



Dirigo Flyer

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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Coastal Patrol Base 19

Recollections of a WWII Sub-Chaser

By Capt. D. Godfrey, Historian

58th Squadron, Maine Wing Civil Air Patrol

It was 1942 and German U-Boats were operating along the East Coast of the US with impunity, wreaking havoc with coastal shipping. The Civil Air Patrol having been established a few months earlier, was given its most critical assignment by the Anti-Submarine Command, and began flying Coastal Patrol in March, first out of newly established bases in Atlantic City, NJ and Rehoboth, Delaware. Proving to be an effective undertaking, additional bases were activated from Maine to Texas between March and September. Coastal Patrol Base 19, in Portland was activated in August, 1942. Squadron 111 Headquarters was located in the then new brick terminal building shared with Northeast Airlines – and now present home of Maine Aviation and Cumberland County's 58th Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol.

The Coastal Patrol attracted many local fliers, otherwise grounded due to war restrictions, as well as other patriots looking to serve their country in the war effort. Among them was Prentiss Godfrey, son of E. R. Godfrey, owner of Godfrey Field in Bangor. Prentiss, then 26 years old (now 92) had earned his pilot's license 10 years earlier in Bangor. Having recently obtained his commercial license with a 225 hp power rating, and instructor's rating through the CPTP (Civilian Pilot Training Program) in Waterville, Godfrey joined the 19th Patrol Force as a First Lieutenant, and volunteered his skills as a patrol pilot and check pilot.



Members joining were required to take an oath, and while it was a volunteer service as it is today, members were required to pledge a length of service anywhere from one month to longer terms. Godfrey recalls that at the time he served with CAP, Base 19 was just starting in its mission, and not as well organized as later on. Training was minimal, and crews, while familiar with the area, learned their patrol skills by flying actual missions. Base 19 pilots patrolled up to Rockland. (Base 20 in Bar Harbor patrolled from Rockland to Eastport.) Safety equipment was not utilized early on, though later the Coastal Patrol pilots wore Mae Wests and "zoot suits" – ungainly rubberized suits that made flying uncomfortable and movement difficult. For a time they also carried

“barracuda bags” essentially a canvas sack attached to an inner tube. Luckily, Base 19 crews never had to use these “in anger.”



The Base had several airplanes of different types, lent or leased by area pilots and owners. They had not yet been repainted in CAP colors. Godfrey’s logbook shows he took his “Army Flight Check” in a Fairchild 24 upon joining, then flew Coastal Patrol missions and also checked out other CAP pilots. He recalls flying a cabin Waco biplane that was owned by the Dingleys of Auburn, who were also active in the squadron. The Airplanes were in good condition, having been privately maintained, then later maintained by base mechanics in a hanger donated by the local FBP in Portland. Well before the time light aircraft were equipped with IFR instruments and avionics, these

planes were rudimentary. Navigation over the ocean was by dead reckoning – clock and compass – and often out of sight of land.

Pilots were instructed to fly a zig-zag course that would take them up to 40 miles off shore. While this was an anti-submarine effort, pilots were told not to expect to actually see a submarine. The true purpose of the mission



was to maintain a presence that would prevent U-Boats from surfacing to recharge their batteries. WWII vintage submarines had limited battery capacity for submerged operations, and the inability to surface for recharging would prevent the subs from coming close to shore, or from traveling very far or very quickly as they were slow when submerged. This was precisely the desired effect of the Coastal Patrol – not so much to locate subs but to *prevent* them from being in the patrol zones in the first place. CAP planes, flown with a crew of two, did have a voice radio for communication with Base – their only connection to land – for reporting position and any enemy activity seen. Godfrey recalls no enemy sightings. Radio transmissions had to be “coded.” Crews were *not* supposed to broadcast messages “in the clear,” -plain, uncoded language.

Godfrey recalls no night flying. Aside from safety considerations, night missions would not have been effective –flight crews would not have been able to see anything, nor would enemy subs be able to see that CAP was on station. Later, Base 19 crews did fly night missions to evaluate the effectiveness of wartime blackouts for Civil Defense authorities.

Aircraft were unarmed during the early period of Coastal Patrol. Eventually, aircraft were armed with small bombs. (At other bases, larger aircraft were outfitted with bigger bombs or depth charges.) The small, surface bombs were not very effective –they would have to score a direct hit to do any damage.

Godfrey recalls that when not actually flying, there was a lot of “hanging around.” Many of the Base personnel were local, but others, like him, rented rooms in Portland while serving. Most preferred hanging around the airport to returning to their solitary rooms. There were few social events, particularly early on. He also recalls that many of the members were a little “rough around the edges!”

The commander, Maj. Milton Smith, was serious about the Squadron’s image. All personnel wore khaki CAP uniforms. Given the wartime status, personnel were supposed to wear their uniforms not only while on duty but anytime they were in public, and even in private gatherings of more than five people! Military customs and courtesies –saluting, etc. were “required.” But while many of these civilian volunteers were happy to observe this military discipline, others were less enamored with it!

Then, as of now, the public is not terribly aware of Civil Air Patrol, though there were those who showed appreciation. A story from Base 19 archives tells of Lt. Roul Souliere of Biddeford, out with friends at a Portland lounge, whose tab was paid by an unknown patron. That fellow later introduced himself –a merchant mariner who had been torpedoed and spent two days clinging to wreckage in the Atlantic before being rescued by a Coastal Patrol amphibian. He was now eternally grateful to all who wore the CAP uniform!

Base 19 was deactivated at the end of August, 1943, along with all Coastal Patrol bases. The submarine threat to the coastal and offshore sea lanes had diminished, partly due to the success of the Coastal Patrol mission, and the Navy had built up its capacity to perform the mission that CAP had prosecuted so faithfully early on. Despite the hazards of the mission, including weather –summer fog and winter storms –Base 19 recorded no serious accidents and no personnel lost. Not even a mission scrub due to personnel, demonstrating the commitment these men and women had to their assignment. When Coastal Patrol stood down on August

31, 1943, CAP overall had flown 24 million miles over the East Coast and Gulf Coast, spotted subs, bombed a few, located merchant vessels in distress and aided in the rescue of survivors. Patrol Base 19 even dropped newspapers to the Boone Island and Sequin Coast Guard garrisons.

Lt. Prentiss Godfrey had left the Squadron prior to its deactivation, as did several others who pursued other wartime duties. Godfrey went on to an Army glider training school in Alabama, where he served as a glider flight instructor and tow pilot flying Vultee BT-13s. He later enlisted in the Navy, and served as a flight instructor at NAS Olathe (Kansas), later returning to his native Bangor to pursue a law career. Continuing to fly recreationally after the War, he has maintained a passion for aviation throughout his life. Humble about his wartime service –characteristic of his generation –he pursued his duty as a patriot and pilot, much as members do today, 67 years later, as volunteers performing missions for America with the Civil Air Patrol.

---Prentiss Godfrey, father of the author, was interviewed for this article in 2005 at his home in Bangor, where he currently resides. Other references include the 19th Patrol Force Yearbook, Flying Minute Men by Robert Neprud, and From Maine to Mexico by Louis Keefer. With few WWII Sub-Chasers left among us, anyone with knowledge of others is encouraged to contact the author at dgodfrey@mewg.cap.gov.



MAHS members with PB4Y at the April meeting in Sanford

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With winter finally behind us, Maine's flyers are pulling their planes out and the hearty ones are busy making the seasonal conversion from skis to wheels or floats. It also means that its time for us to prepare the Maine Air Museum for the 2008 season. There is a lot to do, which was the focus of much of the April meeting (held at the Sanford Airport) since the March meeting was cancelled. Besides the normal cleaning after a long winter, display materials must be set up again, and there is some yard work to spruce up the grounds. Most in need of attention is the exterior which requires a fresh coat of paint before opening on Memorial Day weekend. The May meeting, Saturday the 10th was primarily devoted to work details, and as this issue goes to press it was not possible to report on volunteer turnout or which projects may not have been completed.

MAM NEEDS YOUR HELP

Therefore, we encourage as many members as possible to pitch in during the next couple of weekends with any unfinished work that needs attention before the Memorial Day weekend opening. Even a couple of hours could make a difference. Since weather conditions may have slowed down the exterior painting, please let us know if you are interested in helping with any remaining exterior painting or prep work.

New exhibits planned for the 2008 season include Al's Wind Tunnel project, and a display of select items from Leo Boyle's personal collection. Also, I'm hopeful that a couple of items on the new "Wish List" will be donated which would further add to existing displays.

With the economy likely to continue to be a concern throughout the summer and people staying closer to home, the museum could well have its busiest season ever. Please consider helping out at the museum a couple times or more if you can spare the time on a Saturday or Sunday throughout the summer, and together we can also make this our most successful year.

.....Bob Umberger

2008 Museum Wish List

It has been a couple of years since MAM has produced a "Wish List" of items that would make this season a success and beyond. Please help us out with your donation or your assistance in obtaining:

- Mannequins and/or Dress Makers Forms (many items on hand cannot be displayed at present).
 - Old style gravity feed Aviation Gas Pump.
 - General Aviation Cockpit or partial for interactive children's display.
 - Hollow Core Doors (no lock set hole) for use as display panels.
 - Paint Supplies: New or clean brushes, roller covers, paint trays, masking tape, etc.
 - Hard Board/Poster Board for use in making new transportable (road show) displays.
 - Display cases (plexiglas face/top).
-

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.

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, STS51.

*The United States Air Force
in Maine*



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 \$3.00 postage and handling). To order, call or email the museum.

Kenneth George DeWitt Kenneth George DeWitt passed away peacefully April 26, 2008 at home. He was born June 28, 1908, in Bradford. He graduated June 12, 1929, and then began his life working as an automobile mechanic in Bangor at Crosby's Ford. He later worked for Webber Motor Co., until he opened his own business, Ken's Motor Service, Old Town. In 1939, he began an aviation business at Doan's Airport, Brewer, until World War II began, when he was commissioned as a flight pilot to train pilots for the war effort, where he trained hundreds of pilots. In 1945, he began Central Maine Flying

Service as president. For the next 30 years, he trained thousands of industry, private business, ROTC for college students and private Aircraft distributor for 25 years, selling many planes throughout municipal airport was renamed DeWitt Field in July 1970.



pilots for the airline pilots. He was the Piper the U.S. and Canada. The

“He was absolutely thrilled that he was given that recognition airport,” said Debbie Hambright, DeWitt’s daughter. Hambright with her father as he plowed snow from the airport runway. He father met famous aviators and social leaders, such as Amelia Earhart and Billy Graham, through flying. She fondly recalled flying with her father to Piper factories in Florida and Pennsylvania, and day-trip charter flights to Canada. “I was probably the only kid in Old Town that got to go to Florida twice in a year and during the wintertime.” Hambright said.

In 1973, he retired and moved to Clearwater, Fla., where he began to restore 35 antique automobiles during his retirement. He was married to Dot DeWitt for 54 years, until her death in 2000. He is survived by six children.

Letters

To: Editor

I was surprised and delighted to read the Flyer’s article on the Aero Club of Maine. The author was well informed regarding the club’s origin and activities and there is little more I could add.

I have enclosed copies of related memorabilia that may be of interest.

1. Picture of the first plane used by the Aero Club. Alice Strange, wife of Clifford Strange in the cockpit.
2. Group picture of Aero Rendezvous, Augusta Airport 1937.
3. Car windshield emblem that was included in membership dues.
4. List of Aero Club members names and addresses 1935-1956

.....Neal Strange.

Ed. Note...items mentioned will be at the Museum.

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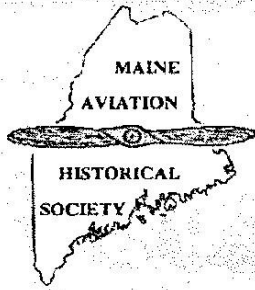
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The Maine Air Museum is located at the 98 Maine Avenue adjacent to the Bangor International Airport.

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



Maine Aviation Historical Society Maine Air Museum * Membership Form

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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, .
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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