



His airline career was punctuated by wins in national air races, including the prestigious Thompson Trophy Race in 1930, part of the National Air Races in Chicago, where Holman set a looping record that stood for many years; visited every corner of the State, lobbying the cities to build airports; was considered one of the country's top aerobatic pilots; and every fragment of his life was spectacular.

Stunt pilot Charles Holman was killed in a plane crash on May 17, 1931 during an impromptu aerobatic performance at the dedication of the Omaha Airport in front of 20,000 spectators. He was 32 years old, according to the an article in the **St. Paul Pioneer Press** called "The life and death of local aviator 'Speed' Holman." By his own philosophy, he had "lived 90 years and died the way he wished," on a web site, So *Minnesota: The Amazing Life of Stuntman and Daredevil Charles 'Speed' Holman* by Joe Mazan.

His funeral was the largest in state history, with a hundred thousand persons turning out along the funeral route and at the cemetery. Airplanes flew overhead and dropped thousands of roses.

Holman Field, St. Paul Downtown Airport is named in honor of Speed Holman, as was Holman Street in St. Paul, Minnesota. Holman is also inducted in the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame, according to George Smedal in **Popular Aviation**, July 1931.



And it all happened because Charles W. Speed Holman watched as the two Strunk brothers, Herb and Ray, learned to fly a glider in Shakopee, Minnesota, and Speed knew that he wanted to fly, too!



SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY
2109 Boulder Pointe, Shakopee, MN 55379

952-693-3865

shakopeeheritage.org



SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



Charles Willis
Speed Holman
1898-1931



When Herb and Ray Strunk were involved in the glider in 1906, many friends visited and watched and participated in the flying of the glider. One of them was Charles Speedy Holman, who later became a famous pilot. Most Minnesotans know the name Charles Lindbergh, but they're probably less familiar with another local Charles whose dazzling aviation career rocketed him to fame, according to the **St. Paul Pioneer Press** on September 11, 1949.

Charles W. "Speed" Holman (December 27, 1898 – May 17, 1931) was a stunt pilot, barnstormer, wing walker, parachutist, airmail pilot, aviation record holder and airline pilot.

Charles was born in Bloomington, Minnesota, the son of William Judson Willis Holman and Jane Elizabeth Rowlands according to the Shakopee Holman Family Tree at <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/165408238/person/162152175988/facts>.

The real fascination of flying is some big, undefinable thing. But admittedly it was the supreme thrill of it that drew and held Speed Holman to aviation.



Charles W. "Speed" Holman was a stunt pilot, barnstormer, wing walker, parachutist, airmail pilot, and record breaker. He was born in Bloomington, but spent a lot of time in Shakopee. Speed went to Union High School in Shakopee, and also, according to a Registration Card on 1898, Speed, at age 19, was a telephone cable splicer at the Northwestern Telephone Company. He lived in Shakopee.

REGISTRATION CARD		REGISTRATION NUMBER	OWNER'S NUMBER
1	365	738	
2. FURNISH NAME AND ADDRESS OF OWNER			
Charles Willis Holman Shakopee, Scott, Minn.			
3. DATE OF BIRTH			
17 December 27 th 1898			
4. R. A. C. E.			
White	Black	Other	None
5. U. S. CITIZENSHIP			
ALLEN			
6. OCCUPATION			
Telephone Cable Splicer Northwestern Telephone Company 62-66 + 3 rd and Minneapolis, Minneapolis, Minn.			
7. NAME OF EMPLOYER			
W. J. Holman Shakopee, Scott, Minn.			
8. ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER			
Charles Willis Holman Shakopee, Scott, Minn.			

Many of the things he did with an airplane had never been done before and some of them have not been duplicated since. Without him and men like him, aviation would have been set back by many years.

Strangely enough, Charles Holman did not win his nickname because of his flying ability. He was named "Speed" while still in Union High School in Shakopee when he built a motorcycle and won a race with it in Minneapolis. Charles Willis Holman also lived in Shakopee at that time. He was a Telephone Cable Splicer for Northwestern Telephone Company in 1918.

He always did have a deep interest in flying, however, and when the first World War came along he tried to enlist in the Air Force. But he was rejected there and by every other branch of the service because of a defect in one ear. So he had to find some other way to learn how to fly. He ended up learning to fly from Walter Bullock, a veteran Minneapolis airman.

Charles married Elvira Marie Swanson (1902-1975), daughter of Frank Emil Ferdinand Swanson and Mary Maria Källström, on July 31, 1925 in Bayview, Michigan.

His name became a household name, and when the newly organized Northwest Airways looked for its first pilot, they hired Speed.

He became Operations Manager and pioneered air mail routes across Wisconsin and into North Dakota.

In 1928, Holman set a world's record of 1,433 consecutive loops in an airplane in five hours over the St. Paul Airport. It has been said that Speed could do things with an airplane that no one else would even think of trying. In 1929 he made the first outside loop, a particularly dangerous maneuver, with a commercial tri-motored airplane. And at the National Air Races in Cleveland in 1929, he had all the veteran pilots calling him crazy when he told them he was going to take a big 14-passenger ship aloft for stunting purposes. But he went up regardless of their warnings and people watched unbelievably as he put the big plane through loops and spins and rolls.

