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## **Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Laird, Emil M. "Mattie"**

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which was to become one of the leading model building clubs in the United States. Always foremost in his mind, however, was a deep-seated ambition to build a real ~~aeroplane~~ airplane he could fly, and he soon started his first monoplane in an attic workshop in his home. Intrigued by his venture fellow Model Club members Arens, Weaver, Wells, Lucas, Hall, Cook, Pease, Cruver and others soon started to frequent Laird's workshop to assist in any way possible.

In the initial planning of this first plane Laird intended to install a 4-cyl. rotary engine which Aero Modeler Harry Wells planned to build. Laird completed his plane and Wells designed and built his engine, but it was not successful, so Laird had an ~~aero~~ airplane without an engine. Fortunately he soon learned of a Curtiss-type pusher biplane that Chicagoan Al Hofer had built, in which he had installed a small 4-cylinder air-cooled engine made largely of automobile and motorcycle parts. It had proved too small to fly the plane so Laird asked Hofer if he would consider selling the engine to him for use in his monoplane. Hofer was interested and Laird offered \$10.00 down and more if and when he could get it. Hofer accepted and this started Laird on his way to aviation success.

The plane was revised to install the Hofer engine and then transported to Cicero Field where he started tax~~y~~ing tests. These were discouraging at first due to improper rudder control, which resulted in much ground looping, but Laird soon corrected this difficulty and learned to steer a straight course. After considerable ground practice Laird decided he was ready to try a hop even though all the older Cicero pilots kidded him saying that his plane would never fly. When all was ready, on September 15th, 1913 Laird taxied to the extreme east end of the field and headed west into the wind saying to himself "Here goes." Revving the little engine to its maximum revolutions per minute ~~full~~ R.P.M., the plane quickly gained ground speed and when it seemed to have a light feeling on the wheels Laird pulled back on the elevator control and to his sudden surprise found himself flying at about 15 to 20 feet off the ground. This was all so unexpected he had to make a quick decision,

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