

THE "K" OF NEW HAVEN

by

Gregory C. Kohn

The roaring thrill packed early years of aviation have made an indelible impression on the minds of this generation. The late 1920's and early 1930's will especially be remembered for the many transoceanic, endurance and record long distance flights that brought fame and fortune to many of the early pioneers and which also brought disaster and even death to those who failed. Here is a record flight attempt that was designed to make aviation history and assure a niche in the Hall of Aeronautical Fame for its participants, but which was abandoned before it got off to a good start. A great deal of time went into the planning of this venture and a fortune was spent to equip the expedition, and on the brink of fulfillment the whole project was abandoned. Why? Here, then, is the story - what little there is of it.

At a luncheon held in the Hotel Governor Clinton in New York on Dec. 15, 1929, an announcement was made to the effect that a new world record flight was being planned. This flight as organized by Capt. Herbert C. Partridge, a former World War I pilot, was to be a nonstop refueling flight between New Haven, Connecticut and Buenos Aires, Argentina in South America. The purpose of the venture was to establish a new world record for nonstop flight with a total distance of 7,700 miles to be flown. The plane was to take off from New Haven with a light fuel load and be fueled in mid air over New Haven and Hartford, Conn., and would be refueled in flight four more times before reaching its destination. Cuba was to be one of the refueling points. The crew of the plane was to be Lt. Cmdr. George W. Pond, Pilot; Lt. Garland Peed, Co-Pilot; and Capt. Herbert G. Partridge, the organizer of the flight. The record flight attempt was sponsored by a toothpaste manufacturer. The aircraft to be used was a single engine high wing monoplane named the "K" OF NEW HAVEN. A total of 450 gallons of fuel was carried in wing and cabin tanks. (See photo of this still unidentified type of plane on page 99).

After an abortive first attempt a few days earlier, the long awaited flight began on May 31, 1930 when the "K" OF NEW HAVEN left Hartford, Conn. for Buenos Aires. Four Army planes escorted the monoplane in style over Hartford for a grand send off, but misfortune struck again and the second attempt came to an abrupt halt when Cmdr. Pond was forced to make an emergency landing at Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York. Investigation showed engine failure due to a faulty oil line. Repairs were rushed for a new start, but this was not to take place. Shortly after the forced landing the crew received word that their Sponsor had withdrawn his support and the whole project was to be abandoned. No further reports of the activity of this specific plane or attempts at this flight have ever been found. The type designation and manufacturer of this aircraft, and its ultimate disposition, are unknown. It would seem that since all preparations had been made and the money had already been spent to furnish the expedition a small item such as a faulty oil line would have been repaired and another attempt be made. It is hard to believe that this was the cause which ended this record try. Who can add to this story to clear up the mystery?

References: New York Times; December 16, 1929 page 18; May 25, 1930 page 3; May 31, 1930 page 16.