

The Lighter-Than-Air Society

Newsletter

Issue #6 March 2011

New movie of the Graf Zeppelin 1929 World Tour in Cleveland Film Festival By Ron Syroid

Join the crowds and enjoy "Farewell," a new movie about the historic round the world adventure of the Graf Zeppelin. The Lighter-Than-Air-Society (LTAS) in Akron has partnered with the Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF) to promote the story, based on the writings of Lady Grace Drummond-Hay. As a journalist for Hearst newspapers, she was the only woman of 61 crew and passengers aboard the August 1929 voyage. Produced in the Netherlands and based on research by Gerard Nijssen the 2009 movie has had limited release, so the Cleveland showing is a rare opportunity.

Archival footage of the Graf Zeppelin on the ground and in flight, images of its luxurious interiors and operation, and majestic views and landscape scenery during the global trip, constitute the biggest part of the 90-minute movie in Black & White. The restored images of LZ-127 Graf Zeppelin are spectacular.

There are some reenacted scenes, and English actress Poppy Elliot provides the narration. It won an International Documentary Filmfest Amsterdam (IDFA) award for a full length movie.

It will be shown during the March 24-April 3, 2011 film festival at Tower City Cinemas in downtown Cleveland. The CIFF website at www.ClevelandFilm.org has the show times as 4:20 p.m. Saturday, March 26 and 11:20 a.m. Monday, March 28. The official FREE festival kickoff will be at 5:30 p.m. on March 16 at the Akron Civic Theatre, 182 S. Main St., with program schedules for all the movies.

While inspired by Lady Drummond-



Lady Grace Drummond-Hay aboard the Graf Zeppelin

Hay's life as well as her news stories and diary, it has some fictional elements. In 1920 Grace Marguerite Lethbridge, 25, had married Sir Robert Drummond-Hay, nearly 50 years older, who died in 1925. She began a career as a journalist but kept no diary. The emotional strain depicted on screen between her and Karl von Wiegand is imagined for human interest.

Director Ditteke Mensink explained, "Farewell tells the story of Lady Grace Drummond-Hay, the only female passenger on the first journey around the world of the Graf Zeppelin in 1929. Grace writes about her adventures on the journey, not only in articles in the Hearst Newspapers, as a reporter, but also in her diary. Traveling high in the sky, up over a world, in a way she has never experienced before, Grace changes. Her former lover Karl von Wiegand is amongst the other passengers. During her long voyage their love is once again tested. When the Zeppelin finally flies over New York, Lady Grace says goodbye to Karl and the lovers lose touch. Landing

in New York she is welcomed like a cinema star. In 1929 people were convinced this journey would be a splendid turning point in history. A few weeks later Wall Street crashed and a dark period in history began."

The director said she created the romantic farewell as a compelling story for the heart of the movie. So it is not a true documentary, although real people and the actual global tour provide the background story.

The young British widow did have an affair with von Wiegand. He was married and also a Hearst reporter and they were together on the circumnavigation flight. However, the movie portrays their tension during the journey and breakup after returning to Lakehurst, N.J. "Farewell" tells the tale of losses -- of their love affair, the exhilarating Roaring '20s Jazz Age, and the airship era. Her romance and reporting on a final journey around the world is the focus.

Lady Drummond-Hay and von Wiegand were veterans of flying in the Graf Zeppelin. Her avid passion for flight was fueled by events like Charles Lindberg flying solo from New York to Paris in May 1927. She was even an aviatrix and visited B. E. "Shorty" Fulton in Akron, in 1933, before buying an airplane.

The couple actually continued their affair beyond the historic trip until her death. In fact they covered the war in China and the South Pacific until being captured in 1942. They were released after World War II from a prison camp in the Philippines. Her health was weakened by exhaustion from the ordeal. She died a few months later in New York City, in Feb. 1946, and von Wiegand carried her ashes to England.

Reviews have praised "Farewell," for the excellent quality of the archival found film footage of the leviathan. Images of the lavish cabin and views of the oceans and snow-capped mountain peaks evoke a sense of awe. The rigid ship measured 776 feet in overall length.

The airship was the first to

circumnavigate the globe. Consequently, Lady Drummond-Hay was the first woman to cross the Pacific Ocean and fly around the world.

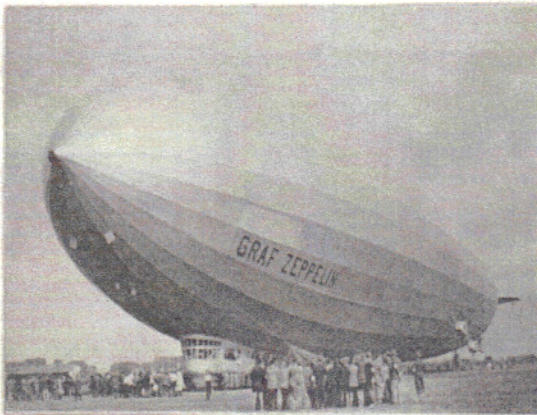
Graf Zeppelin did not get lost for two days without radio communication, as dramatically depicted in "Farewell." Nazi militants did not exist until Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich rose to power in January 1933. Oddly some scenes in "Farewell" are from the 1931 movie "Dirigible," directed by Frank Capra, with the USS Los Angeles airship and U.S. Navy uniforms.

The German airship did not land on the ocean for crucial repairs. No problems occurred on the round the world journey. The stabilizer tail fin was damaged on the transatlantic flight in Oct. 1928 while passing through a squall. The perilous repair was managed in flight, not while landing on the ocean. Coincidentally, both Hearst journalists were also traveling on the German airship then. They reported the experience, including a sudden nose dive that sent cups and plates zooming through the cabin and a two hour disruption in radio communication. Their news articles of the trip were assembled in a small booklet, and a reprint of it is among the 1,200 books in the LTAS collection at the Akron-Summit County Library.

The artistic and dramatic liberties are minor disparities in the movie. The great, silver airship flew over Europe, Russia, Siberia, Japan, and was the first to cross the Pacific Ocean before sailing over the United States. Graf Zeppelin also visited the Cleveland National Air Show and then soared over nighttime crowds in Akron on its return to the starting point of Lakehurst, N.J.

To watch the FAREWELL TRAILER, check our website, www.blimpinfo.com.

William Randolph Hearst paid about half the cost of the trip, and a



The Graf Zeppelin



Akron Beacon Journal Archives / The Graf Zeppelin flying over Akron

documentary of the flight premiered in New York City on Nov. 2, 1929. That film was restored for the UCLA Film Festival in 1993.

Take a flight of fancy with Graf Zeppelin. Be filled with wonder.

Are your dues up to date?

Check your mailing address on this newsletter to see when your current dues expire.

We save the Society money by not mailing reminders.

Tom Crouch has joined our Board

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Thomas Crouch, senior curator of the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. has agreed to be an honorary board member of The Lighter-Than-Air Society. Dr. Crouch, a Dayton native, was the guest speaker at our annual dinner in November of 2010. During his trip to Akron, Dr. Crouch also gave a talk about "The Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright" at the Akron-Summit County Public Library. Dr. Crouch toured the collection of books and documents owned by the LTAS and are housed by the Akron Library.

Dr. Crouch has always been interested in flight and has studied and written about the history of flight from 1783 to present day. His latest book is *Lighter-Than-Air; an Illustrated History of Balloons and Airships* (2009).

Our membership welcomes Dr. Crouch to our organization.

Up ship - Our Website is back!

Finally our website is up and flying again. You can view the website by typing in:

www.lighterthanairsociety.org

Or if you prefer, you can still use:

www.blimpinfo.com

The site features recent news, upcoming events, some basic information about the Society and airships in general. There is an online membership application form that can be downloaded and mailed in. We have added links to other sites of interest and we have included a "Donate button" that allows guests to make electronic transfers to the Society using PayPal at no additional cost to them.

Check out the website and use the "Contact Us" feature to leave us feedback and be sure to include any suggestions you have for items to add to the site.

Smithsonian Museum donates books to the LTAS Special Collections at ASCPL

The National Air and Space Museum Archives have donated several books to the Lighter-Than-Air Society Special Collection which is housed at the Akron Summit County Public Library in downtown Akron. The books are from the collection of Captain Garland Fulton.

Captain Fulton was born in Mississippi on May 6, 1890. He was one of the U.S. Navy's leading proponents of lighter-than-air (LTA) flight. After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1912, Fulton served with the Navy and then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he received a master's degree in 1916. He had studied naval architecture and aeronautical engineering.

Fulton began service at the Bureau of Aeronautics when that organization was founded in 1921. In 1922, Lieutenant Commander Fulton was sent to Europe to assist in negotiations for the purchase of the "Reparations Airship" to replace the German rigid airships that had been awarded to the United States by the Versailles Treaty but were destroyed by their crews before transfer to the U.S. As the head of the Bureau's Lighter-Than-Air Design Section, Fulton oversaw the design and construction of the USS *Akron* (ZRS-4) and the USS *Macon* (ZRS-5). He was instrumental in furthering the acceptance of large airships in both the Navy and in commerce. Under his guidance, expansion of the Navy's non-rigid airship (blimp) program was initiated in the years prior to the United States' entry into World War II.

Garland Fulton retired from the Navy with the rank of captain in 1940. In later years he was an unofficial consultant to the Navy and industry on LTA issues.

He died on October 24, 1974 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



Captain Garland Fulton

Some of the books which were donated are:

1. *The Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers Transactions, Volume 75.*
2. *Adventures in the Navy, in Education, Science, Engineering and in War: A Life Story* by W.F. Durand, 1953.
3. *The Great White Fleet* by Robert A. Hart, 1965.
4. *Navy Yearbook, 1917 and 1918*, compiled by Archibald Oden, Jr., 1919.
5. *Kitty Hawk to Sputnik to Polaris: the inside story of the struggle for air and space supremacy by a pioneer aviator*, by Eugene E. Wilson, 1960.
6. *The Zeppelin Story* by Thor Nielsen, 1955.
7. *Structural Design of Warships*, by William Hovgaard, 1915.
8. *Flying Machines: Construction and Operation* by W.J. Jackman and Thomas H. Russell, 1910.
9. *Aerial Navigation: the Practicality of Traveling Pleasantly and Safely from New York to California in Three Days* by Rufus Porter, 1848, reprint in 1935.

The entire list of books can be viewed on our website www.blimp.info.com

Annual Banquet and Dinner held in November

The Lighter-Than-Air Society held its 58th Annual Banquet on Saturday, November 6, 2010 at the Paul Martin University Center on the campus of the University of Akron. More than 75 people attended the dinner.

The guest speaker for the evening was Dr. Tom D. Crouch, Senior Curator of the Division of Aeronautics at the National Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.

Raised in Dayton, Ohio, he has served both the National Air and Space Museum and the National Museum of American History in a variety of curatorial and administrative posts since 1974.

Prior to coming to the Smithsonian he was employed by the Ohio Historical Society as Director of Education (1969-1973) and as Director, Ohio American Revolution Bicentennial Advisory Commission. (1973-1974).

Tom holds a BA from Ohio University, an MA from Miami University and a Ph.D. from the Ohio State University. All of his degrees are in history. He also holds the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Wright State University.

Tom has written several award-winning books, including *Eagle Aloft: Two Centuries of the Balloon in America* and *The Bishop's Boys: A Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright*. His other works include *A Dream of Wings: Americans and the Airplane, 1875-1905*; *Apollo: Ten Years Since Tranquillity Base*; and *Charles Lindbergh: An American Life*.

Tom Crouch has won a number of major writing awards, including the history book prizes offered by both the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and The Aviation/Space Writers Association.

Throughout his career, he has also played a major role in planning exhibits and managing museum collections. Before he joined the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., he was involved in planning exhibitions for the Neil Armstrong



Dr. Tom D. Crouch

Museum in Wapakoneta, Ohio and the Ohio Historical Center in Columbus.

President Clinton appointed Dr. Crouch to the Chairmanship of the First Flight Centennial Federal Advisory Board, and organization created to advise the Centennial of Flight Commission on activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of powered flight in 2003.

James R. Shock honored

James R. Shock, an LTAS Honorary Board member and Airship Historian, was the recipient of the P. Rendall Brown Lifetime Achievement Award.

This award is presented to those individuals who have devoted a lifetime to service to the Lighter-Than-Air Society, during which time they have dedicated themselves to preserving the history of buoyant flight and promoting the public awareness and appreciation of the technology and the value of it to humankind.

Jim was an expert on airships and airship hangars. He passed away on October 5, 2010. Jim's wife Pat accepted the award at the banquet and many of his family members were also on hand at the banquet.

To see more about Mr. Shock and the award see the website, www.blimp.info.com.

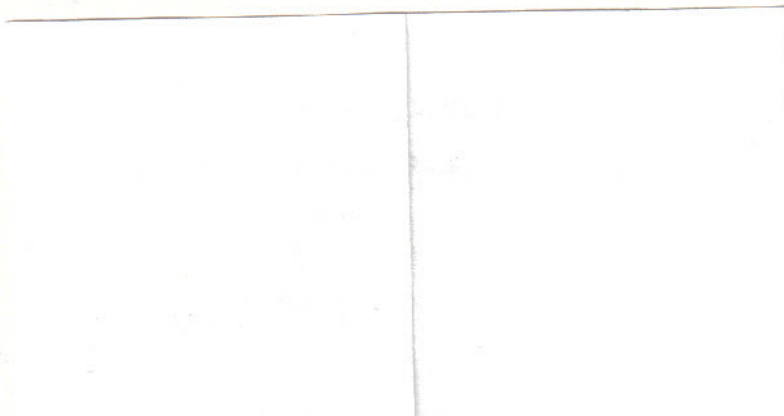


THE LIGHTER-THAN-AIR SOCIETY
526 SOUTH MAIN ST. STE 406
AKRON, OHIO 44311
U.S.A.



PRESORT STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
AKRON, OH
PERMIT NO. 1113

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



PURPOSE: To further knowledge pertaining to the history, science and techniques of buoyant flight; to encourage the use of lighter-than-air transportation; and to establish and maintain a library and museum on lighter than air.

Everyone is welcome to join

The LTA Society Membership Application

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Email address _____

Types of membership available:

- ☐ Active Membership, U.S. & Canada: \$25 per year
- ☐ Student Membership, U.S. & Canada: \$15 per year
- ☐ Active Membership, **all other countries:** \$35 per year
- ☐ Benefactor Membership: \$100+ per year

-
- ☐ New Membership
 - ☐ Renewal
 - ☐ **Please note:** My address has changed to the one written above

Please mark your envelope **ATTN: NEW MEMBERSHIP** or **ATTN: RENEWAL** to speed processing.

Make checks or money-orders in U.S. funds payable to **The Lighter-Than-Air Society** and mail to:

THE LIGHTER-THAN-AIR SOCIETY, 526 S. MAIN ST., STE. 406, AKRON OH 44311 U.S.A.