

President's Message

The American Aviation Historical Society, now celebrating its 65th year of continuous publication, marks the passing of William T. Larkins, the remaining of three founders of AAHS, on September 9, just a few months shy of his 100th birthday.

Bill Larkins, along with Willis Nye, and Chalmers Johnson, developed a concept for an aviation society that would contribute accurate and timely information for aviation photography enthusiasts. Bill Larkins himself was a longtime aviation photographer, and worked as an audio visual specialist for the University of California, Berkley.

Bill is remembered by many in the aviation community, not only for his extensive aviation knowledge, his published books and articles, but his enthusiasm for sharing his knowledge with others. It was that passion for sharing with others that forms the basis of our founding mission. Long time members, such as Bob Parmerter, have shared their recollections of Bill and his influence on their lives. Bob expressed the shared sentiment well with these words:

“We will remember Bill as a founder of AAHS but also for his books, articles, wonderful photographs and for me the fine example he set of aviation historians sharing both their knowledge and their photos. He shared hundreds of Beech 18 negatives with me so that I could make prints, and even more important was his encouragement for me to continue my work with the Beech 18 and subsequently to publish my work.

I have images in my mind of Bill standing on the roof of his early Ford coupe to get a better angle of an aircraft, spending two days photographing the 1,000+ surplus WWII aircraft stored at Ontario, Calif., and then renting a Piper Cub to photograph them from the air. I fondly recall sharing with Bill the excitement of discovering a very unique aircraft to shoot, of going to extraordinary means to get a shot, of waiting for endless minutes for the sun to come out or of finding a significant photo or document in an archive, and sharing it with the aviation community. Bill will live on in his wonderful books, photos and inspiration that we will hopefully pass on to another generation. I'm very proud to be able to say I was a friend of Bill Larkins.

Regards, Bob Parmerter

In my first year as President of AAHS, in 2012, I made a pilgrimage to Bill's home, a trove of aviation lore in Concord, Calif., to discuss his vision for AAHS. Bill remained steadfast in his vision that AAHS was meant to make aviation history photos, negatives, and collected aviation material available to the world, and not held for a privileged few. It has been a commitment to this view that has spurred AAHS to dramatically increase conversion of our images to digital format so our archives can be of use to others, as our founders envisioned.

More information on Bill's life and achievements can be found in a two part article “The Life and Work of Aviation Photographer & Historian William “Bill” Larkins”, published in *AAHS Journal* Vol 62, #3, and *AAHS Journal* Vol 66 No 1, by Jim Geldert.

We all wish a heartfelt ‘Thank You’ to Bill, and our ongoing members for enriching the aviation community through our shared interests.

Jerri Bergen
AAHS President



Jerri & Bill-Larkins 2012