

Chapter III

1927 – Year for Heroes and Headlines

The year 1927 was called a time of Ballyhoo and Hoopla and Wonderful Nonsense, a time when everything was bigger and crazier and publicized with more headlines than anything that ever happened before.

It was a time for Home Run Kings and Flagpole Sitters, Beauty Queens and Talking Movies, Race Riots and Lynchings and Chicago Gang Wars, Mississippi Floods and Big Radio Broadcast Hook-Ups and Record Airplane Flights. People called one another Sheiks, and Shebas; they said things like “You’re darned tootin,” and “he knows his onions.” Flaming Youth drove their Whoopies down the Main Drag and picked up Daring Flappers who wore their skirts Two Inches Above the Knee and smoked Tailor-Mades and drank Bootleg Hooch from Hip Flasks just like their Boy Friends did. And they tuned in Jazz Bands on Superhet Radio sets and listened to Hot Numbers like “Baby Face” and “Five Foot Two Eyes of Blue” and “I Wish That I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate.”

It was a time to worship heroes: Heavyweight Fighters, Movie Stars, and Aviators. And now, in May of 1927, there was a new aviator hero, a winged knight called “The Lone Eagle” who flew nonstop from New York to Paris and in that 33½ hours, became the greatest popular hero in the history of flight; a man acclaimed as no other before or since, including the Wrights and Lincoln Beachey and all the Aces of all the wars put together, and all the men who would one day walk on the moon.

Charles Lindbergh and his Ryan monoplane set off the greatest boom in flying ever seen. Now, everyone must Use the Air Mail, Travel By Air, Buy Airport Bonds, Buy an Airplane, Learn To Fly.

And while only fourteen airplanes competed in the 1927 National Air Tour — perhaps because the factories were all too busy filling orders — the spectators came by the tens of thousands to pour through the gates to Ford Airport; to talk and look and marvel....

They thumped the corrugated metal skin of the

Ford and the Hamilton, “fireproof, you know;” they stared at the new Stinson, “built right here in Northville;” they tugged at the taut wires of the sturdy Wacos and peered inside the cabin of the yellow painted Ryan, said to be just like Lindy’s, except this one was all fixed up with blue mohair seats like a fine automobile.

The spectators watched the airplanes run through their takeoff and landing tests and they talked of newsreel pictures they’d seen: of transatlantic record seekers struggling to take off; “make their getaway,” as the papers called it, dangerously overloaded with hundreds of gallons of “high test gasoline.”

And the tour officials, mindful of all this scare talk, changed the rules to eliminate the full-throttle racing of the previous year; for 1927, a Perfect Score would require only a leisurely “85% of maximum speed.” Another change in the scoring, hotly debated by pilots, was the “Multi-Engine Rule,” which provided that a plane with more than one engine should be charged in the Formula with only the engine power actually required to keep it aloft — a lower figure than its total power. The contestant must demonstrate this in a test, but the test was accomplished at a comfortably safe altitude over Ford Airport and required only that the plane make a gentle climb while the pilot slowed up one engine at a time, to idling. No minimum load was specified, and veteran flyers said the whole thing was very much unlike the actual panic that occurred when a bi-motor or tri-motor had an engine stop suddenly on takeoff, or in a steep climb from a small field. Then, everything happened at once, with the failed propeller stopped dead and trying to drag the ship down with it, the airplane yawing wildly as the desperate pilot jammed on full opposite rudder and pulled the plane up into an even steeper climb, or even a stall or spin.

Such accidents were common for tri-motored airplanes, and many pilots believed that more engines simply meant more trouble. But the tour

Rules Committee wanted to encourage transport plane entries, and the rule stood.

The 1927 tour was off on June 27, with C.F. “Boss” Kettering manning the starter’s flag and the Ford Motor Company band marching up and down blaring away on popular airs, with an occasional Turkey In The Straw kind of tune for square dance enthusiast Henry Ford. Record crowds turned out as the tour planes progressed through Buffalo and Geneva and Schenectady, where on the second morning out they were all held up by rain and fog shrouding the hills and blocking the way to Boston.

The Advance plane went on ahead to have a look, while the others waited and talked and read the newspapers, with their big headlines of the latest ocean record flights. Two young Army flyers named Maitland and Hegenberger were nearing Hawaii in a Fokker Tri-Motor, first to cross from the California mainland. Another plane had taken off from Oakland right behind them, flown by an airmail pilot named Ernie Smith, but this plane had turned back. And Commander Byrd and his three-man crew were finally off Roosevelt Field in his Fokker, heading out over the Atlantic....

Byrd had waited and waited, ostensibly for exactly right weather conditions; now he was off in what turned out to be very bad weather conditions. The tour flyers, talking about it, wondered if the suave Commander might have become upset by the angry letters and telegrams he had received from irate fans; zealots caught up in the flying fever of that wild summer who called Byrd a coward not fit to wear the Navy uniform, for having let Lindbergh and Chamberlin get across to Europe ahead of him....

The Advance plane got through to Boston, word was sent back to Schenectady for the tour flyers to come on. And so they charged aloft into the fog – thirteen airplanes, all bunched up in ragged formation, following along and bouncing in one another’s prop-wash as they brushed hills and tree-tops and telephone wires trying to stay underneath the blinding low clouds and make their way through the Berkshires.

Six of them gave up: old pilots rather than bold pilots. Four came down in Massachusetts, one blundered through and overshot to Newport, Rhode Island and Frank Hawks nearly killed himself and his wife and two other passengers when he tried to climb up through a hole, lost control of his Ryan and fell down through the clouds in a screaming graveyard spiral, with a last-second recovery and landing in a beet field.

Those who did push on to Boston were met and driven in shiny new Hupmobiles to the Hotel Lenox and the inevitable banquet, followed by the inevitable entertainment, a play at the Park Theatre, “The Cat And The Canary.”

Next day, heading for New York they all cruised bravely across Long Island Sound, miles offshore like the transoceanic heroes everyone talked about. And at Roosevelt Field and downtown at the Pennsylvania Hotel, and wherever flyers gathered they talked of the record setters; of the Army’s Pacific triumph in what seemed a comparatively uneventful flight of 25 hours and 51 minutes — and of Byrd and his crew and their Atlantic struggle of something over forty hours....

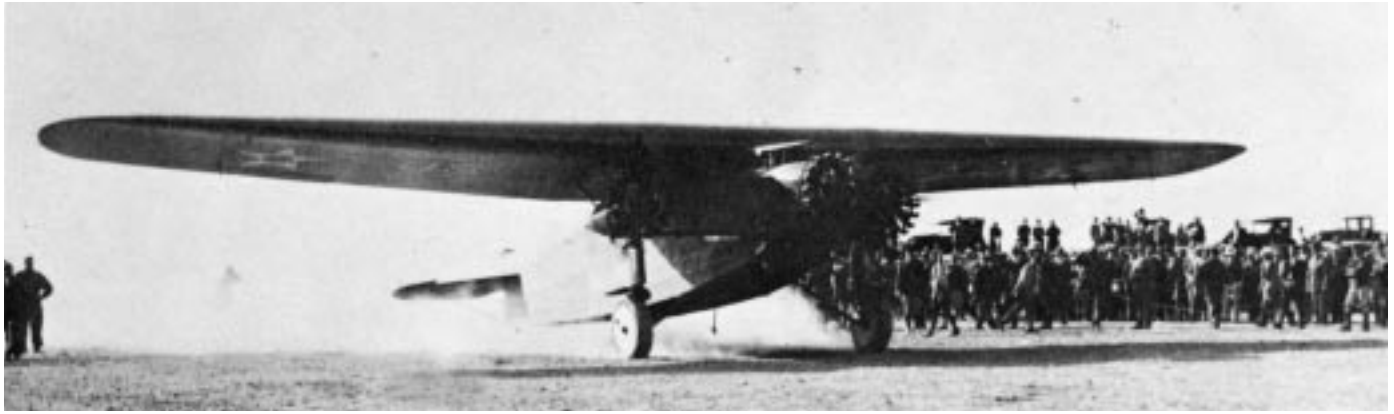
There would be many stories later: how the big Fokker got away from pilot Bert Acosta in the black

The 1927 tour pilots competed for news headlines with many other heroes....



Chamberlain and Levine

(Wright Aeronautical Corporation)



Maitland and Hegenberger

(Willis Nye)

Byrd's "Giant Fokker,"
which used a ramp to get
started.

(S. J. Hudek)



And the Dole Race to Hawaii, remembered for planes lost at sea, and for crashes on land. Here at the Oakland Airport takeoff, Norm Goddard's *El Encanto* lies crippled, at left; Jimmie Irving's *Breese Pabco Pacific Fiver*, just off, will also crash.

(The Dole Company)

night somewhere off Newfoundland and fell out of control toward the sea, to be righted at the last minute by Bernt Balchen. And of navigator Rex Noyelle knocking out the radios when he got his big feet mixed up with the radio wiring on the cabin floor. And how they finally made it through to the French coast while it was still light enough to have made a bee-line for Paris ahead of darkness and more fog, except that Byrd refused to change his flight plan, which called for a longer route, so that

they were trapped in the night and wandered around and finally crash-landed back on the French coast again....

And so the tour flyers need not explain their own blundering through the mountains of New England; rather they could admit to being heroes, battling through the fog just like Commander Byrd. And every flyer in the tour was indeed a hero, especially if he wore helmet and goggles and plus four golf knickers and a suede jacket. What did he think of Lindbergh....and which was best, biplane or monoplane....and was it true what the flying schools advertised about big-pay jobs in aviation?

The men listened solemnly, the young ladies giggled and flirted, the small boys pedaled their bikes along the line of airplanes and talked knowingly of each one. If the motor did not have nine cylinders that stuck out like the spokes of a wheel, then it was not a Whirlwind, like Lindy used. If the ship had a windmill whirligig on top, that was the Earth Inductor Compass which you had to have to fly across the ocean. And the radio aerial on the Ford Tri-Motor, the small boys knew, was so the pilot could talk to the factory every day and get his orders.

Eddie Stinson led them all in points scored as the fleet went on south and west through Texas and Oklahoma and Kansas. Wichita was a lunch stop, long enough to hear all about the frantic activity at Swallow and Travel Air where workmen were going round the clock to finish three ships in time for the Dole hop-off. The Dole Race was the biggest one yet: thirty-five thousand in prize money; 2500 miles nonstop, California to Hawaii with the deadline just four weeks away. At least a dozen planes were entered, and the tour flyers would remember the three entries from Wichita: the Travel Air flown to an easy first place by Art Goebel, another Travel Air which turned back, and the Swallow that went down at sea, as the radio operator sent back word on the short wave, first, "It is beginning to get dark," and then later, "We are in another spin...."

Eddie Stinson was a sure winner as the tour headed home from Omaha but underdog Harold Elliott led the way into Dearborn through a driving rainstorm. Elliott was last in line for takeoff at Grand Rapids and thus the only pilot to spot an eager committeeman who came running along the line waving a weather report. The report said there'd be strong tailwinds up above the rain clouds, and so Elliott climbed up to see. And sure enough a near gale blew his Pitcairn into Ford Airport ahead of everyone else.

ITINERARY 1927

Date	City and Airport Name	Miles
Monday, June 27	Dearborn, Ford Buffalo, Municipal	232
June 28	Geneva, Finger Lakes Schenectady, Municipal	95 160
June 29	Boston, East Boston	155
June 30	New York City, Curtiss	135
July 1	Philadelphia; Pitcairn, Willow Grove Baltimore, Logan	88 95
July 2	Pittsburgh; Rodgers, Aspinwall	196
July 3	Cleveland, Municipal (Hopkins)	120
July 4	Kalamazoo, Municipal Dayton, McCook	212 195
July 5	Columbus, Norton Cincinnati, Lunken	72 100
July 6	Louisville, Bowman	97
July 7	Memphis, Armstrong	321
July 8	Pine Bluff, Toney Dallas, Love	130 295
July 9	Oklahoma City, Municipal Tulsa, McIntyre	195 105
July 10	Wichita, Municipal Omaha, Municipal (Carter Lake)	133 260
July 11	Moline, Campbell Hammond, Ford	285 160
Tuesday, July 12	Grand Rapids, Municipal Dearborn, Ford	145 140
		Total 4,121





Eddie Stinson and passengers in four winner. Leonard Flo, in Stinson SB-1, at left; John Riddle, in Waco below.

(NASM)



The Buhl Airsedan, Tour #1, Registration #3034. This "tail number" indicated the plane was identified and listed with the Department of Commerce, as required by the Air Commerce Act of 1926. "C" and "NC" license designations followed, as manufacturers proved their ships in airworthiness tests for an "Aircraft (or Approved) Type Certificate" which the Act required for use in interstate commerce.

(Ford/Hudek)



The Mercury Arrow, with new paint job, tail number 2396 and "Sponsored by Mercator" on fuselage.
(Ford/Hudek)



The Hamilton Metalplane

(A. W. Walker)



J. S. McDonnell, Jr., left, and Tom Hamilton with Metalplane at Spokane Air Races. The plane was designed to carry four passengers, who looked out, and down, through horizontal windows in bottom wing surface.
(A. W. Walker)



Pathfinder pilot Lieutenant Rutledge Irvine, with the Navy's 1923 Schneider Cup racing team. From left, F. W. Wead, D. Rittenhouse, Irvine, A. W. Gorton, C. W. Fox. (George Van Vliet)

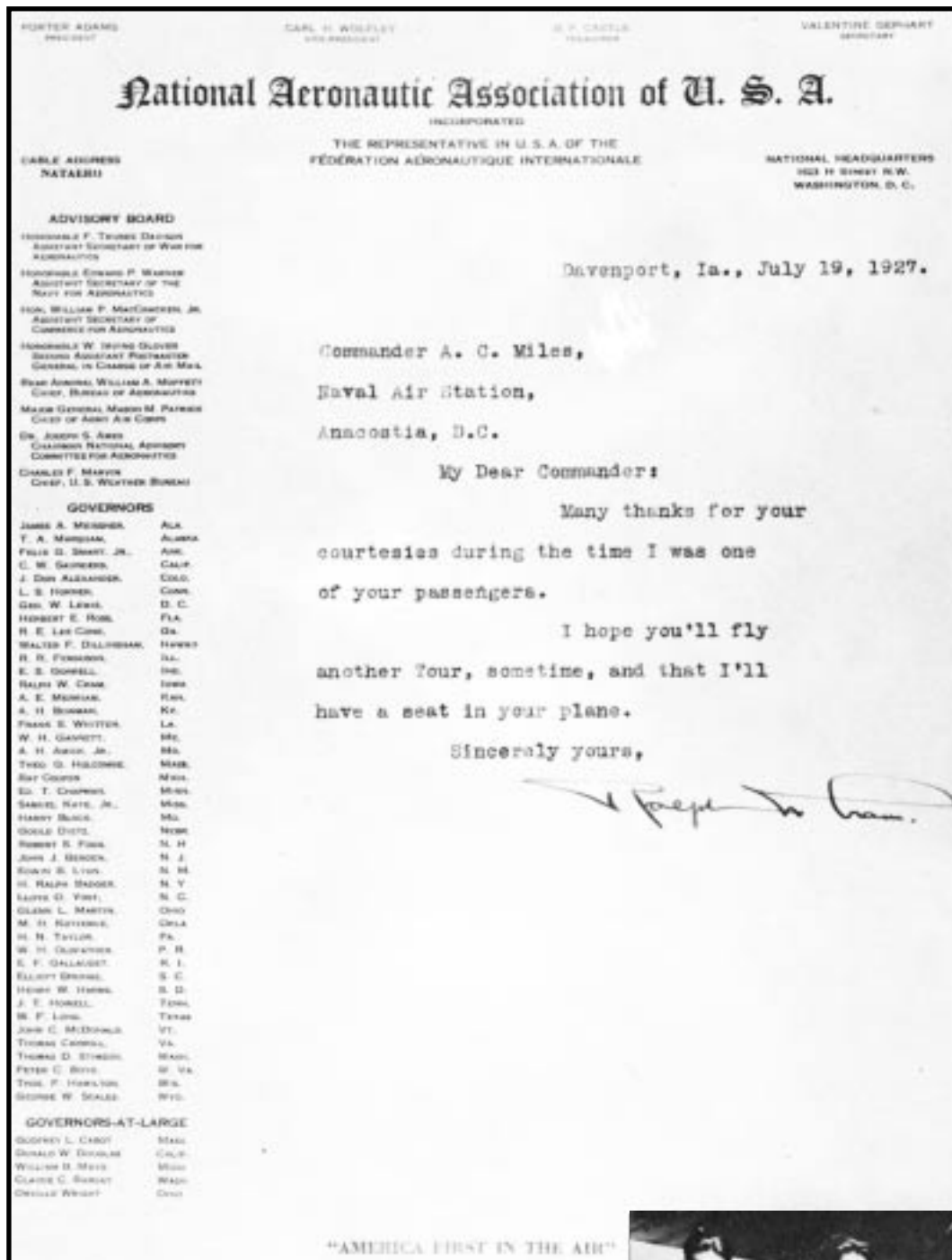


Rules of Ford Airport

(NASM)



Two accompanying Fords, Standard Oil of Indiana's *Stanolind I*, and the Navy's XJR-1. White square in middle distance is the letter "O" in giant "FORD" outlined across the airport. (S. J. Hudek)



Letter to Commander Miles from Ralph W. Cram, newspaperman and NAA representative from Iowa.

(A.C. Miles)



The Navy crew, left to right, J. M. Romero, S. J. Masthay, H. R. Bowes, A. C. Miles.

(A. C. Miles)



Clarence M. Young (left) and William P. McCracken, Jr. (NASM)



Cloyd Clevenger (University of California)



Left to right, John Riddle, Dick Blythe, T. Higbee Embry, Charlie Meyers, John Wood, Harry Sherwin. (Charles W. Meyers)



This Long-Wing Eaglerock carrying a *Detroit News* placard on its nose at the 1927 Spokane Races is probably the same plane flown by Clevenger in the 1927 tour. The dark mass in right background is a truckload of chairs, being set up for race officials. (A. W. Walker)



E. W. "Pop" Cleveland
(Charles W. Meyers)



A beautiful Waco specially built for T. Higbee Embry.
(Advance Aircraft Company)



A Waco DSO similar to Pop Cleveland's tour ship.
(Ted Schroeder)

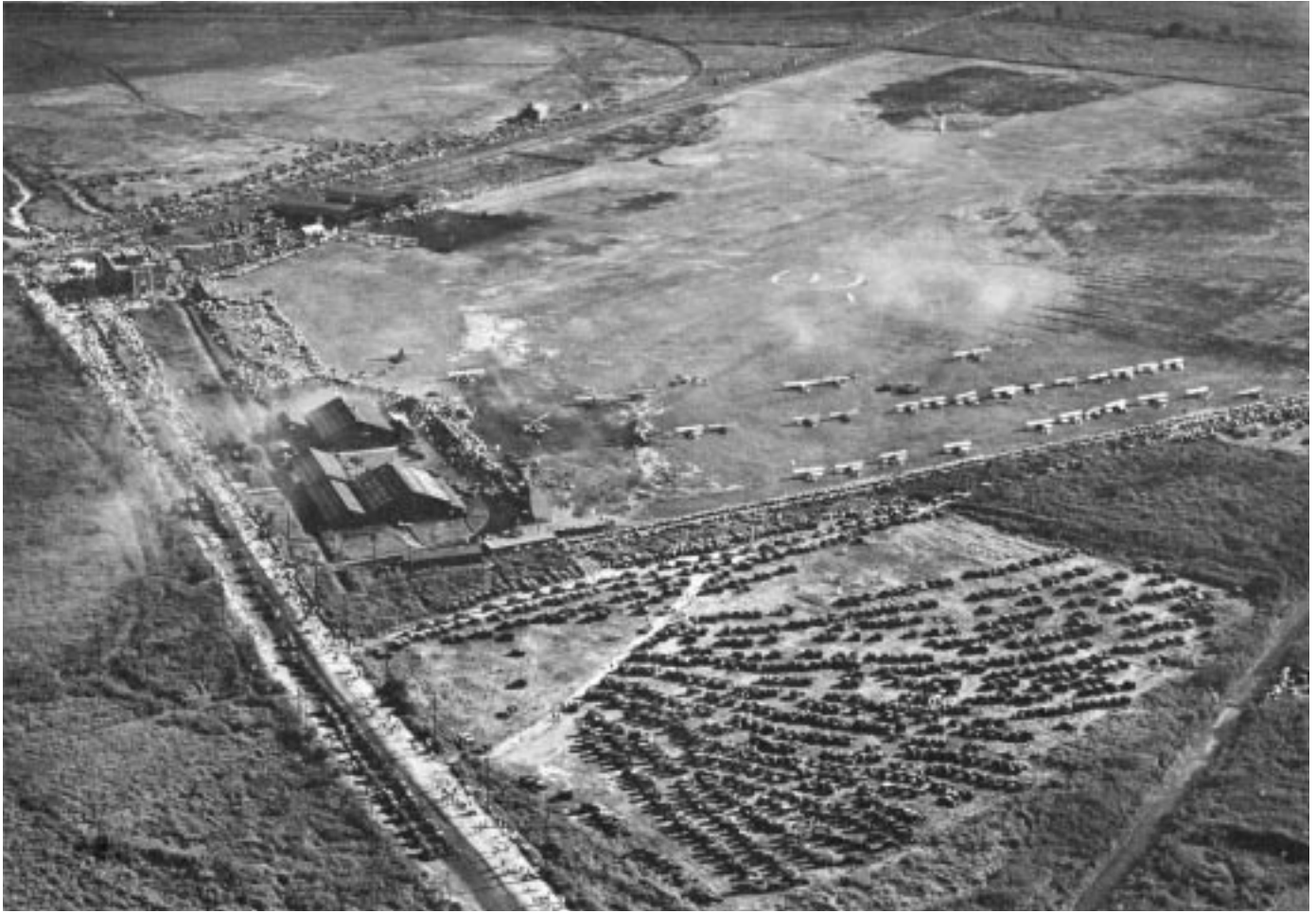


Charlie Meyers' Waco, Embry-Riddle Express.
(Ford/Hudek)



John Riddle in cockpit of Waco 112, Crosley Radio salesman Harry Sherwin at right, holding latest Crosley "table model" publicized with dealers along tour route.

(S. J. Hudek)



Record crowds turned out for the 1927 tour. This is a typical gathering, (for a 1931 air show) at the Philadelphia Airport.

(J. Victor Dallin)

Typical scene: mechanics starting engines with hand-crank inertia starters. These are Curtiss Falcons at the Spokane Races, an O-1 at right, slicked up XO-13A, at left.

(A. W. Walker)





Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh departing Ford Airport December 19, 1927, to spend Christmas with her famous son at Ambassador Dwight Morrow's home in Mexico City. From left, Mrs. Lindbergh, pilot Harry Brooks, passengers Mrs. and Mr. William B. Stout, mechanic Harry Russell, well-wisher Edsel Ford. The airplane is Ford Tri-Motor C-1077.

(S. J. Hudek)



Ford #23, with unusual "Tri-Ford" designation on fin. The plane was listed as standard Whirlwind model in most tour publicity, however this picture indicates it had a Wasp in the nose position.

(Ford/Hudek)



Typical of the ceremonies which took place along the tour route: A brave and efficient lady christens a Vought.
(Mrs. Carl Bigelow)

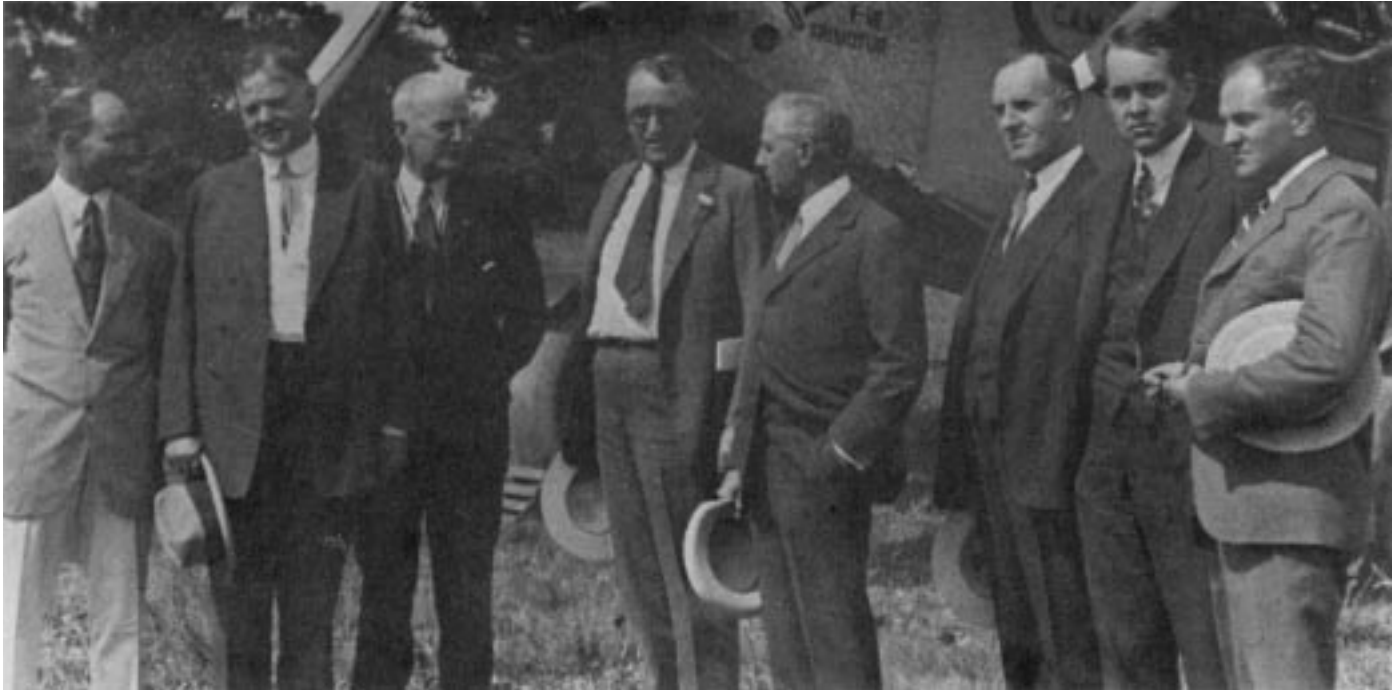


Actress Jane Wyman christens a Lockheed, propped up by a nervous Frank Rose and Walter Varney.
(Franklin Rose)



Miss Wichita of 1926 pins a rose on Clarence Clark.

(C. E. Clark)



Distinguished guests pose with Fokker F-VII for inauguration of Washington, D. C. to Philadelphia airline during the 1926 Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exposition. From left, Tony Fokker, Herbert Hoover, Admiral William A. Moffett, T. P. Mitten, J. W. Drake, J. A. Queeney, Edward P. Warner, and F. Trubee Davison. (NASM)



Leonard Flo, hand upraised in a swearing-in ceremony alongside 1927 Stinson.

(Leonard S. Flo)



T. Claude Ryan, with fellow workers and first Ryan ST Sport Trainer monoplane, in 1934. From left, John Fornasero, pilot, Ryan, M. C. Boyd, and Will Vandermeer, engineers.
(Joseph P. Juptner)



Frank Hawks' Ryan was called *The Gold Bug* due to its paint job, unlike later models which were most often finished in silver "like Lindy's."
(Ford/Hudek)



Paul Braniff (Braniff International)

The 1927 tourists are listed on this *Detroit Free Press* composite. At left: Randolph G. Page; Charles E. Planck, William A. Mara, Mrs. E. F. Schlee, Rosemarie Schlee, Henry Diesenberg, Eddie Stinson, E. F. Schlee; E. A. "Pete" Goff, Mrs. E. A. Goff, Mrs. T. H. Hamilton, Ernest Englebert, Randolph G. Page; Harvey C. Mummert, J. C. Meade; Bailey Wright, George Turner, John P. Wood; Frank Bogart, E. A. "Pete" Goff, Leonard S. Flo, Jean (Genel Searles, Ray Cooper; T. Higbee Embry, Richard Blythe, Whirlwind Jimmy (the monkey mascot), Charley Meyers. Center: Eddie Stinson; then, below the map and the picture of Whirlwind Jimmy: Mrs. John Paul Riddle, John Paul Riddle, Harry E. Sherwin; Ralph Young, Janette Rex, Mrs. Ralph Rex, Frank Hawks, Mrs. Frank Hawks. At right: Harvey C. Mummert; Edward Mulligan, George Arnold, Louis G. Meister; H. A. Elliott; H. A. Wallace, E. C. McMillan, E. W. Cleveland; Paul Braniff, Dave Shackelford; S. J. Masthay, J. M. Romero, William Hall, Frank Cram (should read, Ralph Cram), Lt. Com. A. C. Miles, Lt. H. R. Bowes; "Poppa" Ray Collins, Lt. R. G. Breene; James V. Piersoll, Dean W. Burford, William F. Sturm, C. W. Thomas, Harry Russell, E. P. Crocker, Thomas H. Gilliam (should read, Killian.).

(Charles E. Planck)



Jim Ray taxis out in the Pitcairn Mailwing.

(Ford/Hudek)

OFFICIAL RESULTS: NATIONAL AIR TOUR, FOR THE EDEL B. FORD TROPHY, 1927
June 27 - July 12, 1927

(Contestants listed in order of final standing.)

PILOT	REG. NO.	1 AIRPLANE TYPE AND ATC	ENGINE TYPE		WEIGHTS ²			SECONDS		MAX. ³ SPEED	SCORE	AWARD	PASSENGERS
			DISPL.	H.P.	EM ¹ TY WT.	LOAD	GR ³ SS WT.	ST ¹ K	UST ¹ K				
Edward A. Stinson	24	4307	Stinson SM-1 (16)	Wright J5 788	225	1,970	1,500	4,500	12.13	17.0	124.3	9,853.7	Wm. A. Mara, Charles E. Planck, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Schlee, Rosemarie Schlee, Henry Diesenberg.
Randolph Page	2	C235 ⁴	Hamilton Metalplane	Wright J5 788	225	1,860	1,200	3,850	5.93	16.83	112.3	7,863.5	Thomas Hammen, L.H. Benfer (Milwaukee Sentinel), Russell G. Lynch (Milwaukee Journal) Ernest Englebert.
Harvey C. Mummert	7	2396	Mercury Arrow	Curtiss C6 573	160	1,020	700	2,450	7.37	15.15	122.8	7,807.3	William C. Chadeavne. V.P., Aerial Service Corp.
Dean W. Burford ⁵ (Harry Brooks)	23	3022	Ford Tri-Motor 4-AT-A (87)	(3) Wright J5 787	200	6,000	⁶	10,000	-	-	-	7,609.8	Harry Russell, Clarence Young, C.W. Thomas, William F. Sturm, James Pierson, E.P. Crocker, Thos. F. Killian
John P. Wood	11	4306 (?)	Waco Ten (41)	Wright J5 788	225	1,411	600	2,310	9.0	10.0	131.0	6,857.0	Geo.R. Turner, C.G. Peterson, Pres. Wright Aeronautical, John B. Wood
Leonard S. Flo	13	2707	Stinson SB-1 (24)	Wright J5 788	225	1,810	1,000	3,470	10.3	18.3	116.7	6,386.8	Austin F. Bement, Newton D. Skillman, James Houlihouff
John P. Riddle	12	4304	Waco Ten (41)	Wright J5 788	225	1,411	656	2,310	8.83	11.0	115.6	5,785.5	Harry Sherwin, Powell Crosley, Jr.
Frank M. Hawks	22	3009	Mahoney Ryan B-1 (25)	Wright J5 788	225	2,000	1,000	3,000	15.43	16.3	124.1	5,688.8	Mrs. Frank Hawks, E.A. Goff, Charles Heddon, Ralph Young
Charles W. Meyers	10	4305	Waco Ten (41)	Wright J5 788	225	1,411	600	2,310	9.33	10.47	119.3	5,623.9	T. Higbee Embry, Jr., R.R. Blythe, "Wirlwind Jimmy" (monkey mascot)
Louis G. Meister	1	3034	Buhl Airsedan 10 (or CAsA) (12)	Wright J5 788	225	2,000	1,000	3,700	10.83	15.97	115.0	5,375.7	Edward Mulligan, George Arnold
Harold A. Elliott (James G. Ray)	6	u	Pitcairn PA-5 Mailwing (18)	Wright J5 788	225	1,612	570	2,512	13.0	10.45	127.7	4,666.3	
E.W. Cleveland	8	4308	Waco Ten (42)	Wright Hispano E 718	180	1,508	450	2,404	10.8	10.8	111.3	3,725.5	H.A. Wallace, E.D. McMillan
Cloyd P. Clevenger	3	2873	Alexander Eaglerock Long- Wing 8	Wright J5 788	225	1,705	500	2,491	7.97	9.96	130.2	u	J.A. McInaney, Joseph B. Leonard
Paul R. Braniff	4	3040	Alexander Eaglerock Long- Wing 8	Curtiss OX5 502	90	1,380	400	2,230	10.17	16.0	93.1	u	Dave Shackelford (Daily Oklahoman), Myron Wilson. Out at Oklahoma City

NOTES:

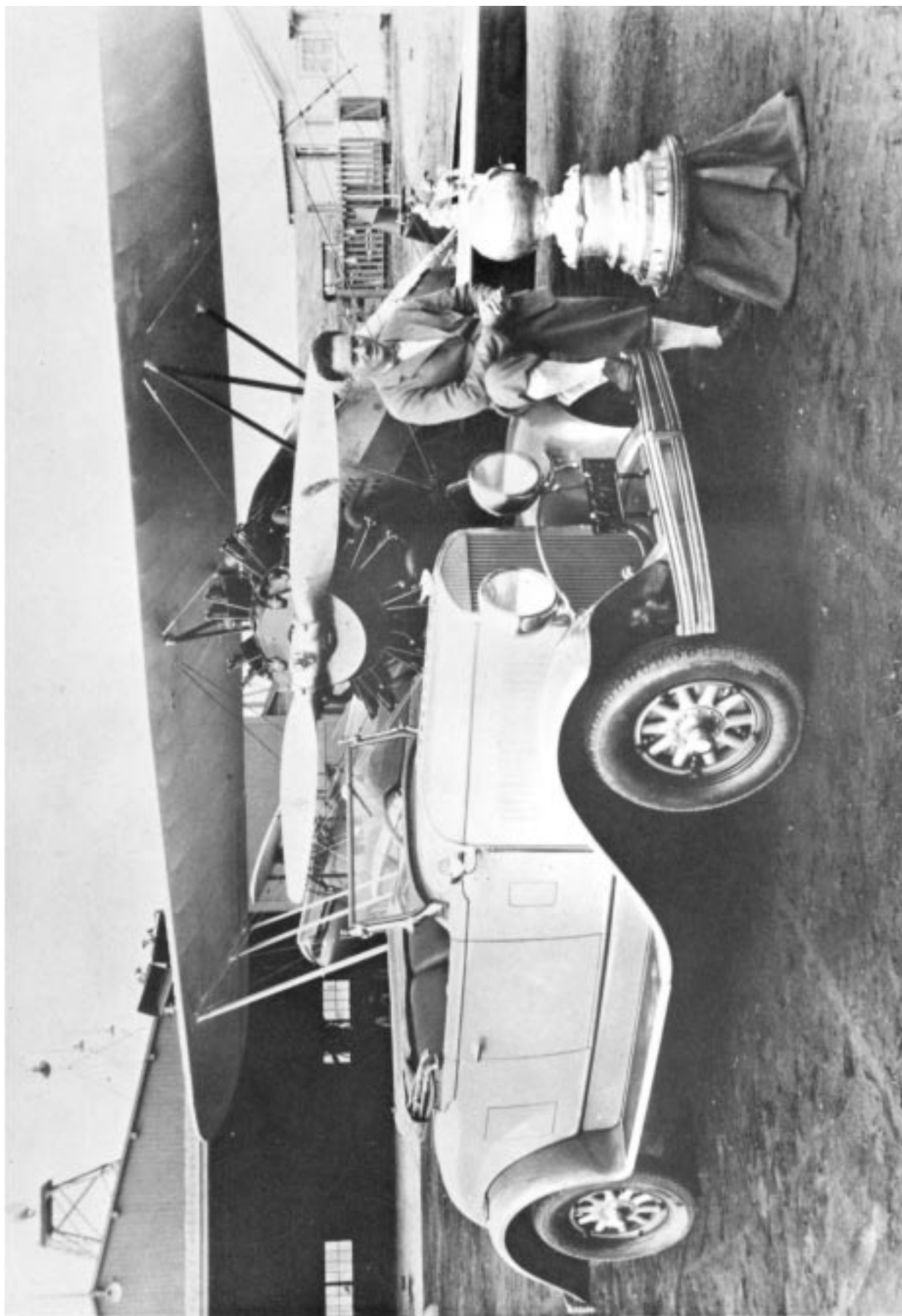
- ¹ ATC - Approved Type Certificates shown in parentheses were awarded at some date subsequent to tour.
- ² Published records for 1927 Tour listed only "Contest Load." Empty and Gross weights are quoted from other sources.
- ³ "Maximum Speed" was established in pre-tour trials. Tour score was based on maintaining 85% of maximum speed.
- ⁴ The "C" prefix for Hamilton registration number indicates completion of Department of Commerce inspection for approval of interstate flight. This model was not issued a Type Certificate.
- ⁵ Pilot listed first is official contestant. Pilot listed in parentheses took ship part way.
- ⁶ Ford figures are incomplete. Airplane was withdrawn as contestant.
- u Unknown

OFFICIAL RESULTS: NATIONAL AIR TOUR, FOR THE EDELS B. FORD TROPHY, 1927
OTHER ACCOMPANYING AIRPLANES

PILOT	REG.NO.	AIRPLANE TYPE	PURPOSE	PASSENGERS
Lt. Rutledge Irvine (Pathfinder)	A7526	Fort Tri-Motor XJR-1 (1) P&W Wasp. (2) Wr. J-4	Advance Pathfinder Airplane and Official Tour Airplane. U.S. Navy, N.A.S. Anacostia	Pathfinder crewmen: Lt. Fred Nielson, J.M. Romero, S.J. Masthay. Tour crewmen: Lt. Cmdr. A.C. Miles, Romero and Masthay. Passengers included: Ray Cooper, F.W. Nerson, Hugh White, W.W. Davies, Frank Bogart, James V. Pierson, Ralph W. Cram, Edward P. Warner.
Lt. R.G. Breene	u	Douglas O-2 Liberty 12	Official Advance Airplane. Army Air Corps, Wright Field	Tour Referee, Ray Collins
Rodney Lamont	NC2492	Fort Tri-Motor 4-AT-A (3) Wr. J-4	Stanolind I, Standard Oil Company of Indiana.	Aircraft had license number NC2492 on the wing and NC2432 on the tail.

Other passengers, various airplanes: Wm. P. McCracken, Jr., Clarence M. Young, Wm. Hall, Wm. F. Sturm, R.G. Lynch, Bert McConnell, Harry H. Knepper, E.P. Crocker, A.G. Schlosser, L.M. Benier, Harvey J. Klemmer, A.F. Bement, John L. Cooley, RH. Gast, R.G. Lockwood, Frank Jerdone, Newton D. Skillman, Arthur Halstead, Larry Selz.





John Wood, Waco Taper Wing, new Chrysler and the Edsel B. Ford Touring Trophy. The trophy was never won permanently by any contending company, was placed on display in the Ford Museum at Dearborn after the last tour.

(Charles W. Meyers)