

sides at the points necessary to guide the saw in cutting at the angle needed

The Greatest Flyer of them All

What He's Like—and Why

By Major General

J. E. FECHET



Chief of the Army Air Corps, who has supervised the training of more fliers than any other man in America. His observations of them cover a period of sixteen years. He is an active flier himself, last year having put in more than an hour a day.

(Reading time: 12 minutes 20 seconds.)

THIRTY years ago there were no fliers. Today there are only a few thousand really capable ones. Yet we have already gained enough experience to know fairly well what kind of human being the mythical greatest airman is. Also we have taken the few great ones apart, analyzed their habits, mental traits, and physical characteristics, to see what makes them fly better than their fellows.

The army and the navy have spent millions of dollars in this work. They know that if war should stalk again among us, thousands upon thousands of fliers must be selected overnight and trained at once. They want to avoid the human slaughter flying training cost them in the last war. We must pick the right man. If we don't, the day we select him we give him a death sentence.

Last summer a great oil executive said to me, "General, I want to travel by air. It saves me time, and time is of the essence of modern, high-speed business. Besides, it hurls me to spend four or five days aimlessly riding a train from New York to Los Angeles when I know I can do it in twenty hours with the right plane and the right pilot. I realize that care must be taken in getting the right plane. Yet the more doubtful equation is the pilot. How can I select the right pilot? I can't reconcile myself to riding in these great air vans driven by careless boys. I wouldn't cross the ocean with a skipper on the bridge twenty years old. I wouldn't feel safe on a train whose engineer was a stripling. Why should I expect to fly safely with a thrill-seeking youth at the controls?"

That man was intelligent. Many such men are going to be asking such questions soon. If they read these pages they'll have my answer. If I told you this potential flier is a distinct type whom we can catalogue and easily pick from the multitude, you'd ask me what he has been doing these thousands of years when there were no airplanes to fly. Probably he was a misfit in some of the other trades and professions. But of this you may be sure: he was always an inquisitive, high-spirited, daring fellow. As we find him today, as a type, he is physically of average height and weight; generally quite active; what



The army's first plane undergoing government trials at Fort Myer, Virginia, September 12, 1908.

What kind of flying marks the great flyer? some will inquire. Again the popular conception is very misleading. Most laymen think the fellow who can loop the most, or roll the best, or who specializes in hair-raising stunts, excels. Not always is this belief confined to laymen. I am sorry to say. I was inspecting one of our flying fields a few years ago, when, as part of the ceremony, three acrobatic fliers went up to show their wares. At one point in this program one of them flew upside down past the reviewing stand. The field commander turned to me and said, "Isn't he a great flyer, general?"

A simple device for preventing a screen door from slamming may be put on as shown in the illustration at the top of the page. A bumping post

of the sort that can be bought at hardware stores is placed on the door

THE largest plane yet built for the army. "A good flyer," says Gen. Fechet, "should be able to fly all of them—from the tiniest bug to this giant dragon fly."

"It depends on your point of view," I said. "Personally, I wouldn't fly with him across the street. Would you?" He looked rather sheepish, but shook his head in the negative.

Flying ability is a compound of flying skill plus flying experience. Most fliers acquire most of their skill, i.e., their actual ability to handle the controls of an airplane, in their early training days. Most skill is acquired in the first few years—ninety per cent of it in the first year, perhaps. On the other hand, flying experience grows with the years, right on down to the grave. Experience is an accretion which gathers with time in the air. And let me emphasize these last words—with time in the air. This air experience can't be gained on the ground. Nobody else can gain it for the flyer.

There are many types or classes of flying—cross-country, acrobatic, racing, military (machine gunnery, bombing, photography), testing, night flying, blind flying, etc., each a specialty all its own requiring individual equipment and experience. No flyer excels in all of them. The best flyer excels in some and takes very high rank in all the others.

There are many types of flying machines, ranging from the single-seater for combat, possessed of high maneuver-

ability, to the multi-engined giant capable of carrying more than two hundred passengers. In this country alone, the army, navy, and Department of Commerce list over two hundred types of planes—land, sea, and amphibian. Each has its own flight peculiarities.

THERE is an old pilot slogan: "If you can fly one plane well, you can fly them all." Translated, this corollary really means that any pilot who can fly one type of plane well can be taught to fly any other type well. Such being the case, therefore, the pilot who has had the most time in the largest number of types is the most experienced in the largest number of types is the most experienced pilot, and, other things being equal, is the best pilot. Some years ago one of our excellent pilots made a miserable showing in a race of national importance. He was flying a plane much faster than any he had piloted before, and he had had little experience with racing planes.

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plane new to Germany, as it took off with three fliers for Port-au-Prince, Ha plane landed at St. Marc, just short of the goal.

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of the sort that can be bought at a hardware store is placed on the frame. On the

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Not long ago several pilots were assigned to test a new type of plane which had just been completed. One of them took off first. Before he had been up fifteen minutes, a pilot on the ground, watching, turned to another and remarked, "Well, there goes a good airplane giving a man a ride." It was apparent to these trained eyes that the plane was flying the pilot, not the pilot flying the plane. There is nothing which can take the place of experience.

Now, there is one quality I have not mentioned before which is indispensable for the really great flyer. That is flying judgment. For lack of it I have been forced to disqualify some wonderful airplane pilots. Although they could handle the controls of a plane perfectly, although they possessed an amplitude of experience, I could not possibly include them in my list of the flying great and near great. I did not trust their judgment.

This thing called judgment demonstrates itself in peculiar ways. Last summer two of our old and experienced flyers took off from Mitchell Field, Long Island, for Washington. The weather en route grew bad. One of them landed on a Delaware farm. The other pushed on through the fog and finally landed at Bolling Field. Two hours later, the one who had landed en route took off when the ceiling lifted a little and came through. His fellow pilots, no doubt slightly jealous of his reputation, said, "You're getting to be a fair-weather flyer. Why, Lieutenant Blank came through all right and has already left for Langley."

The chided pilot's only retort was, "Well, I never hope to be the army's best pilot, but I hope some day to be its oldest." This byplay had scarcely passed when the operations telephone rang. It was Lieutenant Blank who had come through and gone on to Langley. He had landed in the fog and washed out his plane.

I was flying one day with one of our youngsters. We hit a severe thunderstorm. Soon we could see nothing. We were surrounded by walls of water. Somehow, mostly by luck, we got through and landed at our destination. This fledgling felt that he had done a great piece of flying. He could not contain himself, and finally said, "Pretty hot work we did, eh, general?" I said, "To my mind, it would have been a lot hotter had we picked a friendly farmer's cow pasture and made ourselves a nice forced landing as soon as we hit that storm."

I have no doubt I hurt that youngster's feelings, but I probably prolonged his life. I flew with him many times after that and never saw him show such poor judgment again.

It often takes more courage to land or turn back than to blunder through. But that kind of courage is an attribute which all really great flyers possess.

Selecting the leader in any profession or sport is always likely to be colored by the selector. For many years All-American football players came exclusively from eastern colleges. This was due to the fact that sports writers never saw the western players perform.

If I place an army flyer on my list of the best birdmen, it may be because I have had a better opportunity to know my men and see them under fire. To avoid this perfectly understandable unfairness, I have merely described in a rough way the sort of performer it takes to make a perfect pilot. I have built the mold. I'll let you fill it.

Don't make one common error, however. You can't judge of a pilot's flying ability by one spectacular flight. One of the best known flyers in this country can't safely fly alone. It is fairly safe to say that no pilot can hope to occupy a high position on the exclusive list of really skilled flying men who has not had a varied flying experience of four to five thousand hours as a minimum. Most of the prominent flyers had less than a thousand hours when they first came to public notice. Some of them have since become great pilots, but, make no mistake, they arrived by filling air space, not news space. It takes long hours in the air, not columns in the public press.

On a certain field the pilots would have pretended surprise had I selected one of their members as the best. Yet one night a difficult mission came up suddenly. It was necessary to use a fast new plane. Several pilots were asked who was ready and willing to go. All expressed a desire to undertake it, but all ended their remarks with this observation: "If you want my opinion, Pilot X is your man. He knows the country better, he has had more night flying, and has had more time in that type of plane." Needless to say, Pilot X was exactly the man I had intended to send all along. As I said before, there is some petty jealousy among pilots, but when put right up against the iron, they grudgingly admit their relative rank. They know who flies most; who knows his equipment best; who is always prepared and willing to take the air.

SOME years ago it fell to my lot to select several men for a long and difficult flight. Many were anxious to go. The choice was not easy. Eventually all were picked save one. For this position two men stood out and seemed evenly matched. I studied their records carefully. All unknown to them, I watched their flying closely. Finally, one day both were assigned to do acrobatics for an air show. I watched them. Both extended themselves. Just before they landed I overheard two old sergeants soliloquizing. One of them said, "When those two planes come down, the wires of one will be tight and true as ever. You will be able to tie knots in the flying wires of the other. Lieutenant Y flies smoothly, but Lieutenant Z punishes his plane terribly."

That gave me a hunch. When they landed, I inspected their planes. The sergeants had called the turn. One was a natural pilot who flew smoothly through every maneuver. He had what we call the "feel" of his plane. The other was more mechanical. He flew by rote. The eye of an observer could not tell the difference as they spun and rolled high in the air. But the airplanes told the tale. Are you beginning to get a picture of this man we call the greatest flyer of them all? Originally he must have been endowed by nature with a sound body, an alert mind. He must have acquired early those habits of industry and thoroughness which caused him to work harder so that he knows his plane and engine better than his fellows. He has flown more hours in more types than his fellow pilots, he has had more experiences and learned more from them, and, to climax it all, he has by birth and air breeding come somehow to possess that greatest gift of all—flying judgment. He rides, therefore, at the pinnacle of a new profession. He is the king of the flying men.

His name is —
I've drawn the picture—you give it a name.

THE END

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One of the simplest of these methods is known as the mortise and tenon. By this means a projection from the end of one board is inserted in a slot or hole cut in the other. The projection

edges of the boards to be grooved. Other grooves, at the opposite end of the two side pieces from that cut for the dovetail joint, should be cut at right angles to the grooves provided for the

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gates in planing the surfaces opposite the face. If care has been taken in planing, surfaces will be smooth corners will be true right angles.