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Paul Studenski Collection - Scrapbook labeled Reminiscences of a Flier: To My Wife for Whom I Discontinued Flying

Extracted on Apr-17-2024 07:42:27

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[[newspaper clipping]]
Sunday Record-Herald
[[line]]

[Last Edition] CHICAGO, JUNE 16, 1912. [SEVEN PARTS]
[[line]]

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Aviator Studensky's "Idol" Protects Him, He Says
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Long years before the immortal Casey plunged Mudville into Stygian gloom by striking out in a pinch, ball players - that is, a great majority of them - cherished in secret some "fetish" or amulet, which in their belief warded off accidents to their averages and kept them "there or thereabouts" in their daily struggles for the top of the heap. In every branch of athletics one will find these superstitious ones, and while many cling to some "trick" calculated to bring luck, more through habit than anything else, there are as many more who actually believe that future events are influenced by their neglect or observance of these pet practices.

Still, while these devotees can be counted by the hundreds in athletics, there remains but one original aviator who can lay claim to his private "charm." Enter Paul Studensky, armed with his fetish and a command of five languages.

Studensky hied him to these United States from the "Land of the Little Father" last May, bringing with him a sad remembrance of a fortune dissipated, a diploma from the Imperial University of Russia, a speaking acquaintance with a quartet of languages and an insatiable longing to show American "birdmen" how to run an aeroplane.

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Soon after he had acquired his sheepskin, Studensky conceived the idea of learning to fly. He lost no time in getting to Etamps, France, where he learned the game from Alpha to Omega and back again. Louis Bleriot of monoplane fame, who assumed the role of teacher, was soon hiding his laurel wreathes, however, for the pupil showed remarkable nerve, natural ability and an uncanny intuition for doing the right thing at the right time - an acquirement generally the result of years of practice and many tumbles.

During his "class work" it was noticed by the curiously inclined, that Studensky never entered his machine unless accompanied by a "passenger." As this "passenger" took up but little space and Studensky wouldn't leave the ground without him no objections were raised. And the "passenger?" - nobody else but a little plaster of paris "god," hideous as a gargoyle and resembling in form and feature - if such things have forms and features - the American billiken. Every time Studensky cranked up for a joy ride in the clouds, this leering idol was perched above the driver's seat in a little niche fashioned there for him.

Do you think that Studensky would leave the ground now without his "protector?" Not for a minute! He firmly believes that he can't be hurt



while accompanied by this "joss" and he has passed through more accidents

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unscathed, than probably any other aviator in the world, he cannot be convinced to the contrary.

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Since Studensky came to this country he was scoffed at for this weakness and three fatal days while practicing at Cicero field he left the ground with the "joss" severely alone on the turf. And what is considered by many to be three curious coincidences, each of these three times he fell. The first was when he had risen to some 4,000 feet in a Curtis biplane. His motor stopped while at that altitude and although he glided to the ground in safety, the machine ran away from him when landing and ran into a fence, smashing one wing and injuring him slightly.

The second time he was piloting a Beach-National biplane and fell, this time scratching himself severely in addition to almost demolishing the machine.

One day last week he ran a Bleriot out of its hanger. The wind was blowing a young gale and the speed at which the cloudrack was going spoke plainly of a tempest overhead. Studensky, however, cranked up and started across the field.

"Say, you leaving Billiken behind?" some one remarked. He twisted around in his seat as if to return for it, and then evidently changed his mind. The monoplane rose in the air, tilted on a turn and when a puff of wind caught under the tail it ended up and dived fifty feet to the earth.

When Studensky with a broken rib rolled out from under the tinderwood that was once a soaring bird the first thing he said was, "I'll take 'him' along next time." "Him" is "it" - the joss.

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In addition to his superstitious weakness and his linguistic attainments, Studensky is conceded to be the most versatile flier in the world. He can pilot three types of machines, each with steering gears widely dissimilar from the other. Learning the game with Bleriot-Cloche type of gear, the diminutive Russian essayed the Curtiss "shoulder-brace" system next. His latest "steed" is the Beach-National, the largest aeroplane in the country. As no two of these machines are controlled in anything like the same manner, and when it is considered that steering an aeroplane, like riding a bicycle, is largely an instinctive operation, Studensky's successful work with three different types can be more easily appreciated.

Paul Studensky, the birdman, the mystic, the dare-devil and the scholar, can be seen any day at Cicero field, the flying enclosure of the Aero Club of Illinois, tinkering around his motors and contraptions or giving an affectionate pat to his "protector" before he sails aloft on what may be - confidence in that "fetish" of his - his last flight.

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