



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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The Long Road Home

Member Al Cormier of Bangor has done what we all should do. He has written up one of his memorable aviation-related experiences. We have published it in the Dirigo Flyer and it will be preserved for future generations to help them understand the world we lived in. I hope that more of you will do the same to preserve this history and keep the Dirigo Flyer one of the most interesting aviation historical journals.

Your Editor

By Al Cormier

What do you do after you've bailed out in the middle of the night and finally connect with Mother Earth? For the first few minutes you just lie there in pain wondering if you were really a survivor. When the pain abates, you try to orient yourself - feel around - nothing on one side, who knows what is on the other. Wrap yourself in the chute and wait for dawn. And don't forget to thank the Lord that you made it down.

Morning. There you are on a ledge about thirty feet above the ground. Below, the ground recedes for about one hundred yards to a river. If you had landed in that, there would have been no survival. Suddenly you spot some activity on the further bank. Several black pajama-clad men are readying a boat and soon they embark and head down stream; just stay quiet for they may not be friendly. When they're gone you climb out of your chute and toss it down below. A handy tree allows you to climb down to the ground.

After cutting the shrouds from the pack, hide it in the nearby brush. The seat pack contains a survival kit which includes a folding machete with a twelve inch blade, a plastic water bag, a box of 45 cal. ammo, a first aid kit and some fishing gear. Tucked in a pocket was a little book with Chinese and American phrases, a pointy-talky. I made a back pack out of the remains of the parachute and headed for the river to fill my water bag. Unable to locate the chloride pills to purify the water I poured a few drops of iodine into the bag and hoped for the best. It tasted awful but was drinkable.

Following a path along the river I soon came upon a lone man. I approached him cautiously and attempted to seek his aid with the help of my pointy-talky. Absolute blank! If I had dropped in from outer space, which he probably thought I had, I couldn't have found any more uninterested person. I left him and kept following the path until I came to a small group of

buildings — mud hovels with thatched roofs. The place was deserted but as I stood there a door opened and a young lad of about five came out and approached me. He took my hand and led me to the open door. Once inside, I found a room crammed with the village inhabitants. An older gentlemen, who was apparently in charge, greeted me. I showed them the flags sewn into my jacket which proclaimed me to be an American pilot in China to help them fight the Japanese. This was written in several Chinese dialects and promised a reward if they helped me back to my base. This was greatly admired with much nodding of heads from the congregation. They offered me tea and, with the help of my little book, the old gent pointed out that they would send someone to bring help to lead me back home. He led me to a sleeping mat and I soon passed out as I hadn't slept the night before and had been flying for seventeen hours the previous day. The cause of my present situation had been a flight to a far Eastern base to evacuate it in the face of approaching Japanese troops. Returning, we had encountered 100 mph head winds. The result was abandoning the aircraft, a C-47, when the fuel ran out.

It was almost dusk when I was awakened. The crowd had left and in their place was a mean looking Chinaman, ruggedly built, with long hair and unblinking black eyes, a Chinese guerrilla, obviously. He was armed but did not appear to be a threat. The old gent was with him, as well as the young boy, and I was told we would leave and go elsewhere for the night. His guerrilla friend would be our guide when we started our walk to the magistrate's village. I was in no position to argue. I knew that I was helpless without their aid so I had to place my trust in their good intentions. I had left my 45 pistol at home and my machete, which I kept hidden inside my jacket, was certainly not designed to be used as a weapon. Oddly enough, I felt no fear and my disposition was reflected in their treatment of me. My left leg had been slightly injured when I landed and they had to help me walk the half mile to the old gent's home.

His home was similar to the ones I'd seen in the village, though a little more isolated; mud walls, thatched roof and a dirt floor. The only light came from a small fire in a stone hearth over which his wife was cooking. We sat on the floor as his wife prepared the meal which seemed to consist of fried nuts and

"Long Road Home," continued on page 6

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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.

MAHS Meeting Notes and News

February Meeting Notes

The February meeting of the MAHS was held February 13th at John Miller's Antique Airfield in Newburgh. Almost 50 members attended and it was heartening to see such a fine turnout. The Board of Directors met at 9 a.m. and discussed several items, particularly the lease on the building at the Bangor International Airport. This lease has been given to the Airport Manager with our request for some minor changes, and we hope to have the corrected lease back by the March meeting. Acceptance of the lease and implementation of major fund-raising will be the major topics for next month's Board of Directors meeting.

Slide Show Triggers Many Memories

After briefing the membership on the lease, committees, financial statement and other news, we were entertained by the inimitable Norm Houle. Norm gave a slide show complete with tales from his vast repertoire of reminiscences. Many members then visited Larry Nickerson's Gallery and John Miller's Museum and Memorabilia Shop. We can't wait for summer and the chance to meet there again. Thank you, John.

Plan Ahead for March Meeting

The March meeting will be held at the Maine Air National Guard facility at Bangor International Airport on March 13th at 10 a.m. The Board of Directors will meet at 9 a.m. We expect to have Bill Cook, who is drawing up our five-year plan, on hand to explain this to the members after the Board meeting. Bill will also talk to us about his experiences at the Geneseo Warplane Museum. This will be an important and interesting meeting, so please try to attend. Jim Chichetto is doing some planning on hikes for this season and hopefully will have some news for us on this front. We look forward to seeing you all there.

MAHS Treasurer's Report: 12/1/97 to 12/31/98

Balance 12/1/97	\$758.26
Income	
• Dues	\$5533.00
• Miscellaneous	458.12
• Contributions	450.00
Total Income	\$6441.12
Expenses	
• Postage	\$935.67
• Print Newsletters	1285.87
• Newsletter Set-up	1205.00
• Misc. Set-up and Typing	440.23
• Non-Profit Status Expense	350.00
Total Expenses	\$4216.61
Balance 12/31/98	\$2982.61

Museum Fund

• Donations to Museum Fund	\$10,940.00
• Interest on Museum Fund	382.79
Total in Museum Fund 12/31/98	\$11,322.79

Above Prepared and Submitted by George W. Tinker, Treasurer

→ → → Join the Maine Aviation Historical Society Today and Help Preserve Maine's Aviation History for Tomorrow → → →

Acquisitions Committee Hopes to Bring this Plane Home to Maine



Above, a Lockheed P2V-3 at St. Petersburg-Clearwater, Florida which once served at Brunswick Naval Air Station. Our Acquisitions Committee is trying to obtain this aircraft, which needs work, for our new museum. To the right, another view of the P2V-3 Neptune. (Rob Rohr Photo)

Book Review

A lot of good new aviation books have been recently published. If you know of a book, new or old, that our members might enjoy, send me a short review and we'll publish it here.

The B-17 Flying Fortress Story: Design - Production - History by Roger A. Freeman with David Osborne, \$45.00

I first heard about this book last year when I was at a B-17 meeting. Roger Freeman is acknowledged to be the world's B-17 expert, and the story was that he had outdone himself with this book. Upon glancing at it when I first received it, I thought my money had been misspent. However, the more I read in it, the more I enjoyed it. The first half of the book deals with the design and construction of the B-17 with many photos and cut-away illustrations. This part is excellent in itself, but what really makes it worthwhile is the second half. This consists of a brief history of every B-17 built. What I found most revealing was how many of these aircraft went through Maine on their way overseas during World War II. I highly recommend this book for any B-17 lover, and as a reference book on their service use.

Rob Rohr

Battleship and Cruiser Aircraft of the U.S. Navy, 1910-1949 by William T. Larkins, Schiffer Publishing, Co., \$49.95

For those of you who love a different type of flying, this is the book Bill Larkins, noted aero historian, tells the history of flying scout planes off the cruisers and destroyers from the beginning through to its heyday in World War II, and its demise shortly thereafter. With hundreds of photos, on the ground, in the air, but mostly on the catapults on the ships, all of the aircraft are well-covered. There are also tables on which squadrons and what aircraft were on which ships and when. He also details the sometimes confusing cowling, fuselage band and tail colors used by the Navy pre-War. If this type of flying is your cup of tea, this book is the best and fullest teapot you can buy.

Leo Boyle

B-25 Mitchell in Civilian Service

by Scott A. Thompson, about \$20.00

Having already read the author's book on B-17s in civilian service, I was not disappointed in this book. He does a great job of researching old CAA-FAA records and listing each aircraft's post-War service. Their use as fire-bombers, by the Bendix Company, and as high speed executive transports is full of little-known details. There are interviews with many of the B-25 warbird people and a fine selection of rare color and black and white photos. This is a book you should be happy to add to your collection.

Rob Rohr

Final Flight by Ian McLachlan (British, about \$32)

Fellow MAHS member Craig Fuller recommended this book to me. We are both interested in aviation archaeology and that is what this book is about. Although it is British and the setting is in England, the author weaves the human side of air crashes into his stories. These tell of the recovery of crashed aircraft and parts thereof, mostly from the World War II era. Filled with photos, the book gives a fascinating picture of aviation archaeology at work. An index at the end of the book lists all the crash sites visited in the book, which is a most enjoyable read.

Rob Rohr

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Sky Patrol Then and Now — From the U.S. Army Air Corps to the Maine Air National Guard

Photos from the Norm Houle Collection



A U.S. Army Air Corps Keystone LB-6A light bomber at Caribou Municipal Airport draws a crowd of viewers, about 1933. (Jerry Drake Photo)



McDonnell F-101B Voodoo of the Maine Air National Guard, now serving as the gate guard for their facility at Bangor International Airport. (Norm Houle Photo)

In the last issue of the *Dirigo Flyer*, it was announced that member Roland Maheu had passed away on 1/16/99. A feature story on his life and many contributions to Maine aviation is currently underway and will appear in these pages as soon as possible.

????????????????? Information, Please . . .

A beautiful Waco cabin biplane in June 1939 at Godfrey Field in Bangor. Can anyone supply more information as to model, owner or why it was in Bangor?

(Al Cormier Photo)



Oh, Those Marvelous Men and their Flying Machines!

Photos courtesy of Member Rodney Laughton



Ready to go flying, togged out in helmet and goggles, leather coat and parachute is Milton V. Smith, Maine aviation pioneer. The plane is an American Moth on skis, the place is Portland Airport, the date is February 1932. Smith flew for Curtiss-Wright, was the station manager for Boston & Maine Airways at Stroudwater and founded Northeast Airways there, which today is Northeast Airmotive. His son, Fred Smith (#36) of Dallas, Texas and Rockport, is an MAHS member.
(Photo from the Rita Mainville Album)



A beautiful photo of the French Bernard 190 "Yellowbird" taken at Roosevelt Field, Long Island, NY in May 1929. This was taken before it received its American registration. It flew across the Atlantic from Old Orchard Beach, Maine on June 13, 1929 to Spain and on to Paris with Lotti, Assolant and Lefevre — and Portland native Arthur Schreiber as stowaway.
(Photo from the Rita Mainville Album)



Bellanca K "Roma" at the Portland Airport in Scarborough on September 30, 1928. Cesare Sabelli, Roger Williams and Dr. Pisculli attempted to fly from Old Orchard Beach to Rome in October 1928, but engine trouble forced them to give up.



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"Long Road Home," continued from page 1

something else that I could not identify. I sampled the food when it was offered and downed it with big gulps of tea. After the meal, we all retired. I slept on a raised pallet that held a straw mat but no covers and I'm sure I displaced them to some alternate makeshift. The lad who had first approached me appeared to be a member of the family; the mean looking guerrilla had disappeared.

The next day was spent around the house, the old gent brought out some picture books of his own and, with these, I managed to convey how I had arrived in his back yard. He was obviously intelligent and avid to learn all he could about my exploits and the world that I came from. He promised that we would set out for Kweyang, the nearest large village, on the following day. Most of what I relate is not from memory but from a log that I kept in a small notebook that I always carried.

Eventually, there came a time when Nature's call could no longer be ignored. I hadn't noticed any small outhouses around. At the base, we had a big twelve holer built by the Chinese and furnished with six inch squares of rice paper that would have served well as fine sandpaper. I finally got my message across to the old gent and he led me to a big pit that had a ramp extending over one edge. The idea, I guess, was to lean over the pit and add your deposit to the communal pile. I was dressed in khakis over which I wore my flight suit and a B-15 jacket. To do what I had to do, I practically stripped and let it all hang out. My biggest fear was that I would lose my balance and end up in the pit. What a way to go!

We got a late start the following day; it was about eleven before his rugged friend arrived and we took to the road. The old gent and his son accompanied us. Road is probably a misnomer as it was barely a well worn path that led mostly up. China is a mountainous country and all the roads seem to head for the highest point. Our trip was a continuous climb up one side of a mountain and down the other. At about one o'clock, we met a group of American and Chinese soldiers led by a Major Malone, a Medical Officer, who were out searching for survivors of our mishap. When he determined that I was fit to travel, he went on his way assuring me that we would all be brought to the same place for transportation by truck to the nearest airfield. My group continued on until we reached a small village where we spent the night. I was shown to a separate room in a small house and before long a meal was placed before me. It consisted of some type of fowl, flattened like a pancake and cooked. It resembled road kill but it tasted good.

I had bailed out on Tuesday morning and started my walking on Thursday. We finally arrived at the village of Tunlan, where the magistrate lived, at noon on Friday. Here there was an interpreter and I was finally able to converse with the people who had helped me and to thank them for their kind assistance. On Saturday, ten of my passengers arrived uninjured and four more, who had been hurt, would come later with Major Malone and his party. The trucks and ambulance from Wonkang, about sixty miles away, were delayed and didn't arrive until Monday. In the meantime, we all stayed at the magistrate's house. The bed was a makeshift device of planks about twelve feet long set up on sawhorses. We all slept on this, side by side, covered with a tarp. Frankly, I couldn't sleep this way so I spent the nights, with several others, huddled around

a small fire in the kitchen - the Hilton it was not!

Sunday passed without any sign of the trucks. Early Monday morning we heard them coming down the road and presently there appeared a large six-by-six, an ambulance and a weapons carrier. After a lot of commotion and a bit of shuffling around, we got aboard the vehicles but not before I performed one more mission. I had noticed, during our walk, that the Chinese guerrilla had cast a fond eye on my machete, although he had made no attempt to take it from me. Now, with the Major's permission, I went over and presented it to him. The remainder of my pack and its contents I gave to the old gent.

I sat with the Major in the weapons carrier for the two hour ride to Wankang where we spent the night. The next morning several of us boarded the weapons carrier and went ahead to make sure the road to Poseh was passable. It took six more hours of difficult travel to reach Poseh, a small airstrip that had been carved out of the jungle between the hills. The few airmen who maintained the emergency field lived in tents under extremely primitive conditions. The influx of a large group of visitors, for we were not the only plane that had gone down that night, taxed their facilities to no end. I can still recall going through the mess line to get only one slice of Spam and a piece of bread for a meal. We shared a bed roll under a tent at night.

The base was in contact with Chunking by means of a low frequency transmitter and they could speak with planes overhead, but the clouds prevented any of them from landing. We had arrived on a Monday but it wasn't until Friday that the weather broke and the planes were able to land. They were met by an exultant crowd anxious to move on. My fellow pilot had not been among us refugees and I had wondered at his fate. Imagine my surprise when, out of one of our squadron planes, he was the pilot. It seems that all the commotion I had witnessed at the edge of the river was him being sailed home in style. He had made it back to Kunming in a couple of days without having to walk a mile.

There was no hero's reception for me when I returned to my unit. True, they were glad to see me unhurt, but seven planes had gone down that night because of the storm. Several of the planes were abandoned over a landing strip because there were no blind landing facilities available. One benefit was that my parents were not notified that I was missing so they did not worry unnecessarily. The next day it was back to flying again as if nothing had happened. It was a busy time as the Japanese were making a major push to overrun all the advanced bases. That's how we earned our pay!



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Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Calendar of Events

March 13	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting, Maine Air National Guard Facility, Bangor International Airport.
April 10	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting.
May 8	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting.
May 29-30	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Super Flea Market, Old Aeroplane Show.
June 12	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting.
June 13	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Custom and Hot Rod Show, Old Aeroplane Show.
June 26-27	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: WWII Era Aircraft, Auto Show.*
July 3-4	All Day	Great Lewiston-Auburn Air Show, Lewiston-Auburn Airport.*
July 10	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting.
July 11	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: '50s and '60s Auto Show, Old Aeroplane Show.
July 24-25	All Day	Great State o' Maine Air Show, Blue Angels, BNAS, Brunswick, Maine.*
July 24-25	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Truck, Tractor and Old Aeroplane Show.
August 7-8	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Transportation Spectacular and Aerobatic Show.*
August 14	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting.
August 21	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: New England Automobile Auction.
September 5	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Motorcycle and Old Aeroplane Show.
September 11	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting.
September 19	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Convertibles and Old Aeroplane Show.
October 3	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Foreign Auto Festival and Old Aeroplane Show.
October 9-10	All Day	Northeast Aero Historicians Meeting, Owls Head and Samoset Resort.
October 17	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Ford vs. Chevy Meet and Old Aeroplane Show.
October 31	All Day	Owls Head Transportation Museum: Great Fall Auction and Open House.
November 13	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting
December 11	10 a.m.	MAHS Meeting

* We will have a booth at these events. Volunteers needed!

Welcome New Members!

280. **Warren E. Cerrone (WWI, WWII)**
6 Baysite Landing
Falmouth Foreside, ME 04105 207-781-8974
282. **Charles Francis (History)**
222 Dahlia Farm Road
Monroe, ME 04951 207-525-4484
283. **Bryan Raymond (Maine Aviation)**
2 Potter Street, #3
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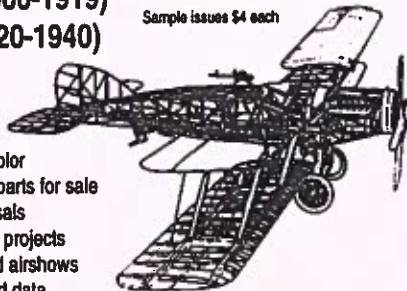
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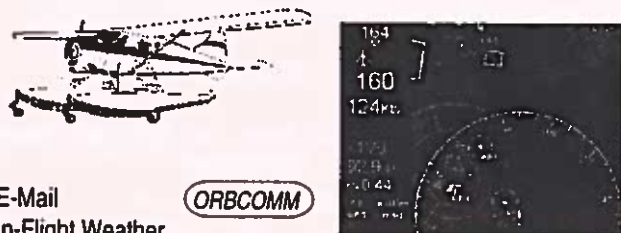
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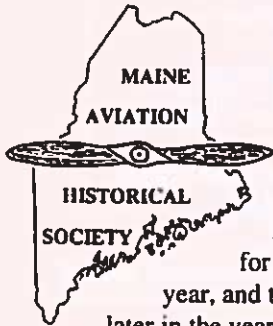
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Corporate	\$50 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission, 4 Free Passes
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Patch, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes
* (2 annual \$250 payments)		

Maine Aviation Historical Society
P.O. Box 2641
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March Meeting
Saturday, March 13, 1999
10 a.m.
Maine Air National Guard Facility
Bangor International Airport
Bangor, Maine