

# TRANSOCEAN: AIR AND GROUND SPECIALISTS

By Howard Waldorf

The name "Transocean Air Lines" is not as well known to the general public as some of its competitors, but that condition will not last long. The most widely known airlines have been in business 15, 20 or 25 years, but Transocean is a post-war operation. In those few brief years, however, the pioneering spirit which established the line has done things by air that many thought impossible and made it a name in the industry. This is the story, in brief, of a fabulous operation which does business anywhere in the world where there is business to be had. It was prepared especially for the STAR by a member of the Transocean publicity staff, Howard Waldorf.

Right: Fifty million dollars worth of gold was transported by air by Transocean Air Lines from Tokyo to New York in lots of \$6,500,000. Gold originally belonged to Thailand and was seized by Japanese when they overran that country, is now credited to Royal Bank of Thailand.

ANT an airlift set up overnight to supply a large scale Arctic exploration project?

Want 50,000 pilgrims magic-carpeted across the burning sands to Mecca? Want \$50,000,000 in gold bullion spirited from Tokyo to New York?

Want an airplane fitted up for a flight to the South Pole?

Want an air force trained, a highway built, a restaurant operated, 25,000 war refugees flown across the oceans to new homes, or what have you?

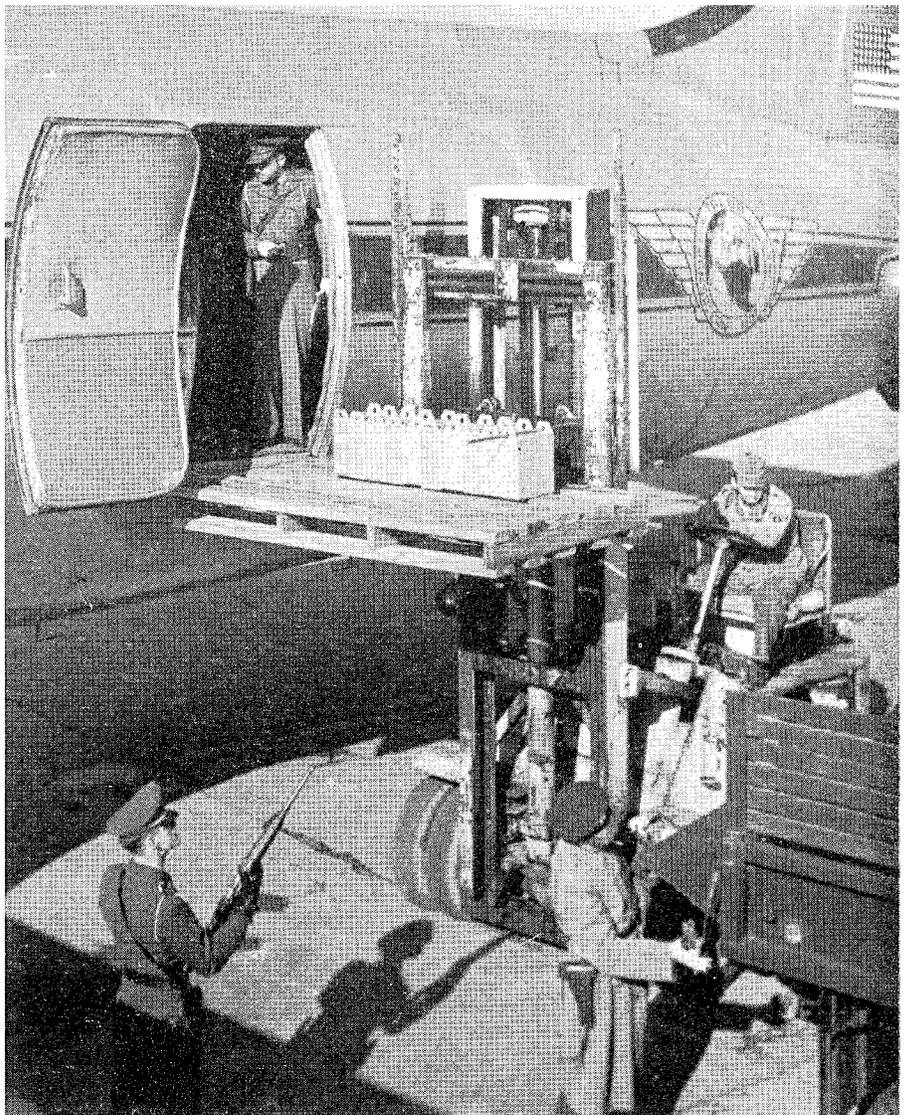
Call Transocean Air Lines, the air and ground specialists, and the job is done and done right.

That is the reputation which this enterprising post-war company has won by fulfilling these and hundreds of other unusual requests.

Headquartered at Oakland, California, but with offices and bases around the world, Transocean Air Lines has recently added a number of Martin 2-0-2s to its fleet of more than 100 aircraft.

An outstanding performance record logged in fulfilling challenging requests has skyrocketed the company to world leadership in the contract carriage field. Essentially a specialist in mass movements by air, the company has expanded in five years from a Hawaii-mainland shuttle for the military employing a comparative handful of veterans to a global organization with more than 30,000,000 plane miles (450,000,000 passenger miles) logged, 3,400 persons employed and a wide variety of air and ground activities grossing approximately \$2,500,000 a month.

Founder, president, chairman of the board and the man with the ideas and the inspirations is Minnesota-born Orvis M. Nelson, an army trained pilot, who for 12 years was a captain with United Air Lines. The company stemmed from a "hangar flying" session on Okinawa in



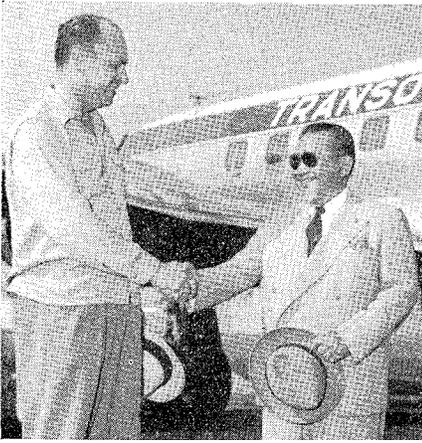
August, 1945, when Nelson and a group of airlift buddies, grounded by a typhoon, turned their thoughts on what to do when the war ended.

The first operation was launched March 8, 1946 when Nelson and his airline and war veterans friends started shuttle service between California and Hawaii. The service was for the Air Transport Command under a sub-contract from United Air Lines. The performance on this contract set the pattern for all future TAL operations. Virtually overnight Nelson and company mobilized 36 flight crews experienced in the then still new art of ocean flying and in the months that followed they flew 2,500,000 miles on the 2400-mile overwater run without incident or accident.

At the conclusion of the ATC contract, Transocean entered the commercial field with exploration flights to the Philippines, Singapore, Java, the Middle East and Europe. During this period, the company logged

the first commercial air/circumnavigation of the world when two TAL planes flying in opposite directions met in Rome. Nelson, who spends considerable of his time roving around the world in quest of new opportunities, was piloting one of the planes.

Next step in the upward climb was a contract to establish and operate a scheduled international service for Philippine Air Lines, extending from San Francisco through Manila to Madrid, Spain. Transocean performed this service for nearly two years, with Sam L. Wilson directing operations, and followed up this activity by lending its experience and key personnel to setting up long-distance operations for other foreign airlines. Word of TAL's know-how and can-do quickly got around and this, spurred by the company's quest for new business, started the torrent of unusual requests.



Orvis M. Nelson, president of Transocean (left) chats with Dr. A. Subardjo, foreign minister of Indonesia, during inspection of Indonesian cadets trained at Taloa Academy of Aeronautics, another Nelson enterprise.

An early one developed from a situation the Province of Ontario, Canada, ran into when it set out to bring in 7,500 British immigrants to solve a manpower problem. The project became stymied by the lack of steamer space and a news magazine ran a squib about it. A Transocean crewman, waiting between flights in Rome, read the squib, cabled Nelson. Twenty-four hours later a contract for Transocean to move the 7,500 by air was in the making. The mass movement across the North Atlantic was performed with efficiency and dispatch and led to a contract with the International Refugee Organization of the United Nations to transport 25,000 European war refugees to new homes throughout the free world.

The war-ravaged Philippines wanted to replenish its poultry stock in a hurry and economically. Transocean Air Lines flew in plane loads of 100,000 baby chicks each from California and set a record low for travel losses. One plane brought back a load of monkeys for scientific research.

Nelson and his alert sales aides traveled far and wide in developing new business and matching back hauls, the secret of the company's profitable operation without benefit of government subsidy. It took two years to convince construction companies that air transportation was the cheapest way to move workers from the mainland to Pacific defense projects. TAL proved the advantages of the operation by the airlifting of 20,000 workers at a saving of thousands of dollars to the taxpayers, and untold thousands of man-hours.

Mass movement of war brides on return visits to their homelands was another TAL-pioneered air operation. A round-the-world flight as part of the

higher education of Youth Argosy students was another.

Transocean Air Lines moved into the sub-zero Arctic wastes north of the Brooks range when the U. S. Navy called for bids on an airlift to supply its oil exploration parties in Petroleum Reserve Number 4, where the ice is 1,000 feet thick. This operation, consisting of linehaul and bush flying in the face of the treacherous Arctic weather, recently passed the 2,000,000 mile mark and Transocean's contract was extended to Dec. 31, 1951.

Another unusual TAL contract operation covers more than 3,000,000 square miles of the Pacific with a scheduled service for the Department of Interior, linking the district centers of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Employing a fleet of amphibian planes and centering at Guam, the service speeds supplies and emergency needs to such colorful tropical spots as Yap, Truk, Ponape, Koror, Majuro, Saipan and Kwajalein.

The request to move the fortune in gold bullion came from the Bank of Thailand. The treasure was moved swiftly over secret routes and saved the shipper a large sum in insurance premiums.

Transocean's experience in mass movements of persons and property played a vital role in the Berlin airlift and is contributing importantly to the Korea airlift, in which it is participating as one of the major civilian contract carriers.

Operating under the authority of the Civil Aeronautics Board as a large irregular carrier, Transocean Air Lines recently extended its airlift to the U. S. domestic scene with flights between major cities and military bases.

The rise of Transocean's subsidiaries has been almost as colorful as that of the parent company. Aircraft Engineering and Maintenance Company, located at Oakland Airport, was one of three civilian concerns selected to render direct overhaul support to the Berlin airlift and is presently engaged in similar work for the Korea airlift and



Chef Paul Norvel was grand prize winner for International Grill at Oakland (also a Nelson enterprise) at recent caterer's art exhibit.

other Military Air Transport Services activities.

Taloa Academy of Aeronautics is one of the largest flight and ground schools in the United States and recently completed the training of key officers for the Indonesian Air Force. This unit also trains stewardesses and other passenger service aides for airlines.

Early in its career, Transocean took on a contract to manage and conduct the testing at the government-industry Landing Aides Experiment Station at Arcata, California. With the experienced personnel of this operation Transocean Engineering Company was formed. This unit is completing its second highway construction contract and is prepared to perform air base construction work.

Transocean also operates the big International restaurant at Oakland Airport, a hotel, restaurant and terminal on Wake Island in Mid-Pacific, a printing company, a chemical sales and distribution concern, a heavy aircraft engine overhaul company, and recently embarked in the export and import field. Transocean Trading Company, the newest activity, has offices in London, Paris, Geneva, Tokyo, Indonesia, San Francisco, New York and other world trade centers.

Transocean's highly flexible operations extending from the Arctic Circle to the jungles of Africa and to the far corners of

the free world, and the varied activities of its subsidiaries call for split-second planning and decisions. Assisting President Nelson in this vital phase are: Col. Ray T. Elsmore,

executive vice president; S.L. Wilson, executive vice president-operations; Douglass F. Johnson, vice president-sales of Transocean and

executive vice president of Aircraft Engineering and Maintenance Company; Sherwood A. Nichols, secretary and director of Transocean; H.B. Obermiller, treasurer of Transocean and director of the trading operation, and Richard Pettit, director of law. At the home office or winging to some distant project they maintain contact with President Nelson to insure the maintenance of a smooth-running operation and progress on all fronts.

Major policies are established by a board of directors composed of airline pilots with an aggregate of more than 90,000 flying hours.



*Troops boarding a Transocean plane, at Travis Air Force Base en route to Korea. TOA is flying better than one flight a day in support of the Korean air lift.*