

FOUR KILLED WHEN AIRSHIP EXPLODES

Melvin Vaniman, Builder of Dirigible, Calvin Vaniman, Fred Elmers, Walter Guest and George Bourtellion Are the Victims.

ACCIDENT OCCURS 1,000 FEET IN AIR

Huge Envelope Containing Thousands of Cubic Feet of Gas Rent Asunder by Terrific Impact and Flames Burst Forth.

Atlantic City, July 1.—In view of three thousand spectators, the big dirigible balloon Akron was shattered by the explosion of the gas bag at 8:35 this morning, a half mile off shore over Absecon Inlet.

Melvin Vaniman, who built the airship with the idea of flying across the Atlantic ocean, Calvin Vaniman, his younger brother, Fred Elmer, Walter Guest and George Bourtellion, his crew, were instantly killed. No trace of their bodies has been discovered.

The dirigible was sailing at a height of 1,000 feet and had been in the air since 6:15 o'clock when the accident occurred. She was a quarter of a mile south of Brantline beach, which is across the inlet from this city. The huge envelope, containing thousands of cubic feet of gas, was rent by the explosion, probably caused by explosion from the sun's rays. It burst near the middle. A mass of flames hid the ship from view.

For perhaps ten seconds the half-million dollar dirigible was invisible while the air about the spot where she had been hovering seemed to be all flames.

Falls Like a Plummet. Then the ship, outlined sharply in the sunrise, was seen to fall like a plummet. First the understructure, or car, in which were perched the unfortunate men, held in by a meshwork put on after the second trip of the balloon three weeks ago, broke away from the envelope and up-ended the bow turning first in a slow arc. Then it reversed suddenly and plunged downward. Directly above, twisting in a long spiral, was the bag, a smoking mass of rubber and silk, with flames shooting out from a dozen sections as it collapsed. It fluttered a moment and then dropped after the car.

Recover Headless Body. In the descent something which appeared to be the body of a man shot out to the left of the wreckage and hit the water before the rest of the descending mass. It was reported that this was the headless body of Calvin Vaniman.

At 8:30 a. m., a message was relayed ashore from rescuers that this body had been recovered. With it came the statement from Captain Lambert Parker, of the Absecon federal life-saving crew, that this was true and that the other four members of the crew were entangled in the wreckage, beyond relief of the crew. In eighteen feet of water.

Hundreds of persons from every part of the resort are gathered along the inlet, boardwalk and about the Vaniman cottage just across from the hangar, at the inlet where Mrs. Vaniman collapsed and became unconscious from the shock.

Excitement On Shore. The greatest excitement prevailed for a time. Boats were darting out from the inlet and all along the shores of the thoroughfare and beach.

The police reserves who helped to launch the aircraft kept the crowds from about the Vaniman villa.

The flight was the second the airship had made. The last flight was made Saturday morning, June 1. The balloon was nearly wrecked by some of the mechanism going wrong but it was landed without serious mishap.

The longest flight the balloon made was last fall when it spent the greater part of the day in the air in the vicinity of this city. At that time the gas in the bag was not sufficient to keep the big ship constantly in the air and it had to make several landings. During the winter Vaniman improved the ship through lessons learned in that flight.

In general appearance, the Akron was not unlike the America, in which Walter Wellman and Vaniman attempted to cross the Atlantic ocean in October, 1910, but there were many differences in the construction. The gas bag was thirty feet longer than that of the America, but was smaller in diameter. The dimensions were: Length of bag, 258 feet; diameter, 47 feet. The bag was made of a composition of rubber and was constructed in Ohio.

Beneath was the car, similar in shape to the America's but longer, perhaps 150 feet long. The bottom of the car was composed of a long steel tank, two feet in diameter and 100 feet long. This tank carried gasoline and was connected with the bag by light steel tubing of light construction. On top of the structure was a platform of two-inch boards and on this rested one on-hundred-horsepower motor and a small dynamo. The 100-horsepower motor was used for the two forward vertical propellers.

These propellers could be turned from the horizontal to the vertical and were used to raise or lower the ship. The small motor and dynamo were used for electric lighting and for furnishing power to the wireless outfit.

The sleeping accommodations for

balloon collapse and dive down toward the water."

Another theory for the cause of the disaster is that a dangling rope of the rigging, dragged into the big propellers, whipped up into the stern end of the balloon and snapped off enough of the cone to free the gas, allowing the vapor to sweep into the engines and exploded.

Three of the widows of men killed in the airship are Mrs. Vaniman, Mrs. Bourtellion and Mrs. Elmer. They had gathered at the Vaniman cottage across from the hangar within an hour after the accident. Outside the little cottage was a crowd of probably 10,000 persons, men, women and children.

Mrs. Vaniman Faints. Mrs. Vaniman, although she fainted on the porch of her little dwelling when she saw her husband dropping to his death, stood the strain better than the others after she finally became conscious and was upon her Mrs. Bourtellion and Mrs. Elmer cried on Mrs. Vaniman's shoulder. Despite the intensity of the moment, Mrs. Vaniman talked of her husband.

Talks of Husband. "He was so very brave," she said, "that I believe he never knew what fear was. I never presumed to urge him not to go up for I knew it would not influence him. It would be more exact to say that he would not even hear what I said. He was devoted to his work, and flight in the air, however dangerous, was to him merely an incident. It was a step in the pleasurable science of navigation which he studied when he was awake and dreamed of when he slept."

"I shall never forget the feeling in my heart when he left me at 2 o'clock this morning. I had a foreboding of trouble. I believe it now as truly as I can believe anything, and I am not a superstitious woman either."

Saw One Man Jump. "Yes, I saw them fall. I saw one man jump. Something tells me that it was my husband. I saw him spread out in the air flat as he fell and then—oh, I can scarcely speak of it—all grew dark before me. They were so high in the air—it must have been a thousand feet. Before I fainted I now remember that the car turned with one end downward and it fell towards the sea like a cloth, all in a string. I can recall that picture all the rest of my days. It is photographed on my mind."

"All these years of my husband's struggle he and I have been as one. I planned with him, I shared his troubles and did what I could to encourage him."

"At times, in Europe, things were very depressing. But Mr. Sieberling of Akron has been a splendid friend. We have never heard from him one word except in praise."

"This Akron he was using for experiment only that he believed already past in the science of aviation. His particular reason for going up today was to try out a contrivance he had for estimating the speed an aeroplane travels, an invention of his own, based on measurements on ground glass of an inverted camera showing the earth or sea moving down."

Sieberling Astounded. Akron, Ohio, July 2.—Frank E. Sieberling, president of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber company, who was financing Vaniman in his attempt to fly across the Atlantic ocean, had not heard of the explosion of the Akron until informed by the Associated Press this morning. Mr. Sieberling was astounded at the news. He then hurried to a telephone in an attempt to get in communication with Atlantic City. Mr. Sieberling probably will leave for Atlantic City at once.

Mr. Sieberling refused to be interviewed, but it was said that the balloon had been filled with gas since last February.

It is believed at the rubber company plant where the balloon was made, that the explosion was caused by air mixing with the gas. It is also believed here that the gas might have been ignited by a spark from the engine.

SPORT

(Continued from Page Two.)

prepared to land a heavy wallop to the body.

"I used to swing a whole lot. Now I'm using the straight punches and hooks although I'm not a boxer."

Further than this, I've made up my mind that unless Johnson comes to me and makes some of the pace, that it is apt to be a slow fight for a few rounds. I'm going to fight him cautiously without rushing in, and hope that at scheme to neutralize his style of standing off for an opponent to whale away at him."

FLYNN WILL EAT CHICKEN BEFORE FIGHT. Las Vegas, N. M., July 2.—With the arena completed and the training of Jim Flynn and Jack Johnson practically ended for their fight here on the Fourth of July, interest was centered among the fans gathering here in the placing of bets. The champion is the favorite with odds apparently fixed at no better than 2 to 1. Flynn announced that as evidence of his intention to beat the champion at his own game he would break his fast the morning of the fight on broiled chicken.

Johnson, it is believed, will do the same, this being his favorite bird.

GIBBONS KNOCKS OUT BURNS IN FIVE ROUNDS. New York, July 2.—Mike Gibbons, the welterweight champion of England, in the fifth round of a scheduled ten-round bout at Madison Square garden last night. The knockout came eight seconds before the bell ended the round, and Burns was unable to face his opponent for the next round.

Gibbons weighed 154 pounds and Burns 148 1/2. Gibbons made play of his opponent from the start with left jab and right uppercuts. The constant jabbing drew blood from the Englishman's nose in the first round. Gibbons knocked Burns down for the count of two in the third round with a right hook to the jaw and in the next round repeated for a count of nine and when he arose put in a left hook to the jaw, sending his man down, completely out. At the count of eight the bell rang. Burns' seconds worked over him desperately, but he was unable to recover in the minute's intermission.

MONTANA BOXER OFF FOR PORTLAND BOUTS. Fred Fairchild, the popular young



President Taft

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