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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Forkner, Joseph R.

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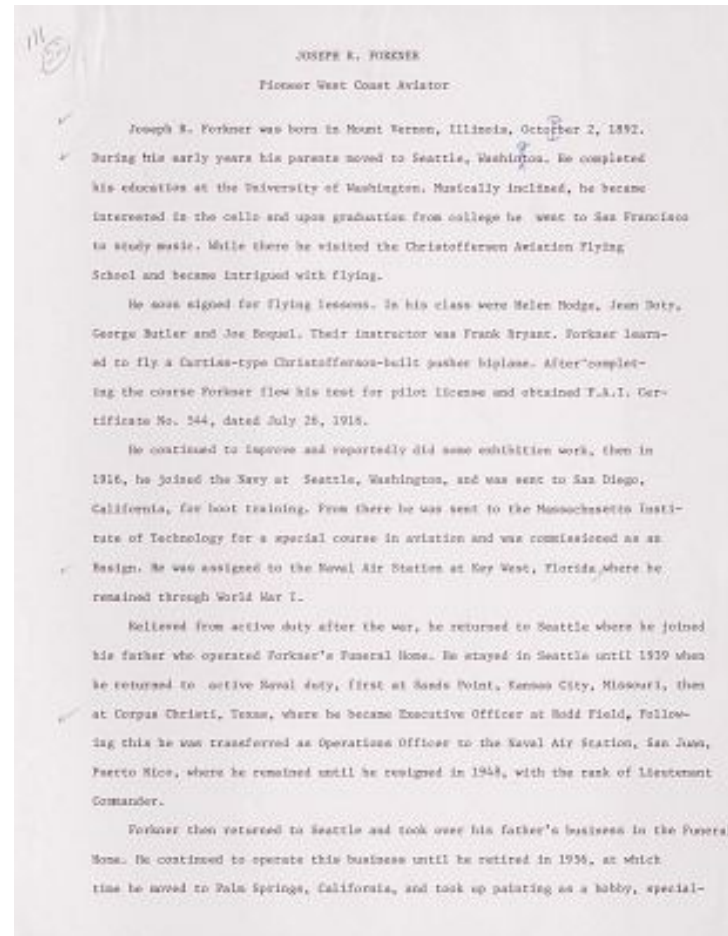
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JOSEPH R. FORKNER

Pioneer West Coast Aviator

Joseph R. Forkner was born in Mount Vernon, Illinois, October 2, 1892. During his early years his parents moved to Seattle, Washington. He completed his education at the University of Washington. Musically inclined, he became interested in the cello and upon graduation from college he went to San Francisco to study music. While there he visited the Christofferson Aviation Company and flying school and became intrigued with flying. He soon signed for flying lessons. In his class were Helen Hodge, Jean Doty, George Butler and Joe Boquel. Their instructor was Frank Bryant. Forkner learned to fly a Curtiss-type Christofferson-built pusher biplane. After completing the course Forkner flew his test for pilot license and obtained F.A.I. Certificate No. 544, dated July 26, 1916. He continued to improve and reportedly did some exhibition work, then in 1916, he joined the Navy at Seattle, Washington and was sent to San Diego, California, for boot training. From there he was sent to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for a special course in aviation and was commissioned an Ensign. He was assigned to the Naval Air Station at Key West, Florida where he remained through World War I. Relieved from active duty after the war he returned to Seattle where he joined his father who operated Forkner's Funeral Home. He stayed in Seattle until 1939 when he returned to active Naval duty, first at Sands Point, Kansas City, Missouri, then at Corpus Christi, Texas, where he became Executive Officer at Rood Field. Following this he was transferred as Operations Officer to the Naval Air Station, San Juan, Puerto Rico, where he remained until he resigned in 1948, with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Forkner then returned to Seattle and took over his father's business in the Funeral Home. He continued to operate this business until he retired in 1956, at which time he moved to Palm Springs, California, and took up painting as a hobby, special-



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