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First-hand account on the Doolittle Raid

Lt. Col. Dick Cole, Doolittle's co-pilot, was our guest speaker at our Daedalian meeting in Austin . Col Cole lives in Comfort, Texas . It was a wonderful presentation. He looks great for being 94. ... Tom

This is a really excellent first hand account by the pilot of aircraft #13 on the Doolittle Raid. It is lengthy but an excellent read. Take the time and enjoy a bit of history.

My name is Edgar McElroy. My friends call me "Mac". I was born and raised in Ennis, the youngest of five children, son of Harry and Jennie McElroy.

Folks say that I was the quiet one. We lived at 609 North Dallas Street and attended the Presbyterian Church. My dad had an auto mechanic's shop downtown close to the main fire station. My family was a hard working bunch, and I was expected to work at dad's garage after school and on Saturdays, so I grew up in an atmosphere of machinery, oil and grease.

Occasionally I would hear a lone plane fly over, and would run out in the street and strain my eyes against the sun to watch it. Someday, that would be me up there!

I really like cars, and I was always busy on some project, and it wasn't long before I decided to build my very own Model-T out of spare parts. I got an engine from over here, a frame from over there, and wheels from someplace else, using only the good parts from old cars that were otherwise shot. It wasn't very pretty, but it was all mine. I enjoyed driving on the dirt roads around town and the feeling of freedom and speed. That car of mine could really go fast. 40 miles per hour!

In high school I played football and tennis, and was good enough at football to receive an athletic scholarship from Trinity University in Waxahachie. I have to admit that sometimes I daydreamed in class, and often times I thought about flying my very own airplane and being up there in the clouds. That is when I even decided to take a correspondence course in aircraft engines.

Whenever I got the chance, I would take my girl on a date up to Love Field in Dallas . We would watch the airplanes and listen to those mighty piston engines roar. I just loved it and if she didn't, well that was just too bad.

First-hand account on the Doolittle Raid

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After my schooling, I operated a filling station with my brother, then drove a bus, and later had a job as a machinist in Longview, but I never lost my love of airplanes and my dream of flying. With what was going on in Europe and in Asia, I figured that our country would be drawn into war someday, so I decided to join the Army Air Corps in November of 1940. This way I could finally follow my dream.

I reported for primary training in California. The training was rigorous and frustrating at times. We trained at airfields all over California. It was tough going, and many of the guys washed out.

When I finally saw that I was going to make it, I wrote to my girl back in Longview, Texas. Her name is Agnes Gill. I asked her to come out to California for my graduation - and oh yeah, also to marry me.

I graduated on July 11, 1941. I was now a real, honest-to-goodness Army Air Corps pilot. Two days later, I married "Aggie" in Reno, Nevada. We were starting a new life together and were very happy.

I received my orders to report to Pendleton, Oregon and join the 17th Bomb Group. Neither of us had traveled much before, and the drive north through the Cascade Range of the Sierra Nevada's was interesting and beautiful. It was an exciting time for us. My unit was the first to receive the new B-25 medium bomber. When I saw it for the first time I was in awe. It looked so huge. It was so sleek and powerful. The guys started calling it the "rocket plane", and I could hardly wait to get my hands on it. I told Aggie that it was really something! Reminded me of a big old scorpion, just ready to sting! Man, I could barely wait!

We were transferred to another airfield in Washington State, where we spent a lot a time flying practice missions and attacking imaginary targets. Then, there were other assignments in Mississippi and Georgia, for more maneuvers and more practice.

We were on our way back to California on December 7th when we got word of a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. We listened with mixed emotions to the announcements on the radio, and the next day to the declaration of war. What the President said, it just rang over and over in my head: "With confidence in our armed forces, with the un-bounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God." By gosh, I felt as though he was talking straight to me! I didn't know what would happen to us, but we all knew that we would be going somewhere now.

The first weeks of the war, we were back in Oregon flying patrols at sea looking for possible Japanese submarines. We had to be up at 0330 hours to warm up the engines of our planes. There was 18 inches of snow on the ground, and it was so cold that our engine oil congealed overnight. We placed big tarps over the engines that reached down to the ground. Inside this tent we used plumbers blow torches to thaw out the engines. I figured that my dad would be proud of me, if he could see me inside this tent with all this machinery, oil and grease. After about an hour of this, the engines were warm enough to start. We flew patrols over the coasts of Oregon and Washington from dawn until dusk. Once I thought I spotted a sub, and started my bomb run, even had my bomb doors open, but I pulled out of it when I realized that it was just a big whale. Lucky for me, I would have never heard the end of that!

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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 user name and password in your printed newsletter. You will be able to access the current list of names, address, phone #s, and email addresses there.

First-hand account on the Doolittle Raid

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Actually it was lucky for us that the Japanese didn't attack the west coast, because we just didn't have a strong enough force to beat them off. Our country was in a real fix now, and overall things looked pretty bleak to most folks. In early February, we were ordered to report to Columbus, South Carolina. Man, this Air Corps sure moves a fellow around a lot! Little did I know what was coming next!

After we got settled in Columbus, my squadron commander called us all together. He told us that an awfully hazardous mission was being planned, and then he asked for volunteers. There were some of the guys that did not step forward, but I was one of the ones that did. My co-pilot was shocked. He said "You can't volunteer, Mac! You're married, and you and Aggie are expecting a baby soon. Don't do it!" I told him that "I got into the Air Force to do what I can, and Aggie understands how I feel. The war won't be easy for any of us."

We that volunteered were transferred to Eglin Field near Valparaiso, Florida in late February. When we all got together, there were about 140 of us volunteers, and we were told that we were now part of the "Special B-25 Project." We set about our training, but none of us knew what it was all about. We were ordered not to talk about it, not even to our wives.

In early March, we were all called in for a briefing, and gathered together in a big building there on the base. Somebody said that the fellow who's head of this thing is coming to talk to us, and in walks Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle. He was already an aviation legend, and there he stood right in front of us. I was truly amazed just to meet him.

Colonel Doolittle explained that this mission would be extremely dangerous, and that only volunteers could take part. He said that he could not tell us where we were going, but he could say that some of us would not be coming back.

There was a silent pause; you could have heard a pin drop.

Then Doolittle said that anyone of us could withdraw now, and that no one would criticize us for this decision. No one backed out!

From the outset, all volunteers worked from the early morning hours until well after sunset. All excess weight was stripped from the planes and extra gas tanks were added. The lower gun turret was removed, the heavy liaison radio was removed, and then the tail guns were taken out and more gas tanks were put aboard. We extended the range of that plane from 1000 miles out to 2500 miles. Then I was assigned my crew. There was Richard Knobloch the co-pilot, Clayton Campbell the navigator, Robert Bourgeois the bombardier, Adam Williams the flight engineer and gunner, and me, Mac McElroy the pilot.

Over the coming days, I came to respect them a lot. They were a swell bunch of guys, just regular All-American boys. We got a few ideas from the training as to what type of mission that we had signed on for. A Navy pilot had joined our group to coach us at short takeoffs and also in shipboard etiquette. We began our short takeoff practice. Taking off with first a light load, then a normal load, and finally overloaded up to 31,000 lbs. The shortest possible take-off was obtained with flaps full down, stabilizer set three-fourths, tail heavy, full power against the brakes and releasing the brakes simultaneously as the engine revved up to max power. We pulled back gradually on the stick and the airplane left the ground with the tail skid about one foot from the runway. It was a very unnatural and scary way to get airborne!

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I could hardly believe it myself, the first time as I took off with a full gas load and dummy bombs within just 700 feet of runway in a near stall condition. We were, for all practical purposes, a slow flying gasoline bomb! In addition to take-off practice, we refined our skills in day and night navigation, gunnery, bombing, and low level flying. We made cross country flights at tree-top level, night flights and navigational flights over the Gulf of Mexico without the use of a radio.

After we started that short-field takeoff routine, we had some pretty fancy competition between the crews. I think that one crew got it down to about 300 feet on a hot day. We were told that only the best crews would actually go on the mission, and the rest would be held in reserve. One crew did stall on takeoff, slipped back to the ground, busting up their landing gear. They were eliminated from the mission.

Doolittle emphasized again and again the extreme danger of this operation, and made it clear that anyone of us who so desired could drop out with no questions asked. No one did. On one of our cross country flights, we landed at Barksdale Field in Shreveport, and I was able to catch a bus over to Longview to see Aggie. We had a few hours together, and then we had to say our goodbyes. I told her I hoped to be back in time for the baby's birth, but I couldn't tell her where I was going. As I walked away, I turned and walked backwards for a ways, taking one last look at my beautiful pregnant Aggie.

(To be continued in the next newsletter.)

Stimulus package provisions for retirees

Stimulus package contains provisions that retirees can benefit from In the current economic conditions almost everyone could use an economic stimulus, and analysts have identified provisions that can benefit America's retirees.

They include a one-time \$250 tax-free payment, regardless of income, to Social Security recipients or an equivalent tax credit for those who do not receive benefits such as retired government workers.

Retirees (and others) may also be able to deduct sales or excise taxes on the first \$49,500 of the sales price of most motor vehicles purchase before the end of the current year.

The analysis conducted by CNNMoney.com also points out some novel provisions that reward energy conservation. Consumers may obtain tax credits for a range of eco-friendly home improvements such as solar-energy heating systems, geothermal heat pumps and wind energy systems.

Moreover, retirees who want to take courses at local colleges may be eligible for education credits, and high-income seniors in particular could benefit from a provision that shields more taxpayers from the alternative minimum tax (AMT).

Such benefits are especially timely given that a slew of recent reports has painted a pessimistic picture of the state of American retirement funds.

According to a recent survey by Pensions & Investment, the 1,000 largest plans lost almost \$1 trillion in the year ended September 2008, their worst decline in 30 years.

from <http://www.personalliberty.com/news/stimulus-package-provisions-for-retirees-19051194/>

Pan Am Reunion Cruise



ms. VEENDAM Cruise to Bermuda r/t New York May 9, – May 16, 2010

Dear Pan Amers:

We are pleased to announce our 2010 Pan Am reunion. Interline Travels, Inc. and Holland America would like to invite you aboard the beautiful luxury liner MS Veendam. Many of you have already sampled its awards and accolades on the Aug.30, 1998 sailing of the Clipper Pioneers cruise reunion to Canada and New England. What a great opportunity to join up with your old buddies and take a stroll down memory lane. Both Interline Travels and Holland America are honored to be serving the Pan Am family once again. With five star luxury dining to white glove service - you've got some pampering coming your way.

Bermuda is an enchanting island with British flair. The proper attire is Bermuda shorts, cricket is the national Sport and high tea goes without saying. From Historic St. George, a charming UNESCO World Heritage Site to Hamilton, with pastel-colored storefronts, there is something for everyone. Onboard you will enjoy endless activities, Vega style shows, gourmet dining, private complimentary cocktail parties with slide show presentations and much more. This invitation is open to all family & friends of Pan Am. Unfortunately, many will be left out for lack of knowledge; so, if you know any ex employees we urge you to inform them of this invitation so they attend this cruise and/or may be kept current of all Pan Am functions in the future.

Cabin Prices (from)

Inside \$**499**.M

(\$529.L - \$549.K - \$569.J - \$589. I)

Outside \$**729**. EE

(\$749.E - \$769.DA - \$789.D)

Balcony \$**1659**. B

(\$1759.A) \$**2559** S Suite

Rates are per person, plus the port charges/taxes of \$359.05 each. These cabins are the starting prices for our group and do not reflect the lowest categories. Once our allotment is gone we will have to resort to the higher categories for a few dollars more. Hurry and lock in you rates; book early before the general public takes the cabins we want for you. More information (cancellations, insurance, etc.) with your invoice. Deposit is \$250 per person; checks preferred but major credit cards are accepted. Advise us if you've sailed on HAL before.

Miami **(305) 598-0363** or **1-888-592-7245** Toll Free

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9401 SW 79th Ave.,

MIAMI , FL 33156

Email:PanAmRetirees@yahoo.com

Treasurer's Report

This is from the Old Scribe in Sequim, Washington. Take a good look at the cruise info. It is, of course, to Bermuda, where most of us have been. I've been there umpteen times out of New York, but have never left the airport as it was done as a turn out of NY. Stu Archer and Carmen are doing this for us, so give them a call.

Dues are coming up a month from now, so look at the envelope that this newsletter came in. If it says 2009 after your name, you are due - so please drop me a check - \$20 / year - \$80 / 5 years.

I keep hearing the argument that "I might not live for 5 years" - probably a valid argument for most of us - but that makes 1 year free. Also, your widow will get it free for the rest of her life, so at least you would be paying some of the postage that it costs me to send it to her... Ha ha.

~Jerry

Alternative to AARP

If you are frustrated that AARP has backed a "healthcare" plan which will cost taxpayers trillions of dollars while reducing Medicare benefits to the elderly, then you may want to know about another option.

American Seniors (www.americanseniors.org) offers a comparable program, but stands for more "individual" issues, as reflected in their "Four Pillars" - • Social Security Reform • Medicare Reform • Tax Reform (Fair Tax) • Keeping Citizen Benefits out of the hands of illegal aliens. (Read more at their website by clicking on ASA's Four Pillars.)

List of Attendees for the Cruise

We will be keeping a weekly updated list of those who have signed up for the 2010 Cruise in the "Members Only" section of the website. Check it out, and if you haven't signed up yet - please get your name in - it will be a fun time for all with the opportunity of seeing old friends.

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.

Be sure to check out "The Maiden of Maiden Flights" slideshow on our website (www.clipperpioneers.com) in the right-hand column - the old photos are amazing - from a bygone era!!

**Check out the wonderful photos of the Pan Am Reunion at our website:
www.clipperpioneers.com!**

*...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

FEO Robert P. Scarsdale of Park Ridge NJ passed away. No further information available.

Capt. Mike Oliver passed away earlier in 2009.

Jack Hunderford passed away July 24, 2008 at the young age of 92. Jack's Pan Am career spanned 32 years and he had the good fortune to spend an additional 32 years in retirement in Incline Village, NV. He was a great person to fly with and the crew members enjoyed his zany sense of humor. He will be missed by all who knew him.

George William Wadsworth, 86, of Clearwater, passed away peacefully Oct. 24, 2009 at his summer residence in Louisville TN, surrounded by his family. He led an active life including service in the United States Navy as a fighter pilot in World War II and Korea. A graduate of the University of Miami, he had a distinguished 32 year career with Pan American World Airways, culminating as captain of one of the first "Jumbo Jets", the Boeing 747.

Robert (Bob) Haws, former Flight Engineer, passed away on October 9, 2009 from cancer. After nine years in the Air Force, Bob joined Pan Am and worked the next 35 years doing what he loved so much, especially the 747.

Archie L. Propps, 92 of Astor passed away at his residence on October 27, 2009. He went to work with Pan-American Airlines in 1942 and retired as a captain in 1977. Arch was a member of the First United Methodist Church of DeLand and the PAA Clipper Pioneers. He was much loved by his family and friends.

Dave Garber passed away on Oct. 22 at age 81, in an airplane accident. He and a local Leesburg businessman departed Athens Ga. headed for Leesburg, FL. Dave was hoping to sell the aircraft. He was flying a Japanese version of a T-34 (a Fuji), and evidently had an engine fail on takeoff. They crashed about a mile from Athens.

Jim Shaver died suddenly last Sat. PM - Oct 31st. Jim came to work for Pan AM in 1966 and retired in 1988. He flew as engineer, navigator and co-pilot on all the Boeing aircraft Pan Am had during that time and the airbus. He met his wife, Joan, at Pan Am.

AUXILIARY

Evangeline Vickery, the widow of Flight Radio Officer Leslie C. Vickery (1940 to 1954), completed her time on earth July 13, 2009. Married 63 years at the time of Leslie's passing on 12-25-04 at 12:25 am, she is survived by one son, two daughters, 10 grandchildren, and 6 great grandchildren. Fatefully, 4 1/2 years apart, Leslie and Evangeline's cause of death would be the same. They each experienced a second episode of aspiration pneumonia within two weeks of the first. Her birthday in 2008 was a great celebration when she turned 88 on 08-08-08!

For more information 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 Jerry Holmes at jerry747@copper.net

Upcoming Events

Pan Am Wives Clipper Club Events will be held on December 12, Christmas luncheon at Channing house.

The San Francisco Bay Area Clipper Pioneers Christmas Luncheon will be held on Friday, December 4th at the Lakeside Olympic Club, San Francisco 11AM to 3PM 599 Skyline Boulevard (Hiway 35) San Francisco, CA. It's \$75.00 per person. Please Contact Mike Kaufmann at mpkpaa@cruzio.com or 117 Phelan Court, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 or 831-423-8195. Deadline November 28th.

The Miami Clipper Pioneers Christmas Dinner / Dance will be held Sunday , December 13 at the Coral Reef Yacht Club in Coconut Grove (near Dinner Key). The cost is \$45.00 per person. Invitations will be in the mail about Nov 1st. If you are not on the "regular" invitation list, call Harvey Benefield 305-665-6384 or benefield@mindspring.com for an invitation. Thanks and Merry Christmas.

Emergency Preparedness Tips Before Onset Of Winter

As the country has just set the clocks back one hour as of November 1, it may be worth remembering that wintertime brings with it a danger of disasters in certain parts of the country for which Americans should be prepared.

Emergencies that have been associated with cold weather include blizzards, floods, blackouts and influenza, but individuals and families may reduce their risks by organizing a stockpile of essential supplies before inclement conditions arrive.

"We already use daylight saving time to focus on preparedness by checking batteries in smoke alarms, so it's a great time to ensure that we have supplies to fall back on in the event of an emergency," said Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association (APHA).

"Use the extra hour to create a new emergency kit or check your current stockpile for any perishable items that may have expired or canned goods that you may have used," he adds.

APHA also recommends reviewing community emergency preparedness plans, including evacuation routes, emergency shelters and the location of food banks, and updating the family communication plan.

It also suggests collecting medications in one place, and making sure there are enough supplies in case family members need to stay home with the flu for a few days.

from <http://www.personalliberty.com/news/emergency-preparedness-tips-before-onset-of-winter-19420698/>

Having trouble viewing the membership list online? When you open the list, go to the top of your screen - you should see that it is set at a percentage. Click on that to make it larger.

For a really neat look at Pan Am in action, go to: www.panamva.com/ on the internet.