

TCA



Issue #5

December 2001

Island Breezes

A newsletter for the employees of Tradewind Caribbean Airlines



Welcome to "Island Breezes" the Official TCA pilots newsletter. Here you can expect to find articles on real world Caribbean airline news, developments and events within Flight Simulator community as well as stories about the pilots and crew of Tradewind Caribbean Airlines and Tradewind Domestic Mail.

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Contact

[Ken Malczynski](#)

[Rich Ellison](#)



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INSIDE TCA

Happy Holidays !!!

From all the staff here at the Island Breezes

Santhana Update



Fron Santhana CEO Thomas Than

Hey Guys!

TCA Santhana takes great pleasure in presenting the four final charters for this year. I just created some nice flights to winter wonderlands in the U.S., especially Alaska, in Canada and in Europe. Snow as far as you can see... and - THIS IS TRUE - you will get the chance to fly Santa Claus across the States...

BUSINESS CHARTERS

CH#15: Fly caribbean author Patrick Chamoiseau to his hidden log-house at Alaska.

First leg is a flight in our beautiful Falcon F50 from Chicago to Yakutat in

Alaska. From here we will use a DHC-3 Turbo to the log-house in the valleys of Alaska...

CH#16: Fly Santa Claus with a full load of toys to FAO Schwarz New York A flight in our Douglas DC-8 Freighter from Seattle to Newark, where all the toys will be loaded onto trucks and transported through Manhattan.

HOLIDAY CHARTERS

VF#51: Canadian Mountain Holiday Heli Skiing Experience Flight in the B777 from Bridgetown to Calgary, Canada via Denver, CO.

VF#52: Skiing at Innsbruck Intercontinental flight via Boston to Innsbruck, Austria. In addition to that you will find the "airline version" of the Night before Christmas... (just click on waving Santa in the Menu-Section...) The next update will be presented on the 1st of February 2002. I going to spend the holidays with an update of my system (from Win98 to Win XP and from FS2000 to FS2002). So I will not be able to add new flights for January 2002. Sorry for that. For February will take-off to the Winter Games at Salt Lake City and in the Business Section Mr. Steven Segal has booked a flight to the Flying M Ranch. For now I just have to wish you all a merry christmas and happy new year.

Happy landings

Thomas Than [#2503]

THA Month's end

It's been a good month for Tradewind Hellenic Airlines As well as being Top of the Virtual Airline Stock Exchange, THA also recorded a record number of flights this month. Under the leadership of CEO Patrick Hanna THA looks to have secured itself a secure future. Here's Patrick Hanna's end of month Statement.

From Hellenic CEO Patrick Hanna:

Guys... the November month end is complete.. here are the totals.. Thanks to all who flew this month.. the hours flown were 34 hours higher than last month and the revenue was \$500,000.00 higher as well.

Pilot Flights Hours Hours YTD PAX CARGO (lbs) Revenue Revenue YTD Salary Salary YTD Pilot

TYLER, Terry 0 0 26.25 0 131000 \$260,636.00 \$265,480.00 \$0.00
\$6,334.00 5001

HANNA. Patrick 10 49 197 1009 42794 \$672,620.00 \$3,187,832.00
\$13,795.00 \$51,243.00 5000

JACKFERT,Doug 6 27 83.5 42 146613 \$288,876.00 \$625,097.00
\$5,356.00 \$6,131.00 9119

RADTKE.Christian 1 3.5 86 223 0 \$49,398.00 \$1,583,050.00 \$700.00
\$22,021.00 5004

MYRINTZOS,Fotis 1 1 15 88 0 \$18,488.00 \$464,822.00 \$200.00
\$4,545.00 5002

TSANTZALOS,K 0 0 15.5 0 0 \$0.00 \$199,118.00 \$0.00 \$4,396.00
5005

WEDGEWOOD,Tony 0 0 30.5 0 0 \$0.00 \$79,347.00 \$0.00 \$9,053.00
2455

ELLISON,Richard 11 38 67.25 712 8948 \$421,965.00 \$754,376.00
\$59,909.00 \$98,951.00 2858

MALCZYNSKI,Ken 3 11 11 0 252762 \$482,775.00 \$482,775.00 \$2,250.00 \$2,250.00 9082

ROCHNER,Johannes 0 0 13.5 0 0 \$0.00 \$217,981.00 \$0.00 \$4,533.00 2572

TRAKOSAS,Yiannis 1 3.5 8.75 0 42767 \$81,684.00 \$163,368.00 \$800.00 \$1,856.00 5006

ANDRONIS.Basil 5 6.25 7.25 177 748 \$29,817.00 \$29,817.00 \$1,470.00 \$1,670.00 5007

STOFFEL,Richard 5 3.5 3.5 0 4526 \$8,643.00 \$8,643.00 \$459.00 \$459.00 5008



OTHER 0 0 3 0 0 \$8,180.00 \$8,180.00 \$400.00 \$400.00

TM 43 143 568 2251 630158 \$2,323,082 \$8,069,886.00 \$85,339.00 \$213,842.00 13

TLM 189 7846 726330

YTD 232 10097 1356488

TCA HANGAR

The Hangar Crew have provided two fantastic additions to the Hangar this month



McDonnell-Douglas/Boeing MD-90

Registration: PJ-TDV

Name: Otrobanda

Designer: Steve Reyling, Sam Chin / Patrick Hanna

Date: November 2001



BOEING 747-400

Registration: PJ-TPH

Name: Empress of the Caribbean

Designer: Project Opensky / Patrick Hanna

Date: March 2001

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Splash Screen Contest

This month we're announcing a splash screen contest for all departments of TCA. This includes: TCA, TDM, Air Cargo, Santhana, Hellenic, Venezuela, Alaska and Pacific. A winner will be chosen from each department. Those finalists will be posted for "YOU", the TCA crew to choose a winner to become the official TCA splash screen for FS2002. An elite (eh-hem) panel of judges will select the winners from each department. Pics should be 800X600 or smaller and in a JPEG format.

Here's a sample we threw together



Submit your shots to either Rich Ellison or myself, care of the "Island Breezes".

Contact

[Ken Malczynski](#)

[Rich Ellison](#)

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(Cayman) American Airlines' Good News for Cayman.

CayPolitics.com is pleased to pass along some good news on the tourism front. The website news service has learned that American Airlines, whose traffic was severely curtailed in the wake of the 11 Sept. U.S. tragedy, will reinstate its third daily flight from the U.S. to Grand Cayman into regularly scheduled service with effect from 31 Jan., 2002. Additionally, according to Country Manager Kevin Mooney, American will be servicing Grand Cayman with a supplemental (third) flight from 3 Dec. to 5 Jan. due to an increase in inbound passengers.

(USA) US Customs Warns International Airlines.

WASHINGTON (AP)

International airlines that don't immediately turn over advance lists of passengers to be screened for possible terrorists face more intensive inspections starting this week. In a letter to 58 carriers, Customs Commissioner Robert Bonner warned of heightened inspections for those that haven't complied by Thursday, even though a new law gives the airlines until next year to start providing the information. Many international airlines already offer the information to Customs. But Bonner is urging immediate compliance with the Advance Passenger Information System, which was signed into law last week and gives carriers 60 days to comply. If not, Bonner said that on Thursday the service "will begin heightened inspections of international flight that pose a national security risk because they do not transmit APIS data." The letter was sent to 58 airlines - that as of Nov. 21- were not providing Customs with advance passenger information. Those airlines include: Aeroflot Russian Airlines, Air China and Pakistan International Airlines. Customs has received information voluntarily from participating airlines since 1988 on international air passengers, including names, birth dates, nationality and travel document numbers. The information is collected at the time of departure and transmitted to Customs while flights are en route to the United States. Information also is transmitted to Customs about crew members as well. Under the voluntary program with the airlines, Customs currently has access to about 85 percent of international flight passenger information. It has no information on domestic flights, and the new law wouldn't change that. The four hijackings on Sept. 11 involved domestic flights. The data on international soon-to-arrive air passengers are transmitted to a Customs facility in Virginia. "We recognize that the vast majority of travelers are not a threat to the United States," Bonner said in the letter to the 58 carriers. "However, we believe that in the wake of Sept. 11, international flights pose a serious national security risk to the United States if carriers do not provide comprehensive and accurate APIS data," Bonner said. "Accordingly, for international flights where such data is not provided in advance to the U.S. Customs Service by the carrier, it will be necessary for Customs to address the security risk that such flights pose by, among other things, inspecting all hand-carried and checked baggage on every flight arriving in the United States."

(USA) Airport screener job must change, security experts say.

Federal officials are scrambling to assemble a new agency to cure airport security ills, but experts say that unless the screener's job is reinvented and better technology provided, improvement could be elusive. "Unless we have some avenues for changing the nature of the job, we are going to continue to see examples like you had in Chicago," said Douglas Harris, a psychologist and expert on security screening. He was referring to a recent incident at O'Hare International Airport when a passenger managed to get knives and other weapons through a security checkpoint. The framework for overhauling security at the nation's airports was established last week when President Bush signed legislation giving responsibility to the federal government, rather than airlines and private companies. The new law is designed to attract better-qualified candidates and eliminate high turnover by increasing the annual salary of screeners to between \$30,000 and \$35,000, about double what they now are paid. The measure also dramatically increases the amount of training they will receive. Supporters of the new law are convinced that security can only improve by replacing a system that allowed convicted felons to get jobs as screeners and resulted in the hiring of low-skilled employees who too often let restricted items get through. Nature of work a problem. But as the Department of Transportation, which assumes responsibility for airport security, begins the massive task of hiring 28,000 airport screeners, some experts remain skeptical. They say the very nature of the work--which requires screeners who X-ray bags to quickly discern whether they contain weapons or explosives--limits how much better security will be under the new system. Better security, they say, is dependent on improving the technology.

"The problem with today's screening system is not just the operator, it is the entire system," Harris said. The X-ray units at many airports do not provide a high-quality image, and screeners have a difficult time maintaining a state of alertness for "threat" items that only rarely pass before them, he said. He said the job is one of detecting "signals"--"threat" objects--embedded in a lot of visual noise, meaning all the other things that happen to be in the bag being viewed. "Even under an alerted condition, detecting these signals in a high degree of noise is very difficult," he said. "Add time pressure and distractions and it makes it even more difficult." A knife, for example, could be positioned in a way that it would be difficult to detect, said James Derry, former director of Civil Aviation Security for the FAA in Alaska. An X-ray reading from one angle would reveal only the thin edge of the knife's blade, which would appear as a long line. From another angle, the X-ray sees a short line, looking down on the point of the knife. "People differ in their ability to find weapons on an X-ray screen, just as there are people who are good at 'Where's Waldo?' and people who are refrigerator-blind and can't find the ketchup," said Michael Cantor, a human factors psychologist who devised a test for screeners the FAA is reviewing. "You want to find people who are sincerely curious and unrelenting in their willingness to resolve a question in their mind." The new law allows 30 days for establishing qualification standards for the security screener job, and it calls for developing a test to determine whether applicants meet those qualifications. But the Department of Transportation has yet to figure out how to measure the qualifications needed for effectively monitoring an X-ray machine. "We are reaching out to experts in places like the office of personnel management to get a handle on how we proceed," said Chet Lunner, chief spokesman for the Department of Transportation. Under the new law, new screeners will undergo 40 hours of training--up from the current 12 hours--and receive 60 hours of on-the-job-training. Federal screeners who fail a periodic operational test will be removed from their checkpoint until they successfully complete remedial training, according to the legislation.

More training suggested. Some say 40 hours of initial training is not enough. "If that is a beginning, that's one thing. But if that's the ceiling on standards, we could be locked into the current inferior system," said Paul Hudson, director of the Aviation Consumer Project and a member of an FAA advisory panel on security screeners. "Most experts say you need 200 to 400 hours of training," he said. Even with ample training, it takes a minimum of 14 seconds to assess an X-ray image of a carry-on bag "to a good level of detection," said Moshe Cohen, a former El Al Airlines security manager who is now general manager for Renful Aviation Security in London. "When you see bags going one after another, you must realize there is no security," said Cohen, who likens the reading of an X-ray image of a carry-on bag by a good screener to a doctor viewing a medical X-ray. Body searches with electromagnetic hand wands, which are now done in a matter of seconds, also could take 40 seconds and more if done correctly, other security specialists say. But additional scrutiny and thoroughness will come at a price: longer lines at security checkpoints. Harris is betting that development is near of an X-ray machine that will both speed the flow of people and improve security by alerting the operator to a possible threat. The operator would then decide whether to open a bag and inspect its contents. "People are much better at resolving issues than they are at detecting them in the first place," Harris said.

(Cayman) McKeeva: "I didn't Ask for CAL".

Tourism Minister McKeeva Bush revealed his feelings about Cayman Airways Wednesday at the Annual General Meeting of the Dept. of Tourism. He was recently given responsibility for the national flag carrier following the realignment of Executive Council on 8

Nov., "and, no, I didn't ask for it," (the responsibility) he confessed, in the presence of the Governor, Mr. Peter Smith, who had allocated it to him. Mr. Bush, MLA for West Bay, and newly named Leader of Government Business, said a new CAL board of directors had been formed, under the chairmanship of Mr. Roy McTaggart. He said board members all had certain expertise in specific areas and they would be given specific areas relating to the airline to scrutinise (i.e. financial, operational, etc.). He said he was taking up his new role "with clarity and responsibility" and has asked for a CAL business plan and stated that he intends to "commit to swift action" regarding if, in fact, "the airline is to continue, or if it is to be closed down, and I'll say it publicly," he stated. "I am not going to rack up another \$16 million loss again this year," he promised. He recognized the airline has a "tremendous staff", but "it must work for us, not against us," he said of CAL, emphasizing, however, as he was speaking before the press, that "I did not say I was closing it down".

(Trinidad) Contractors call for US probe of Piarco airport.

Contractor Emile Elias wants Government to call in the US Justice Department to investigate Florida consultants Birk Hillman's role in the \$1.4 billion Piarco airport terminal project. Elias believes the publication yesterday of excerpts of American investigator Bob Lindquist's probe of the controversial terminal contract merits the entry of the US Justice Department. Government should make a formal request for its help now, said Elias. "A request from the Trinidad Government would lead to their (the Justice Department) taking up the matter." Elias, a prominent critic of the tenders procedure for the terminal's construction packages, also made another call for a commission of inquiry. He got support yesterday from Winston Riley, president of the Joint Consultative Council, and a past president Brian Lewis. Lewis said the JCC had written the US Justice Department more than a year ago asking it to probe whether Birk Hillman was in breach of the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Riley confirmed this, saying the JCC had documents to the Justice Department. "We did receive a telephone call from an attorney making a few inquiries," disclosed Lewis. But he did not receive any other communication from the US body. The trio made the comments in response to another daily's report of excerpts from the Lindquist report. Lindquist had been hired by former Attorney General Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj to investigate the construction of the new terminal at Piarco International Airport. In that publication, it is said Lindquist found 11 instances of impropriety in the award of contracts for the project. Nipdec general manager, Margaret Thompson, did not want to comment yesterday on the article, saying it is inconclusive. Thompson, however, confirmed Lindquist had spent about a month reading through Nipdec's files on the project, around between October and December last year. "He went through our files and asked for documents My understanding is that he made copies. "I am not sure of what," said Thompson who, at the time of Lindquist's visit, was out of the country. Nipdec, she said, is willing to cooperate with any investigation. In 1997, the JCC gave evidence before the Lennox Deyalsingh inquiry. At the conclusion of his hearings, Deyalsingh wrote there had been collusion between Birk Hillman and the NYC consortium led by businessman Ish Galbaransingh. Galbaransingh, however, won a lawsuit against the Government, which appointed the Deyalsingh committee on the grounds he did not have a chance to speak at the inquiry.

Prime Minister Basdeo Panday announced at a business dinner on November 9 that if re-elected he would initiate commissions of inquiry into several State projects, including the airport.

(Antigua) American Begins Service Between Antigua and San Juan With New 737 Aircraft.

SOURCE: American Airlines

American Airlines announced today that it will begin daily service between Antigua and San Juan using Boeing 737-800 aircraft, effective Dec. 2. American will discontinue its daily flight from Antigua to Miami. "We will continue to serve Antigua, and this new schedule will benefit travelers to and from the island by facilitating connections. We are committed to Antigua, and we are confident that our customers will enjoy this new service and this new aircraft," said Janine Billy, country director for American airlines in Antigua. The 737-800 seats 134 passengers and features American's "new-look" interior, with comfortable new seats that have adjustable leather-covered headrests. The aircraft has an updated decor and amenities including powerports for laptop computers and a video entertainment system. The 737 also features More Room Throughout Coach. Under this program, the airline has increased coach legroom by three to five inches per row. "With the new San Juan flight, customers will have better connections to cities throughout the Caribbean and on the U.S. mainland, such as Albuquerque, Aruba, Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Curacao, Ft. Lauderdale,

Dallas/Fort Worth, Hartford, Miami, New York Kennedy, Newark, Norfolk, Orlando, Philadelphia, Santo Domingo, St. Croix, St. Thomas, Tampa, and Washington, D.C., " said Billy. American also announced that it has installed another number for the Reservations Department in Antigua. The toll free number is 1-800-744-0006. The original numbers, 462-0951 and 462-0952, will continue to be available.

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This month we have a special exclusive written by our resident Online flying expert Jose Gonzalez on Online Flying.

Flying online... a closer look.

There are currently over 60,000 flight simulator enthusiasts who have joined online flying organizations such as VATSIM or IVAO. Many of them are the type of FS pilot who is always striving for the most realism in his simulator, and many of them just want some real life company when flying. There are hundreds of pilots and controllers online every day (You can see for yourself here <http://europe-s.areacom.it/atcapplet/ada2jar.html>) and many of those who have flown online for a while (like me) will seldom use FS offline. Still, there are many FS pilots out there who have not gone that further step of enjoying online flight for fear of being overwhelmed or intimidated. In this article, I will try to "de-mistify" online flying and give you a closer look (through my personal perspective) at what it means to fly online.

Back in the days...

My first online flying experience was around 1995 using FS5.1. I believe FS didn't have a multiplayer option then, but there was this program called "Fly by wire", which allowed you to connect to a server and see all the other pilots online. It was very difficult to find other pilots, so everyone basically met at Miegs field. Once in a while, one of the pilots slewed to where the tower is and acted as a controller. It was great to be able to fly in formation and chat with people from all over the world while we flew. Sometimes when there were many pilots, we would do an airshow where we all jumped in our favorite bird and did some maneuvers while the others watched you. Of course, I was always the best <g> Later on, a group of people decided to form a group of controllers which would serve those pilots. They were called the Eagles. We didn't have radars, so we basically controlled from an external view of our aircraft. We were not very organized, but we had lots of fun with it.

A while later, Squawkbox (SB) and Pro Controller (PC) came out. These two programs allowed controllers to see the pilots through a radar along with the altitude, speed, and flight plan information. There were several servers dedicated for this, and unlike "Fly by wire", this service was provided for free. In the beginning, there was a lot of confusion on how to approach this system. There were no regulations or guideline on usage etc., so there was a lot of abusing and misuse. To put some order into this system, SATCO was created. This organization would serve as a "regulator" of the virtual skies. It developed a learning school, and controllers would have ratings, depending on their proficiency. There would be regulations on the usage of the network for both pilots and controllers. After a while, SATCO created regional divisions (US, UK) and created virtual ARTCCs where controllers would be able to learn local procedures. In four years, SATCO had more than 60,000 users around the world. A group controllers who were not happy with SATCO's guidelines decided to form IVAO and are still operating their own network. Today, [VATSIM](http://www.vatsim.org) has replaced SATCO and is the largest online flying organization. TCA has always

trollers who were not happy with SATCO's guidelines decided to form IVAO and are still operating their own network. Today, [VATSIM](#) has replaced SATCO and is the largest online flying organization. TCA has always participated in online flying. Ever since SB and PC came out, we have organized fly in events online. Today we have a very strong representation in VATSIM, both with pilots and controllers. Most of the directors for the [VATSIM Caribbean](#) division are TCA pilots.

The search for more realism

Most "hard-core" flight simulator users are usually looking for ways to make their experience as real as possible. Most of us are constantly on the lookout for the most realistic aircraft, panels, and scenery. Many of us go even further and install utilities which add artificial traffic, sounds, co-pilots, real weather, artificial ATC, adventures, etc. which help create a feeling of a real environment where one flies in. Online flying not only combines most of these utilities, but it adds the touch of real human interaction... making "it as real as it gets".

My perfect flight

Not so long ago I experienced a flight which was the most "realistic" flight I have done in FS. The only two utilities I used was SB and S-Combo.

I went to the [online server web page](#) and saw that there was ATC available in New York and Boston at the moment, so I decided to jump in my 737 and fly JFK-BOS. I parked in a terminal and connected to the server. I then prepared my flightplan and entered it in SB. (most TCA lines are available in SB format from the flight plan center in TCA, so no need to do this for TCA lines) I selected JFK ground from the ATC listing and it automatically connected me to his Roger Wilco voice channel and requested my clearance. He asked me to modify my plan to include MERRIT intersection, so I did. He then gave me my clearance and squawk number. There was a lot of traffic around and the RW channel seemed like listening in on a real life ATC radio frequency... ATC communicating with all the pilots. Except for one thing... this time, I get to participate! Since there was a lot of traffic, I decided to be prepared and grabbed the diagram for JFK to make sure I go the right way <g>.

My copilot started calling out the checklists and once I started pushback, the flight attendants started to do their cabin announcements. JFK ground told me to taxi to the runway and I don't know how in the world s-combo does this, but just before reaching runway end, the co-pilot called the flight attendants to prepare for takeoff!!! Nice!!

So I called JFK tower and I was told to hold for traffic... sure enough, two aircraft came in in front of me before I was cleared for takeoff. (BTW wife was not home, so I had my speakers full blast... it was great!! Haha) I followed JFK Tower instructions (climb to 5,000ft, fly heading 130), then he told me to contact JFK Approach. I selected JFK_APP from the ATC listing and when I called him he cleared me direct MERRIT and to my final altitude. He told me to continue my flight as filed, and then I was then passed along to NY Center, then to Boston. It seemed there were several aircraft flying that same route because I could see them on SB's TCAS lined up in front of me about 20 miles from each other. **(See an example of the TCAS... TCA2415 in front of me visually and on the TCAS.)**

When reaching my cruising altitude, the flight attendants did their announcement, as they did when we started our approach to Boston. The cloud ceiling was low that day, so most of the flight I did it "in the soup". Boston approach did an excellent job with the tons of aircraft he had us



BOS_APP:

"Tradewind 281, fly heading 220, descend to 2,000ft, intercept ILS rwy 25. Traffic 10 miles ahead is a 757."

I responded:

"Heading 220, Down to 2,000ft, have the traffic in sight, Tradewind 281"

To those who don't think they are cut out for ATC instructions, this was an example of the most complication you can get from ATC. If you understand these commands, you are good to go. All I needed to do was set my autopilot for 2,000ft and the heading bug to 220.

lot for 2,000ft and the heading bug to 220.

I closed in on the traffic ahead and approach told me to slow down to 180kts. I then intercepted the ILS and the controller told me to contact Boston Tower, who cleared me to land and gave me the winds. After the ever so handy "GEAR" callout by the co-pilot <g>, I lowered my gear and I settled the bird pleasantly with a x-wind and rain. Tower asked me to exit runway with no delay because I had traffic behind me on final. He gave me taxi instructions to the gate himself to save time, and then flight attendants did their thing again! The Co-pilot gave the shutdown callouts, I then thanked the ATC for excellent service and after disconnecting from the servers, I took a deep breath... "AHHHH" "This is what this is all about baby!! Whohooooo!!!" Doesn't get better than this in FS.

Below is a screenshot of a fly in into Los Angeles. I had just exited the runway. Notice the chat box, and ATC's instruction to taxi to the ramp.



How does this work and how do I start?..

Those wishing to fly online need the program called [Squawkbox](#). This program serves as a link to the VATSIM servers where all the controllers and pilots are connected to. The new FS2K/FS02 version is the easiest to install. While you wait for the VATSIM password, you can start getting familiar with the program and its FMS. Practice loading one of the flightplans available from the TCA flightplan department.

In order to connect to the servers you need a user and password from VATSIM. You can get it here <http://cert.vatsim.net/vatsimnet/signup.htm>.

Squawkbox (SB) is basically a chat box (see picture above) where you can type in order to talk to ATC (and other pilots). When you type in that box, everyone (within radio range) who is tuned to the same (com 1) frequency you are will see your text (hear you). If you want to talk to San Juan Center, you must have your comm 1 radio frequency set at the same frequency he is. SB facilitates this by displaying a listing of all ATC available within your radio range. If you double click on San Juan Center (SJU_CTR), SB will tune your radio to that frequency, and if that controller is using voice, it will automatically set Roger Wilco to his voice channel, where you can.

Where to find more information

Information on daily fly-ins and online events can be seen in the [VATSIM calendar](#).

Information on daily fly-ins and online events can be seen in the [VATSIM calendar](#).

Information on TCA-sponsored fly in events can be received in the TCA mailing list. To subscribe you can send an email to flytradewind-subscribe@yahooogroups.com You can also see the events listed in the [TCA mailing list calendar](#), and soon in the TCA Online Department.

There is a great “[getting started](#)” information in VATSIM, with the basic information and rules, and where it describes a flight from start to finish, step by step.

The [Squawkbox download site](#) has a tutorial for the program.

You can also visit our **TCA Online Flying** department (the link is on the TCA web site) for tips and suggestions on online flying. The website is currently outdated, but most of the information is still applicable except that it is now VATSIM instead of SATCO.

For pilot information on the caribbean FIRs, visit [VATSIM Caribbean](#)

Any further questions feel free to ask me at elprieto@ahora.net

Hope to see ya'll in the virtual skies soon!

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FS2002 Add-on's and Utilities

This month we'll be looking at add-on and utilities for Flight Simulator 2002, it's only been on the shelves for a couple of months but already there are a few new add-on utilities available both commercially and Freeware. Many of the classic plug-ins used by thousands worldwide such as FS Navigator and Squawkbox have released upgrades for their products, which make them more compatible with the latest Microsoft Flight Simulator.

First of all if your going to be adding plug-ins and utilities to FS2002 it's a good idea to download a small but important file from www.flightsim.com This file is called "FSUIPC.dll" and it should be downloaded and placed in the Modules folder of whichever version of Microsoft Flight Simulator you are using. Technically speaking it's an application interfacing module which allows plug-in programs the interface and in some cases control flight simulator. It's freeware and easy to find at www.flightsim.com if you search for the specific file "FSUIPC.dll".

In the last issue of "Island Breezes" we looked at FS Navigator V4. After the release of FS2002 a problem arose which resulted in Flight Simulator 2002 not interfacing correctly with the program. Altitude hold on the autopilot feature was not working correctly which resulted in a "rocking effect" which made it impossible to maintain altitude and airspeed. The team at FS Navigator were quick to identify this problem and by mid November they had a new version of FS Navigator (V4.5) available for download at their website, www.fsnavigator.com For those who had already purchased their previous version (V4) for FS98 and FS2000 this will be a free download at no extra cost.

On the 10th November 2000. "The Developers Group" who are responsible for writing the "Squawkbox" client for online flying on the VATSIM network released a upgrade to their free product. It seems that as with many of the main Flight Simulator plug-ins Squawkbox was not interfacing properly with FS2002. The new version that is called Version 2.3B4 still does not interface with FS2002 entirely in the same way that previous version did with earlier versions of Flight Simulator but through the use of "dot" commands and the FS "chat window". All of this may seem a little complicated but there are some improvements in this new version of Squawkbox, and many pilots are getting used to the new interface. The good news is that all the necessary file to get you started are included in one download. Once downloaded you just run the setup.exe file and follow the instructions provided and will be online in no time.

> TCA pilot King Ingersoll has created a small Squawkbox host and is kindly offering it exclusively to TCA pilots. It's a small file which can be downloaded and placed directly into your Modules folder in FS2002. (no need to unzip as it's only 40kb). It allows the Squawkbox window to be used much in the same way as in previous versions. Here is the link for the download.

<http://www.nauticom.net/users/wki3/SBHost.dll> Remember this is a TCA private Beta.

Also in last month's issue we looked at Lago's FS Traffic. With the arrival of FS2002 with it's AI aircraft moving to a from every airport. Many people thought that Lago's FS Traffic would be somewhat redundant. Lago have responded by releasing what is probably the most exciting Plug-in for FS2002 to date...."FS Scenery Enhancer"

On their official Website_

<http://www.lagoonline.com/ENG/prodotti/FSSE/ptd.htm> Lago describe the product as follows..

"FS Scenery Enhancer is a unique product that makes it very simple to add scenery elements (objects) to existing scenery. What makes this product special is that the whole process of scenery enhancing takes place INSIDE Flight Simulator 2002 and not in a separate program as was the only option to this moment. There is no code to write, no compiling needed.

Using a very simple, clean and fast interface the user selects an object and places it in the FS world. After it has been placed it can be manipulated (scaled, rotated etc) and deleted. Placing an object take only seconds and dressing up a simple bare airport to full blown scenery takes minutes and not hours as it used to need.

The product can be used by all flightsim users; no special qualifications or skills are needed. In fact the short version of the manual will be one a single page and will enough to use ALL options of the FS Scenery Enhancer. FSSE Sceneries that you create may be circulated among other users, but to fully see your creations they need to have a registered version of FSSE installed."



TCA



Issue #5

December 2001

Island Breezes

A newsletter for the employees of Tradewind Caribbean Airlines



Pilot Profile

Doug Miller

Pilot #: 2415



How long have you been with TCA or TDM?

About 3 years.

Your current position at TCA?

TCA Pilot / SJU ARTCC Controller.

Your favorite aircraft to fly?

TCA Airbus 320

Your favorite division to fly with?

Tradewind Lines

In your opinion, what keeps you flying for TCA?

The cool people I have met online, and in person

Comments:

Nice people from all over the world sharing a common goal. go figure ;-)

TCA



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We have PIREPS

Rather than have one of our (so interesting) pireps this month, We decided to share this experience from Angel "Badboy" Castillo.

This was originally posted on our flytradewinds mail group.

Subject: [TCA] My first online flight!! ...was " join vatsim caribbean!!"

Speaking of online and vatsim, last night was my first experience "trying" to do an online flight. I say trying because with the crew chief and my 2 little flight attendants requiring my attention I just couldn't finish the flight.. i barely started it. It was supposed to be a KDCA - KBOS flight on a 747-400. I did all as the online manual said and was greeted by DC_TWR , he/she ?? was very patient and corteous , I would say extremely patient cause I did a blunder after another.

First I filed my flight as VFR by accident and had to refile it. Then I forgot to read back my clearance and I was kindly reminded to do so. But the 2 biggest mistakes were :

1- I started typing my messages without having clicked the squawkbox window, so some of the keys did caos on my plane , turning off joystick control or disabling engines. I think it would be a good reminder to new online fliers to click on the sb window before typing.. good thing I was on the ground, imagine shutting off 3 engines in midair!!.. This blunder increased my #2 mistake.

2- I was unable to find the assigned departure runway. TWR cleared me for rwy 19 and told me not to confuse rwy 19 with rwy15, which in the end I obviously did. But TWR was helpful and guided to rwy 19 , not before i had left the airport area due to having engine and steering trouble (see problem #1). How do you guys know where the runways are ? I mean I got a map view and still

Havin' Fun in the Sun!



couldn't read the #'s on the runways until i was very close.. which is how I found out I was in rwy 15 (the wrong one). Any help on avoiding this mistake again would be appreciated.

One last thing.. as I was cleared to takeoff , TWR told me to expedite my takeoff. In my effort not to make him suffer anymore with my presence I failed to align my plane properly before pushing the engines to takeoff power.. so I ended up rolling all over the field before taking off.. Once I was in the air i was glad the autopilot could help me.. and I was told to switch to the unicom freq ... by then my family required me and I had to go offline. I intend to try it again until I get it done right, granted I can find a day with enough time and controllers in my flight.

Thanks to the online guru's.. your guidance has been great.. and I do plan to help you improve TCA's online presence.

Let's hear from you now...

Angel "Badboy" Castillo #2845

(Still replanting grass on the field he messed up during takeoff)

TCA



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Opa Locka

After he checked into his hotel in Miami the night before he called the Mailservice operations office to see when his next flight assignment was scheduled. Naomi Lowe was the dispatcher on duty in Guadeloupe and answered the phone.

“Tradewinds Domestic Mailservice, how may I help you?”

“Naomi, this is Nick Collins, I’ve returned from the run to Tijuana to drop off that Antonov. Can you check the schedule and see when I’m flying next?”

“Hmmm, sure, hang on. Where are you, back at St. John’s?”

“No, still in Miami, but I do need to get back. I got personal stuff to do, and I need to get the word out that Aaron was threatening to drop by soon, there are a few, uh, projects that we don’t want the bosses nosing into, you know.”

“I already know more than I want to, Nick. You’re not scheduled to fly for three days, then you are set for covering some Leeward Island mail runs. Says you’re on deck for some work in Venezuela after that, lucky boy.”

“Ah, cool, I’d like that, a nice change.”

“Well, well, what’s this? There is an emergency staffing notice for Miami here, let me see what it says. Oh you are a lucky boy, I can get you into a paying flying job as early as tomorrow. In fact, that’s exactly what you are going to do. Seems David Barros, one of the regular pilots at Opa Locka, has gone on emergency leave and his replacement can’t make it to Opa Locka before tomorrow night due to a blown landing gear strut in Cuba. You need to go cover the day’s flights for him, that would be Line

4170, 4171, 4172, and 4173.”

Nick closed his eyes, tired as he was from the traveling and now a new surprise. “Right. Opa Locka. Tomorrow. What route is that Naomi and does it list the equipment?”

“Yes, it does, that route is now being served by one of those new Caravans the Boss bought in the USA, a wheeled model. It goes between Opa Locka, Everglades City, then down to Marathon, Cay Sal, Congo Town, Nassau, and back to Opa. Besides the mail it says you’re hauling some airboat parts to Everglades and a bunch of diving shop equipment and parts to the other locations. And you have passengers on a couple of those legs, no more than three, though.”

“One of the new Caravans, hmm, yeah I guess I can see my way to taking the flight. I need the cash anyway. I got my eye on a new handheld GPS and they aren’t cheap.”

“Oh, yes, I hear they are very nice. OK, Nick, I’m putting you down for the job, have fun.”

Next he called Sean O’Donovan, the manager of the TDM hotel on St. John’s. Nick heard the sleepy Irishman fumble with the receiver as he dragged it to his ear.

“Someone had bloody better be dead, calling me at this ungodly hour.”

“Sean, it’s Nick, I’m in Miami.”

“Nick, I’m glad to hear from you, you need to get your butt back here fast, man. We got a beach party scheduled in two days. Luca picked up a goat on his last run to Grand Cayman and we’re gonna barbecue him. And your dogs, Nick, I’ve got them locked up in the basement right now.”

“Slow down, Sean, and speak English. And what about my dogs? Are they alright?”

“Oh, yeah, I feed them everyday, grab scraps from the bar. But they have been assaulting Eduard’s porch again.”

Nick had two dogs he picked up as puppies as abandoned cargo about six months ago. Boris was a small, thin Dachshund, mostly black with a few white streaks running through his short hair. Natasha was a black Labrador with collie mixed in and she stood about twice as tall as Boris. They were housebroken when he got them, which is good because Nick didn’t have a clue how to housebreak a pet. The two dogs stayed in Nick’s room mostly and Sean watched them while he was away, as he did for many of the pilots who kept pets. Boris and Natasha were also impeccable judges of human character, and they had taken a dislike to one particular fellow, Eduard Vladimirski, a Russian pilot who had a private bungalow along the beach. The dogs had a habit of leaving him two nice presents on his property, one a bit larger than the other, when they got the chance. It was a behavior that was not repeated with any other dwelling on the island. Eduard stood six foot three inches with blonde curly hair and a red face that provided his sour disposition with a stunning effect as he blew up at someone or something.

“Oh, Nick, I got to tell you, I’d have given 20 quid to have been there. Seems Boris and Natasha decided to leave Eduard’s stoop their usual package. He came out about sundown, half pissed anyway I heard, in his bare feet with a margarita in one hand and a cigar in the other. He stepped into the first pile, his foot shot up in the air, the margarita went one way, the cigar went the other, then he fell backwards landing square on the second pile the middle of his back. He rolled around in the whole mess trying to get up. Oh my god, Nick, there was dog crap everywhere, the smell was horrendous. Eduard was in a rage, swearing he was going to shoot your dogs, rolling around spreading the stuff even more. Le Nguyen and Jean Boyer ran and got the fire hose and began spraying down Eduard and his whole porch, blowing his lawn chairs over the railing in the process and breaking three windows, also soaking Eduard’s furniture in side the hooch. This, of course, did little to calm our red-faced friend, I’m afraid. But oh, Jesus, Nick, it was so funny.”

“That crazy Russian better not even think of hurting my dogs, I’ll start the Cold War all over again right here on this island.”

“Ah, Nick, the mates kept him busy while I got the dogs out of sight, and they were trying not to laugh, but it was too hard, and that just pissed Eduard off even more. Anyway, you’d better be ready to deal with him when you get back.”

“I’ll handle him, just keep the dogs out of his way. I got some nice tequila in Guadalajara, a bottle of that should settle him down and make it all right. Now listen, this is important. Aaron Garcia was with me on the ferry flight to Tijuana and tipped his hand that he knew about the little cigar caper Sebastiano pulled and was on his way out to the Roost to check it out. You’ve got to get that stuff out of the way quick, and that’s a problem because about everyone on the island has some of them. You need to lock them down for a while and hope the guys smoke what they have up before Aaron or one of his henchmen show up.”

Sebastiano Fontana, a Portuguese pilot who had been with TDM for just three months, had noticed his cargo load of cigars was bigger than the manifest documents said it was, by about 4000 cigars. He knew if he showed back up at the base with them they would just take them away for salvage, but there was no landing strip for fixed wing on St John’s, so he called on the Roost Unicom for the patrons to come out the beach with tablecloths. He then put the DeHaviland Buffalo he was flying into minimum controllable airspeed configuration at 200 feet and made twelve passes back and forth over the beach, wheels out and flaps full down. As he made each pass he would throw a couple of boxes of Cubano cigars out his pilot’s window until all 4000 cigars were, more or less, safely on the ground. To pull this off he had loaded the cockpit with cigar boxes at his last stop so he could fly and reach the boxes at the same time, creating a mess while he was flying with boxes sliding around. The Roost Bar patrons, where the Unicom radio is kept, tried to catch as many as they could before they hit the ground in the tablecloths, pairs of men running back and forth in less than sober formation holding the outstretched tablecloths. The entire group cheered every time a pair caught one, an activity that diminished the effectiveness of those trying to catch the next box flung out the window. It was a wonder no one got hit on the head by a flying wooden box during the whole ordeal.

Sebastiano arrived back at Guadeloupe 45 minutes late and light on gas, which only added to the other problem he faced as Operations had discovered what looked like a mistake on a manifest and sent a corrected copy. Now there was a bunch of missing cigars, a late plane with low gas, and a sweating pilot with some story about getting a little lost and, no, he unloaded all the cigars at the destination as far as he knew.

It was the talk of the whole island for the next few days and many of the pilots were worried the police would show up and start asking questions, but that was only the beginning of the trouble. Sebastiano got back home later that night to find the collection party had already distributed his cigars among themselves, forgetting to hold out some for him. The now hot Portuguese pilot had capitalistic plans for those cigars and demanded their full return at once with threats to whip each and every pilot on the island that very night, which prompted a group council meeting to decide what to do with the cigars. In logic only men who spend long hours alone in cockpits can understand, it was ruled that, while Sebastiano had rightfully acquired them, he needed the assistance and cooperation of just about everyone on the island to complete the caper. Thus, each pilot or support staff member would get three cigars a week from the cache, to be distributed by Art Hudson, a retired New York police officer who ran the Goose Roost Bar and Grill. When the verdict was agreed upon, the full return of the 4000 cigars were demanded at once, and the men scurried back to their quarters to return their prizes to the communal pile. Even after scouring the area for all signs of cigars, they were missing 342, which set up a series of accusation and counter accusation between suspicious partners in crime for weeks. But the Cubano Cigar Entitlement Program was born, promising to keep even busted flat men in good cigars for quite a while. Unable to get a confession out of Sebastiano, his tormentors, Aaron Garcia among them, decided to contact the destination receiver to work it out, and it was the last anyone heard of it until Nick's trip with Aaron.

The impact of what Nick was saying began to sink through Sean's whiskey and sleep haze. "Oh, Jesus, Nick, to be sure, I'll have Art shut down the program tomorrow for a while until things cool off. Will you be back tomorrow?"

"No, I called Naomi in Ops and I've got to cover a TDM route out of Opa tomorrow, but I hope to catch a late cargo flight toward San Juan at least after that so I can get home early the next day."

"Roger, Nick, got it. I'll keep the dogs out of sight until you get back, but hurry, we need your help to get the beach party logistics worked out."

"What logistics? You drag booze to the beach and drink it, what logistics does that take?"

"Ah, sounds like we've forgotten who said he would rig up a sound system for karaoke on the beach, now did we?"

Nick closed his eyes as thoughts of relaxing when he got back quickly vanished. "Yeah, I remember. So much for kicking back, huh?"

"I'd say so, yes."

“OK, Sean, get some sleep, you sound terrible, I’ll see you day after tomorrow.”

“And a good night to you to, thanks for the cheery words.”

Cramming for sleep after jumping three time zones, he was up and headed for the airport by 0730. He tipped the hotel driver and grabbed his bags, then headed inside the small ramp-side office. Nick walked into the TDM office at Opa Locka airport with his flight bag in one hand and his chart bag in the other. He was still dressed in his Air Cargo clothes from the Tijuana run. He tossed his bags onto a sofa in the lobby and walked to the dispatcher’s desk. Seymour Massey, a large man of sixty-five sat at the desk behind the counter, his Levi’s held up over his massive stomach with suspenders. Nick noticed the suspenders had the silhouette of busty naked women patterned into them. Classy guy, thought Nick as a smile crept onto his face. Seymour looked up at him and noticed the Air Cargo shirt.

“Nick Collins, yes it is you, and don’t you look nice in those clothes. Who did you have to mug to get them?”

“Has anyone mentioned lately that you’re an ass, Seymour? I was on an assignment for Air Cargo and haven’t made it back to St. John’s yet, so this is all I have.”

“Excuse me, I just almost didn’t recognize you all dressed up like that, thought you might be an intruder or something, I might have had to repel boarders or something.”

“That would have required you to get up off you lazy butt, and that isn’t gonna happen anytime soon. Do you have an airplane for me or what?”

“Yes, it says you’re taking David’s route today, a milk run for such a great pilot as yourself. You’re only danger is ditching in the Everglades, you might have to fight an alligator or two, and remember, passengers and cargo must be protected first.”

“That’s right, David’s route, can I have the flight package so I can go brief and plan it out?”

“Nick, you could fly this one with your eyes closed. It is direct to each airport along the way, and you can fly VFR for all segments. I recommend you file IFR from Nassau back here to help get through the Class Bravo airspace. But it is going to be a nice day. I have three passengers for you to carry, all scuba divers. You pick them up in Marathon and drop them in Cay Sal. Eco tourists, bah!”

“Those tree huggers pay our salary, I haul quite a few of them Down Island, most are nice enough.”

“Better you than me, I just take the money and stuff them into the plane.”

“And I hear you use the new Caravan on this route, how’s it flying?”

“You better not bend my new baby. You will like it, very gentle handling, and flies very well. It even does the dirt runway at Cay Sal like nothing else that can carry its load. We have enjoyed it here, there are a couple of floats the Boss bought too, you’ll have to go fly one of them sometime.”

“I’ll put it on my list of things to live for. I got to go brief, get that honey gassed up for me.” Nick turned and picked up his chart bag as he turned the corner into a hallway and went into the small pilot’s briefing room.

The small room had two desks, each with a phone. A VFR sectional chart of South Florida was taped on one wall and various Cuban and Caribbean sectionals on two other walls, along with postings warning pilots of local hazards and advertising opportunities to attend pilot functions and FAA updates. One desk had a computer terminal on it with internet access, which Nick sat down on the chair next to and pulled his chart and airport directory out. He checked weather and other enroute information for restrictions, but Seymour was right, this would be a milk run. The only concern was Cay Sal, listed as a private airport with a really bad sand and grass runway.

The first part of his day would take him on the route Naomi gave him, hitting several scuba diving locations. First he would be dropping off parts for an airboat operator in Everglades City with possible pick-ups for engine parts coming back to be refurbished. After he returned to Opa he had a quick turn back to Everglades and Marathon, then Cay Sal for the late mail run, then have the Caravan back to the barn before 8 p.m., a long day.

As he walked out of the briefing room there was two other TCA Cargo pilots picking up their aircraft for a flight at the counter but he didn’t know either of them. Nick walked to the dispatch desk, said hello to the two pilots then looked at Seymour as his eyes rose up and handed him a small plastic document box.

“This has some emergency stuff, various customs and immigration documents, you might need for your passengers. Aaron Garcia has us including these on all flights now to keep you pilots from getting in trouble. By the way, I just got this over the computer, there’s an Air Cargo crew of four in Nassau for you to pick up and bring back to Opa. They have a DC-8 going to Rio in the morning out of here so don’t lose them.”

“Seymour, the airport directory says Cay Sal is a private runway, what’s up with that?”

It is, but the Caravan will handle it. The passengers you’re taking are meeting a dive boat there and you have some supplies to drop off too. There’s an old guy that lives near there, he’ll meet you and take the passengers. You have supplies and groceries for him too, we fly it in almost daily because he doesn’t have electricity to speak of. He also uses them to supply the dive boats anchored nearby with fresh meat, fruit and veggies.”

“OK, got it, the weather looks great all the way today. I won’t have any trouble today, this should be a milk run. See you in a couple of hours.”

“Don’t hurt that airplane, Nick, and Marco is loading and fueling it, have him show you the GPS in the panel, it’s IFR rated.”

“Ah cool, I’ve been wanting to try one out, its about time we started getting them in the panel.”

“Why, you too cheap to buy a handheld?”

Nick looked at him and narrowed his eyes, “Yeah, Seymour, that’s it, too cheap. Later.”

Nick walked out the front door into the bright sunlight, the smell of jet fuel and hot asphalt was heavy in the humid South Florida air. The Caravan was parked about 100 meters away between a Beech Duke Twin prop and a DeHaviland DHC-5 Buffalo twin turboprop. The Caravan had a fuel truck parked in front and a brown UPS van parked at the left rear that was being unloaded into the rear cargo door by two men in UPS uniforms. He could see what was probably Marco on a ladder filling the left wing tanks from the truck. He walked to the right side door and opened it up, setting his chart bag and the plastic box Seymour gave him in the cockpit along with his headset bag, then stashed his flight bag in one of the lower baggage compartments. Marco had finished fueling and rolled the hose back up.

Climbing back into the cockpit Nick began to check out the features of the new aircraft. Nothing really revolutionary he thought, just more modern with the latest King Avionics Silver Line Horizontal Situation Indicator, called an HSI, in the panel, a combination gyro compass and NAV instrument in one, a radar altimeter, and a small weather radar mounted on the right wing’s leading edge. There were four seats for passengers installed with the remainder of the cabin area set up for cargo and mail, and best of all for Nick, he was alone in his cockpit. Marco stepped up into the cockpit door.

“Hi, you familiar with this airplane, bud?”

“It’s Nick, and yeah, just show me the GPS and radar.”

“Well, OK, I’ll show you a bit now, but you will really have to play with it to get used to it, and don’t let it distract you too much or it will be worse than not having it for sure.”

“I can imagine. Now give me the tour.”

Marco flipped the battery on and powered up the GPS. He spent about 15 minutes showing Nick the basics. Then they went over the radar display, powered down the avionics and reviewed the aircraft’s weight and balance sheet. Marco gave him some spare weight and balance templates for each takeoff that day. After checking to make sure Nick didn’t have any other questions, Marco climbed down out of the cockpit and closed the door with a small wave.

Nick pulled out the checklist book and started to run down the pre-start items. He came to one to ensure the CD player was turned off. Looking across the right of the panel he saw the player mounted on the far side. Fishing into his chart bag, he withdrew Jimmy Buffett’s “Fruitcakes” CD case, flipped open the jewel case, extracted the CD with his fingers, then slipped it into the CD player. He smiled to himself and said out loud, “CD player, check,” then dropped the CD case back into the chart bag and went back to the checklist.

In a few minutes he had the engine running smoothly and Marco had pulled the chocks and stood in front of the aircraft waiting for Nick to get his taxi clearance. After checking ATIS, Nick switched over to

Opa Locka Clearance Delivery and got his VFR clearance to Everglades Airpark, then over to Ground for taxi clearance. He was cleared to taxi to Runway 09L for take off.

Nick looked over the glare shield at Marco and gave him the thumb's up sign, then opened the throttle as Marco lowered his right arm and waved his left arm towards himself, signaling a right turnout of the parking spot. The aircraft took little power to get rolling and soon he was taxiing along toward the runway, watching for the numerous ground vehicles and other aircraft. Opa Locka was a busy cargo hub these days, taking the burden off Miami International and moving it all seven miles north to Opa.

He fell in line behind a FedEx Boeing 727-100 and saw a Coast Guard HC-130H slide in behind him as they all headed towards the threshold of the runway for takeoff. The Boeing was cleared for a quick takeoff to get it out before an Airbus 321 on final arrived, so as the FedEx Boeing rolled out, Nick moved forward to the stop line on the taxiway to wait for the big jets to pass. He completed his cockpit checks, glancing occasionally over his left shoulder to the approaching Airbus. As it landed and took a right exit taxiway, the tower cleared Nick onto the runway to hold short. He knew he had another minute to wait for the wake turbulence to die down before he released and didn't like sitting on the end of runways at busy airports. Bad things can drop out of the sky onto unsuspecting aircraft with their backs to the approach.

"Tradewinds 9106, cleared for takeoff, Runway 09L, winds 070 at 6, altimeter 29.97."

"Tradewinds 9106, cleared for takeoff."

Pushing the throttle forward, Nick pressed the right rudder harder as the torque of the prop tried to turn the nose to the left. At 75 knots, the nose began to rise and Nick started his climb to 4500 feet, his cruise altitude for the short 70-mile run to Everglades. Climbing through 1200 feet, he was handed over to Miami Departure who turned him north, paralleling Miami's famous beaches off his right wing, the huge hotels lined up along the coast and waterways collecting those tourist dollars.

Approach turned him west to a downwind as he climbed to cruise altitude, passing the airport on his left side as he leveled off and set the prop for 1600 RPM. The headset was filled with chatter from Miami Departure as he talked to other aircraft outbound at the same time in the Miami area.

Soon Miami was behind him and the northern part of the Everglades opened up below him, with large Cypress trees and hundreds of birds, clustered in flocks feeding in the shallow water. The Everglades was really a very slow moving river; in fact the area beneath him was called the Shark River Slough. His flight path was taking him across the northern boundary of the Everglades National Park, but he would stay to the north of it to avoid bird hazards and disturbing the wildlife. Not so much that Nick was a naturalist, although he would never intentionally harm any, but the FAA requires aircraft to stay away from certain areas, wildlife preserves being one of them.

The aircraft passed civilization as he headed into the Glades, Departure handing him off the Miami Center, Nick remaining with center for Flight Following where the controller will keep an eye on VFR traffic and give traffic alerts if other aircraft may cause conflict. It was a bit more trouble than just

punching holes with no controller, but it also helped see and avoid other aircraft, just making sure Nick and any other pilot blundering through the same skies lived a bit longer.

At about 20 miles from Everglades Air Park he cancelled the flight following, pulled the throttle back about half way and began his descent to the airfield ahead of him, lining up for a left downwind pattern. At 7 miles out he leveled off at 1500 feet and called the Unicom channel to announce his position.

“Everglades, Tradewinds 9106, 7 miles east for landing Runway 15, will enter left downwind on the 45.”

Everglades City was built in the early 1900’s as a fishing camp followed by cane farmers. The land was built up through dredging operations to the landmass that was there today. The cane farmers and fishing shacks were gone and tourism had become the larger part of the local economy. Nick was carrying parts for airboats from a supplier in Ft. Lauderdale, flat-bottomed boats with an automobile engine and an aircraft prop for propulsion. The driver sits on a high seat at the rear and the front is full of metal chairs bolted to the decks that the tour operators used for taking tourists for an “E” ticket ride through the western Everglades.

Nick flew the downwind leg beyond a small kidney-shaped lake northeast of the airfield, then turned base, dropping two notches of flaps and slowing to 90 knots for approach. As the runway lights lined up on his left wing, Nick banked to the left and called his turn to final on Unicom. He pulled the throttle all the way back, then added just a touch of power as he allowed the aircraft to slow then began the glide to the runway. He pulled the yoke back to level off at two feet over the runway, let the airspeed drain off until the wheels chirped on the asphalt, then braking slowly, turning off the runway at the taxiway.

A Piper Cherokee 140 was waiting to taxi out once Nick cleared the taxiway onto the ramp. Nick waved at the pilot as he coasted by toward the linesman with the wands, then swung the aircraft into position in front of the linesman and brought it to a quick stop, pulling the fuel valve closed and reaching for the checklist to complete the shutdown. He was on the ramp in less than a minute as a delivery van backed up to the cargo door. A US Mail truck slid up and parked in front of the van.

A tall slender man of about thirty, long dirty blonde hair streaming out from under his John Deere baseball cap walked toward Nick.

“Hi, where’s David?”

“He had an emergency and will be gone for a few days. I’m just covering today, another guys is coming in for the next few days until David gets back.”

“Sorry to hear that, hope it’s not too bad. Well, me and Jack there will get the supplies out of the cargo hold, and I’ve got some manifold heads to go back for machining, you want them in the main cargo area or down below?”

“Main cargo area, toward the back and away from the passenger door. I’ve got pick ups along the way and will need to load folks.”

“You got it, we’ll be done in ten minutes.”

The mailman had two sacks of mail for Nick and met him at the rear lower cargo hold.

“I’ve got one sack for you sir,” he said as he dragged the large orange sack out of the hold.

“And I’ve got two for you, one to go back to Opa Locka and one to drop in Nassau. Where’s David?”

Nick broke a smile, set the bag down and looked at the mailman. “Sounds like I better get used to this question. David had some sort of emergency, I’m just covering for today, another guy will cover for the next few days until David gets back. That’s my story, I’m sticking to it.”

The mailman stood up straight and laughed out loud, “Well, we have gotten used to him here, but I should have known it wasn’t him, you’re on time, David’s almost always about ten to fifteen minutes late!”

“He must make it up later, this is a tight route and if you get behind on the first drop, it usually only gets worse as the day goes on. I learned long ago to work hard at making each schedule time so I wouldn’t get behind.”

In ten minutes Nick was climbing back into the cockpit and the linesman stood out in front while he got the engine running and began taxiing out. The Cherokee that had taken off after Nick landed was doing touch and goes in the pattern so Nick waited until he had just lifted back off to swing out onto the runway, taxi to the end, spin the aircraft around and shove the throttle full forward. The Caravan built speed and rose back into the air for the short 70-mile hop to Marathon.

As he climbed he rose over a coastal area known as Ten Thousand Islands for the multitude of little low islands along the coast. Nick checked the GPS for the direct heading to Marathon and started down the coastline leveling off at 3500 feet, plenty high to stay out of the wildlife areas but still allowing him an impressive view across the Everglades off his left wing. Reaching for the prop control lever, he brought the prop back to 1550 RPM for cruise. Looking over his left shoulder he saw a flock of water birds taking off below, the water below them stirring as they flapped their wings and dragged their feet out of the water, and a couple of pelicans sitting on an old Cypress tree stump nearby. Soon Key McLaughlin appeared, then Cape Sable with the town of Flamingo just inland came into view. Florida Bay opened up into less land and more water just south of Flamingo. After he passed the main Everglades area and put Florida Bay behind him, the aircraft headed out over the water.

Marathon is the second largest town in the Southern Keys, with Key West as the largest, just southwest of Marathon. The town was on the island of Key Vaca, which is thought to come from the Spanish who named the island after the sea cows, or manatees found in the local waters.

After the Spanish, wreckers and pirates frequented the area until run out by Admiral Steven Porter and the USS Enterprise after U.S. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams signed a treaty purchasing Spanish Florida in 1819. Soon after farmers and fishermen showed up and established the first settlements. The

legend has it the town of Marathon got its name from a railroad worker clearing the land for Henry Flagler's railroad who said the clearing of this land would be a marathon. The railroad turned the town into a shipping trade center and the rest, as they say, is history. Getting into the act, Hollywood brought us the Humphrey Bogart movie, "Key Largo" that ends with Bogart and Lauren Bacall setting out on a charter boat for a new life in Marathon.

Nick pulled the throttle back about 12 miles out and started to descend to 1500 feet to enter the pattern at the airport. He noticed the Red Mangrove forests along the coastline, with other varieties of West Indian trees brought to the island by centuries of storms. The two strings of the old and new Seven-Mile Bridge, one of the 42 that link the Florida Keys to the mainland, extended off the south end of the island toward Big Pine Key and Key West, the treasure at the end of the U.S. Highway One rainbow.

After an uneventful landing, Nick taxied past an American Eagle Shorts 360 unloading passengers from Miami, then to the ramp in front of the small office that served as a TDM terminal. He brought the Caravan to a stop and switched the fuel off, quickly securing the cockpit and swinging down from the pilot's door. He was met with a smile by a linesman with "Andy" scripted on his blue work shirt who walked over to the baggage compartment and opened one of the doors, dragging out a mailbag. A freight truck backed up to the airplane as Nick walked into the office.

Inside was a counter with a man and woman working behind it and four people sitting on a couch, three men and a woman with a pile of luggage next to them. Two of the men were talking to each other, the other man looked mad and so did the woman. After checking in at the desk, the dispatcher gave him a few documents then pointed at the foursome. "Those are your passengers to Cay Sal, be nice."

Nick walked toward the couch crowd as they turned their attention toward Nick. "Good morning, I am Nick Collins, your pilot to Cay Sal today. Is everyone ready to go?"

The woman sprung to her feet and grabbed two bags, "Oh, I'm beyond ready, lead the way."

The men rose to their feet and began to gather their bags.

"Well then, follow me."

Nick led them to the airplane and stored their bags in the cargo hold, the woman obviously ignoring all attempts by her companion for help with her equipment. Each had a clothing bag and a SCUBA gear bag full of diving equipment. He signed the manifest handed to him by Andy, who then walked to the nose of the aircraft while Nick finished getting his passengers strapped in. He gave them all headsets so they could talk above the roar of the turboprop and gave them a short safety briefing before climbing into his seat, strapping in and bringing the aircraft quickly to life, the prop whipping crisply through the humid Florida air. Andy directed him out of parking and he taxied to the runway threshold, quickly checked the engine gauges and glanced back at his passengers. Nick mashed the mic switch and called taking the runway over the Unicom frequency while he ran the throttle smoothly forward, turning onto the runway, then sliding the throttle full forward. The aircraft lifted into the air as Nick turned south toward Cay Sal.

As they leveled off at 7500 feet, Nick switched on the passenger intercom to check on his passengers. He started to speak when he heard the woman's voice, shrill with an angry tone.

"I can't believe you! I was so embarrassed, everyone in our diving party saw it, I saw their smirks. I have never been so humiliated!"

Nick glanced over his shoulder to see the woman facing what was appearing to be her boyfriend as he slouched back in his seat, staring ahead. The other two men were also sitting back, obviously uncomfortable with the whole situation.

The man sat up a bit, hands gripping the armrests as he looked at the woman.

"Judy, I told you I was sorry, I didn't know it would upset you like this, and I was just trying to help, she was having so much trouble."

"Oh, Mike, unbelievable. If you thought she was helpless then you were fished in. I think it might have something to do with her blonde hair and large breasts. And she didn't look like she was any stranger to the gym, not so helpless."

"I can assure you that never entered my mind, you are my girl, 100 percent, honey. I really thought I was helping her. She was struggling with her dive gear and she almost fell down."

"Michael, please, you've got to be kidding she just wanted the attention and rub up against you with that body and you took the bait. You're busted and you just can't admit it when you're wrong. How about the smaller girl in the dive party, she was having trouble too, but, oh, wait, she was flat chested and not very pretty, I get it."

"Now you're being just silly, like I said, you're the only girl for me, Judy"

"You can kiss my butt, and I don't want to dive with you anymore, it has lost all the fun for me. I can't believe I'm going to be stuck on a boat with you now for three days."

The boyfriend sank back into his chair, his lips pressed together, eyes locked straight ahead.

"Whatever, Judy, I can see I'm not going to be able to convince you, so just whatever."

Deciding he'd heard enough already, Nick switched the intercom back to PILOT so he didn't have to listen to the fight anymore. He reached into his flight bag for a fresh CD and found an old Lynryd Skynyrd CD and popped it into the CD player. He soon felt a tap on his shoulder from Judy, so he flipped the intercom back on.

"I saw you put in a CD, can we listen too?"

"Yes, ma'am, standby."

He reached up and flipped the com panel switch to patch the CD player into the intercom system.

“Thank you very much.” She said as she sat back in her seat again as the Southern Rock music poured through their headsets. The first strains of “Sweet Home Alabama” kicked up. A few minutes later Judy leaned forward again and tapped Nick on the shoulder.

“The mic is on now, ma’am.”

“Oh, I just wanted to say thanks again, I’m from Alabama and the music is perfect. I live in North Carolina now, Chapel Hill. It’s nice but it’s not home, Sweet Home Alabama.”

“Yes, ma’am, I too like Alabama. I favor Mobile area myself.”

She sat back in her seat once again. “Yes, Mobile is nice, I’m from the coast just south of there, Mobile is a great town.”

After a few minutes of just Lynyrd on the headset, the other two men started talking, something about new trends in diving widgets, so Nick flipped the intercom back to PILOT so he didn’t have his music interrupted.

About 30 miles out of Cay Sal Nick pulled the throttles back and started a slow descent. His instructions were to over fly the runway at 300 feet to check its condition, and then try to raise the custodian who lives in a shack there to make sure they were cleared to land. It took two pairs eyes to do this, Seymour had explained as the custodian’s definition of safe to land tended to vary widely with what most pilots would consider clear. David once had to do a go around when he saw 55 gallon drums stretched across the runway blocking it once; took the custodian 20 minutes to get them all off so he could land.

The water’s blue began to lighten a bit as it got shallower around the Cay Sal Banks area, owned by the Bahaman Government, highlighting the reefs and rock walls that made diving this area so attractive. He leveled off at 1000 feet as the island sharpened up through the humidity haze. There were three dive boats anchored in the waters in front of them as they approached, and Nick maneuvered to align with Runway 16, dropping down to 300 feet after he passed the last dive boat.

He aligned with what looked like a beaten path, about 50 or 60 feet wide and 2000 feet long, mostly sand but overgrown with beach grass. As he flew over, Nick could see a row of 55 gallon drums along the side of the runway and a large white washed shack near the beach end, a man with gray hair standing outside holding a radio waved as he flew by. Nick keyed up the mic.

“Cay Sal, Tradewinds 9106, do you copy?”

“Yeah, Tradewinds, all is clear,” came back a Bahamian accent.

“Roger Cay Sal, here we come.” He switched the intercom to ALL. “Lady and gentlemen, we are on final for Cay Sal, please check that your seat belts are nice and tight as this will be a bumpy landing.

Secure all loose items or we'll be dodging it."

Nick turned left and circled back on a downwind, eyeing the runway as it passed his left shoulder, then turning base when the runway was about a half mile behind, then a quick turn to final. With full flaps and the aircraft crawling along at 80 knots, he let the aircraft settle to the runway, bleeding off airspeed and keeping the yoke firmly back in his lap and holding the nose wheel off as long as possible. The aircraft shimmied as it sunk a bit into the loose sand over the harder packed sand beneath. As the nose wheel came down, Nick reversed the prop and applied gentle braking to make the end of the field as it approached quickly.

After bringing the aircraft to a stop, he stepped hard on the right rudder pedal as the aircraft turned around and he back taxied toward the clearing that passed for a ramp at the south end. The gray-headed black man he had seen in front of the shack was walking toward the parking area.

After shutting down, Nick unbuckled and indicated to the passengers they should do the same, then hopped down and began opening the cargo areas for them to get their gear and bags. Nick had an ice chest and a box from Opa Locka with supplies Nick now figured belonged to the custodian. The old man walked up as the five of them were unloading.

"Greetings! Where's David?" He was a tall, thin man of at least 70, a long, wrinkled face with a huge grin, walking with a cane as he approached.

"Hi, I'm Nick Collins, filling in while David attends to some family business."

"Oh, that's too bad, I hope it works out for him, I'm Johnny Weldon, caretaker here. I should have known it wasn't David, you are almost right on time, took me by surprise because I thought I had another ten or twenty minutes, he he he."

His face turned to a more serious look. "He didn't give you anything special for me, did he?"

"No, sir, I didn't talk to him myself, I just got called in to take his route today. Is this stuff here for you?" he said, pointing to the box and ice chest.

The disappointment on his face was unmistakable. "Too bad for me. Yes, those are my groceries." He pointed to several old wheelbarrows lying on their sides in the grass next to the parking area.

"Grab one of those, young fellow, and load my groceries, please. And you young folks can grab one too, for your bags. I've contacted the skipper of your boat and the launch should be here in less than a half-hour. Then follow me."

He started walking slowly back toward his shack. Nick and the others grabbed wheelbarrows and loaded their gear, falling in line behind the old man's slow gait. Nick could hear Judy talking in a low voice to her boyfriend. Johnny stopped the procession in front of his shack. He pointed toward a small dock off the beach and looked at the divers.

“You kids take those ‘barrows down there to the dock, your launch should be here any time now. Me and this young fellow will get my groceries unloaded and get him back in the air.”

The four started toward the dock down the sandy path. Nick could still hear Judy talking away, relieved he was free of all that tension. Johnny held open the front door of the shack, indicating Nick should drive the wheelbarrow right in, which he did.

Johnny’s shack was a very practical arraignment. He had a small cot in one corner, a short table with a propane and electric lamp on it next to it. There was a small bookshelf at the foot of the bed. Overstuffed with many books, most of them hardback. On the opposite wall was a chest of drawers with a small mirror and a table next to it with a small wash basin. Two metal folding chairs were pushed under a folding card table, and a single rocking chair represented the total of his creature comforts. A small wooden desk under one of the three windows had a chair and a small marine band radio on it. The rest of the shack held shelves of dry goods and hardware for the dive boats that frequented the waters from the Bahamas.

“Pretty sparse lifestyle you’ve got here. Must be nice and quiet.”

“Yes, sir, it is very quiet. I do have a TV I get out on special occasions. I run it off a small generator.”

“What is a special occasion?”

“Football matches, what you yanks call soccer, I do miss a good match all the way out here. But mostly I read,” he said as he waved his hand at his small bookcase.

“That’s what David was bringing me today, a load of books. I send an order through him with some money, and he stops by a bookstore near Opa and picks up my books. I expect I’ll just have to wait for him to get back, but that’s tough. I don’t have enough gas to run the generator a lot, so reading is my one joy.”

Nick thought to himself, then offered, “Well, if you’ll give me a list, I’ll go get your books for you, and can drop them off on the second pass through today. I’ll have some time at the turn in Ops to go grab them if the bookstore is close.”

“That’s real nice of you, young fellow, but I already gave David my money, so I’ll just have to wait. I’ll be OK, I can read some of these again,” he said with a sad sigh.

“Just make me a list, will you? There is no way I can strand a fine gentleman like yourself with a love of books. We’ll figure out how to get my money back later.”

“God bless you son, I’ll have you in my prayers so sure, guaranteed to give you that extra protection while flying.”

“I’ll take all the help I can get.”

Johnny quickly scrawled out a short list with four books titles on them, telling Nick any two will do just fine.

After shaking Nick's hand vigorously and thanking him again, Nick walked out of the shack and started back up the short sandy path to the parking area. As he approached he noticed Judy was standing beside the airplane with a single bag.

"What's up, is there a problem, ma'am?"

"Oh, no, no problem, as long as this airplane leaves this island with me on it in the next 15 minutes, there won't be a problem."

"I see, well, and where are you going? I'm going to Congo Town, Nassau, and then back to Opa Locka, I can drop you in any of those places. And, of course, I'm afraid it will be an additional fee for the fare."

"Opa Locka is just fine with me, how much do you need," she said as she dove into her purse for her wallet.

"Hang on to that until we get back to Opa, I don't have any idea what the fare is from here to there." He looked at her red swollen eyes. "You sure you want to do this, leave your boyfriend here?"

"Oh he's been planning this vacation for months, this is his vacation, not ours, obviously. Are we leaving soon?"

"Yes, hop in and let's go." Nick held open the door and climbed in after her, tossing her bag in the rear cargo area. She sat in the first row of passenger seats while Nick made his way to the cockpit. Starting the engine, he taxied to the end of Runway 16, peering over the glare shield to see if the errant boyfriend would come running up from the beach to rescue his fair maiden. No such luck, so he swung the nose back down the runway, set the flaps for a soft field take off, hauled the yoke back into his lap, and ran the throttles to full power. The aircraft bounced its way down the runway before finally bouncing into the air where Nick leveled it off to gain airspeed before resuming his climb to altitude and the nearly one hour flight to Congo Town, his next stop.

They had leveled off for ten minutes before she spoke.

"It is awfully quiet, do you have any other music?"

Nick looked in his chart bag and pulled out a Bob Marley "Exodus" CD, and Judy nodded approvingly. The second song, "No Woman, No Cry" began to play, which Nick noticed only made her tears increase. Sighing, he sat back into his seat and checked his heading against the GPS. He also checked the arrival time estimated on the screen and glanced at his watch.

Damn, he was ten minutes behind schedule.

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Judy Go Round

Judy had fallen asleep during the flight to Congo Town. She awoke when he was slowing on final for Runway 10, announcing a full stop landing on the UNICOM channel. Cut from the mahogany and pine trees of Andros Island, the narrow but paved runway looked much improved over the last one, a deceptive appearance. As he crossed the threshold he noticed what looked like potholes deep enough to drop a nose gear and get a serious prop strike. He was alert to any more that might crop up on the runway but none did as he taxied to the ramp. He brought the aircraft to a stop and killed the engine. A young black man pushed a handcart with several mailbags and a couple of packages on it. He smiled at Nick as he pushed it to the side of the aircraft.

“Quick turn for you, mister, just these few things, and get what you’ve got for me. Where’s David, is everything alright?”

“David’s on emergency leave, I’m covering today, someone else is covering after that.”

“Well, that’s too bad, tell him I hope everything’s OK.”

“See, I won’t be never mind, you bet, I’ll tell him.”

“Thanks, mister. You’re all loaded, see you tomorrow,” he said with a small wave as he turned to pushing his cart with two mailbags from the cargo hold.

“Yeah, tomorrow.”

Nick climbed back into the cockpit, started the engine and taxied to the other end of the runway, being careful to turn around before he got to the potholes. He’d trade the hundred or so feet of runway for no prop strikes on take off. Turning around, he kept the aircraft rolling as he slid the throttle forward and the prop’s whine picked up as they built speed on the runway and lifted off.

The flight to Nassau was a short one from Congo Town, only about 20 minutes after they leveled off at 4500 feet. Nick looked back over his shoulder at Judy.

“It will only be a few minutes to Nassau, and I need to file a flight plan to help us get back to Miami airspace and Opa Locka, but should have you back in a bit over two hours, I guess. Do you have a ride to wherever you are going next?”

“That’s good. Yes, I can call a cab, I guess I’ll see what flights I can get back to Raleigh Durham tonight. What a disappointment, coming home early to an empty house after planning this vacation for so long.”

“It is sure a nice diving area, sorry it didn’t work out for you.”

“Oh, Mike is really a great guy, and I do love him, I think. He is just such a boob and acts so innocent, then he just won’t own up to it. That seems dishonest to me and I don’t know if I want to be with a dishonest man for the rest of my life.”

“That’s understandable. Has he ever done anything serious that would make you suspicious?”

“No, but this is the first time we’ve traveled together other than to go to the folk’s house.”

“What did he do that started all this, if you don’t mind my asking?”

“We were diving off Marathon in a dive party that included Mike and myself, the other two guys with us today, and about ten other people we didn’t know. One of the other girls, about thirty but with some of the best breasts money can buy and a hard body that I’ll bet hasn’t missed a workout in years, she kept acting like she was helpless and fumbling with her gear on the boat. It was so obvious, at least to the other women in the group, I could see they were disgusted by it. And who gets sucked in, my Mike, of course.”

She paused as Nick leaned forward to tune the ATIS frequency for Nassau.

“Go ahead, I’m listening, we’re still about 15 minutes out.”

“He should have known I was upset, all he had to do was look at me, yet he kept at it. And she was eating it up. Oooo, it just makes me want to puke, she was enjoying it so much. He went to snap her vest on and she puffed out those silicone monsters to make him press them to get the latches fastened.”

“Then later, when I confronted him with it, he acted so innocent, like he didn’t understand what I was upset about. Yeah right, he knows. He knows for sure now.”

Nick checked his watch and the GPS to see how many minutes he had left before he needed to call Nassau ATC.

“Have you considered that he really is that innocent, that he really just thought he was helping? One thing I have learned about men and women, and that is admittedly a small amount of knowledge, is women don’t get that we men are really as simple as we seem. It’s no trick; we stumble around our lives, just happy to be here mostly. You women think this means we’re working up some devious plan to undermine you or discredit you before your family or friends. It doesn’t, it just means we’re stupid maybe, but not devious. I know there are exceptions but for the most part, what you see is what you get.”

“Leaping to his defense are you now, I guess I should have expected you to defend his point of view.”

“No, not defending him, I doubt it would work, just offering a different point of view is all. You two seem like a nice couple, he said you were all the woman he needed, so I just thought maybe he isn’t such a bad guy, just, well, male.”

“That’s pretty weak. I do love him, and I think he is getting ready to ask me to marry him, I just worry about his honesty.”

“Fair enough, offer to him that he’s just male, although a repeat of such behavior won’t be tolerated, you just want him to understand how giving attention to another woman in most any form not discussed up front is stealing attention from you, and that just won’t work. I’ll bet he’ll go for it.”

“I don’t know, maybe, but I’m already almost back to Florida now. I just don’t know what to do anymore.”

Nick glanced out the window and saw Andros Town off his left wing, indicating he was only about 25 miles from Nassau Island.

“Oh shoot, I got to call ATC.”

Quickly switching to Nassau Approach, he made contact and approach set him up for a base leg VFR approach to Runway 14. After touchdown he turned off the runway to the left, the parking area for the TDM operation was straight ahead.

As he taxied to his parking spot, he noticed the Cessna 210 with the Bahamas Air Outfitters livery parked to the left of his parking area. Bahamas Air Outfitters was owned by Robert “Bahama Bob” Poole, a South African who had moved to the islands when Tradewinds Domestic Mailservice first opened and was one of the first pilots The Boss had hired to fly in the fledgling air carrier. He flew with TDM for several months before some of the other pilots began to grow suspicious of some of the extra flying Bob was doing. As it turned out, he was running a flying brothel for the tourists using the Boss’s aircraft after hours out of San Juan; kind of a Mile High Club meets Club Med. Bob was fired and opened a competing operation west of TDM’s center on the Leeward Islands. His cut rate ways never allowed him to land any of the big contracts like TDM had done, so he satisfied himself with picking up the

crumbs.

In TDM's contracts were clauses about the clients being able to use other means to carry the mail if TDM failed to show up more than 15 minutes late. If they were that late and an alternative, competitive carrier is available, like Bahamas Outfitters, they can get the job. Nick glanced at his watch and noticed he was just over thirteen minutes behind. Nick gunned the engine to speed his way into the parking spot, stomped on the brakes and shut the engine down.

He looked back at Judy. "We're here for 15 minutes, you can get out if you want," then he jumped down from the cockpit and jogged into the dispatch office.

As he entered the large room, he saw Hans Van Der Geest, a Dutchman who flew for Bahama Bob at the counter looking over a manifest with the dispatcher.

"That's still my cargo," Nick said loudly as they both looked up, "I'm here with one minute to spare."

"Jesus, Nick Collins, what the hell are you doing here?" Hans said with a scowl on his face as he looked at his watch. "Where's David?"

A large smile drew across Nick's face as the situation sank in. David must be always late and Hans gets the job, like clockwork.

"David is on emergency leave, I'm filling in today." He thought a second more. "In fact, I'm on this route for a while now, Hans, better go find another place for bottom feeding, this well is dry, my friend. Maybe time for a short vacation, huh, Hans?"

The dispatcher looked at Hans with a sympathetic expression. "Sorry Hans, I got to give him the mail today, he's within the contract. Maybe tomorrow."

The disappointment and disbelief was not hidden on his face. He glared at Nick, then looked at the dispatcher.

"Yeah, sure Pat, I'll see you tomorrow. See you later, Nick, you can count on it."

He touched his hand to his head as he strode out of the room, almost knocking Judy over in the doorway. Judy recovered and came into the room.

"Where is a bathroom, please?"

"Down that hall, second door on the left," Pat said as he pointed the way.

Pat then looked back at Nick, "Well, aren't you a surprise. Hans has flown this leg for months because David is at least 20 minutes behind everyday. This mail can't be late as it has to get to the Miami Post Office Sorting Center in time to make the outgoing mail."

"Well, I'm not David, sorry for being late. Where's my load, please, I have time to make up."

"The guys have it already, they saw this one coming down. They were half way out to Hans' 210 when you pulled up. But that's not all, there's a four man cargo crew sacked out in my crew rest area in the back, they are yours too."

"Yep, knew about them, glad I don't have to hunt them down, I'll be ready to go in a few minutes."

Pat tossed his head toward the direct Judy disappeared, "Seymour know you got that ballast?"

"Picked her up in Marathon, part of a dive party. She got in a fight with her boyfriend and decided to come home instead of staying in Cay Sal."

"Cay Sal, I guess. There would be no where to get away from each other out there. So you'll have a full load going back into Miami

today, need any gas?”

“Nope plenty of gas,” Nick said as he made a few notes on the weight and balance sheet. Gas in the islands is quite a bit more expensive than on the mainland, so he tried to not buy if he didn’t need it.

“Well, excuse me, I’m going to go file a flight plan back to the States and get those freight dogs out of the rack.”

Nick walked back toward the briefing room, found a telephone and called in an IFR flight plan to Opa Locka. Being Class Bravo airspace, the Miami area is easier to get into on an IFR clearance than VFR, where you are considered low priority traffic and get vectored around until they get around to slotting you to your airport. Then he walked across the hall to the crew rest room, a simple place with four sets of bunk beds, a couch, easy chair, and a small TV on a rolling stand. A coffee table in front of the couch held a pile of old aviation magazines.

“Hey, you guys going to Opa?” he said in an elevated voice so as to stir the four shapes lying on the bunks.

“That would be us,” one man said as he swung his legs out and onto the floor, “C’mon, boys, our ride is here.”

“Nice shiny Caravan outside, gents, load up and let’s go. As soon as you’re strapped in I’ll kick the tires and light the fires and we’ll be out of here.”

All four were up in no time, grabbing their bags and heading out for the airplane. Nick ran into Judy in the hallway.

“We will be full on the way back, I’ve got four guys to take to Opa, so you can ride up in the front with me, OK?”

“Really? Sure that will be fun. Can I fly too?”

“Let’s not push our luck anymore today, OK?”

“Had to try,” she said with a smile as they turned and headed for the doorway out to the ramp.

“Pat, see you tomorrow,” Nick waved as they walked out the door, keeping the expectation of a return alive.

Nick checked all the cargo, did a quick walk around the aircraft, then mounted the step into the cockpit and strapped in. A look over his shoulder saw everyone already had their seatbelts on and they were ready to go, so he cranked up the engine and called for his clearance.

In minutes they were bouncing along the taxiway on their way to Runway 14. Nick fell in behind a United Boeing 767 and a Lufthansa Airbus 340, waiting patiently for each one to take the runway and roll for take off, then wait some more to provide separation for wake turbulence, whirling vortex’s coming off a flying aircraft’s wing; they can turn a smaller airplane over in mid air should you encounter one. After a few minutes it was their turn and the tower cleared them for take off, so Nick ran the throttle up and they accelerated down the runway and into the air.

The tower cleared them on to Miami approach and Nick turned west and leveled off at 4000 feet. The cargo crew had gone back to sleep in their seats, getting ready for a late night departure for those people who absolutely have to have stuff overnight. Nick turned to Judy as she stared out the right side window as they passed a cruise ship inbound to Nassau.

“We should be on the ground in just about an hour,” said Nick. “It’s shorter than that but the controllers will want to shove us around a bit to get in line for a landing at Opa. You can call a cab from the dispatch office, Seymour will be glad to help you find whatever you need.”

Judy sighed, “OK, thanks, I sure hope I’m not screwing this up.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well, I was thinking about what you said earlier, that he was just being male. I know you’re right, but is that a reason I should have to put up with that?”

“I guess not, but while you can’t really change people, I think men, when willing, are trainable.”

She sighed loudly, “I just don’t know what I’m going to do. I think I’ll go home and he and I can maybe talk when he gets home, if he’s still talking to me.”

“That’s the spirit, I hope it works out for you.”

Nick looked off his left shoulder and saw the northern end of Andros Island dropping off behind them. The next bit of land along the way was the Bimini Islands. They flew for another 40 minutes in silence until the shores of the barrier islands off Miami faded into view through the hazy air. By now the radio was alive with chatter from controllers and other aircraft. Miami was a very busy place in mid afternoon. The controllers took them south of Miami International airport before turning them north for an approach to Runway 09L at Opa Locka Airport. Nick set up for landing as they descended toward the runway threshold, flaring just over it until the wheels chirped as they made contact with the warm concrete. He turned off the runway and taxied to the parking area in front of the TDM office. The cargo crew was already gathering their gear and climbing out.

“This is your stop, ma’am,” he said to Judy as she unstrapped her seatbelt, “I’ll get your bag out of the back, then if you’ll go in that door over there and ask for Seymour, he’ll fix you up, and get your fare for the ride. I got to run a quick errand before I have to get back up in the air so I need to go, thanks for flying with us and good luck.”

“OK, thanks, you’ve been a real help and comfort.”

Nick got her bag and set it on the ground. Marco had already brought up a flatbed truck to unload the cargo, a mail truck was backing up to unload the mail bags from Nassau, and the fuel truck pulled up to top off the tanks for the next round. He walked over to Marco standing beside the flatbed, supervising another man unloading.

“Hey Marco, I understand there’s a bookstore nearby? Do you guys have a crew car I can borrow?”

Marco smiled, “Johnny got you running books for him? You bet, it’s just outside the airport road here, turn left at the light, about a half-mile on the right side. Take that pickup truck over there, the keys are in it. And hurry, you’re due back up in less than a half hour.”

“OK, thanks, I’ll be right back.”

As he passed the mail truck driver unloading the mailbags he looked up at Nick and smiled. “I see you beat Hans out of his load today, he will not be a happy camper about that.”

“Yeah, I hear he gets most of the business on this route. It’s always a pleasure to take business from Bahama Bob, especially when it’s our business to begin with. And Hans needed a day off anyway, he’s way too grouchy. Got to run”

Nick jumped into the pickup truck and sped out of the ramp area, out the airport drive, then found the bookstore. He ran in, grabbed the girl behind the help desk and shoved the list at her. She ran off and came back in less than four minutes with two books. Nick thanked her and walked briskly to the checkout counter. He was out the door in no time and saw a Wendy’s Hamburger joint across the street and whipped in for a quick burger with cheese and a coke, then he was on his way back to the airport. He rolled the pickup to a stop, jumped out and walked into the dispatch office. Seymour was seated in his chair behind the desk, looking up as he entered.

“I see you got the mail at Nassau, that’s sure to piss off Bahama Bob, but I’m glad you got it today.”

“Yeah, Hans Van Der Geest was also pretty ticked as I walked in the door with 2 minutes to spare. He and the local dispatcher were already transferring the manifest to him when I walked in.”

“It’s pretty rare when David gets there in time, he’s usually much too late. Heck, Hans is in the air by the time David arrives, I think. Too bad you’re not flying it tomorrow too.”

“It’s a tight schedule, I’ll leave a note in the log book to the next guy with a few tips to speed things up. And warn him about Johnny out on Cay Sal, that was a huge delay not knowing I was his porter and pilot.”

“That old fart? Just ignore him, drop his trash on the ramp, he’ll find a way to get it into the hut.”

“He’s an old man, Seymour, have some compassion. Anyway, I’m off for the next leg. I need you to find me a ride to St. John’s, get me out of the States tonight and as close as possible please. I need to get home tomorrow.”

“OK, I’ll see what’s going your way late, have that for you when you get back. And you have a passenger going outbound with you, waiting at the plane.”

“Later, Seymour,” he said with a wave, wondering about the high volume of passenger traffic on this backwater route.

He walked outside and headed for the aircraft. Marco was standing next to the airplane, all the other trucks were gone. His passenger was sitting on the wheel. As he got closer he could see his passenger was Judy.

“This is starting to get to be a habit, me coming back to my airplane after I’ve thought you’re out of here, and here you are again.”

“Well, I thought about it some more and I want to give us another chance. That, and there was a message from a ship to shore call from Mike saying he was miserable without me. Good choice of words. His message said he was going to return on the next flight back. Anyway, back I go to give it another shot.”

“Good news, let’s load up and go then.” He looked at Marco.

“Oh, yeah, you’re all ready. Tanks are topped off and all our cargo is loaded, except the little lady’s bag.”

Nick grabbed her bag and tossed it in the back next to several small boxes marked for Everglades Airpark.

“Judy, by now you know the way to your seat. Saddle up!”

They both jumped in their seats and Nick had them taxiing out for the second time to runway 9L. A DHL Boeing 727-100 pulled out in front of them but rolled onto the runway and was gone quickly. Nick was told to hold short of the runway to await an arrival.

It was Hans in his Cessna 210, just cleared to land on Runway 09L. Nick looked up the base leg and saw the small prop, flaps hanging out, floating down out of the sky. He was low and fast as he passed them, Nick noticing he had two people in the back. He must have picked up an air taxi job; it probably only paid for his gas and lunch. The Cessna finally slowed a bit more, and then Hans dropped it hard on the runway. \

Nick laughed and looked at Judy, “A pilot can fly you through miles and miles of challenging aviation situations completely unaware, but it is the landing by which passengers measure the competence of the pilot.”

“Yes, I guess you’re right about that, I never thought about it. Yours have been pretty good.”

“Well, you just jinxed us,” he said smiling at her.

Nick held to allow for Hans to exit the runway, then they were off. First east out over Miami Beach, then ATC turned them north along the beach before turning them west and on course. Judy spent the whole time looking out the window at Miami’s many charms and the rows of hotels along the beach.

Judy was clearly more relaxed and anxious to get back to Cay Sal. It only took another twenty minutes to make Everglades and Nick

got the aircraft turned in less than 10 minutes, then they were again in the air flying down the western coast of Florida, both of them spotting birds and other interesting sites along the way.

At Marathon Nick did a repeat quick turn, getting parked, unloaded, reloaded, and taxiing out for take off in less than eight minutes. Soon he had the aircraft turned toward Cay Sal, which only increased Judy's excitement. She talked almost non-stop from the time they cleared the Marathon airport until Nick began his descent into Cay Sal. They flew low over a dive boat and, looking down through the crystal clear water, Nick could see several divers in the water, their black wet suits outlined against the sandy bottom.

Nick set up level at 300 feet and flew down the runway to check it out, clicking on the radio he said, "Cay Sal, Tradewinds 9016 for landing."

In moments he heard Johnny's voice come back saying, "Roger, Tradewinds, uh, whatever, cleared to land."

Nick executed a nice military overhead pattern, pitching out for a quick downwind turn then another quick 180-degree turn to line up on final. As they flared for landing, Nick noticed Judy's boyfriend Mike picking up his bags in a wheelbarrow from in front of Johnny's shack and walking toward the parking area with his shoulders at a noticeable droop.

Nick turned the aircraft around and began to slowly taxi back to the parking ramp, knowing the time must have been excruciating to Judy as she watched his sad body drag up to the parking area. They could see him shielding his eyes looking at them taxing up. Nick swung the aircraft around so that his side of the aircraft was facing Mike.

As he pulled the fuel flow switch to off, he looked over at her and smiled, "Well, good luck, I sure hope it works out for you two."

"Thanks you for everything, especially just talking to me, it really gave me a chance to get some things straight in my head. Got to go!"

She was out of the cabin and peeked around the nose of the aircraft. Nick could see the look of recognition and surprise flash across Mike's face as he saw her and, dropping his bags he ran to her, threw his arms around her waist and lifted her into the air, turning around in two circles before setting her back down for a big kiss. Nick could see her talking in rapid fire telling Mike her story, waving her arms excitedly. Nick unstrapped and went back to grab her bag. He popped open the cargo door and stepped out with the bag for Judy. He set it down next to the two lovers, now completely engrossed in each other.

Nick went back to the aircraft to retrieve Johnny's books along with another box of supplies. He set the books on top of the box and started walking briskly toward Johnny standing at the doorway, walking past Mike and Judy still pouring affection all over each other.

"Well, sir, I got two of your books, and I go this drop off as well."

"Bless you young man, you are a saint, and look at the little surprise you and that lady cooked up for that other fellow. He was one sorry puppy, mopping around like life was over for him. Now look at him, like a new man. Ah, young people are so much fun to watch."

"I suppose. Well, Johnny, I got to get going, straight shot back to Miami tonight, got to get home to St. John's by tomorrow."

"Oh? You're not going to fly the route for David until he gets back?"

Ah, no sir, there's another guy coming in to hold down the fort until David gets back, I got to get home."

"Well, you're one nice young man, and very thoughtful, you'll be in my prayers tonight. Good luck and I hope to see you again sometime."

"You bet, see you now."

"Oh, one other thing. Did you do something bad to one of Bahama Bob's guys?"

“No, why do you ask?”

“I picked up some traffic on the radio, a couple of Bob’s guys were talking about you, how you stole some business from Hans Van Der Geest and they wanted to get back at you.”

“You got to be kidding? I didn’t steal anything from Hans, I prevented him from stealing work from my company. He gets it about everyday because David is always late, but I snatched it today.”

“You better be careful with Bahama Bob’s guys, they can be less than honest, you know.”

“Less than honest, that’s a nice way to say it. Well, those guys got their panties in a wad over nothing, so they can just get over it. OK, I got to get going, see you later.”

He reached out his hand and shook Johnny’s, then turned and walked to the aircraft. He passed the couple gathering their bags into the wheelbarrow. Judy gave him a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

“Thanks again, you were very sweet, I have a good feeling about Mike and I getting a fresh start.”

Mike reached out and shook Nick’s hand, “Yes, thank you for bringing my best friend back to me, you have saved our vacation and more importantly, our lives together, thanks.”

“All in a day’s work for a TDM pilot. You two have fun and keep talking to each other, no matter what. Bye now.”

Nick jumped up in the cockpit and started the engine, then swung the nose down the runway and into the air. He turned the aircraft north toward Miami. He leveled off at 5500 feet and set the prop for cruise. By now it had gotten much darker, and very dark this far out over the ocean. One nice thing about clear, dark nights over the ocean was the explosion of stars overhead.

He dialed in the Dolphin VORTAC just south of Opa Locka and began to fly direct to its signal. He dug out his flashlight and went back into the chart bag for another CD. He drew out an Eagle’s “Hell Freezes Over” CD and popped it into the CD player and punched the shuffle button. The first song it played was one of his favorites, a soft and easy one from the early days.

Desperado, why don't you come to your senses?
Come down from your fences, open the gate
It may be rainin', but there's a rainbow above you
You better let somebody love you, before it's too late

Nick wondered if he had better let somebody love him. He thought about Judy and Mike, they each had somebody to love them. He thought about Amanda Burt, wondering where she might be tonight. He wondered if Johnny on Cay Sal had somebody to love him. He was pretty sure nobody loved Seymour Massey.

The thin line of lights from the Keys appeared off the left wing, barely visible through the hazing night. After a while the lights of the Florida coast also greeted him. He called Flight Service and filed an IFR flight plan to ease the Miami Class B airspace problems and then switched back to Miami Center to begin the vectors to set up for landing. Glancing at his watch he noticed he was right on time, 7 p.m. He’d be on the ground in less than 15 minutes. The broad lights of Miami rolled out below him, streets still packed with commuters on their way home, or to the theater for a movie, maybe just out for a quick dinner.

After an uneventful approach and landing, he was taxing into the ramp area. Lighted wands brought him into the parking spot, crossing to indicate a full stop. Nick breathed a big sigh, pulled the fuel flow switch, and began to gather his gear. With both bags in hand, he walked into the dispatch office. Seymour looked up from his desk.

“About time you got here. I heard you call on final on the tower frequency. Seriously, thanks for the work today. You getting the mail out from under Bahama Bob is all the talk today, those guys are really pissed.”

“Bob and his goons can kiss my butt, I’m a professional pilot and I do my job well. I’m the best prop pilot in the Caribbean, bar none, so those guys better give me a wide berth.”

“This will also poke at David, I can’t wait to see his reaction. He’s been giving me a line about how the schedule is too tight and by the time he gets to Nassau, he’s too late to prevent Hans from getting the mail. You come stumbling in and no one told you it couldn’t be done and you did it anyway. Again, nice work”

“It is a tight schedule, and he seems to have friends all along the way, so I can see how easy it would be to get sidetracked. Johnny did it for me today, but I got us caught up, reunited two lovers, and beat Bahama Bob out of a cheap buck, not bad.”

“Yeah, and I got more good news for you. There’s an Air Cargo DC-10 leaving Miami International in an hour and a half for San Juan. You can stay overnight there, then you should be able to get to St. Johns in the morning. A crew truck is on its way over here now to pick you up, should be here any minute. If you ever want to fly South Florida, I can work you into my schedule, Nick.”

“Thanks for the offer but I’ll stick to flying Down Island, I like the company there better. Too many transplanted New Yorkers around here for me. Thanks for finding me a ride home.”

The crew truck pulled up and honked its horn.

“OK, I’m out of here, make sure you file my hours right, Seymour.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll get every one, see you later.”

Nick threw his bags into the pick up truck bed and hopped in the cab. They were on the ramp at Miami International in less than 20 minutes, pulling up in front of a DC-10 with forklifts still loading pallets into the rear side cargo doors. He found the co-pilot walking the outside of the aircraft, who welcomed him aboard and told him to toss his bags in with the crew’s bags and find a seat in the forward area. Nick found a seat and settled in, pulling out a book about the history of the Texas Rangers. Reading helped him pass long flights, they were a constant and welcome companion.

He read at least a third of the book before the DC-10 began its descent into San Juan. He thought about getting a room at one of the hotels nearby so he could get over to the local dispatch office and get back to St. John’s. There might even be a floatplane available, then he wouldn’t have to wait at all.

He needed to get back, check his mail, pay some bills, figure out how to pacify Eduard the Mad Russian, get a sound system rigged for the Beach party.

How in the world would he get all this done before dark? He laughed to himself; he probably wouldn’t, as this was all contingent on everything going well, and that was just not very likely at the Goose Roost on St. John’s.

Story written by Kyle Ramsey

Have you missed the earlier chapters of "Alternate Air"? Perhaps you'd just like to read them over again? You can catch up using the links below!

[Part I](#)

[Part II](#)