

Dirigo Flyer

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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It Started in a Bathtub

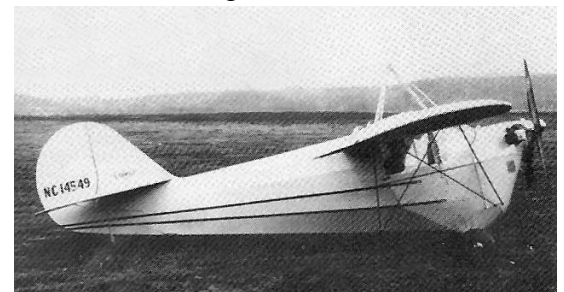
By Linwood Lawrence

Looking back over my 70 years as an active pilot, my first eight years represents a rather steep learning curve. Of course our country experienced a coming-of-age experience during this same time too. It is hard to believe the first plane I soloed was referred to as a “flying bathtub”, and there was a strong resemblance.

Prior to a lifetime of aviation and after graduating from Houlton High School (Maine) in 1934, jobs were scarce in this post depression period. So I counted myself quite fortunate to be working on the more common mode of transportation of that era –the rail road. It soon was apparent that being a brakeman riding the same track day after day would not be an invigorating future. So taking my savings from four years of riding the rails I enrolled in the Luscombe School of Aeronautics in Trenton, New Jersey to earn an aircraft mechanic’s license. This would qualify me to inspect, repair and sign off for flight status equipment that I thought represented the future for transportation. This same school was also building training airplanes which provided students the opportunity to work on the production line for \$0.25 per hour. After understanding the mechanical side of airplanes I soon wanted to experience the real purpose of these machines and earn a pilot’s license.

Now an economic dilemma –the airplanes we were building could be rented for flight instruction for \$8.00 per hour. Yet my income was \$12.50 per week of which room and board required \$7.00. For me to learn to fly would require a less expensive airplane. What about a \$3.00 per hour airplane? Well it turned out to be a rather odd looking contraption, some might even say cute. It did have an impressively named manufacturer -The Aeronautical Corporation of American shortened to “Aeronca”, and I was to get real personal with their model C-3.

Started in Cincinnati in 1928, this company built both the airplane and its engine with a design some called “Frisolous” and others just called it “The Flying Bathtub”. It had an open pod fuselage and a rather distinctive razorback which seemed to accentuate its bathtub appearance. Powered by a 36 hp engine, side by side seats, one control stick, five instruments, rudder pedals, (brakes and heater cost extra) and a few peculiarities –external wire braces, single ignition engine, no airspeed instrument and a very short stubby landing gear. With the wing about chest high it sat very close to the ground and one could not deny its resemblance to a claw foot tub! Production was halted in 1937 when this airplane no longer met new US government standards for airworthiness, but existing planes were “grandfathered” allowing them to be flown but no longer manufactured. This orphaned airplane was to be my “steed” to learn to fly in 1938.



Learning to fly usually means hours of flight time with a licensed instructor with lots of take offs, flying in a rectangular pattern at 800 feet, and then a landing. The flight instructor who was assigned to me took of and had me watch him as he did a pattern at only 200 feet. Upon landing he climbed out cursing what he thought (quite correctly) was a woefully underpowered airplane, especially when flying with two people in it. He announced that I would have to fly it alone...I remember learning to ride a bicycle by myself but assumed flight instruction included a flight instructor. It was not to be and saving the expense of the instructor fee, meant more money for those \$3.00 per hour flights of self instruction. In many ways I am grateful the Aeronca C-3 was a forgiving little plane, flying so slowly that there was time to think about what to do next.

One thing that was disconcerting was the absence of an airspeed indicator. I knew sufficient forward speed was necessary in order to prevent the wings from “stalling” (loosing lift) with the plane falling off to one side or the other and having that bulbous nose point itself directly at the ground. The forward speed at which gravity replaces lift in the C-3 is about 35 miles per hour. I say about because the C-3 had no airspeed instrument. Oh yes, there is this moving pointer thing hanging under the wing –think of the hand on the old hanging scale that was used to weight bananas. This is what was available to “suggest” one’s airspeed. I made sure it always “felt” I was flying with enough forward speed. So this self taught pilot really did learn to fly “by the seat of his pants” –a feel for flying that remains with me today (although I have come to rely upon an accurate airspeed indicator...)

My first aviation job in 1940 was with a Massachusetts flight school on Cape Cod who wanted a mechanic familiar with Luscombe airplanes. I accepted at \$40.00 per week and a cabin on the airfield where I lived with another mechanic. This job gave me lots of occasions to “test fly” airplanes after working on them so my flight time started to build. Interestingly, at this time our country was starting to feel the effects of war, even though we were officially neutral. There were German U-Boat sightings along the Atlantic Coast. The flight school was ordered “for security reasons” to relocate inland. It did, to up state New York, and by my choice, without me.

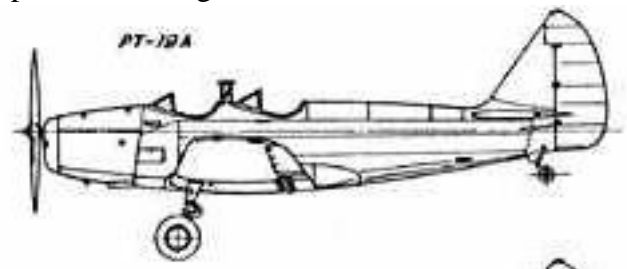
So that fall I did move inland a little, to Worcester, Massachusetts, where a flight school there was gearing up to train pilots everyone knew were going to be needed really soon. I was offered the job if I would agree to fly and teach in any airplane on the field. On my very first flight, the proverbial check ride, I was awarded both a commercial license and a flight instructor’s certificate. Not quite the “do it yourself” style of learning to fly in the “bathtub” but quite close!

The German U-boats off our Atlantic Coast, a threat to every convoy of freighters headed to help our friends in England, were not the tipping point for the United States to enter the war. That came in the Pacific Ocean, December 7th, 1941 –a day of infamy. Suddenly there were contracts to train US Navy pilots. I was immediately assigned five Navy Cadets to get them through primary flight training and immediately thereafter to teach them 35 hours of aerobatic training. This cycle continued, training as many cadets as quickly as we could.

By 1943, the Military had built up its inventory of training airplanes and now it needed experience instructors. So after two New England winters of teaching aerobatics in open cockpit biplanes, the Navy training base in Pensacola, Florida sounded like a place to thaw out. One problem, I was still a citizen of Canada. “No problem” said the representative from the Marine Corps. “Raise your hand.” I did an oath and proudly became an American citizen. “Raise your hand again.” I did, said another oath, and was sworn in as a commissioned officer in the Marine Corps. They even skipped the first rank of second lieutenant, and I headed to Florida as a First Lieutenant.

There were so many flying experiences, so many students to teach, so many different airplanes to fly in, my military time was really quite rewarding. Professionally there would be no other place where I could have flown such a diversified number of aircraft, many with the latest developments of increasing performance. The pace of technical design improvements and innovation was impressive during this otherwise awful time of World War. Our country did come of age during this time with everybody, at home or in uniform, figuring out a way to help contribute to the war effort.

Finally, in March of 1946, I was placed on inactive duty and able to return home to Houlton, Maine. My trip north was flying a purchased Fairchild PT-19, a former military



primary trainer, which were for sale as surplus. This was only 8 years after my first flight in the “Bathtub” but now with several thousand hours of flight time, and importantly, this time with a fully working airspeed instrument.

**Linwood Lawrence was a member of the Maine Aviation Historical Society.
He passed away April 20, 2010 at the age of 93 years and 10 months.**

President’s Message

As we head into Fall and another Maine Winter, the Maine Air Museum concludes one more year of successful operation, but only because of the continued dedication of a very small number of members that gave their time Saturday’s and Sunday’s week after week to make sure the museum was open for visitors as advertised. Because they had so little help from others it wasn’t fair to them to remain open after Labor Day and into October this year. During the September meeting everyone present was in favor of ending the museum season, as has been the case the past couple years with a tasty mix of pot luck fare; concurrent with the October end of season celebration the museum will officially be closed until next spring. We hope there will be a good turnout for the October 9th gathering, especially for members that haven’t made it to the museum this year as there have been several neat and interesting new additions to the display areas, and major improvements to the museum archives. This is a great opportunity to show off the museum and its displays, so please bring along a guest or two as well.

Due to the delay in newsletters the past couple of months I need to mention now that we need to be gathering information on candidates / nominees to run for MAHS Officer and Board positions so that the names can be added to the ballot during the November meeting. In the recent past there haven’t been many new faces willing to help out as an officer or a member of the board of directors, so I again encourage other members to come forward and assist in shaping the future of this organization, and fulfilling its important mission. You all have talents and ideas to contribute in a capacity beyond that of just general membership, so let’s hear from you with your support for 2011.

Finally, the off season meetings will take place around the state as with past years. For November the off-site membership meeting will be held at the Lewiston-Auburn airport terminal just opposite the airport cafe, which by the way is another great breakfast destination frequented by many from around the state. We hope to combine this meeting with a check on Lufthansa’s Starliner restoration project in the adjacent hangar. The meeting spot for December’s meeting will be decided at the October members meeting.

Enjoy the Fall with a Foliage Flight *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 \$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.

A Little Boy and a Northeast Airline DC-3

Back in the summer of 1941, I was a little fourteen year old boy. I lived on the Old Hotel Road across from the Auburn-Lewiston Airport in Auburn, Maine. Airports back then were open to the public. There were no fences and no locked doors. They were just wide open spaces. Neighborhood kids had full run of the airport. It was not unusual to see kids riding their bicycles all over the ramp and at times up and down the runways. I was no exception to this. Many times an airport employee would come out of the hanger waving his arm in the air to chase the bicycle riders off the ramp and runway. He looks as though he was shooing off some annoying flies.

In June of that year Northeast Airlines had purchased three new Douglas DC-3 airplanes from the Douglas factory in Santa Monica, California. In the month of June, one of these DC-3's arrived at the L&A Airport to be on public display and to give rides to local dignitaries.

Earlier in the day, a Northeast Airline employee arrived in a company truck with wooden staging that had to be assembled. The wooden staging was to be used by the people after inspecting the airplane so they could exit from the forward door near the cockpit.

I went over to the person working on the staging and just started talking to him and helping him with his work. He did not tell me to get lost or shoo me away, he just talked with me and let me help him with his work.

As the second ride was about to start boarding, the man that I was helping was standing near the passenger door. He hollered at me and told me to get on board the DC-3. He told me to sit way up front in the left seat by the window and if anyone asked me what I was doing, I was to simply say, "Mr. "X" told me to sit here". I could not believe that I was sitting in a brand new DC-3, about to get a scenic ride over my home town. Seeing the cows and farm houses shrink as we were climbing out of the airport was beyond description. Life was good.

Normally this would be end of this short story, but stay with me I have a little more.

Let's fast forward about twenty-five years to May 16, 1966. On this day I was at the New York La Guardia airport getting on another NEA DC-3. This time I was not going to sit in the forward left passenger seat, but I continue through the cockpit door into the cockpit and sat myself in the left seat. This was the day I was going to make my first flight as a NEA captain. This was a round trip flight to Montpelier, Vermont with stops in Keene, New Hampshire. Returning to La Guardia the wind was from the northeast so we would be using runway 4. The traffic flow for this was to fly down the Hudson River to just pass lower Manhattan, make left hand turn and line up for runway 4 for landing. During this left turn the view of New York was a thing of beauty. I thought to myself, life is good. And now you know the rest of the story.

....Norm Houle, October 2008.

FedEx freightliner arriving at the
Portland International Jetport.

Photo by Michael Gregory





Unusual shot at the Portland International Jetport as cargo is offloaded from a FedEx flight while it sits on the back taxiway.

Photo by Michael Gregory

The following is a short article by member James McCarthy. It is part of an ongoing occasional series of reminiscences by our members.

FLLOW

Flolow, the title of this piece, and also the word with which I began this sentence represent an experience of a few days in 1945, while I was a GI at Reno Army Air Base.

That word also relates to a name, Flolow. Flolow was the name of a full Colonel I found myself accompanying, in an Army Staff Car, from Reno to a sod airfield strip outside Sacramento, California. It must have been summer since there was no snow in Donner Pass. I wasn't driving. The driver was a Lt. Colonel, whose name I don't remember. The spelling of Flolow is questionable, but that's how it was pronounced. Since he was the Reno Base Commander, during one period, I probably once knew the exact spelling and other details. One thing I do remember, because it had made an impression on me as a buck sergeant, was that he was a West Point graduate. The fact that I was accompanying him in the same car, but not just the driver, was surprising enough, but there is more. Why I was selected, and by whom, to accompany Colonel Flolow in this effort, I never learned. There were many other more experienced, at least in terms of service, higher ranking Non-Coms available. I did have one of the few, if not the only, FAA Airframe and Power plant Licenses (A&E, at the time) on the Base, but I find it difficult to think of that as the qualifying requirement.

We arrived at the sod strip in the early afternoon. It was deserted. Mired down in about the mid-point of the strip in a low area was a DC-3 type, probably C-53, that I didn't identify as being from the Reno Squadron. It had apparently been landed successfully but nosed over when it hit the sodden stretch, severely damaging the left propeller. Otherwise, the airplane appeared structurally intact. It had settled back down on its tail wheel.

After examining the aircraft, and reviewing the landing area, we departed for some other location for food, and to spend the night. I suspect it was McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento but I don't remember the details. The next mid-morning we returned to the site of the aircraft. Someone had been there earlier, towed the aircraft to one end of the take-off path, laid down steel grid strips for several hundred feet to facilitate the towing operation and in anticipation, perhaps, of a later take-off.

Somewhere, again I suspect McClellan, we had scrounged a replacement propeller, with the tools and an Army Jeep. As improbable as it seems, the three of us using the Jeep hood as a work stand, removed the old propeller, by some crude method checked the engine propeller shaft for "run-out", and by sheer muscular effort, installed the new propeller. Even more improbable than the task itself, was that it accomplished by me with the help of a Colonel and a Lt. Colonel, without any outside help. What set of circumstances suggested that these two officers, both Command Pilots, were obligated or inclined to participate, when McClellan, an Army Air Corp Depot was not far away? I wondered but I was not told why, in spite of the free flow of conversation, and the unusually casual and unstructured personal relationships during the entire trip.

When we finished the installation, we "ran-up" and checked the engines and propeller operation, checked all the fluids and gave the airplane a thorough visual check. As far as I could see the airplane was ready to fly.

Colonel Flolow was no fool. He measured the length of the take-off strip with the Jeep, eyed the terrain and the trees at the end, and checked the wind. He looked at the situation again, shook his head, and motioned into the Jeep. He drove

back to McClellan where we turned I the Jeep and retrieved the Staff Car. The next morning we drove over the Pass, back to Reno.

I don't remember ever seeing that airplane again. Nobody could tell me what had happened to put the DC-3 onto the sod strip, why it was desirable for a full Colonel to participate, so personally, in its recovery, or what happened afterwards. Nobody seemed to know, or had decided that it was best that I shouldn't know, that was non of my business.

MAINE AIR MUSEUM TEST

All the following questions relate to people, places, and things associated with the Maine Aviation History.

1. Our Luscombe aircraft was originally purchased from:
 - a. A dealer at the Brewer, ME airport
 - b. Maheaux's Airport, Minot, ME
 - c. Spirit Aviation, Old Town Maine
 - d. Beal's Aircraft Service, Houlton, ME
2. Bangor's first heavier-than-air flight took place in:
 - a. 1905
 - b. 1909
 - c. 1911
 - d. 1914
3. Bangor's first heavier-heavier-than-air flight took place at:
 - a. Godfrey Field
 - b. Inside the Sawyer Arena
 - c. Hutchens Park
 - d. Maplewood Park
4. Our Ramp Tug was used by which airline during the 1960s:
 - a. Delta Airlines
 - b. United Airlines
 - c. Northeast Airlines
 - d. TWA
5. Portland International Airport was once known as:
 - a. Idyllwild Airport
 - b. Logan Airport
 - c. Godfrey Field
 - d. Stroudwater Field
6. Our two man, home-built Scorpion helicopter was flown in the 1960s by:
 - a. Robert Cyr
 - b. John-Paul St. Cyr
 - c. Jean-Guy Paquel
 - d. Louis Pasteur
7. The stowaway on the Yellow Bird flight to Spain was:
 - a. Paul Schmeltzer
 - b. Arthur Schieber
 - c. Herman Wolk
 - d. Late for supper
8. The stowaway returned to the United States aboard which ship:
 - a. Titanic
 - b. Queen Mary
 - c. Mayflower
 - d. Leviathan
9. During WWII How many "Plane Spotters" manned observation sites in the United States:
 - a. 1 million
 - b. 1.5 million
 - c. 3.6 million
 - d. 0.5 million
10. Our WWII air raid warning siren was used in which Maine town:
 - a. Fort Kent
 - b. Houlton
 - c. Island Falls
 - d. Pittsfield
11. How long is the active runway at Bangor International Airport:
 - a. 5,280'
 - b. 11,400'
 - c. 12,500'
 - d. None of the above
12. In 1935, Albert Stevens set the world altitude record of:
 - a. 68,500'
 - b. 72,295'
 - c. 80,200'
 - d. 82,290'
13. In the Stephen King movie, **The Langoliers** in one of the scenes there is something in the background that shouldn't be there:
 - a. Good Humor ice cream truck
 - b. SAC Alert Force KC-135
 - c. a fuel truck
 - d. None of the above
14. Ed Link, the developer of the Link Trainer started out as a:
 - a. C.P.A
 - b. Motorcycle racer
 - c. Bicycle maker
 - d. Piano and organ maker
15. The times indicated in the American Air Almanac used for celestial navigation are:
 - a. Greenwich Mean Time
 - b. Eastern Standard Time
 - c. Central Mountain Time
 - d. None of the above

- b. Washington DC standard time
 16. The book “**With an Angel by My Side**” was written by:
 a. Francis Scott Key
 b. Norm Houle
 c. John Wayne
 d. Al Cormier
 d. None of the above

Answers in the next issue.

Some recent Scott Grant pictures taken from the Museum



Seen landing at Bangor is an unpainted Rolls-Royce powered Gulfstream G-550. Owned by the Bank of Utah in Salt Lake City it was being ferried to an unknown buyer in the Cayman Islands.

Here is a older 1996 Boeing 737-33A owned and operated by Omni Air of Tulsa, Oklahoma as it taxis for takeoff



This Air Force T-28 was from the same base as the B-2 that was did a fly-over at the Portland Airshow.

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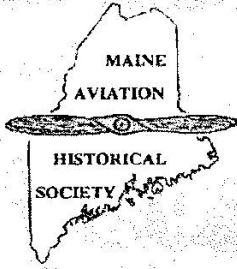
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The Maine Air Museum is located at the 98 Maine Avenue adjacent to the Bangor International Airport.

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



Maine Aviation Historical Society Maine Air Museum * Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

Annual membership includes six newsletters!

Mail payment to:
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PO Box 2641
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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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