

In An Air Quandary

WOMAN FLIER WANTS A NEW PLANE—STYLE UNDECIDED



MARY ELIZABETH VON MACH.

By VERA BROWN.

MISS MARY ELIZABETH VON MACH, Detroit's own woman plane owner and pilot, sat in the living room of her Chicago boulevard home and worried and worried.

There were deep furrows between her blue eyes. Restlessly she thumbed over the pile of air maps on the table, maps which had guided her in the 1,000-mile solo flight from Dallas, Tex., just completed.

"I don't know which way to turn. I'm just worried to death!" the harassed Miss Von Mach declared, as she thumped the air maps. "I've simply got to have a new plane! That's decided. Everybody tells me that I'm absolutely silly even to think of anything but a 'closed job.' They insist that after I've once got used to a cabin ship I'd never look at an open job again! Maybe I wouldn't. On the other hand, I just can't bear to think of sitting up in the clouds in a stuffy old cabin! I don't think I could navigate a closed plane anyway!"

And the woman who has 50 solo hours to her credit, and 3,000 miles of cross-country flying, sighed.

"RUIN MY HATS."

"Of course the sport jobs always ruin my hats," she added. "I realize that. I have to carry an extra set of clothes for ground wear and that makes suitcases which must be strapped into the extra seat on my plane. That's a nuisance, of course. It would be grand to put on a nice little sports suit and go out for a trip in the air. But I like to see things. I don't see how one can really navigate in a closed plane. All the flying I've done cross-country has been in my little 90 horsepower Travelair and I adore it. It hasn't even a gasoline gauge or an extra ignition set, but it has certainly taken me about the sky. The more I think about it, the less I know what to do. We must keep up with the times, I know."

And Miss Von Mach went on arguing in a circle.

As for her recent cross-country flight, she admits she flew it in some of the stormiest and roughest weather of this spring, just to visit a friend in Phoenix, Ariz.

FLIES ON "HUNCHES."

"I always fly by hunches," she explained. "I can't tell you just how I feel when I have a hunch that the day's arrived to make a hop. I just feel that way, and off I go. I honestly think it's the way to fly safely. If I'm up and have a hunch that things are going badly, I come down and call it off for the day—or a week if I feel that way. If I've planned a flight and have a hunch it ought to be postponed, I just postpone it."

Miss Von Mach flew from Phoenix to Dallas, and waited until she happened to have a hunch it was the day to come home. She finally left Dallas, stopped at Oklahoma City to refuel and got into Wichita, Kan., without mishap. There her plane was overhauled, and she started on the next leg of her homeward flight.

"I was heading for Kansas City, and I got lost!" Miss Von Mach laughed and laughed at the confession few pilots will make.

"I was not nervous, but scared, because I knew my gas was running low and there wasn't a spot about on which I could land. Neither could I find out exactly which way the wind was blowing. I looked for washings all about that part of the state. Not a washing on a line to indicate the wind direction.

COLD UP IN SKY.

"It was cold up, and not a spiral of smoke could I see. There was quite a gale blowing and I knew that unless I landed against the wind I'd be in a mess. After what seemed hours I saw a farmer burning corn stalks.

"Then I spied a field about a half mile beyond him that was plowed

and the furrows ran the same way the wind was blowing. 'We' made a perfect landing. The motor stopped and there I sat—alone. Not a house in sight! Then suddenly over the hill came about 75 children! There was a schoolhouse in the valley and the teacher had dismissed classes so that they might see the plane. Most of them had never seen one and I did not dare leave for they swarmed over the plane and me like flies."

Miss Von Mach finally sent a boy for his father, and more helpers were recruited to get the flier on her way again toward the little town of Olpe and an emergency landing field of the National Air Transport line.

CHILDREN IN THE WAY.

"I thought most of my troubles were over when four farmers came and helped me pull my plane to the far corner of the field for a takeoff. But the children! We couldn't keep them out of the way. They wanted to see the propeller spin. They wanted to climb in and when I started to taxi two of them sat on the tail! The farmers and myself were terrified for fear of killing some of them, and the children wouldn't pay the slightest heed. Then the farmers took down a fence and I moved the plane into the next field.

"While I warmed up the motor, they made every child get back behind the fence into the other field and they patrolled the fence with a broomstick. So I managed to take off without running over any school children! Wasn't I glad to be back in the air again and away!"

Miss Von Mach got aid from Wichita at the emergency field and started on her way home again via Moline, Ill., and Hamilton, Ind. "I didn't let mother know I was soloing until I left Hamilton with good weather ahead," she said. "I didn't want her to worry. I wish I'd had a passenger along. Flying's rather lonely business on long hops. Sometimes I'd not see a person for hours at a time. It is nice to turn about and see another human being behind one. It is just a matter of companionship! I suppose most fliers will laugh at that, but it's the way I feel."

HOPES TO TEACH FLYING.

Miss Von Mach hopes some day to be able to teach other women how to fly. That is her goal now.

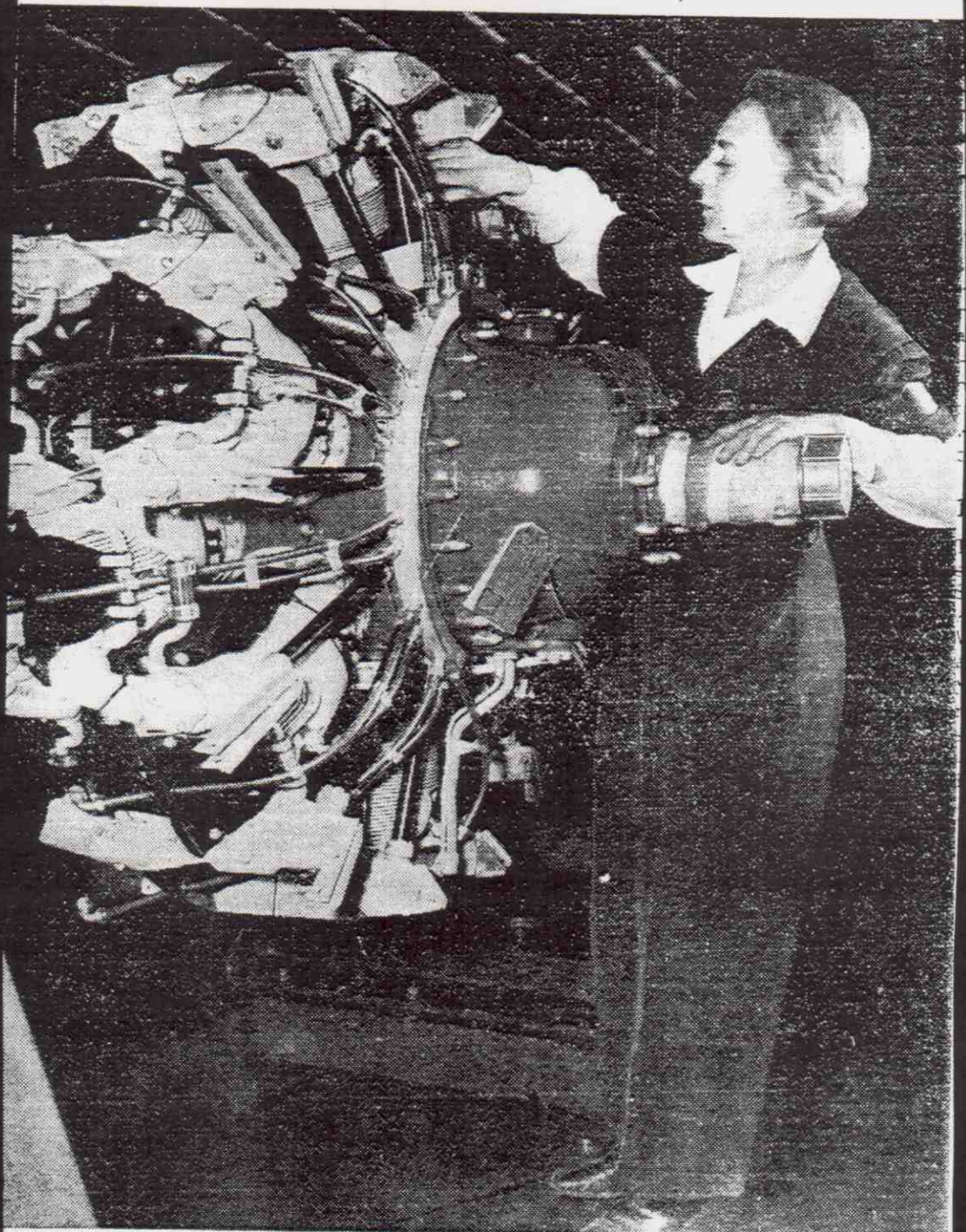
"Mother would like me to stop flying, now that I've made the flight back from the South, but I couldn't stop now. It gets to be more of a habit than bridge playing. I've wanted to fly ever since the war and it is really simple if one keeps her head.

"Planes are so marvelous now that flying is not hazardous as it used to be. I always keep my plane in a hangar. I can't sleep if it is outside in the rain and wind. Then, too, people like to write their names over the linen of the wings. It cracks the finish and that results in cracking the linen underneath. I guess I'm fussy about my plane, but I don't want anybody riding on it. And somebody took the loveliest tool kit I had right out of the cock-pit!"

When the afternoon was over the matter of the new plane still was unsettled. The pilot turned to her handsome police dog, Laddie, and holding his head in her lap demanded:

"Laddie, what shall I do about that plane?" Laddie didn't answer

Ford Inspector in Factory Garb



Miss Mary Van Mach, engine dress-up inspector at the Ford Willow Run Bomber Plant, wears the type of two-piece outfit which is recommended for work of this kind.

Pioneer Aviatrix in Race

Amelia Earhart Also Flew in That First Powder Puff Derby 1961

BY ELEANOR BREITMEYER

A native Detroit and pioneer aviatrix will be in the co-pilot seat when Leah Higgins, of Highland Park, guns the motor of a sleek Cessna 175 and takes off in Santa Monica, Calif., at the start of the 15th annual All-Woman Transcontinental Air Race July 8.

Leah's head wasn't yet in the clouds when Mary E. Von Mach, of Huntington Woods, got bitten by the flying bug. Lindbergh was the toast of the country — having just solved nonstop in a single-engine plane from New York to Paris — when Mary matched out and signed up for lessons at the Stinson Flying School.

ADVENTURERS, REJOICE

That was in 1927 when adventurers everywhere rejoined with Lucky Lindy over the success of his flight and were all agog over flying machines, she recalls.

By December of that year Mary had a student pilot license. Early the next she had logged enough solo air hours to qualify as a private pilot.

The year of the Big Crash — 1929 — found Mary proud owner of a Travel Air Wright J-6-225 and entered in the first all-woman cross-country race from Santa Monica to Cleveland.

Thirty-five ships were entered, she remembers, and the late Amelia Earhart was among the competitors.

FASHION CHANGE

"I didn't come in for any of the prize money. My plane was too heavy, not streamlined for racing. But then I entered just for the fun and experience."

"Planes in those days were really something — open-air cockpits, no brakes and you had to prop your own engine. Nowadays there's a starter to do it for you."

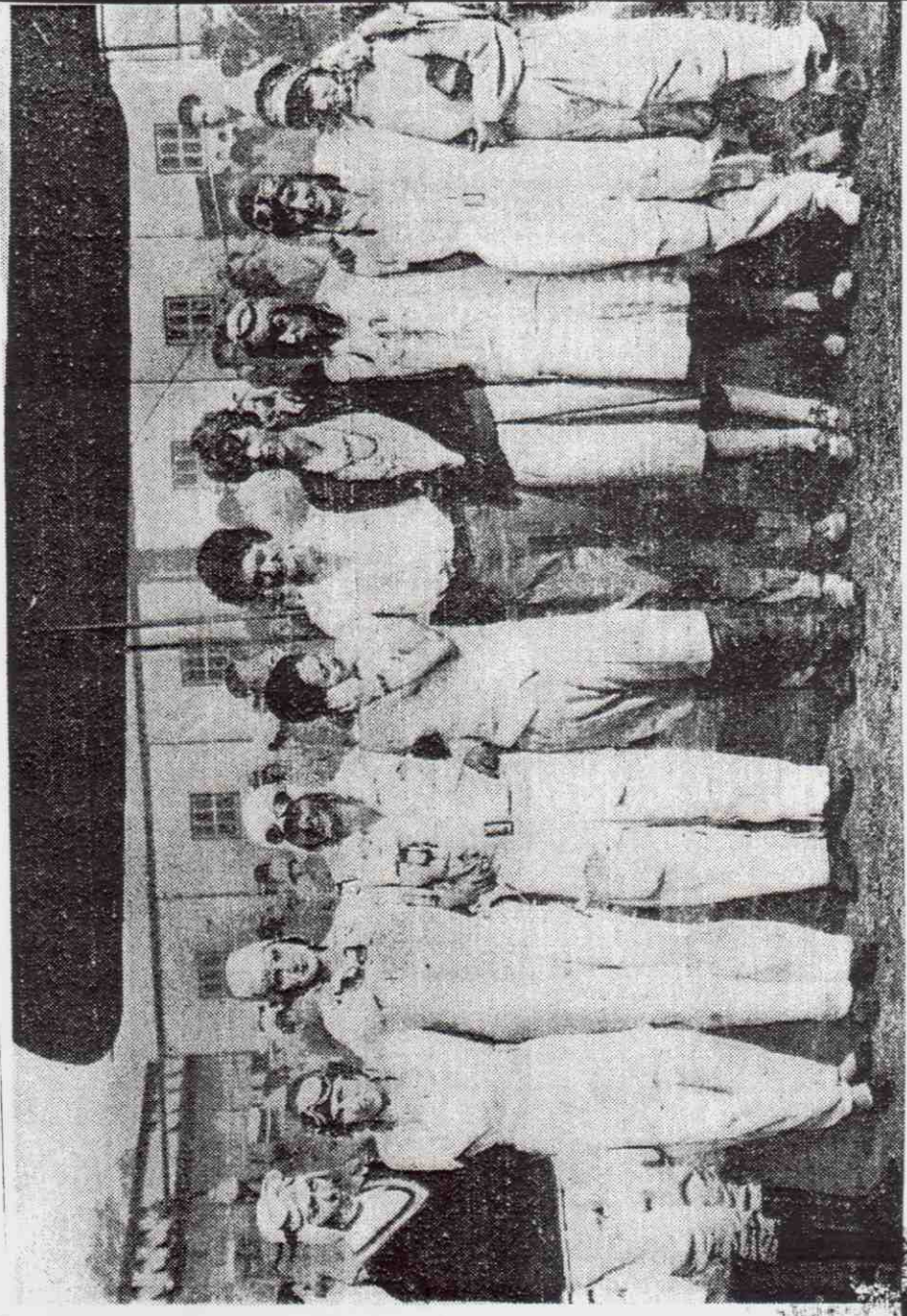
And we wore those bulky flying suits, with helmets and goggles," she said. Mary will be flying this year's course in softly tailored cotton two-piece suits. Her pilot will wear Bermuda shorts, shirts. She'll carry

along a skirt to slip over the shorts when she lands each evening.

Mary, who has more than 1,700 hours of flying time to her credit, holds the distinction of being the first woman

to graduate with a transport license from Parks Air College in St. Louis. She got it in 1931 but has never put it to use.

In the course of her flying. See VETERAN—Page 5E



PILOTS in the first all-woman cross-country race posed for this picture in August, 1929, at St. Louis, one of the refueling stops. That's Detroit's Mary E. Von Mach at the left. Standing with her are Mrs. Keith Miller, Mrs. Gladys O'Donnell, Thea Rasche, Phoebe Omliie, Mrs. Louise M. Thaden (she captured first place in the race), the late Amelia Earhart, Mrs. Blanche Noyes, Ruth Elder and Vera Walker.