

Oakland World Wings Chapter October 1, 2020 Newsletter from President Louise Diracles

OCTOBER ZOOM

Don't miss the zoom meeting with a selection of old photos in celebration of our chapter's 40th year together. During the first slide show no one can enter the zoom so **Be in the Zoom when and where it happens:**

OAK Chapter Meeting

Time: Monday, Oct 5, 2020

1:00 PM Pacific Time

Contact Louise for the link to join the meeting.

Thank you to Emilia de Geer for setting up yet another Zoom meeting!!!
Let me know when you receive this: louisediracles@comcast.net

MEMBER NEWS

- Laurie Barton reported that she had an episode with A-Fib and was hospitalized but is now back to normal.
- Linda Rineck lost her mom.

WWI-OAKLAND EVENTS

- Suzy Proescher had to cancel a ladies only OAK WW gathering on the top deck of the Commodore's Cabernet Sauvignon ship in Alameda. She hopes to re schedule. If she re schedules, it will be open to the first **ten** members who RSVP to 702-280-4773 (Suzy's cell.) After the first ten, interested members will be put on a waiting list and confirmed depending on Alameda County health regulations at the time of the event. Everyone can bring their own picnic lunch with beverage and utensils. There will be tables with tablecloths and chairs set up on the Sky Deck allowing for distancing. Bring your **gloves and masks** for a germ-free event that will stand out from all previous dining experiences aboard the Cabby. Hopefully the air will be smoke-free by then so we can enjoy the fresh breeze, views and our World Wings friendships.
- From the 8/29/20 virtual meeting: WWI President Nancy McAllister asked us all to save Sat., 10/24/20, ten am for WWI Annual Meeting which will be online. Hopefully you've received your JetWings in your mailbox. Support

MSF through World Wings. Donate to Int'l. Charity Drawing by check, credit card or PayPal. WWI members' average age is 75. The 2021 Convention will be a 9 day Caribbean Cruise out of Ft. Lauderdale. The 2022 Convention will be a Fall Cruise Boston-Quebec. Conventions are priced to cover costs but are not fund raisers. WWI gets 20% if you buy from David Jeffries Designs.

- Nominations for Chapter Officers are now open. Please e mail me: louisediracles@comcast.net if you're willing to nominate yourself or someone else for President or other offices. Also, e mail Louise with your event ideas for 2020.
- Sally Andersen may host an event for ten outside in Rossmoor.

MEMBER PAN AM STORIES

Please send me YOUR Pan Am stories; we love to read them.

louisediracles@comcast.net

Be sure to read Gloria Read's Fighting Tiger Squadron story which is NOT to be missed!!!!

Pan Am Story from Janet Bisbing:

I started in 1967, but think I stopped in 1974. I also flew out of Miami and New York before transferring to S.F. So, my years of flying to Vietnam were not numerous...although memorable. I flew purser out of S.F. but also remember having to train the stewardesses how to look for guys coming down from heroin withdrawal. We learned a lot in those years. in many ways...but mostly very positive ways. We were fortunate to have flown at the time.

Pan Am Story from Netty Kilgour:

This happened to my friend Cees, a member of the SFO chapter. I ran into him shortly thereafter and remember him complaining to me about his new address book that got blown up along with the aircraft:

50 years ago (9/6/70) I boarded PA 093, Clipper Fortune N 752 in Amsterdam to go back to New York. I had just spent the weekend with my family. Little did we know that Clipper Fortune would never reach New York. The plane was hijacked by members of the PFLP. The aircraft turned in the opposite direction and went to Beirut where the explosives came on board that were later used in Cairo to destroy the aircraft. All passengers and crew, including the hijackers, got off the aircraft safely by using the emergency chutes.

Pan Am story from Linda Rineck:

I really enjoyed what Wendy had to say about Neerja...I didn't know she would be attending the Virtual meeting. I am so glad that she has done as much as she has to get Neerja recognized! She deserved it. My last assignment with Pan Am before I went to UAL was to help train the South Asians to be Pan Am flight attendants. I was a class coordinator and I had Neerja's class.

They all were very bright and worked very hard to score high on their exams. They wanted the job! During this training class Pan Am announced "The sale of the Pacific Routes to UAL." My father and uncle influenced me in making the choice to go with UAL! I actually made the decision in Miami during the training session. I actually went from that assignment straight to UAL! I felt like a traitor. UAL let me finish my special assignment and I was one of the last ones to arrive at the new carrier. One month later after the original 1202 went to UAL!

In September of that year, The Karachi hijacking happened. I was in Hong Kong boarding passengers when I heard about the hijacking. We know the rest of the story.... So sad.

I felt awful! So grateful that Wendy and others were able to get Neerja recognized and the rest of the crew for their bravery! They all did an amazing job!

The following background on PA Flight 73 and Neerja Bhanot is taken (from Wikipedia):

Neerja Bhanot was the Senior Flight Purser on Pan Am Flight 73 flying from Bombay to the United States, which was hijacked by four armed men on 5 September 1986 at Karachi airport in Pakistan. The aircraft was carrying 380 passengers and 13 crew members. The terrorists wanted to fly to Cyprus with the goal of freeing Palestinian prisoners in Cyprus. Bhanot was able to alert the cockpit crew as soon as the hijackers boarded the plane, and as the plane was on the apron, the three-member cockpit crew of pilot, co-pilot and the flight engineer fled from the aircraft through an overhead hatch in the cockpit. As the senior-most cabin crew member, Bhanot took charge of the situation inside the plane.

The hijackers were part of the Abu Nidal Organization, a Palestinian terrorist organization backed by Libya; they were targeting Americans and American assets. In the early minutes of the hijacking, they identified an Indian-American citizen, dragged him to the exit, shot him dead and threw his body from the plane. The terrorists then instructed Bhanot to collect the passports of all the passengers so that they could identify the other Americans on board. She and the other attendants under her charge hid the passports of the remaining 43 Americans on board, some under a seat and the rest down a rubbish chute so that the hijackers could not differentiate between American and non-American passengers.

After 17 hours, the hijackers opened fire and set off explosives. Bhanot opened one of the airplane doors, and even though she could have been the first one to jump out and flee from the aircraft, she did not do so and instead started helping the other passengers escape. According to a surviving passenger, "She was guiding the passengers to the emergency exit. That is when the terrorists were firing constantly fearing a commando attack. They saw Neerja relentlessly trying to help three unaccompanied children, among others, out and that is when they caught her by her ponytail and shot her point blank." Out of a total of 44 American passengers, two were killed during the hijacking. A child on board, then aged seven, is now a captain for a major airline and has stated that Bhanot has been his inspiration, and that he owes every day of his life to her. She was recognized internationally as "the heroine of the hijacking" and became the youngest recipient of the Ashok Chakra Award, India's most prestigious gallantry award for bravery during peacetime.

In addition to saving the lives of many hostages, Bhanot had also helped prevent the plane from getting off the ground. She posthumously received multiple awards for her courage from the United States government, and the Tamgha-e-Pakistan from Pakistan, an award given for showing great human kindness.

Pan Am Story from Dorothy Megeath:

Funny flying story:

Right out of training school in Honolulu in 1978, I flew with Victor, another new-hire, who was such fun to be around. His energy and enthusiasm were contagious. After boarding the aircraft, a German Purser told us the movie was *Kaput*. Victor and I worked the back half of a full 747 and proceeded with our duties. After the meal service to hundreds of people in economy, passengers were asking me when the movie, *Kaput*, would be showing. I went to Victor to see if he knew about that. Victor thought the name of the movie was *Kaput* (meaning broken in German) and we had to refund over 100 headsets at 3.50 each. Thanks, Victor for a memory that has lasted decades.

Dorothy Cross Megeath

Hired January 1978 out of SFO (Thanks to Linda Kelley)

THE FIGHTING TIGER SQUADRON by Gloria Read

This piece would not win the Gloria Steinem prize for advancement of the cause of feminism, and for heaven's sake don't show it to a supporter of #MeTooMovement (which I wholeheartedly support), but as we know, things were different in the 60's.

Like all other Pan Am "stewardesses" based in San Francisco in the late part of the 1960's, I flew into Vietnam often since Pan Am was contracted by the U. S. Air Force to fly troops into and out of Vietnam and to take soldiers on their R & R flights during the Vietnam War. Each of us was issued a Geneva Convention Card, stating that we should be treated as second Lieutenants should we be taken POW. That should have given us pause that we were in danger, as were the bullet holes sometimes found in the fuselage of planes.

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(FLYING TIGER SQUADRON continued from previous page)

As the war went on and protests at home erupted and flared, I like many others, no doubt, began to wonder for the first time, whether the “Good Fathers in Washington” really were as wise as we used to think. Perhaps this war was a mistake. But early on, it all seemed like a great adventure, and it was fun to be the center of attention for the many admiring soldiers. One of my fun memories of the early war is of DaNang’s Fighting Tiger Squadron. I still have their printed Christmas dinner menu from 1967. The men at the base had gone to great ends to supply all of the normal menu items of the traditional American Christmas dinner. Our flight was delayed, but the men at the airport waited to share their dinner with us American girls.

The Fighting Tiger Squadron maintained a bulletin board on which was hung various items of women’s lingerie. The rules were clear: items contributed must be taken off our bodies, not carried in, and there was a room at the airport where the removal could be done privately. For each donation, we would receive a small tacky fighting tiger painted on black velvet. When we had received four of these small paintings, we could turn them in for a large tacky fighting tiger painted on black velvet. Just before or after landing, we would slip into the airplane lavatory and put a sexy piece of lingerie over our normal undergarments, which, of course, included our required girdle and nylons. Our contribution would then be removed in the private room.

In time, our filmy dainties were supplemented by such things as a pair of men’s boxer shorts with red hearts and a 38D bra that would have required at least three of us to fill. After an absence from DaNang but after having submitted my four contributions, I returned with a new donation in hand — er elsewhere— eager to win my large black velvet tiger. I was dismayed to learn that a new base commander had put an end to this noble tradition, and I would be forever foiled in winning my coveted prize.

In 1994, when I had long been a community college instructor involved in international education and weeks after President Clinton had lifted the trade embargo, opening Vietnam to trade and tourism, I was invited to be part of a delegation of educators to Vietnam. We were hosted by a travel company and our goal was twofold: to examine opportunities for student study-travel and to establish contacts for helping Vietnam set up educational programs. I, of course, had my history in Vietnam, but others in the group, moreso. One man had been in the U.S. infantry, had worked through his issues by getting a PhD in Vietnamese history, and was now a college president. Another man had been a North Vietnamese POW for three years. Two others had written books about Vietnam, and the people from the travel company were Vietnamese ex-pats who could fill in the cultural gaps.

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(FLYING TIGER SQUADRON continued from previous page)

All in all, it was one of the most interesting, poignant and even fun trips of my life. It was strange to see the Saigon and DaNang airports, which at last sight had been so bustling with military aircraft and personnel and at least one Pan Am plane, now inhabited by a single small Air Vietnam plane surrounded by bunkers which had been reclaimed by the jungle. It was distressing to see the country still ravaged by our war and the ones with Cambodia and China that followed. Largely because of our embargo, the country was in the dark ages technologically. Sad memories returned of visiting soldiers at the DaNang Hospital who likely had few days left to live and of the stack of aluminum caskets awaiting every Pan Am flight.

At a DaNang cafe, however, when we were served drinks on little cardboard coasters embossed with tigers, I smiled as I recalled the Fighting Tiger Squadron. Someone in the group was curious that I was collecting these coasters as people finished their drinks, and I related the story of the squadron and my long ago thwarted aspiration of receiving my coveted prize. On the last night of the trip, when thank yous had been expressed and gifts given to the tour leaders, one duo in the group told the fabricated tale that while walking down the street in DaNang, they were approached by a man who asked if there was someone in their group named Gloria. When they responded affirmatively, he gave them a package and told them I had left something behind and to please give it to me. Surprised, I opened the package to find — yes — a very large tiger painted onto black velvet. I framed the painting and it hung in my office until I retired. Occasionally a visitor would take a look at the black velvet tiger and then look at me as if to say, “Gee, I would have thought you to have better taste in art.” I would smile.

Stay safe; be well,
Louise

Photo: Shirley MacLaine



STYLE & FASH