

THE "GOLDEN EAGLE"

by

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Serial No. 1

Model No. V-1

Owner: Mr. George Hearst, San Francisco.

Hollywood, the home of many bright stars, was also the home of Vega, Lockheed's first star. This was the beginning of a series of ships named for stars. The first Vega was built at Sycamore Street, Hollywood, in 1927 and test hopped by Eddie Bellande on July 4th, 1927, at Rogers Airport, Los Angeles, California.

Vega 1 was sold to Mr. George Hearst of San Francisco for \$12,000 and named the "Golden Eagle". It was powered by a 200 h.p. Wright J-5C "Whirlwind" and proved to be the fastest commercial airplane of its time. It flew from Oakland to Los Angeles in three hours and five minutes with three passengers in addition to the pilot and 400 pounds of payload. On its return trip it covered the 400 odd miles in three hours and twenty-five minutes with a payload of 1,500 pounds.

With such a performance record it was inevitable that later the same year when Jim Dole, pineapple king of Hawaii, sponsored the first air race from Oakland, California, to Hawaii that Hearst would enter his Vega to compete for the generous prizes, \$25,000 for first place and \$10,000 for second place. The "Golden Eagle" was thoroughly re-conditioned and equipped with every known safety device. The landing gear was droppable in case of a forced landing at sea, thus preventing a nose-over. Large rubber flotation bags were installed inside the wing tips. These, with the rubber floats in the fuselage, were connected to a carbon dioxide bottle and in less than sixty seconds all floats could be inflated. A special nozzle designed by John K. Northrop, chief engineer for the Lockheed Aircraft Company, permitted 80% of air sucked in when filling the floats with carbon dioxide. If the gasoline was dumped via dump valves before landing on the sea the flotation system could support twice the weight of the ship fully loaded, or over 8,500 pounds. There were two fifty gallon tanks in the wings and two one hundred gallon tanks in the fuselage for carrying the fuel. To aid in navigation a two-way radio was carried. Rockets, flares, and smoke bombs were available for attracting passing vessels. The compass was removable and could be taken into the rubber life raft which was equipped with paddles and a 24 square foot silk sail. The bottom of the fuselage was packed with cork and the final precaution was to have all openings such as doors and windows sealed with rubber strips prior to take-off. All these measures show that every possible effort was made by Lockheed to ensure the safety of both crew and craft in the air and on the sea.

The "Golden Eagle" was entered on August 1, 1927, by the Hearst Newspapers of San Francisco (George Hearst) with John W. Frost of San Francisco as pilot, and Gordon Scott of Santa Monica as navigator. Frost was required to fly the Vega around a triangular course twice for an instrument check, while Scott had to take a written test of seventeen questions on navigation. A two degree error would mean missing their goal.

On August 16th, at 12:29 P.M., the bright orange Lockheed monoplane taxied to

the starting circle. Frost waited tensely for the drop of the checkered flag, then gave her the gun and roared down the runway for a quick take-off. He cleared the border lights by 200 feet, and made a graceful left turn, heading for the Golden Gate. The fastest and most beautiful ship of the race soon disappeared from sight on its 2,406 mile journey.

At 6 P.M. the following day, when no report had been received from the crew, it was certain the ship was down somewhere because the fuel supply on board was sufficient for thirty hours aloft only. Then an intensive search began for the missing flyers by air and sea but nothing was ever found.

Specifications for the Lockheed Vega V-1

Wing span	41 ft.	Gross weight	2900-3200 lbs.	Cruising speed	110 mph
Length	27 ft. 5 in.	Useful Load	1250-1550 lbs.	High speed	135 mph
Height	8 ft. 2 in.	Weight Empty	1650 lbs.	Landing speed	50 mph
Airfoil	Clark Y	Climb at sea level,	925 ft/min	Service ceiling	15,900 ft

References:

Aviation, August 22, 1927

Western Flying, September 1927

Aero Digest, September 1927

Aircraft Circular No. 61, National Advisory Committee
for Aeronautics

Lockheed Vega V-1 Specifications, Lockheed Aircraft Co.

U.S.A.F. AIRCRAFT 1947-1956

James C. Fahey's second Air Force book is just out, published April 1956, and is naturally a "must" for all members of the A.A.H.S. Even if your interests are not strongly directed toward this field the book should be in your library simply because it is the "bible" and untouched by any other book in the world today.

This newest compendium lists much information never before brought together in one place. Jim Fahey certainly deserves a well done from all concerned for his patience and effort in producing this work, and particularly for wading through the labyrinth of security regulations in order that the entire contents might be approved for publication.

In addition to the tabular material covering all models and modifications of USAF aircraft, engines, marking and insignia, guided missiles, and Army aviation, the book also contains several hundred photographs on beautiful slick paper. This is a very scholarly work and is highly recommended. And....Jim Fahey is still the only man in this business that can make all of those periods come out exactly in the lower right hand corner!

USAF Aircraft 1947-1956 is available from Ships & Aircraft, Box 548, Falls Church, Virginia, for \$1.50 postpaid. If for any reason you do not have the earlier book U.S. Army Aircraft 1908-1946 (available for \$1.00) be sure to order it also as the two books complement each other.