PAUL L. BRIAND JR.

DAUGHTER OF THE SKY
THE STORY OF AMELIA EARHART

Duell, Sloan and Pearce

DAUGHTER OF THE SKY
THE STORY OF AMELIA EARHART
BY PAUL L. BRIAND JR.



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Title: Daughter of the sky
The story of Amelia Earhart

Author: Jr. Paul L. Briand

Release date: March 11, 2023 [eBook #70263]
Most recently updated: April 16, 2023

Language: English

Original publication: United States: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1960

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/70263

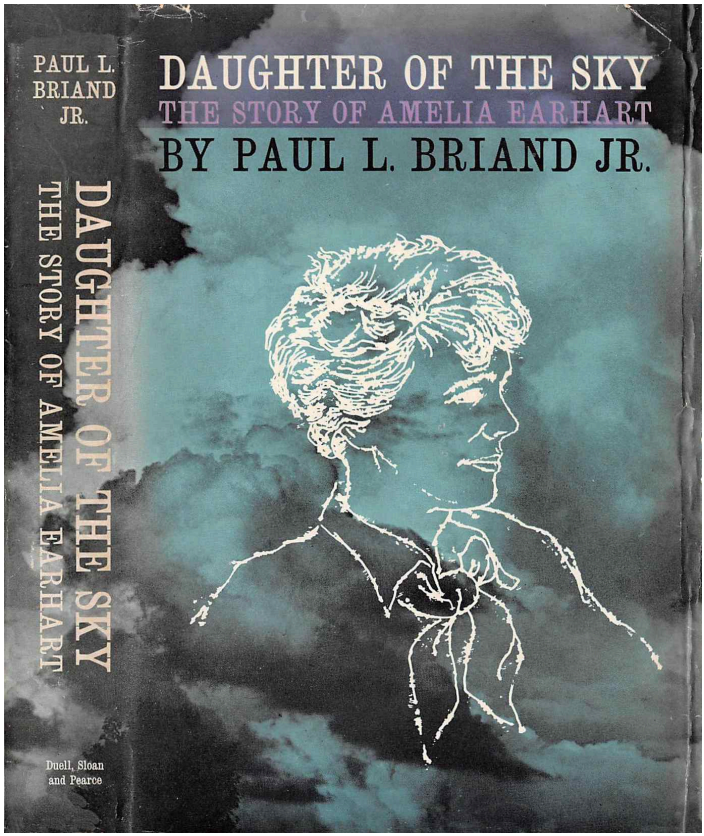
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Daughter of the Sky

Courage[A]

Courage is the price that Life exacts for
granting peace.
The soul that knows it not
Knows no release from little things:
Knows not the livid loneliness of fear,
Nor mountain heights where bitter joy can hear
The sound of wings.

How can life grant us boon of living,
compensate
For dull gray ugliness and pregnant hate
Unless we dare
The soul's dominion? Each time we make a
choice, we pay
With courage to behold the resistless day,
And count it fair.

—Amelia Earhart

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Daughter of the Sky

THE STORY OF AMELIA EARHART

by PAUL L. BRIAND, JR.

DUELL, SLOAN and PEARCE
New York

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First edition

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number:
60-5457

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

VAN REES PRESS · NEW YORK

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For Margaret, my wife,
who allowed another woman—
Amelia Earhart—into my life.

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Author's Note

THERE are many women who wish they were men; few men who wish they were women. Amelia Earhart did not want to be a man—she was the essence of femininity; but she did want to do many of the things men can do—and a few of the things men cannot do. For her, the greatest challenge in the world of men was the ability to fly, and this ability in AE (as she liked to be called) was the flowering of an attitude that took root early in her childhood. Having learned to fly, she was not content, however, simply to be able to fly; she wanted to be "the first to do," to set new records, to prove that women could try things as men have tried.

Amelia Earhart was one of America's great heroines; her life was in many ways unique. She was one of a kind, and the fabric of her life was woven of strands that are rarely produced: she had an insatiable curiosity about everything in life—ideas, books, people, places, mechanical things; she loved all kinds of sports and games, especially those "only for boys"; she fidgeted with an implacable unrest to experiment, to try new things; she teemed with a zest for living, paradoxically entwined with a gnawing and pervasive longing to be alone; and, finally, she brooded with a fatalism toward death, which she met with a tremendous will to live.

Of such strands was the fabric made that produced the public figure acclaimed throughout the world; the woman who succeeded in such incredible

achievements as flying solo across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and then resented the publicity which they brought; the girl who simply wanted to do because she wanted to demonstrate the equality of her sex with that of the opposite in all fields of constructive endeavor. But what she wanted to do could not be done simply, and in that complexity lies the mystery of a human soul and the fascination of a woman who dared the dominion of that soul.

My research into the life of Amelia Earhart led me into a study of many lives and of the period in which they were lived; it has also led me thousands of miles across these United States and occasioned from me hundreds of letters of inquiry. I pored over books, magazines, and newspapers, and from them gained the basic story of the woman flier's life; but it was the people I interviewed and wrote to, who answered my many and persistent questions and provided me with their private letters, pictures, and other memorabilia, who in the last analysis made the writing of this biography an enjoyable undertaking.

My purpose in choosing the narrative-dramatic-expository technique of the modern biographer in telling my story was a simple one: while I used many of the resources of the objective scholar in gathering and marshaling my materials and in establishing their accuracy, I tried to show the novelist's interest in background influences, in hidden motives, in the complex nature of character. In short, I wanted to translate an intriguing woman out of aviation terms into human terms.

PAUL L. BRIAND, JR.
Captain, USAF

United States Air Force Academy
Colorado

> When time has smoothed out somewhat the rough sorrows of the present, there will be another book—the full story of Amelia Earhart's life. That's a project for a tomorrow of retrospect.
>
> —GEORGE PALMER PUTNAM, 1937

Introduction[B] by Colonel Hilton H. Railey, United States Army (retired)

ON the pivot of my casual conversation with George Palmer Putnam turned the career of Amelia Earhart, her transformation from social worker at a Boston settlement house to a world figure in aviation.

If it had not been for that conversation with Mr. Putnam the chances are that Amelia Earhart would still have become a constructive factor in the industry to which she was so devoted; and that she would be alive today.

In the spring of 1928 I dropped in to see Putnam in New York. He told me that Commander Byrd had recently sold his trimotored Fokker to "a wealthy woman who plans to fly the Atlantic." He did not know her name or anything more about it, except that he believed floats were being fitted to the plane at the East Boston airport.

"It'd be amusing to manage a stunt like that,

wouldn't it?" he remarked. "Find out all you can. Locate the ship. Pump the pilots."

In Boston I cornered Wilmer (Bill) Stultz, the pilot, and Lou Gordon, his copilot and mechanic. Stultz admitted he was getting ready for a transatlantic flight, but maintained that he knew only his backer's attorney, David T. Layman.

In New York, some days later, I got in touch with him and learned that Mrs. Frederick E. Guest of London and New York, whose husband had been Secretary of State for Air in Lloyd George's cabinet, was the mysterious sponsor who had planned to be the first of her sex to fly the Atlantic. Her family, said Mr. Layman, was much concerned. Soon it was agreed that if I could find the "right sort of girl" to take her place Mrs. Guest would yield.

When I returned to Boston I telephoned Rear Admiral Reginald K. Belknap, retired.

"I know a young social worker who flies," he said. "I'm not sure how many hours she's had, but I do know that she's deeply interested in aviation and a thoroughly fine person. Call Denison House and ask for Amelia Earhart."

Guardedly, when Miss Earhart came on the wire, I inquired whether she would like to participate in an important but hazardous flight. I had to come out with it because she had declined an interview until I stated the nature of my business. That afternoon, accompanied by Miss Marion Perkins, head worker at Denison House, she appeared at my office.

At sight convinced that she was qualified as a person, if not as a pilot, I asked forthwith:

"How would you like to be the first woman to fly

the Atlantic?"

She asked for details, whatever I was at liberty to tell her. Miss Earhart had owned several planes and had flown more than five hundred hours. She said the role of passenger did not appeal to her much, and hoped that, weather conditions permitting, she could take her turn at the controls. At that time, however, she was unable to fly with the aid of instruments alone, and her experience with trimotored ships had been inconsequential.

In the light of subsequent events, in the tragic shadow of the last, I quote a letter addressed to me by Miss Earhart on May 2, 1928:

> It is very kind of you to keep me informed, as far as you are able, concerning developments of the contemplated flight. As you may imagine, my suspense is great indeed.
>
> Please, however, do not think that I hold you responsible, in any way, for my own uncertainty. I realize that you are now, and have been from the first, only the medium of communication between me and the person, or persons, who are financing the enterprise. For your own satisfaction may I add, here, that you have done nothing more than present the facts of the case to me. I appreciate your forbearance in not trying to "sell" the idea, and should like you to know that I assume all responsibility for any risks involved.

Some weeks after Mrs. Guest had retired in Miss Earhart's favor, my wife, in daily touch with our secret preparations, broached the subject and, woman to woman, urged her to back out if she felt the slightest degree uneasy. Her reply was

characteristic:

"No, this is the way I look at it: my family's insured, there's only myself to think about. And when a great adventure's offered you—you don't refuse it, that's all."

At Mrs. Guest's request, Mr. Putnam agreed to act as the "backer" of the flight. It was at Miss Earhart's request, primarily, that I agreed to see her through the rumpus in Europe. About the middle of May I set out for London. Mrs. Guest had preceded us.

Stultz and Gordon, the press believed, were Byrd's men, grooming the giant Fokker, named the *Friendship* by Mrs. Guest, for the trip to the South Pole.

Toward noon on June 17 the *Friendship* cracked the ill luck which had glued her pontoons to the bay at Trepassey, Newfoundland, for more than two weeks. News of the take-off was flashed to the world.

Early the next morning we heard that the *Friendship* had circled the S.S. *America*, a few hundred miles out, to get her bearings; silence through the night had meant only that her radio was out of commission. After some hours I received direct word from Gordon that they had come down safely at Burry Port, Wales. I telegraphed them to remain aboard ship until I arrived by flying boat from Southampton.

That afternoon, landing near the *Friendship*, I caught a glimpse of Miss Earhart seated in the doorway of the fuselage.

"Hello!" she said.

After a flight of twenty hours and forty minutes they were all dog tired, but there was something else in Miss Earhart's expression—disappointment.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Aren't you excited?"

"Excited? No. It was a grand experience, but all I did was lie on my tummy and take pictures of the clouds. We didn't see much of the ocean. Bill did all the flying—had to. I was just baggage, like a sack of potatoes."

"What of it? You're still the first woman to fly the Atlantic and, what's more, the first woman pilot."

"Oh, well, maybe someday I'll try it alone."

The next morning we boarded the *Friendship* and flew to Southampton, where, for the first time, Miss Earhart met Mrs. Guest, to whom she owed the position which, thereafter strengthened by her own steady hands, she was to turn to such brilliant account.

As Miss Earhart's escort, I felt increasing pride in her natural manner, warmed, as it was, by humor and grace. Whether confronted by dozens of cameramen demanding over and over, "A great big smile, please!" or asked to wave to crowds (a gesture she used sparingly); whether laying a wreath at the Cenotaph or before a statue of Edith Cavell; whether sipping tea with the Prime Minister and Lady Astor at the House of Commons or talking with Winston Churchill, she remained herself, serious, forthright, with no bunk in her make-up.

Even in those days I sensed that for all her lack of ostentation she would yet write drama in the skies; her simplicity would capture people

everywhere, her strength of character would hold her on her course; in calm pursuit of an end not personal she would achieve greatness. Above all, she had a quality of imaginative daring that was to wing her like an arrow.

Aboard the mayor's boat, *Macom*, during Miss Earhart's welcome in the harbor at New York, Commander Byrd told me that he needed help in the financing of his projected expedition to the Antarctic and urged me to join him as soon as I could cut loose from the *Friendship*'s show. After a day or two I did.

In the years that followed, with pride and sure knowledge of Amelia Earhart's motivations, but with a tinge of fear as to the outcome, I watched her gain distinction in aviation.

Genuinely as a tribute to her sex rather than for her own glorification, she accepted the honors that accrued; for the participation of women in aviation, which at all times she strove to encourage and pace, was the obsession which lured her to her death.

After she had flown the Atlantic as the first woman passenger, it was inevitable that she should attempt to fly it alone. Having done so, having established, seriatim, transcontinental records of one kind and another, there remained the Pacific.

Long before she mentioned it, I knew that next, and perhaps fatally, must come her globe-circling adventure. Why—when even to her it must have seemed a stunt without constructive benefit to the aeronautical industry—did she attempt that hazardous expedition?

She had to. She was caught up in the hero racket that compelled her to strive for increasingly dramatic records, bigger and braver feats that automatically

insured the publicity necessary to the maintenance of her position as the foremost woman pilot in the world. She was a victim of an era of “hot” aeronautics that began with Colonel Lindbergh and Admiral Byrd and that shot “scientific” expeditions across continents, oceans, and polar regions by dint of individual exhibition.

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PART ONE

THE FRIENDSHIP *FLIGHT*

1. *Boston Social Worker*

A LOW-SLUNG yellow Kissel roadster with top down, a grinning tousle-haired girl at the wheel, rounded the corner, sped down Tyler Street in Boston, and screeched to a stop in front of Denison House. Before the girl could get a leg out of the car, a swarm of children from the settlement house gathered about their favorite teacher. Jumbled greetings accosted her on all sides.

"Miss Earhart," said one of the older Italian boys, "you been flyin'?" His black eyes sparkled. "Gee, I wish I could fly."

Amelia Earhart smiled at the boy and pulled his cap down over his eyes. "Your mother would send you back to Italy if you did."

The others laughed and followed the tall and slender English teacher into the front door, a polyglot wake of Armenian, Syrian, Greek, Chinese, Jewish, and Italian childhood. She herded them down the hall and corralled them into one of the classrooms.

Finally settled down in the classroom, the children listened to simplified explanations of English grammar. They screwed their faces in disbelief and squinted their eyes in helpless confusion.

The Italian boy of the cap looked at his little brother to see if he understood; he didn't. The older boy raised his hand. Miss Earhart recognized him. "Me and Gino," he said, fingering his tight black curly hair, "we don't...."

"Gino and I," Amelia corrected him.

"Gino and *you*?"

Amelia pushed back her hair with a quick sweep of the hand. "No, no. You and your brother. You should say...."

In the middle of that afternoon in April, 1928, AE was called to the telephone.

"I'm too busy to answer just now," she said. "Tell whoever it is to call back later."

"But he says it's important."

Unwillingly Amelia went to the telephone and picked up the receiver.

"Hello," the voice said at the other end. "My name is Railey, Captain Hilton Railey."

"Yes, Captain Railey?" She could not place the name.

"I wonder if I could speak to you on a very important matter?" His voice was low and strong.

"What could that be?" Amelia answered matter-of-factly.

"You are interested in flying, are you not?"

"Yes, sir!" Her interest quickened.

"Would you like to do something for the cause of aviation?"

"That sounds like a big order."

"Well, would you?" There was a challenge in Railey's inflection.

Amelia twisted the long string of beads that hung from her neck. "Yes!" she said.

"It might be hazardous."

Captain Railey refused to tell over the telephone the exact nature of the risk involved, and asked Miss Earhart to call at his office at 80 Federal Street in downtown Boston.

Amelia asked him for references; she wanted to make sure that this was not somebody's hoax. Railey gave First Army Headquarters and the name of Commander Byrd. She was satisfied for the moment. As an added precaution, Amelia asked Marion Perkins, the head worker at Denison House, to accompany her to Railey's office as chaperone and adviser.

Late that afternoon, nearly bursting with curiosity, AE drove her "yellow peril" faster than usual. She was annoyed at having to trail even one car through the narrow streets of the city. Miss Perkins, rigid stolidity beside her, cautioned against speeding with matronly authority.

The Kissel parked, Amelia tucked her hair under the rarely worn cloche hat and hurried to Railey's office, but only at the pace which Marion Perkins' decorum allowed.

Upon meeting Captain Railey, the two women discovered that he was a civilian who had been a captain in the Army during the war. He was now the president of a public-relations firm with offices in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. He numbered among his clients such aviation notables as Richard Byrd, Clarence Chamberlin, Sir Hubert Wilkins, Lincoln Ellsworth, and Ruth Nichols.

A dark-haired, handsome man, Hilton Railey seated the two women off to the side of his desk. He was pleased with the appearance of the humble social worker, who, he had learned, had a private pilot's license, and had logged more than five hundred solo hours. What he liked above all was her striking resemblance to the greatest of American heroes—Charles Lindbergh. Here before him, if his eyes were not deceiving him, was a "Lady Lindy." Like Lindbergh, she was shy and modest. She didn't know it, but she had been discovered.

"Miss Earhart," Railey asked, "have you ever heard of Mrs. Frederick Guest?"

"No, I'm afraid not," Amelia answered. She sat on the edge of the chair, her back straight, her legs pressed firmly together.

"A short time ago, Mrs. Guest bought a trimotored Fokker from Commander Byrd. She wanted to be the first woman to fly the Atlantic." Railey looked for initial stirring from the girl. "However, although she is courageous, she is also a mother, and her children have talked her out of it."

Marion Perkins, suspicious as a protective aunt, unbending as a ramrod, eyed Railey coldly.

Guessing the direction of the interview, Amelia warmed to the thought crossing her mind. She eased

back in the chair. “That’s too bad for her,” she said.

Hilton Railey gave the young woman a hard look; then he stole a glance at her long, straight legs. AE blushed. “Miss Earhart,” he continued, “Mrs. Guest still wants a woman to be a passenger on that flight. Would you like to be the first woman to fly across the Atlantic?”

Amelia flushed in excitement. Despite the hazard involved, she reasoned, this was a rare opportunity. There were no more than a dozen women in the country with flying licenses, and that seemed to be one of the requirements. Perhaps her chances were good. She made up her mind.

“Yes, sir,” she said finally, “I certainly would.”

Captain Railey rose to shake her hand. He was delighted that he had found such a charming candidate. “You will have to go to New York with me,” he told her, “to meet the backers of the flight. Other women fliers are being considered, too.” He paused, then added, “By the way, Miss Earhart, has anyone ever told you that you look like Lindbergh?”

In New York, plans for the flight were being completed. George Palmer Putnam had been commissioned by Mrs. Guest to find a woman flier to take her place. He had called everyone he knew who could possibly find a likely candidate.

It had been the intention of the Honorable Mrs. Frederick Guest of London, formerly Amy Phipps of Pittsburgh, to do for English-American relations what Charles Lindbergh had done for French-American relations.

Among the several women who had already been considered for the flight was Ruth Nichols of Rye,

New York, who became a famous woman flier. In her career she paced AE all the way.

Waiting in New York to interview AE was an all-male jury. It was composed of George Palmer Putnam, the publisher; David T. Layman, Jr., Mrs. Guest's attorney; and a brother of Mrs. Guest, John S. Phipps.

Amelia had never seen such a stern-looking group. After Captain Railey introduced her to each of them in turn, they began to question her. Was she willing to fly the Atlantic? Would she release them from responsibility in the event of disaster? What was her education? How strong was she? How willing? What flying experience did she have? What would she do after the flight? Was she prepared not to be paid, although the two men in the flight would be?

The demure Boston social worker survived the examination. Recalling the experience, Amelia said later: "I found myself in a curious situation. If they did not like me at all or found me wanting in too many respects, I would be deprived of the trip. If they liked me too well, they might be loath to drown me. It was, therefore, necessary for me to maintain an attitude of impenetrable mediocrity. Apparently I did, because I was chosen."

Impenetrable mediocrity to the contrary, the committee discovered in the girl much of what they were looking for. She was tall and slender and boyish-looking. She was humble and soft-spoken. The men could not help but agree with Railey: she did indeed look and act like Charles Lindbergh.

Amelia was thrilled because she had been selected for the flight. With unbounded enthusiasm

she followed the preparations. It had been decided to make the take-off from Boston Harbor, for if news of the project should leak out to the press, then everyone could say that Boston's own Commander Byrd was preparing another Arctic expedition and that the plane was his.

By the time AE returned to Denison House much had already been done. Acting for Mrs. Guest, Commander Byrd had picked the pilot. He was Wilmer L. "Bill" Stultz, who in turn could make his choice of mechanics. Stultz decided on Lou "Slim" Gordon, who was working in Monroe, Louisiana.

In the event of an emergency, Byrd had also chosen an alternate pilot, Lou Gower. Stultz, however, an exceptional pilot, never had to be replaced, although there were times when he might have been.

The plane, named the *Friendship* by Mrs. Guest, was brought to a hangar in East Boston to undergo alterations. Because of the risks involved in a long over-water flight and the ever-present possibility of having to make a forced landing, it was decided to replace the wheels of the Fokker with pontoons. For added range, two large gas tanks, which could hold 900 extra gallons of gasoline, were fitted to the forward bulkheads in the cabin of the plane. As an extra precaution, new flight instruments and radio equipment were installed. The work done, Stultz and Gordon took the plane up for many test flights before they pronounced it ready.

The press never discovered what was afoot. According to the agreement, everyone connected with the flight kept quiet about it. Amelia did not tell even her family, who were living in nearby Medford. She did, however, tell Samuel Chapman, a good

friend, who was in turn supposed to tell her family after the take-off.

Little is known about Samuel Chapman. He was a lawyer who worked in the Boston office of the Edison Company. According to some reports, Amelia met him in Los Angeles when she was first learning to fly. Some claimed that Amelia was engaged to him.

If there was an engagement, something happened before, during, or after the *Friendship* flight to break it. After the flight, whenever Amelia was asked about Chapman, she was vague and elusive. She would say that she didn't know where he was, that she hadn't seen him, that she didn't plan to see him. She managed to be as secretive about Samuel Chapman as she had been about the *Friendship* preparations.

By the middle of May, 1928, the plane was declared ready by Stultz and Gordon. Weather information was gathered, coordinated, and plotted. Reports came in from ships at sea to the Weather Bureau; British reports were digested and cabled to New York. Dr. James H. Kimball, the great friend of fliers, collected, studied, and advised from his New York office of the United States Weather Bureau. Weather became the great obstacle.

Three weeks of waiting for the right weather drew nerves taut. Because she was so well known about the local airports, Amelia avoided East Boston and the hangar. She and George Palmer Putnam (known to everyone as GP) often visited with the Byrds on Brimmer Street, looking over the vast preparations for the commander's forthcoming expedition to the Antarctic.

On good days Amelia and either Hilton Railey or

GP would take long drives into the country in the yellow Kissel. Each night they would eat at a different restaurant specializing in foreign dishes, and after dinner they would attend one of Boston's legitimate theaters.

Bill Stultz and Slim Gordon stayed at the Copley-Plaza where they shared a room. Stultz, the man of action, the rare combination of great pilot, navigator, instrument flier, and radio operator, grew more restless with the passing days. A somber melancholy began to creep into his waiting hours. He turned to brandy to relieve his boredom and anxiety. His daily intoxication became an acute concern to Amelia, Putnam, and Railey. Gordon, himself sick with ptomaine poisoning, nevertheless knew and insisted that everything would change for the better for both of them if they ever could get out of Boston and into the air.

Spirits dampened during the long, gray days. When the weather was favorable in Boston, the mid-Atlantic was forbidding; when the mid-Atlantic was favorable, Boston was shrouded in fog; when the Atlantic and Boston favorably agreed, the harbor offered only a peaceful calm that made it impossible for the heavy plane to take off.

Amelia wrote what she called "Popping off Letters." One for her father in Los Angeles, and one for her mother in Medford; the one was gay and stoically resigned, the other was serious and somewhat grim. The letter to her father read:

May 20, 1928

Dearest Dad:

Hooray for the last grand adventure! I wish I

had won, but it was worth while anyway. You know that. I have no faith we'll meet anywhere again, but I wish we might.

Anyway, good-by and good luck to you.

Affectionately, your doter,

Mill.

To her mother she wrote: "Even though I have lost, the adventure was worth while. Our family tends to be too secure. My life has really been very happy, and I didn't mind contemplating its end in the midst of it."

Toward the end of May everything seemed ready. But two attempted take-offs were unsuccessful. Too little wind and too much fog mutinied against human will and seabound craft.

At three thirty in the morning of still another day the group left the Copley-Plaza and entered the gray of still another dawn. Once more sandwiches had been made, thermos bottles filled with coffee and cocoa, gear readied and packed. Again they climbed into waiting cars and drove through the wet deserted streets to T Wharf and clambered aboard the tugboat *Sadie Ross*. They chugged once more out to the Jeffrey Yacht Club in East Boston, and out to the anchored plane. The *Friendship* seemed a desultory bird, its golden wings and red body bubbled over with morning dew. It was Sunday, the third of June.

The fog was not too thick. The wind was reasonably right, blowing in from the southeast and churning up waves that pounded the pontoons and splashed over the outboard motors.

There were no good-bys; there had been too

many before. Slim Gordon took the tarpaulin covers off the three motors. Bill checked the radio and the cockpit instruments. Slim, jumping from pontoon to pontoon, cranked the motors, and then climbed into the copilot's seat.

The plane started to taxi out of the harbor. Amelia stood between the two large tanks in the cabin and glued her eyes on the air-speed indicator. Lou Gower crouched in the aft end of the plane, hoping the added weight of his body would help bring up the nose of the plane for take-off. The attempt failed.

A five-gallon can of gasoline was cast overboard, but that did not help. The plane was still too heavy. Lou Gower had hoped to go as far as Newfoundland, but realizing the inevitable, he gathered his gear and signaled for a boat from the tug. He wished the crew good luck and left the plane.

The *Friendship* taxied again down the harbor, propellers whirring in the spray, pontoons cutting the whitecaps. The tug trailed the plane in the churning wake of foam.

Inside the Fokker Amelia watched the air-speed needle while they tried for the take-off. The hand on the instrument moved slowly—to thirty, to forty, then beyond the necessary fifty to fifty-five, and finally to sixty. The three motors roared and snarled and strained. The pontoons rose on the steps, then quickly lifted from the sea. At last they were off.

Amelia glanced at her watch; it was 6:30 A.M. She looked out the window in the side door. Boston and the tugs and fishing boats began to disappear in the fog as the plane climbed to cruising altitude. The sun broke over the rim of the harbor. They were on

their way straight up the New England coast, bound for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

As official recorder for the flight, AE pulled out her stenographer's pad that served as a logbook. She sat on a water can and wrote:

> 96 miles out (1 hour). 7:30. 2,500 ft. Bill shows me on the map that we are near Cash's Ledge. We cannot see anything (if there is anything to see), as the haze makes visibility poor. The sun is blinding in the cockpit and will be, for a couple of hours. Bill is crouching in the hatchway taking sights.

One hour and fifteen minutes later they sighted Nova Scotia and Fear Island. The plane dropped to 2,000 feet for a closer look. The haze had lessened. White gulls flew over the clustered houses on the green land and headed out over the waves rocking a lone dory on the shore. A rocky ledge ruffled the edge of the island. Pubnico Harbor was directly below. The *Friendship*, motors humming sweetly, had averaged 114 mph since it left Boston.

Amelia changed her seat to a gas can and looked down through the hatchway. A green dappled shore came into view. The plane raced fast-scudding clouds and churned through the reappearing haze. Bored with nothing more to see, AE now lay on the floor of the fuselage and pulled up the fur collar of her oversized leather flying suit. She felt snug and warm. Beside her along the bulkhead the gas cans squeaked against the heavy tie ropes. "Having a squeaking good time," Amelia said to herself, and remembered those other squeaking good times she once had in Atchison, Kansas.

2. *Girlhood in Kansas*

Grandfather Otis stood in front of the fireplace in the long living room of his home. He clasped his hands behind his back and rocked back and forth, his black, square-toed, handmade shoes squeaking on the hard wood floor. He was a big, thick-chested man, and even in retirement he was still every inch the judge he had been before his two granddaughters were born.

His wife Amelia sat in the rocking chair, darning a black knee stocking. The chair creaked as it rocked, keeping involuntary time with the heel-and-toe swaying of the thick black shoes.

Two little girls, their daughter Amy's only children, sat on the stiff horsehair sofa and exchanged knowing looks. The older girl, Amelia, who was named after her grandmother, bent over and whispered into her sister Muriel's ear. "A squeaking good time!" They giggled. They wished they had shoes that squeaked, too.

The girls loved their grandfather because he often entertained them with stories about his early days in Kansas. Judge Otis had been one of the first settlers of Atchison. Shortly after the Civil War, when he graduated from the University of Michigan, he came by overland stage from Kalamazoo to Chicago, took a flatboat to St. Louis, then went up the Missouri River and debarked at Atchison to make his home. He built a large two-story brick-and-frame house on a site overlooking the river, and added a

big barn and woodshed. The work completed, he sent for his bride, who had been staying with her Quaker family in Philadelphia.

Amelia Otis found the country nearly savage. The railroad tracks going into Atchison were lined with buffalo bones, and the so-called “friendly” Indians scared her half to death. They were too friendly. Whenever she went shopping in town, the curious Indians fingered her dress and poked into her shopping basket. Grandfather Otis chuckled when he told this story about his wife, for she would always remind him that she had preferred the civilization of Philadelphia and the society of Friends.

The Earhart girls enjoyed their grandfather but he never replaced their father, who, it seemed, was always away on a business trip. One of Amelia’s earliest memories of her childhood was waiting for her father to come home for the weekend, to see what presents he would bring and, best of all, to play with him during the day and to listen to his stories at night. He had bought them a baseball and bat and also a basketball, and had shown them how to play with them, despite the protests of some of the neighborhood mothers.

At bedtime for the girls, instead of sending them upstairs to their room, he would sit in the straight-backed chair by the fireplace, cross the long legs of his slender frame, and tell them stories of his family and boyhood.

Edwin S. Earhart had been born a few miles from Atchison, the youngest of twelve children. His father David and his mother Mary had labored many long hours on the tough Kansas sod, only to encounter crop failure, drought, dust storms, and grasshopper plagues. David Earhart had been a missionary

minister for the Lutheran Church, and though he had traveled sometimes sixty miles to preach a sermon, his congregation had never numbered more than twenty. During the great drought of 1860 his family would have starved if David had not received two gifts of money, totaling $250. Thereafter, to insure some income, however small, David became a schoolteacher. Eventually he was named as one of the regents of the state college at Lawrence. Certainly the greatest figure in the Earhart family was David's uncle, John Earhart, who had been a private in General Washington's army and was killed in the battle of Germantown. All twelve children were proud of Uncle John, a hero.

Edwin Earhart received his law degree from the University of Kansas in 1895 and the same year married Amy Otis. He worked for the railroad as a claims agent and his job kept him from home and family for days, often weeks, at a time. Grandfather Otis, then a judge of the district court, had often advised his son-in-law to open up a law office in Atchison, but Edwin was stubborn. He liked the claims work and he liked to travel.

Amelia M. Earhart was born July 24, 1898, at the Otis home in Atchison, where her parents were living at the time. Since her father's job with the railroad kept him moving from place to place as he settled claims or went to Topeka to plead a case before the Supreme Court, and her mother often accompanied him on the longer trips to Iowa and Illinois, Amelia and her sister Muriel spent most of their childhood living with the Otises.

As a child, Amelia was an irrepressible tomboy. "I was a horrid little girl," she said about staying with her grandparents, "and I do not see how they

put up with me, even part time." A harsh judgment upon herself, but she did cause her mother and grandmother many moments of fret and anxiety about her unorthodox behavior.

3. *Halifax and Trepassey*

AE grinned as she lay on the cabin floor of the *Friendship*, thinking that this flight across the Atlantic was perhaps the most unorthodox happening in any girl's life; then, as Bill Stultz throttled back and nosed the plane into a steep glide, she awoke quickly from her reverie, grabbing at the tie ropes with both hands so that she wouldn't slide forward. They were going down through the thick fog that had developed, for a closer look at check points on the coast. The plane leveled off at 500 feet. Land was to the left through a clearing in the fog.

It was Halifax Harbor, halfway to Trepassey, the Atlantic take-off point, and halfway up the Nova Scotia coast line. Bill circled the harbor twice and slipped expertly down to a landing. The natives swarmed to the shore, and some of them climbed into dories to form a welcoming party. The fog had proved too thick for the fliers, much too thick for visual navigation.

Bill and Slim went ashore to get weather reports. Amelia, meanwhile, remained in the cabin and ate an orange, one of several carefully provided by GP. Mournful sounds of a foghorn punctuated the stillness on the water. A light wind sprang up, and AE hoped that it would help the take-off from the harbor.

Stultz and Gordon returned with discouraging news of rain and clouds for the rest of the flight to

Trepassey. Nevertheless, because they had lost an hour by the change in time, they decided to try to make it. Slim cranked up, then discovered a broken primer. They still wanted to go. They took off at 2:30 P.M., but in vain.

It was a hopeless task to try to navigate along the coast. The rain and the fog were too thick and heavy. Disappointed, they turned around and went back to Halifax. They did not want to run the risk of blind flying.

At the Dartmouth Hotel in Halifax difficulties with the press began. Publicity about the flight was now inescapable, for it had been announced in the Boston newspapers that the aviators were on their way to cross the Atlantic. The three fliers found no chance to take much-needed rest.

At midnight two reporters and a cameraman were still trying to talk Bill and Slim into posing for a picture, and at five thirty the next morning the newsmen were waiting when the three travelers came down for breakfast. Before, during, and after the meal interviews and pictures were requested and begged. More reporters and cameramen awaited them at the dock. The fliers had to wait until 100 gallons of gas, which had been ordered two hours earlier, were brought by tug out to the plane and poured into the tanks.

At 9:45 A.M. they took off from a calm sea. Visibility was good and they cruised at 2,000 feet. The sharp rocks and ledges shone dark and bright along the coast beneath the left wing. The 200 miles of fog predicted the night before never materialized, but a thin haze did. At eleven forty-five they were off Cape Canso, the Atlantic tip of Nova Scotia.

Amelia and Slim, happy at the smooth progress of the flight, dived into the sandwiches prepared by the Copley-Plaza. AE munched hungrily and moved over to the side window. She wrinkled her brow as she looked over the scalloped sea. Between bites Slim smiled at the strange sight of Amelia in the oversized flying suit which she had borrowed from Army Major Woolley in Boston.

At 12:15 P.M. they cruised at 3,200 feet at 100 mph. A thick bank of fog rolled in from the Atlantic on the right. At twelve fifty they sighted Newfoundland; at two fifty, Saint Mary's Bay. Curling masses of fog began to form over the warm earth below. Trepassey, their destination, came into view far below; it looked like an open beak of land. Bill glided and circled down, and landed the Fokker smoothly.

While the plane taxied, Amelia crawled into the cockpit to take pictures of the reception committee. A dozen small boats had come out and were circling the plane, each trying to claim the distinction of being the first to rope the plane and secure it to a mooring.

Slim Gordon had gone out to one of the pontoons. He waved an arm and screamed warnings in vain above the noise of the motors: one of the welcomers threw a rope and nearly knocked him into the water. Stultz at the controls cursed, worried lest the boats get too close to the propellers and entangle a rope in them.

It was impossible to get the idea across that the plane could get to its mooring under its own power, until a Paramount cameraman caught the idea and cleared the way through the boats. Amelia joyfully snapped pictures of the marine rodeo. She had an

entertaining half-hour.

The stop at Trepassey became a nightmare of delay and frustration. Day after day angry winds churned the bay, making it impossible to load gasoline into the tanks. For fifteen days, from the fifth of June, sea and wind, together and separately, conspired to test the patience of the fliers. On June 7 they tried three times to take off and failed. A pontoon sprung a leak and an oil tank cracked. Slim patiently repaired both. The fret of anticipation grew worse by the hour.

At Devereux House, where they stayed, the travelers sought diversion by playing rummy and chopping wood, reading telegrams and scanning maps and weather reports, hiking and fishing. The local food became a topic of conversation. Slim, fearful that he would come down with another case of ptomaine poisoning, dieted mainly on candy bars, and soon exhausted the entire stock of the little neighborhood store. Amelia and Bill braved canned rabbit and boiled lamb, and the inevitable vegetables of potatoes, turnips, and cabbage. The austerity of the land forced a simple fare, but the warmth and friendliness of the Devereux family and the many visitors contrasted with the cruelty of the land and climate.

Apparently untroubled and indefatigable, Bill Stultz would get up before the others in the morning and go eeling, trouting, or exploring; at night he would pick out tunes on the guitar to entertain the others. Job-like, they all tried to ignore the smothering fog, the howling winds, and the hurtling sea, but the strain was telling in wrinkles of concern on all their faces. To dull the sharpened edge of his anxiety, Bill took to drinking heavily. His melancholy

had returned. AE was worried about it; Slim, evidently, was unconcerned, knowing that Bill would stop drinking once he was back in the air, as he had in Boston.

On June 12 they tried desperately for four hours to take off, but the heaviness of the receding tide sprayed and silenced the outboard motors. The plane seemed heavy and unwieldy. Every item of unnecessary equipment was unloaded—camera, coats, bags, cushions—but still the salt spray continued to kill the motors. They were too discouraged to speak.

The next day they arose at six o'clock. They unloaded 300 pounds of fuel and tried for take-off, but the left motor cut out. More days of waiting plagued them until the motor was repaired, but one reassuring message had reached them. The *Southern Cross*, a trimotored Fokker, like the *Friendship* except for pontoons, had crossed the Pacific from San Francisco.

Back at the Devereux home, they decided to do something about their clothes. Amelia, who had only the clothes she was wearing, bought a green-checked Mother Hubbard for ninety cents and a pair of tan hose, then borrowed a pair of shoes, a skirt, and a slip, so that she could wash everything from the skin out. Bill and Slim felt the same crawling need for cleanliness. They borrowed clothes, and had their suits cleaned and pressed and their shirts laundered. Bill splurged and bought a new tie and new Trepassey socks.

Finally, a slight break in the weather came on Sunday morning, June 17. At eleven o'clock, after three tries in a heavy sea, the take-off was successful. Bill Stultz, unfortunately, had to be all but carried on

the plane by Amelia and Gordon, but again he called upon hidden reserves of airmanship, as in Boston, and piloted the *Friendship* as if nothing had ever happened.

Amelia worried lest there would be a recurrence of drinking during the long over-water flight. Her fears were intensified when she found a bottle hidden in the rear of the plane. She debated the discovery for a few moments, but soon acted: she dropped the bottle into the ocean. As it happened, her concern was unfounded. Stultz never came back to look for his stimulant; flying, it appeared, was for him stimulant enough.

The *Friendship* wobbled through the fog, one engine still spluttering from the sea spray on take-off, climbed to 3,000 feet, and leveled off to cruise for a while. More wisps of fog flitted by. Bill nosed the plane higher, out of the fog, but into a sudden snowstorm. Lighter by 2,000 pounds, because of the excess baggage and fuel that had been removed at Trepassey, three tons of aircraft now flew through the air, shaking violently in the buffeting of the storm.

Bill pointed the nose down; the motors roared wide open. At 3,000 feet they bucked a head wind and a lashing rain; the plane bumped and lurched in the downdrafts and updrafts. The air speed was steady at 106 mph. Suddenly a clear sky, sun shining, and blue sea broke as far as Amelia could see; then, ominously, mountainous peaks of clouds towered dead ahead. The plane upended and hurtled headlong in a steep dive. Amelia braced herself against the forward bulkhead and waited for the plane to right itself.

4. *Atchison Tomboy*

How often before had she known the same sensation, long before she had ever seen or learned how to fly an airplane. Like the day she decided to build a roller coaster out behind her grandfather's woodshed. With her sister Muriel and her cousins Katherine and Lucy Challiss to help her, Amelia had nailed some cross boards to two long planks for the runway, then tacked some old roller-skate wheels to a wide board for the coaster. The girls lifted the crude runway and leaned it against the top of the shed, while Amelia climbed up a ladder to the roof. The coaster was handed up to her, and as she knelt with the board between her hands, she felt a shiver along the middle of her back. She wondered for a moment if she could make it down the steep incline. The first time she tried, she flipped over when the coaster reached the ground, and her sister and cousins screamed. Amelia cautioned them against making too much noise, then insisted that she would try it again after the boards were made longer. On the second attempt she shot from the end of the incline onto the ground, right side up and unharmed.

The next day when Grandmother Otis discovered the roughly built roller coaster she disapproved strongly. Young girls just didn't do those things. They stayed at home and sewed and learned how to cook. "Why," Grandmother Otis used to say to Amelia and Muriel, "the most strenuous thing I ever did as a girl was to roll a hoop in the public square."

Despite Grandmother's remark, the girls would scamper hand in hand through the paths from the bluff down to the river where they would search the caves for arrowheads and play Pioneers and Indians. One day when they had returned from such an adventure, Mrs. Earhart looked at her daughters' dirty pinafores and decided they needed costumes more in keeping with their play. Amy Otis bought for her girls some new gym suits. The neighborhood was shocked. Amelia and Muriel were delighted: now they could climb on the back of the cow in the barn, or play baseball and basketball, and never worry about tearing their dresses.

Amelia and Muriel attended the College Preparatory School in Atchison. Of her days at grammar school Amelia wrote later: "Like many horrid children, I loved school, though I never qualified as teacher's pet. Perhaps the fact that I was exceedingly fond of reading made me endurable. With a large library to browse in, I spent many hours not bothering anyone after I once learned to read." But there was some difficulty with her mathematics teacher, Sarah Walton, who had insisted that Amelia put down all the steps she went through to arrive at her answers if she expected to win honor prizes at the end of the term. Amelia didn't care about the honors: she knew she could work the problems in her head, and it was a waste of time to put the steps down on paper.

Early in her life Amelia revealed a mind that was inventive, original, and stubborn. She was bright and inquisitive about everything. Her parents encouraged her interest in books and took turns reading aloud from Scott, Dickens, George Eliot, and Thackeray. The reading habit became ingrained, and later, when

Amelia and Muriel helped in the housework, instead of both of them doing it together, one would read while the other worked. One of Mr. Earhart's favorite games with his girls was to spring words on them which they had to define without running to a dictionary.

Edwin Earhart, much like Lincoln in stern appearance and with gentle and pervasive humor, was unusually open-minded about his girls and what they wanted to do. He did not think he should keep his daughters in school at all costs. Sometimes he took Amelia and Muriel with him on his trips for the railroad—to Kansas City, Des Moines, St. Paul, Chicago—thinking the visits as educational as classes in school. He also took the girls along whenever he went on a fishing jaunt. For such things as a lunar eclipse he would let them stay up late at night. And Amelia never forgot the one occasion in 1910 when she saw Halley's comet.

"Anything unusual is educational," Amy Earhart said, supporting her husband's views. And the girls, dressed in their dark-blue flannel suits and their "shocking" full-pleated bloomers, collected the unusual and did the unusual. They added toads and spiders and chameleons to the collection of Indian arrowheads. They cooked and baked at the oven outside, and Amelia, forever the experimenter, once tried to make the manna she read about in the story of Moses. She was convinced that it was a cross between a popover and angel-food cake. Whenever she was asked why she wanted to do such things, her answer was always the same: "Because I want to!" The reply may have been unsatisfactory, but she used it all her life—for her ungirl-like interest in house painting, working metal, taking mechanical

gadgets apart and putting them together again, and flying an airplane around the world. These were the things she wanted to do.

But nothing was more enjoyable than the new flat sleds with steel runners that Mr. Earhart bought the girls for Christmas, 1905, when Amelia was a round-faced, towheaded girl of seven. As soon as she heard that the hill nearby was covered with snow, she rushed out to try her new sled—a "belly whopper," she called it. When Amelia and Muriel reached the slope, the other neighborhood girls were sitting on their old-style upright sleds with wooden runners. Amelia noted that her sled was much more practical; it was a sled you could steer this way and that. She made a running start and thumped onto the sled. Down the steep slope of the hill she swooped, blinking, her wet eyes whipped by the icy wind, feeling the cold rush into her nostrils. Suddenly a junkman's cart labored out of a side street at the bottom of the hill. Amelia shouted to the driver, but he did not hear. The horse, plodding carefully across the icy patches on the road, had blinders on and could not see her. It was impossible for Amelia to stop and too dangerous for her to go off the side of the road into the ditch. With presence of mind born of necessity, she coasted on straight, then carefully guided the sled by the steering bar up front, and shot through the underside of the horse, between his front and back legs. The tomboy way to sled had saved her life.

Despite the disapproval of his mother-in-law, Mr. Earhart continued to give his girls what they wanted to play with, and they wanted to play with footballs, baseballs, and basketballs.

Amelia loved strenuous games and she tried

them all. She rebelled at the idea that they were not proper exercise for girls. That made her nearly as mad as some of the stories she read: the heroes were always boys. “Exercise of all kinds gave me intense pleasure,” she said later in her life, after she had become an accomplished equestrienne. “I might have been more skillful and graceful if I had learned the correct form in athletics. I could not get any instruction, so I just played and acquired a lot of bad habits.” She had always wanted to ride a horse, and she would climb onto the back of any nag that stopped in front of her house for a delivery. The most fun was riding the heavy-footed sorrel that pulled the butcher’s wagon. He bucked with devilish determination for no reason at all, and Amelia was often unseated.

Her favorite horse was a neighbor’s mare named Nellie. Nellie’s owner kept her in a small, hot, confining shed near the Otis property. Whenever Nellie, tormented by flies, would kick her heels at the sides of the shed, her owner would beat her with a buggy whip. Amelia hated the neighbor for his cruelty, and often tried to calm the horse with cubes of sugar before Nellie’s clattering and banging aroused her master.

One day, in the summer of 1906, Amelia and Muriel watched the neighbor saddle and mount Nellie. The girls glared as the rider reined his horse in tight. They followed horse and rider as they moved into the street. Suddenly Nellie reared and bucked high into the air. The owner shouted, cursed, and beat the animal with his riding crop. Nellie reared again and bucked higher. The owner tumbled off and fell to the ground in a wild heap. Nellie galloped off to the end of the driveway, then raced to

the foot of the street, to the narrow bridge over a little stream. The horse was cornered and bewildered. In defiance she jumped over the railing of the bridge into the rocky stream below. The next day the broken body of the horse was found near the milldam a mile below the bridge.

It was an experience Amelia never forgot, and in later years she loved to read Vachel Lindsay's poem, "The Bronco That Would Not Be Broken of Dancing." It always reminded her of Nellie.

Amelia greatly admired spirited animals, and perhaps even as a young girl she learned something of her own nature from them. There was much of the untamed and the unrestrained in herself and she resented what she considered unnecessary restrictions.

In 1907 her family moved to Des Moines, Iowa, and she saw her first airplane. She remembered the exact day she saw the plane; it was at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines, on July 24, her ninth birthday.

Amelia and Muriel were enjoying the merry-go-round and the pony rides, but Mr. Earhart was impatient to see the airplane, which, it had been advertised, was going to give a demonstration flight. Ever since he had read about Wilbur and Orville Wright, who only four years ago had flown successfully from the sand dunes at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Edwin Earhart had wanted to see a plane, especially see one fly. But his daughters wanted another pony ride, and after that he had to buy them some paper hats. Mr. Earhart obliged, but only after they promised him they would go directly to the flying field.

Later, Amelia remembered looking beyond the

fence to the airplane. She thought it was an ugly thing of rusty wire and wood. It had two wings, one above the other, and between the wings at the center a man sat with goggles over his eyes and with his feet on a crossbar. Just behind the man was a motor with a big wooden propeller. The tail looked like a large box kite. An assistant spun the propeller. The motor sputtered. Slowly the plane rolled over the ground on its small wheels; then it moved faster. All of a sudden it rose into the air.

A woman who was standing beside Amelia took her arm and said, “Look, dear. It flies!” But Amelia was more interested in the ridiculous paper hat she was wearing, which looked like an inverted peach basket and had cost fifteen cents.

5. *Over the Atlantic*

AE shook her head and looked out the small square window in the side door of the *Friendship*. She wondered what the implications were of her nine-year-old disinterest in that early airplane. Certainly now, as she had for many years, she hated hats and loved airplanes. Why the exact opposite in attraction repulsion, why the substitution in meaningful symbols, why the clean and clear-cut reversal? She did not trouble herself for the answers; she took out her log and made some quick entries:

> 140 mph. 3,600 feet. Mist and fog, white from the afternoon sun churn in the props. 4:15 P.M. It is cold in the cabin and colder outside. Bill Stultz has picked up XHY *Rexmore*, a British ship, which gives him a bearing—48 North, 39 West, 20:45 GMT. The HXY has promised to give New York the *Friendship*'s position.

Amelia knelt beside the chart table, drinking in the color from the sun splashing on the mist, fog, and clouds. Cloud peaks tinted pink from the setting sun towered in the distance; their hollows were gray and black. The mist on the arc of the props combined with the sun into three bright rainbows. The pink exhausts from the three motors matched the pink of the cloud peaks. The plane sank in the fog to 4,000 feet. They were 1,096 miles out from Trepassey.

It was night. Cloud, mist, and fog combined. Ten o'clock. Amelia tried to write in the dark by using

the thumb of her left hand as the starting point of a line. The words were uneven on the logbook but distinct:

> How marvelous is a machine and the mind that made it. I am thoroughly occidental in this worship. Bill sits up alone. Every muscle and nerve alert. Many hours to go. Marvelous also. I've driven all day and night and know what staying alert means.

Bill climbed to get over the fog and roughness. Five thousand feet. There was another mountain of fog to climb. Six thousand feet. The north star was reflected in the wing tip. Three fifteen A.M. More mountains of fog had to be scaled. Bill gave the plane all she had. Nine thousand feet. Ten thousand feet. Since Trepassey the *Friendship* had been in the air thirteen hours and fifteen minutes, despite the four-hour advance in clock time. Periodically, Slim Gordon focused a flashlight on the compass so Bill could take a reading.

Stultz had to fly his plane now completely by instruments. He decided to go down through the fog. He began slowly, then more quickly, down to 5,000 feet. Amelia's ears hurt from the rapid descent. Water streamed on the windows. The left motor started to cough, then the other two. Bill opened the throttles wide, trying to clear the cylinders.

Three thousand feet. The left motor still sputtered. Slim took over the controls, while Bill came back to try the radio. It was dead. Everlasting clouds were everywhere. It began to get lighter as the day dawned. The plane came down through an opening in the clouds. Everything in the cabin slid forward, Amelia with it. She thumped against the

forward bulkhead. That sensation again. She grinned, then smiled broadly. The story of her life could be given in forward slides. The roller coaster, the belly whopper, the Columbia dome. It seemed that she had always been coming down from altitude, after seeking the highest point of woodshed, street, or building and exulting to the thrill of quick descent.

6. *Premed at Columbia*

Amelia studied hard and long at Columbia. She had enrolled in the fall of 1919, when she was twenty-one, as a premedical student. After having been a nurses aide in Toronto during the war, she decided to try medicine as a possible profession. She took all the courses ending in "ology," and chemistry and physics; and she treated herself to a luxury course in French literature.

Marian Stabler, a close friend at the time, was amazed at the number of credit hours that AE was carrying. "This course she was taking," Miss Stabler writes, "was really a three-man job, with the full quota at Barnard, and listening courses elsewhere. Apparently Columbia and Barnard didn't compare notes, as she wouldn't have been permitted to carry a load like that if anyone had known. She could only manage it because there was little homework or preparation in the science courses."

But Amelia found time to give free rein to her exploratory nature. As she had adventured into the caves along the shores of the Missouri River below the Otis house, so now she had to investigate every nook of the underground passageways at Columbia. She would go down the steps to the basement of Hamilton Hall, enter through a heavy door, follow the maze of steam pipes wherever they led, and, happily surprised, come out at Schermerhorn Hall on the other side of the campus.

One Thursday evening at about eight o'clock in

the summer of 1920 Amelia, seeking unusual diversion on the one night off she allowed herself during the week, decided to climb to the top of the Columbia library dome. Somehow she had managed to borrow the key that would admit her up the winding stairs.

Impatient to be off, she ran up the long, wide steps in front of Low Library. She brushed past the bronze statue of Alma Mater and puffed up more steps to the library door.

Once inside, she walked past the check-out desk and around to the northwest flight of stairs. She climbed the steps to the fourth floor, and came out on one side of the rotunda. There before her on the north parapet were the more than life-size statues of Euripides, Demosthenes, Sophocles, and Augustus Caesar. She turned to the door and unlocked it.

She took the steps of the spiral staircase two at a time. She pushed open the door and entered onto the narrow walkway at the base of the dome. Gripping the railing that went around the top, she took a deep breath. The view was marvelous, but not so good as it could be at the very top. She now crawled on her hands and knees up the smooth rounded arches to the peak.

Sitting there and looking out over the city which was veiled in the half light of dusk, she felt a warm excitement spread through her body; then suddenly coupled to the warmth, as she caught sight of Alma Mater far below, a quick chill pierced the base of her spine. She grinned: this same mixture of feelings had gripped her before. She had them as a girl when she first tried the roller coaster and when she had coasted down the hill on the belly whopper and nearly hit the junkman’s horse. And in Toronto,

when she thrilled to the sight of the pilots taking off in the snow and was suddenly seized with fear. It was a question of which feeling would overcome the other.

As before, she waited for the warmth to overtake the chill; then calmly she drank in the view of New York at night as lights turned on against the enveloping darkness. To the left on Amsterdam Avenue was an angel perched against the sky on the highest point of the cathedral of St. John the Divine. Trumpet raised, the angel sounded a flourish of unheard celestial music to unhearing earthly ears below.

To the right, Broadway stretched downtown into the night as far as she could see. She swung around on the peak and looked up the Hudson to the dock at 125th Street. The ferry was on its way across to New Jersey.

The ferry made her think of Sundays when she liked to ride across the river and go for hikes along the Palisades. It was as much fun as Atchison had been. Now Atchison was all over. Grandfather and Grandmother Otis had died and the property had been sold. Amelia's father and mother were now living in California; they had been urging her to come out there so they could be together. Mr. Earhart had left the railroad and gone into private practice, first in Kansas where he was eventually raised to a judgeship, and now in Los Angeles where with a partner he had opened a law office. "Dear Parallelepipedon," her father's last letter had begun. Perhaps the big word for a solid of six sides was both a description and a prediction. In later life she looked on herself as having been successively student, nurse, teacher, social worker, clothes

designer, and ultimately flier.

She would like to see California, she mused. Columbia had been interesting, but she didn't feel that she really wanted to be a doctor, after all. She had liked the courses as such, and the lab work. And she had enjoyed feeding orange juice to the white mice and dissecting the cockroaches. But visions of the practical application of medicine, the actual dressing of wounds and the sewing of stitches, sickened her.

For a few more minutes she sat on the top of the dome and breathed deeply of the clear night air. Then she slid down to the walkway, opened the door, and clattered down the metal spiral staircase.

Back outside, she stopped at the statue of Alma Mater and for no reason climbed into her lap. That it was an irrational thing to do, she readily admitted, but she liked to do silly things once in a while. She decided to walk for a few blocks down Broadway. She turned the corner at 116th Street. Campus couples were walking arm in arm up Broadway and down the side streets to Riverside Drive. She walked in long, even strides, moving with the easy, unconscious grace of the natural athlete.

"The girl in brown who walks alone." She remembered the inscription under her picture in the high-school yearbook. She had cried over it when she had shown it to her mother; the tag line had been unkind but true.

She blinked her eyes quickly at the memory. She could not be like those other girls who clung to boys as if they were gods or something. It was worth it to be different and go it alone and do what one wanted to do.

7. *Land!*

"Going it alone," Amelia repeated the phrase to herself, alone in the passenger compartment of the *Friendship*, a lone woman, the first woman in history on a transatlantic flight. She looked up and forward to the two men flying the plane. Bill was nosing down again, and Lou was gazing intently out his side window. AE walked carefully up to the cockpit. Twenty-five hundred feet. Eight fifty A.M. Lou Gordon pointed out to the right. Two ships!

One of them was the S. S. *America*. Lou took over the controls as Bill Stultz went back to try to make radio contact with the ships; but the radio failed to operate. How could he get a position?

The *Friendship* dropped down and circled the *America*. Bill scribbled a note. Amelia attached it to an orange, put both in a paper bag, and aimed through the opened hatchway for the deck of the *America*. The combination of speed, movement of the ship, wind, and lightness of the bag made the bombing a failure. A second attempt failed.

An alternative plan was suggested: should they try to land near the ship, get a position report by voice, then try to take off again? The rough sea would make a landing difficult, a take-off impossible. Bill tried again, but in vain, to receive a message on the radio. What to do?

They decided to trust their earlier course determination, and turn back to retrace the twelve-mile detour they had made to circle the *America*.

They had to trust their own original judgment. They had only one hour of fuel left.

At this low point of desperation Lou Gordon, smiling as if there were nothing to be alarmed about, came back for a sandwich. He tore off the wrapper—another ham sandwich—and crawled back to the cockpit. Amelia liked his easy manner. She looked out: the cloud ceiling was low and the visibility limited. Bill headed the plane down to 500 feet.

Suddenly a fishing vessel came into view, then a fleet of them. The fliers happily noticed that the course of the boats paralleled the course of the *Friendship*. The gasoline tanks were emptying fast. Amelia guessed that there must be land near, but where? She scanned the horizon, hoping.

Then a nebulous blue shadow appeared through the fog. Was it another mirage of fog, a deceptive cloud formation? Slim Gordon studied the shape, then threw his sandwich out the window and screamed.

"Land!"

Bill Stultz smiled. He had brought the *Friendship* across the Atlantic. To Ireland or England, he did not know which, but he had found land.

Soon several islands appeared, then a coast line. Bill worked the plane in close and cruised along the coast, looking for a good place to bring the Fokker down. There was not much fuel left. He decided to land. Circling a factory town, he chose a stretch of water beyond it. He landed beautifully, and taxied to a buoy a short distance away.

They had been in the air for twenty fretful hours and forty exciting minutes. Now they safely rode the

waves at Burry Port, Wales, looking for a stir of recognition from the earth they had so defiantly left.

8. *A Sack of Potatoes*

Three thousand miles from home and only a half mile from the Welsh shore, the *Friendship* lay anchored to a heavy buoy, secure in the swift-moving tide. Amelia stood in the square open doorway of the fuselage, gripped the side, and looked out. She saw three men working on the railroad along the shore; she waved her hand in greeting. The men looked up, walked down the shore, cast an unbelieving glance at the big seaplane, then turned their backs and went back to work. Carmarthenshire of South Wales was unimpressed.

Time passed. The *Friendship* strained at the rope Lou Gordon had used to fasten the plane to the buoy. It started to rain. Sheets of water hit and spread over the Fokker. Pilot, copilot, and passenger stared out from the doorway, frantically waved their arms, cupped their hands, and hollered in vain. Slim crawled out again onto one of the pontoons, and screamed at the top of his lungs. Gray smoke swirled from the factory stacks of the town, his only answer.

Amelia took out a white towel from the crew's common duffel bag and waved it at the shore. A man near the railroad took off his coat, playfully waved back, put it on again, and returned to his work.

An hour went by. Finally, a boatload of policemen rowed out to the anchored plane. Other boats, full of the now curious, followed.

The chief of the policemen spoke first. "You be wantin' somethin'?" he asked.

"We've just come from America," the fliers answered.

"Have ye now?" The chief was indulgent if not credulous. "Well, we wish ye welcome, I'm sure." The policemen rowed back to shore, apparently to make arrangements for the sudden visitors.

Several hours passed before the crew could disembark from the *Friendship*. Rowboats and sailboats came out to meet the plane. The few railroad workers were now convinced that something momentous had happened; they quickly passed the word, and the curious began to gather, in hundreds, then thousands.

The rain stopped, and the three fliers were put into a boat and brought to shore. AE, kerchief and helmet off, her hair in small tightly curled locks, her face bright in a wide smile, was the center of attention. She was besieged by autograph hounds before she could get a foot out of the boat. A boatload of people drew up alongside, and someone reached out a hand and pulled both boats together. They wanted the fliers' autographs now, all kinds of people: a handsome dark-haired man in a gray homburg; a woman in a tweed coat and a cloche hat; a boy in a cap and short pants; policemen, functionaries, workers.

The public acclaim had begun. To Amelia's despair, the clamor of the crowds failed to distinguish her as a mere female passenger. She looked for Bill and Lou, the men who had done what everybody was praising her for. It was their show, not hers. Despite her smile, she felt miserable. She did not like to be taken for what she was not: she hated phony heroines. At last three policemen escorted her through the crowd into a factory

building.

The wife of the factory foreman brought tea for the three fliers. Amelia, despite the tumult outside the factory, maintained her composure and grinned. “Now I know I’m in Britain,” she said cheerfully, raising her cup and saluting the hostess. In answer to the cheering crowd outside, AE went three times to the window and waved. She was beginning to feel the need for the man who had agreed to manage the publicity.

Hilton H. Railey had crossed the Atlantic earlier by boat. He was waiting for them in Southampton, where they were supposed to land. When he heard that they had arrived safely at Burry Port, he left Southampton immediately by flying boat to join them.

Captain Railey went into action as soon as he saw his charges. Seeing that they were tired and worn from the long flight, he whisked them off to a nearby hotel and locked the doors to all well-wishers. He settled Stultz and Gordon in one room and Amelia in another.

AE sank into a deep chair, threw one trousered leg over the arm of the chair, and stretched the other leg out straight. She raised her arms high and yawned wearily.

Railey thought Amelia looked dissatisfied. “What’s the matter?” he asked. “Aren’t you excited?”

Her answer came slowly. “Excited? No.” Amelia took her leg off from the arm of the chair and sat up straight. “It was a wonderful experience, but all I did was lie on the floor of the fuselage and take pictures of the clouds. We didn’t see much of the ocean. Bill did all the flying—had to. I was just baggage,” she

said, “like a sack of potatoes.”

“What of it?” Railey replied quickly. “You’re still the first woman to fly the Atlantic, and, what’s more, the first woman pilot to do it.”

Amelia was not convinced. “Oh, well,” she said, “maybe someday I’ll try it alone.”

9. *In the Public Eye*

The next morning they flew the *Friendship* out from Burry Port to Southampton. For the first time during the trip AE sat at the controls and did some of the flying. During the letdown for landing Bill Stultz took over. In the harbor, boats of all descriptions dotted the water. There was not enough space among them to bring the plane in. A green light flashed from a launch moving farther out. Bill followed the signal and eased the *Friendship* onto the water.

In the launch Amelia looked back at the big plane. It was the last that any of them saw of the *Friendship*. The plane was sold and later it crashed on a flight to South America.

Among the welcomers at Southampton was Mrs. Frederick E. Guest, the sponsor of the flight, and the woman whom AE had replaced as passenger. It was the first meeting for the two. Mrs. Guest took Amelia by one arm, Hilton Railey took her by the other. Sponsor and manager would see the young woman flier through acclaim she could not believe existed in a country famous for its restraint.

The lady mayor of Southampton, Mrs. Foster Welch, greeted her enthusiastically. “Well, now,” said the mayor, the long gold chain of office about her neck, “I’m going out to the States myself next year, and it gives me pleasure to see you here, for when I get out there I’ll feel that at least I know someone!”

Amelia was delighted, and smiled broadly at the footman who attended the mayor and whose mien was so serious behind a long waxed mustache.

From the tumult that was Southampton Amelia was taken to London by Hubert Scott Pain, director of Imperial Airways. They rode in his Rolls-Royce, which was the same color as her “yellow peril” back in Boston. Amelia was still wearing her heavy flying suit, her only wardrobe, and one brightly colored scarf. Her other scarf had been snatched by an eager souvenir hunter. As they drove along they were met on the road by people returning home from the Ascot races; the racing fans, having heard about the flight, waved at the famed woman flier. AE smiled and raised her hand. She was anxious to get to London and out of her flying clothes. Having but a toothbrush and comb, she looked forward to a whole new outfit.

Rolling into Winchester, the Rolls passed the cathedral. Amelia asked if they might stop. She wanted to see the famed resting place of Canute, the shrine of William of Wykeham who built Windsor Castle, and the place where Alfred the Great was crowned and buried. She might not come by this way again, she explained.

AE went inside. The stillness of the cathedral came over her like a cloak. Here the followers of William the Conqueror had built a monument in thankfulness to God. Amelia walked silently through the church, stopping occasionally to admire the interior. She loved the skill and zeal, but not the faith, that marked this marble prayer of arches, like hands joined and raised.

She planned to stay in London for only a short time, but she remained for two weeks. With Hilton

Railey as her escort, she was caught up in a succession of teas, parties, exhibitions, testimonials, and visits. She met hundreds of people, all of them full of compliments for what she had done. As in Wales, she felt embarrassed: it was Stultz and Gordon who deserved the praise, not she.

Captain Railey was proud of his charge. At every occasion she was gracious, charming, modest. He never agreed with Amelia when after a compliment from him she insisted that she was plain and unattractive. For whenever he escorted her from Mrs. Guest's Park Lane home she was quietly triumphant, tall and lovely in a straight-lined, long-waisted black dress, with matching coat and cloche hat, gloves, and pointed silver-buckled shoes.

One of the high points of the London visit was the meeting with Lady Astor. Amelia found her American-born hostess both "gracious and brilliant." Lady Astor was not particularly impressed by Amelia's transatlantic flight. "I'm not interested in you a bit because you crossed the Atlantic by air," she said frankly. "I want to hear about your settlement work."

AE was pleased to find someone who treated her as other than the false celebrity she considered herself to be. She spent the rest of the day with Lady Astor discussing Denison House in Boston and its model in London, Toynbee Hall.

Inevitably, like all visitors to London, Amelia watched the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace; then, later, she saw a Tattoo at Aldershot, where RAF fliers performed in the air while the soldiers went through their maneuvers on the ground. Amelia wished she were in one of the planes,

with the men in the sky. At a flying exhibition she would much rather be a performer than a spectator.

During an interview with newspaper reporters, AE was asked: “Should you like to meet the Prince of Wales?”

Before Amelia could say a word, an American official answered for her: “That depends on His Highness’ wishes.”

The published account of the interview made AE laugh for many years to come. “Wal, I sure am glad to be here,” she was quoted as saying, “and gosh, I sure hope I’ll meet the Prince of Wales.” If there were a reason for not having met the prince, Amelia chuckled, it was the implied nasal twang in that newspaper story.

At a luncheon given in her honor by the Air League of the British Empire, AE met Lady Mary Heath, the famous woman aviator who had flown from Cape Town, Africa, to London. Lady Heath made the flight in a small light plane called an Avian.

Amelia decided she would like to have a plane like it. One early morning she stole from Mrs. Guest’s home and took a taxi out to Croydon Airport. She had made a date to go up with an English pilot in Lady Heath’s little two-seater Avian. While they were in the air, Amelia made up her mind. She would make Lady Heath an offer.

A few days later, when they sailed home on the *Roosevelt*, the little plane was lashed to the deck. The boat trip across the Atlantic was a wonderful opportunity to relax. The skipper, Captain Harry Manning, realizing the strain Amelia had been subject to, set aside a deck for her exclusive use.

“Can’t you take us to South America instead of New York?” she asked him one day. She did not look forward to more receptions. Often AE went into the chartroom and discussed navigation with Captain Manning. One day, they decided, they would make a long flight together.

During the voyage Wilmer Stultz behaved erratically. Although the flight was accomplished through his skill as a pilot, and he was $20,000 richer because of it, he nevertheless sank into deep melancholy. To deaden the long days of the ocean trip, he had brought a case of brandy with him aboard the ship. With the liquor he found what he craved: an escape from mundane realities; in neat water tumblerfuls he finished off one bottle after another.

One afternoon a friend entered Stultz’s cabin. The flier was naked. In his right hand he held a full glass of brandy; with his left hand he gripped the rim of the water basin. He stared dolefully at his face in the mirror. Suddenly the ship lurched. Stultz slipped from the basin, swung across the room, and crashed into the portside bulkhead. He lay sprawled and unconscious on the floor, the water glass broken in a dark splash of brandy.

Later that day, when he recovered, Wilmer Stultz found his way on deck. “Drunkenness,” he said to anyone who cared to listen, “is the only true form of happiness.”

Amelia, Hilton Railey, and the others were stunned by the little, gentle, modest pilot who from drink could turn into a complete stranger.

Perhaps Bill Stultz knew that he had been marked by the gods; for within the year, on July 1,

1929, he was killed in an airplane crash one quarter of a mile short of the runway at Roosevelt Field, New York.

AE walked the lonely upper deck and fussed with her thoughts. She stopped at the railing and looked down at Lady Heath's Avian tied down on the fantail of the ship. Up the metal ladder from the deck below came the clatter of feet. It was her good friend and manager Captain Railey.

"Hilton," she said to him, "I dread all the things coming up—the business I suspect GP has been promoting in New York in my behalf." She paused. "I'm not the type."

Railey smiled half-seriously. "Ticker tape, receptions, dinners," he said. "At least that."

"You don't have to tell me what's in store for me," she answered. "I know." Her forehead wrinkled; she continued: "But why? All I contributed to the *Friendship* flight—apart from the fact that accidentally I happen to be the first woman to fly across, or rather to be flown across, the North Atlantic—was to lie on the floor of the fuselage like a sack of potatoes and admire the lovely clouds we were flying over. That's all I did, Hilton."

Captain Railey did not interrupt Amelia, now fierce in working out her own thoughts. He watched her long fingers grip the railing and turn white as they tightly turned back and forth around the wood.

Amelia looked out over the waves; then she swung around quickly. "But someday," she said strongly, "I will have to do it alone, if only to vindicate myself. I'm a false heroine now, and that makes me feel very guilty. Someday I will redeem my self-respect. I can't live without it."

Hilton Railey understood. She did not want to be the symbol of something she was not. Now she would have to spend the next few years becoming what she was already in the eyes of the press and the public—a woman flier who deserved the acclaim she had received.

Amelia looked again at the Avro Avian below. The fuselage was covered with medals and mementoes to which was added: “To Amelia Earhart from Mary Heath. Always think with your stick forward.”

She had bent her thoughts forward and they had carried her to a resolute conclusion: she had to become a recognized flier in her own right.

PART TWO

THE WORLD OF FLIGHT

1. *Wealth and Independence*

THE ACCIDENT of sex made Amelia Earhart front-page news. After her arrival in New York, she received thousands of letters, telegrams, and invitations. They grew in piles about her feet. Some of the letters hailed her as a “gallant pioneer”; others called her a “foolhardy nitwit.” Those that began, “The presence of your company” had to be accepted or refused.

Thirty-two cities asked the three fliers to visit them. Overnight Amelia became the native daughter of Boston, Kansas City, Chicago, Des Moines, Los Angeles, but she still claimed the place where she was born, Atchison, Kansas, as her native city. Taking the advice of Hilton Railey, GP, and others, the heroes of the hour decided to accept the invitations of New York, Boston, and Chicago.

The receptions were wild, frantic, tumultuous. The American people gave the fliers the same thunderous acclaim they had given Charles Lindbergh one year before. The two men and their woman passenger were showered with ticker tape and torn telephone books, and they were given the keys to each city in turn.

The festivities over, Amelia sought to retire into peaceful seclusion, but she soon realized that she had become, undeniably and perhaps irrevocably, a public figure. Opportunities were offered to her which could not be ignored. G. P. Putnam presented

her with a contract to publish her account of the historic flight, manufacturers wanted her to endorse their products, and an offer for the syndicated rights to her story promised her $10,000. Amelia quietly made her decisions, and within a few months she had earned more than $50,000.

Never had she even dreamed of making so much money. She was now financially independent, and this new freedom meant that she could act and do exactly as she pleased. Yet the new wealth plagued Amelia's conscience. If, as she painfully realized, she did not deserve the fame for having crossed the Atlantic, how could she accept the fortune that came with it?

New feelings of guilt compounded with the old. She would have to regain her self-respect by someday flying solo across the Atlantic, or die in the attempt. She could not live with the nickname "Lady Lindy" for simply having been a passenger; she, too, would have to be a "lone eagle."

For the writing of her book Amelia accepted the hospitality of George Palmer Putnam and his wife at their home in Rye, New York. There, with the solicitous guidance of her publisher, AE studied her log of the flight and her many notes; then, slowly and carefully, she began to join one word to another. The job of writing, she discovered, took much longer than she had planned, much longer than the actual time of the flight, which was twenty hours and forty minutes. She dedicated the book, aptly called *20 Hrs., 40 Min.*, to her hostess, Dorothy Binney Putnam.

Amelia had often been warned about GP; mutual friends had told her that he would not hesitate to divorce his wife if he thought AE would capitulate to

his charms. But in 1928 Amelia did not seem particularly interested in any man, although she had become the center of a triangle of men that included GP, Hilton Railey, and Samuel Chapman.

Samuel Chapman, according to some sources, was supposed to have been her fiancé, even at the time of the *Friendship* flight; yet such a commitment was denied by her, most emphatically, when she was approached on the subject by a reporter in Boston. “No,” she said to him, “I am not going to announce my engagement. I have seen Samuel Chapman since I have been here, but I have seen a great many other people also.” GP, who had been acting as a buffer between AE and the press, clearly indicated that the subject was closed.

Pressed further about plans to get married at any time, Amelia announced: “You never can tell what I will do. If I was sure of the man, I might get married tomorrow. I am very sudden, you know, and make up my mind in a second.”

Despite this comment, many years before AE had decided that marriage for her would never be an escape. Even in her teens she had observed that too many girls used it for a storm cellar, that, afraid to meet life head on, they ran from their first real problems to hide behind a husband.

Amelia had assumed an attitude of almost imperial independence; about men and a possible husband she was never sudden. It was not until three years later, and then with considerable reluctance, that she became Mrs. George Palmer Putnam. She had learned to go it alone, without any reliance upon any man. She had become, in spite of appearances to the contrary, a “loner.”

Hilton Railey, her discoverer and manager, had developed a deep and abiding affection for Amelia, and in spite of tentative signs of encouragement from her when they were in England and returning home on the *President Roosevelt*, he was still deeply in love with his first wife and had every intention of remaining that way. Over the years that followed, there continued between them a strong friendship, and it was Railey who was the first to speak seriously to Amelia about GP.

It was just before he discontinued his connection with her as her unpaid manager. During Amelia's welcome in the harbor of New York, Commander Byrd had asked Railey for his help in financing the forthcoming expedition to the Antarctic as soon as he could break away from the *Friendship* celebrations. A few days later, in Amelia's hotel room in New York, Captain Railey jotted down on a piece of paper the one word "brushfire," and gave it to AE. He told her to consider it as a code word and to use it whenever she needed help in warding off George Palmer Putnam. Amelia grinned, took the paper, folded it, and put it in her purse. She never found the need to use it.

While she had been writing *20 Hrs., 40 Min.*, AE was approached for many new endorsements. The one she remembered and talked about the most, because it was the funniest, was the offer to sponsor canned rabbit; the "stunt" was to have *her* picture on the can. A promotion which she did agree to, however, was one to help finance Commander Byrd's next expedition. Although she was a non-smoker, Amelia signed a statement for a cigarette advertisement.

For her endorsement she received $1,500, which

she immediately gave to Byrd. It was a gesture of good will that Commander Byrd deeply appreciated; later he presented her with copy number two of the limited edition of his book, *Skyward*.

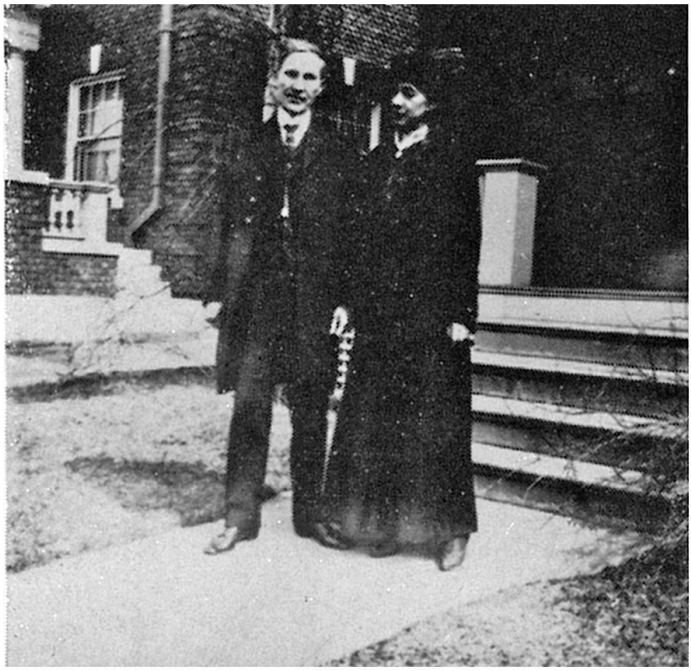
While Amelia was correcting proofs of her book, Lady Heath's Avro Avian was finally delivered. AE kept the plane at the nearby polo field of the Westchester Biltmore Country Club in Rye. She was eager to test it out. Hastily she finished making her corrections and gave the proofs to GP.

The Avian was everything she wanted in a plane. It was small, light, maneuverable, and fast; it reminded her of her first airplane, the yellow Kinner Canary which she had owned in California, except that the Avian had two open cockpits in tandem. Amelia walked across the soft, firm grass to where the plane was parked. She lowered the panel from the left side of the rear cockpit, and holding her plain black dress against her legs, she climbed in. She buckled a white helmet under her chin and adjusted the goggles at her forehead.

She started the engine and watched for the instruments to respond while it idled, carefully checking the oil and fuel temperature and pressure and engine revolutions per minute—rpm's. She fingered the strands of pearls about her neck and waited for the engine to warm up.



Amelia Earhart (*Courtesy of the Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences, New York*).



AE’s parents.



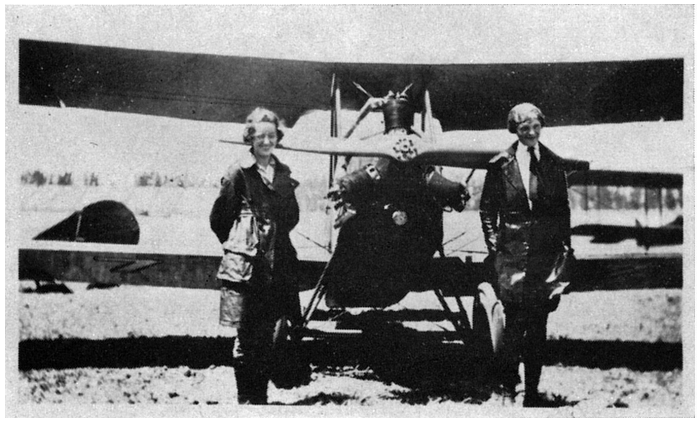
AE, the fledgling flier.



AE's birthplace.



AE after her first solo flight in an autogiro.



Learning to fly. AE (*right*) and her first instructor, Neta Snook.



AE and Lady Heath's Avro Avian.



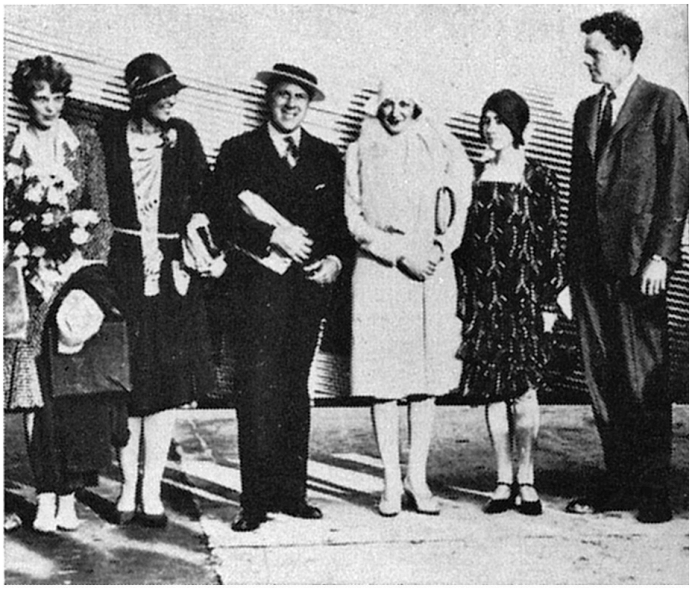
AE at Southampton. The *Friendship* is in the background.



AE, suddenly famous, signs her autograph at Burry Port, Wales.



AE after her transatlantic solo, 1932.

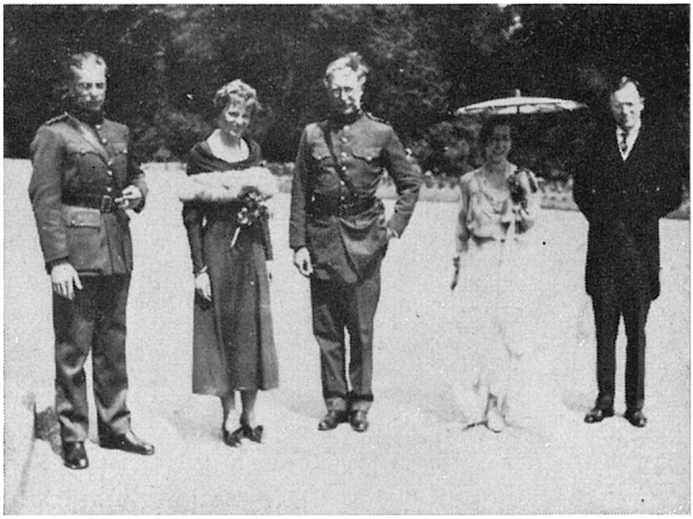


AE and the Lindberghs.

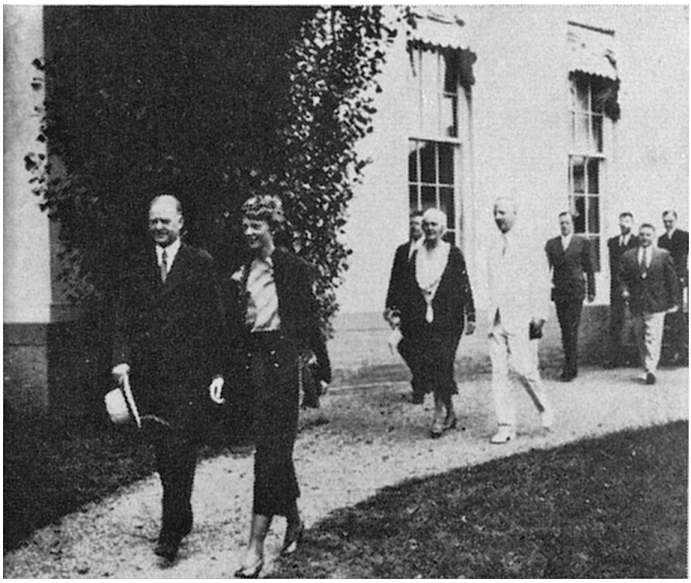


Famous Fliers, 1928: (*standing, left to right*) Eielson, Wilkins, Chamberlin, Balchen, (*seated*) Stultz,

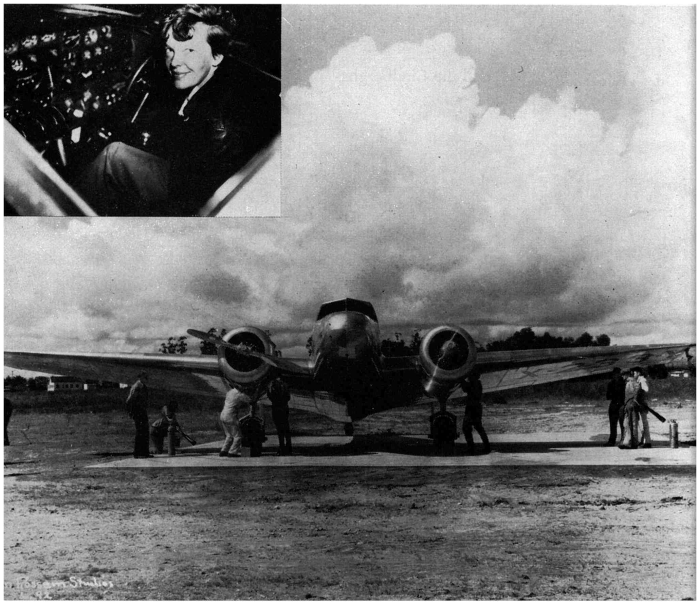
Earhart, Gordon.



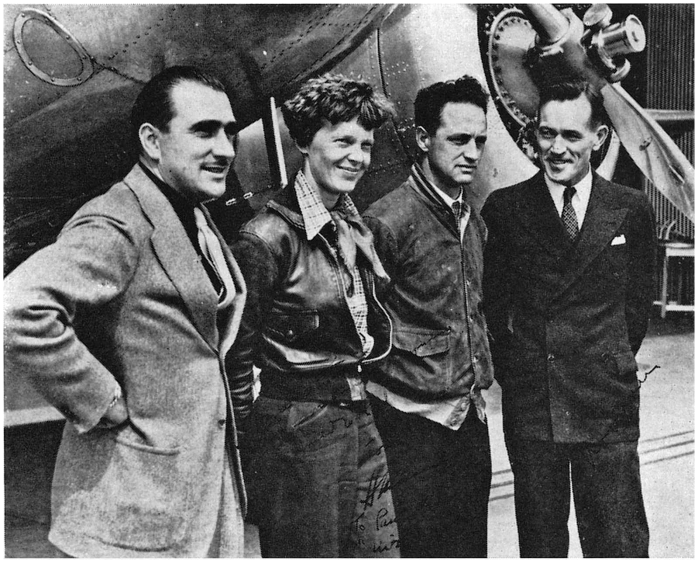
AE and GP and the King and Queen of Belgium.



AE and President Hoover, after he awarded her the National Geographic Medal, 1932.



The Lockheed Electra, AE in the cockpit.



Paul Mantz, AE, Harry Manning, and Fred Noonan before taking off for Honolulu from San Francisco,

March 7, 1937, in the Lockheed Electra. (*Courtesy The Smithsonian Institution*)



Fragment of wood about 23 inches long, possibly associated with AE's last flight, 1937, found by Robert D. Weishaupt at Baranof Island, Alaska, in 1942. (*Courtesy The Smithsonian Institution*)



Josephine Blanco Akiyama, who affirms she saw AE on Saipan in 1937.



AE and Fred Noonan at Calcutta on the last flight.

AE curled her long, tapering fingers about the stick and worked the ailerons and the elevator. She taxied down to the edge of the field, carefully easing on and off first the left then the right brake as she zigzagged across the close-cropped grass. She turned into the wind, held both brakes hard, pulled the stick

all the way back into her middle, then revved up the motor to check out the magnetoes. She reached up and turned the switch: the rpm's dropped within the minimum for first the left then the right, and finally held for both magnetoes. Amelia smiled in satisfaction.

With her left hand she slowly advanced the throttle. The prop blasted back hard and loud. Faster and faster the plane moved down the turf, and she eased the throttle ahead as far as it would go. She held the stick forward, bringing up the tail, then forced the plane to stay on the ground until it fought to get into the air. She pulled back on the stick. The plane clattered noisily off the ground. Amelia grinned. This little craft soared into the air quicker than the sandpiper she had owned in California.

Clearing the way ahead, she made climbing turns to gain altitude. At 10,000 feet she looked down, then out to the left and right and to the back and front. The sky was clear for acrobatics.

Stalls, spins, loops, rolls, Immelmanns: she skillfully commanded the plane through each maneuver. She slipped and climbed and dived swinging and dancing the Avian along the reaches of the sunlit sky. The plane handled perfectly. After an hour of skylarking over the polo field she felt that she and the plane were ready for a long flight, one perhaps to California and the National Air Races.

Amelia knew that she needed much more experience in the air before she could consider herself a qualified pilot. The cross-country trip, she finally decided, should season her for all kinds of flying—over large cities, plains, and mountains. Although she had never made such a flight before, her preparations, considering the distances involved,

were happy-go-lucky and without design. She bought navigation maps and made her flight plan: she would fly over railroads, rivers, and big cities whenever possible; once she arrived in the Far West and the Rockies, she would then determine what to do. Summarily she announced her plans to the Putnams, thanked them for their hospitality, and was off.

2. *Vagabond of the Air*

Once in the air and on her way 3,000 miles to the west, she surveyed the land below. It was a quilted patchwork of green and brown, and woven through it, now the thick and now the thin threads of light and dark rivers and tributaries. Even the mighty Hudson and the Palisades had seemed from 8,000 feet but the thickest thread and the deepest brown.

This was release from little things. Flat-topped beetled automobiles, toy houses, clustered beads of cities: such was the Lilliputian world of men. Cruising along over New York and New Jersey into Pennsylvania, she knew that she would have to do right by the little Avian. Lady Heath had flown it back and forth between London and Cape Town for a record 12,000 miles; now AE would have to add to that record some 6,000 miles of the United States.

She spread her map across her knees and noted the penciled circle in western Pennsylvania that marked Rogers Field in Pittsburgh, her first stop. She began her letdown from cruising altitude. The airport, she observed, had a grass runway.

Amelia dropped down for a closer look. She dragged the field, hoping to spot rocks, or holes, or ditches. The way seemed clear. She tipped up one wing in a tight turn and came around for a landing. She reduced throttle and glided in to what looked like the best part of the field. The plane started to settle; AE chopped the throttle, pulling back hard on the stick. At that moment the landing gear hit a

shallow ditch hidden in the grass. The Avian swung up and over, the propeller cracked and splintered, the tail thumped to the ground. Amelia hung upside down on the safety belt. Calmly she felt along the instrument panel and cut the switch. She was unhurt.

The headlines in the morning papers, however, told a different story: “AMELIA EARHART NEAR DEATH IN CRASH.” AE read the front page, was irritated and mad. The accident of sex again. If the pilot had been a man, nothing would have been said about it, especially if he had walked away from his plane unharmed. Amelia folded the paper and slapped it against her leg. Why couldn’t they leave her alone? All this emotionalism about women fliers, as if a female neck were more important than a male neck.

Amelia went to the phone and called New York. Another plane, twin sister to the Avian, would be ferried in, so that parts from it could be used to repair her plane. The following day four mechanics worked around the clock for a day and a half until the Avian was repaired.

Dayton, Terre Haute, St. Louis, Muskogee followed in uneventful succession. Then came the towns that were small and displayed no signs on barns or roofs to tell her where she was. Not recognizing any of the landmarks and flying by at 100 miles an hour, AE noted that one small town seemed like any other. She checked her map, then scrutinized the terrain under her wing. It was no use. Each town was just another checkerboard of streets and roofs, trees and fields, railroads and highways. Frankly, she admitted to herself, she did not know where she was.

Her confusion mounted as she flew west, but at

last she found an airport which, she was happy to discover, was in Fort Worth. She now decided to stay on course. Once off the ground, however, the light plane hit bumpy weather. It lurched and climbed and dived; and to Amelia's constant annoyance, her map kept slipping from her lap. Flying the plane with one hand, she found with the other a safety pin in her handbag. She picked the map up from the floor and clumsily pinned it to her dress.

AE fought her plane through the updrafts and downdrafts. She scanned the instrument panel, then noticed that the gas-gauge needle was leaning toward empty. She reached up to pump fuel from the reserve tank to the gravity tank. During the refueling the pin loosened from her dress, a gust of wind swept into the cockpit, and the map started to blow against the side of the fuselage. Amelia let go of the stick and grabbed for the map. The plane angled into a sharp dive. Quickly taking the stick again, she pulled back too hard; the Avian went into a steep climb. The map, flapping against and over the side, whipped out of the cockpit. Amelia grumbled. Now she could not possibly determine where she was. She held her last known course, south of west, and kept on flying. She hoped that something would turn up.

Finally, to the north, she noticed a highway. It was busy with cars crawling into the slanting sun. Amelia turned the plane and followed the road, her only guide across the state; when it ended, abruptly and with disheartening finality, she was completely without bearings. The sun sank behind the mountains in the west, leaving a swath of purple haze along the length of the horizon. It began to get dark too fast for her to establish any orientation with the ground. Amelia decided that she would have to

find a place to land—soon.

Ahead in the dusk she noticed some houses grouped about a solitary oil derrick. She hoped that they would yield to a small town nearby. She throttled back and eased the plane down into a shallow dive, then circled low, looking for possible places to land. There were none, and her heart sank as she thought of running out of fuel and having to make a forced landing. Then, flying over the town, her spirits revived as she considered an alternative, at once brilliant and desperate. The main street, which was blessedly empty of traffic, was long enough and wide enough to accommodate her plane. With decision born of necessity, she swung the Avian into a low, wide turn and came around, nose down, over the trees that marked the end of Main Street. Because of the high altitude of the land, the plane came in fast, but Amelia dropped the tail smartly, held the nose up straight, and stalled expertly onto the dirt road. A grin creased wide across her face as she rolled through the center of the town. She was, she soon discovered, in Hobbs, New Mexico.

The people of the town turned out in force to see who the sudden and unconventional visitor was. They were not only surprised to see a plane parked in the middle of Main Street, but aghast to find a woman seated at the controls. And when the woman flier took off her helmet and goggles, they were shocked at her appearance. The sun had burned a red outline on her face, and when Amelia looked out to greet her welcoming committee, she looked exactly like a wide-eyed owl.

Amelia climbed out of the plane and asked some of the men to help her fold the wings and park the Avian off to the side of the street. Then, as if in

ironic commentary on the way she looked, she walked to the Owl Café for something to eat. She made a dinner of breakfast—fried eggs, bread and butter, and milk.

After a night of cool and refreshing sleep in the high altitude, Amelia rose early the next morning in the hope of getting off at dawn. Again she planned to negotiate reliable Main Street. Down she rolled over the dirt road for the take-off. Then the left tire blew out. AE chopped the throttle and cut the switch. She shook her head, then grinned. It seemed that her troubles would never stop. The nosing over in Pittsburgh, the loss of the map, the emergency landing in town, and now a flat tire. She laughed at her new predicament.

While the tire was being patched, Amelia went back to the Owl Café and had the same breakfast of the night before. When she climbed back into the cockpit, she felt that the repaired tire was getting soft. The men who had done the job assured her that she was in error. Convinced but still suspicious, she took off once more down the street and happily into the air.

She had been told in Hobbs that if she flew to the southeast, she would find in about a hundred miles either a river to the right or a railroad with a highway to the left. Or was it a railroad to the left and a highway to the right? Which one, they had carefully explained to her in town, depended on whether she was more west than east or more east than west. As it had often happened when she became lost in her car and had asked for the way to a certain highway or town, she didn’t pay close attention to the directions. Now she wasn’t sure which was which and what was what. She looked

down for guidance from the rivers that coursed through the land, but they snaked such a confusion of meanderings that she did not know which one to follow.

Late that morning she found a railroad that led her back to Texas and into Pecos. Remembering that she might have one bad tire, she circled to land. She set the Avian down gingerly. The left wheel plopped and wobbled; the tire was flat! Fortunately the plane was light and rolled clumsily, but safely, to a stop. Amelia sat in the cockpit, looking enigmatically straight ahead. Someone asked her if there was anything wrong. She looked up and smiled, then shook her head. How could she tell anyone that she had been trying to understand an inscrutable fate?

While the tire was again repaired, Amelia had lunch with the Rotary Club. That afternoon she started for El Paso, her original destination of the day before.

Tire trouble now became engine trouble. At 4,000 feet the motor coughed, then sputtered, and finally stopped. In quick reflex action, Amelia jammed the stick forward and brought the plane into gliding turns. She looked for a place to make a forced landing. Noticing a small clearing among mesquite bushes and salt hills, she nosed the plane in and landed.

She now wondered if she weren't having a contest of wills with some higher power who was trying to keep her earth-bound, or if she weren't being tested to see if she had yet the skill and courage to meet and overcome any danger for the privilege of continuing to fly. She liked the second possibility better. She much preferred a challenge, for the joy that lay on the other side of conquest was

far superior to any she had ever known.

Fortunately, AE had landed near a road. Cars began to gather almost at once; men and women came running to the scene of her emergency landing. The men, Amelia felt, she could handle in such a situation; but the women, with their shaking heads and fluttering moments of undue concern, she dreaded.

The plane had to be towed back to Pecos, where new engine parts could be ordered from El Paso. Slowly, at a mere ten miles an hour, the Avro retraced its course, cruelly on the ground, back to the Texas city of its morning take-off. It was late and dark that night before the plane was parked behind a garage, there to await repairs.

It took three days before the parts could come the 187 miles from El Paso and before the engine trouble could be located and repaired. Amelia was impatient to be off across the mountains to the West Coast. Thankfully she arrived in Los Angeles in time to see the start of the National Air Races and to visit friends she had not seen since her early days of learning to fly in California.

On the way home across Utah, she again had to make a dead-stick landing because of engine failure. She landed in a plowed field, and again nosed over and escaped unhurt. As in Pittsburgh, as in New Mexico and Texas, she rose to fly anew, like the phoenix from its ashes. With skill and courage she had once more conquered her adversary, the challenge.

The challenge, she had often reflected upon her luck in flying, had been with her from the very beginning, and she had always, sometimes through

the workings of a mysterious fate, won out.

3. *The Kinner Canary*

In 1922, when she was twenty-four years old and the owner of her first plane, a yellow Kinner Canary, she had tried for her first record. She decided that the ceiling of the Kinner should be tested, and asked an official from the California Aero Club to seal the plane's barograph—a revolving cylinder for recording altitude. The little three-cylinder Lawrence engine took the plane to 14,000 feet, and a new altitude record before the 60-horse-power quit. The fault, AE learned when she landed, had not been with the motor but with the spark control lever. It had become disconnected during the test run.

Undismayed, Amelia tried again for a higher altitude a few days later. She hoped this time that everything would work smoothly. The Canary climbed quickly and easily to 10,000 feet, but ran into a layer of thick clouds. At 11,000 feet she hit a driving wall of sleet, and at 12,000 feet she looked into a blinding blanket of fog.

AE now did a very stupid thing, she later confessed, one that should have cost her her life. It was a miracle that she survived the experience. Rattled because she could not tell her position without instruments and because she had no outside landmarks for check points, she did the first thing that came into her mind: she pulled the stick back and kicked the plane into a spin. She spun, down and around, winding the Kinner through the overcast until she broke out of it at 3,000 feet. Seeing the

ground at last, Amelia straightened out of the spin and pulled the plane out of its headlong dive.

After she landed, she nonchalantly climbed out of her plane and started to walk away. She snapped off her helmet and shook her close-cropped head. From the edge of the tarmac one of the old-time pilots rushed over to her. He cussed her out roundly.

“Suppose there had been fog all the way to the ground?” he shouted at her, flailing his arms. “You would have screwed yourself into the ground.”

“I guess I would have,” Amelia said, refusing to be alarmed. She held her head high, turned, and walked cockily away from any further discussion about the incident. She had set a new record of 14,000 feet a few days before, and that was good enough for her.

Luck had been with her before in other accidents, the kind she liked to call the “blowout” variety in flying. Once in her early instruction with Neta Snook, her first instructor, the motor of the Canuck cut out shortly after take-off. Neta nosed the plane down for an emergency landing and glided into a nearby cabbage patch. For Amelia the crisis had produced a slow passage of time, time enough for her to reach over and calmly cut the switch before the plane hit the ground. The propeller and landing gear were smashed, but the women fliers walked away from the crash unharmed.

Another time, on a solo flight, she had to make an unexpected landing in a field drenched with rain. The wheels had stuck in the mud, and the plane up ended and nosed over. Unhurt, Amelia hung upside down from the safety belt.

In yet another emergency landing she had hit

dried weeds more than six feet high. The plane flipped over so suddenly and with such force that Amelia broke away from the safety belt and went flying out of the cockpit. Again she had walked away from her aircraft without a scratch.

4. *Aviation Editor*

By the autumn of 1928, after Amelia had returned to New York and concluded her first cross-country flight, she had survived seven crack-ups in as many years of flying. But she looked back upon the solo trip with great satisfaction: it was the first time a woman had made a transcontinental flight, alone, east to west, and west to east.

The press had closely followed her adventures across the country and when she was resettled in New York, she was flooded with business offers of all kinds, many of them having nothing to do with aviation. Simply because she was a news figure, she had the opportunity to join many advertising agencies and to take part in other enterprises for which she had no qualifications.

She had at least two offers to write for the magazines: one was from *McCall's*; the other from *Cosmopolitan*. Because AE had endorsed a cigarette advertisement, *McCall's* reluctantly withdrew its contract; the magazine did not at that time carry any advertising for cigarettes, and apparently did not approve of women smoking. Ray Long, president and editor of Hearst's *Cosmopolitan*, wanted Amelia to join his staff as aviation editor. Amelia did not deliberate for very long. Realizing the opportunity she would have to reach many readers because of the enormous circulation of the magazine and the rare chance she was getting to write every month about what she knew and liked best, she accepted. She had

now established herself permanently with her one great love—aviation.

Working for *Cosmopolitan*, Amelia divided her time equally between writing articles and answering letters. Letters poured in from everywhere and from everyone. Men, women, boys, girls; teachers, mechanics, laborers; inventor, realtor, office boy: all had questions and problems they wanted answered and solved. Some said:

"Do you know the name of a good school of aviation?"

"Why is the monoplane faster than the biplane?"

"I have quarreled with my boy friend and have decided to take up aviation. Please tell me how."

"Do you know Colonel Lindbergh?"

"I want to fly, but my mother won't let me."

Many of the letters AE answered in the magazine. She cautioned the young girl who had quarreled with her boy friend and advised her against taking up flying: no one should take up flying with what appeared to be thoughts of suicide! She cajoled a youngster and told him to bide his time; the day would come when he could start flying lessons without parental approval. Yes, she did know Colonel Lindbergh and his wife, but she had not yet had the opportunity to know them well.

AE enjoyed the queries from her readers, but one complaint from the younger ones made her chafe with irritation: restraining parents. "Why not *now*?" she would say to the mother who refused to let her daughter fly until she was sixteen, and she continued to ask it of any parent who had established an

arbitrary age somewhere in the future.

She began the *Cosmopolitan* articles with the November, 1928, issue. They continued somewhat erratically until one year later. Amelia sat at her typewriter and pounded out her thoughts and feelings about flying. Her own sex was often her target for the month: “Try Flying Yourself,” “Here Is How Fannie Hurst Could Learn to Fly,” “Is It Safe for You to Fly?” “Shall You Let Your Daughter Fly?” “Why Are Women Afraid to Fly?”

In the same issues other counterpointing writers sounded their convictions: “I Don’t Want to Be a Mother,” “I Wish I Were a Man,” “Could You be a Platonic Friend?” “Clinging Vine? Ha!” “I Have My Rights, Too.”

This was only part of the exciting 1920’s in America. The postwar period of the disillusioned lost generation, the new place of women in society, the Freudian explanations for behavior, prohibition, the automobile, the worship of speed, the idolization of heroes: out of such an era Amelia Earhart came and conquered.

“I Want You to Meet a Real American Girl,” wrote O. O. McIntyre in an enthusiastic introduction of AE to his *Cosmopolitan* readers. In a day when young women went from “gin-guzzling to calculated harlotry, here,” he said, was a “wistful slip of a girl” who would be a “highly moral reaction from the inflamed tendencies and appetites which have aroused so much alarm. Amelia,” he concluded, “has become a symbol of a new womanhood—a symbol, I predict, that will be emulously patterned after by thousands of young girls in their quest for the Ideal.”

Every woman’s goal at the time was the slender,

boyish figure, the flattened breasts, the close-cropped boyish bob, the long, youthful waist. In Amelia every woman found her image, cleanly liberated in the speed of solo record-breaking flight. Here was a woman who could satisfy in an acceptable way the cravings of any woman blocked at home, of any housewife chained to a husband, home, and children.

She was a product of her times and a reaction to them, too caught up in them to realize they were driving her to impossible achievement. For the present, however, she was having a gloriously good time doing what she wanted to do for “the fun of it.” And what she was doing was well within her capabilities.

In the spring of 1929 Amelia sold the little Avro Avian and purchased a used Lockheed Vega—a high-wing monoplane with Whirlwind engine. She itched to test it out. California beckoned again, not for a visit this time, but for the chance to enter a race.

5. *The First Women's Air Derby*

In August the first Women's Air Derby was held. Amelia left New York and joined the field of nineteen planes in Santa Monica. This was the kind of competition she liked. A women's transcontinental air race had never been held before. It was something brand-new for fliers, judges, committees, those in charge of every point.

Early on the morning of the eighteenth, AE rolled her Vega onto the field and turned into a double row of planes. To her left and right the planes gleamed under a clear California sky. The lighter planes, six of them, took their positions in front of her. Amelia counted: hers was one of thirteen heavier planes lined up in the rear rank.

The starter dropped his flag. At one-minute intervals the planes roared into take-off. Part of the National Air Races, the women's event would terminate eight days later at Cleveland, Ohio. Certain stops had to be made each day, and no one could fly at night.

As Amelia had done, women from all over the country flocked to take part. Wealthy women, sportswomen, businesswomen, wives, mothers; all were young; many of them pretty. Some came with old planes, others with new; some flew stock planes, others racers. All carried a few canned goods, enough food for three days in case of a forced landing in the desert.

From Santa Monica the women headed for the first stop at San Bernardino. All made it, Amelia learned, except one. Mary Elizabeth von Mack, flying one of the heavier planes, had found the landing field overcrowded and turned back to land at Montbello.

The next day, according to plan, the last woman in from the day before was the first off the ground. This prevented any lagging behind. One by one the women fliers headed toward the San Bernardino Mountains.

Following in turn, AE slipped through Cajon Pass and headed across the desert to Yuma, Arizona. Coming into the Yuma airport, Amelia crashed into a sandbank and damaged a propeller. She escaped unhurt. The other women, seeing what had happened to AE's Vega, voted to stay three hours instead of an hour and a half, until the propeller was fixed.

Amelia loved this kind of sportsmanship. It saved time for her, she reflected, because her flying time was supposed to be counted from the starting time, regardless of repair time. Off they flew to Phoenix, where they would stay for the night.

For all the women the event promised adventure, for many danger, for a few disaster. Claire Fahy, of Los Angeles, withdrew because someone had been tampering with her motor. Marvel Crosson, from San Diego and holder of the women's altitude record, was the only fatality. She was killed when she jumped from her disabled plane and her parachute failed to open.

One of them, her plane out of gas, went down in the sagebrush and cactus of the desert; another

turned back because of engine trouble; one had to wait for a damaged landing gear to be repaired; another had wrestled with a whirlwind. Amelia, less fortunate than most because of the broken propeller, nevertheless thanked her luck that she had survived yet another crash, her seventh since she first started flying.

The days clicked by. The third day they remained overnight in Douglas, Arizona; the fourth, in El Paso, Texas. Everywhere they landed, the women, worn out with weariness, would find hundreds of autograph hunters and souvenir seekers waiting for them. The crowds thronged to Amelia's plane more than to the others. AE despaired to hear that some of the other women had pencils punched through the fabric of their planes by the inquisitive. Her friend Blanche Noyes had discovered fire in her cockpit because of a carelessly thrown cigarette, and was forced to make an emergency landing.

At many of the fields there was no place to rest, no more than a table to sit on. At other airports there were banquets to be rushed to and back from. On the good days AE was happy to find luncheons served at the field and hotels to go to for the night. Many fields provided soap and water, clean towels, cold cream, powder, combs.

At the luncheons and dinners Amelia chuckled at some of the names the speakers used for the women fliers: "sweethearts of the air," "flying flappers," "angels," "sunburned derbyists." All they wanted to be called, AE insisted in vain, were "fliers," and, if necessary, "women fliers."

The press called the race "Lipstick Derby," "Petticoat Derby," "Powder Puff Derby." The last one stuck and has continued to the present time.

At El Paso, the fourth stop, the women waited for a storm to pass, rather than risk some of them not having enough fuel to fly around it; for the next leg, to Fort Worth, was the longest and most hazardous—600 miles, much of it over mountains.

At Pecos they stopped for food and fuel. All the planes landed safely except one. Florence Barnes, wife of a San Morino minister, misjudged her landing roll, overran the runway, and crashed into an automobile. She was rescued, unharmed, from the wreck.

On the night of the fifth day they stayed in Wichita, Kansas; of the sixth, in St. Louis. When they landed in Columbus, Ohio, the last stop before Cleveland, sixteen of the original nineteen had made it.

The morning of the eighth day broke clear. Amelia and Ruth Nichols, her friend from Rye, had been running neck and neck during the entire race. AE had landed just two minutes ahead of Ruth at Columbus and looked forward to the last lap to Cleveland. It would be nip and tuck between them all the way. The girls started their engines and waited for the signal to move out in interval.

Ruth Nichols, poised at the far end of the runway, gunned her motor for take-off. Just as she broke from the ground, the right wing dipped, then hit a tractor parked at the edge of the runway. Amelia blanched. Ruth's plane struck the ground, flipped over three times, and stopped in a shrieking scrape along the pavement.

AE stopped her engine, climbed out of the Vega, and ran toward the crash. Ruth Nichols was not hurt, but the wings and landing gear of her plane were

smashed beyond immediate repair. The private race between the two friends was over.

Louise Thaden of Pittsburgh won the race. Gladys O'Donnell, the mother of two children, from Long Beach, came in second. AE, just nosing out Blanche Noyes, was third. In the light-plane class, Phoebe Omlie was the winner.

6. *Developing Air Lines*

The race had whetted Amelia's competitive appetite, although the event, generally, had annoyed her because of the unnecessary excitement and trouble which the women fliers had caused. She would have preferred a straight and simple race, one in which she could have competed, without fanfare, with men. This last possibility was out of the question for the time being; she turned, therefore, to establishing some speed records of her own. The Vega had yet to prove its mettle at full throttle.

In November of that same year AE set the new speed record for women over a one-mile distance; and a few months later she established the international speed record for women over a 100-kilometer course.

In her fever of activity, Amelia now turned from competitive flying and magazine writing to developing air lines. With a characteristic burst of initial energy, she plunged into first one then another aspect of air-line operation, first with one organization then with another. But, as with nursing and medicine, and as at Columbia when she was too impatient to follow a prescribed course of study, she soon tired of the new activities. There was no occupation on the ground that could hold her interest for long.

Her destiny, she knew, lay in the air; but she would have to continue getting more and more flying time before she could finally break the ties with

mundane pursuits. Working for an air line at least offered chances to fly, even if it meant paying for the privilege by trying to sell aviation to stubborn women.

Mothers and wives, Amelia was to complain later, were the great stumbling blocks in her attempt to convince the American public that flying was safe. It seemed that sons and daughters and husbands were willing to take to the air, but a matriarchal opposition barred the way. As she had used her arguments writing for *Cosmopolitan*, so now AE used them again in speaking tours for the cause of aviation in general, and for Transcontinental Air Transport, the air line she represented, in particular.

Amelia flew from point to point on the Ludington Line of TAT and delivered her talks to women's groups. Often her mother would go along with her. AE would point to her mother seated at the speaker's table and indicate her proof: if mother and daughter could fly together, the air was as safe for any woman and her family as the highway and the railroad. Gradually women began to be sold.

Working on TAT with Amelia were two young men, Paul Collins and Gene Vidal. They had many progressive ideas about the running of an air line and were anxious to put them into operation in their own business. They took AE into the new organization with them as a vice-president.

As she had before, Amelia worked primarily with the women passengers, finding them, quieting them, convincing them. Again she made many lecture tours. She always began her speeches by asking for a show of hands from those who had flown. The career women invariably won out over their less daring sisters from a college group or a women's club.

Difficulties of all kinds were encountered in the running of the line. Irate customers, usually women, complained to Amelia about cabin temperatures that were either too high or too low. Would the plane please stop bumping? Did they have to fly into air pockets? One passenger insisted that she would not pay extra for her thirteen pieces of luggage; after all, the trains did not set any silly limits at thirty pounds. A woman bought a ticket for herself and what she said was a small lap dog: Amelia insisted that the woman sit in the same seat with the lap dog, which, it turned out, was the size of a small pony. At another time the same seat was sold to two different people. Frequently passengers were grounded by the weather and had to be turned over to the railroads.

Amelia soon fidgeted with an unrest to try something else. The right to fly at no cost on the air line was too expensive for her energies when she had to pay for the privilege with so many irritations on the ground. If she could fly *and* earn money at the same time, she could then build up her hours in the air and yet realize enough funds, finally, to back her contemplated solo across the Atlantic. The dual opportunity came in the form of the newest experiment in aviation, the autogiro.

For AE, the forerunner of the helicopter was a challenge to her flying skill. In 1931, to the surprise of everyone, she learned how to fly one in just a few hours, and a couple of days later she took it to 18,415 feet and set a new altitude record for autogiros. Because of the publicity she had gained from the flight, Amelia was approached by the Beech-Nut Packing Company to fly an autogiro across the country as a promotion stunt for the chewing gum. She readily agreed: the venture,

although commercial, was the answer to her desire for flying time and money.

Beginning in May of 1931, and for the next two months, Amelia flew back and forth from New York to California, advertising the name of Beech-Nut painted on the side of her plane.

The cross-country flight, although unusual in some respects, was even more unusual in another. Three months earlier AE had quietly slipped away with GP, who had divorced his wife, and married him in Connecticut. And now by leaving on a "business trip," Amelia had put the marital shoe on the other foot, that of the male, and had left her mate waiting for her at home.

For a long time AE had felt that marriage was a cage; but GP, who had begun his campaign early after the *Friendship* flight, had finally overcome her continued reluctance. He convinced her that the cage could be attractive if the door to it were left unlocked and open.

The marriage was marked by an interesting public reversal of roles. Not unlike an anxious woman who has been left behind, George waited for Amelia to finish her new adventure in the air. He worried about her. She had already sustained one accident in Texas, and had complained about the accounts of it in the press as much as any righteously indignant male.

"A fatal accident to a woman pilot," she wrote, "is not a greater disaster than one to a man of equal worth. Feminine fliers have never subscribed to the super-sentimental valuation placed upon their necks. I am sure they feel they can endure their share of misfortune, whatever it be, as quietly as men."

When Amelia was heading back East on her trip, GP went to Detroit to meet her. She had been scheduled to appear at the State Fair Grounds, where she was going to give a demonstration flight with the autogiro. Waiting for her, George stood on the outside of a circle which had been marked off for AE to land in. Close by stands had been erected, and from them long support wires had been stretched and staked into the ground. GP talked with a group of people who had gathered.

“Here she comes!” someone shouted, pointing over GP’s shoulder.

George Putnam turned his head and saw the giro, whirling and clattering above the treetops. Assured that everything was as it should be, he resumed his conversation.

Then he heard a loud crash. GP spun around. The giro lay broken in a cloud of smoke, the rotor blades cracked and splintered, the landing gear smashed.

He ran toward the wreck. Ignoring the ground beneath him, he struck one of the support wires. He flew up, over, and down, and hit the ground flat on his back.

Amelia emerged from the accident without injury. When she saw her husband sprawled on the ground, and apparently hurt, she ran to him. She saw that he was winded but otherwise, it seemed, in good condition.

“So flying *is* the safest, after all!” she teased him. “If you had been with me, you wouldn’t have been hurt.”

GP turned to get up. His face creased in pain.

He had cracked three of his ribs.

7. *George Palmer Putnam*

George Palmer Putnam II was a man of many accomplishments. Because of his highly active and extroverted nature, people either liked him or disliked him. No one who knew him felt an apathetic indifference toward him.

Newspaperman, mayor, publisher, explorer, author, promoter, manager, publicity man extraordinary, he was tall, good-looking, aggressively masculine, brilliantly informed, and he married some of the most charming women of his day. (GP's four wives were Dorothy Binney, Amelia Earhart, Jean Marie Cosigny, and Margaret Haviland.) In appearance he was deceptive: he looked like an intellectual, a scholar, a college professor, perhaps because of the rimless glasses that he wore; yet he was very much the man of action, the man of constant activity in many fields at the same time.

"Lens louse," photographers later dubbed him, as he managed to get into picture after picture with Amelia. He loved the limelight and as much publicity for himself as he could manage, yet he would do many charitable things for people which he would absolutely forbid them to mention. "The meanest," some called him; others said, "The kindest."

Born in 1887 into a family of wealth and position, George Putnam was a gentleman, a *gentle* man, yet was capable of an irritability easily aroused by what he considered stupidity in others. He was capable with the right provocation of changing from

a person of charm and grace into one of explosive anger and violent fury.

In his lifetime GP wrote ten books in his spare time. He could produce a book "with his left hand," while with his right he went about his daily business of publishing and promoting. His books reflected his many interests: four on travel, four biographies, and two novels. With the eye of a close observer he recorded a perceptive understanding of the land and the people of Central America, the Oregon country, the Arctic, and Death Valley. His ability to see through the deceptive surface and into the reality of his own life and the lives of others produced the biographies of Salomon August Andrée, the gallant Swedish aeronaut; of Amelia Earhart, his famous wife; of Captain Bob Bartlett, "the mariner of the north"; and *Wide Margins*, the story of his own life. Combining his knowledge of people and places, he wrote the novels *Duration*, about an older man and his son, who are both involved in World War II, and *Hickory Shirt*, which is laid in the Death Valley of 1850.

Frequently charming, kind, generous—anything but the tough guy he wanted people to believe he was—George Palmer Putnam would rather be hanged than have anyone discover he was soft behind the hard shell. Typically, he was ever quick to respond to distress in others.

Blanche Noyes, a famous woman flier, who is now chief of the Air Marking Staff, National Aviation Agency, remembers the George Putnam who didn't want to be found out. She writes:

The thing that I shall always remember of "G.P."

> was my first public appearance after my husband's death, when I was mistress of ceremonies in New York at a large luncheon, at which time I was to introduce these celebrities without benefit of notes. However, this time I felt a little shaky and asked "G.P." to write my introductions for me, which he did, but swore me to secrecy. It was quite annoying, after the luncheon, to have two people come up and thank me for the lovely things I said about them, but each said that the only thing that spoiled the luncheon was the fact that they sat next to "G.P.," the man they disliked intensely. I wanted to tell them that all the flattering things I had said about them were "G.P.'s" thoughts and words, not mine, but he had sworn me to secrecy. Someday I am going to tell them how wrong they were in their thoughts of this grand person....

Grand indeed. When Mrs. Noyes' husband Dewey was killed in 1935, AE had insisted that Blanche come with her and GP from New York to the West Coast and stay with them as long as she could at their home near Toluca Lake, California. From time to time on the trip Amelia would see Blanche crying in the back seat. Husband and wife up front would whisper; then they would detour off the main highway, sometimes to see a rodeo, to see a friend whom they thought Blanche might enjoy, or to spend the night at some interesting historical spot. AE was like that, and so was GP.

When George was a boy, his father, Bishop, and his two uncles, Irving and Haven, were the publishing firm of G. P. Putnam's Sons. In their time, George Palmer, the founder, and George Haven, his successor, were the deans of American publishing. Authors on the Putnam list were famous; they are

now required reading in any course in American literature: Washington Irving, James Russell Lowell, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Cullen Bryant, Francis Parkman.

GPP II at the time when his father and uncles were running the firm had little interest in the classics of literature, either British or American. He was having a marvelous time growing up.

Like the elder Putnams, GP went to Harvard, but he soon transferred to the University of California at Berkeley; then, like Francis Parkman before him in the 1840's, he went to the wilds of Oregon. The road was mud, ruts, potholes, and bumps; but up and beyond, as far as his eyes could see, was the most magnificent scenery he had ever seen. Rolling hills to the east, the Cascades on the west, California's valleys to the south, and rock-rimmed ruggedness all the way to the Columbia River to the north.

Twenty-three years old, and with three hundred dollars in his pockets, GP settled in the valley of the Deschutes River at Bend. He was soon elected mayor of the town. The previous incumbent had died; he had fallen out of a second-story window of a bawdy house and landed on his head. GP had needed the job, for he had prevailed upon a young lady in Connecticut to come out to Oregon and marry him. Dorothy Binney came northwest, and became his bride in October, 1911.

In the seven years that GP continued to live in Bend, he became the father of a son, David Binney, and the editor of the local newspaper, *The Bulletin*. One of the best stories conjured up by George to fill space in his paper was the tale about Lucy, the tame trout. Lucy had been kept in a shallow pan, until she spilled out all the water and somehow learned to live

by breathing air. GP would take her to one of the local bars to perform. One day he forgot to close the door where Lucy was kept; and having walked halfway across the foot-bridge over the Deschutes River, GP looked back to see Lucy flapping along after him. Then, before George could get to the fish to help her across, Lucy lost her balance, fell into the river, and drowned.

After serving in World War I, GP, his father and brother having died, now took his place in G. P. Putnam's Sons. In the beginning his selections of manuscripts for publication were happy choices. Under the Putnam imprint were issued, among others, Alexander Woollcott's first books, Rockwell Kent's *Wilderness*, and the novels of Ben Hecht.

One of the cleverest of George Putnam's literary coups was *Bobbed Hair*; it was a novel, and it was victorious on all fronts. The book was a twenty-author production. GP conceived the plot; then, with the help of ten women authors and nine men writers (Putnam was the tenth), each to do one chapter, the mongrel fiction was given birth. The novel was serialized in *Colliers*, published in book form, then made into a movie. Included in the assembly-line production were Louis Bromfield, Sophie Kerr, George Agnew Chamberlin, Bernice Brown, John V. A. Weaver, Alexander Woollcott, George Barr McCutcheon, Carolyn Wells, Rube Goldberg, Edward Streeter, Kermit Roosevelt, and Frank Craven.

For George Putnam these were fabulous times. Franklin P. Adams, Harold Ross, Marc Connelly, Heywood Broun, Herbert Bayard Swope, Ben Hecht, Alexander Woollcott, Maxwell Anderson, Laurence Stallings, Sidney Howard, Louis Shipman, Burton Rascoe, Christopher Morley: all were enjoying the

first of their many successes. GP was in their midst, and like cut glass catching and refracting a brilliant light, he shone among them.

During this period George scored smashing results in publishing books on exploration, and he was a publisher who practiced what he preached. In the Putnam stables of authors were Charles Lindbergh, Richard Byrd, Amelia Earhart, Martin Johnson, William Beebe, Roy Chapman Andrews, Knud Rasmussen, Lincoln Ellsworth, Bob Bartlett, Rockwell Kent, Robert Cushman Murphy, Merion Cooper, Larry Gould, William A. Robinson, Fitzhugh Green, Sir Hubert Wilkins. But GP was not content simply to publish books on exploration; he had to be an explorer himself.

In 1925 he organized and led an expedition into Greenland for the American Museum of Natural History. The exploration was also a writing and publishing success that produced books by Knud Rasmussen, Bob Bartlett, and David Binney Putnam, GP's first son. David Binney's *David Goes to Greenland* was a tremendously successful boys' book. It was a successor to his equally famous *David Goes Voyaging*, written at the age of twelve after an expedition to the Galápagos with William Beebe. For the boy the Arctic Circle was as full of thrills and adventure as the equator; happily, the son had his father's talent for recording new, unusual, and exciting experiences.

In May of 1927 Charles A. Lindbergh flew the Atlantic, alone, and it was G. P. Putnam's Sons that published *We*. In June of 1928 Amelia M. Earhart flew across the Atlantic, as passenger, and it was again Putnam's that released *20 Hrs., 40 Min*.

George Putnam admired Colonel Lindbergh for

his accomplishment but accused Lindy of having a “mechanical” brain and a “one-track” mind. Unfortunately, George did not live to read *The Spirit of St. Louis*; if he had, he would have changed his mind.

The girl from Kansas who looked like Lindbergh, however, became his wife. “Amelia Earhart,” he wrote later, “knew me better, probably, than anyone else ever can. With her discernment, why she married the man she did was often a matter of wonder to me. And to some others.”

8. *Marriage*

Before the wedding of GP and AE in February, 1931, there were warnings given to both. Why did they want to marry? Why did GP want to become a hero's husband? Of all men why did Amelia Earhart choose George Palmer Putnam?

No one, perhaps, understood heroes better than George Putnam. Himself a writer, publisher, explorer, and promoter with, as *Time* said of him, "the dangerous combination of literary ability, business acumen, [and] energy," he was to the young Amelia Earhart the fitting opposite to her essentially modest and retiring nature. He was, in brief, her kind of man.

Soon after the *Friendship* flight AE realized that she needed a man to protect her, to help her continue as the symbol that she was. GP was the man to clear the way for her, to find the money, to stand beside her in the press of circumstance, to support her in every venture. Although many men could fill such requirements in a husband, Amelia felt that she could find happiness, if it were possible to find it with anybody, only with George Putnam.

For GP his first wife, Dorothy Binney, had given him many good years and two sons. But the Oregon years were in the distant past and by 1928 they had become cool and aloof toward each other. Dorothy Binney divorced him on a formal charge of "failure to provide," and moved to Florida. George continued at Rye. He was never long without a wife.

The marriage of AE and GP was, to employ a metaphor from flight, a delicate combination of solo and dual. George was forty-two years old; Amelia, thirty-two.

Before the ceremony at the home of George's mother in Noank, Connecticut, on February 8, 1931, AE gave GP a letter that defined an attitude for the future course of their life together:

> Dear GP, there are some things which should be writ. Things we have talked over before—most of them.
>
> You must know again my reluctance to marry, my feeling that I shatter thereby chances in work which means so much to me. I feel the move just now as foolish as anything I could do. I know there may be compensations, but have no heart to look ahead.
>
> In our life together I shall not hold you to any medieval code of faithfulness to me, nor shall I consider myself bound to you similarly. If we can be honest I think the difficulties which arise may best be avoided....
>
> Please let us not interfere with the other's work or play, nor let the world see our private joys or disagreements. In this connection I may have to keep some place where I can go to be by myself now and then, for I cannot guarantee to endure at all times the confinements of even an attractive cage.
>
> I must exact a cruel promise, and that is you will let me go in a year if we find no happiness together.
>
> I will try to do my best in every way....

The letter was signed simply "AE." Willing but reluctant, Amelia Earhart effected the agreement—it

would have been too demanding for most men—and became Mrs. George Palmer Putnam.

She had refused marriage at least twice before, and as late as 1930 she had written to a friend, “I am still unsold on marriage.... I think I may not ever be able to see marriage except as a cage until I am unfit to work or fly or be active—and of course I wouldn’t be desirable then....”

Amelia’s mother, Amy Otis Earhart, had been opposed to the marriage. At Greenwich House in New York, where Amelia was occupying the top floor as a celebrity in residence, AE and Mrs. Earhart discussed Amelia’s plans. The mother argued in vain; her daughter had made up her mind.

Hilton H. Railey tried to dissuade GP from his plans. For his efforts Railey was accused of being in love with Amelia himself.

Amelia was often asked her opinion on the marriage-career question. “Marriage is a *mutual* responsibility,” she would answer. “And I cannot see why husbands shouldn’t share in the responsibility of the home. By that I mean something more detailed—and for as long as it takes them to get used to the idea, perhaps more arduous, even uncomfortable to the men—than merely keeping a roof over the collective head and coal in the furnace.”

As for her career and its effect on her marriage, she wrote: “It seems to me that the effect of having other interests beyond those exclusively domestic works well. The more one does and sees and feels, the more one is able to do, and the more genuine may be one’s appreciation of fundamental things like home, and love and understanding companionship.”

The problem of money was frequently brought

up. “For the woman to pay her own way,” Amelia said, “may add immeasurably to the happiness of those concerned. The individual independence of dollars and cents tends to keep a healthy balance of power in the kingdom of the home. If one’s time is worth more at specialized tasks—writing, flying, interior decorating, what have you—it is good sense to put in one’s hours at such work rather than cooking, cleaning, and mending. Assistants more skilled than myself can be employed to substitute in the housewife role without robbing a marriage of its essence. It is fortunately no longer a disgrace to be undomestic, and married women should be able to seek, as unrestrictedly as men, any gainful occupation their talents and interests make available. Thus—for me—can joyful luxuries like low-wing monoplanes be had—as adding to the sum total of contentment.”

And George Palmer Putnam seconded his wife’s views. GP and AE had a joint bank account and every month each would put part of his earnings toward those regularly recurring bills such as household, doctor, clothes, clubs, automobiles, and trips.

Occasionally some wag would call GP “Mr. Earhart.” “Usually,” George observed, “it was some nitwit who didn’t care whether or not he lived.” But on one occasion GP called himself exactly that.

The Putnams went out to Hollywood to join other celebrities in making a film for charity. In the group were Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, “America’s Sweethearts,” whom GP and AE had never met. “I,” said Douglas Fairbanks, introducing himself to Miss Earhart, “am Mister Pickford.”

“And I,” said GP, picking up the thread and introducing himself to Mary Pickford, “am Mister

Earhart."

In 1931 GP gave up publishing and went to work for Paramount Pictures as head of the editorial board. He had sold his interest in G. P. Putnam's Sons to a cousin, Palmer C. Putnam.

GP stayed four years at Paramount. Among his successes was *Wings*, which promoted Clara Bow, Dick Arlen, and Buddy Rogers to stardom. Playing a bit part in the film was a tall, gangling youth whose name was Gary Cooper.

There were many delightful days in the seven years of their marriage for AE and GP. George spent most of his time working for Paramount in New York. Amelia flew from her cage in the autogiro and advertised Beech-Nut. The flying advertisement had been one of GP's money-raising ideas. He had many of them.

One, however, Amelia could not accept. It was the "Amelia Earhart Hat." AE, George, and Hilton Railey were at the Biltmore in New York. GP crossed the room and from behind his back proudly produced a woman's hat. It was made of russet suède and on the silk band around it was reproduced Amelia's signature.

Amelia looked at it and turned it in her hands, pensively. Her smile of amusement narrowed to disappointment. "Of course, GP," she said firmly, "this won't do at all. You'll have to cancel it."

"But I can't!" George cried out. "I've already signed the contract. They're already made up."

"Then tell the manufacturer to *unmake* them. Tell him at once—right now!" She pointed to a telephone on a small table. "Phone him," she commanded.

Angrily glaring at Railey, GP flailed his arms and stomped about the room. Amelia waited for the fury to subside.

"Since I can't very well sue the manufacturer, and you *had* my power of attorney, then I shall most certainly sue you—unless!" She was unyielding; she wanted no part in the scheme.

The matter was settled, and no "Amelia Earhart Hats" were put on the market. Railey, bringing all his powers of persuasion to bear, had talked the manufacturer into tearing up the contract.

But there were other, more acceptable, ideas from George Putnam. Amelia became a woman's fashion designer for a time, and she modeled her own original creations—the lines simple, classical, functional. She devised buttons, buckles, and other accessories; they were adapted from such airplane parts as a hexagonal nut, a wing light, taillight, parachute buckles, wing bolts, cotter pins, and ball bearings.

She endorsed the Franklin Motor Car; its engine was air cooled like that of her airplane. And there was Earhart luggage, light, practical, and designed for air travel.

Because of his many and varied ideas and activities, AE had a pet name for George—"Simpkin." The name came from a book Amelia remembered from childhood, which told the story of the Tailor of Gloucester who lived with his cat Simpkin. Simpkin believed in keeping mice in reserve by secreting them under cups; whenever he was bored, he always had a mouse to liven the day. Amelia discovered early in her marriage that she was just another one of the many enterprises that her husband managed.

One mouse at a time was not enough for GP; thus his nickname, “Simpkin.”

The marriage of AE and GP produced no children. Nevertheless, it was a happy one for the most part, although a New York columnist had reported in 1933 that AE and GP were on the verge of breaking up. Helen Hutson Weber, who was a house guest in the Rye home, where she was recuperating from a serious illness, chuckled when she read the item. For as she did, AE and GP were out on the patio cavorting like two playful children: George was driving Amelia around in a wheelbarrow, then dumping her on the ground. AE squealed in delight.

Neither George nor Amelia had to meet the pledge of two years before and go their separate ways if they found no happiness together.

9. *Solo Across the Atlantic*

Five years to the day after Lindbergh's famous flight in *The Spirit of St. Louis*, Amelia Earhart flew solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Like Lindbergh, Amelia had competitors who had tried the solo flight before her; but, like his, the luck of "Lady Lindy" held out.

Ruth Nichols, AE's friendly neighbor and fellow flier from Rye, was on the way for the transatlantic hop in June, 1931, but as she came in for a landing in Saint John's, New Brunswick, her overloaded plane cracked up, nearly killing her. Although she was still encased in a body cast from the crash, Ruth Nichols was ready in 1932 to try again. But, just as she was ready to go, she heard that Amelia had made it.

The two women fliers were the friendliest of rivals, and they were always neck and neck to be the first woman-to-do in aviation. In 1930, for example, AE had set the speed record at 181.157 mph; in 1931, Miss Nichols set a new one at 210.685 mph. They had raced together in the first Powder Puff Derby, until Ruth crashed in Columbus. Each wanted to be the first woman to fly around the world: AE failed; Ruth succeeded.

For Amelia the flight alone across the Atlantic came four years after the *Friendship* venture. She had gained experience in all kinds of flying, in all kinds of weather. She had flown coast to coast across the

United States four times: twice in Lady Heath's Avian and twice in the autogiro. With her Vega she had made numerous flights; one of them the Women's Air Derby in which she placed third in the race from California to Ohio.

AE purchased another Vega; although secondhand, it was in excellent flying condition, and as added insurance she had a new Wright Whirlwind engine installed. After nine crack-ups and emergency landings, most of them because of engine failure, she felt that the new motor was a wise investment.

One morning in the winter of 1931, the Putnams sat at breakfast in their Rye home. Amelia lowered the morning paper and looked out the dining-room window. The light was clear, hard, and bright. The oak trees out beyond the patio were stark and bare. The air seemed crisp and clean, as if snow might begin to swirl at any moment.

Amelia brushed her stiff locks with a quick sweep of the hand and turned to her husband. "Would you *mind*," she asked slowly, "if I flew the Atlantic?"

GP was elated with the idea, finally expressed, for he knew the project had been growing within her, like a child, for a long time. He could see, as he looked into his wife's steady gray-blue eyes, that she had arrived at that point of self-confidence where only agreement with her was possible.

"Of course I don't mind," he said quickly. "I think it's an excellent idea."

Plans began to take definite shape. To avoid any possibility of advance notoriety, Amelia chartered her Vega to an old friend, Bernt Balchen, the famous Arctic explorer and an intrepid flier. He had agreed

to act as her technical adviser. It was well known that Balchen and Lincoln Ellsworth were planning an Antarctic expedition; everyone could now infer that AE's plane was going to be used by the explorers.

As with the earlier *Friendship* flight, when everybody thought the Fokker seaplane was being made ready for Byrd, thus giving Stultz and Gordon the necessary freedom for test-hopping the aircraft, so now Amelia had hour after hour and day after day for checking out the new Whirlwind motor, for blind flying entirely by instruments, for preparing for the variable weather over the North Atlantic.

On a Sunday in April of 1932 the Putnams had asked Bernt Balchen to drive over to Rye for lunch. After a leisurely meal, AE led the way down over the stone steps outside to her garden. She walked to the crocuses, blooming in bright dabs of yellow, purple, and white, and felt their grasslike leaves. Overhead she noted the elms and oaks beginning to leaf. Bernt and GP had stopped at the croquet rack. Amelia joined them. They started to play.

At the middle wicket on the turn for home AE dropped the long handle of her mallet and walked toward the men. "Bernt," she said suddenly, "I wanted to tell you...." Her voice trailed inconclusively.

Bernt and George laid down their mallets. They followed Amelia to a nearby rock and sat down. AE looked down at Bernt. "I want to fly the Atlantic, now, by myself," she said to him. "Am I ready to do it?" she asked. "Is the ship ready? Will you help me?"

Balchen, a Norwegian of few words, fixed his clear blue eyes on a wire hoop of the croquet game.

His voice still had the trace of a Norseman's accent. "Yes," he said slowly. "You can do it. The ship, when we are through with it, will be O.K. And, yes, I will help."

Her questions answered, Amelia returned to the game with renewed vigor and clouted her opponents' croquet balls into the bushes.

Toward dusk Bernt returned home. AE, suddenly hungry, went into the kitchen. She started to make cocoa. Lucy Challiss, her cousin from Atchison, who had been staying at the house for a few days, came in with George.

"Can you keep a secret?" Amelia said, grinning, to her cousin.

"Of course," Lucy answered.

AE went to the table and started slicing a loaf of bread. She reached out a forefinger, picked up a bread crumb, and placed it on the tip of her tongue. "I'm going to fly the Atlantic again," she said. "Alone."

Incredulous, Lucy stared at Amelia. The cocoa on the stove came to a quick boil, bubbled, and spilled over the pan onto the floor. GP sprang for a mop, Lucy for a dishcloth. Laughing, AE reached into the cupboard for more cocoa.

It was the first time that Amelia had taken into her confidence someone not directly connected with her flight. Lucy Challiss did not betray her trust.

Unlike the first flight across the Atlantic in the *Friendship* plane, which had three engines, pontoons, and three crewmen, the Vega with its one engine and fixed wheels would have to go the whole distance with one pilot. For the next month, therefore, AE

sharpened her reactions in the conditions demanded in blind flying. For hours at a time she practiced flying by her instruments alone: setting a course to some distant city, then by following the dial of the gyrocompass and keeping the Vega straight and level by flying the needle and ball of the turn and bank indicator, she would compute the time and distance from the chronometer, and finally look out from the cockpit to see if she had made her estimated time of arrival at her destination. She would then turn around and go through the same procedure all the way back to New Jersey.

If possible, she wanted to be ready for the Atlantic take-off on the same day as Lindbergh, five years earlier, had left New York. She had never forgotten the time in Boston when she read about Lindy's historic flight and how she had hoped even then before the *Friendship* venture that she might, somehow, be the first woman to attempt the same flight.

While she waited at Rye or Teterboro, she often phoned the office of Doc Kimball at the Weather Bureau office in New York and asked for a prognosis. The weather conditions that had been forecast for the North Atlantic were not too encouraging, but she had decided that if there was the slightest chance to be on her way she would take it.

On the morning of Friday, May 20, AE climbed into her car and started for New Jersey. She was on her way to see Bernt Balchen at Teterboro airport. Ground fog, heavy and wet, bubbled on the windshield of the car; she turned on the wipers. It did not seem to her now that she would get off this gray day. When she turned onto the George Washington Bridge she could barely make out the

tops of the towers. The Hudson River below was clouded in mist.

Just before noon at the airport she was summoned to the telephone by Eddie Gorski, her mechanic. It was GP, calling from the office of Doc Kimball at the Weather Bureau. “It looks like the break we’ve been waiting for,” he said. “Doc Kimball says this afternoon is fine to get to Newfoundland—Saint John’s, anyway.”

Amelia asked for particulars about the weather. A “low,” she learned, which had threatened the first leg of the flight, had dissipated to the southeast; and a “high,” which promised good weather, was moving in beyond Newfoundland.

“O.K.!” she said. “We’ll start.”

In ten minutes she made final arrangements with Bernt Balchen and Eddie Gorski. They had agreed to fly with her as far as Newfoundland, to make sure everything was all right before the Atlantic take-off. Amelia looked at her watch. There was no time for lunch.

Always a fast driver, AE now drove quickly back to Westchester. Take-off had been set for 3:00 P.M. She had to pick up her clothes and maps, and then meet GP at the New York end of the George Washington Bridge. Two o’clock, he had said. She swung into the driveway. She had driven the last twenty-five miles in fifteen minutes.

She rushed upstairs to her room. In five minutes she had changed into jodhpurs, plaid sports shirt, and windbreaker. She tied a bright blue scarf about her neck, then stuffed toilet articles into a small bag. She stopped at the window that looked out on her garden. The dogwood trees were in full flower, white

and pink in the sun. She turned, picked up her leather flying suit and the folder of maps, and fled out of the room and down the stairs.

At 2:55 P.M. AE and GP reached Teterboro. Bernt and Eddie were waiting by the plane. Eddie and Amelia climbed through the door into the waist. Bernt crawled up on the wing and descended through the hatch into the cockpit. Balchen had convinced AE that he should fly the first leg so that she could conserve her strength for the long solo.

The red high-wing monoplane with gold stripes along the fuselage lifted off the runway at 3:15 P.M. Amelia looked out the small window in the door. On the ground below, standing on the edge of the pavement, was George Putnam, waving. She waved back. For a change, a man would wait, anxiously, for his woman to come home.

The Vega cruised over the coast of New England to Cape Cod. Behind the big fuel tank in the cabin Amelia was sleeping, stretched out on the floor of the fuselage, her leather flying suit under her head. Three hours and thirty minutes later Bernt Balchen brought the plane into Saint John, New Brunswick.

Early the next morning they flew to Harbor Grace, Newfoundland. Amelia found detailed weather reports from GP waiting for her when she arrived. While Bernt and Eddie made a final check of the aircraft, she pored over the predictions. The weather outlook was not too good but held the promise of something better. She decided to leave that evening. That settled, she found a cot, lay down, and took a nap.

At dinnertime she was awakened. There were more telegrams from GP. Her decision to leave that

night, she learned, had been a good one. The weather seemed to be clearing on her route. Amelia put on her heavy flying suit, picked up her maps, and went out to the field.

Bernt had already warmed up the engine. Awkward in her clumsy gear, Amelia plodded out to the plane. She reached a hand out to Bernt, then to Eddie. They helped her up the side of the fuselage onto the wing. She let herself down through the hatchway into the cockpit. She grinned through the side window and waved.

"Okeh," said Bernt with characteristic brevity. "So long. Good luck."

Amelia took command of the plane. She looked over the instrument panel, her "dashboard," and checked the engine gauges. Four new instruments had been installed in the plane to help her find her way: a drift indicator, an aperiodic and a magnetic compass, and a directional gyro. She taxied to the end of the only runway. The wind was from the northeast, nearly perfect for take-off.

At 7:13 P.M. the Vega broke from the ground and rose into the air. It was May 20, 1932. Amelia headed out to sea, to fly the Atlantic Ocean for "the fun of it." A few hours later it would be anything but fun.

Amelia eased back on the stick and climbed to 12,000 feet. She leveled off. She looked out the narrow windshield to the right. The sun, beginning to set in the west, sprayed out in a multicolored fan of gold, yellow, orange, and red. This was beauty, and adventure: the excitement and romance of flight. She looked quickly across the instruments, then out the other side of the windshield. The moon, like a

disc of butter in whipped potatoes, sat on the top of a bank of clouds.

The nose of the plane felt a little heavy against the stick. She reached down and rolled in a little trim. She then held the wings straight and level, and trimmed the rudder against the torque of the propeller. The turn-and-bank indicator responded promptly: needle and ball aligned in the center of the instrument. The steady rhythm of the motor was like another heart; and the wings and fuselage were like extensions of her arms and body and legs. She was one with her plane.

10. *Other Atlantics*

"If you follow the inner desire of your heart," she had said in a magazine article, "the incidentals will take care of themselves." For four long years she had waited to justify herself to herself. She wanted to prove that she deserved at least a small fraction of all the nice things people had been saying about her as a flier. She had the credit, to spilling and overflowing, for already having flown this ocean; she now wanted to make the credit good by making a large deposit, by flying the Atlantic alone.

"Illogical?" She tried to explain with reasons from her heart. "Perhaps. Most of the things we want are illogical!"

Under the left wing she watched a ship knifing slowly through the water toward Newfoundland. She reached for the light toggle and blinked her navigation lights. There was no answer from the ship.

Amelia swallowed. Her mouth was dry. She reached down for a can of tomato juice, punched a hole through the top with a screw driver, and inserted a straw. She sipped slowly, letting the juice moisten her tongue and the inside of her mouth, then she swallowed a mouthful.

"Adventure," she had always felt, "is worth while in itself." Even when she was a little girl in Kansas, playing with her sister Muriel and her cousin Lucy Challiss, she had often gone to play "bogey" in the

barn in back of the house in Atchison. The three girls would sit in the old buggy. Amelia would pick up the mildewed whip and crack it over the heads of the imaginary horses. They would ride wildly over a cobbled road, the buggy swaying. The horses galloped; the girls were in a hurry to get to Vienna. A knight in shining armor came riding out of the woods—toward them.

"Who's that?" Lucy shrieked.

"Dispatches, Sir Knight!" Amelia shouted at the man on horseback; she was not afraid. "For the Congress of Vienna of Treves, in favor of the Holy Grail." Undaunted, she continued, "Crusade about to start—unless we get through, the Pagan may prevail!"

The knight put up his lance and let them pass.

"Women can do most of the things men can do," she had written. "In anything that requires intelligence, coordination, spirit, coolness, and will power (and not too heavy muscular strength) women can meet men on their own ground."

She grinned as she remembered. She had once climbed upon a delivery horse, had explored the caves in the cliffs overlooking the Missouri River, had invented a trap and caught a chicken, had jumped over a fence that no boy her own age had dared to try, had even popped bottles off a fence with a rifle. If it was new and if it was different, she couldn't wait to try it, especially if some boy dared her.

She had twenty-eight different jobs in her life and she hoped to have two hundred and twenty-eight more.

The restless urge. Better than any college education was it to experiment, to meet new people, to find out what made them tick. Adapt, please, anger, study: these were better than any classroom. The unexpected by adventure became the inevitable. Even the small things, if they were an invitation to hop out of the rut, meant just as much—as flying the Atlantic.

She stamped her feet on the floor of the cockpit. Then quickly she lifted herself from the seat and tried for a more comfortable sitting position. The motor purred steadily. The phosphorescence of the numbers and dials of the instruments was the only light. Outside it was night. The moon shone over plane and sea.

There had been many “Atlantics” before—things she had wanted very much to do, against the opposition of tradition, neighborhood opinion, and so-called “common sense.” There had been the time she left Ogontz School before graduation to become a nurse in Toronto. Learning to fly in California had ostracized her among the more conventionally minded girls. By driving a truck to deliver sand and gravel, to earn money to fly and buy her own plane, she had become a simple nobody. Such things were simply not done, not by a girl.

“The girl in brown who walks alone.” Now she was the girl in brown leather flying suit and helmet, flying alone across the Atlantic Ocean. She looked at the smooth and worn leather of the arm of her suit, and grinned as she remembered her first flying jacket, how she had slept in it so it would have a used look. At first she had been shy about flying.

11. *Flying in California*

California was a wonderful place for flying. In the summer of that year—it was 1920 and she was an exuberant twenty-two—Amelia had dragged her reluctant father from his Sunday newspapers and persuaded him to take her to an air meet at Daugherty Field, out on the far stretches of Long Beach. By the time they arrived, Mr. Earhart was hot and uncomfortable. He ran a long finger under his wilted collar, and mopped the sweat and dust from his face. He could not understand his daughter Millie's enthusiasm for airplanes. After you had seen one, he affirmed, you had seen them all.

Amelia was fascinated at the sight of the old Jennys and Canucks. They were the same kind of planes she had seen at Armor Heights in Toronto. A man in uniform with an "official" badge pinned to his coat passed in front of her. She took her father by the arm. "Dad," she asked, "please ask that man how long it takes to learn how to fly."

Mr. Earhart went to talk to the official; then he returned to his daughter. "He says it's different with different people." Then he added, "The average time is between five and ten hours."

Amelia reflected on the report. "Please ask him how much lessons cost."

Unwillingly Mr. Earhart went to the official again. When he came back he said, "The answer to that question is one thousand dollars."

All the way home Amelia thought about the $1,000. It was more money than she had ever had, and she wondered where she could get such a large sum. Her father did not seem to share her interest, and she did not know how her mother would react to the idea of her taking flying lessons. She would begin her campaign by first asking her father if she could take just one ride in a plane.

She finally coaxed him into taking her out to Rogers Airport. They ate a hurried breakfast then took the streetcar to the outskirts of town, to an open space at Fairfax and Wilshire boulevards which was the airfield.

A young pilot of about Amelia's age, noting prospective customers, came forward and introduced himself. He was Frank Hawks and he would one day establish numerous records as a famous racing pilot. Amelia told him she wanted to go up for a ride.

Frank Hawks glanced at the tall, slight build of the girl in the high-laced shoes. He was unimpressed. If she wanted to go, he told her, she would have to suffer another passenger in the same seat with her, and he nodded to his companion standing by the plane. Hawks didn't trust frightened females in his airplane. Amelia saw that argument was pointless and agreed to the conditions.

The pilots helped her into the front cockpit. Hawks climbed into the rear seat, and his friend squeezed in beside Amelia. A mechanic swung the propeller and the plane came suddenly to life. AE watched the whirling blur before her and covered her ears to shut out the deafening blast. The plane started to roll over the uneven ground to the far end of the field, then it turned and stopped.

The wings and fuselage shook as the motor clattered wide open. Amelia screwed up her face to the noise. The plane began to move down the take-off run, dipping and bumping as it picked up speed. Then, suddenly, it broke cleanly into the air. As suddenly Amelia was thrilled: she felt as if she were floating on a cushion of air.

She looked down from 300 feet. Trees and ground were speeding by; everything was getting smaller as the plane climbed into the sky. The automobiles on Wilshire Boulevard looked like black bugs, the houses like toys.

The plane leveled off. “Two thousand feet,” Hawks shouted from the back seat. Amelia looked over the side of the cockpit. The oil derricks on the edge of the city were directly below; farther out, the Hollywood hills and the ocean.

Hawks nosed the plane into a steep glide, then tipped up the wing into a turn. The wind whistled over the wings and through the struts and cross wires.

Amelia braced her arm against the instrument panel. She smiled as she rose slightly from the seat. The stick in front of her angled forward; she wanted to hold it. When she reached out a hand, the man beside her shook his head and pushed the hand aside.

She turned quickly left and right in the seat, then tapped her feet on the floor. How wonderful to climb and turn and dive through the air! She felt buoyant, light, free—something she had never known before. A warm wave of exhilaration surged through her.

The plane had landed and the flight was over too soon. AE was on the ground but her thoughts were

still in the sky. She knew now that she would have to fly again, whatever the cost. As soon as she had left the ground on that take-off she had known it. She now understood what had lured the young Canadian pilots into the air.

That evening she had to tell her family about her plans. “I think I’d like to learn to fly,” she said finally, when the supper dishes were being cleared from the table.

“You aren’t really serious, are you?” her father said. “I thought you were just wishing. I can’t afford to let you have instruction.”

Amelia was by no means defeated. She would find other ways of getting the money. She would get a job and pay for her lessons by herself. She was now old enough to decide what she wanted to do with her life. Her father’s decision forced the issue and broke the financial ties she had grown to depend upon.

Amelia found a job with the Los Angeles telephone company. It paid little, but sorting mail and running errands provided enough to get started with her lessons. She worked five days a week, leaving her with weekends to spend at the flying field. Neta Snook, an early woman flier and a graduate of the Curtiss Flying School, was her first instructor.

Early one Saturday morning AE rolled out of bed. She was wearing a leather flying jacket over her pajamas. For the last several nights she had been sleeping in it to give it a worn look. She didn’t want the curious to know that she was a novice at flying. She ate her breakfast quickly; she wanted to be out of the house before seven o’clock.

The ride out to the airport took more than an hour to the end of the carline, then she had to walk another three miles along the dusty highway to the field. Amelia wore her riding breeches, her high leather boots, and her leather jacket; tucked under her arm was her leather helmet and goggles. Although she had not soloed yet, she felt like a flier. And to complete the woman-flier portrait, she had been secretly snipping away at her hair.

Instructor Neta Snook and student Amelia Earhart must have looked strange to the casual onlooker. What were these two women doing, dressing like men and climbing into an airplane?

Neither woman cared. Why couldn't a woman enjoy the pleasures and run the risks of flight? Snooky did not trouble herself about how she looked: she was comfortable in a pair of mechanic's dirty coveralls. Tall and slender, Amelia, with her hair pushed under her helmet, looked like a handsome boy. She was not concerned about her appearance; she was being practical: the field was dusty and the plane was difficult to climb into. The jodhpurs and jacket, like the gym suits she wore as a little girl, made good sense.

Amelia was glad that Neta Snook was her first instructor. With a woman to teach her she felt less self-conscious about taking lessons; any of the men fliers, who overwhelmed her with their abilities, would have scared her away, at least in the first difficult stages of learning how to fly. Her self-confidence was still shaky and insecure.

AE learned slowly but well. At first Neta showed her how to read the instruments, how to start and rev up the engine, how to check the magnetoes, follow through on stick, rudders, and throttle as she

took the Canuck off, climbed, made gentle turns to the left and right, and came in for a landing.

After a few weeks Amelia had learned how to fly a quadrangular course. This had been difficult at first in the light plane. She had to fly around a fenced-off field by keeping the right wing, at a steady altitude of 1,000 feet, exactly in line with the fence. She would angle in to the line, move swiftly downwind, turn steeply into the wind and crab along the cross-wind leg, then level out and move slowly upwind. The fourth leg was the hardest, for it meant a shallow turn with the wind to stay on course. The maneuver around the field demanded coordination of up and down and left and right. But Amelia could see the point of the exercise: if she could successfully work stick, rudder, and throttle in getting around the field, she would have learned the basic requirements for a landing pattern.

Then Neta taught her stalls and spins. These had to be mastered soon if she hoped someday to solo. Again Amelia followed through on the controls. AE sat in the rear cockpit and studied Neta's every move with stick, throttle, and rudder. Neta reduced throttle, pulled up the nose until the wing stalled; the plane plunged down, then she jammed the stick forward and added throttle to pull out of the dive. This was a simple stall, and Amelia soon commanded the necessary skill to recover the plane.

A spin was more involved; again Neta proved that the Curtiss Flying School had taught her well. As before she pulled the plane back into a stall, but now she kicked the right rudder hard, snapping the wing over. The plane spun to the right, and Amelia, getting dizzier from each tightening whirl, tried to concentrate on Neta's recovery. Neta applied

opposite rudder to the direction of the spin, straightening the wings; then she thrust the stick forward, adding power, and slowly came back on the stick to bring the nose back onto the horizon. Amelia thought the maneuver too complicated to master, but after several attempts with Snooky patiently guiding her through each step, she finally learned. Her reactions became quick, sure, and accurate.

Having learned how to take off and land, and how to recover from stalls and spins, Amelia began to radiate with the new sense of power which these basic skills and accomplishments had given her. She was eager to get on with her lessons, but there was never enough money to pay for them. Much of her instruction from Neta had been on credit, and her job with the telephone company scarcely paid enough to meet all costs. It became immediately clear to her that she needed a better-paying job. She found one a few days later in a most unlikely occupation for a girl—driving a truck for a sand and gravel company.

By this time Amy Earhart realized that her daughter was serious about flying, and she decided to help. On the condition that Amelia would spend more time at home, Mrs. Earhart let her have some of the money she had been saving over the years. Amelia readily agreed to the terms.

To her sorrow, however, when she returned to the field a few weeks later to tell Neta Snook the good news, AE learned that Neta, herself desperate for funds, had sold her plane. Disappointed but not discouraged, Amelia turned to a man to help her through enough lessons so that she could solo. Fortunately, her choice of a new instructor was a good one. He was John Montijo, a former Army instructor with hundreds of hours of experience in

the air. And what was more, he was patient and unexcitable before the most trying stupidities of his students. He was demanding, but very knowing and skillful in his ability to teach others.

Amelia learned quickly from him. And she insisted that he teach her acrobatics before he allowed her to go up alone. She wanted to have complete mastery of the Kinner Airster biplane. She knew that if she could stunt the plane, she would then have the necessary confidence to recover the plane from whatever attitude it might assume.

Under Montijo's guidance, her reactions to the most unusual conditions of flight became as trigger fast as they were in the more normal spins and stalls. She practiced for hours doing slips and split-S's, loops and rolls, lazy-eights and Immelmanns.

Amelia had gained such a sure degree of skill from her new instructor that when her time to solo finally came she had lost all nervousness and fear. She reversed the usual procedure for the first flight alone. Most fledglings she had watched took off with a joyful sweep and circled the field; then—suddenly ground shy—they kept circling until the tanks ran dry and they had to summon the courage to land. The necessary judgment for a good landing is one of the first tests of a good pilot, and AE hoped that hers would be as smooth as John's always were.

On the day of her solo Amelia walked out to her plane with the graceful ease of newly won self-assurance. Her patent-leather jacket gleamed in the sun; her high leather flying boots, carefully laced over the tight-fitting breeches, kicked up the dust as she walked; her white shirt, jauntily opened at the neck, revealed the inevitable feminine touch. She stepped onto the lower wing of the plane and swung

into the front cockpit. She buckled her helmet and set her goggles over her eyes. A mechanic spun the wooden propeller and the biplane headed out to the runway for the take-off. As the plane rolled down the barren strip, gaining speed for the take-off, Amelia felt the right wing sag just before the plane should have lifted into the air. Instinctively, AE chopped the throttle, pulled back the spark-control lever, and settled the plane onto the ground. Getting out to see what had gone wrong, Amelia noticed that one of the shock absorbers had collapsed.

After the damage had been repaired, Amelia, taking courage anew, tried again. She inched the throttle forward, and when the plane had more than enough flying speed, she eased back on the stick, waiting an anxious moment for the plane to break from the ground. The shock absorber held, and the Airster sprang from the end of the runway. Gently, almost caressingly, Amelia coordinated throttle and stick, aileron and rudder, in her climbing turns out of take-off. Suddenly, as she leveled the wings and straightened the nose, she realized an overwhelming fact: she was alone, gloriously alone. She was in complete command of the surging power from the engine and it was just at her fingertips to obey her will and no other.

Her nerve ends had multiplied, for now the power of the engine was her power and had become part of her own body, and the wings and fuselage and *empennage* were extensions of her own limbs. She climbed and dived and turned, pranking the air in the thrill and exhilaration of new-found love. The awareness of soaring flight now struck her consciousness as if for the first time. She was now the master of her life, her destiny, and perhaps her

death. The realization brought a bitter joy and a livid loneliness, but beyond them lay a new kind of freedom and a blessed peace.

Buoyant and elated, she swung the plane into the landing pattern. Feeling too confident, she neglected to lose enough flying speed in her final approach to the runway, and when she tried to touch the plane down, it kept bouncing off the ground and back into the air. Finally, realizing that she had not cut the power, she pulled the throttle all the way back and held the stick hard against her middle. The engine sputtered, the wing stalled, and the plane thumped to the ground.

When she had taxied the plane to the parking area, some of the other pilots came running over to her. “Congratulations!” they shouted. “How did it feel?” they asked. “Were you scared?”

Amelia felt guilty and somewhat silly, but she certainly had not been frightened. She was ashamed of her rotten landing, but took some comfort in what John Montijo had once told her. All landings are good ones, he said, if you can walk away from them. Amelia was proud that she had finally soloed; by flying only on weekends, she had taken months to do what others had done in just a few weeks of constant instruction. She turned to one of the men standing near her plane and asked him to take her picture out in front of the Kinner. She posed like a wistful maiden who is going to announce her engagement in the society section of the Sunday newspapers. She smiled softly and held her arms out from her body, her hands angled, her fingers pointed. The camera clicked.

12. *The Girl and the Machine*

The remembered sound was enough to snap Amelia back from her reverie. She looked at the chronometer on the instrument panel of her Vega. Time had passed quickly. She checked the fuel-flow indicator. Everything normal. It was 11:30 P.M. She glanced at the air-speed indicator: 180 mph. She wondered what ground speed she was making along her track: that depended on the direction and velocity of the wind. To the right of the air-speed dial she noticed the dials of the altimeter; suddenly they started to spin crazily around and around. In her twelve years of flying this had never happened before. With the altimeter out, she would have to fly by carefully watching the air-speed needle.

She looked out. The moon slid behind a tall build-up of clouds. Then more clouds grew and thickened about the plane. The Vega started to buffet, then to buck like an unbroken horse. Rain pinged and splattered against the metal wings and fuselage, hit and spread like gravel against the windshield, and streamed across the width and off the trailing edges of the wings. Whips of lightning cracked across the nose of the plane.

Amelia set her jaw hard and flew the plane by the needle and ball. She hoped the driving downdrafts of the storm were not nosing her too far down to the water. She could only trust to luck. For an hour she fought the plane through.

Fleetingly she saw the moon. If she could only

pull out on top of the clouds. She added throttle and applied back pressure to the stick. She watched her instruments. For thirty minutes the Vega climbed. Amelia felt the controls getting sluggish. The dial of the rate-of-climb indicator fell off. The wings were picking up ice. Slush now splattered on the windshield. Amelia checked the engine rpm's. Like the altimeter, the tachometer now began to spin wildly. It had picked up ice from the freezing outside temperature. The stick and rudder became sloppy and unresponsive.

Suddenly one wing lurched up high and snapped over. The plane, heavy with ice, spun out of control down through the clouds to the ocean below. Amelia quickly jammed opposite rudder, drove the stick all the way forward, and slowly brought the nose of the plane up out of the dive. She looked out. The gun-metal waves of the Atlantic rose and fell less than a hundred feet beneath her. She inhaled deeply against the pounding of her heart.

Amelia continued to fly near the water, hoping the lower altitude would melt the ice. Then fog and clouds gathered and spread over the ocean. Without the altimeter she dared not fly that low, and she climbed again to what she hoped was a safer altitude: low enough to escape the ice and high enough to avoid the water.

She would have to depend on her remaining instruments to make it across. She did not look out of her cockpit again until morning. The Sperry directional gyrocompass became her savior. She believed in it and followed it. Setting the gyro every fifteen minutes to a new heading, she pursued it across the night and through the engulfing clouds. For Amelia, it was now a grim, dogged, and stubborn

refusal to be overcome. As long as the Wasp engine kept firing, she would fly her plane. The last hours became the worst of the flight.

Toward dawn the exhaust manifold began to vibrate badly. Then the stinging odor of gasoline filled the cockpit. The gasoline gauges of the reserve wing tanks leaked drops of fuel on the floor by her feet. Her eyes and nostrils smarted from the strong smell. From about her neck Amelia brought her kerchief to her eyes and wiped away the tears.

Daylight finally dawned. Through the dim light Amelia found herself between two layers of clouds. Her eyes burned from the ordeal of the night and she rubbed them briskly with her hand. She fidgeted in her seat trying to relieve the stiffness and soreness. She rubbed her back against the back of the seat, and pressed her feet against the rudder pedals in an effort to stretch her legs. Below, the cloud layer began to break and clear. Amelia dropped down to examine the whitecaps; from the spray of the waves she hoped to determine the direction of the wind. She decided it was from the northwest.

Out on the leading edge of the wings she noticed ice. It had not yet melted from the heat of the morning sun. She climbed a little higher, but ran into another cloud bank. Suddenly she broke into the clear; the clouds were now below her, closely packed in clear white and looking like fields of snow she had once seen in New England. The upper layer of clouds began to thin out, and through an opening came the morning sun, blinding bright against the white snow of the clouds below.

Amelia reached into the pocket of her shirt, under the leather jacket, and took out a pair of dark

glasses. Through the darkness of the glasses the light was still too bright. She nosed the Vega down through the lower layer, hoping to find some shade near the water.

Ten hours of the long flight had passed. She reached for the thermos bottle of hot soup. Pressing the stick firmly between her knees, she gulped down the hot liquid food. It was her first meal since the take-off from Harbor Grace. Amelia checked the fuel gauges: 120 gallons left. Since take-off the Vega had burned 300 gallons.

Amelia looked out across the water for passing ships. None were within sight. The sunshine and low-hanging clouds persisted. Preferring the shade, she continued to fly close to the water.

She looked out far ahead. In the distance a thin line of black stretched across the horizon. Was it landfall or a front of black clouds? She had been deceived before. Then a dark object moved out from the black line. It had to be a ship; whether a fishing vessel or tanker, it was too soon to tell.

The vibration of the exhaust manifold became severe. Amelia saw that the cracked weld had melted and grown larger from the exhaust flames during the night. The engine would probably not last much longer. Paris as a destination, she now decided, was out of the question. She would have to come down on the first available piece of land.

Gently applying right rudder and stick, she banked into a turn, leveled off, and held a new compass course of ninety degrees. By flying due east she intended to hit the tip of the black line on the horizon, the tip of what she hoped was Ireland.

Doc Kimball in New York had told her she might

find bad weather south of her course during the flight. The fact of last night's experience now convinced her she must be south of course, especially if the wind had been long from the northwest.

The line on the horizon grew in contour. It was definitely a coast line, and probably Ireland. By maintaining her course she would hit it, not at the tip as planned, but exactly in the middle.

The coast came into full view below. Amelia screamed in delight; she had made her landfall. Exultant, she turned and headed down a long spine of mountains. Crowded against the peaks and knobs were thunderstorm clouds, growing and spreading up and out.

Knowing that she could not depend on the broken altimeter and realizing that she did not know the country, Amelia turned north to where the weather seemed better. She did not want to churn through billowing clouds whose roots were mountain peaks.

The new course proved a wise one. Ahead she saw a railroad, the blessed "iron compass" which in any country could bring a pilot home to a city and perhaps to an airport. Dutifully, Amelia followed the double track. The worst of the flight, she knew, was over.

Happily she tried to stretch in the narrow seat. She felt like that Greek traveler Odysseus whom she had read about at school in Philadelphia—again, she mused, *another* male hero. He had triumphed over that sea-god who had tried to drown him—and so had she, over whatever it was that had knocked out her tachometer and altimeter, and had tried to drown her in the Atlantic.

Dead ahead on course what appeared to be a large city began to take shape. Once over it, Amelia circled in wide, swinging loops, looking for a landing field. There was none. But out beyond the city she saw grazing pastures, neat, green, and trim. One of them would have to do.

She brought the Vega down low over a pasture dotted with cows. She made several passes, checking carefully for any obstacles to a landing. The cattle, frightened by the sound of the plane, scampered in all directions. She reduced throttle and began her letdown. She brought the nose up slowly. The meadow sloped upward. The tail skid hit, then the wheels. The Vega rolled to a quick stop at the top of the slope.

Amelia shut off the switch and locked the brakes. She was weary and tired but at the same time exhilarated and wide awake.

It was 1:45 P.M. Saturday, May 21. She had flown for fifteen hours and eighteen minutes.

13. *A Real Heroine*

It was not until after she had climbed up through the hatchway that Amelia noticed a cottage at the edge of the meadow. Flying over and making her passes she had not seen it.

A man came running out from the cottage. When he reached the plane, breathless, Amelia said to him, “I’m from America.”

It took awhile for the farmer to understand: a woman, from America, flying the Atlantic, all alone? He shook his head in disbelief.

As they walked to his cottage, Amelia learned that she had landed in Culmore, Ulster, near Londonderry, the city she had circled. There was no mistaking that she was in Ireland: the accent of the farmer, and his name, Patrick Gallagher, were sufficient proof. Amelia asked to be taken to the nearest telephone.

Gallagher commandeered a neighbor’s car and drove her to The Elms, the home of Mrs. Francis McClure, five miles down the road. Amelia put through her call.

“I did it!” she said to GP in New York; then she told him about the altimeter, and the tachometer, and the gas leak, and the broken manifold.

George Putnam thanked God that she had made it safely.

Amelia then returned with Gallagher to his

home. He asked her if she were tired, if she wanted to sleep.

"I haven't slept since Friday morning," she told him. "But I don't feel the least bit fatigued."

She slept until the next day.

Amelia Earhart had become what she was in the eyes of her public—the great American woman flier. She had regained her self-respect; she was no longer what she considered a "phony heroine." The eighteen tons of ticker tape and torn telephone books that had greeted Lindbergh five years before in New York could now scatter down on her. She had paid her debt. She was now ready to play the part of a true heroine. A smooth lyrical grace, the romantic quest of old, and the chivalric spirit of adventure had now combined in the boyishly slender figure of—this time —a woman. Like the lone eagle who preceded her, Amelia acted with ease, modest self-effacement, and exemplary good manners, becoming a good-will ambassador for America.

On Sunday, May 22, Amelia left Londonderry for London in a plane provided by Paramount News. Cables and telegrams had already reached her. "We do congratulate you," said the Lindberghs. "Your flight is a splendid success." Lady Astor wired to her: "Come to us, and I will lend you a nightgown." The one message Amelia would never forget was in the cable from her cleaner, Phil Cooper, in Rye. "Congratulations!" it said. "I knew you'd do it. I never lost a customer."

At the airport in London AE was met by Ambassador Mellon. They were driven through the cheering crowds to sanctuary at the embassy. Not having brought any clothes other than those she flew

in, Amelia was eager to change out of the jodhpurs and sports shirt into something feminine. After a long night's sleep at the embassy, AE, in dress, coat, shoes, hat, gloves, and purse borrowed from Mrs. Mellon, went forth to shop at Selfridge's and to sign her name with a diamond-pointed pencil on the plate-glass window that served as the Selfridge autograph album for celebrities.

The British conferred upon her an award that had been given to only one non-British subject before. Norman Selfridge, who had AE's Lockheed Vega on display at his store and who was its official custodian for the time being, flew Amelia to Brooklands. Here she received the Certificate of Honorary Membership of the British Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators.

Luncheons, dinners, receptions, more awards and decorations followed. Amid all the fanfare Amelia said, "I realize this flight has meant nothing to aviation." The remark went unnoticed; the press continued in notes of triumphant praise—except for one discordant chord sounded by M. E. Tracey in the New York *World-Telegram*: "Amelia Earhart has given us a magnificent display of useless courage.... The interest in such performances is one great weakness of the present age."

Amelia retained her composure. "If science advances," she said, "and aviation progresses, and international good will is promoted because of my flight, no one will be more delighted than I—or more surprised."

For millions of people in America, however, Amelia's solo flight across the Atlantic was not a display of "useless courage," nor was it a "tremendous trifle." Here was a feminine successor

to the long list of heroes whom Americans had idolized and adored. Amelia took her place with Lindbergh in aviation, in the glittering gallery that included Bobby Jones in golf, Babe Ruth in baseball, Bill Tilden in tennis, Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney in boxing. In an age of heroes, a heroine was most welcome.

To help manage the avalanche of invitations that had engulfed her, Amelia sent for her husband. GP sailed on the *Olympic*; when he arrived in Cherbourg, Amelia was there to meet him on board the *Evadne*, the yacht of C. R. Fairey. GP scrambled up the ladder. AE stood in the doorway, grinning in the morning sun.

"Hi!" she said to her husband, as if he had just come home from work. Man and wife joined arms and went into breakfast with the others.

She told him about her visit with the Prince of Wales. She had a private audience with him in his library at St. James's Palace. He had pinned a dark pink rose on her blue suit, and escorted her back to her car. The prince was a pilot, but they would never let him fly solo.

"We just talked shop," Amelia said. "That is, we did a little ground flying. I told the prince all about my flight. He was most warm in his congratulations."

Of his guest the prince had been quoted as saying: "She is just as charming as I had expected."

On they went to Paris. The French people were most excited by her visit, and the French Senate extended an official reception. Gallic wit glittered, turning on a pretty compliment from the modest American flier.

"But after all, m'ssieurs," Amelia concluded her little speech before the Senate, "it is far more difficult to make good laws than it is to fly the Atlantic."

"Ah, madame," crackled the president, "when you fly the ocean, what you do is a danger only to yourself, while the laws we make are a danger to so many."

At the American embassy in Paris Amelia was awarded the Cross of Knight of the Legion of Honor. "Five years ago," M. Painlevé said at the ceremony in the drawing room, "I had the pleasure to decorate Colonel Lindbergh after his remarkable flight. And now I have the honor to bestow this cross upon the colonel's charming image."

Rome followed. The Italian Government invited the couple to a gathering of fliers who had flown the Atlantic. For the Italians Amelia's sex was a problem. A woman simply did not set aviation records; she stayed home and had babies. Amelia was a kind of curiosity whom they could not understand.

From Rome they went to Brussels. King Albert and his queen received them at their summer home in Laehen. Amelia loved the easy affability of the king and his dainty wife. They lunched, talked about flying, and took snapshots of one another. For Amelia there was yet another decoration, the Cross of the Chevalier of the Order of Leopold.

On June 15 they sailed for home. Aboard the *Ile de France* AE rested for the ordeal ahead in New York. When she arrived, the city clasped her to its breast: she was their heroine, and thousands cheered her as they had Lindbergh.

The climax of all receptions came on June 21,

1932, when AE had the gold medal of the National Geographic Society presented to her by President Herbert Hoover. In contrast to the warmth of the royal reception in Brussels, the atmosphere of the dinner at the White House was formal and cold.

After dinner they removed to Constitution Hall for the actual ceremony. The President rose to a respectful silence and made his address.

> It is a great pleasure to come here and share in your honoring of Mrs. Amelia Earhart Putnam. She has shown a splendid courage and skill in flying alone across the Atlantic Ocean.... She has been modest and good-humored.
>
> All these things combine to place her in spirit with the great pioneering women to whom every generation of Americans has looked up, with admiration for their firmness of will, their strength of character, and their cheerful spirit of comradeship in the work of the world....
>
> Her success has not been won by the selfish pursuit of a purely personal ambition, but as part of a career generously animated by a wish to help others to share in the rich opportunities of life, and by a wish also to enlarge those opportunities by expanding the powers of women as well as men to their ever-widening limits.
>
> Mrs. Putnam has made all mankind her debtor by her demonstration of new possibilities of the human spirit and the human will in overcoming barriers of space and the restrictions of Nature upon the radius of human activity.
>
> [The President turned to Amelia] The nation is proud that an American woman should be the first woman in history to fly an airplane alone across the

> Atlantic Ocean. As their spokesman [he moved to Amelia now standing beside him] I take pride and pleasure in conferring this rarely bestowed medal of the National Geographic Society upon Mrs. Amelia Earhart Putnam.

Amelia took her place behind the microphone. She spoke calmly in a low, well-modulated voice. “I think,” she said, reaffirming the position she had often taken, “that the appreciation for the deed is out of proportion to the deed itself.... I shall be happy if my small exploit has drawn attention to the fact that women, too, are flying.”

Later, at a less formal occasion, Mrs. Hoover added her personal opinion to what her husband had said in his prepared statement. “I often think,” the President’s wife said, “that if a girl was to fly across the Atlantic alone and so, in a sense, represent America before the world, how nice it is that it was such a person as Miss Earhart. She is poised, well bred, lovely to look at, and so intelligent and sincere.”

It was not until the Roosevelts came to Washington, however, that Amelia became a close friend of the White House. AE gave Eleanor Roosevelt her first experience in night flying, both women taking to the air in evening clothes. The first lady of the nation and the first lady of flight became fast friends. At one time Mrs. Roosevelt decided to take flying lessons from AE, and even went so far as to get her student pilot permit. But the President strenuously objected to the idea of his wife becoming a pilot, and the matter was finally dropped.

After her solo flight, Amelia could count enough awards and decorations to fill a display cabinet, but

she cherished one above all. In tribute to her accomplishment the Congress of the United States presented her with the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Not content to rest on her Atlantic laurels, AE now turned to more challenges, some in the air and some on the ground. The Pacific Ocean, Mexico and its gulf, the transcontinental speed record: each in turn presented the unexpected in life that could indeed become the inevitable.

14. *Solo from Hawaii to California*

On July 24, 1934, Amelia Earhart was thirty-six years old. Mature, confident, and poised, she spent the summer of that year working in her flower garden, swimming and boating at Rye beach, entertaining a wide variety of guests. To all appearances she was calm, radiant, self-assured; yet within, the unrest of old began again.

On a day, happy yet disconsolate in the bittersweet of autumn, Amelia walked about the grounds at Rye, under the great oaks and through the paths. Underfoot the dead leaves crunched and crackled; above, bare branches hung in the crisp air, the remaining leaves hanging on, tenacious and unwilling to surrender to the wind, which was relentless in its sudden swirling gusts.

AE hooked the fur neckpiece closer to her neck, drove her hands deep into the pockets of her tweed coat, and looked down at the dust that had gathered on her flat brown walking shoes. She walked up the flagstone steps to the side door that opened on the patio, then raised her head and looked up over the tops of the trees. Across the clear blue of the sky she watched afternoon clouds scud by. Her eyelids flicked quickly over her gray-blue eyes. With a sudden jerk at the door handle, she swung inside the house.

Early that evening she showered briskly and put

on gold crepe pajamas. She sat before the fireplace and read the evening paper, waiting for GP to come home.

It was six thirty when he came through the front door. AE looked up at him; she had rehearsed all afternoon what she was going to say to him; it couldn't wait.

"I want to fly the Pacific," she said. "Soon."

GP stood inside the doorway, leaning against the arch. With a forefinger he pushed his glasses up along the bridge of his nose. "You mean from San Francisco to Honolulu?" he asked.

"No. The other way. It's easier to hit a continent than an island." She fingered the topaz link at the cuff of her long pajama sleeve.

George put his brief case and hat on the hallway table. "When do you want to do it?"

"Fairly soon. But only when I'm ready—and the ship."

It was not long afterward that the Putnams moved to the West Coast, not so much to be closer to the Pacific Ocean, but so that AE could be near the center of the aviation industry in California.

By December plane and pilot were ready. Paul Mantz, Amelia's good friend and a crack pilot, acted as her technical adviser. He was her Bernt Balchen on the West Coast. On December 22 AE and her husband and Paul Mantz and his wife left Los Angeles aboard the S. S. *Lurline* of the Matson Line, bound for Honolulu. Lashed to the aft tennis deck of the ship was a new Lockheed Vega. The old one had been sold to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia for more than eight thousand dollars. The new plane,

like the old, was painted a vivid red for quick recognition in the event it should go down on a flight.

When the ship docked five days later, Amelia, as soon as she descended the gangway, was surrounded by newsmen. “Would she be the first woman to fly from Hawaii to the mainland?” they asked.

Amelia bent her head to accept the lei placed about her neck by a pretty native girl. Never one to divulge her plans to the press, AE replied affably yet distantly: “I thought I would do some flying over the Hawaiian Islands.”

Not satisfied with that answer, a reporter pressed his point. “If you fly to the California coast,” he asked, “will Mantz fly with you?”

Amelia grinned, then broke into a rare, broad gap-toothed smile. “If I fly to the coast,” she replied, “I will not take a cat along.”

For two weeks she waited in Honolulu for the right weather conditions and for the sign from Paul Mantz that the plane and engine were in top condition for the Pacific crossing. The Vega had been taken to the Navy’s Wheeler Field.

Amelia made one public appearance, at the University of Hawaii, where she spoke on “Flying for Fun.” Before the speech, word of the flight had leaked out, and there had been criticism of her from the press; a newspaper had said that her radio equipment was inadequate for the long flight to California.

The night of January 2 Amelia stood at the podium in Farrington Hall, telling students and faculty about her fun in flying. In the audience sat

GP, listening attentively. His wife, he thought, had responded beautifully to his coaching: she had become a first-rate public speaker. A young man came down the aisle and handed George a note. GP unfolded it and read: Paul Mantz, at the moment flying above the islands at 12,000 feet in AE's plane, had reached radio stations up and down the mainland, and inland as far as Arizona. The Vega's radios could send and receive, GP concluded, not the mere 300 miles leveled at Amelia in the criticism from the press, but 3,000 miles. GP sent the note up to his wife.

AE read the note aloud and grinned. She looked up at her audience. "I realize"—she spoke in a solemn tone—"that I have made a serious mistake." The audience bent forward to hear the rest. Amelia's mouth curled up in a half-smile. "I was born a mere *woman*," she said quickly, "instead of a man." The audience roared in delight.

While they were in Honolulu the Putnams and Mantzes stayed at the home of Chris Holmes in Waikiki. Early on the morning of January 11 GP and Paul Mantz went to Wheeler Field. Amelia stayed behind and ate a slow, leisurely breakfast, then went outside for a sun bath.

Toward noon a light rain began to fall, and Amelia scurried inside. By the time George returned for lunch, the rain had developed into a heavy tropical downpour. AE stood at the window; disgusted with the sudden change in weather, she watched wanly as the thick raindrops slid against the panes and outside splashed on the palm leaves and streaked to the ground. It did not seem that she would take off today.

"I don't think it looks very good yet," she said.

Then hoping that the rain might slacken and make it possible for her to get off later, she added: “Do you mind if I take a nap?”

At 3:30 P.M. GP checked with the Navy weather officer. The forecast predicted good weather along the projected course of the flight if Amelia could get off before more bad weather moved in from the west.

George went into the bedroom and awakened his wife. After hearing about the predicted weather, Amelia decided she would try it. She put on her brown flying suit and went to the window. The rain had stopped.

At four thirty they drove out to the field to the concrete apron where the Vega was parked. Paul Mantz and Ernie Tissot, the mechanic, stood by the plane. They told her everything was ready. AE clambered up to the wing and down into the narrow cockpit.

She settled her one hundred twenty pounds onto the cushion of the seat, reached up over her head, and pulled the hatch shut. She started the engine and let it idle while she checked the dials for fuel and oil temperature and pressure. The pistons worked smoothly and evenly: she quickened to their steady rhythm. It was four forty-five.

Amelia signaled to Ernie Tissot standing by the wing. He ran under and removed the chocks from the wheels. AE waved from the cockpit to GP and Mantz on the apron.

She moved the throttle forward and taxied to the edge of the field. She swung the nose around and pointed the plane up between the two rows of flags that had been planted along either side of the unpaved runway. The Vega stood ready.

Paul Mantz dashed to the rear of the plane and removed a thick clod of mud and grass from the tail skid.

Amelia calmly appraised the scene outside. About two hundred people, it seemed, had gathered to watch her attempted take-off. She could see that many of them, particularly Wheeler personnel, were armed with fire extinguishers. The women had handkerchiefs in their hands: Amelia hoped she wouldn't have to bring them to tears with a crash. The ground underfoot was wet and soggy from the rain. The wind sock hung limp; the prevailing northeast wind had not only failed to prevail, it was dead.

Down the runway she fixed her eyes at a point along the marker flags where she would chop throttle and jam on the brakes if she could not lift the plane off the ground. Beyond that point and the end of the 6,000 feet of runway she saw the fields of sugar cane, and diagonally across from them, into the distance, the mountain peaks cushioned in low-hanging clouds.

Out of the corner of her eye, to the left and down the field, she caught a glimpse of three fire engines and an ambulance. With everybody so pessimistic, she decided, the least she could do was try.

She opened the throttle and held the brakes hard. The plane shook and vibrated against the prop wash, blasting back against wings, fuselage, and tail. She released the brakes. The Vega started forward, slow, sluggish, heavy with the extra fuel tanks.

She could see Ernie Tissot running alongside the wing: his feet squashing in the mud, a dead cigarette drooping from his lips, his eyes flashing fear in a

dead-white face. “Cheer up, Ernie!” she wanted to call to him over the noise of the motor. “It will soon be over.”

Paul Mantz stood along the side, next to one of the marker flags. “Get that tail up,” he shouted. “*Get that tail up!*”

The plane strained against the sucking mud and then began to roll, now faster, through the mud. Amelia saw the flags flapping in a wind, but it was just the opposite of what she needed; it was a tail wind. She felt the tail come up, then the plane getting lighter. Suddenly the wheels hit a bump. The Vega jumped into the air, then began to settle toward the ground. Amelia jammed the throttle full forward. The engine caught the added power, and the plane lifted slowly into the air. AE grinned. She had made it.

She climbed to 5,000 feet, swung to the right, and headed out to Honolulu and Diamond Head. She had left behind 2,000 feet of unused runway.

“If I do not do a good job,” she had written to GP, just in case, “it will not be because the plane and motor are not excellent, nor because women cannot fly.”

The letter need not have been written. The women with handkerchiefs at the ready would not have to use them. Ernie Tissot could scrape the mud from his shoes, regain his color, and light a fresh cigarette.

Amelia dipped her wings over Honolulu. Below she could see people—they looked like ants—going home to supper. At 5:00 P.M. she crossed Makapupu Point, the last of the island outposts. Out under the wing and to the right the long sloping side of

Molokai glittered through a blue haze. Clouds began to gather.

She climbed to 6,000 feet, well above the clouds; from on top they looked fluffy, like mashed potatoes, and the dark sea under them like gravy.

She rolled out her radio antenna and unhooked the hand mike. “Everything O.K.,” she reported in. She adjusted her earphones, then turned the dial of the radio beside her to station KGU in Honolulu, and listened to the music.

The music stopped, and an announcer broke in. “We are interrupting our musical program with an important news flash,” he said. “Amelia Earhart has just taken off on an attempted flight to Oakland.”

“*You’re telling me!*” Amelia shouted out loud in the cockpit.

The announcer continued: “Mr. Putnam will try to communicate with his wife.” GP broke in loud and clear. “AE,” he said, “the noise of your motor interferes with your broadcast. Will you please try to speak a little louder so we can hear you?”

Amelia was thrilled to hear his voice; it seemed as if he were sitting next to her in the plane. She reported in again, louder, and George was satisfied. It was the first time they had spoken together ground to plane. The darkness outside had enveloped the Vega.

But above and below and around her the night became a night of stars. They clustered about her; she felt that she could reach out and pluck them as they rose from the sea and hung outside the cockpit. She had never seen such large stars, and now the moon slipped out from behind the clouds. The

contrast of the starlight and the moonlight and the white clouds against the black sea struck her as no other night scene had before.

In the thousands of miles of ocean she had flown over before this, she had seen little of the ocean below. She had sped over clouds, fretted between layers of them, or plowed through thunderstorms, for hours on end. And ships she had seen only near land.

Now the night was bright and she reveled in its beauty. She spread her map on her knee and checked for the positions of ships out of Honolulu, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The ships on or near her course had agreed to keep their searchlights on for her. She looked at her clock: it was nearing midnight.

Off the right wing and below, against the black sea, shone a pink light. It had to be a searchlight from a ship. Amelia snapped on her landing lights, flashing them three times. Then she flicked the toggle three more times. She turned her radio dial, trying to tune in on station KFI in Los Angeles. A spattering buckshot of radio code hit her ears. She realized it was the ship, trying to submit a signal to her. Then from the ship's lights came a rapid flicking on and off. They were answering her earlier signal from her landing lights. She checked her map again: on course, 900 miles out; the ship was—it had to be—the *Maliko*, from the Matson Line.

Below, clouds now joined, knitted, and closed over the ocean. Ahead, the stars grew misty, dim, and distant. There was blackness everywhere, and dead ahead on course—rain.

Like pins, fine raindrops hit the windshield and spread in long, wet needles down the glass. Amelia

squeaked open the cockpit window and breathed deeply of the cool wet air. The rain squalls continued for the next two hours.

Suddenly she realized that she was hungry and thirsty. She reached into the little cupboard she had prepared in the right wing. There, neatly stored against hunger, were water, tomato juice, sweet chocolate, malted-milk tablets, a thermos bottle of hot chocolate, and a picnic lunch. She decided on the hot chocolate. She unscrewed the top of the thermos, pulled out the cork stopper, and poured out a cupful. In short, quick sips, she drank the hot, sweet chocolate liquid. Its warmth spread through her and she felt good.

She set the empty cup down in the cupboard; then, changing hands on the stick, she rubbed and kneaded the muscles of her thighs and calves. They were stiff and tired. She could not look upon her legs for long without feeling a deep sense of thankfulness, for they invariably called up the image of those amputees she had seen in Toronto during the war. The experience had changed the course of her life.

15. *Nurse's Aide in Toronto*

She had been nineteen at the time. It was in 1917, during the Christmas vacation of her senior year at Ogontz, the Philadelphia finishing school, when Amelia and her mother went to visit sister Muriel, who was attending St. Margaret's in Toronto.

On one blustering morning, a few days before Christmas, Amelia went shopping. She pulled the collar of her long, warm coat close to her neck and buried her chin in the fur against the cold. She bent into the icy wind whipping in from Lake Ontario and slowly pressed her way down the street. Late shoppers bustled in and out of the stores and up and down the sidewalk.

Toward her came four one-legged soldiers with crutches, thumping and swinging up the pavement, and grimly pressing their shoulders against the wooden supports. The sight of one of the veterans in particular greatly disturbed Amelia. He was younger than the others and he caught her eye as they went by. He had smiled at her with difficulty and in his face was the look of incredulous bewilderment, as if he had suffered his loss too soon to realize what had happened to him. Amelia tried not to stare at his empty khaki pants leg which had been folded and pinned to his hip. She forced a smile in return for his, and then looked the other way as her eyes welled up with tears.

For her, war had been simply a matter of parades and brass bands and men in uniform. She had been

unaware that Canada had been at war for four years. Like so many other Americans, especially women, she really didn't know what war was like. The crippled soldiers made her feel guilty and ashamed. She decided she must do something to help.

That night she had a long talk with her mother. "I want to stay in Toronto," she told her, "and help in the hospitals. It's useless for me to go back to school."

Mrs. Earhart tried to dissuade her daughter. "But you're graduating this year, Melia," the mother said. "You should graduate from school before you do anything."

"I don't care," she answered. "I want to help. A diploma doesn't mean anything; but what you do does. I'm old enough to know what I want to do, and I want to do something useful in this world."

The mother had met this stubbornness before, when as a child Amelia had wanted such things as a flat-bellied sled, a football, a baseball bat. Mrs. Earhart relented: her daughter was of an age to make her own decisions, even if they did seem somewhat impulsive. She would have to learn for herself, now, and discover the consequences of her own acts.

Amelia started training under the Canadian Red Cross and soon qualified as a nurse's aide. Her first assignment was to Spadina Military Hospital, a converted college building. With characteristic energy in meeting a new challenge, she scrubbed floors, made beds, and carried trays of food. She worked from seven in the morning until seven at night, with two hours off in the afternoon.

"Sister," the patients would call to the slender girl in the white coif and the white starched uniform,

"please rub my back." Sister Earhart would rub backs —some of them lovely ones, she frankly admitted. "Sister, please bring some ice cream today instead of rice pudding." Sister Amelia, remembering the rice puddings that came back untouched, bearing little crosses with the epitaph *R.I.P.*, matched pennies with the help in the kitchen. With her winnings she bought ice cream for her patients.

Although Amelia found much satisfaction in her work as a nurse's aide, there was another activity that attracted her as no other had. At first she had looked simply out of curiosity, but now she would go out to the edge of the city to Armor Heights whenever she had time off. She had become fascinated by the training planes and the way they took off and landed. She had seen and talked with some of the young beginning pilots at the hospital; they had crashed their planes through some mishap or other, and some of them had barely escaped death. Yet they were of unqualified good humor: they laughed and joked with one another about their accidents, and spoke gruesomely yet smilingly about an ambulance as a "meat wagon." They were blasé and devil-may-care, and such an attitude toward life and death, so kindred to her own, intrigued her.

She wanted to know more about these young men and their business of flying. Despite their surface merriment, she wondered what it was that made them fly, even in the face of death. Certainly they realized the danger involved; if so, she reasoned to herself, there must be something beyond the danger that somehow lured the pilots into the air. She would have to find out for herself what it was.

Soon she ventured closer to the airport and the operations shack where she could watch the young

men. They were Canadian, Scotch, Irish, American. She talked with some of those she had seen at the hospital either as patients or as visitors. She loved to watch their descriptions of various maneuvers; “hangar flying,” they called it. They simulated with their hands the best way to execute a loop, or a barrel roll, or a lazy-eight. Their enthusiasm fired her with an irrepressible urge to go up.

She begged one after another of the pilots for a ride to see what it was like. Just a take-off and a landing, and she was willing to pay. “Sorry,” they would say. “Regulations absolutely forbid giving civilians any rides.” Certainly not a woman. “Even the general’s wife couldn’t go up,” one of them said. “And she can do just about anything she wants.”

The pilots laughed at the expense of the general’s wife. Amelia, turning away in disappointment, kicked her toe into the packed snow. A plane with skis turned off the ramp and taxied out to the field; the blast from its propeller flung back a sheet of snow that stung Amelia full in the face. She raised her arm against further lashing, and walked away toward the side of a building.

Here, she thought, was a challenge she would like to meet. She watched the pilots put on their big padded helmets and adjust their goggles. The men smeared grease on their faces to prevent freezing in the biting cold of the Canadian sky. Someday she would get her chance to fly in an airplane, and maybe fly one herself. She wanted to be the master of one of those planes and make it obey her will like a horse, a winged horse, and send it roaring through the sky. Amelia was a lone and disconsolate figure as she nurtured her private dreams and left the eager pilots and their planes to their man’s world of flight.

She headed back to the city and to woman's work at the hospital.

AE was still working as a nurse's aide at the time of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, and at the time of the great Toronto Exposition a few months later.

Amelia and a friend joined the crowds that pressed through the fairgrounds to see the displays and exhibits. AE wanted especially to see a highly advertised added attraction: a demonstration of stunt flying by one of the returned aces of the war.

As the time drew near for the air acrobatics, the two companions settled themselves in the middle of a clearing. Suddenly they heard the plane. Shading their eyes against the afternoon sun, they looked up.

The plane was black against the sky, then red as it turned and the wings and fuselage caught the sun. The little plane twisted and turned and rolled; then it looped and spun down to the right. As the plane swooped down close to the ground, the crowd broke and ran like frightened deer.

The friend grabbed Amelia's arm; she wanted to get out of the field, fast. Amelia stood her ground. The companion fled for safety.

Nose down and motor roaring, the plane hurtled headlong in a steep dive toward the lone girl in the middle of the clearing.

Amelia gripped her hips, spread her feet and planted them defiantly on the ground. No plane and pilot were going to scare her. She had seen them pull out of dives many times before. Certainly this pilot was no fool, and he seemed to have the plane fully under control.

The plane, a bare 200 feet from the ground, roared out of its dive, wings and struts shaking, and climbed in a tight half-loop back into the sky; now on its back, the plane kicked over in a half roll, then sped away, a disappearing speck on the horizon.

Amelia hadn't moved an inch. And because she had faced it in that moment of danger, the plane had said something to her—something thrilling and buoyant and exhilarating. There was now no question that someday she, too, would fly. And it didn't matter if she was a woman. Someday she would get her chance.

16. *Back Home Again*

Amelia shook her head and rubbed her eyes. After staring at her instruments and following them during the night, she looked forward to the dawn. She had missed it on the Atlantic solo because of the clouds. There was still time, she knew, before light could crack through the darkness of the eastern horizon. Like a window with the panes painted black, it was closed shut.

She felt warm and cozy in the small cockpit. She yawned. Easily she held the stick between her legs and thighs, then reached her arms high and stretched, working her long fingers open and shut. She took the stick again with her right hand, brought her feet up from the rudders, then pressing her heels on the floor, she sat up and down in quick, short jumps.

Resettled on the cushion of the seat, she scanned her instruments, then looked out. To the right, a thin line of light lay on the dark horizon. She looked up through the hatch: the stars were gone. Slowly, well to the right of course, the top arc of the sun appeared. Amelia was puzzled: she should be flying into the sun. She wondered if she weren't heading for Alaska. She quickly checked her maps and charts, then the compass before her on the left. Everything was as it should be. Obviously, then, the sun was wrong and she was right.

From the compartment in the left wing, where she kept her small tools, an extra flashlight, spare

batteries, and other odds and ends, she took out her sunglasses and hooked them behind her ears. She wanted to be ready for the full brilliance of the morning sun.

Through the dark glasses she saw below her a solid overcast of clouds. They looked like the stiffly-beaten whites of eggs, and they made her think of breakfast. She reached into the cupboard in the right wing and pulled out a hard-boiled egg from the picnic lunch.

While she nibbled on the egg, she looked at one of the three chronometers she had set in Honolulu, the one for indicating lapsed time. She had been flying for fifteen hours, and according to her time and distance figures, she should be somewhere near San Francisco—if there had been no head winds during the night. Below, the ocean was blanketed in overcast.

The fog over the water began to break up. Through one of the holes she hoped to see signs of land, but she saw only water, blue in the morning sun, ruffled, and flecked with white. Then through another larger hole, she caught sight of a ship; from 8,000 feet it looked like a toy boat. Down through the opening Amelia plunged, and pulled out at 200 feet to investigate. She circled the ship several times, and discovered it was the *President Pierce*. The wake from the ship, which stretched for a mile, was exactly on her compass course. AE followed the foam as if it were a beam.

She tried to make radio contact with the ship, but was unsuccessful. She then tried radio station KPO in San Francisco and this time established contact. She asked for the position of *President Pierce* and was told that the ship was 300 miles out from

San Francisco. Amelia checked her map and grinned: that was exactly where the ship was supposed to be. Settling back in her seat, AE cruised at 1,500 feet and made straight for the coast.

She strained her eyes for sight of land. The clouds overhead played tricks on her: their shadows on the water looked exactly like islands. Amelia now wondered if real land would look like cloud shadows.

She climbed to 1,800 feet. Dead ahead on course she saw an undulating outline of what she hoped were the coastal hills of northern California. As she approached, they were unmistakable. She looked up for the tops, then noticed a valley between them. She added throttle and nosed over the hills. Squinting ahead as far as she could see, she saw at last the familiar notch of land and water that could only be San Francisco Bay. Directly below, San Mateo rolled into view.

In the next six minutes she crossed over the bay, then sighted Oakland, and finally the airport. She had made it back home. Elated with her victory, she felt a new tide of energy surge within her, flooding out the ache and soreness of tired muscles. As she had done so many times before at Oakland, she made her approach and landed.

As she started to taxi from the end of the runway, she noticed great crowds waiting at the ramp. Then the barriers broke and thousands of people ran toward her plane. Amelia chopped the throttle, cut the engine switch, and locked her brakes. She opened the hatch and stood on the seat, and as she shook her mop of hair from out of her helmet, a deafening roar assailed her ears.

Amelia climbed down from the Vega and

dropped to the ground. Her knees felt weak; her face, as if it were drained. “I feel swell,” she said, stroking her hair with a quick sweep of the hand. She held a stray lock between her fingers. “I always look this way,” she explained. “I’m a little tired—you will have to excuse me.” She was driven away in a waiting car.

17. *Solo from California to Mexico*

For the next few weeks after the Pacific flight Amelia rested at her home near Toluca Lake and luxuriated in the warm California sun. She spread a blanket on the wide lawn and took sun baths. She stretched her long, straight legs over the soft wool of the blanket, closed her eyes against the glare of the sun; then, as if she were preparing maps and charts for a long flight, she surveyed her past accomplishments and her future plans.

The *Friendship* flight and its sudden catapulting to fame of an unknown social worker. The year before that when she had read in the Boston newspapers about Charles Lindbergh and his sensational solo conquest of the Atlantic: how she had thrilled to his victory. The “Lady Lindy” tag the press had given her because she looked like him: how it made for difficulty in trying to be herself and making her own flights. The Atlantic solo: she had to do it to deserve the fame that the *Friendship* flight had heaped upon her. The hop from Hawaii was free and clear: it involved no debt that had to be paid. And so would the rest of her flying be. Women could fly as well as men; she had proved it and would prove it. Then when she reached forty, that fortieth year which followed July 24 in 1937, she would quit —give up long-distance flying and retire to short jaunts for pleasure. Each thought had unfolded before her scrutiny, like new stretches of countryside

beneath the wing of her Vega. Amelia turned over on the blanket and tanned her back. She was not yet thirty-seven.

Not for long after the Pacific flight, therefore, did she stay on the ground or remain confined in her attractive California cage. The year 1935 became one for record-making and record-breaking. On April 19 she flew 1,700 miles from Burbank, California, to Mexico City; then on May 8, from Mexico City to Newark, New Jersey. The first flight she made because of an invitation from the president of Mexico; the second, because Wiley Post told her not to do it.

One day when AE and Wiley Post were discussing flying in general, Amelia told the veteran pilot about her plans to fly from Mexico to New York. He asked her what route she intended to take. She told him she would go as the crow flies—in as straight a line as possible.

Wiley Post strode across the room to a globe on the table. He turned it until he found Mexico, then measured the distance to New York between his thumb and little finger. He raised his head.

“You are cutting across the Gulf then?” he asked. The white patch over his eye caught the light from the window.

“Yes, sir!” Amelia answered. There was no doubt in her voice.

“That’s about seven hundred miles,” he said. “Almost half an Atlantic.” He looked at her directly, his large round face serious and questioning. “How much time do you lose if you go around by the shore?”

“About an hour. Maybe a little more.” She fingered the long string of pearls about her neck. Her voice was low and soft.

“Amelia, don’t do it,” Wiley Post said. “It’s too dangerous.”

AE was incredulous. Did Wiley Post, who had braved every hazard in flying, think such a simple flight as this one was too dangerous? She could not wait to be on her way.

It was not the first or the last time that she disregarded professional advice.

Shortly before midnight on the nineteenth of April she soared into the California moonlight, heading south and east. The light from the full moon was soft; it gently gilded the rolling hills and marked as with a large diffused flashlight the course to the Gulf of California. In the moisture of the night air the Wasp motor purred: the rhythm of the pistons was smooth and even.

The moonlight, which had been a guide, now played tricks on the earth below. A white haze had moved in from the coast and covered the shore line and the stretches of desert. In the light it was difficult to tell the one from the other. Amelia strained her eyes, looking for telltale signs to help her navigate. Now she caught the light on the rolling breakers, then a black shadow on the scalloped sand, but the short glimpses were not enough for pilotage.

She scanned the instrument panel. Her eyes stopped short at the dials on the lower right. The hand of the oil-temperature gauge pointed beyond the red quadrant. The engine was burning hot. Amelia reduced throttle, then readjusted the propeller at another setting. Neither helped. The

Wasp continued to overheat.

She pulled out her flashlight, flicked it on, and checked her maps. According to time and distance, Mazatlán, on the Mexican coast, should be directly below. Gently she applied left stick and rudder, leveled her wings, and headed east. Mexico City should be 600 miles away. She stared directly before her and slightly to the left at her compass: it had rolled into the new heading.

Left and right under her wings the mountains of Central Mexico sloped upward into high tables. She found the towns of Tepic and Guadalajara. She hoped she would not wander from her course: unknown winds had a way of keeping a plane from making its track.

The Vega, cruising at 10,000 feet and at an indicated air speed of 150 mph, sped over the mountains and plains. Amelia caught sight of a railroad below. A railroad? It should not be there. She wondered where she might be.

She had estimated her time of arrival at one o'clock, Mexican time. The chronometer for total elapsed time clicked past the hour for arriving over Mexico City. She looked down, trying to find something on the ground to correspond to the markings on her map. She flicked off the flashlight. She was lost.

As if in insult an insect flew into her left eye. Amelia tried to dislodge it by rubbing the closed eyelid with her finger; the rubbing made the eye sore, and it started to burn and cry. She flickered her eyelid, trying to keep the eye open so that she could see. It was no use. Suddenly she decided to make an emergency landing.

Amelia thought of Wiley Post, who could make a landing easily with one eye. He had learned to get along without depth perception in judging distances and lining up objects on the ground. Would that she had his ability now.

She circled, looking for a likely place; then she spotted what seemed to be a pasture. She swung down low and swept by in quick inspection. Unlike the time in Ireland when Gallagher's cows fled in all directions at the sound of the plane, now the goats and cattle were placidly indifferent to the roaring plane, and the Irish green grass and shamrock were replaced by cactus and prickly pear.

Amelia fixed her good right eye on a patch of the pasture, swung a wing up in a steep turn, and eased the plane into the final approach. Reducing the throttle, she brought the stick back slowly, held the nose up, and dropped the tail skid then the wheels onto the ground. The plane clattered to a stop.

Cowboys and villagers sprang up as if out of nowhere and rushed to the plane. They were not at all surprised at seeing a woman pilot, at this time of the night, at such an unlikely place.

The vaqueros could not speak English and Amelia could not speak Spanish. Smiles and gesticulations served as the common tongue. One of the cowboys showed Amelia on her map where she was. He pointed to Nopala, then pointed down to the ground; a bright white smile broke across his dark skin. Amelia nodded, then noticed on the map that Mexico City was only about fifty miles away.

As she looked about around the plane, she could now see that what she had thought was a pasture was in fact the bed of a dry lake. Happily she noted

as she walked up and down that the bed was flat and without obstructions for take-off. She hoped that the engine had now cooled down sufficiently so that she could make it to the capital city.

By waving her arms she tried to explain to the villagers that she wanted a path cleared down the dry lake so that she could once more get into the air. She climbed into the plane, then taxied down to the edge of the hard, sandy bed. She looked out to see if the way ahead were clear: two cowboys had placed themselves in the middle of the take-off run, directly in front of the plane. Amelia set the brakes and climbed out of the cockpit.

With much pointing and gesticulating, she finally convinced them that everybody—including cattle, goats, and children—was safest far over to the sides.

She walked back to the Vega. She took a corner of the kerchief about her neck and wiped her left eye dry; the insect had been watered and flushed out.

The Lockheed roared off the dry lake bed. In less than thirty minutes AE had found the military field at Mexico City and rolled her plane to a stop.

The days that followed were for Amelia what she called “Fun in Mexico”: meeting, seeing, doing in endless activity. She met President Lázaro Cárdenas, she saw the floating flower gardens of Xochimilco, she watched a game of *jai alai* and a *charro* fiesta. She attended a concert given in her honor.

A few days after the concert she was given a costume like the one worn by the cowboy musicians who had entertained her. She promptly put it on and wore it to a horse show; then posed in it, her face cracked wide in a full smile.

She loved the color of the costume because it was her favorite blue. There was fine silver embroidery at the collar, sleeves, and waist, and along the seams of the trousers. To top the ensemble, she wore on her head a large high-crowned sombrero with a curled-up brim gaily trimmed in entwining leaves and flowers. It became one of her treasured gifts.

The women of Mexico, particularly, interested Amelia. As she went about from place to place, she noted the few sheltered women of the higher classes; the many, bent and worn from the hard labor of the peon; then again the few self-supporting of the middle classes in the city. She would have liked to know more of their strivings and ambitions; she had seen enough, however, to know that reforms were needed in the new order.

“I, for one,” she wrote of the experience, “hope for the day when women will know no restrictions because of sex but will be individuals free to live their lives as men are free—irrespective of the continent or country where they happen to live.”

As in the past, GP had joined AE and guided her through all the festivities. As her manager he had become indispensable to her, particularly where only a man could get certain things done. She was free to live her own life as men are free, but there were times when GP with his bulldozing energy was the only man for the job. Without his help she would not have been able to take off from Mexico.

18. *Solo from Mexico to New Jersey*

Mexico City was 8,000 feet above sea level. To fly non-stop to Newark, New Jersey, Amelia would need a full load of gasoline; with a full load, she would not be able to take off from the short runway of the military field. George Putnam resolved the dilemma.

Nearby there was the dry bed of Lake Texcoco; if the obstructions were cleared, there would be plenty of room to get three tons of aircraft and fuel into the air. She had landed and taken off under similar conditions at Nopala when she had lost her way; why not now? Amelia looked over the mud-caked flats and agreed it could be done.

GP took over. He organized and supervised the work of Mexican soldiers in getting the dry bed ready for the Vega's landing and take-off. He pitched in with the men as they leveled hillocks and filled ditches, until they had prepared three miles of makeshift runway. The job done, George then flew to New York to gather weather data from Doc Kimball, in order to advise his wife as to the exact weather conditions she would encounter in her record hop.

The Vega had been flown into the dry bed while AE waited from her husband for the signal to go. Weather permitting was always a condition imposed on any flight. For eight days she waited in Mexico City for the weather to become favorable.

It was not until after midnight on May 8 that GP phoned from New York. “Good visibility,” he said, summarizing Doc Kimball’s analysis, “but the winds are not very favorable.”

At one o’clock that same morning Amelia decided to go. She sent word to the men at Texcoco to fill the Vega’s tanks with 470 gallons of gasoline; then she went back to bed for a few hours’ sleep. At four o’clock she awoke, had breakfast, and drove out to the lake bed.

As at Wheeler Field in Honolulu, the pathway for the take-off run had been staked out with flags. Amelia walked to her Lockheed. By the light of automobiles which had been parked with headlights on she could see empty gasoline drums that had been rolled off to the side; and perched on a ladder, a mechanic who was giving the Wasp motor a final check.

AE climbed into the cockpit. She was handed some provisions through the hatch. Earlier she had ordered one hard-boiled egg and one sandwich, but into the cupboard in the right wing she now placed much more. There was enough food for many days of sustained flying: six hard-boiled eggs, three of them already shelled; four sandwiches, with thick slices of meat; three cans of tomato juice; one thermos bottle of hot cocoa and another of water. The way she was cared for, the accident of sex was sometimes a happy one!

She started the engine and let it idle for a few moments. Then she opened the throttle wide and checked the rpm’s and magnetoes. She watched the fuel and oil pressure, the fuel and oil temperature. She brought the throttle back. Everything set.

At 6:06 A.M. the Vega roared down the runway and blasted into the air. AE had used only one mile of the three she thought she would need for the take-off from the dry lake bed. She smiled as she climbed to 8,000 feet. Again the plane had behaved beautifully. If there was one name she truly loved besides Earhart and Putnam, it was Lockheed. During the take-off run she had forced the Vega to stay on the mud flats until it developed a speed well over a hundred miles an hour; then it flew into the air by itself.

Amelia watched the altimeter until it indicated 10 on the dial, then she leveled off. She skimmed over the mountains surrounding the valley in which Mexico City lay. Together valley and mountains formed a large saucer and rim. Behind her Popocatepetl and Ixracihuatl mountains loomed; they seemed mighty, proud, majestic with their white-peaked crowns of snow. The rising sun flung its warmth over the dappled earth.

To Amelia, the tomboy of Kansas whom the magic of flight had transformed into an air adventurer astride Pegasus, the land below was a veritable fairyland of beauty. Like Alice through the looking glass she thrilled to each new sight. Like a taller Gulliver she looked down from 10,000 feet and strode on swift, unseen legs through a Lilliputian world of small green fields, narrow dirt roads, tiny adobe huts, bull rings that could be covered with a hand. They were the playthings of a child.

She crossed the divide. Thick clouds formed and stretched out over the Gulf. Briefly they parted and through them she saw a cluster of oil tanks. She checked her map and estimated that she was over Tampico. Applying right stick and rudder, she

turned, leveled her wings, and took up a northeast heading. Straight ahead, across the Gulf of Mexico and 700 miles away, should be New Orleans.

Over the water, she remembered the warning of Wiley Post: “Amelia, don’t do it; it’s too dangerous.” She grinned and shook her head. Why, everything was fine! She scanned the instrument panel, listened to the steady purr of the motor. Fine indeed. She reached into the cupboard and unwrapped one of the peeled hard-boiled eggs. She ate the egg quickly; then she took out one of the thick sandwiches and the thermos bottle of water.

She munched, sipped, and mused. Wiley Post was right in a way. It would be safer to make long over-water flights in a bigger and better plane. Two engines would be ideal. Why, with a multimotored plane a pilot could fly anywhere. She rolled the paper wrapper from the sandwich into a tight little ball. She squeezed it hard in her hand, then popped it into the compartment in the left wing. Why, with a two-engined plane a pilot could fly—around the world! She settled back in her seat and pressed her shoulders against the bulkhead behind her. One day, perhaps. One more good, long flight. It would be the last. Then she could sit back, relax, and really write a good book about flying. The others, the articles and the books, had been done too hastily. She could do better.

Ahead she saw a ragged peninsula jutting out into the water; short, stubby fingers of land, then the long index finger. At the base of the notch formed by the thumb and index, a city. It must be New Orleans. She radioed in on the New Orleans frequency. She had made it; her dead reckoning had been right on the nose.

From New Orleans to Newark she could be in radio contact all the way. She reported in to Mobile, Montgomery, Atlanta, Charlotte, Richmond. She felt like a country telephone operator listening in on party lines, the conversations were so numerous and frequent on the way across the country. She looked out and watched the darkness cover the earth. She snapped on her navigation lights.

Successively, each of the cities as she looked down at the lights was a treasure of diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds. A thousand and one nights' treasure that had been tipped over, spilled out, and spread over the black land. She thrilled to the sparkle and glitter.

At 9:05 P.M. she passed over Washington, D.C., and reported her position. Into her earphones came the voice of Eugene Vidal, her old friend from the Ludington Line. He came in loud and clear. "You've done enough," he said. "You'd better land at Hoover Airport." He was calling from his office at the Bureau of Air Commerce.

Amelia grinned. "No thanks," she answered him. "Going through to New York." Then she added, "Cheerio."

It was a beautiful night for flying, too beautiful to land. Clusters of bright green and silver stars against the black of the night were better than emeralds and diamonds at Tiffany's.

Amelia checked the gasoline gauges for the left- and right-wing tanks and for the big extra tank in the passenger compartment. She studied the fuel-flow meter. Everything normal. The Wasp purred in steady, rhythmic beats. She pulled out the thermos of hot chocolate. She gulped a mouthful; the warmth

from the sweet liquid spread through her.

People had often offered her coffee or tea, and on other occasions liquor and cigarettes. She didn't believe in stimulants of any kind; she didn't need them. Once, someone had asked her why she didn't smoke. He had undoubtedly seen her endorsement of a cigarette after the *Friendship* flight.

Amelia smiled as she remembered. To overcome any thoughts of prudishness he might have of her she had thereupon taken two cigarettes, lit them, and puffed them into clouds of smoke. "There," she had said, after they had burned down and she put them out in an ash tray, "I have smoked." She never smoked again, not even in jest. But there was nothing to prevent her if she wanted to. That point had to be made clear.

She looked out from the cockpit and ran her eyes from wing tip to wing tip. It was a lovely night: the new moon, the stars that could be scooped into the palm of her hand, the clean, fresh air that whistled through the opened windshield. Space unlimited. She looked at the tachometer: the needle was steady at 1,750 rpm's; then at the indicated air speed: unwavering at 150 mph. Homeward bound. Everything fine.

Waiting for her at Newark were GP and thousands of other people who had heard about the flight and driven out to the airport. With George were Paul Collins, AE's other good friend from the Ludington Line; Doc Kimball, the famous New York weatherman; and Dr. Eduardo Villasenor, consul general for Mexico. From the southwest they saw a single-motored, high-winged plane. It was AE, and she was ahead of schedule.

Paul Collins, a veteran of more than a million miles in the air, watched the plane come in. The red and green passing lights slid down and up in a turn, then rolled out and headed down for a landing. Thinking of the long flight that was being finished, apparently without effort, Paul shook his head. There was admiration in his voice. “That’s a flier!” he exclaimed.

Doc Kimball was proud that AE was one of “his fliers.” “Such people are good for us all,” he said, just after the plane touched down on the runway.

Amelia taxied the plane to the parking ramp. She saw a huge crowd of people straining at the ropes that held them in. The crowd broke and ran for the plane. AE cut the switch. The throng, now wildly shouting, had eddied up and completely surrounded the plane. Amelia opened the hatch. A loud roar of welcome acclaimed her.

GP, lost in the sea of faces, looked up at his wife who could not pick him out. She looked like a little girl in the heavy flying clothes. Her face was streaked with grime; her eyes were taut and strained.

Two policemen pushed through the crowd to the side of the plane. Amelia jumped down to them. One policeman grabbed her right arm; the other her left leg. They started to move in opposite directions. Amelia screamed. The policemen reunited at the girl and plowed through the mob to the police car.

19. *Purdue University*

"You are all a lost generation," Gertrude Stein had said to Ernest Hemingway about him and the group of disillusioned postwar expatriates who lived in Paris. Hemingway had quoted her in *The Sun Also Rises*, published in 1926. The phrase "lost generation" became a touchstone of the times; in the early thirties it still persisted, but now included in one wide sweep all who were the young, the troublesome, the enigmatic.

In 1934 the New York *Herald Tribune* held its annual conference; the topic: "Women and the Changing World." Amelia Earhart was a guest speaker. In the audience was Dr. Edward C. Elliott, president of Purdue University. Up on the platform Mrs. William Brown Meloney rose to introduce the famous woman flier.

"I present to you," Mrs. Meloney said, turning to AE, "evidence against a 'lost generation.' For I remind you that no generation which could produce Amelia Earhart can be called a lost generation. She has set a pace for those of her age and time. She has never been content to rest on her laurels. She has worked, and is working, and will continue to work hard to further the science to which she has dedicated her life."

Amelia, thirty-six years old and born in the same year as Ernest Hemingway, sat uneasily as she listened to the introduction. She had been asked to

discuss youth. Although she did not consider herself a member of the younger generation, she certainly did not consider it lost. She got up from her chair and walked to the speaker's stand. Her voice was low and confident. The speech was short and to the point.

"It is true," she said, after making the usual introductory salutations, "that there are no more geographical frontiers to push back, no new lands flowing with milk and honey this side of the moon to promise surcease from man-made ills. But there are economic, political, scientific, and artistic frontiers of the most exciting sort awaiting faith and the spirit of adventure to discover them."

She brushed her hair back with a quick sweep of the hand. "Probably no field," she continued, now with more animation, "offers greater lure for young people—explorers—than aviation. It has the color and movement of flying to kindle the imagination, and its growing importance as an industry is tempting to those who plan serious careers in transportation, for aviation is simply the newest form of transportation—the climax of the human pageant of human progress from oxcart to airplane...."

She listed some of the problems in aviation that had to be solved, and admitted that there were no easy solutions. "For," she then explained, "the economic structure we have built up is all too often a barrier between the world's work and the workers. If the younger generation finds the hurdle too absurdly high, I hope it will not hesitate to tear it down and substitute a social order in which the desire to work and earn carries with it the opportunity to do so."

She narrowed to a conclusion. "The ancients, such as I am," she said, as she drove home a burning

conviction, “should be listening to young ideas, rather than pointing up opportunities in a world”—she paused for a quick breath—“which has the elders decidedly on the run.”

President Elliott of Purdue nodded in agreement. Such a woman, he decided, who believed in young people, belonged on a college faculty.

A few days later Dr. Elliott joined the Putnams for dinner at GP’s favorite restaurant in New York, the Coffee House Club. GP and AE sat with their guest at a little table on the second floor. The room was cozy. The men talked.

Amelia glanced at the familiar surroundings, and was glad that her husband had taken her to such a place. As if clearing the area before making a turn in the Vega, she directed her eyes across the books and paintings along the wall, the piano in front of the little stage, the Fish drawings and Chappell cartoons along the other wall.

George looked at his wife. She seemed particularly lovely to him that evening. Her long bangs, neatly combed over the high forehead; the clear blue-gray eyes, forever hiding a mystery; the sensuous lips and the wide mouth; the strong jaw; the long, lovely hands: on such a night as this he could propose to her all over again.

After dinner they walked casually out of the room toward a couch against the far wall. Dr. Elliott pulled up a chair; AE and GP sat on the couch. Amelia leaned to one side, held her skirt, and tucked her feet up and under her.

President Elliott looked at the bulletin board above the couch, then at the slight figure of Amelia. He caught her eye, then told her how much he had

enjoyed her speech at the *Tribune* conference. Young people, he explained, were his business and he could never find enough of the professionally trained to motivate and inspire his students.

"Amelia," he said, smiling, "we would like to have you at Purdue."

AE thought a moment. "I'd like that," she said, knowing nevertheless that she had no degrees to qualify for such an assignment. "But what do you think I could do?"

Dr. Elliott's eyes brightened and crinkled at the corners. "We have about six thousand students. Eight hundred of them are girls. We don't think the girls are keeping abreast of the opportunities of the day nearly as well as they might be."

Amelia warmed to the possibilities. "And I...?" She began a question.

"You could supply the spark they need," he answered. "Something from outside the classroom."

For two hours they continued to discuss the idea. By the time President Elliott had been taken to Grand Central for a midnight train, the project had assumed a definite shape. For one month during the academic year Amelia would deliver lectures, act as a counselor to the girls, and advise the department of aeronautics. AE liked the challenge. Purdue at the time was the only university in the country that had its own airport.

On June 2, 1935, after the Pacific and Mexico flights, President Elliott formally appointed Amelia Earhart to the faculty of Purdue University. "Miss Earhart," he announced, "represents better than any other young woman of this generation the spirit and

courageous skill of what may be called the new pioneering. At no point in our educational system is there greater need for pioneering and constructive planning than in education for women. The university believes Amelia Earhart will help us to see and to attack successfully many unsolved problems."

Amelia was heartened by the announcement. Not satisfied with the record flights of the spring, she now tested the high-speed capabilities of her plane. In July she set the transcontinental speed record for women, by flying from Los Angeles to Newark in seventeen hours, seventeen minutes, and thirty seconds.

In November, AE was the "flying professor" of the Lafayette, Indiana, campus. With the students, male and female, she was easy, casual. Dressed in slacks at a conference, she would swing her legs up on a desk or table and chat. She invariably preferred an atmosphere of informality.

She lived in one of the women's dormitories at Purdue, and kept her door open for any of the girls who wanted to drop in for a visit. In the dining hall she had a different group sit at her table for every meal.

Amelia soon declared herself as the empiricist and pragmatist which she was. Learn by doing and have fun at it had guided her every step through life. At one of her first lectures she explained why she came to Purdue. It was her kind of school—a technical school where all instruction had its practical side. Education, she felt, had failed to discover individual aptitude soon enough. If a child's bent could be determined early, much study and work in the wrong direction could be avoided.

"We have watched the colleges," she said, "produce countless graduates who could only demand jobs for which, notwithstanding the adequacy of their formal education, they might be totally unprepared or unfitted, and in which they were often even just plain not interested.

"It's a fundamental problem, and I can imagine that reform may involve the entire reconstruction of our educational system. Because Johnnie liked to play with tin soldiers, his mother has jumped to the conclusion, since the year one, that he wanted to be a soldier! So she packed him off to military school—which he hated—though maybe she never found it out—all because what really interested him about tin soldiers was that they were made of lead, and lead is metal, and you heat metal and melt it and make it into lots of things—steel for skyscrapers, decorative ironwork, leading for stained-glass windows...."

Although she would have liked to, AE soon discovered that it would be impossible to interview all 800 women students. She therefore sent out a questionnaire to them. In answer to one question she learned that 92 per cent of the coeds wanted to go into useful employment after graduation.

She would assemble the girls in large groups and talk to them.

"After all," she said to them, drawing from her own experience, "times are changing and women need the critical stimulus of competition outside the home. A girl must nowadays believe completely in herself as an individual. She must realize at the outset that a woman must do the same job better than a man to get as much credit for it. She must be aware of the various discriminations, both legal and traditional, against women in the business world.

"I cannot tell you that you will be able to bounce right out of college into your life work. I believe, under existing conditions, that it is almost impossible to do. But I believe also that it doesn't greatly matter, for the business world will draw out one's aptitudes.

"Probably no sure way has yet been discovered for women—or men either—to know before they reach the age of sixty-five if they have done right by their lives; and even then I believe they can't be exactly sure that something else they could have chosen would not have made their lives richer.

"Probably people of outstanding talent—like Lily Pons, for instance—couldn't do anything but follow their natural bent. Such people must know they're in the right profession. The rest of us, I fear, can never know for certain until we can take a backward look in old age, for we must have a background of experience against which to make comparisons. So our vocational starts are somewhat conditioned. But not fatally, surely. Of course if men and women are very unhappy in their work, they are entitled to a pretty good opinion that they are in the wrong work. Yet if they are happy in it—I don't believe it means, necessarily, that they couldn't be happier.

"And so I'm inclined to say that, if you want to try a certain job, try it. Then if you find something on the morrow that looks better, make a change. And if you should find that you are the first women to feel an urge in that direction—what does it matter? Feel it and act on it just the same. It may turn out to be fun. And to me fun is the indispensable part of work."

Aptitude, trial and error, practicality, fun: such were the tenets of her proclaimed philosophy for

living. For the girl who initially had accidentally become a heroine of flight, then had to prove it to herself, and for the rest of her life to the world who acclaimed her, it was the only possible philosophy.

Although she forgot to mention it, there was in her life, in addition to the necessity of fun for work, much work in her fun. And despite the fact that her practical self would never admit it, she was also a romantic and a visionary. Like the skylark and the nightingale of Shelley and Keats, she was a blithe spirit and a light-winged dryad, who soared on the wind and pranked the starlight sky. Without her dreams she could not live in the wide-awake world.

Like Henry David Thoreau, the famed mystic of Walden Pond, she could say:

I hear beyond the range of sound,
I see beyond the range of sight,
New earth and skies and seas around.

There was fitful restlessness in the way Amelia had skipped from job to job and interest to interest on the ground, the ground in which her soaring ambition could never take root. It was only in the air that she found the repose and the leisure to probe the depths of her own soul, to come to a sustaining knowledge of herself.

Dr. Elliott was pleased with her work. So was the Purdue Research Foundation, which set up an Amelia Earhart Fund for the purchase of a plane that she could use experimentally at her own discretion.

AE, despite a deep interest in the engineering and mechanical aspects of flight, wanted to study the human elements involved—“the effects of flying on people.” She had named herself as the first guinea

pig.

Early in 1936 enough funds were declared available for her to make her choice of airplanes. Amelia picked a new twin-engined ten-passenger Lockheed Electra transport plane. It was what she had wanted for a long time: a bigger, safer airplane.

Amelia now announced to GP that she planned to fly around the world at the equator. It was something no man had done, not even Lindbergh.

Like the matador of many victories who pits his ability against the bull by getting closer and closer to the horns and making more and more difficult passes, or the mountain climber who has proven himself the victor over the tallest peaks and has yet to climb Everest, so Amelia, who had triumphed over the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and the North American continent, now would set out to conquer the one remaining adversary to her skill and courage —the world.

PART THREE

THE LAST FLIGHT

1. *Crack-up in Hawaii*

IRONICALLY, Amelia Earhart's flight around the world was her last long flight. "I have a feeling," she had said to Carl Allen of the New York *Herald Tribune*, "that there is just one more good flight left in my system, and I hope this is it. Anyway, when I have finished this job, I mean to give up major long-distance flights."

Her plan was to girdle the earth at the equator on an east-to-west flight. The time of departure was set for March, 1937.

For Amelia, the flight was the greatest challenge of her life. No one had done what she planned to do. There had been other flights around the world, but none had been attempted at the equator. Wiley Post, AE's good friend, had flown around the world twice in his Vega, the *Winnie May*, once in 1931 with Harold Gatty, then again by himself in 1933.

In 1935 Wiley Post tried again, this time with Will Rogers as his passenger. The plane, a half-breed of Lockheed Orion and Sirius with floats attached, was dangerously nose heavy. "You'll be in trouble," the engineers told him at Lockheed, where they refused to put on the floats, "if there's just a slight power loss on take-off." Post was stubborn and insistent. He found another company to attach the pontoons. At Point Barrow, Alaska, in August, the engine stuttered on take-off. The plane nosed in and crashed, and two of the most famous men of their

time were killed.

Wiley Post's flights had been made well north of the equator, at a distance only two thirds the length of the equator.

There had also been some remarkable distance flights by others. In 1933 the Lindberghs made a 29,000-mile air-route survey of Europe, Africa, and South America. Laura Ingalls in 1934 had flown solo from New York to South America and return, a distance of 16,897 miles. Also in 1934 the Pacific was flown in a first west-east flight, from Australia to California, by Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith and Captain P. G. Taylor.

By girdling the globe, Amelia could achieve not only the record for distance, but also fly around the world. She would like to do it alone. It would be fun to be the first to fly the equator.

AE made her plans, the most elaborate and time consuming of her career. The details that had to be worked out, she found, were formidable. But she began simply, almost casually, to map out the 27,000 miles of the flight.

One day early in the winter of 1936 she walked across the living room in her home at Rye. She picked up the globe from the long table behind the sofa. She turned the globe to the Pacific, placed her thumb on Oakland, and spanned her hand to Honolulu; then from Honolulu her long, slender fingers reached easily to two little islands just above the equator. In another stretch of the hand she reached New Guinea. Seven thousand miles across the Pacific Ocean were easy to cross by a span of the hand, but those two little islands, Howland and Baker, were mere specks on the globe.

She looked closely at Howland, and wondered if she could find it flying alone after nearly 2,000 miles out from Hawaii. She swept her hand quickly over her hair and grinned. This was the most exact kind of flying. She would need the best of navigation equipment. She would need a navigator to make it.

When GP came home she told him of her need for a navigator; not for the whole flight, but just for the long over-water legs across the Pacific. George picked up the phone. He always knew whom to call.

GP first telephoned Bradford Washburn, a young Harvard professor who had done some distinguished ground navigation and exploration. Washburn agreed to come to New York for an interview.

AE was sprawled on the living-room floor with her maps when the young professor came into the house. She liked his cut: he was slim, wiry, handsome. She liked the set of his jaw and the look of his clear eyes. She got up from the floor, smiled, and reached out a hand in welcome.

Pilot and prospective navigator sat on the floor and discussed the problems involved. Amelia traced the itinerary she had marked on the map, mentioning, as she moved her finger, the distances between points.

Bradford Washburn examined the first two proposed legs of the flight. He was familiar with the Electra and felt it could easily make the distance from California to Hawaii. The long stretch over the vast Pacific to the tiny dot that was Howland Island: that was an immediate difficulty to overcome.

“How far did you say it was to Howland?” he asked.

"Roughly, about 2,000 miles," Amelia said.

"Your 50-watt radio isn't strong enough for that kind of flying. On such a long leg as that one you'll be out of range of any ground stations." Washburn looked intently at Amelia. "If you're off just one degree on your heading, you'll miss that little island completely."

Amelia had no intention of being one degree off course. The best navigator available could hit the island right on the nose.

"What kind of radio signals will there be at Howland to home in on?" The professor pursued the point.

"None," Amelia answered.

For Bradford Washburn the interview was over. The project was out of the question. He did not want to look for a needle in a haystack, especially if the haystack were the Pacific Ocean—and certainly not without a strong magnet to find the needle.

Bradford Washburn was convinced that Amelia had rather not have a navigator, that she had decided on one only as an irritable necessity. Her self-confidence, her belief in her own flying abilities, was for him towering and magnificent to behold; but he wanted no part of it.

"One must take chances," AE had often said before, and she repeated the same words in the hope of hitting Howland Island.

That she was devil-may-care was perhaps attributable to what seem to have been premonitions, foreshadowings which she blatantly ignored. AE and GP had spent an afternoon examining gyroscopes at the Sperry plant in

Brooklyn. On the way home Amelia had stopped the car at a red light on Flatbush Avenue. In the blue dusk of that winter's day she noticed off to the side an old man step off the curb and start to shuffle across the street. "It's hard to get old," the old man muttered as he crossed, "so hard." Amelia heard every word.

The light changed. Amelia slammed the clutch to the floor and shifted the car into gear. Her lips were closed tight, her eyes intent on the moving traffic. At the next corner she turned into a side street, drove around the block, and swung back up the street to where the old man had stepped off the curb. She looked up and down the opposite sidewalk. The old man had disappeared in the crowd.

That night, before going to bed, Amelia turned to George. Her eyes were level and serious. "It *is* hard to be old," she said. "So hard." She walked to the mirror and sat at her dressing table. She looked hard at her own reflection. "I'm afraid I'll hate it. Hate to grow old."

GP said nothing; he waited for his wife to finish.

Amelia turned and faced her husband again. "I think probably, GP," she spoke slowly and deliberately, "that I'll not live to be old."

On the twenty-second of July, 1936, Amelia went out to Burbank, California, to inspect the new Lockheed for the first time. The all-metal plane glistened as it was rolled out of the hangar into the sun. AE examined the plane closely: she walked the 55-foot span of the wings, climbed into the cockpit, worked the controls, and started the engines.

Lockheed, in keeping with its previous stellar

designations for its aircraft, had christened the low-winged, twin-engined monoplane the Electra, after the “lost” star of the Pleiades.

Amelia, dressed in a mechanic’s white coveralls and inspecting her new plane, paid no attention to any designations, stellar, mythological, or psychological. She promptly dubbed the plane “the flying laboratory.” That was practical and to the point, for that was what the plane in fact was.

She loved the navigation equipment which had been installed in the passenger compartment. She climbed in to look it over. The fuselage had been cleared of passenger seats. Directly behind the cockpit two large tanks had been bolted in place; they could hold 1,000 gallons of fuel. That would give the plane an added range up to 4,000 miles. Behind the tanks was a complete navigation room.

She walked to the wide chart table set up against the bulkhead and under the far window. Through the round glass in the table she read the master aperiodic compass placed directly below. Mounted at each window was a pelorus, for taking bearings from any land mass. She set her eye to the tube of the one at the window over the table. The special flat plane of the window allowed for no distortions, especially for the readings from the bubble sextant. She noted next to the table a temperature gauge, an air-speed indicator, and three chronometers; and above the table and to the left side of the window an altimeter.

The arrangement for the use of the drift indicator was brilliantly simple. On the cabin door a special latch had been installed to keep the door open about four inches. Down through the opening in the door she swung the drift indicator. By looking through the instrument at smoke bombs during the day or flares

at night, a navigator could determine the direction and velocity of the wind. Amelia was satisfied: her laboratory was adequate to the task from the navigation point of view.

The communications equipment, however, was at once delightfully modern and frustratingly primitive. Pilot and navigator had voice radio; but only the navigator had telegraphic key. Both could transmit and receive with ground stations, but not with each other. For intercommunications the navigator would have to use a cut-down bamboo fishing pole, with an office clip nailed to the end of it, to send messages written on cards up to the pilot; if he wanted to talk to the pilot, or if he wanted to dial the radio behind the pilot to a new frequency, he would have to crawl along the catwalk over the two big tanks between the cockpit and the passenger compartment.

The radio had a power of only 50 watts. Amelia was not satisfied, and she tried to borrow a better, more powerful, system. The radio was the weakest link in the laboratory chain.

For weeks she flew the Electra up and down the California coast, working out the “bugs.” In August she went to New York to enter the Bendix Trophy race. The coast-to-coast speed flight, she felt, would be an excellent “shakedown” for the plane.

Other women joined in for the race and gathered at Floyd Bennett Field. Louise Thaden, Blanche Noyes, Jacqueline Cochran, Laura Ingalls, Martie Bowman, Mrs. Benny Howard: all were stiff competitors. Helen Rickey had agreed to be AE’s copilot.

During the race trouble developed in the Electra’s fuel lines, and Amelia had to drop out much

against her will. But two women did win the race: Louise Thaden with Blanche Noyes as her copilot.

Preparations moved along for the world flight. Clarence S. Williams of Los Angeles was engaged to get ready maps and charts. He laid out compass courses, the distances between points, the exact times at which to change headings: he prepared sectional after sectional for the many legs of the flight. His work was invaluable.

Paul Mantz was technical adviser, as he had been for the Hawaii-California flight. He supervised the mechanical readiness of the plane, and took it up on many test flights.

GP managed the far-flung problems, and they were many, of stopping places and alternates for the caching of fuel, oil, spare parts. Red tape of international length had to be cut and unsnarled. Innumerable credentials were needed: permissions to land from foreign governments, passports, visas, certificates of health and character, negative police records, medical papers. George made all the official advance arrangements. Before he was finished, he had spotted fuel and oil at thirty different locations along the route, and had collected several thick folders of papers for his wife.

Amelia made more and more notes on her charts as new information poured in. Airports, alternates, emergency landing fields, winds aloft, weather, terrain, altitudes: each had to be entered at the proper place. She took the maps and carefully marked the stop-off points, then drew lines to a double row for entering the exact amount of gas and oil that would be available along the way.

In preparing for previous flights she had revealed

her plans only to closest friends, but this time Amelia did not shroud her activities in secrecy. The press received broad clues, and then were blamed, half-jokingly, as the cause of it all. Late in 1936 AE said to reporters in Los Angeles, “I’m nearly sold on the idea of flying around the world because I’d like to do it; but I’m a busy person this year. I have a lot of other things to do. Next year? Well, one never knows.”

On February 11, 1937, Amelia had flown to New York from California. Newsmen had surrounded her at the Hotel Barclay; they wanted a confirmation or denial of all the rumors they had heard about her plans for a world flight. With AE was the man who had agreed to be her navigator. He was Captain Harry Manning, her old friend from the *Friendship* days, on whose ship, the *President Roosevelt*, she had returned home.

Amelia smoothed at the hips the dark-blue wool dress she had changed into. The press rarely saw her in “feminine” clothes. “Well,” she said, “I am going to try to fly around the globe.” She toyed with the bright scarf about her neck. “The flight will be as near to the equator as I can make it, east to west, about 27,000 miles.”

The press moved in. Reporters fired questions at her, photographers shot pictures at close range, newsreel men turned on their bright lights and rolled their cameras. Somewhat flustered by the sudden excitement she had caused, Amelia laughed. “You know,” she said to them, “I feel you men have pushed me into this. You are the ones who have kept saying that I was going to fly around the world, until finally you’ve compelled me to think seriously about doing it.”

Carl Allen, her friend from the New York *Herald Tribune*, would have none of it. “Oh, come now,” he protested, “nobody has pushed you into it. You know you’ve been wanting to do it all the time.”

Captain Manning, stolid and silent beside AE, smiled uneasily. Amelia quickly relinquished her ground. “Yes, I suppose you’re right. I guess I didn’t get away with that, did I?”

“What are you going for?” one reporter abruptly asked.

AE thought for a moment. The question was one she had heard many times before. “Well,” she answered, “I’ve seen the North Atlantic. And I’ve seen the Pacific, too, of course; at least a part of it. But”—she hesitated—“well, just say I want to fly around the globe. And I think a round-the-world flight just now should be at the equator.”

She turned to the quiet man beside her. She looked at his thick, curly black locks. “Captain Manning is going with me part way,” she explained, “because I don’t believe the pilot on such a flight can navigate, too.”

Interview over, reporters broke for the nearest telephone. The world heard and waited.

Amelia dived again into the myriad details of preparation. She was still dissatisfied with the radio equipment. She realized that a 50-watt transmitter and receiver could reach only about five hundred miles under normal conditions. On the Hawaii-California flight the Vega radio had reached up to 2,000 miles, but only because of skipping—a radio phenomenon in which radio waves bounce up and down from the ionosphere and move forward for incredibly long distances.

But skipping was something that could not be depended upon. Some of the ground stations would be much farther than 500 miles apart. The distance between Hawaii and Howland was 1,940 miles; between Howland and New Guinea, 2,556 miles. The other navigation equipment was good, and worked well in test after test. How to strengthen the weakest link?

The problem continued to plague her while she gained more and more experience flying the Electra during most of the year 1936. Often she flew cross-country until she attained that assured feeling of confidence that came when the plane became an extension of her own body and limbs.

It was during the late morning of one of these flights, with Jacqueline Cochran acting as copilot, that Amelia landed at Wright Field in Ohio. The women pilots were met by Manila Talley, AE's friend from Denison House days, whose husband was stationed at the field. The three of them climbed into Manila's car and drove to the Officers' Club at adjoining Patterson Field for lunch. Mrs. Talley noticed that AE seemed somewhat distraught.

When they sat down to lunch Amelia told her companions how she had hoped to borrow desperately needed radio equipment. She had been unable to get better radios from the manufacturers. They told her they had lost all they could afford on flights that didn't make it. And, she was reminded flatly by them, regulations absolutely forbade lending government equipment.

Mrs. Talley and Miss Cochran tried to dissuade Amelia from making the flight with inferior equipment.

AE was adamant. “I have to meet my obligations,” she said. “We’ve sold letter covers to pay for the flight. I have to carry them.” She had earned $10,000 by selling and carrying letter covers for the Pacific flight. And for the world flight, Gimbel’s in New York had sold to collectors 10,000 covers, which had realized some $25,000 to meet expenses.

Amelia straightened her back against the chair and popped her crumpled napkin onto the table. “I will simply have to make do,” she said with a stamp of finality, “with what equipment I have.”

Other equally important matters occupied her days and nights. One at a time problems had to be faced, solutions had to be worked out. The preparations were the part of the iceberg that didn’t show.

Paul Mantz wrung out the Electra in shakedown flights and final tests. GP surveyed the extra-long runway at Oakland, waited for the final word about the emergency field being completed at Howland Island, and coordinated final arrangements with the Department of Commerce, Pan American Airways, and the Coast Guard.

For two weeks Amelia pored over weather maps, waiting for the one which would let her go: it didn’t have to be completely satisfactory, only acceptable.

There was plenty of help for the flight to Honolulu. Paul Mantz would be her copilot, and helping Captain Manning in the navigation room would be Fred Noonan. They were a right good crew.

Captain Harry Manning, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner for heroic daring in having rescued thirty-two men from the sinking steamship *Florida*,

had taken leave of absence from his ship to be the navigator. Paul Mantz, expert pilot, movie stunt flier, aviation instructor, owner of a flying service, dependable technical adviser, was as familiar with the Lockheed as AE herself. Fred J. Noonan, a veteran of twenty-two years of ocean travel before he joined Pan American Airways, transport pilot, instructor in aerial navigation, had pioneered routes for PAA flights across the Pacific.

The plan was to drop Mantz off in Honolulu, where he could join his fiancée; to leave Noonan at Howland, where he could take the Coast Guard cutter back to Hawaii; and finally to drop Manning at Brisbane, Australia. From that point on Amelia hoped to continue solo for the rest of the way around the world.

On March 17, 1937, Amelia and her plane were ready. The Electra waited in the Navy hangar at Oakland. There was Gaelic festivity in the air: it was St. Patrick's Day. In deference to Fred Noonan, AE pinned shamrocks on the men and herself. But the weather was not favorable; it drizzled, on and off, all day.

Amelia went to the window of the Navy office and looked out. Time and again she had waited at windows before, watching and waiting for the weather to clear. She drove her hands into her brown slacks, then adjusted the collar of her plaid wool shirt, then twisted the brown linen scarf about her neck. She turned up the collar of her brown leather flying jacket. Crow's-feet gathered at the corners of her eyes as she squinted at the wet grayness outside.

Several showers passed over the field. Shortly after 3:00 P.M. she watched the low scud beginning to clear, and heartened as a thin strip of blue

appeared in the higher overcast. The crew was alerted. It was time to go.

Paul Mantz started the engines, taxied the plane out of the Navy hangar, and stopped on the apron. Manning and Noonan ran out and climbed into the passenger compartment. To avoid reporters and well-wishers, Amelia sneaked into a Navy automobile and was driven out to the plane. GP drove out with her. Quickly she was hustled up onto the wing and into the cockpit. GP bent in and wished his wife a final farewell.

For five minutes AE and Mantz revved up the engines, checking the rpm's and magnetoes of first one and then the other, then both of the powerful Wasps.

The Electra taxied to the east end of the field, to the 7,000-foot runway. On alternate sides of the take-off strip, cardboard placards had been staked out every 150 feet. Small puddles of water splotched the runway. Throttles were advanced and the props blasted back. The take-off roll was short: the five-ton Lockheed eased into the air after 2,000 feet. It was 4:37 P.M.

The flight to Honolulu proceeded without incident. At 5:40 A.M. the next morning, 2,410 miles, fifteen hours, and forty-seven minutes after Oakland, the Electra touched down at Wheeler Field.

Despite the long flight just completed, Amelia, teeming with energy and anxious to be on her way, wanted to take off for Howland without delay. But the weatherman dampened her zest.

Bad storms, she discovered, had started to move in from the southwest. Resigned, Amelia went to the home of a friend and slept. There was no point in

worrying about the weather. “Weather permitting” had always qualified her every flight plan.

Paul Mantz, meanwhile, moved the plane to Luke Field, for the use of the longer runway there. Although the Electra would not use the full fuel capacity of 1,151 gallons to get to Howland, the weight of 900 gallons was still considerable. At Luke, a Pratt and Whitney mechanic made a thorough final inspection of the two Wasp engines. There was no time to spare: AE had sent word that she wanted to take off at dawn on the following day.

Amelia rose early that morning of March 19. Light began to break over the hills of Pearl Harbor as she drove out to the field. Expecting her, Paul Mantz had warmed up the engines; and Captain Manning and Fred Noonan had taken their places in the navigation room.

Amelia climbed into the cockpit. Before her lay the 3,000 feet of runway. The concrete shone in the morning light, and here and there gleamed patches of water. AE signaled; the mechanics pulled the chocks away from the wheels.

She lowered the flaps, held the wheel firmly, then slowly inched the throttle forward. The 1,100 Wasp-stung horses fought to go. The Electra started to roll. Halfway down the runway one wing dipped.

Amelia applied opposite aileron. The plane pulled to the right. AE yanked the left throttle all the way back. The nose swung from right to left, but the wing would not lift. She watched helplessly as the wing tip hit the runway and scraped the concrete in a shower of sparks. Then the right landing gear collapsed, the plane careened, then swung around uncontrollably in a swift ground loop. Amelia

chopped the other throttle, cut the switches, and climbed out of the cockpit. On the ground she met Manning and Noonan jumping out from the passenger compartment door. They had not been scratched.

The $80,000 Electra lay like a broken bird upon the pavement. The right wheel had been sheared off; the right wing was battered and crumpled. Amelia was sick at heart as she looked at her damaged plane. “Something must have gone wrong,” she said in an attempt to say something.

“Of course, now you will give up the trip?” someone asked.

Amelia shook her head. “I think not,” she said. “If it’s possible, I’ll try again.” Her voice trailed off. “Repairs. Costs.”

Grave and silent she left the runway. Later she regained her composure and called GP in Oakland. He was relieved to hear that she was safe. “They crashed; the ship’s in flames,” a reporter had told him. The sparks had been mistaken for fire.

A few hours later a newsman came up to Amelia. He tried to be understanding. “Tough luck,” he said. “Anyway, you’re fortunate to be alive. By the way, I understand your husband will be greatly relieved, because now you can’t go on with the flight.”

AE showed him the telegram she had just received from GP. “So long as you and the boys are O.K.” it said, “the rest doesn’t matter. After all, it’s just one of those things. Whether you want to call it a day or keep going later is equally jake with me.”

The reporters now pressed her for a statement. “Nothing has happened,” she announced, “to change

my attitude toward the original project. I feel better than ever about the ship, and I am more eager than ever to fly again."

Amelia turned and walked to the window of the operations building. She looked up. High above the center of the field a black bird swung through the air in lazy widening circles.

2. *New Route, New Preparations*

“Hamlet would have been a bad aviator,” Amelia once said. “He worried too much. The time to worry,” she added, “is three months before a flight. Decide then whether or not the goal is worth the risks involved. If it is, stop worrying. To worry is to add another hazard. It retards reactions, makes one unfit.”

Contrary to her injunction, AE, like the melancholy Dane, worried, but only for two months before she reattempted the world flight. In May the Electra would be repaired and ready again.

After the accident at Luke Field, messages offering encouragement poured in from everywhere. Loyal friends helped her to pick up the pieces and start again.

The brush with death she had taken as a fatalist. “Someday,” she told GP, “I will get bumped off. There’s so much to do, so much fun here; I don’t want to go. But when I do go, I’d like to go in my plane. Quickly.”

The old plans, most of them, would now have to be scrapped. Routes and weather conditions would have to be restudied. Where rains had been in March, there were now none; where winds had once proven favorable, they would now prove adverse; where monsoons had been predicted, there would now be dust storms.

For a world flight beginning in late May, the advantage seemed to lay in flying west to east. To beat the bad weather predicted for the first legs of the route, she would have to be through the Caribbean and Africa by the middle of June. If she left from Miami, the flight to Florida could serve as a final shakedown for the Electra. Amelia decided on a west-east route.

The reversal of flight plans brought on countless difficulties and greatly added expense. Fuel, oil, spare parts, mechanics would now have to be relocated. Typical was the change involved in one engine overhaul. A mechanic had been dispatched from London to Karachi; he would now have to be reassigned elsewhere.

Having taken the warning of Bradford Washburn about radio facilities on the ground, AE had made arrangements with the Coast Guard to have one of its cutters stationed at Howland Island, so that the Electra could home in on the ship's radio signals. All this had to be worked out again, and GP contacted Richard Black of the Department of the Interior to rearrange the necessary coordination.

Credentials had to be re-examined and reacquired. New approval for plane and pilot was secured from the Bureau of Aeronautics. Charts were replotted for the new routes, and hours had to be spent at Lockheed consulting with the engineers and the mechanics.

In blessed relief from the pressure of the many details, AE would slip out to Indio, in the California desert, to visit her flying friend, Jacqueline Cochran. Miss Cochran and her husband Floyd Odlum had greatly helped in the financing of the world flight. At the desert retreat Amelia could rest and bathe in the

sun, swim in the pool, or ride horseback.

On one such visit AE and Miss Cochran discussed, as they had before on other occasions, the experiments going on at Duke University in extrasensory perception. Amelia was extremely interested in the subject, as Miss Cochran had indicated her own ability at ESP.

Curiously, the two women pilots had heard that night on the radio about a passenger plane that had been lost somewhere in the mountains between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. Amelia asked Jacqueline if she could locate the plane. Her friend gave the location of the plane and other specific details of roads and mountain peaks in the area where the plane had gone down. AE called Paul Mantz, who verified the details on an aerial map. Excited, Amelia sped back through the night to Los Angeles, and took off early the next morning. She searched the area for three days and verified the names and locations in Miss Cochran's descriptions; but she could not find any trace of the plane. That spring, however, when the snows had melted, the wreckage of the plane was found just two miles from where Jacqueline Cochran had said it was.

At other times subsequently Miss Cochran demonstrated again her extraordinary extrasensory powers. At AE's request, she located another missing airliner, crashed and pointing downward from a mountain peak. The plane was found at the exact location.

Before one of her flights with GP in the Electra, Amelia asked her friend to record the details of the flight. Miss Cochran gave exact dates, times, and locations near Blackwell, Oklahoma, where AE had landed to remain overnight.

As a result of these experiences, the two friends decided that in the event AE should go down and get lost on the world flight, Jacqueline would tell the rescuers where to look for Amelia and her plane. That she failed when Amelia went down in the Pacific is one of the deepest sorrows of Jacqueline Cochran's life. Yet many of Miss Cochran's perceptions about the disappearance were correct.

Upon returning from Indio to plunge again into her preparations, Amelia immediately concerned herself with finding a new navigator. Captain Harry Manning's leave of absence had expired and he had to return to the command of his ship. AE turned to Fred Noonan, Manning's co-navigator for the Honolulu-Howland leg of the aborted east-west flight. Noonan agreed to sign on.

There had been some anxiety from some quarters as to whether Fred Noonan was capable of the expert, high-speed celestial navigation needed on the long over-water legs of the world flight. Jacqueline Cochran, in particular, was most anxious, and convinced Amelia that she should take Noonan far out over the Pacific, fly him around in circles until he was disoriented, then make him take her back to Los Angeles. AE obliged. Noonan gave her the course back. The Electra hit the California coast halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Apparently, Amelia was undisturbed by the navigation error, even in view of the irrefutable and just-demonstrated fact that a mistake of one degree on the compass could, on a long flight, take her miles off her course. That she still engaged Noonan, knowing as she did that tiny Howland Island was just two miles long and only three-quarters of a mile wide, a mere fifteen feet above sea level, and more

than 2,550 miles from Lae, New Guinea, is testimony to an unshakable confidence in her own ability.

On May 19, two months to the day after the crack-up on Luke Field, the Electra, repaired and gleaming, was rolled out of the Lockheed hangar. Two days later it was flown up to Oakland where the letter covers were quietly and secretly placed on board again, then flown back to Burbank.

Amelia had made no public announcement about the reversed direction of the flight. To all appearances, therefore, when she, Fred Noonan, her mechanic “Bo” McKneely, and her husband George Putnam took off the next day for Miami, the trip was just another routine flight.

Actually, it was the final shakedown flight. If it proceeded without mechanical difficulties, Amelia decided, she and Fred would continue around the world from Miami; if not, she could bring the plane back to Burbank for further adjustments.

Late that afternoon they landed in Tucson, Arizona. The summer heat of the desert rose from the concrete ramp in wave after stifling wave. Discharging her passengers, AE taxied to the refueling pit. After having her tanks topped, she restarted the Wasps. The left engine stuttered, caught, then backfired, and finally exploded into a burst of flames. Amelia cut the switches and hit the left fire-extinguisher button. The men on the ground sprayed the burning engine with foam. The fire suffocated and died.

AE climbed out of the Electra to examine the damage. Wisps of smoke rose from the Wasp. The acrid smell of burned rubber filled her nostrils. The engine and prop were black with dirt and grime, the

cowling caked gray-white with bubbled foam. The heat from motor and ramp cloyed the air.

Early the next morning, when Amelia and her three men returned to the ramp, the engine had been repaired and the plane thoroughly washed. Out of the west, winds charged with sand began to swirl and sweep over the field. Amelia wanted to be on her way. “Let’s see if we can get up and over it,” she said.

They took off and climbed to 8,000 feet. All the way to El Paso, on the western edge of Texas, the sandstorm below, like a golden turbulent sea, billowed and eddied. On they pushed across Texas. That night they were in New Orleans. The next day, after crossing the Gulf of Mexico to Tampa, they turned southeast to Miami. At Miami the final decision had to be made.

Now began a week of final preparations. The Electra, Amelia decided, would not have to be returned to Burbank; the Pan American mechanics in Miami, she happily discovered, had all the skill needed to make a last tune-up on the plane.

While the men worked on the Electra, Amelia was ostensibly calm, patient, unhurried. She would sit on a service stand to watch an adjustment being made on one of the engines, sprawl on the tarmac to help with a bothersome strut, or join the mechanics for lunch at the “greasy spoon” restaurant across the street. The men, noticing her ready smile and easy ways, admired her as a pilot who knew her plane and as a woman who knew what she was about.

Fred Noonan renewed his old acquaintances among the Pan American personnel. “Poor old Fred,” they had said about him initially, “flying around the

world with a woman pilot." But growing to know Amelia as she calmly went about her tasks, they finally conceded to Fred that he had the pick of women fliers for his pilot.

Their acceptance of AE on an equal footing with the men of aviation reflected Fred Noonan's personal views. "Amelia is a grand person for such a trip," he wrote to his wife. "She is the only woman flier I would care to make such an expedition with. Because in addition to being a fine companion and pilot, she can take hardships as well as a man—and work like one."

For Amelia there was criticism from the press that she was just another "stunt flier," despite her statements to the contrary that she was conducting an experiment on the human level. The press was partially right.

"When I have finished this job," she said in confidence to Carl Allen, "I mean to give up long-distance 'stunt' flying." Then a smile creased her face. "I'm getting old," she added. "I want to make way for the younger generation before I'm feeble, too."

There were serious conversations with GP at the hotel where they were staying. He was anxious about her safety on such a long trip. Life held out so much else for her, he asked her if she could not give up the idea.

"Please don't be concerned," she said. Her voice was low and soft. She parted the bangs of her dry mop of hair. "It just seems that I must try this flight." She walked to the window and watched the waves in the distance breaking on the shore. She turned slowly. "I've weighed it all carefully. With it behind

me, life will be fuller and richer. I can be content. Afterward, it will be fun to grow old."

George Putnam knew from the look in his wife's eyes that her mind was made up irrevocably. Such was the woman he had married. She had to prove to herself, and to the world, that women could do as men could do.

Amelia made the final inspection of her aircraft. She was concerned about all the weight the plane had to carry and looked for ways to lighten the load. After she checked again each item of equipment, she finally decided to remove the 250-foot trailing wire antenna from the plane. It was too bulky and it was too much trouble to reel out and reel in while she was trying to fly the plane. One had to take chances.

3. *Miami to Africa*

Shortly after five o'clock in the morning of June 1, 1937, AE and Fred climbed into the Lockheed Electra to begin their flight around the world at the equator. Amelia started the engines. The dials of the engine instruments—rpm's, oil pressure, fuel pressure—swung into place; then she noticed that the needle for the left cylinder-head pressure failed to respond. AE shut down the motors. The left Wasp would have to be checked.

Bo McKneely scurried up a ladder, removed the cowling, and quickly spotted the trouble. It was a broken lead to the thermocouple—a thermometer coupled to one of the cylinders. AE and Noonan rejoined GP and his son David on the ramp, while McKneely resoldered the lead. The sun edged over the gray line on the horizon.

As Bo McKneely replaced the engine cowling, AE and Fred remounted the wing on either side and again climbed into the cockpit. GP, climbing up after Amelia, leaned in to bid his wife good-by. It was their last farewell.

Amelia slid the hatch shut, started the engines, and signaled for the chocks to be pulled from the wheels. She taxied to the southeast corner of the field and turned into the take-off runway. At 5:56 A.M. the Electra broke from the ground, bound for California by the longest way possible. The last flight was on.

The Lockheed climbed slowly to cruising altitude, then swung southeast to the course for Puerto Rico, the first stop. Amelia, settling back in her seat, looked out under the left wing. The blue waters of the Gulf Stream shaded into the green off the coast; against the light ocean floor, fish flitted darkly.

Shortly after six o'clock she tuned in on Miami's WQAM to find out what weather conditions were ahead on course. She heard, in addition, a breath-taking account of her own take-off. Such a dramatic rendering, Amelia reflected, would awaken any man. She turned to Fred in the right seat. They laughed aloud.

The sea was misty against the rising sun, and clouds swiftly scudded by under the wings. Then she saw the great reef that was the Bahama Banks loom into view, followed by the bright green tapestry of Andros Island. Fred had crawled over the catwalk back to the navigation room.

Amelia locked in the Sperry automatic pilot, then from a brief case took out her logbook—a secretary's dictation pad. She jotted down fleeting impressions: "... little rocks and reefs just poke their heads above the water. So few lighthouses in this mess ... trees in black silhouette against the burnished sun path.... The shadows of clouds (white clouds in the blue sky) are like giant flowers, dark on the green sea ... curtains of rain clouds aloft...."

Layers of cumulus clouds built up and sandwiched the Electra between them. Amelia nosed down to 1,000 feet and caught the sun again off to the left. Fred Noonan had estimated the time of arrival at San Juan as 1:10 P.M.

Shortly after twelve o'clock Fred sent up a card clipped to the end of the fishing pole. Amelia read: she was too far south of course. She swung the plane into a corrected heading. Through the haze she could not distinguish between sea and sky. She looked at the indicated air speed: the needle pointed at 150 mph. She was nursing the engines for the long trip.

Through the mist the island of Puerto Rico came into view. Amelia followed the coast line to San Juan. As the Electra closed in on the city, she spotted the airport and began her letdown for a landing. She lowered flaps and gear and eased into a long glide into the wind. Anchored off the near end of the runway was a four-masted schooner. Amelia skipped over the masts and rounded out in a three-point touchdown.

After she had taxied to the parking ramp, she suddenly realized that she had forgotten to eat any of the sandwiches placed on board the plane. Breakfast had been pre-dawn and 1,000 miles ago. She was hungry; and from the abrupt release of tensions, tired.

Friends waiting at the airport came to the rescue: Mrs. Thomas Rodenbaugh with food and Clara Livingston with rest. At the Livingston plantation, twenty miles from town, Amelia turned in at eight o'clock. The sound of the surf outside the window, "charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam / of perilous seas," surged over her and drowned her in a deep sleep.

For the 3,000-mile stretch, south and east down the coast of South America to Natal, there were only four satisfactory airports; between them, the grim alternatives of ocean or jungle. The first stop was to be Paramaribo, 1,000 miles away.

At four the next morning Amelia bounded out of bed, determined to make a dawn take-off. But occasion conspired against her. Repair work on the take-off runway would necessitate a shorter run to get airborne; to get airborne, she would have to reduce the fuel load; to reduce the fuel load, she would have to forego Paramaribo. She would have to push through to another, closer stop.

"*Push through*," she wrote. "We're always pushing through, hurrying on our long way, trying to get to some other place instead of enjoying the place we'd already got to."

As she had skipped from place to place as a little girl, and from job to job and interest to interest as a young woman, so now she skimmed over the world to touch and go. "Sometime," she said, realizing that her schedule prevented long visits, "I hope to stay somewhere as long as I like."

By the time the Electra was ready for take-off the sun was in full view above the horizon. The leg would have to be a short one; strong head winds had been predicted. Once in the air Amelia watched the green mountains of Puerto Rico change to white clouds and blue sea. From 8,000 feet the little clouds looked like white scrambled eggs. Far into the distance, and dead ahead on course, the hazy outline of the land mass of Venezuela came slowly into focus.

South America, the second of five continents to be flown over, was a complex of densely timbered mountains, valleys of open plains, and thickly tangled jungle. Amelia, looking at her first jungle, shuddered at the thought of the Electra having to make a forced landing—"the getting away would be worse than the getting down."

Fortunately, Fred had flown the region many times before. He would get them through. Such were the advantages of flying the Pan American route with a former Pan American navigator.

A dirty red-brown river snaked through a mountain pass. Amelia followed it inland to a town of red roofs and black oil tanks. It was Caripito. The airport offered a long, paved runway. AE eased the Electra down.

They lunched at the hangar and stayed overnight at the home of Henry E. Linam, general manager of Standard Oil for Venezuela.

The next morning—it was June 3—mountainous rain clouds hemmed in the town. Determined to get on, Amelia plowed through them, then skirted around them back to the coast. She climbed through showers to 8,000 feet and broke into the sunlight. The gray, dank world lay below.

AE pulled out her log and scribbled her sensations of the moment: “The sun illumines mystic caves,” she scribbled on the pad, “or shows giant cloud creatures mocking with lumpy paws the tiny man-made bird among them.”

Over sea, jungle, and shore line Amelia played tag with the clouds. From well out to sea she recognized off the right wing a muddy river spilling into a wide dirty fan; together they formed the Nickerie River and delta that separated British from Dutch Guiana. She turned inland toward the coast; and rather than follow the coast in true Pan American fashion, she now cut across Jungles. A strong head wind was reducing her ground speed: she advanced the throttle to make a true air speed of 148 mph.

Another river cut across the course line. It was a curling thread of silver with green beads of islands. Amelia spread the sectional map across her knees. It should be the Surinam River, she concluded as she ran her finger along the blue line on the map. Paramaribo must be 12 miles in from its mouth; and the airport, another 25 miles farther. Alongside the river on the map a cross-hatched line indicated a railroad. Instructions from Fred were to follow it; like Casey Jones, Amelia did.

On either side of the railroad track were jungle and now and again rice fields and mud huts. From the clothes swinging from the lines behind the huts AE tried to determine the direction of the wind, but she was too busy following the course of the river to get an accurate reading. Expecting to find a small hacked-out clearing for a landing field, she was delighted to find one of the best airport facilities she had ever seen. Paramaribo had gone aviation-modern! A wind sock marked the wind direction; strips of white cloth indicated the best landing strip; smoke from a bonfire, set ablaze when her plane came into view, showed the wind velocity. How thorough are the Dutch, Amelia thought, as she began her letdown.

Amelia and Fred were hot and tired when they climbed out of the Electra. Coffee, orange juice, and sandwiches were quickly provided. Refreshed, they went to the Palace Hotel, one of Fred's old Pan American stopping-off places.

At the hotel pilot and navigator discussed possible delays from rain and mud at the field. Amelia was eager to get on; Fred, calm and stoical.

"It's all a matter of comparison," he said to her. "We're impatient about a day's delay. That's because

that lost day's flying might see us across a continent or an ocean. But a swell way to learn patience," he assured her, recalling one incident in some twenty years of sailing the seven seas, "is to try a tour of sailing-ship voyaging. Back in 1910"—he stretched his long, slender body across a chair and footstool —"I was on the bark *Compton* which was then the largest square-rigged ship under the English flag."

Fred's eyes crinkled at the corners into crow's-feet as he smiled about what he was going to say. "We were weather-bound for 152 days on a voyage from the state of Washington, on the Pacific coast, to Ireland. After nearly half a year on one vessel on one trip you become pretty philosophical about the calendar."

Amelia's concerns about delay were somewhat alleviated by Fred's story, and, as she discovered the next morning when the day broke clear, unfounded. Ceiling and visibility were unlimited, except for a diaphanous mist that clung to the Surinam River. Happily they took off, bound for Fortaleza in Brazil, to fly over 960 miles of jungle and 370 miles of ocean.

They had left Paramaribo too early to receive any weather reports; as a result, what the weather would be like on course was strictly a matter of wait and see. Amelia hoped she would not have to turn back: of all possibilities, this would be the most exasperating.

The first of four projected crossings of the equator lay ahead. Unbeknown to Amelia, Fred had planned appropriate ceremonies for the occasion. He had set aside a thermos bottle full of cold water, and at the right time he was going to crawl across the catwalk and pour the water over her unsuspecting

head. But Fred became so occupied with his navigation that the Electra had winged across the zero line of latitude before he could play his role of baptismal King Neptune. When Amelia learned his plan she laughed in victory, but shuddered to think of the next three crossings.

The broad banks of a long river wound through the jungle. It reminded Amelia of the Mississippi, which she had flown over many times. This South American cousin could only be the Amazon. Under the right wing yellow and brown currents stretched out and in to the lower delta. Like so many toothpicks, thousands of uprooted and broken tree trunks flowed, gathered, and spread over the moving stream. The shadow of the Electra skimmed over the surface.

Bragança, São Luís, Camocim: Amelia checked off on the map each city as she passed over it. According to Fred's dead reckoning—determining position by speed in a given direction for a definite elapsed time—she should soon be in sight of Fortaleza. He had given her ten hours to make it.

She watched the preset chronometer on the instrument panel, and waited for the steady jerks of the dial to click to the designated hour. She then looked out to see if she could recognize any telltale signs below. Just west of what she determined to be Cape Mucuripe she saw a light brown strip of sand that formed an arc between the mountains and the seacoast. She checked the map. It had to be her destination. Fortaleza was the only city on such a topographical boomerang. Fred had hit it on the nose!

The airport was excellent; and when Pan American put all their facilities at her disposal,

Amelia decided to ready the plane there for the South Atlantic hop to Africa, rather than at Natal, her actual point of departure.

The Electra underwent a complete inspection: oil change, greasing, instrument check, engine overhaul, scrubdown and washing. Amelia and Fred, after a week of traveling, felt for themselves a similar need for cleaning and overhaul. AE's one-suitcase wardrobe contained few duplicates. There was much laundry to be done.

They stayed at the Excelsior Hotel. Amelia's room looked out over red-tiled roofs to the sea. She sat in the cool breeze from the open window, pulled the chair up closer to the desk, and addressed a letter to GP. She chuckled as she wrote:

"The hotel people naïvely put F.N. and me in the same room. They were surprised when we both countermanded the arrangements!... For a female to be traveling as I do evidently is a matter of puzzlement to her sheltered sisters hereabout, not to mention the males. I'm stared at in the streets. I feel they think, 'Oh, well, she's American and they're all crazy.'"

The city of Fortaleza for Amelia was a remarkable study in contrasts. As she explored and shopped, she stopped to notice the carts and donkeys that clogged the streets along with busses, streetcars, and automobiles; the women carrying loads on their heads, as they walked past up-to-date shops; old decrepit buildings standing next to the most modern examples of architecture; and down along the shore primitive catamaran fishing vessels setting sail, while airplanes roared overhead.

The next day, while the mechanics continued to

work on the plane, Amelia and Fred set things in order. They repacked gear, sent used maps, gifts, and souvenirs back home, and washed the cloth covers for the engines and propellers.

That night AE lay on her bed and tried to relax from the day's work, the weeks of flying, the hours of anxiety, the months of tense preparation that had gone into the flight. Her leg jumped as muscle tensions eased. On the tile roofs outside rain began to fall and splatter. It became a tropical downpour, sudden, heavy, and unremitting—like the ones she had known in Honolulu. She feared the Fortaleza airport might turn into a sea of mud. Luckily, the hop to Natal was short, and the fuel load would be light. The Electra should be able to get off. Amelia turned her head into her pillow and fell off to sleep. There was no need to worry. Even in blackest times sleep was a gift she cherished.

At four fifty the next morning they were off for Natal; fortunately the field had drained beautifully, and the runway was more than adequate for take-off. Natal was only two hours away, and they hoped to get an early start across the South Atlantic. Off the left wing and far out to sea rain squalls chased black clouds. Amelia set the automatic pilot and pulled out her log.

She wrote, then crossed out what she had written, then started to write again. This did not seem to be a day for composition:

Par One

~~Last night was not long enough for two tired fliers.~~
~~Despite going to bed immediately after~~
~~Fr~~ Fred Noonan and I rolled out of bed at

three
forty-five after an incredi
It shines on the engine cowls and into the cockpit
Have cover for radios
Get clock I can see at night
Check props

Amelia put down her pencil and looked out to watch the progress of the black squall line out at sea. It was moving closer. She would have to race it in.

Down along the edge of the coast and on a tip of land the Natal airport was unmistakable. The long intersecting runways were a sure landmark. Amelia nosed the plane down and dived for the field. The rain squall was right behind her.

The Electra was just rolling to a stop and turning into the taxiway when it hit. Long whips of rain lashed the wings and cracked along the fuselage. AE stopped; she could not see out ahead from the cockpit far enough to taxi any farther: the rain relentlessly hit, spread, and streamed down the windshield.

From the hangar along the parking ramp mechanics noticed the difficulty. They rushed out to the Lockheed and pushed the plane up to the ramp and into the hangar. Once inside, Amelia felt guiltily dry as she watched the rain gather in small puddles about the feet of the mechanics. They were soaked to the skin.

To cross the South Atlantic from Natal, AE deferred to the experience of the French. She checked with the crew of the next plane scheduled to leave on the flight across. They told her they preferred to leave very early in the morning, because

the worst weather could be expected during the first 800 miles. Amelia decided to leave very early in the morning—soon after midnight. If weather prevented then, they would leave the next afternoon and fly all night to make an African landfall in the morning.

At three fifteen on the morning of June 7 the Electra stood ready for the take-off. Amelia fretted: the only runway marked by lights in the black night could not be used because of a strong cross wind. For an upwind take-off the run would have to be made across a grass field. Flashlights in hand, Amelia and Fred walked in the grass, looking for obstructions and for any landmarks that could serve as guides.

The Electra came through splendidly; as it had so often before, it sprang easily into the air.

In the blackness of the night, inside the cockpit the instrument panel glowed. A glimpse at the bright dials pointing at the correct numbers cheered Amelia. She flew by the instruments she believed in, had learned to believe in from experience. On such a night it was the only way. And it was up to Fred in the navigation room to pass up the right headings to fly by. This was her third crossing of the Atlantic, she reflected happily; Africa, her third continent to be spanned, and her second leap over the equator. She hoped Fred was again too busy to think about dousing her with water.

For the first half of the 1,900 miles across the ocean the Electra bucked head winds averaging 20 miles in velocity. AE set the throttles ahead just far enough to average a ground speed of 150 mph. The dial of the indicated air speed inched forward to 170. She wanted to nurse the engines, whatever the wind and weather, for the long, hard pull around the world.

Ahead she noticed jagged mountains of clouds building up with towering peaks, and below them dark downward-streaking geysers of rain. There was no way around them. She would have to plow through.

The rain was hard and heavy. Mixed with oil from the propellers, it spattered and smeared brown and black against the windshield. Amelia could feel the weight of the rain on the wings against the pressure of the wheel in her hands. The Electra buffeted and surged in alternating downdrafts and updrafts. Then, as suddenly as the thunderstorm had hit, she was through it.

At six forty-five she crossed the equator and reported her position to Natal radio. At six fifty the left engine, then the right, started to miss, then to catch again. Too much oil, Amelia guessed. She looked out to the left and saw a plane streaking across the sky. It was an Air France plane. She would have liked to talk with it, but she knew it had only telegraphic key, and she in the cockpit only voice telephone. The Electra's key for transmitting code was back in the navigation room with Fred; and even if she shouted back at him, he could not hear her over the noise of the engines. With all its modern devices, the "flying laboratory" lacked an intercom between pilot and navigator.

Locking in the auto pilot, she placed the stenographer's pad on her knee. She scrawled hastily: "Gas fumes in plane from fueling made me sick again this morning after starting. Stomach getting weak, I guess." Then she added later: "Have tried getting something on radio. No go. Rain, static. Have never seen such rain. Props a blur in it." Fred had crawled up from in back to sit in the right seat. "Fred dozes,"

she observed. “I never seem to get sleepy flying. Often tired but seldom sleepy.”

Fred stirred, woke up, and looked about. He got up from the seat and crawled back to the navigation room to see if he could get a fix. The haze was too thick. He studied his other instruments, then made an estimate. He jotted on a card:

> 3:36 change to 36˚
> Estimate 79 miles to
> Dakar from 3:36 P.M.

then sent it up ahead to Amelia. She read it, shook her head, then added at the bottom in pencil:

> What put us north?

Amelia disregarded the advice of her navigator. Although Fred’s directions indicated a turn to the right, she turned left: it seemed better to her.

Forty-five minutes later she found herself over St. Louis. She was north instead of south, and 163 miles off course to Dakar! She decided to let down and make a landing. It was too late to turn around and go back.

To hit a continent, such a refusal to follow directions was of no grave consequence; to hit an island, however, it could prove fatal.

The flight across the South Atlantic, Amelia was careful to note, took thirteen hours and twelve minutes. That was one hour and sixteen minutes less than it had taken for the solo hop across the North Atlantic.

4. *Africa to India*

Far from the customary skies was Africa and its smells. To Amelia's sensitive nostrils the aromas of South America had been the lush and pleasant ones of fruit, fish, meat; in Dakar, as in St. Louis, the odor was the strong one of people.

The big bare feet of the natives she found extraordinary. She walked through the teeming streets, her eyes focused to the riot of color, her ears tuned to the comic opera of sound. Splashes of bright yellow, red, and green marked the native garments. The women wore Mother Hubbards and slung their babies on their backs or held them at their breasts. Amelia went over to one of the market stalls and bought a large bag of freshly roasted peanuts, her only West African export.

At Dakar, the Electra was scrubbed and washed, oiled and greased; the engines were given a forty-hour check, and a faulty fuel-flow meter was repaired.

The flight so far had been over the charted Pan American route to Natal and the Air France course to Dakar. Ahead, however, inland across Africa, lay regions rarely, if ever, flown over. Exactly what course they would fly, pilot and navigator were undecided. But they would have to leave soon, for tornadoes to the south and sandstorms to the north had been predicted. They would have to find a way somewhere in between.

The schedule for crossing Africa was a strenuous

one. It meant flying the distance of 4,350 miles in at least four separate legs—a daily flight, in comparison, from New York to St. Louis. Where neither pilot nor aircraft was replaced, or replaceable, and this fact coupled with the thousands of miles that lay behind and ahead for the same pilot and plane, the flight became an ordeal of endurance and courage.

Amelia carefully studied the situation: the navigation aids were only two—contact and celestial. She could fly contact by following her map and identifying landmarks with the corresponding symbols on the sectional; but the African maps were pitifully inadequate, even when supplemented with pilot reports at each stop on the way. There were no radio beams to home in on, nor were there any lights at the landing fields they planned to stop at for refueling. For Fred, although he could, if it were clear, make position fixes from the sun and the stars, navigating over Africa was more difficult than finding his way over any ocean.

“Our flights over the desert,” Fred wrote to his bride of one month, “were more difficult than over water. That was because the maps of the country are very inaccurate and consequently extremely misleading. In fact, at points no dependence at all could be placed on them. Also recognizable landmarks are few and far between, one part of the desert being as much like another as two peas in a pod. However, we were lucky in always reaching our objectives. In all the distance I don’t think we wandered off the course for half an hour, although there were times when I wouldn’t have bet a nickel on the accuracy of our assumed position.”

Despite the difficulties Amelia blithely set out.

They would push through somehow: there were, after all, countless places for an emergency landing if anything went wrong or if they lost their way.

On the morning of June 10 they took off just before six o'clock. The course was due east over the Senegal and Niger to the Sudan. Some 1,140 miles, seventeen hours, and fifty minutes later they sighted the upper reaches of the Niger River and landed at Gao. There the ubiquitous gasoline drums marked "Amelia Earhart" awaited them like squat silent sentinels. The months of planning in spotting the fuel were reaping their rewards. George, to Amelia's soaring satisfaction, had done his job well. The rest was up to her.

The next leg was 1,000 miles long. The following morning, again before dawn, they left Gao for Fort-Lamy, flying over the Niger River for 170 miles then crossing endless stretches of barren desert land to Zinder. Then below lay spread out the broad valley of the Yobe River with its long brown tendrils and sprawling swamps. Now in the shifting pattern of land and water, for as far as her eyes could see, Amelia watched Lake Chad come into full view. She ran her eye over the shining surface but was unable to find any shore lines. Islands in the great lake had in outline the shapes of fantastic creatures out of storyland, with large fat paws and broad flattened heads.

As a little girl in Atchison, Amelia would climb into the old buggy in the barn with her sister Muriel and her cousins, the Challisses, and lead expeditions to imaginary lands. The map of Africa had been her favorite. Names such as Timbuktu, Senegal, Khartoum had stirred her dreams.

For Amelia in the cockpit of her own plane, the world of her childhood imagination was coming to life. Yet she missed seeing Timbuktu. If she had known about it beforehand, she could have visited the fabled town, for it lay but 400 miles up the Niger River from Gao. But the pressure of having to meet her schedule prevented the side trip. Someday, Amelia kept telling herself, she would return and make a leisurely trip, when she had time really to see and do.

Cranes, maribou storks, blue herons abounded about Lake Chad, as did many other birds she could not identify. She watched the shadow of the Electra, like a strange black flying fish, glide over the surface of the water. Once across the shore and over jungle, she looked for the elephants and crocodiles which had meant Africa to her ever since she had been a little girl in bloomers, but she could see none. Yet through the haze that now began to rise from the hot land like steam from a kettle she caught now and again the sight of a hippopotamus. The cockpit became hot and stuffy, and Amelia opened the windshield for a breath of outside air.

According to the pattern of early take-offs and landings for the African hops, it was just before noon when they approached Fort-Lamy for a stopover. The sun was high; its rays direct and glaring. As she came in on a long glide for the touchdown, Amelia held the throttles more forward than was usual: she needed a faster landing speed to compensate for the thin, hot air with its weak lifting power on the wings. Thick beads of sweat bubbled, broke, and ran down her face and neck. Her eyes smarted from the sting of the salt and she tried to blink the drops of sweat away. Her hands were wet and slippery on the

wheel and throttles, and quickly she brought back one hand then the other to rub it dry against the leg of her trousers.

The Electra rolled swiftly over the ground. Gently Amelia touched the brakes until her plane came to a stop. Hoping for cooler air, she slid back the cockpit hatch. The inside of the plane was like an oven turned up to broil, but the hot outside air only added more heat to it. Quickly she taxied the plane and parked it. The bright metal wings sizzled in the sun; AE climbed out of the cockpit, skipped on tiptoe over the hot metal, and jumped to the ground. Fred swung open the door of the fuselage and climbed out. Pilot and navigator looked at each other: they were soaking wet, each separately chafing at the neck and waist from collar and belt. Amelia removed the kerchief from about her neck and wiped her face dry. She looked at the Electra: it sagged at one wing. The oleo strut of the left landing gear had just collapsed.

The landing gear was not repaired until 1:30 P.M. the next day. Because the heat was well over 100° AE and Fred decided to make that day's hop a short one. They flew to El Fasher, only a few hours away. Fortunately, there was a strong tail wind, but Amelia felt as if she were riding a bucking bronco. The heat from the hot, dry sands below rose in strong convection currents that buffeted and pitched the Electra like a ship in a rolling sea. Fred felt as if he were back to his days of sailing ships. They were both happy to get to El Fasher, but not for long. When they crawled out of the plane, men with guns were waiting for them—disinfecting guns. As a health measure, pilot, navigator, and plane had to be thoroughly sprayed. Amelia and Fred submitted and

squirmed.

One day at El Fasher was enough. Although the next day was Sunday, it was not a day for rest or prayer. The thirteenth of June, like any other day on the schedule, was marked for a flight, this one into the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to Khartoum.

The land flown over was for Amelia the bleakest and most desolate in all of Africa. There were no rivers, no native villages, not even one identifying contour line on the map. As far as Amelia could stretch her hand over the course line there was blank space beneath.

Unable to fly by contact, she locked in the auto pilot and studied the romantic-sounding names on the map. Qala-en Hahl, Umm Shinayshin, Abu Seid, Idd el Bashir, Fazi, Marabia Abu Fas: as she pronounced them, each in turn rolled from her lips and tongue in twisted vowels and consonants. What wonderful sticklers they would make for crossword puzzles!

As they approached Khartoum, Amelia was struck by the orderly way in which the city was laid out. She learned later that Kitchener had used the Union Jack for the blueprint. The city was situated on the banks of the Nile, 1,350 miles south of Cairo and several hundred miles west of the Red Sea. They remained in Khartoum for only two hours, time enough to refuel but not time enough for any sight-seeing.

From Khartoum they set out for Massaua, in Italy's Eritrea. From above AE noticed an occasional grouping of colorfully striped tents; they marked stopping places along the endless camel trails across the desert. The blowing wind wrinkled and scalloped

the waste of land.

Two hundred miles out the Electra bisected the Atbara River. Across the river sandy plains gently rose to foothills, the foothills to lush green mountains. As it approached the foothills, the plane hit bumpy, contrary air currents. The flow of air coursing down the slopes of the mountains tangled with the strong convection currents rising from the ground. Amelia fought to hold her plane steady, but it pitched and tossed. She added throttle and climbed to 10,000 feet, but the buffeting continued. To the left and about 3,000 feet below her wing she caught sight of Asmara, the capital of Eritrea; to the right, a range of peaks that towered to 14,000 feet. She weaved in and out and across to the other side. The eastern slopes came suddenly; sharp and abrupt, they angled quickly down into a broad, flat, sweeping valley. For the next 30 miles the land continued flat all the way to the Red Sea.

As she had found the Blue Nile and the White Nile to be neither blue nor white, but green, so now Amelia discovered the Red Sea not to be red, but blue. She was gradually seeing the world, or at least its rivers, in its true colors. She lowered flaps and landing gear and began her letdown.

Standing at the end of a bay formed by two coral islands and the mainland was Massaua. Late-afternoon shadows lengthened over the port. Mounds of salt about the town, like sand dunes she had seen at Cape Cod, glittered in the slanting rays of the sun. Two small clipper ships, some freighters, and countless other smaller craft rode the tide in the harbor.

After she had landed, Amelia soon discovered why Massaua was one of the world’s great exporters

of salt. The blistering sun, causing temperatures often in excess of 120°, could evaporate hundreds of gallons of salt water in pans set out along the shore and leave thick layers of salt.

Amelia had forgotten to eat, as she had done so often before during these daily flights. She was starved for food; she felt “as hollow as a bamboo horse,” she said to one of the Italian officers who had greeted her when she arrived. The officer did not know how to translate the remark for his bewildered colleagues, but he understood her meaning, laughed, and nodded. Food had been prepared for them.

To prepare for the long flight across Arabia—it was a distance equal to the one she had flown over the South Atlantic—Amelia now flew the Electra 335 miles south and east down the coast of Eritrea to Assab, where the runways were longer and where a large number of gasoline drums had been stored for her.

The next morning, and well before daybreak from across the Red Sea in Arabia, they left Assab. It was June 15. Their destination, Karachi, India, lay 1,920 miles away. The flight would have to be non-stop, as the Arabian authorities had forbidden the Electra to land in their country; in fact, they had even refused the right to fly over their country. And, Amelia reflected, from what little she saw of it, their country was as forbidding as their refusals.

One hour and fifteen minutes after take-off they had passed over the southern entry to the Red Sea and had reached the English possession of Aden. From Aden, Amelia snaked a course along the southern Arabian coast. Flying at an altitude of 8,000 feet, she could see the blue of the Arabian Sea and

the abomination of desolation which was the shore. Beyond the coastal mountains stretched the bare and endless sands of the desert. Of all places to make an emergency landing, Amelia thought, this was the worst. She reached into the cubbyhole to the right and behind her, and pulled out her Arabian credentials. “To Whom It May Concern” they began. Amelia hoped they would never have to concern anyone, because among other things the credentials begged for clemency for the fliers in the event they went down. AE wondered what would happen if she and Fred encountered the wrong nomadic tribe.

Amelia glanced at her instruments, then her eye stopped at the fuel gauges. The left engine seemed to be using too much gasoline. She reached for the mixture-control lever to lean out the fuel. The lever would not move; it was jammed. AE quickly analyzed the possibilities of a forced landing: neither the Arabian Sea nor desert was inviting, nor did she want to try to make it back to Assab; they would have to try to push through to Karachi. She eased back on both throttles.

Ahead was the Gulf of Oman, and across the gulf, Gwadar. At Gwadar she looked at the chronometer; it was five o’clock. Karachi was only two hours away. She hoped that by flying at a lower rpm she might make it.

The fuel supply lasted. When they reached Karachi, the chronometer for elapsed time since take-off had clicked off thirteen hours and ten minutes. It had been one of their longest flights. Weary, AE walked away from the plane.

“There’s a phone call for you,” someone said to her.

“Oh, yes,” Amelia answered flatly. Probably some newspaperman, she thought.

“It’s from New York. Mr. Putnam is on the wire.”

AE rushed inside to the telephone and picked up the receiver.

“How do you feel?” GP asked from 8,000 miles away.

“Fine. A little tired, perhaps.” The connection was good.

“How’s the ship?”

“Everything seems O.K. There’s been a little trouble with the fuel-flow meter and analyzer, but I think they’ll cure that here.”

“How’s Fred?”

“Fine....”

“Having a good time?” George asked.

“Oh, yes,” AE answered. “It’s been very worth while. We’ll do it again, together, some time.”

“O.K. with me. Anything else?”

“Well, I’ll cable tomorrow an estimate of when we should get to Howland. Good-by.... See you in Oakland.”

Amelia hung up the telephone and walked away slowly. GP was a most considerate and understanding husband, and when their friends had their little jokes about George’s role as the “forgotten husband,” he was always good-humored. After the Atlantic flight, she remembered, her Unknown Husband was decorated. Friends and well-wishers had gathered in her hotel suite in New York. The rooms were crowded with floral bouquets of

congratulations.

A woman friend of AE's went from bouquet to bouquet untying ribbons of various colors, and from them she fashioned a rosette. She walked over to George, who was sitting in one of the easy chairs.

"Stand up, husband!" the woman said. The husband obliged. She fastened the decoration to the lapel of GP's coat. "For distinguished service in self-effacement beyond the line of marital duty, I hereby bestow upon you the 'Order of the Forgotten Husband.'"

A flash of laughter cracked across the room. GP smiled uneasily, then laughed with the others.

"And," added AE from the side line of spectators, "for having a sense of humor, too."

Then, later, he organized other forgotten husbands of women fliers into the Forty-Nine Point Five Club. The women had formed an international organization of licensed women pilots and called themselves the Ninety-Nines. AE was the first president of the group. Not to be outdone, GP proposed a new trophy from the 49.5's. It was an endurance prize to be awarded to the first wife who stayed home the longest. The trophy: a cut-glass baby bottle with crossed silver safety pins. The award was never made. There was no one who qualified.

Amelia kicked up the dust at Karachi as she remembered the telephone conversation with GP. Certainly she had never qualified for the trophy, but she would give it an honest try if she ever got home from this long trip. There was another continent to fly over, and another after that; not to mention the Pacific Ocean, which was more than equal to both of

them put together.

For the present, however, the chance to ride a camel could not be foregone. Amelia and Fred rose to the occasion—literally. The way the camel swung up from the ground, nose-diving forward then lurching backward, Amelia, ensconced between the humps, felt as if she were going into a flat spin.

“Better wear your parachute,” Fred called over to her.

After the ride, or rather the swing aloft from extended rubber pads, AE went to the post office to have the “covers” canceled for her subscribing philatelists back home.

Out at the airport, the largest AE had ever seen, mechanics from Imperial Airways worked around the clock getting the Electra back into top-flight condition. Two instrument specialists on loan from the Royal Air Force repaired the troublesome fuel-flow indicator and the jammed mixture-control lever.

5. *India to Australia*

Two days later, on June 17, the Electra was pronounced ready; and on that same day they left Karachi for Calcutta, 1,390 miles directly across India to its eastern border.

Shortly after take-off low clouds formed and sped by beneath the wings but were soon outrun. The waves of sand of the Sind Desert now whipped into little whirlpools; then, driven by a strong wind from the south, they became a sandstorm of unabated fury. Amelia climbed higher in escape.

Ahead there was no storm, and she could see ridges that grew from the ground rising to foothills and then to mountains. They were like "sharks poking their backs through a yellow sea."

Over Central India aids to contact flying became a surfeit of plenty: well-mapped railroads, rivers, and mountains were easily identified. By such landmarks her way was made easy.

But it was not so in the air. Large black eagles dived out of the sky toward the Electra. They soared and swung and spun about the plane, giving Amelia many moments of fretful anxiety. If they flew into the propellers, they would be chopped into bird-and-feather burger which could choke off the Wasp engines. That she missed them was a miracle of purblind fate and wide-eyed flying.

Below, the mountains had descended into plains. Mosaics in neat squares of brown, green, and gold

were laid out as if on a vast floor, the squares joined by silver-and-gold inlay that reflected the sky and the sun.

In the distance the Ganges River sparkled, and beside it the city of Allahabad stood out against the white brightness of the encircling countryside. Beyond the city mountains green with luxuriant growth rose sharply into towering magnificence. Rainstorms engulfed the peaks. Amelia plowed through.

Air currents from off the mountains lifted the Electra an added 1,000 feet into the air. AE jammed the control column forward, trying to hold down the nose of the plane. Sheets of rain smashed down on wings and fuselage and lashed back from the props against the cockpit windows.

Once over the tops, the mountains quickly became plains that would continue for the next hundred miles all the way to Calcutta. Low clouds now scudded by and the weather cleared, revealing a quilted patchwork of gray, green, and tan rice fields.

More towns and an increasing number of railroads indicated that a big city was at hand. AE watched factories and mills and many villages grow thicker as she approached the heart of the city.

Harbor, docks, many intersecting streets, and countless white buildings bright in the sun: these were Calcutta. As she reached Dum Dum airport, another squall line moved in and broke across the Electra just as Amelia began her letdown for a landing. Rolling down the runway the plane sent up sheets of spray. Then as suddenly as it had begun, the rain stopped, and the sun shone as before. It was 4:00 P.M.

Four hours later Amelia was sound asleep. The long, hard flight had exhausted her; her eyes, tired and sore from the constant strain of watching ground, wings, and instruments, had closed as if from an involuntary reflex action.

Because of the Honolulu crack-up and the consequent change in plans that turned the flight to a west-to-east crossing at the equator, the monsoon season, which they had hoped earlier to escape, was now upon them. For India, it meant that the winds, beginning in June, would sweep in from the Indian Ocean in the southwest, carrying with them rains heavy, violent, and destructive. For the Electra, it meant cross winds and downpours, for its course lay directly in the path of the monsoon. For Amelia, it meant one of the supreme tests of her skill, courage, and endurance.

During that night of June 17 the monsoons began. When Amelia and Fred reached the airport in the morning, the ground was wet and soggy. A take-off would be risky at best; but the forecast was for more rain, which would make a take-off impossible. Amelia decided to chance the risky.

She revved up the engines. Slowly, as she added throttle, the Electra began to roll and gain speed. Tail up and at full power, the plane sloshed through the mud and strained to become airborne. The end of the runway loomed ahead; in a desperate move, AE pulled back sharply on the control column. The Electra broke from the mud, then began to settle, but finally held. Amelia pulled up the gear; the wheels, still spinning and slinging mud, rose into the wells. As the plane rose in a steep climb, the underside of the wings and fuselage just cleared the treetops at the edge of the field. The Lockheed had done it

again.

Difficult and dangerous as it was, the take-off was but the beginning. The worst was yet to come. The sky was a dull metallic gray, and in it leaden clouds heavy with rain crowded about the plane. AE felt that they were grim harbingers.

Through occasional holes in the clouds Amelia saw scattered chunks of land that looked like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. They marked the mouths of the Ganges. From the hot land, steam rose as if from a giant cauldron. In a constantly moving pageant, rice fields dotted with workers, grass houses, and green trees sped by.

The weather clearing ahead, Amelia recognized the two unmistakable landmarks of Akyab: two golden pagodas and many volcanic islands. Beyond the city was the airfield with two runways and one hangar. She wanted to refuel and push on to Rangoon that same day, but the monsoon proved a superior foe.

At Akyab, while the Electra was being refueled, AE checked the weather reports for the way ahead. They were dire and discouraging. Amelia decided she would have to try to get through somehow.

No sooner had she leveled off from her climb out of take-off, and turned into her course heading, than a head wind, full of rain, hit the Electra squarely on the nose. It was the heaviest rain Amelia had ever seen. Sheet after sheet, thick and concentrated like shovelfuls of gravel, flung back from the props and slapped against the windshield. The Electra heaved and churned through wave after wave, through wall after wall of water. Amelia could not see out from the cockpit and had to fall back completely upon her

instruments.

For two hours she pitted herself and her plane against the storm, trying to break through the monsoon. Finally exhausted, her legs and arms heavy as lead from fighting stick and rudders, she relented, and retreated from the encounter. Reluctantly, she turned out to sea, nosed down to the tops of the waves, and headed back to Akyab.

For her navigator Amelia had nothing but praise. “By uncanny powers,” she wrote later, “Fred Noonan managed to navigate us back to the airport, without being able to see anything but the waves beneath the plane.”

When they returned to Akyab, the weatherman at the airport told them that the weather would probably not improve for three months. Amelia wondered if she and Fred would not have to set up light housekeeping and wait things out. She talked things over with him. They decided that they would try again.

The next day, the nineteenth, they set out, hoping this time to reach Bangkok in Siam. Amelia, quickly realizing that yesterday’s tactics of trying to fly under the monsoon would not work again, now climbed to 8,000 feet, hoping to top the mountains and somehow plow through. She was determined to make it.

She set her eyes on her instruments and flew her plane blind. Through the tossing and pitching of the plane and the pounding of the rain she brought the Electra through. She worked her legs constantly, trying to hold the rudders. Hands gripped to the wheel, her arms pressed forward then pulled back on the control column; the plane now rolled left, now

right. Her legs and arms began to ache and then to stiffen as she fought to keep the nose up, the wings straight and level.

The instruments were her only guide, her only hope. She flew the little yellow plane on the artificial horizon before her, and held the pointer on the compass heading by flying the needle and ball of the turn and bank indicator. Never far from her right hand were the engine throttles, set evenly forward and registering 150 mph in the white quadrant of the air-speed indicator. Out of the corner of her eye she kept constant check on the altimeter and the rate of climb. Again for two hours she worked and sweated and fought.

She broke out into the clear, the victor. Below her were plains, brilliant in the morning sun. She pressed back in her seat and heaved a heavy sigh. It was a blessed relief to see the earth again. Through the plains meandered the Irrawaddy River.

Clouds appeared again; and Amelia, carefully choosing the openings of light among them, skillfully skirted her plane this way and that between them for the next 50 miles.

Far in the distance, about twenty miles in from the sea and near a wide river, she saw a great golden pagoda pointing brightly above the dark shadows of a city. It was the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, AE quickly determined from her map, and that meant Rangoon. She grinned happily: she was dead on course.

They landed to refuel and with the intention of leaving immediately for Bangkok. But the Electra had not rolled to a stop when a heavy downpour engulfed the airport, making a take-off out of the question.

Amelia and Fred made the best of the delay by sight-seeing. The first tour was a short motor trip on the road from Rangoon to Mandalay. The fliers, in a sudden release from their tensions, could not restrain themselves from singing snatches of Kipling's "The Road to Mandalay," although they shuddered to think of the number of tourists who must have done exactly the same thing on the same road.

After finishing the line—"Where the flying fishes play"—Amelia turned to Fred.

"That's it," she said to him.

"What is?" Fred asked.

"*Flying* fishes," she answered. "See?" Amelia explained: "That's what aviators are—ought to be—if they're silly enough to squash around aloft at this season."

Fred agreed. He had never known at sea storms like those of the last two days.

They then went to see the golden Shwe Dagon Pagoda, the same that had guided them into the city from the air. Fred refused to go inside, but Amelia kicked off her shoes, climbed the long flight of steps to the top entrance, and entered to see the many Buddhas and to watch the white-robed men at their priestly tasks.

On the morning of June 20 they were off for Bangkok. They crossed the upper half of the Gulf of Martaban to Moulmein, then flew across the north-south range of mountains that marked the dividing line between Burma and Siam. From the height of 8,000 feet Amelia looked out beyond the right wing and back to Rangoon: like the prow of a ship, the city divided the waters of the Indian Ocean and the

Andaman Sea, creating the wide Bay of Bengal on the right side and the smaller Gulf of Martaban on the left.

Since take-off, clouds had begun to form. What had been gentle sheep-backed formations far into the west now grew and changed into forbidding anvil-shaped thunderheads; in the east, flanking the range of mountains, clouds broke and scattered, baring to Amelia's view green foothills that gradually sloped and diminished into broad, thickly snarled jungle. As she looked at the heavy undergrowth, Amelia hoped she would never have to pancake the Electra anywhere below.

They cut across the Mae Klong River. In the distance were plains backed up by mountains. Slowly a ragged outline on the horizon became the sharp needle points of Buddhist temples and the peaked roofs of tiled buildings. It was the city of Bangkok. Through the city AE could see from above how the Mae Nam River continued its tortuous course from the mountains in the north to the Gulf of Siam in the south.

Hoping to make Singapore before nightfall, they landed at Bangkok only to refuel and be on their way again.

Back in the air, Amelia stretched the sectional map across her knees and studied the way ahead. Singapore lay on an island to which pointed the long 900-mile finger of the Malay Peninsula. To reach it, she would have to cut across the Gulf of Siam, then proceed on a course east of the Malay coast, and finally head directly south.

She looked out from the cockpit. The day was clear and the visibility unlimited. She found it hard

to believe that she was flying over the fabled world she had so often set out for, riding the old buggy in the Atchison barn, or lying on the floor in the parlor looking at one of Grandfather Otis's big geography books. She loved the sound of the names, Siam and Cambodia, and she picked out others at random from the map—Bang Saphan, Lem Tane, Koh Phratnog. Yet there were two of them below: Siam to the right, Cambodia to the left.

Nevertheless, Amelia shook her head, as she had failed to see Timbuktu, so had she missed seeing the famous Taj Mahal in Negra, which had not been far off the Karachi-Allahabad leg. It, too, would have to wait for another time. Now, there was too little time and too much to see.

She now followed a valley across the mountains, then swung down the western coast from Alor Star in Malay. The clouds over the peaks were beginning to grow: cumulus into cumulo-nimbus, cumulo-nimbus into great thunderheads.

A deep green jungle unfolded below, with an occasional scar that marked the cut of a road across the undulating hills and flatlands.

After six hours of flying Amelia sighted Singapore. Letting down from altitude, she passed over countless ships in the great sprawling harbor, then continued over the vast city to the airport. At 5:25 P.M. the Electra touched down.

Amelia and Fred had dinner with the American consul general and his wife. After dinner the fliers begged to be excused, and turned in. At 3:00 A.M. they were up and on their way back to the airport, eager to get on to their next stop, Java, which lay on the other side of a third crossing of the equator. It

was the morning of June 22.

The Electra soared into the air. Over the sea along the coast of Sumatra, then across the southeast point of the island, Amelia guided her plane into the world down under of the Southern Hemisphere.

In quick succession she noted the jungle and swamp of a long chain of islands; then sudden and abrupt, the volcanic mountains of Java, imperious and proud, which rose out of the mist to dominate the surrounding sea below them. Like suckling pigs, tiny islands lay along the mother shore for their nourishment.

Amelia landed at Bandung and taxied the plane to the hangar. According to plan, the Electra was scheduled for a complete going over. The plane in the hands of the mechanics, Amelia and Fred decided to get a closer look down into one of the volcanoes they had flown over.

In a borrowed car they drove up the mountain to the rim of the crater at 6,500 feet. For the first time on the long trip they felt a chill and put on their flying jackets. The sulphur fumes from the volcano were strong and sickening; they reminded Amelia of the strong gas fumes in refueling that sometimes made her ill. Nevertheless, she could not restrain herself from looking down into the crater. It was pointless to drive to the top and not see what she had come to see. She bent over the rim and looked down: a pool of bright green water glittered softly hundreds of feet below.

At 3:45 the next morning, the twenty-fourth of June, Amelia and Fred climbed into the Electra. They hoped to fly this day non-stop to Australia. AE started the engines. She watched the instruments

closely as the needles moved up in response; then, as in Miami when they first started out for the world flight, one of the important engine instruments failed. Something had gone wrong; but without the instrument operating correctly there was no point in proceeding.

It was not until two o'clock that afternoon that they heard they could now move out. Because of the late start, they decided to fly only as far as Surabaya, 350 miles away. On the way, what had been failure of engine instrument for Amelia now became failure of navigation instruments for Fred Noonan. He could not get his most important long-range instruments to function properly. Reaching Surabaya, they turned around and flew back to Bandung. To go on without aids for the difficult navigation that lay ahead, especially over water, would make the rest of the world flight extremely dangerous.

Before they left Surabaya to retrace their steps, AE was called to the telephone. It was GP, calling from Cheyenne, Wyoming, where his United plane was refueling before continuing on to California. George had heard from Amelia that there had been some difficulty with the plane.

"Is everything about the ship O.K. now?" he asked.

Amelia, refusing to worry her husband concerning something he could do nothing about, held back the truth.

"Yes," she said abruptly; then softly added: "Good night, hon."

"Good night," GP answered. "I'll be sitting in Oakland waiting for you."

When the Electra landed in Bandung, Dutch technicians were hastily called to work on the faulty navigation instruments. While they worked, Amelia and Fred went sight-seeing in the close-by city of Batavia.

Pilot and navigator had made an agreement not to do any shopping; they did not want to add any weight to the plane. Six pounds, they reminded each other, equaled one gallon of fuel. But Amelia broke the pact to buy a knife. She purchased it—a handmade sheath knife at a metalworker's shop—for her friend John Oliver La Gorce of the National Geographic Society; she wanted him to add it to his extensive knife collection. She jammed the knife under her belt. She wanted to carry it all the way to Washington, D.C., and make an official presentation of it to her friend.

It took two days to repair the Electra. On Sunday morning, June 27, Amelia and Fred left Bandung, hoping again to reach Australia. But what had been the conspiracy of instruments now became the conspiracy of time. For every fifteen degrees of longitude crossed, they would lose one hour; and the day would grow shorter the longer and farther they flew east.

For this reason they had to land, after only five hours of flying, at Koepang, on the island of Timor. The flight from Java to Timor had been for Amelia an experience in extremes, as the lush tropics became arid wastes—and rich abundance, monastic sparsity.

Except for a fuel shed at Koepang there were no other storage facilities. Amelia and Fred pulled out the cloth covers from the back of the fuselage and covered the props and engines. Then with the help of

some of the natives they turned the Electra into the wind and staked it down to the ground.

The next morning, again before dawn, they climbed wearily into the plane. The Electra rolled down the grass runway and jumped into the air from the steep cliffs of the island. Over the Timor Sea the head winds were strong, and it was not until three and a half hours later that Amelia sighted the bright emerald sea on the northern coast of Australia. They landed at Port Darwin.

Again, as it had happened before in arriving at a new country, Amelia and Fred had to be fumigated. For the last time they stoically submitted to the spray guns.

At Port Darwin they unloaded their parachutes and sent them home. Over the Pacific a parachute would be of no use whatever. Gracefully declining all invitations, Amelia and Fred parted for their separate rooms to turn in early for much-needed rest. The next stop was Lae, New Guinea, only a few hours away from Australia, but an eternity away from home.

6. *New Guinea to Howland Island*

The flight from Port Darwin to Lae, on June 30, was a flight of seven hours and forty-three minutes of the same day. The flight from Lae to Howland Island, however, was a flight into yesterday. For Howland lay one day earlier across the international date line. By the flight to the other side of the 180° of longitude there was one day to be gained; but to get to the great divide, there were two hours to be lost. And two lives.

In March, before she had cracked up in the earlier try for Howland from Hawaii, AE had written: "It is much better not to let fatigue of any kind creep into the early part of any expedition, for it cannot be eliminated later."

Now she was weary and tired from a fatigue that could not be eliminated. Twenty-two thousand miles of flying in only forty days had taken its unremitting toll upon her and Fred.

Amelia wanted to be home by the Fourth of July and before her thirty-ninth birthday on the twenty-fourth. She considered the 7,000 miles that lay before her and wrote in her logbook: "Whether everything to be done can be done within this time limit remains to be seen." And before she left Lae to begin the longest leg of the world flight—the 2,556 miles to Howland, she hastily scribbled: "I shall be glad when we have the hazards of its navigation behind us."

AE hoped that the old difficulties with the

navigation instruments that they had had at Surabaya would not return now to plague them on the long over-water flight. For on the leg to Howland the aids to navigation were limited.

The vast Pacific ruled out immediately the case for pilotage: except for islands few and far between there were no landmarks she could follow. The small size of Howland, for all practical purposes, discouraged the time and distance plotting of dead reckoning. There remained celestial navigation, with radio as an aid. For Amelia to be able to hit her target, the weather would have to be clear enough for Fred to be able to take his fixes from the stars at night and from the sun during the day. Once over the ocean and more than 500 miles out she would no longer be able to contact Lae by radio.

To get a radio bearing from Howland, she would have to fly all night and never waver from her course until early the next morning. Then she could home in on signals from the Coast Guard Cutter *Itasca*, which lay anchored off Howland. With the Electra's loop antenna and the ability to receive from a strong sending station, she felt that her chances were good.

Nevertheless, Amelia wished now that she had not ordered the 250-foot trailing wire antenna to be removed from her plane before they left Miami. Gladly on the long over-water leg that faced her would she go through the trouble of reeling out and reeling in: if she had the long antenna she would be able to contact and to receive from the *Itasca* from distances much farther out than the loop antenna permitted.

And, as if in fateful conspiracy, Amelia did not know that there was yet another aid to get to Howland. She did not know because no one had told

her. A high-frequency direction finder had been obtained from the Navy and installed on the island of Howland; but neither Commander W. K. Thompson of the *Itasca* nor Richard B. Black, the field representative of the Department of the Interior, had advised AE that the direction finder had been set up to help her.

This lack of foresight and coordination was but the beginning of a chain of incidents that linked finally to tragedy. Fred Noonan, in trying to set his chronometers, found that he could not calibrate them correctly because of radio difficulties on the Electra's 50-watt set. With his chronometers reading slow or fast, he knew he would not be able to obtain accurate celestial fixes. An error of fifteen seconds on the precision instruments would mean a mistake of one mile in his position computations, and an error of one minute a mistake of four miles.

Such position errors, taken into account in giving AE headings to fly by, might add to the difficulties of the navigation. For a mistake of one degree in following the compass could take them one mile off course for every sixty miles flown, more than forty miles off course for the Howland leg.

Despite these serious problems, Amelia set out to find in the 7,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean the small speck of land that was Howland Island.

On July 1 the Electra stood poised several thousand feet from the edge of the cliff that marked the end of the runway. The plane was fully loaded with 1,150 gallons of gasoline, enough to fly under ideal conditions the full range of 4,000 miles. A contrary wind, however, which blew across rather than down the runway, coupled with an ominous black squall line, conspired to keep the Electra earth-

bound for the day.

Amelia and Fred repacked the plane, discarding every scrap that was not absolutely needed. AE kept the bare essentials needed for travel; and Fred, a small tin case which he had picked up in Africa and which, Amelia was careful to note, “still rattles, so it cannot be packed very full.”

Restless and disappointed with the day’s delay, pilot and navigator did more sight-seeing on the island, but with half a heart. They could not wait to be off and homeward bound.

At ten o’clock the next morning—the second of July on Lae but the first on Howland—the Electra roared down the 3,000 feet of runway. In the cockpit Amelia watched the tachometer and the air-speed indicator: the rpm dial moved forward, and the air-speed needle crossed the red quadrant into the green, then across the green into the white. The plane broke cleanly into the air 150 feet short of the edge of the cliff that dropped to the sea. Amelia pulled up the gear and climbed to 8,000 feet, the cruising altitude.

She spread across her knees the sectional map prepared by Clarence S. Williams. As usual, all the information was there. She noted the course directions: a magnetic compass heading of 73˚, later to change to 72˚, then to 71˚.

If the Wasp engines would continue to purr, and if the navigation could be correct, or not too far wrong, she would make it. She would be happy when it was over. After 22,000 miles, thirty stops, nineteen countries, five continents, and three crossings of the equator, and looking after 100 dials, gauges, and gadgets, and bucking wind, rain, thunderstorms, and monsoons, she had become tired

from strain and weary from the work, not the pleasure, of flying.

The head winds were strong. A few hours out from New Britain and the Solomon Islands, directly on course, Amelia radioed her position to Lae. It was 5:20 P.M. Friday. They were, she said, at 4.33 South Latitude and 159.6 East Longitude, 795 miles out from New Guinea, and proceeding on course. Now, she hoped, if she could home in on the *Itasca* in the morning, getting home by way of Hawaii would be an easy matter.

On the *Itasca* preparations had been made and carried out with Swiss-watch precision. Commander Thompson had set up his watches—two men on the ship and one on the shore—and waited. The prearranged radio frequencies were checked, the higher short wave and the lower long wave. The limits of the Electra's direction finder—the loop antenna—were listed as 200 to 1,500 and 2,400 to 4,800 kilocycles.

Giving her call signals, KHAQQ, Amelia would report in on radio at quarter past and quarter to each hour, as was her custom when possible during the entire world flight. Her frequencies for transmitting were 6,210 kilocycles by day and 3,105 kilocycles by night. For telegraphic code by key, Fred would use 500 kilocycles, the standard frequency used by ships at sea.

On the hour and the half-hour the *Itasca* would broadcast weather reports and forecasts, and homing signals, on 3,105 kilocycles by voice and 7,500 kilocycles by key.

At 6:30 P.M., Howland time, the first of July, the San Francisco division of the Coast Guard notified

the *Itasca* that the Electra was airborne. To make doubly sure that the ship's radios were operating correctly, the *Itasca* tested signal strength with San Francisco, then tried to contact the Electra. It was too early to establish communication with the plane.

Listening at two receivers and a loud-speaker, in addition to officer and enlisted members of the crew, were correspondents from the Associated Press and the United Press, and the Interior Department's Richard Black, whom GP had asked to be his representative and the coordinator for the flight. The *Itasca* was standing by and ready.

12:04 A.M. The *Itasca* transmitted by voice on 3,105 and by key on 7,500, trying to make contact; then keyed the homing signal, · —, the dit dah of the letter A.

12:15 A.M. KHAQQ was not heard.

12:30 A.M. The ship sent out the weather, repeating twice each part of the report: wind direction east, force 11 miles, partly cloudy, visibility 20 miles, calm swell, direction east.

Checking against possible radio receiver difficulty, the *Itasca* asked Samoa if the cutter *Ontario* had heard the Electra; the ship's answer was that it had not.

12:45 A.M. KHAQQ was not heard.

1:00 A.M. The *Itasca* sent the weather on 7,500 kilocycles by key and on 3,105 kilocycles by voice. The code was sent at a slowed-down ten words per minute.

1:15 A.M. The *Itasca* had not heard AE's signals. The ship felt that there was no cause for alarm, for the Electra was still about 1,000 miles out.

1:25 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: “Have not heard your signals yet; please observe schedules with key; go ahead, am listening on 3,105 now.”

This transmission was not answered by Amelia.

1:45 A.M. KHAQQ not heard.

1:55 A.M. The *Itasca* sent the weather on 7,500 kilocycles by key and on 3,105 by voice.

2:15 A.M. KHAQQ not heard on 3,105 kilocycles.

2:45 A.M. Electra heard on 3,105, but the message was not completely understood because of the static. AE’s voice, identified by Carey of AP and Hanzlick of UP, was a low monotone. “Cloudy and overcast,” she had reported; they were her only intelligible words.

The *Itasca*, having heard Amelia, however indistinctly, now tried to establish communications with her. The attempt was unsuccessful. Again checking its own signals, the cutter now broadcast to stations in the vicinity; its messages were heard throughout the Pacific area.

3:00 A.M. The *Itasca* reported the weather by key on 7,500 and by voice on 3,105; wind direction east 8 miles per hour; clear, calm; ceiling unlimited. Then by key the ship sent out the homing signal, the dit dah of the letter A.

3:15 A.M. The Electra was not heard.

3:30 A.M. *Itasca* weather report: Wind direction east, force 8 miles per hour; clear visibility, 20 miles; calm swell, direction east; ceiling unlimited.

Then by voice on 3,105: “What is your position? When do you expect to reach Howland? *Itasca* has heard your phone, go ahead on key. Acknowledge

this broadcast next schedule."

3:45 A.M. AE reported in by voice: "*Itasca* from Earhart.... *Itasca* from Earhart.... Overcast.... Will listen on hour and half-hour on 3,105.... Will listen on hour and half on 3,105."

4:00 A.M. The *Itasca* again gave the weather, then asked: "What is your position? When do you expect to arrive Howland? We are receiving your signals; please acknowledge this message on your next schedule."

4:15 A.M. AE not heard on 3,105.

4:55 A.M. The *Itasca* heard AE. But her message was garbled and unintelligible.

5:15 A.M. KHAQQ not heard on 3,105.

5:30 A.M. The ship sent the weather by key and voice; then by key on 7,500 kilocycles, a long line of dit dah's.

5:45 A.M. AE not heard.

6:15 A.M. Amelia called in. She wanted a bearing on 3,105 kilocycles, on the hour. She would whistle into her microphone, she said, so that the Electra could get a bearing. She was about two hundred miles out, she figured.

6:20 A.M. Commander Thompson called the watch on Howland Island and told him to get a bearing with his direction finder on 3,105. AE's whistle went out; the attempt was a failure.

6:45 A.M. Amelia's voice broke in; it was clear and strong. "Please take a bearing on us," she pleaded, "and report in half-hour. I will make noise in microphone. About one hundred miles out."

Her voice was on the air too briefly to allow

sufficient time for the Howland direction finder to take a bearing from it.

7:00 A.M. For the next fifteen minutes the *Itasca* sent out the homing signal, both on 3,105 and 7,500 kilocycles.

7:18 A.M. The *Itasca* broadcast to AE by voice: “Cannot take bearing on 3,105 very good [sic]. Please send on 500, or do you wish to take bearing on us? Go ahead, please.”

There was no answer from Amelia.

7:19 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: “Go ahead on 3,105.”

The message was not answered.

7:25 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: “Please go ahead on 3,105.”

There was no answer.

7:26 *A.M.* KHAQQ from *Itasca*: “Go ahead on 3,105.”

Again there was no answer from Amelia. The ship again sent out the A homing signal.

7:30 *A.M.* KHAQQ from *Itasca*: “Please acknowledge our signals on key. Please.”

Again the request was unanswered.

7:42 *A.M.* Amelia broke in loud and clear. Her voice was high and frantic. “We must be on you,” she said. “But cannot see you. But gas is running low. Been unable to reach you by radio. We are flying at altitude 1,000 feet.”

7:43 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: “Received your message, signal strength 5. Go ahead.”

Again the ship sent out the homing signal on 3,105 and then on 500 kilocycles.

7:49 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: "Your message O.K. Please acknowledge with phone on 3,105."

7:58 A.M. Amelia called in again. She obviously had not heard the *Itasca*, for she failed to acknowledge the ship's message. "KHAQQ calling *Itasca*," she reported in; again her voice was loud and clear. "We are circling, but cannot hear you. Go ahead on 7,500 either now or on schedule time of half-hour."

8:00 A.M. The *Itasca* sent out a long series of A's on 7,500 kilocycles.

In response to the ship's message, Amelia broke in: "We are receiving your signals, but are unable to get a minimum [for a bearing]. Please take a bearing on us and answer with voice on 3,105."

The *Itasca* probably could have taken an accurate bearing on her if she had counted numbers rather than whistled. The whistling sound was too much like static to be distinguished from it.

At 10:00 A.M. July 2, when Amelia had taken off from Lae, it was 12:00 noon, July 1, on Howland, two hours later but one day earlier. At 8:00 A.M. the next day, Howland time, she had been in the air for twenty hours of elapsed time. If after adding throttle to compensate for head winds she had averaged a ground speed of 142 mph over the distance of 2,556 miles, she should have been over Howland at the end of eighteen hours. If she had averaged only 128 mph because of head winds, after twenty hours she should have been well over the target island.

8:33 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: "Will you please

come in and answer on 3,105. We are transmitting constantly on 7,500 kilocycles. We do not hear you on 3,105. Please answer on 3,105. Go ahead."

The message was not acknowledged.

One minute later the *Itasca* continued: "Answer on 3,105 kilocycles with phone. How are signals coming in? Go ahead."

8:45 A.M. Amelia broke in on 3,105 kilocycles. Her voice was loud and clear, but broken and frenzied. "We are in a line of position 157-337," she said hastily. "Will repeat this message on 6,210 kilocycles. Wait, listening on 6,210 kilocycles. We are running north and south."

Anxiety drew taut across the radio room of the *Itasca* as everyone strained to hear the repeated message on 6,210. Nothing was heard by anybody.

8:47 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: "We heard you O.K. on 3,105 kilocycles. Please stay on 3,105. Do not hear you on 6,210. Maintain QSO on 3,105."

The same message was sent by key on 7,500 kilocycles.

The *Itasca* again heard nothing on 3,105 or 6,210.

8:49 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: "Go ahead on 3,105."

8:54 A.M. KHAQQ from *Itasca*: "Your signals O.K. on 3,105. Go ahead with position on 3,105 or 500 kilocycles."

The ship listened for AE's answer on 3,105, 6,210, and 500 kilocycles.

The message was not acknowledged.

"We are running north and south," at 8:45 A.M. had been Amelia Earhart's last words.

Until ten o'clock on that morning of July 1 the Itasca continued to call. The operators transmitted on 3,105 and 7,500, and listened on 3,105, 6,210, and 500, and also on 500 of the direction finder.

Nothing more was heard from the Electra.

The decision of the *Itasca*'s crew was obvious and unanimous: Amelia Earhart was having radio receiver trouble.

Questions abounded. How account for her last report: "We are in a line of position 157-337"? What was the geographical point of reference for the line of position? Did she get a bearing from Howland? Where was she when she made the report?

The answers lay partially in several alternatives: the Electra's loop antenna, or radio; the stars before dawn, or the early-morning sun.

The loop antenna, one of the plane's direction finders, had a low-frequency limit of 200–1,500 kilocycles and a high-frequency limit of 2,400–4,800 kilocycles; therefore, it could not receive the *Itasca*'s homing signal from 7,500 kilocycles, but it could receive the one from 500 kilocycles. If the line of position 157-337 were determined from 500 kilocycles, then the all-important point of reference from which it was drawn had to be understood as Howland or the *Itasca*.

Obviously, AE knew her line of position, but she did not know where she was north or south on the line. This fact accounts for her "We are running north and south." If she had known her exact position, she would not have conducted the search

pattern for the island, nor would she have asked the *Itasca* to take bearings on her.

Curiously, the only transmission she seems to have received on radio was the telegraphed A on 7,500 kilocycles, but she did not receive that signal long enough to get the aural-null, a minimum of sound for a bearing.

If neither the line of position nor the bearing could come from the loop antenna or the radio, there were still the aids of celestial navigation.

For navigator Fred Noonan, veteran of eighteen previous Pacific air crossings, it should have been relatively easy to determine position, if his navigation instruments were operating correctly and if the weather were clear enough to take fixes from the stars or the sun.

Before dawn on July 3 he could have taken a fix from the stars. But an error in his chronometer of a mere four seconds would lead to a mistake of one mile in the longitude of his determined position. If the sextant were in error, however, the mistakes could have canceled out by the taking of three observations. Yet it would seem that Noonan could not shoot the stars, for as early as 2:45 A.M. AE reported the weather as “cloudy and overcast,” and at 3:45 A.M. as still “overcast.” If that bad weather continued until dawn, Fred Noonan could not use celestial navigation regardless of instruments.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, if he saw the sun after dawn, he could have shot a sun line. But if 157-337 were a sun line, it was worthless without a geographical point of reference, because the line could be drawn anywhere on the globe. No point of reference was given by AE in her last report.

Thus the question persisted: Where was she?

7. *The Disappearance and the Search*

Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan and their plane were lost somewhere over a possible area of 450,000 square miles in the South Pacific. The United States Navy was determined to find them.

In Washington Chief of Naval Operations Admiral William D. Leahy acted quickly and ordered ships and planes to take up the search for the missing fliers. In addition to the *Itasca*, an aircraft carrier and its full complement of planes, a battleship, four destroyers, a minesweeper, and a seaplane were pressed into service. Together these ships and planes would search for sixteen days an area of more than 250,000 square miles.

Commander Thompson of the *Itasca* made some quick decisions after Amelia failed to arrive at Howland. If she had flown to the south, she should have seen Baker Island, just 38 miles south of Howland. The area to start looking for her, he concluded, was in the northwest quadrant indicated by the 337° of her last position report of 157-337.

Also, he was far from abandoning hope. Although Amelia was having radio trouble, there was every belief that Fred Noonan could make a fix and yet find Howland. Radio transmissions, therefore, continued around the clock at the same frequencies, of 3,105, 6,210, and 500 kilocycles.

If Amelia were leaning out her fuel at the rate of

50 gallons per hour, at the end of twenty-one hours, at 9:00 A.M. on the morning of July 2, she would have enough fuel left for two more hours of flying time, for she had had 1,150 gallons of gasoline aboard the aircraft. If, on the other hand, AE were using fuel at just under 45 gallons per hour, she could have flown for a total of twenty-six hours—until 12:00 noon, Lae time, but 2:00 P.M. Howland time. In other words, just as her tanks were going dry, her chronometer for elapsed time would have indicated approximately twelve o'clock. The Navy reasoned, presumably from AE's point of view in the cockpit, that she could stay aloft trying to find some island somewhere until about noon.

If she were slightly north and west of Howland, and realized the fact, she would have tried for the Gilbert Islands; or, if she were even more north and west, she would have attempted the Marshall or Caroline Islands; if extremely north and west, the Mariana Islands. The last possibility was most unlikely.

"If they are down," George Putnam wired from San Francisco, "they can stay afloat indefinitely. Their empty tanks will give them buoyancy. Besides, they have all the emergency equipment they'll need —everything."

That the Navy was unable to find the two fliers defies understanding if all the conclusions and predications were correct.

At 10:15 A.M. the *Itasca* steamed north, and a Navy seaplane took off from Honolulu bound for Howland, to help in the search.

At twelve o'clock Amelia was reported as definitely not having reached Howland. Her time had

just about run out. She was most probably down; somewhere close by, everyone hoped, either riding the wing of the floating Electra, or paddling away from it in the emergency rubber raft. Holding to the first assumption, the *Itasca* listened for AE's SOS on 3,105 and 500, because it was believed that the plane's radio supply was by battery and that the antenna could be used from on top of the wing. The *Itasca* pressed the search and kept calling the Electra continuously.

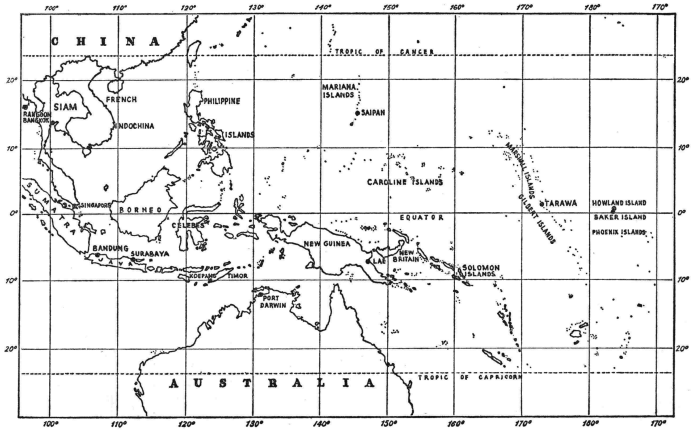
Because only portions of Amelia's transmissions had been received during the night, and those garbled amid static, the Navy concluded that the Electra had been flying through or above thunderstorms.

After her last report to Lae, at 5:20 P.M. on July 2, something had happened to put her off course. After sunset at 5:55 P.M. and during the night until sunrise at 6:12 A.M. the next morning, she had somehow become lost.

The navigation procedures of Fred Noonan tend to confirm this last view. It was his practice, according to those who knew him, to follow course and to correct it by taking infrequent fixes during the night; then, just before dawn, he would correct course for destination by determining a line of position near the end of the estimated run. This procedure would allow a flight of about three hundred miles during the morning without a good fix.

If the compasses had tumbled during the night and if the chronometers were badly out of calibration, then there were navigation errors aplenty—especially where Amelia depended on a faulty radio to make her landfall at Howland.

The seaplane out of Honolulu had to turn back to base because of bad weather. During the initial part of its 1,800-mile flight to Howland, however, it constantly received transmissions from the *Itasca*. Obviously, there was nothing wrong with the ship's radios.



(map)

The Lockheed engineers were contacted to find out whether the Electra's radio could operate if the plane were floating. Their answer was the first heavy note of discouragement. The Electra's radio definitely could not operate if it were on the water, they wired, because it needed the right engine for power. But, they added, the plane could float from the buoyancy provided by the empty tanks for a maximum period of nine hours. It was now hoped, for radio purposes, that the Electra had made an emergency landing on land.

The *Itasca* searched an area of 9,500 square miles without success. In addition to constant transmission on 3,105 and 500, during the day it set up a smoke screen, and during the night it played its searchlight against the sky. These measures were in vain.

On July 7 the battleship *Colorado* and the minesweeper *Swan* joined forces with the cutter *Itasca*. The *Colorado* with its planes went south and east through the Phoenix Islands, exploring the 157° reciprocal of 337° represented in AE's last reported line of position. The *Swan* and the *Itasca* turned north and then west to the Gilbert Islands.

On July 9 the aircraft carrier *Lexington*, with 63 planes, accompanied by the four destroyers *Perkins*, *Cushing*, *Lamson*, and *Drayton*, sailed from Hawaii. They arrived in the Howland area on the thirteenth to lend their support to the search. For the next five days the *Lexington*'s planes logged 1,591 hours looking north and west for the missing fliers. The planes covered an area of 151,556 square miles without turning up a trace of the Electra or its pilot and navigator.

Each ship was required to send out the same broadcast:

> "We are using every possible means to establish contact with you. If you hear this broadcast, please come in on 3,105 kilocycles. Use key if possible, otherwise, voice transmission. If you hear this broadcast, turn carrier [a steady key transmission] for one minute so we can tune you in, then turn carrier on and off four times, then listen for our acknowledgment."

All attempts by the ships and planes were in vain. After exploring an area of 161,000 square miles, nothing was found of the Electra, the life raft, Amelia Earhart, or Fred Noonan.

Newspapers and radio stations across the country told the story of the disappearance and the search.

Americans could not believe that Amelia Earhart was missing, and would not believe that she was dead. Everything about the story was too sudden, too tragic.

False signals and false reports now began to give spark to a despairing hope. On one of the ships two lookouts and an officer of the deck had seen a distinct green flare on the northern horizon. It was known that AE's rubber raft had emergency flares. The *Itasca* steamed north and east to investigate; at the same time it asked AE on the radio if she were sending up flares, and if she were, to send up another one. A few seconds later another green light appeared at a bearing of 75°. It was seen by twenty-five witnesses.

The *Itasca* now checked with other ships in the area to find out if they had seen the flares. The replies were all in the negative; the signals, they cautioned, were probably heat lightning.

Howland Island then reported flares to the northeast. The men on the island immediately set flame to three drums of gasoline, hoping that the fire would serve as an unmistakable beacon. The Swan reported more lights but thought that they were meteors.

Because of the position, appearance, and timing of the lights, the *Itasca* seriously thought that they were flares; but because of the other dissenting reports, it was now decided that the lights were merely a meteoric shower.

There were all kinds of radio reports. Amateur and professional radio operators from Honolulu; from up and down the west coast of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle; from across the Rocky

Mountains in Cheyenne; and from as far inland as Cincinnati, now reported hearing SOS signals from Amelia Earhart.

If Amelia had landed on an island or reef, and were using her radio, it was possible that her signals had skip-waved back and forth and forward between ionosphere and ocean across thousands of miles. Yet, if there were SOS signals, they were not heard in the Pacific by the official radio operators on any of the assigned Navy and Coast Guard ships, or on any of the shore stations from the Gilbert Islands through the Hawaiian Islands to San Francisco Radio on the West Coast.

In exploring the Gilbert Islands, the *Itasca* sent a party ashore to Tarawa, to confer with the senior British administrator of the islands. He had been informed of the Earhart search, and was surprised that neither the station at Tarawa nor the one at Beru had been notified about the flight before it began from Lae. Both stations, although they heard no Electra transmissions, could have helped, for Amelia's course had lain just 20 miles south of Arorae, the most southern island of the Gilbert group.

The concentration of the search to the northwest had been based on a very careful analysis of the evidence. The weather conditions at the end of the flight were a clear blue sky to the south and east of Howland but heavy cloud banks about fifty miles north and west of Howland.

The *Itasca* had laid a heavy smoke screen for two hours on the morning of July 2; it would have been visible to AE, flying at an altitude of 1,000 feet, for more than forty miles from the south and east, but only twenty miles from the north and west.

Evidently, judging from her reports, Amelia had been flying earlier during the night at a high altitude and above a thick overcast of clouds. Her signal strength, if direct and not the result of skip waves, indicated a maximum distance of 250 miles from Howland and not nearer to the island than 30 miles. Such was the conclusion of the *Itasca*.

All available land areas were searched and hundreds of thousands of miles of sea area. On July 19, 1937, the Navy released the *Itasca* from any further search; the cutter's mission was completed.

Back in California George Palmer Putnam had called on Jacqueline Cochran. He remembered Amelia's having told him about her friend's strange and marvelous powers at extrasensory perception. He was very excited when he came into Miss Cochran's Los Angeles apartment. He begged her to help him locate Amelia.

Miss Cochran told GP where the plane had gone down: that it had ditched in the ocean, that Fred Noonan had fractured his skull against the bulkhead, that Amelia was alive, and that the plane was floating on the water. She named the *Itasca* as a ship that was in the area although she had never heard the name before; and she named a Japanese fishing vessel in the same location. She told GP to get ships and planes into the area immediately to begin the search.

For two days Jacqueline Cochran followed the course of the drifting Electra. Ships and planes searched the area of her insight, but to no avail. Miss Cochran was racked with disappointment. If her ability were worth anything, she reasoned, it should have been able to locate and save her friend. Giving up, Jacqueline Cochran went to the cathedral in Los

Angeles and lit candles for the repose of Amelia's soul. She never tried her powers at ESP again.

Amelia had unquestionably disappeared. At best, her attitude toward her radio plans for the flight was casual; at worst, a combination of poor coordination, faulty radio receiver, and imperfect navigation instruments, had sent plane, pilot, and navigator to a watery grave.

The search over, rumors now began to abound and multiply about what had *really* happened to Amelia Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan.

Each would cause Noonan's wife and Amelia's husband and mother untold hours of anguish and false hope.

8. *The Fog of Rumors*

The first great rumor, which had gained widespread acceptance, was that Amelia and Fred were prisoners of the Japanese. They had flown over islands in the Japanese mandate which were being illegally fortified, the plane had been shot down by anti-aircraft guns, the pilot and navigator had been taken and held as spies.

This Japanese-prisoner story still persists after more than twenty years, largely because of a movie released in the early forties, while World War II was at its highest pitch and anti-Japanese feeling at white heat. The film, *Flight for Freedom*, starring Rosalind Russell and Fred MacMurray, told the story of a famous American woman flier, "Tonie Carter," who had been asked by the United States Navy to "get lost" in the South Pacific (actually, to remain in hiding at Howland Island), so that Navy planes could take photographs of illegal Japanese fortifications while "looking" for her.

In the movie, Tonie Carter's navigator was an old beau, "Randy Britton," to whom she had once been engaged. This gave rise to another rumor: Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan were in love, and decided to find a lonely Pacific island where they could live out their idyllic love "happily ever after." Incensed by the broad allusions of the film, George Palmer Putnam filed suit. The movie company settled out of court.

The scenario writers for *Flight for Freedom* were not alone, however, in their belief. Aboard the U.S.S. *Colorado* while it was conducting its search for the missing fliers were Dr. M. L. Brittain of Georgia Tech, and other university presidents, who were guests of the battleship on a Pacific cruise.

There was the possibility, Dr. Brittain later suggested, that Amelia was a prisoner of the Japanese, even as late as 1944, and that one day soon she would be liberated by the advancing United States Marines.

“We got the definite feeling,” Dr. Brittain was quoted as saying, “that Miss Earhart had some sort of understanding with government officials that the last part of her voyage around the world would be over some Japanese islands, probably the Marshalls.”

Amelia’s mother, Amy Otis Earhart, has long maintained that her daughter was on a secret government mission and that she was captured by the Japanese. This is Mrs. Earhart’s belief although she has no official basis for it.

The Navy Department at the end of World War II was compelled to make a final official announcement about AE’s disappearance. Amelia Earhart had not been sent on a naval cloak-and-dagger operation. Her plane had not been shot out of the skies by Japanese gunfire. She had not been captured, held as a prisoner, or shot as a spy.

Nevertheless, despite official and unofficial beliefs and statements to the contrary, rumors still flourished.

There was the story of the Japanese fishing boat. After United States forces had invaded the Marshall Islands—north and west of Howland—Lieutenants

Eugene T. Bogan and James Toole were quoted as saying that this story was told to them by a missionary-trained native named Elieu:

> "Ajima, a jap trader, said three and a half years ago that an American woman pilot came down between Jaluit and Ailinglapalap Atolls [southeastern Marshall Islands] and was picked up by a Japanese fishing-boat crew. She was taken to Japan."

In July of 1944, during the invasion of Saipan, in the Mariana Islands—far north and west of Howland Island—the Marines found in an abandoned Japanese barracks a photograph album filled with snapshots of Amelia Earhart in her flying clothes. It is known that AE carried a camera with her on the world flight but not that she was carrying a photograph album filled with pictures of herself.

Dr. Brittain, the same who had been on the searching *Colorado*, was queried in 1944 about the Saipan pictures. He felt that there was a definite connection between the album and the disappearance of the Earhart plane.

Of all the pieces of "evidence" in the stories about the disappearance, the most extraordinary was a piece of wood. It was a fragment of a fence post, with several nail holes in it and with one end badly charred. The piece of wood was found in July, 1942, by Robert D. Weishaupt while he was on beach duty with the Coast Artillery at Baranof Island, Alaska. Weishaupt noticed the burned piece of fence post as it washed in and out from the shore. It looked as if it had some writing on it. He waded in and picked it out of the water.

On one side was printed:

TO MY HUSBAND—I HAVE
CRASHED 250 MLLS FROM HAWAII—N.W.
OUR MOTOR WENT INTO FLAMES—
SHARKS
ABOUT ME.

A.E.

and on the other side, simply:

MRS. A.E.

Whoever wrote on the piece of wood and set it adrift on the water perpetrated a cruel hoax. It is extremely unlikely that AE could have crashed 250 miles northwest of Hawaii; the Electra did not have enough fuel to fly another 2,000 miles beyond Howland. And if Amelia had written such a desperate message, on wood suddenly provided in the middle of the Pacific, she would have addressed the message, not “TO MY HUSBAND,” but, rather, to GPP, her husband’s well-known initials; and she would have signed her initials on the reverse side, not “Mrs. A.E.” but AE, because she was not Mrs. Amelia Earhart.

For the rest of his life George Palmer Putnam was a man haunted and hunted by people who claimed that they had mystic powers and that they could put him in contact with his wife.

Eighteen months after her disappearance Amelia was declared legally dead, and GP married again. He went to live in the mountains away from the crowds, and during the war he joined the Air Force.

9. *The Light of Fact: A Mystery Solved?*

Two additional events, however, separate in time and both involving Amelia Earhart—but heretofore never interrelated—do fit together into a logical and revealing pattern. All the pieces of the puzzle are not available, but there are enough of them to form a discernible picture.

At the end of World War II Jacqueline Cochran, then head of the WASPS, the famous organization of women ferry pilots, was asked by General Hap Arnold to go to Tokyo and investigate the role that Japanese women had played in aviation during the war. While she was in Imperial Air Force Headquarters Miss Cochran noticed that there were numerous files on American aviation notables—and many files on Amelia Earhart.

These documents since that time have mysteriously disappeared. They are not in the official custody of the United States Government, or any of its departments, services, or agencies; nor do they seem to be in the possession of the Japanese Government. (All captured documents, those of historical importance having been copied on microfilm, have been returned to Tokyo. No AE files were discovered among the captured materials.) Nevertheless, these files seem to indicate that the Japanese had more than a normal interest in Amelia Earhart, because of another event that happened, curiously, again in the Marianas. This new evidence

has never before been made public.

At the end of the war on the island of Saipan a Navy dentist worked with his assistant, a native girl named Josephine Blanco. It was 1946. Dr. Casimir R. Sheft, now practicing in New Jersey, was taking a break between appointments and talking with a fellow dentist. During the conversation Dr. Sheft casually mentioned the disappearance of Amelia Earhart and speculated about whether the famous flier could have ended her flight in the Marianas, and possibly near Saipan, for he had read somewhere that the Marines had found AE's flight log during the invasion (actually, it had been the photograph album). Suddenly his dental assistant, Josephine, broke in: She had seen an American woman flier many years ago—nine or ten—on Saipan, when she was a little girl. The American woman wore khaki clothes and had her hair cut like a man....

Josephine Blanco, now Mrs. Maximo Akiyama, and living in California with her husband and their young son, was witness to an incident which is as incredible as it is enlightening.

In the summer of 1937 Josephine was riding her bicycle toward Tanapag Harbor. She was taking her Japanese brother-in-law, J. Y. Matsumoto, his lunch, and was hurrying along because it was nearly twelve o'clock.

That summer she had just finished Japanese grammar school, where she had gone for the last five years, ever since she was seven years old. In March she had celebrated her eleventh birthday, and now she could begin Catholic school. She was looking forward to studying with the Spanish missionary sisters. Father Tadzio had hoped that someday Josephine, too, like some of the other Chamorro

native girls in the Marianas, would answer God's call and become a native sister.

Josephine had a special pass to the Japanese military area near the harbor. Not even Japanese civilians were admitted to the area unless they carried the proper credentials. The young girl rode up to the gate, stopped her bicycle, and presented her pass. The guard allowed her into the restricted area.

On the way to meet her brother-in-law, Josephine heard an airplane flying overhead. She looked up and saw a silver two-engined plane. The plane seemed to be in trouble, for it came down low, headed out into the harbor, and belly-landed on the water.

It was not until she met her brother-in-law that Josephine discovered who it was that had crash-landed in the harbor.

"The American woman," everyone was saying, greatly excited. "Come and see the American woman." Josephine and her brother-in-law joined the knot of people who gathered to watch.

She saw the American woman standing next to a tall man wearing a short-sleeved sports shirt, and was surprised because the woman was not dressed as a woman usually dressed. Instead of a dress, the American woman wore a man's shirt and trousers; and instead of long hair, she wore her hair cut short, like a man. The faces of the man and woman were white and drawn, as if they were sick.

The American woman who looked like a man and the tall man with her were led away by the Japanese soldiers. The fliers were taken to a clearing in the woods. Shots rang out. The soldiers returned

alone.

Mrs. Akiyama has affirmed, after identifying a photograph of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan taken on the world flight, that the couple was unquestionably the same man and woman she and her brother-in-law had seen on Saipan: the clothes were different, but the woman's haircut was unmistakable.

Josephine Blanco's story, which is basically the same one she told Dr. Sheft in Saipan, is most probably true. It is extremely unlikely this native girl could have invented her story. If she had, then for what purpose? If for profit or gain, she had, for more than ten years after the American invasion, the opportunity to capitalize on her sensational news.

As an eleven-year-old girl, Josephine of course had no idea of the significance of what she had seen other than it was indeed an American woman she had seen. Dr. Sheft has never doubted her story, and for many years he has hoped that a thorough reexamination of the facts would be made. They were.

Amelia Earhart could have ended her flight around the world at Saipan. If she were indeed headed for Howland Island, however, she somehow made an error of about 100° in reading her compass.

It means that all during the night of July 2, beginning after sundown at 5:55 P.M., Fred Noonan was not able to get a fix from the stars to determine his position. And if, after fourteen hours out from Lae, he looked down and saw a chain of islands, he would have determined that he was on course and over the Gilbert Islands; but if AE had turned north while he was napping, and he had still awakened in

time to see islands, they would have been, not the Gilberts as he might have thought, but the Caroline Islands—exactly the same distance away but in the wrong direction.

By somehow departing from her course, and making the tremendous error of steering north and west instead of east—as she had done once before on the world flight, when she had turned north to St. Louis instead of south to Dakar, overriding Fred's directions, after the flight across the South Atlantic—AE would have found herself after twenty hours of flying time somewhere along the chain of islands that marks the Marianas.

Her last report, at 8:45 A.M., gave her line of position as 157-337. The Navy's search satisfied judgments that the line was not a radio line, for the areas northwest and southeast from Howland were thoroughly investigated. One hundred fifty-seven-337, therefore, was undoubtedly a sun line.

Near Howland, at position 01° 00' North Latitude and 177° 20' West Longitude, on July 3, 1937, the bearing of the sun was 66° from the north point at 7:00 A.M., Howland time. The sun line, therefore, would have been 156-336.

Near Saipan, at position 13° 00' North Latitude and 153° 00' East Longitude, at 5:00 A.M., Saipan time, the sun was 64° from the north point. A sun line there would have been 154-334.

If Noonan had thought he was close to Howland when he shot his last sun line, his geographical point of reference—used for computing and plotting his observation—would obviously have been close to Howland. If he had actually been close to Saipan, however, the relative position of the sun would still

have been almost the same: 64° from the north point near Saipan, as opposed to 66° from the north point near Howland. But his observation, when computed and plotted on his chart, would have shown him to be the same number of miles from his geographical point of reference.

An experienced navigator with trust in his abilities such as Noonan would have tended to believe that either his observations or his computations were somehow wrong. He would not have thought, at least immediately, that he was some 2,600 miles off course. If AE had been pressing him for a position to radio to the *Itasca*, he might have, in agonies of doubt, merely given her the line of position, which he could be sure of, but *not* the geographical point of reference, because he could now no longer determine that point with certainty. This possibility would explain the irregularity of Amelia having transmitted the line of position without the necessary point of reference.

On the basis of these determinations, therefore, there is strong support for believing in Josephine Blanco's story.

The Navy gave Amelia until about noon before she would go down. It was at noontime that Josephine saw the two-motored plane ditch in Tanapag Harbor.

The Navy's final conclusion was that Amelia had ended her flight somewhere north and west. Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan were seen by two eyewitnesses north and west of Howland on Saipan. At that time of the year the American woman and her tall male companion could have been none other than AE and Fred Noonan.

In 1937 on Saipan, according to Maximo and Josephine Akiyama, the Japanese military did not hesitate to kill anyone, Japanese civilian or Chamorro native, whom they suspected of spying on their illegal fortifications.

Japanese officialdom maintaining an enigmatic silence (the Japanese Embassy in Washington knows nothing of the Earhart case, nor does Dr. John Young of Georgetown University, who examined captured Japanese documents for the American Government) concerning the disappearance of the two fliers, it may be idle to speculate upon the final fate of Fred Noonan and Amelia Earhart. The evidence, however, justifies at least one tenable conclusion.

When Josephine Blanco saw the twin-engined silver plane, Amelia and Fred had been flying for twenty-six consecutive hours and for 4,000 futile miles. The sight of the island that was Saipan must have cheered the fliers with renewed hope for safety and for life itself.

When they survived the crash landing in Tanapag Harbor only to be taken into custody as spies, their joy must have turned to inexplicable bitterness: they had been saved not for life, but for death before a Japanese firing squad.

For Amelia, who once had said to her husband, “I don’t want to go; but when I do, I’d like to go in my plane—quickly,” the last word of her wish must have struck her now with sudden and ironic force.

Yet, as she had so often before, Amelia Earhart must have met this challenge with stubborn self-control and resolute courage. For here at last was her unmistakable, but irrefutable, fate.

RECORD FLIGHTS
AWARDS AND DECORATIONS
BIBLIOGRAPHY
A NOTE ABOUT SOURCES
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

RECORD FLIGHTS

1928, June 17: The first woman to fly across the Atlantic as a passenger; with Wilmer Stultz pilot and Lou Gordon mechanic; in the pontoon-equipped Fokker trimotor airplane; from Trepassey, Newfoundland, to Burryport, Wales; time: 20 hours and 40 minutes.

1929, August 24: Third place in the first Women's Air Derby Race; from Santa Monica, California, to Cleveland, Ohio.

1930, July 6: Women's speed record; three-kilometer course; at 181.18 mph.

1931, April 8: World's altitude record for autogiros; at 18,451 feet; in Pitcairn autogiro.

1932, May 20–21: First woman to fly solo across the Atlantic; from Harbor Grace, Newfoundland, to Londonderry, Ireland; time: 14 hours and 56 minutes.

1932, August 24–25: Women's non-stop transcontinental speed record; from Los Angeles, California, to Newark, New Jersey; 2,447.8 miles; time: 19 hours and 5 minutes.

1933, July 7–8: Broke her own transcontinental speed record of the year before; in her Lockheed Vega; from Los Angeles, California, to Newark, New Jersey; time: 17 hours, 7 minutes, and 30 seconds.

1935, January 11–12: First to fly solo from Honolulu,

Hawaii, to Oakland, California; in her Lockheed Vega; 2,408 miles; time: 18 hours and 16 minutes.

1935, April 19–20: First to fly solo from Los Angeles, California, to Mexico City, Mexico; in her Lockheed Vega; time: 13 hours and 23 minutes.

1935, May 8: Solo flight from Mexico City to Newark, New Jersey; time: 14 hours and 19 minutes.

1937, March 17–18: Flight from Oakland, California, to Honolulu, Hawaii; in Lockheed Electra.

1937, July 3: Record flight around the world at the equator; with navigator Fred J. Noonan; in Lockheed Electra; covered a distance of 22,000 miles, until strange disappearance over the Pacific somewhere between Lae, New Guinea, and Howland Island.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

City of Chicago: medal presented by Mayor Cermak, 1932.

City of New York: medal of valor presented by Mayor Walker, 1928.

City of New York: mayor's committee medal; presented by Mayor Walker, 1932.

City of Toledo: medal presented 1928.

Atlantic City: key.

City of Philadelphia: medal presented by mayor, 1928.

City of Pittsburgh: key.

Mexico: Order of the Aztec Eagle; medal with blue center and crest; gold ribbon and lapel pin.

French Legion of Honor; with lapel pin.

Belgium Order of Leopold; with lapel pin.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts: medal presented, 1928.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts: medal presented, 1932.

Aero Club Royal de Belgique: medal presented, 1932.

Aero Club de France: medal presented, 1932.

Women's Roosevelt Memorial Association:

medallion presented, 1933.

Le Lyceum Société des Femmes de France of New York: medallion presented, 1928.

Le Comité France-Amérique: medallion presented, 1932.

Distinguished Flying Cross: medal presented by the Congress of the United States, 1932.

Columbia Broadcasting System: medallion presented, 1932.

Mexico: Union de Mujeres-Americanas: medal presented, 1935.

American Society of Mechanical Engineers: medal presented, 1929.

American National Geographic Society Award: medal presented by President Hoover, 1932.

United States Flyers Association: member.

Poor Richard Club, Philadelphia: member.

Ciudad de Mexico: medal presented, 1935.

Sociedad Mexicana de Geografia y Estadistica: medal presented, 1935.

Society of Women Geographers: medal presented, 1932.

Chicago Aircraft Show, 1928.

International Civil Aeronautics Conference, 1928.

Brooklyn Rotary Club.

National Air Races: 1926.

International Shrine of the Birdmen: Mission

Inn, California.

Badge with picture of Amelia Earhart, Lou Gordon, and Wilmer Stultz.

Two medals with picture of Amelia Earhart on the converse side and a seaplane on the reverse side.

Kansas Commonwealth Club.

Atlantic City: freedom of the city.

Boy Scouts of America; Medford, Massachusetts, Council: medal presented, 1928.

City of Toledo: key.

City of Buffalo: key.

Lafayette Flying Corps: medal.

Breakfast Club, Glendale, California: medal presented, 1928.

Lindbergh medal: presented in 1928.

Medal presented by Amelia Cardenas to Amelia Earhart: 1935.

City of Medford, Massachusetts: medal presented, 1928.

Harmon Trophy: presented in 1937; shared jointly with Jean Batten of Australia.

N.B. These awards and decorations, in addition to many other memorabilia, can be seen on display at the National Air Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. The display was made possible by: Purdue University, the Amelia Earhart Post of the American Legion at Los Angeles, California, Amy

Otis Earhart, Amelia’s mother, and AE’s friends.

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A NOTE ABOUT SOURCES

In addition to the books and articles listed above there are also countless newspaper accounts about the exploits of Amelia Earhart, which are too numerous to be cited separately. Among the primary sources are the files of the Boston *Herald*, the Boston *Traveller*, the New York *Times*, and the New York *Herald Tribune*, both in the original editions on file at The Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences in New York and on microfilm. They began in 1928 with AE's *Friendship* Flight, then to 1932 and 1935, and finally through the tragic year of 1937.

The basic story of AE's life can be found in her books and articles and in George Putnam's writings. GP had a keener eye for detail than AE: where Amelia needs to be rewritten, George elicits admiration for his skill; but this is true only for "ground operations." In the air—for the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of flying—Amelia is the master, although she is sometimes vague and often inconsistent. I am indebted to GP for the ground story and to AE for the air story.

For most of the facts of the last flight—and many readers would wonder how I came upon them, I found them in AE's logs, which she sent home with her other gear before the take-off from Lae, New Guinea. Some of the logs are now at Purdue University; these and others GP used for AE's book *Last Flight*, which he arranged for publication. The communications between AE and the *Itasca* came

from the cutter's radio log, which Commander W. K. Thompson included in his official report, dated July 19, 1937. Some of the details of the Navy's search were obtained from the deposition of the *Lexington*'s commanding officer, Captain Leigh Noyes, dated October 4, 1938, and from the affidavit of Richard D. Black, dated November 22, 1938. These three documents are in the possession of Clyde E. Holley, AE's former attorney, in Los Angeles, California.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For most of the basic scenes and incidents in the story of Amelia Earhart I am indebted to G. P. Putnam's Sons and to Harcourt, Brace and Company, whose books by Amelia Earhart and George Palmer Putnam provided me with the beginning framework for my biography. From AE's *20 Hrs., 40 Min.*, *The Fun of It*, and *Last Flight* (arranged by G. P. Putnam), from GP's *Soaring Wings* and *Wide Margins*, I have carefully chosen events, transcribed letters, and quoted conversations. In the conversations and letters I have taken liberties and occasionally changed the word order and inserted synonyms, for it is my belief that GP often made AE sound the way her public expected her to sound. Expressions like "you betja," "tummy," and "grand" were not in keeping with my interpretation of Amelia's character and I did not use them. GP, I believe, invented too freely.

I owe profound gratitude to the following persons, who wrote me letters, showed me photographs, and/or told me anecdotes:

Mary Ahearn, Josephine B. Akiyama, Lois Allen, Bernt Balchen, R. S. Barnaby, Elizabeth B. Brown, Howard Cady, Sidney Carroll, John F. B. Carruthers, Lucy Challiss, Jessie R. Chamberlin, Jacqueline Cochran, Thomas Coulson, Marjorie B. Davis, Anne M. Earhart, Paul Garber, Viola Gentry, Betty Gillies, John Glennon, Lawrence Gould, Clyde E. Holley, Clarence L. Johnson, Teddy Kenyon, Marvin

MacFarland, Jan Mason, Ruth Nichols, Blanche Noyes, Charles A. Pearce, Edward S. Pearce, Margaret H. Putnam, Hilton H. Railey, Eleanor Roosevelt, Lauretta M. Schimmoler, Ester Schlundt, Casimir R. Sheft, Manila Talley, Mark S. Waggener, Bradford Washburn, Helen Hutson Weber, Edna Gardner Whyte, and Gilbert L. Campbell.

For providing me with their Earhart materials and helping me in my research I offer my deepest thanks to:

The Library, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado; the Staff and the Bibliographical Center, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado; the National Air Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences, New York, New York; the Libraries, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana; the Honnold Library, Claremont, California; Robert Saudek Associates; and the Ford Foundation. And my special acknowledgment to the finest librarians I have ever known: Lieutenant Colonel George V. Fagan, Shirley Karol-chik, and Donald J. Barrett, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado. For a clean manuscript thanks to my typists, Beverly Bowman and Marie Rossignol.

For his invaluable assistance in working out the many navigation problems of the last flight my sincere thanks to Captain Thomas E. Pearsall, USAF Academy; and for their help in solving other difficult flying problems, my appreciation to Major John R. Galt and Captain Lawrence G. Campbell, also of USAFA.

Finally, for guidance and advice in writing and

rewriting the manuscript, from the first stages through the final drafts, I want to thank John E. Williams, Harold M. Priest, Stuart B. James, Harvey Gross, and Major Joseph B. Roberts. And for having had faith in me from the beginning, four years ago, I want to express my profoundest gratitude to Colonel Peter R. Moody, head, Department of English, United States Air Force Academy. My deepest acknowledgment is on the dedication page.

$3.95

DAUGHTER OF THE SKY

The Story of Amelia Earhart

by PAUL L. BRIAND, JR.

The full story of Amelia Earhart's life—including an explanation of the mystery of her disappearance and death—is told for the first time in this biography. It is a story of her girlhood in Kansas, her college years, her jobs as nurse and social worker, and her first adventures in flying as well as of her later years of achievement and triumph.

It was almost by chance that Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. Overnight she found herself the most famous girl in the world. That was her decisive hour. She felt she had to prove worthy of her fame, to show the world that she was a great flier by right, not just by luck. What happened is explained by Colonel Railey in his Introduction:

> "Genuinely as a tribute to her sex rather than for her own glorification, she accepted the honors that accrued; for the participation of women in aviation, which at all times she strove to encourage and pace, was the obsession which lured her to her death."

Amelia Earhart went on to spectacular victories, setting up a flying record that is still a marvel of achievement and that puts her in the top rank of America's hall of fame. A likable and modest woman, Amelia Earhart was a skilled and dedicated air pioneer, a true daughter of the sky, and her life story

remains unique.

Jacket design by Larry Lurin

DUELL, SLOAN AND PEARCE
NEW YORK



PAUL L. BRIAND, JR.

CAPTAIN PAUL L. BRIAND, JR., was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1920. He received his primary and secondary education at parochial, private, and public schools in greater Boston, and his higher education at Boston University, the University of New Hampshire (B.A., *cum laude*, 1948), Columbia University (M.A., 1952), and the University of Denver (Ph.D., 1959).

He began his military career as a naval aviation cadet, transferred to the Army Air Forces where he earned the Air Medal as a combat crew member in Europe during World War II, and was commissioned from college as a Distinguished Military Graduate, Air Force ROTC, into the regular Air Force.

Initially a public-relations officer, Captain Briand became an English instructor at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, from 1952–55. Since 1955 he has been an Assistant Professor of English at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado, where, “like two eyes joined in sight,” he combines his loves for aviation and literature. He is the co-editor of *The Sound of Wings*, an anthology of flying literature, published in 1957.

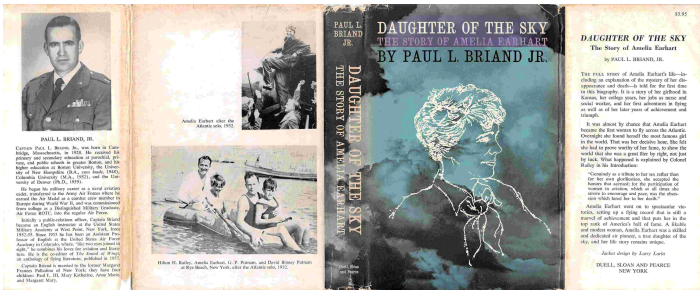
Captain Briand is married to the former Margaret Frances Palladino of New York; they have four children: Paul L. III, Mary Katherine, Anne Marie, and Margaret Mary.



Amelia Earhart after the Atlantic solo, 1932.



Hilton H. Railey, Amelia Earhart, G. P. Putnam, and David Binney Putnam at Rye Beach, New York, after the Atlantic solo, 1932.



Transcriber's Notes

Punctuation, hyphenation, and spelling were made consistent when a predominant preference was found in the original book; otherwise they were not changed.

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