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Kench Mountain F-101B Crash Hike

by Jim Chichetto

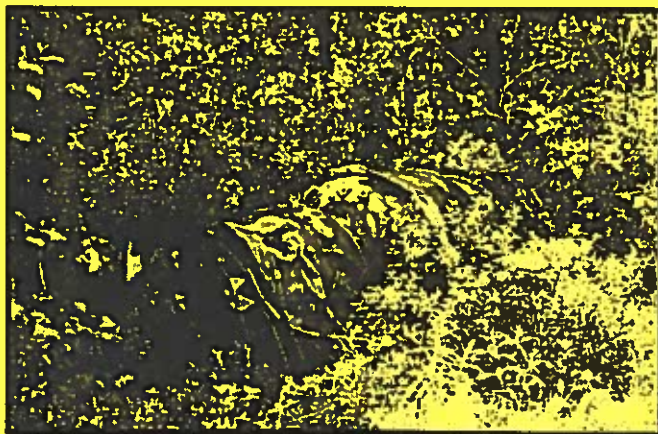
After the June meeting of MAHS in Bangor, which was another great one, a couple of short side trips were made by some of those folks gathered. Leo Boyle and I had talked about taking a photograph of Merle Fogg's grave in Mt. Hope Cemetery. Since I knew the person who gives historical tours, Ryan King of Bangor, I had set up a meeting with him. We called as we left the pilot's lounge and 10 minutes later Ryan met us at the main office of Mt. Hope and we drove up to Merle's final resting place. Merle's gravestone has an aircraft engraved on it. The plot is within sight of where Lt. Valentine made his crash landing in the DH-4B in 1922. We took some photos and fed the mosquitoes a few moments before Leo and Frank Powers headed to Bett's Bookstore. Ryan headed back home and James, myself and Scott Grant headed for Kench Hill in Dedham.



The wing of McDonnell F-101B Voodoo 57-0401 which crashed on Kench Mountain in Dedham on 4/11/61, killing both crew members. Photo taken 6/7/96 by Scott Grant.

Scott had never been to a crash site and we took him on the tour of the F-101B site with the help of Dwayne Smith Sr. We walked around the engine and then hiked to the wing and fuselage. After taking photos and poking around we headed up the trail to the cross and the actual crash site. We backtracked to the IP of impact and then followed the path of bits and parts left by the aircraft as it made its last flight. Dwayne answered all our questions and we decided to come back on Sunday with John Miller. John had been unable to make the hike on Saturday due to the opening of the Winterport Airport. John put on a flying display with his Skybolt Biplane as part of the opening ceremony.

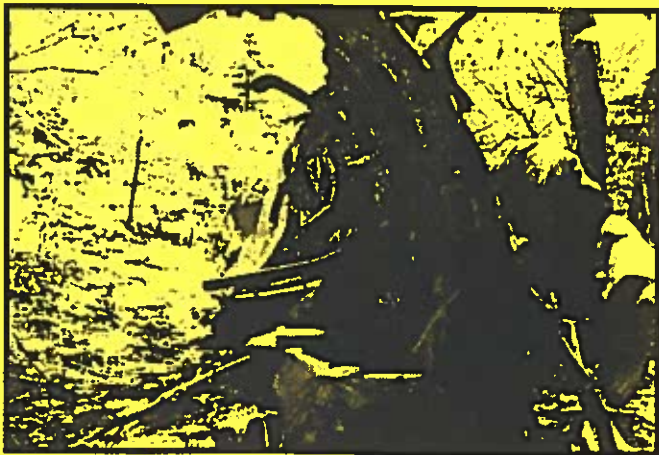
Newsletter Editor: Leo Boyle



The engine of F-101B Voodoo 57-0401 on 6/7/96. Scott Grant Photo.

On Sunday the 9th we arrived at Kench Hill with a crew of six to see the F-101B. Joining James and I were John, his wife Maria Baeza, Jim McCurdy and his daughter Sarah. Jim and Sarah had never been to a crash site so it was all new to them. Dwayne came over and we took the entire tour starting at the engine and then heading over to the wing and fuselage. After poking and photographs we headed up to the marker and replaced the two American flags with new ones. We then

Kench Mountain, continued on page 3



The fuselage of F-101B Voodoo 57-0401 as it is on 6/7/96. Scott Grant Photo.

Mt. Abraham F-101B Crash Hike

by Jim Chichetto

On November 14th, 1967 two F-101Bs of the 60th FIS were flying near Kingfield, Maine. For some unknown reason they got too close and suddenly had a mid-air collision. The aircraft flown by 1st Lt. James Craig now had a hole in its wing from the contact. He flew his aircraft to Dow Field in Bangor and landed safely with his RIO Capt. Vincent Robben. The aircraft was put in a hangar and no statements were forthcoming by the USAF about this mission and what had happened.

Meanwhile, Capt. Dean Glazier and his RIO Maj. Lawrence Uchmanowicz were in serious trouble. Shortly after the two aircraft hit, the tail on Capt. Glazier's F-101B started to come apart. The damage done in the impact with the second aircraft was making the F-101B unstable and the two men decided it was time to get out. Both men ejected safely and they were both found and returned to Dow later that evening. Their F-101B, free of any human control, impacted on the steep face of Mt. Abraham in T4 R1 (Mount Abram TWP) at about the 3200 foot level. USAF crews came in by helicopter and took care of those parts deemed too important to leave. Over the years, hikers and hunters have picked up the ejection seats, nose wheels and other odds and ends, but the remoteness of this site makes it almost impossible to reach easily and even harder to haul anything of any size away. For the most part this F-101B is all there, in a neat 150 ft. by 150 ft. crash site, waiting for the serious crash hunter.

While doing some survey work in the western part of the state, John Miller heard stories about some downed aircraft. Locals had stories of the F-101s which had collided in 1967 near Kingfield and the T-33/F-102 mid-air near Flagstaff Lake. With a few questions to the right people, John tracked down a couple of folks with parts and stories to tell about the F-101B which crashed high up on Mt. Abraham in 1978. Armed with this knowledge he and his wife Maria Baeza headed into the woods to find this site. They came close but found only one part that day, dropped by someone as they were hiking down from the site. John decided to do more research. He flew a series of lines from the crash site which he had seen from the air to the nearest tote road. After a few passes enough information had been gathered to plot a good hiking path to the site using a GPS and a compass.

On Saturday, June 15th, 1996 a group assembled to hike to this site. John and Maria, Jim and Sarah McCurdy, and James and I met Larry and Rebecca Ross in Canaan, Maine. Jim and Sarah had hiked the Bald Mountain F-101B with us the Sunday



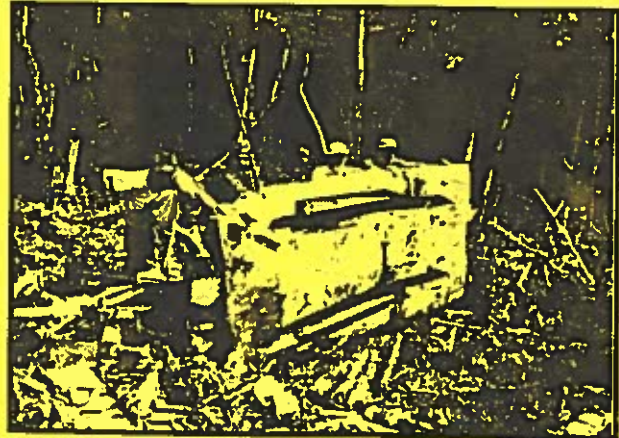
l to r: Jim McCurdy, Jim and James Chichetto. front to rear: Sarah McCurdy, Maria Baeza, Rebecca and Larry Ross, Mike Dolan (r rear).

before. Larry Ross has the Lindbergh Crate Museum in Canaan. He had hiked the F-84E crash site in East Bucksport with us last year. His wife Rebecca had never been on a crash hike, but thought she would give it a try. We met Mike Dolan in Kingfield. Mike has hiked with us before and had also hiked up Mt. Abraham looking for this F-101B without success.

We headed into the woods fully prepared with four vehicles, two of which were 4WD and two dirt bikes for scouting tote roads. After about 20 minutes we reached the area where the roads were washed out by the recent rains and we unloaded the dirt bikes. Jim McCurdy and James headed up to scout the road further on, while the rest of us packed gear into my truck and Mike's Jeep. The outriders came back with a good report and off we went, ever climbing up the tote roads. Another 15 minutes and we had reached the end of the driveable section of tote road. We took GPS readings and a compass reading. We were about 1800 feet up on the mountain side at this woodyard. Our hike would only be about 1.6 miles to the crash site, that is as the crow flies. A rough skidder trail headed up and we geared up and started to hike, onward and upward.

We covered the next 1200 vertical feet in short segments. The first rush of the hike left as we plodded up steep cut-over areas. Climbing over the tree tops and blowdowns left by the recent logging slowed us down. After about 300 yards we all stopped to catch our breath and let our heart rates slow down. The contour lines on the topo map were so close that the map appeared to be brown with them. The mountain side ranged from a 45 degree slope to 70 degrees and sometimes even steeper than that. We started to pull ourselves uphill using the trees to help us. We had broken into two groups by now. John and Mike were on point with Maria, Larry and Rebecca a little farther back. About 100 yards farther back James, Sarah, Jim and I were going a little slower. After about two hours of this vertical hiking the light got brighter and we could start to see the tops of other mountains nearby. We knew we were close to the summit where the crash was located. We all gathered around the map and checked the compass reading. It wasn't even noon yet and we were close. Having gotten close before and gone back empty-handed, neither John nor Mike were going to leave this mountain without finding the site today. We had all afternoon to find it, but it took less than 10 minutes to reach the site.

John and Mike started up the slope on point. The trees here were spread apart and showed wind damage. The walking was



F-101B missile launch rails under fuselage. l to r: Jim and James Chichetto, Rebecca and Larry Ross. John Miller Photo, 6/15/96.

easier and we were refreshed by that last bread. Up ahead we heard a shout and then another. Suddenly our tired legs found some more strength and off we went. John's compass line was true, the line he had plotted on the map was correct and we had hit the site on the vertical climb. No spreading out and searching for this one, it was all laid out there for us in a neat 150 ft. by 150 ft. area.

The first thing which struck me was how compact an area the crash site was. Other than the cockpit area, the rest of the aircraft showed only impact damage cause by the sudden stop. Everyone was poking and walking around the area, picking up all kinds of parts and checking them out. I did a circuit of the area and checked the woods around the site for more parts. Only a few small bits of skin were outside of the 150 ft. by 150 ft. area.

The aircraft looked like it hit flat, some parts like the pilot tube were slightly bent but intact. There isn't much soil here and a large outcropping of rock is right on the surface. The impact was hard but the aircraft didn't slide or bounce much. It hit hard and stopped suddenly. Both wings and engines were torn free but were laying beside each other. The bottom of the fuselage and the arresting hook were laid out between the engines. The cockpit area was the only part burned, and I suspect this was the work of the USAF. We found the same type of melted metal and radio parts at the Bald Mountain crash site. There the USAF just gathered the radios together and touched off a thermite grenade to the pile. At Bald when it had burned out there wasn't anything left worth picking up. At this site there was all kinds of cockpit instruments left lying around. Rebecca picked up the altimeter, John grabbed a radio and the switches all still moved! James dug out a cooling fan from the cockpit area (when we arrived home he cleaned it up and plugged it in and it worked). The right side speed break was totally intact and undamaged. We could move it open or closed by hand. The engines had all kinds of pumps still hooked up and those that had torn free were in good shape. Most had manufacturer's plates on them and everyone wanted to get a plate as a memento. As with the Bald Mountain site, the stainless steel and safety wire looked new 28 years after it had crashed.

Kench Mountain, continued from page 1

walked the site from the IP to the cross. Dwayne told us the fuselage actually came to rest about 300 yards down the slope from the cross and in line with where the engine was resting.

As the group headed down the hill, I started to follow the route taken by the aircraft. About 175 yards from the cross I came by a few bits of the aircraft. About 250 yards downslope I hit the motherlode of big chunks of aircraft. The tail section which housed the drag chute was there, along with one wheel cover and part of the rudder. I called to James and John and soon everyone was poking around looking at all the parts trying to figure out what each part had been. As they were looking, James and I started down toward where the motor had been. Thirty plus years later, the ground still showed signs of where the engines had impacted and tumbled down the mountain. Large troughs were still visible in roughly a parallel course. All of a sudden James started to yell and I knew he had spotted something big. There in the woods was the entire outer housing for one of the engines. It was semi-flattened by its journey and showed some damage from where the engine had slid out during the impact with a tree.

The outside was still shiny and the safety wires were still in place. Nearby was part of the afterburner control system.

After everyone had seen everything twice, we moved part of one wing vertical and looked under it. Then we stood the cockpit floor up and checked out the bottom. There were the two missile launch rails, still in place. We were at the site for about an hour and half before everyone had seen enough. Everyone found a keepsake and we headed back down the mountain. The tags on the trail made it much easier to follow and we made good time. If you want to hike this site, bring a GPS and program the crash site in as 44-56.76N, 070-17.00W. It is a long hike, but worth the trip.

On the way home John and Maria and James and I stopped by to see what Larry had done to the Lindbergh Crate. It is set up just as it had been years ago as a summer cottage. Inside Larry has photos and letters from people who knew Lindbergh or who had ties to the crate. It is truly a one-of-a-kind museum and anyone who likes aviation history should stop by and see this display. Rebecca offered us all supper, but James and I had to get home. It was a long day, but a good one, one more site had been tracked down and explored.



John Miller at Mt. Abraham F-101B crash site on 6/15/96.
Maria Baeza Photo.

Then there was another large chunk of aircraft where the wing and engine had been connected. We poked around and looked at everything until John and the others caught up. Once everyone was ready we headed through the woods on dead reckoning until we came out to the field by the engine. It was another successful hike and we had photos and some display parts to show for our efforts.

Anyone who wishes to hike this site in the future and needs directions can call me at 269-3281 or give Dwayne Smith Sr. a call at 843-7279. He is always willing to take folks up to the site. He owns some of the land and his aunt owns the rest of it and has rights to all aircraft wreckage left from the USAF. They don't mind people hiking and taking out small parts for display or keepsakes, but always remember to ask first since this is private property.

After everyone had headed out, James and I stopped by Dwayne's house and talked about the other wreck sites nearby. Dwayne has been to the F-86 crash in East Bucksport and the F-84 crash in Amherst. He had not been to the F-84 site in East Bucksport. We learned some details of those sites for the files and made some plans to track those sites down in the future. It was a good two days of hiking and three more people had made their first wreck hike.

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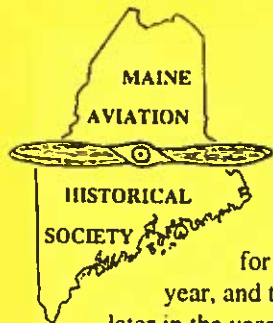
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