

NEWS & COMMENT FROM OUR MEMBERS

CLYDE WILBUR ICE

Roger Besecker, *Canadensis, Pennsylvania*

Ref: the letter in Vol. 38 No. 1, Spring 1993 *Journal* from Mr. Don Ives and my article on Clyde Wilbur Ice (p-79). I hope Mr. Ives is aware that most authors who write for the *Journal* are amateurs, not professionals. I regret that horrible clanger on the Standard J-1; however, the main thrust of the article was on Mr. Ice's life and not a particular airplane. I confess I never saw a Standard J-1 so I hope Mr. Ives will forgive me and accept this apology for having offended him so deeply.

I don't feel any offense was intended or apology is needed. One of the functions of the News & Comment section is as a medium for members who know to correct errors in the articles, no matter how slight, so that history can be as accurate as possible. I have often experienced being corrected only after an article has been published. All authors have. It's another source of research data.
—Editor

NEWS & COMMENT — SPRING 1993 JOURNAL

H. Glen Buffington *El Dorado, Arkansas*

Vol. 38, No. 1, looks great. In News & Comment, p-80, the Waco piece should read Brandy's Taperwing Wacos (not Brandy's). Ray Brandy is the president of the National Waco Club, 700 Hill Avenue, Hamilton, Ohio 45015.

LWF TRAINER

Mike Gradidge, *Rickmansworth, Herts, England*

Lowe, Willard and Fowler V, a two-seat training and observation biplane built by L.W.F. Engineering Company, College Point, Long Island, New York, just before WWI. This example is in the Narodni Technical Museum, Prague, Czechoslovakia. The photo was taken on April 14, 1992, and submitted by an AAHS member from England, Mike Gradidge. Does anyone know how this aircraft got to Czechoslovakia?

THE ACROJETS

Ben L. Honahue, *Mountain View, California*

During the past four decades I have been appalled by the lack of in-depth research by commentators and historians, especially the Air Force historians. I speak now of the Thunderbirds Aerobatic Team. The most recent comment regarding the "T" Birds was on the excellent Discovery Channel—telling viewers that the very first jet aircraft used by the Air Force team was the F-84.

I strongly object to that statement. Reason? The *very first* acrobatic jet team of the Air Force was The Acrojets out of Williams AFB, Arizona, in 1949, or thereabouts.

The team was made up of four F-80 instructors at Williams who wished to show the student pilots just how good the aircraft could perform the myriad of maneuvers needed to engage the enemy. Depending upon schedules, the four pilots put on shows for the student body and others who were about. Very soon it became a huge show for the whole base. And soon Hollywood became interested in this team of instructors and, with Air Force approval, produced a movie that made the rounds of theaters in 1951 titled *The Acro Jets*. Not the greatest of movies, but there was a good portion of the film devoted to the precisionness of their flying. Unfortunately, the team was broken up shortly thereafter. The Korean conflict took precedent. The team was broken up and those pilots were sent into combat in Korea.

I knew one team member, Capt. Kingsley

Sellinger, who lost his life during his second tour. While flying a weather recon mission in very bad weather and being guided by radar he struck a small mountain peak near Taegu.

Many times in the past I have voiced my displeasure in writing of the omission of the pioneer acrobatic jet team. As always, the Thunderbirds claim to be the first. I would be most pleased if that error would be corrected by giving credit where it justly belongs.

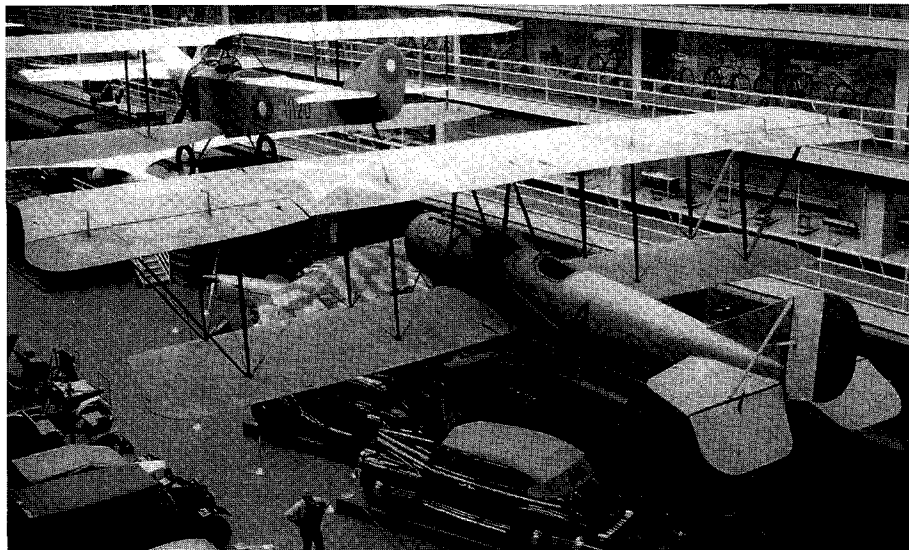
How about some comments from the readers out there?

THE DOUGLAS DC-6 SERIES

Matthew E. Rodina, Jr., *St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands*

Part II of Bob Williams' article on the Douglas DC-6 series aircraft (Summer, 1993 *Journal*) was of interest to me especially as it related to the DC-6A aircraft. My father flew these aircraft for Slick Airways during the 1950s so perhaps I will be permitted some comments about the aircraft:

1. The photos of the Douglas prototype (N30006) and the Slick airplane (N90806) are the same aircraft (c/n 42901). Slick sold the plane to Transocean Airlines in 1952 and it disappeared on a military contract flight between Honolulu and Wake Island with the loss of 58 lives.
2. The Alaska Airlines DC-6A N6118C (c/n 45243) pictured on p. 148 had been ordered by Slick but sold to Alaska before delivery. It



crashed at Shemya Island, Alaska, in July 1961 killing the six crew members aboard. 3. The two DC-6As modified for airborne TV transmission (p. 152) were former Slick planes N6813C (c/n 44889) and N6815C (c/n 45110). They had retractable 25-foot-long antennas mounted on their bellies and were operated by Purdue University from Lafayette, Indiana, for the Midwest Program for Airborne Television Instruction.

No DC-6Cs were manufactured or certified as such. All aircraft were built as DC-6As or DC-6Bs including the C-118As and R6D-1s for the military. The latter now account for a large portion of the DC-6A/B series aircraft still flying. The DC-6As could be certified as convertible passenger/cargo aircraft with a maximum of nine crew and 102 passengers which was the same as the DC-6B.

By the late 1950s, the DC-6A/B aircraft were selling for about \$1.8 million but most of the DC-6Bs were being scrapped a decade later having flown about 20,000 hours. The versatility of the DC-6A series has led to its continued use today.

Altogether, 528 DC-6A/B series aircraft were built with 74 being DC-6As, 166 as C-118A/R6D-1s and 288 as DC-6Bs.

R4Q/C-119F PACKET

Fred Horky, Warner Robins, Georgia

I very much enjoyed Nick Williams' piece on the R4Q that appeared in the Summer 1993 issue of the *Journal*.

Many years ago (1956-58) my first tour out of USAF pilot training was in C-119Gs at Pope AFB, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.

The passage of time always puts a warm glow on things, but my view has *always* been that the airplane got a bad rap in Korea, and

never quite got over it. We didn't have much trouble—anyone making "only two or three landings with both engines running" must have had lousy maintenance, indeed! I had only two engine-out landings in two years.

By the way, the Wright R-3350 Turbo-Compound is the most efficient piston engine ever but is *not* turbosupercharged: instead three power-recovery turbines are geared directly to the crankshaft and do *not* drive a blower to increase manifold pressure. At max power, each "PRT" extracted 150 hp out of exhaust gas kinetic energy.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A BOEING F4B-4

Walter F. Gemeinhardt, Central Point, Oregon

I found Vol. 38 Number 2—Summer 1993 a most enjoyable issue. At this time I would like to direct a comment or two to News & Comment.

Pete Bowers' article on the Smithsonian's Boeing F4B-4 No. 9241 brought back a lot of fond memories, as I too had a small part in that aircraft's history. You might find the enclosed photos of some interest or use.

There was an article about Vice Admiral Priore presenting the F4B to NASAM in the Sunday *Washington Post*, 1961 sometime as I recall. On Monday morning my old friend Lou Casey called me to gloat a little bit about the "Smith's" new prize.

I had conferred with Maj. John Elliott about the s/n of said aircraft, and he confirmed what I had long known. F4B-4 No. 9241 had never been in a Navy squadron, certainly not in VF-1B.

I told Lou that they had a bogus airplane and I didn't think that was very fitting for our No. 1 National Aviation Museum.

My friend in D.C. promptly wanted to know the exact story about their new possession, and so I gave it to him. Also, I presented L.C. with an exact model of the F4B and, I believe, some photos to use as a marking/color guide.

Not too long after No. 21 was back in her old VF-9M markings I had occasion to borrow the a/c. It was, however, still slightly incorrect in that the grey was a bit too dark and the side No. 21 was a bit under size.

We of the Marine Corps Museum were most happy to get the use of 9241 "as was" and so not looking a gift horse in the mouth was the order of the day. That whole transaction proved to be a most interesting adventure for me, one of many with the MCM; but that is another story which I won't go into at this time.

The enclosed photos were taken by a Marine photographer at Turner Field, Quantico, about October 1963. My good friend, the late Gen. Ford (Tex) Rogers, USMC Ret., especially enjoyed seeing one of his old VF-9M a/c present, and it was mostly for his pleasure that I brought the F4B to our special "air show."

In the background can be seen the Standard E-1, belonging to the late Sidney Shannon. The WWI bird was just nearing its restoration when I also borrowed it. Cole Palen's first WWI Nieuport 288 is also seen on the flight line. Cole easily stole the show with his flight demonstration that day, bringing tears to our WWI types in the audience.

F4B-4, BuNo 9241, on display at Turner Field, Quantico, Virginia, about October 1963 (right). Aircraft in the background are Sidney Shannon's Standard E-1 and Cole Palen's Nieuport 288. Posing in front of the F4B-4 is General Ford O. (Tex) Rogers, USMC (Ret.), former C.O. of VF-9M

