



News and Comment

KINGFISHER LOCATED FOR USS ALABAMA

The OS2U Kingfisher aircraft was manufactured by Chance Vought Aircraft, Division of United Aircraft, and the first of the series was delivered to the U. S. Navy in 1939. The OS2U was constructed as a scout and observation aircraft with extremely limited armament consisting primarily of a single, fixed forward firing .30 caliber machine gun and a flexible .30 caliber gun in the after cockpit, together with racks for two light bombs. The type was extremely successful in rescuing Allied pilots and one of its best known feats in WW II was the rescue of Eddie Rickenbacker from a life raft in the Pacific.

Only two of these aircraft are known to be in existence in the United States today. One is in the collection of The National Air Museum of the Smithsonian Institution. The other was located by this writer for the USS ALABAMA BATTLESHIP COMMISSION in Mexico, by means of a notice run in the American Aviation Historical Society JOURNAL (Spring 1964).

On Thanksgiving week-end of 1964, the writer, a Naval Reserve Lieutenant, flew to Mazatlan, Mexico on board a C-119 aircraft of the 908th Troop Carrier Group. There, the Kingfisher (an OS2U-3, CV59250, completed 14 Feb 1942, Engine 985-AN2) was presented to the State of Alabama by the Mexican Navy. One other OS2U had been located and it was mounted on a pedestal for display in Montevideo, Uruguay.

The particular aircraft acquired was one of the few manufactured with wheels, but the Alabama Battleship Commission was nevertheless most grateful to receive it. Its condition was not at all bad considering the many years of storage on the Island of Santa Margarita off the southwest tip of Baja California at a Mexican military airstrip. Once communication had been established with the Mexican officials, namely, the Secretary of the Navy of Mexico, every courtesy and assistance was extended.



The USS Alabama Battleship Commission Kingfisher as it was when returned from Mexico to Brookley AFB. The tail assembly, wings, cowling, cowl flaps and control surfaces were intact and in good condition. (Edington)

ed. The U. S. Naval Attache in Mexico City and the United States Consul at Mazatlan gave every possible assistance, and, without the help of all these men, it would not have been possible for the Alabama Battleship Commission to recover this very rare WW II aircraft.

Through the civic-minded response of several skilled craftsmen at Brookley Air Force Base in Mobile, the Kingfisher is now being completely rehabilitated and readied for permanent display on the stern of the USS Alabama.

Captain Raphael Semmes, IV, USN, was Senior Naval Aviator on board the USS Alabama during World War II. Those familiar with the history of the war between the States will recall that his great grandfather, Admiral Raphael Semmes, commanded the Confederate States Raider "Alabama" a century ago during one of the most successful sea ventures of all time.

Robert S. Edington, P. O. Box 388, Mobile, Alabama.

"FLIGHT FROM THE WATER" AND "ENDURANCE FLYING"

After reading Harold Morehouse's excellent article, "Flight From the Water", JOURNAL Vol 9, No 3, I find I have a few additional pieces of information on the two photos of the prototype Curtiss Flying Boats (last two on page 173). The first one at San Diego with twin tractor chain drive never flew or even taxied. Although the chain drive was never properly worked out, the real reason for abandonment was lack of balance in the water. This can be noted by the man standing on the rear of the boat (Lt. J. C. McClaskey). The machine would have cap-sized forward if his weight had not been there. Later, the forward portion of the boat, just forward of the engine, was sawed off and a larger portion spliced on, including a step. It likewise did not have enough displacement and the project was abandoned at San Diego. The hull laid around a junk pile on the beach for at



With much of the rehabilitation work done, the OS2U stands at Brookley AFB. Engine, prop, instruments and guns were gone. A main float will be obtained through use of a surplus float from another type. (Edington)

least a year afterward. No portion of the finally successful flying boat (last photo page 173) was from the original.

Photo of the Patterson-Francis flying boat (page 176) brings back memories. Shortly after the Great Lakes cruise the machine was shipped back to Charlie Patterson's San Francisco shops. Here the aspiring aeronautical engineer, Waldo Waterman, was given a job by Patterson during his college vacation, putting on a new bottom for the hull. Until his death last December 17th, Charlie and I frequently recalled these days at our Early Bird reunions.

The Raymond V. Morris boat (second photo, page 177) was later built into a biplane configuration. The following year, while an engineering student at the University of California, I designed and started to build a similar flying boat with an entirely new (at the time) concept of flying boat hull design. Lack of finances caused the project to be abandoned, but the hull was nearly completed. Photos of this hull reveal a pointed bow and a "V"-shaped bottom, with a step aft of the Center of Gravity and a great deal more displacement forward than in the Curtiss twin tractor concept.

I would also like to offer a few comments on Russell Plehinger's article, "Endurance Flying", JOURNAL, Vol 9, No 4. Page 283 places the "Question Mark" flight as basing at Mines Field, Los Angeles. This is wrong as the flight based at Los Angeles Metropolitan Airport, now Van Nuys Airport, of which I was the General Manager. I have a couple of letters written to me by "Tooney" Spaatz on the official "7" Stationery and passed down with the refueling hose. No radio was used, and all messages were transferred in this manner. Two Curtiss Pursuits were also employed as "black board" planes. A large area on the side of the fuselage was used to inscribe messages which were then sent up from the ground as a one-way communications system.

On the same page, this article refers to the first endurance flight of Bobbie Trout. Her sponsor, R. O. Bone, sneaked the airplane on to Metropolitan Airport, and she took off early in the morning, unannounced and without my permission. It was known that she had no running lights and when the Army found that they were likely to have another airplane flying around up there, especially one piloted by a woman, they threatened to abandon the "7" flight unless they could "shoot" poor Bobbie down. With the press assembled to cover the "7" flight, it developed into a press agent's dream for Bobbie and a headache for me, as I had a hard time convincing the press that I was not in on it. However, by nightfall, Bobbie was out of gas and with her landing, all was forgiven.

In the late summer of 1929, Bobbie and Elinor Smith combined forces for a try at the women's refueling endurance mark at Metropolitan. They were having a great deal of trouble with refueling contacts and asked me to fly their plane to determine if the plane was suitable. It was an experimental biplane, the "Commercial", and I have never flown a plane so unstable longitudinally since the Jennie days. I told them that I considered the project suicidal for refueling at night, and the project was abandoned.

Waldo E. Waterman, P. O. Box 6532, San Diego 6, Calif.

(Ed. Note - Further additions and corrections to the article, "Endurance Flying", will appear in the JOURNAL later this year. At this time, however, I would like to acknowledge with thanks the interest of Member Jack Stone who has talked to Fred and Al Key and passed on word that their record endurance flight, 4 June to 1 July 1935, was flown from Meridian, Mississippi and not New Orleans, Louisiana.)

DU PLESSIS COMMENT ON THE DIXMUDE

Curiously enough the following, prophetic phrases did not appear in the article, "Mystery of the Dixmude",

JOURNAL Vol 9, No 2, despite its high quality, and I would like to offer them for the record.

After the difficult trip from Maubeuge to Cuers in the Dixmude in August 1920, a flight which left him fully pessimistic, Lieutenant de Vaisseau du Plessis de Grenedan gave an interview to the fine magazine L'Aéronautique. His opinions were printed in that magazine's November 1920 issue.

"... What kind of services can be given by the German airship L 72, now named Dixmude? Calculations are not necessary to learn what things it can do: It will do well only those things for which it was conceived. On paper, anyone can give it a range of 15,000 kilometers at 100 kilometers per hour; we can imagine it carrying numberless people to America; we can use it to scout fleets in the most remote seas. Dixmude (however) is unable to do anything like that, since it was not built for such services.

"... Evidently the German builders' concepts are not ours. We think deadweight gain is secondary. The necessary qualities for a big cruiser airship are resistance, endurance--on the whole, solidity. But, as it exists, Dixmude is certainly fragile and unable to give intensive service. It was conceived for war raids, not for long range cruising."

J. Cuny, Paris, France.

OAKLAND REALTY BOARD TAKES TO THE AIR



As a Realtor and Member of the A.A.H.S., here is another "First" that will be of interest to JOURNAL readers--the photo above which speaks for itself and was taken in 1924 at the Oakland Airport, California. From left to right are: WW I Ace Eddie Rickenbacker, Realtors Bruce Maiden, Jim McElroy, Frank F. Porter, Atty. Carlos G. White, O.R.E.B. Secretary Porter Giles, Realtors Joe Pizzoti, George Lewis, Emil Fritsch and others. E. T. "Smally" Smallwood, 938 Rosemount, Oakland, Calif.

REUNION OF WW I ESSINGTON AIR SERVICE GROUP

On May 16, 1964, the Essington Air Service Group held their 45th annual reunion at the original site of their group at the seaplane base at Essington, Pennsylvania, on the shores of the Delaware River. The Group consisted of two Aero Squadrons, the 45th and the 143rd, and the veterans of these outfits have been gathering together once a year, without interruption, since 1919. Over 40 members and several guests were present for the afternoon and evening get-together last year, and they represented all phases of the Group, from pilots and civilian instructors, to mechanics and cooks.

Mr. Samuel H. Paul, pilot from Philadelphia, was organizer of the 1964 reunion and has been instrumental in keeping the Group together. An afternoon of good

fellowship and "hangar flying" was concluded with an evening dinner with guest speaker, Paul L. Carpenter. Mr. Carpenter is a retired American Airlines Captain with 32 years of service and president of the Gray Eagle Association.
Milton Sheppard, 617 Stanbridge Rd, Morton, Penna.

RARE BOEING C-97 AIRCRAFT



Above is a photo of a plane that was about phased out when General D. J. Smith discovered an economical way of modifying the old KC-97G by the addition of two J47-25 jet engines. The aircraft, 52-2697, had its two jet engines and additional electronic equipment installed at Hayes International Airport, Birmingham, Alabama, and was flight checked in May 1964 by the Flight Test Crew of the Illinois Air National Guard.

Interspersed with flight tests were demonstration flights at Andrews AFB and other bases to show the advanced operational and contingency capability of the jet-augmented 697. The new "KC-97GJ" has successfully refueled F-105 and F-4H fighters, and take off and climb plus cruise have been increased by thirty percent. M/Sgt Chester J. Klish, 7624 S. Laramie, Oak Lawn, Ill.



With the departure of Boeing C-97J, 52-2693A, above, from Norton Air Force Base, California last Summer, an era of special significance ended for the base. Since 1958, Norton had been the home of the only two C-97J aircraft in the USAF inventory. The production line KC-97 tankers had been modified to a turbo prop configuration in a test program for C-133 engines. Upon completion of test and evaluation these aircraft would normally have been removed from the inventory and sent to salvage. However, because of the excellent speed and altitude performance which the modified planes possessed, they were retained to haul both cargo and passengers. They were assigned to the San Bernardino Air Material Area in 1958 and performed like champions on worldwide missile support missions.

With the collapse of a nose wheel on one of the air-

craft in the Fall of 1963, it was decommissioned to furnish spare parts for the surviving aircraft. With near depletion of spare parts from all sources, the end was apparent for the surviving 693. Nevertheless, the C-97J breezed away last Summer with all the vitality of a plane fresh off the assembly line and went to the last resting place for winged vehicles, the Aircraft Disposition and Storage Group at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona.

The "rare birds" were about 100 knots per hour faster and could cruise some 10,000 feet higher than conventional types. With Pratt & Whitney YT-34-P5 engines, the C-97s were 62% overpowered in comparison to the assembly line model and had a considerable margin of safety. This margin was best illustrated in 1959 when 693 landed safely at Keflavik, Iceland with two engines out on one side--a condition usually ending in disaster. Once, on a flight from England to Chateauroux, France, the Paris air controller was unable to justify (or believe) the extreme altitude and speed reported for a Norton C-97J until told it was a "Super Stratocruiser". Robert F. Brooks, 269 E. Markland, Monterey Park, Calif.

AIR EXPRESS AND WOMEN'S AIR DERBY ADDITIONS

With regard to the Rick Allen article, "Barrel-Nosed Cigars", JOURNAL Vol 9, No 1, I have recently come across a "for sale" ad in the April 1932 Aero Digest which sheds a little more light on the Laura Ingall's Air Express, NR-974Y. According to the ad, this aircraft had never been cracked up to that date, had a fuel capacity of 663 gallons, had a supercharged Wasp in the nose, and had originally cost \$25,000. The address given was that of the Atlantic Exhibition Co.

Following are a few notes on Glenn Buffington's "The First Women's Air Derby", JOURNAL Vol 9, No 3. Mary Elizabeth von Mach withdrew from the race when she found the field at San Bernardino overcrowded. She turned back and landed at Montebello. The nose-stand landing of Amelia Earhart was the result of a sand bank. In contrast with the article, my files show that Claire Fahy withdrew because she found that someone had tampered with her engine and Florence Barnes' accident was the result of a misjudged landing. Surprising that Ruth Nichols came out of her mishap unhurt, for her plane flipped over three times.

Following are some pertinent facts (Pilot-Race Number, Time, Speed, Cash prize):

Thaden-4	20:19:02	135.97 mph	\$3,600.00
O'Donnell-105	21:21:43	127.52 mph	1,950.00
Earhart-6	22:12:42.5	122.64 mph	875.00
Noyes-3	24:33:58		725.00
Omlie-8	25:10:36.5	108.19 mph	600.00
Elder-66	28:15:14	96.41 mph	350.00
Foltz-109	41:37:41		450.00
Miller-43	52:24:24.6	51.98 mph	325.00
Rasche	64:35:36	42.17 mph	175.00

Russell Plehinger, 214 Parker Road, Hamburg, N. Y.

MORE ON TRANSOCEAN STRATOCRUISERS

After reading the Comment story, "Transocean's Stratocruisers Languish", JOURNAL Vol 9, No 3, page 229, I would like to add a few additional facts. At this writing, N410Q is still stored at Oakland Airport as previously pictured, except that the tail is now folded down. A recent visit to the airport revealed that vandals and souvenir hunters have been extremely busy, although no serious damage has been done. The aircraft is locked up tight, but several people have evidently broken in by forcing an emergency exit in the lounge.

Parked in the center of the airport are two of the remaining Short S.45 Solent flying boats. The two aircraft (N9945F and ?) were purchased by a Canadian company which planned to fly them up north for use as floating restaurants. This plan seems to have fizzled

as the boats have been tied down and under guard for six years. South Pacific Airlines is reported to still be operating a Solent from San Francisco, but I have not been able to confirm this.

If Members would like photos of the above aircraft, I would be happy to hear from them.

Jay L. Sherlock, 4672 Flamingo Park Ct, Fremont, Calif.

BEAUTIFUL MODEL RESULTS FROM JOURNAL DRAWINGS



An excellent example of the fine results that can stem from the scale drawings that have appeared in the JOURNAL over the years, is the model of the Naval N3N-3 appearing above in the photo by Lou Jackson. It is the work of the man who created the detailed drawings of the type for the JOURNAL Vol 7, No 3, David H. Brazelton, and it is a real pleasure to print a few of his comments on the model.

"It is built to the specifications of the Naval Aviation Museum. The scale is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to the foot and it is built of pine. The struts are spruce, and wires, ribs and stringers are simulated with thread. There is nothing really unusual in its construction. No plastics aboard, though. I changed the rigging slightly to agree with the full scale plane that is on display in the Museum. Some of our readers may note that the 3-view shows long flying wire separators on the wing rigging and the model omits them as does the Museum airplane. I will settle the argument now, if you wish. These separators (Part No. 47025-1, -2, -3, -4) are shown in NAF Dwg 68141 and existed on the early planes."

CORRECTIONS FOR THE WINTER 1964 JOURNAL

"FOKKER FRIENDSHIP" - On page 302 it is stated that the pilot of the FRIENDSHIP was Bill Schultz. However, your Editor has deftly consulted the wrong source, and Member Venlo Wolfsohn has corrected this and informed us that the pilot was the ex-Navy pilot, Wilmer Stultz.

"9th AIR FORCE IN THE DESERT" - The Editor's head was up and locked again. On page 275, Major John R. Kane was CO of the 344th Squadron, not the 343rd. Top of page 276, the photo is not of a P-40F but probably of a P-40K. Regarding undersurfaces of the early bombers and fighters of the 9th, it now appears that some, but not all, of these were light grey or light blue and further, exact information is being sought.

PASSING OF FAMOUS AVIATION PERSONALITIES NOTED

We are indebted to Members Paul R. Matt, Royal D. Frey, E. T. Smallwood, Bill Feeny and W. M. Friel for word of the passing of the following:

Stanley Henry Page, inventor of the Liberty engine, died at age 79, October 1964 in Los Gatos, California.

Vincent J. Burnelli, pioneer aircraft builder of flying wing fame, died at 69, June 1964 on Long Island.

Victor Herman Roos, of the American Eagle Lincoln Aircraft Co., died at 76, October 1964 in Kansas City.

Howard F. Wehrle, one of the pioneer military pilots, died at age 74, December 1964 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Edward Ward, first Signal Corps flying non-commissioned officer, died at 84, January 1965, Dayton, Ohio.

Prentice A. Newman, who built the first monoplane in the U. S., died at age 94, June 1964 at San Antonio