



The Air Force personnel at Shemya welcomed the first two planes and crews.

## Last chapter of 227 story was most exciting

A pre-trip description of the final flight(s) of Piedmont's 227s sounded like a fictional return to the age of adventure.

The settings were international. The locales, if not quite exotic, would cover the better part of the globe.

The cast would include five men who were to make the first trip and a number of others working on logistics, communications and a myriad of details.

The roles of other nations and foreign governments could complicate and color the trip.

Even the weather might present problems. The rapidly approaching winter in Alaska and a possible typhoon in the Far East would have to be considered.

Only the plot was cut and dried — take two, then two more, airplanes from point A (Winston-Salem, North Carolina) to point B (Tainan, Taiwan).

That they were 1,000-mile-range airplanes and would have to cross the Pacific encouraged the idea that this would be an adventurous undertaking.

Mechanic Joe Archer, pilots C. D. McLean, Jim Combs, Jerome Zavar and Bo Davis took the Piedmont planes to places where Piedmont planes were certainly unfamiliar and probably unheard of.

The first of the four FH-227s, N705 and N709, left Winston-Salem on Tuesday, August

30, 1977. And for the first leg of the trip, planes and people were very much at home. They went to Greensboro. The temperature was hovering around 90 degrees. A 227 with an extra 1,414 gallons of fuel in its belly needed all the runway it could find.

From Greensboro, McLean, Davis and Archer took N705 non-stop to Van Nuys, California. They covered the 1,920 miles in 10 hours and 15 minutes.

Combs and Zavar, flying N709, left Greensboro several hours after 705. They stopped in Oklahoma City for the night but caught up with the others on Wednesday in Van Nuys.

The HF and the long-range navigation system (LORAN) installation for over-water flying was done by Friday. Aero Equipment bid them farewell as they headed towards Seattle. Van Nuys to Seattle was a short four-hour flight.

By Saturday morning, they were off to Alaska. Then came a rewrite in the script. An engine malfunction developed on N705. Everybody back to Seattle. With some interline help, a part from Airwest, they left Seattle again on Sunday morning for the six-hour trip to Anchorage.

At the Anchorage stop, it was time to clear customs. To clear two airplanes through customs is mostly paperwork. And that was simplified by a lot of advance planning.

It was a cold, but clear, Monday morning when they headed for Shemya. Alaska's winter was holding off. This leg gave the crews their first taste of extended over-water flying. Shemya is the next to the top, or last, island in the Aleutian chain. It was about dusk on Labor Day when the 227s touched down at the U. S. Air Force Base there. In the last hour of daylight, the hospitable personnel at Shemya took everyone on a complete tour of the two by four-mile island. It was cold, windy and 45 degrees, but apparently there aren't too many visitors.

The crews' memories of Shemya include seeing seals and blue foxes and playing ping

pong before having dinner in the transit barracks. At 8 a.m. on Tuesday, September 6th, the crews headed their planes 240 degrees southwest. That it was their last sight of land for the next nine hours didn't occur to them. They reported their thoughts were mostly about staying on course.

Tuesday went by quickly. Almost immediately after take-off from Shemya, they crossed the international dateline and it was Wednesday, the 7th.

McLean and Davis, in N705, took off about 30 miles ahead of Combs, Zavar and Archer. It was nearly five hours before they re-established visual contact, though they were in radio contact with each other.

When asked how they found each other, "descriptions of cloud formations" was as specific as they would be.

Most of the time they were on top of over-cast and didn't see much of the northern Pacific.

The notes Captain Combs kept of the journey revealed that N709 maintained an altitude of about 16,000 feet and N705 was at 18,000 feet for most of the nine-hour flight. During the first half of the Pacific leg, they were in radio (HF) contact with Anchorage. On the second segment, their contact was Tokyo. The crews talked to each other frequently and radioed in position checks about every half hour.

Thoughts of their closeness to, or distance from, Russian airspace were frequent. They stayed more than 150 miles out, using radar to map the coastline.

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Dick Morgan, Ray Parker and Joe Archer delivered N710.



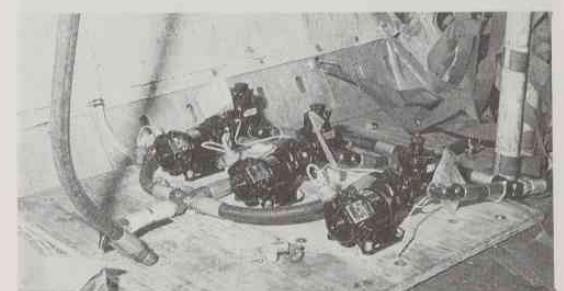
Mechanic Bill Wimmer checked out the seven DC-3 fuel tanks which were installed in the fuselage of each of the 227s.



Carroll Gambill and Ronnie Macklin, who had worked for weeks on the logistics of delivering the planes, were delighted when the time to say good-bye finally came.



Dick Vining and Jerome Zavar flew N708 to Taiwan.



The fuel transfer system used to pump the fuel from the tanks in the fuselage to the wings actually used only one pump at the time. The other two pumps were stand-bys.