

Merry Christmas to all!

PAN AM ASSOCIATION



ALOHA CHAPTER



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND JOY TO THE WORLD!

At least, here in Hawaii we are being allowed to spread our wings just a bit more after severe restrictions over the past 20 months. Around the end of October and early November, new rules went into effect “until Christmas Day” at which time they will be reevaluated. Finally people with proof of vaccination can attend outdoor events—still socially distanced and masked. We are no longer the only state in the union barring fans from attending UH games. People can now plan outdoor weddings with up to 25 people, including minister, photographer, and other “crew members”.

With that cheery news in mind and the thought that we are creeping toward “pre-Covid normal”, my mind went back to a happy Christmas memory. It was a night before Christmas in the 1940s. Our parents used to put our presents under the tree after we had been sent to bed.

That night I remember my older sister suddenly sat up in bed and said, “Listen, listen!” I did and I heard our parents laughing in the living room below. We shared that news with the boys whose room was at the other end of the hall too far away to hear the laughter. We crept downstairs to sneak a peek. Mom and Dad were playing with a wind-up toy that was making all kinds of crazy moves, backwards and forwards and rearing up on its back wheels. It was a G.I. Joe jeep and “Joe’s” helmet would slip forward over his eyes at times. The next morning after returning from church, we didn’t even have to fake surprise as we had so much fun with that toy.



The memory made me smile and I thought others might have even better stories to share this holiday season. This seemed like a good time to emphasize the positive. Following are a few stories from our readers:

Patti Jacoby who flew for United Airlines, has this heart-warming story to share: We landed at Seoul’s former airport, Kimpo. This was some time before 2001 when the new airport opened. Our crew had cleared customs but



had not yet left the customs hall when the captain asked us all to wait for him. We all had a not particularly happy attitude of "oh, okay." Most of us were anxious to get to our hotel after working an 11-hour flight. Soon the captain returned. He was in a full-on Santa Claus outfit! I can't remember if he was a heavy man or if he used a pillow but he *was* Santa Claus. When the interior doors opened and we walked out to the area where people were waiting to greet arriving family members and friends, all the kids in the hall went ballistic. I will never forget what a good feeling it was and how much fun it was to see the kids come up and clamber around him. Surprisingly, he had candy to hand out to them. It was a really great Christmas experience.

Carol Suyderhoud *feels that her fondest memories are a result of her employment with Pan Am. She writes that she invited her father to a short introductory flight on the new 747 and he was very excited boarding the new aircraft. The flight was around Manhattan and it was only for employees and their families. When Carol was a child, her father often took her to LaGuardia Airport from their home in Corona in Queens to watch the airplanes from the sightseeing tower. Here is her favorite Christmas story:*



My family hails from Germany. Back in the 60s and early 70s when my father went to visit his family in Germany, he traveled on charter flights because they were the least expensive way to fly to Europe. It was a long trip because the charters operated with much slower prop-jets that had to land in Newfoundland to refuel. I joined Pan Am in 1969 and had just received the family travel benefit in early December. You can imagine how excited I was when I was able to announce to my father that we could go to Heroldsberg, a town in Bavaria, on Pan Am via Frankfurt, Germany. Heroldsberg is where my father grew up. We stayed there only a few days but were treated like celebrities. It was wonderful as the feeling of Christmas was everywhere. And we were able to enjoy the comfort of traveling on Pan Am both to and from Europe.



James Husing *(son of the late Ed Husing who was a Pan Am purser), shared a Christmas he will always remember. One of my most memorable Christmases was on December 25, 1966. I was in Vietnam with the 1st Infantry Division. I had been promoted to Sergeant E-5 on that day. I was happy with the promotion and also with the news that I would be rotating home on January 4th, 1967. I was all of 22 years old and had survived a year of combat duty.*

During training at Fort Ord, a fellow I met, Pat Ingram, and I became good buddies. He was from Fremont and I was from San Jose. After completing several training courses, we received orders to go to Vietnam in Dec. 1965.

In Vietnam we were both assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, specifically to the 2nd Battalion/2nd Infantry Regiment, located at Lai Khe 30 miles north of Saigon. I was assigned to Company A and Pat was assigned to Company B but we saw each other frequently while at base camp or on operations throughout 1966. The photo on the right of us with the company clerk (left in photo) was taken just after Christmas. I had already been promoted and we had just received confirmation of our departure date for home. Pat was wounded in Vietnam and received a purple heart. He is on the right in the photo.



After we returned to the U.S. we lost touch for 30 years. We got reconnected as a result of a reunion of our battalion in 1998 in Middletown, OH, and have stayed in touch ever since. We have lunch several times a year.

Michael Lilly *sent a story that, while not exactly a Christmas story, goes well with the above:*

In the summers of 1966 and 1967, I was a Pan Am passenger service agent at Honolulu International Airport. Every day I greeted flights from Vietnam. Service members were given a week of R&R in Honolulu. Loved ones, mostly wives and girlfriends, met the service members in happy, but tearful reunions which brought tears to us spectators as well. A few hours later I helped load the same plane with service members from the previous week's arrivals who were now returning to Vietnam. Only this time the departures brought unhappy, tearful farewells that again brought tears to us spectators as well. What a poignant time! Epilogue: a year later it was my turn to serve in Vietnam, but my R&R was in Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore.

NOTE: *This was a last minute thought to include happy Christmas memories in this December issue. I sent out an email message to our online members and the above members responded. Those of you who receive the hard copy may want to contribute stories of your own. In fact, I hope you do! The Christmas season is not over until the Epiphany on January 6th and many people don't even take their Christmas decorations down until after that. So please contribute your happy memories. Maybe some of you who received my email request now have time to submit your own story. Or some of you may have a special New Year's story to contribute. I am hoping the stories above remind you of a special holiday season memory. We need to stay positive! Thanks to Patti, Carol, James and Michael for their stories.*

A LEGACY OF SERVICE PAN AM NISEI STEWARDESSES

Mae Takahashi and **Aileen Sodetani** were interviewed by students belonging to a group called Young Historians. They wanted to know how their jobs with Pan American came about. (You will note that the narrator does sound pretty young.) If you have access to a computer, check out the following YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpNZgE-qfMY>. Or you can look for it on YouTube by its title, *A Legacy of Service Pan Am Nisei Stewardesses*.

1978 FIRST AMERICAN TOUR TO THE PRC—Part 3

By Darlene (Carver Laster)

Shanghai

We stayed at the Peace Hotel, considered to be the best hotel in 1978. In its glory days it was a well known brothel. Each floor was decorated in a different color scheme. There was a "door" person in the hall that tended to the needs of each occupant. A large air pot filled with hot water was in each room and tea was delivered as requested. We were all fascinated with these air pots as they had not yet reached our shores. I always poured a glass of the water each evening to cool. Because it had been boiled it was safe to use to brush my teeth the next morning. The walls were like paper, my neighbor received a call from overseas and I could hear every word perfectly.



A Small Airpot

One of our Pan Am tour guides on this trip, Ray Agricota, Account Manager from our Washington DC office, was based at Wake Island before the Revolution. He had never been to China so he wrangled his way to take one of the last Clippers to Shanghai and back. He was able to tell us a lot of inside information about Shanghai. Our group was always required to eat by ourselves in a large room on the top floor of the hotel. This was the casino in its day and you could see the stained glass windows in the ceiling through which the gambling tables were observed. Our Pan Am ticket counter was in the lobby but no Pan Am sign remained. Ray said when you went to supper back then you had to carry several bags of money to pay for it. Every Pan Am flight operated full out of China in those last days.

The next morning we rode around the city to see the sights and take photos. We saw the new stadium (round like the Forum), the Bund along the River, and the birthplace of the Revolution. The people walk more here than ride bicycles, although there are still many, many bicycles. Our hotel was next to the park that bordered the Bund and each morning we could see lots of older Chinese performing Tai Chi for their exercise. The city appears a bit drab in comparison to Can-



ton, but then it is winter and the trees are bare. We visited the Shanghai Industrial Exhibition which showed all their latest industrial development. Large and small machines, automobiles (a convertible no less), trucks, buses and then 20 textiles and products. It is amazing what they have done on their own and I can't help but wonder what the next few years will bring with the input from the outside world.

In the afternoon we were taken to one factory worker's new housing complex. There are many buildings that house some 7000 people. They have their own private stores, hospitals and nurseries. However, some of our tour members became ill and had to be treated in the hospital in Shanghai. They said it was very clean, a bit old fashioned but they had never been treated in a more gentle manner.

The kindergarten was lovely, the children performed especially for us. We learned children are chosen according to their school performance and if they do well, they can attend higher grades and thus receive better positions. They were all dressed in colorful clothes. We had to watch some of our group as they wanted to hug the children, which was not allowed.

We broke up into smaller groups of 5 or 6 to visit a worker's family in their new home. Ours had 4 members: father, mother and 2 children ages 16 and 13. They lived in one room, about the size of our average bedroom, sharing the kitchen and bathroom with another family. They did have a TV and radio combination. The rent was 3 yuan per month plus 1 yuan for water and 3 for electricity because of the TV. There was no heat. The father was a truck driver and the mother a crane operator in the factory. Her bus transportation to and from work was paid by the factory. The father makes 74 yuan and the mother makes 69 yuan per month so they are able to save enough for the TV set, clothing, etc. They will be given another apartment with another bedroom when the children are a little older. It was spartan by our standards but when one remembers before this they had no housing at all you can see why they are so proud and happy with what they have.



After supper we were taken to see the Chinese Acrobatics. They were very good, especially the trapeze performers. They were all young people in their teens. By now you have probably had the opportunity to watch them perform right here in Honolulu.

Next morning we went to the Shanghai Arts and Crafts Research Institute. Here they are preserving the old almost forgotten arts and crafts while making work for the older craftsmen who teach the younger ones. Their work was exquisite.

They are so wise to preserve their arts and crafts because so many countries have not done so in their rush to industrialization. The afternoon was spent touring the Museum which doesn't compare to what I had seen in Taiwan. What they had were things that were very old and not well displayed. It was obvious to me that Chang Kai-shek had taken lots of the best things to Taiwan.

Next stop was the #1 Department Store for shopping. This is the local Chinese store that is very large with four floors. It had the best selection by far and our members shopped until they had to catch the bus back to the hotel. Rice and cotton are rationed in China so our guides had to give the store the necessary coupons to cover our purchases. Those who wished could shop at the adjacent Friendship Store and were given passes as this store is only open to foreign nationals and diplomats. It contained many products not available elsewhere. These stores reminded me somewhat of the large department store in Toledo, Ohio, where my parents took us to do our serious shopping back in the late 1940s, except this one smelled of mildew, etc.

Once our people realized they were not being charged for excess baggage when we traveled from city to city, those who were large shoppers just kept buying new suitcases for all their purchases. This in spite of the advice given us in Hong Kong that we must be prepared to pay U.S. Customs duty in the same amount as the purchase price because there was no formal agreement between our two countries. This was in 1978 and none of these items were available in the USA so once your family and friends found out you were going to the PRC, they all made their lists.

Back to the hotel for supper at 6pm followed by packing our bags for leaving them outside our door before breakfast at 7:30am. At 8:30am buses leave for our visit to Tysun #2 middle school, what we would call a high school. This was the first of this type we had visited and we found it interesting. We sat in on English, Physics, Biology, Chemistry and Art classes. We learned they have exams just like we do and if they wish to go on to the University, they must pass an entrance exam. Then their family must provide their entry costs as well as their books. If they are unable to do so, the state will help out. After school (5½ days per week) at 4pm, 4 days per week students must do on-the-job training in factories or in agriculture. They also have to do homework from their classes.

For lunch we were taken to a downtown Cantonese restaurant and what a reception we received. When we arrived the street was lined on both sides with spectators and again when we left, except it was even larger then. The meal was delicious, more like what our group was familiar with.

At 12:15pm we left for the airport to fly to Peking. The airport at Shanghai was quite modern. For the first time we saw six black locally made limos parked waiting for some dignitaries. According to what we were told there are no private automobiles in the PRC. Whatever private autos you see are the property of foreigners or assigned to China Travel Service for use by foreigners. Occasionally there is a limousine used for some state purpose but it is very rare that you will ever see one. For all practical purposes there are no private cars available in China. The bicycle is the principle means of transportation along with the bus.

Our hotel in Peking is the Peking Hotel. It is the most modern one so far and guess what, we can lock our door! There is a TV in the room but when there is something on, it is only in Chinese. Our meals were served in a special room in the hotel just as in other cities.

Peking— Today dawned bright and sunny, a welcome change from the overcast and rain we've had since our second day in the PRC. Although the wind is cold and blustery, it seems warmer. When we arrived at the airport yesterday, as usual our bus and guide meet us and will be our transportation the entire time. We were told snow was expected later in the week so they changed our trip to the Great Wall to tomorrow.

Breakfast at 7:00 am before we board our bus to drive across the plain to the Great Wall. Yesterday when the driver picked us up the wind was quite strong and cold. The door did not close totally so the wind made us very cold. Some of the men tried to brace the ever present broom against the door but it wouldn't stay. Today after we all boarded and the usual mopping was finished, magically a 2x4 cut to the perfect size appeared to brace the door properly shut. No words were spoken but obviously the driver had observed our attempt yesterday. No heat but this helped a lot.

The pollution is quite bad and by this time we had all come down with some kind of respiratory cold. So we decided to share what was left in our cognac bottles with each other against the cold. No one wanted to miss this opportunity to walk on the Great Wall. We rode through the plain, past fields and small factories into the distant mountains. The buses labored hard to reach the place where a section is open to enter and climb the Great Wall. When we arrived our driver dropped us off about a 10-minute walk to the entrance. There was hardly anyone else there. We were told we had 1½ hours to spend on the wall.

The Great Wall rises and falls with the ridges of the Yenshan Mountain range. Viewed from the battlements, it winds into the distance like an immense dragon whose head and tail are invisible. To the west you can see the Mongolian plain stretching for miles to snow-capped mountains. One can imagine how the ancient barbarians looked racing over the rough terrain to try to forge the Great Wall. It was built originally in 1340, is 3,333 miles long, and constructed of granite blocks and stone



Photo courtesy of Ilona Benoit. Her crew toured the Great Wall 3 years later—1981—still before masses of tourists arrived.

bricks. It averages 22 feet high, 18 feet wide at the top and 22 feet thick at the base. One wonders how such a feat could have been accomplished by hand. It is one of the world's oldest and most gigantic engineering projects.

It was an incredible sight. I have told many people it is on the top of my list of not to be missed sights. I haven't been back since 1978 but am told now that there are numerous buildings and souvenir shops at the entrance and a train now takes you across the plain.

On the way back we stopped at the Ming Tombs. The archway over the entrance is one of the oldest pieces of architecture in China. Life-size stone statues of various animals guard the roadway on both sides. There are 13 tombs scattered around the valley and one can see the various temple structures dotting the landscape. Only one has been excavated to date. We viewed some of the treasures exhumed and then walked down into the tomb proper to view the various chambers. This was the third Ming Emperor and he was buried with his two Empresses. The first one preceded him in death and then he took his top concubine to be his second Empress. She died a couple of years after the Emperor.

Tonight we have supper at the famous Peking Duck Restaurant. The national drink was served straight (white lightning). I soon found out they serve the entire duck, that's all. Unless you like the head, eyes and feet, there isn't much left. We slipped these items to our guides because this is such a delicacy for them. However, the main course was only the duck skin (no meat like we are used to). It brought back memories of my first 15-course Chinese dinner here in Honolulu on my second trip here. Tommy Ching, VP of one of the local banks, sat next to me and told me what we were eating was the very best Peking Duck anywhere and if I ever visited Peking not to bother going to the Peking Duck Restaurant there. He was so correct. This was the first time I have ever left a Chinese restaurant still hungry.

Another lovely sunny day and today we tour the Imperial Palace, formerly known as the Forbidden City. Building began in 1406 by the Ming Dynasty and the imperial families lived in the inner part that was also where the Emperors conducted their daily activities of rule. The grounds cover an area over 178 acres on which stands some 9,000 rooms. The enclosure is surrounded by walls 10 meters high and a moat 52 meters wide. Here we were finally able to see the best treasures of the PRC. They were housed in two of the several buildings that we were allowed to visit. Lovely treasures and gardens but truly nothing to compare to those in Taiwan. This is what I was looking for. Our CITS guides did not mention the fact that Chiang Kai-shek took the best of the treasures with him when they escaped but we found it in the material they gave us printed in the Chinese Travel Service in Hong Kong. No question in my mind that he knew which pieces to carry away.



Note: The 1981 photo of the Forbidden City is courtesy of Ilona Benoit. Note the stewardess in uniform (back of the line). The crew layovers were short in those days. We arrived in the evening and our flight departed the next morning at 10:00. The company provided a bus and driver and we would all go to one site or another. The Great Wall was the favorite but sometimes the group would decide on another destination. The pilots and flight attendants who wanted to go would put on their uniforms because the bus would take us directly to the plane after our tour. We did not have the luxury to see all that Darlene and her group were able to see.

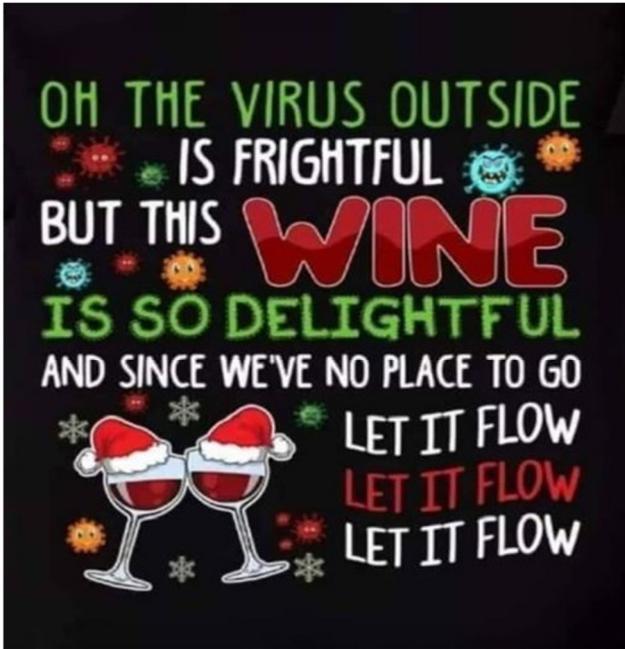
To be concluded: Packing for departure and final thoughts.

Last Issue Reminder

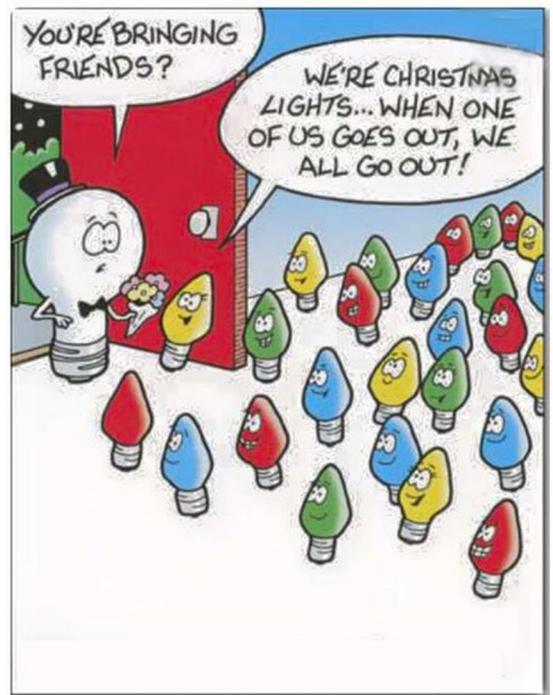
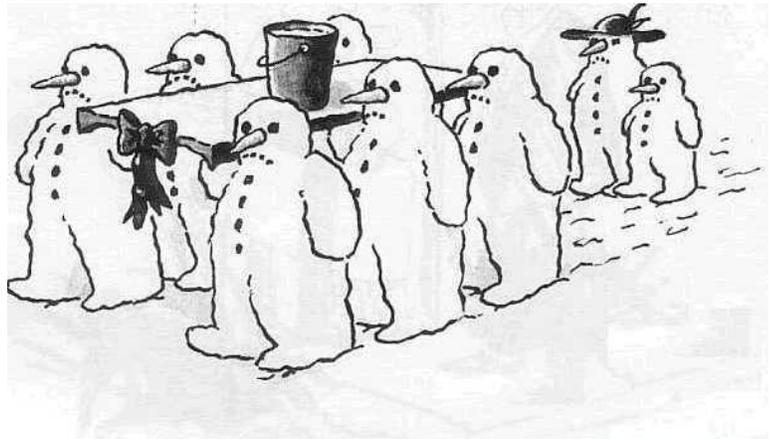
The following individuals have not renewed as of the middle of November. If your renewal is not received by the end of the year, this will be your last issue.

Blaydon, Christopher
Craighead, Michael
Stables, Donna

Topping, Allan
Tryon, Betsey Pease
Young, Charles K



May your Christmas be a delightful, safe and joyous celebration!



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Newsletter Items:

If you have any news item that would be of interest, please call Diane VanderZanden at 200-4322 or send mail to 500 Lunalilo Home Road, #26-D, Honolulu, HI 96825-1734 or by e-mail: alohadvz@gmail.com.

Members, we encourage you to print this page and give the application below to your Pan Am friends who are not members. If you are a former employee and not a member of the Aloha Chapter of the Pan Am Association, we encourage you to complete and submit the application below and help keep our association healthy. Thank you.

PAN AM ASSOCIATION—ALOHA CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please check all applicable boxes and complete all applicable lines.

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- Retiree—Pan Am retiree who received lump sum pension or is receiving PBGC checks.
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- Annual Membership: \$ 30 US Residents \$ 35 Overseas residents
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