

(December 13, 1932)

## Address

BY MRS. AMELIA EARHART PUTNAM.

PRESIDENT CHALMERS:—Ladies and gentlemen, it is a very great pleasure to be able to say ladies and gentlemen. It is the first time I have had the honor and I think too it is the first time any President of the Canadian Club has had the honor for about eight years. We have the particular distinction to-day of having the privilege of welcoming as guest of the Club Miss Amelia Earhart, the most distinguished flying woman of the continent. You are all aware of Miss Earhart's many adventures in the air. You are all aware also of the fact that she is no stranger to Toronto. Toronto knew Miss Earhart during the war when she came here on a casual visit to a sister of hers who was in school. She became impressed with the magnificent work being done by the women of Toronto in connection with the war. She joined the staff of one of the local military hospitals and served for about a year as a V.A.D. nurse, doing magnificent work. She was one of the magnificent women who helped us to win the war just as she is to-day one of the magnificent women who are achieving great things in aviation. But if it is not necessary for me to introduce Miss Earhart to this audience it might be necessary for me to introduce this audience to Miss Earhart. You see before you, Miss Earhart, a group of gentlemen who have come out here to-day to pay tribute to a number of things: first, to your courage; second, to your technical skill in aviation, and I think also to the scientific achievements which you have contributed to the cause of aviation. But I think chiefly they are interested in the courage you have shown because they are all engaged

in the daily struggle and daily routine of life and they have to take most of their thrills by proxy. They came here to-day to get two thrills, one in hearing you and the second in hearing some of the things you have done. We appreciate very much the fact you have come here to-day to speak briefly at the Canadian Club on the very day you have to go to some full-dress lecture in the evening. It is quite an effort for you to have to speak twice and we appreciate it very much. We are delighted to have you with us. Before I call upon you I should like just to give Mrs. Chalmers an opportunity of expressing the appreciation of the ladies.

Mrs. Chalmers presented Miss Earhart with a bouquet of flowers.

MISS EARHART:—It is always very pleasant for me to receive a bouquet of flowers. You know even when women get into aeroplanes and fly they do not lose their liking for flowers. Very often I get boxes, very interesting looking boxes, and I open them and there is a new gadget to put on the aeroplane, a new type of carburetor or a monkey-wrench. I cannot say I am disappointed when I open those boxes but I do like the flowers, too, in addition to the monkey-wrenches. I am very glad to be in Toronto again. I was here during the war and have thought of Toronto as a friendly place ever since. I was here at a period when there was much romance in my life, and despite the privations of the war and the hard work and the rest of it, I think I lived a life of French poetry, as I say, romance, and while nothing very interesting happened to me in a romantic way, still, I felt it was just around the corner if you found the right corner. And, of course, that made all corners interesting.

I think that I can attribute the beginning of my aviation career to what I experienced here in Toronto. Even though I worked from seven o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night, I found time to visit—well, they were hardly air ports, they were flying fields. I never had a chance to take a ride, because I understand the general's lady could not get into an aeroplane during that period. Still, I had a chance to see the fliers. Perhaps there is some

of the romance, because they were very young and very handsome, taking-off in the aeroplanes and I remember the sting of the snow in my face as I stood behind the planes and the propellers whirled and blew it back on the spectators.

I think the aviation bug entered my system at that time and probably has never left, because I went back to the States and went to California and took my first ride in 1920. I have often been asked how I started flying and it is a very simple explanation. I took a ride and I rode first with Frank Hawkes, a well known speed flier, who was barn-storming in California. I got up only five or six hundred feet and realized I had to learn to fly. And I did. I learned to fly. I learned to fly before I learned to drive a car. I came down from the first ride and I told my father who was waiting on the ground that I must learn to fly and he said, "well, all right," so I went out and signed up for lessons, and the next day I went to my father and I said, "I have signed up for lessons to learn to fly and all I need is one thousand dollars." So, twenty-four hours had elapsed since I made the first statement and my father was surprised. I was not a very good salesman, so he said, "Well, I didn't know you were serious. I think a thousand dollars is rather expensive and I don't see how I can let you have one thousand dollars." I said, "Well, I have signed up and what am I going to do?"

Well, I could not move him at all. And so I got my first job in the telephone company and proceeded to earn the wherewithal to take my flying lessons. I was not a telephone girl but I had charge of the office boys. I don't know why. We had a lot of fun sorting the mail. We did not always sort it. We got it mixed up, but anyway I was paid. And I worked all week and flew all day Sunday and my family didn't see me at all, and that worked out very well too, because the family was forced finally to buy me an aeroplane so they could see me and I could stop work. When I started flying there were no schools such as we have to-day.

Of course every pilot has to pass physical examination before he or she is permitted to learn to fly, at least in the

States. I presume it is the same here. And then we have to check in every six months to be sure of our physical condition; eyesight, muscular reaction, etc., are checked, and of course pilots are supposed to have a little intelligence too. I don't mean to imply it is all physical. When I started anyone who got into an aeroplane and got up and got down again and walked away was considered a flier. And if you did that two or three times you were an expert flier, and it was much easier in that way and much more hazardous than flying to-day. To-day it is—well, I use my aeroplane as I do my car, which is a family carry-all and Mr. Putnam is one of my best customers. I took him out to California last winter just as I take him in an automobile, because I do the driving in the car too. I took his son with him too—David is nineteen. The way young men and women are learning to fly to-day is just as a matter of course. I think we have to regard flying as transportation. It isn't a matter of exhibition any more; it is a means of getting from one place to another and I think if we do not so regard it we will be *passé* in a very short while, as far as our attitude toward transportation is concerned. I do not know what your statistics are here but in the States our safety factor has increased so that we have but one casualty in every four million miles of travelling on regular established airways. Translated into flying time of the person who used the airlines to travel, that would mean more than twenty years before your turn comes around without an accident, and I think that is a very remarkable relationship considering the short time that flying has had a chance to be transportation.

Of course I am one of those individuals who look forward to the time when all transportation will be coordinated. That is, we will have special loads and shipments for different forms of transportation and they will all work together. The railroads probably will be regulated, if that is the word—I hope there are not very many railway men in the room—to carrying the heavy freight, and for mass movement of people and things. I think the busses will co-operate with the railways, not be rivals, in both

schedule and time and in what they carry; they will probably carry the lighter express and fast passenger service. The airlines will take the first-class passengers and the fast mail and express. We might as well face that situation because I think it is inevitable and the longer we fight against it the more inefficient will our transportation systems be, and I think that flying will not be hampered by weather any more than any other form of transportation.

To come back to my own flying, when I started in there were only a few hundred licensed pilots in the United States. Since then we have increased the number to eighteen thousand licensed pilots, exclusive of army and navy. Of that number there are more than six hundred women fliers. Speaking of woman fliers I am reminded of a story which is told of women flying. You might be amused. Three years ago we had the first women's race that ever was held. Women had never been in competition with women before. We started out from San Domingo to fly to Cleveland. We were having a race across the country and we had to check in at various control stops across the way. It took us several days to get across and they were a group of inexperienced women. Some had not had very much cross country flying and they landed some places where they were not supposed to land. Some of them had to come down for gasoline. They ran out of fuel. Some had motor trouble. Some got lost and had to come down and ask the way and various things happened, although they all got through with the exception of one. But one day one pilot had to come down for some reason or other and you know when a pilot has no airport he or she must land in the best pasture available. So this pilot looked around over the landscape and picked out the best pasture she could find and it had animals in it. And she got down among the animals without damaging her plane and the animals began to walk toward her aeroplane and she felt very religious and she offered up her little prayer and her prayer at the moment was this, "Dear God, let them all be cows."

I think possibly the cow should be the official emblem of aviation. I think there are more cow stories and more

cow events in aviation than concern any other animal. When I landed in Ireland some of the first dispatches that went out intimated that I had killed a cow in landing. I made several attempts to land in various pastures in Ireland because I was afraid my judgment was not right, with flying all night, and so I tried out a couple of pastures and they did have cows in them, but there were no casualties, unless some of those cows died of fright when they saw the aeroplane coming. You know there is a story they tell of the air-mail pilots that they always know when they are off their course because the cows and chickens run. When they are on their course, the cows are so used to aeroplanes they do not even look up and those cows in Ireland did jump around when I came down.

I cannot tell very many experiences. I do not know how many you would be interested in. Of course the thrills in aviation are possibly not the thrills you may think they are. Of course I don't know how many of you here are familiar with aviation. There are possibly one or two who have not been in an aeroplane. Perhaps half a dozen. However I can tell you, in a few years aviation will be accepted as a matter of course. To go back to my husband again—I hate to be bringing in domesticity all the time; but he is too busy a man to be able to rely on any other form of transportation. He must dash between New York and Los Angeles and doesn't have time to go any other way than by air, and of course, when I am going the way he is, he rides with me.

I would like you to feel that there is nothing different about those engaged in aviation. It is not a strange occupation and I hope you don't think those engaged in it are strange creatures. I may be a little odd but it is not aviation which is responsible. It is really a normal outlet for energy and a normal means of transportation and enters our life and calculations, whether you will or no. Because it is simply transportation. I should feel guilty if I inflicted two addresses on Toronto in one day. So I must just say that I have enjoyed coming here. I would love to come again and I hope I can be as hospitable to you if you come to my home town as you have been to me to-day.

PRESIDENT CHALMERS:—Miss Earhart was kind enough to say that if she did not speak long enough she would be prepared to answer questions from the chair, not from the audience. She offered to answer questions from the audience but I told her it would be a panic. She has been most generous in view of the fact she is speaking to-night and I think it would be an act of discourtesy on my part to put any questions to her at all. She has answered a great many of the questions that were in our minds. We have enjoyed tremendously having you with us. We have enjoyed the manner in which you have addressed us and also what you have told us. The Canadian Club appreciates very much the courtesy of the Women's University Club in permitting us to-day to send an invitation to Miss Earhart. May I again thank you on behalf of the Canadian Club for your address. We wish you God Speed and I hope we shall have many opportunities to read of your adventures and exploits in the air, and the additions to scientific knowledge being made by yourself.