

## PANAMUSINGS

Japan always fascinated me; the country that my father had fought against during WWII was a mysterious place to me. My first flight to Japan was in 1965 and I subsequently flew many flights on Boeing 707 aircraft from New York to Fairbanks and then on to Japan. The visit to Fairbanks alone was worth the trip, but that is another tale.

In the early 70's Juan Trippe, the founder of PAN AM, went to Boeing and asked them if they could build a long-range version of the 747. This aircraft would be used on extreme range flights, such as New York to Tokyo and San Francisco to Sydney. These routes were long but had a relatively light passenger load.

Boeing built the aircraft, called the 747SP (special performance), a 247 passenger version of the 747, some 46 feet shorter. It was equipped with JT9D-7a engines, a 50000 lb. thrust engine versus 46000 lb. of the older 3a. This was combined with a lighter takeoff gross weight (696000 vs. 734100) and the ability to carry 50000 gallons of jet fuel. This aircraft was a spectacular performer and a delight to fly. This aircraft could go higher (45100 feet), faster (Mach .85 vs. Mach .82), and further (7100 vs. 5500 statute miles). The only problem was that the flights were 12 to 14 hours long. However, we did have bunks in the cockpit and one extra pilot and flight engineer as relief crewmembers.

On one of my flights to Tokyo I was flying first officer (copilot) for Captain Lloyd Welken, a WWII veteran and a Brigadier General in the Air Force reserve. As we started our descent into the Tokyo area, Pan OP (operations) was attempting to give us a message that we were having a hard time understanding. We suggested that they meet the aircraft and deliver the message in person. As it turned out the Japanese version of J. Walter Thompson, Pan Am's advertising agency, wanted to interview a crew regarding their experience and training. Since we were all rather tired we suggested that the following afternoon would be much better and we agreed to meet them at the Keio Plaza hotel, our layover facility.

Our Japanese interviewers showed up promptly at 1800 hours and we went to the lobby lounge. After a series of questions concerning training, background and education, they asked Captain Welken what aircraft he had flown. He mentioned the Boeing 377, Boeing 707 and of course the 747. He was asked if he had been to Tokyo before joining Pan Am. Lloyd's response was that he had flown to Japan at least **49 times** before working for Pan Am. The interviewer asked what aircraft Lloyd had been flying when he made these trips. Lloyd replied "**B29's**". After a long period of silence, the interviewer replied "**You probably burnt down my house.**" Always gracious hosts, our interviewers ended the evening by buying us a large Tempura dinner and forced us to drink many glasses of Sake.

*Ed Spellacy*