

The purpose of this letter is to keep the personnel of the Air Service, both in Washington and in the field, informed as to the activities of the Air Service in general, and for release to the public press.

FOR RELEASE July 19, 1924.

LIEUT. MAUGHAN'S RACE AGAINST THE SUN

With the sun to pace him, Lieut. Russell L. Maughan, the well-known Army Air Service pilot, set out from Mitchel Field, Long Island, N.Y., just before dawn on Monday, June 23rd, to fly across the continent to San Francisco, Calif., with the expectation of arriving there just before the evening shadows cast their pall of darkness over the Golden Gate city. "Old Sol", however, proved too strenuous a pacemaker, and when Lieut. Maughan reached Crissy Field he found himself out-distanced.

With clear sailing ahead he would have realized easily his ambition to see the sun on the California coast before it sank below the horizon over the broad expanse of the calm Pacific, but his progress was retarded by strong head winds during two-thirds of his trip and by cross winds during the remainder. A mechanical breakage while at Dayton consumed valuable time to the extent of one hour and 11 minutes while the necessary repair work was being made, also an extra stop at North Platte, Neb., between St. Joseph, Mo., and Cheyenne, Wyoming, consumed precious time. This intermediate stop was necessary by reason of the fact that the landing field at St. Joseph was muddy and Lieut. Maughan found it necessary to take off with a fuel supply considerably below the maximum, the little pursuit ship being unequal to the task of taking off from the wet field with a full load.

Faced with all these handicaps, Lieut. Maughan truly made a most remarkable flight. He spanned the continent in 21 hours, 49½ minutes, or about five hours better than the record made last year by Lieuts. Kelly and Macready in their non-stop flight across the continent.

As the New York TRIBUNE-HERALD put it, "The sun still travels a little faster than this, but humanity seems to be pushing him rather hard." A cartoon in the Cleveland PLAIN DEALER showed Lieut. Maughan pointing at the surprised countenance of "Old Sol" and exclaiming: "I made you stop, didn't I, Sol!"

As is well known, the plane which Lieut. Maughan piloted was the Curtiss Pursuit ship, powered with a Curtiss D-12 engine, which is capable of attaining an average speed of 160 miles an hour. It was on the assumption that the plane could average this rate of speed that Lieut. Maughan calculated on making his transcontinental flight between sunrise and sunset but, as before stated, the wind did not appear to be in sympathy with his flight, for Lieut. Maughan was forced to combat Old Boreas practically all the way.

It is not likely that Lieut. Maughan will again attempt this flight for the mere satisfaction of actually accomplishing a dawn to dusk transcontinental flight. He has demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the thing can be done, and nothing would be gained in taxing his physical endurance in another grueling test of that sort.

Delayed in his start several times because of bad weather, conditions for June 23rd promised to be ideal for the flight, and prompt advantage was taken of that fact. Captain John Platt, Jr., meteorologist of the U.S. Signal Corps, shortly before midnight sent word to the newspapers that weather conditions were excellent all over the country. News that Maughan would make the flight sped quickly through Mitchel Field. He was awakened shortly before three o'clock, and while he was eating a hasty breakfast a crowd was already gathering on the field. The plane was wheeled out to the flying field, a mechanic climbed into the cockpit, threw on the switch and the motor began to roar. Lieut. Maughan strapped on his parachute, posed for some flashlight photos taken by newspaper photographers, stepped into his plane and waved farewell. As the first gray streaks of dawn became visible on the field, Lieut. Maughan "stepped on the gas" and was off. The time of his take-off from Mitchel Field was 3:59 a.m. Eastern Daylight Saving Time, or 2:59 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. He rose rapidly in the air and soon disappeared in the darkness of the western horizon.

Lieut. Maughan arrived at McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio, at 7:10 Eastern Standard Time. A quick inspection of the plane showed that the gasoline line needed attention. Lieut. Maughan also decided that it would be better if the machine was equipped with larger landing wheels. One hour and ten minutes were used up while the repairs and changes were made and the plane refueled, and at 8:15 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, Lieut. Maughan was again in the air headed for his next stopping point - St. Joseph, Mo. He landed at Rosecrans Field at 10:55 a.m., Central Standard Time, and spent nearly 40 minutes at this field. At 11:37 a.m., Central Time, Lieut. Maughan took off for Cheyenne, Wyoming, but landed at North Platte, Neb., for gas at 12:48 p.m., Mountain Time. At 2:15 p.m., Mountain Time, he arrived at Cheyenne. He apparently had difficulty in landing, for he circled the field several times and twice skimmed the surface before he finally made a perfect landing. He bettered his mark of last year between these two points by about 22 minutes. After a rest of 30 minutes, at 2:56 p.m., Mountain Time, he was in the air speeding towards Salduro, Utah, at which place he arrived at 5:20 p.m., Pacific Time.

Lieut. Maughan was adhering closely to his rest periods and 31 minutes later (5:51 p.m.) found him on his way to his destination - Crissy Field, San Francisco, Calif., where he arrived at 9:47 p.m., Pacific Time, thus completing the entire transcontinental journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast in 21 hours and 48 minutes elapsed time, or at an average speed, counting all the stops made, of approximately 118 miles an hour. The figures given above are not official, same being taken from press reports. They are, however, about as accurate as can be had at this time. Lieut. Maughan no doubt kept an accurate check on his time, and will in all probability disclose same in his official report to the Chief of Air Service.

A battery of arc lights illuminated Crissy Field some time before Lieut. Maughan's arrival. When he arrived over the field the mist blotted his plane from sight, and a great din burst forth from the assembled throng when he unexpectedly soared down to the field at the south end of the big quadrangle. Newspapermen broke through the police lines holding back the huge crowd and greeted the flyer. A few seconds later the spectators, cheering and shouting while automobile sirens shrieked in a bedlam of noise, surged over the landing field and surrounded the plane.

Lieut. Maughan's face bore a serious and drawn expression. He appeared to be almost overcome with emotion at the victory which he had achieved. His comrades from the Air Service lifted him bodily from the cockpit of the plane and carried him on their shoulders through the cheering crowd to the Army Headquarters. A San Francisco newspaper picks up the story here thus: "They took him in Colonel W.E. Gillmore's office and he sank into a chair. Every muscle of his face was twitching and he had the appearance of a terribly tired man. The women had put wreaths of California wild flowers around his shoulders and he still held his battered helmet, smiled and answered the questions that were flung at him by members of the press with that proverbial good nature, willingness and modesty of his that fatigue could not lessen."

The demonstration accorded Lieut. Maughan was without parallel in the history of aviation in San Francisco:

Secretary of War Weeks dispatched the following congratulatory message to the victorious flyer:

"The Army is proud of you and the latest record you have added to its achievements. Your flight of yesterday is not only a triumph of science, but of personal courage and skill. I extend to you my own congratulations, as well as the thanks of the War Department."

Major-General Mason M. Patrick's message to Lieut. Maughan was as follows:

"Congratulations on the achievement of a wonderful feat. You have fulfilled every confidence I had in you. Your success proves the full value of careful preparation, efficient organization and excellent physical condition and qualities of endurance. You have brought prestige to yourself and to the Army Air Service. Your flight is a history-making event which more than ever demonstrates the possibilities of the airplane as an annihilator of time and distance. Not only from a military viewpoint but from a commercial viewpoint your flight is epochal. I am proud of you."

The significance attached to Lieut. Maughan's flight may be drawn from editorial comments of various American newspapers. Some of them are quoted below, as follows:

The Boston TRANSCRIPT says: "For Lieut. Maughan no praise can be too high

and the wonder of the exploit grows with lengthening contemplation. Up an hour before the rising sun, the stars above and the first faint flush of dawn in the east behind the tail of his machine, he held his course steadily to the goal while the sun passed overhead and sank to the horizon in front, on through the gathering night to a landing at Crissy Field as twilight faded to a close. To put more than sixteen hours of actual cross-country flying in less than 22 hours total elapsed time, with no relief pilot at the second control, is an unusual feat on an airplane of any sort. On a pursuit machine, designed only for short patrols, it becomes marvelous. The pilots of such craft were seldom expected to give more than two hours of actual flying each day even under the stress of war conditions, yet the machines which were in service then landed more slowly than Maughan's, and the country over which they flew was, on the whole, far less rugged and hazardous than that which he had to cross. Such men as Maughan make the Air Service, and the service in turn, through the rare esprit de corps that exists, has a large share in making men."

"He has bridged not merely the continent", comments the Philadelphia PUBLIC LEDGER, "but the whole of man's progress from ox-cart to the airplane. x x This triumph was not merely over the 'celestial mechanics' of propulsion but over the human engine of the solitary voyager with no reliance outside himself and the small, frail craft he piloted. His thrilling flight meant a bloodless victory of science, an inspiring achievement for the lasting advantage of mankind. By the same aerial pathway he took, millions will ultimately pass from sea to sea at a rate exceeding the celerity that has thrilled America."

The Detroit FREE PRESS states that while Lieut. Maughan ascribes his success to the mechanically perfect behavior of his plane, those who applaud him know how much of the feat has been due to his persistence, his will power, his nerves of steel, and his determination not to be outdone by the elements. Lieut. Maughan has demonstrated that the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts can be linked by air within the space between dawn and dusk.

According to the Cleveland PLAIN DEALER, Maughan has written one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of aviation, and it goes on to say: "The possibilities of aerial navigation can be foretold by no man. The Americans who have flown half way around the world are still flying. Other Americans have soared high beyond the life-sustaining zone of the atmosphere. Others have achieved speeds unbelievable. All we can do is to wait and wonder. Day after day brings its new record, its new story of difficulties overcome and perils finely scorned."

"Seventy-two years ago", says the Chicago TRIBUNE, "Ezra Meeker crossed the continent in five months. That was a record. Day before yesterday Russell Maughan crossed the continent in 21 hours and 48 minutes. That is another record. Meeker piloted an ox team at two miles an hour. Maughan drove a pursuit plane at an average of 156 miles an hour. Between these two transcontinental-trips there are seventy-two years, or one man's life. That is not long as history goes, but in human progress it is many ages. Between Meeker's creaking ox cart and Maughan's pursuit plane there are more centuries compressed than can be counted in the entire thousand years of the mediaeval era. In industrial development, in invention, in the advance of human knowledge, if not in human wisdom, there are more ages packed than can be found in the entire period of kings and holy wars."

The El Paso HERALD states that "Lt. Maughan has made the railroad seem almost as antiquated as the stage coach. He has shown the new possibilities in commercial aviation. Also he has proved it possible, if either of our coasts were menaced by an enemy, to move an army of the air across the entire United States in less than the time required to transport it across Texas by train."

"Lieut. Russell L. Maughan has shown how armed men of the Republic may be awakened with the reveille in circling camps on the Atlantic seaboard and arrive the same day in ample time to hear the soft, restful notes of 'Lights out' float over the reinforced strength of camps on the Pacific seaboard", is the editorial comment of the St. Louis GLOBE-DEMOCRAT, and it then goes on to say: "That is what his flight means in terms of naval and military efficiency. Of course, it is another and, let us say boldly, more important definition, expressed in terms of commerce and peaceful communications." Later on in the editorial it states that the journey of Lieut. Maughan covered one-ninth of the average distance around the globe in a little more than four-fifths of a day, and that at the same speed and the same ratio of stops a flight around the world might be made in a little more than seven days.

The New York EVENING POST says: "The whole country followed Lieut. Maughan's daring flight with hopes for its complete success. The thrill with which the people read this morning of the aviator's safe landing at San Francisco within the scheduled period was nation-wide. Man had achieved one more victory in the long list of conquests over space and time."

The Chicago NEWS points out that "What many army aviators believed to be impossible - according to the positive declarations of some of them - Lieut. Russell Maughan of the army has succeeded in achieving despite conditions that appear to have been exceptionally unfavorable. x x x Only exceptional pluck and endurance, coupled with wellnigh perfect mechanism, make possible such astonishing feats. Lieut. Maughan by this striking achievement has given one more important demonstration of aviation's value to the country's defense and to industry and commerce."

Pointing out that Lieut. Maughan's wonderful achievement shared equal prominence with news of the Democratic Convention, the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR goes on to say: "Perhaps a decade or so hence the achievement of this trail-blazer will be looked back upon as one simply marking a step in the progress of aerial navigation. Today one is inclined to regard it as the ultimate in this spectacular method of transport. Twenty years ago the possibility of such an achievement had not been dreamed of except by visionaries. And yet how simply the record of this latest flight is written! The story must be told in simple words, just as simple words tell of the nomination and election of a president, the launching of a ship, the result of a battle, or the dedication of a great monument. It is a fait accompli, a thing already done."

Almost within the memory of some persons still active in the affairs of today, there was no pathway across the Great American Desert. That path was marked and worked deep following the discovery of gold in California in the late forties of the last century. Even then Indian runners contested the passes and the roadways with the white men and their caravans. The invaders, wending their slow and perilous course over mountains and across desert wastes, were not welcome. They heralded, it was divined, a progress which the plains people resented. Yet how crude were the processes employed! At first they seemed ineffective and futile. Wise ones said the desert could never be conquered. Those who passed it in safety despaired of ever retracing their steps. They were glad to leave the barren wastes, the sturdy peaks, the buffalo and the red men to themselves.

But progress does not come by men retracing their steps or turning backward. It comes through the courage and gauntlessness of those who, once setting forth, proceed, undiscouraged, to the goal which they have set. The covered wagon was the pioneer of the stagecoach, the pony express and the steam railroad. The desert, conquered, was a desert subdued. An empire invaded was an empire peopled and made productive. How distinctly the several stages have been marked. One man, braver and more determined than his fellows, sets some new record of achievement. His accomplishment is an inducement to greater and ever greater endeavor.

Today, as one reads of Lieutenant Maughan's wonderful achievement, it does not seem that it will soon be surpassed. But a wise observer will hardly venture the assertion that it cannot be. A short look backward will convince a prudent person that no limit can safely be set upon progress. True progress signifies actual progress, and that, necessarily, cannot be expressed in inaction or retrogression."

Heading its editorial with the caption "Our Narrowing Land", the Providence JOURNAL states: "This was incidentally either a speed or an endurance flight. It had the definite purpose of demonstrating the feasibility of a mobilization of the forces of the Aviation Service at points far distant from a base. Some day whole squadrons will cruise with like confidence."

Says the Kansas City STAR: "It was a thriller that Lieutenant Russell L. Maughan gave the country. It was a thriller for the whole flying world. From ocean to ocean by the light of one day's sun! That's going some; that's staying some. Speed, endurance, control, combined in a new achievement in the air."

The country congratulates Lieutenant Maughan and the United States Army. This new feat is not merely a detached stunt in flying; it is related to the high average skill American airmen have displayed as a class and to the whole problem of air development in this country. It should stimulate interest in the Air Service, both military and commercial. The two lines should be expanded together. Commercial flying creates a reserve for possible defensive emergencies. The old coast defenses have become relatively ineffective. The Panama Canal, for instance, is exposed to assault in a way never contemplated before the advent of air bombing.

Yes, the great flight of Lieutenant Maughan may be classed as a splendid de-

fensive maneuver, as a suggestion of what might be done if necessary in the way of air mobilization if we had the requisite number of planes and men, all proved by training and service."

"The Greeks of old", says the Indianapolis STAR, "represented the sun god driving a chariot across the sky pulled by white horses. Heretofore no mortal has been able to equal the speed of that western race, but now a twentieth century pilot sitting at the stick of a roaring plane has reduced into hours and minutes the mythology of early centuries."

The Washington Evening STAR says: "Lieut. Maughan did not suddenly emerge from inaction when he performed his great flight. Preparation had come through hard drill - physical, mental and, above all, spiritual. His feat was not that of a trapeze performer, but was the demonstration of a great service to humanity, especially to the nation whose soldier he is. He has crystallized an idea which had been disputable. He has opened the way - just as all pathfinders do - for others to follow, with improved methods, due to his obstacles. Lieut. Maughan worked for a big idea, and only that kind of work is humanity service."

Comparing transportation over the country in the days of '49 with that of the present time, the Louisville COURIER JOURNAL says: "It was over this wilderness, now a prosperous and settled country, that Lieutenant Maughan took his flight, flying with the sun, enduring a strain on every nerve. It was a test of the fiber that was in the man. Keyed to the highest pitch, constantly alert, rocked by the cross currents till he almost became seasick, he heeded but one call - speed.

Here was high adventure, as bold as that of Magellan of Columbus. The same stuff that brought their caravels across the Atlantic or sent them around the world guided Maughan from sea to sea. The same zeal for discovery was in them all, and the same intrepid spirit in each was essential to success."

As the Baltimore SUN sees it: "The peaceful and commercial aspects of the airplane space-killers are more pleasant to dwell upon than its warlike implications. Yet that is one of the suggestions from Lieut. Maughan's achievement which must give us pause. If we can fly in less than a day from New York to San Francisco, a foreign fleet of the future might fly in the same time from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The east is no longer so far away from the west that we can feel no concern in its troubles. Science is making us all next door neighbors, and is emphasizing the necessity of international harmony and understanding, if the peace of the world is not to suffer by reason of its very advance in knowledge."

The Milwaukee JOURNAL sees in Maughan's flight a new era of transportation "four times swifter than any we have known," for, "it says to the man in New York, 'You can open an office in San Francisco and spend two or three days a week there and the rest of the time at your home office'; it says to the whole nation 'You are one community bound by the span of a single day.'"