

DIRIGO FLYER

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Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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"To Be An Aviator" The Story of Stanley William Tumosa

By Jack Battick

Stanley W. Tumosa graduated from Foxcroft Academy in June 1939. He was the youngest of seven children of Lithuanian immigrants, George and Annie Tumosa, who resided on the Foxcroft Center Road. Stanley began his education at the one-room schoolhouse about a mile north of his home and entered FA in the fall of 1935. At the Academy he became very popular, went out for all sports, was on the track and football teams in his senior year, sat on the student council, and was elected class president. In the school yearbook he stated his ambition, "To be an aviator". He achieved his ambition in an unusual way.

Classmates recall that Stanley had the ability to be admitted to college, but his family couldn't afford the needed tuition. The Great Depression stalked the country and work opportunities in D-F were scarce, so in October 1939 Stanley enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Sent to boot camp in Newport, R.I., he was assigned to the destroyer U.S.S. *Claxton* in December. War had broken out in Europe in September 1939 and under isolationist pressures, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was moving quietly to build up the armed forces of the U.S. realizing that America would almost inevitably be drawn into the conflict.

Aboard the *Claxton*, Stanley patrolled off the East Coast from the Virginia Capes to Cape Cod. The *Claxton* was an old "four-piper" destroyer built during World War I and Stanley was onboard when she sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to be turned over to the Royal Navy under the ships-for-bases Lend Lease program. Along with other crew members, Stanley returned to Boston passing through Maine by train, but had no opportunity to stop and see his family. He was ordered to the Navy's radio school in Norfolk, Virginia. After radio school he was sent back to destroyers, winding up in San Diego, California by July 1941. Still longing to fly, he hoped to become an aviation radioman at the same time intending to take lessons, obtain a private pilot's license, and buy an airplane out of his Navy pay.

But events abroad facilitated Stanley's quest to fly. The German blitzkrieg in Poland in 1939 and the Battle of Britain in 1940 demonstrated the importance of air power in modern warfare. On the Atlantic, Britain was struggling to maintain vital supply lines for food, oil, and armaments in the face of German U-boats.



N.A.P. Stanley W. Tumosa, 1944

American powermakers recognized the U.S. had to prepare for its own defense. To beef up air power, the U.S. began a rapid build-up in planes and pilots and crews to man them. In response, Stanley had taken and passed the exams for naval flight training and was ordered to Pensacola, Florida in July 1941 to become a candidate in the naval aviation pilot program. Initiated in the 1920's, this program provided for training enlisted men as aircraft pilots. Their training and assignments were almost identical to those of commissioned officer pilots, but their official titles were purposely differentiated: the commissioned officers were designated Naval Aviators, while enlisted pilots were designated Naval Aviation Pilots (NAPs). The distinction was based essentially on social status and educational background of the candidates. Officers were college or Naval Academy graduates, NAPs lacked college experience.

"Aviator" 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 calendar for details.

Maine Aviation Historical Society

President's Message • September 2002

We continue to be open on the weekends and are attracting 30 to 40 people each weekend. We will remain open the rest of September and then close for the season. During the winter we need to become much more professional in how we do things.

We need to get our volunteers together and scheduled and work on a number of different areas to be ready in the spring. We need to organize tasks and get people involved. We find that the few who are working aren't able to accomplish all that needs to be done. We have a wonderful start but we need to work hard this winter to be ready for the Grand Opening in the spring.

We have many openings, but the position of Volunteer Coordinator still needs to be filled. This is a great job for someone who wants to be involved but lives too far away or isn't able to do the physical work. The job is to call members and schedule people for work as tour guides in the museum. We will pay for the calls and you can do it from the comfort of your home in your spare time. We have tried to do it along with the many other tasks that are required on a weekly basis and find that we can't work 40 hours at our regular jobs, spend another 10-15 hours at the museum and do this as well. This is a very important position and one we need to fill. If you are interested, let me know.

Get involved and find out how much fun it is to be part of the Maine Air Museum! As a bonus, the end of the runway is open again so we have planes going by our back fence.

On a happy note, Jim Chichetto, one of our founders and a past president, had major bypass surgery recently. He is recovering well, is in good spirits, and is now out of the hospital. We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to have him back with us soon.

— Les Shaw, President

Nominations and Elections

An important time has arrived for the society and the museum. We need to elect the officers (for two years) and five directors (for three years) to lead, direct and guide us through the exciting period upcoming. With our Grand Opening scheduled for next spring, we need to find the best people to lead us during these exciting days.

The positions up for election are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Pete Noddin is a candidate for re-election as Vice President; Bill Townsend as Secretary; and Joe Quinn as Treasurer. Les Shaw, who filled the last year of retired President John Garbinski, is not a candidate for President.

Nominations are now open for these positions, and we need your nominations or volunteers to run for these positions by October 20, 2002. Please let us know if you wish to run for office and/or present your nominations as soon as possible.

For Board of Directors, Bill Cook has resigned, and Leo Boyle, Carl Sederquist, Mike Cornett and Al Cormier have all volunteered to run for re-election. Please nominate up to five members to run for the Board. This is your society and your museum, so please do your duty and volunteer or nominate good people to run for these positions.

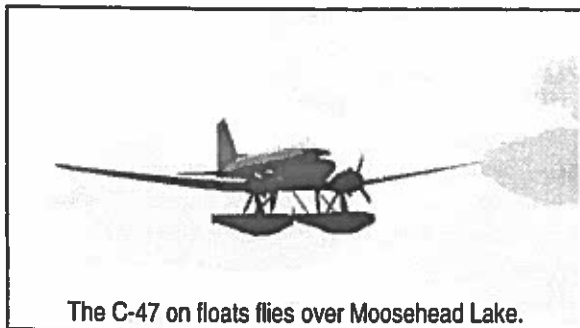


MAHS at Greenville.

(left to right)

Dana Ellis (standing),
 Peter Marini, Aletha Boyle
 Ellis and Leo Boyle.

(Mike Cornett Photo)



The C-47 on floats flies over Moosehead Lake.

She was affectionately called *Bloomer Girl*. She is C-47 No. 25671. Col. Franklin C. Spinney, USAFR, then a second lieutenant, was appointed project engineer in April 1943 to modify the C-47 as a seaplane. Col. Spinney's first look at the unusual C-47 was in the American Airlines' hangar in June 1943, at LaGuardia Field where it was being modified. Later that month, the airplane was delivered to Wright Field for flight acceptance tests, which began early July.

According to the colonel, the airplane flew beautifully in all conditions as well as short landings and take-offs on grass and water. The airplane did have one quirk and that was during a power-on stall when she tried to flip over on her back without any noticeable warning. "However, she could be pulled out fast," he related.

Around July, it was determined to use the airplane as a hospital evacuation plane in the Far East Theater. The flight would be from the West Coast to Hawaii. Because of the loss of speed, the airplane would be so loaded with fuel that take-off would have to be made at 35,000 pounds.

"Therefore, a series of overload flight tests were programmed up to and including this weight. I seem to recall that the C-47 wings were stressed for 35,600 pounds, which did not give us much of a safety factor.

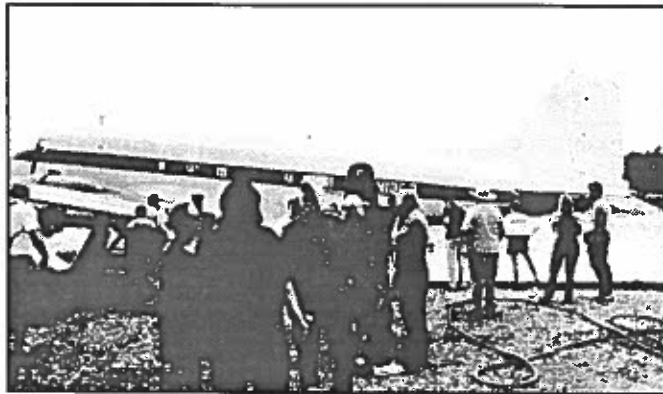
"To shorten water take-offs we investigated the use of JATO. These were liquid JATOs which we attached to the external drop-racks under the center section of the wing. The JATOs were fueled with aniline and red-fuming nitric acid and each produced about 500 pounds of thrust. They were normally fired just before the airplane got on the step. After they were fired, the airplane would immediately be on the step and with the lessened drag would shorten the take-off by about one-third," Col. Spinney said.

In October 1943 the airplane was flown to Mitchell Field and based there for the overload tests which were to be conducted in the water adjacent to Floyd Bennett Field. The airplane was easily handled in the water and would climb up the ramp under its own power. During the tests, landings and take-offs were made with as much as 33,500 pounds. One take-off was made at 35,000 pounds without the aid of JATO. Col. Spinney pointed out that it took 80 seconds to get the C-47 in the air. "And when you were in the air, you could look up and see the wing tips. We dumped 600 gallons of water ballast before we landed. The pilot's comment after the flight was that it handled more like a B-17."

It was on unlucky November 13th and on the thirteenth flight that the C-47 crashed. Loaded with 35,000 pounds, Col.

The C-47 "Bloomer Girl"

Having just witnessed the flights of the C-47 on floats at Greenville, I thought this account of some of the testing of the plane during World War II would be interesting reading. Written by Col. Franklin C. Spinney, it is reprinted from *Aerospace Historian*.



The C-47 at the dock. Photos by Mike Cornett

Spinney was sitting in as the flight engineer to fire the JATOs. Col. Spinney explains what happened:

"We were taking off in a quartering wind and, in fact, had taken off. However, because of the overload condition of the airplane, there was no acceleration when we broke water. There was a mud bank about one-half mile ahead; and, the pilots thinking they might go aground on it, reduced the power. At this very second the JATOs quit and the airplane stopped flying. We were about ten feet off the water and the airplane hit so hard that the struts went through the bottom of the float.

"As the cockpit was rapidly filling with water, we opened the escape hatch and swam away. We had life vests on the navigator's table but we didn't even think about them because we were afraid she would blow up with the hot rockets so close to the fuel tanks.

"The hatch was one inch above the water, and I don't know what would have happened if, when we opened it, the water would have come in. I am not sure we would have thought to run to the tail of the airplane in which case we would only have gotten our feet wet."

The Navy picked up the uninjured crew. Col. Spinney was especially fortunate since he was standing between the pilots copying data on the instrument panel when the crash occurred. His only injury from the crash was a cut on the left thumb. He says that you can still see some O.D. paint in it.

The crew was returned to Wright Field for further examination of the collected data and the C-47 with pontoons was selected for inventory. Old *Bloomer Girl* was quite a bird.



A Stearman
PT-17 at
Greenville
Airport.

(Mike Cornett
Photo)

"Aviator," continued from page 1

The revival of the NAP program provided Stanley with an unforeseen opportunity. He could achieve his one great ambition at government expense despite the handicap of not having a college education.

Stanley went through the various phases of naval pilot training from July 1941 to February 1942. At that time most flight school classes were 70% officer trainees and 30% enlisted trainees. While most NAPs were assigned to patrol and utility squadrons upon graduation from flight training, that is to the less glamorous billets than fighter, bomber, or torpedo plane squadrons, Stanley was assigned to a fighter squadron on the West Coast in February 1942. Stanley's strong potential as a pilot was recognized by the time he received his Navy wings of gold.

Until early 1944 Stanley served on aircraft carriers in the central and southwest Pacific and rose to the top enlisted rank of Chief Aviation Pilot, abbreviated in the Navy as CAP. His first battle experience at the Battle of Midway in June 1942 ended in near disaster. While heading toward the Japanese fleet, Stanley's plane developed engine trouble and he was forced to try to return to the carrier. Ditching his now powerless aircraft in sight of the carrier, he managed to get out of the cockpit just as the plane sank under him. For several hours he drifted in his life jacket while the two fleets exchanged blows, eventually rescued by a destroyer as the action wound down. As his parachute harness tapped on his legs, Stanley floated, constantly terrified of a possible shark attack. Unlike other American sailors in other battles, Stanley escaped that horror.

In March 1944 he was temporarily assigned to a carrier air service unit where, as a so-called check pilot, he tested aircraft after they had been overhauled and upgraded for further combat. This probably occurred after he had been hospitalized for injuries after a Japanese attack on his carrier. In May 1944 he was home on leave. Two of his brothers, Victor and Frank Tumosa, were in the U.S. Army overseas. His other brother, Edward, was a fireman on the Maine Central Railroad, an essential service that exempted him from the draft. Stanley stayed for a few days in Brownville with Eddie and his family and gave a talk about his experiences to the Kiwanis Club in D-F. In his Chief Petty Officer's uniform, he wore his Navy wings and his Chief's hat at a rakish angle in the many photos taken during this time.

Later that year he was assigned to Fighter Squadron Five (VF-5) at Alameda, California, being equipped with the new F4U Corsair, the Navy's hottest plane. All the other pilots in VF-5 were officers but his long experience and flying skill earned Stanley the respect of his squadron mates. VF-5 was a part of Air Group Five, a mix of fighters, dive bombers, torpedo planes, and night fighters, to be attached to the carrier U.S.S. *Franklin* in February 1945.


The *Franklin*, "The Ship That Would Not Die" had undergone numerous attacks by Japanese air forces including a kamikaze attack that inflicted heavy casualties on both men and planes. The attack sent the carrier back to the U.S. for repairs. The newly repaired *Franklin* returned to combat in early March 1945, this time to cover the invasion of Okinawa. As flagship of Navy Task Group 58.3, *Franklin* and other ships of that group were ordered to cruise within a hundred miles or less of Japan, striking at airfields to knock out enemy fighter airfields.

"Aviator" continued on next page



Photo Courtesy of Jack Battick

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In the hours before dawn on March 19, 1945, *Franklin* launched the first of an intended four air strikes. Just after dawn, she began launching aircraft for the second strike when a lone Japanese "Betty", a twin-engine torpedo bomber slipped through air defenses and dropped two armor-piercing bombs on the *Franklin*.

The Japanese had shifted to single-plane attacks which might be missed by American radar amid the dozens of planes landing, taking off, and flying air cover over the task group. This tactic worked all too often. Though this Betty was soon shot down by an American fighter, its mission had been accomplished. The two bombs penetrated through the flight deck and exploded in the hangar deck where planes were normally parked for repairs, arming and fueling. At the time, *Franklin* had about 30 armed and fully fueled planes on the flight deck preparing to take off. Other planes were being serviced on the hangar deck. Those familiar with the Battle of Midway will recognize that *Franklin's* status at that time was the same as three Japanese carriers faced at a crucial point in that battle. Within ten minutes all three had been turned into flaming, exploding wrecks and all sank a few hours later.

Except for sinking, *Franklin* followed virtually the same fate. Gasoline fumes filled the hangar deck space and ignited in an explosion which killed all of the several hundred men on that deck except for three who were blown over the side. Men on the flight deck saw the ship's two centerline plane elevators blown clear out of the deck, then fall back into their wells. Spinning propellers, as planes were tossed about by the bomb explosions, chewed into fuel tanks in the wings of other planes and soon a wide river of flaming gasoline was flowing across the flight deck, into the hangar deck and over the side. Soon, bombs and rockets mounted on the planes exploded as crewmen frantically sought to contain the fires. Machine gun ammunition exploded, less lethally, but surely just as frightening. Within minutes,

Franklin ceased to be a weapon of war and became a ship and crew fighting for life.

Just where Stanley was when catastrophe struck is uncertain. Family tradition holds he was in his plane on the flight deck awaiting his turn to take off. But not all the pilots were in their planes at that time. Some were airborne, others scheduled to fly later in the day; still others relieved from flight duty after returning from action the day before. Most waiting to take off were able to jump out of their planes and escape. A few were on the hangar deck and were killed along with the hundreds of others there. Yet others were in their bunks. Some of these men escaped; others killed in the maelstrom of exploding ammunition, and the inferno of fire and suffocating smoke. A VF-5 veteran who knew and liked Stanley, didn't see Stanley that morning. This officer would have been berthed in a different part of the ship than Chief Aviation Pilot Tumosa.

Wherever he was, Stanley was not among the survivors. Well-liked and respected by the other pilots, Stanley is shown smiling his broad, infectious grin, wearing a chief's working uniform of dungaree trousers and khaki shirt, at the extreme left of the back row of a group photo of the squadron's pilots. Only his clothing sets him apart from his comrades. Stanley achieved his high school ambition. He became an aviator. He flew in defense of his country among men whose respect and confidence he earned. His name appears on the memorial at the American Legion Hall in D-F and on one overlooking Casco Bay dedicated to all Maine men who lost their lives at sea in WWII.

Stanley's brothers, Victor and Frank, both survived the war and became private pilots. Frank's first son was named for his uncle. Another nephew, George Green, made a career as an airline pilot. The boyhood ambition of Stanley William Tumosa became a family tradition following his heroic death at the age of twenty-three.



And That's No Fish Story!

Standing in front of Bill Cote's (of Lewiston) Republic Seabee about 1946 are Leon Marois on the left and Bill Cote in the center.

They had just returned from a weekend fishing expedition at Churchill Lake. Bill Cote had the College Avenue Airport in Lewiston for 47 years from 1946 to 1993.

(Cote Family Photo via Norm Houle)

Buy a Brick and Support the Maine Air Museum

The Maine Air Museum is proud to announce the new memorial Pathway Program. Here's how it works:

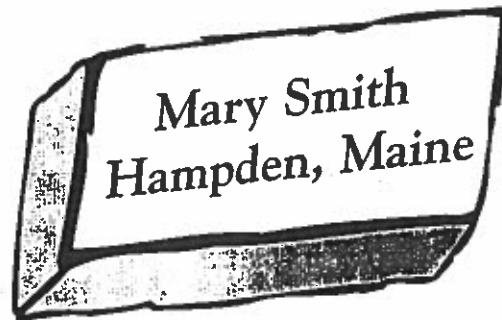
To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to refurbish building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of business and public community leaders and individual private citizens. Your interest in preserving the rich Maine aviation history will require funding presently not available to the museum effort. To this end, the museum board has established the following contribution plan for receiving your monetary donation and recognizing your gift permanently in the museum pathway and wall of honor. Remember: your donation is fully deductible.

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See Order Form on Page 7

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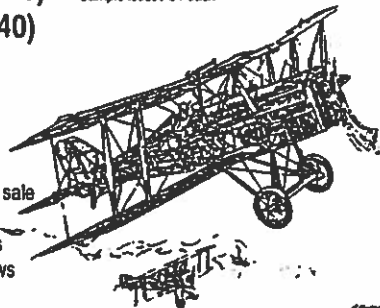
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October 18-20 All Day Northeast Aero Historians Meeting, Cradle of Aviation Museum, Garden City, NY

November 9 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine

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Call Les Shaw at 1-877-280-MAHS if you have any ideas or if you can be of help.

Membership Update

Welcome New Member

432. **Mark L. Finn**
382 Prospect Street
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Got Ideas?

MAHS meeting sites are flexible and we're always looking for guest speakers and new program ideas. Call Les Shaw at 1-877-280-MAHS if you have any ideas or if you can be of help.

Got E-Mail?

Don't forget to send us your e-mail address if you want it listed in the *Dirigo Flyer*. It's a great way to keep in touch with other members, share information quickly and stay current on aviation issues and happenings.

Remember When?

Member Bill Robertson donated this postcard to us. It shows a 1913 Curtiss MF-2 Flying Boat being hoisted aboard a U.S. Navy ship. Can anyone identify the type of ship and where the picture was taken? Was it in Maine? The postcard was mailed on Nov. 20, 1917 in Bar Harbor.



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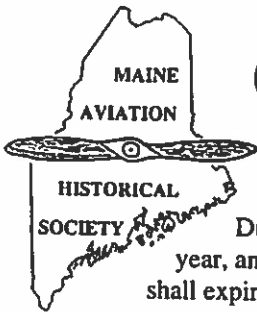


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October Meeting

October 12, 2002
10 a.m.

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