

The first time up.

With a certain amount of desire to do my well known "bit", during the recent fracas overseas, I called at a recruiting station, and gave myself up.

Being overweight and suffering from a large family, I was at once rejected, with the remark, that the government could not support another orphan's home, under the then, present conditions.

Leaving the place, with a feeling of elated dejection (that's good, I'll say) I hurried home and showed my enlistment card, that had not been filled in, to my waiting wife, who at once collapsed without waiting to read it. My own battalion, or home guard rushed hither and yon, in an effort to revive my momentarily defunct spouse.

As she came to, she noticed the little white card, and gave groan and passed out again.

This time I grabbed the little card and hastily put it in my pocket and sat down beside the recovering generalissimo of the home guard. Assuring her as she became fully conscious that I had not enlisted, I was rewarded with a short but snappy lecture on the inadvisability of giving me a sudden shock.

Feeling that I was the one that had received the shock, I went more or less quietly about my business of taking the roll call, and marching the troops to their sleeping quarters.

Three quarters of an hour later, I returned downstairs and had a chat with my wife which ended in her being a little fussed that I was unfit for the army — can you beat it — sore because I tried to enlist — sore because I couldn't — oh well.

Then the war records commission was formed, and here I thought was my chance to do that everlasting "bit". Sure enough I was accepted without any question about my physical fitness.

Two weeks later I went to have my trial flight, — oh yes I was given the job of recording the air force's activities — exacting, what?

No man condemned, and waiting in a death cell ever suffered more than I during those two weeks of waiting — the days rushed forth in quick succession and the fateful day of the trial flight arrived.

Very neatly arranging to miss my train to the flying camp — I came home happy that I would have another day's respite. On arriving at the house a motor car was waiting outside, and I thought how nice it was to be back to receive the visitors, but my joy was short lived.

My wife's brother had just dropped in, on his way to Niagara, which incidentally was just beyond the flying camp.

Telling them I had missed my train, Jake, the brother, said "see that's great, I can take you over in the car — you know I have to pass Beesville, and will be tickled to have your company". Ye Gods, what a life, here I was up against it, but could not do otherwise than go along. Holding the good wife in what I thought would soon last embrace I cheerfully bade her "so long".

To add to my cheerfulness, as we passed down Yonge St. a plane was crashed in the middle of the road, and the pilot was being put in the ambulance in sections.

Jake noticing my sudden pallor, hurried the car passed the "cheer's light" and rapidly told six soldier's stories, in succession. Each story I had not heard more than four or five hundred times previously.

He stopped at Hamilton and bought a cigar — oh what a cigar. Did you ever smell burnt Sour Kneat — no? — well you haven't missed much.

A few miles past Hamilton planes could be seen soaring and looping about, and here Jake said, Well old time, you're a lucky dog to get a chance to fly. I sure did wish as we drew closer to the camp that I could fly — away from there.

Bidding me a cheery farewell, Jake drove off leaving me like a rabbit in a lion's cage.

Immediately a sentry, cross questioned me, and upon showing my credentials, summoned a passing constable and had him lead me to the O.C.'s office. The O.C. was out, but the adjutant said he would look after me.

He called in a young and dapper, American officer, who was training

there and suggested that he share ⁽³⁾ his quarters with me. Upon learning I was an artist he cheerily bore me off and had his batman prepare a bed and look after my "bags".

Lunch had been served, but they took me in to the officer's mess and put a meal before me that looked much to me, as a condemned man's last meal, would look to him. The coffee was about all I could manage, besides I had a feeling that it would be useless to eat food that I would not be needing.

Scanning my untouched lunch and going outside I was met by the O.C., a fine big cheerful chap, who greeted me with "Well you're going to try it out eh? Well, Well, I hope you like it."

We left the building and briskly walked (at least he did) to the hangars - that word seemed ominous in itself.

Major Gibson, we'll call him, chatted cheerfully, about crashes and the number of cadets in the hospital not being as many as usual, but you never could tell. - Ah Ford, how long?

The major called a clean shaven, fair haired, Appleton-like, young officer and introduced him to me, and said he would look after my flights - flight, I thought he should have said.

Lieutenant Kumber (another suggestive name) said that all the good machines were out but he thought he had one that might do.

Suffering Shrinks, I thought this is the last straw, so I said, as cheerfully as I could, "I say old bean, you know I have a large wife and a stirring family and strangely enough I would like to come down alright." He laughingly replied with a strong glitter in his eye, "Oh, we come down alright."

A helmet, goggles and leather coat were brought to me, which I put on as slowly as possible without seeming to lag. Then the plane, that might do, was pushed into position, and I was told to step into the front seat in the cockpit. Major Gibson came

running over to me and said, ⁽⁴⁾ how you might sign this just before you go up, seeing that you are a civilian, handing me a slith of paper as he spoke. I noticed it was a release of responsibility on their part. He climbed up along side and fastened a very wide belt around me that comforted me not a little.

Then I bravely took out my sketch book and pencil, and said, "God help me, I'm ready."

First, Kinbar climbed in the back seat, and we cranged signals, such as, left hand up - go left, right hand up - go right. Both hands up - I'm finished my work. I merely put both hands up right there.

The major said "Look here, Kinbar, no stunts", to which Chapfield said, "Oh, I'll not interfere with Mr. Gilbrun's work."

Then the man around stepped back, and I was grateful that the goggles were shielding my eyes, because if they looked as I felt, they would have stopped the flight.

A mechanic stepped in front of the plane to "swing the prop", as they call it, and said, "Ready?"

Kinbar, I think said, "Such is". Then, switch off, then, switch on and there was a roar that scared the wits out of me. I ducked behind the cockpit, at which everyone around shrieked with laughter. I could not hear them, but I could see, and gradually straightened up again.

The draft from the roaring propeller was shaking the flesh on my face, and this was being responded to by my "inwards".

In a moment, the roaring increased till I thought I would be blown to fragments, then the plane started to move off, "taxi" they called it. Looking gingerly over the side, I noticed ~~the~~ that we were rapidly moving over the rather rough ground. A sudden change took place, and wondering what it was, I again looked over the side and I found that we were just touching the ground once in every fifty feet or so and tearing along at a great rate, my excitement was intense.

The little bumpings finally ceased, ⁽³⁾ and flooded out, and instead of the machine racing along the ground, the ground was rushing away beneath us and I thought, it's all off, we're in the air.

The actual flying was much more pleasant than I anticipated, and my extreme nervousness was beginning to leave me, but it wasn't leaving me much.

Flying in a spiral upward, everytime, the plane turned upward and the great silver wings towered up on one side, and fell away on the other, I thought were were about to upset, but it always righted itself and higher ever higher we rose till the land below became a beautiful map with a somewhat geometric design, of all colours, broken by light ribbons that were the main highways.

Then we flew out over the lake, and here I began to make notes feverishly, and signalling as a subject suggested itself to me.

Flying out well over the lake, that was intensely blue, the sandy shores seemed like a golden fringe on the blue jewel.

Here my frantic ramblings were brought to a sudden stop by the engine, starting to cough, spasmodically. Kinkler immediately turned around and pointed the nose of the plane downwards and raced it as hard as it could go — this seemed to be what was needed, for the machine gun, straggler, of the motor picked up again and continued without interruption.

Running smoothly again, we again spiralled up and up till the machine would go no higher. The land below was bathed in a blue veil and the pattern was less sharply defined.

Making many notes and rapid diagrams in my sketch book, I then proceeded to give the signal, that I was finished.

Kinkler who had been flying the machine smoothly enough for me to write, and sketch, upon receiving the signal that I was finished suddenly seemed to lose control, and we dived head first towards the distant earth.

If it had not been for the belt ⁽⁵⁾ about my body, I would have been pitched headlong into eternity, and pieces. The spheres rapidly turned in circles as we fell and I thought, really, that the end was very near. I tried to look over the side, and as I did so I felt as if we were in the center of an aerial vortex from which we could not extricate ourselves. The fields below were quickly coming up close ~~every~~ second, and instead of being rectangular seemed to have only three sides and made me feel as if we were sailing around and heading down into a huge pie of which we would be the falling. I tried to look up, and down, and through the hole in the floor of the plane, but my brain reeled — then suddenly the plane flattened out and veered around and went roaring into the higher air again — again I put up both hands that I was completely finished — in every respect, at which Kinber dipped his nose down again for a few hundred feet and threw the plane into a loop, flew a little farther then turned a side roll ~~roll~~ finishing with what is called an Immelmann turn.

Terrible thoughts that I was doct with a machine, tempted me to jump out into space and definitely get it over, without any more torture, but the belt held me fast.

Kinber calmed a bit, and started to float the machine down in long sweeping spirals, that stirred my interests around till they felt like a boiler full of spaghetti.

At once, he shut off the engine and pointed the nose down to what I could now see was the perodrome, trees, fields, houses and roads pushed up at us all in a mad rush to destroy.

Then came the bump, bump, bumping and we were again tapping across the fields.

They had to help me out of the machine, my brain refused to function — when they let go I sat on the ground and hung on.