



DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. IX, No. 10 October 2001

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402 • 207-941-6757 • 1-877-280-MAHS (in state)
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Remembering the Crew of KC-97G 52-2728

By Peter Noddin

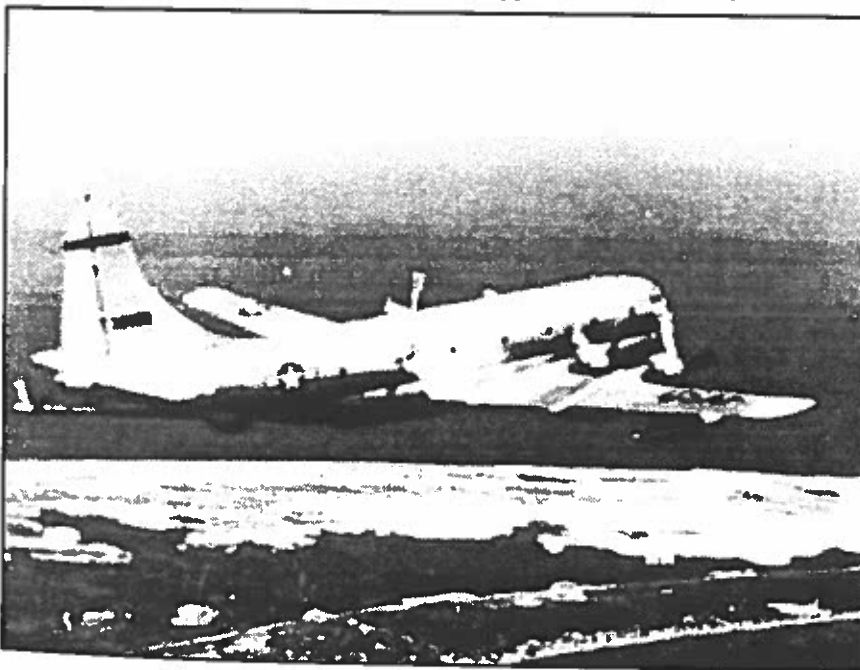
At 8: 15 PM on Monday, June 27, 1960, crew T-51 of the 380th Air Refueling Squadron departed Plattsburgh AFB aboard a KC-97G for the "Fighting Fox" air refueling area over Maine. Their mission was part of a SAC Operational Readiness Inspection of the 380th Bombardment Wing code named "Jet Stream Golf". They, and a backup KC-97G, were to refuel a B-47 under simulated combat conditions. The mission was expected to last just under four hours, with both tankers returning to Plattsburgh.

After a successful rendezvous with the bomber, the tanker descended to the refueling altitude of 15,500 feet and accelerated, nose down, to 190 knots. The low altitude, when compared to today's KC- 135 and KC- 10 operations, was one of the necessities of refueling jet bombers like the B-47 and B-52 with a reciprocating engine powered aircraft.

As the B-47 closed with the KC-97 from a higher altitude in "observation" position, everything seemed fine. Logistical radio exchanges were made and the bomber began to descend and close into refueling position. As they approached, the

B-47 pilot and copilot saw a long stream of flame come back toward them from the KC-97's number one engine, then suddenly disappear. A small spot of white hot glow was noted near the rear of the number one engine. Seconds later, a large ball of flame enveloped the engine and the surrounding wing area. The boom operator transmitted "breakaway, breakaway, breakaway," and the B-47 commander took up a loose formation position off the tanker's right wing.

The backup tanker, above and to the rear, made radio contact asking if they were in trouble, to which Lt. Burgess, the aircraft commander calmly replied "Roger, I'm on fire." At this point, the aircraft entered a gradual left turn which continued to get steeper, and turned into a spiral or spin. It was later determined that the left wing outboard of the burning engine had failed due to fire damage before the crew could complete the "engine fire" drill. It was later found in Howard Pond some three miles from the crash site. The B-47 commander called "bail out! bail out!" but got no reply and spotted no parachutes.



Witnesses on the ground, including over three hundred moviegoers at the Rumford Point Drive-In, saw the flaming aircraft spin down with burning pieces falling off. The fuel laden tanker crashed into Jonathan Smith Mountain near Route 26 in the town of Newry.

During the first few hours of the search, it was believed that one or two of the crew had successfully bailed out. But the following morning it was confirmed that all five crewmen had perished in the accident. They were: Lt. William Burgess of Indian Lake NY, Commander; Lt. Lewis Turner of Spokane WA, Copilot; Lt. Raymond Kisonas of Waterbury CT, Navigator; MSgt. Harold Young of Selma AL, Flight Engineer; and TSgt. Robert Costello of Springfield IL, Boom Operator.

"Remembering," continued on page 3

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Monthly meetings
are held at 10 a.m.
on the second Saturday
of each month
at various locations.

See calendar for details.

A Tragic September

As the morning of September 11, 2001 unfolded so spectacularly and so tragically, all of our lives were affected, and everything was changed. With television bringing these tragedies so vividly into our homes, everyone felt the pain, the hurt, the fear, the terror and the wonder at how this would change our lives and our futures. As our condolences go out to those who suffered most grievously and we pray for them and for our nation, we must go on and show those who promote terror that they cannot win this war.

Our September meeting was held at the museum under heightened security. However, the Collings Foundation's B-17 and B-24 were grounded in Portland and could not come to Bangor as scheduled. The Great State 'o Maine Air Show scheduled for September 22nd and 23rd at the Brunswick Naval Air Station was cancelled. Your Board of Directors will be meeting shortly to assess the effects upon the Society and the Maine Air Museum and make any changes necessary in our short term and long term goals.

The agenda for the October meeting is outlined elsewhere in the newsletter. It should be a most interesting meeting and we urge all who can to try to attend. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Leo Boyle, Editor

September Meeting

Under heightened security because of the terrorist attacks, the September meeting was held at the Maine Air Museum. After the business portion of the meeting, John Miller's generous donations of various uniforms, instruments and magazines were viewed, as were the models Dick Johnson received from the Military Museum in Augusta. John Garbinski's film on SAC Global Shield was cut short because of a glitch in the take-up reel. During the rest of the meeting we talked about many things, including Ed Armstrong's trip back to Maine from Colorado after the attack.

October Meeting

The October meeting of MAHS will be held at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, October 13th at the Quonset hut at Bethel Airport. After the business meeting, there will be a brief presentation about the KC-97 accident in Newry in June of 1960. A hike to the site and memorial dedication will follow.

Hike Information:

Following the October meeting, we will hike to the KC-97 crash site on Jonathan Smith Mountain in the western Maine town of Newry.

On June 27, 1960, KC-97G 52-2728 crashed into the mountain as the result of an engine fire while participating in a SAC ORI. All five members of the 380th ARefSq crew T-51 from Plattsburg AFB died in the accident.

The landowner has worked with Scott Grant of MAHS to prepare an area along an adjacent snowmobile trail for an MAHS memorial to the crew. The granite monument will be dedicated during this hike.



We Regret the Recent Loss of Two of Our Members

James D. MacKinnon

James D. MacKinnon, 64, died September 1, 2001, while traveling with his wife in Copenhagen, Denmark. They were en route to Ireland, where he held dual citizenship.

Mr. MacKinnon was born in Lewiston, Maine, a son of Donald and Eleanor Egan MacKinnon, and graduated from St. Joseph's Grammar School and Cheverus High School, both in Portland, Maine.

He received a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Maine, and started working at Pratt and Whitney in East Hartford in 1959. He was currently a project engineer.

He received a master's degree in engineering and management from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a law degree from the University of Connecticut, and was working on his master of laws degree in taxation law at Boston University.

Mr. MacKinnon was a member of the American Bar Association and the American Trial Lawyers Association. He was a board member of the Visiting Nurse and Health Services of Connecticut, Inc. of Vernon and a board member and past chairman of the Community Health Association of Manchester.

He was a private pilot and a member of New England Air Museum and the C.A.P. Flying Club and the Maine Aviation Historical Society.

Mr. MacKinnon enjoyed sailing on Casco Bay and vacationing at Little Sebago Lake. His interests included jazz and military history. He was writing a book on the history of Casco Bay.

Sherman Luther Tinkham

Sherman Luther Tinkham, 91, died August 30, 2001, at Morton Plant Rehabilitation Center in Bellair, Florida.

He was born in Portland, a son of Robert S. and Gladys C. Tinkham. He graduated from Deering High School in 1927.

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was assigned to Fort Hood, Hawaii. He was discharged in San Francisco, and worked in a sheet metal shop while taking flying lessons.

Returning to Maine, he worked as a mechanic for Boston and Maine Airlines, then worked for Southern Air Service in Memphis, ferrying airplanes and handling maintenance.

He set up a maintenance program to service 250 planes in a cadet flying school program in Memphis, Tennessee and Helena, Arkansas where he oversaw the maintenance of 200 planes for two years. He was a flight instructor for the remainder of the war.

Afterwards, he started a flying school in Clarksdale, Mississippi, buying and converting Stearman biplanes to cotton dusters, and operating a private flying partnership.

He served as an inspector with the Federal Aviation Administration in St. Petersburg, Florida for 17 years, retiring at 68. In 56 years, he flew more than 8,000 hours.

Surviving are a sister, Elnora L. Wyman of Windham, and a brother Henry S. of Portland.

"Remembering," continued from page 1

The investigation revealed that the accident was caused by a lubrication failure to the supercharger impeller shaft of the number one engine, leading to premature failure.

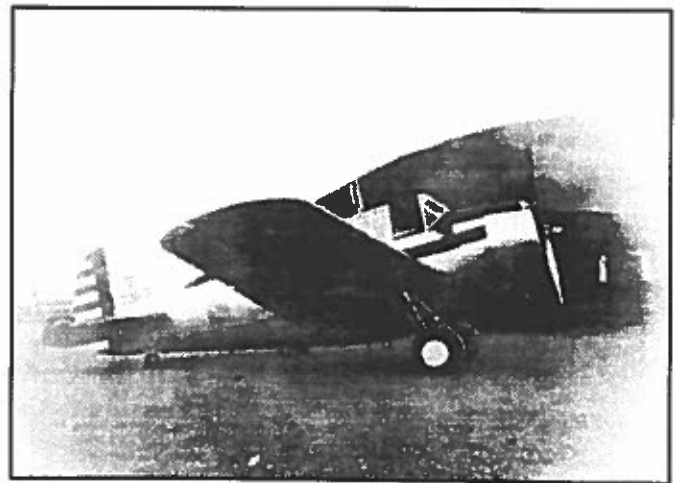
The impeller, leaving the engine nacelle, did major damage and caused fuel leakage resulting in the severe fire and rapid structural failure of the wing.

This month MAHS honors this crew with the dedication of a simple memorial on a snowmobile trail that passes the five acre wreckage field.

We hope that this gives a better understanding to those who pass by this site of the earnestness with which SAC aircrews served in the Cold War era.

This crew, like many others, lost their lives in Maine while operating as if they were participating in a shooting war that fortunately never came, because of their effort, dedication and sacrifice.

Oh Say, Can You See?



Another great photo from member Philip Plummer taken in Bangor about 1940. It is a North American O-47B observation plane.

JOIN US TODAY . . . SAVE AVIATION HISTORY FOR TOMORROW

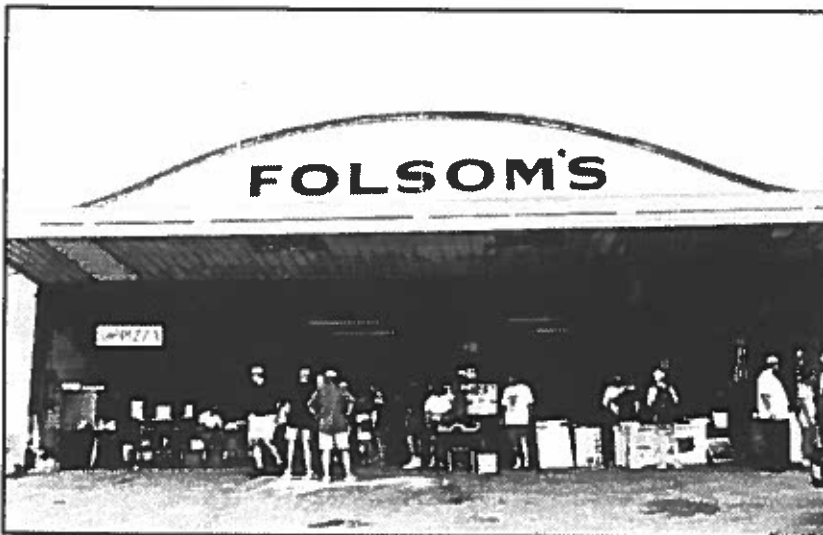
The International Seaplane Fly-In at Greenville

The International Seaplane Fly-In was held in Greenville on September 7, 8 and 9 under sunny and warm skies. We had a table in Folsom's Hangar. Les Shaw and Mike Cornett with Charlie Brantner brought the display materials from the museum and set up shop. They were joined by Peter Noddin and Leo Boyle.

Many people stopped by to talk, purchase t-shirts or hats, and listen to Peter Noddin talk about his military crash site map and the B-52 Elephant Mountain crash. Many members stopped by to visit and chat, and of course there were seaplanes, seaplanes and more seaplanes. In the evening, Leo gave his talk on early aviation in Maine to a large group at Squaw Mountain.

Our thanks again to Folsom's and to Frank Woodworth for their generous courtesies and help.

Scenes from a Beautiful Day in Greenville



Folsom's Hangar, our home in Greenville.
(Mike Cornett Photo)



Here in Kentucky you don't see too many people hang gliding. Ol' Zeke decides to save up and buy a glider. He takes it to the highest mountain, he starts running and — off the edge and into the wind he goes!

Meanwhile, Maw and Paw Hicks were sittin' on the porch swing talkin' when Maw spots the biggest bird she'd ever seen.

"Lookit the size of that bird, Paw!"

Paw raises up. "Git my gun, Maw."

She runs into the house and brings out his pump shotgun.

BANG...BANG...BANG...BANG!

The monster bird continues to sail silently over the treetops.

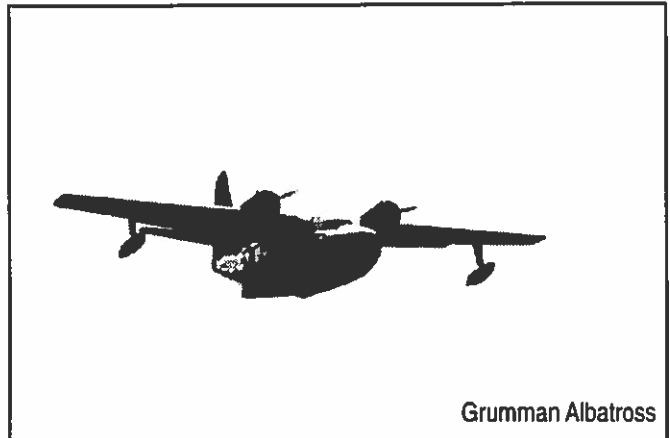
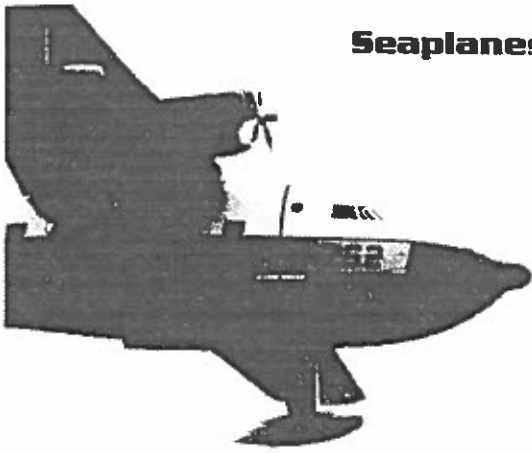
"I think ya missed him, Paw."

"Yeah," Paw replies, "but at least he let go of ol' Zeke!"

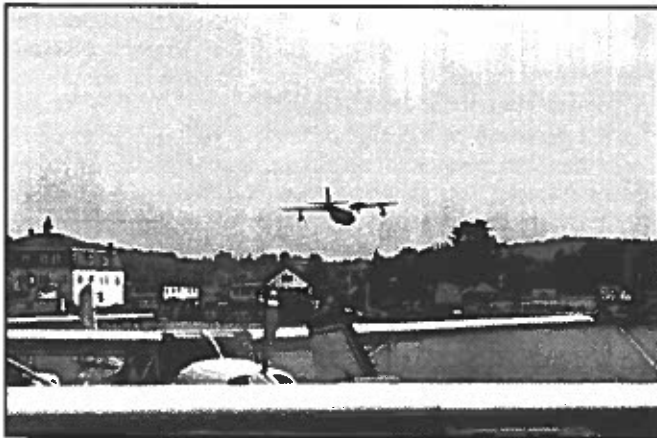


Our table at the Greenville Seaplane Fly-In. Left to right: Aletha Boyle, Dana Ellis, Leo Boyle, Charlie Brantner and Peter Noddin. In the rear is the new engine for the C-47 Amphibian. (Mike Cornett Photo)

Seaplanes, Seaplanes and More Seaplanes



Grumman Albatross



This is what it's all about at Greenville. Photos by Mike Cornett




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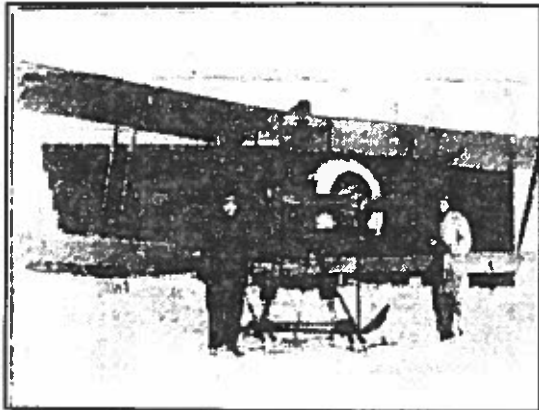
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1927 NEWS FLASH



Here's Something New: An Airplane on Skis The First of Its Kind in Maine

Bangor has taken another step forward in the aviation world. An airplane on skis, the first in the state of Maine, now reposes in the hangar at the Bangor Airport, outer Hammond Street. The property of the Penobscot Valley Fliers, Charles Treat and Lieut. Robert H.W. Lowell, it makes almost daily trips over the city.

The skis were constructed and placed on the machine by Treat. After being thoroughly tested, the machine was given its first real trip by Lieut. Lowell, and upon returning to the ground he reported that it took off and landed more easily than when on wheels.

The lieutenant, in discussing the ski-plane, states that it was even more safe than one using wheels for landing. "With the skis, every field and even lakes are landing fields," he said. "It is possible to glide down or up hills that would be considered impossible places in the summer time."

The plane used is an Arvo 504 and the property of Mr. Treat, the first student graduated from the flying school conducted by the Maine Aerial Service, Inc.

The Penobscot Valley Fliers is a company formed last summer, with Charles Treat as president and Lieutenant Lowell as pilot.

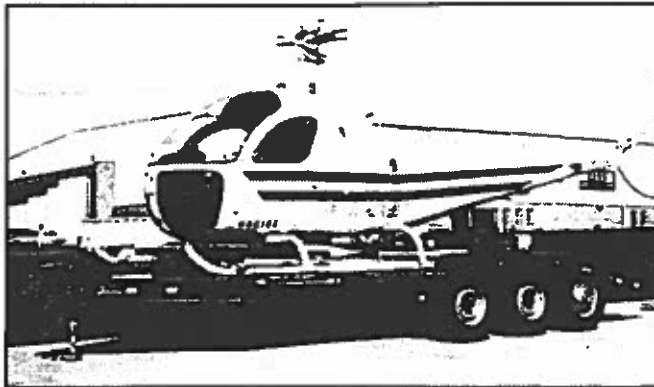
Thanks to member Pauline Sodermark for this historic story from the March 7, 1927 Bangor Daily Commercial.

Speaking of Acquisitions ...



Our Gamma-Goat, generously donated by Phil Hall of Scarborough, should be at the museum by now. (Leo Boyle Photo)

Museum Acquisition has Maine Ties



Thanks to the generous bequest of the estate of Lawrence J. Keddy, the Museum added a Bell 47-H1, serial #1355, Registration #N801 OE to our permanent collection.

In the American Helicopter Society's *Newsletter*, April 1955, Bell Aircraft Corporation announced that its streamlined Model 47-H1 was certified by the C.A.A. and available for commercial customers throughout the world.

"The single-engine three-place aircraft was designed primarily to meet the demand for an attractive yet practical helicopter for the modern business executive and features exceptional pilot-passenger comfort, combined with proven performance of the Model 47 series machine." The aircraft features 60" wide automobile type seats with ample leg room and foot rests, and a soundproof cabin allowing people to converse at a normal range. The Bell 47-H1 could be purchased with either a standard or deluxe cabin interior.

It has a maximum speed of 100 miles an hour with a range of over 200 miles. With three occupants, full fuel, and 30 pounds of baggage, the 47-H1 hovers in ground effect at 3000 feet and has an absolute ceiling of 14,800 feet. Rate of climb at gross weight (2350 lbs.) is 830 feet per minute. The addition of hydraulic booster controls in all 47-H1 helicopters, together with synchronized elevator and Bell's semi-rigid rotor system made the helicopter exceptionally stable and easy to handle.

Our new helicopter is in excellent condition. Come and see it!

Thanks to member Igor I. Sikorsky Jr. we now know that what was possibly the first helicopter in Maine is now in the American Helicopter Museum and Education Center in West Chester, PA. This helicopter was owned and flown by Lawrence J. Keddy, President, Cumberland Corporation, South Windham, Maine. This model helicopter was certified and first sold in 1955.



Some of our new bookshelves, donated by the University bookstore at Orono, arrive at their new home. (Mike Cornett Photo)

Upcoming MAHS Meetings

✈ ✈ ✈ 2001 — 2001 — 2001 — 2001 — 2001 ✈ ✈ ✈

- October 13 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Quonset Hut, Bethel Airport, Maine.
- October 14 All Day Antique Aeroplane Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum, Owls Head, Maine.
- November 10 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting.
- December 8 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting.

Welcome New Members

- 415. **Roland P. Turgeon**
115 Main Street
Bowdoinham, ME 04008 207-666-8961
- 416. **Charles W. Poingdester**
541 South Street
Tewksbury, MA 01876
- 417. **Rocco Santa Fez (Commercial Aircraft)**
1059 Main Street
Veazie, ME 04401
- 418. **James Lawrence (Flew WWII Corsairs)**
97 Old Kent Road
Readfield, ME 04355 207-685-4273

COME JOIN US

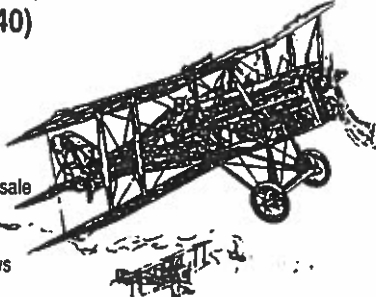
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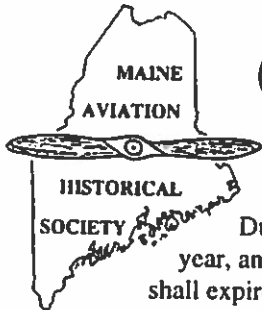
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October Meeting

Saturday, October 13, 2001
10 a.m.

Quonset Building
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