

Lewis Strang – An Unfortunate 1910

Lewis Putnam Strang, a factory driver for Buick in 1910, may have been successful on track, but he had a very turbulent year. He was known as a courageous and fast driver, although somewhat unlucky, frequently suffering mechanical maladies within sight of the winning line.



Mrs Strang, known on stage as Louise Alexander.

His wife, an actress known as Louise Alexander, performed as the Vampire (shown in the above picture) in a musical production in New York, performing “a dreadfully shocking dance” according to the *Washington Post*. Born Jeanne L. Spaulding, she had promised not to go back to the stage again when they married in 1908. However, she returned to the stage in 1909, and they separated, Strang believing that she would tire of the stage and return to him. He was disabused of this notion in 1910 when she was named by Mrs Bessie Clayton, another well-known dancer, in a divorce suit against her husband Julian Mitchell, who was Mrs Strang’s partner in the Vampire dance.

When the news was announced, Lewis Strang had just fallen from an aeroplane in which he was qualifying as an amateur, and told a correspondent “Two knockouts together – this is the limit!” He was in Mineola for his first attempt, and on letting out the power the aircraft moved off, but wouldn’t

rise. The aircraft kept gaining speed as he went around the grounds of the Aeronautical Society, bouncing over the hillocks, when suddenly the nose of the aircraft dug into the ground, turning it over and flinging Strang onto the grass. He wasn't injured, and promised to keep trying to win races and to fly. His luck was sufficiently bad that even the contemporary press commented on his "Hoodoo" curse.

Washington Post, 10th July 1910, pg 36.

Strang was killed on the 20th July 1911 near Blue Rivers, Wisconsin. He was accompanying the technical committee of the Wisconsin Automobile Association on its annual reliability run, and was attempting to pass a farm wagon. As the car left the road Strang's passengers jumped clear, but Strang didn't. It was suggested that he had not fully recovered his strength following an accident in Kenosha on June 18th when he dislocated his arm and suffered internal injuries after crashing during a race.