

October 31, 1973

William Seawell
Chairman of the Board
Pan American World Airways
Pan American Building
200 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Seawell:

I am a research physician and travel widely, constantly and internationally. I would like to mention to you an observation made on my return 27 October from a U.S. mission in Moscow, involving your flight PAA #055 London to Minneapolis. First, the flight was technically perfect and competent in all respects; no complaints!

But from the time I heard the captain's first words on the speaker system, through meeting him, and then observing his behavior on arrival in Detroit customs, I was disconcerted, for him and for the flight. Your senior pilot on that flight was beyond his tolerance of fatigue. His initial announcement was in a weak voice, rambling, at times incoherent, and included announcement of our landing in New York instead of Detroit.

On his visit to the cabin we had a nice chat, and he was clearly bone-tired, yawning, mumbling about getting messed up by the strike in Rome, volunteering, "If I don't get home tonight, I'll be dead." He recounted 8 transatlantic crossings in 11 days. He again spoke of landing in New York. When he left and I said, "See you in Detroit"; he said, "I hope so" in a pessimistic tone.

On arrival he repeatedly mumbled all the way through customs, "Are we going to Rome; they'll probably send me to Rome," sighing and shaking his head.

Aside from his unsettling appearance, grossly obese, missing teeth, and cigarette smoking, I felt great sympathy for the man who was clearly operating beyond his stamina. It would seem to me that fitness, freshness, and careful pacing by schedules to avoid fatigue, depression and confusion in middle-aged pilots, would be essential to the optimal function of senior personnel and of the world's most experienced airline! .

Sincerely,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Professor and Director

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