

Dateline 60 Years Later

By PAUL R. MATT

The Checkered Cap gang of the 1900-1916 era moved in on Long Beach, California during September 1963. Although well-known throughout the country, their records are not on the police blotter. These records, individually and as a well-organized association, can only be found by delving into the pioneer days of aviation. Every year since their inception, the grand old flyers of early aviation have met to renew old acquaintances and reminisce. It is hard to find a finer group.

They are the Early Birds, an organization formed in 1928 and spearheaded by the late P.G.B. "Bud" Morris of Los Angeles. A constitution and bi-laws were drawn up in '28 and the ranks closed, limiting membership to those who flew solo prior to December 17, 1916. Continental members had to prove their solo prior to 1914 and the start of World War One in Europe. Upon inception, eligible members were hard to find and scattered throughout the world. By 1938, the roster contained little more than 280 names. They became known as the "Last Man Club" and fear was expressed that they would never number more.

Through diligent efforts of the club's officers and membership, an increasing number of pioneers were discovered and added to the roster. Today there are 253 active members. Throughout its 35 years of existence the Early Birds have located and validated over 567 qualified fliers. There were others. Many could not be located, some preferred not to join and others were deceased while a great number have not heard of the organization.

With each passing year new members are uncovered but almost an equal amount pass on. The laws of nature will eventually dwindle the membership, and the Early Bird organization will go out of existence. At present there is no perpetuation of the club, but it will be in existence so long as there is one member still alive.

Of several resolutions passed in 1963, one sets a date upon which any member can qualify for his Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Solo Plaque. This is December 16, 1966. The Board of Governors unanimously amended the articles of incorporation to terminate the organization officially on January 1, 1977. At that time, the remaining funds and much of the Early Birds' memorabilia will be passed on to the Aeronautics Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

In the past it was assumed and generally taken for granted that the yearly conclave would be held in conjunction with some aviation celebration, air show, or the like. When Long Beach was chosen for the 1963 gathering, it befell Ivan Wheaton to prove this wasn't necessary. Some skepticism was held that this just would not be an Early Bird Reunion without an airshow. The thought was soon disproved as one of the most enjoyable and well attended affairs was held without benefit of a display of airpower or air progress. So successful was the convention that it was decided to hold the 1964 affair in New York at the World's Fair.

One thing the Long Beach reunion afforded was more time to get acquainted and talk at leisure. Registration started on Thursday evening (September 12) and extended into Friday morning after which there was a two hour cruise of the Long Beach Harbor area. Following this, individual dinners were enjoyed at various places around town, and the evening progressed fast and well into the late hours of the night with legends and fables passing over reheated cups of coffee.

Saturday morning everyone was up early and boarded buses for Disneyland. Here a whole day of losing one's self in another world was enjoyed. The youngsters of 60 and 70 years entered the festivities with the spirit of children 50 years younger. By 5:00 PM the hotel was again filled with tales of old aviation. Cocktails were served from 6:30 to 7:30 and followed by the Honors Night Banquet. It was at the Banquet that the Fifty-year bronze Commemorative Plaques were presented by the guest speaker, Najeeb Halaby, Director of the FAA.

Mr. Halaby was presented by Waldo Waterman, 1962/63 President and Master of Ceremonies, and gave a brief talk on the advancement of aviation and a concise record of the tremendous strides taken in commercial aviation since the days of wood, fabric and wire so familiar to the pioneers present. He then presented the first Fifty-year Commemorative Plaque to E. M. "Matty" Laird. Others went to Early Birds Arthur C. Burns, Fred C. Hild (since deceased), David H. Young, Harry M. Jones, Filip Bjorklund, Edmund E. Bates, Albert D. Smith and Armand W. Claverie, and they were presented by Ivan Wheaton. Mrs. Earl Daugherty received her late husband's plaque posthumously. Early Birds Joseph R. Hutchison, Will D. Parker, Matilde Moisant (since deceased), Bertel W. King and Clarence deGiers were not present and were to be awarded their plaques later.

Before the Banquet closed, a moment of silent prayer was called for in memoriam of the Early Birds who had passed away during the past year. These were Clifton Hadley, Clair G. Horton, Frank LaVista, Frank P. Lahm, George Netzow, Hugh Robinson, J. D. Smith, Lawton V. Smith, and Harry J. Webster. At the mention of the name Frank Lahm there wasn't a dry eye in the room. Well remembered and highly thought of, he was truly a grand gentleman.

Reunion Chairman, Ivan Wheaton, had a full schedule for Sunday, September 15th. There was a business meeting in the morning with election of officers for the coming year, and the afternoon saw the E.B.s headed for Marineland of the Pacific. After Sunday dinner, a surprise was afforded by Zeno Klinker. A one hour historical, composite movie on the funny side of man's conquest of the air and space, entitled "Higher 'n a Kite", was shown. When the show was over, again there wasn't a dry eye in the hall, but this time it was from sheer enjoyment and laughter. A chronological movie was then shown of the stone and bronze monument presented by the Early Birds commemorating Governor's Island's place in aeronautical history.

Monday came and the group toured the anti-submarine carrier USS Bennington (CVS-20). At 9:00 AM all E.B.s and their guests were welcomed aboard by R.Adm. Joseph A. Jaap, Commanding Officer. Guests were treated to traditional Navy coffee and pastry, followed by color slides of the carrier's operations. A tour of the ship was provided from bridge to hangar deck, from stem to stern. The crash barrier was demonstrated (minus the use of an actual aircraft) and at 11:00 AM a Grumman S-2 of VS-25 was sent skyward from the forward port catapult to demonstrate the coordination and teamwork necessary for operations aboard a carrier.

By noon all were at the Douglas Aircraft Plant, Long Beach, for a preview of the most progressive and promising short haul jet airliner, the DC-9. A buffet lunch was served and then a view was given of the DC-9 mock-up with everyone trying out the cockpit. Fellow

A.A.H.S. Member, Harry Gann, corralled the group into a projection room to show some historic slides. Comments flew fast and furious from many of the pioneer spectators as Harry clicked the frames through, noting the historic remarks with enthusiasm.

At 2:00 PM the Early Bird group was at the Long Beach Municipal Airport for the official dedication of the field when it was renamed Daugherty Field in honor of E.B. Earl Daugherty, pioneer Long Beach airman. Mrs. Earl Daugherty accepted the honors for her late husband who was the first Early Bird to lose his life after formation of the organization in 1928. The plaque donated by the Early Birds is now placed at the entrance of the administration building and was unveiled by Waldo Waterman at 2:10 PM, September 16, 1963.

Immediately following the dedication, the first indication of being up in the air occurred. Everyone was given the opportunity of an airplane ride. Waiting on the field were American Airlines' Ford Tri-motor 5-AT (N9683), two Cessna Skymasters, one Beech Bonanza and a Piper Apache. Not everyone went up for their 30 minute ride, but those who did enjoyed it thoroughly. Rides were given over the Long Beach and Los Angeles area and several over Catalina Island. The biggest attraction was the old Tin Goose, but unfortunately, due to its slow, almost constant, 90 mph speed, it was able to make but one trip. In the same length of time and over the same distance, the Beech, Cessnas and Piper made two and three trips to the Ford's one. Added to this was the fact that it was filled with pioneer pilots and everyone had to have his turn at the controls. They got their wish but over-extended the flight time by almost an hour. No one begrudged the "make hay while the sun shines" and all were exceedingly happy and tired as they boarded buses and pulled away from Daugherty Field at

five o'clock.

The hotel was a welcome sight as the last of the pioneers came through doors, and headed for their rooms to pack and bid farewell. Many of the E.B.s were greeted by another well known aviator, the only personage to come in and say hello during the reunion. A smile came upon each face as they were greeted by the tall and handsome Art Goebel. A few words of admiration passed between the remaining group but time was limited and wearing on. By 6:30 most of the E.B.s were on their way home, some by round-about vacation routes, while others went back to work and business.

The affair was over, but the remembrances will live on. During the coming year they will hear from each other personally or through correspondence, read about each other and keep in contact in one way or another. It is an exclusive group, well organized and benevolent. Already they are looking forward to the 1964 Reunion.

E.B.s PRESENT AT 1963 REUNION--WITH SOLO DATE

1.	Arens, Charles A.	November 18, 1916
2.	Bates, Edmund E.	July 17, 1912
3.	Batts, Carl T.	August 9, 1916
4.	Bjorklund, Filip A.	December 19, 1913
5.	Bonnalie, Allan F.	November 1, 1911
6.	Broadwick, Georgia	*December 28, 1908
7.	Burns, Arthur C.	April 10, 1913
8.	Canady, Buel H.	August , 1915
9.	Carter, Ralph D.	July 15, 1911
10.	Clark, George R.	June 9, 1914
11.	Claverie, . Armand W.	April 15, 1912
12.	Curry, John F.	September 20, 1915
13.	Denehie, William A.	March 14, 1912
14.	Eaton, Warren S.	June 2, 1909



Early Birds at 1963 reunion at Daugherty Field, Long Beach, California, 16 September 1963. Back row from left: Harry N. Jones, Waldo Waterman, R.C. "Tex" Marshall, Filip Bjorklund, David Young, John F. Curry, Allan Bonnelie, P. H. Spencer, Joseph Thomas, Horace Keane, Arthur Burns, Ivan Wheaton, Edmund Bates, Charles Arens, William Y. Fray, E. M. "Matty" Laird, George Hallett, Helen Hodge Harris, Robert G. Fowler, Carl Batts, Georgia "Tiny" Broadwick, Stanley Vaughn, Charles Willard, Otto W. Timm, Thomas Hamilton, Leo Kimball, William Denehie, Ira Proffitt and Warren Eaton. Front row from left: Howard Wehrle, Ralph Carter, George "Russ" Clark, Harry Suppe, Hilder Smith, Anthony Stadlman, Fred Hild, Forrest Wysong and Russell Holderman. (Photo - Paul R. Matt)

15. Fowler, Robert G.	August 10, 1911	34. Stadlman, Anthony	October 28, 1912
16. Fray, William Y.	June 1, 1914	35. Suppe, Harry B.	June 12, 1912
17. Hallett, George E.	January 15, 1911	36. Suppe, William F.	June 12, 1912
18. Hamilton, Thomas F.	May 10, 1912	37. Timm, Otto W.	June 12, 1911
19. Harris, Helen Hodge	May 28, 1910	38. Thomas, Joseph H.	July 4, 1911
20. Heindell, Howard J.	July 4, 1915	39. Vaughn, Stanley I.	May 23, 1909
21. Hild, Fred C.	November 15, 1912	40. Waterman, Waldo D.	July 1, 1909
22. Hiller, Stanley J.	June 15, 1911	41. Wehrle, Howard F.	June 16, 1916
23. Holderman, Russell	May 7, 1913	42. Wheaton, Ivan P.	January , 1916
24. Jones, Harry M.	December 10, 1912	43. Willard, Charles W.	August 4, 1909
25. Keane, Horace	March 17, 1902	44. Wilbur, Paul F.	October 7, 1912
26. Kimball, Leo B.	April 11, 1911	45. Wysong, Forrest E.	March 10, 1915
27. Laird, E.M. "Matty"	September 15, 1913	46. Young, David H.	May 20, 1913
28. Marshall, R.C. "Tex"	November 15, 1914	*Balloon and Parachute	
29. Meyer, Cord	October 2, 1912		
30. Proffitt, Ira J.	October 22, 1916		
31. Smith, Albert D.	October 6, 1913		
32. Smith, Hilder F.	June 10, 1911		
33. Spencer, Percival H.	April 2, 1911		

Officers elected for 1963-64 were: Cord Meyer, President; R.C. "Tex" Marshall, 1st V-P; Glenn Messer, 2nd V-P; Stanley I. Vaughn, 3rd V-P; Ivan P. Wheaton, Treasurer; and Elmo N. Pickerill, Secretary.

Lincoln Beachey,

Balloonist

By WILLIS L. NYE

While Lincoln Beachey, the great aerobatic pilot of the pre-World War One era, is primarily known for his aerial exploits in heavier-than-air machines, he originally was one of the great early dirigible pilots. He was born in San Francisco, California in 1887 while his brother, Hillary, was born in Idaho. At the age of 13, Lincoln Beachey started his own bicycle repair shop, and by the time he was 15 he'd attained proficiency in the repair of gas engines, had graduated to motorcycles and had become, with his brother, a professional racer.

The prowess of the brothers at motorcycle racing, and their knowledge of air-cooled and water-cooled engines, brought them to the attention of Captain Thomas Baldwin, an early dirigible builder. He engaged them to provide engines for his dirigibles in addition to several balloons. Captain Baldwin also taught the Beachey brothers how to manufacture balloons, many of which flew successfully but required constant repair.

Early dirigibles used pongee cloth, a product of India, for the gas cells. This material was not overly strong and would tear easily, but it was the best known material to hold the hydrogen gas used to inflate the balloons. The Beachey brothers, however, developed their own kind of sealing materials to close the pores in the pongee fabric, and this material was sold by a San Francisco paint manufacturer for several years to aeronauts and balloonists. The gas envelope would be coated on the inside and outside with the sealant, the pongee cloth then being sufficiently durable to last several flights.

The Beachey brothers also developed the side type of finger patch later used by non-rigid airship builders to attach gondolas to the outer fabric of the non-rigid dirigibles. Heretofore, the net type of attachment and suspension was used to hold the gondolas to the non-rigid airship fabric. The gas cells were enclosed in this netting.

In 1902-03, Lincoln Beachey designed his first, crude dirigible. In 1904, he and his brother constructed The California Arrow for Captain Baldwin, and Lincoln flew it during 1904. This airship was powered with an early model Curtiss type, air-cooled, motorcycle engine, and the performance was fairly good. Lincoln flew it at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri. In an air race against the veteran aeronaut, Roy Khabenshue, Lincoln Beachey emerged victorious.

The small dirigible flown by Beachey also vied with

spherical balloons intended for free flight. It could be flown free style but it was also controllable, and could be flown at will in the direction desired, and so its flights held the interest of spectators. A rudder was fitted to obtain directional control, being actuated by control cables and a rudder bar. To descend, the pilot moved to the fore of the crude fuselage framework, and to ascend, the pilot moved aft. The payload was small and so only a man of light weight such as Lincoln Beachey could obtain any performance at all with the feeble horsepower output of the engine. In 1907 he flew this dirigible in Cuba.

At the Lewis and Clark Exposition held in Portland, Oregon, he built and flew another of his own dirigibles. It has been said that Lincoln Beachey had more experience and hours in the air in piloting dirigibles of the time than any other man except Captain Baldwin. During 1906-07, Beachey flew a dirigible around the Washington Monument in Washington, D. C. After the conclusion of this flight, he called on President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House but the doughty President was not at home. However, Mrs. Roosevelt greeted Lincoln Beachey, and his brother Hillary, for this historic event. In 1907, Beachey flew at the Tercentenary Exposition, Jamestown, Virginia. He also flew a dirigible from Staten Island to the Battery in New York City.

Bookings for balloon ascensions or dirigible flights were made through the International Booking Company, a vaudeville theatrical agency. They booked Beachey for a flight in Washington, D. C. wherein he landed his dirigible on the roof of the Munsey Building. On occasion, he also flew in Canada.

At the First International Air Meet, held at Dominguez Field, Los Angeles, on January 10-20, 1910, Lincoln Beachey distinguished himself by racing his 5,000 cubic foot dirigible against the veteran Roy Khabenshue in gusty weather. But already his love for the heavier-than-air machine was manifesting itself. Through his association with Capt. Baldwin, Beachey had met Glenn Curtiss who taught him to fly Curtiss Biplanes. Once Beachey had felt the rush of air against his face from the seat of a pusher biplane, nothing could suppress his desire to be the best in the business, and this he was until he was drowned in the waters of San Francisco Bay in 1915 (A.A.H.S. JOURNAL, Summer - 1961, page 105), flying the Beachey Monoplane which is detailed on the opposite page.