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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Wildman, Francis A. "Doc"

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government service for about four and one-half years. Under government ownership the North Island flying facilities became known as Rockwell Field.

Very intensive military training operations were carried on there during the war and some twelve to fifteen instructors were kept busy training students. In January, 1917, Lt. Col. Bisho and Lt. Robinson became lost in the air over the mountains east of San Diego, and finally crash-landed in the Sonora Desert in Mexico. Wildman and Brindley led aerial search operations from Rockwell Field to find them but after much very rough flying gave up, having found no trace of the missing flyers who finally, in bad condition, reached help themselves.

After the war Wildman remained at Rockwell Field for a time, and when the Army decided to discontinue the services of the last of their civilian instructors he was offered a commission as Major if he would continue in the Army. Wildman decided against this as he had established residence in San Diego, owned a home there and had become a partner in a rapidly growing Hupp and Oldsmobile automobile agency. During 1927 he became acquainted with Charles Lindbergh at the time the celebrated "Spirit of St. Louis" was being flight tested, and he assisted with some of this work. Wildman remained with the automobile agency until 1929 when the depression resulted in the loss of his business, with a bad financial loss. He then returned to aviation and in 1930 joined the Engine Research Group of the Power Plant Branch at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. He remained there until 1939 when he moved back to California, where he worked on aircraft inspection at Lockheed Aircraft Corporation and Kinner Motors until his retirement in 1948. In late 1944 Wildman was awarded a citation by the War Department in recognition of his long and faithful employment following nineteen years of "Exceptional Services." His left leg was amputated in 1949 after complications resulted from his 1911 plane crash at Mineola, Long Island.

Wildman joined the Early Birds in 1953, and at that time was living at the Hotel El Rey in San Diego. He passed away there on August 13, 1956, at

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