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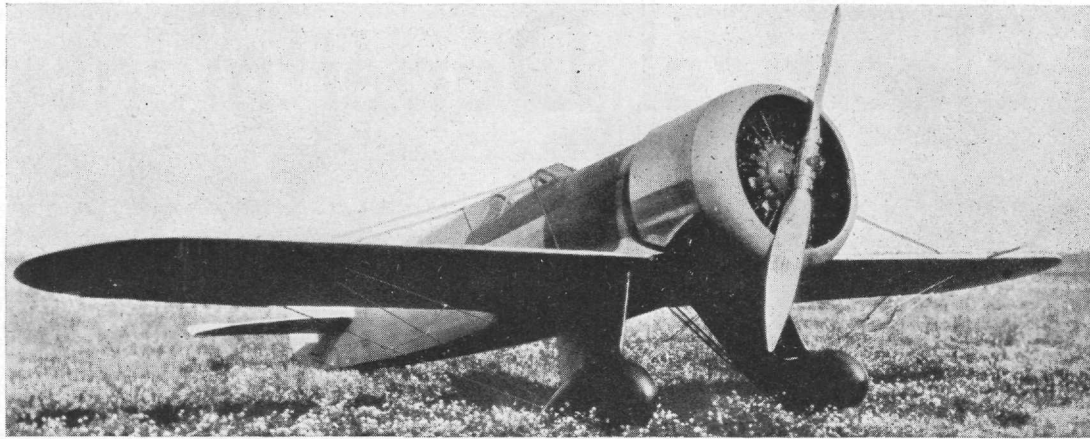
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WASP POWERED WEDELL RACER—Cut courtesy Ohio Motorist

# Ups and Downs

By J. E. BATTERSON, M.E. 3

THE MOST outstanding experience that befell us while flying was our first solo cross-country trip, the details of which are still vividly impressed upon our mind. For a period of several months we had been studying the art of navigation of aircraft from the theoretical standpoint. A naval aviation officer of wide experience was our instructor in this subject and he saw to it that we were thoroughly drilled in this phase of flying. We can still recall him standing in front of the class and repeating time and time again the pitfalls that awaited the pilot who attempted a cross-country flight without a compass. To intensify and impress this upon our minds, he cited many examples of the tragic as well as the humorous events that had occurred as a result of just such attempts. Since we were young, and shall we say "cocky," we seized the first opportunity that offered itself for making a solo cross-country trip, and the fact that the ship did not possess a compass did not deter us in the least.

The trip was between St. Louis and our fair city of Columbus. Because the land between the two cities was quite flat the trip appeared to offer little difficulty as far as navigation and the problem of making emergency landings was concerned. Having been over part of the route before, we felt quite confident of our ability to get there safely by following either the Pennsylvania Railroad or the National Highway, both of which made excellent guides in the absence of a compass.

So it was with a light heart that we took off alone

early one bright summer morning for Columbus in an OX-5 powered Travelair. After circling about the city to get our bearings, we picked up what we thought was the Pennsylvania Railroad and the National Highway. The two ran side by side toward the east so we pointed our plane in that direction and for the first two hours everything ran smoothly, although we had considerable trouble in coinciding the towns on the map with those that we passed over. (In those days the towns were not marked so well for air identification as they are today.) At the end of two hours of flight we decided that perhaps we were following the wrong railroad so we started circling to find out just exactly where we were. After circling for quite a while, we discovered to our chagrin that we were slightly less than a hundred miles north of where

we should have been. Not at all daunted, we headed our plane in approximately the correct direction and within an hour had again picked up our trail. From then on the journey was uneventful and we landed safely at our destination after spending six hours in the air.

It was on the return trip, however, that the incident occurred that made this trip so impressive to us. After taking off from Columbus with just about time enough to make St. Louis by dark we were soon well on our way without mishap or the trouble that we had experienced coming over. Just before we reached Indianapolis, while breezing along at four thousand feet, our engine started to develop all the symptoms of asthma by be-

*THIS article on the experiences of a pilot is the fourth of a series of aeronautical articles by John E. Batterson, M.E. 3.*

*Mr. Batterson graduated from Parks Air College of St. Louis in 1929 and holds a Limited Commercial Pilot's license. He has had a great deal of interesting flying experience and if our readers so wish, we shall publish more of his interesting narratives.—The Editor.*

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## Ups and Downs

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ginning to wheeze with sickening gasps at frequent intervals. We immediately began to look for a handy place to sit down in the event that she would fail us altogether. With much coaxing, we managed to limp our way to the Municipal Field at Indianapolis. There we remedied the trouble which was caused by water leaking into the carburetor from the water pump.

After another checkover we again took off for St. Louis with not quite the light heart that we had had at the beginning of the journey. Keeping as high as possible in order to be able to glide quite a distance in the event of further trouble, we managed to fly for about an hour with out "Hortense," as we fondly called her, acting up. But at the end of this time with darkness overtaking us, Hortense again developed the snuffles. So we began to look for a place to land and spend the night but a half hour of search found us still sputtering around with quite a bit of empty space between us and terra firma and no suitable landing place in sight among the many black shadows that were rapidly lengthening beneath us.

Just as night was beginning to settle over the earth below, we saw the beason of our home airport flashing in the distance. The sight of a lighthouse was never more gladdening to the heart of a sailor than this light

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was to us. After seeing that we were between the proverbial "devil and the deep blu esea" we decided to choose what we thought was the lesser of two evils and decided to try to make the airport. We put the nose of our plane right on the beacon, coaxed the motor some more, and prayed for the best.

Many times during that forty-five minutes of flight Hortense caused our stomach to turn over by threatening to gasp her last and leave us up there without lights or any idea as to the nature of the ground underneath us. Each time, however, we managed to keep her going, at least to the extent of keeping us up in the air. It was with a great deal of relief that we saw the lights of East St. Louis begin to pass under us like a myriad of tiny points of light on a black moving background. Just as we were congratulating ourselves upon saving our plane as well as our skin, Hortense gave a few last gasps and then absolutely refused to go any further.

Few can imagine the many pictures that ran through our minds while we were up there alone, three thousand feet above the city between the stars above and the star-like twinkling points of light below, and faced with the necessity of getting down and being able to tell about it afterwards. But it was our dying determination to make our crash as close to our home port as possible so that the remains could be transported home with the least possible difficulty.

With a couple of prayers on our lips we headed for the field in a shallow glide in an effort to keep the plane in the air as long as possible. To our dying day we will never forget those last few minutes when our fate was hanging on a very slender thread. Many were the sins and past deeds that flashed through our mind as we literally dusted the soot from the house tops at the edge of the field. After landing we were pretty limp and just sat there trying to get our breath and waiting for the fireworks to begin. What the instructor said after we had related our experience would not look well on this page.

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