The TRIPLE A Story

1938 - 1946

by

Frank Peter

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CHAPTER I

THE LATROBE BEGINNING

It was Latrobe, Pa., and it was Friday, May 12, 1939. Eighteen minutes earlier, three scarlet Stinson monoplanes had taken off from the Allegheny County airport at Pittsburgh, and now their droning engines were heard in the West.

The hundreds of spectators watched the sunny sky anxiously, or checked their watches. "Right on schedule, 11 o'clock," was heard as the Lycomings' roar became more audible.

The sun glinted off two steel masts, 30 feet high, which were set 60 feet apart in a clear area of the airport, with a rope strung between them. Brilliant orange flags extended 10 feet above the tops of the masts. A bag, somewhat resembling an aerial bomb, was suspended from the rope.

The crowd tensed and stared into the West now as the planes approached, and, suddenly, they were overhead. Two circled but the third descended in a sweeping turn into the wind which lined the trim cabin monoplane up with the vertical masts.

Down and farther down the plane dropped and, as it approached, the breathless crowd could see two lines trailing from the belly of the airplane. One was a rope holding a container similar to the one suspended from the masts; the other was a 50 foot long cable, trailing out behind the rope and ending in a grappling hook.

Now, at an altitude of about 60 feet and at 100 miles an hour, Pilot Norman Rintoul, of Brooklyn, N.Y., flew the red Stinson over the masts and his grappling hook caught up the suspended delivery bag, which was pulled up into the plane as it zoomed back up to altitude. The 50 pound container which he had flown to Latrobe had been released seconds before the masts were reached and already it had rolled to a stop on the ground, and excited officials were opening it and extracting scrolls, documents, and stamps.

And excited they should be, as should all in the country who realized the implications of the plane's dive across Latrobe airport.

For at that moment was born a new method of providing direct airmail facilities to smaller communities which had a genuine need for them but were deprived of them be reason of their size or geography. Fifty-four towns and cities in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, and Delaware were now linked for the first time directly with the national airmail system by this means of airmail pick-up and delivery wherein the planes do not take time necessary to land.

But, even more important, Norm Rintoul's successful pick-up marked the start of the long-awaited, long-needed development of a feeder airlines system for the small but nevertheless important and progressive cities that were anxiously seeking direct air service.

Now, at Latrobe, the second of the red Stinson Reliants had begun his power glide towards the pick-up poles. Rintoul's delivery and pick-up had started the ball of progress rolling and he was now winging his way towards Morgantown where

thousands of spectators and many government and industry officials had gathered for a full scale ground-type inauguration.

But the first actual sacks of mail were yet to be snatched and delivered on this inaugural day. The first attempt was not successful! A strong wind carried the grappling hook inches out of reach of the suspended sack, and Pilot James Piersol climbed for a second try. The second failed also when the metal link holding the bag in place was broken. Proper connection was made on the third try and the "flying postoffice", as many newspapers of the day dubbed the All American Stinsons, headed for its next pick-up at Connellsville, Pa. Due to the heavy philatelic mail of the first day, the third plane was necessary for the inaugural trip. After two unsuccessful attempts, the mail was hauled aboard that plane, too, and it headed for the next scheduled station.

Similar typical inaugural day slip-ups occurred as high winds, broken gear, weather, and fouled cables caused delays, but few who witnessed the slip-ups and none who witnessed the successful flights could fail to recognize the importance of the events of May 12.

As the shiny red planes flashed through the pick-up stations at Latrobe and other towns, an insignia new to the air transport world gleamed from the fuselages. Three A's arranged in the triangular shape of a three-bladed propeller, winged, and set against a blue globe carrying the North and South American continents in white, signified that All American Aviation, Inc., of Wilmington, Delaware, had taken wing.

Standing near the steel masts at Latrobe on that day was one of the men who early recognized airmail pick-up as the best means for introducing local air service to the nation, young Richard C. DuPont, who was President of All American Aviation. An internationally-known flyer and aviation authority, Dick DuPont was also a soaring enthusiast, and was President of the Soaring Society of America. He formerly held the American gliding championship.

On May 12 he watched three of his ships inaugurate direct air service to towns which had a genuine need for air transportation, but were formerly deprived of it because they had limited landing facilities for airplanes, or none at all, or their geographical location was such that the trunk airlines could not serve them practically or economically.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR LOCAL AIR SERVICE

Air transportation in this country had been developed almost exclusively as a utility for large metropolitan centers. The energies of commercial aviation had been concentrated on producing bigger, faster, more luxurious planes to provide service between these great urban areas.

Where smaller cities appeared in the air transportation system, the reason could be ascribed principally to an accident of geography in conveniently placing them on a main airway.

This country had the finest planes and the best air transport system in the world, and the tremendous and constantly increasing traffic was a vindication of

its economic soundness. A notorious weakness of the program, however, was its almost complete neglect of the development of supplemental or local service feeder lines, which are an essential adjunct of a transportation system.

Beyond the orbit of the airways, in what might be called the "twilight zone" of the air transport system, were thousands of small but nevertheless important and progressive cities that were actively and anxiously seeking direct air service. Proportionately, their need was greater than that of larger cities because local transportation facilities were usually inferior, and they were further removed from sources of supply.

Established air routes directly served only a little over one-fourth the population, and of the 4,000 cities in the United States with more than 5,000 inhabitants, there were only 210 cities on the air lines, or about five percent. From the standpoint of serving the public, these facts alone emphasize the deficiency of the air transportation system. The situation presented a serious challenge to the industry and to the government.

Commercial aviation would never fully perform its function as a "public convenience and necessity" until the benefits it provides in the swift transportation of mail, express, and passengers were extended directly to every section of the country. Everyone is paying for this service, and it is unfair to deprive them of it.

Now, the air pick-up and delivery system which required no airports for its operation had been almost tailor-made to begin the remedy of this situation. It was to bring the advantages of direct airmail and express service within reach of the smallest community, with the prospect that passenger carrying would shortly follow, and the air transportation system would eventually serve <u>all</u> the people.

The pick-up service had been established by the Post Office Department, under an Act of Congress, to test the merit of this system whereby collections and deliveries were made in flight. Nothing like it had ever been tried as a scheduled air operation anywhere in the world.

The idea of aerial pick-up, in itself, was not new. Man had scarcely learned to fly before he was thinking about picking things up on the wing. The record is not clear as to exactly when the first pick-up flight was made, or what method was used, but the files of the Patent Office in Washington disclose that the first pick-up device was patented not long after Orville Wright made his amazing flight of 47 miles an hour for the Army in 1908, showing that the idea was born almost with flying itself.

Impetus was given the idea during World War I when both sides developed systems of picking up articles in flight, but these systems were very elementary and were impractical except for light loads, usually a message or a map.

About this time the endurance flier made his appearance and various methods of picking up fuel and supplies from the ground were tried, but they were mostly makeshift arrangements. At air circuses and carnivals, in the movies, pick-ups of persons from the tops of moving trains or boats became popular with stunt fliers and their fans. These pilots became proficient in picking up handkerchiefs and light articles with a wing tip or by simply leaning out of the cockpit and snatching them with their hand as they flew by. But these stunts only demonstrated the controllability of the airplane and the foolhardiness of the

man, rather than making a contribution to the practical application of the pick-up principle.

A pioneer in the pick-up field was Dr. Lytle S. Adams, of Irwin, Pa. He devised a system which was successfully demonstrated at the World's Fair in Chicago for an entire summer, where it was used in picking up airmail daily from a station in a congested area of the Fair grounds. It had also been used by Dr. Adams in the first nonstop ship-to-shore service, with mail being delivered and picked up from the deck of the Leviathan.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIMENTAL ROUTES ESTABLISHED

The Post Office Department had been considering the advisability of trying the pick-up idea experimentally on regular routes. Meanwhile, in 1938, Dr. Adams had met DuPont and talked about the possibilities of an airplane pick-up service using his device. DuPont, extremely interested, quickly whipped into existence All American Aviation, Inc. It was ready with bids on the two experimental pick-up routes advertised by the Post Office -- and won them without a contest.

The bids established Airmail Routes 1001 and 1002 for a period of one year, linking together 54 cities and towns in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, and Delaware with the national airmail system. Route 1001 was to extend between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, serving 27 towns and cities, all of which, with the exception of Wilmington, Delaware, are located in Pennsylvania. Route 1002 was to operate between Pittsburgh and Huntington, W.Va., serving 27 towns and cities in southwestern Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and southeastern Ohio. The combined distance of the two routes was 954 miles.

The lines followed a circuitous course connecting communities varying in population from 588 to 110,000 (excluding Pittsburgh and Philadelphia), which were anywhere from 5 to 20 miles apart. (The average distance between regular airline stops at that time was about 235 miles.) The largest section of each route lay in the Alleghenies where admittedly some of the most difficult flying conditions in the country, both as to terrain and weather, are encountered. In the fledgling days of the airmail this region was known as the "graveyard of aviation". At a 1928 Air Transport Association meeting, a leading airline executive predicted that "the day will never come when passengers will fly over the Alleghenies, because it is too dangerous".

More exacting conditions under which to test the new airmail pick-up would be hard to find anywhere and it was principally for this reason that the Post Office Department selected this region for the experimental routes.

Yes, the company, All American Aviation, was formed in a skeleton fashion, but what a hectic period now began! There were no planes, few pilots, no official testing, no organization. The service was to begin within a year. It took just six months to get it into operation.

Orders were placed for six Stinson Reliant SR-10C single-engined passenger planes, which were to be converted and equipped for pick-up operations, and the manufacture of the pick-up units, accessories, and ground station equipment was started.

The public and the press were introduced to the new airmail pick-up for the first time at a full dress rehearsal of All American's system on March 2, 1939, at Coatesville, Pa., one of the points on the experimental routes. Similar demonstrations, which were witnessed by thousands, were held later at Franklin, Corry, Warren, Washington, and other communities prior to the beginning of regular service.

All of the experimental and exhibition flights were piloted by Norman Rintoul, who for the last three years had been making experimental flights with the pick-up device. The Flight Mechanic was Victor Yesulaites, A Wilkes-Barre resident of Lithuanian descent, who was mechanic for a New York-Lithuanian trans-Atlantic flight project and later assisted with the World's Fair demonstrations.

The Post Office Department designed an individual postal cachet for each of the 54 cities and towns on the two routes which were to be affixed to mail dispatched on the inaugural flights, and philatelic mail immediately started piling up at all Post Offices.

Company representatives spent busy days and dizzy weeks visiting with town and city officials and dignitaries, ironing out details of selecting pick-up sites, hiring of mail messengers, and the innumerable problems of inauguration. Airports convenient to town were selected for most of the pick-up sites, open fields were chosen, so were tops of hills, public parks, open roads, and graveyards.

The company had proposed that the communities share in the expense of erecting and servicing their local skymail stations, and the response and enthusiasm was encouraging. The proposition entailed an expenditure of $450 by each community, which included $150 for the equipment of the skymail station which was to remain the property of the community, and $300 for the community's share of the expense of employing a mail messenger. These local residents were hired for a period of one year to transport the airmail between the station and the Post Office.

The communities knew that they did not have to put up a penny to get the new service, but, for the most part, they appreciated the benefits and advantages of a direct, daily airmail service, and they were anxious to cooperate in every reasonable way, not only to obtain the service but to help develop and retain it.

It was thought that after operations were started experience with the new system would make it necessary to revise routes and schedules, and, in that event, local sentiment and pride in the local contribution to the development of the airmail program undoubtedly would be an important factor in the retention of the service. Also, local citizens would be more likely to utilize the new service to the greatest extent possible in order to protect the community investment.

Seven pilots and four skymail clerks, or Flight Mechanics, as they came to be known, comprised the All American starting line-up. In addition to Norm Rintoul, the pilots, all of whom were nationally known, were: Holger Hoiriis, who flew the first pay passenger across the Atlantic in an airplane; Camille Vinet, formerly Pennsylvania State Director of Aeronautics; James Piersol, newspaperman-pilot, formerly with the New York Times; Lloyd Juelson; Thomas T. Kincheloe; and Raymond Elder.

The Flight Mechanics, in addition to Yesulaites, were Dalton Osborn, Charles Rodgers, and Glen Rymer. Mike Mancini appeared on the 1939 scene as a plane mechanic.

Because of the huge accumulation of philatelic mail, the starting schedules on both routes were purposely staggered at two-week intervals, so that the company's six-plane fleet could be shifted from one route to another to handle it. Most of the inaugurations were planned for Sundays to insure the greatest number of interested witnesses, although the service was to be scheduled in the future for weekdays only, omitting Sundays and holidays. The principal inaugural observance was held at Morgantown, W.Va., where Dr. Adams had conducted most of his early experiments. Guests of city officials included West Virginia's Governor Holt, Robert Hinkley, chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, Rep. Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, Charles Graddick, superintendent of airmail, Col. Edgar Gorrell, Air Transport Association president, Wayne Parrish, head of American Aviation publications, Richard DuPont, and numerous other government and aviation authorities.

Seven thousand persons attended the Morgantown inauguration. Plaques and scrolls commemorative of the occasion were delivered via pick-up and delivery for Postmaster General James A. Farley and other notables. Five company pilots received awards from five pretty co-eds -- rabbits' feet for luck.

At Marietta, the first city in Ohio to receive a direct airmail service via the new line, suitable ceremonies were held for the inauguration. The principal observance for the opening of the northern route was held at DuBois, Pa., a junction point on that line.

But it remained for Latrobe, Pa., to be the first place in the world to receive pick-up and delivery airmail service on May 12, 1939; and All American Aviation, later to be known as All American Airways, and, still later, Allegheny Airlines, became the first of the local service air carriers.

CHAPTER IV

AIRMAIL PICK-UP PROVES ITS VALUE

Romance had returned to the postal service.

The last Pony Express rider had lashed his straining mount into the west; stage coaches no longer rumbled over wooden bridges and rutted roads; the tiny, snorting, cinder-choked frontier trains had given way to the shining streamliner; and the lone mail pilot groping over poorly-lighted airways was now seated, with other members of his crew, in the instrument-laden fastness of a modern flight deck, comfortably detached from the precious burden of mail, passengers, and express compartmented behind him.

In 1939 the sleek DC-3 was fast becoming the world standard in airliners; the airways were well lighted and well radio-equipped; radio navigation was common and "above-the-weather" flying was beginning to be; regular airline service was excellent for the cities in the country that were receiving it.

But now, romance returned, as lone pilots, aided by a flying mailman, again climbed into single engine planes and took off into skies blue or gray to deliver the mail. No more than in the late 20's did they, at first, fly the mail at night. Nor did they fly purposely on instruments, or "blind", though they and their ships were well equipped for it. Nor did they follow the routes and air-

ways so expensively and laboriously laid out, from large city to metropolitan area.

Instead they took off, turned swiftly onto their appointed rounds which led them into the rural areas, the hamlets, to the backwoods people. And, upon arrival, they borrowed a page from the annals of railroading. Trains no longer stop at the little places, smaller than the "whistle-stops", for the mail. Rather, they snatch on the fly, with a hook protruding from the mail car, a pouch suspended from uprights along the track. Similarly, All American Stinsons swooped down to an open field, leveled off near the ground, and speedily and deftly extracted the mail pouches suspended from flag-topped poles, delivering a similar pouch at the same time.

Through the weather, over the weather? All American's pilots flew under the weather! They followed circuitous routes which connected communities 5 to 20 miles apart. There were few radio aids to follow, fewer for instrument let-downs. So the planes stayed "contact", followed ground landmarks from one station to the next. They talk about pilots "knowing the country like a book"? These pilots wrote the book! A glimpse of Smith's barn told them they had arrived at the station, a sighting of Kelly's fence was enough to line them up on it, and a flash of Jones' cornfield coincided with the delivery of the mail.

The red Stinsons zooming over the cornfields of Pennsylvania caught the imagination of America and the world. Newspapers, magazines, the Congressional Record soon sang of the exploits. The ships were called "flying postoffices", the men "winged mailmen", the service "zigzag airmail pickup". From Atlanta, Ga., they shouted up, "the grab-it-and-growl" airmail system. "Airmail for Punkin' Center" was an article written by Congressman Jennings Randolph, a pick-up legislative champion. "Airmail for Rural Free Delivery" was headlined in all parts of the country, and a British transport magazine wrote of "A Unique Apparatus for Mail". All American called itself "The Airway to Everywhere".

The air pick-up service clicked from the start and its success revived the long-dormant interest of the air transport industry in feeder, or local service lines, just as it had been intended to do.

As the crews grew more familiar with the territory containing their routes, and more dextrous with their equipment, the percentage of flights successfully completed shot to unbelievable heights. By July 2 the world's first airline of its kind was in full operation over both routes, now serving 58 cities. Steadily mounting figures on the mail per capita picked up and delivered to the stations proved its value to the proud small town dwellers.

In August, 1939, the service was expanded to include air express which was transported over All American's lines under a private contract with shippers for the remainder of the experimental year.

The pick-up system was demonstrating its merit in daylight operation. But, as the greatest volume of mail moved at night, the adaptation of the system to night operation was a natural evolution.

On October 29, 1939, the first public demonstration of a night mail pick-up was given before Post Office and CAA officials at Bellanca Field, Wilmington, Del. Three times a plane piloted by Holger Hoiriis swooped down, dropped its mail bag and picked up another suspended between masts whose tops were neon-lighted. The pick-up operator on the plane was William Burkhart.

The work of developing the night-flying equipment was conducted under the supervision of Mr. DuPont and James G. Ray, vice president of the company and one of the nation's first airmail pilots. Major Hal Bazley, operations manager of All American, who had been the pilot on experimental night flights, reported that the pick-ups could be made as easily by night as by day. Six weeks of extensive testing under actual operating conditions was conducted on the Pittsburgh-Philadelphia route beginning in December, utilizing lighted stations at Grove City, Butler, and Natrona, Pa.

By April, 1940, the All American service was being largely taken for granted, but severe floods throughout the entire Ohio River valley brought it into the headlines again. While the rushing waters had disrupted mail service by train, bus, and trunk airlines, air service continued as usual to the cities and towns in the distressed area served by All American pick-up. Rowboats were used to carry the mail to the pick-up stations and hoist it in place on the masts. Shock-proof containers carrying the incoming mail were dropped on dry ground. At Gallipolis, Ohio, the mail was dropped by the All American pilots directly in the Post Office yard.

During the experimental year, All American's planes were to handle 75,000 pounds of airmail and 6,500 pounds of air express, were to complete 438,145 miles of scheduled flying and make more than 23,000 pick-ups, averaging 78 a day, without mishap to personnel, aircraft, or cargo. The percentage of performance--91.6!

CHAPTER V

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In the late summer of 1939, the company submitted to the Civil Aeronautics Board and the Post Office Department a program for the establishment of a comprehensive air feeder system throughout the country based on the utilization of the Air Pick-up system "which would enable millions of people now deprived of direct air transportation to have its advantages without an extravagant expenditure of public funds".

All American further stated, "The development of an adequate air feeder system does not mean simply the creation of new airlines that will serve only the more populous centers. It means a comprehensive system whereby every community in the country, regardless of its size or geography may have the opportunity of being on an airline. This can be effectively accomplished through the Air Pick-up."

The conviction was expressed that such a feeder system would stimulate the use of the airmail to such an extent that it would become self-sustaining within a short time. It was announced that AAA did not intend to organize and operate the system itself, but to encourage the establishment of these feeder routes by existing air lines or by local enterprise in the areas they would serve.

"As the transportation of passengers is a function that a complete feeder line must perform," stated the All American plan, "the next logical step in the development of the pick-up system is its adaptation to passenger-carrying planes. Use of the pick-up system to maintain high-speed schedules on routes of this type

seems entirely practicable, and flights with multi-engined equipment will be undertaken shortly to thoroughly test the feasibility of the operation."

All American's program proposed "creation, by utilization of the air pick-up principle, of a national network of feeder lines carrying mail, express, and passengers, as an auxiliary of the present air transportation system through the establishment of radial feeder routes from the major air terminals of the country."

On December 22, as All American's part in the proposed feeder program, an application for a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity for mail, express, and passengers on six Air Pick-up routes extending through Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Delaware was filed with the Civil Aeronautics Board. The requested permanent pick-up system would cover 125 communities in six states, including most of the 58 that were on the two experimental routes. In addition, the application listed 99 contiguous communities that might be conveniently served from regular station points.

All of the projected lines would radiate from a central terminus at Pittsburgh to other termini at main-line points where their schedules would be closely coordinated with the trunk airline systems. The routes were laid out as a model for the establishment of similar systems around other major air centers of the country.

Hearings on the application for permanent routes opened before the Civil Aeronautics Board in February, 1940. A witness was Charles P. Graddick, Superintendent of Airmail of the Post Office Department. Of the Airmail Pick-up, he testified, "The experiment frankly has exceeded our expectations, particularly in the percentage of performance." Up to that time over 94 per cent of schedules on the experimental routes had been completed.

The experimental year on the Airmail Pick-up lines ended on May 13, 1940. On that date Postmaster General Farley transmitted to Congress, as directed by law, a report on the results of the operation. Continuation of the service on a permanent basis was recommended.

The report stated in part:

"At the close of business Monday night, May 13, this service will have been operated for the full period of one year provided for in the two contracts. The operation has been carried on during one of the worst winters in recent years. Not withstanding that fact, a very high percentage of performance has been maintained, even during the worst of the winter months. Regular schedules have been maintained throughout the length of the two routes. . . ."

"From a safety standpoint, it is interesting to note that notwithstanding the fact that this operation has been carried on over mountainous terrain with single-motored planes and without the usual strict supervision given regular transport routes by the Civil Aeronautics Authority, the carrier has operated a full year on the two routes without a single casualty. For a new type of operation, this record is perhaps without precedent when all conditions are considered. . . ."

"The experiments conducted by the Post Office Department in compliance with the wishes of Congress, as expressed in H.R. 7448, appear to have demonstrated conclusively that the pick-up can provide improved airmail service, and it is

recommended that such service be authorized by Congress on such routes as are granted certificates of public convenience and necessity by the Civil Aeronautics Authority."

On the same day the Postmaster-General's report was sent to Congress, All American reached an impasse in its affairs. Its contracts with the Post Office Department were about to expire; the CAB had not acted on the company's application for a permanent certificate; and the Post Office Department had ordered returned unopened all new bids which had been invited in a last-minute effort to prevent an interruption in the Air Pick-up service. Suspension was inevitable. The final schedules on the experimental route were flown that afternoon.

A few days later the Examiner for the Civil Aeronautics Board submitted his report denying All American Aviation's application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity on the ground that the Board had no jurisdiction over the new service as long as the Experimental Airmail Act remained in force.

"Success kills U. S. Airmail Pick-up Service" read the sardonic headline in one newspaper.

CHAPTER VI

GROUNDED! - BUT NOT FOR LONG

Once again the little towns were without the airmail service they had come to depend on during the last year. The Tarentum, Pa., Valley News said, "Somehow, we miss the pick-up plane which for almost a year winged its way over the valley--oftern with a mail bag trailing behind--after making a picu-up at our airport. So well did the plane keep to its schedule that one could almost set his watch when the ship went over. It varied but a few minutes at any time."

"Missing the plane even more must be those valley folk who regularly took advantage of the opportunity to get their late afternoon mail out on the evening pick-up. Letters picked up here in the evening were on the Pacific coast early the next day and in New York and Chicago by midnight. It was a great advantage to its patrons. Surely local folk who used the airmail will agree with postal authorities who said that the experiment proved successful."

"If it proved successful--and there is no doubt that it did--the postal authorities will be justified in seeking bids for the service from air lines on a permanent basis. Surely our government is spending money in ways that yield far less return than the airmail pick-up."

"Anyway, we'll be longing for the day when the red airplanes will again streak across our sky with a mail sack trailing behind."

As the service terminated, All American attempted to explain the suspension to the towns by noting that it was due to the expiration of the contracts held by the company over the two routes, the action of the Post Office Department in rescinding its call for bids on new contracts, and the failure of the CAB to act favorably on the company's pending application for a permanent certificate.

The reason for the action of the Post Office Department, as announced in Washington, was that, inasmuch as the pick-up service had proved a success, the

Department, under the law authorizing a test of the system, had no jurisdiction over it once it had passed the experimental stage.

Beyond this, it was learned that, forty-eight hours before the bids were to be opened and twenty-eight days after the Post Office's advertisement of them had been issued, the validity of the advertisement was suddenly challenged on the ground that it favored All American and precluded competitive bidding.

Stated All American's president, "We have been aware for some time of the danger that the airmail contracts on the Air Pick-up routes would expire and a lapse occur in the service before arrangements could be completed to put the service on a permanent basis, and we have been making every effort to avert it."

"A month ago, when it became apparent that the CAA would be unable to act on our application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity before the termination of the airmail contracts, the Post Office Department issued its advertisement for bids on new contracts. There was a reasonable expectation that this action would permit the service to continue without interruption until the CAA reached a decision in our case."

"The call for new bids admittedly was favorable to All American but that was to be expected considering our position as operators of the routes and the company's performance record . . . together with the fact that the action was regarded as an expedient to prevent an interruption in service. It also must be admitted that the cancellation of advertisement came as a distinct shock, and I imagine that the suspension of the service also will be a shock to the cities and towns along our routes."

"Re-establishment of the service now depends on the approval by the CAA of our application for a Certificate. . . It is hoped that this approval will be expedited so that the service may be resumed at an early date."

Industry leaders hoped so, too, and an editorial in American Aviation magazine commented: "It may be harsh to say so, but we believe the examiner's report issued May 21 denying the application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to All American for pick-up feeder routes is a miscarriage of justice and an abuse of the responsibility of a public agency toward the public interest."

"All American Aviation has been forced to suspend operations because of a serio-comic passing of the old-fashioned buck by two government agencies. Awarded a one-year experimental contract by the Post Office Department, All American was given to understand that it should apply to the Civil Aeronautics Authority for a permanent certificate. The Post Office decided that it did not have jurisdiction to continue the route, that the CAA was the agency in charge. And now the CAA examiner passes the ball back again by saying that the CAA is without jurisdiction insofar as the transportation of mail is concerned."

"In these days, when pilots and airplanes should be in active operation everywhere in this nation, a company that has spent large sums of money in a worthwhile enterprise is forced to suspend while two agencies pass the buck. . . No matter what the CAA now decides, All American has been forced to lay up its planes, disrupt operating procedures, lay off personnel. It is, indeed, a travesty."

Upon the publication of the adverse report of the CAA examiner, members of Congress from the states in which the Air Pick-up had operated immediately organ-

ized to fight for the restoration of the service. Strategy was planned at a group meeting.

While the finding of the examiner was not final, and there was a possibility that it would be reversed by the Board, the jurisdictional issue being highly debatable, it was decided that the best way to settle the question was to seek the repeal of the Experimental Airmail Act. Bills for this purpose were promptly introduced in both the House and Senate. The House passed its bill on June 21--the Senate a day later.

Besides repealing the provisions of the experimental act under which the Airmail Pick-up was established, the legislation specifically invested the Civil Aeronautics Board with jurisdiction over the newly-developed system of air transportation. The President signed the bill on July 5. There no longer remained any doubt about the Board's power to act.

The Board's decision on All American's application was announced on July 22. The company was granted a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for five Air Pick-up lines for the transportation of mail and property. The Board rejected without prejudice the company's application to carry passengers on pick-up planes until the operation had been thoroughly tested.

CHAPTER VII

PERMANENT CERTIFICATE AWARDED

All American Aviation, Inc., was the first domestic airline to be certificated by the CAB after passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, and was the country's first truly short-haul airline.

Marking the greatest expansion in the nation's domestic air transportation system that had ever been authorized at any one time, 79 cities and towns were permanently added to the system through the action of the Civil Aeronautics Board in granting the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to AAA for five air pick-up routes, Airmail Route 49.

The routes included the six states of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Delaware, Kentucky, and New York. Besides the 79 new points and 8 cities already having air service, 52 additional nearby communities would be served from these stations, making 139 in all that would receive the advantages of direct service. In point of the number of communities served, although not in mileage, the new pick-up routes comprised "the biggest little airline in the world".

Up to the granting of All American's certificate, and after twenty-two years of development, the air transportation system included only 189 cities, most of which had a population well over 100,000. Population of All American's communities ranged from 799 to 115,000 - Glenville, W.Va., being the smallest, and Wilmington, Del., being the largest (Pittsburgh and Philadelphia excluded).

Granting of the certificate to All American also marked the first practical effort made by the CAB to extend the benefits of air transportation directly to small communities through the establishment of feeder lines. The Board's decision indicated that if the system attracted a substantial patronage, "further extension on an increasing scale may be expected to be justified".

Transportation of mail and express only was authorized in the certificate awarded to All American, but the Board stated that it would accept a renewal of the application at such a time as the company was prepared to present a more completely developed proposal.

Rejection by the CAB of the passenger-carrying application would not affect the company's developmental work in this direction, company officials declared, stating that it was intended to acquire a twin-engined passenger plane with which experiments along this line would be conducted. The Lockheed Saturn was being specifically designed and developed to provide this service.

Regret was expressed that the certificate had not been granted in its entirety in view of the energetic efforts to obtain the service that were made by many of the cities dropped from the routes. The company thought, however, that it was only a question of time before the service would be authorized to those points.

During the period that the Airmail Pick-up was suspended, All American held its organization intact and it was ready to go when the Board made its decision.

August 12, 1940, was the date selected for the inauguration of the permanent service.

August 12, 1940, was May 12, 1939, all over again--but more so! There were more cities to be served on this inauguration day and they were being served on All American's new permanent pick-up routes. Today there were no slip-ups and misses. Each pilot and flight mechanic had logged thousands of pick-ups and deliveries on the experimental routes and they knew their jobs perfectly.

Service over only three of the five new routes was resumed on August 12, started in advance of the others because they comprised, for the most part, cities and towns that were on the old experimental lines where the ground stations were already installed, and the few new stations necessary could be erected in a short time.

Postal officials from the cities and from Washington, CAB and CAA leaders, municipal authorities and dignitaries, and All American officials took part in ceremonies marking the inauguration at terminal cities on the routes. Following appropriate ceremonies at Pittsburgh, a group of Post Office and CAB officials was flown to Jamestown, N.Y., where the establishment of the service was observed by a celebration at the city's new airport. The passenger plane followed the pick-up ship to give the government officials an opportunity to watch the operation from the air. They then landed at Jamestown before the Reliant made its business-like descent over the new municipal airport.

The Post Office Department provided all new points on the routes with separate postal cachets for mail dispatched on opening-day flights.

The first three routes extended between Pittsburgh and Huntington via Morgantown, Charleston, and 17 other intermediate points; between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia via Harrisburg and 20 other intermediate points; and between Pittsburgh and Jamestown and 10 intermediate points.

First-day doings behind, All American Aviation settled down to developing airmail business. Each point on the routes had an afternoon and morning schedule, planned to give every city the maximum service possible. Morning trips left

Pittsburgh and Philadelphia after the arrival of the overnight transcontinental and trunk-line schedules, and the pick-up schedules were so arranged that all mail received from these and other connections reached its destination in time for delivery by carrier the same day. This eliminated the day's delay that formerly occurred in transporting this mail by train from the air terminal. It was this delay that had made airmail service of little or no value to thousands of cities and towns throughout the country that were not on air lines.

Afternoon schedules were arranged so that all mail and express destined beyond the routes would reach Pittsburgh and Philadelphia in time to make trunk-line connections, affording overnight service to every other air line point in the country. In addition, the All American system offered a fast local service between points on the routes. A considerable volume of mail had moved between intermediate points on the experimental lines, and it was expected that this traffic would greatly increase over the permanent routes.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW ROUTES - NEW METHODS

Inauguration of service had been deferred over the other two routes not only because they were mostly over new territory, but also because All American was nearly ready to use its new Air Pick-up system which it had been developing for some time. Delayed by increasing difficulty in obtaining deliveries on new equipment due to the national defense program, the company was finally ready to launch the new routes together with the new equipment on November 12 and December 12.

The new system greatly simplified the operation of the pick-up equipment, increased accuracy and speed in making pick-ups, and facilitated the handling of heavier loads. It was decidedly different from that used during the experimental period and in use over the three routes already in operation. It increased the normal pick-up speed from around 90 miles an hour to 110 miles an hour, and had a normal load capacity of 50 pounds. In former everyday use pick-up loads had been limited to 20 pounds.

A feature of the new system was a portable ground station, dismantled when not in use, in contrast to the present permanent-type stations.

The pick-up hook no longer trailed free at the end of a 55-foot cable when making contacts, but was now held in position and guided through the ground station by a 15-foot arm that retracted into the fuselage. The arm prevented the pick-up line from whipping in turbulent air, making the pilot's work easier and more accurate. Accuracy of contact also was improved by shortening the pick-up line and making the ground station only 20 feet high instead of 40 feet as formerly. Still later, stations were shortened to 14 feet.

A power-driven unit was substituted for the hand-operated pick-up winch in the plane and a new shock device made heavier loads possible. The delivery method also was improved. Instead of trailing from the plane at the end of the transfer rope, the delivery container was now attached to the retractable boom just above the pick-up hook, and deliveries were made by the pilot by simply tripping an electrically-controlled release.

Replacing the high steel masts of the present type of station, the poles for the new ground station had an aluminum base and a bamboo tip which would not damage the plane if they were accidently struck during a pick-up. They were now set only 20 feet apart. The ground equipment, when not in use, was stored in a box especially designed for the purpose and could be erected in three minutes.

Miss Olive McCoy, popular postmistress of Grove City, Pa., and one of the few female messengers employed by the company, had made herself beloved to the company early when she personally purchased the pick-up station for Grove City. Now she again led the way as she donated the permanent steel poles of her station to local schools for use as flagpoles. Most other stations soon followed suit.

By July, 1941, all stations on the system had been replaced by the new portable masts and the operation was completely streamlined.

Air express service was started on the Pittsburgh-Williamsport route in January, 1941, under the standard arrangement between the Railway Express Agency and the other domestic air carriers, and the service was gradually extended to the rest of the Air Pick-up system.

CHAPTER IX

ADDITIONAL CITIES AND ROUTES REQUESTED

Extension of the pick-up service to six additional communities in West Virginia and Pennsylvania, which were located almost directly on the course of the routes in their region, was proposed in an application filed with the CAB in the autumn of 1940. Anxious to get the service, the city of Athens, Ohio, filed its own application and the two proceedings were consolidated by the Board. The decision was that service should be approved to three of the six cities requested by All American -- Lewistown, Carlisle, and Shippensburg, Pa. The petition of Athens was denied. Service was begun to the three cities late in 1941.

Further expansion of the system was proposed early in 1941 when All American notified the CAB of its intention to file for seven new routes covering 254 cities and towns in the New England-Middle Atlantic area. Not long thereafter, the company submitted a formal application to extend its existing route to 64 additional communities in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. An independent application for pick-up service made jointly by Bradford and Kane, Pa., and Olean and Salamanca, N.Y., was embodied in this proceeding.

Application was also made to the Board late in 1941 for permission to extend its Williamsport route to Harrisburg, and its Jamestown route into Erie to provide trunk-line connections for the morning schedules on these divisions, the absence of which was impairing the efficiency of the service.

CHAPTER X

FIRST BIRTHDAY UNDER NEW CERTIFICATE

All American's Pick-up, on August 12, 1941, celebrated its first birthday as a full-fledged member of the air transport system. Marking the occasion, Representative Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, known as the "legislative father" of the pick-up service, again championed its cause, informing Congress that during the first year of operation the system had reached a basis where "it can be considered self-supporting insofar as its direct cost to the Federal Government is involved".

Representative Randolph stated: "In this first year of service on a permanent basis, remarkable results have been achieved both in performance and in developing the airmail patronage in the communities served."

"The system has completed over 92 per cent of its daily schedules, flying approximately 693,727 miles and making over 32,000 pick-ups and deliveries without losing a single piece of mail or express and without a serious flying mishap. Of importance and significance is the surprisingly large increase in airmail volume in the communities on the routes which can be attributed directly to the establishment of the service. Since permanent establishment, the volume has increased over 47 per cent at the 54 points which were on the experimental system, and 93 per cent at the 53 additional points on the present pick-up lines. Individual increases have ranged from 2 to over 1,000 per cent."

"It was further disclosed that, excluding the three terminal points of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg, the 106 cities on the Air Pick-up lines which, incidently, serve more points than any other airline in the country, are dispatching an average of 254,223 pieces of airmail a month. The three terminal points are dispatching an average of 161,021 pieces of airmail a month via pick-up, making a grand total of 415,244 pieces."

On August 12 there were 61 full time employees and 73 mail messengers on the list of personnel.

CHAPTER XI

EXTRA SERVICE

All American's second permanent year started clicking off as smoothly as its first -- smoother, as the operation settled into a routine. Only how routine can this type of airline get? Numerous stories and tall tales have leaked out about pick-up flight incidents, but most of them remain with the people who experienced them.

Between the plane crews and the mail messengers there was an undeniable comradeship, even though they had little more than a passing, waving acquaintance. Officials were reported perplexed about continuous short delays at one station, until it was realized that the mail messenger there was a young pretty female who considered shorts proper attire for a pick-up.

There was the first time during the summer heat wave when the crew of a plane flying over West Virginia figured they'd need a cooling drink at about the mid-way point on the afternoon flight back. With the morning mail they dropped a dime and a note, "Please send up two bottles of coke this afternoon."

When they snaked in the mail that afternoon, the bottles were there. Next morning, going back, they dropped off the empties. This soon became routine.

One of the sky clerks had a grandmother living in a small town he passed over frequently. He dropped her a letter, telling her to be out at the pick-up point next day to see him go over. She was there and they exchanged waves of the hand. When the mail was hauled in, there was also a cardboard box with a warm peach pie in it.

The plane didn't even make a time-killing circle while the pie was devoured. It just kept on dropping and taking on mail. But when it reached Huntington, there was no more pie in the sky.

Something of the same thrill that another generation got out of going to the depot to watch the express train thunder through and grab the mail without stopping lured hundreds of people to the pick-up points. Even golfers paused in their sinking of a tough one to watch the plane swoop within 30 feet, snatch up the mail, and roar aloft again. Though human beings looked on with awe, livestock didn't worry much. Cows continued to chew their contented cuds without looking up when they pastured in the vicinity of the pick-up poles. Chickens were far more sensitive as the gull-winged Reliants appeared, like gigantic hawks, swooping down on them.

Some of the extra-curricular work of the flight crews was serious. Norm Rintoul was serious as he searched his familiar mountains for a plane reported down in them with a young husband and wife aboard. He found the wreckage while flying his regular run and reported its position to rescuers who found the occupants dead. Grateful relatives mailed him a $1,000 check.

Pilot Ray Elder flew into the headlines three times in as many months as he (1) led a lost Army pilot to a safe landing, (2) discovered a house burning early in the morning, circled to attract attention, and radioed for help, and (3) discovered another fire near Philipsburg, radioed to Pittsburgh who telephoned the Philipsburg Fire Department, and had the satisfaction of hearing the Philipsburg fire alarm over his radio as he circled the fire. To even up the score he led another lost Army pilot in a year later.

New experiences piled up in all phases of the operation. Pick-up man Lingar, in the fuselage of the Stinson, opened the container he had just hoisted aboard at Huntingdon, Pa., to find 25 live and very lustily cheeping day-old baby chicks. This marked the first time any living being had been picked up in flight.

As it was rather an unusual event, company officials wrote to the destinee in Florida to ascertain if the chicks had arrived safely and with no ill effects from their experience. Surprised at the interest shown, the reply was that the chicks were doing fine. A couple of weeks later they still were doing fine; still later they were a plump 2-1/2 pounds each. Then -- silence!

The next logical suggestion was that a parrot should be picked up so that he could tell how it felt to be jerked from a standstill to 110 miles an hour in a split second.

CHAPTER XII

ALL AMERICAN GOES TO WAR

Yes, the second year of All American under the permanent certificate started off smoothly enough, but what American ended smoothly in 1941? Pick-up didn't operate on Sunday, so the first Sunday in December found the men who flew the now silver planes with the blue and red trimmings taking a well-earned rest. But in the Pacific the men who flew the silver planes trimmed with a red disk were taking a crack at Pearl Harbor.

Triple-A went to war gradually, as did most industries that were already performing tasks vital to the defense effort. Men in increasing numbers were called to active duty with the various services, were drafted, or volunteered for even more important tasks. But increasing numbers of men and women were hired for the new and increased tasks thrust upon the airline by a warring nation.

Airmail and air express volumes ballooned, especially after the Postmaster General urged the use of airmail instead of long distance telephone calls, in order that the trunk lines might be kept open for emergencies.

One million miles of scheduled flying since the inauguration of service on Airmail Route 49, in 1940, were completed the day after Christmas, 1941. While amassing this tremendous amount of mileage 216,000 pounds of mail were carried and 53,000 pick-ups and deliveries were made. All this with an operating percentage of 94.6 and with no serious mishaps to personnel or equipment.

A tremendous increase in mail poundage was shown in the comparison between the experimental year, when 73,946 pounds of mail were carried, and the first year of AM 49 when 143,661 pounds were carried.

In January, 1942, the company employed 88 full time personnel; by the end of the year the family totaled 200.

A good number of these had doffed the Triple-A colors for the olive uniforms of the Air Transport Command, as an Army Cargo operation was inaugurated in July based at Harrisburg. Operating a seven-day schedule, company cargo pilots carried in the ensuing two years the staggering total of 2,461,000 pounds of important military material, flying 1,738,368 miles. Operating a fleet of C-81's, the familiar Stinson Reliants with Army designation and markings, the military cargo division set up an amazing performance record over routes in the east and northeast. In the month of May, 1944, they turned in a perfect score by completing 100% of their schedule. There was no serious loss or damage to equipment or cargo.

W. B. "Bill" Moore headed the cargo division as operations manager for most of the two years, replaced by Captain "Foss" Thomas for the remainder. Captain Harvey Thompson, fresh from ocean flying with TWA's Intercontinental Division, served for some time with the military division, and Joseph Medve, mechanic, first worked with the company in that division. Captain Norm Rintoul helped set up the operation before reporting for active duty as a Captain in the Air Force.

Under a program initiated by the Army Air Force to train urgently needed flying personnel for the rapidly-expanding Army Cargo program flown by the various airlines, All American also inaugurated an Instrument Training School in August, 1942.

Link instrument flying training and ground school were conducted at the Triple-A Wilmington base, after which the students advanced into actual instrument flight training. This flying was given in twin-engined Lockheed training ships based at Harrisburg. At the completion of the courses, graduates were placed with the various airlines on their Army cargo runs.

All American's Manufacturing Division had undergone a rapid expansion as a result of the adaptation of the Air Pick-up system to military uses. Production contracts received by the company from the War and Navy Departments made necessary the leasing of all of the office, shop, and hangar space at DuPont airport at Wilmington, Del., as well as much additional space for engineering and other personnel. The expansion made it necessary to centralize the personnel of the Manufacturing Division and other departments in the new general offices at Wilmington.

All American's greatest contribution to the war effort was a "natural" for the young company with its pick-up development and experience, and for its young president with his glider research.

On D-Day in France, in the Burma and German campaigns, and in evacuation of wounded from all theaters of war, gliders of the Allied military forces used Air Pick-up equipment and a flight technique developed, tested, and perfected by All American Aviation and the Army Air Force.

Lewin B. Barringer, noted glider expert, who was the first head of the AAF Glider Command, piloted the first glider launched by Air Pick-up. An airmail pick-up plane made the pick-up with its regular equipment. The test was made at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, in November, 1941.

Research engineers of All American calculated the stresses and acceleration involved in picking up heavier craft. They designed larger units and used heavier rope for experiments with multiple tows. The nylon rope used as a pick-up cable was developed for glider towing and adapted as standard equipment for this purpose by the Army Air Force. With tests successful, All American turned to quantity production of its pick-up equipment.

In April, 1943, Richard DuPont resigned from the presidency of All American Aviation to accept a position with the Army Air Force as Special Assistant to Commanding General "Hap" Arnold. He was placed in complete charge of the Army's glider program, focusing all his attention upon the glider as a war plane. He replaced Major Barringer, lost in a Caribbean flight.

He witnessed the use of the glider in the invasion of Sicily, and was convinced that the new tactical development had great possibilities for airborne operations in combat areas.

Returning from the war zone, DuPont went to the Pacific coast to assist in testing new military gliders there. During one of the tests, the glider went into a spin from which it could not be freed and Richard DuPont, 33, was killed when his parachute failed to open. Three other occupants of the experimental glider were killed with him. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, posthumously.

The glider program went on to new heights with the inspiration of All American's former president and the know-how and equipment developed by the company. In Burma, gliders landed in small clearings at advanced spots. Loaded with

wounded, they were hauled aloft by Air Pick-up, saving days and weeks in getting men to hospitals. The same technique was followed in Europe and was used in other areas where lack of airports called for glider use, and Air Pick-up enabled gliders to be used again and again.

The famous "Shangri-La rescue", deep in the heart of Hollandia, New Guinea, captured the public fancy when all the ingredients of a Hollywood scenario presented themselves following the crash of a sight-seeing plane.

Killed in the crash of the transport in the beautiful valley, nick-named Shangri-La, were all of the occupants except a handsome lieutenant, an equally handsome sergeant, and a beautiful WAC corporal called Susy Hastings.

From the crash on in, however, the scenario refused to conform to pattern. The sergeant did not try to shoot the lieutenant; the lieutenant did not try to strangle the sergeant in the dead of night over the affections of Corporal Hastings. As a matter of fact, Susy was sick as a dog from burns suffered in the crash and there was nowhere for her to get a sarong. And all of the activities of the men were directed toward getting them out of their "heaven".

After 45 days of search, discovery, and preparation, a glider was landed and snatched back into the air via All American pick-up equipment with the rescued soldiers aboard. After the ordeal, the sergeant's first request was for a shower, the lieutenant's was for a shave, Susy's was for a permanent. Hollywood would have done it so much better!

Many AAA employees, pilots and ground technicians, served the various services as technical representatives in all parts of the warring world, teaching and demonstrating the techniques and servicing the equipment manufactured by All American. All received commendation and praise; one, Bill Burkhart, received the Bronze Star for meritorious services in the China-Burma-India theater. Bill started early with the company as mechanic and worked himself up through the operation and was later killed as pilot in the last accident of the pick-up service.

The first direct pick-up of a human by an airplane in flight was made in September, 1943, at Wright Field. A young paratrooper was snatched from the ground and reeled into the cabin like an ordinary container of mail.

Before calling for volunteers for the first human pick-up, the research groups tried pick-ups with live sheep--the most fragile-boned of all animals. Then came the paratrooper and a new way of rescue.

Engineers worked on the special equipment for another year before putting it to more extensive use. They increased the safety factor and simplified the rig so that it might be used by men who had never heard of the pick-up before. Concise instruction booklets were written, to be dropped along with full equipment to personnel to be rescued.

The pilot of the "first human pick-up" plane? Air Force and All American Captain Norm Rintoul. The story was that they planned to use a chimpanzee for the first demonstration, but Rintoul drawled, "Well, boys, if you plan to use Barbette you'd better teach her to fly, because when she comes in one side, I'm going out the other."

CHAPTER XIII

BAZLEY SUCCEEDS DUPONT AS PRESIDENT

In 1942 Major Halsey R. Bazley and Harry F. Stringer had been appointed vice presidents of All American in charge of the Operations Department and the Mail, Traffic, and Advertising Department, respectively.

Both of these men had played a very important part in the development of the organization. Stringer was one of the pioneer members of Triple-A, arriving when the company boasted five employees. He was active in the establishment of the original experimental routes and, since, was largely responsible for the development of the permanent routes.

Major Bazley had joined AAA in August, 1939, and since that time had built up the Operations Department to the present smoothly operating system.

Now, when Richard DuPont left All American - forever, as it was to develop - Bazley was named to succeed him as president.

Shortly afterwards, Triple-A observed its fourth anniversary of pick-up service. Three days later, on May 15, the 25th anniversary of the Airmail Service of the United States was celebrated. One of the features of the program, held at Washington's National Airport, was a pick-up demonstration by an All American ship.

In view of the many applications now pending before the Civil Aeronautics Board for similar and other types of feeder routes in various parts of the country, the Washington anniversary demonstration was scheduled as "a possible preview of the nation's post-war feeder line system, as performed by its only feeder airline".

Now serving 115 cities and towns throughout the six states on its routes, All American had successfully completed the four years of flying with an operating percentage for that period of 92 per cent.

During that time the pick-up planes had flown 2,700,000 scheduled miles, made 225,000 pick-ups and deliveries, carried 750,691 pounds of airmail and 172,801 pounds of air express, without injury to personnel or damage to mail or cargo. The Air Pick-up had long been on a self-sustaining basis, having reached that point in less than three years of operation, and now was producing a rapidly growing profit for the Post Office Department.

Again, Representative Jennings Randolph spoke of All American's tremendous success and progress in the Congressional Record.

The tremendous increases in airmail patronage over Triple-A routes was apparent from figures released in 1943. For example, airmail dispatched in July, 1943, from the 10 Ohio cities and towns on the routes increased 229 per cent over July, 1942.. In the same period, the national increase averaged 75 per cent. The 65 Pennsylvania cities served by the company increased 162 per cent, West Virginia cities 118 per cent.

CHAPTER XIV

IT FINALLY HAPPENS!

Air Facts magazine published an article written by Editor Leighton Collins titled "Under the Overcast". Ranking as one of the best stories yet written from the co-pilot's seat, it told of Collins' reactions while riding over pick-up routes with such veteran pick-up pilots as Rintoul, Dave Patterson, and Clyde Hauger. He referred to the Triple-A system as being made up of "iron men and SR-ten's".

Iron men they were to demonstrate themselves, through four years of the hardest type of flying any pilot has ever been asked to do well every day. They came close on April 12, 1943, but were still able to say that they "completed four years without injury to personnel or damage to mail or cargo".

On that day Captain Russ Crow, with Flight Mechanic Ed Louden and Flight Mechanic Trainee Dick Bazley, was forced by an unusually violent downdraft into the side of Tuscarora mountain near Port Royal, Pa. Displaying quick thinking ability, Russ brought the ship into the scrub oak without a scratch to himself, the crew, or the cargo. The ship was damaged considerably. Its removal from its mountain-side perch to a road three miles away entailed quite an engineering project, but it soon was back on the run.

"One of our planes was missing" on October 25 on a flight from Chambersburg to Gettysburg, with Captain Tommy Bryan and Flight Mechanic Victor Gasbarro aboard. Hope was all but abandoned as hundreds of searchers scoured the mountains all night through fog and rain, and low clouds next day prevented an aerial search. But late on the next day they were found, bruised and battered, in an abandoned hunting cabin to which they had hobbled from their wrecked plane near the top of Piney mountain. Still no serious injury to personnel or damage to cargo.

It had to happen sometime, it appears--at least to the mail. It happened on August 3, 1944, when Flight 3 crashed and burned at Yorkville, Ohio, injuring Captain "Red" Lindemuth and Flight Mechanic Ralph Monaco. Monaco was thrown clear of the wreckage, suffering a severe hip injury. Lindemuth, although caught in the controls, managed to extricate himself from the blazing fuselage in spite of a broken leg and fractured ankles. Only three of the thirty-four mail sacks aboard were saved. The ship was a complete loss.

Seven weeks later, on September 29, 1944, Captain Wilson A. Scott died in an accident following a pick-up at State College, Pa., in the company's first fatal crash in almost 6,000,000 miles of scheduled operation. Flight Mechanic Bob Taylor sustained head and back injuries.

Air Transport owes an incalculable debt to the early aerial postmen who blazed the trails through the Alleghenies as well as over most other parts of the country in the 20's and early 30's. In many cases the feats performed by the early single-engined planes were daredevil exploits, but from the stunts and the mistakes came progress. Each loss of a plane and its precious cargo of mail, each life snuffed out was part of the price of progress; and, in the end, the rest of mankind profited from the loss.

The All American pilots in the late 30's and early 40's were not daredevil barnstormers. They were doing a workmanlike job in an established business--

carrying the mail. No less than the Pony Express rider who died of thirst crossing a desert stretch, no less than a stage coach driver toppled from his perch by a highwayman's bullet, no less than a mail clerk on a derailed train---no less did the Triple-A pilots, such as Captain Scott, who were to die deserve the gratitude and thanks of their nation for contributing to the greater well-being and progress of their fellow men. They were pioneers---and pioneers expect rough roads and sometimes inpenetrable forests.

They lived up to the best traditions of the Post Office Department, which had pioneered post roads, river steamer routes, the overland stage, pony express, the railroads, and even motor transports for mail routes. They were the rural carriers for the far-sighted government officials who believed that the mail had to be carried to the farm folk as well as the city dweller, and every day they did their damndest---on schedule!

CHAPTER XV

LOOKING TOWARDS PEACETIME

All American had earned a profit of $27,690 in its business year ending June 30, 1943, compared to a net loss of $22,407 in the previous year. The pick-up lines were now serving 117 communities, having added Ripley, W.Va., as an intermediate point on the Pittsburgh-Huntington run. These 117 communities represented one third of the nation's airline points.

The Civil Aeronautics Board had found it necessary to suspend definite action on all applications for the expansion of commercial routes and to curtail existing service because of the war, but because of the need for additional mail service the company was able to obtain increased utilization of its airplanes by adding additional trips over route segments.

Although concentration was on the war efforts of the company, plans for peacetime expansion were a close second. The CAB, despite its status quo position, was also thoroughly studying the possibilities of future development in local, feeder, and pick-up services. Because of Triple-A's pioneering and its staff of qualified personnel, the governmental agency drew heavily on company experience in its investigations.

The success of All American's airline operations to date had demonstrated the need for greatly expanded service of a similar nature but with passenger carrying as an addition, or for more conventional passenger and airmail service. Consideration was being given not only to the development of such service in new areas, but also to the possible use of new types of aircraft, such as helicopters, gliders, converti-planes, or whatever new equipment or technical aids might become available.

President Bazley, testifying before an early Board meeting inquiring into the feasibility of short haul air transportation, said, "The Civil Aeronautics Board should adopt an aggressive development policy in local and short haul air transportation. If applications for local and short haul transportation are judged solely on the basis of past experience, progress will be painfully slow. There has not been enough experience in local service other than Air Pick-up to form the basis for satisfactory forecasts."

And he stated a company policy which became Board and industry policy. "All American believes that, under no circumstances, should surface carriers be permitted to operate transport lines and that the development of short haul and local transportation should be left to independent operators."

On May 12, 1944, five years of Air Pick-up had been completed, and on May 15 air service was inaugurated to Athens, Ohio. An earlier petition of the city in 1941 requesting the service had been denied, but now the tremendous increase of airmail dispatched by Athens had brought them a favorable ruling from the Board.

During the five years All American crews had flown 3,260,961 scheduled miles, made approximately 250,000 pick-ups and deliveries, all with an average operating percentage of 92.2 per cent.

Applications were pending late in 1944 for new routes in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and the four New England states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Vermont that would add 422 additional communities and 4,851 additional route miles to the system.

The District of Columbia had recently been added to company routes as the temporary eastern terminus for the Pittsburgh-Philadelphia run, while air service was suspended to Philly due to the War Department's closing of the municipal airport of the nation's third largest city. All American had requested permission to use the not-yet-completed Philadelphia Northeast airport as a pick-up point to alleviate the city's situation. After one of the shortest deliberations in its history, thirty-five minutes after taking up AAA's petition, the Board decided to authorize the pick-up at Philadelphia and the flight's termination at Washington; and, 19 days after it had been interrupted, airmail service was restored to Philadelphia.

William B. Moore, operations manager for All American, was named Vice President in charge of Operations in November, 1944. He had come to All American from a post as manager of the State airport at Harrisburg and was first operations manager of the Military Cargo Division, later operations manager of the commercial activities.

Air Pick-up had conclusively demonstrated that it was a practical, efficient, and economical medium of short haul air transportation. It had also proved that the traffic was there, waiting development. However, it still carried only mail and express and, while it could truthfully be called "The Airway to Everywhere", it did not provide passenger service to offer a complete service.

From the first, All American had envisioned the adaptation of pick-up to passenger planes which could be operated over short routes to many intermediate points, making stops only where necessary to load and discharge passengers and providing service to other places by means of pick-up. Technically, the operation was entirely feasible. Pick-up planes had carried many government officials, members of the press, and others as passengers on regular trips and, without exception, these passengers had afterward expressed the belief that a combination pick-up and passenger service would be both practical and safe.

As of November 1, 1944, there were 711 applications for new routes, of all types, pending before the CAB. Of this total, there were some 524 applications proposing service with conventional aircraft; 142 for helicopter service; 43 for air pick-up; and 2 for lighter-than-air. The majority proposed feeder line operations.

Many of those applying for feeder lines were aviation people backed up by many years of varied aeronautical experience. Most of them had vast aviation knowledge plus successful business records as fixed base operators, operators of civilian and military schools, airport operation, aircraft and engine sales, and operators of army cargo routes. Some had had actual airline operation and maintenance experience.

In December, 1944, All American outlined its proposal for new routes, including 219 communities in New England and northeastern New York, at a Civil Aeronautics Board hearing in Boston. Testifying for the company were Counsel A. M. Zimmerman, President Bazley, Vice Presidents Harry Stringer and Bill Moore, and D. L. Miller.

All of the proposed routes included pick-up service; three were defined as combination passenger and pick-up routes. One of the witnesses was James Streabig, aviation editor for the Associated Press, who, testifying on passenger reaction to pick-up, said that he "knew no discomfort while riding with All American over Route AM-49".

In January, 1945, All American applied for a system of 46 Air Pick-up routes, extending 13,364 miles and proposing service to 741 communities in 9 southern and 4 central states. Combination passenger/pick-up service was asked over the new routes where the potential traffic appeared to justify such an operation.

Twenty-three of the routes in the southeastern area would serve 438 communities in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio, Mississippi, and West Virginia. The remaining 23 routes in the Great Lakes area would serve 303 communities in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio.

Company applications for new routes now totaled 24,591 miles and proposed service to 1,109 communities in 24 states and the District of Columbia.

With such a goal to aim for, All American Aviation celebrated its sixth birthday. In the past year pick-up planes flew 1,296,472 revenue miles, making the six-year total 5,166,434 miles, to which was added another million miles flown by the company's military cargo planes. During the year 70,488 pick-ups and deliveries were made for a grand total of 295,609. Mail transported amounted to 954,000 pounds; air express 181,000 pounds. The mail volume represented an increase of 71 per cent over the previous year.

All American's Manufacturing Division did business exceeding $3,500,000. Business in the preceding year amounted to $2,919,046. The company's present backlog was $3,400,000.

Considerable expansion of the Air Pick-up system abroad was in prospect. All American was completing the organization of its own Brazilian company for this purpose, and in recent months government representatives from France, Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and several other South American countries had discussed the subject with the company. New uses for Air Pick-up equipment in other industries and new products, such as the Brodie landing system, were being investigated by the company.

Vice President Charles Wendt had laid the groundwork for most of the foreign pick-up work, journeying to several of the countries to discuss the operation. Captain Clyde Hauger and Flight Mechanic Raymond Garcia were the operations de-

partment of Equipamento All America Aviation S/A, a subsidiary of the company, formed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to develop short haul transportation by means of cargo and glider pick-up operation.

On July 9, 1945, Representative Jennings Randolph introduced a concurrent resolution calling for the immediate expansion of direct air service to the country's small cities and towns through feeder line service. The same resolution was introduced in the Senate by Senator Warren G. Magnuson of Washington.

During a five-day period in October, 1945, All American conducted the world's first commercial glider pick-up operations when a glider containing 400 pounds of live lobsters was picked up from a relatively inaccessible coastal area near Allerton Beach, Mass., and towed to Teterboro, N.J. The operation was conducted to gain the practical experience necessary to determine the possibilities of glider pick-up.

Also in October, All American Aviation received the Army-Navy "E" production award on behalf of its Manufacturing Division for its fine record of production of war equipment. Air pick-up, glider and human pick-up, and the Brodie system, portable rig for landing and launching aircraft on a cable, all were cited as outstanding military needs fulfilled by All American.

On October 30 Triple-A applied to the CAB for an exemption order which would permit the company to operate passenger service over its two Airmail pick-up routes between Pittsburgh and Huntington, W.Va.

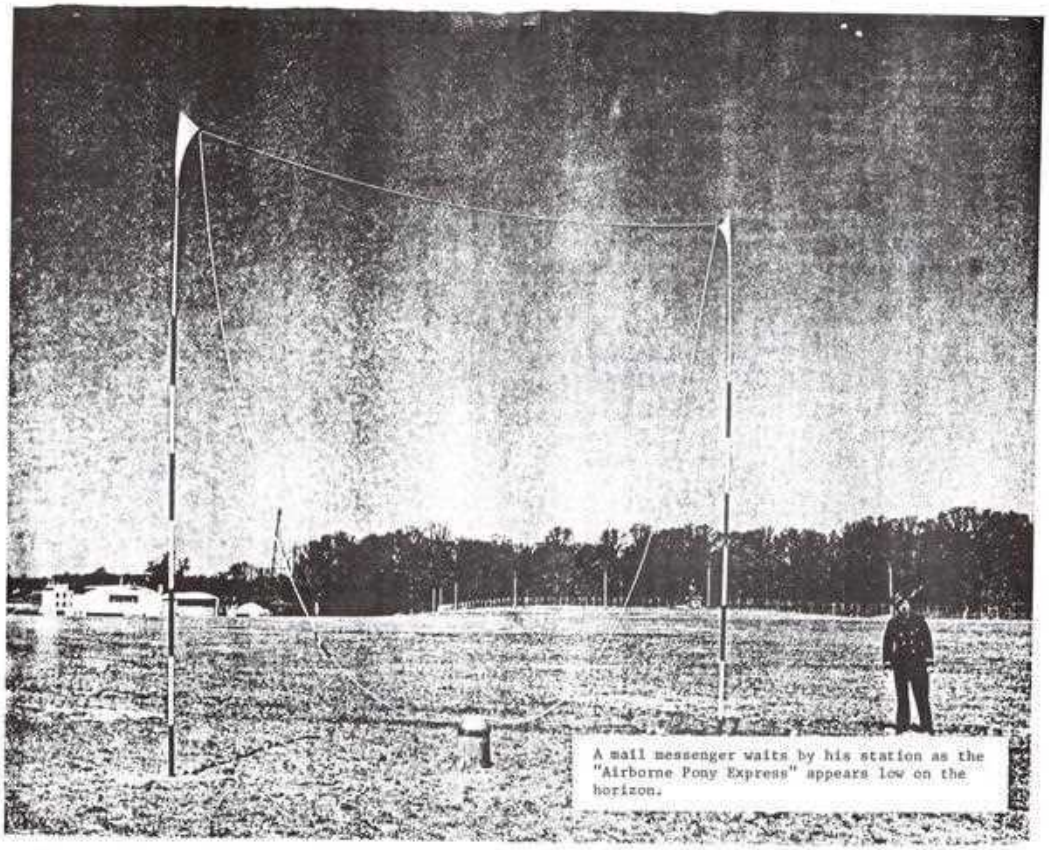
On Route 49-A, which extended through southeastern and central West Virginia, AAA would provide passenger service to Connellsville and Uniontown, Pa., and Morgantown, Clarksburg, and Elkins, W.Va., at the same time continuing its regular pick-up operations at the other 21 intermediate points on this route.

On Route 49-B, which the company operated in the Ohio Valley and southeastern Ohio, passenger service was proposed at Steubenville, Martins Ferry, Bridgeport, Marietta, Athens, and Portsmouth, Ohio, and Weirton, Hollidays Cove, Wellsburg, Wheeling, and Parkersburg, W.Va. Pick-up operations would be maintained at the other 16 intermediate points. Granting of the applications would fill a desperate need for air transportation in the West Virginia and Ohio River Valley area, the company felt.

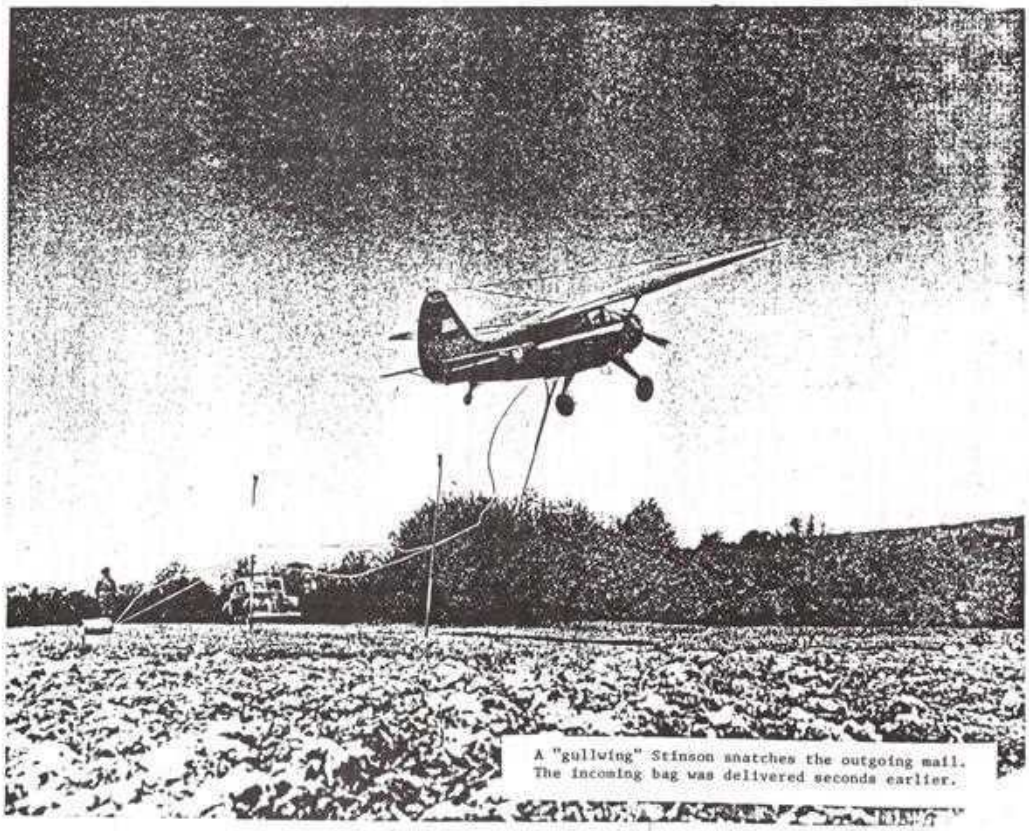
Captains Rintoul and Lloyd Santmyer returned to All American from tours of active duty at about this time, gladly forsaking the many foreign assignments with which they had become familiar for the Triple-A "clothesline circuit".

A hearing on ten routes proposed by All American in eight Middle Atlantic states was held by the CAB in Washington, beginning in January, 1946.

The Middle Atlantic hearing was the last of the regional proceedings conducted by the Board to establish a national pattern for air service in this country.



A mail messenger waits by his station as the "Airborne Pony Express" appears low on the horizon.



A "gullwing" Stinson snatches the outgoing mail. The incoming bag was delivered seconds earlier.