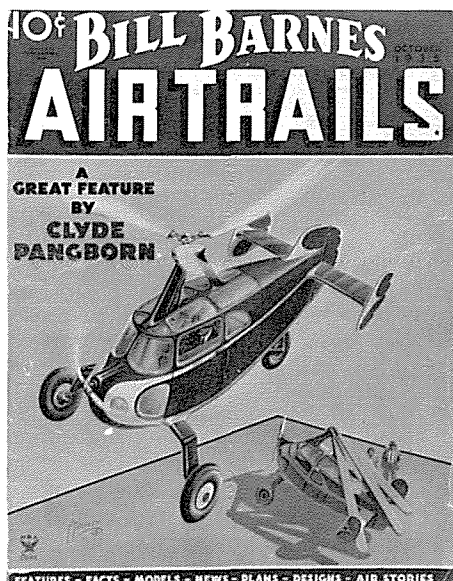




Oct 1935, Vol 5#1 1st Slick



Nov 1939, Vol 13#2 1st Giant



Mar 1975, Vol 75#3 Last Issue



1938 Annual, 1st Air Progress

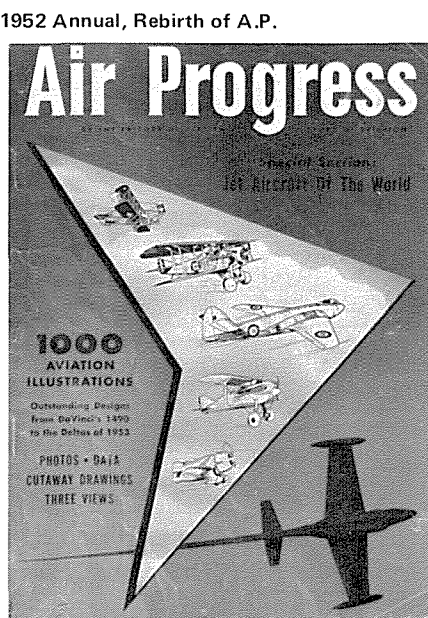
AIR PROGRESS GENEALOGY
 Annual: 1938, 1939-40, 1941, 1942 (4 issues)
 Quarterly: July 1942, October 1942, January 1943 (3 issues)
 Monthly: February 1943-October 1943 (9 issues)
 Ceased Publication 1944-1951
 Annual: 1952; 1953/54; 1954/55; 1955/56; 1956/57; 1957/58 (6 issues)
 Semi-Annual: 1958 spring & fall; 1959 spring & fall (4 issues)
 3 Issues/Yr: 1960 spring, fall, winter (3 issues)
 Quarterly: 1961/62 spring, summer, fall, winter; 1962/63 spring, summer, fall, winter (8 issues)
 Bi-monthly: 1963 Feb./March; April/May; June/July; Aug./Sept.; Oct./Nov. 1964 Jan.; Feb./March; April/May; June/July; Aug./Sept.; Oct./Nov. 1965 Jan.; Feb./March (13 issues)
 6 Issues/Yr: 1965 April; May/June; July; Aug./Sept.; Oct.; Nov./Dec. 1966 Jan.; Feb./March; April; May/June
 Monthly: 1966-July on to date



1941 Annual, 3rd Air Progress



1942 Annual 4th Air Progress



1952 Annual, Rebirth of A.P.



1953-54 Annual

No. 2 of a series featuring general aviation, flying pulps, and model airplane publications. The genealogy of America's great aviation "P.R."

FROM PULP TO SLICK

By Herm Schreiner

In March of 1975, 41 years of continuous publication which began in October, 1928 as Street & Smith's flying pulp, "Air Trails" (20¢) ended after seven title changes as Potomac Publications "slick" American Aircraft Modeler (\$1.25). If we accept the August, 1927 introduction of Fiction House's "Air Stories" (20¢) as the first of the "flying pulps," then "Air Trails" became the 5th such pulp to bow on the newsstand.

Billed as "Stories of Aviation," the initial covers were uniquely not "air war" scenes. The typical content of some 128 pages contained only one "air war" story and featured "pilot authors" such as Raoul Whitfield, Frederick Painton and Arthur J. Burks. The science fiction aspect was supplied by Ace Ainsworth who operated out of the futuristic city of "Centralia" and boasted a super helicopter, the "Falcon," with electric engines driven by batteries energized by earth currents.

Robert J. Hogan's colorful "Smoke Wade" air war episode appeared in 1931. C.B. Colby's illustrated feature, "Diary of a War Aviator," was to portend his later promotion to the post of editor (1939) of the "slick" version. But by far, the most dramatic change occurred when Frank Tinsley's superior draftsman-ship breathed realistic air action into the story heads (February 1929). On the May 1931 cover he created one of "Air Trails's" first air war scenes with a Fokker D-7 plunging into no-man's-land. Tinsley's covers then assumed the air war pulp image beside those of two other noted contemporaries, Frederick Blakeslee's

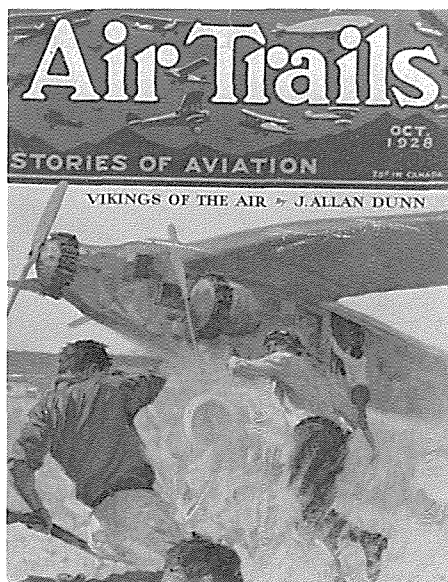
"Battle Aces" (Popular Publications) 20¢ and Rudolph Belarski's "Aces" (20¢ Fiction House).

Tinsley's cover art was uncluttered and his six covers for "Air Trails" did not exactly captivate the reader at that time. They belied the great talent which would later enliven the covers of George Bruce's "Contact" and "Squadron" (Adventure House) and ultimately "Bill Barnes" and the slick version of "Air Trails."

However, the great depression intervened and the October 1931 (Vol. 7, No. 1) issue carried the announcement on page 17 that "Air Trails" was ceasing publication but that the reader could follow "Air Adventures" in Street & Smith's "The Popular Complete Stories," another pulp.

In February, 1934, author George L. Eaton and artist Frank Tinsley with a silver streaking Seversky SEV-3 amphibian and a bold logo on the first cover, created one of the most popular of the "hero pulps," "Bill Barnes, Air Adventurer," priced at 10¢—"one thin dime." Despite the fact that the three major competitive publications, "Flying Aces," "Model Airplane News" and "Popular Aviation" had already gone "slick," Street & Smith bucked the trend and "Bill Barnes" fans increased the circulation.

Bill Barnes was introduced as a hero of an around-the-world flight with a cadre of loyal wingmen and mechanics: Shorty Has-further, Red Gleason, Beverly Bates, Cy Hawkins, Scotty Mac-Closkey and the 16-year-old "boy wonder," Sandy Sanders, who flew the "Eaglet," a Bill Barnes design launched from the interior



Oct 1928, Vol 1 #1 First Pulp



Oct 1931, Vol 7 #1 Last Pulp

Feb 1934, Vol 1 #1 1st B.B.



Mar 1934, Vol 1 #2 Pulp

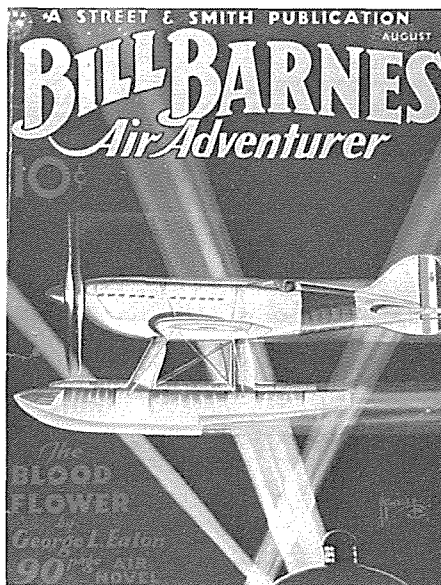


Apr 1934, Vol 1 #3 Snorter





May 1934, Vol 1#4 Pulp



Aug 1934, Vol 2#1 Pulp



Sept 1934, Vol 2#2 Pulp

of the B.B. Transport.

George L. Eaton's fertile imagination created global conflicts pitting Barnes as the all-American air hero type desperately involved to save the U.S.A. from a series of unscrupulous invaders. Dirigibles, advanced military and civil aircraft designs and all manner of air-to-air skirmishes were vividly described and illustrated. Bill Barnes was ever developing secret aircraft with such advanced features as retractable wings and pontoons, exotic diesel powerplants and super firepower. Frank Tinsley dramatically unveiled each new design such as the "Snorter," "Stormer" and "Lancer" with a detailed 3-view and specifications. The Vol. I, No. 3 (April '34) cover featured the "Snorter" and Vol. II, No. 4 (November '34) featured the "Scarlet Stormer" in which the hero overcomes insurmountable odds to win a round-the-world air race. Tinsley's dynamic action-oriented art combined with the air dueling and intrigue of Eaton's narrative captivated thousands of young men and influenced them to seek a career in civil or military aviation. The model plans by Gordon S. Light, U.S. Wakefield Contest winner, supplied the hobby attraction and the net result was a winner.

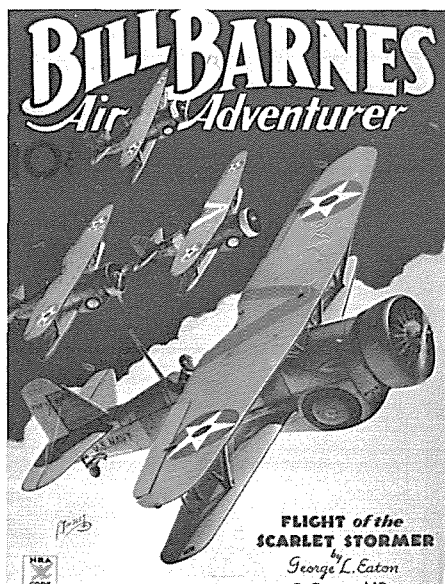
Based on Long Island, Bill Barnes' private air field was the origin for a series of worldwide assignments to outwit forces of evil. Plots were devoid of sex; Barnes used no tobacco or alcohol and Eaton found it unnecessary to resort to the invective. Violence was resorted to only to facilitate the forces of good overcoming

those of the bad. Eaton's aviation research was thorough and featured design details of advanced aircraft specifically described. Thus, the youthful reader's knowledge of engines, structure, armament and flying were enhanced with a prophetic glimpse into the future of aviation. The reader could identify with Barnes as his "hero type" much the same as other heroes of the flying pulps were idolized such as "G-8," John Masters the "Lone Eagle," "Smoke Wade," or "Phillip Strange."

In the September 1935 issue an announcement appeared that the October issue would reflect one and a half years of preparation in a new, bigger publication entitled "Bill Barnes Air Trails." Thus emerged a "slick" publication, still at 10¢, with the Bill Barnes logo gradually phased out until by January of 1938 it was "Air Trails" exclusively. However, the Bill Barnes novel did not disappear until after March 1939. In October of 1939 there was an announcement that the Bill Barnes novel would be carried in another Street & Smith pulp, "Doc Savage" (10¢) upon which a current movie is based. Likewise, the September 1938 issue marked the end of the Tinsley covers. However, the ubiquitous artist continued with illustrations for many of the special feature articles.

The "Air Trails" "slick" at its peak had an impressive staff with C.S. Colby as editor, William Winter as assistant, Clyde Pangborn, Arch Whitehouse, Gordon S. Light, Alexis Dawydoff, and Frank Tinsley. In what other publication could you enjoy flying

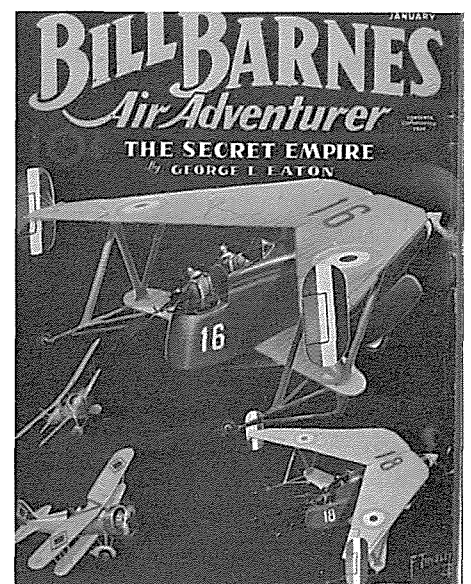
Oct 1934, Vol 2#3 Pulp

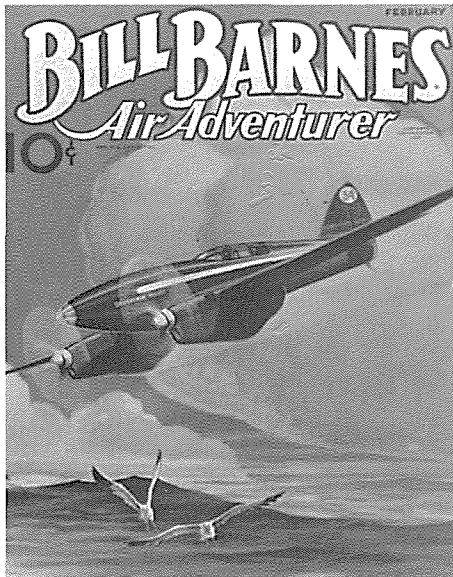


Nov 1934, Vol 2#4 Stormer



Jan 1935, Vol 2#6 Pulp

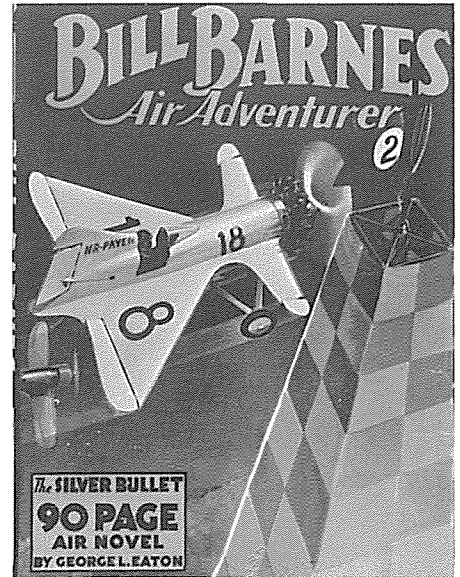




Feb 1935 Vol 3#1 Pulp



Mar 1935 Vol 3#2 Pulp



Apr 1935 Vol 3#3 Pulp

fiction, superb model plans for scale solid or flying, rubber, free flight gas or indoor plus technical articles and sharp photos? Perhaps only "Flying Aces" came close, but the layout and lithography of "Air Trails" and the modeling was superior.

In December of 1938 editor Colby published the "Air Trails Annual" and called it "Air Progress" at 25¢. The name stuck and each year thereafter until 1943, it was published developing an identity of its own as a photographic documentary of military and civil aircraft (see schedule of erratic publishing). After nine years of no publication, it was revived in 1952 and evolved through an irregular schedule to survive as a monthly in 1966, currently a Challenge publication at \$1.25.

In November of 1939, "Air Trails" (15¢) made a bold move to a new giant size 10"x13" which capitalized on the popularity of the size of Look and Life magazines plus facilitating the printing of larger model plans. During World War II it continued its technical coverage of civil and military aircraft to the limit the censorship imposed.

Beginning in October of 1947, "Air Trails" went through a series of title changes which could only confuse the reader and aid and abet competitive publications such as "Model Airplane News" and "Flying Age":

- 1947 October "Air Pictorial"
- 1954 April "Air Trails Hobbies for Young Men"
- 1955 November "Young Men"
- 1963-1966 Bi-monthly
- 1967 December "American Modeler"
- 1968 January "American Aircraft Modeler"
- 1975 March Last issue

"Air Trails" and its successor, "American Aircraft Modeler" may have ceased publication but it will always be a living legend in the minds of the thousands of dedicated fans.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges contributing collectors who have volunteered their knowledge and rare issues:

John Caler—President of John Caler Publications founded in 1959 and who built the largest aeronautica stock in the world.

Richard Twohy—President of Aviation Magazines & Plans founded in 1968 as a result of his search for an April 1933 issue of Popular Aviation.

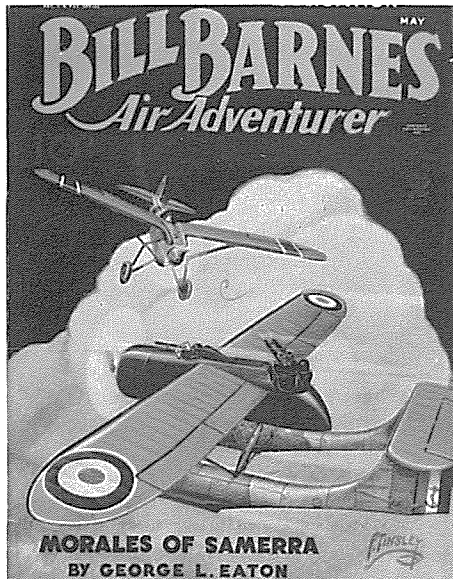
Sid Bradd—Foremost aviation publication collector and authority on Robert J. Hogan's G-8 and His Battle Aces.

Richard Mosgeller—Outstanding collector of flying pulps with one of the few complete collections of Bill Barnes.

George Hocutt—Authority on all pulps and who has one of the most complete and diverse collections of pulps and aviation publications.

Jack Deveny—Northwest Airlines captain and noted pulp collector.

May 1935, Vol 3#4 Pulp



Aug 1935, Vol 4#1 Pulp



Sept 1935, Vol 4#2 Last Pulp

