



# Dirigo Flyer

NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Volume XXX, No. 4

October - December, 2022

Editor's Note: in this issue of the *Dirigo Flyer*, we acknowledge the contributions of Maine's Strategic Air Command bases of the Cold War era. Loring AFB and Dow AFB both had nuclear-armed heavy bombers and alert crews ready for duty at a moment's notice. Both had personnel holding areas called Mole Holes. Hank Marois' article in the May 2004 *Dirigo Flyer* describes life in the Loring AFB Mole Hole (see Volume XII, No. 5, in the newsletter archive). The following article highlights Bangor historian Dave Bergquist's 2012 visit to the Dow AFB Mole Hole area.

## Visiting the Mole Hole

Dave Bergquist

The windows rattled and the house shook. "Oh boy..." we thought, "the flyboys across the road were at it again!" But it was October 1962, and the country was in midst of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The military personnel at Dow Air Force Base in Bangor were on "Alert," ready for the Soviets' next move. President Kennedy had told the Soviets in no uncertain terms the threat they posed to the security of the United States and what this country's response would be. The U.S. Air Force's Strategic Air Command was ready for this crisis thanks to their forward thinking, planning, and implementation during the mid-

1950s as the Cold War was heating up.

The Bangor airbase was designated as a Strategic Air base in 1954, one of many spread across the contiguous United States and its territories. As a result, massive amounts of money (over \$12,000,000 1950s dollars -now \$125,000,000) were poured into the WWII base to reconfigure it into a modern military installation to better serve the Air Force's new mission as a credible deterrent force able to counter a Soviet surprise attack within 15 minutes. This strategy mandated that 1/3 of SAC

bombers and tankers be on ground alert at all times, ready for takeoff in 15 minutes with weapons loaded and crews ready. To implement this new defense policy, the New England Division of the Army Corps of Engineers rebuilt and lengthened the main runway and built an Alert Crew Readiness Center and Alert Aprons off the southern end of the new runway. This unique apron area where bombers were parked, was dubbed "The Christmas Tree" because of its similar look from the air. In the middle of this complex was the Crew Readiness Center, or crew living quarters, a low squat building of two levels with multiple ramps that extended from three sides of its exterior toward the aprons. Crews called their new home "The Mole Hole." It was their home away from home!



*A 2006 aerial photo of the Bangor International Airport. Notice the Christmas Tree alert aprons in the lower right corner of the photo. The Crew Readiness Center can still be seen in the middle of the two Christmas tree aprons.*

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## Maine Aviation Historical Society Minutes

### Minutes of the Annual Meeting – October 8, 2022

Present were John Nelligan, Les Shaw, Pauline Sodermark, Bob Littlefield, Don Finnegan, John Miller, Joe Quinn, members Sarah L and Sharon B.

Joe Q. passed out the financial report. It was discussed and approved.

John N. reported that we received \$33.00 from the Darling Ice Cream Truck. It was a small amount, but they have agreed to come back next year.

John N. also reported that the credit card machine is ready to be installed but asked if we should do it now or wait till spring. It was decided to get it now and make sure it will work. Then we will be ready in the spring when we reopen. John also asked about getting donations from Bangor Savings Bank. He has added our organization to the list.

John N. suggested that we add a 4-year family membership option for \$140.00, as we have the individual option. It was agreed.

There was a vote to fill two Board positions. Nominations were submitted for Andrew Constantine and Don Ames. They were voted to fill the positions. I will contact them to see if they will accept the positions.

Sarah L. is working to back-up the paperwork for the organization on a Google hard drive. It was approved.

John N. has applied to Walmart/Sam's Club for donations. He hopes to get something to thank the volunteers for their work this year.

John N. also suggested we invite Dr. Wax back this coming year. He gave a great talk, and many have commented that they were sorry that they had missed it. It was agreed.

John N. also asked for a review of his year as President. It was commented that he has done a great job and brought much attention to the organization as well as memberships and funds. We all encouraged him to continue.

Adjourned at 11:00

Submitted  
Les Shaw, Secretary

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## Maine Aviation Historical Society News

### Credit Cards

Good news! Starting in June, we will be able to accept credit cards for admissions and gift shop purchases at the museum. We will no longer need to turn away folks who – like many of us – no longer carry cash.

### New Dues Structure

As noted in the minutes of the Annual Meeting, above, the Board of Directors has approved two new options for payment of your annual dues. The membership year will still run from July 1 to June 30, with dues payable by June 30. However, for those of you who find it more convenient, you can now pay for four years at a time. If you have an Individual membership with \$25 annual dues, you can pay \$100 by June 30, 2023, and not have to pay again until June 30 of 2027. For a Family membership with \$35 annual dues, you can pay \$140 by June 30, 2023, and you will be paid up until June 30, 2027. If this does not strike you as something you want to do, no problem, just continue paying on a yearly basis as always.

### Dirigo Flyer

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

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Fifty years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, I stood on a banking overlooking Dow Air Force Base's mole hole. Mike Gleason, retired Maine Air National Guard recruiter, had arranged a tour of the MAINEiac facilities for me and other Cold War historians with Colonel Bolduc of the 101st Air Refueling Wing. Others along were Dick Shaw, Bangor historian, and John Nelligan, retired Maine Air National Guard member and now President of the Maine Aviation Historical Society, d/b/a the Maine Air Museum.



As I looked at the mole hole facility, I visualized young scrambling airmen, officers and NCOs, rushing down or up the egress ramps to their ready aircraft on the alert aprons after the sounding of the "Go Alert" alarm. The alerted crews quickly entered their assigned aircraft and immediately prepared for take-off. When an alert was called, the base erupted into a cacophony of jet engine noise heard across the City of Bangor and beyond. The city literally "rocked and rolled" as the B52s of the 397th Bombardment Wing rumbled down the lengthened runway only seconds apart and took to the skies followed by the KC135s of the 71st Air Refueling Wing. At times, the 75th Fighter Interceptor Squadron joined in with their F101B Voodoos and kicked in their explosive sounding afterburners. The odor of jet fumes filled the air of neighborhoods around the base. But local citizens took an alert in stride and felt assured that they were being well defended. Since the end of the Cold War days and the closing of the base, Bangoreans have known relative peace and quiet until the recent introduction of the Waterfront Concerts.

I asked the Colonel if we could go into the structure to look around. He was quite clear, however, that it was far too dangerous to enter the structure as it had been abandoned and neglected for nearly half a century. Indeed, the low slung concrete windowless building looked terribly uninviting with its dingy exterior, boarded up doorways, and decaying roof. And who knew what you would find if you could enter it!

The design of the alert center followed the same government blueprints of other such Cold War facilities built across the United States. Constructed of reinforced concrete, the two storied building was surrounded on three sides by a built-up berm approximately four feet in height. From these three sides protruded entrance and exit ramps. The higher ramps coming off the upper level were squared flat-roofed structures with plenty of windows, while the lower ramps from the lower level were windowless and shaped like large culverts emerging from the ground. The fourth side was a service area with no built-up berm area.

The interior of the alert center's top level consisted of two dining rooms, one for officers and one for NCOs, a kitchen, two lounges, again one for officers and one for NCOs, two latrines, a briefing room, a weapons room, a command office, a library, a storage area, and a number of utility rooms. Both the officers' and NCOs' lounges had a section designated for playing cards and a separate television area - a must for the mid-1950s. A staircase in the center led to the lower level or the sleeping area for 70 personnel.

The lower level contained the crews' sleeping quarters - 14 two-man bedrooms and 14 three-man bedrooms. Full-service latrines complete with showers occupied the center of the bedroom area. The average duration for an alert was 72 hours; the mole hole needed to provide opportunity for ample rest, so the crews were ready to meet the enemy at any moment's notice.

For a period of time, the Alert Crew Readiness Center served as an integral part of the nation's defense against surprise Soviet attack. Outmoded by the advent of ICBM defense systems, mole holes across the country fell into disrepair.

Today the mole hole is a relic of the Cold War period. Nevertheless, they have an important place in our nation's military history as they serve as a symbol that the country was determined not to relive a surprise attack again such as was experienced at Pearl Harbor.



*The Mole Hole of Dow  
Air Force Base in 2012*

## Loring Open House 2022

August 12-14, 2022, saw the Open House at Loring AFB. Loring was the home to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Wing, and home to so many airmen and their families. On Thursday, the Loring Air Museum's Loring Open House 2022 Committee anxiously awaited the inbound flight of the B52 from Barksdale AFB from atop the Loring flight tower. As they all stood watching and holding their breath, a collective sigh of relief came over them when a puff of smoke came off the runway for the first time in 29 years!! A B52 had touched down.



The planning of this large event took many months, with a great crew and committee. Leading that crew were Matt Cole and Cuppy Johndro, who have held the committee lead in previous open houses. Matt was the "Wings" in getting the flights here, and planning, emailing, messaging and letter writing. Matt, a former Eagle Scout, persevered through 10 years of open houses to obtain this landing.

When the B52 landed at Loring on Thursday, it kicked off what was a special event, one that made so many come to tears. The landing was held in secret due to security concerns about securing the runway and keeping the crew as safe as possible. That was the intent with secrecy. When the B52 landed it was met by former Crew Chiefs of Loring B52s and KC135 members, who had smiles as wide as could be. Leading that crew was Jim Quinn a former Crew chief. They were also met with a TV crew and a cooler full of local brews.

When Friday morning came the crew was willing and ready to meet and greet the public at the B52. The Museum crew had a lot of events planned as well. Another B52 would make an appearance in the sky at 1pm, coming in from Minot, N.D. for a flyover. That would be spectacular! A B52 flying over Loring with another one on the ground.

A soft opening, held at noon time, proved to be a hard opening as people flocked to the Museum. When word got out via TV on Thursday, we could not hold back opening fully at the Museum. Official shirts and coins went on sale, and due to overwhelming response, we sold out of shirts in some sizes by the end of Friday.

A scavenger hunt kicked off the weekend, sending those who paid to participate all over the base. The participants didn't have to enter a building, but what they did have to do was find the answer to the clues that they were given and that would

take them all over from the Weapons Storage Area to the flightline and Arch hangar. Ron Ready and his family, winners of the hunt, enjoyed it. They got all the scavenger hunt entry fees collected. They remarked how it was one of the better events and that they could not wait for the next one.

A special dance was held with the band Boyz Gone Wild from Portland, Maine. At that dance, River's Edge Variety was our food vendor. They did a Beer Garden and did an amazing job serving some amazing BBQ. People sat and listened to 1980s music and rock and roll. Before the band, the Loring Air Museum did an official ribbon cutting to rename the Museum. The name was changed from the Loring Military Heritage Center during the winter, but the new Loring Air Museum sign went up just before that weekend. Amy Beil, the president of the Museum, proudly stood and cut the ribbon with some of her Officers, members, and some local Congressional aides and dignitaries. We want to thank our local Civil Air Patrol for being on hand collecting the money as people entered the dance area. That money went to the Museum for upgrades and to the CAP for their needs.

As Saturday rolled around, the Museum got the place up and running and brought in local vendors to sell items, many of which were Loring-related and etched or made with the Loring name. Tours via a van were given to those wanting one, and Jim Alward, a Loring Air Museum member, gave the commentary while driving. Jim worked at the Loring Development Authority and has a lot of knowledge of all things Loring. We were happy to have our Recruiters for the Army National Guard and the USAF active duty, Guard, and Reserve on site; it made our event that much more special. The Wildlife Refuge opened and greeted those wishing to view their area and the Weapons Storage Area. Working in partnership with these groups has been amazing.

At the Museum were a food booth and an all-day beer garden for people to sit and eat and reminisce about old times and their careers at Loring. The Museum went all out with new coins, hats, tee shirts, and many other items making the day special. Getting one of the items was a tremendous feat, but we managed to obtain it. The Limestone Post Office's Postmaster, Lisa Cantafio, and Cuppy Johndro together were able to design and make a special stamp that was only available for purchase on-site on Saturday to mail postcards. Many people took advantage of this because these stamps are highly collectable. TV and radio crews were on site the whole day.

At noon a one-of-a-kind event was held for a local boy who had just received word he would become an Eagle Scout due to his recent project at the Loring Air Museum. Nathan Morrow and his crew had taken on the difficult task of refreshing all the paint inside the Museum. They had to remove everything off the walls, sand, and fill holes and then repaint the entire inside. Working on evenings and weekends the crew finished just one week prior to the event. Nathan's ceremony was held in front of the B52, with his family, friends, the crew of the B52, and others present.

Cuppy Johndro arranged for Congressional delegates to be on hand to present Nathan with some pretty special gifts. Thanks go to Kim Rohn who represented Jared Golden's office, Trisha House who represented Senator Susan Collins' office, and State Senate President Troy Jackson for being on site. Cuppy asked that all Eagles at this event step up and stand with and assist Nathan in obtaining his "wings." Nathan was presented with many gifts, but there was one special one at the end. A

*Continued from Page 4*

Member of the crew who was also an Eagle Scout, took Nathan inside the cockpit of the B52 and into the belly of it.

In addition to the Eagle Scout recognition, Amy Beil was presented with a framed certificate on behalf of the Loring Air Museum by Maine Senate President Mr. Troy Jackson, to honor the Museum for all its efforts to keep the memory of Loring alive.

The flightline and local roads filled up once again in anticipation of a KC135 flyover from the Maine Air National Guard. We love our MAINEiacs! The Forest Service was on the ground near the Museum (parked at the former Post Office building) and in the air doing a water drop after the fly-by of the KC135.

An evening dinner dance was held for those who preregistered. Cuppy Johndro was the master of ceremony and held a posting of the colors, a POW MIA table ceremony, and a Loring census. The census was fun and interactive, as people stood up when the category given pertained to them. The crew of the B52 was on hand and able to participate because one of the questions was "did you land or fly over Loring AFB?" Matt Cole was honored for all his efforts and getting the "Wings" to the event. Matt was presented with a wooden tail trophy embellished with the Barksdale crew information on it. A wonderful presentation was given by Mr. J.C. Garbinski, author of *North River Depot* and *USAF in Maine*. As the evening came to an end, participants danced the night away to the DJ and music of the Loring era.

Sunday August 14, 2022, came, and with it a knowledge that this event was ending. With events still underway, many attendees flocked to the Museum for the anticipated PowerPoint presentation by Mr. Peter Noddin. Peter is an airplane archeologist, and he presented on a crash at Loring to a full house with standing room only. Following the presentation, the public was invited to join the Car Caravan to the Weapons Storage Area, with 4 stops and commentary by J.C. Garbinski once again. It was the biggest caravan we have had to date.

At 3pm an official closing of the event was held at the Loring Air Museum building with retirement of the colors and taps by local Eagle Scout Lars Spooner. Following the closing, a private event was held at the Museum for the crew of the B52 and the members of the Committee that planned the open house with their family and friends. Thanks to Cantrell Seafood for providing the lobster, and clams and to our local farm, Skonieczny's. So many others donated to this amazing event. The crew was thrilled to have local brew, and food. Many had never had Maine Lobster and were amazed at the food. After eating, the crew were presented with wonderful gift bags from the Museum. Everything from Maine syrup to jams, patches, coins, window clings, and post cards. But they were overwhelmed to receive the 6 lithographs depicting former Loring B-52s for their man caves.

We were thrilled to have the weekend for the public and those that once served at this once great base. There were many tears shared, items donated, new life members joined, and so many memories and stories shared by those in attendance. A great amount of planning went into this event from getting sponsors, to getting cars, hotels, additional bathrooms, food, bands and more. The sponsors came forward from everywhere, not just locally, some in memory of loved ones, and that was awesome to see.

We want to thank everyone who had a hand in making this event one that will last in the hearts and minds of Aroostook County. The Committee truly came together, and the planning and events were perfect. It truly was, as Matt Cole said, "the event of the summer". We look forward to another in 2 years and hope that we can make that just as spectacular as this one.

The Moose will always be Loose on Loring.

Cuppy Johndro ,  
Sec. LAM, Co-Chair Loring Air Museum Open House.



*Photos by Cuppy Johndro - taken from atop the flight tower as the B52 approached and landed at Loring*

**Plane Spotting Around Maine**



*According to Bob Umberger, this homebuilt plane was a "new addition" to the ramp at the Brunswick airport in 2022*

## *In Memoriam*

### **ED ARMSTRONG**, Member No. 166

Hampden - Life member Ed Armstrong passed away on October 18, 2022, at the age of 86. Ed joined the MAHS in 1996 and was active in the organization for many years. He served on the Board of Directors from 1998 through 2002. Les Shaw shared his memories of Ed Armstrong:

“Ed was very instrumental in the operations and management of the Maine Aviation Historical Society and Maine Air Museum in the early years. He was the President of Snowman Printing, and for years he printed, folded, and mailed the newsletters at a reduced rate. He served on the Board for many years and worked hard to bring new ideas and funding for the organization. He had big ideas and I remember one time he had the idea to add a second floor on the building and open a restaurant and IMAX Theatre.

I enjoyed working with him and will miss his ideas.”

Les Shaw

### **JULES AREL**, Member No. 147

Hermon – Past member Jules Arel passed away on October 5, 2022, at the age of 86. Jules joined the MAHS in 1996. He served on the Board of Directors in between 1998 and 2002. As Chairman of the Museum Committee, he was instrumental in acquiring the lease of Building 98, the Maine Air Museum’s current building. A history buff, Jules’ article “From Biplanes to Bombers” on the history of the Houlton Army Airfield was published in the *Dirigo Flyer* in June and July of 2000. His article “German Prisoners of War in Maine, 1944-1946” about the German prisoner of war camp in Houlton was published in the journal *Maine History* in 1995.

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### **New Members**

The Maine Aviation Historical Society welcomes the following new members:

- David Boivin, No. 9232, Bangor, ME
- David Garnett, No. 9233, Old Town, ME
- Robert Petersen, No. 9234, Brewer, ME

### **New at the Museum**



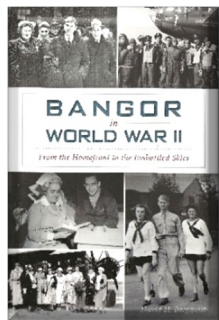
In April 2021, Jennifer Anderson of the Lower Dedham Road in Holden contacted the Museum regarding an aircraft canopy found on her recently purchased property. See photos above. She was aware of the 1961 crash of an F-101 Voodoo on the opposite side of Bald Mountain and wondered if the canopy was connected to that crash.

In early November of this year, Les Shaw, his son-in-law Craig Saunders, and two teenage grandsons Brandan and Brady Saunders visited the Anderson property to retrieve the canopy. Les had been warned that it would take 4 strong men to do the job – and that is exactly what was required. The front section of the canopy was buried in mud. Les reported that they “had to dig quite a hole to get it out.” They persevered; the canopy was freed from the mud, loaded onto a trailer, and transported to the Museum where it will be cleaned and put on display.

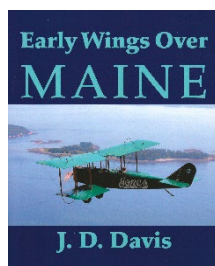


First, however, the canopy needs to be identified. It is the general consensus that it is not from an F-101, so not connected to the Voodoo crash. The canopy is most likely from an F-89, possibly jettisoned before an emergency landing. But when, why, and what happened to the jet and crew? Member Peter Noddin has examined the photos and has opinions, but will want to examine the canopy itself for numbers, and especially inspection stamps. He promises to stop by the Museum some day to help solve the mystery.

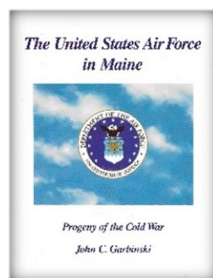
## Books by Maine Authors Available at the Museum Gift Shop



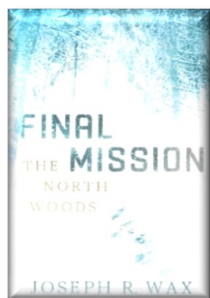
**Bangor in World War II** *From the Homefront to the Embattled Skies* - MAHS member Dave Bergquist documents in great detail, complete with photographs, the story of Bangor and its “world class air base,” Dow Field, leading up to and through World War II.



**Early Wings Over MAINE** – Maine native and MAHS member John Davis chronicles the early history of aviation in Maine. Davis concludes the book with a tribute to MAHS founding member Leo Boyle, who edited the society’s newsletter *The Dirigo Flyer* for its first 10 years.



**The United States Air Force in Maine** *Progeny of the Cold War* – Authored by MAHS Life member John Garbinski and published by the Maine Aviation Historical Society, this photograph-filled history of Maine’s role in the Cold War is available at the Maine Air Museum, the Loring Air Museum, or through MAHS.



**FINAL MISSION** *The North Woods* – Authored by Joseph R. Wax, a Maine physician and medical researcher, this book tells the story of the crash of a Strategic Air Command B-52 Stratofortress on Elephant Mountain in the North Woods of Maine.



**All dues expire on June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. If joining after December 31, pay \$2.00 for each remaining month (\$3.00 per month for Family Memberships)**

Annual membership includes quarterly newsletters

Mail payment to:

Maine Aviation Historical Society  
PO Box 2641  
Bangor, ME 04402-2641

**Maine Aviation Historical Society  
Maine Air Museum \* Membership Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership	Dues	Benefits
Regular	\$25 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Family	\$35 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Corporate	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission

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 enclose 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

**DIRIGO FLYER**

**MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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