

BY JOHN BASKIN



DAYTON BENEATH MY WINGS

Considering how famous the Wright brothers became, it can be difficult to follow their historic tracks in their hometown, unless you have a guide who knows where the first fliers went up and where the first parachutist came down.

One must be patient with the Dayton landscape, which is constantly being made over in the image of its keepers. The history of flight itself being filled with permutations and emendations, these adjustments to the landscape seem consistent to the place known as the birthplace of aviation. At the time of these Dayton observances, made not so very long ago, Read Viemeister's huge mural of the Wright brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk was still hanging in the convention center, for instance, something that is no longer a fact. But then Kitty Hawk itself is not so much fact as the world at-large seems to believe, considering it to be the Wrights' birthplace. No less an authority than the august *New York Times* ran an editorial recently, calling North Carolina 'the home of the Wright brothers.' A colleague, who has slummed in eastern ports long enough to be only moderately defensive at finding himself now in Ohio, wrote to tell the *Times* that it was easy to confuse the Midwest and the South and went on to straighten out the troublesome geography by noting that "North Carolina is the place you fly over on the way to Florida," and that Ohio, meanwhile, "is the flat place between Hoboken and



Though the world has progressed from modest flyer to modern rocket, it was from two Dayton natives that we learned to fly.