



Thanks Jeane --great newsletter ---lots of good memories---Sorry to hear about Bill Keating. **Jennie Cook *******



Jeane; Again, a great newsletter!! Sorry to hear about Stu, and Bill Keating. Stu and I have crossed paths many times over the years. The last time that I recall was when I was flying from HNL~NRT(JAL) and called Midway airport on VHF only to discover it was Stu I was talking to!! He was a dispatcher at the time. I also met Bill Keating and his wife at their home about 11~12yrs ago with a mutual friend that knew Bill well. It's a bummer growing old, and seeing your old friends go. I am surprised I don't recognize any names in your letter referring to OAES, and hangar 28. I worked in hangar 28 in late '54 to mid '55, when I went to Wake and Guam and then in '56 to mid '58 I worked as an inspector on the final line at O.A.E.S. until I quit and started my airline career with "Arctic Pacific" – a one plane (C-46) operation as an F/O-mechanic, since I had an A&E....and as they say....the rest is history!! I hope we can have another annual get together soon. Keep up the good work!! Regards, **Val Barrett *******

Thanks very much for the newsletter! I really appreciated it, especially since it [informed me of] Bill Keating's obit. A very special guy. **Captain Joe Henderson *******

Jeane: I know you have many stories to contend with and I personally feel some should take precedence over others as with the story of **Bill Keating** with whom I am quite positive I flew with in 1949. Not only a Great Pilot but, better still, a man of genuine character I personally place above all other accolades of an individual. I am deeply saddened of his passing and my condolences to his family. Life will go on as it must. Thank you again. If it weren't for your dedicated effort in preserving fond memories of so many - a task in itself - history would just pass on to the ages and be lost for future generations. I am finding now our youth have become more interested in past history. Keep up your inspiring work everyone is so appreciative of. Stay cool. Sincerely, **Mac [Charles Mac Quarrie] *******

Hi Jeane. Thank you for the newsletter including a request for information about Mr. Rosto. [See Taloo Newsletter July 2011, **Oliver Andre Rosto**] I hope there are other members remembering him. That would be nice. Your help will be appreciated. Regards **Rob Mulder, European Airlines *******

I enjoy reading the newsletters. I have moved. Here is my new address: 31770 Alvarado Blvd. Apt.77, Union City CA 94587. I'm just a month away from 97 years old and going strong. This photo was taken this year with the new Mrs. Dijeu – an sweetheart from 40 years ago. Keep up the good work, **George Dijeu**



I find the newsletters very interesting. Thank you for all you do. **Erik Moberg** responded to my comment in the last newsletter about a mid-air collision involving ex-TAL DC-4 N79992. The information I had stated was that the other DC-4 was owned by Eastern Air Lines. To be honest I questioned whether EAL was flying DC-4s in mainline service in 1951. I volunteer with a couple of ex-airline pilots at the New England Air Museum and they also questioned that. Erik set the record straight by stating that the other DC-4 was operated by Cal Eastern, not Eastern Air Lines. I appreciate that he took the time to make the correction and thank him for doing so. **Rick Centore**

Webmaster response: Hi Rick, Our readers not only read, but respond with stories, corrections & further information. TALOA alumni are very engaged and have made this newsletter a MUST read for so many of them

as well as those interested in aviation around the world. Once again the family & community spirit that was Transocean Air Lines shines through. Thank you, readers, for your contributions! *****

I believe my brother, H. Glen Leason, was a director of TAL in the late 50's. I owned some TAL stock as did some of my customers that I had when I worked in the securities firm owned by my father, Leason and Co., Chicago, IL. There was a rumor that some big operator was wanting to take over TAL, with the backing of a securities firm known as Reynolds & Co. The stock was up around \$10 and then fell flatter than the proverbial pancake and apparently zeroed out. Does any of this ring a bell? I'd love to hear the "rest of the story". My brother passed away in 2007 at the age of 83. Regards, Geary Leason

Readers...would anyone like to answer Geary's question? *****

Anyone around from the period of 1957 – 1959? I set up the first "TRAVEL AGENCY", having arrived on Guam after working with Thomas Cook in NY. My husband's work brought us to Guam. **Jeanne Helwig ****



Transocean Air Lines was the first commercial flight to Samoa, 1959. The air was so thick you could fish out the windows on take off!



The dancers are all the "party" in Samoa. It went on for 2 days, which we didn't expect, but it was fun (taro and all!). We were pooped after the flight from Honolulu. Funny thing, my neighbor is from Samoa and remembers that flight coming in and the "party". Small world! Also, talking to Ron Winiker, he was on that inaugural flight as well!! How time flies!

TRANSOCEAN INAUGURAL FLIGHT TO SAMOA 1959 By Ron Winiker

HNL to Canton 7:33 3-10-1959

Canton to Samoa 3:15

I was the Flight Engineer on Transocean Boeing Stratocruiser 27V and Carol Johansen, a friend of mine, was a flight attendant. We landed on a grass and coral runway in Samoa with Orvis Nelson and his family on board the inaugural flight. On arrival we were all treated to a Kava Root ceremony by the Samoan chief or prince. I remember the main hut was very impressive with mahogany beams bound together, and with palm thatch on the sides and roof with white pebbles for the floor, all quite contemporary except for the two rows of old tires on each side of the peak of the roof to keep it from blowing away.

The Kava Root ceremony was also very impressive with speeches and dancing girls who later prepared the Kava Root in large bowls by kneading it with their hands in water. Then the girls passed the Kava Root drink around in coconut shells. It looked like muddy water, and tasted about the same, but the effects were good after an 11 hour flight, and we enjoyed it all.

I remember Carol sitting next to me but I can't remember the rest of the crew, and I did not write their names in my log book for which I'm sorry now, but the best part is after 51 years Carol and I have made contact again.

Editor: The following images with captions are from the collection of Carol Johansen Hill...



The Nelson family was also part of that first flight into Samoa. The gentleman with them is now the King of Tonga. At that point he was just a prince, returning

home after ordering a new yacht in Holland, rough life.
Very loving person, took up 3 seats!



Stewardess Tanya Takahashi
Stewardess Pat Baum



Ron Winiker & Carol Johansen Hill - 2011

I took flight instruction from Virgil Simmons in the 1950's at Transocean Academy. I recall taking my ATR check ride with Mr. Simmons many years ago. I really enjoyed his instruction. I never forgot him – quite a gentleman. I was wondering if there is a source where I can check for info re Mr. Simmons & the flight academy history. I went on to fly for Frontier Airline. Thank you, [Lou Sylvestri](#)

Webmaster response: Hi Lou, I published an email you wrote in the August 2010 newsletter but I don't recall anyone responding about Virgil Simmons. The TALOA Academy of Aeronautics has its own webpage with images - <http://www.taloe.org/academy.html> . I'd also be happy to publish any memories you might like to share. Hopefully this time someone will write in with some memories.

We are French Airline on AOG station, investigating on P/N 65-50773U116 CHORD, could you please assist us if you have any stock available. Looking after your feedback. Best regards. Yasmina Arkoub, EUROPE Airpost Purchasing Dpt.

Webmaster response: Dear Mr. Arkoub, Unfortunately, we cannot assist you in obtaining this part. Transocean Air Lines has been out of operation for 51



years. Sincerely, Jeane Kennedy Toynbee, Chairman, TALOA Alumni Association.

Readers...I found the following information on Wikipedia:

Europe Airpost is an airline based in the Bâtiment Le Séquoia in Tremblay-en-France. It operates mail and cargo flights for the postal service and newspapers dispatch during the night and scheduled and charter services for other airlines and tour operators by day thanks to its fleet of Boeing 737-300QC ("Quick Change") that can be switched between cargo and passengers configuration in less than an hour. Its main



base in Europe is Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport and in Africa Ibn Batouta International Airport.

The airline's roots can be traced to the "Companie Générale Aéropostale in 1927 that pioneered mail delivery between Europe, Africa and South America with famous pilots like Jean Mermoz and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. It was originally part of Air France from 1947 to 1991 when it operated as Société d'Exploitation Aéropostale (SEA). It took on the current name in 2000 when it started services on its own for the French national postal service (La Poste). On March 14, 2008 Air Contractors of Ireland officially acquired the airline. The aircraft keep the former livery and call sign. It had 400 employees as of March 2007. *****

I am researching Ray Elsmore, gone west in 1983. I found one news article listing him as a T.O. Captain. Do you have any info on him? Thank You, Sincerely, Mike Poirier

Webmaster response: Hi Mike. There are 8 page references of Ray Elsmore on www.taloea.org. Use our search feature on the site and each of the pages will display. In addition, two of our newsletters contained articles which will provide further information. The editions are:

August 2010: <http://www.taloea.org/files/Aug2010.pdf>

August 2011: <http://www.taloea.org/files/Aug2011.pdf>

Hope that helps, Jeane

Hi Jeane! Thanks for such a prompt reply. After I sent you the email, I spent over two hours of maximum enjoyment on your site! What a great site. I guess I

probably found most of what you sent, and now have almost more questions than before.

Col. Ray T. Elsmore is not the man I am looking for. I actually bought the book about the South Pacific crash he was involved in (its on your site) hoping it was "my" Ray H. Elsmore, but it clearly was not. It seems both were approx. the same age, and both passed away near each other too. "My" Ray Elsmore had a note to the editor in the June, 1982 newsletter, and he joined your organization at the same time. Ironically, he mentions being involved in AZ Real Estate while living in Reno, and a year or so later, was killed in a light plane accident going between those two cities. I was unable to find any further references to him in my look.

I will return to your site often! It is the best...Can't wait to visit the Museum in OAK. Thanks again, and if any info on the "other" Ray H. Elsmore surfaces, please send it my way! I will scan and email to you any info I am able to come up with. Sincerely, Mike, Reno, NV

Transocean's Impact On Humanity From 1940 – 1960

Readers: Help is needed! Run to your bookshelves (or closets) and check those logbooks! You may remember the author, John Davis, He is leading a team that is writing the full and complete history of the C-54/R5D and DC-4. This book will cover the development, operational military history & histories of all airlines that used these aircraft - including a lot of detail, and also a complete history of every one of these aircraft.

I started TAL's contribution by scanning over 100 pages of my father's (Capt. Frank Kennedy's) logbooks that contained entries for these aircraft. It's easy...just scan & send to John Davis at this email address: dav1229@sbcglobal.net

[Here's the latest email from John...](#)

Jeane: May I yet again ask that you put a brief note in an issue of the newsletter when space allows? In *Folded Wings* Arue Szura lists N79999 as a DC-4 leased from U.S. Overseas Airlines, but with no dates recorded. We have asked Dr Ralph Cox Jr., who was principal owner of that company, if he can find a record of the transaction, but so far - no luck. It seems that N79999 was only leased for a short time, possibly 3 to 6 months in 1958. I wonder if anyone can find a log book record for '999' that might help establish dates of use? Thank you very much, John M. Davis, Wichita, KS. PS: No record of your father flying that aircraft! *****

Subject = Past Affiliation. Was Western Sky Industries once a division of Atlas Corporation? If so, the military is interested in purchasing a plate spacer nut, part number WS17-7-5. My phone number is 215-737-4079. Leon Silverman

Webmaster response: Hi Leon, No, Western Sky Industries is no longer in business. A bit of history: Western Sky was established in 1952 when Transocean Air Lines was awarded a Douglas Aircraft Company subcontract for the manufacture of aircraft components. Western Sky Industries assembled 931 wing-sections for the AD-4, AD-5, and AD-6 Sky Raider, the propeller driven multi-purpose Douglas Attack bomber of the U. S. Navy. In 1955, the company assembled forward fuselage sections of the Douglas built AD-3 Sky Warrior, a U.S. jet bomber. The company employed about 400 workers (with a \$1.2 million dollar annual payroll) in its ultra-modern 60,000 square foot facility with its high intensity lighting, monorails, and other aircraft production requirements.

*What the Webmaster would have liked to respond: Sure, they cost \$16 each! I'm sure someone still has those parts in their garage!!******

My name is Greg Liefer and I am the author of two books on Alaska aviation. "Broken Wings: Tragedy and Disaster in Alaska Civil Aviation" was published in 2003, and "Aviation Mysteries of the North" was released earlier this year. The reason I'm writing is an interest in your Alaska C-46 photos. The circumstances of the Transocean C-46F crash on December 30, 1951 are detailed in my first book, "Broken Wings: Tragedy and Disaster in Alaska Civil Aviation". When the book was published I lacked many quality images to be used for publication, but have since located many of the actual aircraft and wreckage photos pertaining to the individual stories. The exception is the story on the N68963 crash near Fairbanks, Alaska. If you would be interested in providing some of the Transocean C-46 photos in Alaska, especially #38 of the actual pre-crash aircraft, you and your website will of course be given full credit for any used. I look forward to hearing back from you. Sincerely, Greg Liefer

Wedmaster response: Hi Greg, I'm publishing your email in our alumni newsletter in the hope that someone will be able to provide the images you are looking for. In the meantime, I will search my father's logbooks & photos to see if I can identify anything that might help in your search.

Q: Where can I get another copy of the newsletter?

A: An archive of the TALOA Alumni Newsletters can be found at:

<http://www.taloea.org/newsletters.html>

Once there you can print your own hardcopy if you like. And it will be in living color!

Editor: What follows is the story of only one small chapter in the life of Transocean Air Lines' Captain Bill Keating, but it is the story of a man who risked his own life to bring life and joy to the most innocent victims of the Vietnam War. During the final days of the Vietnam War, a group of orphans were evacuated to the United States on a dramatic flight that would launch

Operation Babylift

Written by Patricia Johnson Mulder

It was Easter Sunday in 1975, and life for Charlotte Behrendt became a series of events because of one phone call. Charlotte, twenty-eight year old, only daughter of Edward J. Daly, listened to the anxious voice of Maria Eitz. Maria, sounded alarmed and worried about the orphans in her care. Maria, a dedicated organizer of the Friends For All Children, an orphanage in Boulder Colorado, expressed to Charlotte her fears about the orphaned children in Saigon. DaNang had recently fallen to the Vietcong. Maria asked Charlotte for help in getting the orphans out of this now very dangerous place. There were over five hundred and



fifty children in this orphanage. Maria and parents waiting in the United States for the children, felt that they were in danger of being killed by the conquering forces. A few weeks earlier, Ed Daly had sent the World Airways planes in to give supplies to the orphanage. Now, more help was needed. Maria asked Charlotte if she could do anything to get the orphans out of South Vietnam and to safety in the United States. Charlotte told Maria to stay on the line, while she placed a Trans-Pacific phone call to her father. Edward J. Daly answered. As Maria, Charlotte and Daly talked, hope for rescuing the orphans became a reality. Daly was already in Saigon, working on other missions involving getting

rice to hungry people in Phnom Penh. Daly did not hesitate a moment. Every minute counted. As soon as he hung up the telephone, Daly began to make plans for the rescue. On March 27th, Daly had already cabled President Ford and Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. His message was urgent. "A human slaughter of massive proportions is imminent," in Cambodia and South Vietnam. Daly never received a message back from his cable. Therefore, he decided to take on the responsibility of helping save hundreds of lives. It did not matter to Daly how much it would cost to save the children. Daly had been a busy man. He had a previous charter commitment in Oakland, which gave him only two days to assemble a flight crew, food medicines, and anything else necessary for a successful, safe operation. Apparently, the government seemed nervous about his undertaking, but it did not make Daly lose his focus. He wanted to help the orphans. Daly checked his schedule log for available pilots. He wanted to handle this emergency quickly and professionally for the safety of the orphans and his crew. Daly pulled one of his planes off the Rice Lift in Cambodia. Captain Bill Keating flew to Phnom Penh the morning of April 2, unloaded his forty-five tons of rice, and was back in Saigon before noon. It was then that Captain Keating and Captain Kenneth Healy (pictured below) discovered that they were assigned to fly five hundred and fifty orphans to the United States.

They would not be alone on this flight. Volunteers were willing to help. On this flight, were four doctors, seventeen European, American and Australian nurses, from the orphanage who wanted to accompany the children to safety. As Daly sat in his hotel room, used now as his office, he counted the hundreds of dollars bills that lay on the desk in front of him. Rescuing people had become a part of his life and he enjoyed the planning process. Daly had already instructed his pilots and on many occasions flown with them to rescue men, women and children refugees from DaNang. In fact, from March 24 through March 26, 1975, World Airways rescued over 1000 refugees from DaNang to Saigon and Na Trang, using three 727 aircraft under a sub contract with Air Vietnam, who then terminated the contract, as they felt that DaNang was too far out of control. On the 27th, flights were then made for USAID, for one day. On the 28th Daly spent the day urging both Vietnamese and United States government officials to some how affect an acceptable crowd control at DaNang, and he would continue to fly out refugees on his own. (A detachment of United States Marines was suggested - and laughed at) Talks continued until past midnight, when Daly and Healy, unsuccessful in their quest, went back to their hotel to get some sleep. At five AM, Daly called Healy's room and said, "I don't care if the ___ will

help or not. If you will fly to DaNang with me, we will move more refugees on our own." Healy said, "Sure." So they went to work. Three crews were alerted, so as to use all three 727 aircraft. It was decided to operate the flights 30 minutes apart so that only one plane would be on the ground at DaNang at a time. Daly and Healy took the first one. Captain Don McDaniel the 2nd, and Captain Dave Wainio the 3rd. This flight was on March 29, 1975. On arrival at DaNang, all looked calm, and the control tower advised that everything was under control. Upon landing, all hell broke loose, and Healy immediately radioed the other two aircraft to turn around. At that time many refugees did everything to board the last plane out of DaNang. There were soldiers running behind the 727 as it taxied slowly down the runway, trying to get aboard. Some even ran up the rear stairs, into the cargo compartments and wheel wells. World Airways made a daring escape with a plane severely damaged by hand grenades, thrown by soldiers in an attempt to stop the plane. The crowd was out of control so Daly told Captain Healy to take off. The plane was overloaded by 20,000 pounds. There were 360 people aboard a plane which is designed to carry 105. The baggage compartments were loaded with people. Some of the problems during the flight included, the rear stairway remained partially extended for the entire flight and the main wheels would not retract, and the lower cargo doors were open. The plane had to fly at 10,000 feet because of lack of pressurization. Fuel consumption was three times greater than normal.

When they finally landed at Saigon the fuel tanks were almost empty. This flight was later referred to by CBS News as "The return flight from hell." Now, Daly had another rescue to prepare for. He looked at Jan Wollett, standing near his desk, waiting for instructions. Jan saw her boss counting the money to help buy supplies. Jan, a flight attendant was also scheduled to take part in the rescue of the orphans. She smiled as she took the money from Daly. She was sent to buy supplies needed for the flight. It was about 8:30 AM, Wednesday morning of the flight. Jan searched Saigon for pens to secure the orphans during the flight. Unfortunately, Jan was met with coldness and uncooperative people. No one wanted to help her buy supplies. The blankets, milk, baby food and food were essentials to keep the children comfortable. Most disappointing of all, was when the Red Cross refused to supply anything. They had been advised by the U.S. Embassy that Daly's plan to fly orphans, was a hazard. So Red Cross officials stayed out of the evacuation plans completely. These officials did not understand the importance of saving the children. The clock was ticking away without even a handful of

supplies for the orphans. Jan was still willing to look for other help. She thought of Father Roberts, who had said Mass for the crew of Plane 691, on Easter Sunday after they escaped on the last flight out of DaNang. With his prayers and kind blessings, their hearts and minds were more at ease. They looked forward to more challenges that involved helping people. Jan was happy to meet Father Roberts again. Jan explained to him what she needed. Father Roberts, knew about the black market and could get blankets for the children. Jan gave him five hundred dollars, and he quickly left for the inner city of Saigon. Later, Jan was told by some of the doctors and nurses that the U.S. Embassy had just received a delivery of a thousand cases of baby food. "Food for the children. Thank you." Jan thought, as she located a telephone. She telephoned the Embassy. It was almost noon. No one there would help her. The cases of baby food would never reach the orphans. An invisible cloud of despair seemed to fill the afternoon air. The flight was to depart at 3:30 p.m. on April 2nd, Saigon time and date. 15 Jan tried one last place. She telephoned Foremost Milk Company in Saigon. They agreed to help. After a few hours, they appeared at Ton Son Nhut with four hundred quarts of milk, which they donated to the orphans. Jan was extremely happy when she saw the milk. Her efforts had been rewarded. "I only buy Foremost Milk now," Jan said later, during an interview with reporters. Soon after, the milk was aboard the plane, Father Roberts arrived at the gates of the airfield, with blankets he purchased. But, he was refused entry. The officials on duty at the gates gave no explanation to Father Roberts. Father Roberts was very disappointed that his treasure went unnoticed by the officials. But, he knew that World Airways crew understood, when they saw him walk away with his arms full of blankets. The crew now had to focus on the aircraft. Kenneth Healy and Bill Keating spent the rest of the day getting the plane ready for flight. In spite of being assigned to a plane with no seats, the crew was able to create a safe, comfortable interior. Cargo pallets were locked to the floor. Then mattresses and blankets were put down; crew wrapped netting around it and fastened this to the pallets. It was finished off by adding blankets and pillows on top which were also fastened securely. The bassinets were tied to the cargo netting. For the older children, they could crawl and hold on to the strong netting. The idea of a huge padded playpen, would make the long flight more comfortable than having seats. The overhead compartments had been removed. To replace the fact that there were no oxygen masks to use in case of emergency, thirty to forty portable bottled oxygen tanks, were obtained and tied to the side of the plane. The four lavatories were located, two in front and two in back. Jan was very happy that at

least some of the supplies were ready to go. She discovered another hero during the rush to prepare everything for the orphans. Ken Kaizer, station manager for the Flying Tigers, and a colonel in the U.S. military were both able to ask the commissary for soft drinks, baby food, fruit, cookies, medical supplies and other edibles, to be delivered to the aircraft. Time was running out. At around 1:00 p.m., Daly and Margaret Moses, deputy director of Friends For All Children, and her assistants, arrived at Tan Son Nhut, with sirens and Vietnamese police. The exit visas were approved. All was going well until Margaret received a phone call warning her that the plane was unfit. With her two companions, Margaret examined the airplane and her two companions agreed that the plane was unfit. Margaret was out voted. Margaret was still willing to go, but she never flew on World Airways flight. When Daly located the source of the warning, which was from USAID, who had determined that the flight be stopped, he understood that they really did not know the facts. "If they could only see the airplane, they would realize that it was fit." Daly said. There were thirty-one adults and three doctors to handle the five hundred and fifty orphans. But, the USAID still insisted that the plane was "antiquated and unsafe." USAID did not have time to come out and inspect the airplane. Jan felt that, "The USAID and orphanage officials do not understand the way the cargo plane is set up with pallets, blankets and everything. It is perfectly safe. There is 1 adult for every 10 children. We can more than evacuate them in this emergency." The orphans would be very well protected in World Airways plane.

Thirty years later, on June 13, 2005, 21 of the orphans from that first flight prepare to board a World Airways plane in Oakland, Calif., to return to their homeland, where they will spend two days touring the former South Vietnamese capital. The airline, once based in Oakland and now in Peachtree City, Ga., agreed to host the flight after Shirley Barnes, author of



Ken Healy and Bill Keating

War Cradle (Vintage Pressworks, 2000), brought her book to the attention of CEO Randy Martinez. "If you can round up the adoptees, World Airways will take them home," Martinez said. And *Operation Babylift: Homeward Bound* was launched.

Captain Bill Keating along with a group of evacuees, family members, former airline employees, and retired service members, totaling 120, gathers in the airport hangar to embark on the flight. An MD-11 plane, painted with World Airways' white and red logo, sits proudly poised on the runway. Before boarding, Martinez, a retired Air Force officer, thanks the invited group of special guests: "We are here to honor our heritage, reunite 21 adoptees with their birth land, recognize our loyal employees, and support the growing relationship between America and Vietnam."

Ferry to USA by [George Hernan](#)

When flying long distances over water or unsettled territory, there are two significant waypoints of which one must be continuously aware. The first is called the equal-time point; this is the point along the route where it takes equal time to arrive at the destination as it takes to return to the point of departure. The second is of vital significance and is properly called the point-of-no-return; this is the point of the flight at which there is not enough fuel to return to the departure point. The importance of this is that, no matter how dire the situation, one must continue to the destination because one cannot turn around and go back. Most of the time neither waypoint becomes a major concern, but the point-of-no-return reared its ugly head when I was flying with Air Djibouti and was part of the crew assigned to ferry C-46 N68964 from Jerusalem to the USA in 1953.

This trip did not start auspiciously. On January 3, an hour after departing Asmara in N68966, the left engine failed and we had to return. After repairs, we departed again the next day, on January 4, and the trip was uneventful as we traveled to Port Sudan for refueling and then on to Jerusalem Airport to pick up N68964. The proposed routing was Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, Frankfurt, Shannon, Keflavik, Narsarssuak, Gander, then to Bradley Field, CT.

On January 6, we left Jerusalem in N68964 for Athens and, after refueling, left Athens for Rome. The forecast along our route included a cold front moving in, which usually means bad flying weather. A little over an hour after takeoff the fun began. We ran into severe turbulence and thunderstorms and ice began to form on the wings. If the turbulence wasn't enough to convince us to return to Athens, the icing was.

This airplane had been flying in the deserts of the Middle East and no longer had any deicer boots on the

wings. Deicer boots are flexible surfaces on the wing's leading edges that, by alternately inflating and deflating, break up ice as it forms, thus maintaining proper airflow over the wings and the necessary lift. The forced overnight stay in Athens had a plus side – we had a chance to do some sightseeing, the highlight of which was visiting the Parthenon.

Between January 7 and January 20 our stops were Rome, Frankfurt, Shannon and Keflavik, Iceland. The potential for icing when crossing the Alps on the Rome–Frankfurt leg caused minor concern, but it turned out not to be a problem. The real problem was the malfunctioning cabin heater, which kept us in Frankfurt for a week as we awaited repairs and for the weather to break. After Frankfurt, the stops were Shannon and Keflavik.

On January 23, we left Keflavik for Narsarssuak, Greenland (also known as Bluie West One). This flight turned out to be a white knuckler because January is not the time of year to fly over the north Atlantic, from Iceland to Greenland, in an airplane with no deicer boots. We discovered the wings were starting to ice up after we had passed the point-of-no-return. Since going back was not an option, we had to continue on to Narsarssuak. To melt the ice, we descended to about 6000 feet, which was below the icing level. This worked fine over the ocean; however, Narsarssuak is on the west coast of Greenland and we had to fly over the Greenland icecap to get there. The icecap was over a mile deep so, if the top of the icecap turned out to be higher than the freezing level, we had a major problem because it was doubtful that we had enough fuel to go around the southern tip of Greenland. We continued to fly directly across, barely above the icecap and, luckily, the wings did not ice up. Once we had reached the west coast of Greenland, we only had to find Narsarssuak.

Narsarssuak is located about fifty miles up a fjord. To find the airfield, we had to fly up the fjord and make a partial left turn at the end, being immediately ready to land. A minor complication is that there is more than one fjord to choose from and it is vital to pick the correct one. Flying up the wrong one, with mountains on both sides, would have presented a problem because there is no room to turn around.

A pilot could make only one attempt to land at Narsarssuak because the runway ended at a mountain. We could not abort the landing and go around to try again. Of necessity, all landings were from west to east and all takeoffs were from east to west, regardless of the wind direction. The picture (above) shows Bluie West One at a later date; when we were there it was winter and snowy, and the runway was icy and more primitive.

We located Bluie West One and landed successfully. After refueling, we left for Gander, Newfoundland, but



our visit to Narsarssuak was not over. About 45 minutes after takeoff, we detected an oil leak and had to return up the fjord and land again. After repairs and an overnight stay, we again departed Narsarssuak for Gander and then on to our final destination, Bradley Field in Windsor Locks, CT. On this second try, we arrived at Gander without incident. However, unbeknownst to us, we had not shaken our jinx.

The flying time from Gander to Bradley Field in a C-46 should take a little over six hours. After five and a half hours, we determined that we were only as far as Halifax, about half way to Bradley Field, and running low on fuel. Obviously, the headwinds were unusually strong, apparently about 100 mph, and had slowed our ground speed to a crawl. It was getting imperative that we find somewhere to land to refuel, but Halifax was completely hidden under clouds and we could not find the airfield.

As we searched there suddenly appeared an opening in the clouds and through it we spotted a runway. The pilot circled that big, clumsy C-46 like it was a fighter and navigated down through that hole in the clouds and landed, to our great relief. I had not been able to contact anyone to get clearance to land and, because we had not been able to see the ground, we had no landmarks to tell us what field it might be. That airfield turned out to be a Canadian military airfield. Our dropping out of the sky and landing was the cause of some excitement. The armed greeting committee made it clear that they were unhappy because we were American, civilian, not expected and did not have clearance to land. But after an hour or so of explaining our near-emergency situation and a lot of telephone calls, everything cooled down. They refueled us and we took off again for Bradley Field.

On a previous trip, the flying time from Gander to Bradley Field took six hours and ten minutes. The flying time for this trip, between the same two points, was nine hours and forty-six minutes, not including the one hour and twelve minutes on the ground at Halifax.

We left Gander at 0928 hours and finally touched down at Bradley Field at 2026 hours and we were mighty glad to finally get there after the relatively eventful trip from Asmara, Eritrea.



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