

A RYAN RESEARCH TRIP

By EV CASSAGNERES

INTRODUCTION

Most Research Projects connected with avocational pursuits are only part-time involvements, and seldom does one have an opportunity to devote three weeks to the endeavor. Ev Cassagneres' RP 6604 was begun in 1966 but in May 1968 he found time to make a trip to the mecca of his interest, The Ryan Aeronautical Company in San Diego, California, to investigate photo files, make interviews, and take photographs. This is the account of his journey.

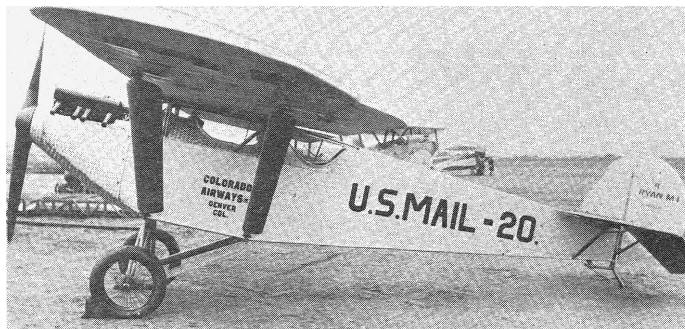
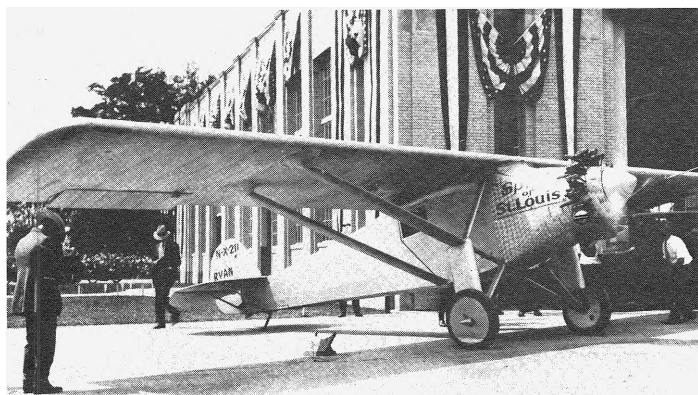
As the UAL Boeing 720 lifted off the runway at Bradley Field, Windsor Locks, Connecticut, in May 1968, destination San Diego, California, I thought back to the weeks of planning that went to ensure that this trip would be a successful aeronautical historical research venture. All my paperwork was ready to "go to work" out West to record many details of the colorful past of the Ryan Aeronautical Company.

Shortly after arrival in San Diego, the dedication of the bronze bust of Charles A. Lindbergh was held. This will be on permanent display in the terminal of Lindbergh Field International Airport, a gift to the people of San Diego by T. Claude Ryan on behalf of Ryan Aeronautical Co. The dedication culminated a long search for this particular bust, finally located in the New York studio of the noted sculptor, Paul Fjelds. It is a bronze cast of the original done in 1940, and will remind travellers that the SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS was constructed for the "Lone Eagle" in San Diego.

Much time was spent, during this research/vacation trip, in interviewing oldtime employees of Ryan, visiting the Ryan factory, and local sidetrips. Many of those interviewed were builders of the Lindbergh NYP, the "SPIRIT." One side-trip was to Orange County Airport and the auction of the Tallmantz aircraft collection which included an NYP replica. Underneath is actually a 1928 B-1 Brougham, c/n 159, NC7212. It was sold to Dave Jameson of Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

That same evening a trip was made to the other side of Los Angeles to visit Art Mankay, an engineer on the "SPIRIT," and Vance Breese, the first aviator to fly over Pike's Peak with passengers, in a Ryan Brougham. Also,

Lindbergh flew the SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS to Ford Airport, Dearborn, Mich. on 11 Aug. 1927 and took Henry Ford up for his first flight. The SPIRIT is shown here before the hangar decorated for the occasion, Lindy preparing to take off. (Photo — Ryan R94964)



Hispano-Suiza powered Ryan M-1 (Photo — Ryan Aeronautical Co. 6227)

hardly known for his connection with the early days of Ryan, but mostly for his famous over-water flight to Ireland in a Curtiss Robin, is Douglas Corrigan. Of course, the visit with him included an 'inspection' of the Robin, still in storage on his property. Doug's help was invaluable in leading to early Ryan history; he was a welder in the shop at the time and had learned to fly at nearby Dutch Flats.

A later, and very enjoyable, side trip was to Hemet to visit Paul Wilcox, former test pilot and flight instructor at the Ryan school, and now City Manager of Hemet. There also was Millard C. Boyd. Contact was made with him because of a long-standing interest in the Ryan ST, and his responsibility for its design and construction. From him much was learned of the birth of the ST. On to Twenty-Nine Palms, a desert resort community, and a visit with O.R. McNeel, one of the builders of the NYP.

Martin Jensen, the well-known Dole Race flyer, had made a much publicized flight in a Mahoney Ryan B-1 Brougham with a live lion known as Leo, the trademark of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films, as his passenger. They got lost in the mountains of Arizona and had to walk back from a crash landing. But that is another story. Martin had also flown a Ryan-Standard around the islands of Hawaii and his account was recorded.

One of the STMs was looked up, still in existence, having been brought back from Mexico where it had been since 1937. Owned by Jim Flatland of Redondo Beach, it is in process of restoration. Later, while back at Ryan, who should pop in but William "Doc" Sloan, who had flown one of three STMs to Tegucigalpa, Honduras in 1939 on a fascinating flight that took them over uncharted and mountainous terrain from San Diego to Central America. The story of this flight was recorded, as well as his experiences as instructor at the Ryan School.

One of the Guatemala STMs (Ryan sold a number of these to Central American countries before WWII) is being assembled from bits and pieces by Ed Morrow for the San Diego Aerospace Museum. Ed, and "Dapper Dan" Burnett, both old timers who helped build the NYP, are also responsible for much of the information that went into the reproduction of the NYP for the 40th Anniversary of Lindbergh's famous New York-Paris flight.

In La Mesa, an interview was recorded with the widow of the late John Fornasero, former test pilot on the ST and SCW models and who had made the first flight of the Boeing Stratocruiser. Another series of discussions were held with one of the most knowledgeable of the Ryan pioneers, a Dutchman, Jon van der Linde, now retired but still a consultant for the Ryan Company. Of all of the photographs in existence from the days of the M-1 and the Brougham, Jon is shown in a large percentage.

Another of the early pioneers of Ryan had passed away about ten years previously. His widow, Mrs. Earl Prudden, was also one of the Ryan employees in the early 1930s and had learned to fly in an ST. Her instructors were Paul



Antique Airplane Assn. owner/pilots gather at Dacy Field, Harvard, Illinois. At top (on wing) Mike Heuer (Maple Park, IL). Standing, l.-r., John Gosney, (Rockford, IL, owner NC17352); Bill Dodd (Prairie View, IL, owner N11D); Bob Heuer (Maple View, owner N42X); Dorr Carpenter (Lake Bluff, IL, owner NC18902); John

Wilcox and John Fornasero. Notes made with her, on her husband's aviation career, which dates from World War I could well be enough for a book in itself.

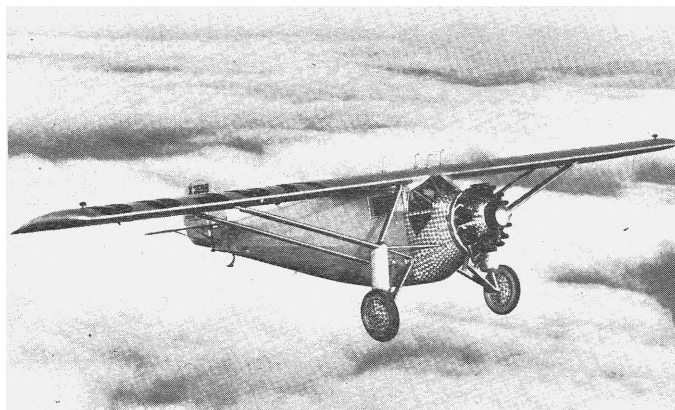
At the date of this writing a Ryan M-1 had just been purchased for the San Diego Aerospace Museum. It is c/n 23, No. 2537, and had been restored by a group of USAF airmen at Minot, North Dakota. It was on display in a prairieland museum in Minot, but will now be back "home," the oldest Ryan airplane in existence.

While talking shop with Mr. William Wagner, Vice President, Public Relations, a telephone call came to him from the son of Donald Hall, announcing the passing away of his father on May 2nd. Donald Hall was engineer-designer of the NYP. The people at Ryan in particular mourn the loss of Donald Hall who had contributed much to the making of Lindbergh's New York-Paris flight a success.

With this opportunity, at the Ryan plant, I took advantage of access to non-restricted historical material, so invaluable in filling the many gaps in registration and serial number lists, civil and military. With the availability of these files, plus personal interviews, the development of the M-1, NYP, B-1 series, CM-1, ST, SCW, STM and other early Ryan history was recorded.

The "topping off" of this research trip occurred more than halfway back to Konn-et-ekut. Arriving in Chicago on a DC-8 I was met by A.A.H.S. Member John R. Wells, escorted to a waiting Cessna 172, and was shortly on the way to Harvard, Illinois, accompanied by local photographer Ted Koston. Landing at Dacy Field, Harvard, was like a child's Christmas morning. There stood six beautiful Ryan STs, all owned by local Antique Airplane Association members, and one of the largest gatherings of STs since pre-WWII days.

It wasn't long before several were in the air performing



Lamb (Streamwood, IL, owner NC17368); Ev Cassagneres; Dario Toffanetti, Jr. (Winnetka, IL, owner NC17361). Kneeling, l.-r., Buck Hilbert (Dundee, IL); unknown; unknown. Lineup: NC18902, N11D, N42X, NC17361, NC17368, NC17352. (Photos - Ted J. Koston)

aerobatics. Later, after much hangar flying and donning of helmet and goggles (not much needed in these days of closed cabins but carefully tucked in a pocket even while on the DC-8) off we went into the wild blue for formation flying, aerial picture taking, and more aerobatics. This gathering was due to Chicago A.A.A. Chapter President Dario I. Toffanetti, Jr. Rounding up so many thorough-breds in one coral at once is not easy.

All good things must come to an end, and as the Boeing 727 lifted off the runway 1 had a couple of hours to reminisce over this "Ryan Vacation." In these complex late 1960s there *are* indeed people from all walks of life who can dream, be enthusiastic, and enjoy good fellowship in a common interest — the wonderful world of flight. The "T-tail" 727 gently touched down at Bradley Field and I was back home, the pieces together, the story of a great airplane company, still pioneering in the space age.



A Ryan built along the lines of the Brougham and intended for a trans-Atlantic flight to Rome. When the final payment was not made the airplane was resold to an Oklahoma oil company also planning a long distance record, later reported crashed in a tornado. Further details needed. (Photo — Ryan 93304)

At left are Ev Cassagneres and pioneer airman Claude T. Ryan.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As Editorial Consultant for the *JOURNAL*, Everett "EV" Cassagneres is a special historian for the Ryan Aeronautical Company, and though unofficial, has obtained recognition by that company. Ev is a commercial pilot (S.E.L.) flies for both business and pleasure as company pilot and precision aerobatic flyer. He was also at one time a champion bicycle rider, had won top honors in Connecticut, and set a national 200 mile record that still stands.

Ev bought a Ryan ST in 1961 that began his intrigue with the Ryan Company, and is still looking for existent Ryans, no matter where they may be. He is a member also of E.A.A., A.A.A., the Canadian AHS, and a founding member of Connecticut Aeronautical Historical Association, lives with wife Elaine and daughter and son at 1210 Avon Blvd., Cheshire, Connecticut.