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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Alma Scrapbook Tells Of Flight

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I GOT this story from Rae Barbour's scrap book in Alma and I'm going to use it here. Even though it does not properly fit under "Across the Island", the story is so unusual, I thought you would like it.

The Americans made so much noise about the non-stop flight Charles Lindberg made across the Atlantic Ocean on May 20, 1927 that many people were led to think it was the first time such a feat was performed.

But the Barbour scrap book has an interesting story on the first trans-Atlantic flight and it was made by Captain John Alcock, pilot, and Navigator Arthur Whitten Brown some eight years previously. The pair took off from a Newfoundland airfield at 5:13 p.m. on June 14, 1917 and they completed the flight in an Irish Bog next day after 16 hours and 12 minutes of battling storms and ice over the fearsome Atlantic – at least it was fearsome to aviators at that time.

Problems In Mid-Ocean

THEY USED a twin-motored Vickers Vimy biplane with each motor developing 4,000 horsepower. The aircraft, this story said, weighed 13,000 pounds.

Light rain was falling as darkness came and the visibility and ceiling was almost zero. They sighted their first clear sky just after midnight when they were about 700 miles out. Brown barely had time to make a flight correction when the blanket of fog closed in again.

"We were starting to spin at 4,000 feet", Brown reported later and still later "we found ourselves dangerously close to the water. Only about 200 feet up."

The higher they climbed the colder it got – there was a driving rain and the ailerons were blocked with ice, and the controls became stiff and jammed.

Tremendous Performance

HERE'S THE part which decided me to use the story here. Some 8,000 feet above the ocean, with the wind rippling at his clothing, and the man half blinded by the rain, Brown climbed out on the wings to chip the ice off the oil pressure gauge. It wasn't until daybreak that they burst through the fog at 11,000 feet.

Imagine the incredible courage and daring of the man to climb out on the slippery wing surface and do that job, when the craft was some 8,000 feet above the Atlantic.

They were still troubled by rain and fog when they were 100 miles from land. When they finally reached the Irish coast they tried to spot a likely landing place. They tried throwing flares to attract attention, but nobody seemed to take notice of the lone aircraft above their heads.

Nose-Down Landing In Irish Bog

TWICE THE pilot circled Clifden, then he came in to land on what looked like a smooth farm field. They plowed to a nose-down landing in the innocent-looking Irish bog. Their average speed had been 120 miles per hour.

Ahead of them was a prize of 10,000 English pounds and Knighthood for both of them from King George V.

Lindberg took off in his Spirit of St. Louis plane from Roosevelt field, New York, May 20, 1927 and landed close to Paris, France 34 hours and 30 minutes later. His average speed was 106 miles per hour. His machine weighed five tons when heavily loaded with fuel. He made the flight alone.

And here is an interesting excerpt I took several years ago from a Centennial essay written by Mrs. Frank Bagnall, Hunter River. As I recall it, the essay was contributed as an interesting addition to the stories of 100 years ago, but was not for competition.

Cellar Dairy Wonderful Place

HERE IS the item as Mrs. Bagnall wrote it:

“The dairy in the cellar was a most wonderful room. In it was stored wild strawberry jam, rhubarb preserves with raisins in it, crabapples done up whole in heavy syrup, and black currant jam to be used in hot drinks when one took a cold. There were crocks with pound cake and fruit cake, and oatmeal or butter cookies, and firkins of butter.

“We were not forbidden to go to the dairy to get cookies, but there were some things in the dairy which were not for our use, and we knew it without being told. In one corner was a jar with a straw covering which they called a ‘Demi-John’. It contained homemade rhubarb wine which my aunt told me was 15 years old.

“My oldest brother and my cousin, lads in their early teens, came to stay for a weekend. While my aunt was absent and grandmother was napping, they, daring spirits that they were, decided to test the rhubarb wine. It nearly lifted the tops off their heads. Aunt returned, summed up the situation and without a word marched straight to the dairy, took up the jar of wine and emptied the contents into the sink.

“THESE BOYS, my brother and my cousin, because of the rigors of war have long ‘slept their last sleep that knows no waking’ and my aunt has long ended her earthly journey, but to this day I cannot refrain from bursting into laughter, when I think of the look on her face, good temperance advocate that she was, when she returned home to find her two young nephews going in circles – owl eyed and tipsy – on the day they sampled her rhubarb wine.”

I was one of the three persons who judged the essays, and the year was 1964, the 100th anniversary of the Charlottetown conference. That’s how I came to get this interesting story.

Fishin’ Trout – By J. J. Enman

LONG-TIME FRIEND J.J. Enman of Summerside mailed me several weeks ago a copy of his song “Fishin’ Trout” in which the veteran newspaper man, now retired, has captured the spirit of fishing trout as I would expect J.J. to do.

Using the vernacular of the angler he says in one verse, for example:

“Oh it’s funny sort of work, fish-in’ trout. An’ yer jest gotter mind what yer about, yer must keep back outer sight, not to give the fish a fright, all the time you are a-fishin’, yer must keep in one per-sishin’. Keep yer line a-gently swishin’, and keep wishin’, wishin’, wishin’ that they’ll bite.”

The music was written by Lew Tobin.