



Orvis Nelson often takes his wife and kids along on inspection and sales trips, which may last for weeks and crisscross the earth. Even the Raggedy Ann he carries has been around the world. **JOHN GUTMANN**

# The Daring Young Men of Transocean

By **RICHARD THRUENSEN**

A Transocean pilot may find that his tribesmen passengers have built a fire on the plane floor, or that his ship is being tilted by up-and-down Moslem prayers. But so far the fly-anywhere boys have logged over half a billion passenger miles, with only three bad crashes.

## CONCLUSION

One of the accepted principles in running a contract air service on a global basis is that it's necessary to

know where your next flying job is coming from if you want to sleep nights and eat regularly. When Orvis Nelson and his Transocean

Air Lines lost the profitable Air Transport Command contract for a twice-daily run between Oakland and Honolulu, in December, 1946, the skeptics said that the Nelson luck was beginning to run out. Nelson now thinks it was the best thing that could have happened to his young air line.

"We'd had all the breaks, up till then. Now we had to tighten our belts and really find out if we had the stuff to survive. By that time we owned four airplanes. And we still had the Philippine Air Lines contract-to pioneer their international routes and to set up their domestic service and train their native crews. That winter we traded two of our aircraft to PAL for a stock interest in the company." With the air-transport business mighty tough all over (even the big, scheduled air lines were beginning to feel the postwar travel slump and the bite of overexpansion) Nelson was eager to look for new worlds to conquer in the early spring of 1947. PAL, with the help of the Philippine Government, had arranged for survey flights to Indonesia. The prospect of tapping that rich, if politically confused, area was an inviting one for the hard-pressed Transocean PAL combination. Nelson, who had been busy re-opening the route between Manila, Hong Kong and Shanghai for PAL, piloted a small group of Filipino government and air-line officials on the survey flight. It turned out to be a journey of frustration.

"We made a night flight to Bangkok, in Thailand, on our first hop. The next day we went on to Singapore. There we learned we wouldn't be able to stay overnight at Batavia, in Java, because of the fighting between the Dutch and the Indonesians.

"In Batavia, the Dutch officials made us somewhat less than welcome. The city was under siege by the Indonesians and you could see the gunfire around the perimeter as we went in to land. The Dutch military commander of the airport didn't want us in there. He finally agreed to give me

enough gas to get back to Singapore. We started to gas up the plane, and the gas truck broke down. So they got a second truck. Meanwhile, it was getting dark and the Dutch commander was jumping up and down. Then the second truck broke down, with only half the job done. There were no more trucks, so I had to take the DC-Four off with full tanks on one side and empty tanks in the other wing. The first time I've ever done that. That lopsided loading tended to pull the plane to one side-and I kept the nose down and the control wheel over in one corner and built up some speed and finally got off the ground.

"We got back to Singapore in the middle of the night, and after a meal, went on to Bangkok and then to Saigon, in Indo-China, where the native communists and the French were fighting."

### **25,000 DP's Become 25,000 South Americans**

"The airport and the town of Saigon were surrounded by the rebels, but I managed to get in and land. In Saigon I picked up enough passengers to fill the ship. I figured I might as well make what I could out of that one trip. We sat around there half a day listening to the distant gunfire, and then took off and got back to Manila about four in the morning. It was a very rough deal all the way around and we decided that it was no use trying to do business west of the Philippines until Indonesia and the Malay states settled down politically."

By the time Transocean's contract with the Philippine Air Lines expired, Nelson had some business to replace it. Setting up an office in Geneva, his representatives had been successful in obtaining a contract from the International Refugee Organization to transport 25,000 displaced persons and refugees from Europe to South America as part of a vast resettlement project.

"Once we were through with the Philippine Air Lines, we were able

to put seven airplanes on this refugee job. The refugees were Germans, Poles, Lithuanians and, during the latter part of the movement, a great many Italians. Most of these people settled in Venezuela, though we did take some loads to Brazil and Chile."

The chain reaction which seems to relate one international job to another occurred again during the summer that found Transocean embarking on the transatlantic refugee lift, when Nelson won a contract to ferry **150 C-46** cargo planes, purchased by the Chinese Nationalist Air Forces from United States war surplus, across the Pacific.

Most military pilots, who flew the C-46 Commandos during the war, placed heavy odds against the success of the ferry operation. The twin-engine **C-46**, they pointed out, simply wasn't designed to make the long overwater hops lying between the American mainland and Shanghai, where the planes were to be turned over to Chiang Kai-shek's forces. The consensus was that the Transocean crews would lose at least ten of the airplanes at sea.

This is the sort of challenge that Nelson enjoys. Equipping the **C-46's** with special cabin tanks to extend the range from **1500** to 2400 miles, he sent out the planes in groups of five and flew them to Shanghai by way of Honolulu, Wake Island and Guam. Each group of twin-engine aircraft was accompanied by a four-engine mother plane which nursed the Commandos across the Pacific and then returned the ferry crews to Oakland. The operation, involving more than 1,500,000 miles of overwater flying, was completed on schedule without the loss of a plane.

Transocean's job on the ferry lift to Shanghai, its flight into Hong Kong for the Philippine Air Lines and its transatlantic refugee airlift all combined to make it a logical candidate for a rescue mission when the IRO discovered that there were some 5000 stateless White Russians stranded in Shanghai in

the path of the communist armies. Nelson's staff was just cleaning up the last details of the Commando ferry job when Transocean received a frantic request from the IRO to send a fleet of airplanes to Shanghai immediately to evacuate the White Russians before the communists reached the city and gobbled them up. Nelson was also asked to find a haven for the *évacués*.

"I assigned five planes to the rescue project and several of the big air lines promised me more equipment if and when we could use it. When the Philippine Government heard about the rescue mission, they offered the IRO the use of a former Navy Camp on Samar as a temporary haven for the *évacués*. By this time the first two planes had reached Okinawa, where they waited for landing privileges in Shanghai. And then the trouble started.

"Though Transocean was, in effect, acting as an IRO agency for the rescue flights, Nelson found that someone in the Chinese Nationalist Government was holding up the landing privileges for the planes. When this situation was finally resolved and the Shanghai landings cleared, the uplift rights (permission to rescue the Russians) were denied to Transocean. Meanwhile, the Nationalist Government was falling to pieces and the Reds were at the Yangtze, poised to strike at Shanghai. Nelson now discovered that the Chinese National Airways had persuaded the Chinese authorities to deny Transocean the uplift rights.

"CNAC couldn't do the job without canceling its own scheduled flights and there were no other local carriers with the equipment to make the rescue trips. . . . It was simply a case of throttling any possible competition. With five thousand lives at stake, it was a nasty situation. The newspapers out there finally blew the lid off the story, and, after three weeks of arguing, we worked out an arrangement which let us fly the

rescue flights from Shanghai to Manila on a trip-for-trip basis with CNAC. In that way we finally got the show going. When we moved out the last load of Russians the commies were only ten miles from Shanghai."

The ability to do business profitably with the inscrutable East is now a necessity for any company with worldwide operations. Nelson's introduction to the commercial practices of the Orient occurred during Transocean's Philippine Air Lines contract, when he went to Pakistan and sold Orient Airways five of PAL'S surplus aircraft.

"The following spring I went back to Karachi and spent a month working on Pakair, Pakistan's international airline project. I wanted to sell Pakair some of Transocean's DC-Fours and I wanted to get a contract with them to set up their air line—just as we had with the Philippine outfit."

Nelson did sell Pakair two of the big DC-4's and three twin-engine DC's—a \$500,000 transaction. The Pakistani decided, however, that they could run their own air line with the help of a few big-ship pilots to be borrowed from Transocean. This proved to be wishful thinking, and after a bad crash (caused by poor maintenance and lack of spare parts) had grounded all the company's planes, Transocean was called in to run the operation.

"I put Dan McCarthy, one of our original Air Force boys, out there to run the show. There was a good deal of pressure on McCarthy to have the native pilots take over as captains on all the runs—our American pilots were serving as captains on most of the planes—and so Dan agreed to check out some of the native copilots. The first five pilots Dan checked, he fired. He said they wouldn't even be safe as copilots. Then all hell broke loose. There was a cousin of so-and-so here and a nephew of somebody there. As a result of all the pressure, the Pakair executives had to put the native fliers on as captains on the DC-Three runs

and McCarthy canceled Transocean's management contract on the spot. He did agree to stay for thirty days, without responsibility for the operation, so that Pakair could arrange to take over on its own.

"Ten days later they woke Dan up about midnight and told him that the flight from Calcutta was two hours overdue. Dan went out to the field and got into one of the DC-Fours, climbed up through the overcast and started for Calcutta, back-tracking the course he knew the DC-Three would have taken. About a hundred miles out he saw the glow of a fire through the overcast. It was the DC-Three with a full load of passengers, flown by two of the pilots Dan had tried to fire. It was burning on a mountaintop. Apparently the pilots had neglected to use their radio aids, had misjudged the headwind and had let down on an estimated time of arrival over Karachi a little too soon. It looked like a case of bad judgment."

That was the end of Pakair—a promising air line that didn't make use of its hired know-how. Nelson later bought back his two DC-Fours for \$200,000 apiece—precisely the amount Pakair had paid for them. By the time the transaction was completed and the Pakistan Government had granted export licenses for the aircraft, the Korean war had increased the market value of the planes to half a million apiece.

This happy faculty of picking up bargains at the right time, on confidence, foresight and monthly payments, signalized Transocean's acquisition of its plushiest subsidiary, the Aircraft Engineering & Maintenance Company, of Oakland—now one of the world's largest aircraft-overhaul bases. During 1947, when he initiated the Pakistan deal, Nelson had made four trips to the Orient, four to Europe and two around the world. This traveling convinced him that war, hot or cold or both, was just around the corner. A maintenance organization—to overhaul both air-

line and military planes—looked like a good proposition.

"We went to work on the Matson Navigation Company, with whom we had had our earlier maintenance agreement. Matson had started an air line after the war and had subsequently been forced to relinquish the operation. Before the sales agreement with Matson had been signed, President Truman made a speech saying that the United States must rearm and contain communism. Matson's phone started ringing that very day, with the military wanting to know if Matson could handle a large overhaul contract at their base but they lived up to their oral agreement with us and we took over the base and were awarded the contract by the Air Force. We bought that plant for nothing down and three years to pay—so, for us, it was a good deal."

Returning from his second trip to Pakistan, in May, 1948, Nelson learned that his company was having difficulty in financing the military contract.

"An unsuccessful bidder on the Air Force contract had raised a fuss about our being a little outfit with no background. Washington finally decided we had to show seventy-five thousand dollars in the bank as working capital to finance the contract. We'd just been through a tough winter, and Ray Elsmore, who was heading up the overhaul operation, was having difficulty finding the money. The only group of investors who were willing to put up the money wanted half the company—not just the overhaul base, but half of Transocean. We had only one day left till our deadline by the time I got back home, and the situation looked almost hopeless.

"The more I thought about that business of giving half the company away the madder I got, so finally I got together all of our flight crews I could find in town and went down to the overhaul base and called everybody together. There were several hundred of them—mostly mechanics. I explained the

situation and told them we were willing to give them half the profit on that particular contract for the first nine months in return for the lending of that money. The next day I had the seventy-five thousand in the bank and kept the contract. And the boys made a good profit on their money. It was a very heart-warming thing."

Transocean's faith in its overhaul project has paid out handsomely. The AEMCO subsidiary now employs 1500 workers on a two-shift, six-day-a-week basis. During its first military contract the base completely reconditioned several hundred Air Force DC-4's, which had been in storage since the end of the war. Many of these transports were used in the Berlin airlift. AEMCO is now doing overhaul work for half a dozen air lines and for military aircraft used on the transpacific airlift to Korea, in Europe, Alaska and various other theaters of operation.

During its brief administration of Pakair, Transocean made a handsome profit for the Pakistani company by running charter trips with Moslem pilgrims from Karachi to Mecca. Nelson had this regular, annual source of income in mind when, in 1949, he set up a division known as Air Djibouti, based in Eritrea, across the Red Sea from Arabia. From its base on the East African coast Air Djibouti spreads its routes fingerwise over most of Arabia and into Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Jordan, Syria and Israel. An aerial produce run operated by Air Djibouti between Asmara, in Eritrea, and the oil-drilling center of Dhahran, on the Persian Gulf, supplies the Arabian-American Oil Company bases with perishables that cannot be grown in the desert country, and a weekly trip from Africa carries fresh fruits and meats to Riyadh, in the middle of Arabia, for the royal family of Ibn Saud. Transocean runs a self-contained operation on this vittles lift. Air Djibouti agents buy the produce, ship it to the desert countries in Air Djibouti planes and there sell it to local merchants

or the oil-company commissaries. Nelson is proud of this combination of trading and transport.

"We faced a lot of difficulties when we first established ourselves out there. In flying a load of fresh meat, for example—we'd have to start the men butchering around ten o'clock at night, and then we'd load the still-smoking meat on the plane about four o'clock in the morning and fly it over to Arabia and land in those hot temperatures, where it often reaches a hundred and twenty degrees during the day. The meat all had to be sold during that day or it would be a total loss to us or to the merchant. Now we've persuaded the merchants to put in cold-storage facilities to handle both our produce and the stuff they import from the States."

The annual Hadj movement—the pilgrimage of Moslems to Mecca—provides Transocean and its Air Djibouti subsidiary with a rush season that lasts approximately three months. Extra equipment is flown in and, together with other air carriers operating in that part of the world, Transocean picks up the pilgrims in Indonesia, Pakistan, Africa and various parts of the Middle East, and transports them to Jidda, a Red Sea port about fifty miles from Mecca.

Last year Transocean employed seven airplanes on the Hadj movement. One of the aircraft lifted several loads of pilgrims from faraway Kabul, in Afghanistan—the never-never land lying in the mountains between Pakistan and the Soviet Union. The Kabul section of last year's Mecca pilgrimage confronted Transocean with what has now become a common problem—the conversion of foreign currencies. Nelson, through Transocean's Taloa Trading Company, has found an ingenious answer to the difficulty.

"One of our biggest headaches in operating all over the world is this foreign-exchange problem. We decided that the best way to handle it was to get into the foreign-trade business and buy and sell different commodities. In

the Afghan contract, for instance, we were paid for our services in Afghani, which we changed into Arabian riyals. We took these riyals and bought fish meal in the Red Sea area and shipped the meal to New York by boat. In this country we sell the fish meal for dollars. When we deal in less bulky commodities—at one time—we bought a lot of teakwood chests in China, for instance, we can use the goods as backhaul cargo to fill up empty space in our planes."

Nelson took a personal part in last year's Hadj movement and enjoyed the experience of helping to transport the family and entourage of King Ibn Saud from the capital at Riyadh to Taif (which is near the holy city) at the time of the pilgrimage.

Nelson was touring the Air Djibouti operation in a big Martin 202 twin engine transport for which he had the Middle Eastern sales agency when King Ibn Saud decided to move the royal household from Riyadh to Taif for the pilgrimage. The Arabian Government has three DC-3's which are considered royal airplanes and nine more of the same type of aircraft, plus half a dozen British-built freighters, which operate as an air line from Jidda to Cairo and Beirut. These planes were assembled and Air Djibouti's aircraft were brought down from Asmara for the move. Nelson and his big 202 provided an added starter.

"There were twenty-three airplanes assembled to move the two thousand members of the royal family and the king's staff, including some two score of Ibn Saud's sons. It took us five days and nights of flying between Riyadh and Taif—a distance of about five hundred miles—to complete the movement.

"The king wanted to arrive at Taif just after dawn, before the heat of the day made flying rough, and so, the night before, all the planes were lined up and gassed and inspected and then put under armed guard. I was to fly my Martin out as No. Two in the pro-

cession, following the king in his royal DC-Three, and so we were out there at the airport, which is about three miles from the palace, at two in the morning.

"It was quite a sight for American eyes. The first thing that showed up was a British-trained regiment of Arab troops, carrying fixed bayonets and wearing their turbanlike kaffiyeh. They lined up along the road leading toward the palace, did a sort of manual at arms, and then stood at ease until a muezzin started calling prayers, when the soldiers did a right about face and knelt and went through their prayers. Then a couple of truckloads of troops heralded the arrival of the king, who drove up to the plane ramp in a big limousine with white-garbed slave bodyguards on the running boards.

"The king is a big man—well over six feet and weighing a good two hundred and fifty pounds—but he's rather badly crippled with arthritis. After he and his elder sons and some cabinet ministers boarded the royal plane, we loaded twenty-six more of his sons and their staffs into the Martin and followed the king's DC-Three out of the field. Being a lot faster than the DC-Three, I had to throttle back so that we wouldn't arrive at Taif ahead of the king. We landed right in back of the royal plane and I took a lot of pictures of the reception, which included another limousine and Arabia's only military band. After that we went back to Riyadh and started shuttling the wives and children and their attendants to Taif."

Transocean executives figure that their planes have flown well over half a billion passenger miles during the company's six-year history. The fact that most of these passenger miles were flown as a contract service (rather than common-carrier operation) has resulted in some unusual human cargoes. One Transocean plane, for instance, flew three quarters of the way around the world with a load of forty-five deportees being returned to their native countries by the United States Immigration

Service. Most of the aliens-seamen who jumped ship in American ports were off-loaded at various way stations between Pakistan and Indonesia. The aerial bum's rush was accomplished in five days, when the last unwelcome guest was deposited in Batavia.

The Department of the Interior, which administers the Pacific Trust Territory under a United Nations trusteeship, currently employs Transocean to run a passenger, mail and freight air service linking Guam, Saipan, Yap, Koror, Truk, Ponape, Majuro and Kwajalein—the Micronesian islands scattered like pepper grains over the Western Pacific.

In its wide-ranging flying activities, Transocean has occasionally found itself in conflict with the American scheduled carriers which fly the foreign air lanes. One of these squabbles, plus a happy piece of opportunism, eventually resulted in establishing Transocean in both the hotel and the heavy-construction fields. The scene of this odd development was Wake Island, midway between Hawaii and the Philippines.

When Pan American World Airways reactivated its Wake Island base shortly after the end of the war, Transocean found that it would have to pay a substantial landing fee for the use of Pan Am's facilities on the Government controlled island. At the time, Transocean was using Wake as a steppingstone for its operation between the West Coast and Manila for the Philippine Air Lines. After a good deal of bickering and bargaining had resulted in no satisfactory adjustment, Nelson went to the Government's Air Coordinating Committee and obtained permission to set up his own facilities on the island, sharing the use of the runway with Pan Am.

"We went out to Wake to look over the facilities there, and found an old Seabee camp on the opposite end of the island from Pan Am's base. There was a Quonset hotel, a mess hall, a water tower, some generators and a

freshwater still the Japs had built during their wartime occupation of the island. We added a lot of our own equipment to this layout and gradually built up the camp until we now have a three-hundred-bed hotel, a restaurant and quarters for the hundred and fifty people we have out there as our station personnel. When the trouble started in Korea and the Pacific airlift was established, all this came in very handy. Pan Am and Transocean, between them, now service all the civilian and military flights crossing the Pacific. On an ordinarily busy day we handle a plane every forty-five minutes. Transocean itself, which is averaging forty trips a month in the airlift, makes two or three landings a day on the island."

During his frequent trips through Wake, Nelson had inspected the heavy construction equipment brought in by the Seabees and abandoned at the end of the war. There were cranes, trucks, tractors, pile drivers and rock crushers—some \$750,000 worth of the equipment used for highway and airport construction. Tracing the ownership, Nelson found that the machinery had been given to the Chinese Nationalists—as had thousands of tons of similar equipment on other South Pacific islands. Nelson was able to buy the machinery on Wake from the Chinese for about 10 per cent of its original cost.

"We paid about seventy-five thousand dollars, on an installment basis. We knew there would be a construction contract let on Wake Island and we thought that, with the equipment on hand and some engineering people we had on our staff, we'd be in a good position to get the contract for rebuilding the island's airfield. We missed out on the contract, but we did make a deal with the company that got the job—we traded them some bulldozers and rock crushers and other equipment, and they, in payment, brought a thousand tons of our equipment back to the States. Later we rented a Navy barge that was deadheading back

and brought in another thousand tons. We sold about half the machinery and used the money from the sale to recondition the other half. So our difficulties at Wake ended quite happily."

The Transocean Engineering Corporation, which started life with the windfall of equipment found on Wake, was a typical example of the Nelson technique in adventuring in new fields. In running the multi-million-dollar Arcata Landing Aids Experimental Station (a joint venture sponsored by the armed services, the air lines, the CAA and the Airline Pilots Association) for three years, Transocean had acquired the nucleus of an engineering and construction staff. Nelson incorporated this staff in the construction organization, placed an experienced contractor at the head of the new venture and had the company make practice bids on several dozen small construction projects.

"We bid these jobs, all under a hundred thousand dollars, just to be sure that we had mastered the bidding pattern. Didn't get any of them, though we were second or third a number of times. In each case, we'd watch the successful contractor to see how he came out on the job. After we were sure we knew what we were doing, we went out and bid for keeps and got a couple of fair-sized bridge jobs—about eighty thousand dollars apiece. Then, last year, we successfully bid in a seven-hundred-thousand-dollar road job up in the high Sierra between Sequoia and Yosemite Parks. Transocean Engineering is now angling for other big jobs at home and negotiating for some airport construction in Indonesia."

Though Nelson is quick to point out that accidents can happen on the best run air lines, he is proud of Transocean's safety record. In flying more than 38,000,000 plane miles in six years, Transocean has suffered three crashes involving passenger fatalities. In one unexplained crash of a military charter flight in New Mexico, one

soldier passenger was killed. Another crash occurred when a DC-4 carrying D.P.'s from Rome overflowed its scheduled stop at Shannon, Ireland, and was forced to land in the ocean when it ran out of fuel. Seven passengers and a crew member were lost through exposure, but the fifty other occupants of the plane were saved. The third crash recently occurred in Japan when a Transocean-operated Japanese air liner hit a mountain peak in bad weather. Three Americans and thirty-four Japanese were killed.

One of the conspicuous ironies of our Government-controlled economy is that Transocean, an air line currently flying more than 700,000 miles a month for a Federal department, the Army, the Navy, various international service organizations and scores of commercial customers, someday may find itself grounded in this country by bureaucratic decision.

In its essence, this situation arises from the fact that our Federal laws lump American-flag air lines into two groups—the irregular carriers and the regular scheduled air lines. The scheduled lines (there are fifty) are given routes and mail subsidies and are allowed to operate as common carriers.

The sixty-odd irregular lines are given no routes and no mail contracts, and are not, except under certain restrictive exemptions, allowed to act as regular common carriers. (The regular air lines point out, correctly, that although Transocean has no mail contract, it does get a fat slice of Government business.) Though there is nothing fundamentally objectionable in separating the sheep from the goats in a public-transportation system, the irregular operators complain that this regulatory pattern tends to stratify the whole industry and someday might eliminate the sort of free-wheeling competition that has made America an industrial pioneer in so many fields. Nelson, whose Transocean line does more

air business than three of the smaller, scheduled air lines combined, would simply like to know that he someday has the chance of being a live sheep, rather than a dead goat.

Another difficulty inherent in this system is that neither Congress nor the Civil Aeronautics Board, created by Congress to control United States domestic and civil aviation, has ever decided where the rights and privileges and responsibilities of the irregular air lines begin and where they end. Each controversy, each application for operational privileges, is adjudicated by the board on what seem to be the topical merits of the case. This sort of day-to-day regulation makes it difficult for the irregular air lines to plan their business from one year to the next.

The future, and possibly the very existence, of the irregular air lines (a label Nelson deplors, preferring "nonscheduled" or "contract" airline) may well be decided in an omnibus hearing now beginning before a CAB examiner. At this hearing many of the controversial issues regarding the rights and responsibilities of the nonscheduled lines will be aired.

The hearings, which will continue for some months, may result in a series of rulings which will not only keep the nonscheduled lines in business but will also clearly define their place in our transportation system. If, on the other hand, Transocean and its companion lines in the nonscheduled branch of the air-transport industry are either liquidated or allowed to die on the vine for lack of clear-cut CAB decisions prescribing their rights as contract carriers, there will be a number of mourners at the obsequies. No one has yet asked the military what they will do when they want a few extra transport planes in a hurry or an auxiliary fleet to help man an airlift. Most of the contract work between this country and abroad might well go to foreign-flag air lines, who would fatten on American business. In order to

take care of its international commitments abroad, such as its Middle Eastern air services, Transocean itself would probably have to take refuge under a foreign flag—thus depriving our Treasury of a fat slice of taxes.

More important than the economics involved or the fate of any individual company, however, is the fact that the liquidation by law of the international contract air carriers would be a blow at one of the most colorful examples of free enterprise ever to brighten the global scene. Not since the days of the strong-armed clipper captains have individual Americans roamed the world in search of cargoes for their ships, with payment in trade or gold or dollars or what-have-you. Nor have there been many more exciting examples of ingenious fortune hunting than the exploits to be found in the logs of Nelson and his free-flying competitors.

When Orvis Nelson and his fellow pilots of the United Air Lines MATS service sat down on Okinawa in 1945 to dream up an independent air line, the group pinned their hopes for such a project on the chance of forming an air line to serve defeated Japan. This plan died a-borning when General MacArthur vetoed the suggestion on policy grounds, and the fuse that Nelson had lighted had almost sputtered out when a chance conversation launched the Orvis Nelson Air Transport with borrowed planes—and on what later proved to be borrowed time. During the intervening years, while Transocean's flying operations were spanning the world and its commercial activities flourishing like the green bay tree, Nelson somehow kept his eye on that first, lost opportunity.

Last October the wheel of fortune completed its inevitable cycle and after a typically complicated piece of negotiation Transocean crews and planes established an interisland air service in Japan. Nelson can't pronounce the Japanese name of his Nipponese air line, but he does know that it is

operating at 80 per cent load capacity. And that's enough for Orvis Nelson. A man hates to fail on his first independent venture.

**Editors' Note—This is the last of three articles by Mr. Thruelsen.**