

FOREWORD

This is the story of Captain Bud Muench. His flight was inspired by the 1919 flight of USCG Aviator #1, Elmer Stone, the pilot on very 1st flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Captain Muench's flight occurred in the summer of 1956. Here, in his own words, is the story of his amazing journey.

RETRACING THE FLIGHT OF NC-4

By

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After WWII it was my privilege to fly with the Navy's "Weekend Warrior" program. My primary assignment was as Instrument Training Instructor for our Squadron. Was selected as Patrol Plane Commander to retrace the 1919 flight of the NC-4 as the first airplane to cross the Atlantic Ocean. It was piloted by Elmer Stone, USCG Aviator #1.

As stated, our mission was to retrace the NC-4 flight. My assignment was as Patrol Plane Commander. The plane flown was the PB4Y-2, a version of the WWII B-24 aircraft with a single fin and rudder. The first leg of the flight was to Argentia, Newfoundland. Having served with VP-6 during WWII in Greenland this was our rest base. The flight was marked by a problem in making an instrument approach due to a 40 degree compass deviation which was later identified. From Argentia we flew the major overwater leg to Lajes in the Azore Islands. Decided to perform this leg as navigator. An indication of our compass problem became apparent when our compass track and our Loran track deviated considerably. Since we were at the outer limits of the Loran system had to decide which to follow. Fortunately decided to follow Loran. Otherwise we might have wound up lost and landing in the ocean. We did have another problem when in transferring fuel the plane filled with gas fumes. We could have blown up. Opening the bomb bay doors cured that. We landed successfully at Lajes in the Azores. The flight to Naval Air Station, Port Lyauty in Morroco was routine. The Arabs in Morroco were unfriendly so we were restricted to base.

A highlight of our trip was a flight to the Rock of Gibraltar. Still have an enlarged picture of our plane with the Rock towering over it.

We operated with the 6th Fleet in the Mediteranean. This brought about a landing at Madrid in Spain. We landed during their siesta and no one was in the tower. Unfortunately the runway on which we landed had a barricade across the middle of it. Fortunately, we were able to brake to a stop just before hitting it. We attended a bull fight and was surprised to find that waving a white handkerchief is the supreme salute for an outstanding performance. This salute is also given at the Chatauqua Community, a highly cultured center of activity in Upstate New York.

We also were given a weekend off on the Riviera where we landed at Nice in France. We managed to get a lift from the airport with the Naval attache's limo. The Navy corpsman driver recommended that we stay at the Hotel Rhuel there. He also recommended that we ask for the bartender George. When we demurred, he pointed out that George was the key to guiding activities. He stated that George was utilized by General Eisenhower when he visited Nice during WWII. George proved to be a great help to us. The hotel was on the beach and had my first view of women in bikinis there. Also visited the gambling casino at Monte Carlo.

In taking off we passed over Cannes. The ship Andrea Doria was there on her maiden voyage to New York. She never made it being sunk by her collision with a petroleum carrier.

Before departing for our return to the USA decided to swing ship to check the compass. In doing so discovered the 40 degree error. In that process the plane's nose wheel broke off. It had to be replaced.

The return flight to the USA was routine.

This has to be one of the great flight adventures of my over sixty year flying career.