



At his stopover in Fond du Lac, WI Pierre Hollander holds his insulated flight suit up for a photograph by *Sport Aerobatics* editor Jean Sorg.

ATLANTIC CROSSING ...

IN A PITTS??

by *Jean Sorg*
Editor, *Sport Aerobatics*

The following article is reprinted from EAA's International Aerobatic Club's monthly publication, Sport Aerobatics. It is our feeling that all EAA members will enjoy reading of this aviation odyssey.

"Mrs. Sorg?" the voice on the phone questioned. "My name is Pierre Hollander."

It was mid-May and Hollander was telephoning the editor of *Sport Aerobatics* to learn if she would be interested in meeting him at the airport in Fond du Lac, WI, that Saturday, May 18, 1985. He explained he would tell her about the trip he was making in his Pitts S2B and the modifications he had made to for the junket. She quickly discerned that what he was doing was far from ordinary and agreed to meet the Swedish IAC member.

Piloting a low-time demonstrator

S2B, he was enroute across the United States. He then planned to hop the Atlantic Ocean via northeastern Canadian regions, Greenland, Iceland and Norway on his way home to Sweden. He definitely seemed serious about flying this single engine aerobatic aircraft of his with approximately 40 hours on it over open seas with minimum fuel reserve and stretches of no radio contact. She had to hear more about this!

Armed with tape recorder and camera, she met Hollander in the shop at the Fond du Lac Skyport mid-morning where he was busily engaged in changing the oil in his shiny red Pitts. It sported Swedair decals and instead of an N number as in the U. S., an SE number. Oil change completed, she gave him a lift into town to pick up a few items at the local supermarket, mostly fruit and some yogurt. She learned he's a vegetarian and also stays away from caffeinated beverages.

Back at the airport, he proceeded to fill in more details about his journey,

which had begun two days before in Portland, OR. It was there in April that he had bought his acro mount from IACer Bill Stone. Stone had given him (Hollander) a ride in it the previous fall during a visit to the area. "After that ride, I thought my S2A was a very old airplane," the captain with Swedair said.

He had been doing aerobatics with an S2A since 1977 — contests sponsored by IAC Chapter 22, some air shows and mostly just for fun flying of maneuvers. That S2A's shipment by sea from the U. S. to Sweden ended up taking more than three months, thanks to numerous frustrating delays, including icing conditions in New York City's harbor and then arranging for it to be flown to New Orleans where it sat on the docks awaiting a ship. He decided this time around he would ferry his aircraft himself all the way across the Atlantic — no more ocean voyage hassles for him. Cost was about the same in his judgment. Hence, here he was carrying out that decision.



Photo by Jean Sorg

Pierre Hollander and his well stocked instrument panels.

The major modification to his Pitts for the transatlantic flight in his estimation was the installation of a fiberglass ferry fuel tank, capable of holding 59 gallons. This took up the front seat. With it, he estimated he would have about 6 hours and 40 minutes of total endurance, maybe 7 hours if he'd practice good fuel management. He figured he would average about 140 knots and 13 gallons per hour during cruise. His longest leg would be around 6 hours; his greatest jump over water, 3-1/2 hours. It would be close to say the least. He'd not only have to conserve fuel but would also have to be blessed with good weather and minimum headwinds. And he'd have to stay on course.

His S2B came equipped with a VHF-VOR and transponder. He added another VOR, an ADF, a Loran C, an additional compass and gyros for direction and horizon determination, plus oxygen. The latter was for his jaunts at higher altitudes, particularly over the mountains of Greenland. He also figured the higher altitudes would help in his fuel management with the more favorable winds there increasing his speed. In addition, he imagined he might have to fly higher altitudes at times to be over the top of any poor to marginal VFR conditions.

Other special gear included a military issue rubber insulation suit complete with boots, a life raft which he was sitting on at all times and which was actually attached to him, and an extra ELT and VHF in his pockets. He did not have a parachute. He explained that it would be too complicated to sit on a chute and if he ditched in the water, he would sim-

ply climb out with the life raft. It was a calculated risk. Thoughts of pilots failing to bail out of aircraft with in-flight fires ran through the editor's mind.

His early route took him over the Rocky Mountains and the flat lands which he thoroughly enjoyed viewing in all their spectacle. "It was very exciting to see — so much land!", Hollander exclaimed. He would end up spending more than 20 hours transiting the North American continent in all. In his country

he could fly from east to west in about one and a quarter hours and from north to south in slightly more than five.

He spent several hours at the Pitts factory in Afton, WY, where he had a test pilot there check his compasses and rigging. Much of the time was spent getting the two compasses to agree with each other. "I was rather concerned about this because these were my primary navigation aids," he stated. Then he added, "After eight years of flying different Pitts machines, it felt like coming home when I got to the Pitts factory."

Although he tried to make Fond du Lac, WI — the site of the annual IAC International Aerobatic Championships — the same day, darkness caught up with him and forced him to stay overnight at Fillmore County Airport in northwest Wisconsin. No one appeared on the scene during his layover. His dinner menu was a vending machine snack; breakfast, oranges he had with him. Landing at Fond du Lac Skyport brought back memories of the 1979 IAC contest there when he competed in a borrowed Bellanca Citabria belonging to former IAC Vice President Steve Morris.

Hollander advised he planned flying eastward to New York state and then on north to New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Baffin Island. Next he'd head east again with stops slated for a U.S. Air Force Base in Greenland and the airports at Reykjavik, Iceland; Bergen, Norway and finally, Stockholm, Sweden. He promised to notify the editor upon his arrival at home and would follow up with some notes about the trip and maybe some pictures.

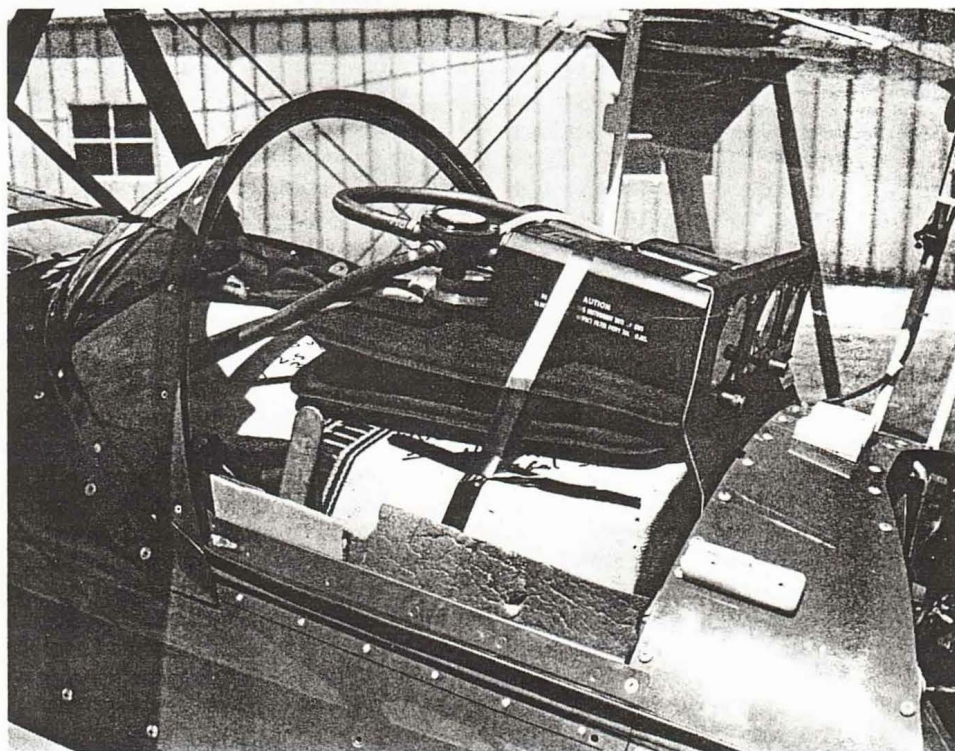


Photo by Jean Sorg

The 59 gallon ferry tank tightly stuffed into the front cockpit — with a secondary instrument panel taped to it.

During his interview with her, he related he now flies in the Advanced category and hoped to participate in some meets in England in late summer using a borrowed S2A. He did not feel he'd be accustomed enough yet to his S2B in 1985 to begin competing with it. Fond du Lac '86 might find him back at the Fondy event, providing someone would loan him another aircraft — this time, a Pitts.

Married and the father of three children, ages 8, 13 and 15, he claimed his wife and family were used to his involvement in aviation. Although it consumes much of his time, he has also taken up surfing in the summer and skiing in the winter. He runs regularly to keep in shape. Fluent in German, Swedish and English, he intended to begin studying French shortly.

With no aspirations to compete in the Unlimited category, he would not be attempting to enter any World Aerobatic Championship. For him aerobatics is fun, pure enjoyment. "When I started this in 1962, it gave me fun and it gave me some idea what the aircraft was supposed to do, not only fly from A to B," he related.

It has also increased his skills and knowledge with regards to flying in general he maintained, including providing him a helpful edge in his professional aviation career. During a night approach many years ago into Frankfurt, Germany, in a DC-3 behind a DC-8, he, his flight crew and 25 passengers found themselves almost upside down, sitting at an angle that was considerably more than knife-edge. "It took some forces to get it back to level flight and I think my knowledge in aerobatics at that time

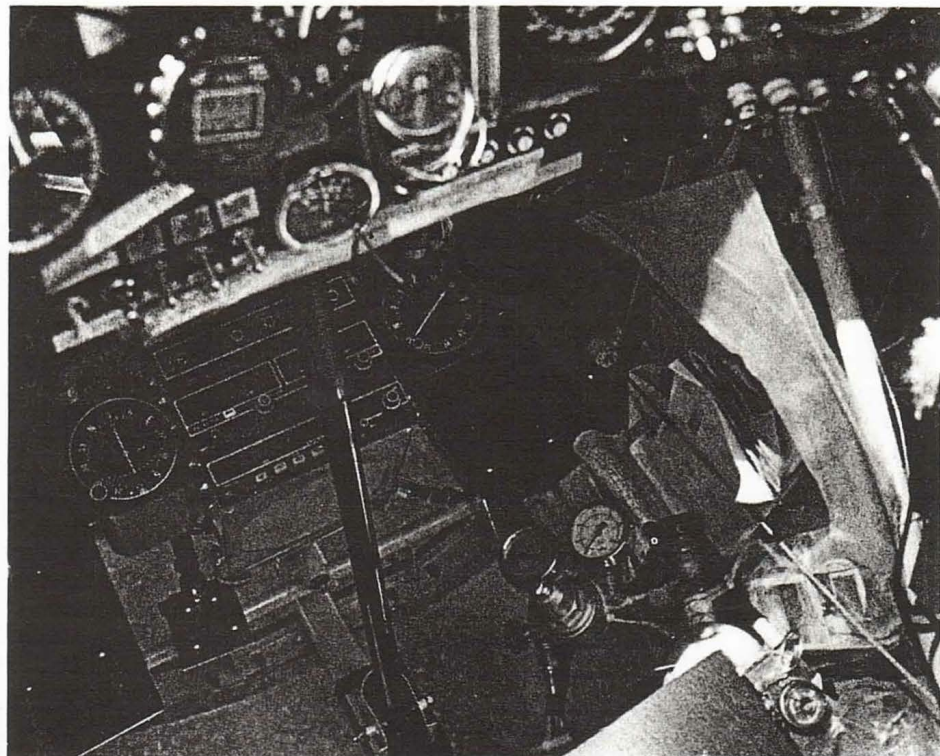


Photo by Jean Sorg

This view into the bowels of the Pitts reveals the oxygen bottle and associated plumbing, the Loran (at left) and the vertically mounted radio stack just ahead of the stick.

saved me a lot of problems during those few seconds of emergency," he commented.

When asked if he was not just a little apprehensive about piloting a single engine aircraft with so few hours on it and with such marginal endurance time over the open seas, his response was negative. As he put it, "No, I'm not worried about it. I gave it (the aircraft) a very close look in Portland. And up in Canada, I'm going to take the cowling

away once more and check it over." He went on to name the additional equipment and gear he would have on board as noted earlier and again promised to write about how he fared on the rest of his flight home.

Prior to his departure for Rochester, NY, we held a brief picture session on the ramp and exchanged waves and wishes for good luck. June came and went with no word from him. Concern began to mount but was quickly quelled with the arrival of a short note in July. He penned, "The flight of my life went almost as I planned it. Arrived here (Stockholm) May 25." He noted more details would follow. Sure enough, he sent a recorded message in the fall and pictures late in the year.

The rest of his cross-country over the States was uneventful it seemed, with the last half hour in the rain before touch down in New York. The following day dawned cold and clear and he headed for Bangor, ME. Monday found him and his Pitts passing the required Canadian inspections for single engine aircraft flights into the remote northern provinces as well as for ocean crossings.

VFR conditions prevailed as he progressed northward with a little fog only over the St. Lawrence. After refueling in Shefferville, Newfoundland, his next destination lay further north at Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island. "When I reached the Hudson Strait, I realized that the weatherman had been wrong," his voice on the tape recalls. "The visibility over the water was very poor so I turned 180 degrees back to Fort Chimo."

He spent two days there awaiting better weather. When his flight resumed, SPORT AVIATION 59



Photo Courtesy Pierre Hollander

Some of the frozen terrain Hollander traversed on his flight to Sweden.



Home at last in Sweden!

Photo Courtesy Pierre Hollander

he found himself flying above fog over the Hudson Strait for about an hour before he found a hole in the clouds where he could climb without "getting iced up". He ascended to 18,000 feet, ultimately through holes in cirrus clouds. Temperature was minus 18 degrees C. "It was cold after three hours of flying," he remarked. "And the insulation suit was not made for this weather — nor the Pitts. After 5 hours, 15 minutes, the cirrus was gone — good enough. The last 45 minutes was low over the water and icebergs to get some temperature into my body. I landed at nine minutes past five."

That meant it was nine minutes past closing time at the field in Greenland, causing him to have to pay an opening fee of approximately \$200. After refueling, he departed a bit angrily. He was upset not only over the fee but the fuel costs. Soon, however, his temperament changed or at least was soothed by the sight displayed over the barren icecap. "Flying for hours over the cap at nearly 8,000 feet, close to the ice in a long sunset, was very special," he reported.

Next stop was Reykjavik, Iceland — another jump of about six hours. Electrical problems and fuel starvation reared their ugly heads on that leg. Fortunately, he was able to recycle the alternator switch and restore electrical power to his radios again. "The over-voltage relay must have kicked out the alternator," he surmised. But just "when this was done, the engine stopped," he continued. "I was about 18 nautical miles west of Iceland . . . I had forgotten to change the tank selection to the main tank, but the reminder was clear.

Landed in Reykjavik at four in the morning after two times six-hour legs of flying from Canada."

Some sleep was called for on the agenda. Upon arising later that day he asked the local flying school to charge his biplane's battery. When a hangar door was opened, there sat another Pitts, an S2E with only 10 hours on it. He decided to stay overnight and visit with the flying club members. Visiting lasted until one, the ensuing morning.

May 24th promised good flying weather or so it appeared at first. He took to the air again bound for Norway on a northerly heading. However, in spite of the recommendations he had been given for his flight plan, a front loomed before him and forced him up to 17,000 feet after about 2-1/2 hours. "I was in the worst storm front I've ever been into," he observed. He went on with his narrative, "Freezing at about 1500 feet. I was cruising at very low altitude with visibility of less than two miles. The storm was hard! I could see the bottom of the few fishing boats I saw in the rough sea . . . so I climbed to just under freezing level between 1500 and 2000 feet. After four hours airborne I had a radar vector to the airport (in Norway)."

Upon landing, the flying club there stowed his S2B in a hangar and he spent the night in the home of one of its members. He was exhausted. Warm food, friendly conversation and rest helped repair that condition. He had only eaten fruit, basically, thus far during his flight. Tired as he was, he took time right after landing to send a message home to Stockholm via the air-

port's tower. Those on duty there told him how surprised they were to see a little biplane arriving from the west!

Rain greeted him in the morning, a lot of it and below VFR conditions. The highlands of Norway were in clouds, he learned, with snow falling. "I had had enough of ice, fog and clouds!", he declared. "So I planned to go south to the southern tip of Norway before crossing to Sweden and heading up to Stockholm . . . the flight started in rain and marginal VFR and ended in clear sunshine after four hours."

About 50 minutes before reaching his final destination, he flew over the airport where IAC Chapter 22 held its first contest in 1985. He couldn't land there because of the custom regulations, but he also couldn't resist doing a few loops and hammerheads. Family, friends and the press met him at journey's end. He had made it! He and his little red Pitts had successfully crossed the United States from west to east and the Atlantic Ocean to boot!

He said he owed a great deal of thanks to many. There were those who assisted him enroute and those who aided in the planning of the trip, including the American Embassy in Stockholm which had arranged for his landing clearance at the Air Force Base in Greenland. He never had to use it.

Would he cross the Atlantic again in another Pitts or any single engine plane for that matter? He indicated he felt the statistics are in his favor, but it would be in the month of August, instead of spring. Even June would be too early he felt. "It's too early in my June — too much fog up in the north," he explained.