Memories of Uncle Ed (E.M. Smith of EMSCO) By Pat Kearns

Images and format- Larry Latimer

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It was a warm summer morning in the early 1940s in Downey, California. The kids we played with every day: Johnny Rodriquez, Kenny and Donna Ganser, Buddy Hayman, Ray Cabrera, Mory Guarerro, Ward Dawson, my brother Mike and I were busy with a game of “work-up” softball in the middle of Davis street when a 1939 Grey Plymouth business coupe turned on to Davis from Downey Avenue. The driver saw us and promptly pulled over to the right and parked off the road next to our 9-foot tall solid fir tree fence. As he got out we all recognized him as “Uncle Ed”. He waved with a big smile on his face and dug into his right pants pocket for a handful of bright shiny $1.00 coins as we all ran over to greet him. He had a treasure coin for each of us. After a handshake, small talk and a hand tousled hair touch he was off to our house to visit with my Mom, his favorite, niece. After a visit with her he would walk across Downey Avenue to visit with Mrs. Edna Fether, she was Don’s wife and Aunt Mimmie’s daughter—in-law. A little while later he would come back to the car and wave goodbye. He was just a great guy! Uncle Ed, E.M. Smith, worked his way from Charleroi, PA., near Pittsburgh across the USA to San Francisco, arriving in the city near the end of the 19th century. He was 18-years old and found work in the various manufacturing businesses in this fastest growing city in the west. He was very skilled mechanically but found his real niche in sales. By the time of the big San Francisco Earthquake he was a top salesman for Diamond Rubber Company selling drive belts for mechanical equipment. After the quake in April 1906, he was sent by the company to Los Angeles to supply the very fast-growing business community of the “southland”. He was a very personable and, with his mechanical ability, a very helpful supplier of mechanical drive belts and equipment. He really got to know, not only the movers and shakers, but also what their future needs would be. By 1911, with the help of his father, my great grandfather, Henry John Smith, and his brothers, Walter and Joseph, (He had sent for all of them from the Pittsburg area as he became more and more established and successful.) he established the E. M. Smith Co. His first major line of products revolved around reinforced rubber belts and belt drive mechanical equipment. He was not afraid to partner with others and expand his product line to meet the needs of a growing Los Angeles. The oil industry was in its infancy as were the auto and truck industries, engines, transmissions, brakes, oil towers, modern concrete construction, and even the banking industry, each needed aggressive and competent leadership and Uncle Ed knew and was a part of that leadership. By 1924, his ownership included: The E.M. Smith Co., West Coast Asbestos and Brake Lining Co., Emsco Derrick and Equipment Co., Western Forge Co., Peerless Pump Co., Los Angeles Pump Supply Co., Emsco Piston and Brake Co. and Pacific National Bank of Los Angeles. In 1928, with the massive construction going on in downtown LA, Emsco Concrete Cutting Co. was formed to provide services to demolish and dispose of old buildings and roadway surfaces and to prepare sites for new construction.

Uncle Ed never let a dream slip by. In 1928, he put together a team to design and construct private aircraft. They were to be used for sport, business and commercial aircraft travel. In 1929, he had established and built EMSCO Aircraft in Downey which one day would become the “Home of Apollo” and the Space Shuttle. During WWII, Uncle Ed’s companies were devoted to the war effort and after the war he established Globe Oil Tool Co. and designed and built the first mobile starting gate for harness
races. (photo right) As we grew up we knew Uncle Ed was rich, but he was a friendly uncle that shared
time with us and had encouraging words and smiled as he told us stories. We visited his office at work
and his homes. We even went to his Arizona ranch to watch the cowboy’s roundup his cattle and brand
the new little calves with his Bar-Heart brand. I remember a number of trips to his Lido Isle home in
Newport Beach and swimming in the bay at the beach club, and him taking us for a ride in his rowboat
that he rowed. He and Aunt Mimmie (Marian Fether Smith) were married in 1919, they built a big house
in Berkeley Square west of downtown Los Angeles in 1923. They were out of that house in the early
1940s selling it to a doctor. I was never in that house, and Caltrans condemned it under eminent domain
proceedings in the 1960s for the Santa Monica freeway. I would visit their Downey hide-away home that
was next door to us on Downey Avenue. When Uncle Ed and Aunt Mimmie wanted to get away for some
quiet time they would come with their maid, Maddy, for a few days. Maddy made cookies for us and
would call us over to get them. Aunt Mimmie had two matching big Dalmatians who were very quiet
and not too scary even for 5 and 7-year-olds. Aunt Mimmie just left the scene in 1940, the next thing we kids
knew Uncle was married to a very nice Aunt Catherine. They had a beautiful home in the hills just above
downtown Whittier. We would visit that home and the new home they built on Lido Isle. Uncle Ed
moved his office from South Alameda St. in Los Angeles to Globe Oil Tools off Los Nietos Rd. in Santa Fe
Springs, CA. to be closer to home. Aunt Catherine died in a terrible auto accident in Whittier in 1948.
Uncle Ed was heartbroken and never really recovered. He did build a church hall in her honor at St
Mary’s Catholic Church in Whittier. It was dedicated on the day of his death, March 17, 1950. He died of
natural causes, a broken heart, at the age of 69.

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The efficiency of the Emsco Challenge is apparent in the front view of the plane. The design is optimized for speed and fuel efficiency, allowing for long-distance travel. A single engine powers the aircraft, ensuring reliability and efficiency. The fuselage is streamlined to reduce drag, improving the plane's aerodynamics.

Another view of the plane captures the attention, highlighting the meticulously crafted design and the attention to detail in its construction. The cockpit is spacious, providing comfort for the pilot and allowing for easy navigation.

The Emsco Aircraft Corporation takes pride in its commitment to innovation and excellence in aviation technology.