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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Waterman, Waldo D.

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WALDO D. WATERMAN

Waldo D. Waterman was born in San Diego in 1894. He left there in August 1912 to attend the University of California at Berkeley as a student in Mechanical Engineering. In 1909, early in his high school career, he became very much interested in the stories of the exploits of the Wright Brothers and Glenn Curtiss, and through that interest decided that he would build a glider. This he accomplished with the cooperative use of the facilities of the high school woodworking shops. On July first, 1909, he made his first successful air-borne flight down the slopes of a canyon at Albatross and Maple Streets, near his San Diego home. From that time on his sole ambition in life was to accomplish things in aviation, and all of his efforts since then have been devoted either to the scientific development of aircraft or developing his own abilities and techniques along aviation lines. He still holds an active Commercial Pilots License (#417), and made his last solo flight at this writing on July 31, 1962, rounding out a career of fifty-three years as an active pilot, this being a record as far as winged aircraft are concerned.

After his glider flights in San Diego were extended to a point where it seemed advisable to build a huskier machine that would carry a power plant, Waterman took into partnership a fellow high school student by the name of Kenneth Kendall. This partnership resulted in the construction of a full sized powered airplane which was entered in the first Dominguez Air Meet in Los Angeles in January 1910. The plane was not quite completed in time, but armed with credentials of an entrant, Waterman hied to Dominguez Field and got a job from Glenn Curtiss helping out around the Curtiss camp. At the conclusion of the air meet and the acquisition of much more "know-how", the Waterman-Kendall airplane was completed and set up for tests at the old Coronado Polo Field. The promised engine did not materialize and the one obtained lacked sufficient horsepower for take-off. An auto tow-assist was employed with some success, and a few flights were made, terminating in a bad crash resulting in the plane's demolition and two broken ankles for Waterman. The spot of the crash is the present entrance gate to North Island, so Waterman enjoys the dubious distinction of being the first flight casualty of that facility.

The following January Curtiss moved his winter experimental station to North Island, where the Hydroaeroplane was to be developed and many famous aviators were to be taught to fly. This was a wonderful break for Waterman in that he was right in the midst of this activity by reason of his former contacts with Curtiss. When the school was closed for the summer, Waterman was left in charge with one flyable airplane. It would not take much imagination as to what would happen next. At that time Waterman made his first extended powered flights at North Island with this airplane. During this same time, Waterman was building a tractor type plane which he finally got ready for assembly in the latter part of 1911, and moved it to North Island for its completion. Unfortunately this airplane was later wrecked by a wind storm in the spring of 1912, before complete evaluation flight tests could be made.

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