

THE PILOT'S REWARD

We have experienced most of these, or a variation on the theme. None of us has seen it all...but a Big % for most...and we are ALIVE to enjoy the memories another day.

Flying close finger tip formation in a flight of four.

Losing an engine in an F-84F while taxing back to the ramp after a mission.

Terminating afterburner at 1.85 Mach in an F-101 and experiencing deceleration so hard that I flew off of the seat and into the harness so hard that I had strap bruises on my body, and needed a change of underwear.

Full afterburner take off in a clean F-100C in 20 below zero weather at night.

Somehow, all the jet-lag and other problems had some compensating balance!

Doing formation join-ups in the F-100 around big beautiful columns of Cumulus out of every fighter base.

Sunrises seen from the high flight levels that make the heart soar.

The patchwork quilt of the great plains of Kansas from 37,000' on a day when you can see forever.

Cruising mere feet above a billiard-table-flat cloud deck at Mach .86, with your chin on the glare shield and your face as close as you can get to the windshield.

Knowing you got to land a fighter on a seven-thousand foot runway, that is covered with hard packed snow, and no drag chute.

Punching out the top of a low overcast while climbing 30,000 feet per minute in Afterburner.

The majesty and grandeur of towering cumulus.

Rotating at VR and feeling 800,000 plus pounds of Airplane come alive as she lifts off.

The delicate threads of St. Elmo's Fire dancing on the windshield at night.

The twinkle of lights on the Japanese fishing fleet far below, on a night crossing of the North Pacific.

Cloud formations that are beautiful beyond description.

'Ice fog' in Anchorage on a cold winter morning.

Seeing the approach strobes appear through the fog on a 'Must do' zero, zero approach when there is no other place to go.

Seeing geologic formations that no ground-pounder will ever see.

The chaotic, non-stop babble of radio transmissions at O'Hare during the afternoon rush.

The quietness of center frequency at night during a "Transcontinental flight" ... or over the Amazon at any time.

Watching St. Elmo's fire all over your windscreen in the winter night skies over Alaska.

Landing at night on a pitching deck after a strike.

The welcome view of approach lights appearing out of the mist just as you reach minimums.

Finding yourself in a thunderstorm with 750# bombs still hanging on your wings.

Lightning storms at night over the Midwest.

Picking your way through a line of huge Thunderstorms that seemed to go all the way from Chicago to New Orleans.

The soft, glow of the instrument panel in a dark cockpit.

The dancing curtains of colored light of the "Aurora Borealis" on a winter-night "North Atlantic" crossing.

Passing 30 west . . .

The taxiway names at O Hare before they were renamed: 'The Bridge', 'Lakeshore Drive', 'Old Scenic', 'New Scenic', 'Outer', 'The Bypass', 'Inner', 'Cargo', 'North-South', 'The Stub', and 'Hangar Alley' !

The majestic panorama of an entire mountain range stretched out beneath you from horizon to horizon.

Lenticular clouds over the Sierras.

The brief, yet tempting, glimpse of runway lights after you've already committed to the missed approach.

The Alps in winter.

The South China Sea so smooth that you leave waves in the water from 75 feet above the sea as you fly over it.

Watching a fellow pilot do an engine out flameout approach and making it in an F-100.

Seeing a "dumb" bomb you drop hit a target and knowing you had all the parameters right.

The lights of London or Paris at night from FL 350.

Squall lines that run as far as you can see.

Exotic lands with exotic food.

Seeing Tokyo lights at night from thirty five thousand feet stretching from horizon to horizon.

Maneuvering the airplane through day lit canyons between towering Cumulus Clouds.

The deep blue-gray of the sky at FL 430.

The hustle and bustle of Hong Kong Harbor.

The softness of a touchdown on a snow-covered runway.

Hearing the nose wheel spin down against the snubber in the wheel well after takeoff. A delightful sound signaling that you were on your way!

Old Chinatown in Singapore before it was torn down, modernized, and sterilized.

Watching the lightning show while crossing the ITCZ at night.

Long-tail boats speeding along the klongs in Thailand .

The quietly turning paddle fans in the lobby of the "Raffles Hotel" in Singapore .

Dodging colored splotches of red and yellow light on the radar screen at night.

The sound of foreign accents on the radio.
Luxury hotels.

To paraphrase the eloquent aviation writer, Ernie Gann, "The allure of the slit in a China girl's skirt."

Sunsets of every color imaginable.

The tantalizing glow of the flashing strobe lights just before you break out of the clouds on the approach.

Yosemite Valley from above.

The almost blindingly-brilliant-white of a towering cumulus cloud.

A cold San Miguel in Angeles City after a long day's flying.

The Diamond Horseshoe at Itazuke.

Ocean crossings and in-flight refueling.

Hearing every sound a single engine fighter makes at night over the open ocean.

The taxiway sentry (with his flag & machine gun) at the old Taipei (downtown) airport.

Seventy-thousand-foot-high thunderstorm clouds in the tropics.

Sipping Pina Coladas in a luxury hotel bar, while a Typhoon rages outside.

Chinese Junks bobbing in Aberdeen harbor.

The smell of winter kimchee in Korea.

Watching the latitude count down to zero on the INS, and seeing it switch from "N" to "S" as you cross the equator.

"Wake Island" at Sunrise.

Oslo Harbor at dusk.

Icebergs in the North Atlantic.

Contrails.

Pago Harbor, framed by puffy cumulus clouds in the late afternoon.

The camaraderie of a good crew.

Ferryboat races in Sydney Harbor.

Experiencing all the lines from the old Jo Stafford tune:

"See the pyramids along the Nile . See the sunrise on a tropic isle. See the market place in old Algiers Send home photographs and souvenirs. Fly the ocean in a silver plane. See the jungle when it's wet with rain."

White picket fences in Auckland.

Trade winds.

White sandy beaches lined with swaying palms.

Double-decker buses in London.

The endless expanse of white on a Polar Crossing.

The "Star Ferry" in Hong Kong,

Bangkok after a tropical rain.

Mono Lake and the steep wall of the Sierra Nevada range when approached from the east.

The bus ride to Stanley ... on the upper deck front seat of the double-decker bus.

The "Long Bar" at the Raffles.

Heavy takeoffs from the "Cliff" runway at Guam.

Landings in the B-767 when the only way you knew you had touched down was the movement of the spoiler handle.

Jimmy's Kitchen.

The deafening sound of tropical raindrops slamming angrily against the windshield, accompanied by the hurried slap, slap, slap of the windshield wipers while landing in a torrential downpour in Manila .

Endless ripples of sand dunes across the trackless miles of the Sahara desert.

Miller's Pub in Chicago.

German beer.

The pounding pride, joy, and excitement as your carrier slowly returns to port after a combat cruise.

Oktoberfest.

The white cliffs of Dover.

Oom-pa-pa music at Meyer Gustels in 'Frankfurt'!

Fjords in Norway.

The aimless compass, not knowing where to point as you near the top of the world on a polar crossing.

The whiskey compass on a steep tilt.

The old Charlie-Charlie NDB approach into Kai Tak.

Brain bags crammed with charts to exotic places.

The Peak tram in Hong Kong.

Breaking out of the clouds on the IGS approach to runway 13 at Kai Tak, and seeing a windshield full of checkerboard.

An empty weight takeoff in a B-757.

The bustle of Nathan Road on a summer day.

Sliding in over Crystal Springs reservoir for a visual approach and landing on 1R in SFO.

The smell of tropical blooms when you step off the plane in Fiji.

The quietness of a DC-10 cockpit.

The rush of a full-speed-brakes descent at barber pole in a B-727.

Deadheading in First Class.

The Canarsie approach into JFK.

The Eiffel Tower

Max Gross Weight Takeoffs.

Cross-wind landings at 29 Kts/90 degrees

Good Co-pilots.

Man-sized rudder pedals as big as pie plates.

Leak-checking your eyelids on a long night flight.

Making an aural null range approach.....

Then there was Venus coming up before the sun in the Eastern sky, giving the horizon a light show like no other!

And, as one friend so perceptively pointed out, "Payday" !