

Jimmy Doolittle Makes Thrilling Leap From Crippled Ship

MAJOR JAMES H. (JIMMY) DOOLITTLE, formerly an ace stunter of the army air corps, leaped to safety a few weeks ago when the fabric tore loose from the wings of his plane while traveling at an indicated speed of 235 miles an hour. Although Doolittle was not injured, the plane was a total wash-out. His leap is considered one of the most spectacular in aviation history.

Doolittle was putting the plane, one of his own design with which he had hoped to break the present record for land planes, through speed tests at East St. Louis. He was flying at an altitude of only about 100 feet when

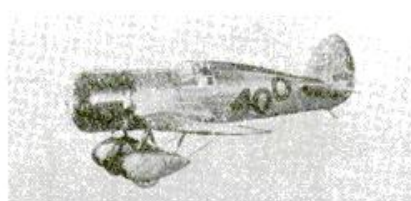


Doolittle's plane in process of construction.

the wings started to flutter and then pieces of fabric began to fall. The flyer immediately nosed the plane upward and leaped when it reached an altitude of between 300 and 400 feet. Doolittle said the wings, which he had taken from an old plane, apparently were not strong enough for the high speed he was making.

"Jimmy" Doolittle had bailed out before, but he regarded this leap as his closest call, due to his speed and low altitude. He had been flying the plane for about 15 minutes before the trouble developed. When the fabric started falling from the wings, one witness said, it looked as though the plane had struck "a bunch of birds."

Doolittle's plane was completed only



In flight, Doolittle had hoped to break the world's speed record for land planes.

a short while before his flight. This flight was the first of a series Doolittle had planned with an ultimate view of attempting to break both the American and world speed records for land planes. The American record is 266 miles an hour and the world record 277.

"I was in level at about 235 miles an hour," Doolittle said, "when I suddenly felt the right wing become heavy. I couldn't tell what had happened, but I knew I would have to nose her up if I was going to get out. I pulled the ship up as steep as I could and turned her over on her back. Then I let loose. I was so close to the ground it seemed I didn't have time to do more than pull the rip cord before I landed."

When the first spectators reached the scene Doolittle was intently searching for the rip cord, which aviators who bail out consider a good-luck souvenir. He found it. Doolittle's 10-year old son, Jimmy, Junior, was in the crowd which witnessed the famous flyer's narrow escape.

Finis. What was left of the plane was quickly taken by souvenir hunters.



Glider Planes Proposed for Freight Carrying

RECENT spectacular flights by engineless aircraft, particularly the crossings of the English Channel, have raised again the fascinating idea of "glider trains," consisting of a power-driven craft having in tow a number of gliders which might be detached above their respective destinations like slip coaches from a railway train.

Gliding experts declare that the load which can be transported for a given engine power by a glider train is 60 per cent greater than a single power-driven plane could carry, while the towing aeroplane becomes virtually a flying fuel tank of much greater range than it could possibly have if it carried pay load as well. A further advantage claimed for the scheme is that gliders do not require special landing grounds.

European Airports Are Community Social Centers

CAPT. Frank M. Hawks, who recently startled Europe with some speed flying, brought back from Europe several definite ideas, among them one concerning airports.

"In Europe, the airport is a social center," declared Capt. Hawks. "Every large European airport has fieldhouses, restaurants, cafes and beer-gardens. People with only small interest in actual flying use the fields for recreation and sport. They are open to the public, instead of being small and exclusive, and an interest in flying naturally is developed among the masses. America might take a lesson there."

But while Capt. Hawks admires this feature, he declares that American landing fields, with their paved runways, are far better than those of Europe.

Balloons To Indicate Fog-Bound Airports

CAPTIVE balloons, lighted to indicate position and altitude as markers for fog-bound airports, have been suggested by California pilots as a possible key to the problem of landing aircraft that are helpless when earth and landing fields are blanketed by fog.

The suggestion has a few minor unfavorable points, such as the wire connecting the balloon with its ground station representing an obstacle for pilots, but, in the opinion of some flyers, promises advantages which would balance the sheet in its favor.

In California the fog layer rarely extends to an altitude of more than 2,500 feet. The flyer finds it impossible to get under the ceiling, so he rises above the layer that obscures his vision from the ground. He knows that there are airports below, but to dive down through that blanket without an idea as to the exact location of a skyport obviously would be disastrous. Such a situation could be solved by balloons, pilots believe. This is the way it would work:

Three balloons, twenty-five feet in diameter, anchored to trucks on an airport, can be sent up through the fog and out on top. A newly-developed fog-sensitive instrument will indicate when the balloons are above the fog. On each balloon will be electrical neon numbers indicating the altitude at which the balloons are stopped—not more than two numerals being required up to 10,000 feet. The figure 16, for instance, indicates that the gas bag is at 1,600 feet. Anchoring cables will be equipped with warning lights at 50-foot intervals.

The three balloons will form a triangle—the narrow base of which will indicate the end of the port that the flyer should approach for landing, and the two sides of the landing lane, while the third will mark the other end of the port. The latter will be in the center of the proper lane.

An experienced pilot, informed where his landing lane rests and of his altitude, is able to line his ship up at the proper angle to glide down to landing—flying "blind" by his navigation instruments. Nine times out of ten the ceiling—the distance between the ground and the bottom layer of fog—will be at least fifty feet, so that a pilot will be able to come out on the under side with enough visibility to set down.

A New Lightplane Record

MRS. MAY HAZLIP, St. Louis aviatrix, recently reached an altitude of approximately 22,000 feet in a Buhl "Bull Pup" single-seater plane. The altitude will be checked by the N. A. A. and will probably become the basis of a women's record for the type plane used.