

THERE I WUZ! GONE WITH THE HURRICANE (<http://capnaux.com/there-i-wuz-gone-with-the-hurricane/>)

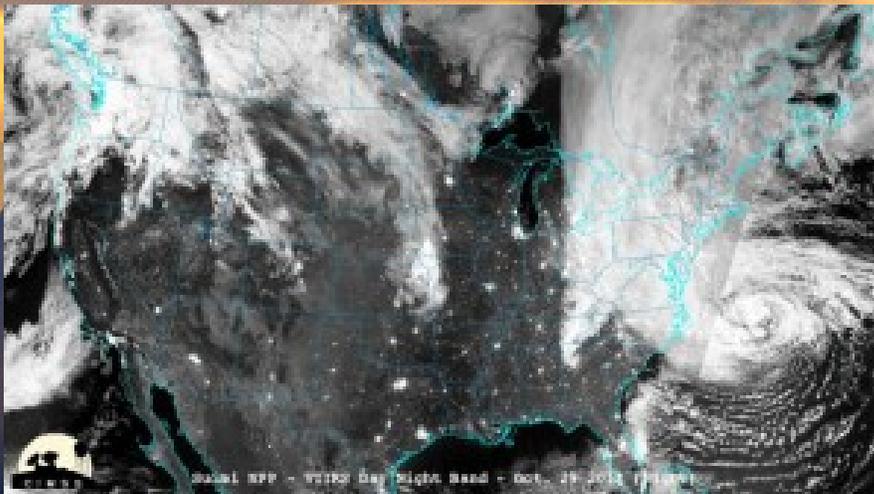
🕒 November 7, 2012 📄 Blog Post (<http://capnaux.com/category/blog-post/>)

💬 18Comments (<http://capnaux.com/there-i-wuz-gone-with-the-hurricane/#comments>)

11/8/13 UPDATE: RED CROSS DONATION LINK FOR VICTIMS OF PHILIPPINES SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN VICTIMS COMING ASAP!

HELP VICTIMS OF HURRICANE SANDY!

Text "REDCROSS" to 90999 to automatically donate \$10!



(<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/>-

kbamI_5B2RI/UJwf50dg71I/AAAAAAAAACRQ/N0f98jTEZ5c/s1600/Sandy_NASA-s.jpg)

A snapshot of Sandy, Oct 29, 2012

**Note: I wrote and scheduled this post prior to Hurricane Sandy. My thoughts and prayers go out to the victims.*

I wrote most of this story shortly after experiencing Hurricane Hugo back in '88, and in no way want to detract from the many hardships and sufferings still being experienced by survivors and victims of other Hurricanes such as Sandy, Katrina and Ivan. This is merely my story.

I'm sure readers on the East Coast of the U.S. are SICK AND TIRED of all things Hurricane, so for that I apologize! But by the same token, I hope the rest of the "uninitiated" world will learn something here about living through a hurricane, and also about the madness, mayhem and lawlessness that follows...

PART I: THE EVACUATION



(<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-1MV8VeERwO4/UH->

[vhc8pLfI/AAAAAAAAAB6c/ET99A_fgZc/s1600/Mallard+Formation+2a.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-1MV8VeERwO4/UH-vhc8pLfI/AAAAAAAAAB6c/ET99A_fgZc/s1600/Mallard+Formation+2a.jpg)

—BEFORE—

*Evacuation 1. Note the telltale washboard swells of the approaching hurricane.**



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-dYzilwVNfko/UH->

[rGQusN6I/AAAAAAAAAB3A/gOQ6_NqxrQo/s1600/GodHugo.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-dYzilwVNfko/UH-rGQusN6I/AAAAAAAAAB3A/gOQ6_NqxrQo/s1600/GodHugo.jpg)

—AFTER—

All hail the great god Hugo!

The sole surviving art piece from a multimillion dollar home.

*Hugo (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Hugo): there never was a hurricane more aptly named. It sounded like the neighborhood bully; a Hubert or Harold just wouldn't have cut it. And on September 16, 1989, Hugo, the bastard son of Mother Nature, picked a fight with my little airline.



(http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-UyVJaundzas/UH_9fyIN-

I/AAAAAAAAAB8Y/X1ux9YhftSg/s1600/VI%2527s1-7.jpg)

—BEFORE—

The gorgeous Virgin Islands Seaplane Shuttle Grumman Mallard.



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/->

qa6kGD4ltUk/UH_ANjhTMvi/AAAAAAAAAB_Y/d2ZxcawQ9eE/s1600/VISS+Logo.jpg)

I was flying for the Virgin Islands Seaplane Shuttle out of St. Croix, USVI. We were a modest but intrepid outfit in the spirit of the isles we served.



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-wFf1dc19ZGA/UH->

[_5Rb25eI/AAAAAAAAAB7w/dRokjiLjxVA/s1600/VI%2527s1-2.jpg](#))

—BEFORE—

Cap'n Aux enroute to SJU (San Juan, PR)

With five Grumman Mallard amphibian seaplanes and two land-based deHavilland Twin Otters, we ferried gawking tourists and locals alike over the turquoise waters, pristine coral reefs and lush jungles of the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.



(<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/->

[CT1LAqf0s0s/UH_OsspnnI/AAAAAAACCY/sMB-sP4FXOk/s1600/VI%27s3-2.jpg](#))

Hey, Miss TWA: Can you guess who Cap'n Aux's

FIRST Captain gig was for?!

Yes, it was a job in paradise.

But it was about to become, "Paradise Lost."



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-expE629qVe8/UH->

rCje_iQI/AAAAAAAAB2I/hcU-Uv5m0Gw/s1600/BeachGals%2521.jpg)

—BEFORE—

Our Idyllic life was about to be turned upside down...

For much of the year, the Caribbean pilot can forecast weather as deftly as the seasoned meteorologist: mostly sunny, isolated showers, light easterly breeze, temperature upper seventies.



(<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/->

EvEu9FK6aco/UH_Et_BuvPI/AAAAAAAACBA/iuBhkBEOogc/s1600/IMG_1424.JPG)

*This weather station woulda worked well on our lovely island...
until the coconut flew away!*

But during hurricane season, the climate undergoes an evil, Jekyll-and-Hyde metamorphosis.



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/>-

YtXFY8QuNtc/UH_AG0FFzVI/AAAAAAAAB-I/Vj5AJWy4e-c/s1600/VI%2527s2-5.jpg)

Cap'n Aux greets Mom and Dad, along with FO Mike.

Waves of weather, borne in the mid-Atlantic, sweep through the Antilles like the hands of a clock—and just as regularly.



(<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/>-

dZILzVuZZI0/UH_AAIYEaul/AAAAAAAAB8w/C1qc5fRkhsA/s1600/VI%2527s1.jpg)

*FO Terry (a regular reader of this blog)
during a night run to STT (St. Thomas)*

These fronts build momentum, sucking up moisture and energy from the warm Caribbean waters. Some of these systems hatch tropical storms; often they grow into hurricanes.



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-3PgPReWdkHQ/UH->

rEG2eAHI/AAAAAAAAAB2g/4QDjd_UzLeE/s1600/Cap%2527nE%2521.jpg)

—BEFORE—

Cap'n Aux savors his first real Captain's seat, in the 19-pax Twin Otter (complete with '80 hair and '70's mustache!)

So it is, during this season, that the Caribbean pilot suspiciously eyes each wave of weather, anxiously chews his lip as winds build to hurricane speed, then frantically plots its westward course as it plows across the seas.



(<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/->

Pu7VgDBK_yY/UH_AF8IV5bl/AAAAAAAAAB90/I4dFWnb0unk/s1600/VI%2527s2-3.jpg)

Cap'n Aux gets 'artsy' on the isle of St. John

If the storm veers homeward, the evacuation begins.



(<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-ZgXeSnxx6vA/UH->

[rN2JG02I/AAAAAAAAAB4Q/WHN2PMk9DT4/s1600/JAHCopilot%2521.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-ZgXeSnxx6vA/UH-rN2JG02I/AAAAAAAAAB4Q/WHN2PMk9DT4/s1600/JAHCopilot%2521.jpg))

"F/O" Julia takes a joyride to St. John in a Mallard...

Such was the case with the season of 1989. The enemy advanced, our forces retreated. We evacuated the humble fleet to PSY (Ponce, Puerto Rico.) As copilot Mike and I flew our Twin Otter across the Caribbean Sea, clouds rushed in at record speed. Thunderstorms popped up like acne on a teen. Below us a washboard of rhythmic ocean swells stretched to the horizon, warning of the approaching storm. We landed, lashed down the planes and took refuge in a nearby hotel. Our troops silently searched the skies for the Blitzkrieg.



(<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/->

[fRk7JEMemmg/UH_PkKXO5WI/AAAAAAACCg/CCTvUrqtYqo/s1600/VI%27s1-6.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-fRk7JEMemmg/UH_PkKXO5WI/AAAAAAACCg/CCTvUrqtYqo/s1600/VI%27s1-6.jpg))

—BEFORE—

Enroute to PSY...

It never came. We soon lost interest and headed for the officers' club (a local cantina.) The only damage sustained on that outing was a few rum hangovers; the only hurricane present was the one pounding in our heads.

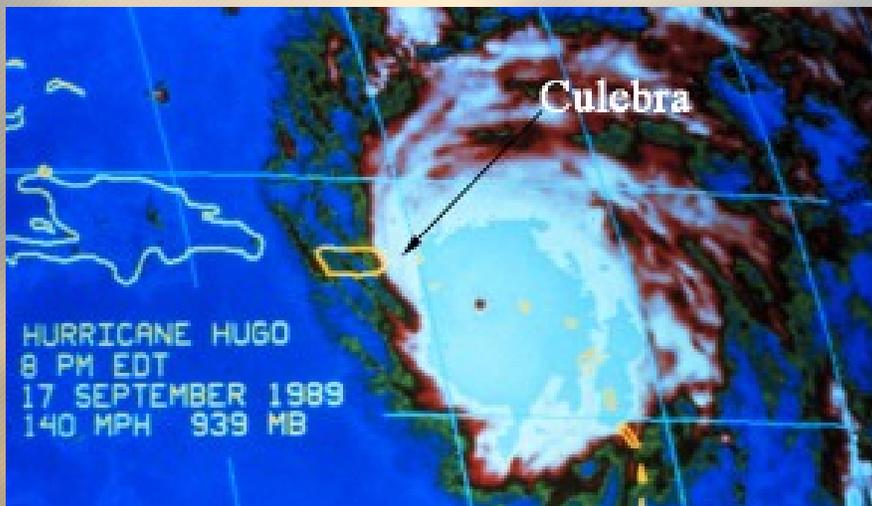


(<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>-

VgRxvjnNLUI/UH_AHSbO3CI/AAAAAAAAB-Q/y4CB1GcShc/s1600/VI%27s2-6.jpg)

PSY: A DC-3 basks in a gorgeous rainbow left in the wake of a passing hurricane...

So much for the storm preceding the Main Event.



(<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>-

KmHAF8XkNzU/UH_D40t9TGI/AAAAAAAACAw/ZZHHK8NILGw/s1600/wea00450.jpg)

Hugo came out to play.

We again evacuated, this time to San Juan. But only three planes were flyable at the time; the others were down for maintenance. What the heck, we figured, too much trouble to put them back together. The boy cried wolf last time, it'd probably be the same with Hugo. We'll take a chance. And shucks, the last time a major hurricane hit St. Croix was way back in 1928, right?

We flew above the ocean at 4,000 feet, and again saw the telltale washboard swells. They radiated like waves from a stone dropped in water. But this stone was two hundred miles wide.



(<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-uOOvB97iphA/UH->

[rSNcXGQI/AAAAAAAAAB5I/oALnGLI3Fiw/s1600/MallardFormation3.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-uOOvB97iphA/UH-rSNcXGQI/AAAAAAAAAB5I/oALnGLI3Fiw/s1600/MallardFormation3.jpg))

Again we evacuated. Again the telltale washboard ocean swells.

We stuffed the planes into a giant, three-story hangar at SJU (San Juan International Airport.) One drawback: no hangar door. If the hurricane did indeed hit, and the winds blew from the south, the whole building—and its contents—would blow away like Dorothy's house to the land of Oz. We crossed our fingers.



(<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-ExpUWIC5NKQ/UH->

[_98j71wl/AAAAAAAAAB8g/sley8K3No44/s1600/VI%2527s1-8.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-ExpUWIC5NKQ/UH-_98j71wl/AAAAAAAAAB8g/sley8K3No44/s1600/VI%2527s1-8.jpg))

On approach to SJU.

San Juan Flight Service Station was a bedlam of frantic meteorologists, anxious pilots and noisy reporters. All crowded in, straining to hear the latest scrap of news on Hugo's progress. Yes, he would hit. The Virgin Islands his first target. STX (Alexander Hamilton Airport, St. Croix), reported 80mph winds and rising. Then all contact was lost.



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-TrRPYP-gkz4/UH->

[rlyxHPEI/AAAAAAAAAB3g/GjVzerUsSNI/s1600/HomeGang4.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-TrRPYP-gkz4/UH-rlyxHPEI/AAAAAAAAAB3g/GjVzerUsSNI/s1600/HomeGang4.jpg))

—LEFT BEHIND—

Julia (blue shirt) and some of our crew batten down the hatches on St. Croix. For three days we didn't know each other's fate...

My guts churned. All I could do was pray for my girlfriend Julia who, in the last-minute confusion, missed our flight and got left behind on the island to fend for herself.

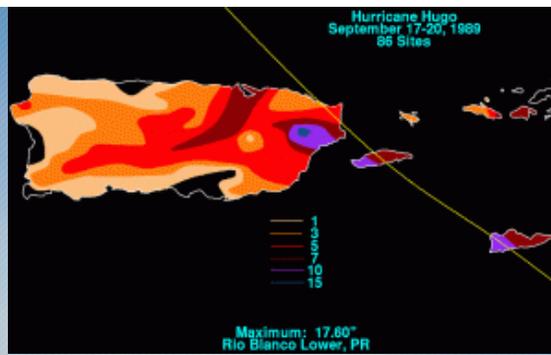


(http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-6gCzXk2vaml/UH_ADZ-

[kECI/AAAAAAAAAB9Q/lk2XehGQ3PQ/s1600/V1%2527s2-12.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-6gCzXk2vaml/UH_ADZ-kECI/AAAAAAAAAB9Q/lk2XehGQ3PQ/s1600/V1%2527s2-12.jpg))

—LEFT BEHIND—The boys crossing fingers 'n praying the great god Hugo for a successful storm passage...

Hugo slowed, and parked its blistering, 160 mph blender smack on top of St. Croix. We scurried to our hotel rooms and battened down the hatches.



(<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>-

[_CFbAucpAP0/UH_FcutlUrI/AAAAAAAAACBI/9WsxZILWJpk/s1600/hugo1989filledprblk.gif](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_CFbAucpAP0/UH_FcutlUrI/AAAAAAAAACBI/9WsxZILWJpk/s1600/hugo1989filledprblk.gif)

The only eye closed that night was Hugo's . . . and it closed in on us.



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/>-

[rg7e2clB9dk/UH_VIH8BbsI/AAAAAAAAACEQ/4v7thGg-oqg/s1600/VI%27s1-4.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/rg7e2clB9dk/UH_VIH8BbsI/AAAAAAAAACEQ/4v7thGg-oqg/s1600/VI%27s1-4.jpg)

Remember those lunchtime outings to the airport, sitting under the departure path and listening to the ear-splitting roar of jets overhead? Well, that's what it sounds like in the middle of a hurricane—for *eight solid hours*. And through the din you hear glass shatter, cars crash and tin roofs rip away. And you pray that your roof isn't next.

The sleepless night dragged on to morning. In a feeble attempt at distraction from the onslaught, we played cards. Being stuck on the ground floor of a hotel only 2 blocks from the beach, our biggest fear was floods and tsunamis. Mercifully, our ground turned out to be high enough.

Finally, that afternoon, the winds died to a safe speed. We cautiously emerged, anxious to see how the planes had fared. All feared the worst.



(<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/->

EthSt4Wf2Sw/UH_SuJZXmvl/AAAAAAAACC4/khWyEqh_Gw/s1600/V1%2527s5-2.jpg)

—AFTER—

Downtown San Juan was a flooded obstacle course of debris.

We drove to the airport, forging knee-deep gully washers and swerving around downed power lines, tumbled trees, battered cars.



(http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-6_tQ0B9Zl6o/UH_QjO5X0yl/AAAAAAAACCo/7IMWBVhNsgw/s1600/SJURamp.jpg)

—AFTER—

Largely intact, SJU nevertheless suffered some serious damage...

San Juan Luis Munoz Airport was a mess. Airplanes lay strewn haphazard about the ramp. In all, 22 aircraft destroyed. One DC-3 lay inverted atop another plane, its type indistinguishable. I chewed my nails as we neared the hangar.



(<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/>-

<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/>subjQ5qJjmM/UH_StArfPyl/AAAAAAACcW/BISrsM9Djg/s1600/VI%27s5-1.jpg)

—AFTER—

While the hangar was totaled, miraculously the planes inside suffered little damage.

The top two floors were caved in, but otherwise the hangar was largely intact. Our hopes jumped. The hurricane, it seemed, had swerved north before reaching San Juan. Except for a dinged wing tip, our three planes survived.

The next day, Chief Pilot Rudy deemed it safe enough to take off and scout the ruins of St. Croix. All contact was still lost with the entire island. I feared for Julia's safety. While she and our friends had hunkered down in a concrete pillbox of a house, I worried that a mudslide would dump them into the ocean.



(<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>-

<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>yHHvXb2Xwkk/UH_Su5wMUzi/AAAAAAACDA/3Wzwvz1h0FI/s1600/VI%2527s5.jpg)

—AFTER—

The twisted remains of a light twin Piper Aztec.

With no airport info nor weather data for STX, we took off. We only took the two Mallards, as Rudy figured we could land in the bay if the airport was trashed.

It was a flight I'll never forget. I gazed out the window at the most beautiful sunset I've ever seen; Hugo's final, sarcastic farewell to the newly orphaned islands. The photo I snapped of our companion Mallard flying formation is the one that graces this blog page, and remains to this day the most gorgeous photo I've ever taken.



(http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-3EMWWbSR_zM/UH_XGyJGsal/AAAAAAACEg/7j-l_detCZg/s1600/MallardSunset2%21.jpg)

As I marveled at the fantastic sight, and contemplated its grim irony, I couldn't help but think that the sun was also setting on our little airline in paradise...

—————*TO BE CONTINUED*—————

—————
POSTING 11/21/12:

HUGO, PART 2: LEFT BEHIND-the Aftermath



([http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-Sbd_Jac7vIY/UH-](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-Sbd_Jac7vIY/UH-rQBIAPbi/AAAAAAAAB4w/SdKqBcv2T8A/s1600/MallardBoat%2521.jpg)

[rQBIAPbi/AAAAAAAAB4w/SdKqBcv2T8A/s1600/MallardBoat%2521.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-Sbd_Jac7vIY/UH-rQBIAPbi/AAAAAAAAB4w/SdKqBcv2T8A/s1600/MallardBoat%2521.jpg))

“Chaos reigned. Looting was rampant. Gunshots rang through the night. For two weeks, I carried a machete.”

**All photos in this post taken by Cap'n Aux or his friends, unless otherwise noted!*



(<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>

uWwXWn7UpSs/UIBGevolX11/AAAAAACHo/IHral3NEz3U/s1600/MamaJAH%21.jpg)

...AND A SPECIAL HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO JULIA, MY "COPILOT" IN THIS ADVENTURE!!!

—Wiki on Hugo (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Hugo)

—A link to a Wall Street (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203707604578092943938947524.html>) article on Storm Damage, for Sandy victims.

—A great Link of Hurricane Sandy photos (<http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2012/10/hurricane-sandy-after-landfall/100396/>); thanks, Jim!



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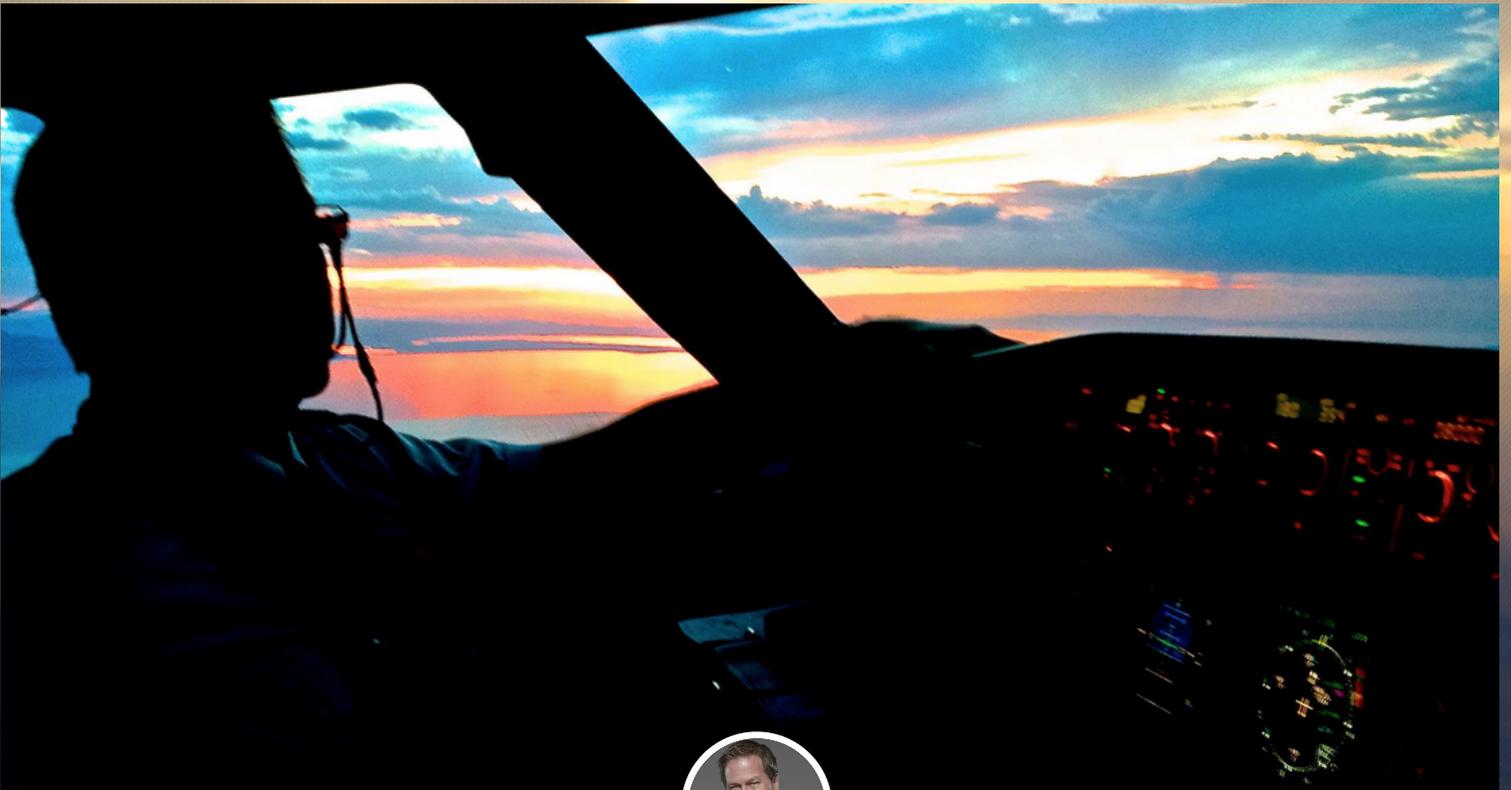


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Feb 20, 2019

Eric Auxier



Airline pilot by day—Writer by night—Kid by choice!

WELCOME ABOARD!

I'm an A321 captain for a major U.S. airline. I may have over 22,000 hours in the cockpit, but I am still madly in love with flying. Through this blog, I share with you the magic, the joy, and the travails that is the airline pilot career. Life's an adventure—life in the sky, exponentially so!



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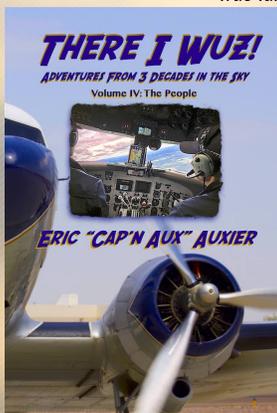
Don't forget to check out my new books, **There I Wuz! Volume 4** (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B076J39CB6>), and **Yakuza Dynasty** (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LGL6OSI>), **Mission 4** of the **Code Name: Dodger SPY/FLY** thriller series.

(Both series can be read in any order.)

Also check out my other books (below), and articles and videos for NYCaviation.com (<http://www.nycaviation.com/author/eauxier/>) and Airways Magazine (<https://airwaysmag.com/author/eauxier/>).

THERE I WUZ! VOLUME 4

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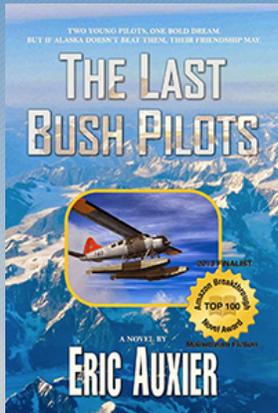
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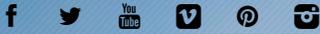
Check out All 4 Missions! (https://www.amazon.com/gp/bookseries/B016L2F1E0/ref=dp_st_1535205032)

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- Karlene Petitt - Flight to Success (<http://karlenepetitt.blogspot.com>)
- Ron Rapp - House of Rapp (<http://www.rapp.org>)
- Leland Shanle - Project 7 Alpha (<http://project7alpha.com/blog/>)

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- Airline Pilot Chatter (<http://www.airlinepilotchatter.com>)
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