

NEWS and Comment from our MEMBERS

MORE EXCALIBUR

Captain F.L. Wallace, Jamaica, New York

The article on the Sikorsky "Excalibur" in the Winter '75 Journal was very interesting to me since I flew the VS-44A for American Export Airlines. I was the captain on the first nonstop Bathurst-San Juan flight noted in the article.

The Pan American Employee's Association looked into rebuilding NC-81, painting it with Pan American insignia of the time, and using it for pubrel purposes, as several airlines have done with the Ford Tri-motor. However, there was just too much corrosion after sitting so long on the beach.

The VS-44 was quite an airplane—it had the longest range of any aircraft of its time. It had a very small hull for the load it carried, so getting it on the step was sometimes a very interesting experience. The inboard propellers turned in a solid wall of water at the start of the takeoff, and took a real beating. Export took movies to show Mr. Sikorsky, hoping the situation could be corrected, but Mr. Sikorsky thought the 44's performance very satisfactory. "After all," he said, "you are taking off at a weight of 59,500 pounds with a hull I designed for 45,000 pounds. Remarkable!" And I guess it was.

There is a slight error in regard to the accident at Botwood. The crew—those I remember, were Captain Wilson, F/O Bob Lindsay, Navigator Don Goodman, Radio Operator Moon, Flight Engineer Mike Doyle, and Stewardess Adele Jenkins. Miss Jenkins was an expert swimmer and assisted several passengers to the rescue boats. The accident was caused by the flap switch being accidentally rotated during the takeoff, to landing, rather than takeoff flaps. It became nose heavy very rapidly and went back on the water in a nose-down attitude.

AMERICAN BIRDMEN EXCEPTIONS

George A. Fuller, Mount Royal, Quebec, Canada

Some errors appear in Enrique B. Santos' fine article, "American Birdmen in the Philippines, 1911-1912," in the Spring 1976 Journal:

Although never a participating member of the Aerial Experiment Association, Thomas Scott Baldwin was a respected friend of the original members, among them Frederick Walker "Casey" Baldwin (no relation). "Casey" Baldwin made the first flight on the Association's "Red Wing" on March 12, 1908, becoming the first Canadian to make a public flight on a powered heavier-than-air machine.

"Captain Tom" Baldwin did not make the first parachute jump in the U.S.A. He revived and greatly refined an art first practiced as early as 1819, when the French aeronaut Louis-Charles Guille is reported to have descended to earth in a balloon basket suspended from a parachute at Jersey City, New Jersey.

Although he worked closely with Glenn Curtiss and used Curtiss' facilities in building his first aeroplanes T.S. Baldwin was never a member of the Curtiss Exhibition Company.

Lee Hammond was not a participant in the Belmont Park, New York aviation meet in 1910. He learned to fly at the Baldwin school at Mineola, Long Island in the early summer of 1911 and flew for T.S. Baldwin at the Grant Park Aviation Meet at Chicago in August of that year.

Many thanks for your fine efforts in maintaining the Journal's high standards.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The article "Charles Willard: The Creative Years" appearing in the Spring Journal, Vol. 21, No. 1, has a miscaption on page 65 under photo of Curtiss T Flying Boat. It states the aircraft was the world's largest airplane and not exceeded in size until 1929 with advent of Donier DO-X. Actually, the Germans were building slightly larger seaplanes during the war years.

COMMENTS ON SPRING JOURNAL

K.M. Molson, Islington, Ontario, Canada

Your colorful Vol. 21, No. 1 arrived and I noted several items in need of comment.

In the Western Airlines aircraft table, page 11, the Curtiss HS-2L, C-652, was, I believe, given to the Los Angeles County Museum but in any event found its way there. The hull, unfortunately, was stored outside and was finally scrapped in the 1950s but the wings and tail surfaces together with smaller items were stored inside and survived. They were obtained about 1970 by the National Aeronautical Collection in Ottawa which had earlier salvaged the hull of an HS-2L in northern Ontario. The hull was too far gone to be restored so a new hull is being made which will be mated to C-652's wings and photo of the hull under construction is enclosed. A minor point, while noted as NC-652 on page 11, my records indicate it was C-652 which I believe correct. Very few aircraft of WWI vintage were given the privilege of carrying the prefix N. The HS-2L was, of course, exceedingly important in the early days of Canadian aviation, so this will be significant addition to the Ottawa Museum.

Mr. Enrique Santos in his excellent "American Birdmen in the Philippines, 1911-1912" mentions that T.S. Baldwin was with the Aerial Experiment Association. Actually, it was F.W. (Casey) Baldwin who was with the A.E.A.

Regarding Beachey's tragic death in the Charles Willard story, he was not flying a modified German Taube, but rather a Beachey/Eaton monoplane.

The engine of the A.E.A. Silver Dart, built by Curtiss, and mentioned in Tom Foxworth's "The Racing Curtiss Triplanes," had concentric valves in 1908, I have long been curious about the relationship between Kirkham and Curtiss and wonder if Kirkham could have had more to do with the early Curtiss engines than is usually indicated.

THE RACING CURTISS TRIPLANES

SFC Dan Hagerdorn, Niagara Falls, New York

Perhaps Tom Foxworth would like to know the Bolivian Curtiss 18-T-2 arrived by ship at Arica, Chile, Dec. 12, 1919. It did not arrive in La Paz, however, until April 15, 1920, due to incredible difficulties encountered en route. Lt. Col. Hudson (Bolivian rank) crashed the aircraft May 18, 1920 (not 1921) on a flight from Oruro to La Paz. To say the crash ended the Air Force is not entirely accurate, as additional aircraft were received from France in 1921, 1922, and 1923, and development continued sporadically up till the Chaco War of the early 1930s when the Bolivian Air Force came of age.

DOLE RACE ADDENDUM

R. Plehinger, Buffalo, New York

I enjoyed Lesley Forden's two articles of the Dole Race in the 1975 Fall and Winter Journals. The Woolaroc was later fitted with fuel tanks for some 600 gallons. Goebel planned to use the plane for long-distance flight ventures but then gave it up in favor of a specially built Cessna, and still later a Lockheed Explorer. Later the Woolaroc was supposedly used by Wiley Post for a number of high-altitude flights before being placed in the Woolaroc Museum sometime in 1929.

The Oklahoma was renamed Princess, and was fitted out for an attempt at the nonrefueled landplane endurance record. This was sometime in 1928 at Wichita, Kansas. Whether the actual attempt was made I do not know.

DH-4s' COLLISION CLEARED UP

Richard F. Belke, Waukegan, Illinois

Regarding Martin Cole's People Who Fly pictorial page in the Summer Journal, the collision between the two DH-4s is a Signal Corps photo No. 39331 with notation, "Romorantin, Loire Et Cher, France, Nov. 17, 1918."

PACIFIC PRIVATEERS POSTSCRIPT

Joseph Woolf, Weaver, Alabama

The following updates my Pacific Privateers as appeared in the Summer Journal.

William J. Martin, former bow gunner of VFP-121 Privateer #59492 and T.G. Allen, #492's pilot, have confirmed that the armament modification made to Pflum's aircraft, "Lotta Tayle," consisted of 2x50 cal. machine-gun packs and not 20mm cannon. In addition, Mr. Allen is sure that this modification was applied only to Pflum's aircraft. Concerning the August 11 attack on his aircraft Mr. Allen has also contributed this important information: "... My plane hit three enemy fighters—two splashed astern and the third took off trailing smoke. I should also add that the part tail gunner Reef Kelly played should be emphasized more. He was later awarded the Navy Cross for the action. Though wounded on the first attack and pulled out of his turret and treated, Kelly climbed back four times to fire at enemy fighters on later attacks. Even though he fainted several times, he responded on call and was able to fire his turret, take photographs and report enemy tactics accurately. In fact, when we got back to base, we discovered that Kelly had fired more rounds than any other turret." On October 7, 1945, Kelly received the Navy Cross in ceremonies on Tinian. He was VPB-121's highest decorated enlisted man.

Anyone having additional information about VPB-121 or comments on Pacific Privateers is invited to contact me at 1223 Oakdale Circle, Weaver, Alabama 36277.

LOCKHEED 14 COMMENTS

John M. Davis, Wichita, Kansas

I refer to the useful article by Messrs. Emmert and Larkins in the Summer 1976 Journal on the Lockheed 14 and immediate derivatives.

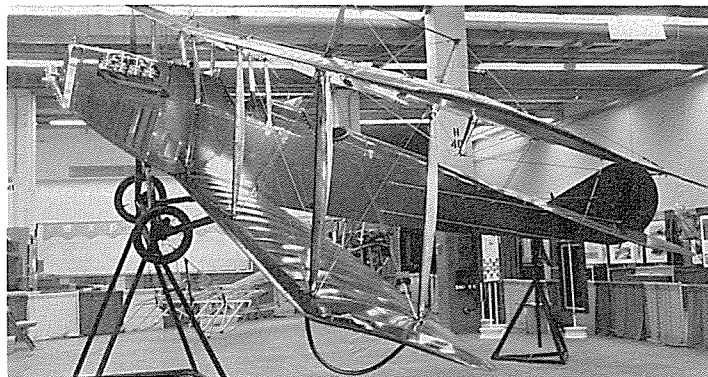
A number of the export aircraft went to agents, rather than directly to customers; this being the case in aircraft that went to Australia (1), and Canada (16), and the 20 aircraft to Tachikawa Aircraft Co., went to Tachikawa Aircraft Co., and Okura & Co. Finally all five French aircraft were delivered to the Ministère de l'Air.

The production list is of value but needs considerable refining and checking, as there is definite problems with the aircraft operated by TACA in Honduras, which probably only engine numbers could answer. A number of additions are to be found in three recent editions of Air-Britain Digest, No. 6 of 1974, and Nos. 2 and 3 of 1975. 1451 crashed at OB-QAG-338, OB-QAO was a Beech 18; 1488 crashed 10.16.52 at Perpignan. Sperry's second aircraft, serial 2626 is a problem. It was originally registered as a Hudson II serial 2405, which would make it AM544 of the Royal Air Force; but was later changed to a Model 18 serial 2626 (the last production Lodestar being 2625). Was AM544 not delivered to the RAF?

G-AGDO is serial number 3936. 6442 is a PV-1, formerly USN 49626. 6608 is another problem as it appears to have been either a Hudson or a 18-56; when first registered in the USA it was given as a Hudson 14, currently as a 18-56. It would be interesting to know how it was registered in Canada. Finally, 7463 was 42-55741, N33367, N367, and is currently LV-ITE in Argentina.

Thomas Emmert, Peabody, Maine

C/N 6608 appeared on the Canadian register as L-18. Reg CF-CPL was registered Canadian Packers Ltd., not Canadian Pacific Airlines as indicated in production list.



THE LINDBERGH JENNY RESTORED. From Frank Strnad, author of "The Lindbergh Jenny Story" featured in the Winter Journal, 1975, we learn that the original Lindbergh Jenny is restored, and plans are for it to have a permanent home at the proposed Nassau County Air & Space Museum, to be located on the grounds of the former Mitchel Field, Hempstead, New York. (Photo by Frank Strnad)

AN F-80 FOR WHAT? . . . STILL UNANSWERED

Bruce Fraites, Taylor, Michigan

Chuck Hansen's photo of the P-80A, 485044 (PN 044) that appeared in the News & Comments of the Fall Journal struck a chord. This aircraft was flown in the 1946 Weatherhead speed dash by Lieut. W.J. McAuley and in the 1946 Thompson (Jet Division) by Major R.O. Chilstrom. A trace of the racing paint scheme is slightly visible on the rear fuselage, just aft the National insignia. I have no information on the gun arrangement.

CORRECTIONS: DAUNTLESSES OVER MIDWAY

Barrett Tillman, Athena, Oregon

Two factual errors in the account of Bombing Squadron Six's role in the morning strike of June 4 have been pointed out by retired Lt. Cdr. Richard H. Best who led the unit at Midway.

On page 160, paragraph four, it is stated that Scouting Six pilots had difficulty with their oxygen equipment. Actually it was VB-6, which dropped below Scouting Six about 5,000 feet prior to the dispersal for attack on the enemy carriers.

Page 163, second paragraph implies that Lt.(jg) Bill Roberts was with Yorktown's Bombing Three. In fact, he was with VB-6.

HELLCAT BUST UP; INSIDE FRONT COVER

Peter Mersky, Reston, Virginia

Reference is made to the inside front cover of the Spring Journal. The September 1951 issue of Naval Aviation News, page 12, uses the same F6F photo, saying that the date, carrier and pilot involved are unrecorded. The pilot "got a cut when he anticipated a waveoff, so he dove for the deck hitting at an angle and engaging an arresting wire so violently it broke the plane in half. The front end churned through three barriers before finally stopping."

Captain Roy Stafford, El Toro MCAS, California

The pilot was Foster Blair. Cmdr. Blair was stationed at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, in 1959. During this time his son and I went to school together and this picture was one in a sequence as I recall hanging in his home. I don't remember the exact circumstances that led to the crash; however, I do believe it was combat related. I also recall that Foster Blair III (son) stated his father was a "double Ace." He acquired the distinction the hard way. He shot down five Japanese aircraft, but was also shot or forced down five times!

ERRATA FALL JOURNAL 1976

Re: USN & USMC Units and Identification Codes. Each caption page 186 should read for opposite photo.

Re: Convair 880. Caption bottom page 206, Ship 44, identified as "880H" should read "880M". That portion of C/N 57M that appears bottom page 212 is carried inadvertently to second column top of page 213, beginning with N5865.

The last line of first paragraph in Barrett Tillman's "About the Author," Fall Journal, page 184, should be deleted as it is an editor's mistake.