

Food for thought, or you can't take it with you:

As the half-century mark comes into sight for some of us, a problem arises that we have not seriously considered before...what to do with our historically valuable airplane picture collections, aeronautical libraries, and even complete airplanes? Much as we'd like to, we can't adopt the belligerent attitude of the old scotchman, who said: "If I cannae take it with me, Mon, I nae gonna go!"

In a few cases, there is no problem. Junior has a sincere interest in the subject and can be counted on to take over and keep things in order; maybe even make additions. Others regard pop's carefully-maintained file as so much scrap paper. Some wives I know for a fact are deeply resentful toward this thief of hubby's time and attention and would welcome the first opportunity to throw it out. A few wives, bless 'em, recognize the worth of a collection and appreciate the meaning that it has for the husband. An outstanding example is Viola Schmidt, who was very insistent that the identity of Al's collection be retained as a memorial to him.

Selling the collection before you go is one way, but the main trouble there, if you still have an active interest, is that it is apt to be a painful process something like selling off one of your children. If the job is left to the wife after the funeral, the painful parting will be eliminated but there is apt to be considerably less financial gain if the disposal is left to one who actually knows little of the actual worth or the most remunerative channels. In a few cases, certain rare individual negatives can sell for one or several dollars apiece, but in quantity, such as a neg collection of five to ten thousand negs, the average price is seldom in excess of twenty cents a neg, which hardly covers the cost of film, developing and file envelopes expended over the previous years.

There's still a way out that will preserve the material in the collector's name - will it to some suitable institution. The books present no problem in this department - there are plenty of public and institutional libraries that will be glad to have them. However, if the particular library already has a lot of the same books, yours may merely be set aside and used as trading material. Public and private museums may be interested in your airplane, but they won't buy it - it will have to be a gift. Another question to consider is: after you do give it away, can the institution display it? Most museums have a terrific problem today just in displaying a representative part of what they already have. The rest is in storage because of inadequate display area.

The question, to what kind of an institution should one leave a specialized negative collection, to is a tricky one. Wide public use of the material will be cut down if it goes to a "Membership" organization. On the other hand, some others, private, public, and government alike, are so busy keeping up with the present that history gets little consideration and is relegated to inaccessible "Dead" files. It might be well to do a bit of shopping around while you are still hale and hearty and able to line up an appreciative recipient that will "Do Right"

by the collection that you so lovingly and laboriously built up. However, once you do decide what the disposition is to be, write it into your will. Then the trustees of your estate, with legal direction, will see that your wishes are carried out.

One thing that is very important, unless you are leaving your negs or a photo collection to someone who knows as much or more about the subject than you do, have EVERY neg in a file envelope and have a good filing system that will enable those who will use the file to find what they are looking for. An index is not necessary, but a pile of several thousand unsorted negs is useless to anyone but the expert who is willing to dig. My declining years, if I have any, will probably be spent in such arranging.

If you don't make formal arrangements, at least brief you wife or heirs on the actual value of the collection and inform them that they can get much better prices by shopping around a bit and advertising than they can by selling in a lump to the first customer that comes along.

I hope that this little opus will stir up some thinking on the subject or bring forth some conclusions that others have reached. Other readers as well as myself would like to see some of these opinions printed in an early issue of the Journal.

Peter M. Bowers, Seattle, Washington

ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

Notice to all Members:

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Aviation Historical Society, duly held on 28 April 1960 in the County of Los Angeles, the Secretary was authorized to establish the time and place of the annual meeting of the Membership.

The Annual Meeting of Members will be held in the auditorium of The Institute of The Aeronautical Sciences, at 7660 Beverly Boulevard, in the city of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, California, at 7:30 P.M. on Friday, the 29th of July, 1960.

The following business will be conducted: ratification of the acts of the Directors during the first year of operation as a non-profit incorporated society; election of Directors for the ensuing year; adoption of the Code of By-laws as presented; amendment to the Bylaws to provide for eleven (11) Directors in lieu of nine (9) as now stated; and such other business as shall properly come before the meeting. Refreshments will be served.

(Signed) James J. Sloan, President