

NEWS & COMMENTS FROM OUR MEMBERS

AAHS Journal, Vol 63, No 3 – Fall 2018

Dear Editor:

I wish to complain bitterly about the latest issue of *AAHS Journal*.

I arrived home late from work, exhausted, with hours of further computer work / paperwork still to do before bed. Unfortunately, I opened my mailbox and found your envelope in my mailbox.

Plopping on the couch, with my briefcase and computer bag, I gave the envelope the courtesy I extend most of my retrieved mail: a polite perfunctory opening and glance. Unfortunately, the latest issue of the *Journal* was inside, and due a civil flip-through before resuming my chores.

To my chagrin, flipping through was not possible. Starting inside the cover, with a hilariously true L-5 cartoon, I stumbled immediately into the traditional opening with a WWII story, which I've grown immune to, usually. However, what grabbed me by the eyeballs with the stunning big photo of a Catalina belly-landed on ice -- preparing to take off!

Escaping that distraction, I moved onto the next article that opened with a startling artist's-concept hybrid-airliner painting, which demanded that I guess at its complex pedigree (DC-6 / Connie / Stratocruiser / 707?). And, it was attached to an article on a historic, short-lived branch of grand old American Airlines that I never knew of: AOA.

I forced myself to skim its pages, though repeatedly snagged by historic moments (world's FIRST transatlantic landplane airliner service? So late in the century? Wow.), and tangled repeatedly in the staggering collection of images. Who doesn't instinctively ogle the cutaway of America's first double-decker landplane-liner?)

But with the discipline of self-restraint again unfurled, I looked away -- right into a grand Connie, with a sparrow underneath. Oops, it was a PLANE. To my astonishment, you found a major-manufacturer's light plane - the prototype Lockheed "Little Dipper" - that I had never heard of. I have studied and written extensively about all the other single-seaters of its time, and was horrified to discover YOU found one I missed! And a product of John Thorp, no less.

Now, for a general aviation (light plane) historian, this was obligatory (and irresistible) reading, as the spectacular details and colorful history of this mystery plane unfolded, page by page. It seems no detail was overlooked, nor undepicted. Dammit! I had to read the whole darn thing. Took FOREVER. And then I wanted to go back and read again!

Dammit! Clock ticking. No work getting done. I was forced to gloss over the Capital Airlines history -- though very comforted that someone has now, at last, done a deep and broad report of this history-making, industry-shaping, culture-influencing airline that has so long gone under-covered. And now I've got it in my library for (important and treasured) secure, future reference.

Forcing myself forward, I simply splashed into the photo of one of my deepest aviation fantasies: The Last Great Flying Boat Airliner. I'd know the big Sikorsky anywhere, as I constantly promised myself, for decades, a ride in it as part of my "bucket list." How my heart broke when it was taken out of service and "museum'd." The topic is still painful.

I sought to console myself by mooning over the glorious photos (where DO you get all these %\$#@ photos??), but it only pained me all the more -- so I cut the reading down to about ten minutes worth.

Tearing myself away from the photos of my lost love, and flipping over the page, I was snagged again by the Panther jets planes I toyed with as a child... and the heroic childhood icon of astronaut Glenn.

Oh, come on. Let me GO! I have work to do.

Flipping determinedly and furiously, I crash into spectacularly detailed drawings and photos of Glenn Curtiss' pioneering aviation engine innovations. For ages I've contended that the most obvious, superficial shapes and images of planes are not the only bits of decisive early aviation history. And here was evidence in abundance.

That's it. I'm late for bed, and no work done.

I slammed the *Journal* shut in disgust... but then couldn't resist a peek at the Forum of Flight photo gallery, for my routine self-quiz. Damn, AGAIN -- amongst the planes I knew well (including two from my home town, one built in the building I once worked in, plus another I've actually photographed myself, and whose owner/flyer I've met and interviewed), there was one I did NOT know. What the %^#\$ is a "Pheasant"? Now I gotta do research. Thanks for NOTHING!

Sometime tonight I'll get back to work, and finish the stuff due in the office tomorrow. But, thanks to you, AAHS editors and contributors, it'll be sleepy-headed, half-assed junk. The boss and I will blame YOU. Shame on you!

Now, let's see, what page was I on....?

Richard Harris
Wichita, Kansas

The Last Winged Sikorsky - David L. Johnston

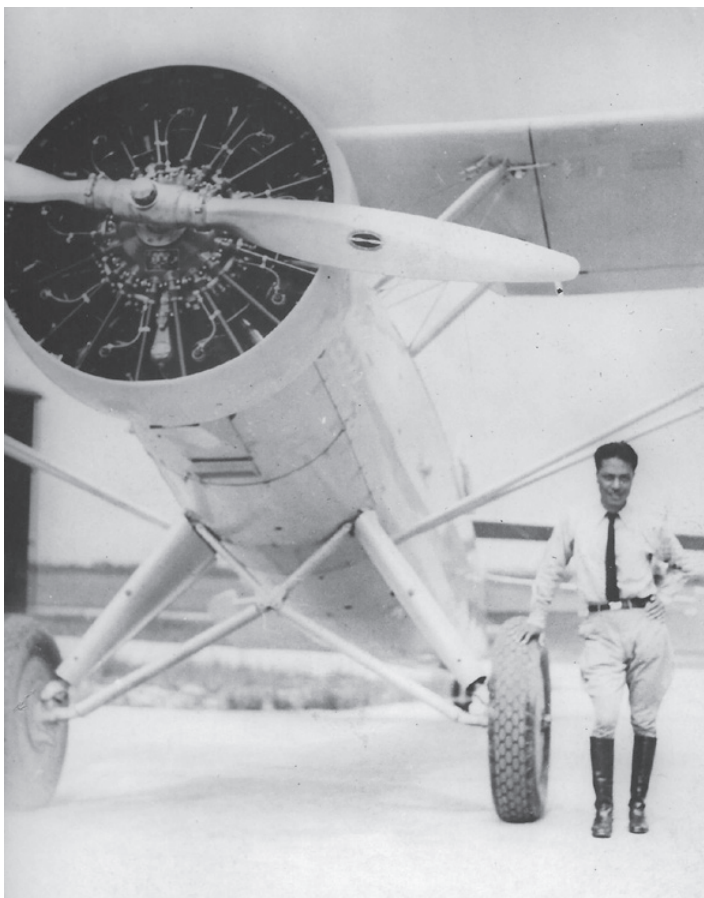
On p. 213 there is a factual error in the VS-44A story. N41881 was stored on St. Thomas, not St. Croix, after it was damaged. I was living there in 1976-77 and have photos of her. Also photos of when the Navy came to retrieve her.

Jim Caiella
Richmond, Va.

What the Heck is Going On Here? (II)

Since there has been such a resounding thud of utter silence from members and readers of this esteemed publication since the first subject was hoisted in the Spring 2017 (Vol.62, No.1,

American Aviation Historical Society Journal, Winter 2018



Can you identify this aircraft? If so, please drop a note/email to the editor (webmaster@aaahs-online.org). Dr. Hagedorn would greatly appreciate the assistance.

pages 32-33) issue, describing a “twin P-40,” being the eternal optimist, submitted for your consideration once again is the accompanying photograph.

We know precious little about what can be seen here. The handsome young man leaning on the port main wheel of this truly large, apparently parasol monoplane, is purported to have been a serving Mexican Army officer. However, we can discern no evidence of wings, rank insignia, or locale.

The aircraft has defied every effort at identification. It appears to be an unusually tall and large parasol monoplane with a nine-cylinder, radial engine. Close examination reveals no apparent insignia on the aircraft, other than the propeller manufacturer’s sticker, which appears to be a Hamilton Standard, ground adjustable type. The undercarriage is stoutly built, and the portion of the wing that is visible seems to show a nearly full-span aileron. It cannot be determined if the aircraft is single or two-seat. There is no indication of bomb racks or armament. The wheels appear to be about three feet in diameter, if the man shown is between 5’5” and 6’ in height. There seems to be a castoring tail wheel.

The image was found in the collection of the late, great Peter M. Bowers, now held by The Museum of Flight Archives. There were no comments on the reverse side and, apparently, even Pete did not know where to file this one.

Dan Hagedorn
Pullman, Washington



Forum of Flight, Vol 63, No 2, Summer 2018

Correction – Several members have brought it to the editor’s attention that we miss-identified one of the aircraft in Forum of Flight. This photograph (above) is actually an Interstate L-6 Grasshopper, N2778Q, 43-2648, c/n 91. About the only thing we got right was the N-#, which in the FAA database correctly identifies the aircraft. We’ll try to be more diligent in the future. Thank you to those sharp-eyed members that brought this uh-oh to our attention.

U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds

AAHS Member Ed Martin brought this subtle fact to this editor’s attention – something he had never noticed in the dozens of displays and 100s of photos he’s taken of the Thunderbirds.

Aircraft numbers 5 and 6 are the solo performers with number 5 always flying the inverted portions. The “5” on this aircraft is painted upside-down, and thus appears right-side-up for much of the routine. There is also an extra amount of humor regarding the inverted performance of Thunderbird 5: the pilots all wear tailored flight suits with their name and jet number embroidered on the left breast. The suit for the pilot of Thunderbird 5 has the number sewn upside-down.

