

TRIP TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

By
W. L. WEBB

This is not a technical report, nor is it historical, but is only written in an attempt to answer some of the commonly asked questions regarding conditions in England. First hand impressions of a visitor are presented regarding methods of travel, bomb damage and shortages of luxuries.

Arrangements for the trip were quickly made in Washington by making personal calls to the proper authorities. General Colton's office kindly wrote letters of reference to the Chief Signal Officer in London, the Military Attaché at the American Embassy in London, General Rumbough, Chief American Signal Officer in European Theater and the British Air Commission. Mr. Barton and Group Captain Bell of the British Air Commission, with the help of Mr. Pain, sent the necessary cables and letters to the Ministry of Aircraft Production in England. At the time it appeared that many of these arrangements were unnecessary, but after my arrival in England it was found that these arrangements were well worth while because the way was well paved for visits to many establishments that we desired to inspect.

The British Air Commission kindly offered to arrange my transportation to the United Kingdom via the R. A. F. Ferry Command, and on September 30 [1942] Mr. Pain advised me that we would leave Montreal at noon on Thursday, October 1.

Upon our arrival in Montreal on the morning of September 30 Mr. Jackson at the R.A.F. Ferry Command Headquarters was contacted and he advised Mr. Pain and myself that a Ferry Command Station Wagon would pick us up at our hotel at noon that day. Promptly at noon the station wagon arrived and we were taken to the airport where the necessary papers were signed, our baggage was checked, we were measured for fur flying suits and boots, fitted for a fur helmet, issued an oxygen mask and given instructions on its use, and prepared for the trip in a Liberator Bomber. We were advised that we would leave before noon the next day and that the station wagon would call at our hotel at 9 A.M. and to be prepared to leave.

Promptly at 9 A.M. Thursday morning the station wagon collected us with several other passengers and we were taken directly to the airport, but there was a few hours delay and after getting dressed up in our heavy suits we had to wait until 1 P.M. for the take-off. Before the take-off another Liberator took off for England with a full load of cargo and about a dozen passengers.

Finally at 1 P.M. and in a "big sweat" we crawled into the Liberator among a lot of heavy cargo. There were about twelve passengers and four of us were asked to crawl down into the bomb bay before the take-off. I happened to be one of the unlucky four and managed to squeeze into the bomb bay into a position where it was almost impossible to move. It would not have been so bad except that with heavy clothing and a heavy flying suit on it was almost unbearably hot. However, we were soon in the air and could walk back into the cabin and get acquainted with our fellow passengers.

The flight to Gander, Newfoundland took five hours and we landed at Gander just about twilight. During the flight to Gander we amused ourselves by sitting in the gunner's position in the tail of the aircraft and watching the trailing wire radio antenna go through unusual gyrations. We had plenty of sandwiches and coffee stowed aboard and the time passed rather quickly.

Upon landing at Gander we were met at the aircraft by a very agreeable R.A.F. officer who showed us where we could remove our flying clothes and we were taken over to the Inn to dinner. Gander is a very large and complete airdrome, but there is absolutely nothing there but the necessary aircraft facilities. The entire area looks rather raw because there has not yet been any time to clean up the debris resulting from the construction and the building of the airdrome.

We took off from Gander at approximately 6:30 P.M. prepared for a ten hour flight to Prestwick, Scotland. We were rather fortunate on this trip because the weather was excellent and the Liberator did not fly higher than 10,000 feet. The temperature did not go much below freezing, but it was still rather uncomfortable because we could not move about much. However, after a couple of hours out everyone got tired of being bound up in their parachute harness and one by one they were being removed.

It was impossible to sleep during the night, so everyone spent the night drinking hot soup, coffee, tea, and eating frozen sandwiches, raisins and dates.

Among the passengers there were one R.A.F. officer, one British Army officer, three Englishmen, two Canadians and myself. The entire group was cordial and the night passed rather quickly.

The cabin of the Liberator definitely is not fitted out for passenger comfort, and the only seat available is a hard bench along one side. Directly opposite of where I was sitting there was a large box, about 6 feet cube, which apparently contained a spare engine. It was not lashed too securely, and one had the feeling that at any moment it might fall down on top of the passenger. Mr. Wilhelm, a Canadian Professor from Toronto, was definitely the father of the crowd and appointed himself to take care of the comfort of all passengers and give each one instructions as to what to do, although he had never made such a flight before.

The flying characteristics of the Liberator are very good, and even though there is no insulation in the cabin it is not extremely noisy, nor is there very much vibration.

Dawn occurred about 2:30 A.M. (New York time) and everyone was anxiously waiting to see the first sight of land. The coast of Ireland was sighted about 3 A.M. and it was a beautiful sight as the entire country appeared to be a green patchwork of roads, farms and villages, and a few small mountains.

The aircraft then made about a 45-degree turn and flew northerly about an hour, and the city of Prestwick, Scotland was sighted about 4:30 A.M. (New York time). A perfect landing was made at the Prestwick airdrome about 4:30, just ten hours after leaving Gander and only 16-1/2 hours after leaving Montreal. Scotland is a beautiful country and everything appeared very well kept and green. Everyone climbed out of the Liberator through the bottom hatch and it was a stiff and cold looking bunch. Again a very courteous R.A.F. officer greeted us and took us into a very cozy room where we shed our flying clothing and had a cup of coffee. The customs and immigration officers were very efficient and took only about five minutes of our time. The customs officer passed through every one very hurriedly and made a statement similar to this to each one: "I am sure that you do not have any silk stockings, tobacco or whisky" and quickly shoved everyone into the next room. After a quick breakfast we were informed that a U. S. Army Transport was leaving for London immediately and that we would be flown to London.

The trip to London was uneventful, and we arrived over the Hendon airdrome at London about 12:30 - as our watches had already been set forward five hours for the time difference. Apparently the young U. S. Air Force Officer that was flying the transport DC-3 aircraft had very little flight time in this type of aircraft because he had to make four passes at the Hendon runway before he was able to land. I was later told by another U. S. Officer that this particular chap had only three hours flight time in a Douglas. The cabin of the aircraft had all of its windows blacked out, so on this flight we were unable to see any of the country-side. However, during the flight I had an interesting conversation with a young Air Force Lieutenant from San Francisco.

Upon our arrival at Hendon the U. S. Army bus drove us into London and let us off Grovnor Square. During the bus ride we passed through many bombed areas but it did not appear as bad as one would imagine because by now all of the debris has been cleaned away.

Fortunately, Mr. Pain was an old timer in London and we were soon in one of their funny little cabs and had a room at the Cumberland Hotel. Mr. Pain had primed me with stories about how terrible English hotels were, so the room obtained at the Cumberland Hotel was an unexpected surprise as it was very comfortable and had a private bath. The Cumberland is one of the few American-type all-concrete hotels in London and was very popular during the 1940 blitz. The hotel rate for two of us was 22 Shillings per day with breakfast, which is quite reasonable considering New York hotel rates. One shilling is worth 20 cents in American money at present.

After a very welcome bath, my first telephone call was made to the Military Attaché at the American Embassy, who I learned to be a Col. Hughes. Col. Hughes suggested that I call at the Embassy right away and a very interesting conversation was had with Col. Hughes. He had only been in London four months and liked it rather well. He called Col. Van Voorst, the Chief Signal Officer, who took charge of me and introduced me to the Naval Attaché, the engineers at the American office of Scientific Research and Development, and gave me a few pointers on the proper people to contact in the British government. He suggested that Sir Watson-Watt was the head man in communications in England and that by all means I should make every effort to get next to him and get his O.K. on all of our desired visits. The Col. had received the necessary letters from Gen. Colton in Washington and was most anxious to do everything that he could to be sure that my visit was a success.

It was only a short walk back to the hotel and I arrived back there at 5 P.M. and was soon sound asleep as we had no sleep the night before. Mr. Umpleby of the M.A.P. who had visited us here in Towson last February was called by Mr. Pain and he came by the hotel about 6:30, so painful as it was we had to wake up and go to a nearby pub for a beer. After a few beers and a quick dinner at the hotel we were ready to retire and were soon sound asleep.

The dinner was my first experience with war time English food, and it was the most terrible meal that I had eaten for many years. It consisted of plain boiled macaroni of a very low grade as an appetizer, boiled sole and potatoes, and a cup of the terrible English coffee. In England the desert is known as a "sweet" and our sweet was a cherry tart made of sawdust and one cherry.

All of the next day was spent at the M.A.P. contacting all of the necessary politicians and officials to make the arrangements for our desired visits. However, appointments were made to see Air Commodore DeBurgh the next morning and to obtain the necessary passes for various British establishments.

That evening we decided to find a better place to eat than the hotel so stepped out into the darkness for my first impressions of the London blackout. It is hard to imagine how a large city looks at night with absolutely no lights showing. Every building is completely blacked out and no light is allowed to show from any window. The street lights are screened so that no light shines upward and are merely a very tiny glow. Only a few taxicabs and busses are on the streets and their lights give even less light than our usual parking lights.

It was impossible to obtain a taxicab so we walked about 1-1/2 miles to a small and very popular pub just off Piccadilly Circus. Piccadilly Circus is the Times Square of London. However, this pub, known as "Shepards" was so crowded that we could not get in, so we had another 1/2 mile walk to "one of those little places around the corner that doesn't look like much but where the food is good". This statement, "one of those little places around the corner that doesn't look like much but where the food is good" got to be a standing joke as invariably the food was also very poor.

The next day was Sunday so a very enjoyable day was spent in the country with Mr. Pain's parents at their country home in Farnham-Hale. Farnham is about 30 miles East of London, and the suburbs out of London are really beautiful. The village is a typical small English village with narrow winding streets and ancient homes. Pain insisted that I must see the local pub, which was known as the Bush Hotel, and had been an old coach stop centuries ago. The lounge room at this old hotel must have been hundreds of years old as the beams were about 18" square and were worn and wormy. The room reminded me of the Molly Pitcher dining room at Red Bank where similar beams exist, but they are faked antiques.

Mrs. Pain keeps chickens, so we had chicken for dinner and had an egg for supper. As you may know, eggs are not normally obtainable in England and I believe that the ration is one egg per month for adults.

The most interesting thing about this visit was Mrs. Pain's story about the bomb which dropped in the next door neighbor's backyard. A bomb had dropped in the backyard and had destroyed about half of the house next door and shattered all of the 87 windows in the Pain residence. Such stories are typical of nearly everyone that I talked to in England, as without exception everyone has handled incendiary bombs or has been within a few hundred yards of bomb explosions.

The next day we were back in London bright and early and spent the entire day at M.A.P., Oakwood Court again, except for a short meeting with Air Commodore DeBurgh and his staff at the Air Ministry. We left the M.A.P. at about 6:30 P.M. and several of the M.A.P. officials joined us at the local pub for a beer and a few games of darts. This was my first experience in a typical English pub, nearly all of which have three bars: one for the common folk, one for a quick drink at the bar, and the third one a bit more elaborate where the ladies may also have a drink. One of the group, a Mr. Bradley, drove us back to the hotel in his English Ford in the blackout and in a driving rain. It was beyond my comprehension as to how he could see where he was going in the blackout in the rain, and all I could do is shut my eyes and hope for the best.

The next morning we were on hand promptly for our appointment with Sir Watson-Watt at 9:30 and had a very interesting conference with Sir Robert and two or three of his staff. He approved of our proposed visits and issued the necessary instructions to see that we saw

everything that we wanted to see. Sir Robert Watson-Watt is in charge of all communications for the R.A.F., and everything was clear sailing after it was approved by him.

The next day I went to the Hoover Company in the suburbs of London by myself and had my first experience in finding my way about in the London underground subways. The Hoover people served an excellent lunch in their private executive dining room, and I had enough to last me for a few days until I could get another good meal.

We had planned to visit R.A.E. at Farnborough the next day, but the people we wanted to see would not be there that week so our plans were changed and it was decided to visit some R.A.F. stations on Thursday and Friday of that week. The arrangements were very quickly made by Wing Commander Powell in the Air Ministry who was most helpful and efficient. He assigned Wing Commander Long to accompany us on a two-day tour to a fighter command and bomber command station. Mr. Pain contacted Sir Watson-Watt's office and got a staff car assigned to us for the trip.

Promptly at 9 A.M. the next day Wing Commander Long and a small Hillman car, driven by a W.A.A.F., called for us at the hotel. After a very pleasant three-hour drive to the North out of London we arrived at the Wittering Fighter Command Station, and after the necessary formalities were introduced to the station commander who turned us over to a very charming and helpful Signal Officer, Squadron Leader Mortimer. Squadron Leader Mortimer was very proud of his station, and he obviously was enjoying himself in showing it to us. The Squadron Leader took us to lunch and dinner in the R.A.F. mess at the station where we had two fairly decent meals.

That night we were driven out to a Radar station about 20 miles from the airdrome in the blackout and without car lights, and our young lady driver was totally unfamiliar with the road. It was quite a nerve-racking ride as several times she went off the road, and once when passing through a small village she barely missed a fire-hydrant by about a half an inch.

That night we put up at a small country hotel at Stamford. This was my first experience in an English country hotel. We arrived there after midnight, but fortunately had made previous arrangements for our rooms. The hotel was locked up and we stood in complete darkness pounding on the door for about ten minutes before the caretaker was aroused. The caretaker turned out to be a typical Britisher, with a bushy mustache, and was very much annoyed for our bothering him at that hour of the night. I was again very agreeably surprised with the room we had obtained, as Mr. Pain had assured me that in a country hotel the rooms would be terrible. However, the only room that was left was the best one in the house, and it was a very fine large room with twin beds and a private bath. However, we later learned that this was the only private bath in the hotel and that Wing Commander Long and our young lady driver did not fare as well as their rooms were cold, small, and had no running water.

The trip the next day to the bomber station at Waddington was uneventful, and we left Wing Commander Long at his home near Waddington and started on our return trip to London about 3 P.M., hoping to get to the hotel before darkness. However, there are no sign posts anywhere in England now, and neither Mr. Pain nor our driver knew the road, and of course I didn't know it, so we became lost several times. However, the drive was very pleasant and by inquiring at every village we finally arrived at the outskirts of London just at darkness. It then took us three hours to get to the hotel because none of us knew the road and we became lost several times in trying to navigate through London in the darkness.

The next day, Saturday, was again spent at Hoover, London, and Mr. Colston, the Managing Director of Hoover, and now a Regional Controller of Production for the Ministry of Production, invited me to his country home for the weekend. We left the plant and started for his home, about a 30-mile drive, about 6 P.M., but unfortunately his car broke an oil line, and after much trouble his car was finally put into a garage and Mrs. Colston was telephoned to come and pick us up.

It is interesting to note that in England there is absolutely no gasoline available for private driving, and extremely few cars are seen on any of the highways. The only traffic is large Army trucks and official government cars. However, hundreds of bicycles are on the roads and all of the housewives go to the market on their bicycle, and all of the working people go to the factories on bicycles or on busses.

Previous to leaving the U. S. various people who had visited London and some of the Englishmen in this country now, had advised me regarding shortages of certain things in England. They especially emphasized that one must take their own soap, chocolate and matches with them as these are almost unobtainable in England. It was also suggested that the most welcome gifts in England would be things as silk stockings, cigarettes, candy, bananas and oranges. We took with us a fair quantity of chocolate, oranges and bananas and found that bananas have not been seen in England for 2-1/2 years. Those that were given to people were exhibited as a great curiosity and shown to all of their friends. One banana was given to Mrs. Colston who auctioned it at a charity benefit and obtained 87 pounds for it, which is \$348.00 in American money.

When we first arrived we gave a lot of our chocolate away, but fortunately saved out a few bars for our own use and found it very welcome as desert after some of our meager meals. I was also very glad that we had taken soap as none of the country hotels furnish soap.

We arrived in London on Friday, October 2, and I left on Monday, October 26.

During my stay in England a considerable amount of the country was covered and visits were made to Bradford, Manchester, Great Malvern, Farnborough, Reading, Crowthorne, and Mitcham. In addition, several short trips were made to outlying plants in suburbs about London. Mr. Pain had warned me previously that train travel in England was pretty terrible and that we should not attempt to travel by train any more than absolutely necessary. In general his statement was true as all trains are now operating under 30 miles an hour, are dirty because they have had little maintenance in the past two years, and are always over-crowded. On the trip to Great Malvern, which is approximately 100 miles from London, we bought first class tickets but were unable to even obtain seats for about half of the journey, and the 100-mile journey took seven hours. However, everyone accepts these hardships without complaint, and we found all the people on the trains good natured about being crowded or having to stand up.

Everywhere that one goes there are hundreds of British and American troops in uniform. A very large number of women are also seen in the A.T.S., W.R.E.N., and W.A.A.F. uniforms.

All hotels in London are full, and the hotel situation is about like in Washington in the U.S. Places of entertainment in London are few and far between, and any of those that are desirable are badly over-crowded early in the evening. All night-spots and pubs do not open in the evening until 6 o'clock and must close either at 10 or 11 P.M.

Bomb damage is to be seen everywhere one goes, although in varying degrees in different sections of London and in other cities. As you may know, the East end of London was the most badly damaged, and one taxi ride through the East end of London reveals nothing but mile after mile of completely destroyed blocks of buildings. Even in the center of London near Hyde Park and Piccadilly Circus one or more buildings have been damaged in every block. In some cases buildings now in use have been partially destroyed. Sometimes a complete half of the building will have been destroyed by a bomb, and in other cases the upper floors of a 10- or 15-story building have been destroyed. In the case of the M.A.P. Building at Thames House one employee in this building told the story of being at work one day when a large bomb struck the top of the building and practically demolished the upper 3 stories. This is an 11-story building, and this chap happened to be working on the 4th floor. People were evacuated from the building, but when it was learned that the building had not caught fire everyone went back to work in the remaining eight stories of the building.

St. Paul's Cathedral was formerly completely surrounded by other buildings and now all of the surrounding buildings have been destroyed leaving St. Paul's Cathedral as a very prominent and beautiful landmark in this area.

Anti-aircraft guns are in evidence in every park in London and all around the outskirts of London. The Germans still send over a few aircraft every day, and hardly ever a day goes by without a few bombs being dropped somewhere on England, although not in enough quantity to get anyone excited.

Air-raid alerts are heard nearly every day, but I was not fortunate enough to actually see any activity. One morning during an air-raid in London during my visit, two German aircraft came over and we could hear the guns shooting at them and they downed one of them. In another case, while visiting the S.T.C. Company at Southgate, the air-raid alarm was sounded and afterward we learned that one lone enemy aircraft had come over about one mile from Southgate and dropped two bombs, both of which dropped in the streets and killed three people.

Practically every necessity and luxury is now rationed in England, including all food, clothing, fuel and household goods. As a matter of interest, each person receives an allowance of 1/2 lb. of meat per week, 1 egg per month, and 8 oz. of candy per month. The sugar allowance is the same as in the U.S. Fresh eggs, milk, cream, steak, pork, pie and cake are practically unobtainable. It seems that Spam is almost the national food, and one gets it for breakfast, in sandwiches for lunch and tea, and often for dinner. Apparently it is shipped to England in boatloads in large 25- and 50-lb. tins. One type of cheese, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and fish is fairly plentiful. White bread is hardly ever seen, and typical coarse English bread is served. Spam became almost an international joke between Americans and Englishmen, and any American who has spent any time in England swears he will never eat Spam again at home.

Heat in any building was prohibited prior to November 1, and the hotel rooms and many offices were miserably cold and damp. During heavy rain, when one was out in it a considerable part of the day, it was almost impossible to get your clothing dried out as your room was too cold and damp to dry the clothing. However, people in England seem to be accustomed to all of these hardships and take it all in a very good natured way - no complaining.

It seems that such luxuries as scotch whiskey and woolens are exported to America to obtain good hard cash as they are hardly obtainable in England now. Nearly every bar is rationed its whiskey every day, and by 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening many of them are out of

whiskey altogether. Wine is very scarce and is extremely expensive, the cheapest bottle being about 30 shillings, and many types of fine wine selling for 80 to 100 shillings.

Taxicabs are allowed three gallons of petrol per day, and most of them use up their allowance during the day and do not work at night. This means that it is almost impossible to obtain a taxicab at night in London. Recently the busses and underground trains stopped running at midnight, and one must be home by midnight or be faced with a 3- or 4-mile walk

On Thursday, October 15, we decided that we would be ready to return to the U. S. on October 24. Inasmuch as the British Air Commission had arranged my transportation to England very quickly, and in the best possible way, it was decided to request return transportation through the M.A.P. in London. Our official request was put in and on Monday, October 19, we were advised that there were 100 people on the waiting list for air transportation to the U. S. and that we would probably have to wait several weeks. They told us that they would advise us to take a boat which was scheduled to leave on October 26. However, this didn't sound good enough so I contacted Col. Van Vorst at the American Embassy and told him my story and stated that I very much wanted to leave on October 24. He dictated a letter for me, signed by the Military Attaché, which I took to the U. S. Air Transport Division of London, and was immediately assigned a seat on a Pan American Clipper scheduled to leave Foynes on Monday, October 26. I was told that the airway train would leave London Saturday night, October 24. This was very good and I greatly enjoyed "ribbing" Mr. Pain about the inefficiency of the M.A.P. when it came to arranging transportation. Mr. Pain decided not to leave for another week and came over on a boat about two weeks later.

At 5 P.M. Saturday, British Overseas called and advised me there would be a 24-hour delay in the departure. Again the next day, about noon, I was called and advised that there would be another 24-hour delay. It began to look like it was another one of these long waits - never knowing when we were going to leave, but no message came through on Monday and a telephone call to British Overseas confirmed that we would leave London on the train for Bristol, and this was the first deluxe train that I had seen in England. It was one of their best trains and is equal to any of our crack trains.

Upon our arrival at Bristol we were driven to a hotel and put up for the night, having to room with someone else, and told that when we would be called at 6 A.M. to go to the airport for a 9 o'clock departure for Ireland. The next morning I did not awaken until 7:30 and immediately called downstairs to learn that there was another 24-hour delay.

Bristol is not a very exciting place to spend a day, so I enjoyed a good sleep until about 11 A.M. Having nothing else to do I took a long walk about Bristol and saw some of the worst bomb damage that I had seen. The very center of Bristol had been badly bombed and the debris had not been cleaned up as well as it had been in London. This gave a much better picture of how bad bomb damage actually looks. In walking straight West from the hotel there were about ten blocks with hardly a building left standing. In all directions about the center of Bristol all buildings had been practically demolished. Just to view this damage it is hard to understand how a city can continue to operate after having suffered so much damage, but it still seems to be existing and business going on as usual. Even next door to the hotel where we stayed a complete building had been demolished.

The evening was spent seeing a "lousy" double feature American movie and I went to bed early expecting to be called at 6 A.M. Promptly at 6 A.M. we were up and by 7:30 in a bus on the way to the airport. After a considerable delay at the airport getting weighed, going through

immigration and customs, we took off in a British Overseas four-motored DeHaviland Albatross. After flying for about 15 minutes it was noted that the plane turned back and returned to Bristol and landed. We were advised that one of the motors was missing and that we would have to wait until it was repaired. We finally took off about 1 P.M. and arrived at the Shannon airport in Ireland about 2:30. Customs and immigration inspection was taken care of very quickly and we were taken on a 40-mile bus ride through the Ireland countryside to the Pan American sea base on the outskirts of Foynes. After a 4 o'clock lunch of ham and eggs with plenty of butter and coffee we left for Lisbon in a Pan American Clipper at 6:30 P.M.

Among the 30 passengers on the Clipper was Henry Morgenthau, Jr. with two of his aides.

The flight to Lisbon, Portugal took nine hours and was uneventful. The weather was perfect and the flying very smooth. The time was spent getting acquainted with fellow passengers and drinking scotch.

A fairly rough landing was made in the Bay of Portugal at 3:30 A.M. London time. The Captain advised us that he had about a 30 mile an hour wind and that the Bay was rather choppy. He stated that he had to land cross-wind in order to properly ride the swells in the Bay.

The officials of Portugal were inefficient and it took two hours to get the necessary clearance through immigration and customs.

Apparently the entire group could not continue on from Lisbon in the same clipper, and about ten of them were advised that they would have to lay over and wait for the next clipper. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending upon the viewpoint, I was not in the group that was to stay in Lisbon.

Five of us were assigned to the Avenida Palace Hotel and loaded into a Dodge Sedan driven by a Portuguese driver. The ride from the sea base to the hotel was the only part of the entire trip where I believe that I was actually frightened. The driver drove the car through the narrow streets at 60 to 70 miles per hour, with the horn blowing continuously. The streets were wet, as it had been raining, and it would not seem possible that he could arrive safely at the hotel. However, we did arrive safely at the hotel, and after much argument between our Portuguese Pan American escort and the night clerk in Portuguese we were assigned rooms.

Apparently I drew the worst possible room in the hotel because it was only about six feet wide and had no running water. The single small window opened onto a square and the bed was a series of hills and valleys. However, I finally managed to go to sleep and awakened about nine A.M. to feel things crawling around the sheet and on my pajamas. I decided it was time to get up and very carefully brushed my clothing and myself to be sure there were no bugs remaining.

With some difficulty I located the breakfast room and managed to make the waiter understand that I still wanted breakfast at 11 o'clock in the morning. Apparently food is still plentiful in Portugal and I enjoyed a very nice breakfast - about three cups of good coffee, sweet rolls and jam.

An interesting two hours were spent strolling about the square and boulevards of downtown Lisbon, and it is interesting to note that Lisbon is a very beautiful and clean city. Most of the people seen are well dressed and appear to be in rather good circumstances. However, this is not true of certain other sections of Lisbon.

As you know, Portugal is a neutral country, and in Lisbon Germans, British and American people intermingle with people of other countries of Europe. Apparently the German propaganda is rather extensive in Lisbon, and I rather enjoyed looking at a number of Nazi picture magazines showing how good conditions could be under Hitler. Prior to leaving England we were especially cautioned against carrying any papers into Lisbon that would divulge any confidential work as the German Gestapo operates in Lisbon and searches your baggage carefully when left in any room at a hotel.

After a very substantial lunch we were advised that we should be at the Pan American office at 2 P.M. to be taken to the sea base in a bus. We arrived at the sea base about 3 o'clock, and again there was considerable delay going through the Portuguese officials, and we finally took off about 5 P.M. The weather was perfect, and the most perfect rainbow that I had ever seen could be seen across the Bay of Portugal. It was a complete semi-circle and the colors were vivid and complete from one base to the other. During the take-off we had a wonderful opportunity to see the city from the air and the nearby resorts. It is truly a beautiful country and would be a very nice place to spend a holiday.

This leg of the journey took 16 hours and we arrived at Bolema, Portuguese Guinea, West Africa about 10:30 A.M. There were about 40 passengers aboard and among them four ladies, three children and one baby two months old. All sleeping facilities had been removed from the clippers and it is necessary to sit up all night. Another chap and I attempted to make a bed on two of the seats, but it would not work very well, and it was impossible to get a good night's rest.

Bolema is nothing more than a small native village and the Pan American base. The governor formerly lived there, but he has moved to some inland city and there are no points of interest in the small town.

We were given an excellent combination breakfast and lunch of ham and eggs, fruit juices, several kinds of fruit, white bread, and plenty of butter and jam.

It may sound superfluous to mention meals so often, but after a month in England one mentions good meals whenever he gets one.

Shower baths were available in the Pan American barracks, and after a welcome shower - as it is hot and tropical here - we enjoyed a stroll in the village for about half an hour. We spent some time in a small native store trying to talk to the natives, but it was almost an impossibility as they understood no English. A quick walk was taken through the village market square where numerous seminude natives were standing about and doing their marketing. The market-place was very dirty and smelly, and it is hard to believe that food purchased here is to be eaten. It is interesting to note that the native women are bare to the waist, and the men wear nothing but a loin cloth. However, the natives are most friendly and will do anything to entertain the travelers in order to obtain a few silver coins.

Take-off was made at 1 P.M. and the next stop was made at Fisherman's Lake in Liberia at 5:30 P.M. This is a very large inland lake surrounded semi-jungle country, and the climate is semi-tropical as the nights are fairly cool. There is absolutely nothing here but the Pan American base, and two or three very small villages about a half mile from the base. Pan American has a very complete maintenance base here with well constructed buildings and good repair facilities.

It was expected that we would take off again at 8 P.M., but we were advised that it was necessary to change a cylinder on one engine and that this would require about six hours. After spending a short time strolling about the base and inspecting their zoo containing six monkeys and two leopards, the next thing in order was to look for a bed as practically no sleep had been had the last two nights. I was soon asleep, but could hear tom-toms beating in the distance. Some of the travelers had their curiosity aroused by the tom-toms and found that the natives were having a native dance at one of villages, so had a native boy take them to the dance. I was too far gone in sleep to be interested, but was told afterwards that the dance was quite interesting and gave one an idea of native African life.

After being awakened out of a sound sleep at 1 A.M. we took off at 2 A.M. for the longest part of the flight across the ocean to Brazil. By this time all of the travelers had gotten over their inhibitions and everyone arranged themselves a bed wherever possible. I drew a bed on the floor in the aisle which was reasonably comfortable. It was every man for himself, and the first one to obtain the cushions and the choice spots had themselves a bed.

The crew had been changed at Fisherman's Lake and we found the new crew far more efficient and business-like than our previous crew. The Captain of the previous crew spent all of his time in the cabin entertaining Mrs. MacArthur at dinner with wine and amusing her with stories. However, the captain of the second crew was seldom seen in the cabin and the discipline among his crew was better. The stewards were more efficient and gave considerably more attention to the comfort of the passengers than the previous stewards.

This flight took 17 hours, so after getting up about 8 o'clock and being served a meager breakfast of fruit juices, rolls and coffee, everyone settled down for a long day. Time was passed with poker games, bridge games, reading and "shooting the bull". By this time it had been possible to know the personality of all of the other passengers, and on the whole most or of them were not good companions. The entire group reminded me of a group of small children, pushing and milling about and always trying to obtain the best spot for themselves and trying to be the first one to leave the clipper at each stop.

Contrary to some public opinion, Mr. Morganthau is a charming and companionable gentleman, and was one of the most pleasant people on board.

During the entire crossing only one lone freighter was sighted, and the entire trip was smooth and uneventful.

The coast of Brazil came into sight about 2:30 in the afternoon, and a landing was made at Belem, Brazil at 3 P.M., Brazil time. However, this was 6 P.M. according to our watches, so our watches were set back three hours. No attempt was made to go ashore at this stop at all and we were served a very excellent dinner on a barge. This was by far the best meal I had had since leaving home prior to going to England. There were ample quantities of all kinds of fruit, steak, potatoes, vegetables, frankfurters, and a delicious frozen custard.

As Belem is only a very short distance from the equator the climate is not very comfortable.

A take-off was made about 6 P.M. and the Captain advised us that we would not stop at Tripoli or Bermuda, but fly directly to San Juan, Porto Rico. Normally the trip takes seven days as overnight stops are made in Africa and Brazil, but because of Mr. Morganthau, who seemed to

be in a rush to get home, several stops were cancelled and the trip was made by flying straight through day and night.

The entire night was rather hot and it is interesting to note that by now everyone had lost all of their inhibitions and slept in the most comfortable way and slipped into pajamas - as soon as there were no women around, and some managed to make some comfortable spots in the tail of the ship.

We landed at San Juan about 5:45 A.M. in the darkness and were quickly rushed through the U. S. Health Examination, immigration and customs in the efficient U. S. manner. We were then quickly driven to a hotel downtown for breakfast. Only two hours were spent in Porto Rico and nothing could be done as everything is closed early Sunday morning, and we expected to leave any minute.

Take-off for New York was made about 9 A.M. and we were advised that we would be in New York in ten hours. However, the flight took somewhat longer because after about six hours out the outboard right engine was stopped and the rest of the trip was made on three engines. At first this caused considerable excitement among the passengers, but it was soon learned from a crew member that the engine had merely been burning excessive oil and that they had turned it off of their own accord in order to prevent undue damage to it.

The landing at LaGuardia Field in New York was made at 8 P.M. and it was certainly a welcome sight to everyone aboard as many of them had been away from home as long as a year and the British people aboard were anxious to see New York. The customs and immigration service at New York was exceptionally efficient and fast, and in not more than a half hour we were in a taxicab and on our way to the city.

It was impossible to obtain a Pullman seat to Baltimore, but after a month in England the coach seat in a good American train seemed rather good, whereas previously I probably would have complained bitterly.

I would not record the trip, such as the one described, as a pleasure trip, but it was certainly most interesting and gives one an entirely different outlook concerning war-time conditions. The British people are truly fighting a war, and the entire country is operating on a war-time basis. I believe that the most impressive thing about the entire trip is the complete blackout of the whole country of England every night just as soon as darkness falls. Not a single light is allowed to show in the entire country and it is observed faithfully. I am sure that if more of us visited England we would not only gain useful technical knowledge, but would also complain far less about conditions in our own country. In addition it gives one an opportunity to see how electronic equipment is actually used to fight a war, rather than to think that it will probably be used for some such purpose.

All British people contacted were most gracious and hospitable. Everyone did everything in their power to make my stay in England pleasant and apologized for present conditions, insisting that I must return after the war and enjoy real English hospitality. The visit changed my opinion of English people entirely, as I had thought of most of them as being "stuffed shirts."

To quote Mr. Marcus, "The British people cannot be beat in this war", and I certainly agree as their spirit and courage make them unbeatable.

Wilbur L. Webb