

Chapter 14

Central Office Duty and Overseas Airlift

A month or two later, the chief of air operations was transferred to be district director in the Washington district office, his assistant was promoted to his old job, and I was transferred to Washington to be assistant chief. They transferred the plane and the pilot position from Richmond to another station.

My new position justified the grade of GS-12, but I had to get an FAA instrument rating first. I had a good working relationship with the chief pilot of the Virginia State Police, and he let me borrow their twin-engine plane to take my test. I had taught instrument flying for a year at Newport, so I didn't have any trouble. The first pilots flying the big planes were already in grade GS-12, and most of the GS-11 pilots were in the Southwest Region and didn't want to live in Washington. Others didn't want to fly on instruments in high-density traffic, so I didn't have much competition for the job.

I heard they tried several times to get Ed Parker to come to the CO, but he always resisted. Their next choice was Paul Grenier, who was still at Miami. He didn't want to live in Washington, and he hated flying on instruments, so he did everything he could to get out of the assignment. He persuaded them to send him instead for a trial period of two months, and during that time he got a certificate from his doctor saying he had a health problem that would be aggravated by cold weather.

So they sent him back to Miami and gave me the job, although I had been a pilot only a little more than a year. Paul must have made a remarkable recovery from his cold-weather problem, because two years later he was promoted and transferred to be immigration attaché at the American Embassy in Ottawa, Canada. Paul was a good selection for that position. Both he and his wife were gregarious, loved parties, and spoke French. He stayed there several years.

Soon after I got to the Central Office my boss asked me to fly a government official to Little Rock, Arkansas, because of some trouble they were having there over integration. He wanted me to take off at ten o'clock that night, just four hours later. I was the only pilot there at the time, and I needed a copilot. I finally reached Lou Cates, who was not a

pilot but had flown in the C-47 a few times and knew how to handle the radio and let the wheels up and down. By the time I found him he had had a few beers, but he seemed to be in fair condition. When we landed safely at Little Rock, I breathed a long sigh of relief, and I'm sure Lou did too.

Lt. General Joe Swing (retired) was also known as Jumping Joe Swing because he had commanded an airborne division. He was the Commissioner of Immigration at the time, thanks to his friend and West Point classmate President Eisenhower. The general had a very positive personality and was accustomed to having his way. One story went around the service about a psychiatrist who died and went to Heaven. "We are glad you are here," St. Peter said, "because we have a man here who needs your services. He is really Jesus Christ, but he thinks he is General Swing."

The General thought it was a good idea to load up the C-47 with officials from the Central Office and make a trip along the Mexican Border, stopping to visit every District Office, Sector Headquarters, and major port of entry along the border. I made one of those trips, and it was like a three-ring circus. We had Mario Noto from Investigations, Ed Rudnick from Naturalization, Herb Nice from Intelligence, "Slick" Martindale from Records, Jack Keefe from Procurement, and several others whose names I can't recall. At each border town, just about everybody went across the Rio Grande and bought a gallon jug of Mexican Rum (the limit for each entry), and by the time we got to El Paso we had a heavier load than we ever had before.

The airport at El Paso is 4,000 feet above sea level, and the temperature when we took off was in the nineties. We knew this reduced our margin of safety, but we didn't want to tell everybody they had to leave all their heavy rum jugs at El Paso. The ground elevation got gradually lower beyond the end of the runway, so that gave us some margin for error. We backed the plane to the beginning of the runway, held the brakes, and revved the engine to the maximum allowed. Then we released the brakes and went racing down the runway. We got off the ground in time and had a slow rate of climb leaving the airport. We flew through a break in the mountain range just west of the city (a mountain pass that gave El Paso its Spanish name) so we had no serious mountains to cross right away.

At all the stations along the way people complained bitterly about the hard line Tom Roney took in the regional office when scrutinizing their expense vouchers. David Blackwell told me once that he had proved to his chief that he was entitled to an unscheduled overtime (UOT) claim that Roney had disallowed. His chief, George

Harrison, called Roney in the regional office and confronted him with the proof. “Well, maybe he is entitled to it technically,” Roney finally admitted, “but it is a small matter and it is still disallowed.”

The trip ended at the regional office, and they had a big meeting with the regional personnel. Jack Keefe brought in a skinny redheaded man to introduce. “This is the man you have been hearing about all week,” he said. “This is that sonofabitch Roney.”

The Border Patrol used the Piper Super Cubs to fly along the border at 60 feet in the air and 60 miles an hour. At that speed and that elevation the pilot or the observer could see tracks in the sand and could often follow them until they found the aliens. Then they called by radio for a jeep or truck to come and get them. They had strips along the border where they pulled a drag late each evening to smooth the sand and erase any existing tracks. Then any tracks they found the next morning had to have been made the night before. The planes also looked for aliens along railroad tracks that they followed into the interior, and at windmills, where they stopped to drink from the water they pumped for livestock.

Sometimes in the farming areas they formed a task force with several jeeps and trucks and one or more planes. They stayed in radio contact, and the planes found groups of workers and directed the ground units to them. These operations were usually successful. Each sector had at least one plane and one pilot, and the bigger sectors had two planes and three pilots. They needed more pilots than planes, because a Super Cub could fly all day; but four hours was a good day's work for a pilot doing that kind of flying. Often one pilot flew a plane four hours early in the morning, and a different pilot flew the same plane four hours in the afternoon. A Super Cub didn't need much routine maintenance, compared to larger planes. Those planes and pilots served an extremely important function for the Border Patrol, especially along the Mexican border.

A few pilots were killed in accidents while on duty. Ken Carl died in an accident, but nobody was surprised. He was highly effective rounding up aliens, but he took so many chances his friends had been predicting he would never live to retire. He was flying alone at the time, probably because he had trouble finding observers willing to ride with him.

Fritz Karl became a light-plane pilot after they disbanded the airlift. He was flying a Super Cub when he hit wires on takeoff. He had a senior patrol agent named Blue with him, and they both died in the accident. There were others, but I didn't know any of them personally.

Ed Parker compiled and edited a book called *Prop Cops*, a story of the Border Patrol air operation from its inception to approximately 1964. It was published in 1983 and is

available from the Border Patrol museum gift shop, PO Box 4767, El Paso, Texas 79914-4767. The telephone number is 915/759-6060. The following is quoted from Chapter III.

“HONORABLY DISCHARGED

“A special niche in the record of the ‘Seventy Eight’* is reserved for five men who ended their careers with a hand on the throttle:

Ned Henderson	1944
Tommy Box	1950
Buck Buckelew	1954
Doug Shute	1956
Kenny Carl	1961

“The inevitable destiny of man has accounted for only three more of us to date:

Bill Beggs	1960
John Wright	1962
Ralph Cole	1964

“Several are no longer on the INS payrolls. The first pilot to leave the Service for other endeavor did achieve a distinguished career—Greg Hathaway, was long-time superintendent of the Arizona Highway Patrol. Phil Pring, transferred to the FAA and is now ‘top brass.’ Our only retired pilot, I recall, is Fritz Voight, now a tavern operator near San Bernadino, California. Two other Border Patrol pilots resigned to try their luck ‘outside’. –Detail of their current activities is not available at this writing.

“A substantial number of pilots have remained in the Service after doffing flight caps for various reasons. Among these are Bob Brewster, Don Brown, Paul Grenier, Walt Hayfield, Charlie Henderson, Don Morse, Ed Parker, Al Pilliod, and Joe White. Quite a little Service horsepower represented there, but one wonders if each doesn’t frequently wish he could turn back the clock and swap his desk for a cockpit.”

* The Seventy Eight was the total number of Border Patrol pilots there had been up to the time the book was written.

I was never a sector pilot, but I took a flight now and then as an observer. Once we flew over the King ranch in Texas, and I thought it would go on forever. I remember seeing deer from the air, and once a big flock of wild turkeys.

I also flew with Bill Turner, the sector pilot at El Paso, on a sign cutting flight. He was flying along looking at the ground, and I was in the back seat rubber-necking all around. I saw a line of high-tension electric wires up ahead, running at 90 degrees to our line of flight. They appeared to about at our flight altitude, and I had to bite my tongue to keep

from saying something to Bill, who gave no indication he saw them. But just before we would have crashed into them, Bill pulled back on the stick and the plane hopped over the wires and then immediately went back down to his working altitude. I decided he either had unusual peripheral vision or had another set of eyes in the top of his head. Or perhaps he had some checkpoint on the ground to alert him that it was time to hop over those wires.

A Super Cub would fly almost indefinitely unless it started to rust. If an engine wore out we replaced it, and if some fabric got torn, we repaired it. But down in the lower valley of Texas the airframes tended to rust because of the dampness and the nearness to salt water in the Gulf of Mexico. When that happened to a plane, we replaced it. In Arizona, New Mexico, and West Texas, it was so dry they rarely rusted, so they lasted much longer there.

Once I saw several acres of military airplanes in storage, parked in Arizona wing tip to wing tip. They lasted better there because of the dry climate.

There were hundreds of deportable aliens throughout the United States who were in institutions at public expense. Some were in hospitals, some were in mental institutions, and some were in jails. General Swing arranged to get a surplus C-54 (DC-4) from the Air Force and had it refurbished as a hospital ship. The State Department arranged for these aliens to be accepted by their families or by their countries of nationality, and we flew them home in the DC-4.

A typical crew was two captains, two copilots, one flight engineer, one radio operator, one navigator (sometimes plus a trainee), one deportation officer, one doctor, one nurse, one male medical attendant, one female medical attendant, and three flight attendants. That made 15 in the crew, and the plane could carry 50, so that left room for 35 passengers. Our accountants figured if we projected the public cost of the aliens to the end of their life expectancies, we saved the government a quarter of a million dollars on each flight.

We kept the plane at the Lockheed facility at Idlewild Airport in New York City, later renamed J.F. Kennedy Airport; and most flights went by way of Gander, Newfoundland, and Shannon, Ireland. Looking at a flat map it looks like a rainbow arc, but looking at a globe it appears as a straight line. Under normal conditions, we could fly nonstop from Gander to Shannon, because the prevailing winds were behind us, pushing us along.

We had a good kitchen on board and could carry fifty hot meals. We restocked the kitchen in Gander and again in Shannon. If we were going on to Athens, we restocked again in Vienna. It was much simpler to feed our passengers in flight, and we didn't lose

any time on the ground. We had only two bunks, and the off-duty pilot and copilot usually used them. Everyone else slept sitting up in the seats.

On any long-distance flight we filed a flight plan with air traffic control (ATC). The plan included the departure point, estimated time of departure, destination, and estimated time of arrival. If we filed under visual flight rules (VFR), we needed nothing more. We had to report only to ATC when we arrived at our destination, so they wouldn't start looking for us.

In 1956, when I had flown the Super Cub to Chula Vista, I flew under VFR all the way. That plane didn't have the necessary equipment for instrument flying, and I didn't have an instrument rating until later. On most of our trips in the C-46s to and from El Centro, we also flew under VFR. It was late fall when I was there, and many of our weather briefings reported cloud ceiling and forward visibility unlimited (CAVU.)

When we flew the four-engine plane, however, we almost always filed our flight plans under instrument flight rules (IFR.) Those plans had to also include the proposed altitude and the route we planned to follow. There are airways in the air, just as there are highways and railroads on the ground and sea-lanes on the oceans. Under IFR we had to maintain the altitude assigned by air traffic control and stay on the route we had filed for, unless directed otherwise. Then if we encountered clouds on the way we flew right through them.

For navigating on instruments over land, our best aides were the two automatic direction finders (ADF) and the two very high frequency omni range instrument (VOR, or OMNI.) The following information taken from Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 99, will explain the function of these instruments. This is fairly technical, and the casual reader may wish to pass over it to the next part:

“An omnirange station broadcasts radio beams that pilots within a radius of 169 km (100 mi) may use for navigation. The VOR (Very High Frequency Omnidirectional Range) station uses a central antenna to broadcast a continuous reference signal and four variable signal antennae that produce a signal rotated at 1800 rpm. A pilot sets a desired course manually, then relies on electronic equipment to interpret and process the signals received from the VOR station. The airplane receiver compares the phases of the signals to determine the bearing of the plane, then indicates whether the plane is to the left or right of the desired course.”

“The radio direction finder was the first navigational aid to come into general use. If the bearings of two transmitters with known locations can be measured, the position of the receiver may be determined. In its simplest form, a modern D/F consists of a conventional radio receiver with an antenna in the form of a coil of wire called a loop (see Antenna). Such a loop antenna has strongly directional properties; if it is mounted so that the axis of the loop points directly to a radio station, it will receive no signal whatsoever from that station; if it is mounted so

that the plane of the loop passes through the radio station, it receives a strong signal. At intermediate positions the signal is intermediate in strength. In practice, a known station is tuned it, and then the loop is rotated until no signal is heard; this position is called the aural null. The axis of the loop must then point directly toward (and away from) the station; this direction is plotted by the navigator as a line of position.”

“An automatic direction finder (ADF) has a motor that rotates the loop antenna, keeping the loop always in the null position. The motor also actuates a needle, similar in appearance to a compass needle that indicates the position of the loop. This so-called radio compass points not toward north, but toward whichever station is tuned in on the loop antenna. Such direction finders can operate on any station broadcasting a continuous carrier on a frequency that the radio set can receive. Virtually all aircraft and ships are equipped with D/F equipment. Ground D/F stations have also been installed to aid lost aircraft. Radio D/F equipment is also used in police work and counterespionage to locate hidden radio stations.” --*Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 9*

Simply stated, the ADF needle points directly at the radio station it is tuned to.

Our aeronautical charts showed all the airways and the check points along the way, including the locations and the broadcasting frequencies of radio stations and VOR facilities within range of the flight path. We tuned one ADF instrument to a station as near as possible on our direct course to our next checkpoint. That way it would ideally be pointing straight ahead, and when we passed over the station, the needle would suddenly reverse itself and swing around to point to the rear. We tuned the other one to a station off to one side of our desired course, and the needle would gradually swing around as we went by it. When it was pointing ninety degrees from our course, we knew we were abreast of that station and that would pinpoint our location along our line of flight.

The two OMNI or VOR instruments allowed us to get bearings from two facilities at the same time, and where those lines crossed would pinpoint our location. But the ADF system was easier to use and we depended mostly on that to fly to the next checkpoint. If we had a cross wind we had to make necessary allowances instead of following the needle straight ahead.

The charts also showed the locations and the radio frequencies of the air traffic control (ATC) stations for reporting our progress. A typical report might be, “Minot radio this is 1866 Charlie over East Overshoe at 12:23, 10,000 feet, estimate Prairie Dog Village 13:03, over.” Minot might then say, “Roger 66 Charlie, start descent to 8,000, and report reaching, over.” This would be followed by “Roger wilco, Minot, 66 Charlie out.” About four minutes later—“Minot, this is 66 Charlie, 8,000 feet, over.” Then, “Roger 66 Charlie, report over Prairie Dog, over.” And finally, “Roger wilco, 66 Charlie out.”

The FAA had assigned 1866C as the identification number of the plane, and pilots always used names instead of letters to avoid confusion. A listener could easily confuse a C with a Z, but would not be likely to confuse Charlie with Zebra. In casual conversation, our pilots and crew members referred to the plane simply as “Charlie.”

Roger meant “I heard you,” Wilco meant “will comply,” Over meant “I’m through talking and I’m waiting for you to talk,” and out meant “we have nothing more to talk about.”

ATC didn’t have continuous radar contact with planes along the way, and often when we approached a busy area they asked us to make a turn in a certain direction and then turn back to our original heading. That was how they identified our blip on their radar screen.

We had letdown charts for all the airports, and they gave us the information we needed to make an instrument approach for a landing. The minimum conditions usually were a ceiling of 200 feet or more and at least one half-mile forward visibility. If you got down to 200 feet and still couldn’t see the runway, or if you could see the runway, but couldn’t see one half mile ahead, you applied the power and didn’t land.

Usually we used the instrument landing system (ILS) to get us to the point where we could see the runway. The device in the plane had a little model of a plane in the center and two lines (needles), one running laterally through the little plane and the other running vertically through it.

Transmitters on the ground sent out electronic signals to establish a constantly-descending glide path for the approach, and a horizontal line indicated the location of the correct glide path. If we were above the glide path, the horizontal line would be below the little plane, and we would reduce power enough to descend to the line. If we were below the glide path, the horizontal line would be above the little plane, and we would increase power enough to bring us up to the line. If the little plane was exactly on the horizontal line, we knew we were descending along the proper glide path.

If we were to the left of the direct line to the runway, the vertical needle would be to the right of the little plane, and if we were to the right of it, the vertical needle would be to the left. In either case we turned toward the needle to make the correction. Two or three adjustments were usually enough to hold both needles steady on the little plane and to make a smooth approach down the glide path to the runway. Along the route of our approach there were usually two or three radio beacons with different signals, the outer, middle, and inner markers, that lit up little lights in the cockpit when we crossed them. They gave us more precise information as to where we were in relation to the end of the runway. As I recall, the outer marker was about five miles from the runway and flashed one color, the middle marker, about 3,500 feet, flashed a different color, and the inner marker flashed still another color. There was also a distinctive audio signal for each marker. The inner marker told us we were about 1,000 feet from the runway threshold.

Sometimes we had a ground-controlled approach, when an operator watched us on his radar screen and talked us down. Not all airports had that capability, however, so we didn't make them often.

In summer we left New York in time to get to Gander before dark, and we arrived in Shannon after sunrise. The nights seemed really short, because the summer nights were short anyway at those latitudes, and we were flying to meet the sun. It was five hours later in London than it was in New York. The flight across the Atlantic covered about nine hours elapsed time, but because we crossed time zones, the clock time was much shorter. But when we crossed the Atlantic and didn't have the favorable winds, we couldn't make it in one hop. Then we had to make a fuel stop in Iceland, Bermuda, or the Azores, depending on where we were stopping first in Europe.

I enjoyed those flights going east across the Atlantic, especially when we had a full moon and scattered white clouds under us. Because of the time ones we crossed, we often had very few hours of darkness in summer, and then the sun rose in front of us. It was a beautiful sight.

Going the other way was something else, especially in winter. We usually were loaded, because we brought refugees from Hungary or from Albania, and the prevailing wind was pushing us back instead of helping us along. That far north, the nights were 14 or 15 hours long in mid-winter, and we lost three or four hours because we were flying away from the sun. We couldn't make it non-stop to Gander because of the head wind, so we had to stop in Iceland or the Azores to refuel.

Ice could be a serious hazard, especially over the North Atlantic. If the water in the air forms ice crystals before it hits the wings and the propellers, it is not much of a problem. If the water is warm enough so it does not freeze, it likewise is no problem. The danger lies with water that is almost freezing but not quite. It hits the wings and flows over them as it freezes, forming a sheet of ice on the wings or other airfoils. This sheet of ice can change the shape of the wings and cause them to produce less lift. It also can add hundreds of pounds to the weight of an airplane. Moreover, ice can form on the blades of the propellers and cause them to lose efficiency. The combination of the extra weight and the loss of efficiency in the wings and propellers can cause a plane to stall and crash in extreme cases.

Our plane had deicers, but they were not heated and were not foolproof. We could release de-icing fluid on the hubs of the propellers and it would trickle down and loosen the ice so the propellers could throw it off. When that happened it made a loud noise when the ice hit the body of the plane, so we usually warned the passengers in advance so they wouldn't jump out of their seats. We had pulsating deicer boots on the leading edges of the wings, but we had to be careful how we used them. If we left them on all the time, the freezing water would form ice all around them as they pulsated and they would become ineffective. So we left them off until a sheet of ice formed over them. Then we

inflated them to crack the sheets of ice, allowing the wind to get into the cracks and rip the ice off in big sheets. Then we turned them off until another sheet of ice built up.

No careful pilot flew into an area where he knew there would be heavy icing. He could handle light icing or moderate icing, but might not be able to cope with heavy icing. We were coming back to Gander one winter's night and stopped at Keflavik, Iceland, for fuel. As usual, the flight engineer checked over the plane and topped off the fuel tanks while the other pilots and I got our weather briefing, preparatory to filing a flight plan for the next leg of the trip. The weatherman said everything looked good, except that we could expect some moderate icing off the coast of Greenland.

"I just have one question," I said, after he finished his briefing. "What reason did you have for telling us to expect moderate icing rather than heavy icing?"

"That's easy," he replied, smiling. "If I told you to expect heavy icing you wouldn't go."

"O.K., we're going," I said. "But if we go into the drink off the coast of Greenland, you tell the next pilot that comes through here to expect heavy icing."

"That's a deal," he said with a smile, and we went to file our flight plan.

A good way to combat the effects of icing was to climb to a higher altitude where the air was colder and the water would freeze before it hit the plane. Then the ice didn't form clear sheets and change the shape of the wings. An even better way was to descend to a level where the air was warmer and the water wouldn't freeze. Descending a thousand feet usually increased the temperature about three degrees, and climbing a thousand feet decreased the temperature an equal amount. That was not always feasible, however, because in bad weather we flew under instrument flight rules and didn't dare change altitude without permission from air traffic control. After all, if we crashed into another airplane, that would be much worse than having ice on the wings.

Once Don Brown and I had the DC-3 overnight at Newark, NJ and there was freezing rain during the night. A sheet of ice formed all over the plane, and we had to delay our departure the following day until we could have the plane de-iced. On another occasion, an Eastern Airlines flight had the same problem at Washington National Airport. They took off without de-icing the plane and crashed a few minutes later into the Potomac River near the 14th Street Bridge. Many of the passengers lost their lives.

I made one trip to Hong Kong, soon after I went to the Central Office. We flew from New York to San Francisco and spent the night. The next day we loaded our passengers and flew to Honolulu and spent two nights and one day. Then came the marathon: Honolulu to Wake Island, to Tokyo, to Seoul, to Formosa (now Taipei), to Manila, and to

Hong Kong. Wake was nothing more than a refueling stop, and the island didn't look much bigger than the airport. We dropped off passengers at most of the other stops except Honolulu.

I had two hand-tailored suits made in Hong Kong. The material was beautiful, the fit was good, and the price was right. But the thread rotted within three months and the seams came out. I also had one pair of woolen slacks made. From a small swatch, I selected a nice blue material, but when they were finished the color looked like the blue flash from an electric welder's torch. I never had the courage to wear them in public.

On the way back we stopped for fuel at Guam, spent one night in Honolulu, and then flew to San Francisco. We spent the night there before going on to New York City. Don Brown was the other captain on the flight, and he wanted to stay in California a few days to visit friends before going home. He flew the plane all the way from New York to San Francisco on the way out, while I sat in back with a pencil and a yellow legal pad and wrote a chapter for Gil Hebard's gun catalog. (The title was Mental Aspects of Match Shooting. It is still on the Internet. To view it, just go to Yahoo and search for it by title.) In return, I flew it all the way from San Francisco to New York on the way back. We had to go by way of Portland, Oregon, and make a stop there for some reason; and we stopped again at Chicago for fuel. We had two bunks on the plane, so I let the two copilots fly it two or three hours over the Dakotas while I got some sleep, and things worked out well.

The DC-4 usually made two trips a month to Europe. When I first went to the Central Office, I made every trip until I was checked out as a captain on the four-engine plane. I already had a commercial license with an instrument rating and a multiengine rating, but I needed a type rating on the DC-4. My boss arranged for me to get checked out in New York by an FAA official and get the type rating. I had to demonstrate my knowledge of emergency procedures, load and balance requirements, and several other things. In the middle of a takeoff, the FAA man reached over and cut power to one of the engines, and I had to keep control of the plane and continue the takeoff. He waited to do it until it was too late to abort the takeoff and stop on the runway. Then after I got the plane well under control he reached over and cut the power to another engine, leaving me with two. I had to go around the field and land the plane with two engines. The plane was not loaded, so that made it easier.

After I was certified as a captain, I made one trip a month. Don Brown, my boss, flew one trip as aircraft commander, with another captain and two copilots. We rotated that duty, usually with one of us in charge of each trip. Eventually we sent John Landry, as aircraft commander, and Paul Green, as flight engineer, to New York on an extended detail to make every flight. They moved their families to New York and rented houses in

Levittown. We detailed other pilots and crew members as necessary, and I still made one flight a month as the alternate captain.

Cecil Fullilove and Eugene Chaput were immigration officers and had previously been air force navigators. They often flew with us as navigators on overseas flights. We also had arranged with an Air Force Reserve unit to lend us a navigator for our overseas flights, on the condition that the navigator was allowed to bring along an air force trainee on each flight. That worked well for us because we didn't have to pay one of our own navigators, and the Air Force used the trips to provide valuable hands-on training to their trainees.

I happened to be the aircraft commander on a flight to Vienna when the lead air force navigator got a call that his father had died. He was Jewish, and they don't delay burials, so he had to leave immediately to get to the funeral. From observing him on the flight going over, we had concluded that the trainee navigator was far short of proficient, so we planned the flight back as if we had no navigator. I never worried when either Chaput or Fullilove was working the charts, but I had serious reservations about this one.

We flew from Lisbon to the Azores, and then to Gander. There were two airports in the Azores, so I thought I could certainly hit one of them. We usually landed at Lajes, the military field, because we could get gasoline at much lower rates than we would pay at Santa Maria, 100 miles to the south. We had ASFs that would point to any radio station we could tune it, within a hundred miles or so. We called them bird dogs, because they pointed the way. About an hour out from Lisbon to Lajes, the navigator asked me to make a 3 degree course correction to the right. He said he was sure, so I made the correction. A 3 degree course error will amount to about fifty miles off course in a thousand mile trip.

Later he wanted me to correct another 3 degrees in the same direction, and I refused. I told him 3 degrees on a long trip in the middle of the ocean is enough. "If you don't make the correction," he insisted, "we will be far south of Lajes." That's OK, I said. "If we are we can pull in Santa Maria on the ADF, and we will know where we are." When we brought in Lajes on the radio, the ADF showed that we were to the right of our course, so we just followed the ADF pointers to the airport. "Don't worry," I told Paul Green, "We could make this route without a navigator." He responded, "I know it. Otherwise I wouldn't have come."

On the next leg to Gander, Newfoundland, a weather ship was anchored half way between Lajes and Gander, and the direct line between them went about 100 miles to the right of that ship. I told the navigator to plot our course to go directly over the weather ship, because it had a radio beacon we could home in on. He argued we would be going 100 miles out of our way, but I insisted. I figured if we were 50 miles off his course to the right we would be 150 miles from the ship and might not be able to pick up the signal. But if we headed directly toward the ship, we could miss it as much as 100 miles on either side and still pick up the signal and know where we were. Sure enough, we were

off course to the right when we passed the ship, but we made a small course correction and went on toward Gander.

When we reached the point where we expected to hear the signal from Gander, we got silence. Paul Green started staring at the navigator. "You little jerk," he told him, "if we go down in the ocean, I'm gonna make sure you are the first sonofabitch that dies." A few minutes later we got a radio signal, loud and clear, and the ADF pointed straight ahead. A little later we could see the coastline of Newfoundland on our radar screen. We had good radar, and it came in handy when it was dark or when we were on instruments. Usually we could identify the coastal landmarks almost as well as if it were daylight. It also helped us identify and avoid the worst parts of thunderstorms when we were flying through a weather front.

Johnny Wright was on the airlift, later was the regional pilot in the Southwest Region, and still later was the chief of air operations after I left to go to Puerto Rico. I thought he was the most careful pilot we had flying the DC-4. John Landry was better at maneuvering the big plane, but he was less concerned about the small details. For example, Wright always knew exactly where he was, the nearest airport he could get to in an emergency, and just about anything else you might care to ask him. He had extensive experience flying "the hump" in the China-Burma-India Theater of operations during World War II.

Johnny's technique for landing the plane always resulted in a safe landing but never in a really smooth landing. He set the plane up with a slow rate of descent and flew it into the runway. There was always a little bump, but never a big one. Some of us tried to "grease it on." Sometimes it was very smooth, and sometimes there was a bigger bump. The pilots and other crew members always graded the pilot on duty on his landings, and we had friendly competition.

Once I was flying into Gander where they had a couple of inches of new snow on the runway. Johnny was the other captain, and he came up front as usual to stand behind me and critique my landing. Even with the smoothest landing, if the runway is dry there is a squeaking noise and a little shudder when the motionless tires hit the pavement at over 100 miles an hour. But this time they skidded on the soft snow, and we knew we were on the ground only when the plane was not going fast enough to be flying. "Jeepers," Johnny said, grinning. "Couldn't you bounce it just a little bit?"

Before we left on our trip to Shannon, I went into the restaurant at the airport and got a cone of maple ice cream. It was Johnny's turn to fly, so I came on board eating my ice-cream cone and preparing to rest for four hours until my next shift at the controls. One of the mental patients among the passengers saw my ice cream and started demanding one for her. It was too late to go back and get her one, so I finished eating mine and let her

complain. I thought she would shut up after mine was gone, but three hours later she was still complaining.

As I was taking over the controls, Johnny pointed to the left. “Northern Lights,” he said, looking at the streaks of pale white lights extending along the northern horizon. On another occasion we flew through a hard rainstorm. “St. Elmo’s fire,” he said, grinning, as he pointed to several tiny spots of light (caused by static electricity) dancing along the bottom part of the windshield, like tiny electrical flames. I felt safer in that old plane over the North Atlantic Ocean in a rainstorm than I did in a car coming home from the airport. When I didn’t take a cab, I always asked someone else to drive me home, because all the cars whizzing around me made me nervous.

On another departure from New York to Europe, we had an Irishman named Degan, who was wanted in Ireland for the theft of a truckload of cigarettes. We had a deportation order and had alerted the Irish authorities that he was coming so they could meet the plane and take custody. When we were ready to leave he wouldn’t get on the plane. The deportation officer asked “What are we going to do? He refuses to get on.”

“Don’t we have a deportation order?”

“Yes, we do.”

“Don’t we have the right to use force to remove him?”

“Yes, we do.”

We had all four pilots approach him to put him on by force. We had 49 people waiting for him, and we couldn’t hold the plane any longer while he argued about getting on. When he saw we meant business, he got on the plane. After we were at 10,000 feet, I said to him in a friendly way, “Now you can get off if you want to.” He laughed and said they would have the biggest cop in Ireland waiting for him when he got off at Shannon. He was right about that. The policeman was huge.

“Do you have a man named Degan?”

“Yes we do.”

“May I have him?”

“Yes you may.”

“Thank you very much,” he said as he signed the form for the deportation officer. Then he snapped on the handcuffs and led him away. In parting, Degan gave me a wry little grin, as if to say, “I told you.”

On my first several trips we stayed three nights in Vienna. In the beginning the plane had stayed only two nights and one day, but the doctor and nurse complained, so after that they gave the crew more time to rest. I enjoyed Vienna more than any other towns I visited. The people there liked Americans, and always seemed happy. They had many basement rathskellers, especially in the Grinzing area, and parents brought their kids there on weekends and spent several hours eating crusty bread and drinking the local white wine at 15 cents a mug.

On our return trips we brought refugees from Hungary, and once we brought a load of American citizens who had fallen on hard times in Europe and were coming back. Many of them looked worse than most of the refugees had looked.

Vienna had a magnificent opera house and I went there twice. It had not been damaged by allied bombs during the war, as some of the other buildings had. On my first visit I saw Carmen and enjoyed it very much. It was colorful and lively and had wonderful music. But the second time, I saw Der Meistersingers, and it was extremely boring. To me, it was just a bunch of whiskered old men in long robes singing at the tops of their voices in a language I didn't understand.

Joe Coleman was the radio operator at the New Orleans Border Patrol Sector Headquarters, and he served as our radio operator on one flight to Vienna. Someone talked him into going to the opera, and his only comment was “They had 32 fiddles in the band.”

On many trips we continued on to Athens, Greece. That required one extra night of flying and an early morning arrival. We stayed there only two nights. We couldn't fly over Yugoslavia or Albania, so we had to come back from Vienna to Munich and go south over the Brenner Pass to Rome and from there to Athens. As a safety measure, air control assigned even altitudes to all flights going in one direction and odd altitudes to all flights going in the other. So we had to go up to 13,000 feet to get over the mountains in one direction and 14,000 feet in the other direction. We had oxygen only for the working crew members, so we kept everybody else in their seats until we were able to descend to 10,000 feet. On the return from Athens, we brought refugees from Albania.

I made at least twenty-five trips to Europe. In addition to Vienna and Athens, we had one scheduled layover in Munich and one or two in Frankfurt. The Germans didn't like Americans much, and especially not American pilots. Too many of them still

remembered the bombing raids during the war. We also had an emergency layover in Rome for an engine change on one of our return trips.

Once coming home we had trouble with our heating and air conditioning on the plane, and we had to spend one night in Paris. I was at the airport with the French mechanics until two in the morning, getting the plane ready for the rest of the trip. I got four hours of sleep, and then went outside and had a wonderful omelet at a sidewalk café. I bought a little blouse for my wife and then went to the airport and headed home. We landed in Paris at Orly airport a few times after that, but never left the airport.

Another time on a return trip an engine failed, and we had to go to London and stay a few days while they found and installed another engine for us. We went to the American Embassy and they cashed checks for us for \$50 each, because we were all broke by that time. I did a little sightseeing, but not much.

The Embassy had a reception for us, and one young Englishman persisted in needling me. First he wanted to know what I thought of the royal family. Obviously I couldn't tell him what I really thought, so I mumbled something in reply. Then he started riding me about how the English pilots made their bombing runs during the war at night, while Americans flew only in the daytime. Next he told a story about an American who went to Seville Row in London and had an English suit hand-tailored. When he put it on he looked at himself in the mirror, flicked an imaginary piece of lint from his sleeve, and said "It's too bad we lost India." He had a belly laugh over that.

He said his uncle had told him about American servicemen during the war. The men in England had only four things against the Americans, he quoted: "They're overpaid, they're overdressed, they're oversexed, and they're over here." His uncle told him if they had another war, America would have to send nothing but the guns and planes, "Because we've already got their bloody kids."

We were guests in his country, and I suppose he thought he had a right to be bitter. But I had to bite my tongue to keep from telling him that daytime bombing was much more dangerous than bombing at night, because the fighter planes and the anti-aircraft gun crews could see the bombers. Furthermore, precision bombing was possible only in the daytime, and that was the only thing that destroyed most of Germany's munitions plants and oil refineries, although with a serious loss of American planes and crew members.

I wanted to tell him about the man who was arrested for making love to a corpse. He got off by convincing the judge he didn't know she was dead—he thought she was English. I held that back too. For all I knew, English women may have been as passionate as the Americans, the Italians, the French, or anybody else you could name.

Once we were in Keflavic, Iceland, on our way to Shannon, Ireland and the weather was not good. Air traffic control would not clear us to any destination unless there was an alternate airport within our range that was forecast to be open. The weather report said all the other airports would be closed all the way to Rome, so we had to use Keflavik as our alternate airport. In other words, if Shannon was closed when we got there, we had to come back to Iceland.

The DC-4 held 3,600 gallons of gas, but we were supposed to keep our gross weight to no more than 73,000 pounds. The reason was that if we had to come back and land soon after takeoff, a hard landing with the wing tanks full of gas might cause rivets in the wings to pop out. When we had a full load of passengers the weight limit restricted us to 3,000 gallons of fuel. The other 600 gallons of gas would weigh 3,000 pounds, which is a significant amount of weight. Then we had to calculate the risks. If we didn't take the extra gas, we might run into stronger than expected head winds and have trouble getting back to Iceland. If we did take the extra gas, it would lessen our margin of safety in getting off the ground with the extra load. Staying in Iceland until the weather in Europe improved was a possibility; but we had 50 SOB (short for souls on board,) and that would bring up serious logistical problems.

Several things were in our favor. The runway was barely above sea level and was 10,000 feet long, there were no mountains or other obstacles to climb over, the temperature was forty degrees, and the wind was blowing straight down the runway at 30 knots. These factors fully compensated for the extra weight, so the decision was easy.

We filled every tank to the limit, pulled the plane to the very beginning of the runway, and revved the engines up to full throttle. By the time we reached the end of the runway, we were more than 200 feet in the air. When we got to Shannon, the weather had improved at our final destination, and we had no further problems on that trip.

The DC-4 was a public aircraft (government owned), so it was not subject to all the FAA rules. Otherwise we couldn't have made such long trips without stopovers along the way for crew rest. But in the beginning we had problems in some foreign countries where the U.S. Immigration Service meant little or nothing to airport officials. Finally, we made an arrangement with Pan American Airlines to use their manifest forms and schedule our flights as Pan American charter flights. Pan American was recognized all over the world, and things went smoothly after that. Nevertheless, we always stopped at military air bases when possible, because the cost for gasoline was so much lower. The Portuguese always resented this.

There were two airports in the Azores. Lajes was a military base on the north side of the islands, and Santa Maria was a civilian base on the south side. The Portuguese had jurisdiction over the Azores, and they always wanted us to go to Santa Maria. George

German was the deportation officer in the Central Office who handled the clearances for our flights, and his story was almost always the same. "We have all the clearances for your stops except for Lajes," he would say, "and we hope to have it by the time you get there."

I liked George. He had been around a long time and he had been passed over for promotion more than once. I saw him one day in the hallway as his boss was walking by. "Always be nice to the office boy," he said loud enough for everyone to hear. "You never know when he will be your boss."

Almost without exception, when we called Lajes before our arrival they told us we had to go to Santa Maria instead. Then after much discussion they relented and let us land at Lajes. On one trip I was the aircraft commander and Hank Skehan was the other captain. We rotated flying shifts every three or four hours, but never let that interfere with whose turn it was to land the plane. We all liked to make landings and didn't want to miss a turn.

Hank was flying all the way to Lajes, but it was my turn to land. "They always give us a hard time about landing here," I told him before I went to sleep. "We just tell them we always land at Lajes, and they always relent in the end." Later they woke me to land the plane. "They gave me an argument, just like you said," he told me as I took the controls, "but the tower has cleared us to land."

When I pulled the plane into the refueling area, a big tanker truck parked across the front of the plane, blocking any movement. Then I saw Portuguese soldiers with guns standing around the plane. They impounded the plane for landing there without prior authority, and they herded the passengers off and put them up for the night in the barracks. I insisted on seeing the U.S. consul, but they said it was outside his office hours and he couldn't be bothered. There was no point calling Washington in the middle of the night, so I just waited it out. About nine the next morning the consul came over and the Portuguese finally said we could leave.

But by then it was too late. We had to deliver our passengers in New York only between certain hours in the mornings, so they could be received by the appropriate agencies and processed. That meant we had to delay our departure until that evening, to make our arrival in New York conform to the standard plan. I called Don Brown in Washington and told him the story and asked him to notify the proper authorities we would arrive one day later.

I had always thought I was on good terms with General Swing, but I was afraid I had ruined things with this episode. He could be impatient and sometimes intemperate, and I didn't know what to expect. When I got back, Don Brown told me the consul had sent a telegram to the Central Office, castigating me severely for my actions. He said he explained to General Swing what had happened and showed him the telegram from the consul. The commissioner read it and noted the name of the sender. "So that's where that fat old fool is now," he said, as he handed the telegram back.

I never heard anything more about that episode. A few months later, Don Brown applied for and got a transfer to a position in the Embassy at Mexico City, and I was promoted to his job as Chief of Air Operations and Logistics for the Border Patrol.