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William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

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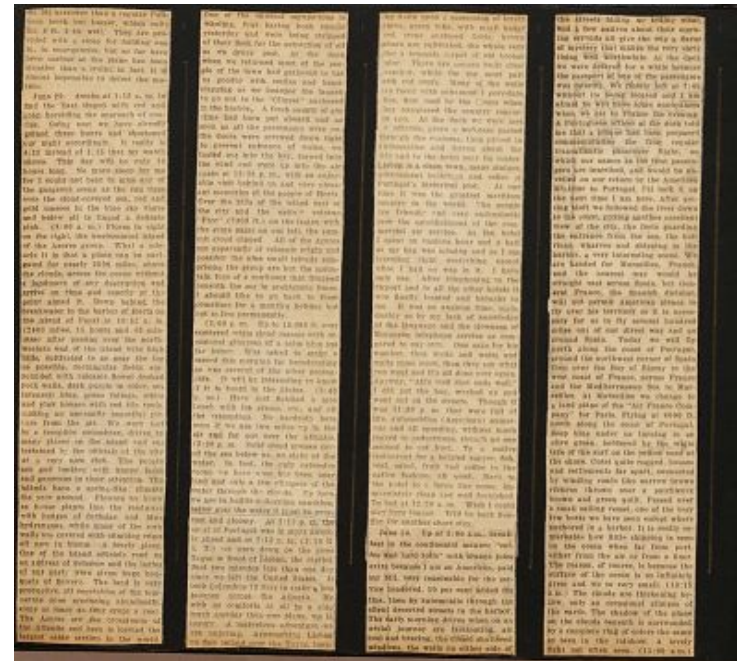
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tle bit narrower than a regular Pullman berth but longer, which suits my 6 ft. 2 in. well. They are provided with a strap for holding one in, in emergencies, but so far have been useless as the plane has been steadier than a train; in fact, it is almost impossible to detect the motion.

June 29. Awake at 1:15 a.m. to find the East tinged with red and gold, heralding the approach of sunrise. Going east we have already gained three hours and shortened our night accordingly. It really is 4:15 instead of 1:15 that my watch shows. This day will be only 19 hours long. No more sleep for me for I could not bear to miss any of the gorgeous scene as the sun rises over the cloud-covered sea, red and gold masses in the blue sky above and below all is tinged a delicate pink. (8:00 a.m.) Flores in sight on the right, the westernmost Island of the Azores group. What a miracle it is that a plane can be navigated for nearly 2500 miles, above the clouds, across the ocean without a landmark of any description and arrive on time and exactly at the point aimed at. Down behind the breakwater in the harbor of Horta on the island of Fayal at 10:52 a.m. (2400 miles, 15 hours and 40 minutes) after passing over the northwestern end of the island with high hills, cultivated to as near the top as possible, rectangular fields surrounded with volcanic flower decked rock walls, dark purple in color, sea intensely blue, green foliage, white and pink houses with red tile roofs, making an unusually beautiful picture from the air. We were met by a reception committee, driven to many places on the island and entertained by the officials of the city at a very nice night club. The people are god looking with happy faces and generous in their attention. The islands have a spring-like climate the year around. Flowers we know as house plants line the roadways with hedges of fuchsias and blue hydrangeas, while many of the rock walls are covered with climbing roses all now in bloom, A lovely place. One of the island officials read us an address of welcome and the ladies of our party were given huge bouquets of flowers. The land is very productive, all vegetables of the temperate zone producing abundantly, some as many as four crops a year. The Azores are the crossroads of the Atlantic and here is located the largest cable station in the world. One of the unusual occupations in whaling, four having been caught yesterday and were being stripped of their flesh for the extraction of oil as we drove past. At the dock when we returned most of the people of the town had gathered to bid us goodbye with smiles and handclapping as we boarded the launch to go out to the "Clipper" anchored in the harbor. A fresh supply of gasoline had been put aboard and as soon as all the passengers were on, the doors were screwed down tight to prevent entrance of water, we taxied out into the bay, turned into the wind and were up into the air again at 12:36 p.m., with an enjoyable visit behind us and very pleasant memories of the people of Horta. Over the hills of the island east of the city and the extinct volcano "Pico" (7400 ft.) on the island with the same name on our left, the summit cloud capped. All of the Azores are apparently of volcanic origin and possibly the nine small islands comprising the group are but the mountain tops of a continent that dropped beneath the sea in prehistoric times. I should like to go back to them sometime for a month's holiday but not to live permanently.

(2:00 p.m.) Up to 10,000 ft. over scattered white cloud masses with occasional glimpses of a calm blue sea far below. Was asked to make a record this morning for broadcasting as was several of the other passengers. It will be interesting to know if it is heard in the States. (2:40 p.m.) Have just finished a nice lunch with ice cream, etc., and all the trimmings. No hardship here even if we are two miles up in the air and far out over the Atlantic. (3:30 p.m.) Solid cloud masses covered the



sea below us, no sight of the water. In fact, the only extensive ocean we have seen has been near land and only a few glimpses of the water through the clouds. Up here we are in brilliant dazzling sunshine, below over the water it must be overcast and gloomy. At 7:00 p.m. the coast of Portugal was in sight directly ahead and at 7:10 p.m. (2:10 E.S.T.) we were down on the river Tagus in front of Lisbon, the capitol. Just two minutes less than one day since we left the United States. It took Columbus 70 days to make a less journey across the Atlantic. He with no comforts at all in a ship much smaller than our plane, we in luxury. A marvelous adventure we are enjoying. Approaching Lisbon we flew instead over the Tagus, looking down upon the succession of lovely views, green hills, with small hedge and stone enclosed fields, brown where not cultivated, the whole very like a Brussels carpet of old bronze color. There are houses built close together, white for the most part with red roofs. Many of the walls are faced with ornamental porcelain tiles, first used by the Moors when they conquered the country centuries ago. At the dock we were met by officials, given a welcome, passed through the customs, then placed in automobiles and driven about the city and to the hotel near its center. Lisbon is a clean town, many statues, government buildings and relics of Portugal's historical past. At one time it was the greatest maritime country in the world. The people are friendly and very enthusiastic of the commercial air service. At the hotel I spent an anxious hour and a half as my bag was missing and as I am traveling light everything except what I had on was in it. I have only one. After telephoning to the airport and to all the other hotels it was finally located and brought to me. It was an anxious time, made doubly so by my lack of knowledge of the language and the slowness of European telephone service as compared to our own. One asks for his number, then waits and waits and waits some more, then they ask what you want and it's all done over again. Anyway, "All's well that ends well." I did get the bag, washed up and went out on the streets. Though it was 11:00 p.m. they were full of life, automobiles (American) numerous and all speeding, without much regard to pedestrians, though no one seems to get hurt. To a native restaurant for a belated supper, fish, veal, salad, fruit and coffee in native fashion, all good. Back to the hotel to a large fine room, immaculately cleaned and well furnished. To bed at 12:30 a.m. Wish I could stay here longer. Will be back Sunday for another short stay.

June 30. Up at 5:00 a.m., breakfast in the continental manner "coffee and hard rolls" with orange juice extra because I am an American, paid my bill, very reasonable for the service rendered, 10 per cent added for tips, then by automobile through the silent deserted streets to the harbor. The early morning drives when on an aerial journey are fascinating, air cool and bracing, the closed shuttered windows, the walls on either side of the streets hiding no telling what, and a few natives about their morning errands all give the trip a flavor of mystery that makes the very early rising well worthwhile. At the dock we were delayed for a while because the passport of one of the passengers was missing. We finally left at 7:45 without its being located and I am afraid we will have some annoyances when we get to France this evening. A Portuguese officer at the dock told me that a plaque had been prepared commemorating the first regular transatlantic passenger flight, on which our names as the first passengers are inscribed, and would be unveiled on our return by the American Minister to Portugal. I'll look it up the next time I am here. After getting aloft we followed the river down to the coast, getting another excellent view of the city, the forts guarding the entrance from the sea, the bull rings, wharves and shipping in the harbor, a very interesting scene. We are headed for Marseilles, France, and the nearest way would be straight east across Spain, but General Franco, the Spanish dictator, will not permit American planes to fly over his territory so it is necessary for us to fly several hundred miles out of

our direct way and go around Spain. Today we will fly north along the coast of Portugal, around the northwest corner of Spain then over the Bay of Biscay to the west coast of France, across France and the Mediterranean Sea to Marseilles. At Marseilles we change to a land plane of the "Air France Company" for Paris. Flying at 8000 ft. north along the coast of Portugal, deep blue under us turning to an olive green, bordered by the white lace of the surf on the yellow sand at the shore. Coast quite rugged, houses and settlements far apart, connected by winding roads like narrow brown ribbons thrown over a patchwork brown and green quilt. Passed over a small sailing vessel, one of the very few boats we have seen except where anchored in a harbor. It is really remarkable how little shipping is seen on the ocean when far from port, either from the air or from a liner. The reason, of course, is because the surface of the ocean is so infinitely great and we so very small. (10:15 a.m.) The clouds are thickening below, only an occasional glimpse of the earth. The shadow of the plane on the clouds beneath is surrounded by a complete ring of colors the same as seen in the rainbow. A lovely light not often seen. (11:00 a.m.)

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