

Starduster Magazine April



Starduster



Dedicated to the
ACTIVE Homebuilders APRIL 1984

April

Starduster Magazine

1984

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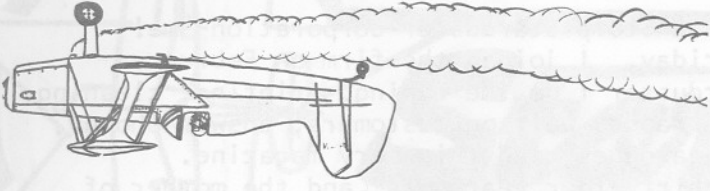
We would like to thank this issue's contributors for some interesting stories, information, and photos.

Cover Photo; Bob Wyse's Starduster Too. For more information, see the letter on page 9.

Page 17; Copy of the cover of Planeurs et Avions Magazine, featuring an Acroduster Too. This has brought inquiries from several French Readers, some of them completely in French!

Back Cover; Bill Kelly's Starlet, painted a striking orange and gun-metal gray, with silver wings. The propeller has been left alone, except for varnishing, to expose the natural beauty of the wood.

1984 APRIL 1984 Dedicated to the ACTIVE HOMEBUILDERS



President's Comments

Discipline: Training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character. Control gained by enforcing obedience or order. Orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior. Self-control. A rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity. To train or develop by instruction and exercise esp. in self-control.

Habit: The prevailing disposition or character of a person's thoughts and feelings. Mental makeup. A settled tendency or usual manner of behavior. A behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance. An acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary. A way of acting fixed through repetition. Habit implies a doing unconsciously and often compulsively. Habitude suggests a fixed attitude or usual state of mind. (The sense of fitness and proportion that comes from years of habitude in the practice of an art.)

Stupid: Given to unintelligent decisions or acts. Lacking intelligence or reason.

We have all heard the expression "There are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots".

I have copied the above definitions from a dictionary, but asked several friends the meaning of the word BOLD. Some of the answers-UNAFRAID, FEARLESS, COURAGEOUS, GUTSY, DARING.

Of these I like the fearless or unafraid-we only fear the unknown and as pilots of high-performance airplanes we should never, singularly, enter the unknown when there is so much talent available to instruct or guide us from dark to light.

Hank Schmel puts it this way, "What's the difference between a stuntman and a daredevil? A stuntman is a trained professional and has calculated the outcome of his stunt. A daredevil takes his chances and is not sure what will really happen."

If we use discipline and habit we can all become old pro's.

If stupidity enters the results are predictable and obits are written.

The '84 flying season is upon us. The snow is gone and the skies are blue. Let's use the self-control and sharpen our skills again for a safe summer.

Leave the exhibitions to the professionals. If you must impress your friends on your flying abilities, do it in the airport coffee shop. Use both hands, too.

A parachute is no more or no less than a life-saving device. More in the next issue.

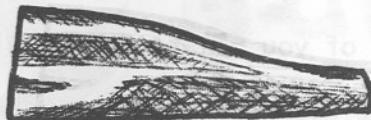


Summer Sale!

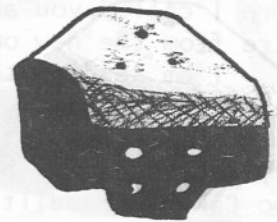
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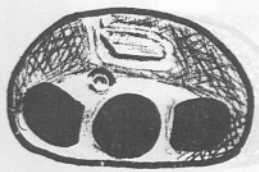


FUEL TANKS

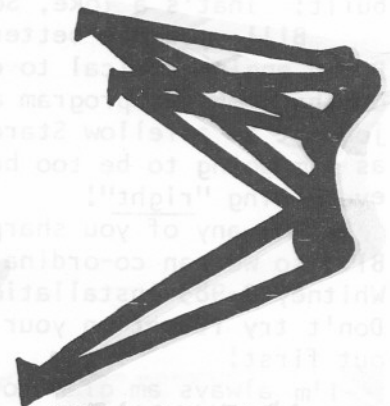


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Feb. 3rd '84

Dear Bill--

Oh, why, oh why haven't you heard from "Crash"?

--Been travelling--Bill--All over!

Also--the big news is; My Jacobs "Bull" Starduster Too has a new owner! A "next-door" neighbor to me, Island Jet, Inc. Malcolm McKinnou Airport, Saint Simon's Island, Georgia Zip-31522- A "Really Big" outfit.

They are going to use it as a shiny toy for contrast in the middle of their brand-new super large hanger amidst all their jets to give a little class & color to the biz--and only to be flown on Sundays by the brass!

I made this move cause I just could not keep up with the corrosion caused by the pulp-wood mill next to the airport where I kept the "Bull" in an open hanger--all that sulfuric acid was too much for the exposed wing bolts, burnished cowling & even the anodized propeller!

So let this be a lesson to all Stardusters with their planes near a pulp-wood mill! Watch out for corrosion!

Enclosed please find a \$20.00 check to cover costs of returning the front flying wire I called you about that was my mistake! You will soon get an order for a rear flying wire from the new owners!

I am sending the pics I took of you all at the Virginia EAA fly-in in October--we had fun ya'all!

Also, a photo for the book of Records! "Crash" McPherson the "World's Oldest Flying Chicken's" birthday party holding what has to be the only Round-Engine Starduster Too Cake ever built!

This is "Crash's" 58th birthday, for the record!

Please notice proper sweep-back in upper wing of the "Sweetest" Starduster ever built! That's a joke, Son!

Bill, you had better write to me & send me the Starduster sheet with the final Round engine artical to complete my library or God will get you! Also, keep me up-dated on the complete program as I want to build another "Bull" Starduster & will farm this job out to a fellow Starduster for best bid on top workmanship! I can't do it all myself as I'm going to be too busy on business, but I do want a round engine "Too"--this time, everything "right"!

So--any of you sharp welders & wood workers who want a project, contact me thru Bill so we can co-ordinate the parts & pieces! By the way, Stardusters, this is a Pratt & Whitney R-985 installation from my own plans with extra chewing gum to hold it together! Don't try it yet on your own unless it has Bill's blessing! Let's see how this one works out first!

I'm always am glad to hear from & help round-engine Stardusters at any time so write Ole' "Crash" C/O his Florida sea-side roost at Rt. 1, Box 139A, Fernandina Beach, Florida 32034, or C/O Starduster Corp. in California & I'll answer all questions on the Round engine Program cheerfully!

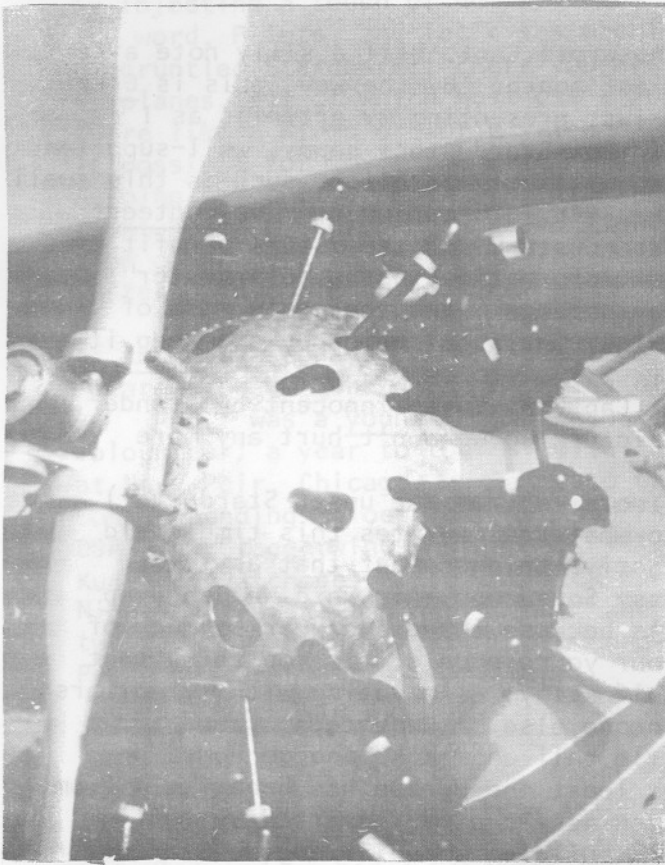
In the meantime, Pilots, "Save Chicken Fat". We may be running Round engines on it someday!

Sincerely to all--
"Crash" McPherson

P.S.

Bill, where are the Round Power Decals?

Send me some--



You are in such a hurry to build a Bi-plane so you can get out there and recapture
 4891 Linda
 April 1984

Dear Bill and Fellow Stardusters;

This is an open letter to the Starduster who wrote Capt. Bill a silly note after reading Crash's final article on "Round Power" last month. By the way, this is Crash speaking, and not Capt. Bill who is a good guy, just presenting my articles as I write them, and worrying about keeping all you fellow-Stardusters happy, well-supplied on parts and all the other services Starduster so willingly supplies, such as this swell magazine (printed at bare cost) with all the fine FREE information from volunteers wishing to share their discoveries with fellow-Stardusters for the mutual benefit of all. As we all (who write articles and technical information in the "Starduster") "don't have to do this for a living" (as the saying goes), and the whole idea of building a radial engine Starduster is a "FUN THING" let's all be happy and keep it that way!

But to keep the record straight, and to get Capt. Bill (an innocent by-stander) off the "hook" let's look at both sides of the picture so we don't hurt any more fine Starduster's feelings!

Here's the note Capt. Bill sent me! (This note is from the upset Starduster) By the way, "Crash" does not know who he is! So what Crash writes this time could concern Anyone who may have unknowingly said negative things about that article! Quote; "Didn't really appreciate the 'Tight Pussy Squadron"--Air Raid Warden Crap you allowed in your last news-letter! Maybe it's because I see and hear so much of that kind of thing these days, especially from our young people. If you think that kind of thing is funny go ahead and laugh yourself silly. I'm voting with my dollars and buying my inverted oil system, etc. from someone else." Unquote!

Tsk, Tsk, Tsk! He's gonna pick up his little ball and jacks and go home!

I love this kind of letter as I now know at least one person has benefitted from reading "Crash's" articles and has at least gotten as far as an inverted system in his Starduster! I look at it this way! If he is building a radial engine Starduster he got the benefit of Crash's 45 years of aviation experience in writing this article, and if he is building a regular Starduster "Too" he must find fascinating reading in Crash's corner of the sheet! Ah-ha!

The funny part of the whole thing is "Crash" has taken the time to write this series and share his "Round Power" and Bi-plane knowledge so the younger generation can carry on the traditions we had 40 years ago! After all, Stardusters, a little knowledge is sometimes worse than none at all! So! Crash has been scratching back in the far corner of the chicken coop to uncover the hidden bits and pieces of aviation history that would normally have gone into the dust of time, and this unfortunate Starduster is not paying attention! Here is an individual obviously taken by the Bi-plane craze sweeping the aviation industry nowadays, even down to the rank amateur with his first Bi-plane ultra-lite airplane. The Bi-planes have caught on because they represent an era of excitement not prevailing in modern aviation. If you doubt this, park any old beat-up Bi-plane next to a new spam-cam and see who looks at what!

To this individual, I say! Wake up when you read Crash's articles and someday you may become a well informed Round-Power enthusiast! Or do you prefer to remain in the dark as you are now and think because you threaten Starduster Corp. (a completely neutral party just trying to give both side of the picture as any impartial media would) with the loss of your future business, after you have already benefitted from their many fine magazines and Crash's free, (you don't have to read it) writings?

I'm sure you are basically a real nice guy with high morals as we in this proud corner of aviation are! Or we would all be out boozing it up and spending our money on wild women and the like! Couldn't build a Starduster then, could we? If you are a young Starduster I can understand your lack of knowledge in the complex and forgotten fabric-covered era, but if you're an old timer in the Round-Power department, you obviously were not in any way connected with any U.S. military unit in aviation during WW-2, or you would not belittle the traditions the Service personnel had at a time when the whole World was at war and there was no tomorrow! That thought was reflected in our actions!

You are in such a hurry to build a Bi-plane so you can get out there and recapture

the past you don't even know what you are recapturing!

I have tried in the "Crash's" series, to bring you all a little closer to the Bi-plane and Round-Powers era (that just a plain blue-print would do injustice to) by injecting a touch of humor in the series while still being authentic. Get this key word, Pilots, and let's see who is giving whom the "Crap" mentioned by our disgruntled Starduster! Here you are in the midst of a series on radial engined airplanes, all of which must use a World War II engine over 40 years old, and you sit there like a Glump or worse yet a Glupe, and bad-mouth the people who are making it possible for you to do this wonderful hobby! You are bad-mouthing all of us helping one another with our airplanes, from Crash to Starduster, to the men of WW-II Tight Pussy Squadron who helped fight for this country at a time in history when it came damn close to losing to the Nazis and Japanese Empire! I wonder how many Stardusters you could build then?

To further quote you, Pal "Maybe it's because I see and hear so much of that kind of thing these days, especially from our young people. "A lot of "Young People" are "Stardusters". What kind of thing did you have in mind?

And I was a young person when I was in the U.S. Navy on my 17th birthday, (a volunteer) a year to the day after Pearl Harbor and after Aviation Mechanic's School at Navy Peir, Chicago, assigned to Carrier Aircraft Service Unit #28, then at Groton, Conn., pending relocation. We had F4U's, FGF's, SB2C's, TBF's, and a handful of Howard DGA15's, Staggerwings, Wigeons, PV-1's, and SNJ's. The "J" Line Chief was George Kuntz of Patchoge, L.I., and Nick Barzetti (now an A&P) & myself were under George! Nick was from New Caanan, Conn., and if any of you Stardusters know either one of these two fine men, please let "Crash" know! They both maintained the planes of the Tight Pussy Squadron!

It was while at "C.A.S.U. #28 that the Instrument Training Squadron adopted several cats. We all brought in all the cats we could find to keep mice and rats out of the area. We then became known as the "Pussy Squadron" and later, because of the "Blind" flying or instrument flying specialized in there, the "Blind Pussy", i.e. "blind drunk, or tight", and then the "Tight Pussy Squadron"! The name stuck and became official and we had a Squadron insignia approved by the C.O., base Commander, Captain of the station, and Commander Fleet Air Wing 2 at Quonset Point, R-1, plus a Squadron Insignia worn on the jackets of the men in the squadron!

This is all WW-II history now and although little known, is as authentic as Eddie Rickenbackers WW-II Hat in the Ring Squadron Insignia!

So--Pardner! When you speak about Tight Pussy Squadrons and "All that Crap" better be DAMN SURE you know what the Hell you're talking about, or you may have not only "Crash" who didn't think any part of World War II was funny for the whole 3 years, 7½ months he was in it! You may also have the whole "Tight Pussy Squadron" trying to shoot you down! We may be old, but we're not dead!

As far as the "Air Raid Wardon" card, try going into the Military Service for several years during a war and let's see if you can eliminate any reference to sex!

I can see you now walking out to your B-17 and hiding your eyes as you walk past the naked lady painted on the nose of the ship!

What do you do at Oshkosh, Wis., every year? Refuse to look at the "Warbirds" because some of the painted insignias have a gal with bare boobs? Yes, my friend, if I may call you that, you might do better rather than criticize, either enjoy the volunteer articles of "Crash" or perhaps build the airplane without the articles or better yet, write the articles yourself!

By the way, "Sourpuss", just what ARE your credentials in Round-Power Bi-planes, anyway? Yeah! Just what I thought! Still have a lot to learn! Like the rest of us! "Crash", too. None of us stop learning.

Could we have a response from you and see how you explain your way out of your obvious? A simple apology would suffice!

P.S.--"Upset Starduster" be sure to watch for the official WW-II "Tight Pussy Squadron" insignia soon to go on sale! Betcha end up buyin' one! Next time you'll know which is the "Crap". Ha-ha! C.

P.S. #2 Did you write a nasty note to "Pussy Galore" in "Goldfinger", too?

Bill,

14 years of part time work & week end work (relaxation) produced the Starduster Too shown on the enclosed picture. The full size sliding canopy & turtledeck are the only changes made. Everything else is "standard" Starduster: except upholstery & electronics: equipped as follows:

Hartzell constant speed prop

Full Gyro panel-NAV & dual strobe lights-lighted panel w/rheostat-720 channel radio w/omni-transponder w/excoding altimeter-Stits process finished w/Stits Aerothane-adjustable cowl flap w/pressure cowl-cabin heat & all them good things-comes to 1372 lbs. but still climbs 1900 ft. per minute.

I want to compliment Stolp Starduster for prompt service during the last 14 years. Don't remember a single time that you were out of anything I needed. I do remember numerous times when you shipped the same day I ordered & I received the order within two days by blue label. This kind of service resulted in my ordering more than 90% of my Starduster from the proper place (Stolp, of course).

I seriously thank you for the time you spent over the past years answering all of my "How to" calls & other questions a Novice airplane builder can think of.

Thanks,
Bob Wyse

P.S.

Been offered \$45,000 for my bird; told that gentleman that amount would just about make a down payment!



In the fall of 1917, when pioneer airman Bob Copsey arrived at Kelly Field, the pilot training program of the Signal Corps's Aeronautical Division was a marvel of casualness. There were no flight manuals, proficiency checks, ground school, or formal curriculum. Before mounting a JN-4 "Jenny" (cost \$5,500), it was standard procedure to.....

HAND YOUR SPURS TO THE CREW CHIEF

By James R. Patterson

If America's early aircraft had been flown with reins instead of a control stick, Maj. Gen. Robert L. Copsey, USAF (Ret.), would not have been surprised. Sixty years ago, when he learned to fly at Kelly Field, Tex., the influence of the cavalry was almost that pervasive.

"We reported to the flight line wearing riding boots, spurs, and a campaign hat," General Copsey recalls. "And we were instructed to mount the aircraft from the left side, as all horsemen are taught to do."

After it had been convincingly demonstrated that hats blew off, and spurs interfered with operating the rudders, the dress order was relaxed. The spurs could be handed to the crew chief (a master electrician in the Signal Corps) just prior to flying.

Now retired in Colorado Springs, General Copsey is trim and vigorous at eighty-one years of age, and enjoying a unique status among the many active-duty and retired military pilots in this area. As a founder-member of the Order of Daedalians, and honorary captain of the local flight of that fraternity of pilots, the General has been a frequent luncheon and dinner speaker. Military personnel trained in the administrative and operational procedures of today's Air Force are astounded at how casually it all began.

"I was a junior at Nebraska University in 1916," the General relates, "when a recruiting officer came to the school offering the top athletes applications to an officer-training camp at Fort Snelling, Minn. I was a second-string tackle and was left out."

Although the United States was not yet at war with Germany the bands were playing and a martial spirit was sweeping the campuses. Bob Copsey fumed on the sidelines, as luckier college heroes marched off to Snelling with hugs, kisses, and tearful farewells from the Nebraska coeds.

It was too much for the second-string tackle. Copsey, with two Kappa Sigma fraternity brothers, Charles Keyes and Wob Ralston, took off from the university for the nearest Army recruiting office in Omaha.

Snafu, World War I Style

"The recruiting officer seemed to be a little impressed that we were college boys," the General said, "and told us the Signal Corps was looking for some men. He wanted to know if we had any mechanical ability. I said I was a medical student but owned a motorcycle. We were asked to read an eye chart, and then put in a barber chair and spun around."

The significance of the whirl in the barber chair as an early-day test of flying aptitude entirely escaped the young recruits. They were sworn in and told to return to Lincoln to await orders.

"A few days later, I got a postal card from the War Department," General Copsey said. "On the card were instructions to present it to the local railroad station agent for transportation to Austin, Tex., and there I

should report to the dean of the University of Texas. That was all. I figured I would at least get a ride to Austin!"

After Copsey surrendered the card for a railroad ticket, he had no written orders, identification, or any idea of what might be his ultimate assignment. In Kansas City, on the way south, he encountered another confused young man, Guy Rudd, also a recruit ordered to report to the Texas University. Arriving in Austin, they learned that the dean's office knew nothing about any Army program.

Undisturbed by this reception, Copsey took his new friend and sought out the Texas chapter house of his fraternity. Made welcome by the brothers, the two enjoyed bed and board until they could determine how they were to start their military careers. Two or three days later, they heard an Army sergeant was on the campus, who--after they found him--referred them to a newly commissioned lieutenant and former history professor named Pennybacker.

Lieutenant Pennybacker accepted their story that they were Army recruits and told them he would try to find out where they were supposed to go. Meanwhile, the sergeant would teach them some drill, and they could start learning the Morse code. Copsey and Rudd were not much impressed by the professor, but they admired his new uniform. After some prodding, Pennybacker disclosed the name of the Austin store where he had bought it. They hurried down to outfit themselves.

"We felt real proud in our new uniforms," the General related, "but as soon as the sergeant saw us he said we would have to take off the officer's braid and the lieutenant's bars. That didn't bother us much, as hardly anyone knew the difference anyway."

Copsey and Rudd might have been content to remain as the glamour boys of the university campus had not orders finally filtered through after they had been at the school for about two weeks. They were instructed to report to South San Antonio, but to whom or for what was not made clear.

"I recall we wandered into a camp where there were a lot of tents," the General said. "The only thing we found out was that we didn't belong there, but someone lent us a couple of mess kits so we could eat, and assigned us cots for the night."

"The next day we learned that we were supposed to be at Kelly Field, which was just across the road from the camp. We saw four or five airplanes parked in front of a hangar, and a little later we were told we were going to be taught to fly. Rudd and I were dumbfounded. It had never entered our minds that we were going to be made to get in one of those spruce and fabric-covered flying coffins. All I had wanted to be sure of when I enlisted was that I didn't get in the Navy."

"That night Rudd and I talked it over. I said, 'To hell with it; I'm going home.' Rudd said he was ready to go, too. And then some fellows came in our tent and told us if we left we would be shot as deserters. We had second thoughts then. We decided we shouldn't disgrace our parents by being shot as deserters, so we might as well stat and get killed in an airplane."

UPT (Unorganized Pilot Training)

At this point in our conversation, General Copsey reached for a battered, leather-bound logbook and flipped the yellowed pages back to the first entry. There it was; his first flight, on November 7, 1917, at Kelly Field. His instructor had been Earl Hoag, who was later to become a major general; the aircraft, a Curtiss JN-4A, popularly known as the "Jenny".

"I remember, when I reported to the flight line, telling Hoag I wasn't interested in learning to fly, but Hoag just told me to shut up and climb in the rear cockpit. I got in and scrunched way down in the seat so I couldn't see out. I never knew when we left the ground. We made several takeoffs and landings before I finally got up the nerve to look out."

"Somewhere along the line, I sort of got an idea of what we were doing. There was no voice communication between instructor and student while in the airplane. We had only hand signals. And, of course, no parachutes." The

General paused to glance at his logbook again before continuing. "Yes. There it is. I had seven hours of flying time on December 4, 1917, when I soloed. I won't ever forget it.

"Hoag stopped the airplane and got out. 'Take it around,' he said. I thought to myself, 'You SOB! I don't know how to fly this thing, and I'll kill myself.'

"I took off and made three landings. I don't know how I did it, but I marveled that I was still there. After that flying was in my blood."

A flying student, after soloing was pretty much on his own. There was no specified course of instruction, and there were no proficiency checks, flight manuals, or ground school. Winning your wings was to some extent a matter of survival.

On January 18, 1918, with a total of forty hours and twenty-three minutes in his logbook, Copsey was awarded the aeronautical rating of "bomber pilot." The next day he started instructing students himself, and ten days later was commissioned a first lieutenant (contrary to the later practice of making graduating aviation cadets second lieutenants) in the US Army Signal Corps.

With no precedents to follow--least of all regulations--the instructors gradually developed the general outline of a training program. The student pilot was taught through the solo stage, then allowed ten to fifteen hours to sharpen his skill. After that, he was given a few hours of dual instruction in recovery from intentional spins, and such elementary aerobatics as wing-overs and loops. With the completion of three cross-country flights, each an hour to an hour and a half in duration, his training at Kelly Field was finished. Although he had no tactical training, and only thirty to forty hours in his logbook, he was considered ready to be sent to France for his first gunnery practice, and then combat.

Crashes and Dust-offs

Meanwhile, an "advanced" version of the Jenny had arrived at Kelly with such new features as a control stick instead of a wheel, and a more powerful engine.

"It was the JN4-D, and we considered it quite an improvement over the earlier model," General Copsey related. "It had an OX-5 engine developing ninety horsepower. Top speed was seventy-five to eighty miles an hour, and it landed at fifty-five to sixty. The only flight instruments were a tachometer, an altimeter, and an oil pressure gauge. We also had a little compass we strapped to our thighs, but it was almost worthless.

"To fly level we sighted the engine radiator cap on the horizon. For maximum climb we aimed the radiator cap six degrees above the horizon. We judged airspeed in landing by the feel of the controls and the singing of the bracing wires on the struts.

"The aircraft were maintained by Signal Corps master electricians, which was not as crazy as it sounds. Nobody else around knew anything about airplanes, and there was a lot of trouble with the magnetos on the engines. Besides, the electricians learned very quickly and became damn good. It was probably the first example of on-the-job training in the military."

Nevertheless, accidents were frequent. General Copsey estimates (no records were kept) that there were at least two crashes a week, with half of them fatal to the occupants of the aircraft. Engine failures and involuntary spins were primary causes of such disasters, as airmen learned largely from trial and error.

"I have seen it stated," General Copsey said, "that in World War I more American pilots were killed in training accidents than in combat. The prospect of being killed at Kelly was certainly very real to both students and instructors--so much so that we developed a philosophy of resigning ourselves to what probably was the inevitable."

The young instructor-pilot himself survived a crash that easily could have proven fatal. It happened on December 4, 1918, the first anniversary

of the day he soloed.

"I was leading a flight of three JN-4Ds down to Alice, Tex., for a Liberty Loan rally," the General related. "When we got there a big crowd had assembled at a field just outside town. Airplanes at that time were still a rare sight and drew large crowds.

"I wanted to give them a good show, so I came in downwind over the field, rolled the aircraft on its back and split-essed down for a landing. But I had too much airspeed to set it down, and found myself too low to pull up in time to miss some high-tension wires at the end of the field. The Jenny was a complete wreck, but I didn't get a scratch."

Lieutenant Copsey did, however, get a physical examination following the crash. He had amassed almost 600 hours flying time, which then was the highest accumulated by anyone in the Army. He was not grounded, but was taken off instructional duty and made an engineering officer, which required him to inspect but only to test-fly aircraft.

By that time, with the war over Kelly Field was winding down. At the peak of operations the flying facility had about eighty airplanes and some 200 students in training, as General Copsey remembers it. His biggest disappointment had been not getting to France. He had seen students he had taught become aces while he was held to the grinding routine of flying school.

Copsey not only had pleaded repeatedly for a combat assignment, but he and another frustrated instructor had taken a desperate measure toward that end. One day when there was a spectacular artillery parade scheduled at nearby Fort Sam Houston, with many high-ranking officers attending, Copsey and his friend saw their chance. Each took an airplane and dove it low over the parade ground just at the height of the ceremonies. Hats went flying, the horses stampeded, and clouds of dust rose from the field.

Only the excellent records of the two pilots saved them from a general court-martial, but their worst punishment was that they failed to receive the expected banishment to an overseas combat assignment.

From Barnstormer to the Stars

Copsey was released from active duty late in January 1919. A few days later, he bought a war-surplus Jenny and started barnstorming around the Middle West. There was no thought of returning to college and completing his formal education. What could compare with the life of the free-lance flyer? In season, he followed the country-fair circuit, performing in front of the grandstand, and then landing on the infield of the racetrack to give passengers rides at \$15 a head. At other times, he flew from town to town selling rides.

"You flew in over the center of town and circled until the people ran out in the streets to see you," the General said. "Then you headed for a nearby pasture or field. A few minutes after you landed you had a crowd. The farmer who owned the land never asked for any money for its use. He was always too proud and excited that you had chosen his property, but sometimes I would give him a free ride if I had caused quite a bit of crop damage."

When the Bureau of Air Commerce (predecessor to the CAA and the FAA) was established in 1926, Copsey saw it as the end of an era and gave up barnstorming to become an inspector for the new agency. He was acting in that capacity in May 1927 when Charles A. Lindbergh was preparing to take off from Roosevelt Field for Paris.

"I tried to talk him out of it," he recalls, smiling wryly. "I told him he would never make it."

In 1928, Copsey became the first manager of the Newark, N.J., airport, and later was appointed Commissioner of Aviation for the State of New Jersey. He continued as an active pilot, flying such notables as Will Rogers and President Herbert Hoover. He also maintained his military flight proficiency as an officer in the New Jersey National Guard.

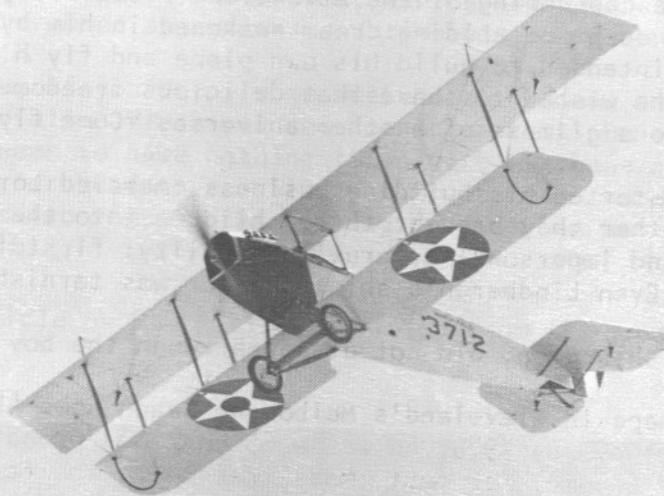
Recalled to active duty in 1942 as a lieutenant colonel, he was made commanding officer of Baer Field at Fort Wayne, Ind., and subsequently

commander of the 1st Troop Carrier Command with headquarters in Indianapolis. Despite his vast experience as a pilot, an overseas assignment again eluded him. In 1950 he was made head of the Office of Reserve Affairs at US Air Force Headquarters in the Pentagon, a position he held until retirement in 1955.

Now General Copsey is content to enjoy the thrill of driving a golf ball flying down the fairway instead of an airplane down the runway. Often when he plays, the contrails of high-flying jets lace the sky above Colorado Springs. The General is well aware that a new breed of airman is up there, in pressurized cockpits, surrounded by a galaxy of instruments, warning lights, and switches.

"It makes me a little sad," the aviation pioneer muses, "to see the evolution of pilots from individualists into today's highly disciplined and controlled monitors of electronic devices. I have the greatest respect for their ability, but they will never know the freedom that was so precious to the men who flew the Jennies."

(This article reprinted from AIR FORCE Magazine/Sept. 1977)



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The dream in Cleveland

72-year-old flying high on life and love

Look back, if you can, and try to understand how the act of one man moved minds.

In the spring of '27, something bright and alien flashed across the sky. A young Minnesotan who seemed to have had nothing to do with his generation did a heroic thing, and for a moment people set down their glasses in country clubs and speakeasies and thought of their old best dreams.

One of those whose life was forever changed by that bright and alien act of Charles Lindbergh's, as F. Scott Fitzgerald put it, was Orson Cleveland, then a 16-year-old boy who was not frequenting speakeasies and country clubs, but living in the heartland that had produced Lindbergh--precisely, Michigan.

Cleveland had taken his first ride in a plane in 1918, and he would take flying lessons after Lindbergh's conquering of the Atlantic--"Practically the next day," he chuckled. But a most deep and abiding dream awakened in him by Lindbergh was that one day, Cleveland intended to build his own plane and fly his own plane and look at those with whom he wished to share that delicious freedom and say, as if he were offering a precious glimpse of another universe, "Come fly with me." He had to wait.

Instead, Cleveland started his building business, married Lorraine Beach on Sept. 16, 1933, and together they brought three children into the world during times dreams were made tired and impersonal by grueling reality: first the Great Depression and then World War II. Even Lindbergh's shining armor was tarnished in the confusion of a hard-bitten era.

But the boyhood in this dream did not disappear when the boy became first a man, and then an older man.

It began to take shape in Cleveland's Melbourne Beach home 48 years after it had taken shape in his mind. By 1975, he was a 65-year-old grandfather, Lindbergh was gone, and flight had become, for most, mass transportation rather than individual adventure, a means of going places rather than knowing places.

"I simply reached the point where I had to do it," Cleveland said. "When they ask mountain climbers why they climb, they say, 'Because it's there.' I think it's probably the same feeling. It had to be built."

It took Cleveland nearly four years to build his own plane and to fly his own plane, which is a Starduster Too tail-dragging biplane. When he finished, he was a 69-year-old great-grandfather and the owner of a \$17,000 gem of a biplane.

And there was no doubt that this, his ultimate toy, was the plane of his life. He had owned others, he had flown others, but this one was truly his.

"I am not a sentimental man," he said after he first flew the plane, "but when I got this to 3,000 feet for the first time and leveled off I started shouting and bawling. To think I was able to put this together..."

In the four years since Cleveland finished building the Starduster Too, he has made splendid routine of taking it up in the air every Saturday or Sunday, weather permitting. His Starduster is a sport aircraft, which means he is able, in his biplane, to whirl the world about his head, performing stunts like loops and rolls. And he usually manages to fly over his house with a tip of the wing in hello.

Last Friday--which was Sept. 16, 1983--Cleveland deviated from the weekend routine in honor of his 50th wedding anniversary. He took Lorraine, who had been greeted at their Melbourne hangar with a large bouquet of flowers from one of the men in the tower, for a spin.

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He said, "Come fly with me." She said yes.

They donned snug-fitting canvas helmets--"I don't like to wear that helmet," Lorraine said, "it messes up my hair"--and climbed into the twin, open-air cockpits of the Starduster Too. A plaque on the dash of the cockpit reads simply, "Orson Cleveland. Builder and Pilot."

Off they went, as it is said, into the wild blue yonder and celebrated together in the skies over Sebastion Inlet and the Atlantic Ocean.

A few times he hit a switch in the plane and their wake was marked by a joyful plume of smoke.

A reedy voice, singing a song, broke through the busy crackling of radio static. It was Cleveland, and he was singing to his wife:

"Put on your old gray bonnet
"with the blue ribbons on it,
"Hitch old dobbin to the shay.
"Through the fields of clover
"We'll fly up to Dover
"On our golden wedding day."

When they landed, 72-year-old Orson Cleveland scooped 73-year-old Lorraine into his arms and planted a victor's kiss on her smiling mouth.

He didn't conquer the Atlantic, he didn't change history, he didn't move continents.

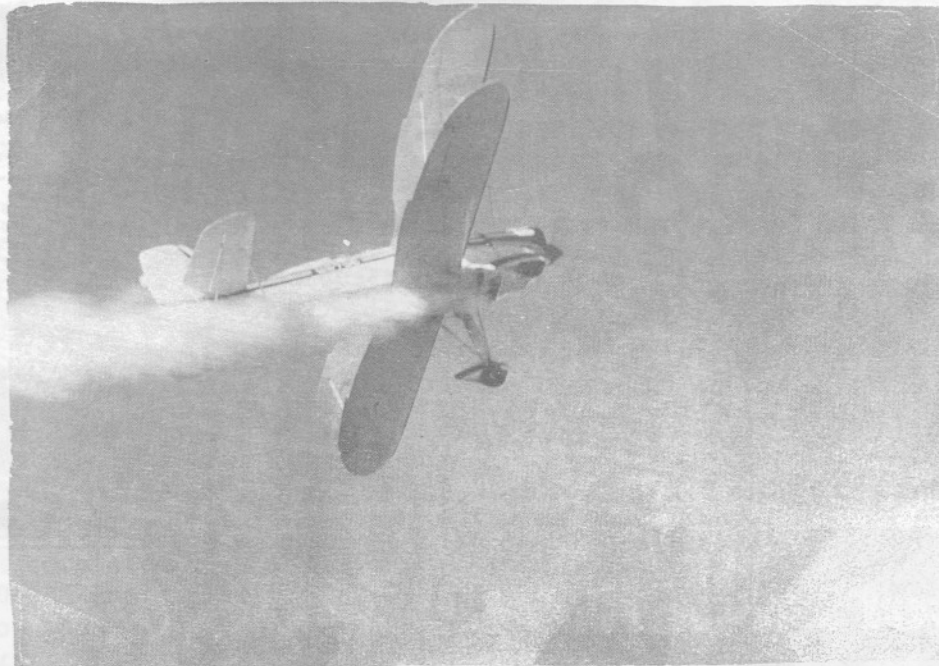
But there is something heroic in a love that lasts a lifetime, and raising and feeding a family to the best of your ability, and building a business and making your own money, and, in realizing your dreams, expressing the best within yourself, a best that lies within everyone: an ageless and timeless commitment to the exploration of being alive.

Look above you, if you dare, some weekend afternoon.

The bright and alien flash you see roaring across the sky might be Orson Cleveland, an older man who seems to have nothing to do with his generation or yours.

And, lifting your head to see him, you might hear the echoes of your own old best dreams, and rediscover, in the beating of your own heart, the challenge that everything is possible.

(This article by Pam Platt, reprinted from the newspaper Today)



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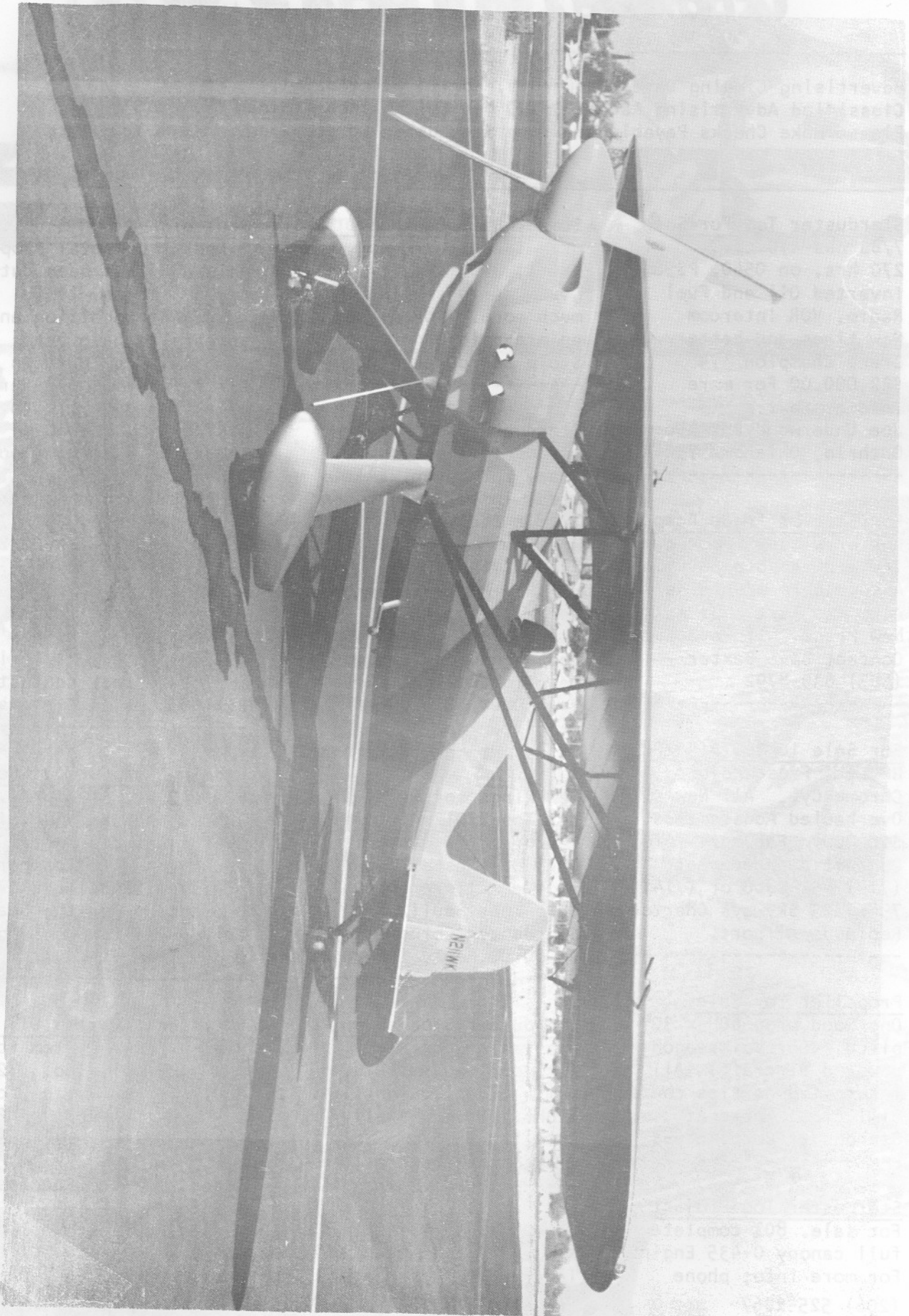
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