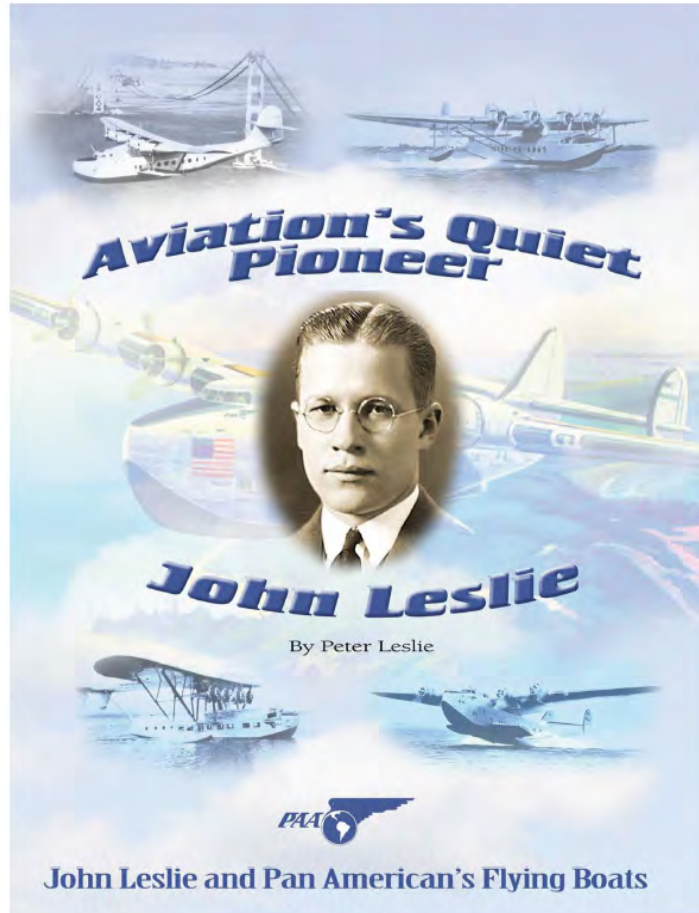

Aviation's Quiet Pioneer



John Leslie
by Peter Leslie



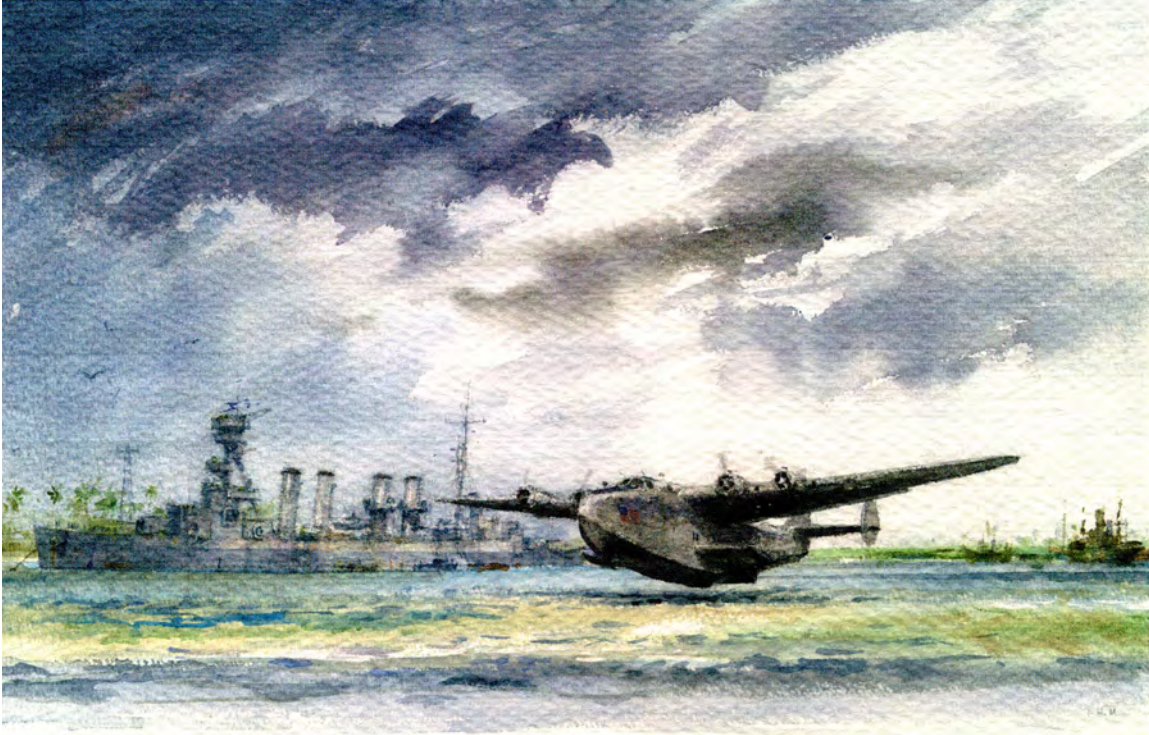
This book about my father's 42-year Pan Am career is compiled from the documents, memoirs, clippings, photos and mementos he left behind. In a sense it is the scrapbook he was too busy to get around to. My words are few, just factual history to tie together 200 plus quotes, letters, documents and photos.

-- Peter Leslie, Director, Pan Am Historical Foundation

Proceeds from the sale of this book will benefit the Pan Am Historical Foundation and its mission.

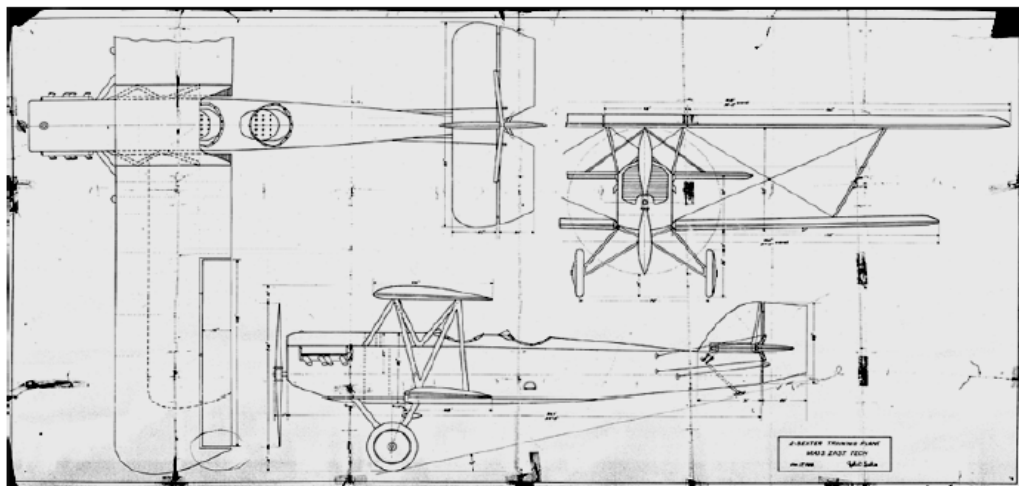
John Leslie's Legacy

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.



AS DIVISION ENGINEER FOR THE PACIFIC DIVISION IN 1935 HE DEVELOPED THE ENGINEERING TECHNIQUE FOR LONG RANGE FLIGHT WHICH MADE POSSIBLE THE FIRST COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICE ACROSS THE PACIFIC.

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.

Aviation's Quiet Pioneer

Endorsements



Leslie said in the 1972 speech at Philip Barter Academy:

"Finally, we were ready to transfer our base of operations to San Francisco. This was in the early part of 1935. Our planned route across the Pacific, between Honolulu and Manila involved landing and overnight stops on the islands of Midway, Wake, and Canton. I arrived in San Francisco on the very day that our supply ship was about to leave for these islands. I vividly recall going down to the docks that night and boarding the SS North Haven. I knew that she had aboard her over a million different items of supplies and equipment, of everything needed to establish communications and operating facilities on these and nearby islands. Although, about 1,000 miles westward from Honolulu, we were occupied only by a few men manning a radio relay station. Wake, some 1,500 miles east of Midway, had never been visited by anyone. Canton was, of course, because the United States had given it from Spain at the Spanish-American War (1898) and it had long been a US Navy base.

"Landing up at the ship, back side of that vessel in the huge San Francisco harbor and realizing the indispensable part that it had to play in our forthcoming adventures, gave me a feeling of awe and a sense of anticipation. I could talk for an hour of course, concerning our advances in constructing these island bases. I would just say that one fact of modern history equipment and tools, in comparison to those used only a few years later for extensive base construction during World War II, was spectacular. I just don't see how you men did it.

CHAPTER 4
"THRILL TO THE WONDER OF IT ALL!"
"The heartiest congratulations of an air-minded sailor: I thrill to the wonder of it all!" — Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States, November 23, 1933.

The successful flight of the China Clipper from San Francisco to Manila, via the island bases, captured the imagination of Americans and people around the world. It was headline news comparable to the landing on the moon in 1969 and the space shuttle launch in 1981. Captain Macmillan became a national figure, although he did not reach even a "Without Incident" Leslie was content, at least, to remain behind the scenes. In the only photo of him with the flying boat on that business day you can see the edge of his signature on the log, just like the one worn by his father. Leslie was excited, going to his job interview with Justice Francis, "grinning broadly, before it occurred to me that I was a little late."



"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

Thousands of Californians were given time off to crowd the shoreline to watch and cheer the world's largest, longest-range aircraft undertake the momentous feat. In the depths of the Great Depression the flight became a ray of hope symbolizing that by hard work, daring and inspiration America could lift itself out of the economic morass. School children were let out of school and those still alive 75 years later remember the excitement.

In Manzanillo John's parents listened to the radio intently as the departure ceremonies were broadcast across the nation.

They went this cable to their son. One can only imagine the depth of their pride and wonder.



To commemorate the accomplishment they also sent him the gold watch engraved NOV. 22, 1935 In PACIFIC AIR MAIL MOTHER & DAD It still keeps good time.

John and John with Polly and John

The flight of America's most famous pilot after Charles Lindbergh was headline news throughout the nation and the world.



Clipping titled 'PILOT'S WIFE CALM Mrs. Musick 'Sure' He's Safe' from the San Francisco Bay community. It mentions Mrs. Musick's optimism and hope that her husband would return safely.



Bull runs up, the end result:

What we should really do is tell about the great things we did. It's not the thing we did, but the great things we did. It's not the thing we did, but the great things we did.

Indeed, they had accomplished their goal and Boeing produced 12 of these mighty aircraft. For American continued to improve its Pacific service, by across the Atlantic and play an important part in World War II with nine of these planes as the backbone of its fleet. The British, already at war, had a dire need for the range and cargo capacity of these flying boats. President Roosevelt directed that these be sold to them for their war effort.

Lester kept in his property a handsome example of the intensity of the effort to perfect the Boeing B-314. As engineers of the first company, Boeing in Seattle and San Francisco secured inter-company cooperation development which led Boeing to produce, longer in flight.

The fact: Gosney is very much perturbed at Pan American Personnel taking possession of their Gosney property without necessary authority.

Understood Junior Engineer Taylor has arranged to visit with him, on or about May 12, Miss FEA listed also is an outstanding asset in the Accounting Department. Also, we have learned indirectly that Junior Engineer Dorner is planning to appropriate, sometime in the near future, Miss Berial, known also a priceless asset in the Engineering Department.

Things of this nature cannot be tolerated without proper release by all parties concerned. To prevent future embarrassment it will be greatly appreciated if you will keep away from this assignment all eligible PAA bookshelves.



Lester and production flight crew member confer aboard a Boeing B-314.



Lester's kept pen for his technical services.

"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

Lieble liked to tell the story of the arrival at New Zealand. He described himself as "biting" on the spacious flight deck as they approached in challenging weather conditions.

He was appraising the north side of New Zealand, which is a strip of rather high hills, maybe 200 feet high, which form a barrier to a wide expanse of some 10 miles. Off the northern side were some rather high mountains called the Three Kings. The weather was extremely gray and murky with rain, and we were consequently flying over the ocean at about 500 to 1000 feet. Knowing these obstacles were somewhere ahead, but in the absence of radio navigation at that time, not being in sure of where they were, we were all in the cockpit peering forward through the windshield.

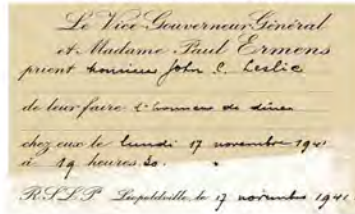
We were not in a dangerous condition, but were hoping to make our landing with a reasonable margin. All of a sudden I noticed through the windshield a long white cloud standing out against the gray, murky background, and as anyone would who knows about weather and terrain I said, "There's your land, boys!" and we made the cape pretty soon after that.

I was telling this story to the Mayor of Auckland, New Zealand at a reception a couple of nights later and he stopped me in the middle and said, "That was very long white cloud," Mr. Lieble said. "Yes, Sir, why?" He said, "That is the formal pronunciation of the Maori name for New Zealand, Aotearoa."

In other words, the Maori speaking comes down from the North from whence they emigrated landlubbers, not the same weather that we are coming in our flying machine. California Clipper and a British Short flying boat in Auckland Harbor, New Zealand.



Lieble was invited by the Lieutenant Governor of the Belgian Congo to dinner the same day his Clipper arrived there, November 17, 1941.



Airlines Division Manager Lieble, wearing a white suit and a white pilot's helmet, confers with Belgian military and government officials in Leopoldville.



AMERICA'S NEW LIFELINE TO AFRICA



Lieble described in his memoirs a crucial contribution made by Pan American personnel at a pertinent time in World War II.

Pan American Airways-Africa Limited, was being organized to build up the airway from West Africa to the Nile at Khartoum and down to Cairo, where the British forces were preparing in July 1942, to repel a major advance by Rommel's Afrika Korps. The British Eighth Army, commanded by Montgomery, found itself almost completely cut off from their bases. Seven planes loaded with 13 tons of tank shell were rushed to the front by P-44-Africa pilots to bring the desperate British artillery back into the game. The British victory in the Battle of El Alamein was a major turning point in the war. Thus the airlifts we built and our pilots played their part in the turning of "the hinge of fate," — as it was later described by Winston Churchill.

Both images on this page are from a Pan American poster illustrating the contribution to the war effort.

A Boeing B-24 flying boat is overhauled while Pan American Airways-Africa and British Royal Air Force mechanics work its powerful wings.



Aviation's Quiet Pioneer

8.5" x 11"

100 pages - full color

Easy to read 12 point type

Available in soft cover at [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) @ \$25.00 plus shipping

