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ing full left rudder then full right rudder, etc., as the B-24 waltzed across the sky, losing approximately 2500 feet in the process. When Kent appeared in the cockpit with a grin and a wise remark, he was persona non grata for a few moments; a couple of the crewmen had begun to wonder if this trip was really necessary!

Captain Loadholt had navigated by map and compass from Poona to Torrejon, but from Torrejon to Santa Maria in the Azores he had to rely on celestial navigation augmented with occasional readings with the drift meter. The borrowed Loran set operated beautifully on the ground, but once airborne it refused to cooperate; possibly, it was trying to prove the navigator's ability. At any rate, the Azores appeared on schedule and the navigator's ability was then a matter of record, much to the crew's relief.

As 100/130 avgas was not available at Santa Maria, the ship was flown on over to Lages, where we found that the trip would have to be continued with 115/145. Checks with Pratt & Whitney and Shell revealed that this would cause no particular difficulty so plans were made for the longest single leg of the journey, Lages to Newfoundland.

### **Forced Landing in Quebec**

A couple of days later, when weather was more favorable, the ten-hour and thirty-minute flight was completed without incident, instilling in the crewmen a great respect for those wonderful P&W R-1830s, the greatest recip engine ever manufactured.

Hoping to make Washington in one day, the crew took off the next morning in questionable weather, using the St. Lawrence River as a guide toward Quebec. Encountering a snow storm, Col. Svendsen was forced to execute a 180 and head for a small airfield which we saw a short time before. The 6500-foot strip at Forestville, Quebec, had been partially cleared of snow, but only 4500 feet were available for the landing.

Col. Svendsen made a superb landing and taxied into the small terminal, the only aircraft on the small field. In short order most of the 3000 inhabitants of the village were present to extend us a most cordial welcome to their community.

### **Refueling By Hand Pump**

Two and a half hours of pumping with an old hand pump filled the tanks for the next day's flight, and thirty gallons of oil were poured by hand from gallon cans. The next morning, for the first time in 25 years, the craft was covered with snow, a far cry from the sub-tropical climate of Poona.

The people of Forestville fell to with the crew to remove the accumulated snow and to apply alcohol to the control surfaces; shortly thereafter, leaving a cloud of snow, the Liberator thundered off for Washington.

The remainder of the flight to Washington, Fort Worth, and Tucson was completely routine. In Fort Worth the 25-year-old B-24 was photographed with a more recent product of its birthplace, a sparkling new F-111 and the crew was entertained at the home of Frank Davis, president of the Fort Worth Division of General Dynamics.

Finally, at 1100 hours, 27 April, 31 days after leaving Poona, with 75 1/2 hours for entry in Forms 5, after consuming 15,000 gallons of avgas, and with more than 11,000 miles behind her, the "Pima Paisano," as the ship had been named, executed a low pass

down the runway at Davis-Monthan, pulled up into a steep climbing turn, then settled gracefully onto the runway, another Svendsen grease job and its last mission completed.

On hand to greet the old veteran and her crew were General James H. Doolittle, USAF Ret.; Air Commodore M. D. Khanna, Air Attache, Embassy of India; James Corbett, mayor of Tucson, Brigadier General Jack C. Ledford, commander of the 12th Strategic Aerospace Division of Davis-Monthan; and Colonel A. V. Grossetta, USAF Ret., president of the Tucson Air Museum Foundation.

"Mission Improbable" had been a success because of Shell Oil Co., Pratt & Whitney, General Dynamics, Honeywell, Trans World Airlines, Pan American Airways, Allied Aircraft Sales, and more than 300 individuals and organizations who had enough faith to risk a buck or two.

And of course, it was successful because of the best (and only) currently qualified B-24 crew in the U. S. Air Force.

At an ALPA meeting some time ago, Lt. Col. LeRoy W. "Swede" Svendsen, Jr., USAF, pilot of the "Pima Paisano" on its long homeward flight, recalled these highlights in an interview with Capt. Harry H. McKee

- The Indian Air Force supplied us with an air officer and an engineer at Poona AB who had obviously been flying this machine for quite some time and they gave us a checkout of about eight hours of transition training.

- We had to land at Bombay to get an FAA certification inspection on the aircraft, done by a TWA mechanic. Then we returned to Poona.

- M/Sgt. Bob Kent of the 75th Military Airlift Squadron was our mechanic and flight engineer, he had been flying the line for about 25 years. He had some B-24 experience in WW II and it turned out to be a very fortunate selection because he was outstanding.

- His recall was almost unbelievable. The Indian Air Force engineer would begin to rebrief him on a system and you could see it flashing back in his mind and he would say "Oh, yeah, and I remember the pressure was here and that valve did this and that, and so on and so forth."

- Yes, Karachi was our first stop en route to the States and we had two days there due to losing a jug on Number 3 engine. We were assisted by the Pan Am folks who provided us with engine stands and tools. The jug was dead from a stuck valve; it was a case of un-sticking the valve, the engine was not damaged.

Air line pilots are a pretty sophisticated group of people, and nothing in aviation particularly turns their heads, they've seen them all, they've flown them all, it takes quite a bit to get them turned on. But at Karachi, our first stop, was my first awareness of the fascination of our old bird. We had an arrival of a BOAC plane and another airline, a Middle East airline, while we were preparing to depart. Both the captains were British, and they came over at a brisk walk, across the very hot ramp in the opposite direction from which they were going, maybe a half mile, to confirm their obser-