

TITLE: *Sky Carnival: Flying with Jack & Mavis*

GENRE: Drama, period piece with aviation theme

AUTHOR: Cindy J. Weigand

LOGLINE: In the Roaring Twenties, a young pilot from the country joins an elite flying group and becomes its star performer.

*High Road to China* (1983) meets *The Great Waldo Pepper* (1975)

### Summary

Confident of his aerobatic skills, JACK ASHCRAFT joins the Gates Flying Circus in the Roaring Twenties. Soon, he becomes their star performer. MAVIS PERKINS is living a life that is the envy of her friends. She's earned her pilot's license, and the newspaper she started is doing well. Working during the week, she flies airplanes evenings and weekends. The two are worlds apart—a society girl from New York and a vagabond of the air from a small town. But that combination proves to be part of the intrigue, and their relationship makes for a wild and thrilling ride that touches both their lives in ways neither could have expected.

AUTHOR NOTES: Born in Oklahoma Territory and raised in Kansas, this story is based on the life of my great uncle John W. "Jack" Ashcraft, Jr. The narrative is further inspired by real people and events in the aviation scene of the 1920s. Source material were numerous newspaper articles, letters and family histories. Not since *High Road to China* has there been a film that includes a female pilot in the Roaring Twenties. There hasn't been a film about civil aviation in the era since *The Great Waldo Pepper*.

GFC was arguably the biggest and best exhibition flying organization of its time. Air shows remain as popular as ever attracting millions of spectators each year. Gates was one of the first.

Aptly named, the Roaring Twenties were a raucous time—speakeasies, nightclubs, flappers, wild dancing, women pushing their boundaries having recently been allowed to vote. And of course, romance. Pilots were the rockstars of the day, aviation a spectacle. Add a little Gatsby to the mix. *Sky Carnival: Flying with Jack & Mavis* has it all.

The movie is a high concept, high budget film that brings aviation history of the 1920s alive.

*High Road to China* meets *The Great Waldo Pepper*.

I desire to sell the script and be a part of production as writer.

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## Synopsis for *Sky Carnival: Flying with Jack & Mavis*

Late 1924, pilot JACK ASHCRAFT joins the Gates Flying Circus in New Orleans, Louisiana, where the group has set up winter headquarters. Come spring, they will work their way north flying in air meets in cities along the way. It is in New Orleans that newspaperman ED CHURCHILL learns of the organization and believes he can be of service with publicity and writing copy for newspapers. He persuades owners CLYDE (PANG) PANGBORN and IVAN GATES to hire him. They secure Texaco's sponsorship and prepare for their tour of the eastern part of the United States.

Their rollout is less than auspicious. With Pang's permission, Jack takes two boys up for a flight with simple stunts. His plane goes into a spin and crashes, killing one of the boys. The first passenger killed in a GFC airplane. Jack is a nervous wreck. Even though an inquest rules that he was not at fault, Jack must recover from a bad case of nerves. Pang gives him an ultimatum—get his act together or they will leave without him.

Jack continues to fly with the circus while dealing with the death of the boy. They perform exhibitions in the south and Florida, the mid-Atlantic states, and the Northeastern United States, especially New York and Pennsylvania. At six feet, four inches tall, and learning that he is from Texas, Ed bills him as Big Jack, Cowboy Aviator. The press follows suit. The group makes headlines in numerous newspapers.

After seeing an article about the flying circus and a photograph of Jack, Mavis journeys to Philadelphia to observe an air meet. Mavis is from a wealthy New York family. A pilot and journalist, she has her own newspaper and shares an airplane with her father. After the show, she takes a flight with Jack but doesn't introduce herself. It's not until after the 1925 National Air Race at Mitchel Field, Long Island, later in the year that she introduces herself. Jack remembers taking her for a ride. They fall in love.

After two years with GFC, Jack strikes out on his own. Jack and Mavis part ways but remain friends. They meet when they can. He participates in the 1927 National Air Race from New York to Spokane, Washington. The winter of 2028 they set up winter headquarters in Macon, Georgia, and prepare for a giant air meet. His younger brother, FRANZ, and best friend BUCK STEELE, join him.

After leaving the circus, bad luck plagues Jack. A fellow pilot commits suicide from his plane. To add to Jack's mental and emotional distress, Franz and Buck are killed in a crash throwing out noisemakers to attract people to the air show. Mavis, Ed and his flying buddies are there for him. Slowly, he begins to heal. He rejoins the now Gates Flying Service and starts putting his life back together. Desiring one last chance at fame and fortune, he attempts an endurance flight over Roosevelt Field, Long Island, with a woman pilot. Jack insists on being in charge.

Fog rolls in and their refueling plane is unable to make contact. At the controls, Jack decides to land. Despite visibility problems, things seem to be going okay. He flies the plane over a water tower; a structure he believes is the only obstacle. He doesn't remember the hickory tree near the structure. An aileron snags on a branch of the tree and they crash. Jack is killed instantly.

