



NEWS AND COMMENT

COMMENT

LINCOLN BEACHEY IN ST. LOUIS

I read with great interest the article in the Spring 1964 JOURNAL (p. 56) by Willis L. Nye on "Lincoln Beachey, Balloonist". Having just completed a few months of concentrated library research on the aeronautical events of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904, I was a little disturbed to see the statement that Lincoln Beachey bested Roy Khabenshue in an air race at that Fair.

None of my research indicated that Lincoln Beachey was in St. Louis in the Fall of 1904. However, it is very easy to become confused in events that occur a long time ago (to us) in the same city at fairly close intervals. The big aeronautical show in St. Louis was in the Fall of 1907. The feature event was the International Balloon races, but combined with them were airship races for money prizes and also flying machine competitions postponed from the Jamestown Exposition a month earlier.

The Scientific American for November 2, 1907 has considerable material on pages 308 and 309; and they include a photograph of, "Beachey, the winner, descending in his airship."

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TRANSOCEAN'S STRATOCRUISERS LANGUISH

(The following is printed through the courtesy of the Oakland Tribune in which an original article by Bill Eaton appeared in the October 27, 1963 issue.)

Jack rabbits are normally fearful of big birds. These carry the jack rabbits off and pick their bones. It is thus strange to watch a galloping rabbit pause in the shadow of giant wings, sniff casually, then kick sand on the bird's underpinnings and bound cockily away. The big bird does nothing, and in the end the rabbit is witness to the picking of the bones of the bird.

The big birds stand silently at the north end of Oakland Airport. Now and then workmen come among them to rip out their vitals with sharp tools, and slice away their proud wings. It is the amputation of the wings that is most painful to see.

The birds are Stratocruisers—four engine, Boeing built Model 377s. They are the last of the once proud fleet of Transocean Airlines that once spanned the Pacific when Transocean was the nation's largest non-scheduled air carrier. Bom in Oakland, California in 1946 it employed 6,500 people and contributed some \$221 million to the Eastbay economy in the 13 years it lived.

In 1960 the airline went bankrupt and creditors carved up its assets. Fourteen big-bellied Stratocruisers were among the assets, their worth once being more than one million dollars. In September 1960 they were sold for scrap with Airline Equipment Co. of Newark, New Jersey being the successful bidder, offering \$150,000.

Transocean had reorganization plans early in 1964, under a Nevada company called the Rhone Corporation. The reorganization was approved by Transocean stockholders (1,100 of them) in July 1963 but only by a six-vote margin over the needed two-thirds of the 400,000 out-

standing shares. Heading the Rhone Corp. were attorney John M. Thorpe of Hayward, California, Orvis M. Nelson who was Transocean's founder and president, and Dwayne Strand who was the airline's president of air activities.

Reorganization plans were cancelled in April 1964 when attorneys found they would have enough money to pay off Transocean's creditors—to the tune of about \$18 million. According to Thorpe, Rhone Corporation would have acquired 80 percent of the stock and would have withdrawn the airline from bankruptcy. But with word that money could be found to pay off the debt, the reorganization ended.

The money, Thorpe said, is to come from lawsuits filed by Transocean against Pan American Airways, Boeing Airplane Company, Continental Airlines and Aviation Financial Services. Transocean alleges the firms violated federal antitrust laws in blocking Transocean's planned purchase of three Boeing 707 jetliners in 1960. Transocean filed suit in Federal District Court, in September 1963, seeking damages of \$199.5 million. It alleged that it was negotiating to purchase three 707s but Pan Am blocked the purchase by threatening to cancel its order for 30 of the Boeing jets. Transocean said it would have operated the jets for Japan Air Lines but Boeing induced Continental to offer such service to Japan Air Lines. Although the JAL-Continental deal was never concluded, Transocean attorneys contend their airline was shut out of the jetliner business.

The lawsuit is now in the "discovery" stage, between Transocean and Boeing attorneys. Meanwhile, only four of the Transocean 377s have survived the wrecker's torch.

A number of the airplanes at Oakland were acquired by Aero Space Lines of Van Nuys, California which converts the airplanes to "Pregnant Guppies" for hauling missile components. The firm has one Guppie flying—the former Pan American 377 (N1024V) now under contract to NASA at Huntsville, Alabama hauling Saturn IV and Apollo components. Three former Transocean 377s are at Van Nuys awaiting conversion to Guppie configuration, N402Q, N403Q and N409Q. The only Transocean 377 still



Last Transocean Airlines Stratocruiser still intact is N401Q. (Photo - Ron Riesterer, Oakland Tribune)

intact at Oakland' is N410Q; Aero Space Lines owns it, but Lloyd Dawson of Dawson Electronics at Norman, Oklahoma has an option to purchase. Aero Space Lines chopped up N401Q, N405Q and N406Q, using the forward, fuselage sections in Guppie stockpiling.

In the 15 months Transocean flew Stratocruisers (October 1958 to January 1960), the airline never lost an airplane or even an engine in flight.
Bill Eaton, Oakland. Tribune, P. 0. Box 509, Oakland, Cal.

SHORTHORN AND BJORKLUND ADDITIONS

A couple of small points in the Summer 1964 JOURNAL caught my eye and deserve comment. First, the registration G-AUBC originally applied to the Farman Shorthorn discussed on page 143 is not a British registration but the original Australian registration issued in 1919. From 1919 to 1929 the prefix "G-" was used by all the countries in the British Commonwealth. Canadian aircraft were registered in the sequence beginning G-CAAA, Australian in the sequence G-AUAA onward, South African from G-UAAA, Indian from G-IAAA, and New Zealand from G-NZAA. British aircraft were in sequence from G-EAAA., and balloons and airships from G-FAAA.

As a second point (in reference to the article on pages: 136-37), Dallas-Brett's HISTORY OF BRITISH AVIATION 1908-1914 shows Mr. F. A. Bjorklund as a pupil of the Grahame-White Flying School at Hendon, who took his tests for the FAI license on February 3, 1914 on a Grahame-White biplane. Bjorklund flew a 50 hp Bleriot monoplane in the 1914 Aerial Derby, flown on June 6th over a 94-mile circuit round London, from Hendon; he force landed on Epsom Racecourse in poor visibility. Only three pilots finished out of eleven starters, and the race was won by the American W. L. Brock in a Morane-Saulnier with an 80 hp Le Rhone.
John A. Bagley, Staff Mess, R.A.E., Farnborough, England



FAIRCHILD 71 STILL FLYING

Another restored "working antique" aircraft, a 1929 Fairchild 71, began flying again at Fresno, California in late spring 1964. Restricted registration is N9135, c/n 631, ATC 89. It was originally a Fairchild Aerial Survey photographic plane, but is now owned by David A. Steeves flying sky-divers for the U. S. Parachute Team. The 600 hp R-1340-AN.1 Wasp engine came from a surplus AT-6, and a completely new wing was patterned from the original, which reportedly went to N.A.M. for use on their "Stars and Stripes". I had a drafty flight on 7-7-64 watching six jumpers.
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SPIRIT OF AMERICAN YOUTH, ADDITIONS

I for One certainly enjoyed H. Glenn Buffington's Short but to-the-point article on America's youth aloft

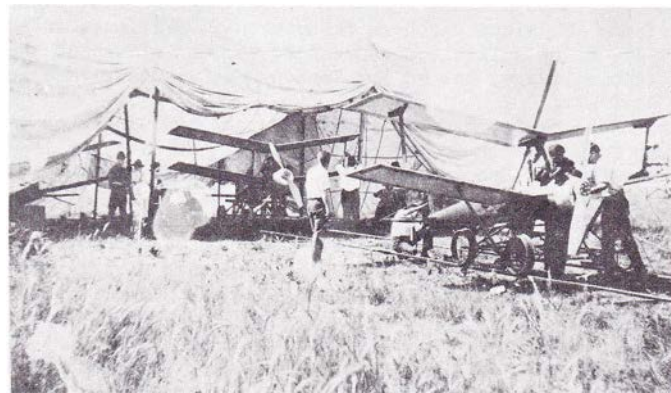
which appeared in the Summer 1964 JOURNAL, pages 132-33. To help complete Mr. Buffington's article I would like to add the following.

The 34 hour, 3 minute transcontinental flight by Frank Goldsborough was not made in May of 1930 but was made on April 28, 1930. This flight linked Westfield, New Jersey and Los Angeles, California. The return trip of 28 hours and 18 minutes was made on May 8, 1930. The Kinner engined Fleet biplane Goldsborough flew was owned by the Fleet company and was the same aircraft in which Mrs. Keith Miller had flown at the 1929 National Air Races. Goldsborough was backed by the Richfield Oil Company all the way. They had obtained the plane for him and gassed it up with, you-guessed-it, Richfield.

The flights of Robert N. Buck were: Newark to Los Angeles and Los Angeles to Newark.

The 23 hour, 56 minute flight by Stanley Boynton was made on October 27, 1930 linking Scarboro Airport, Rockland, Maine and Los Angeles. The return trip was made on the 9th of November 1930.

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KETTERING BUGS AT CARLSTROM FIELD, FLORIDA

I would like to offer some addendum to the piece on the Kettering "Bug" in the Summer 1964 JOURNAL, page 142. From page 56 of WINGS IN THE SUN, a history of Florida Aviation by William C. Lazarus comes the following:

"It should be recorded that it was the United States and not Germany that initiated research into the field (guided missiles). The first flight of a guided missile, a bomb-carrying pilotless airplane, was made from Carlstrom Field, Arcadia, Florida in September 1919. Mr. Charles (Boss) Kettering, the General Motors genius, and Lawrence Sperry were in charge of the project and participated in the tests. The first guided missile was an odd looking biplane with considerable dihedral for inherent stability. The bomb was located where the pilot seat would normally be on a biplane of this era. It was powered with a conventional engine and propeller and was rigged to be remotely controlled by radio from the ground or from an escorting man-carrying airplane. World War I ended before any definite conclusions could be reached on the basis of the Carlstrom Field experiments."

In mentioning "first flight" this account, of course, refers to the first service test flights, not the initial flights carried out at Dayton, Ohio. Above is a photo of three of the "Bugs" on the launching track at Carlstrom Field. This photo was given to me by a man who was based at Carlstrom Field in the late 1920s, and he told me the photo was made by someone at the base and was developed in one of the barracks. Its quality attests both to the fact the photo is the work of an amateur and to the fact that the project was Top Secret and word was passed to all that no photographs were to be taken of the "Bug".

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