

'Smiling Jack' Harding Flew From One Woman's Arms to Another, His Pals on Big Voyage Jokingly Say

Winning Personality of Airmen Made Him Favorite All Over World; Started by Dissembling His Mother's Sewing Machine When a Youngster.

Told by **LOWELL THOMAS.**
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Although all six of America's world fliers are entitled to equal credit for having been the first to circumnavigate the globe by air, the first to actually complete the circuit was "Smiling Jack" Harding from Tennessee—he whom fellow airmen have jokingly charged with having flown round the world from one woman's arms to another.

As a matter of fact, Jack's right to the former honor is just as genuine as Macgillivray's. You will recall that when the immortal Portuguese circumnavigator set forth with his Spanish fleet he met his death on an island in the East Indies. But he had won his right to be forever known as the first to sail around the world because on a previous expedition he had sailed in the opposite direction to a point farther than he reached by air, the west on his final voyage.

So it was with Jack Harding. In 1919 he had flown across America from Atlantic to Pacific on what was known as the "Round-the-Rim Flight." And when the world fliers reached the coast of Maine, they crossed the trail that Jack had helped blaze on his previous flight. Therefore, when he reached Maine he was at that moment could say he had been all the way round the globe by air.

Mother Then His Sweetheart.

However, as to the charge that he "flew round from one woman's arms to another," that rumor has spread simply because "Smiling Jack" has such a winning personality that everybody, everywhere, singles him out for special attention and affection. As a matter of fact, the only real sweetheart Jack Harding ever had up until the end of the world flight was his mother. Since then—ah, but that would be getting ahead of our story.

And surely it's not surprising that six handsome bachelors, after successfully carrying out one of the most hazardous and daring feats in all history, should be even more sought after than the prince of Wales. Nor in that adventurous and romantic sequel to the world flight did "Smiling Jack" shrink from his share of the hazard. But we will not go into the romantic tale of the world fliers' triumphal post-flight tour until we have gone with them around the globe.

"Smiling Jack" Harding, like all of the other world fliers excepting Lieut. Erik Nelson, comes of a long line of pioneers who have played a prominent part in American history. This same Harding family, through another branch, produced the late president of the United States. One of his ancestors was "Stonewall" Jackson.

We have already seen how Lieut. Leslie Arnold made the acquaintance of "Smiling Jack." When Arnold "took off" from Dayton with Harding beside him, he thought his passenger merely a civilian who had succeeded in getting the air service to allow him to take a joy ride to Washington. But an incident occurred on the way that opened Lieutenant Arnold's eyes. In addition to himself and his passenger, Harding, Arnold had two others along in the Martin bomber. They were the regular mechanics assigned to take care of the plane. While flying over West Virginia, 50 miles west of Moundsville, one engine started to sputter ominously. Before Arnold had a chance to spot a place to land and before the two mechanics could do anything, Lieut. Arnold was amazed to see his passenger crawl out of his cockpit and start tinkering with the engine in mid-air. The result was that the engine kept running until a landing could be made at Moundsville.

The two mechanics immediately hustled about and after a few minutes' inspection informed Lieutenant Arnold that it would be necessary to stop overnight in order to give the motor a complete overhauling. "Beg pardon, lieutenant," interposed Harding, "but if you like, I will fix your motor so that we can push on to Washington in a half hour." So saying he pulled on a pair of overalls and got busy. In less than 20 minutes he had that engine in order and the flight was resumed.

Was Motor Expert.

Instead of being just an ordinary civilian, Jack turned out to be a man who had served two terms of enlistment in the air service and was still employed as an airplane motor expert at the aviation headquarters in Dayton.

Lieut. John Harding, Jr., is the son of an inventor and chemical engineer. As a youngster he attended a small red brick country school house where, in his own words, he got "a lickin' every day."

His mother, a charming southern lady, whose family came from Virginia and Carolina, says that her Jack always wanted to know what

made the wheels go round and preferred tinkering with alarm clocks to fairy tales.

Before he was 10 he had the wood shed full of wheels, rusty dynamos and everything in the mechanical line that he could put his hands on. Instead of buying candy or other nicknacks with money earned doing chores, he would invest it in bits of iron, copper wire, and batteries, and he was always dreaming of the day when he could build engines better than anyone else.

Disassembled Sewing Machine.

The soundest hiding hack ever got was one day when he disassembled his mother's sewing machine and scattered it all over the room just when she was in a hurry to put the finishing touches to a gown she needed for a party that afternoon. Jack's father thought that this was carrying the eccentricity of genius a step too far, and although he was delighted that his son was able to put every thing-a-majig back where it belonged, that did not stop his hand when he ushered him on to the wood shed.

Jack Harding not only was the first man to complete the circuit of the world by air, but he also has the distinction of being the first boy in the south ever to ride in an automobile. It belonged to his father and was a Woods electric. When it was superceded by another model, the original was turned over to Jack, who took it to pieces and put it together many times, and thus gained his first real experience with motor engines.

After finishing grade school in the country he went off to Webb Preparatory at Belle Buckle, Tenn., one of the most straight-laced institutions south of the Mason-Dixon line. There are no dormitories at Webb, and the boys live in private homes in the village. Upon arrival at school they are obliged to sign a pledge promising never to go out after dark!

There is no gym at Webb and the boys are not even allowed to play match games with other schools. Latin, Greek and algebra are the mainstays of Webb. And when a boy finishes four years there—provided he survives that long—he is not given a diploma nor even a simple card to indicate that he has been graduated from any prep school at all. To be sure he is encouraged to go on to college, but if he does, he gets no credentials or letter of recommendation from Webb. He must take the entrance examinations for that col-

lege and stand on his own merit. Of course, the result of this is that Webb produces self-reliant young men. And young Jack Harding, who worked his way through Webb cutting wood for the classroom stoves, got as fine a prep school training as this country has to offer.

When Lieut. Erik Nelson was told that he might select anyone he liked to accompany him in the New Orleans, he chose "Smiling Jack." Nelson himself is one of the best aeronautical engineers in America, so to be selected by him was in itself no small honor. And events proved that Nelson knew his man. From Seattle to Alaska, from the Aleutian islands across the Pacific, all the way across Asia and Europe and the Atlantic Lieutenants Nelson and Harding flew without a single delay. Their record until they landed back on American soil was 100 per cent perfect. There are few men in America today who know more about Liberty motors than Jack Harding.

Major Martin and Sergeant Harvey crashed into a mountain on the Alaskan peninsula; Lieutenants Wade and Ogden came down in the north Atlantic and the Boston went to the bottom of the sea; and Lieutenants Smith and Arnold were delayed by engine trouble several times during the flight. But Nelson and Harding came through without trouble until obliged to make a forced landing between Baltimore and Washington at the moment when they were on their way to be welcomed by President Coolidge.

The son of John Harding and Mrs. Roberta C. Harding of Nashville, Tenn., "Smiling Jack," as he is fa-

miliarly known, was born on June 2, 1886. All his ancestors on both sides of the family originally came from England. The Hardings were among the first families of Virginia to migrate west to the blue grass country of Tennessee. Belle Meade, the Harding plantation near Nashville, was owned by four generations of John Hardings and was one of the most famous estates in the south in slavery days. Its pastures were once the home of great herds of buffalo and were a favorite Indian hunting ground.

Pioneer Tennessee Family.

When the early Virginia colonists were lured west by the tales brought back by explorers, tales of rich lands, deep in blue grass, John Harding was among the pioneers to cross the Alleghenies to what is now Tennessee. He built his log cabin near where the city of Nashville stands today. There he carved out the vast Belle Meade plantation which for generations remained one of the most widely known centers of plantation life in all the south.

Belle Meade passed on to his son, Gen. William Giles Harding, famous as a breeder of thoroughbred horses. The plantation in those days included over 5,000 acres of blue grass land.

Belle Meade was particularly famous for its house parties and the Hardings were known far and wide for their princely hospitality. Most of the prominent people of the day, including statesmen, poets and pioneers like Davey Crockett, hero of the Alamo, were entertained there. The finest traditions of the old south were upheld by the hosts at Belle Meade.

After the civil war, the Hardings, like nearly all of the other old aristocratic families of the south, encountered vicissitudes. Parts of Belle Meade had to be sold and today sons of the new south in "plus fours" hunt the elusive golf ball in the blue grass where the ancestors of Jack Harding

hunted buffalo and established their Tennessee home.

Three summers during his prep school days he spent working as a keysmith, opening locks for careless people who had lost their keys. Later he went to work in a garage at Nashville and earned enough money to help put himself through a course in mechanical engineering at Vanderbilt university, where he remained for two years. Then he capped this with three months' special work in engineering at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and pushed off north to Detroit, where he became a road tester for the Chalmers Motor company.

His job was to take new cars for their trial spin, in order to locate rattles, squeaks and knocks and eliminate them. From there he migrated to the Dodge plant, where he spent months juggling 150-pound engines at the rate of 160 of them a day. This gave him arms and shoulders like the strong man in the circus.

And it was while with Dodge brothers that he developed the prodigious strength which stood him in such good stead when he had to fight the fury of the arctic winds that threatened to wreck the world cruisers off the Alaskan coast.

In August, 1917, just as Jack was about to return home to resume his university work with the funds he had earned in Detroit, America entered the war and he immediately enlisted in the air service as a private. Instead of Uncle Sam taking advantage of his mechanical genius, Jack was sent to Fort Oglethorpe and put in kitchen police for months, later transferred to Kelly field, San Antonio, Tex., where after several more months' scouring pots and pans and engaging in a rough and tumble fight with a cook, he was demoted and put to digging stumps. Here again Fate was fitting his physique for the hardships of the round the world flight.


Read the next installment of the

story of the 'round-the-world flight in The Omaha Sunday Bee.

Geneva—Auto license plates for 1925 have been received by County Trans-

urer Thomas, who will begin issuing them December 15. It is estimated that the motor license business for next year will amount to \$40,000 in Fillmore county.

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Fresh Pig Feet, 6c	Fresh Pig Snouts, 8c	Fresh Pig Ears, 6c	Fresh Pig Tails, 12½c	Fancy Cream Cheese, 23c
Fancy Brick Cheese, 23c	Fancy Swiss Cheese, 35c	Sugar-Cured Picnic Ham, 12½c	Sugar-Cured Bacon, 20c	Sugar-Cured Breakfast Bacon, 25c
Fresh Killed Chickens, 23c	Fancy Early June Pans, 2 for, 25c	Fancy Sweet Corn, 2 for, 25c	Fancy Tomatoes, 2 for, 25c	Evaporated Milk, 3 for, 25c
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