

NEIGHBORHOODS

Museum to honor pioneer daredevil Locklear

Fifty-thousand mourners lined both sides of Main Street as a funeral cortege made its way toward the Tarrant County Courthouse on Aug. 8, 1920.



BILL FAIRLEY
TARRANT CHRONICLES

In a city filled with aviation trail-blazers, 29-year-old Ormer Locklear stood out.

During World War I, his talents were such that the Army assigned him to teaching duties rather than chance losing him in aerial combat.

Later, he distinguished himself among the barnstorming pilots for his wing walking.

Sadly, but perhaps fittingly, he was killed in an airplane crash.

Renowned pilot and aircraft manufacturer Glenn E. Curtiss sent an airplane-shaped floral arrangement to the funeral along with a note: "Through his fearlessness and skill, Ormer Locklear has contributed immeasurably to the art of flying."

Locklear, born in Como on Oct. 28, 1891, was educated in Fort Worth public schools and at the University of Texas.

He was considered a daredevil for his early motorcycle feats, but his primary interests were science and the mechanics of aeronautics.

When he was 20, Locklear began taking private flying lessons, and soon after bought a monoplane.

In the Army Air Service, he displayed extraordinary skills as an aerial gunner and navigator.

After World War I, many military aviators turned from deadly dogfights to entertainment enterprises.

Locklear teamed up with another pilot, Lt. Milton Elliott, who had trained with him at Barron Field near Everman.

On the state fair circuit, Locklear was said to have invented the stunt of moving from one biplane to another at 5,000 feet.

He would climb out onto the lower wing and bound to the lower wing of a nearby aircraft, holding onto the struts.

Locklear also left crowds open-mouthed with another perfected exploit, wing walking without a parachute.

While Elliott piloted the biplane, Locklear stood on the top wing, his arms above his head and his feet secured in strong leather straps moored to the wing.

The daredevil waved and smiled to the crowd as the pilot buzzed the field.

Locklear once commented, "I don't do these things because I want to run the risk of being killed. I do it to demonstrate what can be done ... Someday we will all be flying."

Hollywood beckoned the dashing pilot as an actor and stuntman who flew through barns, crashed into houses and "walked" on wings.

During filming for *The Skywaysman*, Locklear and Elliott were to appear as if they were crashing in their burning airplane.

At 8,000 feet, Locklear lit attached torches to simulate an aircraft in flames.

As they nosed the plane into a shallow dive, it began burning furiously, went into a tail-spin and, at 200 feet, the out-of-control aircraft suddenly plunged to earth in a mass of flames.

A battery of four motion picture cameras recorded every

second of their fiery deaths.

During Locklear's funeral, Mulkey Street Memorial Church on Fort Worth's south side was filled to overflowing, and hundreds more waited outside.

An American flag draped the casket, which was surrounded by huge banks of flowers.

The centerpiece was a large wreath donated by Locklear's leading lady in *The Skywaysman*, Louise Lovely.

A bugle sounded taps before the funeral procession departed for downtown and proceeded up Main Street to honor the man considered the father of aviation acrobatics.

Locklear, who had built a house on Alston Avenue in 1912, was survived by a wife, Ruby, parents, two brothers and three sisters. *Melrose Place* star Heather Locklear has said she is related to the pilot.

He will be recognized in the planned Aviation Heritage Museum, which also features such local pioneers as Amon Carter Sr., who brought aviation heroes to Fort Worth and donated money for land used for aircraft production; A.P. Barrett, whose Texas Air Transport became the nucleus for American Airlines; and astro-



Daredevil pilot Ormer Locklear will be recognized in the Aviation Heritage Museum in Fort Worth.

naut Alan Bean, a Paschal High School graduate.

Charles A. Ringler, executive vice president of the museum, said recently, "Locklear's outstanding abilities as a pilot, navigator, aerial gunner and flying instructor more than qualify him for a place of honor among aviation's other historical greats in our museum."

Tax-deductible contributions may be made to the Aviation

Heritage Museum at 306 W. Seventh St., Suite 311, Fort Worth 76102.

Source: *Camp Bowie, Fort Worth, 1917-18*, edited by Bill Jary and Bernice B. Mayfield; *Star-Telegram*; and Charles Ringler interview.

Bill Fairley is a longtime Fort Worth resident interested in Texas history.

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Help this world if me again I hope that you have had a good week. This weekend was not one of my better ones as I assisted in a wreck with a young man named Shane that was riding his motorcycle and was hit by a truck. People were trying to move him and take off his helmet. I got down there on the ground with him until help came. I have heard from his friends that he is alright and I thank God for that. I can say that luck and the Lord was on his side. The other events of the weekend was where I witnessed a shooting as I was trying to wash my car. I seriously doubt that I will ever go back to that car wash. It really shook me up to say the least. But I feel better now.



McIntyre Pushes for National Guard Educational Facility

Washington, D.C. -- US Representative Mike McIntyre has been personally meeting with his colleagues in the U.S. House Representatives to ask for their support of a North Carolina National Guard educational facility at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.

Representative McIntyre stated, North Carolina's National Guard plays important missions at every level of government - federal, state, and local. As the Guard continues to serve our community, I want to make sure that it has the finest facilities available. Therefore, I am doing all that I can to discuss with my colleagues the importance of funding this educational facility.

Over the last several days, McIntyre has personally spoken with key Members of Congress on the House Armed Services and Appropriations Committees including Representatives Floyd Spence (R-SC), Ike Skelton (D-MO), Joel Hefley (R-COLO), Gene Taylor (D-MISS), David Hobson (R-OH), and John Olver (D-MASS).

The North Carolina National Guard has been selected to establish a regional combat arms school at its present military academy at Ft. Bragg. The facility will teach students from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The school will conduct transition training for armor, infantry, artillery, and air defense artillery military occupational specialties. The North Carolina National Guard and the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg have entered into a partnership to develop an educational complex of shared facilities at Ft. Bragg that will serve the needs of active and reserve component forces at the same time. The educational facility is the first project to develop from that partnership.

McIntyre, along with several of his North Carolina colleagues, are seeking \$8.87 million in federal funds that would build this facility on a 30 acre site at Ft. Bragg. Plans and design for the facility are 95% complete as a result of previous federal funds.

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