



Richard L. Perry
1906-1929

Memorialized by the
Richard L. Perry Memorial in
The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

In 1935, Edith Haggin deLong established the Richard L. Perry Memorial in the New York Community Trust, to be administered for charitable purposes.

Warmed by the late spring sunshine, the crowd at the airfield was in a festive mood. It was Sunday afternoon, May 26, 1929, and more than two hundred parked cars lined the road to the Millington, New Jersey, field, where local aviation enthusiasts had gathered to watch the antics of daredevil pilots and parachute jumpers. Some of the on-lookers were eager to have a ride in one of the airplanes that darted in and out of the field every few minutes, and they were willing to pay for the privilege.

Business was brisk. By five-thirty that afternoon, Richard Perry, a 22-year-old pilot for Inter-urban Airways in Millington, had just completed his fifteenth sight-seeing flight from Millington to Hadley Airport and back, and two more passengers were waiting to go up. Dick seated the young man and woman in the forward cockpit of his Challenger and climbed into the pilot's seat behind them. Dick's

wife, Dorothy, watched them taxi to the end of the field and take off. She and many others at the field saw the plane climb to an altitude of 600 feet and then, a mile from the airport, bank, turn abruptly, and go into a nose dive. There was a crash, then silence.

The horrified spectators rushed to the spot where the plane had gone down. They found the nose buried two feet in the soft clay of a swamp, the cockpit smashed to pieces, the tail projecting at a forty-five degree angle.

It was learned later that the connecting rod to the rudder had broken. When Dick realized that they were going to crash, he called to his passengers to hang on, kept his hands on the controls, and fought the aircraft all the way to the ground in a desperate attempt to land safely. Just before the crash, he shut off the motor, so that no fire or explosion resulted.

The two passengers, although badly injured, miraculously survived, saved by their pilot's cool courage. But Dick did not live. Rescuers carried him, breathing but unconscious and with nearly every bone in his body broken, to a nearby farmhouse. There Richard Lounsbery Perry died. He was 22 years old.

Richard L. Perry was born in New York on November 23, 1906, the son of Henry P. Perry and Edith Perry. On his mother's side, Dick was the great-grandson of James Ben Ali Haggin, who had built a fortune in mining interests and earned a formidable reputation as a breeder of race horses. Haggin's father was a Kentucky lawyer. His mother was the daughter of a Christian Turk who had

fled his homeland, studied medicine in England, and later practiced in Philadelphia. Young Haggin studied law with his father and in 1850 established his own practice in San Francisco, California. In the course of his flourishing law career, James Haggin encountered numerous business opportunities, and he had the shrewdness and foresight to profit by them handsomely. He bought up copper, gold, and silver mining interests, and at one time he was said to have ownership in over one hundred mines from Alaska to Chile. He acquired land in the Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Fern River Valleys of California and irrigated them, turning them into rich farming lands. Later he became interested in horse racing and built stables near Versailles, Kentucky. From 1881 to 1891 James Haggin's horses captured most of the important racing crowns in the East and the West.

Richard Perry was an eight-year-old boy when his legendary great-grandfather died at the age of 87 in 1914. One can only speculate on the extent to which the dynamic octogenarian influenced and inspired the child who came to visit frequently in the company of his mother, Edith Lounsbery Perry, and his grandmother, Edith Haggin Lounsbery deLong. Not long after James Haggin's death, Richard's parents were divorced. His mother later married J. Lorimer Worden, who had been one of Theodore Roosevelt's famed Rough Riders in the Spanish American War and who, like Richard's father, became a stock broker.

In 1919, when he was twelve years old, Richard entered St. George's School in Newport, Rhode Island. Dick was not a

distinguished scholar. Although he passed all his other courses, he was defeated by Ancient History in his last year at the school. But he was a good athlete and was active in sports throughout his years at St. George's. He played football on junior squads, and he went out for wrestling, boxing, and soccer. He took part in gymnastics, and in his last year he was a member of the Gun Club, an organization of boys interested in trap shooting.

But it was Dick's enthusiasm for body building and physical culture that his classmates recall most vividly. Through self-discipline and diligent workouts with arm and shoulder muscle-developing equipment, Dick became quite strong. Acquaintances were soon inclined to settle their youthful disagreements with him in other than physical ways, for they all knew he could beat any one of them.

A genial, good-natured fellow with a casual disregard for the strict rules and regulations that governed the lives of students, Dick was considered something of a rebel in his school days. In 1925, at the end of his Fifth Form year (eleventh grade), Dick left St. George's and transferred to a ranch school in Scottsdale, Arizona. Fond of horses since early childhood, and perhaps inspired by his great-grandfather's success with his racing stable, Dick wanted to spend his last year of school where he could ride as much as he liked. He soon proved his physical strength and fine horsemanship, and for awhile he became a rodeo rider. During that year in Arizona, Dick met his future bride. They were married in Florence, Arizona, on July 6, 1926. Dick had not yet reached his twentieth birthday.

Then the young adventurer's enthusiasm shifted from horses to airplanes. He and Dorothy moved from Arizona to Colorado Springs, where Dick learned to fly. From there the Perrys went to Florida, and Dick built up considerable flying experience. Early in 1929 they moved again, this time to New Jersey, where Dick was for a short time engaged in experimental work for Fokker, a German-owned aircraft company in Hasbrouck Heights. Early in the spring of 1929, a pilot for Inter-urban Airways was killed when his plane crashed near Newark Airport, and Dick was hired by the Millington company to replace him.

Dick Perry's talents had only begun to show themselves when he died at the controls of his plane that afternoon in May of 1929, but he had already earned a reputation as one of the pioneers in the field of commercial aviation. In 1935, his grandmother, Edith Haggin deLong, established the Richard L. Perry Memorial to perpetuate the memory of the dedicated young aviator through appropriate charitable works.

Cover portrait by John St. Helier Lander.



The New York Community Trust provides centralized management service, on a non-profit basis, for individual foundations and charitable trust funds. New York's major banks serve as trustees. Trustee for the Richard L. Perry Memorial is the Bankers Trust Company.