

## An Airplane Ride by John Carver

At one time the future of aviation seemed as likely to be with dirigibles as it did with airplanes. At about that same time, the autogyro was being developed. I don't remember ever seeing one, but we read about them. Dirigibles, the air equivalent of ocean liners, were popular with the military and promised transportation for civilians before several terrible accidents that started with the Shenandoah, which crashed in a thunderstorm in Ohio in 1925 killing 14 crew members. Then in the 1930s, a series of crashes that culminated with the burning and crash of the German airship, Hindenburg, caused dirigibles to be largely abandoned. From that time on, airplanes became the favored means of air transport.

At least for some people in Windcrest, a kind of awareness of airplane flight traces from Lindbergh's time. He flew across the Atlantic in 1927. But where were you at the time of Wrong Way Corrigan's transatlantic flight in 1938?

I can remember the first time I saw an airplane in the sky over Preston, Idaho. I was in the 4th grade. I had seen them in books and was kind of a nut about airplanes in the magazines I read, like Popular Mechanics. At one time as a boy, I accompanied my father to the airfield in Boise for a short flight somewhere. I remember him putting on the leather helmet and goggles before he got in the plane.

I saw an airplane crash in Moscow, Idaho when I was in law school there. It was a particularly sad thing because the pilot was a friend of mine. When I went to law school he went into the military. He had taken flight training and had come back for the

graduation of his girlfriend. He had borrowed an airplane from the government and was showing off for his girlfriend. He dove into the ground at high speed while I was a half mile away watching it. It was terrible. When I got over to where it landed, it was afire — what was left of it. Flying my own airplane was a comparatively brief interlude in my life, but I did do it for a short time.

My first ride in a commercial jet was out of Baltimore in about 1958. Thinking of my own adventures with airplanes, generally with the cooperation of the government, I have been on a plane that landed on an aircraft carrier, rode in a T-33 trainer jet and flew it briefly. The DC 3 operated by Empire Airlines went from Boise to Lewiston, making 5 stops along the way. I took that trip and crossed the country in one many times. But before the DC-3 there was a Boeing 2 engine craft carrying about 14-15 passengers. The pilot of that one was our next door neighbor named Smylie. I flew in a Boeing Stratocruiser, which had sleeper berths but I can't remember when or where I was going. I flew from Saipan to Samoa in a DC-4, which is between a DC 3 and and DC6, and had a nice bed in it.