



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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Barnstorming Celebrities

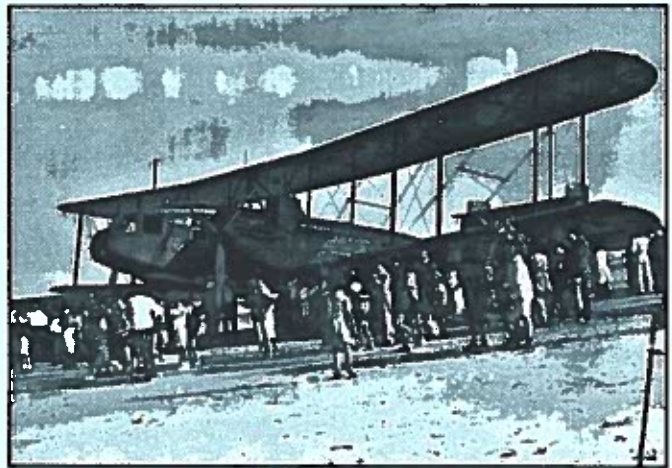
By Neal Strange

Barnstorming pilots of the roaring twenties captivated throngs of spectators by performing breathtaking aerial exhibitions of skill and bravery as they migrated from pasture to pasture in their WWI surplus biplanes. Their antics inspired crowds of rural thrill seekers to forfeit five dollars or more for a brief, airy ride in the open cockpit. But when the novelty of flight became more commonplace, barnstorming slowly declined as many of the young itinerant airmen sought more stable pursuits in other fields of aviation.

However, in 1934, Clarence Chamberlin, of transoceanic fame (having flown the Atlantic just 16 days after Lindberg's historic flight), purchased four Curtiss Condor Airliners from Eastern Airlines with the intention of establishing his own airline service in the Northeast. Eastern had updated its fleet with new, faster Douglas DC2s and sold the aging Condors to Chamberlin for a fraction of their original cost.

To publicize and stimulate interest in his proposed airline, Chamberlin, accompanied by Ruth Nichols, distinguished aviatrix and record holder of the 1920s, embarked on a barnstorming tour from New York through New England, landing on any airstrip of sufficient length that could accommodate the retired airliners.

With little resemblance to modern jets, the Curtiss Condor, model 53-CO biplane boasted a wingspan of ninety-one feet eight inches and was powered by two 12-cylinder 625 Hp



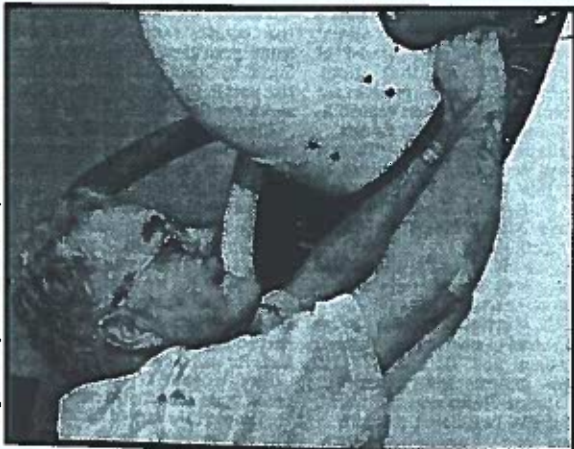
Clarence Chamberlin's Curtiss Condor "Columbia" at Old Orchard Beach in 1935. (Portland Press Herald Photo via Neal Strange)

water-cooled Curtiss Conqueror engines turning fixed pitch, three-blade Hamilton Steel propellers. The entire airframe, with the exception of the forward top fuselage, was fabric covered. Originally designed to carry eighteen passengers in comparative comfort, Chamberlin had the luxury interiors stripped to provide additional seating space.

They landed first in Maine at the Portland City Airport (now Portland International Jetport) on a Sunday morning in May 1935 and were formally greeted by an elite group of local dignitaries. A crowd of curious spectators also arrived and

"Barnstormers," continued on page 3

Bangor Daily News Photo by Kevin Bennett



Alton "Chuck" Cianchette

The MAHS and the MAM suffered a great loss with the death of Alton "Chuck" Cianchette in the crash of his Cessna 195 in eastern Kentucky on January 18, 2000.

A life member and strong supporter of the Society, Chuck loved antique automobiles and aircraft. He and his brother Ken had recently completed a homebuilt Staggerwing-type biplane and had just begun the restoration of the 1929 Travel-Air Mystery Ship Air Racer. A pilot for 40 years, he was awarded the Gadabout Gaddis Trophy in 1981 for his contributions to Maine aviation.

Chuck was the founder and president of the Cianbro Corp. of Pittsfield, a respected state legislator, a devoted family man and a supporter of many worthwhile causes. Nearly 3000 people attended his memorial service in Pittsfield on January 22. He will be sadly missed.

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Peter Hurd (#176)
 Houlton (2002)

Carl Sederquist (#218L)
 Ellsworth (2001)

William Townsend (#101L)
 Bar Harbor (2000)

Monthly meetings
 are held at 10 a.m.
 on the second Saturday
 of each month
 at various locations.
 See schedule for details.

MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Monthly Meeting — 8 January 2000

Call to Order. The January meeting of the Maine Aviation Historical Society was called to order at the Maine Air Museum by recording secretary pro tem William Townsend in the absence of Secretary Boyle.

Members of the Maine Air National Guard were introduced and the attendees moved to the west display room where the MEANG formally presented the J-57 jet engine to the Maine Air Museum. Following these ceremonies, the meeting was moved back into the main display hall. The first order of business was the acceptance of the new officers.

President Chichetto opened the regular monthly meeting.

A. Secretary's Report. Townsend reported that there had been 64 renewals, 3 new memberships and two life memberships received in the past month. This report was accepted.

B. Treasurer's Report. Brantner reported that \$1880 in dues and donations had been received. As of the end of December there was an ending balance of \$2594 in the checking account and \$8209 in the money market account. The end of month balance of the latter had not been received so there will be some difference in the actual amount as of 1/8/00.

Bill received included \$1403 for the heating unit and patching the roof. Operating expenses in the past month totaled \$275. The Treasurer's report was accepted.

C. Museum Report. Chichetto reported on the new heating unit and the acquisition of the J-57 engine. Jobs needed to be done immediately include scrapping and painting the walls. Member work days will be starting in January.

There were questions concerning the fencing. Chichetto reported that it will probably be done in the summer. We can expect to know more in February as to when we can get it done and the expense. We are still working on State surplus fencing.

Houle reported that the Bangor tower would not let him taxi to the museum but only as far as General Aviation. There was a general discussion as to how to get to the museum building by air.

"Notes," continued on page 4

Maine Aviation Historical Society Statement of Cash Receipts and Expenditures for December 1999

GENERAL FUND

Cash received
 Dues 1,880
 Donations 50
 Total receipts 1,930

Cash expended
Dirigo Flyer 294
 Postage 132
 Printing 42
 Utilities 251
 Total expended 719

Excess of Income (expense) (1,211)

Cash balance beg. of month 1,383

Cash balance end of month 2,594

RESTRICTED FUND

Money Market account
 beginning balance 8,209
Investment statement not yet received.
No withdrawals.

Total cost of building to date 2,206

Donated sign 248

Total 3,154

In August \$5,000 was transferred to the checking account from the donations made which were to be used for fundraising. This amount represents an interfund loan which should be repaid. The value of additional items donated for the building and aircraft displays has not yet been determined.

Charles B. Brantner, Treasurer
 January 5, 2000

"Barnstormers,"
continued from page 1

clustered around for a close look at the gigantic black and orange biplanes, the largest ever to land at the Portland Airport.

After politely acknowledging the official greeting extended to him and Ruth Nichols, Chamberlin invited the welcoming committee and "as many others who wish to fill the remaining seats" for a complimentary ride in the Condor. In minutes every seat was occupied; some with city officials, a few by airport employees but most by enthusiastic and daring spectators out of the crowd.

I was fortunate to occupy one of those seats located beside the right engine and shielded only by the window and a layer of doped cotton fabric. When Chamberlin applied power for take-off, the roaring twin Conqueror's exhaust precluded all conversation among passengers for the entire flight.

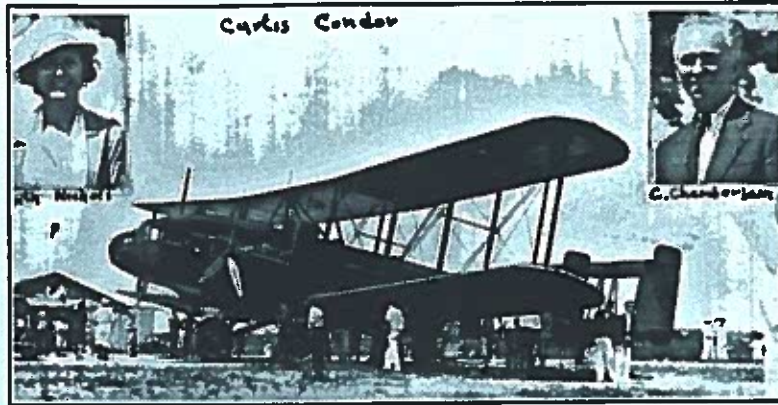
In spite of its size and configuration, the Condor's short field performance was outstanding, especially for an aircraft designed to carry heavy payloads. The runway's length at Portland in 1935 was just 2000 feet but the huge ship, carrying at least 28 exotic (and some apprehensive) passengers, was off the ground and climbing in half the distance. Its short field take-off and high rate of climb capability resulted in a relatively low cruising speed of 125 mph, a fault that may have hastened its obsolescence as a commercial airliner.

After a twenty-minute leisurely flight over Portland and vicinity, Chamberlin eased the Condor down to a flawless landing on the airport's then unpaved runway. As ecstatic, though temporarily deafened passengers disembarked, their jubilation encouraged others in the observing crowd to share the same experience.

Accompanying Chamberlin and Nichols on the barnstorming tour was a young man known only as Scotty. Primarily a mechanic engaged to service and maintain the Condor, his additional duties were to protect the plane from overzealous onlookers, supervise passengers, collect fares and promote ride sales.

When the complimentary flight returned and all passengers had exited, Scotty, clad in crisp white overalls, appeared in the Condor's doorway and, holding a megaphone, announced: "Another flight will be taking off momentarily and for a donation of just one dollar you can experience this rare opportunity to ride with two of America's most eminent flyers." He continued praising the vast experience and historic accomplishments of Chamberlin and Nichols and extolled on the big plane's merits and its "unblemished safety record."

Scotty's eloquent sales pitch plus the magnitude of the entire scene succeeded in enticing enough enthusiastic



Clarence Chamberlin and Ruth Nichols brought his Curtiss Condor airliner to Portland in May 1935 for a barnstorming tour of the state that summer. (Portland Press Herald Photo via Neal Strange)

passengers, with dollar in hand, to fill all available seats for several flights throughout the remainder of the day.

During the summer of 1935, this event was repeated with similar results at other airports in southern Maine, including Lewiston, Augusta, Waterville and some remote fields that were later abandoned.

When landing on a short grass strip adjacent to Route One on the outskirts of Brunswick, the Condor's wingspan exceeded the runway's width, causing it to strike a boundary marker, ripping the fabric on one of the lower wings. Returning to the Portland Airport, after Scotty's assurance the plane was safe to fly, the damaged wing was repaired by mechanics at the Portland Flying Service, Inc., the first FBO (fixed base operator) to locate at the Portland Airport.

Sundown failed to halt flying if paying passengers were still available. Chamberlin frequently continued to fly long after dark until all seats were empty, relying solely on the Condor's own landing lights while negotiating take-offs and landings on unlighted airports. As a passenger on one of the night flights, my enthusiasm began to diminish when I observed a continuous shower of sparks from the V12's exhaust bounce off the fuselage fabric and cabin windows.

"Perfectly normal," Scotty explained later. "They're just harmless carbon sparks, not visible in daylight."

Chamberlin was granted permission from the town of Old Orchard to "barnstorm" Old Orchard Beach with some restrictions and when tidal conditions permitted. During the peak summer months, hundreds of beach vacationers and tourists, enchanted by the size of the plane and its renowned pilots, became major contributors to the barnstorming venture.

"Barnstormers," continued on page 5



Clarence Chamberlin (second left), Old Orchard Beach selectman Herman Gerrish with two members of the town's police force. (Photo via Leo Boyle)

MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board of Directors Meeting — 8 January 2000

Call to Order. The January 2000 meeting of the Board of Directors of the Maine Aviation Historical Society was called to order at 1155 hours at the Maine Air Museum by Jim Chichetto. Present: Brantner, Chichetto, Cormier, Hurd, McCurdy, Miller, Sederquist, and Townsend. Absent: Armstrong, Boyle, and Godfrey.

Secretary's Report. Given by recording secretary pro tem Townsend in absence of Secretary Boyle. It was requested by Hurd that the actual vote totals for the annual election of officers be included in the written minutes. The vote was as follows:

- *President:* Chichetto 45, McCurdy 16, Hurd 3 (write-ins)
- *Vice President:* McCurdy 33, Townsend 31, Hurd 1 (write-in)
- *Secretary:* Boyle 44, Townsend 14
- *Treasurer:* Brantner 67
- *Board of Directors:* Miller 47, Boyle 43, Cormier 43, Hurd 32, Chichetto 27, Townsend 23, McCurdy 16, Rounds 16, Cianchette 1 (write-in) and A. Fernald 1 (write-in).

The votes were collected, opened, and tabulated by Secretary Boyle.

Treasurer's Report. Brantner reported that nothing had changed since the monthly members meeting earlier. He passed out a printed summary. There was discussion concerning heating costs and the need for some extra insulation for doors. The Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Brantner requested and moved: "That we purchase a One-Write System to facilitate bookkeeping." This is a basic non-computer ledger system that would allow him to make three copies of transactions at once. Seconded. Passed.

Old Business.

Funding

A. Sederquist and Townsend reported on their meeting with Friedmann Associates of Bar Harbor. It was noted that an official fundraising committee be set up immediately. Don McCurdy, Rob Rohr, Carl Sederquist, Al Cormier, Peter Hurd, Bill Townsend, and John Miller volunteered to staff this committee. It was moved that: "All those volunteers who are appointed officers, elected officers, and directors as of this date be appointed as members of the Fundraising Committee." Seconded. Passed.

It was then moved: "That Carl Sederquist be acting chairman of this committee." Seconded. Passed.

B. General Discussion of fundraising. Sederquist put up \$5000 cash toward fundraising only and that this amount be used as a challenge to other businesses to support the museum.

By-Laws

A. Current status. No change from last month. Hurd will finish and distribute copies to board members before February.

B. No changes were reported.

New Business.

A. Museum issues. Chichetto suggested that we need an official Museum Director and suggested that Bill and Cathy Cook be co-directors. McCurdy asked if the Cooks would comment on this. The Cooks expressed a desire to fill this position. Their major concern was lack of internal coordination. They did notify the board that both are currently seeking full-time museum positions in Maine.

Hurd asked about the difference between the Museum Director and the Museum Committee Chairman. The Cooks position would be as directors of the museum itself.

Hurd moved that: "The MAHS Museum Fundraising Program be adopted by the fundraising committee." Seconded. Passed.

Chichetto moved: "That we accept Bill and Kathy Cook as co-directors of the museum." Seconded. Passed.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1246 hours.

William Townsend

Recording



"Notes," continued from page 2

New Business. Carl Sederquist requested that "old business" be reviewed at each monthly meeting to ensure continuity of meetings and business. He moved: "That part of the regular agenda be to require a review of old business." Discussion revolved around the formation of a committee to review the by-laws and to continue the work started last year. There was also a discussion about the need for another committee. The motion was withdrawn as the Board of Directors handles this.

He then moved that: "We have a review of previous meeting activities at each subsequent meeting." Seconded. Passed.

There was also a general discussion concerning the use of the terms, Maine Air Museum, Maine Aviation Museum, and Maine Aero Museum. Chichetto noted that the official name is Maine Air Museum.

There was a break following which Board member John Miller gave a program concerning his participation in the 1991 Round the World Flight commemorating the Willey Post flight of fifty years earlier. It was well illustrated, a number of souvenirs of the flight were displayed and a good dialog was had by all present.

The monthly meeting was adjourned at 1130 hours.

William Townsend

Recording

→ → → Join the Maine Aviation Historical Society Today

Help Preserve Maine's Aviation History for Tomorrow → → →

Lewis Robert Johnson Decorated Navy Pilot, Served in Vietnam

BRUNSWICK — Lewis Robert Johnson, 63, also of Pensacola, FL, a retired Navy commander and airline pilot, died Monday at Mid-Coast Hospital.

He was born in Seattle, a son of Tink L. and Lillian E. Sinfield Johnson, graduated from Palatine (IL) High School, and attended the University of Washington in Seattle and Macomb (IL) State Teacher's College.

Mr. Johnson entered the Naval Cadet program in Pensacola and received his commission in 1959. He served in the Vietnam War and was awarded five air medals and a citation for exceptional meritorious service.

On July 21, 1962, he married the former Patricia A. Hill.

In 1968 he worked for the former Northeast Airlines as a pilot, and in 1972 he went to work for Delta Airlines, retiring as a captain in 1995.

Surviving are his wife, Patricia Johnson, and his mother, both of Brunswick; a son, Lewis LaBarre Johnson II of Bath; and a daughter, Sherrye L. Trafton of Brunswick.

A full military funeral service was held at the Brunswick Naval Air Station Chapel on Nov. 20, 1999. (*Portland Press Herald*, 11/9/99)

George H. "Spike" Burrill Served with Northeast Atlantic Division

ORONO and BROOKLIN — George H. "Spike" Burrill, 88, died January 3, 2000 at his home in Orono.

He was born in Bangor, March 12, 1911, the son of Royal Burrill and Ethel (White) Burrill. He grew up in Bangor, near Broadway Park, playing on the Bangor waterfront in the wooden sailing ships that became a passion for him all his life. As a young man, his first job was for the Great Northern Paper Co. where he worked in a logging camp in the Moosehead Lake region.

He was the lead mechanic with Northeast Airlines, which later became Delta Airlines in a merger of the two. During the War years, from 1942-1945, Spike was a part of the Northeast Atlantic Division, which flew supplies to Greenland and Iceland for the United States government under the guidance of the U.S. Air Force. This group of men was recognized for their war efforts in 1997 by the Air Force, and Spike proudly received his official discharge papers in 1998 from that service.

He retired from the airline in 1976 at which time he began to lobster full time, fishing 100 traps until the age of 80. He was a registered Maine Guide from 1930-1950, fishing in his favorite areas. (*Bangor Daily News*, 1/4/00)

"Barnstormers," continued from page 3

Passengers boarded the plane, parked on the beach, close to the famous Old Orchard Pier. When all seats were filled, the Condor would start its take-off run toward Pine Point, slowly at first, then with throttles up, accelerate to lift-off speed, leaving a veritable sand storm in its wake.

Once airborne, Chamberlin would execute a shallow right turn out over the ocean followed by a wide 180 degree left back toward the beach and land in the opposite direction from his take-off run, wind direction seemingly irrelevant. Average time in the air was seldom over five minutes, but apparently of sufficient duration to satisfy his passengers.

With the barnstorming venture a lucrative success, the intended airline concept was put on hold and later canceled due to a tragic accident.

At a barnstorming stop in Troy, NY in October 1935, Ruth Nichols, accompanied by Harry Hublitz, a pilot engaged by Chamberlin, crashed on take-off in one of the condors when the left engine failed. Hublitz was fatally injured in the crash. Nichols suffered severe burns and multiple fractures and remained hospitalized in critical condition for weeks. She recovered, however, and in spite of a permanent limp, continued to be active in aviation all through her advancing years. Fortunately, she and Hublitz were the plane's only occupants at the time of the crash.

Chamberlin resumed barnstorming with the remaining Condors throughout New England and the mid-Atlantic states until 1938. When war clouds began to loom over Europe, he discontinued the tour and became extensively involved in operating flight training schools during and after World War II. In 1975, at age 85, he was inducted into the American Aviation Hall of Fame.

So ended a colorful, though brief resurgence of the barnstorming era, remembered by many New Englanders whose first flying experience was a ride in one of the majestic Condor biplanes with Ruth Nichols or Clarence Chamberlin at the controls.

FUN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We need volunteers to work on the Maine Air Museum Building 98 at Bangor cleaning up, painting and repairing the display building and aircraft restoration. We also need project leaders for each of the aircraft we are restoring. Contact Al Cormier at either MAHS telephone number listed on the masthead or Jim Chichetto at 207-269-3281 evenings. Call today!

Renewal Time

Dues for the year 2000 are now past due. Please check your address label. If there is a red dot on it, this is the last *Dirigo Flyer* you will receive until your dues are paid. Please send your dues *NOW* while you think of it to:

Secretary, Maine Aviation Historical Society
101 Monroe Avenue
Westbrook, Maine 04092-4020

February Meeting

The February meeting of the Maine Aviation Historical Society will be held on Saturday, February 12, 2000 at 10 a.m. at the Museum Building 98 on Maine Avenue, Bangor International Airport, Bangor. An interesting program is planned.

In addition, we will update the membership on the contract we have signed with Gary Friedman and Associates to handle our major fundraising campaign. This will be our major effort for the year 2000 along with renovation and transformation of our building and construction of exhibits. Please be prepared to volunteer for the things you like to do and do best and get our museum off to a great, successful start.

Fundraising

We have signed a contract with Gary Friedman and Associates to handle our major fundraising. Our first meeting with them was held on Saturday, January 29th in Bangor. The first briefing on this campaign will be held at the February meeting. We will need all the volunteer help on this campaign we can get. If you believe in this museum as we do, put your enthusiasm and energy to work for us to assure its success.

Congratulations, All!

In case you missed the changes on the sidebar on page 2, the results of the election of officers and board of directors as announced at the January 8th meeting are as follows:

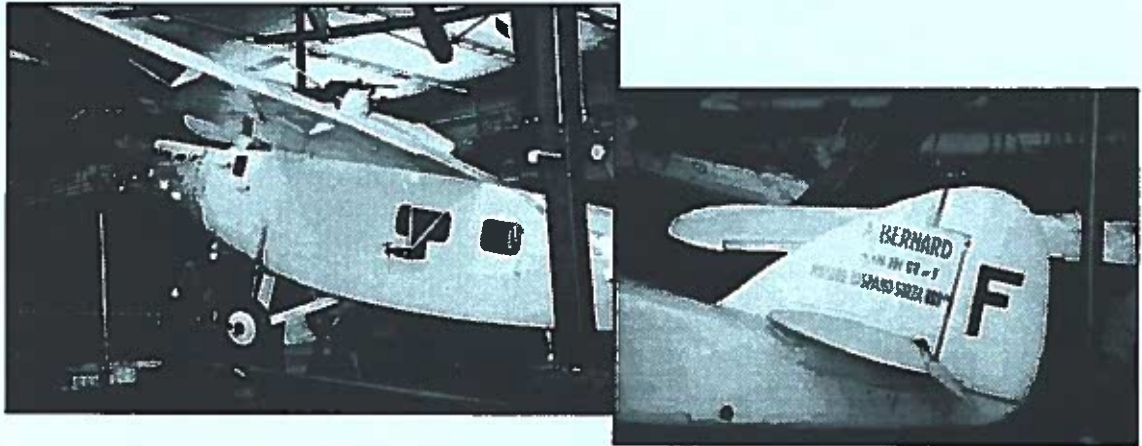
- President: James P. Chichetto, #5L, Etna
- Vice Pres.: James McCurdy, #206, Bangor
- Secretary: Leo Boyle, #2L, Westbrook
- Treasurer: Charles Brantner, #287, Winterport

And the new Board of Directors members are:

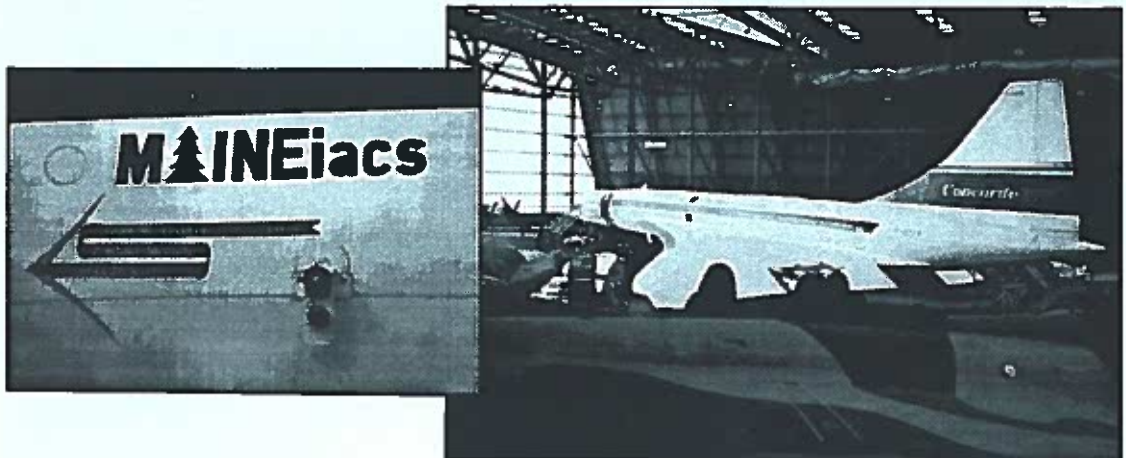
- Alfred Cormier, #196, Bangor (exp. 2002)
- John Miller, #54, Newburgh (exp. 2002)
- Peter Hurd, #176, Houlton (exp. 2002)
- William Townsend, #101, Bar Harbor (exp. 2000)

Great Museum Planes from the Collection of Lloyd Gates

The Bernard 191 monoplane "L'Oiseau Canari" ("Yellow Bird"), which flew from Old Orchard Beach, Maine to Paris, France via Spain, June 13-14, 1929, as it now resides in the Musée Del'Air in France.



The Concorde Airliner which set the trans-Atlantic speed record of 2 hours, 56 minutes between Fairford, England and Bangor, Maine on July 11, 1974. It currently resides in the museum at Duxford, England.



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2000

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MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP
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Special Interests _____

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Maine Aviation Historical Society
101 Monroe Avenue,
Westbrook, ME 04092-4020

Membership	Dues	Benefits
Student	\$12 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Regular	\$25 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
Family	\$35 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
Corporate	\$100 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
Bangor, ME 04402

February Meeting

Saturday, February 12, 2000
10 a.m.

Maine Air Museum Building 98
BIA, Bangor, Maine