



February 2013

Newsletter for the TALOA Alumni Association

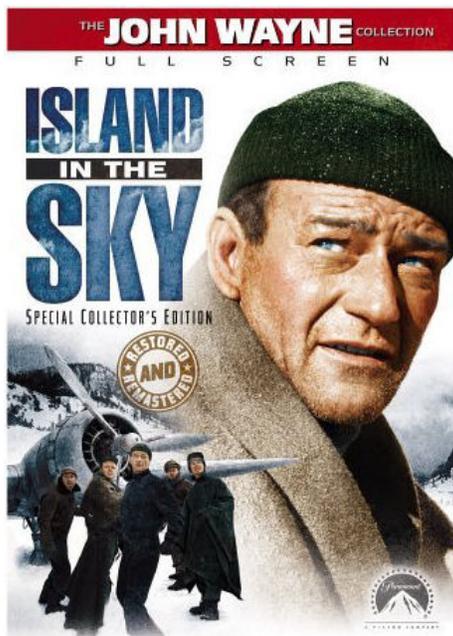
[www.taloo.org](http://www.taloo.org)

Send photos & letters to: Jeane Kennedy Toynbee, Editor, PO Box 243, Copperopolis, CA 95228

Or email: [jeanenbob@caltel.com](mailto:jeanenbob@caltel.com) If you'd like items returned, please include a note along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope

## Making *Island In The Sky* By Jeane Kennedy

This year marks 60 years since Transocean took part in the filming of *Island In The Sky*. My father, Captain Frank Kennedy flew the DC3s used in the movie and wrote a short story that is published on our website at: [http://www.taloo.org/island\\_making.html](http://www.taloo.org/island_making.html)



Many other stories are still told in our family about this Transocean adventure. Two stand out in my memory. First, the author of *Island In The Sky*, Ernie Gann, tried landing at Truckee Airport, which in 1953 was just a dirt strip. My father, a long time friend of Ernie, was captain on that flight and recorded in his logbook that

Ernie “nosed up in the snow”. This information I verified by looking at my father’s logbooks. Second, at the cast party my mother took a whole roll of film of my dad with John Wayne, Ward Bond, Andy Devine, Fess Parker, James Arness, Lloyd Nolan, etc. and left the lens cap on.

From my father’s logbook I found out that Transocean acquired one of the DC3s used for filming – 17314 – from TWA. He flew to Kansas City to pick it up on January 17, 1953. He then flew 17314 to Albuquerque NM where the plane stayed until the 26<sup>th</sup>. Why 9 days there? Did Transocean have a maintenance base there? Were needed parts flown in? No notations were made in my father’s logbooks. I’ll have to rely of the memory of our readers. My father then flew 17314 on to Burbank then Oakland on January 26<sup>th</sup>. February 2<sup>nd</sup> he flew the

DC3 to Burbank again, this time to pick up the actors and fly them to Reno. The same day a flight to San Francisco was then planned with all the actors aboard, however, SFO was fogged in so they had to land at San Jose. My father’s logbooks then show many trips around the Reno area, I presume filming where any snowy area could be shown. It was on February 6<sup>th</sup> that Ernie “nosed up in the snow” and on the 7<sup>th</sup> a new DC3 was recorded in my father’s logbooks – 15591. This plane was used for 2 days until evidently 17314 was put back in service. The last flight recorded in my father’s logbook occurred on February 9<sup>th</sup> when he flew all the actors back to Burbank.

While filming, the actors stayed at the Truckee Lodge which is now the Donner Lake Village Resort – and this is where *my* adventure began. On a two day trip, I stayed at the resort and set out to see what other information I could find out 60 years later.

I contacted the Truckee-Donner Historical Society and although no one was around then, they provided some interesting information:

*“In 1953 the filming of the John Wayne classic, “Island in the Sky” created a lot of excitement in town. The film was about an Air Force transport plane forced down on the bleak wastes of Labrador and the efforts of a rescue squadron to locate the plane in the frozen desolate area.*

*Most of the filming was done at the old Truckee airstrip, which, at the time, was located south of present Interstate 80, directly opposite today’s truck weigh station. The film co-starred Lloyd Nolan and Ward Bond who arrived with a 57 member film crew, which was housed at Donner Lake Lodge. In all, more than 100 actors and technicians were in town during the filming.*

*The late, Nelson Stone, a longtime Truckee resident, was hired as a technician and worked on the set at the old airstrip. Stone believed that the title for “Island in the Sky” was inspired by the deep fog bank that often appears in the morning at the base of Boca Hill. On certain days the layer of fog creates an illusion that makes the top of the Boca hill look like a beautiful mountain island suspended in the sky.”*

Ernie Gann titled & published his book *Island In The Sky* in 1944 so I must disagree with Mr. Stone. However, the last image in the 1953 movie is of Boca Hill, shrouded in fog and looking very much like an “island in the sky”.



My next stop was the local newspaper – The Sierra Sun – to see what may have been written during the time of the filming. I was only able to find two articles. The first article was dateline January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1953:

***Firm will Film Arctic Picture At Airport Here  
Hollywood Stars Due Here To Make Picture Of Arctic***

*For the first time in nearly 20 years, Truckee, which once flourished as a center for major motion pictures, will be host to approximately 100 actors, technicians and others who began arriving this week to film an arctic rescue picture starring John Wayne, Lloyd Noland, Ward Bond and featuring several others.*

*While a few of the advance people are here this week from Hollywood, the main company is not scheduled to arrive until next week for a three weeks stay.*

*Among the first to arrive were Alex Weldon, special effects, and James Bascovi, art director. These two are preparing the Truckee airport, four miles northeast of here for the major part of the filming, and arranging for the arrival of the other technicians, actors and cast personnel.*

*Fifty seven members of the company will be quartered at Donner Lake Lodge and the balance at Gateway Motel, according to present plans, although some members are expected to stay at various other hotels and motels in the immediate area, Weldon said.*

*The picture is being directed by William Weldon for the Wayne-Fellows Productions and well be released through Warner Brothers.*

***Factual Story***

*The story, factual in most details, is based on the crash of an army B-24 in the Artic a few years back in which the five crewmen faced a series of tragic hardships before the rescue. While some of the scenes, including the crash of the plane, the blizzards and other details will be simulated, the producers are hopeful that a storm will*

*arrive soon to blanket the area and background to provide realistic shots.*

*The company was originally slated to make the picture at Big Bear Lake in southern California but the complete absence of snow made the change of plans advisable.*

*All the equipment is being brought here by trucks and local garages are being taxed to provide parking space for the valuable apparatus.*

*Arrangements have been made with the Public Utility District to provide two or three thousand gallons of water daily from which snow will be made for the wind-machine blizzard scenes. The water will be hauled to the site by trucks.*

*Weldon said that while the company does not encourage visits to the airport during the shooting of scenes, it will not object providing spectators do not interfere with the work. There will be no work for local extras since the picture does not require more than the personnel being brought from Hollywood.*

***All-Male Cast***

*The picture will comprise an all-male cast with the exception of one or two shots which will be taken in the studios at Hollywood, where interior plane pictures also are being made.*

*Hap Warnke of Donner Lake Lodge is assisting Weldon and Bascovi in preparing for the arrival of the cast and technicians and in obtaining accommodations, as well as making the airport ready for the production.*

*Truckee in past years has hosted numerous movie companies in the process of filming some of the outstanding productions but the arrival of the current group marks the first time in more than 15 years that a major production has been filmed locally.*

The only other article I found in the Sierra Sun appeared February 19<sup>th</sup>. I'm sure my father never knew this transpired or it would have become a story of legend! To refresh your memory, in the movie, co-pilot Lovatt wanders off from the others and is later found dead. When rescue planes finally arrive, the downed crew makes a sign in the snow to let the rescuers know there are only 4 men left to save. So, I've set the scene for you – the scene the director had made in the snow and this is what happened locally in Truckee:

***Writing In Snow Fools Officials In Wake of Movie  
“Lovatt Is Dead!”***

*These grim words trampled in the snow and emphasized with carefully placed sticks and stones were spotted by a rescue plane four miles southeast of Truckee Tuesday and started an investigation which proved*

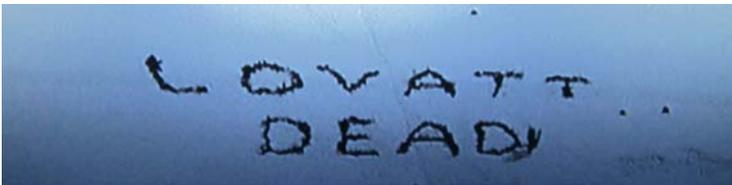
somewhat embarrassing to a "rescue" party headed by Sheriff Wayne Brown.

It appears that while a Hollywood motion picture company was here filming a story of a heroic Artic crash and rescue, starring John Wayne, the words were spelled out in the snow as a prop to be filmed from the air.

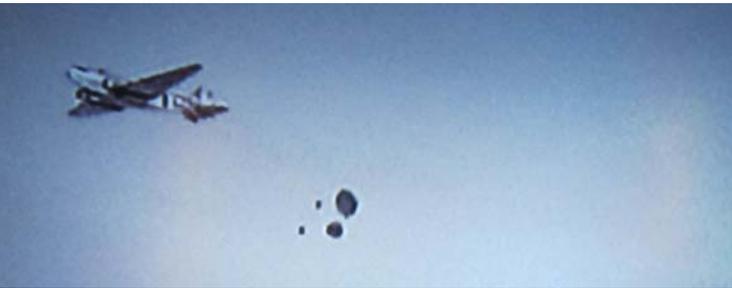
The search plane Tuesday spotted the "tragic" message about a mile south of Highway 40 and immediately notified the sheriff. Brown hurried to Truckee, summoned Deputy Roy Waters and Coroner Alvah Hooper and, after securing a Sno-cat, they started for the scene.

In the meantime, Constable N.F.Dolley, who had been out of town on business, returned and was advised of the message. Finding the location was only a short distance off Highway 40 and that the snow was virtually gone, he put two and two together and came up with the solution, which he later verified, and asked that a message be sent to the sheriff and his assistants to return to town.

Below is a picture I snapped from the movie to show you what the Sheriff & Coroner found.



There's one more story my father wrote about earning all Transocean's movie crew a month's pay. The story of how it came about can be found at: [http://www.taloe.org/island\\_making.html](http://www.taloe.org/island_making.html) but it involves making a perfect drop the first time rather than using all the allotted time the director had planned for, thus saving the production a lot of expense. Here's my dad, flying the DC3 & making the drop...



X marks the spot...right on Dad!



I'm back home again after my Donner adventure. I've watched *Island In The Sky* again and it brings tears to my eyes to know that was my dad flying that DC3.

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Belated birthday wishes to **Bob Allardyce**. He turned 90 last September!



Just got another great Newsletter and happy to say it brought back so many memories. Nice to hear from Jane Bountis --I remember Nick and he was always a joy to talk to. I joined TALOA in 1952 in Seattle and when they closed the station in 1957 they transferred me to Oakland to work with Francis Jones. Orvis sent me to Wake Island in 1959 to check their accounting system. I was there for two weeks. In 1961 I helped close the doors in Oakland and moved onto San Francisco. American President Lines hired me.



Transocean was a great time in my life and that was how I met my Jack. He was with Pan Am and after 50 years of marriage I lost him in late 2010. I had cancer in 1964 and joined the American Cancer Society as a volunteer in 1965. I am still with them and in 1998 became the 2nd woman in their history to become National Chairman of the Board. For those who remember me my maiden name was **Jennie Levy**. Thanks again, Jennie Cook \*\*\*\*\*

Thank you once again for the TALOA Alumni Association Newsletter. I learn something new and interesting with each issue. Keep up the good work. **Neil Kleinman** \*\*\*\*\*

I browsed and found the website and loved it! Sorry about **Merle Sheets**. **Joe Goeller** looks as sweet as ever. **Billie Joiner** looks terrific. **Bill Benge**...bless him. He was the only pilot who would put me on as crew going from Shannon to NY. Why you say, because we always left Shannon TWICE. Nothing like going out...jettison fuel....return and do again. The ground crew would say....do you have Terry Mantz aboard....Bill would say yep! On my last move from Colorado to Georgia, my nursing cap and my Transocean cap went to la la land and I cried for weeks. Thanks for the memories, **Theresa Dalessandro**

*Hi Theresa, What wonderful memories! Would you happen to have any photos of you circa TAL days? I'd love to publish them along with your email note.*  
Sincerely, **Jeane Kennedy Toynbee**

Dear Jeane, These are what's left of my flying



First flight 1957 from Windsor Locks CT - Bradley Field

days! After I married on Okinawa, I returned to California in 1960 and lived in the Bay Area, adopted a newborn daughter, moved to Davis and eventually Grinnell IA, Michigan, Fort Myers FL, Greeley CO and finally ended up in Johns Creek GA.

All of that included 45 years of nursing, the last 15 was oncology. Smile school taught me to make lemonade out of lemons and I must admit I did a pretty good job of that. The past 12 years have been taken up with genealogy research and I love how that tends to mend families. Joe and I were witness Bill's marriage. The Sheets, Joiners and Joe were wonderful to me when I first returned from Okinawa and was trying to get settled. Let's see, Julie Quigley visited me in the Bay Area in



Theresa Dalessandro  
Sept 1955

the 1960's. That's Julie and Ruth Winkler at the World's Fair in Belgium 1958 and Ruth on Wake Island – TAL half, not Pan Am half [unable to reproduce image – Editor]. We did our best to teach the Germans to jitterbug in Frankfurt. Many years later, I met a newlywed couple from Frankfurt and when we got to talking about the sites I remembered. The kids said their grandmother talked about that. The last I had heard from Valerie was a letter telling me she had gone with Pan Am when TAL folded and met Dolores Hart in England. They entered the Benedictine Convent in Bethlehem CT. I went there looking for her a few years ago and she had left,

whereabouts unknown.

Georgia is a big airline personnel retirement center and those of us who are of the same vintage and older get together and tell our war stories. I just



Theresa Dalessandro, 2010, 75 yrs

want to let you folks know TAL was well represented. These service men and families remembered us from the fifties' and some actually remembered me and my maiden name. Small world isn't it. It was all good!!!! Blessings to you all, [Terry Mantz Dalessandro, tzd2126@gmail.com](mailto:Terry.Mantz.Dalessandro@tzd2126@gmail.com) \*\*\*\*\*

I would like to confirm if my grandfather Fren Relano Trinidad as assistant cook under flight captain James Keeton and flight radio operator Winlou Lim with aircraft name DC4 flight #648 year 1948-1950 as stated on his personal diary. Kindly inform as ASAP! Marilyn Trinidad Bornaes

*Hello Marilyn, We do not have any records to confirm the information regarding your grandfather, however, I will publish your email & perhaps someone will remember & write us. Sincerely, Jeane Kennedy Toynbee (Capt. Frank Kennedy's daughter) \*\*\*\*\**

While searching for more information on my mentor (1971-1977) who helped me while I was finishing up my flight training at Little Rock AFB, AR, I found your TALOA September 2012 newsletter. I was so proud to know this American (and Israeli) hero. The picture in the September 2012 newsletter is the same [Don Kosteff](#) mentioned by your writer, Zd. Klima. I believe ALL his references are the same Capt Don. I knew Don and Mildred in Arkansas. They had a beautiful home on the White River at Calico

Rock. 'Uncle Don' took my son John on his first fishing trip - floating the White River. Capt. Don entranced me with stories of flying a Pilatus Porter (for Air America) to Lima Site 85 in North Vietnam. In the movie "Air America" the actors notice a Pilatus landing almost vertically on the side of a location that may be Lima 85. He told me great stories of the effort (as Maintenance Officer) to assemble new P-40s on the Rangoon docks for General Chennault - Don said he ditched more planes into the harbor (due to poor work by the locals) than the Japanese ever shot down. See CAMCO for the story of the Flying Tigers' Tomahawk IIB and P-40E aircraft. What he never mentioned to me was that he volunteered for the RAF and flew in the Battle of Britain (and was an Ace in the Eagle Squadrons) - I found this in some US Army Air Force newsletters from his service in China as Maintenance and Test Pilot during the War. I'll look for them.

He test flew an Allison-powered P-47 and was on the cover of Popular Mechanics in the late '40s in it. Unfortunately, I sent that issue to his daughter and have never found the article online. The story of Don flying for 'Service Airlines' is in a book I found called "Destination Israel" by Harold Livingston - the picture in your newsletter is from that era - after Captain Kosteff was 'detained' at Treviso, Italy after a forced landing. Turns out Don's C-46 was loaded with machine guns and ammo! (chapter 8)

Attached is the last communication I received from

*Beach on Sinai Peninsula  
Gulf of Suez  
Sept. 1977 Uncle Don*



Captain Don - still flying transports. Don and Mildred were a pair of OLD CHINA hands - excellent Skeet and Trap shooters with mountains of trophies to show for it. I too have lost track of Mildred, after she left Lander, WY. Can you forward Mr. Klima's email to me, so I may contact him directly? Bill Howard, Captain USAF (ret) Milton-Freewater, OR \*\*\*\*\*

Here is a picture of me in 1954, taking a group to Hawaii ---on a prop plane. That is me at the bottom of the ramp ---in the black outfit. I will try to find some

more photos. By the way I was Jennie Levy in those days. Jennie Levy Cook



\*\*\*\*\*  
*The following email exchange is printed as is, with no editing...*

Should you please tell me what does it stand for by Taloa...T for Transocean, a for air, L for lines, O for what?, a for what????? I am an aviation history researcher locally here in Japan. Masao Suzuki

*Hi Masao, As the daughter of Captain Frank Kennedy, I spent my high school years in Japan while my father flew for JAL. I graduated from ASIJ - the American School In Japan - in 1965.*

*The hundreds of men & women who were Transocean Air Lines called themselves "Taloans". The telex machines used during the 40's & 50's designated 5 call letters for Transocean Air Lines OAKland.*

*We would be happy to see any article you write with the mention of Transocean Air Lines. Sincerely, Jeane*

Thanks for your reply on my question. As an introduction of myself, I joined Northwest Airlines in Japan in August 1971 and I left it in May 2008 just before the merger was completed between NWA and DLA. During my years at NWA, I was assigned for two years at the main base of NWA in Minneapolis. Prior to joining NWA, I studied in Michigan in 1970 as well. Although NWA was purchased by Delta, however DLA could not take away from my and our reminiscences on esprit de corps to create and build up a new era of civil aviation in Japan. Eventually, Japan Airlines is taking good healthy steps to start over their business. I mean to say they have just completed a Japanese version of chapter 11 and they will to celebrate 61years of anniversary on coming October 25 this year. Jeane, for your information, most of expatriate's sons and daughters from NWA/DLA and other airlines (PAA/UA/CO), and other American business entities

go to ASIJ in Chofu-shi. Not much is different from those days of your time in Japan. By the way, I have a few more questions to ask you:

1. How many JAL personnel were trained at TALOA? When they started and when they terminated the program with your? From my collection of information

regarding this, JAL started sending their personnel to TALOA from October 13, including 11 pilots and 2 flight operations.

2. Were there any others from Japanese airlines such as All Nippon Airways?

3. Did the program include in-flight or stewardess training, such as evacuation procedures by life vest, life raft. I am certain JAL was not equipped with the mock-up to cover Martin 2-0-2 and DC-4 at the time they inaugurated the first flight in October 25, 1951. JAL hired 15 stewardesses in August 20, 1951.

4. Did the program include maintenance?

5. If possible, could you kindly tell me the names of Japan Airlines stewardess and trainee pilot with Captain Rodney Stinch in the posted pictures of your web site.

Coming October 21 in Tokyo, I will attend the alumni of old NWA people, they will be people still to talk about those days of TALOA and NWA. If I could know more about TALOA, I think this will be an exciting moment. I will be able to show you more about the history of civil aviation in Japan as soon as the book is done. Best Regards, Masao Suzuki

*Dear Readers, I'm going to need some assistance answering Masao's questions. Please help!!!*

\*\*\*\*\*  
Subject: Transocean 12 July 1953

I was doing some searching to find information about the subject flight and found it in your 2010 Newsletters and I was totally amazed! At that time I was a very young sailor going from the states via Hawaii to Guam on the USNS Barrett when our ship was ordered to search and find this DC-6 that had gone down. It took several days but the wreckage was sighted in pretty calm seas. We saw some inflated rafts and other bits first so we had some hope of finding people alive. Then going at a low speed we came to find the people floating about and it was evident they were not alive. I was a radio man so I was drafted to some sending of information to headquarters. Morse code was the method then. Boats were put down and men went out to gather the people and fight the sharks too. Not all of the bodies were complete. They were then taken to the freezer for safe keeping. The men in the boats were very brave as it was dangerous - one guy bent over to pull a person out and

just missed a shark coming after him. Others used oars to beat them back.

I always wondered who those people were and why they were on that airplane. I will copy parts of your newsletter to add to my picture of the USNS Barrett. It was good to know now who some were. John Campbell

*Dear John, Thank you very much for sharing your experience. I will publish your email in our next newsletter as many Transocean families still talk about that very tragic incident. Sincerely, Jeane Kennedy Toynbee (Capt. Frank Kennedy's daughter)*

Hello Jeane: Okay, thanks. I must mention that I was not a member of the crew of the USNS Barrett but among many others being sent to their next duty station. Mine was a year in Guam. It's hard to believe that was almost 60 years ago and it still remains a very vivid memory and I was 18. When will your next newsletter be issued? Yours, John

*Hi John, I usually publish a newsletter when I have at least 8 pages of print. In the past that's been about quarterly. I'm hoping to publish another edition before the end of the year. I've kept your email address and will notify you when that next edition is online. Again, many thanks for your contribution, Jeane*  
\*\*\*\*\*

I got to thumbing through old TALOA newsletters and in the March 1996 edition, I found a list of "Hotel Notices & Signs From Around the World". They are hilarious. My TWA retired pilots association would like to republish with full attribution. I've tried to contact Purdy. No response. Can you help? Thanks. Bob Allardyce

*Hi Bob, One thing that has always characterized TAL folks is their willingness to remember & share with others. Yes, as editor of the TALOA newsletter you have my permission to republish "Hotel Notices & Signs From Around the World". Please attribute to:*

*TALOA Alumni Newsletter, [www.taloea.org](http://www.taloea.org)  
Sincerely, Jeane Kennedy Toynbee, Editor*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Jeane, I have moved again. Please update the roster because I don't want to miss out on the newsletters. New address:

1461 Creekside Drive Apt 2014  
Walnut Creek CA 94596

Cell phone number: 925.899.0287. I saw Edie and Holly recently and they both look great. Thanks, Billie Keating  
\*\*\*\*\*

Hello ~ I would like to add my father's picture to your website. Please advise the procedure to do so. Linda Mourgos

*Hi Linda, As webmaster I can do that for you. Can you email me the image and a description of your father's*

employment with Transocean Air Lines? Thank you, Jeane Kennedy, Editor & Webmaster.

Thank you for your quick reply. My father was **George C. Mourgos**. He was a Lt Commander in the Navy during WWII. He was a fighter pilot. After the war he joined Transocean Air Lines at Wake Island from 1949-1952. He was then transferred to Oakland Airport and became Station Manager from 1952-1959. Attached is his photo in his Transocean uniform. Thank you, Linda Hi Pam & Linda, Your father's photo & information is now located at [http://www.taloea.org/photos\\_people.html](http://www.taloea.org/photos_people.html) Thanks for sending us the image & information.\*\*\*\*\*



subscribe my will to join the TALOA family. I'm a former Taloea passenger's service agent based in Rome at Ciampino Airport – 1948/9. I thank you in advance for your attention and am looking forward to receiving your informational newsletters.

Here's a picture of first class passengers ladder for flight Taloea Rome-Caracas . I'm the one smiling ..... 1948, Regards, **Y.V.T. Virgilio (Gino) Esposito**



\*\*\*\*\*

Hello Pat, Enclosed are my dues. My wife Ruth and I worked for TALOA and want to know if it's necessary for us to pay for separate memberships. We do want to go Lifetime but honestly we prefer not to pay twice. Thinking back over the years, some of my best flying was with Transocean and the many fine people that I flew with. It was sad that they folded plus it did hurt my pocketbook at the time. However thinking back a little further than when I was first hired, I had been paying out of my pocket to pursue the love of my life which was flying. Those were the days! **Richard Price**, Santa Cruz, CA. \*\*\*\*\*

Dear Pat, You win. Here's my check. Put me back on your email or regular mail list. I would plan to attend the next reunion. If you are going to have some speakers, I would like to be one of them. I have had a most interesting experience with Transocean relating to my employment. I doubt if anyone else has had the same experience. I would take about ten minutes max. Tonight begins the CAT Reunion in San Francisco and we will be talking Gordon Palmquist with us. He is a lively 90. There will be a Chinese dinner tomorrow night and Saturday there will be a showing of CAT memorabilia at San Francisco International Airport and a banquet. Should be fun to see some former CAT pilots and others. Regards, **John Lannom**, San Rafael, CA \*\*\*\*\*

+++++



*Yearly dues in the amount of \$20.00 are payable now to:*

*Pat Stachon Kearns,  
Treasurer  
15592 Maplewood Drive,  
Sonoma, CA 95476  
Letters to our Treasurer...*

Dear Pat, I'm including a bank note of 20 Euros to



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Jeane Kennedy Toynbee, Editor  
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CORRECTION

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