



### **#33: 1919 – A Barnstormer Crashes at Humble**

1919 in Humble, Texas: World War I had just ended, the Spanish Flu pandemic was raging across the globe, and the Humble Independent School District had just been created. But, Humble was pretty much in the sticks. There were no shopping malls, no airport. Nothing.

On Tuesday, 19 July 1919, two aviators spent the day in Humble taking civilians up for short flights. The plane was piloted by Carl L. Conrad, an experienced pilot. He was a lieutenant in the air service at Ellington Field and served as a bombing instructor. With him was his mechanic Donald H. Sibley, part of the enlisted personnel at Ellington and classified as a first-class chauffeur. The plane was a Canadian Curtiss, one of two owned by the Houston Aero Company. The men were employed by the company and were taking the plane out to increase their time and skill in it.

Airplanes were not a common site in Humble at the time. A large crowd had gathered to watch the plane. The took a few people up for rides. After they dropped off their last passenger, the crowd asked them to perform stunts. Conrad replied that the plane would not go up high enough, but performed a loop at 800 feet. After completing the loop and one tailspin, the plan stalled during the second tailspin. The engine went dead at 300 feet and the plane came down. Nose first. Hard. In full view of several hundred people.

Sibley was pinned beneath the motor while Conrad was thrown from the plane. Sibley was badly burned and was dead by the time the crowd arrived to help. Conrad was unconscious and taken to Falvey hospital, down the road from Charles Bender High School. His arm was so badly torn that it had to be amputated, but he died two hours later. Conrad was from Urbana, Illinois, where he had a wife and baby son. Sibley was married and lived in Minneapolis.

The plane crashed near the home of the Redmon family, southeast of the Humble Cemetery. The plane was destroyed in the crash, although souvenir hunters took fragments of the wreck during the day after the crash.