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## **[Airport] Newspaper article regarding Fort Brown airdrome and rabies serum**

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# Mad dog's bite put Brownsville in the aviation history books

During the period following World War I, many of the young men trained to be military aviators carried this training back to civilian life. Some became "barn



**Bruce Aiken**

Historic  
Brownsville Museum

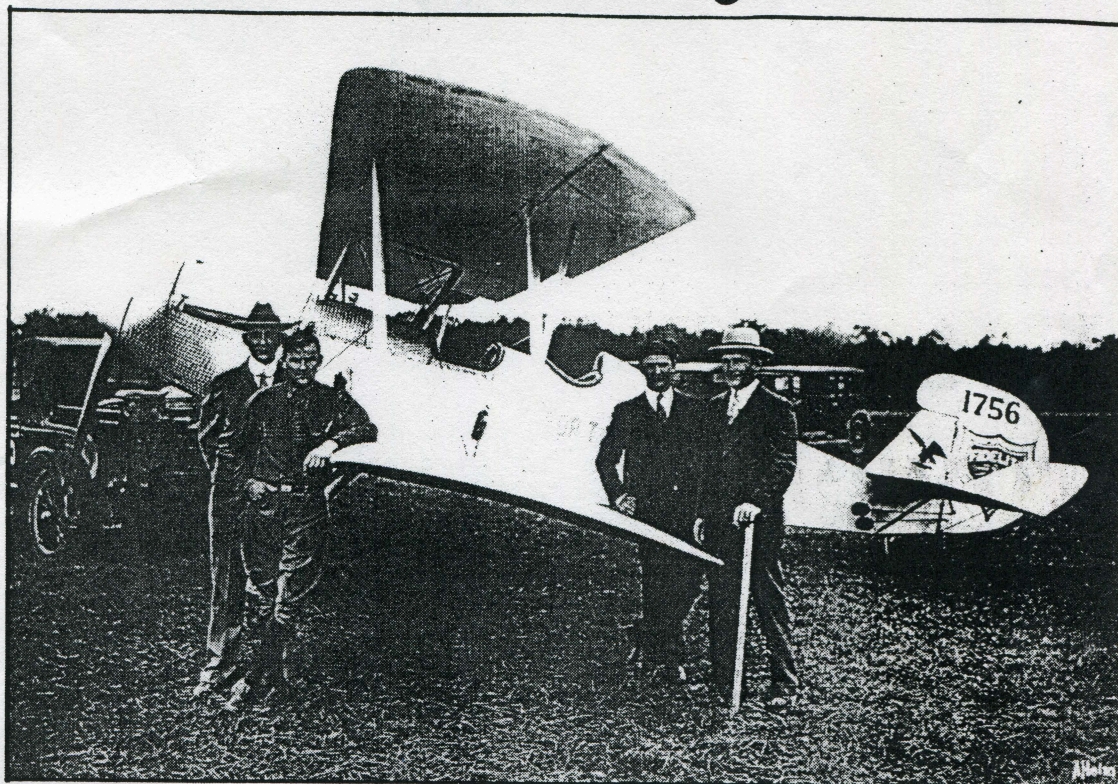
stormers," moving from town to town putting on air shows and selling rides to eager thrill seekers. Many of these shows

were operated from someone's pasture.

Although my father lived to be 90 and never flew in an airplane, his mother, a west Texas pioneer, was at the head of the line when the first aircraft visited her community.

Brownsville was not on the barn storm circuit, but had a very active airdrome at Fort Brown. Military patrols of the border either initiated or terminated here. They were concerned with illegal crossings and assumed the air patrols would curtail such activity. Whether it had an impact, we will never know; however, the Fort Brown airdrome was active until we opened the Brownsville Municipal Airport on March 9-10, 1929.

One day in the 1920s, Mr. S.C. Tucker, one of the leading citizens of the community, was bitten by a "mad dog." Upon confirmation that the animal was rabid, a call went out for serum for the Pasteur treatment. This was a painful series of 14 injections, one each day for two weeks.



Pharmacist Ford Lockett holding a gasoline measuring stick in front of the serum-carrying biplane. Milk cans with gasoline are onboard the pick-up truck in front of the plane.

Yet it was found that no serum was available in the Rio Grande Valley. Still, immediate attention was mandatory if the treatment was to be a success.

Following a frantic series of telegrams, serum was located in San Antonio. The provider contracted a pilot at Stinson Field — San Antonio's commercial airport at the time — and rushed the serum to the air charter company. There it was loaded aboard a bi-wing aircraft for the three hour flight to Brownsville. Waiting at the Fort Brown airdrome was a delegation, headed by pharmacist Ford Lockett, father of Dr. Ford Lockett, DDS, and father-in-law of City Commissioner Jackie Lockett. The plane circled the dusty airstrip and landed into the

southeast wind. Dirt and grass blew everywhere as the plane taxied to the waiting group. The serum was delivered to Lockett and was rushed to the physician who would oversee the treatment.

(Footnote: The treatment was a success. Tucker continued to serve Brownsville in many roles — the first football field behind the high school and junior college was named Tucker Field.)

Now for the return flight to San Antonio. Army gasoline could not be used for civilian aircraft. A local gasoline company was contacted and fuel was delivered to the airplane in milk cans. Hand pumps were used to transfer the gas from the cans into the plane's fuel tanks. When the task was com-

pleted, the pilot warmed up the engine and took off for the three hour return flight.

This mercy flight helped confirm the value of aviation to our quality of life. Lost in time, it remains one of the foundation bricks in our aviation history.

Visit your Historic Brownsville Museum, open every day. History study tours are available to interested individuals and groups. The next King Ranch tour is April 25.