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William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

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As the afternoon progressed there was much speculation as to whether we would have a cocktail before dinner, but hopes sank with the sun--when the tables were laid we were greatly disappointed to find that no liquor had been provided. However, after a really delicious dinner, prepared by a Baltimore caterer, a thoughtful fellow-voyager from Chicago generously produced a bottle of brandy and all hands had a liqueur.

The beds could not have been more comfortable, and sleep should have been easily induced by the lulling drone of the motors--but the light of the full moon on the clouds was so indescribably beautiful that there was no use attempting it. The carpet of clouds below was full of eerie shadows, and the clouds above swept across the moon, creating the sensation of tremendous speed. We ran through several small but spectacular storms, and were up at 6 a.m. to land at Horta, in the Azores, exactly 15 1/2 hours out of New York.

It was lovely circling over the island in the sunshine and seeing the tilled fields of all shapes and sizes with windmills dotted here and there. We skirted the extinct volcano of Pica, rising 7,000 feet out of the sea, circled by a ring of clouds just below the cone, made a perfect landing directly in front of the town, and boarded a tender. The sea wall was crowded with enthusiastic people who were so cordial in their welcome that we felt at home immediately and hated to leave after our visit of an hour and a half.

We were driven in motors through the lovely little town up 2,000 feet into the hills, over curving roads lined with masses of blue hydrangeas that grow wild in great profusion--to see the glorious view of the other islands. It seemed strange to see the mountain from the underside of the circle of clouds instead of from above it. On the hilltop the American vice-consul delivered a speech of welcome, and we went on to a club of partial proportions, where we cakes and the delicious white wine of the country. That, incidentally, served as breakfast for those who had been tardy in rising.

After being presented with flowers and very smart hats of native straw, we regretfully said goodbye and after a short taxi rose in 28 seconds to start the second lap of our journey. The afternoon flew quickly by and we began to hate the thought of leaving the boat--we were just settling down to a pleasant daily life with very good company and all the comforts of home. But, on the other hand, one and all were really greatly excited at having just spanned the Atlantic.

Land was sighted about a quarter to six, and everyone rushed for the windows and glued their noses to the panes, as we began to circle over Lisbon. We could hardly be torn away to take our seats and adjust the belts. Exactly 24 hours out of New York we came down to another perfect landing at the mouth of the Tagus River. Walking up the gangway and setting foot upon European soil was the thrill of a lifetime. Clearing customs, we drove for miles--or so it seemed--through the historic old city to an excellent hotel, the Aviz, to spend the night.

At 6:30 the next morning the Clipper took off again for the last lap of the journey, and flew up the coast of Portugal, with its rocky shore, little towns, irregular farm lands, and distant mountains. When we reached the Spanish coast, the clouds partially obliterated the view of land and we caught only occasional glimpses of very similar terrain. At the height

we were flying, it would have been impossible to see any of the ravages of war even if the clouds hadn't been there.

The Spanish Government does not allow foreign planes to fly over her territory, so we had to skirt the coast, and cross France to Marseilles, north of the Pyrenees--adding 400 miles to the total of 4640 miles in 28 flying hours. Yet we averaged 165 miles an hour--a world record, and the Ruban Bleu de l'air.

The landing at Marseilles was something of an emotional anticlimax to that at Lisbon, but the French were very kind, and a good-natured customs man put us through quickly.

It could not have been more comfortable or more pleasant. The time went very quickly, the ship was steadier than a railroad train, and the sound of the motors not loud enough to be objectionable. The steam heat was well regulated, and there was wonderful hot water. In fact, it proved a most practical and delightful way of coming to Europe as well as a tremendous thrill.
--Anne Haight

[[image--two women and a man at table with dishes, woman at table behind them smoking; Caption above image: Courtesy of Pan American Airways; Caption below image: Combination lounge and dining saloons are amidships aboard Yankee Clipper and her five sister Pan American transoceanic planes. Service is provided for 14 persons at one sitting, but galley is equipped to serve the full complement of 85. Every pound counts. Linens, china, glass, silver are all lightweight.]]

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