

New Energy and Early Aeronautics: The Perils and Rewards of Visionaries

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Last December the world celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' triumph: the first controlled flight of a heavier-than-air craft on December 17, 1903. In honor of that now well-recognized historic event, we are reprinting a reflection by Wilbur Wright himself, which appeared in the *Aero Club of America Bulletin* in April 1912. The great aviation pioneer was celebrating the work of the now (2004) and then (1912) little-known Louis Pierre Mouillard, whose 1881 book, *Empire of the Air*, apparently played a seminal role in the history that led to the Wrights' accomplishment. It is a fascinating story that offers lessons for the struggling New Energy community. Sad to say, the very next month, on May 30, 1912, Wilbur Wright died of typhoid fever. His brother, Orville, who had piloted the first flight, lived on to 1948.

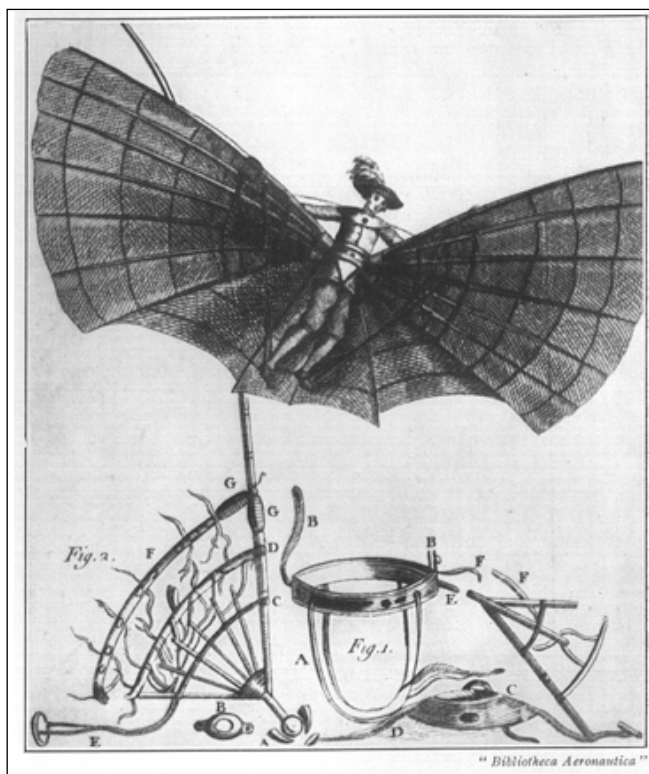
First, we note that Wilbur Wright's citation of Mouillard's obsession with the prospect of motorless gliding by humans—so common today in the sport of hang-gliding—captures some of the same intense spirit that runs throughout the community of investigators and supporters of the vision of a New Energy Age. Mouillard, a Frenchman living then mostly in Algeria and Egypt, had taken inspiration from soaring vultures. As Wilbur wrote, "His imagination was greatly excited by what he saw, and during the remainder of his life he was like a prophet crying in the wilderness, exhorting the world to repent of its unbelief in the possibility of human flight." Wright calls Mouillard's book "one of the most remarkable pieces of aeronautical literature that has ever been published."

If an *Infinite Energy* reader, either a supporter or skeptic of the New Energy (Free Energy) vision, wishes to experience the late nineteenth century central obsession of the "aeronautical underground" and compare it to the feeling of the quest for New Energy, the first passage from Mouillard's book cited by Wright tells all: "If there be a domineering, tyrant thought it is the conception that the problem of flight may be solved by man. When once this idea has invaded the brain it possesses it exclusively. It is then a haunting thought, a walking nightmare, impossible to cast off. If now we consider the pitying contempt with which such a line of research is appreciated, we may somewhat conceive the unhappy lot of the poor investigator whose soul is thus possessed." The analogy with the conception of New Energy is nearly perfect. In the late

nineteenth century, it was obvious to aeronautical devotees that the avian world provided a model of how human flight—gliding or powered—might be accomplished. In the twentieth century, and certainly in the twenty-first, the objective reader of *Infinite Energy* and related publications and archives, certainly cannot readily dismiss the building evidence for the omnipresence of free energy processes—not only in Nature, but also in a large number of laboratory experiments. Further, we note Mouillard's reference to the "pitying contempt with which such a line of research is appreciated" is a good summary of the ill-will of the late nineteenth century scientific community toward attempts to bring about human flight in heavier-than-air craft. The line could as well be applied to investigators today of low-energy nuclear reactions (LENR), vacuum energy, or proposed overhauling of the sacrosanct, energy-stifling "Second Law of Thermodynamics."

Segue now to 2003, to a glossy artifact found on the opulent magazine rack of a twenty-first century bookstore. We pass by the barely visible several issues of *Infinite Energy* Volume 9, #52 ("Three Giant Cracks in Physics") and encounter the December 2003 issue of *Scientific American* (for future historians of the continuing malady of that famous publication, it is Volume 289, #6). We note the tiny promotion on the top of its cover, "100 Years After the Wright Brothers." Expecting perhaps a celebratory piece, we check the colorful table of contents and are startled by the article's formal title, "The Equivocal Success of the Wright Brothers" (pp. 94-97), by *Scientific American* columnist Daniel C. Schenloff, who ordinarily edits "50, 100 and 150 Years Ago"—recollections

from past issues of *Scientific American*. Not a generous word, that "equivocal," in fact quite outrageously insulting—and incorrect, at that. Prepare, oh heroes of the New Energy revolution—prepare to be "equivocalized" after your passing! (Indeed, you have already been equivocalized by many, even within your own field.) In our mind's eye we see the banner of some future issue of *Scientific American*: "Though Fleischmann and Pons [or substitute Mills, Tesla, Reich, the Correias, or others] have now been proved correct in the aggregate of their measurements and projections—indeed their work ultimately led, we now see, to an unexpected scientific revolution and the commercialization of 'free ener-



The flying man.

gy’—they failed miserably as businessmen due to excessive secrecy.”

The *Scientific American* contents page summarizes the offending article: “The Wrights used aerial control as the key to building and flying the first airplane. But trying to refine their invention in secret nearly cost them their glory.” The first sentence is historically correct and is, in fact, one of the key issues that is addressed in Wilbur Wright’s 1912 piece. But the second sentence, “. . . trying to refine their invention in secret. . .,” is false, which is not to say that the Wrights were their own best publicists. They weren’t. But by no stretch of the imagination were the Wrights’ experiments “secret.” But the article gets much worse. . .

Wilbur Wright was most generous in heaping praise on Mouillard, and on the American aviation pioneer Octave Chanute, who had generously collaborated with Mouillard in an influential patent bearing on flight control. In part, “There is no doubt that that the reading of this book was one of the main factors in inducing Mr. Chanute to undertake his experiments, and I know that it was one of the inspiring causes of the efforts of the Wright brothers.” Contrast this with the small-minded Schenloff of *Scientific American* 2003. In a prominent sidebar, “A Wright Brothers Myth,” to his flawed article, he opines: “A popular myth about the Wright brothers is that ‘they were considered cranks because everyone knew that flying was impossible.’ Untrue. This fiction is based on turn-of-the century writings of several skeptics, principally Simon Newcomb, a prominent astronomer. . .” With one egregiously incorrect reading of scientific history, Schenloff turns Mouillard’s reference to the prevailing “pitying contempt” into a damned lie. Even worse, he trivializes the Wright accomplishment: “The reality is. . . By 1903 powered balloon flights and glider soaring were commonplace, and engines were becoming lighter and producing more horsepower. . . few people thought that airplane flying would always be ‘impossible.’” Ergo, the great Scientific Establishment supposedly knew that heavier-than-air flight was inevitable. To that, I say, horsefeathers! Or to put a finer but more apt physiological point on it: bullshit!

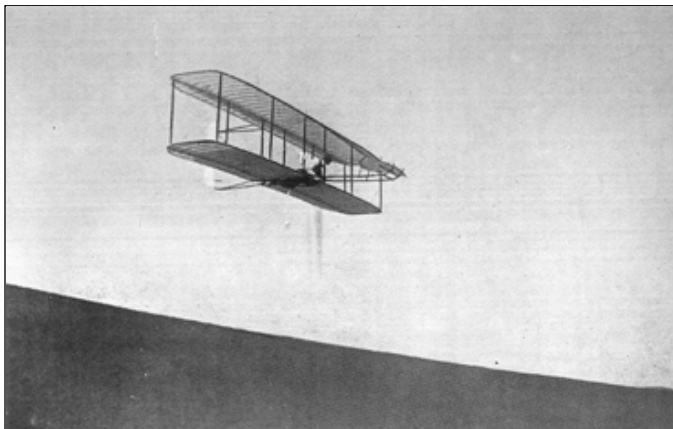
It is ironic that in Wilbur Wright’s 1912 piece, he decries the historical revisionism about the contributions to the art of flight that was then rampant in France. The details of this matter are absolutely fascinating and so reminiscent of intrigues swirling today within and around the New Energy field—read them, and prepare! The re-inventing of history will be much, much worse than this early twentieth century tempest when the incipient New Energy revolution finally manages to bowl over the media, the science, and the political establishment—all three at once. Wilbur’s summary of what was going on in the first decades of the twentieth century: “The memory of Mouillard is well deserving of perpetuation by a monument, but it is a pity that it should have been used by a self-constituted group of pretended champions of French glory, in a disgraceful chauvinistic campaign of slander and detraction not approved by the mass of the French people.”

Now back to *Scientific American*. This flap about the Wright brothers in the December 2003 issue might not have caught my attention, were it not for the well-known history of *Scientific American* in disparaging—and later ignoring—at least one of the prominent New Energy threads, low-energy nuclear reactions (a.k.a. “cold fusion”). It is no secret that the advances

of the LENR field have been egregiously absent from this supposed “magazine of record,” which has actually become a mouthpiece for all manner of physics establishment hot air. The May 2003 issue of *Scientific American* cover story, as an example, was “Infinite Earths in Parallel Universes Really Exist.” Wow, really? This is a piece that so drips with the fantastic fictions of Modern Physics that it manages to convey no less than *four* supposed ways in which a duplicate *you* must truly exist somewhere “out there.” Not *may*, but *probably* exist: “Not only are parallel universes—a staple of science fiction—probably real, but they could exist in four different ways. Somewhere out there our universe has a twin.” We are told that the author, Max Tegmark, “in this universe” is a professor of Astronomy and Physics at the University of Pennsylvania.

And we recall a veritable slanderous article in *Scientific American*, in its May 1992 issue by then staff writer John Horgan. The result of extensive briefing of Mr. Horgan by this editor and by others in the field on the topic of progress in cold fusion research, came out as “Japan, Cold Fusion, and Lyndon LaRouche” (p. 53). We were shocked and appalled, since we had been given the impression by Horgan that his piece was to be a *scientific* account, as befits his publication’s title. Instead, Horgan had acted as a Trojan horse for the physics establishment bigots. It is ironic—presaging the inevitable cosmic justice that is to be conferred on Mr. Horgan—that this cold fusion “side bar” appears after Horgan’s piece on conventional efforts at transmuting nuclear waste with neutrons, via particle accelerators or fission reactors, “Trying Transmutation: Experts debate practicality of a nuclear waste scheme.” Circa 2004, in part through the efforts of those Japanese researchers whom Horgan had marginalized in 1992, we can be certain that low-energy transmutation phenomena are real, and could well be applied to the problem of treating nuclear waste.

Instead of discussing the published scientific evidence for the phenomena—perhaps the pros and cons of such evidence—the article took the traditional journalistic low road. It raised the specter of “pathological science,” the possible exaggeration of Japanese involvement in the research circa 1992 (which has not ceased as of 2004). Then, scoundrel Horgan took political advantage of a single off-hand remark to him by Martin Fleischmann that “good information” on cold fusion was to be found in the magazine *21st Century Science and Technology* (indeed, the information on cold fusion in that publication was particularly excellent and complete in those



Wilbur Wright gliding.

days!). The end point of the Horgan trashing of cold fusion is its very last line: “. . . a journal published by followers of Lyndon LaRouche, who is now simultaneously running for president and serving a 15-year sentence for fraud, has previously claimed the existence of an international drug cartel run by the Queen of England.” Thus the unforgettable title of the article, with “Lyndon LaRouche” in it, is meant to infer the possible fraud and pathology of cold fusion research. (This observation, I hasten to add, is not intended by me to suggest in any manner the innocence or guilt of minority political figure Mr. LaRouche.) Horgan, we should add, went on to write a best-selling book, with the remarkably bold and ignorant title, *The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age* (Addison-Wesley, 1997).

Though the duplicitous Horgan is no longer at *Scientific American*, his spirit lives on. The Schenloff article on the Wright brothers is exemplary in that regard. It distorts fundamental historical truth. In his very first paragraph he writes this ludicrous assessment: “. . . but for that flight alone [Editor’s note: He refers to the December 17, 1903 first flight that lasted 12 seconds and was of length 120 feet.] it is hard to argue that the Wrights were more successful than other inventors who had flown farther (and crashed harder).” Notably, he fails to remark *immediately* that there was a much longer flight that very day—852 feet in 59 seconds! That comes a full two pages later. Then, in a grotesque non-apology for the historical malfeasance of *Scientific American* toward the Wright brothers in the first decade of the twentieth century, he writes, “Unfortunately, until they felt sure of the sale of their perfected machine, their secretiveness invited skepticism from *Scientific American* and other publications of the day and left them under appreciated by their peers and the general public.” What damned, arrogant chutzpah from the *Scientific American* of 1992-2004, which wantonly ignores some of the most remarkable scientific work in history—that within the New Energy field—that is most certainly *not* secret! What will the *Scientific American* excuse be some years hence about this failing?

In point of fact, there was every opportunity for *Scientific American* circa 1903-1906 to be able to get the facts about the Wright brothers’ accomplishments. Sure, there was no internet, but there damned well was telephone, telegraph, and the railroad. One trip out to Ohio, or a report from a credible witness in Ohio, would have sufficed. For that matter, one cheap Cambridge, Massachusetts-based stringer for *Scientific American* sent in August 2003 to ICCF10 (the Tenth International Conference on Cold Fusion) would have revealed to that magazine the depth of their mistakes in the matter of LENR.

Schenloff implies that *Scientific American* was on the ball in 1903 when he states that nine days after December 17, 1903, “*Scientific American* cautiously noted: ‘This is a decided step in the advance in aerial navigation with aeroplanes.’” He references his own “50, 100, and 150 Years Ago” column in the same issue (p. 22). But we find there a December 1903 account that is a complete distortion of what actually happened. The article states that the aeroplane was started from the top of a 100-foot sand dune and glided downward initially. Ah, but Schenloff knows this is incorrect, and admits it lamely: “The description of the takeoff and flight contains several inaccuracies and probably came from secondary sources. . . .” (Yes, gross inaccuracies and omissions such as are

coming from the present day *Scientific American* in the matter of LENR, perhaps due to the biases of “secondary sources.”) In other words, he is excusing *Scientific American’s* general malfeasance in that era with the secrecy of the Wright brothers. The cover-up of *Scientific American’s* bad behavior continues throughout the article. It rises to a crescendo when the January 1906 *Scientific American* article on the Wrights is touted: “Unable to get additional information from, or about, the Wrights, *Scientific American* commented huffily in a January 1906 article, ‘It seems these alleged experiments were made in Dayton, Ohio, a fairly large town, and that the newspapers of the United States, alert as they are, allowed these sensational performances to escape their notice.’”

To readers of *Scientific American*, and to Daniel Schenloff himself, if he is listening, I recommend a quick perusal of *The Wright Brothers: A Biography*, by Fred Kelly, first published in 1943 as *The Wright Brothers: A Biography Authorized by Wilbur Wright* and now available as a paperback from Dover Publications in New York (or from New Energy Foundation at www.infinite-energy.com). (The 1943 book and the 1989-reprinted book are identical in text.) I have not examined the original *Scientific American* issues of January 1906, but the quotation from the January 13, 1906 issue used by Mr. Kelly (his page 144) is much more damning to the credibility of *Scientific American*. The quote is *Scientific American’s* response to a letter published by the Wrights in a French newspaper: “If such sensational and tremendously important experiments are being conducted in a not very remote part of the country, on a subject in which everyone feels the most profound interest, is it possible to believe that the enterprising American reporter, who it is well known, comes down the chimney when the door is locked in his face—even if he has to scale a fifteen story skyscraper to do so—would not have ascertained all about them and published them broadcast long ago?” Essentially, *Scientific American* was suggesting that the Wright brothers were either lying or exaggerating—much as this exalted journal does in 2004 with any material that it deems threatening to the fundamental physics paradigms. *Scientific American’s* Editor John Rennie has been approached on a few occasions to cover LENR research or to accept articles from the LENR community about it. These efforts have all been rebuffed. What is Mr. Rennie’s excuse today? He quite obviously has none that is legitimate. It took the editor of *Scientific American* until the December 15, 1906 issue to assert, after doing some trivial journalistic leg-work, “In all the history of invention, there is probably no parallel to the unostentatious manner in which the Wright brothers ushered into the world their epoch-making invention of the first successful aeroplane flying machine.”

To summarize: *Scientific American* of 1903-1906 took “only” three years to determine and editorialize that the Wright brothers had, indeed, done what they said they had and had showed many others that their flights were real. Still, it took the U.S. War Department a few more years before it actually did anything reasonable and straightforward to deal with the Wrights’ desire to commercialize their technology through the U.S. government’s needs. So despite *Scientific American’s* tardy 1906 pronouncement, it was still not easy sailing for the Wrights. Then in 2003, *Scientific American* rewrites history unfavorably to the Wrights and

marginalizes their work with one side of its mouth, and with the other proclaims its importance. To be completely fair to *Scientific American*, in July 1979 the magazine featured an excellent straight science and technology account of the Wright flyer and how it was invented. It was a story not by a journalist per se, but by F.E.C. Culick, who had received his doctorate in aeronautical engineering from MIT in 1961. There were no polemics against the Wrights in this article. Today's editor, John Rennie, was then not on the *Scientific American* masthead.

Now for the comparison of early aeronautics and the contemporary struggles of new energy. Early aeronautics is in some ways (but not in others) a good paradigm for a major shift in technological world view, but it is not an exact paradigm for a truly fundamental scientific revolution such as I am convinced we are facing, the opinions of the "End of Science" enthusiasts notwithstanding. Nonetheless, there are similarities between the media impressions of early aeronautics and new energy today, as we have seen. The ridicule and ignoring of LENR, one would have to admit, is unfortunately not unprecedented. The same assault has been performed on critics of Big Bang cosmology, on critics of Special Relativity, and on scientific investigators in a host of complementary medicine studies. The Scientific Establishment has become much more powerful in our day. It is funded by huge government grants and its exploits are heralded by giant organs of media manipulation, such as *Scientific American*. But nothing has changed in the requirements of scientific investigation and determining what is scientific truth and what may be work-in-progress—all of which should be reported. What has changed is this: The arrogance and the sheer deafening *noise* of power has increased enormously since those quieter times of 1903-1908. The propagation of falsehood and dishonesty is, we regret, much easier to carry out in our time. Pioneers in New Energy must accept both the perils and the rewards of their work.