

INTERVIEW WITH LEW LINDSEY (1) - 3RD FEBRUARY 1990

Well

This was in the ~~Walsh~~ Street Journal, giving the 50th anniversary of this transatlantic journey and according, I'm sure that in the archives you've been into, you got it more accurate, but there's what I think was the score. It started in July and ended in, when the war starts. As I told Mr Starr, I was on the flight when war started, that is when Great Britain declared war on Germany. We were in the Atlanta Diner in ... (UNINTELLIGIBLE 047) ... getting ready to go to Southampton, and having our breakfast, and on the radio, no television in those days, so on the radio, Mr Chamberlain was telling the world that he had declared war on Germany. We looked at each and said well, there's no way we're going to Southampton on this trip. And sure enough .. we were told we would only go as far as Foynes. And we'll never know, as we were approaching Foynes, we had let down underneath the weather, because in those days there weren't fancy instrument approaches, ILFs or anything like that, you just drove like an automobile, and we had come off of the Irish shore, dropped down to the end of this overcast, all of a sudden right up ahead was a submarine going this way, so I saw it about the same time and he took water over himself real quick and of course we'll never know whether he was one of yours or one of the others. It was probably a German submarine.

Q: Yes, I think it probably was. So that was coming down in Foynes, you must have been late. It was scheduled to come down on Sunday, at Ridgepoint on Sunday morning, wasn't it?

A: Yes, well this was morning, it was daylight. You see those ocean flights were designed so that you passed the night hours over the ocean. We didn't have night, normal night landing facilities for seaplanes. We had emergency electric flares, so that if something happened and an airplane had to come back and land at night, or what, they would put those flares out on the line, and everybody would hope the best.

Q: You never had to use them at all? I

A: No.

Q: I've got, I don't know whether this will help to refresh your memory but I have the instruction manuals and maintenance manuals for the plane. Now I think, one or two of the guys have told me that they must have been written before the plane was ever operated because they're not quite right. But it might be of some interest.

A: Oh yes, these would have been put out by Boeing, I guess about the time we took delivery on the airplanes. We took delivery on airplanes early in '39 and started off in them. I was the a co-pilot on the proving flight of the Yankee Clipper that went down to Lisbon and Marseille, back to Southampton and we were supposed to go to Foynes in the morning. And all of a sudden someone decided between the British representatives and the Pan Am representatives, that somebody from Pan American who had a little idea about airplanes ought to be in Foynes the next morning to help the people there dock the airplane. Well I was the most junior guy and that was me. They put me in the hands of two Stanobile people, Standard Oil, and they, we went by train up to the edge of London all the way across London on the subway, this was my first trip to London, all the across London on the subway to catch the boat-train to Holyhead. And then into Dublin the next morning for breakfast. And then hurried across Ireland to get to Foynes so that I'd be there when the plane got in. That weather over the English Channel held us up. It didn't get there. The next day was Easter and Monday after Easter was a holiday, if I remember rightly, and so I was, I sat there in Foynes waiting for the airplane to come. But that was the reason I have flown Foynes Southampton, but I have never flown Southampton Foynes.

Q: Let me tell you a little about the story, because the story opens - what I've decided to do is take, - the passenger service, the full passenger was cancelled when war...

A: We ran just a few trips to Foynes

Q: Well I'm going to imagine that the first week after the full service was cancelled, it wasn't cancelled, so it's going to be an imaginary flight - and the story opens with the plane landing at Southampton. And what I want to ask you about that I can't get from the manuals and the newspaper reports and the archives of the time, is how it felt and what you did. Cast your mind back to landing, I shouldn't say landing, coming down on the water at Southampton. You would be co-pilot, so you would be sitting up front beside the pilot? Try, see if you can remember what you would see and what you would do and what it would feel like as you came down in this plane.

A: Number one, in those days, I don't whether you want, - in those days there was not radio telephone communication from the airplane to the ground, so everything was done with CW, that is code, and we would have received, about fifteen, twenty minutes, the wind direction and force, the condition of the sea, and that would set in our minds the landing direction in relation to the docking area.

Q: Give me an example say, the wind was such and such, say the wind was north, north west or, and force 1, 2 whatever..

A: 22 knots, 26/27 miles an hour.

Q: 22 knots, north, north west, the sea condition, what sort of sea condition?

A: The sea would slight.

Q: What would you conclude from that about your landing?

A: We would know that we would pull around to the south of Southampton and then line up to land into the wind,

Q: Into the wind?

A: And the area that your landing in is widely circumscribed, ie, you don't have to land in a place as narrow as a street, or as long as a street. You got quite a big batch of water out there to land, and you got squared way back here and it was just a gentle easy approach, to reach the point of....

Q: What would you see as you came down?

A: Ah, pretty much you are looking straight ahead at your area, and you're also watching to the side to see if a launch has gone through the area. A company launch, the handling company, the launch has gone through the area to make sure that there's no logs, or anything, debris, and to also warn off any small boats that might be ...

Q: Could you see the launch as you came down? Would it be somewhere near.

A: Usually it has made it's run across the area and your focused on the shore line there and the terminal area where you're going to be brought into dock.

Q: What did the terminal area look like? Was it very fancy, very primitive?

A: No, this was the first and we were all feeling our way. The whole service had been somewhat held up because BOAC wasn't quite ready to offer reciprocal flights to the west and I think probably in their archives somewhere in London you will find press releases which talk about US and Pan Am versus Great Britain

Q: There was some competition who was going..

A: But they weren't ready. And so it was a, you can't call it tacky, but it was just not a terminal as we know terminals today.

Q: Would it look like an airplane hangar perhaps?

A: No, more, call it a warehouse look. But the whole idea was not a place where you handled a lot of passengers and it wasn't a place where you were too concerned with the amenities. You brought them in from London, put them through their pick-up and tickets and put them on the airplane and that was that. So it was simply that you really, in those days, considered as a fancy airplane terminal.

Q: Now, after you landed, the plane would be towed into the jetty presumably?

*buoy*  
A: Well, they had a boeey with a line and one of the extra pilots or flight engineers would go down in the bow there and lift up the post. It could be tripped and brought down flush during flight and then as you were getting ready to dock, you could bring it up and lock it, it stuck about this high above the fuselage, and you reached down with a boat hook and picked up a line with a loop in it, put over the bow post, then you shut the engines down, you were through and then they would put a line on the stern of the airplane, and swung it around and towed it into the dock.

Q: So let me get this straight. The engineer would go down into the bow and there must have been a hatch that he opened..

A: Yeah, the hatch that he opened is just aft of this bow post area here.

Q: He would raise the bow post and lock it into position. Then he would pick up a boat hook; there would be a buoy with a rope and a hook?

A: No, there would, there's a line lying off of a boeey there. And you got to have two. You pick up that one and that ties you to something. Then they would put a line on the stern

and between working the two lines they would bring the plane into the dock. So the launch would then pick up the ends of the lines, or maybe just one of them because the,...

Q: The stern line?

A: Because as I recall the one that you picked up on the bow was connected to the dock. I mean it ran to the dock. To permit manoeuvring. You really had to have two to do it. Then you'd float the airplane into the dock and I'm sure you've seen the pictures where there's a walkway goes from the dock itself out over the sea wing to the door of the airplane which was the main entrance, which was in the dining salon area.

Q: Now just to make sure I've got this straight. The rope at the front, he would pick - with his boathook he would pick up a loop in the rope and attach it to the, loop it over the stern side, the bow post, that rope would be attached to the jetty. Same thing in the stern of the boat. Somebody would pick up a line.. Would the engineer do that or ...

A: No, no, that's shore, or ground crew.

Q: OK, the shore people, they would be in the launch presumably, they would come up, they would loop a rope over a sternpost,

A: It's more of a ring..

Q: Yes, that makes sense, and then would that rope be attached just to the launch or would that also be attached to the jetty?

A: To the jetty because then either, I can't remember whether

they had mechanical means or used man power. I just can't remember that.

Q: My guess would be man power. Especially as the service had only just started. Maybe if it had continued for months and years they would have installed machinery to do it. And so people would pull on the ropes and actually carefully bring the aircraft in.

A: It had to be done carefully because of those sea wings that are rather easy to damage.

Q: Then the passengers would disembark, and they would go through the dining room, through that door, it must have been a step or two up to that door, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was. The floor of the dining room was level with the sea wings. Let's see if this would give us a clue. Yes. Because you see those are windows, and people who were sitting at the dining tables could see out those windows, so that means the floor of the dining area was either at or a little below these sea wings.

Q: So they would go up ....

Break in tape...

A: .... this trip I'm talking about where I went by Holyhead, boat train to Holyhead. We'd been across the Atlantic to the Azores and so on. And I somehow recall that we would have liked to have gone from Foynes on back to the United States over that northern route, but there was some, as I recall, some sort of a diplomatic problem, so we returned all the way, back to Foynes, back to Lisbon, back to the Azores and back to New York, rather than going straight across. I think there was a question that ..., and understandably the British government didn't want Pan American in the United States to get too far ahead in this thing. So anyway we came back and we stayed the night in that hotel in Hythe, but which one it was, Lord knows,...

Q: Now one of the other people I interviewed remembered that it was called the something Lawn, something like the Lansdown Lawn, ...?

A: Is there such a hotel there?

Q: I don't know if there is today but it must have been, ... you probably know some of these guys. Oh, States Mead, do you know him... He recalled the hotel was rather like a country mansion and ...OK, now you've never actually taken off from Southampton, you've only landed. But now you have landed at Foynes. Presumably the procedure at Foynes would be the same as at Southampton. Fifteen or twenty minutes out, you would get, by radio but in code, not in clear, you would get details of wind direction, force and state of the sea.

A: In the river, the state of the sea was never a problem

Q: Yes, that's right, Foynes is on the Shannon. So let's imagine the situation. What would the wind be likely to be there? Likely to be westerly probably..

A: Yes, I think the times I was in there , it was always from the west I think, coming from the west you went down, and came back over the top

Q: You would go over the land and circle and come back for landing

A: Yes, that's for eastbound, but if you were coming up from Southampton, you would position yourself...

Q: You would already be in that position?

A: Yeah.

Q: You'd be heading west anyway. Always land into the wind. And the wind force might be about the same as you mentioned before? 15 or 20 knots, and so you'd land into the wind, and the state of the water? How would they describe the surface of the water. They'd say calm...?

A: Well they'd use the same terms, but you would not ever see, I don't think, rough, in other words you wouldn't get rough, it would be slight or choppy.

Q: What are the terms they use then? Slight, choppy, you've mentioned rough ..? Choppy is worse than slight isn't it?

A: Yes. I don't remember if they had one, I don't remember one which was better than slight.

Q: Calm?

A: Yeah, I think so, I think they used calm.

Q: Calm, slight, choppy and rough. Once again there would be a.., a launch from the handling company would have looked at the area and so on..

A: Foynes was, the word primitive isn't quite right, but it was very fundamental in Foynes. There was just enough handling facilities in that time to take care of us. And there were no hotel facilities for the passengers there, so they were immediately carried by private transportation, if they going to stay near, to Limerick or on back into...

Q: The procedure would be the same in that there would be two lines attached to the plane in the way we talked about before and it would be manoeuvred into the jetty. Was there a jetty or did passengers get on to a boat there.

A: They got onto a launch in Foynes. I don't think they had a jetty in Foynes.

Q: I seem to remember somebody describing to me re-fuelling from a launch rather than a .. so that would indicate that the passengers used a launch. Do you remember what the buildings looked like at Foynes? Somebody mentioned to me a

harbour master's office which was where you would go for your meteorological reports?

A: I think it was just the harbour master's office literally. I guess the cursory Customs and Immigration was .. (UNINTELLIGIBLE 529)... because it was not a terminal, it was no need to be a terminal, passengers were departing on the airline, they weren't kept in Foynes. If they came in the day before, they stayed in Limerick and came by taxi right to the dock, right to the edge of the river and were launched out to the airplane.

Q: It was a pretty small village Foynes?

A: Oh yes, Foynes was small.

Q: Do you remember a pub there?

A: No, I stayed, since I got stuck there, someone that may.. some sort of a guest house, people by the name of Scales and I stayed there with the Scales for these three or four days. They took good care of us and every once in a while the old man would offer me a slug of Irish whiskey to pour down. And it always intrigued me, he would pour the fusel oil off the top, before he poured us a drink. And then he would pour the fusel oil back in after. I often wondered about Mr Scales and his handling of that Irish whiskey. It must have been a cheap Irish whisky to begin with. They took good care of me and every night, it was chilly, they'd put a hot water tank in my bed to keep my feet warm. They were pleasant.

Q: Now the re-fuelling at Foynes. Talking about a return flight. Now you never flew from Southampton to Foynes. But you must have taken off from Foynes. OK. Now the schedule I have here is an hour for re-fuelling at Foynes. Is that about right.

A: Yes.

Q: So then you would take off again at 4.30 in the afternoon, that would be on the regular schedule flight you would take off at 4.30. Now tell me how you handled the on and off shifts on those, the watches on the plane.

A: Well the plane had one fully qualified captain carrying two flight engineers, radio officer. Remember we were all on duty from the time we left Southampton. Theoretically as far as I'm concerned. - the navigator, because he was only needed for the leg from Foynes to Botwood. From Southampton to Foynes you flew contact, in other words you took visual notice of where you were and radio bearings.

Q: There were radio beacons already then?

A: Yes. And we used broadcast stations too.

Q: Explain that to me, I don't understand that.

A: Well, a, you can tune in a commercial broadcast station, you could, on the direction finder and take a bearing if you knew where that station was and could identify it, then you knew where you were on a line in relation to that station.

Q: So the commercial radio stations must have been marked on your charts?

A: And the navigators, and the pilots and the radio operators usually kept track of them. But everybody kept themselves pretty busy keeping up with the things that they might need. But from Southampton to Foynes was what we call contact operation. From Foynes to Botwood was, for those days, sophisticated navigation. Then normally the navigator was through there and the captain and the co-pilot found their way down to Shediac, and in the same way on in to Port Washington.

Q: So we've got a Captain...

A: Oh, I didn't finish. A captain, two engineers two flight radio operators, one navigator and two other co pilots. One

which they called a first officer, and the other was the second officer.

Q: When the pictures and accounts, they show the two pilots in the pilot's seats in the front of the flight deck and the captain sitting at a table at the back of the flight deck. Is that how it worked?

A: No, well. The captain, when he took some relief, would get up out of the cockpit, put two of the other pilots there. Well, yes, he might go back, but as far as approaches, landings and take-offs, he was always in the left hand seat. He had full responsibility. He was always in the left hand seat.

Q: That gives us a crew of eight. And there would have been two or three stewards.

A: No, I think there must have been three...

Side B.

There was a great sense of speed because the airplane was so large. It would get up, and start out and there would be water flying back over the passenger windows, they could it, then it would get up on the seat and start planing..

Q: Was it noisy at this point?

A: There was some vibration yes. Some vibration because you got four sizeable engines out there beating against the sides of the airplane and you'd get up on the step and the next thing you know, you'd fly off. You don't rotate like you do in jets today. You just fly off of the water and away and you can feel the engines throttling back the plane and gradually, you look out the window and you see that you are gradually ....

Q: Everybody talks about the step?

A: OK, when you're in the water, part of this part of the airplane is down in the water. When you are up and planing, this is all out of the water. It is only here. It's like, you know built around speed boats, I guess..

Q: Not a lot..

A: Well it's the same thing. You know a speed boat when it's just chugging from here over there, just hunkered down in the water, and then when you put all that power to it, it gets up and starts planing literally..

Q: The nose lifts?

A: Well, the thing flattens out, and you're free of drag back here. I don't know how else to describe it. This is what you're running on, this little part right here, just before you brake

Q: Just the very bottom of the hull is in the water, and that's what's called being on the step? Then I suppose with all the noise from the engines, you wouldn't hear the noise of the water as well?

A: No,

Q: It would just be the roar and the vibration of the engines, and the passengers would feel it gathering speed, and then would they feel it lift out of the water, or would they...

A: Yes, it's a sort of a feeling like someone had been hanging on to you, and all of a sudden they let you go.

Q: Is it a little jerk?

A: Sometimes. Sometimes, it depends on the pilot and his particular technique at that time. Whether it comes out

with a final little brake from the water, or just literally flies right off, -

Q: Smoothly. A sudden access of speed perhaps?

A: No, you, not in those old sea planes, you do in jets.

Q: So then you would reach cruising altitude, which I gather was not very high in those days?

A: Particularly westbound. Almost always had westerly winds and would ....(UNINTELLIGIBLE 101) ... all the fuel you could. The fuel load was of course was a minimal that was established for that particular flight to get there and go on to Shediac or whatever ordinate was picked. Then you come up with your payload after that. You got the operating weight in the airplane, and the fuel load for the flight and this much can be for passengers and cargo. If you were only going to have this much, you'd take on some extra fuel, just to have it. If it was going to be this much, based on the forecast, then you were literally in the arms of the meteorologists. So the navigator had a particular responsibility to do his best to keep track of how we're doing and if we had to fly 4,000 feet because winds up here were 30 or 40 knots an hour higher, then you stayed down there.

Q: So the winds would tend to be lighter at a lower altitude. And that explains why they would ..

A: ... across the Atlantic, and the Azores, to Bermuda you'd never get over 1500 feet.

Q: One of the accounts I read, mentioned that you might sometimes see a ship..

A: Lights, at night. Because you got to arrive in Botwood in daylight. You might even see just off the shore,... (UNINTELLIGIBLE 145) ... or arriving or occasionally lights, you never worried about other airplanes, because there weren't any.

Q: So then once the captain gave the OK, then the stewards would start preparing the dinner. Which was pretty fancy I understand?

A: Yes, there's a dinner menu in that batch of tables. And I would say that it was probably a typical.. , that was on another flight, but it would have been quantitative

Q: Did you talk to the passengers much.

A: Only if you happened to run into them when you came down from upstairs. The captain, as far as Pan American was concerned was always supposed to go through the cabin... at least once on a long flight, and speak to the passengers and ask them if they're doing all right. We had some that were more gregarious than others. Some you had to beat them over the head to talk to the passengers, and others you had to beat them over the head to go back upstairs to do their share of flying.

Q: If they, - the dining room would only seat fourteen at most, and you might have as many, on my calculations you might have had as many as 34 people on the transatlantic flight. They would have to dine in several sittings.

A: I think 34 would probably be the outside, especially for the this company. That made a big job. That's why I'm sure they had at least four flight attendants.

Q: By the way did passengers have assigned seats.

A: No. Because there were no numbers on the seats and they came in and ..

Q: Rather like getting on a train?

A: Yes that's right.

Q: But once settled in, I imagine they would have kept that seat for the rest of the flight.

A: The only time that they might change would be if the load were light and back here there was a double seat and no one in it and you're sitting with someone and you don't want to sleep, so why not get the back bench and stretch out. The famous honeymoon suite was rarely used, but one thing it threw the balance of the airplane to hell and gone, but it was so far aft, and it was tough to balance the airplane. You didn't dare fly across the Atlantic with a pale bearing down on it and the company actually, on the those long flights as I recall, made no real effort to sell it. It was just too far aft. It was back in here and too much of an arm for balance.

Q: I gather that the crew berths that are shown on all these plans were not actually installed. Somebody, this is the bow of the aircraft.

A: This is an old one.

Q: And nobody recalls there being any dedicated crew berth..

A: Oh yes there were.

Q: Where were they?

A: They were two bunks, an upper and lower here..

Q: In the forward.. - In the passenger compartment at the back?

A: Yes. Here's the dining salon, and the galley and the men's room. Then this was crew quarters with bunks. Because on the long flights you put up a duty roster in the cockpit and you didn't have to go sleep but a lot of guys liked to. And if I done the flight from Foyne's to Botwood, after I'd been on the beat for fifteen hours as a navigator, well I was damn happy to go and lie down. But this never came to pass.

Q: The aft crew compartment? And they call this the forward crew compartment, but in fact this is what you call the bow of the aircraft and there were no berths in there either, so the crew used what the plans call the forward passenger compartment.

A: Yes, compartment number one.

Q: And that was accessed via the regular staircase.

A: Where the hell is it?

Q: Well it's actually right by the men's room.

A: Yes it comes right down by the men's room.

Q: Now some of the plans show in the forward compartment here, show a door to the bow.

A: Yes. The flight engineer who's going down into the bow to put up the bow post goes through that door. It's right between the two pilots in the bulkhead, underneath the instrument panel, and a small short ladder down into this bow compartment. It was really a kind of waste of space. But we kept an anchor there and things like that. But we carried no cargo or anything like that. Course you could go through a door right between these, between the pilots.

Q: So the navigator would work throughout the transatlantic stretch. But otherwise his duties would not be heavy. That's why I suppose there's only one navigator because he doesn't need to be .. (UNINTELLIGIBLE 295) ... But the radio operators and the flight engineers ...

A: There's got to be on constant man on duty the whole time and you'd be getting an elapsed time about 24 hours or thereabouts. Foynes to Botwood sixteen hours, Botwood to Shediac, four more, is twenty, twenty five to Port Washington and the time, Southampton to Foynes, three hours. And on the water time at Foynes, Shediac and Botwood. So the flight was actually underway well over twenty four hours.

Q: But would the engineers and the radio operators, would they work four hours on, four off, two hours on?

A: They were allowed to make their own. It was usually four and four, or specially during the middle of the night when it made more sense to go and get four hours sleep rather than two. And at the aft end of the cabin there was a row of seats there, you could stay right up on the flight deck if you wanted to and relax and read a little. It was a thing that was so new to all of us that ... (UNINTELLIGIBLE 330/1) ... fed up of the whole thing. We were proud of what we were doing. And it was the first time ever that you were flying a passenger across the Atlantic ocean. So we were pretty thrilled.

Q: So it was quite a thrill for the crew as well as the passengers.

A: It sure as hell was for me.

Q: Now after dinner, the stewards would convert the seats to bunks. Do you recall that?

A: What do the archives tell you?

Q: The archives certainly say that they were converted to bunks and they were curtained and people would go to the men's room or the ladies room and change into their pyjamas and while they were doing that the stewards would, as on a sleeping compartment on a train, the stewards would make up the beds.

A: Now that's right. I know there were some men who probably liked to sit in the dining room all night long and play cards. I don't think we served any kind of liquor on the airplanes in those days. I don't think it was permitted. I saw in that menu that we had there, I don't see any reference to wine or cocktails. You didn't come across anything in the Pan Am archives on that.

Q: They say they served fine wines.

A: Well this was probably it then. I don't think we actually served cocktails. But there you'd have to look some place else. This is the survey flight from er..

Q: That's the southerly route.

A: Across to ..

Q: Now I have, ... on one of the plans that they've released they show, this is the bow compartment. This little thing here is the, I assume is the ladder that led from in between the pilot's seats down into the bow compartment. Now they show another ladder right by the ladies room. There is also a picture of it; this is not a photograph, this is a drawing. I've brought the wrong one. On another one they show it there, right by the ladies room..

A: I don't know what that could have been, unless it was a storage area for the bunk equipment. The back ladder. It had to be stored some place. And I don't remember any overhead racks like we have in airplanes today. I bet you that's where they stored it.

Q: Now that would make sense. Because it must have, - the only place it can have gone. You would have had to crawl along here. If it went up here into the top of the plane, it's very low there, nobody could sit up.

A: This one shows steps when actually it's a vertical ladder.

Q: This is an artist's impression. I don't think it was actually built that way.

A: But somehow or other, I can't remember for sure, but I believe that back ladder led to some sort of storage compartment. Because there was no room up there for a person.

Q: The other people I've interviewed have not been able to remember seeing that ladder. And their feeling was that it was never installed. But as you say there must have been somewhere to store that er .. - if they didn't use the honeymoon suite they might have kept blankets in there.

A: People would have the tendency to stash the stuff wherever they could. I sort of have the feeling, that they sort of put a, - except for short flights, put a kibosh on trying to sell it. But I wouldn't want to be quoted on it.

Q: Now it would get dark during the first dinner setting, I imagine. And it must have got light at about the time you were landing at Botwood.

A: I would guess maybe an hour out.

Q: An hour out of Botwood, it would start to get light. I imagine that people would probably just want a cup of coffee and some juice at that stage. And they might get breakfast after Botwood. That would be the sensible way to do it. Do you remember what Botwood looked like.

A: No I don't. As a matter of fact, I got out my atlas yesterday and looked back at Botwood, trying to conjure up in my mind.

Q: Let's move on to Shediak then. What was Shediak like?

A: It was more of a commercial dock like area which came in here. Then people just weren't, there weren't anybody about to put up fancy sea plane terminal for an airline that was operating one to two trips a week. So they designated a Customs and Immigration area, and the technical people got together about setting up docking facilities. (UNINTELLIGIBLE 469) you could step over and buy a can of lovely lobster and the Customs in the United States were fairly good about that in those days.

Q: But it would be canned did you say? They didn't sell fresh lobsters?

A: No. They er, never did try to buy a fresh lobster. I know that at one time overnight in Shediac, I had to carry some lobster from the dock into the hotel to have a lobster cocktail, because they didn't serve lobster cocktails in the hotel. Everybody had so much..

Q: But there was actually a hotel in Shediac. It was that big a place.

A: Oh yes it was a nice little town. I often wondered why I hadn't taken a (UNINTELLIGIBLE 487) vacation and gone up in that area. But it's just one of those things..... As I say they were not at that point prepared to get involved in any great big terminal at either place. And I'm sure they were correct as war was just round the corner.

Q: The basic facilities they must have had; they must have had radio and presumably phones?

A: Oh yes. Surface communication was no problem and aviation communications facilities were, as I recall, were State. In other words we used their radio stations for our communications. Our code communications.

Q: And these places would have up to date weather reports?

A: Oh yes. They would have their own weather observing facilities, these places

Q: That would apply to Botwood as well?

A: Oh yes.

Q: So they might have a cup of coffee before they landed at Botwood. A proper breakfast be served between Botwood and Shediac. And then they would take off from Shediac for the last leg of the flight. Would they get lunch then?

A: Yes. Pan Am found over the years that they could keep the passengers from grumbling pretty well by feeding them.

Q: I suppose it keeps them from moving around as well.

A: And from just suffering from crushing boredom. And then they relaxed and made it across the ocean. And where they're going is just a few hours from there.

Q: Now in my story, I want to have the plane forced to make an unscheduled landing on the water off the coast of Maine. What kind of mechanical trouble might cause that. Not a crash landing, but just to be forced down?

A: The complete shutdown on one engine and a loss of power on a second which would get you to the point that you could not contemplate continuing ahead at a useable altitude. NO a fire, because then the thing ends right there. Of course you know the flight engineer could go out into the back of the engines in flight. That was rarely done as it got awful cold in those places

Q: I bet it was noisy as hell..

A: Oh yeah. But that's really all I can think of. A complete shut down on one...

Q: What about something to do with the fuel supply?

A: That gives a scenario where you contemplate people coming from the shore coming to the airplane and helping it get on its way. Yeah. I told you we were getting might short of fuel on ... No, you wouldn't run out of fuel from Shediac to Port Washington. There's no way you could.

Q: Unless there was a leak.

A: Unless there was a leak. And octane gas was coloured and if the tank were leaking you would have seen it in Shediac. There's no scenario I can come up with to make the fuel leak logical. At least that's my reaction.

Q: What about the problem of landing, say of the coast of Maine. Presumably the sea would be rougher there than any of the places where you would normally land?

A: Yes, it would be. It would be, er.. (UNINTELLIGIBLE 576) but you could. As a matter of fact, on another operation, in the mid-Atlantic where we used to have land at the Azores, obviously we could dock the airplane inside the breakwater, but all the landings and take-offs were outside the breakwater and we would have swells, three and four feet, and it was hair-raising

Q: In what way, what were the effects?

A: Well, you were sure you were going to break the airplane up. It was like landing up against a building almost. Because you'd be wanting to set this special airplane on smooth water and you're bumping into these waves; the meteorologist makes swell forecast, and we could go on anything up to a forecast of three feet. In other words these are waves or they are swells, you've got waves besides them, but the swells and the movement of the ocean surface with this - and it makes, particularly take-offs very difficult because just about the time you get off speed you could take one of those swells and it slows you down again. And you start to get your flying speed nearer your take-off speed.

Q: When you're landing the effect would be - it would be hitting very hard.

A: That's right. A real good thump.

Q: Whereas I suppose if you landed on smooth water the hull would just cleave the water one time?

A: Yes, you just go back in reverse what you did on take off. You come in on the step, cut your engines back and she settles down into the water.

Q: Whereas if you're coming down in three foot swells, that step is hitting the top of the wave, and then another and another, so you would have a bang, bang, ban..

A: And you're airborne in between until you lose all your flying speed. But as long as you still got flying speed, you hit the water and then all of a sudden you're in the air in between.

Q: So it would be I suppose like breaking a car by stamping up and down on the brake like that, so you judder. But apart from being uncomfortable, what was the danger?

A: Structure. In other words. These were fragile planes. Even for the size of them, they were very fragile. It doesn't take much to dent one. Even today....  
(UNINTELLIGIBLE 624/5) No I'm sure you could pick a locale on the main coast somewhere where.....

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INTERVIEW WITH LEW LINDSEY (2) - 3RD FEBRUARY 1990

The United States Ambassador was in one of the planes that was ... (UNINTELLIGIBLE 003/4) ... and he sent cablegrams to President Roosevelt and told him to tell Pan American that they could get an engine off of one of the aeroplanes and at least get one of them going so as to get him to the United States. And I thought of his name a couple of days ago, and .. (UNINTELLIGIBLE 015/016) .. and that was one of the advantages we had.

Q: You said that you still have your logs. Could I look?

A: This is the beginning of the transatlantic survey operation. .. (UNINTELLIGIBLE 029 ) .. Horta '89s. Horta to Lisbon 748. Lisbon to Viscerose 5. Viscerose back to Marseille and Marseille to Southampton. And this is when I got shuttled off to Foynes, and it us three hours to come back to Southampton and to Lisbon , so.

Q: That's a three hour trip, Foynes to Southampton.

A: Was in that flying machine.

Q: Maybe there was a time difference between Ireland and London as well. From going back the schedule is 2.00 from Southampton and landing at 3.30 at Foynes. Maybe that's local time. Maybe it's a two and a half hour trip.

A: Well this as I say is the only one that I have on that particular leg. And the log goes all the way across, the times, and for my particular, for pilot particular reasons, the breakdown of the time and who the captain was.

Q: Any more on the 314?

A: Now this is all Bermuda, Bermuda to Port Washington. Now  
....

Q: These must have all been test flights?

A: Well, yeah, these were all before schedule. This may have been the press preview flight. I'd have to look that up.

Then we come over here... there was the press preview flight back here; that one with all those guys, this was back here in May. Then we ran for a while with only cargo I think, before we started carrying passengers. Here's another, I was more on that than I ever was on the other. The operation Southampton, as I indicated, the best I can come up with is sometime in the first week of July '39 was the first flight to Southampton. And then of course the last was in August. This is the one when war started. 3rd September Port Washington Port Shediac.

Q: Then you came back?

A: Turned around in Foynes.

Q: Did you make a note of some these .....

A: I tried to look them out for you. Yeah I got them right here. Those are the only ones I have in that area. The only actual flights I was on.

Q: But you've got this one. This was September 3rd though. September 3rd is the day Britain declared war. Let me make a note of that one. Because that one you haven't made a note of. That's September 7th..

A: Oh I know why. You indicated an interest only in westbound and I only put the west bound.

Q: You're right. So this is the 6th and 7th Botwood. Foynes to Botwood, that's the return flight 1552, Botwood Shediac, Shediac Port Washington. Then the same on the 28th. So I have all the information.

A: You have the westbound. Now if you would like to have the eastbound..

Q: No you're right, so I've got all the information already.

A: This is the one where we had to miss Shediac and you can see how long it took us to get from Botwood to Port Washington.

Q: Direct

A: Non stop, not necessarily direct. God, that was an

God-awful looking batch of weather that piled up along that coast.

Q: This is real history here.

A: Well I was glad to be in them.

Q: So you ought to make sure that you leave that to the museum in your will, you know. Pan Am museum in New York, the Pan Am building.

A: They have been trying to establish one down here too. Because that's where Pan Am started was down here at .. (UNINTELLIGIBLE 192).

Q: That's right I read a book. When I first started getting interested in this I got a book that turned out not to be about the Boeing 314. But it was called the Flying Clippers or something. But it was about operations from down here in Florida that went down to Rio I think.

A: Down into the Caribbean, down to Rio. There were two books that were basically historical but not necessarily this. There is the "Chosen Instrument" and "American Saga", they're both about Tripp who was the President of the airline in those days. And then there were others. I've got a rack full of them about the various people.....

Q: Now, I think I've asked you all my questions.

A: It made me quite nervous to contemplate this because my telephone conversations in New York were so short, and all of a sudden the next thing I knew, you were coming and I thought "My God, I hope I haven't led anybody astray about what I know." It isn't all that much. I felt that, it made me fill in a few personal gaps where you hadn't got the stuff from the archives.

Q: You certainly have. And may I phone you if anything else comes up over the next twelve months or so. Because it's bound to happen when I'm sitting down writing the manuscript.

A: Now also I have, one of my little retired pilot cards. Now

let me give you another phone number.

Q: Can I take these with me?

A: Yes, I had them fixed just for you. Now let me give you another phone number. 704 526 2360. We live in North Carolina five months of the year. In the mountains of western north Carolina. We leave here about the end of May and stay until the end of October. So anything from end of May on, I will be at the North Carolina number.

Q: Well it's been a great pleasure and you shouldn't, - you remember things very clearly. You shouldn't worry. One or two of the people I've interviewed have had a lot more trouble remembering things clearly than you have. It's a long time ago and I guess some of them are older than you.

A: Well, I'm pushing 78. Well the only captain that I recall is left alive is Gibberty Blackmore. He's out in Montana someplace, and I don't know what kind of shape Gibberty's in. He must be, age wise, between 85 and 90. Because he was quite a bit older than I was. But I love to get involved in this, it's just like I said, living in Iran all those years, and that Wings of Eagles, that just did it for us.

Q: I have Gilbert Blackmore's phone number here. Dan says he's the only living captain that flew the 314.

A: I guess that's right.

Q: He lives in Washington State, Dan says. But I have his phone number so I probably will give him a call. And let me see if you know.. - remember Bob Fordyce?

A: Oh sure. A red headed character.

Q: Well, he's not redheaded any more, he's got white hair now. Stan Zedalis?

A: Flight engineer.

Q: That's right. Saw him on Monday. States Mead I mentioned and a stewardess called Madeleine Cuniff who flew on this

plane but after war broke out, not on the scheduled flights. She was the Pan Am..

A: Yes, because we didn't have girls in those days.

Q: She flew on the planes much later, maybe towards the end of the war and only between New York and Botwood. She didn't cross the Atlantic I don't think.

A: No. You see that northern route, I don't think we flew it much more than a month or so past the beginning of Great Britain in the war. Because as I say, Ireland was very carefully neutral and it just became a hopeless process to move passengers between Foynes and England on this air line. Also they needed the aeroplanes elsewhere and we continued to operate the Lisbon operation until the United States got into the war in December '41 and then of course the aeroplanes were very shortly thereafter taken over by the US Government and Pan Am continued to operate them on a contract. Navy and Air Corps. A transport command contracts. And they flew down Africa across the South Atlantic and up the East coast. But you know the Pan Am 314 was the first aeroplane literally that the President went overseas in.

Q: That's right I've seen the pictures.

A: Yes I have a video of it. And they loaded here. They brought the aeroplane down here and loaded Roosevelt here and flew across the Atlantic to Casablanca. But, er, ... (UNINTELLIGIBLE 336/8) ... I don't know how he reacted to things like this. I got three of your books and I sure would appreciate you other book..

Q: I'd be glad too, very glad too.

A: We have read two others, "Eye of the Needle" and "The Man from St Petersburg". But please either through the office in New York or directly, if there's anything I can contribute I'd love too. I love hearing myself talk.

A2: (female) I told him the other day, the older he got, the more he talked..

\* \* \* \* \*