

DIRIGO FLYER

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Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society • P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402 • 207-854-9972
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Submarine Enlisted to Find Crashed WWII Planes in Sebago Lake

By Lucretia Douglas
Special to The News

"Those things are flying awfully low."

That was my first thought when I heard six planes zoom over Goodwin's Lodge on May 16, 1944. The next thing I heard was a couple of explosions.

I looked out to see four war planes flying away.

Two had gone to the bottom of Sebago Lake, with their pilots, never to be recovered.

Not for more than 50 years, anyway.

Wayne Peabody, owner of Submerged Exploration, Inc., and Bruce Stephenson, owner of Maritime Trade Routes, have been working in a joint effort for the past two years, doing research and conducting an extensive side-scan sonar survey search of Sebago Lake.

Peabody has been exploring waters around the world in his one-man sub for four and a half years. Last winter, in the Florida Keys, he dived on the wreck of the *Arocha*, a sunken Spanish galleon that was discovered some years back. The discovery team used the same scientific instrument, side-scan sonar, that Peabody uses. Peabody will be in Venezuela for a week later this fall.

Peabody and Stephenson have carefully researched and obtained all permits necessary to examine the submerged artifact, which they regard as historical, and "a delicate operation."

"It's a piece of Maine history, showing Maine's part in the war effort," Peabody said. "The issues of possible recovery and ownership are complex. We have obtained all the proper permits, and we are going carefully."

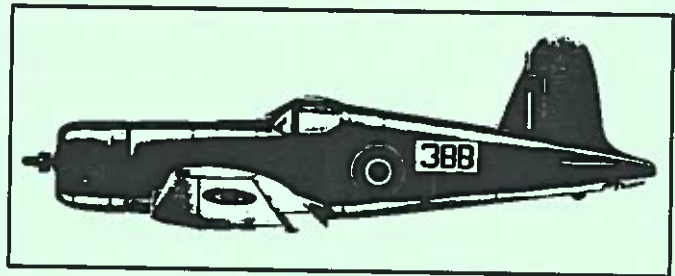
"Previously, divers would latch onto old wrecks and sell what they brought up. That's changing."

In any case, this is no treasure hunt.

Joseph R. Philips, director of the Maine State Museum, explains that this is "the first permit issued by the Maine State Museum for submerged aircraft."

"We're approaching this as a nautical archaeology project," says Stephenson. "We'll focus on developing a proper conclusion to the missing aircraft and the pilots."

Newspaper reports from the time indicate that the two pilots were British, flying Navy F-4U trainers, out of Lewiston.



A Vought Corsair Mk. II of a training unit of the Fleet Air Arm, of the type that was lost in Sebago Lake in 1944. (Picture: Osprey Pub., Ltd.)

Apparently, at least one plane might have flown so low that it hit the water, shortly before noon that day. It bounced up into another low-flying plane. There were two explosions.

The planes sank almost immediately. Boats from Thompson's Cove and Long Beach searched the area, shortly after the crash. All they ever found was a headrest and an antenna post.

The planes went down a mile or so north of Frye Island in the central part of the lake.

"After locating them with the sonar," Peabody said, "we went back to them to look them over. Then we went to the U.S. Navy. Whose planes are they? What about the pilots? We had to find out exactly how we were to conduct ourselves from there."

Stephenson, who is a commercial diver and instructor, will be conducting the submarine surveys with Peabody. Their base of operations on Sebago Lake is Kettle Cove Marina in South Casco, where Stephenson also recently opened a dive shop facility.

All divers or potential salvors are reminded that these sites have been registered with both the State of Maine and the U.S. Navy and are "fully protected as such under state and federal law, which prohibits any unauthorized intrusion or disturbance by any outside parties," Peabody says.

Reprinted from the November 5, 1998 *Bridgton News*, courtesy of Lucretia Douglas.

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Monthly meetings
are held at 9 a.m.
on the second Saturday
of each month
at various locations.
See schedule for details.

November Meeting

The November meeting of the Maine Aviation Historical Society was held on Saturday, November 14 in the Maine Air National Guard Training Room at Bangor International Airport. Our special thanks go to the Maine Air National Guard and member M/SGT John Garbinski for this great meeting room. We hope to meet here again in the future until we have our own place. Over fifty members were present and great discussions were held. George Tinker, Treasurer, presented the financial report showing over \$2000 in the checking account and almost \$12,000 in the Money Market Fund.

• Fund-Raising Ideas and Items Wanted •

Discussions were then held on the upcoming 1999 season and projects for raising money. With an exciting series of air shows already scheduled, we need to be ready with saleable items to appeal to members and non-members alike. John Miller, Don Martin, Norm Houle, your editor, and others are getting prices and quantities for new three-color T-shirts, hats, and decals. We will have a final report on these at the January meeting and decisions will be made as to which items we will do and what aircraft are to be shown on the T-shirts. We welcome your thoughts on these — remember, it needs to be Maine-related and have wide appeal.

• New Business •

Under new business, we collected more ballots for the election of 1999 officers. Please note: Your ballot must be received at MAHS, 101 Monroe Avenue, Westbrook, ME 04092-4020 by Friday, December 11, 1998 or brought to the December meeting in Portland on Saturday, December 12. At that time, the ballots will be counted and the new officers announced. 1999 dues are now due, and we would appreciate your early renewal to make sure you receive all your *Dirigo Flyers* and to save on postage expenses. If there is a red dot on your address label for this newsletter, it means that your 1999 dues have not been paid as of the date of this mailing.

• Building 98 •

We are going to draw up an invitation letter to join us, and this letter will be sent to all airport managers, fixed base operators, and pilots in Maine early in 1999. We need these people to help us and to increase our membership base for our new museum. Jules Arel, Museum Committee Chairman, then gave us an update on his meetings with the airport manager regarding their offer of Building 98. They have made a reasonable offer for our use of this building and we have arranged for an engineer to inspect this building on December 1, 1998 to ascertain any problems and give us an idea of the cost of putting it in shape for our use, as well as the cost of running it. We must then immediately draw up a five-year plan to ascertain our future income and costs. At 11 a.m. the meeting was adjourned for all present to meet at Building 98 and review what it has to offer, its condition, and what can be done to render it a viable museum.

• "White Bird" •

Jules, Jim Chichetto, and Don Saunders then announced the next "White Bird" search (weather permitting) which was to be held on Sunday, November 29. The searchers planned to meet at the parking lot behind McDonald's in Ellsworth at 8 a.m. and proceed from there in carpools to the search site. A full report will be in the next *Dirigo Flyer*.

• Bruce Stephenson •

Bruce Stephenson then updated us on the search for the Sebago Lake Corsairs, which is being conducted by Wayne Peabody of Newbury, MA and Bruce. (*See cover story.*) The *Maine Sunday Telegram* of Sunday, November 15, 1998 carried a feature story by Will Bartlett on this search, and the story was picked up by the *Kennebec Journal* and the *Bangor Daily News*, among other papers. There will be more news on this ongoing search as it progresses.

• MAHS Web Site Address •

The full address for our web site is: <http://www.acadia.net/mahs>
Member Bill Townsend is handling these updates, and is doing a fine job. This web site will include news and items of interest to the general public. It will not necessarily include internal news of interest only to members. Bill also discovered a great new museum in Hampton, VA and suggested a group of members should rent a van and drive down to see this museum in the Spring.

December Meeting

The December meeting will be held in the Conference Room, second floor of the terminal at the Portland International Jetport at 9 a.m. on Saturday, December 12. Results of the election, introduction of the new officers, a report on the "White Bird" search, an update on the Sebago Lake search, the engineer's report on Building 98 at Bangor, and information on possible aircraft acquisitions should make for a very exciting agenda.

January Feature

Coming in the January 1999 *Dirigio Flyer* — the curious "flight" of the U.S. Navy Curtiss SBC-4 Helldivers from Houlton to Canada in 1940, by Charles Francis.

★ Important Notices ★

Because of the high profile and newsworthy activities that we are now involved with, you may be contacted by local or national newspaper and television newspeople. The policy of the Society has not changed: all news media contacts should be referred to Jim Chichetto (207-269-3281) (e-mail: J.F84F@aol.com) or Leo Boyle (207-854-9972) (e-mail: pshaw@maine.rr.com). We may refer them back to you depending on the circumstances, but let us clear it first. We need to protect sources who do not want publicity and negotiations that are not finalized. Please adhere to this policy.

A red dot on your *Dirigio Flyer* address label means your 1999 dues are currently due. Please remit by 1/1/99 to avoid missing any issues. Exciting news and stories are coming your way!

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Mapping the State of Maine



The specially equipped Lockheed EP-3J Orion which is engaged in electronically mapping the state of Maine. It operates out of Brunswick Naval Air Station

(Rob Rohr Photo)

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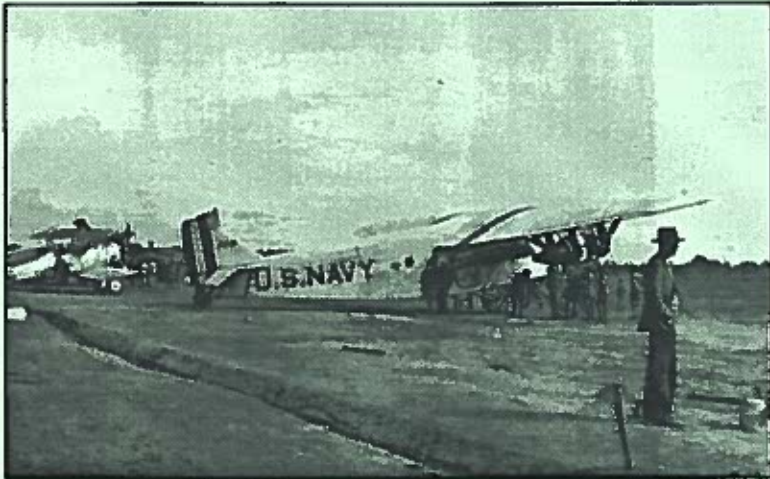
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Brian Wood	bwood@bell.mma.edu

This is our current list of in-state members with e-mail addresses. Please send yours to the editor if you want it listed.

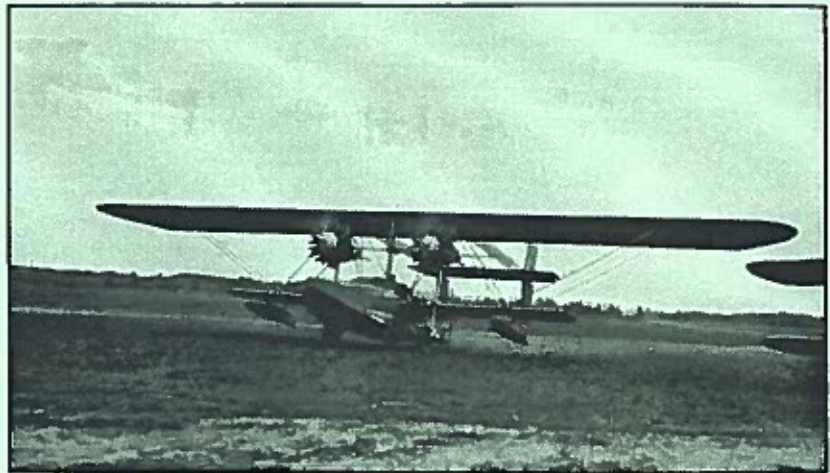


A View from the Archives . . .

Three glimpses of Maine aviation history straight from the history books — and Scarborough Airport.



The U.S. Navy's Ford XJR-1 Tri-Motor (A7526) at Portland Airport in Scarborough on 9/29/28. Behind the Tri-Motor is a Vought Corsair 02U-1 from N.A.S. Anacostia, and just visible behind it is the Junkers Larsen JL-6.



A Sikorsky S-38 Amphibian, probably belonging to Curtiss-Wright Flying Services at Scarborough, for the Air Show on 9/29/28.



Two Curtiss F6C-3 Hawk U.S. Marine fighters of Fighting Squadron 4 from Quantico at Scarborough. Harry Jones' Stinson SB-1B from Old Orchard Beach is parked next door. (Photo via J. Glatter via Rodney Laughton)

Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Calendar of Events

December 12 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Portland International Jetport Terminal, Portland, Maine.

January 9, 1999 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Lewiston-Auburn Airport (tentative).

February 13, 1999 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.

March 13, 1999 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.

July 3-4, 1999 All Day Great Lewiston-Auburn Air Show, Lewiston-Auburn Airport.

July 24-25, 1999 All Day Great State o' Maine Air Show, BNAS, Brunswick, Maine.

Meeting sites are flexible. We are always looking for suggestions on locations, guest speakers, slide shows, etc. Call Scott Grant at 207-775-3404 if you have any ideas or can be of help.

Welcome New Members!

273. **Sherman W. Hallowell, Jr.**
Rt. 2, Box 6245
Carmel, ME 04419 207-848-3777
274. **Captain Barry McLellan**
P.O. Box 119
Naples, ME 04055-0119
275. **Richard G. Theriault**
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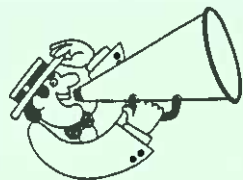
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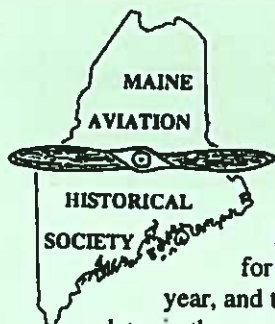
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Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission, 4 Free Passes
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Patch, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes
* (2 annual \$250 payments)		

Maine Aviation Historical Society
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December Meeting

Saturday, December 12, 1998
9 a.m.

Terminal Conference Room
Portland International Jetport
Portland, Maine