

NEWS & COMMENT

FROM OUR MEMBERS

NIGHTMARE OF THE KOREAN HILLS

Jerome J. McAuliffe, San Diego, CA

It is with some regret that I must inform you of serious errors in the article, "Nightmare of the Korean Hills," *Journal*, Summer 1989. In the interest of historical accuracy I wish to address the following details.

1. Page 83. "While the C model had a plexiglass nose with no forward guns." Absolutely false; every B-26C left the Douglas factory with two cal.-50 guns installed on the lower right side of the nose. In fact, the *Journal's* front cover photo clearly shows two metal patches covering the gun ports, just to the right of the squadron insignia. The ammunition storage for both guns was under the bombardier's seat. This nose gun problem arose during the 1951-1952 modification programs due to shipping incomplete aircraft without nose guns from the overhaul depot. There was a reported shortage of M-1 cal.-50 aircraft guns.

2. Page 83. "But both were equipped with a waist turret." Absolutely false; all B-26B/Cs left the factory with General Electric remote control upper and lower turrets controlled by the gunner located in the rear compartment using a periscopic sighting station. The turrets were virtually identical to B-29 upper and lower AFT turrets except for gun heaters. Later, during 1948/49 several B-26Bs, especially older "flat top" B-26B-15 and -20s, were converted into tow-target aircraft by removal of the lower turret and installation of a tow reel. The lower turret opening was then used for deployment of sleeve and banner targets after the tow cable was payed out.

During 1950, '51 and '52, as the B-26s were modified and overhauled for the K-War, both turrets and sighting station were removed because USAF TAC felt that the turret system lacked sufficient Azimuth-Elevation tracking rates for enemy jet fighters. The weight savings could be translated into wing ordnance loads. Several B-26s had the upper turret cover installed with no guns; the turret was removed and its cover was raised about five inches above the fuselage upper surface. The photo on page 87 clearly shows this elevated upper turret cover. This increased space was used for the SHORAN transmitter, T-11/APN-3, which was a 2x2x2-foot cube and weighed 106 pounds. The raised cover still permitted loading of all aft bomb stations and kept the CG over the same range. One of two SHORAN antennas, AT-14/APN-3, is barely visible at the tip of the vertical stabilizer. The SHORAN bomb system operator replaced the gunner in the rear compartment.

3. Page 83. "The dual-turret—bomb load to 'teeter-totter'." This is false. This cannard kept raising its head all during the Korean War. The B-26 could be loaded with all fuel and ordnance and still have a good forward CG and absolutely no tendency to "teeter-totter" while taxiing over rough ground or pierced steel planking (PSP). The only concern during rough surface taxi was propeller ground clearance, normally 12 inches on level pavement. A B-26 with full fuel load and no ordnance had almost too much weight on its nose gear which caused a serious nose gear problem all through its career. Nose landing gear strut/axle and nose gear wheel-well fuselage structural failures were the only serious long-term problem with the *Invader* design.

Technical Orders 01-40AJ-1 and -2 do not describe any CG limitations on bomb loading. TO 1-1-26, dated 1 April 1969, does not list any bomb loading limitations, cautions, or warnings for aft CG dangers. A check with an old B-26 Load Adjuster (Weight and Balance slip stick), which I do not have, should put an end to this rumor. The same rumor was alive and well at Langley AFB, VA, in 1951 and could not be eliminated. The B-26 only became tail heavy during dual engine removal requiring a tail support jack. Both propellers could be removed for maintenance without using a tail jack and there was no feeling of "teeter-totter."

4. Page 89. "But the B-26 variations were not confined to the plane's exterior." This problem arose during the 1951-1952 modification programs due to shipping incomplete "overhauled" black aircraft from the depot to the field. The primary problem was avionics control panels and black boxes. In France, we moved control boxes and radar sets between aircraft so that the scheduled aircraft always had a complete equipment configuration.

This "cats and dogs" story again was false; the B-26B and Cs left the factory in two basic configurations of cockpit armament/electrical overhead panels and left vertical armament panels. Early panels were changed about B-26B-20 and B-26C-25 resulting in the vast majority of B-26s having identical panel layouts. The only cockpit changes that occurred during 1948-50 period was conversion of the VHF radio system from SCR-522 to AN/ARC-3 in some aircraft and installation of an amber marker beacon light. Every B-26, except the K model, had all engine controls, flap lever, parking brake lever, landing gear handle, fuel selector handles, trim tab cranks/knobs, and prop feathering buttons in the exact same location. All important switches, magnetos, battery, cowl flaps, oil coolers, fuel boost pumps, starter (energize-engage), and landing and position lights were in exactly identical positions in all B-26s.

Interestingly, the French Air Force refused the older "flat tops" and received

B-26B-45 and B-26C-25 or later models for use in Algeria and Indochina. The USAF leaders could have solved this "flat top" problem within 30 days because the USAF and ANG had over 230 newer B-26B/Cs to select from within CONUS. The older "flat top" canopy B-26 was approximately 20 mph faster than the later "clamshell" models.

5. Page 84. "The use of C model as point aircraft..." The C model was employed as a point aircraft because it had a Norden M-9 bombsight and Honeywell C-1 autopilot tied together for very accurate bombing. The Bs were to drop their bombs using a lead C model; in fact, the *Invader* had a special red/white formation bomb light in the fuselage rear tip. The white light indicated "doors OPEN and bombs ARMED"; the red light indicated RELEASE. This bombing tactic was successfully used by the Ninth AF B-26s in the ETO in late 1944 and 1945.

I was told in 1951 that the fundamental B-26C bombing accuracy problem in Korea was that the 3rd Bomb Wing did not have a Norden bombsight maintenance shop in Korea and possibly none in Japan. The M-9 required at minimum a 90-day shop calibration of its gyro table, optics, and electrical circuits for optimum performance. Without this shop facility plus trained bombsight technicians, bombing by guesswork in a B model would do the job.

6. Page 89. "The 17th's lineage and honors influenced this action." Wrong. The 452nd Light Bomb Wing was activated for 21 months, 10 August 1950 through 10 May 1952, and by federal law the wing designation and reserve personnel had to be returned to USAF Reserve status within the U.S.

7. Page 87. "Experimented with Mark VI paraflares." These flares were MK24 Mod 2 and Mod 4. Both the MK20 and MK24 flares were dropped from the B-26; the MK20s tended to float in the bomb bay due to their light weight. MK20 and MK24 were preferred as wing pylon station loads for release safety.

8. The butterfly bomb cluster was an AN-M1A4 consisting of six 20-pound, M41A2 fragmentation bombs with M158 nose fuses.

Overall the article was a good summary of the B-26 combat operations in Korea. I think some of these errors occurred by using Futrell's book, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-1953*, as a reference because it contains similar errors! Could we someday get a highly accurate *Journal* story on the A or B-26 *Invader*? I worked on the *Invader* from 1947 through 1953 and most of what is written about the aircraft varies from poor to fair in accuracy and details. The B-26 had many detractors during 1950-53 because it wasn't a jet bomber, therefore, a lot of distorted history has evolved.

DOUGLAS 7B CRASH, 1939

Ken W. Hamilton, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA

An account of the crash of the Douglas 7B is contained in the article, "The Douglas DB-7/A-20 Boston/Havoc," *AAHS Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 3, 4. The account is incorrect. I was there, a member of the North American Aviation Engineering Department. We were on the second floor in the southeast corner of the main manufacturing building (Bldg. 1, now replaced by the air freight terminal).

The crash did not occur during the first pass of the airplane. Mr. Cable had made repeated low-altitude, high-speed passes east and west past the Douglas group on the ground at their hangar, the passes being along the south edge of Mines Field. Although we could not see the airplane, the engine sound from above the roof was loud on each pass, it being obvious the airplane was very close, moving very fast.

After each pass eastward, Mr. Cable would pull sharply up. At the top of the zoom, he would turn sharply back and dive, leveling out low and fast, passing to the west past the Douglas group.

After several passes, which were beginning to worry us, the airplane made a high-speed low pass eastward with one engine feathered, pulled sharply up at the eastern boundary of the field. According to NAA Flight Line personnel who were watching, Mr. Cable turned at the top of the zoom, turning sharply into the feathered engine, the other engine at a high power setting. The airplane whipped about, the vertical rail (rudder and fin) left the airplane, which then began a rapid flat spin being abetted by the engine still running at high power.

We in engineering were unable to see the airplane through the pebbled glass on the north side of the sawteeth in the roof over our heads. But we watched and listened in stunned silence as we saw flash, flash, flash of light reflected off the spinning airplane, and heard the loud *wow, wow, wow* of the running engine as it came around on the near side.

The airplane flat spun on a path carrying it low across the roof of the NAA Bldg. 1, clearing the plant as it drifted west, to crash close to the west side of Bldg. 1 among parked employee autos in the parking lot. *It did NOT crash on the runway* as stated, but impacted well south of the south taxiway, itself south of the runway.

NAA shop employees were thick at the crash site, the crash occurring between 11:30 and 12:00 noon on the shop lunch hour. Needless to say, they scattered as they saw the impending crash. None was hit. I went to the scene at 12:00 noon when the office lunch hour began. I recall seeing a Ford V-8 sedan engine block flattened by the airplane. I talked to a production em-

ployee who told me, "You see that cyclone fence topped with barbed wire [running north-south just east of the impact]? Well, I cannot climb it. But I did when I saw that airplane coming! After it hit, I found myself on the east side of the fence. I have no idea how I got there from the west side!"

As I recall, Mr. Cable struck the ground to the northeast of the airplane, inside (to the east) of the fence, close to the airplane. His chute was streaming behind him when he hit, not having opened.

My friend, W.N. Kee, then working on the second floor of the Experimental Department Building at the northwest corner of the NAA facility, was eating his lunch at his bench, talking with a co-worker. Upon the crash, they ran to and opened a westside window, looking out over the crash site close by. The co-worker was of French background, heard the Frenchman in the rear turret calling for help in French, understood him, ran to the airplane to try and help.

In Vol. XV of Paul Matt's *Historical Aviation Album*, the lead article on the A-20 carries a still different incorrect version of the crash (see pages 288, 289). I wrote Paul Matt, telling him of what had happened. (The album had almost disappeared from the market when I bought it in 1982. It is copyrighted in 1977!) Mr. Matt replied in a letter of September 23, 1982: "... You are the first to bring our attention to this incorrect and limited explanation of this event. Our information came from Douglas PR and a visit to the Long Beach plant to verify the story. ... However, I believe I will run your account as an update and correction notice in the next issue of HAA." He also writes, "I suppose our simplified version is more palatable to Douglas."

I told Mr. Kee of having written to Mr. Matt, and he wrote verifying my account. At the top of page 289 of the HAA is a photo from the rear of the crashed airplane. The empennage is intact, as is the fuselage to just ahead of the dorsal turret in which the Frenchman was. But the entire vertical tail is missing from the otherwise intact empennage! A torn bit of metal indicates the vertical tail departed to the left, supporting your author's statement the port engine was feathered, and my account preceding.

Mr. Matt did not publish a correction of the crash in any of the three albums following. Mr. Matt died shortly after completing Vol. XVIII. I provided him scale data for the Curtiss B-2 in that volume.

Whether or not you choose to publish any correction of the crash account is up to you. I simply could not resist speaking up when I read the article. And by the way, the airplane was certainly lower than 500 feet and traveling faster than 125 mph when it passed the Douglas group!

This is a rare and welcome letter, and one that historians seldom receive. But it is

greatly appreciated and I gladly publish it to set the historical record straight. Such information usually only surfaces after publication of an erroneous account, as in the crash of the Douglas 7B. Thank you, Mr. Hamilton! —Bob Williams.

WEDELL-WILLIAMS

M. D. Bellmore, Alexandria, VA

Re: "Wedell-Williams Service Corp.," Part III-6, *AAHS Journal* Winter 1989 issue, some additional information that may be of interest to members:

Page 282, photo at top of page of Turner's RT-14 is as it appeared in 1939.

Page 287, same plane as it appeared in 1938.

In 1937 I believe it was called the Ring-Free Meteor.

Page 285, in the paragraph above the listed earnings for the 1938 race it is stated "Turner had now won the Thompson Trophy three times." That is not true as his third Thompson victory came in 1939. His first Thompson victory came when unfortunately Doug Davis, who was in first place, crashed and was killed. Roscoe Turner's winnings of \$22,000 in the 1938 Thompson broke down into \$18,000 for winning and \$4,000 for setting a new course speed record. I'm no economist, but I think that with inflation as it is that \$22,000 would probably convert to about \$200,000 today.

I enjoyed those Wedell-Williams articles very much.

14TH SQUADRON — TRUTH

James B. Morin, Guasti, CA

Volume 32, No. 4 (Winter 1987 issue) of our *Journal* had a photo of an unidentified Bellanca on page 291 (part of the Labussiere article) with Air France markings. Based on an article in Volume 34, *Air Enthusiast Quarterly*, titled "Air War Over China," the aircraft appears to be a Model 28-110.

As noted in the article, 20 28-110s were built for subsequent adaptation to bombers by the Spanish government. They were built against a spurious Air France contract which attempted to disguise the fact that the purchase was being made by Republican Spain. The export to Spain was discovered and blocked and the aircraft were purchased by the Chinese government. There is an excellent photo in *Air Enthusiast Quarterly*, Vol. 34, page 23, showing the aircraft being crated at Wilmington, CA, for shipment to China in the summer of 1937. The aircraft appear to be in the colors of the Chinese Air Force but do not have any markings. Does anyone have additional photos of these rather interesting aircraft?

Thanks for publishing the fine article about China's 14th Squadron.

BURBANK AIRPORT — EARLY DAYS

Kenneth W. Taylor, DDS, Burbank, CA

James T. Baughman's "The Early Days of the Burbank Airport" (Vol. 34, No. 4) caught my attention because I am a long-time resident of Burbank. His article and interesting photographs managed to satisfy, in one convenient place, my curiosity about the beginnings of this historic airport that, as Baughman points out, has survived and served this area well as an airport even to this very day when a major relocation of the tower and terminal is under study.

An interesting contrast is the fate of nearby Grand Central Air Terminal in Glendale whose early years in the late '20s and early '30s distinguished it as the premier airport in Southern California. By the early '60s it ceased to be an airport and was redeveloped as an industrial park.

At the risk of being picky I would like to point out a couple of errors in the captions that accompany the photographs, e.g., page 264 top of page: The view is *northwest* not *east*. Page 269 top: The view is *slightly east of due south*, not *southwest*. San Fernando Rd. is not to be seen. The street in the foreground that runs parallel to the east-west runway and crosses the ends of the other two runways is Tulare Ave. Universal City cannot be seen either. However, Warner Brothers' Burbank Studio can be seen, in the distance at the foot of the hills, slightly right of center.

Congratulations to J.T.B. for a fine article.

*Charles L. Smith, Captain AA (Ret.),
Ithaca, NY*

I enjoyed more than I can say James T. Baughman's "The Burbank Airport, 1930-1940" in your Winter 1989 issue.

At the time in question, I was chief instructor at Grand Central Air Terminal in Glendale and, looking toward a career with the airlines, went as often as I could to the Burbank Airport where, in Paul Mantz' hangar there was a Link Trainer in which I took instrument flight instruction whenever I could. Jackie Cochran was often there.

I remember especially my first flight in a tricycle-gear aircraft at Burbank, the first such aircraft I had ever seen. It was one of the very few—eight, I believe—Stearman-Hammonds, a pusher with twin booms and rudders to the rear and, as I remember it, no rudder pedals. My check pilot was one Chuck Sisto who later got quite a bit of publicity as a check pilot on American Airlines.

Over at Grand Central, where we flew CPTP students from sunup to sundown, we often saw Edgar Bergen and his ship, Howard Hughes with his amphibian, Bob Cummings with his Cessna, Airmaster "Spinach II," as well as Tex Rankin, who performed

aerobatics at local air shows. Tex did one maneuver I have never seen duplicated to this day. He would bring a Fleet Biplane in on final at excessive speed. When he got over the fence at about 30 feet of altitude, he would pull up into a complete stall, the ship would fall off straight ahead, and he would pull it up just in time to make a three-point landing. I also had my first flight in a trimotor Ford at that time. We used to go out over the Hollywood Hills at 4,000 feet and practice aerobatics in a Warner Travel Air. Charlie Babb and the Timm brothers had shops on the field and Pan Am's Compania Mexicana d'Aviacion also operated out of Grand Central to Mexico City, leaving at 3:30 A.M.(!) and taking 11 hours for the trip.

Have you ever done an article on Grand Central? I understand it is a shopping area now. I haven't been back there since 1939.

No article I know of has been published in the Journal. However, a good book on the subject has been authored by AAHS member John Underwood. It is titled Madcaps, Millionaires and "Mose," and is available from Heritage Press, Box 167, Glendale, CA 91209. —Managing Editor

AERO COMMANDER 520

Nicholas Williams, Waverly, IA

I'm enclosing a photo I received recently, too late for the Spring 1990 issue of the *Journal* in which my article on the Aero Commander 520 will appear. I am sending it in hopes that it might be considered for inclusion in the second installment to this article which I assume will be in the Summer 1990 issue.

We're really getting fast. You're even too late for the Summer issue. It went to the printer today (March 28, 1990). —Editor

Aero Commander 520-4, N4103B, photographed at Miami, Florida, in August 1954 with "Gase-teria" logo painted on the nose. (Clay Jansson)



THE REPUBLIC XF-91—PLUS

Tom Emmerst, Springdale, OH

Re: Gary Rochfort's "The Republic XF-91" in the *AAHS Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 1, page 16. I had the privilege of meeting Kartveli in 1971. He had retired from Fairchild-Republic Div. but maintained an office at the Farmingdale plant during development of the YA-10. He remembered well that the only prior Republic experience with a GE turbine engine was the J47 in the XF-91.

The Republic throttleable afterburner was indeed ahead of its time. GE offered the pilot a multi-stage unit on the early J79-GE-3 through -11; a fully modulated burner was introduced on the J79-8 (Navy) and -15 (AF) models on F-4s and RA-5s.

Now consider, if you will, the plight of a researcher 50 years from now, reading the *Journal* and puzzling over an author's use of the adjective "conventional." Should he infer conventional at the time the aircraft was built, or conventional at the time of the article? Today we may fault Dr. Gary Rochfort for referring to the XF-91's landing gear as "conventional" (Spring 1989 *Journal*, page 22, column 1). For at least six or seven decades, pilots have always referred to a tail-wheel-style gear as "conventional." Should the mere fact that tricycle gear predominates in 1989 change this usage? I would call the XF-91 a tricycle gear configuration.

I can foresee further problems of this nature; 50 years from now a reader will need to understand the context to determine if ILS means "Instrument Landing System" or "Integrated Logistic Support," or if RFI means "Radio Frequency Interference" or "Ready for Issue." Acronyms and jargon are redefined from decade to decade.

On the subject of usage, turbine engine designations do not use a hyphen in the basic type (e.g., J47, not J-47). Government procurement contracts consistently follow this convention. This seems trivial until one reaches the F100, F101, F102, etc. (engines)

as distinct from F-100, F-101, F-102, etc. (aircraft). However, reciprocating engines do use a hyphen (e.g., R-985).

Hirsch's Wedell-Williams story seems to consistently refer to the P&W *Wasp* as a R-1344. I will not quarrel that this is the actual nominal CID of the *Wasp*, but the military designation of the engine is R-1340, not R-1344, and I doubt that pre-war commercial *Wasps* used any R- designation on the nameplate. Harvey Lippincott, where are you?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Richard R. Burgess, LCDR USN, Editor,
Naval Aviation News

Norman Polmar's letter on page 72 of the Spring 1990 *Journal* commenting on "What's in a Name?" by the Naval Aviation History Office, presents an opportunity to clarify some issues regarding the U.S. Naval Aviation organization.

Mr. Polmar is correct in pointing out that the terms "commission" and "decommission" have been used liberally in Naval aviation documentation. However, in most cases, they have been used incorrectly, albeit unknowingly, by those concerned. This can be attributed to the fact that ships preceded aircraft squadrons into Naval service by thousands of years and the terminology has understandably carried over. The book that he cites, *United States Naval Aviation 1910-1980*, published by the Naval Aviation History Office, now part of the Naval Historical Center, will be updated in the early 1990s, and the terms "commission" and "decommission" will be changed to "establish" and "disestablish," as appropriate.

Aircraft squadrons are "established" or "disestablished" by letter or message from the Chief of Naval Operations. (The CNO files provide abundant evidence of this.) Squadrons themselves often use the terms "commission" and "decommission" incorrectly. It is worth noting here that the date of establishment or disestablishment is the one set by the CNO, regardless of when the actual ceremony is held. This often leads to confusion in squadron histories.

Mr. Polmar is correct in pointing out that the Navy's rigid airships of the 1920s and 1930s were "commissioned." They received commissioning pennants and were considered just as much "ships" of the fleet as were battleships and cruisers. If the commissioned airships had been of such quantity as to be organized into squadrons, those squadrons would have been "established," not "commissioned." Present destroyer and submarine squadrons are "established," not "commissioned."

The dictionary is of little help in distinguishing between the two terms, but certain distinctions can be drawn. As a general rule,

vessels, such as ships and aircraft (such as rigid airships) are "commissioned," but groups of ships or aircraft, i.e., squadrons, are "established." Ships receive commissioning pennants; squadrons do not. Ship and squadron designations often change, but ships have official names which are rarely changed after commissioning, only if the names are deemed "manifestly unsuitable."

On another related topic is the subject of Marine Corps aviation organization. Marine aviation is a part of Naval Aviation, but significant differences exist with regard to organization. As detailed in the original article, Navy squadrons are "established" and, once "disestablished," their existence comes to an end. A succeeding squadron may adopt the designation, nickname, call-sign, insignia, and culture of its predecessor, but it will ever be a separate and distinct organization. Not so with Marine squadrons; they, like infantry regiments, are "activated" and, once "deactivated," their history is only suspended until they are reactivated. For example, Marine All-Weather Attack Squadron 225 (VMA[AW]-225), deactivated in 1975, is scheduled to be reactivated as Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 225 (VMFA[AW]-225) during fiscal year 1992 and its history will continue with its new aircraft and personnel.

I hope this information will be helpful to the reader in understanding Naval Aviation heritage.

Robert L. Lawson, Bonita, CA

Regarding Norman Polmar's letter (AAHS *Journal*, Spring 1990) in response to "What's in a Name?" (AAHS *Journal*, Fall 1989): The learned Mr. Polmar apparently misconstrues the intent of the Aviation History Branch of the Naval Historical Center and of *The Hook's* effort to lend our support. The intent is not to rewrite history but, instead, to correct history. A rereading of the first two paragraphs of the article will explain the problem of the Navy's improper terminology over the years in its own official documents. The Aviation History Branch is merely trying to correct this problem. All serious authors of Naval aviation history should support these efforts.

In closing, yes, airships were commissioned and decommissioned. They were *airships*.

A-20 FIRST AND LAST

Howard L. Naslund, Annapolis, MD

The A-20 article in the Spring 1990 *Journal* was welcome, as that fine airplane has never received the publicity it was due. The author's comment that the 3rd Attack Group was the first unit to operate A-20s is

correct, but needs some clarification. Stripped of senior officers and aircraft, the 3rd arrived in Brisbane in February 1942, with 784 airmen and 17 officers, none higher than 1st Lieutenant. After operating some shopworn A-24s, the 3rd finagled two dozen new Dutch B-25s from Melbourne in March and had half of them ready for combat in early April. These were joined by 24 new glass-nosed A-20s in August, and still more B-25s later. The 3rd became an all A-20 outfit in late 1943 or early 1944. With three groups of four squadrons of about 14 airplanes each, there were at least 168 A-20s in the Southwest Pacific, not the 37 mentioned by the author. By war's end the 3rd had two squadrons of A-26s, but enough A-20s left for three squadrons as well.

The A-20G technical data also needs some slight corrections. Solid-nose models had only a two-man crew. Operational cruise in the Pacific to and from the target was 200-205 IAS, which at 2,000-foot altitude is about 210 TAS (statute), not the 272 mph cited. Target runs at low level were in the vicinity of 260-280 IAS. There were occasional missions up to 5:30, and some round trips were well over 1,100 statute miles, with adequate reserves. At these ranges the only pilots who got into trouble were those who switched tanks when the red light came on, rather than running each tank dry in turn, so that all remaining fuel ended up in the two mains.

As with almost all of Ed Heinemann's creations, the A-20 was a superlative airplane to fly—stable, very maneuverable and light on the controls. The stripped-down training models without armament or turret were every bit as fast as the fighters of that era, except at the upper end of the performance envelope. The pilot manual recommended that normal instrument flight be conducted with feet on the floor, allowing coordinated turns with aileron alone. The six forward-firing .50s were mounted at a 3½ degree angle below horizontal, permitting firing at very close range.

Although the 3rd Group, known since inception as the Grim Reapers, had a couple of squadrons of A-26s by war's end, the last WWII mission by the unit was flown by three squadrons of A-20s, nine airplanes each, from Okinawa to Akune, Kyushu, an undefended city of no military significance, on August 12. While the 8th Air Force and the Pacific-based B-29s and B-32s had been fire-bombing cities for years in carrying out Allied policy, the 3rd and other Pacific units had never been ordered to destroy a civilian target until arriving in Okinawa. Akune was one of only two or three cities assigned the 3rd Attack Group.

Assigned to group headquarters, I led the group in an 89th aircraft. The 13th squadron was led by Donald J. McClellan, but I don't recall whether the 8th or the 90th squadron was on that final mission. There were no organized bombing missions after

that date, although there may have been individual fighter sorties for a couple of days. By my calculations, the A-20 was the only Allied tactical aircraft, and possibly the only aircraft, to be in continuous combat service from early 1940 right up to the last day of the Pacific war. Anyone who flew it would agree that the A-20 deserved that honor.

THE TOILET . . .

Tom H. Brewer, Huber Heights, OH

Reference AAHS *Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Spring 1990, "The Toilet That Almost Flushed an Airplane," photo caption, page 17: I would like to correct a statement made by the author that "the first four B-1s were given a desert camouflage paint scheme." Actually, only ship Nos. 3 and 4 received the "desert" scheme.

The first aircraft, 74-158, which was the performance and handling qualities aircraft, flew until late 1977, at which time it went into storage. It was painted white throughout its flying career, and after the advent of, and prior to the rollout of the B-1B, it served as the test article for the proposed production "Strategic" scheme of two shades of gray and one of green. Presently, the aircraft resides at Rome, New York, on an antenna range, still sporting its "premier" Strategic scheme.

The second aircraft, 74-159, which was the proof loads and handling aircraft, flew in white until 1978 when it went into storage at the completion of the B-1A test program. When the B-1B was announced, this aircraft was activated to fly as the performance and handling aircraft to cover test points unique to the B-1B. It remained in the white scheme until shortly before its tragic loss on 29 August 1984, when it also had been painted in the Strategic scheme.

B-1A No. 3, the subject of the photograph and the offensive avionics aircraft, was painted in the desert scheme in the fall of 1979. The belly and lower surfaces remained in the gloss white, the three-color desert scheme was applied to all upper surfaces and all the way down the fuselage sides to present a total camouflage when viewed from above. This aircraft is now at Lowry AFB, Colorado, serving as an instructional airframe, and still carries the desert scheme.

Ship No. 4, 76-174, the defensive avionics aircraft, made its first flight on 14 February 1979 in the overall white scheme. As ship No. 3, it was repainted in the desert scheme in the fall of 1979. It went into storage in 1981 wearing this scheme. After the announcement of the B-1B, it was hastily brought out of storage and appeared at the Farnborough Air Show in 1982 in the desert scheme. Upon its return, it went into a lengthy lay-up to be completely refitted

with B-1B avionics, and at that time it was repainted into the Strategic scheme prior to serving as the prototype for the B-1B.

Perhaps a bit nit-picking, but after all the confusion that has existed over the years regarding these four aircraft and their schemes, and having served on the B-1A Joint Test Forces at Edwards AFB, I thought it best to set the record straight.

Richard K. Smith, Wilmington, NC

Jim Turtle's story about the near-disastrous toilet in the B-1 bomber in the Spring 1990 *Journal* made me wonder about the dollar cost of this nefarious contraption. When Post and Gatty flew around the world in great haste in 1931, their sanitary facilities consisted of cylindrical ice cream containers made of cardboard. It is to be wondered how many millions it would cost the Air Force to "reinvent" the cylindrical ice cream container.

Ed Betts' first-rate piece re the DC-2 (the best I've seen yet about that marvelous airplane), cites many prices long since made quaint by the depreciated dollars we've been handling over the past 20 years. Without foostering around with the hocus-pocus of consumer price indexes, there are two quick techniques for obtaining a rule-of-thumb index to relative purchasing power. One involves the price of gold; the other the federal minimum wage. Like a pair of inertial navigating systems, they tend to check one another.

Established by the Wage Standards Act of 1938 the minimum wage was originally 25 cents an hour. In 1990 it is \$5.80/hr., going to a more realistic \$4.25 in 1991. If 4.25 is divided by 0.25 a factor of 17 is obtained. From 1900 to 1933 the U.S. was on the gold standard, the dollar being locked into gold at \$20.69 per troy ounce. In May 1990 gold

was fluctuating around \$380/oz. The division of 380 by 20.69 yields a factor of 18. However, I'm inclined to believe that both 17 and 18 lag behind reality and for myself arbitrarily use 20. In other words, that \$160 TWA was charging for a coast-to-coast one-way flight amounts to \$3,200 today, making a DC-2 the *Concorde* of 1934!

FIFTY YEARS OF TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHT

R.E. Williams, Long Beach, CA

In the Summer 1990 issue of the AAHS *Journal*, page 95, the caption was abbreviated to the confusion of many, no doubt. The full caption is printed below.

In 1939 American Export Airlines, a subsidiary of the steamship company of the same name, began test flights over the Atlantic with Consolidated flying boats. These were civil versions of the PBV. It was June 20, 1942, that regular service was inaugurated, flying nonstop between New York and Foynes, Ireland, with three Vought-Sikorsky VS-44 amphibians.

(United Technologies)

HOME FROM THE SEA

Edward L. Leiser, Chula Vista, CA

The Grumman F3F-2 recently recovered off the ocean bottom near San Diego is in the museum workshop for restoration. Enclosed is a photo I made as it arrived April 16. NADEP at North Island stripped the paint and alodined(?) the machine to prevent future corrosion.

F3F-2 BuNo 0976

