



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of EMIL ("MATTY") LAIRD



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"Laird Fix"



Matty Laird with metal replica depicting the "Laird Fix."

Boyhood hero to many an old-timer, Emil "Matty" Laird – the *Laird Solution* and *Super Solution* – was recently honored by the FAA with an appropriate "fix" for him at his hometown, Chicago. This first new fix (there will be others to honor aviation's pioneers) is an enroute intersection where Victor 7 and Victor 172 airways cross over the Lake Michigan shore – a transition point to radar approach for Chicago area airports, including O'Hare International, the world's busiest. Matty displays a metal replica depicting the new "Laird fix."

Laird was 14 when Walter Brookins put on the exhibition in his Wright biplane over Grant Park, Chicago's first airport. Laird began by making models as a member of the Aero Club of Illinois model club, designed and built his own real machine at 17, and rose unexpectedly 15 feet in the air during a fast taxi test.

He became a best-known exhibition flier, making his debut with Katherine Stinson in August 1915 – Ms. Stinson was the first woman to loop-the-loop. His *Laird Swallow* – to be featured in a future issue (Ken Wilson drawing) – was the first plane flown by Varney Air Lines, predecessor of United.

In addition to racing planes flown by Charles "Speed" Holman, Roscoe Turner, and Jimmy Doolittle, Laird was widely known for his clean, efficient commercial biplanes. Who did



Museum Curator Hurst Bowers with a Laird Speedwing in the bones.

we know that had built a Laird model? Nearby Hurst Bowers [National Model Aviation Museum Curator] – he has a show box filled with “must build” subjects – was ready to cover a *Laird Speedwing*, so John Preston got the accompanying pic.

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AMA History Project
National Model Aviation Museum
5151 E. Memorial Dr.
Muncie IN 47302
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

