

England to Denver via Newfoundland
The saga of UA929
11 September, 2001

It all started like any other day except we were in Slough, England, just thirty minutes from London's Heathrow Airport. Jack Kahler, Bill Bollendonk, Mike Francks and I had gone to Beaulieu in southern England to search out those elusive MG bits that we all need at the annual autojumble and swap meet 7 through 9 September. Three days in the largest English car parts mall in the world. Mike left on Sunday so as to be with his daughter as she presented him with a new grandson and he also wanted to attend the season opening Bronco game at the new Mile High. Good timing.

Bill, Jack and I stayed on so that we could visit what is left of the MG factory in Abingdon and visit with Jim Simpson, an 86-year-old youngster who retired from the Works when it closed its doors after forty-nine years of service less his military time during WW II. We had met him in July at MG 2001 in St Paul earlier in the year. We had dinner with Jim and his wife Sunday evening at the Boundary House restaurant, which was for four years, the home of Cecil Kimber. It was a wonderful night as Jim reminisced of the early days and his first chance meeting with Cecil.

Then on Monday, we drove to the National Motor Museum at Gaydon where I took a lot of pictures, inside and out, of a 1937 SA saloon while Bill and Jack picked apart the PA on display. Then further north to Shrewsbury to buy more car parts. Back to the London area on Monday night and our hotel in Slough.

Our flight was scheduled to leave at 1:55 pm the next day, Tuesday the 11th, but since we were so close to the airport, we went there ahead of schedule to see if we could get an earlier flight. Good luck was with us. We were put on a flight, which was to leave at 11:00 am, which would get us to Denver at 5:20 pm instead of 9:15 pm as was originally scheduled. Life is good.

Bill, Jack and I were comfortably seated on UA929, as we took off on what we thought was to be the usual eight-hour boring flight to Chicago-O'Hare. This trip was to be anything but boring.

Our 777 carried a total of 198 passengers. About half way into our flight, (I like to monitor our progress on the little TV screen) I glanced at the screen and it showed O'Hare as our destination with 4:32 to go. Altitude was 39000 ft. All was well. About five minutes later, I glanced at the screen and it showed that we were to land in 45 minutes--had I fallen asleep? Our elevation was now 35k and to my surprise, the next screen showed that our destination was now Gander, Newfoundland!! What's going on?

About that time, you could feel the power being pulled back, but there was no word from the captain. Not many people were aware at this time that something unusual was happening as most were reading or watching a movie. We continued to lose altitude. At 28k feet, the captain came on and said, "We have a healthy airplane but we are going to

be landing in Gander, Newfoundland shortly. There is a problem in the U.S. and we cannot go there.” With that, the wheels were lowered and we began to circle so we could dump enough fuel so that our landing weight would be ok. The power was left full on so as to use more fuel causing the plane to shake vigorously and it was very noisy. At this point, everyone was getting a little nervous. We landed about 15 minutes later very fast and came to a stop in a line of other commercial planes, which had also been forced to land. In all, 39 planes would eventually land in Gander and around 200 in all of Canada.

We had now been on the plane for almost six hours. Once we stopped, the captain explained what he knew of the events in the U.S. and plugged in a BBC radio station to the audio system so we could listen. For the first time, we were hearing the details of the attack. We were on the plane for another 20 hours. There was only enough food for one more meal, a snack actually, so there we were.

The phones on board the planes are all satellite types, so of course all the lines were jammed and no one could get a message out. One of the flight attendants had a cell phone that worked so Jack got through to his wife and she then made calls to someone in each of our families. That was a relief. It was 3 o'clock in the morning before I could get a line and call home. I was able to tell my daughter, Julie, that we were all ok but we did not know what the future held.

All 39 planes were lined up and no one got off until the next morning when they began to off load one plane at a time into school buses. We eventually got our turn and left our plane and crew at 10:30 am taking only what we had carried on. Most people had in their carry-on things like tooth brushes, tooth paste, deodorant, etc. I had car parts. We were processed, passports, etc., and given a sandwich and soft drink and put back on the bus and away we went to a town called Gambo, some 30 miles SE of Gander. Eventually, there were four planeloads billeted in Gambo. We were very lucky--UA929 was to be billeted in a church run by the Salvation Army. Not a big church but it did have a small kitchen, four bathrooms, and enough room for all 198 souls to sleep on the floor, which we did for the next four nights.

We found out later that a call had gone out to all residents of Gambo at ten o'clock the night before to bring blankets, towels, food, etc. to the church. It was an amazing outpouring of generosity by these people in this town of just 1800. The unemployment in Gambo is 30% and they have very little material wealth, but for the next five days, they made sure we were fed three meals a day, they took us to showers all around town in their homes, we used their phones, and they generally treated us like celebrities. They took care of the few medical problems we had and drove us around town to show us the sights. They are very proud of their community.

It was no doubt one of the most incredible experiences of my life. Friendships were forged not only with the others on the plane, but solid friendships as well with the local people there who have such a strong northern accent that sometimes it was hard to understand what they were saying but it was never hard to understand their intentions. As a group, they were the most caring, giving, loving group of people I think I have ever

been around. There was always a smile and an offer to accommodate our every need. At one point, I shaved (just once in the five days) and walked to a small market near by to get some after-shave lotion. The market did not have any so as I was leaving, a woman who had overheard my request asked if I was staying at the church and promptly went home, got her husband's bottle of lotion and brought it to me at the church.

The day before we left, one of the locals, Roland, drove Jack and me back to Gander to a Wal Mart so we could get a few clothing items (shorts, socks, shirts) so we would at least have some fresh clothes on the plane which they now said would probably depart the next day. This was two days after we were supposed to leave the first time.

During the day, discussions and debates of all types and subjects were held. I took a lot of walks to the waterfront and in the surrounding woods. It is gorgeous country, heavily wooded with a river running through it. I saw my first salmon ladder--salmon and cod used to provide a big industry there but not so any more. On the Saturday we were there, we had to completely vacate the church, as there was a funeral. Some of our people went to that funeral.

In the evenings, we sang songs (there was a good guitar player there from the UK on his way to Nashville, Julian Dawson), there were gospel songs sung by the men of the church playing their instruments, some of which were hand made. And Theresa, the church secretary who we began to call Mother Theresa, sang with a group of kids like an old fashion revival. And the young girl choir sang one evening, not too good, but from the heart, our national anthem getting most of the words right and then "O'Canada". These were wonderful experiences. Julian eventually wrote a song about our time in Gambo.

Incredibly, one of the passengers on the last night we were in Gambo developed a web page for our group 'www.ua929.org' on which Julian's song is reproduced. Hearing those spiritual songs at a time like that was really an inspiration to me and I think gave us all the incentive to reflect on our situation and count our blessings, particularly our families who everybody thought about all the time. We were basically hostages in a friendly environment.

Finally, at 2:30am on the 5th day, we were awakened and told that we would be leaving soon. Virtually all of the town's people who had been with us for the last five days got up and came to the church so we could all say our goodbyes--it was a very emotional time. Bill gave Roland his Swiss army knife and Roland just could not stop talking about that gift. We boarded the buses and left this little community on the north Atlantic for the airport. There were a lot of tears, especially among the town's folk. Many had never met an American and I think they liked us. We passed the hat before we left and gave to the church in excess of \$3000 and we exchanged addresses. Roland collects baseball hats so Jack and I are sending him some from Colorado.

From that point on, it was relatively uneventful. We boarded the plane after a seven-hour wait and a very intense screening (the authorities pulled six people from our group for some additional screening--not sure if they ever got back on the plane). The captain had

told us that there was a security issue on our plane, which may have been the reason we were so long in departing. There were only five planes left there when we finally departed. On our flight, there were people from thirteen states and eight countries, by my count, including India and Saudi Arabia.

The flight crew on this plane was the best--Captain Mike, et al. Always kept us informed but not to the point of scaring anyone. They should get medals.

On our 3-½ hour trip to Chicago, I obviously had time to reflect on all of the events, which had transpired over the last week, both in Newfoundland and in America. What I had experienced in Gambo over the previous five days was the most genuine display of human spirit I had ever seen. It was a time of crisis and we all recognized that and everyone responded accordingly. Not once during the five days did I hear even one complaint about our circumstances. The 198 passengers of UA929 and the some 200 citizens of Gambo who cared for us had developed a bond that will last for a very long time if not forever.

I, and probably most Americans, have always taken our freedom for granted, to come and go as we please, wherever--whenever. I now have a new appreciation for that freedom.

We got to O'Hare at 12:30 pm on Monday the 17th. As the plane rolled up to the jet way, the United baggage handlers had moved their trucks in a line on each side of the plane so as to form a corridor to the jet way. Their vehicle lights were on and they were all waving, some with the American flag. What a sight!! There must have been 40 or so of these trucks. As we deplaned, the jet way was also full of United employees all clapping and cheering. They also were waiving flags. I became pretty emotional about that time.

Days earlier, because we were not sure that we could get a connecting flight to Denver any time soon, six of us decided to look for other means to get to Denver. There were no rental cars available, no trains, and no buses. We considered buying a car and driving it to Denver and then selling it. My daughter Julie and her friend Brent volunteered to drive to Chicago (16 hours) and pick us up which they did in a fifteen-passenger van. Bill and Jack needed to get back as quickly as possible so when they found they could get air transportation, they flew and the rest of us drove (another 16 hours). My head hit the pillow at 4:00am Monday.

What an experience!! It is just too bad that it takes an act of madmen to create such an unbelievably wonderful life experience. I, and I am sure it is the same with Bill and Jack, will never forget those Newfies and their incredible hospitality. Maybe some day we will go back for a visit.

Tom Cox
Foxfield, Colorado
19 September, 2001

new twigs on the John Washington Cox line.

Audrey Sonya Lacey was born June 21, 2002 in New York City to David Lacey and his wife. Proud Grandmother is Carol (Cay Leitschuck) Ecklund.

Wedding on the JOHN Washington Cox line.

Lyndle Freeman married Sarah Crandell, August 17, 2002, at Barnabas Episcopal Church in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. They live in Denver. Lyndle is the son of Doris Freeman.

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COX FAMILY REUNION

The Cox family reunion was held August 3 and 4th near Burwell, NE. About 65 family members met at Kamp Kaleo for the weekend. This was the first time the reunion was held someplace other than Burchard, NE., however the building at Burchard was no longer available, making a change in location necessary.

Some people arrived Friday and spent the evening catching up on news and family events. Saturday activities included visiting the cemetery, seeing the local shops near Burwell, touring Fort Hartsuff, or golfing. In the afternoon, about a dozen people canoed down the Loup River. It was quite an experience since NE was in the midst of a drought, and the water level was low, and most of us did not have experience with canoeing. It meant the canoes were pulled some of the time. Others went tubing down the Loup, which included going over a small "rapids" for excitement.

Tom Cox and Amy Plazek were selected to plan the next family reunion in 2005. I know they would like to hear from anyone with suggestions for the next reunion. Amy's address is 4726 Avenue G, Kearney, Ne 68847-8406

Written by Janet Hunt.

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The cemetery that we visited north of Burwell, is where Mary Ann (Cox) Freeland is buried, along with her son Truman and other members of his family. It was not known at the time of the reunion, but Truman Freeland helped build Fort Hartsuff in the 1870's.

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From the Port Byron, IL Globe Newspaper of August 18, 1927

COX FAMILY REUNION

The 24th annual Cox family reunion was held Saturday at Long View Park, Rock Island There was 75 members present. At 1:00 o'clock a sumptuous dinner was served.

Kenneth H. Cox, of Davenport, IA. was toastmaster, and he gave a short address of welcome. Others who responded in short talks were: Raymond Cox of Kearney, Nebr.; Mrs. Martin Capper of Concordia, Kansas; Fred and Elizabeth Cox of Scranton, Pa.; John Wesley Cox of Des Moines, Ia; G. R. Cox of Plainview, Tex, Mrs Margaret Cox of Albuquerque, N.M.; J.J. Cox of Moline, IL. Frank and Cornell Knight of Laurel, Ia., C. L. Cox of Marshalltown, Ia. and oldest member is now 87 years.

Those appearing the program for the afternoon were: Misses Marion Cox of Moline and Clara Shunning of Milar who gave piano selections; Louis Shunning of Milan a whistling solo; Dorothy and Grace Cox of Moline gave dances; The

News: Stephanie Weirich and Steve Zdancewic receive PHDs.

Stephanie Weirich is the Daughter of Charlotte Antes Weirich and Wayne Weirich and is the Granddaughter of John Antes and Eleanor Vanderwalker Antes. Stephanie Weirich is married to Steve Zdancewic and both have completed the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) degrees at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. Stephanie is a 1992 graduate (Valedictorian) of R. L. Turner High School in Farmers Branch, Texas. In 1996, She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree (Magna Cum Laude) in Computer Science from Rice University, Houston, Texas. She was awarded a National Science Foundation Fellowship, which she used to finance her continued education at Cornell University.

At Cornell, Stephanie met Steve Zdancewic who was also enrolled in the Computer Science degree program. As the new Computer Science graduate students at Cornell, they were put in charge of planning and organizing the annual Picnic (Picnic Czars). The picnic was rained out of course and was postponed until the next week, but Steve and Stephanie got to know each other. Steve and Stephanie enjoy many activities together including games, reading, cooking, music, dancing and Ice Hockey (yes, Stephanie plays Ice Hockey).

In August of 1999 Steve and Stephanie were married at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Farmers Branch, Texas. Since the wedding and honeymoon, they have been very busy preparing and presenting technical papers at numerous international conferences. Stephanie's research involves the theory of computer language constructs, such as "Typing", which can be used to develop compilers that generate bug-free code.

Steve is from Somerset County, Pennsylvania. In 1996 he received his Bachelor's degree (with Honors) from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA. Steve's research involves the theory of programming languages and language based security. This research will be used to make Internet web sites that cannot be penetrated by hackers. This Fall, Steve and Stephanie, both, will join the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania as assistant Professors. They are looking forward to teaching and continuing research.

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