

J P V Madsen at Pearl Harbour December 1941.

(Prepared by R W Madsen March 2019).

Introduction.

As Director of the Australian Government Scientific Liaison Mission JPVM had been in the U.S. & U.K. from May 1941 to November 1941 & during this time initial steps for siting of Australian ShD radar (Shore Defence radar to control the 15 inch & 9 inch batteries) in Singapore & other Far East British ports had been carried out by RPL (Radiophysics Laboratory) from Sydney. The C in C Far East (Commander in Chief) was anxious to discuss with JPVM a program to supply & install these radars & JPVM had to decide whether to return to Sydney first & be updated on the RPL position & then fly up to Singapore or alternatively go directly to Singapore from the U.S.. It appears that before leaving mainland U S on December 2nd JPVM had decided on the 1st course of action but did recall that he could have obtained a seat on a plane going to Singapore (from Honolulu) but said he was lucky he didn't as he believed he would have become a casualty of Japanese attacks. As it was he was lucky to leave Honolulu on Thursday the 4th of December & was beyond Noumea on the 8th when the coded Pan Am radio message was received on the "Pacific Clipper" (Boeing 314 see photo at the end of this document) notifying the state of war with Japan.

The Pan Am flight that JPVM most probably would have caught going to Singapore, as a FAM 14 flight, (Foreign Airmail Flight –San Francisco to Singapore linking up with BOAC heading west) was the "Philippine Clipper" a Martin M-130 which left San Francisco on December 3 & from Honolulu on December 4 (ie. the same day as JPVM left on "Pacfic Clipper" for Auckland). The "Philippine Clipper" subsequently had a miraculous escape at Wake Island when 5 passengers, 26 civilians & 8 crew were able to get back to Honolulu on December 9, so perhaps JPVM may not have become a casualty after all, but if the "Philippine Clipper" had not been delayed at Wake for 1 day due to engine problems then its scheduled stop on the 8th December, at Guam ,which was attacked by Japanese aircraft from early that morning, & also for several days after, so that the "Philippine Clipper"& passengers would certainly have been lost.

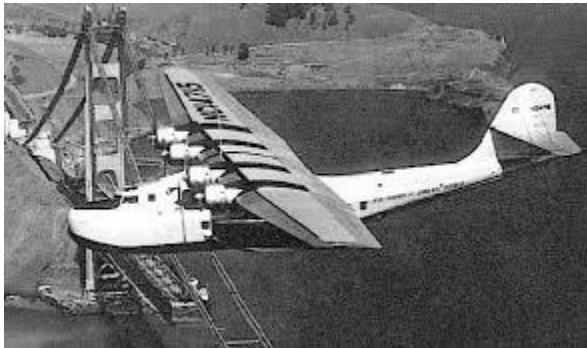
FAM 14 (Foreign Air Mail) Flights- San Francisco to Singapore.

The provision of Pan Am & Imperial/BOAC/ Qantas services in the 1930's was influenced greatly by Government postal service subsidies which made these service flights economically possible.

In 1934/35 the Glenn L Martin company of Baltimore manufactured 3 M-130 commercial flying boats for Pan Am ("China Clipper", "Hawaii Clipper", & "Philippine Clipper") which had a range of 3,000 miles powered by 4 Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp radial engines of 830 hp & had a crew of 6-9 to carry 36 day, 18 night passengers. It had a max. speed of 180 mph & cruise at 130 mph-its wing span was 130 feet. [Pan Am "China Clippers" became a generic name for Pan Am large flying boats viz. the Martin M-130, the Sikorsky S-42 & Boeing 314].

Weekly passenger flights across the Pacific began in October 1936 when the " Hawaii Clipper" left San Francisco for Manila stopping overnight in Honolulu, Midway Island, Wake Island & Guam. An S-42 Sikorsky began flying the Manila-Hong Kong route in 1937 & on May 2nd 1941 Pan Am extended its service from Manila to Singapore. In July 1938 the "Hawaii Clipper" disappeared between Guam & Manila losing 6 passengers & 9 crew due to an unknown cause.

"Philippine Clipper's" NC 14715 last complete FAM 14 round trip before Pearl Harbour had departed from San Francisco on November 4th & arrived at Singapore on November 14th & then returned to San Francisco on November 27th. On December 3 "Philippine Clipper" took off again from San Francisco & flew on from Honolulu the next day, December 4th & from Midway the next arriving at Wake on the 7th (still then December 6 at Midway & Hawaii). On December 8th at Wake "Philippine Clipper" finally got off at around 7.00 am on the regular flight to Guam after a days delay due to engine trouble, however soon after leaving (20 minutes) the plane was recalled to Wake because of the attack on Pearl Harbour. The plane dumped 3,000 pounds of fuel before landing & passengers & cargo were unloaded while the plane was refuelled for the trip to Midway. At around mid day Japanese planes attacked but miraculously the 26 strafing bullets which hit the plane all missed the large fuel tanks. At 1330 on the 3rd attempt to leave for Midway the plane became airborne with 5 passengers, 26 Pan Am employees & 8 crew. The plane had been stripped of all superfluous equipment & after Midway reached Honolulu then San Francisco. Wake surrendered to the Japanese on December 23 & a single PBV from Midway was the only friendly plane to arrive since the war began.["Philippine Clipper" was lost in 1943 in an accident in California].



"China Clipper" NC 14716 , also a Martin M-130, departed from San Francisco on November 19 for a routine FAM 14 flight across the Pacific to Singapore, 8,500 miles away. She started her eastbound return flight on November 29 & arrived at San Francisco from the Far East on the morning of December 6, several hours before "Anzac Clipper" (Boeing 314) departed in the opposite direction.

"Anzac Clipper" NC 18611 left San Francisco on the afternoon of December 6 (the plane had actually taken off late on the afternoon of December 5 but experienced mechanical trouble 400 miles out & had to return to San Francisco. After repairs she was rescheduled to leave at 2.00 pm California time on December 6 but the veteran pilot had been granted a brief postponement of about ½ an hour to attend his daughter's piano recital.) At 8.00 am the next morning "Anzac Clipper" was less than 1 hour away from Honolulu when a radio flash was received that Pearl Harbour was under Japanese air attack & the plane diverted to Hilo 220 miles southwest of the combat zone. Providentially the late departure had kept the vulnerable aircraft out of harm's way.

FAM 19 Flights- San Francisco to Auckland.

After being invited to a party at Hickham AFB in the evening before his departure, JPVM left Honolulu on Thursday 4th December on "Pacific Clipper". The journey of the "Pacific Clipper" after war commenced is an epic story of the Boeing 314 circling the globe back to the US-New York & at times having to use standard motor vehicle gasoline. Collectors of airmail covers put a high value on letters carried on this flight & it is the interest of aerophilatelic collectors which has helped in ascertaining the FAM

information herein. By Wednesday 10th of December JPVM was back in Sydney but the flight to Singapore booked for around the 15th December was cancelled.

Manila-Hong Kong Shuttle.

The “Hong Kong Clipper” NC 16735 (Sikorsky S-42) was a twice weekly service between Hong Kong & Manila. About 6 hours after the Pearl Harbour attack 135 Japanese dive bombers strafed & bombed targets in Hong Kong including the Pan Am flying boat which was burnt out.



Guam.

At 4.45 am on December 8th the Pearl Harbour attack was notified to Guam & at 8.27 Japanese land based planes from Saipan attacked the island including the Pan Am hotel & Standard Oil Coy. Air raids continued into the morning & afternoon before subsiding at 1700. On December 9th the Japanese air attacks resumed with no more than 9 aircraft at a time.

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