

Articulate Flier

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Bernie Lay's flier may be inarticulate, but mine isn't. He is my cousin Gib, Gilbert Robert Hendren Browning (my family is addicted to long names), and when he isn't flying, he loves to talk about everything.

Since his graduation from Shortridge, my twenty-four year old cousin has studied aeronautical engineering at Purdue, architecture at Wabash and DePauw, and business administration at Butler and Indiana University Extension; he has been pledged to Alpha Tau Omega and Delta Tau Delta fraternities, but he has never stayed in the same college long enough to be initiated.

Somewhere along the line Gib learned to fly, and the three years that elapsed between his attendance at Purdue and Wabash were spent in the Army Air Corps. When he received his lieutenantcy, Gib was the youngest second lieutenant in the air corps—he was seventeen.

Gib was born to fly. To him flying is the only thing worth doing. His plane is his sweetheart and the sky is his heaven. Gib is the bodily form of those heavens which he loves so well. His eyes are the bright blue of a summer sky; his hair is the same color as the sun on a good flying day; he is as straight and streamlined as the ships he pilots, and his moods are as varying as the heavens themselves. One minute he is as calm as the sky during the lull before the storm; the next, the torrent has unleashed itself; and he is as wild as a hurricane. Soon, however, his anger has

spent itself, and he is his usual cheerful self.

In the air corps Gib was assigned to fly pursuit planes, and at Tampa he finally met his favorite sweetheart, the P-51. Just as some men love all blondes, Gib loves all airplanes; and, just as every man loves some particular woman, Gib is enamored by one special plane, the P-51. She is a sleek, maneuverable craft, fashioned for unpredictable men like Gib by other men who understand what kind of ship they need.

Gib was transferred to Bainbridge Field in Georgia after he was commissioned a first lieutenant and it was there that the most unhappy incident of his life occurred. Gib was flying over Bainbridge one day when a navy pilot's plane collided with his P-51. The P-51 caught on fire, forcing Gib to bail out and abandon his plane. The ship was burned beyond the salvation point, and for a few days Gib was heart-broken. In a few days, however, he was flying a new P-51, and he was in love with her.

The war is over now and Gib is just a reserve officer, but he is still happiest when he is flying. And every day he does just that; he is a test pilot at Stout Field.

There is a special Valhalla to which all good pilots wing their way eventually. The two Wright brothers are the chief luminaries of this place; one of these days, Gib, with his soft, very slight southern drawl, will feel right at home there with them.