

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.

ODD-BALL AIRCRAFT

By ROBERT ESPOSITO

Throughout the history of aviation there have been many so-called "Odd-Ball Aircraft". The term includes not only one-of-a-kind machines but also many distinctive variations of a design built in some quantity for either the military or for commercial use, plus a number of well-known types that have been put to uses for which they were not originally intended.

The photos on the opposite page are the first in a series designed to take note of the many "Odd-Balls" and present examples of them. Although they concern U. S. military aircraft of the post-World War II era, it is planned that future studies of such types will cover all early periods. For this purpose any assistance or help would be greatly appreciated by the author. If you have one or more shots of "Odd-Balls" for any period, please send them to or get in touch with the author at: 1505 Porter Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19145.

Photo No 1: Lockheed EF-80B, 45-8683. Prior to its use by NACA, this aircraft is rumored to have been the sole Navy P-80B (BuNo 33863). It was last reported as being on display without markings at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

Photo No 2: Lockheed F-94A, 49-2583. This plane of the 111th Fighter Interceptor Wing, Pennsylvania Air National Guard, carried interesting mid-wing gun pods.

Photo No 3: Grumman F-9E, 125995. A non-flying F9F-5 type Navy jet, it is presently used by the Naval Air Technical Training Unit at Mustin Field, Penna for the training of ground crews.

Photo No 4: Douglas B-26K, 64-17672. A COIN aircraft displayed at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland in 1965 with eight 50 caliber machine guns.

Photo No 5: Douglas A3D-1P, 130358. The ultra-rare, modified A3D-1 is currently on display at Naval Air Station Johnsville, Penna.



Photo No 1

(NACA via J. F. Bessette)



Photo No 2

(Ronald Picciani)



Photo No 3

(Robert Esposito)



Photo No 4

(Robert Esposito)



Photo No 5

(Robert Esposito)