

The first Columbia XJL-1 (BuNo 31399) warms up prior to its first flight on October 25, 1946. Large size of the plane is evident when compared to the men in the cockpit. The window at the trailing edge of the wing indicates the location of the six-place passenger/cargo compartment. (Harold G. Martin photo)

COLUMBIA

XJL

by
Matthew Rodina



Herbert Scudder's dream died 5000 feet over Chesapeake Bay on a cold, cloudy December day in 1955. Wednesday, the seventh of December, had started out routinely enough for Scudder, a senior flight test engineer for Martin Aircraft Co. Along with his fellow engineer Jim Hentschel, Martin test pilot Maurice Bernhard, and copilot USN Lt. Cdr. Victor Utgoff, Scudder had already made the day's first test flight in the prototype P6M *Seamaster* jet flying boat. The four-engine plane was the first of 30 ordered by the U.S. Navy in an attempt to keep flying boats alive in an era of B-47s and B-52s.

Up to the beginning of the second flight, the *Seamaster* had accumulated some 50 hours in flight with only the usual minor problems. The day's second flight would depart from Martin's seaplane base at Strawberry Point, Md., and proceed to a flight test area near the Patuxent Naval Test Center some 75 miles to the south. The P6M, together with a chase plane, proceeded to the test area over Chesapeake Bay and there continued the testing begun earlier that morning. After the initial series of tests, the chase plane radioed that it was returning to base to refuel. Although it was not known at that time, the departing chase pilot would be the last person to see the *Seamaster* and crew, since just a short time later four men would be dead and the seaplane totally destroyed.

What happened next can only be guessed at based on telemetry information and investigation of the wreckage. Apparently the P6M had been cruising in level flight six miles off Point Lookout (some 17 miles south of Patuxent) when the aircraft's elevator suddenly went to the full leading edge up position (corresponding to full aircraft nose down). Despite the pilots' application of full opposite controls, the elevators did not respond and the sudden impact of the extreme negative G force caused the airplane to enter the beginnings of an outside loop and resulted in the almost immediate separation of the four jet engines from the wings. The engines continued on a relatively straight and level path while the *Seamaster* continued its death plunge. As reconstructed later, the force of minus 9 Gs next caused the wings to rotate almost perpendicular to the airstream and wrap around the fuselage. The outside loop continued until the wingtips touched one another below the fuselage and then flapped back toward normal position. A massive explosion then occurred which shattered the flying boat into thousands of pieces and took the lives of the four crewmen.

For the next three months, Navy and Martin investigators combed the 50- to 65-foot-deep waters of Chesapeake Bay with salvage vessels, sonar, underwater TV cameras, and dragging rakes. Eventually, some 80 percent of the airframe was recovered but no clue as to the exact cause of the accident was ever found. In a report released less than a month before the loss of the second P6M under amazingly similar circumstances, six possible theories for the loss of control were put forth, but no firm evidence for or against any of the theories

could be found. The crash of the *Seamaster* and changing Navy requirements caused the program to be canceled in August 1959.

Herbert Scudder's death in the *Seamaster* crash was ironic as it was a seaplane of earlier design which became his avocation and occupied much of his spare time. As an employee of Martin Aircraft, Scudder was well aware of the heritage which the P6M represented. For a quarter of a century, the Martin nameplate had been affixed to a long and distinguished line of flying boats and amphibians. Famous names such as "China Clipper," "Mars," and "Mariner" had all felt the first touch of water beneath their hulls at the Martin plant just off Chesapeake Bay. For Scudder, water flying represented not a throwback to the pre-World War II days before long-range landplanes had been developed but rather a landing field which covered 75 percent of the earth's surface and the natural medium from which men were meant to fly. From his home at the mouth of the Gunpowder River in Chase, Md., just a few miles north of the Martin plant, Scudder could look out of his front window across the street to the hangar and seaplane dock where he kept his float-equipped Piper J-2. One of these days, he'd even finish restoring the remains of the Heath Parasol floatplane which also occupied a spare corner in the hangar.

It wouldn't have been unusual for any seaplane pilot to sit on his front porch overlooking a body of water and have idyllic dreams of life in the South Seas piloting a flying boat from one tropic island to another and this is precisely the dream which Herbert Scudder had. But Scudder was different from most of these dreamers because he had mapped out the course of action which would turn these dreams into reality. There, sitting inside his hangar, indeed almost totally occupying it, were the means by which the grey, drizzly skies of the Maryland winter were to be transformed into the tropical blue skies and fair weather cumulus of the South Pacific. Any visitor to the hangar would have been overwhelmed to see therein the massive shapes of two amphibious aircraft, the design of which, while vaguely familiar, was unlike any of which most persons had seen or heard: the Columbia XJL-1.

For those readers unfamiliar with the plane, a pause should be taken here to describe the airplane, its development, and the means by which the stories of Herbert Scudder and the XJL-1 merged. During World War II, Columbia Aircraft's Valley Stream, Long Island, plant had turned out some 330 versions of Grumman's J2F *Duck* utility amphibian. First flown in 1933, the J2F owed much to the earlier Loening amphibians of the 1920s. Although of biplane design, the J2F served the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines performing such functions as observation, anti-sub patrol, rescue, target towing, aerial photography, and general personnel and cargo transport. By the start of World War II, the *Duck* was obsolescent, but the fact that it was a known item and in production caused

additional orders to be placed for the craft. With the tremendous increase in F6F Hellcat production in 1944, Grumman found itself short of space at Bethpage and arranged with Columbia Aircraft for the transfer of all J2F production to the latter's plant. As a result, all 330 J2F-6s, the final production version, were actually manufactured by Columbia. Under the U.S. Navy's designation system, these amphibians should have been known as J2L-1s, but for some reason lost to history, the Grumman model designation was retained.

During 1939, Grumman had begun preliminary design work on a replacement for the J2F and assigned the design number G-42 to the project. This plane was to draw heavily on the *Duck's* design but incorporate a number of features which improved technology had provided, namely monoplane construction with folding wings and tricycle landing gear. A new hull was also designed and tested at the Stevens Institute of Technology experimental towing tank in Hoboken, NJ. Further development was halted by the outbreak of the war and it wasn't until 1944 that Grumman was again able to devote additional engineering time to the project. The only significant change from the prewar design was replacement of retractable wingtip floats with a fixed type and elimination of dihedral in the nonfolding center section of the wing. By this time, space for manufacture of the G-42 was not available so responsibility for its construction was transferred to Columbia along with the *Ducks*. At this point, U.S. Navy funds became involved and the G-42 was officially assigned the Columbia designation XJL-1 under contract NOa(s) 8751.

Construction began on two flyable airframes (BuNos 31399 and 31400) plus one static test piece. When work was suspended on VJ Day, the first airframe was about two-thirds complete and the second about half done. The static test airframe had been completed earlier and Grumman had run all of the required tests on it.

In August 1946, Columbia resumed work on both aircraft. The first flight of BuAer 31399 occurred on October 25, 1946, while sister ship 31400 flew several weeks later. What happened to the planes next is not certain. The accepted story has the planes flown to the Naval Air Test Center at Patuxent River. However, the official acceptance dates were September 19, 1947 (BuNo 31399) and September 29, 1947 (BuNo 31400) so the planes may have remained on Long Island for some time. Even after arrival at NATC, other aircraft had higher priority for testing because hydrodynamic tests run on BuAer 31399 were not begun until July 21, 1948, and were terminated on September 21, 1948. While most handling characteristics were rated as good, "due to repeated structural failure of the nose gear and water rudder well, and exhaustion of spare parts, the tests were terminated before the full evaluation was completed. . . ."

The structural integrity of supporting parts of the aircraft were somewhat suspect for test pilots reported failure of nose gear actuators, wing floats, the water rudder well, lower water rudder bracket, and the nose gear door linkage. All testing on the XJL-1s was halted. Both aircraft were salvaged by removal of engines, props, radios, etc., and the planes were tied down at Patuxent to await their fates, BuNo 31400 having flown only 120 hours. Both were officially stricken on February 28, 1949-

In the spring of 1949, the Navy decided to auction off the two XJL-1 airframes and it is at this point in the story that Herbert Scudder entered the picture. As a man who liked a bargain, Scudder must have been quite interested when he heard about the upcoming auction. The story has been told that he went there to purchase assorted nuts, bolts, and aircraft hardware for his tinkering. Unfortunately, no one will ever know if his dream of a South Seas airline finally found the right airplanes or if the airplanes prompted the dream. In either case, the Navy's castoffs so caught his attention that Scudder submitted the winning bid of \$420 and on June 21, 1949, became the owner of the amphibians and assorted items. Only speculation remains as to Dorothy Scudder's reaction when Herbert returned from NATC to inform her of his purchase.

Having sold the aircraft, the Navy was anxious to see them removed and this presented Scudder with the first of many problems. The aircraft were engineless but even with engines considerable work

would be required to make the planes ferriable. The immense size of the planes made restoration more than a one-man proposition even if one could get time off from an understanding employer. With the obvious alternative eliminated, the less obvious was examined with the result being that the planes would be towed up to Baltimore.

All parts excluding the hulls were trailed back to the hangar at the mouth of the Gunpowder River. The aircraft had been stored with both wings removed but Scudder reinstalled one wing on each plane to provide stability on the water from the wingtip float. At this point in the story, precisely what happened next becomes as hazy as the fog on the Chesapeake. One version has it that the planes were towed to Baltimore behind Scudder's small outboard boat, making the journey of some 80 miles as the fish swims in 18 hours. The other version has the planes barged to Baltimore and then towed to the home at Chase, Md., behind the boat with wife Dorothy riding on the single wing. There is, however, agreement that the canopies and vertical fins had to be removed to squeeze the planes under the railroad bridge which separated the Gunpowder River from Chesapeake Bay and then this could be done only at low tide. Whether either of the above versions is true or partly true, the fact cannot be disputed that both hulls finally made it to the inside of Herbert Scudder's hangar.

What happened to the aircraft between June 1949 and Scudder's death on December 7, 1955, is not entirely certain but it is believed that they remained in the hangar with work on their restoration progressing very slowly. At some point in time, engines were acquired and at least one was installed on one of the hulls. Scudder applied for civilian registration numbers and was assigned N54205 (BuAer 31400) and N54207 (BuAer 31399).

After Scudder's death in the *Seamaster* crash, it remained for Dorothy as executrix of Herbert's estate to dispose of the XJL-1s. Turning to aviation's yellow journalism, *Trade-A-Plane*, Dorothy ran ads for over a year offering the planes plus other items for \$1,000. The ads drew a number of responses but all potential buyers quickly lost interest when they learned that in order to qualify for the bargain price one of the airplanes had to fly at least once. The reason for this requirement was that over the years the aircraft had become "Scudder's Folly" as neighbors, friends, and coworkers saw the planes as monuments to Scudder's ignorance and daydreams. It was to put to rest all such talk that Scudder's widow put in the one flight requirement.

By now, it was summer 1957, almost two years since the first P6M crash. The *Trade-A-Plane* ads were no longer running and interest in the XJL-1s had dropped off to virtually nothing. At this point the story is ready for the entry of Redman Bros. Used Cars of Cicero, Ill., a rather unlikely potential aircraft purchaser. Upon closer inspection, however, one would find Redman to be more than just your typical used car dealer. As a pilot himself, Len Redman might just swap you that '55 Mercury convertible for your Tri-Pacer. While used cars were his main line of business, Len Redman also had a nose for the unusual when it came to things aeronautical and it could have only been fate which drew him to the XJL-1s. After learning about the planes and their history, Redman felt he could live up to the flight requirement set down by Dorothy Scudder and the agreement was made for the purchase of both aircraft. The fact that Redman had never flown a seaplane in his life was not a hindrance to the deal!

Another name enters the story at this point, that of Bob Siegfried. Back in 1957, Bob was an "I'll fly anything once" pilot looking to build flying time. The fact that he was a friend of Len Redman and also had flown a J-3 on floats was qualification enough for him to be recruited for the XJL mission. Siegfried's current vocation as a DC-10 captain for United Air Lines must seem tame compared to the adventure which was to unfold in Maryland. As Bob recalled recently, "The planes had been hangared up to the point when we arrived at the Scudder home and so they were in pretty good shape. The surplus sale had included all of the engineering data, Navy test documentation, aircraft manuals, promotional material, etc., so there was plenty of information about the plane and its characteristics. The plane's size together with the provisions for aerial photog-



Takeoff shot provides a good view of the underside of the plane as well as its electrically actuated landing gear in transit. The nosewheel was to become a failure-prone part and led to abandonment of flight testing by the U.S. Navy. (Harold G. Martin Photo)

raphy, a tail hook, and JATO bottles was almost overwhelming."

Shortly before the *Seamaster* crash, N54205 had been placed in the water for final preparation and testing before its first flight. Scudder's friend and coworker, Maurice Bernhard, pilot of the ill-fated P6M, was to serve as test pilot for the XJL-1. On taxi tests, it was noted that the center of gravity seemed to move back and forth with sloshing of water in the hull compartment suspected as the cause. Also, during the time in the water, N54205's nose gear had been damaged when the plane dragged its anchor and the nose gear never worked well after that. The plane had been lifted out of the water and returned to the hangar for weighing and repairs when the *Seamaster* crashed. There, the plane was destined to remain for almost two years.

Bob Siegfried recalled, "There were no electric motors to retract the main landing gear so wheel well covers had been made so that the plane could be operated as a seaplane. The engine was not the one originally installed and the canopy had been removed to clear both the railroad bridge and the hangar door."

"Once the plane had been returned to the water, Redman and I turned our attention to the engine. We cranked it up several times but it refused to run because of a problem with the fuel pump. I took the easy way out and hit the fuel pump with a large wrench. Thereafter, the engine started but ran on prime only. Each time we ran the engine on prime only it would run for five or ten minutes at a time. Each day the engine ran a little better as the seals in the fuel pump became more and more accustomed to the feel of gasoline."

"The cargo compartment, which was below and behind the cockpit area, could hold six to eight people and had a built-in overhead trolley for use in loading cargo. We used the trolley to load an auxiliary power unit which we used to supply power while we worked on the airplane. As the final repairs were made, we got six 55-gallon drums of aviation gasoline and floated them out to the plane. An air compressor was hooked up to the drums and when the air was forced into the drums, the avgas flowed into the plane's fuel cells through the garden hose which we had attached to the drums' outlets."

As it became apparent that the plane was nearing airworthy status, attention was turned to the actual flying of the amphibian. The cockpit instrumentation consisted of an airspeed indicator, altimeter, oil pressure, and oil temperature. The pilot's seat had at some time in the past been replaced with a folding chair, not much different from the J-3 floatplane which Siegfried had flown before.

Once the situation with the airplane was under control it was able to receive, the two men turned their attention to discussion of the first takeoff. The big problem here was the railroad bridge which ran across the mouth of the bay. Having frustrated the amphibians on the way in with its low deck, the bridge delivered the old one-two punch in the form of numerous electrical wires atop the structure which served to power the electrical locomotives which used the bridge. The takeoff would be a one-shot attempt, if everything wasn't working properly the bridge would form a steel and wood reception committee for a misfiring engine or an aborted takeoff.

As time for the first flight approached, Siegfried and Redman donned their test flying gear—swimsuits and sweaters—not much to brave the water in the month of October. Siegfried continued, "Lee took his place in the rear seat and I did the same in the pilot's chair. We left the canopy open just in case we had to get out in a hurry but having no seatbelts made this somewhat problematical. We then made several taxi tests to see how the engine checked out as well as to see how quickly we could get up on the step. By this time, word had gotten out about the plane's flight and small boats filled with people and cameras were all over. We must have made eight or nine takeoff attempts which were quickly aborted because of the waterborne traffic congestion. Finally, we got a clear opening and began our takeoff run. Fortunately for Lee and me, the plane functioned perfectly and we got off with no problem."

After some additional work, the plane was ready to be flown back to Chicago. Scudder's widow Dorothy had moved to Montana shortly after the first flight, her responsibility to her late husband having been fulfilled. Siegfried recalled, "Some of Scudder's friends at Martin had asked if we could make a low pass at the field on our trip out so that they could see the culmination of his dream in the air. This was fine with us since the Martin airport was only about five miles south of Chase. Lee Redman was flying the Bonanza, which was going to lead me back to Chicago, and we rendezvoused over Scudder's house and headed south only a few hundred feet above the ground. Lee had radioed the tower for permission for the flyby and got the okay. We were expecting to see maybe a dozen or so of Scudder's friends to be there. As I flew by the tower, I couldn't believe my eyes as some 1500 people were on hand to observe! Quite a tribute to their late comrade."

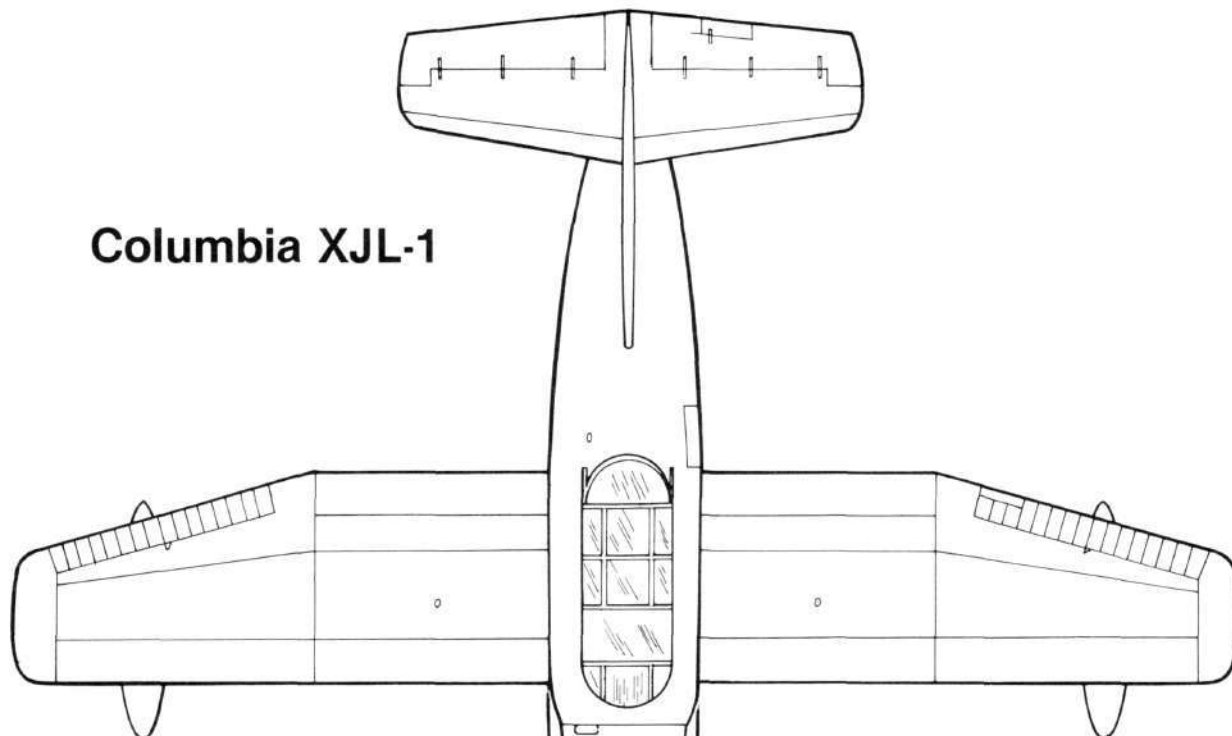
The flight to Cleveland proved uneventful until about 100 miles east of the city when approaching darkness and clouds associated with snow showers proceeded to make the formation flight other than routine. The amphibian had managed to keep up with the Bonanza even at reduced power. The estimated takeoff weight at Baltimore was about 10,000 pounds, one and one-half tons below the maximum gross weight. As the planes neared Cleveland, weather deteriorated to VFR limits. Needless to say, the Bonanza and the XJL-1 became separated leaving Siegfried to find the airport by means of his sectional chart and his wits. Fortunately, Lakefront Airport finally appeared through the windshield and a landing was made on Lake Erie. Prior to the flight, Redman and Siegfried had called the airport and were assured that there was a seaplane ramp. They had been told the truth, but the ramp had been designed to accommodate J-3 type seaplanes and not the XJL-1. As a result, the plane rode at anchor rather than being hauled ashore.

At this point, Siegfried had to leave the saga temporarily to return to Chicago. George Stell (killed in the crash of a borate bomber several years ago) was chosen to fly the Cleveland-Chicago leg and after landing in Lake Michigan he taxied the plane to Navy Pier and tied it up. A short time thereafter, the late Mayor Richard J. Daley was looking out his office window at City Hall when he noted the seaplane. Its pronounced tail-down attitude in the water (normal for the XJL-1) caused His Honor to call out the police and fire departments to save the "sinking" airplane. Police and fire units arrived at Navy Pier and attached lines to the plane to prevent the quickly anticipated disaster. After some time, officials were able to contact Lee Redman and learn that there was no danger of sinking.

Bob Siegfried reentered the picture at this point and his plan was to taxi the plane to Miegs Field and lift it out of the water with a crane. After this had been done, the landing gear would be extended and fixed into place so that the plane could be flown from land. This plan was accomplished in due course and Siegfried fired up the engine and flew the plane to the Joliet, Ill., airport located some 35 miles southwest of downtown Chicago. It was at this location that Siegfried checked out Lee Redman in the craft and Redman proceeded to transition from the Bonanza to the 6.5-ton, 1,400-hp amphibian without any difficulty.

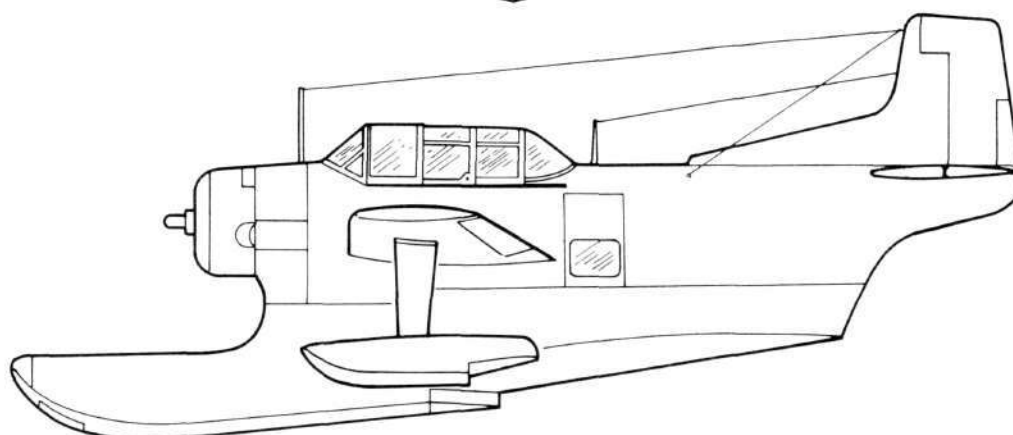
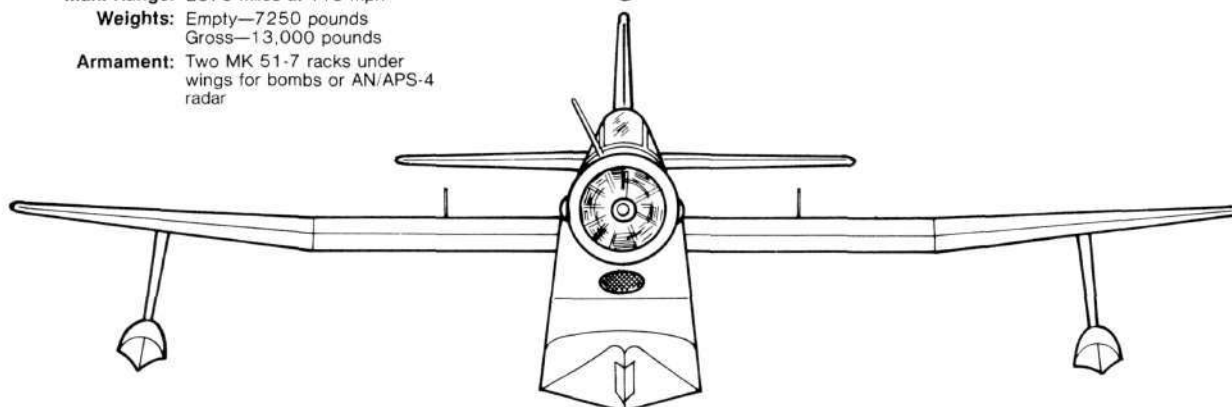
Redman kept the plane for only about a month when the lure of new challenges caused Lee to fly the plane to an auction at Rockford,

Columbia XJL-1



TECHNICAL DATA

Type: Utility amphibian
Power Plant: one 1,350 hp Wright R-1820-56
nine-cylinder air-cooled radial
Span: 50 feet 0 inches
Length: 45 feet 11 inches
Height: 16 feet 0 inches
Wing Area: 413 square feet
Max. Speed: 200 mph at sea level
Max. Range: 2070 miles at 119 mph
Weights: Empty—7250 pounds
Gross—13,000 pounds
Armament: Two MK 51-7 racks under
wings for bombs or AN/APS-4
radar



Ill., and he sold it for \$2,500 to Greg Board of Michigan City, Ind. Board, who ran an aerial survey business, was able to repair the landing gear and return the aircraft to its full amphibious capability. The XJL-1 was tied up at the lakefront of Michigan City for quite a while.

Greg Board, an Australian by birth, is another interesting character in the XJL story. In 1940, at age 17, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force. After training, he joined an RAF squadron in Singapore flying Brewster Buffalos. When war broke out, Board and his squadron mates fought a losing battle against the superior Zeros before being ordered back to Australia where he languished as an instructor pilot. Tiring of the training routine, Board joined the Commonwealth Aircraft Co. as a test pilot and there he remained for the rest of the war. After hostilities ceased, he founded his own airline using Lockheed *Lodestars* and *Hudsons* and participated in the immigrant traffic movements from Greece and Italy to Australia. The *Hudsons* later gave way to a DC-2, DC-3, and DC-5, in addition to four L-18s. When the Australian government clamped down on operators such as Board in 1950, the airline went out of business and there followed a one-year stint as DC-3 captain for Malayan Airways. The years between 1951 and 1957 found Greg as chief pilot for Trans Mediterranean Airways in Beirut. After briefly working for an oil company, Board came to the U.S. and founded the aerial survey business in Indiana. He had purchased N54205 to use both in the survey business as well as to capitalize on the idea he had for modifying the plane for long-range flying and returning with it to Australia.

In 1960, Board moved to Tucson to become involved in the aircraft rebuilding and modification business and took the XJL-1 with him. This is, perhaps, somewhat of an understatement. During the first attempted flight in early May 1960, the landing gear would not extend and the resulting water landing produced considerable damage and a half-submerged airplane (probably near Michigan City, Ind.). After much effort, the plane was hauled out of the water for repairs. In addition to fixing the damage caused in the water landing, work was also done to change the troublesome electrically operated landing gear to hydraulic actuation.

The repairs and modification required over six months of work and in early December 1960 the long-interrupted flight to Arizona was again attempted with much greater success—almost 50 miles went by before the XJL's engine failed and a forced landing was made in a farm field near Kankakee, Ill. Two mechanics from Aero American Corp. in Tucson, Ariz., were sent to repair the plane and its engine. Considerable difficulty was encountered in removing the plane from its resting place and several months were required to put the amphibian back in ferriable condition.

The winter of 1961 was still in full swing as repairs made over a three-month period finally prepared N54205 for flight. This time, Greg Board was to cover some 600 miles before the engine failed again and another unscheduled stop was made at Woodward, Okla. Having lost a little faith in this particular Wright R-1820, Board decided a new engine was in order but other commitments caused the plane to remain at Woodward for almost a year. In early 1962, a new R-1820-97 engine was purchased and built up by Aero American Corp. at Mr. Board's request. The engine and two mechanics were dispatched to Oklahoma and several weeks were spent installing the engine and making other necessary repairs. In late February, the XJL finally departed the Sooner state and arrived in Tucson, the entire 1,500-mile trip having taken just under two years!

After arrival in Tucson, Board commissioned Aero American to begin a very extensive modification program on the plane. Apparently to protect their already considerable investment in the XJL, ownership was transferred from Board to Aero American on December 2, 1960. On August 29, 1962, however, ownership was transferred back to Board. Somewhere along the line, the Australian flyer had met aviation writer Martin Caidin and the two had come up with a plan to modify N54205 with provisions for inflight refueling in order to fly around the world nonstop, an estimated six- to seven-day trip. All the paint was stripped from the plane and the control

surfaces re-covered. In order to handle the increased fuel load, the R-1820-97 engine was removed and an R-2600 purchased and installed along with a new propeller, engine mount, custom cowling and related accessories. Most of the work was completed on the airplane, but it was never flown in its new configuration. Early in 1965, Aero American obtained a judgment against Board for unpaid repair bills and got N54205. Numerous attempts were made by Aero to sell the aircraft for \$25,000 but all were unsuccessful as was an attempt to trade it to the Naval Aviation Museum in early 1974 in exchange for a C-47.

In April 1974, the XJL was sold to Aircraft Surplus Co. of Tucson and was towed from Ryan Field to Tucson International Airport. Eleven months later, title was transferred to Bob's Airpark, a subsidiary of Aircraft Surplus Co. The plane remains at Tucson at the present time. In its 35-plus years of life, it has accumulated fewer than 150 hours in the air.

It is now the proper time to return to Chase, Md., to follow up on the fate of the second amphibian, N5420 (BuAer 31399). It was also purchased by Len Redman on October 7, 1957, with the other ship but was left to languish after the first machine became flyable. One story is that Dorothy Scudder had the plane towed to Essex Skypark which was located nearby. Exactly how the plane got to Essex may be open to question, but the fact remains that by the early 1960s N54207 was a derelict and on October 22, 1963, it was sold to Eastern Flying Service, Inc., for \$25 to satisfy the unpaid storage fees which were owed to Eastern.

The change in ownership brought no change in the condition of the airplane and it remained a deteriorating eyesore. On November 30, 1970, Eastern sold the XJL-1 to Bernard H. Ulbrich of Baltimore who apparently was interested in restoring the aircraft. Again, interest apparently subsided since the aircraft remained unmoved until July of 1976 when it was purchased by John Seidel of Chicago. Seidel had previously owned a number of warbirds and currently possessed one of the few flying Grumman Ducks. In September, Seidel arrived in Baltimore and proceeded to dismantle the XJL-1 for return to Illinois. The size of the aircraft is somewhat deceiving in looking at photos. The fact that two trips with a 40-foot trailer were necessary to transport the plane gives physical proof that for a single-engine aircraft the plane was large indeed.

While Seidel had hoped to restore the aircraft, other interests and a move to Florida conflicted with this goal and the amphibian remained in a barn in Kaneville, Ill., until its sale to Sandy Falconer of Lakeport, Calif. Falconer purchased the plane in December 1981 and returned it to his shop some 75 miles north of San Francisco. One may only hope that in time N54207 will fly for the first time since 1948.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Rodina has been interested in Grumman amphibians for over 15 years and serves as specialist on the subject for Air Britain. Three previous articles for the *Journal* have dealt with this subject including the latest (in conjunction with H.C. Kavelaars) which appeared in the Fall 1982 issue.

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