

THEY WANTED WINGS
CHAPTER FOUR
1940-1945

COUNTY AIRPORT BECAME REALITY IN 1940s

On February 16, 1940, Door County saw the use of an airplane in a lifesaving situation. Aussie Oleson and his brother, Henry, were cutting down trees on Henry's farm on Washington Island when a tree fell on Aussie, breaking two of his vertebrae, a rib and his ankle. Aided by his brother, he walked over a half mile to his home. Pilot Wally Arntzen from Escanaba was called, and Oleson was transported to the hospital there, where he was expected to stay for three months to recover.

The Advocate carried a front page story which sounds as if it came from the pen of Sumner Harris: "Thus again the need of airplane service between Washington Island and the mainland was demonstrated. The actual flying time between Washington Island and Escanaba is between 15 and 25 minutes, contrasted with the usual long time required to get a patient to Sturgeon Bay via boat and ambulance.

"In this case, perhaps the difference in time did not necessarily mean the saving of a life, but time often counts when a person is suffering with a broken back." The story went on to say that in the winter, a plane could land on Detroit Harbor with skis, but Islanders were worrying about what would happen if the airport was plowed up, because of the lack of funds to maintain it.

In March 1940, it was announced that Jack Hadden, the "Flying Fish Peddler," who concocted a plan to fly fish from Door County to St. Louis, was going to replace the plane he cracked up in Decatur, Illinois, with a new one. Hard luck seemed to pursue Hadden; in November, 1939, the plane he had just completed for the fish flights burned up in a hangar in St. Louis. Then, evidently, he'd cracked up another plane intended for the venture.

Records have yet to be found to prove Hadden actually shipped some fish by the first plane. The only evidence uncovered so far is a photograph brought in by Chester Ostram Jr. which shows Chester Ostram Sr. loading fish boxes into what seems like an older plane which looks like a Stinson Jr. or other corrugated metal sided plane.

In April 1940, Dr. Dan Dorchester arrived home from St. Louis where he had visited relatives and brought further news. Hadden would christen a new plane, the "City of Sturgeon Bay," to carry fish to St. Louis and it would be the largest single engine plane to land in Door County.

VALUE OF AVIATION SHOWN IN ISLAND ACCIDENT

On March 3, 1946, an event that had tragic potentials occurred on Washington Island, once again proved the tremendous values of having an airport.

Dick Bjarnarson, the 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Bjarnarson, was hunting in a woods across from his home that Sunday afternoon, accompanied by David Foss and John Gunnlaugson. Dick put his gun against a stump, but it fell down and the shotgun discharged. Most of the shot pierced his right elbow, one grazed his ear, and another scratched his chest.

John, who was standing nearby, called to David and the two walked Dick back to his home a quarter mile away. Oliver Bjarnarson had intended to deliver a fish (he was a commercial fisherman) to another Islander, but had a premonition he should go home, where he found his severely injured son.

Dick fainted from the shock and had to be carried into the house. Oliver called Dr. Farmer, the resident doctor, and Dr. Farmer called George Meredith in Sturgeon Bay, asking him to deliver blood plasma immediately. The plan was to take Dick to an Escanaba hospital for treatment. Wally Arntzen was also called over from Escanaba.

The airport being not far from the Bjarnarson home, Dick was loaded into George Meredith's three place Aeronca, along with Dr. Farmer. Oliver Bjarnarson boarded Wally Arntzen's plane for the flight to the Escanaba hospital.

However, Meredith's carburetor began to ice up 2000 feet over Rock Island, and he had to turn back and land on the ice at Jackson Harbor, which lies between Rock Island and the northeast corner of Washington Island.

Meanwhile, according to the March 8, 1946, Door County Advocate, another plane flew over from Escanaba and brought Dick's mother, Esther, back to the Escanaba hospital.

Due to the icing problem with Meredith's plane, Wally Arntzen crowded Dick and Dr. Farmer into his plane, but, as he taxied on the ice to take off, his plane sank through thin ice into shallow water where fishermen had been cutting ice.

The only alternative was to call Dr. Dorchester up from Sturgeon Bay. Esther Bjarnarson was frantically waiting at the Escanaba hospital, not knowing what had become of her son and husband. She was called and she was flown back to the Island.

Dr. Dorchester flew his plane up to the Island, and he and Dick were transported to Dr. Farmer's office near the shores of Detroit

connection with his work as manager of the Seismograph Service Corporation of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The next Advocate carried the sad news that Clarence Paul Anderson had died of his injuries in the plane crash. His body was brought to the Legion post clubhouse on the Island, where mourners paid their respects. Then it was taken to the new Trinity Lutheran Church, where Rev. Edwin Svendsen conducted the funeral. It was one of the biggest funerals held on the Island since the six Washington Island boys went through the ice in Death's Door in 1935. The Saturday before he was buried, he was to have served as an usher at the wedding of Marilyn Magnusson and John Djuplin.

Marilyn Djuplin recently recalled, "What should have been the happiest day in my life, my wedding day, turned out to be my saddest. Everyone was crying about Paul's death. I remember the last thing I said to Paul before he flew off to Menominee: 'You won't disappoint me, will you Paul? You'll be here in time for the wedding, won't you?' Paul said, 'No, I'll be there.'

"Our wedding was on Saturday, and Paul's funeral was on Monday."

Color bearers were Tess Gudmundsen and Doris Larson Hettiger, and pallbearers were Leonard Ward, Merrill Cornell, Wally Arntzen, Emery Oleson, Murray Cornell and Jerry Legrand, all of whom served in the military during World War II.

In a recent interview, Emery Oleson said, "I knew Paul Anderson very well. He was a very good pilot. I think what happened was the man Paul was training froze at the stick. That happens when you're doing something like that, diving. I think Paul tried to get the stick out of his hand but couldn't do it."

Oleson knows. He served in the U. S. Army Air Corps for three years himself.

PLANS ARE MADE FOR ADDITIONAL AIR SERVICES AND FIRST LOCAL AIR CASUALTY OCCURS

In November of 1946, George Meredith announced that he was starting a regular air service to Washington Island. Previously, flights to the Island were charter flights. (Unless you owned your own plane, like Claude Cornel, as was mentioned earlier. Emery Oleson explained that Claude bought the Stinson Jr. because his father, John W. Cornell, owned three fish tugs, and Claude would fly over the lake to see if weather conditions were good enough to take the boats out.)

MILESTONES IN ISLAND AVIATION

- 1927 First airplane lands on Island
- 1928 Islanders establish their own airport
- 1933 Claude Cornell purchases Island's first airplane
World's largest dirigible passes by east of Island
(13 June)
- 1936-38 Wally Arntzen makes regularly scheduled weekly
flights from the Island to Escanaba and Green Bay
- 1940 Town of Washington purchases airport for \$3500
- 1941 Dr. Dan Dorcester of Sturgeon Bay makes weekly
flights to Island to provide medical care in
absence of regular physician
- 1946 Air rescue mission on behalf of Dickie Bjaranson
- 1948 Surplus lights from Escanaba installed at airport
when Island gets electricity
- 1949 Federal government grants \$7200 to buy more airport
land and expand runways
- 1953 Lions Club sponsors first Fly In Fish Boil

- 1950-56 Ground Observer Corps activated; forty Island families involved
- 1968-69 Green Bay Aviation establishes daily flights to the Island during tourist season
- 1976-86 Dick Dawley establishes Scenic Aire Plane Rides and conducts air rescue searches for Coast Guard
- 1981 Terry Atkins' plane vanishes on a flight to Escanaba
- 1982 Wing-Air establishes weekly flights between the Island and Sturgeon Bay
- Four Minnesotans crash plane near airport (20 July)
- 1989-92 Butch Gordon experiments with aerial photography, homemade experimental plane
- 1991 Islanders establish E.A.A. Chapter 982
- 1992 Islanders establish Washington Island Flying Club; purchase plane
- 1993 E.A.A. Air Adventure Days for high school students

Compiled by G. Berquist
Washington Island Archives
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RELEASE TO DOOR COUNTY ADVOCATE
P.O. Box 130
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin 54235
Attn: Editorial Department

"Island Aviation Then and Now" will be the theme of a Washington Island Archives program, to be presented Thursday, July 15, at 7 p.m. in the Island Community Center.

The program will survey milestones in Island aviation from 1927 to the present and will feature the exploits of pioneer aviator Wally Arntzen of Escanaba, the construction of the Island airport in 1928, the Dick Bjarnarson rescue story (in which Dr. Dan Dorchester of Sturgeon Bay played a key role), the evolution of the Lions Club Fly In Fish Boils, and the recent establishment of both an E.A.A. chapter and flying club.

Panelists will include Goodwin Berquist, Dale Bjarnarson, Henry Nelson and Hal Dee.

A collection of historical photos and airport materials will be on display and slides will be shown. Admission charge is \$2.00.

Although they are some of the best in Southern Michigan. Economically and socially its farmers compare with the other farmers of Wisconsin, that state that is so adept at showing the way. Their cooperative organization has no counterpart in Michigan.

Door county has had much the same favor as the Grand Traverse region this spring, a late season holding back development of the growers and canners and the same. Scattered, 3,000 acres will soon be picked or first crop they have the 3,000 acres are 17,000,000 pounds year.

They are expected to be arranged by the association but the growers of the southern one having prospect this year, and being a great extent in Michigan. The Grand men, enthused over

All of the 34 who varied from 4,000,000 pounds to 16-

| Year | Dis. Packed |
|------|-------------|
| 1922 | 10,580,000 |
| 1923 | 6,000,000 |
| 1924 | 10,150,000 |
| 1925 | 5,500,000 |
| 1926 | 14,500,000 |
| 1927 | 4,300,000 |

The company's plant at Sturgeon Bay, which alone is the largest, is supplemented by two branches in the upper part of the island. Altogether the company operates 38 pitters with a capacity of 400 tons of cherries daily.

The company's property covers five acres and is valued at \$500,000. Of the 47 members of the Door County Fruit Growers Union, which is nothing more than a model farmers' co-op, 150 are stockholders in

(Continued on Page 16)

ISLANDERS GET PRICES ON FOUR LANDING FIELDS

WASHINGTON ISLAND—The committee of five to look after the probability of establishing an airplane landing field here has prices on four tracts, according to Nor Shellwick, as follows:
 Peter Hansen farm, 60 acres, \$6,000; Robert Gunnerson farm, 80 acres, \$5,000; Hans Hansen farm, 98 acres, \$10,000; and George O. Mann farm, 60 acres, \$4,500. Other fields considered but on which no prices had been received up to Monday are those of Jens Hansen, Geo. Hansen, and the tract formerly owned by Dr. Boubeck.

Largest Fixed Star

The Naval Observatory says that Alpha Scorpil (Antares) is the brightest star to be seen in the sky at the present time. It is about 400 million miles in diameter, about 100 times the

Where Payment Ends

Let me be content with the thought that parallel lines meet only in infinity, and let us for such our frame as to what else might happen to men after this meeting had occurred—Arthur Schmitzer in Vanity Fair.

There's Pam in Looking

If woman's intuition is so needed, tell them why does this look at eight or ten hairs before trying any?—Look while time
 construct some statutes, but in many instances more clarification will not be sufficient and amendment must be requested, the chairman said.

YOU SAY THIS TOOTH HAS NEVER BEEN WORKED ON BEFORE?



WELL HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THESE GOLD FLAKES ON MY DRILL?

Deferre troop

and unite upon a set of rules and regulations for the fishing industry that might prove beneficial to the legislature with little if any amendment, they may expect that the conservation commission will recommend the enactment into Wisconsin law of the federal regulations governing Great Lakes fishing. The conservation commission is considering asking the legislature to codify all conservation statutes and if this is attempted, the present regulations of commercial fishing will be closely scrutinized and with good reason, the conservation chairman declared. Great Lakes fishermen have heretofore been unable to agree upon such matters as the size of mesh in the nets allowed to be used, and there have been many changes by the legislature, all without giving general satisfaction. The purpose of the regulatory is not to oppress the fishermen or reduce his chances of earning a living, but to insure the future of the industry and continued prosperity for those engaged in it. It will not be one law or one interpretation of the law for one class of type of fishermen and another law or different interpretation for some other type or class. Where there is a continuing force of such a condition as that which exists at present in that the conservation commission is asked to refrain from strict enforcement of a statute pertaining to commercial fishing because such strict enforcement would work an injustice upon some men engaged in the business. In asking for codification of the laws regarding conservation, the commission has in mind the fact that there is a lack of clarity and harmony in the statutes that makes it uncertain how the courts might

—YOU MUSTA DRILLED CLEAN THROUGH TO MY BACK COLLAR BUTTON, BE JAGGERS!

PLANE USES NEW ISLAND AIRPORT

WASHINGTON ISLAND—Work is progressing nicely on the landing field here. The fences are removed and the shade trees are being cut down quite rapidly.

Owing to the fact that the town truck is out of commission so the road crew cannot haul gravel, the town has its men at the landing field to help prepare it for use. When it is finished it will have a runway from S. W. to N. E. approximately 150 rods long, and one from S. E. to N. W. about 25 rods shorter. The field is nearly level with a little rise to the westward.

A biplane, "The Swallow," from Escanaba, Mich., was sent here by the U. P. Airway corporation last Sunday and had a fairly busy day taking people up. It used the landing field as is now without a prepared runway or smoothing the surface. The plane left the fore part of the week with a prospect of returning in the near future.

Mrs. A. B. Johnson, the evangelist from Chicago, gave her last address in the Baptist church Sunday evening and left for Chicago Monday morning. Mrs. Johnson has a strong personality, is an excellent speaker. Earnestness and honesty were two characteristics which stood out in bold relief in her work. Neither could anyone say she is in the work for what money there is in it, for she paid all of her own expenses and contributed liberally to the local work.

The Island people are very much pleased with the results of the tuberculosis test of the cattle here last week, as there was not one "reactor." We believe Washington Island was one of the first towns in the state to have all of their cattle tested. The best information we can get shows that the results of the first test was about 30 reactors among about 800. The second test found about a dozen; the third test, 3; and some question about some of them; but giving the test the benefit of the doubt, all of those were slaughtered so the last signs of T. B. among the Island's bovines was so thoroughly eradicated that the fourth test, which occurred last week, proves there is no T. B. here and no one need fear to drink Washington Island's milk or eat its cheese and butter. This is surely a great benefit and satisfaction to the Island.

3 Aug 28

WASHINGTON ISLAND — What has come to be considered the Island's most important event of the season, the farmers' picnic, is scheduled for August 21, on Tuesday of next week.

This event has grown to be a sort of home coming day, or an Island reunion.

An interesting program is being prepared and among other interesting features the landing field will be in good condition and be used by two airplanes.

Let everybody help to make this a great day!

C. B. Herschberger, who has his summer home here, has the distinction of being the first passenger to be landed on the new airport here. He came one day last week as a passenger from Sturgeon Bay. Mr. and Mrs. A. Kalmbach of Sturgeon Bay were the next passengers. They arrived Sunday morning and were guests of the W. F. Koken family, who now own and occupy what was formerly the Kalmbach home.

Harvesting grain began generally on Monday of this week but many fields are too green for harvesting as yet.

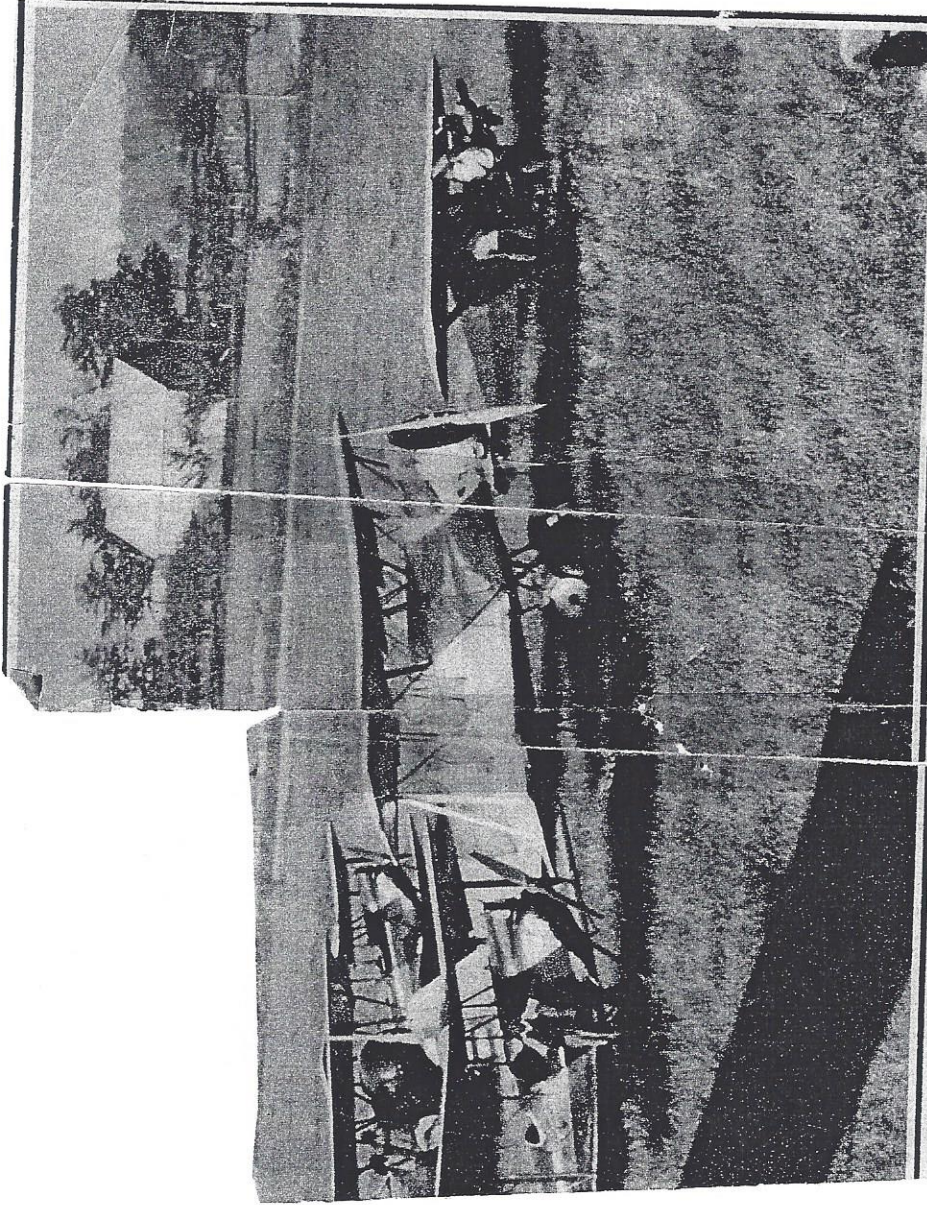
An interesting program was given in the Baptist church Tuesday evening this week by Miss Adafsen, and Miss Carrie Anderson, returned missionaries from China. The two ladies have been co-workers. Miss Adafsen gave a talk on the needs of China and the great benefits of the preaching the gospel there. Miss Anderson, dressed in a Chinese costume, gave a graphic description of a Chinese wedding. She told that marriages in China are in no sense love affairs, but the girls are sold by her parents to the parents of the groom, or husband, and becomes practically a slave to the parents of her husband. These engagements are made while the children are young, from twelve to thirteen years down to infancy. Sometimes intimate friends agree that if they have children they should be paired. The time of the wedding is usually a time of great mourning for the bride, who usually does not know to whom she is engaged until about three days before the wedding. There are no divorces in China. Miss Adafsen is now on her way to return to her work in China after a couple years' furlough. She stopped here for a little visit only.

A son was born recently to Mr. and Mrs. D. McDonald.

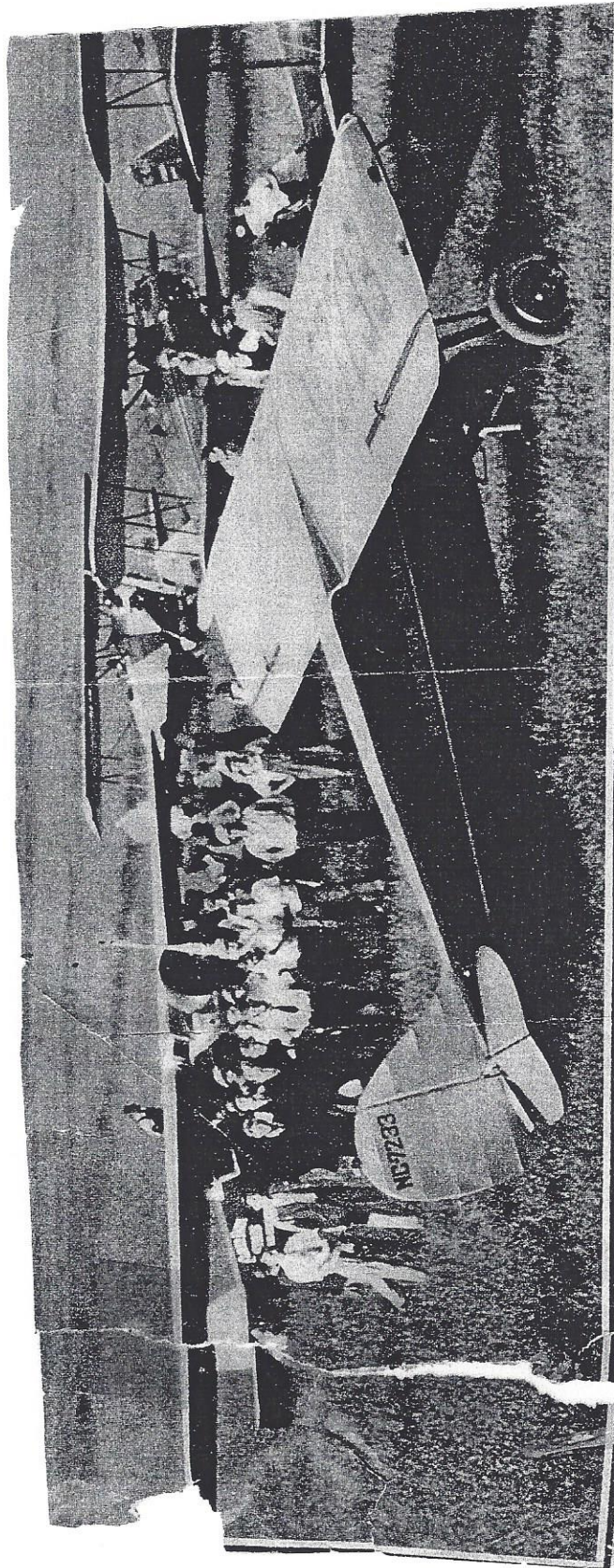
There has been much pilfering going on here for some time. Among other things Mrs. Robt. Gunnerson lost three young geese. The visitors had broken the lock. Mrs. Gunnerson got good tabs on the culprits and let them know it so they sent a delegation to settle the matter. She settled for \$2.00 apiece because she did not want to cast a reflection on the families of the thieves. She says the next time the law will have its full course.

The Washington Island Baptist church is putting on a special musical program next Sunday night, August 19. Several new songs will be rendered as well as special piano-forte and violin music. In addition to this stirring program, Evangelist David Wilcox will bring a message from "The Theme: 'The Greatest Question of the Day.'" The service starts at 7:45. All are urged to come early.

17 Aug 28



Eight planes from upper Michigan and an army
3 pilots. —Hansen & Jensen Photo



BUNCHED ON WASHINGTON ISLAND, Sunday, June 11, just before an aerial exhibition, were
plane from Chicago. Following a day of zooming sport, an aviators' ball was held for the visiting

by
11/11/11



HANSEN AND JESS STUDIO
WASHINGTON ISLAND, WIA