

VALUE OF AVIATION SHOWN IN ISLAND ACCIDENT

On March 3, 1946, an event that had tragic potentials occurred on Washington Island, once again proved the tremendous values of having an airport.

Dick Bjarnarson, the 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Bjarnarson, was hunting in a woods across from his home that Sunday afternoon, accompanied by David Foss and John Gunnlaugson. Dick put his gun against a stump, but it fell down and the shotgun discharged. Most of the shot pierced his right elbow, one grazed his ear, and another scratched his chest.

John, who was standing nearby, called to David and the two walked Dick back to his home a quarter mile away. Oliver Bjarnarson had intended to deliver a fish (he was a commercial fisherman) to another Islander, but had a premonition he should go home, where he found his severely injured son.

Dick fainted from the shock and had to be carried into the house. Oliver called Dr. Farmer, the resident doctor, and Dr. Farmer called George Meredith in Sturgeon Bay, asking him to deliver blood plasma immediately. The plan was to take Dick to an Escanaba hospital for treatment. Wally Arntzen was also called over from Escanaba.

The airport being not far from the Bjarnarson home, Dick was loaded into George Meredith's three place Aeronca, along with Dr. Farmer. Oliver Bjarnarson boarded Wally Arntzen's plane for the flight to the Escanaba hospital.

However, Meredith's carburetor began to ice up 2000 feet over Rock Island, and he had to turn back and land on the ice at Jackson Harbor, which lies between Rock Island and the northeast corner of Washington Island.

Meanwhile, according to the March 8, 1946, Door County Advocate, another plane flew over from Escanaba and brought Dick's mother, Esther, back to the Escanaba hospital.

Due to the icing problem with Meredith's plane, Wally Arntzen crowded Dick and Dr. Farmer into his plane, but, as he taxied on the ice to take off, his plane sank through thin ice into shallow water where fishermen had been cutting ice.

The only alternative was to call Dr. Dorchester up from Sturgeon Bay. Esther Bjarnarson was frantically waiting at the Escanaba hospital, not knowing what had become of her son and husband. She was called and she was flown back to the Island.

Dr. Dorchester flew his plane up to the Island, and he and Dick were transported to Dr. Farmer's office near the shores of Detroit

connection with his work as manager of the Seismograph Service Corporation of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The next Advocate carried the sad news that Clarence Paul Anderson had died of his injuries in the plane crash. His body was brought to the Legion post clubhouse on the Island, where mourners paid their respects. Then it was taken to the new Trinity Lutheran Church, where Rev. Edwin Svendsen conducted the funeral. It was one of the biggest funerals held on the Island since the six Washington Island boys went through the ice in Death's Door in 1935. The Saturday before he was buried, he was to have served as an usher at the wedding of Marilyn Magnusson and John Djuplin.

Marilyn Djuplin recently recalled, "What should have been the happiest day in my life, my wedding day, turned out to be my saddest. Everyone was crying about Paul's death. I remember the last thing I said to Paul before he flew off to Menominee: 'You won't disappoint me, will you Paul? You'll be here in time for the wedding, won't you?' Paul said, 'No, I'll be there.'

"Our wedding was on Saturday, and Paul's funeral was on Monday."

Color bearers were Tess Gudmundsen and Doris Larson Hettiger, and pallbearers were Leonard Ward, Merrill Cornell, Wally Arntzen, Emery Oleson, Murray Cornell and Jerry Legrand, all of whom served in the military during World War II.

In a recent interview, Emery Oleson said, "I knew Paul Anderson very well. He was a very good pilot. I think what happened was the man Paul was training froze at the stick. That happens when you're doing something like that, diving. I think Paul tried to get the stick out of his hand but couldn't do it."

Oleson knows. He served in the U. S. Army Air Corps for three years himself.

PLANS ARE MADE FOR ADDITIONAL AIR SERVICES AND FIRST LOCAL AIR CASUALTY OCCURS

In November of 1946, George Meredith announced that he was starting a regular air service to Washington Island. Previously, flights to the Island were charter flights. (Unless you owned your own plane, like Claude Cornel, as was mentioned earlier. Emery Oleson explained that Claude bought the Stinson Jr. because his father, John W. Cornell, owned three fish tugs, and Claude would fly over the lake to see if weather conditions were good enough to take the boats out.)