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William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

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[[news clipping]]
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STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO

AUGUST, 1942

-PMC-

ON A MODERN MAGIC CARPET

(By W. J. Eck)

In 1930, after a trip by air around South America I applied to the Pan American Airways for passage to Europe by airplane. Commercial flying across the Atlantic ocean was then only a dream and a desire so that it was eight years later (1939) when I received a telegram stating that I was number one on the list of prospective passengers and did I still wish to make the flight. Naturally I did but as I had been married in the meantime it was necessary to consult my wife. She asked, "Is it safe?" I replied, "Of course it is," and so that was settled.

The Pan American Co. gave a story to the press that I was to be the first commercial passenger to fly the Atlantic in regular service, and then the excitement began. An army of photographers and reporters descended upon me and I was asked to endorse all kinds of tooth paste, cigarettes, clothing, gum, etc. one lady in Illinois even sent me her handkerchief to carry across and autograph. I did, it's hard to refuse the ladies, though I did not endorse the trade goods.

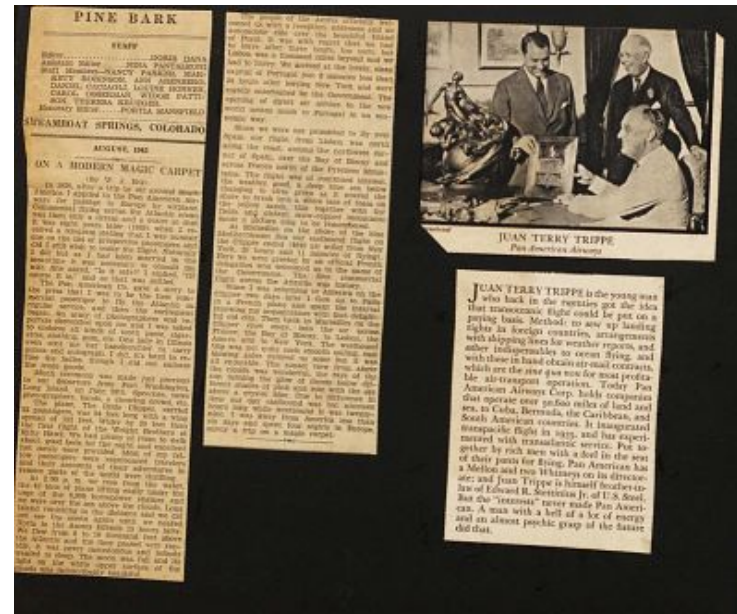
Much ceremony was made just previous to our departure from Port Washington, Long Island, on June 28th. Speeches, news photographers, bands, a cheering crowd, etc.

The plane, The Dixie Clipper, carried 22 passengers, was 94 feet long with a wing spread of 152 feet. Wider by 30 feet than the first flight of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk. We had plenty of room to walk about, good beds for the night and excellent hot meals were provided. Most of my fellow passengers were experienced travelers and their accounts of their adventures in remote parts of the world were thrilling.

At 2:00 p. m. we rose from the water, the 42 tons of plane lifting easily under the urge of the 6,000 horsepower engines and we were over the sea above the clouds, Ling Island vanishing in the distance and we did not see the ocean again until we neared Horta in the Azores Islands 15 hours later. We flew from 8 to 10 thousand feet above the Atlantic and the time passed very rapidly, it was never monotonous and nobody wanted to sleep. The moon was full and its light on the white upper surface of the clouds was indescribably beautiful.

The people of the Azores officially welcomed us with a reception, addresses and an automobile ride over the beautiful Island of Foyal. It was with regret that we had to leave after three hours, too soon, but Lisbon was a thousand miles beyond and we had to hurry. We arrived at the lovely, clean capital of Portugal just 8 minutes less than 24 hours after leaving New York and were royally entertained by the Government. The opening of direct air service to the new world means much to Portugal in an economic way.

Since we were not permitted to fly over Spain our flight from Lisbon was north along the coast, around the northwest corner of Spain, over the Bay of Biscay and across France north of the Pyrenees Mountains.



The flight was of continued interest, the weather good, a deep blue sea below changing to olive green as it neared the shore to break into a white lace of foam on the yellow sands, this together with the fields and distant snow-capped mountains made a picture long to be remembered.

At Marseilles on the shore of the blue Mediterranean Sea our eastbound flight on the Clipper ended (4640 air miles from New York, 30 hours and 11 minutes of flying). Here we were greeted by an official French delegation who welcomed us in the name of the Government. The first commercial flight across the Atlantic was history.

Since I was returning to America on the Clipper two days later I flew up to Paris in a French plane and spent the interval renewing my acquaintance with that delightful old city. Then back to Marseilles on the Clipper once more, into the air across France, the Bay of Biscay, to Lisbon, the Azores and to New York. The westbound trip was not quite such smooth sailing, east blowing gales delayed us some but it was all enjoyable. The sunset view from above the clouds was wonderful, the rays of the sun turning the glow of clouds below different shades of pink and rose with the sky above a crystal blue. Due to difference in time our day eastbound was but nineteen hours long while westbound it was twenty-nine. I was away from America less than six day and spent four nights in Europe, surely a trip on a magic carpet.

-PMC-

[[/news clipping]]

[[photo of three men with two holding a glass plaque engraved with Pan American Airways' bird and with text underneath]]

[[caption]]

JUAN TERRY TRIPPE

Pan American Airways

[[/caption]]

[[partial word International? under bottom left corner of photo]]

[[news clipping]]

JUAN TERRY TRIPPE is the young man who back in the twenties got the idea that transoceanic flight could be put on a paying basis. Method: to sew up landing rights in foreign countries, arrangements with shipping lines for weather reports, and other indispensables to ocean flying, and with these in hand obtain air-mail contracts, which are the sine qua non [[absolutely necessary]] for most profitable air-transport operation.

Today Pan American Airways Corp. holds companies that operate over 50,600 miles of land and sea, to Cuba, Bermuda, the Caribbean, and South American countries. It inaugurated transpacific flight in 1935, and has experimented with transatlantic service. Put together by rich men with a feel in the seat of their pants for flying, Pan American has a Mellon and two Whitneys on its directorate; and Juan Trippe is himself brother-in-law of Edward R. Stettinius Jr. of U.S. Steel. But the "interests" never made Pan American. A man with a hell of a lot of energy and an almost psychic grasp of the future did that.

[[/news clipping]]

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