



Dirigo Flyer

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society

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

www.maineairmuseum.org mam@maineairmuseum.org

Volume XIV No. 1

January – February 2006

This issue of the Flyer is coming a bit late, as usual, due to another change of editors. It was decided some time ago to produce the newsletter as a bimonthly publication. Fortunately we have enough material to produce several more issues...BUT...we are always in need of articles, pictures, and advertising. Contact the editor through the email address above.

We will commence our fifteenth year of the Dirigo Flyer with a first-person article by member Jim McCarthy, a Maine “snowbird” in Dallas, Texas.

HIGH FLYER

At various times I was in the right seat. At other times, Al Schwimmer, the Flight Engineer, was in the left seat in the cockpit of the TWA model 049 Constellation. We were over the Maine countryside on a scheduled passenger flight on the Gander/New York (Idlewild at that time) leg of a Paris/New York flight. The Captain was monitoring the Flight Engineer panel. The Copilot was “circulating.” The Navigator (in 1947 they were still used) was relaxing, his job just about finished for this trip.

Today, this seating arrangement might put us in jail. Then, it was unconventional, but not as bad as it might seem. True, I was completely unqualified in the right seat, except that as Supervisory Mechanic at Gander, and earlier exposure in the first Army Air Corps Flight Engineer class on the Constellation, conducted by Lockheed at Burbank, I knew the airplane. Al Schwimmer had had considerable time in both seats and was capable, however not legal as best I know.

As we approached the Bangor Radio reporting point, cruising at an aircraft altitude of 18,000 feet with a cabin altitude of 8,000 or so, at maximum pressure differential, there was a switch in seats. The scheduled crew took over. Al returned to his Flight Engineer duties, and I was relegated to the cockpit observer’s seat.

The changes in seating positions did not, however, impede the free flow of conversation in the cockpit, encouraged substantially by my presence. The flight crew had “overnighted” in Paris, where they had taken advantage of the bargain prices the US dollar commanded at that time. They had been outside the US only for a period of time that severely limited their “duty free” privilege. They knew that I, as an American, residing in Newfoundland, was entitled to a much higher amount. The end result was the opening and repacking of bags in the cockpit, followed by my passage through US Customs, as a passenger, with a great variety of goods, all entered on my Declaration Statement.

I remember the Customs Agent glancing at me, as he read my Declaration and noted, quizzically, “Twelve dozen pair ladies gloves.” He continued, “And, what business are you in, Mr. McCarthy?” On telling him I worked for the airline, he responded with a knowing, “Oh,” and passed me on.

That is my last memory of Al Schwimmer at TWA. It may have been his last flight. There were rumors that the company had removed him from Intercontinental Division flights because his Jewish ancestry could cause diplomatic problems as TWA moved through the Middle East. Then, later word circulated, more rumor, that he had bought four C-69s, the military designation of the Constellation, from Lockheed for \$5,000 each. These aircraft were supposedly, from the first eight or ten aircraft off the Lockheed line, all of the destined, half to TWA, half to PAA, but were turned over to the military and never received civil certificates. The information passed around was that they were now not eligible for civil licensing.

The four aircraft had been prepared for ferry flight, presumably by an Al Schwimmer maintenance facility in Burbank, the flown to Teterborough Airport. From that point, they were, illegally, exported to Tel Aviv, to become the basis of the long range, pressurized fleet of El Al, Israel Airlines.

I have found no verification of the above suppositions. There is, however, rather extensive coverage of Al Schwimmer's later activities, in Israel, in the Middle East and around the world that would lead one to believe those events may well have been real. It would have been difficult then to imagine that the Al Schwimmer I knew only as a TWA Flight Engineer would later be hailed as one of the principal heroes of Israel's great military and industrial successes. But, that was, and is, the case.

In 1950, Adolph W. Schwimmer and close friend, Hank Greenspun, were convicted of violating the US Neutrality Act, not jailed, but stripped of their civil rights and fined \$10,000 each for smuggling aircraft into Israel during its War of Independence in 1948.

In an interview with Eric Schechter of The Jerusalem Report, on Feb. 26, 2001, Schwimmer answered the question about how he had smuggled the aircraft into Israel.

His reply: *I established false companies, one was purportedly the official airline of Panama. I was in the Air Transport Command in World War II!, so I knew lots of pilots, Jews and non-Jews. They flew over transport planes. We also got some B-17s...and a number of C-46 transport planes carried over disassembled Messerschmitt MA-109 fighters bought in Czechoslovakia.*

On another level, he was asked if it were true that he had helped start the US Iran Contra operation by introducing Michael Ledeen, U.S. National Security Council staffer, to Iranian arms merchant Mannucher Ghobanifor.

His reply: *I knew Ghobanifor personally. I had met him through Adnan Kashoggi, the Saudi Arabian...I also got on my team David Kimche (Foreign Ministry director general) and Yaakov Nimrodi (former military attaché to Iran and arms dealer), who I knew because we did a lot of business with the shah.*

These quotes are telling, but, by no means, do they disclose the depth and extent of Al Schwimmer's involvement in both overt business deals, and clandestine activities. In 1951, in answer to a personal request from Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, who had had become well acquainted with during Israel's War for Independence, he established Bedek Aviation, a broad-based aircraft maintenance organization at Lod in Israel. Bedek later became Israel Aircraft Industries, the country's leading corporation.

His influence ranged across the American, European, and Middle East world, Jewish and non-Jewish, not excluding powerful Arabs in Saudi Arabia. A prime example is Adnan Khasaggi, on some lists of the world's richest individuals.

Hank Greenspun, Al's co-conspirator in the illegal export of aircraft and arms, later, Las Vegas hotel owner, newspaper publisher, friend and adviser to "Bugsy" Siegel was pardoned by John F. Kennedy in 1961, probably in response to Siegel's request and his decorated service in World War II. Schwimmer refused to request pardon because, as he often said, it would require his admission of guilt. He felt no guilt in helping his adopted country.

In the Iran-Contra affair, Schwimmer, was an advisor to the then Prime Minister Simon Peres, where he acted as an intermediary between Washington and Tehran in an attempt to trade American and Israeli equipment for the US hostages held by Iran. It didn't work, but in this capacity he had meetings with President Regan and Vice President George Bush, both of who, he often said, didn't seem to care that they were dealing with a convicted felon.

During the Clinton years, Brian Greenspun, a Georgetown classmate of Bill Clinton, and son of Hank Greenspun, who died in 1989, requested pardon for Schwimmer, without his concurrence and without his admission of guilt. It was granted, together with those of more than 100 others, in the last hours of the Clinton tenure.

From what I can learn, he is still living, in semi-retirement, in Israel. If I thought he might remember me, and I could find an email address, I might drop him a line.

A question comes to mind, is it now too late to admit guilt, and request a pardon, from the new Bush for my complicity with Al Schwimmer, the “high flier”, and others, in the US Customs deception related to that Gander/New York TWA flight?

I wonder.

By James E. McCarthy
4935 Ellensburg Drive
Dallas, TX
JMOasis52@aol.com

© James E. McCarthy 2005

Dirigo Flyer is published bi-monthly by the Maine Aviation Historical Society, a non-profit (501c3) corp. PO Box 2641, Bangor, ME 04402-2641.
www.maineairmuseum.org
mam@maineairmuseum.org
1-877-280-MAHS (Maine)
207-941-6757

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President

Les Shaw
Brewer, Maine 04413
les_shaw@umit.maine.edu

Vice President

Norm Houle
PO Box 563
Barrington, NH 03825-0563
Livefreeandfly@aol.com

Recording Secretary

William Townsend
12 Spring St.
Bar Harbor, ME 04609
townsend10@verizon.net

Treasurer

Joe Quinn
Levant, Maine 04456
jwquinn@adelphia.net

DIRECTORS

Dan See
Dick Johnson
Stan Smith
Leo Boyle
Al Cormier
Jim Nelligan
Michael Cornett
Scott Grant

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The year is off to a strong start. We have all the Officer's positions filled and all the Board positions filled as well. With only two meetings behind us we have accomplished a lot. We have expanded our web site so that it includes current information that can be updated as we require. If you haven't checked it out go to www.maineairmuseum.org and check out some of the new links. We have also amended the Bylaws to allow for Board Meetings by Email and Conference Calls.

We heard some members say that the Historical Society was being ignored so we have dedicated the Monthly Membership Meetings to historical issues and we will keep the business portion to a minimum and have it follow the program. We have scheduled meetings ahead of time with the February meeting held at the Airport at Wiscasset, Maine. The March 11th meeting will be held at the Augusta Airport and the April 8th meeting at the Pittsfield Airport. We are planning on having a short program on the history of each airport followed up by additional programs if available. This also gets us out into the state and will increase our visibility. We plan to return to the Museum in May, so that we can plan for the annual opening.

We have drafted a letter to the City of Bangor to determine the status of the roof loan. We have had one meeting with the City and are working on a presentation to the City to re-negotiate the terms of the roof loan. We are in hopes of having it delayed a few more years or better still to have it forgiven by the City.

We are off to great start but we still need lots of help for the summer season as we open the Museum. Someone will be contacting you, so please give whatever time you can, to support the Museum and the Society. Many hands make for light work, and remember that we will not survive without the membership working to make this a success.

Keep warm and I will see you in March at Augusta.

-----Les Shaw

MAINE AIR MUSEUM WISH LIST

What follows is an updated “wish list” for the museum. Some items are large, some small, some involve man power, others money, artistic ability, and perhaps most of all, time.

We are seeking your assistance with obtaining or sponsoring the following items:

AIRCRAFT be it civil or military that flew or flies in the State of Maine

Help in making the following DISPLAYS:

AIRFIELDS AND SEAPLANE BASES

BANGOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

CIVIL AIR PATROL...HELP IN RESTORING OUR WWII STINSON 10A AND WITH DISPLAY OF THE CAP ITEMS WE CURRENTLY HAVE.

DOW AIR FORCE BASE

ENGINES: WE NEED TO CONSTRUCT A STAND FOR OUR WWII AIR COOLED RANGER AND WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A RADIAL/ROUND ENGINE FOR DISPLAY

MAINE AIR GUARD

MAINE ARMY AIR GUARD

MAINE CIVIL AVIATION

NAS BRUNSWICK

PHYSICAL ITEMS WE NEED:

36" X 78" HOLLOW DOORS (TO BE USED FOR PICTURE DISPLAYS)

24 3" HINGES TO CONNECT THESE DOORS

PICTURE TAKING STAND

DIGITAL CAMERA

DIGITAL OR TAPE RECORDERS OF EITHER MINI OR CASSETTE SIZE

PAINTING SUPPLIES: BRUSHES, ROLLERS COVERS, DROP CLOTHES No paint at this time!

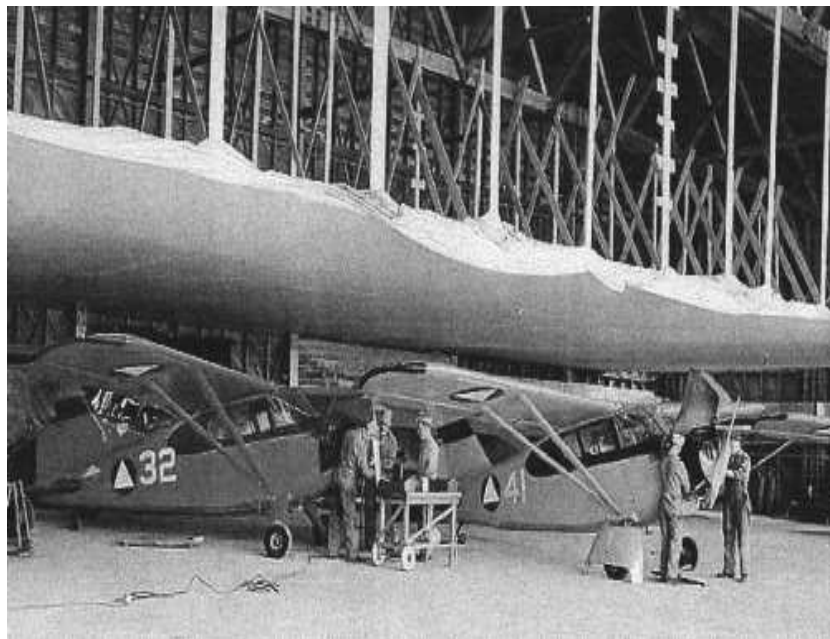
A VINTAGE AVIATION GRAVITY FEED GLASS GAS PUMP

3 OVERHEAD DOORS WITH A PASSAGE DOOR IN THEM

4 ENTRANCE DOORS TO EXHIBIT ROOMS

4 WINDOWS FOR THE OFFICE, BREAK, AND BATH ROOMS

Contact the Maine Air Museum at 941-6757, mail us at PO Box 2641, or email us at mam@maineairmuseum.org



CAP Stinsons at the Bar Harbor Naval Air Station 13 June 1943. We have the skeleton of one of these aircraft at the museum and which we hope to rebuild. Photo courtesy Rocky Hanrahan of Wilmington, MA.

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 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.

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 the following plan for receiving your monetary donation and recognizing your gift permanently in the museum pathway and wall of honor. These donations are fully deductible.

Cirrus Member - \$2500 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a life membership status and a benefactor's engraved three foot white marble sitting bench with one line of commemorative text (27 characters, 2" high) in the name of the gift giver and his/her memorial to others. Bench to be installed in the museum or on the museum grounds

Altocumulus Member - \$250 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a five year membership and five-year museum pass and a benefactors engraved pearl gray marble brick with up to two lines of commemorative text (14 characters per line, 0.65 " high). Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway, or building façade.

Altostratus Member - \$150 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a two year membership and three-year museum pass, a copy of The United Air Force in Maine and a benefactors engraved red brick with up to two lines of commemorative text (14 characters per line, 0.65" high). Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway, or building façade.

Stratocumulus Member - \$100 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a one year membership and a two-year museum pass and a benefactors red brick with up to two lines of commemorative text (14 characters per line, .65" high). Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway, or building façade.

ORDER FORM FOR MEMORIAL BRICKS

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Donation level:

Cirrus (\$2500) Altocumulus (\$250) Altostratus (\$150) Stratocumulus (\$100)

I am interested in a grant or matching grant contribution of \$ _____

Please submit this information with your tax-deductable 501(c)3 contribution to"

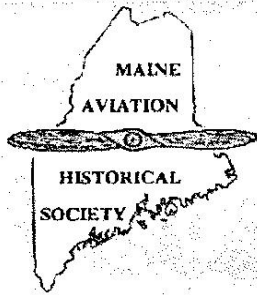
MAM Memorial Brick Fund

Maine Air Museum

PO Box 2641

Bangor, ME 04402-2641

You will be mailed an acknowledgment and a copy of the engraving text proof.



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, Decal, Museum Admission
Family	\$35 annual	Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission
Corporate	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission
Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission, 4 free passes
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Decal, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 free passes
	* 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.

DIRIGO FLYER
MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 2641
BANGOR, ME 04402-2641