



## Smithsonian Institution

*Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives*

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

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or Wilson, was leading. Much of his flying that season was at county fairs. Between exhibition dates Laird always returned to Chicago where he continued active flying, looping, and carrying passengers. He also did some test flying on Charles Arens' new light biplane, as well as with the little plane for the National Aeroplane Company, using the Excelsior motorcycle engine. It flew well, but engine overheating prevented long flights.

The U.S. Signal Corps, Aviation Section, established a flying field at Ashburn that fall and Laird joined the training operations as a junior instructor along with T.C. McCauley, who was senior instructor; Victor Vernon, J.B. Hill, E.A. Johnson, Sinnie Sinclair, and others.

In 1916 Laird rented his Anzani-engined biplane to Katherine Stinson for exhibition flying. She made a tour of several cities in Canada that summer, then in December left for Japan and China. While giving exhibitions in Japan the crankcase developed cracks, so the engine was removed and she had a new crankcase made in a Japanese machine shop. While this was being done she installed a Gnome rotary engine and went on with her exhibition work. When the new crankcase was finished the Anzani engine was reinstalled. Miss Stinson returned to the United States in May, 1917. This plane is now in the Ford Museum at Dearborn, Michigan.

In January, 1917, the Signal Corps Aviation School was moved from Ashburn, Illinois, to Memphis, Tennessee, for the winter months, and Laird moved there with the group. In March he went to San Antonio, Texas, where the Stinsons were operating a school. There, a short time later, he had the first and most serious accident of his entire flying career. While flying one of the Stinson Gnome-engined tractor airplanes designed by Walter Brock, he lost control and got into a flat spin which resulted in a bad crash, putting him in the hospital with injuries that crippled him for life. He was discharged from the hospital after four and one-half months and returned to Chicago, but by ~~that~~ the time World War I had been declared and in November, 1917, a ban was

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