NEWS & COMMENT
FROM OUR MEMBERS

U.S. AIRMAIL—60 YEARS YOUNG—Corrections

Robert Casari, Chillicothe, OH

Regarding Donald B. Holmes' interesting article on the first airmail flights in the Fall 1978 JOURNAL, "U.S. Airmail—60 Years Young," I have several corrections that you might pass on.

All of the Jennies used in the Army's airmail flights were JN-4Hs, not the JN-6H model as indicated throughout the article. Two serial numbers are given in error: on page 196, 38161 should be 38262 and, on page 201, No. 28178 is incorrect; no such serial was used on any Army machine as it was assigned to a canceled contract. The six Jennies were numbers 37944, 38262, 38274, 38275, 38276 and 38278; the last five were transferred to the Post Office in August 1918, indicating 37944 was probably the victim of a crash prior to the Post Office assuming control.

In the photo caption on page 202, the reference to the Curtiss R-4 rudder being installed on the JN-6H is wrong. The early JN-6H had a rudder similar in shape to that of the R-4L, but not of the same size. And no JN-4Hs ever had this rudder design.

(For more information on the airmail Jennies, see *Encyclopedia of U.S. Military Aircraft, The World War I Production Program,* Vol. 3, pp. 129-133.)

No mention was made in the article of the Curtiss R-4Ls used on the northern leg of the Washington to New York run.

VULTEE PHOTO CREDIT—Correction

E.R. Johnston, Glendale, CA

The photo of the Vultee on page 235, Fall 1978 issue of the JOURNAL, was credited incorrectly. It is not Richard S. Allen's photo.

I was fortunate to photograph this plane at Grand Central Air Terminal, Glendale, California, in the summer of 1935. I still have the negative in my possession.

THE RIDER R-4 SCHOENFELDT FIRECRACKER

John W. Underwood, Glendale, CA

In regard to the article in the current issue on the "Firecracker," there are several mistakes (lifted from the Air Progress article of April 1966 which certainly should have been credited) which I am sure Tony LeVier will want to call to your attention. However, I would like to point out a few things that I think are worth mentioning.

The Lockheed Alcor C6, shown on page 186, was not the donor of the R-4's engine. The airplane involved was the Duo-Four which had twin Buccaneers driving a single prop, and it wasn't exactly a loan. It was a surreptitious borrowing without Allen Lockheed's knowledge or consent.

I thought the pictures were very interesting, but some effort should have been made to point out the characters therein. Pictures 7 and 8 on page 187 show Lee Shoenhair running up with Rod Nimmo, behind the cigar, holding down the tail. S. was supposed to make the test flight, but the authorities had lifted his license. Rod did much, much more than put on the tricky paint job. In fact, he practically built the whole airplane.

Picture 1 on page 188 shows Gus Gotch at St. Louis in 1937. Poor Gus had a premonition that he would not return alive from Oakland and said so to several friends. But he needed the money.

THE RIDER R-4

Howard McLeod, Mira Loma, CA

Author Mike Kusenda is to be commended on his excellent article. It is hoped that he and others will continue to pursue this fascinating phase of aero history. However, there are a couple of items that warrant comment in order to further relate the R-4 to its contemporaries.

The Greve Trophy tabulation[1] on p. 184 records J. Jacobson's speed as 212.325 mph, It should have been 214.426 mph. Just for the record, at the 1937 St. Louis International Air Races[2] (p. 185), Art Chester in the "Jeep" with a 363 c.i. Menasco engine won the 50-mile free-for-all race on opening day at 253.5 mph. On p. 194, the supercharger ratio for Turner's #29 is given as 3 to 2—this is much too low for an engine-driven supercharger; this figure is most likely the engine/propeller ratio.

The statement that the "Firecracker" was the fastest racer in its class is in error (pp. 189, 193). The true champ was the Caudron C-460 and its companion the C-561. A brief rundown of the C-460 would be in order. The Caudron C-460[3] was designed and built primarily for the "Coupe Deutsch de la Meurthe" air race. This race[4] was flown in two 1000-kilometer (621.4-mile) sections. Each section was 10 laps around a 100-km triangular course. In addition, the race rules specified that the engine piston displacement must not exceed eight liters (488 c.i.).

In 1935 the C-460 (with 8-liter engine) set the following world records: for 100 km,[5] 476.316 km/hr (295.969 mph); for 500 km,[6] 451.2 km/hr (280.362 mph); for 1000 km,[7] 450.371 km/hr (279.847 mph).

During the 1936 Air Races, it was obvious that Detroyat was holding back the C-460. This was exemplified by his second lap of the Thompson Trophy race when he was clocked at 301 mph,[8] thus indicating the true potential of this superb machine.

REFERENCES

1. Results of the 1936 N.A.R., *Western Flying,* Oct. 1936.
2. Shrader, Welman A., *Fifty Years of Flight.* p.63.
3. The French Caudron C-460 Racer, *Aero Digest,* Nov. 1936.
4. The Deutsch de la Meurthe Race, *Popular Aviation,* Dec. 1936.
5. The Aircraft Year Book for 1937, p. 415,
6. Robinson, J.H., Caudron C-460, *Aero Modriller,* Aug. 1964.
7. A.Y.B. 1937. p. 415.
8. Robinson, J.H., *A.M.,* Aug. 1964.

MORE ON THE BOEING P-26s AT THE MARCH FIELD

Charles R. Hyer, Scottsdale, Arizona

In reply to the letter of B.C. Reed which appeared in "News and Comments," AAHS Journal, Winter 1978 Issue, I offer the following:

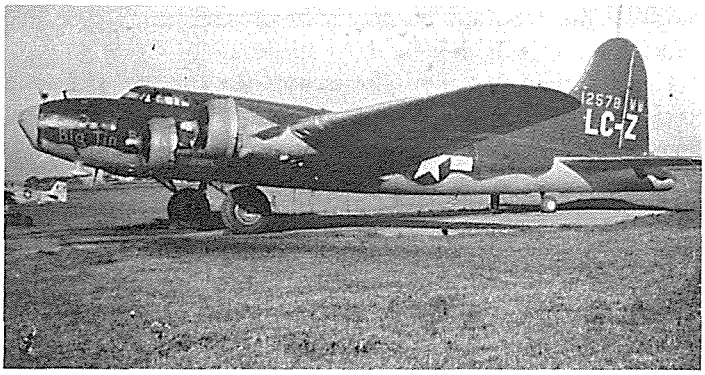
The 17th Pursuit Group, that most colorful and famous champion of the Boeing P-26A, officially became the 17th Attack Group on 1 March 1935. At that time, they were still equipped with Boeings, as the svelte (for that time) A-17As

probably didn't begin arriving until early 1936. On that same date, 1 March 1935, the 34th, 73rd, and 95th Pursuit Squadrons became Attack Squadrons. Whether this change was only a "paper" function or the 17th actually began flying tactics designed to coincide with their new role as an attack group, I don't know. The fact that pursuit aircraft were used in the unusual role of attack airplanes, however, does not surprise me. Those were the lean years, remember?

The foregoing information was gleaned from "Combat-Squadrons of the Air Force World War II," USAF Historical Division, Maxwell Air Force Base. This exhaustively researched volume, produced by a team of War Department historians, is virtually a bible of Air Force squadron assignments.

In defense of aero-historians in general, I would say that engaging in historical research does not give an author or artist "license" to commit "gross blunders" but it certainly gives one a wonderful opportunity to do so.

I would be interested in hearing of Mr. Reed's experiences in the 34th while they were using A-17s. I always did like that airplane.



B-17E AND 77th FIGHTER SQUADRON

Royal D. Frey, Curator Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson A.F.B., Ohio

I thought this photo would be of interest to all of the AAHS B-17 buffs—a Fortress assigned to a fighter outfit. Named the BIG TIN BIRD and assigned to the 77th Fighter Squadron, this B-17E, *War Weary,* was apparently used by the 20th Fighter Group at Kingscliffe in England for such administrative chores as hauling men going on leave to the Continent and carrying back spirits to replenish the liquor larder. I first saw the plane when I returned to the 20th from POW camp about 17 May 1945 and, since I remained for only a couple of weeks, I never had an opportunity to have a hop in her.

GOODYEAR F2Gs

Roger F. Besecker, Allentown, PA

Everyone who has ever traded negatives or slides with me knows I'm a dedicated collector of serial numbers. My recent purchase of FAA files on Martin B-26s and Goodyear F2Gs confirmed some aircraft serials but sure left doubt on others. The B-26 information will be published later; however, for those air race fans here is what I learned on the sometimes-elusive F2Gs. N5577N was F2G's BuNo 88463 and was manufactured 2/46. N5590N XF2G-1 BuNo 14693 c/n 1702. N91092 XF2G-1 BuNo 14694 probable c/n 1703. But to confuse the issue Ron Puckett filed the paperwork as "F2G-2." N5588N F2G-1 BuNo 88457—this aircraft presumably crashed September 1947 but somehow was miraculously resurrected a year later and flew with the same BuNo. Does any reader know for sure which aircraft actually flew in 1948? N5588N was sold by Cook Cleland to Ben McKillen for one race only, and was then repurchased. The ultimate fate of three is in doubt. N5577N is now owned by Walter Soplata. At one time a Mr. A.W. Mosely attempted to sell N91092 to Mr. Sam Goldman of Salisbury, MD. In the mid-50s I saw a Corsair covered with tarps but could not get any photos or information.

One final comment. I'm primarily a fan of military aircraft 1935 to 1945 and prefer articles on these subjects; however, I strongly urge those in other fields of interest to write about what they like and help the editor give us a balanced journal.

ROYAL NETHERLANDS NAVY DB-7s

Gerard J. Casius, Wichita, Kansas

Naturally, I was pleased to see Thomas E. Lowe's reaction to my Japanese Boston contribution (Winter 1978 Journal). However, it showed me that one must be careful with sources and apparent confirmation of facts in historical research. I have often wondered if sometimes one is not led to accept a "different" source as proof for an unconfirmed fact, while in reality all evidence draws on only one doubtful statement. I am here referring to Mr. Lowe's mentioning of Gallagher's book, *Meatballs and Dead Birds,* which he quotes as confirmation that the Boston which is the subject of my letter was indeed c/n 3836. Although I gave Gallagher as a source reference, I probably was not explicit enough. Because the truth is that the same book is the only reason I had to mention c/n 3836. There was the other Boston flown from Tjilatjap to Tasik Malaja airfield before the March 9, 1942, capitulation of NEI forces, but this one may have been destroyed there by the demolition squad. The C.O. of Tasik Malaja field has stated that orders to this end had been given, but he is not sure whether these were fully carried out.

On a recent trip to the National Archives I found some additional info on the origin of the Netherlands Navy DB-7Bs. While these 32 airplanes were originally on order for the British, they had already been released for delivery to the Chinese. The British had shipped certain English-built equipment to the USA for installation in these airplanes, but in the emergency following Pearl Harbor the U.S. Army Air Corps Representative at Douglas had given orders to divert the British Mark II bombsights and the Universal Bomb Carriers for installation in airplanes requisitioned to equip the so-called "54 group" plan for the USAAC. The British also had already given orders to supply the necessary spare engines for these 32 Chinese airplanes to the China Defense Supplies Inc. at Treasure Island in San Francisco. The airplanes themselves were at Ogden, Utah, when orders were given to the Technical Executive Branch at Wright Field to get them ready for supply to the Dutch, on December 27, 1941. Because it had been agreed that the planes would be shipped with all necessary operational equipment "in order that they be capable of combat upon assembly in the NEI," orders were also given to round up all this material and return it to Douglas. If

this proved not possible, "commercial or Air Corps substitutes" had to be provided from "other sources."

Upon completion of the outfitting at Douglas, six of the DB-7Bs were to be delivered in crates to the San Pedro Shipping Depot and 26 were to be flown to Floyd Bennett Field by AC Ferry Command for shipping from the East Coast. On January 6, the six airplanes had already left San Pedro and it is very probable that these were the six which reached Tjilatjap on board the ship KOTA BAROE, including c/n 3836. Twenty-two more DB-7s were shipped to the NEI between January 30 and February 25, 1942 (AL-347, 358, 361 through 369, 887, 890 through 895, 897, 898, 899 and 907), but were landed in Australia to become RAAF A28-1 through -22. Four were never shipped and were canceled.

Reviewing the above course of events one may say that the USA made considerable efforts to get airplanes to the Dutch, something which is frequently denied in Dutch writings. But of course, it was too late. In the same manner considerable quantities of P-40s, B-25s and other material was made available for the Dutch East Indies immediately after Pearl Harbor. It is interesting to see how all during 1940 and 1941 the Dutch tried to get quality airplanes but were denied these on grounds that U.S. (and British) needs were too pressing. But when the USA really got in trouble when Japan attacked, all these arguments seemed to have lost their value and shipments were made in great haste.

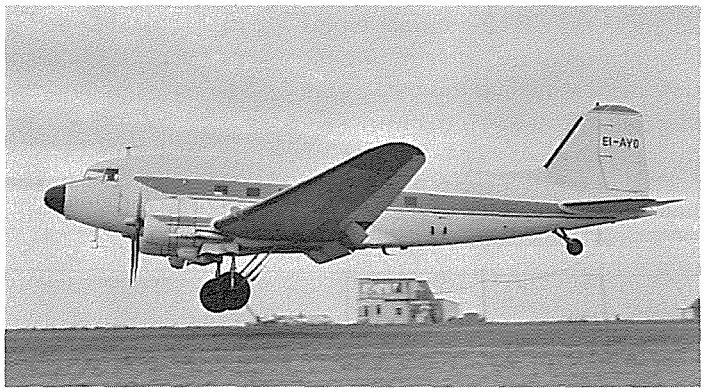
As related above, the order for 32 DB-7Bs was an emergency measure made in an attempt to stop the Japanese from overrunning the Malay Barrier. The Dutch Navy already had an order running for 48 DB-7Cs, which was a torpedo-dropping version covered by Douglas Specification DS-527-C, placed on October 16, 1941. These airplanes were to have a redesigned bomb bay, which could accommodate a torpedo stuck partly outside the airplane in a fashion similar to the Douglas TBD. The quite extensive redesign job took a lot of time and deliveries were delayed from April-May 1942 to August 1942. By that time, of course, the Dutch East Indies had been occupied by Japan and the original intention to equip Dutch Navy attack squadrons in the Indies with these airplanes became redundant. For awhile the Dutch Navy toyed with the idea of equipping the Dutch No. 320 Sqn, operating Hudsons in England, with these torpedo-DB-7Cs, but the concept did not fit the British Strategy. Lacking the manpower to use the DB-7Cs in any other theater, the Dutch agreed to "place them at the disposal of the U.S. provided they will be replaced by new aircraft as soon as the Netherlands Naval Air Force will require them." It was also agreed that the Dutch would continue to pay for this contract in order to simplify the bookkeeping aspect of the transaction. The Munitions Assignment Board then assigned the 48 airplanes as A-20Cs to the Russians, but Dutch Navy inspectors continued to accept the airplanes as they came off the Douglas assembly line in July-August 1942.

It is likely that not all 48 DB-7Cs, for which Douglas c/n 6265 through 6312 were reserved, were delivered with the torpedo installation, because an alternate installation for four 500-pound bombs had been specified in the original Dutch contract. However, there is an elusive DB-7C registered "DO-104" listed in the Index of AF Serial Numbers (AF-WP-O-APR 61 250), published by Procurement Division MCPPSR, which came from Neth. Indies contract 41124. This airplane was reportedly used by the US Navy for torpedo-installation tests at Rhode Island.

Comments on the above would be very welcome, because not all is completely clear, at least to me. A problem with researching old files in the Archives is that, while letters are available, the accompanying enclosures are often missing and wrong conclusions may easily be drawn.

SOURCES:

Bostons van de Marine, *Avia* magazine, Netherlands, 1975, by Nico Geldhof.
Nat. Archives file 452.1, Sale of Airplanes Abroad.
Correspondence with Capt. Paul Valk, NEIAF Ret., 1977.
Data collected by Neth. Navy Historical Branch, via J. Horsthuis and N. Geldhof.



Douglas DC-3 c/n 1911 and presently registered EI-AYO as photographed landing at Wroughton Airfield, England. (Science Museum Photo)

VINTAGE DC-3 ARRIVES IN ENGLAND

Peter Berry, Ayr, Scotland

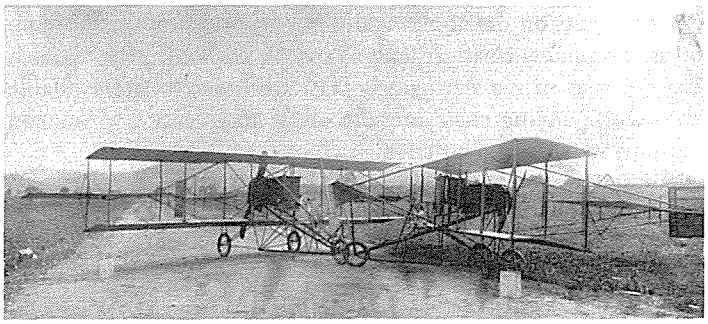
Shown in the accompanying photograph is the latest acquisition by the National Aeronautical Collection of the Science Museum, London, SW7 2DD.

This DC-3 is c/n 1911 and was delivered to United Air Lines in December 1936 as NC16071, who kept the aircraft until 1954. In 1974, AAHS member Peter Berry, an air traffic controller from Prestwick, was visiting Shannon, Ireland, in a club Cherokee aircraft and "spied" the DC-3 on a distant part of the airport. Photographs proved the aircraft to be c/n 1911, and with the help of Capt. J.C. Kelly-Rogers negotiations began to acquire the aircraft. Mr. John Bagley, Curator of the Aircraft Collection at the Science Museum, was successful in purchasing the aircraft, which will be restored in the markings of United Air Lines as a valuable addition to the preserved transport aircraft in Great Britain.

To date, no photographs have been found of NC16071 in its original or "blue" United markings, and AAHS members are urged to send any information or photographs to Mr. Bagley at the Science Museum, to help the accurate restoration of this fine aircraft.

INFORMATION REQUESTED

Sometime ago we received this photo of two Curtiss aeroplanes apparently parked at the edge of a field. Close examination shows that the one facing the camera has an extra seat just to the left of the pilot's seat. The other appears to have just the pilot's seat.



The information that came along with this photo is that the location was "east of Williamsport, Pa., on the northside of East Third St. between Northway Road and Limestone Church." The date was 1911. The information further states "field fenced in with 6' canvas and the entrance fee was $1.00. . . . The plane flew twice as high as the house tops." The letter goes on to tell of going out to watch the planes fly from the "balcony of a red brick house that is now Silvagne's near Big N Plaza."

Can any of the readers in Pennsylvania fill in some of the missing data, i.e., who were the pilots? Were they part of a touring airshow?

Obviously one Curtiss was used to hop passenger and the other used for "stunt" flying.

Any info would be welcomed by the editorial committee.

SUPPORTING EQUIPMENT IN AVIATION HISTORY

Ralph Canady, Hanover Park, Illinois

What is missing in all publications on aviation history, both serious and popular, is good articles about the equipment and apparel used by pilots and aircrews, and how they relate to the times. We've had articles on all sorts of aircraft, engines and whatever, but not on the use of goggles, helmets, protective jackets, flying suits, types of microphone headsets, oxygen masks, Mae Wests, boots, gloves and kneeboards; the construction, type numbers, date, etc. Information about preferred type of equipment and its relationship to the aircraft flown, the dates relative to introduction of items are all of historical interest.

I also believe it should be worldwide in scope, since the U.S. for one reason or the other has borrowed flying apparel and equipment in both wars from the British and French. As an example, in a photo of WWII ace Gabreski, he was wearing a late WWII cloth jacket (USA), boots (British), flying helmet (British), goggles (USA) and earphones (British). The photo was taken in 1944. It might be glib to simply indicate the borrowed uses in all American issues but it would be very thin historically not to explain their development through the years, be they prewar or postwar.

Many members are collectors, and I'm sure they would like to know the reasons for the use of and mixing equipment, as well as the history of the aircraft flown.

It would probably be a worthy project for someone with access to the Air Force Museum or the Smithsonian. What do you think?

It sounds like a good idea for a series of small articles or a major research project. Mr. Canaday is right in that much more emphasis has been placed on aircraft and personalities than on the equipment used. Anyone want to tackle the subject? —Editor

AAHS JOURNAL—SPRING 1979 COVER

CORRECTION—The Spring 1979 cover photo of the XF24-1 Seadart was submitted by Jack Isabel of General Dynamics/Convair via Bob Lawson. *—Editor*

ORAL HISTORY vs WRITTEN RECORDS

William F. Althoff, Whitehouse Station, N.J.

Donald E. Woodward's comments (Vol. 23, No. 4) relative to pure oral history are well taken. The question of accuracy is a sensitive one since, in my judgement, few historical subjects are as poorly researched as is the history of airships. By way of explanation, my two LOS ANGELES articles were based largely on three to four years of detailed recording work involving dozens of individuals. Nonetheless, errors of fact were made. It became clear that the written record must be consulted as well, and research in the National Archives now has become indispensable to my writing. Unfortunately the JOURNAL had already gone to press before I could submit a revised draft of Part One, "The Decommissioned USS LOS ANGELES." I am convinced that oral history is a powerful research tool when carefully buttressed with documents—as Part Two will demonstrate.

Incidentally, it should have been evident that some of the references (including documents) were omitted by the editor in my last piece.

Mr. Woodward's letters show that he has the material and talent to add to the literature on airships. I hope he will eventually share these with others interested in the subject.

WILKINS' LOCKHEED 10 WITH "USSR" MARKINGS

R. Allen, Albany, NY

Regarding the Wilkins' Lockheed 10 with "USSR" markings on pg. 76 of the Spring 1979 issue of the AAHS JOURNAL, the following is submitted for your information.

The ship was Electra 10E c/n 1065, originally powered with two P&W Wasp SH-1 engines, and delivered to O.J. Whitney of Long Island August 26, 1936. The ship was registered NC 16059, but given "NR" when used by Henry T. "Dick" Merrill and Jack Lambie for their so-called "Coronation Flight" from New York to England and return, May 8-14, 1937.

Harold S. Vanderbilt is also listed as an owner of this aircraft.

After the Russian flyer Sigismund Levanevsky came up missing on a transpolar flight attempt in 1937, the Soviet Government hired Sir Hubert Wilkins to hunt Northern Canada for traces of Levanevsky and his crew.

Wilkins first bought (for the Russians) the famous commercial PBY "Guba." As winter came on he needed something for long-range Arctic search sweeps. The Transatlantic Lockheed 10 was available, and the Russians bought if for Wilkins' use.

Actual buyer was the Amtorg Trading Corporation of New York City, the official Soviet purchasing agency in the U.S. They received export license #4376 for the Electra on October 15, 1937. It was given the Russian registration (anglicised) of N-214, and marked "USSR" for identification.

Based in Canada, Wilkins and his crews flew the ship on wheels and skis all through the winter of 1937-38, but no trace of Levanevsky's plane was ever found. When the Soviet Government called off the search the Lockheed was shipped to Russia.