1983

Windcrossing: an Intermedia Play Inspired by the Life of Gustave Whitehead

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WINDCROSSING

An Intermedia Play
Inspired by the Life of
Gustave Whitehead

by

Don Coonley
WINDCROSSING

Directed by Don Coonley
Produced by Steven Ross
Cinematography and Direction of Film Sequences by Steven Ross
Music Composed and Conducted by Leland Roberts

Cast

GUSTAVE WHITEHEAD               Allan Varvella
LOUISE                          Glenna Fickert Ross
YOUNG GUSTAVE                   Michael Guzzi

Supporting Cast

Ralph Corrigan, Edward Malin, Dorria L. Marsh, Richard Matzek, Ken Roberts, Lynne Roberts

Assistant Producers

Bernadette Baldino, Fred Ianotti, Bonnie Carr, Rob Lewis, Arlene Dean, Dorria D. Marsh, Ermelinda DeMaio, Brian Merry, Sally Guzzi, Dorothea Molle

Music Performed by

Sami Kassim, Leland Roberts, Ellen Siff, Sylvia Thittle
The script which follows should not be considered as a complete experience. Unlike the text of a novel or short story, a drama or film script is only a component — albeit the most crucial one — of the multilayered dramatic package designed to be witnessed on stage or screen. To the emotional response elicited by the immediacy and spontaneity of live drama is added the impact of motion pictures and slide photographs projected on three screens mounted on the theater stage. The final component is the recorded sound which surrounds the audience through four speakers: voices of off-stage actors, sound effects, and original music. The play, which runs eighty minutes in length, is termed an "intermedia drama" because while each medium is meant to be utilized to its fullest advantage, all the media are designed to relate to and complement one another.
The theater is dark. The silence is broken by the sounds of a steam locomotive approaching and grinding to a halt at a railroad station. Fade in: on each of two screens, slides (photocopies) of Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1900. Transitions between slides are all dissolves. While several slow-paced slides establish the downtown location and the time — early morning — a conductor in the distance shouts "Bridgeport," and then later, "All aboard." Amid hissing steam and clanging railroad cars, the conductor's harsh voice is heard. The above sounds and the following dialog are on audio tape.

CONDUCTOR
Hey, you, hurry up and get that box off this train! Here, lemme help you.

GUSTAVE WHITEHEAD
(He has a middle-European accent and frequently pauses to search for the right English word.)
Thank you for helping me. It's very heavy.

CONDUCTOR
What the hell's in here, anyhow?

GUSTAVE
Oh, some books, some clothes, some tools . . . an engine for a flying machine.

Gustave has to shout the final sentence to be heard above the noise of the departing train. The conductor's response, also shouted, is partly obscured by noise, but words like "crazy bastard" can be heard. The noise of the train subsides and is replaced with the sounds of a busy city waking up, a milk wagon pulled by a horse, a factory
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whistle, a trolley car, harbor sounds including the distant Penfield reef lighthouse whistle. On screens, the following sequence of slides is blended in with additional shots of 1900 Bridgeport. (The sequence is also shot in black and white and is meant to match the quality and tone of the photocopied slides.) Long shot of a man pushing a railroad baggage cart through the streets. The man, Gustave Whitehead, is dressed in a poorly fitted suit and black hat. On the cart is a large, wooden box. After a series of shots, he finds the house he seeks and stops the cart to rest. A boy, Junius Harworth, eight or ten years old, appears and engages Gustave in conversation. This two-shot is some distance away; their voices are not meant to be heard. There should be no direct correspondence between screen action and audio. The following monolog is a voice-over on audio tape:

GUSTAVE

(He is ingenuous, somewhat awed.)

It is 1900. A new century. And I have stopped here because I think this place is a good place to work. Here there is a current . . . an energy that makes me feel strong. It almost pulled me from the train!

On screens, Gustave gestures toward the box and hands a coin to the boy.

GUSTAVE

I have worked in other places . . . in Boston, in Pittsburgh, in New York. And of course in other countries, too. But in the cities in America, everything is moving, turning, spinning . . . people make things that have never been made before. This place, this Bridgeport, in Connecticut, is that way, too. A good place to work, to do my work.

On screens, the slides move slowly toward the two subjects until they are full frame, i.e., the sequence progresses from a long shot to the medium shot in four or five steps.

GUSTAVE

The boy, Junius Harworth, has lived all his life in this place. He
is very curious about what is inside this box. If he sees nothing happens to it until I return here tomorrow with my wife and child, the secrets may be known. (*He obviously enjoys the boy's company and the chance to pique his curiosity.*)

*On screens, Gustave sits atop the box and Junius leaves frame. As Gustave continues the voice-over, the screens fade out and a stage light is faded in on the actor portraying Gustave (who, of course, is the same person in the slide sequence). The actor sits in an identical position atop the wooden box, stage right. The monolog continues on audio tape.*

**GUSTAVE**

I will see you tomorrow, Junius! That is the difference between a boy and an old man. Curiosity.

*The audio tape fades gradually out and the live actor's voice fades into the monolog. By the final sentence below, only the live actor's voice is heard.*

**GUSTAVE**

Inside that boy's head are many pictures, pictures of the many things that might be in that box. (*He chuckles, becomes a bit pensive.*) When that boy stops looking in boxes and under rocks, then he will be an old man. Curiosity makes things happen . . .

*A single screen fades in slowly to a motion picture scene in a Bavarian park. In this sequence a young boy (a young Gustave) cautiously approaches a fenced-in, or in some way restricted, area of the park. Even though the park is a typical European one, neat and carefully managed, the feeling from the boy's point of view is one of awe and some fear. The trees are tall and thick. The boy moves into the woods and eventually glimpses his quarry — a bird or flock of birds in flight. A close-up reaction shot of his eyes reflects above tone. In a sequence of shots, the boy sets a simple trap, waits, springs the trap, gently holds his catch — a live bird — to study its wing structure. He ties a cord to the bird's leg and releases it, watching carefully the controlled circle of flight. As he spins, suddenly a park guard appears.*
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The boy lets go the cord and is chased by the guard, who quickly catches him. The forest is left with no people, but a strong sense of mystery. Throughout this sequence are somewhat exaggerated forest sounds, almost primeval, and the introduction of a single-instrument musical theme — fragile, whimsical, yet purposeful. As the screen fades out, spotlight is brought up on stage actor. Gustave has opened the wooden box and is holding a model airplane which resembles a bird. The music theme continues low behind him.

GUSTAVE

Curiosity always makes things happen. And children are curious. So it must be important to remember childhood . . . being a child lasts only a little while. Once, the child I remember climbed to the rooftop of his grandmother’s house. The day was early; he was alone. He had strapped to his arms . . . wings, muslin wings which his grandmother had sewn. The child jumped from the roof into the air and tried to be a bird. He fell into the snow below. But his curiosity made things happen. And other things happened, too. He became an apprentice to a bookbinder and then to a locksmith. When he became fourteen, he went to sea.

Fade in behind Gustave a slide which represents his Pine Street workshop. It is fairly representational with such necessities as lathes, saws, wood clamps, a large drill press, and assorted hand tools. It must also reflect imaginative wanderings into aerodynamic theory — kites, model gliders, diagrams. Gustave is now rummaging in the wooden box, lifting out various items which become a part of the clutter of the background.

GUSTAVE

Once I heard of a man in Germany — not far from my home in Bavaria — whose work it was to build ships that fly. When I returned from a voyage of a merchant ship, I visited that man and watched him build a glider. Otto Lilienthal worked and talked almost without stopping until his new glider was finished. I helped him carry it to the top of a slope. It was in June. Otto ran with his glider and at the edge of the slope he leapt out — and he lifted into the air. For me,
everything stopped; the world was silent. Otto and his wings floated in the mountain air. Then on a gust of wind he soared higher than the slope on which I still stood. I ran fast down the hill as he came to earth, over two hundred feet away, in a field of wild flowers. We laughed and laughed until tears ran. (He lifts model glider and book from box.) Otto gave me this . . . and this book, too. It is called Bird Flight as the Basis of Aviation. By Otto Lilienthal. Otto has been dead for four years now. A new glider soared out of his control and crashed. He was nearly ready for his next invention — to mount a motor on his glider. To have powered flight.

_The single-instrument theme is faded in during the above speech._

**GUSTAVE**

And it was four years ago that I — Gustave Whitehead — arrived in America. To work on flying machines. To make things happen.

_Gustave's live voice trails off and is cross-faded with the taped voice of Louise Whitehead. She, too, speaks with a European accent and her voice reflects the strength and humor necessary to live with Gustave. As she speaks the machine shop slide fades from the screens and faded in are slides of New York City, circa 1897. Interspersed are shots of a variety of kites, rudimentary diagrams of flying machines, and finally the initial shots of Gustave's own machines, particularly the glider he built for the Boston Aeronautical Society._

**LOUISE WHITEHEAD**

(Her second word, "America," is synched with his "America" in the above speech.)

America is many surprises for me. Gustave Whitehead is the biggest surprise. In the city of New York I worked as a maid in a boarding house. I knew no English then. Gustave Whitehead (he changed his name from Weisskopf) lived in a room on the third floor, and he worked for the Horseman Toy Company. The favorite part of Gustave's job was flying kites! He sometimes flew fifteen kites at once high above the buildings. That would make people curious and they would come to the toy company. Another surprise to me was the flying machine that he was building in the basement of the boarding...
house at night. *(She laughs.)* Of course I thought, too, that he was crazy. But he showed me photographs of other flying machines he had built. In Boston, a glider for the Boston Aeronautical Society. One night Gustave was telling me about such things as aeronautical societies. He seemed much like a small boy in his excitement . . . he asked me to marry him. I thought it was a joke and I laughed and said yes. The next day was Sunday and Gustave took me in a horse and buggy to Coney Island. On the way home I suddenly knew that he was serious. And I wished at that time that I could fly. I returned to Buffalo to be with my brother and to hide. Gustave found me and we were married. At night he worked on his machines and during the day he did the hardest kind of work at a buggy factory.

_The New York-Kites-Gliders sequence is dissolved to the machine shop background. The stage light is brought up on Gustave as he lugs a motor from the box on stage._

**LOUISE**

The following year we moved to Pittsburgh and Gustave worked in a coal mine in the day . . .

**GUSTAVE**

*(Whose first word, "Pittsburgh," is overlapped with her "Pittsburgh" in the above speech. He is live.)*

Pittsburgh was the beginning of the next step. With this motor, driven by steam. At night my friend Louis Darvarich and I worked on the airplane — it was very big; it had to carry two men, one to control the flight and the other to provide fuel for the steam engine. Through trials — and sometimes errors, too — *(he laughs)* we built a strong boiler. One morning we pushed the machine to an open field on the edge of town. We heated the boiler to its fullest . . . the propeller gathered speed and Louis and I pushed the airplane down a long hill. *(He becomes more serious, almost embarrassed, even though the attempt would be considered by many to be a success.)* The machine lifted from the ground but I was not able to control its direction. We crashed into a building as we were still climbing. Louis was badly scalded by the escaping steam and the firemen who watched us took him to a hospital. It took many months of work in the mine to pay for
the hospital's bills, and the damage to the building.

_Gustave tinkers with the motor while Louise's taped voice is heard. She is distraught._

**LOUISE**

Gustave, we cannot stay here. The neighbors came here again today — they say the police will come. They say they will stand no more explosions in the basement. Gustave, the children of the neighbors, they threw rocks at our house today. We must move away . . . for us, for our child.

_During the taped monolog, the stage light has faded from the stage actor. Fade in slide sequence of Gustave and Junius Harworth. It is Sunday morning and the two are on their way to the shore to capture seagulls to study flight mechanics. The setting is an identifiable Bridgeport location; possibly, the interspersing of photocopies is necessary. The tone should be reminiscent of the first Bavarian forest sequence, but not as strong — stark, but with a sense of beauty. Gustave and Junius are seen walking and talking, arriving at a location, baiting hooks and catching fish which in turn are used as bait to catch seagulls. The birds are tied, studied, and released. Time is much compressed; the episode is not over three or four minutes. The audio track is typical harbor noises, especially reflecting steamship activity and church bells. The following dialog is on tape and is played during the latter part of the above sequence._

**JUNIUS**

What more can you learn from the gulls, Mr. Whitehead?

**GUSTAVE**

Birds have the secrets, Junius, lightness, strength, speed.

**JUNIUS**

You have watched them so many times.

**GUSTAVE**

The secrets are given to them. But we are given brains to figure
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out secrets.

The final shots of the above sequence are of Gustave’s eyes, intent upon the birds in flight. The following sequence of slides is of birds in flight, dissolved into the airplane diagrams of early aviation pioneers, perhaps even including da Vinci’s. As many as possible of Whitehead’s, but others as well. The dissolves are slow, deliberate; they continue through the following taped voices.

VOICE #1
(Following a loud explosion.)
What in hell is . . .

VOICE #2
It’s that crazy Whitehead again, blowing up boilers. It’s the only way he knows to test how much pressure they’ll take.

A music theme fades in near the last sentence above and continues through the beginning of the next speech. It indicates separation of time and space.

POLICEMAN #1
Cronin, this is the most peculiar duty I’ve ever had.

POLICEMAN #2
Peculiar it is, but Gus Whitehead’s tinkering is perfectly legal. So it’s up to us to keep the citizens away from his shop so they don’t get blown up.

Music theme.

LOUISE
Gustave, a man named Miller is here to see you. It’s about your work, your work on airplanes . . .

MILLER
(Fading in)
. . . and since your previous experiments indicate a sound
knowledge of the problems — a light-weight engine and take-off velocity — I'm prepared to fund you three hundred dollars, with the stipulation that you quit your job to devote your time completely to the new airplane.

Music theme.

GUSTAVE

Twenty pieces of white pine, five feet long, eight inches wide and seven-eighths of an inch thick, Junius. And a large pot of glue from the hardware store on the way back.

The sound of a primitive gasoline engine sputtering to a start after several attempts. Overlapped with a knocking on a door and . . .

VOICE

Mr. Whitehead, please, the pastor of the church next door asks that you please not test your engines during his evening worship service!

The birds-in-flight-airplane-design sequence fades out. Stage light up on stage actor. He holds a tool, possibly is working on the wooden propeller.

GUSTAVE

(Laughing at himself.)

"The consequences, Mr. Whitehead, remember to think about the consequences!" That is what Pastor Johnson tells me. His vegetable garden is between his Lutheran Church and my shop. Sometimes we talk. Pastor Johnson usually begins by saying: "Mr. Whitehead, you're troubling my mind again." And I usually say, How in the world could I do such a thing as that? And he says, "It's not the 'in-the-world' that troubles me, Mr. Whitehead. More than one of my congregation have asked me whether God meant man to fly." And what have you told them, I reply to the pastor. "Well, Mr. Whitehead," he says, "I've told them that the matter requires considerable more theological study." (Laughing) And then Pastor
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Johnson always says: “Mr. Whitehead, what if it works?” Those matters concern me, too, I tell him. But I am sure that flying could only get me closer to the source of the answer.

Gustave turns back to his work as the spot fades from him. Fade in slides of 1900 Bridgeport, again emphasizing the busy, energetic, commercial aspect of the city. Specific industries are identifiable. The audio is related and in addition, a Christmas carol and sleigh bells are heard faintly.

LOUISE

It is Christmas, 1900, in Bridgeport. Our house on Pine Street is drafty inside and there is not enough firewood. In the shop, even though it is colder there, Gustave and his friends and helpers do not know it is cold. The machine noises and the voices make me feel warmer. I worry, too. Mr. Miller’s money has run out and he has not answered Gustave’s letters. Gustave is again working at a machinist’s job at Wilmot and Hobbs. At night, nearly all night sometimes, he and the others work in the shop. (She brightens.) Early one morning last week, they pushed the new airplane to Seaside Park. They came back, more excited and happy than little boys. Gustave had flown the machine over twenty feet high, for more than two hundred feet . . . (long pause) Our daughter, Rose, is two and a half years, now. I want for her the good things of this country. I look forward to the warm spring days, to walk on the shore in the sunshine.

A ragtime piano, lazy and slow, fades in as the final Bridgeport slide — an early movie house — freezes on screen. On tape, Louise and Gustave are laughing together. As spotlight comes up on stage actor, Gustave is laughing, synched with his own taped laughter.

GUSTAVE

Today Louise and I saw a most amazing thing — pictures that moved! We paid five cents to enter a room that had a white sheet hung at one end. The lights were turned off, and then on the sheet, the image of a railroad train that moved! Steam came from its stack! Then a great waterfall ran down the sheet. I paid a second five cents to discover how this movement is made. My brain can understand how
Gustave Whitehead and airplane #21, ca. 1901, Bridgeport, Connecticut.
Allan Varvella on stage as Gustave Whitehead
Doria L. Marsh, Lynne Roberts, and Allan Varvella as Whitehead and his children — on spring excursion at Bridgeport beach.
Spring excursion
Steven Ross and Bernadette Baldino shooting Bavarian Park sequence at Woods Estate, Trumbull, Connecticut.
Don Coonley on Windcrossing set.

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this movement is made — but my heart tells me it is magic. *(He
laughs.)* It is called Vitascope, made by Mr. Thomas Edison of West
Orange, New Jersey. I have written him this letter:

April 10, 1901
Dear Mr. Edison:

I have seen your Vitascope and congratulate you on such a clever, unique invention. I, too, am an
inventor and am wondering if you might be interested in making moving pictures of the flight of my
airplane.

*Fade in a slide of Gustave and the first plane built at the Pine
Street shop.*

I enclose a photograph of the machine and myself. The carriage is made of pine, spruce, and
bamboo reinforced with piano wires. The wings, which fold for storage, are covered with varnished
Japanese silk. She is powered by a four cylinder, two-cycle gasoline engine. Of course I have flown
this machine on several short flights — nothing yet over three hundred feet. But I expect to fly much
longer distances very soon. I would be very happy to fly my machine in the presence of your machine.
Trusting this will interest you, I remain very truly yours,

Gustave Whitehead
Bridgeport, Connecticut

*(He is slightly bothered by all the "verys" in the last part of the letter, but his enthusiasm overcomes his syntax.)*

*Fading in on the last sentence is an audio track of fireworks, crowd noises, bands, steamwhistles. It is July 4, 1901, in Bridgeport. As the spot fades from Gustave, he is smiling hopefully and folding his letter in an envelope. Fade in a slide sequence of an Independence Day celebration. The audio focus shifts among various events: a political speech relating to McKinley or Roosevelt, vocal ad-*
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Advertisements for the circus and the local opera houses, a local politician speaking of the late, great P.T. Barnum, snatches of popular music sung or played by brass bands. Then, a closer conversation between two Bridgeport Sunday Herald reporters.

REPORTER #1

It might be a new century, but these celebrations haven't changed much.

REPORTER #2

Whadda ya say we go down to the “Rosedale” and see who’s come up from New York. At least have a drink at the ship’s bar.

REPORTER #1

Naw, let’s go over to the circus grounds and see how independent old Buffalo Bill is today.

REPORTER #2

Hell, I’ve written so many pieces on Bill Cody lately, Bailey is thinking of putting me in the act.

REPORTER #1

Let’s go over and talk to Gus Whitehead. Maybe he’s working on his new flying machine.

They begin to walk and the sounds of the celebration fade in and out in the background.

REPORTER #1

Ya know, I can’t help liking that crazy Whitehead. What do you suppose would happen if he’d get that thing in the air?

The background noise intrudes on their conversation now. We hear distinctly, yet distantly, a public speaker extolling freedom of the press.

REPORTER #2

(He pauses, as if debating whether to say . . . )
He has gotten that thing in the air.

REPORTER #1
What? When? You’re joking me . . .

REPORTER #2
On my way to work a couple of months ago I saw Whitehead and a group of his helpers. Near St. Stephen’s School, on the old circus grounds. They started the motor and towed the thing with ropes. Whitehead himself was in the machine. He went off the embankment on Bostwick Avenue. Must have gone nearly a hundred yards, and twenty or thirty feet off the ground.

REPORTER #1
But, why didn’t you . . .

REPORTER #2
(Both angry and ashamed)
Who the hell would have believed a story like that?

The audio and visual elements of the July 4th celebration fade out and after a brief single-instrument theme, the spot fades in on Gustave. The screen is black. Live speech.

GUSTAVE
(He seems younger here and is naively open with his passion toward his machine.)

The machine is almost ready to fly. To really fly this time, much farther than before. We call her “the Bird” — and she is beautiful. Pieces of wood and silk and metal, built in my shop into a bird. Once off the coast of Brazil, I stood morning watch as the sun came up from the water. An albatross flew across the sun’s path and her wings turned gold. I think of that time often when I look at this bird. So much of me — of Gustave Whitehead — is in that machine. We are nearly ready to fly.

During the last part of the above speech (on the phrase “wings turned gold”), fade in slide of Gustave standing beside #21, “the
Bird."

His reverie is interrupted by audio taped Louise.

LOUISE

Gustave, so much of our money is spent on the airplane. We have so little now.

GUSTAVE

(He is jarred from his middle-distance stare and impatiently turns to answer his wife.)

I know, Louise, I know. We will have more soon. Last week — I forgot to tell you — two men, brothers I think, came from Ohio to visit. They knew of my work in Ohio, Louise! They too are inventors, and they too knew of Otto. They were quite interested to hear of my visit with Otto in Germany. I shared with them two ideas, Louise, one about steering and one about engine cooling, and they have promised to finance my . . .

LOUISE

(Frustrated, disappointed)

Promises, Gustave . . . only spoken words — from strangers.

GUSTAVE

There will be more help — as soon as we fly longer. The new motor can run for nearly five minutes and not become too hot. As soon as the generator is improved . . .

JUNIUS

Mr. Whitehead, please get someone from the newspapers to come to see "the Bird" fly. Some of the other boys laugh at me when I tell them about flying. My teacher says that it is folly for men to learn to fly like birds.

GUSTAVE

(Laughing good naturedly)

"Crazy Whitehead, Crazy Whitehead." I know, Junius. But we have flown and will fly again — and much longer in the air. Then we'll invite the reporters and the teachers and . . .
DON COONLEY  

JUNIUS

But Mr. Whitehead, people should know now . . . it is important.

GUSTAVE

All right, Junius, all right. We will tell the boys from the newspaper. But I doubt they will come. I am not sure that a flying machine that flies will fit into their stories.

Gustave laughs kindly as the spot fades from him. On screen remains the slide of “the Bird” and Gustave. A series of the same photograph, each shot taken from slightly closer, gives the impression of a slow zoom in towards Gustave’s face. At a feasible point, the photocopied face is replaced with a close-up photograph of the stage actor’s face. A single-instrument theme fades in. The tone is the same as that experienced in the Bavarian forest sequence — a sense of mystery, unknown, and excitement. The tone is stronger here. The audio is impressionistic; it is brought up gradually and at what feels like a breaking point, the sputtering start of the motor of “the Bird.” On screen, the slides have graduated until we see only Gustave’s eyes.

16mm film fades in and is superimposed on the close-up of the eyes. The slide is faded out after a few seconds. The film is a subjective point of view, shot from Gustave’s perspective as he pilots the craft. The camera looks down a crude runway, constructed on a vacant lot or hill-top. Two men are on either side of the frame, holding ropes which are apparently tied to the airplane below the camera’s position. The four men (one is Junius) look toward the camera waiting for a signal. They receive it, tighten the tow lines, then begin running down the runway, pulling the plane. The ride is bumpy. After a few seconds, the plane gains enough speed to pass the men. As they drop off to the sides and out of the frame, they are yelling encouragement. (They cannot be heard because of the noise of the motor and/or the above-mentioned audio effects.) After several more seconds, “the Bird” is airborne and the ride instantly becomes more smooth. The audio, too, creates a smoother, almost surreal effect. The camera tilts upward toward the sky as the horizon drops below the frame. The audio fades down and Gustave’s actual words (later printed in a newspaper article) are voiced over (tape or live).
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GUSTAVE

"I never felt such a strange sensation as when the machine first left the ground. . . . I heard nothing but the rumbling of the engine and the flapping of the big wings. . . . I don't think I saw anything during the first few moments of the flight. I was so excited. When the ship reached a height of about forty or fifty feet. I began to wonder how much higher it would go . . . then I observed she was sailing along easily and not raising any higher. . . . I still had a feeling of doubt about what was waiting for me further on. I never felt such a spirit of freedom as then when I was soaring up above my fellow beings in a thing my own brain had evolved. . . . It made me feel I was far ahead of my brothers, for I could fly like a bird, and they must still walk. And while my brain was whirling with these new sensations of delight, I saw a clump of trees the machine was pointed for. I became afraid but then like a flash, a plan to escape the trees came to mind. I had watched the birds when they turned out of a straight course to avoid something ahead; a machine ought to be able to obey the same principle and when within about fifty yards of the trees I shifted my weight to the left side of the machine. It swung a little to the left and turned from the straight course, around the trees. I had soared through the air for a half a mile now and the field ended with a piece of woods. When within a hundred yards of the woods I shut off the power and then began to feel a little nervous about how the machine would act in settling to the ground . . . but my machine began to settle evenly and I alighted on the ground with scarcely a jar and not a thing broken. That was the happiest moment of my life, for I had demonstrated that the machine I have worked on for so many years would do what I claimed for it. It was a grand sensation flying through the air. There is nothing like it."

The corresponding screen version is much like that described by Gustave above. The final image — after the plane touches down and coasts to a stop — is a slow pan toward the rising sun. There is a moment of silence as the plane and its pilot are motionless. The screen fades to black.

An audio collage fades in: each of the following speeches is overlapped, possibly even a double audio track. A celebration is underway. Spirits and hopes are high, much laughter, clinking of
glasses. As the audio (which begins in the dark) gets underway, fade in various shots of documented newspaper stories of the August flight. Slides from each of the three major papers complete with the diagrams and the sketch of “the Bird” are shown. This authenticity should be established as painlessly as possible, avoiding obvious one-to-one correspondences to the speeches.

JUNIUS

Telling the newspapers wasn’t such a bad idea, now was it Mr. Whitehead?

LOUISE

Listen to this story: “The airship was taken back to the starting point . . . By this time the light was good. Faint traces of the rising sun began to suggest themselves in the east. Your Bridgeport Herald representative assisted when the opportunity offered, but a stranger about a flying machine is sadly out of place.” (Laughter) “An early morning milkman stopped in the road to see what was going on. His horse nearly ran away from the noise.” (More laughter) Here, you read Pastor Johnson.

PASTOR JOHNSON

“The nervous tension was growing at every clock tick and no one showed it more than Whitehead who still whispered at times, although the reason for it was not apparent.” That newspaper fellow doesn’t know you well Gustave or he would have known that you’ll be whispering about your flying machines until you’ve flown one from here to New York! Then perhaps you’ll think what you’ve done is worth shouting about.

JUNIUS

“They let go and when they did so the machine darted up through the air like a bird released from a cage. Whitehead was greatly excited and his hands flew from one part of the machinery to another.”

PASTOR JOHNSON

“And she lighted on her four wooden wheels so lightly that
Whitehead was not jarred in the least."

After each reading, Gustave mildly and humorously protests, corrects accuracy, etc.

LOUISE
Now listen, Gustave. "For half an hour the man who had demonstrated that he has a machine that can navigate the air . . . spoke almost like a child who has seen for the first time something new and is panting out of breath in an effort to tell it to its mother." Now that must be true, Gustave!

PASTOR JOHNSON
There are more stories, Gustave. From the New York Herald . . . and the Boston Transcript!

GUSTAVE

PASTOR JOHNSON
"Bridgeport, Connecticut, August 19, 1901. With a view to perfecting a flying machine for commercial purposes, Gustave Whitehead of this city and W. D. Custead of Waco, Texas, have formed a partnership. Both are inventors. Whitehead has a flying machine and Custead an airship. Last week Whitehead flew in his machine half a mile. . . . The chemical preparation is the secret of the new generator and Whitehead will not reveal the ingredients. Mr. Custead is backed by a number of Texas and Southern capitalists for the manufacture of the new airship. The company is financed at $100,000."

All applaud, someone proposes a toast to the new success. The party audio and the slides fade out. The stage light is brought up on actor. Gustave is pensive, staring beyond the newspaper which he holds, open.
GUSTAVE

Last month, President McKinley was shot. He was at a place called the Temple of Music. Our President did not die for awhile. Each day he lived on the newspaper, and the people, talked about him and the things he did. When he died, eight days after the shooting, President McKinley was a great man. (Gustave does not understand exactly why.) We have a new president now, one who seems to be great from the beginning: the newspapers are always talking about Teddy Roosevelt. He does many things in little time. I think this man has changed a gear in America and the country is going much faster than before. I feel sometimes like the moment when “the Bird” lifted from the ground and I became confused by excitement. The newspaper fellow was right when he wrote “His hands flew from one piece of machinery to another.” (He laughs.) Sometimes it is that way, all the time.

I have not been able to contact my new partner, Mr. Custead. He does not answer my letters. I do receive much mail after the newspaper stories. Most are requests to build motors, motors for automobiles, for boats, and some even for airplanes. Sometimes I build these motors — for money to live. But I am close to longer flight and I can think of little else. (Long pause) The man who killed President McKinley told the police he had been “on fire” for months to kill a great ruler. I am on fire, too.

During this monolog, Gustave leaves his usual position on the apron of the stage and begins to pace as he becomes more excited. The speech is not at all fanatic because his passion is controlled. But Gustave is himself somewhat surprised with his own analogy to the murderer. In the background of the final part of the speech, an audio collage fades in, representing the Thanksgiving-Christmas holiday season, 1901. Pastor Johnson might be delivering a Thanksgiving message; Christmas carols and sleigh bells; several personal greetings among Louise, Rose, Junius, the Pastor. The pace is quick and compressed. Gustave, still in the foreground, hears none of this — he is daydreaming. Suddenly we are aware that Louise has called Gustave’s name, has gotten no response, and repeats.
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LOUISE
(Kindly, but insistently.)
Gustave, come down from the clouds.

GUSTAVE
(Turns slightly, as if to speak to her.)
I am sorry, Louise, What is it?

LOUISE
I found a present for you today. It’s a poem, a funny poem about a boy who wants to fly.

GUSTAVE
Oh? (Obviously interested.)

LOUISE
(Laughing)
I’m afraid he’s not as good an aeronaut as you.

JUNIUS
Read it. Mr. Whitehead, please read it.

GUSTAVE
I have not read a poem since I was a boy your age, Junius. And that is a good reason to try and read this one. I’ll try:

“If ever there lived a Yankee lad,
Wise or otherwise, good or bad,
Who, seeing the birds fly, didn’t jump
With flapping arms from stake or stump,
Or, spreading the tail of his coat for a sail,
Take a soaring leap from post or rail,
And wonder why he couldn’t fly,
And flap and flutter and wish and try, —”

Gustave, enjoying himself, reads on but his voice becomes quiet and the audience cannot really hear him. On tape, the stage whispers of Pastor Johnson and Louise are introduced. Gustave, of course, doesn’t hear them.
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PASTOR
Louise, that poem . . . you cut it from the newspaper?

LOUISE
I know, Pastor, I know. It was put there to make fun of men who try to fly.

PASTOR
. . . but the article next to it was malicious! What if he should see the entire . . .

The Pastor is interrupted by Gustave's voice, who reads:

GUSTAVE
“An aspiring genius was Darius Green:
The son of a farmer, — age fourteen . . .
Darius was clearly of the opinion,
That the air was also man’s dominion . . .
‘The birds can fly, and why can’t I?
Must we give in?’ he says with a grin.

Gustave begins to read to himself again as the stage whispers are brought up.

LOUISE
Gustave doesn’t pay much attention to the newspapers. He calls them advertising, especially the front page.

PASTOR
Then he didn’t see the story called “Last Flop for Whitehead Flying Machine”?

GUSTAVE
“And he said to himself, as he tinkered and planned:
‘But I ain’t goin’ to show my hand
To dummies that never can understand
The first idea that’s big and grand,’
And in the loft above the shed
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Himself he locks, with thimble and thread —
Two bats for patterns, curious fellows!
A charcoal-pot and a pair of bellows;
And old hoop-skirt or two, as well as
Some wire, and several old umbrellas;
A carriage-cover, for a tail and wings;
A piece of harness; a strap and strings;
And a big strong box, in which he locks
These and a hundred other things.”

(He trails off again.)

LOUISE

No, I don’t think he saw the story. But he knows people make fun of him. “Crazy Whitehead.” (Pauses to reflect.) Why do they write about his failures and forget the flight in August, and the ones before that — almost as if they didn’t really happen? Gustave has had great successes.

PASTOR

I’m not certain, Louise. It is sometimes very hard to accept a thing which you have come to believe cannot be true. (His tone indicates he, too, struggles with this concept.)

GUSTAVE

Stepping careful, he travels the length
Of his spring-board, and teeters to try its strength.
Now he stretches his wings, like a monstrous bat
Away he goes
As a demon is hurled by an angel’s spear
Heels over head, to his proper sphere, —
So fell Darius. Upon his crown,
In the midst of the barn-yard, he came down,

(Gustave has been caught up with the story and seems suddenly disappointed with the turn of events, especially “proper sphere.”)

In a wonderful whirl of tangled strings,
Broken braces and broken springs . . .
DON COONLEY  45

Broken tail and broken wings,
Shooting-stars, and various things . . .

His voice trails off and he is alone on stage, daydreaming of his own youth in Bavaria. The rooftop sequence, shot in 16mm film, has begun near the line above “as a demon is hurled . . .”

GUSTAVE
Darius Green and his flying machine. How much we are alike.

The rooftop sequence begins with an establishing shot of a snowy Bavarian village. A young Gustave is seen climbing to the top of a two-story village house. He is wearing muslin wings, strapped to his back. As in the first Bavarian sequence and in the first flight sequence, an air of mystery, excitement, and fear is reflected in the audio and visual components. (This sequence, of course, is the enactment of the anecdote that Gustave told early in the presentation.) The boy reaches his take-off point, hesitates, and leaps outward, flapping his wings. He plunges into a snowbank, struggling to the surface. He brushes himself off, inspects his wings for damage, and looks up at the roof. Gustave, on stage, has a soft spotlight on his face. He urges his youthful counterpart:

GUSTAVE
Try again. . . . Try again!

On screen, the boy looks up to the rooftop and in the next shot is perched there again. A close-up of the boy’s eyes. He leaps again, but this time the shot is subjective camera. Dissolve from the boy’s leap toward the snowbank (which he never reaches) to a subjective shot from an airplane flying over Long Island Sound. Both water and sky are visible. A plane’s motor is cross-faded from the audio of the rooftop sequence. It is January 17, 1902. Gustave, at the controls of his #22 plane, is soaring between one hundred and two hundred feet over the Sound. The visuals approximately correspond to Gustave’s description. We do not see him: his voice is taped to be heard above the plane’s noise. Although Gustave is not speaking during the flight, he is nevertheless excited.
GUSTAVE

“January 17, 1902. Today I have flown farther than ever before. Farther, I think, than any man has. I intended to cover only a short distance on this winter day but the machine behaved so well that on the first trial it covered nearly two miles over the water of Long Island Sound. The machine kept on steadily in crossing the wind at a height of about two hundred feet, when it came into my mind to try steering around in a circle. As soon as I turned the rudder and drove one propeller faster than the other the machine turned a bend and flew north with the wind at a frightful speed, but turned steadily around until I saw the starting place in the distance. I continued to turn but when near the land again, I slowed up the propellers and sank gently down on an even keel in to the water, she readily floating like a boat.”

At the touchdown point, almost in the water, the screen fades out and spot comes up on Gustave, who is composing (or has composed and is reading back) this letter. His live voice cross-fades with the audio tape so that the line “and as the day was at a close and the weather . . .” is spoken simultaneously (voice and tape), while the line “changing for the worse” is spoken only by the stage actor.

GUSTAVE

“My men pulled her out of the water, and as the day was at a close and the weather changing for the worse, I decided to take her home until Spring. This machine was built in four months with the aid of fourteen skilled mechanics and cost about $1700 to build. It is run by a five-cylinder forty horsepower kerosene motor of my own design, especially constructed for strength, power, and lightness, weighing but 120 pounds complete. It will run for a week at a time if required, without running hot . . .”

Fade in slides of The American Inventor (April 1, 1902) in which this letter, with diagrams, appears.

GUSTAVE

“The flying machine proper is built like my machine number 21 (which I call “the Bird”) of which I send you photographs. Number 22 is made mostly of steel and aluminum, rather than bamboo . . .”
A cross-audio fade into Louise reading the same letter from the point Gustave leaves off above. The single-instrument theme fades in.

LOUISE

"The length of flight on the first trial was about two miles, and on the second about seven miles. The last trial was a circling flight, and as I successfully returned to my starting place with a machine hitherto untried and heavier than air, I consider the trip quite a success."

John, please listen. Gustave is your brother. This will help you to understand what he has done. The American Inventor is an important paper in this country.

JOHN WHITEHEAD

(He speaks in an accent heavier than Gustave's. He is skeptical.)

I try, Louise, Read more.

LOUISE

"Believing with Maxim that the future of the air machines lies in an apparatus made without the gas bag, I have taken up the Aeroplane and will stick to it until I have succeeded completely or expire in the attempt of so doing." (She is moved by his statement.)

JOHN

But there are no photographs. No proof!

LOUISE

But listen, John! "As soon as I can I shall try again. This coming Spring I will have photographs made of machine number 22 in the air and let you have the pictures taken during its flight. If you can come up and take them yourself, so much the better. I attempted this before, but poor light prevented them from coming out."

JOHN

... but next time is not good.
LOBISE

(Interrupts him)

"... information of my flight is new, of course, to the world at large, but I do not care much in being advertised except by a good paper like yours. Such accounts may help others along who are working in the same line." He is trying, John. You could have no idea how long it took him to write this letter.

_Fade in a slow series of slides of Gustave, both distant-view photocopies and mediums of actor as Gustave._

LOBISE

"To describe the feeling of flying is almost impossible, for in fact, a man is more frightened than anything else. Trusting this will interest your readers, I remain, very truly yours,

Gustave Whitehead
Bridgeport, Connecticut."

JOHN

What do the doctors at the hospital say today, Louise? How is he?

LOBISE

The chip of steel has lodged too deep. He has lost all sight in the eye. The foreman at the plant says the accident was Gustave's fault; they'll not pay anything. John, I'm grateful you're here. Please, believe in Gustave, as I do.

_Fade out the slides of Gustave. Cross-faded with the last few words above the sound of a railroad train steam engine at a station._

GUSTAVE

(On tape, heard shouting above noise)

I hope you approve of this kind of travel, Pastor Johnson.

PASTOR

Of course, Gustave. This, after all, is much different than
hurtling through the air like a bird.

GUSTAVE
Yes. It’s much lower. Goodbye and thanks for the help!

PASTOR
Goodbye. Good luck at the Exposition!

They are both shouting as the sound of the train leaves the station. On screen, an old movie (ca. 1904) of a railroad train. Mixed with the train’s noise, faintly, the ragtime piano. After fifteen seconds, the spot is brought up on the stage actor, seated on a folding wooden chair, back toward audience, facing the train movie. (The audience will have assumed that they are watching the same train boarded by Gustave in the previous audio sequence, when in fact they are watching the same movie he is.) Gustave is transfixed, occasionally laughing, childlike. The film ends abruptly and Gustave turns around to face audience. He wears an eye patch and looks several years older, although this is only two years after the 1902 flight. The melodramatic effect of the eye loss is contrasted to his animated enjoyment of the movie. He is dressed formally.

GUSTAVE
It is the spring, 1904, in St. Louis, Missouri. I have come to a great event called the Louisiana Purchase International Exposition! Mr. Edison’s moving pictures are shown here — but so much more, too. There are people from many countries and they have brought here things that they have made — tools, music, clothing, machines of all kinds. There are gardens and waterfalls, boats on waterways. And two large buildings called the Palace of Electricity and the Palace of Machines. They are filled with the most modern inventions in the world. Except flying machines. (For the first time, a trace of bitterness is mixed with his bewilderment.) My flying machine, number 22, is at a part of the Exposition called “the Pike.” On “the Pike” there are ferris wheels and carousels, and circus acts, and sometimes automobile races.

Fade in, circular, swirling imagery, possibly realistic suggestions
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OF CAROUSELS, FERRIS WHEELS, OR MORE ABSTRACT MOVEMENT.

GUSTAVE

I have flown my new bird here three times, before a great many people. I will fly more tomorrow. But the managers of the Exposition want only short flights in small circles so that many people can see at once. It is important that people see the flights, so I go on. There is no other way for the people to imagine what a flying machine is — and what it will soon be: a way to travel fast . . . and far. (He nearly wanders, then regains his concentration.)

Also on "the Pike" is a man who is called an escape artist. Every day he is handcuffed, then put into a trunk which is padlocked and chained shut. The trunk is pushed into a deep tank of water. After what seems like a long time, the escape artist bursts to the surface of the water, free of the chains and the trunk! The people cheer and clap their hands and shout his name — and that is what they do after my flights, too. Do they think of me as an escape artist, that my airplane is something to escape from? I will soon return to Bridgeport to work on longer flights in more powerful airplanes. Here, I feel like a wooden horse on a carousel.

A second "feature" has flickered on the screen and Gustave turns to watch it, then half turns back to the audience.

GUSTAVE

Mr. Edison's invention is also not in the Palace of Machines. It is here on "the Pike" too. Mr. Edison never answered my letter. And so he has had to settle for earthbound machines in his moving pictures.

The movie could be The Great Train Robbery or The Black Diamond Express. Gustave is quickly absorbed in it as the spotlight fades from his back. The ragtime piano, played faster than the first time, is brought up in the background and then is cross-faded with sounds of a train which correspond to the train noises at the beginning of this sequence. The movie remains on screen for one minute.

Fade in a series of slides of 1905 Bridgeport. In a manner similar to the opening sequence depicting Gustave's arrival, Gustave and his
two oldest children appear — first in long shots, then close-ups. Rose, his daughter, is now about eight or nine and Charles is about five or six. The three are on an early spring day’s excursion. They will spend time climbing hills, including the site of the first August flight, and walking near the shore. Gustave carries a box camera and takes shots of the children and of birds in flight. Photocopies of old Bridgeport are dissolved in with the enactment shots. The sequence is highly lyrical, romantic. The children and their father obviously like one another, but a shot occasionally reflects Gustave’s preoccupation with something else. The audio is composed of lyrical, soft background noises which approximately correspond to the visual excursion. The single-instrument theme is also in the background. The following audio collage of voices occurs at the same time as the above spring-excursion sequence.

JOHN WHITEHEAD
(Knocking on door)
Where’s Gustave, Louise?

LOUISE
He’s off with the children, John, near the shore I think. He took the camera, too.

JOHN
At least he remembers to take photographs of something. Has he heard from the Patent Office in Washington yet?

LOUISE
No, not yet. (Pause) John, Gustave has lost his job at the Locomobile plant. They said he was not careful enough to be a machinist . . . but he is so careful, John.

JOHN
Yes, on his own machines he is very careful. Try not to worry, Louise. I know a foreman at Coulter and MacKenzie. They are hiring men this week . . .

His voice trails off and the single music theme is played. The
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following monolog is faded in after a few seconds of music. The spring-excursion sequence continues on screens.

STANLEY YALE BEACH
(Stuffy, pompous voice.)

Whitehead, let me introduce myself. I am Stanley Yale Beach, the aeronautics editor of The Scientific American. I am sure you've heard of the journal? I have looked into your work and have concluded that you need both financial backing and shrewd management. Now, I'm prepared to make you an offer that would satisfy even . . . (Trails off.)

Cross faded

HERMAN LINDE

My name is Mr. Linde, Mr. Whitehead, and I have an idea for which I'll need your expert help. Now if you were to build me a lightweight engine to the specifications I've drawn up here, then I think we could come to . . . (Trails off.)

Cross fade

PASTOR JOHNSON

Louise, I'm sure that Gustave has not seen this article yet in the New York Herald. I'm not sure I can tell him about it. Someone must. "War Department Contracts Flying Machine: The United States Army Signal Corps Today Awarded a $25,000 contract to the Wright Company for Construction of an Aeroplane. The firm's founders, Wilbur Wright and Orville Wright, took the first patent on a flying machine in early 1906." Louise, that patent was awarded well over a year ago?

The spring-excursion sequence begins to share one of the two screens with slides of various events, newspaper headlines, and people which comprised the quickly accelerating velocity of life during this 1907-1911 period. The slides begin with the Wright Brothers' first press notices, then Wilbur's successful French trip (1908). Later, his flight up the Hudson during the Hudson-Fulton
celebration in 1909. Also, political landmarks (photographs of both Teddy Roosevelt and Wm. Taft), cultural events, sports events, and the rise of technology. The slides of this march-of-time sequence will initially be intercut into the spring-excursion sequence at the ratio of one march-of-time slide to three spring-excursion slides. Gradually, the ratio will reverse until Gustave and his children are overwhelmed. The final shot of Gustave is a long one, taken at a high angle. Although his children are nearby, he appears isolated. The audio collage continues:

POLICEMAN #1

Mrs. Whitehead, I'm sorry to be tellin' you this, but they've got Gus down at the city jail. It seems as if a Mr. Beach has claimed a breach of contract. Something to do with a motor that he says wasn't delivered on time. Don't worry, Mrs. Whitehead, the judge just gave him a couple of days. He'll be back home before ya know it, out there in the shop working . . . (Trails off.)

Cross fade

HERMAN LINDE

Whitehead, you son-of-a-bitch, that engine, which I have paid for, has been sitting under your bench for six months. If you don't fulfill our agreement, I warn you, I'll take legal action! Do you know how much money I've given you over the past . . . (Trails off.)

Cross fade

PASTOR JOHNSON

Louise, Louise, I have some good news for a change. Buffalo Jones is here in Bridgeport. He's come to see Gustave, Louise, to contract him to build a flying machine. The man is well-known. Goodness, Louise, Zane Grey has even written a book about him—The Last of the Plainsmen! Imagine, building an airplane for Buffalo Jones. People would notice that.

LOUISE

(Confused)
BUFFALO BILL? But he . . .

PASTOR JOHNSON

No, Louise, Buffalo Jones is a different one. This could be good for you and Gustave, the money . . . (Trails off.)

The single-instrument theme is reintroduced as the pastor's excited voice trails off. The pace of the march-of-time sequence has been quick, a slide about every three seconds. Now the pace slows with the music. As Louise begins her monolog, below, one slide remains on the screen which reflects the date, 1911. On a second screen, a slide of Gustave from the end of the spring-excursion sequence.

LOUISE

(Weary, older, but still with definite strength.)

Gustave! Gustave! (She calls, then remembers.) Oh, yes, yes . . . he is with the children. Or perhaps I should say that all my children are together. . . . Our lives are better now. We finally saved enough money to buy this house on Tunxis Hill. It is bigger and a little warmer in the winter. In the back we have planted a large orchard of peach trees and a vegetable garden. We have a cow and Gustave at last has his own birds — chickens to lay eggs. We have enough to eat; the children sell the food we have left. And Gustave has just sold an engine for a boat to an actor from New York. It is not easy to persuade Gustave to finish a boat motor when he wants to work on flying machines! It was necessary. The actor paid $1,800 and was most happy with the work. Heaven knows that not all people have been happy with Gustave's work. He has been sued more than once. He has spent four nights in the city jail. Those times were so cold and so quiet in the house. These men, they pay Gustave for his ideas and his skills, but then they seem always to want more. I do not understand the agreements . . . or the disagreements, either. Fighting takes so much energy; I do not want Gustave to have to fight with these men. Someday he will be left with no energy.

A slide of Gustave (from the spring-excursion) is on the screen. Near the end of Louise's above speech, near the city jail reference,
that slide dissolves to a similar shot taken from some distance further away, which in turn dissolves to one taken from an even greater distance. The shot could be of Gustave (the children not visible) sitting on a park bench or leaning on a railing by the shore. His attitude reflects an underlying tension even though he’s trying to relax. His entire body fills the frame. The second shot is taken from about seventy-five feet back and so forth. The final shot is an extreme long shot with the solitary figure in the distance. This series counterpoints the earlier one which dissolved inward toward his eyes, prior to his flight. On the second screen is a series of birds in flight. As both series are faded out, the instrument theme, which has been playing during Louise’s speech, is brought up. The stage and screens are dark. Gustave begins to speak — live — from the darkness.

GUSTAVE

“He’ll rope cougars — sure he will — and watch ’em jump. Jones would rope the devil, and tie him down if the lasso didn’t burn. Oh, he’s hell on ropin’ things!”

The stage light comes up on Gustave who is sitting on a stool, center stage, reading from Zane Grey’s The Last of the Plainsmen. He reads hesitantly but obviously enjoys the book.

GUSTAVE

Buffalo Jones! The Preserver of the American Bison! This man came to ask me to build for him a flying machine which would rise vertically from the ground without a running start — a helicopter. That morning Mr. Jones told me of his plans and we also talked of other things.

A short series of slides of Jones appears on the screen.

GUSTAVE

“Mr. Whitehead,” he said, “it seems that you and I just might have something in common.” Now, I couldn’t think of what that might be, so I said nothing. “I’ve been capturing animals for a long time, Mr. Whitehead, sometimes to breed, sometimes for excitement. More than one man has asked me if I didn’t think it was cruel to keep
wild animals in captivity — isn’t that against God’s word, they say. And this is my answer to them, Mr. Whitehead.” Buffalo Jones stopped for a long time, looked hard at me and said: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in my image, and give him dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, over all the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.’ Dominion over all those things, Mr. Whitehead, that was God’s word!”

Now Mr. Jones, in his shaggy coat and big hat, was standing up and looking very hard at me. It was not very hard to know that he was ready for me to say something. I said: More than one man has asked me if I thought that God had intended man to fly. Wouldn’t man have wings if he was supposed to fly? I do have wings, I say, I have many pairs of wings, and I have made them with my hands and my curiosity.

The slide of Gustave and his sixty-prop helicopter fades in

GUSTAVE

Mr. Buffalo Jones looked hard at me then and he began to laugh very hard. He gave me a sum of money and his plans and I began that day to build his vertical flying machine, staying as much to his design as I could. The machine had sixty propellers for lifting purposes and two more for forward movement. By springtime the helicopter was nearly ready for trial flight. One morning I received a letter from Mr. Jones. Dear Mr. Whitehead, it said. I have decided to continue my dominion over those things that creepeth upon the earth and to leave it to aeronauts like yourself to take dominion over the fowls of the air. Therefore, I instruct you to begin at once to redesign and rebuild the former helicopter into a light-weight, moveable windmill. I plan to use it to pump water to American Bison. I am sincerely yours, Buffalo Jones, Esquire.

Gustave enjoys the humor of the story briefly, but is quickly caught up in the more serious implications. On screen, slides of birds in flight appear. This sequence is a series of graceful, lyrical slides, each dissolved into the next. The audio has begun softly near the ending of Jones’s above-read letter: it is similar to the Bavarian forest sequence and the flight sequence — mysterious, fearsome, awful.
Gustave is again moving into unknown areas.

GUSTAVE

I never heard from Mr. Jones again. That winter I attached a saw to his windmill and cut wood for the fireplace. *(Laughs softly.)* I could have dominion over trees, but over fowls of the air? No, not dominion. Someday I will fly faster, maybe even higher than birds . . . but never so easy, never so free.

Gustave has turned as if to study the slides of birds on the screens. The stage spot has faded from him and he has become part of the projected photographs. The audio is now noticeably increasing in pitch and volume; it becomes uncomfortable. After what seems like too long a time, the screens go dark and the audio stops abruptly. After a brief silence (in the dark), a loud gavel is heard. A narrow spotlight is brought up on Gustave who is sitting on a low stool, center stage, hands on knees, tense. He cringes at the sound of the gavel.

LAWYER
*(Testy, annoying, brassy, condescending to someone who does not know the jargon of the law.)*

Mr. Whitehead, I must remind you again that you must direct your remarks toward me, the legal representative, not toward my client, Mr. Burridge.

GUSTAVE
*(Confused and not fully aware of the gravity of the proceedings.)*

But it is Mr. Burridge who does not like what I do. *(He turns toward where Burridge might be sitting.)* I think that we could settle our difference, Mr. Burridge . . .

LAWYER
*(Interrupting.)*

Mr. Whitehead! Your honor, would you please instruct . . .

GUSTAVE
Yes, yes. I will talk to the inbetween. But I do not understand the
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need for it.

LAWYER

Is it true, Mr. Whitehead, that you failed to honor the aforementioned contract with Mr. Burridge?

GUSTAVE

The machine was not quite ready. It could fly, but not fly well. (Turns again) Mr. Burridge, I told you that it was not good enough yet to . . .

LAWYER

Mr. Whitehead, is it true that the engine you had built for the flying machine was not of sufficient power to propel the machine?

GUSTAVE

Yes, but I did not know that in time. I had to have more tests. I . . .

LAWYER

Could it be true, then, Mr. Whitehead, that you failed to estimate properly the strength of the engine? That you simply guessed that it would be of sufficient power?

GUSTAVE

When I build things for the first time, sometimes I must first guess. Guessing is inventing, sometimes . . .

LAWYER

Then it is true, Mr. Whitehead, that this breach of contract was the result of your own failure . . . by your own inability to estimate horsepower of an engine. Really, Mr. Whitehead, you claim to be an engineer and yet your education seems somewhat lacking.

GUSTAVE

But I have learned much from Otto Lilienthal, and I learn for myself enough to fly . . .
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LAWYER

Surely, Mr. Whitehead, Orville and Wilbur Wright do not simply guess. Haven't I read that they spend thousands of hours recording their various tests? Perhaps that explains the brilliant successes of our American inventors, Mr. Whitehead? While you, on the other hand, go about slap dash.

GUSTAVE

(One of the few times when Gustave has been angered but this is more than he can stand. The Wrights' recognition has built up pressure within him until this point. Yet he is nearly inarticulate.)

The Wrights . . . they came to me . . . at my shop on Pine Street . . . they came to me for their education! They . . . They . . . (Unable to speak further)

Gustave has stood for this response. Realizing that he cannot be understood, he gradually sinks down to the stool. He knows the effects of ridicule and composes himself quickly. But he still does not know the gravity of these proceedings.

LAWYER

According to this deposition executed by Mr. Burridge, that aforementioned party did award a Mr. Gustave Whitehead, in three separate installments, a sum totalling $5,000, in accordance with the aforementioned contract. Is that true, Mr. Whitehead?

GUSTAVE

(Resigned, limp)

I think so. Mr. Burridge and I had . . .

LAWYER

You think so. You think so? Is it true, Mr. Whitehead, that you keep no records of your business transactions? In fact that you keep no records at all?

GUSTAVE

But I have agreements with people . . .
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LAWYER
Agreements that you do not always keep, Mr. Whitehead?

GUSTAVE
I try to keep agreements. I always try. Sometimes I cannot. Sometimes things happen . . .

LAWYER
(Impatient now, time for the details, the clean-up)
Is it true, Mr. Whitehead, that you failed to deliver the contracted aircraft to Mr. Lee S. Burridge of the Aero Club of America, on September 1, 1911?

GUSTAVE
(Weakly)
The machine was not good enough. It could have been much . . .

LAWYER
Answer yes or no, Mr. Whitehead.

GUSTAVE
Yes.

LAWYER
And is it true that you cannot repay the $5,000 to Mr. Burridge?

GUSTAVE
I cannot pay him money.

LAWYER
Your honor, in light of the great personal and professional inconvenience caused my client, and considering Mr. Whitehead's actions and financial status, I suggest that foreclosure is the only feasible choice of the court. The entire Whitehead property, the house and its contents, the machine shop — including the tools and parts — should be attached as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Whitehead family should be . . . (Trails off.)
The lawyer's voice is cross-faded into a steadily increasing audio track which has the by-now-familiar tone associated with the flight sequences. This time the feeling is more intense, more hostile, a greater unknown. On screen appears the blur (16mm) of a 360 degree swish pan. As the full meaning of the foreclosure falls over him, Gustave is stunned. Head in hands, he seems swept, physically, with the movement of the pan. He attempts to struggle against the confusion of the swirling screen movement (in which he is integrated, being projected upon) and the rising audio. His voice is heard on tape.

GUSTAVE
(Frightened, angry, confused)
I have done something wrong — and I do not know what it is.

The pan gradually slows and Gustave is swept to one side of the stage, near and facing the screen. On screen is established the same Bavarian roof-top sequence in which young Gustave with his muslin wings has attempted flight. The sequence begins with the boy in the snowbank after his first unsuccessful attempt. He looks up toward the roof. Cut to the boy on the roof and his leap. Unlike the previous sequence (which dissolved into the airplane flight over Long Island Sound), the boy's unsuccessful leap is concluded. He again plunges into the snowbank. He struggles to free himself from the snow. He is disappointed but indicates that he'll probably try again. From a distance, Gustave's grandmother calls to him. He looks up toward the voice, distracted. The speech is in German, beginning “Gustav Weisskopf . . .” The intonation clearly means “Come in the house, playtime is over, etc.” Young Gustave picks up his snow-covered wings, resigned to return to his grandmother's house. As he reaches the door, he turns and looks skyward. A shot of a bird in flight (slide) is superimposed on the film. The moving picture film fades to black, leaving the still of the bird on screen. The audio has become less intense during the sequence and by the time it ends is soft and is cross-faded into the reflective tone of the single-instrument theme. Gustave remains on stage, quite near the screen and at the very edge of the left side of the frame. The slide of the bird in flight dissolves to a shot which matches, approximately, the stage position of Gustave. His back is toward the audience; he is facing an expansive, open area.
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of landscape. Dissolve to second slide which follows Gustave as he enters further into that empty area. Stage actor Gustave has moved off stage.

The following slide sequence depicts Gustave from the years 1911 (foreclosure date) until his death in 1927. The anguish, the struggle, the gains and mostly losses of those years reflect in his face. Most of the shots are close-ups. There is some laughter and much hurt. During the sequence, Gustave ages appropriately. A few shots into the sequence Louise speaks on tape.

LOUISE

On a spring day in New York City in 1898, I remember seeing many kites, maybe a dozen or more, floating, turning in the wind. They were of all colors and shapes. The strings of all those kites came together in the hands of my husband, who made them. It was a beautiful sight. (Pause.) It is not the same for Gustave, now. It is not the same for any of us. (She is bitter but struggles to regain control.) When he can, Gustave helps others with airplanes. And when he can, he plans new airplanes of his own. Mostly, he works on other things. Gustave says it is better to make windmills than to make nothing at all. But it is not the same.

On screen, the final slides of Gustave in his older years are dissolved into the following words, superimposed over shots of a younger Gustave with airplane:

In 1927 Gustave Whitehead died and was buried in a pauper’s grave, row 27, Lakeview Cemetery.

In 1964, he was proclaimed by the governor the Father of Aviation in Connecticut.

The credits follow, letters against a black background on slides. The audio (single-instrument theme) continues through credits.
Special thanks to:

William O'Dwyer
Jim Bissell
Patrick Mooney, S.J.
Corbit's Studio, Inc.
Coulter & McKenzie Co., Inc.
Robert W. Huebner
WEZN Radio
Chris Campbell
Monica Roberts
S.N.E.T.
Bradley Air Museum
The Bridgeport Public Library