

## Amelia's Been 'Down' Before—

# 'Crash Is A Horrid Word' Said Famed Flier Here After Autogiro Fall; Hosts And Others In City Express Selves On Her Chances Now

By MAURINE ROE

This isn't the first time Amelia Earhart's "been down."

Wherever she is and whatever has happened to her, she wouldn't want to call it a "crash."

"That is a horrid word," the woman flier said with feeling that memorable day of June 12, 1931, when her autogiro pancaked to earth here, completely "washed out."

The despairing search for America's "First Lady of the Air," lost somewhere in the Southern Pacific on the longest lap of her projected globe-circling flight, has revived many memories of her "paddle plane" visit to Abilene, six years ago—of how she pulled her faltering giro sharply down to avoid hitting spectators at the port here and of her return in a new plane five days later just "to prove that an autogiro can take off in good shape."

The manner in which she handled that situation has been the source of the hope which many Abilenians have that she may have weathered another storm of ill luck and that she will yet be found unhurt from this latest experience.

## PERHAPS ON ISLAND

"I don't know how many coral islands there are in the Pacific ocean, but I'll betcha that if there's one, Amelia found it," said George Paxton with conviction, as many other Abilenians began to despair of chances for her being found. An aviation enthusiast since before Abilene had an airport, Paxton was a member of the committee welcoming Amelia here in 1931. Two years earlier, when the national air derbyists made an over-night stop in Abilene, Miss Earhart, a contender, and several other fliers were guests in the Paxton home.

"I can't believe she is lost," Paxton continued. "She and her navigator had a notice of an hour or two that the gasoline supply was low, and they had an idea of where land was located. They must have made directly for it."

"Miss Earhart is one of the outstanding fliers of all times, regardless of sex. She is resourceful, capable of dealing with almost any situation. I still believe she'll be found."

## HER HOSTESS HERE

Mrs. D. M. Oldham, Jr., who was Amelia's hostess during her visit here in 1931, likewise has faith in her ability as a flier, an unflinching belief that she will be found. Mrs. Oldham recalls vividly the details of Miss Earhart's stay in her home:

"My husband and I went with hundreds of others to see Miss Earhart land her autogiro. We were quite close, and when I saw how worn and sunburned she looked, I wanted to do something for her, so I edged up and asked her if she would not like to go to our home



This is Amelia Earhart as scores of Abilenians think of her—smiling, as she came back to the scene of her crash-up here to prove that an autogiro "can take off in good shape." On June 12, 1931, five days be-

fore these pictures were snapped by the Reporter-News staff photographer, Miss Earhart's "paddle plane" had been "washed out" on the take off at the Abilene air terminal.

as our guest. She looked questioningly at Mr. Bentley and Mr. Carswell who flanked either side. They told her to go, that she would enjoy it, so she came on with us.

"She wanted her manlike khaki trousers washed, so my colored maid Sarah, after serving the dinner, had them all nicely laundered and in her bedroom when she went to retire at 8 o'clock."

## 'I'M SO TIRED'

"Next morning, she was quiet, praised the tallow preparation I had given her for her sunburn, talked with George Paxton, Jr., and Mr. Oldham's father, and posed for some kodak pictures."

"At the airport as she was placing her parachute, she sighed, 'I am so tired,' climbed in, busted a little, and started her engine. She had given me no word of fare-

Britt Morgan, traffic department:

"She will never be found. The reason for the flight, as I see it, came out in an article I read recently. She was probably paid money by some rich person who would receive reflected glory. As others did deeds catching the public eye, Amelia felt that she made this trip to rebuild herself."

The unidentified man in the cafe was even more outspoken. "Personally, I think that is merely a publicity gag. Amelia had no reason for making the flight, except for publicity. I don't think she'll ever be found."

And there was even humor as the negro at the shine parlor expressed his opinion: "I don't think they'll ever find her, but that navy ship with 87 airplanes ought to help."

## NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT

To determine Miss Earhart's reaction at the time of her crash-up here, which incidentally was her third, a reporter turned to the Reporter-News files of June, 1931, for this account:

"Miss Amelia Earhart's autogiro was 'washed out' here this morning when the famous woman flier, making a coast to coast exhibition flight, made a forced landing a moment after she had taken off from the Abilene air terminal to continue her flight eastward."

"The giro dropped 30 feet into an enclosed parkway southwest of the hangar, in the one small area vacant of spectators and parked automobiles. Miss Earhart pulling the plane steeply down to avoid falling into the crowd."

"The flier herself and her mechanic, Eddie DeVaugh, were not hurt. Some 1,500 persons saw the mishap, and as many of them were crowded in the line of the ship's takeoff. . .

"Miss Earhart stood up in the cockpit, calm, and announced to the crowd no one was hurt."

"I underestimated my distance," she said as she climbed out."

That was on June 12. Five days later she was back in Abilene in another autogiro. The first was sent to the factory for repairs.

## FOUR OTHER CRACK-UPS

In her 19 years of flying, the 39-year-old woman flier has been in four other crack-ups. Remember the first? She was taking the man she married—George Palmer Putnam—for a ride in a small biplane. She came down to a perfect landing at Pittsburgh, then taxied into an unmarked ditch.

No. 2 was September 25, 1930, at Norfolk, Va. This time she suffered a slight scalp wound when her plane nosed over after landing. "Too much braking," she explained laconically.

Abilene was the third. No. 4 was at Detroit—the autogiro again. Trying a slow landing in front of a crowded grandstand, she dropped 20 feet, smashed landing gear and wing. She wasn't hurt, but her husband, running toward the wreck, tripped over a guy wire and had to have hospital treatment.

Then came the March 20 crack-up in Hawaii, on her first attempt to circle the globe. But that did not discourage her. She took off again, heading the other way round the world—and settled down—in the vast, watery wilderness of the southern Pacific.

well. I felt just like Sarah had when she got no recognition for the clean trousers. This is the reason I have always believed she had been a bit sunstroked the day before when she had a forced landing in the desert and her mechanic had walked 20 miles for aid. For when she left the next time she did not omit words of gratitude and courtesy and I have a lovely letter written by her from Rye.

**OFFERED NO ALIBI**  
"I think," continued Mrs. Oldham, "that had Miss Earhart rested over here a day, her accident would never have happened. My husband told her and others that he saw a whirlwind hit the plane, but she refused my excuse that she was ill and his of the whirlwind. She stuck to a technical explanation, even though she knew it might be cause for being grounded."

"When the plane fell, I was near enough to see her alight. Her face was quite calm, and as I took her arm, she was not trembling. But I have never seen a face any more surprised and frightened than that of her young mechanic."

"When we arrived home, she came out of all the dazedness and sat at the telephone all afternoon giving and receiving messages. Not one excuse did she ever give—just her technical explanation."

"She took no rest, and we had dinner with only two guests as she refused to allow me to ask more—she said she just preferred to attend a picture show. Just before we started that evening she glanced in the mirror and I offered to run upstairs and get her comb for her ever-tousled hair. She said not to bother, as it would be that way again so soon. I must praise Abilene people in that not one pushed in as a curiosity seeker; that even at the show no one stared or pushed near."

## DERRYBERRYS DIVIDED

Faith in Miss Earhart's ability as a flier and to cope with serious situations as they have arisen is the basis for Mrs. L. E. Derryberry's belief that she may yet be found. "I don't want to think that she might not—it would be a great loss to aviation," said Mrs. Derryberry, who has had nearly 100 hours in the air herself, and who will soon be renewing her pilot's license.

Derryberry, her husband and manager of the Abilene airport, says on the other hand that "Amelia just stuck her neck out one time too many."

"She's been getting away with fool stunts too long—this time was just one too many. On that long hop, she probably didn't have a chance."

"What Pan-American is doing on long ocean flights is for progress—this other gets nowhere," said Derryberry, who apparently was worrying more about the navy's budget than he was about the missing woman flier. Anyway, he knows something about budgets and what extra expense he has to cope with one for 365 days in the year. "This search for Miss Earhart sure is tearing up the budget for the navy," he remarked.

## OTHERS LOSE HOPE

Other Abilenians are losing hope that Amelia will be found. "I don't think she will be found. I only hope so," said Judge E. M. Overshiner. "She is a wonderful woman. I think she made this trip for the advancement of science, with the knowledge that she might lose her life. Any science that has advanced through the ages has been at the cost of human life, and I think that she is one of those brave persons."

Edmund Yates, city attorney: "I feel the same way. Amelia did this with the purpose of advancing civilization. I do not think that she will be found."