



## William James O'Dwyer

February 13, 1921 - August 29, 2008

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Maj. William J. O'Dwyer, 87 (USAF Ret.) of St. Augustine and formerly of Fairfield, CT, the devoted husband of Doris K. O'Dwyer for over 65 years, died August 29, 2008 at his home. Born in Bridgeport, CT he was a veteran of the Army Air Corp during World War II as a Pilot. Maj. O'Dwyer retired from the Air Force in 1978 after thirty-six years of service to his country and where he was a member of the 9315th Squadron. Prior to his retirement, he was the owner of his own planning and engineering business where he worked on numerous projects including designing and building homes, stores, industrial projects, boat basins, the Park City Hospital and Trumbull High School. He also served as Project Manager for the First Presbyterian Church in Fairfield and the new Trumbull High School. After his retirement, he devoted the balance of his life to research, writing and projects in aviation, including serving as Contributing Editor for "Flight Journal", an aviation magazine based in CT. He was also trained by NASA to serve as a courier of lunar rock samples for a tour in Germany. In that capacity, he met, interviewed and befriended Professor Herman Oberth, who was considered the "Father of Modern Rocketry". Maj. O'Dwyer was the first to place a lunar rock in the hands of Professor Oberth. For over 60 years, Maj. O'Dwyer researched the accomplishments of Gustav Albin Weisskopf (Whitehead), the father of motorized space flight, who flew his own plane in Fairfield, CT in 1901, two years prior to the Wright Bros. flight

at Kitty Hawk. Maj. O'Dwyer chronicled this first flight in his book, "History by Contract". Based on this new discovery, he was made an Honorary Citizen of Leutershausen, Germany where Gustav Weisskopf was born. His hobbies also included woodcarvings. Maj. O'Dwyer was also a member of the American Legion Post #74, the St. Augustine Navy League, and a member of Corpus Christi Catholic Church. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his daughter, Susan M. Brinchman of La Mesa, CA; a son, Thomas D. O'Dwyer of Chapel Hill, NC and seven grandchildren. He was predeceased by his son, William R. O'Dwyer. A Graveside Service with full Military Honors was held on Thursday, September 4, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. at St. Thomas Cemetery in Fairfield, CT. A Memorial Mass will be held at 9:00 a.m., September 15, at Corpus Christi Catholic. Donations may be made in his memory to the American Diabetes Assn., P.O. Box 11454, Alexandria, VA 22312. St. Johns Family Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

# Tribute Wall

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“ I was deeply saddened to learn of Major O'Dwyer's passing. I too believed that Gustave had the first flight. I knew Harvey Lippencott who he worked with researching all the evidence. My grandfather was Matthew B. Sellers, II and was friends with Gustave Whitehead. I am publishing a book on my grandfather, who only had a first flight in Kentucky in 1908. In his diaries he writes back and forth to Whitehead. I would like to honor Major O'Dwyer in my special chapter on Whitehead to thank him for the years of research he conducted and his dedication to Whitehead. Even though all my grandfather's artifacts are in the Smithsonian I am extremely angry with them for this coverup. I wish I could help in some way to carry on Major O'Dwyer's work. We can not let this stop now. He set the tone and the whole world will soon know that Gustave took the first flight. My thoughts and prayers are with you. I know it has been a year now, and I know the pain you must all be feeling. I lost my 87 year old father last year in July. He served also during WWII as a Commander. Please feel free to contact me anytime if there is anyway I can help carry on the Major O'Dwyer's mission. God Bless, Barbara Sellers 847-489-0317

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**Barbara Sellers** - August 16, 2009 at 12:00 AM

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“ I am very sad to hear that Maj.O'Dyer passed over so recently. My condolences to his family. His tenacity in researching Whitehead's first flights mark him out as a genuine searcher for truth. He was clearly an Officer and a gentleman who was prepared to go up against the Smithsonian, who should hang its head in shame for defrauding the public. He has left future aviation historians a very wide body of evidence. Others will follow and pick up his baton. This story is not over yet. Gone, but not forgotten. RIP.

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**Ron Howland (UK)** - March 11, 2009 at 12:00 AM