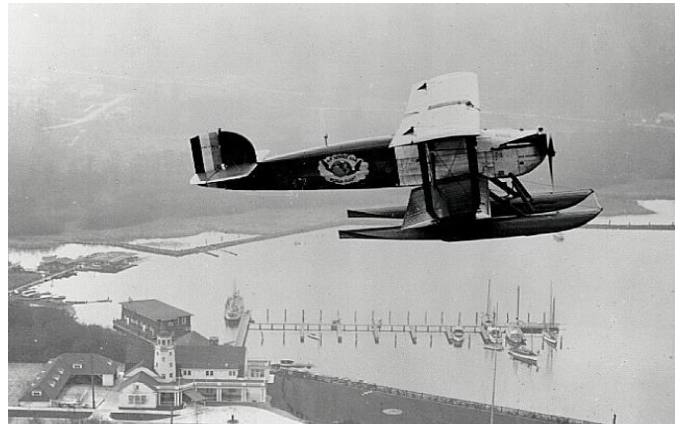


Aerial Circumnavigation Began in Seattle

Ninety years ago -- Sunday morning April 6 1924 -- "*The Seattle*", a U.S. Army seaplane, led the first few miles of the first flight around the globe over the yacht clubs of Portage Bay, houseboats of Eastlake, Wallingford bungalows, the lumber mills of Fremont, above the commercial fish boats of Salmon Bay out to the open water of Puget Sound. It was a sky armada of thundering Liberty engines.

Only the *Chicago* and *New Orleans* circumnavigated. *Chicago* assumed command after *Seattle* crashed in Alaska. *Boston* went down in the Atlantic. *Chicago* was retired to the National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC. *New Orleans* is a museum piece in Santa Monica. The wreckage of *Seattle* is in an Alaskan museum. The *Boston* is at the bottom of the North Atlantic.

By 1924, nations and adventurers were competing for the honor of first to circle the globe by air. The U.S. Army expedition – The World Cruisers -- arrived at Seattle's Sand Point Air Field on March 20th to begin on pontoons. The pilots were celebrated like movie stars. All had flown in WWI. Lieutenant Erik Nelson, piloting *New Orleans* (#4), flew in the New York – to- Nome Black Wolf Squadron of 1920, Lt. Leigh Wade set altitude records in 1921 and piloted *Boston* (#3). Lt. Lowell Smith held endurance records and piloted *Chicago* (#2). Major Frederick Martin, recently of supply logistics, commanded the expedition in *Seattle* (#1). These were the U.S. Army's handpicked ambassadors of aviation and America. The 2nd cockpit sergeants were specialists in mechanics, motors and electricity.

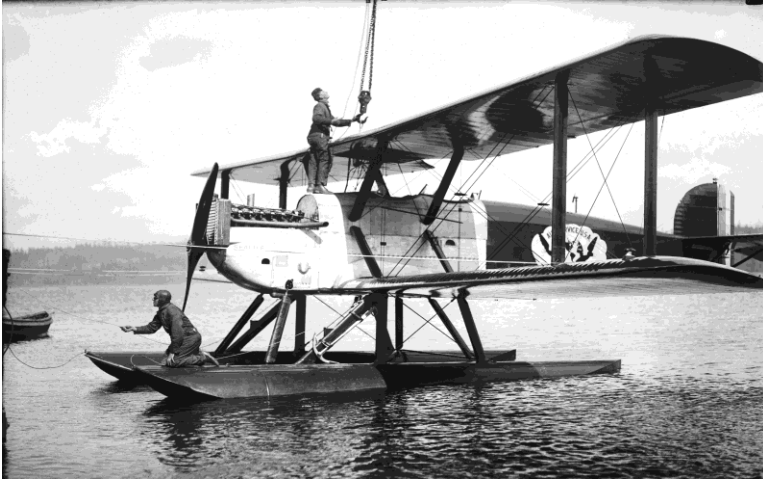


New Orleans (#4), piloted by Lt. Erik Nelson with electrician Sgt Jack Harding flying over Portage Bay. In November-December 1923, Lt. Nelson supervised the modifying the Douglas Cloudster design into five Douglas World Cruisers. In 1968, retired brigadier general and Boeing executive Erik Nelson provided this picture which hangs today in the Seattle Yacht Club.

For eighteen spring days, Seattle crowds came to Sand Point Airfield to witness circumnavigational preparations. Seattle welcomed the officers at public dinners. Nearly thirty military wheeled aircraft came from West Coast airfields to escort the four seaplanes to the Canadian border. Commercial pilot Nick Mamer flew from Spokane to Sand Point to peddle some flight seeing amid the festivities. Roosevelt High School boys fetched water and oil for Lt. Mamer in exchange for rides.

On Saturday, March 29, some 10,000 paying spectators in University Stadium witnessed an Air Circus of nearly 40 aircraft demonstrating formation flying and bombing techniques. There was an air courier

race to Renton and back. The greatest cheer of the day came when Major Martin flew *Seattle* (#1) by with relief pilots Lts Kelly and Arnold waving. Both were expecting to be left behind after 6 weeks of rigorous training. (But two days later, the charismatic Lt Arnold replaced SSgt Turner in *Chicago* (#2). Les Arnold was a pilot with skills in photography and finances. Arthur Turner was a mechanic who couldn't shake a bronchial cough). The Grand Aerial Review finale massed 30 aircraft circling above at different altitudes.



Sgt Alva Harvey (age 23) unhooking *Seattle* (#1) at Sand Point, with expedition commander Major Frederick Martin (age 42) taking in a mooring line on the pontoon. The engine cover is off, exposing the 12 cylinder Liberty engine – the dominant aviation engine of its day. Three weeks later, the youngest and oldest of the Army's expedition began a 10-day forced march through snow for survival.

This was a jinxed command for Major Martin. Examining blue dawning Seattle skies before 20,000 spectators at Sand Point, Major Martin canceled the departure. Although *Seattle's* weather was marvelous, from Vancouver BC north was a squally mess. Departure Day II, with 200 spectators watching, Major Martin damaged *Seattle's* propeller tips, forcing another delay. The *Seattle* wouldn't rise off Lake Washington. Water spray while planing caused the initial damage. Major Martin then tapped the mooring buoy and split a leak in one of his wood-topped metal pontoons. The ceremonial escort of 25 military aircraft to the Canadian border returned to their West Coast bases. Boeing employees worked through the night on repairs.

Sunday morning's third launch attempt sent three World Cruiser seaplanes, escorted by two wheeled Sand Point Army planes down the Ship Canal at 9:00 AM. Three hundred witnessed the takeoff from the Sand Point shorelines, many thousands more from the streets, sidewalks, yards, porches, windows, roofs and parks between Laurelhurst and Ballard. Lt. Leigh Wade in the *Boston* initially couldn't break the plane off the water. After 3 take-off attempts, he lightened his load and left an hour later, escorted by 4 Sand Point airplanes.

Major Martin hit an Aleutian mountain in the fog – the fourth equipment delay caused by the expedition's leader. The pontoon damage at Sand Point cost a day. Major Martin's hard landing in Port Rupert to conclude the first day cost a week repairing broken left wing struts. Replacing a failed engine west of Kodiak Island Alaska required another week. Catching up to the other three seaplanes waiting 7 flight hours (390 miles) away at Dutch Harbor, Major Martin's fourth incident ended the *Seattle*. He and

Sgt Alva Harvey went missing. After 7 days the War Department ordered the three remaining World Cruisers to continue, Lt. Lowell Smith assuming command. Three days later, Martin and Harvey walked out of the wilderness into a shoreline cannery connected to the world by radio. A crowd of 20,000 met Major Martin in Bellingham. He spent the summer on Lake Whatcom on recovery furlough with his family.

The French effort to circumnavigate ended in May; the Portuguese in June. Early-August front-page headlines announced the English crew abandoned their seaplane near a Siberian island after a foggy crash landing. But the World Cruisers lost *Boston* that same day in the North Atlantic. A Navy destroyer raced Lts Leigh Wade and Hank Ogden across the Atlantic to Nova Scotia to meet the prototype World Cruiser re-named the *Boston II* and re-join the expedition. Seattle avidly followed newspaper and movie newsreel progress reports on our Magellans of the Air.

When the *Chicago*, *New Orleans* and *Boston II* landed in Maine on September 5th, the Argentinian expedition was too far behind to ever catch up. After changing off pontoons for the last time in Boston, the three airships led a 15-city aerial victory lap across the nation, eventually coming up the West Coast – San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Eugene -- before crossing the FINISH line in Seattle.



This World Cruiser logo is on the fuselage of the *Seattle II*, a flying replica -- complete with the WWI-sounding Liberty engine -- built by Bob Dempster with the assistance of the Boeing Company and Seattle's aviation community.



The six circumnavigators (pilots Nelson, Smith, Wade standing, crew Harding, Ogden and Arnold kneeling) posed for the media on Monday September 29th. Years later, Nelson and Harding returned to Seattle as Boeing Company employees.

Boat and factory whistles and 40,000 spectators greeted the World Cruisers back to Seattle. The *Chicago* touched down Sunday September 28th at 1:36 PM, *Boston II* and *New Orleans* followed. Major Martin was the first to greet them, leaping up the still-rolling *Chicago*. The World Cruisers were taken by yacht to Madison Park, then by laurel and flag-covered Rickenbacker sedans to the official welcoming reception at the Volunteer Park bandstand. A mayor, governor, admiral, general and ambassador all spoke. The Chamber of Commerce presented rings made of Alaskan gold. Each flyer spoke. Then Major Martin was brought forth to the roar of the thousands.

For their exploits during the spring and summer of 1924 the Flight Around the World aviators were awarded the MacKay Trophy for the "meritorious flight of the year".

Of the eight World Cruisers who left Lake Washington that Sunday morning, two retired as major generals, one a brigadier general, a vice president for Lockheed Aviation, and three as colonels.

Of the six World Cruisers who circumnavigated, five retired from the military within three years. A generation later, four returned to Army Air Forces leadership roles for the duration of World War II.

Three World Cruisers circling a globe became stock certificate vignette of the Douglas Aircraft Company.

The Victor Alonzo Lewis expedition monument Seattle citizens commissioned was erected beside the Sand Point airstrip prior to the September 28 1924 landing.



Victor Alonzo Lewis's flying wings tribute to the World Cruisers is located at the entry to Warren G. Magnuson Park.

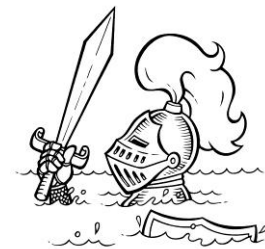


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