



Dirigo Flyer

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PO Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402 • 207-941-6757 • 1-877-280-MAHS (in state)

www.maineairmuseum.com mam@maineairmuseum.com

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PETER GOUTIERE – PILOT WITH A MAINE CONNECTION

By Ray Gibouleau

On September 28th, 2014, Captain Peter Joffre Goutiere became a centenarian. The odds of an average male born in 1914 reaching age 100 are 0.3%. Those are pretty slim odds, nothing you'd want to bet on. Add to that a career of tempting even those odds by flying the "Hump" in World War II about 680 times, and one would guess the odds to be nearly a negative number! Yet "Pete" accomplished that, and quite a lot more. He's someone you'd like to meet and spend time just conversing with.



Captain Peter Goutiere at 100

Our (my wife Mary's and my) first encounter with Pete occurred in November of 2013, when Pete was "only 99." A fellow pilot had mentioned him to us, and having a person such as Peter Goutiere address a group of pilots sounded quite interesting. Pete has some roots in the Bangor/Brewer area, so when contacted about speaking to this group of pilots, he said he'd be happy to do so. Asked about how long a talk he could deliver, Pete said anywhere from an hour to a week! Talking with him was just like talking to most any other pilot – he is quick and articulate, his mind is sharp and his memory works better than Windows 8.

Mary and I arranged to meet Pete and take him to dinner. Expecting to render some help to a 99 year old when we arrived at his motel room, we were most pleasantly surprised to find Pete quite ready and able to get to the car completely unassisted, and to do it faster than we did. After he seated himself in the "co-pilot's" seat, we followed and seated ourselves. Pete then exclaimed – "Wait a minute, I forgot something." Before either Mary or I could extract ourselves, Pete had opened his door, hopped out, and briskly walked to his motel room. He returned with the same speed, hopped in, and belted himself in. "OK – let's go!" he said. Mary and I kind of looked at each other in amazement, and away we went to a most pleasant evening. Pete is hard of hearing, and he doesn't like hearing aids even though he uses them. Outside of that, Pete is "all in the green" as pilots would say, and he seems to be running at around 60 inches of manifold pressure – on high blower – without any problems! That we should be so blessed!

Pete, who was born in Aligarh, India, the youngest of five children, left for the United States from Liverpool on the White Star Line, arriving in Boston April, 1928. In early May, Pete arrived in Bangor by train. It was a considerable change in culture. He did attend a private school for a few weeks near the end of the school year to "get his feet wet" and learn the American style systems. Friends were made, and one of Pete's best friends was Jim Wilson, son of the mayor of Bangor. A bicycle was purchased from Dakin's Sporting Goods owned by Mr. Shep Hurd. Mr. Horace Chapman, owner of the famous Bangor House, presented Pete with an archery set, and Pete became quite an expert with it. Pete was friendly with a man named Howard Peavey whose father from Old Town had invented the "Peavey," a lumberjack's tool, examples of which are on display at the Old Town Museum. With the arrival of September, school began, with Pete in the 7th grade at the public school.

In the fall of '30, a Gypsy Moth landed one day in the back yard of the home Pete had moved to in Brewer with brother-in-law Robert Weston and sister Christine. Duncan Dana was the pilot, and he took Pete for his first plane ride to Godfrey Field (now BIA) for fuel, and then back to Brewer. Pete became interested in some airplane magazines a friend from school had given him, and built a model glider. In the fall of '31 Pete moved to New York, and then New Jersey, to be with his mother and brother Vernon and sister Geraldine. School again was difficult as everything was new and unfamiliar, and it was not a priority.

After a few varied employments, including working as an able-bodied seaman shipping to South America several times (and nearly always seasick), Pete began work at American Can Company in New York. This lasted until 1937, when Pete would return to Maine and resume school in Brewer as a Junior, at age 23. He worked at the Bangor House for room and board. He remembers Al Brady, at the time Public Enemy No. 1, being shot on October 12, 1937, in front

of Dakin's Sporting Goods in Bangor. The owner, Shep Hurd, a friend of Pete's, had tipped off the FBI and the stage was set. Pete graduated from high school in the spring of 1939, and that summer married Helen Bremer, the school's drama teacher.

One evening, at a gathering at the Bangor House, Bill LaLibertie asked Pete if he'd like to learn to fly. Pete froze. "Who me? Fly? No, sir. I thank you though. I get terribly seasick and can't imagine what would happen in an airplane." He remembered that one day, however, when he had taken his only two flights – from Brewer to Bangor and back – and he had actually enjoyed it.

Bill explained that the Civilian Pilot Training, or CPT, working through the University of Maine, would train civilians to fly at government expense. They needed ten applicants, and if Pete would join it would help reach that number. He could drop later if he didn't care to continue. First would come the ground school to learn about the airplanes, the weather, and navigation. Classes were to start at the end of November - in about three weeks - with flying to begin in the spring. "Don't tell Helen yet – if I like it I'll tell her!"

Pete went with Bill to sign up, but as Pete was not a US citizen, he was not eligible. He went right to the Bangor Superior Court to apply for citizenship. Papers had been filled out for this while he lived in New Jersey. On November 9th, Pete became a US citizen, and was now clear to join the CPT. After Pete signed up, Helen was told, and she wasn't thrilled. Ground school lasted 6 months, then a written exam from a designated Civil Aviation Officer took place. Pete passed the ground school, and later the physical exam was passed too.



Godfrey Field (Bangor Airport) in the 30s, now BGR Int'l Airport

One Saturday the class went to Bangor Airport, the old Godfrey Field, where the airplanes had arrived – five Piper J-3s. Instructor George Gary was assigned to Pete. After a thorough briefing and preflight, the two boarded the Cub and taxied awhile to the end of the strip. In flight, George had to sort of yell to Pete to instruct him, with the two Cub doors open and rattling around, and the noise of the engine and wind. Straight and level, nose up and down, banking left and right, yawing with the rudder, *etc., etc.*, were demonstrated. Then, it was Pete's turn to duplicate the maneuvers on command. The Cub responded to all of Pete's inputs as demonstrated. "Am I flying the airplane?" he yelled to George. George nodded yes. Pete couldn't believe it. He was hooked. Back on the ground, Bill met Pete and they elatedly drove back to town. Eight hours of flight later, Pete broke the surly bonds of earth in solo flight!

In training for the Private Pilot license, many maneuvers must be mastered – including emergency landings from 2000 feet. After practicing S-turns and pylon 8s, Pete and George returned to the field, and began a simulated emergency landing from right over the runway at 2000 feet. Two spirals were required, then the turn to base and final. All was proceeding well, as planned. The Cub came over the threshold at 20 feet, and when Pete was about to cut the power he heard a "tick" and a little shake and jar from the airplane. Then two cars with flags were observed racing down the runway towards the Cub. Pete landed the Cub right where he should have. Instructor Percy Billings gave a signal to cut the engine. When the Cub stopped Percy looked in and asked George if everything was OK – he said everything was fine. "Well, look behind you," Percy said. There, 50 feet behind them was another Cub, with little stubs of propeller rotating. They got out and learned that the other plane's propeller had cut one of their longerons in two, gashed the fabric, and just missed cutting the elevator cable. Percy and others stated that the two Cubs had approached the field from the same direction with one Cub three to five feet directly below the other. They both executed the same maneuver letter perfect to the other! They remained at five feet separation throughout the spiral turns, the turn to base and final. Only when Pete pulled his nose up to flare did his tail strike the propeller of the lower Cub! Everyone was dumbfounded. Caution became the game from that day on.



Pete on Pushaw Lake with a J-3 Cub in 1941

The Private Pilot's license was earned that summer from CAA Inspector Thomas; the number was 9190-40. Horace Chapman, owner of the Bangor House, was Pete's first passenger. Any flying done now had to be paid for, and Pete's piggy bank was depleted in short order. That fall, Bill took Pete aside and said there was going to be a secondary course – right here in Maine. It would be all aerobatics in Waco UPF-7s, a radial engine biplane painted in military colors with open cockpits. The airplanes arrived in December. Percy Billings would be Pete's instructor. Percy's name still comes up to this day when "older" pilots gather and hangar fly. He had been a pilot in WW I, and had seen action in France. Pete said Percy was an excellent pilot, but a little quick in temper. Nonetheless, the two got along well. December in Maine isn't the best time to fly open cockpit airplanes, with temperatures in the 15 to 20 degree range. With heavy flying suits and long johns, and sitting on parachutes (just in case), they went up to 5000 feet. Steep turns, stalls, and a loop were demonstrated. Now it was Pete's turn to do the same things. After landings and a few more lessons, it was time to solo the Waco. All went well. Then came slow rolls, snap rolls, and spins. The group was given about 20 hours flying the Waco, and Pete enjoyed every minute of it!

When flying was dangerous and sex was safe begins phase three as described in Pete's book "Himalayan Rogue". A lot of what you are reading here (if you've read this far) comes from this

book with Pete's permission. It took Pete four years to write it. It has had two printings, and there likely will be no more. There are about 50 left to be sold. Should you wish to enjoy a most satisfying read, consider getting one before they're gone. His daughter Hannah is custodian of the remaining copies. If you wish to obtain one, contact Hannah at hakitah@charter.net, or call her at 1-860-868-6006. The cost is \$45, shipping included. It's full of pictures and 250 pages of three column print.



Bill again mentioned there were even more flying courses coming up, and they would be taking place in Waterville, Maine. Bill, however, joined the Navy, and Pete decided to forgo higher education at the University of Maine, and take advanced flying in Waterville. A group of four, consisting of Pete, Rob Robertson, Willie Wilder, and Pete Peterson met Wes Marden, who was in charge of the flight school. Study began for the Commercial License, which would take six to eight weeks of ground school. After passing the written, there would be flying in the J-3 Cub. After that, the cross-country course started, and they flew right seat in the Gull Wing Stinson, a large radial engine, four seat, high-wing monoplane. Flights all over New England commenced, with navigation and night flying instruction. The CAA had installed beacons between cities, or about 50 miles apart, to facilitate night flight. Also, radio navigation using 4 course radio ranges that broadcast an A or an N in Morse code were utilized in navigation. (The author of this article received his instrument rating from examiner William "Bill" Perry of Augusta using these 4 course ranges, now long gone). When Pete's course was finished, the group was allowed to go on long cross-country flights using the Cubs. Experience was gained doing this, although not without problems, but all survived.

Now that flying was over, Pete returned to Brewer in September of '41. He studied for an instructor's license. In the meantime, Pete spent a lot of time with friends and instructors at the South Brewer Airport doing a lot of Hangar Flying, and listening, and learning. A Mr. Sailor, who owned a Cub based there, allowed Pete to fly the plane as long as he left it full of fuel. Pete rounded up a whole lot of people who were willing to pay for short flights around the city and up and down the Penobscot River. He was building flight time doing this. Pete landed on the ice at Pushaw Lake on wheels, this was in November.

When I first met Pete in November of 2013, we had the afternoon free to drive about looking for his old homestead, places he'd resided, and to just reminisce. "It all seems so silent now," he said. Gone is the hustle-bustle of the two cities with clanking of trolleys, and gone is the Bon-Ton Ferry, the majestic Union Station, the Bangor Hydro-electric dam, the old brick building that was once the Bangor House where he lived and worked, and the old Bangor-Brewer bridge. Gone are all those wonderful friends that were his mentors, now at rest in the Mount Hope Cemetery, including his sister Christine. But the Thomas Hill Standpipe still stands sentinel over the cities, he noted.

Pete wished to go to the Brewer Airport. Upon arriving there, he walked to the runway. He requested I take his video camera and walk around him in a 360 degree circle, recording the event. We then walked over to the old hangar. Pete said he was sitting right in there on December 7, 1941, and we were standing about right where the Cub he was flying on skis was parked that day. The hangar was locked, and the windows were too high to look into, but he appeared satisfied to just be at that place again.

On that Sunday morning, about 72 years ago then, Pete was in that hangar at the Brewer Airport with others, gathered around the pot-bellied stove. Pete was flying a Cub on skis, and it was parked outside the Hangar. Folks were listening to the radio when a commentator came on and said, "Stand by for an important message from the White House!" President Roosevelt came on and gave the famous speech to announce that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Everyone was stunned. Pete decided to join the Air Force.

The next morning, Monday, Pete was at the recruiting office and filled out the forms. The recruiter was happy to see that he had 350 hours and a Commercial License. There would be no problem. After the commanding officer looked at Pete's application, he informed Pete that he was eight months too old. Pete was 27 and 26 ½ was the limit. There was "no way" around that. He continued to study for his instructor's license, and missed passing the written on the first try by one question. He could come back in 30 days and try again. A few days later one of Pete's friends called to inform him that Pan American Airways was hiring pilots to ferry U.S. Army Air Force P-40 War Hawks across Africa. The planes would be assembled in Accra, West Africa, and ferried to Cairo, Egypt.

Pete called the appropriate persons regarding this, and Pan Am Captain Brick Maxwell interviewed him. After filling out the PAA forms he was deemed qualified, and must obtain a passport, which would take a few weeks. The inoculations for travel to Africa did a number on Pete, and he needed a few days to recuperate. Just before Christmas, the passport came, along with a bunch of visas for Africa, and an airline ticket with a note informing him to be at the Newark Airport the first week of January. He was to report to the Air Ferries office at 119th St. in Miami, Florida. At this point, Pete would be taking courses in Advanced Navigation, Equatorial African weather, dead recognition navigation, *etc.* Instrument training was completed in Link Trainers. Flight training began after the ground school in the AT-6 to prepare for flying the P-40. Finally, the course wound down and a celebration was held at the Pan Am facility. Juan Trippe, PAA President, presented diplomas and Pam American Wings to the group. There was a short visit back to Maine for Pete, and the group reported in mid-May to LaGuardia Marine Terminal to fly in the Pan American Clipper Boeing 314 flying boats heading East.

At this point most of Pete's Maine connection has been briefly covered. Of course, there is much more to his life, like flying 680 missions over the "Hump", the Himalayan Mountains – highest on earth, becoming a Captain for CNAC (China National Aviation Corporation), flying many VIPs and all their stories, flying the first jets like the Boeing 707, becoming Captain and check airman on the 747 for Pam Am and TWA, along with consulting to write manuals and op specs for start-up airlines, and on and on. Just this year, 2014, Pete flew a DC-3 from Seattle to San Francisco, at age 100. And not just any DC-3, but the same one he had flown from Miami to Calcutta, India 70 years ago when it was new. And he's still straight and level. If you want to learn more of this man, get a copy of his book. He thinks he may have donated one to the Maine Aviation Museum. We fellow pilots say to Captain Pete: Don't Ever Grow Old !



Pete in the left seat flying the DC-3 from Seattle to San Francisco, age 100



Centenarian Pete in "his" DC-3



Studying check lists on the 'new' 70 year old DC-3



THE END – of this story, but not Pete!

Editor's Note

When your Editor heard about 100 year-old pilot Pete Goutiere's visit to the Bangor area to deliver a speech about his long and amazing career, he asked speech-attendee and MAM member Ray Gibouveau if he would be willing to write an article for the *Dirigo Flyer* regarding the event. Ray was kind enough to draft the article that appears above. Not wanting to send a single paragraph - or photo - to the proverbial cutting-room floor, I elected to publish this Special Edition of the *Flyer* so that Ray's work could be published in its entirety.

You may also have noticed that the *Dirigo Flyer* mast head has been updated and, I believe, improved. Many thanks to Director Hank Marois.