

Woodland Daily Democrat

Wednesday November 1, 1911

PROGRESSIVE SCIENCE SUFFERS A GREAT LOSS

The Accident by Which
Professor J. J. Montgomery
Met His Death

Recollections of "Democrat" Writer,
Who Talked with World-Famed
Inventor Recently

The scientific world was shocked Tuesday afternoon by the death of Professor John J. Montgomery of Santa Clara College, scientist, inventor and "dean of all modern aeronauts," as one writer aptly refers to him. Professor Montgomery was dashed to death while making an experiment with his motorless monoplane.

To the writer his death brings much sorrow. It has been his privilege to have been intimately associated with the famous scientist for nearly fifteen years. Less than three weeks ago he visited Professor Montgomery while the latter was at work in his shop at Santa Clara. Professor Montgomery was working at the time on the monoplane which caused his death. He explained some of the details of the aeroplane and confided some of his future plans. He was in optimistic mood and joked with the writer as he had frequently done when the latter was a student at the college. It is hard to realize that now the still hand of death has silenced his lips forever.

Professor Montgomery was a man of pure thought and noble deeds, and his loss is not alone to the scientific world.

The following details of the accident are culled from the San Francisco papers:

In the motorless monoplane in which he had been making secret experiments in the hills back of Evergreen for the past two weeks, Professor J. J. Montgomery, for a score of years one of the best known figures in the aviation world, plunged to his

death today. Caught in a whirlpool similar to those which sweep up the hillsides in the foothills any windy morning the 120-pound craft in which Montgomery was flying swooped nose foremost to the ground and he received injuries from which he died three hours later. Efforts to get medical assistance failed for three hours, and shortly after Dr. J. L. Beattie of Santa Clara crossed the last hill to the Montgomery camp, the inventor breathed his last. Mrs. Montgomery, a bride of only a little over a year, was holding her husband in her arms when the end came.

Two weeks ago Professor Montgomery moved his machine into the Evergreen foothills to make secret experiments. His wife accompanied him. and he had for assistants Cornelius Reinhardt, a German machinist, and J. C. Vierra of Moss Landing, Monterey county, machinist and handy man about camp. Each day flights were made either by Vierra or Professor Montgomery, the latter sometimes remaining on the ground to watch the movements of his craft in the air and at other times riding it himself to test its stability and to endeavor to make it practicable.

Montgomery was making his thirty-sixth flight this morning at 9 o'clock when the accident happened. Vierra had made twenty flights. Vierra made his twentieth flight this morning and it was so successful in every particular that the camp was jubilant over the success of the work.

Following is an extract from the Call's report of the accident:

Professor Montgomery began his experiments with aeroplanes nearly twenty years ago. He was always a firm believer in the theory that man will eventually fly in the same way as do birds, and he thought that when a man was able to construct wings and a body which would make his proportions the same as those of a bird he would be able to fly as do birds. With this idea in mind, twenty years ago, he went to Point Loma, near San Diego, and, living on

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the wild coast he studied the flight, habits and construction of the seabirds, which are able to hover so long over the water without apparent motion, and which soar tirelessly over the water for hours.

There he evolved the idea of the parabolic curve in aeroplane wings. This curve is a bend outward from the front inside of a wing to the back outside. This wing-warping he considered the secret of his early success with the glider, and with the idea he returned to Santa Clara College, where he furnished up a shop and started work.

After gliding with the machine in a manner similar to his experiments at the Evergreen field, he secured the services of Daniel Maloney, an aeronaut. He and Maloney made flights with the glider from various heights, Maloney sometimes gliding to earth from altitudes of 2000 feet with the frail monoplane. They took the machine aloft by means of a hot-air balloon, and Maloney cut loose when at a sufficient height, the same as with a parachute. On July 9, 1906, Maloney fell from a great height at Santa Clara College and was instantly killed and the glider was crushed. The disaster caused Montgomery to lose heart, and for several months he did nothing with the machine.

Professor Montgomery was born in Yuba City 53 years ago, and in the early eighties succeeded in making his first flight, which startled the scientific world and established principles since used in the construction of the present aeroplane.

Santa Clara College went into mourning last night over Professor Montgomery's death.

Rev. Father Morrissey, president of Santa Clara College, said last night: "The tidings of the death of Professor Montgomery was an inexpressible shock to me. In him the faculty of Santa Clara loses one of its most honored and devoted members. I feel that by the untimely ending of a remarkably brilliant life the science of aeronautics has sustained a loss that many years will not repair. Professor Montgomery was no mere experimenter with wings. A profound

mathematician as well as a keen observer and a persevering thinker, he elaborated his principles and treated them mathematically before experimenting practically.

"I regret that many of the most valuable results of Professor Montgomery's labors have never been committed to writing. It was his intention to make public his most recent discoveries in the course of lectures he was to give during the present year on aerodynamics, and later he intended to publish these in book form. These discoveries he has carried with him to the grave."

The Chronicle's correspondent furnishes the following:

Early in 1906 he again began the construction of a machine, and was ready to begin experiments when the fire in San Francisco temporarily stopped his backing. During this period he was experimenting with the electric current, and discovered the electric rectifier.

It is said that Professor Montgomery's profits from the rectifier would have been in the neighborhood of a quarter of a million dollars. While he was working on the electric rectifier Victor Loughheed's book on the history of aviation, giving him credit for the pioneership in flying with heavier than air machines, came out and drew especial attention to his work. A well known automobile company took up his work and it is authoritatively said that the company made him a proposition to pay approximately \$1,750,000 for his patents on the wing-warping process.

From another source it was learned tonight that the automobile company mentioned had paid \$10,000 down on its bargain with Professor Montgomery and was paying all the expenses of his experimenting. In the bargain was a provision that the auto company should continue with experiments it has been making with an aero engine, and to this end a Montgomery aeroplane was shipped a few months ago to Chicago.

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ED. E. LEAKE, Editor and Proprietor

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