

FLF: The planes

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 11 Dec 2002

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Roy C. Lackey — 11 Dec 2002, 21:27

There are some problems with both the _High Country_ and the B-17 that I can't resolve. At the end of the book Free tells the four boarders that there are two ways to leave the _High Country_, either the gizmo or the B-17. Use of the gizmo entails time-travel; the B-17 doesn't. There is no doubt that when the four were put aboard the B-17 it was January 1983. Free also makes reference to the fact that the year on board the _High Country_ is the same as the year on the ground, or 1983. There is also no doubt that the B-17 came from the W.W. II era, as did the crew. The crew's lack of contemporary knowledge, their clothing, and their artifacts (guns, cigarettes) all point to the 1940s. Okay, but the problem is, how did the B-17 get from 1942 to 1982?

Judging from the backdoor of Free's house, use of a gizmo involves passage through some sort of field in order for the person/object to be transported through time. In other words, when the gizmo on _High Country_ was used, neither the plane itself nor the other persons/objects on it were transported. The _High Country_ got to 1982 the hard way, by flying continuously for forty years. When the B-17 appeared in November 1982, how did it get there?

Improbable as it may seem, the duffel-coated Whitten in 1982 seems to be totally ignorant of the fact that the _High Country_, in that year, is completely abandoned and has been for many years. In fact, judging from the dates on papers the four found, and the globe which still showed many former colonies as still being colonies, and the natural decay of fabrics and other items, the plane seems to have been abandoned since the war years. After all, once the first use of the gizmo to travel to 1952 was successful, the original purpose for building the _High Country_ no longer mattered. All the future history books showed that the government powers were not and never had been threatened. There was no reason for the powerful men to stay on the plane, so they didn't. The only purpose the plane then had was as a future staging platform for the gizmo. The OSS wanted to go into the future to get a jump on future gadgetry that might be useful to them in their operations. 1982 was the year they chose to travel to and set up a base of operations, which is when and why Whitten bought the Flying Carpet. The orders that Whitten thought came from 'on high' didn't come from the plane, they were planted by his future self, after he deserted.

At least, that's how I see it. But I can't explain the B-17.

-Roy

Michael Andre-Driussi — 11 Dec 2002, 23:01 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

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When Buck Whitten brought his team from August 20, 1942 to November 5, 1982, they came in the B-17.

Presumably the gizmo on High Country can be set to project outside of the High Country as well as in a doorway (in the High Country or in Free's house). The B-17 then flies through the sky-door and into 1982.

"On the other hand, if _High Country_ or some successor . . . was still flying and we wanted to take something big home [to 1942], we could do that in the plane" (ch. 59, 392).

Thus the HC gizmo can make a plane-size door, the little gizmo can make a man-size door.

I hope this resolves your initial problem so we can move onto the next: what is the perspective from the flight-crew of the B-17? That is, those two guys (one Army, one Navy) seem to have had some experience in flying through time, and yet they have not lived in the 1980s, or if they have they have not known it. If they are the original crew who flew in with Buck, then maybe they flew back to 1942 . . . otherwise they have been living in 1982 for a couple of months (November 5 to January 22), under wraps by Buck & Co. (so they would not know they were in the 80s), but during which time they would use up their Camel cigarettes and matches.

That is (and maybe this is just a refinement of your original problem): the B-17 seems to have come directly from 1942 specifically for this one mission, and to have gone back to 1942 right after. But this is not a problem if the 1982 High Country gizmo is set to "outdoor" sky-door mode and the target year of 1942.

The reason this one plane and crew must be used for =all= traffic to and from High Country is plain.

I note that the plane left after it dropped off the four. It might have gone back to 1942 (lessen the chance of time-contamination) or it might have landed back in 1982 for simple refueling prior to going up again to get Ozzie Barnes, the one of the four who did not go through the indoor gizmo portal.

Also note: the three who went through the gizmo on High Country did not teleport to Free's house--instead they would have found themselves in the abandoned High Country of whatever year the gizmo is set to, and have to be ferried down to the surface via B-17.

=mantis=

Roy C. Lackey — 12 Dec 2002, 06:44 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

mantis wrote:

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The crew does know when they are; they say so, and this is **after** they have de-coupled from HC and are gliding down to earth. The hypothetical projected field of the gizmo must not have been turned on.

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Yes, and it brings up another problem. See below.

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And who gave the orders? Ignoring that, given that HC is abandoned, how would the three have contacted the shuttle crew of whatever year they went to? They had to go to the past (HC couldn't keep aloft much longer; it was aging badly), in order for them to merge with their earlier selves. They couldn't go too far back; the women were only in their twenties.

But the bigger problem is Whitten's second disappearance. According to Wolfe's timeline, Whitten vanished on Friday, January 14, 1983, when Free made his last return to his house. Free was murdered on the following Friday, the 21st, and Whitten reappeared after a week's absence. Kip reported to Whitten after killing Free. Both she and Whitten were present at the airfield later that night, after each of the boarders had undergone their 'trials'. The four talked to Whitten; he was there when they went aboard the B-17. The shuttle reached HC about midnight. In the early-morning hours of Saturday, the 22nd of January, 1983, they spoke to 60-70-year-old Free in the cockpit of HC. He was already there, waiting for them. That's the problem--how did he get there?

Since there can't be two versions of the same person at the same time, for Free to have been present on HC on the 22nd, Whitten had to have vanished a second time **after** the B-17 took off. The timeline states that he did vanish, but doesn't explain how Free came to be aboard HC when the B-17 got there. How could Free be both on HC and on the ground as Whitten? The obvious answer is that Free reached HC from another time, another shuttle flight, and arrived

on HC only after the B-17 left the airfield with the four boarders. He couldn't have been on HC while the four talked to Whitten on the ground. And I don't think he got there *after* the four arrived; not enough time had passed since the four arrived for the shuttle to land and return to HC with another passenger. Besides, if Whitten had vanished again so soon, there would have been pandemonium on the ground. The trouble with the obvious answer is Free's age.

When Whitten deserted on the 24th, he was necessarily less than 60 years old. He was always clean-shaven. Free, according to Dr. Makee, sometimes was clean-shaven, sometimes had a beard. After he deserted the OSS, Whitten no longer had free access to the gizmo on HC, or the cooperation of the organization. After spending so many years on the frontier, he had aged too much to ever go back to the OSS and resume his role as the general. That's part of what he meant about it being too late for him to use his "ticket" back to the HC. So, how did a bearded, 60-70-year-old Free ever get aboard a shuttle in another time to get up to the HC to meet the four boarders?

-Roy