

# My Lucky Turning Point

*A telephone call — that she tried to avoid — sent Amelia Earhart across the Atlantic to Fame and changed her whole life*

by AMELIA EARHART

ALMOST any one can look back over his past and discover some moment when the whole course of his life was changed by what seemed, at the time, an insignificant or an unfortunate thing. Maybe it was a party he went to when he would rather have stayed at home; or some oysters he ate at dinner; or an overheard remark; or even a particular seat he dropped into on a street car. Anyone of these trivial happenings may have started a train of circumstances which brought fame, fortune or love, even though promising nothing of importance at the time.

Many people who have made big successes have had lucky turning points in their lives. Sometimes these lucky breaks came when they were fired from jobs at which they would never have succeeded anyway, and were thus forced to look for something more suited to their talents — in other words, kicked upstairs. At other times their turning points have come when they have made one more effort, after many failures, and the effort has succeeded.

We have asked some of these successful people to describe their lucky breaks for the readers of THIS WEEK. We begin with one day early in nineteen-twenty-eight, when a certain tousle-haired social settlement worker received an unexpected 'phone call.

MY CAREER — such as it is — had a well-defined "turning point." It hinged (can turning-points 'hinge?') on a telephone call in Boston early in 1928 — as casual as an invitation to a matinee. As a result of that telephone message, I made an Atlantic flight, which in turn opened the way for later ocean air crossings and much beside — including matrimony.

In those days I was at Denison House, one of America's oldest social settlements.

"Phone for you, Miss Earhart."

"Tell 'em I'm busy." At the moment I was the center of an eager swarm of Chinese and Syrian neighborhood children, piling in for games and classes.

"Says it's important."

So I excused myself and went to listen to a man's voice asking me whether I was interested in doing something dangerous in the air. At first I thought the conversation was a joke and said so. Several times before I had been approached by bootleggers who promised rich reward and no danger — "Absolutely no danger to you, Leddy."

The frank admission of risk stirred my curiosity. References were demanded and supplied. Good references. An appointment was arranged for that evening.

"Would you like to fly the Atlantic?"

My reply was a prompt yes — provided the equipment was all right and the crew capable. Seven years ago flying oceans was less commonplace than today, and my own experience as a pilot was limited to a few hundred hours in small planes when work and finances permitted.

So I went to New York and met the man entrusted with the quaint commission of finding a woman willing to fly the Atlantic. The candidate, I gathered, should be a flyer herself, with social graces, education, charm and, perchance, pulchritude.

His appraisal left me discomforted. Somehow this seeker for feminine perfection seemed brusque. I just didn't like him. Anyway, I showed my pilot's license (it happened to be the first granted an American woman by the F.A.I.) and inwardly prepared to start back for Boston.

But I felt that, having come so far, I might as well meet the representatives of Mrs. Frederick Guest, whose generosity was making the flight possible, and at whose insistence



From a Portrait by Howard Chandler Christy

Amelia Earhart—Opportunity telephoned her

a woman was to be taken along. Those representatives were David T. Layman, Jr., and John S. Phipps, before which masculine jury I made my next appearance. It should have been slightly embarrassing, for if I were found wanting in too many ways I would be counted out. On the other hand, if I were just too fascinating, the gallant gentlemen might be loath to risk drowning me. Anyone could see the meeting was a crisis.

A few days later the verdict came. The flight actually would be made and I could go if I wished. Naturally I couldn't say "no." Who would refuse an invitation to such a shining adventure?

Followed, in due course, after weeks of mechanical preparation, efforts to get the monoplane "Friendship" off from the grey waters of Boston Harbor. There were chill before-dawn gettings-up, with breakfasts snatched and thermos bottles filled at an all-night lunch-counter. Brief voyages on the tug-boat "Sadie Ross" to the anchored plane, followed by the sputter of the faithful motors awakening to Mechanic Lou Gordon's coaxing and their later full-throated roar when Pilot "Bill" Stultz gave them the gun — and I crouched on the fuselage floor hoping we were really off.

Thrice we failed, dragging back to Boston for more long days of waiting. Waiting is apt to be so much harder than going, with the excitement of movement, of getting off, of adventure-around-the-corner.

In charge of shore preparations was that man I'd met in New York, possessed, somehow, of a driving knack of getting things done.

Finally one morning the "Friendship" took off successfully, and Stultz, Gordon and I transferred ourselves to Trepassy, Newfoundland. Thirteen days of further waiting in that tiny fishing village, and then, on May 20, over the Atlantic to Burryport, Wales, in 20 hours and 40 minutes.

So . . . from that telephonic "turning point", after the pleasant accident of being the first woman to cross the Atlantic by air, I was launched into a life more full than ever.

Aviation offered such fun as crossing the continent in planes large and small, trying the whirling rotors of an autogiro, making record flights. With these activities came opportunity to know women everywhere who share my conviction there is so much women can do in the modern world and should be permitted to do irrespective of their sex.

Two years ago, having been rudely characterized as a "sack of potatoes" when I was a mere passenger on my first Atlantic crossing, I flew alone to Ireland — an exploit which contributed little beyond indicating that women, now and then, can do things themselves if given the chance.

Also, I suppose that phone call can be considered the genesis of the thoroughly interesting eighteen hours I recently experienced over the Pacific, en route from Honolulu to California.

Those latter were solo voyages, but much of the preparations for them weren't. For, as often since that "turning point", the Man-who-was-to-find-a-girl-to-fly-the-Atlantic had an encouraging hand in them — that man I didn't like so well at first.

His name, I neglected to say, is George Palmer Putnam.

Nowadays, he has his solo jobs and I have mine. But there is also work and play together, conducted under a satisfactory system of dual control, since we were married four years ago.

In an early issue we will publish another "Lucky Turning Point" that led to fame.