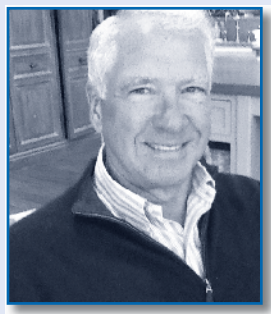


From The Chairman, Edward Trippe...



Last December, could anyone have imagined that 2020 would unleash a global pandemic that would threaten our lives and all that we have comfortably assumed would be secure in this modern era of technology and amazing medical advances? For the aging Pan Am community, we are the most vulnerable and hopefully most of us have been spared. However, as this issue of *Clipper* goes to press, it is hard to comprehend the new social and economic realities we live with and where it will all end.

Across the Pacific

As the new decade of 2020 opened, the Pan Am Historical Foundation (PAHF) had great hopes and plans. The long-awaited Pan Am documentary, *Across the Pacific*, was on schedule to roll out in May and by June it was showing on multiple PBS stations across the country. The film by all accounts has been a great success and has been well received by all who have had the opportunity to see it. In this issue, Executive Producer Stephen Lyons talks about how the film came about over a period spanning more than fifteen years. The story tracks the earliest

Chairman *cont. p. 2*

The Making of 'Across the Pacific' —

A Conversation with Stephen Lyons, Executive Producer/Director

By Ruth Maron

When the three-hour documentary, Across the Pacific, debuted on Virginia Public Media/PBS in May 2020, it was the culmination of more than 15 years of work. Clipper recently talked with Stephen Lyons, Executive Producer, Writer and Director, to find out how this groundbreaking film came about.

“In the late ‘90s, I was working at WGBH in Boston as development editor on a NOVA series called “Adventures in Flight.” The idea was to do a series of programs, each one a re-enactment of a historic flight,” Steve said. When an independent production team proposed a film about the storied China Clipper, Steve added that idea to the hopper of potential programs for the series. But NOVA was unable to raise the necessary funds for “Adventures in Flight.” The project was ultimately shelved, and Steve soon left NOVA to pursue other projects as an independent producer.

Years later, Doug Miller, a member of the team that had initially proposed the film to NOVA, contacted Steve to rekindle interest in a film about the China Clipper. Now PAHF’s webmaster and a board member, Doug eventually became consulting producer on the film.

“Doug played a big role in the development of the film,” Steve says. “He was an important source of information about the early history of Pan Am; helped us track down dozens of critical images, particularly those from the Pan Am archives, and was an invaluable sounding board for the project.”

Together, Steve and Doug approached PAHF and secured the first of two

development grants totaling \$40,000 to support the research and writing of a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the most promising source of production funds for a historical film of this sort. Based on his experience with previous NEH proposals, Steve did not think it likely that NEH would support a film that focused only on Juan Trippe, Pan Am and the China Clipper. But his early research suggested a more promising approach: basing the film on Trippe and two other major characters: Russian airplane designer Igor Sikorsky and radio engineer Hugo Leuteritz.

“People today think of Igor Sikorsky as the inventor of the helicopter; they are largely unaware of the role he played in the development of the Flying Boat,” Steve says. That story begins with Sikorsky’s design and production of an amphibian called the S-38, which could land and take off on water as well as land. That led to the S-40 and the S-42 — two of the most important flying boats from an era when the lack of suitable runways meant large planes could land only on water.

Leuteritz played an underappreciated but critical role, pioneering the radio navigation techniques that would allow

Across the Pacific *cont. p. 4*

beginnings of Pan Am and chronicles the advances in avionics with each successive generation of aircraft. I grew up hearing stories about the early days of Pan Am, but as I watch 'Across the Pacific,' I still marvel at that dedicated group of young men and their incredible accomplishments achieved against unimaginable odds.

Marine Air Terminal

After many months of discussion and much frustration, we hoped that in 2020 we would conclude our plans with the Port Authority for a permanent Pan Am presence in the Marine Air Terminal (MAT) at LaGuardia Airport. Though talks have been stalled by the current pandemic, we are optimistic that plans



Detail showing Pan Am from the famous James Brooks mural, "Flight"

will be finalized soon. The building has been designated a National Landmark so its place in history is secure. However, Pan Am's role in the operation of the Terminal is not well documented. The MAT was Pan Am's headquarters for its North Atlantic Operations from its opening in 1940 through WWII until the airline moved to the new Idlewild Airport in 1948. As previously reported, the exhibit will include a series of plaques recognizing the landmark status of the building and commemorating the massive mural by James Brooks which depicts the history of flight and Pan Am's significant role in aviation. A new, larger model of the Boeing B-314 is proposed to hang in the Rotunda. ➔

Please see page 3 for Ed Trippé's report of the Foundation sponsored tour through Egypt on the eve of the pandemic.

Persistence of Vision — Pan Am's Moving Image Heritage

By Doug Miller

Having these historic motion pictures provides a bridge to a past which is now beyond most living memory, but they also provide the resources essential for accurately presenting Pan Am's history on into the future.

From the start, the building of an international airline was the subject of intense interest and excitement. Aviation was still in its formative stage, and stories of record-breaking flights and adventure aloft filled newspapers and magazines in the US and internationally. And even more captivating were actual movies of the same events.

Motion pictures were only a bit older than aviation, but by the 1920s, the movie business had grown from novelty status into a sizable industry. By the close of the decade, as Pan Am was spreading wings to the south, the portable movie-making gear was widely available. Both professional and amateur film equipment was being widely used.

Hollywood had already caught 'flying fever', not coincidentally with Charles Lindbergh's unleashing a tidal wave of popular enthusiasm with his transatlantic flight in 1927. The very first Academy Award for Best Picture went that year to the World War I aviation epic "Wings."

Interest in capturing aviation on film went far beyond big budget productions for the silver screen. Motion picture presentations provided the perfect visual aids for group presentations — a huge advance over the 'magic lantern' used previously. With the advent of portable film cameras and projectors (mostly using 16mm 'safety' film rather than highly flammable nitrate film commonly used in Hollywood), public presentations enjoyed a powerful new dynamic visual dimension.

Pan Am, like other companies, saw value in commissioning films to be shown to groups. Civic, church, school, and other gatherings were perfect venues, and the audiences were more than willing to watch. As routes spread ever wider, Pan Am made films with titles such as "Two Hours to Havana," "Flying the Lindbergh Trail," "South by Sky," "Five Hours to Bermuda," "Gateway to the Southern Americas," and "Transpacific." Even if the average viewer was not about to pay the price of a Clipper journey, the vicarious thrill of a promotional film provided a fine alternative.



Transpacific Title Frame

These films were heavy on the allure of what were then exotic destinations, but they also showed how comfortable, safe, and exciting a Clipper trip could be. Viewed today, the presentation can seem campy and quaint. But the places filmed decades ago have long since changed. For example, shots of 1934 Port of Spain, Trinidad are today valuable as a window onto a bygone time and place. And the sequences of the aircraft, terminals, and personnel are true historical gems.

Persistence *cont. p. 6*



A report on the Pan Am Historical Foundation 2020 Tour on the Eve of the Covid 19 Pandemic

By Ed Trippe

In early March, an enthusiastic group of Pan Am colleagues, along with family and friends, descended on Alexandria from far-flung corners of the globe to embark on a two-week adventure of a lifetime. Upon arrival, we were greeted by Dina Ezz El Din, our tour leader and Egyptologist extraordinaire. Each day was filled with so much fact, myth and history that our heads were spinning. The trip was the tenth tour to be organized by PAHF and was managed by our travel partner, Distant Horizons. Earlier groups had gone to Cuba, Iran, Southeast Asia, and Morocco. The Egypt trip, because of the onset of the early stages of the Covid-19 virus, would have its own challenges.

We started the tour in Alexandria staying at the historic Cecil Hotel. A high point of our visit was the modern Alexandria Library. Built in 2002, it is an amazing building housing an impressive collection of books and historic artifacts.

Our next stop was Cairo where we stayed at the Semiramis Inter-Continental Hotel. It was a nostalgic visit for me as I was involved in the lengthy negotiations among the Egyptians, the Saudi investors and IHC when the hotel was built. IHC oversaw the development and construction of the hotel and ultimately its management when it finally opened in 1988. We were also able to reconnect with my old IHC colleague, Raymond Khalife. Many remembered him from his days as General Manager of the Phoenicia Inter-Continental in Beirut, a Mecca for Pan Am crews transiting the Middle East.

Cairo has changed dramatically since my days visiting Egypt in the 1980s. The urban sprawl has grown in all directions and the traffic is crippling. Unchanged and still incredibly impressive are the Egyptian antiquities. On the first day, we visited the Citadel, a massive fortification and mosque built in 1176 BC. Next on the tour was the Al-Khalill Bazaar, a Cairo landmark with narrow allies and vendors selling the

government moved quickly and all hotels and cruise ships on the Upper Nile were immediately quarantined. We were under lockdown at the Moudira Hotel, unsure whether our Egyptian tour was about to be cancelled. By noon, the Egyptian medical authorities had tested our group and we were released to continue our tour. That afternoon we were among the first groups to be admitted to the Valley of Kings,

and for the next few hours we had this amazing site of ancient burial chambers almost to ourselves. The tomb of King Tut is among the most renowned with still-vivid paintings created 3,500 years ago.

Later that afternoon we boarded our cruise ship, the MS Farah, which was to become our hotel for the next four days as we moved South up the Nile to Aswan. Clearly Covid-19 was already impacting Egyptian tourism as there was only one other group on the ship.

Our next morning was spent at the Temple of Luxor, which dated to 1400 BC and is one of the largest and best preserved of all of the ancient monuments. We sailed on to visit a series of towns along the Nile to our final stop in Aswan, the location of the High Dam that controls the flow of water in the Nile, the life blood of Egypt.

On our last day aboard the ship, we experienced a massive sand storm that essentially closed down all of Egypt. The air was filled with very fine particles of sand that made it difficult to breathe. In Cairo, the city was shuttered and the airport closed. The airport closure would add to the chaos for visitors trying to reschedule flights home.



The group assembles beneath the towering statues of Pharaoh Ramses II at Abu Simbel

same wares they have for generations. That afternoon we toured the Cairo Museum that I had visited 40 years earlier on my first visit to Cairo. On our final day, we visited the Pyramids, an amazing sight that leaves you in wonder as to how in the world they were built.

The following day, we flew South to Luxor on the Upper Nile that was the high point of the trip. The first night we stayed at the Hotel Al Moudira, a small boutique hotel that provided a bucolic transition from the chaos of Alexandria and Cairo. Al Moudira will also be remembered because it was where the harsh reality of the Covid-19 pandemic first began to register with us. An Egyptian tourist, who we think was traveling from Asia, was on a Nile cruise and had shown symptoms of Covid. The Egyptian

Pan Am's pilots to safely cross the ocean by touching down on the tiny islands where they would need to stop to refuel.

Steve's first proposal to NEH was turned down, in part because aviation films are not highly regarded by historians — they're often too superficial and celebratory. But Steve thought it might be possible to change NEH's mind. With the second of PAHF's development grants, he amended the proposal to emphasize how the film would explore the social dimensions of flight, and he beefed up the epilog to illustrate how the film would show how transoceanic flight had changed the world.

Success! The second proposal was accepted, and Moreno/Lyons Productions received, first, a scripting grant for \$75,000 and, later, a production grant for \$600,000. "It was the largest grant NEH awarded in that cycle," Steve says, "but it was only half what we needed to make the film." And so began a long fundraising drive, which eventually netted support from the Pan Am Historical Foundation, the Ambrose Monell Foundation, the Freeman Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the Thomas W. Haas Foundation. Additional funds were earned through a film tax credit from the state of Massachusetts, where all the dramatic re-enactments were shot.

Once they had enough funds to produce a two-hour film, the production team started shooting interviews with authors, scholars, former Pan Am employees and family members of the aviation pioneers. "At a summer camp run by Sikorsky's grandson, we discovered that Igor Sikorsky III is a natural-born storyteller who had taken the time to learn about his grandfather's

work. He became the main voice in the Sikorsky sections of the film."

In telling the story of the events leading up to the historic first flight of the China Clipper, the film combines interviews and archival images and film, interwoven with dramatic scenes. The scripts draw on interview sound bites, excerpts from letters, speeches and other archival material.



On the set at the filming of 'Across the Pacific' (L-R) Re-enactment Director Lisa Quijano; Director of Photography Ezra Wolfnger; Juan Trippe played by actor Brian Muller; Ed Trippe; and Writer/Producer Stephen Lyons.

Using a model they had developed on earlier projects, the production team cast the major characters in New York, where there is a deeper pool of acting talent to draw on, and the lesser characters in Boston, drawing on actors from across New England. "The New York actors delivered the strong performances we expected," Steve says. "The surprise was the caliber of the performances we got from the ensemble cast from New England. They really make certain scenes — and therefore the film — much stronger than we had any reason to expect."

All the re-enactments were filmed in the Boston area over five long, grueling days in four locations. "It was the only way we could afford to do it," Steve says.

Asked if there were any other surprises along the way, Steve cited the recent discovery of the 1927 letters between Juan Trippe and his future wife Betty, found in a closet by their son, Ed Trippe. "Up to then, Juan Trippe

had always been a cryptic figure," Steve noted. "But he comes to life in these letters, which reveal a softer personal side to his personality."

During the editing of the film, the team decided they needed a third hour to include the newly discovered letters and tell this increasingly complex story. A last-minute contribution from Margaret C. Zockoll and Jim Zockoll

(a former Pan Am employee) made the third hour possible.

Across the Pacific is being distributed as three one-hour episodes by American Public Television to all 350 PBS stations nationwide. But each station individually decides whether and when to air the program. "It's frustrating not to be

able to tell people when the program will air, Steve says. "But it's a good sign that about 85 percent of the stations that have scheduled it so far have chosen to air it in prime time— weeknights between 8 – 11 PM— rather than burying it over night or on weekends." "Though they don't yet have a complete picture of ratings, the early signs are promising. In Richmond, a re-run of Across the Pacific, broadcast over three hours in a row on a secondary channel, drew more viewers than a Masterpiece Theatre episode airing at the same time on the main channel. Each episode drew more viewers than the one before — a sign of the series' ability to attract and grow an audience. ➔

If you don't want to wait for the program to be broadcast on your local station, you can stream it now on the Virginia Public Media website or on the project website (www.acrossthepacific.com). You can also purchase the series (\$2.99 per episode or \$6.99 for the entire series) through iTunes at the Apple website.

The First Air Force One Flight — An African Odyssey

By Ron Marasco

President Roosevelt celebrates his 61st birthday, January 30, 1943, aboard Boeing B-314 Dixie Clipper, en route home after the historic conference in Casablanca. From left, Admiral William D. Leahy, his physician, Harry Hopkins, his assistant, and PAA Captain Howard Cone.



During World War II, Pan Am's fabled Clipper flying boats "carried priority passenger and cargo. Admirals and General flew, kings and queens flew, film stars flew to entertain the troops and hundreds of American celebrities and noted war correspondents flew throughout the world," writes Robert Daly in his book, *An American Saga: Juan Trippe and His Pan Am Empire*.

But undoubtedly the most famous passenger in the world was President Franklin Roosevelt, "the first incumbent President ever taken aloft." The President's trip to Casablanca for the first major Allied Conference in January 1943, was also the first Air Force One flight undertaken during a dangerous part of World War II. Clearly a bold and courageous undertaking given the overall state of President Roosevelt's health

The specific details of the trip were never widely known until 2011. Fortunately for history, Peter Leslie, a Pan Am Historical Foundation Board member published his father's spellbinding memoir in his book entitled *Aviation's Quiet Pioneer John Leslie*. John Leslie was an airline engineer and Pan Am's Atlantic Division Manager. He was also a war-time Naval Reserve officer who coordinated the Casablanca mission between the Navy and Pan Am, and accompanied the President on his historic journey.

The Casablanca Conference was the first of the great Allied mid-war conferences, attended by Roosevelt, Churchill, their military chiefs of staff, and the French leader Charles de Gaulle. The Soviet Union's Josef Stalin did not take part because the Nazis were dangerously close

to capturing Stalingrad. The Conference planned the invasion of Europe and the Mediterranean Campaign with the plan to invade Sicily.

Leslie's memoir offered an opportunity to document the historic contribution Pan Am made to a truly pioneering event in aviation history, and indeed World War II. The story, *The First Air Force One Flight: An African Odyssey* expands on the mission's fascinating details, intriguing



John Leslie, Atlantic Division Manager, was a Lt. Cdr. in the USNR. He was placed on active duty and commanded the Clipper One flights to Casablanca and return.

commentary on the flight crews and the exclusive revelation of the origin of today's famous Air Force One call sign.

A Princeton graduate, Leslie also held an aeronautical engineering degree from MIT, and started his career in engineering with Pan Am in 1929. Throughout the 1930s he worked closely with Ed Musick, Pan Am's legendary Chief Pilot and Charles Lindbergh developing

cruise control techniques for long range transoceanic flights for all of the early Flying Boats. In later years he advanced through the company's senior executive ranks, including being a Board of Director for Pan Am.

As Leslie noted, it started with a phone call from a friend on active duty who indicated that he better come down to Washington to discuss "certain matters" with the Navy high command. When he got there the Navy high command told him he would organize what had to be a "top-secret" mission, flying President Roosevelt to Casablanca. Since the mission had to be accomplished in total secrecy, Leslie made no special preparations for either aircraft or flight crews. In fact, he did not even tell Pan Am's Chairman Trippe. Using two Pan Am Boeing B-314 flying boats, the President's party would fly in one aircraft, Leslie and the President's support staff would fly in the other aircraft.

Today's Air Force One is a magnificent VC-25, a military version of the 747-200 that has been totally reengineered from top to bottom. It is "the most celebrated aircraft on earth, with sophisticated flight control capabilities, top secret airborne defense systems that surpass any plane in its class. Its design and extraordinary capability projects the power of the United States President around the world."

The Presidential Airlift Group at Andrews Air Force Base is an elite flight and ground support team that ensures the president flies in the most secure flight operations system in the world. The President travels in a secure bubble of protection, with Air Traffic Control

Air Force One *from p. 5*

clearing the airways and Air Force One's every move tracked by an armada of air and sea support services.

Needless to say, President Roosevelt did not travel to Casablanca in a secure bubble of protection. On the contrary, the Casablanca mission was arguably, the riskiest air transportation mission a United States President has ever undertaken. Pan American World Airways had established a distinguished service record bringing far flung destinations from the United States to Europe and the Far East within reach of world travelers. Their legendary Boeing 314 aircraft and Pan Am's "elite flight and ground support team" were a logical choice to ensure President Roosevelt's utmost safety.

Because of the dangers raging in the North Atlantic at that time of the War, a South Atlantic crossing became the chosen route for the Casablanca trip. Pan Am's pilots and navigators had garnered extensive experience flying the Boeing 314 Clipper flying boat across the South Atlantic from Brazil to Liberia, Africa, transporting cargo to supply the Allied forces in North Africa.

The full story, *The First Air Force One Flight: An African Odyssey*, can be accessed on Pan Am's website, panam.org. It vividly portrays Leslie's observations of the trip from beginning to end, starting with the pilots reporting for duty, not knowing their passenger list would include the President of the United States; the landing in Africa at Bathurst, British Gambia alongside the Navy Cruiser, USS Memphis; the details of the abrupt change in Roosevelt's return trip from the well-lit, calm waters of Fisherman's Lake, Liberia to a risky, unlit midnight departure takeoff from Africa's Gambia River, loaded with floating debris; and ending the mission with a First Class Pan Am celebration dinner for President Roosevelt's Birthday, during the last leg of the trip from Trinidad to Miami. ➔

Persistence *from p. 2*

The Pan Am Historical Foundation is fortunate indeed to have, and have access to and use of many of these decades-old films, through both donation and via cooperative arrangements with other institutions and individuals.

Of course, individuals were taking their own motion picture gear along to record their experiences. Clipper trips were a highlight of anyone's life, and passengers would bring their 8mm or 16mm cameras. One such wonderful example of this is the extensive color footage recorded by Jonnie and Pauline Falk on their 1937 trip to China, including the transpacific flight on a Martin M-130. A year later, aeronautical engineer Richard Rhode flew from Alameda to Hong Kong and back on the Hawaii Clipper. His film, along with a quantity of great still photos, was donated to the Foundation.

We also have some of the films of those connected with Pan Am. One such is Ernest Allison, who flew for and managed operations in China for China National Airlines Corporation (CNAC). Other collections include those from pilots Bob Ford, Humphrey Toomey, and Royal Leonard. We even have the films of the Trippe family themselves, which awaits a transfer from the original 16mm film to a modern digital video format.

All these, whether sophisticated commercial productions with music and narration, or silent personnel documentation, are perishable. The old film stock is often subject to chemical degradation due to improper storage where heat and humidity will eventually destroy them.

The PAHF has been working to save these irreplaceable historical assets. Since 2015, we've been working with a nationally-recognized lab near Washington DC to make sure that they will be preserved and digitally copied so that they will remain a valuable part of Pan American's rich legacy.

An exciting recent prospect is a grant proposal currently under consideration for funding by the National Foundation for Film Preservation (NFPF), an organization mandated by and funded

by an Act of Congress. If approved, the grant will provide a substantial sum for our preservation of and digital reproduction of an important film collection we currently hold.



A roll of film from the Fulton Collection:
Saved from destruction



A frame from the film reel shown above:
A Panagra DC-2 with some uninterested onlookers

Having these historic motion pictures provides a bridge to a past which is now beyond most living memory, but they also provide the resources essential for accurately presenting Pan Am's history on into the future. Much of the archival footage used in "Across the Pacific," recently released on public television, was shot by Robert Fulton, Jr., a young man hired to film Pacific base-building in the 1930s (and more besides). The footage — much of it highly inflammable nitrate stock — sat in a barn for years, until rediscovered by his family and donated to the Foundation. It was almost lost forever, but it's now safely preserved and available for years to come. ➔

An Interview with Dan Colussy

By Martin Deutsch

Martin B. Deutsch created Frequent Flyer magazine in 1980 and was editor-in-chief and publisher for 15 years. He has also published and edited leading travel industry magazines, including Travel Management Daily and Travel Age.

Luxury Dining in the Sky



The oft-told narrative of the Boeing 747 does not often include tales of what was one of the most tasteful promotions ever crafted in the jet era: Candlelight suppers on the upper deck of Pan Am's specially configured widebodies.

The Queen of the Skies is in the news again more than 50 years after its maiden flight because the end is near. Although Boeing has not confirmed it, the financially stressed plane-maker will shutter its 747 assembly lines. Production of passenger variants ended in 2017, but Boeing has continued to slowly crank out 747 freighters for grateful customers such as UPS. Only about a dozen remain to be built, however, and 2022 literally seems to be the end of the line for the aircraft that essentially created modern commercial aviation.

Mass-market flying--the "democracy" of affordable travel for all, if you will--is surely the Boeing 747's greatest legacy. Which is ironic because it took a double-decked behemoth like the 747 to allow Pan Am to craft a most elegant and exclusive in-flight perk. Although I flew Pan Am 747s dozens of times back in the day, I only remember being invited a few times to the upper deck. Even a first-class ticket wasn't enough to guarantee you an invitation to the dinner table. There were 24 first

class seats on the lower deck of the Pan Am 747s, but only 14 available dinner positions in the lounge upstairs.

I know it's hard to believe, but once upon a time flying was that luxurious. Airlines competed for and courted first class customers. They were pampered with sandwiches from famed restaurants such as New York's 21 Club and in-flight lounges offering cocktail bars and even Wurlitzer organs. Pan Am was always a cut above, however.

Dan Colussy, who ran Pan Am marketing in the 1970s, found the Boeing 747 upper deck a problematic piece of real estate. During a recent conversation, the now 88-year-old Colussy told me he "didn't think" the area was right for a "legit first class seat" and he found existing upper-deck lounges "ineffective. If you put economy [seats] up there, then first class passengers were offended with [coach flyers] walking through the space" to reach the staircase to the upper deck. "It was a problem from a marketing point of view."

The solution — a lounge that converted to a 14-seat dining room for first class flyers — was certainly something that would burnish the Pan Am brand. The airline "was known for dining. After some research, we said, 'Let's give this a try and see what happens.'

There were challenges. The financial team needed to be convinced it was an economic use of space. Besides, Colussy remembers, "engineering doesn't like marketing guys screwing with their planes, whether seats or you name it."

Although the steep, narrow Boeing 747 spiral staircase would remain, Pan Am installed a "dumbwaiter to get food upstairs" at the back of the upper cabin. Special tables and chairs were installed, some plush banquettes, others swivel-style bucket seats. Tables were outfitted with white tablecloths and napkins and set with fine china, glassware and utensils. Four people were seated at each table as well as one set for two. There were fresh flowers, of course — a graceful centerpiece for each table.

And what of the food? There was no separate menu for the lucky 14 who dined restaurant-style in the bowed upper deck. The first class passengers who remained downstairs and the flyers invited upstairs ordered from the same menus.

But, oh, what menus. The star was always Pan Am's carved-at-your-seat roast beef. Lobster Thermidor was equally loved. Menus rotated seasonally with a choice of entrees, of course. Deserts such as Baked Alaska were popular. On some routes, local

Supper in the Sky *cont. p. 8*

Supper in the Sky from p. 7

specialties were featured, such as a cheese plate on flights to Nice. And there was always top-notch caviar and wonderful Champagne.

“It was quite the elaborate service,” Colussy says proudly.

Wine service was often controversial, Colussy recalls. “We always had good wines. In those days, the French dominated the elite selections and we had special deals with vineyards in France.

We basically bought out their whole supplies.”

But Pan Am strived to offer both the best of the

“elite” French category and the best American wine. That didn’t sit well with European guests. “Back in the 1970s, Europeans were very snobby about their wines. California wines were not considered very good. They turned up their nose at our service of California wine.”

You could reserve a seat for dinner upstairs when you booked your first class seat. I never did. It was always a bit of a thrill to be offered the opportunity to ascend the spiral staircase for dinner after being invited by the purser or a flight attendant. It was, literally, a class by itself. It made you feel important. There was a cache to this marketing approach that still resounds all these decades later.

And while I best remember some unique tablemates — three fresh-faced German post-grads on a backpacking trip of a lifetime--Colussy stresses that Pan Am was always the carrier of the stars.

“The thing about Pan Am in those days, on almost every flight, especially to Europe and across the Pacific, is you always had one movie star aboard or someone who could be called a

celebrity,” he recalls. “That was a big attraction for other first class passengers, to see a celebrity and maybe sit upstairs with them.”

Sadly, the upper-deck candlelight dinner service was ephemeral. It operated for only two years in the early 1970s and was jettisoned as the oil crisis exacerbated Pan Am’s worsening finances and stoked its long competitive decline.



Colussy, who joined Pan Am in 1970, has been more durable. He lasted a decade at America’s one-time “Chosen Instrument” and ended his career as president and chief operating officer. In 1981, he became chairman, president and chief executive of Canadian Pacific Airlines. He led the company that rescued Iridium, the satellite operator. He’s still active today as chairman of Gemini Capital, a venture-funding firm, and appears as personable and approachable as ever.

As for the Boeing 747, there are two more passenger versions in production along with the remaining freighters. Boeing has a contract to build a pair of specially configured 747-8 aircraft to serve as the next generation of Air Force One. The \$3.9 billion aircraft are expected to be delivered in 2024.

I’m guessing whomever is President in four years will be able to arrange their own in-flight luxury dinners. I’m available on short notice to fill out a table. ✈

Reprinted With permission from ‘Joe Sent Me,’ a business travel newsletter by Joe Brancatelli.

Egypt from p. 3



March 14th was our final day in the Upper Nile and began with a short flight to the Temple of Abu Simbel before continuing on to Cairo that afternoon. Abu Simbel, with its four colossal statues of Pharaoh Ramses II, was to become the most impressive temple we visited. Originally built in 1244 BC on a site overlooking the Nile, the temple, in a massive feat of engineering, was relocated by UNESCO and rebuilt into a mountainside when the Aswan Dam flooded the Upper Nile.

We returned to Cairo for our final evening and at dawn the next day we would all make our separate ways home. These were the chaotic days when returning US residents on flights from all over the world experienced massive delays and confusion in US gateway cities. When we arrived at JFK, the Immigration and Customs lines were chaotic with few people wearing masks and no effort at “social distancing”. It is no wonder in the chaos that my wife and I were exposed to and contracted Covid-19. Thankfully we have both recovered and nobody else in the Pan Am group contracted the virus.

Since March and our amazing trip to Egypt, the world has changed dramatically. As I look ahead, it’s hard to know when or where there will be another Pan Am tour. But the Pan Am family members are inveterate travelers so we can assume there will be a time in the future when we’ll search the Pan Am route maps and pack our bags again. ✈

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