

Dirigo Flyer

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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In this issue of the *Dirigo Flyer* we will catch up on a couple of short articles submitted over the past winter and begin a series of photos that have been found as we catalog Leo Boyle's collection. The editor has his usual lament that we need more articles that run about 1-2 pages single spaced.

REMEMBERING ANN WOOD-KELLY

By Rand Peck

I've mellowed over time. Some may not think so, but I've most certainly noticed it. Let me give you an example. When I was a young, 28 year old Twin Otter captain at Air New England, I overheard one of our senior management employees complain to the Montpelier, Vermont station manager when I'd delayed a flight to Boston. I've long since forgotten my reasoning for this delay, but I puffed myself up, walked over to her and politely explained that when the company made her a captain, she too would have such authority. It felt good as I turned and walked away.

Months later, I was home visiting my parents and proudly related the story to my Dad. I saw the look of horror come across his face as he asked, "Do you know who Ann Wood Kelly is, Rand?" Apparently not, my knowledge of historical aviation figures was lacking.

When 19 years old, Ann Wood joined the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPT) through Bowdoin College in Maine, later becoming a pilot instructor. A male bastion, she was only allowed admission due to persistence and an insufficient number of young men who had applied. Shortly thereafter, recruited by aviation legend Jacqueline Cochran, she packed her bags and departed for Montreal and eventually London where she flew in the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA or BATA, depending on your source of historical data). Through the war years, from 1942 through 1945, Ann Wood was one of only 24 U.S. women who ferried Spitfires, Hurricanes, Mosquitoes, Lancasters, P-51s, P-40s and B-17s from factories and drop off depots to active military airfields in England and France. Her logbooks reveal that she flew more than 900 airplanes of 75 different types for the Royal Air Force and Navy. These round engined beasts with cowl flaps, prop levers, METO power and tailwheels are airplanes that I dream about flying.

Locating military airfields was difficult, because on board navigational equipment would later be installed at the front, where she would then pick up battle damaged equipment and fly it back for repair. In recognition of her wartime service to Great Britain, King George IV awarded her the Kings Medal. In 1946, she served as the First Assistant to America's Civil Air Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in London.

When she returned to the States, she secured employment at Boston based Northeast Airlines in 1953, the nations smallest Trunk Carrier as Special Assistant to President George Gardner. Her work was instrumental in

Northeast's bitter flight for survival against much larger Eastern and National Airlines, to win CAB approval to compete in the New York-Miami market in 1957. They won! It was at Northeast Airlines that my father became acquainted with Ann Wood Kelly.

After years with NEA, she departed in 1972 to serve as Pan American World Airways first female vice-president under Chairman Najeeb Halaby and William Seawell. PAA founder Juan Tripp had resigned in 1968, but still maintained an office at the Park Street headquarters and attended board meetings regularly. She came on board early during the "Chosen Instruments" Boeing 747 era, only two years after they'd taken delivery of Clipper Victor, the first 747 to fly in scheduled service. Tragically, this airplane was destroyed at Tenerife in March 1977.

Yearning to return to Boston's North Shore, she left Pan Am and acquired a position with Boston based Air New England in 1977, who just a few years earlier had become the nation's newest certified air carrier flying a fleet of (former NEA/DAL) FH-227's. Working with President Charles Butler, her duties involved public relations. It was in the tiny passenger terminal, at the rural Montpelier airport, that we enjoyed our first dubious encounter. As time passed our paths crossed in the company's general offices at Logan Airport, where I discovered her to be gracious, engaging and a person of patrician bearing. These were the same offices incidentally, that she's occupied during her Northeast Airline years.

Twenty-five years later, flying as a B-757 captain at a major airline, I flew my Stearman (PT-17) to a Northeast Airlines reunion in Plymouth, NH. Twice a year in June and October, retired NEA captain Bill Grandy hosts these get-togethers attended by hundreds of former Yellowbirds. They're wonderful events, which allow me to mingle with my boyhood heroes who occupied early positions on the NEA seniority list, flying DC-3s, Convair 240s, DC-6Bs and Vickers Viscounts. Many, including Ann, were WWII veterans with stories to tell. Miraculously, through the aging process, I wasn't quite so full of myself now and knew to listen.

On this beautiful yet windy and gusty October day, I worked hard, maneuvering among the foothills near Mt. Washington, to get the Stearman on the ground at Plymouth. This was not a particularly good flying day, as I fell in line behind a Cherokee Arrow on downwind for the single grass strip.

"Bam" I was on the grass; stick hard left and full back planting the tailwheel and holding the left "wings" down. Hundreds of eyes were watching as "Red's boy," in cloth helmet and goggles, plunked the Stearman on. I was glad to be on the ground though, as I taxied and parked next to the Arrow, strong winds still buffeting my antique airplane. As I started to walk across the runway to join the party, I encountered the Cherokee pilot. To my surprise, it was Ann Wood Kelly. I hadn't seen her in years; in her mid-eighties now, she stood tall and straight and maintained her elegant bearing. As I walked towards her, introducing myself, I decided not to make a big deal of the rather uncomfortable flying conditions!

Her first inquiry was of my father, "Rand, how's your dad?" She was saddened to learn of his death and related a story of him in a DC-6B years earlier. We continued walking chatting about friends at Northeast Airlines and Air New England. Her attention to detail and memory were remarkable and we laughed as we strolled across the grass runway.

Just before reaching the gathering while we were still alone, I stopped and told her that I thought that I owed her an apology. She looked me square in the eye and said, "no you don't Rand, you were the captain." I'd not mentioned why I owed her the apology, she'd remembered the incident from my infancy in the business as well. She smiled, had probably noticed the gray around my temples, remarked how much I looked like my Dad and nothing more was said of it. We went on our way as she engaged her contemporaries and reveled in an afternoon of good food, good friends and great flying stories. She mixed with a group of salty old airline pilots, as well as a book discussion group on Beacon Hill in Boston. Two years later in May of 2006, she was gone.

A gracious woman, who years earlier could have squashed this young captain like a bug, but chose not to and let him grow up on his own.

President's Message

Finally, a few really nice days in April produced some noticeable increase in activity at airports around the state with shuttered hangars opening up and more aircraft coming and going. This renewed activity reminds me of a favorite bumper sticker I used to have which read "*I Love Airplane Noise*". Spring has its good points and a

few problems too, for instance the receding snow has been followed by very dry conditions, which has kept the Maine Forest Service's helicopters & crews rather busy making fire spotting runs and battling a few isolated flare-ups. Much of this aviation activity goes unnoticed by the public, as thankfully there has not been a major forest fire event anywhere in the state. For us, springtime means we are once again approaching the point where we must ready the museum for opening weekend, in conjunction with that weekend preparing our float for the annual Memorial Day Parade. The May member meeting will primarily be devoted to cleaning up the museum, setting up a couple of new displays and lining up volunteers for the opening and first few weekends of the season.

So please consider helping out at the museum a couple times or more when you can spare the time on a Saturday or Sunday as we progress through the summer season. I also need to mention that we will have a display at the Portland Jetport Show/ Open House, June 13 & 14th, which is an important "off-site" event for us exposure-wise and as a revenue generator. Further, it is an opportunity for members from the southern part of the state to help out more locally too.

Without question, the economy remains a concern for most which likely means many people will be looking for inexpensive things to do close to home which could result in MAM having a very busy year. You can check the volunteer openings /requirements each weekend day by going to our website, and contacting Les Shaw, Mike Cornett or Jim Nelligan to sign up; and contact me or Scott Grant as far as helping during the Portland Jetport event. Let's make this another successful and fun year by having more members working together.

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.

*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.

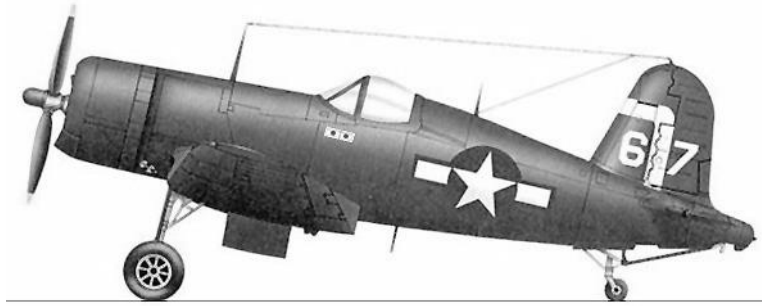
Another exclusive book from the Maine Aviation Historical Society. Softbound, 134 pages, 151 illustrations.

\$20.00 (plus \$3.00 postage and handling). To order, call or email

Tragedy Twice Averted F4U-4 Corsair 82020 August 3, 1951 at Bradford

Master Sergeant Irving G. Taylor was a U.S. Marine Corps Fighter Pilot who had recently returned from a tour in Korea after completing 105 combat missions. He was among 132 enlisted "Naval Aviation Pilots" in the Marine Corps, having obtained his wings in 1946. After rotation stateside, he was assigned to VMF-225 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina. He was a highly experienced pilot with 1878 hours, 856 of which were in F4U Corsairs.

The F4U-4 was the last version of the famous Chance Vought Corsair fighter produced during World War II. By 1951, it had been superseded in the air to air combat role by jet powered naval fighters like the Grumman F9F "Panther" and McDonnell F2H "Banshee". Corsairs were still seeing extensive service in Korea, however, in the ground attack and close air support role.



Master Sergeant Taylor had received clearance for a weekend cross country flight to Dow Air Force Base in Bangor. There he had planned to meet up with his parents, who were traveling from Detroit, Michigan, and spend the weekend with his brother's family in Dover-Foxcroft. At 20:00 local time he took off from Squantum Naval Air Station in Massachusetts for the final leg of the flight, with a planned time in route of one hour. The weather was predicted to be adequate for a VFR flight to Bangor, with a ceiling of 3500 feet and visibility of 5 miles.

57 minutes later, as should have been on approach to Dow AFB, Taylor called the Dow tower and stated that he had overshot the field and was having trouble getting oriented in the darkness and rain falling in the area. He asked about getting a direction finding steer to the field and was told that he could get one if he was declaring an emergency. He declined to do so.

Just after 21:15, while flying south toward Bangor at low altitude, the 2450 hp Pratt & Whitney R2800 engine on his Corsair began to "miss", possibly due to low fuel pressure. He selected a large field visible in the darkness below, and lined up for a forced landing.

Down below, Clarida Vandyne entered the kitchen of the family farmhouse to get a glass of water for her 10 year old daughter Charlotte, who was recovering from a bout with polio. As she entered the room and snapped on the kitchen light, she was startled by two bright white lights approaching the house at alarming speed!

Taylor was similarly alarmed when the kitchen light came on and revealed a house in the middle of the field he was about to belly land on. He advanced the throttle and pulled back hard on the stick, just clearing the house. Charlotte later vividly described a glowing exhaust pipe visible as the aircraft passed by her second story bedroom window.

After clearing the house, the Corsair began to stall and sink. It clipped off the tops of several small birches and the left wing struck a large elm tree next to the Middle Road shearing off several feet of the wing tip.

As the four members of the Vandyne family recovered from their shock, realized that the plane had actually somehow missed their house, and climbed back to their feet, they heard a tremendous roar as the aircraft crashed into the ground. Garf Vandyne gathered his family together and they got into the family car to go to the crash site, which Garf believed was somewhere near the Ido Wilson farm on the Reeves Road. When they got there, however, they could see an orange glow on the horizon further to the southeast. After driving over to the Wilder-Davis Road, they finally saw the flaming wreckage of the fighter in the woods below the Leon Allen home. A small crowd had gathered, but moved back from the flaming wreckage as 50 caliber machine gun ammunition began exploding.

Most members of the crowd were certain that the pilot had perished in the crash, but soon a figure staggered out of the woods nearby and approached the crash site. It was MSgt Taylor, who had been able to get the Corsair up to 300-400 feet of altitude and bail out before the plane impacted the ground. He had landed in a tree about 300 yards back in the woods from the crash site and had suffered only minor injuries.

A crash crew soon arrived on the scene from Dow AFB and Taylor was transported to the base hospital. The burned wreckage, which had remained fairly intact in the low angle, low speed impact, was removed from the site. About 2 weeks later, Clarida Vandyne was chasing down a loose cow on her property, when she discovered

the debris from the Corsair's left outboard wing, a poignant reminder of the rainy summer night in Bradford when a total of 5 people escaped almost certain death by mere feet!

...thanks to Peter Noddin



A Martin MB-2 bomber of the U.S. Army Air Corps at Old Orchard Beach on its way home from the epic Bangor Flight.....from the Harry Jones collection via Leo Boyle



Left: F5C-3 Hawks from Flight Squadron 4 at Quantico at Scarborough on 31 September 1928.



Right: A Boeing KC-97 Stratotanker undergoing maintenance at Loring AFB, Limestone, ME in 1957.

(Relatively recent) NEWS

On 20 Jan. 2009 Starlink Aviation on Montreal announced FAA approval of a new route from Portland, Maine (PWM) to Yarmouth (YQI) and Halifax (YHZ), Nova Scotia.

On 5 May a DC-3, newly restored by Swiss owner Francisco Aguillo visited Auburn while on its maiden flight from Florida to Quebec City. Aguillo, who is a founding member of the Super Constellation Flyers Association and a Boeing 757 captain, visited the Lufthansa Constellation restoration project (see *Dirigo Flyer* 17 no.1). After the Quebec City stop the 69 year-old DC-3 will eventually be flown to Switzerland via many fueling and publicity stops.

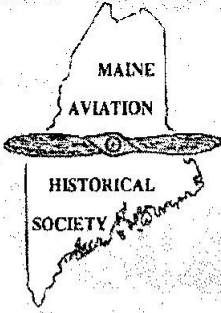
UPCOMING:

- May 9:** Maine Aviation Historical Society meeting at the Maine Air Museum in Bangor at 10 a.m.
- May 23:** Sanford Airport Rag-wing Fly-In.
- May 23-24:** Spring Auto Festival and Antique Aeroplane Show at Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- May 25:** Memorial Day parade in Bangor.
- June 13:** Maine Aviation Historical Society meeting at the Maine Air Museum in Bangor at 10 a.m.
- June 13:** New England Seaplane Safety Expo, Naples.
- June 13-14:** Transportation Show at the Portland Jetport.
- June 20:** Northern Maine International Air Show, Presque Isle.

Web site: www.maineairmuseum.org email: mam@maineairmuseum.org
1-877-280-MAHS toll free in Maine. 207-941-6757

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: _____

Address: _____

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!

Mail payment to:
Maine Aviation
Historical Society
PO Box 2641
Bangor, ME 04402-2641

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* * 2 annual \$250 payments	Newsletter, Lifetime Membership Number, 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 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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