

BLACK CATS—AND MORE

Mauno Salo, Lake Elsinore, CA

I'd like to comment on John Barclay's vignette on the Black Cats of Hollywood AAHSJ, Vol. 28, Nos. 3 and 4, p. 244, where he states that the Denny Sopwith Snipes were powered by Ale Rhone rotary engines. The powerplant was a Bentley B.R. 2 rotary of 200 horsepower that had a bore/stroke of 140 x 180mm, larger and heavier than the Le Rhones. The Snipe can be said to have been an enlarged version of the Camel. Denny presented a Snipe to the L. A. Museum of Science, Exposition Park, where it lay in the basement among the old autos until rescued by Jack Canary. Along with the help of others (Dusty Carter built new horizontal and vertical tail structures) the Snipe was restored to a superb condition and ended up in the RCAF Museum, Ottawa, Canada.

Snipes saw little action during WWI as only three squadrons had been formed, one of them No. 4 Australian. By the end of 1918, 497 Snipes had been built. However, Major W.G. Barker (Can.) took a Snipe to France in October 1918 and while attached to 201 Squadron, fought the famous "60-to-1" air battle and won the Victoria Cross.

In the early years of our Society, we had some interesting "Spad N' Gun Club" meetings at a Boy Scout facility, Redondo Beach, not far from Canary's duplex. One could find Jack spending his weekends and evenings tinkering with a variety of WWI aero engines which filled his garage. The Bentley was among them. It was a fairly large engine compared to the Le Rhones. Sometimes Jack would bring a Le Rhone to these get-togethers and fire it up.

Reg Denny's model shop was at the corner of Hollywood Blvd. and Taft Ave. This writer lived four years on the next two streets (Wilton and Gramercy Places) east and would often look at the window displays of the big Cleveland models and those powered by the Brown engines.

It is my understanding that Radioplane target planes were built primarily for Army and Navy antiaircraft artillery targets. They featured a parachute recovery system when the engine cut off. I seem to recollect that while at Fort MacArthur on the waterfront at San Pedro, that there was an Army launch equipped with a launching rail a la catapult. These target drones were quite large with a span of 12 feet powered by the Righter 20-hp engine and were designated "OC" (aerial target—non-man carrying). Some 14,000 were built during WWII. *Is there someone out there who could do a feature on the drones?*

Art Goebel got his start back in 1921 when he hired on as a helper at the Douglas plant (a former planing mill) back at the Goodyear Rubber Co. factory off Central and Florence

in south L.A. Douglas had its first contract to build three DT-1 torpedo bombers. Lloyd Royer was given the job of constructing the wooden fuselages aft of the rear cockpit. Goebel became his helper. Prior to that, Goebel had bummed around western South America. Apparently Royer's tales of building Jennies and barnstorming in the midwest sparked Goebel's interest so that he asked Royer to help him buy an airplane. Royer drove Goebel down to North Island, San Diego, where the Navy was disposing of surplus aircraft. Royer selected a near-new disassembled Jenny for some \$400. Another \$50 was given sailors to erect, rig, test fly and deliver the Jenny to Clover Field, Santa Monica. And that is where Goebel's flying career began. Royer later constructed a set of steel struts to beef up the flimsy upper wing-tips. They were splayed out from the outboard existing struts. These can be seen in three of the photos appearing with Barclay's vignette on page 245.

JOURNAL/NEWSLETTER ERRORS

J.M. Kirkpatrick, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

I would like to mention two mistakes in recent *Journal* publications.

1. Vol. 28, No. 2, Summer 1983, page 155, "Flying Boat Facts" by M.E. Rodina, Jr. His statement that "takeoff was being attempted with full flaps down. . . . All 11 aboard the plane were killed." Takeoff was started with normal takeoff flaps. Somehow the electric flap switch was actuated to full down. The captain, copilot and many others survived. I lost my best friend and Pensacola roommate in this unnecessary crash.

As a former American Export Airlines pilot I quote our then chief pilot, Capt. C.F. Blair. "Somehow no one will ever know exactly why the electrically actuated wing flaps had been driven all the way down, and were fully extended. *Excalibur's* salvation demanded that the pilot throttle back the engines. . . . The throttles went untouched."

In my opinion lack of flying boat experience led him to violate the first boat pilot commandment, "when it starts to porpoise-chop the throttles."

2. Newsletter, 4th Quarter 1983. Cover picture, "Boeing 80A, in United Airlines livery, was the last biplane transport." Boeing 80A ATC No. 206 8/20/29. Curtiss-Wright Condor ATC No. 547 7/16/34. The "Condor" T-32-C was the last of the biplane airliners.

Should any member writing about American Export or the flying boat era contact me I will be happy to give them any firsthand recollections from an old dinosaur flying boat captain of that time.

J.M. Kirkpatrick, Capt. (Ret.), Pan Am; 1733 S.E. 10th St., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316. Member No. 4446.

PINEAPPLE AIRLINES ERROR

Nicholas Williams

One of my sources of information has pointed out a somewhat ridiculous error con-

tained in my article on "Pineapple Airlines" (JAAHS Fall 1983), the result of my poor memory of a telephone interview.

In the event of an inflight emergency aboard a VR-21 C-1A carrying nuclear components, rather than have *each* crewman parachute while carrying a component, as I had stated on page 166, squadron policy dictated that in the event these components had to be jettisoned over the sea, a crewman was expected to parachute with them to ensure that they sank.

Also, while I personally have never seen nor heard of any of VR-21's *Traders* carrying the squadron's insignia on the nose, other than their VIP configured TF-1 as stated in the photo caption on page 171, I have been assured by an ex-squadron member that other *Traders* did indeed fly with this emblem at one time or another.

ARMY AIR CORPS, ETC.

Deane R. Brandon, Medford, OR

I think that it is about time that historians and history buffs quit perpetuating the incorrect information found all too often in articles and books on WWII.

One of the most confusing myths is that the "Army Air Forces" replaced the "Army Air Corps" early in the war. Not true. The Army Air Forces was created at the same time as the Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces. Please note that the "forces" is correct. Therefore, it is incorrect to refer to the Army Air Forces as the Army Air Force in the singular.

The creation of the Army Air Forces did not in any way affect the Air Corps. The Army Air Forces consisted mostly of Air Corps personnel but there were others in the Air Force whose branch of service was not Air Corps, i.e., Medical Corps, Ordnance Department, etc.

How many times have you seen references in books to such units as the "8th Army Air Force" or the "12th Army Air Force?" They did not exist. An "Air Force" such as the numbered air forces were commands just as squadrons, groups, wings and air divisions were commands. The 8th Army did not have an Air Force, but there was an 8th Air Force, thus "8th Army Air Force" could not have existed.

And then we have references to "Major, U.S. Army Air Forces." This too is incorrect. The major may have been in the Army Air Forces, but that was not his branch of service. He was really a "Major, Air Corps."

Seeing these untruths continuously being repeated in otherwise excellent books on WWII aviation is a source of annoyance to any history buff interested in accuracy.

CAPTION CREDIT CORRECTION

Mauno Solo, Lake Elsinore, CA

Page 144, picture 4, is credited to me. I'll get skinned alive for taking the credit of the photographer, *Howard Levy*. It should have been credited *H. Levy via Solo*. The fault lies with Gerry Casius.

KILLER KANE CAPTIONS

R. Frank Schirmer, Tucson, AZ

Reference Spring 1983 issue of AAHS *Journal*, see pp. 33 and 34; captions need to be switched.

The caption for photo on p. 33 is shown on p. 34. BGen. Ent is the officer on far right on p. 33 photo.

The officer shown seated in the photo on p. 34 is MGen. Brereton; the correct caption for this photo is shown on page 33.

RACE FROM "POINT ZERO"

Richard J. Beiter, Snyder, NY

A few notes from a longtime Curtiss buff regarding the photos accompanying Mr. Johnson's fascinating article, "The Race from Point Zero" in the Summer 1983 *Journal*.

The 1916 photo of the Curtiss R biplane, the *New York Times* was taken at the Curtiss "Aerodrome" located north of the Buffalo city line. This flying field, at the corner of Niagara Falls Blvd. and Eggert Road, existed from c. 1916 to 1926. The corner today is a very congested part of a busy shopping area. Not even the smallest sign marks the site of one of the most important flying fields operated by Curtiss. Numerous photos of *Jennies*, R-4s and all the other landplane products of the Curtiss Buffalo factories were taken there. Unfortunately when such photos are published they almost never are identified as having been taken at this field. Curtiss ran a very active flying school there as well. The school's JNs with large individual numerals on their tails also appear in the background of this photo.

The *New York Times* aircraft was tested at the Curtiss Aerodrome beginning on October 14, 1916, by Victor Carlstrom. Carlstrom flew her from Chicago to Governors Island, New York (with stops at Erie and Hammondsport) on November 2 and 3, 1916.

The photo of the F boat was taken along the Niagara River. Uncropped prints of the same photo show the skyline of Buffalo harbor in the background. National Archives data indicates the photo was taken in October 1916. The major Curtiss factory in Buffalo at that time, on Churchill Street, was in fact located only a few blocks from the river. The Austin Street plant—an old smelting plant taken over expressly for the purpose of making flying boats—was literally right on the Niagara. This site is still standing incidentally, as is the giant North Elmwood plant where the 1918 factory photo showing HS flying boats under production was taken.

LOCKHEED ORION NR12222

Dustin W. Carter, Lake Elsinore, CA

I think by now everyone knows that the Lockheed *Orion* in the Swiss museum is NR12222! I do have a tidbit of information that may be the answer to why no one thought enough of the *Orion* to restore it to flying condition and I do not think it was because

they were all spending their money on warbirds.

One Saturday afternoon I had the opportunity to spend several hours with Paul Mantz some time after he acquired the *Orion* for the last time. I asked why the American Airways markings were applied to the Lockheed and his response was something to the effect that he was trying to get American interested in the restoration of NR12222 since they had originally flown the bird on their routes (as an ALTAIR). He indicated that the airplane was in very bad condition and it would cost more than he could put into it. Mantz had also approached Shell Oil Co. on a similar arrangement and they were not interested. It turned out that the *Orion* had a badly rotted main spar and that the entire wing needed to be rebuilt to make the airplane flyable. A similar condition had existed in the horizontal tail surfaces. The owner, previous to Mantz, had spent a couple of years making a new tail surface and the airplane was dismantled and sat in a hangar at Del Mar, CA.

I have a photo of the airplane at Santa Ana, Calif., taken shortly after the *Orion* was ferried from Del Mar to Santa Ana. The date on the photo is 7/15/56, probably the last time NR12222 was flown.

I think the airplane was simply too expensive to rebuild to flying status. The big surge in Warbird restoration comes from those who have recently gained enough wealth to pursue that hobby. I would guess that a good number of them are not as old as the airplanes they are flying! Not many would remember a Lockheed *Orion* other than the U.S.N. P-3!

SUPPORT AND CRIT

Tony Morris, Ashbourne House,
Marsh Gibbon, Bicester, England

Please find enclosed a little something for your emergency fund request. Although on the other side of the "pond" and a fairly recent member I feel very strongly about AAHS and the work that it is doing and rate the *Journal* very highly among aviation literature.

On a different vein could you pass the following onto the *Journal* editor regarding my letter on Charles Blair's flying boats in the summer 1983 edition. Apart from two small proofreader's errors—Barrier Reef Airways, not Barrier Relf; and in the last sentence Charles Blair *bought* it in 1974 not *brought* it—you forgot my name: Marsh Gibbon is my home village!

Mr. Morris was most generous (a donation of \$200.00), and a good proofer—no one caught these two obvious errors. He's also a good sport, considering I confused his name with that of his home village. My apologies.

—Editor

P-39 TUMBLING/EXCALIBUR CRASH

Christopher Clarkson, Old Lyme, CT

In response to the News & Comment column in the 1983 Summer issue of the *Jour-*

nal, there are two items which raise possible questions:

1. The alleged "tumbling" of the P-39. I did most of the test-and-development flying of the British P-39s as well as the pilots' notes and did not experience anything untoward during some fairly extensive flying. One of your correspondents suggested that the "tumbling" was really a very fast flick roll. But can anyone elucidate on the exact nature of this maneuver? And what caused it?

2. Mr. Rodina, in his letter about the American Export Lines accident at Botwood, says that all 11 on board were killed. After the war I met in New York a Mr. Louis Galantiere (who I believe was at one time connected with either Radio-Free Europe or Voice of America) who told me he was a survivor of a flying boat accident at Botwood, and that it was an American Export aircraft. Were there two such accidents? He was unable to remember exactly what happened or how he (and he said two others) got out, as he was quite badly hurt.

Both small points, but quite interesting historically.

MEDAL OF HONOR AVIATORS

Update to AAHS *Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1

On 10 March 1966, Maj. Bernard F. Fisher with Capt. Francisco Vazquez as his wingman, sortied in their A-1Es from Pleiku, about 150 miles south of the besieged Special Forces Camp in the A Shau valley. They flew north and joined four other A-1 *Skyraiders* above the valley. There was a thick cloud cover hiding the valley floor and the forces attacking the base had a strong antiaircraft contingent. Maj. Fisher found a hole in the clouds and led the other five aircraft down to where the action was. Once down, they found an 800-foot ceiling in a valley about six miles long and one mile wide. Early in the action, Capt. Hubert King had his canopy riddled by enemy fire greatly impairing his vision from the cockpit so he had to pull out and return to Pleiku. Maj. Dafford W. Myers, callsign ("Surf 41"), had his aircraft badly hit during his second strafing pass. His engine faltered, then cut out entirely. He called Fisher (Hobo 51) advising him what had happened then tried to make an emergency landing on the airstrip just outside of the besieged camp. Myers' auxiliary fuel tank would not jettison so it was knocked off when he belied in alongside the airstrip. It burst into flame and a ball of fire traveled back to the aircraft setting it afire. Myers delayed a bit before getting out of the now-burning aircraft and hiding in some nearby bushes. The delay was his unstrapping and disconnecting himself from his seat, but it caused Fisher to think that Myers was injured. Fisher and Vazquez were joined by Capt. John Lucas and Dennis Hague flying protective cover for Myers. Radioing for a rescue chopper, Fisher was told that it was 20 minutes away. Fisher decided not to wait that long. He lowered the landing gear of his aircraft and went down. Landing too fast, he had to go back up and around again for another attempt. The second time,



Major Fisher's A-1E at the Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. (Photo by Bob Williams)

he made it dodging the debris on the runway and ignoring those V-C that were shooting at him. He turned and taxied back to where he believed Myers was hiding and prepared to jump out and assist Myers into the aircraft. Uninjured, Myers jumped up and made a dash for the aircraft and was climbing up the right wing before Fisher could finish unshackling himself from his seat. Seeing Myers crawling up the wing to the cockpit, Fisher reached out and pulled Myers into the cockpit head first by the seat of his pants. While Myers was rearranging himself into a more normal position, Fisher poured on the gas and got his aircraft back into the air. During all this, the other three A-1s were flying strafing passes discouraging any potentially adventurous V-C from trying to do any outstanding heroics. When Fisher and Myers had returned to Pleiku, A-1E, 52-132649, a/c No. 2, was inspected and it was found to have taken only 19 hits.

This aircraft was later lost on a mission. Fortunately, someone with a sense of history was in a position to have the airframe recovered and brought back to operational condition using parts from other crashed Skyraiders. '649 was later returned to the States and has found a more permanent home in the Air Force Museum where it is today in the same markings it had when Fisher landed at A Shau to rescue Myers.

Both Cols. Bernard Fisher and Dafford Myers are now retired from the Air Force, still among the living.

Reference: *Air Force Heroes in Viet Nam* by Maj. D.R. Schneider, G.P.O. 1979.

UNITED FLYING SCHOOLS OF AMERICA

A. R. Brashear, Sunnyvale, CA

I was delighted to see a picture of some Waco UPF-7s on page 75 of the Spring 1983 issue, as I had the good fortune of flying these particular airplanes during the summer of 1940.

After I had completed a civilian pilot

training course with Scott Flying Service at the Long Beach, Calif., airport, I was selected to attend an advanced CPT course. This course was conducted by United Flying Schools of America at the Gardena Valley Airport, Gardena, CA. The chief pilot and instructor was a wonderful gentleman by the

name of Lowell P. Lamoreaux. Other instructors that I remember were E.G. (Slim) Kidwell, Hank Coffen and H.S. Mazet.

The course started in mid-July, and at the time the school only had two Waco INFs available. If I remember correctly the school had ordered some UPF-7s, but they had not arrived in time for the start of the course. Mr. Lamoreaux had been an instructor at the Santa Maria Army Air Corps Primary Flying School and was also a captain in the Air Corps Reserve. In some manner, he managed to borrow two Ryan PT-16s from Hemet, Calif. Therefore, the course started with two Waco INFs and two PT-16s but no UPF-7s.

The PT-16s were great little airplanes to fly but suffered from continual oil leaks and tail wheel assembly problems. Gardena Valley Airport was a rectangular dirt field, and during the summer months, the adobe soil would dry out leaving large deep cracks on the surface. The Ryan's tail wheel was quite small and it would be wrenched around quite a bit as it dropped into these irregular cracks during takeoffs and landings. The tail cones were finally removed from the rudders to facilitate inspection and maintenance (see photos).

Midway through our course, two Waco UPF-7s arrived and the PT-16s were returned to the Air Corps. The two UPF-7s, NC29343



(All photos by Ray Brashear, Sept. 1940)





Brashear

and NC20975, were brand new and, to this low time pilot, the ultimate airplane. We continued to fly INFs and UPF-7s on a random basis with no student assigned to a particular model.

The course was completed during the first week in October 1940. I joined the Air Corps shortly thereafter and was immediately sent to Randolph Field. It was, therefore, somewhat of a surprise when I learned from Robert Diehl's photo that United Flying Schools had moved to Vail Field shortly after I left.

CHEWING GUM FIELD AIR MUSEUM

Shelby York, Placentia, CA

The Lockheed *Hudson* bomber taxied 200 feet to the empty fairway, turned into the wind and took off. The golf course was left in the prop wash, as the veteran twin-engined bomber climbed into the blue. A 1941 dime novel? A WWII mystery story? Not at all. This event takes place frequently at the Guineas Creek Golf Course adjacent to the Chewing Gum Field Air Museum, located in Tallebudgera, Australia, near Brisbane. This little-known air museum is owned and operated by Cliff Douglas and his partner Malcolm Long.

It is located not far from the Gold Coast, the tourist mecca of Southern Queensland. The local tourist guidebooks don't even list the place as a sight to see.

Their 40-odd display aircraft, of which almost half are airworthy, are crowded into a onetime Royal Australian Air Force hangar. Cliff is the full-time curator and restorer of these fine planes that make up the only "known" air museum in Queensland.

We stumbled onto it almost accidentally and were very impressed with the operation. American variant aircraft included the aforementioned *Hudson* bomber, a Stinson *Senti-*

nel, Douglas *Dakota* (C-47) and a Beech 18 (C-45). All of these aircraft are flyable. In addition, there is a Lockheed P2V *Neptune*, recently acquired from the Australian Navy and a Curtiss P40N, that are on static display. The *Kittyhawk* had been pulled from the jungles of New Guinea at Tadjji, where it had served with the 5th Air Force.

Australia still has a good supply of British-built aircraft and this museum has a good share. They are a Bristol *Boxkite*, *Canberra*, *Sea Venom*, *Vampire*, Short *Scion*, Chrislea *Ace* and a *Hornet* Moth (taper wing). Cliff proudly displays two Australian-built airplanes that he flies regularly. They are a *Boomerang* fighter and a *Wirraway* trainer. His present restoration project is a rare EGC-8. Only seven of them were built by Waco. Since the founding in 1978, the financial upkeep of the museum has been from private donation and paid admissions. The local schools also tender support, as a busload of elementary-aged children arrived while we were there and soon they were darting between the parked planes.

In addition to the aircraft, there are excellent displays of engines, turrets, drones, uniforms and aerial armament, dating from WWI to the present. The souvenir shop at the entrance is run by a very attractive lady pilot named Irene, and their stock of imported RAF and RAAF artifacts seems endless and is of excellent quality.

For a brochure of the museum and a list of available memorabilia you may write to: Air Museum, Chewing Gum Field, Tallebudgera, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia 4221.

To any Queensland tourist, who is an air enthusiast, we highly recommend a day's visit to this unique air museum. With any luck, mate, you may pick a day when they are flying one of these beautifully restored antiques.

1. P-40N *Kittyhawk* retrieved from the jungles at Tadjji readily shows the ravages of time.
2. One of the rare *Hudson* bombers still flying in the world.
3. Museum owner Cliff Douglas stands before his present restoration project, a Waco EGC-8.
4. An Australian-built *Wirraway* in prime flying condition.
5. Recent acquisition P2V *Neptune* from the Royal Australian Navy.
6. Some of the many American and British aircraft engines on display.
7. A Douglas-built *Dakota* or Cargo Door C-47 from the Solomons' campaign.

(Photos by Jo York)

