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Aviation Pioneer J. Herman Banning Makes Historic Cross-Country Flight On This Day In 1932

Sep 19, 2012 | 5 | By D.L. Chandler

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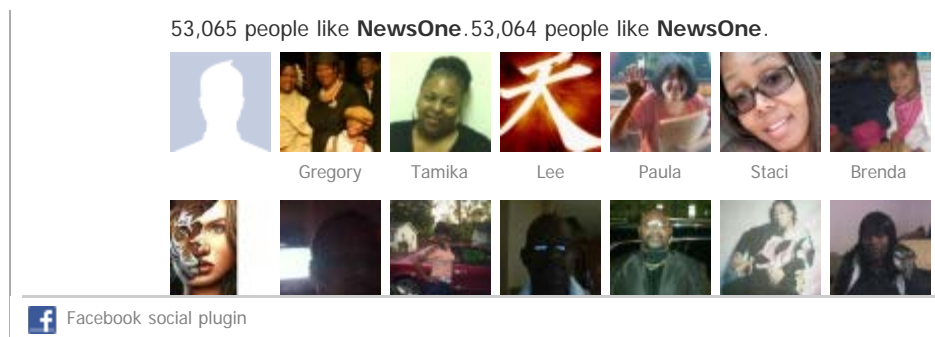
The story of **J. Herman Banning**, an aviator who made a series of historic firsts, is an inspiring tale worthy of being retold for generations on end.

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Born James Herman Banning in Oklahoma in 1899, he would later move his family to the town of Ames, Iowa in 1919. Enrolling into Iowa State, Banning briefly studied electrical engineering but later ended his collegiate career after being called to the skies.

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Determined and driven to learn more about aviation, he endured denials to access at area flight schools due to his race. Eventually, an instructor and army aviator taught Banning privately at the **Raymond Fisher’s Flying Field** school in Des Moines. Although Banning didn’t complete his education, he owned and operated an auto repair shop before a bold move to Los Angeles would change the entire course of his life.

Banning arrived in Los Angeles in 1929 and began working for the **Bessie Coleman** Aero Club, named after the first African American female pilot who lost her life in a tragic accident in 1926. Banning performed in various air circuses and even flew Illinois Rep. **Oscar De Priest**, the first Black person to serve in Congress since Reconstruction, in an exhibition event in California.

Along with being the first African American aviator to obtain a flying license from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Banning and his co-pilot **Thomas C. Allen** would embark upon a cross country flight that took the duo three weeks to complete. The 3, 300 mile flight from Los Angeles to New York took a total of 42 flight hours, with several stops made to raise funds for fuel and maintenance. The plane used was constructed of surplus parts and the pair was nicknamed “**The Flying Bohoes**” in several papers.

Just four months later, Banning would return home and attempted to rent a plane for a San Diego air show but was refused once again due to racism. Instead, he was a passenger in a biplane with a young, inexperienced Navy pilot who wanted to impress the older Banning. After forcing the small plane into a steep climb, the engine would stall and send the plane crashing to the ground, killing both men. He was 34, ironically the same age as Bessie Coleman at the time of her death.

Although he was faced with odds and barriers beyond his control, J. Herman Banning never let his circumstances cloud his dreams. His determination, grit and refusal to accept no for an answer are lessons many folks, young and old, should heed.

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 **jazzwatch** 13 hours ago

THIS story needs to BE in the history books...but unfortunately they ONLY got LINBURGH..and I personally feel that he had that ONE baby killed because he was NOT perfect, Haupman was INNOCENT, and he denounced the U.S, even though they SPOILED his butt after 1927, SMDH.....

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 **Mike Stein** 14 hours ago

This was an outstanding aviator and man. I honestly never heard of this brother. It is so common to hear about the Tuskegee airmen that soon followed Mr. Banning. I wonder if Banning would have joined the Tuskegee airmen team, had he lived. Thank you Mr. Banning for your contributions and RIP.

Thank you also Newsone....

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Interesting and another part of American Black history and advancement made by Blacks in the face of racism in America. Thank you Mr Banning for dispelling myths and lies about Black Americans and for opening doors that folks should be taking advantage of today.



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Spellchecker 11 hours ago in reply to BlackHeywood

Blacks and Africans have done much more than we know. We are taught the history of Western civilization in this country which is the history of white people.



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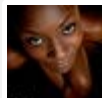
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