

## **Racing Around the World**

Worshipful Master,

Mankind has long been fascinated with travel, and it is indeed one of our privileges as Master Masons. Tonight we will talk about a different sort of travel. It was inspired, in part, by conversations with brothers in our parlor about their experiences and enthusiasm for piloting airplanes.

When you think back to time around the turn of the century, advances in transportation were making the world an ever smaller place. This was evidenced by such classics as Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, which was written in 1873. Verne told the story of a businessman, Phineas Fogg, who accepts a bet from members of his London club to circumnavigate the world in 80 days. At the time, this was thought to be a wild bet but a theoretical possibility with advances in rail systems.

If you look on the wall in the Palestine Lodge parlor on 5M, you will find among the portraits of past masters our Worshipful Brother, Edward S. Evans, who served as Master in 1927. Worshipful Brother Evans was the head of E.S. Evans and Company, who manufactured automobile shipping crates. He had the habit of using his summer vacations for what the Free Press termed his "yearly stunts."

In 1921 Worshipful Brother Evans drove a car over the Carroll pass in Nevada with the assistance of picks and shovels to clear a path. The following year he drove through White Horse Pass near the Salt Lake desert, and followed that up with a trip through Northwestern Canada, from Winnipeg to Victoria, finishing the last 63 miles over railroad tracks, their car bumping over the ties across trestles and through tunnels.

A year before assuming the leadership of our lodge, Worshipful Brother Evans was recognized in the press for a slightly smaller honor. He, along with newspaper writer Linton Wells, had completed his greatest "stunt", by setting the new record for travelling around the world - in 28 days, 14 hours, and 36 minutes. The Encyclopedia of Freemasonry tells us this was accomplished by covering 8,000 miles in sixteen days at sea, 4,000 miles over five days on trains, and the remainder of the total 18,700 miles in airplanes.

After hopping planes across Europe, taking the Trans-Siberian railway, and driving through parts of the United States, they arrived outside the Pulitzer building in New York to claim the prize. Upon return to Detroit, they were celebrated at the Book Cadillac Hotel with a dinner hosted by the Board of Commerce, the Detroit Aviation Society, and Palestine Lodge.

A year after the 1926 feat of Worshipful Brother Evans, Brothers Edward Schlee and William Brock, themselves Palestinians, set off to beat the record by traveling only in a Stinson Detroit airplane, called the *Pride of Detroit*. They meticulously planned their route. They received

guidance on travel through Russia from Shell Oil, who had Brother Schlee as a distributor. The US Army agreed to help with directional beacons and Stinson placed spare engines strategically around the world.

After some test flights in Detroit, Brothers Schlee and Brock departed for Newfoundland. From this starting position the planned route was London, Munich, Constantinople, Karachi, Calcutta, Rangoon, Hong Kong, Yokohama, Midway, Honolulu, San Francisco, Cheyenne, Chicago, Detroit, and back to Newfoundland.

Brothers Schlee and Brock told Popular Aviation that they battled storms for the first six hours of their flight, and battled sleep for the next three. After finding England through dense fog, they continued to Munich, where they rested for the night. With a quick stop in Belgrade, they traveled on to Constantinople, where they were the main attraction of Turkish Aviation Week with a gala reception held in their honor.

They continued racing across the globe on a world record pace until a typhoon forced an unscheduled landing at a Japanese government airfield. They were welcomed by the Japanese and began to plot a course around the storm. According to Popular Aviation, the United States was concerned because of the loss of ocean flyers and “every pressure was brought to bear” on the men to abandon the trip. Popular Aviation says, “messages poured into Japan beseeching the men to rest on their record of completing two thirds of the trip in record time.”

Under this pressure from the US government and appeals from friends, they decided to abandon the trip and were hailed for putting the good of aviation over personal glory.

On October 28, 1927, Brothers Schlee and Brock were the guests of honor at a degree dinner given by Palestine Lodge. The theme was Aviation Night and the guest list was extensive. Major Thomas Lanphier, the Commanding Officer of Selfridge Field; Alvan Macauley, the President of Packard; Colonel Jesse Wood of Packard, designer of the Liberty aircraft engine; Eddie Stinson and William O'Mara, founders of Stinson Aircraft and builders of the Pride of Detroit; Duke Schiller, known as Canada's best pilot; WWI Ace Captain Eddie Rickenbacker; William Stout, the designer of the Ford Tri-Motor airplane; Henry and Edsel Ford; and others with connections to the aviation industry attended. Brothers Schlee and Brock recounted their trip for the audience and the night was presided over by Edward Evans as Worshipful Master.

Worshipful Brother Evans even wrote to President Coolidge to ask for honor to be bestowed on Brothers Schlee and Brock, noting that England had knighted men for traveling half their distance.

Most of us know the storied names who grace our membership rolls - Ford, Vernor, Kresge, and others. But the achievements of these adventurous men, our Brothers as well, should serve as a reminder of the spirit of our lodge, that of self development and achievement, where men have long strived to do great things and have been celebrated and supported by their brethren.

### **Additional Information**

In 1932 Brother Schlee returned from visiting Brother Brock in Chicago, where the latter was dying from cancer. He brought back the news that their plane was in a shed at Burns Airport near Dearborn, missing its wings and prop. It had been sold in a Sheriff sale and had become the property of a coal company executive. A plea was made to save the aircraft and the Board of Commerce and Aircraft Bureau decided to see what could be done.

If you find yourself visiting Brother Ford's museum in Dearborn, be sure to visit the Heroes of the Sky exhibit and look for a canary yellow plane. This is the Stinson SM-1 "Pride of Detroit", a landmark in aviation and Palestine Lodge history.



## *Palestine Lodge Will Honor World Fliers at Degree Dinner*



Photo by C. M. Hayes & Co.

**EDWARD F. SCHLEE.**

**WILLIAM BROCK.**

Members of Palestine lodge, F. & A. M., will have their fellow-members, Edward F. Schlee and William Brock, as guests of honor at its Third Degree dinner at 6 o'clock Friday night. The evening will be known as "Aviation night," and a number of leaders in the development of aviation have been invited, including Harvey A. Campbell, Jr., Harold H. Emmons, Henry and Edsel Ford, Stanley B. Knauss, Major Thomas G. Lanphier, Alvan Macauley, Eddie Stinson, William Mayo, William O'Mara, H. G. MacCarroll, Captain E. V. Rickenbacker, Duke Schiller, William B. Stout, Colonel Jesse G. Vincent and Phil Wood. Edward S. Evans, worshipful master of Palestine lodge, and holder of the time record for circumnavigating the globe, will preside. Schlee will tell of his experiences in the thrilling attempt he and Brock made to better the globe-circling record, and an address also will be given by Carl B. Fritsche, general manager of the Aircraft Development corporation.