

HISTORICAL VIGNETTE

by

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George Marshall of San Francisco was one of the students taught by Early Bird Harry P. Christofferson to fly. This student flyer was a great admirer, and well may he be, of the daring Lincoln Beachey. In fact he wore a cap similar to that worn by Beachey on many occasions. This admiration may have been carried to extremes so it seems.

After Beachey had his monoplane built by Warren Eaton, he changed his style of headgear. This consisted of a red knitted cap that was a combination cap and snood. It was knitted by Beachey's mother and worn by the great flyer on the test flights of the monoplane he was later killed in. However, a couple of days before his final flight, Lincoln Beachey hung the red snood-cap on the wall of Harry Christofferson's hangar at the S. F. Beach. Beachey was killed the following Sunday but the red snood-cap was not disturbed.

However, George Marshall, apparently in a mood of hero worship took the red snood-cap and used it on ensuing flights. By this time George Marshall was a competent flyer and was seeking his place in the world of aviation. He read in the newspapers the plea of the Mexican bandit leader, Francisco Villa, for mercenary aviators to fly in the rebel army. He promised payment in gold. The lure of gold and aviation captured the imagination of George Marshall. He forthwith journeyed to the hills of Chihuahua and talked the proposition over with the rebel chieftain and members of his staff.

The only available flying equipment was an old and decrepit Curtiss pusher biplane. Marshall was warned that the airplane was not in good condition but it could be flown. He made the bargain to fly the plane with the rebel chieftain. He had the airplane warmed up and taxied to an improvised cleared area in the desert. He warmed the engine then took off. Just as the plane started to rise in the air, the engine sputtered and died. Marshall started to nose down. However, he was not able to do so, and the plane stalled into the ground at high speed, and rolled uncontrolled into the only barnlike structure or building in the whole area. Marshall was killed from the impact as the engine tore loose and impaled him against the building wall.

Ironically, he died of a brain concussion. The red snood-cap was on his head as he took off. Thus died George Marshall early flyer in the deserts of Chihuahua. He was warned as he took that cap off the wall by Harry Christofferson that the red cap was a jinx to Beachey and would likewise be a jinx to him. The jinx proved true.