

WAITING FOR THE GREEN FLASH

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Sir Knights and Ladies of Ohio. Due to a change in the format of the KT magazine, this will be my final published message to you.

Many more years ago than I care to admit, I was a young USAF Captain stationed at Kadena Air Base on the island of Okinawa, Japan. During my two-year tour of duty on Okinawa I had to return to the United States several times. I had to attend simulator training twice, Squadron Officers College, Instructor Pilot training and a few other missions that required me to make the long trip across the Pacific Ocean.

I would normally make the trip across the Pacific on a regular scheduled Military Airlift Command (MAC) flight called the "808" or the "807" It was a scheduled run to and from either Travis AFB north of San Francisco or Norton AFB near Los Angeles. The flight was on either a C-141 Starlifter or a C-5A Galaxy depending upon which base was doing the mission. Regardless of which aircraft was doing the run, I hated riding in the back as a passenger so I would always get myself listed on Auxiliary Crew Member (ACM) orders. The ACM status allowed me to sit in one of the cockpits jump seats and use the crew rest facility instead of trying to sleep in the airline style seats in the cargo compartment with the space available passengers.

Just before the flight, I would go the flight deck and check in with the Aircraft Commander and the next thing I would do would be to check in with the Navigator. I would always ask the Nav what time sunrise was going to be? I would set the alarm on my watch for 10 minutes prior to sunrise and then grab the jump seat and get strapped in for takeoff. Once we got up to cruise altitude I would normally eat one of my box lunches and then sign off the interphone and head for the crew rest facility. Once I got to the bunk, I would strip off my flight suit and crawl into the bunk wearing my olive drab t-shirt and a pair of gym shorts. I could sleep like a baby on one of those big airlifters, especially the C-5. I would usually be out within a few minutes. When my alarm sounded, I would crawl out of the bunk, slither back into my flight suit and head back up to the cockpit to watch the show.

The show that I was so anxious to see is what we called the "Green Flash." *The green flash and green ray are meteorological optical phenomena that sometimes occur transiently around the moment of sunset or sunrise. When the conditions are right, a distinct green spot is briefly visible above the Sun's upper limb. The green flash is very short lived and usually lasts for no more than two seconds. On very rare occasions, the green flash can resemble a green ray shooting up from the sunset or sunrise point.*

Green flashes may be observed from any altitude but were more consistently viewed from higher altitudes. They usually are seen at an unobstructed horizon, such as over the ocean, but are possible over cloud tops and mountain tops as well. The green flash occurs because the atmosphere causes the light from the Sun to separate, or refract, into different frequencies. Green flashes are enhanced by mirages, which increase refraction. A green flash is more likely to be seen in stable, clear air.

As sunrise approached, everyone in the cockpit would be focused at that spot on the horizon where the sun was about to rise. If we were lucky, we would be treated to that incredible emerald-green spot that looked like it was just sitting perched on top of the rising sun. It was an incredibly beautiful and breathtaking sight. As fast as we would see it, it would be gone, and the sun would just explode over the horizon and a new day would begin over the North Pacific.

No matter how many times the crew had seen the green flash it was still an amazing sight, and we would all remark about how beautiful it was for several minutes before going back the job of flying and navigating the airplane. I never got tired of seeing this amazing spectacle and always thought how lucky we were to get to witness this miracle that God was putting on just for us. I admit that was an arrogant and self-important interpretation of what we were being treated to.

A little while later I came to the realization that while what I and the rest of the crew was witnessing was indeed one of Gods miracles, it was not meant exclusively for us. I came to the realization that the green flash was traveling around the world with the sunrise every second of every minute of every day. The show was not just for me and the men that I was flying with, it was for anyone and everyone who knew that it was there and to look for it.

As I approach the completion of my term as Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Ohio, on October 7th, I find myself looking forward to that green flash that will mark the dawn of a new day on October 8th and the end of my term. I have been honored and blessed to serve the Sir Knights and Ladies of Ohio and I offer my profound thanks to you for allowing me to serve as your Grand Commander. As I find myself once again waiting for the green flash, I realize that the miracle occurs everywhere on Earth every minute of every day. Sir Knights and Ladies, the miracles are everywhere! You just have to know where to look! Thank you for allowing me to serve you and for your support. Soar Aloft, and may God bless you all.

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(Portions of this article are taken from the Wikipedia page describing the Green Flash.)