

COPY

February 19, 1943

AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC.

Director's Booklet

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Star-Gazer...with Wings on the Brain

(Portrait Photo)

RALPH S. DAMON

These days, Ralph S. Damon and his telescope (astronomy is his hobby) rarely get together. For what with pushing production of war planes in his capacity as president of the Republic Aviation Corp. - this A. A. vice-president, on leave for the duration, sees few stars outside of the blue and white ones painted on his P-47's by the Army Air Corps.

But his predilection for fixing his gaze on distant places - while keeping his feet on the ground - is still characteristic of this 45-year old aviation pioneer from the green hills of New Hampshire. Sometimes, in fact, he looks too far ahead, as witness his goals upon entering Harvard: Phi Beta Kappa, editing the Harvard "Crimson", and stroking the varsity crew - not a one of which he made. But he graduated summa cum laude, and established a personal rule that might be paraphrased as "one star at a time".

Only other time Mr. Damon didn't quite get what he was aiming for, was when he enlisted in the Air Corps to fly and fight for Uncle Sam in World War I. Commissioned he was and fly he did - but the most exciting part, he says, was winging the Army mail from one air field to another, eight miles away. (Good experience, though, for later work with air mail.)

After he left the Army he answered a want ad for a millwright's assistant in an aircraft plant - got the job and a broom to go with it (for sweeping the factory floor) - but in two years found himself assistant superintendent.

In 1922 he married, joined the Curtiss organization on Long Island as mathematician...and in two years did enough tall figuring to become, at 25, superintendent of the plant with its 800 employees. Thereafter, Mr. Damon rose almost as rapidly as his new fighter planes. He became factory manager in their St. Louis plant - then assistant to the vice-president in charge of production in 1928 - then vice-president in charge of the St. Louis plant which was engaged in volume production of commercial aircraft. In 1932 he became president, and a year later the organization became the Curtiss-Wright Airplane Company.

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That was when Mr. Damon developed the first all-sleeper plane in the world - The Condor, which was subsequently placed on American Airlines to become the forerunner of our peacetime Flagship Skysleepers. Before actually manufacturing them, Mr. Damon had Mrs. Damon and himself, and sundry weekend guests, spend several nights at the factory, trying out the berths of his model sleeper plane.

After this, Ralph Damon was made president of a Curtiss company which specialized in military aircraft - and built up still more experience for his present job of turning out war planes for America. But commercial aviation seemed to have the greatest appeal for him - and in January 1936, Ralph S. Damon was appointed vice president in charge of operations of American Airlines...and he played no small part in helping American expand, until it operated the largest fleet of commercial aircraft in the country.

If you met him then, you must remember him now. The steady voice and eyes and personality, brightened by a good sound smile. The passion for perfection - as shown in his efforts to make commercial aviation safer than ever - tempered by his ability to listen to and learn from others.

But came the war - came our increased military production program - and Uncle Sam and Republic Aviation needed Ralph S. Damon. So he's on leave of absence - still keeping as close as he can to wings, still thinking about, if not viewing, his stars. He can't ride his astronomical hobby too often now - but he can console himself with this thought: "Ad astra per aspera" - which means, "to the stars through hard work".

Ralph Shepard Damon

Aviation official. Born Franklin, New Hampshire, July 6, 1897. A.B. cum laude, Harvard, 1918.

Began as milwright assistant G. Elias & Co., Buffalo, N. Y. 1920. Served in various capacities with Curtiss Aeroplane & Motor Co., 1921-22, Factory supt. 1922-28, President 1934, 35., Vice President and factory manager Curtiss-Robertson Airplane Mfg., Co., Robertson, Mo., 1928-30; Assistant to Executive Vice President Curtiss-Wright Corp., New York 1930-31; Vice President and General Manager Curtiss-Wright Airplane Co., Robertson, Mo., 1931, President 1932-35; Vice President and factory manager Keystone Aircraft Corp., Bristol, Pa., 1931-32; in 1933 developed Curtiss-Wright "Condor" commercial transport; Republic Aviation Corp., 1941-43; Vice President in charge of Operations, American Airlines, Inc., 1936-41; Vice President & General Manager since 1943.; President since June 12, 1945.

Served as flying cadet, Air Corps, U.S.A. 1918-1919, reserve officer same.

Member St. Louis Municipal Airport Commission, 1934., Member Institute of Aeronautical Sciences, Society of Automotive Engineers,

Member of Alpha Sigma Phi. Mason.
Member of Harvard Club, New York.

Home: Garden City, New York.

Office: New York Municipal Airport, N. Y.

James Bruce

James Bruce was born in Baltimore, Maryland, a couple of days before Christmas in 1892 and with a silver spoon in his mouth. It hasn't tarnished yet and little wonder for Mr. Bruce has lived what most of us would call a charmed life ever since.

Following his graduation from Princeton in 1914, where he was editor-in-chief of the daily paper, he attended law school at the University of Maryland. And when his uncle was appointed ambassador to Italy in 1916, young Bruce, fresh from law school, went with him as his secretary.

Then the United States joined the Allies in 1917 and Jim Bruce joined the army as a private. When peace came he had the rank of major in the Field Artillery. He was put on the staff of the Army of Occupation at Coblenz. In December 1918 he was ordered to the Peace Conference at Versailles, and appointed aide-de-campe to President Wilson on his trip to Italy.

The Balkans were at that time in their usual state of turmoil, and President Wilson needed an observer there. So Jim Bruce was given the title of Asst. Military Attache to Italy and in that capacity went to Montenegro to observe the fireworks. There were plenty, and Mr. Bruce says he spent most of his time escaping would-be assassins. His good-luck charms did not desert him, however, and he returned to the United States in the spring of 1919 to report to the President.

Then he began a career in banking. His experience abroad and his legal training stood him in good stead. He was successively vice president of the Atlantic Exchange Bank, the International Acceptance Bank, and the Chase National Bank of New York. In 1931, he returned to Baltimore to reorganize the Baltimore Trust Co., and did such a fine job that he was asked to serve as financial adviser to the Board of Directors of the Home Owners Loan Corp. in Washington. He went there for two months and stayed a year and a half.

Mr. Bruce states he is completely ruled by his wife, his secretary and the manager of his farm in South Carolina -- a "farm" incidentally which occupies a whole island off the coast. Here he raises colts, white clover and oats -- and likes nothing better than to run the tractor himself. When he can take time off to attend them he's an enthusiastic spectator at football and hockey matches, prize fights and horse races.

Mr. Bruce's charm isn't all good luck. He works so hard that he forgets social engagements, yet answers questions of inquiring reporters and innumerable telephone calls as if he had all the time in the world. But his present position as Vice President of National Dairy Products is proof to the contrary. And that's not even mentioning his directorships on the boards of half a dozen prominent companies. In fact, it's not even mentioning that one of those companies -- for whom he's served as director since 1938 is American Airlines.

James Bruce

Corporation executive. Born Baltimore, Maryland December 23, 1892. L.B. Princeton 1914; LL.B. University of Maryland 1916.

Assistant military attache to Italy and representative of the Peace Conference in Montenegro and Albania, 1919. Vice President Atlantic Exchange Bank 1921-26. International Acceptance Bank 1926-1927., Chase National Bank 1927-31. President Baltimore Trust Co. 1931-33. Financial advisor to Board of Directors Home Owners Loan Corp., Washington September 1933-December 1934. Vice President National Dairy Products Corp. since January 1935., Commercial Credit Co., Maryland Casualty Co., Republic Steel Co., National Dairy Products Co., Standard Gas & Electric Co., American Airlines, Inc., Columbia Oil & Gas Co., Federal Home Loan Bank of N. Y., General American Investors, Pennsylvania Coal & Coke Co., Utilities Equities Corp., American & Hawaiian Steamship Co., Fidelity Phenix Fire Insurance Co. Director.

Captain, U. S. Field Artillery, World War

Clubs: Maryland, Elkridge (Baltimore);
Recess, Brook, Links (New York)
Burning Tree (Washington)

Home: Eccleston, Maryland

Office: 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Harry E. Benedict

If Harry E. Benedict should ever write a book, as he threatens to do some day, the pages will be filled with the names of every important financier in this country, in Europe and in Japan, since 1918. And it will probably be dedicated to "the prettiest women in the world, who doesn't look a day over thirty" -- his wife. Which is no mean tribute to a lady nearer fifty and the mother of two six-foot sons.

Mr. Benedict comes of early Wisconsin pioneer stock and was born in Neillsville in 1890. He was brought up on the legends of Paul Bunyan, the "superman" of logging camp fame. With more ambition than money, he worked four years in lumber camps in Wisconsin and in railroad shops before he got a job as page in the Legislature. Then he decided to enter the University of Wisconsin and worked his way through as Secretary to the State Highway Commission. He was graduated in 1916 with a Phi Beta Kappa key dangling on his watch chain -- a feat worthy of Bunyan himself, had his talents run in that direction.

1916 was the year the National City Bank of New York decided to see if it could make a banker out of a college man, and set out to find the 35 most outstanding seniors in the country. Harry Benedict was one of the young men chosen. Thus began his career under the aegis of Frank A. Vanderlip, then president of the National City Bank.

When the United States entered the First World War, Mr. Benedict was called to Washington to serve on the War Loan Board, of which Mr. Vanderlip was chairman. He explains that probably the reason they took anyone so young, was because he was bald-headed even then. His particular task was to see that the public put their money into War Savings and Liberty Bonds.

When the war was over, along with Mr. Vanderlip and other financial leaders of this country, Mr. Benedict spent six months in Europe settling the postwar finances of the world. There wasn't a leader of finance in any country in Europe he didn't meet, and at one time he spent a week with Paderewski, first premier of the newly established republic of Poland.

Upon their return to the United States, Mr. Vanderlip resigned as President of the National City Bank and in 1919 took his young friend Benedict with him into partnership. A year later Mr. Benedict was sent to Japan with a commission of American business men to confer with a similar group there. The purpose of this conference was to forestall the present conflict which Japanese business already foresaw if the military should get control. Mr. Benedict says it was a lost cause even then.

Harry E. Benedict (cont'd.)

Mr. Benedict is President of the Palos Verdes Corporation on the coast of California. Here he has a victory garden of six square miles, with two thousand men picking vegetables. He likes to ride, and says his favorite avocation is building and furnishing houses.

Considering he just about cut his teeth on tall tales of Paul Bunyan, it's not surprising to find Harry Benedict conducting business simultaneously at practically opposite ends of the continent. Not surprising either, to find that he maintains homes both in New York and California. It all seems quite in the Bunyan tradition -- even to the fact that since 1936 he's been a Director of American Airlines. For to superman Bunyan also, distance meant nothing.

Harold T. Ames

Born Antioch, Illinois, February 16, 1894.

General Manager Automobile Distributorship 1919-1926.; 1927-1937 President Duesenberg Motors, Co., President Indianapolis Corp., Executive Vice-President Auburn Automobile Co., Vice President Cord Corp., Vice-President Central Mfg., Co., Vice President Lycoming Motors Co., Director: Aviation Corporation; Stinson Aircraft Co.; New York Shipbuilding Corp.; Columbia Axle Co. Since 1938 actively engaged as Industrial Engineer concerned with management and re-organization of various manufacturing concerns in and around Chicago.

Now President Metal Door & Trim Co.
Director Chicago Electric Manufacturing Co.
Director American Airlines, Inc.

Served as Lieut, Pilot in Army Air Force 1917 to 1919.

Hobbies: Flying and airplanes.

Clubs: Bob-O-Link Golf Club; Chicago Athletic Association.

Home: Wilmette, Illinois.