

# DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. VII, No. 7 July 1998

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society • P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402 • 207-854-9972  
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## Very Important July Meeting!

A very important meeting will be held on Saturday, July 11th, at 9 a.m. at John Miller's Antique Airfield in Newburgh, Maine. Officers and directors should try to be there by 8:30 a.m.

Important discussions will be held on the future and the direction of the Maine Aviation Historical Society and the Maine Air Museum. Please make every effort to be at this important meeting. Those of you who were there last year will remember it as an exciting and fun meeting. We expect that Larry Nickerson and his Aerobat Gallery will be there and food is available at the field.

### Directions:

Take Exit 43 off I-95 to Route 69. From the north, turn left on Route 69. North Road is the second right after crossing I-95 and is marked. John's airfield is about half a mile on the left. From the south, turn right at Route 69 and North Road is your second right.

See you there!

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDARS!**

## June Meeting News

The June meeting of the MAHS was held on Saturday, June 13th at the Brunswick Naval Air Station. Beleaguered by a steady rain, the meeting was conducted by member Rob Rohr. After a very short business meeting, Rob led the members present on an historical tour of the air station. This tour also included a visit to operations and a tour of a Lockheed P-3C Orion airborne detection aircraft. Our thanks to Rob Rohr for a very interesting meeting.

The following weekend, four members, led by Brian Wood, travelled to the Newry area on a preliminary search for the KC-97 crash site. Although unsuccessful that day, they have since done further research and have better pinpointed the location. We hope to schedule another hike to this area soon. We will announce details as they become known.

## May Meeting Notes

The May meeting was held in Houlton, Maine on Saturday the 16th. A number of members drove up to the County from central Maine for this meeting. Among those present were: Carroll Leland and his son, Carl Sederquist, Al Cormier, Jules Arel, Don Saunders, Jim Chichetto and Herman Bayerdorffer, who flew up in his newly painted 310. Our host was MAHS member Peter Hurd. An excellent program was enjoyed by the people from the Houlton area and the MAHS members.

We had breakfast at the Brookside Restaurant. From there we drove to the meeting site, the Greater Houlton Christian Academy. The first speaker was Professor H. Anderson Giles, whose video documentary on the atomic bomb missions flown from Tinian won a Telly Award in 1997. His slide show was excellent and the before, during and after pictures showed the island as it went from a Japanese stronghold to the base of

operations for B-29s bombing Japan. With its six airstrips, six B-29s took off at the same time; on some raids, six aircraft took off every 30 seconds for two hours to get the strike force airborne. After his slide show and talk, the question and answer session was very good. A number of members bought a copy of the tape "Thunder From Tinian." If you are interested in purchasing this tape, you may do so by sending a check or money order for \$32.50 to: Tinian Documentaries, 16 Summer Street, Presque Isle, Maine 04769. And if you know anyone who served on Tinian, please have him contact Professor Giles. He may have photos of the unit or work camp, and he is always looking for more people to interview and tape. This program was excellent and we hope to have him come to Bangor and give it to our group at a later date.

"May Meeting," continued on page 2

"May Meeting," continued from page 1

We took a lunch break and walked to the Courtyard Café for sandwiches. After lunch, Jules Arel gave us a slide show and talk about the building of Houlton Army Air Base and flight in Houlton from the start of 1914 to the pre-war building of the airstrip. Houlton was used as a jumping off spot for people and aircraft heading for the ETO. It grew from a small strip to a modern military base in a very short time. By 1942, 4000 flights began or ended at Houlton. As Dow AAFB and Presque Isle AAFB became operational, Houlton was phased out. By the middle of 1944, only 25 men manned the base, down from the 2000 people working in or on the base just 16 months before.

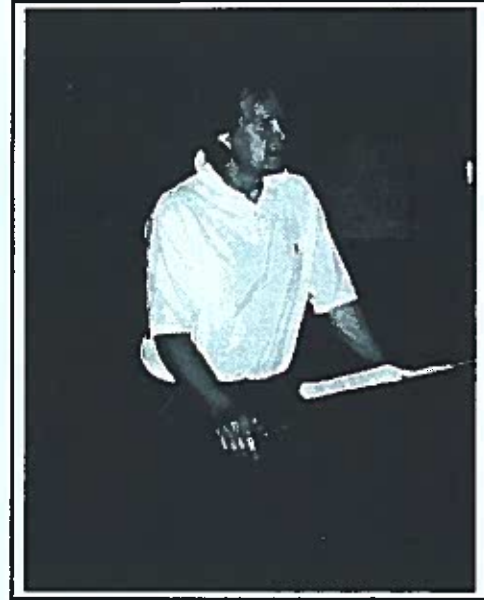
The main reason for the change in status was that the runways could not be expanded any more. Hills on two sides, a swamp on one end and the Canadian border at the other end of the main runway sealed its fate. Aircraft had grown larger and faster in four short years, and Houlton could not grow enough to change with the times. As the airfield side closed down, 3000 German and Russian POWs were brought in and stayed there until 1946. It was one of six POW camps in the state of Maine during WWII. After his talk, Jules answered questions and told the group his article will be published this summer in *Echoes*. I hope we all get a chance to pick up a copy of this article for our files.



Member Peter Hurd, who organized the great Aroostook County meeting in Houlton.

We held a short business meeting and then headed out to the airfield. We did not have time for Peter to give his program as the question and answer periods from the two programs did eat up time, but everyone was happy to hear the speakers. Hopefully, Peter will give his full program at the October meeting.

A number of local people drove to the airport and took the tour with us. We were greeted by Terry Larson of Larson Flight Services. He gave us an overview of the airport and the many projects which have been done to upgrade the airport. He showed us the manned weather station, and then we toured

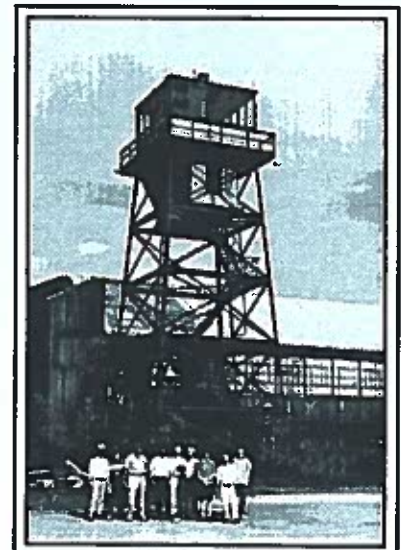


Professor H. Anderson Giles tells of the B-29 experience on Saipan in World War II.

Hangar 2. Hangar 2 was one of two hangars built during WWII to house aircraft and work areas. Hangar 1 is still in use, but as a wood shop. Hangar 2 is still used as a hangar and it is huge. After the hangar, we walked the flight line, checked out aircraft and looked at the WWII flight control tower. Peter is working with a group to take this tower down and restore it. It will be a long project, but one well worth doing.

After a pleasant tour, we all headed for our transportation. Some of us had a two and a half hour drive, while Herman had a half hour flight. It was a very good meeting, and we now have at least one more member in the County. Hopefully, more folks will join up as the newsletters start to be passed out and people know they are not alone in their quest to keep their history alive and intact.

A good job and special thanks go to Peter Hurd for his hard work to bring this meeting together for MAHS and the people of Aroostook County.



The WWII Control Tower at Houlton Airport which Peter Hurd and Jules Arel are working hard to get restored.



## President's May Meeting Recap

by James Chichetto

Bill Nungesser called Leo Boyle, Ed Armstrong and Jim Chichetto to tell us of his latest trip to France. He visited with his relatives and with MAHS member Laure Leveziel. He had talks with his cousin, who thinks the time is right for the French government to become involved in the search for the "L'Oiseau Blanc." Upon his return, Bill accompanied noted author Clive Cussler on a "White Bird" search in Washington and Hancock counties during the first week of May. Side scan sonar and other devices were used, but the lakes and ponds checked did not give up any secrets. Clive did check the MAHS site which we have been working on for the last two years, and he was quite upset with the logging operation going on at this time. After Clive left, Bill began gathering facts for the proposal which he is writing for presentation to the French government. He hopes to have a grant from them to help pay for an aerial search to be conducted. I advised him to also check out the possible use of a French anti-sub aircraft. They sometimes fly in Maine while training, and we could seek help from them in this quest.

Bill will keep us updated on developments in this area. We are also working on two other sites to be checked. We will print details as these new sites become better known and a hike is set up for them.

The Museum Committee met on May 11, 1998. Members Jules Arel, Ed Armstrong, Don Saunders, Jaylyn McCue and myself discussed the lease, fundraising efforts and bookkeeping. At present, the city of Bangor has not finalized the lease but has agreed to all our changes to date. After some discussion it was

decided to appoint Jaylyn McCue as our comptroller. Her duties are basic bookkeeping and the setting up of our accounting for MAHS and, later, for the Maine Air Museum. Jim Hodges has agreed to pick up our mail and bring it to Jaylyn, where she will open, sort and take care of the money end of the MAHS business. I will be signing the checks being deposited and those being mailed out for bills we owe. Later, as our elected treasurer gets back into good health, he will take this position over again. Leo will keep track of the membership and still have some duties until this transition is complete.

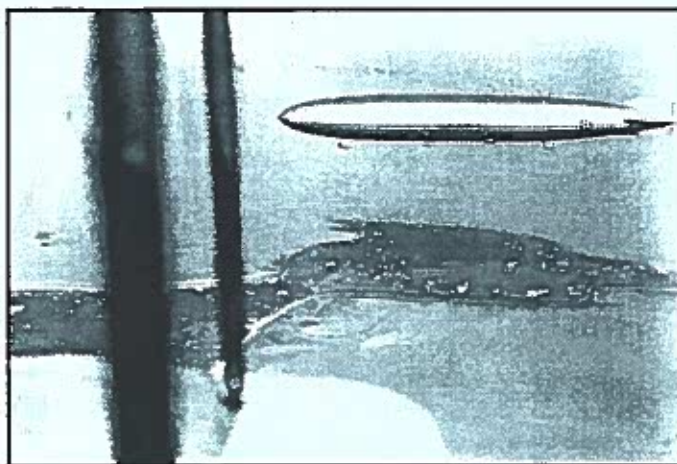
Jules held a two hour meeting with our fundraising advisor during last week. She was very good at telling us what we need to do and what we need to provide to her so she can do her job. We will be signing a contract with her shortly and paying her the first half of her fee. The Museum Committee will be meeting again soon to work further on this project.

Efforts by the Maine ANG are still going on in an attempt to bring the F-89 back to Bangor from Waterville. Steve Alex is working on this project. He can be reached at alex@acadia.net.

We had 127 hits on our web site last month. We hope to have even more now that more search engines are carrying our address. We have started to have people contact us using this site. Bill Townsend is our webmaster. He can be reached at townsend@acadia.net.

As of May 14, 1998, MAHS had \$2,332.36 in our checking account and \$10,973.16 in our money market account for the feasibility study.

The U.S. Navy Dirigible  
ZR-1 U.S.S. *Shenandoah*  
photographed over Prouts Neck,  
Maine about 6 p.m. on July 3, 1925.  
Photo was probably taken by  
Cole, the photographer of  
Old Orchard Beach,  
from Harry Jones' Standard J-1.  
(Photo via Member Dan Blaney)



Members Leo Boyle and Norm and Kay Houle at  
Norm's table at the Hampton, NH Fly-Market on May 16, 1998.  
(Photo by Member Jack Denison)



## News Clip from the Past

### Maine Man Is Hero of Lorient Raid

German efforts to keep American Fortress planes from their deadly precision bombing of the submarine base at Lorient, France cost the Luftwaffe at least 10 planes, said reports coming into newspapers back on January 2, 1943. This story was important to the people in the state of Maine because one of their own boys was a hero to a B-17 Fortress crew:

*Three American bombers failed to return from the attack on the base in daylight yesterday. Crews said a "fair percentage" of their high explosives landed in the concrete submarine pens, where U-boats come for servicing and repairs.*

*One Fortress limped back with the co-pilot at the control and Sgt. Clarence B. King of Maine, who never has flown a plane, in the co-pilot's seat. The pilot had been knocked unconscious when a 20 millimeter cannon shell tore through the glass of the cockpit, just above his head. King helped the co-pilot, who was wounded in the arm, to move the pilot to the floor and get the bomber home with one engine out.*

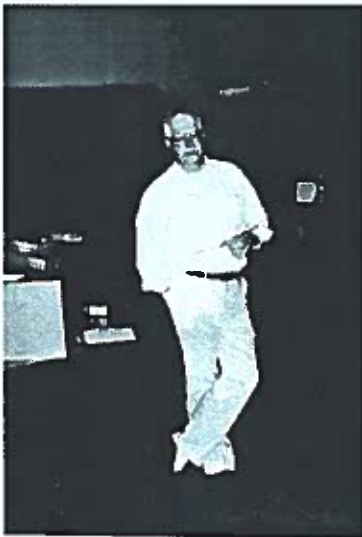
In this news clip from the past, Sgt. Clarence B. King became a hero in the eyes of the men on board the B-17. He also became a hero to the people of Maine. If someone has more information on Clarence B. King, please send it to Scott, Jim or Leo.  
— Submitted by Scott Grant

### 90th Birthday Bash

On June 27th, a 90th Birthday Bash was held at the Black Bear Inn in Stillwater for Ken DeWitt, longtime proprietor of the Central Maine Flying Service at Old Town.

Over 120 guests, family, friends, ex-employees and customers attended. Ken was duly roasted and a great time was had by all. Norm Houle remembers Ken being on the phone at 10 or 11 at night selling airplanes, and being awakened at 5 in the morning to fly somewhere.

A very happy birthday to Ken, and to Mrs. DeWitt who will soon join him at her 90th year.



Our erstwhile Museum Committee Chairman, Jules Arel, presents his history of the Houlton AAF at the May 18th meeting.

The "White Bird"?  
How easy it is to be fooled!  
From a distance, this pile of cedar shingles and tar paper fooled Oscar Blue on his visit to one of the "White Bird" search areas this spring.  
(Oscar Blue Photo)

## News Clip from the Past

### Bangor's First Airplane Flight

by Clark P. Thompson

Did you know that Bangor's first airplane flight took place at Maplewood Park, now Bass Park, on August 26, 1911?

According to the news account which appeared in the August 28th (Monday) edition of the *Bangor Daily Commercial*, "C.C. Bonnette, the aviator, made a short flight at the fairgrounds Saturday afternoon, going about 15 feet in the air." Bonnette, an accomplished balloonist who had been coming to the Eastern Maine State Fair for many years, contracted with the fair to conduct daily flights from the racetrack oval in front of the grandstand, but problems with the propeller on his Curtiss type biplane prevented any flights during fair week.

Several news stories appearing in the *Bangor Daily News* questioned whether Bonnette would ever fly his "aeroplane" in Bangor. One such story was headlined, "Bonnette Didn't Fly, But Offered His Daily Explanation" while another read, "Bonnette Says He Will Fly in Bangor, Sure." These news stories reported that fair president F.O. Beal's announcement from the judges stand on Friday (8/25) that Bonnette has assured him "his machine will fly" in Bangor and "I think he will" was greeted with skepticism. It was reported that Beal's words were drowned out by people who hollered things like "Fake!" and "Tell it to Sweeney."

An advertisement for the 28th Eastern Maine State Fair appearing in the August 18th edition of the *Bangor Daily News* showed a sketch of Bonnette's "aeroplane" and stated that the upcoming event would be "the first real aeroplane flight ever attempted in the State of Maine." As it turns out, Bonnette's flight at Maplewood Park is credited by the Maine Aviation Historical Society as being the second airplane flight in Maine. The first flight occurred on August 9, 1911 in Augusta, just 17 days earlier, according to the MAHS.

In any event, F.O. Beal must have been pleased when Bonnette landed his biplane on the grassy oval in front of the grandstand, even if this flight was accomplished a day after the conclusion of the fair. For some reason, Bonnette's historic flight was never reported by the *Bangor Daily News*. The *Commercial* reported on Monday (8/28) that after his Bangor flight, "Bonnette left Sunday for Squantum, Mass., where he is entered in the \$1500 amateur contest."



## Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Calendar of Events

July 11 .....	9 a.m. ....	MAHS Meeting, John Miller Field, Carmel, Maine.
July 12 .....	10 a.m. ....	1950s-1960s Car Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
July 25-26 .....	10 a.m. ....	Antique Truck Meet, Owls Head Transportation Museum.*
July 29-Aug. 4 .....	All Day .....	EAA Oshkosh Fly-In, Oshkosh, WI, 301-695-2083.
August 8 .....	10 a.m. ....	MAHS Meeting, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
August 8-9 .....	10 a.m. ....	Annual Transportation Spectacular Aerobatic Show, OHTM.*
August 22 .....	10 a.m. ....	21st Annual New England Auto Auction, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
September 6 .....	10 a.m. ....	Antique Motorcycle Festival, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
September 11-13 .....	All Day .....	25th International Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, ME, 207-695-2821.
September 12 .....	10 a.m. ....	MAHS Meeting, Greenville Seaplane Fly-In.*
September 20 .....	10 a.m. ....	Convertible Meet, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
October 4 .....	10 a.m. ....	Foreign Car Oktoberfest, OHTM.
October 10 .....	9 a.m. ....	MAHS Meeting, Houlton, Maine.
October 25 .....	10 a.m. ....	Great Fall Auction, OHTM.
November 14 .....	9 a.m. ....	MAHS Meeting, TBA.
December 12 .....	9 a.m. ....	MAHS Meeting, TBA.

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. \*We will have a table at these events — volunteers needed!

### Welcome New Members!

253. **C. Peter Marini** (*Maine Aviation History*)  
7 M Street  
Bangor, ME 04401-2569      207-990-3463
254. **Russ Vogel** (*Aircraft Wreck Hiking and Search*)  
312 Wash Pond Road      (B) 978-545-4983  
Hampstead, NH 03841      (H) 603-329-8361
255. **Richard W. Billings** (*WWII Navigator*)  
RR 7, Box 1940      (B) 207-623-8011  
Augusta, ME 04330      (H) 207-622-3029
256. **Stephen W. Naas**  
8 Winchester Street  
Presque Isle, ME 04769-2945      207-764-0497
257. **Merrill Rollins** (*Sebago Lake Planes*)  
249 Scribners Mills Road      (B) 207-655-4775  
Harrison, ME 04040      (H) 207-583-4797

### Patten Air Meet Update

In the April issue of the *Dirigo Flyer*, we printed a program for an air meet held in Patten, Maine. We knew it was held on August 11 to 13, but we didn't know the year. Member Bill Deane, who sent us the original program, informs us that the year was 1933. Bill got this date from Johnnie Poland's autobiography, which the Massachusetts Aviation Historical Society is now editing. We'll keep you posted as to when this will be available. We would still appreciate any photos or information on the show itself.



**LAWRENCE E. NICKERSON**  
2107 CARMEL ROAD NORTH  
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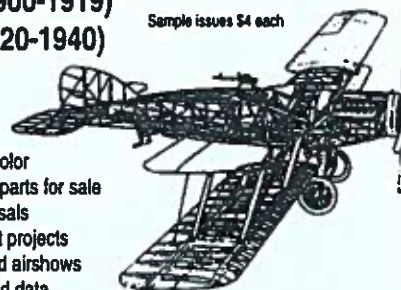
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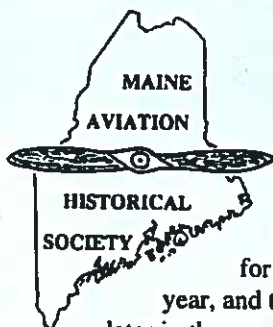
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Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Patch, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes
* (2 annual \$250 payments)		

Dues will be for the calendar year, and those joining later in the year will receive all newsletters retroactive to January of that year. All renewal of dues shall be due on January 1st.

Annual membership includes *12 monthly newsletters!* Mail payment to: MAHS  
101 Monroe Avenue, Westbrook, ME  
04092-4020

Maine Aviation Historical Society  
P.O. Box 2641  
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**COME JOIN US!**  
Saturday, July 11, 1998  
9 a.m.  
John Miller Field  
Carmel, Maine