

Good News

In May of 1928 the Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune* took delivery of a five-place Fairchild cabin monoplane, valued at \$14,000, and became, so far as the record shows, the first newspaper organization to own and operate regularly an airplane of the new commercial type. Somewhat earlier the Chicago *Daily News* had acquired a converted DeHaviland military plane such as then were being used in the air mail service.

Reasons for acquiring the big monoplane — it was then considered big — were various. It was considered that genuine service to the news departments could be rendered, especially in the speeding up of picture procurement and in the rapid transportation of staff writers. It was considered also that there would be practical gains to the *Register* and *Tribune* in the way of general prestige. American newspapers feel it important to keep near the head of the procession. Values to other-than-news departments of the papers were also believed to exist in plane ownership, though those remained mostly to be discovered after acquirement.

Apart from all reasons of this type, there was the belief that much service could be given to Iowa, as commercial aeronautics developed, by a stimulation of early interest in developing airports, by

encouraging and developing air mail and air passenger lines, by furthering the development of flight instruction schools of high grade within the State, and by fostering, if possible, aeronautic manufacturing industries or industries serving aeronautics.

It was believed that a modern airplane, steadily but conservatively operated by Iowa newspapers, would by its very example as well as by various specific uses help win for Iowa its proper "place in the sun" aeronautically.

The record of this first modern commercial cabin plane operated regularly in Iowa (if an Anzani-powered ship owned years earlier by W. B. Swaney, one of the State's real aeronautic pioneers, and perhaps one or two other smaller craft can be excepted) is considered by its newspaper owners to be satisfactory, as is attested by the purchase this spring of a new and larger cabin monoplane, an eight-place Stinson, with practically double the horse-power, considerably greater speed, more modern instrument equipment, and greater passenger luxury.

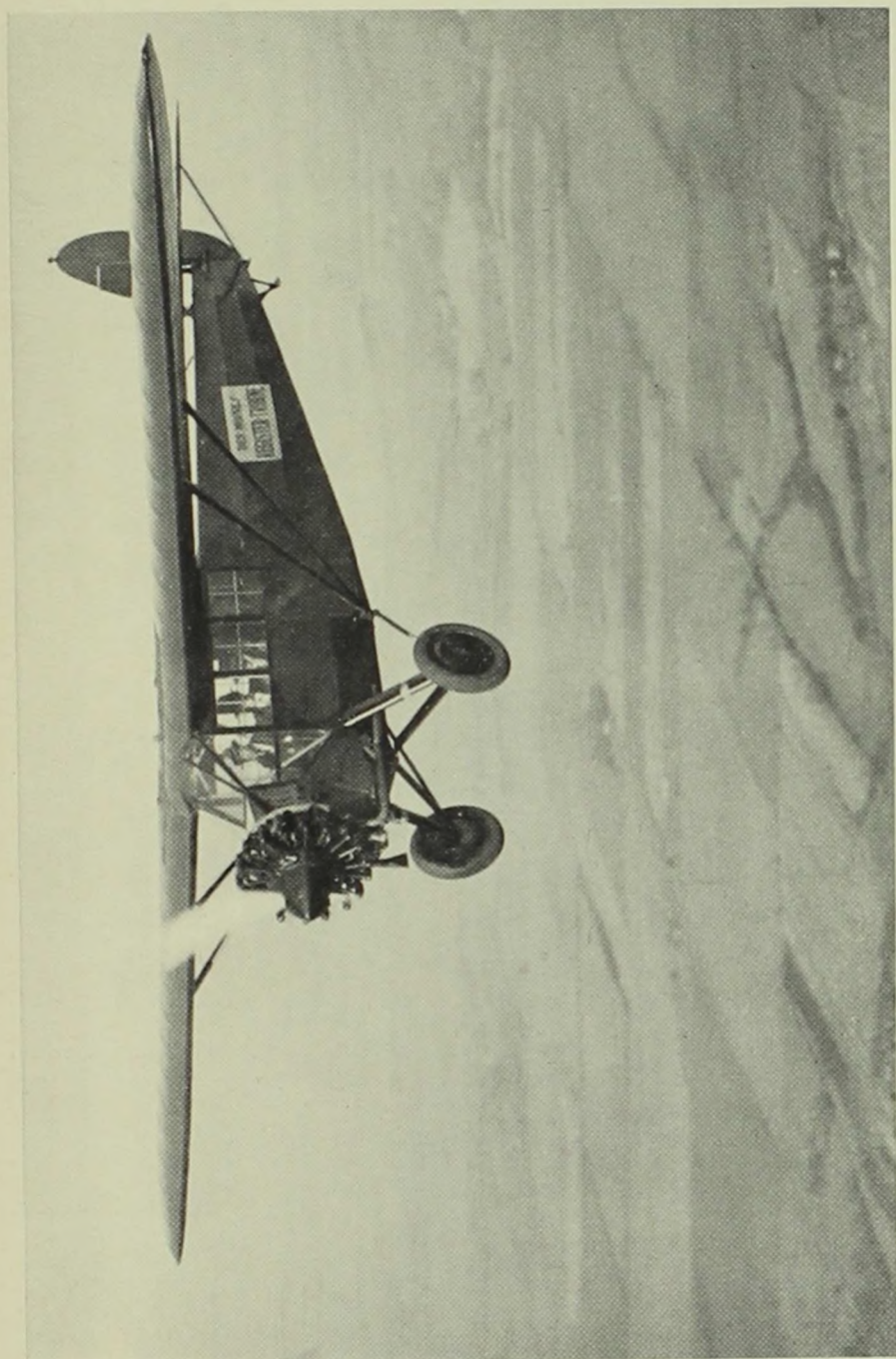
The record of the Fairchild begins with its flight from New York to Des Moines immediately after delivery to the newspapers by the factory. It began its active life with the advantage of a clever name, "Good News", produced by a State-wide contest in which several thousand Iowans participated. That name, incidentally, has been continued as "Good News II" in the case of the new Stinson.

Shortly after its arrival in Des Moines, "Good

News" was the inspiration of probably the most impressive aeronautic event in the State's history — the Iowa Aeronautics Day celebration in late May of 1928 at the Des Moines municipal airport. The original idea of this day was a dedicatory ceremony for "Good News". The idea quickly outgrew this first form, and the dedication of "Good News" became a very minor incident of the program. With that trend the newspapers were delighted, for it was precisely by this sort of stimulation to general aeronautic interest that they hoped to make "Good News" most broadly serviceable.

Before a literally huge crowd, estimated at around 40,000, various field improvements as well as "Good News" were dedicated, and a thrilling aerial program was put on by the First Army Pursuit Squadron of eighteen planes from Selfridge Field, Michigan. President Coolidge at the White House pressed a button that fired a cannon on the field and started the ceremonies.

In the two years of steady flying activity that followed, the red monoplane became quite familiar in nearly all of Iowa and in various neighboring States. It was the "official ship" of two annual Iowa "Good Will" air tours, in 1928 and 1929, leading the other tour ships by an hour on each lap. It took part in many airport dedications in Iowa, and was always, as a matter of policy, kept ready to aid in such things. Often it carried speakers or other notables to aeronautic celebrations in the State.



COURTESY OF THE DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE

GOOD NEWS

Governor Hammill, for instance, was a passenger on various occasions. "Good News" also visited a number of district and county fairs, in places where landing fields existed, and it carried aloft, not only in Des Moines but at other airports in the State, many Iowans for their first flights. Particular effort was made to invite State and city officials, leaders of commercial organizations, fair officials, newspaper publishers and editors, and others whose interest in flying, if it could be awakened, would be likely to benefit their communities and the State's general aeronautic development.

All told, counting approximately five hundred *Register* and *Tribune* employees who were taken up either for "hops" or long flights, "Good News" in its two years of activity, though its passenger capacity was only four besides the pilot, gave rides to almost exactly three thousand persons, practically all Iowans, and most of them previously unacquainted with air travel.

"Good News" put down at forty-five cities in Iowa, seven in Missouri, two in Nebraska, two in Illinois, one in Kansas, one in Michigan, one in Minnesota, and one in Wisconsin — many separate times, of course, at some of these towns. It made, in all, eleven hundred and fourteen flights. The hours of work "put on" the Wright motor totaled approximately eight hundred. The mileage covered was not much below 80,000, or more than three times the earth's circumference. And in all that

flying there were four "forced landings", so called, only one of them being due to real mechanical trouble — a magneto that, though normally waterproof, got rain-soaked in a flight through heavy rains from Des Moines to Sioux City. The plane was never damaged in any landing. No one was even slightly hurt in connection with its operation. As one of the purposes of its operation was to prove the possibility of safety with prudent handling, this record was pleasing.

The pilot of "Good News" during practically all its career as a newspaper plane was Charles W. Gatschet, a veteran flyer. He is piloting now the successor plane, "Good News II".

In services of direct value to the *Register* and *Tribune* as newspapers, "Good News" carried staff writers and photographers, and occasionally editors and officers of the *Register* and *Tribune* company, including for instance Cartoonist J. N. Darling, to scenes of important happenings. The Republican National Convention in Kansas City was one such. The passage of the Graf Zeppelin across southern Iowa on its round-the-world flight was another. Tornadoes in different parts of Iowa, floods, numerous important sporting events such as football games, and other events altogether too many for listing were "covered" swiftly by the newspapers through use of the plane. It was sometimes possible on a Saturday afternoon to drop staff photographers at three different cities, to pick up pictures

of football games later, and to have all the pictures in the earliest editions of the *Sunday Register* for sports enthusiasts to see.

All the State's largest cities were photographed at high altitudes, up to 15,000 feet, with special Fairchild camera equipment, and the pictures later printed in the Sunday photogravure section. Often the camera was ten, fifteen, or even twenty miles distant from the remoter parts of the picture shown.

Important service of various sorts was also given to the non-news departments of the papers.

A number of special editions of the *Evening Tribune* were delivered by the plane to Iowa towns, usually in connection with aeronautic celebrations in those towns.

This review of the activities of the first "Good News" is not exhaustive. It aims to give rather a general than a specific picture, plus some of the "highlight" functions. It may merely be said in ending that the human sentimental instinct is not absent when "Good News", superseded by a more luxurious and larger and faster ship, passes from the scene.

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