

Just before take off at Yosemite National Park, July 14, 1921. From left, Jiocondos Jacuzzi, John Kauke, Duncan McLeish and Harold "Bud" Coffee. Caption from MODESTO HERALD, Saturday July 16, 1921:

Last Photograph of Four Aviators Killed at Modesto, and Ill-fated Machine.

(Herrington-Olson photo)



THE JACUZZI BROTHERS MONOPLANE

By ERNEST L. TRUE

The Jacuzzi brothers of Berkeley, California, began their aviation endeavors by turning out propellers for the United States government during World War I. Following the war, and without a sufficient market for propellers, they branched out into airplane repair and rebuilding. In 1920, they decided to enter aircraft manufacturing, designing and building the Jacuzzi single-seater. Powered with a "souped-up" Model "T" engine, this airplane was built on a smaller scale of a larger aircraft that the brothers had in mind. The single-seater proved that the design was aerodynamically sound and work was started on the larger version.

During February 1921, the Jacuzzi brothers publicly announced that they would begin an aerial passenger service between San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond and Sacramento. In April 1921, the seven-passenger monoplane was completed and test flown by Mike Brown. (Brown had been a civilian instructor at Mather Field, Sacramento, California, during World War I.) From a Jacuzzi Company brochure, there appears this statement:

"This new design is now recorded in the history of aviation as the first totally enclosed cabin, high-wing monoplane to be designed and built in America."

Twenty-nine feet long, with a 52 foot wing span and a 200 horse power Hall-Scott L-6 engine, the monoplane was based and flown from Durant Field in Oakland. In April 1921, Mike Brown flew Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Caldwell, of San Francisco, over the Sierra Nevada Mountains and into Reno, Nevada. From the *Gridley Herald* of April 18, 1921:

LOST AIRPLANE LANDS AT FRIESLEY FIELD

The Jacuzzi brothers' monoplane landed here after becoming lost during a snow storm over the Sierra Nevada Mountains and circling over the Upper Sacramento River Valley fog for nearly three hours. Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Caldwell, with pilot Mike Brown, left Reno at 7:00 a.m. after a successful flight there from San Francisco. With their fuel nearly depleted and suffering from the cold and dampness, they finally located Friesley Field and landed. After refueling both the airplane and human body, they resumed their flight to San Francisco.



Although this finished the Jacuzzi brothers in the field of aviation, there is an addition to the tragic ending. Found in the wreckage during the investigation was an intact camera containing exposed film. Processing of this film brought forth some of the finest photographs ever taken of the Jacuzzi monoplane.

The negatives are now in the possession of:

Herrington-Olson Photography
769 22nd Street
Oakland, California 94612

Negative numbers are: 10-17513, 10-17514, 10-17515, 10-17516 and 10-17517.

See also: Friesley Field. American Aviation Historical Society *Journal*, Summer 1965. Volume 10, No. 2, "The Friesley Falcon"

Jacuzzi Monoplane at Friesley Field on return trip from Reno, Nevada. Upper photo shows original rudder configuration. (Author photo)

Performance figures on this flight indicated an average speed of 90 miles per hour. This did not please the brothers and there followed a period of carefully calculated improvements. Lightening the monoplane was one of the major undertakings and this included such details as hollowing out the steel bolts that held the wing struts to the landing gear assembly.

On July 12, 1921, pilot Harold "Bud" Coffee of Modesto, California; Jicondos Jacuzzi, president of the company; Duncan McLeish, company attorney; and John Kauke, a friend, left Durant Field for a flight into Yosemite National Park. Flight speed into the park averaged 105 miles per hour and the modifications were outwardly satisfactory. The four men left the valley early on the morning of July 14 and headed for Oakland. Flying over Coffee's hometown of Modesto, they paused to circle the town. From eye-witness accounts as reported in the *Modesto Herald*, there was a loud snap and the left wing strut was seen to fall away from the landing gear assembly. Flopping momentarily, it quickly caused the left wing to collapse and the airplane plunged to earth from 2,000 feet. There were no survivors.

An investigation of the crash was conducted by Major F. S. Gullet and Engineer F. G. Hackett, both from Mather Field, Sacramento. Their investigation showed that the hollowed out bolt securing the left wing strut to the landing gear assembly had sheared off. This report was published in the *Modesto Herald* July 16, 1921.



Jacuzzi Monoplane undergoing alterations after Reno flight. Entirely new rudder. (Herrington-Olson #10-17515.



Jacuzzi Monoplane at Durant Field. Still a different rudder. (Herrington-Olson #10-12848)



Presumably same as above. (Herrington-Olson #10-17514)



Single seat Jacuzzi Monoplane. (Addendum): Certainly a need for additional information on this single seater. (Author photo)