



PROLOGUE

HOW IT ALL STARTED

I cannot remember when I first became fascinated with airplanes but it had to be when I was less than 5 years old. I think I just basically always wanted to fly. Long before they had such things as model airplane kits, I was building model planes out of boards from Blue Goose orange crates, retrieved from the back of the local store. These particular boxes were good because they were made of soft white pine which made whittling easy. I always thought I was particularly good at making propellers. The models were crude but I made fleets of them and played airplane pilot continually.

I don't know whether it was absolutely necessary or not but in those days, when we needed to send a letter airmail, my brother Doyle, who had a car, would drive the family out to the Oklahoma City Airport, about 7 miles to the south west of where we lived, and we would put it in the AIR MAIL bag. I will never forget one pitch black night at the airport, kind of foggy, with a flood light casting sort of a blue glare out onto the field (I don't think they actually had a runway per se at that time) when out of the darkness came this beautiful bi-wing mail plane taxiing into the glare of the flood light. Its propeller was cutting silver circles in the night and the engine sounded strong and rhythmical. At the conclusion of this beautiful scene, the plane stopped and the engine was shut down. Then this big figure of a man climbed out of the cockpit and stood up straight; slowly stretching out his long frame. He was clad in a big brown leather jacket that came down well below his waist but still showing those pants that flared on the sides. He had on boots like horse back riders might wear and a beautiful leather helmet with a big pair of goggles up on his head. I HAD NEVER SEEN SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT IN MY LIFE. The love affair, that never ended for me, started officially that night; and it was consummated when my brother Zack took me on my first airplane ride in 1938.

I also remember when my Mother took me to see Charles Lindbergh after his historic flight in 1927 when he flew solo across the Atlantic ocean. He went on a goodwill tour across the USA and came by Oklahoma City and in the process passed thru Capitol Hill; the little section of town where we lived.



FAST FORWARD

The depression hit in 1929 and my Dad lost his job. Being unable to find work, he had to take his family to his Mother's farm in southern Oklahoma where he, knowing nothing about farming, had to become a share cropper.

BROTHER ZACK GOT US OFF OF THE FARM

The year was 1933 and my eldest brother Zack, who had departed Oklahoma for Art School in Chicago, just about the time the depression hit had been successful in becoming an assistant cartoonist on the comic strips entitled "Sky Roads" and "Buck Rogers". At that time Zack had an opportunity to enter a comic strip of his own into a competition being held by the New York News, Chicago Tribune Syndicate wherein the Syndicate was going to bring 10 new comic strips into their papers. It was an open affair for any cartoonist to enter his work in the competition. As hard as times were you can imagine how many starving artists entered their work; hundreds of them. Not to take anything away from my brother, because he was extremely talented as a cartoonist and had a great imagination for writing a comic strip, but I have always thought it was God's hand that led the selection board to pick his comic strip entitled first as "On The Wing" and later changed to "Smilin' Jack" as one of the 10 new comics. With this happening the whole world changed for my family and consequently for me. My whole life took a turn away from the pointless direction it was heading on the farm; i.e. Zack moved to New York and the comic strip became very popular which translated into a very good salary for him. He then, being the most generous person I have ever known, wanted to get his family off of the farm, where we were living near Sulphur, Oklahoma. He apparently told Dad to come back to Oklahoma City and take any job he could find and he would pay the rent and take care of anything Dad couldn't handle. What a guy !

I do not know what would have happened to me had I stayed on the farm. The two room school house I attended at Prairie View School, at the intersection of two country roads 10 miles from the nearest towns of Sulphur, Stratford, Wynnewood, and Roff, Okla. only went through the 8th grade. I would have had to go to Sulphur or Stratford (10 miles away) if I wanted to



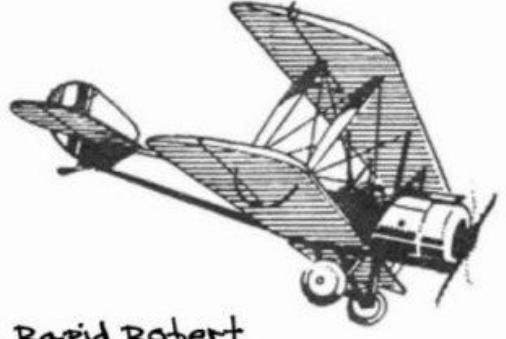
go to high school. That would have been difficult to do, partly because it was hard to go that distance to school since we only owned a horse and wagon, but also because Dad needed help with the farm work.

With World war II starting in a few years I might have eventually gotten off of the farm. But, I would have never, in all likelihood, been able to get to live my dream of flying as I did, for at best I would have had was a high school education. As it was, with Zack getting us off of the farm I was able to get through high school (without the Stratford/Sulphur problem) and then go on to college. This enabled me to get into the military pilot training program (you had to have at least 2 years of college to get into the flying cadet program when I joined). Had we stayed on the farm I would have probably been drafted and with only a high school education (had I gone on to Stratford or Sulphur) I would not have been unable to get into the military flying program at that time.

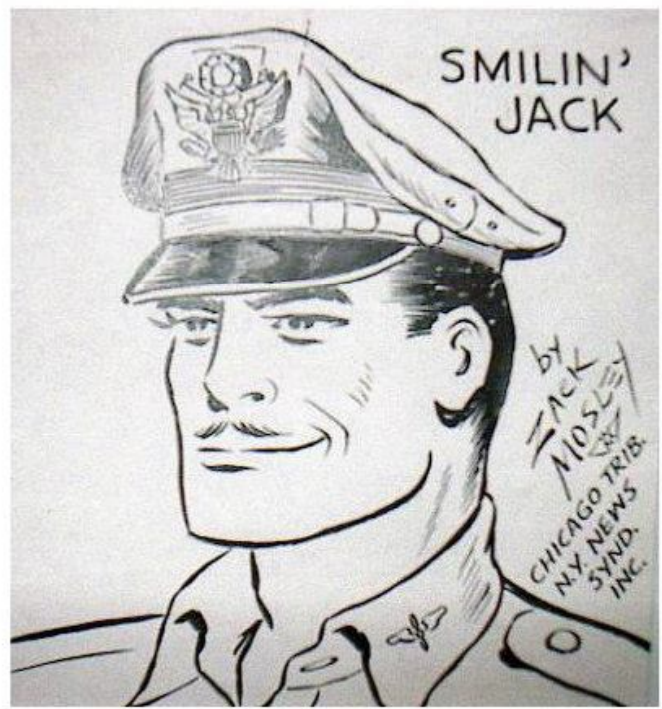
So in 1934 we left the farm and moved back to Oklahoma, City where Dad got a job working for the same people as he had before the depression. We had just taken a 3 year, side track, trip to the farm and for all practical purposes, we were right back where we started. We did, however, have Zack backing us up this time and the country was coming out of the depression; the depression that sent us to the farm in the first place.

One of my many reasons for being happy to get off of the farm was because of the Oklahoma City airport. And, while I can't remember ever seeing an airplane all the time I was on the farm, I never wavered in my dreams that I wanted to be a pilot. Thus, I made many trips, on my bicycle, out to the airport when I got back to the city and eventually did become a pilot.

As stated before, that dream may have somehow come true had I even stayed on the farm; we will never know. But, the thing I do know is that by Zack getting us off of the farm when he did, my flying dreams DID COME TRUE.

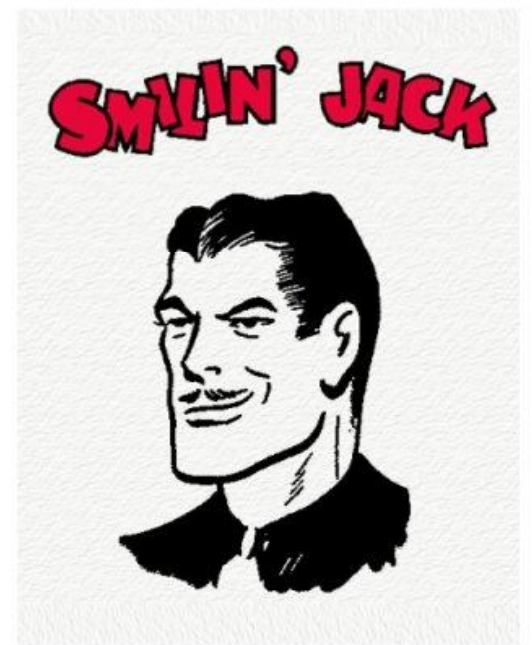


Rapid Robert



SMILIN' JACK

by JACK MIDSLEY
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NY NEWS SYND. INC.



SMILIN' JACK



Rapid Robert



Bob & Zack Mosley getting ready for takeoff an Anti Submarine Patrol Lantana, Florida in 1942



Zack at Teterboro, NJ in 1947 picking up his new Bonanza with his special tail number N11111