

The Flying Pioneers

by Harold E. Morehouse



MILTON H. KORN



EDWARD A. KORN

The Korn brothers' biographies should be recorded jointly, because from the start they always worked together and their accomplishments were made as a team. In 1908, while Edward was away at college, Milton made a flying model aeroplane, powered by rubber strands that flew successfully. Later that year when Edward came home on vacation, the flying of this small model raised their enthusiasm to the point that they decided to build a full-size plane. Edward, who had some training in drafting, started drawing plans. In 1909, he left school and they started building their first aeroplane, a high wing pusher monoplane, using a 2-cyl. 30 H.P. engine. They had it ready to try out in March, 1910, but it was too heavy and did not have sufficient power. Disappointed, but not discouraged, they decided to rebuild it and try again, this time installing a 50 H.P. 4 cyl. Roberts Aircraft engine. In July, 1911, they were making one-half mile hops across the farm. One terminated in a bad smash-up, wrecking the plane completely, but without injury to themselves. This airplane was undoubtedly one of the first pusher type monoplanes in the United States.

Following a conference with their father, it was decided that they should give up the idea of trying to teach themselves to fly home made aeroplanes and that Edward should go to St. Louis to a good flying school for competent instruction. Accordingly, he arrived in St. Louis in September where he began taking flying lessons from George W. Beatty on a Wright Model-B at Kinloch Field. He made rapid progress and was soon handling the school plane alone, but did not take his license tests at that time.

While he was taking instruction, local pilot Horace Kearney had been trying to sell him a French Farman-type biplane. It was in a local freight storage warehouse and Kearney had been notified that it was to be sold for the freight and storage charges. Edward had not seen the plane and was not really interested, but as a joke he offered Kearney five dollars for it. To Edward's complete surprise, Kearney accepted the offer.

Edward paid the freight and storage charges and had his plane carted out to the flying field. With the help of a field mechanic, they got it assembled and he was quite amazed with his purchase. He made Wright controls for it and installed the 50 H.P. Roberts motor from the wrecked monoplane. Again he was disappointed for it lacked sufficient power to fly. At this point he sent for Milton. After several major changes to reduce weight and head resistance, they succeeded in getting it to fly quite well.

Edward then started flying Benoist planes with Tony Jannus, and Milton began working as a mechanic in the Benoist factory. Soon Edward became assistant instructor for Benoist Company and began training several students. In March, 1912, Edward and Milton sold their Farman biplane for \$150.00 more than the original cost. Mr. Benoist gave Edward and Milton permission to build one of the new model Benoist airplanes for their own use. Theirs was the third one of that type.

On May 1, 1912, Edward obtained his pilot license, No. 117, at Kinloch Field. Their own new plane was finished on May 20th and Edward gave his first public exhibition shortly after at Anna, Ill. On June 20th, Edward and Benoist pilot Ray Benedict flew at Youngstown, Ohio. On July 9th, he had a minor smashup while flying an exhibition at the Delmar Race Track at St. Louis, but was not injured. The accident occurred when trying to land in a very small space to avoid spectators who had crowded on to the field. During July, 1912, he did considerable flying at Kinloch Field, St. Louis. In early August, he filled some dates in Ohio, back to Missouri, then to Fulton, Ky. for five days, starting August 31.

During this time, Milton was still working for the Benoist Co. where in July, 1912, he helped build their first successful hydro-aeroplane, and later that year, their original model flying boat, the first of a line of Benoist watercraft that later became famous in early marine aviation. This flying boat was the second one to be

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TANG found Burns with his load of men, she came alongside the OS2U and took them off, then sank the airplane by gun-fire. The story of VO/VCS aviation during World War II is much too long to include in this article; it will be covered at a later date.

There is one further airplane type to be covered here: the last VO/VCS plane to be used by the cruiser-battleship aviation units. When the SO3C did not meet all requirements, it became necessary to obtain a replacement for SOC's and OS2U's. On 31 March, 1943, Curtiss was given a contract for a new experimental VO/VCS aircraft, the SC-1. The first SC was delivered to the U.S.S. GUAM aviation unit on October 22, 1944. It was a single seater, carried two 50-caliber machine guns, had radar, an automatic pilot, carried 200 gallons of gas and could do close to 300 M.P.H. (Photo Nos. 24, 25 & 26). It was nice to fly after one got used to it, an excellent catapult airplane partly due to the fact that it had so much horsepower (1350). On a catapult launching, the pilot had complete stick control when only half-way down the track; very seldom would the plane drop away at the end of the catapult,

an unpleasant feature of the SOC and OS2U. On recovery operations, it handled very well. Once it was on the water, it stayed. (Photos Nos. 27 & 28). However, one had to watch in a water landing that he didn't stub the nose of the wing tip float. If this happened, on occasion the airplane lost its float. There were only four bolts holding the floats and they were not strong enough.

With the development of the helicopter, it was but a matter of time before the catapult and VO/VCS airplanes became a thing of the past, just as the battleship has been replaced by the aircraft carrier. In June, 1949, the last cruiser/battleship aviation unit was decommissioned. Many are the sighs of the old-timers who spent time as "orphans" in VO/VCS when they gather to tell tales of what it was like to be a VO/VCS pilot. Only those who flew over the briny deep in a VO/VCS airplane know how much resourcefulness was necessary to keep the planes flying and to bring them home safely. A VO/VCS pilot was a "Jack of all trades" -- he had to be in order to survive.

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placed on the American market. In September, Edward was back at Kinloch Field until the latter part of the month when he gave exhibitions at Springfield, Ill. for one week. Late in October, he had another smash-up at Monticello, Ark. while flying at the fairgrounds there, but was not injured. During the summer, Edward instructed at the Benoist School when he was not out on exhibition engagements. He carried authorized airmail on one occasion while flying an exhibition engagement at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield on October 8-10.

After the 1912 exhibition season was over, the Korn brothers decided to take their aeroplane home for the winter. Upon arriving there, Edward gave an exhibition for the home folks on November 9th at the Shelby County Fairgrounds. They prepared an air strip on the home farm for their local flying activities. During the late winter and spring months, they gave their plane a thorough overhaul, replacing many parts, including new wings with trailing edge ailerons, and Milton devised a new dual control system for training purposes.

During the early summer of 1913, they formed the Korn Brothers Aeroplane Co., Sidney, Ohio, and started booking exhibition engagements. For some time the brothers had been planning to build a new light single-seater plane of their own design and Edward was working on the drawings for it, largely to Milton's ideas. They operated a flying school with their revised, dual-control Benoist airplane. Up to that period, Milton had not had the opportunity to learn to fly, so Edward was teaching him, along with the other students. On August 13, 1913, while Edward and Milton were flying to the farm of their grandfather, they experienced a bad smash-up. Edward was in the hospital for several weeks. Milton was thrown against the engine and sustained injuries from which he died on August 19th, thus ending what promised to be a brilliant aeronautical career for this enthusiastic and devoted brother team.

Following the accident, Edward gave up active flying until the late fall of 1915, when he did some test flying for the Maximotor Aircraft Engine Co. of Detroit, Mich. with a new flying boat being developed. At the same time, he rebuilt his old Benoist airplane with the

assistance of Orvil Clemmer, a former pupil, who was to fly it after completion.

For years after the accident on August 13, 1913, Edward was in very poor health from the injuries he sustained. He finally entered the Ross College of Chiropractic, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, as a patient and as a student. He graduated in August, 1926, and has practiced at his profession ever since.

An active "Early Bird" and a member of Silver Wings, Edward Korn is now living in East Orange, N.J., where he has been for thirty years. He is one of the few remaining members of the early Benoist organization. His interest and first work in aviation dates back well before the average "Early Bird" and in the recording of aviation history his name rightfully belongs with those "very first few" who, by their faith, determination and courage, helped mould the actual foundation of the American aviation industry.

A younger brother, Arlington Korn, became a pilot and in 1926, after leaving the Department of Agriculture, operated the old home farm airport with several airplanes. The field was used by flying farmers. During World War II, he taught many A.A.F. pilots to fly. Arlington Korn died on April 27, 1958, but the field is still an active airport and known as Korn Field, one of the oldest in Ohio.

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At our request for a real jazzy shot of a catapult-type airplane for the first page of the lead article, William T. Larkins forwarded the flight picture of the SOC-1's from U.S.S. HONOLULU. This is an official Navy photograph, apparently No. AP-F-34, from the marks on the reverse side of the print; however at the last minute your Editor could not verify this number. The bars shown on the vertical fin and rudder were green. This illustration is one of several very fine pictures of SOC's being included in Bill's forthcoming book, "U.S. Navy Aircraft 1921-1941" which, at this writing already totals 321 pages not including the appendices.