



Like others in the 177 cities visited, these 14 first-fighters at Schenectady, N. Y., were given certificates attesting that they handled controls of Williams' Fairchild.

# Aviation's Apostle

by  
**RICHARD MARTIN**

**When Roger Q. Williams flew to Rome in 1928, he turned the public's eyes to flying, but his recent national tour put 3,400 groundlings into the air.**

**T**WELVE years ago a young fellow by the name of Roger Q. Williams lifted a heavily-laden plane from the beach at Old Orchard, Maine, and 48 hours later plumped it down at Rome, Italy. Today, a little balded, a little more staid in his ways, and even more of an aviation enthusiast, Col. Roger Williams is selling aviation to the United States—aviation's first apostle.

The term "selling" is perhaps erroneous for the Colonel is not selling aviation—he's giving it away. Giving it away with no strings attached, with nothing but a sincere belief in his product keeping him on the road. He's been selling the sky now for 17 months and he'll open up anywhere—in Horner's Corners or the auditorium at Kansas City. All he asks is an audience that is willing to listen. And he has a message—a message that keeps his audience quiet and attentive as he tells them of this thing we call aviation.

"Whether you are willing to admit it to yourself or not," he says, "aviation is here to stay. If you don't fly during your lifetime, you may accept it as an incontrovertible fact that your children and grandchildren are going to shake off the shackles of the earthbound and bring to themselves a new sense of values which getting up in the clouds engenders."

What started this man off on his Odyssey of wings? It was a writing man, Editor DeWitt Wallace of *Reader's Digest*.

Wallace had a couple of good ideas in mind when he decided to spend several thousand dollars. In the first place, he's a flying enthusiast; in the second place he saw the tremendous future of aviation. With the goal in mind, Wallace had to find a fellow who could reach it. He had to

have a man who made an excellent first appearance; he had to have a man whose name meant something to an aviation-ignorant public; he had to have a man who could speak so well what he had to say would stick. He went through candidates like a prairie fire before he found Williams, half concealed behind a mass of blueprints and working models in his New York airplane designing plant.

At first Williams refused to come out of hiding—not because he disliked the idea—but because he hated to stop work on his revolutionary new plane designs long enough to do a little missionary work. But Wallace was not to be denied, and Williams finally put on his coat and pigeonholed the blueprints.

*Reader's Digest*, with an outstanding national reputation, couldn't afford a risk on this decidedly unorthodox venture. Nobody else had ever tried it and the sponsors had to be sure of their man. Williams was put through a maze of tests that bewildered him. He was shoved out on a stage before hundreds of people and told to start selling aviation. *Reader's Digest* checked his every move to see how he deputed himself before crowds. You wouldn't be reading this if he hadn't made the grade. He was given a pat on the back, a Ranger-powered Fairchild and a very expensive expense account.

That was 17 months ago and the Colonel has been traveling ever since. *Reader's Digest* has had to call a halt and no more advance engagements are being accepted. The tour originally was scheduled for 12 months, has run five over that, and the sponsors are satisfied it has accomplished its purpose. Then, too, Uncle Sam has



His *Reader's Digest* tour ended, Williams has opened a flying school in Toledo.

stepped in, opened his money bags and is sending thousands of new private flyers into the air every few months. The apostle of aviation scattered seeds that are bearing fruit. The *Reader's Digest* tour over, he retired to his blueprints and to organize the Williams Aircraft Corporation at Toledo, Ohio. A training school for pilots and mechanics has been opened and manufacture of parts and accessories will start soon. Later Williams plans to build airplanes of his own design. But the blueprints and the school will lose him soon again to the lecturing platform. He plans to continue his speaking tour, to continue to preach aviation to the public on his own.

A few scattered statistics illustrate how thorough a job has been done in bringing aviation to the nation. In a year and a half Williams talked directly to 150,000 persons. It took 457 meetings in 177 cities to get this many folks together under the sponsorship of the local chamber of commerce, junior chamber or civic club. Twenty-nine states have been visited as well as the District of Columbia and Canada. Twenty-seven radio talks have been delivered, bringing the Colonel's message to an estimated 2,000,000 additional people. The Fairchild has logged some 380 hours in covering 48,000 cross-country miles. Not

(Continued on page 72)

could from his cockpit and found a bolt in the tail assembly had snapped. It threatened momentarily to come apart letting the tail blow away. But for now the tail group held together.

Deciding against jumping with his chute, Depew eased the ship around in a gingery turn and headed back for Mineola using a minimum of power and speed. Finally the Mineola Field hove into sight and Depew brought the ship down to the gentlest landing of his career.

"You, you . . ." sputtered the photographer, Robert A. Smith, still employed by Fairchild, as he climbed out of his cockpit, unaware of the accident. "Perfect weather," he exploded, "good air conditions . . . and then you give up the job. Why did you turn back?"

He quickly subsided when he saw the twisted tail assembly.

Now Depew has abandoned much of his active flying devoting most of his time to his executive duties although he still holds a commercial pilot's certificate and frequently takes a Taylorcraft aloft.

"But," he explains, "the old days in aviation are gone. And the new day with a much safer, much cheaper, much more reliable, much more economical plane is here—and it's our job to make and sell it. It's our job also to make the public

realize aviation's place in the scheme of things and to accept it."

Depew finds plenty to do in keeping the Taylorcraft plant humming. At Alliance, Taylorcraft Aviation has a fine big single-story brick building—the original home of the ill-fated Argo biplane and the Hess *Warrior* engine—which is jammed to overflowing with machinery, equipment and more than 200 workmen who are busy turning out about 15 Taylorcrafts a week under Depew's direction.

"And if this keeps up," Depew comments jubilantly, "We're going to need more room—a lot more room—for the old days in aviation are gone."

END

## Aviation's Apostle

(Continued from page 37)

once in 17 months has Williams missed a speaking engagement. He's proud of that record, for as he says: "I think it speaks in broad terms for the safety and punctuality of private flying."

The speaking formula of aviation's apostle is simplicity itself. No arm waving, no crescendos to carry a point mark his actions. He speaks quietly, expressively, leavening his speech flow with a flash of humor here and there to take the sting out of some of the things he says about local aviation problems. Prior to his talk he discusses airport problems with civic leaders. If the town is amiss in keeping up with the parade the Colonel tells them so bluntly. Clippings received by *Reader's Digest* in Pleasantville, N. Y., indicate folks welcome the chance to discuss their problems with a fellow who knows the answers from experience.

At the conclusion of his address the flyer offers to take aloft those in the audience who have never flown. Lots of die-hards fall under the fascination of his words. He has carried 3,400 first flyers, has logged 360 hours and 41,000 miles doing it. Each first flyer gets an attractive card on which is placed the date and message that "this passenger actually handled the controls of the ship while aloft." Hundreds of first fliers would rather cut off their right arms than part with one of Williams' cards. A number have indicated, after hearing and flying with Williams, they intended to learn to fly. It's difficult for *Reader's Digest* to follow through and find out how many actually do, but several cases have been found. Many write asking for the Colonel's advice on how to get into various phases of the aviation industry. One Oklahoma community reported four of the wealthiest men in town went right out and bought a chunk of land for an airport after hearing Williams speak. The major

airlines and the C. A. B. shouted approval when they heard of the program.

How has the Colonel gone over? Well, 126 cities have asked for a return engagements, but, of course, have been refused. Some of the things Williams says are surprising even to men in the industry. First, he says what keeps so many people out of the air today is fear—not fear of injury—but fear of criticism. "You know the airlines flew 841,000,000 miles last year without a fatal accident, but you're afraid of what people will think and say if you travel on them," he says pointedly. A second form of criticism he talks about is the mental barrier put up by antiquated businessmen who yell the battle cry: "You'll never get me to ride in one of them things. They're for fools only." What employe has the courage to travel by air or learn to fly when the boss blows up every time "airplane" is mentioned?

The Colonel pleads for a better understanding of aviation by parents of growing boys. Learn about it, he begs, so you can be a qualified guide for your boy when he asks your advice about entering it as a profession. Don't stick your head down the hole of ignorance and shout "no." Youngsters want to fly. That's backed up by a *Reader's Digest* survey. Says Williams: "Of 200,000 school children contacted, we found 60 to 75 per cent already had been in the air; 60 to 75 per cent had built model planes and the majority indicated a decided preference for aviation as a career." In most cases, the survey found, parental objections stopped the career in the bud.

When Williams speaks of the movies he gets a little aroused.

"Hair-raising crack-ups and death every reel are enough to frighten anybody," he comes his closest to shouting. "It's no wonder parents want their children kept away from flying as the movies dish it out." But he points out that this is not the real aviation. For the real thing is a business—a constantly growing beehive demanding thousands of new bees every year to keep it humming.

"For every man in the air today it takes 17 on the ground," he declares. "Aviation

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Then his address reaches the smash wall—top—the story of his flight to Rome. It's a graphic word picture, painted on a canvas of trials and dangers that beset him and his navigator, Leon Yancey, as they plowed on hour after hour in zero-zero weather. Yancey, whose humorous notes the Colonel gives credit for keeping him going long after hope had gone, died last April.

*Reader's Digest* has been swamped by letters of congratulation on its innovation. Club leaders, sponsoring groups and individuals have penned their approbation.

Colonel Williams first hit the nation's headlines in 1928 with the transatlantic flight, but his aviation career began long before that in Stratford, Conn. It was in 1913 that a young lad became what was then, and undoubtedly still is, the first test pilot to fly his solo and test hops at one and the same time.

Stanley Beach, aviation pioneer, was building a new experimental plane. Young Williams hung around, helping out here and there. There was much bickering between Beach and some of the other interested parties. This verbal feuding reached

a climax over a test pilot, both factions having a candidate. Beach lost his temper, yelled: "I'm financing the blasted thing and I'll pick the guy to fly it." He looked at Williams. "You're my test pilot," he belted.

The "test pilot" spent many days just taxiing the plane around the field. He knew he didn't know how to fly it and doubted that he had the courage. So he taxied only during the early morning when there was no wind. One day he bent a wheel. By the time he had repaired it a light breeze had sprung up. But Williams failed to notice it and continued his slow rolling around. A sudden gust caught the plane and—he was flying. The subsequent hurried landing smashed a wing tip and the propeller, but Beach was so tickled that the plane would fly he kept the "test pilot" who finally got so he brought the ship down in one piece consistently.

From that rather dubious beginning the Colonel has rolled up 15,000 hours in the air, has flown 69,000 passengers and has taught 700 persons to fly—none of whom has subsequently died in a crash. The apostle of aviation has some very definite and conceded to be radical ideas about how flying should be taught. He has watched and checked and studied through the years as he handled students with the result he is now trying to interest the C.A.B. in a psychological teaching method. It is his contention that every person, being an individual type, is amenable to a teaching pattern which must be matched to his physical, nervous and mental make-up. He places character types in four categories—mental, motive, vital and natural, the latter a combination of mental and motive.

"Each of these types has a different learning pattern, must be taught in a different manner," he says. "You can tell within a few minutes just what type your student is. Before you know it you'll be categorizing your man and fitting him into your corrected category. Do this and amaze yourself with the speed your students show generally."

The *Reader's Digest* tour is over and the Colonel is back behind that drawing board. He has designs just about completed for some of the most radical planes yet produced. The apple of his eye is one which he says is going to solve the problem of keeping the private flyer out of trouble when he makes a fool of himself aloft. But don't ask him for details. He's remarkably close-mouthed for a speaker.

END

## Safe Training

(Continued from page 46)

the bonus lets you know that your efforts are appreciated."

The bonus system, however, has one major drawback, Eldred learned. It makes the instructors overly cautious—they washed out flying on days of unfavorable weather when Eldred felt it could go on safely.

As a result of the plan's success Eldred has worked out a new bonus system for his civilian pilot training program classes under which his two instructors now have 15 students each. Instead of paying a bonus for safety alone, he has set up a system to pay a bonus for safety, economy and speed. Now, instead of paying the instructors salaries, he allows each a drawing account. Each instructor gets \$2 an hour for each hour his C.A.B. students fly—up to 35 hours—whether dual or solo, with a \$15 bonus for each student who finishes the course within the allowed 35 hours without breakage and before the deadline set by the C.A.B.

"You may be sure that the instructors are seeing to it that the students are flying safely," observed Eldred, "that the students are getting in all the dual time they need and that the students are coming out for their lessons at the scheduled times—and aren't playing 'hookey' occasionally." He pointed out that each instructor will get, for each student he finishes up on time without any damage, \$85 or \$1,275 for about two and a half months work with 15 students, plus the pay he earns from carrying passengers or teaching private students.

"That's as good as airline pay," Eldred declared, "but the instructors ought to be paid well. Their jobs are as important as airline jobs and the pay ought to be as good. And if they do their jobs conscientiously, it's good for me, too, because it eliminates these trifling accidents, the \$50 or \$100 breakages, that soon take the profit out of instruction for the operators and runs up the cost of flying to the private student." The plan also is very successful in still another way, Eldred feels. "It's turning out better pilots," he said.

END

## Mass Delivery

TWENTY private pilots flew as many Taylorcrafts from the company's Alliance, Ohio, factory to Los Angeles, a distance of 2,500 miles, recently. The planes were distributed for use in C.A.B. courses at the University of Southern California, U.C.L.A., Loyola University, San Bernardino Junior College, Santa Ana Junior College, Pomona College and Pacific Aeronautical College. Pilots making the mass flight included Alex T. Powell, Los Angeles business man who received his license on his 61st birthday.

## Washouts Drop

PRIMARY training washouts usually average 40 per cent of each class, but a recent detachment trained at the Cal-Aero Academy, Glendale, Cal., and sent on to the Army's basic stage at Randolph Field had less than nine per cent of the original enrollment eliminated.

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