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## Would You Believe?

*by Robert L. Bragg  
(Capt., Pan Am and United, Ret.)*

I was asked to fly the first "Operation Desert Storm" flight operated by United Airlines. It was to be the first of ten such flights for me.

We ferried the plane from San Francisco to March Air Force Base just outside of Los Angeles to pick up our passengers - three hundred and fifty marines, who had been waiting for over twenty hours in the hangar for our arrival. I met their commanding officer, a full bird colonel, and we hit it off from the first.

Our schedule called for a three hour transit. Since neither the colonel nor I knew why, I informed the colonel that as far as I was concerned we could leave whenever he wished. I practically observed, "It's a lot more comfortable than waiting longer here in the hangar." The colonel turned to a master sergeant and told him to pick twelve men and load the plane. One and one half hours later, with the colonel with us in the cockpit, the plane had been loaded and we departed. Our flight went from March AFB to Bangor, Maine, and then to Brussels for a crew change.

After a twenty-four hour layover, we took off the next day for Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, with another load of marines. The routing took us out of Brussels over the Swiss Alps, over flying Rome, across the Mediterranean, near Libya, over Egypt, and on to Dhahran.

During the flight, I was truly impressed with the traffic. I had never seen so much traffic. Our 747 had two C-130's in front of us and two on each side. It sure was crowded.

After landing, disembarking our passengers, and refueling, we departed, as there was no layover – ferrying the plane back to Brussels. It had already been a rather long day.

As the flight to Dhahran had been so busy, none in the cockpit had eaten. Accordingly, after level-off, we called the pursuer and asked her to come to the cockpit. We then asked her what the chances were of getting a meal – we were certainly hungry.

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## Would you believe... ~ continued from previous page

She politely informed us that since it was a ferry flight, they weren't required to feed the cockpit and prepared to leave.

I thought the first officer was going to come out of his seat – he was visibly angry. After motioning discretely to him, I simply said to her, "That's fine."

As soon as the pursuer left the cockpit, I asked the flight engineer to turn the cabin temperature control as far down as possible. I smiled visibly. It took about thirty minutes for the pursuer to return to the cockpit with a request to turn the heat up. She said, "They were cold, very cold." I couldn't wait to inform her that "As it was a ferry flight, we weren't required to heat the cabin." I think I smiled again.

Needless to say, although she didn't say anything, her attitude immediately changed and we received the crew meals very quickly. They tasted better than usual, much better.

When we got to Brussels, I called the vice president of operations, Hart Langer, who had also come from Pan Am. After hearing my tale about the meals, he stated without hesitation, "Effectively immediately, there will be more ferry flights and every ferry flight will have a trip number – meals will be served.

Previously, apparently, some never associated the reality that those controlling the throttles or in this case the thermostat controls on a flight can dictate the "comfort" of all.

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## 76 Years Ago...

Just thought you might be interested to know that 76 years ago today, Pan Am bought 45% of the stock in China National Aviation Corporation from Curtiss-Wright. Turned out to be a pretty good investment.

Bob Willett

Merritt Island, FL

"An Airline at War: The Story of Pan Am's China National Aviation Corporation" is my fourth book. See web [freewebs.com/rlwillett](http://freewebs.com/rlwillett)

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## 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](http://www.clipperpioneers.com) - and click on the powerpoint presentation. It's just great! Here's what a couple of Pan Am'ers have to say about it..."This is an incredible collection of photos on Pan Am's history. It was forwarded by an ex-employee, Arthur Rindner who now lives in Israel. I think these are some of the best Pan Am photos I have ever seen. Enjoy." - Tony "Definitely, this is the best collection. Hope you all enjoy. Thanks Tony and Trudy for sending these. And also to Arthur who has definitely shown how deep his heart is still with Pan Am." - Vickie

You can now access the mailing and phone list of your fellow Clipper Pioneers. Go to the Clipper Pioneer website - [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://www.clipperpioneers.com) - and scroll down to the bottom of the home page. Click on "Members Only" - when the password box pops up, type in "CPMember" and the password in your newsletter. (If you don't have your copy of the newsletter, please email us at [sue@clipperpioneers.com](mailto:sue@clipperpioneers.com)). You will be able to access the current list of names, address, phone #s, and email addresses there.

## “Navigators of the First Global Air Force”

From *On Celestial Wings* by Col Ed Whitcomb

November 1995

Pages 1-11 - *Part 1 - to be continued in next edition*)

The University of Miami band blared its music through the majestic Biltmore Hotel as 44 khaki-clad cadets marched onto the stage of the big ballroom. It was a historic occasion because we were first graduating class of professional aerial navigators for the United States' military services. We were to become known as the Class of 40-A. On stage with the 44 of us were representatives of the University of Miami at Coral Gables, Florida, the United States Army Air Corps, and Pan American Airways – the organizations that had put together America's first navigation training program. It was among the first programs of World War II in which business, military, and university personnel combined efforts in the interest of national defense.

The date was 12 November 1940. World War II had been raging in Europe for more than a year, and Adolph Hitler had sent his troops into Poland, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Fighting, death, and destruction were far away from US shores. America was enjoying peace with a president named Franklin Delano Roosevelt who had vowed that he would never send an American boy to die on foreign soil. Congress had passed laws enacting the draft, but the men on the platform in Coral Gables were not concerned about that. There were all volunteers who anticipated one thing: to fly!

We came in early August 1940 to what became the fountainhead of navigational knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Few people traveled by commercial airlines in those days. We came by bus, boat, train, and automobile from the crowded streets of New York City, the lonely rangelands of Montana, and the peaceful small towns of the Midwest. Many of my classmates were first and second generation Americans of Serbian, Jewish, Italian, Polish, and English extraction. It was an all-American group including, among others, the family names of Markovich, Berkowitz, Boselli, Vifquain, and Meenagh.

The class members were young men in their early twenties, bright-eyed and eager to succeed in navigation school so they could fly. We had only a vague idea of the complexities of celestial navigation. None of us had ever known an aerial navigator nor could have had any idea of the perils the future held for us. We could not have envisioned that we would be flying courses where no man had ever flown, dropping bombs on civilian cities around the world and seeing our classmates shot out of the sky.

My roommate, Theodore J. Boselli, a former champion bantamweight boxer from Clemson University, would later navigate the first presidential plane. Walter E. Seamon, son of the mayor of West Jefferson, Ohio, would also be assigned to the president's plane. George Markovich, a brilliant graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, would guide a plane called the *Bataan* for the great Gen Douglas MacArthur in his flights around the Southwest Pacific. Russell M. Vifquain, the blonde-headed son of an Iowa college professor, had led Iowa State University to be runner-up in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) gold competition. In the years ahead he would be with Gen Curtis LeMay dropping tons of incendiary bombs into the crowded heart of Tokyo, Japan. Jay Horowitz, a happy Jewish boy from Sweetwater, Tennessee, would suffer more agony as a prisoner at the hands of the Japanese than anyone could have imagined. These and many others were my classmates as we entered into the academic phase of celestial navigation.

But it was 1940, and we were in the city of Coral Gables. The US was at peace and our thoughts were not of war. Our home during the 12-week course of training was the stately San Sebastian Hotel at the corner of Le Jeune and University streets. In our first military formations we wore T-shirts, civilian clothes, and a variety of uniforms from previous military organizations. We were a second “Coxey's Army” ready to be molded into military men and more importantly, celestial navigators.

Capt Norris B. Harbold, a 1928 product of the United States Military Academy at West Point, was in

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## “Navigators of the First Global Air Force” ~ continued from previous page

charge of the detachment. He had a history of efforts to promote celestial navigation training in the Air Corps. We conducted close-order drill formations on the streets near the hotel where there was scant vehicular traffic. Coral Gables on the outskirts of Miami was a sleepy and almost desolate city after the big land development boom and later depression of the 1930s. There were dozens of city blocks where streets, sidewalks, curbs, and fire hydrants supported vacant lots overgrown with weeds.

The cadets marched in ragged military formations across the street to the “Cardboard College” – a group of buildings intended to serve the University of Miami until a new campus was established. The university’s grandiose plans for new buildings had stopped dead with the advent of the big depression. But the temporary facilities were adequate for our 240 hours of ground training in navigation and meteorology.

The development of the navigation training program had come about in a very unusual way. Gen Delos Emmons, chief of General Headquarters of the US Army Air Corps, had been aboard a giant Pan American clipper on a fact-finding mission to Europe in 1939. All night the big silver clipper lumbered along on its flight from New York to the island of Horta in the Azores. While other passengers dozed, General Emmons observed the plane’s navigator industriously plotting his course by celestial navigation. The general stood on the flight deck in awe of the proficiency of the work. Then as the stars faded away in the light of a new day, the navigator pointed to a dark mound on the distant horizon dead ahead of the aircraft.

“That is the island of Horta,” announced Charles J. Lunn, the navigator.

“Amazing!” exclaimed the general.

“It would be more amazing if it were not there,” replied Lunn matter of factly.<sup>2</sup>

General Emmons had more than a passing interest in this feat of expertise in celestial navigational. Axis victories in Europe suggested alarming possibilities for US involvement in the European war. The Air Corps urgently needed a lot of well-trained and highly skilled navigators. General Emmons knew that there

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### CLIPPER PIONEERS FINANCES MARCH 27, 2009-03-26

Our finances are in good shape; the expenses have been reduced considerably.

Checkbook: \$17,661.69

CD # 1: \$24,169.17

CD # 2: \$12,825.00

This seems like a lot of money but a large percentage of it is advance payment of dues.

Note: Each copy of the newsletter costs slightly over a dollar each, so each newsletter mailing costs about \$1300.00 to \$1400.00.

The printing and mailing of the roster has a cost of over \$5000.00. This is our single most expensive item. The Roster is now available on the website and is updated every time a newsletter goes out.

I have the checkbook available for your inspection should anyone wish to see it.

~Jerry Holmes

**Keep ‘em Comin’! We love getting your stories!**

## **“Navigators of the First Global Air Force”** ~ *continued from previous page*

was no program in the Air Corps to do the job although the Air Corps had tried on several occasions to establish celestial navigation schools. At that time, most military flights were conducted within the continental limits of the United States. Therefore, there was little stimulus for flying officers to do more than make a hobby of celestial navigation. A few officers including Norris B. Harbold, Eugene L. Eubank, Albert F. Hegenberger, Glenn C. Jamison, Lawrence J. Carr and Curtis Le May had taken particular interest in celestial navigation; but by the spring of 1940, the Army Air Corps had only 80 experienced celestial navigators. It would need thousands to man the new bombers on order for the Air Corps.<sup>3</sup>

“How many men could you teach to do this?” Emmons asked Lunn.

“Just as many as could hear my voice,” was Lunn’s succinct reply.

The conversation planted an idea in the general’s mind. With whatever else he may have learned on his fact-finding mission to Europe, he came back to Washington, D.C., with an idea for training navigators.

Upon his return, he contacted Juan Tripp, president of Pan American Airways and Dr. B.F. Ashe, president of the University of the Miami. Their meetings culminated in an agreement whereby Pan American would provide navigational training with Charles J. Lunn as the chief navigation instructor. The University of Miami would provide food, housing, and classrooms for instruction at the rate of \$12.50 per cadet per week. The cadets were in place, and the program was under way even before the agreement was signed.<sup>4</sup>

Charlie Lunn seemed the most unlikely person to be teaching a university class. His academic credentials were woefully deficient. He had no college degrees whatsoever. He had never attended a college or university. The fact was Charles J. Lunn, chief navigator instructor at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida, in 1940, had failed his sophomore year at Key West High School. He was a high school dropout.

Charlie and his sister had stood at the head of their classes in grammar school and in high school until Charlie’s interests turned to girls and basketball. At 16 years of age, he was a good enough athlete to draw \$10 a game playing for the Key West Athletic Club team. However, as a result of his extracurricular activities, his academic standing declined to the point that he decided to leave school.

Nineteen years later, he found himself standing before a class of college-trained and educated students from all parts of the United States. Many of them had college degrees in engineering, education, and a variety of other fields. It was Charlie’s job to train them in the complicated art of celestial navigation.

When Charlie left high school, his father made it clear to him that he was to get himself reinstated in high school or get a job to support himself. Since he had grown weary of dull classroom life, Charlie set out to find a job.

In 1921 there were few employment opportunities in Key West, Florida for a 16 year old school dropout. Sponging (gathering sponges from the sea) and fishing were about the only jobs available on the island and such jobs were not attractive to young Lunn. The 7<sup>th</sup> US Navy Base, where many naval vessels stopped for fuel and water, was one of the chief employers in Key West. Charlie was unable to find a job there because 18 was the minimum age for employment with the government.

Like other boys his age, he was fascinated by the ships which came into the Key West Harbor. He had talked to sailors about their voyages to far away ports and learned that it would be possible to get a job as an oiler on an oceangoing ship.

So at the age of 16, Charlie took his first job oiling the engine on a freighter ship of the P & O Steamship Company plying between Key West, Tampa and Havana. It did not take the lad very long to grow tired of his work in the steaming hot and smelly bowels of the ship. If there was any romance and adventure in that life, it completely escaped him. After a couple of trips he applied for a job working on the top deck where he would have more opportunity to learn about sailing.

As a deck hand, Charlie was industrious and inquisitive. He asked questions and he studied books until, at the age of 18, he became third mate on his ship.



## No such thing as a stupid question

*by Alan Meadows PanAm/United ret*

In 1981 I was a 747 flight engineer based in LAX . After a layover in MIA we reported for a night flight to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. On my walk around I discovered a cold brake on a right main gear, which I reported to the mechanic and the captain. I asked the mechanic to install a debraking tool since that wheel had to stop before retraction, and he informed me they had used the last one yesterday.

When I told the captain this, he informed New York we had a problem since we had to leave the gear down after takeoff until the wheel stopped, so we could meet 2nd segment climb requirements.

New York and the captain agreed that we would have to remove 85 passengers, reduce the fuel load, land in Caracas enroute, and the crew would have to layover there due to duty limits. This was going to cost a bundle, besides upsetting (read pissing off) a bunch of passengers.

Just before we started downloading the fuel load, I asked what I thought was a stupid question "Did you try to borrow a pool part from one of the other airlines?" When the mechanic said "No, he hadn't thought of that." we suggested he go try. He got the tool from TWA and before too long we departed nonstop to Rio. I learned that night there are no stupid questions.

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## Clippers in Time - Their Historical Context

As we open the Golden Age of the Flying Clippers, we find the world in a deep economic depression. The United States has just been through what will have been, the two worst years of it. Franklin Roosevelt has just been elected president of the United States and will remain so for an unprecedented 4 terms and Adolph Hitler has just come to power in Germany. There are only 48 states in the Union. Alaska and Hawaii will not be added for almost 30 years. Prohibition has just been repealed. Thanks to Hollywood, New York's Empire State building will now have King Kong forever associated with it.

If you are "lucky" enough to be an airline pilot you will earn \$8,000.00 per year. A dentist earns \$2,391.00; an electrical worker, \$1,559.00; a public school teacher, \$1,227.00; a secretary, \$1,040.00; a steelworker, \$422.87; a waitress, \$520.00.

A new Pontiac coupe costs \$585.00 and is powered with a gallon of gas costing only 18. A wool suit is \$10.50. Chicken is 22 a pound and milk is 10 a quart. A six room house with a two car garage in Detroit will cost you \$2,800.00. If you have the time, a 60-day 11-country tour of Europe will cost you \$495.00. Round trip airfare from New York to Chicago is \$86.31 and from Chicago to Los Angeles is another \$207.00.

*From: <http://www.flyingclippers.com/timeline.html>*

**For a really neat look at Pan Am in action, go to: [www.panamva.com/](http://www.panamva.com/) on the internet.**

Read more stories and breaking news, along with more information about those who have passed on at our website: [www.clipperpioneers.com](http://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

**Charlie Boaz** died in Sarasota, Fla on March 9th, 2009. He was hired as a mechanic in 1936 at Dinner Key. During his 35 years at PanAm he was based in Miami, New York, San Juan, and Honolulu. He is best remembered for his trek through the Amazon jungle in 1952 to discover why a flight from Rio to Trinidad crashed. Later he taught pilots in New York and was a well known administrator in these different bases. Many of our pilots probably knew Charlie, and he will be missed here in Sarasota as he had many great stories. He was 92.

**John Curtis Burn** passed away peacefully Saturday, Feb. 7, 2009. He was born Feb. 19, 1919, formerly of Tenafly, N.J., in Upper Saddle River, N.J. He was the husband of Dr. Charlene Hargrove Burn, a former New York Summer Festival Queen, model and psychiatrist. He is also the former husband of the late Jane Froman, a popular singer in the 1940s and early 50s. Their marriage was highly publicized and documented in the recently released book "Say it with Music" by Barbara Seuling and also in the movie "With a Song in my Heart" starring Rory Calhoun as John and Susan Hayward as Jane.

After a childhood in Atlanta and Colorado, John attended the University of Chattanooga and lived with his mother's relatives in Chattanooga. He was selected for further training as a pilot for World War II. He was a pilot for Pan American Airlines for 36 years, retiring in 1979 as a Captain of the 747 Aircraft running international flights. During his years as an awesome pilot, he experienced a hijacking and two airplane crashes. He later worked for the Flight Safety Committee. After retiring from Pan Am he received a master's degree in Social Work from NYU and formed the first fear of flying clinic with an associate.

He is survived by four children, Sean, of Brighton, Mass., Gray and his wife, Jessica, of Chelsea, Mass., Heather, of Brighton, Mass. and Nora and her husband, Bruce Yerk Jr., and their children, Michael and Matthew, of Long Pond, Pa.; and cousins, Mary Curtis Black, Paul Black, Mark Curtis and Jamie Curtis, of Chattanooga.

**Harry Shepard** passed away recently. No details are currently available.

**Rolf Von Lorenz** passed away in California recently. No details are currently available.

**Emery Wanless** passed away on March 2, 2009, just 5 days before his 99th birthday.

**Know of someone from Pan Am who has passed?  
Email the obit to Jerry Holmes at [jerry747@copper.net](mailto:jerry747@copper.net)**

**ATTENTION AUXILLARY MEMBERS:  
You must let me know if you wish to continue  
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Jerry Holmes, 192 Foursome Drive, Sequim, WA 98382 -  
360- 681-0567 or email [jerry747@copper.net](mailto:jerry747@copper.net)**

## China Clipper Radio

*by John Cook, Radio Operator, Alameda Station  
Pan American World Airways  
from [www.panam.org](http://www.panam.org)*

These are John Cook's reminiscences about the China Clipper's first transpacific flight, as he related them at the 60th anniversary celebration in Alameda, CA.

I was a veteran of three weeks with Pan Am that day, on duty in the radio shack by the seaplane ramp. My wife watched Juan Trippe take a sack of mail from Postmaster General Jim Farley and hand it to Ed Musick.

The day before, the area was jammed with newspaper reporters taking pictures of the airplane on a test flight, and interviewing everybody. So they were really ready the next day.

About five minutes after takeoff, they had an Extra on the street: "China Clipper Off to the Orient", with a full page picture of the airplane flying over the bay bridge. Of course, we all knew it went under the bridge.

Right after takeoff the radio shack door broke open. Three men came running in with cameras and microphones and said they were from Fox Movietone News. We want to get a picture of you talking to the China Clipper. I said, we don't talk to them, we use dots and dashes. Oh, we can't use that. Pick up your desk phone and pretend you're talking to them. So, anything for the press, I picked the phone up and said, Alameda calling China Clipper. They said, that was great, now tell them that you got the message. I said Roger, China Clipper, over and out.

They said to ask my local movie theater manager to alert me when this newscast would be shown, and he did. I got all my radio operator pals, and we went to the theater. What they did, after I made my first call, a voice said, Hello, Alameda, this is the China Clipper. We're landing in Manila. Everybody died laughing, because they knew this was not possible.

The flight went routinely as far as Guam, but then there was great consternation in Manila. If it continued the next day to Manila, it would arrive a day before all the festivities were planned. Somebody had completely overlooked the International Date Line.

So the Clipper had an extra day delay in Guam. The world's most experienced airline got a little more experience.

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](mailto:jerry747@copper.net).

**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.