

NEWS & COMMENT FROM OUR MEMBERS

THE BOEING STRATOLINER AND TWA
William Villani, Selma, Oregon

In Ed Betts' article "The Boeing Stratoliner and TWA" (*Journal* Fall 1993) mention was made of a 307 which was lost near Madras, Oregon, in October of 1958 after running out of gas while crop dusting. In fact, the date was May 10, 1958, and the plane was lost due to an in-flight fire that developed during a test hop prior to Boeing's planned delivery to a new owner in the Philippines. According to the news reports the *Stratoliner* still had several hundred gallons of fuel aboard at the time of its loss. ("2 Pilots Escape as Fiery Plane Lands on Butte"—*Portland Sunday Oregonian* May 11, 1958, p. 1.)

Also, isn't the Fairchild in Forum of Flight, p. 238 of the same issue NC8016, not NC8106 as the caption states?

Yes! —Ed.

IN MEMORIAM —JAMES H. (JIMMY) DOOLITTLE 1896-1993

H. Larry Elman (Col. USAFR, Ret.), Port Jefferson, New York

In over 30 years of AAHS membership, I have often sent errata or criticisms—after all, our goal is historic accuracy, and one contributor may often have data another lacks. But this is the first time I am sending such a correction with chagrin and embarrassment for the AAHS as a whole. You see, I never expected to see a serious error in the obituary of a truly major historical figure.

It is one thing for the *New York Times* to print an error in the obituary of General James H. Doolittle—they "can" obituaries of famous persons well in advance of need, and it probably does not dawn on them to update the obituary of a person in their 80s or 90s because so few persons achieve anything of importance then. But there is no excuse for AAHS to carry General Doolittle—this country's ONLY 4-Star Reserve Officer—as Lieutenant General in its final tribute to one of the most distinguished aviators of this nation.

I am enclosing my commentary to the NYT on their obituary error—perhaps a portion of it should run in a future AAHSJ issue to correct your mistake. As a result of this correction, I was asked by MIT to speak at its memorial service for General Doolittle, and my text was basically what appears in

this attachment. If I can be of further assistance, do not hesitate to ask.

"Dear Sirs—I may well not be the first to call this to your attention, but there is a serious error in your obituary of General James H. Doolittle, USAF, in today's *New York Times*. I am sure it occurred because such obituaries are researched and written well in advance of the person's passing. General Doolittle was a full General (4 Stars) when he died; he was the only full 4-Star General or Admiral in the history of this nation's Reserve Forces. The story of this is much to the credit of a number of fine persons who served this nation well. (Note: Because the average person may be confused by the various titles for Generals and Admirals, I will use the number of Stars in each reference which follows.)

"General Doolittle retired as a Lieutenant General (3 Stars). Because he had left Service and was later recalled as a Reservist just before World War II, his retirement decades later was as a Reserve Officer. The law at that time restricted rank in the Reserves and National Guard to Major General or Rear Admiral (2 Star) and below; General Doolittle was the only person to attain 3 Star rank in the Reserves of any of the Armed Services. (He was not reverted to the lower rank because he had earned the third star in a combat command; his status as a holder of the Medal of Honor may well have also affected the decision to allow him to retain a rank above what the law allowed Reserve Officers.)

"During the Reagan Administration, the law was amended to allow the ranking Officer in each of several Reserve Components to attain 3 Stars. Senator Goldwater, in what was one of the more magnanimous and kindly gestures of his Senatorial career, then introduced a bill to promote Doolittle to 4 Stars so that he would retain his status as the highest Reserve Officer in our history. It was a fitting and just tribute to a gentleman who not only served with distinction in wartime, but who also was instrumental in building the key technologies (instrument or "blind flying," high energy fuels, etc.) of today's worldwide aerospace transportation system. Senator Goldwater also placed in the same bill a long-overdue promotion for General Ira Eaker, one of the primary founders of the United States Air Force. Eaker had been Vice Chief of Staff (then a 3 Star position; but ever since then a 4 Star position) under General Spaatz, and was slated to replace

Spaatz as Air Force Chief of Staff. He chose instead to retire in order to serve as a columnist and elder statesman/philosopher of aviation. As superb as Eaker's leadership had been in the war, his subsequent very long and wise service as a commentator may well have been more valuable to this nation.

"When Senator Goldwater's bill passed and both Doolittle and Eaker were scheduled to appear at the White House to receive their fourth Stars from President Reagan, Jimmy Doolittle made a special request (which was honored). He asked for two separate ceremonies, and that Eaker's be first. His reasoning, he explained, was that Eaker had always held Date of Rank on him and should continue to do so. While minor to the average person in the street, this gesture held great symbolic importance for the generals involved, and important precedents for the relationship of Reserve and Regular members of the Armed Services.

"These incidents illustrate the character and honor of Doolittle, Eaker, and Goldwater. Perhaps those traits of these three need as much stress as their feats in flying and combat.

"General Doolittle will be sorely missed. In passing, I spent a day with him about 15 years ago while doing some oral history work for both the Air Force and for AIAA (the professional organization of aeronautical engineers). During the entire day, General Doolittle—when asked about controversies—always described ably and in detail the positions of his opponents. He voiced only a few words for his own positions in these debates. Finally I remarked on this seeming contradiction. General Doolittle replied that God had seen fit to leave him on earth, while his opponents had passed on. He felt the need to therefore defend their positions since they were men of honor and were not present to do it themselves. This is typical of Jimmy Doolittle, MIT Doctorate, Air Force General, but most importantly a fine and honorable man."

Staryl C. Austin, Jr. (Brig. Gen. USAF, Ret.)

I was very disappointed in the "In Memoriam" story and the caption on the back cover of the Winter 1993 *Journal*. Jimmy Doolittle was an outstanding officer and one of my boyhood heroes as an air racer—of all people to overlook his promotion to four-star general in 1987, AAHS should be ashamed. Isn't the goal [of AAHS] to pre-

serve history? If so, it should be accurate.

You are absolutely right! Our goal is to preserve and propagate American aviation history, and I must take all the blame for this gross error. Some aspects of history, though, are altered by current events. General Doolittle's fourth star is one example.

As luck would have it I was traveling both when he was promoted long after his retirement and when he passed away. I only learned by chance of his demise, and not at all of his promotion. On my return I had to hurriedly redo part of the Winter 1993 Journal to include an appropriate memoriam and, unfortunately, used only "Doolittle A Biography," by Lowell Thomas and Edward Jablonski, Doubleday 1976, for reference. There was no time for Society members to check my copy, as the Journal art was overdue at the printer. So I'm totally to blame for the error.

—Bob Williams, Managing Editor

AMERICAN HAWKS FOR CHINA II

William F. Stagg, Hampton, Virginia

Reference the photo on page 301 in the Winter 1993 *Journal*. I believe that this is a clinker in the otherwise excellent article by Daniel Ford.

While not specifically identifying the pilot as a member of the AVG, the use of the word "volunteer" leads one to believe so. However, the plane shown is almost surely a P-40N model which was not introduced until 1944, almost two years after the AVG was disbanded. The P-40N (and Lend-Lease P-40M) can be identified by the cooling grill just forward of the exhaust stubs. Not enough of the rest of the plane is visible for me to determine the production block.

FAIRCHILD C-119A CARGO PLANE

David W. Menard, Dayton, Ohio

As Paul Harvey says, "and now the rest of the story." Kent Mitchell's C-119A story (Winter 1993 *Journal*) was interesting but not quite complete. Fairchild did not keep '769' around too long, as she wound up at Wright Field as EC-119A, with the 'E' for EXEMPT. After duty there, off to Chanute AFB for the R-4360 engine course. I saw her many times while there in 1955/6, marching by on the flight line, and seeing students run her up. The radio call number on fin was removed, but buzz number CQ-769 stayed, along with a round-style Air Training Command insignia on nose. I have a neg of her, but cannot get it printed in time to mail this. She was eventually scrapped when production 119s became available as Class 25 instructional airframes.

FORUM OF FLIGHT — WINTER 1993

James R. Shock, Warren, Michigan

Reference to Vol. 38, No. 4, Winter 1993, photo No. 11, page 244. The airship shown is not a U.S. Navy B-type, but a Navy C-type. Just to keep the record straight. It also appears to be a Goodrich-built C-type, most likely the C-6 which was shipped to Montauk 4 February 1919.

NORTHROP N-9M FLYING WING, BRESEE-LAMBERT, LWF

John Underwood, Glendale, California

I'd like to comment on Balzer's N-9M piece, which indicates considerable trouble with the Menasco engines. This is undoubtedly true, given all that was involved. Oddly, Harry Crosby noted only a single engine failure in all of his test flying of the N-9Ms. It was Crosby who rounded up the *Buccaneers* for the program.

Crosby's own *Buccaneer* surfaced recently in Northern California. It had been given to one of the university ground schools after the N-9M program. Possibly others have survived. I would be very much interested to know the serial numbers of any surviving *Buccaneers*, particularly those used in the N-9Ms. This has to do with a Menasco biography. Incidentally, Al had nothing to do with the N-9M program and had no knowledge of the application of ex-racing *Buccaneer* engines. Years later, when he inspected the Crosby engine, he mistook it for a marine conversion.

Re the so-called Breese-Lambert (p. 318, No. 8, 1994, No. 4 *Journal*), more properly Breese-Dallas Model 1: It was owned by Jackie Cochran who had it groomed for the '36 Bendix. Her pilot, Wes Smith, made a wheels-up landing shortly before the event, allegedly on Floyd Odium's orders, thereby preventing her participation. It subsequently went to Mexico in a sub-rosa deal orchestrated by Paul Mantz, ostensibly for Col. Roberto Fierro, who was a procurement agent for the Spanish Republic. It was demolished when American expatriate Cloyd Clevenger was flying it to a Mexican port for sea shipment to Spain.

Re the LWF (N&C, 1994, No. 4 *Journal*, p. 319): A number of these observation aircraft were sold to the Russians in 1917 and they were reported in service on the Czech-Slovak Front. Later, in 1918, when the Czech air force was brought into being, incorporating elements formed in Russia and elsewhere, the LWFs must have been among the "seven American aircraft" in the mixed bag inventory.

I might mention that the Prague LWF was

incorrectly labeled "Morse LWF" and is referred to as such in various museum guidebooks. This must come from confusion over the engine, which was a 150-hp Thomas V8, built by Thomas-Morse.

179th TACTICAL AIRLIFT GROUP MANSFIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD UNIT

James C. Gorman, Mansfield, Ohio

Enclosed are some photos of an F-84F (s/n 52-07021) on display at the Air National Guard Base at Mansfield Lahm Airport, Mansfield, Ohio.

The unit initially flew the P-51B, and P-51H before transitioning to jet power with the F-80, followed by the F-84E, F-84F and F-100, later converting to the C-130 *Heracles*. They currently fly the C-130H.

I was one of the original pilots of the Mansfield Air National Guard unit, which was established in 1948.

The F-84F display, in addition to being attractive, is also a memorial to the men and women of the 179th TAG. The memorial engraving reads: "THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE, PRESENTLY SERVE, AND WILL IN THE FUTURE SECURE THE SPIRIT OF THE MINUTEMAN."

The display/memorial was dedicated on 24 June 1988 in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the 179th Tactical Airlift Group, Chapter 23.





In March 1944 a Piper NE-1 was assigned to Airship Squadron 32 at NAS Lakehurst, N.J. The NE-1 was modified as shown and mounted on a retractable trapeze on one of the squadron blimps. The story was that the NE-1 could be launched and retrieved from the blimp although the ultimate intention was to load a depth charge into the plane, launch it as a drone and steer it into a surfaced submarine.

(National Archives 80-G-450426.)

WHAZZIT?

Jay E. Wright, Chico, California

I was first attracted by a similar photo that appeared in the book *Golden Wings 1941-45* by Dave Lacabaugh of Annapolis, MD. He was not able to supply any further information except what appears in the caption. I have written to all the aviation and Naval history sources in Washington, D.C., plus the Smithsonian. I did get three photo negatives from the National Archives but no other information can be found.

About 10 years ago I corresponded with RADM. D.S. Fahrney, USN, Ret. He was a foremost authority on drone aircraft and, after WWII, he published a study for the Bureau of Aeronautics, *Radio Controlled Aircraft and Guided Missiles*. I have recently written to ADM. Fahrney about the NE-1 project but have not heard from him. I fear he may have left us.

Perhaps one of our members may have some firsthand information on the project or a copy of ADM. Fahrney's study and would send me a photocopy of the section dealing with the NE-1/Blimp project. If this fails I'm afraid a damned good story has been lost forever.

