsletter mailing costs about \$1300/\$1400 dollars.

The printing and mailing of the roster has a cost of over \$5000. 00. This is our single most expensive item. The Roster is now available on the website and is updated several times a year.

I have the checkbook available for your inspection should anyone wish to see it.

~Jerry Holmes, Treasurer

## REPORT ABOUT THE CONVENTION

*from Buck Clippard*

This year's Clipper Pioneers convention (cruise) was excellent. The weather was perfect, the sea was calm, the itinerary good, and the camaraderie was great! It was enjoyed by all and included quite a few flight service and ground personnel, which made for a great reunion.

We are now planning for next year's convention and decided to do something a little different. We are organizing it to be held in Tucson, Arizona. A wonderful place with many many attractions and activities and we have chosen four days to include some of the best. Mark your calendar for the last week in April 2009. The convention is planned from the 28th thru May 1st. (Easter is on the 12th). You will find that this is usually the very best and most beautiful time of the year. Tucson is an easy destination that is served by all the major airlines, the interstate highway (I-10), and even a stop on Am-Track.

We will be staying at the Double Tree hotel with special rates and the itinerary is already planned to include: a BBQ cookout at a dude ranch, a tour of the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base 'bone yard', a dinner at the Pima Air Museum, and a visit to the Desert Museum. The details will be provided later.

We would like to promote this event to all of our Pan Am colleagues and friends and look forward to another great reunion.

### **PAN AMIGO TRAVEL UPDATE INTERLINE/HOTEL/TOUR/CRUISE/RENT A CAR DISCOUNT PROGRAMS**

Did you know as a Pan Am retiree & Pan Amigo you are eligible for some great benefits ? Pan Amigo is always a phone call away for any help you need. Bon Voyage! Please read carefully below:

We work closely with the Airline Retiree Pass Bureau (ARPB) to assist our readers in obtaining reduced rate travel benefits. So please let us know if you have any questions or comments.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

**PASS REQUESTS:** Please call 1-800-266-6738 during the hours of 9:30am – 5 pm EST. For Retirees OUTSIDE of the USA, Pass request may also be sent by e-mail. Pass requests are generally issued the same day, Monday through Friday. To request pass authorizations for DELTA, JETBLUE and SPIRIT Please send a cheque for \$30 per person made out to: ARPB 600 NE 36 Street Suite 608 Miami FI33137. Please allow 2-3 weeks for DELTA process. Please allow 1-2 weeks for JETBLUE and SPIRIT.

Who Is eligible? You must be a bona fide retiree of Pan Am, be drawing a pension from PBGC or other pension program and be over fifty years of age. **REQUIRED 10:** At check-in, the pass rider is required to produce their respective airline or retiree association ID card plus a government issued ID. ARPB \$30 processing per person (address above). ARPB will send voucher by return mail. **NOTE:** "No advance notice required" means that ARPB issues the tickets and sends them out the same day you request them. Fedex is also available and recommended.

***This and more information will be available in our next newsletter.***

*...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

Carl E. Benson, 89, passed away on Jan. 26, 2008. Carl became a pilot after training with the Civilian Pilot Training Program. Afterwards, he worked as a pilot for Pan Am for 36 years. During World War II, he flew as a Navy Contract Pilot while employed by Pan Am. Throughout his career, he flew aircraft ranging from the B-314 flyingboat up to the Boeing 707.

Gone but not forgotten : Dan C. Hobbel 77 of Ft. Lauderdale passed away during the last week of Jan.'08, following a short illness. Dan served for many years as a mechanic on Wake Island, prior to becoming a Flight Engineer.

Brooks Conrad died March 3, 2008. Hired in 1942 by Pan American Airways, he spent 38 years flying the boats, pistons and jets. He retired in 1980 and moved to Stuart, FL, then to Winter Haven, FL. His wife of 59 years is the former Tudy Gilbert, who was the DC-3 stewardess on his first command in 1946. She survives him as does a daughter, Carol, of Weaverville, NC. He showed his worldwide photographs at competitions and exhibits for many years in retirement.

Fred Pouy passed away on April 11, 2008.

Capt. Jack McQuale passed away suddenly on Easter Sunday March 23, 2008 at his home after a long illness. He joined Pan Am in June 1942 at the Dinner Key (Miami) base and flew Pan Am's flying boats, Sikorsky S-43s and S-42s and the Martin M-130 China Clipper, for four years as a co-pilot. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Emily Gilbert Conrad.

Ken Basehore passed away on Oct. 30, 2007. Ken was a career flight engineer for Pan Am, and flew most of the modern planes and jets including the Flying Boats, the DC Fleet, and most of the Boeing 700's. The many flights over the Atlantic, especially the night crossing, were his very favorite. Ken would kiss his daughters good-bye with the farewell: It's a good to fly! Ken wanted all to know, "There never was a flight I didn't love!"

## AUXILIARY

June Banfe a long time resident of Palo Alto California passed away on September 28, 2007 at about 7:00am in the Phoenix Hospice. She became a stewardess for Pan American Airlines where she flew the South America routes, she had many stories about nights in Puerto Rico, Argentina and dancing on the beach in Copacabana Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Betty Jo "BJ" King passed away on April 7, 2008. She was employed by Compania Mexicana de Aviation, a Pan American affiliate in Burbank, CA. She obtained her dispatcher's license and worked as the only femal dispatcher with a major airlines in the country, which she enjoyed for 37 years.

**Know of someone from Pan Am who has passed?  
Email the obit to Jerry Holmes at [jerry747@copper.net](mailto:jerry747@copper.net)**

## MINUTES OF CLIPPER PIONEERS 2008 BUSINESS MEETING

Held on board the MSC Lirica - March 18, 2008

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM March 18, 2008 by President Stuart Archer. Those present: President Stuart Archer, Vice President William H. Benefield, Secretary Gerald W. Cassidy, Treasurer Jerry Holmes and many Clipper Pioneer members and guests.

A. A motion was made by Pete Carroll and seconded by Harvey Benefield to accept the minutes of the Clipper Pioneers Business meeting of 9 June 2007, held aboard the Grandeur of the Seas. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Jerry Holmes gave the Treasurer's report. A motion was made by Rich Yoder and was seconded by Harvey Benefield to accept the Treasurer's report as presented. Motion passed unanimously. The report is found in Enclosure #1.

C. A discussion followed concerning the costs of printing and mailing of the Clipper Pioneers roster each year. The roster is updated regularly and posted on the Clipper Pioneers website. It will be mailed as needed. A motion was made to just post the roster on the website, that motion was tabled.

We will continue to improve both our internet and mail communication amongst CP members. For those without internet access, we will try to keep them informed by mail or phone calls. Local groups can assist by passing on the news and information. As previously mentioned, [www.ClipperPioneers.com](http://www.ClipperPioneers.com), our website, is an excellent source of information and pertinent news, CP addresses and announcements of coming events.

D. President's Report: Stu Archer reported that there are many former Pan Am pilots and Flight Engineers who are not Clipper Pioneer members. Most of these pilots were not retired when Pan Am ceased operations and are not aware or were not invited to become members. Please reach out and help us find these pilots and invite them to join Clipper Pioneers.

E. The following members of Clipper Pioneers were nominated, elected, and agreed to serve as officers for 2010: William Atkinson, Donato Dangelico, and Bruce Dean.

F. Buck Clippard, president of the 2009 reunion spoke of the plans scheduled for Tucson, Arizona scheduled for Tuesday, 28 April 2009 through Saturday, 2 May. His itinerary and plans sounded entertaining and exciting. You will be receiving information shortly. (Initial information can be read on page 6 of this newsletter.)

2. There being no further new or old business presented for discussion, the meeting was adjourned by President Stu Archer at 10:55.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jerry Cassidy, Secretary

**Don't forget to send your memory pieces for publishing in the Clipper Pioneers newsletter!  
Email them to Jerry Holmes at [jerry747@copper.net](mailto:jerry747@copper.net)**