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Thomas DeWitt Milling Collection - Clippings

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...shington News
The Evening Star
WITH SUNDAY MORNING EDITION
WASHINGTON, D. C., THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1933.

Pioneer Airman Quits Army MAJ. MILLING HOLDS UNIQUE AVIATION RECORD

[[IMAGE: Two photographs, one inset]]
[[caption: Maj. Thomas De W. Milling (right), shown standing beside one of the planes he flew back in 1911. The other man is Maj. H. H. Arnold, a companion pioneer. Inset: Maj Milling as he is today.]]

AFTER 22 years of continuous military flying, beginning in the days when the United States had only two airplanes and you could count the number of airplane pilots on your fingers, Maj. Thomas De Witt Milling, Army Air Corps, is retiring because of ill health.

He is one of the few real pioneers to weather the whole period of military aviation history. For 22 years he flew in peace and in war, while aviation grew from a puny thing of little more than power-driven kites to its present far-reaching scope. Coming unscathed through this long and troublous period, he now is putting aside his wings at the age of 46 because of illness.

Ordered to Return Home.

War Department orders issued yesterday wrote the final chapter in one of the most remarkable careers in aviation when they directed Maj. Milling, now a patient at the Fitzsimons General Hospital, Denver, Colo., to return to his home in New Orleans next Sunday to await retirement. He has been an invalid for nearly three years.

The only career in American military aeronautics more remarkable than that of Maj. Milling is that of his commander, Maj. Gen. Benjamin D. Foulois, chief of the Army Air Corps, who was the world's first military pilot. Gen. Foulois, as a student of the Wright brothers, began his flying career in 1910 and for a year was the entire Army air service. Maj. Milling joined him a year later, and also learned to fly under the Wrights, with the cooperation of Foulois.

Some idea of the progress which has been made by aviation since Milling began to fly may be gained from the fact that he established two world records as an Army pilot which sound small, indeed, in the light of the achievements of the decade which has followed.

Set Mark in 1911.

Carrying two passengers, he set a new mark on September 28, 1911, by a record flight of 1 hour and 58 minutes in a Burgess-Wright plane at Nassau Boulevard, N.Y. It made him a national hero of the air.

Again, while on duty in Texas, he made a cross-country and endurance record flight with two passengers in a Burgess tractor. This was for the then remarkable distance of 220 miles, from Texas City to San Antonio, made in 3 hours and 50 minutes. Upon arriving over San Antonio, Maj.



Million remained in the air for more than 30 minutes, thus establishing a new American duration record of 4 hours and 22 minutes. His Burgess plane had a 70-horsepower Renault engine.

In these early days of the Air Corps, the Government had leased a 1,000-acre tract for flying purposes at College Park, Md. The first airplane received there was on June 16, 1911. During his stay there, Maj. Milling made a number of flights from College Park to Washington and return, which attracted much attention. Eventually there were four planes at College Park, a Wright biplane, a Burgess-Wright, a Curtiss 4-cylinder and a Curtiss 8-cylinder plane.

In the Fall and Winter months the school was operated at Augusta, Ga., but in the Spring and Summer the aviators returned to College Park. In August, 1912, Milling, then a lieutenant, took part in air maneuvers in New York State with Lieuts. Arnold, Kirtland and Foulois. Before the World War he was sent to Europe and trained at a number of flying centers abroad. Returning home, he organized the first flying school for the instruction of reserve military aviators.

Won D. S. C. Medal.

Upon America's entry into the World War, this pioneer aviator was ordered to overseas duty. His skill and experience was utilized in many important positions. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal as organizer and commander of the air service of the First Army. At Toul he also commanded the air service units. Belgium decorated him as an officer in the Order of Leopold, in recognition of his services.

After the war, when he was restored to the rank of major, he helped organized the Air Service school for field officers and later was placed in command of it. He also was on duty in the office of the Chief of the Air Corps in Washington after graduating from the Command and General Staff School in 1927.

In the Summer of 1930 he was sent to the Fitzsimons Hospital because of the illness which now necessitates his retirement from active service. In the opinion of Air Corps men he was probably the greatest Army pilot developed in these days of pioneering and ranked with the foremost in the world. Major. Milling, at 46 years of age, has played an important part in developing Army aviation to its present high efficiency.

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