



# The Per Niente



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Volume II, Issue IX

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September 2006



Giuseppe Mario Bellanca was born in 1886 in Sciacca, Sicily. As a young man, he attended the Technical Institute in Milan, graduating with a teaching degree in mathematics in 1908. During his quest for a second mathematics and engineering degree, he became enamoured of aviation, and set out to design and build his own airplane. Bellanca's first aircraft design was a "pusher" aircraft, somewhat similar to the Wright Flyer. Lacking funds for such an endeavor, he joined with two partners, Enea Bossi, and Paolo Invernizzi. The union of the three produced the first flight of a totally Italian-designed and Italian-built aircraft in early December of 1909. The flight was short, but it was a start. Bellanca's second design, was a tractor-type aircraft. Although the aircraft was successfully constructed, it was never flown due to insufficient funds for an engine.

At the urging of his brother Carlo, who was already established in Brooklyn, New York, Giuseppe Bellanca immigrated to America in 1911. Before the end of the year, he began construction of his third airplane design, a parasol monoplane. After construction was completed, he took the small craft to Mineola Field on Long Island, NY, and proceeded to teach himself to fly. He began by taxiing. He then, taxied faster, which gave way to short hops. The hops got longer, until, on May 19, 1912, there was not enough room to land straight ahead, and Bellanca had to complete a turn in order land safely. Having successfully taught himself to fly, Bellanca then set about teaching others to fly, and from 1912 to 1916, he operated the Bellanca Flying School. One of his students was a young Fiorello La Guardia, the future mayor of New York City. In return for flying lessons, La Guardia taught Bellanca how to drive a car.

In 1917 the Maryland Pressed Steel Company of Hagerstown, MD hired Bellanca as a consulting engineer. While there, he designed two trainer biplanes, the CD, and an improved version, the CE. With the conclusion of WWI, Maryland Pressed Steel's contracts were cancelled and the company entered into receivership. Thus, the CE never went into production.

In 1921, a group of investors lured Bellanca westward to Omaha, NE, in hopes of establishing that town as a center for aircraft manufacture. Before the aircraft could be built, the

company went bankrupt, but construction of the aircraft continued under the financial backing of a local motorcycle dealer named Victor Roos. The resultant aircraft, the Bellanca CF, was called by Janes's All the World's Aircraft "the first up-to-date transport aeroplane that was designed, built, and flown with success in the United States." Among the local people helping to build the aircraft was the daughter of Bellanca's landlord, Dorothy Brown. Giuseppe and she were married on November 18, 1922.

Despite its advanced design, the Bellanca CF could not compete with the economics of the time. In the days just after World War I, a surplus Curtiss Jenny could be purchased for as little as \$250.00. A Bellanca CF, with a price tag of \$5000.00, was just too expensive and the aircraft never went into production. After the disappointment of the CF, Bellanca designed wings for the Post Office Department's DH-4's. His new wings were a tremendous improvement over the original design, but only a few aircraft were so modified.

In 1925, Bellanca went to work for the Wright Aeronautical Corporation of Paterson, NJ. His assignment there was to develop an aircraft around the new Wright Whirlwind engine. He already had a design in mind, which was an improved version of the CF, called the CG. This design evolved into the Wright-Bellanca WB-1.

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