

Lapel and Uniform Insignia

By ED YOUNG

Of the various means by which aeronautical history can be depicted, one of the most colorful is that of preserving civilian lapel insignia and airline and military uniform insignia wings. Several A.A.H.S. Members have notable collections as does the St. Francis flyer's chapel of the Mission Inn at Riverside, California. The author's collection now represents 50 years of aviation history, having been started in 1916 by his father, J. E. "Brig" Young, while employed at the Wright-Martin Company in Los Angeles. Not until 1933 or 1934, however, did it start to resemble a collection when the accumulated insignia pins were taken from the usual chiffonier drawer, mounted in a small frame and placed in his office at the Douglas Aircraft Company plant in Santa Monica. The time was fortunate as it was about that time that Douglas pilots were delivering DC-2s and DC-3s to a variety of customers and began vying with each other in obtaining pins for the collection. At the time of the elder Young's death in 1943, the collection had 402 insignia pins on display.

Today the collection has approximately 1,300 different pieces from about 102 different countries. Insignia from 69 different U. S. aircraft manufacturers recall nostalgic memories of such names as Brewster, Stearman, Stinson, Waco, Timm, Seversky, Atlantic (Fokker--U.S.A., personally contributed by Anthony Fokker), Chance Vought, Consolidated Aircraft, Curtiss, Detroit (Lockheed), Fleetwings, Harlow, Piasecki, Kellett Autogiro, Lowe-Willard-Fowler, Vega, Vultee and others no longer about.

Insignia pins and pilot wings from 83 U. S. airlines graphically show not only the growth of that industry but the historical progression leading to current major carriers. Notable examples are Ludington Airlines which was absorbed into Eastern Air Transport, which then became Eastern Air Lines. Another is the traceability of TWA from the Aero Corp of California to Transcontinental Air Transport, to T.A.T./Maddux, to Transcontinental Western Air, then to Trans World Airlines. Similarly, Western Air Express is traceable to its integration into TWA then the "unmerger" to Western Air Lines. United Air Lines of today can be traced back to Boeing Air

Transport, National Air Transport, Varney Speed Lines, Pacific Air Transport, and its relatively recent merger with Capital Airlines--the latter itself evolving from Pennsylvania Central Airlines.

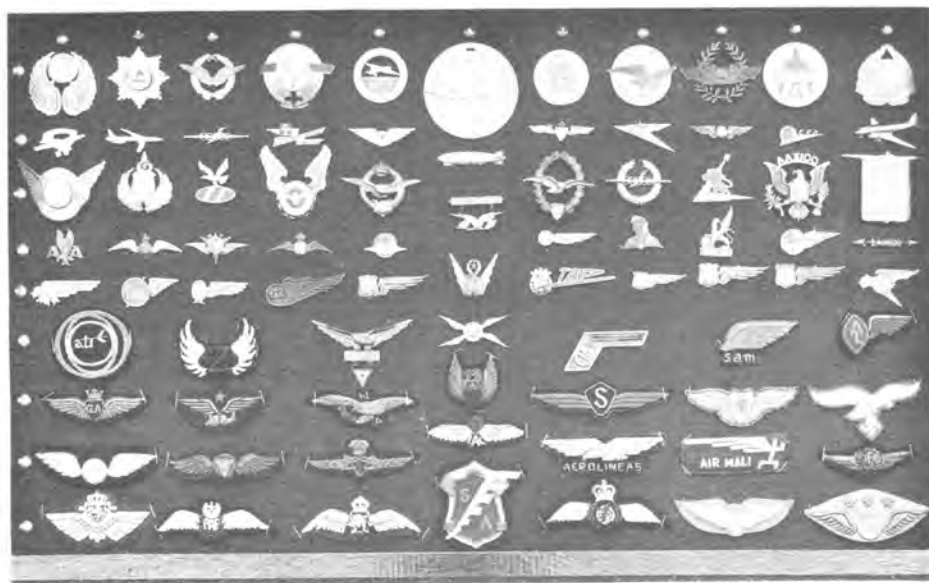
Even the course of U. S. military aviation history is evident--starting with the Military Aviator wings of the Army Signal Corps Aviation Section, the Army Air Corps and Army Air Force to the missile launch crew's insignia of today's USAF.

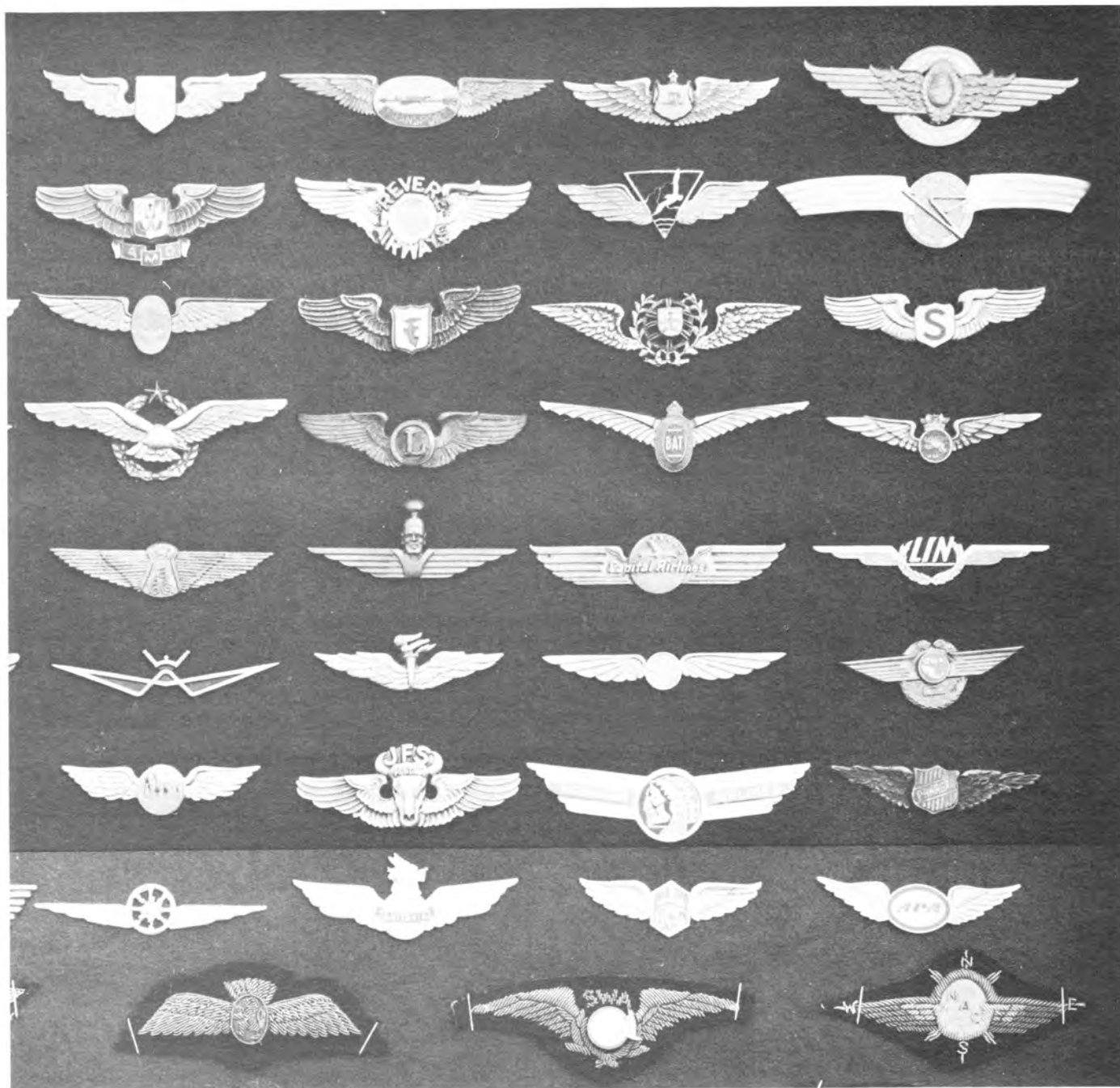
Similarly, aeronautical history of other countries can be depicted by means of lapel and uniform insignia, from the names of early aviation pioneers to the government sponsored air carriers of the newly established nations, from de Havilland to Air Malawi, Air Mali, Air Congo, Air Guinee and others. As a further example, World War II is graphically recalled by the insignias of Messerschmitt, Dornier, Focke Wulf, Heinkel, Mitsubishi, Nakajima, Kawanishi as well as replica pins of P-38s, P-51s, B-25s, B-17s, B-24s, C-47s, P-47s, etc.

An especially interesting aspect is observing the evolution of insignia design, noting, for instance, that the air forces of nations formerly associated with the British Commonwealth adhere to the RAF "droop"-feather pilot wing format with appropriate modifications, usually in embroidered cloth design. On the other hand, countries which may have been influenced by the U.S.A. tend toward metal pilot wings with the wing design being similar to that used in the U. S. Traditionally, the usual pilot wing has been a pair of feathered wings, with a right hand or left hand wing denoting a copilot or other crew member. Of special interest is the modern note evident in the Italian Air Force's four feather wing design, denoting, quite naturally, a helicopter pilot.

Related to all this are the interesting stories behind the designs of the various insignias. Mitsubishi, for instance, being located on the bend of a river where natural eddies occur, selected the ripples of an eddy as the basis of their insignia. Reportedly, on Hughes Aircraft's 5-pointed star, each point represents a crew member of Howard Hughes' speed dash around the world.

One of the four major display panels created to show author Ed Young's collection of lapel and uniform insignia. Such insignia are a worthy way of recording aviation history, and in the words of the author, "Who knows how many other embryonic collections are lying dormant in the bureau drawers of other A.A.H.S. Members--or what an A.A.H.S. lapel pin itself would look like when and if one is created?" (Art Maruyama)





Some of the wings in Ed Young's collection, from top and left to right. 1st Row: Olympic Airways (Greece, pilot, 1958), Eastern Air Transport (pilot, 1934), Hawaiian Airlines (pilot, 1957), Argentine Air Force (military aviator, 1962). 2nd Row: Dominican Air Force (pilot, 1957), Revere Airways (pilot, 1950), Trans Mar de Cortes Airlines (Mexico, pilot, 1958), Condor-Flugdienst (Germany, Pilot, 1964). 3rd Row: Derby Aviation (England, pilot, 1964), Compania de Aviacion "Faucett" (Peru, pilot 1950), Portuguese Air Force (pilot, 1963), Straits Air Freight Express Ltd (New Zealand, pilot, 1962). 4th Row: Indonesian Air Force (first pilot, 1962), Ludington Airlines (pilot, 1930), Butler Air Transport (Australia, pilot, 1959), WAAC (Nigeria) Ltd Airways (pilot, 1960). 5th Row: Iraqi Airways (pilot, 1950), Transpacific Airlines (pilot, 1959), Capital Airlines (pilot, 1961), Linjeflyg Airlines (Sweden, pilot, 1961). 6th Row: Wardair Canada Ltd (pilot, 1963), Italian Air Force (bomber, 1962), TransAir Ltd (Canada, pilot, 1959), Compania Mexicana de Aviacion (pilot). 7th Row: Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft (England, 1948), Johnson Flying Service (pilot, 1963), Robinson Airlines (pilot, 1951), Pan American Grace Airways (PANAGRA, pilot, 1938). 8th Row: Italian Air Force (radio operator, 1962), Britavia (England, 1961), Rutas Aereas de Colombia (pilot, 1960), Aerovias Panama Airways (pilot, 1964). 9th Row: Caledonian Airways (Scotland, pilot, 1961), Suidwes Lugdiens (South-west Africa, pilot, 1963), National Airways Corp (South Africa, pilot, 1963). (Photo—Art Maruyama)