

Dirigo Flyer

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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With the onset of Spring (and a nice one it was), activity at the museum and interest in aviation activities increases proportionately. For those of us who fly, good weather whets our desire to “get up there”, those of us who don’t fly start looking forward to air shows, aviation flea markets, local displays, and an overall increase in air traffic at our local airports and, especially true in Maine, on our lakes and more remote areas. This newsletter is, as usual, running a little bit late as the editor has started his summer work and is at sea every day.

Again, we are appealing for more articles for the newsletter. Personal stories, wartime experiences, and any items of historical significance are welcome.

The following story is being printed with permission of *Water Flying* magazine (Mark Twombly editor), and author Paul J. Fournier.

Still Flying the Maine Bush

By Paul J. Fournier

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Andy Stinson (what a name for an old-time bush pilot!) began his aviation career at a most unlikely location—tiny Quoddy Village in Eastport, Maine, where in 1940 he attended a National Youth Administration School that offered classes on airplane construction and repair. After graduation he went to St. Louis, where he worked on an experimental troop glider. Then he was offered a position back at the Quoddy Village School as an instructor. When the school closed in '43 he went to a Civil Air Patrol base in Portland, working on Civil Air Patrol planes that were flying up to 100 miles out to sea in search of German submarines.

In late '43 he went to a War Training Service unit in Claremont, New Hampshire, where he taught classes to Navy cadets. From there it was to Jacksonville for 12 weeks of Navy boot camp, following which he transferred to Daytona Beach at the Marine Pilots Training base, where his assignment was to do line checks and run-ups on Grumman Wildcats. In 1944 he returned to Maine, where he was assigned to the Brunswick Naval Air Station to rebuild Corsairs, and ended up running the base propeller repair shop until the war ended.

War’s end meant Andy could pursue his real goal: to become a pilot.

While still at Brunswick he took flying lessons at a small private strip near the Androscoggin River, basically a farmer’s field that the locals dubbed “Death Valley Airport.” His natural talent for flying soon emerged. After soloing he quickly earned private and commercial certificates, and then purchased a new Piper J3 Cub and obtained a set of floats.

Since aluminum floats were still unavailable, he bought a set of Wollam pontoons built of plywood. With no facilities at the small airfield for raising the plane, Andy enlisted the assistance of several fellow students and hangers-on to bodily lift the Cub while he bolted it to the floats.

With fresh pilot certificates and new seaplane in hand, Andy set up base at a lake near Camden, Maine, and flew passengers and supplies to offshore islands along the Maine coast.

Andy says one of his most frequent and enthusiastic passengers was Duane Doolittle, then-editor of Down East magazine, who loved being flown out to deserted islands and left there for hours to roam and mediate in the solitude. But on at least one occasion, the editor was left out overnight.

MISFUELED

Andy was hand-pumping his avgas from a metal drum delivered to his dock by a local dealer. One day the driver mistakenly delivered a drum of Varsol, a cleaning liquid. Andy topped off his tank and began his takeoff from the lake to pick up the editor, but found he had little power and the engine was knocking loudly. It wasn't until the following day that he got the tank and lines drained, refilled with the proper fuel, and was able to return to pick up his passenger.

Those plywood floats made life interesting. Andy says the Cub could scarcely climb higher than 1,000 feet AGL with the Wollams, and after numerous beaching on pebbly shores the seams became porous.

"I finally decided it was time to let them go when the water came in so fast I had to make long takeoff runs even after just pumping them out," he says. "And when I pulled it out on a ramp, the water ran OUT of them!"

Andy made a major career move in 1948 when he became the first pilot/mechanic hired by Dick Folsom at his soon-to-become legendary bush flying operation on Moosehead Lake. Again, it's tough to drag much exciting anecdotal information out of Andy about this stage in his life. He shrugs off much of what to many would be thrilling and exciting as just part of "doing the job." But anyone who has done this type of flying knows it can be anything but routine.

I was privileged to be hired by Folsom's during the 1950s while Andy was there, and I recall him as the quiet guy who went out daily, did his flying job as efficiently and quietly as possible, and always returned with passengers and plane intact. No flamboyance, no bravado. (The two other pilots flying for Folsom's while we were there-both highly experienced- died in plane crashes within the year, both involving passenger fatalities.)

When he wasn't out flying Andy was always the guy who would give you a hand loading up for departure, docking, and tying-up.

It was early in his flying for Folsom's that Andy suffered the only incident involving slight aircraft damage. During the winter when the lakes were frozen it was routine to fly on skis. Winter ice, no matter how intense the cold, can always be unreliable and treacherous. The ice surface may look innocent, but it can hide weak spots created by spring-hole upwellings and currents. And the conditions can change daily.

ICE LANDINGS

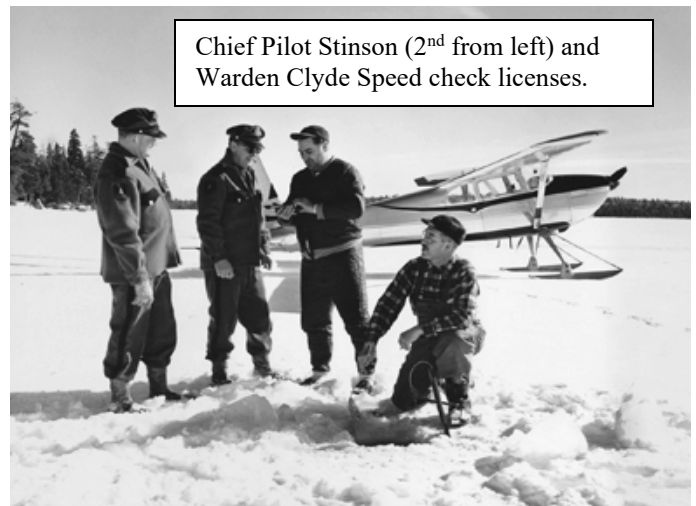
One of Andy's jobs, summer and winter, was to haul supplies to trappers and woodsmen living in isolated cabins on remote lakes. On this particular day Andy was flying supplies to a trapper name Gene Dupre who lived on remote Allagash Lake some 70 miles north of Greenville. It was early in the season. They had agreed on a signal to let Andy know the ice was safe to land on. Gene had set out a red flag indicating it was OK to land. Andy, flying a practically new 90-hp Piper Super Cub, made a routine landing in front of Dupre's cabin.

But then, as he puts it, "I found a soft spot" in the ice. The skis broke through and the prop hit the ice and shattered. The ice was solid enough that the fuselage stayed on the surface and the aircraft suffered little additional damage. After installing a new prop and making some minor fixes, Andy flew the Cub back out a few days later (after more cold weather and improved ice conditions.)

It's remarkable that after such a long career, this was his only incident, and a minor one at that. Virtually everyone who's ever done this type of flying has upset or bent aircraft, or worse. But to go 60 years and 19,000-plus hours with no serious incident or accident is phenomenal.

Oh, Andy does admit to dinging a float or two, but that's understandable. One type of flying he engaged in was serving and monitoring the huge log river drives which were common in those days. This entailed many landings at booms and tugboats and un-bumpered floating docks. Dings and dents were inevitable.

Andy says that flying for Folsom's "provided me with many flight hours landing on many ponds, lakes, and streams large enough to accommodate a plane." What he doesn't say is how tricky and potentially dangerous this type of operations can be. Water surfaces can change by the day, hour, even minute, from glassy smooth, to wild, wind-churned whitecaps, either of which can kill the unwary. And beneath the surface can lurk many unseen hazards, from float-bashing rocks and ledges to submerged log deadheads.



Chief Pilot Stinson (2nd from left) and Warden Clyde Speed check licenses.

Some of Andy's flights involved hauling canoes strapped to the pontoons across the carries between lakes. He also did much flying for the Maine Forestry Department, locating lightning-induced forest fires and directing fire-fighting crews from the air.

SAR DUTIES

After eight years with Folsom's, which Andy says "seemed like a short time," he was asked to fill a position as warden pilot for the Maine Warden Service. Over the next 20 years, during which he became chief pilot, he was called on for bush flying of sea- and skiplanes. But the mission was different. Now, not only was he engaged in aerial surveillance of poaching activity, he also flew many search and rescue missions for lost or injured persons in remote corners of Maine's then-roadless 17 million acres of northern forests. He found many, and no doubt save lives.

Two rescues stand out in his memory are a hunter stricken ill and able to only feebly wave a hand when Andy flew over, and an 84-year old man who had been the subject of an intense ground search including use of a bloodhound, without success until Andy saw him tangled in a barbed-wire fence, and disoriented and was in "terrible shape" according to his son. Both victims survived.

Andy was with the Warden Service when the techniques for aerial fish stocking were being developed by department mechanic Howard Lambertson. Andy flew many fish-stocking flights. He also flew department biologists conducting aerial wildlife surveys.

At times, Andy was called upon to work with the Maine State Police. It was on one such occasion he almost got shot. He had been asked to fly a low pass over a lakeside cabin in which troopers believed a dangerous suspect was holed-up. When he flew over, Andy spotted movement behind a window, confirming the man's presence. After notifying the cops, Andy landed his

seaplane on the lake nearby and stood by as troopers closed in. Later, after the suspect was apprehended, he admitted to police: "You know, I almost shot the pilot that plane. I had a bead on him with a scoped rifle, but didn't pull the trigger." It had been that close.

After his retirement from the Warden Service in 1977 (mandatory at the time; he would have preferred to stay on), Andy, far from resting on his pension and laurels (he'd won several awards for outstanding and meritorious service), flew a Cessna 206 floatplane to Alaska, where he flew sportsmen for a fishing lodge. Of this his only comment is: "Alaska is a very interesting state that I hope to return to someday." This at the tender age of 85!

Finally going into semi-retirement, Andy returned to Maine and went to work part-time as both A&P mechanic and pilot for the Central Maine Flying Service based at Old Town Airport. The facility is located near the bank of the Penobscot River and operates a seaplane base patronized by the area's large and active floatplane clientele. One of Andy's main jobs each spring and fall was transitioning planes from wheels to floats and back. Pilots of my acquaintance tell me they miss Andy's dedication and devotion to detail. He always got it right.

SAFE AND COMFORTABLE

Andy also continued flying at Old Town. I particularly recall him flying, under contract, wildlife biologists counting wintering waterfowl along the Maine coast in January to determine population trends. The biologists told me they always felt safe and comfortable with their lives resting in Andy's confident and experienced hands.

At last, finally retired from commercial flying, Andy is far from the old rocking chair. Today he continues flying, now under the light sport rules.

And he's taken up a retirement project: restoring and flying classic light airplanes. With partner Ronald Thornton of Lincoln, they've completely restored a 1946 Aeronca 7AC that they keep on floats and use for pleasure flights into Maine's north country, revisiting some of Andy's old bush flying haunts in the Allagash and St. John River areas. When I visited them at their hangar at the Lincoln Airport, they had just completed the final touches on what had originally been a Champ 7ED (the electric version), starting with the plane's partial skeleton and modifying it considerably into a beautiful if unique experimental category aircraft they've dubbed "Hybrid 1." Among other things it now sports an O-200 (100 hp) engine, completely new wings with metal spars, modified landing gear, and a squared-off tail resembling no original Champ.



Stinson on float of a new Cessna 180 on Branch Pond



On its maiden flights, Andy says he was “surprised” to find it perfectly rigged: “It flew hands-off, straight and level.” Knowing Andy’s penchant for meticulousness, I’m not surprised.

What’s next for this seemingly indestructible human flying automaton? Lurking in a dark corner of their hangar is the partial skeleton of another wrecked Champ. (One gets the impression he’s partial to Aeroncas.) Andy owns the registration and N number. Could this be the next project?

When I last saw Andy, fussing with details on his “Hybrid 1” (which earned praise from the FAA inspector), he gave me the impression that, at age 85, he was good to go for at least another decade of building and flying...his seventh.



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

For those readers and members who are wondering what has been happening with the organization during the transition from winter to spring, our March meeting/event was another interesting off-site gathering. It was held at the Boothbay Railway Village, the first time most of us in attendance had visited this well known mid-coast attraction. Following our meeting MAHS member and archivist Norm Houle gave his slide show and presentation on the history of Northeast Airlines to approximately 60 of the Railway Village members and guests. Steve Williams arranged for Norm to be a guest speaker as part of their winter lecture series, as Steve is on the Board of the Railway Village in addition to being a pilot and member of MAHS. In introducing Norm, Steve did a great job for the audience of making the connection between rail service and early air travel. We concluded this presentation by presenting the Railway Village’s director with a duplicate copy of the 1930s era contract between Maine Central & Boston and Maine Railroads and Pan American Airways, signed by the infamous Juan Trippe of Pan Am. It is just this kind of educational out-reach that helps gain MAHS/MAM greater recognition. Our thanks go out to Norm and Steve for a job well done.

April brought us back to the museum for the first time in the New Year; the building withstood the ravages of another Maine winter..... with the exception of a small leak in the roof caused by one of the many heavy wind storms. Now, the opening is nearly upon us on Memorial Day weekend, along with MAM’s participation in Bangor’s holiday parade. We will be showing off our new P-47 float thanks to the efforts of Hank Marois completing it before heading to Florida for the winter months. So, as we throw open the doors for the 2010 season it goes without saying,

MAM DESPERATELY NEEDS YOUR HELP

Each year we struggle to cover many weekends and it is only because of the dedication of three or four faithful volunteers that we didn’t disappoint visitors who might show up and then find we are closed. So, we encourage as many members as possible to help out at the museum a couple times or more when you can spare a few hours on a Saturday or Sunday as we progress through the summer season. I also want to mention we will again be exhibiting at the Portland Jetport on June 12th and 13th, which has become one of the most important “off –site” events for public relations and as a revenue generator. It is being called the “2010 Aviation Exposition” and is expected to be bigger and better. This is an opportunity for members located in the southern part of the state to help out closer to your home. Just contact Scott Grant or me for details regarding the Portland event. For museum volunteer openings / requirements each weekend day go to our website, or contact Les Shaw, Mike Cornett or Jim Nelligan to sign up.

As Brunswick NAS moves closer to being fully decommissioned / closed, MAHS/MAM is trying to stay on top of the disposition of the Neptune P2V and Orion P-3 that have been on static display near the base main gate. Elsewhere on the Maine aviation scene, the former Telford Aviation’s aircraft maintenance facility at Bangor Airport will become Maine Aero Services Inc. under new ownership. Telford was sold in 2009 to a Milwaukee air cargo company and then transferred to an Australian firm. Local businessman, Gene Richardson, the CEO has brought control of the Bangor airport based company back to Maine. And, few are aware of the flight tests that have been underway in Limestone of an LTA – UAS (lighter than air – unmanned aerial system), the Skybus 80-K, which has a number of applications for the military, law enforcement, and more.

I conclude by asking again for your help in making this year’s museum season “fun and successful”, and we salute all our “Veterans and Fallen Heroes” for their service to our nation!

Bob Umberger

Now available:

Memoirs: With an Angel By My Side by member Alfred Cormier.

His flying life as told by Al and available exclusively from the Maine Air Museum.

\$16.00 at the museum, \$20.00 via mail. To order, call or email the museum. “...a great story by a member of the Greatest Generation. Exceptionally good reading, riveting to the end.” Bill Townsend Teacher-in-Space, STS-51.



Progeny of the Cold War
John C. Garbinski

The United States Air Force in Maine, Progeny of the Cold War

by John Garbinski.

Another exclusive book from the Maine Aviation Historical Society. Softbound, 134 pages, 151 illustrations.

\$20.00 (plus \$4.00 postage and handling). To order, call or email the museum.

Buy a Brick and Support the Maine Air Museum

The Maine Air Museum is proud to announce the new Memorial Pathway Program. To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to help refurbish Building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of businesses and public community leaders and individual private citizens. To this end, the museum board has established a means for receiving your monetary donation and recognizing your gift permanently in the museum pathway and wall of honor. These donations are fully deductible.

Details available on our web site: www.maineairmuseum.org or from the museum by request.

PASSING

MAHS member Linwood Reed Lawrence June 17, 1910 – April 20, 2010

Born in Debec, New Brunswick on a farm near the Maine border, Linwood Lawrence's family moved to Houlton, Maine so he and his five sisters could receive a high school education. Graduating high school in 1934 and after a brief stint working on the railroad, Lin decided to cast his fortunes with the emerging world of aviation. Trained at the Luscomb School of Aeronautics in New Jersey as an airplane mechanic and pilot, he commenced a lifetime of teaching others to fly. During WWII the US Marines invited him to become a US citizen and made him a 1st Lieutenant and flight instructor of advanced training in Pensacola, Florida.

At the end of the war Lin purchased a surplus Navy trainer, flew home to Maine and established the Aroostook (county) Air Academy with extensive flight training, air charter and ambulance, and aircraft sales and service.

Relocating to Florida with his family in 1961, Lin combined various aviation related activities with a real estate business he and his wife developed in Ft. Lauderdale. His beloved wife of 60 years, Emilie (Wilson) passed away in 2001. Lin relocated to Sun City Center, Florida in 2005 where he taught an aviation course in the community college and commenced building his third airplane.

He is survived by his son David and wife Susan, and by his daughter Linda, children and great-grandchildren, and his two sisters Marjorie and June.

UPCOMING

May 29-30 Opening weekend of the Maine Air Museum.

June 12 Monthly meeting cancelled due to the Portland Jetport open house the same weekend.

June 12-13 Portland Jetport Open house. There will be static displays of aircraft and the traditional jet pull. This year they will attempt to pull a B757.

June 19 Sanford Airport will be holding it's annual Open House. Fly-in, Elks Car Show and this year's event will also feature an aircraft pull contest of the PB.Y.

July 10 Monthly meeting of the Maine Aviation Historical Society at the Maine Air Museum. 10 a.m.

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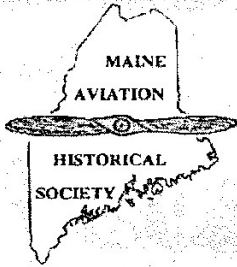
Recording Secretary: Mike Cornett MDF84B@aol.com

Corresponding Secretary: Al Cormier acormier@roadrunner.com

Treasurer: Joe Quinn, Levant, ME, jwquinn@midmaine.com

The Maine Air Museum is located at the 98 Maine Avenue adjacent to the Bangor International Airport.

44° 48' 2.10" North 68° 48' 36.02" West



Maine Aviation Historical Society Maine Air Museum * Membership Form

Name: _____

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City, State, Zip: _____

Special Interests: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Dues are for one year, and membership will expire in the month you joined.

Annual membership includes six newsletters!

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| Lifetime | \$500* | Newsletter, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, |
| | * 2 annual \$250 payments | |

We need volunteers-docents, mechanics, maintenance, librarians and exhibit specialists, etc.

Please call me. I want to be active in the organization.

I cannot join now, but would like to help. I am enclosing a check for \$_____.

Contributions over \$20 are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

I wish to support and obtain membership by purchasing a memorial brick.

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