



OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS

TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

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July , 2017 No. 73

Message from the Editor

Some good news. Mike and Michelle Lawrence have arranged a good price for us at the famous Menger Hotel in San Antonio at a good time, October 13 - 15, when it cools down a bit. This was discussed last year at Amarillo when San Antonio was being considered as a selection for our annual meeting in 2017. We believe it will be fair to everyone as far as travel is concerned. It is one of the important aviation centers, especially from a historical standpoint. So we have concentrated on Stinson Field, the second oldest continuously operated airport in the United States. The terminal was renovated some years ago. There are some very interesting historical photographs in the building in addition to a cafe.

We suggest making reservations at the Menger Hotel by calling the desk at (210) 223-4361. The desk will transfer you to reservations. Tell them you are with the OX-5 group and that you are requesting their reduced group rate which is \$118 per night. Best time to call is between 7 am and 4 pm. More details to follow.

OFFICERS, 2015-2016 ----- Colton Woodward, President Cade Woodward, Vice President Michelle Lawrence, Secretary-Treasurer, Hazel Fehmel, Historian

GOVERNORS Robert Clark (2016) Barbara Kraemer (2016) Jack Nelson (2016) Mike Lawrence (2017) "Susie" Brouse (2017) John McCrory (2017) Cade Woodward (2017) [Gov. Term-expiration dates in parentheses]

Katherine Stinson



We recently discovered some new material on the accomplishments of Katherine Stinson. I wrote a few things about her in the December, 2014 No. 63 Newsletter. Little by little I found more references, coming to the conclusion that related events were spread all over the country. That is because she barnstormed in her early career at county fairs and other aviation events throughout the country.

One thing I mentioned was her persistence. Not sure of a career during her teens she decided to sell her piano and then searched for an instructor in the art of flying aeroplanes. She heard of a flying school and persisted until she was accepted into the Max Lillie Flying School at Cicero Field. Max Lillie was an experienced aviator and prominent figure at the aerodrome during the early 1900's.

Cicero Field was located in the heart of Chicago. It wasn't down south like Midway or up north like O'Hare. It was right in the middle of the great metropolis. It was a flat square of turf on the electric rail line to downtown, and a long line of hangars housed American and European flying machines flown by scores of early aviators on a regular basis. Some were barnstormers and some were early designers and builders. There was a lot of experimenting going on and they even had an early wind tunnel in one of the buildings.

Max Lillie had established his flying school and provided instruction in the Wright Model B which was a currently manufactured pusher biplane. Katherine climbed on one of his Model B's (she had a couple of rides given previously as a passenger only by Tony Janus) and was ready to go. The well-kept turf was clear for takeoff, and off she flew with Lillie as instructor. It is said that she only had 4



hours of instruction before solo. Lillie proclaimed her a natural.



A view of the Laird Swallow biplane, a later but very similar design to the Stinson 'Looper' which is in the Ford Museum in Detroit, MI.

Cicero Field was the hub and the International Flying Club of Illinois was the organization in charge of the field. Mr. Cyrus McCormick of the International Harvester family had organized and financed the well run operation. There was even an aerodrome cafe where everyone ate lunch. It was the prototype of the successful flying facility that began to spread to other cities, and it was only 1912.

Katherine became the 4th woman to be licensed by the Aero Club of America on July 24, 1912. She was only 21 years of age. She began exhibition flying almost immediately and was billed as the "Flying School Girl".

Emil "Matty" Laird designed and built a tractor biplane which was lightweight and maneuverable. It had a Gnome seven cylinder engine which gave it adequate power. The current issue of the EAA magazine gives Matty Laird credit as "an early figure in serious airplane design".

Katherine acquired the plane and flew it at Cicero Field. The petite aviatrix was fearless in the Laird biplane and taught herself most maneuvers, even inventing some of her own to enhance performances. She was doing well on the exhibition circuit and her mother Emma served as her manager. One thousand dollars in 1915 was common compensation for one day of flying. She was able to retain a good mechanic, Rudolf "Shorty" Schroeder, who took good care of the biplane. She also was meticulous in her pre-flights, and probably as a result of this there is no record of her having an accident.



Katherine Stinson preparing her Laird biplane for shipment in the Orient. Wings can be seen being crated on the right.

An early performance at Memphis Tri-County Fair was in the summer of 1915. A photographer took excellent photos of the Laird Biplane. Details of its light weight construction can be seen - the wings had underside camber. It was capable of consecutive loops which became Stinson's trademark. She called it her 'looper'.



A remarkable turning point occurred when she accepted an invitation to bring her biplane to Japan for exhibition flights. She was the first person to fly in the Orient. Her performances were so unusual that she became an instant success and performed before huge crowds in Japan and China. Photos show her flying her 'looper', the Laird biplane. Others show her posing before the airplane in oriental clothing as seen on the left. She was always stylishly dressed on her exhibition flights.

Back in the United States in 1916, she applied to the U.S. Government to become an instructor of military pilots who were arriving in San Antonio in large numbers. She was turned down. Her sister Marjorie became the 9th licensed pilot after training at the Wright School in 1914. She then returned to San Antonio and as an instructor at the school she became known as the 'Flying Schoolmarm'. At the time, Canadians were arriving and there were no objections to training them at the Stinson Flying School.

Both Marjorie and Katherine were actively trying to participate in the war effort which was getting underway with a lot of flying activity at Kelly Field. Turned down as an instructor, although immensely qualified, Katherine decided to help the Red Cross raise funds through her flying performances. She carried funds at various Red Cross events, Flying a Curtiss JN-4; this inspired others to donate. Finally she decided to go to Europe and drove an ambulance, making this her active contribution. The cold damp climate was a hardship and she developed influenza symptoms forcing her to return to San Antonio. She was diagnosed with Tuberculosis. Seeking medical treatment, she was admitted to the sanatorium in Santa Fe, NM. At this point she considered her flying career at an end.

In the early twenty's she had recovered somewhat and remained in Santa Fe. She met Miguel Antonio Otero, Jr., who was an airman during WWI and also the son of the former territorial governor of New Mexico. They married in 1928. He became a district judge in Santa Fe and also a judicial officer in WWII. Katherine began second career as an architect and was involved in building several homes in Santa Fe. She lived until 1977 and was buried with her husband in the Santa Fe National Cemetery.



This Issue's "MYSTERY" Plane and Onlookers

The figure in white is 'Tiny' Broadwick, 1893 - 1979, who was an early parachute barnstormer preparing for a jump wearing a parachute back pack. Spectators include Benjamin Foulois on the far left and other military personnel. The plane is a Martin trainer-observation plane. The photo location was probably San Diego, and was taken in 1914. The pilot was probably a Signal Corp officer, name unknown. One known fact: the jump was successful.