

FLIES HIS OWN PLANE AT 63; HOPES TO DO SO AT 80

'Dick,' Beloved by All Aviators, Expert Flying Man Despite General Belief Air Navigators Must Be Boys

By EDWIN C. HILL.

WE were lounging in a quiet corner of the Garden City Hotel smoking room, emitting a great deal of smoke and much harsh criticism of the weather this latitude had served up in the merry month of May, all fog and drizzle and chill and low hanging clouds, rotten weather for those whose lawful occasions take them aloft.

The company was mixed but interesting, with a strong flavor of aviation, flying men, engineers and the like making up two-thirds of the group of a dozen. Berteau, a French pilot over here to hurdle the Appalachians with an Italian plane; Frank Coffin, an engineer of note; Diggins of Chicago, a pioneer on the commercial side, who hopes to have his fifty passenger air trains de luxe beating it back and forth between New York and Chicago regularly as the sun swings round; two or three young lieutenants of the Army Air Service in from Mitchel Field; the editor of an air journal—that was about the lot.

Diggins, with the black eyed Berteau as pilot, was hoping to hop off for Chicago in the morning, early enough in the morning to make a lunch landing at Cleveland, but the night was out of the bottom of the bag, rain driving in slants through steam laundry air certain to deposit a fog fluff over a soaked landscape come morning. Visibility prospects were just about nothing at all, and the outlook for Monsieur Berteau and his boss getting away for Chicago was a poor bet at 20 to 1. The air postman, in from Cleveland scarcely an hour, clinched it.

"There wasn't 100 foot visibility coming over the mountains," grumbled this young person. "How in the Creator condemned, sheol delivered circumstances, do they expect me to make time through 400 miles of asparagus soup?"

"No chance of getting away in the morning, then?" asked Diggins.

"Figure it out for yourself," replied the air post youth, still smarting from his call-down at headquarters.

Real Source of Information Has Confidence of All

"We'll ask Dick," said Diggins. "Dick's judgment can't be beat. Where is the old rooster?"

"Went to Great Neck to see one of a flock of married stepdaughters," returned the engineer. "Should be back by now. Give him a ring. He'll have visibility probabilities, wind velocity and direction, and likely temperature all worked out by this time and set down on a neat little chart slicker than Greenwich and mighty near as accurate."

Diggins went to the phone. "Member the time old Dick flew from Wichita—seven hours' actual flying time, with his white whiskers streaming in the wind, the time the Aero Club gave him the big blowout?" put in Post of the Aero Club, Augustus of the Black Beard.

"Rather!" grinned Coffin. "And the time the old boy got spilled somewhere down in the Ozarks, flying alone, and was two days drilling through the underbrush to civilization. Never turned a hair."

"He's going to fly through Russia as soon as things get settled down," said Diggins, returning with the news that "Dick" was on his way downstairs. He has a notion in his confident bean that before he is 70 he will have flown around the well known world, ringed her around with the sun."

"He'll do it, then," said Post calmly. "There isn't a brag or a boast in the old boy. He's all performance, hundred per cent accomplishment."

Now, I had sat there hearing that cheerful rattle of talk about this absent person, "Dick" somebody or other, but I fear I hadn't got the meat out of it. Certain astonishing phrases had hit me in the medulla oblongata or thereabout and had knocked coherent reasoning out of me. Dick—old rooster—flew from Wichita—old boy—before he is seventy he will have flown round the world! What was all this glibberish about, anyway? What did these lounging gentlemen of the upper air mean by so seriously asserting flying competency on the part of a septuagenarian, or as good as a septuagenarian? What did they mean by yarning away about some old fellow—old fellow, mind you, in the actual sense of being old in point of years—flying alone through the Ozarks? What was the sense of jesting about absurdities? Such things weren't, aren't, couldn't be. They were joshing the stranger within their circle, the greenhorn from New York, the tenderfoot from Manhattan. Well, it amused them. But I knew better.

Youth Must Be Served In Any and All Sports

I knew that aviation has age limits. It's a young man's game wholly, absolutely, exclusively. Every one knows that. I was familiar with all that stuff about coordination and synchronization—you know; the theory and practice that in youth only do mind and muscle work together with perfection, thought translated into action swifter than lightning can flash, faster than instruments made by man can split seconds. Would the army or navy take a flyer beyond his twenties? It would not! Why? Because men who hop the thirty mark aren't all there in coordination when it comes to air navigation.

Take the sports—tennis, baseball, anything you please, except golf, maybe, and even in golf youth must be served—Isn't that the phrase that tradition has handed down to us? Whoever heard of a cham-

pin tennis player of fifty? Baseball players are decrepit old gentlemen at forty. Pugilists have a foot in the grave at thirty-five. And aviation, the swiftest game of all, the one that makes hardest demands upon mind and nerves and muscles, what place had aviation for middle aged adventurers, much less old timers?

My back was to the entrance of the smoking room and I didn't see this "Dick" person come in, though I heard a quick step or two. The men sitting with me went to their feet instantly, which was odd enough in itself, and there was a pleasant babble of:

"Well, Dick, how do you find your ancient self, hey? How's the old boy this evening, ready for the little jump to Chi? All set?"

This, I knew without turning, was pure piffle. These chaps had evidently got in the habit of treating some flying kid as if he were an old timer. It was some sort of local joke, a wheeze they had grown accustomed to and liked to try out on the innocent bystander. Not very funny, of course, but well enough to fill a chunk in the talk of a dull evening.

"Just couldn't be better," drawled a voice that certainly didn't sound young. There is that in voices which betrays age. This one was not the bleating of a spikehorn. It was the full, matured challenge of the old buck. So I turned at once a little dizzy in the place where my intellectuals are supposed to be.

Standing in the doorway was this flying person called "Dick" and he looked as if he had stepped out of the pages of "Pickwick Papers," all except his twentieth century tailored clothes. He was old, if we can call anybody with white hair, white mustache and beard and well past sixty, old. I surveyed in blinking amazement. Did they call this person a flying man? Was this the daredevil who had winged in from a corner of Kansas, driving his own ship? The lad that was going to do Russia before he was seventy—that is, in a year or so?

Standing there he was almost roly-poly, a well nourished apple dumpling with frosting. He is not the fraction of an inch more than five and a half feet tall, and this sixty-six inches finds it necessary to support 180 pounds of good solid flesh. His cheerful, round face is as pink as a baby's, and his eyes, keen as they are, and shrewd with the accumulated wisdom of years, are as blue and frank as a baby's. They regard one through gold-rimmed glasses, looking out through these windows upon a world which their owner evidently finds a pleasant place to linger. It is a kindly gaze. It is the kind of gaze that marks the modest man, the man modest almost to the point of shyness. Lots of first rate doers are that way. I couldn't get Mr. Pickwick out of my mind somehow. When you looked at this person "Dick" you simply had to think of old port and a baron of beef and a coach and four rollicking along the Brighton road. But, bless me, Mr. Pickwick would have been nowhere with this lad, nowhere at all.

"Meet Mr. Charles Dickinson of Chicago," somebody said by way of introduction. "He's our flying kid. You must make him tell you about himself, but you will have to pry it out of him."

"Now, what do you boys want to do that for?" drawled Dick. "You know I just naturally hate to talk about myself. You've betrayed me into the hands of the Philistines, you young devils, and I'll get even with you sooner or later. I don't know anything of interest to the public. I'm no public character at all."

"Don't you believe him," said Post from a corner. "He has done more for aviation than any man in America. Isn't that so?"

"You emitted a mouthful, Gussie," came a chorus from the leather chairs. "Speak up, Dick! 'Don't be so damned bashful!'"

Mr. Charles Dickinson of Chicago was indubitably bashful, even if the qualifying adjective be omitted, and there was no way to get anything satisfactory out of him about his flying adventures until I had drawn him out of the chaffing group and into another room. After some persuasion he loosened up. The conversation went about like this:

"These chaps seem to think a lot of you as a man and as a flyer."

"Oh, they are all friends of mine. I have flown some. It's true."

"May I ask how old you are?"

"Sixty-three."

"I revealed my amazement, doubtless, for 'Dick' grinned.

"'Tis a bit unusual, isn't it?" he asked.

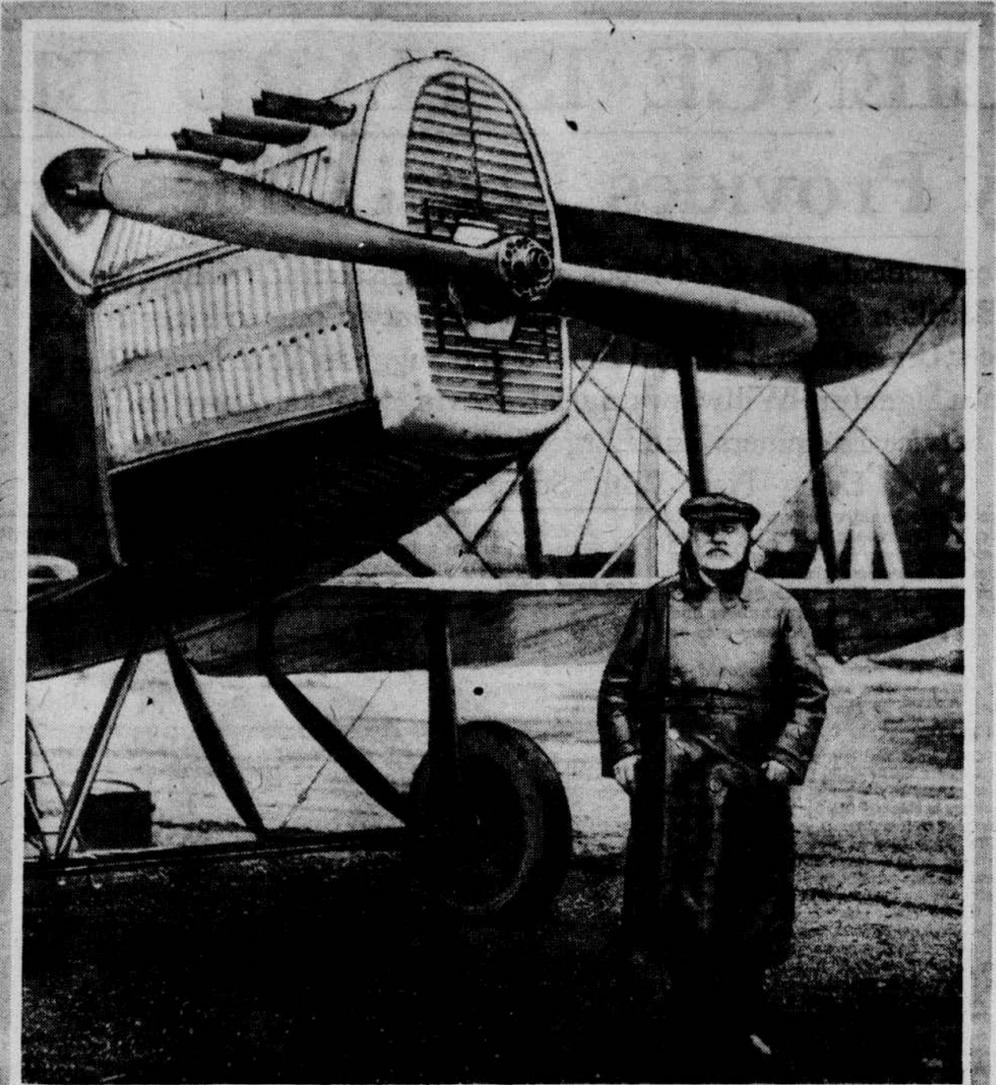
"Fact is, I don't know of anybody my age or anywhere near it that can handle a plane or is willing to take a chance. 'Tisn't supposed to be an old man's game, you know, but that's nonsense. A man's as old as his nerves. That's all. If your nerves are good I don't see any reason why you shouldn't be flying at eighty. I expect to be. As far as I know I haven't got a nerve in my body."

"How long have you been flying?"

"About eleven years," said Mr. Pickwick-Dickinson, I mean. You see I'm a seed merchant—was, rather, since I've been retired for some years—and up to eleven years ago I was too busy with my affairs West and East to devote as much time to sport as I would have liked to do. You remember when they had that big aviation meet at Belmont Park, the first big one the country ever saw? Well, that got me. I made my first flight at that meet with Grahame-White, and I was so thrilled that it spoiled me for anything else.

"I had always been interested in mechanical toys," the retired seed merchant

Charles Dickinson of Chicago, who at 63 is an expert flying man and who expects to guide his own airplane when he is 80. For the last eleven years he has been flying steadily and aviators hail him as one of the sport's staunchest friends.



By a New York Herald Staff Photographer.

continued. "I used to ride the old high wheel bike, and when the safety came along I had one of the first that ever rolled in Chicago's streets. Then came the talking machine and I played around with phonographs. But when the flying machine arrived I found what I had been looking for and didn't know it. It seemed as if I was born to fly. I can't tell you how much happiness it gives me. Age has nothing to do with it—not a thing."

"After making myself a nuisance to all the flying boys at Belmont Park that meet—I knew 'em all, White, Johnny Moisant, Ralph Johnstone, Hoxsey, all the rest, most of them dead now, victims of the early days before machines were made safe—"

"Are they safe now?"

"Safe enough for me," said the boy of 63.

"Nobody need have an accident if he avoids stunts and takes proper precautions about wind, fog and the fitness of his machine, along with correct care of himself. But as I was saying, I got the flying fever in those days and I have simply let it have its way. For eleven years I have been doing what I could to help aviation in this country and I have done a lot of flying myself."

"Do you mean as a pilot?"

"Of course," Mr. Dickinson replied simply. "I have been piloting planes for several years and have taken more flights than I could possibly count up. I have flown alone innumerable times and I have piloted other people. I have plenty of money and can afford to gratify my tastes. Within a year or two, at least I hope it will be that soon, I expect to fly through Russia, or

over Russia, rather, in my own plane. Maybe I will make a trip around the world. The idea is strong in my head and I see no special objection to it."

I took another look at this white haired, white bearded, bespectacled man of 63 who talked so modestly about record breaking achievements and who was so highly thought of by the young men of the game.

"I understand you are going to essay the test for a pilot's license?" I asked.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Dickinson. "I never particularly thought about it before, but my friend Ralph Diggins may start a line of air limousines between New York and Chicago and I may take a hand at piloting one of them occasionally. To do that I would have to have a license or I couldn't have my fun."

New Science, Poroscopy, Is a Hard Blow to Crime

Continued from Preceding Page.

palm of which certain raised ridges describe various figures. These, no less than the finger ends, when examined microscopically, display the open mouths of sweat glands. Listen to Mr. Faurot on this fascinating theme:

"It is an established fact that the traces of the sweat pores either in the finger end prints or the palm prints constitute points of identification that offer the same guarantees as do the characteristic finger tip patterns such as are commonly designated 'forks, ends and islands,' whorls and the like. The pores, always the same in a given subject, are modified neither by age, nor disease. In a given subject they differ from all other subjects in form and size in their position relatively to the axis of the ridge, and in their number in a unit of length. They are, therefore, a valuable adjunct to the dactyloscopic proof."

"Naturally, considering the large number of sweat pores to come under consideration—more than 1,000 in a single average finger print—there can be no possibility of formulating and indexing them. Yet in a specific case, where an identification hangs upon an impression in which only a few ridges may be clearly made out, it is quite possible by the study of the sweat pores present to identify definitely this fragment with a part of a known print in the possession of the investigator and thus render certain a supposed identification."

By the employment of poroscopy in the method first indicated Commissioner Faurot and his associates in 1919 achieved what he calls "the first hand print conviction obtained in America." The case to which he referred is illustrated by reproductions accompanying this article. They were taken from the police originals through the courtesy of Mr. Faurot and heretofore have not been published. The hand print in this case was the final and conclusive evidence which sent William Ackerson to prison for life for a murder committed in Rockland county.

Ackerson's victim was a taxicab driver, who used to carry fares to and from the railroad station at Suffern, N. Y. He was prejudiced against banks and it was common report that he often carried about with him considerable sums of money. He was engaged by a stranger one evening to "drive out two or three miles in the country to a farmhouse."

The next morning the taxi was found several miles out from Suffern on a country road. In it lay the body of the slain chauffeur. He had been shot and instantly killed. A bullet entering the back of his head had been fired evidently by a passenger occupying the rear seat of the vehicle. The driver's pockets had been rifled and his money—about \$40 only, as was ascertained afterward—had been stolen. On the ground, apparently removed from a pocket by the murderer along with the victim's money, lay an empty pasteboard pill box of commonplace type.

But it was that worthless bit of pasteboard that afforded the sole conclusive clue to the solution of the mystery. Its white surface was blood stained. The assassin evidently had held it momentarily in his hand. The crime looked intricate to Suffern's local police talent, so they enlisted the aid of Commissioner Faurot, who went to work at it with zest. One or two persons were found who had seen a young man in conversation with the taxicab driver before they motored away from the station, but they had not paid much heed to his appearance.

Imperfect as was the description it enabled the police to arrest in Haverstraw a suspect William Ackerson. The prisoner made strenuous protest and denial, and there was no living person prepared to connect him directly with the crime. But Mr. Faurot's men photographed his palm print and studied it under the glass. They found that by laying off a parallelogram upon the palm the exact size of the pill box cover they had an accurate replica of the crimson imprint the assassin unconsciously had stamped upon the pasteboard lid. Ridge terminals, sweat pores and all other microscopic details were identical.

By the unanswerable testimony of the sweat pores also not long ago Dr. Edmond Locard, cooperating with the prefecture of police in Lyons, France, obtained a conviction in the famous case of Boudet and Simonin.

Commenting on the importance of poroscopy, Commissioner Faurot said in his recent address to the police chiefs: "As compared with one case where definite finger patterns are left upon the premises, there are dozens where only the marks of a few ridges can be obtained, and these often of other parts of the hand than the finger bulbs. Such fragments may be often identified by poroscopy if we have for comparison the prints of the corresponding parts of the hands of suspected persons."

Commissioner Faurot would like to enhance the yellow peril by making the humble Wan Lung and Sing Lee instruments of greater police efficiency. "The laundry mark on collars and shirts," said he, "frequently has been found all important in the identification of unknown dead or unconscious persons, persons mentally unbalanced, or those who temporarily have lost their memory. Every police department should have a laundry mark file, comprising a record of the indicators used by every laundry within the community."

"To complete this data effectively the city should be zoned and all laundries within the respective zones should have assigned to them uniform zone indicators. All laundries, dyeing and cleaning establishments, places devoted to hat renovation or, broadly speaking, any and all places to which are entrusted clothing or other articles of personal belonging for the purpose of laundry or renovation might be included. Such places should be licensed by the municipality and should be supplied with distinctive registration marks of identification to be indelibly marked on every article laundered or renovated, records of such registration marks to be kept by the police department."

The apparatus for the taking of finger or palm impressions for the Bureau of Criminal Identification of the New York Police Department is exceedingly simple and equally compact. The outfit now commonly used, indeed, is carried readily in a small suitcase, the small portable table being fitted with folding legs. When an extensive raid is contemplated it is customary

Charles Dickinson, Wealthy Retired Seed Merchant of Chicago, Has Flown for More Than a Decade

"Think you can meet the test—it's fairly stiff?"

"Reckon so," he said. "They demand that you go up 6,000 feet and stay an hour, and that you land within 100 feet of a designated target. Those are the main requirements. I've done that lots of times. I've driven my own plane up to 7,500 feet, and I can come pretty close to lying up against any target they set for me. I hope that doesn't sound like a brag, but, honest, I can do that. 'Course I've had a lot of accidents and have smashed up a few planes—Canadian J. N.-4s mostly—but all of us had gone through that experience."

He eyed the forbidding night and shook his head in disappointment.

"Here Diggins and I had it all fixed up to light out of here from Hazelhurst Field at 6 A. M. and to be in Cleveland for lunch by 10," he grumbled. "We had it figured out we could be in Chicago by 2, and I expected to be in my rooms at the Blackstone by the middle of the afternoon. Now comes this damned fog and rain and I don't know when we will get off. Got to go to bed now, anyway. Much obliged for listening to my rambling, and don't, for heaven's sake, make me out to be anything remarkable. I've never been in the newspapers and publicity scares me."

Friend of All Flying Men And Pillar of Air Progress

He drifted out of the room, very light on his feet for his bulk and years. I had begun to see a number of reasons why this "Dick" person was a first rate flying man. But there were gaps in his story and I wanted to fill them out. So I returned to the company in the smoking room. They heard me, nodding affirmation to all that Mr. Dickinson had seen fit to say.

"But he hasn't told you half," said Post of the Aero Club. "In all truth, that little old chap has done more for aviation than any other individual in America. He's worth millions, made out of the grain and feed business, from which he retired years ago, and his whole life is given up to love of flying and to developing the science. He lives at the Blackstone in Chicago when he's at home, but you're likely to find him any place in the country where there is a flying field. He knows 'em all and has flown from most of them."

"He's as liberal as a prince with his money and many an aviator in hard luck has been helped out by Dick. He never takes a dollar back. He makes 'em work it out." He insists that they cancel the debt by giving him rides. In that way he has pretty well covered the country, and the birds don't know the eastern part of the U. S. A. better than Charles Dickinson. Many of the skilled aviators that have given him rides have taught him tricks of their game and he stands to-day as a very competent pilot. There isn't a doubt that he will qualify for his license, and if he cares to drive a passenger machine between New York and Chicago I wouldn't have a qualm about taking a ticket. He's all right, that old boy. Whatever you write about him, treat him nice."

now for Sergeant Tom Reilly or some other expert of the bureau to pack his finger printing equipment along with his artillery, hop into a police car and accompany the riders to the firing line.

That is the way it was done in the recent roundup of the New York Anarchist and Communist headquarters. As soon as the scores of prisoners had been securely netted Sergeant Reilly opened his little suitcase and set up his equipment. Then, while his companions guarded the exits and "rode herd" on the "Reds," he inked his roller, prepared the plate glass and in the persuasive tones of a shell game "burker" urged: "Step right up, gentlemen, and have your fingers manicured! That's right, but don't crowd, and watch your step! There'll be cards enough for all of you and ink enough to go 'round! Fine, that's a beautiful smudge likeness! Now, sir, you're next!"

Scores of prisoners thus were recorded so rapidly that it took their breath, and even before they were hustled away in the "hurry up wagons" to the clanging music of the patrol gongs they had yielded up to the forces of law and order an identification tag that would spot them infallibly, whether tested in Kalamazoo, Turk's Island or Soviet Russia.

A somewhat more elaborate dactyloplane is the invention of Patrick Ryan of this city, finger print expert of the Municipal Civil Service Commission. Writing concerning the speed and accuracy with which that instrument does its work, Major Henry P. De Forest, M. D., a former surgeon in the Police Department, says:

"In a recent examination for patriotes, as the candidates were entering the room for the mental examination, a finger print impression of the right index finger was made. Eight hundred and fifty-four such impressions were taken in sixty-four minutes, an average of about four seconds for each candidate. To Dr. Henry Moskowitz, president of the New York Municipal Civil Service Commission, and his associates much credit is due for the inauguration, after a lapse of many years, of this accurate and rapid system for preventing impersonation and fraud at civil service examinations."