

The pilot's corner

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1962)**

Heft 1410

PDF erstellt am: **12.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691185>

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subsequent development of architecture. Among the very fine buildings by Borromini which are to be found in Rome, we will point out the Barberini palace, the Campanile of St. Andrea delle Fratte, the interior of St. John Lateran, the main front of St. Agnes, St. Ivo, St. Carlo alle quattro Fontane.

Contrary to what was the rule for the other Ticinese artists, who were living a retired and laborious life and very rarely gave cause to speak about them, there are many items of news to be found in the archives of Rome about Borromini. He lived an eventful life and died a violent death. He asked to be buried in the tomb of his relative Carlo Maderno, which was granted — while dying away from his native soil he desired to feel near his fellow-Ticinesi.

Another Fontana, from Mendrisio, we find again as architect in the 18th century, viz., Carlo Fontana who, in Rome and in Florence, erected notable buildings. In Venice also the Baroque architecture had a Ticinese as its greatest exponent, viz., Baldassarre Longhena from Maroggia. Those who have been to Venice know the admirable church of Santa Maria delle Salute — the architecture is stupendous. It is perhaps the most beautiful and most original structure of the Baroque style. The great portals, the wonderful volutes, which unite the central to the outlying portions and the very beautiful dome leave an unforgettable impression. And Longhena, like all the Ticinesi, besides being a genius of architecture had also an excellent engineering mind. Among the innumerable works of art by him which are to be found in Venice, we would point out also the Rezzonico palace, which adorns the Grand Canal. (To be continued.)

THE PILOT'S CORNER

By Captain MARK CLIFTON

Very often I hear an air passenger make a sarcastic remark about the whole silly business of fastening his seat belt during a flight. Even if he is prepared to admit that the best protection on takeoffs and landings is a strong seat belt, he balks at the idea of danger when the light over the control cabin door flashes on during a flight at cruising altitude. Sure, he may feel a bit queasy from the sharp jolt as the plane wings through an airpocket or two, but the idea that these currents could throw him around is a little absurd. Anyhow, they never have. And he has flown over most of the globe.

The hard fact is that we pilots don't put that light on half as often as we should. As a result, the men in the hangar who repair interior upholstery have more than a few times patched up the fabric where the moving parts of the paying passengers have torn holes in the ceiling.

There was a specific instance a few years back when I was flying freight across the Pacific Ocean to Japan. Everything that should have been secured was tied down; with the exception, of myself and the second pilot who was sleeping peacefully sprawled out on one of the four reclining seats behind the cargo. I had just left the third pilot alone at the controls for five minutes so that I could make some coffee when he flew right smack into the biggest, fleeciest white cloud he could find among the few scattered en route. The plane dropped as if someone had pulled the legs out from under a grand piano — then it hit bottom with a groan of metal.

First I found myself clawing my way off the ceiling and then as suddenly slammed against the edge of the crew compartment bunk. The bruise that my thigh got, turning into a blue mark as round as a baseball, was *with me a month*. But the second pilot fared worse than my-

self. In his cosy chair he had sailed right up to the ceiling and down again with such force that his weight broke both the back and arm off the chair — and one of his own ribs. When he saw that the pilot at the controls had gone through a cumulus in a practically clear sky, he was ready to fight, bruises and all.

While this was a case of carelessness on the part of an inexperienced pilot, the real difficulty is that even a seasoned pilot cannot always tell where the big cumulus (turbulent clouds) or cumulonimbus (thunderclouds) are hiding. They may very often be veiled or covered by layers of thin stratus clouds through which the pilot flies solely by reference to instruments until suddenly — thump — his plane rocks crazily in the turbulent air. Weather services advise of such conditions en route. Other pilots report their experiences along the route, and at what altitude they encountered what. But this does not preclude the chance of running into hidden clouds.

In the early days of aviation the bumps and drops acquired the name, "Airpockets". Something you dropped into that gave the same sensation as the first dip on a rollercoaster. Later studies into weather phenomena showed that in certain types of air masses where cumulus clouds are formed, vertical air currents reach velocities at times in excess of 3,000 feet per minute. This would not mean anything if the currents were uniformly up — or down. But the trouble and the danger is that they run up and down in the same cloud. This means that an aircraft hurtling horizontally at 300 miles an hour is in one current going down — and then within a split second in another, going up. With the inertia existent in this situation anything not tied down wants to stay where it is. But that may not be where the air-plane is. You can get some idea if you will take a bean, put it in an empty waterglass, and covering the end with the palm of your hand move the glass quickly up and down. An unstrapped-in human body can and often does react in the same way.

Of course as pilots we do everything we can to reduce this turbulent effect. On entering turbulent air we first disengage the automatic pilot and fly manually. We reduce power and hence our forward airspeed. This cuts down the speed with which we hit the vertical currents. If the plane rises too much and too fast, we reduce power even more. Sometimes, we have to reduce power so much that the engines get too cold. In such a case we may even let the landing gear down to require more power for the reduced speed. Sometimes the downdrafts are so strong that we must use Maximum Continuous Power to maintain even the altitude assigned to us on the airways.

And of course each second we must be ready to change power setting and plane attitude as the currents switch from up to down. To make the flight safe and comfortable for the passengers, and safe and efficient for the airplane, that is the pilot's job. So when you see that *Fasten your Seat Belts* sign flash on, even if at the moment it may seem silly, or be inconvenient, be a safe passenger and tighten yourself in.

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