

Swallow #8730 The workhorse of the Pacific School of Aviation. Santa Monica, Calif.

Swallow 8730 was originally delivered to Ruth Elder at the Swallow plant in Wichita, Kansas in early 1929 to be flown to Clover Field to Jim and Clema Grangers Pacific School of Aviation where it began an exciting and illustrious existence. Ruth Elder was a stock holder in the school and often represented it at gatherings where her presents could advance the schools purpose. The 1929 Derby from Santa Monica to the National Air Races in Cleveland Ohio was certainly one of those gatherings, and Ruth entered the Swallow in that event, and proceeded to win fifth place.

8730 was added to the line of airplanes already in service at the school, a fair collection of O.X.5 T.P. and standard swallows since Jim Granger was also the west coast distributor for Swallow Airplanes. 8730 was the only J5 model in the stable, The job of 8730 was to fly the charter customers, hop passengers, appear in movies on occasion as a fighter, an air mail plane, a smuggler, a private sport plane etc. It is doubtful that any airplane appeared in as many films as 8730 during the 1929 to 1934 period. Another of 8730's jobs was to win prize money, a very important part of early aviations financial support. And that it did. Between Ruth Elder, Jim Granger, Clema Granger and Hoot Gibson of wesertrn movie fame, 8730 was always bringing in prize money, many firsts, and if not first always in the money. In closed course raceing 8730 could defeat nearly all commers consistantly except Gladys Odonnell and her J.6.7. Waco taper wing. Not bad for a work horse! In 1930 Jim Granger flew 8730 in the mens division of the derby and in 1931 Clema Granger flew it again in the derby, each flight was in the money.

About 1931 Hoot Gibson acquired a beautiful Butler Blackhawk with orange wings and black fuselage with all wires and struts chrome plated, it was a thing to behold, and Jim Granger promptly brought 8730 into the hanger and disassembled her and had all struts and wires chrome plated and re covered part of tail group and colored the plane black and white with a sunburst on the top of the upper wing. It too, was a thing to behold.

In 1933 Ken Maynard, also of western movie fame and a good friend of Hoot Gibsons gave birth to the idea that a match race between the two cowboys at the 1933 National Air Races at Los Angeles would be good publicity for the two. Hoot, always a showman promptly accepted the idea and a race was born. Cliff Henderson liked the idea and gave them a spot on the program. Jim advised Hoot that the Butler might not be able to defeat Kens J.6.7. steerman and suggested he fly 8730 instead, to which Hoot agreed and to insure a win offered to

Install a full N.A.C.A. engine cowling and a set of pants free of charge for the loan of the airplane. Needless to say Jim Granger was very happy with the arrangement. The new parts were ordered and were installed a day or two before the big race, and Hoot was on cloud nine, Jim had test flown 8730 with the new equipment on and reported it would easily top 130 M.P.H. A victory seemed within reach, not only with Ken but maybe also with Gladys Odonnell and her waco, in the future! Hoot was off to the races.

When the starter dropped the flag on the two cowboy pilots 8730 was the first one off and reached the first pylon a couple a plane lengths ahead of Kens steerman and Hoot proceeded down the main straightaway, in front of the stands, with a decided advantage, it looked eminent, old 8730 would win by a decided margin, again! But it was not to be.

On the third pylon about four miles from the stands Hoot had a substantial lead and I guess, thinking of his rodeo days, decided to put on a show so he pulled up a couple of hundred feet and did a very steep turn back towards the field and the first pylon, he never recovered the turn and flew 8730 into the ground full bore. Luckily for him he had nearly recovered and the plane did ricocheted off the ground and literally rolled up in a ball. The old Swallow was tough enough to save Hoots Life, and he was to fly again in his Butler, but more carefully.

8730 was a candidate for the junk heap. Nothing was salvagable, even the crankshaft was bent, the instruments were demolished. What had long been the "Pride" of Jim Grangers Pacific School of Aviation was now gone forever, but not without leaving a record to behold. A fine, money making piece of equipment. Even Gladys Odonnel shed a few tears when she came to Clover field and vewed the wreckage in the hanger. 8730 was gone but not forgotten!