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Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives

Manila Davis Talley Scrapbook

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[[newspaper clipping]]
Weekly Aviation Column
By PAUL GALLICO.

DAYTON, O., Aug. 5.-What happened was, so they tell me, that the promoters of the annual National Air Races, usually held in Cleveland, gave the girls the heave this year and fired them right out of the meet. Said they were a nuisance and nobody cared about seeing them, that they couldn't fly fast craft anyway and so the big trophy race which Gladys O'Donnell had won twice and Mrs. Jimmy Haizlipp once was canceled and the trophy given to the men. The girls got mad and organized the first Women's National Air Meet, for and by women and scheduled it at Vandalia, which is a scrubby little airport with one or two hangars, a couple of windsocks and 10 cents' worth of bleacher seats, eleven miles outside of this city, which happens to be the cradle of modern aviation, since here it was that the Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, built their first power-driven glider.

[[image - cartoon: a race plane flying past a pylon]]
[[caption: USUALLY THERE ISN'T ANY THRILL UNLESS THE BOYS TRY TO SCRAPE THE PAINT OFF THE PYLONS.]]
[[cartoon credit: Grant Polly5.]]

[[cut-off]] achute jumping and aerobatics. But it also developed the greatest finish ever seen in any air race, male or female, one of the most thrilling and breath-taking sights I have ever seen and one that was so desperately close to a great tragedy that clammy sweat stood out on the brows of pilots and mechanics on the field until the danger was over.
[[line]]

You know how air races are, a lot of planes taking off and flying away and pretty soon they come straggling back, one after the other, and land, last one home is a sissy, and that is your race. You rarely see two ships closer than a half mile or, in a great pinch, a quarter mile apart. There just isn't any thrill to it unless the boys or girls try to scrape the paint off the pylons on the turn in front of the grand stand which they will do some times in order to cut corners. But some one usually opens up a lead, the ships straggle out and that is that.
[[line]]

The girls were flying every conceivable kind of aircraft, little put-puts that staggered along at eighty miles an hour, Monocoups, powerful Waco open models, Stinson Cabin, none of them overwhelmingly powered and no two alike. The morning before the race, Johnny Livingston, test pilot for the Waco factory at Troy, O., took out each ship entered in the race and flew it to determine its top speed and on that basis handicapped every ship in the race. Thus the ships took off at intervals so that Miss Ione Coppedge's Little Aeronca put-put went hedge hopping over the trees first, and Helen MacCloskey's fast black Monocoup zoomed up five or six minutes later, with the other ships spaced in between at irregular intervals. The girls were flying a twenty-mile triangular course. Some ten minutes after the last ship took off, that Johnny Livingston was wishing that he hadn't been such an amazingly accurate handicapper. Because they all came home and dove across the finish line in one solid lump.

[[image - cartoon of several racing planes in flight with male aviator on ground looking up and gasping]]



[[caption: ALL IN ONE LUMP!!!]]
[[cartoon credit: Grant Powers]]

Swanee Taylor, the Old Professor, was broadcasting the race for Columbia. He said: "Here comes the first ship over the trees, another is right behind it. There's a third and two more, and another and another. My God; they're all together!" That was a sight. There were great elms at the edge of the field about a half mile away. The ships were flying at about two hundred feet. And all of a sudden, with a roar and a whine, they burst into view over the tree tops, red, green, blue, orange, black, a swarm of giant colored locusts, their props drumming the air, their wing tips so close that at times two or three ships would seem to be flying locked together.

But remember, here was no drilled army formation, but a mob of dizzy powder-puff flyers, blondes, brunettes, red-heads, diving onto a finish pylon for a hundred dollar prize and Old Nick take the hindmost. Reckless of life and limb, they wedged their throttles wide open and came on in a beautiful, noisy, colored cluster with the first three planes separated by no more than the length of the fuselages.
[[line]]

Some few seconds before the finish, Frances Harrell, in her devil-red Waco, suddenly swerved out of line, dipped, and dove, just missing a little Monocoup. Only a few feet stood between her and disaster. For if two planes had locked, no less than eight or nine could have missed tangling and crashing to the ground in a ghastly knot of death, so close were these girls to one another in that astounding finish and so stubborn were they in their last dive for the line. I think Harrell got a good scare because she flew over the line dragging her left wing and then went for a little tour of the neighboring countryside to cool off. Flyers do that when they get scared. Zip-zip-zip went Jeannette Lempke, Annette Gibson and Gladys O'Donnell across that finish line, with the other ships right on their tails. Then the group broke up and scattered, but we were still gasping and sweating for the next ten minutes as they came in helter skelter, down wind, cross wind, anyway at all, cutting each other off, landing directly ahead on to one another. Brrrrrr! Those Feathered Ladies! The things they do!

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Five Airplane Mishaps Mark Local Air Meet

Five airplane accidents, with one death, and two near-tragedies resulted from the Women's National Air meet at Dayton Municipal airport.

July 27-Manila Davis Talley, of Dayton, injured slightly and airplane wrecked while training for the meet.

Friday-Rhoda Davis, East Lansing, Mich., smashed the landing gear of her airplane, a Davis monoplane, in training.

Saturday-Helen Johnson, Brownsville, Texas, injured slightly and airplane damaged in a forced landing in a cornfield during a test hop.

Saturday-Lucile H. Parker, South Charleston, W. Va., forced to use auxiliary parachute in an exhibition jump when main 'chute refused to open.

Sunday-Frances Harrell, Garden City, L. I., killed and airplane wrecked when ship crashed during the feature race.
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AVIATRIX UNHURT IN FORCED LANDING

Mrs. B. B. Talley, aviatrix who plans to compete in the women's national air meet here August 4 and 5, escaped without injury yesterday when her plane nosed over during a forced landing at Vandalia. Her motor stalled, forcing her to come down. She announced, despite damage to her plane, she will change her plans to participate in the air meet.
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^[[PAGE 226]]

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