



Excerpt from Charles Kettering – Biography

Page 196 /197

In the years since Kettering's retirement in 1947, during which he has been active in the scattered research projects described in this chapter and the one preceding, he has depended upon the airplane to get from place to place with speed and comfort. After the General Motors Research corporation was moved from Dayton to Detroit in 1925, he flew back and forth to Dayton for a while. Then in the late 1920's he quit flying altogether, and he did not take it up again, for twenty years. Up to the time he quit, though, he had been flying so much and for so long that he is understood to have had then the most hours in the air of any amateur pilot.

After the death of Mrs. Kettering in 1946 and his retirement as head of research for General Motors in 1947, he began to fly once more. In 1948, he again got an airplane of his own. It is a Grumman Mallard, an amphibian which makes it possible for him to land on the water near his farm at Loudonville, as well as on regular airfields. He named his plane "The Blue Tail Fly/" and as a pioneer instrument flier, he had it equipped with the latest in instrumentation,

including a telephone which he uses frequently.

In that plane, he has since traveled wherever he needed to go. It has made him quite mobile and he does a great deal of flying about the country. Although he sometimes takes the controls for a little while when in the air, he does not fly the plane himself but always has it operated by professional pilots.

He took up again his active interest in improving flight. So great is his attachment to flying that as he told his brother-in-law, Ralph D. Williams, in 1951 he would have liked nothing better than to be able to renew his airplane pilot's license for his seventy-fifth birthday, which came that year.

Recently he has intensified his activity, especially in the field of the small airplane. He has increased the number of his own airplanes to three by purchasing first a Cessna 180 and later a Piper Apache. He would like to help find ways to bring down the cost of owning and operating a plane and to reduce the need for long runways in take-off and landing.

There is a great opportunity in extending the usefulness of the small airplane, he thinks. In spite of all the progress thus far in that field, the surface of what is possible has, in his view, barely been scratched.