

THE BLUE PRAM

by Bengt Collin

At Arrival Service

The woman was standing in front of the desk. She was dressed in a casual way, blue jeans, green t-shirt and a dark green jacket. She had a grey suitcase. She was holding a small baby, probably around six months old, in her arms. "I just arrived from Anywhere Airport, my pram hasn't arrived. It's a blue pram, a very nice looking pram if I may say so. Do you know where it is?" "Roy, could you please check for this lady's pram, it's missing. Please start with the luggage hall behind the public area, look for a blue pram, it must be somewhere in there. It just arrived from Anywhere Airport."

The woman continued: "First that scary flight, then this"; she was upset. "I was looking out of the aircraft window, we just descended below cloud when I saw the ground just below us", she closed her eyes and stayed silent for a second. "The Captain said something about an aircraft on the runway, I never saw the runway". She paused again, continued with a puzzled voice; "after ten more minutes we landed". "Isn't that strange"?

"Well, it depends on how you look on things, doesn't it" he replied. "You probably don't have the full picture".



BENGT COLLIN

formerly worked at EUROCONTROL HQ as a Senior Expert involved in operational ATC safety activities. Bengt has a long background as Tower and Approach controller at Stockholm-Arlanda Airport, Sweden

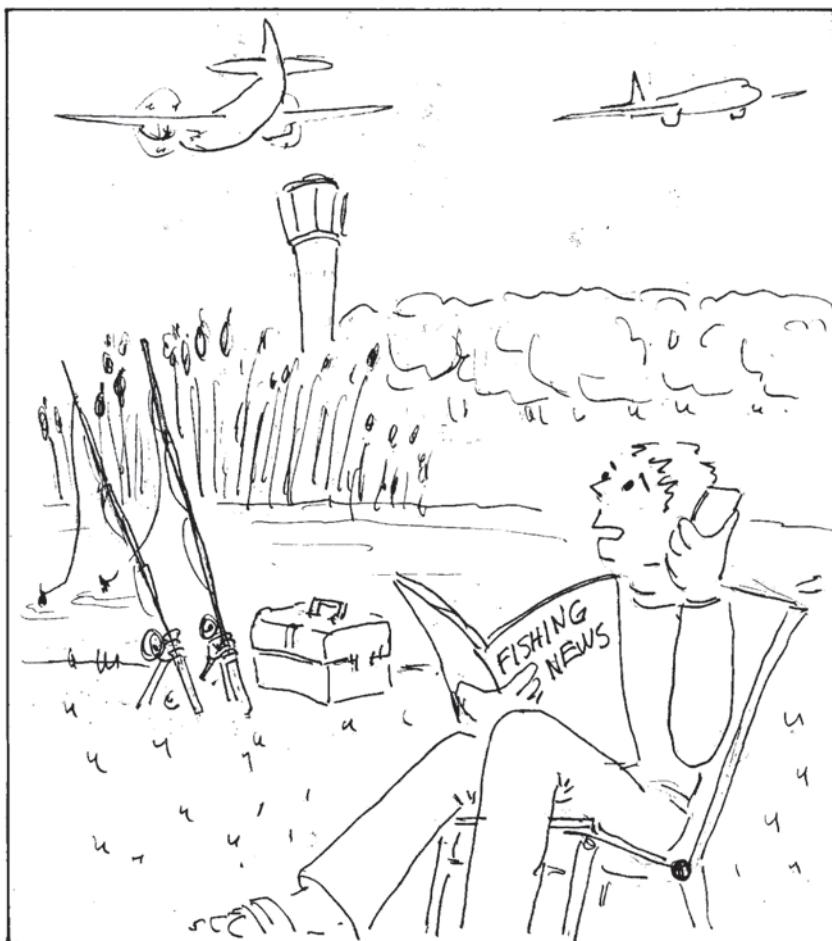
Roy slowly walked away, leaving them on their own. The sound from Roy's shoes sliding over the terminal floor was apparent, he never lifted his feet properly. Why can't Roy walk like other normal people, he thought?

On the Flight Deck BRM299

It was Susan's first flight after a ten days well deserved vacation. She had accumulated thousands of hours of flying experience as a first officer, but only a few on this aircraft type; she felt well prepared though. They were heading north descending through flight level 120 for an approach to runway 18 Left. To her left, was Bob, the Airline's main instructor and examiner. Bob was also in charge of flight operations for the Airline, a true legend, very experienced indeed. She liked the idea of becoming a Captain like Bob!

In the Approach Centre

He arrived just on time for the start of his shift. All the computers for individual briefing were available, obviously everybody else had already arrived for the evening shift. This was his fifth day in a row at work, to save time he immediately pressed the check-in button on the HMI and entered the centre. He passed the supervisor desk, "Hi, I made it just on time didn't I". "Anything unclear, you know about the Minimum Safe..", he interrupted the supervisor, "I understand everything"; he decided it was time for a cup of coffee, after all everybody just started working. "OK",



Yeah Boss, I'm just reading the briefing and I've started to follow the traffic. Let me grab my gear and I'll be in position in 10 minutes

the supervisor replied while continuing reading the document in front of her.

In the Somewhere Tower

"We need to change the runway again, this rules are really annoying", Dagmar said to Mo, the tower supervisor who just re-entered the tower. Two months earlier the new environmental rules on landing and departure directions were introduced. Regardless of the wind the controllers were only allowed to use the same runway configuration for a maximum of two hours, stupid. "Mo, can you please assist me in coordinating a change to runway 36 left"? Dagmar co-ordinated with the approach controller herself, at the same time turning away from her working position; time for a healthy orange juice and a glass of water "Grey dull weather this evening Dagmar. But it's dark, you wouldn't have seen the sun anyway", he said in a positive way while coordinating with the supervisor in the centre. He finally sat down in a comfortable armchair and began reading a copy of HindSight Magazine.

In the Approach Centre

He sat down in his working position. Quite busy but he liked that. Eight inbound aircraft expected the next twenty minutes to Somewhere Airport plus one to the smaller Whenever Airport. A few departures expected too. The tower controller from Somewhere Airport called, asking for a change of the runway direction. "OK, no problem we can change immediately if you like. BRM299 will be the first one to runway 36 left.

On the Flight Deck BRM299

Susan, as 'Pilot Not Flying', checked the latest weather on the ATIS. OK visibility, still runway 18 left for landing. Should be a relaxed and uneventful approach. It was her birthday, she knew her partner was preparing a special meal for them, warm herring with blue berry pudding. Yum, yum! She was interrupted in by the approach controller calling on the frequency. "BRM229, turn left heading two four five, new runway for landing 36 left". "OK, it will save us at least 10 minutes, I like to get home as soon as possible", the Captain commented after they replied to the controller. Soon after beginning radar vectoring, with the

aircraft auto pilot engaged, the controller asked them if the 30 nm remaining was sufficient. He realised they were too high, but with his experience it should be no problem. They started the briefing for the new runway.

In the Somewhere Tower

"Mo, the visibility is getting worse, we need to prepare for runway 36 right instead and initiate CAT III". Annoying since they just changed runway some five minutes ago; Dagmar called the approach controller.

In the Approach Centre

"BRM299 prepare now for runway 36 right frequency 111.6 due weather conditions" Another aircraft called causing a blocked transmission. He replied the other aircraft. The first aircraft BRM299 was really fast, the label on his HMI indicated 240 knots. It was really getting busy, he should have called for a Final Director to assist him but now he didn't have time.

On the Flight Deck BRM299

"ILS selected", the First Officer advised. "Select flaps one", the Captain instructed. "Traffic is starting to build up" the First Officer replied. "That was for us" the Captain commented after a call on the frequency. OK sorry, Susan replied to the call "Heading 260, cleared for approach runway 36 left, BRM299.

At the Approach Centre

"ABC123 fly heading two nine five". "Heading two nine five ABC123". "BRM299 turn right heading two eight five, vectoring for ILS runway 36 right". He noticed BRM descending rapidly but since it was still a bit high he decided to delay the inbound turn as long as possible.

On the Flight Deck BRM299

"Heading two eight five, runway 36 right BRM299" Susan replied. "Runway 36 right??? I need to program the FMGS for runway 36 right" Bob said. "Can you please take over controls for a while Susan?" Bob started programming, something went wrong the first time he tried, but he was successful the second. He thought of requesting a new approach, but changed his mind

considering all the inbound aircraft behind them. He took over again as Pilot Flying and activated the APP mode. "Capture" happened almost immediately whilst passing the localizer at an angle of ninety degrees. The auto pilot introduced a bank right with some sideslip to capture the localizer beam.

At the Approach Centre

He was just about to turn BRM299 inbound when another pilot called. Well, they managed to turn inbound anyway, he observed the inbound turn on his HMI.

In the Tower

"Mo, please come and look at my approach HMI. BRM299 is indicating 260 knots abeam twelve miles final". "Must be a new record, we need to urgently extend the runway by a few kilometres to allow necessary distance for landing". Dagmar regretted her words immediately, luckily they were not recorded anywhere. Mo didn't reply - he was snoring.

On the Flight Deck BRM299

"SPEED, SPEED", Susan saw the Flap 1 limit of 230 knots (indicated) was going to be exceeded and tried to alert the Captain. "TERRAIN AHEAD, TERRAIN AHEAD", the warning from the on board system was synthetic, clear and impossible to misunderstand.

At the Approach Centre

His Minimum Safe Altitude Warning system activated. Since the sound of the alert due to a planned software update was out of service (notified in the computer based controller briefing), he did not immediately notice. After turning away from his HMI for a few seconds, discussing with a colleague how to best fry herring, he turned back. An alert, why was there no sound? Trying to understand the situation, waiting a few seconds, he acted. "BRM299 maintain altitude, you are too low, you are below the glide". No reply from flight deck. "BRM check your altitude immediately, you are too low".

At Arrival service

"Here it is, blue as you asked for." Roy looked happy and satisfied. "But Roy, that's a blue suitcase, not a blue pram." "Well, it depends how you look on things, doesn't it?" 