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Knabenshue Collection - Magazine articles, 1966-1971

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Mr. Aerial Photographer continued

housing developments.

But this is today- more of the past is important in understanding Mayfield and his career.

Usually mild-mannered and calm, Mayfield was impatient when stranded one day on the third floor of the News building during the 1913 flood. His thoughts that day—"I ought to be out taking pictures now. This is the biggest story in Dayton's history." He worked on that flood assignment and a second flood assignment followed in 1937. It was the Ohio River flood. On this assignment, Mayfield, in a plane piloted by J. C. (Slim) Gregory, took pictures of the flood ravages from Marietta to Cincinnati.

Mayfield, under contract to Pathe News, used his own plane (his firm operates two now) and shot 5,000 feet of film. But his desire for the unusual almost cost him his life. As Gregory skimmed the water heading into Cincinnati, Mayfield decided he wanted a picture of the city's waterfront. About the same time, the plane's main tank ran out of fuel.

The firm had owned the plane only a few weeks Gregory knew there was an auxiliary fuel tank, but fumbled momentarily for the switch. The bridge ahead was looming larger. The plane couldn't pull above it without fuel and it couldn't glide beneath because of the high water. Mayfield felt a hair separated the plane and the bridge when Gregory finally located the switch, raced the motor and pulled over the bridge. He missed it by inches.

Aerial pictures began to dominate Mayfield's photography. He requested a commission as a photographer in the service, but it was turned down in 1918 because the classification was filled.

This military association found Mayfield in close touch with Colonel George W. Goddard and Major A. W. Stevens, who were pioneering aerial photography for the Army Air Force. The start of Mayfield's association with this military pair came in 1925 as the Air Corps was about to start its first maneuver using the new heavy bombers of that day.

Mayfield was signed on at the last minute as a civilian photographer when the regular Army cameraman was forced to drop out because of a death in his family.

"I took 15,000 feet of film during those maneuvers," Mayfield says, adding, "That was about 10,000 feet too much but that was what they wanted— pictures of everything"

Mayfield's Army work preceded by only a few months the full launching of his personal aerial photography career.

It began with Gregory, former stunt man with an aerial circus, and Roscoe Turner, who was to become one of the best known pilots in aviation. They barnstormed through eight states.

Mr. Aerial Photographer continued

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The idea for the barnstorming tour was born in the summer of 1925 at the airport of Johnson's Flying Service southeast of Dayton.

Mayfield had been taking pictures with Gregory from the air for several years.

He used pilots and planes from Johnson's Flying Service. One of the newer, younger pilots was Roscoe Turner. Turner was young, but he was not new to aviation. He had come to Dayton from his home in Huntington, W. Va. Before he met Mayfield, he had been barnstorming through the south and southeast in a two-engine Sikorsky and doing exhibition flying at state and county fairs.

"Why don't we take a swing around the country," Turner proposed. "We can make more money than the way you're doing it now."

The trio was comparatively uneventful until they reached at the ocean falls in London, Tenn. There, during a fall in the photography business, they took up passengers for short rides.

As the "Jenny" whirled rapidly toward the white board fence of the reserved infield, Turner manipulated the controls frantically. He barely man-

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Turner was young, but he was not new to aviation. He had come to Dayton from his home in Huntington, W. Va. Before he met Mayfield, he had been barnstorming through the south and southeast in a twin-engine Sikorsky and doing exhibition flying at state and county fairs.

"Why don't we take a swing around the country," Turner proposed. "We can make more money than the way you're doing it now."

The trip was comparatively uneventful until the incident at the county fair in London. There, during a lull in the photography business, they took up passengers for short rides.

As the "Jenny" wheeled rapidly toward the white board fence of the racetrack infield, Turner manipulated the controls frantically. He finally man-
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