

Book Review – The Flying Carpet **by Richard Halliburton**

Review by Chris Hope, Master CFI



A couple of months ago, I reviewed a book titled **Searching for the Epic of Flight – 107 Books Briefly Noted.**

This was a collection of 107 reviews of the author's favorite aviation books. I suggested that the book might be a worthwhile addition to an aviation library because it could lead to some great finds. So, I took my own advice, and I am glad I did so.

In the 1930's the name Richard Halliburton was on everyone's mind. He was an adventurer, a *bon vivant*, who traveled the world and lived the exciting life that us mere mortals long for. He vanished in 1939 on a sailing voyage around the world. But it was not just his adventures that brought him to everyone's mind – it was also the way he described them.

In 1930 he purchased a Stearman - A bit unusual since he did not know how to fly and had no intention of learning. He asked Moe Stephens, an expert airman of the time, to pilot the plane around the world for him, promising no pay but a lot of adventure. And from the opening paragraph, the reader knows that this will be an extraordinary adventure:

Ten thousand feet above the California hills. The airplane sailed through the sky with the ease and grace of a sea-gull. It hurdled the clouds, soared over the mountain tops, dived toward the sea and skimmed the waves. Two sets of

gleaming golden wings extended on either side of the scarlet body. The motor and cowling were shining black; the tail was as gold as the wings. And down each side of the body stretched a golden band, bearing in small black letters a name – The Flying Carpet. In this ship, with fleet lines and flashing colors, I was setting forth once again on the royal road to romance.

And what a romantic adventure. They fly from California to the east coast and pack the plane aboard a ship to France. Some re-assembly required. Then it is off to cross the straits of Gibraltar, enroute to Morocco. From Fez in Morocco, south across the Sahara to Timbuktu and north to spend time with the French Foreign Legion.

Where to next? Vienna? Budapest? Constantinople? Well, yes. Why not?

Long before we arrived at Constantinople I knew what I most wanted to see there – the Basilica of Santa Sophia. Pictures of this astonishing temple I had seen all my life. . And there it was, a mile below; a monarch commanding two continents. Approached from the air the great

seems to scorn all outward grace, relying on its enormous size and strength to capture one's eye.

And after Constantinople and Jerusalem they travel ever eastward, on to Baghdad and Tehran. And these are not the war-torn cities that we know today. These were the cities of ancient mystery as they still existed eighty years ago.

Passengers? It seems everyone had a chance to fly on a Flying Carpet. Aviation was still new in much of the

world, and if the Prince of Baghdad wanted to see his realm from the air, here was an opportunity.

Ever eastward, to view the Taj Mahal and Mount Everest. (but alas, not to fly over that mountain, only around it.) Then to Bangkok and south to Borneo. (Would the king of the local head-hunter clan like to fly? Just ask and it shall be so?)

Richard Halliburton most definitely possessed a Flying Carpet, and he is kind enough to take us along for the ride.

Chris loves to read, write, and fly, but not necessarily in that order

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And here are more favorites: www.ChrisHopeFAAFlightInstructor.com/books/books.html