



DIRIGO FLYER

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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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Revisiting Big Spruce Mountain

Oscar Blue's article on our personal involvement in the search for the "White Bird" in the April issue brought some questions regarding why we had never gone further with a Big Spruce Mountain search. We did, and we are reprinting Jim Chichetto's story of that search from the October 1995 *Dirigo Flyer*. Since our membership has more than tripled since then, this will be new to many of you and a good refresher to older members.

Background Notes on the "White Bird"

As most of you know, Nungesser and Coli took off from Paris, France on May 8, 1927 in the *White Bird* attempting to fly to New York. They were last seen crossing the Irish coast, and a plane was heard over Newfoundland and as far as Machias, Maine. Extensive searches were made at the time. Since then, ENIGMA has searched in Newfoundland, and TIGHAR has searched the Machias area extensively and in Newfoundland, all without positive results as yet. Maine native John Argraves theorized that after arriving in the Machias area, Nungesser and Coli, not having enough fuel to reach New York, would have diverted to Montreal. This theory, combined with the 1942 sighting of a wreck on Big Spruce Mountain by the U.S. Army Air Force, has led to aerial searches there in 1994 and 1995. On October 29th, a small group of MAHS members climbed the mountain on a preliminary hike to get the lay of the land.

Member Jim Chichetto has written the following account of this hike. It was also covered by Royal Ford and Mark Wilson of the *Boston Globe*. Their account with two pictures appeared in the *Boston Sunday Globe* of November 5, 1995, pages 39 and 40. This story was reprinted in the *Portland Press Herald* on Tuesday, November 7, 1995, page 5B.

Report on the Big Spruce Mountain Hike

On Sunday, October 29, 1995, members of MAHS make their best attempt to date to find the *White Bird* on Big Spruce Mountain. Joining them were four hikers from the New Hampshire and Massachusetts area. Everyone converged in Milo, Maine for the long awaited ground search of Big Spruce Mountain. The weather was damp and rainy. It had rained all

night leaving the ground soaked and the streams were running high. The forecast was for showers to come through the area and for the temperature to cool down.

Leo Boyle had spoken with Royal Ford, a reporter for the *Boston Globe*. Mr. Ford had expressed interest in going along on this hike and learning more about Maine's aviation history. With Royal were *Globe* photographer Mark Wilson and two hiking companions, John Pratt and Mike White. John is a pilot who flies for Delta Airlines. He learned his trade while flying P-3s out of Brunswick for the Navy. Mike married a girl with local ties and has spent time in the Milo area.

Leo, James and myself arrived early in Milo to have time to go over some background for the story with Royal. We spent about an hour talking about the *White Bird* and other Maine aircraft stories before heading back down to the Milo Fire Department to meet the other adventurers. At 0910 we all got together and discussed the best way of traveling to the site. It was decided to take all the vehicles in as far as the gate by Katahdin Iron Works. We pulled out in a six-vehicle line at 0930. The weather was damp with light showers and pockets of misty ground fog.

The roads were good and we drove into KIW in about 35 minutes. We stopped at the old ruins and took a few pictures of the site. Since the gate was open and the road good, we decided to press on with all the vehicles. We drove another six miles up to the High Bridge area and then parked the two autos. We squeezed the spare gear into the three 4WDs and Rob Rohr's pick-up. The easy part of the trip was over. It had stopped raining but was getting colder.

The road to Greenwood Pond was good until we reached the halfway point near where Greenwood Brook crosses the old road. At this point we went four wheeling as the road became washed out springboard, nice flat gravel with sudden holes large enough to drive a truck into and hopefully out of.

Jeremy Williams, a new MAHS member who knows the KIW area, took point. John and Maria Miller rode with him in his full size Chevy pick-up. James, Leo and myself followed in my S-15 GMC. Royal and his party came next in a Toyota

"Spruce," 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.

Maine Aviation Historical Society President's Report April 2001

This month we are at the Maine Instrument Flight School at the Augusta Airport. Learning to fly has always been a dream of many, but few ever really attain that dream. We are pleased to be able to have our meeting at a flight school that helps Maine people achieve their dream of flying.

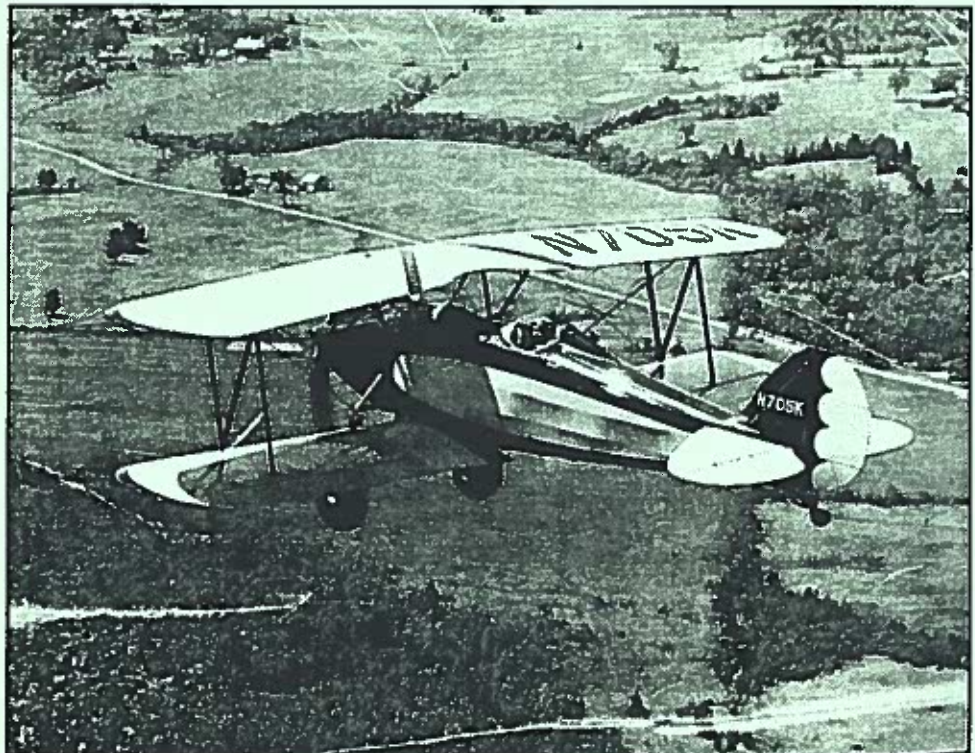
On Friday, April 6, 2001, the Maine Aviation Historical Society held a Board of Directors meeting at Pilot's Grill in Bangor. At this meeting, Ed Armstrong came forward and agreed to be the Chairman of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. I thank Ed for stepping up and providing this organization with his effective leadership. We have certainly needed this for quite some time now. I also want everyone to know that Ed is not alone in his desire to make this organization the best possible. We are on the verge of some great things in regard to the Maine Air Museum. We are working hard and will work even harder with your support in making the Maine Air Museum a reality. The fund raising initiative is now moving forward. We have made ourselves known to the key people in this state, and now it is time to bring our message to the public. We have some great initiatives in the works to make this happen. I welcome your ideas and suggestions on this and other matters.

Finally, we are beginning the acquisition phase of bringing aircraft and artifacts to the museum. The paperwork for the UH-1 H Huey helicopter to be donated by the Maine Army National Guard has been submitted.

I am excited about what the future holds for this organization and the Maine Air Museum. Please join us in any way you can in support of these endeavors.

John Garbinski, President

Great Mechanic, Great Plane



Harris Matthews, master mechanic, flies his Great Lakes 2T-1A biplane over Pittsfield, Maine about 1950. (Photo: Norm Houle Collection)

JOIN THE MAHS TODAY

"Spruce," continued from page 1

Forerunner. Rob and his "I-can-go-anywhere" Ford pick-up were next. Cliff Haines rode with Rob. We hit one mud spot and then two washouts within the first quarter mile. The big Chevy eased down into these and dragged its bumper as the nose started up the other side of the washouts. Williams, who has done this before, make it look easy. The shorter wheel based GMC and Toyota zipped up and over each challenge with no problem. After we hooked a rope onto Rob's Ford at the second washout and pulled it out by hand, it was decided that he would park it right there and we would use only 4WDs to continue. We swapped more gear around and then Rob and Cliff climbed into the back of the Chevy as we all headed towards the pond.

A traveling routine was soon established. The trucks would drive up to the next washout and stop. The three drivers would then check it out while the passengers disembarked. The drivers would then work their way through the bad spot and reload on the other side. Most washouts were solid and we didn't sink at all. The last mile or so to our hiking site took us over an hour to reach.

When we reached the site near Greenwood Pond, we spent time checking gear and comparing the topo map with the new J.W. Sewall Co survey photos. We then divided into two groups. Leo and Cliff would stay with the trucks and act as our base camp. The rest of us headed into the woods across from the trucks at 1202. The wind had picked up some and the temperature had dropped a few more degrees. It was much colder than it had been back in Milo, but at least the rain was holding off.

The first 200 yards up the mountain were the worst. Some timber had been cut there years ago and small evergreens about 10 feet high had grown in the cleared area. This dense growth was thicket-like and one had to bull between the small trees, pulling oneself through by holding onto the small tree trunks. We all separated as we picked paths of least resistance through this section. By the time we had all gotten past the new growth we were scattered across the bottom of the hill. Since it had rained all night, we were all soaked by the time we had pushed our way through the dense evergreens. We re-formed into two groups and moved upward following roughly parallel lines.

The mountain is covered with moose trails and we followed them when they ran in an uphill direction. About one third of all the trees on this side of the mountain were dead from budworms. Many had lost their tops from the high winds. The tops were criss-crossed on the ground everywhere. At this point Rob stopped for a few minutes before heading back down to help Leo and Cliff at the trucks. The rest of us headed upward, still in two groups. The rain held off, but it was getting colder as we climbed.

As we reached the 2700 foot level we spread out a little more. We moved along the face of the mountain in a vertical line. John, with the hand-held GPS, guided us toward the prime search area, pinpointed by Oscar Blue. We explored every open stop and rock outcropping we could find on the northeastern side. The area has few clearings and no large rock formation.

We reached the target area clearing at 2790 feet around 1315. We stopped and checked the map, took a few group photos and then decided to check the woods around the site and the peak above it. We were having problems with the GPS unit so we did a visual check to locate our position. We circled the north side of the mountain to visually see the area. Once having seen the northern view, we crossed to the back and looked down that slope. We then walked to the top of the north end of the mountain. We consulted the map and photographs again. We knew we had hit the right spot but had found no sign of any man-made objects. It was cold and windy at the top of the mountain, and the rain was starting again. We decided to head back down the mountain in a scattered manner to check over more ground. We had done a good job checking the face of the mountain thoroughly while climbing up. We hoped we might see something we missed by coming at it from another angle. We headed down and divided into small groups as we struggled over blowdowns and into pockets of small evergreens. The hike down was much easier except for the last 200 yards. At last everyone was down and we gathered around the trucks to compare notes.

Cliff had brought donuts and instant coffee, along with a small camp stove to heat the water with. As we shed some of our water soaked gear we enjoyed the coffee and donuts. We agreed, that we had covered the area well, but had found nothing to support the *White Bird* theory. After 20 minutes or so we decided to head back to Milo.

The trip back out was quicker, but the washouts were worse than before. It had rained off and on while we were hiking and the water was ripping the washouts more by the minute. Our tires had also torn up the sides of these washouts while driving into the pond. Now on the way out it was more of a challenge, but we all made it without anyone having to be towed.

Once back in Milo, the group broke up. Many of us headed for Miller's Field in Newburgh, Maine. John had offered to show Royal and the others his collection of aircraft parts and art. While we were there we had a chance to go over some more files and compare notes. John then gave everyone a tour of the field and showed off the F-84F parts recovered from the East Bucksport crash site this year. It was early evening before everyone headed home. We had not found the *White Bird*, but we all had fun. We will continue to look for clues and investigate reports, like the strange engine found in tidal mud flats near Lubec . . .

And So the Search Continues . . .

A good time was had by all, and the search continues. The top of the mountain is moss-covered and there is nothing on the surface to be seen. As a prelude to a return in the spring in 1996, we will continue our research. We want to talk to any wardens or foresters who have possibly been in the area. We also want to investigate the possibility of a magnetic or infrared search then. It would be possible to put a small group on the mountain by helicopter. And then there's that strange engine near Lubec . . .

April Meeting Highlights

Thanks to Shirley Perry-Whitney, co-owner of Maine Instrument Flight School in Augusta, the April meeting was held in their new conference room. Member Norm Houle was instrumental in arranging this meeting.

After a most interesting talk by Dr. Millard Harmon (see next column), President John Garbinski gave the President's Report.

Recording Secretary Bill Townsend was absent, but he is recovering well from heart surgery, as is past-President Jim Chichetto from kidney surgery.

Leo Boyle, recovering from back surgery, gave the membership report.

Les Shaw told us of progress at the museum building and putting the membership list on our computer.

Carl Sederquist gave the fundraising report, and the Executive Committee will hold a special meeting on April 27 on this subject.

Mike Cornett reported on the physical plant progress and Peter Noddin on crash sites and crash hikes.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

The May meeting will be held at the museum in Bangor on Saturday, May 12, 2001 at 10 a.m. and we are working on an interesting speaker for that meeting.

Tentatively, the June meeting will be held in Millinocket and may be combined with a tour of an F-86, F-101 and "Sea Fury" crash sites in the area, so mark June 9 on your calendars for what could be a most exciting meeting.

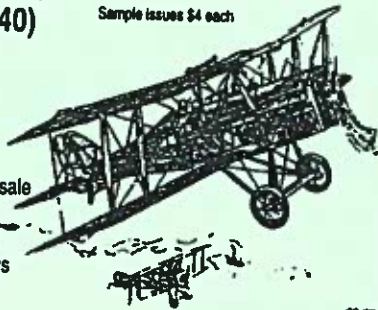
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Thank you, Dr. Millard Harmon

Right on time, despite gusty winds, our speaker landed his Beech 36 Ten Romeo at the Augusta Airport. Member Scott Grant, who arranged for Dr. Harmon to speak to us, introduced him.

After his retirement during the Cold War period, Dr. Harmon decided to work for world peace by becoming a personal ambassador for peace using his airplane Ten Romeo to help break down the wall between Russia and the free world. He obtained sponsors to help defray his expenses and proceeded to fly his Ten Romeo to Moscow, using his personal charm and intelligence to break down the barriers and become the first to fly a personal aircraft there.

Due to a foul-up on his visa, his first three days in Moscow were spent in jail. However, he persevered and went back again and again, even meeting the Russian premier. He has also flown into Cuba and certainly had a collection of most interesting flying stories to relate to us.

We thank Dr. Harmon for joining us, entertaining and educating us on a different aspect of the Cold War, a subject we in Maine are very familiar with.



Our April speaker Dr. Millard Harmon and his internationally acclaimed Beech-36 have captured 154 speed records. Records flights include two flights to Moscow, USSR, a North Pole dash with a confirmation assist by the Soviet Satellite, a harried swing through the Bermuda Triangle, and many U.S. Continental records. (Photo per Dr. Harmon)

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Dr. Harmon and Friends to the Rescue!

The following is reprinted with permission from the Ten Romeo newsletter, compiled and edited by Dr. Millard Harmon.

In April I had a telephone call from Bill Freeman, a friend for many years, who had an interesting idea.

"Mil, I have a proposal for you to consider. I offer nothing but high risk, hard work, long hours, and extensive costs, but I promise that you and I will walk away from the project with a warm heart, deep satisfaction, and the realization that many lives will be saved."

Bill Freeman is a true humanitarian. Some years ago Bill and his wife Karen adopted three lovely children from South America. He enjoys flying back occasionally. As flying friends learned about his flights south, he had inquiries. "I've always wanted to fly to South America, but complications of clearing customs and the mechanics involved have seemed too formidable to make the flight alone. Could I fly with you?"

Bill had an exciting suggestion. "Sure! I'll handle all flight planning, deal with Customs clearance, and arrange housing. All I ask is 500 pounds of useful load in your aircraft which I'll fill with medicines desperately needed by children at our destination."

Five friends joined Bill and with those privately owned aircraft they delivered over a ton of medicines.

In 1995 when Bill learned I was planning a flight to Havana for a ramp check of aviation fuel, he called me. "Mil, don't fly Ten Romeo to Havana *empty!* Hospitalized children in Cuba need medicines! We'll have no difficulty filling your plane with the medicines required."

That April morning my thoughts jumped ahead to possible unique humanitarian projects he might be focusing upon.

"I've located a refugee camp in Central America filled with people who are homeless due to the recent hurricane. Dozens of children are dying daily because no safe water is available. Our planes could provide medicines to save lives."

Problems precluded our chance to help those children in Central America last spring, but an interesting dialogue began.

As we contemplated the lack of good water in Central America causing death to the most vulnerable in the refugee camps, it brought to mind a similar need in Mozambique where my church has mounted a sustained effort in recent years to relieve suffering. A delegation from Mozambique came to Delmar recently to thank our community for help provided. They also mentioned the lack of good water. The closest "good" water is a well three miles distant. Someone from every family in the village must walk that six-mile trip daily.

As Bill and I discussed this universal need, we considered the problems of providing clean water. The ideal system must work without electrical power, have no moving parts, and be constructed of indestructible material.

Many aircraft emergency units carry a small distillation unit, a small box with a glass cover set at an angle where sunlight provides a distillate on the under surface of the glass that collects pure water. Such a device could be designed large enough to serve a whole family. There are no moving parts, and it would be made from durable plastic.

As Bill and I "brainstormed" on current world concerns, the matter of land mines came to mind as a problem raised by Mozambique missionaries who spoke of weekly loss of life to this nasty hangover from recent conflicts. It is difficult to understand our government's reluctance to sign the world treaty banning land mines. Implementation can be delayed for ten years, and surely the 38th parallel in Korea could then be protected electronically. The importance of the 38th Parallel may be muted within a unified Korea by then.

Modification of a small caterpillar tractor with a flying arm and armor-plate protection for the driver might work. We believe we have located foundation money to build a prototype of both the water system and the land-mine destroyer.

Friends in Texas are considering construction of the two prototypes. Stay tuned! There's a better day ahead.

To contact Dr. Harmon or to subscribe to his newsletter, call him at (518) 439-7166.



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Leo Boyle, Membership Secretary
101 Monroe Avenue
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207-854-9972

Be It Resolved . . . We Are Official!

On March 27, 2001 the Maine Legislature passed a joint resolution in support of creating the Maine Air Museum. A display table was set up in the Hall of Flags of the State House. The resolution was introduced by Bangor Representative Tina Baker. A copy of the resolution was printed in last month's *Dirigo Flyer*. Members of the Legislature and the MAHS who shared in the event are pictured below. (All photos courtesy of Mike Cornett)



Bangor Representative Tina Baker, Carl Sederquist, John Garbinski and Bangor Representative Patricia Blanchett.



Ed Armstrong, University of Maine Chancellor Terrence MacTaggart, and Carl Sederquist.



Representative Patricia Blanchett looks over some of our display material, helped by John Garbinski. Carl Sederquist, Rep. Tina Baker and Ed Armstrong converse in the background.



Ed Armstrong, MAHS President John Garbinski and Carl Sederquist.



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Upcoming MAHS Meetings



- May 12 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine.
- May 12 1 p.m. Amelia Lives, Alison Machaiek, OHTM, Owls Head, Maine.
- June 9 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Millinocket area, TBA.
- July 14 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine.
- August 4-5 All Day Transportation Spectacular and Aerobatic Airshow, OHTM, Owls Head, Maine.
- August 11 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting.
- Sept. 8 All Day Greenville International Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, Maine.
- Sept. 15 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting. Note change of weekend.
- Sept. 22-23 All Day Great State o' Maine Air Show with the Blue Angels, BNAS, Brunswick, Maine.
- Sept. 29-30 All Day Gadabout Gaddis Fly-In, Bingham, Maine
- October 13 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting.
- November 10 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting.
- December 8 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting.

* The Owls Head Transportation Museum will also have their Antique Aeroplane Show on the following dates: May 2 - June 10 and 24 - July 8 and 21-22 - September 2, 16 and 30 - October 14.

Welcome New Members

- 406F. Stephen Williams & Lisa Reece** (*Katahdin Wings*)
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 swilliams@maine.rr.com 207-371-2339
- 407. Kent Knowles** (*Sports*)
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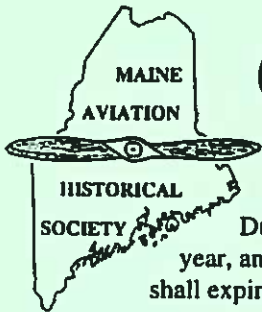
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May Meeting
Saturday, May 12, 2001
10 a.m.
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