

Plane crash leaves four dead

Mustang Daily
 CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE

Poly Royal festivities dampened by tragedy

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Special to Mustang Daily
 by Joe Hannigan

The thirty-sixth Poly Royal will long be remembered—for many reasons, among them a tragedy.

Four persons were killed in the crash of a 1933 Waco Cabin biplane, just west of the college airstrip at 1:14 pm Saturday.

Killed were Cal Poly instructor Leo Philbin, 48, 1190 San Carlos, San Luis Obispo; Charles Lasceter, 40, 3148 Laughton, San Francisco, owner of the plane; Steven Caruso, 20, 1233 E. Remneya, Anaheim, of Travis Air Force Base; and Charles Eugene Johnson, residence unknown.

Philbin was an aeronautical engineering instructor and a 1944 graduate of Cal Poly. He was an aircraft instructor at Naval Flight Preparatory School, an aircraft instructor at the Fourth Air Force Headquarters in San Francisco, and a civilian training administrator at the Salinas Army Base.

He joined the staff of this college in 1945 and served as registrar.

Eye witnesses said the plane had just taken off and was at an altitude of about 400 feet when the craft stalled, banked to the left and spun into the ground.

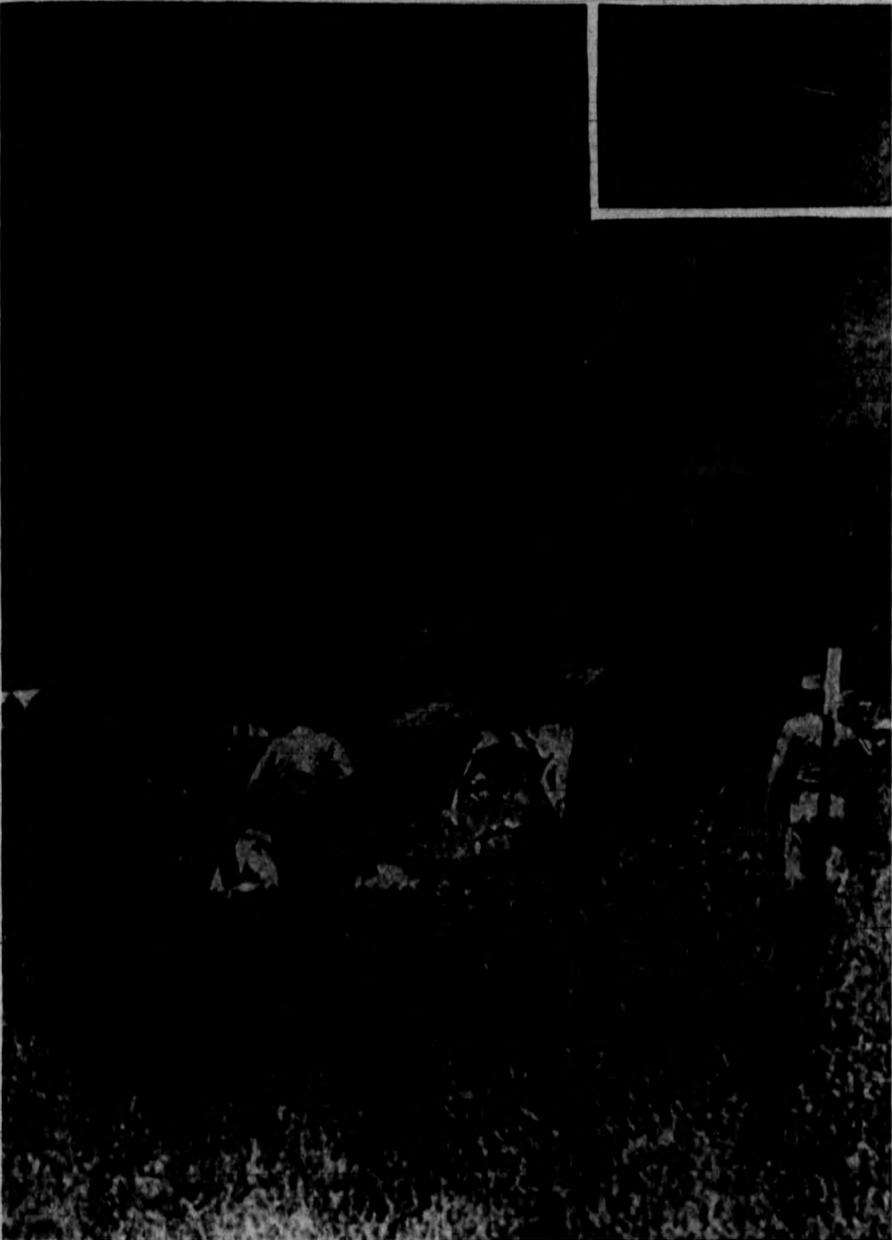
About one-half mile from the end of the airstrip is a row of trees which the pilot of the biplane apparently was trying to clear.

Mike Williams, a journalism student from Cambria, was flying over the scene of the crash just before it happened. He turned to the pilot of the craft

Roger Moulin of Coastal Airlines, Inc., and told him the biplane was going to crash.

Moulin banked his plane, and he and Williams watched the biplane spin into the ground. Williams had a camera with him, and began to take pictures, some of which are printed in this issue. "The plane burst into flame 15 seconds after hitting the ground," said Williams.

Security Chief George Cackriel told Mustang Daily he saw the plume of smoke from the crash and said to himself, "We're too late." It was only a matter of

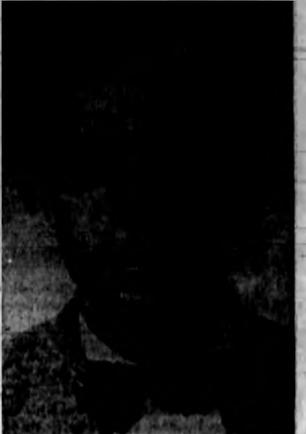


BEFORE AND AFTER CRASH... Biplane was photographed in the air by Mike Williams before its crash at 1:14 pm Saturday (insert). Spectators who rushed to the scene, just west of the college airport, stand by as security officers (in uniforms) try to remove victims of the crash (main photo).



END OF RUNWAY... Crowds focus their attention on grove of trees one-half mile from west edge of airport, past Southern Pacific Railroad track. Tail of 1933 Waco Cabin biplane projects above burning wreckage. Plane burst into flame 15 seconds after hitting ground, according to reporters.

**Photos by
 Jack Halstead
 and
 Mike Williams**



LEO PHILBIN
 Aeronautical instructor

minutes until Cackriel and five other security officers reached the scene with a firetruck to fight the blaze.

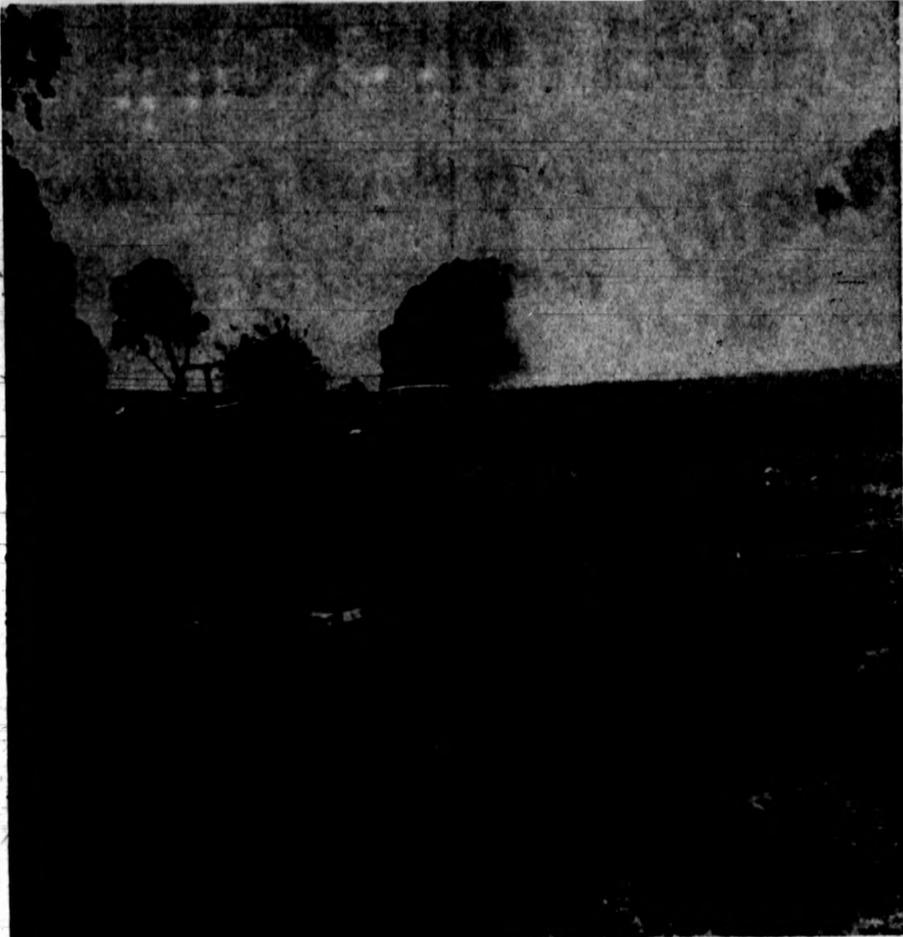
"It brings to mind a few years ago when we had a similar situation," said Cackriel. "A plane crashed three years ago, but we were there before the plane's wheels stopped rolling. Fortunately, we got everyone out all right."

When asking about the circumstances leading up to the

(Continued on page 2)



ALL THAT'S LEFT... Security officers confer after controlling blazing wreckage of 1933 Waco Cabin biplane. Frame of tail section lies in field beyond airport. Photograph was taken from top of pole alongside nearby railroad track.



TOO LATE TO HELP... Fire truck and cars of campus security officers reach the site of the plane crash and officers begin to control the blaze. In spite of their efforts, four persons were killed in the crash. Photograph was taken from another plane.

RUN, SHEEP, RUN... Curious spectators who spotted smoke rush to view wreckage of plane. Among those killed in the crash Saturday was Cal Poly instructor Lee Philbin, who joined the staff

of this college in 1948. Philbin was a passenger in the plane, which was so badly burned that its number could not be determined for identification.

(Continued from page 1)
 crash, Cockriel emphasized there was no airshow at the Poly Royal display, merely a collection of antique and experimental aircraft. Williams said he believed the Waco biplane was stunting, performing a series of spins, until he realized the plane had just taken off and was in an uncontrollable spin. Cockriel said that as soon as the flames were under control, he and the other officers from the college security force tried to remove the victims. They were hampered, however, by spectators

who had rushed to the scene on foot and by motorcycle. He also stated that the victims all were badly burned, and that identification of the bodies was so difficult that it was not accomplished until nearly five hours after the crash. Cockriel and this reporter later returned to the scene of the crash to try to determine the number of the plane for identification purposes. The plane was almost entirely burned, with only a small portion of the right wing left intact. At the time, we were unable to find any remaining numbers on the

plane to help identify it. However, a photograph taken by Williams before the plane crashed showed a number that ended in the figures thought to be "289." This figure conflicts with that given by the authorities as "N13066." As the word of the crash spread, crowds began to drift from the airport displays and focus their attention on the end of the runway. Some stood in visible shock, while others whispered rumors they had heard about the crash. Yes, it was a Poly Royal they would all remember...

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