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Australian Outback Misadventure 1947 *by Ray Conn*

The big war was over. Australia had been saved from the Japanese by American fighting men and women. Americans - "Yanks" to the Aussies - were in high esteem. For a year in my status of Pan American World Airways pilot, I had flown the San Francisco to Sydney schedule. Which was two flights a week, with either a three day layover in Sydney waiting for the next plane. Or four days.

One time I started a long walk out of Sydney. Well before reaching my destination, I could not resist a "Get in Yank" gorgeous blonde's invite to ride. "You just stick out your thumb," she instructed me. "Anyone will pick you up." I'm not a kid anymore. And I'd never thought of hitch hiking anyplace but back home. When I was young. But she planted the seed. Hitch hike. In Australia.

So we will have four days in Sydney waiting for the return airplane. I'd done just about everything around Sydney. Why not? Hitch hike. I'll change out of my uniform, take my tape recorder from which I am learning Russian, and go immediately back to the airport. We Pan Am pilots can fly anywhere. Free.

I'll fly out. Hitch hike back. I look at a wall map. Alice Springs sounds nice. I return her smile and greeting. "Alice Springs."

"Round trip, Alice Springs." She is giving me her best smile.

"One way."

"I sigh (say). What did you sigh? (same thing)"

"Yeah. One way."

"One way?"

"Yeah."

"But- you are Pan American crew. How- how will you get back?"

"Hitch hike."

"Hitch hike?"

"Yeah. Hitch hike."

"Do- do you have any idea how far - Alice Springs?"

No. I really didn't have any idea. Just picked the name off the map. Didn't look far. She informs me, "Alice is fifteen hundred miles." And as if that wasn't enough to squelch me. "And there are no roads."

Holy cow! Fifteen hundred miles. "What's in between?"

"Broken Hill." Halfway to Alice. That's still seven hundred and fifty miles. Wow. But I can do that. I think. As a kid in the States, I've gone almost that far.

"Okay." I say. "Broken Hill."

"Broken Hill. Round Trip. Coming up."

"No."

"No?"

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"No round trip. Just one way."

She is getting exasperated. "I'm telling you! There are no roads!"

Every town has a road to the next town. Everyone knows that. I insist. She regards me as maybe someone who could jump over the counter and take her on any minute. Right here in front of everybody. Everybody including two Aussies in uniform. Taking this in.

I get my one way ticket. She is not smiling.

The Aussies in uniform are flying this twin engine high wing plane. That plane has really good visibility to the ground. "See! Yank. No roads!" They have me up in the cockpit. So I'll be sure to see this. I'm amazed. Damned if they aren't right. No roads! Just vague tracks and trails across the desolate outback.

But I've made up my mind.

At Broken Hill. "We are flying on to Alice. We'll be back in the morning." They advised, "You be out here at the airport. We'll take you back to Sydney. No charge." They don't know me. "No way. I'll be gone."

I began my "gone" by a direct walk from the flying field to where I had seen tracks going my way.

Now I wish that I could tell you about those next three days.

I've got one day left to reach Sydney.

And I'm only half way to Sydney.

There have been no roads getting here. I know there will be no roads to Sydney.

Somehow I've ended up in the only public habitation between Broken Hill and Sydney. A hotel. A few buildings. I'm out here. On an outback river. That has not seen water for seven years. Can you believe? Darling? That's the name of this damn river. "Darling." And the so-called "town?" That's darling too. Darling. Halfway to Sydney. One day left.

There is absolutely no way to get any transportation out of here. What a hell of a situation. But they do have beer here.

Many places in Australia where you order a glass of beer, you get two. Why? I don't know. Here, in Darling, beer comes in bottles. Big bottles.

I'm a Yank. Seems most everybody here has never seen a Yank. Give the Yank beer. Two bottles. Listen to how funny he talks. The Yank talked. When two big bottles of beer disappear. Here are two more. Other than that, I don't remember much until I went into "my" hotel room. Four rundown bunks. One light bulb. Hanging from the ceiling.

Three guys. Grinning. And beside my bed two more big bottles of beer. A present from them. To hear me talk.

Next morning I wasn't thinking too clearly. I've got to get to Sydney. That was clear. But how wasn't. Early. Before any breakfast, I started walking toward Sydney. Why? Back in the States when I hitch hiked I never walked. Stayed put until someone picked me up. But here?

Where's that someone? Back there? Nobody. What else can I do? Let's see. Broken Hill was halfway between Sydney and Alice Springs. Seven hundred and fifty miles. This place, Darling, is halfway between Broken Hill and Sydney. I guess that's still halfway ah about, ah, let's see. Maybe over three hundred miles? A long way. And I am walking?

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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 the 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. If you have trouble accessing it, email sue@clipperpioneers.com, and we'll email it to you.

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And the sun. I have some hair on my head. But not enough. Why hadn't I bought or stolen a hat. Back there in the hotel. Why hadn't I thought to fill an empty beer bottle with water. All I am carrying is my tape recorder.

Oh. I forgot about the snakes. Australia has lots of snakes. But I can't watch for snakes all the time. I'm watching those prehistoric monsters. Out there. On my left.

Were you there, you would have said, "Those are just kangaroo." I'm hallucinating. Those are huge big prehistoric monsters. I divide my time between watching those monsters and for these snakes. Although I didn't see any snakes.

I decide to record what I am seeing. Over my Russian lessons. I describe those monsters. That's important. A recording I will have. When I get home. Home? I've got to get to Sydney -

The sun is high. Hot. Hard to walk. Long ways -

Long ways - He has his arm around me. I look at him. A man. Not smiling. Where -

A car ... he is helping me into a car...

Water. He is giving me water. Has to hold my hands. Shaking. "Tike it easy." He said.

I go to sleep.

When I awaken. How long was I sleeping. The sun is lower. He gives me more water. "Tike it easy Yank." I guess he knew no Australian would have been so stupid to be out where I was.

What a wonderful thing. A car. Moving so swiftly across this wasteland. He having no problem. Drives like he is on a highway. I feel the texture of the seat. Reach out to touch the panel. I've owned fancier cars than this. But beyond pride, took them fairly much for granted. I know that he is watching me. Sideways. "Nice?" I nod. "Government car."

Government? I learn that he is a government inspector. His job in charge of all the widespread watering holes. In the sheep stations. Out there. No wonder these tracks are a super highway to him. "And what do you do? Yank?"

How to answer that. If I tell him I'm a trusted airline pilot, he probably will never fly again. If he ever has. Well. "I'm a Pan American pilot."

"I thought so. Something like that. No desk clerk would ever try what you are doing." In a way. We are two of a kind. We exchange smiles.

Miles and miles. Hours and hours. We must be getting close to civilization. There's our first car. Out there. Well ahead of us. Coming our way. He nervously applied the brakes. That car is still over one mile ahead.

We turn at right angles to the tracks. Move well out of the way. Wait. The car rips past. We rejoin the tracks. Nothing is said.

Next, after a bit, we see another car. Parked. Two men. My sheep station water hole driver smiles. "My driver." He gets out, greets the man who comes to us, then he gets back into the rear seat of our car. Together these two deliver me to the front of my hotel I in Sydney.

Charmed life? Australians were surprised that I didn't die out there. Walking alone.

Lucky? My savior drove over this forsaken wasteland to Sydney... once a year...

I would never try that again for all the tea in China. Or for all their gold either.

One Liners...

"In case this flight becomes a cruise, your seat cushion can be used as a flotation device."

If black boxes survive air crashes -- why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff?

**Be sure to check out the website - www.clipperpioneers.com -
for breaking news, reports and some excellent photos and slideshows!**

The Evacuation of Hostages from Iran

In 1979, Pan American was called to evacuate the American hostages from Iran. We stayed at Istanbul for almost a week awaiting clearance to enter Iran airspace. Finally, on February 17th, we were advised that we had authorization to depart. There were two B-747s and volunteer crews for each. I was to fly with Capt. William Malcolm and Capt. Joseph Greely, along with all volunteer flight service team from Germany, France, Brazil, Sweden, England and the USA. This was an outstanding flight service team.

We departed Istanbul as the second flight #E451/17 to arrive at the Iranian border just at sunrise. There were no navigation aids in Iran, but the inertial navigation worked perfectly and we arrived at Mehrabad airport. Pan Ops advised that the left runway was blocked by tractors, trucks, buses and other equipment and the right was clear. After landing, we were stopped on the taxiway by vehicles with armed guards. We were told to shut down engines and lower a ladder. I opened lower 41, and an armed guard climbed up over the nose gear. I was advised not to worry, as this was only a security check. Others checked the airplane, and after we were cleared, we restarted engines and followed the escort to the ramp. In addition to our other 747, there were a US MAC 141, and a small military transport from the Indian government. It was amazing to see all the armed guards on the ramp: most seemed to be very young and well armed. They were very courteous to us other than seeing them with weapons pointed at us.

We had prior approval to carry up to 573 evacuees for each 747 if it was required, but not that many were ready for this flight. We had about 100 passengers loaded, and the Khomeini army thought we might be attempting to evacuate two Americans who had escaped from prison. They stopped all boarding and searched all passengers. I was advised to open gear doors and panels to be sure no one was hiding there. Once they were satisfied that the prisoners were not on board, they started loading again.

The US Embassy advised that they had more passengers but could not get them to the airport, so we were to leave with about 400 passengers. We had all our passengers on board, and they decided to re-check each passenger and the baggage was put back on the ramp. They called for each passenger to come down on the ramp and open their suitcase. If they didn't, they would force it open and check for pictures, cameras, on anything pertaining to the revolution.

They made another security check of all passengers, and after about 7-1/2 hours, we were advised that we could depart. I made a cabin check and noticed a small girl crying and pointing to the ground. Her pet dog was on the ramp in his cage and the cargo doors were closed. I checked with the Captains and went down and brought the small dog to the upper deck.

We started engines and you could hear the cheers as we started to taxi. After a normal takeoff and climb, we headed for the Turkish border, and when the Captain announced that we were out of Iran, you could hear the cheers in the cockpit. Once things settled down, I asked one of the flight attendants to bring the little girl to the upper deck. When she saw her dog, she gave me a big hug and kiss. I received a note from the Hull family and I cherish this memory. (My family and I thank you from the bottom of our heart for your kind deed. We have had Chuca for 11 years and you saved her for us). Thanks to Pan Am we are now safe.

Our first flight was to Rome and our passengers kept thanking us for their freedom. However, the Italian Government did not want to upset Iran so all subsequent flights were out of Frankfurt.

Our next flight was on the 21st from Frankfurt, and when we arrived in Tehran and our transit was only a

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little over three hours. The passengers were just as happy to get out of Iran airspace and we had a normal flight to Frankfurt. We were surprised when we finished our paperwork and went into the arrival area to see them waiting for us and we were met with cheers, applause and personal thanks.

Our flight on the 24th was even easier, as we only had three armed guards and a transit of only two hours. I was scheduled to come home, but the State Department requested a 747 freighter to bring out US Embassy material, so on the 26th, we headed back to Iran with Capt. Ned Brown and Capt. Hart Langer. The cargo was almost finished when a tractor ran into the airplane and put a small hole just under the cargo door. I asked for a drill to stop-drill the crack, and was told that none was available. I used my Boy Scout knife to round out the cracks and had high-speed tape that Frankfurt had supplied. Capt. Brown agreed to fly back to Frankfurt unpressurized, as it was getting late and we did not want to spend a night in Iran. We departed normally and went on oxygen. I asked Capt. Brown if I could start a little pressurization, and he agreed. I kept increasing it until we did not have to use oxygen, but kept our masks at the ready. When we arrived in Frankfurt, the high-speed tape was still intact, and Frankfurt maintenance installed a patch over the area and the flight departed for the USA.

Our crews, our flight service and everyone involved in these evacuation flights were outstanding and we're proud to be just a part of Pan American World Airways.

New Scam Targets Veterans - Callers falsely claim VA has changed procedures

By Mark Huffman
ConsumerAffairs.com

September 22, 2009

Scammers have figured out a new way to steal credit card numbers and other sensitive financial information. They target military veterans, pretending to be working for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

In the scheme, the caller tells the veteran that the VA is updating its prescription information and asks for the victim's credit card information.

"America's Veterans have become targets in an inexcusable scam that dishonors their service and misrepresents the Department built for them," said Dr. Gerald Cross, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "VA simply does not call Veterans and ask them to disclose personal financial information over the phone."

The scam was brought to the VA's attention earlier this month by several veteran service organizations, which heard from their members about the suspicious calls. The VA says veterans should not be fooled by a caller who claims the VA is updating its procedures for dispensing prescriptions.

"VA has not changed its processes for dispensing prescription medicines," Cross said. "Nor has VA changed its long-standing commitment to protect the personal information of this nation's Veterans."

At the state level, law enforcement officials say they are stepping up their anti-scam efforts and have

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New Scam Targets Veterans

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added the veterans scam to the growing list of known schemes they talk about. Ohio Attorney General Cordray reminds all Ohioans to be wary of any call soliciting personal information such as credit card or social security numbers.

"I strongly recommend never giving out personal information over the phone when someone calls you," said Cordray. "Scammers thrive on their ability to catch us off-guard. The best defense in these situations is to play offense. Take control of the conversation and ask the caller if you can call them back. Take the time to research the legitimacy of the call."

Cordray says that if someone tells you to "act now" or to keep the transaction a secret, its a good reason to be skeptical. Veterans shouldn't be pressured into making a rash decision, he says. Talk to trusted family members and friends for advice.

Read more: http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2009/09/veterans_scam.html#ixzz0TpSvYj5j

Upcoming Events

Pan Am Wives Clipper Club Events

December 12

Christmas luncheon at Channing house.

The San Francisco Bay Area

Clipper Pioneers Christmas Luncheon

Friday, December 4th at the Lakeside Olympic Club, San Francisco

11AM to 3PM 599 Skyline Boulevard (Hiway 35) San Francisco, CA

\$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

Self-help Tips for the Elderly: Drug Safety

Drugs can treat diseases and relieve symptoms. But they can also have side effects. Improper use of drugs can do more harm than good, and even lead to serious consequences. Therefore, everybody should know more about drug safety, and follow the advice of their doctor or pharmacist while using drugs. As the elderly are more prone to side effects like stomach bleeding, they should be extra cautious, and avoid taking too many drugs unnecessarily.

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.

**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

Capt CT Hawkins passed away on June 29, 2009 in Orlando from complications to a back injury. His wife and seven children were with him. Charlie went to work for Pan Am in 1943. He was based in Miami, Trinidad, New York and Berlin. He flew Commodores, Sikorsky S42 and S43, Constellation, DC613, Boeing 377 and 707, and 747 for his last 5 years. He held elective and appointive offices in ALPA since 1947, and was U.S. Delegate for International Affairs and International ALPA. He retired in 1980.

Donald H Townshend, age 91, passed away peacefully at home. Following his graduation from Penn State with a degree in Engineering, he reported to Brownsville TX and the start of his career with Pan American World Airways. He retired in 1981 after 40 years as a Flight Engineer for Pan Am. He is survived by his wife Kathleen, son Donald H Townshend II, daughters Sandra Craig and Patricia Beedenbender, extended family, including 14 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. He was dearly loved and will be missed !!

George Price passed away yesterday Sunday, October 4, after a long illness. A Memorial service will be held 4 PM Saturday, October 10, at the Stanfill Funeral Home, 10545 So Dixie Highway Miami, FL. Our sympathy and condolences are extended to his wife Antoinette, and family. May he rest in peace.

Captain William Willis passed away 10/2/2009 in Carlsbad, CA.

Captain Richard (Dick) Allen died at age 84 on October 8, 2009. He flew with Pan American for 32 years starting in 1951 as a Navigator on the Lockheed Constellation, and after spending a large portion of his life sitting in the cockpit of the Boeing 707, finished his career in 1983 as a Captain on the Boeing 747. He is survived by his wife, 2 sons, and 2 grandchildren, and will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Stan Sabalis, flight engineer for 43 years, passed away Sept. 15. He is survived by his wife Kathleen and five children.

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

Don't Miss This Fantastic Pictorial History of Pan Am Available Online

For a trip through Pan Am's history with pictures and photos, go to our website -www.clipperpioneers.com - and click on the powerpoint presentation. It's just great!

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

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.

NOTE FROM STU... The Pan Am reunion is all setup. 9 May-16 May 09 from New York to Bermuda on Holland America's Veendam. Contact Carmen, Interline Travels Inc. 305-598-0363 or 1-888-592-7245. Deposits of \$250 each will hold a cabin. Outside from \$729 and Balcony \$1599 and up. E-mail and mailings are starting (see insert from Interline with this newsletter). Please pass the word to all. We have been on the ship before; it's very nice and small enough to dock walking distant to all at both ports. We need to get the Pan Am folks to make their reservations now, so we can get good cabins ahead of the normal passengers. It's going to be a great reunion, see you on board. ~Stu

Be Cautious About Giving Info to Census Workers

With the U.S. Census process beginning, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) advises people to be cooperative, but cautious, so as not to become a victim of fraud or identity theft. The first phase of the 2010 U.S. Census is under way as workers have begun verifying the addresses of households across the country. Eventually, more than 140,000 U.S. Census workers will count every person in the United States and will gather information about every person living at each address including name, age, gender, race, and other relevant data. The big question is - How do you tell the difference between a U.S. Census worker and a Con Artist?

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) offers the following advice:

If a U.S. Census worker knocks on your door, they will have the following:

1. a badge,
2. a hand held device,
3. a Census Bureau canvas bag, and
4. a confidentiality notice.

Ask to see their identification and their badge before answering their questions. However, you should never invite anyone you don't know into your home.

Census workers are currently only knocking on doors to verify address information.

Do not give your Social Security number, credit card or banking information to anyone, even if they claim they need it for the U.S. Census.

While the Census Bureau might ask for basic financial information, such as a salary range, it will not ask for Social Security, bank account, or credit card numbers nor will employees solicit donations.

Eventually, Census workers may contact you by telephone, mail, or in person at home.

However, they will not contact you by Email, so be on the lookout for Email scams impersonating the Census. Never click on a link or open any attachments in an Email that are supposedly from the U.S. Census Bureau.

TO RECAP – HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF – FOLLOW THESE RULES!!!!

1. Census workers will carry a badge, a hand held device, a Census Bureau canvas bag, and a confidentiality notice. **MAKE SURE TO ASK THEM FOR THEIR BADGE AND IDENTIFICATION BEFORE TALKING TO THEM!**

2. Census workers will NOT ask for Social Security numbers, Bank Account Numbers, Credit Card Numbers, or any specific account information!

3.. Census workers will NOT solicit for donations – do not give anyone any money!

4. Census Workers will NOT contact you by email – do not respond to anyone claiming to be with the US Census by email!

5. Don't invite them into your homes!!