

James A. Sullivan

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Star Photographer Flies Over City

Sullivan Snaps Pictures of Buildings From 3,000 Feet in Sky

Hydro-Aeroplane Used By Aviator A.C. Beach

Boat Part Is Smashed Against Brick Wall as Trip Ends on Potomac's Surface

James A. Sullivan, a staff photographer for The Star, had the unique experience late yesterday afternoon of observing and making pictures of Washington in a hydro-aeroplane while it flew over the capital, with a touch of drama at the end of the trip to give it an unusual thrill.

Skimming the waters of the Potomac river, and flying over the city at a height of 3,000 feet, in a machine belonging to and manipulated by Aviator A.C. Beach, Mr. Sullivan saw Washington as few other American citizens have ever seen it, making photographs such as United States Army aviators have made, and at the end of the twenty miles, the machine smashed into a brick wall with an impact that crushed the boat structure of the hydroplane like an egg shell. Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Beach today avowed themselves little the worse for their experience.

Mr. Sullivan, who lives at 512 G street northeast, today told an interesting story of his trip to a reporter for The Star.

"We started about 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon," he said, "from a lumber wharf on Water street, at the foot of K street. Mr. Beach was anxious to go up as was planned, because he said there was no wind aloft, but I thought it was too misty for me to get the pictures I wanted. There seemed to be a heavy mist over the whole city, so far as I could see while we were still on the ground."

Trip Down River

Nevertheless Mr. Beach tried out the machine and we sent out for an additional supply of gasoline. He wound her up, as the aviators say, and pushed off and got out into the middle of the channel of the Potomac. Mr. Beach gave her a spin and we went about three miles down the river, toward the arsenal, like a shot.

Right off the 7th street River View excursion wharf we began to rise in the air. We climbed for about 200 feet at first, and then we were over the forks of the three channels in the river and Giesboro point, I saw. We continued to climb, up and up, above the War College, and I got my camera ready, and as we rose photographed that building.

"We made a complete circle high in the air, in order to rise higher. The wind was blowing toward the southwest, and in order to rise Mr. Beach had to direct the machine against the wind. We described another complete circle, and then did so again, going up in a spiral, with an area of about a mile, I judged by familiar buildings on the ground.

"As we made the second turn, going up, Mr. Beach made signs to me that he did not seem able to make the engine pull the machine higher up. I couldn't hear a word he said, and he couldn't hear me, because at that elevation we found there was a wind roaring through the wings, which made a noise added to by the noise of the propeller. Also, the rapid movement of the machine created a wind on its own account.

Takes Photographs

"We were going about sixty miles an hour, and, realizing the difficulties of speech, we gave up trying to talk and just made motions. Besides, it was too cold to talk. It seemed to be freezing cold up there.

"I got out my gloves and after I found my hands a little warmer, so that I could manipulate my camera, I began to focus it, getting ready to take pictures, and then took a number.

"We were by that time half way between Washington and Alexandria and I wasn't paying much attention to the hydroplane devoting my time to the camera focus.

"I looked down at the city trying to distinguish buildings and other landmarks. The buildings looked like pencil marks, set as they were along the streets and avenues, or, perhaps I should say, the streets and avenues looked like pencil marks.

"Washington looked to me from the hydroplane exactly like the picture printed in the picture section of last Sunday's Star, which was a part of the commission of fine arts exhibits which are to be sent to the Panama exposition. That picture was taken from a height of 3,000 feet, and I can bear witness that it shows just what Washington looks like from the sky.

"I could distinguish big buildings in the foreground, such as the War College, but the little houses and other small buildings all ran together in my vision. They looked like criss-cross lines

"About that time Mr. Beach pushed the lever forward and we shot toward the earth. We were above the river, and he made a beautiful landing on the water. As I watched our flight down, we descended so rapidly that I expected to take a ducking and got ready for it. But we landed in the water all right, and then we came kiting up the channel on the surface of the water at what seemed to be about fifty or sixty miles an hour.

Runs Into Brick Wall

"Opposite the float from which we started, Mr. Beach turned east toward Water street and we shot over the float and into a brick wall at the lumber wharf, at high speed. We hit that wall squarely and plumply, as if we had tried to do it, and the boat part of the hydroplane was crushed like an eggshell.

"The contact was so great that it threw me forward, and my shins got badly treated by an inch-thick iron bar of the hydroplane. I was dazed for a moment by the impact but just then I heard the fellows on the wharf shout.

"Gasoline"

"That roused me, and I jumped realizing that there might be an explosion or a fire, such as there is sometimes in automobile accidents. My shins were bruised and bleeding, but Joseph Lehman took me in his automobile to the Emergency Hospital, where I was fixed up all right.

Sullivan. Suddenly on Sunday, June 4, 1916, at 6:30 p.m., James A., beloved husband of Elizabeth Sullivan (nee Smith). Funeral from his late residence, 638 6th street northeast, on Wednesday, June 7, at 2 p.m. Interment at Congressional cemetery. Friends and relatives invited.

Sullivan. A special communication of the lodge [Hope Lodge, No. 20, F.A.A.M.] will be held Wednesday, June 7, 1916, at 1:15 p.m., for the purpose of attending the funeral of our deceased brother, James A. Sullivan. All brethren invited to attend. By order of

D.F. Linthicum, Master

Attest: W.A. Craig, Secretary

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"Jimmy" Sullivan Victim of Accident

**Member of The Star's Staff of Photographers Drowns in Potomac River
Falls Into The Water From Power Launch**

His Companions on Pleasure Trip Make Futile Attempt at Rescue Body is Recovered

James A. Sullivan, member of The Star staff of photographers--familiarily known as "Jimmie" by a host of friends--was drowned off the power-launch Foam about 6:30 o'clock last night, near Jones point lighthouse, a short distance from Alexandria. He went down within a few feet of the boat from which he fell, his friends both aboard the Foam and other boats being unable to save him. Members of the crew of the police boat searched for the body last night, but without success.

Victor Norris, deckhand on the police boat, this afternoon about 12:15 o'clock recovered the body near the scene of the accident. He was working in a small boat when he made the recovery. Lieut. Dean, in charge of the harbor precinct, and Mr. Harvey, who was aboard the Foam when the accident happened, were in the boat with Norris. The body was brought to the city and turned over to an undertaker.

The accident happened while Sullivan was on his homeward trip from Marshall Hall with Franklin Harvey and John Winston of 638 6th street northeast, where Sullivan resided, and William Wright, 725 Florida avenue northeast. Sullivan was conversing, with Claude Dombhart, who was aboard the launch Loraine, 2d about taking a photograph of the Loraine, it is stated, when he lost his balance and fell into the river.

Sullivan had promised Dombhart, it is stated, that he would photograph his boat the first time they met on the river, if he had a camera with him, and yesterday, when the boats met, Sullivan was reminded of his promise. He had no camera with him, however, and was unable to take the picture. Sullivan was seated on an icebox at the stern of the boat.

Futile Attempts at Rescue

Immediately following Sullivan's fall there was a cry of "Man overboard," and the Foam was turned about. Harvey jumped overboard and went to his aid, while Frank Hardle, aboard the Bohemia, made a similar effort.

Sullivan swam a distance of fully thirty feet, it is stated, and probably would have been saved had lifelines thrown from the boat reached him in time for him to grasp them. Hooks were used by the men aboard the Bohemia in the hope that he might be caught and held. It is said a hook tore the drowning man's clothing.

The searchers were unable to find the body, and the police of the harbor precinct went to the scene in response to a message telephoned from Alexandria.

Begins Service as "Copy Boy"

The deceased, who was twenty-six years old, was employed as a messenger to "run copy" for The Evening Star when he was a boy. His strict attention to this work and a willingness to be accommodating won him many friends, and he was made a member of the staff of photographers. He was fond of fishing and boating and spent much of his spare time on the river.

He was married only a few months ago. His wife was visiting friends yesterday afternoon, and when she returned home she became aware that something out of the ordinary had happened, and expressed the fear that her husband had met with a fatal accident. There had been two deaths in his family, she remarked, meaning the deaths of his stepfather and sister-in-law, and she feared the third one had happened.

Fearing serious consequences from the shock when she should be told of his death, her relatives summoned Dr. Frederick H. Morhart, their family physician, and had him break the news to her. She expressed no surprise but she manifested great distress. Mrs. Mary Hartford, mother of the deceased, 512 6th street northeast, and Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, mother of Mrs. Sullivan, were on their way home from a Confederate reunion at Frederick, Md., when the drowning occurred.

The deceased is survived by his wife, who was Miss Elizabeth Smith before her marriage; his mother, Mrs. Mary Hartford; Ensign William Sullivan, a brother, who is on duty on the U.S.S. Chattanooga, and Mrs. Mabel Eppley, a sister, who resides with her mother at the G street address. He was a member of Hope Lodge, No. 20, F.A.A.M.

Sullivan's Remarkable Feat

In addition to his ordinary news photograph work, Mr. Sullivan distinguished himself among photographers on Thanksgiving evening, Wednesday, November 15, 1914, when he made a flight in a hydro-aeroplane over Washington and succeeded in making photographs of the Army War College and other buildings from a height of 3,000 feet in the sky, of the same character as the pictures made by army aviators.

There was a touch of drama at the end of the trip when the hydro-aeroplane, manipulated by A.F. Beach, smashed into a brick wall with an impact that crushed the boat structure of the machine like an egg shell. The lower part of Mr. Sullivan's legs were bruised and bleeding and he was taken to Emergency Hospital for treatment, although, notwithstanding the accident, with the instinct of the news gatherer, he saved his camera and pictures, and they were published in The Star with an interview with Mr. Sullivan, in which he described his trip.

Two Narrow Escapes

Upon that occasion, after making pictures while the hydro-aeroplane was going at the rate of sixty miles an hour, Mr. Sullivan had two narrow escapes from death--once, when the machine for some unexplained reason, smashed into the brick wall at the end of the trip, and, again, when it was discovered that there was a store of gasoline at the landing place which, it was realized, might have caused an explosion had sparks from the machine engine come into contact with it. Some one shouted "Gasoline" and Mr. Sullivan jumped in time to avoid any possible danger from the latter source.

The Evening Star, June 6, 1916, p. 12

J.A. Sullivan's Funeral

Services Will Be Conducted Tomorrow by Rev. Dr. McKim

Funeral services for James A. Sullivan, staff photographer of The Star, who was drowned Sunday evening, are to be held at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon at the home of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, 638 6th street northeast. Rev. Dr. Randolph H. McKim, rector of the Church of the Epiphany, is to officiate.

The pallbearers will be members of the Masonic fraternity, under whose auspices the interment at Congressional cemetery will be conducted. Mr. Sullivan was a member of Hope Lodge, No. 20, F.A.A.M. The pallbearers will include Henry Hanford, William B. Dobie, William H. McLean, I. Pidgeon, Charles Long and Edward L. Hutchinson.