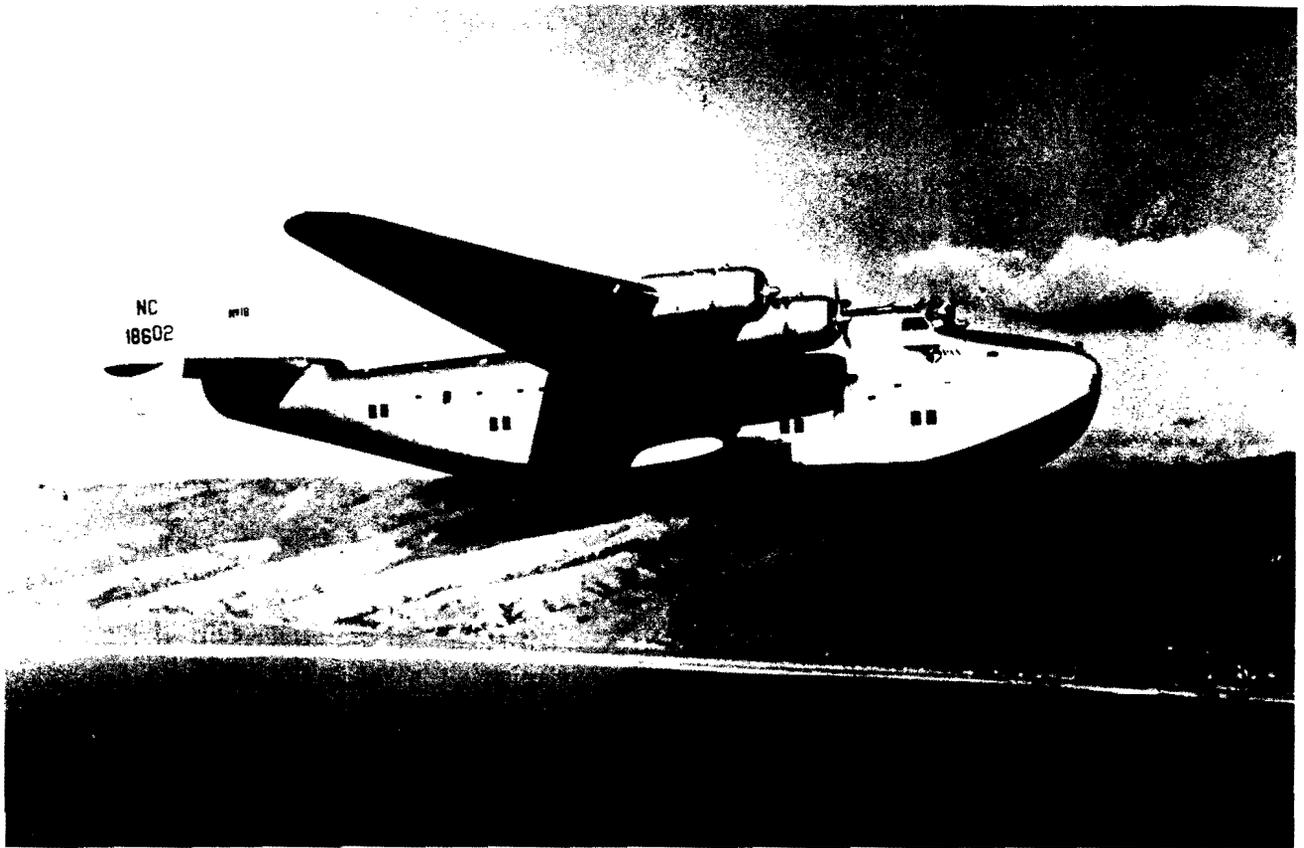


Training of B-314 crew.



All-metal 42-ton Clipper ship had 4000-mile range.

It seemed as if the Flying Clippers could push on forever.

THE SHIPS HAD WINGS

Following is the major part of a letter written by Capt. William M. Masland to M. D. Klaas of Chatsworth, California, who is compiling a history of the famous Flying Clippers. Twelve of these huge flying boats were built by Boeing between 1937 and 1941 and delivered to Pan American World Airways. At the beginning of the second world war, nine of the Clippers were purchased from Pan Am by the United States War Department, but their operation by the airline with its own crews continued. The other three flying boats were sold to British Overseas Airways.

Captain Masland describes the rigorous training given Clipper crews, and provides a glimpse of service on the flying boats during the big war. He still flies Boeing planes for Pan American on routes

around the world, but now the aircraft are 600-mile-an-hour jets.

By CAPT. WILLIAM M.
MASLAND

MOST OF US who went to work for Pan Am in 1935 as trainees for Flying Clipper crews were former Navy hotshots. I had been on the old carrier *Langley* and knew all about it, or thought I did. The company wasn't so sure. It put every last one of us into a hangar at Dinner Key, Florida, and there we stayed until we earned our A and E mechanic licenses, even if it took two years, which in some cases it did.

Following this stint we were sent to the radio shops and told to stay until we had earned our commercial radio licenses. This was the license required for radio telegraph opera-

tion on commercial circuits—copy 20 words a minute of cipher, know the ins and outs of five different types of equipment and so forth.

Following these exercises we were turned loose on little two-man ships out in the sticks to operate as copilot, mechanic, radio operator. My stint was in Port of Spain running across Venezuela and to Barranquilla on the mouth of the Magdalena. The ships we flew were S-38 and S-41 twin-engine amphibians. We serviced, maintained, repaired, improvised our way across country as wild as you will find. Facilities often were no more than a couple of Indians in a dugout canoe with some five-gallon tins of gas.

We ran a series of courses at home in our spare time and took periodic exams on them. Successful passage of the first series raised us

from apprentice pilots to junior pilots. After completing the circuit, which included time in the engine overhaul shops as well as in the hangars and on the morning runup crews, followed by the year or so in an outbased operation like the one in Venezuela, we went to an ocean division. Here we started all over again at the bottom.

First assignment was as junior flight officer. These ships, at that time the Martin M-130 China Clipper type, were close to marginal as to load. We carried a crew of seven. It was the junior flight officer's job to relieve each of the others in turn; first the captain, then the first officer, then the radio operator, then the engineer—an hour for each. Then the junior officer had an hour off, but used it to understudy the navigator.

Eventually the junior officer navigated a crossing from Alameda to Manila or Hong Kong under the eyes of a checked-out navigator and if successful was moved up a grade to second officer. We followed the practices of ships. Second officer was automatically navigator.

While this was going on we also were studying and taking exams. My exam in meteorology would be typical. It was given by Clover, the chief meteorologist. It took three hours; he asking the questions and I hopefully answering.

All in all there were about 100 exams before we ran through the course from apprentice pilot to junior pilot to captain coastwise to master of ocean flying boats. The tests ran through the area of navigation starting with charts and projections, plane sailing, Mercator sailing, celestial navigation includ-



Capt. William M. Masland

ing cosine-haversine method, admiralty law, aircraft structures and strength of materials, power plants and fuels, at least one foreign language, the history and culture of the countries to which we were flying, and on and on.

It all came in handy before we were through. I have been at the local met office with my navigator making my own forecast and my own flight plan while the first officer was loading the ship, the engineers beating out some needed fittings at the local blacksmith shop and the two stewards baking their own bread in an oven they had constructed on the beach. Then we loaded fuel out of a surf boat, loaded it to our own specifications, and were off, often to a place none of us had ever seen before, sometimes to a place no one had ever flown before.

I have in the files of Special Mission 72 a note from Ibn Saud, forwarded through the State Department, saying that it would be all right for me to fly across Arabia if I avoided flying over certain holy cities, but if for any reason I was forced down, he would have to disclaim any knowledge of this authorization.

This Mission 72 was to wait at Bahrein in the Persian Gulf until the Casablanca Conference was over and then fly Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin to Australia for a meeting with Chiang Kai-shek. They changed their minds because the Japanese got wind of it. Apparently my crew was the only group in the Middle East which did not know of the plan. We made the flight anyhow, taking General Wedemeyer and his staff and then continuing on around the world.

It was all hard work, but also a lot of fun. There were sometimes long hours of high tension; a night at sea in the Gulf of Paria with a dead engine and rising winds; everybody shooting at us, especially our friends.

And there were days or nights of great beauty; a quiet night at anchor in the remote port of Angra dos Reis (Anchorage of the Kings) on the Brazilian coast; an anchor watch on a cold clear night in the Persian Gulf with the stars hanging as low overhead as the lamps in a mosque.

The pattern is gone, as well as the ships. I don't know from one port to the next who will be on my crew. But it's still fun, the jets are lovely ships and the upper atmosphere has its own beauty.

Clipper crew had plenty of elbow room.

From left: Admiral Leahy, President Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins and PAA Captain Cone dine aboard a Clipper en route from Casablanca, January, 1943.

