



March 2002

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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Inside TCA



Tradewind Domestic Seaplane Service Now Open!

<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/capn/capn/tds.html>

TDS

*A word from one of
the TDS
management team:*

I'm proud to

announce the formation of a new division of Tradewind Domestic Mail - TRADEWIND DOMESTIC SEAPLANE SERVICES. For more than a month, around seventeen of your Management Team have been denied their usual diet of Margaritas and Fatburgers, forced by a cruel and unfeeling CEO to develop this exciting new experience in your world of Virtual Flight. Now TDS is ready to hire rough tough floatplane jockeys to fly Mail, Cargo and Pax to every corner of the Caribbean, using our many custom Seaplane bases and small landing strips throughout the islands of this beautiful region. If you're bored with the "Big Iron", sick of staring at a vague green carpet from FL350, or you're no longer friends with your First Officer, then now is the time to "Get Down and Dirty" and wash the dust off with a waterborne touchdown or takeoff with TDS! If you're already a pilot with TDM, come and find



out what you've been missing. If you want to experience what Flight and Fun have in common, send an Email to buckland1@ntlworld.com with the subject: "Yes! I want Salt Water with my Margaritas!" Don't Delay! Sign up today!

Terry Tyler
TDS5001

Seaplane Addons

Some fantastic addons have arrived for seaplane enthusiasts. All can be found at their usual places: Flightsim.com and Avsim.com etc.

Environmental Water Effects Library: file names oceansfx.zip and oceanstx.zip Created by Ed Truthan

The files contain SEVEN environmentally diverse and visually engaging animations to replace the Default Surface Water Effects of FS2002. They also allow the Simmer a number of choices as to the manner in which the surface of FS2002 water can be displayed in terms of: Wind Speed, Wind Direction, and visual "WaveHeight". They have been rendered in the same 256x256, 42.7KB, DXT1 format as the default files, and therefore should cause NO frame rate degradation. Loading and using them is very simple. These files replace the SURFACE effects only, and do not replace or change the "shore breaking" waves or the floatplane wake effects, etc. NOTE: This Package Has Been Designed and released in TANDEM with another project, "Environmental Water Textures Library" (oceanstx.zip), which preserves and enhances the complex bathymetric world water mapping present in FS2002 with a complete set of environmentally comprehensive, color balanced replacements. I highly recommend you try them together.

New Airbus A320-200

The new Airbus A320-200 "Isle of Martinique" is available at Hangar 4.

Pilot Profiles

The Breeze is looking for jpegs of you handsome gents for the Pilot Profile pages. Please submit a pic of yourself to the Breeze and we will send out a questionnaire for you to fill out. Could be of yourself or with your Crew Chief. No pet co-pilots please.



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Cargo Newsletter March 2002



Our new B747F

We should generate some revenue with this beauty! Thanks guys for a fantastic plane! You can get it from Hangar 5. Here's a flight plan you might want to try with the 747, 707 or DC-8..Miami Int'l (KMIA) to Mariscal Sucre Intl (SEQU). Don't forget to set your altimeter and all flight crew must be on O2 while landing.

Miami Intl to Mariscal Sucre Intl

From ID Freq Course Distance ETE Fuel
To ID Freq Mag-Crs Total Total Total

Miami Intl KMIA 193 66.5 16.6 1268.3
DROWN 195 66.5 16.6 1268.3

DROWN 207 18.0 4.5 342.9
top of climb 38000ft 209 84.4 21.1 1611.2

top of climb 38000ft 207 72.0 9.6 519.9

GOLFO 208 156.4 30.7 2131.1

GOLFO 187 50.0 6.7 361.1

PALOS 189 206.4 37.4 2492.2

PALOS 185 57.3 7.6 413.7

CAYO LARGO DEL SUR UCL 230.00 186 263.7 45.0 2905.8

CAYO LARGO DEL SUR UCL 230.00 176 96.4 12.9 696.5

ATUVI 177 360.1 57.9 3602.3

ATUVI 179 80.0 10.7 577.9

EMONA 180 440.1 68.5 4180.2

EMONA 162 64.9 8.6 468.4

SAXER 163 505.0 77.2 4648.6

SAXER 171 79.0 10.5 570.4

16 20' 4"N, 80 52' 2"W GPS 172 584.0 87.7 5219.0

16 20' 4"N, 80 52' 2"W GPS 169 81.4 10.8 587.6

ARNAL 170 665.3 98.6 5806.7

ARNAL 170 120.7 16.1 872.0

ITANA 170 786.1 114.7 6678.7

ITANA 140 107.0 14.3 772.9

DAGAS 141 893.1 128.9 7451.6

DAGAS 188 73.7 9.8 532.3

MIKUS 188 966.8 138.8 7983.9

MIKUS 171 71.2 9.5 514.5

PANIL 171 1038.0 148.3 8498.4

PANIL 169 62.2 8.3 449.1

BOMAK 169 1100.2 156.5 8947.4

BOMAK 170 44.7 6.0 322.7

IRATA 169 1144.9 162.5 9270.1

IRATA 150 100.9 13.4 728.5

ROKAS 150 1245.8 176.0 9998.6

ROKAS 149 124.6 16.6 900.0

ASIKO 149 1370.4 192.6 10898.6

ASIKO 187 77.4 10.3 558.9

ONAYA 187 1447.8 202.9 11457.5

ONAYA 184 70.7 9.4 510.8

MERCADERES MER 116.30 184 1518.5 212.3 11968.2

MERCADERES MER 116.30 216 73.4 9.8 530.5

BOKAN 215 1591.9 222.1 12498.7

BOKAN 216 13.6 1.8 98.1

beginning of descent 38000ft 216 1605.5 223.9 12596.8

beginning of descent 38000ft 216 49.7 14.2 295.7

CONDORCOCHA (QUITO) QIT 115.30 215 1655.2 238.1 12892.5

CONDORCOCHA (QUITO) QIT 115.30 167 6.3 1.8 37.4

Mariscal Sucre Intl SEQU 166 1661.5 239.9 12929.9

To contact the office, email the below link.

TradeWind@compuserve.com To email me, see below

capn@mediaone.net

Dave McElroy "capn"

Cargo Chief



TCA



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FAA to order inspections of some Airbus planes

03/15/2002 - Updated 05:40 PM ET

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government said Friday it will order inspections of Airbus A300-600 planes that experience side-to-side movements similar to those of doomed American Airlines Flight 587. The Federal Aviation Administration directive also will affect Airbus A310 planes, which have similar nonmetallic composite tails. In some cases, airplanes will be grounded until the inspections were made. FAA spokesman Les Dorr said the directive won't take effect until early April, but airlines will voluntarily conduct inspections in the interim. The FAA announcement is its second since the National Transportation Safety Board said Monday that it found previously undetected damage to the tail of an American Airbus that swayed while trying to land at West Palm Beach Airport in May 1997. Two people were injured.

Earlier in the week, the FAA said it will order ultrasound inspections of tails of Airbus planes that either hit turbulence or had sharp rudder movements. The airlines voluntarily agreed to the inspections, Dorr said.

American Airlines said two Airbus A300-600s experienced strong side-to-side movements. An ultrasound check of one plane found no problems, and results on the second are expected next week, the airline said.

One FedEx plane and three foreign-owned jets also had similar stresses, Airbus spokeswoman Mary Anne Greczyn said. She said all the tails are being removed and inspected with ultrasound.

The new FAA order requires detailed visual inspections of the tail and other parts of any Airbus A300-600 or A310 experiencing side-to-side movements as strong as the stresses recorded by American Flight 587 before it crashed Nov. 12 shortly after taking off from New York's Kennedy Airport. The accident killed 265 people. The French aviation authority is issuing a similar rule, Dorr said.

(Curacao) April 1st: cooperation ALM and SLM.

CURACAO

(From The Stabroek News, 15 March, 2002)

Air ALM and SLM are going to strengthen their commercial alliance. Following their joint venture of February concerning two collective flights covering the route Curaçao-Paramaribo, they will now increase these flights to four. According to Cesar Prince, member of the Air ALM management, the objective is to minimize costs and maximize profits on this route. Air ALM as well as SLM will each cover 2 flights on this route starting next month. The local aviation company will handle the flights on Monday and Thursday, while the SLM will handle the flights of Wednesday and Saturday. Expenses will be divided between the two companies. The accord further states that SLM and Air ALM concur to a cost- and code sharing agreement concerning the Curaçao-Miami route. Basically this means that the company from Surinam purchases seats on the Curaçao-Miami route. "We have conducted an accurate cost-analysis into the entire agreement. We are guaranteed of a minimum amount of occupied seats, while our expenses will be held to a minimum. It will also drastically improve this company's cash flow." It is expected that the agreement between SLM and Air ALM will be signed shortly. Prince could not estimate precise date, but he did mention that the cooperation is scheduled to start on April 1st. "We are still busy with the last finishing touches, but we are confident that we will meet the deadline."

(Guyana) Gaul says his rights violated

Other travelers appalled at treatment

Guyana-born Swedish citizen, Colin Gaul has presented the Foreign Ministry with a formal statement, declaring that his rights were severely violated when he was ejected from a BWIA West Indian Airways flight at the Grantley Adams Airport in Barbados last Saturday. And the Foreign Affairs Ministry says it will write to the airline to get its version of what transpired during the incident. Meanwhile a number of passengers who travelled on BW431 - the same flight as Gaul - have corroborated Gaul's story. They all expressed disgust at the manner in which the airline handled the incident, more so in front of his three-year-old child. Commenting on the incident at the post Cabinet press briefing yesterday, Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr Roger Luncheon, said that the incident highlighted government's position taken at a number of CARICOM fora on the despicable treatment Guyanese received at the hands of officials from sister CARICOM states. Promising that the issue would be followed up Dr Luncheon said that government had made various levels of representation against stereotyping and profiling of persons. BWIA is set to hold a press conference on the issue at its head office today at which two members of its Executive Management team -- Vice President with responsibility for Customer Services and Operations Don McLean and Director (Security) Peter McCarthy -- will be present along with Area Manager, Dawn Murray. Responding to questions from the media on the issue at Takuba Lodge yesterday, Foreign Affairs Minister, Rudy Insanally said that the ministry would contact BWIA immediately. Gaul yesterday met Insanally and Director General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Elisabeth Harper. When questioned about actions taken over similar occurrences in the past, Insanally explained that often "there have not been enough details" allowing the overseas missions, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, to take any specific action. But he acknowledged that in this instance, unlike other cases in the past, it appeared that there were several witnesses, and the details were clearer. Questioned about the captain's (of the flight in question) instructions that Gaul be removed from the plane as he posed a security risk, Insanally said that he would rather not comment, adding, "we are living in difficult times." Since the

incident came to light, the ministry had requested Guyana's Honorary Consul in Barbados Norman Faria to investigate and accordingly a preliminary report from Faria has been submitted. The minister was not prepared to disclose any details of the report but said that it included Faria's discussions with the Barbados Police and BWIA officials on the incident. The airline was quick to defend the captain's decision to forcefully remove Gaul from the flight in a release issued following the incident. BWIA claimed that Gaul had become "angry and abusive at the inconvenience of having to board the aircraft through the rear door while a wheel chair bound passenger was being assisted to board via the front door." Gaul has refuted this saying that when he asked why he had to use the rear of the aircraft, he was told by cabin crew that only first class passengers could enter through the front door. However, the press release completely omitted any mention of a waiver which Gaul is alleged to have signed, absolving BWIA of any responsibility for his injuries. The issue of the waiver was raised with BWIA Public Relations Officer, Clint Williams, in Trinidad. No response was forthcoming. When Stabroek News approached the Georgetown branch of the airline yesterday, Murray denied any detailed knowledge of the waiver, stating that the office would have had to get in touch with the Barbados office and would contact Stabroek News later. When the response came it was that BWIA would hold a press conference today, at which all questions would be answered. Murray further informed the newspaper that she preferred not to answer any questions prior to the press conference. Meanwhile, proprietrix of Clairan's Enterprise, Claire Pires, who was on the flight Gaul boarded in Barbados and witnessed the incident, recalled that Gaul's shirt was off when a Barbadian policeman dragged him off the plane by his crotch. When Gaul was forced pass her seat, she said, she saw blood oozing from his mouth. Gaul's son, not more than three years old, followed, screaming at the top of his voice. She said that was when tears came to her eyes. Pires was accompanied by her son on the flight from Miami to Georgetown via Barbados. She said that local attorney-at-law Dr Barton Scotland, who was seated some way behind got up, identified himself and said that the man had said what he had wanted to say, had been quiet for awhile and asked "Why take him off now?" She said that a female lawyer on plane also questioned the police's actions. Pires said that she was not a first class passenger, but had boarded from the front of the plane at Miami. Pires said that no one who spoke up for their rights deserved the treatment the Barbadian police and BWIA staff meted out to Gaul. Chief Medical Technologist attached to the National Blood Transfusion Service of the Georgetown Public Hospital, Lynette Hardy, who occupied seat 14C was also asked to disembark the plane. In an invited comment, Hardy told Stabroek News that the police who took Gaul off the plane returned asked her and the woman in 13C to get off the plane with him. She refused to budge, but took the opportunity to voice her concerns. However, she said, the other woman started to remove her bag, telling the police that she knew her rights, including that of expressing herself verbally. The police then ignored them both. Hardy corroborated Pires' story and that carried in a letter to the editor of this newspaper from Yuolanda Barker titled 'I did not feel threatened by this passenger.'

Pires, Hardy and Barker expressed disgust at the manner in which the incident was handled by BWIA.



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A little bit of background about the author of oceansfx and oceanstx Ed Truthan



I'm a 45 year old folk/rock solo musician working in the clubs and hotels on Maui's west side in Lahaina. But my true passion of late has been developing my computer GRAPHICS SKILLS and of course figuring out ways to use FS2002's new graphic workings to that advantage.

Thanks for the kind words of encouragement. As I mentioned, I've been aware of TCA of course, and knowing the great deal of time your outfit spends flying over water I had it in my mind that if I succeeded in the manner to which I had visualized the result, yours would be one of the organizations that would most benefit from the enhancements. I'm so glad that was the impression on your end."

Breeze:

How long did it take you to create oceansfx and texture package?

ED:

I began the project the first week of January and spent as much free time as I could on it until the March 12th release. As a local musician working only four nights a week, I was able to stay up at night with no distractions...sometimes till dawn. The project started as a simple experiment to see if I could simply do something, ANYTHING, with the default water effects. When I finally figured out HOW to do this, the idea of an entire

package of diverse environmental effects and textures took hold. Later, when the first good set that actually LOOKED like water were achieved, the project began to possess ME instead of vice versa. Some days off I spent 18 solid hours on the computer. I dreamt of water animations at night. It took ten weeks to create everything from concept to finish. I'd estimate all together about 400 hours went into the whole project. Frankly I was exhausted toward the end. If I hadn't had finished and uploaded last week, I think my girlfriend would have left me without so much as a "So-Long". I'm very glad everything came out as well as it did. Yesterday, I started the simulator up for the first time since finish.....(Default flight, Bimini Is.) Seeing the water and effects, once in the air, I thought ..."Woww, that looks cool....Did I do all that?"

Breeze:

What made you get into texturing, rather than aircraft or panels?

ED:

Firstly, there are so many brilliant aircraft designers out there...I'm not sure I could improve on thier work. More importantly however, my true enjoyment of Flight Simulation has always been that of Earth exploration. The illusion of being above, and having free range to roam all parts of the planet. VFR. Think about it...Fs2002 is Virtual Model of the Entire Planet. Complete. With real-time weather even! I started on Terminal Reality's FLY!, first release. Needless to say, outside of the five satellite rendered areas which weren't very extensive, very little in any other part of the world LOOKED like the world. The flight models were stellar, yes, but there was simply nowhere much to go to see or explore, and visibility always limited to 20 miles, (less if you wanted frame rates). With thier latest release and the advent of Terrascene, this has been remedied to a degree, but the scenery file sizes are exorbitant and screen resolution limited. I switched to FS2000 because I could fly VFR from Arizona to Montana, with eighty miles visibilty, straight up the Rocky Mountain backbone, along corridors I'd driven in cars all my life, enjoy every familiar mountain, valley, river, road, and lake, never consult a chart, and rarely get lost. With the advent of FS2002's dramatic and technologically adaptive improvements over environmental effects such as lighting, vegetation, real-estate, and so much more, the temptation to push this elusive feeling of REALITY to it's limits is just far to tempting. That's why I do textures. To fly the Earth.

Breeze:

Have you done any previous packages for FS2002?

ED:

Yes one. The Autogen Conifer Tree Replacement, (conifers.zip, released 12-29-2001), available at www.flightsim.com and www.avsim.com. I simply couldn't stand the default conifers, (as I fly Alaska and the

Rocky Mountains frequently, and love the American West). It's been a very popular download, and was mentioned in Steve "Bear" Cartwright's Top Ten List at Avsim for the month of December. I had designed many things for FS2000 (desert sceneries, panel reworks, macros, re-texturing and color balancing "Polynesia 2000" islands, some ground textures, many other things) but never got around to uploading anything before the announcement of FS2002. The results I got from the "Conifers" project were just too good to keep for myself, and that broke the ice for me. Now I guess I have the BUG....

Breeze:

Any future projects that you can tell us about?

ED:

I've been asked by several popular Bush Scenery designers if I could make some Macros of my conifers for use in scenery design so as to blend with the Autogen Conifer Forests, and as soon as my very sweet woman has had a little more of my time, (or if I can sneak to the computer while she sleeps), I'm going to get right on it. Won't be as much work as the "Oceans" project. After that... I have a few ideas in mind. It'll involve the natural "environment" in some way I'm sure. Got that bug.

Breeze:

Will you be keeping your future projects freeware?

ED:

At the level of these first two releases, no. If I were to join with, or were asked, to assist in a project for one of the FS Software Developers, yes. Depending on the project...and it's level of challenge.... I'd enjoy and welcome that. However, if I were to take on some of the more grandiose programatic ideas I have been conjuring in my head concerning FS2002, and then take the time to design and perfect the programs by myself, and they could be designed and finished at home, the way I now imagine them, and actually work, I'd certainly consider offering them up at a reasonable price. That way, at least, I could pay for the Vacation I would HAVE to have promised to my Sweetheart to have given me the grace to begin it in the first place. So?.....True Love or Tarmac? Choices....choices.....choices.....

**Aloha,
-E.T.**

TCA



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The Iditarod Supply Flights

Saturday 3rd of March saw the official start of the 2002 Iditarod race in Alaska. This year there was a total of 64 Mushers race on sled powered by teams of between 16 and 5 dogs, 1151 miles from Anchorage to Nome over some of the most challenging terrain on the planet. Martin Buser crossed the finish line in a record time of just 8 days 22 hours 46 minutes and 2 seconds. The weather has been unusually good this year which many people believe is the reason for the fast race times.

Once again TCA Alaska won the contract to fly the support flights for the Iditarod. Although the race only last about two weeks the support flights start long before and will continue after the last musher has crossed the finish line.

Marvin E. Sandmire AKA Snowboss is the CEO of TCA Alaska and has the Job of scheduling every one of the hundreds of individual Iditarod support flights that have to be flown. He also does a fine job generally organising his small but dedicated roster of pilots.

Flights began way back in January with straw and dog food been flown up from Sioux City and Billings in the North Western United States. These were Long Haul Cargo flights flown in the B767's B757's DC10's, DC8's and B707's. Many Tradewind pilots flew these online using the VATSIM network so that they could chat with one another during the long hours in the cockpit. This stage of the operation took about two-three weeks.

Once all the straw and dog food had arrived in Anchorage The big heavies were put in the Hangers or flown back to their respective bases. The Next stage of the operation was to distribute the supplies to the various checkpoints along the Iditarod trail. Initially the straw and dog food would be flown up to warehouse in McGrath, Galena, Unalakleet and Nome where they would be stored until mid February. The Alaska pilots used the rare TCA Alaska Boeing 737-200QF and the venerable DC3's and DC7's for this job. Many pilots flew these missions through bad weather on VATSIM network where they could trade valuable information on weather and flying conditions in the various parts of Alaska they were flying in.

Around 2 weeks before the race began it was time to start flying the supplies to the various checkpoints along the Iditarod trail. There's a saying that "When the going gets tough the tough get going" and that's certainly true in the case of TCA Alaska. Most of the runways long the Iditarod trail are gravel or oil-treated VFR only affairs for piston or turbo prop bush planes. The terrain is often mountainous and strong winds and unpredictable weather are common place. It's a good idea for TCA Alaska pilots fly as many of these missions so that they can get as much practice as possible before the race begins.



The night before the official start of the Iditarod. A flyin event is organised at Rainbow Lake (the TCA Alaska equivalent of the the Goose Roost) for a meeting to discuss the race support flights and to errrr get drunk.

Once the Iditarod also know as "The Last Great Race on Earth!" is underway the pilots are kept busy flying dogs and mushers who retire or scratch from the race from the race back to civilisation. As well as this vets have to flown around to tend to injured or fatigued dogs and race fans and mushers families have to be shuttled between Anchorage McGrath and Nome.

After the race is over TCA Alaska will perform the Clean-up operation which involves flying bags of trash out of every checkpoint.

Flying the Iditarod supply flights is a challenging experience where even the most seasoned TCA or TDM pilots can push themselves to the limits and learn new tricks. There is always a warm welcome at TCA Alaska so I would have to recommend a trip up there to any Tradewind Pilot.



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The Nest

News From Tradewinds Domestic Seaplane Service

By Kyle Ramsey

What happened to the FS98 Seaplane routes?"

This simple question, one among many that appear on the TCA mail list from time to time, sparked a quick discussion and a call to arms. It was quickly discovered that many older pilots had quite an affection for that old route through Central America. It was one of this reporter's first flights with TDM, in the old Grumman Goose, Hemisphere Dancer.

When FS2000 came its water areas were just as hard as the land and were wholly unsatisfying, and we saw a drop in the number of seaplanes and amphibians being built. When FS2002 came out, the water world had changed dramatically, enabling for the first time realistic float planes. The new version came with a Cessna Caravan on floats and pretty decent instructions on the subtleties of flying floats.

Well, what happened to the FS98 seaplane routes were really nothing, they were still out there. But the discussion sparked some of the boys to get together and begin to ask if it was time to put a really nice seaplane service together using this new capability. Soon it began to come together.

The group is lead by none other than the SeaBear himself, Lawrence "Oso" Clark. Terry Tyler, Rob Abernathy, and this reporter turned to making scenery and routes, and new paint jobs for seaplanes ordered by Jack Ford in the hanger department. Also lending a hand has been Han Tilroe, Capt Dave, and a couple of the other folks checking our accuracy and providing advice (sorry if I missed you, you are important!).

It will take a while to cover to whole Caribbean, so we have started in the northern area of Florida and the Bahamas with Terry Tyler making those routes and accenting them with FSSE scenery; he has several dozen done at this point. Rob Abernathy is busy in the Leeward Islands, has made several sceneries for that area and a couple of routes he had designed. This Reporter has chosen to start on the big islands; PR, Dominican Republic, Haiti,

Jamaica, Cuba, and the Caymans.

We have chosen San Juan Harbor as our final home base, and Kyle has built a harbor home for us, with three large concrete docks and maintenance facilities nestled in the Old San Juan Harbor west of the international airport. In the meantime, Rob will release a scenery for MYPI, which will be the temporary base of operations while most of the activity is focused on the northern area in our formative stages.

We have published nine routes already and expect to have more coming each week as the route and scenery designers move forward. We expect to hear soon from the hanger crew on the delivery schedules of our airplanes in among the others they are busy working on right now. A web page is also in the making (are you anybody anymore if you don't have a web page?) which will have the routes and sceneries, and the aircraft will be available through the TCA hanger.

If you are interested in scenery building, route building, aircraft building, or just want to play in the water with the best prop pilots in the Caribbean, please drop Oso or Terry a note and sign up today! All hours are applied toward your TCA hours as TDS is a division of TDM.

Let's Get Wet!



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We have PIREPS

Pilot_Name = Angel Castillo

Pilot_No = 2845

Flight_No = charter

IFR = X

Date_flight = March 10 2002

Plane_Type = TCA Lockheed L-100-20

Dep_Apt = Kabul

Arr_Apt = Toronto Pearson Intl, Canada

Time_flight = 27:14

Comments = Finally back in Canada. Flight manifest indicates 70 passengers (30 from Kandahar and 40 from Kabul) and some of their equipment that is no longer needed in Afghanistan. Flight was delayed for 2 days due to bad weather. We took off in something they call here good weather which I'm not sure I would call it the same way, but hey we are used to Caribbean weather I guess. Had a layover at Istanbul Turkey cause we landed late at night after a normal night takeoff from Kabul. The next day we took off for Iceland to land there and make a quick refuel and leg-stretching before finally taking off for Canada. It's nice to hear the pax cheer once we touched down in Toronto. We had planned to turn the plane around quickly to take it back to TCA Headquarters but Canadian Armed forces wanted us to stay here a bit to congratulate us on our quick help and "expert flying in difficult conditions" they say. So how could we say no to 5-star hotel rooms, free real meals and tours around this historic city after being over such a damaged place as Afghanistan. I feel sorry for them and I hope they get their country up and running soon. So tell Susannah we'll be back in HQ in a couple of days once the hangover is gone :-)



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VATCAR Opening Fly-in

VATCAR the FIR covering online pilots and air traffic controllers held it's first official Fly-in event on 16th March. The event was eagerly anticipated by many people and organisations and took months of planning. As the event drew nearer everybody associated with VATCAR became apprehensive, would many pilots turn up? If they did would VATCAR be able to cope with the extremely high volumes of Air Traffic? Many people clubbed together to help in what ever way they could, be it training new controllers or simply publicising or advertising the event throughout the Flight-Sim community.

At 20:00zulu (GMT) people began to log on to the VATSIM servers. Very soon there were hundreds of pilots and controllers online busy calling out clearance, taxi instructions and getting planes up in the air. British Airways virtual alone had over sixty pilots attending the event. Things began to get very busy, an air traffic controller at event of this size expects a hectic experience but things were about to become even more hectic. The VATSIM organisation runs through a network of 13 servers dotted around the globe, unfortunately because of the very high volumes of traffic many of the servers began to slow-down, overload, and generally not communicate with one another. This made the controllers' jobs even more difficult. One controller who is also a TCA member, Romulo Rodriguez wrote about he's experience as a controller at the event:

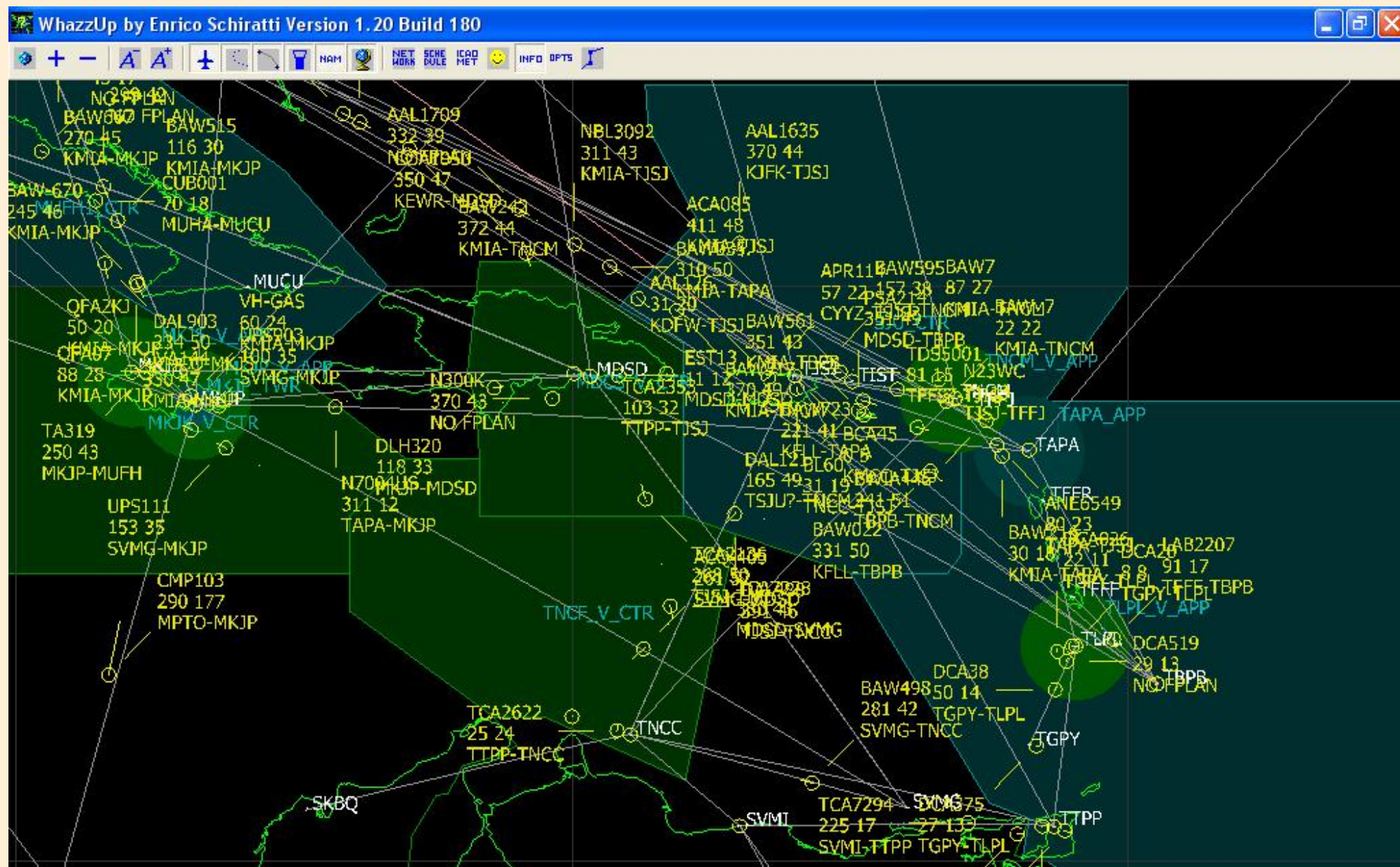
"I started the flyin as Maiquetia Approach (SVMI_APP) but after some thirty minutes in Maiquetia with light traffic I got a message from Jesus Betancourt asking me to switch to TNCF_CTR (Curacao Center). Jesus told me that the controller there had a problem with his DSL connection so he urgently needed someone there. So I closed SVMI_APP handing all traffic off to Maiquetia Center (SVZM_CTR) and reset Procontroller for Curacao. I had to open the Curacao FIR webpage study the charts for a while and set my RW to a new frequency. I used vitez.net as RW server."

"And then I started to have problems. The lag made all traffic to disappear from time to time making very difficult to provide a good ATC service. At a moment I saw 480 connections in the VATSIM network, and according to Jesus more than 200 were in the Caribbean. I also read the notice in the Vatsim web page were they were advising of the

problems we were experiencing with the network. For example I saw a couple of airplanes crossing my airspace but it was impossible for me to contact them. The I saw Chris and he reported that I was not listed in the ATC display. He was connected to the OZPACK server, I was using USA-E. The communications between the servers was causing a lot of problems. I could see pilots connected to Europe-C but couldn't communicate with them."

"Well apart from the glitches I think we all had a good time, unfortunately I had to leave around 0000Z, but I am sure a lot of other controllers and pilots continued to have fun for some more hours."

To illustrate just how busy the event was VATCAR president and TCA Board member Jose Gonzalez sent the screen shot below into the Island Breezes office.





The peak of the action at TJSJ_CTR

The TCA presence was relatively strong at the fly-in. Many TCA members were fundamental in the organising and managing the event. There were also many TCA members manning the control towers throughout the Caribbean special thanks go out to them. And last but certainly not least we'd like to thank on behalf of the management the TCA pilots who took part in the event, for many of them this was their first fly-in!!

Well Done!!!

TCA



March 2002

Island Breezes

A newsletter for the employees of Tradewind Caribbean Airlines



Alt Air

- 8 -

Isla Mona

Boarding the ferry at Cruz Bay for Charlotte Amalie in the dark, Nick settled into a seat after tucking his flight bag under the bench. It was a short 40-minute ride through the cool morning air to the dock in St Thomas where Nick climbed out of the boat and walked the 10 minutes to the office Tradewinds used on King airport. He saw the Shorts sitting on the ramp and figured that would be his ride today.

Andy had briefed him the previous evening between the stitches Art Hudson was working into his scalp after plowing into the chairs and cutting his head. He was to take the Shorts over to St Croix where he was to pick up a load of furniture and then fly it to the Boss's retreat on Isla Mona then zip back home. It always sounds seductively easy.

Nick liked going to Isla Mona and had been there a couple of times before. The Boss, Andre Diess always put him at ease and made him feel welcome there and the otherwise uninhabited island could be explored for petroglyphs and pictographs left by Pre-Colombian Taino Indians that reminded him of the same type of art in his native New Mexico.

He walked into the operations office and saw Billy Maxwell sweeping the floor and Johann Andersen sitting at the dispatch desk.

"Good morning, Nick, what are you doing this morning?"

"I'm flying for Andy this morning, Johann, is everything ready to go?"

"Sure, I hope Andy is alright."

"Yeah, just a bit of a headache this morning. I said I'd take the flight. It's the Shorts, right?"

"Oh yes, and she's all gassed up for you."

Billy stood upright with both hands on the broom. "And I cleaned the windshield and swept out the cargo area, Nick, and there's fresh coffee in the galley."

"Thanks Billy, you do the extra stuff well."

Nick poured himself a cup of coffee from the FBO's pot and went to the pilot's briefing room in the back to start his preflight work. He needed to be at St Croix's Henry Rohlsen Airport by 0730 to meet a delivery truck full of school furniture made by a carpenter in St Croix. He was also taking a couple of assemblers with him from there to Isla Mona along the southern coast of Puerto Rico. Nick figured this was part of one of the Boss's projects, and he had heard a school and dormitory for orphans had been built on the east end of the island since he was last there. St Croix was only 10 minutes away, heck the pattern would take more time to fly than to get there from King, and Isla Mona was another 55 minutes further. The weather looked good with light clouds and a light breeze, with a possibility of some light rain to the southwest of Puerto Rico, no big deal.

He finished his flight plan and called it into the local Air Traffic Center, then pre-flighted the aircraft as the sun began to break to the east over the low mountainous terrain of St Thomas. He had the engines turning and Billy directing him out of parking just before 0700 and he taxied to Runway 10 behind a Cessna Citation. He took position on the runway after the Citation departed and called for take off. The tower held him while a Coast Guard HH-60J took off to the west across the airfield, and then he was released. The boxy Shorts are a good flyer and he was quickly heading direct to St Croix with its low mountains looming into view through the morning haze.

Turning right around the west end of the island, he set up for a left base to Runway 09 at Rohlsen, then turned final to a nice tire-chirping landing and taxied to the transit ramp. He was 10 minutes early.

A large truck pulled onto the ramp and behind the Shorts as Nick climbed out of the cockpit and walked back into the cargo hold and opened the ramp. Two men were walking the truck backward toward the open ramp, the one on the left holding up a hand to stop the driver. Nick saw another car also approaching and five men emerging with metal briefcases. One of the men approached Nick.

"Hello, sir, I'm Conrad, you are here for Herr Diess' shipment, no?"

"Yes, sir, I am. Nick Collins." He said extending his hand.

Conrad turned to the other men, "OK, lads, load it carefully, and follow this man's instructions."

Nick gave a few quick instructions to the men and they began loading the various boxes. Conrad fussed over the handling of the boxes.

"So what kind of furniture is this we're carrying?"

"If it were mere furniture, sir, I would not be having a coronary as these workers treat it like sacks of potatoes. No sir, these were made in my shop, by my hands. I used mahogany and various other woods from around the islands here to achieve the subtlety different shades for each piece."

"Mahogany? For children's school desk's?"

"Yes, and I have also built for Herr Diess a new desk for his study. I made him a good deal for giving me the school desk business. And I made two other desks for his teachers as well as a few filing cabinets and bookshelves."

"All out of mahogany?"

"Yes, it was a good choice for him to make. Strong grain and deep color. It will last for years."

Nick shook his head and went to strapping the boxes to the deck. Conrad ensured each box was accounted for, then motioned to the men with silver briefcases toward the airplane.

"These are my assembly crew, they will accompany the furniture to Isla Mona and you will return them here this afternoon when the job is complete."

"OK, gotcha. You guys can find seats up toward the front. Get settled in and we'll be going soon."

Nick checked the manifest Conrad had been working on, ran a quick weight and balance calculation, then looked at Conrad and smiled.

"I'll get your goods to Mona safely, and get your crew home in time for dinner. Got to run." He said, shaking Conrad's hand.

"Please do be careful, no turbulence!"

"Yeah, right, I'll specifically request that from the weather forecaster."

Nick raised the ramp and made sure its locks were secure, then walked up to the front where the five men were sitting.

"Hello, gentlemen, I am Nick Collins, your pilot today. We will be flying along the southern coast of Puerto Rico and over to Isla Mona, a flight of about an hour at an altitude of 6500 feet. I see everyone has figured out the seatbelts, just remember you have to unlatch it to get out of the seat. I recommend you keep it fastened when you are in your seat in case we hit some bumps, and anytime this light is illuminated. And no smoking on my airplane at anytime. If I smell smoke, we're going down quickly and you won't have to worry about the FAA getting you because I will. For emergency exits, there are two up front over there and there is one near the ramp at the rear. Any questions?"

"Yes, will you be back to serve champagne breakfast after we take off?"

"I'm afraid we don't have that on this flight, but I might be able to find you a warm beer or something stashed in the wheel well," Nick said with a smile. "There is coffee in that container there near the cockpit door, feel free to grab a cup if you want it after we level off."

Nick climbed into the cockpit and started the aircraft's twin turboprops, taxied out and took off, turning right after

about 1000 feet and tuning the Ponce VOR along the southern coast of Puerto Rico, about half way along the island.

Fifteen minutes into the flight the island of Vieques appeared off the right side as Nick called San Juan Center. After several attempts to raise Center, he switched over to the number two comm radio. ,P. "San Juan Center, Tradewinds 016, do you copy/"

"Tradewinds 016, roger, have you five-by."

Well, number one comm is on the fritiz, what a pain.

"Roger, Center, we're a Shorts at 6500 feet, just southeast of Vieques, request flight following."

"Tradewinds 016, squawk 0241"

"0241 for 016."

"Tradewinds 016, radar contact, traffic is an Air Force C-17 on approach to Roosevelt Roads, 5000 feet, six miles at your 11 o'clock."

Nick strained to see, and then he saw the huge cargo airplane in front.

"Tradewinds 016 has the C-17."

He watched as the gray aircraft got larger. He knew they were a good two or three miles apart as they came abreast of each other, but it was still a monster. He'd have to find some of those C-17 drivers in the bar in San Juan sometime and ask how it is to fly such a big airplane.

Center made two more call outs as they proceeded along the southern shoreline of Puerto Rico, with the low mountains rising gracefully from the flat plains along the coast. They passed the Ponce VOR and soon after that the southwestern tip of Puerto Rico.

"Center, Tradewinds 160, request."

"Go ahead 016."

"Roger, sir, I'd like to cancel flight following, we're letting down at Isla Mona now."

"Isla Mona? Is there an airstrip there?"

"They call it an airstrip sir, I'm just a pilot, not a civil engineer."

"Roger, 016, radar contact terminated, squawk 1200, have a nice day, and be careful out there."

"1200, thanks, Center."

Nick flipped the seatbelt light on and off three times, leaving it on, then ringing the bell three times. He started through the descent checklist then pulled the throttles back and let the aircraft's nose dip into a nice glide as the island came into view ahead of them.

The airstrip was really just a long narrow clearing where there are less rocks and soft sand than in other places. It was about 3000 feet long and located on the western end of the island, only a short distance from the Boss's compound. Nick brought the Shorts down to 600 feet and took up a right downwind approach to the east-west runway, scanning for anything especially exciting left on the runway. The compound where the Boss lived with his support staff comprised several smaller cottages around a larger main house, and a long building containing the Boss's offices and a conference room, all surrounded by a wall.

Banking the aircraft on the base leg, he dropped the flaps and rolled out, looking for the runway, then turned final. He flared over the end of the runway and landed in a dust storm flying up from the wheels and props. Nick threw the props into reverse and stood on the brakes, bringing the aircraft to a quick stop, then he taxied to the end and parked off the side of the runway. Already he could see two trucks and an open roof Jeep headed in their direction. His passengers were out of their seats when Nick walked back to lower the ramp.

"Hope everything went OK for you gentlemen?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, it was too short. George over there has too much of my money."

"There's the trip back this afternoon, amigo. Revenge shall be yours."

George's antagonist smiled big and raised his palm for a high five, "You got that right man, I'll get you going home, George."

Teams of men streamed into the aircraft's cargo area and emptied the boxes into the back of the trucks in less than 15 minutes. The trucks loaded with crates, boxes, and the workmen began to drive away. Nick walked off the ramp, thinking maybe go over to the main house kitchen and grab something to eat.

A sandy haired man stepped out of the jeep, "Andy?"

"No, Andy didn't make it. I'm Nick Collins."

"Oh, I see. I was expecting Andy. Anyway, you are to come with me to the main house. Hop in, Nick."

Nick held onto the window frame of the jeep as they bounced along the rough road toward the compound. There wasn't any pavement anywhere on the island, and the roads aren't very well maintained. The Boss was having construction work in a couple of locations on Mona, so these roads had been smoothed a little, although not enough for Nick to release his grip for fear of being bounced out of the jeep.

Within ten minutes the Boss's compound came into view, a low stucco wall around the five acres the group of buildings occupied. The dirt road led to a wrought iron gate that entered the compound grounds. One of the trucks from the airstrip was already inside the compound walls, backed up to the main house and unloading some of the crates and boxes into the house. As they pulled up, the truck's driver was closing the rear doors. Two of Nick's

passengers were walking inside to start assembling the furniture.

The jeep's driver brought the vehicle to a quick and dusty stop, then hopped out of his seat and looked over at Nick.

"That's it for now, I guess. You can just hang around here until its time to go back to the airstrip. What time are you expecting to depart?"

"These guys say they will be ready to go by 3 p.m. at the latest. Are you my ride back?"

"Yes, I'll be here at 2 p.m., how's that?"

"Sounds good to me. I'd like to explore things a bit, is there a truck or something I can use?"

"I'll leave the keys in the jeep here, take it if you like."

"Great, thanks, I want to go check out the petroglyphs in some of the caves."

"Ah, yes, they are very interesting, enjoy!"

The driver spun around and shot into the main house. Nick followed him at a slower pace. Walking into the large foyer, he saw the assembly crew already laying out large pieces of the desk in the office to the left. Ahead he knew was the kitchen and with any luck Juanita, the best cook in Puerto Rico.

He pushed the swinging door to the kitchen open and Juanita was scolding a young man in Spanish. He looked very uncomfortable as she wagged her finger at him. She stopped when she heard Nick enter the kitchen.

"Senior Nick, want a pleasant surprise! I was expecting to see Andy today."

Nick walked over and gave her a big hug. The young man took the opportunity to slide quickly out the back door while Juanita was distracted.

"Como esta, Juanita, you look good. They don't let me take these milk runs much, but Andy got hurt last night so I took his run today."

"Oh, I hope Andy will be alright. He's a good boy, a little young yet, but he'll make Senior Andre a good pilot. Have you eaten lately? Oy, Nick, you TDM pilots get to looking so lean, is Art's cooking getting that bad at the Roost?"

"Andy will live, but his head will hurt for a bit. Art grounded him for a couple of day. And his cooking is, as always, terrible, but he's got Sam, so I think we'll survive it. Plus we get to eat all that exotic food from all these islands."

"You get to eat all the junk food at the airport vending machines and dirty diners, no?"

"Yeah, I guess we do. I am hungry, what have you got?"

"For you today, I make an omelet, a western omelet you call them, right? And I'll get fresh eggs."

"Yes, they are very good, thank you."

Juanita walked over to the back door, whipped it open, and bellowed something in Spanish to whoever was outside. A few minutes later a young man, the earlier subject of her scolding, appeared with a handful of eggs.

"Bueno, Marco, now please get back to scrubbing that grill for Senior Andre's party tomorrow night. Spotless, Marco."

"Si, si, Juanita, very clean," and he disappeared after laying the eggs on the island counter in the middle of the kitchen.

Juanita drew a few packages out of the refrigerator and laid them next to the eggs.

"So what's been up, Nick? How's it been going for you, tell me."

She pulled a bowl and a pan from a cabinet underneath the island, setting the pan on the stovetop.

"Well, not much. I did a long ferry flight with Aaron Garcia and John Bakker from Florida to Tijuana, got to see Guadalajara and Cabo San Lucas on that trip. Nice."

She broke the eggs into the bowl, added a bit of milk, and began to whip them with a beater.

"Aaron Garcia, he is muy handsome, I like him. He's here right now, you know?"

"No, I didn't know that, yeah, he's alright."

"I met a woman in Cabo"

"A woman! For you? Muy bien, Nick, you need a woman."

"I said I met one, not that I have one. We did exchange information, and I got a postcard from her."

Juanita stopped whipping and looked at Nick with a small smile.

"A postcard? Si, you have a woman, I will bet on it."

"I can only hope, Juanita. She was really nice, and very pretty. It's been a while since I've had a steady girlfriend, though. I wasn't real good at relationships, have one bad marriage already. My first wife said I was damaged goods, so I worry about that."

"You are a good man, don't listen to an angry woman on that, Nick. You should go after this girl. Tell me about her."

Juanita poured the whipped eggs into the pan and it began to sizzle. She sprinkled cheese, ham, onions, and peppers across the surface of the cooking eggs. Nick breathed in the smell.

"Well, I don't really know much. She looks to be in her later thirty's, she's a travel magazine writer from Texas, and she felt really good when I hugged her goodnight that last time I saw her in Cabo. I guess I need to write her back"

Juanita folded the eggs over on top of itself.

"Si, don't you waste anymore time, you send her a note or maybe she disappear and you never see her again."

She reached up into a cabinet and took out a plate, sliding the cooked omelet onto the plate, then placed it on the island counter in front of a stool. Nick sat down in front of the plate while Juanita poured two cups of coffee. She then went to a small desk in one corner and came back with some paper, envelopes, and a pen, then she sat down next to Nick, poured some sugar from the container into her cup and arraigned the paper and envelopes.

"First you eat. Then you write. You got no where to go for a while."

"I was planning to go explore some caves on Mona."

"Explore later. This island has been here for thousands of years, this girl you gonna lose if you don't write her back."

"OK, Juanita, you are the wise one."

Nick lifted the fork, sawed off a corner of the omelet, the juice and cheese flowing out the wounded side, and shoveled it into his mouth. Juanita was the best cook. He raised the coffee and drank, that was good coffee too. Juanita sat there, smiling as Nick quickly gobbled the whole plate down.

She slid the paper over to Nick.

"Now, you write. If you get stuck, old Juanita will tell you want to say, you don't worry."

Nick saw she wasn't about to let him off, so he dragged the paper over in front of him and picked up the pen.

Dear Amanda,

I got your postcard when I got back from the trip. It was a pleasant surprise.

The rest of that trip wasn't too bad. We got the Antonov to Tijuana on time and we caught a flight back that night to Miami. I split up from Aaron and John there, and ended up flying the next day out of Opa Locka Airport to cover for a pilot who was out. That was a small adventure, some nice flying over the Florida Keys and over the Bahaman Banks, then Nassau. Carried a nice young couple that got into a fight, ended up carrying the woman around with me until she got ready to go back and make it work. Nice couple, I hope it worked out for them.

I also met a nice old guy out on Cay Sol, lonely fellow who is the keeper. He needed some new books so I had to

run to a bookstore in Miami and grab them between turns at Opa. It was quite an adventure.

"You gonna tell her about your run in with Bahama Bob's guy?"

"Now Juanita, I can't believe you know about that. What's the big deal? Airplane On Time, alert the media!"

"That story got around quick, mostly through Bob's guys, they were pretty angry about that one. They see you as a real threat, I guess. You fly mostly to the east and south, so I guess you don't see Bob's boys much, but they are a fierce competitor over near the US, and you peed in their cereal the other day. I heard jokes are still going on at locations throughout South Florida every time one of those guys picks up a load. The dispatcher will say, 'Oh, hello Nick, you here to steal another load from Bahama Bob?'. Probably starting to wear on them, no?"

"All I did was fly my route, like I was suppose to, Bahama Bob can just take a really big get-over-it pill."

There was one other little incident that appears to have taken on legend status, although I am perplexed as to why. I guess the regular pilot had a habit of being late, and another freight company, run by a crook named Bahama Bob, usually picks up TDM's load at Nassau because he's always late. I was able to push it and I got there with only minutes to spare, but I didn't know the other guy was there already. It was a little uncomfortable, the other guy had to walk away with no load and I got it myself. I hear Bob's guys are really mad about it, but I don't really understand why.

"You gonna tell her about the beach party. I haven't heard any juicy details yet myself, so go ahead."

"Dang, Juanita, is there anything that happens in the Caribbean Basin that you don't know about?"

"Very little, now write."

I got back to St John early and had to get a sound system set up for a beach party last night. It was pretty fun, I guess. I didn't get too drunk, and one guy got hurt, so I took his flight this morning and am sitting right now with the best cook around on Isla Mona, writing this note."

"Oh no, take that out, no woman wants to know a letter from her guy was looked over by another woman."

Nick picked up a new piece of paper and looked at Juanita with an impatient look.

"Is this my letter or yours?"

"Quiet, boy, and write, Juanita knows what she is doing. You, you are hopeless and need much help. Write."

He rewrote the letter down to the last sentence.

I am sitting at Isla Mona now, writing this letter. It's a nice, quiet island and Andre Diess is really putting some time and money into it. Today's run was furniture for his study and some school desks for an orphanage he is building on the island. I'll be headed back home this afternoon after taking the assembly crew back to St Croix.

"Why are you stopping?"

"I can't think of anything else to write, I guess I'll close."

"Not to worry, Juanita is here for you, pick up that pen."

I really enjoyed our time together in Cabo, it was one of the most wonderful evenings I've spent in a long time. I think of you often and can't wait to see you again soon. Please write or call soon so we can find another time to get together. I felt a good chemistry between us and want to see if you felt the same thing.

"Isn't this a bit over the top? I don't talk like that."

"Which is why you are a lonely man. If you don't want to be lonely forever, write."

I should be near St John for the next week or so, flying local routes, so I really look forward to hearing from you soon.

- Nick

Juanita picked up the letter and read it over again. Then, satisfied, she folded it twice long-ways, and placed it in an envelope, and handed it to Nick. He wrote the address on it from the card in his wallet.

"OK, give it to me and I'll put it in the mailbag. You will be taking the mail bag back today."

You're a good man, Nick. I hope this girl turns out to be a good one for you, she sounds very nice.

Nick looked at his watch. He had still two or three hours before it would be time to go back.

"Juanita, thanks so much for everything. You're a great cook and a great person. If the Boss ever kicks you out, you are welcome at the Roost anytime. I'm going to go check out the caves."

Juanita gave him another big hug and started to clean up the kitchen.

"OK, Nick, you be careful. I'll see you next time, but you send me a note and tell me about your woman."

"I will, I promise, thanks again."

Nick walked back outside through the foyer. The desk was getting close to assembly completion.

He went outside into the warm sunlight and fixed his sunglasses on his face, then walked over to the Jeep and hoped in, turning the key over and putting it in gear. Off he went, just to explore the small island.

Over the next few hours, he drove to many part of the island. Barren of trees, cut to fuel the guano kilns, the Boss had brought in the few trees and placed them around the compound. Otherwise it was a rough rocky island. He found a couple of the caves and climbed inside where he found both Pre-Columbian and more modern petroglyphs

left by Spaniards, the guano harvesters, and even more modern day explorers. Petroglyphs are rock carvings left by past civilizations, and are found the world over. Nick's native New Mexico had lots of them, and it wasn't uncommon to find a cluster of them while hiking in the mountains. They were thought to be sites of religious activity, or maybe just story telling. Nick believed the latter model himself.

He noticed the time getting later, and he was hungry again, so he decided to head back toward the compound. The drive back was slow going over roads that were almost not there, the dust blowing up into his face.

Nick parked the Jeep back at the compound where he had picked it up earlier, then went inside. The desk was now finished, and sat in the office off the foyer. It looked splendid and very polished, with different color woods used to inlay the TCA logo right in the middle of the desk, all buried under many coats of clear polyethylene. Quite a piece of work. Nick headed for the kitchen to see if he could get a late lunch. He heard laughter coming from the other side of the door as he pushed through. On the other side was Andre Diess, Aaron Garcia, Juanita, and another man Nick did not know, all standing around drinking coffee and having a small piece of cake. Nick stopped and let the door swing closed behind him, feeling like he had intruded on something.

"Ah, Nick Collins, I heard you flew in this morning with my furniture, how nice to see you."

Nick reached out to return the handshake.

"Very nice to see you too Boss, you have a great place here on Mona."

"I like it more each day, and with additions like my new desk, I just want to stay here more and work less."

"But work we have to do, "said Aaron, extending his hand to Nick, "I see you made it home successfully, and heard you busted up Andy in the process."

"Hello Aaron, Andy busted himself up, but we'll take care of him, thanks for caring."

"Now boys," Andre looked to the other man, "Nick, I'd like you to meet the latest member of my management team, Johnny Issacs. Johnny, this is Nick Collins, probably the best prop pilot in the Caribbean, and he works for you."

"Nice to meet you, Nick, I look forward to working with you and the other Mailservice pilots to build a great organization."

"It is already a great organization, or I would have split already, but nice to meet you the same."

"Well, I have some ideas on ways to increase the per hour pilot profitability and find ways to increase the revenue of some of the bigger routes and maybe look to drop some of the less profitable ones. Also we can bring in some instructors to teach you guys how to squeeze fuel out of these airplanes"

"You realize some of those low profit routes are the only link with the outside world some of these villages we fly to have, so dropping them because we're not cleaning their pockets out each time they get on board a TDM aircraft doesn't strike me as a good thing. And I'm dying to meet who you'll bring in to teach me about squeezing mileage out of an airplane."

"Ah yes, Nick is right, of course, we are much more than profits, Johnny. And Nick, Johnny comes to us with a lot of very good management experience with major airlines, and I think he is the man to lead TDM into the next phase."

"Oh, I didn't realize we were in a phase that required changing, I guess."

"The world changes every day, Nick, and we must change with it or we will die. I think it was your countryman, Will Rogers, yes. He said, 'Even if you're on the right track, if you just sit there, you'll get run over'. Our airline is growing all over the world, but our power base and our core is still inside TDM. The Caribbean is our strength and our motherland, we shall always treat her as our number one priority and she shall return the favor with prosperity."

"I guess so, Boss. We had heard we might get a new manager at St John. No offense, Johnny, but it isn't something the folks there are looking forward to, see."

"From what I've heard from Aaron, I can imagine why."

"You can't believe everything Aaron tells you, ya know. TDM has always had a special place in his heart."

"Well, Nick, you and Johnny will have a chance to get to know each other much better later on, he'll be coming to St John in a day or two. First we have more business to do and plans to make."

"And you need to get Conrad's men home," said Aaron, "I see the trucks pulling up out front."

"OK, I wanted to see if I could make a sandwich before I went."

Juanita took the cue, "Oh yes, let's make one real quick, get you on your way."

The men exchanged good-byes and departed the kitchen for the office. Nick and Juanita made a couple of ham sandwiches and she dug a soda out of the fridge for him too and put it all in a small bag.

"Goodbye, Nick, you take care and good flying."

"Thanks for everything, you're the best," he said with a hug.

"If this works out with that woman, you got to remember to bring her by and let me check her out, OK?"

"You got it, Juanita, bye now."

He walked through the foyer and past the office. He could overhear a bit of their conversation.

" will be the best place to put the main base, but it will be a while before the San Juan Pier will be ready, and the Paradise Island Pier is ready now, so I say we start the seaplane office there and move to Old San Juan when it is done. This way we can start now, get our name out and"

The honking of the horn on the Jeep hurried Nick out the door and into the Jeep, and off they went, slowly down the road toward the airstrip with one truck full of Conrad's crew behind them, the swirling dust getting everywhere.

They arrived back at the airfield and the men unloaded their tool boxes and stowed them on the Shorts while Nick gave it a walk around, looking for any birds who thought this looked like a nice new home for them. Within ten minutes he had the engines running and began taxiing to the end of the runway. He swung the Shorts into alignment, finished the take off checklist, stood on the brakes, then shoved the throttle forward as the aircraft strained against the brakes. As the props reached full RPM, he released the brakes and the aircraft lurched forward, sprinting down the bumpy runway, lept into the air, then Nick flattened out the climb to build speed and he climbed to 5500 feet for the return trip.

The sun was behind them and casting its afternoon light through the few clouds and against the mountains of Puerto Rico. Nick never got tired of the beauty of the Caribbean; how God had shaped this most wonderful of lands, He kept warm winds and clean rain around them too. This had to be the one place on Earth God made for himself, and a lucky few like himself that had the pleasure of sharing His most perfect work. And he got paid for this, go figure.

He reached over and grabbed a CD out of his flight bag, Pink Floyd. He popped it into the CD player as "Learning to Fly" started up.

*Above the planet on a wing and a prayer,
My grubby halo, a vapour trail in the empty air,
Across the clouds I see my shadow fly
Out of the corner of my watering eye
A dream unthreatened by the morning light
Could blow this soul right through the roof of the night*

*There's no sensation to compare with this
Suspended animation, A state of bliss
Can't keep my eyes from the circling skies
Tongue-tied and twisted just an earth-bound misfit, I*

They landed at St Croix about 55 minutes after departing Mona, and Conrad was there to greet them. He rushed up to the head of his assembly crew.

"Roger, I got a call from Herr Diess, and he was very happy with the work we did. Thank you, I worried all day long."

He turned to Nick.

"And thank you too, it seems everything has turned out alright."

As the men got off the airplane Nick noticed the man who had earlier lost money to one of his mates.

"Well, did you do better on the return trip?"

"I suppose so. I only lost \$20 instead of the \$40 I lost on the way over."

"Maybe poker isn't your game. You gentlemen have a great day."

The men trickled away from the Shorts as Nick readied it for the short return flight to St Thomas. He was airborne again in a few minutes and had it back at Charlotte Amalie and in the chocks just before it got dark. He closed up the airplane and dropped the books off in the dispatch office, remembering to gripe the COMM 1 radio for the avionics guys to fix.

Unable to find a ride, he grabbed his flight bag and started walking toward the docks. He didn't see a TDM airplane at the seaplane dock so he walked instead to the ferry and got ready to endure the 45-minute ride.

He thought about Johnny Issacs, and couldn't wait to talk to some of the other guys about their new problem. He also thought about the conversation he overheard. Seaplane piers? TDM had a couple of old seaplanes, but didn't use them commercially. That might be interesting, he thought. He wondered what Art knew about it.

He thought about the letter in the mailbag he had brought back from Mona. He hoped Juanita was right.

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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!

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