



Map showing the area explored by the MacMillan expedition. (Courtesy of the National Geographic Magazine)

Thursday, January 1, 1925

I wonder what the new year holds. Strange but the first seven months in every new year interesting things seem to happen to me. Every year seems to hold something unusual. I was married in January. Got severely broken up in [Ed.: "January" is crossed out here]. December 28. When I was a kid my trip around the world was decided in May. Entered the naval academy in May. Graduated in June. Went to Mexico in March. Left in England nearly dead with typhoid fever in June on one of the battleships. Went through Haitian and San Dominican revolutions in May-June. Went to war in April. Was assigned to aviation in June. Returned to states from war in January. Assigned to navigational preparations for first transatlantic flight in Jan. Was promised flight across Atlantic Ocean on ZR-2 in July. Escaped explosion of ZR-2 in August. Volunteered for Amundsen flight in Jan. but was ordered same month to Washington to assist Admiral Moffett in preparation for trans-Polar flight in *Shenandoah*. Got Bureau Aviation Bill through Congress in February.

I have been dreaming all winter of a trans-polar flight. I wonder if it will materialize. The President will not, I am sure, permit the *Shenandoah* or the *Los Angeles* to make the trip. When Congress adjourns, I shall wire Bob Bartlett and try to work out some scheme with him to raise some money and somehow or other get hold of a small dirigible—one of the e-type—and try the pack [ice] and unexplored region of the Arctic. I was greatly disappointed last year when the President called off the trans-

polar flight of the *Shenandoah*. There is a bill up in Congress to promote me. It will mean a tremendous lot to me but there are hundreds of bills on the calendar. What chance will my bill have?

Saturday, January 3, 1925

Is the human race an accidental by-product of the cosmical processes? If God directs us, remaining silent and inscrutable to us, then he means either that he does not want us to know him or he is indifferent or he has made the knowing of him a difficult task.

Saturday, June 20, 1925

The 20th has come at last and we left Wiscasset [Maine] at 2:45 PM today on schedule date. As anxious as I have been to get started on the expedition, I have felt so sad at leaving my precious family that I haven't been able to mention the subject to Marie. I am doing her (apparently) a miserable mean trick in causing her to go through all the apprehensions she has felt for weeks and will for weeks to come. I feel mightily low and wicked today on account of it and the wonderful send off we got from thousands of people has meant absolutely nothing to me for nothing could matter with this terrible ache I have tried so hard to hide.

Dear little Dickie [Richard Byrd Jr.] didn't realize what it was all about and that made me feel still more useless.

Poor little fellow. He is too young to realize what an irresponsible "dad" he has. Marie as always was a wonderful sport.

With all this on my mind, I had to make a speech on the City Common to hundreds of people and also accept for the naval unit wonderful hunting knives presented to the personnel by the National Aeronautic Association of Maine.

Tuesday, July 7, 1925

Met famous Mr. Perritt and family at Hopedale [Labrador].⁷

Wednesday, July 8, 1925

Had a very narrow escape from death a few minutes ago. [Harold E.] Gray and [Paul J.] McGee had just run a heavy copper uninsulated cable from the radio room across the gangway about the height of my head. They were trying it out with 100,000 volts and watching and listening to anyone passing by. I had on rubber shoes and was coming from aft behind their radio room door which was half open so that they neither heard nor saw me. My head got six inches from that wire before I was stopped and the 100,000 volts would have jumped to my head had I gotten one inch nearer! Gray was white as a sheet.

7. The Perritts were Moravian missionaries.

There's another narrow squeak. The gods of chance have been good to me. That wire will have to be well insulated.

Sunday, July 12, 1925

At last we are underway again. I am so anxious to get to Etah that every day's delay seems like a week. We had another near tragedy today. While standing on the bridge about 2 PM taking some sights I saw some thick smoke coming from amidships. I was there in a jiffy and found a pile of life preservers on fire. They were piled against one of the wooden wing crates near the planes. I threw one of the preservers overboard and put the fire extinguisher on the rest of them. We are already short on life preservers, so the incident is unfortunate but it could have been so much worse. Another minute and the flame would have ignited the oil and kerosene the plane is soaked in and nothing in the world could have saved this ship with 7600 gallons of gasoline around her decks.

As a result of this fire McDonald has agreed with my recommendation to put on a fire watch including the personnel of the naval unit and the doctor, [Jacob] Gayer and Kelty of the last three will volunteer, which of course they will do. When I suggested a watch, [A. C.] Neld immediately volunteered to go on watch. I have never seen such spirit as my men have. They never require orders.

Got a ticker today. Chronometer "A" 3.5 seconds fast. That is bad.

Wednesday, July 15, 1925

We should reach Disco [Island, near Greenland] tomorrow morning. McDonald told me today that MacMillan had given orders for us to wait for him at Disco. I told McDonald that the project might be a failure if we had to do that for it would probably be another two days before the *Bowdoin* would leave Hopedale and probably five or six days more getting here. Then a day or two wait here and we would get up at Etah too late to accomplish our mission. I urged McDonald in the strongest terms to ask MacMillan to let us leave Disco as soon as we get coal and water and to call his attention to the urgency of the matter. He promised to do that.

Thursday, July 16, 1925

Arrived Godhavn, Disco this morning 5:30. The local and district Danish governor came aboard early and gave us the startling information that we can get not a single ton of coal here. We haven't enough coal to get up to Etah and back here. There seems to be no coal on the Greenland coast. It looks as if the expedition is ruined but we'll get that coal somehow. The governor admits that he has coal and is mining it at the other end of the island but when winter comes he will have just enough for the eskimos here and in surrounding villages.

On top of this no one is allowed to go the village (about 150 eskimos) because the eskimos have an epidemic of whooping cough. The governor says he is afraid we will

carry the disease north and give it to the Etah eskimos. I tried to get the governor to have some laundry done for me but he said it couldn't be done. There has been no evidence what so ever of any hospitality.

Saturday, July 25, 1925

Do not the enigmas which life presents keep our interest as nothing else could. It is the inscrutableness of the sweetheart that keeps the lover happy and thrilled. There can be few bored moments if one can be alive to the contradictions which life presents. Does not there seem to be wisdom used for our good.

Sunday, July 26, 1925

This is the day I had hoped to reach Etah but here we are [at Godhavn].

Monday, July 27, 1925

Got underway this morning at 4:20. Seven more precious hours lost. I wish I could see this thing as MacMillan sees it. At 9:30 the *Bowdoin* hoisted sail and stopped her engine. For an hour and a half we trailed after her making only five knots.

Tuesday, July 28, 1925

7:45 a.m. Ran into flat pack ice today about 60 miles north of Upernivik. At first the flat pack ice was in cakes