

## LOOKING BACK

### Hank Beardsley

Like most of us, I look back on my life with mixed emotions. Some things I would have done differently, but most things I wouldn't change for the world. An exciting life but not all that lucrative. I could have made a lot more money doing other things that would probably have bored me stiff.

After leaving Princeton at the height of the depression, I thought I was lucky to get a job in New York with De Vinne & Hallenbach, a fine old firm specializing in quality printing of books, catalogues, pamphlets, etc. I was on commission and pounded the streets for business. I landed a few good contracts, but they were scarce.

My Dad had been a member of the NY Cotton exchange for many years, and only recently had bought a seat on the NY Stock Exchange. He had not sold his seat on the Cotton Exchange and suggested that I take over and learn the cotton futures business.

He arranged for me to go to Mobile, Alabama for six months as an apprentice in the firm of Anderson Clayton, leading cotton merchants. I enjoyed those six months tremendously; met some wonderful "Southerners" and was even invited to be a Knight in the King's Court at Mardi Gras. . . . Not bad for a damn Yankee. I returned to New York and traded on the floor of the cotton Exchange for about four years. Cotton was selling for about five cents a pound (it's more than a dollar a pound to-day). The market was listless and trading limited; so I finally decided to sell my seat and seek my fortunes elsewhere.



*Hank and Di, second and third from right, pose with Tiger, and classmates Ray Carter, Bink Dannenbaum and Phil Smith at our 55th.*

I ran into a young man, Jimmy Thompson, one day, whose father owned the Good Hope Ranch, a coconut, cattle and delightful Guest House operation in Jamaica, West Indies. Jimmy had a job with Rogers Peet and was not too happy with it. He was bullish on Jamaica and was convinced that it held great promise as a tourist attraction; that Americans had only just discovered the island; and that the British loved it.

It appeared to me that a minimum investment might catch on, and with Jimmy's father as our mentor we couldn't go far wrong. We bought a couple of used cars, fixed them up, repainted them, put uniformed drivers behind the wheel and hired out at six pence a mile. Very profitable! Jimmy's father felt there was not enough on the island for tourists to do; that big game fishing could be developed. So off to Miami we went and found just what we were looking for up the Miami River. She was 42' in length . . . trunk cabin . . . twin 125 HP Lycoming engines . . . and two fishing chairs aft.. And the price was right if we were willing to do the work ourselves to fix it up.

We brought THE RAMBLER back to Jamaica in the height of the hurricane season but all went well. We fished off the north coast of Jamaica in the Montego Bay area, in-shore, off-shore, deep water, shallow water and had many charters - but no fish! We took the boat around the island to Kingston and had better luck.

The year was 1939 and storm clouds were brewing in Europe. Jimmy, my partner, married one of his father's guests at The Ranch, and went back to the States. I was fortunate to sell THE RAMBLER to the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands for his official use, and she is still there as far as I know. The cars had been disposed of, so I boarded the next Pan Am flying boat for Miami and home. . . . not sure what I was going to do.

What happened next, however, determined what I was going to do for the rest of my business life.

My Dad had oil interests in New Mexico, and wanted me to go out there; meet the principals and report back to him on the status of the operation.

I purchased a round-trip ticket on TWA from Newark Airport (LaGuardia did not exist) to Artesia, New Mexico. I met the people he wanted me to meet; inspected the various properties; got to know Mel Baish, leader of the group;

returned home within the week and wrote my report.

What impressed me though were the two flights on TWA. The weather was perfect; the service was great; the martinis dry; and the DC-3 was, to me, luxurious! I had not flown commercially before in the United States. I had a long chat with one of the stewardesses on my return flight, and she took me up to the cockpit and introduced me to the Captain. Both of these employees of TWA were dedicated people and thoroughly enjoyed what they were doing.

The next day I told my family that I thought I would try to get a job with one of the airlines. Dad knew the specialist for Eastern Airlines on the floor of the Stock Exchange. I had an interview with the Regional Vice-President, who offered me a job as Courier at their Newark terminal. I accepted and went to work the following day.

An interesting anecdote: Mayor LaGuardia had been campaigning to build an airport for New York City. He was on one of our flights returning from Washington. Our tickets in those days read "Washington - New York". When the plane landed at Newark and taxied up to the terminal, the Mayor stood in the doorway of the plane and said, "This isn't New York, it smells like Newark. My ticket reads 'New York' and I demand to be taken to New York". So we cranked up the plane and flew him to Floyd Bennett, an airfield on Long Island. Of course the press was in on the deal and gave it headlines in the New York papers the next day. Construction on Laguardia Airport started soon after.

After two years with Eastern, I was offered a job with American Airlines. . . better pay and a step up the ladder. American was (and is today) a great airline and I stayed with them until war broke out and I applied for a commission in the Naval Air Transport Service. I was turned down because



*In the Gun Room at the Nassau Club for the '95 Reunion Class Dinner - Matty Haythe, Ferd Roebing and John Kemmerer.*

my eyesight was not 20/20. But I was accepted in the United States Army Air Force as 2nd Lt. in the Air Transport Command. My tour consisted of eight months on Canton Island in the Pacific and three years at Pacific Division Headquarters at Hickam Field, Hawaii.

The Air Transport Command was charged with the responsibility of ferrying aircraft to the combat zone; and moving men and material by air. The first four-engine aircraft were bombers, B-17s and B-24s. The latter could be stripped down to become a passenger and cargo carrier. . . the C-87. Later on the Air Force developed the C-54, a large four-engine passenger/cargo aircraft, which was to become the DC-4 in post war commercial aviation. The point is that rapid technological development of four-engined equipment during the war would have taken years if the airlines and manufacturers had had to do it on their own!

I attained the rank of major and was in charge of the Hawaii sector of the Oceanic Air Traffic Control, an organization that controlled all Pacific air traffic from San Francisco to Brisbane, Australia. The growth of air traffic had become that great!

On my return to civilian life, I immediately went to American Airlines to see what openings were available. I was offered two alternatives: District Sales Mgr. - Baltimore or City Mgr. - London for American Overseas Airlines. I chose the latter. AOA, formerly American Export Airlines, had been taken over by American Airlines and had just started up operations to London, Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Helsinki with DC-4 equipment.

Our boss of American Airlines, C. R. Smith - a great leader - was disappointed with the financial prospects of AOA. We had taken delivery of the new Boeing StratoCruiser with its cocktail lounge "downstairs" and its upper berths in the main cabin. But it was an expensive aircraft to operate. It relied on numerous individual electric motors for in-flight performance and control of the aircraft. Maintenance delays were frequent and costly. So it was no surprise when Pan Am offered to buy out AOA that C. R. quickly agreed. The employees of AOA had the choice of returning to American Airlines in the USA or joining Pan Am in Europe. By this time, I was sold on the development of international air transportation and the important part Pan Am was playing with its Round-the-World flights. So I joined Pan Am and never regretted the decision.

This was the era in which Pan Am was promoting the theory of "The Chosen Instrument". It was Juan Trippe's belief that

U. S. interests would best be served by designating a single U. S. carrier to fly the American flag in international aviation under the banner of, say, UNITED STATES AIRLINES. This was the policy followed by other countries. The British with British Overseas Airways. . . the French with Air France. . . the Italians with Alitalia and the Germans with Lufthansa. Though he felt strongly that Pan Am was the logical carrier to be so designated, he would agree to any carrier being chosen if that was the general consensus. After many hearings and arguments pro and con, politics prevailed and the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) killed "The Chosen Instrument".

Two years in Stockholm as Regional Director of Sales for Scandinavia turned out to be very important to me as I met and married Gunilla, the mother of our three children. Stockholm is a beautiful city and the Swedes are fine people. I was reluctant to leave.

But it was back to London for four more years as Director of Sales-Europe, after which I was transferred to Washington as District Manager., and finally back to the Pan Am Building in New York as Director of Sales-USA. Highlights of this period, of course, include the introduction of the Boeing 707 and the Douglas DC-8 as the first pure jet commercial airliners under Pan Am colors. What a competitive advantage these aircraft gave us, and Juan Trippe is to be congratulated for his courage and foresight. The wide-bodied Boeing 747 was the next generation of technical advancement in aviation, and Pan Am was there with early deliveries.

It should be noted that we turned down the Concorde, built by the British and the French. Though the aircraft was popular because of its supersonic speed, it was extremely expensive to operate and Pan Am felt that its narrow cabin was a return to the tube of DC-3 days. In fact Pan Am told the aircraft manufacturers that it would be very interested in a wide-bodied aircraft with supersonic speed. So far, that aircraft is still on the drawing boards.

Shortly before he died, President Roosevelt shared with Juan Trippe his thoughts that to strengthen post-war commercial activities with South America, the American businessman would demand better hotel accommodations than presently existed. Since Pan Am was the dominant air carrier in South America, it was logical that they take on this responsibility. Pan Am reluctantly agreed and Inter-Continental Hotels Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of Pan Am was born.

It started with 11 hotels in the major cities of South America. . . some new but mostly refurbished older hotels. About the time that John Gates became Chairman and Chief Executive



*George and Betty White from Carmel, California  
- Happy Hour, The Tides Inn, April 1995.*

the company began a worldwide expansion program, and this is when Gates asked me to be Senior Vice-President of Marketing. . . a job I held until my retirement in 1974, and 75 hotels later!

It was an exciting experience mainly because the locations of these new hotels were far flung. . . Helsinki, Tokyo, Nairobi, Beirut, New Delhi, Karachi, Frankfurt, Athens, Melbourne, Auckland, Bangkok and of course London and Paris, to name a few. The Opening Ceremonies of these hotels were an opportunity to tell the world "that another luxurious Inter-Continental was open and available to the world traveller".

The hotels in the Inter-Continental chain were all deluxe hotels, but we soon saw the need for less expensive, less luxurious but first class hotels and that is when the Forum chain was developed with some 30 hotels today.

I was looking forward to a relaxed life in retirement, but it was not to be. Our first year of retirement my wife Diana and I flew around the world three times for Board meetings, industry conventions, and various assignments. I had an unlimited First Class pass on Pan Am and "complimentary" accommodations at Inter-Continental hotels and a wife who loved to go places and see things! So we travelled a lot and it was fun. With the demise of Pan Am, however, our pass privileges have gone. But we have an organization, "Retired Employees of Pan Am" that has made a deal with about twelve international carriers who give us a 75% discount (stand-by). We have flown three times to London on Virgin Atlantic Airways and though it doesn't match the good old days with Pan Am, they treat us well!

So at 83, I look back on a life with few regrets. Oh sure, there were things I might have done differently, had I known. My crowning glory, however, was shooting my age last week at Seminole Golf Club. . . much more important than all those previous milestones!