



You Thought You Knew Who Was First to Fly!

Every 30 years or so, a researcher will report the discovery of new information alleging that some individual made a powered flight earlier than the Wright brothers. This year, researcher John Brown, released, via the Internet, information asserting that Gustave Whitehead achieved powered flight on August 14, 1901 — some two-and-a-half years prior to that of the Wright brothers. In promoting his thesis, Brown successfully lobbied the publishers of *Jane's all the World's Aircraft* to recognize Whitehead as the first individual to achieve sustained powered flight.

Brown supports his assertions with a number of purported aspects ranging from newspaper articles, analysis of photographic evidence and analysis of previously reported statements by purported witnesses. Among his positions — and one of the reasons that he submitted his proof to *Jane's* — is that the Smithsonian should disqualify



Gustave Albin Whitehead

itself from this debate because they are contractually obligated to recognize only the Wrights as “first in flight.”

Brown is not the first to assert that Gustave Whitehead flew before the Wright brothers, and probably will not be the last. The earliest flight claims for Whitehead were put forward in the book by Stella Randolph., *Lost Flights of Gustave Whitehead*, published in 1937, and again in *Before the Wrights Flew*, published in 1966. In 1986, retired Air Force Maj. William O'Dwyer took up

the call after discovering some photos of Whitehead's aircraft. In collaboration with Ms. Randolph, they published *History by Contract* in 1978. A summary of their findings and conclusions can be found in an article that appeared in the October 1998 issue of *Flight Journal* entitled “The Who Flew First Debate.”

Gustave Whitehead

Born Gustav Albin Weisskopf on January 1, 1874, in Leutershausen, Bavaria, he anglicized his name to Gustave Albin Whitehead after immigrating to the United States in 1893. Trained as a mechanic, he showed an early childhood interest in flight, building and testing a number of kites. In 1897, the Aeronautical Club of Boston hired him to build two gliders, one of which was patterned after a Lilienthal glider and was partially successful. After a period of time in the Pittsburgh area, Whitehead moved to Bridgeport, Conn., in 1899. He would remain here until his death on October 10, 1927, from a heart attack while trying to lift an engine from an automobile he was repairing.

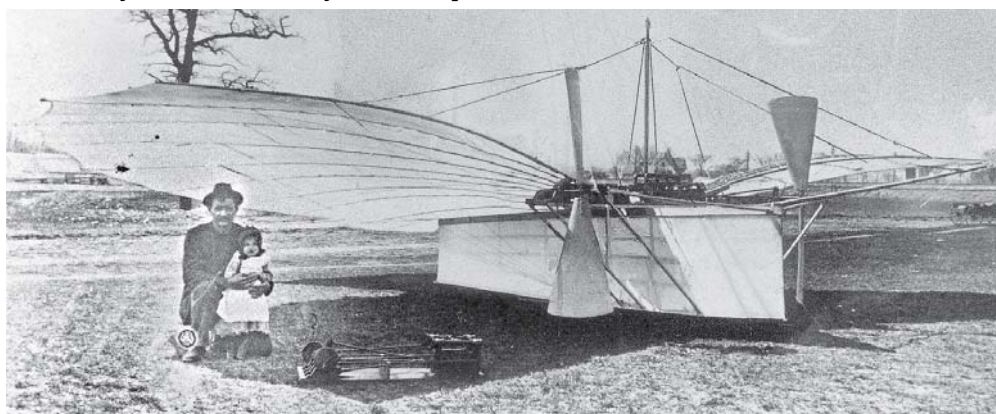
Whitehead had a creative mind, but was unsophisticated in his business dealings. This led to a constant struggle to provide for his family and pursue aviation activities.

Highlights of What's Inside

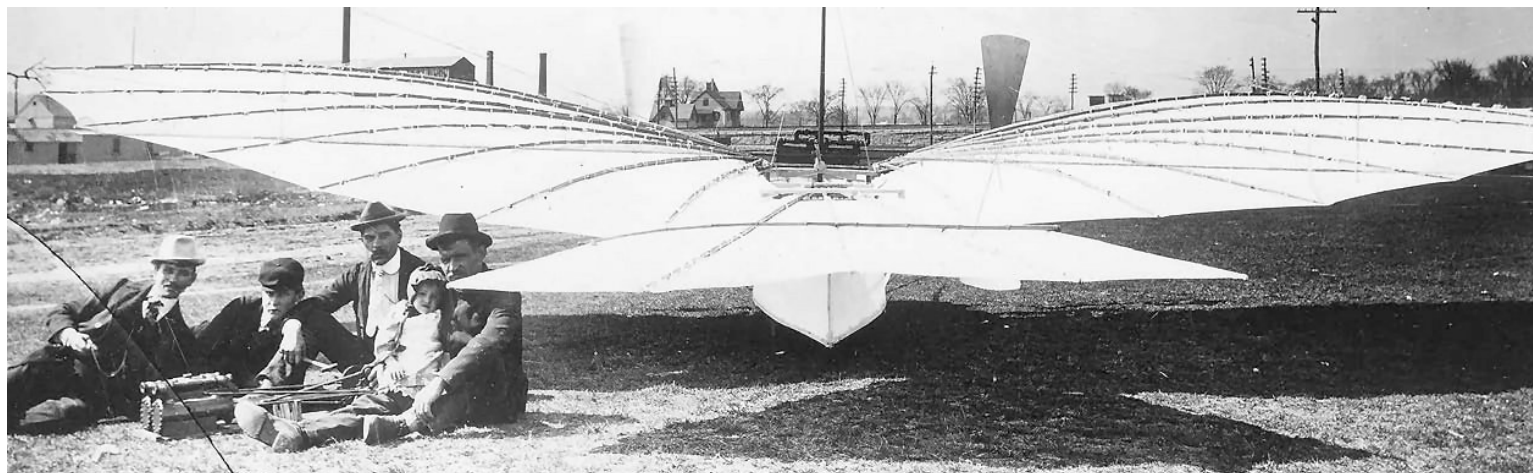
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Gustave Whitehead with his daughter under the wing of his model No. 21.



Tail-view of model No. 21, shown Whitehead holding his daughter with three unidentified men.

He is better known historically for his engine building than his other aviation exploits. In 1908, he had developed a light-weight 75-hp aircraft engine that featured a design that would allow functional cylinders to continue to operate if others had failed. This motor design led to a partnership with George A. Lawrence in the form of the Whitehead Motor Works that built motors of 25, 40 and 75 hp weighing, respectively, 95, 145 and 200 pounds. These engines are known to have powered a number of different aircraft and balloon designs including at least one Curtiss. He was involved in aircraft design up through at least 1915 when he is known to have exhibited an aircraft in Hempstead, N.Y. Among his other inventions are a railroad safety-braking device and a concrete-laying machine.

The Flight

It was the summer of 1901 that Whitehead is claimed to have flown his airplane, model No. 21, that he called the Condor. Some historians say that in the early hours of August 14, 1901, the Condor propelled itself along the darkened streets of Bridgeport, Conn., with Whitehead, his staff and an invited guest in attendance. In the still air of dawn, the Condor's wings were unfolded and it took off from open land at Fairfield, 15 miles from the city, and performed two demonstration sorties. The second was estimated as having covered one and half miles at a height of 50 feet, during which slight turns in both directions were demonstrated.

Whitehead is also purported to have made two flights over Long Island Sound in his model No. 22 on January 17, 1902, which was almost two years before the Wright's flight.

Supporting Evidence

Brown claims to have "discovered" around 86 newspaper articles reporting Whitehead's successful flights and his Gustave Whitehead website (see references) lists these. The *Bridgeport Sunday Herald* of August 18, 1901, leads this list with a full page dedicated to flying with the "FLYING" headline superimposed on silhouettes of witches on broomsticks. While of interest, it should be pointed out that news agencies were in existence at the time (Reuters News Agency was established in 1851) and it is likely that many of these independent newspaper articles stem for the same source(s).

Brown cites articles by Stanley Yale Beach, the aeronautics reporter for his grandfather's prestigious publication, *Scientific American*. Beach claims to have visited Whitehead and seen and photographed his aircraft during the period of 1901 to 1910. He reported on Whitehead's experiments in the June 8, 1901, issue of *Scientific American* that Whitehead was ready for preliminary trials of his craft, describing it in detail, but stating that it had not flown. In January 1906, Beach attended the first Aero Club of America exhibit, on which he reported in the January 27 edition of *Scientific American*. In this article he states, "A single blurred photograph of a large birdlike machine propelled by compressed air and which was constructed by Whitehead in 1901 was the only other photograph besides that of Langley's [scale model] machines of a motor-driven aeroplane in successful flight." (Note: the Wrights did not release photos of their flights until 1908, which were held back to protect their efforts to first obtain a patent for their design.) Beach, in an unsigned and self-contradictory article published in the April 10, 1939, issue of *Scientific American*, retracts



1906 first Aero Club of America Exhibition. Whitehead's exhibit, reportedly showing a photo of his aircraft in flight is on the far left. Langley, Curtiss and Wright exhibits are on the right behind the engine(?).



Close-up view of the front of No. 21 with Whitehead holding the 10-hp ground-wheel drive assembly.

these earlier statements regarding Whitehead's flights, stating that Whitehead never claimed he had flown during this period. Orville Wright would use this 1939 article as part of his 1945 assertions that Whitehead had not flown prior to December 17, 1903.

A third compelling piece of evidence is Brown's assertion that he has found a much clearer print of a photo that was taken at the Aero Club exhibit showing Whitehead's exhibit and the photos he posted. Brown claims that through modern digital image enhancement and analysis that the photos at the 1906 exhibit possibly substantiate Beach's report. The one question that is not addressed in the photo analysis, and could be open to question, is *when* the flight photo was taken, as Whitehead stated that the weather on the early-morning flights did not produce any usable photos. There is a possibility that it could be a post-1903 photo of Whitehead's aircraft in flight. At least two modern replicas of Whitehead's No. 21 have been built and flown, though both used modern engines and one used modern propellers, indicating that the design at least had the *potential* for powered flight.

Analysis

While Brown makes a compelling argument for his case, there is an element of question about his methods and research. First, the information he presents in support of his position is not new. Randolph and O'Dwyer address almost all of these points in their works.

Second, Brown's approach to presenting his case appears to be one of modern marketing. One in which you "go public" with your findings and let the lay people decide for themselves rather than go through a professional peer review. It is not clear if any peer review was performed and, if so, who performed it.

Thirdly, a question that has never been addressed, nor even speculated on, is: If either machine (No. 21 or No. 22) flew

so well on their initial flights, then why didn't Whitehead continue to make additional flights with the aircraft?

Finally, what are Brown's *bona fides*? While he claims to be an experienced aviation researcher and historian, the Internet that he so proudly proclaims to be a primary research tool seems to indicate this is his first and only publication. That in itself does not "disqualify" him as a historian, but does potentially question the caliber of his work.

Other First Claims

Finally, there are others that could possibly lay claim to first powered flight prior to the Wrights. According to Adam Smith, an AOPA senior vice president and aviation historian, these could include:

Felix Du Temple, France, 1874;
Alexander Mozhaitski, Russia, 1884;
Clement Ader, France, 1890, 1897;
Hiram Maxim, England, 1894;
Augustus Herring, Michigan, 1898;
Rev. Burrell Cannon, Texas, 1902;
Richard Pearse, New Zealand, 1902-1903;
James Preston Watson, Scotland, 1902-1903;
Karl Jatho, Germany, 1903.

Conclusions

Smith goes on to say, "I don't believe Gustave Whitehead ever flew, or even hopped, a powered aircraft before the Wright brothers. Others will disagree, as is their right, but that's my judgment as a trained historian and having spent a lot of time in libraries and archives looking at the original source material. All key aspects of the Whitehead story have verisimilitude issues."

"I hope we can all agree that if anyone did get off the ground before the Wright brothers, it is a footnote in history, not a major chapter."

The author of this article encourages you to decide for yourself. The material used to compile this article was taken from the following websites. After all, "it must be true because I read it on the Internet."

References:

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A Peek into the Board Room of an Air Museum

by Larry Elman

Many members of the aviation history community pay little or no attention to the problems encountered in the internal operations of aviation museums. As one who spent over 15 years on the volunteer staff of the Connecticut Aeronautical Historical Association (CAHA – better known today as the New England Air Museum – NEAM), I was “in the front lines” of those problems. For many of those 15 years, I was on the board of directors. In several cases, all participants were sworn to secrecy. A few years ago, realizing that I am probably the last living witness to an amusing event, I began telling selected friends about it, despite my oath. I now realize that this incident may be of some interest to the history community and that, with everyone else dead, it is time to finally tell the story.

A concern for all museums is the valuation of donated artifacts. In many, perhaps most, cases, the donor expects to receive an appraisal intended to justify a Charitable Deduction on his Income Tax. For this reason, in the time period in which I was on the Board, the National Air & Space Museum (“NASM”) of the Smithsonian refused to provide such appraisals, asking instead that selected air museums do the appraisal instead. The Smithsonian (because it is owned by the Government), felt that such appraisals presented a “conflict of interest” situation for the Smithsonian system. CAHA was one of the very few air museums frequently used by NASM for such appraisals. This was not only an honor, but also had practical effects on research and restoration (my area of interest) because it never hurts to have the NASM owe you a favor. CAHA/NEAM remained on that list for decades.

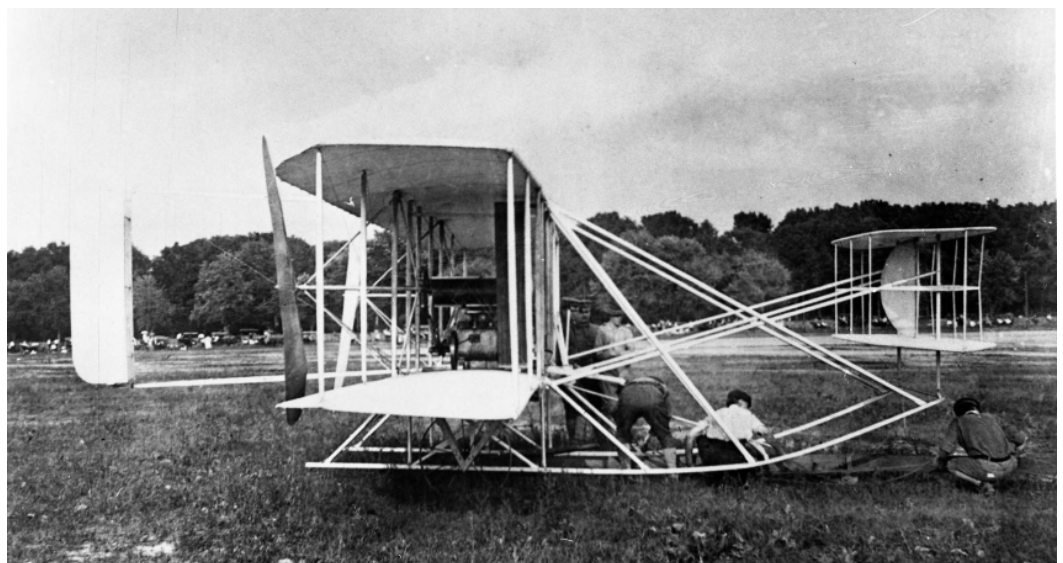
But there were some “Catch 22s” for such appraisals. If not generous enough, the donor will go “museum shopping,” while if too generous the museum may be risking its Tax Exempt status, which is essential to its budget. Another problem occurs when the appraisal request is made by an attorney for an anonymous client. That often indicates that one spouse in a divorce action is seeking to injure the other spouse in court by using the appraisal. For that reason alone, deliberations on such donations were almost always done in secret. There were numerous other similar considerations. Appraisals are taken quite seriously by museums, particularly when of large value or of historic importance.

Around 1974, the Nixon Administration announced that

the IRS would tighten up its inspections of charitable donations. I was very concerned – I knew from experience that our appraisals were usually not well documented, were often done by one or two staff members chosen because of knowledge and close interest in that sub-field of aviation (engines, or Golden Age, or World War II, or....), and were reviewed by only one man – our Curator, President, Museum Director... his title varied with the date, but all of these were simply Harvey Lippincott. Harvey, in my estimation, ranks as one of the top half-dozen historians that aviation history has ever produced. He was superbly competent, and a good friend. But to the IRS, he would be just one person.

Having become concerned, I brought the problem up at a Board meeting. Everyone voted down further discussion of the subject because of our reputation and our connection with NASM. I brought it up at the next meeting with the same result. I filibustered it in the third meeting. During the fourth meeting, I excused myself to go to the restroom briefly, and returned to find I was chairman of a three member Appraisals Committee to solve the problem. (Never filibuster unless you have an oversized bladder!)

I was very fortunate. One member attended only the first meeting of our committee. Philip C. O’Keefe and I voted that the remaining two of us were a quorum, and went right ahead without the dead-weight character. Anything I say of Phil is likely to involve superlatives. He was a very good aeronautical engineer, even better as a historical researcher, and we had been close colleagues on several other projects. We usually agreed almost completely, and when we disagreed our mutual respect meant we could “thrash out” a solution. Our solution for this problem was that all appraisals on artifacts, planes, etc., with an appraised value over XXX would be reviewed by an



Wright brothers' Flyer. (Photo from the AAHS archives, AAHS-25928)



Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Enola Gay," 44-86292, at Andrews AFB in storage prior to restoration. (Steven Miller photo from the AAHS archives, AAHS-P003041)

Accessions Committee of about 10 experienced aviation history colleagues after Harvey had ruled on the appraisal report, and that documentation would be standardized. There were, of course, details and procedures, but the basic approach was as just stated. So far, so good.

Phil chaired such a meeting and asked for routine approval of a response to an attorney for a client requesting anonymity – “send the guy the “bug” letter” – a summary of our appraisal security practices that went out routinely in such cases. The next month, Phil told us the same attorney had sent a second letter with very detailed questions about our security procedures. Phil had replied with answers to the series of detailed questions, and we all muttered that it must be a pretty complex divorce. All Phil could say was that the attorney had said the donation would be a very large and very complete historic aircraft.

The third month, we all found a sealed envelope on the table at each seat. Phil asked that we not open the envelopes until the correct point in the agenda. When we finished the routine business and opened the sealed envelopes, we found that each contained a Xerox of that same attorney’s latest missive. The letter stated the potential donor was still concerned over security and, therefore, we were asked to appraise 10 aircraft, of which one would be the intended donation. We all began reading the list, and then someone giggled. A few seconds later,

a hearty laugh. Then a third. I will admit my embarrassment at being the last person in the room to figure out what everyone was laughing at.

Here is what I can remember of the list of 10:

- The Wright Flyer (on display in NASM)
- The Spirit of St. Louis (also NASM)
- Amelia Earhart’s Electra (bottom of the Pacific Ocean)
- Alcock & Brown’s Vickers Vimy (same fate, different ocean)
- The B-24 “Lady Be Good” (a broken mess in the middle of the Sahara)
- The B-29 “Enola Gay” (NASM again)

And so it went for nine planes. If you were an aviation historian and realized this, the odd-ball aircraft stood out plainly. I raised my hand and apologized for being so slow to see what was going on, but I requested that I be designated to compose CAHA’s reply, which I promised would be quite brief and to the point. The committee so voted and we moved on to a discussion of the value to be inserted in my Appraisal Letter. We reached a figure, and the following letter was sent. It read:

Dear Attorney <his name>:

Please inform Howard Hughes that the appraised worth of the Spruce Goose is \$<our number>.

Sincerely,

Co-Chairman, Accessions Committee

For many years, one could spot members of the Committee who had been present for this incident, because at various gatherings we always greeted each other with an almost whispered password – “How long do you think it took Howard to fire that lawyer?”

2012 Best of the Best

Each year, the Society members are asked to vote for the Best Article and Best Artist of the year. This year saw a slight change to the voting procedure in that members could elect to return their ballots via post or to vote online. About 40 percent of the votes were submitted electronically. Winners receive a recognition plaque acknowledging their achievement.

There were a total of 29 articles and seven artists that were nominated.

The year’s best article was “Number Two” Helicopter Pioneer Stewart Ross Graham, by Tom Beard, that appeared in Vol. 57, Nos. 2 and 3. The year’s best artist was Mike Machat, and his painting “Star of Windsor” TWA Lockheed Super G Constellation, that graced the inside back cover of Vol. 57, No. 3.



Then There Were Four

by Cliff Radel

Tom Griffin, one of just five surviving Doolittle Raiders, died February 26, 2013, in his sleep at the Fort Thomas, Va., hospital. He navigated one of 16 B-25 bombers from an aircraft carrier in the middle of the Pacific during the early dark days of WWII to launch a surprise daylight attack on Tokyo, lifting American morale. The longtime Green Township resident was 96.

By his own count, Mr. Griffin cheated death eight times during WWII. The first time was when he took off in a land-based bomber from the deck of the USS Hornet at 9 a.m. April 18, 1942. The mid-ocean takeoff made history. No land-based bomber had ever taken off from an aircraft carrier in combat. The Raiders made history later that day when they bombed Tokyo in partial payback for Japan's December 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Griffin's plane, which was named the *Whirling Dervish*, knocked the lights out in Tokyo. The *Whirling Dervish's* bombs flattened the Tokyo Gas & Electric plant.

After spending months and traveling thousands of miles behind enemy lines, he returned home – “they gave us three weeks off” – only to be sent on bombing runs from North Africa to Europe. He was shot down and taken prisoner on July 4, 1943, after a mission over Sicily. He was freed nearly two years later.

“Spending the last 22 months of the war in a German prison camp was no fun,” Mr. Griffin recalled. His last day in camp was supposed to be his last day on Earth. The Germans had planned to execute all of the prisoners of war on April 30, 1945. But on that day, the camp was liberated by American troops.

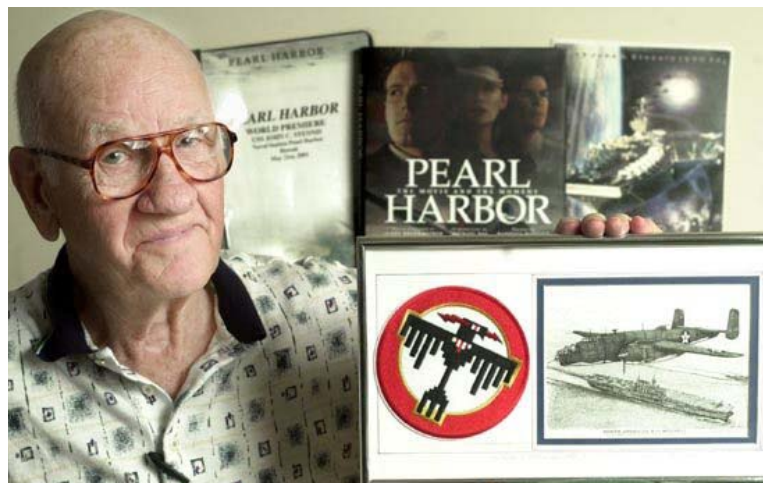
“That was a glorious day,” Mr. Griffin recalled. “Never saw the sun shining so brightly.”

The ranks of the Doolittle Raiders once numbered 80. Mr. Griffin's passing leaves just four survivors. They are: Dick Cole (a Dayton native and the copilot of Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, the leader of the raid and its namesake), Robert Hite, Edward Saylor and David Thatcher.

The remaining Raiders had their 71st reunion on April 17-21 in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., where Mr. Griffin's passing was noted with a toast and the words: “To those who have gone.” He had hoped to attend the event.

“I had also planned to live to be 100,” Mr. Griffin said during an interview just after a heart condition landed the retired accountant in the Fort Thomas facility in late November. “But the way I feel, with my ticker, I might have to eat my own words.”

He said that with a satisfied smile.



Tom Griffin with memorabilia commemorating the Doolittle Raiders.

“What a life I’ve had,” Mr. Griffin added, leaning back in an easy chair his sons had installed in his room. “It’s a great old life if you can get a good design for living and you can come up at my age and say: ‘Well, I didn’t do too badly.’”

In anyone's book, he did quite well, as a GI, a husband and a dad.

After the war, Mr. Griffin, a native of Green Bay, Wis., moved to Cincinnati with his wife, Esther. They raised two sons, John and Gary, and he opened an accounting office in Cheviot. His tall, lanky frame was regularly seen walking from his office to the nearby post office.

Mr. Griffin kept quiet about his time as a Doolittle Raider. That ended in 1977. When his son, Gary, was hired to play keyboards with the Beach Boys, the musician told an interviewer, “You should be talking with my dad. He’s more important. He’s a Doolittle Raider.”

With that, Tom Griffin's secret was out. For the next 35 years, he went to schools and hospitals and community groups to tell his stories.

He did not talk about his heroics as a husband. When his wife became ill and needed to go into a nursing home, he visited her every day. He walked from his house to the nursing home, fed his wife and at the end of the day brought home her clothes. At night, he washed and ironed her clothes. Then, he walked them up to her room the next morning. He did that for three years until her death in 2005.

During his 25 years as a public speaker, Mr. Griffin was regularly introduced as a “hero.”

Every time he heard that word, he would wince, shake his head and humbly decline the title.

“I’m no hero,” he said one last time in November in his hospital room.

“I just did my job as best I could.”





2013 Cactus Fly-In

Photos by Charles E. Stewart

The 55th annual Cactus Fly-In is one of the oldest, continuous running, west coast fly-ins. If you don't have the opportunity to travel back to Blakesburg or Oshkosh, then this is the event for "westies." Held in Casa Grande, Ariz., this fly-in features one of the largest gatherings of antiques and classics held in the western United States, and is hosted by the Arizona Antique Aircraft Association.

The Cactus Fly-In is held the first full weekend in March in the laid-back environment of an uncontrolled airport. The emphasis is on aircraft and the people that restore, build, maintain, fly, and talk about aircraft. It is an easygoing, memorable annual social event in contrast to other venues that focus on air races, air shows, air events, commercialism, growth, and profit. There is no PA system to annoy you while you are looking at the aircraft and talking with your friends. With the exception of vendors, the fly-in is manned totally by volunteers.

Clockwise starting at the top:

Double award winner 1928 Command-Aire 5C-3, NC946E (Grand Champion, General, Best General Aviation Aircraft, Manufactured before 1946)

1946 Commonwealth Skyranger 185, N93253 (Antique Aircraft Assoc. -Texas Chapter Award)

1948 Luscombe 8A, N77L (Best General Aviation Aircraft, Manufactured after 1945)

1942 Boeing Stearman PT-17, N67957 (People's Choice Award)

1942 Stinson L-5, N49279 (Best Military Aircraft, Manufactured prior to 1946)

1934 Waco YMF-3, NC14080 (National Antique Aircraft Assoc. Award)



Van's Aircraft

Van's Aircraft, founded by Richard "Van" Vangrusven in 1972, has become the most successful American (if not world) kit aircraft maker. As of the end of 2012 more than 8,000 Van RV aircraft have been completed and are flying. The designs are all based on a traditional, aluminum, low-wing monocoque construction and range from the single-seat RV-3 to the latest RV-14. Van's aircraft approach to kit building has simplified the construction process, allowing builders to quickly move from initial rivet to finished product with minimal frustration and time.

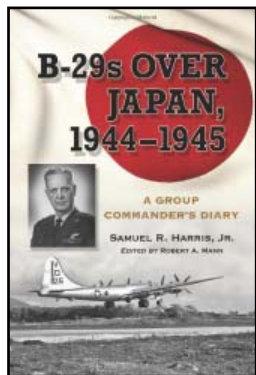


1. RV-3, NX13PL, single-seat (Vans Aircraft photo), 2. RV-4, N14LJ, two-seat tandem (Charles E. Stewart photo), 3. RV-6A, N858SB, two-place side-by-side (Charles E. Stewart photo), 4. RV-7A, N666CL, two-place side-by-side (Charles E. Stewart photo), 5. RV-8, N90309, updated RV-4 design (Charles E. Stewart photo), 6. RV-9A, N8070U (Charles E. Stewart photo), 7. RV-10A, N46007, four-place cabin (Charles E. Stewart photo), 8. RV-12A, N441DM, Light Sport Aircraft compliant design (Charles E. Stewart photo), 9. Prototype RV-14A, N214VA (Vans Aircraft photo).



Book Reviews

B-29s Over Japan, 1944-1945: A Group Commander's



Diary, by Samuel Russ Harris Jr., Edited by Robert A. Mann. www.mcfarlandpub.com, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. 2011, ISBN 978-0-7864-6297-1. Softcover, 6"x9", 267 pages. \$37.00.

Much has been written about the air war over Japan during WWII. *B-29s Over Japan, 1944-1945: A Group Commander's Diary* takes a very personal view of this war. The author, Samuel Russ Harris Jr., was

the commanding officer of the 499th Bomb Group (BG), 73rd Bomb Wing, 21st Bomber Command from 1944 to March 1945 during the first B-29 raids over mainland Japan. The framework of this book is the diary written by Harris during his assignment. The diary information is augmented by extensive research conducted by Robert Mann at The Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell AFB, where Mann utilized the Individual Aircraft Record Cards and the 73rd Bomb Wing Operations/Planning Staff reports. Unfortunately, much of the operational history of the 499th Bomb Group was lost when the aircraft returning these records to the United States crashed shortly after takeoff at the conclusion of WWII.

The organization of this text is relatively straightforward. The first chapter is a development history of the Boeing B-29 Superfortress. From this point it quickly moves to a chronological history of Harris' service with the 499th BG. In his diary, Harris speaks freely of the challenges and frustrations in trying to establish and train a new bomber group with an unproven aircraft. This honesty within this book is a valuable addition to the library of those interested in the bombing war over Japan. Harris was relieved when Gen. Curtiss LeMay assumed command of the Wing, and lowers the bombing altitude in order to achieve better accuracy. Readers will clearly see that Harris was less concerned about overall war aims, but focused squarely on the health and success of his men.

The book is enhanced with Mann's inclusion of some of the key events in the Pacific War, as well as modifications to the production lines of the Boeing Superfortress. However, the clear focus is the day-to-day life of the 499th BG and the challenges of leading such a group. Harris had been a member of the U.S. Army Air Corps for some 15 years prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. This background is reflected in Harris' honesty in Wing debriefing following a number of the raids on Japan. In one example, Harris noted that during the debrief on January 15, 1945, that with the exception of himself, all of the Group Commanders of the 73rd Bomb Wing reported an excellent job; "But not one bomb hit the target. How come if three Groups functioned so prettily?" In this commentary, we see officers concerned about making themselves look good,

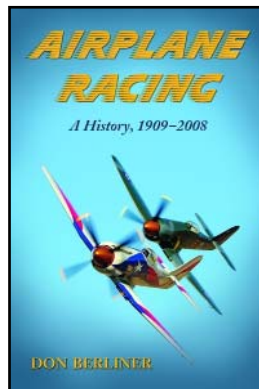
that there is a lack of honesty in the reporting of the mission. The same problem would plague the United States through the Vietnam War and later.

With the exception of Harris's own direct staff, squadron commanders, and a few pilots, the reader is left wondering about the men of the bomb group. Harris rarely spoke of the men responsible for carrying out the missions, echoing the "top down" view of so many military histories. With that being said, at several points through the text, Harris is faced with the realities of having to admit that men that he personally likes are not capable of performing assigned tasks or just aren't good pilots. In this way the book is a valuable addition as commanders rarely discuss this difficult issue of leadership.

In conclusion, this book does contribute to the understanding of leadership during the air war against Japan from one group commander's position. In addition, while difficult to decipher, there is a wealth of information pertaining to the aircraft status of the group. This book would make a good starting point for someone interested in the 499th Bomb Group history.

Christopher S. Trobridge

Airplane Racing: A History, 1909-2008 by Don Berliner.



McFarland and Co., www.mcfarlandpub.com, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. 2010, ISBN: 978-0-7864-4300-0. Softcover, 6"x9", 266 pages, photographs, index. \$35.00 plus S&H.

As I prepared to return to Reno for the 2012 National Championship Air Races, I picked up Don Berliner's excellent summary of the first 100 years of air racing, *Airplane Racing: A History, 1909-2008*. This volume will remind readers of the long safe history of air racing; I only wish that the members of the media had access to this volume before they wrote about the tragic event of September 2011.

Don Berliner faces a difficult challenge in trying to summarize 90 years of air racing in under 300 pages. However, he does a fine job with this task. Berliner organizes this study into four sections - each section based upon the dates of competition. Berliner further divides each time period into distinct categories, such as the Schneider Cup competitions, the Thompson Races, and various other races. The author begins with the first race at Reims in August 1909, when aviation as a whole was still in its infancy, where most of the challenges faced by the pilots were to take off, fly briefly and then land in one piece! By the end of this study of air racing, pilots are closing in on the elusive 500 mph mark.

This book is a great introduction to the sport of air racing with brief overviews of every air race competition that occurred through 2008. However, because Berliner covers such a wide period, he is not able to discuss specific races in great depth. He

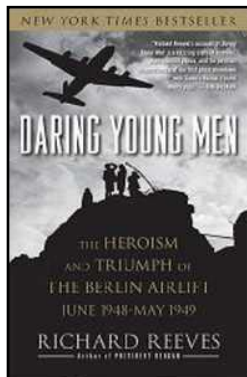
does touch on the highlights of each event and lists the winners and those that figured prominently in the race. I give the author credit for taking care to include all of the race classes, not just focusing on the most prominent classes.

I only wish that Berliner would have had more time to discuss the implications of air racing on commercial and military aviation during the inter-war period. The Schneider Cup competitions and Pulitzer Trophy Races were used by the military and manufacturers to test engines and aerodynamic advances during the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the advances first seen during air races would be applied in the design of WWII fighters and bombers. Following WWII, the aircraft manufacturers withdrew from air racing. Then after the tragic Cleveland Race of 1949, the military also withdrew their support.

For a new fan of air racing, I would strongly recommend this easy to read, concise history. Many of the aircraft and pilots discussed in Berliner's chapters on the National Championship Air Racing are still active today. I just hope that there can be a continuation published in another 20 years to mark the 125th anniversary of air racing.

Christopher S. Trobridge

Daring Young Men, The Heroism and Triumph of the Berlin Airlift, June 1948-May 1949, by Richard Reeves. Simon and Schuster, www.simonandschuster.com, New York, N.Y. 2011, ISBN 978-1-41654-119-6. Hardcover 6" x 9", 316 pages, 25 photos. \$28.00.



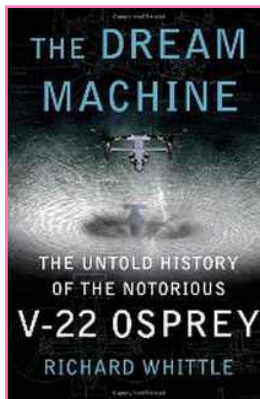
Daring Young Men is the passionate story of the 1948-49 Berlin Airlift, where the USSR used the war-torn city as a pawn in the Cold War of post-WWII. The Soviets took one-third of the old Germany that included the original capital of Berlin, with the British, French and Americans being given control of the western half of Berlin. With the closure of the access highway, the only choices were to have the Soviets control the food supply in Berlin, or begin a long-term airlift to save the people in the western part of the city.

Richard Reeves has authored 10 books on history and America including three Presidential biographies. His treatment of 300 pages does have near 10 percent illustrations although clustered in the typical center signature. Yet he tells the deeply moving story of danger for the American flyboys, and the literal rescue of nearly three million German citizens, through more than 500 flights a day for almost a year.

Reeves presents a well crafted story. As well, chapter heads are adorned with comics of the period and numerous personal accounts make the story come alive. It is a rewarding story.

Douglas Westfall

The Dream Machine, The Untold History of the Notorious V-22 Osprey, by Richard Whittle. Simon & Schuster, www.simonandschuster.com, New York, N.Y. 2010, ISBN 978-1-41656-295-5, Hardcover 6" x 9", 454 pages, 16 photos. \$27.00.



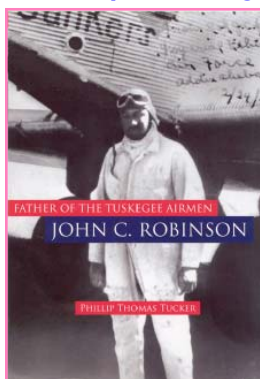
The *Dream Machine* is the V-22 Osprey, a Bell/Boeing collaborative tilt-rotor aircraft, and the book of the same name details the story of the efforts of Washington, D.C., officials and the military to keep it in production despite its high cost and failure rate. A 450-page tome with little more than one percent illustration, the story here is largely about the cover up of problems, highlighting the fatal crashes, the grounding of the aircraft for two years, and the U.S. Marines' proud support of the ideal weapon. The \$60 million plus unit cost is not overshadowed here by glowing tales of its flight operations.

Author Whittle, a former newsman, approaches the story as a newsman should: looking for news within the history of the fixed and rotary-wing airplane. He pursues each individual who supported and promoted the project through the design and manufacturing trials, and constant budget overruns. Again, this book is about a cover up more than about the machine itself -- even the title suggests that.

The long discussion on who-did-what is a common format for books on the government, but this is about an aircraft. Whittle does the job well, reporting on failings of the aircraft, the billions in cost overruns and the loss of U.S. military men in the crashes. This is a well detailed report.

Douglas Westfall

Father of the Tuskegee Airmen, John C. Robinson, by Phillip Thomas Tucker. Potomac Books, 22841 Quicksilver Drive, Dulles, VA 20166. 2012, ISBN: 978-1-59797-487-5, Hardcover with dust jacket, 6" x 9", 343 pages – 11 B&W images. \$29.95.



Like many aviation pioneers during the Golden Age of aviation, John C. Robinson had a passion for flying. He also had a vision of African Americans' role in aviation's future. Through hard work and a winning personality he overcame many hurdles to accomplish his dream of learning to fly, building his own plane and teaching black youths to fly.

Robinson's mother moved to Gulfport, Mississippi, with one-year old John in 1906, a move that later made it possible for him to get the basic education he needed to attend Tuskegee Institute. Upon graduation, John moved to Detroit and then to Chicago where he set up his own automotive garage and began

his dream of learning to fly.

This soft spoken, persuasive, and very talented young man was able to overcome racial barriers repeatedly in his goal to learn to fly and all of his other accomplishments. Robinson was the first African American to enter the Curtiss-Wright Aeronautical School and became the first black instructor for that prestigious institution. He formed aero clubs for black youths in Chicago, and constructed an all-black airport almost from scratch.

Robinson even flew down to his alma mater in 1934 to promote his dream that Tuskegee Institute begin its own aviation program. He was not discouraged that they did not accept his idea then, but continued to encourage them to do so for years. Eventually his efforts, the efforts of his former students, and the changing political climate resulted in the establishment of the training program at the institute that produced the Tuskegee Airmen of WWII. Even then, John C. Robinson's School of Aviation in Chicago played a key role in support in training pilots and mechanics for the Institute.

In 1935, Italy under Mussolini's fascist leadership set out to invade Ethiopia. He sent hundreds of thousands of troops and hundreds of warplanes to Africa in preparation for the invasion of a country without an air force, warriors without modern arms that were totally unprepared for blitzkrieg type warfare and the unlimited use of mustard gas. The author does a masterful job of explaining Ethiopia's rich history, why Mussolini used an unprecedented amount of force to conquer this virtually undefended African nation. He describes how the arms embargo and the failure of the League of Nations virtually sealed Ethiopia's fate and Roberson's role in this historic event.

Robinson, because of his pilot and mechanic skills, went to Ethiopia to help and ended up creating the Ethiopian Air Force, which never had more than 24 planes, none of which were military combat aircraft. The planes were used for courier service, liaison activities, and transport of medical supplies, ammunition and personnel. During the year that Robinson was there he served as Emperor Selassie's personal pilot and head of the Ethiopian Air Force. During that time he flew over 700 hours, escaped getting shot down on numerous occasions and became known as the Brown Condor of Ethiopia.

What makes this book an interesting read is Phillip Tucker's masterful narrative talents that provide insight to the accomplishments of John Robinson and the racial and political struggles he encountered. He tells why Robinson, once the best-known black pilot in the world, has since been largely forgotten. The author provides a clear perspective of the African American racial experiences in the U.S., Europe, and Africa during the years before, during and after WWII. From a historical military aviation viewpoint, the author provides a superb analysis of the Italy-Ethiopia war in 1935-1936 and how it was a precursor to aviation's role and the tactics used in WWII. This is a good read and is recommended to anyone interested in this little known, but important segment, of aviation history during the 1930s, as well as getting to know an extraordinary man, John C. Robinson.

Larry Bledsoe

Want to help your Society?

How about reviewing a book? Just let Hayden Hamilton (webmaster@aahs-online.org) know and he'll send you a book. The only catch is that you have to write a short book review (as shown in this *FLIGHTLINE*) and send it back to us. Hayden will let you know what titles are available.

Or, if you have read a good book lately, let other members know about it by writing a short book review of it. Again, contact Hayden for details and titles - don't want to have you writing a review of a book that has already been reviewed.

AAHS FLIGHTLINE Sign-Up Reminder

For those that want to be notified by email when the next issue of the *AAHS FLIGHTLINE* is posted, please register your email address online. You can do this by going to the AAHS website "home page." At the bottom of this Web page is a link and instructions that will allow you to register your email address. This is an "opt in" program. Only those that request notification will receive one. The AAHS will not use your email address registered here for any other purpose than to notify you of a *FLIGHTLINE* posting. You have control and may remove or change your email address at any time. Remember that the electronic version of the *AAHS FLIGHTLINE* is in color.

AAHS FLIGHTLINE

American Aviation Historical Society

President: Jerri Bergen

Vice President & Chief Publication Officer: Albert Hansen

Managing Editor: Hayden Hamilton

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President's Message

Just this last weekend AAHS Board member Paul Butler and I attended the National Air & Space Museum's Mutual Concerns Conference, held at the Museum of Flight, Seattle, Wash., where many of the major aviation museums across the country met to discuss problems/solutions, issues and progress on many common museum topics.

It was both gratifying and sobering to learn AAHS shares many of the issues of other aviation museums and historic groups, large and small. We were pleased to hear that historians (who knew of us!) found the articles written by our members to be of great use in their research and general learning. We were dismayed to learn of the number of new tools and techniques other organizations have successfully used to meet their mission, which we in AAHS have yet to attempt. And finally, we were yet again reminded that AAHS continues to be relevant for a sizable audience, but we need to do a much better job of getting our information out to that audience.



AAHS Board Member Paul Butler and Jerri Bergen at the entrance of the Museum of Flight that hosted the NASM's Mutual Concerns Conference.

As noted earlier this year, we are eager to focus our efforts upon becoming a better value for our members, and the many new ideas we learned at the conference will, with successful implementation, assure AAHS's growth for the next 50 years.

One key element of our value proposition is to better connect with you, our members, who are the true resource of AAHS - the basis of much of our knowledge of aviation history. **I ask you to help support** our upcoming Member Survey, now in development by Board Member Jeff Erickson, that will help us identify key sources of aviation knowledge that could provide invaluable support for another historian who needs your specific knowledge or experience. Just a few days ago a gentleman called in to AAHS asking if we knew anyone who might have knowledge of the Republic Manufacturing plant in Evansville, Ind., during the war years, as part of research for a proposal to save a historic building in that town.

Requests like these come in often, and our understanding of your experience and knowledge can help us meet the needs of these kinds of questions, and, allow you another avenue to share your aviation experience with others. When the envelope arrives in the mail, don't toss it out! Please take just a moment to fill out the form and return it.

This and other upcoming AAHS projects are turning us in a new, positive direction. With some input and favorable response from you, we are also moving forward with plans for an AAHS Annual Meeting, January 24-26, 2014, at the Chino Airport, Chino, California. All AAHS members are invited to gather for some socializing, participate in an excellent aviation program, and provide input at our annual open Board meeting.

I am very glad to be part of AAHS at this time. It's a tough row to hoe, but a flourishing crop of aviation knowledge, documented for our future generations is well worth the effort.

P.S. **DO take a moment** to say "Thanks" to Hayden Hamilton, editor of the *Journal* – he's made our all-color *Journal* possible, and at a cost about the same as our black and white version! Hayden researched various printers and found one that would work with AAHS for the same pricing as our older print style. We thank Hayden for his tireless efforts on behalf of AAHS.

Jerri Bergen
AAHS President

Wants & Disposals

DISPOSAL: *AAHS Journal* Winter 2012 (Vol. 57, No. 4) featured an article about aviation pulp artist Frederick Blakeslee along with two covers reprinted on the inside front cover. These two Blakeslee originals, along with several others are available for sale.

Also for sale are a large number of flying pulp magazines, most of which are in good to very good condition.

These items come from the collection of Herman Schreiner (see *Folded Wings* this issue).

Interested parties should contact:

Carlton Schreiner
6218 Oak Way
Paradise, CA 95969
E-mail: CarltonSchreiner@gmail.com

WANTED: I am researching items on the Piper L-4 Grasshopper liaison aircraft. During WWII, these were carried (assembled, ready to fly) on especially modified ships with the airplanes stacked, nose down. There was a "ramp" down the middle of the ship from which the L-4s were launched. There was no recovery capability other than ditching.

Anyone with information about these ships: what they were called, and/or, especially, are there any known sources of info or pictures?

Tony Stinson
Ulladulla, Australia
E-mail: tonyhelen9@bigpond.com

WANTED: For research project on Lockheed T-33s on the Civil Register. Kodachrome slides or B&W negatives of the following aircraft:

N154, N156, N156Y, N350S, N401S,
N62278, N650, N651, N9123Z and N9126Z.

Have quality Kodachrome slides and B&W negatives to trade. No digital images, please.

Douglas E. Slowiak
PO Box 42133
Mesa, AZ 85274
E-mail: vortexphoto@aol.com

DISPOSAL: 31 years of the *AAHS Journals* for sale; 1979-2009. Complete EXCEPT for Winter '08; Winter '02; Spring '00; Winter '99; Spring, Summer and Fall of '91; Spring '88;

and Summer '80 (nine issues). All are in excellent condition, no torn covers or pages. Make offer. You pay shipping (these are HEAVY).

John Lauber
Vaughn, WA 98394
Phone: (253) 884 0807 or
E-mail: jlauber@ix.netcom.com

DISPOSAL: Original black and white negatives on U.S. military and civil aircraft from the early 1960s to 1980s period, mainly 120 / 620 size, at \$3 each plus postage. You choose aircraft types, and I will reply with number of negs available that have different serials. Also free list of aviation books, magazines, photos including poster size, etc., for sale upon request. For inquiries by U.S. mail, please include a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope.

Robert Esposito
409 Orchard Ave.
Somerdale, NJ 08083
E-mail: baesposit@verizon.net
Phone: (856) 627-5872

WANTED: Seeking information and/or images of the aircraft built by Lt. Melvin B. Asp. He built three aircraft that I am aware of, the first in 1922 at Ellington Field that won the Southern Aerial Derby, held in Houston in 1922. The aircraft was sold that year to an American aircraft manufacturer, I believe it may have been used as a base for the Cox-Klemin XS-1, but I have not confirmed this. The second and third planes were built at France Field, Panama C. Z., between 1925 and 1927. His first two planes had a Lawrence 3-cylinder radial engine, the third plane had an inline engine. Any information related to this subject would be greatly appreciated.

Denny Cole
E-mail: user776289@aol.com

DISPOSAL: 90-year collection of aviation related items that include limited edition prints, posters, hardback and paperback books, 35mm color slides and B&W negatives, magazines, color and B&W photographs and a complete set of *AAHS Journals*. Some of the books are rare. Also available are diecast and built-up plastic models. For inventory listing, please contact me.

Paul L. Schiding
301 Queensdale Dr, Apt. F
York, PA 17503
Tel: (717) 741-1086 [1:30-5:00 p.m. or 6:30-11:30 p.m., Eastern]

New Members

Jeff Boomershine
Fishers, IN 46038

Paul Nowaske
Dover, ID 83825

Tom Bui
Irvine, CA 92620

William Howell
Kent, OH 44240-2628

Frederick A. Johnsen
Nampa, ID 83686
Curtis Kitteringham

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Jeff Brown
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Steven Macey
Hudson, WI 54016

William F. Cass
West Chester, PA 19380-6041

Ryan Maguire
Chester Springs, PA 19425

Robert J. Rushforth
Littleton, CO 80120-3433

Editor's Note: Due to search engines extracting and indexing personal information, the AAHS will no longer publish detailed addresses. Please contact the office if you wish to contact a member.

Stephen Bell
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316

Ellen Mays
Ellisville, MO 63021

John P. Daniel
Covington, LA 70433

Corinne Tippet
Portland, OR 97220

Don A. Joyce
Little Rock, AR 72210

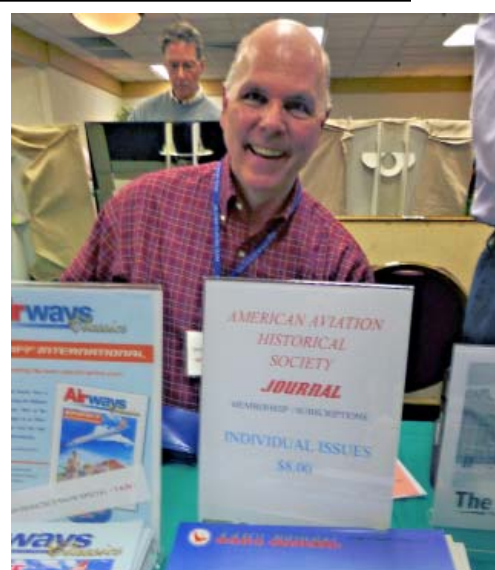
David Zimmerman
Lakeway, TX 78734

Dr. Larry H. Kasulka
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

David Nixon
Portland, OR 97215

David Malmad
Anaheim, CA 92806

Promoting the AAHS. David Stringer was caught in the act at a recent San Francisco airliners show promoting the AAHS along with his personal material. David is the author of series "Local Service Airlines" that has been running in recent issues of the Journal. If you would like to do something similar, contact the AAHS office and we'll put some material together for you.



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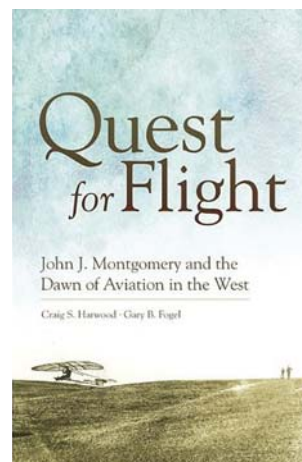
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AAHS Photo Archive CDs Series

The Society has recently started development of a series of photo CDs. These CDs contain high-resolution scans of negatives, slides and prints from the AAHS Image Library. The resolution of these scanned images is sufficient to make an 8"x10" photographic quality print. Each CD focuses on a particular aspect of American aviation history - be that a particular manufacturer, type or class of aircraft.

As of this date, the following CDs are available. Each CD contains between 70 and 140 images depending on content.

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- 1009 Lockheed P-38/F-5
- 1011 Curtiss Transports
- 1021 Boeing Propeller-Driven Commercial Transports
- 1031 Golden Age Commercial Flying Boats

These CDs are available to members for \$19.95 (\$29.95 non-members) each plus shipping (\$2.50 U.S., \$10.00 International - add \$1.00 for each additional CD). Order forms are available online and on request, but a note along with your donation specifying your particular interest is sufficient.

Proceeds go to support the preservation of the photo archives. Do you have a particular interest or suggestion for a CD in this series? Drop us a line or email the webmaster (webmaster@aahs-online.org). We are currently researching the possibilities of offerings covering the following areas: Connies Part II, XP-56, Northrop X-4, Bell Aircraft, and Early Lockheeds.





American Aviation Historical Society

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Please enroll me as a member of the AAHS. Enclosed is my check (money order or bank draft) for dues as checked below. I understand that I will receive all issues of the *AAHS Journal* published to date during my membership year, plus all issues of the *AAHS FLIGHTLINE* (Downloadable from the AAHS website). Individuals joining after October 1, will have their membership begin the following year, but will receive the Winter issue of the *Journal* as a bonus. I also understand that renewal is due at the end of the calendar year in which membership will expire. (Valid through 2013)

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