

A P P E N D I X 6

TRIPPE'S PAN AMERICAN AIRWAYS SYSTEM

Juan Terry Trippe was born in Sea Bright, New Jersey, U.S.A., in 1899. He graduated from Yale in 1923. After working for a year in banking, he organised Long Island Airways with surplus aeroplanes (seven) from World War I. In October 1925, he won a Post Office contract between Key West and Cuba for his newly formed Colonial Air Transport.

He founded, in July 1927, Pan American Airways System. Within three years this aggressive and far-sighted man had thrown an aerial loop around South America.

His dream expanded to put PanAm around the world using a trans-Pacific route. Trippe used islands controlled by the United States as *stepping-stones*. His routing after Honolulu was Midway, Wake Island, Guam and then the Philippines.

For this vast distance his airline needed bigger aeroplanes. He consulted Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh and Andre A. Priester. Then Lindbergh was PanAm's technical director and Priester was chief engineer. Lindbergh, without hesitation, proposed flying-boats – the landing fields of his *stepping-stone* islands were inadequate. Trippe accepted Lindbergh's reasoning and sent his required flying-boat specifications to the premier aircraft builders of the day.

Igor Ivanovich Sikorsky (1889-1972) won the contract and in December 1929 production began on his *Winged-S*. Sikorsky's pilot Boris Sergievsky had command of testing. In April 1931, pushing the throttles to 1,950 rpm the \$125,000 giant four-engined flying-boat skipped off the water. Sikorsky's *Winged-S*, designated S-40, received Department of Commerce approval and was licensed NC80V.

The Sikorsky S-40 had four 575hp Hornet engines mounted on struts (*pod-and-boom*) beneath the 35m (114ft) span wing. Three of these 44-passenger amphibians came to PanAm – *American Clipper*, *Caribbean Clipper* and *Samoan Clipper*.



Juan Terry Trippe (Photo: Courtesy PanAm.)

AIRPORT OF THE NINE DRAGONS, KAI TAK, KOWLOON

These were the first machines to bear the famous *Clipper* name. An inaugural flight left Miami bound for Cristobal on 19 November, 1931, with Lindbergh in command.

PanAm took delivery of an improved S-42 Sikorsky on June 5, 1934. The S-42 carried out most of PanAm's trans-Pacific pioneering. These were the Alameda-Honolulu and Alameda-Honolulu-Wake Island flights of April and June 1935 that extended to Guam in October.

Late in 1935 saw the first of Glenn Martin's beautiful M-130 four-engined long-range civilian flying-boats take to the air. This, the *China Clipper*, had a wing span of 40m (130ft), length 28m (91ft), maximum take-off weight 23,600kg (52,000lb) and speed 210km/h (130mph).

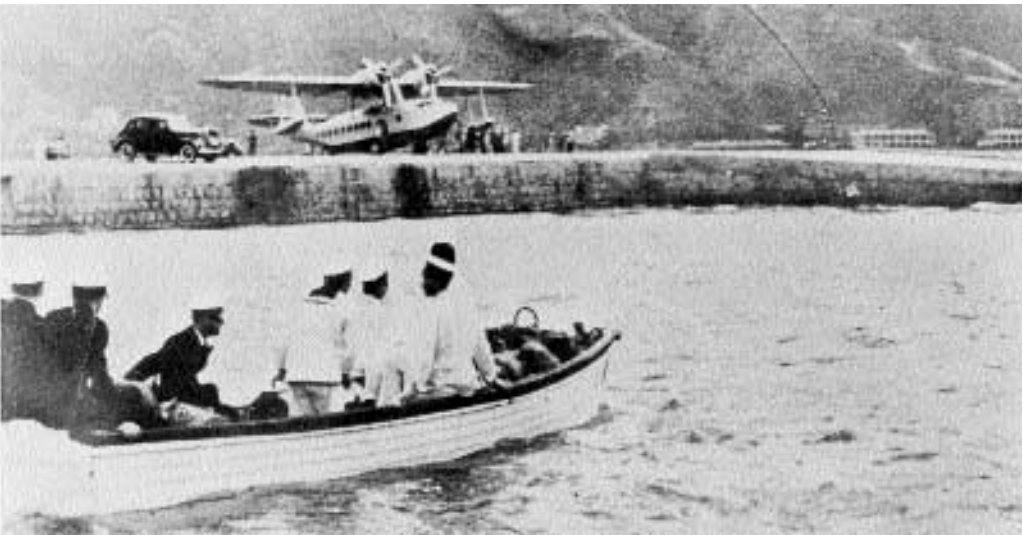
Martin built two more M-130s for PanAm's trans-Pacific service – they became the *Philippine Clipper* and the *Hawaiian Clipper*. On November 22, 1935, the *China Clipper* inaugurated the first schedule airmail flight to Manila.

The M-130 could carry 24 passengers on short stages, but the longer sectors meant a reduced payload. The M-130 became an accounting nightmare incapable of earning her keep. This problem brought the Sikorsky S-42s back into contention. The S-42s became the prime link between Hong Kong, on the Asiatic mainland, and the United States more than 8,500 miles away.

January 11, 1938, was a sad day for many Hong Kong residents. On that day Captain Edward Musick and his crew died, while refuelling at Pago Pago, Samoa. Without warning his plane exploded to become a flaming inferno.

Ed Musick had become a popular local figure when he inaugurated the first scheduled airmail flight across the Pacific. As a mark of respect Trippe suspended (temporarily) PanAm's South Pacific Service.

In Hong Kong, Monday 8 December, 1941, Captain Fred S. Ralph's launch headed towards his moored Sikorsky S-42B. A Japanese squadron screaming overhead dropped a string of bombs that turned the sea into lethal geysers. He watched as his beautiful *Hong Kong Clipper* slowly sank into the mud-stirred waters of Kowloon Bay.



MARTIN AMPHIBIAN AT KAI TAK – 1936

Kai Tak had no terminal facilities, passengers drove out to the amphibian to embark. The PanAm crew arrive by launch. The loaded plane waddled down the slipway and took off on Kowloon Bay.

(Photo: Courtesy Hong Kong Government Information Service)

APPENDIX 6

PanAm seemed to lose direction when Trippe retired as chairman and chief executive in 1968.

Then PanAm lost Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, on December 21, 1988. That day 270 people rode the *Maid of the Seas*, a Boeing 747, to their death.

The United States Federal Jury, in July 1992, found PanAm *guilty of wilful misconduct for their alleged disregard for federal security rules concerning hand-searching unaccompanied baggage*. An airline can receive no worse indictment than this!

Although Lockerbie was the end of PanAm the company was in decline long before that awful bomb blast. A top-heavy executive squandered financial resources in vying to host the most lavish cocktail-party. There were no restrictions – anyone could attend!

Juan Terry Trippe died on April 3, 1981. PanAm died in bankruptcy court in 1991.

Proof material that one could not exist without the other!