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FLIGHT THROUGH THE DISTANT PAST - FLEET MODEL 7 AIRCRAFT

Registration number 788 Victor - Memories of Charles Cutting

-continued from last month's issue

In my state of alarm, the only clue to my problem is the oil temperature gauge that indicates a needle that is at the top of its scale. The only conclusion I can draw is that the engine is misfiring due to detonation. (When an engine runs at too high a power setting without adequate cooling, little specks of carbon in the cylinder heads start to glow red hot and ignite the fuel air charge at the wrong times. Reducing power cools the cylinder head temperatures and the engine will operate normally with a lower output.) The effect of this power reduction is a drop in forward speed. Without an airspeed indicator, this is indicated by a change in the air noise through the rigging. My heart rate now slows as I realized that the aircraft will hold its altitude with the new reduced power setting. In a few more minutes, the highway comes into view, followed by the appearance of the Colorado River. The cross of the two landmarks forms a perfect check point, and I flood with relief that I am now out of the wilderness, and if necessary, can glide down to the vicinity of other men. Now, with the fuel tank near empty, I make my approach and land at Blythe just to the west of the river. I'm ten minutes late on my estimate, so I have been in the air for two hours and fifty-five minutes. My backside is aching, and my head tells me that I have cut the fuel reserve far too close for safety. Once my aircraft is put to bed, I dig down to the bottom of my food bag in search of the little cheese that remains. Supper consists of the old standby of stale bread and peanut butter, as the cheese is completely ruined by a thick mold that has permeated it completely.

IX - NIGHT FLIGHT

I spend the early evening preparing my aircraft for tomorrow's flight. This includes hand pumping grease into the rocker boxes in the hope that the engine will run cooler. Now that I am once again back in my home state of California, I begin to feel that success is but a few hours ahead of me. Next I check tomorrow's weather forecast over the telephone that hangs outside the weather-beaten airport shack. The forecast is for CAVU, but I note that the ground temperature here in Blythe is forecast to be over one hundred and ten degrees tomorrow. Now I am concerned with this high temperature, as it will cause more heat-induced detonation in my old antique engine.

My answer to this problem will be to depart in the cool of night. I compute the distance to Barstow to be one hundred and sixty-five miles, and cruising at eighty miles per hour, it should take a little more than two hours flight time. This will provide me with a reserve of one hour and fifteen minutes to dry fuel tank. I conclude that if I take off at four AM, in the moonlight, I should arrive in Barstow just after sunrise and thus

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avoid my nemesis, the heat. Studying my aeronautical chart, I conclude that if I maintain the correct north-westerly heading I will intersect railroad tracks in twenty-five minutes after takeoff. Once locating the iron compass, it will lead me directly to Barstow, California. With a clear night and a three quarter moon, it should be no problem to locate the railroad from altitude.

I arise at four AM in the cold clear desert night. Blythe is located down in the Colorado River Valley, and on this night, there is not a breath of wind as I prepare for flight onward toward home. The takeoff is uneventful, and I turn to my outbound heading and am reassured by the steady thrum of my engine as it labors for altitude. A feeling of contentment runs in my mind as I climb higher under the stars. I notice that the moon is lower on the horizon than I had anticipated, and therefore the ground surface is not clearly illuminated. I frequently check my watch, and with the passage of the estimated twenty-five minutes of flight time, I should see the railroad tracks, but nothing appears. The ground lighting is poor, only the dark outlines of ridges are apparent. I grow more uneasy after another hour of flight has passed and still no sight of the iron compass. Thankfully, the first light of dawn begins to illuminate the desert below; surely I will soon see signs of habitation. The light continues to increase along with my unease. As the desert becomes more defined, I search for train tracks, power lines, oil pipe lines, buildings, anything that indicates human activity. Absolutely nothing but the sharp stony ridges, like successive waves on a lunar landscape, meet my sweep of vision ahead. I have completed two hours of flight and should be in my let down to land in Barstow; but instead I start to sweat with uncertainty triggered by the unknown. I think how glad I am that I had topped off my water bottle before departing Blythe. Now it is time to make a decision! If I continue on this heading, I will certainly pass my intended destination and fly out into more barren forbidding desert in the region of Death Valley, California.

I come to the resolution that I must be far to the east of my intended track. My only recourse is to turn to a heading of due west and fly until my engine quits, and this will put me as close to habitation as possible. Last night, I had spoken to the fuel man in Blythe as to my intended route of flight, but it will probably be a long time before anyone realizes I am missing - not a happy thought. Three hours have passed and time is short before the engine will consume the last of the fuel supply and cough to a halt. Up ahead, there is one more ridge higher than the ones I have crossed, and out beyond the desert turns to a long flat sagebrush covered plain in the glow of the rising sun. I mentally prepare for a forced landing in the next few minutes as I sweep across the high jagged ridge. Then to my immense relief, I find parallel signs of human activity. Hidden against the western edge of the cliffs is a railroad track close beside an asphalt highway. Looking south less than one quarter mile is a small hamlet of tin roofed shacks. I immediately pull the throttle back to idle power and start to sink down as I swing ninety degrees to the left. There are no cars on the highway, and now it's a straight run in to land on the paved road. A short taxi, and I come to a halt in the ramp of a small desert gas station. The three men in the station garage come out into the morning sunlight to see what has arrived in their front yard. Once again, I'm relieved to be back on earth without incident.

The owner of the building informs me that I have landed on Route 66 in the town of Essex. (I look at the four weather-beaten buildings that they consider a town and I agree — after the miles and miles of trackless desert that I have just navigated over.) They provide me with a long drink of cold water in the little cafe while the owner's wife runs out to take a picture of my old biplane standing in front of their gas

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

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pump. While refueling with auto gasoline, an air force man drives up in a big Cadillac and after some discussion, we agree to race into Barstow. When I'm ready for takeoff, he drives down the highway and stops on the top of a little rise to block any inbound auto traffic for my departure. As soon as I'm airborne, he jumps back into his Caddy and we race flat out for Barstow. He pulls ahead of me, but as the road makes long curves through the sand hills, I fly a straight line and once again regain the lead. We trade positions back and forth as my eighty mile per hour airspeed is pitted against his ninety plus ground speed. It takes one hour and twenty-five minutes for the run into Barstow. By the time I have made my approach pattern and landing, he is waiting with his car in the aircraft tie-down area. We drive together into the local restaurant for a late breakfast of bacon and eggs, and he insists on paying the bill as I had passed over the airport ahead of him. He is a jet fighter pilot out of Muroc Dry Lake (Edwards Air Force Base) and we trade an hour of hangar flying. He tells of battling Migs over Korea, and I counter with a time in Istanbul, Turkey, when two Migs buzzed my carrier at mast top level which put the whole US Navy battle fleet into an absolute panic. They had dropped anchor chains and tried to get instantly underway. We complete our meal, and I am anxious to move on, as the sensation that home is close at hand fills my thoughts.

In the small airport office, prior to my departure, I learn why I was so far off course in my flight out of Blythe. The weather information shows that at five thousand feet there is a steady fifty knot wind that flows from the south-west across the Mohave desert. In my hours of night flight, I had drifted far to the east of my intended track, and thus had completely missed the railroad I had intended to fly into Barstow.

The flight from Barstow through the Tehachapi Pass and on to Bakersfield takes one hour and forty minutes. After a quick refuel, I fly up the San Joaquin Valley to Los Banos, and with a strong wind that flows south down the valley, it takes me two hours and forty-five minutes of bouncing through the rough summer heat waves to reach my destination.

The last leg of my journey takes me through Pacheco Pass over Gilroy, Morgan Hill, and west a few miles off track to buzz my aunt and uncles' house in Campbell that I call my home. A few minutes later, I land at Reid Hill View airport, a few miles south of downtown San Jose, California. I am stiff and tired after having been in my cockpit for a total of nine hours and twenty-five minutes for the day. I left Blythe at four-thirty AM in the dark, and now the time is six-thirty in the evening of September the 5th, 1953. My nose is burned raw and I sport two large white circles around the eyes where my navy flight goggles protect my face. The clothes I wear have not been washed since I departed Florida, and are saturated with sweat and burnt engine oil. The smell is that of a wino derelict. In my pocket, I have less than twenty dollars, not enough for another full tank of gas! Throughout the trip, I have repeatedly cut my margins to the minimum, but I am pleased to complete the effort with success. My relatives come to collect me, and I doze as we drive home. After a long hot shower and the donning of a set of clean clothes, my aunt remarks, half joking, that I can now come back into the living room. I consume a good hot meal and after a glass or two of wine, I retire to bed, to the sleep of the dead.

EPILOGUE

In the years that followed, I completed my college degree in aeronautics and spent the next thirty-seven years in the aviation industry: the first two years as a flight test engineer for Douglas Aircraft Company,

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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!!

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followed by thirty-five years as an international airline pilot, for Pan American World Airways. Over the years, the lessons that I learned in that old 1929 Fleet biplane have come to my aid. The most important of these is to hold in check the fear that crowds the mind when faced with the unknown.

Twenty-seven years after the flight of 788V, I volunteered to drive a trailer load of household effects from California to New Orleans to meet my son, who is an airline pilot in Florida. I was driving from Barstow to Needles on Interstate 40, when I noticed a sign that said "Essex on the old historic Route 66". The drive down the old broken pavement soon led me into the desert town of Essex. Nothing had changed except that the few building had become more derelict with the passage of time. I drove up to the old gas station and went in to meet the proprietor. I told my story, and the old man shook my hand and said the owner had died years before, but that he was the mechanics helper at the time. He remembered clearly the event. A picture of my old aircraft had been on the wall behind the bar for years alongside pictures of spectacular auto wrecks of the area. The original building had burned to the ground in late 1960's and this new, he emphasized new, garage had since been built. I had a private laugh as this new facility was so rundown, windblown, and rattled with flapping tin that I thought it was the original. This gentleman was very hospitable and insisted on buying my drink before I returned to my cross-country drive.

I was hard pressed to imagine what work there could be to keep this town in operation now that the Interstate had long since bypassed its isolated location. My guess would be that a few cattle ranchers and a handful of welfare recipients who have taken up residence in the abandoned buildings constitute the town population.

Now it is July of 1997, and in my retirement, I have gathered my notes, log books, and memories of that long ago flight. Together, my computer and I have attempted to put down on paper my best recollections of a "FLIGHT THROUGH THE DISTANT PAST".

Charles Cutting, Campbell, Calif.

Upcoming Events: Flight Engineers Picnic

Our annual picnic for Flight Engineers/Pilots/Flight Attendants and their spouses/significant others will be at "The Villages Golf & Country Club", San Jose CA on September 23rd 2010. Cost is \$25/person, menu is BBQ baby back ribs, salad, BBQ beans, dessert, complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks. Send check to: P. M. Ryden, 8701 Lomas Azules Place, San Jose CA, 95135.

Help requested for Public TV Documentary

I am working on a Public Television Documentary that has a section which covers the era of the famous 314 Boeing Clippers. I could use some help. Would anyone be interested in sharing stories, letters, photos and memories about their 314 experiences. (Also words out of a pilots log books). I have been supporting In-Kind work for The Museum Of Flight in Seattle WA.

Your support and interest would be respected.

Sincerely, Gary J McMillen,
Museum Of Flight Liaison, Seattle WA. ~206/850-4872

Come Join Us on the Next Cruise!

A number of you have asked who have mailed in their deposits for our Pan Am Reunion Cruise departing April 8, 2011 from Ft. Lauderdale on Royal Caribbean's ship, The Jewel of the Seas.

Well, these are the folks that have sent Interline Travels Inc their \$350 deposit, and that guarantees the cabins at our current prices. Contact Carmen 1-888-592-7245, interlinetravels@yahoo.com for any information. We are trying to contact all we can via e-mail, so please pass this on to all your contacts. It's kind of funny, we will visit a fantastic Emerald factory in Cartagena, Colombia on the ship "The Jewel of the Seas". It doesn't much better than that, what luck. Thanks for passing the info on.

~Stu Archer

Signed up for the next cruise

Folks are starting to get their deposits in. This should be a great Pan Am Reunion Cruise. Stu

2	ARCHER	STUART & VERA	FLORIDA
2	BENEFIELD	WILLIAM & JANET	FLORIDA
2	BENNETT	THOMAS & CAROLYN	TENNESSEE
2	BOOTH	ROBERT	FLORIDA
2	BRYAN	JAMES & LUCILLE	ARIZONA
2	CLIPPARD	OSCAR & CAROL	ARIZONA
2	CLIPPARD	JANET & ED MARTINEZ	FLORIDA
2	DEAN	BRUCE & GAIL	NEW YORK
2	DOUGLAS	OSCAR & ETHEL	TEXAS
2	DWYER	PATRICK & DOROTHEA	FLORIDA
3	HIEFTJE	HENRY & JEAN & SALLY	ITALY
2	KAISER	JOHN & URSULA	FLORIDA
2	KAISER	JOHN & URSULA	FLORIDA
2	KNIEF	HERMAN & JACQUELINE	NORTH CAROLINA
2	LEUDTKE	HERTMUT & MONIKA	FLORIDA
2	LUEDTKE	HERMUT & MONIKA	FLORIDA
2	MADDEN	HOWARD & MARIA	FLORIDA
3	MARTINEZ	CHARLES/CELIA/LAURIE	NEW YORK
2	MEFFERT	MICHAEL & SALLY	VIRGINIA
2	NEMETH	JORGE & RAQUEL	ARGENTINA
2	NEWMA/BARRAL	MARIA, MARIA	ARGENTINA
2	OMURA	LAWRENCE & MARIA	NEW YORK
1	PAYSEE	CLAIRE	CALIFORNIA
2	PFLIEGER	AUGUST & BONITA	CALIFORNIA
2	RYAN	KAREN & MYRA GREEN	MONTANA
2	SHUMAN	JIMMY & FRANCES	GEORGIA
2	V.HEIRSERMAN,	M LAMBOOY, SHAT NICKY	NEW YORK
2	VAUGHN	GERALD & HOLLACE	WASHINGTON
2	VITALE	RICHARD & SUZANNE	NH
2	WAYNE	ROBERT & SANDRA HUFF	CALIFORNIA
2	ZOSE	HELMUT & NANCY	GEORGIA

PAN AM

Reunion Cruise

Jewel of the Seas April 8-18, 2011

**Fort Lauderdale to: Labadee, Haiti/ Cartagena, Colombia / Colon, Panama /
Puerto Limon, Costa Rica / George Town, Grand Cayman /**

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Once again, Interline Travels takes great pleasure in inviting the Pan Am families on this, our next fabulous reunion cruise. Your group leaders have chosen to return to the Caribbean and partial Panama Canal trip traveling to some very exciting ports. Labadee is a private paradise and exclusive destination with breathtaking scenery. Cartagena, one of Latin America's most photogenic cities, not just another pretty seaport, but world renown for emeralds of every shape and size (great gifts). Colon is less than an hour's drive from Panama's most historical attractions, so it's easy to fit in visits to sites like the Panama Railroad, Gatun Locks, and old Spanish fortress Fort San Lorenzo. Puerto Limón overflows with lush natural wonders - towering mountains, sun drenched beaches and magnificent rain forests with over 2,000 varieties of orchids. Visit the town of Hell in Grand Cayman and explore scenic coastline of Seven-Mile Beach, undersea world in Stingray City and tour of Turtle Farm.

Price includes lovely staterooms in the category of your choice, all meals and entertainment and Captain's Gala night. Additionally, group leaders have planned fun activities, nostalgic memorabilia, Pan Am cocktail parties, customized amenities and much more for all Pan Am guests booked through Interline Travels.

\$749 (Inside) \$1019 (Outside) \$1359 (Balcony)
Rates per person, double occupancy, and availability at time of booking.

Deposits: These prices will go quickly; get your deposit of \$350. per person in ASAP and secure your price. Port charges/taxes are additional at \$331.46 per person. Once our allotment of cabins are sold, we must resort to selling higher categories at higher prices. Therefore, make your reservations ASAP. Deposits refundable if canceled by 1/14/11 (\$50. PP Service charge will apply). All major credit cards are accepted, but checks are preferred. More details when reserving and in your invoice. Inquire on insurance. Singles pay 200% or can be put on a waitlist for a roommate. Those wanting to book but needing special arrangements are welcome to call me confidentially, and I will try to get your issues resolved. Call in your dining preference- early (6pm) or late (8pm). Table assignments will be done in January.

Awareness: To ensure awareness of this wonderful cruise event, it is imperative to pass this cruise information to all your Pan Am Family and friends. Our goal is to fill the ship with Pan Amer's, so pass the word on and relive memories all over again. More details on other Pan Am trips, reunions and activities can be found at www.clipperpioneers.com .

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Toll Free 1-888-592-7245 OR Miami (305) 598-0363
www.interlinetravels@yahoo.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

J. Richard Bergad passed away on July 27, 2010. He died in peace at the local hospital. He will be buried in the 'familyplot' in Greensburg, PA within a few days. There will be a 'celebration of life memorial service' at a later date. If ever anyone could say: Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth, it would be Dick. The last 18 months were surly for such an active, in-control guy, just sitting in his fancy recliner watching himself waste away.

Dan Cooper, Flight Engineer, died July 14th in Modesto. He had emphysema. No services will be held. Dan was 78.

Hugh Huddleston passed away on June 12, 2010. He had pancreatic cancer. He is survived by his wife Liz, 3 children and 10 grandchildren. He was hired by Pan Am in August 1956, and retired as a Captain on the 747.

Norton D. Pladsen (Nort) was a member of the Clipper Pioneers and lived in Caldwell, ID. March 5, 2010 was given as the date of his passing. Nort was a pleasant crewmember to fly with with a good sense of humor.

Charles Morris died August 5, 2010. A retired PAA Captain for many years, he was in his mid 90's and had been quite ill for some time. He is survived by his wife Sara, children & grandchildren.

Lilo Brissette, wife of Les Brissette, passed away on July 3, 2010 after a long illness.

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

18th Annual Family Reunion und **OKTOBERFEST**

Sunday, October 3, 2010 from 1500 'til 1700

Luncheon Buffet

Beer & Wine - No Charge; Pay Bar Available

Cost \$26 per person, all inclusive

Casual Dress

Two Steps Downtown Grille, Ives Street, Danbury, CT.

(See upcoming events on www.clipperpioneers.com for map & more information).

Make checks payable to: Alan Vale (write "Reunion" in the memo of your check) - send to: 40 Britannia Dr., Danbury, CT 06811-2612. Alan can be reached at 203-778-2993 or avpaa@comcast.net. If sending a check, please let Alan know how many in your party and their names. Also give your address and phone number so he can reach you, if necessary.

Pan American Airways Crew Layover Hotels - <http://www.paacrewlayover.com/> - is a website that has photos from many hotels from the present and the past. Be sure to check it out!

New Medicare Phone Scam Targets Seniors ***Scam crops up in West Virginia, Kentucky***

from Consumer Affairs.com

Beware of a phone call from someone claiming to be a representative of Medicare. In reality they're just trying to steal your identity.

West Virginia Attorney General Darrell McGraw has raised the warning, saying he's received reports from citizens of his state, and has learned that seniors in neighboring Kentucky have also been targeted.

The scheme targeting Medicare seniors relies on the telephone, not the Internet. The fraudulent phone calls -- identified as originating from 866-234-2255 -- claim to represent a Medicare or Social Security Office and ask consumers for personal information so that new Medicare cards can be issued.

When people refuse to provide the requested information, a phony supervisor comes on the line to say that the information must be provided to remain enrolled in the Medicare program. The thieves then use information collected to steal victims' identities and remove funds from accounts through checks or electronic transactions.

McGraw says a call to the 866 number used by the Medicare scammers as their caller ID reaches a recording confirming that it is being used in the Medicare spoof.

Check caller-ID

McGraw says consumers should check caller ID on incoming calls and avoid giving out personal information including policy numbers, date of birth, social security numbers, credit card numbers or bank account information over the phone or on the internet - especially when speaking with or replying to email from strangers.

"Be suspicious of any requests you get asking for personal or financial data," McGraw said. "Never offer information. Always verify the identity of the person on the other end of the phone or emailing you. And remember that scammers will typically just hang up if confronted or threatened with a call to the police or attorney general."

Thieves use similar methods for a tax refund scam in which fake IRS phone calls or emails ask for personal and banking information so that the consumer supposedly can receive an additional tax refund. McGraw reminds consumers that the IRS does not solicit personal information via e-mail. McGraw said it's just the latest scam that is targeting senior citizens.

Read more: http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2010/04/wv_medicare_scam.html#ixzz0wnWBfqWi

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!**