

PAN AMUSINGS

"Fate is the Hunter"

My apologies to Ernest K. Gann for stealing his book title, but I think you will understand after you have read this.

A pilot's monthly schedule at Pan Am came out in a form called "bid lines". The line was a series of trips, or maybe one long trip that would fulfill your flight hour obligation for the month. These lines were bid on in seniority order, thus the name "bid lines"

Naturally the months of November and December were intense for crew members, trying to schedule the holiday periods to be free of duty. The more senior a pilot was the less of a problem it became.

In December of 1988, I managed to schedule myself so that my last trip before Christmas returned from London on December 23. I would then be off for a few days after Christmas but would be gone for New Years.

Ken McAdams had been a chief pilot at Pan Am and was a frustrated author. In fact when I first met him in 1965 he was writing a book, we are still friends and he is still unpublished. He had bid and picked up a trip to London from the open time board (trips still not assigned to a crewmember), that would return on December 21. When he told his wife, she mentioned that they were scheduled for a Christmas party that night, so Ken dropped the trip back to the open time board.

Jim MacQuarrie had an interesting background. He had been raised in an orphanage, went through USAF pilot training as a cadet, was hired by Pan Am and became the head of the Air Line Pilot's Association at Pan Am and a 747 Captain. I knew Jim well, as I had been a union official for several years.

Jim needed a trip to fill out his month, as he was going on vacation after Christmas. Therefore, he picked up the trip that Ken McAdams had dropped to the open time board

Ray Wagner was a first officer. Ray was only 55 but it was his intent to retire in 6 months, he was only flying so that his wife could do some traveling before he retired. Ray had devoted a good part of his life and all of his land to the local junior soccer league, for the kids to practice their game. Ray had successfully bid to return from his last trip on December 21.

I met and talked with Jim McQuarrie in the lobby of our layover hotel in London on December 20 as I was departing for New York. My flight arrived in New York

rather late, around 2030 (8:30pm). Jim would be bringing the same flight back the next day.

I was scheduled to return to London the next day, December 21, 1988 on flight 102. This flight was the last flight out to London leaving around 2000(8pm). As I was driving to the airport, I usually listened to the news on WCBS 880 New York. This gave me the traffic picture for my drive through the NY area. The radio had something more than traffic information that night, the announcer said that Pan Am 103 had disappeared over Lockerbie, Scotland. Jim and Ray were on that flight.

When I arrived at the airport, it had been confirmed that Jim and Ray as well as 251 other people were on Flight 103, ***I had operated that flight the day before.*** I took the 102 flight to London that night but my heart was not in the operation. I had a whole FAA contingent and many company officials on board. One of the FAA inspectors met me in operations and said that he would be in the cockpit all night, *"watching my every move"*. A clever purser gave him a scotch and put him in first class, eliminating him from the cockpit. That incident reinforced my negative feelings about FAA.

As we later learned the accident was a result of a terrorist bomb, and the traveling public was reminded of it frequently with that sad picture of one side of the cockpit section of the aircraft lying on the ground. After a while I turned off the news when that picture appeared. While Pan Am had been physically ailing for a long time, the company reached a terminal stage after the 103 bombing. Our first class traffic, the high revenue traffic, dropped to zero and stayed that way for the next year. Pan Am and it's employees struggled, and it took three more years, but the company finally died. The end came on December 4, 1991, another story and another day I will never forget.

It has been 19 years but the memories are still vivid. Fate was the hunter, and missed me by one day.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Ed Spellacy