

# Parachute of Caterpillar Club Member #1 Henry Wacker

The Caterpillar Club is an Association in which most people would not desire membership. To become a member, you must successfully use a parachute to exit a disabled aircraft. This Parachute was used by Henry Wacker, the first recognized member, on July 21, 1919.

Henry Wacker was an Observer/Mechanic on the ill-fated Goodyear airship *Wingfoot Air Express* when it made three trial flights from the White City Amusement Park in Chicago. During the third flight of the day, the hydrogen filled envelope burst into flame for reasons that are still speculative.

Although all five persons on board were equipped with these “Spencer-type” parachutes, only two survived: Henry Wacker and the Pilot Jack Boettner.

With his parachute aflame, Henry crashed into a building and finally came to rest on a fifth-floor fire escape. Although he suffered two skull fractures, broke all of his ribs, tore his right arm from its socket and badly injured his back, when he awoke in the hospital nine days later he considered himself fortunate to have survived the ordeal.

When the Caterpillar Club was officially formed in 1922, Henry Wacker & Jack Boettner were grandfathered in as original members, with Henry being given the “honor” of being Member #1 due to having been the first to land.