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First-hand account on the Doolittle Raid - Part II

(This is a continuation of the story run in the December 2009 issue of The Clipper Pioneers newsletter).

Within a few days of returning to our base in Florida, we were abruptly told to pack our things. After just three weeks of practice, we were on our way. This was it. It was time to go.

It was the middle of March 1942, and I was 30 years old. Our orders were to fly to McClelland Air Base in Sacramento, California on our own, at the lowest possible level. So here we went on our way west, scraping the tree tops at 160 miles per hour, and skimming along just 50 feet above plowed fields. We crossed North Texas and then the panhandle, scaring the dickens out of livestock, buzzing farm houses and a many a barn along the way.

Over the Rocky Mountains and across the Mojave Desert dodging thunderstorms, we enjoyed the flight immensely and although tempted, I didn't do too much dare-devil stuff. We didn't know it at the time, but it was good practice for what lay ahead of us. It proved to be our last fling.

Once we arrived in Sacramento, the mechanics went over our plane with a fine-toothed comb. Of the twenty-two planes that made it, only those whose pilots reported no mechanical problems were allowed to go on. The others were shunted aside. After having our plane serviced, we flew on to Alameda Naval Air Station in Oakland. As I came in for final approach, we saw it! I excitedly called the rest of the crew to take a look. There below us was a huge aircraft carrier. It was the USS Hornet, and it looked so gigantic! Man, I had never even seen a carrier until this moment.

There were already two B-25s parked on the flight deck. Now we knew! My heart was racing, and I thought about how puny my plane would look on board this mighty ship. As soon as we landed and taxied off the runway, a jeep pulled in front of me with a big "Follow Me" sign on the back. We followed it straight up to the wharf, alongside the towering Hornet. All five of us were looking up and just in awe, scarcely believing the size of this thing. As we left the plane, there was already a Navy work crew swarming around attaching cables to the lifting rings on top of the wings and the fuselage. As we walked towards our quarters, I looked back and saw them lifting my plane up into the air and swing it over the ship's deck. It looked so small and lonely.

Later that afternoon, all crews met with Colonel Doolittle and he gave last minute assignments. He told me to go to the Presidio and pick up two hundred extra "C" rations. I saluted, turned, and left, not having any idea where the Presidio was, and not exactly sure what a "C" ration was. I commandeered a Navy staff car and told the driver to take me to the Presidio, and he did. On the way over, I realized that I had no written signed orders and that this might get a little sticky. So in I walked into the Army supply depot and made my request, trying to look poised and confident.

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First-hand account on the Doolittle Raid

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The supply officer asked "What is your authorization for this request, sir?" I told him that I could not give him one.

"And what is the destination?" he asked. I answered, "The aircraft carrier, Hornet, docked at Alameda." He said, "Can you tell me who ordered the rations, sir?" And I replied with a smile, "No, I cannot."

The supply officers huddled together, talking and glanced back over towards me. Then he walked back over and assured me that the rations would be delivered that afternoon. Guess they figured that something big was up. They were right. The next morning we all boarded the ship.

Trying to remember my naval etiquette, I saluted the Officer of the Deck and said "Lt. McElroy, requesting permission to come aboard." The officer returned the salute and said "Permission granted." Then I turned aft and saluted the flag. I made it, without messing up.

It was April 2, and in full sunlight, we left San Francisco Bay. The whole task force of ships, two cruisers, four destroyers, and a fleet oiler, moved slowly with us under the Golden Gate Bridge. Thousands of people looked on. Many stopped their cars on the bridge, and waved to us as we passed underneath. I thought to myself, I hope there aren't any spies up there waving.

Once at sea, Doolittle called us together. "Only a few of you know our destination, and you others have guessed about various targets. Gentlemen, your target is Japan!"

A sudden cheer exploded among the men. "Specifically, Yokohama, Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe, Nagasaki and Osaka. The Navy task force will get us as close as possible and we'll launch our planes. We will hit our targets and proceed to airfields in China."

After the cheering stopped, he asked again, if any of us desired to back out, no questions asked. Not one did, not one. Then the ship's Captain then went over the intercom to the whole ship's company. The loudspeaker blared, "The destination is Tokyo!" A tremendous cheer broke out from everyone on board. I could hear metal banging together and wild screams from down below decks. It was quite a rush! I felt relieved actually. We finally knew where we were going.

I set up quarters with two Navy pilots, putting my cot between their two bunks. They couldn't get out of bed without stepping on me. It was just fairly cozy in there, yes it was. Those guys were part of the Torpedo Squadron Eight and were just swell fellows. The rest of the guys bedded down in similar fashion to me, some had to sleep on bedrolls in the Admiral's chartroom. As big as this ship was, there wasn't any extra room anywhere. Every square foot had a purpose...

A few days later we discovered where they had an ice cream machine! There were sixteen B-25s tied down on the flight deck, and I was flying number 13. All the carrier's fighter planes were stored away helplessly in the hangar deck. They couldn't move until we were gone. Our Army mechanics were all on board, as well as our munitions loaders and several back up crews, in case any of us got sick or backed out. We settled into a daily routine of checking our planes. The aircraft were grouped so closely together on deck that it wouldn't take much for them to get damaged.

Knowing that my life depended on this plane, I kept a close eye on her. Day after day, we met with the intelligence officer and studied our mission plan. Our targets were assigned, and maps and objective folders were furnished for study. We went over approach routes and our escape route towards China.

I never studied this hard back at Trinity. Every day at dawn and at dusk the ship was called to general quarters and we practiced finding the quickest way to our planes. If at any point along the way, we were discovered by the enemy fleet, we were to launch our bombers immediately so the Hornet could bring up its fighter planes. We would then be on our own, and try to make it to the nearest land, either Hawaii or Midway Island.

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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 username & password in your 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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Dr. Thomas White, a volunteer member of plane number 15, went over our medical records and gave us inoculations for a whole bunch of diseases that hopefully I wouldn't catch. He gave us training sessions in emergency first aid, and lectured us at length about water purification and such.

Tom, a medical doctor, had learned how to be a gunner just so he could go on this mission. We put some new tail guns in place of the ones that had been taken out to save weight. Not exactly functional, they were two broom handles, painted black. The thinking was they might help scare any Jap fighter planes. Maybe, maybe not.

On Sunday, April 14, we met up with Admiral Bull Halsey's task force just out of Hawaii and joined into one big force. The carrier Enterprise was now with us, another two heavy cruisers, four more destroyers and another oiler. We were designated as Task Force 16. It was quite an impressive sight to see, and represented the bulk of what was left of the U.S. Navy after the devastation of Pearl Harbor. There were over 10,000 Navy personnel sailing into harm's way, just to deliver us sixteen Army planes to the Japs, orders of the President.

As we steamed further west, tension was rising as we drew nearer and nearer to Japan. Someone thought of arming us with some old .45 pistols that they had on board. I went through that box of 1911 pistols, they were in such bad condition that I took several of them apart, using the good parts from several useless guns until I built a serviceable weapon. Several of the other pilots did the same. Admiring my "new" pistol, I held it up, and thought about my old Model-T.

Colonel Doolittle called us together on the flight deck. We all gathered round, as well as many Navy personnel. He pulled out some medals and told us how these friendship medals from the Japanese government had been given to some of our Navy officers several years back. And now the Secretary of the Navy had requested for us to return them. Doolittle wired them to a bomb while we all posed for pictures. Something to cheer up the folks back home! I began to pack my things for the flight, scheduled for the 19th. I packed some extra clothes and a little brown bag that Aggie had given me, inside were some toilet items and a few candy bars. No letters or identity cards were allowed, only our dog-tags. I went down to the wardroom to have some ice cream and settle up my mess bill. It only amounted to \$5 a day and with my per diem of \$6 per day, I came out a little ahead. By now, my Navy pilot roommates were about ready to get rid of me, but I enjoyed my time with them. They were alright. Later on, I learned that both of them were killed at the Battle of Midway. They were good men. Yes, very good men. Colonel Doolittle let each crew pick our own target. We chose the Yokosuka Naval Base about twenty miles from Tokyo. We loaded 1450 rounds of ammo and four 500-pound bombs... A little payback, direct from Ellis County, Texas! We checked and re-checked our plane several times. Everything was now ready. I felt relaxed, yet tensed up at the same time. Day after tomorrow, we will launch when we are 400 miles out. I lay in my cot that night, and rehearsed the mission over and over in my head. It was hard to sleep as I listened to sounds of the ship. *(continued in the next issue)*

A Worthwhile Website to Check Out...

Be sure to check out this great Website: www.area51specialprojects.com. That was sent courtesy of Col. Glenn Perry, a former U-2 pilot and a Tucson Daedalian member. Glenn's name is on the crewmember's list, and view the photos of the XB-70 accident that was struck by an F-104 while on a photo op. (The XB-70's sole survivor later became a member of our Tucson QB's).

A great Website! Enjoy. - Buck

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!!

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

INTERLINE TRAVELS,

9401 SW 79th Ave.,

MIAMI, FL 33156

Email: PanAmRetirees@yahoo.com

Pan Am Pilots' Retirement Foundation

13615 South Dixie Hwy, Suite 114 - # 518 Miami, FL 33176 - 7252

President's Report to the Membership — November 2009

Dear Member,

Thanks to your help, we continue to provide financial assistance to Pan Am and National cockpit crewmembers and their dependent survivors who find themselves in dire straits. I am pleased to report that all went smoothly during this year.

What we do and how we do it

The Trustees meet twice a year in Miami. This is where the formal business gets done. In addition to that, we stay in touch via email and telephone to handle issues that arise between meetings.

Two Trustees have the primary responsibility of screening initial requests for aid, and then for staying in touch with persons approved for aid. One Trustee is the Treasurer, who supervises a part-time bookkeeper we employ, and maintains liaison with Wilmington Trust, which holds our funds. Another Trustee is our Secretary. We also have a Finance Committee whose main responsibility is to advise the Board on the investment of our funds. Then we have a President and a Vice President.

All of these officer positions are assigned by the Trustees, who, in turn, are elected yearly by you, the members.

The semi-yearly meetings allow us to review with great care the status of each aid recipient, and to consider recommendations to change the amount of aid. Each case is different, and each changes over time. Some recipients are crewmembers, others the widows of deceased crewmembers. The average age of our recipients is 80. Although we are not obliged to give aid in monthly installments, that has almost always been our method. Contributions to Operation Dignity continue to diminish, slowly but surely as our supporters pass away. Here are the statistics for the last five years, as of July 1 of each year:

	Contributions	Benefits disbursed
2005—	\$25,294	\$99,050
2006 —	\$31,383	\$83,400
2007 —	\$21,232	\$71,000
2008 —	\$19,164	\$68,436
2009 —	\$19,728	\$54,336

The shortfall is made up from our investments. During the last five years we have had to dip into our principal, and will probably continue to do so to meet expenses in the foreseeable future. However, the Trustees do not believe this to be a critical problem at this time. If finances deteriorate to the point where our ability to carry out the mission is in doubt, we will not hesitate to say so.

In recent years, several families of deceased crewmembers have asked for donations to Operation Dignity in lieu of flowers. Please keep this option in mind.

Tell Us... Tell us if you know of any person who might need our help. Of course, we observe strict confidentiality. Write to the address above, or email to rjdurant@aol.com.

Tell Us... If you change your mailing address. Every year we get many letters back from the Post Office — they only forward for one year.

Trustee Election

Please use the enclosed form to cast your vote for the Trustees to serve in the year 2010. Remember that in order for your vote to be counted, you must have made a contribution to Operation Dignity within the last three years. You can vote using the proxy, or you can attend the January meeting. We would love to see you there.

Thanks again for your support!

Sincerely, Bob Durant President

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

Please spread the word about the possible future historical display at the old Marine Terminal at LGA

The New York/New Jersey Port Authority would like to put together a display of the history of LGA in the now empty Marine Terminal. As you know, Pan Am was instrumental in building the Marine Terminal and the two hangers next to it. The Terminal was Pan Am's base in New York from 1939 until the late '50s. The Port Authority would like to partner with the Pan Am Historical Foundation in developing a display of this early history. It could include pictures, early uniforms for manikins, dispatch records, models, headline events, communications equipment, maps, etc. It could even display a complete 1930s check in counter. The Foundation has some items and pictures but we need to search for LGA-related, museum quality items that might be in someone's attic.

Anyone who has a possible LGA museum-quality display items, to send a list of the items they would like to contribute to The Pan Am Historical Foundation at P.O. Box 747, Bethpage, N.Y. 11714-0747.

Senior health in wintertime

Skin care and weather: wind, sun, lack of humidity (both outdoors in summer and indoors with heating system running in winter) can be devastating to our skin; a dry, leathery condition can result.

Cleansing our skin is important, but too much harsh washing and drying - which can damage the delicate, fat globule-like cells - will do harm to skin texture of the face and neck....and the whole body!

Moisturizing lotions are a must in maintaining healthy skin....along with drinking LOTS of water as part of your senior home health care.

**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

Frederick Crew Burton, 86, Palm Coast, Florida passed away on September 13, 2009 at the Stuart F. Meyer Hospice House. As a young man my Dad served in the U.S. Airforce where he was the Flight Officer of the B-17 bombers during WWII. He found his love of flying which led him to a a glorious career as a Captain of the 747 for Pan American Airways for 35 years. He retired to Palm Coast 25 years ago with his wife, Louise, where they shared their lives with friends and of course us "3 Kiddos." My dad was an avid golfer enjoying a few eagles in his day. My parents were active members in Pine Lakes Country Club, Matanzas and the Palm Coast Club as well. I know he is missed by all who knew him especially my Mom, Brothers, and of course Dads' are a "Girls" best friend, daughter Lee Ann.

Bob Crouse died on Thanksgiving. Bob was the man most responsible for the Clipper Pioneer lunch in Port Jefferson on Long Island every June.

Grant Alvin Baker, 91, died Nov. 10, 2009, at Treasure Coast Hospice in Stuart. He was born in Wabash, Ind., and lived in Stuart for 30 years, coming from Coral Gables. He graduated from Michigan State University, was a member of the Mensa Society and a renowned scuba diver. He served as captain for Pan Am out of Miami, retiring 31 years ago. Survivors includes his wife of 67 years, Loretta, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

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

Actual Transmissions from Pilots and Ground Crew

Actual exchanges between pilots and control towers

Tower: "Delta 351, you have traffic at 10 o'clock, 6 miles!"

Delta 351: "Give us another hint! We have digital watches!"

Tower: "TWA 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 Degrees."

TWA 2341: "Center, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?"

Tower: "Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"

A Pan Am 727 flight, waiting for start clearance in Munich, overheard the following:

Lufthansa (in German): "Ground, what is our start clearance time?"

Ground (in English): "If you want an answer you must speak in English."

Lufthansa (in English): "I am a German, flying a German airplane, in Germany. Why must I speak English?"

Unknown voice from another plane (in a beautiful British accent): "Because you lost the bloody war, Mate!"

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.

THINGS YOUR BURGLAR WON'T TELL YOU...

GREAT INFO FOR THE PEOPLE WHO KEEP THINKING, "THIS WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ME"!!!

1. Of course I look familiar. I was here just last week cleaning your carpets, painting your shutters, or delivering your new refrigerator.
2. Hey, thanks for letting me use the bathroom when I was working in your yard last week.. While I was in there, I unlatched the back window to make my return a little easier.
3. Love those flowers. That tells me you have taste ... and taste means there are nice things inside. Those yard toys your kids leave out always make me wonder what type of gaming system they have.
4. Yes, I really do look for newspapers piled up on the driveway. And I might leave a pizza flyer in your front door to see how long it takes you to remove it.
5. If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Virgin drifts in the driveway are a dead giveaway.
6. If decorative glass is part of your front entrance, don't let your alarm company install the control pad where I can see if it's set. That makes it too easy.
7. A good security company alarms the window over the sink. And the windows on the second floor, which often access the master bedroom-and your jewelry. It's not a bad idea to put motion detectors up there too.
8. It's raining, you're fumbling with your umbrella, and you forget to lock your door-understandable. But understand this: I don't take a day off because of bad weather.
9. I always knock first. If you answer, I'll ask for directions somewhere or offer to clean your gutters. (Don't take me up on it.)
10. Do you really think I won't look in your sock drawer? I always check dresser drawers, the bedside table, and the medicine cabinet.

(More in the next issue...)

*Sources: Convicted burglars in North Carolina , Oregon , California , and Kentucky ; security consultant Chris McGoey, who runs crimedoctor.com; and Richard T. Wright, a criminology professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, who interviewed 105 burglars for his book *Burglars on the Job*.*

Upcoming Pan Am Events

If you have an upcoming event you'd like everyone to know about, please send it to us at least a month ahead for the next newsletter. Thanks!

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.