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Hattie Meyers Junkin Papers - Periodical Articles, General

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LAIRD
(continued from page 46)

duce the comforts of an enclosed cabin; the company anticipated its use on a projected passenger service between Wichita and Chicago. In actual operation, however, the aircraft was an utter disappointment. Weaver returned from the coast just in time to help Beech test the experimental cabin job. After a few flights it became apparent that engine induced vibration was beyond tolerable limits. Later on, the airframe was rebuilt and a single 280-hp Packard V12 installed. A few test flights were then made, but performance was not exciting and the shortage of fuel for the high-compression Packard made it a poor choice for commercial purposes. Beech decided to try a 400-hp Liberty-12. By this time the machine had been christened the Laird Limousine. Shortly after putting in the Liberty, the expansion tank in the radiator exploded as Beech was taking off on a trial flight. The Limousine mushed in hard and was reduced to kindling and shredded fabric. Beech escaped unharmed, but the incident spelled finish for the airliner project. During spring and summer of 1921, Swallows participated in numerous races and sporting events all across the country. Laird pilots picked up most of the prizes at the Wichita Aerial Tournament on Memorial Day; this sort of thing was repeated over and over again. Several weeks after the Kokomo meet in September, Weaver flew to Chicago, picked up Col. Charles Dickinson and continued on to New York for Aviation Day Mineola on October 16th. This outstanding flight provided further proof of the Swallow's dependability. More awards were collected in November at the International Aero Congress in Omaha and the Kansas City meet.

At the Kokomo meet, Matty had left the impression that things in Wichita were going splendidly and outwardly it may have seemed that way. However, disagreements with respect to management and policy were apparently creating discord between the principals - Moellendick and Beech on one side, Laird and Weaver on the other. As an indirect result Moellendick let Buck Weaver go at the end of the year.

Laird, Beech, and Cyle Horchem did well at the American Legion flying meet in Wichita Falls late in April of 1922. Horchem owned three Swallows and one of these had completed a 35,000-mile tour of the U.S. and Mexico with his aerial circus. Occasionally Horchem's showmanship resulted in a great plug in the papers for the Laird company. Such was the case in Mexia, Texas, early that year.

A carnival was in town and this prompted someone to bet Horchem that he could never get his Swallow off the ground with a Johan, a genuine giant, nearly nine feet tall weighing 503 pounds. Horchem took the bet and invited the big fellow for a ride. Getting "The great Johan" into the cockpit must have been a real

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