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THE QUARTERMISTRESS
A Designation and its Implications in Airline Crew Duty

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F the two titles by which women cabin-attendants in
passenger aircraft are usually known, "air stewardess" places the emphasis upon the menial tasks, and "air hostess" has the best sales-value; a third, less usual, is "air quartermistress," and this is one that admits a claim as operating crew. Stewardess, with its suggestion of the cap and apron of maidservant or cafe waitress, is frankly inade-quate and uncomplimentary; hostess, with its acknowledg-ment of the need for tact, charm, and patience, and reciprocal obligations under the sacred rites of hospitality, is the most pleasing and appropriate term by which an ordinary day's duty in this branch of the flying profession can be described; quartermistress (a term greeted with considerable merriment at first), being the feminine of quartermaster, is an indication of the need at certain times for the exercise of leadership and authority in this work.

All discipline must be justified by a belief in its own necessity owing to danger or urgency, otherwise it will collapse. It must be based upon ethical and logical founda-tions and be capable of interpretation even if it is not actually self-revealing. Aircrew discipline is non-military in civil aircraft, but the statement is not just a truism. Happily, it is self-revealing, too—unlike some aspects of discipline in the armed forces. It is the discipline of mountaineers, of expeditions going forward in defiance of the starkness of natural forces, and of merchant seamen. It is the amalgama-tion of skill under an appointed leader in order to ensure the common survival of the party or crew.

An aircraft setting out with passengers on board contains, with its crew, a unified party of travellers. Th e sense of urgency is felt by the passengers too, and manifests itself in their willingness to be guided by the crew and to receive orders from them—so long as confidence is present. This desirable confidence must be maintained, under ordinary circumstances, by the external signs of all discipline—a correct bearing and appearance—on the part of the crew. In times of emergency it must be maintained by calm, clear, and firm orders, and by a methodical sequence in carrying out safety precautions or drill. Whe n an aircraft has been prematurely forced down on land or sea, the captain and crew are still responsible for the passengers' fives until rescue has been effected, because the original band of travellers has merely exchanged one untrustworthy natural element for another.

CAPTAIN A

'T'HOSE who knew him in the Service and in his years at A Westland Aircraft will be grieved to learn of the death of Capt. A. S. Keep, M.C., which occurred recently in Somerset. Arthur Stewart Keep joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment
in September, 1914, and went overseas with it in November, 1915. He was invalided home in 1916 and transferred to the R.F.C., gaining his wings in August 1916.
Until January 1917 he was engaged in ferrying aircraft and then went overseas as a test pilot. In January 1918 he was posted to No. 55 Sqn, Independent Air Force, stationed in Alsace-Lorraine and equipped with D.H.4S. He took part in daylight bombing raids on Mannheim, Coblenz, and other targets and was awarded the Military Cross after the famous Cologne raid, at that time the longest daylight bombing operation of the 1914-18 war.

He was wounded and invalided home in July, 1918. Shortly after the Armistice he was sent to Westland Aircraft as Air Ministry test pilot and, on demobilization in 1919, joined the company as their test pilot. In this capacity he carried out all the flying of the Weasel, a two-seat fighter biplane powered by a 320 h.p. A.B.C. Dragonfly; the Limousine, a four-seat cabin biplane fitted witfi a 275 h.p. Rolls-Royce Falcon engine; and the Westland six-seater (450 h.p. Napier Lion), with which he won the first prize of £7,500 in the small-aeroplane class of the

Unfortunately, the command of an aircraft crew is not absolutely straightforward. Each crew-member, with the exception of the first officer, is a specialist in a different branch from that of the captain; but although a captain must consult and respect his crew's individual opinions on appro-priate matters, his command remains absolute, owing to the potential dangers which (as in most forms of transportation, to a greater or lesser degree) menace the whole operation. Th e cabin attendant is responsible directly to the captain in all duty between bases. Th e particular responsibilities of such a person in any kind of forced landing are to ensure that all the passengers survive the landing, to see that they are able to get out of the aircraft quickly after it has come to rest, and subsequently to co-operate with captain and crew to ensure the ultimate survival of the whole.
Th e essence of a woman cabin attendant's value in time of emergency is her ability to have been able to visualize previously the sort of circumstances in which she is likely to be required to change the ordinary duties of an air hostess for the authority and leadership required from her as an air quartermistress. It is likely that the need may occur when it is least expected; when there is barely enough time to complete preparations unless she slips into the emergency drill immediately and automatically; and when the most startling aural (and even visual) distractions have started to occur. It is essential that the preparations be completed, no matter how desperate the plight of the aircraft may seem. She will have these great advantages : that the passengers will be eager arid receptive to suitable orders, and that she can absorb all her energies in that most satisfying of all tasks, consideration for others. She should be able to take up her ditching or crash-landing station conscious of a team duty well performed, and that she has not broken faith with the people whose lives have been entrusted to her care.

Obviously, the changeover from air hostress to air quartermistress cannot be a Jekyll-and-Hyde metamorphosis; the seeds are fundamentally in the person's character, hence the severe selection boards; mechanically, there is the drill to be learnt and practised; finally, there is the quality of imagination, which can draw self-confidence from the drill and make it merge with the leadership inherent in the character of those selected. Th e courage of women, as a sex, is quite beyond doubt.

. S. KEEP

Air Ministry competition for commercial aircraft, held at Martlesham Heath in the autumn of 1920.
He also flew the Walrus, a carrier-borne reconnaissance biplane for the Royal Navy. Basically a D.H. 9a, but with the Liberty motor replaced by a Napier Lion, the Walrus had flotation bags and an observation blister, and carried a crew of three.
The test machine with which Capt. Keep was actively concerned was the Dreadnought "postal monoplane," powered by a single Napier Lion and embodying the "flying wing" theories of M. Woyevodsky, a Russian inventor. The initial test flight took place in May 1924 and ended in disaster, owing to control diffi-culties. Keep was seriously injured and had to have both legs amputated.
Although this misfortune ended his active flying, he continued with Westland as technical superintendent, later becoming a director of Petters, Ltd. (to take over whose aircraft branch the Westland company was formed in 1935), until his retirement in 1935-
Those who knew Arthur Stuart Keep (writes Mr. A. H. Lukins, who has provided these biographical details) will remem-ber him as a fearless pioneer, whose work polished one small facet of the now bright jewel of British aviation and one whose sense of humour kept him going in circumstances that would have broken the spirit of a lesser mortal.

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