

# CAPTAIN JACK SCHADE

IT SEEMS THAT IN EVERY WORKPLACE THERE IS ONE individual who stands out among his fellow employees, that exceptional someone they admire and look up to. Such was the standing of Capt. Jack Schade among his fellow pilots. He was a favorite of all the crews. Captain Schade was known as Frontier's premier storyteller and always had a good yarn to spin. You may have perceived by now from some of the prior plots and tales, that Captain Schade made it interesting in the cockpit. I especially remember several trips in the 1950s when we were still flying the DC-3s across the mountain empire.

## Gooseberry Pie

Captain Schade, a man with a tremendous appetite for gooseberry pie, was always off the airplane at Riverton, Wyoming before the props had stopped wind-milling. I would attempt to keep up with him as he hot-footed it for the little airport cafe, but I soon stopped as some of the passengers thought I was chasing him. Captain Schade never ordered a regular meal there, it was always gooseberry pie.

When anticipating the captain's arrival, the cook kicked in the afterburners on the oven to make sure the gooseberry pie would be waiting to appease the captain's appetite. When they saw that it was Schade easing the DC-3 to a stop on the ramp, they would hurriedly cut a big wedge and set it on the counter before backing away. Nobody dared interrupt him until the dish was clean. He always requested a second slice, and back then pie was cut into four grand slices.

It is rumored that some copilots always checked by calling ahead, fearing dire circumstances if the little cafe didn't have gooseberry pie on the menu that day. I remember the time we arrived at Riverton late, and our turn-around time was shortened to the extent we didn't have time to have Jack's favorite pie. Jack asked me to hurry into the cafe and pick up a couple of wedges and we would have pie after we got off the ground. Feeling quite prosperous as I had just received my salary, I asked the waitress to cut a whole pie four ways and slip it into a container.

The captain let me fly the first leg and after we leveled off at cruise altitude I asked if he would please pass me a slice. "Where is it?" he asked. I answered that I had slipped it behind his seat. "I thought all that was for me. Where's your pie?" "In the container behind your seat, I think." He handed me the empty container, and trying to look repentant, said, "I made a mistake." He hadn't fooled me. When he smells homemade gooseberry pie, he's like a piranha going after dessert; and he had finished off the whole pie. Of course, I got to fly an extra leg.

## Multiuses for the Oxygen Tube

Oxygen requirements for the DC-3 consisted of flexible rubber tube with a fitting that you inserted into the oxygen outlet located on the side panel next to each crew member station. On the other end was a pipe stem that you held in your mouth when you needed oxygen. Besides having a great appetite, Captain Schade carried a great thirst around with him. When the oxygen tube wasn't being employed, he had discovered other uses for it.

There are two fuel selector valves, one on each side of the pedestal located between the pilots: a convenient place to set beverage cups. 'When flying after dark, the captain kept the cockpit lights turned to a low setting. He would then sneak his oxygen tube across the pedestal and let it slide into the copilots cup. With the long rubber tube taking the place of a straw, he would empty the contents. The victim was never quite sure why his cup was always empty. He would request another drink from the stew and the whole process would repeat itself. A few stews thought some of the copilots had a hollow leg; and it was rumored that other copilots swore off drinking any beverage at all in a DC-3 cockpit.

Captain Schade denies that he ever thought of any uses for the oxygen tube other than to supply oxygen to the crew. He will stand all day with his hands in his pockets and hold a straight face while he banter with you about his innocence.

A rumor circulated that the oxygen tube could be used as a water pistol. A search for the source of this rumor led to Captain Schade. When asked to demonstrate this new feature of the oxygen tube he slowly acknowledged, "I'll tell you how it works, but just because I know how it works doesn't mean I used it for such." He then proceeded to explain. "You unplug the hose from the outlet and drop it into a container of water. Then you suck on the pipe stem, and the water is drawn into the hose. After selecting a target, you pinch the hose at the pipe stem, plug the other end into the oxygen outlet, aim the pipe stem, and release the pressure. The built up pressure in the hose from the oxygen will propel the water like a squirt gun."

"What do you usually aim at?" he was asked. "Usually at the stew's posterior as she leaves the cockpit - but that doesn't mean I would do such a thing."

## The Copper Halo

There was always relentless weather to fly through in the DC-3 days. We couldn't go high enough to fly above it, so we would tighten our belts and punch through the areas appearing to have the least minimal weather. One time when I was with Captain Schade, an electrical storm was strutting its defiance by shooting lightning bolts all over the sky. Captain Schade called the stew to the cockpit and asked if she was wearing her grounding antenna.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she replied. "Hold up there a moment, and I'll make a grounding antenna for you to wear on your uniform hat from this copper wire. We don't want our stew getting knocked on her fanny by Mother Nature. Hand me your hat." Captain Schade formed a halo with copper wire, then ran a strand of wire down from the halo, and fastened it to her hat. As the stew departed the cockpit, her halo shown brightly above her hat. To inquisitive passengers she happily explained, "I'm to wear this anytime we are near an electrical storm." Soon the word was out that one of Mother Nature's little angels was safely guarding the airways with grace and charm.

### **It Happened**

Captain Schade said that airline pilots can sometimes be a little fiendish with their sense of humor. He related the following anecdote: Braniff had just finished redoing the interiors of their aircraft and were painting the exteriors with a variety of different colors. While waiting in line for departure at Denver Stapleton Airport, a Braniff jet taxied out and fell in line. It was painted in multi colors flowing in a wave like pattern from nose to tail. Suddenly on our radios we heard, "Hey, Braniff, who puked all over your airplane?"

### **Burp Cups**

Captain Schade was a true professional. But when the two of us shared the same cockpit in a DC-3, open season was declared on anything that broke the monotony of a long trip.

Flying into Albuquerque on one of those extra warm days when the upper air was super heated, we suffered the wrath of Mother Nature as she spread a path of continual turbulence over our route. After landing, our usual custom was to grab a quick meal and pick up a box lunch for the stew, who had to remain aboard the aircraft. We hurried to enjoy the hospitality of the excellent restaurant in the old terminal and enjoy our fill of delightful Mexican cuisine at its best.

As we polished off our chili rellenos, Captain Schade ordered a container of split pea soup to go. I knew it was going to be open season on our next leg. Arriving at the aircraft, Captain Schade handed the box lunch to the stew, keeping her occupied while I smuggled the split pea soup to the cockpit.

Departing Albuquerque, we climbed to 12,000 feet and leveled off. Even at this altitude Mother Nature was still in an ill-tempered mood. I wondered if she knew about our open season? Captain Schade hit the stew call button, and I knew our plan was about to unfold. After the stew had made her presence known in the cockpit, Captain Schade explained that the combination of Mexican food and turbulent air had taken its toll, and had left his copilot with a queasy stomach. Would she please fetch a burp-cup.

When she looked over at me I was prepared. Captain Schade had coached me until I was blue in the face. But it was red now because I had been holding my breath and I leaned over in my seat holding my stomach. Without a second look she rushed to the commissary and returned with my burp-cup. Captain Schade suggested, "It would help if you brought him a couple of wet towels." As soon as she took leave to bring the towels, we poured the green split pea soup into the burpcup, and then to make it more realistic, I wiped some of it around my mouth and chin, letting it drip back into the full container.

Rushing back into the cockpit, she attempted to hand me the towels. Feigning more nausea, I ignored the towels and when she reached for my full burp-cup, I clutched at it and briskly drank some of the contents. She screamed and in a high shrill voice demanded, "What are you doing?" Then, not looking to well herself, she rushed from the cockpit.

Dreaming up beguiling pranks of this nature made short legs out of long legs, and fortunately, when the stews realized they had been had, they laughed about it and warned all the others to be on the lookout.

*(EXCERPTED FROM "THE GOLDEN YEARS OF FLYING" By Old Frontier Airlines Captain Tex Searle with his kind permission and his publisher, Aviation Supplies & Academics (copyright 2009). His grand memoir is for sale at Amazon.com and ASA2fly.com)*

