

THE NINETY-NINER

No. 3

December 15, 1932

Staying Up There by Twos

When one person met another on the street during the summer of 1929 the question passed between them, whether they were middle-aged or young or old was, "Are those two fliers still up?" Jackson and O'Brine were setting a new standard for uninterrupted flight just then, and a popular fashion for duration with refueling flights.

It must be a good airplane that could stay up so and so many hours, it must be an excellent motor to keep right on going. They must be a pair of sturdy humans to withstand the steady grind and monotony of such long spell flying. But aside from their physical and nervous endurance, they must be first-class pilots, who would take on a duration with refueling flight.

Such a seasoned duration flier as Elinor Smith wrote: "Believe me formation flying isn't in it with this job. In order to hold the proper curve in the refueling hose it is necessary to keep the planes 15 feet apart and as the pilot of the refueling ship can't see me I have the whole job of gauging distances, compensating for bumps, following every movement of the other ship and at the same time managing to keep out of its propeller wash."

This was dated December 1929, when Bobby Trout and Elinor Smith made several attempts and finally abandoned their duration flight, having extracted only 42 hours and 16 minutes out of their longest period up. They did not claim an official record, but since they were the first women to refuel a ship in midair their efforts have a place in flying history.

A little more than a year later Bobby Trout and Edna May Cooper made the first official woman's duration with refueling in flight record at Los Angeles. Had they not been forced down by a cracked piston and bad weather the team of Trout and Cooper might have done even better than 123 hours even, as they had been sailing along in great shape, what with celebrating Edna May Cooper's birthday in the Lady Rolph between refueling contacts and four-hour naps on top of a gas tank.

Theirs went down on the books of the F.A.I. as an international record rather than a world record. It seems there is a nice distinction between International Records and World records. The most successful performance in any of the five fields -- greatest altitude, maximum speed over a three kilometer straightaway course, greatest distance measured in a straight line, endurance flying around a closed circuit and endurance flying just staying aloft and landing at the place of take-off -- is a World Record. But there are many official records classified as International rather than World Records which are subdivided into various categories. To date no woman holds a world record, although Maryse Bastie of France has been officially credited with staying aloft longer than anyone else has ever done. But since a solo performance is not differentiated from that where two or more pilots may relieve each other she does not, technically speaking, rate a World record.

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This summer of 1932 Louise Thaden and Frances Marsalis made the most impressive duration flight ever achieved by women. They flew continuously for eight days - 196 hours - and chalked up another international woman's record. And, interestingly enough, Viola Gentry who four years ago this month first started the ball rolling for duration flights by women, acted as their flight manager. For the first time an important record flight in aviation was managed by a woman, thus making an all-woman's event out of it.



The idea of promoting the flight at the moment was born, it seems on the tender Macon as she steamed out to greet Amelia Earhart with her load of flying notables. Viola Gentry, who had been planning on a flight of the kind for a couple of years, got right busy and found a manufacturer who was willing to back the flight in exchange for the privilege of having his name on the plane. Although she had valiently given the lie to the dictum that if she lived she would never fly again --which was issued after a crackup during her own refueling duration flight attempt with Jack Ashcraft three years ago --by securing a waiver and getting herself re-instated as a pilot last April, still, her practically useless right arm barred her from the steady strain of the flight itself. But throughout she spoke of it as "our" flight and stuck by on the ground. And after it was over she arranged for such formalities as a reception at the White House and a first refueling contact over the Washington Monument, as a good flight manager should.

Two experienced transport pilots, Louise Thaden and Frances Marsalis agreed to make the flight in the I.J. Fox, and succeeded in besting the Trout-Cooper record of 123 hours by 3 days, 1 hour and 5 minutes. Their total time was 196 hours and 5 minutes and they made 72 gas and food contacts and 6 radio contacts during the course of the flight. An extract from Louise Thaden's own story of the flight in the Baltimore American is much more to the point than any second-hand account:

"Endurance flying is fun - a month after the flight is over. The flight itself is a grind of no mean proportion. Our air mattress got itself punctured the second day up and so we slept on nuts and bolts, fire extinguishers and oil cans without even feeling them. I slept on a pair of pliers in the hip pocket of my overalls and didn't know they were there until I needed them later on.

"Several times we had difficulty making contacts on account of rough air. We had only 30 feet of hose which necessitated flying rather close to the refueling plane. Our plane, a six-place cabin monoplane, was much heavier than the refueling plane, so that we didn't 'ride the bumps' the same way.

"We had been up four and a half days and were within 20 hours of breaking the record when a beautiful storm broke. It was preceded by low clouds, so low that a refueling looked out of the question. At dusk, when we had almost given up hope of getting enough gasoline to carry us through the night, we saw a break in the clouds. The refueler took off, we climbed up through the hole (expecting every minute to have it close up on us), refueled above the clouds, and came back through again. We flew through 14 hours of heavy rain and low clouds, worse weather than I ever expect to fly through again.

"It was doubtless the strain of those 14 hours, together with our false start of 18 hours that tired us to such an extent that we landed before completing the 10 days we had set for ourselves.

#### Unveiling the Wright Memorial

To Ruth Nichols, second woman transport pilot, holder of many records, and charter member of the Ninety-Nine Club, was assigned the honor of unveiling the inspiring granite shaft above the shifting sands of Kitty Hawk, N.C., in honor of Wilbur and Orville Wright.

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Just as two great twin-engined flying boats of the Coast Guard soared above the monument Miss Nichols mounted the long path up the hill and drew aside the flag while the band played the national anthem. As she unveiled the rugged triangular pylon with carved wings folded back Miss Nichols said: "It is with feelings of great and reverent appreciation of the amazing progress and far-reaching values of present day aviation, as well as its future scope that I unveil the Wright memorial today."

Two North Carolina Ninety-Nines - Mary Nicholson and Gene Benson -- also attended the impressive ceremony.



### To Date Data on Women Pilots

This month's total is 596, just 4 shy of a round 600, according to the last four weekly bulletins of the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce. Two former privates have become limited commercial pilots, and 18 more women have become private pilots since the last compilation. Hazel Lockhart Cortright of Bethayres, Pa., and Jacqueline Cochran, of New York City, now as of San Diego, Calif., are the new L.C. pilots. Two southern states, Alabama and Georgia, with 3 apiece, head the other states from a production standpoint this month.

The 18 additions to the list are: Eileen M. Bunker, Montgomery; Lois V. Finley and Vivian M. Pharo, Birmingham (Alabama) -- Esther E. Blair, Los Angeles; Margaret A. Lewis, Brentwood Heights (California) -- Ellen A. Barber, Savannah; Madeline D. Johnson and Ruth K. Mohr, Atlanta (Georgia) -- Eleanor C. Dwornick, Detroit (Michigan) -- Grace C. Hunton, Norfolk (Nebraska) -- Lola G. Hayward, N.Y. City; Fay D. Linehan, Glens Falls (New York) -- Babe Smith, Akron (Ohio) -- Leah Hing and Edith M. Lawson, Portland (Oregon) -- Helen Clegg, Everett (Pennsylvania) -- Alice M. Franklin, Spokane (Washington) -- Ellen D. Robertson, Charleston (West Virginia).

### Plane Passengers

According to a report issued by Colonel Clarence M. Young, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Aviation, 104,840 more passengers were carried over scheduled airlines in 1931 than in 1930.... And United Air Lines reports that 17,256 women bought tickets on their airways during the first nine months of 1932. Approximately 25 per cent of the passengers carried during that period were women, the largest percentage of women travelers transported in that company's history... Three generations: Mrs. Eva Hedden, 81, her daughter, Myra Hedden, 59, and a grandson John Hedden, 31, recently made the 2000-mile journey from Chicago to Los Angeles in one and the same United transport plane.... Eskimo and Indian women living in isolated parts of Alaska can now enjoy the benefits of styles without whiskers. A merchant fills the cabin of an airplane with dresses and flies to many of the remote settlements several times annually.

### Wings on our Feet

Edith B. Clark and Clema Granger made a 5,000 mile tour of the country in a Lycoming-Stinson.... Margaret Spitz, aged 17, recently soloed her father's cabin plane at Detroit. He is acting as her instructor.

### About the Ninety-Nines

Mary E. Von Mach, Governor of the North Central Section, has opened an office at the Detroit City Airport, making a place for Ninety-Nines to stop and chat.... Margaret Cooper, of 447 South Peck Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif., who is Governor of the Southwestern Section reports that 68 California women pilots are members of Ninety-Nine.... Lauretta Schimmoler, National Secretary-Treasurer, of Cleveland Airport, Cleveland, Ohio, reports the following new members during the month: Alice E. Cross, San Bernardino, Calif.; Edna Crumrine, Los Angeles; Maxine Dunlap, San Francisco; Lela Heffner, Long Beach, Calif.; Marjory Hook, San Francisco; Margaret Horton, Flint, Michigan; Harriet Isaacson, Oakland, Calif.; Myrtle Disney Mims, Burbank, Calif.; Elizabeth Russell, Alameda, Calif.; Mary Williams, Burbank, Calif.; Leah Zeigler, Florence, S.C.

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The Editor will be glad to have contributions in the way of news or



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The Editor will be glad to have contributions in the way of news or articles from readers. Be sure and send along any data you may have concerning activities of women pilots and information about new pilots or changes in license rating. Any material received by January 12 is eligible for the January issue.

Please mail all contributions to The Ninety-Niner, 51 East 42, N.Y. City. All subscriptions should also be sent to the same address. The rate for a year's subscription is one dollar.