



Lucy Merrick

This is one of the series of vocational stories sponsored by Mortar Board, honorary for senior women. The writer, a graduate of the Home Economics and Technical Journalism Departments, has been air hostess with the Eastern Air Transport.

THERE'S a great crowd on board today. Weather is clear to Washington, you'll probably get thru all right. Bad tail wind for a few hours. Your supplies are on. Take off in 5 minutes."

This is my greeting from the field dispatcher at Newark airport as I come into the Eastern Air Transport waiting room at eight o'clock in the morning. We are going all the way through from Newark to Miami, Fla., today, a 10 hour run. My first glance goes to the passenger list; interesting people make a long trip great fun.

"Whew — some trip — the 'Notable Special.'" The wise-cracking pilot is reading over my shoulder. "It may be rough to Washington and looks rainy down the line. Wind may blow it out all right."

Then I hear — "O. K." — from the dispatcher. Gathering up my ever-present suitcase, the morning papers and my list I trot down the runway after the pilot and co-pilot. The motors are whirling so I clutch my hat and papers as the "prop-wash" snatches at them, to blow them out on the field. After stuffing the papers in the racks in each seat and stowing away my suitcase in the back compartment, I take my stand by the door to greet the passengers as they come aboard. Now I try to identify them as much as possible from my list.

Yes, there is the First Lady, flying back to Washington. "Good Morning."

There is that newspaper and magazine sports writer I have admired from afar—that must be the prominent "Brain Truster" now teaching in New York. "How do you do." Hmmm—who can this be? Where have I seen his picture? Oh yes, the movie czar going to Washington for a code meeting. "How are you this morning?" Now these next three must be corporation presidents off

When the Pilot Says

"Take Off at Eight"

By Lucy Merrick, '31

to Miami for a rest. This young girl is going to Palm Beach. I'll have to get the rest later. "Yes, we have 14 on. O. K. So long."

Then my first difficulty arises when one passenger can see no reason for fastening his seat belt. It is a carefully enforced rule that all seat belts be fastened on take offs and landings. He is finally convinced as the plane reaches the north end of the field and the pilot runs up both motors. As we start down the field into the wind I must jump for the last seat in the back and hook my belt as the wheels leave the ground. Our next stop is Washington, 1 hour and 35 minutes ahead.

HERE I shall take time out from our day to give some technical bits of information. The ship is a 15-passenger Curtis-Wright biplane. We have a first pilot who does most of the actual flying and has the first responsibility. The co-pilot relieves him and sends and receives radio messages, reporting our position every 30 minutes to the field just ahead and the field we have just left. The flying hostess has charge of the cabin and the comfort of the passengers. She has among her supplies, thermos bottles of coffee and hot water, tin boxes of sandwiches and cakes, first aid kits, ammonia capsules, pillows and blankets, and a supply of unbreakable dishes.

"There is Princeton's stadium, just to the left, the university is right beyond. Now Philadelphia is that smoky blur ahead. Way off there, see that blue line? That is the edge of Chesapeake Bay. We are flying at 3,000 feet, higher than usual, to get above the wind.

As we come over the bay the winds pick up and we get into some bumps. These are only air currents and seldom cause distress.

"We are now coming over Washington. There is the capitol, the 'Mecca of America.' Here is the White House." Now, without exception, 13 passengers glance at the First Lady, who has been quietly reading her novel, and smile knowingly.

I continue my little speech to a Russian girl and her English husband. "There is the Washington monument, the Lincoln Memorial. The Potomac River is just below us. Is your seat belt fastened? We are coming in to land."

We stop only 10 minutes in Washington—just long enough to say good bye to 6 passengers and greet 5 more coming aboard. Then with two new pilots we take off again for Richmond, Va.

The snow is still lying softly on the

rolling hills of Virginia, a huge woolen blanket of black and white plaid. Round clumps of trees glisten like crystal and squatty pine trees bend down with ice coatings, look from the air, like flat palm trees.

I AWAKEN from my reverie to find the sports writer trying to tell me that the pilot wants to speak to me. He probably wants to tell me that the weather beyond Richmond is bad and we may have to wait over. It is always my job to tell the passengers such news and the possibility that we may have to cancel the trip and send them ahead by train.

When I stick my head in the cockpit, the pilot only wishes to know how many would like lunch in Richmond. I listen to a few minutes of Morse code on the radio—our lunch will be ready when we land in 15 minutes.

As we sail over the field to land, the northbound ship from Atlanta is taxiing up the runway. I tell the man sitting next to me what a gay affair luncheon will be with all the passengers from the other ship. For 30 minutes of bedlam 24 passengers, 4 pilots and 2 hostesses talk weather, the Giants, politics and the market.

"All aboard please. Northbound ship to Washington and New York. Now leaving from Gate Number 1."

Five minutes later the same call comes for us and we take off for Charleston, S. C., 3 hours away.

I am overjoyed to find a crossword puzzle book in the hands of the sports writer. Someone is making a grand slam at the bridge table in the front of the plane. The Russian girl finds it slow work to teach the corporation president some new Russian words.

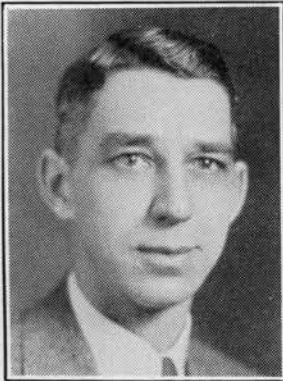
A puzzle fan gives up and challenges me to tell him a good tale. "I'll tell you of one cold night spent on the ground in these hills. We had been coming north, fighting cold winds, when we suddenly ran into low clouds. It was nearly zero at that altitude and the moisture froze at once on the wings. We tried to climb to find warmer air but couldn't get up. Our pilot, a veteran of winter night flying, banked as steeply as possible, picked out a field he saw through a break in the clouds and we 'sat down.' We stayed in that plane for 5 hours, but at the first streak of light peeking through a crack in the gloom, we struck out again."

I leave him to ponder on my story while I serve tea, sandwiches and small frosted cakes. In the morning I usually

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**STUDENT
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NEXT TO AMES THEATRE

Take Off at Eight

(Continued from page 2)

serve coffee and rolls or bouillon and crackers.

"THERE is Savannah. See over here the straight, prim streets, the square red brick houses with white pillared porches?"

I see a very black cloud rolling across the western sky blowing out to sea. It is directly in our path by the time we reach Daytona Beach and suddenly the storm hits the ship. At the first drop of about 50 feet there are several startled passengers. A thunderstorm in the air can be a thrilling experience; these drops caused by currents of air of different temperatures may vary from 5 to 100 feet. The rain drives against the windows as a few streaks of lightning race past and thunder hurls itself at us. We are jolted a bit more as the storm moves on out to sea, leaving a swept sky, and taking daylight away with it.

The surf is only a line of white and Palm Beach a dotted line of glowing lights. Then a beacon flashes at Ft. Lauderdale to be answered almost immediately by the green and white signal of the Miami airport. It is 8:40 p. m.—just 12 hours since we left New York.

As we walk into the hangar, I find more questions to be answered and so I must tell something more of this job. Forced landings are not common; interesting people and delightful conversationalists are common. New cities to prowl about in can be found on every trip; people living in traditions new and strange; dialects with foreign tangs or soft slurred accents are heard in queer streets. There is always the exhilaration of flying over soft hills or along the edges of blue and white beaches. Summer and winter may be interchanged in a day—just this day we leave zero weather behind us and find a warm soft evening in Miami.

Coed's Pet Peeve

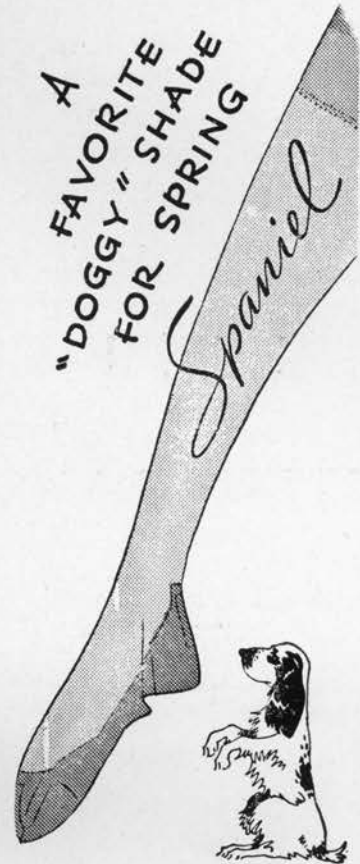
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tioned are wild gestures—one history prof has the distinction of having ruined some illustrative material in the classroom by his irrepressible desire to gesticulate—eating in lab—yes, some instructors have been known to do that—and sleeping during an exam—probably this prof was trying to show the class that he didn't doubt their integrity, but nevertheless the class doesn't like his method.

And now lest some conscientious instructor, after reading of his faults, should deem himself entirely unworthy of filling his position, the coeds wish to assure him that their complaints are made with no ill feeling but with only the best intentions of giving some helpful suggestions for improvement.



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