

Time Magazine  
Monday, Sep. 14, 1925  
Shenandoah

In an hour before dawn, two winds met. One was moist and warm, the other cold and dry. Comingled — the warm wind climbing the front of the cold — they became a single ferocity which shot upwards pummelling, as it went, the Shenandoah, U. S. Navy dirigible.

On duty in the ship's control cabin were 16 men including the master of the vessel, gallant, air-tested Lieutenant Commander Zachary Lansdowne. For two hours they had fought their ship this way and that through a series of pesky squalls. They had released helium. They had dumped into the storm their water-balast.

Already half a mile above land, their ship was being drawn with incredible speed by this last, fiercest rod of wind another mile upward.

At Commander Lansdowne's order, Lieutenant Commander C. E. Rosendahl mounted the ladder, made his way down the keel to unload fuel. Fifteen men were left.

A wrenching, a crunching, a howling of steel, and "Everyone beat it" cried one of the 15. Colonel Hall, as he sprang to the ladder, scrambled up. Fourteen men were left.

Like a breastpin torn from a satin gown, the great control cabin was ripped from the body of the ship. One man, Lieut. Anderson, grabbed a girder in mid air, swung himself clear of the falling bridge. Thirteen men were left—13 men in a polished cage slipped through the air. Thirteen mangled bodies in mangled metal lay in a small farm at Ava, Ohio.

Ferocity — warm wind climbing up the front of cold — pumelled the splitting smooth-skinned bulk. The ship's nose—in itself a mountain was torn completely from the body. Carrying seven men, including three who had left the control-cabin, it began to spin. Those of the seven who were not desperately engaged in keeping their seats astride a girder, valved gas as freely, as quickly as they could. The lost mountain spinned — earthward. Nearing ground, Chief Machinist Halliburton fired shot into the gas envelope. Through the twilight, a farmer was signalled, caught a guide-rope, wrapped it about a tree. The nose had arrived safely, only one man being injured.

Meanwhile the body of the ship, containing 23 men, had plunged from the crash 1,000 feet higher into the air, and then, with a sickening, sliding motion it had started to earth while gas-tanks, oil-cans, girders crashed about. It landed near a grove with 22 survivors. At some point in the maelstrom, Lieut. Sheppard was thrown from the hulk. His body was found a mile from the main wreckage, a bit of guy-rope in one hand, a bit of rigging in the other.

Thus, lying in three spots twelve miles apart on Ohio's rolling country, the Shenandoah was junk. And 14 men were dead. And 20 lived to tell the strangest story of their lives to their children's children.

Crowds at the scene of the wreck stole pieces of the ship's duraluminum frame, pieces of her fabric covering, even pieces of the dead men's clothing. The survivors tried to keep off vandals. Finally soldiers were posted, and had difficulty in restraining the crowd anxious to lay its boards on the wreckage.

G. W. Armour was radio operator of the ship. He kept a log of the flight. Excerpts:

"4:02—Ship released from mooring mast and glides into the air. . .

"Passing high over Philadelphia. Saw lanes of lights in street below. . .

"7:50—See Laurel Mountains ahead and gain height to cross them ... as dusk falls lights may be seen for great distance on the mountain lanes. . .

- "9.30—Receive baseball scores of the afternoon games. . . Chambersburg below looks like a picture under a Christmas tree, and we think of the kiddies at home and wonder if they are asleep. Throw kisses to Tom and Billy from the ship in the air. . . See lightning to the south. . . Crossing Pennsylvania and its beautiful farms but we cannot see their beauty owing to the darkness, but hope for better things tomorrow. . .

"1:55 A. M. (standard time)— Pass over Wheeling and cross Ohio River, being greeted with whistles and bell. . . red flares set off on top high hill. . .

"2:10 A. M.—. . . see lightning flashes directly ahead. . .  
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"2:30 A. M.—Strike strong head winds and see storms both north-west and southwest in distance. Believe we can ride them without trouble. . .

"3.50 A. M.—. . . Storm worst we have encountered to date. . .

"4:55.—Members of crew called from gondola pit and sent into runway to aid in keep ship on even keel . . . Lightning increasing in intensity. Hope to ride out storm soon. . . Pleasant City seen in distance. . . wind increasing in volume, get chance to—"

He then stopped writing.

He next sent by radio the words "I am losing my seat—"

He made no further records.

Chief Petty Officer Frank Masters had planned to land at Akron from a parachute to visit his wife who had just borne him a son. He was tossed into an Ohio field not so far away with the loss, merely, of his shirt.

Mrs Lewis Hancock received word of the death of her second husband, the Lieutenant Commander. Her first husband had been killed when the uR2 exploded over England.

Joseph Shevlowitz had been thought dead for six months during the War when his submarine dropped

him off at Bermuda with the spotted fever. Again he was believed dead once more he sent a telegram: "Am safe tell mother."

On the second morning following the fall, the farmer on whose land the 450 ft. stern of the ship fell charged \$1.00 to admit each automobile into his field, and 25 cents for each pedestrian. Drinking water was priced at 10 cents a glass.

Said Mrs. Lansdowne, wife of the dead Commander:

"Commander Lansdowne was very much opposed to making the flight at this time, and he advised the department accordingly. Having been born in the Ohio Valley, he knew weather conditions out there and had some fear of them." may rest throughout the years.

Said Secretary of the Navy Wilbur: "Captain Lansdowne fixed his own time for making the flight into the Middle West, and was also given absolute discretion as to the route to be followed going and coming. He did not think the flight should be made during the months of July and August. His wish to defer the voyage from July to September was complied with by the department."

President Coolidge let correspondents know that he expected the building of another dirigible for war purposes — viewing its loss like the loss of a battleship — something to be replaced.

Captain Anton Heinen, German dirigible expert acted as advisor during the construction of the Shenandoah. He referred last week to the report that eight of the 18 safety valves in the ship's gas bags had been removed before her trip: 'I would not call it murder, but I cannot put it too strong that if it had not been for the foolishness in cutting down the number of safety valves the crash would not have occurred .... Now there will be a whitewash board of inquiry and some camouflage to cover up the real story of the cause which was the foolish action of the crew at the station in changing the valves. Already they are trying to lay the blame on poor dead Landsrowne."

Said Senator Swanson of Virginia: "The Navy Department should be more careful."

Director Duerr of the Zeppelin Co., said in Berlin: "No German airship ever broke in two in the air, but this has happened twice with English airships."\*

The record of ship's barograph when picked up at a distance from the rest of the wreckage disclosed that

the ship was at a height of 2,100 feet when she broke in the centre.

Commander Jacob H. Klein of the Count of Inquiry announces: "We have received orders to advertise the wreckage for sale to the highest bidder and already several aluminum companies are preparing to submit bids."

Senator Hiram Bingham of Connecticut, planning to fly from Middletown to Westfield by airplane, hearing of the Shenandoah's disaster abandoned his flight. The reason given was that the landing field at Westfield was not as "ideal as supposed."

Nine years ago, before the U. S. entered the War, Lieutenant Commander Lansdowne was sent to Pensacola, for instruction in flying. Ever since, he has appeared to other men as one whose feet were shod with wings.

In 1917, he was attached to the Curtiss Aeroplane Co. After a brief period at Akron, O., he was sent to England for instruction in dirigibles under the British Admiralty. During 1918 he was stationed at the U. S. bases at Brest and Quipavas, France, and in the U.S.

Attached to the ill-fated #34, he made the 57-hour trip to the Baltic, obtained a British pilot's license,



became a regular member of her crew. Previously he had attended at her modeling, her building. His training completed by study of the Zeppelin in Germany, Lansdowne was regarded as one of the half-dozen ablest lighter-than-air commanders in the world.

He had two triumphs, one when he crossed the Atlantic with a British crew in the .R-34; one when he flew the Shenandoah across the U. S. and back.

Greater than his triumph was his faith. Lansdowne declared, not one, but many times, that dirigibles could be built to withstand any storm, that the Shenandoah was so built. But he told his wife-before his last trip that the one thing which could break the ship was the line-squall—the conflict of warm and cold shafts of air, pressing from below and above. He knew that such storms occurred near the locality where he was killed, for at Greenfield, Ohio, he was born 37 years ago.

So great was his faith that his dominating ambition was to be permitted to fly the Shenandoah to the North Pole.

"Peace is the ashes of that fire,

The heir of that king, the inn of that journey. . .

Death-day greetings are the sweetest.

Let trumpets roar when a man ...dies

And rockets fly up; he has found his fortune."

Hereafter the name of Lansdowne will be the rythm  
for a proud measure in the epic of the skies.

### Pacific Flight

On a golden afternoon last week, two large seaplanes rose from Pablo Bay, Calif., and lifted their droning snouts over the Pacific. They—the "giant" seaplanes PN-9 No. 1 and PN-9 No. 3—had received orders from the Navy Department to fly to Hawaii.

This distance is 2,100 nautical miles. When the ships had accomplished it (as there seemed every likelihood of their doing, what the guard ships, the good weather) they would have beaten the non-stop flight record established last month by the Frenchmen, Arrachard and Le Caitre. In Honolulu, crowds gathered to watch a tiny plane crawl across a bulletin board, nearer, nearer. When it arrived there would be a holiday.

The PN-9 No. 3 commended by Lieutenant Allan Snody, did not get very far. Four hundred miles from the California beaches it was forced down by a broken oil pressure line—a surprising, an unfortunate accident. The PN-9 No. 1 would, of course, continue. But the watchers under the Honolulu bulletin board were suddenly amazed to the toy that delighted them stop in its course, its little light go out.

Wailule, the Honolulu radio station, had picked up a message from the PN9 No. 1: "Please keep good track. Gas is about all gone. Think it impossible to get in."

The message was not the first indication that the ship was in trouble. Commander John Rogers on the seaplane had reported to Naval listeners that headwinds had forced him to open his throttles in order to keep his headway—that his petrol tanks were consequently emptying too fast. This message of distress was regarded as distinctly alarming. It meant that the Frenchmen would retain for a while longer the non-stop flight record. Why, it might actually means that the Rogers and his men were in danger.

Had the seaplane been flying on schedule, it should have been about 200 miles off Hawaii when the

message was sent. But no plane had passed the U. S. S. Farragut, stationed 420 miles off. The ships Aroostock and Tanager began to search.

A day passed. Apprehension grew. Planes put out from Hawaii. Eighteen destroyers of the line were ordered from Samoa to join in the search, and proceeded "with orderly haste" to do as they were told. That hope was dying became manifest in the furious urgency with which Navy officials investigated the most obviously fabricated reports of the plane's discovery. Somewhere in the corrugated deserts of the Pacific the ship floated, her men in a torment of thirst, staring at the horizon, or somewhere a mass of torn fabric and splintered wood served as a roost for gulls who waited for certain objects (which had sunk) to rise again. One or the other must be found. The ships, the planes, and the 18 destroyers, continued searching.

\*He married Miss Margaret Ross whom he met overseas when she was a Red Cross Nurse. Their daughter, age 3, is Peggy.

\* The Shenandoah was built in the U. S.