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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Johnstone, Ralph

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dips and dives, and it was here the press began to call them "The Heavenly Twins", a phrase that stuck with them from that time. On October 25th Johnstone set a new altitude record of 7,300 feet, besting Drexel's height of 7,180 made the day before. On October 27th both Johnstone and Hoxsey got caught in a high wind while attempting altitude flights and were blown backwards and away from the field. They drifted for several miles and became separated. Hoxsey landed first at Brentwood Park, Long Island, 24 miles east of Belmont, and Johnstone went on to Middle Island, 42 miles from Belmont, before he succeeded in getting down. The Wrights were really alarmed over this incident. Both men flew back to the meet the next morning. Several times during the meet Johnstone brought the crowds to their feet by his tight spiral drops from altitude. On the last day, Johnstone really outdid himself when he established a new American altitude record of 9,714 feet in 1 hour, 45 minutes, a record that stood for some time. On the climb, he almost ran out of gas and at 3,000 feet on the way down the engine stopped, so he glided into a landing.

Following this Johnstone was entered in a meet at Overland Park, Denver, Colorado on November 16th to 19th. Also at this event were Brookins and Hoxsey. There during the afternoon of the 17th Johnstone, at age 30, was instantly killed in a bad crash. He was making a tight spiral drop and for some time had been trying to best the Brookins record of a complete circle in 5 seconds. Evidently, he stressed the machine beyond its limit and at 800 feet a strut failed and the wings collapsed. Wilbur Wright said of him later, "Johnstone always wanted to be able to do anything anyone else could do, and do it better if possible." Brookins took his remains to Kansas City for burial. He was survived by his wife and two children living in New York, and an invalid sister and a close uncle, both living in Kansas City. He had married his wife, a German, in Berlin during his traveling days.

Flying Pioneer Ralph Johnstone was a happy-go-lucky sort of fellow, did

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