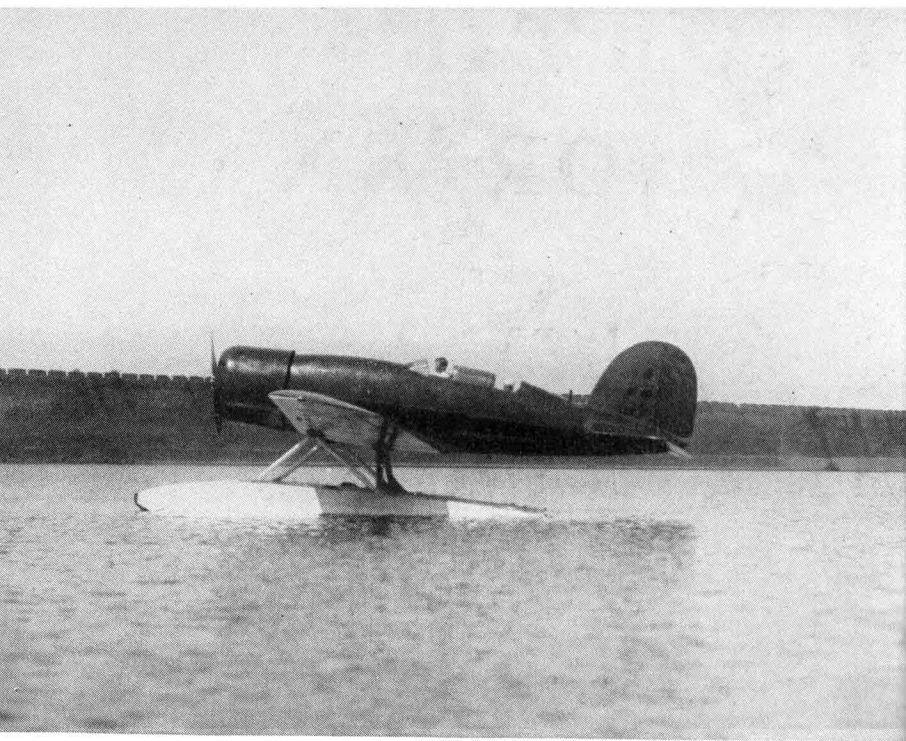


NORTH TO THE ORIENT

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The *Sirius* on Lotus Lake outside the wall of Nanking

NORTH
to the ORIENT

BY ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH

WITH MAPS BY CHARLES A. LINDBERGH

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PREFACE

A PREFACE is perhaps more for the writer than for the reader. There comes a moment when the things one has written, even a traveler's memories, stand up and demand a justification. They require an explanation. They query, "Who am I? What is my name? Why am I here?" They block the road and will not be put off. One must sit down quietly and reply to their questions in a preface.

This introduction seems unusually necessary in my case, because the anomalous collection of chapters before me, purporting to be an account of an air voyage, evades classification, will not fit the conventional standards and measurements, but stands, nameless, awkward and shy, asking to be introduced.

It is perhaps easier to introduce it negatively, to say what it is not, to clear away the underbrush of illusions, so that neither writer nor reader be disappointed in what follows.

I have not written a technical account of a sur-

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vey flight on the great circle route from New York to Tokyo. I do not know enough to write one, and if I did, the time for doing so would be past. Aviation moves a long way in four years. No geographical knowledge can be gained from reading my story. We constructed no maps or charts, and I have not even kept a scientific record of all the territory passed. It is not in any sense a guidebook. Our stops were so short and hurried that only a superficial picture remains. Nor is each point on our route portrayed, but only those which seem to warrant description for the vividness of impression.

What, then, is this collection of chapters? How explain it? Why did I write it? There is, of course, always the personal satisfaction of writing down one's own experiences so they may be saved, caught and pinned under glass, hoarded against the winter of forgetfulness. Time has been cheated a little, at least in one's own life, and a personal, trivial immortality of an old self assured. And there is another personal satisfaction: that of the people who like to recount their adventures, the diary-keepers, the story-tellers, the letter-writers, a strange race of people who feel half cheated of an experience unless it is retold. It does not really exist until it is put

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into words. As though a little doubting or dull, they could not see it until it is repeated. For, paradoxically enough, the more unreal an experience becomes—translated from real action into unreal words, dead symbols for life itself—the more vivid it grows. Not only does it seem more vivid, but its essential core becomes clearer. One says excitedly to an audience, "Do you see—I can't tell you how strange it was—we all of us felt . . ." although actually, at the time of the incident, one was not conscious of such a feeling, and only became so in the retelling. It is as inexplicable as looking all afternoon at a gray stone on a beach, and not realizing, until one tries to put it on canvas, that it is in reality bright blue.

And what is the bright-blue stone of our trip? What essential quality has come out in the telling? It is not in the flying alone, nor in the places alone, nor alone in the time; but in a peculiar blending of all three, which resulted in a quality of magic—a quality that belongs to fairy tales. It was not that we arrived in Baker Lake on August third by plane, but that three hours of flying had brought us from the modern port of Churchill to a place where no white woman had ever been before. It was not only

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that we flew from Baker Lake to Aklavik in twelve hours, by the midnight sun, but that while flying over those gray wastes south of Victoria Land, isolated and wild as the moon, I could hear through my ear-phones the noisy chatter of big cities over the edge of the world. At northernmost Point Barrow, we flew into an isolated settlement, still waiting for its new year's supply of provisions, and flew out again, independent as the wind, passing their ice-blocked ship, far below us in the sea, on our way to Nome. Over the Chishima Islands in fog, radio told us of weather and harbors ahead. A barefoot fisherman took us into his thatched hut when we landed in bad weather in Kunashiri. The next morning, in clear skies, after a twenty-minute flight, we were in Nemuro and civilization. With nothing but flood beneath us in China, we were within easy distance of food and safety.

It was a magic caused by the collision of modern methods and old ones; modern history and ancient; accessibility and isolation. And it was a magic which could only strike spark about that time. A few years earlier, from the point of view of aircraft alone, it would have been impossible to reach these places; a few years later, and there will be no such isolation.

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Perhaps a real magician is only a few steps ahead of his amazed audience, as the Yankee at King Arthur's court, who could prophesy the eclipse. Our modern plane was just a few steps ahead of life at Baker Lake and Barrow and Kunashiri; and therefore it was marvelous to us as well as to them. One has only to see that chasm between accessibility and isolation—narrow, so one could reach across, but deep as time—to appreciate what can bridge it. For though it is easy enough to rub the lamp and have one's wish granted, or to say "Abracadabra" and sail away on a carpet, sometimes the magic fails. The lamp is broken; the word is forgotten; or a spark sets fire to the carpet—and where are you? East of the sun and west of the moon, and you must find the way back alone, trudging through the thorns by foot.

There is always a back stairs to magic, and it is just as well to keep it in mind, to know where it is and how to clamber down. The back stairs of aviation-magic is sometimes a parachute and sometimes a rubber lifeboat. But it can also be a radio tube or a sextant or army rations or a life preserver or snake-bite serum or a bug-proof tent or a revolver or a compass—or even a pair of heavy boots. One must

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always be thinking, not only, "Thirteen hours of gasoline will take us to Aklavik," but also, "If we have an engine failure on the way, we have food enough for thirty days' walking to an outpost."

The back stairs are terribly important—almost more important than the front stairs—so much so that one is tempted to say, if it were not for them there could be no front stairs. For which reason I may be excused where I have emphasized the back stairs in my story.

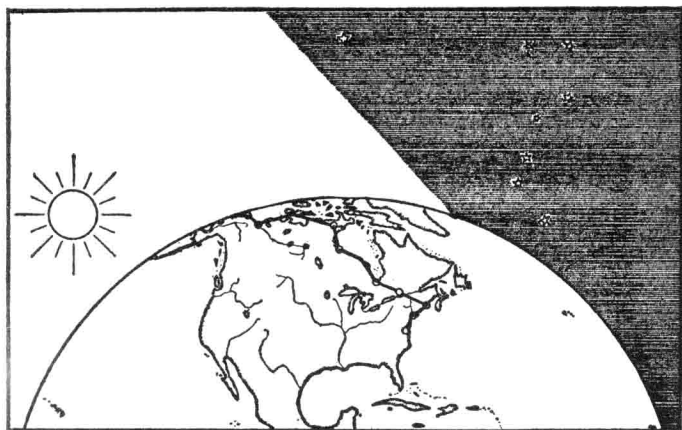
For it is in an attempt to capture some of the magic that I have written this summer's experience—in an attempt to capture a phase in the history of travel that is perhaps unrepeatable and, as such, is worth being recorded.

For magic, unless it is written down, escapes one. Who would know, if it were not for Hans Andersen, that three enormous dogs, each bigger than the other, with eyes like saucepans, lay hidden in a tinder box; or that a pair of ordinary-looking galoshes could take one to the moon; or that if one sat on an old trunk and pressed the lock, one could hurtle across the skies anywhere?

"'Hurtle across the skies anywhere,'" someone repeats, smiling. "But that is no longer a fairy tale.

P R E F A C E

That is almost everyday life!" Exactly, it is right on the line. Yesterday's fairy tale is today's fact. The magician is only one step ahead of his audience. I must write down my story before it is too late.



I. NORTH TO THE ORIENT

TO go north to the Orient is not a new venture. The idea must have originated soon after the discovery of America. That great "island" lying across the route foiled the schemes of early explorers who wanted to "saile by the West into the East." But there was still a chance of sailing by the *North* into the East. An attempt to find such a route may have been made as early as 1508 by Sebastian Cabot. And the Elizabethan explorers Frobisher and Davis, who followed him, started in earnest the long search for "a passage by the North-west to Cathaia."

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In an age when continents were linked for the first time by boat, the trade lines to the East were the most important and eagerly sought. The Portuguese had already discovered and monopolized the route around Cape of Good Hope. Magellan had labored west across two oceans and through the straits to China. The Elizabethans, in Sir Hugh Willoughby's fatal expedition, had tried unsuccessfully to find a Northeast passage around Russia and Siberia, and were now turning in the other direction. They wanted a "new and nerer passage to Cataya," and their hope lay in the supposed straits on the north side of the recently discovered America.

Then, as now, the object of a new route was greater accessibility and speed. Cabot is quoted, in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, as saying, "If I should saile by way of the North-west, I should by a shorter tract come into India." Many explorers believed that if such a passage could be found "for the bringing of the Spiceries from India into Europe," it would be the easiest and shortest of all routes.

There was, however, much doubt as to its existence. The problem attracted many minds to its study and drew earnest discussions from both sides.