

### A.S.M.E. Dedication of Wright Flyer III

Everyone has seen things they'll never forget. I call those experiences "flashbulb" moments...your mind takes a picture of a scene that affects your life in some way forever. And the moments we photograph in our heads can capture a range of feelings from complete wonder to "I don't ever wanna see that again". Next door, the theatre presentation in Wilbur Wright Hall highlights the flashbulb moments of Uncle Orv and Uncle Will's quest to fly by sounding the pop of a camera's flash with each historic step of invention. Today, I'd like to share with you some flashbulb moments, both old and new, in regards to this beautiful machine, the 1905 Wright Flyer III.

As mentioned before, the 1905 was Uncle Orv and Uncle Will's most extraordinary achievement. This flying machine could take-off and land safely, fly for extended periods of time (which was directly related to the amount of gas in the tank), and it could bank and turn consistently, thanks to the pilot's separate controls for pitch, roll, and yaw. While the Wright Flyer III was soon deemed the world's first practical aeroplane, the reviews of its early performance on the afternoon of October 15, 1905 at Huffman Prairie were mixed to say the least. A small crowd of spectators had gathered along the fence at Amos Stouffer's farm to watch the Wright boys that day. And

their flashbulb remembrances of exactly what took place on that prairie varied greatly.

I quote:

“Like a duck”, said drugstore clerk Reuben Schindler, as one brother landed the aeroplane safely. “She squatted on the ground.”

“No”, disagreed Henry Webbert, another observer, she was more like “a turkey descending from the trees.”

And if those comments don't complete your snapshot of that day, Mr. C. S. Billman, a West Dayton neighbor of the Wrights, summed it up beautifully when he said, “Well, she flies.”

Perhaps these eyewitness accounts are not a particularly strong endorsement for the reason we are here today, and that is to honor the Wright Flyer III as a Mechanical Engineering landmark. Ah, but I still have my flashbulb moment to recall...

On December 17, 1998, much like the scene at Huffman Prairie, a group of folks gathered around this very railing to see the '05 Flyer and witness history again. The excited crowd filled this entire hall and it included many Wright family members: my husband, my children, my brother and sisters, in-laws, lots of nieces and nephews, and Nana, also known as Marion Wright. As the media and special guests took their places,



my eyes were focused on the Flyer and four men in the pit: Steve, Steve, John and Wick. Three American heroes, one personal hero... When everyone quieted, my father, Wick Wright, carefully stepped through the wires of the '05 and he began to explain to all present how the Flyer achieved safe take-offs and safe touch-downs almost 100 years ago. No one was more interested in the capabilities of this tiny aeroplane than Discovery pilot Steve Lindsey, Discovery mission's specialist Steve Robinson, oh- and their Discovery crewmate, Senator John Glenn. Definitely, a flashbulb moment. The three astronauts' respect for the Wrights' achievements was so obvious as they took in every detail of the machine. As real flashes popped, they spoke about it enthusiastically with my father, asking all sorts of questions, wanting to try the controls. Our nation's brightest pilots, scientists, engineers...and a muslim moth of a flying machine.

The next day, the Dayton Daily News headline read, "Bringing History Home", and its story recounted Senator Glenn's presentation to the Carillon of a 1903 Flyer swatch that he had taken with him on his historic second journey in to space. But that headline held another meaning for me. I believe it described the astronauts' delight in returning to the birthplace of flight and their joy in paying homage to this infant of aeroplanes and the world's first pilots, the Wright Brothers. I will never forget that evening.

Today, as a result of that flashbulb moment, I understand more clearly why other families, students, teachers, maybe even another drugstore clerk or two will visit this amazing machine here at Carillon Park. In light of America's recent tragedy, I understand again the importance of safe take-offs and landings, and I understand the heroism of men and women who fly. Finally, I understand how the 1905 Wright Flyer III launched mankind from a prairie to the stars. In closing, it is the Wright family's hope that this new landmark of the American Society Of Mechanical Engineers will continue to inspire flight and ignite flashbulb moments for all who are lucky enough to view it.

Thank you very much!

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