

NEWS & COMMENT

The NEWS and COMMENT section is open to all Members of the Society for statements on any aspect of aviation history or for expressions regarding the affairs of the Society. The chief purpose is to bring forth the facts, including the airing of controversies. It serves to

present information in brief form which Members might not feel moved to contribute as complete articles. Opinions are welcomed but such opinions, and the accuracy of the information contained therein, are the responsibility solely of the contributor.

ERRATA

Ross Whistler reports two changes for the "Bibliographical Notes," which he submitted and was printed in the *JOURNAL*, Fall, 1971, page 219. The price of photographic prints from the National Archives is now \$2.00, vs. \$1.25. Also on the same page, the correct address code for the Aeronautical Systems Division at Wright-Patterson AFB should be ASD/DAD instead of ASAD.

LIBERATORS IN CANADA

Allan Blue, Bethesda, Maryland

For readers using J.A. Griffin's fine book *CANADIAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT* for research on Liberators in the RCAF, the following is offered:

Page 212: RCAF No. 594 (BZ739) was AAF s/n 42-40450.

Page 265: RCAF No. 3701 was AAF 41-24236; the missing AAF serials for RCAF No. 3709 and 3710 are 44-10254 (EW251) and 44-10255 (EW252); also, RCAF No. 3711 and 3712 were allocated RAF serials KG935 and KG932.

Page 266: RCAF No. 3723 thru 3732 were allocated RAF serials KH250/255, 249, 258, 257 and 256 respectively.

Page 383: RCAF No. 11135 was AAF 44-50040.

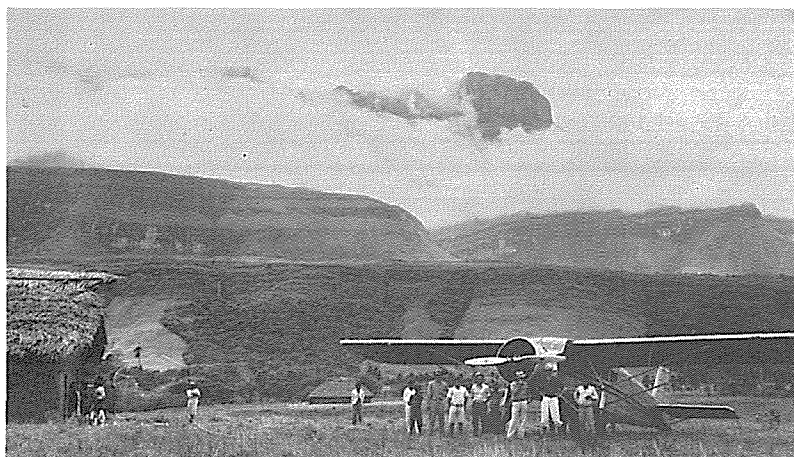
WHEELER FIELD INSIGNIA

James V. Edmundsen, Lt. Gen., USAF, Deputy Commander in Chief, US Strike Command, McDill AFB, Florida.

With reference to your item entitled "Insignia — Wheeler Field, T.H.; c. 1934" on pages 86 and 87 of Vol. 16, No. 2, Summer 1971, the insignia labeled "Luke Field, T.H. insignia???" is the insignia of the 5th Bomb Group which was stationed at Luke Field, Ford Island at that time flying B-10's. The inscription "Kiai O Kalewa" means "Guardians of the Upper Air" in Hawaiian. The squadrons of the 5th Group were the 23rd, the 31st and the 72nd. The 5th Bomb Wing, under the command of Colonel Bob Garner and using essentially the same insignia, is an active Strategic Air Command organization today, stationed at Minot AFB, ND and flying B-52's.

Angel's Flamingo at "Devil's Mountain," 1937.

(Henry S. Villard)



MID-AIR COLLISION

Edward L. Leiser, Chula Vista, California

Regarding the "Mid-Air Collision" subject in "News & Comment," Major C.C. Turner, in his book *THE OLD FLYING DAYS*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1927), said in effect that the first air collision was 8 September 1910. A Russian pilot, Warchalowski and his passenger, Archduke Leopold Salvator, collided with an airplane flown by his (?) brother. Both pilots' legs were broken, but no one was killed.

Henry S. Villard, Gstaad, Switzerland

In supplement to Mr. Leiser's letter, as the Milan air meet took place from September 25 to October 20, according to my information, the collision mentioned by Major Turner as having occurred on September 8 must have been the earlier.

Warchalowski may have been of Russian origin, but his biplane (on M. Farman lines) appears in Jane's *ALL THE WORLD'S AIRCRAFT* (for 1913, not under Russia, but under Austria-Hungary). The same publication lists A. Warchalowski as holder of Austro-Hungarian license No. 1 and Karl Warchalowski (presumably his brother) as holder of No. 8.

Archduke Leopold Salvator sounds like a member of the Hapsburg dynasty rather than a Russian.

It would be very interesting to obtain confirmation of the Turner report from the appropriate Austrian authorities, as well as a description of the circumstances under which the collision took place.

THE RYAN FLAMINGO OF JIMMY ANGEL

Henry S. Villard, Gstaad, Switzerland

One of the prized exhibits presently in the air museum at Maracay, capital of the State of Aragua and main operational base of Venezuela's Air Force, is the Ryan Flamingo monoplane NC-9487 that belonged to Jimmy Angel, American pilot, prospector, explorer, and adventurer. Jimmy's

Gov. of Aragua (Ven.) and U.S. Ambassador



airplane, which he named EL RIO CARONI after a tributary of the Orinoco, was stranded for 33 years on the table top of the awesome, frequently cloud-shrouded "Devil's Mountain," the Auyantepuy, whose precipitous sides rear out of the jungle wilderness to a height of 6,000 feet. Lifted off the summit in sections by helicopters of the Venezuelan Air Force in February 1970, restored to its original conditions and shown to thousands of visitors, EL RIO CARONI is destined to play a permanent role in Venezuela's aeronautical history.

Jimmy Angel was long intrigued by a prospector's tale that a "river of gold" would be found on the virtually inaccessible Auyantepuy, that a lost civilization might have existed on the impregnable heights. A veteran of many years flying in Venezuela, he had discovered the world's highest waterfall — 3212 feet — in a rocky cleft. Known to the natives as Churun Meru, it was renamed in his honor "Angel Falls." Jimmy also believed he had spotted the airplane of Paul Redfern, presumably crashed in Southeastern Venezuela on a flight from Brunswick, Georgia, to Rio de Janeiro in 1927. In May, 1937, Jimmy had participated in the search for a downed commercial air liner in the same general area; shortly afterwards he felt that the time had come to risk a first-hand look by landing on the flat-topped mountain.

Circling over the mesa-like surface on Saturday morning, 9 October 1937, he set the Flamingo down on what appeared to be solid ground. Unfortunately, it proved to be a swamp. He nosed over and suffered some damage; to take off again was impossible. Forced to abandon the all-metal monoplane, Angel and his passengers — his wife Marie, an experienced mountaineer named Gustavo Henny, and an aide Miguel Delgado, made an arduous descent of the Auyantepuy in 14 days. That dramatic episode led the Government of Venezuela in 1964 to declare EL RIO CARONI a national monument. In 1965 its site was reached by an expedition that included Jimmy's son Rolan, who attached a plaque to the engine cowling in memory of his father.

So the story might have ended had it not been for the Venezuelan Air Force's decision to rescue the plane from eventual disintegration by the elements as a feature of its Jubilee Anniversary program in 1970. With the aid of helicopters, "Operation Auyantepuy" began on February 6 of that year from a base at Canaima. Two days were required to dismantle the Flamingo; the wings had crystalized and a large portion was corroded. For the lift off, only estimates could be made of the weight of the several pieces — 250 to 300 kilos each, 450 kilos for the 450-hp Wasp engine; the cabin and fuselage presented special difficulties. But everything went according to plan — keeping in mind that the operation would one day have to be repeated in reverse, for the Air Force left behind a plaque with an inscription

promising to return the rehabilitated plane to the same spot as a tribute "to the pioneer who had conquered the Southern Orinoco." At the same time State of Bolivar agreed to erect a memorial to the aviator and to act as conservator of the relic.

Jimmy Angel was born in Missouri on August 1, 1899, and died in a crash at Panama on December 8, 1956. In compliance with his wish, his ashes were scattered from an airplane over Angel Falls by his widow and two children in 1960. It would probably have made Jimmy happy to know that the Ryan Flamingo which had landed him on Venezuela's legendary mountain would be recovered and preserved as a lasting reminder of his close association with that country.

GUNSHIPS

Major William A. Gericke, Jr., Ft. Walton Beach, Florida

In reference to the article in the JOURNAL, Fall 1971, "Southeast Asia Air Operations" by Albert C. Piccirillo: The 17th SOS flew AC-119G airplanes, and their call sign was "Shadow." The 18th SOS flies AC-119K models, and their call sign is "Stinger."

The AC-119G had only its two piston engines, Pratt-Whitney R-3350's, and carried four miniguns, .30 cal Gatling-type machine guns. The K model had the two R-3350's plus two jets of about 2,500 lbs thrust apiece. In addition to the four miniguns, the Stinger also packed two 20 mm Vulcan cannons.

The role of the fixed-wing gunship has been underpublicized. They represent an entirely new concept in ground attack and have been developed entirely during the Vietnam War. Considering that the AC-47's and AC-119's are obsolete transports, they have given the United States an enormous return on their relatively small investment.

Past tense was used in referring to the AC-119G Shadows because that squadron has become part of the Vietnamese Air Force. I had the honor to fly 144 missions in the Shadow, and the privilege of helping train the first VNAF Shadow crews.

FRANK LUKE STATUE

Harry S. Gann, Huntington Beach, California

A statue of Frank Luke is at the State Capitol Grounds in Phoenix, Arizona. While I was attending grammar school in Phoenix during the early 1930's a campaign was launched within the grammar schools to collect enough money to pay for the statue. There is a bronze plate attached to the rear of the statue mount listing all of the World War I casualties from Arizona.

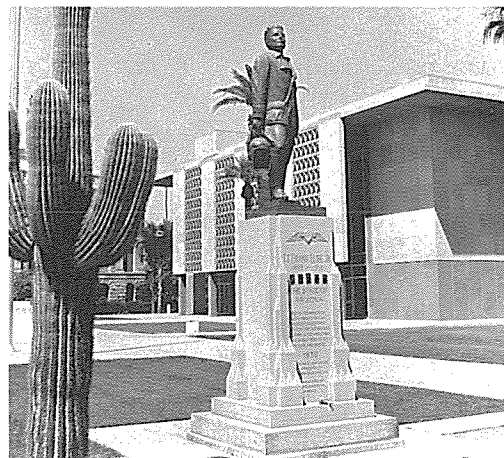
EL RIO CARONI at Maracay Museum.

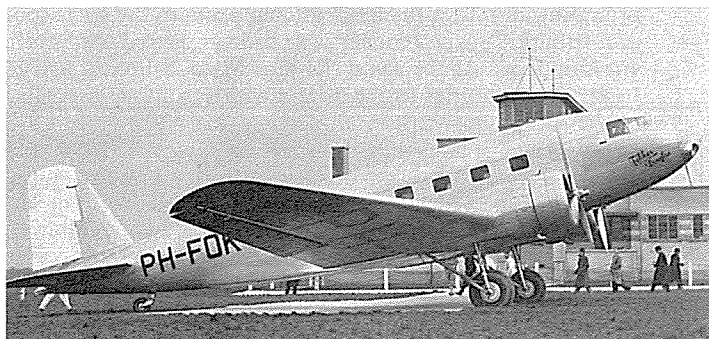


(U.S. Embassy, Venezuela)

Statue of Lt. Frank Luke.

(Harry S. Gann)





Douglas DC-2, PH-FOK

(Courtesy of John Underwood)

ANOTHER DC-2

John Underwood, Glendale, California

PH-FOK is yet another registration for the DC-2's. The knowledgeable people at Fokker works in Schiphol stated that PH-FOK ended in Italy and was reproduced in wood as the Fiat G18.

AGNES IDENTIFIED -- BEETLE PILOT

John Underwood, Glendale, California

The P-47 on Page 224 of *JOURNAL*, Fall 1971, is indeed AGNES, and the pilot was Lt. William Roach. There are several 35 mm negatives of this airplane in the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. The photos shown are negative numbers 484-2998-11A and 19A (of six negatives). Roach's name was preserved under the canopy track although the Germans applied their national markings and unit insignia.

Albert C. Piccirillo, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska

Another photograph of the P-47 (*JOURNAL*, Fall 1971, Page 224) is shown in *Dora Kurfurst end Rote 13* by Karl Ries, Jr. (Vol. 3). It was made after Luftwaffe markings had been applied but the U.S. unit code was still visible, with "F" and "U" bracketing the Luftwaffe cross, viz., F†U. It would appear that this airplane was flown by the 336th F.S., 4th F.G. (code VF).

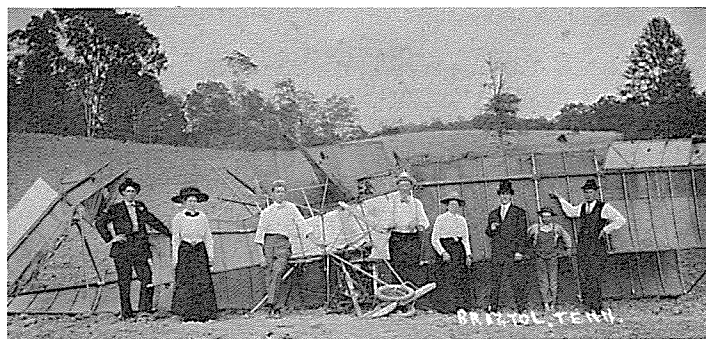
THERE IS NO FINAL WORD

Peter M. Bowers, Seattle, Washington

The enclosed picture of still another conversion of a Fokker came from Mrs. Edris Mathiessen, wife of our late Member, Jim Mathiessen. It is of a Curtiss JN-4C Canuck, converted to a monoplane by Montee, with a Curtiss C-6 engine of 160 hp and a Fokker C-4 or C-5 wing. (See Page 262, Editor)

Fokker/Curtiss/Montee

(Mrs. Edris Mathiessen)



Early airplane (?) in Tennessee.

(Courtesy of Jeffrey Ethell)

C.J. RUTHERFORD IN TENNESSEE

Jeffrey Ethell, Roanoke, Virginia

A friend cleaned out an attic in a house in Bristol, Tennessee and found the enclosed photograph. The caption on the reverse states, "C.J. Rutherford, May 18, 1911." Can anyone provide further information?

LAST SS-RB-1

(Last Stainless Steel Conestoga)

Robert C. Mikesh, Nat'l Air & Space Museum, Wash., D.C.

Many rare or unusual aircraft are brought to our attention with the hope they might be preserved. We would like very much to have one of each type — but this is physically impossible. A deaf ear is not turned, however, and attempts are often made to have aircraft placed in other museums or preserved by interested persons. One of these rare aircraft is the Budd RB-1 "Conestoga" which rests on a remote field in west Texas. Based upon the late Dr. Michael Watter's excellent article, in the Spring 1967 *JOURNAL*, on these stainless steel aircraft, this may well be the only remains of a RB-1 in this country. (It is interesting to note that this engineless frame will still rest on the nose gear.) Hopefully, in making its presence known to readers, it may be acquired by caring hands.

GERMAN L.V.G. IN UNITED STATES

Kenneth M. Sumney, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The enclosed photograph is of an L.V.G. C.V. taking off at Mayer Field, Bridgeville, Penn. It was then owned by a Mr. Casper P. Mayer and local residents referred to it as the "big German bomber." Other information from the USAF Museum states that there were two L.V.G.'s of this type in the United States in July 1919. Does any Member have further information on where the two were used and their ultimate disposition?

L.V.G. C.5, where in U.S.? (Courtesy of Kenneth M. Sumney)

