



# DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. IX, No. 9 September 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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## Memoirs of a World War II Flight Instructor

By Member Lin Lawrence

December 7, 1941 began as a typical Sunday at our local grass field airport with only limited student training flights in progress and several potential passengers waiting to take their first airplane ride. We tend to forget the exhilaration of a first flight; yet seeing their homes and surrounding landscape from the air was always a memorable experience for those first-time fliers — and it only cost \$1.00 — what a bargain!

Little did anyone realize that it would be a long, long time before we would see another quiet normal Sunday or, for that matter, Monday through Saturday, too. Although Pearl Harbor was attacked about noon Eastern time, it was evening before we first heard about it. Fifty years ago there was no instant news or even hourly newscasts.

Everyone's world changed that day. Initial anger turned to resolve to win this war. The recruiting offices were swamped while housewives signed up for the production lines. Auto manufacturing ceased and gasoline and tires were rationed, as were some foods. Draft boards were quickly established to administer enlistments. Coastal cities were blacked out at night and observation towers were built and manned 24 hours per day to report type and direction of every aircraft spotted. In the early 1940s a bomber with sufficient range to reach our shores did not exist, yet the Japanese carrier-launched attack on Pearl Harbor created anxiety for most everyone.

All civilian airplanes were grounded and subsequently confiscated by the government at its non-negotiable price. These airplanes were flown to nearby flight schools to be used for the training of military pilots. Navy cadets housed at nearby colleges were bussed to our field for primary training. The attack on Pearl Harbor caught the armed services short of both pilots and airplanes to train the influx of cadets. Civilian aviation came through in this hour of need.

A great photo of a U.S. Navy Grumman FF-1 at Bangor about 1938-39. Photo taken by member Philip Plummer Jr., then a John Bapst High School student.

Having received my Flight Instructor Rating late in 1941, those first few classes of cadets were "victims" of my limited teaching ability. We flew seven days a week and taught ground school at night. It seemed as though we lived with those cadets. (Our poor wives saw little of us during 1942.) How does \$40 dollars a week sound for this pace? Eventually, our pay got up to \$70 a week, but no one had any spare time to spend it!

Only a few months passed and a secondary program was organized. I was advised I would be assigned to teach an aerobatics course of 35 hours to those who completed the primary course. When I asked the chief pilot who was going to teach me aerobatics, he replied, "You can learn a long with the cadets." This will give you an idea of the pilot shortage that existed. My guess is, when he realized what he had said, he suggested we do a few slow rolls in an old, old Fleet biplane. Like almost everyone else I was busy hanging on when inverted. (It takes a while to learn to trust the safety belt.) I did notice the lower left wing moving backward and forward. Having been first trained as an aircraft mechanic, I was quick to enthusiastically point down to Mother Earth.

*"Flight Instructor," 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

*Read at the August 2001 Membership Meeting at Miller's Air Field*

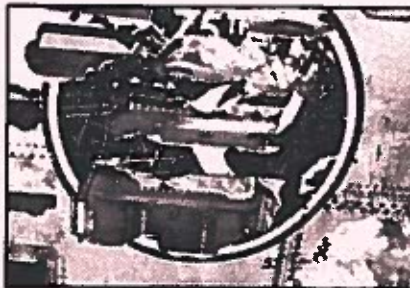
I would like to begin by thanking John Miller for once again hosting our monthly meeting here at Miller's Antique Air Field. We have had our meetings here many times over the years, and it is always a pleasure to come here.

The past six weeks have been one of the busiest periods in the history of this society. We have been moving forward with our plans for raising money for the Maine Air Museum. After our last monthly meeting at the museum on July 14th, we held a media event and invited the press to our museum. Channel 2 and Channel 7 sent news crews to our museum where we unveiled to the public our fundraising campaign to raise \$2 million dollars to build a state-of-the-art museum facility. Part of the fundraising event included the presentation of our new signs that were erected just in front of the museum along Maine Avenue. The signs are high enough to be seen above the fence line surrounding the property.

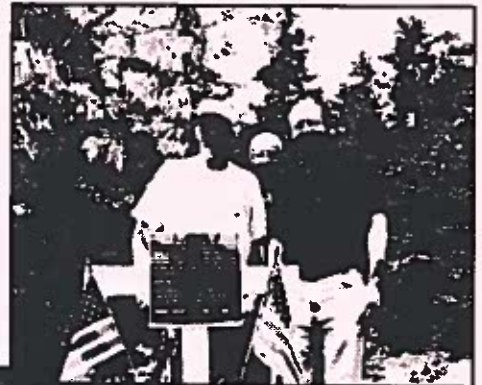
After finishing our interviews with the media, we took them to the Bald Mountain crash site of an F-101B Voodoo. The two TV news crews did a great job and we had excellent publicity for the museum fundraising campaign. Both TV stations aired 3-4 minute segments on their newscasts Saturday evening, Sunday morning, and again on Monday.

On July 24th, Ed Armstrong hosted a Board of Directors meeting at his Snowman Printing Conference Room in Hermon, Maine. Some of the agenda items discussed at length were: the forming of an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to assist in the development of the Maine Air Museum; our upcoming meeting with city officials of Bangor about the museum building; the status of the donation of the UH-1 helicopter by the United States Army; fundraising plans (both short and long term); and an estimated budget needed to maintain operations for the remainder of the year.

On August 1st, after attending a ceremony at the Bangor International Airport for the resumption of flight service by Delta Airlines, Ed Armstrong, Carl Sederquist and I hosted a group of distinguished guests (including Bangor Mayor John M. Rohman) for a presentation at the museum. After the presentation given by Carl Sederquist, we stated our position on requesting some financial support from the city of Bangor in regard to necessary repairs to the building itself. We also had the opportunity to talk with representatives from the Bangor International Airport, as well as Senator Susan Collins' office. I came away from the meeting feeling that we are now well on our way to realizing our dream of an air museum for the state of Maine.



The remains of the 75th Fighter Interceptor Squadron insignia on the F-101B fin at Dedham.



The MAHS plaque, cross and flags at the Dedham F-101B crash site. Jim Chichetto, Carl Sederquist and John Garbinski.



Lori Shamroth of Channel 2, Jim Chichetto and Les Shaw at the Dedham Kench Hill F-101B crash site.

(All Photos via Mike Cornett)

"Flight Instructor," continued from page 1

Our inter-cockpit communication in those days consisted of a piece of rubber hose with a funnel stuck in the instructor's end. The chief pilot assumed I was sick so he used up our altitude doing half rolls and then pulled the stick back, a maneuver commonly known as "Split Ss." I was concentrating on my parachute just in case that wing left us. An inspection showed the bolt hole in the rear spar was badly elongated. We agreed that moving wings were only appropriate for birds not airplanes.

Soon a few WACO biplanes began to arrive. What a sorry sight they were! WACO must have produced 60 different models and we seemed to get one of each. During the Depression I suspect they built whatever the customer wanted. To my surprise, I was assigned a reasonably new WACO UPF-7. Only when I began progress checks of other instructors' students did I realize my good fortune. "Black Mira" was a sports model and had been painted shiny black. On my first check flight, my

Wouldn't it be great if we could roll-back prices to this 1938 one?

harness must have been a bit loose. The student stretched me out beyond the windscreen when inverted as a drop of battery acid struck me on the forehead. "Black Mira" was powered by a Jacobs engine — one Mag and one distributor — which required a battery (and one that leaked when upside down).

Another WACO I recall flying had a ridiculous braking system. The rudder pedals became the brake pedal when the throttle was pulled in toward the pilot's knee. To do this and not add power was a challenge few students met and few instructors mastered.

The cadets looked forward to the 35th hour, our last flight together, as I would change seats and let them do anything they wished. This really backfired one cold winter day. A cadet who loved to do aerobatics made himself airsick. Without any warning, he raised both arms to signal I was to fly the airplane and — here comes his breakfast and lunch. Before I could lean forward behind the windshield, I got blasted in my face and goggles and "it" was freezing on contact. When I did lean forward, "it" was dripping around the windshield and down the back of my neck. With one pilot too sick to care and the other nearly blinded in the rear cockpit, what a relief it was to get back on the ground.

In the 1940s, insulated clothing was not yet invented and the airplanes were open cockpits without canopies. They certainly weren't meant to be flown in the winter in northern latitudes. With multiple layers of clothing, it was a challenge, first to climb in and then to last four to five hours so each cadet would have a chance to fly solo.

Getting engines started on cold mornings required a crude, yet unique method. A leather boot was slipped over one end of the prop with a 30-foot piece of shock cord attached. The cadets would stretch the shock cord as far as possible as the mechanic moved the prop off center, then snap, and hope it coughed, sputtered and begrudgingly started. Once started, we let them run the rest of the day rather than repeat this stunt.

One of the unusual things I recall was when a C-47 landed on our small and short grass field. This plane was the DC-3, the airliner of that day. Soldiers came piling out, ran around the airplane and climbed back in. When the pilots opened the throttles to take off we all held our breath. "Old Faithfull" bent a few bushes at the end of the runway on the way out. Later we learned the Air Force had removed the original airline engines and installed larger and more powerful ones.

The day a German submarine surfaced near Boston Harbor, a naval reserve aircraft landed

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"Flight Instructor," continued on page 4

## Maine Stunt Pilot Hall of Fame

Clarence MacArthur



Irvin Davis



Roland Maheu



A couple of the featured performers at the 1938 Maine Aero Rendezvous in August. On the left, Clarence MacArthur who flew a 1910 Lincoln-Beachey Pusher for the Old Farmer's Act. On the right, Irvin Davis who made delayed opening parachute drops and was also a batwing jumper. (Photos via Leo Boyle)

Roland Maheu of Auburn, noted stunt pilot, and George Gerry, head of the Heart of Maine Flying Service with the new Luscombe at Dexter Airport about 1948. (Photo via Norm Houle)

### "Flight Instructor," continued from page 3

with instructions from the commanding officer to hide the airplane in the hangar. An old Grumman Duck aircraft was probably 10 feet higher than our hangar doors. So, we pushed it back in the bushes while wondering why the commanding officer didn't go after the sub. Fear will cause people to make some crazy decisions. It was an exciting time to live through.

Another thrill occurred on a hazy day. First we heard a low roar, and then, through the haze, we saw a student on solo flight returning to the airport, followed by five P-47 US new secret high altitude fighters trying to follow the new student in an old Fleet biplane. The formation leader landed and announced they were lost and low on fuel. He promptly taxied to the end of our longest runway and proceeded to talk each pilot down to a safe landing. Fortunately the field sloped uphill. With heavy braking, they all got stopped before hitting the stone fence at the end. A common saying back then was "All airports are surrounded by high tension wires and politicians." This one had a third hazard: an ever present and very unforgiving stone fence.

One day we created some excitement at a local prison. We treated the prisoners to a parachute jump when an instructor and student were forced to bail out. They both landed in the prison compound.

By mid-1943, the military's rush orders for new airplanes began to arrive in great numbers. Needing pilots, the military offered the instructors a commission in the branch of service of our choice. My choice was the Marine Corps.

After suffering through two long, cold New England winters in those open cockpit airplanes, I reported to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida on July 15. The temperature must have been 100+. It didn't take too long to get thawed out.

No air conditioning; the night seemed even hotter than the day.

Every Marine must know how to march, so I reported to drill grounds in full khaki uniform. Khaki back then was starched stiff, heavy and just miserable. After two weeks, I was still heading west long after the formation turned east. Then it was on to much more familiar activities, flight operations. What a shock to learn my assigned military instructor and a flight surgeon had been killed in a mid-air collision. Also, the same day, a PBY had flipped over and burned on a night landing in the gulf. The pilot misjudged and landed too close to the beach. All 14 were burned to death. In the two weeks while I was trying to learn to march, 31 pilots had been killed. I had volunteered for this? It was often said, "If you survive flight training, combat will be a cinch."

Our group of volunteers came from many different flying experiences and backgrounds. I vividly recall my first solo formation take-off. Our leader was an airline captain and he began walking the rudder as if he were in a DC-3. How we wing men avoided striking him was a miracle; that formation was probably the most spread-out formation ever to depart the Naval Air Station. Until we learned and were comfortable with tight formation, flying was difficult for all of us who had spent years trying to avoid other aircraft.

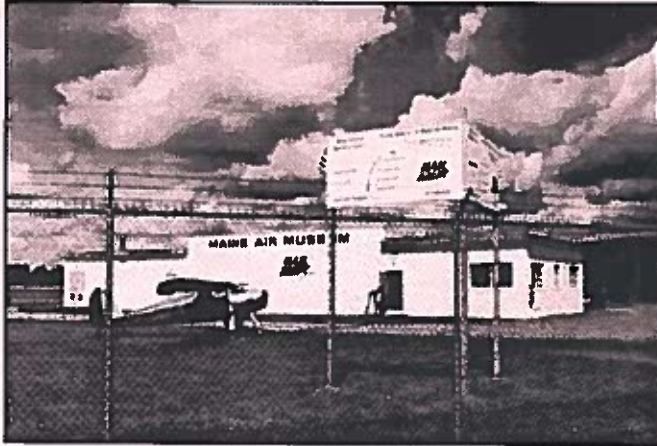
After completing instrument training, I reported for multi-engine instruction. It was a pleasant surprise to meet my instructor who came from my same community far up in northern Maine.

When training was completed, we joined a group of cadets for graduation ceremonies and each was presented his coveted Navy wings of gold. All in all, it was a wonderful personal experience and a just cause for our country.

## A Busy September Ahead for the MAHS

September should be an exciting month for the Maine Aviation Historical Society / Maine Air Museum.

On September 7, 8 and 9 the International Seaplane Fly-in will be held in Greenville. This is always a great show and we will be participating again this year. We need help in moving our display to Greenville and setting it up. We especially need people to man the display and to talk up the Society and the museum. Contact Mike Cornett at the museum (1-877-280-MAHS) and leave a message as to how you can help.



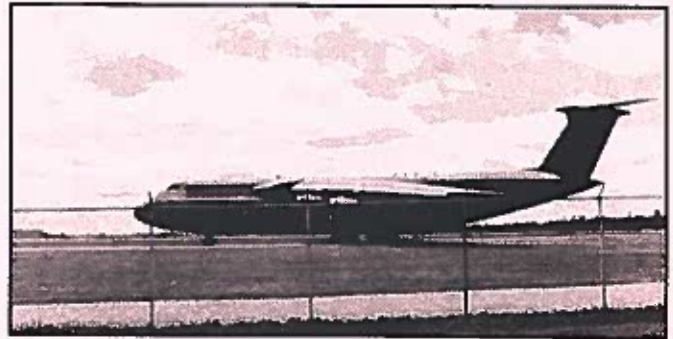
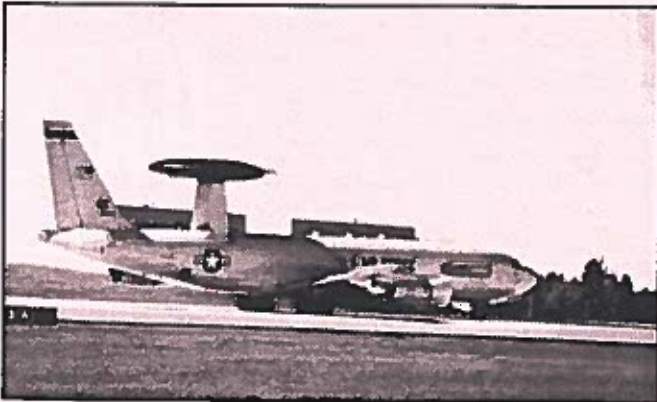
Above: The new fundraising sign, the Luscombe, and the MAM logo now up on the building. At right: Member Jim Sheppard (Tuskegee Airman) and friend talk to Jim Chichetto and Leo Boyle at our booth at Owls Head on August 4. (Photos via Mike Cornett)

On September 13, 14 and 15 the Collings Foundation is sending their B-17 and B-24 to Bangor. Regrettably, we cannot have them at the museum, but we are helping the committee. Members Jim Evans and Al Cormier are coordinating this visit. Again, call the museum for more information. Our regular monthly meeting will be held at 10 a.m. Sturday, September 15 at the museum, and the B-17 and B-24 will be part of it.

One September 22 and 23 the Great State o' Maine Air Show featuring the Blue Angels will be held at the Brunswick Naval Air Station. Again, we will need major help setting up our display, and especially in manning it. This show attracts 100,000+ people and we have a great opportunity to tell our story and raise money. Please let President John Garbinski know (207-262-6749) how you can be a part of this exciting event, or call the museum at 1-877-280-MAHS.



### Oh, The Sights We See!



Above: Lockheed C-5A from Westover AFB 7/10/01 taxiing by the museum. At left: Boeing E-3 AWACS plane outside the museum. (Photos via Mike Cornett)

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## The Restoration of the Boeing B-307

Member Morgan Barbour sent us the following on the restored Boeing B-307:

By Morgan S. Barbour

I went to Boeing Field last week and watched the B-307 that I helped restore fly on a test flight. The aircraft departed this past Sunday, 7/22/01, at 1025 for Oshkosh via Billings and St. Paul for EAA Venture 2001. It won't surprise me if they win the blue ribbon prize this year for their category and the grand prize and trophy overall.

This airplane, prior to being restored, was in pretty sorry condition coming out of the dust and heat of Pima, AZ, but it now looks like a new airplane . . . 1939 vintage, thanks to all the volunteers and their dedicated efforts! It is the only one left in the world from a total of ten that were manufactured in the 1938-1940 era. I would have liked to have been a part of the flight crew on this historic trip to Oshkosh but only so many of the volunteers could be taken



1939 photos of the Boeing B-307 NC-19903, the actual one that was restored. I remember seeing a B-307 flying into LaGuardia when I was at the New York World's Fair. (Photos via Morgan Barbour/caption by Leo Boyle)



and each one was deserving of a seat. The cockpit crew was: pilots Buzz Nelson, Mike Carriker, Paul Lechman, and FE Nate Andrews from Boeing Flight Test. The flight crew was selected by the Boeing Flight Test Group and I assume had to be approved also by the Smithsonian (owner of the aircraft) probably for safety and insurance liability reasons. The aircraft holds an approved FAA Airworthiness Certificate.

I had the pleasure and the honor to volunteer my time in the restoration of this historic "one and only" Boeing 307 Stratoliner, N19903. My personal efforts, no matter how large or small, will be etched and displayed in places known only to me. So I say, "Good Flying and Godspeed" to the Clipper Flying Cloud in her new mission of keeping history alive and memories vibrant of that aviation era by showing her 1940 Pan American Airways logo and colors to the people of the world.



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## Upcoming MAHS Meetings

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

- Sept. 7-9 ..... All Day ..... Greenville International Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, Maine.
- Sept. 13-15 ..... All Day ..... Collings B-17 and B-24 at Bangor International Airport.
- Sept. 15 ..... 10 a.m. .... MAHS Meeting. (Note change of weekend.) Maine Air Museum, Bangor.
- 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:  
September 2, 16 and 30 • October 14

### Welcome New Member

414. Edward Fischer  
62 Spring Brook Drive  
Hampstead, NH 03841                      603-329-6251

### New E-Mail Address

Morgan Barbour's new e-mail address is: bam777@abac.com

### Got E-Mail?

Don't forget to send us your e-mail address if you want it listed in the *Dirigo Flyer*. It's a great way to keep in touch with other members, share information quickly and stay current on aviation issues and happenings.

### Got Ideas?

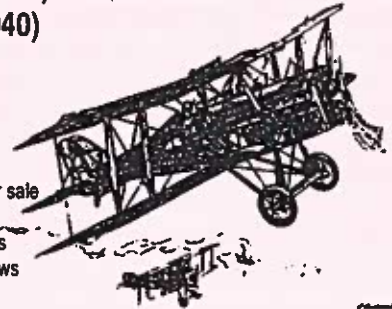
MAHS meeting sites are flexible and we're always looking for new program ideas. Call Scott Grant at 207-824-8617 if you have any ideas or if you can be of help.

**For more info on the MAHS, call 207-941-6757 or 1-877-280-MAHS (in state) or check out our web site at [acadia.net/mahs/](http://acadia.net/mahs/)**

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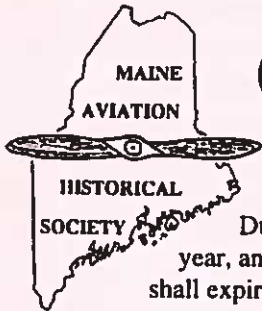
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**September Meeting**  
Saturday, September 15, 2001  
10 a.m.  
Maine Air Museum  
Bangor International Airport