

The Warren Record

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The Warren County Scene



This serene farm pond beckons fishermen and little boys to its banks, perhaps to fish—or maybe even to jump in when warmer weather has come to stay.
(Staff Photo by Phyllis H. King)



Thurletta Brown

Up, Up, And Away!

Thanks to the thoughtfulness of Mrs. Catherine Brown of Rt. 3, Warrenton, who brought in from her files an article printed in an early-1927 issue of The Warren Record, those of us who thought early aviators hailed only from Kitty Hawk can learn of the adventures of a Warren County man, Ben Tharrington, whose plane, "The Spirit of Inez," on Aug. 30, 1927 soared away on a non-stop flight to Franklinton. According to Mrs. Brown, Tharrington bought the first airplane owned in Warren County. The news article relating the four-day ordeal of Tharrington and Harry Williams, his navigator, was written by Dawson Alston, collaborating with William Palmer, special air correspondents of The Warren Record. Portions of it appear below.

August 29, 1927

INEZ—Benjamin Tharrington, local aviator, announces his plans to...hop-off from Alfalfa Field at dawn tomorrow...(en route to Franklinton), accompanied by his able navigator, Harry Williams. The Inez Embassy at Franklinton has been notified to have all street lights put in perfect order in case he lands at night.

August 30, 1927

As dawn began to break, a low, grey mist was creeping over Fishing Creek, and in a few minutes...(at 5 a.m.)...the daring ace had started on his memorial flight. The crowd cheered and yelled, "He's off!"

7:35 a.m.—was sighted over Fishing Creek, flying low.
10:30 a.m.—special dispatch from Halthcock's Store reports sighting "The Spirit of Inez" over the establishment.
4:10 p.m.—plane seen flying over the golf course.

August 31, 1927

"The Spirit of Inez," which set out yesterday at dawn on a non-stop flight to Franklinton, has disappeared and persons of this section are greatly worried as to his whereabouts. When the plane departed, enough rations for four days of flying were carried, as two hams and a crate of canteloupes were put on board. Persons of this section fear that strong inland winds have blown him into Bear Pond, but no reports have come in at this time.

8:00 a.m.—sighted in Palmer Springs, Va. as he flew low and dropped a message saying he hoped to reach Franklinton by dark.
9:53 a.m.—caused big commotion in Drewry.
11:10 a.m.—a canteloupe rind was dropped from the plane onto Main Street of Manson.
2:07 p.m.—seen over Greystone, but turned sharply off its course. It is thought that fear of blasting was the cause.
5:15 p.m.—seen over Henderson.

September 1, 1927

FRANKLINTON—"The Spirit of Inez" came to a safe landing at Frankfurter Field here this morning at 10 a.m. A large crowd...had stayed up all night to see the closing chapter of the historic flight. A few persons from Inez had motored up to see his landing after seeing him hop-off at Alfalfa Field. As the plane swept down, the police had difficulty holding back the surging crowd.

Lest you think we make fun of this serious aviator, I include the editor's note that accompanied the article: This week we received a parody write-up bringing Warren County in the limelight on air publicity. It is a story of "Things As They Might Have Been" and is published with apologies to the flying ability of Ben Tharrington.



Kay Horner

Rummaging In Dumpster

Two large bags sat by the car door. One contained trash, the other held several items I had purchased for a friend at a housewares sale in Raleigh. I added a second bag of trash, making a trio of identical bags lined up in a row.

Two I deposited at the nearby dumpster. The third was later opened by my friend who was surprised, but not impressed, to find a day-old newspaper, an empty milk carton and a plastic bag of leftovers gleamed when I cleaned out the refrigerator.

I returned to the dumpster to find the housewares bag covered by a day's worth of dumping. And I was two hands shy of reaching my deposit. I waxed philosophical: "Win a few, lose a few." But as I turned toward the car, the thought of \$25 worth of new items going to the incinerator was more than I could bear. After determining that most of the garbage in the dumpster was nicely bagged and tied, I decided to cast propriety aside and go for it.

With the grace of Queen Elizabeth boarding the garbage barge, I hoisted myself up and into the dumpster and retrieved my goods.

I would have jumped out immediately, but I heard two cars coming, so I just stood there, hoping the sight of me in the dumpster would be less conspicuous than the sight of me jumping out of it.

I looked around my feet and remembered hearing a televised account of a New York City bag lady taking a novice to the streets through indoctrination.

"Only eat garbage from the best restaurants," she cautioned. "Going second-class can make you sick as a dog."

Those to whom I have related my venture seem convinced that \$25 would have been a small price to pay for not having to jump into a garbage dumpster.

Like the bag lady, they aren't accustomed to going second class.

from HISTORY'S SCRAPBOOK DATES AND EVENTS FROM YESTERYEARS

- April 14, 1912—F. R. Law became the first man to jump from the Brooklyn Bridge as a stunt.
- April 15, 1889—Labor and civil rights leader and longtime head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, A. Philip Randolph, born Crescent City, Fla.
- April 16, 1952—Adlai Stevenson declared he was not a candidate for president.
- April 17, 1859—Walter Chauncey Camp, a coach who in 1889 began practice of selecting All-American College football teams, born New Britain, Conn.

New Measures Needed

Members of the Warrenton Lions Club Friday night witnessed the monetary costs and physical anguish associated with highway crashes caused by drunk drivers.

The occasion was the showing of a 30-minute video tape by club member and local insurance man Monroe Gardner. For those in the audience, what they saw was far from a pretty sight, and one that drove home anew the need to rid our highways of drinking drivers.

Literature handed out by Gardner and provided by the Insurance Information Institute shows that progress is being made in the fight against drunk driving. The Institute calls attention to the law passed by Congress withholding federal highway funds from states that fail to adopt a minimum drinking age of 21 for all alcoholic beverages, and hails it as a major milestone. On July 1, Wyoming will become the last of the 50 states to raise its minimum legal drinking age to 21.

Another milestone brought to the attention of local Lions was the employment by California of technology to keep drunk drivers from becoming repeat offenders. In a pilot program last year, breathtesting ignition interlock devices were installed in the vehicles of a number of drunk-driving violators. The cars won't start if the driver fails the breath test.

Maryland, we understand, is another state in the forefront of the fight against drunk driving. Maryland has a policy allowing for the breath analysis of any driver arrested in the State of Maryland. The first year it was in

effect, deaths were reduced by 100.

Now, according to an article in The Washington Post last month, Maryland's legislature is close to passage of a bill which would allow Maryland judges to require drunk drivers to install ignition lock devices in their cars.

An ignition lock prevents a driver with a blood-alcohol level of more than 0.05—as measured by an electric breath analyzer attached to the device—from starting the car.

The ignition lock devices should not be restricted to the cars of convicted drunk drivers, in our judgment. The costs of drunk driving are so great that the devices should be put on every car sold in America, and there should be severe penalties for tampering with the device.

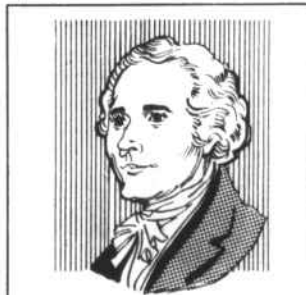
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that motor vehicle crashes cost Americans more than \$74 billion in 1986. The crashes caused more than 46,000 deaths, 3.4 million injuries and 45 million damaged vehicles. Far too many of these crashes are attributed to drinking drivers.

State legislators have required licensing of motorists to determine who is fit to drive and who is not. A natural extension of this policy would be to keep the drinking driver off the highway by requiring an ignition lock device already in use in four states.

Drunk drivers are potential killers we can stop. But it is going to take many hours of observing the costs of their actions, as Warrenton Lions did Friday night, before our legislature can be persuaded that some additional strong measures are needed to reduce highway carnage traceable to a drink or two.

An excuse is worse and more terrible than a lie; for an excuse is a lie guarded.
Pope

American Viewpoints



Constitutions should consist only of general provisions; the reason is that they must necessarily be permanent, and that they cannot calculate for the possible change of things.
Alexander Hamilton

Courthouse Squares

MY SON IN COLLEGE IS MORE SOPHISTICATED NOW. INSTEAD OF WRITING HOME FOR MONEY, HE REPORTS AN UNANTICIPATED MAJOR ADVERSE CASH-FLOW CRISIS.



Looking Back Into The Record

April 9, 1948

Acting on a decision they tentatively reached several months ago, the Warrenton Town Commissioners in regular session Monday night set the date June 30 as the final time for allowing the town's one and only fire truck to leave here to fight fires elsewhere in the county.

Unless a reduction is made in price or some other arrangements are made, it is expected that court action will be resorted to in order to secure additional land for John R. Hawkins High School.

Tax collections for the month of March were \$2,413.88, bringing total collections to date to \$118,011.80.

April 12, 1963

A town without an empty store; a town where warehouses and a fish market have been converted into modern stores; a town where other merchants are kept out of town only by a lack of buildings, as a result of cooperative efforts of merchants, business men and citizens is the "Smithfield Story," a saga heard Tuesday night by the Warrenton Merchants Association.

A huge forest fire—largest in the county's history—burned over 1,500 acres last week as it cut a six-mile swath through Warrenton Township, Forest Ranger Wilbur F. Davis said yesterday.

Warren County cattlemen and poultrymen favor assessments for marketing promotion, but interest in the plan has drawn little enthusiasm as only 30 producers voted in Tuesday's referendum.

April 13, 1978

A prison escapee from the Warrenton Unit of the Department of Correction on April 4 fled the county in a stolen vehicle, but not before confiscating steaks left warming on the stove in the kitchen of an Afton residence.

Mrs. Julia Carroll Fitts, owner and operator of Ideal Florist, has been honored by a four-county women's organization, which has begun a program of recognizing area businesspersons.

A well-known restaurant chain, MacDonalds, during April and May will give a free hamburger to any pre-school child in Warren County, who brings in a vaccination certificate.

Carolina Commentary Jay Jenkins

Baseball's Glory Days

Spring has sprung again to the crack of the bat and the arc of the umpire's arm behind home plate.

Baseball is with us again, and not a minute too soon.

Time was when many Tar Heels have seen a major league team play before the official opening day of the season. In those days, major leaguers played exhibition games en route to their home parks from training camp.

An old man still recalls the excitement of more than 50 years ago when he saw Dizzy Dean and the St. Louis Cardinals play a minor league team in Asheville. Ole Diz fogged his high hard one, and the "Gashouse Gang" played with an enthusiasm that makes today's players resemble wooden soldiers.

George Murphy, 59, of Hickory is one of a group trying to bring organized baseball back to that Catawba county town after an absence of 28 years. He told the Charlotte Observer how it was

when the Cleveland Indians and the New York Giants used to play an exhibition game there every year.

"In 1946, there was an editorial in a Cleveland newspaper that said: 'In Hickory they start arriving in bare feet and overalls at 10 o'clock in the morning, and they have 10,000 people by 2 o'clock,' which was game time," Murphy said. "That's pretty close to the truth."

Back in the bleak Depression years of the 1930s, baseball was one of the few recreational antidotes to a cheerless time. This was the era, in the Piedmont, of semi-pro teams sponsored by textile mills.

When Shelby's Cleveland Cloth Mills, owned by Governor O. Max Gardner, squared off against the Moors of Mooresville Mills fans saw some fence-rattlin' baseball of high calibre. Some of the players had failed to make it to the majors, and some were plain country boys who had prepped in cow pastures with taped baseballs and could flat-out swat and field that pill.

The semi-pro leagues even had their equivalent of a world series. Then later organized baseball began moving into the larger towns all over the state. At one point, North Carolina boasted more professional teams than any other state, and Tar Heels dotted big league rosters.

Rivalries could be fierce, especially at the Class D level. In an eastern North Carolina league, Willis (Dock) Murphrey, now a sedate district attorney in an eastern county, was called out while trying to steal a base. He pulled a cap pistol and fired a blank at the umpire; a riot nearly ensued. The ancient recollection still puts sweat on his forehead.

In the glory days, American Legion baseball also flourished. Gastonia and Shelby won national championships that are recorded on plaques in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. One Gastonia alumnus, though not of the championship team, is Bill Friday, who was rated by scouts as good-hit good-field during 30 years as president of the University of North Carolina.

As repositories of sweet memories of what was, old codgers all across the state will be hoping for what could be; a team in Hickory, full bleachers, and league pennants on the grandstand rafters nodding gently to the zephyrs of spring.