

through hard work, capitalizing on opportunity, risk taking, and investment in his businesses. Lastly, Charlie embraced progress and innovation. It may be unfair to entertain stories claiming he stunted Concordia's expansion in refusing to sell his land. Perhaps the answer lies in this next part of the story.

Years later, the city wanted to build a municipal airport. They wished to do it next to Blosser Field. They approached Charlie with a proposal to purchase the land. However, it was right in the middle of his farmland, so he declined. The city then gave him an ultimatum, either sell, or they would take it by condemnation. It was the latter that would prevail, and the city took the land. When it was time to apply for the funding needed to build, they were denied because of Blosser Field. The city again stronghanded Charlie to accompany them to the FAA in Kansas City to remove "Blosser Field" from the government arial maps. Unbeknownst to them, the head of the FAA was a personal friend of Charlie's. He told the city Charlie could not be forced to remove his name from his airfield. Instead, he proposed a

compromise that they remove the name if the city named the airport Blosser Municipal Airport. They agreed and the city would get its aid. It was also agreed, because the city had taken the airport land, it could not be used for any other purpose than the airport without Charlie's permission. Years later Charlie would give permission for the National Guard Armory and the Weather Bureau to be built on the land.

This author has to question if the city hadn't simply taken Blosser's land, perhaps he might have been more willing to sell other lands years later when the city requested.

This author has become quite fond of Charlie and would love to share more stories of Charlie's heroic rescue of people stranded in the Republican River Flood of 1935, or how Isabell was instrumental in getting city names on water towers, or the or tales of famous aviators Charlie knew, or flights he took. Sadly, space does not allow. You'll have to seek those stories.

Charlie was inducted into the Kansas Aviation Hall of Fame in 1990, a true aviation pioneer.

KELLER'S PLANE COMES HOME

This author has mentioned Don Kerr before, and we visit him yet again. After Keller sold his plane in 1935, it made its way back to the Keller family where it sat in their barn for 45 years. Keller's son, Leland, decided it was time for the plane to come home and donated it to the Cloud County Museum. With no room for renovation, Don

took the plane to his shop, which to-day houses the POW Museum. It had no motor, wheels, tail, or running gear. He used photos and the 1978 story by Clarence Paulsen to reconstruct the plane. He crafted a new propeller and wings as well. It doesn't fly to-day, but you can view it at the Cloud County Museum.

CCCC TAKES TO THE SKIES

Small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) are taking the world by storm. We know them commonly as drones.

It is exciting to see Cloud County Community College among those leading the way. Oh, what possibility!



Lady Shirley's SOCIETY PAPERS

Eighth Edition, September 2025

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY STORIES

Dearest Reader,

On a seemingly ordinary day, December 17th, 1903 in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the world changed forevermore. Orville and Wilber Wright completed the world's first successful flight. It only lasted 12 seconds, but in those moments, the sky was no longer the limit, but merely the beginning.

Contemplating the marvel of flight, it has come to this author's attention that the skies, once gifted to the birds, the moon, and the stars above, have been conquered by the most brilliant of minds and the most courageous of hearts.

The tales of man's mastery of the heavens are as exciting as any scandal discussed in the society circles of Cloud County.

What a thrill that Concordia has long been able to boast its position in the forefront of aviation. As the world began to traverse the skies, so too were Concordians. Their skilled hands, curious minds, and steadfast determination led the way.

Our skies are dotted with marvels of innovative engineering from passenger planes carrying travelers over oceans and continents to unmanned drones that silently whirr overhead.

The motto of the great state of Kansas boldly proclaims, Ad Astra Per Aspera! Kansans fully understand keeping our eyes toward the stars, despite the difficulties.

*Yours truly,
Lady Shirley*

ALL EYES ON THE SKY

As we take off on our adventure, this author promised a continuation of a tale of heartbreaking tragedy from the June races edition.

spotted in the distance jumping from a hot air balloon. All eyes were on the sky.

The regular parachuter had quit in a huff the previous day, and a new young man agreed to do the jump for \$5 pay. His first parachute jump. It would also be his last. For on that fateful evening, the nervous young man, reluctant to go through

'Twas the final day of the 1929 Fall Festival. The KC Monarchs were playing the Concordia Travelers in a baseball game, the terrapin derby was underway, and a parachuter was

with the contract, jumped. The parachute opened, cheers came from the crowd, and then horror and gasps followed as the

parachute strings tangled with the air balloon. The 29-year-old's neck snapped and he died instantly.

KELLER'S AIRPLANE

Frank E. Keller once owned the building Maverick's Steakhouse occupies to-day. Inside that old automobile station is where he built, according to Clarence Paulson in 1978, *"the first and only airworthy plane ever constructed in Concordia, Kansas."* For this story, let us rewind well before 1978, to a time when aircraft was a new fascination.

To offer a description of Mr. Keller, this author defers to Mr. Paulson: *"Keller was an unusual man, with an active mind, skilled hands, musical talent, and a wide range of interests. He was an inventor of sorts, having applied for patents on a Model T Ford automobile battery carrier, a rivet set forming tool, a school merry-go-round, a brake system, an oscillograph and other small mechanical and electrical devices. His varied interests and accomplishments included photography, antique collecting, and the playing of string and brass musical instruments. He held a copyright on a piano composition. On April 15, 1930, he installed a radio in his 1925 Buick automobile as a demonstration model to promote sales. Probably his was the first car radio in town."*

He began building an airplane in 1929. Obtaining plans, he set his hands to work. Adapting automobile parts, sawing spruce, looking at second-hand stores, and sorting through junk piles, Keller's plane began to take form.

Community members would gather to watch Mr. Keller build his airplane in his shop, though no one believed it could ever possibly fly. As this author knows quite little about the

workings of machinery, let alone engines and the innerworkings of an airplane, one does find interesting how he managed to power the machine. Allow me to defer to Clarence Paulsen once more. *"For power, a Model T Ford engine was first installed. That engine was not quite powerful enough, so Keller bought from Carl Conley, the local Ford automobile dealer, a used Model A engine. This engine came out of an old delivery truck formerly used by Matt Sanger to deliver the products of his Concordia Bottling Works. The truck had been traded to Conley after having traveled more than sixty thousand miles. Keller put new pistons in the engine, changed the oiling system a little, and added a centrifugal-force water pump. He modified the head of the motor so that the water would circulate through faster. He stepped up the compression ratio. He replaced the regular Ford ignition system with a high tension magneto. He installed this modified motor in his plane, and, presto, his power problem was solved."*

By March 1930, the little monoplane's framework was complete and ready for covering. Shortly after it stood proudly in the battery shop, its silver wing a little higher than a man's head, its length about 19 feet, and its wingspread 28 feet and 5 inches. Its overall weight was 700 pounds, of which the motor account for 222 pounds. It was ready for a test flight."

Keller was not licensed to fly a plane. He called upon his friend, Valta Lewis, who often did stunt flying, and he agreed to fly it. A little over 4 months after Blosser Field was dedicated, Lewis took the plane up on three successful test flights at the field. Later

that month, he completed three more successful tests. The last of his flights had several witnesses who had been skeptical of Keller's plane while building. It was flown successfully several times over the next months, including by Keller himself, who still did not have a pilot's license. People

CHARLIE AND ISABELL BLOSSER

To-day it is indisputable, that Kansas has and continues to play a significant role in the innovation of flight with names like Cessna, Beechcraft, and Stearman. Among those innovators were Charles H. Blosser and his wife Isabell.

In 1976, Charlie told his life story to Mildred Barber. She then wrote a small book *"Why Live to Be a Hundred If You Can Do It in Fifty."* It's 62 pages are an entertaining read should you find a chance to give it a whirl. This author would enjoy retelling many stories about Charlie, but for sake of space in this Society Paper, let us move along to tales of airplanes.

In 1923, Charlie purchased his first aircraft, a Lincoln Standard with a WWI OXX-6 engine and he taught himself how to fly it. The same year he was issued his pilot's license. In the 1920's and 30's he promoted flying by doing airshows. He was a salesman for American Eagle Airplane Co helping establish dealerships across the country.

In 1928, Charlie purchased his 1928 Lincoln-Page bi-plane, which is on display at the Cloud County Historical Society Museum. The bi-plane was known for its versatility and reliability. The country was entering into the Great Depression and its effects were present. American Eagle was forced out of business. Charlie and Isabell had to do some

came from far and away to see the plane with the Model A engine, bearing the US Dept. of Commerce number 747W.

By January 1935, the novelty of the plane had worn off for Keller and he sold it for \$75 and a single cylinder 1927 Harley Davidson motorcycle.

reorganizing in regard to their businesses, for they had a few. He was not going to allow this depression to affect his flying. He put a bid on 11 American Eagle planes, found men to fly them to Concordia, and built an airfield on his property. They held a grand dedication in 1930.

This excerpt from Mildred Barber's book tells of that day well, *"There was a very large crowd, for people had come from many places. There were more than 100 planes from Kansas City, Wichita, western Kansas towns, and towns in Nebraska, on the field at one time - more than there has ever been since that day. The dedication celebration was indeed a gala affair. The local newspapers, as well as those throughout the area, carried stories before and after it about the important people, famous fliers, unusual contest, unbelievable stunts, special planes and the thousands of spectators and visitors in Concordia."*

For years, stories circulated of Charlie as a stubborn wealthy man against expansion and progress in Concordia, refusing to sell his land. Delving into Charlie's life, this author has come to notice things that may shed some alternate light on these stories. First, Charlie may have been stubborn, but not in a negative sense that certain stories may have painted him. He was determined, adventurous, and unafraid to tackle hard things. Second, Charlie truly earned his wealth