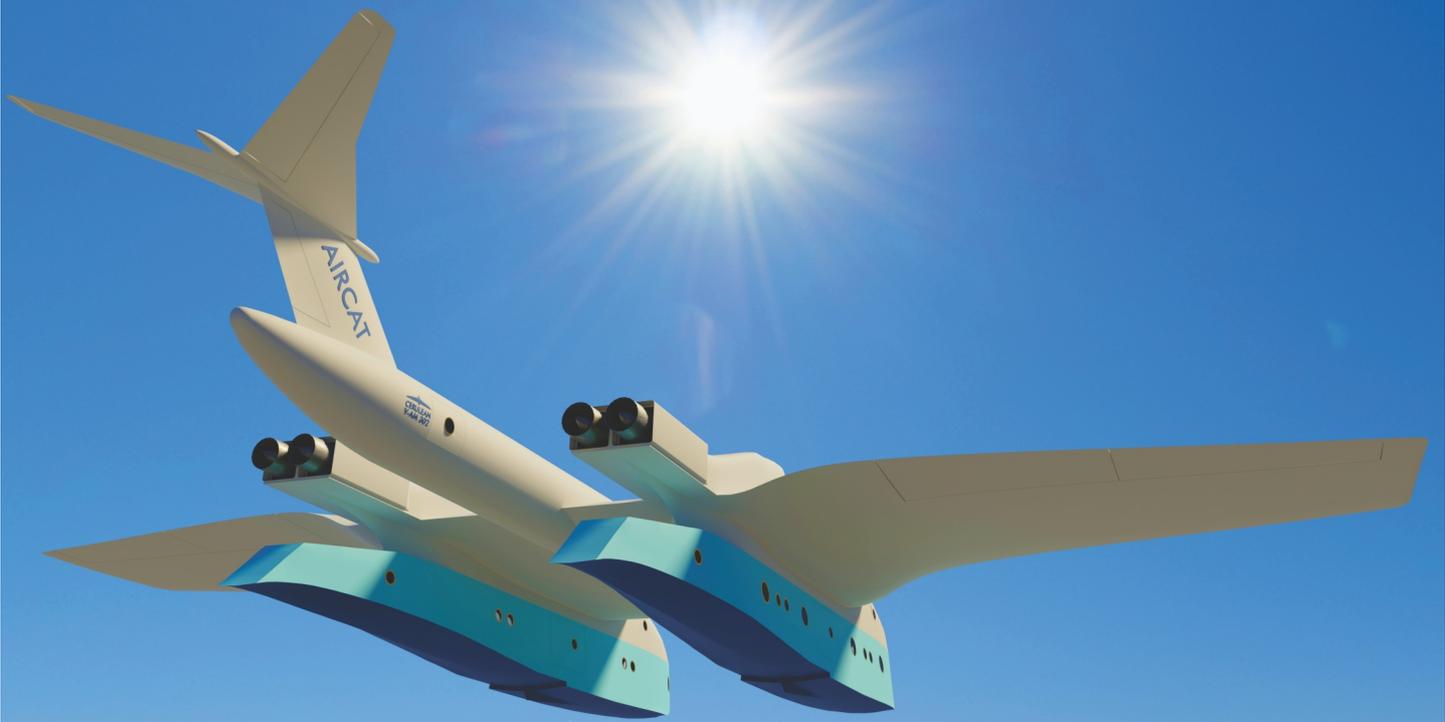


AIRCAT OCEANIC



CERULEAN

CHARLOTTE

An Amazing Aerospace short story by Rupert W Brown

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“Amazing Aerospace” is a project where Rupert reimagines aircraft of the past and imagines what the future holds for human space exploration. These short stories (the burning line series) are to illustrate how people interacted with and will interact with these airships, aeroplanes and space craft. This story focusses on the Aircat Oceanic, a twin hulled jet powered flying boat, active from 1950 to 1970.

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CHARLOTTE

“I had no idea that what you just did was even possible, especially in a bunk this small. I am in awe of your aptitude.”

Charlotte said nothing but shifted her position a little. He caught the glorious post-coital aroma of honeyed almonds as she moved the sheet.

He uncoupled for a moment to open the cabin’s tiny window, before taking a drink of water. He relaxed back into the bed, pulling Charlotte closer. She let out a little moan but slept on. He could smell the pungent but compelling odour of the little cabin, the musk of Charlotte’s hair, the ozone and salt of the breeze that sauntered through the window. Light spots, reflected from the water, danced on the cabin ceiling and he heard the gentle lapping of waves against the side of the boat.

Thanks to a youth spent at boarding school, he had always hated Sundays. There was that detestable time of 5 pm when all would come to an end, and the haul back to the dormitory would begin. But more recently Sunday afternoons, thanks entirely to Charlotte, had become a haven, a place for his soul to heal and replenish. Now Sunday afternoons were the best times of his life. He lay there hoping, praying for time to stop so that this moment would last forever, even though he knew it wouldn’t. But then he didn’t mind too much. Typically life gives you a whole stack of memories that range from mediocre at best, to downright unpleasant. But now he had a glorious memory, something that was his and that he could return to whenever he liked. It was better than gold.

Their time off was coming to an end. They would be required back on duty soon. One thing he did know was that Charlotte would need tea, and he would be her manly lover and go and get it. He slipped out of the tiny bunk and, as quietly as he could, retrieved his trousers and shirt. He listened at the cabin door. There being no obvious noises, he opened the door and moved swiftly and silently down the corridor to repeat the process at the next door, the Sun Deck. Voices, and the clink of glasses meant that some of the passengers were enjoying the deck. He swept a hand through his hair, and straighten his shirt, then, as casually as he could manage, opened the door and strolled across the room to the spiral staircase. Mrs Briggs and Mrs Henderson stopped chatting and looked at the young man. He smiled back and made a small bow before escaping up the stairs.

‘Do you think he comes under the section in the brochure marked “on board entertainments”?’ Mrs Briggs whispered to Mrs Henderson.

‘I dare say he does,’ Mrs Henderson replied, ‘but, I fear, not for the likes of us my dear. Oh to be young again!’

‘Well, looking back over the years I don’t think we’ve done *too* badly. You had your Maharaja.’

'And you your Arabian Prince, but there is always room for a little more, always room.'

John, who was on bar duty, just shook his head and then refreshed the Gin & Tonics of Mrs Briggs and Mrs Henderson.

Once up the stairs he quickly crossed the dining room and ducked behind the Singapore Bar to get to the hot water boiler. Chef was there, just starting the prep for the evening dinner service. He noted the two mugs and smiled.

'Make the most of it son. It will soon be over.'

Tea secured and back in the cabin, he gently kissed Charlotte.

'Time to wake up. We'll be back on duty soon. I have tea.' He wafted it under her nose. She opened her eyes, slid herself up the pillow and took the tea from him. She said nothing till she was halfway through the contents of the mug.

'What time is it?'

'Hey, how about "Thanks for the tea?"'

'Thanks for the tea, What time is it?'

'About 4:45.'

'Oh my God! Why didn't you wake me earlier! I've got to get ready, I'll be late.'

She wiggled out of the bunk and stood up, quite naked. He was sitting on the opposite bunk. Her pubic hair was now exactly at his head height, so he did what every red blooded man would do and buried his face in it.

'Stop that! We've got to get to work.'

'Gosh you smell good.'

She pushed him away. He watched as his favourite follicles disappeared into a pair of white cotton knickers. She put on her uniform skirt and shirt. He realised that she was even more desirable with clothes on. He was having trouble keeping his trousers from exploding.

'Marry me,' he said.

She said nothing while she hunted around for her hairbrush.

'Marry me, I'm serious.'

'You think you are because I'm seriously hot and have sex with you. I don't think that is a good enough reason.'

'It's not just that, although that sounds like a really good reason. I love you.'

'Ha! I think you're confusing the burning sensation you get in your loins with what should be a far deeper emotion.'

'Oh, and I suppose you're an expert on this are you?'

'No, but that is my whole point. I'm too young. You're too young. You haven't clue what you want or where you're going. I don't either, but I'm beginning to understand how I figure out what I do want.'

'Well, couldn't we figure it together?'

'No, because straight away that implies compromise. I'm not ready to compromise anything yet. I want to be clear about my own path before I take a detour for some man.'

'But we'd be stronger together wouldn't we?'

'Maybe, but it's not something I want. Neither of us have any money, resources. If we got married where would we live and what would we live on? After tomorrow you haven't even got a job.'

'Yes, but I can get another job.'

'I already have something lined up.'

She paused and looked at him.

'Look, it's lovely that you feel that way. In the sack you really do rock my boat. But, at the moment that is not enough. I want to do something, be something and that doesn't include washing a man's underwear, sucking his cock, looking after his kids and cooking dinner.'

'Wow, don't hold back, tell me how you really feel.'

'Men always want to possess.'

'But you know me. I wouldn't be like that!'

'You say that now. Anyway, bugger off. I've got to fix my hair and you need to straighten yourself out. You haven't even got your knickers on.'

'OK, OK, I'm going, but please don't leave tomorrow without saying goodbye. And at least let me write to you.'

'Go.'

As he left the cabin, Liz came in. She had spent the afternoon in a bikini and sarong flirting with some of the older male passengers on the starboard Sun Deck.

'Everything OK,' she enquired of Charlotte.

'Yes, all good,' Charlotte replied and smiled. 'All good.'

He made his way back to the male crew cabin on the starboard side of the boat and smartened himself up. Then he reported in to Chief Steward Diane and started his evening routine. The first job was to get everybody back on board. A few of the passengers had taken one of the little boats and made the short trip across Crab Bay to Hamilton Island. He took the other boat and went after them. They weren't hard to spot, the check pattern of their picnic blanket standing out against the gold sand of the beach. It was going to be another beautiful evening in paradise and he was in the middle of it in his little boat on Azure waters.

The beach party were very pleased to see him. Champers, cold chicken and terrine, and Gin & Tonics, had left them quite incapable of launching their own boat. They had swashed all their buckles and were quite exhausted. He gently coaxed them into life jackets and divided the party between the two little boats, which he had tied together. Then slowly he motored back to Aircat. A giggly young woman kept touching his knee and dropping hints about which cabin she was in, even though he knew her newly wed husband was just behind them in the other little boat.

He moored at the port Sun Deck. John helped him disembark the passengers. Mrs Briggs and Mrs Henderson, now a full nine sheets to wind, thought it was all great sport and screeched with laughter as the equally intoxicated beach party stumbled their way aboard. She was chuckling so much, Mrs Briggs managed to rock her sun chair to the edge of the deck and then capsized into the sea. He had to jump in after her and with a hand pushing up on her

bottom, and John pulling her arms they recovered the very wet but rather thrilled madame. Diane had heard the commotion and took the two ladies back to their cabin to “dress for dinner”. He had to get back to the male crew cabin to get dry clothes before starting his rounds of the cabins.

Each of the cabins in the port and starboard hulls had to be visited. This was to see if they needed anything, remind them when dinner would be served, and to ensure that everybody was accounted for. It's generally not good practice to leave people on islands or just floating around. After that he was to do whatever Chef needed him to do back in the dining room. Charlotte was already there looking stunning as usual. He had no idea how she did it but one small adjustment of her hair, one tweak to her shirt and she was Grace Kelly-class beautiful. It was the way she wiggled her bottom when she walked ... he couldn't watch. Chef wanted him to prepare vegetables which came as welcome relief.

Chef's menu for that evening was “Fried Fish a la Mexicaine with steamed potatoes”, a classic roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, or a “Canard a la Maison”. Chef was an excellent fisherman. He was not so good at recognising fish species, so when something turned up that he didn't recognise, it always ended up as “Mexicaine”. “Canard” was more of a reference to seabirds in general. It turns out that spatchcock seagull can be edible. Chef swears that there is a great tradition of eating seabird, but then he does come from Totnes.

Dinner service over, John went to the Salon and played Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue for a few of the passengers. Diane set up “To Catch a Thief” in the Cinema Room. Charlotte was kept busy looking after the bar down by the Sun Deck, while he got lumbered with most of the washing up. Much later they sat together in the Chef's office. Chef opened one of the Kitchen Resupply Doors so they had a view of the sea and the stars in this beautiful and peaceful place. He also opened a bottle of Laphroaig to toast their last night of the tour. Even the Captain joined them for that. He managed to get a kiss and a cuddle out of Charlotte before they dispersed for bed. He wasn't sure whether that made him feel better or worse.

He was up early the next morning. A flying day required everybody to be on deck. He was in a little boat between the hulls waiting for the supply lighter to appear. He heard it before he saw it, as it chugged its way from Airlie Beach. Jobs to do included exchanging mail, pumping out the toilets, picking up the boat's rubbish and filling the fuel tanks. He liked helping out with those jobs. They left him with a feeling of satisfaction, well, apart from the toilets. Once the jobs were done and the First Officer had given them the all clear, the lighter chugged away. He helped the First Office do his inspection from the little boat, and then another inspection from the top of the wings. Then he had to stand and watch for trouble as the Captain fired up the Auxiliary Power Units. They sputtered into life and after a short while ran smooth and quiet. He ducked back into the Dining Room to help prepare for take off.

Most of the passengers liked to be strapped into the chairs in their rooms. The big windows afforded the best views. He was on station in the port stairwell, ready to open the Sun Deck

doors should anything go wrong. Diane confirmed for the Captain that everybody was onboard and secured, and seconds later the boat was full of the sound of the Hunter Wraith turbojets starting, and what a noise! They shattered the peace of Crab Bay, but was it exciting. The Captain nudged the throttles just enough to turn the boat into the wind, paused for a second, then opened the throttles on all four engines. Within a few seconds Aircat was moving faster than any ship ever could. The twin hulls lifted from the water and the Captain kept both hulls on the step while the boat gathered speed, and then Aircat was up, soaring into the sky of a perfect day.

Whenever he could he would just sit by a window and watch the Earth go by. He loved the colours, the forms, the light. Not unsurprisingly, flying boats like flying above the water. The land is not really their friend. The Captain flew a south bound route that skirted the east coast of Australia, only straying inland at Sydney to shorten the distance to Melbourne.

All too soon Port Phillip Bay was beneath them. The Captain circled the city of Melbourne and then made his approach into Hobsons Bay. He let Aircat skim the water, a sight the flying boat devotees just loved and there were plenty of them watching. Aircat elegantly came to rest on the water, then they cruised to Princes Pier and tied up. Now it was all hands to help the passengers disembark.

He spent the next two hours lugging suitcases out of cabins and into waiting taxis. The passengers took ages saying goodbye to each other, swapping address, hugging and generally wishing it would never come to an end. But that was all good he supposed, so much better than rushing to be away.

By the time he got back aboard his worst fear were realised. Charlotte had slipped away. Liz was there.

'She had to go, had to get on another plane.'

'To where?'

'She didn't say, but she left you a note.'

Liz handed him an envelope.

'Thanks.'

Liz gave him a hug and then she too disappeared down the pier and into Melbourne. People are there. You can touch them, hug them, enjoy their smile. And then they're not. There is just an emptiness, a hole surrounded by raw painful tissue that takes an age to heal, and often never truly does.

He put the note in a pocket and went to find Diane. Diane wanted him to stay an extra day to help clean out the boat before it went for servicing in the hangers at Fisherman's Bend. Out of pity she said it was OK for him to spend the last night in Charlotte's bunk. She wouldn't need the cabin. She had a hot date in Melbourne.

After dinner he drank too much whisky with Chef and then retired to the female crew cabin. He could smell Charlotte on the sheets. When he closed his eyes he could see her again, curled up with him in that little cot. He remembered the note.

Goodbye darling, got to go. Next adventure awaits.

It's like I said, I'm not sure what I want, but I'm working on how to find out. I think deep down you understand.

It's something about love, sex and a fulfilling life, but when they all come together. I know it's not wishful thinking. It's just takes real work to find.

It was great spending the Summer with you. I'll never forget. And this isn't the end. There's an address you can write to me, and if we are to be together we'll meet again, you'll see.

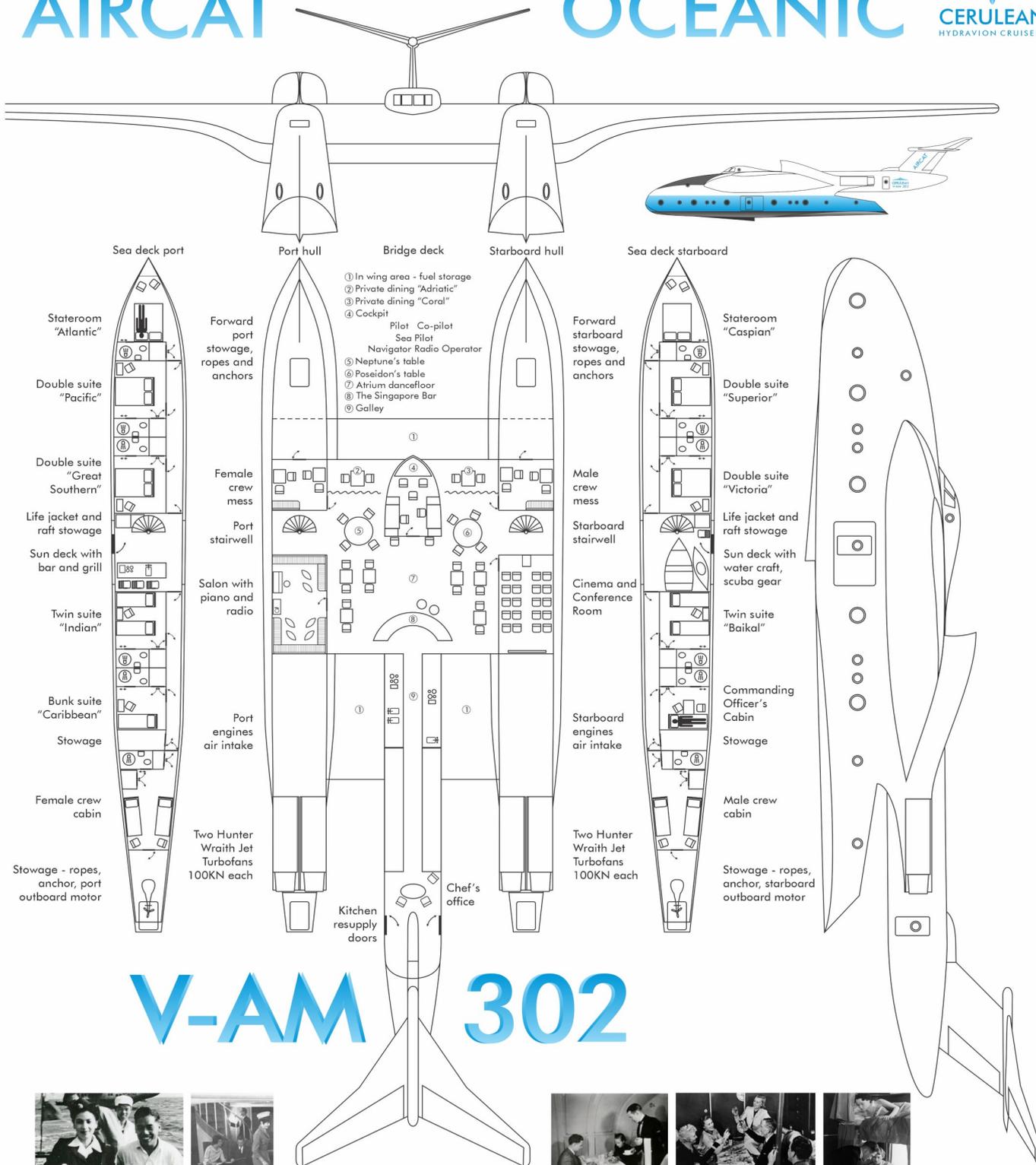
x x x Charlotte

He sat dumb for a full half hour. But by the end he knew what he had to do. He had to build a life, a life that Charlotte would want to share. There was now a burning line that connected him to her, a driving, passionate force. He had to follow that line.

The End – 2794 words

AIRCAT

OCEANIC



V-AM 302



Our magnificent crew - professionals on land, on water and in the air



The stairwell - link between the Sea and Bridge decks



Private dining Adriatic style



Entertaining on the Bridge deck



Silver service in the Bunk Suite Caribbean

DRAWN BY <i>Ryff</i> CHIEF ENGINEER			
NAME: AIRCAT OCEANIC V-AM 302			
CLASS: AIRCAT	TYPE: HYDRATION CRUISER		
CERTIFICATION: DAY/NIGHT, ALL WEATHER, SEA OPERATIONS <small>Permit 302/2P.6 SER. 532.6</small>			
PASSENGERS: 18	CREW: 9		
LENGTH: 49M	HULL BEAM: 4M		
WINGSPAN: 62M	EMPTY WEIGHT: 91 TONNES		

AIRCAT - A CERULEAN HYDRATION CRUISER

JET TURBOFANS BY:

SEACRAFT AND ENGINES BY:

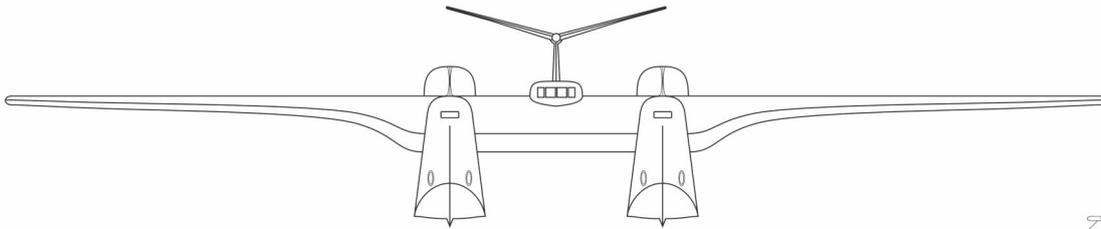
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SEA SAFETY EQUIPMENT BY:

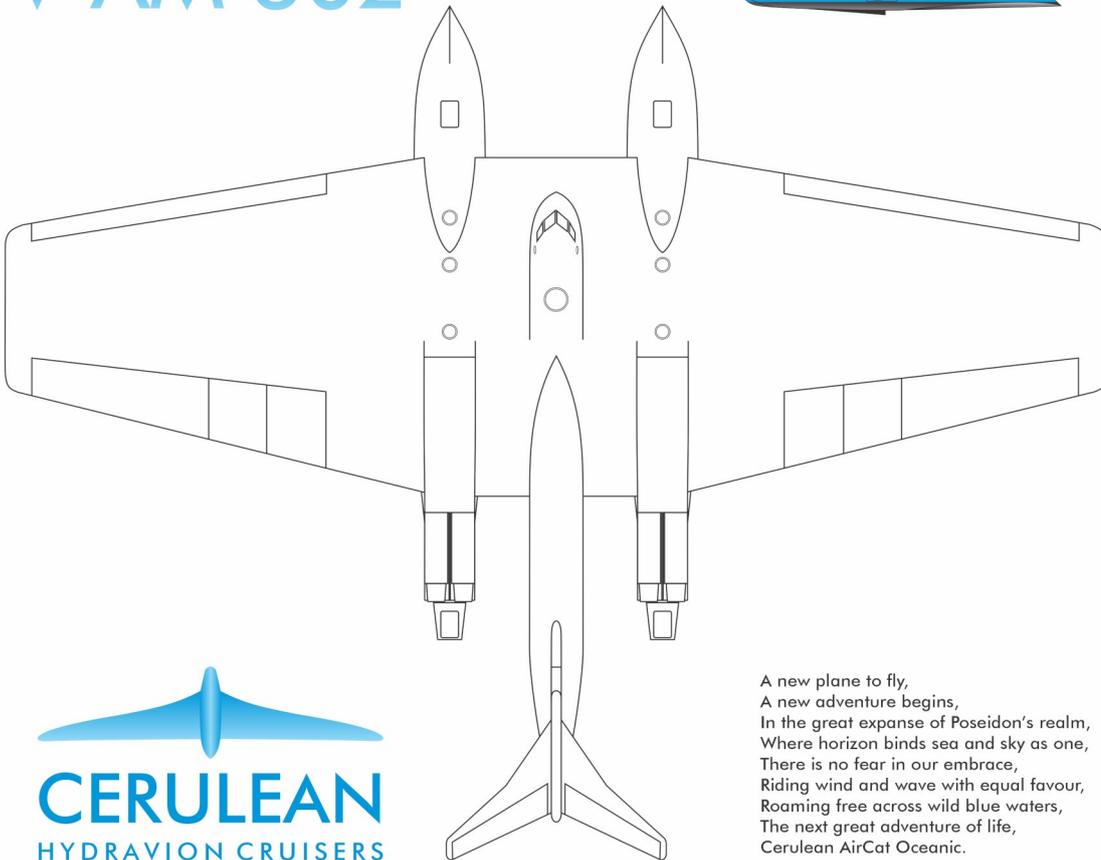
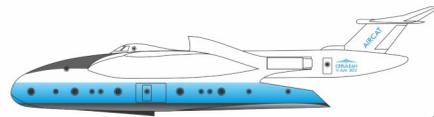
AVIONICS AND CONTROL SYSTEMS BY:

INTERIOR DESIGN BY:

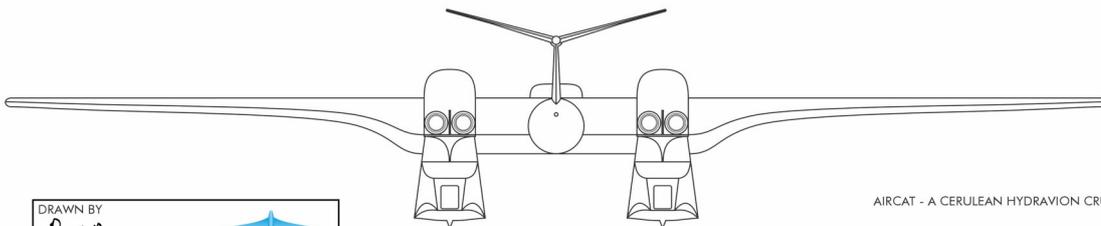
AIRCAT OCEANIC



V-AM 302



A new plane to fly,
A new adventure begins,
In the great expanse of Poseidon's realm,
Where horizon binds sea and sky as one,
There is no fear in our embrace,
Riding wind and wave with equal favour,
Roaming free across wild blue waters,
The next great adventure of life,
Cerulean AirCat Oceanic.



DRAWN BY 		
CHIEF ENGINEER		
NAME: AIRCAT OCEANIC V-AM 302		
CLASS: AIRCAT	TYPE: HYDRAVION CRUISER	
CERTIFICATION: DAY/NIGHT, ALL WEATHER, SEA OPERATIONS		
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WINGSPAN: 62M	EMPTY WEIGHT: 91 TONNES	

AIRCAT - A CERULEAN HYDRAVION CRUISER



JET TURBOFANS BY: 

SEACRAFT AND ENGINES BY: 

AIRFRAME AND ASSEMBLY BY: 

SEA SAFETY EQUIPMENT BY: 

AVIONICS AND CONTROL SYSTEMS BY: 

INTERIOR DESIGN BY: 

The Party



Has Arrived!

AIRCAT
SOUTH PACIFIC

