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FLYING DOWN TO RIO

by John Marshall

Pan American Airways (the 'World' didn't come until after the war, when the airline really did fly all over the world) from the beginning had a Latin flavor. Its very first flight was from Key West to Havana, and the early days were marked by exploration and new service to the Caribbean, Central America, and down to the huge southern half of the hemisphere. One of founder Juan Trippe's early moves was the purchase of a fledgling airline called New York, Rio, and Buenos Aires Airlines, (NYRBA) and the inherited routes formed the backbone of the South American route system that would be a mainstay of the company until its very last days.

Early route exploration was done in 1929 with the S-38 Sikorsky seaplane, with Charles Lindbergh at the controls. The Trippes, Juan and his wife Betty, along with Charles' wife Anne, pioneered the first routes that connected Miami with Cuba and Central America. Later on that year, they explored another air mail route that took them through Puerto Rico as far south as Paramaribo in Dutch Guiana (now Surinam). The fledgling airline inherited a fleet of Consolidated Commodore flying boats from the now defunct NYRBA, and these new planes, along with the venerable S-38, would form the backbone of Pan Am's South American operation until the arrival of the four-engine Sikorsky S-42. The Commodore could cover the journey from Miami to Rio in an astounding five days. It could fly nearly 900 miles without refueling, and carry a load of 32 passengers, plus cargo - a truly staggering achievement! Crossing the equator in a Pan Am Clipper vested one with a rare and unique badge of honor, and properly engraved certificates were solemnly presented to each passenger. When the 'Line' was crossed, the captain pulled back on the yoke and then pushed abruptly forward, performing a swooping, stomach-dropping maneuver that was proof that the flight had indeed crossed the Equator and entered the southern hemisphere.

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We're getting ready for our next convention - check out the information on the back page of this newsletter! Plan early to attend - it will be great fun!

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It was about this time that Pan American began the construction of a series of guest houses along the long route to South America in order to provide suitable accommodations for overnighing passengers. These guest houses remained in use until well after the war.

A glance at some of the early timetables tells interesting stories. In July 1948, just three years after the end of the war, Pan Am advertised daily single plane service between New York and Rio. The flight number was 201, as it would remain until the last day of the airline, and it left every night for Brazil.

In 1948, it was a Douglas DC-4, the unpressurized successor to the C-54, the military workhorse whose fame extended to the Berlin Airlift in the same year. Flight 201 left New York (the airport was LaGuardia then; the international airport at Idlewild, later JFK, would not come into general use until years later) at 23:15, according to the timetable, which was 11:15 PM to the civilian populace. Ten hours later, it landed at San Juan, where it spent an hour's layover before departing on the next leg, to Port-of-Spain, the capital of Trinidad, touching down three and a half hours later. Here the passengers were offered the facilities of the Pan Am Guest House at Piarco Airport if they wished to break their journey. Here is what the timetable in 1948 had to say about that:

"At Port of Spain, Trinidad, crossroads of air travel, Pan Am provides a charming Guest House for passengers only a short distance from Piarco Airport. Pleasant bedrooms and the bright, cheery CALYPSO Bar...all fully air-conditioned...make PAA's Guest House an ideal place to break your trip."

Never mind the fact that you had just spent the better part of half a day in an unpressurized airliner, subjected to the endless throb of big engines. I think I certainly would have easily been enticed to break my journey in Trinidad, particularly when enticed by such a blurb in the airline's timetable; that is, unless I was hurrying to meet Ingrid Bergman or Ginger Rogers for an exotic assignation in Rio de Janeiro.

Almost exactly thirty years later, flying a 707 on one of my first trips in command for Pan Am, I was slated for a layover in Port-of-Spain. I looked forward to a restful time at the famous Piarco Guest House. My eager anticipation turned quickly to anxious apprehension as we drove around the perimeter of the decidedly Third World airport on a rutted road that had obviously served better times. We pulled up in front of a non-descript wooden structure that seemed to be rotting from the inside out. Each of us was handed a key to a room that existed somewhere down a dark corridor, a walkway that was open to the elements on the one side, on the other were the numerous doors that opened to stark, barren guest rooms. Squadrons of large unidentified insects buzzed menacingly around the lights that struggled to hold back the gloom. My room consisted of a single bed with a paper-thin mattress, barely large enough to hold a child, a small table with a lone straight-backed chair, and a single bare light bulb hanging by a ratty cord descending from the pock-marked ceiling. The bulb worked hard to reach forty watts. The bathroom doesn't even bear discussion. Suffice it to say that it harbored species of wildlife that I would only expect to encounter in the National Geographic. I wondered idly if my tetanus shots were up to date. I wish now that I could have seen the alluring paragraph in the 1948 timetable, extolling the virtues of the Piarco Guest House! I will leave the charms of the "bright, cheery Calypso Bar" to your imagination.

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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 - and scroll down to the bottom of the home page. Click on "Members Only" - when the password box pops up, type in "CPMember". The password is "flyboat". You will be able to access the current list of names, address, phone #s, and email addresses there.

FLYING DOWN TO RIO ~ *continued from previous page*

But, back to 1948. After breaking your journey at the Piarco Guest House, you boarded your ongoing flight at 2:15 PM the following day. This was a daily flight, remember. If you wished you could have spent two, or even three days exploring the wonders of Port-of-Spain and Piarco. But today, next stop, Belem. If your itinerary perchance included Georgetown, in British Guinea, Paramaribo, in Surinam, or Cayenne, in French Guinea, you could wait for flight 203, but only on Wednesdays and Saturdays, mind you, and in that event you would climb aboard another DC-4 at 2:00 AM and spend the rest of the long night boring through the South American skies to these exotic ports of call. Nonetheless, back to our beloved flight 201. We board in the early afternoon, and take off for Belem. It is Brazil's northeastern-most seaport, on the bulge of the continent just north of the mouth of the Amazon, where the continent juts out into the Atlantic. It is eight gut-throbbing hours before we land in Belem; nearly midnight. Never despair, however, because the end is finally in sight. On the ground a scarce sixty minutes, at 11:15 PM we lift off for the final time. Next stop Rio!. We fly through the endless night until finally the sun pushes its way into the windows on the port side of the aircraft. We haven't missed anything; the flight from Belem is over nothing but solid, endless, green; the never-ending Brazilian rain forest. Villages and settlements are mere specks of light in the endless darkness: there is nothing to see. The new capital city of Brazilia is not yet a gleam of an idea in a politician's mind. Finally we start our letdown, and right on schedule, at 7:15 AM, we touch down at Rio's Galeao Airport. What a journey!

Came the jets, and not much has really changed, except the guest houses are left for the really hardy and adventurous, along with the flight crews. The first time I flew flight 201 was in the late '70s, and my chariot was a 707. Departure from Kenney Airport was at 2200, and it was the nightly non-stop to Rio. The airplane was at nearly maximum gross weight for the long flight; it was a common occurrence to "ring the bell" at the noise monitoring site, and we did that night.

The first hours were spent flying south down the familiar airways into the Caribbean — dozens of flights to San Juan and Jamaica and yes, Piarco, had made these airways like old friends. South of Port-of-Spain, however, the airways and place names became decidedly more exotic. Georgetown and Paramaribo passed silently beneath in the darkness, and we crossed the border into Brazil. The immensity of the country struck me when I realized that we were barely half way — all the rest of the way would be through Brazilian airspace, but it would consume mere hours, instead of the days just a few years before.

A three-quarter moon had risen over my left shoulder, providing just enough illumination to enable me to pick out rivers below. I craned my neck to peer forward into the night, searching for the mighty Amazon, which we would cross just east of Santarem. Suddenly there it was, stretched out before us in the moonlight, that most immense of rivers. As we lined it up with the moon, I could see far to east, where it opened up to a vast oceanic estuary, a hundred miles across at its mouth. In a moment we would cross the equator, and I felt myself anxiously waiting for the bump. In later years, I always thought it would be an amusing exercise to have someone flush the lav just as we crossed the Line, and see if the swirl stopped going clockwise and began rotating in the other direction. (Or is it the other way around?)

Communications are a little different down here. Routine position reports are passed to Belem on HF (high frequency) radio, which was proving to be a difficult exercise. Both Belem and Brazilia radio seem to be at the bottom of a deep echoing well, and require patient persistence to make ourselves heard. I was reminded of my first flights to India and South Asia. One of the caveats concerning flight into South America niggled at my brain. "They'll give you anything you ask for, so you are essentially your own air traffic control." I tested this a moment later when, after finally reaching Belem, we asked for the next higher flight level. The answer

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came instantly winging back, without a pause. "Roger, Clipper, cleared to climb to flight level three five zero." Now is when the do-it-yourself kicks in. We dialed up the air-to-air VHF frequency, 126.9, and make the required broadcast in the blind. "Clipper 201, on one twenty-six nine, in the blind, southbound on Amber 4, fifty south of Santarem, climbing out of three three zero for three five zero." I reached up and flip on the landing lights, two stabbing beams of light piercing the night. Silence. Not a lot of traffic abroad in northern Brazil at two in the morning.

Above, the night was punctuated by a dazzling display of stars, uncompromised by any lights on the ground; below an endless stretch of black, broken only every hundred miles or so by the lights of a tiny village on the banks of a river. The air was smooth; we were suspended in the night. I wandered aft to stretch my legs into the darkened cabin, virtually the entire airplane was asleep. A lone flight attendant sat on a plastic crate in the galley, reading a book. She smiled at me as I reentered the cockpit.

Finally the eastern sky grays, then pinks and blues, and the sun burst upon us. In three hours we will begin our descent into Rio's Galao Airport, but we couldn't relax our vigilance even for a moment. Hot air balloons and hang gliders drift blithely across the long descent path from Pirai, unseen and unheeded by Rio Approach Control, who at this point have yet to see their first radar scope. All hands were on the flight deck, eyes searching the haze ahead. (Later on in my career, taking off from Galao for New York of a miserable rainy midnight in a fully loaded 747, we had a very near miss with a brightly lit hot air balloon drifting among the broken clouds, right smack in the middle of the departure path. It appeared suddenly in the glare of the landing lights, startling us all nearly out of our wits, and was quickly gone. We missed it by less than a hundred feet, by my estimate, and I wondered later if its occupants were as surprised and frightened as we were, and whether they were caught in our jet wash.)

Finally the airport appeared in the windscreen, and on the horizon we could see Corcovado Mountain, with the giant figure of Christ, arms outstretched, the symbol of Rio. With a healthy crunch the wheels bit the concrete, and we arrived.

ANNOUNCEMENTS - ONGOING EVENTS

Hi, I'm Captain Chris Blaydon, one of those guys who instantly retired in 1991 after 35 years of Air Force and Pan Am flying. I have been getting the Philadelphia area pilots together at the General's Quarters at Trenton-Mercer County Airport, NJ terminal for the last 15 years. I named it the PAPAP (Philadelphia Area Pan Am Pilots) and guys come from all over New Jersey and as far away as Harrisburg and Wilmington. We usually get 10 to 15 guys for a little therapy followed by lunch on the second Tuesday of every quarter. If there is an appropriate place for you to post this we would appreciate it. I presently have 36 pilots on my e-mail list who I notify and they try to attend. Here's what's published in PanAmigo:

PHILADELPHIA & NEW JERSEY

PAPAP (Philadelphia Area Pan Am Pilots) meet the second Tuesday of every quarter, i.e. Jan, Apr, Jul, Oct at the General's Quarters restaurant at Trenton, NJ air terminal at 1200. Contact is Capt. Chris Blaydon 215 757 6229 or CBlayd@aol.com

Do you have an ongoing event you'd like posted in the newsletter and on the website? Send it to us!

Let us tell your story or information of use to everyone!

Send your stories, your articles, jokes, and other interesting information to: Jerry Holmes, 192 Foursome Drive, Sequim, WA - or email to jerry747@copper.net.

WARTIME MYSTERY RESCUE

(A true and incredible story)

by Capt. Robert E. Evans

Pan Am – 1940 – 1976.

In the Spring of 1944, I was pilot in command of a Navy PBM Cargo Seaplane on the South Pacific route - Pearl Harbor, Hawaii to Canton Island, Funafuti Island, and the destination of Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands Group. A large U.S. Navy base was located there that was vital in the U.S. war effort against the Japanese naval and military forces that were fighting to the north. I had completed my flight to Espiritu Santo and was now on the return to Pearl Harbor via the same route. Funafuti was our next stop - where we would refuel - before continuing to Canton Island for an overnight rest stop. Funafuti normally does not have much to add to our cargo load - but this time we will have four Navy airmen as passengers back to Pearl Harbor. After meeting them, and making them welcome aboard our cargo plane, they told me a most bizarre story of a mystery rescue.

This is the true story reported to me:

They were flying a two engine Navy Cargo seaplane, at night, with the ultimate destination of Espiritu Santo. They were nearing Funafuti - when they suddenly had a failure of # 2 engine - and had to shut the engine down. The pilot continued flight, but he became concerned about maintaining flight altitude as they were drifting continuously lower. He made the decision to jettison his cargo, hoping to maintain flight to Funafuti. He gave the order to the crew to open the side hatches - and throw out as much cargo as they could. They hurried to comply - and made a big mistake. They opened a hatch forward of the # 1 engine (the good one) - and threw out cargo that was blown back into the propeller of # 1 engine shearing off propeller blades. Now, they were in a steep descent, at night, with little vision of the surface - and made a crash landing into the sea. The plane broke up on the landing - and four of the crew of five found themselves in the water together - clinging to floating aircraft debris. Unfortunately, the 5th crew member was never seen again - undoubtedly perishing in the crash.

The four crew members continued to stay together as a group - finding nothing to support them except the plane debris. They had not been able to prepare and take any of the plane's emergency equipment - nor had they been able to establish radio contact with Funafuti to report their situation and position. Their situation was very bleak - and when the sun rose - even more bleak at the sight of the empty ocean. They were without food and water, nor did they have any signaling device. They were part of the flotsam on an empty sea - and spirits were low. They clung to the debris, while the sun beat down unmercifully. Then, a shout, as they detected an attack from below. Sharks were attacking their legs hanging down in the water. All were terrified - and tried kicking them away. Fortunately, the sharks were not vicious in their attack - or they would have been easy prey. The sharks would seize the leg - bite down hard enough to leave a raw imprint of teeth - and then release it. The sharks then left them - but all day they feared for their return.

All day the group floated together - fearful for their fate. There did not seem like much to hang their hopes on. The day was long - and they were suffering from sunburn - so they were glad to see the sun go down. Spirits were very low - as their expectations were so hopeless. The emptiness of the ocean was very depressing.

That same night - there was a cargo ship steaming for Espiritu Santo - when suddenly the crew saw a flare go up - some distance away. Knowing it was likely to be friendly forces in distress - they turned and

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WARTIME MYSTERY RESCUE ~ *continued from previous page*

proceeded for an hour without seeing anything. Just as they were about to resume their original course - another flare went up. They continued in the direction of the flare for another hour - and suddenly came upon the four floating airmen. It was an incredible and inexplicable rescue. The ship dropped them off at Funafuti - to recover at the base hospital. Fortunately, they had no serious injuries and all recovered in a few days. When our flight arrived, they were eager to join us and return to Pearl Harbor. They told us of their incredible story - and showed us the shark bite marks on their legs. They had no explanation regarding their ship rescue.

Now for the mystery:

Who shot off the flares? It wasn't the four floating airmen - as they had no flares to shoot.

Were the flares shot by others in crisis - and never found? We will never know. But, the four airmen were humble and grateful for their mysterious rescue - and have a life-time story to tell of their war adventure.

Aviation Memorabilia to be presented to museum in Atlanta

Jack Barbery, a retired FEO, lives at 8 Luftbury Court, Williamson GA 30295. He has a large collection of aviation memorabilia, books, parts, engines, etc., the most important probably being a Curtiss Robin aircraft with an OX-5 engine, manufactured in the 1920's, dismantled but complete and restorable. This is all being moved to a hangar museum at Peach State Aerodrome (GA2) this summer. This is about 40 miles south of Atlanta and about 20 miles west of exit 205 on Interstate 75, worth a visit for those interested in antiquity aviation.

Veterans' Updated Benefits Book Available

The VA recently published their Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents Booklet for 2008. An easy-to-read reference guide, it provides the most current information about your earned benefits. You can download the 153 page booklet at the following web site: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>

Cell Phone Information

Cell phone companies are charging \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 Information calls. Since no one carries a telephone directory in their vehicle, they get away with it. When you need to use the 411 Information option, simply dial 1(800) FREE 411, or 1 (800) 373-3411; you will incur no charge. This works on your home telephone as well.

The year is 1953 and this tape will make you laugh heartily!

Here's that classic Saufley Field tape every Naval Aviator is familiar with. They taught us formation flying there, and this is the tape where four flight instructors took the places of students who were heading out to their airplanes for their formation flight. Their instructor was known for his abrasiveness and the way he screamed at his students, and this flight which was taped by the Saufley Field tower drove the instructor nuts. The four instructor pilots purposely screwed up everything they could. It's in two parts since it's the entire flight and is therefore quite lengthy.

Subject: Training Command fun [YouTube - Saufley Field 1953 Part 1 of 2](#)

http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=Snq_CT_7rrk / [YouTube - Saufley Field 1953 Part 2 of 2](#)

<http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=k5LoTgDfYYg&feature=related>

*...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

Stanley Westover Pierce, Jr. passed away at his home in Kentfield on June 7th, 2008, at the age of 88. He was born in Pittsburgh, PA on September 17th, 1919, and is survived by Jannette, his wife of 39 years and two adult children and their families. When WWII broke out, Stan enlisted in the Army-Air Corps, and learned to fly. After instructing young B-24 pilots in Roswell, NM, he became a B-29 aircraft commander based on Saipan. With his plane, Devil's Delight, he participated in the first raid on Tokyo and went on to complete 35 missions. He earned two distinguished flying crosses, two presidential citations and seven air medals. At the end of the war he flew his B-29 back to California and, resisting the urge to fly underneath the Golden Gate Bridge, retired from the Army-Air Corps. Shortly after, Stan joined Pan American and flew around the world for 34 years rising to the top of his profession. He retired in 1979 as a 747 captain.

Captain George William "Bill" Allaman, who flew for Pan Am for several decades, including among the most extended service in Viet Nam, opening several routes, and all the glory of flying years gone by enjoyed by his peers. Captain Allaman died last November, He truly was a Clipper Pioneer, one of the first to pilot a 747 with a long list of earlier planes.

Ned Corman, a member of Pappy Boyinton's USMC "Black Sheep" squadron, which flew the F4U corsair, during World War II, died May 4th in Hawaii. He was a Pan Am Captain based in SFO and HKG. My memories as a copilot for him in HKG were, you would never know him as a hero. He left me with the impression that he was reserved, lead a quiet life, a gentleman and dam good pilot.

Captain Dick Stansbury, 78, passed away Nov. 4, 2007. He is survived by his wife Joyce, daughters Susan and Judy in Hawaii and a son living in California.

Garrett E. Taylor passed away March 13, 2008 at the Reno Life Care Center in Reno, Nevada. He lived his career at Pan American.

Aviation medicine pioneer **James Everett Crane, M.D.** died at age 94 on April 7, 2008. He was the longest serving FAA examiner in history, attracting pilots from around the globe to medical practice in Stamford, CT. He served hundred of commercial pilots including Pan Am pilots. During WWII, he was an intelligence officer in the US Army Air corp, where he led a mission to determine the safety of an air transport rought through South America and Africa. He became commanding office of a rest camp for pilots on R&R in New Zealand, where he founded the International Order of Characters, better know as the IOC. He led the IOC to become a forum that fostere the fields in aviation and aerospace and provided scholarships for students involved in aviation, as well as children of deceased or disabled aviators, many from commercial airline families.

AUXILIARY

Jean Reichel, stunt pilot, member of the Civil Air Patrol, and wife of John Donald Reichel who worked on loan from Pan American to the US State Department helping countries start up national airlines, passed away on April 22, 2008. She was 88 years young. She was actively involved in setting up and promoting Girl Scouting, and in 1959, they had the privilege of entertaining President Eisenhower when he made his trip to the Mid-East. She was also honored by Lady Baden Powell, founder of Girl Scouting. As a photographer, she documented much of the tribal wars in Nigeria from 1967-69.

**Know of someone from Pan Am who has passed?
Email the obit to Jerry Holmes at jerry747@copper.net**

Pan Am Reunion - Tucson, AZ - April 28th - May 2nd, 2009

Tuesday, April 28th

Includes transport from the airport to the Doubletree Hotel. Check next newsletter for reservation phone #.
Registration in lobby.
Cocktail Party by the pool.
Dinner on your own at one of the two dining rooms in the hotel or nearby restaurants. (Courtesy van service).
Hospitality Suite - Casita by the Pool, manned by Bill Stevens

Wednesday, April 29th

7-9 am - Buffet breakfast at the hotel.
10 am - Buses leave for the Sonora-Desert Museum with a brief stop at the San Javier mission. Lunch available at the museum. Return to hotel before 3 pm.

5:30 pm - Buses leave for the Tanque Verde Guest Ranch for Cowboy music and a BBQ cookout under the stars. (cash bar).
Buses to the hotel.

Thursday, April 30th

7-9 am - Buffet breakfast at the hotel.
Noon - First buses leave for a tour of the ARMARC at the Davis Monthan Air Force Base to see the rows of 5,000 stored (moth-balled) aircraft.
Buses will then arrive for a tour of the Pima Air Museum. This is reportedly the second most complete air museum in the country. There is a snack bar at the museum. Spend the afternoon enjoying the Air Museum.
5:30 p.m. - Sit-down banquet dinner at the museum with an address by a Korean Ace, Hall of Fame, Leader of the USAF Thunderbirds, Col. Hoot Gibson. There will be a Mariachi Band.
Buses to the hotel.
Enjoy the hospitality suite.

Friday, May 1st

7-9 am - Buffet breakfast at the hotel.
10 a.m. - Buses leave for the Sonora-Desert Museum with the second half of the group, with a brief stop at the San Javier mission. Lunch available at the museum. Return buses to hotel before 3 pm.
Rest at the hotel and enjoy the Hospitality Suite - Casita by the pool, manned by Bill Stevens
6 p.m. Cocktails (cash bar)
6:45 - Sit-down banquet dinner in the hotel ballroom including dance music.

Saturday, May 2nd

Breakfast and depart
Complimentary transport to the airport

Note: Attendees may stay for 3 days before until 3 days afterward for the same hotel price in order to enjoy additional attractions on their own.

Other Attractions:

Colossal Caves
Kitt Peak Observatory
Mining Museum
O.K. Corral at Tombstone
Old Tucson Studios
Reid Park Zoo
Sabino Canyon
Saguaro Nat'l Park
Titan Missile Museum
Tucson Botanical Gardens
Tucson Museum of Art

Keep this section for your records.

Sign up for the Pan Am Reunion, Tucson, Arizona - April 28 - May 2, 2009:

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone# _____

Email: _____

Amount Enclosed @ \$245.00 per person: \$ _____

Clip and mail with your check to:

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