

# Jack Harding Won Place on Flight Through Ability as Mechanic

## First Flight Won by Fixing Engine of Martin Bomber

### Lt. E. E. Harmon Chose Smiling Sergeant to Accompany Him on "Round the Rim" Flight in 1919.

Told by **LOWELL THOMAS.**  
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"Smiling Jack" Harding did everything he could to get into the air as a pilot, but once you are a buck private, it's a difficult thing to blossom forth in the boots and spurs of an officer. However, his officers eventually found out that he was just as good at repairing their staff cars as he was at digging stumps and haling out soap to the rest of the rookies. He finally got to the aviation mechanics' training school in St. Paul, Minn., where he made such a high record that he was transferred to Wilbur Wright field, Dayton, and first made a sergeant and later given the rating of master signal electrician and aviation mechanic.

His first great flight was in 1919 and came about in this way: Lieut. Ernest E. Harmon had been sent down to Langley field, Virginia, to look after the repairing of a Martin bomber. A group of mechanics had been vainly attempting to get the engine running and were just about ready to give up in despair when a powerfully built young sergeant stepped up and remarked: "You birds stand back a minute."

It was "Smiling Jack." And just as we saw on that similar previous occasion when he met his future fellow circumnavigator, Lieut. Leslie Arnold, Jack got the motor working in a few minutes, and, with a spin of the propeller, started it off with a crash and a roar that swept him to fame.

Lieut. "Tiny" Harmon made a mental note of him as a mechanic worth remembering, and a little later, when he needed a man to help him on the first flight ever attempted all the way around the borders of the United States, known as "the round the rim flight," he asked permission to take Harding along as his mechanic. The feat was attempted by a single Martin bomber under the command of Col. R. H. Hartz, and piloted by Lieut. "Tiny" Harmon.

The bomber flew from Washington, D. C., to Maine, then straight west across the continent to Puget sound, on down the Pacific coast from Canada to Mexico, and back to Washington by way of the Gulf states. It was the first time that the United States had ever been circumnavigated by air, and on this flight of 24,600 miles Jack passed over Maine and made the transcontinental trip in a way that later entitled him to be mentioned as the first of the six world fliers to actually complete the circuit of the globe by air.

When his first period of army service ended in 1920, he reenlisted for another year and served most of the time at Bolling field, Washington, D. C., and McCook field, Dayton, O., where he first became intimately acquainted with Erik Nelson, the man who was later to show his great faith in him by selecting him for the round the world flight. When his second enlistment was up he retained his position with the air service as a civilian expert mechanic, and when chosen for the world flight he was acting as assistant chief of airplane and engine maintenance at Dayton under Lieutenant Nelson.

### 500 Hours in Air.

Although he had always been a mechanic and for some time had been a lieutenant in the air service reserve, he had never been given an official opportunity of realizing his dream of becoming a full-fledged birdman. But he was now flying on the fly to earn his wings, and before he even started he had 500 hours in the air, most of it cross-country flying.

However, just before the world cruises hopped off from Seattle Jack was given an examination, as a result of which he was given the rating of junior airplane pilot, despite the fact that he had never had any official instruction.

Lieut. Leigh Wade, he has done considerable high altitude work, and on one occasion froze the side of his face when he got up to an altitude of 24,600 feet.

In several respects Jack differs from the other world fliers. In addition to his high altitude work, which has gained him the nickname of "Smiling Jack," he has another physical peculiarity. One of his eyes is blue and the other is brown. But this does not detract one whit from his fascination. He is also unlike three of his fellow round the world fliers in that he never ran away from him. In fact his mother is Jack's best pal, and when he got the surprise of his life by being invited to go on the world flight he at once put it up to his mother and told her that he would not think of accepting unless she wanted him to go. But his mother was a good soldier and urged him to seize the opportunity, although her heart sank when she said it, because she fully realized the extremely hazardous nature of the undertaking and knew that just one small accident might prevent her seeing him again.

Because of his magnificent physique, his magnetic personality, and that infectious smile of his, Jack has been a favorite with the fairer sex in every land over which he and his fellow circumnavigator winged their way. But his mother is still his sweetheart, and she relates an anecdote in support of this: Shortly before Jack started on the world flight he returned to Nashville for a visit and one evening found himself sitting in a hammock beside a charming young southern debutante, the belle of the town, who cooed softly about the moonlight and slipped her hand into his.

"Sure—great," Jack murmured absently. "If I could just figure out—cylinders—magneto—dynamo—Whoreupon the girl snatched her hand away in pique. And that was as far as the mechanically minded 'Smiling Jack' ever got with a courtship—that is, until he arrived back in America after having flown around the world.

By this time his mother, and we must wait until the end of our narrative to hear how America's world fliers went from the conquest of the air to the conquest of the hearts. "Trouble Shooting Henry" is the name by which Lieutenant Ogden of the world cruiser Boston is best known to his fellow fliers in the air service. But just for short, they call him "Hank." Then again they call him "Houdini," both because he is a sort of wizard with engines and because he had a mysterious habit of disappearing in nearly every city where the world fliers stopped. No one has entirely solved this mystery, but "Houdini" Ogden has a secret volume, a little black book, in which are some hundreds of addresses that ought to give a clue.

A "trouble shooter" is a sort of a doctor of engines. Whenever a Liberty or Hispano-Suiza, or any other motor develops a bad cough, blind staggers, altitude sickness, or any of the other thousand and one ailments that engines are subject to, "trouble shooters" like Henry Ogden are called in to prescribe, or perform a final autopsy and order the interment of the deceased.

picked him up to circumnavigate the world by air and take his place in history along with Macellan and Columbus. "Trouble Shooting Henry's" sole ambition in life was to run a country store like his father's and protect his cows from the dreaded "Texas tick."

Related to "Ma" Ferguson. Like his associates, Wade and Harding, Henry Ogden attended country school. Like all of the rest of the world fliers, excepting Erik Nelson, his ancestors were of English origin and among the earliest colonists to settle in America. His mother comes from the same family as "Ma" Ferguson, the newly elected woman governor of Texas.

Henry's life before he entered the air service was spent among the Negroes of the cotton plantations, and he tells many interesting stories of his associations with them. For instance, there is one old "Uncle Tom" who has just passed the century mark. Henry's father has long since pensioned him off, and surely few men ever did more to earn a pension. In the old slavery days, before this black Samson went to work on one of the Ogden plantations, he was the property of a slave owner who was interested in eugenics. "Uncle Tom" was, and still is, a giant. He stands over six feet and has the chest development of a covenanter. His master was keen to breed a race of giants for his cotton plantation, so he presented this dusky stalwart with a harem, and today he is the father of 60 children, which ties the record of Brigham Young, and is exceeded only by the record of the late king of Siam, who held the world's championship for many years.

Henry had finished his high school work at Woodville, he went down to New Orleans to take a course in a business college. He also spent several summers working as a fur buyer—collecting possum and coon skins from colored trappers. On several occasions it turned out that the furs he had bought were stolen property, and once when he caught the thief he and his friends tied the latter over a log, gave him a hundred licks with a strap, and then chased him out of the state.

Youngest of Six. Lieutenant Ogden is by far the youngest of the world fliers. When America entered the World War he was only 17, having been born on September 2, 1907. So he was not allowed to join the army until 1919, when he entered the air service repair depot at Montgomery, Ala.

Up to that time this youth, who was destined to circumnavigate the world by air, not only had never been in an airplane, but he had never seen one.

After a six weeks' course in the construction of airplane motors, during which time he frequently studied all night long so that his instructors would not be able to ask him questions that he couldn't answer, he showed such aptitude that he was made an instructor himself. Five months after he had enlisted he passed an examination that raised him to the rank of staff sergeant, and he remained at Montgomery as

an instructor in motors until the end of his first year. It was during this period that he had his first flight. Then for a time he was in charge of one of the crews building motors for the government in the airplane factory at Montgomery. For another nine months he worked on different types of engines, such as Gnomes, Le Rhones, Cleggets, and Hispano Sulgas. Then he was transferred to the rigging department for instruction in the building of the wings, fuselage, and other parts of an airplane.

Next he got his first assignment as a "trouble shooter," and in the summer of 1921 was transferred to Ellington field, Houston, Tex., and placed in charge of the hangar used by visiting "ships." From that job he was transferred to the aero repair department, where he was in charge of the inspection and repair of planes for 10 months, until transferred to Selfridge field, Detroit.

During all of his years in the air service he has spent the most of his time when off duty either experimenting with aero engines in his own private shop or flying around in commercial planes owned by his friends. It was during those off hours that he began doing such daredevil stunts as jumping from plane to plane.

Thrills as Student. While still in Texas he attempted to fly from San Antonio to Houston on one occasion and ran into a fog that nearly cost him his life. He and a companion named Moshier took off from Kelly field, San Antonio, late one afternoon, but not too late, they thought, to reach Houston before daylight.

However, as a result of fog, night closed down over them sooner than they had anticipated. They were obliged to fly above the clouds with nothing to guide them but their compass. Thinking that they must be somewhere in the vicinity of Houston, they dove down through the fog. It was pitch dark, so dark that they couldn't see the struts of the plane 10 feet away.

To their consternation they found themselves over water, which they figured must be the Gulf of Mexico, a branch of the Gulf of Mexico. Nearly out of gas, they turned back in search of land. The night was inky black by now, but at last they made out a faint light and, heading toward it, discovered that they were near the shore. Then the gas ran out, and they simply had to find some place to put the bus down.

When the wheels touched ground the plane bounded back into the air for 30 or 40 feet and then pancaked down and stopped dead, right astraddle of a 15-foot ditch. In digging the ditch the laborers had piled dirt high on either side. Ogden and Moshier had hit the pile on one side and this was what caused them to bound back into the air. If they had been unlucky and had hit 10 feet farther on, they would have dug the nose of the plane right into the middle of the ditch and neither of them would ever have known what had happened.

Plane Busted. As it was, the plane broke squarely in two. The machine gun mount hit Ogden in the face, knocking out all of his front teeth. A piece of the fuselage went through his left arm. The control stick was driven through Lieutenant Moshier's left side just under the ribs, but fortunately far enough to the left to prevent the injury being fatal. To make matters still worse, both airmen were obliged to sit out in the swamp until morning because the night was too thick for them to move away from the plane without running the risk of falling into a morass.

During his five years as an aviation "trouble shooter" Ogden has witnessed many thrilling sights. One day at Houston he was standing out in front of his own hangar when Lieutenant Tinsley, flying an SE-5, attempted to make a landing. Tinsley came down with the wind and directly toward one of the hangars. Seeing that he was in danger of hitting the hangar, he "gave her the gun" and attempted to ascend. But he couldn't quite clear the roof. His wheels caught and his landing gear was ripped off, causing the plane to dive straight into another hangar across the company street. As Tinsley in his SE-5 passed through the first wall of this hangar, the wings of the plane stopped on the outside, while fuselage, engine and pilot crashed right on through. Tinsley had presence of mind enough to leap out of his cockpit and a moment later his gasoline tanks exploded and both building and airplane went up in flames. Tinsley escaped with nothing but a slight scratch. Lieutenant Ogden was standing only a few feet away and saw the whole affair.

Went to Michigan. When he left Ellington field for Detroit, Ogden accompanied 19 airplanes that were being transferred by air from Texas to Michigan. He was one of three mechanics selected to keep the squadron in condition on the way and they succeeded in getting all 19 through without a forced landing. In Michigan he was again assigned to "trouble shooting" and took care of

visiting planes that took part in the Detroit airplane races of 1922, and afterwards remained at Selfridge field until called to Langley field, Virginia, for duty in connection with the world flight.

Read the next installment of the thrilling "round-the-world flight in The Omaha Bee tomorrow.

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