

# The Preble County News

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## Controversial Author-Stunt Flyer Landed in Gratis 52 Years Ago

As recorded in "The Preble County News," on September 17, 1931, L. Ron "Flash" Hubbard and his friend Phillip W. "Flys" Browning roared down out of the sky just east of Gratis, their stunt plane "The Sparrow" low on fuel. Raymond Boomershine offered to buy gas for their little ship in exchange for a ride. "Flys" took him up, and before very long a crowd gathered around "Flash" clamoring for rides. The two young men spent the rest of the day giving rides from George Swisher's field to 36 daring souls from Preble County. Night fell and Mr. and Mrs. Luther Kiracofe boarded the boys for the night. The next day Hubbard and Browning roared on to St. Louis, headed for more adventures.

Today, L. Ron Hubbard is a New York Times best selling author; his latest book *Battlefield Earth*, has appeared on seven other national best seller lists. But it was his barnstorming adventures that were to initiate his professional writing career.

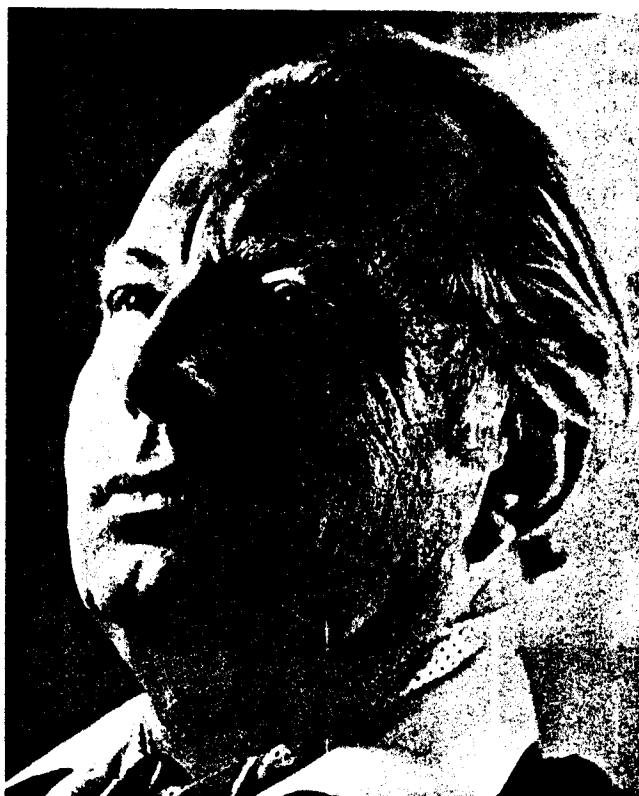
One of the first journals to regularly publish Hubbard's articles was the "The Sportsman Pilot." Also a glider pilot of some renown, Hubbard provided them with aviation articles and photographs. In a feature story in "The Pilot" H. Latane Lewis II wrote of the man behind the popular articles:

"Whenever two or three pilots are gathered together around the nation's Capital, whether it be a Congressional hearing or just in back of some hangar, you'll probably hear the name of Ron Hubbard mentioned, accompanied by such adjectives as 'crazy,' 'wild,' 'dizzy.' For the flaming haired pilot hit the city like a tornado a few years ago and made the women scream and strong men weep by his serial antics. He just dared the ground to come up and hit him.

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L. RON "FLASH" HUBBARD, THEN ...



... AND NOW

### Here And There

(Ed. Note: The following article appeared in the Preble County News on September 17, 1931 under the headline "Here And There".)

Phillip W. "Flys" Browning and A. L. Ron "Flash" Hubbard dare-devil speed pilot and parachute artist, were forced down east of Gratis about ten o'clock Sunday morning, through lack of fuel. Raymond Boomershine offered to buy gas for the flyers in exchange for a ride in the famous little ship. When "Flys" had circled the town and landed back on George Swisher's field he found "Flash" surrounded by a crowd, clamoring for a ride.

The team hastily held a consultation, and decided that since their business in St. Louis would not require them until Monday afternoon, they might as well spend the day barnstorming for their own amusement. Although they intended to leave Gratis later in the day, the prospective passengers were so numerous that darkness finally stopped activities at the improvised flying field.

The flyers spent the night in Gratis as the guests of Mr. and Mrs. M.L. Kiracofe and left for St. Louis Monday afternoon.

# Stunt Flier

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"In the beginning, Ron (also known as 'Flash') hailed from out west, but only stayed long enough to be born. Since then he has been a dweller of the world at large, and there are few nooks and corners of the earth that he hasn't poked into. Before he fell from grace and became an aviator, he was, at various times, top sergeant in the Marines, radio crooner, newspaper reporter, gold miner in the West Indies and a movie director-explorer, having led a motion picture expedition into the south seas aboard an ancient windjammer.

"Then he turned to glider flying. Ron could do more stunts in a sailplane than most pilots can in a pursuit job. Once he took a glider up at a Chicago airport which was surrounded by a concrete road. It was a hot day and waves of heat were rising off the road as if it had been a stove. Ron sat up on that current of air and stayed there. Round and round the airport he went like a merry-go-round, until everybody got dizzy from watching him. Finally, he got tired of chasing his tail and came down, after establishing something of a record for sustained flight over the same field."

By 1938, with stories and articles pouring out at an unprecedented rate, Ron Hubbard ranked with the the top of his profession. He joined forces with one of the greatest editors of any genre, John W. Campbell, Jr., and they helped launch what came to be called "The Golden Age of Science Fiction." For the next decade, save the war years of 1941-1945, Hubbard dominated the field along with such names as Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, A.E. Van Vogt, Theodore Sturgeon and others.

When it seemed as if Hubbard had given up non-fiction for good, he returned to non-fiction with Dianetics, the Modern Science of Mental Health. The book rose to the top of the best-seller lists and stayed there for months. Hubbard's concept of people helping each other improve their mental health swept the country.

"Dianetics" directly countered the psychiatric ("electroshock") establishment, which launched an all-out, if ineffective, smear campaign. If anything, that campaign helped his popularity as an author. His fiction written before launching "Dianetics" was republished consistently. Although his non-fiction writings since 1950 sold in the millions of copies, his fans longed for more fiction. It wasn't until 1982 that he delivered.

Finding that he had time on his hands, and "in celebration of his fifty years of writing," he published *Battlefield Earth*: 430,000 words, 800 pages. The reviews are in, and (not surprisingly) they're terrific. *Publisher's Weekly*: "... a superlative storyteller with a total mastery of plot and pacing... if you like Heinlein, you'll like Hubbard... This has everything: suspense, pathos, politics, war, humor, diplomacy and intergalactic finance..."

The first and second printings were gone practically before they hit the bookstore and the epic is now in its fifth printing. It's still on the best-seller lists today, six months later and climbing.

You don't have to read much of Hubbard to tell he likes flying. From his 1937 article, the "Test Pilot":

"She whipped down that runway and into the air before I could blink. The earth went by in a blurred stream. The factory flashed under the wings and was gone... Within a space of seconds I was up to five thousand feet... I was riding on the tail of a bullet. Tricky and restless and fast, she blasted through the sky at three hundred miles and hour, making a slipstream as hard a a bring wall." From 1982, *Battlefield Earth*:

He felt awe. Was this how it was to be an eagle? Is that how the world looked from the sky?

The panorama of the mountains to the west began to open in relief. And in a few moments he realized they were now higher than Highpeak, seen whitely in the cold clear air.

For fifteen minutes he was enthralled. They were at height

of about four miles. He had never realized there was so much world! Or that one could feel so thrilled.

... The main thing, he instinctively knew, was not to get too close to that ground!"

With this latest in his long string of successes it doesn't look like there's much chance of Hubbard ever getting too close to the ground! Hubbard himself still seems to be blasting along at 300 miles an hour, with "a slipstream as hard as a brick wall."

Sounds a lot like "Flash" Hubbard, the boy who landed at George Swisher's field so long ago, and it's awfully good to have him back.