



RADM Russell R. Waesche's Journal Entries Regarding a Trip to Europe via a Pan Am Clipper, 1939.



Project officers: Dr. Dave Rosen, PACAREA Historian & Captain Lance Bardo, USCG.
Special thanks to Ms. Marilla Waesche Pivonka, ADM Waesche's grand-daughter.

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Pan American Clipper Ship "Yankee Clipper" on first flight from New York to Europe via Northern route – First mail flight, N.Y to Europe.

Saturday, June 24, 1939

Following passengers – guests of Pan-American Airways

Steve Early - Sec. to President

Jim Rowe, White House staff

Judge Moore, Counselor State Dept.
Clinton Hestor, Administrator, C.A.A.

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Fred Laidlaw, Dir Mail Specialist
Ed. J. Warner, C.A.A.
U.S. Senator dennis Chavez of new Mexico
U.S. Senator Ernest Lundeen Minnesota
Congressman Carl Mapes Michigan
Congressman Clarence Cameron Missouri
Majr. Gen Emmous Army Air Corps
Chas. B. Grabbick, P. O. Dept
W.S. McDuffy C.A.A.
Richard Bouteller C.A.A.
Col. E.S. Gorrell, Pres, Air Transport Association of America
Juan T Trippe, Pres Pan American Airway
Col. J. Cone, Mgr, Atlantic Division Pan American Airways
Robt. A Lord do

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Diary of Trip

Left Wash via P.R.R. at 8 p.m. June 23 – Mr Rowe on same train. Arr. N.Y. 2 a.m. 24th – Waldorf Astoria hotel – guest of Pan Am. Called at 5:45 – over-slept – dressed hastily and went to lobby and to breakfast room where other guests of trip were finishing breakfast – ordered light breakfast. Then discovered that envelope containing passport and other

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papers were missing. Best recollection was that I had left then on train the night before. Rushed back to lobby and got key to room to take a look there – after wandering around corridors excitedly found room and went in- only to find I was in strange room – man asleep in bed. Beat quick retreat and back

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To lobby – manager got night key – and piloted me back to right room. Found nothing. Called station – Pullman lost and found office not open – talked to Station master and told him my story – Rushed back down just in time to get bus with rest of party to Pan. A. offices Chrysler Bldg.

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Had visions of returning to Wash. Instead of Europe. Evening before got passport at State Dept at last minute – Passport Div. holding office open for my benefit and making arrangements through Irish Frec State legative to cable to Foynes to have passport visa-ed there.

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St Pan-Am offices all other passports were inspected and tickets procured etc. Called up Pullman “Lost and Found” office – still not open. Judge Moore – Counselor, State Dept

suggested I call Miss Ruth Shipley at her home in Washington and see if she could arrange for me to proceed by cabling

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Foynes Ireland. Miss Shipley is State Dept official that handles such matters. Called her home – long distance – Wash. Found she was in New York at hotel Barclay. Called there and got her out of bed. She said to go on via plane and she would arrange by cable. By that time rest of party were in

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Buses for airport – last man in last bus. Arrived at Port Washington airport – inquired there at desk as a forlorn hope – was told Station Master had found papers and was sending them out by taxi. Half hour later papers arrived including passport - all serene but nerves still jittery

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After many movie and still pictures were taken of party boarded Yankee Clipper and took off at 9:21 Daylight Savings time. Beautiful weather up over Long Isld Sound. Off Mass. Thick weather and for next couple hours flying above clouds 8800 ft. – bright sunshine above – unbroken

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masses of billowy white clouds below as far as eye could reach in all directions. Smooth comfortable riding.

About noon sandwiches and coffee – very welcome – had had no breakfast. Low ceiling reported at Botwood – indications we might have to lay over awhile at Shediac

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About 12:30 flying through thick fog and continued so,

Congenial crowd on board – visiting and talking – Tried to get up bridge game – only three available.

Kidded by all hands over loss of passport.

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Circled over Shediac and landed about 4:30 As weather was bad at Botwood and we knew we could not get through to-night, The plane had been running at lower than average speed. We all went to the hotel – very comfortable and food good. Shediac a town of about 2000 people – most of town consists of one long street.

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The whole town was crowded on the dock to see us come in.

Remained in Shediac from 4:30 Saturday till 1:55 p.m. Tuesday. Mr. Warner of CAA went back to Washington by train Monday. Meet most of people in the town – a cottage on the beach was favorite rendezvous I was there only once the evening

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before we sailed. We had three sessions of poker during our sojourn – it was too heavy a game for me and I had no business playing but once having started , stuck it out.

Everyone was congenial and made the best of the delay. Each morning we packed our bags and brought them down to the lobby, only to take them back up to the

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rooms in the evening. By Tuesday morning we all were restless and had it not been for getting off in the afternoon several would probably have returned to Washington by train. The ceiling at Botswood remained about 300 ft during this time – air unusual weather freak.

All were happy when we shoved off

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Tuesday. Flew over Prince Edward Island – farming country – apparently fertile and a very beautiful picture. The coastal region of Newfoundland was also low and apparently marshy but soon we were flying high tableland cut with deep ravines with innumerable lakes, large + small, streams etc. partly wooded with

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scrub pine – but mostly bare rock and tundra. During the first two hours we were above the clouds but later the weather cleared and we had beautiful sunshiny weather The passengers are sleeping, reading and playing dominoes. Very comfortable flying.

Landed at Botswood about

Page 19 6 p.m. and remained there till ten p.m. on account of mail – first covers – to be stamped and cancelled. Entertained at supper party by airport officials – very cordial – Botswood a fishing and mining village – one street – wood cottages – poor village. Walked around the place.

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Took off from Botswood just at dark and for one hour cruised over inlets, winding channels – thousands of rocks and islets and islands – barren – thence over the ocean. Beautiful moonlight night, but soon we were above the clouds with full moon and cloudless sky

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above and a sheet of billowy white clouds below – very beautiful and awe inspiring. Went up into pilot house – spacious with Engineer – radioman – navigator and two pilots on duty – very roomy and well arranged – crawled out into wings – past both engines on hands

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and knees. Ship riding very smoothly entire journey. About midnight gave little birthday party to Trippe he is 40 yrs old – a fine man in every way. The boys had brought a lot of toys etc – and a cake with 40 candles. Had dinner – our supper at 2 a.m. just as day was

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breaking. Turned in about 3 a.m. and slept comfortably and soundly. Up at eleven – some one had left water tap run – no water. Shaved with barbasol – breakfast about noon and sighted Irish coast at about noon. Easy to understand why it is the Emerald Isle. One is impressed with

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the green fields and green woods – unbroken for miles and miles.

Arrived Shannon airfield, Foynes Ireland on Shawman River about two. Received a royal greeting by Prime Minister De Valere and staff – fine luncheon served – speeches, etc. No drive to

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see country though it would be most interesting – By time lunch was over we had to board plane for take off DeValere and son and daughter visited plane.

Took off at 5 p.m. London time and flew up through clouds and thence again over billowy unbroken sheet of clouds with

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Sunshine and blue sky overhead. Came down through clouds over Portsmouth – good view of Navy yard – “Victory” – airplane carrier and others. Circled over Southampton land. Landed about 9 p.m. London daylight savings time. Went onboard vessel where reception committee received us headed by Air- Marsh Sir?

Page 27 After speeches, radio broadcasts, etc vessel steamed to wharf. Passports inspected passed customs and got on board special train to London. The Royal train had been chartered for this purpose. Beautifully appointed and fitted. Our party reception committee and press only ones aboard.

Had excellent dinner on board. Easy

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comfortable traveling. Arrived London one a.m. D.S.T. and were taken to Dorchester hotel where rooms were reserved. My room was luxurious and comfortable. Had a few drinks in the lobby and turned in at 2 a.m.

Thursday June 29 Breakfast in hotel and then went (inserted – after calling on ambassador) sight seeing on

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specially planned trip – various places and govt buildings – London Tower Westminster Abbey – watched changing the guard at Buckingham Palace.

Saw #10 Downing St and drove generally through business and historic sections “Old Curiosity Shop” and other scenes of Dickens works

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Attended luncheon at Savoy Hotel given by Air Minister 1 to 3 p.m. speeches etc.

Went shopping in afternoon and walked through shopping district – Oxford St – Regent St – Bond St – Piccadilly.

Returned to hotel and hot bath and thence to supper party given by Ambassador Kennedy at London casino

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Fine food – fine show – back to hotel and turned in at 2 a.m. Friday

Checked out hotel at 9 a.m. – to special train to Southampton – delayed an hour in takeoff which we spent around shops and plant of Imperial Airways.

In air about 2 p.m. Trippe and Col. Cone did not

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return with us. Excellent weather – fine view of green fields and hedges over England – no wasteland

Arrived Foynes about 6 p.m. – took on gas and mail. Mr Cudahy, U.S. Minister to Ireland came on board for passage to U.S.

In air about 7:30 p.m. and headed out across the Atlantic

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Fine smooth weather. Had delicious dinner of filet mignon and vegetables. Part singing, playing cards, dominoes, chess etc. Very congenial group. Turned in at 2 a.m. and slept soundly till 11 a.m.

Arrived Botwood about noon – stayed one hour to gas up and take on mail thence underway

Page 34 for Shediac. Slightly rough trip Botwood to Shediac – low ceiling. Arrive Shediac about 4 – no one ashore – stayed about half hour to handle mil and thence in air for New York.

