



William T. Larkins Founder & First Editor, 1956-58



THE ELEVENTH YEAR

Ten years ago the American Aviation Historical Society was born of an idea in the minds of Larkins, Nye and Johnson. William T. "Bill" Larkins, with Willis L. Nye (also sometimes called Bill) and Chalmers A. Johnson, founded this group for the simple purpose of bringing to fellow enthusiasts the source material used in researching, compiling and recording aviation history. From that has grown the Society as we know it today, about 3000 members in all of the United States, British Commonwealth and 24 other countries.

We are now entering into the eleventh year of publication of the JOURNAL of this Society, and a review of the past ten, for the record, is in order. The idea, and the initial funds for the printing of the first JOURNAL, Volume 1, Number 1, were initiated by the founding fathers, wondering at the same time what would be the response. It was immediate and forthright. From seventeen other mutual friends and correspondents came additional funds and encouragement and Larkins compiled, typed mimeograph stencils, prepared camera-ready photo pages, and sent off to the Associated Student Book Store at the University of California the first issue, 26 pages, which, incidentally, introduced the first 26 Members.

The basic precept set forth in the opening paragraph of that first issue has been little-changed since that date. Said Larkins, "For some time many of us have felt the need for some sort of organization... that would provide a means of contacting other persons with similar interests, in addition to providing the type of quality information about old aircraft, aviation history, etc. that is not carried in any other current publication in the United States. The American Aviation Historical Society has been founded to fill that need, and this can be done if all of the members will cooperate. This is a non-profit organization for the sole benefit of all the members..."

The first JOURNAL carried such articles as "A Survey of Lockheed Orion History", "Knight Twisters Registered in the U.S.", "The Home-Builts", and pages devoted to those member services which have continued to this day, the Wants and Disposals, Correspondence, Introductions of Members, and so on. Today's JOURNAL is larger and more slicked up, and there are more Members, but it remains as a publication of articles contributed by the Members and for the Members.

From the original 26, the Society grew to nearly 500 by the end of 1958, during which time Larkins continued to compile, edit, stuff in envelopes and mail each copy. Material was drawn from the collections of his own and fellow enthusiasts, implemented and verified by such research tools as photograph negative numbers and sources, manufacturer's specifications, newspaper files, magazines and books and correspondence. In the early months Douglas D. Olson served as the original membership chairman, aiding Larkins in the registration of new members.

Near the end of the first year of publication, Warren D. Shipp, of Brooklyn, New York, undertook to provide another vital element, administrative help. He volunteered to the office of President until such time as a more formal organization should be established, and obtained the aid of James J. Sloan for volunteer Secretary/Treasurer. A first Board of Directors was also 'volunteered' by Bill Larkins, consisting of Peter M. Bowers, Dustin W. Carter, John C. Durand, "Chai" Johnson, Gregory C. Kohn, Larkins, Charles G. Mandrake, Nye, Merle G. Olmsted, Shipp, Sloan and Frank Strnad. Its first, and almost only act, was to express its confidence in the concept of A.A.H.S. and its volunteer help by reducing itself to a five-man Board, with Shipp as President, Bowers as Vice-President, Sloan as Secretary/Treasurer and Johnson and Nye as the other Directors. This Board continued throughout 1957 and 1958 to define the organ-

ization and to handle membership dues and records.

It became apparent, with the growth in membership, that the production tasks would also have to be spread out and that Larkins could not be expected to perform the increasing duty indefinitely. In mid-1958 discussions were opened with Dr. Gerald E. Wheeler, prompted by an exchange of correspondence between him and Larkins, with the view of his becoming Editor of the JOURNAL. Dr. Wheeler was then Professor of History at San Jose State College, and college administrations look with favor on such extra-curricular activities of its faculty, even supplying, on occasion, some secretarial and other help.

However, since this could not be effected until the end of the current school year, an editorial staff of volunteers was formed in Los Angeles by Sloan to compile, edit and produce the first two issues of Volume 4, 1959. These volunteers were Gerald Balzer, Carter, Roland L. Bliss, Harry S. Gann, Jr., Warren M. Bodie, William A. Riley, Bowers and Sloan, George Holmes and Robert Lovece joined the group later. Volume 9, Numbers 1 and 2 were created in committee sessions held around the dining room table (except that Bowers forwarded his WW I contributions from Seattle), Mrs. Roberta Riley typed the mimeograph stencils and the actual printing was done in Berkeley. Collation and mailing was done by a commercial letter service.

At the close of Larkins' term as Editor he was able to announce, with justifiable pride, 485 Members in the U.S. and 10 other countries throughout the world. In the meantime, Shipp had brought into the management council, Harold Andrews, representing the Washington, D.C. area, and George A. Hardie, Jr., then Vice-President of the Experimental Aircraft Association.

With the shift in JOURNAL production to the hands of the editorial committee, Shipp urged the consolidation of the administration on the west coast and obtained the acquiescence of the Board; Sloan was named President, Riley and Gann became Secretary and Treasurer respectively. The results of the Board's work on the Constitution and By-Laws was surveyed and the new officers put under way the initial acts of incorporation of the Society.

In addition to the announcement of the new staff, the first issue of Volume 4 brought a face-lifting to the JOURNAL with use of a cover photograph, a series of Articles by Ross S. Fenn describing new source material and the beginning of the regular bibliography section

by Robert B. Casari. Dr. Wheeler was announced as the new editor to be, in Volume 4, Number 2, and shortly after he took over Lt Col. George V. Fagan, USAF, was added to the staff and began a series of briefs on books and literature.

Volume 4 underwent subtle change during the year toward more of the professional historian's approach. Under Dr. Wheeler's direction more was being written of the people in aviation history, yet the JOURNAL retained its essential character as the collector's magazine. Three monumental articles had been printed in the early Volumes 2 and 3—the Vega story by Chal Johnson, a duo on "Sparrowhawks" by Bill Nye and John C. Mitchell, and the definitive work on U. S. Navy markings by Larkins and Riley. Contributions of greater length were encouraged and during this period the JOURNAL brought out a series of WW I articles which were to stimulate the eventual creation of another organization and journal devoted to that period.

The Society was officially incorporated under the laws of the State of California with Larkins, Gann, Riley and Sloan as incorporating Directors in late 1959. The By-Laws were adopted at a first, or organizational, meeting of the corporation. At the First Annual Meeting of the Society, held in Los Angeles July 23, 1960, Andrews, Bliss, Hardie, Shipp and Wheeler were added to the incorporating Directors. Riley was named President by the Board and R. T. "Doc" Hood became Secretary.

Dr. Wheeler edited the JOURNAL throughout the latter part of 1959 and all of 1960, printing being done under the same arrangements as before, but a switch in format was made to "paper" plates for multi-lith processing. Both front and rear covers were printed on soft finish paper in the usual format of cover photo and inside rear cover drawing. All photographs were separately grouped for economy of printing, there being from 10 to 16 photo pages in each issue.

With the Spring of 1961, the next major changes in the JOURNAL format were made. Dr. Wheeler was moved up to the post of Assistant Dean of San Jose State College, and the pressure of administrative affairs, plus an impending assignment as visiting Professor of History at the University of Manila, indicated further changes had become necessary. R. T. Hood was elected to the Board of Directors in October 1960. Sloan assumed the editorship at year's end. The printing method was changed to offset lithography, and semi-hard covers of enameled stock graced front and rear. The most significant change



James J. Sloan, Pres. 1958-59, '63-66



William A. Riley, Pres. 1959-61



George A. Hardie, Jr., Pres. 1961-63

however, was to a two-column page, with all photographs distributed throughout the pages instead of grouping. Membership in the Society had grown to approximately 1000 active members, with increasingly worldwide distribution. Later on, in 1962, Warren E. Oberhaus was drawn in to aid the Editor throughout the year in the preparation of texts.

Also announced in the Spring 1961 JOURNAL were the first Midwest A.A.H.S. Meeting, under the enthusiastic drive of Fred C. Dickey, Jr., at Glenview, Illinois; the first of the continuing series of aviation art; and a commemorative flight of the "Vin Fiz". This last was to be aborted later. Peter M. Bowers announced that he would fly from Middletown, New York to Long Beach, California over the same route as taken by Galbraith Perry Rogers in a replica airplane. Help was generously provided by Captain Ralph Barnaby of the Franklin Institute, Philip Hopkins and Paul E. Garber of the Smithsonian Institution, Director Harold Andrews and the late Charles E. Wiggins in obtaining details of construction. A monumental effort was put forth by Member William N. Fleming of Passaic, New Jersey in coordinating the route of the flight. However, as the year wore on and the pressure of making a living continued for Bowers, the production schedule slipped. Finally, in the Winter issue, the flight was described as indefinitely delayed.

Roger Besecker began a negative file for the use of the Members of the Society, from which film negatives could be borrowed by those who did not have specific photographs in their collections or for other purposes. The first list of negatives was printed in the Summer 1961 issue, and the list has now grown extensively. Although it is recognized that there will be some attrition, the service is for the taking and Members are encouraged to make use of it.

The Second Annual Meeting marked a turning point in the nation-wide image of the Society, expressed through the election of George Hardie, Jr. as President and the naming of Regional Vice-Presidents. This was Hardie's first action on assuming the Presidency, enlarging the administrative group and bringing an official representative to each area of the U.S. During his two years in office, Hardie constantly expounded the cause of dedication to the Society, the need for the gathering of aviation history now while the pioneer aviators are still with us, the use of the JOURNAL as an instrument of policy and the need for local history groups. To this end he proposed and appointed as Regional Vice-Presidents, Harold Andrews, Karl Bergey, Ross Fenn, Len Morgan, Warren Shipp and Gordon S. Williams. Since that date there have been some additions and subtractions of names as the pressures of personal business dictated. The present RVP's include Fred Dickey, Mitch Mayborn, Ernest W. Robison, E. T. Smallwood and Bergen Hardesty. At one time Bill Larkins, T. G. "Tim" Miller and Robert L. Cavanagh served their areas.

The basic purpose of the Society began to show forth particularly well in the next two years as many fine contributions to the JOURNAL flowed in and local history groups began to form up. As expressed in the Articles of Incorporation, the Society's aims are "...to preserve and record the history of aviation, ... to disseminate knowledge and understanding of the influence of aviation on world affairs, and ... to stimulate interest."

The Connecticut Aeronautical Historical Association was formed in 1959 with Harvey H. Lippincott, who was to become a Director of the A.A.H.S. in 1962, as a Founder and President. In 1962 the Texas Aviation Historical Society was formed, largely through the work of Len Morgan and Mitch Mayborn. And in 1963 the first regional inter-society meeting of aero historians was held in Dayton at the Air Force Central Museum, initiated by Regional V-P Bob Cavanagh and other A.A.H.S. Members. It was billed under the sponsorship of the Miami Valley Aero Historians, and portions of the two-and-a-half day conference were presented by the A.A.H.S., the Ohio Chapter of Cross & Cockade, Wingfoot Lighter-Than-Air



Dr. Gerald E. Wheeler, President 1966-

Society and the National Association of American Balloon Corps Veterans. The papers presented included many from already well-known contributors to the A.A.H.S. JOURNAL.

Throughout 1963 the JOURNAL continued to announce the formation of new groups and the accomplishments of those existing. The C.A.H.A. entered the field of television with a series of programs on aeronautical history, the Society for the Preservation of Commercial Aircraft was founded in San Francisco, The Early Aircraft Association, launched in Chicago in 1962, continued its series of varied programs, the Canadian Aviation Historical Society was founded in Ontario and a German Aviation Historical Society came briefly into being.

As the Society began to take on modest prestige, it was honored by some distinguished speakers at the Annual Meetings. VADM William V. Davis, of the famed "Three Sea Hawks" addressed the Second Annual Meeting; Harry White, of Western Airlines was featured guest at the Third Annual Meeting; Walker M. "Bud" Mahurin, famed WW II fighter ace and Frederick C. Goerner of Radio CBS both gave speeches at the Fourth. Also, note was being taken in other areas and Roland L. Bliss presented a paper at a joint session with the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association.

By the end of 1962 the Society had grown to 1310 Members, a nearly one-third increase in that year alone. This was announced by Secretary Frank C. Boyce at the Fourth Annual Meeting, which also saw the addition of Boyce, Dr. John B. Rae and Kenn C. Rust to the Board of Directors. Dr. Rae was formerly on the Executive Council of the Society for the History of Technology and is Professor at Harvey Mudd College of the Claremont Universities. Kenn Rust had begun his active role in preparation of the JOURNAL in the Spring of 1963 and assumed the full editorship with the Summer issue.

Sloan was elected President.

The high mark of the year 1964 was the second Regional Meeting of the Central States Aero Historians, again a two-and-one-half-day conclave, with many speakers and splendid cooperation among the various societies represented. 1964 brought the founding of the New York State Aviation Historical Society.

At the beginning of last year, as the Society entered its Tenth Year, there were 2420 active Members throughout the world. There was, for the first time, an operating reserve in the treasury. With a new cover design and improved printing, the JOURNAL stood at an all-time high in appearance. In the months that followed, fresh new thinking on the Society's purposes and great activity at the local level were to occur. The financial reserve came about through the appointment of the Operations Committee of the Board of Directors, consisting of R. L. Bliss, Executive V-P, W. A. Riley, Secretary, H. S. Gann, Jr., Treasurer and Kenn Rust and Walter M. Jefferies, Jr., Editor and Technical Editor, respectively, with the President as ex-officio member. Under the leadership of Bliss the income and expenditures were brought into line, all operations of the Society were Fully coordinated for the first time with emphasis on advance planning and the Directors of the Society could at last put on their Directors' hats for thinking Instead of their doers' hats for working.

Four major events in the life of this Society occurred in 1965, two outstanding Regional Meetings and two occasions affecting its future for some time to come. The Third Regional Meeting of the Central States Aero Historians was held in Dayton in May, producing many papers of original research and a distinguished list of speakers headed by Grover Loening and George A. Page, Jr. As before, the host organization was the Miami Valley Aero Historians, and again the A.A.H.S. was splendidly represented. In October the Connecticut Aeronautical Historical Association was host to five other organizations; the A.A.H.S., the Long Island Early Flyers Club, the New York State Aviation Historical Society, Society of World War One Aero Historians and the Wing-foot Lighter-Than-Air Society. S. Paul Johnston, the director of the National Air & Space Museum was the featured speaker and, in terms of attendance, interest and program, it was an outstanding success through the efforts of Lippincott and Regional V-P Robischon. It was held at the Hartford Club and at Bradley Field, Hartford, home of the C.A.H.A. Museum.

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Society was held in Los Angeles, well attended by the Southern California contingent of the Early Birds and was highlighted by the Annua) Address prepared by Waldo Waterman. It saw the election to the Board of Louis S. Casey, Curator of the Flightcraft Division, National Air Museum. And it brought the return of Dr. Gerald E. Wheeler, after an absence of three years, to the Board. The Membership also voted to change the date of the Annua) Meeting to year-end instead of mid-year, thus permitting coincidental timing of the election of Directors, calendar year ending of the JOURNAL volumes and closing of the accounts for the year, with the annual renewal of dues to the Society for the next year.

The fourth event mentioned above, was the first open forum called to discuss the Society's program and its future. At a meeting held in Oakland in October 1965, the Officers and Directors conferred throughout the day with representative groups of Members and in the evening, all Members who could, attended. It was a refreshing look for the administrators of the Society at the enthusiasm at the grass-roots level. The Directors took the occasion to present to William T. Larkins the only Honorary Membership in the Society, for his work as a Founder and Editor of the JOURNAL for the first three years.

As one result of the Forum, Membership cards will be issued in 1966 for the first time. Another of the original Founders, Willis L. Nye, was appointed to do the ground work toward the establishment of an awards

program, The date of the Annual Meeting was set at January 29, 1966, and in response to the requests of the Northern California Members it was agreed to hold it in the Bay Area. Perhaps the most important long-lasting result of the forum discussions was the plan to give greater support to the Editor of the JOURNAL with all of the means at the Society's disposal. Dr. Wheeler gave the basic concept of the plan in a Motion to activate an Editorial Committee of Members throughout the country, specialists in their fields end dignified by the publication of their names in the JOURNAL, who can work closely with the Editor in implementing research in aviation history.

As the Society enters the Eleventh Year of publication of the JOURNAL it is apparent that it is, first of all, an organization, and that its primary material purpose is to publish the JOURNAL. It, in turn, expresses the end results of all efforts expended in research, Member-to-Member cooperation, local and regional meetings and stimulation of interest in aviation history. A.A.H.S. Members have participated in many programs all over the country, and Indeed, are represented at aviation groups in many other countries.

The first ten years have produced 40 issues, over 3000 pages of Information, nearly 4000 outstanding photographs, scores of drawings. There have also been supplementary publications, the E-suffix register (of all U.S. aircraft) by Larry Smalley; British Petroleum Company's book "Airlines"; Douglas Aircraft Company's "Service Notes"; Boeing's "Pedigree of Champions", each distributed free to Members as the supply lasted. In the years ahead, other supplements will be evolved, each contributing to the recorded history of aviation.

Originally, the annual dues to the Society were \$3 per year. Dues were increased to \$6 as the JOURNAL grew in size, but increased membership and income has enabled better reproduction methods, paper, photo quality and payment for some of the essential services that do not fall in the area of avocational interest. Expressed more bluntly, this last means that the JOURNAL is still made up of the volunteer contribution of many people, partly through civic-minded interest, but mainly wishing to share the subject with others.

Membership now stands at 2895 as of year-end 1965. At the Annual Meeting of January 29, 1966, described on page 66, the incumbent Board of Directors was reelected, and thereupon it elected Dr. Gerald E. Wheeler to the Presidency. Under his direction new personnel will be brought from the professional history field to aid in the Society's programs. Meanwhile the A.A.H.S. will continue to sponsor more and larger regional meetings, lend its aid to the authentication of aviation art (as in the Phillips Petroleum series) and plastic models Stimulate basic research, and through the JOURNAL record all facets of aviation history.



Warren D. Shipp, Pres. 1956-58