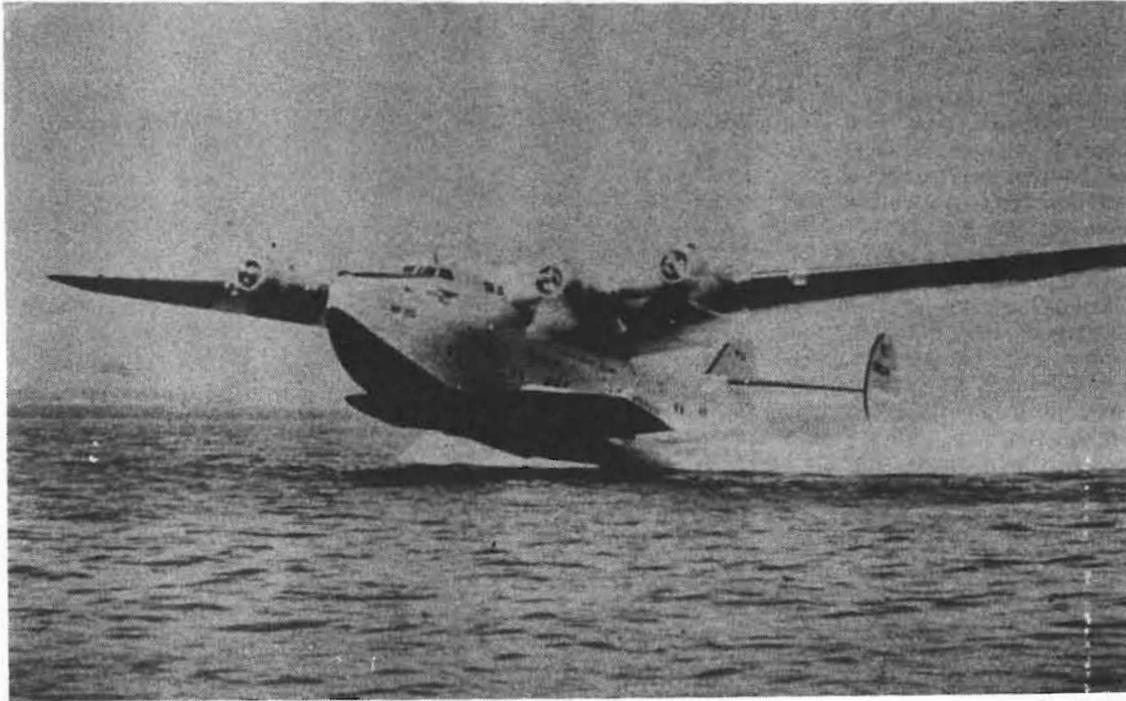


The Flying Hotel that went to war

By Don McCrea Marshall

(First of three parts)



The Dixie Clipper wings its way off the waters of Long Island Sound 50 years ago on the first regularly scheduled flight across the Atlantic. These Boeing-314 "Flying Hotels" became well known in Shediac, N.B. and Botwood, Nfld., where they stopped to refuel on their way to Ireland and Great Britain during the war years. (Photo courtesy Pan American World Airways)

Your steward, impeccably dressed in black tie, white jacket, has just called you to the dining room for dinner. As you enter, you look out the window on to a scene of blue sky, fair weather cumulus cloud and sparkling ocean. Your table is beautifully set with crisp white Irish linen, sterling silver, European stemware, and bone china. A world class resort hotel on the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans? An ocean liner of the Queen Mary class? Nope! This was 8,000 feet above the water, 50 years ago, aboard a Pan American World Airways' Boeing 314 Flying Clipper ship.

across the Atlantic from New York (actually taking off from the waters of Port Washington, Long Island, Pan Am's base at that time) to Marseilles, France, via Horta in the Azores and Lisbon, Portugal. And also with you is William Eck, a Washington, D.C. railway executive who had booked a seat in 1931, but he was still only the number 2 person on the list at that time, moving up to the number 1 position in 1935 when the first booker, Will Rogers, was killed in an Alaskan plane crash with Wiley Post.

It is June 28th, 1939, and earlier that afternoon you had joined a cadre of "first flighters" including then Col. William "Big Bill" Donovan, Congressional Medal of Honor winner in the first World War and the founder of the American Intelligence system, for the first regularly scheduled passenger flight

Your craft is the Dixie Clipper, which later would carry such notables as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. It is one of just 12 of these wide bodied, spacious, double decked flying boats that were manufactured by Boeing for Pan Am. Three were later sold by Pan Am to Britain's Imperial Airways,

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About Don Marshall

Biographical notes:

Don Marshall was born in the Borough of Brooklyn, New York City. He was educated in the New York City Public School system and at Brown University, Providence, R.I., and the United States Merchant

Marine Academy, Kings Point, New York. He completed post graduate level studies at McGill University in Montreal in Organization Theory and Design, Personnel and Industrial Relations and Macro-Economics.

During the war years 1942-1945 he flew as Second Officer, Navigator on various Pan American World Airways' Clipper types on assignment with

the U.S. Navy, including the marvellous aircraft he writes about in this series.

He later managed airports for Pan Am, including 13 years as General Manager of all their operations at JFK Airport, New York. He then went on to become Senior Director of Organization Development for Pan Am before leaving to accept a position as General Manager, Canada, Con-

solidated Aviation Services, based in Montreal and then Toronto.

He moved to Bracebridge in 1986 after eight years in California as Vice President, Marketing, Western States and Provinces for the Allied Aviation Service Company. He now works as an independent consultant and also teaches Management courses for Georgian College.

Don is married to the former Patricia Elizabeth Goodyear of Grand Falls, Newfoundland. They have four children, two of whom were born in Newfoundland during assignments there with Pan Am (they live in California), and two of whom were born in New York, and now live in Toronto. Six grandchildren (to become seven in August) round out the family.

Reminiscences of a seafarer



The Flying Hotel—

(Continued from page 51)

which flew them in support of war efforts in Europe and Africa. In fact, this fleet of 12 accounted for well over 4,000 missions in war support activities on the Atlantic and Pacific.

To get aboard this flight you have paid the regular round trip fare established for those times, \$675 (U.S.), equivalent to \$7,000 (U.S.) in today's dollars. Per marine practice, your Captain,

R. O. D. Sullivan has joined the passengers for dinner of shrimp cocktail, turtle soup, filet mignon (freshly cooked), mashed potatoes, asparagus hollandaise, alligator pear salad, biscuit tortoni and petits four. Then, after dinner, you moved into the recreation lounge for bridge, chess or perusal of business papers. The recreation lounge is one of 11 sections on the passenger deck: five compartments seating 10 people during the day, sleeping six at night, a

deluxe or "honeymoon suite," another deluxe compartment seating six and sleeping two, a dressing room for the men and one for the ladies, plus three toilet compartments. While enjoying the lounge, your stewards, Bruno Candotti and John Salmini are making up your berths for the night and soon you and your fellow "first nighters" drift off to your compartments and berths, each of which has a window with moonlight streaming through, ventilator, reading light, steward's call button, clothes rack and hangars, with comfort ensuring linens, blankets, soft pillows and bedspreads. The lucky (and rich!) occupant of the deluxe suite also has a love seat, writing desk, a coffee table, folding wash stand, mirrors, special light fixtures and so on.

As you go to sleep, the crew on the flight deck is seeing that (as one passenger later said) "you continue to hurtle through the sky at 160 miles per hour," powered by four Wright cyclone engines developing 1600 Horsepower each. And those crew members who were not needed at the time (your normal crew consisted of four pilots, two engineers, two radio operators, a navigator plus the stewards) could rest in their own sleeping accommodations both on the flight deck and forward on the passenger deck. Rising with daylight, you are served a breakfast of strawberries and cream, cereals, sausage, bacon and eggs. Twelve hours and 26 minutes after taking off you set down in the waters of Horta for a two-hour refuelling stop, then on to Lisbon, landing in the Tagus River, leaving these first paying passengers (22 of them) shaking their heads in the wonder of crossing the Atlantic in eight minutes less than 24 hours!

This "Flying Hotel" had its beginnings in 1936 when Pan



Passengers enjoy pre-dinner aperitifs in the dining salon of a Pan Am flying boat Clipper (Boeing-314) in 1939. The room seated 14 diners in luxurious comfort. Meals were served in "sittings" per shipboard practice. (Photo courtesy Pan American World Airways)

good passenger load at least 2,400 miles against a 30 mile per hour headwind at 150 MPH at 10,000 feet altitude.

This competitive call angered such companies as Sikorsky and Martin, which had designed and built successfully Pan Am's original Clippers they used on the original routes in the Caribbean and the Pacific (mostly carrying mail only). And in fact, Boeing, declined to enter the contest because of its already full plate of projects. However, Warren Beall, a Boeing engineer, worked on a design on his own time, came up with an answer which his superiors approved and then asked Pan Am to extend their deadline.

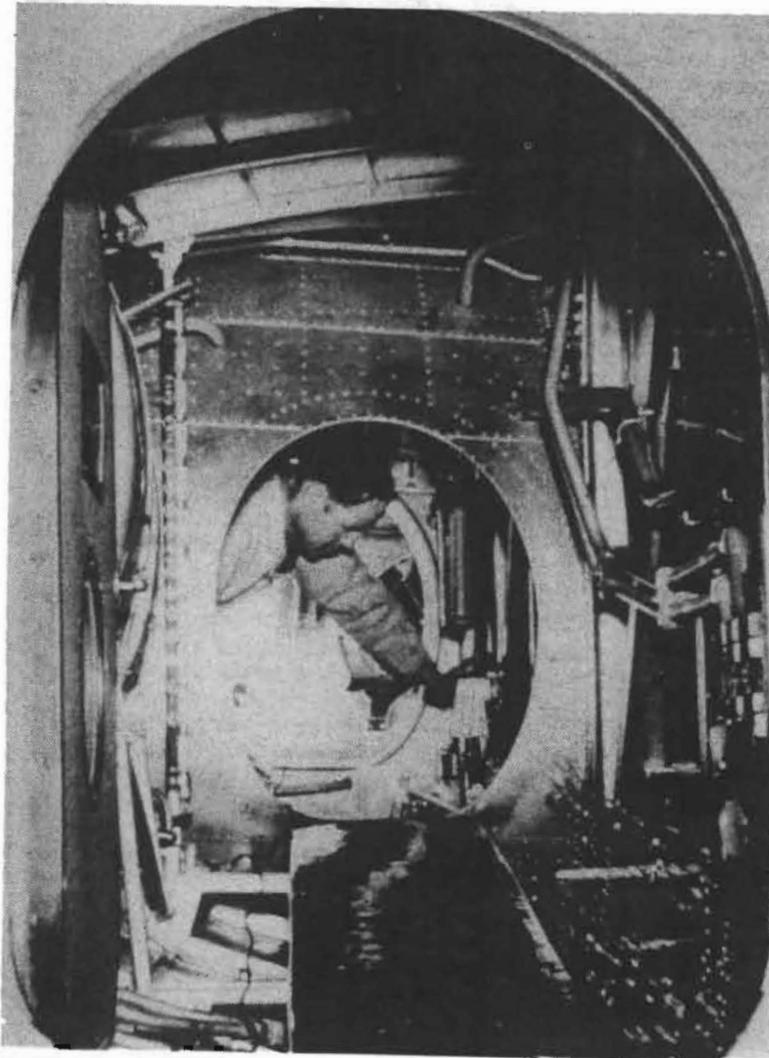
Thus was born what has been called by many the most beautiful aircraft ever built up to the time of the Concorde, today's super-sonic airliner. And, so too, was born the beginnings of a commercial transportation revolution, the frenzy of which lives today.

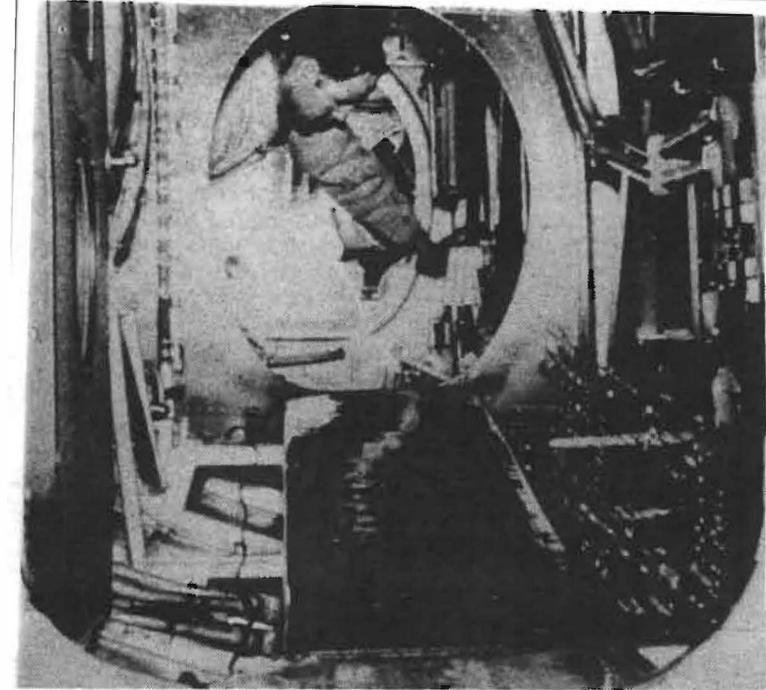
This "flying hotel" had a wing

inch line for tying up to buoys, plus a couple of six-foot sea anchors to help stabilize the "boat" in rough waters. A most unique feature was a catwalk out into the wings, which allowed the Flight Engineers to actually work on an engine in flight. The pilots would stop the engine, "feathering" the propeller in doing so, so that the broad part of the blades would not create drag, and the engineer could then trouble-shoot and fix certain items that might be causing a problem.

This catwalk was also used by crew members (the writer included) who were sent out to sit behind either of the outer engines to help stabilize the boat while taxiing into takeoff position. This was a procedure often necessary at Horta, in the Azores, where the swells would grow to immense proportions, many times causing cancellations of takeoffs and landings.

It was not uncommon to be posed for takeoff in Bermuda heading for Horta, then Lisbon, only to get a radio message to





Working inside the wing of the Pan Am Boeing-314 flying boat Clipper. Flight personnel could work on engines in flight and often were sent out behind the outboard engines to help stabilize the aircraft while taxiing on the water in heavy swell conditions. (Photo courtesy Pan American World Airways)

crew members who were needed at the time (your normal crew consisted of four pilots, two engineers, two radio operators, a navigator plus the stewards) could rest in their own sleeping accommodations both on the flight deck and forward on the passenger deck. Rising with daylight, you are served a breakfast of strawberries and cream, cereals, sausage, bacon and eggs. Twelve hours and 26 minutes after taking off you set down in the waters of Horta for a two-hour refuelling stop, then on to Lisbon, landing in the Tagus River, leaving these first paying passengers (22 of them) shaking their heads in the wonder of crossing the Atlantic in eight minutes less than 24 hours!

This "Flying Hotel" had its beginnings in 1936 when Pan Am's founder Juan Terry Trippe put out a call to America's aircraft makers to come up with a design for a flying boat that would become the first trans-oceanic aircraft capable of carrying at least 10,000 pounds of payload in addition to carrying a

original Clippers they used on the original routes in the Caribbean and the Pacific (mostly carrying mail only). And in fact, Boeing, declined to enter the contest because of its already full plate of projects. However, Warren Beall, a Boeing engineer, worked on a design on his own time, came up with an answer which his superiors approved and then asked Pan Am to extend their deadline.

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This "flying hotel" had a wing span of 152 feet and was 109 feet long. Its hull was 19 feet high, its overall height 28-1/2 feet. It could carry 74 passengers and 11 crew in luxurious comfort in its two decks, and could sleep 40 people in deep matted comfort. Its weight "grossed out" at about 86,000 pounds (compared to about 600,000 for today's Boeing 747). Pan Am insisted on their pilots being master mariners as well, and their official title was "Master of Ocean Flying Boats."

Some of the craft's unique features included hydro-stabilizers, stubby winglike structures which helped stabilize the aircraft in the water, and also served as fuel tanks. Fuel capacity was 5,400 gallons, maximum range about 4,900 miles. In the bow of the aircraft was carried a 90 pound anchor, 150 feet of three-

propeller in doing so, so that the broad part of the blades would not create drag, and the engineer could then trouble-shoot and fix certain items that might be causing a problem.

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It was not uncommon to be posed for takeoff in Bermuda heading for Horta, then Lisbon, only to get a radio message to cancel due to the swells in Horta; or even to takeoff, fly for some hours and then have to turn back for the same reason (but this would happen seldom).

Soon after the June 28th, 1939 flight, Clippers were crossing the Atlantic regularly, via Bermuda and Horta in the Middle, Bermuda and South America to Africa in the South, and to the British Isles via Shediac, New Brunswick and Botwood, Newfoundland to Foynes, Ireland, in the north.

In fact, this summer, museums dedicated to the days of the various flying boats are being dedicated and opened in Botwood and Foynes, and these openings will be well attended by aviation "buffs" from all over the world.

(More next week)



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