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William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

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[[newspaper article]]

ONCE AGAIN "FIRST TIMER" COMMUTER

By James McVittie

July 2nd--Marseilles, France; July 3--Lisbon, Portugal--Horta, Azores;

July 4th--Chicago (Noon)

Breakfast in Lisbon--July 3rd

Lunch in Chicago--July 4th

What an age for adventure and accomplishment! The Arabian Nights fables are truly coming to life! Don't we all remember the 'flying carpet' -- how fantastic that seemed as with wide-eyed awe we listened to the tales read to us by or elders? Never did we dream that, in our day and age, we would experience the thrill of being on the "flying carpet." But, sure enough--

On June 28th --at about 2:10 P.M.--the giant "Dixie Clipper" left Port Washington, Long Island, (New York) on its first commercial flight to Marseilles, France, via Horta in the Azores, and Lisbon, Portugal, and I was one of the 22 passengers to be given the opportunity to be on this initial flight. This, by no means, was my first experience in "being up in the air"--

My first experience in flying high above the waves of the mighty ocean was on the first commercial flight of the dirigible GRAF ZEPPELIN from Friedrichshafen, Germany over the South Atlantic--flying over Lake Constance, Switzerland, through the air corridor over France, over the Mediterranean, Gibraltar, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands (where mail was dropped off with parachutes) finally reaching our destination, Pernambuco, Brazil,

This seemed most marvelous to me, because steamers ply in this trade route need from 18 to 20 days to traverse the same distance.

My second experience in mastering the mighty ocean--this time the North Atlantic--was on the Dirigible HINDENBURG. I had to transact some business in Russia, so my trip was planned with a view to connecting with the first westbound flight of the HINDENBURG, and it dove-tailed very nicely. I flew from Bremen to Copenhagen, thence to Stockholm and Helsingfors; then by train from Helsingfors, Finland to Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, and over to Bucharest, Roumania, from which later point I flew to Belgrad, Jugo Savia, Budapest, Hungary, Munich, Germany, and on to Friedrichshafen, where I arrived in time to board the HINDENBURG. The Dirigible, this time, followed the northerly course over Suttgrt, Mainz, Frankfurt, Cologne (over the beautiful cathedral), Holland and then along Land's End, over the Atlantic to Lakehurst, N. J., in the record time of 62 1/2 hours and then to Chicago. I made the entire trip from Friedrichshafen to Chicaago in only 66 hours.

The next came my initial [[line has been cut off article]] over the Pacific. The plane took off from Alameeda (the San Francisco airport), at 3:15 in the afternoon, and the next morning, at 8, we were in Honolulu, Hawaii (this span is made by steamers, on this route, in about 4 1/2 or 5 days). The Royal Hawaiian was the stopping place for that day and night, and early the next morning the Clipper left for its next stop--Midway Island--where we stayed for the night at the Pan American attractive one-story hotel. The accommodations were very comfortable, with tub and shower

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baths; there was every convenience, and the food very good--really a delightful spot, and I was fortunate, too, to be there when the Goona Goona birds were also "visiting" Midway Island--they surely were a lot of fun. The following morning, early, we again took off, for Wake Island, crossing the International Date Line. Here the Pan American Airways has built a hotel similar to the one at Midway Island. There was sufficient time to go fishing (but I won't tell you how many fish I caught--because, after all, this is an "air" story, not a fish story). The stay there was most enjoyable. Came the third morning, and we, per usual, took off early in the morning for Guam. This is a quaint Island--where the inhabitants are very religious and--superstitious--barring their doors and windows and keeping lights on at night to keep the ghosts out. We arrived on this Island on Christmas Eve of 1937. On Christmas morning we left Guam early for the most perilous stretch of the journey for Manila. At night of that day, we were flying at a height of about 14,000 feet--and so close to the Southern Cross that we felt we could almost reach out and pick a brilliant star out of the inky darkness--a more beautiful sight could not be held anywhere--so I felt. But I'm getting a little ahead of my story--during the day one of the stewards erected a Christmas tree and trimmed it with colorful orna-

[[/newspaper article]]

[[image: picture of a smiling man on stairs]]
[[caption under picture]]
James McVittie
[[/caption under picture]]

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