# Retired "Mattie" Laird Was One Of The First "Barnstormers", Designed Own Plane

"Mattie" Laird had already designed and built his own airplane at the age of 15, when most boys are just getting interested in cars.

"I built a 12 horsepower, 4-cylinder engine made from old automobile parts," recalled Mr. Laird, sitting in the living room of his comfortable Toxaway home.

In 1905 E. M. Laird started on his airplane. The whole plane wasn't ready to go until 1913 when he was 17. For some time "Mattie" taxied up and down spare lots and fields, getting the feel of his plane.

"I had to teach myself to fly. If I got advice, it was usually to be careful. The pilots made fun of my onewinged plane with such a little engine in the front-but they were the first to congratulate me when it flew."

Before he flew, Mr. Laird worked in the First National Bank in Chicago. In 1910 Walter Brookins from the Wright School of flight put on a demonstration at Grant Park. "That started the fire in my veins.

"I made my first public flight in 1915. Several men booked me for a fair. After that, I took a leave of absence from the bank for a day and never came back."

As a pre-World War I barnstormer, Mr. Laird was the fifth pilot in the U.S. to loop-the-loop. From 1915 to 1918 Mr. Laird toured county fairs making "as much money in a day as I would in a month at the bank.'

Mr. Laird's real love is aircraft designing. In 1916 he designed a plane with a French Anzani engine. He used this plane for several barnstorming seasons. This airplane is now at the Ford Museum at Dearborn, Mich.

Mr. Laird pointed out that the pre-World War I meaning for a "harnstormer" was a flier who would make a contract with a fair where the owners were doubtful about their gate intake. The pilot would then take a percentage cut of the gate.

A bad accident put Mr. Laird in the hospital for almost five months. "I spun out from 25,000 feet and never recovered. It gave me a bad leg and a stiff arm. That kept me out of the service."

After the war, Mr. Laird started his own aircraft company in Chicago. The E. M. Laird Airplane Co. built several famous planes from the time it started operations after World War I to the end of World War

One of the most famous Laird planes was the Laird "Solution," a stubby-nosed racing plane which could attain speeds of up to 200 miles per hour. Pilots like "Speed" Holman and Jimmy Dolittle flew the Laird planes in races.

Dolittle set the intercontinental speed record in 1931 by flying from Burbank, Calif., to Newark, N. J. in a Laird "Super Solution" airplane.

This same plane will soon be placed in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

During World War II, the Laird Co. made airplane parts for the large plane companies. After the war, Mr. Laird retired. "I had a feeling the

government would flood the market with surplus planes like they did in World War I. When this happened many companies were knocked out of business. I don't regret retiring at all."

After bowing out gracefully from the airplane business Mr. Laird took up residence in Boca

Raton, Fla. The Lairds found Toxaway when they brought their daughter up from Florida to play the piano for a choir group in the area.

Mr. Laird will have a book published soon about his highflying life as one of America's earlybird aviators.

## Dr. Pinkney Herbert Says Lake Toxaway Most Beautiful US Area

"When I was single and 21 I used to come up here to the Toxaway Inn for the weekends," recalled Dr. Pinkney Herbert of Lake Toxaway.

"I was a doctor in Asheville for 45 years and I guess I know every stream in these mountains," Dr. Herbert said as he chomped on his unlit pipe.

Before 1916, the young surgeon from Asheville enjoyed the company and the sights at the fabulous Toxaway Inn. It was a haven for a young

Dr. Herbert's bushy grey eyebrows wrinkled in a frown. "Rained for four days back in '16 when the lake went out. We

were the last people out in a car. Car dropped in a big hole out of Rosman. Mr. Silversteen made us a new axle and we drove on to Asheville. That was Friday. On that Sunday the dam broke and washed away half or north South Carolina.

"Then when the lake was rebuilt it was natural that I would be interested." Dr. Herbert now lives in his old stomping grounds just in the summer. His winter home is in Laurens,

"It's natural that I should gravitate back to the mountains\_I've known them for so long. This is the most beautiful area in Eastern Ameri-

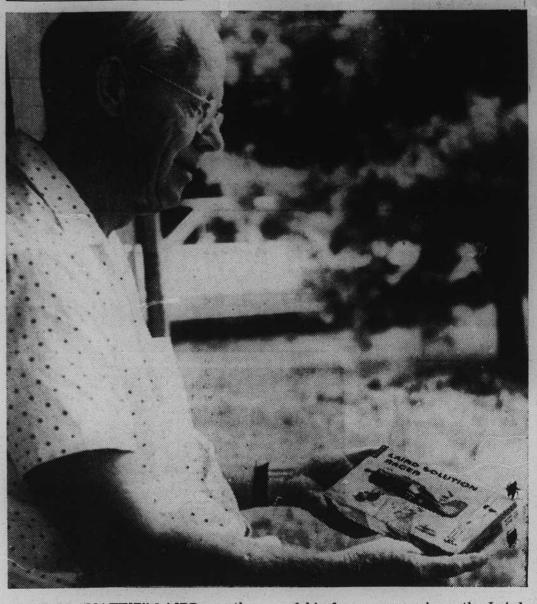
#### Bill McNeely

### Lake Toxaway Native Is Now **Building Many Homes In Area**

Bill McNeely drove by the company store back in the pre-

The old frame housed the Mr. McNeely is a local con-

gaunt frame of the old Mc- 1916 era. Then it passed on to Neely's store. "I lived there Mr. McNeely's father. In 1957 for 20 years," he said, wag- the new store was built just ging his head in the store's down the road from the old



E. M. "MATTIE" LAIRD was the fifth pilot in the U.S. to loop-the-loop as an early barnstormer. Here he is shown looking at one of the models

on the lake. He is, at present, Colombia. "By blind people,

of his famous race plane, the Laird "Solution", which his company designed and built.

structor, building in the Tox- at work on the unique George away area since 1961. In the second World War he was in the Pacific in the SeaBees doing construction work.

THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1965

the mayor of Atlanta the first Cecil home will incorporate a English church. of August."

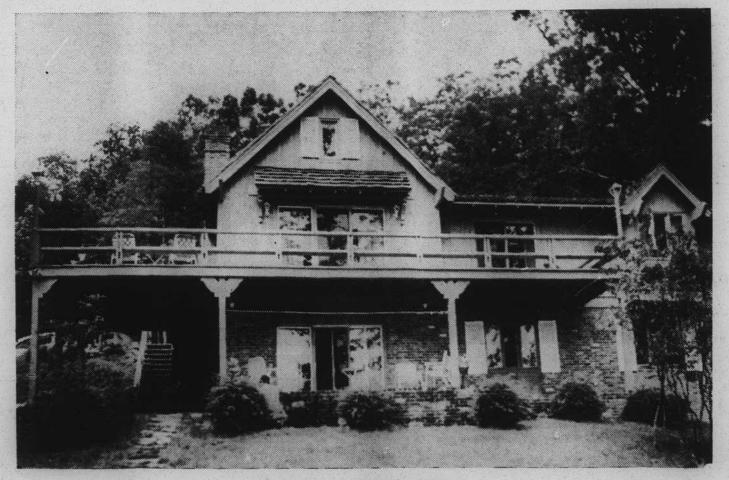
probably", said Mr. Mueller Cecil home. Mr. Cecil is head of the Biltmore Dairies.

Mr. McNeely seems to excell The bricks in the Muellet "We start building a home for in building off-beat homes. The home were imported from an old log cabin in its frame. The James W. Mueller home is a This sort of thing isn't un- quasi-alpine affair with a cordusual for Mr. McNeely, who wood shingled roof. The shinhas built 30% of all the homes gles were cut by hand in British

"Not a single one is like anoth

Mr. McNeely also built Dr. Pinkney Herbert's home. D. Herbert says, "If Bill McNeelly ever leaves, I'll leave five

# BEST WISHES To Our Friends At The Lake McNeely Construction Company



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