This book about my father's 42-year Pan Am career is compiled from the documents, memoirs, clippings, photos and mementos he left behind. In a sense it is the scrapbook he was too busy to get around to. My words are few, just factual history to tie together 200 plus quotes, letters, documents and photos.

-- Peter Leslie, Director, Pan Am Historical Foundation

Proceeds from the sale of this book will benefit the Pan Am Historical Foundation and its mission.
John Leslie's Legacy

Clipper One with FDR aboard alights alongside the USS Memphis on the Gambia River in Africa.

Painting by Ian Marshall

When John Leslie, in charge of President Roosevelt's 1943 Pan Am Special Mission flight to the wartime Casablanca summit, named the presidential aircraft Clipper One, he started an American tradition. That legacy lives on today and the phrase Air Force One instantly symbolizes American prestige and power around the globe.
John Leslie was Pan Am's first aeronautical engineer. Leslie designed this aircraft in 1927 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Leslie was hired in 1929 and worked in Miami on Pan Am's earliest aircraft: The Fokker F-10, the Sikorsky S-38, the Consolidated Commodore and this Sikorsky S-40 shown in a postcard sent to him by his niece in 1935.
Leslie was called the “Father of Long Range Cruising.” He tested his theories and techniques with his good friend Captain Ed Musick at the controls of a Sikorsky S-42.
In 1935 Leslie was transferred to San Francisco to prepare for the epic Pacific crossing flights. In a teletype press release naming Leslie to the Pan Am board of directors, Juan Trippe credited him with developing the engineering techniques that made the flight of the China Clipper possible.
Juan Trippe greets Leslie at the Marine Air Terminal in New York in 1941. During World War II Leslie was Pan Am Atlantic Division Manager. Pan Am flying boats performed essential missions in the war effort. One was supplying the British essential materiel just before the Battle of El Alamein, which turned the tide against Field Marshall Rommel’s Afrika Korps.
"This lively, fascinating and authentic account makes the operations of Pan Am during its pioneering years come alive. The book features the personal papers, photos and memorabilia of a young engineer who joined the company in 1929, became Pacific Division Engineer during the launch of Trans-Pacific service, and Atlantic Division Manager during WWII."

--Charles Trippe, Pan American World Airways Vice President

"With intimate detail, this narrative reveals the life and character of a Pan American Airways unsung hero: John C Leslie. In this captivating book, Leslie’s private and humble personality is shared in a way not found in any Pan American Airways history. The book is colourful both in format and content and will leave any reader wanting more."

--Professor Gabrielle Durepos, Schwartz School of Business, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
“John Leslie, Pan Am’s chief engineer for the Pacific Division, avoided the spotlight and as a result, his contributions to Pan American’s epic flights have not been fully appreciated. This personal memoir by Peter Leslie of his father’s remarkable career will both inform and inspire you.”

--Jon Krupnick, author of Pacific Pioneers and The Rest of the Story. Collector extraordinaire of Pan American first day covers and memorabilia