

Salem Man Recalls Days He Flew Spies To Germany in World War 1

By GEORGE STROZUT JR., Statesman Correspondent

"Getting caught in the Huns' searchlights at night made things rather awkward for us British pilots, you know," said M. V. McKeon, 643 Union St., as he reminisced to Arnold Air Society members and AFOTC officers at Wilamette University recently about his experiences in the Royal Flying Corps—later the R.A.F.—in World War I.

McKeon, now retired after some years as an underwriter at Lloyd's of London, noted that there were two kinds of "Huns" then, (1) the enemy in general, and (2) all flying pupils, who sometimes caused as much damage to aircraft as the enemy.

Saw 1910 Air Show
Flying had interested him since he saw an air show in Dublin in 1910. He was enrolled in the Officers Training Corps at Dublin University, and in 1914 at the age of 20½ he received his second lieutenant's commission in the Royal Artillery.

However, artillery observers were needed in the Royal Flying Corps, so he transferred there in 1915. The observers flew with a pilot over enemy gun emplacements.

"I soon decided I had better become a pilot," McKeon said. "Much safer. Had control of the crazy machine then."

Trained Three Months
So, after three months of training McKeon received his wings and was immediately shipped to France because, his training officers said, the best training was at the front.

McKeon received British Graduation Certificate No. 1696 and simultaneously received International Aeroplane Club's license No. 3102. Everyone then, including the enemy, received the international license, he recalled.

The battle of Somme in France had started in July 1916 and McKeon found himself involved in this in a rather peculiar way.

First Tank Attack
The British developed a "land-cruiser," secret weapon to use for opening a wide gap in the enemy lines. McKeon was assigned to this project in September, 1916 when he first saw a "tank." These early tanks were very crude affairs and extremely noisy, so in order to cover up the sound of the tanks advancing to the front during the first night, McKeon and three other pilots flew overhead, back and forth, making as much noise as possible.

However, out of 49 tanks which started to the front, only 15 were able to make it over the line to participate in the first tank attack in history on Sept. 15, 1916, and only 9 completed the skirmish.

During the third tank engagement that month, two tanks found themselves hopelessly hung up, straddling a German trench. They were wondering what to do when 300 Germans came out to see what all the noise was about, saw the huge monsters, and immediately surrendered, McKeon said.

Later McKeon was given the job of flying spies across the lines.

Spies Volunteered
The spies were volunteers who had never been in a plane before. They were given a dose of spirits to build up their enthusiasm for the adventure and then were taken out to the plane which was fitted with a bucket seat on the left wing, next to the open cockpit.



Shown in cockpit of plane he flew for British Royal Flying Corps in early days of World War I is M. V. Keon, now a Salem resident. Bucket seat on wing was used to transport spies across enemy lines at night. The spies wore parachutes for their drop behind the lines but the pilots never wore them. This was one of six British planes equipped with seat for spies.

er pilots flew overhead, back and forth, making as much noise as possible.

The spy was fitted with a parachute, which had a box of six pigeons attached to it for communication back to the British, then was placed in the seat. It was an extremely cold position because he caught the propeller draft and his feet dangled over the edge of the wing.

Enthusiasm Waned
Usually these men would lose their enthusiasm quickly, so when McKeon could see that he was over the right location, he would reach over and pretend to adjust the spy's safety belt. Then he tripped a lever inside the cockpit and pulled off the spy before the man realized what was going on.

"The kindest thing was to do it suddenly, you know!" he said.

In July, 1917, McKeon became assistant test pilot at the Bristol Aeroplane Co., which brought out the revolutionary, first two-seater "Bristol Fighter." Altogether, he tested some 300 planes as they came off the assembly line and never had any mishaps due to faulty construction.

In July, 1918, he was placed in charge of the U. S. 36th Aeroplane Squadron, whose purpose was to train American fliers.

He was discharged in 1919 with the rank of acting captain.

During his years of air service at the front, McKeon was forced down only twice due to "sky squabbles." In his machine which cruised at only 65 miles an hour (a good strong wind blew it backwards sometimes), he never wore a parachute. No one but the spies wore them until the end of the war.

"Our superiors told us that if we wore parachutes, the next thing we'd want would be to take along extra propellers or wings," he said.

McKeon came to the United States in 1939, was granted citizenship in 1945, and has been a resident of Salem since 1950, when he came here because of his wife's health, which required a mild climate.

Two Women Top Dallas Flower Show

Statesman News Service

DALLAS — Sweepstakes winners in the annual Dallas Garden Club flower show Thursday were Mrs. Lynn Cook and Mrs. Elmer Boman.

Mrs. Cook scored a total of 32 points for her entries in the flower arrangement division while Mrs. Boman topped the horticulture division with 15 points.

Judging was by Mrs. A. W. Bedford, Mrs. S. J. Burch and Mrs. Delmer E. Branson.

Other blue ribbon winners in horticulture included Mrs. Dyre Yung, Mrs. Bert Campbell, Mrs. Howard Fleming, Mrs. Norman Baker, Mrs. Della Waters, Mrs. Maude Butler, Mrs. G. Brandli, Mrs. Hilda Lantis, Mrs. Fritz Klaus, Mrs. Delwin O. Reinemer and Mrs. John Tilgner.

Blue ribbon winners in the arrangement division besides Mrs. Cook were Mrs. Alpha Livesay, Mrs. Lantis, Mrs. Cecil Meeker, Mrs. Norman Baker, Mrs. Hulda Smith, Mrs. Claude Hoisington, Mrs. Harriet Enstad, Mrs. C. L. Marsters, and Mrs. William Effenberger.

Twenty women displayed their craft in the non-competitive showing of ceramics.

Berries and Beans Late Due to Frost

Statesman News Service

KEIZER — Strawberries and beans, two of the major crops of this area, are delayed by recent inclement weather. Temperatures averaging five degrees below normal, and frequent showery days have combined to keep tractors and other equipment off the fields.

Many bean yards have not yet been planted, at a time when most planting would be normally completed. It now appears that strawberry picking will be approximately two to three weeks later than in normal years. Concentrated population nearby provides ample harvest help for these crops.

Notable in this and surrounding districts is the increase in strawberry acreages. Many five to ten acre fields are being planted this year.

One of major interest, however, is the 70-acre field leased by John Johnson near Mission Bottom. Although strawberry harvest will be late, it is expected that the crop will be larger than normal.

The cool weather preceding the last frost prohibited the usual growth that is frequently damaged by such frost, and all blossoms are expected to bring forth top-notch fruit.

QUEEN'S DANCE SET
SHERIDAN—The Phil Sheridan Rodeo Queen's dance will be May 28 at the Eagles hall, when the 1955 Rodeo Queen will be named. Candidates are Joan Keck of Sheridan, Carolyn Laughlin of Yamhill and Phyllis Fogg of Tillamook.

MOVE TO BARSTOW

SHERIDAN—Mrs. Lowell Leathers and baby daughter left by plane for Los Angeles this week, where they were met by Cpl. Leathers. They will live at Barstow, Calif.

Our Valley

... By CHARLES IRELAND

When big news strikes, Statesman reporters often go out into the "valley" to cover stories in areas nominally served by our valley correspondents. . . Today is one of those rare occasions when a correspondent, George Strozut Jr. of suburban Hayesville, has slipped into town to "poach" for a feature story. . . And reporters who got an advance peek at his story (elsewhere on this page) about the British war pilot, think George scored a direct hit when he interviewed M. V. McKeon.

Couple of Sundays ago the New York Times travel section ran a two-page spread of special events around the nation which tourists might want to look in on during the summer. . . The Oregon list mentioned 17 events. . . Included were the State Marble Tournament and the Cottage Grove Pet Parade. . . And missing were such stalwarts as the St. Paul Rodeo and the Oregon State Fair. . . A deeper look into the series of events around the U. S. disclosed that National Hobe Day will be observed at Britt, Iowa, on Aug. 23, and the public is welcome. . . Free mulligan stew.

Good reports were heard following the first annual concert of the Citizen's Band Friday night at Silverton. . . John Philip Sousa fans may be interested to know that the band included three Sousa marches in its first concert, which also included such universal favorites as Teddy Bears Picnic, Indiana State Band March and On the Mall. . . The titles merit a mention since the band will present an identical concert at 8 p.m. this Friday at Woodburn High School. . . The Sousa marches were Semper Fidelis, Washington Post and, of course, Stars and Stripes Forever. . . Here's a hope that Maestro Chas. W. Yuki and his tooters will include another fine Sousa march, High School Cadets, in an early concert. . . And while we're at it, how about that waltz the band always used to play at the county fair when the tight-rope walkers went into their act, Chalma.

Monmouth folks were happy last week that little Sue Muller recovered from her illness in time to make the trip to Washington with Teacher of the Year Margaret Perry. . . Dickie Peterson, the fourth-grade boy who made the trip, got more publicity last week when the sponsoring magazine came out with a big picture of him and Miss Perry. He hadn't been selected for the trip when the magazine decided to use his picture. . . President Eisenhower joked Dickie about his haircut, but in the magazine photo, taken in January, Dickie's hair is long and straight.

Postmasters had a varied week in the valley. . . At Dallas, Postmaster Carl Black learned he was going to get a badly-needed new building. . . At Jefferson, Postmaster Clarence Miller made an experimental count and determined that the Jefferson P. O. handled on average of 540 first-class letters per day. . . At Lyons, Postmaster Ruth Lyons went out to burn some rubbish. A hearing-aid battery that someone had thrown into the trash exploded and struck her in the hand. The injury required eight stitches. . . And at Albany, the internationally-circled Western Stamp Collector devoted an editorial to how happy Salem Postmaster Al Gragg was because a stamp collector back East wrote him a fan letter about some nice service he got from the Salem Postoffice.

Pool Opening Set June 25 At Woodburn

Statesman News Service

WOODBURN — The Woodburn Memorial swimming pool will open for the season on Saturday, June 25, it was announced following the meeting of the park board Thursday evening.

Keith Llewellyn, who holds senior life saving and water safety certificates, will be life guard and superintendent of the pool.

Patrons will be free to picnic, also, beginning Sunday, June 22, in Settlemier Park.

Improvements planned for the park area include the installation of five additional permanent tables to be set in concrete. The parking area has already been enlarged and will be gravelled, it was reported.

The area at the corner of First and Oak Streets is in the process of being graded for the construction of two tennis courts later.

Members of Woodburn Junior Chamber of Commerce helped with the project. Members of the latter received permission to hold their Chuck Wagon Breakfast for the public July 4, and were also assigned an area on which to build a storehouse to house stores for the breakfast and other equipment.

Plans were also made to enlarge the softball field, and the board requested persons interested in softball participation to contact Bob Sawielle or Layman Baird who will have charge of the organization of leagues.

WILL SERVE REBEKAHS

LYONS—The Women's Society of the Methodist Church will serve supper for the Rebekah convention which will be held here Wednesday, June 22. The society also voted to have a clean-up day at the church on Tuesday.

Births At Valley Hospitals

Statesman News Service

SHERIDAN — To Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Beachy, Sheridan, a daughter, May 17 at McMinnville Hospital.

Polk County Court News

Statesman News Service

DALLAS—The following marriage licenses have been issued: Benny Howard Watt, 19, mill worker, Willamina, and Janice L. Stalwick, 18, concession worker, Salem.

Richard Baker, Jr., 19, logger, and Mary Lois Freeman, 18, both of Dallas.

The following assumed business names have been filed: Arrow Lumber Co., filed by Harry Engelen and Harlan Goble, located in Polk County. Stowers Bros., filed by E. W. Stowers, located at Dallas.

Silverton Business District Notes Round of Improvements

Statesman News Service

SILVERTON—When it rains it pours, and anyone who has been gone from Silverton for six months would find that it has been "raining" changes here, Mayor Harry V. Carson noted Saturday.

Weiby's department store on Main street is undergoing a modernization of its front. Oldtimers recall that this section of the Weiby store is one of the oldest brick buildings in Silverton.

It withstood two of the hottest fires in the city's history, once in 1900 when the corner location was burned, and again in 1938 when two buildings on both sides were ruined.

New Building
The new Hollywood Ice Cream store, at the corner of South Water and Lewis Streets, opened this week in its new block-and-glass building. Owners are Gail Jones, a former Silverton man but now of Salem, and Nick Brinkley. The spot this building occupies has been in disuse for a number of years.

A \$10,000 improvement at the Silver Bowl has been outlined by Joe W. Stevens, new owner. The new proprietors operated a Bonneville Power Association Cafeteria for 12 years. The bowling alley will be operated Wednesday through Sunday.

Add New Room
A dining room has been added to the Silverton Cafe to provide more room for its patrons. The new addition will seat between 35 and 40.

Hahn's Grocery which closed last week, will be reopened by R. A. Montgomery & Son as a retail meat market and frozen food supply store.

Wing Completed
The debris of the old Methodist Church has been cleared away and the new educational wing completed.

The adjoining house, known as the Scarff property, has been bought and remodeled by the Methodist Church with the pastor, the Rev. and Mrs. Paul Henry, settled there.

Mrs. Felix Goyette of Bethany Road, has sold her home there to Mr. and Mrs. V. M. Parke. Mrs. Goyette will visit for a brief time with Mrs. Betty Liard (Betty Uphoff) in Seaside, before leaving for California to make her home with relatives at Grass Valley.

W. R. Mortell has opened an accounting and tax service office at 302 Oak St., in the offices formerly occupied by M. C. Storruste, who has retired because of ill health.

Prowlers Enter W. Stayton School

Statesman News Service

WEST STAYTON — A break-in at West Stayton School was under investigation Saturday by the sheriff's office and Stayton police.

The culprits took several kitchen utensils including a bowl from the electric mixer valued at \$15. Custodian Alfred Thompson discovered the break-in when he unlocked the school Friday morning. The prowlers had entered the school via the rear door in the breezeway adjoining the new addition to the building. They broke a door pane and reached through to unlock the door.

VISIT GEN. POWELL
Statesman News Service
MONMOUTH — Mr. and Mrs. Clares C. Powell are on an air trip to Honolulu to visit his brother and sister-in-law, Gen. and Mrs. Herbert Powell. The general is a native of Monmouth, attended all Monmouth schools and was graduated from the University of Oregon prior to entering military service.

New Store Building Started at Monmouth

Statesman News Service

MONMOUTH — Van Crider, who operates a general store here, is starting work on a new building along side his present store. This new addition will be two stories, and will enable him to increase his merchandising range.

In South Africa, corn is called "mealies."

Brown Joins Staff Of Dallas Station

Statesman News Service

DALLAS — Bruce Brown of Salem has been appointed commercial manager of station KPLK at Dallas, station owner Ed McElroy announced Saturday. Brown has been an account executive with KSLM for two years and is a graduate of Dallas High School.

Glass threads are made so fine they are barely visible.

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