

NEWS & COMMENT FROM OUR MEMBERS

FALL, 1990 JOURNAL REAR COVER

George A. Carney, Lisle, Illinois

The back cover of the Fall 1990 *Journal* (Vol. 35 No. 3) shows Sid Bradd's painting of the 1930 Thompson Trophy Race at the Curtiss Reynolds Field northwest of Chicago. The Naval Air Station, Glenview, Illinois, began as the Curtiss-Reynolds Airport in 1937. In 1943 the Curtiss Reynolds field was designated the U.S. Naval Air Station, Chicago.

I have been working here as a General Engineer for the past 17 years as a Facility Planner and performing architectural and engineering services. Our Hangar No. 1 is the old Curtiss Flying Service, Inc. hangar. In the past years since 1974 we have been building new hangars for the Army, Navy and Marine Corps and demolished many old buildings.

I fear someday this old hangar will be replaced and demolished. In my mind's eye this hangar is one of aviation's historical sites. Many golden era aviation events took place here. The old blueprints show that Rebori, Wentworth, Dewy and McCormick, Inc., were the architects. A.N. Rebori was the architect located in the McCormick Bldg. in Chicago. The drawing's title is "Chicago Airport for the Curtiss Flying Services, Inc., dated May 6, 1929."

I am not aware if the Navy and the historical community have considered this hangar as a historical site. It would really be a shame to see this hangar demolished someday. What could we do to prevent this from happening?

Sid Bradd, Solon, Ohio

Re: the Wedell-Williams back cover painting on the Fall 1990 issue of the *AAHS Journal*, the misspelling alluded to on the Wedell 92 "We-Wmc" is indeed wrong but also right for the time and place. I originally had it correctly spelled but on closer examination of Air Corps photo No. 15467, taken at Chicago in 1930, you can make out (barely) the extra D in Wedell. You have to have a print from the original negative, however, as the orthochromatic film barely discerned between red and black.

Perhaps somebody was hired to paint it on by phonetic instructions and it would then have been difficult to change.

CONVAIR COMMENTS

William L. Davis, Santee, California

I would like to add my two cents' [plus] worth on the identity of the aircraft in photo

5 of the "Forum of Flight" in the Winter '90 issue (Volume 35 Number 4) of the *Journal*.

The aircraft in the photo is a Convair model 440-72, production number 343. It is a '72 version (C-131E) and was the seventh -72 version built. It was originally built for the USAF (as s/n 55-4796) but was delivered, instead, to the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) as N105. The model 440-72 was a cargo aircraft with a cargo interior and a 120"-wide cargo door on the left side of the fuselage aft of the wing. The date of manufacture was 10/16/56 and the date of delivery was 10/17/56. The aircraft was reregistered in 1973 as N90 and it is still in service with the FAA.

The aircraft was converted to a 580 by Pacific Airmotive Corp. The conversion was done under Supplemental Type Conversion (STC) SA4-1100. The Allison Division of General Motors Corporation is the STC holder. The aircraft went into conversion on 6/13/61 and came out of conversion on 8/23/61. It was the fourth aircraft converted for the FAA and it was the 17th conversion done by Pacific Airmotive.

Regarding the letter in the "News & Comment" section of the Summer '91 issue (Volume 36 Number 2) of the *Journal* from Dave DeBace, I would like to offer the following comments. The correct designation for the Allison commercial engine installed on the 580 is 501-D13D or 501-D13H. (There is an additional Allison commercial engine approved for the 580—the 501-D22G. This engine has only been installed on four civilian 580 aircraft to date.) The 501-D13H engine is equipped for water/methanol injection. The only customers to choose the water/methanol injection option at conversion were Frontier Airlines and the USAF for the C-131D conversions (redesignated C-131H after conversion).

Regarding his comment on the lack of mods to this aircraft, there were numerous modifications offered during conversion. Some options were performed by other STC holders at the time of conversion. For instance, AiResearch Aviation installed "stingers" in some 580s while Aircraft Tank Service modified some aircraft to increase their fuel capacity. Most of the options available were not necessarily visible to the naked eye.

The only customer that opted for the air-conditioning system described by Mr. DeBace, the GTC85-90F, was North Central Airlines. The majority of the 580s use the original Convair 340/440 air-conditioning system. The components of the original system were also manufactured by AiResearch. The GTC, mounted forward of the RH fire-

wall in the QEC, was only used to provide a pneumatic bleed air source for starting the main engines on those aircraft not modified with the GTC85-90F or GTCP85-91C/-291C.

A tail-mounted APU, the GTCP85-91C/-291C installation, was also offered as an option during the 580 conversion. This was installed by AiResearch Aviation. Those aircraft so modified had the GTC removed from the RH QEC and the new unit installed in the tail cone of the aircraft behind a new pressure bulkhead. The air-conditioning system was modified to provide ground heating/cooling without engine operation, an alternate source of inflight heating/cooling and pressurization (if desired), a 40 KVA alternator (the same capacity as installed on each main engine) which was available for both ground and flight operations in addition to providing a pneumatic bleed air source for starting the main engines. Both the GTC85-90F and the GTCP85-91C/-291C allowed for a completely self-sufficient operation of the aircraft, without ground support equipment of any kind. Due to potential weight and balance problems with the tail-mounted "stinger," most airline operators did not choose this option.

I personally can think of a few reasons why an airline would choose to relocate the rotating beacon from the tip of the vertical stabilizer to the top and bottom of the fuselage. Many 580s are still operating with rotating beacons installed in the vertical stabilizer with no apparent difficulties with "vibrations" causing frequent failures of the bulbs. Some airline operators even installed strobe lights in the wingtips to improve the aircraft's visibility. I would hardly think that this would be a point that would cause someone to draw the conclusion that the aircraft has a "lack of mods." I'm sure each customer chose only those options that were appropriate for his type of operation.

Regarding the letter in the "News & Comment" section of the Fall '91 issue (Volume 36 Number 3) of the *Journal* from Ed Woods, I would like to offer the following correction. The horsepower ratings of the Allison 501-D13D/H engines on the 580 are as follows:

Engine Ratings

Takeoff (5 min.)

Equivalent shaft horsepower

501-D13D or 501-D13H dry 3,750

501-D13H with water/methanol . . 3,880

Shaft horsepower

501-D13D or 501-D13H dry 3,460

501-D13H with water/methanol . . 3,630

Jet thrust (lbs.)

501-D13D or 501-D13H dry 726

501-D13H with water/methanol . . 625

Maximum continuous

Equivalent shaft horsepower 3,420

Shaft horsepower 3,138

Jet thrust (lbs.) 705

The above ratings are based on static sea level conditions, dry air, 59° F (501-D13D or 501-D13H dry) or 100° F (501-D13H with water/methanol), 29.92" Hg, no external accessory loads, and no air bleed.

Engine power limits as measured by the torquemeter at maximum rpm:

Takeoff (5 min.) 4,000 shp

Maximum continuous 3,400 shp

As a final comment, those aircraft modified per STC SA4-1100 are frequently referred to as 580s. This is an unofficial designation. For record purposes, these aircraft retain their original model 340 or 440 identity. The Convair production number, and only the Convair production number, identifies an aircraft as either a model 340 or 440. Convair production numbers 1 through 311 were manufactured as model 340s while production numbers 312 through 510 are model 440s. There are many 340s that were modified by Convair service bulletins to incorporate the performance improvements of the model 440; however, they are still model 340 aircraft.

A large weather radar nose does not necessarily identify an aircraft as a model 440 either. The large weather radar nose was incorporated in some 340s by a Convair service bulletin. Also, some 440s were delivered without the large weather radar nose. For example, the C-131H (Forum of Flight, photo 2) in the Summer '91 issue of the *Journal* and Mohawk airliner on the back page of Newsletter Number 95 are both 440s manufactured without the large weather radar nose.

This particular C-131H is a 440-79, production number 326. The '79 identified one of the USAF C-131D versions of the 340/440. (Note: 340-67 and 340-68 versions were also delivered to the USAF as C-131Ds.) The aircraft was converted by Pacific Airmotive. It was the fifth conversion for the USAF and the 51st for Pacific Airmotive.

The Mohawk Airlines Metropolitan is a 440-75, production number 463. The -75 identified the Scandinavian Airlines System version of the 440. This was the 19th -75 version manufactured. While it was ordered by SAS, it was canceled before delivery. The aircraft was placed into storage then sold to Mohawk in December 1958. By the way, who gets credit for that gorgeous photo on the back page of the Newsletter?

TRANSOCEAN AVIATION FATALITIES

Phil Brooks, Indianapolis, IN

I wish to add to the list of Fatal Accidents in Transatlantic Flight for the period 1946-1970, as mentioned by Matthew E. Rodina, Jr., in the Spring 1991 *Journal*. This incident

has a personal connection which I think might be interesting to your readers.

My grandmother, Louise Bador, was a passenger on an Air France L-749 *Constellation*, F-BAZN, from Paris to New York on October 28, 1949. As she prepared to board the flight, the entourage of French boxer Marcel Cerdan arrived. Cerdan, the former Middleweight titleholder, was on his way to New York's Madison Square Garden to attempt to retake the title from Jake LaMotta. It was discovered that the Cerdan party contained more people than seats had been booked for, so Air France personnel asked for volunteers to take a later flight. My grandmother was flexible with her travel plans, so she decided to take the next flight.

The *Connie* later crashed into a mountain 90 miles north of course inbound to the en route stop of Santa Maria, the Azores. All 48 passengers and crew were killed.

My father and grandfather, at home in Loogootee, Indiana, heard about the crash, and quickly returned home to break the news to my mother, a war bride, who was due to give birth within days to my older brother. They were fretting about how to tell her when a telegram arrived from my grandmother advising that she had taken a later flight! (See newspaper account of the accident.)

I am passing the Summer 1991 *Journal* on to a friend who is a retired Air France captain. I am sure he will enjoy Part I of Ed Betts' "The Original Connies" as much as I did.

PLANE CRASHES INTO MOUNTAIN SIDE IN AZORES

PARIS, Oct. 28 [1949]—A Paris-to-New York *Constellation* carrying 48 persons crashed in flames against a mountain peak in the Azores today. The Air France line said all aboard perished, including French boxer Marcel Cerdan and 11 Americans.

The plane apparently strayed from its course in bad weather and poor visibility and rammed into 3,500-foot Algarvia Peak in the northeast section of Sao Miguel Island. It was five minutes away from a landing at Santa Maria in the Azores when its last message was heard. Eight hours later the wreckage was sighted.

Air France here said it received word from Santa Maria by cable that rescue parties had rushed to the scene and found all 37 passengers and 11 crewmen dead.

The *Constellation* was last heard from at 8:50 P.M. CST last night when the pilot radioed he was ready to land at Santa Maria in five minutes. Then for eight hours there was no word. Planes and boats set out to look for the missing craft.

In the message received just before the

plane was due in the Azores, the pilot said he had "accomplished first part of trip normally."

At the time the plane last radioed it was going to land, it had gasoline reserves for four more hours flying, airline officials said.

At 6 A.M. EST Air France dispatched a search plane from Orly Field for the Azores.

Air France said that Jean De La Noue, 37-year-old captain of the plane crew, was "one of the best pilots of the North Atlantic line."

"He had 88 flights over the ocean to his record, representing 6,700 hours of flight," the company said.

PAA-AFRICA

Don Thomas, Dunedin, Florida

Re: my story on PAA-Africa I mentioned a C-46 when I meant a C-47. I really know the difference, as I have flown thousands of miles in both. Sorry, I am getting old.

FORUM OF FLIGHT '91-4

Deward B. Gresham, Oakland, California

Caption on page 314, Vol. 36, Winter of 1991. A Stearman 4D. "At Oakland, CA. 1935."

The photo was taken in the city of Alameda. The airport was "San Francisco Bay Airdrome." This airport existed 1931/41. The original hangars still remain. Regrettably the long hangar was cut in half in the mid-'50s to serve as a warehouse. Note in the photo letter V in the upper R/H part of the photo. VARNEY was the rest of the name. When the AAHS *Journal* first began in 1956 Bill Larkins requested remarks by members be as accurate as possible. The reason that the *Journal* exists is to provide accurate data for future historians. With that in mind I've often wondered why you never commented regarding F11C-2/BFC-2 serial numbers. You made the comment these A/C had an "A" prefix to BuAir numbers. I wrote and stated these machines never held an "A" prefix letter. During 1931 the "A" prefix to serial numbers had become a matter of the past.

Pardon me for sounding like an old geezer. I was at Bay Airdrome when I was a kid. The hangars at the site were unique, and not at all like Oakland.

JUSTICE WITH VICTORY

Harold W. Sherman, Belleville, Michigan

The B-17F in the photo at the top of page 278 in the Winter 1991 issue of the AAHS *Journal* is dubbed the "Bob N' Joyce." That is incorrect. The correct name can be seen below the machine gun port and that is "Jeanie," which is also listed on page 289.

In addition, the abbreviations "Key" on page 289 does not contain all of the symbols used in the table, e.g., CAM, NMF, MNO.

RARE BEAR

Birch Matthews, Rolling Hills Estates, California

In my article "Rare Bear" published in the *Summer Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2, there is an error which I wish to correct. On page 131, I stated that Lyle Shelton holds the Reno Air Race qualifying record of 467.378 miles per hour. It is true that Lyle does hold the qualifying record; however, at the time this article was prepared, the correct record qualifying speed was 474.622 miles per hour. To my chagrin, this inaccuracy was brought to my attention by no less than four members of Lyle's crew. My apologies to Lyle and his crew are in order.

This error on my part also represents an opportunity to bring the article up to date with regard to the current performance of Lyle and the "Bear." During the recently concluded 1991 Reno National Championship Air Races, Lyle set a new qualifying record of 475.899 miles per hour. More astonishingly, however, Lyle won the championship race on Sunday at an average speed of 481.618 miles per hour, some 13 miles an hour faster than his 1990 record speed. To quote the *Reno Gazette-Journal* published the following day: "On his final lap, he was clocked at an incredible 489 (miles per hour)." To put this "incredible" speed in proper context, it was achieved over a 9.1-mile course encompassing eight pylons turns. Lyle's records require no further adjectives. Lyle Shelton, the *Rare Bear* and his loyal crew are truly astonishing in the field of air racing.

LEAR RADIOS IN PIPER CUBS, 1941

Stewart L. Faber, Cincinnati, Ohio

In September of 1941 arc welding was just coming into general use. In Troy, Ohio, the Hobart Company was trying to expand the demand for the welders they were building by offering free training as a welder to anyone who applied. I was staying in a boarding house (room \$3.00/wk and 19 meals \$7.00) when the word went out that Lear (Bill Lear) Company in Piqua needed some mechanics for a crash program to install radios in 40 Piper *Cub* airplanes which were being flown in from Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, for delivery to Wright-Patterson AFB. I think the pay was about \$1.00/hr for as many hours as you could stay on your feet each day. Based on a number of years of tinkering with cars and a few months of working for a fire alarm company I was hired. The work was simple. The radio was installed under the instrument panel and wired to the plane's electrical system. We had to make up the mounting and the wiring harness, install the set and connect it up.

The planes were flown in by factory workers from Piper who had gotten their pilot certificates at Piper expense and took

turns ferrying planes to buyers. The planes arrived in twos and threes up to six or so a day. The work was done outdoors although we had a hangar for a shop to make up parts.

When the installations were complete they were tested by calling W-PAFB and then a couple of pilots flew them to W-PAFB for delivery, then returned to Piqua by auto for the next ones.

Several of the workers managed to get rides in a biplane parked in front of our work area. It made an impression on me as it was the first OX-5 engine I had seen close up. When the last plane was finished the pilot offered me a ride with him to deliver the plane, which I took. When we taxied up in front of the hangars at Wright-Patterson, they looked enormous compared to the one where we had been working.

Job over I collected what looked like a lot of money for about two weeks' work and went back to Troy and the welders.

THE OHIO-CURTISS AIRPLANE CONNECTION

Robert Pfaff, Johns Island, South Carolina

A good friend of mine has been after me to join your organization for a number of years, but until I read your article about that weird and not so wonderful SB2C I kept putting it off. For almost 47 years I have been trying to figure out how or why anybody would design an airplane like that. After reading your article the answer is obvious: Nobody did. Like Topsy, "It just grewed." You keep coming up with articles like that and I'm sure you'll clear up some problems I've had with some other inexplicable aircraft I've flown over the last 50-some-odd years. Do that and I'm yours for life.

In April 1945, I was Assistant Operations Officer in a Marine composite air group at Mojave, California. Our mission was to provide close air support for Marine ground troops, and we were to operate off of escort carriers, each carrier having a squadron of either F6F or F4U fighters, and a squadron of TBMs. So when we got a telex that the Navy was going to assign us an SBW4E we were more than just a little curious. We knew it was a dive-bomber because of the prefix SB—Scout Bomber—but none of us had any idea what W was. Maybe it was some kind of new secret weapon that we were going to have the honor of testing. We should have known better. Why would the Navy give the Marines anything good? The only reason they gave us the *Corsair* was because they thought it couldn't be flown off a carrier, and then when we did they took about half of them away and gave us F6Fs in return.

A couple of days later the mystery was cleared up when a Navy ferry pilot made us a present of a Beast. The only reason they gave

a fighter and torpedo air group a dive-bomber was to get rid of it. When we got the documentation on the plane we found out what the W meant. W was Canadian Car and Foundry. How very fitting that was we were to find out later.

Nobody in the group had flown a Beast, so it sat out on the ramp for almost a week while we tried to figure out what to do with it. I had a few hours in TBMs, which had the same engine, so I decided to check myself out in the thing. A half hour with the aircraft manual completed my ground school course, and all that was left to do was fly it.

The fun started when I taxied out from the line. The *Corsair* was a little short on visibility on the ground, but it was a veritable solarium compared to the SBW. It also didn't help that the landing gear legs were way out toward the wingtips and the brakes grabbed. S-turn taxiing was sort of like playing crack-the-whip. Taking off was even more fun, involving a kind of game of patty-cake while operating landing gear, flaps, throttle, prop, cowl flaps which were hand-crank-operated with the crank tucked away almost out of reach, etc. No matter what system you were operating the next one almost always involved changing hands on the stick.

Once off the ground and cleaned up I was pleasantly surprised to find that it was a fairly pleasant airplane to fly, for all its size. I went through a series of clean and dirty stalls and had about decided that I would be able to get along with it after all, when I noticed that my rpm was fluctuating with my air-speed, and a lot of my instruments were dead. Since I had a grand total of 30 minutes in the plane I felt I should get it back on the ground as quickly as possible. I called the tower to get cleared for a long straight-in approach, and that's when I found out my radios were dead too. My introduction to Curtiss wiring! My peace of mind wasn't helped any when I didn't get any green lights when I put the gear down, but the landing was uneventful. I flew the SBW off and on when I couldn't avoid it, for about a year after that, but somehow it and I never became friends.

MOVING?

If you're planning to move please send us your change of address as soon as possible. We cannot get your JOURNAL to you if we don't know where you live. To ensure uninterrupted service please let us know at least six weeks in advance. And to be sure it is *your* address we change, please include your current mailing label.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
INCLUDE CURRENT LABEL