

My Cathay Pacific Interview

Trip to Hong Kong

October 18th

The much awaited trip started with little fan fair but a lot of anticipation. It was raining as I drove to the airport in Columbus at 9:00 a.m. and consequently got pretty wet as I moved my four bags (rollerboard, briefcase, laptop case, and suit in a plastic bag). I had to tell Joe Ogden, a captain friend of mine that I was going to a wedding because he saw me in the employee van with the suit bag. I was fortunate enough to catch the 10:55 a.m. jetBlue flight to JFK. I got a seat in the back and did some review of my notes, but not too much review as I'd have 16 hours to review on the way to Hong Kong! As I deplaned in JFK, the captain saw the suit bag and said, "Got an interview, eh?" I was shocked and told him, yes, in Hong Kong with Cathay. Later, at the curbside, waiting for the hotel van, a man walked up to me and said, "Got an interview?" Again, I was surprised, and told him yes. He asked if it was with jetBlue (because we were in JFK). I said, no, it's with Cathay. He said, "Ah, and where are you working now?" I said Chautauqua. He replied with, "That figures." I asked how that figured and he replied, "Cause there's no pay!" I agreed. He told me he worked for Polar on the 747-400. He wished me luck and walked on. A few minutes later, he came back and asked if I had a free ticket to Hong Kong or not. I told him that Cathay did indeed buy my ticket. He mentioned this because if they hadn't, he'd put me in touch with the jumpseat person at Polar, and let me jumpseat on them for free. I thought that was really nice. The hotel van ride was long and when I walked into the lobby, the front desk clerk told me that I looked like I was going to an interview! Wow, no hiding it I guess. I was wearing a pilot uniform and carrying a suit bag – don't do this if you want to hide the fact you are going to an interview somewhere . . .

I did some studying in the hotel in the afternoon, but I was tired and went out to find some dinner. I walked about 15 minutes and found a little Italian joint and had a meatball sub that was really good. I was trying to eat some high protein food because it was apart of a diet I was on to reduce jet-lag effects. I came back and did some more studying before calling Laura and going to bed about midnight. I'd have a long day ahead of me . . .

October 19th

I woke up about 8:00 in the morning and finished reading what I couldn't finish the night before. I met a Delta captain in the lobby who was on the 767 and was headed to Athens in a few hours. We chatted, and then it was off to terminal 7 at JFK to catch

the 15 hour and 55 minute flight, CX831 to runway 25L at VHHH. I was hoping for an upgrade to Business Class because Cathay would allow it if there were seats available to do so. There weren't, but I got an aisle without anyone next to me. That worked out great because that gave me plenty of room to sprawl out, get comfortable, and spread out my notes to look over all of them. The rain from yesterday was now in NYC with a vengeance. It was pouring and the ramp, with two BA -400's, looked like a large pond. There was also a very noisy family with an ear-rupturing two year old brat that obviously didn't know what a spanking felt like. I thought, great, they'll be right next to me! We boarded up, and that wasn't the case, and the kids fell asleep quickly.

Captain David Saunders smoothly rolled us out of the gate after starting all four engines on our Airbus A340-600. The screen in front of me read: Destination: Hong Kong: 8066 miles. Flight Time: 15:55. Destination time: 4:00 a.m., exactly opposite the origin time of 4:00 p.m.. The next channel showed an on onboard camera mounted on the belly looking forward, about 20 feet behind the nose gear. That was really great, because you could see the taxi way, and how far off, if at all, Captain Saunders had the nose wheel from the taxi line! He was to the right of it, just where he should've been, to avoid bumping over each taxiway centerline light. Then, it happened. Just as quickly as the journey began, it stopped. One moment, we were on our way to Hong Kong, and the next minute, reality set in, and everyone on board remembered that we were departing JFK, which means that you rarely depart when you are *supposed* to depart. We had about an hour delay on the taxiway as we waited for our departure time. The weather that had moved in reduced the amount of available departure fixes that could be used, thus reducing the departure capacity of JFK. I was thinking: we are about to depart for a sixteen hour flight, and all four engines are turning, greedily drinking their fair share of Jet-A while we sit here and wait. But, the reason the crew kept all four engines turning was two fold. They always carry a lot of taxi fuel for JFK (which, in and of itself is amazing, considering how much fuel is needed for a 16 hour flight without delays. Obviously, the A340-600 can carry a lot of fuel – 350,000 pounds to be exact) but they also *have* to keep all four running for taxi. Why? because it takes so much force to get moving, if they only had two engines turning, with that reduced amount of pushing power, they'd blow someone who was behind them completely away if they had to get moving again. I was sitting there thinking, we have a long flight in front of us and we can't even get off the ground! Time passed, and we finally took the position and hold clearance at 4:53 p.m. EST. The nose wheel went well beyond the centerline of the runway so that when the right turn was made, it would be right on the centerline without taking up too much runway to do so. The A340-600 is 246 feet long and the nosewheel is 9 feet behind the captain's chair. At 4:55, the call must have come down to the crew from the tower, because the thrust was “stood up” and then the auto-thrust kicked in and we heard a tremendous roar – one that was both heard and felt. The power was set and we hardly moved – a clear sign of

our weight. 8,000 feet later, we broke ground, leaving JFK, NYC, and the USA behind, not to be on the ground again until Hong Kong.

The inflight camera didn't show too much because the screen was all white, due to the rain clouds we were punching holes in. We finally leveled at 32,000 feet, and according to the camera, we were right in the tops of the clouds. -- a rough place to be, indeed. Captain Saunders sat the cabin crew down twice as they were serving inflight meals because the ride was so bad. I wondered, since these bumps would probably knock someone down if they were standing, what would these bumps feel like in my plane, which weighs less than the 280 passengers we had aboard our A340? Riding right in the tops of the clouds is not fun but there wasn't anything that could be done to climb above the rough altitude because at our weight: 32,000 feet is all we could do. Aircraft that run long-haul and ultra-long haul routes are so heavy when they first take off that they have to step climb, in other words, they can't climb to their highest altitude until they are lighter – until they've burned fuel. We started at 32,000 and ended our trip at 39,400 feet. It smoothed out as we climbed, which was about two hours after liftoff. Why was our final altitude over China such an odd altitude of 39.4? That's because China, Russia, and some other countries use metric altitudes. So, when flying over a country that uses them, there has to be a conversion into feet. 12,000 meters is roughly 39,400 feet. The pilots pull out a little chart that shows each flight altitude and its equivalent. There were several aircraft that passed underneath us that I was able to catch on the screen. For the most part, I studied my notes, and slept for about three hours. I was trying to be tired when we arrived in Hong Kong about 8:00 p.m. (8:00 a.m. my time) so I could go to sleep and start turning my body around.

We touched down on 25L in VHHH around 8:15 p.m.. Watching the night landing from the camera was amazing. I could see the nosewheel come down, and when it was locked in place, the landing light shown out into the darkness. A few minutes later, I could pick out two small points of light. As we got closer, I could tell that those two lights were the two parallel runways, 25L and 25R. We were lined up for 25L and as we coasted over the threshold of the runway, you could see the VASI lights, runway markings, and the terminal on the right. The aircraft touched down a few feet to the right of centerline (yeah, I noticed). There was a double thud on the landing. This is because there is a center truck of four tires on the A340-600. This double bogie of tires doesn't hang as low as the two other main trucks of tires, so it sets down second, or after the mains have hit, giving a second “landing” feel. After the long flight, I felt pretty good, and after a long walk down to the immigration line, I was able to retrieve my bag (minus the \$14 dollar crew tag I had strapped to it – oh well). I met an Atlas -400 crew on the hotel van to the Novotel Hotel and they were really nice. They reminded me that even though interviewing with Cathay might be difficult, it was started by an American (Roy Ferrell)! The room was really awesome and chic; better than most hotels I've ever stayed in. With three pills of Dyphenhydramine

Hydrochloride (Benadryl) in me, it was off to never-never land. It was the evening of October 20th, losing one full day.

October 21st

I woke up about 5:30 a.m., which wasn't bad because I had basically slept “all day” and was fairly refreshed for the day. I made some calls back to the wife and fam and then headed down to breakfast. At \$140, I ate all I could eat at the all you could eat buffet! Raw smoked salmon, rice and noodles, sushi, sausage, eggs, juice and coffee. Then I went out to explore around the hotel. The Novotel is directly connected to a shopping mall with several levels. I was going to call my friend and former captain at Chautauqua, Marshall McMullen when I got back. He has been at Cathay for a while. But even better, I ran into him at the mall doing some grocery shopping! God is good. We chatted for about an hour about Cathay, old times, and what annoys us about the Asian culture. For example: cutting in front of you in line, staring, etc.

Then it was back to the hotel for the rest of the day to review my notes, relax, and get ready for the next two days. Day one was going to be the hardest, with the simulator evaluation and interview, right in a row like a double punch. The good thing was that they would then both be out of the way for day two.

October 22nd

I slept well the night before, again thanks to Mr. Benadryl. It was a nice morning and most all of us interviewing (nine great guys) met up in the hotel lobby and took a dedicated bus over to CathayCity which runs employees staying at the Novotel to their jobs at the headquarter complex.

Cathay headquarters is amazing. A compound of buildings with offices, simulator bays, classrooms, a hotel for crew only, food courts, and more. The pilot and flight attendant crew rooms are there as well as dispatch, management offices, training facilities, and so forth.

We all got to the headquarters so early, they wouldn't let us in right away. Then we got badges that open all the doors around the building complex. We found our way up to the Flight Recruitment offices and waited. One more bloke joined us there, Jules, from British Airways on the 75/76. I thought, oh boy, I'm up against a lot of talent here. Well, it's in God's hands: I'm either going to get it or not based on His decision. Kelly Crawford walked past us and I said, “Hello Mrs. Delany.” I called her Mrs. Delany, who is her colleague, by mistake! She said hello, being very gracious. I should have known better, because she, along with Alan Burge, interviewed me a few weeks

earlier in SFO. Oh well. After she left, everyone in the group looked at me like, “How do you know her?” They also gave me looks like: how does this guy have a leg up on us? I told them she interviewed me and that she is very nice. We met Abby DeBeer who briefed us on the Conditions of Service, pay, insurance, etc, and then we went down to the simulator bay for the 747-200, in which we would be tested for our simulator evaluation.

There we met Keith Griffin, and absolute riot and funny guy. A Brit living in Australia. He was funny, foul mouthed, and a true legend. After that briefing, I was first to go in the sim. I feel like I did okay, but of course, could've done better. Jeff Dalglish ran the sim while Keith sat as my copilot. Sitting their, Keith could see any and all mistakes made by me! We took off, did some steep turns, he asked where the airport was, and after telling him, we headed back for an ILS approach. We went missed and then came around for a second one. This time, we had an engine fire and flew on three engines. I didn't get off my altitude too much, and probably only got off more than 100 only once. I couldn't get the rudder situated with the engine out. Then Keith said, “Check your rudder.” Then I got the right amount in – I was using left instead of right rudder! Whoops . . . The airplane immediately straightened up and the rest of the approach was fine. The last 800 feet of the last approach, everything was stabilized and I was on loc/slope and all I had to do was land. I started getting nervous that something might change and I was focusing so hard that I started to sweat. A lot. Three different beads of sweat dropped into my eyes, but I couldn't wipe them because I had to fly. Later, as I related this story to the other applicants, one funny Aussie asked me if I had “Cold foh wipe-airs” or Called for wipers! That would have been funny! It was like the scene in the movie Airplane when the guy tries to land at the end and water is pouring off of his head because of his nerves. Keith would have laughed, but I didn't think about it at the time. I then headed up to the recruitment waiting area to have my interview.

I met John Holmes, the H.R. guy, and Gus Larard, the technical interviewer. They were both very nice and did a great job at putting me at ease. They had a model of a Duchess airplane on the table because they had seen that I got my multiengine rating in one. Usually, they have a 747 or 340 model on the table. Mr. Holmes started first: “We want to get a feel for who you are, Toby and what you are capable of. We have to make a recommendation on whether or not to hire you, and to be able to do that, we have to get to know you a little bit better. Tell us about where you have lived and your flying career up to now in about a minute or two.” I told him about living in Indonesia, Texas, Indiana, Purdue, Ryan Airlines, and then Chautauqua. “Great, tell us about the fleet we have here at Cathay and how many of each aircraft.” I told him about the 24 747-400's, 6 747-400BCF's, 6 747-400F's, 7 747 Classics, 1 777-300ER, 5 777-200's, 12 777-300's, 28 A330-300's, 15 A340-300's and 3 A340-600's. It just rolled out. He look impressed that I broke it down so fast. He said, “Okay” and we moved on to

other subjects. He asked about a time when the chips were down. "People often learn a lot about who they are as a person and can grow personally out of the challenges they face in life. Tell us about a tough time in your life where you developed and grew from your experience." I told him about the time that it didn't look like I was going to be able to become a pilot due to my poor uncorrected vision. I had spent so much time and money already learning to fly and when it came to a first class medical, I couldn't get one without a waiver. Maybe I should give this dream up and move on? Maybe I have spent money in vain. How can I lose after coming this far and loving aviation so much? Just as things couldn't look worse, the FAA changed the rules and no longer was uncorrected vision a problem! I learned about perseverance, faith, and the importance of goals and the reliance on them. He asked why I would want to work for Cathay? I told him about the impressive reputation, how they have done so well, and that it is an amazing place to be. He wondered aloud why I wouldn't go to some place in the U.S. since they are hiring too. I told him how that the state of the U.S. airlines are troubling to me. They fail to care about passengers like Cathay, and even though I am not a businessman, I feel their financial plans are not sound enough for me to place my faith in them as a career: the most profitable airline in the last quarter (US Airways) also lost the most bags and ran on-time the fewest amount of times! What does that say? It says that money is the most important factor, not customers, and that seemed not to be inline with a place where I'd like to work. He wanted to know what my typical monthly schedule was like. He also wondered why I would want to move from having three to five flights and landings a day to just a few landings a month? I told him about wanting to fly internationally and how the 747 would be quite a challenge, but enjoyable too. He asked a few more questions, but I can't recall them.

Then he turned the interview over to Gus Larard. He is a very nice gentleman who seemed to truly care about me getting the answers correct. As he asked questions, he seemed to try and guide me through what he was talking about. Usually a model of a 747 or A340 is on the table and they ask questions about it. He asked me if I recognized the model on the table. I said I did: it was a Beechcraft Duchess. He said, "We pulled this model out because we noticed that you got your multi-engine rating on this airplane." I said, "Yes, I did!" "We use this airplane in our cadet training program as well." His first question out of the gate was: "What is VySE?" I seemed to stumble at such an easy question. I had studied advanced aerodynamic theory, so this entry level question had me thinking! I told him that VySE is a best-rate speed single engine. He just sat there, so I figured I needed to give him more: "a blue line on the airspeed indicator." "Yes" he said. He asked a few more questions about it, but I was so scared at the time, I don't honestly remember what he said.

He also asked:

What is Vmca?

What are some aircraft that are fly-by-wire?

What are some advantages to fly-by-wire?

What are some performance factors to fly-by-wire?

What is the difference between max range cruise and long range cruise?

What about V_{md}?

Draw the drag vs. fuel flow curve.

Draw where max range, long range and V_{md} are found on the drag/fuel flow curve.

How do you determine crossing restrictions and crossing altitudes? Formulas?

If you were getting low on fuel what would you do and what are your options?

What's the square root of 67,547 in your head? Just kidding, he didn't ask that.

“That's about all I have to ask”, he said. We stood and they thanked me for my time. I feel like I've forgotten a few, but that was the meat of it. I left the conference room, and they closed the door behind me to discuss how well or poorly I did. I was a little surprised at the questions. I don't feel like I missed any, but at the same time, I knew and prepared for a lot more and a lot tougher questions. At least system questions on the 747, system questions on the EMB-145, and so forth. I know that each interviewer has his own style and “bank” of comfortable questions. I also know that they give each candidate some of the same questions, but mostly all different questions, so we can't share them later and “cheat.” I don't know how to read into the interview but I guess I'll see . . .

After the interview, my friend Johan Hansen, who was hired a month ago and is working through training, met me in the lobby on the recruitment level. It was good to see a familiar face and we chatted a little bit about how things went. He was glad to hear that my sim ride went well, because the main focus at stage two is the sim evaluation. We headed down to the main level to get some lunch and we both ended up getting some chicken curry and rice. After lunch, we headed out to see the rest of CathayCity. It is quite the amazing place. Simulator bays, training rooms, computer labs, classrooms, eateries, offices, free uniform dry cleaning, dispatch, crewrooms, the Headland hotel for crews, a full gym, racquet ball courts, lounges and more. Crews can meet at the headquarters of CathayCity and then pass through security on the ground level of the building. Then, a bus will take the crew directly to the airplane, completely bypassing the terminal, hassles, and passengers. Johan showed me his hotel room that he was living in for the past few months and then he headed back to do some more studying while I walked around some more. I ran into Gus Larard in the hallway, and he remembered my name and told me good luck, and that he'd see me at the cocktail party the next evening.

From five to six p.m., we had a fleet briefing, that was lead by John Holmes. It was just an hour meeting in another conference room to talk about generalities about Cathay and what questions we might have. He was very up front with us about a lot of things. He told us that the best way to find out about Cathay is to talk with friends that we already have at Cathay, because they would be the most honest and real. He told us that he loved it there, and might sound biased toward the company, but he truly felt

like it was the place to be. John is currently the 777 fleet manager at Cathay. The meeting ended late, and the bus wasn't running to the Novotel, so we had to split up into groups of three and take a cab. That was interesting, because our cabby didn't speak english (or at least, pretended to not speak english. We heard later from someone that sometimes they play dumb, to keep the meter running. Good ploy, huh?) He sped through the streets as we tried to remember where to go and how to show him what turns to take. After lots of yelling instructions, hand gesturing, motions, and twenty Hong Kong dollars later, we arrived at the front of the Novotel hotel. I was pretty tired and having the hard day, day one, down and behind me, I just wanted to relax. I didn't feel like eating, and the curry chicken was still with me, so I just went up to my room. I called Laura, thought about studying, but couldn't even hold my eyes open, so I went to bed. Ah, the jet-lag was coming back to haunt me. I woke up about 2:00 a.m. and couldn't go back to sleep. I rolled around in bed, but to no avail. Part of it was nerves, part of it was jet-lag, part of it was stress over the following day, and part of it was just being away from home, a long way away, alone, and facing quite a challenge to get a job. Oh well, it's for the experience, right?

October 23rd

Getting up around six, I headed back to the lobby for some breakfast to start day two. I met a few of the fellow candidates and we had breakfast together. Today I would have the group exercise, medical exam, computer testing in math and psychological examinations and then a cocktail party to top it off in the evening.

We took the same bus back over to CathayCity, but this time, we didn't leave as early, learning from the day before. We all met up at the recruitment level lobby, and there I saw Alan Burge, Kelly Crawford, and one other gentleman I don't remember. I reintroduced myself to Alan, and he remembered me. I said that I had interviewed with him in SFO and thanked him for allowing me to be here. He said, "No, no, you got yourself here, and congratulations."

Alan ran the group exercise while the other gentleman and Kelly observed us. All nine of us were put in the main conference room, overlooking the airport. Alan explained that this exercise was to see how we all worked together to solve a complex problem. Our goal, as we had all learned from previous group notes, was to not dominate, but not be real quiet either. Cathay just wants to see if you can get along with others, like we'd have to as a crew on a 16 hour flight. They also want to see our reasoning skills to put this puzzle together.

We all got a laminated sheet of paper with a scenario on it, with a lot of detailed information about the scenario as well. Our scenario was something to the effect of needing to save the world because an asteroid was headed toward earth. There was a

mission to fly up to the asteroid to destroy it. We each had information about a candidate to lead the mission, and our job was to pick the best candidate. The trick was that some of us had some information about the mission, while others had other information. We had to make sure that each person contributed the necessary information to weed out what we needed know and use and what we didn't need to know about the situation and the candidates. For example, the leader of the mission couldn't have a certain blood type. But, we found out later, buried in the info that only one of us had, that transfusions can be done up to 48 hours prior to the mission. So, there was a lot of info that ended up just distracting us from choosing the best person to lead the mission. The leader had to have 10 years of Nasa background or 15 years of Air Force background, test pilot experience, geological degree, etc. Pulling all this together from 9 candidates was challenging, because we only had 45 minutes to do so. We elected one guy, Simon, to write up on the whiteboard, a matrix of all the candidates and all the necessary traits. Then, in the end, we picked the person with the most positive check marks in the matrix. That person ended up being my person: J. Glenn. We almost messed up because the person had to be a certain age. Most of the ages were listed, or they were given to us as: person x is five years older than person y who is seven years older than person z. But, someone noticed that this "scenario" occurred back in 1995 – so the ages we calculated were wrong! We fixed that and gave Alan our best guess right at 45 minutes. He said we all did a good job, that there is a right answer, and that he wouldn't tell us who the best candidate is! We all groaned, but had a good time doing the group exercise and were glad it was it over.

Next, I had a few hours before my medical exam, but I went up to that level right away, so I could get started. They wanted all my medical records that I brought and they asked me to take off my glasses. I couldn't see anything, but she wanted my eyes to adjust to not having correction. The nurse took me into a room and gave me my vision test. It was hard not to laugh while I tried doing the uncorrected vision test. I read the first line or two and that was it. She said, for my vision, that was good and expected. Then we did the audio test in the quiet chamber. I had to click the pushbutton when I heard the tone. Beep. Beep. Beep. Hah, hard to hear that one, huh? She said I passed, and then it was on to the EKG. I had never had one before, but it measures your heart and I was just hoping my heart was fine that day. Electrodes were placed on my chest and arms but I felt no pain. With that out of the way, I met with Dr. Richard Cocks. He was a very nice British fellow and he went through his various checks. I mentioned growing up in Indonesia and asked him how he liked living in Hong Kong. He loved it and so did his family. Afterward, he wished me luck and said he hoped to see me again . . . meaning a job offer. I had blood drawn from my right arm by an Indian man, and I asked if he had a lollipop as I am scared of needles. He apologized so much for not having one, I had to interrupt that I was just joking. I am squeamish, but he did a great job and not looking at the needle, I never felt it go in! Once the medical exams were over, I headed down to get some lunch – more curry. I

tend to stick with what works, and the breakfast and lunch items were working, so I didn't want to change much. I stuck with what I knew . . .

After lunch, I had to take the dreaded math test. It was a computer based test that lasted an hour and fifteen minutes. There were four cubicles in a room and four of us took the tests at the same time. Shawn, Me, Axel, and Ryan. We had thirty minutes to take the math test, and then the computer would automatically shut that test down and then go right into the psych evaluation. The math test was 33 questions to be done without a calculator and then the psych test was 187 questions to be done in about half an hour. The math was hard. For me, math isn't my strong suit, but also, it was more reasoning than it was math. Long division, fractions, ratios, percentages, and so forth. The hard part was the time given to us. There were 11 problems with three questions pertaining to each of the 11 problems (hence 33 questions). The first question was somewhat easy, the second was harder, and the third question was very difficult. I went through and tried to answer all the first questions first, then I attempted the second questions, and I don't think I got but maybe one of the third questions. The math was hard, like I said, but the story problems were tough to get an idea of the questions and where to begin. We had to reason what the question was asking, how to answer it, and then find the right answer out of a possible 16 answers (no guessing would work with that many possible answers). I probably answered 10-15 which is horrible, but if you can answer all 33 in 30 minutes, you should probably get out of aviation and be an astronaut or surgeon or scientist or something. Also, I've heard that the math test doesn't have any weight on our evaluation. I hope that's true. Later at the cocktail party, the Airbus chief pilot asked me how I thought I did on the computer tests. I told him that the math was hard and that I didn't feel confident about it. He looked over both shoulders and said, "Don't worry about it, I've never taken any math test around here and I doubt it counts." Cool, I thought. We had heard through the grapevine that the only reason we are given the test is to be standardized with the Cadet program (a program that trains pilots from the ground up, with zero pilot experience). We take it, but it has no weight. Well, I don't know if that is true, but I hope it is! I was working on an answer with one minute left – all I had to do was a long multiplication problem. I solved it, and when I went to put my answer in, the time expired! Oh well.

The psychological test was actually fun and a stress reliever because it was easy. No right or wrong answers, just tell us about yourself with the first answer that comes to mind. It's hard to cheat the system by telling it what you think it wants to hear, because many questions are asked in different ways, to test our consistency. Near is to far as heat is to _____. Do you prefer guns or poetry? Do you like going out or staying in? Rock or classical? I had a good time with it and enjoyed the survey of my mind.

With the testing complete, I could finally relax. I did all I could and now I was in the home stretch. It was nearing 4:00 p.m. and our cocktail party was from 5 to 6:30. I

used that time to finish up some final thank you cards and handed them to Abby DeBeer so she could pass them out. Relaxing for a while, it was time to head up to the top of the Headland hotel, in the Catalina restaurant. There is a meet and greet section of the restaurant that has huge windows that face both Chek Lap Kok Airport, and the hills near the Novotel hotel. We were up on the 23rd floor and the view was magnificent. The skies were somewhat polluted but it was neat to see what we could see up there. One candidate had brought his wife along. She had done some shopping during the interview process, but she was invited to come up to the cocktail party. There were about 25 people, not including us, who had name tags to pick up, but only about 15 came. The goal for us candidates was to drink something, but not get rowdy and drunk! No problem. I nursed a Carlsberg beer and found Keith Griffin, from the simulator, and we chatted for 20 minutes or so. He was telling me about how to get cheap electronics there in Hong Kong, and I was talking to him about photography, digital techniques and how to download iTunes music. Keith is into cameras, but is still learning this digital thing. I saw Gus Larard, some other interviewers (one in particular was pretty full of himself and seemed to be some what of a jerk, so I was glad I didn't have him) and I met some management types as well. All in all it was good time. I don't know if it was nerves or humidity, or me, or a combination of all three, but I was sweating like crazy! I had to wipe my brow once a minute. And when I realized that I was the only one sweating, it made me get worse! Talking with Abby and Kelly, they had to have noticed my profuse and gross sweating head, but were kind enough not to say anything. I took my coat off, but with a tie on, I might as well have been wearing a winter coat in Houston.

Everyone but us and Keith had left, so we got a group photo of all of us candidates. Keith let us know that he was going down to the Aviator bar if we wanted to continue our drinking. We all caught rides back to the hotel and most guys headed to the hotel bar. I went upstairs and talked to Johan and Laura about how things went on day two, changed clothes, and went back down to the hotel bar with the others. I wondered if they were not going to meet Keith around the corner at the Aviator. They were all happy to pay a lot for drinks right there at the Novotel, so I took Dan, another candidate, and went to the Aviator. We wanted to not appear disrespectful to Keith, and also see if he would tell us anything about how we did . . . He must have already gone, because he wasn't there when we got there. It's probably all the same, because I doubt he'd be able to tell us anything anyway. Dan had had a rough interview as the interviewers had really gotten after him, telling him he should've studied more, and so forth. I was hoping Keith would have some good news for him, but such as it was, we never found him.

When Dan and I got back to the Novotel, I asked some of the other candidates, who, along with Dan, were Australian, what kind of view they had of Americans, and if it was poor, why? I got a lot of interesting responses, but most of all, I found that they

had had one or two bad experiences and labeled the whole lot of us. They admitted this was unfair on their part. It was pointed out by Dan that there are 350 million Americans and only 22 million Aussies. If ten percent of Americans are jerks, then that's more than the entire population of Australia! Good point. I was tired and so I said my good-byes and headed up to bed, because the next day was going to be very long.

October 24th

I slept very well that night and only woke up about 30 minutes prior to my alarm going off. In other words, I was just getting used to Hong Kong's time and now it was time to leave! It was also the prettiest morning since I had come to Hong Kong, with lots of sun and no haze or pollution. I did the usual breakfast and ran into the two other guys, Shawn and Ryan, who were headed out with me to JFK that day. I also ran into Adam Horbach, who is a Chautauqua guy and who interviewed right after me in SFO. He was just starting his two day ordeal and in the back of my mind, I was glad to be finished, not just starting! I gave him some tips on what to expect and then headed over to the cashier's desk to check out. I got some money to keep as a souvenir and the three of us headed to the airport.

Checking in, we found out that business class was full. The other two guys at least got window seats, but I got stuck in the middle section, with people on both sides of me. I wondered how I was going to last 15 hours in a middle seat, but don't worry, I made it! I took some photos in the terminal and waited for the call to board. The terminal in Hong Kong is beautiful and huge. It is very bright and open and simply expansive. Again, the airplane we were going on was the Airbus A340-600 to New York. When I found my seat, I had an Asian man on my right and a Spanish man on my left. The Chinese man slept for the first 10 hours or so, and I couldn't believe it. How lucky it would be to let 10 hours pass so quickly. The Spanish man and I chatted off and on. Again I watched the camera view and saw the taxi lines as we departed gate 60 out to runway 25R for departure. This time, it was Captain Lee Beemer at the helm, and I must say, he did a fine job. The crew from JFK to VHHH looked no older than 35 while this crew, ahem, looked a little more "experienced."

Lifting off, again we had 8066 statute miles to travel, however, Captain Beemer told us that we would be traveling a more southerly "Polar" route, instead of directly over the North Pole. The route would take us over Taipei, Tokyo, the north Pacific, and then make land fall over Anchorage, then over Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, and into New York. I can only assume the more southerly route was to take advantage of tail winds. Going to Hong Kong, we went directly north over the pole and down, so it was nice to see a different route on the return flight.

I watched four movies and got up twice in the 15 hour flight. I managed to stay up the entire time, to help swing my body back around to EST. I chatted in the galley with two guys who I recognized as being on the same flight over to Hong Kong. I also talked with a flight attendant who told me about the crew quarters on the A340-600. They have a cargo container down below that has electricity and beds and so forth and they access it through a stairway in the back of the plane. There is also one in the front for the pilots. The nice thing about this system is that on shorter flights, where the crew quarters aren't needed, they can be removed and more cargo can be put down below.

As we descended into JFK, it was rainy and overcast. Dropping below the clouds, I could see that we were lined up for a landing on 31R, which when rolling out, takes us right to the gate. It was a nice touch down on the centerline, but the brakes got stomped on, and we all got thrown forward quite a bit. Overall, it was a great flight and a lot smoother than going over, but I was just glad to be back. After a long line in immigration and an even longer wait to get my checked bag, I finally said good-bye to Shawn and Ryan, and wished them luck.

I headed over to the next terminal, to see when the next jetBlue flight was scheduled to depart for Columbus. It left at 4:15 p.m., so I had about an hour and a half – just enough time to get something to eat and check up on e-mail while I waited. A few Dunkin' Donuts plain glazed doughnuts and a coffee later, I was headed to gate 18 to Columbus. In this terminal, I had to ride a bus from where security was, over to the section where gate 18 was. No big deal, but it was quite a hassle to mess with four bags and going in and out of busses. Checking in at the gate, there were plenty of seats and so I was glad to be getting a seat and sat down to check my long overdue e-mail. They called for boarding, and I headed down the jet way about 4:00 p.m.. I went to call Laura to let her know I'd be home soon. That's when I realized that I didn't have my mobile phone! I checked my pockets, my bag, and found nothing. I figured that I must have left it at security – a long walk and then a bus ride away. The flight attendant asked what was the matter and I told her that I lost my phone, but that I'd just come back for it another day. I honestly was thinking of just leaving it, because I was so tired and just wanted to get home. I now realize how crazy that sounds because I would have lost a lot of numbers, and probably would have never seen it again. Luckily, she added some sensibility to the conversation and said that I had time to run back and look for it. I couldn't leave my bags there in the jetway, so I had to lug them back to the bus, wait for the bus, ride it over to the other terminal, run up the hallway, and back up to the security checkpoint. Luckily, I saw it sitting there in a lost and found basket! Now all I had to do was make it back to my flight, lest I have to wait four more hours for the next one to Columbus. I ran, started sweating, ran some more, caught the bus, and ran back down the jetway, to an awaiting flight crew. I made it. I asked for a jumpseat ride, with sweat pouring off my face and my bags all falling down near my feet. The captain said to just slow down, relax, take a water, and head

down to any row in the back. Whew! Getting aboard was a nice feeling because it was the last flight I would be on before getting home.

As we taxied out to the runway, the captain came on over the PA system and told us that we'd be at least an hour before we could take off because of rain and lots of in-trail departure restrictions. Where had I heard that before? That's when I made some phone calls and started typing up my story so I can remember this years from now.

We finally departed runway 31L and an hour later, we started our decent into CMH. The bumps were worse than the ones we felt on the flight to Hong Kong. It was so bad, I couldn't type! I gave it up and put the laptop away, and snapped a few pictures of the sunset as we turned final into CMH onto runway 10L.

As I drove back toward 537 Cherry Street, I reflected back on how fortunate I was to take a whirlwind trip like that, all expenses paid. Months of preparation, days and days of studying, hours of filling out forms and copying my logbook pages, and still, I'd do it all over again. If I get the job, that will be really exciting, but even if I don't, I had a great time in Hong Kong, met some really great guys, enjoyed a stressful but exciting trip, and got to see a part of the world that many don't get to see. I got a grand tour of CathayCity, the secret behind the success of a world class airline and I got to fly on an amazing airplane and route across the world.

I will remember this trip for many years to come and either way, job offer or not, I'm humbled by the opportunity to be invited to interview at Cathay and am so fortunate that I was able to go. If you ever want to travel to Asia, may I suggest taking Cathay Pacific?

