



DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. VIII, No. 8 August 2000

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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What Happened to Lieutenant Hare? A Maine Aviation Mystery

By Peter Noddin

Around noon on Friday, June 30, 1950 Royal Canadian Navy Lt. Mervin C. Hare took off from Quebec City in Hawker FB 11 "Sea Fury" number TF 997 and proceeded to put on a brief show of high speed aerobatics before flying off to the east. The brief stop at the Armament Establishment at Ancienne Lorette, so that some internal measurements could be taken, was the third stop on his ferry flight from Toronto to HCMS Shearwater in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. The plane had just completed an overhaul at A.V. Roe LTD and was being returned to his squadron, the 803 Naval Fighter Squadron, at Shearwater.

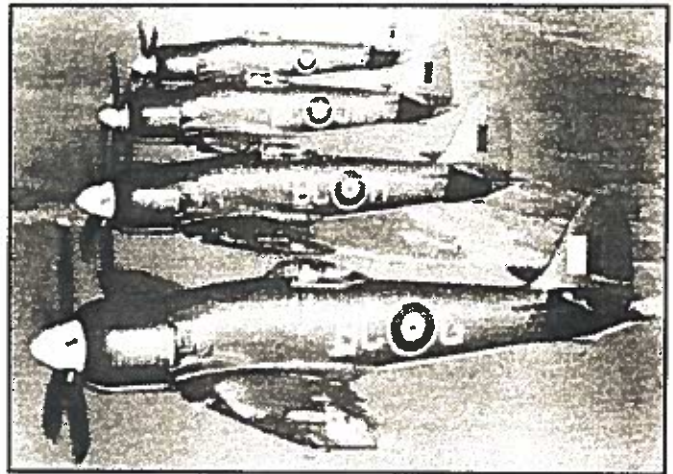
Twenty minutes later, Gene Duprey at a camp on Allagash Lake saw TF 997 pass over on course, on schedule, but low, "on the deck." The 8000 foot ceiling that existed over Quebec when he took off was rapidly closing in to 2000 feet as a warm front moved westward. This was the last certain sighting of TF 997 for nearly 18 years.

When Lt. Hare failed to arrive at Shearwater, a massive international air search was launched. After five days, the U. S. search was called off. No evidence of a crash could be found in

the search area from Mt. Katahdin to the New Brunswick border, and it was felt that the plane had made it to New Brunswick before going down. Seven days later, the Canadian search was also called off.

The fate of Lt. Hare remained a complete mystery until the wreckage of the "Sea Fury" was discovered

Lt. Mervin C. Hare RCN.
(Photo: Ron Hare via Jim Cogle)



Sea Fury TF 997 (forefront, tail code BC*G) in her "as delivered" paint scheme. The plane had been overhauled and repainted in a lighter gray scheme just before being lost in July 1950. (DND Canada Photo)

in February 1968 by two foresters north of Millinocket. An RCN examination of the wreckage located parachute parts and other evidence that the pilot had not bailed out. However, the pilot's remains were never recovered, so a small ridge in the thick Maine woods is the final resting place of the 25-year-old lieutenant who began his career in 1944, trained in the U. S. as a Royal Navy F4U Corsair pilot and served in the Pacific aboard the HMS "Victorious" in the closing days of WWII.

The location of the wreckage still leaves several questions unanswered. The plane came down in a low angle, high speed dive flying almost true north, not the easterly direction of the intended flight. It impacted just 40 feet above the lowest land within a dozen air miles, making a controlled flight into terrain accident unlikely. There were somewhat reliable sightings of TF 997 passing close to a fire tower north and east of the crash site, as well as over a lake south of Millinocket and later flying north near Greenville. If these are all true, then the crash site location and presumed timing of events just does not make sense.

"Hare," continued on page 4

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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

President's Report

July 8, 2000

This past month has seen many positive changes taking place within the MAHS, and much has been done to forward our message and to promote the museum. First, if you were here last month, you would have noticed the large number of young people at Building 98. About 35 kids had a chance to get their first aircraft ride. MAHS provided hot dogs and hamburgers along with soda and coffee. Cooked by Rob Rohr, they were served up as the kids came back from their flights. Most of the food involved was left over from the Air Show, so it didn't cost us any money, but brought us a lot of good will.

As you have noticed the building has been cleaned out and we are working on parts of it. First off, the outside walls are being repaired and prepared for a coat of paint. We will be using a textured exterior paint to bring the building up to a new state of repair. There will be a lot to be done in the coming months and all of you who can pitch in on the work parties will find it an interesting experience. We have removed the plywood in Bay 2 and are making Bay 3 into a shop with metal working and wood working tools and benches. Our next big project will be replacing the corner cinder block by the furnace room. Anyone who wishes to donate some exterior corner blocks is encouraged to do so today. I have this next week off and want to try and get that wall fixed so we can paint the back side ASAP. Once people see us painting and working on the building, the public will know we are serious.

We are working on getting more fencing and may soon have a Huey on display by the fence line. The Luscombe has been taken for repairs and while it's gone we will be getting the storage area up to par for its return.

Pete Noddin has had an article printed in *Lost Birds* about the "Sea Fury" crash near Stacyville. He is also going to have his F-101B story printed in *Atlantic Flyer* next month. Later today we are going to the Bald Mountain F-101B site and put up a new marker to replace the old one which had been vandalized. You are all welcome to come with us, it is not a hard hike, and a good chance to see what Pete and I have been doing on our own for the MAHS at wreck sites. Peter pays for the plaques, I build the markers, and then we donate them to the MAHS. If you want to get involved in this part of our hobby just let either of us know.

Next Board Meeting. There will be a meeting of the Board of Directors after the regular meeting at about 11:30 a.m. on August 12, 2000 at the Maine Air Museum in Bangor. All directors should make every effort to attend.

August Meeting. Those of you who were at the July meeting heard "Shorty" Evans tell some of his exciting experiences as a B-24 Bombardier in the ETO. "Shorty" was recalled in the Korean War and was converted to a radar operator in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. At the August meeting, "Shorty" will tell us of his experiences flying in the backseat of fighters. Be sure to attend and hear one man's first-hand experiences serving his country.

MAM Fundraising Appeal

MAHS is in the Maine Air Museum public awareness phase of its fundraising effort. An awareness campaign to raise public interest in the air museum is crucial to the all-out effort in gaining corporate donations and state and federal grants to build the full fledged air museum. Funds are needed now for promotional material, advertising expenses and materials to prepare the museum building exterior and interior for public viewing. This is necessary before any solicitation of large donors commences later in the year to bring in funds to build the museum. We need membership support to assist us in this awareness phase to tide us over until large sponsors step forward. Please, as members, do what you can and send in an extra \$25, \$50, \$75 or \$100, whatever you can afford. Your dollars now will make a difference in obtaining the larger funding we will need to make this dream come true. Send your donation to Maine Air Museum (MAM), P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, ME 04402. Your donation will be recognized and a thank you letter for tax purposes will be sent in return.

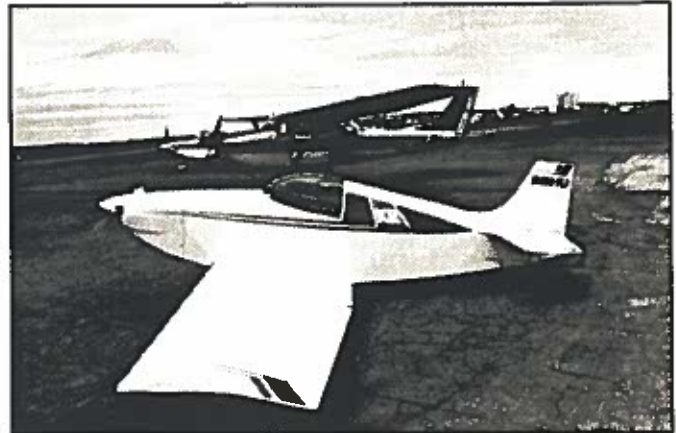
Carl Sederquist, Fundraising Chairman

Young Eagles Day at the Maine Air Museum — June 10, 2000

Photos by Mike Cornett



President Jim Chichetto puts up signs announcing Young Eagles Day where, thanks to the EAA, young people had an airborne ride.



Some of the airplanes at the Maine Air Museum for Young Eagles Day.



Members helping Young Eagles with some of the display material available in the museum.



Vice President Jim McGurdy with a Young Eagle holding his flight certificate.

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Two Night Igor Sikorsky Seminar at Bradford Camps

Members Igor I. Sikorsky Jr. and Igor I. Sikorsky III are hosting a weekend seminar at the latter's Bradford Camps in Ashland, Maine on August 18-20. The subject will be the personal life and early careers of Igor I. Sikorsky. This seminar will be limited to about 20 guests, so please answer their ad below as soon as possible if you are interested.

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"Hare," continued from page 1

Putting all of the known facts together, there are two likely reasons that TF 997 crashed. When Lt. Hare landed at Ancienne Lorette, he only had 135 gallons of fuel remaining. There was no 100 octane fuel available there. This would only give him a 10-15 gallon margin of safety to make Dartmouth. He had discussed the possibility of having to set down at Moncton or Greenwood New Brunswick for fuel, but he did not so amend his flight plan. The inquiry concluded that his actual fuel state was around 100 gallons, or 60 minutes, after the aerobatics over the airport. This combined with the worsening weather and flying below 2000 feet instead of 7000 makes fuel exhaustion a likely scenario. This is the theory favored by the official inquiry. Lt. Hare was not wearing his life jacket nor did he have his life raft in place when he took off. This was taken by some as confidence that nothing bad would happen, but could he have fully intended to land at Millinocket, Moncton, or Greenwood for fuel?

A second possibility is engine failure. The early "Sea Furys" had problems with the Bristol Centaurus engine. The actual engine in TF 997 had been overheated during a ground run up at A. V. Roe, and their test pilot had experienced several power losses before replacing all of the plugs seemingly took care of the problem.

The version of events, locally touted in 1950, of a lost pilot flying all over Penobscot and Piscataquis counties before running out of fuel does not stand up in the face of the facts. First of all, Lt. Hare did not have fuel enough to be airborne for the Greenville sighting. To have flown south of Millinocket and then back north again across rivers, roads and populated areas marked on the charts of the era, and stay lost is unlikely even with the 2000 foot overcast and scattered showers at the time. It turns out that a RCAF Harvard flying from Chatham to Montreal flew into Millinocket to refuel and wait out the weather and later flew over Greenville on the final leg of the trip. The timing accounts for these sightings. The only question is, could the witnesses have mistaken a yellow trainer flying overhead for the gray fighter that the Air Force and CAP personnel were specifically asking about? I believe they did.

The likely events leading up to the crash, then, hinge on the validity of the fire tower sighting. It is widely reported locally that the plane passed over the "ground house" type fire tower atop Deasey Mountain in T3 R7 at low altitude. How close the aircraft actually came to the structure and whether or not the engine was missing as it passed is up for conjecture, but the actual sighting was referenced vaguely in the inquiry and was

given credibility in the early hours of the search. Local CAP and volunteer aircraft focused on the area east of Stacyville to Haynesville based on this sighting. I have had the story related to me repeatedly second hand, but unfortunately, the gentleman reported to be actually there that day passed on before I could interview him.

Deasey Mountain is right on Lt. Hare's intended course.

If this sighting is not true, then it is possible that the aircraft or pilot got into trouble and simply spun or spiraled down and hit in a northward orientation. Fuel exhaustion, engine failure and vertigo in poor visibility are a few possibilities.

If this sighting is accurate, and I feel that it is, then how did TF 997 end up back west and south of the fire tower?

Deasey Mountain is just over 1900 feet high. Flying under an overcast of about 2000 feet would indeed put the aircraft right over the ground house. It would be important for a pilot intending to put down in Millinocket to stay north of the high mountains around Baxter State Park when flying at this altitude. The rivers and the sudden change from forest to the open fields of Aroostook County are pretty clear landmarks that you are east of these mountains and would be visible just after passing Deasey Mountain.

My personal theory is that Lt. Hare was perfectly oriented as he passed Deasey and the convergence of the East Branch and the Sebois rivers. He had an operational DF radio and may have been tuned in to Millinocket. He knew he was in a serious fuel situation. I believe that he turned south to Millinocket and shortly thereafter got into serious trouble and knew that he would not make the runway. The valley where the crash occurred appears from the air as a long wide flat section of land in an area that is otherwise rolling hills and mountains. It is plausible that he turned north in an attempt to ditch the aircraft in a deadwater or one of the numerous stream beds that appear as fields from the air and that he simply did not make it.

Exactly what happened that rainy summer day will forever remain a mystery of Maine aviation history. The best that we can do is gather the facts, tell the story of this young flyer as opportunity permits, and maintain the simple cross, with plaque and Canadian flag that is the sole memorial on that remote ridge that became the final resting place of TF 997 and Lieutenant Mervin Hare, known to his squadron mates as "Butch."

I am forever indebted to Jim Cogle of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society for his help in researching this historic mishap.



Propeller hub and blades in the impact crater (left).

Scattered sections of the left wing which separated and went through the woods for 50 yards (right).

(Peter Noddin
Dhater)



Museum Facelift Begins July 2000 — And You're Invited!

Photos by Mike Cornett



President Jim Chichetto and Les Shaw prepare the building exterior for painting.



Don Martin smiles through the cleaning out of the museum interior.

Jim and Les repair a corner of the building.



Les Shaw and John Garbinski bring the second B-52 ejection seat from the Elephant Mtn. crash to the museum.

Rules of the Road?

Al Cormier received the following and, based upon his still being here after his lifetime of flight experiences, feels it is excellent advice.

→ → → → →

1. Every takeoff is optional. Every landing is mandatory.
2. If you push the stick forward, the houses get bigger. If you pull the stick back, they get smaller. That is, unless you keep pulling the stick all the way back, then they get bigger again.
3. Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is what's dangerous.
4. It's always better to be down here wishing you were up there than up there wishing you were down here.
5. The ONLY time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.
6. The propeller is just a big fan in front of the plane used to keep the pilot cool. When it stops, you can actually watch the pilot start sweating.
7. A 'good' landing is one from which you can walk away. A 'great' landing is one after which they can use the plane again.
8. Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make all of them yourself.
9. You know you've landed with the wheels up if it takes full power to taxi to the ramp.
10. The probability of survival is inversely proportional to the angle of arrival. Large angle of arrival, small probability of survival and vice versa.
11. Never let an aircraft take you somewhere your brain didn't get to five minutes earlier.
12. Stay out of clouds. The silver lining everyone keeps talking about might be another airplane going in the opposite direction. Reliable sources also report that mountains have been known to hide out in clouds.
13. Always try to keep the number of landings you make equal to the number of takeoffs you've made.
14. There are three simple rules for making a smooth landing. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.
15. You start with a bag full of luck and an empty bag of experience. The trick is to fill the bag of experience before you empty the bag of luck.
16. Helicopters can't fly; they're just so ugly the earth repels them.
17. If all you can see out of the window is ground that's going round and round and all you can hear is commotion coming from the passenger compartment, things are not at all as they should be.
18. In the ongoing battle between objects made of aluminum going hundreds of miles per hour and the ground going zero miles per hour, the ground has yet to lose.
19. Good judgment comes from experience. Unfortunately, the experience usually comes from bad judgment.
20. It's always a good idea to keep the pointy end going forward as much as possible.
21. Remember, gravity is not just a good idea, it's the law. And it's not subject to repeal.
22. The three most useless things to a pilot are the altitude above you, runway behind you, and a tenth of a second ago.

The MAHS Bald Mountain Memorial

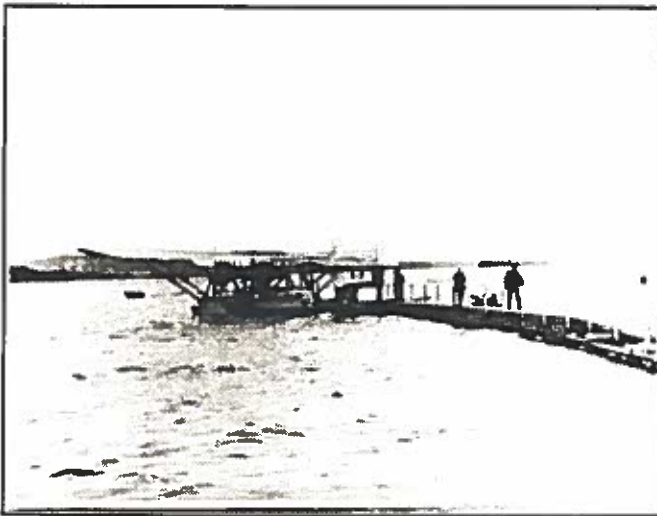
This marker was made possible by the following people and businesses: The wood, stain and labor donated by Jim Chichetto of Etna. The plaque and engraving donated by Peter Noddin of Medway. The flags and brass screws donated by Paris Framer's Union on Newport, Maine.



The MAHS plaque which was erected at the F-101B crash site on July 8, 2000. (left to right) Jim Evans, Jim Chichetto, Don Martin. (Mike Cornett Photo)

The Sikorsky S-41 Amphibian

A Sikorsky S-41 Amphibian of Pan American Airways at the dock in the St. Croix River in Calais. PAA flew the Boston to Halifax route in August 1931 with stops in Portland, Rockland, Bangor and Calais. (Norm Houle Collection)



Mystery . . . Solved!

The winner of the book United States Air Force in Maine by John Garbinski is member Carl Betterley, 70 Perkins Ave., Old Town, Maine who not only was the first to reply, but he was right on all but one ID. He said that Harold Noddin was Lyndon Fletcher, and since your editor doesn't know, Norm and Carl can decide who's right. Maybe George Tinker can referee?

Thanks to all who sent in answers.



Roll Up Those Sleeves — It's Party Time!

There will be a volunteer work party at the museum just about every Saturday from now until late fall — and you're invited! We need your help to clean, paint and repair the displays and building and help with aircraft restoration. Can you think of a better way to spend a summer Saturday? Call Al Cormier at 207-941-6757 or 1-877-280-MAHS, or Jim Chichetto at 207-269-3281.



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Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Calendar of Events

- August 5-6 10 a.m. Transportation Spectacular and Aerobatic Show, Benjamin's GeeBee, OHTM.
 August 5-6 All Day EAA Chapter 736 Fly-In, Norridgewock. FMI: 207-634-2156.
 August 12 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine.
 August 12 All Day EAA Chapter 87 Fly-In, Merrymeeting Field, Bowdoinham.
 August 12-13 All Day Great New England Air Show, Westover ARB, MA. Thunderbirds.
 August 18-20 All Day Igor I. Sikorsky Seminar, Bradford Camps, Ashland, Maine (see ad)
 August 19-20 All Day Bowman Field Fly-In, East Livermore.
 Sept. 2-3 All Day Radial Round-Up, Bethel. FMI: 207-824-4321.
 Sept. 9-10 All Day Greenville Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, Maine.
 Sept. 30-Oct. 1 All Day 75th F. S. Reunion, Bangor, Maine.
 Fall 2000 All Day Air Force Association Cold War Symposium.
 October 14 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
 November 11 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
 Nov. 2000 All Day Cole's Land Transportation Museum Reunion.
 December 9 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.

Meeting sites are flexible. Call Scott Grant at 207-775-3404 if you have any ideas or can be of help.

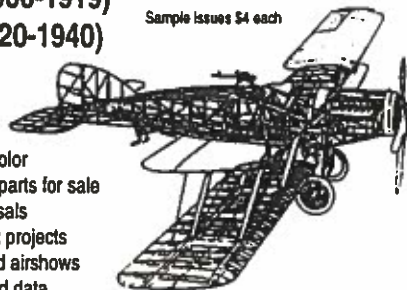
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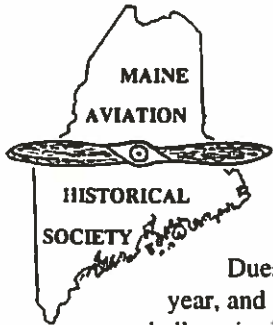


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August Meeting

Saturday, August 12, 2000
10 a.m.

Maine Air Museum Building
Bangor, Maine