

# Skippers of the skyways

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# SKIPPERS OF THE SKYWAYS

Some three years ago, we had the proud experience to see for the first time *SWISSAIR* machines flying over this great Metropolis.

Since then hundreds of flights, in all weather conditions, have been made without the slightest mishap.

Hundreds of our compatriots have since flown in golden sunshine or high above the clouds back to our homeland, in perfect comfort.

These golden hours high up in the skies are for many of us an unforgettable experience and are kept as treasured memories.

Thanks for all this should go in the first place to those fearless and highly skilled pilots of the *Swissair*, and we venture to publish here with the photographs of these messengers from home, together with a few biographical notes, thanking them at the same time for having piloted us in safety for thousands of miles.



**Capt. Ernst Nyffenegger.**

Born September 1900 in H<sup>och</sup>stetten/Canton Berne, made his *breret* as military pilot in 1923. He was a pilot of "Balair" from 1926-1930; when this Company amalgamated with the "Ad Astra Aero" to form the *Swissair* he continued his services with the new Company. He is the oldest pilot employed in civil aviation in Switzerland, and since the death of Walter Mittelholzer, is chief of *Swissair's* navigation department.

He has flown over 30 different types of planes from the small Klemm-Daimler up to the 21 seater Douglas DC3. He was the first to operate the Lockheed Orion four seater when his Company, in 1932, put two of these machines into service on the Zurich-Munich-Vienna route.

In October 1936 Capt. E. Nyffenegger accomplished a million flying kilometers in civil aviation and was awarded a cash-prize and a medal from the Swiss Air Ministry, as presented to all pilots on this occasion.

The first *Swissair* millionaire was Capt. J. Schaer who retired in 1936.

By the end of September 1938 Capt. E. Nyffenegger had flown 1,258,619 km.



**Capt. Alfred Künzle.**

Born in 1902 in Konstanz.

As a small boy he took a keen interest in aviation and desired to become a pilot. He succeeded in receiving admission to the School of Military Pilots and obtained his *breret* in 1925. In 1927 he was awarded a prize in an acrobatic competition at an aeronautical meeting, and for

some time he acted as flying instructor. In 1929 he was engaged as a pilot of the Ad Astra-Aero and he accompanied Walter Mittelholzer as second pilot to Africa on the hunting flight of Baron Rothschild. These two men were the first to overfly the Kilimandjaro. Numerous are his flights over the Alps.

The figure of total kilometers flown by A. Künzle at the end of September 1938 was 1,156,568, having been honoured as a millionaire in October 1937.

Capt. A. Künzle assists Capt. E. Nyffenegger as head of the navigation dept. — He is married and father of three children and in his spare time likes hunting.



**Capt. Franz Zimmermann.**

Born in 1901 in Mitlödi/Glarus.

Like many of his colleagues he made his apprenticeship as a skilled mechanic and later attended the school of military pilots. In 1929 he was appointed a pilot of the "Ad Astra." After the amalgamation with the "Balair," from which the *Swissair* emerged, he became a pilot of the latter Company. Together with Capt. E. Nyffenegger he was one of the first to fly the Lockheed Orior. He was frequently charged with special flights and his name is well-known. He accomplished his millionth kilometer in January 1937, and at the end of September 1938, the figure totalled 1,346,539.

Like his cousin B. Zimmermann, director of *Swissair* who died last year, he is very keen on chamois-hunting.



**Capt. Walter Ackermann.**

Born in 1903.

He was appointed a pilot of the "Ad Astra Aero" in 1927 and won in that year the national prize for acrobatics at the International Aeronautical Meeting in Zurich. The following year he flew the Zurich-Berlin non stop route with a good regularity. He experienced the rapid development from the days of the old-one-engined planes without wireless to the aircraft of to-day with all the modern equipment including robot-pilots. In September last year he joined the ranks of the *Swissair* millionnaires. He specialises in Alpine flights.

Walter Ackermann is not only an experienced pilot, but he is also a splendid author, and he has written a number of books which have met with great success.

Km. flown at the end of September 1938: 1,220,010.



**Capt. Walter Borner.**

Walter Borner is a French-Swiss and before his engagement as a pilot of *Swissair* was director of "Aero-Traffic S.A." in Geneva. He has flown on all the various *Swissair* routes and has 1,033,130 flying km. to his credit (figure of 30th September 1938).

Walter Borner always takes his holidays in winter, being an accomplished skier and very fond of this sport.



**Capt. O. Heitmanek.**

Born in 1903 in Ragaz.

A military pilot, he was working for some time in the automobile trade. Before going to the U.S.A. in spring 1929 he spent three months in England. As a pilot of Curtiss Wright, New York Airways and other concerns O. Heitmanek acquired valuable experience in day and night flying and on his return to Switzerland he was engaged by *Swissair* and in the first place entrusted with the night air mail service Basle-Frankfort. This does not exclude, of course, his flying on the day routes as well and the route to London is his favourite.

Total of km. flown by the end of September 1938: 1,056,335 km.

Otto Heitmanek goes in chiefly for swimming and tennis in summer, and in winter skiing up at Davos or St. Moritz.



**Robert Fretz.**

Born in 1901.

Robert Fretz had already covered a good number of kilometers as pilot on the regular air lines of the "Ostschweiz. Aero Gesellschaft." When *Swissair* took over the services of this Company in April 1937 he joined the *Swissair* staff and he was glad to find a wider field of activity.

Robert Fretz takes much interest in art, chiefly music and painting.

At the end of September 1938 the figure of km. flown was 516,600.