



News and Views

From the Editorial Hangar

Congratulations!

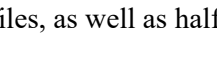
Dan Hagedorn, AAHS Life Member #0100, has been awarded (for the second time, it should be noted) Air Britain's American Aviation Historical Society (AAHS) Trophy, for contributions to U.S. aviation history. Announced at Air Britain's Annual General Meeting for 2025, Dan's "citation" reads as follows:

Dan Hagedorn has an incredibly comprehensive knowledge of all things related to American aeronautical heritage. This is wonderfully demonstrated by his very substantial and detailed two-part article on the evolution of the US Register. [Ed. note: "The Evolution of November Charlie" in the Spring and Autumn 2024 editions of Air Britain's *Aviation World* magazine.]

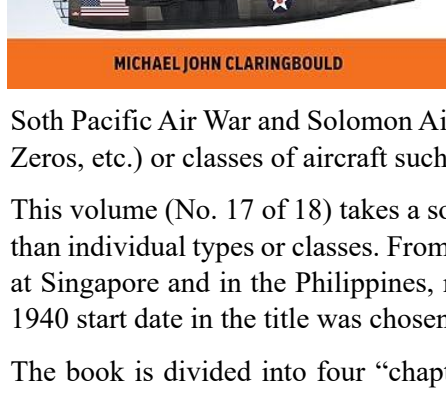
He paints a vivid picture of the frenetic work undertaken by the team in the Air Regulations Division of the Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce in the late 1920s. It is truly amazing to see the task facing the team in establishing an accurate register of all aircraft in America. This was all done in an age before computers using only 'manual typewriters, pens and pencils.' What was also not anticipated was the very rapid growth in both the number of aircraft and their longevity.

Dan explores some of the idiosyncrasies of the system around what actually was the first aircraft to carry the Registration 'N-1'. Although this had been applied to a D.H. 4 owned by the Department of Commerce, Aeronautics Branch, it appears that the correct recipient of the 'N-1' registration was not an American aircraft, but a DH 60 Moth built in the UK. Dan addresses all the variations of both the prefixes of the registrations, the increasing number range and subsequent suffixes. Oh, and by the way, yes, the dash between the suffix and number was part of the full registration. At least till the late 1930/early 1940s when this regulation was dropped. Dan's article demonstrates the depth of knowledge and learned output from Air-Britain and its members.

Recognized as one of the world's foremost experts on the history of aviation in Latin America, Dan has written numerous articles for the *AAHS Journal* over the years. Congrats on this honor, Dan, and keep those Journal articles coming! →



Book Reviews



Pacific Profiles Volume 17

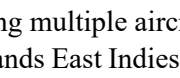
Allied Air Power: Netherlands East Indies 1940-1942

By Micheal John Claringbould

ISBN: 9780975642375

180 pages, with sources and index, maps, many photos, a few in color, with 107 aircraft profiles, as well as half-page digital "paintings" depicting various aircraft in flight.

Available at <https://www.casematepublishers.com/> or through Amazon.

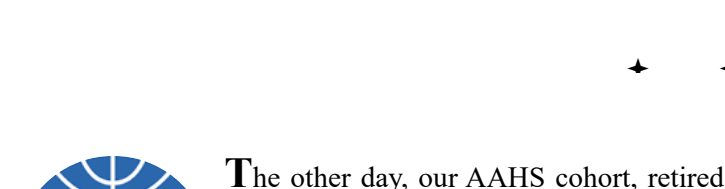


Over the past several years, Michael J. Claringbould, by himself or with collaborators, has uncovered details of the air war in the Pacific that to most students of that conflict will be entirely new. In *Pacific Profiles*, a companion series to his *South Pacific Air War* and *Solomon Air War* volumes, Claringbould looks at individual aircraft types (P-40, F4U, land-based Zeros, etc.) or classes of aircraft such as Japanese army fighters and IJN floatplanes.

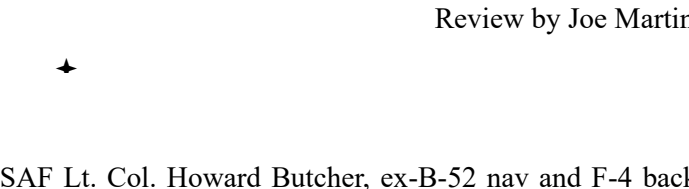
This volume (No. 17 of 18) takes a somewhat different approach, covering multiple aircraft types within a campaign rather than individual types or classes. From the Allied perspective, the Netherlands East Indies campaign, along with the debacles at Singapore and in the Philippines, marked the darkest period of World War II in the Pacific. As the author explains, the 1940 start date in the title was chosen because some of the profiles depict aircraft in their prewar configurations.

The book is divided into four "chapters," covering six different air arms. The Dutch army and navy air components are allotted separate sections, with the RAF/RAAF and the U.S. Army Air Corps/USN combinations making up the other two.

In all, 107 profiles are presented, representing 22 aircraft types. (The Hawker Hurricane, Curtiss P-40E, and Consolidated Catalina appear in multiple sections according to the services that flew them.) The array of aircraft is eclectic to say the least. The Catalina, Warhawk, and even the much maligned Brewster Buffalo are well known participants in that unhappy drama. But who knew a handful of Fairey Albacores were present?

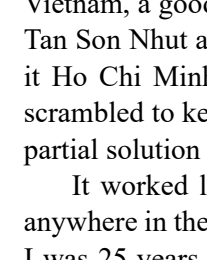
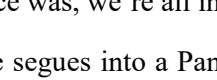


Above: Curtiss-Wright CW-21B of the NEI Army Air Force. Right: No. 36 Sqn RAF went to war in the ancient Vickers Vildebeest.



Like all numbers in this series, Volume 17 will appeal to modelers. An interesting sidebar is the inclusion of photos and profiles of several allied types captured and later flown by the Japanese. Some color schemes are necessarily speculative, but to the people involved, survival far outweighed any need to make or preserve records. Along with the camouflage markings notes are significant operational details. When known, the fate of the profiled aircraft is included in the description. Anyone with an interest in this now largely ignored but hugely impactful World War II campaign will find this book to be of value on a number of fronts. →

Review by Joe Martin



The other day, our AAHS cohort, retired USAF Lt. Col. Howard Butcher, ex-B-52 nav and F-4 back-seater, pointed out that the Pan Am logo, the final advertising representation of what at one time was arguably the world's premier airline—Pan American World Airways—might again be seen in American and possibly other skies. As reported by *Aviation Week*, Pan Am Global Holdings LLC, which holds title to the Pan Am brand, in partnership with Avi8 Air Capital, have begun proceedings to re-establish Pan Am as a Part 121 scheduled air carrier, headquartered in Miami and operating an Airbus fleet.

An earlier Pan Am resuscitation was attempted back in 1996. That one survived barely two years, and this latest effort will face significant challenges. We admit to being among those chauvinistic curmudgeons who can remember the bad old days before deregulation, when airlines actually served hot food, to be eaten with metal utensils and delivered by people, mostly attractive women, who were at least 30 years away from Social Security and were not candidates for Weight Watchers. Alas, nostalgia doth not an airline make, but if the new Pan Am, in this age of low-fare [?] aerial mass transit, can bring back even a semblance of what air travel once was, we're all in! →

This trip down what I remember of memory lane segues into a Pan Am-related war story. Veterans Day will be upon us shortly, so I hope you'll indulge me for a minute while I tell it. February, 1971. Over the past year I'd seen most of South Vietnam, a good bit of Laos, and almost all of southeastern Cambodia from the back of an EC-47, usually based out of Tan Son Nhut airfield, then as now Saigon's international airport. (The airport code today is still SGN, and I refuse to call it Ho Chi Minh City.) Nixon's "Vietnamization" exit strategy was being rapidly rolled out, while the powers in D.C. scrambled to keep South Vietnam in the war without sending more Americans to push that forlorn hope along. An obvious partial solution would be to entice those already "in country" to stay longer.

It worked like this: a six-month extension of one's Vietnam tour would be rewarded with a round-trip air ticket to anywhere in the so-called Free World, and thirty days in which to enjoy the trip. A second R&R made the deal even sweeter. I was 25 years old then, and knowing the near impossibility that another opportunity like this would ever fall in my lap made it an offer I couldn't refuse.

One balmy Saigon eve not long thereafter, my buddy Richard "Spirus T" Renkas and I, after a few of those old steel cans of whatever wretched brew our makeshift squadron bar featured that day, decided it would be a splendid idea to go to Copenhagen. Rich doesn't know who tagged him with that nickname, or why—maybe as an oblique reference to then-V.P. Spiro Agnew—but it stuck. Fifty-odd years later, to those of us who were together at TSN, he's still Spirus T.

We were given what amounted to open ticket vouchers on Pan Am, which we cashed in as needed. Nether of us knew it, but in those days Pan Am operated a pair of 'round the world flights. Flight 1 went west from San Francisco (SFO) and terminated a few days later at New York's JFK airport, Pan Am having no domestic coast-to-coast interconnections. The major segments of our flight would be on Pan Am Flight 2, the eastbound version, departing from JFK to wind up at SFO.

How we got from Saigon to SFO I don't recall precisely, but I think it was via Japan and Anchorage. Getting to JFK required an unrelated Stateside deviation, then it was on to London. That was my first ride on a 747. I wouldn't make another for more than 30 years. A week in London; over to Copenhagen for another week or so, then a flight down to Frankfurt. A train ride through Bavaria with a couple of stops on the way to Zurich, then back to Frankfurt.

At that point we reboarded Pan Am Flight 2, destination Bangkok. Pardon another diversion here, but this one relates well to aviation history, so here goes. Unlike the Saigon-SFO leg, I was quite clear on this one, but after a half-century plus, confirmation would be good. That came via the University of Miami (Fla.) Libraries' (plural) digital collections, one of which is *HistoryMiami Museum Pan American World Airways Collection*. (Yep, that's the official name.) Within this are 10 "sub-collections" covering every aspect of Pan Am's history, illustrious and otherwise. How thoroughly mined these have been, I have no idea, but for the Pan Am enthusiast, or for anyone with an interest in the history of airlines in the USA, this is a readily accessible trove not to be overlooked.

I was interested in timetables, of which there are 596 records to be searched. Finding what I was after proved to be way harder than it should've been, but find it I did. I can now confirm that "the road to Bangkok," as a Bing Crosby/Bob Hope movie would've titled it, did indeed go just as I remembered—from Frankfurt, via Istanbul, Karachi, Calcutta, and Rangoon. Furthermore, it would've begun on either a Monday or Friday, those being the only days that schedule ran. Somewhere between Karachi and Calcutta we flew through midnight, arriving in Bangkok two days after leaving Frankfurt. We spent what time and money we had left before heading back to Saigon, completing our unplanned trip around the world.

I departed Tan Son Nhut for good on 10 December 1971, closing out my military service after four years and 10 months, almost all of it overseas. (My previous 1967-69 tour at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, also qualified.) Spirus had to finish his enlistment plus the six months extension so didn't get home until 1972. By then he'd logged over 300 missions.

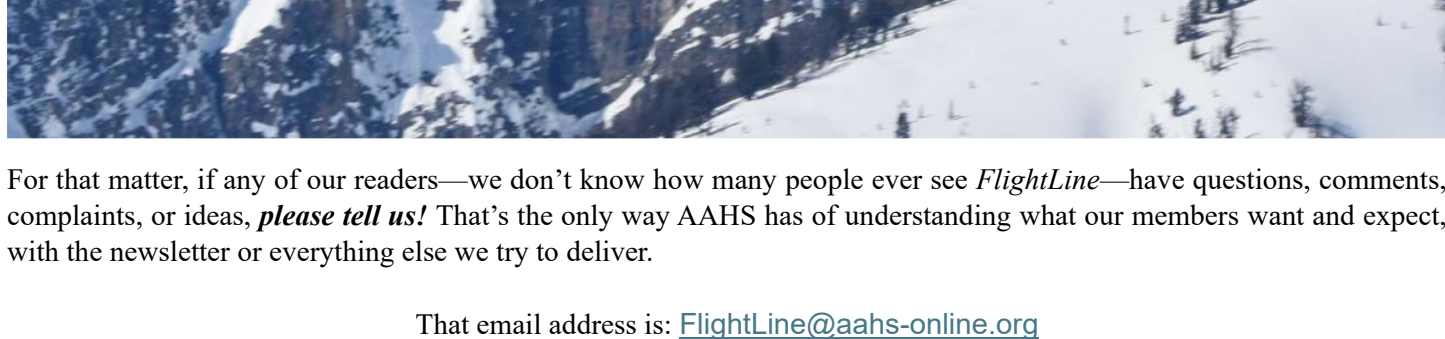
Returning vets frequently had every intention of remaining in touch, but life intervened and contacts were soon lost. Thanks to the marvels of modern technology, in 1999 a group of EC-47 vets reconnected for a reunion. That continues to the present day, although old age has taken its inevitable toll. Meanwhile, for years Spirus was nowhere to be found, despite strenuous efforts to locate him. Then one of our fellow TSN vets spotted a guy he thought might be him on a Facebook page of car club people. It was a shot in the dark but it paid off and in 2012 Spirus was welcomed back into the fold.

I think most vets would agree that if they're able to reunite years later, the paths their wartime pals later followed are often not what they would've imagined back then. I finished school on the GI Bill and eventually went on to a solid if unspectacular career in the Aerospace/Defense biz, where I continued to work (part time) until last December. Spirus, who had made noises about becoming an attorney, did go on to law school but ended up retiring as a Sheriff's Police Officer in the Cook County, Ill., department. The guy who spotted him years later, one I would've pegged for a masters degree or higher in something or other, went back to his job at the local NAPA auto parts store and stayed there until he retired. You never know.

If you've stayed with me this far, thanks for that, and to those AAHS members who are vets, enjoy our upcoming day. For all, and especially those in the Greater LA area, please join us on Saturday, November 9, for a fun Vets Day celebration at Flabob Airport. Stay tuned for details. →



Sometimes we run across an aviation-related image that's just too good to pass up, even if it doesn't relate to the subject at hand. We neglected to note the source of this one, and we're too old and lazy to try to find it again, so apologies to the photographer. If you snapped this fine shot, please drop us a note telling us about it. We'll be more than happy to acknowledge and offer our thanks. →



For that matter, if any of our readers—we don't know how many people ever see *FlightLine*—have questions, comments, complaints, or ideas, *please tell us!* That's the only way AAHS has of understanding what our members want and expect, with the newsletter or anything else we try to deliver.

That email address is: FlightLine@aahs-online.org

Thanks!

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