



War didn't shake Orville's faith in airplane's value

By Maxwell Nathan

Editor's note: Maxwell Nathan is a rare journalist – he actually got Orville Wright to talk on the record. (One of the few video clips of Orville talking – in this case about the Engineers Club – can be seen at the engineersclub.org Web site with a high-speed connection.) In an Oct. 7, 2003, talk to the Barn Gang, Mr. Nathan described his experience covering Orville Wright. He wrote this summary for the Temple Israel newsletter, reprinted here.)

The year 1940 was a significant one for me as a busy reporter with the old *Dayton Morning Herald*. Events that year brought me into a discussion twice with Orville Wright.

The first incident ended with Mr. Wright – normally a shy and reticent individual – giving me a scoop that even went across the Atlantic.

France had just fallen to the Germans and the Nazis had turned their efforts to crushing Great Britain by almost nightly bombing raids. The airplane seemed to be destroying civilization as we knew it.

Following a meeting of a national aeronautical society held at the Engineers Club of Dayton, Mr. Wright let me walk south on Jefferson Street with him on condition that nothing he said would appear in my newspaper. He spoke at length about early aviation.

I commented on the German planes demolishing London. How did he feel about

the airplane becoming such a means of destruction?

He replied that despite the current wars in Europe, the airplane as an increasingly used means of transportation would bring people of the world closer together. He declared it definitely would be known to future generations as an instrument of peace.

I told him his expressions supporting the airplane were the most favorable ones I had heard since the blitz on London and other cities. He agreed to let me to use them, and they were published as a small story on Page One.

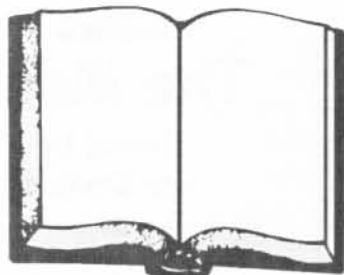
A short time later a visiting British Royal Air Force officer told me at Wright Field that, just six weeks before, the London newspapers that were still able to publish carried Wright's statements on their front pages.

Subsequently, on Aug. 19, 1940, the Wright Brothers Monument was dedicated on a hill overlooking Wright Field and Huffman Prairie. Orville Wright, Maj. Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, chief of the Army Air Force, and I were at the dedication site before the ceremony. The three of us – mainly Arnold – spoke together about the early flights conducted on this prairie and about the Wrights' flying school. Then many other dignitaries and spectators arrived. Orville Wright sat up front for the ceremony, but, typically, he said nothing.

Club library seeks books by and about members

The Harold Shaw Library of the Engineers Club of Dayton is creating a special space for books about or by members of the club.

The club has quite a number of authors – of history, technical subjects, aviation and fiction. And the



club has had many members who have been written about, beginning with Orville Wright and Charles F. Kettering.

If you would like to donate a book for this space, leave it with Brenda to give to **Ed Frank**, chairman of

the House committee.

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How to contribute to this newsletter

Items for publication in *The Engineers Club News* must be submitted by the 10th of the month preceding publication (i.e. April 10 for the May/June issue). Please limit articles to 500 words or contact the editor in advance if you have something of club interest that exceeds 500 words.

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