

PREFLIGHT

Chairman's Message

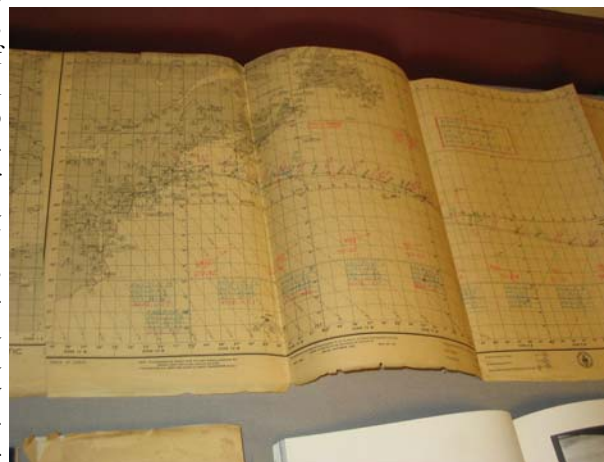
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Our annual meeting of January 16, 2004, was well-attended. Our luncheon speaker, Captain Loyd Florence, gave a very interesting presentation on the development and operation of the Boeing 314 Flying Boat operated by Pan American Airlines and known as the "Clipper." The Boeing 314 was the brainchild of an aeronautical engineer who took the initiative to consider employing a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress wing and grafting that onto a fuselage of a flying boat. By today's standards, the accommodations in the aircraft appear to have been spacious. Sleeping berths were available. Meals were served in shifts



Chairman Alan Armstrong Introduces Captain Loyd Florence at the Section Luncheon



One of the Transatlantic charts used by Captain Florence while aboard a Clipper

in a dining area where people ate from china using silverware, as opposed to today's plastic spoons and forks. There were two crews, i.e., two captains and two first officers, in addition to the navigators. The senior captain would perform the take-offs and landings, while the junior captain would fly the aircraft *en route* and the senior captain would "administer" the operation.

Instrument approaches appear to have been an adventure. The aircraft was equipped with an automatic direction finder ("ADF"). The aircraft would home to a non-directional beacon ("NDB") on a boat or motor launch. The launch was sitting in the water, and you were letting down through the clouds

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***From the Editor:
No Sweepstakes Winners***



Unfortunately, we did not have a mystery plane sweepstakes winner from our Fall 2003 issue. The mystery planes were: (1) Cessna T-37; (2) Lockheed C-130; (3) Beech 18/C-45; and (d) Ilyushin IL-4—the stumper of the group. I have included another set of four aircraft, so please keep your emails and phone calls coming for our next contest. The prize is lunch for two at the Downwind at PDK (or a similar restaurant, for those of you outside Atlanta), so good luck! Please email or call in your responses to my office address listed on the back page.

Airshow season is starting to kick in, and I wanted to invite everyone to the Cherry Blossom Fly-In and Airshow here in Macon on March 20-21. While we have always had hot-air balloon events for the Festival, Macon has recently added an airshow and fly-in, co-sponsored by EAA Chapter 38. Performers include Jim LeRoy of Bulldog Airshows, Orlando attorney Pat Phillips of Stearman acrobatic fame, and Georgia native Gary Ward in his Giles 202. There will also be assorted military and civilian displays at MAC, as well as fly-bys

by a B-52, F-16 and F-86, among others. Fly in and spend the day with us here in Middle Georgia—enjoy the food, the music and the beautiful cherry blossoms! You can get more information at the website www.cherryblossom.com, or you can call MAC at (478) 745-0964. Below are a few photos of the performers below. I hope to see you this weekend! ✖



Jim LeRoy (Yes, those trees are real)



Gary Ward and Crew Chief Savannah Collins

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YES, VIRGINIA, EVEN A THUNDERBIRD CAN FORGET THE AIRFIELD ELEVATION

Some of you in the Middle Georgia area may have had the same pleasure that I did when the Thunderbirds performed at Robins AFB back on September 7, 2003. It was quite an impressive show, especially since I had not seen them since my military brat days in California. As we all know, these pilots are among the best of the best, with a level of training, skills and precision that we can only dream about. However, even the best of the best can forget the simplest things, as was the case on September 14, 2003, when a Thunderbird F-16C crashed in Idaho due to the pilot's incorrect recollection of the airfield elevation.

The show in Idaho had only begun when Thunderbird opposing solo pilot Captain Chris R. Stricklin (#6) took off and went straight up, planning to enter into a Split S maneuver, a spinning roll. As the F-16C plummeted back towards earth, Capt. Stricklin suddenly realized that he was far closer to ground level than usual. Although he attempted to pull out of the dive, he was unsuccessful and parachuted to safety 0.8 seconds before the aircraft impacted the ground and exploded. Fortunately, no injuries were reported,



Capt. Stricklin in his F-16C at Robins AFB the week before his crash in Idaho.



Capt. Stricklin parachutes to safety 0.8 seconds before his F-16C crashed and exploded.

although the \$20+ million aircraft was destroyed.

So how did this happen? Flight control or avionics malfunction? Simple pilot error, according to the Air Force. Capt. Stricklin started his maneuver at 1,670 feet AGL, instead of the required 2,500 feet AGL. Why the discrepancy? It appears that Capt. Stricklin was operating under the mistaken assumption that the airfield

elevation was 3,000 feet instead of 2,000 feet MSL. Apparently this occurred because the Thunderbirds had just come from their home base at Nellis AFB (2,000 MSL), and Capt. Stricklin simply did not take into account the change in elevation.

So what is the end result? The split S maneuver must now commence at 3,500 feet as opposed to 2,500 feet. There are new rules involving the call-out of altitudes during maneuvers. And, unfortunately for Capt. Stricklin, he is no longer a Thunderbird but is working at the Pentagon. A harsh penalty, especially considering Capt. Stricklin's ten years of exemplary service with the Air Force and his numerous ratings and awards.

This story reminds me of so many others stories that I run across in my law practice and in the NTSB reports that I review. Even the most talented of pilots (or any professional, for that matter) can make a costly mistake. As posted on the wall at Lowe Aviation here in Macon, "Flying is not inherently dangerous. But to an even greater degree than the sea, it is terribly unforgiving of any carelessness, incapacity or neglect." ✖



Mystery Plane #1

Chairman's Message (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

in a flying boat over the water towards the launch with its NDB. If after breaking out, the ocean swells were too high, you would divert to an adjoining lake or river, land your aircraft, and then engage in a high-speed water taxi to your originally intended point of arrival.

Captain Florence also talked about having to land the aircraft in confined areas when one would approach over a peninsula or isthmus at a low air speed and high sink rate to ensure landing in the distance of water available.

Captain Florence was a member of the United States Navy. However, he was on reserve status. When flying to neutral ports such as Lisbon, he would see Japanese, Italian and German pilots and military personnel in bars and restaurants. It is hard to imagine how that must have felt for an American pilot when his nation was at war with the countries represented by the other airmen. Captain Florence and the other crewmembers wore civilian uniforms of Pan

American Airlines. Upon arriving in a neutral port, their passports would be collected by Pan Ameri-



Kip Loggins, Lisa McCrimmon, Alan Armstrong, Jim Dell and Keith Wood listen to Captain Florence at the luncheon.



Captain Florence responds to a question from Leonard Goldstein.

can officials and they would be given passes or some form of identification to show police or military officials.

Accompanying the flight crew in the Pan American Clippers was a special agent employed by the Office of Special Services ("OSS"), which was the forerunner of the CIA. The OSS agent had served in the military and was charged with transporting sensitive materials. Sometimes these were secret documents involving communications between the American government and foreign governments. Other times, cash or gold was transported in the aircraft in payment of economic obligations of America to foreign countries, such as the price of building airfields.

On one occasion, the OSS agent was a Marine who had served in the Pacific. The OSS agent and flight crew members appeared in a bar, only to see Japanese playing backgammon at a table. The OSS agent went berserk. Captain Florence and the other Pan American pilots had to restrain the OSS agent and remove him from the bar as quickly as possible.

Navigating the Pan American Clipper involved dead-reckoning navigation and celestial navigation. Periodically, the navigator would take a two-star fix and then a three-star fix.

Chairman's Message (cont.)

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Obviously, the three-star fix was more accurate. If the weather was bad and you were flying beneath a cloud layer and could not see the stars, you could estimate your drift with a wind-drift sight on the side of the airplane. A smoke pot or flair was dropped from the aircraft to measure the degree of drift. Who among us today can imagine flying an airplane for thousands of miles without reference to a ground-based navigational fix?

Captain Florence also had with him charts on which he had plotted flights across the Atlantic. He could look at the chart and tell you where a two-star fix had been taken and where a three-star fix had been taken. He relayed one incident in which they were flying over Africa, and the most reliable map they could find for their flight was a Rand-McNally Road Atlas.

It was very interesting to hear about the old days of romance in the sky during the Second World War from a pilot who flew the Pan American Clipper.

Officers for your Section were elected. Lisa McCrimmon will continue to serve as Vice-Chair and Keith Wood will serve as our Secretary. I ap-

preciate the opportunity to continue to serve as your Chairman. It does appear that we will be due to present an aviation law seminar in the year 2005. Anyone who would like to participate or assist in the development of that program may contact me.

I wish everyone a safe and happy 2004.

Happy Landings, Alan

Come See Us On The Web!
www.gabar.org/avlaw.htm



Mystery Plane #2



Mystery Plane #3



Mystery Plane #4

SKYNOTES

Macon Cherry Blossom Fly-In & Airshow

March 20-21 at MAC;
www.cherryblossom.com

National Congress on Aviation & Space Education

March 24-27 at the Marriott Marquis, Atlanta
www.cap.gov/events/ncmain.html

Auto Pilot Day

April 3 at PDK;
www.autopilotmagazine.com

Sun 'n Fun Fly In, Lakeland

April 13-19 at LAL;
www.sun-n-fun.org/content/

Georgia Wings Weekend

April 30—May 2 at LZU;
www.wingsweekend.com

Vidalia Onion Festival Airshow

May 8-9 at VDI;
www.vidaliaonionfestival.com

Dobbins ARB Airshow

May 8-9 at NAS Atlanta

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