

HAROLD E. MOREHOUSE *

FLYING PIONEERS OF AVIATION

HARRY N. ATWOOD (1877-)

Harry N. Atwood was born in Boston in 1877. He entered the Wright School at Simms Station, Dayton, Ohio, in early May, 1911 and was taught by Cliff Turpin and Frank Coffyn. After 18 lessons he joined the Burgess Co., Marblehead, Mass. on May 29, as an instructor and company pilot demonstrating new planes. He flew in his first local meet at Metz Field during June 15-20, 1911.

The Burgess Company's students at that time were: A. A. Merrill, Dr. Percy L. Reynolds and Eugene Heth. Atwood started at once specializing in cross-country flights, first around Boston and vicinity. On June 20, 1911, he flew from Boston to Pittsfield, N.H., 137 miles, carrying newspaper reporter Phillips W. Page, who later became a renowned pilot.

On June 30 Atwood flew from Boston to New London Conn. to attend the Harvard-Yale rowing regatta. He then decided to fly on to New York, which he did on July 1st, landing enroute at Astoria, L.I. for gas and directions. From there he flew over Manhattan and circled the Singer Bldg. and then around the Statue of Liberty, landing at Governors Island. This was the FIRST flight ever made "over" New York City. At that time he had been flying about a month and was 28 years old. Burgess met him in New York and gave him a check for \$1,000 as a surprise.

From New York he decided to go on to Atlantic City, N. J., arriving on July 4, 1911. While in Atlantic City he met Charles K. Hamilton, another pioneer aviator, and Atwood invited Hamilton to fly to Washington with him by way of Baltimore. They landed at College Park, Md. July 11. The week

*Mr. Morehouse began this series in the Summer 1959 (Vol. 4, No. 2) issue of the Journal. Biographies presented so far include: W. Brookins, A. Hoxsey, A. L. Welsh, Du Val La Chapelle, R. Johnston, F. T. Coffyn, Max T. Lillie, C. P. Rodgers, Andrew Drew, J. C. Turpin, O. A. Brindley, H. M. Rinehart, P. O. Parmelee, L. W. Bonney, H. W. Gill, G. W. Beatty, and Katherine Stinson.

of July 15 he was the "aviation attraction" of Washington and vicinity, as he flew down Pennsylvania Ave., circled the Washington Monument and the Capitol Dome. On July 14th he flew from College Park and landed on the south lawn of the White House and there paid his respects to President Taft. While in College Park he demonstrated a new Burgess Plane to the Army men at College Park. Total mileage on this trip was about 460 miles.

On July 12th Atwood announced his intention to attempt a flight from Chicago to New York, and at College Park he flew for his Pilot License, No. 33, dated July 13, 1911. On August 14, 1911 he started from St. Louis, Mo. on his way to New York, stopping first at Springfield, Ill. and then at the Chicago Meet, which was in progress, at Grant Park, Chicago, Ill. On August 15 he flew on to Toledo, Ohio, making one stop at Elkhart, Ind. From Toledo he flew to Cleveland, Erie, Buffalo, Auburn and Nyack, N.Y. where it was necessary to replace two engine bearings. From there he flew to Governor's Island where he landed on August 25. This flight set up a new world's distance record and was made with the same plane he used in the Boston-to-Washington, D. C. flight. No passengers were carried and he merely had a suitcase of clean clothing and a small tool roll. No serious trouble was experienced throughout the trip except the bearings replacement. He earned approximately \$5,000 for this trip and was awarded two Medals of Merit. This flight was 1266 miles and his daily flying average was about 105 miles.

In December, 1911, Atwood left the Burgess Co. to become chief instructor and pilot for the newly formed Clayton and Craig Flying School of Boston. The school used flying grounds at Saugus, Mass. for both land and water planes. On December 21 he flew from Saugus to Providence, R.I., 110 miles in two hours, forty minutes. In 1911 he became known as "The King of the Air" and flew approximately 5000 miles cross country, gaining great renown for himself.

In 1912 Atwood continued to fly for Clayton and Craig, instructing, carrying passengers, exhibition engagements and cross country, flying in and about the New England States.

In 1913 he left the Boston area and settled in Sandusky, Ohio, where he conducted passenger hydro-aeroplane flying and cross country jaunts to Toledo, Lorain and other nearby Lake Erie points. He also formed a company and built an experimental flying boat having two pusher propellers driven from a single Curtiss OX engine in the hull. That year he carried passengers from Sandusky to Put-in Bay and made a flight across Lake Erie to Canada and return in his Burgess Hydro. Later that fall he moved his operations to Toledo, Ohio, where he was sponsored by the Toledo Railways and Light Co. There he installed a new Wright 6 cyl. engine in his plane which improved its performance for off-water flying. That fall Atwood did considerable flight testing of the new Wright Airboat for the Wright Co., and in the spring of 1914 he bought one for his own use that season at Toledo. In May, 1914, he did some

test flying of Wright Airboats for the Navy on delivery from the Wright Co. On June 1, 1914 he flew his Airboat from Toledo to Detroit where he spent a few days carrying passengers and demonstrating it to members of The Detroit Yacht Club. He returned to Toledo on June 6. Earl Utter, who later became a pilot, was his assistant and mechanic at Toledo.

After 1914 Atwood apparently gave up active flying and turned promoter, forming companies to build both planes and engines, none of which ever succeeded beyond the experimental stage. In May of 1917 he offered his services to his country as a civilian flight instructor and was first assigned to a field at Wilmington, Del. which was established by the DuPonts and the Roskobs for both land and water flying. He continued to serve throughout the World War I period, but it is not known whether he was commissioned.

Following the World War Harry Atwood dropped from public notice. He was a great pioneer and a very active pilot who contributed very much to the development of early aviation by his wonderful flights and energetic activity. He trained many early and renowned pilots.

ARCH FREEMAN (-1918)

Arch Freeman was from Flushing, Long Island, and had been in vaudeville before entering aviation. As a guest, he was a passenger on several flights made by Al Welsh and O. G. Simmons at a private flying exhibition given at "REST HILL," the country estate of Robert Collier at Wickatunk, N.J., on October 14-16, 1911. As a result he became interested in flying and started instructions on a Wright at the Wright School at Nassau Boulevard, L.I., in late October. He was taught by Al Welsh, Wright Company instructor, and obtained Pilot License No. 83, dated January 10, 1912, at Dayton, Ohio.

Freeman started flying for Harry Atwood in Boston during the early spring of 1912, and on May 20 made an extended flight over Boston Harbor, circling Fort Heath, the battleships Rhode Island and New Jersey at anchor, and dropped toy bombs during a military demonstration.

During the spring and early summer months, he was an assistant instructor at the Clayton and Craig Flying School, working with Chief Instructor Harry N. Atwood, and also flew exhibitions occasionally at New England points. That fall he began to fly in exhibitions on his own, flying at Newark, Ohio, on October 2nd and carrying passengers. October 11th he flew at Suffolk, Va. Later that month he made daily passenger flights as an attraction at Riverview Park, Louisville, Ky.

In 1913 Freeman was an instructor for the Wright Company at Mineola, Long Island. Through 1914 he continued as an instructor and did occasional exhibition flying for the Wright Company. He was retained as an instructor at Mineola, L.I., in the spring of 1915 after the Wright interests were sold

did some demonstrating and test flying for the Wright Co. at their winter quarters at Atlanta, Ga. The airplanes tested included the small Army Speed Scout. That summer he left the Wright Co. and bought a Wright plane, and in early August established himself at Cicero Field, Chicago, carrying passengers and doing cross-country taxi flying. Here he remained for the rest of the season.

Kabitski apparently gave up flying after the 1913 season closed, and became associated with the Moon Machine and Electric Works, Chicago, where he remained for several years.

He was a member of the Early Birds, a pioneer airman, and died in 1944. His name appears on the Wright Memorial Plaque at Dayton along with the others who learned to fly there.

DeLLOYD THOMPSON (-1949)

DeLloyd Thompson was from Washington, Pa., and an auto race driver before taking up flying. He became interested in flying when Walter Brookins flew at his home town October 3-7, 1910. When Brookins started to give instructions for the Pioneer Aircraft Co. in St. Louis, in early September, 1911, Thompson signed up for a course and made his first solo flight there during October. Shortly after, he flew his first public exhibition flight at his home town.

About the first of May, 1912, he joined Max Lillie's organization at Cicero Field, Chicago, Ill., and here Lillie gave him some additional instruction in preparation for his license tests. He obtained License No. 134, dated June 19, 1912, on a Lillie Wright. On July 6, 1912, he was made an assistant instructor of the Lillie School at Cicero. He had an accident while flying an exhibition at Hopkinsville, Ky. on July 25 for Lillie, but was unhurt. During August he continued flying as instructor for Lillie at Cicero and commenced practicing for his Expert License test, obtaining Expert Pilot License No. 8, on October 8, 1912. On August 24 he started flying a French Nieuport Monoplane, with a 50 Gnome engine, owned by Lillie and fitted with Wright controls. He flew in his first Air Meet at Cicero September 12-21, 1912, where he entered all major events and made a good showing against veteran pilots.

On October 7, 1912 Lillie took the Chicago agency for and got delivery of a new Day Tractor, made by Chas. Day, of Los Angeles, California, and Thompson began flying it at once. On October 12 he flew to Aurora, Ill., and back, 64 miles, to fly an exhibition there. October 22nd he filled an exhibition date at Pontiac, Mich., using the Day Tractor. He continued teaching at Cicero until November 9th, when the school moved to Kinloch Field, St. Louis, where it operated until December 14th. The school then went south to Ft. Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, for the winter months.

Early in January, 1913, Thompson and Andrew Drew started operations

to an eastern group. In 1916 he became associated with Howard Rinehart in a private aviation enterprise owned by E. A. Deeds and C. F. Kettering on the site which later became McCook Field, near Dayton, Ohio. There he assisted in the training of a number of students, including many Canadians sent there under contract with the U. S. Government.

When the Dayton-Wright Co. was formed in April, 1917, he became a member of their staff of pilots who did test, demonstration, and acceptance flights on World War I planes. He did a considerable amount of flying at the various government training fields on acceptance tests of the Dayton-Wright built Standard T-1 training planes during 1917. In the late fall and winter months of 1917-1918 he began test flying the first Dayton-Wright built DH-4 aeroplanes with Liberty engines. After production started on these, early in 1918, he became a member of the staff of acceptance pilots flying new aeroplanes as they came out of the factory. On June 27, 1918, while taking off with a new DH on its first flight, he crashed, sustained fatal injuries and lived only a few minutes, dying in the ambulance on the way to the Hospital. He was buried at Flushing, Long Island. He had been married only four weeks before the accident.

A small, slightly built fellow, with a quiet soft-spoken, pleasing personality, and an ever-cheerful disposition, he was loved and respected by all who had the good fortune to know him. An active, skillful pilot who loved to fly, he gave his life to the cause in World War I.

His name appears on the Wright Memorial Plaque, along with the many other pioneer airmen who learned to fly on Wright machines.

J. WILLIAM KABITSKI (1885-1944)

Born in Milwaukee, Wisc., August 18, 1885, William Kabitski began working in aviation as a mechanic in Chicago late in 1909. He entered the Wright School at Dayton in early April, 1912, was taught to fly by Al Welsh, and obtained his license, No. 126, there on May 23, 1912. Continuing practice flying at Simms Station, he did odd jobs for the Company during the early summer months.

In August, 1912, the Wright Company sent him to College Park, Maryland, to demonstrate aeroplanes for them before government officials. He did so well the Company kept him there through September and October, demonstrating new types and putting planes through acceptance tests. In early October the Wright Co. sent him from College Park to St. Louis, to fly in an air meet there. On October 12, he wrecked a Wright Hydro while flying on the river at St. Louis. The plane capsized trying to get off the water, but Kabitski was not injured. Following the meet he returned to College Park, where he remained on test work into November, 1912.

On December 21, 1912 Kabitski was made Chief Instructor of the Wright Winter School, which was located at Augusta, Ga. In February, 1913, he again

at the school in San Antonio, and also flew Sunday exhibitions to create local interest in flying. February 17 he flew at San Marcos, Texas and on February 22nd at Laredo, Texas. On March 1st, with Chance Vought as a passenger, he attempted to set up a new altitude record for pilot and passenger and reached a height of 7,350 feet, but fell short of a new record. On April 16, 1913, he left the Texas camp for Cicero to re-establish the School there for the summer. Operations started at Chicago on April 29th.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1913 Thompson was busy with students at the Lillie School, but also flew exhibition dates throughout the mid-west. By November 29 he was back at Cicero giving the Day Tractor a thorough overhaul following the season's exhibition engagements. During the summer, while at Cicero, he had also flown the new 50 Gnome motored Lillie Tractor designed by Chance Vought.

On December 27, 1913 Thompson went to the Wright School at Simms Station, Dayton, Ohio, to complete the training of a former Lillie student, Mrs. Richard Hornsby, who had gone there to complete her training after the Lillie School closed due to Lillie's death. During late January, 1914, he went to Los Angeles to assist and supervise the construction of a new 80 gyro exhibition tractor, intended for looping, which Chas. Day built for him. It was finished on March 28 and on April 12 he made his first loops at Griffith Park Flying Field, Los Angeles. On April 18 he made arrangements to contract exhibition work with Lincoln Beachey at Chicago. May 15 he was back at Cicero with his new machine and flew his first loop engagement at Overland Park, Kansas City, Mo. on May 30th and 31st, making two flights daily.

He flew and looped at Peru, Indiana June 24 and 25. On July 4th Thompson had an accident at Kansas City, where lost a wheel on take off and turned over, partially wrecking the machine, but he was not hurt. He gave daily exhibitions at Kansas City through July. On August 6, 1914, he broke the existing American altitude record at Kansas City, flying to 15,580 feet. Through the summer months Charles Day was with him as an assistant, and Thompson taught him to fly. On August 10th he looped at Moberly, Mo., August 12th at Marshall, Mo. and on August 29th, with Day as a passenger, he looped at Kansas City.

During the latter part of 1914 he worked with Frank Bryant of the west coast, experimenting with the first "sky writing," which later became the Skywriting Corporation. In early Spring of 1915 he contracted for a new Sloane exhibition tractor with 90 H.P. gyro rotary motor, in New York, for the activities of the coming season. He flew and looped this new plane at Atlantic Beach, Fla. on March 29, 1915 and was at Oak City, Illinois April 22nd. He flew over the Continental Divide at Butte, Mont. July 16th, reaching altitudes well over 10,000 feet. He had a very active exhibition season that year and was at the Missouri State Fair for one week at St. Louis early in October.

In the spring of 1916 Thompson was employed by the Sloane Aeroplane Co. at Garden City, L. I. as a test pilot, flying military-type Hall-Scott motored tractor planes for his old friend Chas. Day, who was Chief Engineer there. In Mid-April he flew at Washington, D.C. for the Company, and late in April made a new passenger altitude record of 13,950 feet., at Garden City in one of the new Sloane-Day planes. On May 4th, 1916 he had his first serious accident there, flying as a passenger with Lt. Harold Bleakley of the New York National Guard. The plane stalled on take-off and spun in from a low altitude. Thompson suffered a compound fractured ankle in two places and as a result he was laid up for some time.

About mid-summer, 1916, he started flying at major large U.S. cities, "bombing" with pyrotechnics at night to show his trail through the sky, in behalf of national defense. He became known as the first "HUMAN COMET," to show the need for aerial preparedness. He flew a few exhibitions in the spring of 1917 and after deciding to quit he flew his last public appearance at Arden Downs near his home town of Washington, Pa.

He then entered into the coal business and for a time operated a mine of his own in western Pennsylvania, after which he joined a construction company. He "got the flying bug" again in 1937 and supervised the design and construction of a two-seater high wing monoplane bearing his name. He proposed to manufacture it, but the plane was not a success and the project was abandoned. He did his last flying in this plane at Meadowlands, Pa. during the Summer of 1937.

In 1945 Thompson suffered a serious automobile accident, from which he never fully regained his health; and on January 28, 1949 he died in his sleep at his home in Washington, Pa. age 61 years. He was married and left one son. His burial was at Washington. On July 13, 1949 the local townspeople and a group of EARLY BIRDS dedicated a Plaque in his memory at their local Airport, at which time it became known as "Thompson Field" and remains so today.

A true and hard working pioneer of the early flying days, his name rightfully belongs in the annals of Aviation's historical records. He was an extremely active early pilot who had a tremendous amount of flying time to his credit, with very few accidents, even though he began flying on the very first early machines. He loved to fly and was always well liked among the early pilots.

CHANCE M. VOUGHT (1888-1930)

Chance M. Vought was born in New York City, February 26, 1888. He was a graduate engineer of Pratt Institute, New York University and University of Pennsylvania.

He worked as an engineer for Harold McCormick 1909-1912. He was

associated with Sidney V. James on McCormick's early aeronautical experiments, including the design of the Umbrella-Romme plane. They built three early experimental planes of radical design which were not successful.

In the Spring of 1912 the Aero Club of Chicago appointed Vought to pass upon the condition of all aeroplanes before they could be flown at Cicero Field. In June he started taking flying instructions at the Lillie School and on July 20th made his first solo flight, making his third flight along on July 27. Continuing to practice, he flew for his license, No. 156, on August 14, 1912 at Cicero on a Lillie Wright. In late October he was made Field Manager at Cicero Field until closing time following the termination of Drew's contract as Manager. At that time he was also Engineer in charge of the School Equipment for Lillie and did engineering lecturing to the students as a part of their flying course. Before the school left Cicero for the south he was also acting as fill-in instructor when needed.

On December 27, 1912 the entire Lillie organization, students and equipment, arrived at San Antonio, Texas for their winter school location at Fort Sam Houston. In Mid-January he assisted in some wireless experiments from a Lillie plane in cooperation with Army officers. February 1, 1913 he was appointed to act as observer and licensing official for the Aero Club of America in the San Antonio area. He did considerable flying that winter, instructing, carrying passengers, weekend exhibitions, etc. including two attempted altitude flights with passenger to 7000-8000 feet, which did not surpass existing records. At this time he was also preparing a design for a new military tractor plane to meet Army requirements, which, however, was never built.

In the early part of April the school left the Cicero and was set up and in operation there on April 26, 1913. Vought turned more to engineering matters in 1913 and did very little flying. He designed and brought out a 50 Gnome motored staggered biplane for Lillie's exhibition work which proved to be a first class machine. This was the FIRST aeroplane of Vought's design genius. It was very advanced in appearance for it's day - designed to be simple and quick to take down and crate for shipment and as easily set up again, at the next engagement. Because of Lillie's fatal crash, Vought never flew it, but it was flown a great deal by both Thompson and Robinson and was certainly the fore runner of many later designs.

In late 1913 he turned to consulting aeronautical engineering, became Technical Editor of Aero & Hydro magazine, and was made engineer for The Aero Club of Illinois. At this time he was preparing all drawings and illustrations for Aero & Hydro. During the winter of 1913 he completed the design of a Gordon Bennett Racer for a syndicate to be entered in the 1914 Races, but it was never built. In the Spring of 1914 he became Managing Editor of Aero & Hydro and also designed another staggered tractor biplane for two mechanics at Cicero, using a 60-80 H.P. Sturtevant engine. This plane which

was built and known as the P-L-V also proved very efficient. It was flown extensively during mid-summer and fall of 1914 by Roy Francis and Earl Daugherty at Cicero.

Following this he designed another machine for two Chicago men, Messrs. Rath and Stadlman. This machine was also built and flown there. During the winter of 1914-1915 he designed and supervised the construction of the MAYO Tractor Biplane with 90 H.P. GYRO rotary motor. His assistant was Al Hofer, well known Chicago aeroplane parts and fittings mechanic. This machine was successful and was flown by Steve McGordon. Vought was Design Engineer for the Curtiss Co. at Buffalo, N. Y. through the rest of 1915 and early part of 1916. He then became Design Engineer for The Wright-Martin Co., New York, late in 1916 and into 1917.

On June 18, 1917 the Lewis-Vought Co. was formed, the beginning of the present day Vought Co. In November 1917 design work was started on the well remembered Vought VE-7 advanced trainer with 150 Hisso motor. The first plane was delivered to the government for test on February 11, 1918 after company tests at Hazelhurst Field, Long Island. This plane was of very advanced design and construction at that time and brought great credit to Vought's design genius and really established him permanently in the aircraft manufacturing business. A large number of these planes were built and it was easily the best machine in its class at that time.

At his factory at Long Island City, N. Y., the VE-7 began the long line of Vought planes for the military services and the company grew rapidly. In 1929 his Company merged with the United Aircraft Corp. and was moved to a new plant at Hartford, Conn. He was made Vice-President of the new Corporation and the growth of the present day Vought Co. began.

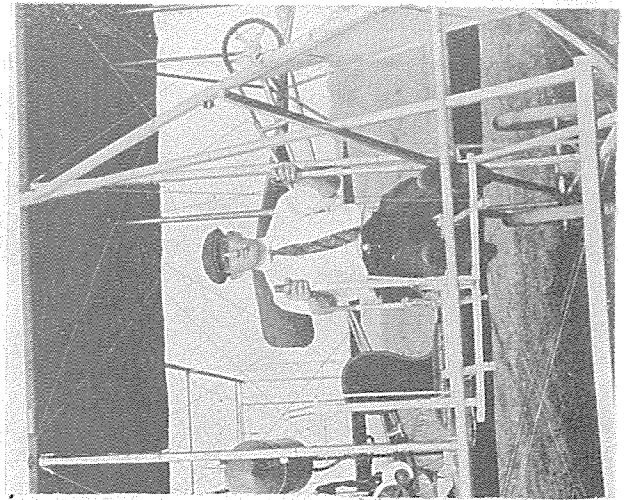
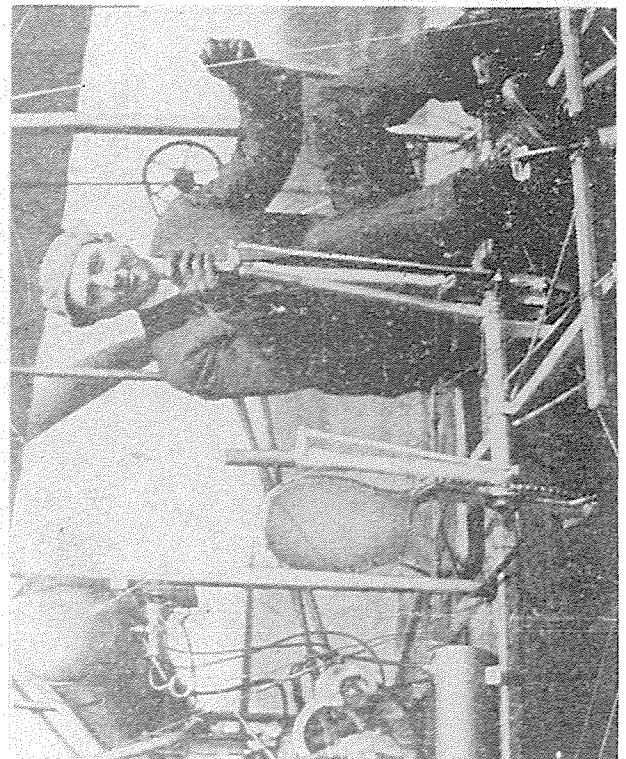
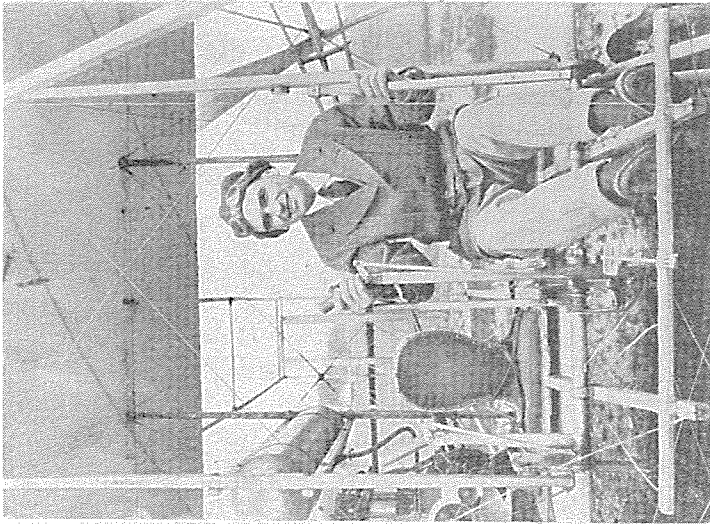
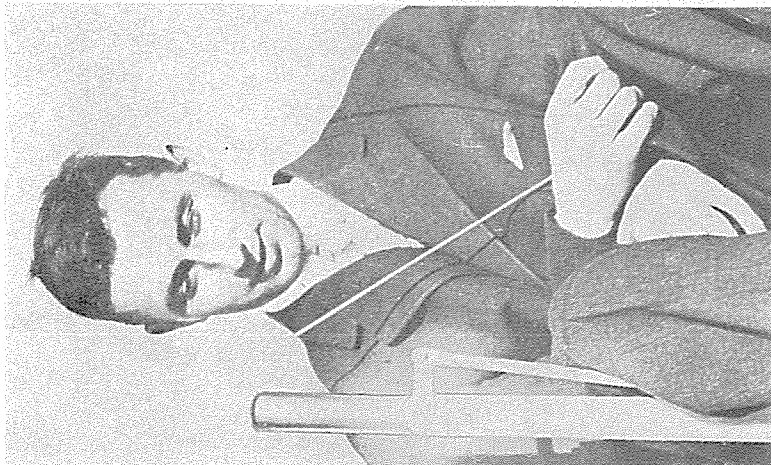
After failing health he died at his home at Southhampton, L. I., N. Y. on July 25, 1930 at age 42. One of the true pioneers of aviation who devoted all of his active life to its progress and growth.

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THE FIRST AERIAL WAR CASUALTY

The dubious honor of being the first aerial war casualty of all time belonged to a Captain Monti of the Italian Army. Captain Monti was flying a reconnaissance mission over a rebellious Arab encampment, near the City of Tobruk, Cyrenaica, North Africa accompanied by an aerial observer. The aerial observer hurled several light weight fragmentation bombs among the bewildered natives. However, the Arab tribesmen returned rifle fire. Four bullets hit the airplane structure and one of these struck and wounded the pilot, Captain Monti. The observer helped pilot the airplane to a safe landing. This is the first recorded air casualty and it occurred in 1912 during the Italian-Trpolitania War.

--Contributed by Willis L. Nye



"FLYING PIONEERS"
(Clockwise from upper left)

- Harry N. Atwood
- Chance M. Vought
- Arch Freeman
- J.W. Kabitaki
- Delloyd Thompson