No conflict of interest in connection with this presentation.

Lufthansa Flight LH 416
From Frankfurt to Washington

Anouncement of the pilot close to the Canadian border:
“I will flow now a circle over the Atlantic.”
“Don’t be surprised, but some fluid will come out of the wings.”

What I learned later:
We were too heavy for landing – 28 tons of kerosine were sprayed over the sea.

Lufthansa Flight LH 416
From Frankfurt to Washington

Pilot again:
“We are not allowed to enter the US air space and will land in Gander.”
No further explanation for that change!
What and where is Gander? What happened?

After Landing …
Within a couple of hours 38 civil planes and 3 military planes landed.
9,104 passengers in a city of 11,056 people!

How to care for all these people?
After 8 hours a convoy of school buses showed up at the side of our airplane, the stairway was hooked up and the passengers were taken to the terminal for “processing”.

We were allowed to take the hand luggage with us.

We were informed that we would go to the “Academy” after passing immigration.

"And don’t leave the group!”

The last passengers: “We spent the next 23 hours locked on the plane.”

Passing immigration needed about 30 min per plane.

We found out that Gander and the surrounding small communities had closed all the schools, meeting halls, lodges, and any other large gathering places. They converted all these facilities to a mass lodging area. Some had cots set up, some had mats with sleeping bags and pillows set up. ALL the high school students HAD to volunteer taking care of the “GUESTS”.

On 11 September 2001, a total of 240 flights were rerouted to Canada when American airspace was closed after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

All of you are familiar with these pictures!
Stuck on planes for up to 31 hours since taking off from Europe and in the age before smartphones and social media, many passengers didn’t know exactly what caused their diversion to this tiny Canadian province.

After arrival we learned what had happened!

My first idea – a science fiction film.

TCT was stopped the next morning.

When we arrived at the “Academy” which is a basic school I got a blanket and slept on the flour, not really comfortable.

My phone did not work! No net!

Newtel Communications, the telephone company, set up phone banks for passengers to call home.

Local television cable companies wired schools and church halls, where we watched the events unfolding in New York and Washington.

We realized how lucky we had been.

At home my visiting father in law saw the attack:

“Alexandra come! Klaus is dead! His plane crushed in a New York building”.

My wife looked at the TV screen and said:

“No, that are US planes and he is flying with Lufthansa. I will call them”.

When I made my phone call the next day she knew already that I was in Gander.
It was clear that it would need a couple of days to refuel 38 planes.

I was dressed for summer temperatures. I went to a small shopping mall and bought underwear, a warm shirt, jacket and shoes.

Next day:
The Walmart had run out of nearly everything. Underwear was a particularly hot commodity.

09/12
The people of Gander supplied us with nearly everything.

09/12
You could rest on the flour or eat and drink.

They even played music for us.

09/13
No essential change the next day

09/13
Even the children of Gander helped!

09/14
My new outfit

Does that lady like it?
After 4 days back to the airport.

This town of 11,000 people and its surrounding communities welcomed the passengers and crew from nearly 100 countries with open arms.

The town all but shut down for the “plane people”, inspiring the Tony-award winning Broadway musical “Come From Away”.

During the performance last year I lived through the 9/11 events a second time – And all the emotions awake again.

At the end of the performance I jumped on the stage and talked backstage with the artists.

Gander 4ever!
A great town with adorable people.
Never met people with bigger hearts!