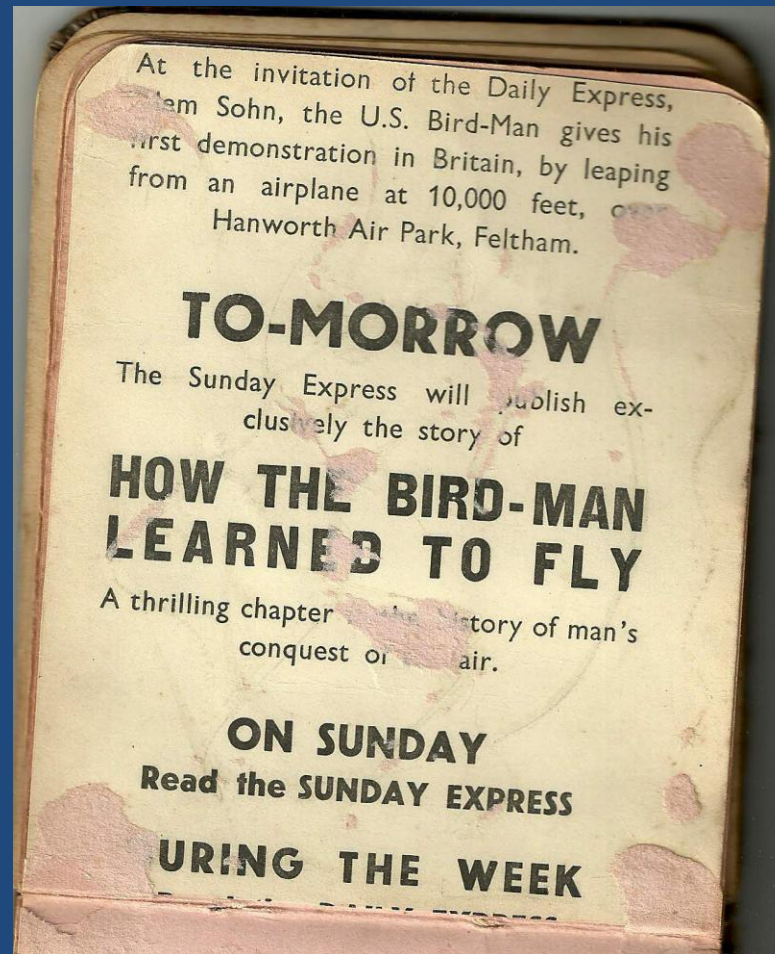




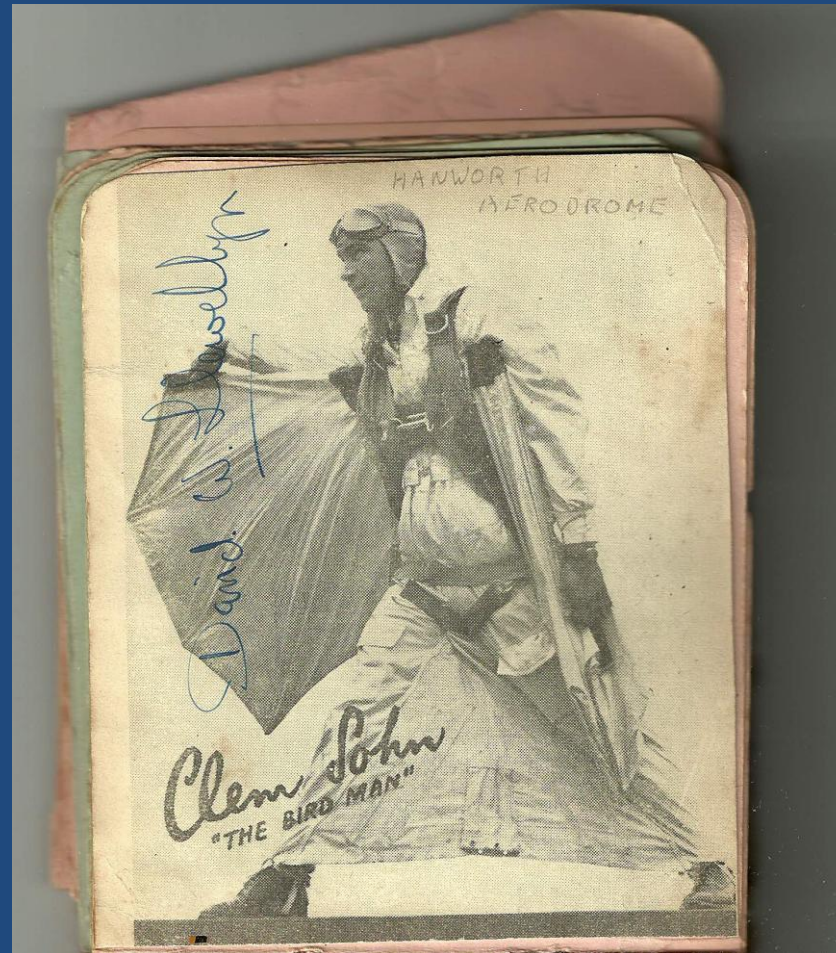
Clem Sohn “The Birdman”

By Cameron Lancaster

I found this in my Grandma's autograph book, I decided to find out the story



What was Clem Sohns's Story?



1937

BIRD MAN FALLS TO DEATH

Paris, France.

America's 'Bird Man' Clem Sohn jumped from a glider at 10,000 metres. He was watched by 100,000 people. He opened his wings. As he got near the ground he tried to open his parachute. His parachute did not open, nor did his reserve chute and he died. Crowds ran towards the place where he fell.

Memories of a Wokingham Resident

“Wokingham Society 2009”

1936

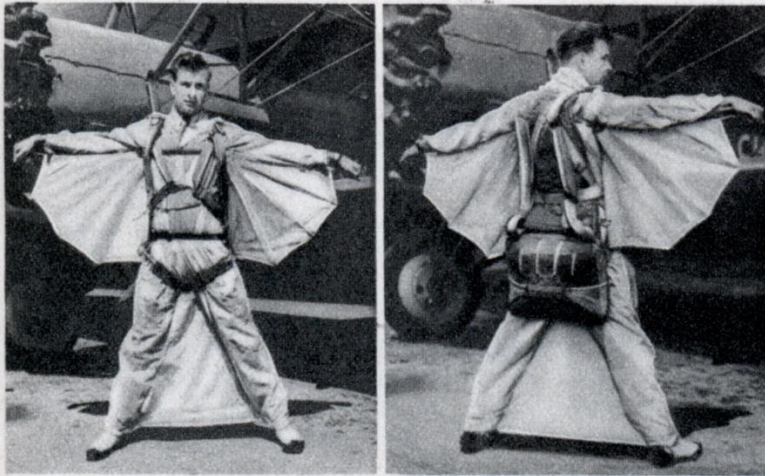
May 2nd. “in the town this afternoon still recklessly spending. Clem Sohn, the bird-man, so called because by means of wings attached to himself he can leap from an airplane and fly like a bird through the air, came to Hanworth Aerodrome this afternoon. I saw him come down in a parachute just as I got to the cemetery: a weird but thrilling sight. 50,000 people went to Hanworth to see him”.

May 2nd was my Grandma’s birthday, she was 9 years old, perhaps she went to see Clem Sohn as a treat

He appeared in newspapers and magazines



Daring Bird-Man Soars At 10,000 Ft. On Homemade Wings



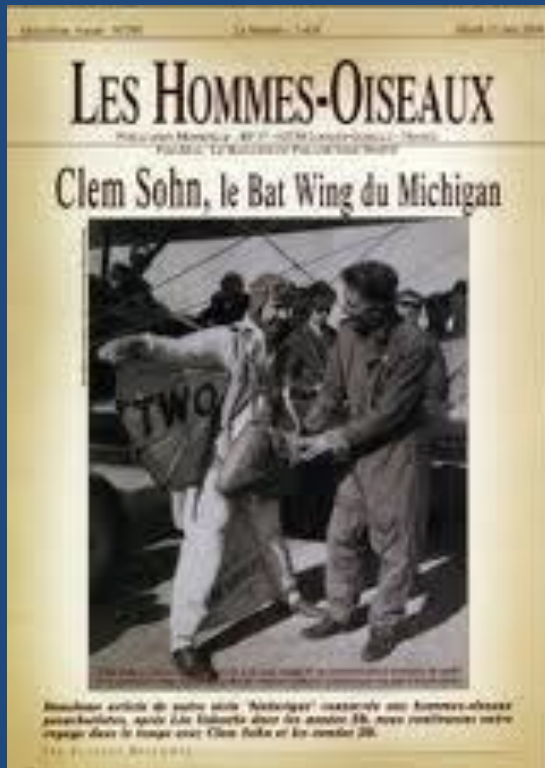
Like a modern Icarus, Clem Sohn, parachute jumper, has won the distinction of being the first to glide through the air under his own power. Sohn is seen above with his apparatus which works only when arms and legs are spread.

FOR three years Clem Sohn, parachute jumper of Lansing, Michigan, dreamed of the time when man might go aloft and soar like a bird. Recently his dream became a reality.

Clad with foot-webbing and home-made wings of airplane canvas, he bailed out of a ship at an altitude of 12,000 feet. During the first 2,000 feet of his fall, he kept his wings folded at his side while he tested his leg-webbing. Slowly, he opened his wings to check his descent, and for more than a minute he banked, looped, climbed and zoomed to right and left. At 6,000 feet he pulled the rip cord of his parachute and floated back to earth.

While aviation authorities who witnessed the stunt failed to see any practical value in man's new "conquest of the air," Sohn was already at work designing bigger wings and planning future aerial maneuvers.

.....in lots of countries



...all over the World



Hanworth Air Park

- Hanworth Air Park was near Feltham. My Grandad learnt to fly there.
- It closed because it was too close to the growing London Airport. It is now a retail park



Clem Sohn's life

- Clements Joseph Sohn (December 7, 1910 – April 25, 1937) was an airshow dare-devil in the 1930s from Fowler, Michigan, USA. Working with Art Davis and his “Flying Circus”, he perfected a way of gliding through the air with a home-made wingsuit. He had himself dropped from an aeroplane at a height of approximately 6000 metres, and would glide down until he was only 300 to 250 metres from the ground, at which point he would open his parachute for the final descent.
- He made the wings from zephyr cloth (woolen fabric) mounted on steel tubes, forming a large web under each arm which was clasped to his hips. A feature of the wings was a device to prevent them from opening out too far and ripping his arms from their sockets. A loose cloth formed another web between his legs, which acted like a birds tail. His large goggles gave him an appearance which led to his becoming known as "The Batman" or "The Batwing Jumper".



Clem Sohn's Life



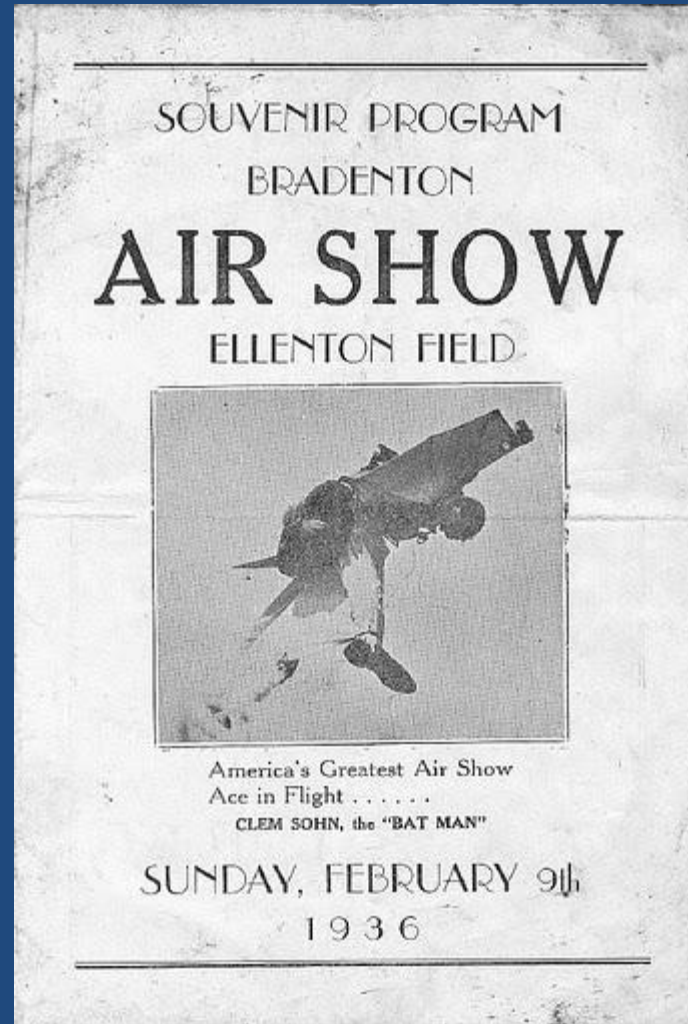
Clem as a baby and
with his older
brother Francis

Clem Sohn's Life

- Clem was badly injured during the opening ceremony of Gatwick Aerodrome, in London, England, when his primary parachute tangled in his wings. He broke his shoulder on landing, after opening his emergency parachute at an altitude of only 60 metres.



Clem Sohn's Life



Clem Sohn's Life

- Sohn's career came to an end on April 25, 1937, at the Paris Air Show in Vincennes, France. Before taking off, Clem had remarked, "I feel as safe as you would in your grandmother's kitchen." But during his descent on that day, his parachute didn't open. A crowd of 100,000 watched him frantically tug on the ripcord of his emergency chute, but that failed too, and Sohn, 26 years old, plunged to his death. Said a witness: "When I realized Clem Sohn was doomed, I felt worse than ever during the World War. . . . The hush coming over the crowd was the most impressive thing I have ever seen. . . . And when Clem Sohn hit the ground, it sounded like an explosion." He is buried in the Holy Trinity Cemetery, Fowler, Michigan A memorial plaque can be seen in his old school in Lansing

Paris Air Show Poster



Clem Sohn's Funeral

SERVICES FOR
Clements A. Sohn
1412 LINVAL

O Holy Virgin, in the midst of thy Heavenly joy, do not forget the sadness of the Earth. Look down upon us in our misfortunes, we who struggle in our difficulties, and feel so bitterly the weariness of life. Have pity on those who love and are separated! Have pity on the lonely and friendless! Strengthen our faith! Bless our dear ones! Look down tenderly on those who mourn, on those who pray, and on those whose life is heavy with the burden of sin! Give to all thy peace and thy faith.

(Abbe Perreye)

Born
DECEMBER 7, 1910
FOWLER, MICH.

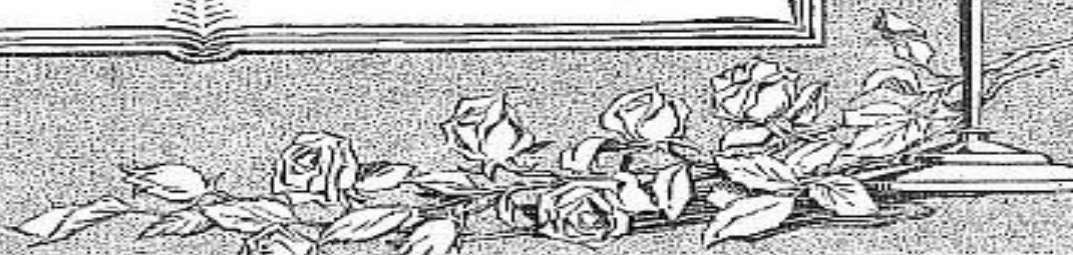
Died
APRIL 25, 1937
FRANCE

Services held at
ST. CASIMIR CHURCH
MAY 12, 1937
9:00 A. M.

Clergyman
FR. LEO P. SZYBOWICZ
ST. CASIMIR CHURCH

Interment
HOLY TRINITY CEMETERY
FOWLER, MICH.

—
Pall Bearers
Eldred Cramer
Orlo Wason
Robert O'Dell
Carl Muller
John Hutchins
Lawrence Motz



Clem Sohn's Funeral



His friend honoured his memory

Memorial in Sky Honors 'Batman'



The name "Sohn" written in synthetic smoke on the sky above Lansing, was the tribute paid Monday to the late Clem Sohn, Lansing's famous "batman," who died in France April 25 during an air exhibition. The sky-writing, shown in the picture, was done by Bob O'Dell, Lansing flyer and close friend of Sohn. After doing the writing, O'Dell dropped an empty parachute as a memorial to the ill-fated 'chute performer.

Clem Sohn's grave



Clem Sohn's Flying Suit



Clem Sohn's Goggles



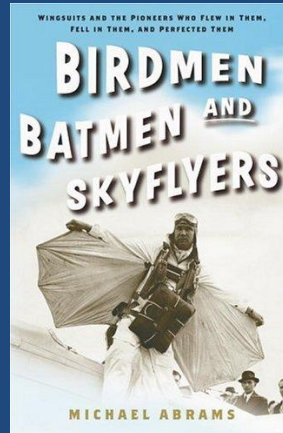
Clem Sohn was so famous that they made toys and models of him just like they do modern television or film stars



Clem Sohn's legacy



Many others have followed but Clem Sohn was the first



A dramatic sunset or sunrise scene with a bright sun on the left side, casting a glow across the sky. The sky transitions from a deep orange at the top to a lighter yellow near the sun. The text "THE END" is centered in a blue, serif font with a slight reflection below it.

THE END