



May/June 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! Really!

TDS

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

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! Also visit the "Nest" the official newsletter of TDS.

Terry Tyler
TDS5001

Rest & Relaxation

So you just finished a hard week of pax flights, and mail dumps, and the stress is getting to ya. Is that what's troubling you Bunkie?

Well there is this little program to relax yourself, but still savor the "Joy of Flight". Blns2002.zip is a set of lighter than air hot air balloons, which run in FS2002. You can enjoy the MS scenery, without worrying about schedules, deadlines, and instrument watching.

Take off at dawn and watch the burners lightup the craft as you ascend into the morning sky.



You can find the file at Avsim.com or Flightsim.com.

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 May 2002



Looks as if our revenue is down for all of TCA! Guess we should take our heads out of the Margarita barrel for a few months and start flying again! ;-) I'm guilty of taking time off also, since I have been working on some ideas for the TDS (Tradewind Domestic Seaplane Service) and I've had some contact with factions in the Caribbean for a Covert Ops mission. Plus I've been practicing some aerobatics with several different aircraft. There is a rumor floating around that TCA's "Flying Nightmares" may make a comeback and I want to be ready!



I've seen several posts in recent months on the newsgroup regarding charts and ways to improve skills making flight simming more realistic, especially with on line flight. Since a few of the fellows talked me into giving it a try, I've enjoyed my time with VATSIM and it has motivated me to take my skills a little more seriously. So, here are a few websites which I've found and had dealings with, which offer instruction, charts, and books to increase your piloting skills

Offers "How To" books for simmers: <http://www.topskills.com/flitsim.htm>
(Not free but reasonable. I have one on Navigation and consider it worthwhile)

Charts in Atlas form: <http://desktopwings.com/>

(Great little company! Alfred Poor has provided service to the flight sim community for years offering charting for the whole world)

SimCharts on CD: <http://www.jeppesen.com/wlcs/index.jsp>



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Caribbean Airline News

(From Curacao Amigoe.com, 16 April, 2002)

(Curacao) Pre-flight check KLM started: 42 passengers rejected.

CURAÇAO/SCHIPHOL On the first day of the KLM pre-flight check in 37 passengers at Schiphol and 5 in Curaçao were rejected. Based mostly on the passengers' orderly conduct the authorities advised against allowing them to travel suspecting they could be potential drug smugglers on their return trip. The Dutch airliner is following the advice, "otherwise we would be more or less accessory to the fact". The KLM-press representative Hugo Baas stated this. Based on what the judicial system calls objective criteria, the officers check if passengers fall within an established drugs courier profile. At Hato things did not run smoothly, causing a half hour delay to the flight. "It was the first day so we still have to get used to the new system", explained the region manager Frank van der Laan. KLM delayed check-in of the 66 passengers until the authorities were present to avoid having to re-unload luggage. To avoid problems at the counter the customs officers escorted away the 5 suspects after screening the hand luggage. No problems surfaced at Schiphol. Tomorrow's round trip from Aruba to Curaçao with an evening flight to The Netherlands should certainly be exiting. 350 Passengers will be checked-in at the Hato, of which more drug smugglers are expected. Aruba doesn't participate in the pre-flight-checks. It's an agreement between the Antillean and the Dutch justice department. Van der Laan: "we started with Curaçao. St. Maarten and Bonaire will probably follow soon."

(From RJR Radio Jamaica, 16 April, 2002)

(Jamaica) New Instrument Landing System For Airport.

The Ministry of Transport on Tuesday signed a contract for one million US dollars with Canadian company Intelcan, for a new Instrument Landing System for the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston. The landing system is expected to enhance the navigational capabilities of the island's Air Traffic Controllers and pilots. The contract includes test equipment, training for technicians and the preparation of the site at the airport. Expenditure for the contract will be recovered from navigational fees collected from air operators by the Civil Aviation Authority, CAA. Speaking at the signing ceremony Tuesday morning, Transport Minister Robert

Pickersgill said the contract follows the incident involving an Air Jamaica plane in November 2001. The minister says the system is on schedule for implementation. Aerotel Limited, a subsidiary of the CAA will be the local technical administrator for the project.

(From The Trinidad Express, 16 April, 2002)

(Tobago) London: Tobago Express should cater to needs of Tobagonians.

Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), Orville London, has challenged Tobago Express to work and grow according to the needs of Tobagonians. London spoke at the inauguration of the airline's new Dash 8 Q 300 aircraft at the Crown Point International Airport on Sunday. He directed his comments at BWIA president and CEO Conrad Aleong, who was also present for the event. "Today's exercise is not just about christening a plane, not just about adding new aircraft, it is about attempting to resolve a problem that has plagued Tobagonians for too long," he said. London said that while satisfying the expectations of the Tobago Express shareholders, Tobago Express should also consider that the airbridge was an essential service to Tobagonians. "There is a need for us to ensure that there is a synergy between our vision and the vision of the Tobago Express. So that while satisfying the expectations of the shareholders, we must still be in a position where (Tobago Express) is seen as an essential service, and therefore the decisions taken should reflect that it is critical," said London. "We have reached the point where there are still a number of people who do not even try to get to Tobago at certain times of the year because they don't think that they will be able to get there using the service," he said. Citing a negative perception as a huge challenge for an airport, London encouraged the airline to grow away from the days of the notorious "Shake and Bake" aircraft that characterized inter-island travel of yesteryear. He expressed his confidence in the airline's future, saying that its future would be linked to Tobago's future growth as an island.

(From The Trinidad Guardian, 16 April, 2002)

(Tobago) Crown Point not user friendly says Piggott.

The Crown Point airport terminal is not user friendly and needs to be upgraded, Minister of Works and Transport Arnold Piggott stated yesterday. He based this comment on his observation of the problems affecting the Tobago airport on the weekend. "My recent visit to the Crown Point airport terminal building revealed there is urgent need for some upgrade in the short-term to facilitate greater functionality and to make it user friendly," said Piggott. He addressed this matter during the Association of Caribbean States Transport Committee meeting in Port-of-Spain yesterday. Piggott said the Tobago terminal needs a complete overhaul to ensure efficient usage. Talks were held over the weekend between the Government and the Tobago House of Assembly to address this issue as part of the ongoing efforts to revamp tourism in Tobago. Piggott also spoke of a drain of skilled seamen, many of whom are seeking employment in other countries outside of the Caribbean. "This country can boast of a large cadre of competent seamen," he said. "Unfortunately, their competency has made it all too well recognized in the developed world, resulting in another aspect of the regional brain drain." On a positive note, Piggott disclosed Cabinet had approved proposals for a \$16 million national transportation study on land, sea and air transport. The survey is also aimed at improving this country's road infrastructure so citizens can travel to any point in Trinidad in less than three hours. "Such a study will guide Government's development plans for the country's total transportation needs," said Piggott.



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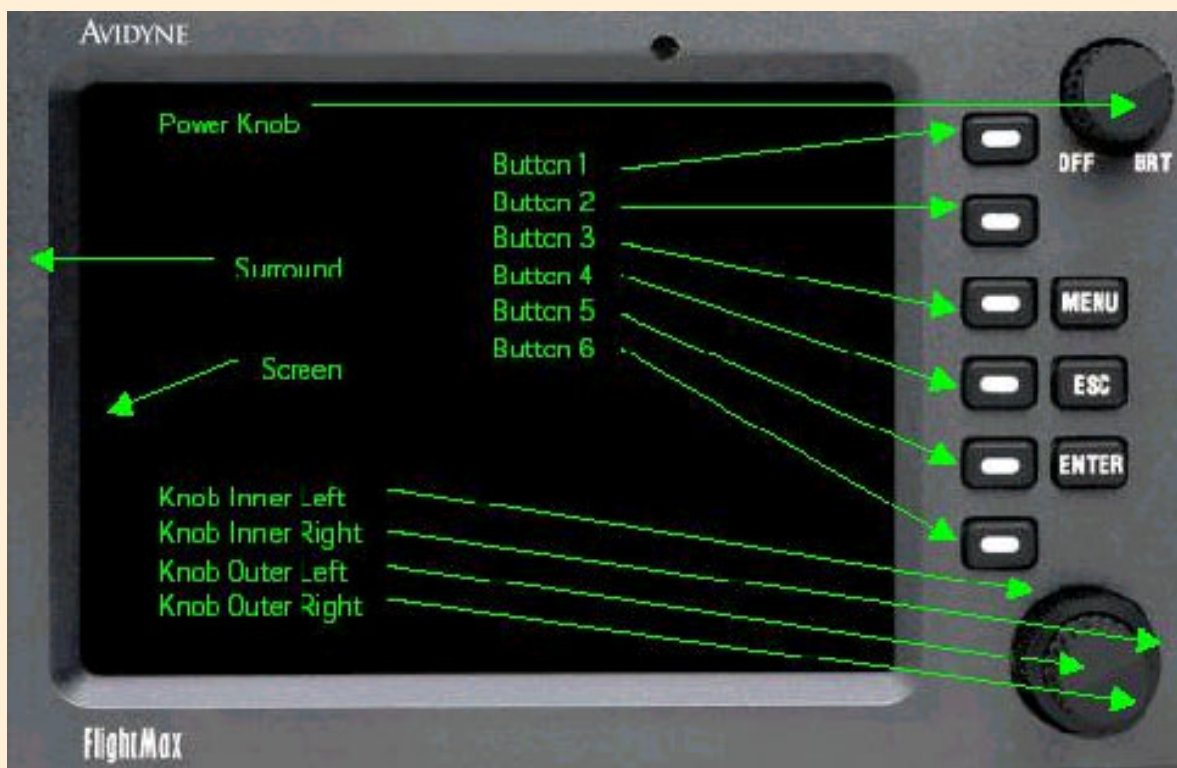


FS FlightMax Review

Every now and again, into our world of Virtual Flight comes an addition to the Basic Flight Simulator program that makes you sit up and take notice. A couple of examples are FSNavigator and Squawkbox/ProController. A short time after their introduction, they became, and still are, powerful and indispensable tools for our hobby.

A few days ago, another tool joined the ranks of "Must Haves" - the "**FSFlightMax**" Flight Management System. Produced by a small dedicated team of enthusiasts way down under in the Land of Oz, SimSystems' "FSFlightMax" is in my humble opinion, the most powerful and fully featured utility of it's kind that I have yet seen. Modelled faithfully on the Avidyne FlightMax 850 - a 'Real-World' FMS, it is at first sight bewildering in the number of User manuals alone, the makers of the 'real thing' having given their permission for the Software engineers in FSFlightMax to include them in the Simulation package. This alone indicates to me that this is a high quality production.

So for those of you who haven't yet seen the object of this review, what does it look like? Here's a screen shot of the Beast asleep.



Basic module before Power Up

Simple - looking, isn't it? Just seven buttons, two knobs and a screen. But all is not as it would seem. The simplest control is the On/Off control knob - does just what it says. After that, things begin to get more interesting - the other, lower, control knob is in fact two knobs in one - an inner and an outer. Hmmm. What next? The three buttons between the control knobs are Menu, Esc and Enter. No surprises there for the crafty PC user! But it's in the clever way these buttons are programmed to work that brings in the remaining six buttons which have no useful legend to tell us what they're used for. This is an Add-on where you have to RTM (Read The Manual) to find out just what can be done with the unit. And there are eight - count 'em, EIGHT user guides, a total of 204 pages of information for you to absorb. Phew!

Fortunately, it's not required to read all before switching the unit on - there's a comprehensive Introduction written by the producers of this unit which will get you up and running, well, trotting anyway!

It's not my intention or desire to give readers a course of instruction in how to use the machine, so if you're interested enough by the end of this review to find out for yourself, go download the Basic package : FSFlightMax10.zip and it's update FSFlightMax11.zip, you'll find them both at <http://www.simsystems.com.au/fsflightmax/>. Since the package is a module and not an Application, it fits in it's own folder within the FS [Modules] folder, and has little or no affect on frame rates whilst Flightsim is in action.

To bring it to life, open the Modules menu in Flightsim and click on FSFlightMax/Show/Hide. Up pops the unit - powered off. Click the left side of the top knob, and the thing starts up by conducting a self-test. When this is finished, click the "Enter" button (remember them?) and away it goes. For first time use, the screen shows very basic information - your aircraft overlaid on a basic map of your location, and surrounded by the Compass rose.



Heading, Compass Rose, Flight Plan route legs, Radar Status and other traffic (small number left of center)

Now the fun begins! Clicking on the "Menu" button brings up a list of desirable facilities - top of the list is the Map itself. This little beauty has 5 options to look at: **Traffic Overlay, Compass Rose, Clear Strikes, Settings** (of which more later), and Help. When selected, Traffic Overlay lets you see other aircraft around you as you fly, whether above, below or grounded, Compass Rose lets you select either the Rose or Arc as directional aid. Clear Strikes does what it says - it clears the history of Lightning Strikes from your Radar, if you have this facet of the program checked "On". Settings has four further menus: Data Blocks, Airport Filter, Nav Map Settings, and our old friend, Help. Briefly, Data Blocks allows the Pilot to see at a glance various aspects of his instrumentation without having to hunt around the panel for them - Time (UTC and LOCAL), Altitude, TAS and Ground Speed, Barometer Pressure, Waypoints (in various flavours; next, last, waypoint and ETE....you get the idea)....each and every in-flight function of the Navigation system can be custom-selected.



Night Lighting, Data block info, Map, Traffic, Weather Radar and Warning at base of screen - aircraft on Ramp At TNCC

Airport Filter enables the Pilot to select just those features of an Airport that he/she wishes to know about with the minimum of searching for it in a manual. Every detail of an Airport can be uploaded from the Internet and stored within the FSFlightMax for later use when required. Nav Map Settings are just that - for instance you can specify whether you wish to have only those Airports which have a Tower, only Runways over a certain length, whether the airport or base has a Water Landing...and so on.

Next up comes **Ground Proximity**.

This speaks for itself - it presents a side on view of your Aircraft's altitude AGL, and a side-on view of the Terrain's ups and downs as you fly over it. I haven't tested this option over mountainous territory yet, as I'm allergic to heights (Yeah, Right!), but one of these days.....

Next on the list we have **Traffic** - which is a simple Toggle (no menus!): However, this is where the lower, outer knob comes to life - you can change the distance from which Traffic in the skies around you can be seen from 5 miles to an incredible 500 miles.

Charts. There's little to say about this option at present, except to say that charts may be purchased separately as needed and uploaded to the unit. There is a demo chart already in place, but unless you're a fanatic about flying small circles over the Island of Guam, it probably won't do a lot for you. The charts currently recommended for use with the FSFM by it's proud parents are produced by AeroPlanner.

This option has the largest sub-menu list of any of the current built in goodies, and allows the Pilot in Command to manipulate any and all charts that may be needed on the flight. I shall say no more.



The included Demo chart of Guam

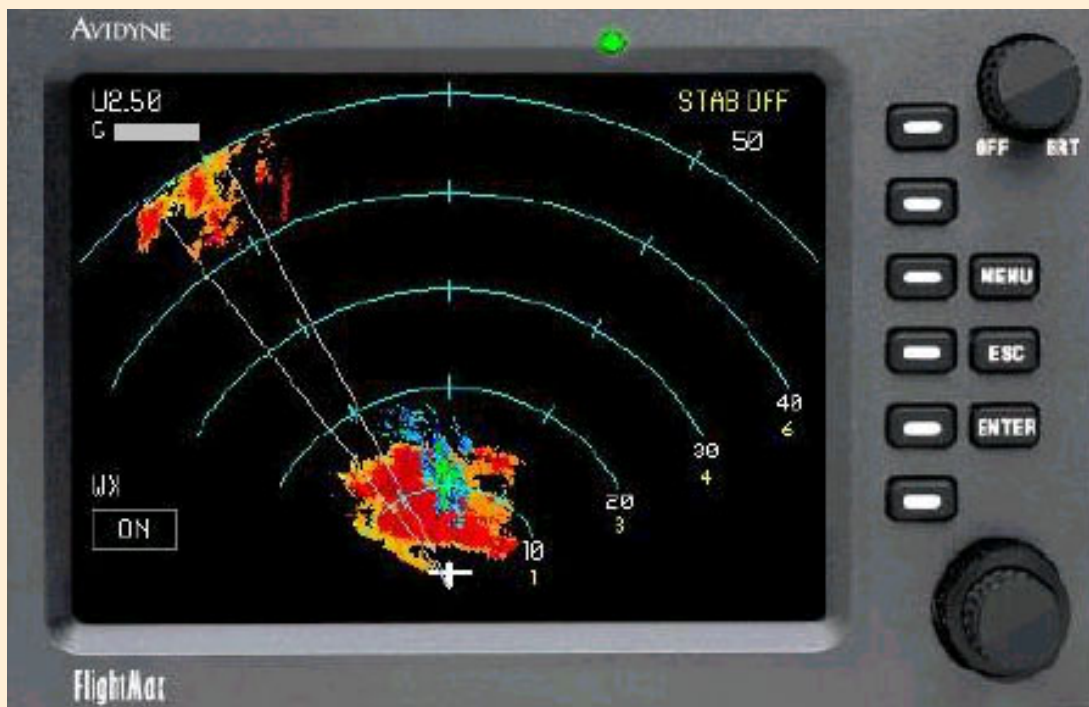
RADAR.

Each of the two sub-menus has (as with every other Main menu) a comprehensive Help Sub-menu. The first Sub-menu (Function) has 2 further sub menus (or should that be sub-sub- menus?), these cover such aspects as Radar on, Test, Standby, Radar Off.

MODE deals with the Weather Radar (Yes Folks, real honest to goodness WORKING Weather radar - not painted into a *.bmp file),

CYCLE: not the two wheeled variety, but allowing the user to cycle between Ground, Air and Lightning radar. Ground Map the radar can be tilted to map ground, low altitude weather, or above the aircraft if you're flight plan calls for a climb through Cloud. You can have a Bearing line superimposed, increase the Gain or decrease it, alter the Beam Width or decrease it, set the Azimuth Lines.....

It's a wonder that anyone will want to leave the ground - there are just so many toys to play with here - and there's more on the way to be added in Updates to the basic (!) program.



The Weather Radar in display mode - note the degree of tilt in upper left corner, and Range

LIGHTNING. We're nearly there now, so bear with me, OK? The Unit that senses and reports Lightning has a multitude of options built into it, Storm Chasers and Mid - Westerners will jes' lurve this unit. Within the menu, you can set/unset such jolly things as Strike flashes, Cell mode, Contour Strikes, maintain a history of your favourite Strikes....and more. I may have seemed tongue-in-cheek with this one, but it adds a new and fresh aspect to flight planning and routing - who in his right mind wants to take a valuable aircraft (and even more valuable paying customers) through a massive and potentially lethal Lightning storm? Well, now you don't, because you can see where the durned things are, and avoid them!

To keep the Module as close visually to the real thing as possible, there is an option labelled **CD Player**, but this is non-functioning - let's face it, if you haven't got a CD or DVD player in your PC's set-up, how the heck did you get Flightsim onto your Hard drive?

Next to last: **System.** Encompasses Module Settings , Datafiles can be loaded with this, and from this menu you can load or unload your Flightplan - when loaded, your route is marked on the Map display with a white line for previous or future legs, while the leg you're currently on is shown in a tasteful magenta.

Finally!

FSFLIGHTMAX This is a very useful menu to find - in it you can reconfigure any Keyboard button(s) to perform functions within the module. As a simple example, instead of having to bring down FlightSim's Task Bar, select Modules, click on FSFlightMax, click on Show/Hide (Four separate functions with the mouse). I have assigned the Shift + Space keys to the job. Hit the two keys - there's the module. Hit 'em again, and it's gone. If it's powered on when you hide it, it continues to function until you need it again. NightLighting is covered here - the Lighting does not currently change automatically from Day to Night and return - this is something that is planned for a future upgrade issue, as is the ability to resize the module according to your likes and dislikes or (in my case and a few others - you know who you are), poor eyesight. Two *.bmp files are part of the package - you get to choose whether you want the smart silver finish or the warm nightlight. It's a simple matter to swap out the file you don't want to use and save it somewhere safe while you go fly with the other decorative effect.

So, that's a run down on the FSFlightMax, in my opinion the most fully featured and valuable addition to my Flight Simulation hobby to come my way in literally a long time. One thing is certain, if the fellers at SimSystems are as good as their words, there will be more options on the way - and did I mention speedy Customer Support? I had a couple of problems in the first day or so, and emailed my grief to them - it's never taken John Hnidec longer than an hour to get back to me with the solution - at one point his Email solving a problem arrived almost before I'd sent my question!

And the payoff if you've read this far (Good Lads!!) is, that he has very kindly offered a discounted price to any and all TCA members - only! If you've downloaded it (Version 1.0 and it's upgrade to version 1.1) and recognise it's value to your flying, contact me and I'll tell you how to go about buying it - but do it soon, before the (discounted) price rises!

Terry Tyler
TCA/TDS#5001

ã T Tyler - May 2002



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TCA Santhana Update

Charter CH#21: Fly Mr. Bibb of Joy Pipe USA to an Oil Rig near Chicago

JoyPipe USA assists oil companies with any of steel pipe requirements worldwide. In addition to supplying new Line Pipe and Oil Country Tubular Goods (OCTG) Joy is also a large supplier of used, structural and limited service pipe. Joy Pipe purchases tubular items worldwide and also purchases pipelines in place that are to be excavated. We would appreciate the opportunity to bid on any used, new surplus and/or limited service pipe that may be available. The most important engineer, Mr. Tom Bibb is spending some free time at the Grand Cayman Island. Unfortunately an oil rig near Chicago reports some structural problems with their pipes. So it's our mission to fly Mr. Bibb as soon as possible to Chicago, where he can arrange the needed action. First there's a flight in our Falcon 50 to Chicago O'Hare. From here our pilots have to use a lend helicopter of our friends at Virtual Coast Guard.



Charter CH#22: Fly the X-Files crew to Area 51

Now, after the final episode of the show, the U.S. government invites the crew of X-Files to a mysterious place: AREA 51. Will this be the answer to Mulder's questions? Their destination is Groom Lake, also known as Area 51, an installation so secret, its existence is denied by the government agencies and contractors that have connections there. By late 1955, the facility had been completed for flight testing of Lockheed's U-2 spyplane. Since that time, Groom Lake has undergone vast expansion, catering to the needs of testing the most advanced aircraft projects in the world. Forty-four years after it was created, Groom Lake has hosted flight testing of the aforementioned Lockheed U-2, the SR-71 Blackbird, the F-117 stealth fighter, Northrop's B-2 stealth bomber, the mysterious Aurora Project, and possibly even alien spacecraft. The trip starts at Vancouver and ends at Area 51.



The charter flights will be available from the 1st of May. In addition there will be a charter flight to the Miller Lite CART race and to the Formula One Races in Austria & Monaco.

At the end of May TCA Santhana will offer charter flights to the Soccer World Cup at Korea...

Greetings,
Thomas Than [#2503]
CEO TCA Santhana, Barbados
<http://www.santhana.org>



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The Nest

News From Tradewinds Domestic Seaplane Service

By Kyle Ramsey



No Runways, No Boundaries, No Restrictions. Seaplane Pilots Begin Flying the Caribbean May 1st!

April has been a tough month for seaplane pilots; lots of work and no airplanes of our own to fly, yet. The Rob has put some finishing touches on the scenery files. Several of the pilots have been flying the routes, looking for errors in flight plans or scenery.

Dave has gotten the web site up and running to provide seaplane pilots their own information source. Here pilots will be able to find links for scenery and flight plans, as well as a route summary. What you see is what we have for

now, but we will be expanding soon. We do hope that what you see will be a delight to the eyes of all VFR pilots out there. Here is the link:

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

The seaplane routes also double as a venue for helicopter pilots as well. The distances for many of the shorter runs are such that helicopter jockeys will find plenty to see and experience using the latest in FS2002 float-equipped helicopters. If you love VFR helicopter flying, this is also the place for you.

Airplanes, yes we have airplanes. Jack Ford and the hanger crew have been busy working on a few versions for us. First out of the hanger was the Bell 47 Float, an easy helicopter to fly and used by the maintenance crews to recover broken airplanes that quit between landmasses. The Chief Pilot of the Seaplane Division (that's you, isn't it?) flies this one as his personal aircraft when the Grease Monkeys don't need it. The detail on this aircraft are unbelievable, just check out the engine, transmission, even watch the pushrods in operation. You can read the data plates.

Next, as a bone to a bunch of undeserving whelps, Jack gave us a wonderful Hughes 500D Float, but only after a pilot who's name shall not be mentioned lest Jack find out sunk the skid version in the bay near Vieques (I guess Jack found out). By the way we are looking for anyone who can get the smell of aplomb out of leather, please contact SeaOso if you know how.

The other airplanes, well, you will have to wait until May 1st like the rest of us. And it is a sad site, seeing such fine pilots mopping around the FBO and docks waiting for a peek at those airplanes. Jack help, they are starting (starting?!?) to look ugly.

Stop by the TCA Hanger after May 1st and see what else Jack and the crew have made for us. You can bet they will all be the same high quality you have come to expect from the TCA Hanger Crew!

And won't you consider flying TDS, the height of VFR Flying in FS2002. Being low never got you so high. If you are interested, please email the SeaOso, his email link is on the TDS web page.

Let's Get Wet!



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Pilot Profile

Terry Tyler
Pilot #:



5001

How long have you been with TCA or TDM?

Errm...about 5 or 6 years I think - it's all going a bit misty now....

I originally joined TMA (Tradewind Mediterranean Airlines), then came THA (the original Tradewind Hellenic Airlines), then into TCA when THA "died" - Passed the flag to Pat Hanna, who is now doing a great job with the new look THA. Then somehow found myself flying floatplanes and drinking Margaritas!

Your current position at TCA?

Horizontal in the High & Dry....no, that was last week.... I'm "On the Board" and Number 2 Skipper for the Seabirds (Tradewind Domestic Seaplane Services) - Soon to go "Official" on May 1st (Insert blatant Commercial for TDS here.....)

Your favorite aircraft to fly?

**Anything small-ish with floats and wheels, one or two fans in front, or the Bell 47G and the Hughes 500D (I enjoy a challenge.....). I also like to see the ground I fly over from close up so that I can pick out the soft spots
- Be Prepared you know!**

Your favorite division to fly with?

It's got to be TDS, followed closely by TDM; the sceneries are outstanding, the Lines are full of interest, and the Float Jockeys are a great bunch of Guys. (That should keep me in Margs and Mysteryburgers for a while.....)

In your opinion, what keeps you flying for TCA?

Insanity.

Oops, no one word answers hey? OK, start again....Basically it's the sense of 'Family' built up over the years. It's very doubtful if I'll ever meet more than 1 or 2 of my TCA friends, but I probably know more about each of you than I do about my next-door neighbour. Sad, isn't it?

Comments:

When I stopped trying to shoot everything out of the skies with "USNavy Fighters" and joined TMA / TCA, I thought.."I'll wait until it gets boring flying civilian aircraft for this VA, then I'll leave.

I'm still waiting.....



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The Flying Nightmares ***By Kyle Ramsey***



The Flying Nightmares, what a silly name, I thought as I logged into TCAVAT for the first time looking, for a couple of other pilots who said they would be there. Well, I guess the name comes from the black paint of the Zlin 145 aerobatic single engine prop we are going to fly.

Heck, the complaints from this bunch had started before the first flight began. The Zlin was too slow, too underpowered, the scenery too plain, the server and hooking up on multiplayer too hard, too many disconnects. Somehow we overcame all that and managed to get four of us on line at the same moment; Brooklyn, Capt Dave, Terry Tyler, and this reporter. I think Brook is in charge, but nobody seemed to listen to him much. This should

have been my first clue.

Brook assembled us on the ramp at Barbados and said, "Let's try a formation take off, you guys line up on the runway in your spots." So we lined up on Runway 09 in our spots and on command, we all went to full throttle.

Now I know why they are called the Flying Nightmares. We were all over the sky, a combination of FS multiplayer hesitations and our fine flying skills. I heard the screams of the women and children in the nearby town, or maybe it was just Terry and Dave in the next airplanes, can't be sure. I doubt it was Brook as the cigar he was chomping never left his mouth. It's a wonder no one traded paint or got a ride to the hospital in the shiny ambulance.

We quickly discovered tight formation flying will be tough in a connected world as the lag is still too much to get the same overlapping wings of the Blue Angels variety.

But we also discovered that the Zlin, while slow at about 130 knots, is very easy to fly and very maneuverable. If you have ever wanted to learn to fly upside down, this is your airplane; I love rolling over at 300 feet AGL and just holding it down the centerline of the runway, then push the nose over the top at the threshold and back down the runway for another pass, maybe a loop. We have also developed routines (well, OK, they aren't planned enough to be routine just yet) that have us crossing back and forth along the runway axis, passing each other very close while also performing loops, rolls, inverted flight, and tight high-G turns.

This reporter popped out a few scenery items to make us feel more at home at TBPB as it looks like this thing might stick. We have a hanger there now, along with Fs2002 initial start locations for each of up to seven pilots (an even bigger nightmare, seven of us). There is an elevated media platform next to the hanger and several bleachers across the other side of the runway, with Show Center down the runway in front of us. Oh, and I added a fire station, fire trucks, tow truck, and an ambulance to clean up the mess that is made we one of us misjudges the altitude or power. And lastly, there is a 19-mile triangular racecourse with 100-m tall custom Nightmares pylons just offshore to test your skill against other pilots.

The Flying Nightmares practice every Saturday at 1600 UTC, and sometimes Sundays, on TCAVAT (see the web page on the main TCA page) using Multiplayer hook ups (not SB) and Roger Wilco for voice communications. If you think you may be interested in flying with us, contact Brooklyn and he can see if you have the skills to scare the %#^\$& out of yourself and others, and keep on flying! You can also use a new utility called Viewpoint that is ideal for sitting in the bleacher section and just watching. By the way, we have provided a facility, just behind the bleachers, for when the margaritas hit the bladder during an airshow

And don't be scared, we're scared enough for everyone!



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Alternate Air

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The Parcel

Christine Célette lifted the music box into the larger cardboard box, moving the Styrofoam packing material out of the way and nestling the painted wooden box into the middle. She picked up a bag of the white peanuts and continued to fill the carton to the top, stopping every so often to pack them down tightly. She smiled as she thought of her sister Marie admiring the music box in the shop in Hell's Gate during her Christmas visit to Saba. The box was hand carved mahogany with Saba lace lining the inside. Christine and her husband Henri had moved to Saba four years previous to open a dive shop on the local waters and this had been the first visit any of her family had made from France to see her.

She finished adding the Paris address to the package, grabbed her handbag off the kitchen counter and looked at the clock on the wall. It was 9 in the morning, the Tradewinds Domestic Mailservice plane wouldn't arrive at Juancho Yrausquin Airport for 25 more minutes, and she still had plenty of time. Walking outside she placed the parcel into the basket of her motorcycle. She climbed on and tied her long black hair up into a ponytail, then fired up the little Honda and headed down the hill toward the airport.

It was a bright, beautiful Caribbean day, with a light breeze blowing from the west. Christine could see sailboats and dive boats working the waters off the coast and a fishing boat trailing lines beyond them. Squinting, she could see one of the dive boats was Herni's, that means he was working today. Good, the business had been very steady lately and she wanted it to last forever, but she knew it wouldn't so they saved as much as they could for the leaner times. But overall the business was making more money each year and they were committed to this new life. Henri even hinted that he was ready for a baby, a thought that really made Christine feel at home.

Arriving at the bottom of the hill and entering the small airport, Christine parked the motorcycle and lifted the parcel out of the basket, walking inside the little shipping office at the edge of the field.

"Hello Janet, I have a package to go home."

“Hello, Christine, nice to see you again. Let’s see what you have.”

Janet placed the package on the scales and looked at the address.

“Paris? Well, let’s see, I can get it there in four days for 105 Guilders. Do you want it insured?”

“Yes, please, for 250 Guilders.”

“That brings it to 121 Guilders and three days. You just made it, I expect the Tradewinds plane any minute. Nick Collins has been flying this route for three weeks now and he is always just a little early. Nice fellow, have you met him?”

“No, I can’t say that I have. A pilot..... I don’t know, they are so, how do you say.... unpredictable. You know, unpredictable?”

“Hmm, yes, unpredictable. I’ll have to add that to the list of pilot things, but I think you are right. However Nick is predictably on time these days.”

“And he is due in soon? I will stay and see this pilot.”

Christine walked outside and stood with her back to the breeze facing the sun. She held her hand to her forehead shadowing the morning sun. Looking across that long stretch of water between Saba and Sint Maarten she thought about all the water her sister’s gift would have to travel to get there, and she would be trusting this important package to pilots. She had dated a pilot in college for a short while, but he was demanding of her when he was around, which he wasn’t around enough for her to continue the relationship.

She breathed a big sigh.

Nick Collins climbed into the TDM DHC-2 Beaver for his Line 4310-11 run. He had been on the run for three weeks straight, but this route included Saba’s little 1300 foot Runway 12, a special training requirement and usually all volunteer among the pilot community. Nick was about ready for someone else to volunteer to come take over and had called the office the previous evening.

“Naomi, this is Nick Collins. I’m flying 4310 and I need a change.”

“Yes, Nick, I know, and they love you on that route, you should hang for a while, build those relationships with our clients.”

“You’ve been listening to that crap Johnny Issacs has been spewing. Get me off this route, Naomi.”

“I’ll see what I can do, Nick, but that route is gravy for you, six hours of flying, home before dark, you can sleep off that hangover in time to make the 9 am departure, a long lunch, it is ready made for you, Nick, a TDM pilot’s dream.”

“Well, it’s becoming a nightmare, if you don’t get me off this route soon I’ll come to Guadeloupe on that long

lunch and kick some butt. Send me to South America, Alaska, send me anywhere else besides around this circle. Three weeks, Naomi, have a heart.”

“I’ll talk to Johnny in the morning and see what we can do for you, Nick.”

He was less than assured. Johnny Issacs had banished him to this route after one little slip of the tongue, he was sure of it. Johnny had shown up at the Roost about three days after Nick had met him on Isla Mona. Nick was sitting in The Roost Bar and Grill around one of the larger tables with some of the other pilots, holding court and making pronouncements after a couple of beers.

“Yeah, I met him, and I tell you I didn’t like the guy. Too stiff, too by-the-book for us.”

“Why don’t we give him a chance, maybe he’ll be an OK guy?”

“Andy, I don’t think you’re head is in a state to be making suggestions like that, and I might smack you if you keep it up,” said Doyle.

Andy reached up to cover his still bandaged head, “I’ll get well sooner or later, Doyle, and I’ll hunt you down like the dog you are if you touch this noggin.”

“You two shut up that yap. Ernst, I’m telling you, we don’t need a pencil necked regulator climbing up our shorts on a daily basis.”

Nick noticed Ernst’s eye had moved beyond him toward the doorway.

“And this regulator, he wouldn’t be about Andy’s height would he, a long drink of water for a young man?”

“Yes, I would be the pencil necked regulator Mr. Collins is speaking of, Johnny Issacs, and you are?”

“Uh, Doyle, Doyle Locke, Mr. Issacs, nice to meet you, I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Johnny is fine, nice to meet you Doyle. Aren’t you one of the Five Commandments Club members?”

“Yes, you heard about us, yes I am.”

“Nothing bad, it sounds interesting to say the least.”

Nick looked at Doyle, what a kiss-ass.

“Well, I’d say I hoped it was nothing bad you heard about me, but I guess we can put that to rest, right Mr. Collins?”

“Sorry, Johnny, too many beers tonight.”

“I forgive you, we will all learn to work together soon, even Mr. Collins and I, I assure you.”

Yeah, he assured him, and here he was on Week Three of this snappy little route, but if he flew it much longer, he was going to be adopted by the grandmotherly woman who ran the FBO at Grand Case. She had already started having something for him to eat each day, just a light snack, she would say, leaving him with a mid morning and afternoon sugar buzz.

This run started late, later than Nick really liked. The sun had already started to heat things up which resulted in a bumpy ride for the little airplane drivers. He left St John at 0700 to catch a ride over to Sint Maarten, giving him an hour to preflight. Then he was off to Saba, the short aircraft carrier sized runway with a huge mountain off the wing while on a westerly approach. In any case, if you go long, the runway sits about 100 feet above the rocks on the shoreline, so you have about four or five seconds to recover before you hit the rocks; this was based on empirical data gathered by locals who felt such information was critical to tell each pilot who came through. Then on to St Bart's, St Martin, Anguilla, then back to Sint Maarten until 1500 when he did it again, seven days a week.

But it did pay well, six hours of flight time plus two hour's bonus for a couple of tough landings at Saba and St Bart's, plus Sint Maarten had its own challenges. Nick hauled mail on this route, only very occasionally did he get a passenger and they were mostly medical flights that the Boss gave away seats for free on designated islands. They would bring the patients to the doctors in the larger cities or to a specialist that were far a few between. Nick didn't mind the medicals a bit.

The lineman finished loading the last bag of mail into the rear compartment and walked around in front of the Beaver as Nick indicated he was ready to start. In minutes the airplane lurched forward toward the runway for takeoff and on his way for the day. Saba was a short distance from Sint Maarten, only about a 15-minute flight. The wind was gentle out of the east so he set up to fly a downwind. He could see the winding road that lead down from the top of Saba to the airport, which stuck out on a small tongue of land at the base of the mountain.

As he came abeam of the little airport he noticed a dark haired woman watching him fly by from in front of the FBO office. He turned base, slowing and letting out the flaps for the short field landing, then slowed more with full flaps and a bit more power as he settled into the final approach, flaring right over the numbers and chopping the power to drop the wheels quickly and started braking hard. He rolled to a stop with at least 300 more feet to go, no sweat. He turned the aircraft around and back taxied to the ramp and parked. Climbing out of the cockpit he reached into the back of the aircraft for a mailbag. A young man ran over with chocks for the wheels.

"I'll take the bag for you Nick."

"OK Simon, here you go, got something for me today?"

"Oh yes, sir, Janet has it ready to go."

"Great, let's grab it and get going, don't want to be late."

Nick walked toward the FBO shack and saw the same dark haired woman retreat back into the small office as he approached.

"Good morning, Janet, a nice day. Got a load for me?"

“I do Nick, its right over there in the corner. And Nick, I’d like you to meet one of the local women, Christine Célette. She and her husband are originally from France and now run a dive boat here.”

“Hi, nice to meet you Christine, Nick Collins.”

She smiled, “And so nice to meet you.”

“Christine brought me a package today, going to Paris.”

“Yes, a gift for my sister back home, I hope it will be alright to ship it this way.”

“Oh, yes, ma’am, this is very safe and will get it there the fastest.”

“I told her it would be four days to ship it, is that right?”

“Yes, that seems so long, is it four days?”

“Where is it going?”

“Paris, my sister Marie lives just outside the city.”

“That is what the schedule says, ma’am, but if I can get ahead of schedule I can catch Tradewinds Flight 91 leaving for Curacao at 11:10. It is a squeeze, but I’ll try hard. If I make that connection, we will get your package on the big mail flight to Paris that leaves tonight about 23:30.”

“23:30?”

“Sorry, ma’am, that’s 11:30 at night.”

“So my package will get to Paris tonight?”

“Well, no, ma’am, it gets into Paris tomorrow, in the afternoon, so I’d say it would take another day or two to get through the French mail system after that. So two or three days, that’s better than four isn’t it?”

“Oui, it is better, thank you, I feel much better now.”

“See Christine, didn’t I tell you these Tradewinds pilots are OK.”

“I’ll make a liar out of myself if I don’t stop yacking and get flying with her package. Ladies, have a nice day. Christine, it was a pleasure to meet you.”

“Thank you, Nick, and thank you for rushing my gift, her birthday is in three days, it would be so nice to get it there on time. I have a reputation for being late, but it so far from here.”

“ I will do my best, and I’ll be able to tell you if I made it on my return this afternoon just after five. Good morning

ladies.”

He threw the mailbag into the rear of the aircraft and climbed into the front seat. Simon stood in front as Nick called, “Clear!”

The prop swung into action and Nick taxied to the end of Runway 09 for take off. 20 degrees of flaps, set the trim, Nick scanned the panel one last time before standing on the brakes and pushing the throttle to the wall. He listened to the prop spin up, biting into the air and straining against the brakes. As they approached full RPM, Nick let the brakes off and pressed the right rudder hard to compensate for the torque of the prop. His eyes darted between the cockpit's airspeed and engine gauges and the perilous end of the runway now too rapidly approaching. Nick had done this dozens of times, but it never failed to get his heart pumping. He lifted the aircraft off the runway and leveled off about fifty feet over the runway and allowed the airspeed to increase, then he lifted the aircraft out of ground effect and it climbed easily into the warm east wind.

Turning right toward St Bart's after clearing Saba's sharp mountainous walls that run right up to the sea's edge, Nick pulled the flaps in and leveled at 1500 feet for the 20 minute ride over. He landed and pulled into the parking ramp, repeating the dig for a mailbag and hoping out, walking quickly to the office near the edge of the ramp. In just a few minutes he was back in the aircraft and taxing out to the runway, now eight minutes ahead of schedule, Nick was feeling pretty good about intercepting the Hato flight and knocking a day off the trip for Christine's parcel. He pressed the Beaver just a bit, arriving at Grand Case in 17 minutes, now 12 minutes ahead. Nick smiled to himself as he brought the aircraft to a stop.

He reached into the back and lifted out a mailbag and then reached into his flight bag and withdrew a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum Lawman revolver and stuck it in his waistband in the small of his back. This pick up usually had some commercial paper in it between some banks here in Grand Case and Sint Maarten that required him to be armed while in its possession. He climbed out of the cockpit and went inside the FBO to pick up one mailbag while dropping off another. Geraldine Smythe-Evans, an elderly woman who ran the office greeted him with a large smile.

“And good morning, Nick, how are you this fine day? You are a bit early, aren't you?”

“Yes, Geraldine, I'm trying to get a few minutes ahead and stay there, got a package to Europe and I can catch the Hato flight if I hustle.”

“Oh, my, that is bad, I guess. There is a young girl on her way over from the hospital, they need you to take her to Sint Maartin to see an infection specialist, Nick, you have to wait for her.”

Nick's heart sank. There was no way he could not take this girl, the parcel would have to wait. Nick looked at his watch, 10:27.

“Nick, I have some nice coffee, and I made some apple turnovers, why don't you sit down while you wait?”

“Sure, yeah, that would be great. When did you say they would be here?”

Geraldine poured coffee into a Styrofoam cup and handed it to Nick and then wrapped a turnover in a napkin and handed that to Nick as he sat on the couch inside the FBO office.

“Well, I told them you would leave by 10:40, so I expect them by then.”

Nick looked at his watch, 10:31. The Hato plane leaves in 39 minutes. His usual luck he supposed, as he tried to relax. Geraldine went into a story about a string of burglaries at the airport lately, but Nick was only half listening. He looked at his watch, 10:34. Man, when will they get here!

“Do you think I should get a video system to go with the alarm? I see those videos on America’s Most Wanted on TV, and they say they catch those guys.”

“Geraldine, that stuff is still Hollywood, you can’t throw money at a burglar. Mostly, you make breaking into your place in the first place a huge pain in the butt. Call your local constable or police, they can tell you how to do that. Keep them out to begin with and you have a lot less trouble, so spend your money on that. Where are they?”

“That makes good sense, thank you, Nick, I will call my friend Capt. Williams at the police station, he is married to one of my Thursday golf partners. And why don’t you have come more coffee, my lord, I don’t know when they will be here, Nick, please try to relax.”

“Sorry, Geraldine. I better not have any more coffee. In the end it will just slow me down.”

They both heard the van pull up outside. Nick rose and went outside. Two attendants were helping a small girl out of the van. Nick looked at his watch, 10:38.

“Hi, this is Maria, she needs ride to Sint Maartin.”

Nick bent over and smiled, “Hi, my name is Nick and I’ll be your pilot, you ready to go flying, Maria?”

She smiled weakly, “Yes, it will be fun to see everything from way up there.”

“I think it is, so let’s go.”

They attendants helped her into the seat next to Nick’s, and Nick checked her seatbelt and showed her how to open the door. He smiled and waved to the attendants and leaned out his window to clear the prop for start. It was 10:44, four minutes behind schedule. Damn.

He wheeled the aircraft onto the runway and taxied to the end where he spun around and pushed the throttle full open. The Beaver lifted into the air after only a few hundred feet of runway passed beneath it and began climbing into the morning air as he turned to the northwest and Anguilla.

“Why do you have a gun in your back?”

Nick looked over at his passenger. She had a very serious look on her face. He smiled back at her reassuringly.

“Well, I carry some things that someone else might want to take, so I carry this gun so they think twice about it.”

“Are you going to have a shoot out before you get me to Sint Maarten?”

“No, see, I have never had to use this, I just carry it to keep anyone from trying it. When I have the gun, no one will try to steal my cargo.”

“Why does someone want to steal your cargo?”

“Well, I don’t mean there is some person out there right now trying to steal my cargo, I mean that in case someone thought about it, they should know I carry this gun, so maybe they think about doing something else.”

“You would shoot somebody?”

“Hmm, good question. I guess I would have to, since I have the gun and all.”

“Yes, I guess you would. Are you a good shot?”

“I can hit about any coconut you can see.”

“A coconut is not a person. Can you hit a person?”

“You ask a lot of questions, that’s not why you’re going to see the doctor is it, the Too-many-questions syndrome?”

“If you don’t know if you can shoot somebody, why don’t you just say that? There is nothing to be ashamed about.”

“I never said I couldn’t shoot somebody. Yeah, I could, for the right reasons. And I am NOT ashamed of anything!”

“You don’t have to get mad, I was just asking.”

“I’m not mad! It’s just that,.... well never mind. I can shoot someone, trust me.”

Nick slowed and lined up to land at Anguilla’s Wallblake Airport. Taxing to the ramp in front of the FBO, Nick gave the sit tight instructions to Maria, then leapt out of the cockpit with the mailbag in his hand.

“Hi, Raphael, got my mailbag? Here’s your’s, got to run.”

“Hello Nick Collins, what’s you’re hurry.”

Nick froze in his tracks and looked to the left and saw Reggie Compton, one of Bahama Bob’s pilots leaning against the counter.

“Here Nick, let me pour you some coffee. You and I need to chat about a few things, like maybe you taking a vacation to South America, get out of these waters for a while, ya know.”

“No thanks Reggie, I’m in a bit of a hurry. Here’s your bag Raphael, let me have mine.”

“But I insist, mate, have some coffee.”

“Insist if you like, mate, but I have other plans.”

“Now that’s not very nice, Nick, I offered you some coffee and conversation and you are insulting me by refusing. I may have to defend my honor.” Reggie stood to his full six foot four inch height.

“Reggie, what the hell are you talking about, you don’t have any honor to defend in the first place, over some trumped up insult that never happened. All you people are crazy, you know? I’d have Bahama Bob’s maintenance guys check for carbon monoxide in your cockpits, you boys have been behaving very odd lately.”

“That’s right, Nick, I’m crazy, you better be careful with crazy people, we aren’t accountable for our actions.” Reggie moved over toward the door, squatting down and spread his legs into a defensive stance.

“I can’t believe this. I think God put all these nuts on earth just to piss me off. Now look, I’m a professional and I don’t have time for the macho crap, Reggie. Now get the hell out of my way.”

“Tell you what, Tradewinds boy, why don’t you try to move me.”

The words of Nick’s father came back to him in that instant. “If you are certain that some conflict is going to end in punches, then go ahead and make sure you get in the first ones.”

Nick’s shoulders sagged and then rose up as he drew a deep breath. Reggie hunkered down a little more, ready to take the brunt of Nick’s attack. Nick took one step back then stepped forward the mailbag still in his hand. He stepped to the right to go around Reggie, who shuffled over to block his path. Nick smiled quickly, then slid to the left with Reggie shuffling over again.

Nick spun to his left quickly, allowing the mailbag to develop momentum. He looked over his left shoulder to see Reggie’s face register first amazement at Nick’s tactic, then recognition as he plotted a quick path between the now horizontal mailbag and his head, just too late.

The mailbag hit Reggie square in the head, sending him sprawling across the room, landing in a heap in a corner near the couch. He didn’t move.

“Oh crap, I hope I haven’t killed the idiot.”

“It was self defense, Nick, I saw the whole thing, he started it,” said Raphael.

Nick approached the damaged man as he lay on the floor. As he came close, Reggie, moaned and rolled over on to his back, clearly quite alive.

“Get the hell out of there before he wakes up.”

“Yeah, good idea, see you later, Raphael.”

He ran out to the aircraft, his knees spongy from the adrenaline. Other words from his father came back to him. “Better to beat it and fight another day than overstay your luck.” Dad knew way too much about hand to hand combat for an engineer.

It was straight up 11:00, the airport and the departing aircraft to Hato were both 10 minutes away. He’d never make it. But he was still going to try. He threw the mailbag into the back and pulled himself into the seat, threw on his seatbelt and cranked up the engine, rolling out for take off even as the prop came to speed.

“Why are you sweating? Did you have to shoot someone?”

Nick looked at is diminutive passenger. In all that he never even thought of the gun. On second thought, that is probably a good thing.

“No, just ran into a friend who wanted to wrestle a bit, but I told him we were in a hurry.”

“A friend? You knocked him out and he’s a friend?”

“OK, he’s not a friend, but he was trying to start something and I didn’t have time for it.”

“Yeah, why are we in such a hurry? You have been rushing since I got on the airplane. You are going to have a heart attack if you keep this up, you know.”

“I will be just fine. I am trying to get a package on an airplane than is schedules to leave Sint Maarten in seven minutes. It is important to a customer to get it on that airplane, so that is why I am in such a hurry. It is for a lady with the same name as you in Paris; her name is Marie. Believe me, this afternoon’s run will be much, much slower.”

“Why don’t you call them on the radio?”

“Well, see, they arehmmm, maybe you have something there.”

Nick switched over to Sint Maarten tower. “Sint Maarten, Tradewinds 016, 10 miles north for landing, and request.”

“Tradewinds 016, altimeter 29.94, winds calm, cleared for a left base entry for Runway 09, say request.”

Nick recognized the voice of the tower controller as Jamie Pasqal. “Tradewinds 106 requests to know if Tradewinds 91 has departed?”

“Negative, he is requesting push back on ground frequency now.”

“Jamie, can you hold them five minutes?”

“Nick? Yeah, sure, what shall I tell them the reason?”

“Tower, I’m turning left base in two minutes for landing, you work for the government, think of something.”

“Roger, 016, thinking. This one will cost you, senior. You are cleared to land Runway 09.”

“Affirm on that, sir. Cleared to land Runway 09.”

Nick banked left to line up for the runway, flaps down and checked his passenger’s seatbelt. He just might pull this off.

After landing he taxied toward the TCA ramp where he saw a TCA Boeing 737. He could also see the pilot and ramp agent standing outside looking at him, their arms crossed and turning toward each other to speak into the other’s ear over the roar of props and jet engines. Nick taxied up next to them and killed the engine. He then reached into the back and grabbed the parcel from Saba and jumped down from the cockpit.

Eric Heyliger, the ramp agent spoke first. “Nick, this better be good, we’re holding up a revenue flight for you.”

“And I thank you very much, all in the name of customer service.”

Robert Greene, the 737 pilot spoke next, “Customer service? Your customers or mine?”

“Our customers, Bob, I need you guys to get this package to Hato on this flight, it can’t wait another day. I didn’t know any other way to keep from missing you.”

Eric took the package and pulled a small notebook out of his packet and wrote something down as he read off the parcel. He handed the parcel to another man nearby. “Throw this in with the cargo and button it up.”

“OK, Nick, we’ll let it go for two things. First, we want a box of those Cubano cigars you prop jocks got stashed, and second, we want to know what happened in Wallblake a bit ago.”

Nick was stunned, not knowing which to address first.

“What cigars? I don’t know what you’re talking about, and Wallblake, man news moves fast. I just had a bit of a go with one of Bahama Bob’s boys, Reggie. Big dumb guy, but I got by him.”

Bob smiled, “We heard you gave him a concussion, and he is swearing cheap shot and revenge. And don’t give us that crap on the cigars, we know you got them and that is the price for Johnny not finding out about this little delay you orchestrated. Give it up, you owe, buddy.”

“Oh all right, tomorrow I’ll drop a box off with Eric for you guys. If I gave Reggie a concussion, he earned it.”

“OK, well boys, enough jaw jacking, got time to make up, thanks to Nick.” “That’s the spirit, I knew you guys would have the time to make it up.”

“You bet, see you tomorrow, Nick”

Nick looked over at Eric.

“I have a little girl who needs a ride to the hospital, you know about it?”

“Yeah, they are inside waiting, go get her.”

Nick walked back to the airplane and opened the passenger door.

“This is your stop, there are folks inside to take you to the doctor.”

“OK, thank you for the ride, sir, it was fun. I hope you don’t shoot that guy back there.”

“He might need shooting, but it won’t be by me. You know, I never even thought about the gun.”

“Good, you don’t look like a killer to me anyway. I don’t want to see your picture in the newspapers.”

“You won’t, don’t worry.”

They walked into the TCA office as the hospital drivers rose.

“Here is Maria, gentlemen. Goodbye, see you another time maybe.”

Maria turned back and reached up to give him a hug, which he returned.

“You are a good pilot, they say that means you won’t stay here long, so I probably won’t see you again.”

“I hate to say it, but you are probably right. Nice to meet you anyway.”

“Goodbye,” she waved as the three of them walked to the waiting ambulance.

He waved back and felt satisfied, a job well done and only half the day down. He now had time to go call Guadeloupe and get off this route. He walked back toward the pilot’s lounge to get to a phone.

“Naomi, this is Nick Collins, did you talk to Johnny about getting me a new assignment?”

“Oh hello, Nick, yes I did. He said he wanted to talk to you about it personally.”

“Hmm, well, that can’t be good. OK, let me talk to him.”

“OK, hang on, it may be a few minutes.”

It was 25 minutes, and Nick was not very good at waiting. He held the phone to his ear as he wandered around the lounge, picking up old magazines and flipping through the pages, the same old magazines he had looked at for

three weeks. He walked to the doorway where he could look out onto the ramp and see the aircraft and people moving about. Everyone was making progress except him.

He thought about Amanda. He had gotten two postcards from her on her travels. There was no mention of his letter in any of them, so he wondered if she had even gotten it at all. Time was beginning to fade his memory of her hair, her face, her voice, and her smell. He needed to see her again or Juanita was right, she would be gone forever.

“Nick, hi, its Johnny, how’s things going over there at Sint Maarten? Say, I just got off the phone with a police officer from Anguilla, he had some interesting questions about you. Tell me what happened?”

“Johnny, these Bahama Bob thugs are starting to bug me, they keep wanting to get physical all the time, I don’t want anything to do with them. I just fly, but sometimes you just have to defend yourself. It was self-defense. What did the cop say?”

“He said it was self defense, and they charged your assailant with a misdemeanor. You’re off the hook, the airport agent vouched for you. They do need you to give them a statement, and he said he’d have an officer to meet you at your round today, only take a couple of minutes. You can spare them a couple of minutes, right?”

“Well, that’s a relief, sure no problem. Now Johnny, I’ve been out here flying this God forsaken route for three weeks, I know every seagull along the way. You have got to get me off this route, please, I’m begging you.”

“Aaron said it would take getting you to this point. He said you are the best prop pilot anywhere, but you don’t like to take too many orders, a loner and all, is that so?”

“Aaron knows squat about me. I take orders fine, from people I respect.”

“Now we don’t always get to choose who we take orders from, right?”

“Right, what’s your point, Johnny, you gonna get me a new route or not?”

“Hmm, maybe Aaron is more right than I thought. Maybe you need a bit more time flying that circle, maybe you and I can have a more civil conversation in, say, a month?”

“No, no, no, I’m listening, you have my full and undivided attention. You go, Johnny, I am all ears.”

“Splendid, here is what I need you to do. Nick, what do you think of seaplanes?”

“Seaplanes? The marriage of aircraft and boats, air and water. No runways, no boundaries. I love them, why do you ask?”

“Nick, we are opening a seaplane division, and I want you to start next week as Chief Pilot. Now listen, this is not a job for lazy people, and it is a flying job, not a desk job. I have enough people sitting at desks, I need pilots and you are my pick if you can take orders from me and we can work together. The Boss gave this project to me and I intend to use it to show him what I can do to build the airline. I pick the best I can find to do things like this, even if I have to take a chance on a guy like you. You have the material, now let’s see if you can deliver. What do you say?”

“Seaplanes? Where are they going to fly? What sort of airplanes do you have? How many pilots?”

“Lots of questions, yes, this is good. We have been testing some routes up in the Bahamas and South Florida, and we are opening a new base in Old San Juan harbor, that is where I will need you to move your operations. Airplanes, hmmm, let’s see, the kind made by people named Grumman, Cessna, DeHavilland, Canadair, Consolidated, Bell, for starters. So many questions, you and need to meet, and I need you to meet with a few of the other players, one of whom is Aaron. I need you in my office day after tomorrow at 0800 sharp, can you do that?”

“Consolidated? You have a PBY, oh man, I haven’t had my hands on one of those in a while, it will be nice to make my acquaintance again. And a Bell, we have a helicopter? I will be there, I will close up business tomorrow here, you have a replacement for me yet?”

“No, but Naomi will find me one, she is an artist at small airplane operations, you know. The Bell is a refurbished Model 47 on floats, to use as a maintenance aircraft in case we have a break down. I have a Hughes 500D on floats as well, but that one is mine for now and I have a pilot for it. The Bell you share with the maintenance crew when they need to recover an aircraft, otherwise it is yours.”

“I have my own Bell 47? This is too cool, thanks Johnny.”

“It all come apart if we don’t deliver, you understand Nick?”

“I do, yes, we will make this a winner. I can’t wait to get started.”

“OK, we will meet in two days at 0800, my office in Guadeloupe. There will be a lot of PR around the start up too, lots of press, so find a tie, for me, alright? You do have a tie, don’t you?”

“Of course I have a tie. I have a whole suit, I mostly use it for funerals of pilots.”

“Yeah, a tough part of this business, isn’t it? The quick and the dead, as they say. You are either quick or you are dead.”

“Or smart, I stay out of those places where I need to be quick, so I don’t have to be quick so often. Even a quick pilot will run out of luck someday. Then there is what the combat pilot’s call The Golden BB. That one has your name on it, and no amount of quick can dodge it from its path right into your butt.”

“Such a morbid topic, I thought you pilots didn’t ever talk about dying.”

“We talk about it because it is in our face on a daily basis. One mistake and that’s it for you, no do-overs. So I don’t make mistakes.”

“Indeed, that is why I have chosen you. OK, I have to go now, other business, and I have to find a replacement pilot for you, let me get Naomi for you. See you later, and welcome to my team.”

“OK, thanks, I’m looking forward to it.”

He couldn't believe how quickly his fortunes had changed. Just a few minutes ago he was beginning to have thoughts about leaving TDM because of Johnny, now he was going to work directly for him. But as chief pilot in the seaplane division, with a PBY, and his own helo, what luck. Johnny wasn't such a bad guy after all, he thought, after all, he had great wisdom in choosing Nick as chief pilot, he laughed to himself. It was time to grab some lunch before getting back in the sky for the last round of the day. He couldn't wait to get back to St John to tell the other guys about the seaplanes.

"Nick, Naomi, good news, you don't have to go back tomorrow. I have a new pilot coming in, and he will be there in the morning. His name is Evan Harris, already certified for Saba and he will be at the Roost tonight, so look him up and brief him on the route, OK?"

"You bet, that is good news. Thanks Naomi, see you later."

"I always try to leave them smiling, Nick, see you later too, and congratulations on the new assignment, he did pick the right pilot for the job."

After a good lunch of steak and salad, Nick was back up at 1500 hours for the second round of the day. After take off he headed back toward Saba, anxious to tell Janet he was able to make the parcel connection. He reached into his flight bag and lifted out a new Jimmy Buffett CD and popped it into the CD player, adjusting the sound to get above the drone of the turboprop. He was still learning the words to this new album.

*I don't have a plan
It's not that kind of thing
I'm not Martin Luther King
I don't have a dream
Its just sometimes I know
That's the way I'm supposed to go.*

*I see a flying boat
I get a lump in my throat
And I say someday I will
Someday*

Nick's someday would start the day after tomorrow.

Three days later Christine and Henri were down cleaning the dive boat between jobs. It was hard work keeping their investment in the boat up, but they were both willing to provide the labor. The phone rang in their house up on the hill above the pair working in the harbor; the answering machine picked it up.

"Halo, Henri and Christine are away right now, but we value your business. Please leave your name and a phone number after the beep so that we may return your call. Adeiu."

"Christine, this Marie. I know you were planning to call later for my birthday, but I just got your parcel and the wonderful music box. It is so charming, and you remembered that I liked it when I was visiting. This is so special, and you got it to me on my birthday. Your parcels from there are usually late, so that added to the surprise.

Anyway, I just wanted to say thank you so much and I look forward to talking to you later. My love to Henri, dear. Chow.”

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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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