



On This Date: Iowan First Man to Take Off in Plane From the Deck of a Ship



🕒 9:08 am 📅 November 14, 2018

SCHNACK'S WEATHER BLOG



Eugene Burton Ely lived a short life, but was very important in naval aviation.... and he was born in Williamsburg, Iowa! He was born October 21, 1886 and had a rather active life, even though it was short. After growing up in Davenport, he worked as a chauffeur to Rev. Fr. Smyth... a Catholic priest in Cosgrove, Iowa (Eileen's hometown).





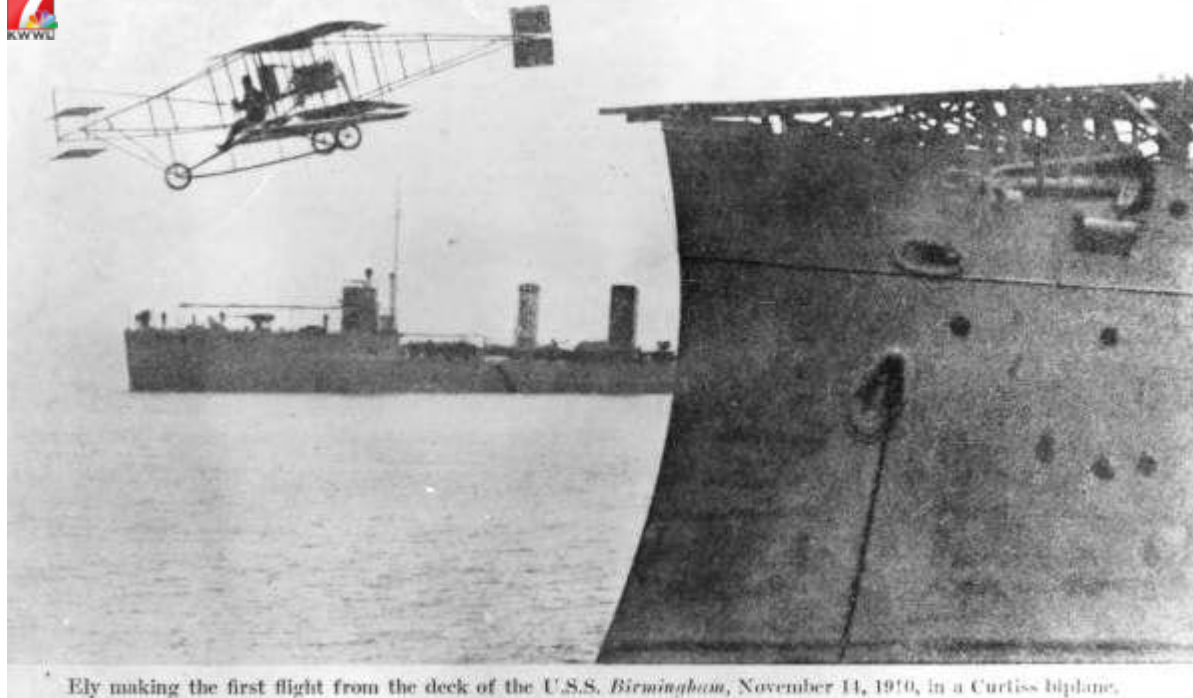


Ely was active in the early days of racing and selling automobiles. He was working as a salesman for E. Henry Wemme when Wemme bought a four-cylinder biplane. Wemme was unable to fly the plane, but Ely thought he could do it easily due to his driving skills. He crashed the plane... but bought the wreckage from Wemme, fixed up the plane and learned how to fly.

Ely made the acquaintance of Captain Washington Irving Chambers, who was keeping "himself informed aviation matters". Captain Chambers offered the use of a ship if Ely wanted to try flying from the deck. The USS Birmingham was docked in Hampton Roads, Virginia. An 80-foot platform was build extending from the ship's deck.

Monday, November 14, 1910 had low clouds, fog and some rain showers. Ely launched his biplane from the platform... and the plane promptly fell toward the ocean... but he did stay in the air (although the wheels reportedly touched the water) and landed on a beach nearby.

<http://www.militaryphotos.net/forums/showthread.php?63121-Mil-photos-from-Florida-state-archives>



Two months later, Ely made history again.... he landed his airplane on a platform on the USS Pennsylvania... the first successful shipboard landing of an aircraft.



Ely died in October 1911 while flying at an exhibition in Georgia. He didn't pull out of a dive soon enough and crashed. He is buried in Williamsburg.

You can read more about Ely and his flights by **clicking here** and **here**. The Smithsonian Air and Space Museum also has a link about him **here**.



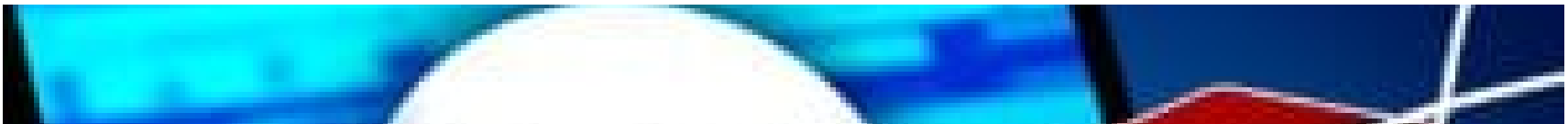
Eileen Loan
Meteorologist



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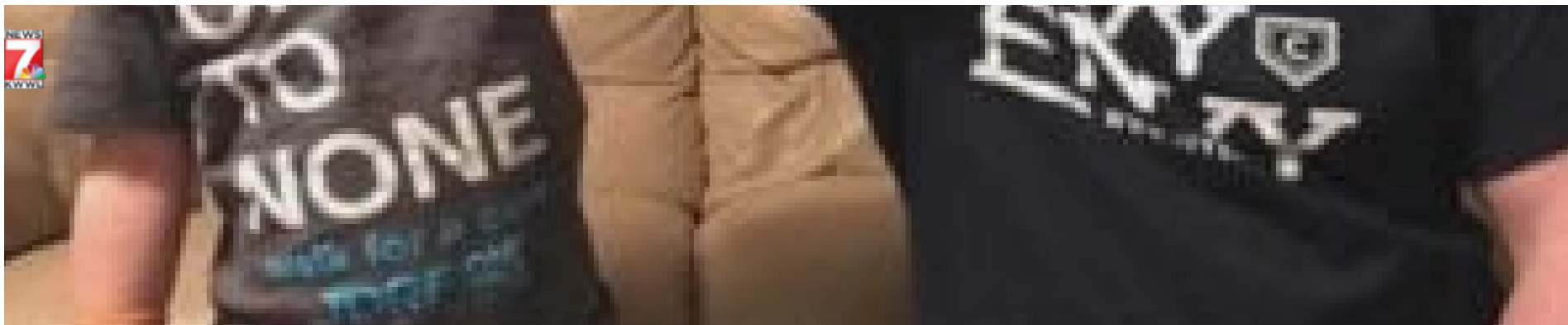
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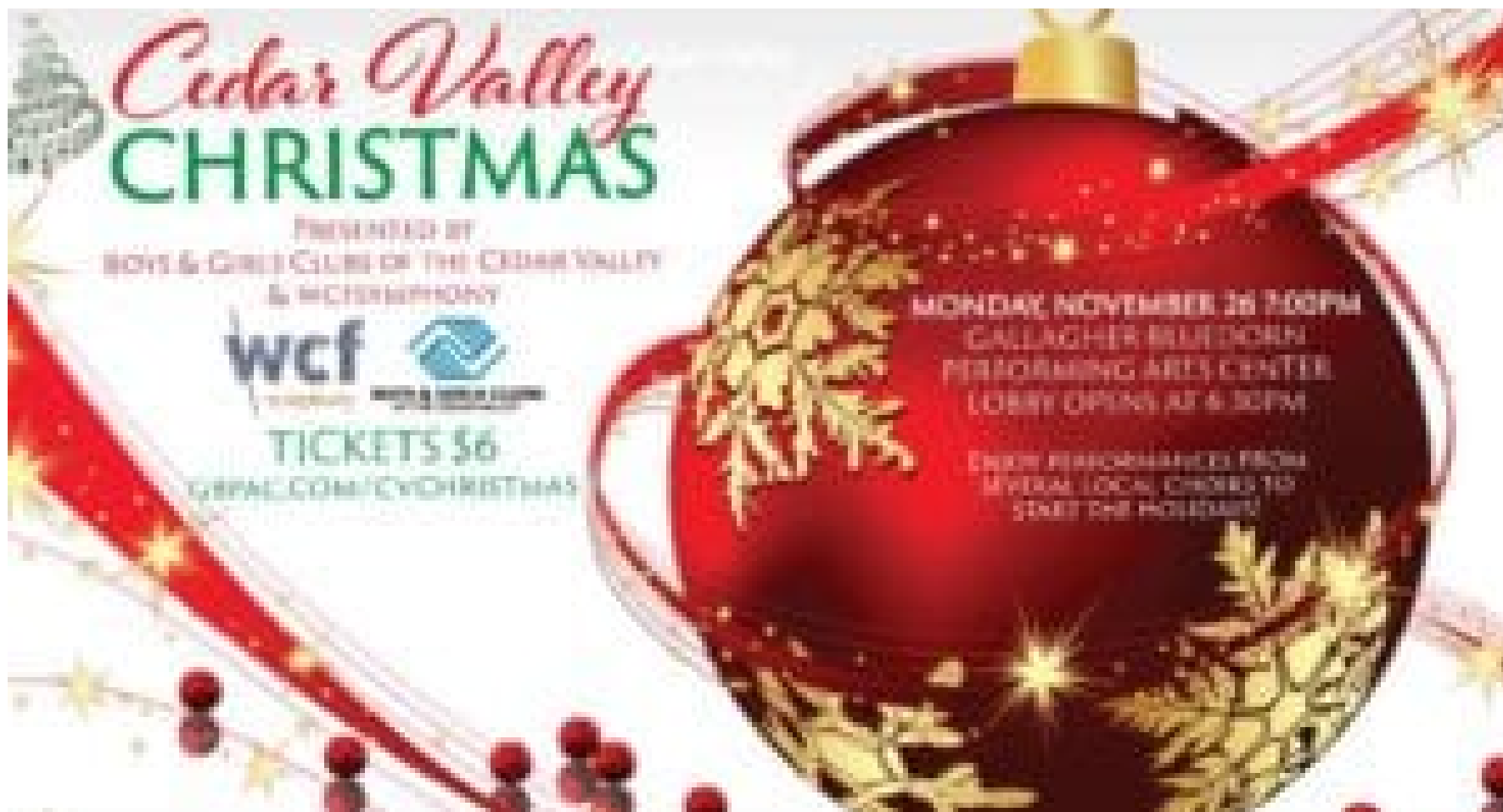


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Cedar Rapids

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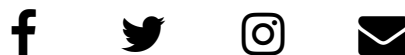
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