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William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

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were to dine in New York that night. I had been away for fifteen days and thirteen of them had been spent in Europe.

N.B.-Mrs. Grosvenor had only just stepped into a Madison Avenue bus when the brakes were thrown on violently to avoid running down a woman. The woman gathered herself together and got on the bus. To Mrs. Grosvenor's amazement it was not other than Mrs. Clara Adams herself. She had flown around the world in fifteen days, to barely escape death on Madison Avenue.

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The Fremont Gazette

ALVAN B. JONES

RALPH E. JONES

Editors and Publishers

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A. THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 1939

[[line]]

"After You Col. Lindbergh"

By W.J. Eck

Note: About two months ago every daily paper in the nation published many columns of print matter about the opening of passenger service by plane across the Atlantic Ocean. It has been stated in the columns of this paper before that the number one passenger on the first flight was W.J. Eck, of Washington, D.C. Mr. Eck is brother of Mrs. E.E. Edwards of Cedar.

Mr.Eck has been kind enough to allow us to publish his own personal account of the trip and it is our pleasure to bring it to our readers in the next few issues.

[[line]]

"Ah, wondrous age!

Man can dare

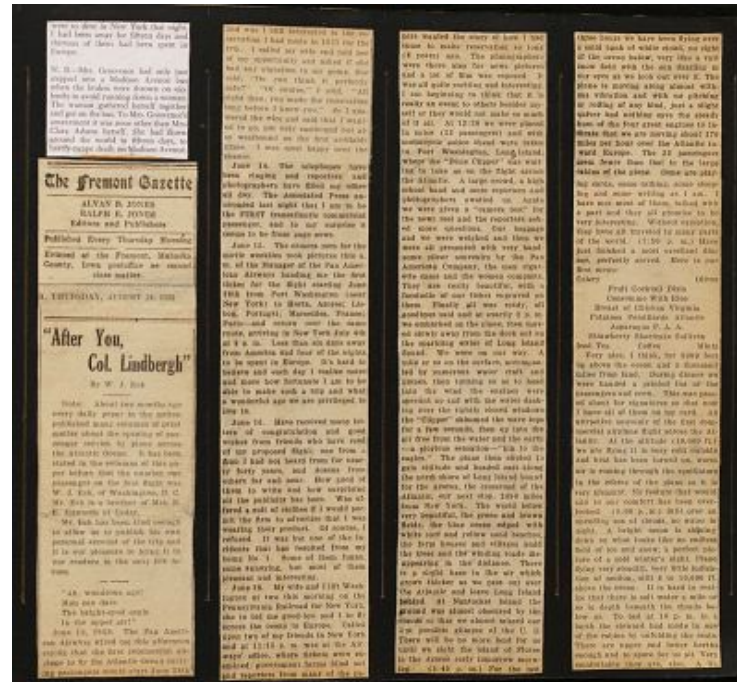
The bright-eyed eagle

In the upper air!"

June 13, 1939. The Pan American Airways wired me this afternoon saying that the first commercial airplane to fly the Atlantic Ocean carrying passengers would start June 28th and was I still interested in the reservation I had made in 1931 for the trip. I called my wife and told her of my opportunity and asked if she had any objection to my going. She said, "Do you think it perfectly safe?" "Of course," I said. "All right then, you made the reservation long before I knew you." So I answered the wire and said that I wanted to go, not only eastbound but also westbound on the first available plane. I was most happy over the chance.

June 14. The telephones have been ringing and reporters and photographers have filled my office all day. The Associated Press announced last night that I am to be the FIRST transatlantic commercial passenger, and to my surprise it seems to be front page news.

June 15. The camera men for the ovie weeklies took pictures this a.m. of the Manager of the Pan American Airways handing me the first ticket for the flight starting June 28th from Port Washington (near New York) to Horta, Azores; Lisbon, Portugal; Marseilles, France; Paris - and return



over the same route, arriving in New York July 4th at 8 a.m. Less than six days away from American and four of the nights to be spent in Europe. Its hard to believe and each day I realize more and more how fortunate I am to be able to make such a trip and what a wonderful age we are privileged to live in.

June 16. Have received many letters of congratulations and good wishes from friends who have read of my proposed flight; one from a man I had not heard from for nearly forty years, and dozens from others far and near. How good of them to write and how surprising all the publicity has been. Was offered a suit of clothes if I would permit the firm to advertise that I was wearing their product. Of course. I refused. It was but one of the incidents that has resulted from my being No. 1. Some of the funny, some annoying, but most of them pleasant and interesting.

June 28. My wife and I left Washington at two this morning on the Pennsylvania Railroad for New York, she to bid me good-bye and I to fly across the ocean to Europe. Called upon two of my friends in New York and at 11:15 a.m. was at the Airways' office, where tickets were examined, government forms filled out and reporters from many of the papers wanted the story of how I had come to make the reservation so long (8 years) ago. The photographers were there also for news pictures and a lot of film was exposed. It was all quite exciting and interesting. I am beginning to think that it is really an event to others besides myself or they would not make so much of it all. AT 12:30 we were placed in autos (22 passengers) and with motorcycle police ahead were taken to Port Washington, Long Island, where the "Dixie Clipper" was waiting to take us on the flight across the Atlantic. A large crowd, a high school band and more reporters and photographers awaited us. Again we were given a "camera test" for the news reel and the reporters asked more questions. Our baggage and we were weighed and then we were all presented with very handsome silver souvenirs by the Pan American Company, the men cigarette cases and the women compacts. They are really beautiful, with a facsimile of our ticket engraved on them. finally all was ready, all goodbyes said and at exactly 2 p.m. we embarked on the plane, then moved slowly away from the dock out on the sparkling water of Long Island Sound. We were on our way. A mile or so on the surface, accompanied by numerous water craft and planes, then turning so as to head into the wind the engines were speeded up and with the water dashing over the tightly closed windows the "Clipper" skimmed the wave tops for a few seconds, then up into the air free from the water and the earth - a glorious sensation - "kin to the eagles." The plane then circled to gain altitude and headed east along the north shore of Long Island bound for the Azores, the crossroad of the Atlantic, our next stop, 2490 miles from New York. The world below very beautiful, the green and brown fields, the blue ocean edged with white surf and yellow sand beaches, the farm houses and villages amid the trees and the winding roads disappearing in the distance. There is a slight haze in the air which grows thicker as we pass out over the Atlantic and leave Long Island behind. At Nantucket Island the ground was almost obscured by the clouds so that we almost missed our last possible glimpse of the U.S. There will be no more land for us until we sight the island of Flores in the Azores early tomorrow morning. (5:45 p.m.) For the last three hours we have been flying over a solid bank of white cloud, no sight of the ocean below, very like a vast snow field with the sun dazzling in our eyes as we look out over it. The plane is moving along almost without vibration and with no pitching or rolling of any kind, just a slight quiver and nothing save the steady hum of the four great engines to indicate that we are moving about 170 per hour over the Atlantic toward Europe. The 22 passengers seem fewer than in the large cabins of the

plane. Some are playing cards, some talking, some sleeping and some writing as I am. I have met most of them, talked with a part and they all promise to be very interesting. Without exception, they have all traveled in many parts of the world. (7:59 p.m.) Have just finished a most excellent dinner, perfectly served. Here is our first menu:

Celery Olives
Fruit Cocktail Dixie
Consomme With Rice
Breast of Chicken Virginia
Potatoes Persillarde Atlantic
Asparagus P.A.A.
Strawberry Shortcake Sullivan
Iced Tea Coffee Mints

Very nice, I think, for 8000 feet up above the ocean and a thousand miles from land. During dinner we were handed a printed list of the passengers and crew. This was passed about for signatures so that now I have all of them on my card. An attractive souvenir of the first commercial airplane flight across the Atlantic. At the altitude (10,000 ft.) we are flying it is very cold outside and heat has been turned on, warm air is coming through the ventilators in the cabins of the plane so it is very pleasant. No feature that would add to our comfort has been overlooked. (9:00 p.m.) Still over an unending sea of clouds, no water in sight. A bright moon is shining down on what looks like an endless field of ice and snow, a perfect picture of a cold winter's night. Plane flying very steadily, very little indication of motion, still 8 to 10,000 ft. above the ocean. It is hard to realize that there is salt water a mile or so in depth beneath the clouds below us. To bed at 10 p.m. in a berth the steward had made in one of the cabins by unfolding the seats. There are upper and lower berths enough and to spare for us all. Very comfortable they are, also. A lit-

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