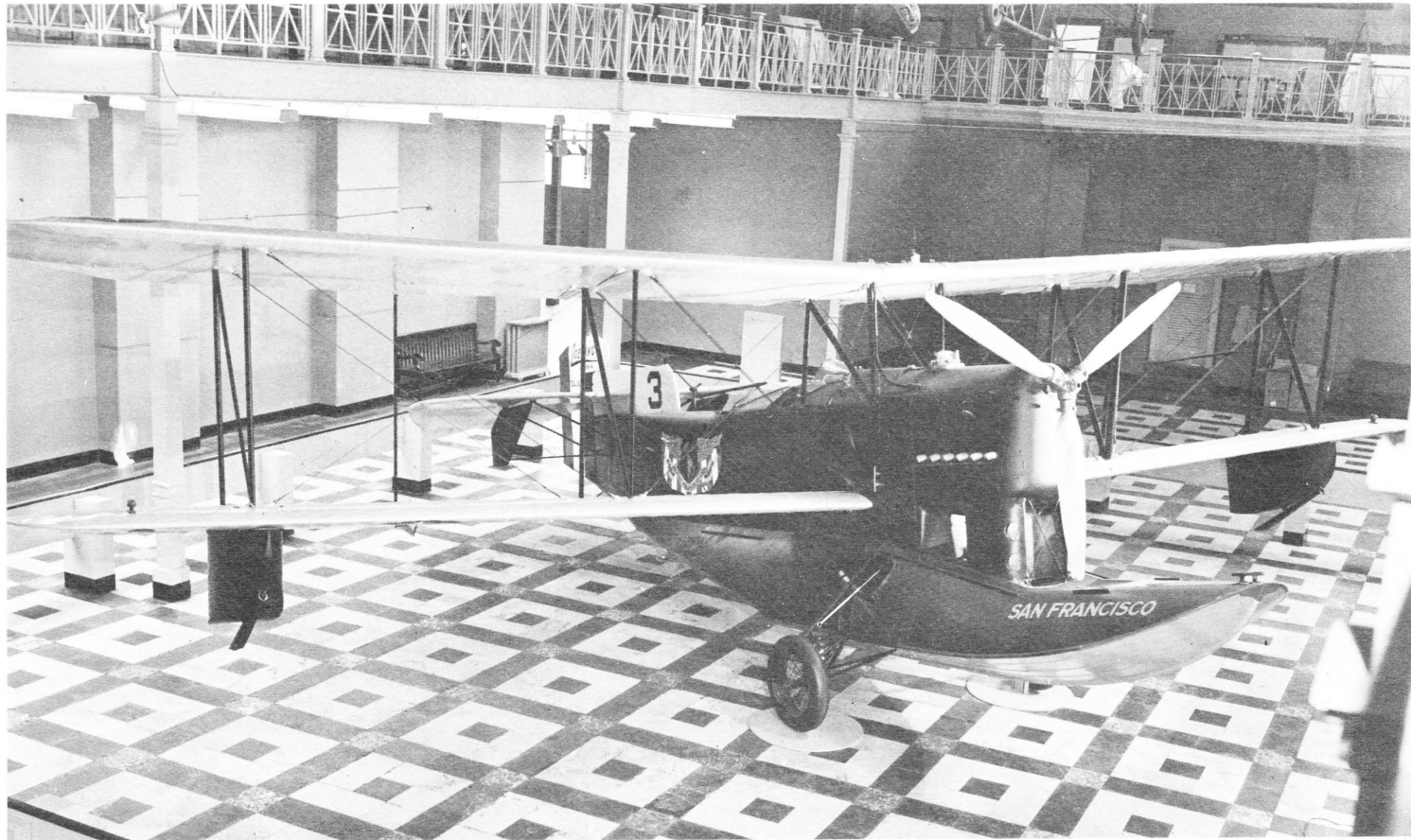
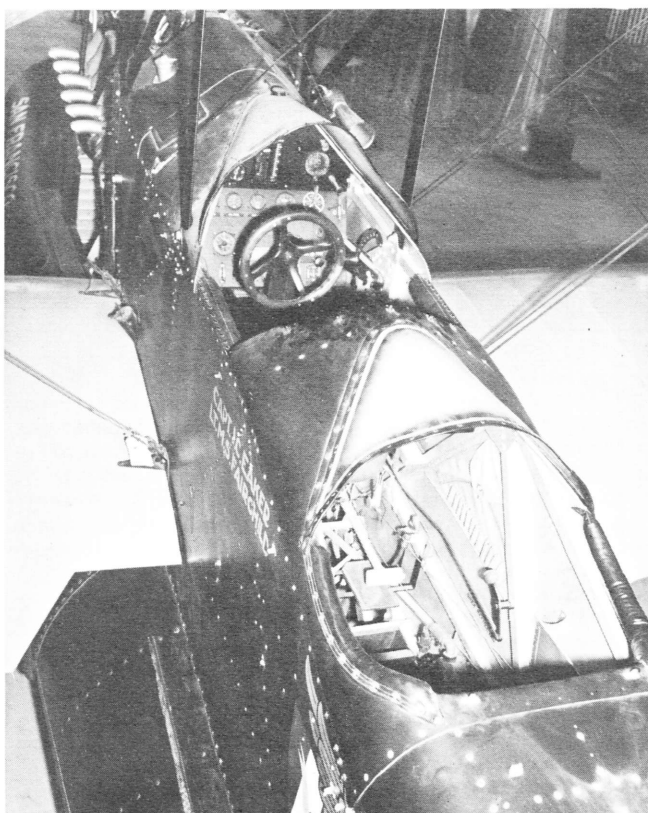




Pan American Good Will Flight

By LOUIS S. CASEY



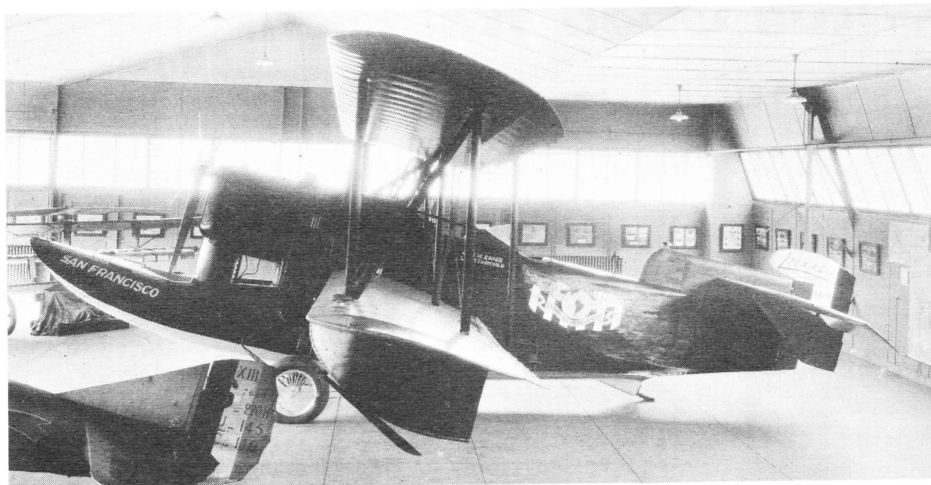
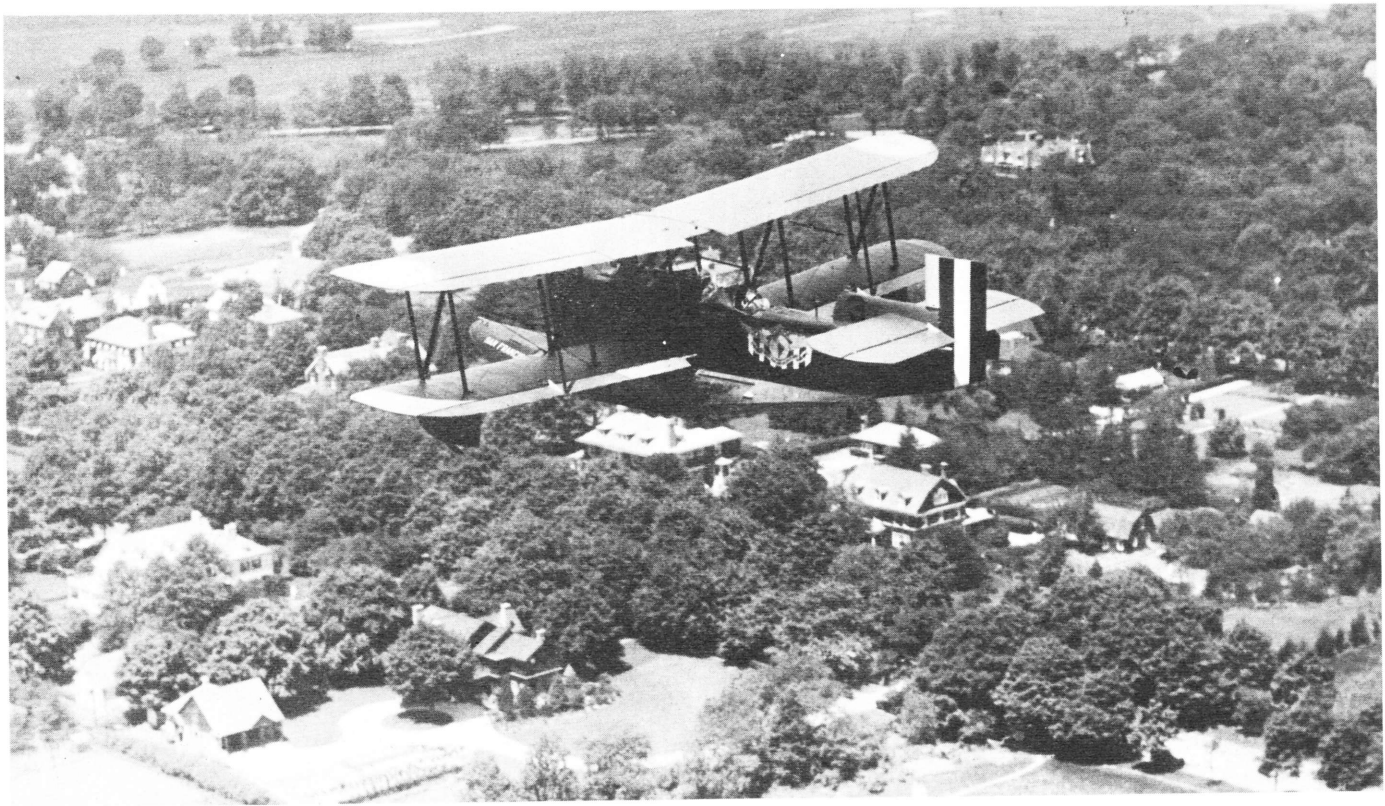
Cockpit details of the Loening OA-1A San Francisco in the collection of the National Air Museum. (Smithsonian A1831)

The U. S. Army's Pan American "Good Will Flight", celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year, was a milestone in the development of aviation. The project was planned by the State Department in 1926 as a diplomatic goodwill mission to our neighbors in Mexico, Central and South America and the West Indies. The Flight consisted of ten pilots and five aircraft. It was hoped that the project would interest the nations to the south in U. S. aircraft and engines, would emphasize the advantages of aircraft for transportation and communication in regions which were without rail or road transportation, and would also serve as a stimulant to the then-struggling aviation industry in the United States. Each of the Loening OA-1A amphibian aircraft (designed and built by pioneer aeronautical engineer, Grover Loening) was named after a major U. S. city to stimulate interest among the people of these cities.

The Flight began December 21, 1926 at San Antonio, Texas and the 22,000 mile trip took four months to complete. The utility of the aircraft and their design and construction details were thoroughly tested and proven to be excellent. The diplomatic function required that the Flight remain a day or two at each of the 25 capitals. The servicing and maintenance requirements imposed delays which were to be expected on such a long trip under widely varying conditions.

All ceremonial functions were carried out by the pilots themselves as were the maintenance functions, there being no mechanical crews stationed along the route. At most stops the aircraft were the first that the residents had seen. Weather enroute was an outright gamble because no advance weather information facilities existed. To add to the problem there was no communication between aircraft during flights except hand signals and seldom was there any communication between points along the route.

It is impressive to note that when Pan American



Above, the San Francisco with Capt Ira Eaker flying Charles Lindbergh from Mitchel Field to New York harbor, following Lindbergh's Trans-Atlantic flight. At left, the San Francisco as it was previously displayed at the Smithsonian Institution. (Smithsonian A199 & 799¹/₂-A)

Airways began South American airline operations about two years later they selected their stations to closely follow the Good Will Flight route.

One disaster marred the otherwise successful tour. On approaching for a landing at the Argentine Air Service Field at Palomar, Buenos Aires, the Detroit and the New York collided in mid-air, resulting in the deaths of Capt. Woolsey and Lt Benton, the crew of the Detroit, and the loss of the two aircraft.

The Flight concluded May 2, 1927 at Bolling Field, Washington, D. C. where the fliers were greeted by President Coolidge and other dignitaries. Within three weeks this historic flight was eclipsed in the news by the solo Trans-Atlantic flight of Charles A. Lindbergh in the Spirit of St. Louis.

After the completion of these two historic flights there was one direct contact by participants of each flight. Lindbergh, following the official welcome in Washington, flew from Bolling Field to Mitchel Field, Long Island, in a Curtiss Hawk. There, the Loening amphibian San Francisco awaited him, with Capt. Ira Eaker

as pilot. Utilizing this aircraft's unique ability to take off from land and alight on the water, Lindbergh was flown to New York harbor where he boarded the official boat Macon. This landed him at the Battery, to be greeted by New York officialdom. It is the San Francisco which is now exhibited in the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D. C. and whose three-view, from the Smithsonian files, appears opposite.

The pilots and their assigned aircraft (with its number given first) were as follows:

- "1" NEW YORK: Major Herbert A. Dargue, pilot and Commander of the Flight. 1st Lt Ennis Whitehead, co-pilot.
- "2" SAN ANTONIO: Capt. A. B. MacDaniel, pilot. 1st Lt Charles McK. Robinson, co-pilot.
- "3" SAN FRANCISCO: Capt. Ira C. Eaker, pilot. 1st Lt Muir S. Fairchild, co-pilot.
- "4" DETROIT: Capt. C. F. Woolsey, pilot. 1st Lt John W. Benton, co-pilot.
- "5" ST. LOUIS: 1st Lt Bernard S. Thompson, pilot. 1st Lt L. D. Weddington, co-pilot.

