

AIRMAN TELLS OWN STORY OF FLIGHT

First Two Legs of Trip End at Trepassey Bay.

COURSE EASILY FOLLOWED

Commander of Naval Airplane NC-1 Writes Narrative Just Before Start for Azores Islands.

(Continued From First Page.)

ance with prearranged plan, NC-3 taking position in the center, guide, NC-1 on the right flank and NC-4 on the left flank. Course was taken along the coast in accordance with the previously plotted charts.

The altitude first maintained averaged about 1500 feet until we reached Vineyard Sound, then it was about 2000 feet. The air thus far was very good and continued so, with exception of a short stretch about 100 miles from Chatham until in the vicinity of Cape Sable. From there to Halifax the conditions were extremely bad and most tiring on the pilots. The wind coming in gusts over the land caused the plane to rock and yaw continually and sometimes violently, but the way in which the plane rode out the gusts proved that it was even more controllable than the pilots at first thought as very few pilots had really had much experience with these planes under varied conditions.

First Ship Looked For.

After leaving Chatham Neck the real navigation commenced and the question whether the first ship could be sighted and passed close aboard was the vital point but in due time, at 2:20 o'clock, No. 1 ship was sighted on the port hand, just ahead of the beam and distant about 15 miles. This showed that we were being set to the right too far, so our course was changed on the left to compensate for drift. Several times we went to lower altitudes, approximately 200 feet, in order to check up on wind direction and drift, realizing, though, that the drift might be different at higher altitudes. The means we had on board for navigating by dead reckoning were, however, not good for much higher altitudes, depending on the conditions.

Shortly after passing No. 1 destroyer, No. 4 plane, which was almost out of sight on the left flank, reported engine trouble via radio and in about half an hour was lost to sight but we continued, allowing for the error originally made and for the drift, and at its proper time we sighted No. 2 destroyer. Soon Seal Island came into view, the visibility being good. As No. 3 plane was considerably ahead of us we changed our course in order to cut off corners, then headed for Cape Sable. No. 3 was considerably lower than we were, but on account of the very bumpy air we were encountering it was considered best by Barin to fly at a considerable altitude, even though the wind at that altitude, 2500 feet, was hindering our progress more than at lower levels.

One Plane Lost to View.

NC-3 was flying very low and very soon lost to view on account of the dark background caused by the water, when flying over waves in bumpy air, depending on the controllability of the plane, it may be well to fly low—that is about 1500 feet—and as our plane was tail-heavy it was thought best to fly high.

No. 4 destroyer was passed on our starboard hand off Cross Island, distant about 10 miles. As we were approaching Sambre Island the wind changed its direction more to the northward and hit it up with gusts at a great rate. Soon Halifax harbor came into view and it was a very welcome sight. At the outer entrance we started on a glide of from about 1500 feet to 1000 feet and Mitcher, working together through the bumpy air, placed the plane on the water in great shape, just astern of the Baltimore and just ahead of the destroyer from our moorings, which had been previously provided.

NC-3 was just securing at the time and we were glad to see her safely in the harbor, because for the last hour we had lost sight of her and did not know what luck she had had. It was a great feeling actually to have completed the first leg of the trans-Atlantic flight and to have had everything work satisfactorily. Everyone of the crew was in good shape. The pilots were a little tired from the considerable exercise entailed by the bumpy air, in hauling first one wing up and then the other, and I was a little sore about the knees and hands from crawling through the small passages from the bow to the stern of the plane. We talked to our mooring buoy where a small boat from the Baltimore was waiting to assist us. We secured and were taken on board the Baltimore, having completed 534 miles in 9 hours and 9 minutes total flying time.

Greeting at Halifax Hearty.

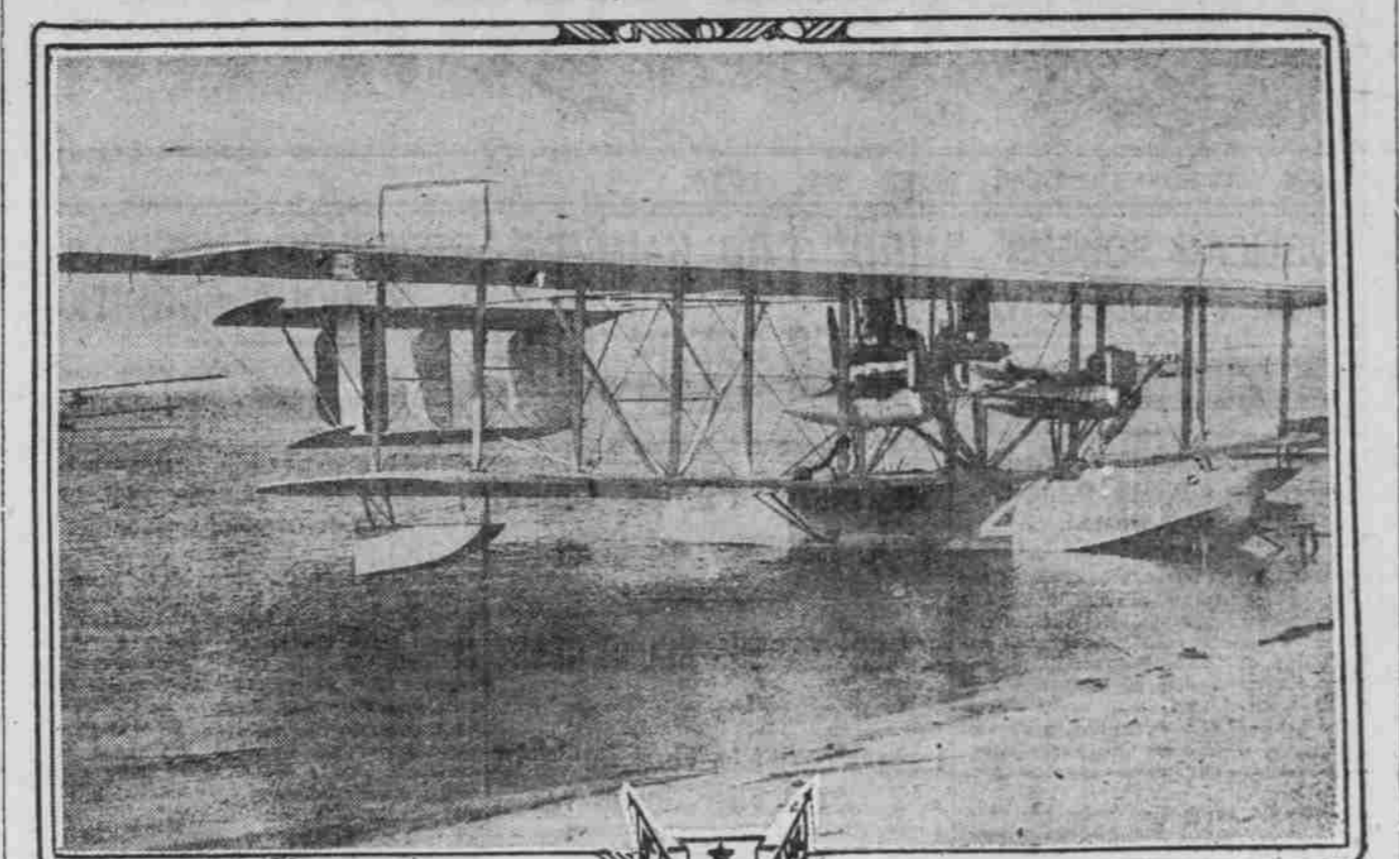
The captain and other officers of the Baltimore, which was our base ship at Halifax, were most hospitable and did their best to look out for the comfort of all hands. The entire crew of aviation companies started to put the plane in condition for an early start the next morning. Ensign C. J. McCarthy, U. S. N., R. E. an observer representative from the bureau of construction and repair, made the trip with us in order to compute the route and to see how far Trepassey, N. P. Captain Hines, naval representative at Halifax, came on board the Baltimore to welcome us into port, together with Consul-General Young. During the trip Lieutenant Sadenwiler, radio operator notified me over the inter-communicating telephone set that if I wished I could catch the 75th meridian noon tick in order to check up my great Mercator Greenwich mean time watch, so I switched my receiver to the radio line and heard the time signal from Arlington coming in strong. The tick was caught very easily, and I found my watch to be 30 seconds slow on Greenwich mean time.

Shortly after passing No. 1 destroyer I tried out my sextant in the sun, using the correct Greenwich mean time found by the Arlington tick. I assumed my position was latitude 42 north, longitude 65:20 and found my summer, which tallied very closely with what I assumed my position to be at that time. It was very interesting to note that the navigational instruments, including a special bubble sextant and drift indicators, together with the vast amount of navigational data which were all respectively developed and compiled by Lieutenant-Commander R. E. Byrd Jr., were of the utmost value in the aerial navigation on the second leg, Halifax, N. S., to Trepassey, N. F.

Machines Are Made Ready.

The plans for leaving Halifax were for the following morning, so that night was utilized for refueling the planes, cleaning spark plugs and checking up details. This was performed by the base ship seaplane crew, with the two engineers Christensen and

CLOSE-UP VIEW OF FAMOUS AMERICAN SEAPLANE ENGAGED IN TRANS-ATLANTIC FLIGHT, NOW AT MOORINGS IN PONTA DELGADA BAY, AZORES, READY FOR CONTINUED FLIGHT OF 800 MILES, AND HER INTREPID COMMANDER.



Kessler, taking watch superintending the work.

About 7 o'clock both planes were set for getting under way. Then it was discovered several propellers on both planes showed defects that warranted their replacement. This entailed considerable work and required too much time to consider starting that day. The following morning, everyone being ready, the crew got aboard their planes, cast off their moorings and attempted to start up the motors. The atmosphere was rather chilly and the motors refused to start without considerable coaxing. NC-3 got three motors going, while we could only get one. After taxiing around for about half an hour it appeared that NC-3 could not start her fourth motor and she was secured astern of the Baltimore. Meantime, with one motor going and taxiing around at close quarters, we came near ramming a buoy, but no damage was done.

Lieutenant Barin Sprains Wrist.

Lieutenant Barin, while endeavoring to get at the bow of the plane to assist in fending off the buoy, tripped, fell and severely sprained his hand. For a while it looked as if Barin's hand would be out of commission, which meant the NC-1 would not fly, but as a sprained hand is nothing to Barin when there is something important going on, we continued our efforts, finally got all four motors going, and as we passed close aboard of NC-3, Commander Towers gave me the signal to go ahead. This was good news, for, although we did not like the idea of leaving the NC-3, it meant a chance to operate and navigate on our own responsibility.

At 8:40 o'clock A. M. we left the water. Making a climbing turn we passed out of the harbor, passed Cow-boy point at 8:55 o'clock as a point of departure and continued on a cruise parallel to the coast. It was pleasant work coasting in the drift air and wind, computing the ground speed along the coast and checking up on the lighthouses that could be clearly made out through my binoculars. The wind was variable and constant attention to the drift was required in order to make good the proper course. We sent out our position by radio several times to the Baltimore and received word that the NC-3 had started, but was later compelled to return on account of engine trouble. Our air pressure was very low at the start, due to cold oil, and the pressure was watched with great anxiety for the first half hour, but it gradually began to come up and it was a great relief to us all as no one likes to have a forced landing of any nature when quite a distance from home. At 11:22 o'clock we passed Guyon Island, our point of departure from Cape Breton and started on a cruise to the westward jump to St. Pierre. The wind that we began to encounter increased from 10 to 40 miles, and our drift from six degrees right to 22 degrees right, in about 22 minutes, so continual check on the drift indicator was required.

First Destroyer Is Passed.

At 12:09 o'clock we passed the first destroyer. The course we had been heading was found to be correct and as the drift had changed so rapidly, necessitating several changes in the course, it was well pleased with the means at hand for noting it. The radio compass was used a few times at distance, but was not used for more than merely for practice as the ships at that distance were always in sight. It was found after leaving Rockaway that, due to induction from the ignition circuit, the radio compass could not be used at present installed for distances exceeding 10 miles. Therefore navigation must be depended upon. We continued to cruise along at 500 feet altitude until the wind increased in velocity, when it was found necessary to climb to 1000 feet to get into a smoother stratum and thus to steer a more accurate compass course. At 12:58 o'clock we passed close aboard destroyer No. 2 which, like all on station, was smoking away at a great rate in order to make itself seen. When first the smoke is sighted it is difficult to trace its origin and finally when located, the destroyer appears to be entirely too small to emit such volumes of smoke, but it is a good sight and when located, head ahead, the navigator points to it for his pilots information with great glee. At 1:35 we passed close aboard destroyer No. 3. At 1:42 St. Pierre Island was sighted ahead on the course. We were making good time and it was interesting to note that the course selected after striking the steady wind was the correct one to land us at St. Pierre, our objective.

Stern Wind Increases Speed.

At 1:43 o'clock we passed over St. Pierre.

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ABOVE—C-4, LONE SURVIVING ENTRY OF UNITED STATES NAVY. BELOW—LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER ALBERT C. READ.

Pierre and changed our course to make good 122 degrees magnetic, for a run of 123 miles. At 1:52 we passed the fourth destroyer. The wind, being near our stern, increased our ground speed considerably. We increased our altitude to 2500 feet, as the air began to get a little bumpier. The atmosphere also was noticeably colder.

Shortly Cape Pine came into view and it was a relief to see it stand out, clear of fog. I wrote a note to the pilot, saying we would be at our destination at 2:45 and it was a good guess.

After rounding Cape Pine the harbor of Trepassey came into view and it looked as if we were due for a difficult job. The harbor does not offer a wide expanse in which to land, and the wind, coming over the surrounding hills and highland, we knew would make it very bumpy. We made a detour to head up into the wind and made our approach as we neared the harbor. The bumps we received increased. First one wing would go down, then the other. I think individual mind hats were made on the likelihood of them coming up again.

Barin afterwards remarked that he was sorry we did not have an extra pontoon on top of the plane, as it would have been easier to land on it, but, however, Mitcher and Barin working together, kept her right side up and very cleverly landed well inside the harbor of Trepassey at 2:45 P. M., after having made a total distance of 562 miles in 7 hours and 4 minutes.

Crews Cheer Arrival.

We were greeted as we taxied to our moorings with cheers from the crews of the Prairie and Aroostook and as we tied up to our moorings, and the hoisting of our ensign jack and commission pennant caused a thrill.

It was the first time the colors had been hoisted on a regularly commissioned seaplane on a ship of the navy in extra-continental foreign water. We were all taken on board the base ship Aroostook where Captain Tomo and his officers thoroughly looked over our welfare.

The aviation mechanics of the Aroostook, under Ensign Paul Talbot, took charge of our plane and began making it ready for the third leg of the flight. The ship's doctor was also called into action by me to fix up Barin's hand, much to Barin's disgust, but it afterward proved a wise procedure.

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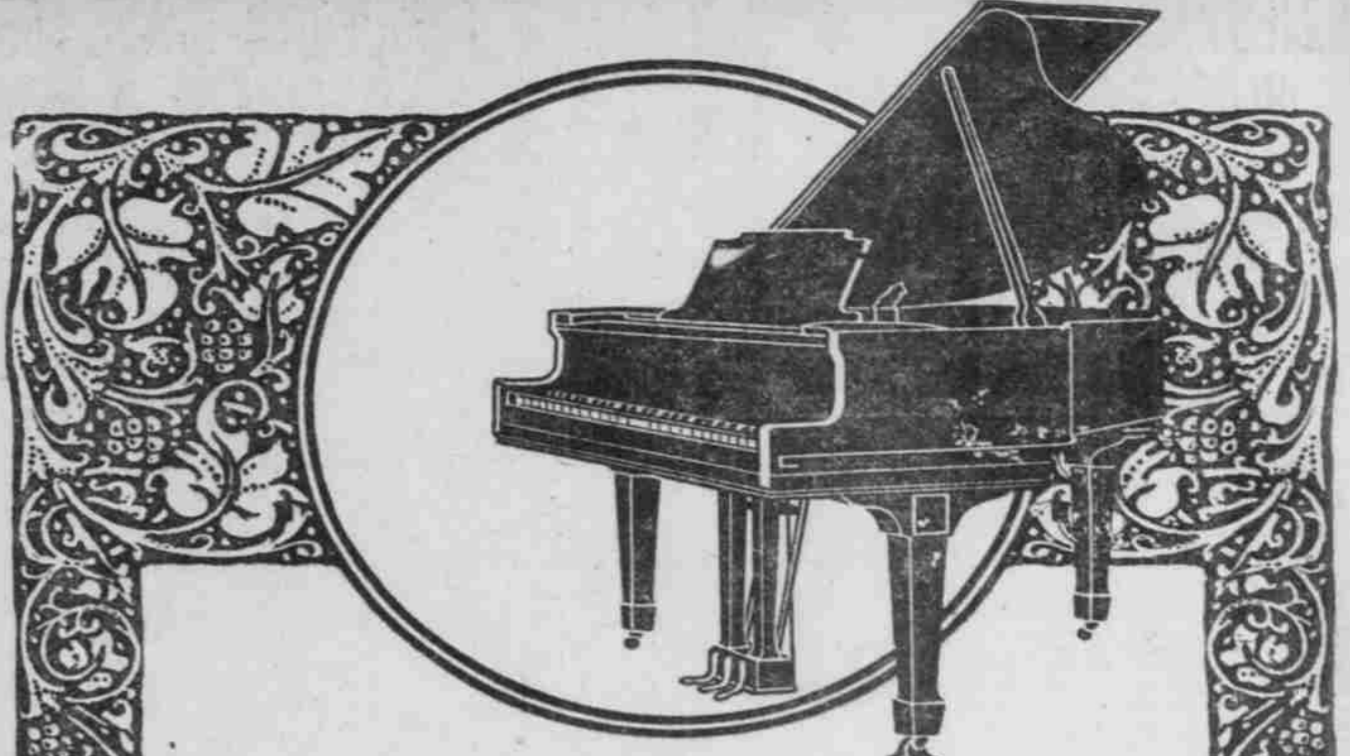
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