

# WHEN BOEING FLEW THE MAIL

PIONEERING AVIATOR EDDIE HUBBARD AND WILLIAM BOEING COMBINED FORCES TO CREATE THE B-1 FLYING BOAT — AN AIRCRAFT THAT LAUNCHED INTERNATIONAL AIR MAIL SERVICE IN AMERICA

BY HOWARD CARTER



Eddie Hubbard would enroll in the flying school set up by Herbert Hunter and Bill Boeing. Munter is seen at the controls of a Curtiss-style aircraft that he had built.



Eddie Hubbard and the B-1 with a prodigious load of mail sacks for the flight from Seattle to Victoria. Note that the flying boat carries the early American civil registration of N-ABNA.

Eddie Hubbard was having a hard time of it. The weather over Puget Sound had clamped down even further compared to when he had taken off just minutes earlier. A dark gray overcast hung low over the whole area and there were patches of thick fog. The air was heavy and dank with moisture and Eddie was having to use his jacket sleeves to keep wiping away at his goggles. To make matters worse, he had taken off late and the October sun — not that he could see a trace of it — was rapidly dropping toward the horizon while the usually reliable 200-hp Hall-Scott engine beating away behind him had let out a “bark” with a corresponding drop in RPM before settling down and running like normal. However, Hubbard was made of stern stuff — he had a schedule to meet and he was not going to let bad weather or a problematical engine stop him.

Edward Hubbard was born in San Francisco during 1889 but was quickly orphaned, growing up with a variety of relatives. He decided to seek his fortune as a young man by moving to Seattle when he was 18. Working various jobs, he became captivated by aviation and during November 1915 he was the first pupil to walk through the doors of the newly-opened Aviation School of the Northwest. The school was a subsidiary of the Aero Club Northwest that had been started by Herbert A. Munter and another fellow named William Boeing. Counting out a deposit from a hard-earned roll of bills, Hubbard was soon up in one of the school's three “Wright-style” tractor planes with Munter as instructor. It would not be long before Bill Boeing would start his own company with Munter as his first employee and test pilot.

Hubbard quickly mastered the ungainly trainers and became the first aviator from the Pacific Northwest to obtain a license from the Aero Club of America. Now, all he had to do was find a way of supporting himself. He began to do some instructing through the school while reading about the aerial combat taking place over the Western Front. In January 1917, Hubbard joined the new Boeing Airplane Company as, initially, a mechanic (to give an idea on how rapidly aviation was growing, Hubbard was soon promoted to test pilot). When America entered the war, the new Air Service