



# *Dirigo Flyer*

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society  
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Welcome to the fourth issue of 2006 for our now bimonthly newsletter. We are running a historical article that, although it happened in New Brunswick, has connections to Maine. It was compiled and written by Jim McCarthy from material found in the Bangor Daily News and local accounts. Submitted some time ago it was lost in the shuffle of newsletter editors, finally resurfaced, and is presented in this issue.

## MISCUE AT MISCOU

The Bangor Daily Commercial of April 29, 1939, front page headline was:

### *Russian Fliers May Come Here*

The first paragraph states: Bangor airport was a principal focal point in the world of aviation today.

The article goes on to describe the arrival of two amphibian airplanes from New York, enroute to Moncton, New Brunswick, carrying Russians and Americans, heading for Miscou Island, in that province. Miscou Island was the site of a forced landing of a Russian Airplane the previous day.

A Russian attempt, in a modified Ilyushin TsKB-30, to capture the aviation world's attention ended shortly after 8:00 PM Eastern Standard Time, April 28, in 1939, on a sand dune on Miscou Island, just off the northeast tip of New Brunswick. The New York Times chronicled the event in its issue of Sunday, April 30, 1939, by quoting the Amtorg Trading Corporation office, the Russian company that had planned and followed the flight, as follows:

*The General Kokinaki – Major Gordienko itinerary Moskow-United States which commenced April 28, 4:19 A.M. (Soviet time), finished April 29, 3:15 A.M. (Soviet time) on Miscou Island, North America. Plane covered 6,516 kilometers along a straight line, average 384 kilometers an hour speed.*

*...The crew wishing, at any cost, to reach New York heroically tried to get through, ascending to altitude 9,000 meters (leaving Bay St. Lawrence). However, nightfall and further worsening of weather compelled them to return to Bay St. Lawrence and make forced landing on Miscou Island... During entire flight plane equipment worked without a hitch. Since very moment of take-off up to landing, Moscow radio station kept contact with plane.*

The fliers were not seriously injured, and the aircraft suffered surprisingly little damage in the landing. The Amtorg account appears straightforward, until the necessity for the forced landing is questioned. A Wireless

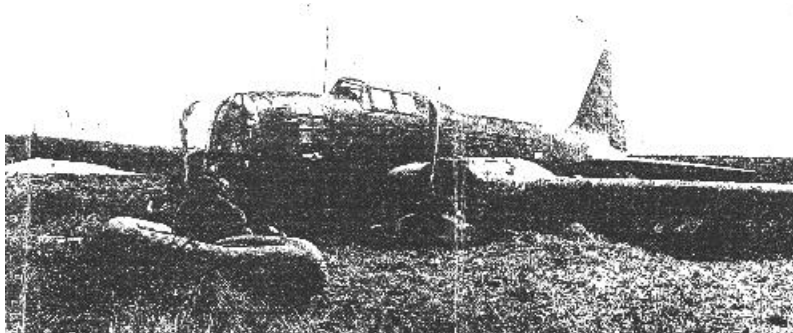
Message to The Times, from Moscow, was also contained in the New York Times story. Loudspeakers had been set up around Moscow to broadcast communications from the flight and to celebrate the Communist holiday, May Day, on May 1st. The Times quotes from the Wireless Message:

*There was something puzzling in the latest messages (received on the Moscow radio). Thus, at 10:48 (all times in this are Soviet times) Major Gordienko reported "height 7,000 meters over the Gulf of St. Lawrence, All well." At 10:77: "All well, Height 9,000 meters." At 11:19: "What is the ceiling and visibility in New York?" Major Gordienko received the reply that the ceiling in New York and Boston was from 250 to 500 meters.*

*At about midnight came a message that the plane was doing 350 kilometers an hour and expected to land in New York two hours later.*

*At 1:40 came a message saying: "All well" and at 2 o'clock another "All well." Then shortly after 3 came the announcement that they were planning to land. What puzzles observers here is that they flew at such a speed for more than four hours after they sighted the Gulf of St. Lawrence, only to end up on an island in that river.*

It seems that the Amtorg recounting of the flight, at best, left a lot to the imagination. What led up to the forced landing on Miscou is not clear, considering that radio reports received in Moscow, the apparent weather in Boston and New York, and the extensive experience of Kolinaki. Whatever the reason, it must not have been inconsequential. Perhaps it was the actual weather encountered, or expected. In spite of the report that they had no radio contact with anybody but Moscow they may have picked up some information on East Coast weather. One interesting detail, probably established by Canadian authorities, was that the remaining fuel in the aircraft was 98 gallons, hardly enough for an hour flight, or even minutes, if "residual" —unusable—fuel is considered. Kolinaki was, perhaps, facing empty tanks. The condition of the propellers in the photo of the aircraft, as it rested on Miscou, suggests that the engines might not have been running at the time of touchdown, or the aircraft had been slowed to the point of stall and "dropped in" with very little ground speed, the engines at idle. That is further suggested by the lack of break up of the airplane structure, and the lack of injury to Kolinaki and Gordienko. Stephen Naas, a Maine Aviation Historical Society member, who visited the site and brought this occurrence to our attention has stated that had the aircraft landed two or three hundred feet further on it would have been in a small lake, with survival questionable.



Vladimir Kolinaki was expert in the characteristics of the Ilyushin, and not one to be intimidated by a difficult situation. He had, according to an issue of *WWW Aviation*, RU, dated March, 2004, on the history of Ilyushin Sergj Vladimovich, looped an Ilyushin TsKB-26 in the presence of Stalin to gain government support for the aircraft. He later established numerous world altitude and distance records with that model, although it never went into production. He was, for many years, an Ilyushin and military test pilot, and probably the most illustrious of Russian flyers.

For the publicity impact, and a world shaking coup, it was undoubtedly hoped and planned that the flight would arrive in New York, in time for Kolinaki and Gordienko to participate in the opening ceremonies for the World's Fair. That didn't quite happen, but it was still a sensational flight in 1939.

The headline in the Bangor Daily News of Monday, May 1, 1939, reported:

### ***Russian Airmen Given Huge Reception Here***

This was followed by a description of the arrival of Kolinaki and Gordienko in Bangor at 7:37 PM, on April

30th, in “a great silver airplane” (actually, a Lockheed 14) owned by Harold Vanderbilt and flown by Russell Thaw, landing in Bangor to clear Customs enroute to New York from Moncton. They had been picked up earlier from Miscou, after spending the night beside the Ilyushin, with food and blankets provided by the native fishermen.

Since their predicament had been in the news, a large crowd, in addition to the officials and airport personnel had gathered for the occasion. In the welcoming committee was Congressman Ralph O. Brewster, then representing Maine’s Third District. Aboard the aircraft, in addition to Kokinaki and Gordienko were Russians Victor Butisof, representative of Soviet Aircraft in the U.S., P.I. Baranof, chief of engineering of Amtorg, and A.J. Lodwick, aviation advisor. Accompanying them was a New York doctor, L.S. Spector.

A reputed Russian, residing in Bangor, was recruited as interpreter. Since his name was Mike Quinn, his Russian heritage seems somewhat debatable, particularly after several minutes of animated conversation with the Russians, all he could offer in explanation for the forced landing at Miscou was that they had experienced, “a big blow, a big blow.”

The Lockheed departed Bangor at 8:29 PM, arriving in New York in time for the tail end of the World’s Fair opening.

The miscue at Miscou, after all, must still be considered a Russian, and international aviation, coup.

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## WHAT’S NEW AT THE MUSEUM

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If you haven’t visited your museum this summer, you ought to drop by and see what the volunteers have added. We now have over 40 exhibits and the collection is growing every week.

**ENGINES.** Led by **Les Shaw, Al Cormier, Jim Nelligan, and Mike Cornett**, the crew is restoring three aircraft engines for display. One is an R-1830 the type used to power the DC-3/C-47 and the B-17. There are two more inline engines being shaped up.

**SIMULATOR.** Now that the mystery has been solved by **Donald Saunders and Jules Arel**, you can sit in the “cockpit” of a deHavilland Dash 8.

**DOW FIELD.** **John Miller and Mike Cornett** have assembled a great collection of photos of the old base. There are unit patches and even the dedication plaque from in front of the old NCO club. Are you in any of the photos?

**WOMEN’S AIR SERVICE PILOTS:** **Scott Grant and family** have developed a very interesting exhibit about these fearless ladies who ferried everything from trainers to B-17s in WWII. You may be encountering their female offspring in your local Wal-Mart parking lot.

**NAS BRUNSWICK.** **Mike and John** did it again. A truly fantastic collection of aviation artifacts from the base including flying gear form most of the flying squadrons.

**BGR ILS.** **Hank Marois** assembled a display all about the Bangor International Airport Instrument Landing System – that’s how the pilots “find” the runway in the fog and “heavy” weather. The answers to three of the FAA Instrument Rating exam questions are on the display.

**DRIFT METER.** We now know where our Bendix-Pioneer B-3 drift meter was used. Some C-47s were equipped with this device for determining wind speed, direction, and ground speed. Come and learn how WWII aircrews performed the infamous “double drift” maneuver. The explanation requires that your left hand not be holding a coffee mug.

**AVIATION ARCHIVES.** **Norm Houle and Scott Grant** have been spending a lot of time in the back room. We know Scot painted half of one wall and Norm has been getting rid of a lot of useless material. That’s progress! Now we can actually find stuff in there! **WARNING:** Don’t sneak in there for a coffee break, if you find a place to sit down, someone will slap a coat of paint on you or haul you out to the dumpster.

**TOUR GUIDES.** We try to give each group of visitors to our museum a 10 minute tour of our facility with a brief explanation of each of the major displays. We have a **TOUR GUIDE BOOK** with all of the facts and figures about the major displays. With this you can totally confuse and befuddle even the most knowledgeable aviator. If you are physically able to take a slow lap around the museum once an hour on weekends, contact Jim, Les, or Hank and we will hang a “MAM VOLUNTEER” ID card around your neck and admit you into this most secret of secret societies. Who said airplane nuts don’t have a sense of humor?

*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.

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*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.

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## **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](http://www.maineairmuseum.org) or from the museum by request.

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### **A Brief History of Flying in LaGrange**

**By Marcel “Sonny” Dyer**

The following is courtesy of Old LaGrange Vol. II © 2005 and courtesy of Moosehead Communications of Greenville, ME.

My first recollection of flying in LaGrange began approximately 1934 or 1935 when Earl Bishop Sr. was taking flying lessons from Kermit Hatt of Milo in an open cockpit biplane. They were using the field on the south side of Mill Street and were closely watched by all of us who were interested in flying.

Earl did learn to fly and shortly thereafter purchased a plane which he kept at his parents’ field on the Medford road.

A few years later he purchased a 40 h.p. J2Cub with a single high wing and an enclosed cockpit, which he flew until around 1942 when aviation gasoline was very difficult and then impossible to obtain due to World War II.

He had built a hanger on his home property and, when he could no longer fly it, he hung the plane near the roof of the building where it stayed until 1946.

During the years from 1937 to 1940 Earl flew many times and was the envy of all the young boys who were so interested in flying. This group included Elwood Howard, Thomas Howard, Kenneth Ingalls and me – all of who would later fly in the military during WWII in various capacities.

Elwood Howard became the pilot of a P-38 fighter aircraft in the European theater. He was shot down during a mission over southern France, was wounded severely but was hidden by the French Underground, nursed back to reasonable condition and taken to the border of Spain where he could contact rescue people who got him back to his base in England.

Thomas Howard became a radio operator in the Air Force and was also in the European area. Kenneth Ingalls became the copilot of a B-17 stationed in England where he flew several missions until his plane was shot down. He was captured by the Germans and was sent to two different prison camps before being liberated by U. S. forces in Germany.

I was somewhat younger than the others and was not able to enlist as a Naval Aviation Cadet until November of 1942. After completing the training program, I became copilot/navigator on a PV-1 twin engine land-based patrol bomber and had orders to report to Guam for fleet assignment in the Pacific area in September of 1945. Those orders were cancelled due to the war ending in August that year.

Pilots were a dime a dozen at that time, but there was growing interest in private flying of small planes.

After being reunited with Ken Ingalls, we decided to team up and purchase a 1946 Taylorcraft and began a flying business consisting nearly exclusively of giving sight-seeing rides at various towns. Since there were

several flying organizations in the area, I decided to get my flight instructor's rating so we could offer flying lessons.

Sometime later in 1946, Ken Ingalls and I joined with Earl Bishop to obtain a dealership for Cessna airplanes. Earl purchased three planes and Ken went to the factory and flew back to LaGrange.

We decided to try giving rides at the Springfield Fair in September. Earl and I flew to Springfield in the T-Craft, landing in the center of the race track. We found the owner of a field located just to the north of the fairgrounds and got permission to use the field during the fair.

The afternoon before the fair opened, John Bishop and I flew in the Cessna 120 to inspect the field in preparation for flying from there during the fair.

It was a bad decision. Being unfamiliar with the capabilities of the landing gear, I attempted to take off up hill into the wind. The field had been mowed early in the season and grass had grown to about six inches in height. This held us back on the attempted takeoff and we did not become airborne until we had run out of field. I could see that we couldn't clear the trees and chopped the throttle. We struck a slight bump in the field, which threw us slightly into the air. When the plane came down, I braked hard but another bump in the field caused the plane to go over –upside down. We were not seriously hurt but the plane sustained considerable damage.

We still had two new Cessna 120s and the Taylorcraft but my enthusiasm was very diminished. Earl was actively engaged in buying war surplus and both Ken and I flew him to the Boston area to inspect materials and place bids.

In early 1947, a potato farmer from Van Buren, who was selling potato seed to Kroemer Farms, saw the planes parked outside the hanger and purchased one of the 120s. He had taken flying lessons but needed further instruction in cross-country navigation to qualify for his private license. Ken flew him to Van Buren the next day and we decided to help him construct a flying strip on his property.

During a January thaw in 1947, Earl had some prospective buyers of some surplus materials. They saw the planes and wanted to have rides. Earl had plowed the snow from the field as we had been using wheels instead of skis on the plane. It had snowed during the night to an accumulation of about two inches. The weather was light rain and a ceiling of about 300 feet. Earl asked me to give the people rides and I objected but, after some urging, I agreed to take off to check conditions before I would take anyone with me.

On my takeoff, the rain froze over the windshield and I had no forward visibility, so immediately turned back to the landing strip. As I approached my landing point, I had very low visibility and could not see where the strip had been plowed. As I straightened out from my side slip, the plane drifted too far left and landed in the snow that had been plowed off the strip. I was unable to keep it from turning upside down, causing the prop to snap, the oil sump to break off, and the right wing tip to be damaged.

We got parts and partially repaired the wing tip, installed a new prop and, later in the year, Ken flew it to Houlton for further repair. After the plane was repaired, Ken and I decided to trade our Taylorcraft with Earl for the Cessna 120 and we joined Claude Levesque in Van Buren to develop his landing strip and operate from there. There was little flying activity from LaGrange after that time.

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## GREENVILLE 2006 FLY-IN



*Photos by John Miller*



**Maine Aviation Historical Society  
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Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission, 4 free passes
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Decal, Lifetime Membership
	* 2 annual \$250 payments	Number, Museum Admission, 10 free passes

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- 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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