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

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the Bach Company for the benefit of the creditors. While doing so, he built a plane that was to become known as the Waterman "Whatsit". It was the forerunner of his final concept of his Flying Auto or Arrowbile. The "Whatsit" bears the distinction of being the first tailless flying wing monoplane ever built in this country, and it incorporated the first version of the modern concept of the tri-cycle landing gear in its design. These two unusual features have merited its acquisition by the Aeronautics Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, where it is now in storage awaiting the completion of their new building for exhibition.

Late in 1932, Waterman got to the end of his financial rope and applied to Jack Fry, then President of T.W.A., for a job as pilot on that air line. He was successful in getting the only available flying job that had occurred in many months on that line. He flew for T.W.A. on most of their then system and finally ended up on the Los Angeles to San Francisco run, where he flew tri-motored Fords and Fokkers and single engined Fleetsters. During this activity he acquired a Scheduled Air Transport and Instrument rating to add to his 4M multi-engined rate.

With the financial picture brightening in the country, Waterman again went to work on the "Whatsit" and perfected its flying characteristics to a point where it appeared to be one of the few planes that might qualify for the Vidal Department of Commerce Competition for a safety "every man's" airplane, and in the latter part of 1934 Waterman received a contract from the Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce to build a prototype airplane for this competition. This resulted in producing the Waterman Arrowplane, which was the first airplane to ever meet the very rigid Vidal specifications for performance and controllability. Encouraged by the very excellent reception received by this plane, Waterman organized the Waterman Arrowplane Corporation for the purpose of developing his fiscal concept of what every man's airplane should be, that is, the roadable airplane or flying automobile. As the finances started to develop for this project, Waterman set up a plant at Santa Monica and started building the prototype and accepting orders for this unusual machine. The first customer was the Studebaker Corporation, who wished to buy five of these airplanes to make a tour of the country advertising the Studebaker automobile, so their engine was incorporated in the Arrowbile design. Three of these planes were flown across the country in the late summer of 1937, and appeared on the National Air Race Program at Cleveland, and were exhibited by Studebaker during a tour through various parts of the country, at various aircraft and automobile shows.

The finances of the corporation came to a grinding halt when the promoter thereof, Harry M. Hanshue, died unexpectedly in New York, and before other financial arrangements could be developed the company found itself in a secondary recession, which stopped production. This was coupled with the fact that an overly ambitious program got under way entailing the marketing of the Arrowbile for less money than it was found it cost to build. This automatically closed the doors of the Waterman

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