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Hattie Meyers Junkin Papers - Newspaper and Journal Articles: General

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WE FLEW AROUND THE WORLD-FIRST!

Condensed from Air Facts

MAJ. GEN. LEIGH WADE, USAF (RET.), WITH JAMES H. WINCHESTER

[image]]

Boeing 747 pilots today circumnavigate the globe week in, week out, in approximately 53 hours. The first pilots to fly around the world -- in two seater, wood-wire and cloth aircraft -- took 175 days.

It wasn't exactly a "race" back there in early 1924, but fliers from six nations -- the United States, Great Britain, France, Portugal, Italy and Argentina -- were competing to do by air what Ferdinand Magellan's armada had done by sea 402 years earlier. It is little remembered that six men of the U.S. Army Air Service (as the Air Force was then called) won first honors. Said globetrotter-news reporter Lowell Thomas of them: "You have kept aflame the spirit of adventure by which the world progresses."

This account of how a dramatic new chapter of the air age was opened, three years before Charles Lindbergh flew alone across the Atlantic, is written by retired U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Leigh Wade, who piloted one of the planes. He is today one of three survivors of the epic flight.

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[Book Publication]]

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[Book Publication]]

Shortly after takeoff from Seattle's Lake Washington on April 6, 1924, we hit fog. We were headed for the first stop of our projected round-the-world flight -- Prince Rupert, British Columbia, 605 miles north -- and my mechanic and I were two hours behind the three other planes in our flight, having been delayed at the start because of a cargo overload.

I was following the Canadian coastline, flying so close above the sea that the spume and mist of the wild waves bathed our faces. Most of the time I could see no farther ahead than the blurred arc of the spinning wooden propeller. After a while, driving rain turned to snow, then to pounding hail and sleet. I missed the masts of a passing freighter by mere inches, managing just in time to kick the rudder and dodge by.

Reaching Prince Rupert after eight hours and ten minutes of flying nearly blind, I sat in the cockpit pretending to write in my logbook. I didn't want anyone to see me shaking.

Our route around the world, planned mostly from old sea charts, was westward. With the exception of the Italians, all the other nations' pilots were planning to go the other way, to take advantage of prevailing winds. By going westward, we hoped to fly through the Aleutian Islands when fogs and storms were less frequent than at other times of the year. We would also be crossing the North Atlantic in the summer, when danger from ice was least.

First Accident. It didn't work out that way. In Alaska and the Aleutians, fog delayed us, winds were always bad, ice regularly formed on our pontoons. We were supposed to make the 3292 miles from Seattle to



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