

THE FLYING PIONEERS

By HAROLD E. MOREHOUSE

CHARLES WALD

Charles Wald was born in Brooklyn, New York on October 11, 1881 and attended school there. As a youngster he started working in department stores in 1894. Wanting to learn a trade, and being very interested in mechanical things, he went to Newport News, Virginia in 1898 and started to work in the shipyards.

Wald worked there until 1901 when he joined the Army Transport Service and went to sea on a trip that was to eventually take him around the world. Crossing the Atlantic, through the Mediterranean and Suez Canal, he remained with the Transport Service until reaching the Philippine Islands where he joined the U. S. Customs Service at Manila. While there, in 1905 he saw an article in a magazine with photos that showed Wilbur Wright gliding at Kitty Hawk and this aroused his interest.

In 1906 Wald was recalled to the United States and on his way east decided to stop in Dayton and visit the Wright Brothers to learn at first hand what he could about their experiments. To his surprise they invited him to their home where he met their father, Bishop Wright, and sister, Katherine, for a friendly family-type visit. From that first meeting came a friendship that lasted through the years and resulted in many meetings between Wald and the Wrights.

While still in Government service Wald's interest in aviation grew and he attended major flying events whenever and wherever possible. He was present and saw Wilbur Wright make the flights from Governors Island to Grant's Tomb and return in late September 1909. He also attended the FIRST air meet of public exhibitions by the Wright Team of Aviators at Indianapolis, Indiana between July 13 and 18, 1910. At that event were Brookins, Welsh, Hoxsey, Johnstone and LaChappelle, and there on the 14th Frank Coffyn made his first solo flight. Orville Wright also flew, carrying Carl Fisher and A. B. Lambert as passengers. During this time Wald furthered his education by taking an engineering night school course at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. In the Fall of 1910 he became one of the founder members of the Brooklyn Aero Club and remained an officer of this organization through 1912.

In the Spring of 1912 Wald decided to learn to fly and enrolled in the Wright Flying School at Dayton about April 1st. There he had his first flying lesson on April 12th from Instructor Al Welsh. In the same class were William Kabitsky, Grover Bergdoll and John Klockler. Wald continued instruction through May, weather permitting, and made his first solo flight on June 27. The next day Orville Wright rode with him on two flights as a passenger to check him out "as a graduate student." While in Dayton as a student Wald attended the funeral of Wilbur Wright as a member of the group of close personal friends. After completing instruction Wald remained at Dayton and continued practice into July when the Wright Company decided to take him into the organization, and placed him in charge of a company demonstration agency at Glen Head, Long Island, using a Wright Model C on floats, with 6 cylinder Wright engine. The branch was established to promote interest in water flying among Long Island yachtsmen. Demonstrations were arranged at various yacht clubs and passengers were carried in a general plan to sell water flying to wealthy sportsmen. A hangar was built at the water's edge, complete with launching ramp, and flight operations started in August with Wald as Pilot-in-Charge of operations. During this

time he made several notable flights, including one from Glen Head to New Rochelle and return on September 21st. On October 10th he saved a man from drowning while flying at Sea Cliff. During this period he also made several basic improvements in the plane and its handling capabilities. At the close of the 1912 flying season the Wright Company abandoned the project and Wald was released.

Following this Wald and some of his former Brooklyn Aero Club colleagues formed the Manhattan Aeroplane Company in New York. During 1913 they built two land planes and one flying boat, using Kirkham 6 cylinder engines. These planes were flight-tested and proved quite successful but the project was discontinued due to a serious general slump in aviation. In 1914 Wald joined the Curtiss Company in Buffalo, New York, first in the shop working on the controls of a large tri-motored plane for the British Government. He remained with the Curtiss Company through 1915 and for a time was located at the Toronto plant where Tony Jannus gave him some instruction on Curtiss Flying Boats.

In 1916 Wald enlisted and flew Curtiss Jennies in Texas with General Pershing's Border Patrol Unit. In 1917 he joined the Naval Aircraft Inspection Service. His first assignment was at the Curtiss Buffalo plant,



Charles Wald: Mechanic, Pilot, Designer-Builder and Inspector for the Navy Department

and while there he did some flying on their HS-1 Flying Boats. In 1918 Wald qualified as a Senior Naval Aircraft Inspector and during that year was transferred from Buffalo to the Garden City Curtiss plant, assigned to their HS-1, 2, 3 and 4 series twin-engined flying boats. That year he also wrote an official Navy Aircraft Inspection Manual which was used for many years. At Garden City, Wald also assisted with the Navy NC Flying Boat program which went on to make aviation history with the Atlantic crossings of 1919.

In August 1923, Wald was sent to Great Britain by the Navy Department, reporting to the Officer-in-Charge U. S. Navy Schneider Cup Team to assist with the race activities there. During the years 1923-27 he was given various assignments at Vought on their UO Series plane, where he also assisted with some major flight tests. He was Inspector-in-Charge at Loening in 1926 during construction and acceptance of three special Loening Amphibians. In 1927 he was Inspector-in-Charge of a special Navy race plane built at Kirkham Products Corporation, Farmingdale, Long Island, with which Al Williams was to attempt new speed records. Later Wald was stationed at Grumman Aircraft Corporation for some time.

After 38 years in Government Service, 30 of which were on aircraft inspection and construction duty, Wald retired in July 1949 and since that time has made his home in Freeport, Long Island, New York, where he now lives quietly with the rewarding memories of an enviable record of accomplishment and service.

Flying Pioneer Charles Wald has devoted the major part of his active lifetime to aviation in all its various phases--mechanic, pilot, designer-builder and a long, noteworthy period of inspection and advisory service with the Navy Department where his early experience was of great value. He is richly deserving of great credit for his long, faithful service and many valuable contributions toward the progress and growth of the aviation industry our world enjoys today.

The name of Charles Wald appears on the Wright Memorial Plaque at Dayton along with the many other pioneer Wright aviators who learned to fly there.

CORD MEYER

Cord Meyer was born in New York City November 15, 1894. He attended St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire and Yale University, 1913-1917, graduating with a Ph.D. degree. His parents lived at Great Neck, Long Island, New York and during his schooling years he spent the summers there.

Meyer became interested in aviation in 1910 when Glenn Curtiss made some of his first public flights on Long Island. As a result he frequented the early Long Island flying fields with his friends, hoping to get a ride sometime, but without success. Finally, in 1911, he had his first ride at the Mineola Fairgrounds. After this flight he was determined to learn to fly, and when he finally obtained his parents' reluctant consent, enrolled for flight instruction with the Beatty Flying School at Hempstead, Long Island during the summer of 1912. His instructor was George Beatty and on October 2, 1912 he obtained FAI Pilot License No. 176 flying a Wright Model B. His license tests were of particular note, for he obtained an altitude of 1,200 feet. This, in 1912, was sort of a record for students.

Since Meyer was still in school his flying practice was somewhat limited for a time. In college, however, he took advantage of every opportunity to gain additional aviation experience. In the early spring of 1916 he joined with about 20 other students to form the Yale Aero Corps. Arrangements were made for them to take an aviation ground school course at the State Armory, New Haven, Connecticut, on the new DN-1 blimp built by the Connecticut Aircraft Company. At that time Meyer was one of the few in the group already holding an FAI license. About the same time he also joined a group of

Yale oarsmen to form an Aviation Corps, after having just been elected as Captain of the next year's Yale crew. In 1915 he had been a member of the All-American Crew.

That same spring Meyer joined a group recruited at Yale for a summer training course in aviation which would be preparatory to an examination for a commission in the Aerial Reserve Corps. They were sent to Governors Island, New York. This unit was headed by Captain Phillip A. Carrol, with Filip A. Bjorkland as instructor, and was financed by a central fund to which all members of the group contributed according to their means. Curtiss JN-4 training planes were used, and Meyer was commissioned First Lieutenant there in 1916. At this time he also flew for and obtained Expert Aviator Certificate No. 70.

When the United States entered World War 1 this group became the first reserve squadron. Meyer went on active duty in April 1917 with the Personnel Section of the Signal Corps. He was sent overseas in July with the First Instruction Squadron to serve as instructor and field commander at the Third Aviation Instruction Center at Issoudun, France. There he worked with French teams and flew single-seater fighter planes, most of which were Nieuports.

In March 1918 Meyer served with the R.N.A.S. at Dunkirk. Later he joined the 97th and 103rd Aero Squadrons, acting as pursuit pilot and flight leader. The 103rd was the former LaFayette Escadrille, with the 3rd Wing under the First Army. On August 18, 1918 Meyer was involved in a serious crash while flying as a passenger in a DH-4 plane with Lt Blair Thaw. They hit some unseen telegraph wires at full speed and Thaw was killed in the accident. Meyer was seriously injured and was hospitalized for several months. This was the only flying accident of his career. In the hospital following the accident, Meyer was assigned Red Cross nurse, Miss Katherine Thaw, who was closely related to Lt Blair Thaw, and she later became Mrs. Cord Meyer. From this union there were four sons, three of whom are still living. After convalescence, Meyer was honorably discharged from the service in April 1919.

Entering the Diplomatic Service, he served as Secretary of the Legations in Cuba and Sweden, and Secretary



Cord Meyer: Early Wright Pilot and World War I Aviator,

to various American delegations to International Conferences, the last of which was his position as Secretary General to the International American Conference on Conciliation and Arbitration, held in Washington in 1929.

Upon leaving the Diplomatic Service, Meyer entered private business with firms with which his family had been associated for some time, principally in real estate and related enterprises. He continued in this business and later became President of the Cord Meyer Company, one of the major real estate developers of the Borough of Queens, New York City. He maintained his residence in New York but also had a country home in North Hampton, New Hampshire where he took an active interest in their local airport.

Through the years he continued his interest in aviation and first flew in rented or commercial planes, then in 1946 purchased his first plane, a Piper Cruiser. He has had four others since that time, including a Piper Tri-Pacer in which he made frequent commuting trips from New York to his country place.

During World War II Meyer joined the Civil Air Patrol and served in that distinguished organization for many years, advancing to Colonel, Northeastern Regional Director. On December 3, 1954 he was given the Distinguished Service Award for his noteworthy accomplishments in this organization. He resigned his post in CAP in 1958. Mr. Meyer passed away unexpectedly at his country home June 19, 1964 at age 69. He was survived by his wife and three sons. A fourth son lost his life in military service.

Early Bird, Flying Pioneer and World War I aviator, Cord Meyer never lost his love for flying. Active in civic matters and club affiliations, he served his country and community well. He was Founder, Director and Vice President of the renowned Wings Club of New York City, and Past Commander, American Legion Air Force Post 501, New York City. Early American aviation history will record his name with pride among those courageous and enthusiastic young birdmen who helped give the world the aviation industry it enjoys today.

FRANK MILLS

Frank Mills was born in Chicago, Illinois on January 12, 1889. At age 11 he moved to New York and for a time attended schools there.

Mechanically inclined, he became interested in gas engines and acquired a knowledge of them. Some three or four years later, with limited education, he shipped from New York as the auxiliary engine operator on a sailing schooner making a voyage to San Francisco. After a short time at sea the engine failed, so the Captain put young Mills to work as a sailor. The Panama Canal was under construction at that time but was not in use, so the voyage took them around Cape Horn. At San Francisco the cargo was changed and the return voyage started.

By the time the Canal Zone was reached young Mills had enough of life at sea, so deserted ship and took a job on the canal construction project. He was soon amazed at the amount of steel work involved. He decided to learn more about this trade and arranged to take an International Correspondence School course in boiler making. He studied and completed this course and as a result was later put in charge of a large crew of men on steel construction work.

After five years in the Canal Zone Mills became interested in aviation and wanted to learn to fly. He had also conceived the idea of establishing an air line from coast to coast at the Canal Zone for fast transportation of mail, merchandise and passengers, but this idea was abandoned later.

As a result, Mills left his job at Panama in the fall of 1914 and went to New York where he enrolled for a flying course at the Curtiss Company's New York office.



Frank Mills: Mechanic, Veteran Pilot, Instructor and Base Operator.

Since the Hammondsport school had closed for the season, he was sent to the winter school at North Island, San Diego, California. There, during December 1914, he started his flying lessons with company instructor Raymond V. Morris and made his first solo flight on January 23, 1915 in a Curtiss Flying Boat. Bert Acosta, later to become an internationally famous pilot, was mechanic on the school boat for Mills at that time. Mills continued his practice there and on May 28th received a letter from Glenn Curtiss offering him a job at Buffalo, which he accepted at once. At the Buffalo Curtiss factory he was engaged in both flying and mechanical work.

Later that year Mills joined a flying classmate, Beryl H. Kendrick of Atlantic City, New Jersey, who owned a Curtiss Flying Boat and was operating a passenger carrying business there. Kendrick had entered the Curtiss Marine Trophy Race that year, an event carrying an award to the person who flew a water flying craft the greatest distance between daylight and dark on any one day. Mills assisted in the preparations for this event and acted as co-pilot and mechanic on the attempted flights.

Their first trial was on October 11, 1915, when Kendrick and Mills started to fly for the trophy over a course from Atlantic City to Bay Head, New Jersey, a distance of 52 miles. After completing two round trips, and starting a third, they were forced to land on the water with engine trouble which prevented further flying that day. After covering about 300 miles, Kendrick announced he would make a later attempt to establish a better record.

On October 28th Kendrick and Mills started again on an amphibious flight for the trophy from Albany, New York to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, a distance of 750 miles, their course to carry them down the Hudson River and along the coasts of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. They planned to stop twice for refueling, first at Bay Head, New Jersey, then again at Ocean City, Maryland, and expected to make the flight in 10 to 12 hours. They left Albany at 8:30 AM and all went well until 11:00 PM when they landed at Edwin Gould's Yacht pier near New York to tighten some wires. While there they also refueled and, as a result, passed up the intended refueling stop at Bay Head. They passed Bay Head at 1:00 PM and continued with favorable

weather conditions until they reached the Delaware Capes, where serious fog banks were encountered and troubles started. They pressed on and for two hours tried to extricate themselves from the intense fog by turning both seaward then shoreward, and also by climbing to higher altitudes, but they could find no area of open visibility.

The gas supply was running low and they were finally forced to land on the sea and await rescue. After fearing it might be necessary to spend the night adrift, the fog began to lift about 4:00 PM, and a bit later they were able to see a fishing boat some two miles away. Using the very last remnants of gas left in the tank, Kendrick was able to taxi to the boat where he was given gas and correct bearings. Leaving there the men landed at Ocean City, Maryland at 5:30 PM, thoroughly soaked and practically exhausted from their misty exposure. Before another trial could be made, a bad hole was torn in the bottom of the flying boat forcing them to abandon the Trophy event for the season. In spite of this misfortune, the flight was a splendid showing and they undoubtedly would have won the event that year if such extremely bad weather conditions had not been encountered on the way.

Mills reportedly remained with Kendrick and assisted in his passenger-carrying business at Atlantic City through the remainder of 1915. Another Curtiss Flying Boat pilot, E. K. Jaquith of Chicago, Illinois, was also connected with this activity during the fall. Reportedly, Kendrick and Mills also continued their passenger-carrying business at West Palm Beach, Florida over the winter months of 1915-1916.

In April 1916, Mills joined the newly-formed Philadelphia School of Aviation at Essington, Pennsylvania as mechanic and assistant instructor. This new school was organized by Robert Glendinning, wealthy Philadelphia banker, clubman and aviation enthusiast, who had purchased a Curtiss Flying Boat and taken instruction at Hammondsport the previous year. Walter Johnson was in charge of the school and arrangement of facilities. On December 15, 1916, Mills obtained F.A.I. Hydro License No. 60 flying a Curtiss Model F Flying Boat with a 100 hp Curtiss engine.

Mills remained with the school through 1916 and when the U. S. Army Signal Corps took over operations in early 1917 and the school became a military training base, Mills was retained and made a senior civilian instructor. Additional planes and instructors arrived, and in two months over 500 men were busy at the field, which had been placed under the military command of

Captain William Ocker. Among the civilian instructors there that summer, in addition to Mills and Walter Johnson, were Harry M. Jones, Robert Simon, Earl Beers, T. F. Maroney and R. J. Hutchison. In November 1917 the school moved south to Lake Charles, Louisiana for winter operations.

In the spring of 1918 Mills was transferred to Mineola, Long Island, as a civilian instructor, and later was sent to Indianapolis, Indiana where he was located at the time of the Armistice. For a time Mills remained at Indianapolis with the Government, reconditioning Curtiss JN-4 planes and test hopping them in preparation for disposal sale.

Mills terminated this work at Indianapolis in late December 1918 and returned to Essington where he succeeded in purchasing the school and equipment at auction, then started planning for a training and passenger-carrying business at once. For the next two or three years he moved his operations to Palm Beach, Florida for the winter months, and there a former student and World War I pilot, George Dunn, Jr., joined Mills as a partner for the 1920-1921 season. Mills gradually improved the Essington Base and his enterprising business developed into one which he continued to operate for the remainder of his active career. He taught his three sons to fly and took them into the business, to later become an important link in the training of Reserve aviators.

Following a year's illness, Mills passed away at his home in Essington, Pennsylvania on December 29, 1940 at age 48. He was survived by his wife and three sons. Burial was in Mt. Zion Cemetery at Essington.

Mills was one of the founder members of the Aero Club of Pennsylvania and the Early Birds. He taught many Pennsylvania and Delaware pilots and several members of the Essington Squadron of World War I Aces, including members of the 45th and 143rd Air Corps, together with British and French students sent there for instruction. He later obtained Department of Commerce Commercial License No. 303. It is noteworthy that the Essington Water Flying Base is still being actively operated today by Robert Mills, his brothers having given up flying some time ago.

Early Bird and Flying Pioneer Frank Mills devoted the greater portion of his life to aviation and contributed much to its early development. As a mechanic, veteran pilot, instructor and base operator he was a great ambassador of flying. A cautious, experienced operator, he was a firm believer in safe flying and had few accidents. His name will long remain in the annals of aviation history.