

# DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. IV, No. 10 October 1996

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society • 101 Monroe Avenue, Westbrook, Maine 04092 • 207-854-9972

## The Search for the "White Bird": Part I

By Jim Chichetto

On Saturday, October the 12th, the long-awaited MAHS "White Bird" hike took place under a clear, sunny sky at a site near Ellsworth, Maine. Twenty-one MAHS members and guests took part in this latest hike. Between 08:15 and 09:00 everyone arrived and most stopped at MacDonald's for a snack or breakfast before we left. We car pooled into six vehicles to make the drive. We arrived at the site about 10:00. At that point numerous map consultations and compass readings, GPS readings and general discussion occurred. Once everyone was in agreement, the base camp crew set up the stove and gear while the rest of us scrambled up the hillside next to the road. Staying at the base camp were Leo Boyle, Oscar Blue, Jim Millet and Cliff Haines, who brought the camp stove and doughnuts. Thanks again, Cliff, your efforts are most welcome.

Leading the hike up the hillside was John Miller, Brian Woods and James Chichetto. The rest of the group was strung out into a long line snaking up the hill over slash from a recent logging operation. About 20 minutes later, the entire group was treated to a tremendous view of the Maine coast and the surrounding mountains. The top area of the mountain we were on was cleared and the site from the survey marker was really excellent. The leaves in the woods were multi-colored and interwoven with the dark green spruce to form an endless path of color to the Atlantic Ocean.

Having taken more compass readings, GPS fixes and map readings, it was time to get down to the business at hand. Looking at the layout of the land to the North and East, and the topographical map, coupled with the hunter's story, a search line was agreed upon and a line search was started.

Since this area had been cut over within the last couple of seasons, there were four and five foot high saplings springing up everywhere and berry bushes at every turn. Using a single tree with orange tape on it as a center point, the line stretched down to the edge of the cutting and into the woods. It was slow going and hard to see under the new growth and slash. The members who were in the woods soon discovered ledges just like the hunter's story had described. Brian Woods and I soon started a zig-zag search on the ledges going up and down in 200' sweeps. James and Scott Grant started going to the right of us

doing the same. Ed and Bill Armstrong followed them; Ed narrated while Bill was filming.

After about an hour's worth of hiking, looking and enjoying views, the group reassembled at the starting point to discuss what next to do. At this time, John Miller had to leave to head back home and pick up his aircraft. He was going up to DeWitt Field in Old Town to give plane rides for the benefit of the Special Olympics. He was the only one of us to go straight back to the autos by the route we had traveled up the hill.

It was about 12:00 when we decided to start down the mountain. A lively discussion on how we should go developed among the group. It was decided to swing more North toward the likely path the aircraft would have been flying. The thought was that we could check that area as we worked our way back to the base camp. We crossed the cut over area of the hilltop and reached the woods. At this point the group started to spread out some. Scott and his dad Richard headed down and walked a route parallel to the up trail. They did great coming out nearest the base camp. Herman Bayerdorffer, Jules Arel, Chris Fernandez and Brian Woods came out about 100 yards further up from the Grants. The rest of us chose "the road less traveled" and covered much more territory.

Bill Townsend, Ed and Bill Armstrong, and James were working their way downslope when they lost touch with the group on their left. They also lost touch with Frank Powers who was on their right. As they came down the face of the hill they hit woods and a swampy area. They knew the base camp was to the left, but after a short hike in that area it was apparent that the ridge they had followed down had ended in the flat swampy area North and East of the base camp. Bill took a GPS reading and worked out a heading toward the road. Using the topo map and a compass and GPS they arrived on a jeep trail, followed it to the camp road and an hour later were back at the base camp. Their 20 minute hike had taken them over an hour and 25 minutes. By looking at the topo map and seeing where the ridge had led them, they knew where the rest of us were heading and that we would be a while getting back.

I, wanting to see as much of the mountain as possible, had started to zig-zag back and forth between Bill's group and those folks with me. At some point Frank Powers lost contact with both of these groups. He started down between us but soon was

"White Bird," Continued from Page 1

alone. He headed down until he hit the cuttings and then went through them until he hit a swamp. He stepped into a bog hole and got wet up to his knee. As this point he knew he was in a hard spot and that he should get back to a clear spot and wait for help. He did this and was soon found by the long-distance hikers led by yours truly.

We had come down to the "flats" just like Bill's group had, but further East of them. We too started toward the West, but hit a swamp. Having studied the topo map for weeks, I had an idea we had run longer to the North than planned, and thought a simple West course would put us where we needed to be. We hadn't hiked for more than 10 minutes on the flat cut over area, zig-zagging around the slash and bog holes, when we heard a shout. We kept hearing it as we walked toward the West. We all thought it was the rest of the group hooting at us for being so slow. It wasn't; it was Frank. I walked up to him and asked where everyone was. He said he had lost contact with them and was alone and glad to see us. At this point, I could have turned us all around and followed the GPS heading back to the top of the hill, but that would be a hard walk, and we had a beautiful day to explore so we headed toward the direction of the base camp.

We hit Frank's swamp at the other side of the clearing. With known swamp to the right and the base camp somewhere to the left, we decided to keep going West and follow the stream. About 15 minutes later we were all standing on the RR tracks which run North and then East of the mountain. We all wondered how we managed to stray this far East of the base camp. For whatever the reason, we now knew exactly where we were and where we had to go. We started back down the tracks toward the road near the base camp. After about a mile and a half of this pleasant walk, we came to our only problem. A beaver had dammed up a stream and flooded the tracks. The water was only a couple inches over the rails, but we might get our feet wet crossing to the other side. While we were walking up to the section we saw two men working by the tracks on the other side. Then a RR putt-putt rode over the rails and stopped. We were all smiles; they could just putt over and whisk us across this water and right back to the road. Alas, it was not to be. Carroll Leland picked up two sticks and, since he was wearing boots, walked the rail to the other side and spoke to the guys working there. It turns out that two of the men had a camp there and one of them, John Webber, knew Carroll. While they were talking, Frank headed across using two sticks also. We all found sticks and I elected to take off my hikers and sock, as did my sister Sue Cummings and my niece LeAnne Schwarz. Bill Heyford elected to keep his boots on. My thoughts were that since it was about 55 degrees out, shallow water and an unknown amount of hiking yet to go, it would be better to do this with dry feet rather than wet ones. As we started out across the 300 yards of rail line, Carroll yelled down and told us to go back to the camp road. John's friend drove their 4WD down the camp road which crossed the track behind us and we were given a ride to the dry side. (We had looked at this road, but not knowing exactly where it would lead us, elected to stay "on track" because we knew exactly where it would bring us.)

Having safely passed the water hazard, we were disappointed to find out that the putt-putt crew had departed while we were getting a ride around the beaver flowage. Since we were back to hiking, a short discussion was held. If we took the camp road beside John's camp, crossed a new dirt road and then hit a jeep trail, we would be almost back to the base camp. It may be shorter, but I for one wasn't going to give up a sure thing for unknown woods roads. Our major concern was that the others at the base camp would be getting worried and might try to find us. They would be looking North of the area where we now were. By sticking to the tracks it would be longer, but no danger of getting lost in the woods. If you think you are lost or turned around, find an open area so an aircraft can spot you. Frank had done this and now we figured that any aircraft could easily spot six folks hiking down the RR lines toward the base camp.

Carroll and I reached the road ahead of the others and caught a ride back to the camp with some friendly local folks. We had put on a few more miles than anyone else, but had seen all kinds of ledges, a turtle, grouse, various birds and small animals and enjoyed a nice hike on a warm fall day. The colors were great and there were no bugs. It was a little longer than we had thought, but we had food, snacks and good companions to hike with, and we did find Frank.

The others had reassembled and various groups had left by the time we arrived back at the base camp. While waiting for everyone to come back, Jules and Scott had talked with Jim and now had some more ideas about where to look. Bill and Chris had borrowed a 4-wheeler and gone down the jeep trail they had hiked out to the RR tracks. They thought we might be coming back that way. By that time we were almost back to camp, but it was good of them to make the effort.

It was a good hike overall and another search is being planned. It is going to be on Sunday, October 27th, weather permitting. This area has great promise and if we can find the correct set of ledges, we may yet find the engine of the "White Bird." The next attempt will be October 27th at 9:00 a.m. at the Maine Coast Mall parking lot in Ellsworth. Everyone will bring a compass, whistle, matches and food and drink. Extra clothes and equipment is left up to the individual. Any questions, call me, Jim Chichetto, at 207-269-3281 or Leo Boyle at 207-854-9972. (Pictures in next issue of *Dirigo Flyer*.)



## CATCH THE MAHS EXCITEMENT!

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If you are not yet a member, join today  
and help preserve Maine's aviation heritage.

Enjoy the *Dirigo Flyer*!

## Get-Togethers

As you can see from Jim Chichetto's lead story, enough hope was found on our hike on Saturday, October 12th, for us to schedule a second hike on Sunday, October 27th. We will meet as before in the Maine Coast Mall Shopping Center parking lot behind MacDonald's at 9:00 a.m. The same rules apply to this search as the first one. Please, if you're going in the woods, bring a compass, matches, lighter, canteen and lunch, good footwear and any other tools you can use. If you have a GPS or a metal detector, bring them. A search pattern has been set up for a limited and promising area, and aerial reconnaissance will be done before the 27th. Maps will be provided to each hiker this time. Please — no communication with the news media at this time.

## November Meeting

After the second hike, we should have plenty to talk about, so Bill Townsend has arranged for us to meet on Saturday, November 9th at 9:00 a.m. at Acadia Air at the Bar Harbor Airport in Trenton. Bill has arranged a tour of the airport, including many old pictures and a special surprise. In addition, Bill will tell us about his participation in the Teacher in Space Program, a sure to be treasured event. Later, for those who wish, we'll hike to a crash in Bar Harbor.

## December Meeting

For those of you in Southern Maine and New Hampshire, don't despair. The December meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, December 14th in the Conference Room of the Terminal at the Portland International Jetport. We will try to arrange an interesting program — more in the next *Dirigo Flyer* — and we need your help. Let Leo know what you can contribute. The reason we have been in the Bangor/Northern Maine area so much lately is because this is where the active members, the growth and the spark-plugs for our future are gathered. Let's have some life and active participation in this area and show them there's life down south!

## Thanks

■ Thank you to all who have written to me or called me. If you haven't heard back, hopefully you will soon.

■ We want to thank member Don Brown of 2270 Carriage Lane (#81) in Salt Lake City, Utah 84117-4441 for his most generous contribution to the MAHS. He also asks if anyone has flown into Eastport or spent some time there recently to drop him a note, for that's where he was born and spent his early youth.

■ An Ed Maliar of Batavia, New York keeps recounting early Lewiston-Auburn air history and many of the activities that took place there. The following appeared in the *Lewiston Journal* on October 14, 1942:

## LHS Reunion at AIT

Pvts. Wm. Marston, Maurice McMahon, Laurier DeMers, and Edward Dumont, students at the Army Training Detachment of Aviation Institute of Technology, Long Island City, New York, were surprised upon entering their classroom for the first time to find the instructor was none other than Francis E. Malia, a classmate at Lewiston high school.

Mr. Maliar, a former local aviator, joined the Air Corps several years ago and after obtaining an honorable discharge, has been an instructor for the U.S. Air Forces Technical Command. He is now Sr. Instructor in charge of the Fabric and Cable-splicing course and the Structures course at the A.I.T.

According to Maliar, they are good students and show promise of being good aviation mechanics.

■ Just opened today is a large packet from Morgan Barbour of Bellevue, WA containing follow-up information on the Mystery Photo B-17G "Five Grand" which will appear in a future *Dirigo Flyer*. Also included is a wealth of Boeing material and possibly a Mystery Photo, too.

■ Rich Frangella has sent me a follow-up piece on his PBM "Flying Lobster" story which appeared in the November 1995 *Dirigo Flyer*. This interesting piece will appear in the near future.

■ Also on the agenda soon is an interesting story revolving around William C. Wheeler of Bangor, his log book and Wiley Post's visit there in 1933. Peter Anderson submitted this piece on *White Knuckle Airways, Inc.* stationery and you will soon be reading it exclusively here.

■ And to Larry Closson of Bernard for his generous donation of 87 aviation magazines, including 61 issues of *Air Classics*. We need to get a home for our library soon with the generosity of our members.

■ And last but not least, to Supreme Pizza of Portland for their continuing generous contributions, and to Norm Houle for his labels for every issue of the *Dirigo Flyer*.

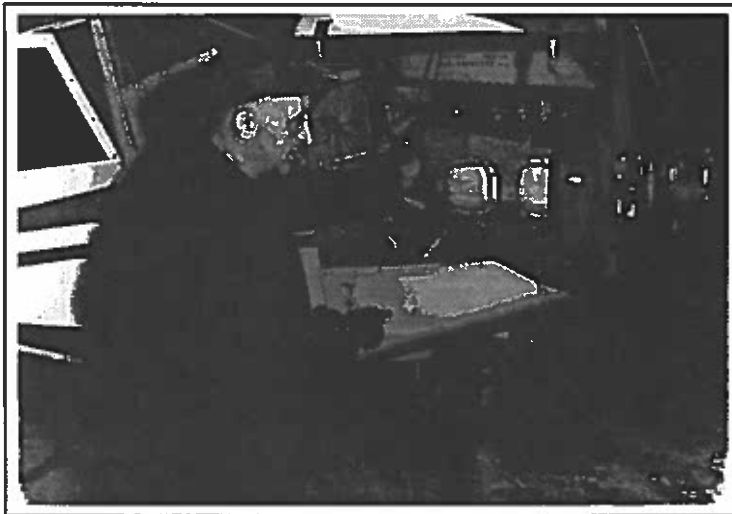
■ Member Larry Webster of Rhode Island asks that anyone who knows of any airplane accident or crash that we may not know of to let Jim Chichetto or Leo Boyle know that it may be recorded in the Maine Crash Records Larry compiles to help us.

■ Member Bill Townsend of Bar Harbor has made a generous contribution that you can participate in. He has had made up a limited number of caps at his own expense of navy cloth with the inscription MAHS Air Crash Investigation in gold thread on the front. While they last, these few caps are available for \$12 each. Anyone going on the "White Bird" search on the 27th should have one, and help MAHS at the same time. See Jim or Leo soon before they're gone.

■ Keep the stories and letters coming — they are the lifeblood of the Society and the excitement of the *Dirigo Flyer*.

## More from the ...

F-117A Stealth at Bangor ME ANG Open House, 8/11/96.  
Old ANG ready hangars in background.  
These hangars are due to be moved or torn down.  
We need to be involved in preserving at least  
one of these hangars. (John Miller Photo)

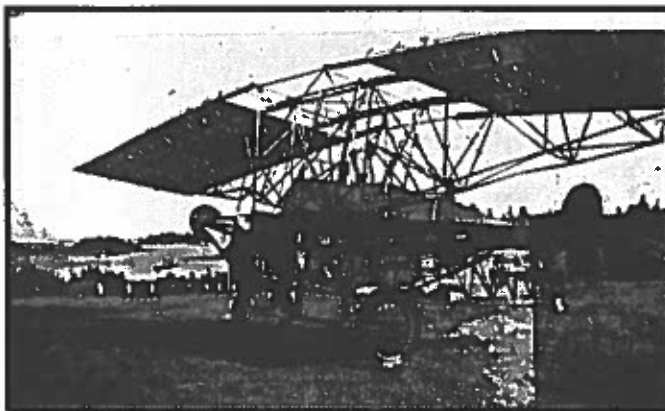


## ... MAHS Scrapbook

George Doane of Doane's Airport in Brewer in 1953  
with his Piper PA-20. (Harris Mathews Photo)

### Mystery Photo of the Month

Member Walt Humphrey took the following photo in 1938 near Gouldsboro, Maine with a box camera. The first correct answer with the most information wins a MAHS T-shirt.



### Mystery Photo Answers

The plane in the Vol. IV No. 8 August 1996 issue of *Dirigo Flyer* was the one and only Curtiss-Reid Courier. Built in Canada by the Curtiss-Reid Co. as a mail plane, it had a single cockpit and a large mail compartment ahead of it. In 1932-33 it was modified to fill the mail compartment with fuel tanks for long-distance flights. Noted Canadian mail pilot Bernard Martin, a well-liked visitor to the Prairie Airport in Brownville, was killed in a crash testing the modified Courier.

The plane in Vol IV. No. 9 September 1996 issue of *Dirigo Flyer* was also a one and only that member Larry Closson had his first ride in. It was a Grumman XSF-1, which was an attempt to use the FF-1 airframe into a scout plane. It did not go into production and this plane ended up at Anacostia, probably as a "station hack." The closest and most complete answer was sent in by members Don and Judy Martin of Carmel, and their T-shirt has been dispatched.

## Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Calendar of Events

- October 18-20 ..... Northeast Aero Historians Meeting, Holiday Inn, Philadelphia
- October 27 .... 9 a.m. .... 2nd White Bird Search (See details on page 2.)
- October 27 .... 10 a.m. .... Great Fall Auction, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- November 9 .. 9 a.m. .... Acadia Air, Bar Harbor Airport, Trenton, Maine.
- December 14. 9 a.m. .... Conference Room, Portland International Jetport Terminal

The meeting sites can be flexible. We are looking for suggestions on locations for many of these meetings. Call Leo or Jim if you can help. The same goes for suggestions on the weekend hikes — let us know. We are also looking for guest speakers, slide shows, etc. Scott Grant has volunteered to handle the scheduling of our meetings and arranging for speakers and slide shows., etc. Please contact him at 207-774-4438 (207-761-9288 business) or 225 York Street, #3, Portland, ME 04102 if you have any ideas or can be of help.

### Psstt . . .

Save money and WIN a handsome MAHS T-shirt by being the first to correctly identify the *Dirigo Flyer's* monthly Mystery Photo.

See page 4 for this issue's photo and clue. Good luck!



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- 166L. **Ed Armstrong** (*Lifetime Member*)  
1211 Kennebec Road  
Hampden, ME 04444 (207) 862-3645
167. **Bill Armstrong** (*Video Production*)  
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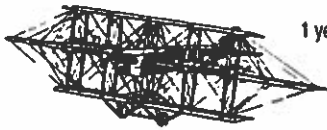
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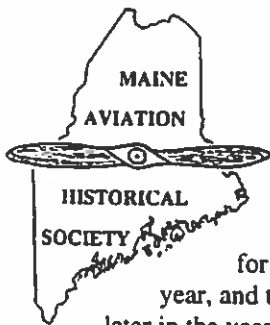
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Lifetime	\$500	Newsletter, Calendar, Journal, Lifetime Membership No. (2 annual \$250 payments)

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### JOIN US SUNDAY

Major Aircraft  
Wreckage Search  
(Details on Page 2)  
Ellsworth, Maine  
**October 27, 1996**  
9 a.m.

### JOIN US SATURDAY

Acadia Air  
Bar Harbor Airport  
Trenton, Maine  
**November 9, 1996**  
9 a.m.